



Lambda Sci-Fi DC Area Gaylaxians

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044

(202) 232-3141 - Issue #226 - January 2009

E-MAIL: info@lambdasf.org WEBSITE: <http://www.lambdasf.org/>

Book (et al) Exchange at Jan. 8th LSF Meeting



As promised in last month's newsletter, here's a short reminder about Lambda Sci-Fi's *nineteenth* annual book (et al) exchange, which will occur at the upcoming Jan. 8th meeting! All LSF members — and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. — are invited to participate in this “blind exchange.”

In case you've never participated in one of these before (or in case you've forgotten), here's how it works:

(1) Go out and purchase a copy of your “favorite” science fiction, fantasy, or horror book. (*NOTE:* Over the years, LSF has expanded the concept of “book” to include comics, videotapes, “books on tape,” etc. If you want — or if you're feeling particularly wealthy — you can even make it *several* favorite books or whatever.)

(2) Insert a piece of paper (or a bookmark) with your name on it. (That's so whoever eventually ends up with the item will know who it's from and will get to know a little more about you — at least to know what one of your “favorites” is.)

(3) Wrap up the exchange item, but don't put any identifying marks or anything on the wrapped package to say

(continued on page 2)

New Year's Eve Video Party announced by Peter Knapp



Come celebrate New Year's Eve with Lambda Sci-Fi at Rob and Peter's home in DC. This annual event will give us a chance to both recover from the hectic “holiday” season and to party some more in anticipation of the New Year. Here are the details on how to join in on the fun!

Where: The home of Rob & Peter - 1425 “S” Street NW, Washington, DC 20009. For directions, see:

<http://www.lambdasf.org/lsf/club/PeterRob.html>

When: Wednesday, Dec. 31.

Time: The doors will open at 5:00 PM. The potluck dinner and the videos will begin in the 6:00 – 6:30 PM range. We'll toast in the New Year with champagne, sparkling wine, and/or sparkling cider.

What to Bring: Bring your favorite genre Blu-rays, DVDs, and/or videos (science fiction, fantasy, horror). Attendees will vote on which movies will be shown at the party. (There will be different concurrent “tracks”).

January LSF Meeting

The next LSF meeting will be held on the **Sunday, Jan. 11th**. The meeting will be held at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413), near Dupont Circle. The business meeting will begin (as usual) at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting (including the book/whatever exchange) will begin at 2:00 PM. *Remember: this meeting will include the Annual LSF Book Exchange!*

Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. See you there!

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It's a **potluck meal**, so bring along something scrumptious to eat. Feel free to bring some appetizers (vegies, chips, etc.), a main course item (enough to serve at least 4-5 people), dessert (of course!), and/or *non-alcoholic* drinks (both regular and diet).

For the New Year's toast *only*, it's okay to indulge. So bring some sparkling wine or sparkling cider (or champagne, if you're feeling generous) to toast the New Year. *The hosts request that no one drink alcohol during the party other than at Midnight.*

For more information, call 202-483-6369 or send email to:

PeterKnapp@wavelengthsonline.com

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

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The LSF Book Discussion Group

If *you're* interested in lively discussions of F&SF books (with an emphasis on elements of interest to the LGBT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, we conduct fascinating round-table discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group *generally* meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW -- for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. The next meeting will be held on January 22nd.

Here are the details on the next several discussion meetings:

Jan. 22nd (2009) - *Altered Carbon*, by Richard K. Morgan; moderator: Randy.

Feb. 26th (2009) - *Dead Until Dark*, by Charlaine Harris; moderator: Peter.

March 26th (2009) - *The Family Trade*, by Charles Stross; moderator: Mike P.

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Book (et al) Exchange at Jan. 8th LSF Meeting

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who it's from. (That's to make sure it's a "blind" exchange — *i.e.* no one is supposed to know who it's from at first. And, by the way, all of that leftover Holiday wrapping paper should come in handy here!)

