

# SOL RISING

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

## FREE

*Sol Rising* is a free publication of the Friend of the Merrill Collection supported by your donations. Want to donate? Check out the back page for more information.

## Ho Ho Ho!

The TPL Foundation sends their generous donors an early gift, just in time for the holidays



*Things are looking up: Collection Head Lorna Toolis, Annete Mocek, and other members of the TPL library staff gaze up into the lens of photographer Andrew Specht, one of the many volunteers who donate their time and skills to the Collection. In appreciation for those efforts the Toronto Public Library Foundation can now issue tax deduction slips for all monetary donations to the Collection. For more information, see the article below, and the back page of this issue of Sol Rising, for how you can become a donor.*

The entire cost of your membership in the Friends of the Merrill Collection became income tax deductible in 2005. The Friends' membership list has been forwarded to the Toronto Public Library Foundation, which issues the income tax deduction slips. In February of 2006, all members of the Friends should receive a slip allowing them to deduct their \$35.00 membership fees from their income tax.

Of course, any other amount donated to the Merrill Collection also generates an income tax deduction receipt for the amount given. The money is moved into the Merrill Collection book budget and allows the purchase of more materials for the Merrill Collection. In effect, you are directing how your taxes are to be used. You are telling the government that the best use of your income tax dollar is to buy books. Who could argue?

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THE  
MERRILL COLLECTION OF SCIENCE FICTION  
SPECULATION AND FANTASY

**SOL RISING**  
Friends of the Merrill Collection  
Number 33, December 2005

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[www.friendsofmerril.org/](http://www.friendsofmerril.org/)

Call for Submissions!  
Contact Sabrina ([sabrinafried@rogers.com](mailto:sabrinafried@rogers.com))  
if you wish to submit articles, essays or art  
pieces. Be a part of SOL Rising, speak out!

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# From the Collection Head

By Lorna Toolis

**T**his year the Toronto Public Library sent me to the World Fantasy Convention in Madison, Wisconsin. Most people who attend the WFC make their living in the sf community: writers, agents, publishers, and librarians, under 1,000 people in all. There were a lot of excellent panels. I know that attending panels is held to be gauche by the cognoscenti, but I like them, and sometimes I learn neat stuff.

I attended a panel on different forms of narrative, as this is a question which frequently occurs (in varying forms) at the Merril Collection<sup>1</sup>. One of the panelists was science fiction writer Walter Jon Williams, who has been writing for an on-line game, Last Call Poker. Another panelist designs X-box games; the third started with White Wolf and went on to write text for video games; and the moderator writes games that are beamed to Japanese cell phones.

"Games," one of the panelists began gently, "do not transfer well into text." This is well known: oral storytelling works differently from written tales, and has to be completely restructured in order to make sense if it is written down. So, how does electronic storytelling differ from standard text or oral storytelling?

The designers have no idea how their narrative differs from text, or what impact they are having on the evolution of fiction. Conscious storytelling structure is determined by the limits of the available technology. Other than that, as one of them said, "We're making it up as we go along." This led them to talk about their users.

Players are extremely involved with the game and interact with the designers. One of the panelists - he was holding his head in his hands while he talked - had received a reproving e-mail from a player, saying, "I statted your characters out and they could never happen!"<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the form of release, all games include puzzles, clues upon which the users can sharpen their mental teeth. Some of the puzzles are meant to be solved in a few hours, a few days, a few weeks; some, never. The response is interesting: all levels of puzzles are solved with 24 hours of release.

As one designer said, "We are not dealing with a couple of thousand patrons of standard intelligence, we are dealing with one player with an IQ of a million."

"Plus Google," added another designer morosely.

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THE  
MERRIL COLLECTION OF SCIENCE FICTION  
 SPECULATION AND FANTASY 

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# So Bad They're Good

**An occasional look at sf movies that bombed at the box office despite big budgets and pretensions to grandeur - but took on new lives as "cult" films.**

## *Night of the Lepus*: The Horror of the Monster Bunny Rabbits

By Ted Brown

In *Night of the Lepus*, giant rampaging rabbits, created by a scientific experiment gone wrong, terrorize a rural community. How scary are giant rampaging rabbits? Not at all scary. In fact they're just as cute as any other little bunny. It is interesting to speculate at what point the makers of the movie realized this hard, cold fact, and clued in to the nasty realization that whatever they did to make the rabbits seem monstrous was doomed to failure. One can picture the director smacking himself on the forehead as it dawns on him, too late, that he could have been making a smash hit comedy instead of an accidentally hilarious horror flick.



