

Lost in Transmedial Ecosystems:  
Exploring television's *Lost* and its fans

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## Introduction

The first time I heard about *Lost* was on a craigslist help wanted posting. The listing said that a new show being produced on Oahu was seeking an office production assistant. At the time, I was living in my van so that I could complete my first novel without having to worry about paying rent. I had also been picking up odd jobs as a production assistant with shows such as *America's Next Top Model* and *The Apprentice*.

This seemed like it was right up my alley.

On the application, under address, I listed a post office box I maintained in Kailua, on the opposite side of Oahu from where the production office was located. The interview with the producer, Steve, went extremely well. My resume was solid, my enthusiasm was high, and I felt a good rapport

with Steve and the other production staff members I met in the office. The girl at the front desk told me that the show was like ‘a cross between *Survivor* and *The X-Files*’. That sounded like just the kind of show I would have loved to work on. Steve shook my hand and told me that he felt good about the interview and that it was a decision between me and a girl who had interviewed earlier in the day.

I left feeling hopeful and walked back to where my van was parked three blocks away in a K-Mart parking lot. I had just about finished the novel and was ready to take on a full time job again, especially working on what sounded like a very cool show. It was not meant to be however. No one knew that I was houseless, but I can’t help but wonder whether I didn’t get hired by *Lost* because somehow they could tell that I was a car dweller.

Steve called the next day and apologetically told me that they had decided to hire the other candidate because she lived closer to the production office. It was a very reasonable explanation and one of the nicest rejection calls I had ever received, but I couldn't help wondering if someone from the office had seen me get into what was pretty obviously, the van I lived in.

I took a job driving for a limo company, found a place to live, and tried to find a publisher for my novel; but it was not the last I heard about *Lost*. Living on the island of Oahu in the state of Hawaii, it is impossible not to hear about *Lost*, read about *Lost*, run into the cast members of *Lost*, or, in my case, wonder what would have happened if I had been hired by *Lost*. The show has become an institution in Hawaii, a media phenomenon throughout the world, and one of the most widely

anticipated and discussed shows in the history of television.

As you can see, *Lost* has been a part of my life for a while now. It is now 2008 and I am about to graduate with a degree in Anthropology. As an Honors Student, I am required to write a BA Thesis in my field of study. When I was asked what I wanted to write my thesis on, the answer was easy. *Lost*.

## **What is Lost? A Review of the Literature**

*Lost*, a show its producers once described as *Survivor* meets *The X-Files* premiered as a new series in 2004 on ABC television. In 2009, *Lost* will begin its fifth season. *Lost* will only run for six seasons. This is the amount of time the producers say they needed to tell the story. Since initially airing, *Lost* has become one of the most widely discussed programs ever shown on TV and a true cultural phenomenon. On the surface, *Lost* is the story of Oceanic flight 77, a trans-pacific flight from Sydney, Australia to Los Angeles, California that crashed mid-flight and stranded a group of strangers on a remote tropical island. The castaways

struggle to survive, escape from the island, and in the process encounter unexpected dangers and a multitude of surprising adventures. Below the surface, *Lost* is much more. By many, *Lost* is seen as being on the cutting edge of breaking down the wall between the production and consumption of entertainment. The ecosystem of *Lost* spans the entire globe and the entire range of media.

The most ardent fans of *Lost* are not just fans of the show; they are fans of the entirety of objects that represent the sum total of the texts that compose *Lost*. The architecture of *Lost* is transmedial. *Lost* begins with the writers in L.A., crosses the Pacific to Hawaii where it is filmed and produced, gets broadcast to the world on television entertainment, enters the liminal space of the internet where it begins to blur the boundary between the created and the real, and then,

sometimes, *Lost* enters into the real world in the form of products such as Apollo candy bars or billboards advertising Oceanic Air. Those who follow the show most closely now exist within a space where the fictional has seemingly become real and as such has become something that they, as real world human beings, can touch, taste, and perhaps even contribute to.

In fact, *Lost* is a composite of technical forms which, through purposeful architectural design, manages to create contingency within the fan community. It is through this lens of uncertainty as to the actuality of what is happening within the fantasy world of *Lost* that fans are forced to sift in order to discover the answers to their many questions. To add further confusion to the issue, the producers also blur the lines between the worlds of fantasy and that of reality. This inter-textual and

inter-world nature of *Lost* is representative of a contemporary discourse in which the entire range of media and products must be considered in order to understand why fans continue to speculate, argue, and wait anxiously for the next episode of the show to appear. The architecture of uncertainty built into *Lost* is as complex as it is compelling and in order to have an understanding of how the show has acquired such a dedicated fandom, one must look at what came before *Lost*.

To understand *Lost*, one must range through history from the dawn of the English language novel form to the most current trends of thought in internet sociology. The texts that form the genealogy of *Lost* include classic literature such as *Robinson Crusoe* and the latest scientific internet conspiracy novels. The writers have been known to use 'real world' scientific explanations to explain

the many mysteries that exist within the full ecosystem of the television show. *Lost* is more than just a story that came from the minds of its creators.

*Lost* is descended from a number of tropes that have profoundly affected the way people write, produce, watch, and interact with entertainment. At its most basic level, *Lost* is an island survival story in the tradition of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719 and is considered by some to be the first novel written in the English language. The characters on *Lost*, like Crusoe before them, find themselves stranded on an island where they encounter a number of 'others' and are forced to come to terms with a variety of moral, religious, and economic decisions as a result of these encounters.

*Lost* though is more than a survival story, it is also the story of 'the island' and as such owes a

large debt to Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* published in 1874. Like the castaways on Verne's island, those on *Lost*, arrive from the sky and experience strange phenomenon. In addition, Verne's story also has a dog, a submarine, a mysterious beacon from another castaway, and supplies that come from an unknown source. The creators of *Lost* have recently acknowledged that *The Mysterious Island* was the starting point for the story of *Lost*.

In fact, *Lost*, owes a large debt to many in science fiction and fantasy. Many of the episode titles are in reference to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Numerous references are made to white rabbits and both a prominent location and an episode are named "The Looking Glass". Like Alice, the castaways have gone down the rabbit hole and are now in a world

which does not always make sense to them in terms of the world they have left. And, like the readers of Carroll's works, the audience of *Lost* is left in a state of uncertainty as to what is going to happen next.

Moving forward, *Lost* is organized like the serialized fiction of radio and film in the early 1900's. While serials fell into many different genres such as science fiction, western, or detective stories; the common elements often included a recap of previous episodes and at the end of the episode a cliff-hanger ending and a preview of the next episode. A serial is, according to *The Online Dictionary for Library and Information Sciences* "any medium issued under the same title in a succession of discrete parts, usually numbered (or dated) and appearing at regular or irregular intervals with no predetermined conclusion."(Reitz: 2004). It

remains to be seen if *Lost* has a predetermined conclusion.

*Lost*, like daytime soap operas, is a serial. In *Taking Soaps Seriously: The World of Guiding Light*, Michael James Intintoli looked at soap operas from an anthropological perspective. His description soaps sound a lot like a description of *Lost*.

The unpredictability of an expected resolution is an extremely important factor in the creation and uses of suspense and anticipation. A story or plot line can go through a number of stages, as happens when a mystery is partially solved and the audience is made aware of the identity of an evil character. But the audience then becomes involved in predicting and

anticipating how and when the evildoer will be revealed to the characters on the show, who are unaware of his identity. Similarly, because audiences identify with characters and have access to information that characters are not privy to, viewers cannot be sure of an outcome or the well being of any particular character during any particular program. (Intintoli. p.52)

In fact, if one were to read this definition to *Lost* fans, they would almost certainly think you were talking about their favorite show. One of the things that *Lost* fans have both complained and marveled at is that even the most popular characters can be killed off without any notice. *Lost* has earned a reputation for killing off characters just as they start

to become interesting. Of course, sometimes they don't stay dead, or perhaps they never died at all, or maybe the viewers were looking at the past or future of the characters, or maybe the idea of death isn't quite the same on *Lost* as it is in the real life. Fans are rarely sure a character is dead or at least dead and gone. Unless the actor is dead, which hasn't happened yet, but even that might be no guarantee.

Another notable series that contributed to the tropes of *Lost* is *Dallas* (1978) which pioneered the season ending cliffhanger. And finally there are shows such as *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and the previous show created by J.J. Abrams, *Alias*. All of these shows drew dedicated and discriminating fan bases which not only kept the shows high in the ratings but also

consumed transmedial content, expanded the production created universes through fan fiction, artwork, and intense speculation. To some extent, each of these shows continued even after completing their televised runs through the continued creation that happens within the fan communities. Interestingly, many of the writers and episode directors on *Lost* are connected with these science fiction and fantasy serials.

In *From Alien to the Matrix: Reading Science Fiction Film*, writer Roz Kaveney states that

...certain works of art, among them science fiction films, have the capacity to act as triggers for the creative and critical imagination.

*Lost* is a trigger to the imaginations of those who have become fans of the show. Unlike the

confined two hours of a film narrative, *Lost* makes time an uncertainty as it progresses in a non-linear format which can move from past to present and from character to character while still maintaining a cohesive meta-arc due to the hyper-knowledge the fans have about the text. In the season three finale, *Through the Looking Glass*, the show broke with a tradition of using only flashbacks and also began to use flash forwards. This only became apparent at the end of the show. And yet some fans had already figured it out based on the appearance of a cell phone that would not have been available at the time of a flashback.

This hyper-knowledge of the minutest details serves the fan as a sort of social currency (Jenkins: 1992) which allows for participation at a higher level within the fan community.

Most often, transmedia stories are based not on individual characters or specific plots but rather complex fictional worlds which can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories. This process of world-building encourages an encyclopedic impulse in both readers and writers. We are drawn to master what can be known about a world which always expands beyond our grasp. This is a very different pleasure than we associate with the closure found in most classically constructed narratives, where we expect to leave the theatre knowing everything that is required to make sense of a particular story.

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[http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/trans-media\\_storytelling\\_101.html](http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/trans-media_storytelling_101.html)

Like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and other cult television shows which preceded it, *Lost* has acquired a discriminating and productive audience that ranges from fans of the actors to fans who role-play as add-on characters within the greater narrative. These relationships between the fans, stars, producers, and the media have created an intricate web of connections which not only define the reaction to the show, but, according to many fans, determine the plot as well.

Charting the ecosystem of the world the show itself has created is not a simple task. While the show has only one 'official' website at ABC.com, fans have created millions of websites devoted to the show. A Google search of the

keywords “Lost Television Show” brings up over 8-million pages. One of the most comprehensive is *Lostpedia.com* a community created wiki which details everything from transcripts to pop-culture references. In addition there are the very popular fan message board sites at *thetailsection.com*, *thefuselage.com*, and *lost-tvforum.com* with a combined total of more than 100,000 users. I should emphasize these are only three of the most popular and there are literally millions more websites.

Many of the websites are dedicated to discovering what the fans have dubbed ‘Easter Eggs’. *Lost* uses these hidden clues which are scattered throughout episodes, websites, and even the real world; to create a sense amongst watchers that there is a secret story that is hidden beneath the surface waiting to be found, however, many of the Easter eggs are so ambiguous that it becomes

uncertain whether they are meaningful at all. One example of this is the books shown on the bookshelf of Ben, an evil-seeming character. Are the producers telling the fans where to find further clues or simply dressing the set with *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.

In some cases these clues reveal startling things about the meta-narrative and its characters motivations and in others they are simply a way of acknowledging those fans that are paying extra close attention. These nods became important to the fans after a season two episode where the logo of an in-story organization called ‘Dharma’ was seen printed on the side of shark for less than a second. Associate Producer, Noreen O’Toole told me the producers are continually amazed at the speed with which the fans unearth even the most obscure Easter Eggs.

The producers have embedded sub-audible whispers within the show, reversed speech hidden within the soundtrack, shown split second images, utilized historical meaning behind names, and even had billboards put up in real-life New York City advertising Oceanic Air which then led fans to a fake website positioned as if it were real, which in turn took them into an alternate reality game (ARG) based on the show but anchored within the real world. Navigating these multiple realities is not easy and some fans have speculated that they might be looking at alternate realities which may not even exist for the characters at all!

Producers Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse have placed themselves in a position where they need to create a show that is enjoyable and comprehensible to four different levels of fans. The first and most basic are the casual viewers. These

viewers watch the show on a fairly regular basis but may miss episodes. The show needs to make sense, have easy to follow recaps, and not be too complex for these fans. In addition, the show needs to be exciting enough to keep the next level of fans, the dedicated viewers enthralled so that they continue to not miss a single episode. The third level of fan, the group viewers, need to be so motivated by the mysteries and events of the show that they continue to discuss, speculate, and re-watch episodes with colleagues, family, and friends and thus spread the show virally to new audiences via word of mouth. And finally, the big challenge is to do all of the above while still satisfying the most obsessive of fans, the trans-medial fan. It is the trans-medial fan who is willing to record the show and examine interesting scenes frame by frame for Easter Eggs. Trans-medial fans analyze the names of characters

or in-show businesses to locate anagrams such as ‘Mittelos’ a bioscience company mentioned in the show during the third season which fans quickly descrambled into ‘Lost Time’. Fans also take part in the multiple alternate reality games that the show has created. The trans-medial fans require more than the past, present, and future that is presented in the course of the series narrative. Instead, they are treated to a meta-story that exists independently of the TV show itself.

The Lost Experience, an alternate reality game which took place between seasons two and three revealed the story behind the story of some of the characters on the show. The *New York Times* described it "a multimedia treasure hunt that makes use of e-mail messages, phone calls, commercials, billboards and fake Web sites that are made to seem real." This was followed by alternate reality games

titles “Find 815” between seasons three and four and “The DHARMA Initiative Recruiting Project” between seasons four and five which is still in development according to ABC. The Oceanic Air billboard mentioned earlier was a part of “Find 815”. The alternate reality games introduced new characters and storylines that the producers claimed would help unlock the many secrets of the island.

