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Forteanism

Forteanism is skepticism gone nuts. It is named after **Charles Hoy Fort**, a man who was [anti-science](#) but quite intellectual and somewhat reclusive (much in the manner of Ignatius J. Reilly, except married). Fort was openly skeptical of science, but was a great collector of items that would now be called "news of the weird", feeling that the fact that many of them could not be explained by orthodox science of the time rendered the whole enterprise

This might be **Skepticism**



But we're not sure

- [Discovery Channel](#)
- [Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence](#)

bankrupt. Fort was the inspiration for, but not a member of, his writer friend Tiffany Thayer's Fortean Society (founded in 1931 over Fort's objections), and much of his writing would be considered an example of what the Jargon File refers to as "ha ha only serious", in the manner of the Baker Street Irregulars, [Discordianism](#), or professional wrestling.

The original Fortean Society dissolved upon Thayer's death in 1959 (Fort had died in 1932), and its official magazine, *Doubt*, went out of print, but Fort's writings continued to have numerous fans, and the current magazine, *Fortean Times*, began its print run in the late 70s. Fort's influence on fringe science has been such that in the 1957 book *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* [Martin Gardner](#) wrote extensively on how Fortean thinking could lead to bad science, using the then-new field of [ufology](#) as an example of Forteanism in action.

The fundamental difference between Forteanism and [denialism](#) is that while both could be considered [pseudoskeptic](#) in nature, Fortean thought takes a radically agnostic approach to almost everything it touches, whereas denialism purports to state fact (albeit fact contrary to established data). A denialist would misrepresent [Occam's razor](#)'s effect on an argument; a Fortean would throw it out entirely, claiming that the result is likely to be something unanticipated anyway, and thus amounts to the scientific equivalent of the "they're all crooks so who cares" school of political science. A common theme of Fortean thought is a perceived elitism among scientists, with a corresponding need to deflate said elitist thinking; ultimately, if Forteanism stands for anything at all, it stands for a democratizing of the natural world by ignoring what it perceives to be insoluble or irrelevant.

The fallacies behind Forteanism are reasonably obvious — a mix of [argument from incredulity](#) and [argument from ignorance](#), akin to the proofs of [God](#) that require you to assume that you can't see the air (why is the sky blue then?). More to the point, it borders on (if not actively crosses into) [solipsism](#), and therefore seems to render the entire question of [reality](#) pointless. Obviously, this is untestable and [unfalsifiable](#); a Fortean probably wouldn't care, but then... yeah.

Fort is widely credited for coining the term ["teleportation"](#).

- [Ophelia Benson](#)
- [Prometheus Books](#)
- [Skeptics in the Pub](#)
- [The Fine Art of Baloney Detection](#)

Who's asking?

- [James Randi](#)
- [Jerry Coyne](#)
- [Neil deGrasse Tyson](#)
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- [Stefaan Blancke](#)
- [Trolling With Logic](#)

v - t - e

'[Fortean](#)' [\[edit\]](#)

The adjective 'Fortean' has also come to be used as a catch-all term for the unusual, unexplained or seemingly anomalous. Thus, when someone talks about a collection of Fortean books or an interest in Forteana, they are not



"Weird Weekend" — a family-oriented Fortean conference

necessarily bringing the baggage of Charles Fort's ideas with them. Interest in things Fortean can be keenly scientific, although pseudoskepticism masquerading as science is all too common. The wider meaning of 'Fortean' is well-illustrated by the evolution of the *Fortean Times* — what was initially a painfully earnest **pseudoscientific** periodical aping the look of **peer-reviewed** journals is now a glossy magazine that's more likely to quietly mock the credulous than promote them.

See also [\[edit\]](#)

- [Postmodernism](#)
- [Pseudoscience](#)
- [Pseudoskepticism](#)

External links [\[edit\]](#)

- [Fortean Times](#)^[a], the official website

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Charles Fort

Charles Hoy Fort (August 6, 1874 – May 3, 1932) was an American writer and researcher who specialized in anomalous phenomena. The terms *Fortean* and *Forteana* are sometimes used to characterize various such phenomena. Fort's books sold well and are still in print. His work continues to inspire admirers, who refer to themselves as "Forteans", and has influenced some aspects of science fiction.

Fort's collections of scientific anomalies, including *The Book of the Damned* (1919), influenced numerous science fiction writers with their iconoclastic skepticism and as sources of ideas. "Fortean" phenomena are events which seem to challenge the boundaries of accepted scientific knowledge, and the *Fortean Times* (founded as *The News* in 1973 and renamed in 1976) investigates such phenomena.

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Charles Hoy Fort



Fort in 1920

Born	Charles Hoy Fort August 6, 1874 Albany, New York, USA
Died	May 3, 1932 (aged 57) The Bronx, New York, USA
Occupation	Anomalistics researcher

Biography

Fort was born in Albany, New York in 1874,^[1] of Dutch ancestry. His father, a grocer, was an authoritarian and, in his unpublished autobiography *Many Parts*, Fort mentions the physical abuse he endured from his father. Fort's biographer, Damon Knight, suggested that his distrust of authority began in his treatment as a child. Fort developed a strong sense of independence during his early years.

As a young adult, Fort wanted to be a naturalist, collecting sea shells, minerals, and birds. Although Fort was described as curious and intelligent, he was not a good student. An autodidact, his considerable knowledge of the world was due mainly to his extensive personal reading.

At age 18, Fort left New York to embark on a world tour to "put some capital in the bank of experience". He travelled through the western United States, Scotland, and England, until becoming ill in Southern Africa. When he returned home, he was nursed by Anna Filing, whom he had known since childhood. They were married on October 26, 1896. Anna, four years older than Fort, was non-literary, a lover of movies and of parakeets. His success as a short story writer was intermittent between periods of poverty and melancholia.

Career as a full-time writer

His uncle died in 1916, and a modest inheritance gave Fort enough money to quit his various day jobs and to write full-time.^[1] In 1917, Fort's brother Clarence died; his portion of the same inheritance was divided between Fort and Raymond.

Fort's experience as a journalist,^[1] coupled with his wit and contrarian nature, prepared him for his real-life work, ridiculing the pretensions of scientific positivism and the tendency of journalists and editors of newspapers and scientific journals to rationalize.

Fort wrote ten novels, although only one, *The Outcast Manufacturers* (1909), a tenement tale, was published. Reviews were mostly positive, but it was unsuccessful commercially. During 1915, Fort began to write two books, titled X and Y, the first dealing with the idea that beings on Mars were controlling events on Earth, and the second with the postulation of a sinister civilization extant at the South Pole. These books caught the attention of writer Theodore Dreiser, who tried to get them published, but to no avail. Discouraged, Fort burnt the manuscripts, but soon began work on the book that would change the course of his life, *The Book of the Damned* (1919), which Dreiser helped to get published. The title referred to "damned" data that Fort collected, phenomena for which science could not account and that was thus rejected or ignored.

Fort and Anna lived in London from 1924 to 1926, having relocated there so Fort could peruse the files of the British Museum.^{[1][2]} Although born in Albany, Fort lived most of his life in the Bronx. He was, like his wife, fond of movies, and would often take her from their Ryer Avenue apartment to a movie theater nearby, stopping at an adjacent newsstand for an armful of various newspapers. Fort frequented the parks near the Bronx, where he would sift through piles of clippings. He would often ride the subway down to the main Public Library on Fifth Avenue, where he would spend many hours reading scientific journals, newspapers, and periodicals from around the world. Fort also had literary friends who would gather at various apartments, including his own, to drink and talk.

Death

Suffering from poor health and failing eyesight, Fort was pleasantly surprised to find himself the subject of a cult following. There was talk of the formation of a formal organization to study the type of odd events related by his books. Clark writes, "Fort himself, who did nothing to encourage any of this, found the idea hilarious. Yet he faithfully corresponded with his readers, some of whom had taken to investigating reports of anomalous phenomena and sending their findings to Fort" (Clark 1998, 235). Fort distrusted doctors and did not seek medical help for his worsening health. Rather, he emphasized completing *Wild Talents*.

After he collapsed on May 3, 1932, Fort was rushed to Royal Hospital in The Bronx. Later that same day, Fort's publisher visited him to show him the advance copies of *Wild Talents*. Fort died only hours afterward, probably of leukemia.^[3] He was interred in the Fort family plot in Albany, New York. His more than 60,000 notes were donated to the New York Public Library.^[4]

Fort and the unexplained

Overview

For more than thirty years, Charles Fort visited libraries in New York City and London, assiduously reading scientific journals, newspapers, and magazines, collecting notes on phenomena that were not explained well by the accepted theories and beliefs of the time.

Fort took thousands of notes during his lifetime. In his short story "The Giant, the Insect and The Philanthropic-looking Old Gentleman" (first published by the International Fortean Organization in issue #70 of the *INFO Journal: Science and the Unknown*), Fort spoke of sitting on a park bench at The Cloisters in New York City and tossing some 48,000 notes, not all of his collection by any means, into the wind.^[5] The notes were kept on cards and scraps of paper in shoeboxes, in a cramped shorthand of Fort's own invention, and some of them survive in the collections of the University of Pennsylvania. More than once, depressed and discouraged, Fort destroyed his work, but began anew. Some notes were published by the Fortean Society magazine *Doubt* and, upon the death of its editor Tiffany Thayer in 1959 most were donated to the New York Public Library, where they are still available to researchers of the unknown.^[6]

From this research, Fort wrote four books. These are: *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931) and *Wild Talents* (1932); one book was written between *New Lands* and *Lo!* but it was abandoned and absorbed into *Lo!*

Fort's writing style

Fort suggested that there is a Super-Sargasso Sea into which all lost things go,^[1] and justified his theories by noting that they fit the data as well as the conventional explanations. As to whether Fort *believed* this theory, or any of his other proposals, he himself noted, "I believe nothing of my own that I have ever written."

