

Notes from all attended panels. All quotes are paraphrased by at least a word - generally they're near perfect, but don't take them as actual quotes please - I don't want to put false words in people's mouths.

Books to read:

Black Company - Glen Cook

Willful Child - Steven Erikson

Music to listen to:

Scenes from a Memory - Dream Theater

OST for Black Hawk Down

Pink World - Planet P

Seven Dust

Operation Mindcrime

Dark Side of the Moon

Endless Forms Most Beautiful

Warpriders - the Sword

Friday

10:30 A - Getting Started Writing in the RPG Industry

Jason Andrew - VtM (MET) Developer

David Boop - Author

Peter Wax - Cyberpunk CCG

Roles in the industry

Writer - Rules writing

Developer - mgr/head writer (creates the "bible")

Technical/line editor - ensure continuity/rules matching
also - world creation/ development

5 big companies + niche businesses

- build your own game
- or freelance for a bigger company

Shadowrun & Battletech (+Call of Cthulhu)

- take freelance fiction/scenarios

Approaching a company with a licensed project

- likely not a great idea

Per Neil Gaiman related to freelance writing:

- be on time
- be good
- be pleasant (or at least 2 of the 3)

Keep an eye on your behaviour on your blog - always be polite and professional

Things potential employers check for:

- good members of the relevant community
- boosting/positively talking about other things
- just generally being positive instead of negative

You exist in a binary state - you can be a fan or a professional at any given moment, but not both of them at the same time.

Do your best on all writing gigs - people reading it are fans even if you are not.

Blog - write about gaming/game theory

- once per week, about 5000 words is a good minimum to shoot for
- write and write consistently
- take any work

keep a clean and professional online presence.

Rules are a cup - they give form and definition. The cup is imbued with meaning by filling it with characters.

Economy of Cool

- every player should have a chance to feel cool
- Happy days season 1
 - fonz, richie, and potsy all have positive aspects and time in the spotlight.
 - season 2 - fonz becomes increasingly cool, others lose their moments of cool
- don't forget the gm - they should be able to have a moment of cool as well.

Onyx Path/WOD - check online submission guidelines

Pick games and write about them

Jason D Andrew .com - tips on running larps - look at this as an example

Ralan.com - posts writers wanted information

worry about your portfolio - not the theft of your ideas

be careful what you put up online - you will be judged for it

- make it look good.
- playtest the hell out of it

don't pigeonhole yourself to writing only one thing - games, books, comics

focus on good story and style - small continuity issues can be cleaned up by editors.

2:30 P - Worldbuilding in Comics

Evan Dahm, Carla Speed McNeil, Greg Rucka

- comics as a world building media
 - additional “room” vs novels/movies
 - visual allows more info to be inserted in the work
 - it created the implication of what else is there.

Rucka - characters portray the story, the world draws you in

- extemporaneous invention with visual style (see Star Wars ep 4) can be hurt by mythology building

Establish mood - mood is vital for foundation of sci-fi/fantasy

- work on mood - without mood, you are just “rivet counting”

Careful not to fall in love with rivet counting.

Story changes over time and as it is being told

- with constant publish comics (i.e. webcomics), there is no going back/retconning (unlike novels, where you have multiple drafts)

cycle between world-building, writing, hitting a block/missing a detail, then back to world building, then writing, etc.

Lazarus - contains world building ads

- creates an extra level of immersion (transmedia storytelling to some degree)

readers will rivet count - make the assumption of additional detail.

- detail and depth can be implied, but only so much time can be taken on rivets - the creator has to do the work of actually making it.