The producers have released at least one book which has brought about intense speculation. *Lost Twin* is a detective story, written by Gary Troup, a fictional passenger who died when Flight 77 crashed. Characters in the second season find, read, and then burn the manuscript which was salvaged from the flight. Later that year, in the real world, Hyperion Books, released the book complete with an account of how the author had disappeared on a flight from Sydney to Los Angeles. Troup

figured prominently in *The Lost Experience*, the first alternate reality game associated with the show. This is but one example of how the lines between reality and fiction have become blurred on *Lost*.

*Lost* is the latest manifestation of a trope that is more than three-hundred years old, that of the mysterious island and castaway. *Lost* is one of the latest generation of science fiction (even though the producers reject the sci-fi label) serials that utilizes multi-linear plotlines. *Lost* is a unique artifact of the early twenty-first century United States of America. In the words of Marshall McLuhan, “The media is the message,” and as such the totality of the ecosystem the media creates and encompasses is deserving of careful scrutiny. *Lost* is the nexus of a more modern sort of entertainment.

Lost fandom is a worldwide group connected by shared experience, the internet,

common knowledge, and sometimes through meeting in person. They create a community, establish rules and norms within it, and at the same time are perhaps even convinced that they have the means to take a hand in shaping the source of the culture which they are participating in.

Fans of the show see *Lost* as the cutting edge of breaking down the wall between the production and consumption of entertainment. The producers of the show see *Lost* as a new way of telling stories. The truth is, *Lost*, is a means of interactive storytelling which spans multiple media and makes the fans think they might be contributing to the way that the story is told, but they don't know. The writers and producers of the show create this sense of contingency within a complex global media.

Those who are most interested in the show find meaning in the tiniest details. Elaborate theories have been constructed to explain how and why the characters are on the island, heated debates rage as to the validity of these theories, and the ultimate conclusion is that even those with the best theories are forced to wait for the producers to reveal the plot or the spoilers to leak. Thus far all theories have been disproved or modified to fit new data.

Within minutes of an episode airing, fans have captured screenshots, magnified book titles from the background, played audio forward and backward, identified the most obscure use of previous plot, identified historical or literary references based on the names of characters, locations, or companies, and constructed

philosophically deep theories as to the reasons these things have been included.

*Lost* attempts to cross the boundary from the fictional to the real. The production is architected to create contingency and thus draw the fans into speculation about what is real versus what is fantasy. While it is descended from island stories and serialized drama, *Lost* distorts time, death, and meaning in new ways. The show has millions of fans and the producers use Easter Eggs to reward dedicated fans with a deeper understanding of the show which can then be used as a form of social currency within the fan community. *Lost* architects contingency using a combination of old methods, such as literary devices and new methods such as alternate reality games and embedded audio. Through this combination of forms, *Lost* has become a new sort of entertainment which caters to

a new form of fan. *Lost* is a television show, an online game, an obsession, a lifestyle, and to some extent, *Lost* is real.

## ***Why talk about Lost at all?***

In this study, I will look at four aspects of this world created by the collaboration between the producers of the show, the fans of the show, and to some extent the living mythology of the show. I am charting the ecosystem of the world that the show itself has created. In this study, I will record the world of *Lost* as revealed to one man, on one island. This self-reflexivity however, will be but one aspect of an entire ecosystem that exists surrounding *Lost*. Since I am on the island where this world was visibly born and continues to be visually created, I have opportunities to see aspects of the world of *Lost* not available to researchers in other locales. Through the assistance of members of the cast, crew, and the fan community, I will convey a broader and more clear understanding of how the

show is created, what it is that the producers and writers are trying to accomplish, how the fans are receiving, interpreting, and adding to the output of the production team, and what all of this means in terms of the island itself, or perhaps I should say islands; that in the show and Oahu itself.

In order to be clear, I think it is important to state that I am a fan of the show. Initially, this project was going to be a simple ethnography of the fans using online surveys and questionnaires at fan meet ups. During my initial fieldwork, I came to realize that the questionnaire and surveys by themselves would not be sufficient to answer the main questions that I was considering. These questions were 1) Is Lost different than entertainment that has proceeded it? How? Why? 2) Are the fans of Lost different than the fans of other TV shows? And 3) Is Lost the beginning of a new

form of entertainment in which the fans participate as much as the producers?

My initial expectations were that I would be treading into unexplored territory by conducting ethnography within the fan community of a relatively new and popular television show. My naivety was quickly revealed as I found that the field of media and fan studies is vast and well studied. A survey of literature connected with *Lost* reveals an entire range of studies that fall within the fields of philosophy, literature, religion, media studies, and anthropology.

Through ground breaking work from the likes of Henry Jenkins and others the foundation has been laid to examine *Lost* as a complete system. Previous research includes mainstream anthropology methodologies using case method and situational analysis and fringe sociology looking at

the cultural relevance of the literature that surrounds soap operas. At times, I had to dig deeply into social theory in order to find root levels of meaning connecting anthropological theory to *Lost*.

Early on, it became obvious that in order to chart the full relevance of the show, I would need to talk to not just the fans, but also the creators of the program. I believe that *Lost* and many other products of mass media act as a mirror upon contemporary society. Thus, through studying media and popular entertainment, one is able to reveal data that might not otherwise be apparent from the outside of the looking glass. However, one must be certain that one is looking into mirror and not simply through a clear sheet of glass.

I chose to focus on the intersection between the created reality of the show, the mediated reality of the online communities, the face-to-face reality

of the meet up groups, and the effect that all of these factors had on the creation and production of the show. In other words, I have chosen to look at the contained ecosystem of the show and how self referential components are reflected back thus changing the original conception of the show from something produced by producers to be consumed by consumers into something that is very different.

In *The Intensive Study of Small Sample Communities* (1954), Elizabeth Colson wrote:

The real argument lies not with regard to the use of the census, but how it shall be used, to what units it shall be applied, and how it can be combined with other field techniques to produce the most adequate description of the society which is to be studied. (Colson. 1954. pp7)

While Colson was studying rural villages and I am looking at electronic global villages, we are both seeking the same thing. As accurate a picture of our sample community as it is possible to portray. As such I have used a variety of field techniques and analytical constructs.

In this study, I will be looking at *Lost* from multiple points of view. As J. Van Velson wrote in *The Extended Case Method and Situational Analysis*:

As fieldwork became the accepted method by which anthropological material was gathered, the emphasis gradually shifted from a study of societies as wholes to particular communities or segments of societies. (page 130)

*Lost* contains more than one society; the fan based cyber-community, the community of the production team, and the community that the show is made in.

The advent of the internet has moved the field of fan studies from the sociological realm, squarely into the realm of cultural anthropology. Van Velson goes on to conclude in the same essay that it is important to add

..an analysis of social process, that is, the way in which individuals actually handle their structural relationships and exploit the element of choice between alternative norms according to the requirements of any particular situation. (page 148)

Thus, I feel that learning how the various segments of *Lost*'s population interact and intersect with one another is important. For instance, one of

the questions I was most concerned with was how much interaction takes place between the producers and the fans versus how much interaction is perceived to take place.

While the line is certainly not clear cut between each of these groups since fans are often on the production team or as in my own case, live on the production island, we can classify trans-media fans as those fans who not only watch the show on television but also participate through lurking or contributing to online forums, read print texts based on the show, subscribe to mobisodes or podcasts related to the show, or become involved with fan clubs of the show. This sets them apart from most members of the production staff and the casual fans who happen to live on Oahu.

In *Patterns of Surprise*, Matt Hills, writes about how fans use the object of their fandom to

express themselves as individuals. Such is the case with the fans of *Lost*. For instance many fans identify with one side of a love triangle that exists on the show. The triangle is composed of Kate, played by Evangeline Lilly; Sawyer played by Josh Holloway; and Jack played by Matthew Fox. Kate is the sexy bad girl with a heart of gold who is torn between the love of the misunderstood con-man Sawyer or reluctant-hero surgeon Jack. Fans have identified themselves as Skaters, those who root for Sawyer and Kate; and Jaters, those who root for Jack and Kate. Associate Producer Noreen O'Toole, told me that Jaters will often send in sewing kits to the production office. The sewing kits are symbolic of Kate sewing up Jack's wounds in an early episode. Melinda Tsu Taylor, a writer for the show, told me that she recently saw a package containing photo shopped pictures of Sawyer and Kate,

presumably from the Skaters. These fans identify themselves with rooting for the con man or the doctor and Hills posits that in order to understand the reasons why individuals become fans, one must :

...potentially discount the way that some media fan consumers may use their fandoms to express a sense of personal identity, going beyond subcultural and other social/sociological marker. (Hills. pp. 819)

In other words, one must look beyond the fan to the conditions that created the circumstances wherein the fan is able to become a fan in the first place. Hills regards fandom as almost a pathology that is not dependent upon the object of fandom but more upon the individual nature of the fans. In other

words, why are some fans Skaters and other fans Jaters? If one were to focus upon that individual nature, there is no doubt that there is interaction between the fans of *Lost* and how they relate to the show.

Among the fans of *Lost* there is a community. There is a shared mythology. There is, to a certain extent, a shared language. Judith Irvine has explored this concept of a shared language in her work *Shadow Conversations: The Indeterminacy of Participant Roles:*

Perhaps one would want to say that the independence, or pragmatic transcendence, of this set of utterances- what makes it a transferable object- is what gives it a sense of “textuality”. But if so, it is a textuality that presupposes the

conversational moments it purports  
to transcend.

(Irvine. pp.156-157)

On certain levels, there is a complex sort of kinship between fans that can be observed and participated in just as other cultures are able to be participated in and/or observed by anthropologists of the present and past. The culture of *Lost* is vast. This is a worldwide group that is connected by shared experience, the internet, common knowledge, and sometimes through meeting in person for the purpose of discussing the show. Abner Cohen states in his 1980 *Drama and Politics in the Development of a London Carnival* that

Culture generally is expressed in terms of symbolic forms and performances that are by definition ambiguous, having reference to both

political and existential issues  
simultaneously. (Cohen. 1980.  
pp.83)

Such it is for the fans of *Lost* as they create a community, establish rules and norms within it, and at the same time are perhaps left without the means to take a hand in shaping the source of the culture that they are participating in.

This idea of the fans using *Lost* as a text which forms the basis of a community is not without precedent in anthropology. In *Natural Histories of Discourse*, Micheal Silverstein and Greg Urban state that

The text idea allows the analyst of culture to extract a portion of the ongoing social action- discourse of some nondiscursive but nevertheless semiotic action- from its infinitely

rich, exquisitely detailed context, and draw a boundary around it, inquiring into its structure and meaning. This textual fragment of culture can then be re-embedded by asking how it relates to its “context”, where context is understood as nonreadable surround or background...(Silverstein and Urban. pp. 1-6)

As such, the texts of a fan community serve as a means to share culture, form the bricks of a house of community, and thus make culture transmittable, durable, and possible to combine the individual pieces into a “connected discursive history.”

## ***Lost*: multiple realities in a single ecosystem**

### ***The Show***

On August 28, 2004 large crowds gathered in Waikiki for the semi-weekly Sunset on the Beach event to see the world premiere of the *Lost* pilot. This was nearly a month before the broadcast premier of *Lost* on September 22, 2004. The following night Sunset on the Beach also premiered the soon to fail police drama '*Hawaii*'. Due to the excitement of *Lost* and *Hawaii* being homegrown products that many locals had worked on, the crowd was largely involved in the two productions in terms of knowing an actor, crew-member, or location. In addition, there was a noticeable buzz

about the show and what the pilot would be like due to the secrecy that had shrouded its production..

Amongst the crowds were tourists and locals who had come out to see the new shows that had been providing jobs and getting some press as a result in the local newspapers. According to the Honolulu Advertiser, more than 10,000 people gathered for that first peak at *Lost* along with fourteen members of the cast.

Many had been brought out by a column from the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*'s columnist Tim Ryan two days prior to the premier.

J.J. Abrams's castaway TV drama "Lost" is a mysterious, often terrifying, sometimes confusing thrill ride, compelling enough to make you want to stay aboard but only if you

suspend a bit of reality to accept the premise.

Abrams and co-executive

producer/creator Damon Lindelof

weave an interesting web of intrigue,

without slipshod manipulation. Some

surprises come early, keeping

viewers as alert as the castaways.

Like Steven Spielberg, Abrams taps

into our primal fears of desertion,

monsters and being lost. The first

episode doesn't even venture into the

ocean. Who knows what lurks there?

Abrams/Lindelof tweak our sense of

reality, challenge our notion of what

can't possibly happen -- or can it? --

then envelops the audience with

good writing and acting.

Oahu is a shining star in this series, but an island this lush, with beautiful white sand beaches (Mokuleia) could not go undiscovered.

"Lost" is an inspired drama mixing wildness, weirdness and whimsy that will test the creators' ability to avoid getting stranded in castaway clichés. If they do this, count on "Lost's" survivors not being rescued for a very long time.

According to a story written after the event, lead actor Matthew Fox downplayed the decision to show the premier on the beach in Waikiki instead of in the more typical Hollywood style.

“This is not really business driven,”  
said Fox, the lead actor on *Lost*  
whose character, plane crash  
survivor Jack, is in the opening scene  
of the show. "It's more a screening  
for Hawaii.”

