

SOL RISING

December 2008

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The Newsletter of The Friends of the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy

“Knot after Knot” – Andreas Eschbach Reads from *The Carpet Makers*



German author Andreas Eschbach made a rare North American appearance in September at a reading sponsored jointly by the Goethe-Institut Toronto, the Friends of the Merrill Collection and Toronto Public Library. Photo courtesy of Marianne Eschbach

By Mary Armstrong

Andreas Eschbach, acclaimed author of *The Carpet Makers*, gave a reading at the Beeton Auditorium of the Toronto Reference Library in the evening of September 26, 2008. *The Carpet Makers*, his first published

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SOL RISING
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Number 39, December 2008

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if you wish to submit articles, essays or art pieces. Be a part of SOL Rising, speak out!

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The World Fantasy Convention in Calgary

By Lorna Toolis

The World Fantasy Convention moves, taking place in a different city every year, usually in North America, sometimes in the UK. Attendance usually runs around 1,000 members: writers, editors, publishers, artists, and collectors. The World Fantasy Convention is large enough to be interesting, and small enough to be friendly. The primary focus is text: panels tend to deal with the nuts and bolts of publishing and writing.

The guests of World Fantasy 2008 were David Morrell, Barbara Hambly, and Tom Doherty of TOR books. Tad Williams was Toastmaster, and Todd Lockwood was Artist GoH. Leo and Diane Dillon (regrettably unable to attend the Convention), and Patricia McKillip, received Lifetime Achievement Awards. Guy Gavriel Kay won the best novel award for *Ysabel*, which was lovely and very appropriate.

Strong programming is always a feature of at the WFC. Barbara Hambly's first books, the Darwath Trilogy, gave her a reputation for excellent fantasy; *Bride of the Rat-God* is renowned for charm as well as originality. Since her first mystery, *The Quirinal Hill Affair*, she has enjoyed a successful career in the second genre. Gay Haldeman interviewed Hambly, who compared the experiences of writing in the two genres and the impact changing market conditions are having upon her career, causing her to shift from fantasy into historical mysteries.

Tom Doherty, interviewed by David Hartwell, talked about the changes in publishing, marketing and distribution of books over the course of his 30+ years in publishing. After listening to him, many of the odd things that the industry does make more sense. It is apparent that publishing fantasy, like writing fantasy, is something people do more for love than for money, and that Tom Doherty's career has had a huge impact upon the development of genre publishing.

The wealth of knowledge brought by the people who regularly attend the WFC gives attendees a remarkable choice of panels to attend. On different days over the long weekend it was possible to listen to four editors from major publishers discuss The Best Fantasy of the Past 20 Years, or listen to George R.R. Martin, Steve Erikson and Tad Williams discuss the in/advisability of killing major characters. A panel on Forgotten Fabulists featured some of the most knowledgeable authorities in the world, discussing forgotten titles. A discussion of medieval murder mysteries,

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THE
MERRIL COLLECTION OF SCIENCE FICTION
 SPECULATION AND FANTASY 

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(first cousin to fantasy), by Patricia McKillip, Barbara Hambly, Irene Radford and David Keck, identified common elements of the two genres.

Other panels included: Where Have All the Magical Creatures Gone? – 15 years ago, fantasy was infested with unicorns and it seemed they would never go away, a Small Press Roundtable, as well as a Magazine and an Anthology panel: editors everywhere face the same problems in finding, developing and retaining talent, three panels dealing with Young Adult Fantasy, currently a hot topic, and an unusual panel on Commonwealth Fantasy, dealing with different cultural sub-text and expectations between their fantasy and that published in the United States. A large number of readings were held at the WFC, where authors read from works in progress and answered questions from an impatient audience.

The art show was small compared to years when the Convention is held in the United States. It is a pity, but having to ship one's art and send it through Canada Customs is enough to put many artists off – if Romeo had had to go through Canada Customs to get to Juliet and live happily ever after, he would have gone away and found someone else on his own side of the border. Likewise the dealers' room was small, although many of the Canadian specialty presses were represented and there was a good selection of titles currently in print.