“it’s not about building a world, it’s about building a storytelling tool.” - Dahm

political commentary and worldview can be inserted in the background - “hidden” behind the prominent story

Earthsea and The Forever War - both short and concise works

Modern tome-sized sci-fi/fantasy novel bloat - rivet counting is sometimes outweighing quality storytelling

- long and lots of content, lasts ages - “comfort food”

From Hell - inspiration for Speed McNeil

any Ursula K Leguin - inspiration for Evan Dahm

Black Company (Glen Cook) - inspiration for Rucka

4:30 P - Avoiding Magical MacGuffins

Holly Black,

magic needs underlying logic

- day logic - clear and sensible'
- night logic - opaque but still bound by limits/rules

explicit and implicit magic

- or scientific vs poetic
- scientific: rules, math, clear system
 - readers can appreciate clever use and appreciate it
 - lacks wonder/numen
- poetic: rules defy clear explanation, but still exist
 - more wonder, less anticipation

should always have rules - consistent, recognizable rules

“there are no rules when writing a story until you write something down”

magic shouldn't swoop in and save the day, the story should hinge on characters, consequences, and choices

magic should have a price of some sort

- potentially a social price (stigma attached to it)
- a consequence or real world permutation
 - upfront price - study, arcane knowledge
 - cheaper price - higher consequence

look at bleedthrough - intro of technology or magic - how does that impact the setting and bleed out into other aspects of the world

Brandon Sanderson - has a clear world with clear rules

- people can make food with magic - allows long scale large army conflicts to occur
- good bleedthrough consideration

Tolkien - working in an epic tradition, avoids looking at the details

think outside the box - spin and innovate to work with and around the rules without breaking them

you can start with low magic and build over time - the reader takes the journey with the characters and understands the layered and more complex system by learning it as they go

have your Red Mage (game mechanic focused) friends read your story/idea and assess how it breaks down

- don't get around rules
- "When you're writing a sonnet and it's hard, you ask how do I get around it? You don't. It's a fucking sonnet." - Patrick Rothfuss
- work within the constraints and the impact they create. this can add flavour and interesting logistics. it forces you to be clever and think around corners.

logic puzzles are part of the joy and pleasure of writing a world.

calibrate the power of the magic to maintain balance in the setting

"what does the magic say about the world and is it truly what you want to say about the world?"

- be careful things don't sneak in accidentally
- bloodline magic implies master race/eugenics
- can be put in innocuously or to achieve a purpose
 - have your social/progressive friends take a look instead of just gamers

ending with change or return to the status quo in a story? depends on the story

be careful and build in weaknesses to avoid characters becoming overpowered and losing dramatic tension

"you can do whatever you want so long as it works" - Patrick Rothfuss

- avoid the time-turner and matrix 3 - it irritates readers

you get 1 because I said so, then you need to explore the consequences

- additional because I said so weaken the story

worldbuilding has to serve the story

- too much unnecessary worldbuilding will bore the reader
- worldbuilding is Rothfuss' hobby, but not a constructive use of time for writing - occasionally helpful, but a hobby - not writing work

just show what is needed for the story

2 types

- just story, with less worldbuilding
- show a massively detailed world, with stories contained within

Saturday

11:50 A - Making a Living in Nerd Culture

Nerd 4 a Living - Wendy Baske (Marketing Director)

- website to help people find nerd careers

Susan specifically pursued her career in voice acting

major takeaway - each worked towards their career in the desired industry

- hard work and development in desired area
- “wanted to share what was inside of me in a direct way” - Isaac

experience is a key

- but also put some time into technical classes

writing - you can learn from reading and parsing how the books are written

for portfolio-centric fields, a degree means nothing if not reflected in the quality of your portfolio

take any jobs within reason - the experience and exposure is worth it

can be good to post works online - immediate outlet with potential feedback

- unlikely, but someone might see it.

have no fear of rejection

- if you get rejected, just move on to the next thing

if submitting works, pay close attention to the guidelines/requirements

“It’s competitive, challenging, it’s nearly impossible, and if you love it you do it” - Susan

take critique and rejection - work with it and move on

you can have all the great ideas in the world, but you have to execute them

learn from the way things are done in the industry, but don’t just mime it - bring your unique skills and outlook to the table

work on it every day

you have to make sacrifices (cut things out) to work on your passion

if you “don’t have time” do you really want to do it? re-examine your goals/passions

1:30 P - Finding the Story with Michael A Stackpole