It's hard to remember that at the time, the  
expectation among critics and pundits was that *Lost*  
would be a short lived venture due to its expense  
and complexity. According the Calgary Sun:

Fans of Abrams, of *Alias* - maybe  
just of quality television that pushes  
the creative envelope - have  
reportedly begun organizing a "Save  
*Lost* campaign, expecting that, not so  
long after the ABC drama debuts  
Sept. 22, it will be marked for

extinction by network brass. Their concerns aren't unfounded. For one thing, *Lost* is an expensive proposition - the two-hour series pilot the Sun screened is as ambitious and cinematic as the small screen gets - and, two, it's a drama that requires both the commitment and concentration of viewers. It used to be the sort of positive advance word-of-mouth *Lost* is basking in was cause to celebrate; these days, it's reason to fear.

In any event, I can remember the electric feeling as we all watched from the beach on that night that now seems so long ago. I remember one of my companions turning to me with a shocked

look on her face and saying “Was that a polar bear?”

It was. We were all blown away. Obviously, we weren't the only ones. We knew that we seeing something different from everything we had seen before. As viewers around the world watched the pilot of *Lost* broadcast on September 22, 2004 they too were converted into fans. The same combination of elements that had converted me from a skeptical (and slightly bitter over not having been given a job by the producers) viewer into a fan eagerly awaiting the next episode worked on viewers around the world. *Lost* was elevated almost instantly to the status of ‘cult’ television through a combination of innovative marketing, suspenseful storytelling, and the endless speculations from fans about the nature of both the island and the characters that inhabit it.

These speculations take place in homes, at bars that screen the shows, around water coolers, at premiere events such as the Sunset on the Beach in Waikiki, and in a vast number of internet communities dedicated to *Lost*. Fans of the show have dedicated hundreds of thousands of hours to creating intricate theories and scenarios that might explain some of the mysteries of *Lost*. From books, to games, to DVDs, to podcasts, and even to the creation of organizations designed to bring together academics studying *Lost*, fans have created an entire world, separated from and yet dedicated to the world of *Lost*.

**(Warning- Spoiler Info Below)**

**Topography of *Lost*'s Plotline**

On September 22, 2004 Oceanic flight 815 enroute from Sydney to Los Angeles broke into two pieces and crashed on a mysterious island. The

island is the central character and mystery to the show. In addition to flight 815 other castaways vehicles have also been stranded on the island, sometimes bringing passengers that survive. The vehicles include a drug running Cessna from Nigeria, a French research vessel, a sailing yacht, a hot air balloon, a slave ship called the Black Rock, and a submarine belonging to a mysterious group called the 'Others'.

Members of flight 815's tail section struggle to survive and encounter a mysterious monster, polar bears, a survivor from the French vessel, and various mysterious phenomenon. Meanwhile survivors from the front section are struggling on a different part of the island. Both groups find hidden bunkers that are the remnants of a research experiment run by a group called 'Dharma'.

There are several main characters who are survivors from the front section. They are Jack, an American Surgeon played by Matthew Fox; Kate, a beautiful fugitive from justice played by Evangeline Lilly; Sawyer, a conman with a heart of gold played by Josh Holloway; Hurley, a good natured but cursed fat man played by Jorge Garcia; Michael and Walt, a dysfunctional African-American father and son played by Harold Perrineau and Malcolm David Kelley; Jin and Sun, a married Korean couple with issues played by Daniel Dae Kim and Yunjin Kim; Sayeed, a former torturer in the Iraqi Republican Guard played by Naveen Andrews; Charlie, a washed up rock star with a heroin problem played by Dominic Monaghan; and John Locke, a mysteriously healed parapalegic played by Terry O'Quinn.

The characters in the tail section have a very low survival rate and those that do survive have thus far played roles of limited importance.

Inside the 'hatch' called Swan Station the tail section group finds Desmond, a Scottish sailor who was shipwrecked while sailing in an around the world race, played by Henry Ian Cusick. Desmond has been tasked with pushing a button every 108 minutes to save the world. He has met Jack, the leader of the survivors in their past.

Dharma, a scientific community with an unknown purpose, was wiped out by Ben played by Michael Emerson. Ben is the son of a Dharma worker and has become the leader of a group that appears to have been indigenous to the island. These are the people known as the 'Others'. The 'Others' kidnap, kill, and harass the survivors of flight 815. The flight 815 survivors fight back and

eventually are reunited. In the process the audience, and in some cases the characters, learn that there are mysterious coincidences and connections between many of them.

Among the islands most discussed mysteries are ‘the numbers’ (4,8,15,16,23,42) based on something called the Vinzetti Equation, the smoke monster- a security device with shape shifting powers, the purpose of the Dharma Initiative and its founder Alvar Hanso, the nature of the island, the identity of Jacob- an otherworldly presence who seems to control Ben- the leader of the Others, and most recently the appearance and identity of a new group that appeared at the end of Season 3. This group seems to be in the control of a powerful man named Charles Widmore and has a ship, helicopters, and high tech equipment.

Woven into the plot are anagrams, references to books and literature which may or may not have significance, famous names of philosophers, and confusing references to the nature of time and space which are most clearly demonstrated in a flash-forward where Desmond meets the godlike Mrs. Hawking and then proceeded to have flashes, sometimes inaccurate, of the future.

Overlying themes include control vs. weakness, cultural clashes, religion vs. science, sexual tension, irresolvable dilemmas, and father-child relationships.

As mentioned previously, a huge amount of the writing and fan attention have been focused on the love triangle between Jack, Kate, and Sawyer. Fans who desire to see Jack and Kate in a love relationship refer to them selves as Jaters while fans

who prefer to see Sawyer and Kate together call themselves Skaters. So far as I know there is no pressure from the fans to see or intention of the writers for Jack and Sawyer to be together and thus no groups calling themselves Jawyers or Sacks. At least not yet.

## ***The Fans (including me)***

### **The Internet Group, Hawaii Lost.**

One aspect of my fieldwork was monitoring and participating in a specific internet group dedicated to the show. I chose the group, Hawaii Lost, which was formed by fans in Hawaii shortly after the show began. Part of my hope in joining this group was that I would also be able to take part in live gatherings of local fans whether it was to watch the show or to gather for other fan related activities.

The Hawaii Lost Fan Club currently has 125 members. It is located at <http://tv.groups.yahoo.com/group/hawaiilost/>. The group grew from a message board hosted at HawaiiLost.com in 2004 and migrated to the more

easily accessed and managed Yahoo! Groups in 2006.

While I found that some members of the group would attend public viewings, for the most part, members are busy with work or family and participate online only. Those members I did meet greeted me as an already known person when we did meet, even though we had in fact never met in person. My participation consisted mostly in commenting on shows and local events. This real world friendship resulting from online participation was not limited only to me. On several occasions fans from the mainland or as far away as Germany, Croatia, Norway, and Korea who came to Hawaii and through the group were able to find real world friends that offered them places to stay, excursions to various filming locations on Oahu, and even evenings out.

Specifically, during February of 2008, the public boards of the Hawaii Lost Fanclub show a 47 year old German tourist nicknamed, Netti, who introduced herself and then came to Hawaii to meet up with group members at the Tropical Smoothie Café. When I met her, she was firmly a part of a group of ladies that loved the show who had been escorting her around town, showing her filming locations, taking her to dinner, and even offering her a place to stay.

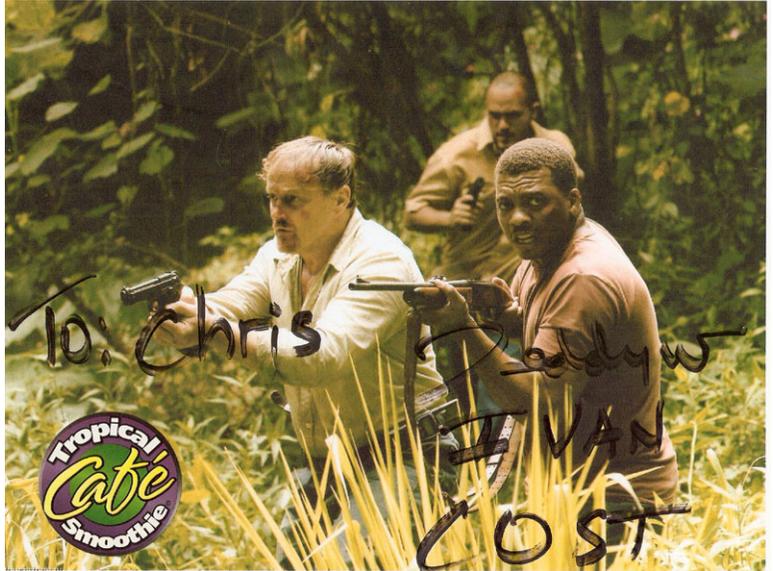
Most of the groups posts concern Lost being mentioned or featured in various media such as *TV Guide* or *The Honolulu Advertiser*. During the break between seasons, activity was rare, but occasional posts would direct other fans to fan video trailers for the coming season, podcasts about the show, interesting theories about the mysteries of the show that had been discovered, or news of the show being

shot in various locations on Oahu. The casting call was passed along through the group and commented upon afterwards by several members.

## **Watching at Tropical Smoothie**

Nearly forty fans of *Lost* gathered together to watch the premier of the fourth season at Tropical Smoothie Café in Honolulu. The event was emceed by a blogger from *The Honolulu Advertiser*. Hosting the event was Teddy Wells who owns Tropical Smoothie Café and played a character named Ivan in the third season of *Lost*. Teddy is a very friendly guy and autographs stills from the show for fans. He also comes out during the commercial breaks and hands out tickets that lucky fans can win *Lost* t-shirts, dolls, or other show memorabilia with. It's a savvy business move, but Teddy also seems to be a genuinely friendly guy

who enjoys the show, the fans, and running Tropical Smoothie Café.



The gathering of *Lost* fans was diverse. I met fans of the show from Croatia, Norway, Korea, the mainland United States, as well as from Hawaii. Wells wasn't the only actor from *Lost* to make an appearance. Additionally, there was an actor who will appear as an extra in episode six of the fourth season was also there. This actor has also appeared in episodes of the *Jeffersons*, *Mama's Family*, and

*Hawaii 5-0* in addition to appearing in *Lost*. He told me an anecdote about shooting *Lost* at the Richards Street YWCA.

“I went into the bathroom to take a leak and when I was washing my hands, Matthew Fox came in and was peeing right next to me. I thought about saying something, but figured it would be impolite,” he said. “How many people do you know that can say they washed their hands next to Matthew Fox peeing?”

I had to admit that he was the only person I’ve ever met who had done so. Other fans I spoke to were excited to discuss their favorite theories about the show’s mysteries, who their favorite characters were, and what they thought of the season premier.

“It was great! I love the way they draw you in and then leave you wanting more,” said a mother

of five who was out for the night with her husband while leaving her kids at home with her visiting brother.

## **Watching at Pearl**

Pearl is a high end ‘ultra-lounge’ located in Honolulu’s Ala Moana Shopping Center. At the beginning of the fourth season several venues offered to allow fans to gather to watch the show. This role had been filled during the first two seasons by Jackie Chan’s Restaurant in Ala Moana Center. The gatherings of fans at Jackie Chan’s had been lively and fun according to those fans I spoke with who had attended the weekly event. On several occasions major cast members and crew had come out to join the fans at this venue.

From what I was able to learn, there were no scheduled public fan gatherings for the third season.

For the fourth season; Pearl, Tropical Smoothie Café, and Planet Hollywood had all offered themselves as venues to fans. For the season opener, I had gone to Tropical Smoothie and several other fans from Hawaii Lost went to Planet Hollywood. Their reports on the internet group indicated that it was a bad experience. They said that the TVs were blocked by patrons not interested in the show, the volume was lower than the noise level of the restaurant, and the food was overpriced.

For the second episode of the season, I decided to go to Pearl since no one from Hawaii Lost had been to this venue. I was excited at the prospect since when I arrived a beautiful girl in a white dress handed me a free drink coupon and the crowd looked as if it might contain actors, crew, or production staff. I walked through the bar and talked with people at several tables. None of them

were there because of the show although several said they had seen it before. I sat at the bar waiting for the episode to begin with the expectation that it would become obvious who the fans were when the show began.

By midway through the episode, there was no one in the bar who seemed to be paying attention to the show aside from me. I finished up my free drink and departed during the commercial break which gave me almost enough time to get home and watch the rest of the show in a quieter environment. I went to Pearl the next week and this time the volume on the televisions was lower than the volume of the bar. A third visit required me to ask the bartender if he was going to turn the TV to *Lost*. The bartender told me he had seen a few episodes but wasn't too impressed by the show. I asked him if there was a regular crowd of people that came to

watch the show and he told me that I was the first to have asked him about it.

These experiences were interesting to me in that they seemed to describe who the fans of *Lost* are not. This was an upscale, hip environment filled with singles and well dressed couples. Ages ranged from early twenties to men who were trying to look like they were in their late thirties but were probably in their early to late forties. From this experience, I think it is possible to posit that *Lost* does not appeal to this particular demographic whereas the fans at Tropical Smoothie were casually dressed, working, coupled people who, like the couple who had left their kids at home were enjoying a rare night out. The *Lost* fans were more socially awkward than the singles at Pearl and there was always a sense that they were watching the show together but separately. Fans would sit with

people they had met online but there was little interaction with those that they didn't know. It would not have surprised me if there were people sitting next to each other who had met online, but who didn't realize it because they didn't talk to each other at all at the in person meet-ups.