Notable literary contemporaries of Fort openly admired his writing style and befriended him. Among these were: Ben Hecht, John Cowper Powys, Sherwood Anderson, Clarence Darrow, and Booth Tarkington.

After Fort's death, the writer Colin Wilson said that he suspected that Fort took few if any of his "explanations" seriously and noted that Fort made "no attempt to present a coherent argument." He described Fort as "a patron saint of cranks",^[7] while at the same time he compared Fort to Robert Ripley, a popular contemporary cartoonist and writer who found major success publishing similar oddities in a syndicated newspaper panel series named Ripley's Believe It or Not!

Wilson called Fort's writing style "atrocious" and "almost unreadable", yet despite his objections to Fort's prose, he allowed that "the facts are certainly astonishing enough." In the end, Fort's work gave him "the feeling that no matter how honest scientists *think* they are, they are still influenced by various *unconscious* assumptions that prevent them from attaining true objectivity. Expressed in a sentence, Fort's principle goes something like this: People with a psychological need to *believe* in marvels are no more prejudiced and gullible than people with a psychological need *not* to believe in marvels."^[8]

However, Jerome Clark wrote that Fort was "essentially a satirist hugely skeptical of human beings' – especially scientists' – claims to ultimate knowledge."^[9] Clark described Fort's writing style as a "distinctive blend of mocking humor, penetrating insight, and calculated outrageousness."^[10] Fort was skeptical of sciences and wrote his own mocking explanations to defy scientists who used traditional methods.^[1]

Fortean phenomena

Examples of the odd phenomena in Fort's books include many occurrences of the sort variously referred to as occult, supernatural, and paranormal. Reported events include teleportation (a term Fort is generally credited with inventing),^{[11][12]} falls of frogs, fishes, and inorganic materials,^[1] spontaneous human combustion^[1] ball lightning^[1] (a term explicitly used by Fort), poltergeist events, unaccountable noises and explosions, levitation, unidentified flying objects, unexplained disappearances, giant wheels of light in the oceans, and animals found outside their normal ranges (see phantom cat). He offered many reports of out-

of-place artifacts (OOPArts), strange items found in unlikely locations. He was also perhaps the first person to explain strange human appearances and disappearances by the hypothesis of alien abduction and was an early proponent of the extraterrestrial hypothesis, specifically suggesting that strange lights or objects sighted in the skies might be alien spacecraft.

Many of these phenomena are now collectively referred to as "Fortean phenomena" or "Forteana",^[1] while others have developed into their own schools of thought: for example, the study of reports of UFOs as ufology and of unconfirmed animals (cryptids) as cryptozoology.

Forteans

Fort's work has inspired some people to consider themselves "Forteans." The first of these was the screenwriter Ben Hecht, who in a review of *The Book of the Damned*, declared, "I am the first disciple of Charles Fort... henceforth, I am a Fortean." Among Fort's other notable fans were John Cowper Powys, Sherwood Anderson, Clarence Darrow, and Booth Tarkington, who wrote the foreword to *New Lands*.

Precisely what is encompassed by the term "Fortean" is a matter of great debate; the term is widely applied to people ranging from Fortean purists dedicated to Fort's methods and interests, to those with open and active acceptance of the actuality of paranormal phenomena, a belief with which Fort may not have agreed. Most generally, Forteans have a wide interest in unexplained phenomena, concerned mostly with the natural world, and have a developed "agnostic scepticism" regarding the anomalies they note and discuss. For Hecht, as an example, being a Fortean meant hallowing a pronounced distrust of authority in all its forms, whether religious, scientific, political, philosophical, or otherwise. It did not, of course, include an actual belief in the anomalous data enumerated in Fort's works.

The Fortean Society was initiated at the Savoy-Plaza Hotel in New York City on January 26, 1931, by some of Fort's friends, including such significant writers as Hecht, Theodore Dreiser, and Alexander Woollcott, and organized by fellow American writer Tiffany Thayer, half in earnest and half in the spirit of great good humor, like the works of Fort himself. The board of founders included Dreiser, Hecht, Tarkington, Powys, Aaron Sussman, former *Puck* editor Harry Leon Wilson, Woollcott and J. David Stern, publisher of *The Philadelphia Record*. Active members of the Fortean Society included prominent science-fiction writers such as Eric Frank Russell and Damon Knight. Fort, however, rejected the Society and refused the presidency, which went to his friend Dreiser; he was lured to its inaugural meeting by false telegrams. As a strict non-authoritarian, Fort refused to establish himself as an authority, and further objected on the grounds that those who would be attracted by such a group would be spiritualists, zealots, and those opposed to a science that rejected them; it would attract those who *believed* in their chosen phenomena: an attitude exactly contrary to Forteanism. Fort did hold unofficial meetings and had a long history of getting together informally with many of New York City's literati such as Dreiser and Hecht at their apartments where they would talk, have a meal and then listen to brief reports.

The magazine *Fortean Times* (first published in November 1973), is a proponent of Fortean journalism, combining humour, scepticism, and serious research into subjects which scientists and other respectable authorities often disdain. Another such group is the International Fortean Organization (INFO). INFO was formed during the early 1960s (incorporated in 1965) by brothers, the writers Ron and Paul Willis, who acquired much of the material of the Fortean Society, which had largely ceased by 1959 with the death of Tiffany Thayer. INFO publishes the *INFO Journal: Science and the Unknown* and organizes the FortFest, the world's first continuously running conference on anomalous phenomena dedicated to the spirit of Charles Fort. INFO, since the mid-1960s, also provides audio CDs and filmed DVDs of notable conference speakers, including Colin Wilson, John Michell, Graham Hancock, John Anthony West, William Corliss, John Keel, and Joscelyn Godwin. Other notable Fortean societies include the London Fortean Society, Edinburgh Fortean Society in Edinburgh and the Isle of Wight.

Scholarly evaluation

Fort is acknowledged by religious scholars such as [Jeffrey J. Kripal](#) and [Joseph P. Laycock](#) as a pioneering theorist of the paranormal who helped define "paranormal" as a discursive category and provided insight into its importance in human experience. Although Fort is consistently critical of the scientific study of abnormal phenomena, he remains relevant today for those who engage in such studies.^{[1][13][14]}

Literary influence

More than a few modern authors of fiction and non-fiction who have written about the influence of Fort are sincere devotees of Fort. One of the most notable is British philosopher John Michell who wrote the Introduction to *Lo!*, published by John Brown in 1996. Michell says: "Fort, of course, made no attempt at defining a world-view, but the evidence he uncovered gave him an 'acceptance' of reality as something far more magical and subtly organized than is considered proper today." [Stephen King](#) also uses the works of Fort to illuminate his main characters, notably *It* and *Firestarter*. In *Firestarter*, the parents of a pyrokinetically gifted child are advised to read Fort's *Wild Talents* rather than the works of baby doctor [Benjamin Spock](#). [Loren Coleman](#) is a well-known cryptozoologist, author of *The Unidentified* (1975) dedicated to Fort, and *Mysterious America*, which *Fortean Times* termed a Fortean classic. Indeed, Coleman terms himself the first Vietnam era conscientious objector to base his pacifist ideas on Fortean thoughts. [Jerome Clark](#) has described himself as a "sceptical Fortean".^[15] [Mike Dash](#) is another capable Fortean, bringing his historian's training to bear on all manner of odd reports, while being careful to avoid uncritically accepting *any* orthodoxy, be it that of fringe devotees or mainstream science. Science-fiction writers of note including [Philip K. Dick](#), [Robert Heinlein](#), and [Robert Anton Wilson](#) were also fans of the work of Fort. [Alfred Bester's](#) teleportation-themed novel, 'The Stars My Destination', pays homage to the coiner of the term by naming the first teleporter, 'Charles Fort Jaunte.' Fort's work, of compilation and commentary on anomalous phenomena has been carried on by [William R. Corliss](#), whose self-published books and notes bring Fort's collections up to date.

In 1939 [Eric Frank Russell](#) first published the novel which became *Sinister Barrier*, in which he names Fort explicitly as an influence. Russell included some of Fort's data in the story.^[16] [Ivan T. Sanderson](#), Scottish naturalist and writer, was a devotee of Fort's work, and referenced it heavily in several of his own books on unexplained phenomena, notably *Things* (1967), and *More Things* (1969). [Louis Pauwels](#) and [Jacques Bergier's](#) *The Morning of the Magicians* was also heavily influenced by Fort's work and mentions it often. Author [Donald Jeffries](#) referenced Charles Fort repeatedly in his 2007 novel *The Unreals*.

The noted UK paranormalist, Fortean and ordained priest [Lionel Fanthorpe](#) presented the *Fortean TV* series on [Channel 4](#). [Paul Thomas Anderson's](#) popular movie *Magnolia* (1999) has an underlying theme of unexplained events, taken from the 1920s and '30s works of Charles Fort. Fortean author Loren Coleman has written a chapter about this motion picture, entitled "The Teleporting Animals and *Magnolia*", in one of his recent books. The film has many hidden Fortean themes, notably "falling frogs". In one scene, one of Fort's books is visible on a table in a library and there is an end credit thanking him by name.^[17] In the 2011 film *The Whisperer in Darkness*, Fort is portrayed by [Andrew Leman](#).

