

SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship 2019



Originally the Pilgrim Award, the SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship was created in 1970 by the SFRA to honor lifetime contributions to SF and fantasy scholarship. The award was first named for J. O. Bailey's book, *Pilgrims through Space and Time* and altered in 2019.

This year's awardee is Sherryl Vint of the University of California, Riverside.

Committee Statement

Joan Gordon (chair), Amy Ransom, Art Evans

SHERRYL Vint is one of the hardest working and most modest scholars now working in science fiction. She is also certainly one of the best. I have found her scholarship invaluable ever since her first book, *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (2007). Her second, *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* (2010), is very important to my own work in animal studies and science fiction. She has published two other books and co-edited four more, all vital to any decent collection of sf scholarship. All these books are widely read and cited in sf scholarship.

But wait, that's the least of it in some ways. As Professor of Science Fiction Media Studies at the University of California, Riverside, she has made Riverside a mecca for sf study, growing a strong department, nurturing graduate students and launching them into the academic world. She has hosted wonderful conferences there, wrangled the International Association of the Fantastic in the Arts as their president, been a keynote speaker on sf all over the world, and written many fine articles. In between all this work she managed to found, with Mark Bould, the journal *Science Fiction Film and Television*.

Most importantly of all in my universe, she is a co-editor of *Science Fiction Studies*, where I and five others share editorship. I know for sure how much work that involves—I only feel vaguely on top of things now that I'm retired but she's doing it along with teaching, administrating, writing, speaking, etc., etc., etc. And doing it as meticulously and thoroughly as she approaches all those other things. She is a wonderful scholar, a wonderful colleague, and a wonderful companion. That's just

my opinion (one shared with the other editors at *SFS*). Our committee took about five minutes to decide that the Award for Lifetime Achievement in Science Fiction Scholarship should go to Sherryl because my opinion is also that of the award committee as a whole, and I feel confident it is an opinion that the members of SFRA share.

Awardee Statement

Sherryl Vint

University of California, Riverside / USA

I am honoured and humbled to be selected to receive this award, joining so many scholars I admire. I am tremendously grateful to this field for welcoming me into your conversations and giving me an academic home that has not only inspired my scholarship, but also enabled me to meet people whom I consider among my closest friends. I believe that such generosity is a significant part of why the sf research community produces important and relevant scholarship that strives to make a difference in the world.

Thank you to the SFRA Executive and those who work on committees for your role in fostering this field of study, and especially for your role in preserving this space for younger scholars to continue to expand and improve.

I must also thank Douglas Barbour, my PhD supervisor, who introduced me to sf as a field of study. Unlike many, I came to sf scholarship not through fandom but through critical theory: sf writers engaged the questions that most excited me in my critical reading, and with Doug's support I thus transformed my planned area of study. I've followed in the footsteps of so many great scholars whose work showed me what was possible in the field, chief among them Veronica Hollinger, whose essays on gender and more showed me a model of the kind of scholar I wished to become. I first met Veronica as the external examiner on my dissertation, and I'm so pleased that today I can call her my colleague and friend.

I feel fortunate to be part of a community that prioritizes thinking about how *and why* the world might be otherwise. Such thinking is vitally important today, a volatile moment in history in which competing visions of the future—even about the nature of reality—are highly contested topics. In my research, I have aspired to

show that sf is a significant site of political engagement that grapples with central theoretical and ethical issues. To me, the struggle over the imagination has never seemed more urgent than it does today, a time that feels on the cusp of momentous cultural change—although whether this will be to reimagine social inclusion and extend measures such as debt relief that have suddenly become “possible” in the wake of the pandemic, or to intensify the racialized inequalities the pandemic has made all-the-more visible in an austerity-driven return to “normal” remains to be seen. In her National Book Foundation Medal acceptance speech in 2014, Ursula K. Le Guin reminded us that sf is the voice of those who can “see alternatives to how we live now,” who recognize that what is described as “inescapable” is, in fact, contingent. I’m privileged to be part of a community that cultivates the imagination of a better world, that takes the struggle to imagine the future as serious political work, and that provides hope and vision to enable us to make as well as to imagine change. Over the past decade, I’ve seen the field grow and change in ways that are consistent with this ethos, led by visionary writers and scholars.

There are so many people to thank who have educated, inspired, and supported me along the way, as scholars and as friends. The list (which inevitably will fall short) includes Jonathan Alexander, Andrew M. Butler, Gerry Canavan, Grace Dillon, Paweł Frelik, David M. Higgins, Roger Luckhurst, Farah Mendlesohn, Colin Milburn, Keren Omry, John Rieder, Steven Shaviro, Rebekah Sheldon, and Taryne Taylor. I’m lucky to be able to call these people friends as well as colleagues. I’ve frequently collaborated with Mark Bould, whose scholarship deserve special acknowledgement in shaping my own. My colleagues on the *Science Fiction Studies* board—Arthur B. Evans, Joan Gordon, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., Veronica Hollinger, Carol McGuirk, and Lisa Swanstrom—continually teach me and have become a second family. My sf colleagues at UC Riverside—andré carrington, Nalo Hopkinson, and John Jennings—exemplify all that is best about collegiality in our field and enable me to work in a research culture that epitomizes what I value about this field. Finally, I want to thank my graduate students, whose cutting-edge and politically engaged work shows me that the best is yet to come.

I’m so pleased to accept this award and I thank you for this recognition.