

Chronicle, Guide, Catalyst:

Archive-Lensing of Fan Franchise Histories

Abstract

Our topic concerns the use of archives of fan knowledge for pop culture franchises. These archives encourage fans to write for, read about and return to franchises of fannish attachment. Our argument revolves around these archives serving as important historical repositories of knowledge, created and curated by passionate fans, fleshed out with significant detail and, in some cases, maintained long after the franchise has finished releasing new entries. The archive – both historically and in the contemporary form of the fan wiki – serves an important function as a motivation for action, both in terms of creating further fan knowledge and nostalgically returning to knowledge that has already been historicised. While the phenomenon is felt keenly by those engaging with wiki culture at the time of a franchise release, it can also elicit engagement from newer fans who approach archives long after those series have ended. Fan archives serve as important narrative and cultural history touchstones.

Our article investigates *Star Trek's* wiki, Memory Alpha, the *Battlestar Galactica* wiki, and the *Xena: Warrior Princess* AUSXIP archive, as respective examples of current and historical archives. Collectively, they articulate the concept of *archive-lensing*, whereby three distinct modes of fan franchise archive engagement can be seen: the archive as *chronicle*, providing new information, the archive as *guide*, orienting new and old fans to franchise content, and the archive as *catalyst*, stoking a return – nostalgic or otherwise – to a franchise that has been dormant.

Keywords

Fan archives, film and television studies, historiography, wikis

1. Introduction

[1.1] This paper discusses the use of wikis as archives of fan knowledge that prompt certain fans towards particular fannish activities – those of writing for, reading about, and returning to franchises of fannish attachment. These practices provide avenues for fan engagement in prosocial and creative immaterial labour, while also embedding a franchise within the Internet as an easily-accessible database for consumption, replication and return. This article's primary focus is on wikis, though we also consider the genealogical precedent of pre-wiki fan-made databases designed for franchises in the early days of the public internet. Our conceptualisation of the fan franchise archive (FFA) discusses both historical and contemporary examples: that is, FFAs for franchises that are, respectively, either dormant through not featuring new franchise texts that elicit continued updating of information, or still being updated as new franchise texts are released. Our analysis discusses three television-centric properties (*Star Trek*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Xena: Warrior Princess*) and their FFAs, though much of our discussion equally applies to analyses of archives (both run and not run by fans) centred around music, film, video games and more, particularly as further research on these kinds of archives continues (see for example McKee 2010, Baker 2015, and Swalwell *et al.* 2016).

[1.2] Wikis are crucial as living online documents of a franchise, particularly those involving extensive narrative histories and production details. Long-running franchises like *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek*, both encapsulating in excess of fifty years' worth of content, benefit greatly from their wikis – TARDIS Data Core and Memory Alpha, respectively – having frequent upkeep from fans to maintain coherency on multiple levels. Invested fans can be reminded of significant plot details or character turns, while – less frequently – casual viewers can learn more about those details outside of watching, reading or playing an entry in the franchise. In certain cases, in addition to production facts referenced with evidential sources, wikis also involve predictive information about upcoming franchise entries, based on rumours and fan conjecture. The ability to view edit histories of many of these wikis also enables a dredging of cultural memory, where observers can witness how information was presented by FFA writers at a certain point in time.

[1.3] Today's fan wikis are genealogically drawn from fan-made websites and databases that predate the digital turn of the 21st Century. These are sites made and managed almost entirely

by fans, with little uniformity between them. Such fan sites could document (and archive) news items, cast interviews, fanfiction and fan-made artwork, production rumours, and release information, such as publication dates for novels or broadcast dates for television episodes. Though the sites are largely edited and moderated by fans, many are built on industrial and commercial infrastructures, particularly that of Fandom.com (formerly Wikia), the wiki hosting service co-created by original Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales. While some of these sites have evolved to contemporarily suit the fan environment of the 2020s – particularly in the areas of fanfiction and artwork – others have either discontinued or shut down permanently. In this latter case, as one of our examples from the Xena fandom will show, the sites that are stopped, but not shut down, offer interesting historiographic snapshots of early digital fandom, while also signposting one of the modern fan wiki's most important functions – that of temporal and spatial archival. The archiving functionality of fan wikis is the key component of this paper's study.

