

Activities keep fantasy, sci-fi club growing

UNL group offers animation, gaming



By Mark Baldrige
Staff Reporter

They started with just four charter members: Garner Johnson was president, and Rochelle Dvorak, Ann Goering and Tudor Lewis were members.

Today, two and a half years later, the Lincoln Fantasy and Science Fiction club has grown to the point that it's sponsoring its first convention — Maelstrom — in September.

As a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student organization, the club has access to both student unions and other campus facilities.

They also charge no dues, no fees, and no admission to most of their club functions.

"I'd say we offer our events 90 to 95 percent free," Johnson said.

There will be, however, a \$20 fee for Maelstrom at the door, he said. But the fee is five dollars less for those who register before Wednesday, September 1.

Johnson said the club offers opportunities to "socialize with people who are interested and like the same things."

The club's meeting — which serves as a forum on science fiction and fantasy books, films and comics — meets on Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

A writer's group meets biweekly on Thursdays. It offers a workshop for those interested in writing horror, sci-fi, and fantasy.

Role-playing games are offered in conjunction with the Lincoln Gaming Guild on Saturdays.

And premiering tonight at 7:30 is "Radio-Active Badger Theatre," a weekly showing of episodes of "Dr. Who," "Blake's 7," and the bizarre "Mystery Science Theater 3000" which is currently unavailable in the Lincoln area.

The group is probably best known for offering mini Japanese animation festivals one Sunday a month and occasionally previewing upcoming science-fiction television shows and series episodes.

The previews are made available by mem-



Travis Heying/DN

Garner Johnson, a graduate student in military history and the president of the Lincoln Fantasy and Science Fiction club, stands in front of a collection of his favorite science fiction books.

bers with satellite hookups who receive satellite feed transmissions intended for local stations.

Showing the feed transmissions is legal because it's free, Johnson said.

"The cable companies know that we do it," he said. "And really what happens is that people will watch (the shows) twice."

Johnson said many will watch the shows at the preview and then again later when the show premieres.

Fan networks supply much of the animation

and films that the club shows, working within the gray areas of the law.

"The fans are pretty good at policing themselves," Johnson said. "The distribution companies are also very helpful."

But once the rights are purchased by an American distributing company, the fan bootlegs disappear, he said.

Basically, he said, the method allows fans and distributors to work together to create a wider market for the films.

Johnson said club members also maintain a

great interest in American science-fiction and fantasy authors. The monthly newsletter carries regular interviews with well known writers, including upcoming articles with Larry Niven and Roger Zelazny.

A host of writers will also be guests at Maelstrom, including Robert Reed of Lincoln, Mickey Zucker Reichert — whose latest novel, "Last of the Renshai" is just out — and Richard Knaak, whose new novel, "King of the Gray," is due in October.

'The Client' has privilege, but doesn't retain chance of being Grisham's best



John Grisham
"The Client"
Doubleday

John Grisham's latest novel of murder and intrigue debuted at No. 1 on the bestseller lists and filming for the motion picture has begun.

The book is good anyway.

"The Client" is a departure for Grisham in the respect that the protagonist is not a lawyer or a law student. He's an 11-year-old boy.

Mark Sway is sneaking a smoke with his little brother Ricky in the woods near the trailer park where they live with their mother. They become embroiled in a crooked lawyer's suicide attempt and then witness his last, successful try.

Mark tries to keep their experience a secret, but when Ricky goes into extended

shock, Mark has no choice but to get help. Unfortunately, the police are of little assistance.

It seemed the suicide victim was representing a young Mafioso accused of murdering a U.S. senator. The police, the F.B.I. and a pompous district attorney are convinced Mark knows the details of the crime.

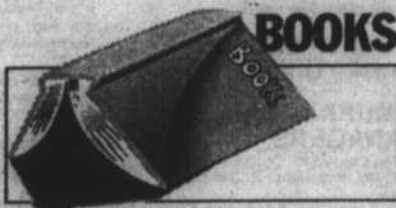
He does, but he's not telling. And he hires an attorney to make sure he doesn't have to spill the beans. His representation is one Reggie Love, a 52-year-old divorcee and child's rights activist.

The story rolls from one escapade to another, involving bumbling F.B.I. agents and vengeful Mafia hitmen. Grisham makes Mark a very savvy little boy but it's not too contrived, especially as Grisham gives glimpses into the boy's troubled life.

The book gets a little too sentimental in some places but reads at a fast pace despite playing the heartstrings so often. "The Client" is not quite as good as Grisham's previous novels — "A Time to Kill," "The Firm" or "The Pelican Brief," but it's still an entertaining way to whittle away the hours.

— Anne Steyer

'Exile' explores quest to reveal truth in rigidly controlled society



Michael P. Kube-McDowell
"Exile"
Ace Science Fiction

A light appears in the sky over the world of Ana, and a voice tells the people it is from another planet, their home planet, and they are a colony.

The leaders of the world, stricken with fear at the challenge to their rule, destroy the spacecraft. The witnesses to the event are massacred, or exiled, because they demanded to know the truth about the incident.

This is the intriguing premise of Michael P. Kube-McDowell's "Exile."

This twist on first-contact stories picks up 15 years later, when Meer Faschen receives a message that his friend, Kendar Nanchen, has died while in exile. Nanchen wished to be returned to the city of Ana upon his death.

Faschen is painfully reminded by the request that he himself sent Nanchen into exile, in an effort to save himself from the executioner's blade.

Despite violent opposition, Faschen travels to Epa-Daun, the city of exiles.

There he finds his friend still quite alive, but unable to live with himself. It seems he can no longer suppress the truth of the fateful encounter so many years before.



David Badders/DN

The two became determined to return from exile, and tell the truth. But it's no easy task in a rigidly controlled society such as Ana.

Nanchen dies of exhaustion before the two can reach their destination, leaving Faschen to carry on, and eventually break the silence.

"Exile" is the sixth novel from Kube-McDowell, and follows his growing tradition of excellence, marked by meticulously crafted and believable settings. His first novel, "Emprise" (1985), was a Philip K. Dick Award finalist. His fifth book, "The Quiet Pools" (1991), was a Hugo Award finalist. "Altermities" (1988) is one of the best alternate-universe tales ever published. "Exile" is highly recommended reading, from an author almost certain to win a Hugo or Nebula before the decade is out.

— Sam Kepfield