

Westercon 78

BayCon 42

THE ANSWER

Progress
Report 1

A Message from the Chair

Planning for **BayCon 42** has continued to build momentum over the past several months, and as we move toward the new year, the shape of the convention is becoming clearer and more exciting. Volunteers across every department have been meeting regularly, coordinating details, and laying the groundwork for a vibrant, community-centered event when BayCon returns to the Santa Clara Marriott from **July 3–6, 2026**. The November and December executive meetings brought together a wide range of updates, new ideas, and collaborative efforts, all reflecting the dedication and creativity of the BayCon team.

A major highlight of this planning cycle is the confirmation of three Guests of Honor. **Sumiko Saulson** will join us as Poet-in-Residence, bringing their powerful voice and perspective to the convention. We are also thrilled to welcome two award-winning authors: **Charlie Jane Anders**, known for her novels, podcasting, and work as a founding editor of io9, and **Annalee Newitz**, the celebrated journalist, editor, and founder of io9. Their presence adds a strong literary and cultural foundation to the event, and the programming team is already considering how best to feature their work.

Programming is approaching a major milestone, with the panel request form nearly ready to launch. This year, we're expanding our science and STEM offerings to spotlight

the remarkable expertise within our own community, including attendees with ties to NASA, robotics, engineering, computer science, and emerging technologies.

BayCon will also celebrate the long tradition of fan-created works through a revitalized partnership with Fanzines, while expanding support for the furry community.

This year we'll highlight new community-focused offerings, including mental health programming specifically created for queer attendees.

Hospitality has begun planning an inclusive, allergy-aware menu for 2026.

Events is planning for returning musical acts, drag programming, Maggie's Gurls, divination workshops, fanzine meetups, and furry community activities.

The Hotel team is preparing to release the reservation link soon, we'll announce it over social media.

We encourage you to join us at the **first All-Staff Meeting of the year on January 10 at 11 a.m.**

With each meeting, each update, and each new idea, BayCon 42 grows a little more defined — a collaborative effort shaped by volunteers, creativity, and the shared excitement of bringing the community together once again.

—Robin Vasilakos
BayCon 2026 Chairperson

Guest of Honor Charlie Jane Anders

Charlie Jane Anders is the author of *Lessons in Magic and Disaster*, published August 2025 by Tor Books. Her other novels include *All the Birds in the Sky*, *The City in the Middle of the Night* and the young-adult *Unstoppable* trilogy. She's also the author of the short story collection *Even Greater Mistakes*, and *Never Say You Can't Survive*, a book about how to use creative writing to get through hard times. She's won the Hugo, Nebula, Sturgeon, Lambda Literary, Crawford and Locus Awards. She co-created Escapade, a transgender superhero, for Marvel Comics and wrote her into the long-running *New Mutants* comic. And she's currently the science fiction and fantasy book reviewer for the



Washington Post. With Annalee Newitz, she co-hosts the podcast *Our Opinions Are Correct*.

Guest of Honor Annalee Newitz



Annalee Newitz writes science fiction and nonfiction. They are the author of four novels: *Automatic Noodle*, *The Terraformers*, *The Future of Another Timeline*, and *Autonomous*, which won the Lambda Literary Award. As a science journalist, they are the author of *Stories*

Are Weapons: Psychological Warfare and the American Mind, *Four Lost Cities: A Secret History of the Urban Age* and *Scatter, Adapt and Remember: How Humans Will Survive a Mass Extinction*, which was a finalist for the LA Times Book Prize in science. They are a writer for the New York Times and elsewhere, and have a monthly column in New Scientist. They have published in The Washington Post, Slate, Scientific American, Ars Technica, The New Yorker, and Technology Review, among others. They are the co-host of the Hugo Award-winning podcast *Our Opinions Are Correct*, and have contributed to the public radio shows "Science Friday", "On the Media", "KQED Forum", and "Here and Now". Previously, they were the founder of io9, and served as the editor-in-chief of Gizmodo.