[1.4] First and foremost, a fan wiki is a database of information. Each franchise that has a fan-made wiki is a compendium of the franchise's lore, history, mythology and, in some cases, production. There are a variety of motivations for why fans in particular find wikis appealing as editable objects. A TV series wiki, such as that of *Battlestar Galactica*, includes elements such as episode recaps, production details, and pages for individual characters, events and objects from the fiction of the series. Many wikis, even those on commercial platforms like Fandom.com, are concerned with the free and open spread of information by a variety of users: Fandom.com notes this in their Community Creation Policy as concerning "large communities who want to work together [and] small groups who want to share their passions with the world" (n.d.). When maintained studiously, fan wikis can offer a complete paratextual picture of any given franchise by displaying the depth and breadth of information inherent to that franchise, and the application to that franchise that fans resultantly demonstrate. As the most avid consumers of these franchises, fans are uniquely placed to extensively and voluntarily document every facet of a franchise, given that '[f]andom's know-how can involve detailed awareness of production contexts as well as expansive knowledge of the narrative universe or hyperdiegesis', and that 'such fan knowledge of overarching storyworlds operates as part of the epistemological economy surrounding cult TV,' (Hills 2015, 361). Such engagement with these archives defines part of what Dennis Jansen terms 'archontic fandom', an enthusiasm with 'gathering, archiving and studying 'information' for any given fandom or franchise (2018, 2).

[1.5] A fan wiki can be seen as facilitating two core functions of informational archiving, that of longevity and complexity (Comerford 2018, 288-289). Depending on the franchise, a wiki can be

a detailed list of information across a large range of franchise entries, an in-depth articulation of a smaller number of complex texts, or a combination of the two that provides meticulous details within a long list of entries. Wikis serve 'as both archives of a fictional universe's content and guides for fans who could not hope to command vast amounts of information' (Hunter 2011, 43), while also presenting a digital narrative of the franchise's history, and its history specifically through archiving (Booth 2009, 334). A wiki acts as both compendium and history book, logging the franchise's contents whilst providing a historiographic roadmap of those contents' logging. Arguably, they represent what Abigail De Kosnik terms a 'universal' digital archive, one where materials are comprehensively collected and made 'equally accessible to the public' (2016, 75), though De Kosnik does not deem fan wikis as archives themselves given that they 'mostly offer factual information and commentary about cultural texts, and not the texts themselves' (2016, 76). We would posit that these wikis, as FFAs with both the information about their franchises and the contents of user inputs such as edit histories and comments, do constitute archives of cultural memory, both as encyclopedias of important cultural texts and as representations of fan input over time.

[1.6] In many ways, the FFA becomes an archive of the community, as much as the franchise that brought the community together. From the second you begin writing or editing an entry, or uploading a file, you are contributing to the archive. The franchise archive becomes, by way of practice, a community archive. With the Xena fan site AUSXIP (discussed in depth later in this article), there is a single web master (Mary D) responsible for the curation of the archived content, however the community acts as contributors by providing the content to be archived. Wikis, on the other hand, often have multiple moderators responsible for the archiving of content. You can look at edit histories of a wiki site, for example, and track the individual contributions of each archivist, how entries have evolved and who authored which section. Andrew Flinn, a scholar in community-led archives and memory discusses how defining and establishing a common understanding of terms like "archive" and "community" is important but also quite difficult. He states that "definitions of what a community might be, or what a community archive is and what it might be taken to include are not necessarily clear or fixed" (2007, 152). Flinn has chosen to use an inclusive and broad approach, noting that some definitions refer to "geography, culture, or common interest" [or more broadly] "a community as a group who define themselves on the basis of locality, culture, faith, background, or other shared identity or interest (2007, 153). In the case of FFAs, the community shares one key identifier in common - the franchise'. Flinn notes that many of these community archival

projects, like FFAs take place on the web by a virtual community in a virtual space, and that “some of the digital material created by these virtual projects might be artificial or ephemeral, but nonetheless it represents an important further source of material whose long-term preservation requirements need to be explored (2007, 153). This echoes Jansen’s thoughts on the archive in fan studies, as, “both a physical place and a metaphorical entity at the same time; it is “a place of storage” where documents are stored and subjected to categorization by authoritative agents” (2020, 1.3)

[1.7] FFAs, as emblemized through the modern wiki, revolve around engagement. This does not just entail the creation of new knowledge for franchises – for instance, updating an episode’s recap page once the episode has aired – but in fundamentally reconfiguring some fans’ engagement with the franchise itself. As a paratext constructed by fans, for fans, wikis ‘stand to recalibrate the text’s interpretive trajectory’ for those fans (Gray 2010, 162) as a result of respective calls-to-action for those wikis, and how those wikis encourage further engagement with their respective franchises. To categorise this notion, we have developed the term *archive-lensing* as a catch-all to describe consumption habits that intersect with fan wikis and other FFAs, diffracting into multiple forms of engagement. We have roughly collated FFAs into three categories for this analysis through the process of archive-lensing, involving three distinct forms of fan engagement:

