

Communities of Harry Potter books and films fans on the Internet, the case of *slash* fans

By Anna Rogozińska

Abstrakt: Fandom *slash* to społeczność przede wszystkim internetowa i złożona prawie wyłącznie z kobiet, które są fankami rozmaitych tekstów kultury i odczytują je według stworzonego przez wspólnotę kodu. Kod ten oparty jest na znajomości dzieła-kanonu i zasadach interpretacji, które umieszczają w centrum istnienia związku homoerotycznego między bohaterami kanonu. Zasady te są zarazem regułami określającymi charakter nowych, pisanych przez fanki tekstów.

Internet nie jest tu traktowany jako jednorodne medium, ale raczej jako zbiór środowisk. Przedmiotem analizy jest sposób wykorzystywania przez fanki środowisk takich jak strony www i blogi (Live Journal) w celu dystrybucji tekstów, komunikacji i rozwijania społeczności. Proponowana metodologia jest próbą zastosowania metod etnograficznych do badania społeczności internetowych przy pomocy analizy dyskursu, analizy treści i obserwacji uczestniczącej.

Słowa kluczowe: fandom, społeczności fanów, społeczności internetowe, wspólnoty praktyk, antropologia internetu, etnografia internetu.

Abstract: Fandom *slash* is an online women community of fans of various texts of culture who interpret those texts according to the code of the community. That code relies on the knowledge of the work of canon and rules of interpretation that concentrate on a homoerotic relationship of male heroes of the canon. Those rules constitute a basis for new texts written by fans and for fans.

Internet is treated here not as a homogeneous medium, but as a set of social environments. The main question of this paper is how fans appropriate online environments such as websites and weblogs (Live Journal) as the means for text distribution, communication and community development. The answer is being sought by using ethnographic methods of online communities research such as discourse analysis, content analysis and participant observation.

Keywords: fandom, fan communities, online communities, communities of practice, anthropology of the Internet, Internet ethnography.

Fandom *slash* in research

In the largest Internet archive of fiction fans, the Fanfiction.Net, there are 274,018 related stories about *Harry Potter* (his books and films). In comparison, there are 40,212 about the *Yu-Gi-Oh* anime, 39,020 about *Lord of the Rings*, 37,321 about *Gundam Wing*, 30,074 on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 22,995 on *Magician from the Moon*, 19,109 on *Card Captor Sakur*, 14,141 on *Rurouni Kenshin* and 10493 on *Pirates of the Caribbean*¹. These are nine of the most popular among thousands of other sources – books, films, TV shows, games and cartoons present on this website, the largest but only one of many others similar to it.

Fandom is a group of fans of a specific fiction story, which has their own internal hierarchy, a values system, language and way of communication and participation in this type of culture. Fandoms either meet in person in club meetings or at national conferences or exist primarily on the Internet. Fandoms may be centred around fantasy or science fiction texts but also include fans of sports clubs, ie. the Warsaw Legia football clubs fans and their culture and values. These fans are also organized (meet at games, fight with other fans, have their songs, slogans, websites and forums). This article will focus on the most popular example of Internet fandom, the *Harry Potter slash* fandom, or creativity of fans describing homoerotic relationships of the series' male heroes. This slash fan fiction is, however, not representative of the whole fandom group. It is probably most popular, largest and therefore most

¹ Fanfiction.Net, <http://www.fanfiction.net>, [07.12.2004].

creative but it does not represent all fandoms or fans and their practices and social structure. Although, it should be mentioned that many fans belong to more than one fandom and may therefore transfer their experiences and practices from one fandom to another.

The subject of this study is an Internet fandom, as opposed to a traditional one based on more direct relations. My interest in the Internet is the context of its text content, as space available for the publication of texts by fans, as space for communication in which fans readers communicate with fans authors as well as with other fans, and finally as social space in which fans, through common interests, organize themselves into communities. The texts present in the *slash* fandom are predominantly in English.