It was a good convention to attend for anyone who wanted to meet Canadian fantasy writers; there are seldom conventions which are useful enough to attract Canadian writers from both East and West, and many people were available who are normally hard to meet.

A mass signing is an extremely popular feature of the WFC, where all of the authors are available to autograph copies of their works. Collectors are advised, "No wheeled carriers or backpacks are allowed in the signing hall;" nonetheless, there was at least one collector with six banker's boxes of books on a trolley. This is a convention for enthusiasts.

I had a glorious time, met a great many people with whom I had previously only corresponded by e-mail, and I recommend the conference to anyone interested in the mechanics of fantasy.

Volunteers Needed!

If you would like to help with any of the following, contact Lorna Toolis at ltoolis@torontopubliclibrary.ca

* **Event Set-Up:** In the hour or two before every Friends of the Merrill event (readings, Xmas Tea, etc.), there are a number of small jobs which need to be done (rearranging chairs, picking up catered snacks, etc.)

* **Man the Tables!:** Help staff the Merrill promotional table at events such as local sf/fantasy conventions.

* **Sol Rising:** Write articles for our twice-yearly newsletter; help with proofreading, ad sales, graphic design.

* **Marketing/Promotions Committee:** Looks at ways to increase the profile of the Friends and the Collection (among both individuals and corporations), and promote Merrill events. It will involve occasional meetings (decided upon by its members), and follow-up work investigating its ideas.

* **Fundraising Committee:** The Fundraising Committee looks at ideas to raise money to support the Friends and the Collection through merchandise sales, fundraising events, encouraging individual and corporate donations, etc. It will involve occasional meetings (decided upon by its members), and follow-up work investigating its ideas.

MEMBERSHIPS MAKE EXCELLENT GIFTS!

Memberships in the Friends of the Merrill Collection now run between January 1 and December 31. This change in the membership year makes a membership in the Friends of the Merrill Collection a perfect stocking stuffer! Just copy the form on the back of this newsletter and send it to the address shown with a cheque and your friends and family are ready to start the New Year! All memberships, including those from the US, are tax deductible.

DONATIONS: HOW THEY WORK

Your thirty-five dollar membership generates an income tax deduction receipt for the full amount, as do all cash donations over the membership fee. The Toronto Public Library Foundation mails the receipt to you and you deduct it as a charitable donation the next time you do your income tax. The money that you donate is moved into the Merrill Collection's book budget and enables the Collection to purchase that many more books. Think of it as a means of directing the use of your tax dollars – what better use could the library make of your money than buying books?

- continued from page 1

novel, is the only one so far to be translated into English. Five of Eschbach's novels have won the *Kurd-Laßwitz-Award*, one of the most prestigious awards in the German sf scene.

The event was sponsored jointly by the Goethe-Institut Toronto, the Friends of the Merrill Collection and Toronto Public Library. This is our first collaboration with the Goethe-Institut, and it produced a fascinating evening with insight into current European sf. The audience included members of the Goethe-Institut, the Friends of the Merrill Collection and a number of people who had heard about the event through the media or online.

The Goethe-Institut Toronto's newly arrived Director, Sonja Griegoschewski, and Jutta Brendemühl (Project Manager, Theatre & Literature) made introductory remarks and Lorna Toolis, representing the Merrill Collection, introduced Andreas Eschbach.

As he took the podium, he mentioned that this evening marked the first time he would give a reading from the English translation of his book as well as from the original German. However, to make sure there would be enough people to appreciate the reading in German, he asked for a show of hands before he began. After reading the first chapter in English, Mr. Eschbach repeated it in German, though he read the second chapter in English only.

