
Core Collections in Genre Studies

Fantasy Fiction 101

Charlotte Burcher, Neil Hollands, Andrew Smith, Barry Trott, and Jessica Zellers, Guest Columnists

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The second edition of the Reading List, RUSA's juried selection of the best genre books in eight different categories, was announced at the ALA Midwinter Meeting this past January. The winning titles showcased the rich pleasures that genre books offer readers. To celebrate the creation of the Reading List and to highlight the importance of genre fiction in library collections, I instituted an "Alert Collector" occasional series on genre fiction. The first column in the series focused on romance fiction. This second entry focuses on fantasy fiction.

Fantasy fiction is, like much of genre fiction, at the center of a storm. Motifs, approaches, and styles that were once its sole domain have spread out and entered other genres. Today it is often difficult to decide if a book is a fantasy or a horror or a romance title. To the dismay of some purists, sometimes it is even hard to tell fantasy from science fiction. Forms are changing, genre lines are blurring, and new spin-off genres are appearing. The richness of this genre world offers readers great new frontiers to explore, but it can be a bit of a headache for librarians trying to build collections, work with readers, or even shelve titles in the most useful manner.

To help us get our bearings in this fabulously rich stew of books, I asked the Adult Services staff at Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) to look at the genre and map it out for readers and librarians alike. I thought of WRL because several of the staff there are known in readers' advisory circles for their knowledge of fantasy fiction and their appreciation of genres in general. Charlotte Burcher, who wrote the "Historical Fantasy" section, reads broadly in adult and young adult fantasy. She is a member of WRL's Looking for a Good Book team and a regular blogger on fantasy titles at Blogging for a Good Book. Neil Hollands, who wrote the "Literary Fantasy" section, is the author of *Read On . . . Fantasy Fiction* (Libraries Unlimited, 2007) and coordinates WRL's Looking for a Good Book service. He writes for *Booklist Online's* Book Group Buzz blog and reviews fantasy titles for *Library Journal*. Andrew Smith, who wrote the "Realistic Fantasy" section, is readers' services librarian at WRL, where he implemented the library's Gab Bags collection for book discussion groups and coordinates the library's book groups and author visits. He is a contributor to the *NovelList* readalikes collection and develops reading lists as part of the WRL Looking for a Good Book team. WRL Adult Services Director Barry Trott, who wrote the "Epic Fantasy" section, is series editor for Libraries Unlimited's Read On series and author of *Read On . . . Crime Fiction* (Libraries Unlimited, 2008). He also writes for *NovelList* and edits the "Readers' Advisory" column in *RUSQ*. Jessica Zellers, who wrote the "Paranormal/Urban/Contemporary Fantasy" section, is electronic resources librarian at WRL. She is completing her first book on women's

nonfiction for Libraries Unlimited and is a regular contributor of readalikes and articles to NoveList.—*Editor*

Fantasy is one of fiction's largest and fastest growing genres. While there are many definitions, a generous approach to the genre includes any work that contains magic or other elements that cannot be understood by the rules of reality. It also includes largely realistic works set in imagined variations on certain historical periods—the medieval era in particular.

Although fantasy does have escape value and is enjoyed by many readers for exactly this reason, it is a mistake to think of this as the genre's only appeal. The best fantasy fiction features a wonderful blend of action, strong characters, and detailed, atmospheric settings. Classical themes such as honor, love, war, revenge, responsibility, otherness, obsession, and loyalty are explored in fantasy tales. Subjects such as bigotry, greed, religious extremism, politics, abuse, and addiction can be examined in fantasy contexts without offending cultural sensitivities. Fantasy is a chameleon, taking in elements of historical, romance, crime, and adventure fiction, often in the pages of the same book.

This article highlights five major types of fantasy: epic high fantasy, paranormal/urban/contemporary fantasy, historical fantasy, realistic fantasy, and literary fantasy. While this covers the largest subset of the genre, space does not allow us to fully cover other important subgenres: political fantasy, hero fantasy, dark fantasy, romantic fantasy and fantasy romance, humorous fantasy, fables, and science fantasy most prominently.

Alert collectors should also note two other aspects of fantasy: First, an appreciation of series and their reading order is critical to the genre. Series gaps in the collection reduce the enjoyment of readers and circulation of every series title. Circulation of a series may languish until that series becomes known or nears completion, but then it will rise quickly.