The research method used in this case can be named Internet ethnography². It is a method in which the research is carried out 'from within' (from fan perspective as well as the perspective of Internet user). It will describe meetings and relations between fans within. In 'new' ethnography participation is just as important as observation, boundaries between researcher and its subjects are crossed and self aware subjects are able to analyse their situation and can actively object to any generalizing interpretations distorting their experiences³. Carrying out research 'from within' allows the researcher to obtain information which is often unavailable to those who do research from the 'outside'. This way it is easier to gain people's trust and one can analyse experiences with which one is familiar with⁴ through the use of participant observation, an analysis of text content and daily discourse analysis.

This ethnographic method is based on specific research attitude as well as precise way of construction of research subject. The fandom slash is seen as a community of practices⁵, as a social group of fans connected by their attachment to a specific culture phenomenon, having their own internal hierarchy, a system of values, language and specific cultural participation. Fandoms are seen as having their own culture, "with their own symbols, vocabulary, cognitive and emotional models, forms of communication, relationships, myths and future perspectives"⁶ – they need to be researched on the social, symbolic, and material levels which cannot be separated from each other. Their creativity is solely a result of the existing social relations between fans and their characteristic symbolic order.

Fandoms before the Internet era

The slash fandom before the Internet era was completely closed off , only available to the inner circle. The enter this community one first had to formally register in the fan club and attend more or less official meetings of friends discussing a common theme and creating methods of interpretation. Official initiation took place at an official convent, or a meeting of fans, usually organized at a culture centre, in a club or at a hotel (depending on the size of the community and its range). Such meetings usually included an exhibition of fan art, a trade fair (where one could buy graphic art, fanzines, etc. on

² Zob. N.K. Baym, *Tune in, log on: soaps, fandom, and online community*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks 2000; A. Escobar, *Welcome to Cyberia: Notes on the Anthropology of Cyberculture*, [in:] Z. Sardar et al. (ed.), *Cyberfutures: Culture and Politics on the Information Superhighway*, New York University Press, New York 2002, p. 111-137; C. Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks 2000; A. N. Markham, *Life Online: Researching Real Experience in Virtual Space*, AltaMira Press, b.m. 1998.

³ H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, Routledge, London and New York 1992.

⁴ M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, Routledge, London and New York 2002.

⁵ N.K. Baym, *Tune in, log on: soaps, fandom, and online community*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks 2000.

⁶ G. Godlewski, *Wstęp: słowo o antropologii słowa*, [in:] G. Godlewski (red.), *Antropologia słowa. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2003.

the subject), discussion panels, fan film and videoclip shows, *cosplay* or short scenes acted out by fans, LARP or games (RPG) in disguise.

In the past, before the onset of the Internet, convents were crucial to fandoms, they allowed fans to meet each other in person, they gave participants a feeling of belonging to social group, they allowed them to identify themselves with a particular culture. Also, new ways of writing fan fiction and creating fan art were established. People had access to fanzines, the main communication way between them. Aside from reviews of books, films, games, etc of the theme, there was information about upcoming convents and their members such as interviews with more famous fans and samples of their creativity including stories, poems, songs and graphic illustrations.

There were three ways of distribution of fanzines, sales at convents, through distribution lists to subscribers and through special libraries where one could borrow them free of charge for a period of two weeks. It is worth noting that such fan communities follow the rule 'from fans to fans' where important is reciprocation, honesty and not gaining profits from practices of participation in the communities.

In practice though, most of the time the fanzines did not represent the entire community's creativity. Their content largely depended on the decision of the main editor who consciously or not printed works of people who he knew best. This meant that people taking first steps in the life of the community had very little chances of being published.

The pre-Internet fandom was a closed-off community requiring initiation to be allowed into it. Such was carried out by a mentor who knew the code and social structure of the group. The community was a non-profit one with a motto 'from fans to fans'. Technically it was a tolerant and democratic community although there existed the usual power connections. Those fans who were more talented or creative were published more frequently and consequently had greater authority within the group. They, for example, could decide whose *fan art* or *fan fiction* would also be published in the fanzines.