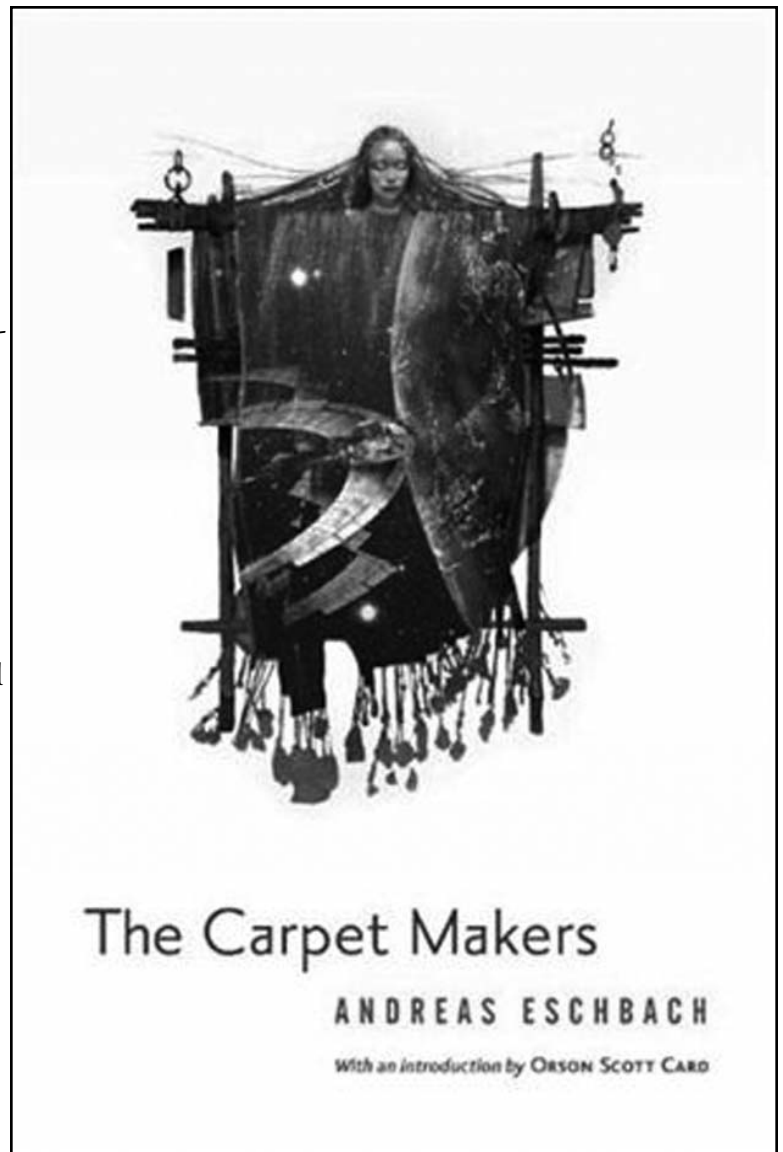
The main floor of the Toronto Reference Library is normally brightly lit and bustling. It is unusual for an event to be held on a Friday night after the library has closed, and as the reading continued I was aware of the darkness and silence outside the auditorium, which somehow brought the author and his words into sharper focus.

“Knot after knot, day in, day out, for an entire lifetime, always the same hand movements, always looping the same knots in the fine hair...”

» *Knoten um Knoten, tagein, tagaus, ein Leben lang, immer die gleichen Handbewegungen, immer die gleichen Knoten in das feine Haar schlingend....*«

After the reading, the audience was eager to ask about the background of both the book and its author.

Andreas Eschbach is an affable man with a gently wry sense of humour. He explained that although he had been writing since the age of twelve and wanted to become a professional writer, his parents told him he needed a *real* job instead, so they sent him off to the University of Stuttgart to study aerospace engineering. He moved on some years later to a software company, and earned a good living there while continuing to write.



The Carpet Makers is the first novel by Andreas Eschbach to be translated into English.

