

MEETING OF MARK PROTECTION COMMITTEE
October 22, 2023

MEMBERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

The first meeting of the Mark Protection Committee (“MPC”), jointly with the Board of Directors of Worldcon Intellectual Property (“WIP”), for 2023-2024 was called to order in person in the Meteor Hall of the Chengdu Science Fiction Museum, Chengdu, China, and via Zoom at 10:13 a.m., Chengdu time, on Sunday, October 22, 2023. The MPC is the only permanent body of the World Science Fiction Society (“WSFS”), created by authority of the WSFS Constitution. Membership in the MPC also constitutes membership in the board of directors of WIP, a California nonprofit corporation.

Present were Alan Bond (appointed by Seattle in 2025 until 2027), Joni Dashoff (elected until 2026), Linda Deneroff (elected until 2024), Donald E. Eastlake III (elected until 2024), David Ennis (appointed by Buffalo NASFiC until 2026), Isabel Kestermann (temporarily appointed by Glasgow in place of Alissa Wales, who was appointed until 2026), Dave McCarty (elected until 2024), Helen Montgomery (appointed by Chicon 8 until 2024), Linda Ross-Mansfield (appointed by Pemmi-Con until 2025), Kevin Standlee (elected until 2025), Nicholas Whyte (elected until 2025), Ben Yalow (elected until 2025), and Lily Zhou (temporarily appointed by Chengdu in place of Chen Shi, who was appointed until 2025).¹

Cliff Dunn’s appointment on behalf of DisCon III expired, and we thank him for his service.

Kevin Standlee acted as chair until elections were held.

ELECTIONS

Without objection, the rules were suspended, and Kevin Standlee, Don Eastlake, and Linda Deneroff were reappointed as President, Vice President and Secretary of the MPC/WIP. Bruce Farr was reappointed as the nonvoting member from California as Treasurer.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Standlee observed that Chengdu Worldcon 2023 made liberal and proper use of our service marks. Their intention appears to be to name the theatre used for the Hugo Award ceremony permanently as the Hugo Award Theater. Since it’s a descriptive term, that is considered a valid use of our marks. Whenever Chengdu had questions about our marks, Mr. Yalow was able to provide guidance.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be another combination in-person/Zoom at SMOFCon, which will be held December 1-3, 2023, in Providence, Rhode Island. Mr. Standlee will work with that convention to arrange a time and room.

We need to again start looking into registering our marks in Canada and Australia. Kevin was tasked with contacting the Australian fan who is also an IP attorney and who has volunteered several times to do this. (We will pay him, of course.) For Canada, we should ask our U.S. attorney if she knows of someone who can handle this for us.

If the constitutional amendment to create an Asian Science Fiction Convention (“ASFIC”) is ratified and adopted next year, we will also consider what we do about protecting our intellectual property in Asia. We cannot do anything yet because the term has not been used in commerce. Additionally, the WSFS

¹ Joni Dashoff, Linda Deneroff, David Ennis, and Linda Ross-Mansfield attended via Zoom.

Business Meeting may choose to call the convention something different. In any event, we do not need to take instantaneous action and can wait even a couple of years while it is used in commerce. (As a precedent, when the Lodestar Award was created, we waited until the sunset clause went away before applying for a trademark, and it is probably best to do the same with an ASFIC mark.)

If a Worldcon is ever held in India, we may have a problem using the term Worldcon since there is already a non-fannish (medical) convention there called Worldcon. It will be hard to convince their trademark office that the a convention of doctors and a convention of science fiction fans are different enough that the terms can be used by the two distinct organizations. Mr. Eastlake said there are IP offices in India, but he did not know if the doctors convention has registered a mark. In any event, it would cost a lot of money to register a mark or fight theirs. Since nothing is on the horizon for India, we will let the next generation of fans take care of it.

Our attorney has formally completed the transfer of the IP marks formerly held by the MPC to WIP to the satisfaction of the USPTO. She is now working on the upcoming U.S. mark renewals. Now all Worldcons can use the same service mark notice, which simplifies matters for all Worldcons.

Action Item for 2024: Mr. Yalow proposed that we should now commence cleaning up our domain registrations so that they, too, will all be owned by WIP. (Currently various people have obtained domains for the MPC/WIP.)

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

ADDENDUM: Per our September meeting, we were supposed to discuss the following but failed to do so, and we should take them up in Providence, RI.

Business to Refer to 2023-24 MPC/WIP Board

The order of business for our next meeting will include

- Further discussion of the two policies discussed above.
- Review the budget. Bruce noted that Sasquan gave us about \$10,000, much more than they were nominally required to.