Aww....Cute, adorable psycho killer bunnies!

*Night of the Lepus* springs, of course, from the fine tradition of B-movie eco-thrillers featuring mutated creatures (*Frogs*, *Kingdom of the Spiders*, even *King Kong*) but fails to note that some creatures are scary or icky and can be used to promulgate fear in a theatre audience (which, for Pete's sake, comes to see the movie expecting to be scared), and other creatures are just downright cute and cuddly (the dictionary definition of "rabbit" includes the word "gregarious." Bit of a clue, there). There is a precedent for this, of course - the 50-foot woman in *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* was pretty cute, too. So, if the movie isn't scary, why has it become a minor cult classic?

The reasons are many, and they illustrate why this column has taken a bit of a turn from the original mandate of looking at "big budget" movies that clanked as they walked, to B-movies with minimal budgets. It's mainly because the result is the same, no matter the size of the budget. If Ed Wood had had a lot of money to spend on his movies, they still would have turned out as quirky novelties. *Barb Wire* might actually have been a better movie if its creators had had a little less money to spend on it.

A point well illustrated by *Night of the Lepus* is that the B-movie filmmaker is often attempting to produce a "big budget"-type product on razor-thin finances. Take the example of *King Kong* rampaging through a city. That takes money. The producers of *Night of the Lepus* don't have any money, so the rabbits rampage through a village. Same effect, right? Well, not quite. But you get the idea. *Night of the Lepus'* producers also realized the importance of "star power": there are recog-

### DONATIONS: HOW THEY WORK

Donations of twenty-five dollars and above, over the cost of membership in the Friends of the Merrill Collection, generate income tax deduction certificates from the Toronto Public Library Foundation at the end of every year. 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?

### MISSING MEMBERS

When members forget to send a change of address to the Friends of the Merrill Collection, we try to locate them. If you know where any of the people listed below are currently living, please contact the Merrill Collection staff.

Carol Lang, Toronto

**SOL RISING**  
**Friends of the Merril Collection**  
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**Upcoming Events  
at the Merril**

**December 3**

**The Annual Christmas  
Cream Tea**

Featuring an appearance and  
reading by Tanya Huff

**April 2005**

**The 10th Annual Pulp  
Show and Sale**

**May 2006**

**Friends of the Merril  
Collection Annual General  
Meeting**

**Other Events**

**First Saturday of every  
month**

**The Graphic Novels Club**

A discussion group for  
youth ages 14 and over about  
comics and graphic novels.  
For times and topics, please  
visit the Merril website

Another told of an on-line game where the plot involved an eventual assassination. The players got together through the Internet, off-line from the game. Their players infiltrated the target group on-line and then successfully eliminated the target, using all of the six servers the parent company operated in a simultaneous attack.

All designers agree that they cannot generate content as fast as their users go through it - this is common to text as well. The intense interaction with each other is made possible through the Internet. The game players compete with each other, as well as co-operate; this may be a function of the player demographic. This was a throw-away panel; panels scheduled at 10:00 P.M. on a Friday night are not usually of absorbing interest.

Similar quality was available in the other panels. Most of the people who attend the WFC are more interested in text - frequently old text. Attendees had the chance to listen to Jane Yolen and Terri Windling, among other distinguished guests, on "Adapting the Brothers Grimm and Other Fairy Tales." Gene Wolfe, Patricia McKillip, Ellen Kushner and other excellent writers gave advice to practiced writers on how to identify weak spots in their fiction. A panel of publishers and editors reported to the audience on "The State of Fantasy & Horror." The importance of the surrounding world in fantasy came up in panels over and over: "Fantastic Houses," "Ghosts in the Attic," and "The Romance of Ruins." Cultural codes were discussed in "Curse Words & Other Ways to Tell It Isn't Children's Fantasy," and "Good vs Evil: Philosophy in Fantasy." Authors enjoyed themselves discussing "Really Good Really Bad Guys," and so did their audience.

Artist Charles Vess gave a slide show illustrating three schools of original fantasy art, from which most current work stems. The artist guest of honour was Kinuko Craft, who is best known in the sf community for the covers to Patricia McKillip's novels from Ace.