- **Chronicle** – the archive features extensive knowledge creation from fan input, particularly if the franchise is still ongoing with new entries contemporaneously. This can be seen on levels of depth, breadth or of both, but a key appeal for these kinds of archives is the creative component arising from chronicling new information (*new* in this case being information not already contained in the archive).
- **Guide** – the archive’s knowledge, particularly for the more extensive-written fan wikis, is compendious in its depth and complexity of information that it is used as a touchstone for fans approaching the franchise. While this is obviously a feature of archives that fit the Chronicle framework above, a facet for archives in franchises that are dormant or completed is that they can promote engagement with fans who are newer to the franchise than those who consumed it during its original release. This is also where FFAs can be more easily seen as capturing specific moments of time and instances of information.

- **Catalyst** – the archive reinvigorates existing fans to return to the franchise, particularly if that franchise ended a long time ago. This can also occur in more modern wikis – someone updating the latest episode recap may link to a prior episode in their writing, and be encouraged to re-watch it afterwards – but older archives, particularly those existing prior to the mainstream ensconcing of wikis in fan documenting practices, are adept at triggering these nostalgic returns, not just through featuring older franchises, but through presenting older content made by and for fans, such as commentary, artwork and fanfiction.

[1.8] To demonstrate these processes of archive-lensing, we analyse three case studies: the *Star Trek* fan wiki, Memory Alpha, the *Battlestar Galactica* fan wiki, *Battlestar Wiki*, and one of the early *Xena: Warrior Princess* FFAs, AUSXIP. While we analyse our case studies in terms of each individual category, many FFAs – including our case studies – encompass multiple or all three of these archive-lensing categories, with the categories rarely being mutually exclusive to one another. The American mystery TV series *Lost*'s own wiki, *Lostpedia*, is both a lengthy and deeply-detailed archive, which demonstrates all three archive-lensing categories in action: the series was broadcast from 2004-2010, vigorously *chronicled* by fans who detailed the series' labyrinthine mysteries as they were unspooled in each episode, providing a *guide* to orient fans newly coming to the series, or for long-time viewers needing to be reminded of certain plot turns and characters. Now more than 10 years since the airing of *Lost*'s finale, a revisit of *Lostpedia*, still containing the depth of fan knowledge inscribed during and after the show's broadcast, can provide a *catalyst* for fans to go back and start the mystery all over again on Netflix. *Lostpedia* also serves archive-lensing well, given it encouraged fans to visit and edit the site more actively than many other FFAs, due to the Alternate Reality Game *The Lost Experience* that ran during the series' initial broadcast, and was integrated with *Lostpedia* itself (see Mittell 2009). We discuss our case studies as emblematic of one archive-lensing tenet each, and historically work backwards to demonstrate each function, starting with the more contemporary – and still-updated – of the three.

2. Chronicle: creating new knowledge for *Star Trek*

[2.1] As the database of *Star Trek*'s narrative and production history, Memory Alpha encompasses a vast slew of information across many of the franchise's entries, including details from seven live-action and two animated series (containing, at time of writing, a combined thirty-five seasons across nearly eight hundred episodes), thirteen films, and a variety of transmedia properties, including novels, video games and comic books[i], as well as many in-development projects and upcoming seasons. The depth of Memory Alpha's knowledge eclipses franchise owner CBS's proprietary database on StarTrek.com, making it the premier destination for information on almost any *Star Trek* entry.

[2.2] Memory Alpha demonstrates chronicling in large part due to its currency and proliferation of franchise entries. In 2020, three *Star Trek* series – the live-action *Discovery* and *Picard*, and the animated *Lower Decks* – aired new episodes, necessitating active engagement with the wiki for fans to keep its pages updated. The site's users document almost every narrative and production element of the franchise with meticulous detail. To take the example of the *Star Trek: Picard* season 1 finale, *Et In Arcadia Ego Part 2*, the episode's page has a recap of the plot – totalling almost four-and-a-half thousand words alone – a series of key quotes and continuity references, production information, and links to over one hundred and fifty wiki reference pages for characters, starships, plot objects, locations and other events. These ancillary links include pages developed solely for content from the episode: for *Et In Arcadia Ego Part 2*, this includes a page for the “khalagu”, a Romulan demon mentioned briefly and only in this episode, with the page itself containing two lines of text and eleven hyperlinks to other wiki pages. Macro and micro detail is maintained across the site.

