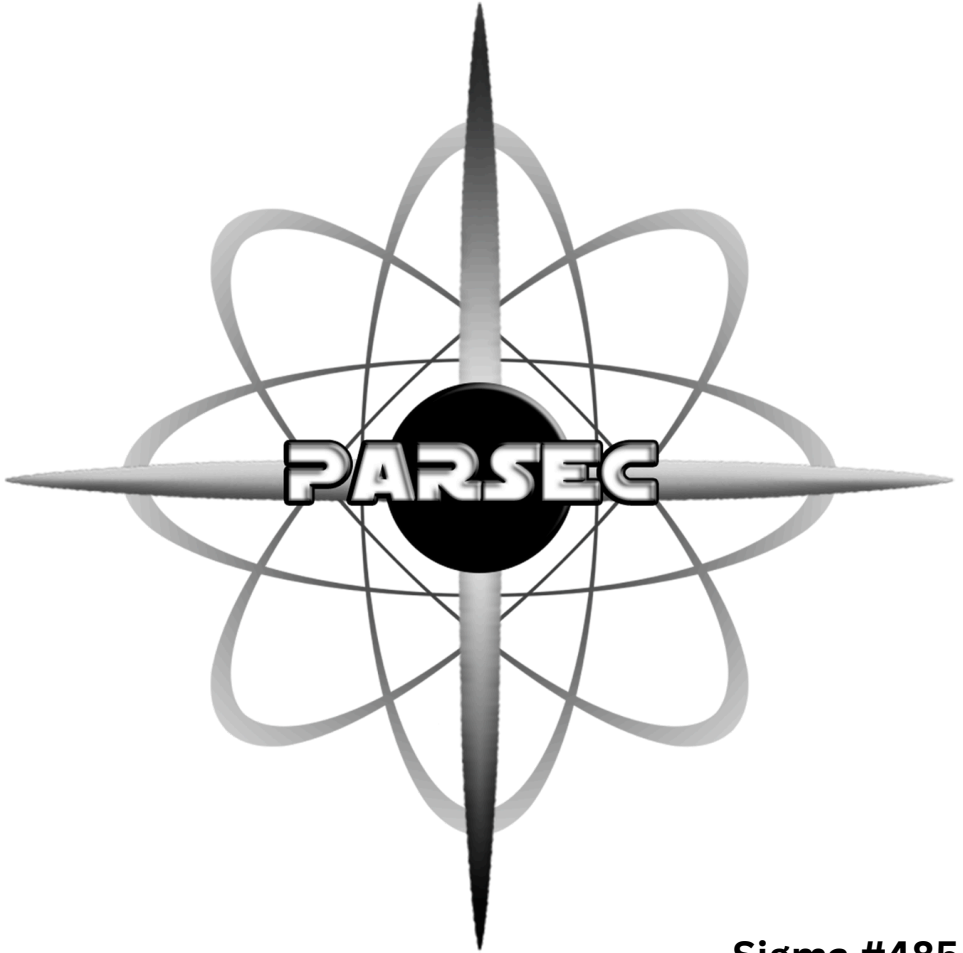


SIGMA

The Official Parsec, Inc. Newsletter



Sigma #485
September 2026

To promote awareness of the richness of speculative fiction as literature, art and music; further general education in the sciences and arts, support contributions—both scientific and artistic—to society and to espouse the enjoyment of speculative fiction as literature, art and music with others.

Contents

Pg 3: Dear Friends of Parsec

Pg 6: Announcement: Parsec Seeks an Executive Director

Pg 7: Parsec Monthly Event

Pg 9: Parsec Member List

Pg 10: Parsec Programs - Parsec Short Story Contest

Pg 11: Parsec Programs - Parsec Ink

Pg 11: Parsec Programs - Confluence

Pg 12: Parsec Programs - Write or Die!

Pg 13: Author Seeking Rejection by Timons Esaias

Pg 15: Spec Lit Magazine Highlight by Jess Simms

Pg 17: Member Announcements

Pg 22: Opinion

Back Cover: Next Month's Event

Want to submit your own photo, art, 3D rendering for use on the cover of Sigma?