Aside from small groups of friends living within the same area and meeting more or less regularly as well as semi-annual convents, the fan community was rather scattered and did not have effective means of synchronised communication. The only possible forms of communication were through traditional mail and through information included in the fanzines. Therefore, the greater was the power of those who decided what was to be included in them.

Media Evolution: from print to Internet culture

Fandom history evolved together with the development of media. The photocopier, according to Marshall McLuhan, allowed authors to become publishers. In reality they were quasi-publishers due to the limited scope of distribution of the photocopied texts⁷. At that time the first fanzines were created. The video recorder allowed fans to create their own amateur videoclips, it generated the possibility to record and repeatedly view the recorded content. This was particularly imperative in the process of education of new fans. The VCR also enabled fans to watch and together analyse the source materials of interest during convents. The computer or word processing programs in particular simplified and greatly shortened the production and edition of written texts. The evolution of media had a great impact on the evolution of fandoms. New technologies diversified their activities and enabled new ways of creativity. But it was the Internet which completely revolutionised their existence. It created a effective means of communication, it was fast and it allowed the communities to exist on line.

Internet individualism and the active nature of existence in virtual space (where to go, choice of sites, etc) make us re-evaluate the different role divisions such as broadcaster, recipient, author, reader, producer and consumer (or active vs. passive fandom members). In the past, it was only the producers and authors selected by them who had access to productions means. It was a very small group in comparison with the rest. Although *fan fiction* was always seen as creativity breaking the barrier

⁷ P. Levinson, *Miękkie ostrze*, przeł. H. Jankowska, Muza, Warszawa 1999.

between the producer (author) and passive recipient of mass culture (reader), making readers also authors, their works existed only in fandoms which were quite limited in their scope and did not allow two way communication. It was the editors who decided which works were to be published and which weren't. And there was little discussion about that as there also existed many complicated power relations between different members.

In connection with the above comparison, Manuel Castell divides Internet users into two groups, users-creators or those "who influence the content of the Internet"⁸, and users-consumers or those who do not make any changes to the Web. At a closer look this division is more complicated than seems at first. The Internet requires a certain level of activity from its users, something more than just visiting and reading various sites but maybe sending an e-mail or taking part in a discussion forum, that is leaving some kind of individual trace on the Web. Therefore, can we use the term 'passive user' at all? And where does active user begin? Does one have to write a program, have his own website or be in charge of a discussion group? Maybe it's enough to take part in a forum or leave some kind of an individual trace on the Web?

These deliberations lead us to Internet fandoms. Castells calls this "individualised Web use"⁹, or individual possibility to find a niche space on the Internet fitting one's needs. This is a fundamental base for the existence of fandoms and *fan fiction* in conditions created by the new medium. What is available to read is no longer dictated by limited space in fanzines and editor's individual choices about what is published. On the Internet each *fan fiction* author has the opportunity to make their works available to the public. This way they become their own publishers and are responsible for the creation and promotion of their creativity. Authors can put their works in fandom archives, on their individual websites, in blogs, or by sending them to related discussion groups and forums. One result of this is the practically not existent anymore authority of mentors and editors. Instead there is increasing authority of webmasters, moderators and authors themselves. There is also the invisible reader or lurker who only reads the available texts but does not leave any comments or feedback.

Feedback

In the past, asynchronous communication in fandoms did not really allow people to express their opinions about others' works. It was only possible in conversations with the author at conventions or, in rare cases, when a letter to the editor was published in a fanzine. Now, with the Internet, it is possible to instantaneously react and comment on *fan fiction*. It is almost like a live dialogue with the author where readers' commentaries can influence the future plot or content of the work. This type of feedback, according to fan *savoir-vivre*, is necessary as it is the only sign to the author that his works are actually read. Feedback is absolutely crucial to the existence of fandoms, their communities, practices and creativity because it motivates authors to create and to improve their works. In practice, it is essential that texts should be commented on. The feedback can be entirely positive or constructive (aside from positive comments, there are also some critical remarks). This rule means that 'bad' texts are not read or commented on since negative feedback can discourage writers completely, which is not the goal. Only constructive criticism can help them improve their future works.