American crime and science fiction author [Fredric Brown](#) included an excerpt from Fort's book *Wild Talents* at the beginning of his novel *Compliments of a Fiend*. In that quote Fort speculated about the disappearance of two people named Ambrose and wondered "was someone collecting Ambroses?" Brown's novel concerns the disappearance of a character named Ambrose and the kidnapper calls himself the "Ambrose collector" as an obvious homage to Fort.^[18]

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Fort published five books during his lifetime, including one novel. All five are available on-line (see [External links](#) section below).

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See also

- [William R. Corliss](#)
- [Fortean Society](#)
- [Fortean Times](#)
- [Ghost Stations](#)
- [Inoue Enryō](#)
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- [Scientism](#)
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Fortean

See also: [fortean](#)

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English

WOTD – 3 May 2017

Etymology

Fort + *-ean*, named after [Charles Hoy Fort](#) (1874–1932), an American writer and investigator of [anomalous phenomena](#). The word was coined by American journalist [Ben Hecht](#) (1894–1964) in a review of Fort's book [The Book of the Damned](#) (1919) in the [Chicago Daily News](#) in 1920.^[1]



Charles Hoy Fort in 1920

Pronunciation

- (*Received Pronunciation*) IPA^(key): /'fɔː.ti.ən/
- (*General American*) IPA^(key): /'fɔɹ.ti.ən/, /-ri.ən/
- Hyphenation: For·te·an

Noun

Fortean (*plural* [Forteans](#))

1. A follower or admirer of Charles Fort.

- **1996**, Loren Coleman, "Alligators in the Sewers", in Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith, editors, *Contemporary Legend: A Reader* (New Perspectives in Folklore; 4; Garland Reference Library of the Humanities; 1718), New York, N.Y.; London: Garland Publishing, – ISBN, page 153 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=Zl39ezuo158C&pg=PA153>):

Stories about alligators in the sewers have been of particular interest, however, to **Forteans** (followers of Charles Fort). **Forteans** contend that many happenings derided by the official science of the Western world (falls of frogs from clear skies, the appearance of lake monsters, mystery beasts and so on) are genuine occurrences.

2. One who investigates anomalous phenomena.

- **2003**, Karl P. N. Shuker, "Bring Me the Head of the Sea Serpent!", in *The Beasts that Hide from Man: Seeking the World's Last Undiscovered Animals*, New York, N.Y.: Paraview Press, – ISBN, page 244 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=QNFR4xHHlegC&pg=PA244>):

Not long afterwards, **Fortean** writer Paul Harris contacted me concerning this putative sea serpent, kindly supplying me with a couple of newspaper cuttings [...] that contained photos of its remains, plus various additional details that he had gathered during his own investigation of this case.

- **2013**, "Contributors", in Alex Norman, editor, *Journeys and Destinations: Studies in Travel, Identity, and Meaning*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, – ISBN, page 287 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=bMswBwAAQBAJ&pg=PA287>):

Morandir [Armson] is also a traveller, a food blogger, a scholar of the occult, an amateur cook, a martial artist, an enthusiastic **Fortean**, and a transplant recipient.

Adjective

Fortean (comparative **more Fortean**, superlative **most Fortean**)

1. Of or pertaining to anomalous phenomena.

*Ufology is a somewhat **Fortean** subject.*

- **1957**, Martin Gardner, "Flying Saucers", in *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science*, 2nd rev. and exp. edition, Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, OCLC 9780486203942 (<http://worldcat.org/oclc/9780486203942>), page 55 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=TwP3SGAUsnkC&pg=PA55>):

Charles Fort died in 1932, fifteen years before the flying-saucer craze began. It is a pity he did not live to witness this mass mania, because in many ways, it was a triumph of pure Forteanism. Mysterious objects are seen in the sky. They elude all "official" and "scientific" explanation. Wild **Fortean** hypotheses are invented to explain them, and discussed seriously by the man in the street as well as by seemingly intelligent authors and editors.

- **1986**, Leon L. Gammell, "The Shorts", in *The Annotated Guide to Startling Stories* (Starmont Reference Guide; no. 3), Mercer, Wash.: Starmont House, → ISBN, ISSN 0738-0127 (<http://www.worldcat.org/issn/0738-0127>), page 85 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=2gOD6psACOQC&pg=PA27>):

Coppel, Alfred: TOUCH THE SKY [...] Short story. / Obviously based on **Fortean** concepts, this one concerns a man who really did touch the sky.

- **2001**, Curt Sutherly, "Strangers in the Night", in *UFO Mysteries: A Reporter Seeks the Truth*, St. Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn Publications, → ISBN, pages 44–45 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=uVL7BCSdv5gC&pg=PA45>):

Characters such as "Jack Brown" [supposedly a UFO investigator] have been annoying and frightening people for centuries. In earlier ages they were associated with the occult or with religious experience ... the "dark men" of countless traditions. Today they are a part of the UFO mythos. They arrive after a UFO or **fortean** event, sometimes afoot, sometimes driving automobiles that appear new even if the vehicle is clearly many years old. [...] They ask strange questions and make outlandish observations, or they simply follow from place to place.

- **2015**, Simon Wilson, "Fortean phenomena", in Matt Cardin, editor, *Ghosts, Spirits, and Psychics: The Paranormal from Alchemy to Zombies*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, → ISBN, page 92 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=3JMeCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA92>):

Other Fort-influenced writers argue that **Fortean** phenomena are themselves the means by which a kind of paranormal conspiracy of cosmic proportions is perpetrated against human beings.

2. Of or pertaining to Charles Fort.

Alternative forms

- fortean

Related terms

- Forteana

References

1. ^ Simon Wilson (2015), "Fortean phenomena", in Matt Cardin, editor, *Ghosts, Spirits, and Psychics: The Paranormal from Alchemy to Zombies*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, → ISBN, page 91 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=3JMeCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA91>).

Further reading

-  Charles Fort on Wikipedia.

Anagrams

- [Torfaen](#)
-

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Ben Hecht

Ben Hecht (/hɛkt/; February 28, 1893^{[1][2][3]} – April 18, 1964) was an American screenwriter, director, producer, playwright, journalist, and novelist. A journalist in his youth, he went on to write 35 books and some of the most entertaining screenplays and plays in America. He received screen credits, alone or in collaboration, for the stories or screenplays of some seventy films.

At the age of 16, Hecht ran away to Chicago, where, in his own words, he "haunted streets, warehouses, police stations, courtrooms, theater stages, jails, saloons, slums, madhouses, fires, murders, riots, banquet halls, and bookshops".^[4] In the 1910s and early 1920s, Hecht became a noted journalist, foreign correspondent, and literary figure. In the 1920s, his co-authored, reporter-themed play, *The Front Page*, became a Broadway hit.

The *Dictionary of Literary Biography - American Screenwriters* calls him "one of the most successful screenwriters in the history of motion pictures". Hecht received the first Academy Award for Best Story for *Underworld* (1927). Many of the screenplays he worked on are now considered classics. He also provided story ideas for such films as *Stagecoach* (1939). Film historian Richard Corliss called him "*the* Hollywood screenwriter", someone who "personified Hollywood itself". In 1940, he wrote, produced, and directed *Angels Over Broadway*, which was nominated for Best Screenplay. In total, six of his movie screenplays were nominated for Academy Awards, with two winning.

Hecht became an active Zionist after meeting Peter Bergson. Shortly before the Holocaust began in Germany, he wrote articles and plays about the plight of European Jews, such as *We Will Never Die* in 1943 and *A Flag is Born* in 1946.^[5] Of his seventy to ninety screenplays, he wrote many anonymously to avoid the British boycott of his work in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The boycott was a response to Hecht's active support of paramilitary action against British forces in Palestine and sabotaging British property there (see below), during which time a supply ship to Palestine was named the *S. S. Ben Hecht*.^(nl) ^(he)

According to his autobiography, he never spent more than eight weeks on a script. In 1983, 19 years after his death, Ben Hecht was posthumously inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame.^[6]

Ben Hecht



Hecht c. 1945

Born	February 28, 1893 <div>New York City, U.S.</div>
Died	April 18, 1964 <div>(aged 71)</div> <div>New York City, U.S.</div>
Nationality	American
Occupation	Screenwriter, novelist, playwright, journalist
Style	Comedy, newspapers, gangster
Spouse(s)	Marie Armstrong (1916–1926; divorced; 1 child) Rose Caylor (1926–1964; his death; 1 child) (1898–1979)

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Early years

Hecht was born in New York City, the son of Belarusian Jewish immigrants.^[7] His father, Joseph Hecht, worked in the garment industry. His father, and mother Sarah Swernofsky Hecht, had immigrated to New York from Minsk, Belarus. The Hechts married in 1892.^{[8]:107}

The family moved to Racine, Wisconsin, where Ben attended high school. For his bar-mitzvah, his parents bought him four crates full of the works of Shakespeare, Dickens and Twain.^[9] When Hecht was in his early teens, he would spend the summers with an uncle in Chicago. On the road much of the time, his father did not have much effect on Hecht's childhood, and his mother was busy managing a store in downtown Racine. Film author Scott Siegal wrote, "He was considered a child prodigy at age ten, seemingly on his way to a career as a concert violinist, but two years later was performing as a circus acrobat".^[10]

After graduating from Racine High School in 1910, Hecht attended the University of Wisconsin for three days before moving to Chicago.^[9] He lived with relatives, and started a career in journalism.^[11] Hecht won a job with the Chicago Daily Journal after writing a profane poem for publisher John C. Eastman to entertain guests at a party. By age seventeen Hecht was a full-time reporter, first with the Daily Journal, and later with the Chicago Daily News.^[9] He was an excellent reporter who worked on several Chicago papers.^[12] After World War I, Hecht was sent to cover Berlin for the Daily News. There he wrote his first and most successful novel, *Erik Dorn* (1921).^[13] It was a sensational debut for Hecht as a serious writer.^{[8]:108}

The 1969 movie, *Gaily, Gaily*, directed by Norman Jewison and starring Beau Bridges as "Ben Harvey", was based on Hecht's life during his early years working as a reporter in Chicago. The film was nominated for three Oscars. The story was taken from a portion of his autobiography, *A Child of the Century*.