(4) At the meeting, add your wrapped exchange item to the pile with all the others; and you'll be assigned a number. (Only one exchange item — *i.e.* one package — per person, please!)

(5) When your number is called, you pick one of the packages from the pile. (And when you open it up, you'll find out who it's from.) See how easy?

I can hardly wait to see what shows up *this* year!

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LSF Meeting Minutes – December 14th taken by Scott

Business Meeting

The **election of officers for 2009** went quickly. All current officers were elected by acclamation: Teresa (Speaker), Rob (Treasurer), Peter (Membership Coordinator), and Scott (Secretary).

Rob reported that the club has about the \$1700 in its bank account.

Social Meeting

Rob covered the **upcoming LSF events**: (a) New Year's Eve potluck party at Peter and Rob's place (doors open at 5:00PM); (b) next month's LSF meeting (which includes the annual blind book exchange); and (c) the subject of next month's LSF book discussion group (Richard Morgan's *Altered Carbon*). Rob also mentioned that the February book discussion will feature Charlaine Harris's *Dead Until Dark*, which is the basis for HBO's *Tru Blood* series. (Charlaine Harris might make a cameo appearance on *Tru Blood*.)

David promoted **2009 Gaylaxicon in Minneapolis** (Columbus Day weekend).

James passed around an obituary of fannish sci-fi great **Forry Ackerman**.

Upcoming genre movies: *The Spirit*, *Wolverine* (starring Hugh Jackman – pant, pant), and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. Teresa reported that *Punisher: War Zone* is ultra-violent.

Rob raved about the series of 2-to-3 minute **webisodes** at scifi.com that lead up to the January 16th premiere of

the next season of *Battlestar Galactica*. The first webisode has GLBT content. The last (final) episode of *Battlestar Galactica* will be 3 hours long.

Carl passed around a children's picture-book promo for the new *InkHeart* movie, starring Brendan Frasier. It was asked if the *Twilight* books are worth reading; Rob said that he got exhausted reading page after page about teenage girls who are obsessed with sexy teenage boys.

Peter distributed the current issue of *Parsec*, the newsletter of the Pittsburgh sci fi group.

In **TV news**, it was noted that *Pushing Up Daisies* is dead. BBC's *Sarah Jane Adventures* has been commissioned for a new season. The *Doctor Who Christmas Special* will be shown during Christmas in the UK. Could Catherine Tate become the next doctor (one of a zillion guesses being proffered around the globe)? *Torchwood* will be back as a five-part mini-series. The DVD of *Doctor Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* will be released exclusively through Amazon.com on 12/19 and will include commentaries done as musicals.

Alex asked about the sub-genre known as "**mundane science fiction**." (Here is what your Secretary found at Wikipedia: "Mundane Science Fiction is a sub-genre of science fiction. Inspired by an idea of Julian Todd, the Mundane SF movement was founded in 2002 during the Clarion workshop by novelist Geoff Ryman among others. It focuses on stories set on or near the Earth, with a believable use of technology and science as it exists at the time the story is written.") Rob said that there has been a mundane SF anthology.

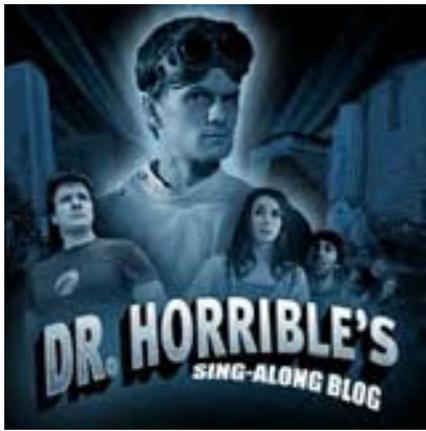
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The more complex a civilization, the more vital to its existence is the maintenance of the flow of information; hence the more vulnerable it becomes to any disturbance in that flow.



