

Archive of Our Own

Archive of Our Own (AO3) is a nonprofit open source repository for fanfiction (fic) and other fanworks contributed by users. The site was created in 2008 by the Organization for Transformative Works and went into open beta in 2009. As of 2019, Archive of Our Own hosted 5.5 million works in over 35,000 fandoms. The site has received positive reception for its curation, organization and design, mostly done by readers and writers of fanfiction.

Archive of Our Own won the **Hugo Award for Best Related Work** in 2019.^[2]

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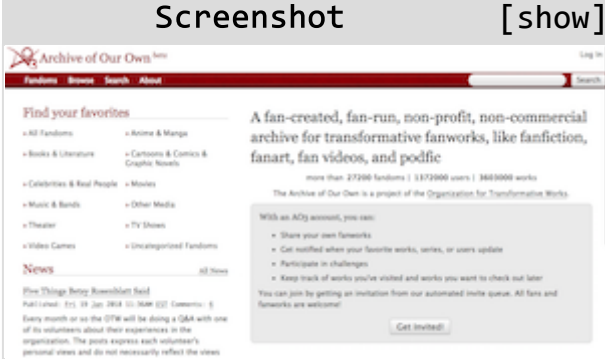
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History and operations

In 2007, a site called FanLib was created with the goal of monetizing fanfiction. Fanfiction was authored primarily by women and FanLib, which was run entirely by men, drew criticism. This ultimately led to the creation of the nonprofit Organization for Transformative Works (OTW) which sought to record and archive fan cultures and works.^[3] OTW created Archive of Our Own (abbreviated AO3) in October 2008 and established it as an open beta on November 14, 2009.^{[4][5][6]} The site's name was derived from a blog post by the writer Naomi Novik who, responding to FanLib's lack of interest in fostering a

Archive of Our Own

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Type of site	Fanfiction
Founded	September 2008
Owner	Organization for Transformative Works
Website	archiveofourown.org (https://archiveofourown.org/)
Alexa rank	▼ 1422 (Global, January 2020) ^[1]
Commercial	No
Registration	Optional
Users	2,235,000
Launched	November 15, 2009 (Open beta)
Written in	Ruby

fannish community, called for the creation of "An Archive of One's Own".^[3] The name is inspired by the essay *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf.^{[7][8]} AO3 defines itself primarily as an archive and not an online community.^[8]

By 2013, the site's annual expenses were about \$70,000. Fic authors from the site held an auction via Tumblr that year to raise money for Archive of Our Own, bringing in \$16,729 with commissions for original works from bidders.^[4] In 2018, the site's expenses were budgeted at ~\$260,000.^[9]

Archive of Our Own runs on open source code programmed almost exclusively by volunteers in the Ruby on Rails web framework. The developers of the site allow users to submit requests for features on the site via a Trello board.^[3] AO3 has approximately 700 volunteers.^[7]

On February 29, 2020, Archive of Our Own was blocked in China, possibly due to the website's hosting of queer and sexually explicit content.^[10]

Features

Hybrid tagging wrangling system

Stories on Archive of Our Own can be sorted into categories and tagged based on elements of the stories, including characters and ships involved and other more specific tags.^[11] Approximately 300 volunteers called "tag wranglers" manually connect synonymous tags to bolster the site's search system, allowing it to understand "mermaids", "mermen", and "merfolk" as constituents of the "merpeople" tag, for example.^{[12][7][3]}

Content ratings

Archive of Our Own allows users to rate their stories by intended age ("General audience", "Teen and up audiences", "Mature", and "Explicit"), relationships, orientations and pairings ("F/F", "M/M", "F/M", "Multi", "Other", and "Gen"), and to supply content warnings for their works (e.g. "Major Character Death", "Graphic Depictions of Violence", "Underage", and "Rape/Non-Con").^[11]

Archive of Our Own allows writers to publish any content, so long as it is legal. This allowance was developed as a reaction to the policies of other popular fanfiction hosts such as LiveJournal, which at one time began deleting the accounts of fic writers who wrote what the site considered to be pornography, and FanFiction.Net, which disallows numerous types of stories including any that repurpose characters originally created by authors who disapprove of fanfiction.^{[3][8]}

Reader feedback

Readers can give stories kudos, which function similarly to likes or hearts on other sites.^[13]

Username

The site does not require real names from its users, who may identify themselves by one or more pseudonyms linked to their central account.^[3]

Content

Archive of Our Own reached one million fanworks (including stories, art pieces, and podcast fic recordings or podfics) in February 2014. At that time, the site hosted works representing 14,353 fandoms, the largest of which were the Marvel universe, Supernatural, Sherlock, and Harry Potter.^[5] In July 2019 it was announced that the site had 2 million registered users and 5 million posted works.^[14] Of the top 100 character pairings written about in fic on the site in 2014, 71 were male/male slash fiction and the majority of character pairings featured white characters.^[15] In 2016, about 14% of fic hosted on the site took place in an alternative universe in which characters from a particular canon are transplanted into a different context.^[16] AO3 maintains a policy of "maximum inclusiveness" and minimal content censorship, which has led to the hosting of controversial content including works depicting rape, incest, and pedophilia.^{[8][7]} According to AO3 Policy and Abuse Chair Matty Bowers, a small fraction (1,150) stories submitted to the Archive were flagged by users as "offensive".^[8] Organization for Transformative Works Legal Committee volunteer Stacey Lantagne stated that: "The OTW's mission is to advocate on behalf of transformative works, not just the ones we like."^[8]

The length of a story on Archive of Our Own tends to correlate with its popularity. Stories of 1,000 words received less than 150 hits on average while stories that were closer in length to a novel were viewed closer to 1,500 times apiece.^[11] As of June 2015, the most popular story on the site was reportedly "I Am Groot", a "masterpiece of hardcore Guardians of the Galaxy erotica"^[13] that consists of the words "I am Groot" and no others.^{[17][18]}

As of January 2020, the most popular work by hits (views) is "狱门调教 (1—4)" by Saviel with 1,429,460 hits, an Attack on Titan fanfiction.^[19] The most popular English work by hits is "Twist and Shout" by gabriel and standbyme, a Supernatural fanfiction, with 1,129,857.^[20]



Reception

Aja Romano and Gavia Baker-Whitelaw of The Daily Dot described Archive of Our Own as "a cornerstone of the fanfic community" by 2012, writing that it hosted content that other sites like FanFiction.Net and Wattpad deemed inappropriate and was more easily navigable than Tumblr.^[21] Time listed Archive of Our Own as one of the 50 best websites of 2013, describing it as "the most carefully curated, sanely organized, easily browsable and searchable nonprofit collection of fan fiction on the Web".^[22] According to Casey Fiesler, Shannon Morrison, and Amy S. Bruckman, Archive of Our Own is a rare example of a value-sensitive design that was developed and coded by its target audience, namely writers and readers of fanfiction. They wrote that the site serves as a realization feminist HCI (an area of human–computer interaction) in practice, despite the fact that the developers of Archive of Our Own had not been conscious of feminist HCI principles when designing the site.^[3]

In 2019, Archive of Our Own was awarded a Hugo Award in the category of Best Related Work, a category whose purpose is to recognize science fiction–related work that is notable for reasons other than fictional text.^{[23][24]}



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External links

- [Official website](http://archiveofourown.org/) (<http://archiveofourown.org/>)
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