Writing career

Journalist

From 1918 to 1919, Hecht served as war correspondent in Berlin for the *Chicago Daily News*. According to Barbara and Scott Siegel, "Besides being a war reporter, he was noted for being a tough crime reporter^[14] while also becoming known in Chicago literary circles".^[10]

In 1921, Hecht inaugurated a *Daily News* column called, *One Thousand and One Afternoons in Chicago*. While it lasted, the column was enormously influential. His editor, Henry Justin Smith, later said it represented a new concept in journalism:

the idea that just under the edge of the news as commonly understood, the news often flatly unimaginatively told, lay life; that in this urban life there dwelt the stuff of literature, not hidden in remote places, either, but walking the downtown streets, peering from the windows of sky scrapers, sunning itself in parks and boulevards. He was going to be its interpreter. His was to be the lens throwing city life into new colors, his the microscope revealing its contortions in life and death.^[15]



Hecht in 1919

While at the *Chicago Daily News*, Hecht famously broke the 1921 "Ragged Stranger Murder Case" story, about the murder of Carl Wanderer's wife, which led to the trial and execution of war hero Carl Wanderer. In Chicago, he also met and befriended Maxwell Bodenheim, an American poet and novelist, later known as the King of Greenwich Village Bohemians, and with whom he became a lifelong friend.

After concluding *One Thousand and One Afternoons*, Hecht went on to produce novels, plays, screenplays, and memoirs, but none of these eclipsed his early success in finding the stuff of literature in city life. Recalling that period, Hecht wrote, "I haunted streets, warehouses, police stations, courtrooms, theater stages, jails, saloons, slums, madhouses, fires, murders, riots, banquet halls, and bookshops. I ran everywhere in the city like a fly buzzing in the works of a clock, tasted more than any fit belly could hold, learned not to sleep, and buried myself in a tick-tock of whirling hours that still echo in me".^[4]

Novelist and short-story writer

Besides working as reporter in Chicago, "he also contributed to literary magazines including the *Little Review*. After World War I he was sent by the *Chicago Daily News* to Berlin to witness the revolutionary movements, which gave him the material for his first novel, *Erik Dorn* (1921).^[13] ... A daily column he wrote, *1001 Afternoons in Chicago*, was later collected into a book, and brought Hecht fame". These works enhanced his reputation in the literary scene as a reporter, columnist, short story writer, and novelist. After leaving the *News* in 1923, he started his own newspaper, *The Chicago Literary Times*.^[16]

According to biographer, author Eddy Applegate, "Hecht read voraciously the works of Gautier, Adelaide, Mallarmé, and Verlaine, and developed a style that was extraordinary and imaginative. The use of metaphor, imagery, and vivid phrases made his writing distinct... again and again Hecht showed an uncanny ability to picture the strange jumble of events in strokes as vivid and touching as the brushmarks of a novelist".^[17]

"Ben Hecht was the enfant terrible of American letters in the first half of the twentieth century", wrote author Sanford Sternlicht. "If Hecht was consistently opposed to anything, it was to censorship of literature, art, and film by either the government or self-appointed guardians of public morality". He adds, "Even though he never attended college, Hecht became a successful novelist, playwright, journalist, and screenwriter. His star has sunk below the horizon now, but in his own lifetime Hecht became one of the most famous American literary and entertainment figures...".^{[8]:107}

Eventually Hecht became associated with the writers Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, Maxwell Bodenheim, Carl Sandburg, and Pascal Covici. He knew Margaret Anderson, and contributed to her *Little Review*, the magazine of the Chicago "literary renaissance", and to *Smart Set*.^[17]

A Child of the Century

In 1954, Hecht published his autobiography, *A Child of the Century*, which, according to literary critic Robert Schmuhl, "received such extensive critical acclaim that his literary reputation improved markedly during the last decade of his life... Hecht's vibrant and candid memoir of more than six hundred pages restored him to the stature of a serious and significant American writer".^[18] Novelist Saul Bellow commented about the book for the *New York Times*: "His manners are not always nice, but then nice manners do not always make interesting autobiographies, and this autobiography has the merit of being intensely interesting... If he is occasionally slick, he is also independent, forthright, and original. Among the pussycats who write of social issues today, he roars like an old-fashioned lion."^[19]

Ghostwriting Marilyn Monroe's biography

Besides working on novels and short stories (see book list), he has been credited with ghostwriting books, including Marilyn Monroe's autobiography *My Story*. "The reprint of Marilyn Monroe's memoir, *My Story*, in the year 2000, by Cooper Square Press, correctly credits Ben Hecht as an author, ending a period of almost fifty years in which Hecht's role was denied... Hecht himself, however, kept denying it publicly..."^[20]

According to Monroe biographer, Sarah Churchwell, Monroe was "persuaded to capitalize on her newfound celebrity by beginning an autobiography. It was born out of a collaboration with journalist and screenwriter Ben Hecht, hired as a ghostwriter..."^{[21]:77} Churchwell adds that the truths in her story were highly selective. "Hecht reported to his editor during the interviews that he was sometimes sure Marilyn was fabricating. He explained, 'When I say lying, I mean she isn't telling the truth. I don't think so much that she is trying to deceive me as that she is a fantasizer.'"^{[21]:106}

Playwright

Beginning with a series of one-acts in 1914, he began writing plays. His first full-length play was *The Egotist*, and it was produced in New York in 1922. While living in Chicago, he met fellow reporter Charles MacArthur and together they moved to New York to collaborate on their play *The Front Page*. It was widely acclaimed and had a successful run on Broadway of 281 performances, beginning August 1928. In 1931, it was turned into a successful film, which was nominated for three Oscars.

Screenwriter

Film historian Richard Corliss writes that, "Ben Hecht was *the* Hollywood screenwriter...[and] it can be said without too much exaggeration that Hecht personifies Hollywood itself." Movie columnist Pauline Kael added that, "between them, Hecht and Jules Furthman wrote most of the best American talkies".^{[22]:5} His movie career can be defined by about twenty credited screenplays he wrote for Hawks, Hitchcock, Hathaway, Lubitsch, Wellman, Sternberg, and himself. He wrote many of those with his two regular collaborators, Charles MacArthur and Charles Lederer.

While living in New York in 1926, he received a telegram from screenwriter friend Herman J. Mankiewicz, who had recently moved to Los Angeles. "Will you accept three hundred per week to work for Paramount Pictures. All expenses



Caricature of Ben Hecht, 1923

paid. The three hundred is peanuts. Millions are to be grabbed out here, and your only competition is idiots", it read. "Don't let this get around." As a writer in need of money, he traveled to Hollywood as Mankiewicz suggested.^[10]

Working in Hollywood

He arrived in Los Angeles and began his career at the beginning of the sound era by writing the story for Josef von Sternberg's gangster movie *Underworld* in 1927. For that first screenplay and story, he won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay in Hollywood's first Academy award ceremony.^{[10][23]} Soon afterward, he became the "most prolific and highest paid screenwriter in Hollywood".^[24]

Hecht spent from two to twelve weeks in Hollywood each year, "during which he earned enough money (his record was \$100,000 in one month, for two screenplays) to live on for the rest of the year in New York, where he did what he considered his serious writing", writes film historian Carol Easton.^{[25]:173} Nonetheless, later in his career, "he was a writer who liked to think that his genius had been stifled by Hollywood and by its dreadful habit of giving him so much money".^{[26]:267}

Yet his income was as much a result of his skill as a writer as well as his early jobs with newspapers. As film historians Mast and Kawin wrote, "The newspaper reporters often seemed like gangsters who had accidentally ended up behind a typewriter rather than a tommy gun; they talked and acted as rough as the crooks their assignments forced them to cover... It is no accident that Ben Hecht, the greatest screenwriter of rapid-fire, flavorful tough talk, as well as a major comic playwright, wrote gangster pictures, prison pictures, and newspaper pictures."^[27]

Hecht became one of Hollywood's most prolific screenwriters, able to write a full screenplay in two to eight weeks. According to Samuel Goldwyn biographer, Carol Easton, in 1931, with his writing partner Charles MacArthur, he "knocked out *The Unholy Garden* in twelve hours. Hecht subsequently received a fan letter from producer Arthur Hornblow, Jr.:

After reading your magnificent script, Mr. Goldwyn and I both wish to go on record with the statement that if *The Unholy Garden* isn't the finest motion picture Samuel Goldwyn has ever produced, the fault will be entirely ours. You have done your part superbly." It was produced exactly as written, and "became one of the biggest, yet funniest, bombs ever made by a studio".^{[25]:174}

Censorship, profit, and art

Despite his monetary success, however, Hecht always kept Hollywood at arms' length. According to film historian Gregory Black, "he did not consider his work for the movies serious art; it was more a means of replenishing his bank account. When his work was finished, he retreated to New York."^[28]

At least part of the reason for this was due to the industry's system of censorship. Black writes, "as Mankiewicz, Selznick, and Hecht knew all too well, much of the blame for the failure of the movies to deal more frankly and honestly with life, lay with a rigid censorship imposed on the industry ... [and] on the content of films during its golden era of studio production." Because the costs of production and distribution were so high, the primary "goal of the studios was profit, not art...[and] fearful of losing any segment of their audiences, the studios either carefully avoided controversial topics or presented them in a way that evaded larger issues", thereby creating only 'harmless entertainment'".^[28]

According to historian David Thomson, "to their own minds, Herman Mankiewicz and Ben Hecht both died morose and frustrated. Neither of them had written the great books they believed possible."^{[26]:170}

with Howard Hawks

In an interview with director Howard Hawks, with whom Hecht worked on many films, Scott Breivold elicited comments on the way they often worked:

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Breivold. Could you explain how the day-to-day writing goes on a script?

