

**Watcher Junior:
The State of the Journal**

[1] Three years ago we began our term as Editors of *Watcher Junior: The Undergraduate Journal of Whedon Studies* under the aegis of the Whedon Studies Association. As we complete our term of service we thought it would be useful to review where the journal has been, where it is headed, and what we learned in the process.

[2] Back in 2005, Whedon scholars Lynn Y. Edwards and Katy Stevens took inspiration from *Slayage: The Journal of Whedon Studies*, to launch *Watcher Junior* as a space for undergraduates to publish their work on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Under the leadership of David Kociemba and Kristin Romanelli (2009-2014) the journal expanded its range to include articles on *Firefly* and *Dollhouse*. As both the Whedonverse and the Whedon Studies Association expanded so too have the variety of subjects undertaken by student researchers. Since 2014 *Watcher Junior* has regularly published articles on *Buffy*, *Dollhouse*, and *Firefly*, along with others on *The Avengers*, *Cabin in the Woods*, *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Angel*, and *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*. This is also an indication of the breadth of teaching and coursework by scholars across the globe, from Canada, Australia, France, the United States, and Europe.

[3] That being said, the majority of submitted articles continue to place *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* at the center of their analysis with some comparing Buffy Summers to heroic characters such as Xena the Warrior Princess, and others dissecting her relationships with Spike and Angel. Questions about Buffy as a heroic character remain popular. Students continue to use *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as a subject to deconstruct and understand feminism and gender with characters like Buffy and Faith serving as analytical subjects. Authors have analyzed Xander, Spike, and Angel through a gendered lens to draw conclusions about masculinity and its representation in Whedon's work.

[4] After *Buffy*, *Firefly* is the most popular Whedon text for undergraduate submissions with students investigating everything from individual characters to *Firefly* role playing games. Recent student work about *Firefly* makes comparisons between companions and geishas, for example, and explores subjects of otherness, humanity, and the self. The analytic depth of these articles reminds readers of the value in teaching a full course dedicated to *Firefly* as Cynthia Masson does at Vancouver Island University in Canada. Her course along with those covering other Whedon texts taught by David Kociemba at Emerson College (Boston, MA) create a productive pipeline between student authors and the journal. The cessation of those courses has reduced the flow of submissions and reminds us of the necessary ties between Whedon Studies Association scholars, teachers, students, and publications.

[5] *Watcher Junior* has published one or two articles over the past three years about *The Avengers*, *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, *Angel*, *Cabin in the Woods*, and *Dollhouse*. These articles illustrate the interest students have in the wide variety of work that Whedon has produced. Yet, as he moves more into directing and away from creating original content, it is essential that Whedon scholars and others continue to introduce his earlier work to students at the undergraduate level. As we have argued elsewhere, the longevity of *Buffy* and Whedon studies will live or die in the classroom, as students no longer encounter the texts during the time of their creation, but after the fact.

[6] Over the past three years *Watcher Junior* has published an array of articles written by students from the United States, Canada, Australia, England, and Germany. Students find the work engaging and as they conduct research, they depend upon and add to the rich analytical work being done by members of the Whedon Studies Association and other Whedon Scholars. *Watcher Junior* continues to be an essential space where students learn how to navigate the publishing world, to engage with published scholars, and to ultimately see their name in print. We encourage you to continue including Whedon's work in your syllabi and guiding students toward thesis or other projects that examine the Whedonverse. As we turn the journal over to new editors in 2018 we thank you for your continued support.

Jodie A. Kreider
University of Denver

Meghan K. Winchell
Nebraska Wesleyan University