In 1991 he sold his first short story to C't, a German computing magazine, and in 1995 *Die Haarteppichknüpfer* (*The Carpet Makers*) was published. It was recognized immediately with the SFCD Literature Prize for 1996. Three years later, it was translated into French.

The English edition was only published in 2005. It came about after Orson Scott Card encountered Andreas Eschbach and heard raves about his work during a science fiction convention in France. As Card says in his introduction to the English edition of *The Carpet Makers*, "...while there's plenty of translation from English into the languages of Europe – which is why I had been invited to the convention in the first place – there is very little translation into English." Frustrated by the language gap, Card asked Eschbach for a short piece that he could take home for a friend of his to translate. The piece of work he received was the first chapter of *The Carpet Makers*, and a synopsis of the rest of the book.

Orson Scott Card's translator friend was Doryl Jensen, a writer and poet who eventually took on the challenge of translating the book into English. Eschbach described his meeting with Jensen as being like the scene in *Star Wars* where Han Solo has a discussion with a group of aliens in which each speaks his own language but understands the others. This should not be surprising, Eschbach pointed out. "After all, I understand English very well but express myself best in German, and Mr. Jensen has an excellent command of German but expresses himself best in English."

At one point, Eschbach drew our attention to the cover artwork of the original German paperback edition he had used for the reading. When he was dealing with the publishing house, he made a suggestion (and he swears it was just a suggestion) of the picture he had always envisioned on the cover showing a woman in profile, with long hair streaming down her back which transmutes into an intricate carpet. The publisher's art department tried to reproduce this motif because they were told the author demanded it. In retrospect, although he appreciated the effort they had made and still likes the image, he has decided that it is an example of why publishers have art and marketing departments to decide what should be on the cover. In fact, each translation of the book has had a different cover, calculated to appeal to the readers of that language. He particularly admires the cover of the English edition, which encapsulates so many of the elements in the story in a single striking image.

It was a great pleasure to hear Andreas Eschbach speak, and I look forward to future translations of his works since I, like Orson Scott Card, do not understand German. His novels have been translated into a number of languages, including French, Polish, Czech, Italian, Russian and Japanese. However, there are no more English translations under discussion at the moment, so I fear we must be patient.

Les Klinger at the Merrill



Les Klinger's lecture included images and film clips. Photo by Andrew Specht

By Lorna Toolis

Les Klinger, editor of *The New Annotated Dracula*, spoke at the Merrill Collection on Thursday, October 23. His lecture on "Changing Images of Vampires in the Media" was illustrated with images and film-clips taken from a wide number of classic and modern vampire films.

Mr. Klinger also spoke about the research for *The New Annotated Dracula* (New York: Random House, 2008). He was able to look at the original manuscript, now housed in Paul Allen's personal library. After the lecture, Mr. Klinger answered questions from the audience.

Another Exciting Year of

A retrospective photo spread by Andrew Specht



In June, Phyllis Gotlieb was presented with a lifetime achievement award from SF Canada. The ceremony was held at the Merril. Chris Szego, Chair of the Friends of the Merril Collection, presents Ms. Gotlieb with a bouquet of flowers during the ceremony.

Ms. Gotlieb is considered a pioneer of Canadian science fiction. Her first novel, *Sunburst*, was published in 1964. The Sunburst Award for Canadian Literature of the Fantastic was named to honour her first novel.



Events at the Merril



Also in June, bestselling author Laurell K. Hamilton gave a spirited reading and book signing at the Merril. The event was held in the basement of the Lillian H. Smith Branch, a venue much larger than the Collection itself.



Notable Acquisitions at the Merrill Collection in 2008

By Lorna Toolis



Stephen Hickman's *Fire in the Mist* is the cover for the Holly Lisle book of the same title

The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy should have everything an ardent reader of the genre might want to read. New science fiction, fantasy and horror titles are acquired as they are published.