Second, while this article focuses on fantasy published for the adult market, collectors should understand that, more than in any other genre, young adult readers will explore the adult fantasy collection and, conversely, adult fantasy fans will appreciate young adult and children's fantasy works. Awareness of authors such as J. K. Rowling, Lloyd Alexander, Susan Cooper, Brian Jacques, Diana Wynne Jones, Robin McKinley, Garth Nix, Christopher Paolini, Tamora Pierce, Philip Pullman, and Jonathan Stroud will behoove librarians trying to satisfy fantasy readers.

EPIC HIGH FANTASY

When many readers think of fantasy fiction, they are really thinking of epic high fantasy. These stories, often rooted in Norse and Celtic mythology, feature elegant prose, large casts of characters, arduous quests, and lots of magic. Objects play an important role here; rings, chalices, and swords are frequently keys to the success of the quest. A major appeal of epic fantasy is worldbuilding. These tales play out on a

large map, giving an opportunity for authors to develop and explore their worlds. Series titles are common here as well. These tales take time to reach resolution.

Contemporary epic fantasy writers can hardly avoid being compared to the early masters. E. R. Eddison, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Lord Dunsany paved the way for writers like Terry Brooks, Ursula K. Le Guin, David Eddings, Raymond Feist, Jennifer Roberson, and Stephen Donaldson. Epic fantasy flourishes today with these writers and others producing exciting tales of high adventure. Readers come to these works looking for adventure on a sweeping scale, elegant language, and struggles between good and evil.

Bujold, Lois McMaster. Chalion series. *The Curse of Chalion*. New York: EOS, 2006. (ISBN 0061134244).

Perhaps better known for science fiction, Bujold is also a master of high fantasy. Here, she presents a damaged hero, betrayed by those he trusted, who returns to serve the royal family. As tutor to the young royessse of Chalion, former nobleman Lupe dy Cazaril puts his life and honor at risk to protect his charge and to revenge himself on his betrayers. Bujold presents a compelling mixture of magic, violence, and romance in this series starter.

Duncan, Dave. Tales of the King's Blades series. *The Gilded Chain: A Tale of the King's Blades*. New York: Avon Eos, c1998. (ISBN 9780380974603).

Duncan blends adventure, magic, politics, and swordplay into a satisfying tale. This series starter sets the stage, a land with a medieval/feudal feel, and the premise, that a class of men is raised to be bound swordsmen to their liege lords. Duncan tells the life of the swordsman Durendal, bound by powerful magic to serve the king. Durendal and his band are sent on a quest to uncover the secrets of the distant city of Samarinda.

Hobb, Robin. Farseer trilogy. *The Assassin's Apprentice*. New York: Bantam Books, 1995. (ISBN 055357339X).

Hobb has made her name with several epic high fantasy series. The Farseer trilogy is Hobb at her best. She tells the story of a prince's by-blow, trained as an assassin to serve the royal family. Hobb is noted for her skilled and creative worldbuilding and for the depth of her characters. She offers up a fine mix of adventure, political intrigue, and romance.

Jordan, Robert. The Wheel of Time series. *The Eye of the World*. New York: Tor, 1990. (ISBN 0812500482).

Jordan's series is an epic undertaking in worldbuilding. Over twelve books, Jordan takes readers on a far-reaching journey across his fictional landscape. The series starter introduces the heroes of the quest, who find themselves caught up in events far beyond their imagining, in a world where magic and physical prowess battle for control. Complex characters, twisting plots, and a deft blend of action and description make this a potent series.

THE ALERT COLLECTOR

Kay, Guy Gavriel. *Tigana*. New York: Roc, 1990. (ISBN 0670833339).

Kay is noteworthy for having been selected to assist in the editing of J. R. R. Tolkien's work for posthumous publication. Tolkien's influence is clear here in the varied cast of characters, the strong sense of place, and the story of a young hero, son of a vanquished kingdom, leading the struggle against the forces of evil. A prolific fantasist, Kay has a number of important stand-alone novels as well as series titles.