Hawks. Well, when Hecht and MacArthur and I used to work on a script, we'd sit in a room and work for two hours and then we'd play backgammon for an hour. Then we'd start again and one of us would be one character and one would be another character. We'd read our lines of dialogue and the whole idea was to try to stump the other people, to see if they could think of something crazier than you could.^[29]

with David O. Selznick

According to film historian Virginia Wexman,

David Selznick had a flair for the dramatic, and no one knew that better than Ben Hecht. The two collaborated on some of Hollywood's biggest hits – movies like *Gone With the Wind* and *Notorious* and *Duel in the Sun* – and often enough, the making of those films was as rife with conflict as the films themselves...^{[30]:89}

Nothing Sacred is probably the "most famous of all the Carole Lombard films next to *My Man Godfrey*", wrote movie historian James Harvey. And it impressed people at the time with its evident ambition ... "and Selznick determined to make the classiest of all screwball comedies, turned to Lombard as a necessity, but also to Ben Hecht, nearly the hottest screenwriter in Hollywood at the time, especially for comedy. ... it was also the first screwball comedy to lay apparent claim to larger satiric meanings, to make scathing observations about American life and society."^{[31]:219}

In an interview with Irene Selznick, ex-wife of producer David O. Selznick, she discussed the other leading screenwriters of that time:

They all aspired to be Ben. The resourcefulness of his mind, his vitality were so enormous. His knowledge. His talent and ambition. He could tear through things, and he tore through life. They'd see this prodigious output of Ben's, and they'd think, 'Oh, hell, I'm a bum.' I think it must have been devastating. Ben did it to MacArthur, who died in time to save his reputation. And I'd hate to have been Herman [Mankiewicz], caught between Kaufman and Hecht.^{[32]:160}

with Ernst Lubitsch

According to James Harvey, Ernst Lubitsch felt uneasy in the world of playwright Noël Coward.

If Coward could write his play for three particular actors, he reasoned to an interviewer, why couldn't it be rewritten for three others? It was at this point ... that he turned to Ben Hecht...to work with him on the screenplay for *Design for Living*." It was the only Lubitsch-Hecht collaboration. Harvey adds, "Though Lubitsch must have been reassured by Hecht's taking the job. No writer in Hollywood had better credentials in the tough, slangy, specifically American style that Lubitsch wanted to impart to the Coward play. And together, they transformed it."^{[31]:57}

Styles of writing

According to Siegel, "The talkie era put writers like Hecht at a premium because they could write dialogue in the quirky, idiosyncratic style of the common man. Hecht, in particular, was wonderful with slang, and he peppered his films with the argot of the streets. He also had a lively sense of humor and an uncanny ability to ground even the most outrageous stories successfully

with credible, fast-paced plots."^[10] "Ben Hecht", his friend Budd Schulberg wrote many years ago, "seemed the personification of the writer at the top of his game, the top of his world, not gnawing at doubting himself as great writers were said to do, but with every word and every gesture indicating the animal pleasure he took in writing well".^[4]

"Movies", Hecht was to recall, "were seldom written. In 1927, they were yelled into existence in conferences that kept going in saloons, brothels, and all-night poker games. Movie sets roared with arguments and organ music."^[33]

He was best known for two specific and contrasting types of film: crime thrillers and screwball comedies.^[10] Among crime thrillers, Hecht was responsible for such films as *The Unholy Night* (1929), the classic *Scarface* (1932), and Hitchcock's *Notorious*. Among his comedies, there were *The Front Page*, which led to many remakes, Noël Coward's *Design for Living* (1933), *Twentieth Century*, *Nothing Sacred*, and Howard Hawks's *Monkey Business* (1952).

Film historian Richard Corliss wrote, "it is his crisp, frenetic, sensational prose and dialogue style that elevates his work above that of the dozens of other reporters who streamed west to cover and exploit Hollywood's biggest 'story': the talkie revolution."^{[22]:6}

Personal life

Married life

He married Marie Armstrong (1892–1956), a gentile,^[7] in 1915, when he was 21, and they had a daughter, Edwina, who became actress Edwina Armstrong (1916–1991). He later met Rose Caylor, a writer, and together they left Chicago (and his family) in 1924, moving to New York. He was divorced from Armstrong in 1925. He married Caylor that same year, and they remained married until Hecht's death in 1964.^[34]

On July 30, 1943, Ben and Rose had a daughter, Jenny Hecht, who became an actress at the age of 8. She died of a drug overdose on March 25, 1971, at the age of 27, shortly after completing her third movie appearance. A play about Jenny's brief life, *The Screenwriter's Daughter*, was staged in London in October 2015.^[35]

Civil rights activism

According to Hecht historian Florice Whyte Kovan, he became active in promoting civil rights early in his career.

...in the early 1920s, Hecht organized campaigns against the Ku Klux Klan, whose lynchings of minorities, primarily blacks, terrorized the American South and North... Artists and writers joined the effort, blending civil rights into the arts and literary scene...

Hecht wrote enough stories about black-white dynamics to form a small collection, including *To Bert Williams*, a richly symbolic obituary to the eminent vaudevillian, the thought-provoking *The Miracle*...In the same period, circa May–June 1923, Hecht ... collaborated on a musical with Dave Payton (Peyton), jazz pianist and music critic for the black newspaper the Chicago Defender...He broke taboos by publishing a regular column, Black-belt Shadows, about Chicago and broader AfroAmerica by young William Moore -- with the then-daring editorial note: "This column is conducted by a Negro journalist". A factor in his willingness to work with blacks on occasion was his first playwriting experience: his collaborator was a young black student.

Hecht film stories featuring black characters included *Hallelujah, I'm a Bum*, co-starring Edgar Conner as Al Jolson's sidekick in a politically savvy, rhymed dialogue over Richard Rodgers music. Jolson, a noted blackface performer and star of *The Jazz Singer*, was also active in promoting racial equality on the Broadway stage.

Hecht's most important race film historically was the Frank Capra message film *The Negro Soldier*, a feature-length tribute shown to the armed forces and civilians during World War II.^[36]

Supporting allies during World War II

Hecht was among a number of signers of a formal statement, issued in July 1941, calling for the "utmost material assistance by our government to England, the Soviet Union, and China". Among those who signed were former Nobel Prize winners in science, and others persons eminent in education, literature, and the arts. It advocated

the protection of civil liberties and the rights of labor, ... the elimination of all forms of racial and religious discrimination from our public and private life ... [and] the worldwide defense of human liberty ... There can be no victory over Hitlerism abroad if democracy is destroyed at home.

Later that year, he had his first large-scale musical collaboration with symphonic composer Ferde Grofe on their patriotic cantata, *Uncle Sam Stands Up*.^[37]

Jewish activism

Hecht claimed that he had never experienced anti-Semitism in his life, and claimed to have had little to do with Judaism, but, "was drawn back to the Lower East Side late in life and lived for a while on Henry Street, where he could absorb the energy and social consciousness of the ghetto", wrote author Sanford Sternlicht.^[8]

His indifference to Jewish issues changed when he met Peter Bergson, who was drumming up American assistance for the Zionist group Irgun.^[38] Hecht wrote in his book, *Perfidy*, that he used to be a scriptwriter until his meeting with Bergson, when he accidentally bumped into history - i.e. the burning need to do anything possible to save the doomed Jews of Europe (paraphrase from *Perfidy*). As Hecht relates it in *Child of the Century*, he didn't feel particularly Jewish in his daily life until Bergson shook him out of his assimilated complacency: Bergson invited Hecht to ask three close friends whether, in their opinion, Hecht was an American or a Jew. All three replied that he was a Jew. (This is incorrect, in his book, *Child Of The Century*, Hecht says that he used that line to convince David Selznick to sponsor a mass meeting at the Hollywood canteen).

Like many stories Hecht told about his life, that tale may be apocryphal, but after meeting Bergson, Hecht quickly became a member of his inner circle and dedicated himself to some goals of the group, particularly the rescue of Europe's Jews.