Out-of-print titles may be purchased when a request from a researcher has identified a significant title that the Merrill Collection does not hold, or if the Collection is offered a title or titles by significant authors. A partial list of out-of-print titles purchased in 2008:

Artzybasheff, Boris	<i>As I See</i> . New York: Dodd, Mead, 1954.
Bedford-Jones, H.	<i>Flamehair the Skald</i> . Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1913.
Benson, Robert H.	<i>A Mirror of Shalott</i> . London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1907.
Bowen, Marjorie	<i>The Shadow on Mockways</i> . London: Mellifont Press, [n.d.].
Correy, Lee	<i>Rocket Man</i> . New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955.
Dunsany, Lord A.	<i>Jorkens Buys a Whiskey</i> . London: Putnam, 1940.
Harvey, William F.	<i>Moods and Tenses</i> . Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1933.
Holt-White, W.	<i>The Man Who Dreamed Right</i> . London: Everett & Co., 1920.
Holt-White, W.	<i>The World Stood Still</i> . London: Everett & Co. [n.d.].
Lambourne, John	<i>The Second Leopard</i> . London: John Murray, 1936.
Mercer, Henry C.	<i>November Night Tales</i> . New York: Walter Neale, 1928.
Norton, Andre, ed.	<i>Space Police</i> . Cleveland: World Publishing, 1956.

The Merrill Collection wishes to thank Mr. Don Hutchison for his generous donation of the archive of his correspondence with American pulp writer Huger B. Cave, including an inscribed manuscript. Mr. Hutchison also donated correspondence from the first World Science Fiction Convention held in Toronto, TorCon 1 (July 1948), and TorCon 2 (Sept 1973), in addition to three manuscripts written and inscribed by Mack Reynolds.

The Merrill Collection received the first seven titles of the Virginia Heinlein edition of Robert Heinlein's books. The Heinlein Foundation has assumed the obligation of the previous publisher, Meisha Merlin, after that company's business failure. The Merrill Collection also wishes to thank Mr. Jim Munroe for his generous donation of manuscripts.

Art

Art is acquired as opportunity and budget allows. In 2008 the Merrill Collection acquired the following items:

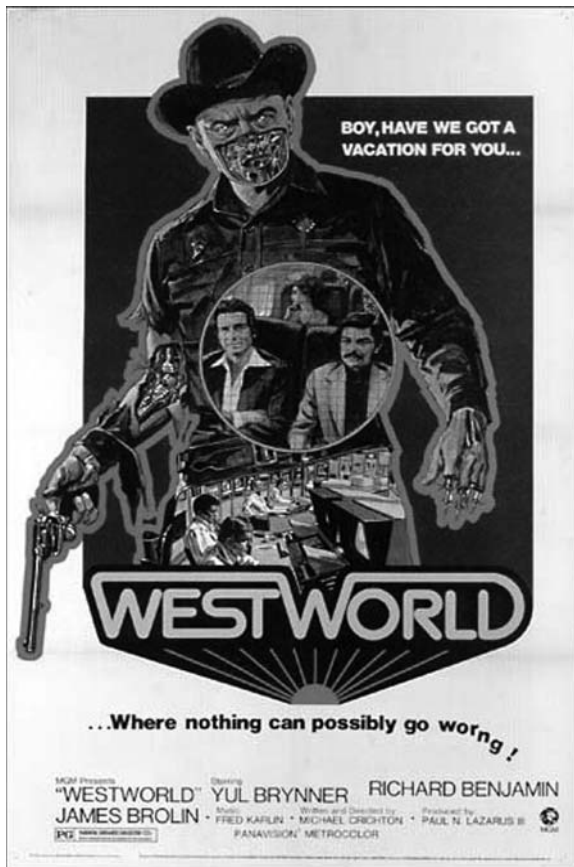
Hannes Bok, *Untitled*

Stephen Hickman, *Fire in the Mist* (cover of the Holly Lisle book of the same title)

SF Pulp Cover Art, un-attributed

In Memorium: Michael Crichton

By Jamie Fraser



Westworld was Michael Crichton's first hit feature film.