PARANORMAL/URBAN/CONTEMPORARY FANTASY

Buffy the Vampire Slayer did a great service to humankind (above and beyond killing monsters, that is): she ushered in the craze for Contemporary Fantasy. Buffy showed the masses that fantasy can be fun, modern, quirky, sexy, and funny. Also known as Paranormal Fantasy, the books usually feature paranormal characters (werewolves, vampires, wizards, fairies, etc.) in a contemporary setting. City settings are especially popular (ergo the subgenre Urban Fantasy) and crossovers with other genres are hot, most notably with romance and erotica. Expect fast pacing, exciting plots, and hip characters.

Forerunners of Contemporary Fantasy include Charles de Lint and Emma Bull, both of whom are still popular. J.K. Rowling and Stephenie Meyer are phenomena in their own right; other hot authors include L.A. Banks, Patricia Briggs, Rachel Caine, P.C. Cast, MaryJanice Davidson, Christopher Golden, Laurell K. Hamilton, and Sherrilyn Kenyon.

Armstrong, Kelley. Women of the Otherworld series. *Bitten*. New York: Viking, 2001. (ISBN: 0452286034).

Werewolves, necromancers, and other assorted denizens of the supernatural world drive the stories in Armstrong's books. Expect a bit of mystery, a lot of romance, and female leads who steal the show. The novels work well on their own or can be read in sequence (ten to date); first in the series is *Bitten*.

Butcher, Jim. Dresden Files series. *Storm Front*. New York: Roc, 2000. (ISBN: 0451457811).

The basis of the short-lived television show, Dresden Files novels feature fairies, demons, vampires, and Chicago's only professional wizard, Harry Dresden. Fantasy, crime noir, and comedy make surprisingly good bedfellows, especially as the series progresses and author Butcher hits his stride. Dark themes of power, responsibility, and hints of a vast conspiracy are leavened by Dresden's wisecracking jokes and quirky friends. Read these in order (eleven to date), starting with *Storm Front*.

De Lint, Charles. Newford series. New York: Atheneum, 1990. (ISBN: 014230218X).

De Lint is a granddaddy of Urban Fantasy, and he's still going strong. Though he's written many, many books, try fo-

cus on his Newford series, set in a fictional North American town. Myths and folklore underpin these richly detailed stories, in which the divisions blur between the worlds of humans and fairies. The first book is *The Dreaming Place*, but it's not necessary to read the series in order.

Gaiman, Neil. *Neverwhere*. New York: Avon, 1997. (ISBN: 0060557818).

Neverwhere is a consummate example of Urban Fantasy, though most of Gaiman's works will appeal to fans of the subgenre. Lurking just below London is a darker, creepier version of the city, where two nasty bad guys are hunting for a strange little girl and her hapless friend Richard, a resident of the so-called "real" London.

Moning, Karen Marie. Fever series. *Darkfever*. New York: Delacorte, 2006. (ISBN: 0440240980).

Author Moning's last name is rather, um, appropriate for the books she writes. Romance and steamy sex abound in these paranormal adventures, featuring MacKayla Lane, a human who gets caught up in fairy politics in Ireland. Read these racy thrillers in order, starting with *Darkfever*.

HISTORICAL FANTASY

"Historical fantasy" exists at the overlap of historical fiction with the fantastic, where carefully researched historical details are embellished with and altered by the addition of dragons, magic, or the otherworldly. Its fans appreciate details, the particulars that in historical fiction build authenticity and that fantasy calls "worldbuilding." These novels reintroduce the element of surprise to the enjoyment of history; aided by dragons or alchemical weapons, maybe Napoleon won't be defeated at Waterloo after all.

Tending towards labyrinthine plots and imposing casts of characters, historical fantasies take on the tone, whether mannered or gritty, of the historical periods that inspired them. Marion Zimmer Bradley, Sara Douglass, Juliet Marillier, and Judith Tarr are inspired by the dark and classical ages, where history blends into mythology. Mary Gentle, Harry Harrison, and Harry Turtledove play war games with military regiments shifted in time. Lian Hearn, Kij Johnson, and Kara Dalkey mine the histories of Japan and India. Writers to watch include Elizabeth Bear, Marie Brennan, and Jo Graham as well as young adult fantasist Libba Bray and co-authors Caroline Stevermer and Patricia Wrede.

Clarke, Susanna. *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004 (ISBN: 0765356155).

