

Making the Fantastic Real: From Design Fiction to Engineering Fandom

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This study - *Making the Fantastic Real* - provides research on the subject of design fiction, fandom, sharable digital media content on one hand, and real-life engineering artifacts on the other. The study has selected the case of *The Hacksmith* in order to understand the space of meaning (science and fiction) the production of this specific Youtuber presents to its users, fans, followers, and general public.

The Hacksmith Industries is the trademark name of the YouTube channel *The Hacksmith* (<https://www.youtube.com/user/MstrJames>) created by Canadian engineer James Hobson in 2006. One of the signature elements of Hobson's interest in the Fantastic is the lightsaber and the *Star Wars* franchise. But Hobson explores many other dimensions of popular culture, ranging from nerf wars shooters to superhero artifacts of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. His focus is on how to make elements of the Fantastic real, not to change any storyline or story arc, but to see how far the innate human capability of play and creation can be taken from the fictional realm to reality.

The research question for this study is: Where does *The Hacksmith Industry* lead us in relation to the demarcation line of the Real and the Fantastic, between science and fan- and design fiction? *The Hacksmith* can be considered a model for exploring the border between the Real and the Fantastic, creating the notion of a fangineer, a fan becoming an engineer by expressing their fannishness through the feat of engineering.

An analysis of selected YouTube videos, including the comments sections, as well as an ethnographic approach to various online fan forums have been conducted to ensure a broad understanding of the transformation of the fantastic into reality by engineering fans. The work is ongoing.

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Tem's research focuses on digital leisure and user studies, and how users domesticate digital media in everyday life. He has published research on superhero origin stories on YouTube, superhero motion comics and how users use heroism as a key motif in digital fan works.

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Thessa's research ranges from understanding participatory culture and collaborative creativity on online platforms to the practical application of her findings in educational settings. She actively engages in fandom culture, writes fanfiction, and maintains a Tumblr blog.