He started his writing career while in Harvard medical school and his first books were published under pseudonyms. Most people find medical school difficult enough. Only an incredibly intelligent and disciplined person could write six excellent books while remaining at the top of their class. Of the six novels, there were four thrillers under the name of John Lange. As Jeffery Hudson he wrote a hospital-set mystery called *A Case of Need*. It went on to win the Edgar Award for the Best Mystery Novel of the Year (a feat he repeated with 1980's *The Great Train Robbery*). An excellent film adaptation starring James Coburn as the heroic doctor was released as *The Carey Treatment*. The last of the six books and the first published under his own name was *The Andromeda Strain*. This techno-thriller recounts the efforts of a select team of scientists the government recruits to investigate and find a deadly extraterrestrial microorganism. A huge best seller, it immediately established Crichton's reputation.

Soon afterwards, he graduated and received his MD from Harvard and went on to postdoctoral work at The Salk Institute for Biological Studies. He continued to write, producing four more novels under the Lange pen name. The last Lange book was *Binary*, a personal favorite of mine and of many other Crichton fans. It's the story of a middle class businessman who plans to use a mix of nerve gases and explosives to assassinate the President during a Republican Party conference. A TV movie version with a strong cast of veteran actors was made as *Pursuit*. It was directed by Crichton (his directorial debut) to good reviews and launched his career as a filmmaker.

One of the more unusual books Crichton published was co-written with his brother, Douglas, under the pseudonym Michael Douglas. *Dealing: Or The Berkeley -to-Boston Forty-Brick Lost-Bag Blues* was a counter-culture novel about a Harvard graduate who falls in love with a hippie while transporting a load of pot for the campus dealer. Urban myth has actor Michael Douglas starring in the film version. While that's not true, Barbara Hershey plays the hippie (no big

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Many years ago an old *Montreal Gazette* reporter told me that the main information of any story or obituary should be in the first paragraph. The next would have some of the more interesting or unusual information. And anything after that was basic filler which could be, and often was, skipped over by the reader. I've found that to be an accurate assessment in most but not all cases. There are exceptions and this piece is a good example. One cannot sum up the life and career of the late Michael Crichton in only a few paragraphs. Those free papers with names like *48* or *Macro* tried but could not do justice to his life. As a long-time fan I will do my best to describe the amazing story his life actually was.

The recent passing of Mr. Crichton came as a great shock to his millions of fans around the globe. Unlike many other celebrities he did not disclose his battle with cancer. He was with family and friends until he lost his private battle on November 4, 2008. Most people knew him as one of the world's bestselling authors of science fiction, mystery and thriller novels. Between 1966 and 2006 he published 25 novels, with his last to be published posthumously in 2009. A renaissance man he was also a director, screenwriter, producer, anthropologist and medical doctor. He even found time to teach courses at Cambridge University and MIT.

He started his writing career while in Harvard medical school and his first books were published under pseudonyms. Most people find medical school difficult enough. Only an incredibly intelligent and disciplined person could write six excellent books while remaining at the top of their class. Of the six novels, there were four thrillers under the name of John Lange. As Jeffery Hudson he wrote a hospital-set mystery called *A Case of Need*. It went on to win the Edgar Award for the Best Mystery Novel of the Year (a feat he repeated with 1980's *The Great Train Robbery*). An excellent film adaptation starring James Coburn as the heroic doctor was released as *The Carey Treatment*. The last of the six books and the first published under his own name was *The Andromeda Strain*. This techno-thriller recounts the efforts of a select team of scientists the government recruits to investigate and find a deadly extraterrestrial microorganism. A huge best seller, it immediately established Crichton's reputation.

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stretch) and John Lithgow plays the fey campus drug dealer.