[2.3] Going beyond keeping each page updated, the wiki also serves as a reference point for industry, especially for those in charge of making new franchise entries. In the lead-up to the release of J.J. Abrams' 2009 *Star Trek* film, Abrams himself conducted an interview on Memory Alpha based on questions submitted by users of the wiki, ostensibly using Memory Alpha as a mediating point between industry and the *Star Trek* fandom by positioning Abrams as a fellow fan (see Hadas 2017, 65). Moreover, the production of the 2016 film *Star Trek Beyond* utilized the site to narrativize part of the film, with writers Simon Pegg and Doug Jung soliciting Memory Alpha users to name an object and provide its backstory to be used in the film (see Lesnick

2016 and Comerford 2018, 286-287). As a fan-run enterprise linked on occasion with industry, Memory Alpha provides examples of discussion for the potential exploitation of fan labour, the authorship of fan-made resources, and the ways users can be recognized as participants in their franchises. As an example, the fan wiki can usurp the showrunner bible as a key reference point for a series, especially given the rarity with which bibles are updated following the initial sale of a series to the network (see Espenson 2008). Industry then have access to living documents of their franchises that can exist thanks to fans, without needing to expend capital to make it themselves: while not every industry stakeholder may care about the continuity and nuances of their franchises, there is surely a benefit for utilising “fan wikis [that] are demonstrably just as, if not more, informationally rich” than what showrunners or producers could create (Comerford 2018, 291). This raises a host of ethical and legal questions around the precarity of fan labor, almost all of which is unpaid and unrecognised, and the ability of industry practitioners to use resources fashioned by fans for their franchises. These questions are also compounded by many of these wikis being hosted on a commercial platform like Fandom.com, which could already potentially harness the voluntary practices of fans for commercial gain. We do not focus as much on these topics here, as they have been discussed at length elsewhere in relation to other fan sites (see examples such as Noppe 2011, Hunter 2011, Chin 2014, Turk 2014, Bruns 2016, and Comerford 2018.)

[2.4] Fandom is often conceived as a gifting economy, with many fans altruistically creating material and offering their labour as a display of their affinity for objects of fannish attraction (Hellekson 2009). For some fans, it may be as simple as showing that affinity in a tangible manner by helping to catalogue the inner workings of their favourite franchises, which then has historical value for those fans making sense of the “current” narrative history (ie. the latest episodes) and those interested in plumbing the depths of the franchise’s history. Given how many references are made to other episodes, characters and events in *Et In Arcadia Ego Part 2*, some of which go as far back as the original *Star Trek*’s second season in 1968, expansion of the wiki can help just to keep the continuity straight in the minds of fan both new and old. As fan archive contributors ourselves, we have certainly been motivated by these factors of tangible affinity and continuity documentation.

[2.5] Similarly, there is the process Paul Booth terms *narractivity*, defining it as ‘the process by which communal interactive action constructs and develops a coherent narrative database’ (2009b, 373). By documenting extensive narrative histories of these franchises, fans act as storytellers for other fans coming to the wiki, enabling either re-construction of the narrative –

through episode recaps – or deconstruction – through spoilers. The wiki space is also conceived as communal and reliant on active participation, pooling fans' collective intelligence to represent the franchise in granular detail. Booth (2009b) argues that fans reconstitute the existing narratives of these franchises through the ways they are written, with the wiki offering an audience interpretation of what they have seen on-screen. In this manner, the wiki offers an impression of how franchises have been understood by their fans: in a similar vein, Jonathan Gray offers that fan-made paratexts, which would include fan wikis, 'are pre-constituted audience research, providing evidence of how viewers make sense of texts' (2010, 146). While *Star Trek* is an ongoing franchise, offering a continuously-reconfiguring impression of how the franchise is understood and chronicled with each new entry that is released, this principle is intriguing to analyse from the perspective of the opposite – a franchise that has largely ended, and is thus more of a lasting historiographic impression of fannish understanding, rather than a palimpsest.

3. Guide: engaging new fans in *Battlestar Galactica*

[3.1] FFAs can be viewed as historiographic snapshots, capturing specific moments of time and instances of information. Wikis represent the collaborative expressions of fannish communities of practice, enabling fans to extend the hyperdiegetic storyworld of the show by collecting and archiving paratextual information including interviews, articles and images and participate in its expansion through fan created artefacts. As with other forms of transmedial engagement, fan archives and wikis demonstrate how audiences experience a storyworld and then actively participate within it (Krikowa 2018, 52). Wikis remain repositories for shows that have ended, but are still in reruns, therefore continually gaining new audiences after production has ended. There have been many *Battlestar Galactica* (BSG) wikis created over the years since the 2003 re-imagination, including Galactica.tv[iii], Galactica.fandom and Battlestarwiki.org. Battlestarwiki acts primarily as an encyclopedia of the entire Battlestar Galactica transmedial franchise, which includes the original single seasons of *Battlestar Galactica* (1978) and *Galactica* (1980), the re-imagined series and its related webisodes (2003-2009), the spin-off *Caprica* (2010), and the web series *Blood and Chrome* (2012). The site includes over 4,900 pages of content and is the largest fan-built BSG information repository on the Internet. It gives other fans an encyclopedia