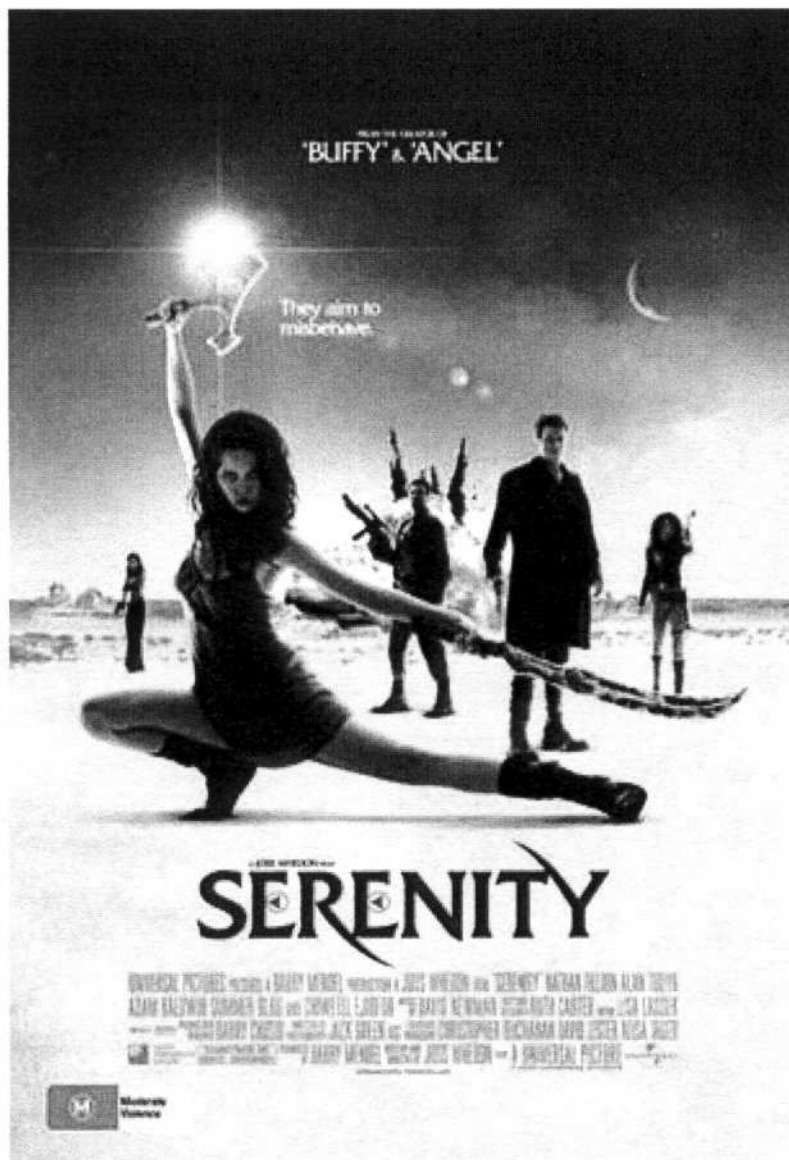
The convention had one track honouring Arkham House, a special press publishing horror. The art in the Arkham House display included art by Frank Utpatel, Lee Brown Coye, Virgil Finlay and a cartoon for "Golden Blood" by J. Allen St. John. There was also a complete set of the publications. I became involved in the sf community as a result of finding a copy of an Arkham House book when I was 12 years old.

I went to readings given by several excellent writers. John Ford read from his piece "The Fellowship of the Woosters." (Think of the Lord of the Rings, with Bertie Wooster as Aragorn, and out-takes from Gilbert & Sullivan.) Gene Wolfe, Patricia McKillip and Ellen Kushner all read from forthcoming novels. There were more good panels and readings by more excellent writers than I could attend.

I met and talked with a lot of people whose work I have been reading for years. It was an intense weekend, personally interesting and professionally useful. I'll let you know how the next WFC goes - the theme is the word of Robert E.

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# One Friend's View: Serenity



By Arlene Morlidge

The future depicted in the film *Serenity* is not clean and tidy. It merges low and high tech, languages and cultures as tidily as could be expected given this is still the human race we are talking about. Given the main subject matter, I was pleasantly surprised by the lack of gratuitous violence. Don't get me wrong, there was violence and plenty of it, but it could have been a lot gorier. The violence fit with the characters and the situations in which they found themselves. I found myself more scared by the Alliance operative who killed so cleanly than by the Reavers. The Reavers seemed to be the worst part of bestial and human, whereas the Operative was so logical about it. He was so calm and cool as he killed with his "This is a clean death, an honourable death" statements.

As the closing bow to a fairly decent (if short-lived) series, *Serenity* tied off the main plotlines fairly neatly. It still leaves a fair number of the plot-lines hanging, but I did expect that.