Stanislaw Lem,
Memoirs Found in a Bathtub
(1961)

quoted in *Science Fiction Quotations*, edited by Gary Westfahl
(Yale University Press, 2005)



It's official! Now you can own your own DVD copy of *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*! (It's an Amazon.com exclusive.)

Thrill to the musical adventure as Dr. Horrible (Neal Patrick Harris) hatches his nefarious plan to score big-time and gain admission to the Evil League of Evil, while impressing his would-be new girlfriend Penny (Felicia Day)! Only his dashing superhero arch-nemesis, Captain Hammer (Nathan Fillion) stands in his way!

Lots of nifty musical extras on the DVD! (Ye Olde Editor sayeth: "I've already ordered mine!")

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Call for Stories and Artwork



Chroma is the UK's premier queer literary magazine. We pay \$50 per accepted piece. Guidelines on length are available at:

<http://www.chromajournal.co.uk/#/submit/4521483856>

We can accept e-mail submissions from overseas contributors – but please get in touch first and let us know what you'd like to send along!

Issue 11 has the theme "Utopia," and we are looking for great science fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, horror writing, comics, and art. Full information can be found at:

<http://www.chromajournal.co.uk/#/utopiaissue/4530952834>

The deadline is 15 June 2009, so there's lots of time to imagine beautiful machines and fabulous planets...

Thanks,
Sophie Mayer
Guest Editor, "Utopia" issue

Breaking the News to Your Parents



Telling your parents you are a superhero is not an experience people take lightly—whether you are on the giving or the receiving end of this bombshell. There's never a right time or easy way to break the most difficult news they are likely to hear. For this reason, some superheroes choose to keep their identity secret from anyone.

Parents still have very stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a superhero. They often believe it is just a matter of time before their son wears his underwear over his pants, and makes ludicrous puns. The truth often lies very far from this.

Parents worry about their children leading a life of what they perceive as unstable and alien to their own experience. The life of a lonely latex-clad social misfit is what many parents imagine for their superhero child.

If you are strongly inclined to reveal your true identity to your folks, be prepared for some unexpected reactions. Your parents may have been suspecting that you have been leading a double life and may be relieved to get everything out in the open (even if you do decide to wipe their memories the next day).



excerpted from
The Superhero Handbook
by Michael Powell
(Sterling Publishing, 2005)



Info About Gaylaxicon in 2009



passed along by Carl



Here's the scoop about *next year's* Gaylaxicon:

Dates:

October 9 - 11, 2009

Site:

Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis-Park Place (Minneapolis, MN)

Guests of Honor:

Margaret Weis (co-author of the original "Dragonlance" stories and collaborator with Tracy Hickman on several other F&SF series)

Andy Mangels (author, journalist, editor)

Lawrence Schimel (Lambda Literary Award-winning author)

Membership:

\$70 until 10/01/2009

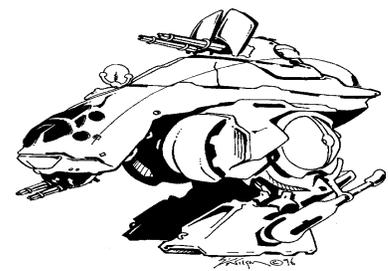
\$80 at the door

Make checks payable to:

"Gaylaxicon 2009" and send to:
Gaylaxicon 2009, P.O. Box 2412,
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

Visit their website at:

<http://www.gaylaxicon2009.org>



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From Troy to Rome: *The Aeneid* in F&SF (Part 2)

book review by Carl Cipra

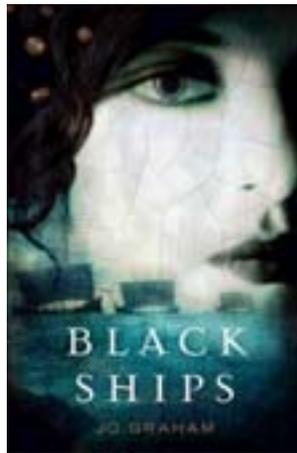
Recently, three F&SF authors have written their own versions – or reinterpretations – of *The Aeneid*. In the December issue of the newsletter, I reviewed two of those books: David Gemmell's *Troy: The Fall of Kings* and Ursula K. LeGuin's *Lavinia*. And now for my review of the third re-telling of the voyage from Troy to Rome.