## **Respondent Demographics**

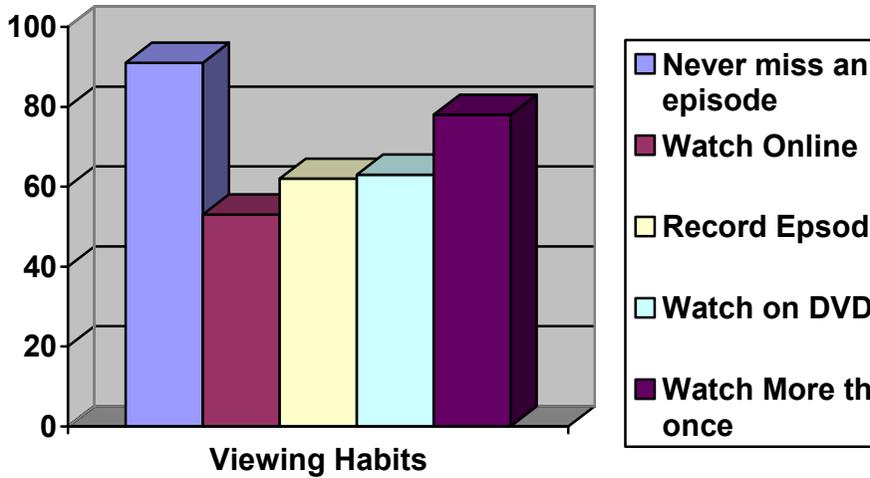
In April of 2008, I sent out a survey to several of the most popular message board communities focused on *Lost*.

Of those who replied twenty-six were female and six were male. Respondents were all above the age of 18 with a median age of 36.5 years old. Female viewers averaged slightly older than male viewers. All but four respondents were citizens of the United States. Other respondents were from the Philippines, United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada.

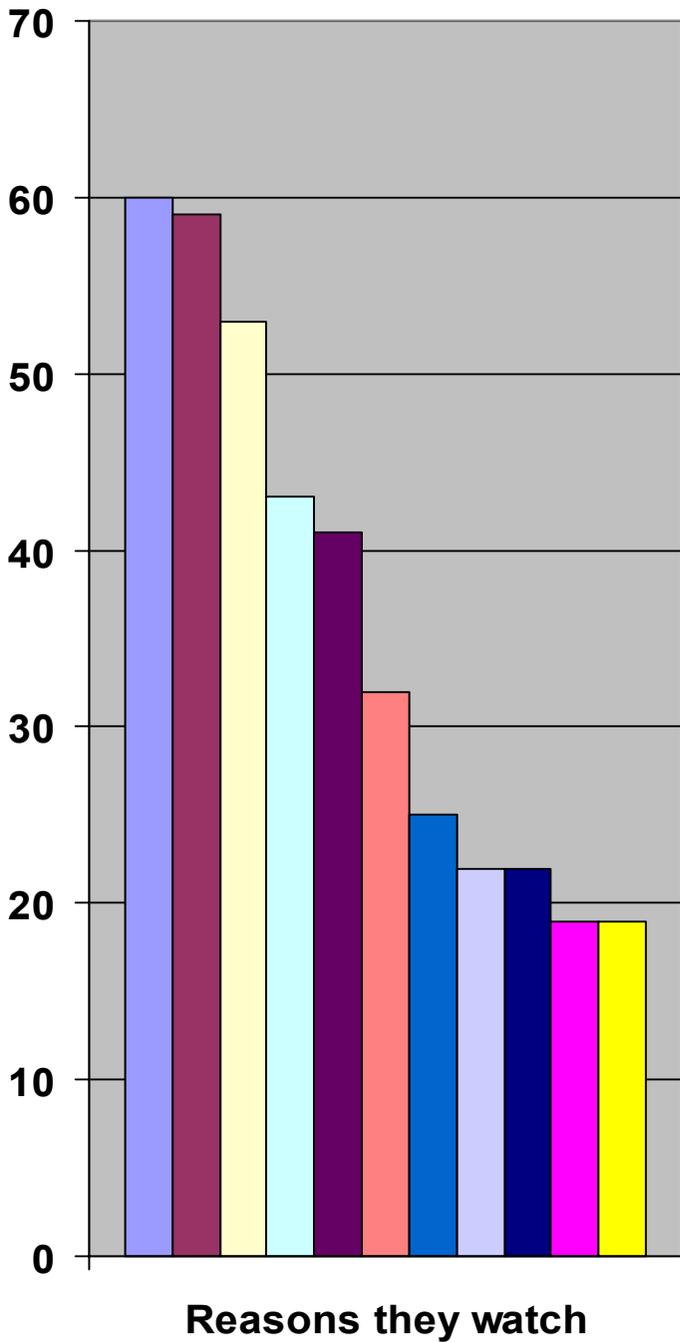
The significance of the above demographics could mean that American women above 30 have become the largest fans of *Lost*, or, just as likely that American women above 30 are the most likely to fill out online surveys sent to fan message boards. Further research will be required in the future to get

to the bottom of this most pressing of demographic questions.

### Viewing Habits



78% of respondents watch episodes more than once. 78% is the same number of respondents who said that they go back to watch episodes again to look for hidden visual or auditory clues within the show.



- The C...
- The P...
- It's Inn...
- To Tal... on the
- It's Su...
- The Pu...
- It's Fu...
- Good Product Values
- Philos...
- Distra...



Respondents gave a wide variety of answers as to why they enjoy watching the show. As one respondent noted:

I find it fascinating, involving and lived in Hawaii twice and worked on a TV show (Magnum, P.I.) set there and watch all shows set there.

Largely however, when asked for the main reasons they watch *Lost*, respondents chose three reasons. The character, the plot, and the that they find the show innovative.

What really brought me into it during Season 1 was the characters being the focal point of the story.

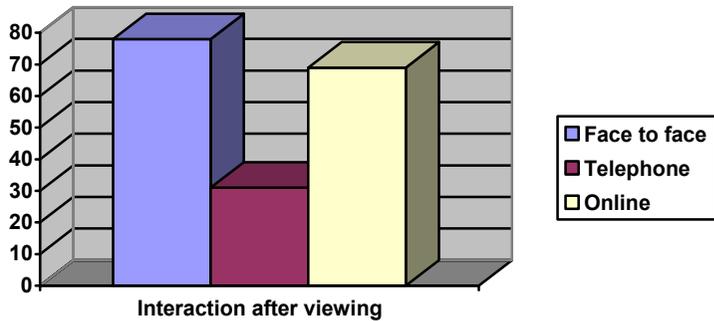
Fans often have more than one reason for watching though. As another respondent wrote:

What I love the most is trying to figure out the mysteries. I love how

everything fits together so perfectly.

The writing is brilliant.

One respondent said that the show teaches them useful things about the world. A number of other fans said that the drama of the show sometimes makes them cry.



When asked about how they would interact with others after seeing a new episode, 78% of the fans surveyed said that within a few days of seeing an episode they would discuss it face to face with another person. 47% discussed new episodes on the phone. 97% of those who responded said that in their discussions they would speculate about the

mysteries of the show. 84% said that in their discussions they would compare the new episodes to previous ones.

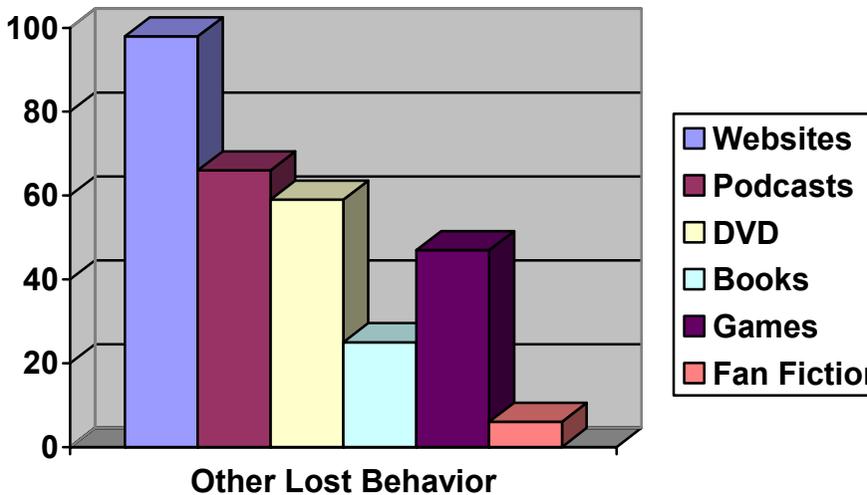
72% of those surveyed said that within a few days they would watch episodes or parts of episodes again. Interestingly, only 63% responded that they would read discussions online while 69% said that within a few days they would post to online discussions. This disparity in numbers could indicate megalomania or bad communication skills among fans of *Lost*, but more likely is indicative of problems within my survey.

In *Speculation of Spoilers: Lost Fandom, Narrative Consumption and Rethinking Textuality*, Jonathan Gray and Jason Mittell summed this active period of not watching in the following way:

For fans, these weekly (or longer) gaps are not barren periods devoid of

Lost, but serve as times to focus intently on the program – rewatching episodes, contributing to websites, writing fan fiction, and consuming paratexts. (Gray and Mittell. 2006.)

**Other Lost Associated Behavior**



Fans of Lost are connected to the show in material ways beyond just the time spent watching and discussing episodes. Not surprisingly, nearly all of the respondents to my survey said that they frequent websites associated with the show. Fans

spend a considerable amount of time looking for ‘clues’ or what the producers call ‘Easter eggs’ that reveal something about the mysteries that abound in the show. It is this search for Easter Eggs that sends many fans on virtual Easter egg hunts that lead them to the many websites dedicated to the show or to podcasts like that produced by Ryan Ozawa, a Hawaii resident, and many others. Ryan Ozawa’s podcast “The Transmission” is listened to by up to fourteen thousand fans each week.

Knowing that the show has so much to present in a fixed amount of time has now freed me to watch spoilers and read Ryan Ozawa's stuff since I know that the producers are always going to have stuff that is SO surprising and SO shocking that

nothing is really spoiled in knowing incidental details.

Due to long breaks between seasons, fans stay connected with the show through these and other methods. Here are three of the comments that were returned with the survey question “How do you stay involved with Lost when the show is not on or when repeats are showing?” The rest can be found in the Appendix with my full survey results.

I visit thefuselage.com regularly, I have a few friends that are Lost fans and we discuss the story so far, I write and read fan-fic and I belong to the Henry Ian Cusick Yahoo Group and we talk a lot about Lost there.

Several female fans who responded to my survey expressed how attractive they found Henry Ian Cusick, who plays Desmond, to be.

I have participated in the web game,  
I rewatch the epsiodes, I keep the  
discussion alive with friends and  
family. I try to recruit noobs to the  
experience. (I do my part to keep the  
ratings up!)

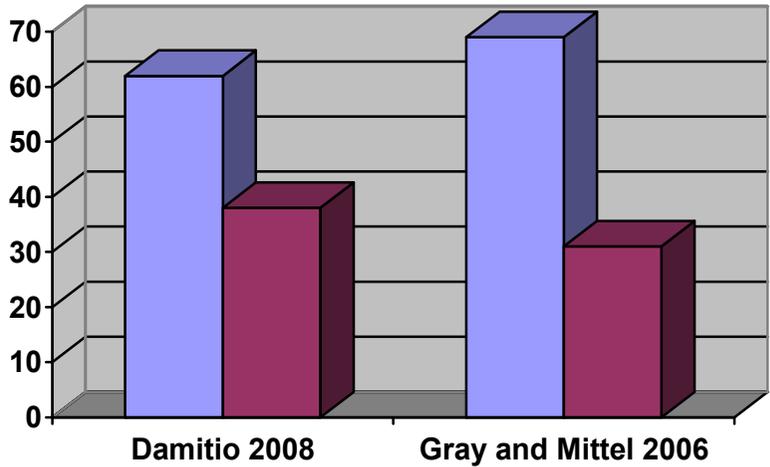
I found it particularly interesting that this fan felt like it was their responsibility to keep the ratings up and find new ‘recruits’ to keep the show on the air. Through watching, this fan is perhaps feeling as if they are keeping the show alive and thus making it their responsibility. In the episode “Man of Science, Man of Faith” there is a situation where characters debate whether pushing a button every 108 minutes makes any difference. A similar argument could be

structured around this fans belief that they are effecting the show.

I re-watch episodes, and follow any stories about the show in magazines, online, on tv, etc. I visit the message boards for show discussions. I also have a group of friends who are fans of the show and we discuss anything that comes out. I also collect memorabilia from the show, and I am always on the lookout for anything and everything that's out there.

This fan could easily be a fan of *Star Trek* or *The Golden Girls* or any other show. If there is a traditional fan behavior, this would seem to be it.

## Spoilers



One of the most contentious issues among fans who gather to discuss the show on the internet or in person is that of spoilers. A spoiler is essentially, any bit of information that reveals something about the show earlier than one would get the information from watching the show in the normal linear way.

Spoilers can be broad and simple:

*Next weeks episode is going to be Jack-centric.*

In this case pointing out that the next episode of Lost will be focused on one particular character.

And, of course, spoilers can become quite detailed:

*In next weeks episode Jack will wear the color blue and have a romantic interlude with Juliet where they will eat fried chicken and she will try to convince him that she is on his side, but really she is working for Ben.*

This second made-up example of a spoiler is the kind that generates a lot of controversy among fans of the show. The worst spoilers (or to some, the best, depending on how they feel about spoilers) are those that revolve around show information that fans refer to as ‘game changers’.

‘Game changers’ are events that occur in the timeline of the show that reveal important information about the mysteries of the island, the lives of the characters, or the direction of the show. Examples would be the death of a major character such as when Charlie died at the end of the third season, the nature of the island (is it real or is it magic?) , or the motivations behind any of the various major characters being different than viewers had been led to believe (Is Ben really evil or just misunderstood?).

It is important to note here, that spoilers are not speculation. None of the fans I have spoken with have any problem with speculation, in fact, as we saw above, it is one of the main reasons they enjoy the show. A spoiler relies on specific inside information such as knowledge of a filming location, having seen footage prior to broadcasting,

or getting information from someone who works within the show. Major controversy broke out in the *Lost* fan community when at the end of the third season; an unidentified person leaked the entire synopsis of the season finale. This spoiler was a major game changer and changed the way many fans feel about spoilers.