Submit files to parsecsigmanews@gmail.com

The four programs under the Parsec Inc., 501(c)(3) organization are:

- [Confluence Conference](#)
- [Monthly Events](#)
- [Parsec Ink Publishing](#) (Triangulation)
- [WorD - Write or Die Writing and Critique Group](#)

**Need to mail anything to Parsec, Confluence,
Parsec Ink or WorD? The address is:
PO Box 79281
Pittsburgh, PA 15216**

Parsec Inc., is an equal opportunity, nonprofit organization and does not discriminate based upon age, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, gender expression, national origin, disability, race, size, religion, sexual orientation, military status, socioeconomic background, or any other status prohibited by applicable law.

www.parsec-sff.org | parsecsigmanews@gmail.com





DEAR FRIENDS OF PARSEC,

"Friends of Parsec." That's been the beginning line of the newsletter since I started editing it in 2024. Looking through the archives we have listed online, it seems that only became the intro in the month or two before I took over. Sigma holds pretty consistently at just under 900 subscribers. We average about a 29 to 32% open rate per issue. On a rare month, we may hit the high 30s and into the 40% open rate. So about 300 people read that line each month. (Assuming, you're actually clicking through to the e-zine or PDF edition. Which, according to Heyzine, only about 70 to 100 of you look at that version.)

What, or who, is a "friend" of Parsec? There are, as of this writing, 58 paid members and associate members for the year. There are two "founders fund" members, and 5 lifetime members. Friendship isn't necessarily what is given financially, so I wouldn't want to define the term solely on that metric. But as a nonprofit organization, like public radio and charities of all kinds, money is one of the things needed in order to survive. (I would say Parsec isn't in the best financial shape it's possibly ever been in, but at this moment I'm not especially concerned with that aspect of what is needed. Don't tell the Treasurer, I said that.)

I was reminded a few months ago, by Confluence treasurer, former board member, and current corporate bookkeeper, Karen Yun-Lutz, that this is Parsec's 42 year in existence. But in all that time, again from what I can see, Parsec has only been a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for about twenty one years ago. I had a long, and what I thought was a good, talk with Parsec founder Barb Carlson at Confluence this past July with the enthusiasm of what seemed to me like her support in what I, and the rest of the board, are looking to do to move Parsec into the future. Not that age is truly a factor but I look at the current makeup of the board, and how the majority of the people (including me for the next two years and two months) are under 50 years old. It's possible a couple current board members weren't even alive when Parsec was created.

But friends? How many friends has Parsec lost over the years? From life, from time? That's just the way things go, I think. How many

friends have we lost because of our actions? How many people have been driven away, abused or silenced or simply disrespected, never to return? I'm thinking a lot about the Horror Writers Association (HWA) lately. I joined the HWA for the first time this year, thankfully qualifying for an active, voting membership, because of the number of publishers who deemed me worthy of their money and the space they provide in their publications. I attended StokerCon and extolled my takeaways, and excitement, in the following Sigma. But since then a lot of darkness has been revealed on how that organization has been run. How a few people, possibly in some circuitous way of acting under the guise of good intentions, made it essentially a living corpse rotting from the inside. There are now questions about reform, or complete annihilation of the HWA, and similar groups that some think no longer have a need. I wonder where Parsec sits in the milieu of organizations founded for one thing and have, perhaps, come to the point of either needing to evolve or fade away.

I am a relatively new friend of Parsec. Not the newest, certainly, but my introduction to all of this was Confluence 2022. Then I started attending the Write or Die meetings (though, at the time, not actually a part of Parsec) headed by Kevin M. Hayes, and I attended the monthly meetings co-chaired by Scot and Jane Noel, in 2023. In 2024, I took on the vice chair duties of the monthly events, then became the editor of Sigma, and in November of 2024 I was voted onto the board of directors. In December of 2025, I was voted president of the board.

All of these elections for the board have been done by the board. There are very few benefits of being a member of Parsec, but as a nonprofit organization, one of those ought to be having a say in who is running Parsec. With 60 members that's enough of a pool to draw from for leadership. For stewards of the organization. You are contributing your time to reading this newsletter. Some if you are donating your time to help run Parsec and its programs. And many of you are giving us the money we need to survive.