I really can't say more about why I enjoyed it, as it would involve telling you parts of the plot, and unless you really dislike a tale about violence that has blood and gore. I enjoyed this movie. It pulled me out of this world and into another for two hours. I do recommend you see it.

*Serenity: Herald of a new Golden Age for sf films, or So Bad It's Good? You Decide!*

Curiosity educated  
the cat.

Add to the discussion in our magazine. Advertise with us.  
Contact Sabrina for further information.  
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Howard. It will be held in Austin, Texas, and I have always had a thing for bats...<sup>3</sup>

Twenty years ago we watched text move into graphic novels; now we are watching graphic novels mutate into on-line games.

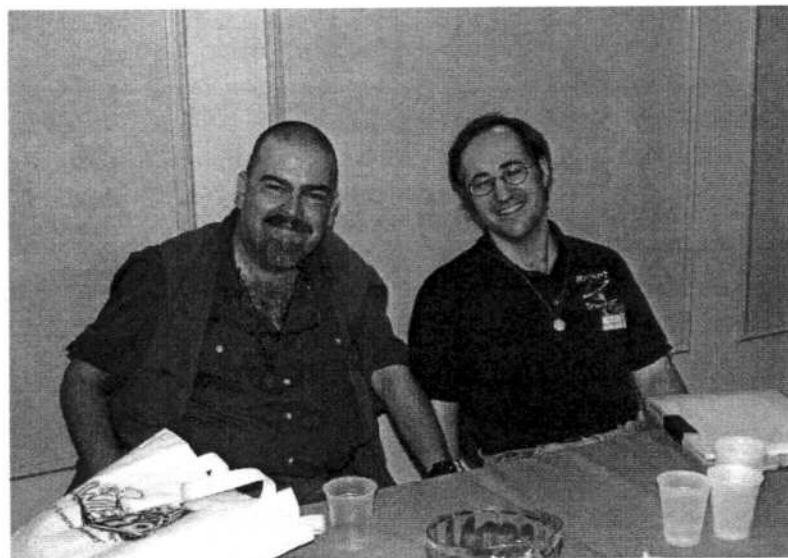
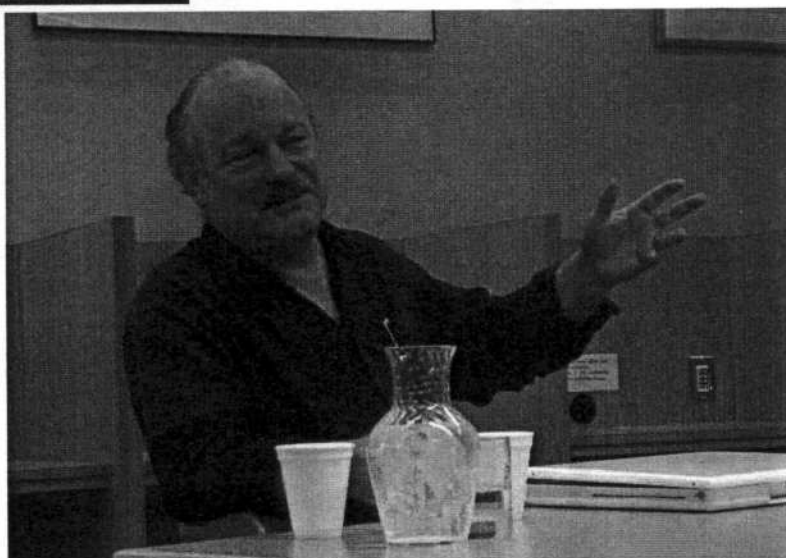
- 1) See [www.boingboing.net/2005/10/05/alternate\\_reality\\_ga.html](http://www.boingboing.net/2005/10/05/alternate_reality_ga.html)
- 2) This means that he thinks the designer cheated. He was right.
- 3) Austin is home to about a quarter of a million bats, which emerge from under a bridge at sunset. It is apparently a spectacular sight.