In their 2006 study of spoiler behavior associated with *Lost*, Jonathan Gray and Jason Mittell studied the habits of *Lost*'s 'spoiler fans' in depth. Their study was done prior to the end of the second season of *Lost*. It is interesting to note how the demographics they found online compare with those that I found at the end of the fourth season. Gray and Mittels study found:

...80% of respondents identified themselves as American, with 17 other countries represented in the

survey. 60 % of the respondents were female, and respondents ages ranged from 18 to 54, with a mean age of 29 and median of 27. (Gray and Mittell. 2006.)

In addition, their study found that 69% of respondents consumed spoilers to some degree.

While neither study can be cited as evidence of the spoiler habits of all fans, it is interesting to note that both came within 7% of one another.

One further explanation is necessary before seeing how respondents felt about spoilers. There is a general consensus among fans that the producers are active on the most popular fan message boards and often confuse the issue of spoilers with what fans call 'foilers'. A foiler is an intentionally misleading piece of information presented as a spoiler, but having no basis in reality and leading

fans in the wrong direction from where the show is really going.

Fans were divided on reading spoilers. Surprisingly (to me) 62% of those polled read spoilers of varying degrees. 38% of fans polled said they do not read spoilers, though some confess to minor spoilers such as previews or information about their favorite characters on the show. Here are a few responses from those who do not want to see spoilers. Full results can be found in the appendix.

No. I don't like to know what's going to happen before the show. I like to be surprised and 'in the moment' with the show.

This was a fairly typical response. Fans want to be surprised and spoilers ruin that.

I used to read spoilers but after I found the full disclosure of the S03

finale it really showed me that the show is a lot more fun when I don't know what's happening ahead of time. But I still like to know the new actors that will be regulars on the show and I like to find out spoilers about Desmond (my favorite character).

This was a separate reference to Henry Ian Cusick. The ladies love his Scottish accent and curly hair.

No, I used to watch the previews for the next week, but found the ways they tried to lead me on/reveal was always slightly different from what would happen and just end up with me being disappointed so I prefer going in on a completely clean slate,

and usually find I enjoy it much  
more that way.

This was my favorite spoiler response since it all  
but accuses the producers of using the preview to  
fool the viewers into being disappointed. Layers of  
conspiracy.

Nope, I like to be surprised. The last  
30 seconds is always the best part of  
the night- why ruin it for myself?

Finally, a simple and pragmatic answer.

Interestingly, I think most of the fans who read  
spoilers feel the same way but lack this viewer's  
self control. Spoiler watching is very much a guilty  
pleasure that fans seem to know is not in their best  
interest. Among fans that admitted to liking some  
sorts of spoilers, the admission was often given with  
an overall feeling that was akin to an admission of  
guilt. Nearly everyone seems to share the feeling

that the spoilers take something away from the show, yet a majority of fans still seem to seek them out. To me, fans that admitted to reading spoilers usually did so with an overall sense that they were admitting some sort of vice or guilt. I could almost imagine them gathered in a room together “Hi, I’m Fangirl and I’m a spoiler reader.” “Hi, Fangirl.”

The three answers below (as those above) are left as they were submitted with punctuation, emphasis, and capitalization in tact though some abbreviations and misspellings have been corrected. Full results can be found in the appendix. The question was simply stated “Do you read spoilers? If yes, why?”

Yes, but I try to stay spoiler-lite.

Mainly looking at the episode stills and the sneak peaks. I do it because I am weak.

It is as if this fan is admitting that they only drink in the evenings or when they are upset.

Yes, I can't resist! It doesn't ruin the upcoming episode for me at all. I find that it allows me to be more aware of smaller details during the show. After viewing the current episode I don't feel that I have the next show figured out either so I don't think it matters.

This fan is suffering from a classic case of denial. They are saying that drinking is really good for them while admitting that it is a problem.

Yes, need my fix. It doesn't ruin it for me.

Finally, this fan comes out and tells it like it is.

They admit that they are a junkie.

## ***The Production staff***

Hortense Powdermaker, an anthropologist working in Hollywood in the 1940's described the production of film as the mass production of dreams in her seminal work *Hollywood The Dream Factory*.

Hollywood is engaged in the mass production of daydreams. It tries to adapt the American dream, that all men are created equal, to the view that all men's dreams should be made equal. Movies are the first popular art to become a big business with mass production and mass distribution. (Powdermaker. 1950. p 38)

The production side of *Lost* is composed of both traditional and new, non-traditional mechanics. J.J. Abrams and Damon Lindelof co-produced and co-created the show through Abrams production company, Bad Robot. The show is produced in association with and through ABC studios (owned by Disney) and Touchstone TV. The writers, primary cast, and crew are all union members. This includes the Teamsters who provide transportation. *Lost* uses local talent as much as possible as well as utilizing local companies when they are able to for security and other services. The show is shot entirely on location on Oahu and in the State of Hawaii Film Studios at Diamond Head. Some of the non-Hawaii companies that work on the show are Behind the Scenes Freight, Chapman-Leonard Studio Equipment, Intervideo, Marshall Plumb Research Associates, Technicolor Creative

Services, and Varese Sarabande. Much of the local casting is done by Margaret Doversola in Honolulu.

The marketing of *Lost* has been both traditional and innovative utilizing shortened seasons, extra-long periods between seasons, inter-textual games that reward determined fans with inside information, podcasts, hidden material on DVD's, viral videos, release of spoiler and foiler information, and a general tendency to blur the line between the world that exists within the show and the world that exists outside of the show.

As could be expected, the producers hired heavily from among the local population on Oahu for cast, crew, and extras. At the time the pilot episode for *Lost* was being made, there were three other television series (*Hawaii*, *Rocky Point*, and *North Shore*) being filmed on Oahu along with a wide variety of films and commercial projects.

Local cast and crew were not given explicit information about the plot, details about future direction of the show, or much more beyond the description “a plane crashes on a tropical island in the Pacific and strange things start happening to the survivors.” The above is the description I was given when I applied for a job as an office production assistant in 2004 with the producers.

## **Crew Members**

Living in Hawaii, it’s hard not to know someone who has a connection to *Lost*. Because of my association with the University of Hawaii’s Academy for Creative Media, I know several students who have worked as interns on the show. During my time in Hawaii, I have also worked on numerous short films, visiting television shows, and commercial shoots. In the process of this, I have made friends with a number of people who have

worked on *Lost*. Unlike the producers, writers, and some of the fans, most of my contacts agreed to speak with me about the show only on the condition of complete anonymity. Their reasons for this were primarily that they did not want anything they might say to me, to limit their ability to work for *Lost* or other shows in the future. Out of respect for their wishes, I will not identify these people by position or name. As such, I realize that their contributions to this study are limited; however, I still feel that including what I am able adds to the fullness of this study. I spoke with a total of five crew members from various departments of production.

When I asked what the best part of working on the show was, the answers were varied. Those who were working in a non-paid positions through the ACM spoke highly of the professionalism of the production and the ability to work with equipment

that they would not otherwise be able to handle.

Those who were in paid positions listed the high rate of pay that *Lost* offers as the best thing about the job. One respondent told me that the best thing about working on *Lost* was that there was always food available.

“There is food everywhere on that set Man! It’s amazing that all of those people aren’t fat!”

All of my informants told me that it was important to them to be able to list having worked on *Lost* on their resumes. Two students told me that they felt that the contacts they made on the set of *Lost* were valuable to their futures as film makers.

Interestingly, only one of my informants had seen the show prior to getting the opportunity to work on it. One of them told me that he had watched two seasons in a weekend before going to work.

When I asked what the worst aspects of working on *Lost* were, I was surprised by one of the answers I received.

“Those guys are all racists man.”

This statement was made but then clarified by my informant. There had been several incidents in my informants time working on the set when he was in the position of hearing racist jokes, comments, and slurs. Only once was my informant the object of these comments, but my informant felt that there was a lot of racist talking that went on when my informant was not present.

Another informant told me that there had been situations where the informant had felt uncomfortable as homophobic statements were made by members of the crew that the informant was working with. The informant told me that none of this was said with hostility and that the crew

members appeared to be enjoying jokes with one another with some inappropriate humor, but the fact that the informant was uncomfortable in these situations is worth noting.

Another informant told me that there was a fair amount of drug use by the crew during the production. He spoke of grips, electricians, and security crew members smoking marijuana during the long periods of waiting that invariably occur on the set. In my experience, this is not an uncommon event, but this particular informant was uncomfortable with the use of illegal drugs during working hours. Similarly, I was told about crew members taking lunch breaks while on the clock and in one case, going to a strip bar while still on the clock.

Overall however, all of my informants spoke about the professionalism, strong work ethics, lack

of complaining in the face of long hours shooting, and overall friendliness and camaraderie of the entire crew. In regards to the cast, several of my informants told me that they were briefed before working that they were not to talk to the cast members unless the cast members spoke to them first. Several of my informants had no contact with the cast during their time with *Lost*.

One informant told me the Daniel Dae Kim, the actor who plays Jin, was the only one of the actors who was not stuck on himself. This informant told me that during a break in shooting Kim would mingle with the crew, make jokes, and take an interest in who the people working around him were.

When I asked if they had discussed the show with other crew members, my informants told me

that there was little talk among the crew about the show.

“Nobody seemed to care about the show at all among the local crew. I would try to talk to the crew and they just didn’t care, it was just a job to those guys.”

All informants told me that during production the crew kept busy and had little time to socialize, but that there were long periods when they had to “hurry up and wait.”

Out of my five informants, only one said that given the opportunity to do further work on *Lost*, this informant would decline. This was the informant that complained of the racism of the crew. This informant is not an overly sensitive individual in my opinion and as such, this condemnation of the production crew of *Lost* would seem to hold some merit.

## ***The Island***

More than just a continuation of survival literature, the *Lost* pilot offered the heart pounding musical scores of Michael Giacchino, references to pop culture (both overt and covert), edge of the seat action and drama, and, perhaps most importantly, an introduction to the many mysteries of ‘The Island’ itself. This last, may be what sets *Lost* apart from all of its predecessors. Abrams and Lindelof made the island itself the centerpiece and star of the show. The island is an unnamed entity. It is the only essential character for the continuation of the drama series. The island’s many secrets, slowly revealed throughout the arc of the show, may be a large part of the reason why *Lost* continues to be one of the most discussed programs on television today.

I feel that it is important to note that this casting of place in the leading role was, perhaps, the innovation that set *Lost* immediately apart from its predecessors and contemporaries. *Lost* was and continues to be filmed entirely on the island of Oahu in the state of Hawaii. In addition to listing the actors in the credits, the producers of the show also prominently feature Oahu as the sole filming location. Much is made of the fact that Oahu is a versatile actor in the show, impersonating locations as varied as London, Paris, Los Angeles, Sydney, Boston, Vancouver, the Sahara, Kenya, Korea, Portland, and of course, a remote island in the Pacific Ocean.

### **Casting Call**

In August 15, 2008, I saw a story in the Honolulu Advertiser saying that *Lost* would be holding an open casting call.

*There's an open call for wannabe actors tomorrow at Ala Wai Elementary. So if you've ever wanted to join the beleaguered castaways on "Lost," here's your chance.*

I decided to go for it. At the very least, I would meet some fans of the show there while I waited, at best, I would get hired as a regular on the show for the pay that the article listed as \$759 per day.

I wasn't the only one to come out that day. Producers of the show later said that over 1,500 came out for the opportunity to become a star. Like the other 1,500 people, I stood in line for over three hours to fill out an application, get my picture taken, and be told to hurry out the back door so more could come in. In the process of standing in

line for that time I did get the chance to meet about a dozen people who were standing ahead and behind me. All of them were fans of the show.

There were three military wives and their children directly ahead of me. One of the women had become obsessed with the show and turned her two girlfriends on to the series. When they saw that it might be possible to become actors on the show, they packed their kids in a car and drove from Schofield Barracks to Honolulu to wait in line for hours. The woman who had introduced her friends to the show told me that it was her daughters second birthday. Her daughter was remarkably well behaved as we waited in the sun for our turn to go into the school lunch room where the casting call was taking place.

Ahead of the military moms was a rotund woman in glasses with her two rotund daughters.

The three told me that they were *Lost* fanatics.

When I asked why they watched the show, the mother told me simply “Because it is the best show on television.” At this point, the older of her two teenage daughters said “And because of Desmond.” Her sister and the military moms all quickly agreed. Actor Henry Ian Cusack is perhaps a choice I should have listed by himself on my online survey. As it is, I had several respondents write him in.

Behind me were three generations of women. A grandmother, mother, and daughter. They had seen the ad on Craigslist and decided to come out in the hopes that they might get to see some of the actors from the show. No actors were present and they ended up leaving after only a couple of hours without even having filled out the paperwork.

Behind them were a young couple. He said that he was more a fan of *The Sopranos* and *Battlestar Gallactica*. She said that he was a liar and that he had been the one to get her interested in *Lost* and now it was her favorite show. He admitted this was true but said that he had begun to lose interest after the second season. At this point, his companion told me that he never missed an episode and sometimes watched them more than once. He admitted this was true also.

There were fairly constant conversations about *Lost*, mostly focusing on the mysteries of the show. What do the numbers mean? Why do some people wear white tennis shoes and others wear black tennis shoes? Is the island alive? Most of the conversation focused on speculations such as these. When I asked the people around me if they thought the show was planned in detail or adapted as it went

along, everyone except for the rotund woman and her daughters thought the show was adapted as it goes along. The rotund family was firm in their belief that the creators of the show had mapped out every detail of the show.

By the time we were rushed out the back door of the cafeteria, we had spent about three hours in the hot sun. Everyone was in a rush to get somewhere where they could get a cold drink of water or a slurpee. The slurpees had been introduced to all of us by a man who walked up and down the line several times carrying a very cold looking slurpee in his hand.