But as we, somehow, come to the close of my first year as president of this organization, as the board plans for the future, and looks at instituting ideas on growing our number, widening our net for younger

and more diverse people to join us, as well as putting Parsec on the path it sort of feels like it has lost; friends, I ask you to tell me what you want. What can you offer or do to make Parsec thrive? Along those lines, what can we do for you?

When you complete the Membership form there is a question about what you would like to see. We have gotten great ideas (some being instituted and some being considered), but I am open to more ideas and thoughts.

If you're reading this but have fallen away from or left Parsec for some reason, if you're willing to share, I welcome hearing your story of not only what took you away but what can be done to bring you back. I see with the HWA how so many people are ready to walk away and give up, many who say to just burn it all down and either let it smolder or start something completely new. One way or another, the people talking about it still care. If you haven't completely walked away, I think you're a friend of Parsec and I want to bring you into the fold. If you know someone who has completely written Parsec off as a lost cause, I'd love for you to share this with them. Or point me in their direction.

Because, friends, I want you to know I think friendship is hard. It takes work, and sometimes it takes knock-down, drag-out fights, but true friends find the common ground to keep moving forward. I hope that means trying to build up Parsec, but I'm also not afraid to burn it all down and try something completely new. As I spoke with Barb Carlson at Confluence, I introduced her to one of next year's editors for Triangulation. Barb offered to volunteer to slush read, and help format the book. That's what a friend of Parsec is to me. Someone who says, "I can help." That's what community is. I hope some of you will want to help, and I hope the board can be there to take you up on that offer.

Your friend in Parsec,

John Muth

Sigma Editor, Monthly event officer, and
Parsec, Inc. Board of Directors, President

Parsec, Inc. seeks an Executive Director



MISSION: To promote awareness of the richness of speculative fiction as literature, art and music; further general education in the sciences and arts, support contributions—both scientific and artistic—to society and to espouse the enjoyment of speculative fiction as literature, art and music with others.

POSITION: Parsec, Inc. is a divergent organization with many interests, a long history, and a desire to continue far into the future. For that, we are looking to fill a volunteer position of Executive Director who has the energy, the stamina, and the willpower, to maintain the organization through its many projects and programs. The organization has always been a work in progress, an experiment of the grandest order, limited only by the time, resources, and people making everything happen.

To that end, below is a list of basic duties expected of an Executive Director, but our real goal is to bring in someone with a vision and passion for what makes Parsec impactful: a celebration of creativity and our people.

HOW TO APPLY: Despite the title, this is not a regular job. Parsec, Inc. is not a regular organization. Therefore, we do not have a regular process. If you are interested in applying for the Executive Director position, please submit a proposal of what you see Parsec, Inc. needing, how you would lead the organization into the future, and a plan for sustainably continuing the programs currently active. Growing the programs and the organization so that it remains the premier organization promoting science-fiction, fantasy, and horror in literature, media, and music, in Pittsburgh and beyond.

You are welcome to submit a cover letter, resume, essay or presentation (video or slide), that communicates how you would be best to serve as Executive Director. Be creative, think outside the box, but be honest with what you believe you can achieve with Parsec.

Please send all submissions to: parsec@parsec-sff.org

Being a Parsec member is not a requirement of applying for this position. All potential candidates will be requested to meet and interview with the Parsec board of directors. If you have any questions about Parsec or the position, please contact the email address, above, and we will do our best to answer you.

Thank you!

PARSEC MONTHLY EVENT

Date: Saturday, September 19th, 2026

Time: 1 to 3 pm (Doors will open at Noon.)

Location: 2966 Voelkel Avenue, Dormont, PA 15216

(There will be a Zoom element, but it probably won't be a great setup.)

Check www.parsec-sff.org for more details.



This may, or may not be a photo of the Parsec Library.

In this "Library Tour," we will take a look at the works of Sir Terry Pratchett. We will first examine his non-Discworld books: collections of his early short stories, several science fiction works, and others. Time permitting, we will move on to the Discworld collection and even discuss the question, "Where do I start reading the Discworld books?"

Feel free to bring some snacks, and Greg has been graciously offered to provide some light refreshments. We look forward to seeing you!

Bring a friend!

Monthly Event Officer: John Muth; want to help organize the meetings?
Email parsecsigmanews@gmail.com!

Become a Parsec Member today!