Hecht "took on a ten-year commitment to publicize the atrocities befalling his own religious minority, the Jews of Europe, and the quest for survivors to find a permanent home in the Middle East".^[36] In 1943, during the midst of the Holocaust, he predicted, in a widely published article in *Reader's Digest* magazine,

Of these 6,000,000 Jews [of Europe], almost a third have already been massacred by Germans, Romanians, and Hungarians, and the most conservative of scorekeepers estimate that before the war ends, at least another third will have been done to death.^{[39]}} }

Also in 1943, "out of frustration over American policy, and outrage at Hollywood's fear of offending its European markets", he organized and wrote a pageant, *We Will Never Die*, which was produced by Billy Rose and Ernst Lubitsch, and with the help of composer Kurt Weill and staging by Moss Hart. The pageant was performed at Madison Square Garden for two shows in front of 40,000 people in March 1943. It then traveled nationwide, including a performance at the Hollywood Bowl. Hecht was disappointed nonetheless. As Weill noted afterward, "The pageant has accomplished nothing. Actually, all we have done is make a lot of Jews cry, which is not a unique accomplishment."^{[40]:237}



New York City opening of *A Flag is Born* at the Alvin Playhouse



SS Ben Hecht

Following the war, Hecht openly supported the Jewish insurgency in Palestine, a campaign of violence being waged by underground Zionist groups (the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi) in Palestine. Hecht was a member of the Bergson Group, an Irgun front group in the United States run by Peter Bergson, which was active in raising money for the Irgun's activities and disseminating Irgun propaganda.

Hecht wrote the script for the Bergson Group's production of *A Flag is Born*, which opened on September 5, 1946 at the Alvin Playhouse in New York City. The play, which compared the Zionist underground's campaign in Palestine to the American Revolution, was intended to increase public support for the Zionist cause in the United States. The play starred Marlon Brando and Paul Muni during its various productions. The proceeds from the play were used to purchase a ship that was renamed the *SS Ben Hecht*, which carried 900 Holocaust survivors to Palestine in March 1947. The Royal Navy captured the ship after it docked, and 600 of its passengers were detained as illegal immigrants and sent to the Cyprus internment camps. The *SS Ben Hecht* later became the flagship of the Israeli Navy. The crew was imprisoned by the British authorities in Acre Prison, and assisted in the preparations for the Acre Prison break.^{[41][42][43]}

His most controversial action during this period was writing an open letter to the Jewish insurgents in May 1947 which openly praised underground violence against the British. It included the highly controversial passage:

Every time you blow up a British arsenal, or wreck a British jail, or send a British railroad train sky high, or rob a British bank, or let go with your guns and bombs at the British betrayers and invaders of your homeland, the Jews of America make a little holiday in their hearts.^{[11][44][45][46][47]}

Six months after the establishment of Israel, the Bergson Group was dissolved, followed by a dinner in New York City where former Irgun commander Menachem Begin appeared, saying,

I believe that my people, liberated and re-assembled in its country, will contribute its full share toward the progress of all mankind ... [and predicted] that all of Palestine eventually would be free, and that peace and brotherhood would prevail among Arabs and Jews alike.^[48]

Thanks to his fund-raising, speeches, and jawboning, Sternlicht writes,

Ben Hecht did more to help Jewish refugees from the Holocaust, and to ensure the survival of the nascent state of Israel, than any other American Jew in the twentieth century". As much as anything, it was the abiding love of his Jewish parents and Rose Hecht that motivated the writer to become arguably "the most effective propagandist the Jewish state ever had. In 1964, at Hecht's funeral service at Temple Rodeph Shalom in New York City, among the eulogists was Menachem Begin.^[8]

In October 1948, the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, a trade union representing about 4,700 British film theaters, announced a ban on all films in which Hecht had a role in.^{[49][50]} This was a result of "his intemperate utterances on the Palestine problem", according to one source.^[45] As a result, filmmakers, concerned with jeopardizing the British market, became more

reluctant to hire Hecht. Hecht cut his fee in half and wrote screenplays under pseudonyms or completely anonymously to evade the boycott, which was lifted in 1952.^[51]

Notable screenplays

***Underworld* (1927)**

Underworld was the story of a petty hoodlum with political pull; it was based on a real Chicago gangster Hecht knew. "The film began the gangster film genre that became popular in the early 1930s."^[11] It and *Scarface* "were "the alpha and omega of Hollywood's first gangster craze".^{[22]:6} In it, he "manages both to congratulate journalism for its importance and to chastise it for its chicanery, by underlining the newspapers' complicity in promoting the underworld image".^{[22]:10}

Like so many of his films, *Underworld* and *Scarface* are 'stories' that ace-reporter Hecht loved to cover, as much for the larger-than-life qualities of his headliners as for the enormity of their crimes. Love-hate ... fascination-revulsion ... exposé-glorification ... these are the polarities that make Hecht's best films deliciously ambiguous.^{[22]:6}

Hecht's introduction, which is nothing if not moody and Sandburgian, describes "A great city in the dead of night - streets lonely, moon-flooded - buildings empty as the cliff-dwellings of a forgotten age."^{[22]:6}

Hecht was noted for confronting producers and directors when he wasn't satisfied with the way they used his scripts. For this film, at one point he demanded that its director, Josef von Sternberg, remove his name from the credits since Sternberg unilaterally changed one scene. Afterward, however, he relented and took credit for the film's story, which went on to win the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay - the first year the awards were presented.^{[11][23]}

***The Front Page* (1931)**

After contributing to the original stories for a number of films, he worked without credit on the first film version of his original 1928 play *The Front Page*. It was produced by Howard Hughes and directed by Lewis Milestone in 1931. James Harvey writes,

it is Hecht and MacArthur's Chicago ... that counts most deeply in the imagination of Hollywood. And their play, the first of the great newspaper comedies, did more to define the tone and style, the look and the sound of Hollywood comedy than any other work of its time.^{[31]:86}}}

Of the original play, theater producer and writer Jed Harris writes,

... here is a play which reflects miraculously the real as well as the literary personalities of the playwrights. Every line of it glows with a demoniacal humor, sordid, insolent, and mischievous to the point of downright perversity, in which one instantly recognizes the heroic comic spirit of its authors... Both Hecht and MacArthur owe their literary origins to the newspapers of Chicago. Famous crime reporters, their talents were first cradled in the recounting of great exploits in arson, rape, murder, gang war, and municipal politics. Out of a welter of jailbreaks, hangings, floods, and whore-house raidings, they have gathered the rich, savory characters who disport themselves on the stage to Times Square Theatre.^[52]

***Scarface* (1932)**

After ushering in the beginning of the gangster films with *Underworld*, his next film became one of the best films of that genre. *Scarface* was directed by Howard Hawks, with "Hecht the wordsmith and Hawks the engineer...",^{[22]:8} who became "one of the few directors with whom Hecht enjoyed working".^[11] It starred Paul Muni playing the role of an Al Capone-like gangster. "*Scarface's* all-but-suffocating vitality is a kind of cinematic version of tabloid prose at its best."^{[22]:10}

The story of how *Scarface* came to be written represents Hecht's writing style in those days. Film historian Max Wilk interviewed Leyland Hayward, an independent literary agent, who, in 1931, managed to convince Hecht that a young oil tycoon in Texas named Howard Hughes wanted him to write the screenplay to his first book. Hayward wrote about that period:

So I went back to Hughes, and told him I'd been able to persuade Hecht to do his script; I told him Ben's terms, - \$1,000 per day - and Howard didn't blink an eye. He nodded, and said, 'Okay-it's a deal. But you tell Hecht I want a real tough shoot-'em-up script that'll knock the audience out of its seats, okay?'^[33]

"So Ben went to work", added Hayward. Hayward was to receive 10% of Hecht's fees as his commission. "He was a hell of a fast writer – sometimes too fast. I didn't even know how fast he could go... At the end of the first day, I went back to Ben's house. There he was, typing away... I said, 'Ben – please slow down.' Over the next few days, 'while watching the accumulated pages of Hecht's script growing higher and higher, 'I couldn't slow the guy down!', sighed Hayward, who only made his commission for each day Hecht worked.

I came by his home the next day... 'I've got an idea. I'm going to finish this damn thing tomorrow', Ben told me. 'Ben—for God's sake!', I said. 'Can't you slow down a little? Hughes isn't interested in you setting some sort of a speed record for writing!'

But it was as if young Hayward had set out to flag down an army tank. Nothing stopped Hecht. On the night of the ninth day, Hayward arrived with his daily payment from Hughes, to find Hecht lounging in a chair, enjoying a highball.

Hecht waved at his stack of manuscript. 'Done', he announced. 'Finished the damn thing'.

Nine thousand dollars – for the screenplay of *Scarface*? sighed Hayward. ... Hughes was tickled with Ben's script; he showed it to Howard Hawks. Hawks loved it, and then they picked up this wonderful young actor from New York, Paul Muni, to play the lead. The picture went out and cleaned up – made a bundle for Hughes... And if old Ben really outsmarted himself on that one... he didn't care. He was on to something else. Ben was always on to something else.^[33]

Twentieth Century (1934)

For his next film, *Twentieth Century*, he wrote the screenplay in collaboration with Charles MacArthur as an adaptation of their original play from 1932. It was directed by Howard Hawks, and starred John Barrymore and Carole Lombard. It is a comedy about a Broadway producer who was losing his leading lady to the seductive Hollywood film industry, and will do anything to win her back.