# 2005: A Pictorial Look at a Year



*Left: September 8, 2005 - Alison Baird answers questions from her audience during her reading and book launch for The Archons Of The Stars*

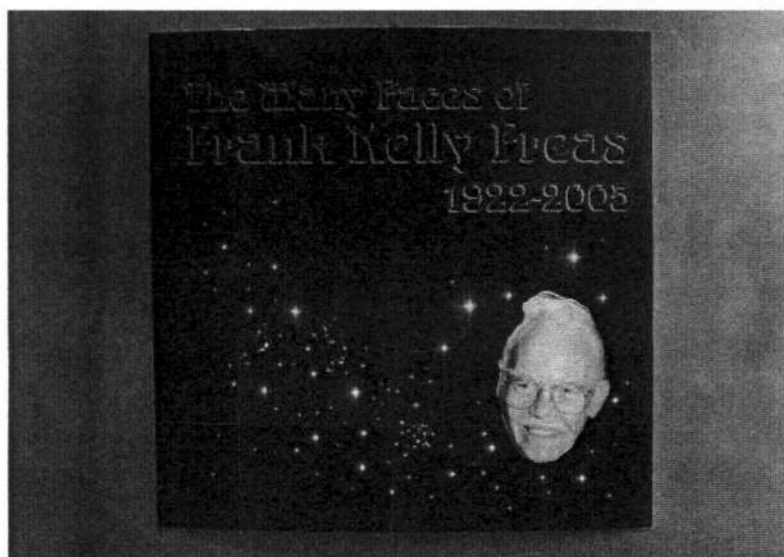
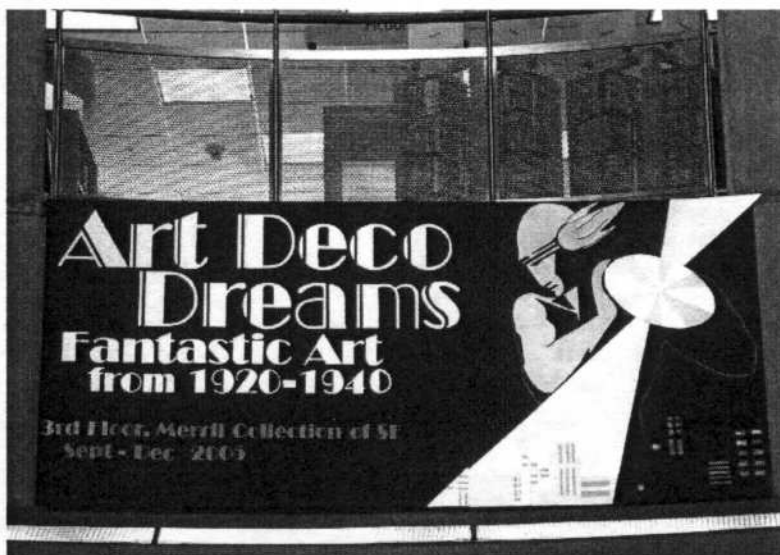
*Right: July 14, 2005 - Joe Haldeman tells all during his reading at the Merril. He entertained his fans with a reading from his latest novel, Old Twentieth*



*Left: July 16, 2005 (Stardate - 318538.12) Long time Merril volunteers Andrew Specht (left) and Donald Simmons run the first ever panel about the Collection at Toronto Trek*

# in the Life of the Merrill Collection

*Right: September to December 2005  
Kim Hull and Annette Mocek create a  
beautiful display celebrating sf art done  
in the Art Deco style*



*Left: Following the death of Frank Kelly Freas, Kim Hull and Annette Mocek prepare a memorial display of some of his finest covers. (For more on Frank Kelly Freas and his connection to the Merrill, please see the May 2005 issue.)*

*Right: April 30, 2005 - Vice Chair Jamie Fraser does a booming business at the ninth annual Fantastic Pulp Show & Sale*



All photos by Andrew Specht

# Bring Your Dead to the Merril Just in Time for Halloween!



*The first annual Science Fiction Swap Meet coincided with the tenth anniversary celebrations for the Lillian H. Smith Branch, which included refreshments and a Chinese Lion Dance for visitors to the library. Photo by Andrew Specht*

By Richard Price

The "Bring Out Your Dead" SF Swap Meet provided an opportunity for the community to trade or sell their unwanted books and memorabilia. Fans brought out their dead to the late October event: their sf puzzles, board games and figurines, their dog-eared books, framed artwork, DVDs and videos. Some vendors offered rare goods, like bound galleys of popular fantasy novels and musty pulp magazines, while others tried to unload collections of RPG novels that could no longer justify the space they hogged on their collectors' shelves.

Donald Simmons, a board member of the Friends of the Merril Collection, organized the swap meet. He said he hopes the meet becomes an annual event.

"It's something for sf fans - so that people can come out and have fun," he said. The original vision of the swap meet was a sf-themed flea market where fans could trade their basement collections for something better, and meet like-minded people.

Simmons repeated the joke of the day: "If you can't go home with less stuff, hopefully you can go home with other people's stuff."

More than a dozen vendors turned out garage-loads of Golden Age gems and Bronze Age junk.