***Black Ships*, by Jo Graham (Orbit, 2008)**

I picked this book up on a whim. When I first spotted it, I figured it'd be a pleasant counterpoint to Gemmell's "Troy" trilogy (reviewed in last month's newsletter). Well, *Black Ships* turned out to be rather more than that! This is Jo Graham's first book; and it's astoundingly good! It tells the story of *The Aeneid* from the perspective of Gull (later called Linnea or "the Pythia" or "the Sybil"), who accompanies Aeneas (aka Neas) on his journey to Italy.

The time is the Late Bronze Age, when civilization is on the brink of a Dark Age and cities fall one after another to raiders and barbarians. As the story opens, Gull is a young girl in the Achaian city of Pylos, daughter of a captured Trojan slave. When she is crippled in an accident, Gull is taken by King Nestor to be apprenticed to Pythia, the priestess and oracle of Persephone, the Lady of the Dead. In time, she becomes Pythia herself. When a group of Trojan raiders descend on Pylos – led by Prince Aeneas – Gull/Pythia and the other Trojan slaves join them and begin their quest for a new homeland. And throughout this quest, Gull becomes the virtual heart, soul, and guide of the fugitive Trojan people.

But Graham's book isn't just a simple re-telling of *The Aeneid*. Through Gull's story, Graham also provides the reader with her fascinating interpretation of the so-called "crisis of circa 1200 BC" (the fall of Troy; the destruction of the Achaean citadels; the end of the Minoan and Hittite empires; the depredations of



the Sea Peoples; etc.). And she offers a number of interesting possibilities. For example, archaeology shows us that the city of Troy was actually destroyed and rebuilt a number of times. In Graham's novel, Gull's mother was captured during the *first* Trojan war (the invasion led by Agamemnon); but Aeneas and his men are fugitives from a *subsequent* destruction of Troy: a new raid led by Neoptolemos, the bloodthirsty son of Achilles. This Neoptolemos leads a fleet of pirates in savage forays throughout the eastern Mediterranean, sacking one city after another – even leading them to the shores of mighty Egypt. His seafaring band of mixed Achaians, Sardinians, and others is Graham's take on the fabled Sea Peoples eventually defeated by Pharaoh Ramses III (circa 1175 BC). And in *Black Ships*, it's Aeneas and his Trojans who are instrumental in tipping the scales of victory in Pharaoh's favor.

This brings up what is perhaps Graham's most ingenious re-interpretation of Vergil's epic poem: her version of the tragic "Dido and Aeneas" story. Vergil, of course, has the Trojan prince visit Carthage, where he falls in love with, romances, and then abandons Queen Dido. Well, says Graham, that's an unsupportable anachronism: Carthage didn't exist during the time of Aeneas and the Trojan War – it wouldn't be founded until several centuries later. So where can Aeneas have found a powerful royal lady to woo? Aha! Egypt! So, for this story, Graham has ingeniously created the Princess Basetamon, sister of Ramses III, "She Who Speaks with Pharaoh's Voice in Mem-

phis." It all fits together so well that I can hardly believe that no one has thought of this before. (Well done, Ms. Graham!)

Black Ships isn't only historical fiction, however – there are plenty of Fantasy elements to keep F&SF fans interested. To begin with, Gull is an oracle and prophetess (particularly in her roles as Pythia and Sybil). As priestess of the Persephone, she leads Aeneas in his visit to the Underworld in search of knowledge. One of my favorite fantasy scenes occurs in the Phoenician city of Byblos, where Gull encounters a "young" winged god named Mik-el, "one of the warriors who waits upon Baal." In the course of their brief meeting, Gull learns of Mik-el's origins in prehistoric Mesopotamia and of his desire to become a "champion of the worthy." (It becomes obvious that this "young god" is actually the precursor of Michael, archangel and supreme enemy of Satan.)