Crichton wrote a few teleplays for television and then wrote and directed the smash hit *Westworld*, a high tech amusement area where the rich live out their fantasies through lifelike robots until the main computer breaks down and the robots start killing all the guests and staff. The intense finale has the main guest relentlessly pursued by a seemingly indestructible robot. This scene must have been a major influence on the creation of *The Terminator*. The film was so successful it spawned a sequel, *Futureworld*, and then the short lived TV series, *Beyond Westworld*. Crichton wrote five novels between 1972 and 1987; all received good reviews and four were turned into films. In the early 1980s he wrote and directed two other sf thrillers: 1981's *Looker* and 1984's *Runaway*, that once again featured malfunctioning robots in the near future. Filmed in Toronto, it reflects Crichton's lifelong interest in computers, robots and the failure of complex systems. Of these five novels my favorite is *The Great Train Robbery*. Set in Victorian England, a master criminal and his two associates make elaborate plans to steal a gold shipment from a moving train. The wonderful film starred Sean Connery and Donald Sutherland, and is undoubtedly the pinnacle of Crichton's directorial career. It won the Edgar Award for Best Motion Picture Screenplay, Crichton's second Edgar.

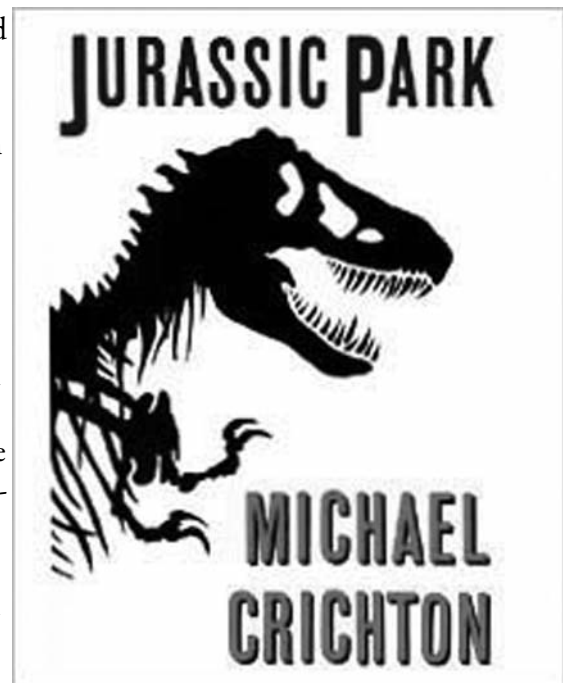
Crichton revisited the story of a fantastic theme park gone wrong with his novel *Jurassic Park*. No malevolent robots this time, just genetically recreated dinosaurs, from harmless herbivores to deadly and intelligent raptors. And no dinosaur story could leave out the Tyrannosaurus Rex! A global bestseller, it went on to become Crichton's most famous novel. He then wrote a screenplay that was made into a blockbuster film by Steven Spielberg, as was *The Lost World*, his sequel to *Jurassic Park*. Both the novels and the films were worldwide hits; video games and a theme park attraction soon followed. It was around this time that he created the extremely popular and long running TV series *ER*. He stayed on as a producer for much of its 15 seasons and 250 plus episodes.

This is when Crichton peaked as an author. He went on to write seven more novels, bestsellers all, but only a couple approached the quality of his earlier books. And the three film adaptations were not well received, by critics or at the box office. Over the past decade he's put much of his time and effort towards challenging the scientific beliefs of others, particularly global warming and other environmental issues. His opinions have alienated many members of the scientific community.

One area I haven't touched upon yet is his non-fiction publications. His non-fiction works had scientific themes, with the exception of a coffee table book on his friend, the artist Jasper Johns. One of these books, 1993's *Electronic Life*, introduced BASIC programming to its readers. In it Crichton made clear his strong beliefs about being able to program one's own computer. He later went on to design two popular games.