The coming of a new medium changed the way whole communities existed. Personal or traditional mail contacts ceased to exist and became almost entirely replaced by virtual ones. *Fan fiction* was transferred from fanzines to websites, the archives became considerably larger and more accessible to those interested. Changes in the existing hierarchies took place and new types of fan creativity, based on interactivity, came to light. Almost instantaneous feedback has become one of the most important tools in the functioning of *fan fiction* practices. Within the fandoms new sub-communities were created, centered around the Internet but slightly differing from each other in terms

⁸ M. Castells, *Galaktyka Internetu. Refleksje nad Internetem, biznesem i społeczeństwem*, translated by T. Hornowski, Rebis, Poznań 2003, p. 47.

⁹ *Ibidem*, s. 68.

of interests. They possess slightly different rules of conduct and hierarchies. The resulting *fan fiction* is also somewhat different and requires knowledge of specific principles and styles. Within Internet fandoms there are three basic types of communities: website based, fan fiction archive based and Live Journal.

Internet fan websites

*The Potions Master's Office*¹⁰ is a Femme (Slash) main website and just like most others of the *slash* theme it warns that, "if you are against homosexuality, do not read *slash*. Also, do not write to *slash* authors to tell them that their works are offensive. Better stick to *het* (*fan fiction* with a heterosexual theme). *Slash* is not for everyone, just like not all fans of *slash* like all its types". The main page introduces the website (*slash fan fiction* on Severus Snape/Harry Potter) and warns, those who may have found it accidentally, what will follow. The graphic art available includes manipulated scenes from films which show a valid relationship between these two heroes. Most slash websites have warnings on them which state that they include adult content in order not to be accused of promoting pornography among minors. If one wishes to gain access to fan fiction which includes descriptions of sexual scenes, a password is necessary. It can be obtained after contacting the webmaster. This is common practice regarding this type of fan fiction so that they do not come up on keyword search lists. This way the parents do not have to worry about their children accidentally accessing unwanted content as well as people not associated with the fandom.

The subpage 'News' informs about the latest changes to the website which took place in May 2003. This indicates that this website is practically dead¹¹, which does not mean that its author has stopped writing or is no longer active in the fandom but has probably moved from one sub-community to another or to Live Journal which, thanks to a new script, quickly and easily allows one to make updates to a page or be in continuous contact with other members via commentaries.

The subpage "Fanfiction" is an archive of Femme(Slash) stories, classified according to which pair it is devoted to, marked with an age category and including a short abstract. The same is with fan art, on the subpage "Artwork", with a classification by pairs. The "Fic recs" is a subpage which recommends favourites of the pair Harry/Snape. Generally Femme(Slash) gives each and every work a PG age, a short summary and a commentary which explains why it evoked an emotional reaction. If one wishes to read the whole story, he will need a password but it is not necessary to view the reviews. For example,

- If You Are Prepared I, II, i III, Cybele (R, NC-17): Dumbledore has a plan to ensure Harry and Severus security. He tells Severus the truth about Harry. Severus tries to assimilate the news from Dumbledore, to take care of Harry and not to lose himself at the same time. It is a very dark fic, full of sadness and suffering. Despite this, it is wonderful to read as it beautifully shows the relationship between Harry and Snape.¹²

The subpage devoted to recommendations can be considered a type of feedback for authors of various texts, especially since it includes readers' emotional reactions. It is valuable because it not only informs authors of others' opinions, recommends the texts to others but it also promotes those more creative writers.

The Femme(Slash) webpage is a typical site for female *fan fiction* authors, it exhibits their works and is not focused on too much interaction with visitors. It is consistent in its goals and carrying out the rules of the canon and *fan fiction* practices. For example, there is the necessity of writing feedbacks (comments on the Web) which have to be positive, recommending stories to other members and maintaining a certain level of secrecy of the fandom with passwords and limited access to certain sites.

