



"Kirk and Spock Did What?!?"

A Brief History of Fanfiction as a Tool for Learning to Write

Dr. Sarah A. Evans
Assistant Professor

School of Library & Information Studies
Texas Woman's University

Name That Tune

- Listen to the music mashup and identify the source of as many theme songs as you can.



Are You a Fan?

- Doctor Who (2005)
- Star Trek (The Next Generation)
- Game of Thrones
- The Lord of the Rings
- Sherlock
- Harry Potter



Origin Story

Fanfiction Writer



What my friends think I do.



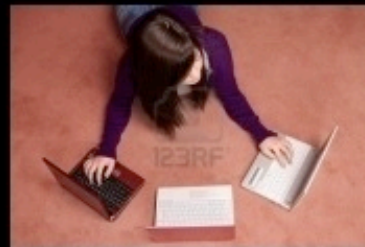
What my mom thinks I do.



What society thinks I do.



What my boss thinks I do.

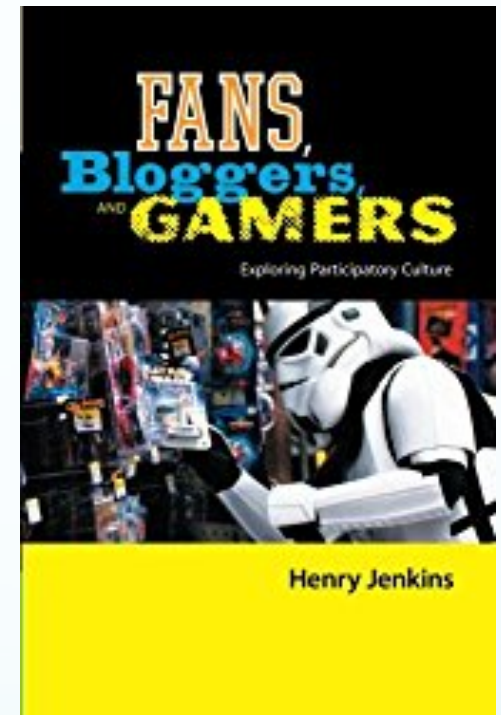
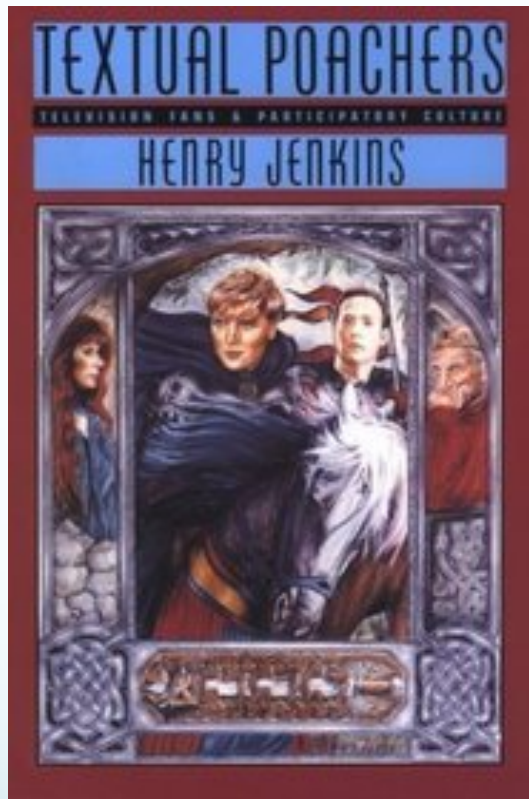


What I think I do.

All, but not limited to, the aforementioned things...

What I actually do.

The Original AcaFan



Dr. Henry Jenkins
“transmedia storytelling” and “participatory culture”

Open Learning

Harry Potter



Social Justice



Research Questions

- Why do young people participate in online fanfiction communities?
- How and what do young people learn through their involvement in fanfiction communities?
- What role does mentoring play in participants' learning, and what does this mentoring look like?



Fandoms and Sites

Harry Potter



Methods



- 9-month ethnography
- 3 types of data
 - In-depth interviews with 28 fanfiction authors.
 - 5 months of participant observations of fanfiction discussion forums and story reviews.
 - Thematic analysis of 4,500 reader reviews coded from 262 fanfiction stories.