It is "a fast-paced, witty film that contains the rapid-fire dialogue for which Hecht became famous. It is one of the first, and finest, of the screwball comedies of the 1930s."^[11]

Viva Villa! (1934)

This was the story about Mexican rebel, Pancho Villa, who takes to the hills after killing an overseer in revenge for his father's death. It was directed by Howard Hawks and starred Wallace Beery. Although the movie took liberties with the facts, it became a great success, and Hecht received an Academy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation.

In a letter from the film's producer, David O. Selznick, to studio head Louis B. Mayer, Selznick discussed the need for a script rewrite.^{[53]:70}

I have arranged with Ben Hecht to do the final script of *Viva Villa!*... On the quality, we are protected not merely by Hecht's ability, but by the clause that the work must be to my satisfaction. It may seem like a short space of time for a man to do a complete new script, but Hecht is famous for his speed, and did the entire job on *Scarface* in eleven days.

***Barbary Coast* (1935)**

Barbary Coast was also directed by Howard Hawks and starred Miriam Hopkins and Edward G. Robinson. The film takes place in late nineteenth century San Francisco with Hopkins playing the role of a dance-hall girl up against Robinson, who runs the town.

***Nothing Sacred* (1938)**

Nothing Sacred became Hecht's first project after he and Charles MacArthur closed their failing film company, which they started in 1934. The film was adapted from his play, *Hazel Flagg*, and starred Carole Lombard as a small-town girl diagnosed with radium poisoning. "A reporter makes her case a cause for his newspaper. The story "allowed Hecht to work with one of his favorite themes, hypocrisy (especially among journalists); he took the themes of lying, decadence, and immorality, and made them into a sophisticated screwball comedy".^[11]

***Gunga Din* (1939)**

Gunga Din was co-written with Charles MacArthur, and became "one of Hollywood's greatest action-adventure films".^[11] The screenplay was based on the poem by Rudyard Kipling, directed by George Stevens and starred Cary Grant and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. In 1999, the film was deemed "culturally significant" by the United States Library of Congress.

***Wuthering Heights* (1939)**

After working without credit on *Gone with the Wind* in 1939, he co-wrote (with Charles MacArthur) an adaptation of Emily Brontë's novel, *Wuthering Heights*. Although the screenplay was cut off at the story's half-way point, as it was considered too long, it was nominated for an Academy Award.^[11]

***It's a Wonderful World* (1939)**

Movie historian James Harvey notes that in some respects *It's a Wonderful World* is an even more accomplished film –the comedy counterpart to the supremely assured and high-spirited work Van Dyke had accomplished with *San Francisco* (1936). "Ben Hecht, another speed specialist, wrote the screenplay (from a story by Hecht and Herman Mankiewicz); it's in his *Front Page* vein, with admixtures of *It Happened One Night* and *Bringing Up Baby*, as well as surprising adumbrations of the nineteen-forties private-eye film."^{[31]:335}

***Angels Over Broadway* (1940)**

Angels Over Broadway was one of only two movies he directed, produced, and wrote originally for film, the other was *Specter of the Rose* (1946). *Angels Over Broadway* was considered "one of his most personal works".^{[22]:21} It starred Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Rita Hayworth and was nominated for an Academy Award. "The dialogue as well as the script's descriptive passages are

chock full of brittle Hechtian similes that sparkle on the page, but turn leaden when delivered. Hecht was an endlessly articulate raconteur. In his novels and memoirs, articulation dominates..."^{[22]:19}

In the script, he experimented with "reflections of life - as if a ghost were drifting in the rain". These "reflections" of sidewalks, bridges, glass, and neon make the film a visual prototype of the nineteen-forties film noir.^{[22]:21}

Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) and *Notorious* (1946)

For Alfred Hitchcock he wrote a number of his best psycho-dramas and received his final Academy Award nomination for Notorious. He also worked without credit on Hitchcock's next two films, The Paradine Case (1947) and Rope (1948). Spellbound, the first time Hitchcock worked with Hecht, is notable for being one of the first Hollywood movies to deal seriously with the subject of psychoanalysis.

Monkey Business (1952)

In 1947, he teamed up with Charles Lederer, and co-wrote three films: Her Husband's Affairs, Kiss of Death, and Ride the Pink Horse. In 1950, he co-wrote The Thing without credit. They again teamed up to write the 1952 screwball comedy, Monkey Business, which became Hecht's last true success as a screenwriter.^[11]

Uncredited films

Among the better-known films he helped write without being credited are Gone with the Wind, The Shop Around the Corner, Foreign Correspondent, His Girl Friday (the second film version of his play The Front Page), The Sun Also Rises, Mutiny on the Bounty, Casino Royale (1967), and The Greatest Show on Earth.^[23]

Often, the only evidence of Hecht's involvement in a movie screenplay has come from letters.

The following are snippets of letters discussing The Sun Also Rises, based on the novel by Ernest Hemingway:^{[53]:444–445}

Letter by David O. Selznick to Hecht, 12/19/1956:

My present feeling is that eighty percent of the script is eighty per cent right, and that twenty per cent of it is eighty per cent wrong. That's pretty damn good, considering the time we spent on it, even though it was twice as long as you normally spend. So let's really try to do a job that will be ... something that we can be proud of for many years to come ...

Letter by Selznick to John Huston, 3/4/1957:

It is certainly not demeaning your talent to say that I don't think there is anybody alive who can come in on a job at the last minute and revise, *without serious danger*, work to which two old hands like Ben and myself have devoted many, many months of most careful work and devoted effort... it is also true that I have never seen Ben or anyone else bring to a job more thorough analysis, more willingness to rewrite, than he has.

The following letter discusses Portrait of Jennie (1948):^{[53]:390–391}

Letter by Selznick to Hecht, 11/24/1948:

Dear Ben: Very many thanks in advance for coming to the rescue again ... the audience was enchanted ... and it set the mood beautifully for the picture ... It needs the type of cinematic forward journalese of which you are the only master I know ... In any event, I shall be eagerly awaiting your redraft, which can take an entirely different form

... either actual or Hechtian creations...

***Gone with the Wind* (1939)**

For original screenplay writer Sidney Howard, film historian Joanne Yeck writes,

reducing the intricacies of *Gone with the Wind's* epic dimensions was a herculean task...and Howard's first submission was far too long, and would have required at least six hours of film; ... [producer] Selznick wanted Howard to remain on the set to make revisions...but Howard refused to leave New England, [and] as a result, revisions were handled by a host of local writers, including Ben Hecht...^[54]

Producer David O. Selznick replaced the film's director three weeks into filming and then had the script rewritten. He sought out director Victor Fleming, who, at the time, was directing *The Wizard of Oz*. Fleming was dissatisfied with the script, so Selznick brought in famed writer Ben Hecht to rewrite the entire screenplay within five days.^{[55]}}

Hecht was not credited, however, for his contribution, and Sidney Howard received the Academy Award for Best Screenplay.

In a letter from Selznick to film editor O'Shea [10/19/1939], Selznick discussed how the writing credits should appear, taking into consideration that Sidney Howard died a few months earlier after a farm-tractor accident at his home in Massachusetts:

To Mr. O'Shea: Some time ago, it was my intention to have, in addition to the Sidney Howard credit on *Gone With the Wind*, a list of contributing writers. I would rather now abandon this idea, first because, while it is true that Sidney Howard did only a portion of the script ... [but] because I don't want to deprive Sidney Howard, and more particularly his widow, of any of the glory that may be attendant upon his last job.^{[53]:216}

In a letter [9/25/1939] from Selznick to Hecht, regarding writing introductory sequences and titles, which were used to set the scene and condense the narrative throughout the movie, Selznick wrote,

Dear Ben: There are only seven titles needed for *Gone With the Wind* and I am certain you could bat them out in a few minutes, especially since a few of them can be based on titles you wrote while you were here. Will you do these for me in accordance with your promise?... Very anxious to get picture into laboratory at once and would appreciate it if you could tackle them immediately upon their receipt^{[53]:214}

***His Girl Friday* (1940)**

"*His Girl Friday* remains not just the fastest-talking romantic comedy ever made, but a very tricky inquiry into love's need for a chase (or a dream) and the sharpest pointer to uncertain gender roles."^{[26]:221}

The *D.C. Examiner* writes,

Director Howard Hawks' 1940 classic "His Girl Friday" is not just one of the funniest screwball comedies ever made, it is also one of the finest film adaptations of a stage play. "Hawks took Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's Broadway hit "The Front Page", the best play about newspapers ever written, and, by changing the gender of a major character, turned it into a romantic comedy. The new script was by Hecht (uncredited) and Charles Lederer.

***Casino Royale* (1967)**

Hecht wrote the first screenplay for Ian Fleming's first novel, Casino Royale. Although the final screenplay and film was made into a comedy spoof, Hecht's version was written as a straight Bond adventure, states spy novelist Jeremy Duns, who recently discovered the original lost scripts. According to Duns, Hecht's version included elements hard to imagine in a film adaptation, adding that "these drafts are a master-class in thriller-writing, from the man who arguably perfected the form with Notorious."^[56] Hecht wrote that he has "never had more fun writing a movie", and felt the James Bond character was cinema's first "gentleman superman" in a long time, as opposed to Hammett and Chandler's "roughneck supermen".