Two magicians respond to the reawakening of magic in 19th-century England: academic Norrell hopes to confine its study to the ivory tower, while his protégé-cum-rival Strange seeks practical applications, beginning with the confounding of Napoleon's soldiers by illusion. Footnoted digressions regarding England's magical past give the story historical sweep. Literary, stylish, both Austen-inspired

and unique in tone, this lengthy tome is a benchmark for creating an eerie yet believable world equally furnished by history and folklore.

Kay, Guy Gavriel. *The Lions of al-Rassan*. New York: Harper Collins, 2005 (ISBN: 0060733497).

Whether inspired by Renaissance Italy or medieval Provence, Kay's low-magic standalone novels transpose historical conflicts to invented worlds. This variation on medieval Spain mirrors its Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultures in an imagined setting. A young woman physician is torn between two strong men, exiled generals destined to end on opposite sides of impending war. All of Kay's novels feature richly detailed settings, an eloquent style, and nuanced characters with divided loyalties.

Bull, Emma. *Territory*. New York: Tor, 2007 (ISBN: 0812548361).

Tombstone, Arizona just ain't big enough for more than one sorcerer in this low-magic Western fantasy. Horse-breaker Jesse Fox, new to town, crosses paths with a serial-writing widow, a Chinese doctor, Doc Holliday, and a particularly sinister incarnation of Wyatt Earp, all strongly characterized. Following the power struggles leading up to the West's most famous gunfight, Bull connects silver mining and earth magic in a moody, original chimera of fact and fancy.

Novik, Naomi. Temeraire series, *His Majesty's Dragon*. New York: Del Rey, 2006 (ISBN: 0345481283).

Building on the popularity of Patrick O'Brian's age-of-sail historicals, Novik re-imagines the Napoleonic wars with an air corps of intelligent dragons. Royal Navy Captain Laurence's service as an aviator begins unexpectedly when he bonds with dragon Temeraire, just captured from an enemy ship. The ongoing series ranges from Dover to the Far East, captivating readers with military action, engaging characters, and convincing details of dragon natural history.

Keyes, J. Gregory. Age of Unreason series, *Newton's Cannon*. New York: Del Rey, 1998 (ISBN: 0345433785).

Isaac Newton introduces magic-enhanced weaponry to the conflict between England and France. Sorcerer's apprentice and ladies' man Ben Franklin endeavors, with Louis XIV's latest mistress, to stop the Sun King from destroying London. Fictional and historical figures mingle in a busy, multi-threaded plot played out over four novels, building to an apocalypse that encompasses Europe and the New World, angels and demons. Like Neal Stephenson's Baroque Cycle, Keyes's series canvasses the Age of Enlightenment, but with blacker magic.

REALISTIC FANTASY

"That was not how it happened in the stories." This sorrowful statement from Joe Abercrombie's First Law trilogy captures the fundamental appeal of Realistic Fantasy. Influenced by

George R.R. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire series, worldbuilding authors began examining the high price characters pay for their ambitions. No longer stereotypical heroes and villains, these people have mixed motives, and it is sometimes difficult to find a "good guy." Magic and the *deus ex machina* don't sew up these stories with neat endings, and major characters can and do die. While action scenes are exciting, overall plots may cover months or even years in detail, so readers must be patient and collection developers alert to sequels. Brutal language, violence, and sex may make Realistic Fantasy more for mature YA and adult readers. In one of the newest corners of the fantasy genre, other realistic fantasy authors of note include K. J. Parker, David Anthony Durham, and R. Scott Bakker.

Micklem, Sarah. *Firethorn*. New York: Spectra, 2005. (ISBN: 055338340X).

A base-born young woman becomes a camp follower devoted to an impetuous royal knight. Herblore forms the basis for the fantasy elements, but use of it brings reward and heart-break. While a system of gods under male and female avatars is established and maintained, there is no hint of interaction with supernatural beings. For readers who like strong female characters, unromanticized chivalry, and political maneuvering. First in a projected trilogy.

Ruckley, Brian. Godless World trilogy. *Winterbirth*. New York: Orbit, 2007. (ISBN: 0316068063).

Dynastic succession, conflict between traditional ways and a new apocalyptic religion, and the shadows of past crimes hang over this freezing world. Modeled on the clan warfare of the Scottish Highlands, with a dark and growing supernatural enemy, Ruckley's Godless World (of which two books have been published) also lays bare the challenges of leadership in a time of anarchy and crisis.