## Meeting the Cast

In the course of living on Oahu, I have had the chance to meet several of the cast members. In most cases these were not situations that gave me the opportunity to ask them about their participation or interest in the show. I met Dominic Monaghan, who plays a rock star with a heroin problem named Charlie, at the gym. Since we were both in the midst of a workout, there was little conversation beyond introductions.

While shopping, I met Jorge Garcia, the real life person who is known as the lovable overweight Hurley on *Lost*, at Don Quixote, a supermarket in Kailua. At first I couldn't figure out where I knew him from, but after an awkward moment, I said "Oh, you're on *Lost*." He smiled and asked if I liked

the show. I told him I did and then we moved on through the aisles to pick up our groceries.

I had the opportunity to spend about forty five minutes with Evangeline Lily, the actress who plays Kate on Christmas Eve Day of 2005. At the time, I was still driving for a limousine company and was told to go pick up “Annie Hall” in Lanikai, an upscale community on Oahu’s windward side. When I arrived, I thought she was my boss’s wife since the two resemble one another. This created a strange conversation where I acted as if I knew her and she tried to figure out where I knew her from since I wasn’t treating her as if she were a star on a big show. It was only when her boyfriend, Dominic Monaghan came to the door that I realized my mistake.

She was catching a flight to Vancouver to spend Christmas with her family while he was

staying in the islands. During the forty five minutes from Lanikai to Honolulu International Airport we had a nice conversation about how it felt to her to suddenly be a star, about the speculation that exists among the actors about the show, and about books we had read recently. She was a very normal, nice girl.

Yunjin Kim I met at the carwash. While we waited for our cars to get dried, I was chatting with her as we sat in the sun. As she was leaving, I asked her name and she told me. I felt pretty stupid for not recognizing her. In fact, I felt so stupid that I didn't ask for her number like I had been planning to do before I found out she was a big star. I'll admit that I've been kicking myself for that one.

Unfortunately, I was not writing and had no idea that I would be writing this thesis when I met any of the actors, so my questions were not

necessarily as pointed as they might have been otherwise. Since I have worked with several actors before, I usually try to allow them to just be normal people, i.e. I leave them alone. This is mainly because I know that having a moment to be just a face in the crowd is a rare luxury.

In include this simply because I think it is interesting in the context of living on an island where a major show is being filmed. If I were not a fan of the show, I wouldn't have noticed or remembered these interactions as other than ordinary.

## Conclusion

Perhaps *Lost* is something more than a new and separate culture growing out of modern culture and society. *Lost* might be more like a mirror that gives us the opportunity to look at ourselves from a different perspective. What is it that fans of *Lost* have found so captivating about the show? In watching the show, are viewers looking for something that they are not able to find in the real world? What is it that *Lost* can tell us about ourselves?

*Lost* reflects back many of the things that we already know, often in new ways. Woven into the plot are anagrams, references to books and literature which may have significance, famous names of philosophers, and references to the nature of time and space. Overlying themes include control

vs. weakness, cultural clashes, religion vs. science, sexual tension, irresolvable dilemmas, and father-child relationships. What are the producers trying to say with *Lost*?

Would *Lost* have any interest to a people that have no understanding of any of the above? Among fans, there are many who believe that the producers utilize online bulletin boards to look for new ideas and to judge the success of each episode. This self-referential reflection, would (and probably has) created a situation that is as if the aspects of modern culture and society that are drawn to *Lost* were placed between two mirrors and then continually spun into new episodes in a never ending narcissus that slowly identifies specific traits of the original culture that began the process.

Future studies can be made with regards to the buying patterns of those who watch the episodes

on network television and are subjected to the paid advertisements played during the commercial breaks, the relationships between the writers and the fans, the power structures of the creation of the series as a whole or in individual episodes, or the collaborative efforts of fans who have not met in person, who work together to solve the many mysteries that the show offers to its viewers. *Lost* is a show about people, a show made by people, and a show made for people.

And so the question arises, what does all of this data mean? What have I learned in the process of doing all of this research into a television show? I started out as a fan of the show and what I saw as the potential of it to change entertainment. I've always believed that when you start with a conclusion, you are bound to find data to support it, but in this case, I have to admit that just the

opposite is true. In fact, *Lost* is not a new story, it is not filled with a new type of characters, it is not ground breaking in the way that it is marketed, and it is not produced in a way that is different than the shows that came before it. Even the way the fans interact and react to the show are not unique nor new.

*Lost* is the story of a group of travelers that arrive on a mysterious island, struggle to survive, encounter mysteries, encounter various bad guys that impede their escape, and develop relationships along the way. So is *The Mysterious Island*.

*Lost* is marketed using products, the internet, games, and interactive puzzles. This may be where *Lost* is unique though the idea of hidden videos on the net going viral was put forth in William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and *Twin Peaks* was marketed in a pre-internet transmedial fashion.

*Lost*'s characters are almost stereotypical. A disturbed Arab, a disturbed doctor, a bad girl with a heart of gold, a misunderstood conman, and a jolly fat man with emotional problems that no one knows about. The interactions between them, including the various love triangles come straight out of soap opera.

*Lost* is a creative product created with a set ending and meticulously managed by the show runners. While the fans are active and perceive that they have a hand in the direction of the show, the producers actively choose not to pay attention to the fans or monitor the fan boards.

The fans of *Lost* are the same as the fans of other shows. They have favorite characters that they empathize with or find attractive. They look for meaning in their own lives within the context of the show and they like to gather with other fans or

discuss the show with others who appreciate the show.

Am I saying that there is nothing special about *Lost*? No. What makes *Lost* special is that it has brought all of these elements together at a time when the sum of these non-unique parts is suddenly able to create something brand new. The sum of these old elements being combined at the present moment in time has created what I consider to be the first in a genre that we are already seeing more of. The massive online televised interactive multiverse (MOTIM) is unique in that it takes the world created by the producers, allows the fans to collaborate and speculate, and then spawns new creation from the producers and the fans that takes place in the world of the show, the world of the more deeply embedded metatext, and in some cases in the 'real' world. This enables the construction of

fan identities, fan communities, and what I call the ‘third world’; that which is created by neither the fans nor the producers but through the unintentional collaboration of the two.

## **Appendix 1: The Interviews**

### ***The Podcaster***

On September 15, 2008, I conducted an interview with Ryan Ozawa who produces one of the most listened to podcasts about *Lost* on the internet. According to one of the web's most thorough sources on *Lost*, Lostipedia.com, Ryan was responsible for releasing one of the biggest spoilers in the history of the show. The interview was conducted over Google chat.

CD: Ryan, I saw you mentioned on Lostipedia. I followed the link and was surprised to see that you are the spoiler king!

RO: Heh. That entry is a bit off. But fun!

CD: What was it that got you involved in *Lost* in the first place?

RO: The buzz over the pilot. \$10M for two hours? Had to see that. Also liked JJ's stuff, so was curious.

CD: Were you at the Premier back in August of 2004? If so, can you tell me about that?

RO: I think I saw that on TV. Made the advance premieres in subsequent years.

CD: What about your podcast, what made you switch from your previous podcast [called Hawaii Up] to the [*Lost* oriented] Transmission? Is that how it went?

RO: Basically. Didn't mean for HawaiiUP to end, or at least go into hibernation, but it turned out that way.

CD: What are the most people you've had tune in to any given episode?

RO: Hard to say. Average first week downloads is 14,000 or so. I think the biggest number I saw was 24,000, but that was over a longer period.

CD: Okay, can you tell me, do you think that *Lost* is unique in the world that it has created? (all of it, fans, mythology, show, online, podcasts, virals, etc)?

RO: It's up there. It's certainly Exhibit A in shows and brands that extended far beyond what shows on screen.

CD: Do you think it will reach the same sort of status as *Star Trek*?

RO: Hard to say. Times are different now, for one. I wonder how *Star Trek* would've fared in a wired world.

CD: Do you think that people that watch *Lost* are different than people that don't?

RO: Well, there's a science fiction aspect to *Lost*, and more so now, but it's not as fantastic as *Trek* in terms of scope and imagination. I don't know if we'll be as nostalgic about *Lost* as *Trek* because *Lost* is more conventional drama, just with a lot of mythology. And no. My mom watches "*Lost*." She's not like me. She likes "*Monk*" and "*CSI Miami*." Do I think the fans that follow "*Lost*" online and listen to podcasts and read blogs and join forums and do the ARG are different? Sure.

CD: How so?

RO: I'd say the vast, vast majority of *Lost* viewers don't dig any deeper than the cover stories in EW. But fandom online? That's another dimension and demographic. I don't think *viewers* of *Lost*, on balance, are different than other TV viewers, at least those with good taste.

CD: Well. That makes sense I think. Ryan, about the spoilers...were you, you know, without me saying it so that you don't have to acknowledge it, but were you...the guy?

RO: Snake in the Mailbox?

CD: That's the one.

RO: Ah. Well, you have to go look for spoilers.

CD: There is that. The only ones to blame are those who read them. Still, from what I gather from talking to fans, no one had expected that that kind of information would ever be allowed to get out. It was sort of like discovering that condoms can leak. Of course, knowing that doesn't ruin sex for everyone, nor the show either.

RO: I didn't touch it. Most spoiler hounds I deal with didn't, either. There was a big spoiler ethics debate after that one, to be sure.

CD: Absolutely, it was that spoiler that decided me to not read spoilers any more no matter how much I might want to know what would happen next.

Speculation is one thing, but it's nice to be surprised too.

RO: Well, stay away from my blog, then. Heh. I do hold back and tease here and there, but... folks have to know what they're getting into.

CD: I definitely stay away from your blog...most of the time. Okay, last question....what is it about *Lost* that you love? Or do you actually not love it? Do you blog and podcast because you love the show or because the fans of the show are paying attention?

RO: I love the show. When the show challenged my love, that was when we stepped back. It's not unconditional, to be sure. In terms of reward, though, the fan interaction is 99 percent of it. What

we saw at ComicCon, the people we met, made all  
the late nights worth it.

## ***The Writer***

Melinda Hsu Taylor – writer Interviewed on  
10/16/08.

CD: Has *Lost* changed you at all.

MHT: You know, it has changed me professionally because it's a huge credit and it is a huge step up for me. It's great to be working on a show that I love and that I am passionate about creatively so it's positive forward motion. I've only been working there since July, so I think it's too early to say if it has fundamentally changed me as a person.

CD: Is there much interaction with the fans?

MHT: The other day I was walking through the building and noticed a care package sent to the show that was making a plea for the Jaters (that would be Jack and Kate as opposed to Sater which would be Sawyer and Kate.) Included with it had

photo-shopped pictures of the happy couple in different locations. The fan was just making the point that they should be together. But that's about it, I have friends that watch the show and we all talk about it in the writing room.

CD: Is there a specific demographic the show is trying to hit?

MHT: The demographic we do really well with is 18-49 both sexes, more educated than not. Those are the people that buy stuff so it goes over well with the network if we do well with them. But I don't think we actually are shooting for a specific demographic. I would say that our fans are more educated than not, with a college degree of some sort.

CD: Do the you or the other writers have anything to do with the trans-medial story-telling?

MHT: Some of the writers participated in the con-con video and the interactive games but so far I haven't worked on any of the trans-medial stuff yet. It's all collaborative though, so in a way everyone takes part.

CD: How has Hawaii worked out? Is it more of a pain in the back because of the distance from L.A?

MHT: Hawaii has worked out really well, they get tax breaks and can do just about everything they need to do in Hawaii. I don't think it has been a problem at all. There are conference calls with the director's, and we take care of the CGI stuff, but it seems to work pretty well.

CD: Is *Lost* trying to change the world?

MHT: Short answer yes. Creating a show that has changed marketing, the online community and inspired passionate followers. Carlton and Damon want people to consider certain questions like in

Man of Science Man of Faith, the conflict between Jack and Locke. You know? The empirical versus faith. Locke is just going push the button and he and Jack are going at it and then finally, Jack pushes the button. It's a question of where does faith end and begin. They want people to think about these things.

CD: Should people be fans of the shows they work on?

MHT: I think you should be a fan of the shows you work on. I was a little afraid they wouldn't hire me if I was too big a fan for the job. It's hard to suspend your disbelief when you work on the set . I was a huge fan of Season 1 and then I had a baby so I had to catch up and watched a lot of episodes back to back.

CD: What kind of TV do you and the other writers watch?

MHT: One of the shows we talk about in the writers room is *Madmen*. We love it. We also do trivia about *Lost*, I'm pretty good at the trivia. I'm a big fan of the procedural dramas too.

CD: Do you or the other writers post or lurk on the fan boards?

MHT: I've only posted online once about a show and it wasn't about *Lost*. I don't really know about the other writers.

CD: Is it fun to write for *Lost*?

MHT: I think it's really fun. The desert island allows for a heightened kind of story telling with basic frontier dynamics. It's about what you want and need in the moment and the trappings of real life. Everything is pretty well fleshed out in the writing room so that there isn't a whole lot of room to add things in. Sometimes though you can add in one of the numbers or something else that the fans

are going to love. We get a lot of information but I  
can't talk about what information we have.

## ***Producers***

### **Interview with Damon Lindelhoff and Carlton Cuse, Executive Producers and show runners for *Lost* on October 20, 2008.**

*Lost* was co-created and co-produced by J.J.

Abrams and Damon Lindelof. Since the pilot was produced the show runners and primary powerhouses behind the show have been Lindelof and co- executive producer Carlton Cuse. Cuse and Lindelof have done numerous interviews about *Lost* together and agreed to talk to me about the show on the morning of October 20, 2008.

CD: One of the things I love about *Lost* is its connection to literature. Was there a conscious decision to make the show appeal to readers when it was created or was it a result of you

guys growing up reading Jules Verne and  
Robinson Crusoe?