and episode guide, as well as an exhaustive list of paratextual material including books, comics, magazines, interviews, and podcasts recorded during the re-imagined series. Although the wiki itself is not regularly updated, the moderation team engage with the fandom on social media accounts which are updated daily with original and shared content related to *BSG*. They integrated social media networking on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube^[iii]. The Facebook Fan Group no longer exists, but suggests that in the past, wiki members wanted to use the platform as another social space to meet and discuss all things *BSG*. However, with a new *Battlestar Galactica* series in the pipeline for NBC's Peacock streaming service, the Battlestarwiki could continue to operate as a guide for new fans. If the proposed new series goes ahead, there may be a new wave of *BSG* fans (just as there were with the re-imagined series in 2003), many of whom will take to the internet in search of historical information about the franchise.

[3.2] FFAs like Battlestarwiki serve as 'repositories of knowledge for the fandom and are circulated as gifts among fans and within fan communities' (Chin 2014, 1.2). Fandom's gift economy assigns special value to gifts produced by fans for other fans, or what Hellekson calls 'gifts of time and skill' (2009, 115). With over 4,900 pages of content, Battlestarwiki is an enormous feat of collective fan labour. Its value is not just in the wiki's content or the fact that it is provided to other fans for free, but value is also placed in the labour that went into the creation of the website itself (Turk 2014, 2.1). Fan labour is not just the production of artefacts (art objects such as videos and fanfic), but much of what is produced by fans is information (discussion, resources, metadata), one example of which is the updating of wikis (Turk 2014, 2.3) like Battlestarwiki. Ryan Milner (2009) argues that fans derive as much pleasure from building web sites as they do from writing fan fiction or creating fan fiction or fan videos and Tiziana Terranova further argues that free labour is not always exploited labour because compensation is often "willingly conceded in exchange for the pleasures of communication and exchange" (2000, 48). Fans contribute to wikis to share their passion for their franchises, knowing that they are providing a service to other fans, especially new fans, whose passion for the same show is likely only beginning. From the perspective of archive-lensing, FFAs like Battlestarwiki act as a guide for fans looking to engage with historical franchise information. The archive's knowledge, particularly for the more extensive-written fan wikis, is compendious in its depth and complexity of information that it is used as a touchstone for fans approaching the franchise. While this is obviously a feature of archives that fit the Chronicle framework above, a facet for FFAs in franchises that are dormant or completed is that they can promote

engagement with fans who are newer to the franchise than those who consumed it during its original release.

[3.3] Battlestarwiki expects that it will receive many new fans entering the site to learn more about the franchise. It provides several functions for new fans to seek answers to their questions. The 'FAQ' lists common answers to questions about the website's navigation, content and functionality. The 'Quorum' acts as a forum for fans to ask questions and receive answers from fan volunteers. The 'reference desk' serves the same functions as a library information desk and centres around questions relating to the storylines in the re-imagined series. The 'Help' provides new users with a tutorial on how to operate the wiki. While the website does refer to itself as a wiki, it also uses the terms encyclopedia and archive, as it both chronicles the franchise and archives its own development[iv].

[3.4] Although the reimagined *BSG* ended over ten years ago, the show and its fandom remain trapped in a "virtual amber" via FFAs like Battlestarwiki. These kinds of FFAs for dormant franchises continue to act as a compendium or repository of knowledge, connecting fans to a living cultural memory. While there may be generalised experiences of franchise memory that fans will share when returning to a dormant wiki - fond memories of particular episodes or characters, for example - such experiences are not always uniform, and will offer specific resonance for fans depending on how they originally experienced the franchise, how they approach the franchise on cultural and social levels then and now, and the real world context that surrounds the franchise. The sites exist as "historical typographies" where fans and the fandom are trapped in the translucent amber of history (Elsaesser 2019). This would be especially true for fans who visit Battlestarwiki in coming from certain temporospatial viewing perspectives: a fan who watched *BSG* during its initial transmission will obviously experience a different personal resonance than someone who watched it years later. This also extends into the cultural memory of the time beyond the experience of watching the show itself. *BSG* was first transmitted only a few years after the 9/11 terror attacks, with many of the sociopolitical themes of the aftermath of the attacks - especially the fears of terror suspects hiding in plain sight and extreme measures taken by the state in the name of security - informing *BSG*'s conception. Many American TV series (*BSG* being one of them) released after 9/11 evoked the recent cultural memory of the attacks and their aftermath, dedicated in part to "[testifying] to the many anxieties that have gripped and grip [the United States]" in the wake of the attacks (Höglund 2014, 12) and explicitly invoking those anxieties through the series' themes and narratives. A fan watching *BSG* at the time of the original transmission, with the attacks still