And there's even some LGBT content in *Black Ships* – not a lot, but enough to be satisfying. Aeneas, the "man of destiny," is loved by both Gull and his longtime friend Xandros (aka Alexandros) – but neither of their loves are requited. Aeneas loves them both, but only as friends. (Gull is a Priestess of the Dark Lady, and Aeneas cannot wed her to found his dynasty; and although Xandros is bisexual, Aeneas is not.) Gull and Xandros console each other and eventually fall in love and have children. (It is true that, as a Priestess of the Dark Lady, Gull is forbidden to marry; but she's not forbidden to have children.) There's also the heroic-tragic character Ashterah, a young eunuch "priestess" of the goddess Ashterat. Xandros meets and becomes enamored of Ashterah during the Trojans' brief stay in Byblos. Subsequently, Ashterah helps the Trojans escape from Byblos ahead of the Achaian raiders, but is swept overboard during a storm on the way to Egypt.

All in all, *Black Ships* is a really satisfying read! Jo Graham certainly gives a long-time author like David Gemmell a run for his money! ▲ΨΦ





**Forrest J Ackerman
1916 - 2008**

Forrest Ackerman – writer, editor, agent, collector, and fan extraordinaire – passed away on December 4th. “Uncle Forry” was a reader of SF magazines from their inception and an active member of SF fandom from his early teens. He attended the first World Science Fiction Convention (NYC, 1939) dressed in a costume based on the then-current SF blockbuster film *Things to Come*.

Forry’s first story was “A Trip to Mars” (1929) for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which won a prize for the best tale by a teenager. As early as 1932, he served as associate editor of *The*

Time Traveller, the first fanzine. For many decades thereafter he wrote numerous stories and articles for fan journals – becoming known in fan circles as “Mr. Science Fiction.” He won several awards for these activities, including a Hugo in 1953 for Number One Fan Personality.

Forry collected SF books and memorabilia from the very first – eventually housing his 300,000-item library (which he called the Fantasy Foundation) in a 17-room house in Hollywood. (A number of LSF members have had the honor of touring the collection over the years.)

Forry edited the magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (1958-1982) and the US “Perry Rhodan” series (1969-1977), as well a several anthologies. Notorious for his punning and use of simplified words, he is credited with introducing the term “sci-fi” in 1954. He was the agent for a number of writers, notably A.E. Van Vogt. Two of his closest friends over the decades were fellow SF icons Ray Bradbury and Ray Harryhausen.

Although not gay himself, Forry was a long-time friend to the LGBT fannish community. In 1994, LSF was highly honored when Forry agreed to be our Gaylaxicon Special Guest of Honor.

Here are a couple of personal memories from LSF members:

Michael C.: Many of us remember him being a gracious and entertaining



**Forry at the 1939 Worldcon
(photo by Robert Madle)**

guest at a past Gaylaxicon in Rockville, and I have my own memories of hanging out with him at assorted Monster Bash conventions.

Michael M.: It is the sad passing of an era. Ackerman was an important part of my childhood. I remember anxiously hunting down as a kid issues of his fan magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. It was my intro to horror movies and the sci fi horror genre. His fan stuff was my favorite read as kid, even more than comic books. I owe him a debt I can never repay. I’d like to think somewhere in the great beyond he is enjoying a *tete a tete* with Karloff, Lugosi, Price, and all the other greats.