Parsec members in 2026 will receive a free ebook of this year's **Parsec Short Story Contest winners**, and enjoy **free advertising** in the **Sigma Newsletter!**



Your membership dollars allow Parsec to continue offering the following long list of programs, all of which are open to the public:

Confluence
Parsec Monthly Events
Parsec Ink — Triangulation
Parsec Short Story Contest
Write or Die Writing & Critique Group
Parsec Library
Sigma Newsletter

The Parsec Membership year runs annually from March 1st through the end of February.



RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR BUY ONE FOR THE FIRST TIME!

With your membership you get a digital membership card with your name and status for the year. Each member can also choose to have your name on the Parsec website as well as here, in the Sigma Newsletter.

Join today and get your name listed along with these folks:

Lifetime Members:

Barb Carlson, Greg Armstrong, Mary Soon Lee,
Timons Esaias, William Blake Hall

Founders Fund Members:

Sarah Wade Smith, Joan Fisher

2026 Main Members:

Judith Gallagher, Susan Urbanek Linville, Susan Kaye Quinn, Dan Błoch, Jenny Thompson, Barton Levenson, Larry Ivkovich, James Hardin, John Muth (BOD), Darcy Conaty, Scot Noel, Kathryn Smith (BOD), Jamie Lackey (BOD), Alan Bailey (BOD), Jennifer Theoret, Jess Simms, John Frochio, Greg Clumpner, Amanda Pica, Christine Benner Dixon (BOD), Susan M. Smith, Michael Alberg, Paula Sandusky, Brandon Ketchum, Kevin M. Hayes, Shane LaBarge, Kim Vilsack, Mary Beth Diehl, Alan Irvine, Karen Yun-Lutz, Nick Chase, Kaitlin Burge, Larisa VanWinkle (BOD), Michael Taylor, Jim Mann, John Leavitt, Rebecca Warren, Rebecca Miner, Barbara Barnett

2026 Associate Members:

Amy Finkbeiner, Stephen V. Ramey, Elizabeth Penrose,
Jane Noel, Bernadette Harris, Deborah Steinberg,
Nancy Janda, Laurie Mann, Bill Rule

PARSEC PROGRAMS

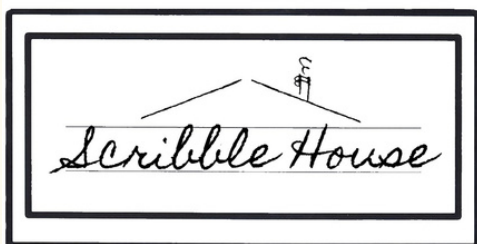
Parsec Short Story Contest

2027 Short Story Contest Coordinators: Liz Abeling and Jess Simms of Scribble House

THE THEME FOR 2027 IS NON-HUMAN RESOURCES.

We're looking for stories that capture both aspects of "Non-human resources." By that we mean stories that engage with the idea of resources and/or workplaces, and that prominently feature some kind of non-human (which can be a human-derived thing like a ghost or were-creature, or humanoid/near-human aliens a la Dr Who or Star Trek, though we'll be extra excited by stories featuring characters, entities, and lifeforms that are markedly different from humans). Bonus points for cheekiness, wit, and humor—we're excited to see people have fun with this theme (or, at the least, more fun than you'd expect from a visit to HR).

For more information check out the [Short Story Contest page](#).



Scribble House exists to connect writers in Western Pennsylvania with knowledge, resources, and community. Founded by two writers and lit mag editors based in Pittsburgh, Scribble House runs the Feedback Open Mic series and annual Scribble House Lit Fest, along with other workshops and writerly meet-ups. You can see what they're up to at ScribbleHousePGH.com.

PARSEC PROGRAMS



Parsec Ink

Co-Editors, Shannon Cross and Fritze Roberts, have announced the theme for 2027: **Leviathan!** Larger than life forces and the heroes who run toward the danger. The open call for submissions is planned for November. More details to come!

If you are interested in being a part of next year's production of Triangulation: Leviathan, including becoming a first-reader, contact parsecink.editor@gmail.com.

Looking for a past edition of Triangulation?

[Dark Hearts](#) (2025)

[Hospitium](#) (2024)

[Seven-Day Weekend](#) (2023)

[Energy](#) (2022)

Or find many more of our anthologies on [Amazon](#).

