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Scott Coon
www.LostHelix.com

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Abstract

This is a reflection on skills and science fiction

Keywords

skills, science fiction

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Jack of All Trades, Master of SciFi

Scott Coon

"A Jack of all trades is a master of none," is an insult until you hear the rest of the original saying, "but oftentimes better than a master of one." If your goal is to be a science fiction writer, becoming a Jack of all trades will help you master the one.

A writer needs to master the art—and at least understand the business—of writing. But they say, "Write what you know." If you only know writing, you can only write about writers writing. To have more to write about, a writer needs knowledge and experience. Make it your goal to know something about everything...or as much of everything as possible. It has never been easier to gather knowledge than today. YouTube is full of short videos about overlooked bits of history, science, and human behavior. Take advantage of this. The more you know, the more you can write about.

For genre writers, there should be an area of specialization related to your genre. In Fantasy, this means global mythology, and I mean all of it. In Romance, this means time travel for some reason. In science fiction, this means building a layperson's understanding of astronomy, physics, engineering, geology, and other sciences. You don't need to learn the math but a basic grasp the theories is essential to creating realistic scientific elements in your plot and setting. Also, studying the sciences will inspire new story ideas and elements.

In addition to science, a science fiction writer should study history, and not just if you're planning to take time travel stories back from the Romance writers. To create a realistic future society, knowing what came before and how it created today will allow you project trends forward. For example, clothing: how has it changed over the centuries and why? How does this

predict what will come next? Personally, I believe jeans are an apex clothing. Now that jeans exist, there shall always be jeans.

I encourage any would-be writer of any type of fiction to become a generalist so they can bring a broad body of knowledge into their pages. Watch documentaries. Revel in experiences new and odd. And feast on knowledge from any source.

And if someone calls you a Jack of all trades, remember that playwright Robert Green once said the same of a young upstart named William Shakespeare.