front-of-mind, may experience yet another layer of resonance when visiting Battlestarwiki that evokes the cultural memory of both the show and its place within the sociopolitical climate of the time. One of the greatest potentials of digital archives is that fans can build their own cultural memory sites and “can be the bearers of the history and memory of a community” (De Kosnik 2016, 138). De Kosnik draws upon Flinn’s earlier work on community histories and archives, which defines community archiving as “the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential” (2007, 153). FFAs are built by fans at a grassroots level with members who share a similar interest and focus. Fan contributions to franchises are now archives in digital culture memory institutions created and maintained by fans. Fan production and archiving practices are “widespread and impactful” and “collective, rather than purely personal” (De Kosnik 2016, 317) and demonstrate how meaning-making practices are not solely the realm of commercial media production.

[3.5] Dormant FFAs like Battlestarwiki become narrative and cultural history touchstones for future generations of fans, acting as guides for existing franchise knowledge. For new fans of shows since ended, they provide portals back in time to when the show was first aired and the social, cultural and political environment surrounding it: a historical snapshot of the climate within which it was produced and consumed. Unfortunately, the ephemerality of web-based content means that many web works including websites and wikis will perish over time. Web hosting costs money, and while some sites obtain small amounts of money through placing ads on their sites to pay for their hosting costs, it still requires someone to commit to that ongoing administration and maintenance. Some fans inevitably move on to new shows and interest in contributing to fan sites and wikis disappear or move to the next project. Even if shows end, hard core fans, however, host their websites as digital archives frozen in time, or continue to follow the producers, directors, actors and crew to their new projects, becoming fans not just of the franchise but those who brought it to life. These sites act as places of nostalgic return – acting as a catalyst for old and new fans alike, to (re)enter the storyworlds of the past.

4. Catalyst: encouraging a nostalgic return in *Xena: Warrior Princess*

[4.1] Prior to the internet, fans of cult shows (like *Star Trek*) interacted through fanzines, physical meetups and conventions, but when the internet made its way into people's homes in the early 1990s, sites like Fidonet and Usenet allowed fans to find one another online and fandom became more as we understand it today. These were also the first text-based fan sites built by the fans themselves using primarily HTML code. A few years later, computers and graphics cards evolved, and text-based interfaces were replaced by graphic interfaces allowing more people to create websites using WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) – a software that allowed content to be created and edited without code that resembles the final output. It was also at this time that free website building tools emerged (such as Angelfire and Geocities) that enabled fans to build websites involving multiple pages and hosting images without technical skills or coding experience. These sites were usually created and updated by individual fans and were not collaborative repositories like we see in today's wikis and other FFAs. Often fans took content, primarily images and artworks, from other sites to populate their own, typically, but not always, crediting the original source.

[4.2] *Xena: Warrior Princess* (*Xena*) first aired in 1995 as a spin-off of the *Hercules: Legendary Journeys* historical fantasy show. It maintained the campy twist but took on a much more serious tone than its predecessor, quickly becoming a cult classic. The show's modern cult appeal can, in part, be attributed to the strength and deep connection found within the *Xena* fandom (affectionally referred to within the fandom as the 'Xenaverse'), which took off in 1996 following the successful first season of the show, leading to the emergence of a handful of fan websites. At that time the main sites were *Whoosh!*, *Tom's Xena Page*, *Logomancy*, *Warrior Princess*, and the *Australian Xena Information Page* (AUSXIP). These sites housed screen captures of episodes, synopses and reviews, fanfiction and artwork, message boards, scans of magazine articles, and other miscellaneous material related to the show. Copyright during this time did not seem to be a concern, and Universal and Renaissance Pictures did not seem to mind these websites uploading this content, as long as a website had some form of legal disclaimer. It was common practice during this period that fans acknowledged the creators of

the show and attributed content to those that created it, with official photos/screen captures attributed to MCA/Universal, and fan fiction/artwork to the individual author/artist.