DL: A lot of those influences are in the show,  
Carlton and I are both avid readers, I'd say that  
we both read our own things but there is clearly  
a place where our tastes overlap, so where  
Carlton is more of an Elmore Leonard spy novel  
fan in addition to all these other things,  
particularly for example, I've read all the Harry  
Potter books as well as the Narnia books, so  
there is this place in the middle, and of course  
all the Steven King books we've read, so we  
have this common language of literature creates  
a shorthand for the story, like, it's like this in  
The Stand or Carlton can say, remember the  
Magician's Nephew with those rings, so we  
kind of fall back on that stuff a lot and

obviously reading those books as kids had a real indelible impression on us as story tellers.

CD: The fans picture you very much as magicians, with regards to the fans, I wonder if the demographic you were shooting is similar to the demographics that I have found among fans in my study. The fans who have responded to my study are pretty heavily women in their 30's, 40's, and 50's. Were you guys trying to make *Lost* a sort of soap opera?

CC: No, we don't think of things from a demographic need, we try to make the show more from an instinctual play. Our basic role is, you know, we are sitting her post breakfast and every morning we have breakfast and talk about the show, you know, the meta-direction of

things or the specific things, and the rule is that both of us think it is cool, then it goes in the show, and we really rely on our guts and you know, who watches it, is really out of our control. We just try to make the show that we ourselves would most like to watch and that is kind of what has guided us from the beginning and once that started working we have been sort of unwavering in our commitment to our creative approach.

CD: There's no doubt about the fact that *Lost* is transmedial. The world of *Lost*, production, creation, and the fantasy world, crosses into all kinds of media. How did this happen? Were there precursor shows that you drew on? Was it just something that happened, or was it planned?

DL: When we first started doing the show we were immediately aware that because of the nature that we were going to reveal our mysteries, that is there would be huge mysteries that we wouldn't answer until the end of the show but then there would be smaller mysteries that we could answer in a single episode, like Why did Jin attack Michael...but at the end of the day, the audience was looking very closely at the show for all of these little hints or Easter eggs that we started throwing into the show.

When you get a DVD, there is a button that you can push that gives sort of secret material. We wanted to write the show so that a mainstream audience could appreciate it, but if you were a rabid fan that there would be more that you could find and the best way to do that because it is only forty-two minutes per episode, the only

way to do that was to sort of go outside the show itself and start sort of coming up with alternate ways like on the internet, or as you call it transmedial storytelling and in terms of kind of having seen it done before, like the message boards in the Weaververse, which I was very active on, and that kind of stuff, I think that, not that we birthed the idea of ARG, certainly movies like A.I. were doing that long before us, but the idea of doing it for a TV show felt unique to us and we had the idea with a lot of support from the network to put that idea out there.

CD: How much contact with the fans do you have? Is it true that you guys 'lurk' on fan sites or interact under pseudonyms? Do you get the sense that there are different types of fans?

CC: Honestly, we really have very little direct interaction with the fans, other than the fans submitting questions to us that we answer in our podcast, we don't troll the boards, in fact we kind of stay away from them because what I think happens is that there are two negatives to it, one is that if you read criticism, that criticism can really kind of stick in your brain, I mean people make compliments and it's great and well appreciated and kind of rolls off your back and that piece of criticism can really stick in your brain and I think it can kind of adversely affect the greater process because that thing starts gnawing at you, whether it is real or whether it is a particular bone that someone has to pick and fans go on the boards because they have an agenda and it's not really possible to

say that they reflect the total. Also the people on boards tend to be more mythologically oriented and this ties to your earlier question, which, I think the mythology is what everyone obsesses about and discusses but I think for us it is really like the frosting on the cake. You know and the cake is the character stories and we find it's important to write, I wouldn't say a soap opera, but it's a real character centric story and for us it goes back to the literary references, it's like *The Stand*, which is a thousand pages plus, unabridged, you've got this really high concept idea of a super flu that has wiped out the whole populace except for a few people, but what *The Stand* as a book is, it isn't the details of that super-flu, it's about the characters who are survivors of the super flu and the book is more focused on what are their relationships, what are

their back stories, and we kind of try to take the same approach with *Lost*, the mythology exists, but the interest and focus of our work as story tellers is telling the character stories.

CD: *Lost* has had a big impact in Hawaii. As a result of the economic and cultural impact, are you guys seriously connected here? Can you pick up the phone and call the governor?

CC: Uh, no.

DL: We could call and leave a message probably, but I don't know if we would get a call back. I think maybe Jean Higgins and Jack Bender in Hawaii might have met the Governor, but we have not had the honor.

CD: Anthropology has been defined as the recontextualization of meaning over the course of time and space. This seems to describe *Lost* pretty well, do you guys think of yourselves as anthropologists?

CC: I don't think we intellectualize it like that, we just see ourselves as story tellers and are continuing a tradition of story tellers who have done the kinds of things we've done but just in other mediums. The imaginations of Jules Verne or Steven King or CS Lewis or even JK Rowling and we are just trying to take the experience we had as readers and the way that those writers skills as story tellers transported us and just kind of look at it in our own vernacular and do the same for the people who watch our show. I think it is easy to aggrandize what we

do or over intellectualize it and we don't tend to think about it in those intellectual terms, we just think more of it in the emotional terms of will this be cool, will this be scary, will this make you laugh, will this make you cry. We just try to take our ideas and turn them into emotional experiences.

DL: You know when you look across the cultural landscape of media. Movies and TV shows and books that have some sort of cultural impact, we hope and fantasize that ten, fifteen, twenty years from now, *Lost* is still something that people talk about. I was reading an *Entertainment Weekly* article yesterday about *The Prisoner*, which is just released their full 16 episode box set and the fact that it was only 16 episodes done in the 60's but it is still

something that people are talking about...it was representative of a certain place and a feeling you know when our feelings about secret agents and our mistrust of government sort of reaching a peak and that show was a sort of commentary about how Europe viewed the world...and if that makes it an anthropological study, I'm not sure that Patrick McGuen, when he was doing the show, had any idea that forty years later we would still be talking about it, like in those terms so you just never know, as Carlton said, we are just trying to do our best version of the show, and we will let everybody else come up with what they think it is. At the end of the day, the legacy of Lost, it's really determined by how well it ends and we feel that our biggest contribution to the show, as its stewards was securing an ending as opposed to just kind of

going on and on and on until no one watched it anymore.

CD: One of my favorite episodes is Man of Science, Man of Faith and that episode really put the idea in my head that maybe Lost is trying to get people to think about specific things. Are there specific messages or ideas that you are trying to get fans to think about or realize?

CC: Well, we basically want people to think about some of the things that we think about as writers. The dramatic issues that interest us, include the notion of faith versus empiricism, you know, we live in a country which is so polarized along those two divides, where we have a deep faith abiding country and at the

same time we are practitioners as a culture of enterprises of science and empiricism and as people we are looking for what is that balance and how do you find your sort of place in the world between those two poles and how does each one affect you, so as a writer, your concerns inform the narrative, so this year for instance we are exploring this issue of destiny versus free will and that is a fundamental issue of how much of our lives are affected by environment. And again, I think these are the kind of things that we kind of talk about in the abstract and I think they percolate into the writing of the show, but we don't sit here and craft or over-intellectualize the process but because these are things that interest Damien and me as story tellers, they naturally inform the work and I think , hopefully, I would say there

is an intentional ambiguousness in our story telling which allows the viewers to draw their own conclusions about some of these thematics.

CD: Do you think Lost owes more to the bible or The Twilight Zone?

DL: You know, that is an impossible question to answer because I'm sure Rod Serling was a big fan of the bible because most of those stories are almost as weird or supernaturally driven as an episode of the twilight zone, just one of them is accepted as science fiction and one is accepted as the definitive religious writing of many many cultures and one of them was generated to be pop culture, so to say that one has more sway than the other as an influence on the show, I would say that it a Rorschach test for whoever is

watching it. So if you are a biblical student, you can watch the show and take away the extreme sense of all these things that Carlton was just discussing. Which, we imbue the show with. We talk about the big themes of destiny and purpose, sometimes more directly we will talk about it, for instance whether (the character) Aaron should be baptized or the struggle of Mr. Eko with being a priest and sometimes more indirectly like Locke and Jack arguing whether or not they should push the button. They're not arguing biblically, but the argument basically boils down to whether or not Abraham should sacrifice Isaac. Because someone tells you to do something, does having faith in it basically give you that power. But if you are an atheist who loves science fiction and doesn't like any of that stuff, you can watch the show on that axis and

then you will probably dig characters like Sawyer more because he doesn't care about issues like free will or faith or religion, he just cares about making out with Kate and stealing people's stuff. Again, we look at it through the spectrum of the characters, if all of our characters were interested in the same thing, it wouldn't really be worth having fourteen characters.

**Interview with Noreen O'Toole 11/4/08**

There had been a death in Lindelhof's family and she was being run hectic with condolence cards.

We only had time for these questions.

1) Is your official position title? How long have you been with Lost?

I am Damon Lindelhof's assistant as well as an associate producer on Lost. Officially I've been here with Lost since the second season because I was JJ's assistant during the second season but I started with Damon on the third season and that is where I got to know Lost in depth.

2) Do you see Lost as different from other shows? If so, how?

Absolutely on every level. Obviously there are certain shows that it can be compared to. With Twin Peaks there is that idea of the original cult show, there is a certain formula it follows, but it's so

outside of the box, it blends in mythology, drama, and all the other factors.

3) Have you eaten an Apollo bar?

No, but I do credit that to the genius marketing of ABC who I think virally let those out in obscure places, especially the east coast. I heard about fans going out of their way to get them. They treated them like a Willy Wonka and while I wasn't around during that time I thought it was one of the genius marketing moves on the show. I have to credit Damon and Carlton and the writers with that too obviously, it's one of the few shows that I see where there is such a collaborative effort between the studio and marketing and the show creatives which sets the tone of the show even outside of the episodic formula. You can see that at comicon or on the website. I actually [link with] the two other coproducers on the show in the Lost book club and

there are so many other things with the show that I don't have the experience of, I'm not a writer, I was never in the writer's room although I am constantly salivating for the next script.

The thing with *Lost* is that it is a different kind of show, yes, there are things it can compare to, but I've never seen anything else like this on television and I don't think we ever will. For instance, I love how over the past four seasons and as we go into our fifth, the narrative has changed but still remained true to the characters. I think this is what is genius about it, especially, all these moments from the third season finale to the transition in the fourth season when they broke that flash back tradition and inserted the flash forward.

- 4) Does fan participation make a difference in the course of the show? In the way the show runs from day to day?

It depends on if you are talking about the blogging or the marketing campaign. In some ways, I would say absolutely the fan participation makes a difference. We love the fans and we have seen different versions of them. We've seen them at comic-con. Or we released the Dharma initiative commercial sometime around the last season finale and just to see the participation level of the fans from the websites all the way to comicon and how they followed each and every step of the way. It's truly amazing. It makes a huge difference to us that the fans are willing to participate in this way.

## Appendix 2: Online Survey and Consent Form

The following is the online survey and consent form I used to poll fans. The survey was adapted from the work of Professors Jonathon Gray and Jason Mittel used in their work titled *Speculation on Spoilers: Lost Fandom, narrative consumption, and Rethinking Textuality*. In addition, the analysis of both the survey and the later interviews was undertaken using the methods described in *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* by John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland.

This survey will take between 5 and 20 minutes to complete depending on the depth of your answers and scope of your activities. Approximately 50 people will participate in this survey. There is little or no risk involved in this research project. You may refuse to answer any question and may abandon the survey at any point. By completing and returning this survey you are expressing your consent for Chris Damitio to use the information you provide for scholarly publication or presentation.

How do you watch Lost? (Check all that apply)

Live broadcast	Recorded	Online
DVD	Other	

How often do you watch Lost? (Check all that apply)

I never miss an episode            I watch  
episodes more than once        I sometimes  
miss an episode but try to keep up with the  
series    I wait to watch a group of episodes  
in a row            I rarely watch an episode  
other

What is the main reason you watch the show?

I like the characters    It is a distraction from  
real life            Philosophical issues  
Production values    Plot    I like the  
actors    It's funny        It's surprising  
I like to discuss it on the web    It is like a  
puzzle game    It teaches me useful things  
about the world            It's innovative  
It makes me cry            other

How else are you involved in Lost?

DVD extras    websites        podcasts  
books            fan fiction        games  
other

Within a few days of watching do you:

Discuss episodes face to face            on the  
phone            text or IM  
Read discussions online        post online  
visit show related websites  
Read articles in magazines or newspapers  
visit abc.com    watch the episodes or  
parts of the episodes again

In your discussions about the show do you:

Evaluate the episode quality  
speculate about mysteries  
compare episodes to previous  
episodes analyze images or  
sound from the episode

Do you think the entire story arc of Lost is:  
Planned out in detail by the producers of the  
program  
Written as they go along  
Written as they go along using information  
from fans  
Planned out but adapted using information  
from fans  
other

Do you read spoilers? If yes, why? If no,  
why?

How do you stay involved with Lost when  
the show is not on or when repeats are  
showing?

Do you have a theory about Lost? What is  
it?

Do you agree to the following statement?

I am at least 18 years old, have read, and  
understand the information on this page, and  
am willing to participate in this study.

Gender:

Age:

Country of residence:

This is an online survey designed by Chris Damitio, an anthropology student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa to explore how fans of the television program Lost use real world friendships, online forums, and other websites to keep themselves involved in the show during season breaks and events such as the 2007-2008 writers. The sole purpose of this survey is to inform academic research on television fandom and online communities and the results will only be used for scholarly publication or presentation. Any quotations or information obtained via this survey will be reported anonymously, with no attribution to specific individuals- any identifying information will be held solely by Chris Damitio and his advisor.