¹⁰ Femme(Slash), *The Potions Master's Office*, <http://potionsmaster.slashcity.net/>, [25.01.2005].

¹¹ Website ceased to be available In 2006.

¹² Femme(Slash), *Fic Recs*, <http://potionsmaster.slashcity.net/ficrecs.html>, [25.01.2005].

With the onset of the Internet, developing are also new hierarchies based on popularity and ways of taking part in the fandom. If one types “Harry/Snape slash” into a search engine he will find a site with Femme (Slash) recommendations of the best *fan fiction* stories (with pen names), this way increasing their popularity or even making them fandom stars.

Slash fan fiction archives

Similar to the above Femme(Slash) website, one of the largest *slash fan fiction* archives on Harry Potter books and films is the *Ink Stained Fingers*¹³ site. It welcomes visitors with an information page divided into three parts. The first is a warning of the content being homoerotic and not for children. The second includes information on copyrights or a disclaimer which states, “All characters from the Harry Potter world belong to J.K. Rowling and Warner Brothers. Any other characters, words, art works and poems belong to their creators. This website is non-profit and it does not wish to breach any copyrights. No fragment of this page can be reproduced without consent of its authors.” This is so that original author and producers do not have any claims that their work is used as a base for further creativity. The third part informs about sending an e-mail to the webmaster in order to obtain necessary passwords to further view content of archives. However, obtaining the password is not the end, in order to access the page one must need to know the source. For example, anyone who has read or watched Harry Potter knows that the phrase “Portkey me out of here” means a portal to a completely different place than “I solemnly swear that I am up to no good”.

From the visitor’s point of view, most important is to be able to search for stories by author, title, status of a story (finished or WIP-*Work In Progress* – a multi part story in the process of writing), date, heroes, warnings, PG status and type of fan fiction (story, poem, romance, ‘first time’, etc.). This way one is able to obtain what he is looking for. The results are presented with typical headers, or detailed information about what will follow (another warning of content) and the way it is constructed. The headers also include fan code, one who is not familiar with the canon will not be very well oriented until he learns a series of secret abbreviations and acronyms.

When a story is put into an archive its form is unified, that is it includes a header, is set against a unified background, it has with the same colour and type of font as all others in the archive. The archives are enormous, with great numbers of authors and readers regularly visiting them, this way putting their fantasies into life or just doing what fans typically do. People’s personal texts which, at the same time, are a realization of a common code bring together entire fan communities. Even though a lot of texts are similar, deal with the same themes or write about the same pair of heroes they generate a lot of *feedback*, through which fans openly express their attitude to the canon, admire specific ways of its realization and this way create a feeling of unity and cooperation within the group. At the end of each story there is the comment, “If you liked what you read, leave some feedback or send a e-mail to the author”. The added feedbacks amount to entire separate pages on which readers cease to be anonymous and begin to participate as members of the fandom. This happens when their feedback is placed on the page, other people can read it, comment and so on. The reader stops being a passive lurker, or a visiting statistic but leaves a trace after himself.

Ink Stained Fingers is an example of an open archive on which anyone can place their story without any kind of preliminary selection. *PSA*¹⁴, on the other hand, is a Harry Potter archive, more similar to a fanzine where webmasters read the sent-in stories, have a discussion group and only select the best ones to be placed on the website. The website owner, together with a group of friends who help him make decisions, have the greatest authority just like in the past the editors of fanzines and their people did.

¹³ *Ink Stained Fingers*, <http://inkstain.inkquill.com/>, [27.11.2006].

¹⁴ *Potter Slash Archive*, <http://glassesreflect.net/index1.html>, [27.11.2006].

These archives, therefore, can be Internet versions of fanzines, with a hierarchy and people in power, however, they are more modern and advanced allowing interaction between authors and readers. They can also be more accessible, free and open. Some are based on the principle that the more variety, the better. It is the readers themselves who will be selective in their choices of favourites and will promote those stories which are best. From this point of view, the webmasters/editors are seen as a circle of censors which act against Internet's liberal utopia.