Fantasy writer Don Bassingthwaite rented a table to sell some of the surplus of his collection.

"I've got too much stuff," he said, explaining that the odds and ends he brought to the swap meet were piling up on boxes, shelves and in the corners of his home. It was time for them to go.

The swap meet brought out fans and collectors, and it also brought out representatives of two conventions. Ad Astra and Gaylaxicon both rented tables to raise funds and awareness for their events.

Janet Jones and Paul Salivar represented Ad Astra at the swap meet. They were able to generate publicity with a new group of sf fans who had never heard of Ad Astra and to sell a few items to raise money for the convention.

Gaylaxicon, a travelling, gay-centric sf convention, is being held in Toronto for the first time this year. Representative Stephanie Clarkson said Gaylaxicon chose to attend Bring Out Your Dead to "let people know we exist."

Lance Sibley, chair of Gaylaxicon, said he was happy to attend the swap meet because it provides a good way to

# The First Ten Years of The Fantastic Pulp Show & Sale

*By Jamie Fraser*

It's now been almost eleven years since several local Pulp Magazine collectors got together with the idea of creating a show devoted to these wonderful old magazines. A Toronto show that would enlighten people to their quality of content and the importance and influence these magazines had on everyday life and future generations.

Over the course of many meetings and even more phone calls we came up with what we considered a good blueprint for the show, giving the public a wide selection of Pulp, related material, talks or panels about the pulp era, art or slide displays

The main draw of most genre conventions is the Dealers' Room, a big room with a wide selection of material available for sale and/or trade, most of it from professional dealers but also some from fans or collectors selling off some of their stock.

In order to accomplish our goals we needed a venue which could house a Dealers' Room, and with areas for lectures, slide shows and presentations. We were delighted when the Friends agreed to sponsor the show, largely due to the support of then Chair Jody Dix. The Merrill Collection was the perfect location and had been our desired venue all along.

Most of us had already been to Pulpcon, a long running American convention devoted to the pulp magazines. Don Hutchison had been attending for decades and was known and respected by everyone there. Here we found several highly regarded dealers and various pulp authorities who wanted to attend our show, some of whom sat on Pulp related panels.

Our first show went off quite well and we quickly began planning the second. It too was a success, as were all the shows since. Most of our American friends kept attending, some for 2-3 years; others have come back every year, except during the SARS scare.

We've made some changes as the show evolved into what is today. For the first few shows we had a TV and VCR set up to play old movie serials, usually ones based on characters from the Pulp. It was fun for us but never really caught on with the public, so we stopped doing it.

Another change made was cancelling our auction of Pulp and related materials. Although there were often some great buys, to be had this part of the show wasn't as well received as we'd hoped. But one auction did involve an intense bidding war between two dealers for an advance copy of a important new publication on the Pulp.

Over the last nine years we've been able to offer some more unusual materials in the Dealers' Room, including vintage movies on DVD, old radio shows on CD, and a greater variety of Pulp fiction reprint material. As well, the Merrill Collection started giving scheduled tours of its stacks and also created a different Pulp Art display for each show.

It's been the always-good turnout and warm embrace of the show by the public that has allowed us to continue putting on the Pulp Show. Without their continued support and financial contributions to the dealers we wouldn't

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nizable names in the movie - Oscar nominees Stuart Whitman and Janet Leigh, DeForest Kelly - but they wander around in '70s polyester leisure suits looking confused at lines such as "Attention, there's a horde of killer rabbits heading this way," delivered by a deputy at a drive-in. And polyester is important in this movie. A reviewer for the online Movie Magazine International described it best: "Because *Night of the Lepus* came out in 1972, the clothes are really ugly. It's great to see these craggy-faced actors, pushing fifty, in shaggy haircuts, sideburns and Steve Austin leisure suits. There's so much polyester in this movie, you expect static electricity to arc between the actors as they move around each other."

And, of course, the "big budget" movies have riveting special effects. Teeny-budget movies that want to emulate the big boys, therefore, also need special effects. But aren't effects expensive? Not to the inventive low-budget director. At one point in *Night of the Lepus* the rabbits start a cattle stampede. Enter the ubiquitous "stock footage:" cheap to buy, easy to splice in. Unfortunately, you can't always get exactly what you want, so *Night of the Lepus* uses footage from two different Westerns, and ends up with charging heifers in one shot and steers in another. And for shots of rabbits actually attacking people and livestock? You guessed it - guys in Easter Bunny outfits. The spirit of Ed Wood lives on!