**Jules Verne was my father.
H.G. Wells was my wise uncle.**



**Edgar Allen Poe was the batwinged cousin we kept
high in the back attic room.**

**Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers were my brothers and friends.
There you have my ancestry.**

**Adding, of course, the fact that in all probability Mary Wollstonecraft
Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*, was my mother.**



Ray Bradbury, introduction to *S Is for Space* (1966)
quoted in *Science Fiction Quotations*, edited by Gary Westfahl
(Yale University Press, 2005)



**** INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS ****

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (LSF) is an organization for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered (GLBT) people, and their friends who are interested in science fiction, fantasy, horror and related genres in all forms (SF/F/H). LSF's primary goals are to have fun, to provide a community, and to:

- promote SF/F/H, with particular attention to materials of interest to GLBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for GLBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of GLBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the GLBT community.

Annual membership fees are \$10, for which you will receive an e-mailed this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. (Hard copies of the newsletter cost an additional \$15 per year.) Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on the **Sunday, Jan. 11th**, at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413), near Dupont Circle. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there!

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians is an affiliate of **the Gaylactic Network**, an international organization for gay people and their friends who are interested in science-fiction and fantasy.



Con Calendar

by Carl



Feb. 13-15, 2009 **KATSUCON 15**. Hyatt Regency Crystal City (Crystal City, VA). Washington's Premiere Japanese Animation and Manga Festival. Membership: \$45 until Dec. 31, 2008; \$50 at the door. Make checks payable to "Katsucon Entertainment" and send to: Katsucon Entertainment Inc., PO Box 3354, Crofton, MD 21114
Website: www.katsucon.org

Feb. 13-15, 2009 **FARPOINT 2009**. Crowne Plaza Baltimore North (Timonium, MD). Guests: Alan Tudyk, Harve Bennett, Marc Okrand, Peter David, and more. Membership: \$70 pre-registration; daily rates available at the door. Make checks payable to "Farpoint 2009" and send to: Farpoint Enterprises, Inc., 11708 Troy Ct., Waldorf, MD 20601. You can also register online.
Website: www.farpointcon.com E-mail: trekcontact@comcast.net

April 17-18, 2009 **GAME CON**. The Clarion Hotel (Aberdeen, MD). Board games, card games, dealers, local artists, local bands. Membership: \$20 for the entire weekend. To pre-register or get your questions answered, contact Kat Brannon (443-299-7784) or on-line at: Kat_of_sorrow@yahoo.com

April 24-26, 2009 **RAVENCON 2009**. Crowne Plaza Richmond West (Richmond, VA). Author Guest of Honor: Jack McDevitt. Membership: \$30 until 12/31/2008; then \$35 until 4/1/2009; \$40 at the door. Make checks payable to "Ravencon 2009" and send to: RavenCon, 43031 Elk Place, Chantilly, VA 20152 Info on-line at: www.ravencon.com

May 1-4, 2009 **COSTUME-CON 27**. Crowne Plaza Baltimore North (Timonium, MD). Theme: "Vampires, Villains & Vixens." Membership: \$80 until 12/31/2008; then \$90 until 4/1/2009; \$100 after 4/1/2009 and at the door. Make checks payable to "Costume-Con 27" and send to: Costume-Con 27, PO Box 207, Beallsville, PA 15313. "Open to all who love costume in all its forms."
Info on-line at: castleb@pulsenet.com or www.costume-con.com

July 10-12, 2009 **SHORE LEAVE 31**. Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: TBA. Membership: \$70 for the weekend; daily rates available. (Deadline for pre-registration: 6/15/2009.) Make checks payable to "Shore Leave" and send to: Shore Leave 31, PO Box 6809, Towson, MD 21285-6809.
E-mail: information@shore-leave.com Website: <http://www.shore-leave.com>

October 9-11, 2009 **GAYLAXICON 2009**. Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis - Park Place (Minneapolis, MN). GoHs: Margaret Weis, Andy Mangels, Lawrence Schimel. Membership: \$70 until 10/01/2009; \$80 at the door. Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon 2009" and send to: Gaylaxicon 2009, P.O. Box 2412, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402
Website: www.gaylaxicon2009 Register on-line at: <http://www.gaylaxicon2009.org/index.php/registration>