Live Journal or a circle of a mutual adoration

Live Journal¹⁵, is an Internet service, in existence since 1999, with 12 million users, combining the characteristics of a classic blog and a discussion group. On the surface it is no different from other blog services, it requires one to set up an account and to log in. Once this is done one can update the journal with a set script by inserting in on a personalized space (with individually selected colours, images in the background, user icons, links to other blogs and favourite websites). There is also space available for commentary, on a separate page where the entries are listed starting from the newest (older can be found on the sub-page "Calendar").

The first difference between a Live Journal and a classic blog is that it bases on interaction between its users. On the Blog.pl services, we can find new blogs through links from those which we already know, through friends' recommendations and fragments of Internet journals made available on the main page. On the Live Journal services, blog owner's cards are listed on the "User Info" sub-page with a short biographical note, information on the type of account, the number of written comments and, most of all, with information about the author's interests (with links to users with similar ones) and a list of his friends and groups (communities) she belongs to.

This type of organization allows much easier finding of users with similar interests and by greater popularity of feedback received, it increases the number of those who read and comment on the content of the journal. The number of friends, commentary statistics and number of groups people belong to all give information on how popular a user is and what position she holds in the fandom. A fandom star, a popular author of fan fiction, an archive webmaster or a graphic artist may have up to several hundred friends who add her blog to their friends' list. This is done to be close to the star, to be up to date with the newest stories, to easily add feedback and, this way, to be active in the life of the fandom. It can also be done to better one's position in the community or within discussion groups.

The focus on interaction is especially visible on the so called *LJ communities* or discussion groups centered around a specific topic. These groups are similar to blog-communities, analysed by Cywinska-Milonas¹⁶ (a blog led by one writer who also plays the role of a moderator by initiating discussions by writing introductory notes) and e-mail discussion groups. They are all Internet based (access through WWW, visible also to those not logged in, taking part in discussion via commentaries) and egalitarian (everyone can take part in the discussion, the moderator only intervenes when someone blatantly and drastically breaks the rules). Resulting is something which technically is 'on one topic' and public but in reality the commentaries and conversation drift far away from the original subject and are rather unlimited in their scope.

Thanks to combining what is individual and what is common, the Live Journal is most popular among *slash* fans. At the same time, going out of use are many e-mail discussion groups as well as individual or moderated websites. This is an environment open to all kinds of creativity. One can

¹⁵ Live Journal, <http://www.livejournal.com>, [31.01.2005].

¹⁶ M. Cywińska-Milonas, *Blogi (ujęcie psychologiczne)*, [in:] P. Marecki (red.), *Liternet. Literatura i Internet*, Rabid, Kraków 2002.

wonder if this really is a change for the better. It definitely is easier to access, for those who know what they are looking for. However, the above mentioned egalitarian nature of Live Journal at a closer look is not so obvious. For example, each and every entry by a fandom star is treated like an event and generates hundreds of comments. We can talk about equal access to content but unequal attention devoted to some members. In a situation where all entries and comments are public, including those negative ones, it puts great pressure on each individual who wishes to be noticed to conform. It can especially be seen on the example of Live Journal how utopian fandoms as communities of equal fans are. In the past it was the authors, writers, graphic artists, editors, website owners, moderators, activists or producers who had the power. Now it is those who can gain the greatest number of 'friends'.

Live Journal was able to solve many problems of existence of *fan fiction* on the Internet. For example, there is the option of writing for oneself or to a group of closest friends (without closing off access to anyone who wishes to read). Also it is promoted in many communities simultaneously. The publication of *fan fiction* on personal but, at the same time, public blogs allowed readers closer contacts with authors. The readers can be up to date on author's writings or problems, there can be a discussion between them via feedback and exchanges of comments (this was possible earlier but not all within one site and about the entire creative process). Live Journal is the first which makes available a long, detailed and public discussion but without engaging those not part of the inner circle (commentaries are hidden on separated subsites). Mutual adding to lists of friends increases the status of both sides, stars become more popular and reader's entries gain importance. Live Journal also allows some insights into the private lives of other fans, if they wish it. Ties between individuals become stronger when they support each other in difficult moments or simply comment on each other's lifestyles. This also influences social behaviour within the communities.