[4.3] In the past, fan studies scholars have engaged with the theory of the gift economy (Hyde 1999, Hellekson 2009, Booth 2010, Booth 2016), which is often positioned as an alternative approach to seeing fans as ‘textual poachers’, a concept that Henry Jenkins (1992) coined to explain how fans appropriate characters, stories and storyworlds. Jenkins saw this poaching, which often included fans adding their own layers of meaning onto cultural texts like TV shows, films, literature, comics, and games in order to challenge or subvert the studios who owned the copyright. Within the context of the gift economy, fan creations (including fanfiction, art, essays, images, videos and websites) are considered cultural productions in their own right. Copyright during the mid-late-1990s was the same as it is today and MCA/Universal could have, at any time asked for content or entire sites to be taken down, however they did not.

[4.4] There were a few publicly known cases where Universal contacted web masters and asked them to take down a specific photo or file and the web master did so immediately. The studio was within their right to dismantle the fandom’s web creations, but they permitted these sites to spread the word of the show. Arguably this made the fandom stronger and more united, as *Xena* fans from around the world were able to connect online and build the fan base. As Will Brooker notes, "fandom is built around love" (2002, 52). Allowing fans to share their love for the show online in these creative ways provided greater publicity, at no cost to the studio. What resulted from these early years of *Xena* fan websites was an energetic, robust and creative fanbase that is still engaged with the series. Many *Xena* fan sites remain today, some are still active, and some are online but retired (existing purely as archives now)[v]. The Figures below provide examples of *Xena* fan websites that still remain online (as of December 2020) either as ongoing archives still being updated (Figure 1), or as archives that have stopped updating (Figure 2).

Fan website	URL	Note
AUSXIP	https://www.ausxip.com/xena/	

The Hercules and Xena Wiki	https://hercules-xena.fandom.com/wiki/Xena	Migrated to Fandom.com
Whoosh	http://whoosh.org/	
The Royal Academy of Bards	http://www.academyofbards.org/	
The Xenaversity of Minnesota	http://xenaversity.tripod.com/	
Xenaville	http://xenaville.com/	
Loyal to Xena	http://loyaltoxena.com/	A site dedicated to production of the show in New Zealand
Callis Creations	http://calliscreations.com/	

Figure 1: Xena websites still actively updated (as of December 2020)

Fan website	URL	Note
Tom's Xena Page	https://xenafan.com/	Web master also posts new content to Tumblr blog

The Xena Scrolls	http://thexenascrolls.homestead.com/	Website was created in 2001 after the series finale, last updated in 2008
Sword & Staff	http://www.sword-and-staff.com/	
Warrior Princess Nerd	https://warriorprincessnerd.com/	Last updated in 2014
Taiko's Xena and Gabrielle Page	http://xenite.net/	last updated in 2015
The Athenaeum	http://xenafiction.net/styles/athenaeum_deepblue/index_2.cfm	Last updated in 2016

Figure 2: *Xena* websites online, but no longer actively updated (as of December 2020)

[4.5] Through the process of archive-lensing, these sites that remain act as catalysts for new and old fans alike, and for existing fans, encourage a nostalgic return to the show and that period of their lives. Although *Xena* has long since ended, the show and its fandom remain trapped in virtual amber, just like the Battlestarwiki. Fans may have moved on to other shows and become members of other fandoms, but every so often, they return to *Xena*, and to the websites that remain. Some remain in the state in which they were last updated — some still retaining the old Web 1.0 aesthetic (e.g., Whoosh! and The Royal Academy of Bards), whereas others have migrated or been updated to the Web 2.0 design aesthetic used by more contemporary wikis (e.g., AUSXIP and The Hercules and Xena Wiki). As historical repositories

of knowledge, archived sites and wikis serve an important function for preserving fandom as it was, and is, allowing nostalgic fans to return to these memories.

[4.6] Many FFAs act as encyclopedias, providing factual information and commentary, however most wikis include, to varying degrees, fan-created artefacts, which are considered cultural texts in and of themselves. The *Xena* fan sites above include uploads of artefacts (including interviews, scans of magazine clippings, news articles and images), which have been digitised and organised into archived folders. These sites arguably align more closely to De Kosnik's description of alternative digital archives, as they 'serve as central repositories for emerging or degraded genres [...] of art and media forms [...] that have not (yet) been granted significant status by traditional memory institutions' (2016, 87). The *Xena* archive sites make accessible online collections of alternative material, thereby challenging the supremacy and authority of traditional canon (in this case, the show itself). Because they operate outside of what Lisa Lewis calls 'official culture', they operate independently of that culture (1992, cited in De Kosnik 2016, 88) in fan culture. De Kosnik further notes that the 1990s fan archives were mostly custom-built single-fandom databases and individual fans' websites containing links to recommended stories, both of which aimed to save fanfiction stories and to make these stories accessible to later readers (2016, 188). De Kosnik suggests that Web 2.0's social networking and blogging websites like LiveJournal, and later microblogging sites like Tumblr, led to archiving practices that 'combined stories and nonstories (commentaries, debates, reviews, and so on) that mixed fannish and nonfannish content, and that facilitated interactivity and collaborative performance between authors and readers' (2016, 188).