Guest of Honor Sumiko Saulson

Sumiko is a two-time Bram Stoker Award® finalist for poetry, recognized for *The Rat King* (2022, Dooky Zines) and *Melancholia* (2024, Bludgeoned Girls Press). Their writing blends horror, Afrosurrealism, and speculative themes to explore grief, identity, and resilience. They are also an Elgin Award nominee and the recipient of the 2018 Afrosurrealist Writers Award and the 2021 Ladies of Horror Readers' Choice Award.

Their most recent novel, *Somnalia: The Metamorphoses of Flynn Keahi* (Mocha Memoirs Press), is a powerful journey of transformation set in a surreal, mythic landscape.



Sumiko brings a distinct voice to speculative literature and poetry. Their presence at BayCon 42 reminds us that meaning can be found in metaphor, memory, and the magic of language.

Advertise with us!

BayCon has multiple publications, both digital and online, throughout the year, which are seen by hundreds of attendees, panelists, and guests. If you're an author, a book publisher, or a local business in Santa Clara, we want to tell our members about it in our Progress Reports, our convention Program Book, and in our Mailchimp e-newsletters. Please email inquiries to marketing@baycon.org.



AfroFuturism Lounge Returns

Last year the **AfroFuturism Lounge** expanded from its origins at **AfroCon** to **BayCon 2025/ Westercon 77** and built connections from the San Diego Area up to the San Francisco Bay Area. The work done to build communities throughout California is an important goal of the AfroFuturism Lounge. It will bring the voices and stories from Oakland, San Francisco, San Jose, and Santa Clara as well as the surrounding communities and share their impact on Speculative Fiction, Poetry, Film Making, and the culture movement that has always been the backbone of the Bay Area. BayCon 42 is honored to host and welcome the AfroFuturism Lounge back and support the work that Dr. LaWana Richmond and her team have created at other mainstream events that we all enjoy. Come and explore all that the AfroFuturism Lounge has to share and find ways to keep building the community beyond our events.

What is the AfroFuturism Lounge?

The AfroFuturism Lounge has emerged as a vital platform for celebrating and promoting AfroFuturism.

Find out more at baycon.org



Westercon 80 Site Selection

by Martin Pyne

Bidding is open to host **Westercon 80**, the 2028 West Coast Science Fantasy Conference. Any site in North America (including Hawaii) west of the 104° longitude line is eligible to host Westercon.

To file a bid, please submit the following documents to Westercon Site Selection (preferably via email at siteselection2028@westercon.org, although you can also file via snail mail at Westercon Site Selection c/o Kayla Allen, P.O. Box 242, Fernley, NV 89408-0242):

1. A statement of intent to bid listing at least two separate people declaring themselves Chair and Treasurer. (You can include other bid committee members if you want.)
2. An organizing instrument for the group sponsoring the bid, such as bylaws, articles of incorporation or association, or a partnership agreement. If the sponsoring organization is within the United States of America, you must also provide evidence that the organization is a non-profit group under applicable state law.
3. A letter of intent or option from a hotel or other facility (e.g. a convention center) declaring specific dates on which Westercon 80 will be held.

The deadline for submitting bid paperwork for a bid to appear on the ballot is May 4, 2026. Write-in campaigns can bid any time up until the close of Site Selection voting on July 4, 2026.

Note that the 2025 Westercon Business Meeting voted first passage of a motion to repeal the Westercon bylaws, so there's a chance that Westercon 80 could be the final Westercon. If you've ever been interested in running a Westercon, this may be your last opportunity!

If you have any questions about Westercon Site Selection, please contact Martin Pyne, the 2028 Westercon Site Selection Administrator, at siteselection2028@westercon.org.

What is Westercon?

Westercon (short for West Coast Science Fantasy Conference) was first proposed in 1948 by a member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS) as an annual convention for West Coast fans. It was held as a one-day event in September 1948, with an attendance of 77.