Scholes, Ken. Psalms of Isaak series. *Lamentation*. New York: Tor, 2009. (ISBN: 0765321270).

A fierce but wise nomadic prince becomes the hope for his world, in which power is precariously balanced among various interests. Magical herbs give the characters limited powers, but a hint of the supernatural links these events to an ancient chess game of vengeance. Strong characters, swirling battle scenes, and the untangling of conspiratorial threads make this a strong first entry in a series.

Abercrombie, Joe. The First Law. *The Blade Itself*. Amherst, N.Y.: Pyr, 2007 (ISBN: 159102594X).

A diverse cast fights a multi-front war—some defending against human enemies, others joining a quest that requires abilities they don't understand. Abercrombie uses multiple narrators to carry the action of the First Law trilogy forward, while legends illuminate the foundations of a war that goes back to the creation of the world. Abercrombie's skills lie in making unlikable characters understandable and in cynically viewing a decadent, faction-riven society.

THE ALERT COLLECTOR

Palmatier, Joshua. Throne trilogy. *The Skewed Throne*. New York: Daw, 2006. (ISBN: 0756403820).

A street girl channels her anger and the power of the mysterious White Flame and rises to become Mistress of Amenkor in Palmatier's Throne trilogy. Varis, brutalized yet vulnerable and caring, grows into power and leadership even as she experiences loss and terror with few resources other than her own strength.

LITERARY FANTASY

"Literary fantasy" is an umbrella term given to books with fantastic elements that apply graceful style, symbolic language, complex characters, ethereal settings, alliterative in-jokes, meta-references, or non-linear timelines (to name just a few devices).

Literary fantasy includes forerunners such as Mervyn Peake, Peter Beagle and Richard Adams. The term encompasses magic realists including Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, Salman Rushdie, and Isabel Allende. Fantasists like Robert Holdstock, Emma Bull, and Patricia McKillip, who explore an anthropological mythos, fit in literary fantasy. Tricksters and shaman prophets of the New Weird such as Jeff VanderMeer, James Blaylock and Hal Duncan, bring the genre new possibilities. Authors mentioned elsewhere in this article are also literary: Tolkien, Le Guin, de Lint, Martin and Clarke to name a few, as are new writers like Kelly Link, Keith Donohue and Catherynne Valente. Finally, it should be noted that countless "mainstream" authors use fantastic elements.

The tie that binds such disparate authors is their audience. Literary fantasy invites crossover readership from literary fiction, attracting readers who like to be challenged *and* entertained. Alert collectors should watch annual awards to make literary fantasy selections. World Fantasy Award, Hugo, Nebula, Locus and Mythopoeic Award nominees almost always come from this part of the genre.

Carroll, Jonathan. *The Ghost in Love*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008. (ISBN: 0374161860).

Carroll's latest makes a fine entry to his work. Ben Gould falls on ice—an accident that should kill him. He survives, but his life turns down the rabbit hole. The ghost sent to guide Ben in the afterlife falls for his girlfriend; Ben talks with his dog; and a mysterious knife-wielding man hunts them all. Carroll's trademarks are here: metaphysics; the afterlife; talking animals; settings that border the "real" and dream worlds; and storytelling that makes luminous that which other writers only make scary.

Crowley, John. *Little, Big*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1981. (ISBN: 0061120057).

Smokey Barnable marries Alice Drinkwater, joining an incomparable family saga: a quirky, shambling tale as variegated as Edgewood, the family home built with elements of every architectural style. The novel ranges up and down the Drinkwater family tree, exploring their connection to the fairy world.

Crowley's style is elegant, affirming, entertainingly digressive and descriptive in the manner of first-rate storytellers. Loosely plotted, this gentle book must be savored, not gulped.

Miéville, China. New Crobuzon series. *Perdido Street Station*. New York: Del Rey, 2000. (ISBN: 0345459404).

Set in a grand, rotting heap of a city called New Crobuzon, these loosely connected novels mix magic, technology, and decay in an indeterminate time. Miéville takes Dickens' protest politics into a sprawling dark world populated by diverse, morally ambiguous characters. Political, gritty, and overflowing with dazzling language, these novels prove how different a successful fantasist can be from Tolkien. Start with *Perdido Street Station*.