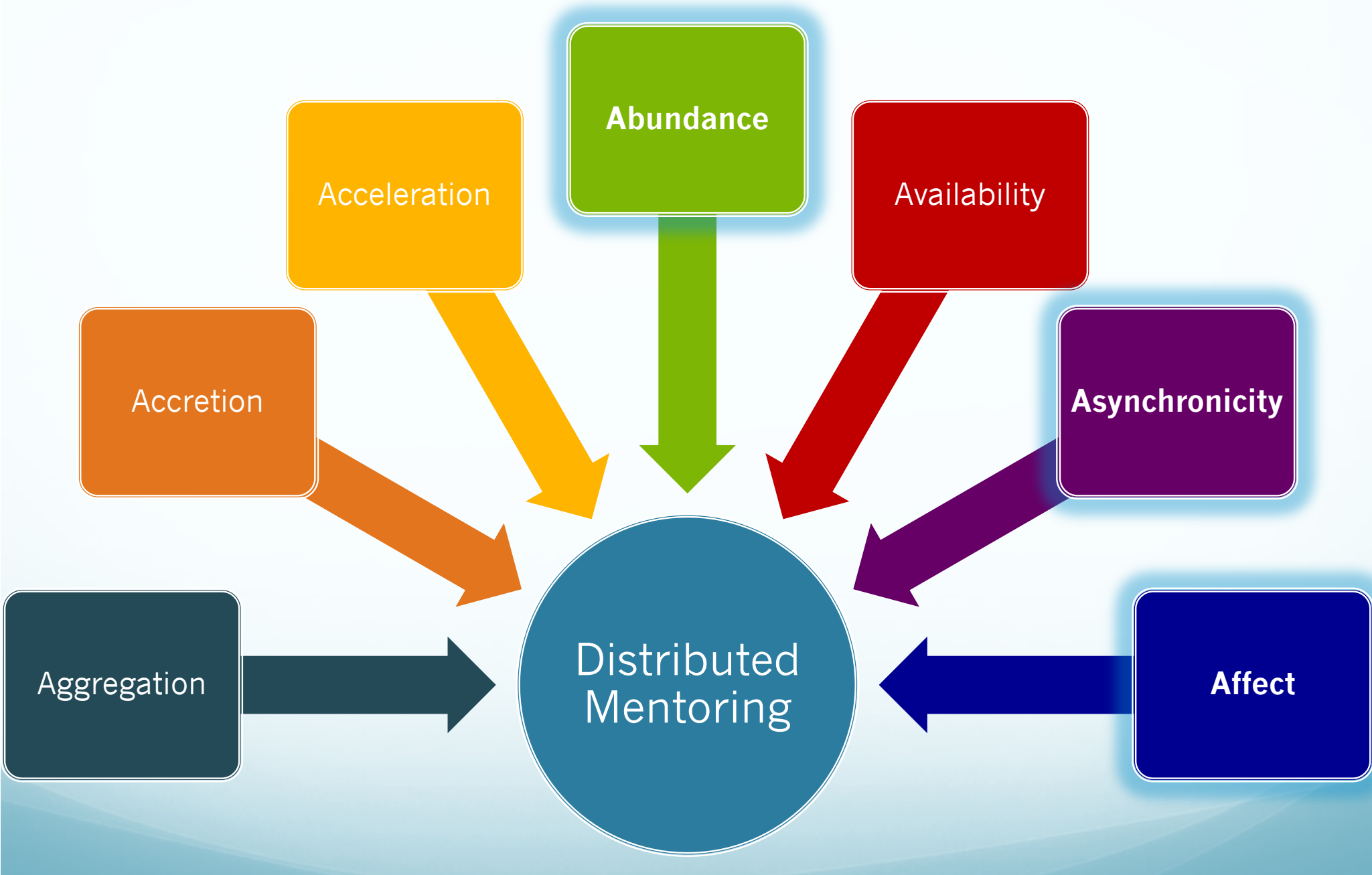
Findings

I've received thousands of positive reviews and some truly wonderful letters and messages from people who have been genuinely touched by my writing, and it's been a massive confidence boost that helped me get through university without quitting and still helps me today if I'm feeling down.

I write fanfiction because you can get immediate feedback from an active fandom. I have to play my part as well, and give back to the community.

Fanfiction was what got me into writing in the first place. I'm planning on majoring in creative writing and more than anything else, fanfiction and the fanfiction community has informed my writing style and ability, and my reviewing/editing abilities. Workshopping with a larger community, which might be an alien experience for many entering my department, is almost a daily routine for me by now.





Abundance

Acceleration

Availability

Accretion

Asynchronicity

Aggregation

Distributed Mentoring

Affect

Abundance



Asynchronicity



Affect



Our Ongoing Mission



- Big data and visualizations of fanfiction stories and reviews
 - Review categories
 - Lexical diversity
 - Relationship strength
- Surveys
 - Fan motivations
 - Fan gatherings
- Interviews
- Theoretical work

Theory Into Practice

- In groups of 3-4 people, brainstorm fictional worlds you'd like to visit and/or stories that you've always wanted to "fix"
- Take several minutes, individually or as a group, to decide on
 - Main character
 - Other characters involved
 - Setting
 - Situation
 - Theme/Mood
 - Character action
- Share your ideas and offer suggestions



Thank You

Who's awesome?



You're awesome!

Dr. Sarah A. Evans

Texas Woman's University

Stoddard Hall 421

sevans14@twu.edu

<https://depts.washington.edu/hdsl/research/distributed-mentoring/>



Additional Resources

- [Journal of Transformative Works and Cultures](#)
- [Professor Henry Jenkins](#)
- General fanfiction story sites
 - [FanFiction.net](#)
 - [Archive of Our Own](#)
 - [Wattpad](#)
- [Fansplaining podcast](#)