Since then, Westercon has been hosted in numerous cities across the Western third of the US. In most years, Westercon is its own convention, often with a unique name, like FiestaCon or Conzilla. It's also run much like a Worldcon (The World Science Fiction Convention), where a committee submits a bid to run the convention in a specific city for the year.

Learn more about Westercon at westercon.org.

Support Speculative Fiction

We founded the **Society for the Promotion of Speculative Fiction** (spSF, for short) three years ago, not just to be the 501(c)(3) nonprofit behind **BayCon**, but also as a vehicle to empower new voices in speculative fiction. And we want you to be a member! Take a journey with us and envision a future where there is funding and a support network of professionals for burgeoning creators in speculative fiction. We're also dedicated to supporting established writers and creators as well, providing events and tools professionals need to get more readers and grow their brand.

Right now if you become a member of spSF, **you can score a discounted badge to attend BayCon 42/Westercon 78!** Also, you get voting rights in our yearly election of directors of the spSF board, a spSF member pin and membership card, and other perks like events at BayCon exclusive to members, priority access to author interviews and readings, and more.

We also still have some Charter memberships available which makes you a founding member of the Society, helping us grow, and unlocking other perks like a numbered challenge coin and special badge/lanyard when you attend BayCon.

Register for BayCon with spSF

All year:

spSF Membership \$25

spSF Charter (Founding) Membership \$100

Until February 1, 2026:

Full Weekend Badge (no spSF) \$105 + fees

Full Weekend Badge w/spSF Membership Discount \$95*

Full Weekend Badge w/Charter Membership \$55*

* must be spSF member of the appropriate level.

Check out our [VIP badge](#) too for priority access to GoH events and access to our VIP lounge at BayCon!



Call for Panels

Are you ready to share your expertise and passion for speculative fiction? BayCon invites dynamic, engaging panelists to submit proposals and lead panels that explore the creative, thought-provoking, and innovative subjects our vibrant community loves. Whether your focus is on writing craft, visual storytelling, multimedia innovation, or the cultural impact of science fiction and fantasy, your panel can spark meaningful conversations and inspire fellow fans.

By joining our panel roster, you'll have the opportunity to:

- Engage directly with a passionate and knowledgeable audience eager to explore new ideas.
- Network with industry professionals, award-winning authors, renowned artists, and fellow panelists who share your creative vision.
- Contribute to a legacy of excellence and help shape the future of fan-run conventions.
- Enhance your personal brand and gain exposure through BayCon's extensive promotional channels.

SUBMIT YOUR PANEL IDEA AT BAYCON.ORG/GET-INVOLVED

Short Story Contest

BayCon 42/Westercon 78 is proud to present the Society for the Promotion of Speculative Fiction's short story writing contest. The winner will be announced at the convention and will receive \$100 and a free badge to accept their prizes. Stories must draw inspiration from this year's theme: The Answer.

ELIGIBILITY

- Must be a standalone, short fiction story inspired by our theme, "The Answer".
- Author must not have previous paid fiction publications (\$.08 per word or more).

MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

Must be a standalone, short fiction story inspired by our theme, "The Answer". Author must not have previous paid fiction publications (\$.08 per word or more).

- Format: Rich Text Format (RTF) or Word-compatible Document (DOC/DOCX).
- Font: 12-point (Times New Roman, Cambria, or Palatino only).
- Margins: 1 inch all sides.
- Lines: Double-spaced. Do not place extra lines between paragraphs
- Word count 2,000 to 4,000 words (hard limit)
- Filename Format: [Story Title] by [Author Name] (example: "Spooky Spooky by Adna Jackson.rtf")
- Additional Info: Modern Manuscript Format

SUBMISSIONS OPEN MARCH 1, 2026

GO TO BAYCON.ORG/WRITING-CONTEST FOR MORE INFORMATION



**See
You
In July!**

Edited by Chris Castro. Contributors: Chris Castro, Marsha Glassner, Martin Pyne, Robin Vasilakos. Graphics by Kyuu. AfroFuturism Lounge photos courtesy Dr. LaWana Richmond.

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