To many his best work of non-fiction, and also his first, was 1970's *Five Patients*. In it he recounts his experiences working in a Boston hospital and the less than stellar hospital practices. It covers five individuals through their entire hospital stays, and shows how their treatment falls below modern standards. He gives a brief history of medicine up to 1969 which helps put hospital practice and culture into perspective.

Over the years he's given so much pleasure to millions of people through his books and films. He set the standard for hard science fiction and was the creator of the techno-thriller. His passing is a great loss to us all.



Jurassic Park is Michael Crichton's most famous novel.

Memories of Michael Crichton

By Robert J. Sawyer

I remember Michael Crichton — especially the early work — very fondly. *The Andromeda Strain*, *The Terminal Man*, the movies *Westworld* and *Runaway* and, of course, *Jurassic Park*. Indeed, I've often enough told the story about how Crichton and I read the same little squib in *Science News* twenty years ago about the possibility of cloning dinosaurs from DNA preserved in the bellies of insects trapped in amber. Me, I said, "Cool," and turned the page — but he went out and created a book-and-movie empire. And, more power to him! He was, of course, the best-selling science-fiction writer of the last forty years, although most people who read him had no idea they were reading sf. It's not clear that anyone else will ever be able to do that: be a superstar in popularity while writing really hard, rigorous sf, full of actual science. His passing is a great loss.

Selling Fleas (Well, Not Really) at TRL

By Donald Simmons



A view of the Flea Market from the Merrill's table. Photo by Arlene Morlidge

The third Friends of the Merrill SF/Anime Flea Market was held at the Toronto Reference Library on Saturday, Sept. 20th, and it's getting bigger every year. Turnout was great, both in terms of vendors (we filled all twenty tables and even had a waiting list) and attendees, with the room nearly filled to capacity the entire morning and business staying steady till shortly before closing.

What makes an event like this work is the variety of items available, and we did indeed have something for everyone. We had tables of VHS (going for a song!), DVDs, costume and gaming supplies, computer games, anime collectibles, action figures and toys of every sort, and of course books. In these Internet-driven digital days, it's always good to see that people will still buy books, and our book vendors seemed happy to be there.

I talked to one guy from Buffalo, in Toronto to visit friends, who left with two shopping bags full of stuff, and said he wished someone in his home town would arrange an event like this.

I'd like to thank everyone who participated this year, whether you were selling or you just showed up, Friends of the Merrill Chris, Mary, and Arlene for helping out during the day, and the staff of the TRL for being so helpful. Mark your calendars for our Flea Market's return on Sept. 12th, 2009 and come and see what you can add to your collection!

All Great Houses Begin With A Strong Foundation



The Friends of the Merrill Collection is a volunteer organization that provides support and assistance to the Collection, which houses the largest public collection of science fiction and fantasy books in North America.

The Friends support the Collection through the publication of *Sol Rising*, providing the Collection with volun-

teers, and sponsoring events held at the library, including readings and appearances by prominent members of the science fiction and fantasy community.

The Friends is an entirely self-funded organization, existing through the generosity of its donors.

By completing the donation/member-

ship form below and sending it in, you are helping to promote the genres of science fiction, fantasy and speculation to new readers and future generations. The Friends of the Merrill Collection would like to thank all the generous supporters and volunteers, without whom this would not be possible.

I wish to become a member of **The Friends of the Merrill Collection**. I have enclosed a cheque or money order (payable to "**The Friends of the Merrill Collection**") for my **2009** membership fee as indicated (memberships run from January to December):

- Individual** \$35.⁰⁰ per year
- Student** (under 18) \$20.⁰⁰ per year
- Institution** \$42.⁵⁰ per year

This is a:

- Membership renewal
- New membership

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Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please mail to: **The Friends of the Merrill Collection, c/o Lillian H. Smith Branch, Toronto Public Library, 239 College St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R5**

In addition to my membership fee, I would like to make a contribution to the Friends. I understand that tax receipts will be issued for both my membership and additional contributions, and that my contribution will go towards funding the Friends' activities \$ _____