The rabbits growl like grizzly bears. The sound guys add thunderous footfalls to shots of the bunnies rampaging through town. A helicopter takes off and lands (because every 1970s movie that didn't have a car chase had to have shots of a helicopter taking off and landing). It's all to no avail. When all is said and done, townsfolk fleeing in panic from rabbits just doesn't cut the mustard. However, an enduring image from *Night of the Lepus* has stayed in my head for years: a long shot of a giant rabbit silhouetted against the sky on the top of a hill. Unfortunately, I don't recall it in the same sense as, for example, the final scene from *Frogs* - the tension as the remote cabin in the swamp is slowly being encircled and crept upon by a mass of lizards, snakes and other creepy-crawlies - instead, my recollection is: What a cute bunny.

*Night of the Lepus* was, apparently, "Based on the novel *The Year of the Angry Rabbit* by Russell Braddon." Now that's scary.

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*The Swap Meet itself was a new experience for the Merrill and its vendors. At every table there was a new surprise awaiting visitors.*  
Photo by Andrew Specht

publicize the convention to new people, and to show support for the Merrill Collection.

"The Merrill has a lot of stuff that's older," said Sibley. "If I'm looking to read something, I know there's a good chance I'll find it here. Especially the classics."

Bookseller Jamie Fraser, vice chair of the Friends of the Merrill Collection, brought enough books to fill two tables. He said the swap meet fits well with the spirit of the Merrill Collection.

"We have to promote the Merrill Collection by broadening the outreach to the public," he said. "This kind of event helps us meet new groups of people we don't always see."

The swap meet coincided with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Lillian H. Smith Branch of the Toronto Public Library, where the Merrill Collection is housed.

# Volunteer for the Merril: Do Cool Stuff!

By Sabrina Fried

I hope you are enjoying the latest issue of *Sol Rising*. I truly enjoy assembling each one. I only wish I could do more of them. But I don't want this article to make it sound like I am the only person responsible for getting *Sol Rising* out to the Friends and well-wishers of the Merril. Because believe me, there's absolutely no way I could put this together by myself. This particular issue took over ten people to create. The pictures and articles were provided by six people, including our newest contributors, Robert Price and Arlene Morlidge. I provide the initial editing, and then assemble everything into a layout. My proof pages then go to two proofreaders, and after I have finished incorporating their revisions into the file, a small team of staff at our printer's prints, folds and staples every single copy. Last, but not least, the Collection's page stuffs the envelopes for those of you who couldn't join us at the Christmas Cream Tea this year.

Aside from the printing staff and the Collection's page, everyone who contributed to this issue of *Sol Rising* did so as volunteers. Many of the events we hold throughout the year are planned and run by volunteers. That's what the Friends of the Merril is for - to support the Collection in any way we can. We're a ragtag team of people with hearts of gold and a diverse set of skills. We're always looking for a few good fen to join our ranks.

If you have a skill, want to learn a skill, or are just really eager to do something to help the Merril, we'll find something for you to do. Our most visible volunteers are those who help us run events like the Pulp show and sale, or run the Merril booth at shows such as Word on the Street, and of course those who write articles for *Sol Rising*, but these are not the only ways you can support the Collection. We're also actively looking for volunteers to help us plan and organize upcoming events, help with the day-to-day running of the Friends, and help promote the Friends and the Collection in the mainstream press.

Volunteering for the Merril is a wonderful way to enrich your experiences in fandom and promote sf to the larger community. You can explore entire fields of expertise while taking part in something you already enjoy and make a real difference for the Collection. Believe me, they truly appreciate our support. So if you know how you would like to help out, drop us a line. If you're not sure, but you want to do *something*, drop us a line too and we'll talk.

Oh, and by the way, if you really enjoy *Sol Rising*, or even if you don't because that article you've always wanted to see in it hasn't shown up yet, then by all means write it and send it in. The more articles I receive, the more issues of *Sol Rising* I publish, and we really need more than two issues a year, doncha think?