Parsec Ink officers: Chair: Jessica Carver. Treasurer: Greg Clumpner.



Nothing to report this month.

Confluence officers: Chair: Mary Tabasko. Vice Chair: Kevin M. Hayes.
Treasurer: Karen Yun-Lutz.

PARSEC PROGRAMS

Write or Die

A Science Fiction & Fantasy Writing Group



WorD Pittsburgh, a science fiction, fantasy & horror writing & critique group meets twice every month! Be on the lookout for info on our annual Halloween Reading Event!

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- Tuesday, September 22 at 7:00 pm, in the Mt. Lebanon Library, Room A with a Zoom Option available.
- Tuesday, October 13 at 7:00 pm, on Zoom only.

For information on meeting procedures, contact info and how to register, **Visit WorD on the web.**

WorD officers: Chair: Kevin M. Hayes. Secretary: Randy Brock.

SIGN UP FOR YOUR PARSEC MEMBERSHIP!

Visit www.parsec-sff.org to become a **Parsec member** today!

Did you know that this year, all Parsec members receive the **EXCLUSIVE** e-book of the winners of the 2026 Parsec Short Story Contest? (Check out that cover!) Plus, you get the digital membership card, and you can also post updates on your work, advertise for upcoming events, or promote upcoming works, in Sigma -- for **FREE**!



AUTHOR SEEKING REJECTION

A QUEST, Volume 9

By Timons Esaias

August has been a massive disappointment. I sold about 7 pieces (one of them to *Asimov's*), and only got 9 rejections. The current YTD rejection count is 229. Last month, I thought I might be approaching 400 at the end of the year. Now I'm a little worried about reaching 300.

It's those danged sales. So irritating.

Why are rejections so important? Aren't they just failures?

No. Here's a key thing to keep in mind: Submission is networking. All those rejections signify putting your calling card into their tray. Editors (and agents, of course) are professional talent scouts. They keep records on you when you submit. They watch you improve (or not). They sometimes try to nudge you in a better direction.

It's easy to imagine that you're anonymous. I was set straight by the experience of having a major editor – who'd rejected me something like 30 times – give me a talking-to off the top of his head. I'd never had a conversation with him in my life, but he knew where I published and where I didn't, and he had specific opinions as to why. Off the top of his head!

And after that talk he sent me copies of my European reviews, along with the rejection slips.

I've also had the experience of getting checks and contracts in the mail for a story that an editor rejected before, but wanted for an anthology they were doing. After it had been published elsewhere, usually. In a couple of cases

AUTHOR SEEKING REJECTION

they mentioned having rejected it in the cover letter.

Get your rejected pieces back out there. Tell them to be polite.

Say hello.

Timons Esaias is a sporadically award-winning satirist, fictionator and poet. His works have appeared in 22 languages, on at least one planet.

He also teaches workshops.



Translunar Travelers Lounge

By Jess Simms

A lot of magazines open for submissions in September, and this month's column highlights one of them: Translunar Travelers Lounge, a speculative fiction magazine that "aims to explore the fun side of fantasy and science fiction."

- Founded in 2019
- Publishes speculative fiction across subgenres
- 2 issues per year (free to read online)



As far as what they mean by "fun side" of SFF, they define a fun story as one that's built on the premise that good can win, and "things aren't all bad." The latest issue, Issue 15 (August 2026), showcases this. Its 13 stories span sci-fi and fantasy subgenres

and even flirt with horror in "All the Things He Loved Beyond Him," a ghost story from the ghost's perspective that opens on his death. In "A Poem of Anas," Ana consults alternate universe selves after her dad's terminal cancer diagnosis, hoping one of their realities has a cure. "Flotsam" centers on Kragg, a being charged with disposing of unwanted things, something he's always done alone until a human boy appears in his domain. None of those topics are swashbuckling romp type "fun" but they all have a unifying thread of hope, and that promise of better things to come is the defining trait of a *Translunar Travelers Lounge* story.

SPEC LIT MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT

What should submitters know about Translunar Travelers Lounge?

The current reading period runs from September 15th-October 15th, with the first week (September 15th-21st) for writers of color. Starting on the 22nd, all writers can submit stories up to 5,000 words. Translunar Travelers Lounge doesn't accept simultaneous submissions, and their response time average is around 53 days. Pay is semi-pro (.03/word with a \$20 minimum) and they have an aggregated 3.85% acceptance rate, so in the "competitive but not impossible" camp.