Fandoms before and during the Internet era

Fan culture, in its social, symbolic and material aspect, was created much earlier than the onset of the Internet. However, fan practices have more or less remained the same regardless of the dominant medium. Common interpretation of source text inspired many to take part and create their own works of art such as graphic art, videoclips and, most of all, stories. Before, it was the fanzine which was the main source of communication through which people's creativity could reach wider audiences. It was the only medium which allowed people to communicate outside of convents or informal meetings between friends. Fanzine played a basic role in the creation of fandom social structures, it promoted certain authors and ways of interpretation. As a publisher, it decided what was good taste and was a mentor to those first entering the fandom. It was basically the only way through which texts could exist and the centre of fan life before the onset of the new medium. The Internet added great variety to ways in which fan fiction could be presented such as via discussion groups, individual websites, archives and blogs. Then what is the basic difference between fandoms before and during the Internet era? Are individual websites and fan fiction archives just a new version of the fanzine? Are discussion groups the same as live discussions during convents or other fan meetings? Hopefully this essay proved that they are not the same. The Internet is not solely a tool which simplifies access to information. It offers people many more opportunities such as various ways of communication, self presentation and publication of texts which result in changes in relationships between users and inspire new types of contacts. In other words, this new medium has resulted in changes in social conditions.

The Internet has allowed the fandom to become a global community based on contacts of various synchronicity but daily ones. Various Internet environments have become wider communities that are in constant contact and do not have to depend on irregular meetings to exchange information. Perhaps the texts themselves have not changed much but other practices have, such as authors becoming publishers, the creation of feedback and different types of existence of texts.

The goal of this paper was to show the differences in pre-Internet and Internet era fandoms. Although many changes have taken place, the old media have not ceased to exist, they have their own

niche and continue to be present in our lives. Fanzines are still being published and many fans continue to collect them as they have beautiful graphic design. Publishers have also adapted the new medium for their own purposes, creating their own websites and distribution channels or changing the form of fanzines into digital ones. Despite being active on the Internet, many fans still regularly attend convents as they are a chance to meet in person, get to know each other better and are treated more like a festive occasions rather than a necessity. Therefore, it can be said that the 'old' and the 'new' are both equally valuable in the building of group identity and creation of common experiences. In practice, as mentioned above, fans like to take advantage of both- old and new media for their practices.

Bibliography

- N.K. Baym, *Tune in, log on: soaps, fandom, and online community*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks 2000.
- M. Castells, *Galaktyka Internetu. Refleksje nad Internetem, biznesem i społeczeństwem*, przeł. T. Hornowski, Rebis, Poznań 2003.
- M. Cywińska-Milonas, *Blogi (psychologic take)*, [in:] P. Marecki (ed.), *Liternet. Literatura i Internet*, Rabid, Kraków 2002.
- A. Escobar, *Welcome to Cyberia: Notes on the Anthropology of Cyberculture*, [w:] Z. Sardar et al. (ed.), *Cyberfutures: Culture and Politics on the Information Superhighway*, New York University Press, New York 2002, p. 111-137.
- G. Godlewski, *Wstęp: słowo o antropologii słowa*, [in:] G. Godlewski (ed.), *Antropologia słowa. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2003.
- M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, Routledge, London and New York 2002.
- C. Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks 2000.
- H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, Routledge, London and New York 1992.
- P. Levinson, *Miękkie ostrze*, translated by H. Jankowska, Muza, Warszawa 1999.
- A. N. Markham, *Life Online: Researching Real Experience in Virtual Space*, AltaMira Press, b.m. 1998.b