Powers, Tim. Last Call trilogy. *Last Call*. New York: Harper, 1992. (ISBN: 038072846X).

Powers brings the Fisher King to the American Southwest in three novels that mix ghosts, magic, immortality, and Jungian archetypes with real world figures like Bugsy Siegel and Thomas Edison and milieus like poker and psychiatry. With his complex, engrossing style, it's easy to see why many literary fantasists cite Powers as a favorite.

Wolfe, Gene. The Book of the New Sun. *Shadow & Claw*. New York: Orb, 1980. (ISBN: 0312890176).

Known for untrustworthy narrators and labyrinthine plots, Wolfe originally published his masterwork in four installments. Now in two omnibus editions, it's the story of Severian, a suave but dishonest torturer with a photographic memory. Motivated readers will reread this mix of Christian imagery, archaic language, and science fiction elements, each time finding new insights.

RESOURCES

To learn more about major fantasy writers and the appeal of the fantasy genre try these tools.

Books

Fichtelberg, Susan. *Encountering Enchantment: A Guide to Speculative Fiction for Teens*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. (ISBN: 1591583160).

Offers annotations of over 1400 titles aimed at readers in grades six through twelve. Eleven of fourteen chapters focus on fantasy titles, with additional chapters on science fiction, horror, and graphic novels.

Herald, Diane Tixier and Bonnie Kunzel. *Fluent in Fantasy: The Next Generation*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. (ISBN: 1591581982)

A guide to current fantasy titles, arranged in thirteen thematic categories. This revised edition includes over 2000 titles either new or newly described.

Hollands, Neil. *Read On . . . Fantasy Fiction*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. (ISBN: 1591583306)

Part of Libraries Unlimited's Read On series, Hollands's book lists over 800 fantasy titles arranged by their primary appeal factor. An excellent resource for quick lists of fantasy for readers and librarians.

Saricks, Joyce. *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2001. (ISBN: 978-0-8389-0803-7).

Saricks's book is a boon to those exploring a new genre or looking to build genre knowledge. The fantasy section includes a discussion of fantasy's appeal characteristics, lists of benchmark authors and subgenres, and suggestions for working with fantasy readers.

Stevens, Jen and Dorothea Salo. *Fantasy Authors: A Research Guide*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2008. (ISBN: 1591584973).

Includes a discussion of the fantasy genre, a timeline of fantasy writing, and research resources on about one hundred prominent contemporary fantasy authors. A useful resource for building knowledge of the fantasy genre.

Review Sources

In addition to the major review sources—*Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*—all of which regularly review fantasy titles, be sure to look at the following specialty sources in both print and online form.

Fantasy Book Critic, <http://fantasybookcritic.blogspot.com>

Provides in-depth reviews of new fantasy titles and is a useful compendium of news about the fantasy publishing industry, fantasy writers, and fantasy awards.

Green Man Review, <http://www.greenmanreview.com>

Offers reviews of books, music and film focusing on titles with elements of fantasy, folklore, and fairy tale. Additional content includes articles on fantasy writers and topics and reviews of performances in these areas.

Locus Magazine. Oakland, Calif.: Locus Publications, 1968–. Monthly (ISSN 0047-4959)

Locus is a major source of information for fantasy and science fiction collectors and readers. Each monthly issue includes author interviews, publishing news, 20–25 reviews, lists of newly published titles (monthly) and forthcoming titles (quarterly). *Locus* also has an online edition at <http://www.locusmag.com>.

Overbooked: Speculative Fiction, www.overbooked.org

Winner of the 2008 Louis Shores–Greenwood Publishing Award for reviewing, Overbooked is an excellent resource for locating starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. The Speculative Fiction section of the site lists titles receiving a starred review arranged by year and then approximate date of publication, then alphabetically by author.

Internet

Fantastic Fiction, <http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk> (for series sequence)

Fantasy Fiction Lists, http://home.austarnet.com.au/petersykes/fantasy100/lists_books.html

Pat's Fantasy Hotlist, <http://fantasyhotlist.blogspot.com>

Recommended Fantasy Author List, <http://www.sff.net/people/Amy.Sheldon/listcont.htm>

SF Site, <http://www.sfsite.com>

SciFan, <http://www.scifan.com>

SFF World, <http://www.sffworld.com>