Most stories published in recent issues are in the 2,500-5,000 word range, and they rarely publish true flash (just 2 in the last 3 issues). They consistently gravitate toward character-driven stories, often ones that center on everyday situations rather than epic adventures.



Jess Simms is a freelance writer and editor, and the managing editor of After Happy Hour. They are the author of the flash fiction chapbook Cryptid Bits and have published stories and essays in Mythaxis, Orca, SLAB, Atlas Obscura, Rinky Dink Press, and elsewhere.

PARSEC MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS



From Scot Noel:

DreamForge has a Washington Science Fiction Association Small Press Award Finalist this year: "The Last Mardi Gras," by Raven Jakubowski, published in DreamForge Anvil #20. The WSFA award, recognizing "the best original short fiction published by small presses in the previous year," will be presented at Capclave, to be held October 2 – 4, 2027 at the Rockville Hilton in Rockville MD.

This makes DreamForge's 4th finalist since 2019, with 2024's finalist (A Bowl of Soup on the 87 Floor by Kai Holmwood) going on to win the award that year. Read our current finalist at:

<https://dreamforagemagazine.com/story/the-last-mardi-gras/>

DreamForge Anvil #25 was released on September 1st, 2026. You can read 8 new SF & Fantasy stories, articles on writing, and more at:

<https://dreamforagemagazine.com/digital-issues/dreamforge-anvil-25-what-we-need/> Free online!

From Donald Firesmith:

My latest hard science fiction novel, The Fifth Future Book 1 - Discovery, has just moved up from the long list to the short list in the 2026 Cygnus Book Awards. I am finalizing the editing of The Fifth Future: Book 2 - Exodus. I have completed draft manuscripts for Book 3 - Two Worlds and Book 4 - New Neighbors. The series concerns the creation of an artificial superintelligence that exiles itself to an unmanned Mars base. For more information, please see: <https://donaldfiresmith.com/a-third-path/>

I will also be at the Canal Town Book Festival on October 3rd.

PARSEC MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS



From Jamie Lackey:

I have a couple of new stories available - "Memoirs of the Spontaneous Combustion Marching Band," in [Flash Point Science Fiction](#) and "Spring Snow," in [Collective Madness: Schisms of the Soul](#).

I will also be presenting at the Writers Association of Northern Appalachia Conference on October 16-17.

From Marie Vibbert:

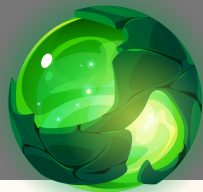
I just realized I have something to announce, too.

My first poetry chapbook just dropped! "Rustbelt Robot: Science Fiction Adjacent Poems" <https://dulcetshop.myshopify.com/products/vibbert>

John Frochio had 3 stories published this year in the new Nebula Magazine (recently renamed to Protostar Magazine).

- "John Glenn is Skating Around the Rings of Saturn," Nebula Magazine #11, Jan-Feb 2026, <https://online.fliphtml5.com/kdqtq/Nebula-Issue-11/>.
- "Skating Away on the Thick Ice of a New Day," Nebula Magazine #15, May-June 2026, <https://online.fliphtml5.com/kdqtq/Nebula-Issue-15>.
- "A Star Over Houston," Nebula Magazine #16, July-August 2026, <https://nebulascifymagazine.blogspot.com/p/time-travel-writing-prompt-july-august.html>.

PARSEC MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS



From Brandon Ketchum:

I will be tabling at Death Comes Lifting's 3rd Annual Crypt Book Fair on September 19th. The event is from 12-5pm at RE360 LLC Warehouse.

From Barbara Barnett:

1- I will be speaking at this year's TudorCon October 23-25 in Richmond Virginia. One of my talks is the Supernatural Child Ballads. [Here's a preview of my talk.](#)

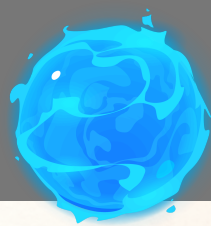


If you want to attend the weekend virtually, [find out more here...](#)

Tudorcon Online 2024 - Renaissance
English History Podcast
tudorbarbara--heatherteysko.
thrivecart.com



PARSEC MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS



From Mary Soon Lee:

Neither writing nor reading-related, but I had my four-year cancer recurrence tests this week. I was pretty agitated about this, so it is a great relief to report that no sign of cancer was found. Yay! And again, yay!