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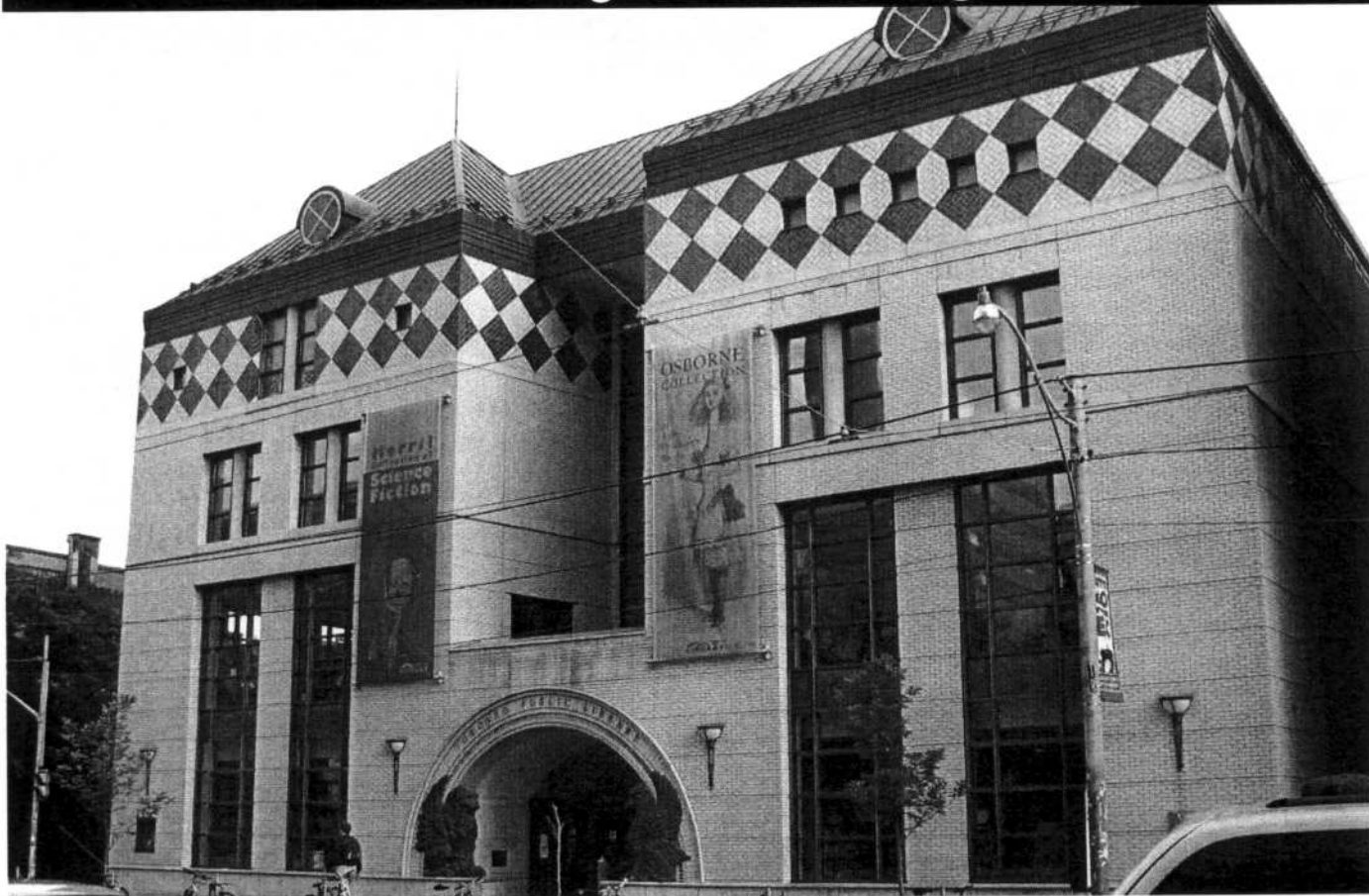
- continued from page 9

have enjoyed nine successful shows, with our tenth set for Saturday April 29, 2006.

Someone asked me recently what my favorite memories of the past nine Pulp Shows were. There were so many special moments it took me a while to narrow it down to a few. The first few shows were my favorites, the first show because we could see what our joint efforts had created. The second and third shows because of the great panels Don hosted, and the always interesting slide shows of Pulp cover art which Robert Lesser presided over. Bob is one of the world's leading collectors and authorities of the subject and his enthusiasm for Pulp artwork is infectious.

The Fantastic Pulp Show & Sale is one of the most popular events held at The Merril Collection, both with our members and the general public. If you have not yet had the pleasure of attending, then I suggest you make a point of coming out to our tenth anniversary show this coming April 29th.

## 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 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 community.

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

By completing the donation/membership 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 2005/06 membership fee as indicated (memberships run from May 2005 to May 2006):

- ☐ **Individual** \$35.<sup>00</sup> per year
- ☐ **Student** (under 18) \$20.<sup>00</sup> per year
- ☐ **Institution** \$42.<sup>00</sup> per year

This is a:

- ☐ Membership renewal
- ☐ New membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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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 my contribution will go towards funding the Friends' activities.  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_