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If you have any questions about this project, call or write the researcher listed above. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the UH Committee on Human Studies at 956-5007, or write to 2540 Maile Way, 253, Honolulu, HI 96822 (email: [uhirb@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhirb@hawaii.edu))."

## **Appendix 3: Survey Results**

In April of 2008, I sent out a survey to several of the most popular message board communities focused on *Lost*. Due to working within a University environment on an academic project, I was required to submit all of my proposed questions, locations of study, and other relevant information to the University of Hawaii Committee for Human Studies (CHS) in order to ensure that in the course of my academic work that I didn't violate the human rights of any individuals.

Working within the highest ethical standards, necessarily limits one's ability to interact, question, and to a certain extent, understand the community that one intends to study. None the less, over the course of the next five months, I was able to find thirty-two brave souls that were willing to

risk their lives and rights by telling me about the nature of their relationship with *Lost*.

### ***Respondent Demographics***

Of those who replied twenty-six were female and six were male. Respondents were all above the age of 18 with a median age of 36.5 years old. Female viewers averaged slightly older than male viewers. All but four respondents were citizens of the United States. Other respondents were from the Philippines, United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada.

The significance of the above demographics could mean that American women above 30 have become the largest fans of *Lost*, or, just as likely that American women above 30 are the most likely to fill out online surveys sent to fan message boards. Further research will be required in the future to get

to the bottom of this most pressing of demographic questions.

### ***Viewing Habits***

91% of respondents claimed to never miss an episode that was broadcast while 53% said that they recorded episodes. Of those who recorded many were the same who never missed a broadcast episode. 62% watch episodes online while 63% watch episodes on DVD. While these numbers may at first seem to add up to more watchers than programs they make sense when we note that 78% of respondents watch episodes more than once. 78% is the same number of respondents who said that they go back to watch episodes again to look for hidden visual or auditory clues within the show.

## ***Reasons they watch***

Respondants gave a wide variety of answers as to why they enjoy watching the show. As one respondent noted:

*I find it fascinating, involving and lived in Hawaii twice and worked on a TV show (Magnum, P.I.) set there and watch all shows set there.*

Largely however, when asked for the main reasons they watch *Lost*, respondents chose three reasons. 59% said that they like the characters .

*What really brought me into it during Season 1 was the characters being the focal point of the story*

The second most selected reason viewers watched (59%) was that they enjoyed the plot , and finally that they find the show to be innovative (53%).

Additionally, 43% of respondents said that they like to discuss the show on the web, 41% said they enjoy the surprises, and 32% said they enjoy the puzzle aspect of the show. As another respondent wrote:

*What I love the most is trying to figure out the mysteries. I love how everything fits together so perfectly. The writing is brilliant.*

Additional reasons for watching were that they found it funny (25%), that they enjoy the production values of the show (22%) or the philosophical issues raised (22%), 19% said it was a distraction from real life and the same number said that they watch because it makes them cry. One respondent said that the show teaches them useful things about the world. When asked to specify, no response was given.

## ***Post Viewing Behaviors***

When asked about how they would interact with others after seeing a new episode, 78% of the fans surveyed said that within a few days of seeing an episode they would discuss it face to face with another person. 47% discussed new episodes on the phone and 31% used text messaging or IM.

97% of those who responded said that in their discussions they would speculate about the mysteries of the show. 84% said that in their discussions they would compare the new episodes to previous ones.

72% of those surveyed said that within a few days they would watch episodes or parts of episodes again. Interestingly, only 63% responded that they would read discussions online while 69% said that within a few days they would post to online

discussions. This disparity in numbers could indicate megalomania or bad communication skills among fans of *Lost*, but more likely is indicative of problems within my survey.

In their 2006 study of spoiler behavior associated with *Lost*, Jonathan Gray and Jason Mittell summed this active period of not watching in the following way:

For fans, these weekly (or longer) gaps are not barren periods devoid of *Lost*, but serve as times to focus intently on the program – rewatching episodes, contributing to websites, writing fan fiction, and consuming paratexts. (Gray and Mittell. 2006.)

## ***Other Lost Associated Behavior***

Fans of Lost are connected to the show in material ways beyond just the time spent watching and discussing episodes. Not surprisingly, nearly all of the respondents to my survey said that they frequent websites associated with the show.

*I watch the repeats and look for clues or “things” I may have missed the first time watching. I also stay up to date with some of the fan blogs to see what people are talking about. I also analyze specific things with my best friend like why a character did a specific thing or said something specific. If we see a particular book being read on the show we go look at the book and sometimes read it*

In addition, 66% of those surveyed said that they regularly listen to podcasts such as Ryan

Ozawa's podcast "The Transmission" which is listened to by up to fourteen thousand fans each week.

*Knowing that the show has so much to present in a fixed amount of time has now freed me to watch spoilers and read Ryan Ozawa's stuff since I know that the producers are always going to have stuff that is SO surprising and SO shocking that nothing is really spoiled in knowing incidental details.*

Other ways that fans connect with the *Lost* world are through the extras on DVDs (59%), games (47%), books related to *Lost* (25%), and writing fan fiction about *Lost* (6%).

Due to long breaks between seasons, fans stay connected with the show through these and other methods. Here are a sampling of the

comments that were returned with the survey question “How do you stay involved with Lost when the show is not on or when repeats are showing?”

*I visit thefuselage.com regularly, I have a few friends that are Lost fans and we discuss the story so far, I write and read fan-fic and I belong to the Henry Ian Cusick Yahoo Group and we talk a lot about Lost there.*

*I participate in forums, posting or lurking. This summer I did the online "Lost Experience"*

*I have participated in the web game, I rewatch the epsiodes, I keep the discussion alive with friends and family. I try to recruit noobs to the experience. (I do my part to*

*keep the ratings up!)*

*I re-watch episodes, and follow any stories about the show in magazines, online, on tv, etc. I visit the message boards for show discussions. I also have a group of friends who are fans of the show and we discuss anything that comes out. I also collect memorabilia from the show, and I am always on the lookout for anything and everything that's out there.*

## **Spoilers**

One of the most contentious issues among fans who gather to discuss the show on the internet or in person is that of spoilers. A spoiler is essentially, any bit of information that reveals

something about the show earlier than one would get the information from watching the show in the normal linear way.

Spoilers can be broad and simple:

*Next weeks episode is going to be Jack-centric.*

In this case pointing out that the next episode of Lost will be focused on one particular character.

And, of course, spoilers can become quite detailed:

*In next weeks episode Jack will wear the color blue and have a romantic interlude with Juliet where they will eat fried chicken and she will try to convince him that she is on his side, but really she is working for Ben.*

This second made-up example of a spoiler is the kind that generates a lot of controversy among fans

of the show. The worst spoilers (or to some, the best, depending on how they feel about spoilers) are those that revolve around show information that fans refer to as ‘game changers’.

‘Game changers’ are events that occur in the timeline of the show that reveal important information about the mysteries of the island, the lives of the characters, or the direction of the show. Examples would be the death of a major character, the nature of the island, or the motivations behind any of the various major characters being different than viewers had been led to believe.

It is important to note here, that spoilers are not speculation. None of the fans I have spoken with have any problem with speculation, in fact, as we saw above, it is one of the main reasons they enjoy the show. A spoiler relies on specific inside information such as knowledge of a filming

location, having seen footage prior to broadcasting, or getting information from someone who works within the show. Major controversy broke out in the *Lost* fan community when at the end of the third season; an unidentified person leaked the entire synopsis of the season finale. This spoiler was a major game changer and changed the way many fans feel about spoilers.

In *Speculation of Spoilers: Lost Fandom, Narrative Consumption and Rethinking Textuality*, Jonathan Gray and Jason Mittell studied the habits of *Lost*'s 'spoiler fans' in depth. Their study was done prior to the end of the second season of *Lost*. It is interesting to note how the demographics they found online compare with those that I found at the end of the fourth season. Gray and Mittells study found:

...80% of respondents identified themselves as American, with 17 other countries represented in the survey. 60 % of the respondents were female, and respondents ages ranged from 18 to 54, with a mean age of 29 and median of 27. (Gray and Mittell. 2006.)

In addition, their study found that 69% of respondents consumed spoilers to some degree.

While neither study can be cited as evidence of the spoiler habits of all fans, it is interesting to note that both came within 7% of one another.

One further explanation is necessary before seeing how respondents felt about spoilers. There is a general consensus among fans that The producers are active on the most popular fan message boards and often confuse the issue of spoilers with what

fans call ‘foilers’. A foiler is an intentionally misleading piece of information presented as a spoiler, but having no basis in reality and leading fans in the wrong direction from where the show is really going.

Fans were divided on reading spoilers. Surprisingly (to me) 62% of those polled read spoilers of varying degrees. 38% of fans polled said they do not read spoilers, though some confess to minor spoilers such as previews or information about their favorite characters on the show.

*NO – I like being surprised when something big happens.*

*No, but sometimes I give in to the minor spoilers....but NEVER the big ones. I like to be surprised while watching the show.*

*No. I dont like to know whats going to happen before the show. I like to be suprised and 'in the moment' with the show.*

*NO – I like being shocked when something big happens.*

*I used to read spoilers but after I found the full disclosure of the S03 finale it really showed me that the show is a lot more fun when I don't know what's happening ahead of time. But I still like to know the new actors that will be regulars on the show and I like to find out spoilers about Desmond (my favorite character).*

*No! There are so few surprises anymore. I do watch the previews for next week,*

*NO---I like not knowing what will happen, it makes it more real...more "in the moment".*

*No, I used to watch the previews for the next week, but found the ways they tried to lead me on/reveal was always slightly different from what would happen and just end up with me being disappointed so I prefer going in on a completely clean slate, and usually find I enjoy it much more that way.*

*NO!!! I don't want to know what's happening in advance. And I work background on the show so when I do know a spoiler, I'm sworn to secrecy, so I don't want to read spoilers.*

*Nope, I like to be surprised. The last 30 seconds is always the best part of the night- why ruin it for myself?*

Among fans that admitted to liking some sorts of spoilers, the admission was often given with an overall feeling that was akin to an admission of guilt. Nearly everyone seems to share the feeling that the spoilers take something away from the show, yet a majority of fans still seem to seek them out. To me, fans that admitted to reading spoilers usually did so with an overall sense that they were admitting some sort of vice or guilt. I could almost imagine them gathered in a room together “Hi, I’m Fangirl and I’m a spoiler reader.” “Hi, Fangirl.”

The answers below (as those above) are left as they were submitted with punctuation, emphasis, and capitalization in tact though some abbreviations

and misspellings have been corrected. The question was simply stated “Do you read spoilers? If yes, why?”

*Yes, but I try to stay spoiler-lite. Mainly looking at the episode stills and the sneak peaks. I do it because I am weak.*

*Yes-I'm too curious for my own good, and often want to try and figure things out in advance, or work up anticipation.*

*Yes, I can't resist! It doesn't ruin the upcoming episode for me at all. I find that it allows me to be more aware of smaller details during the show. After viewing the current episode I don't feel that I have the next show figured out either so I don't think it matters*

*Yes, to prepare myself so that I can focus on other things in the episode (writing, production design, etc.)*

*Yes because there are rarely \*big\* spoilers out there, I read them. If spoilers were more common, I would definitely avoid the spoilers.*

*I do read spoilers. Evidently, I can't wait to find out what is going to happen next but I enjoy being kept guessing.*

*Yes I always want to see what is going to happen next.*

*I usually resort to reading spoilers during the hiatus, but am selective about what I read and I stop reading spoilers when the season begins because I like to be surprised*

*each week--the only thing I pay attention to in spoilers during the season is the episode titles and the character-centric focus.*

*Yes, need my fix. It doesn't ruin it for me.*

*Yes. I'm a spoiler fiend for all media, not just "LOST." I read full plot synopses for movies, scripts if available, detailed reviews of books, grab TV pilot screeners online, and so on. For "LOST," I realize that I'm defusing the impact of some revelations (S3 "Snake in the Mailbox", etc.), but just can't resist. Beyond that, I track the show's production in Honolulu fairly closely, and have generated a fair amount of spoilers for fan communities. I endeavor to "spoil responsibly," and avoid*

*ruining the show for those who wish to live spoiler-free (including my wife, who doesn't have it easy!), but for those who are obsessive fans, I try to be a good resource.*

*Yes, occasionally. I will read some spoilers if they are deemed minor. I try not to read the major "game-changing" spoilers*

*I read some spoilers. Like who the episodes might be about. I also read them to laugh at hilarious foilers. If an episode seems like it will be awesome- I stay away. If it seems like it may be mundane, I go ahead and read. I wish I hadn't been spoiled for last year's finale-and I am being really careful this year.*

*I didn't ever watch coming attractions, ads for the show or read the spoiler page on Lostpedia until the 9th episode this season. Knowing that the show has so much to present in a fixed amount of time has now freed me to watch spoilers and read Ryan Ozawa's stuff since I know that the producers are always going to have stuff that is SO surprising and SO shocking that nothing is really spoiled in knowing incidental details.*

*I do read spoilers, to an extent. I want SOME spoilers, but not so many that I won't have any surprises. If I reach a point where I feel like I'm getting too much information about an upcoming episode, I will stop. I*

*never want to know the ending cliffhanger of any episode- I want to see it and be shocked.*

*I read mild spoilers only, such as filming locations. I do not read major spoilers as it ruins the surprise to me.*

*There are two things I read that are considered Spoilers. 1. The episode title for next week (how is that a spoiler?)2.*

*Watching the preview for next weeks episode on TV. (It's showed with the LOST episode, so why is it a spoiler?)Other than that, I don't do spoilers cause it just ruins the fun of it.*



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