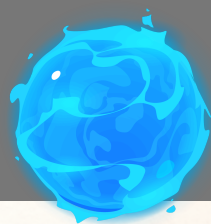
Returning to our regularly scheduled business.... On the writing front, I've been continuing to work on the midquel to The Sign of the Dragon, adding seven more poems since the August update, including appearances by the dragon and the Hidden Queen, plus a moment when Leong's skill at archery is tested. Also, "Opus Number Three," a poem from the midquel (written in December 2025) may be read in SpecPoVerse.

Marching onward, my poem Found in the Troll's Cave appeared in Uppagus. Four poems -- The Languages of Birds + Interregnum + Harbor + The Dodos of Deimos -- were reprinted in the speculative issue of Inlandia Journal. And I belatedly caught up to the fact that my poem "No Place on Earth" appeared in the March/April 2026 issue of Analog. For those who might be interested, the next SFWA poetry book club meeting will be held over Zoom on November 14th. We will be discussing Dwarf Stars 2026, an anthology of very short speculative poems. Email me for details if you are interested in participating. We're close to capacity, but are open to non-SFWA members for the first time since I started the book club.

Meanwhile, on the reading front, I finished reading the Elgin-nominated chapbooks (and voted!), plus Dwarf Stars 2026 (and voted!), plus the short poems in this year's Rhysling anthology (and voted!) I'm on track to finish reading the Rhysling long poems before the deadline in (gulp) five days.

The book I most enjoyed was Tuyu, first in a fantasy series by Rachel

PARSEC MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS



Neumeier. I read it while at peak stress about the cancer tests, and was caught up in the characters and the storytelling, despite what was happening in the so-called real world. I am very grateful to the book and its author. A shout-out as well to the first three books in Victoria Goddard's Greenwing and Dart series, which I re-read with delight. As ever, my book reviews may be [unearthed at Goodreads.](#)

Your Announcement Could Be Here!

Parsec members never pay for ad space in the monthly Sigma!

Become a Parsec member for only \$30/yr

Email: parsecsigmanews@gmail.com

AI is Coming; Here's One Thing We Should Do

By: Casey Matthews

The central peril of AI-written stories is simply this: People don't want them.

I don't mean people don't want AI-written anything—people will stomach marketing copy, instructions on how to use software, or summaries of news articles, provided they trust the AI or they've been vetted. Every day we consume information, and AI will certainly create a good deal of the text we read while navigating legal contracts and rules for the church potluck. There are questions of accuracy in that world, but artistry rarely factors in.

But for fiction—and a good portion of nonfiction—artistry is paramount. AI co-authorship misunderstands one of the central pillars of reading for pleasure. Reading is, more than other artforms, an invitation into the writer's mind. It's an attempt to convey the world through someone else's eyes.

An AI-written story can inform, it can entertain, but the parasocial element is missing. It's an invitation into Claude's mind, not a person's, and if I wanted inside Claude's mind, I would burn a token and get there myself.

It's not enough to curate AI text either, not for anything substantive. To write is to potentially reach thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, and an author must be responsible for every single word. You can't leave your reader guessing which paragraphs are from the heart, and which are from the algorithm.

I just said that readers don't want to read AI content, and I was probably lying. I just don't know if it was a big lie or a tiny one. My hope is it's only 10 percent of a lie, that only 10 percent of the time people will knowingly read machine-stories.

Why do I know people will read at least some machine-stories? Because there are

other pillars to reading for pleasure besides the parasocial. Sometimes you just badly want to hear a particular story, told well. It'll be a bit like pornography: a way to scratch an itch. Perhaps a bit immoral, exploitive, or embarrassing (perhaps not, I'm not here to answer those questions). They will blaze through their bugbear-enemies-to-lovers erotica, or their D&D-self-insert LitRPG, be happy about it in exactly the way I'm happy for some McDonald's fries and a vanilla cone, and then flip seamlessly back to Sarah J. Maas or Larry Niven.