[4.7] The AUSXIP archive site has been running since 1996 and continues to be updated with news about *Xena*'s cast and crew long after the final episode's release in 2001. These older archive sites like AUSXIP, existed prior to the mainstream ensconcing of wikis in fan documentation practices, and trigger nostalgic returns for fans, not just through featuring the historical documentation about *Xena*, but through archiving the history of content made by and for fans, such as commentary, artwork and fanfiction. As *Xena* continues to attract new fans due to reruns on network television throughout the world, AUSXIP also becomes a key point of interest for these new fans to the franchise. AUSXIP's archive provides a one-stop-shop for old and new fans alike to delve as deeply as they wish into the show's lore. These sites are important cultural artefacts that enable enhanced understanding of fans and the franchises for which they give their time and energy. Fans actively contribute to the history of the franchises and by creating and disseminating knowledge about the past they can provide unique

perspectives on the cultural significance of popular franchises, like *Xena*. When production companies move onto new projects, official websites are taken down or minimised. Fan wikis and archives, however, remain online, as gifts from fans to fans.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] This article argues that FFAs serve as archives of fan knowledge that encourage fans to write for, read about and return to franchises of fannish attachment. Focusing on three key websites – Memory Alpha, Battlestarwiki and AUSXIP – these wikis and archive websites serve as important historical repositories of knowledge, created and curated by passionate fans (either solo or in collaborations), continually updated and added to, and maintained long after the franchise has finished releasing new entries (e.g., Battlestar Wiki and AUSXIP). The wiki serves an important function as a motivation for action, both in terms of creating further fan knowledge and nostalgically returning to knowledge that has already been historicised. Engagement with new and old fans can take shape from the angles of *Chronicle*, *Guide* and *Catalyst*, unspooling new information, reorienting existing information, and encouraging a return to information.

[5.2] This article examined archive-lensing within a specific TV show fandom context and as such, its findings are limited to this genre of entertainment and fandom. Future research into other fan contexts (e.g. music, film, games etc.) could broaden the understanding and application of our concept of archive-lensing. By examining other case studies within different genres, we would be able to identify the similarities and possible differences these genres have that may impact how and why fans create, maintain and engage with FFAs. Taking a more ethnographic approach to observing engagement with FFAs could also provide insight into how gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, for example, impact the creation, maintenance and engagement with FFAs. Additionally, examination of how FFAs fill the gaps created by the media industries and how the various industrial power relationships impact the creation and maintenance of FFAs could illuminate how FFAs become archives not just of the fandoms they centre on, but of the communities themselves, their collective intelligence and practices.

[5.3] Through the archive-lensing of these case studies, we argue that FFAs remain important artefacts for fan studies. We argue that the fan-made archive's historical value is both contemporaneous and contemporary, as it represents collaborative expressions of fannish communities of practice while also capturing impressions of them historically. These crucial artefacts enable better understandings of fans, fan production, behaviour and labour, and the franchises for which they give their time and energy. It is hoped that the archive-lensing framework can be used by fan studies scholars to further explore how fans contribute to the production of knowledge and actively engage with history on these sites. Archive-lensing can be used to better understand how fans create, disseminate, share and engage with cultural and historical franchise knowledge, and how this knowledge is used in identity and fandom formation.

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ARCHIVES AND WEBSITES USED:

AUSXIP: <https://www.ausxip.com/xena/>

Battlestar Wiki: https://www.battlestarwiki.org/Main_Page

Memory Alpha: <https://memory-alpha.fandom.com/wiki/Portal:Main>

[i] Memory Alpha does not contain encyclopaedic knowledge of many of these latter transmedia entries: given their dubious canonicity with the films and TV series, in-depth information on the books, games and comics is largely kept on the sister wiki, Memory Beta.

[ii] Galactica.tv has been extensively explored as a BSG fan outlet by Bertha Chin (2014)

[iii] Battlestarwiki has actively-updated accounts on Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/battlestarwiki/>), Instagram

(<https://www.instagram.com/battlestarwiki/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/battlestarwiki>), and

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2V3tO3qmkTOIMgbxNSYqPg>).

[iv] For example, an archived talk page on Battlestarwiki, beginning with explicit instructions from the mod team not to edit or post replies to the archived page:

https://www.battlestarwiki.org/Talk:Main_Page/Archive1#Fan_Fiction.

[v] A list of Xena fan sites can be found here:

<http://www.nutball.com/dissertation/newwindows/BMOverview.html>