I hope for this 10/90 world where people mostly prefer real books in the same way I hope people get real girlfriends and boyfriends, rather than digital constructs. Will some people dabble in the shadow world, will some become addicted to the new hyper-stimulus? Yes. But if my optimism is born out, it will be fringe and most folks will prefer to spend their time with humans.

And supposing I'm wrong, and it's 100 percent machine-stories, please understand: *There will be no authors at all.* Every new model is better than the last, and eventually one will be a good enough writer. The end trajectory is that I will be able to tell Claude-Baphomet or ChatGPT's Tiamet that I'd love a 400-page historical romantasy about a catgirl legionnaire and her praetorian lover's plot to bring K-Pop to the Roman Empire. And Baphomet or Tiamet will churn out something witty, endearing, with exactly three sex scenes that advance the plot, and it will entertain me, and I will be a little more dead on the inside.

But here's the thing. We don't even get to test the theory, we don't even get a shot at the 10/90 world unless we take the right course now. It's all Baphomet and Tiamet unless we maintain a firewall between what is human-made and machine-made. In other words, in the course of navigating AI, this much should never be up for debate:

It should be a policy of every writing institution, including this one, that any AI-generated text must be disclosed.

If Fable is your co-author, list it up front and let readers decide. There should be no hiding, no tricking of the audience. That should be a sin one circle of Hell beneath plagiarism, because plagiarism is robbing one author. Hiding AI usage, though, is duping an entire audience that doesn't wish to consume AI-generated text—so you are robbing many, many more.

If AI co-authored stories take off, if my statement is more like 90 percent of a lie and human authorship is the rump end, so be it. People should still be honest about what went into their writing, and readers deserve to know (good and hard) what they are consuming.

If, on the other hand, the revulsion I see in many for AI-generated content remains strong, and the market for human authors who know their craft remains much larger than for machine-made stories, then I consider that a win for the arts and humanity.

Using AI to generate stories at any point without disclosing it, though, is fraud. It should be treated as such by this organization and any other.

This says nothing at all about using AI in every other way. From marketing, to line edits, to critique, to navigating legal contracts or setting up LLCs, there remain many possible uses for AI. There are separate moral arguments one could make against AI more broadly, and many have, but from the pure perspective of *what is good for the writing world*, what is good for not just authors but for readers, it's imperative that all AI-generated writing be fully disclosed, and any attempt to conceal AI generation be made into a scandal.

I will now bow down onto my knees and say a prayer to Heaven that we continue to find ways to authenticate real human writing and to root out the frauds. That will be an arms race, and it will get messy. But as an institution, we must also do our job, which is to ensure writers *know* that failing to disclose AI use is deception, and when discovered, it will not be tolerated.

We will publish the art, writing, or reviews and commentary of the Sigma Newsletter readership. Parsec membership is not required. All content must be original to you. We retain the right to refuse anything deemed inappropriate by the Sigma Editorial team.

Reader Content may not be self-promotional in nature, other than providing a link so we can credit you. Please view the [Sigma Advertising](#) page for details on non-member ads and announcements.

Publishing Reader Content is not an approval from the Sigma Editorial team of any art or opinions stated in submitted work.

Send submissions to parsecsigmanews@gmail.com

PARSEC EVENT IN OCTOBER

**Come and meet one another. We may have
a guest speaker, and we may not.
Further Details To Be Announced.**

See you then!

Date: Saturday, October 17, 2026

Time: 1pm to 3pm

Location: CLP - Woods Run, Meeting Room

1201 Woods Run Ave. Pgh, PA 15212

Check www.parsec-sff.org for more details.

(The Zoom room will open at 12:45 pm)

CLP is not the host or organizer of this event. CLP does not support, sponsor,
or represent this group or event.

Thank you to this month's contributors, who have
yet to say anything about the rock alien who did
all my homework.

Editor, John Muth



Parsec Board of Directors: President: John Muth.

Vice President: Kathryn Smith. Treasurer: Larisa VanWinkle. Secretary: Laine Wilson.

At Large Members: Alan Bailey, Jamie Lackey, M. Christine Benner Dixon.

Executive Director: Diane Turnshek. Current BOD can be found on the [WEBSITE](#)

www.parsec-sff.org | parsecsigmanews@gmail.com