A few days before the final screenplay was announced to the press, Hecht died of a heart attack at his home.^[56]

Duns compares Hecht's unpublished screenplay with the final rewritten film:

All the pages in Hecht's papers are gripping, but the material from April 1964 is phenomenal, and it's easy to imagine it as the basis for a classic Bond adventure. Hecht's treatment of the romance element is powerful and convincing, even with the throwaway ending, but there is also a distinctly adult feel to the story. It has all the excitement and glamour you would expect from a Bond film, but is more suspenseful, and the violence is brutal rather than cartoonish.^[56]

Academy Award nominations

- 19th Academy Awards Nominated Notorious
- 13th Academy Awards Nominated Angels Over Broadway
- 12th Academy Awards Nominated Wuthering Heights
- 8th Academy Awards Won The Scoundrel
- 7th Academy Awards Nominated Viva Villa!
- 1st Academy Awards - Won Underworld

Screenplays

- Kiss of Death (1995)
- Casino Royale (1967) (uncredited)
- Circus World
- 7 Faces of Dr. Lao (uncredited)
- Cleopatra (1962) (uncredited)
- Billy Rose's Jumbo
- Mutiny on the Bounty (1962) (uncredited)
- Walk on the Wild Side (uncredited)
- North to Alaska (uncredited)
- John Paul Jones (uncredited)
- The Gun Runners (uncredited)
- Queen of Outer Space
- Legend of the Lost
- The Sun Also Rises (1957)
- A Farewell to Arms (1957)
- Miracle in the Rain
- The Iron Petticoat
- The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1956) (uncredited)
- Trapeze (1956) (uncredited)
- The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell (uncredited)
- The Indian Fighter
- The Man with the Golden Arm (1955) (uncredited)
- Guys and Dolls (uncredited)
- Living It Up (based on his play Hazel Flagg)
- Ulysses (1955)
- Light's Diamond Jubilee (television)
- Terminal Station (1953) (uncredited)
- Angel Face (1952) (uncredited)
- Hans Christian Andersen (uncredited)
- Monkey Business (1952)
- Actors and Sin (1952) (also directed and produced)
- The Wild Heart (1952) (uncredited)
- The Thing from Another World (uncredited)
- The Secret of Convict Lake (uncredited)
- Strangers on a Train (1951) (uncredited)
- September Affair (uncredited)
- Where the Sidewalk Ends (1950)
- Edge of Doom (uncredited)
- Perfect Strangers (1950)
- Love Happy (uncredited)
- The Inspector General (uncredited)
- Whirlpool (1949)
- Roseanna McCoy (uncredited)
- Big Jack (uncredited)

- Portrait of Jennie (uncredited)
- Cry of the City (uncredited)
- Rope (1948) (uncredited)
- The Miracle of the Bells
- Dishonored Lady (uncredited)
- Her Husband's Affairs
- The Paradine Case (1947) (uncredited)
- Ride the Pink Horse (1947)
- Kiss of Death (1947)
- Duel in the Sun (1946) (uncredited)
- Notorious (1946)
- A Flag is Born
- Specter of the Rose (1946) (also directed and produced)
- Gilda (uncredited) (1946)
- Cornered (1945) (uncredited)
- Spellbound (1945)
- Watchtower Over Tomorrow (1945 OWI film)^{[57][58][59][60][61]}
- Lifeboat (1944) (uncredited)
- The Outlaw (1943) (uncredited)
- China Girl (1942)
- Journey Into Fear (1943) (uncredited)
- The Black Swan (1942)
- Ten Gentlemen from West Point (uncredited)
- Roxie Hart (uncredited)
- Lydia
- The Mad Doctor (1941) (uncredited)
- Comrade X
- Second Chorus (uncredited)
- Angels Over Broadway (1940) (also directed and produced)
- Foreign Correspondent (1940) (final scene-uncredited)
- The Shop Around the Corner (1940) (uncredited)
- His Girl Friday (1940)
- I Take This Woman (1940) (uncredited)
- Gone with the Wind (1939) (uncredited)
- At the Circus (uncredited)
- Lady of the Tropics
- It's a Wonderful World (1939)
- Wuthering Heights (1939)
- Let Freedom Ring
- Stagecoach (1939) (uncredited)
- Gunga Din (1939)
- Angels with Dirty Faces (1938) (uncredited)
- The Goldwyn Follies
- Nothing Sacred (1937)
- The Hurricane (1937) (uncredited)
- The Prisoner of Zenda (1937) (uncredited)
- Woman Chases Man (uncredited)
- King of Gamblers (uncredited)
- A Star Is Born (1937) (uncredited)
- Soak the Rich (also directed)
- The Scoundrel (1935) (also directed)
- Spring Tonic
- Barbary Coast
- Once in a Blue Moon (1935) (also directed)
- The Florentine Dagger
- The President Vanishes (uncredited)
- Crime Without Passion (1934) (also directed)
- Shoot the Works
- Twentieth Century (1934) (uncredited)
- Upperworld
- Viva Villa! (1934)
- Riptide (1934) (uncredited)
- Queen Christina (1933) (uncredited)
- Design for Living (1933)
- Turn Back the Clock
- Topaze (1933)
- Hallelujah, I'm a Bum (1933)
- Back Street (1932) (uncredited)
- Rasputin and the Empress (1932) (uncredited)
- Million Dollar Legs (1932) (uncredited)
- Scarface (1932)
- The Beast of the City (1932) (uncredited)
- The Unholy Garden (1931 film) (1931)
- The Sin of Madelon Claudet (1931) (uncredited)
- Monkey Business (1931) (uncredited)
- Homicide Squad (1931) (uncredited)
- Quick Millions (1931) (uncredited)
- Le Spectre vert
- Roadhouse Nights (1930)
- Street of Chance (1930)(uncredited)
- The Unholy Night (1929)
- The Great Gabbo (1929)
- The Big Noise (1928)
- The American Beauty (1916) (uncredited)
- Underworld (1927)
- The New Klondike (1926) (uncredited)

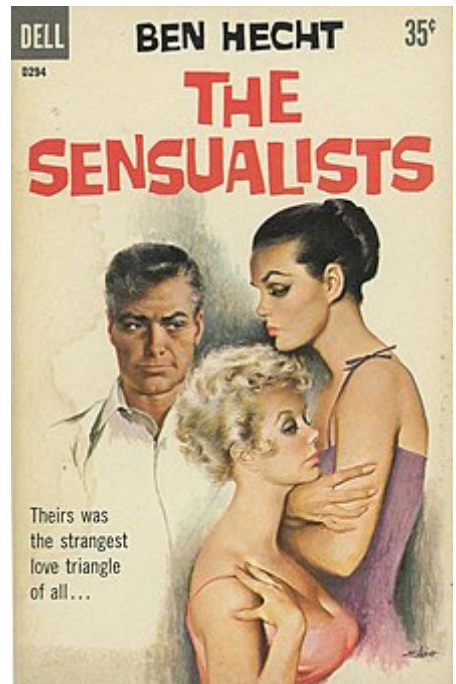
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- *I Hate Actors!* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1944)^{[67][68]}
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- *The Sensualists* (1959) ^{[69][70]}
- *A Treasury of Ben Hecht: Collected Stories and Other Writings* (1959, anthology)
- *Letters from Bohemia* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co, 1964)^[71]



Fantazius Mallare, (1922)
Wallace Smith (illustrator)



The Sensualists (1959)
Freeman Elliott (illustrator)



The Front Page (1928)

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- *The Hero of Santa Maria* (1916)
- *The Egotist* (1922)
- *The Stork* (1925)
- *The Front Page* (1928)
- *The Great Magoo* (1932)
- *Twentieth Century* (1932)
- *Jumbo* (1935)
- *To Quito and Back* (1937)
- *Ladies and Gentlemen* (1939)
- *Lily of the Valley* (1942)
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Musical contributions

- In 1937, lyricist Hecht collaborated with composer Louis Armstrong on "Red Cap", a song about the hard life of a railway porter. That summer, Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra recorded it for Decca Records, as did Erskine Hawkins's Orchestra for Vocalion. This may be Ben Hecht's only "popular" song.^[78]
- *Uncle Sam Stands Up* (1941) Hecht contributed the lyrics and poetry to this patriotic cantata for baritone solo, chorus, and orchestra composed by Ferde Grofe, written during the height of World War II.
- *We Will Never Die* (1943) a pageant he composed with Kurt Weill, with staging by Moss Hart, written partly because of Hecht's consternation with American foreign policy in Europe concerning the Holocaust and Hollywood's fear of offending European (Axis) market

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External links

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- [Works by Ben Hecht](https://librivox.org/author/352) (<https://librivox.org/author/352>) at [LibriVox](#) (public domain audiobooks) 
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Fortean Times

Fortean Times is a British monthly magazine devoted to the anomalous phenomena popularised by Charles Fort. Previously published by John Brown Publishing (from 1991 to 2001) and then I Feel Good Publishing (2001 to 2005), it is now published by Dennis Publishing Ltd.

In December 2018 its print circulation was just over 14,800 copies per month.^[2] This now appears to include digital sales. The magazine's tagline is "The World of Strange Phenomena".

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History

Origin

The roots of the magazine that was to become *Fortean Times* can be traced back to Bob Rickard's discovering the works of Charles Fort through the secondhand method of reading science-fiction stories:

"John Campbell, the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* (as *Analog* was then titled), for example,"

Fortean Times



Fortean Times issue 200

Editor	David Sutton
Former editors	Bob Rickard (Founder) <div>Paul Sieveking</div>
Staff writers	Jen Ogilvie
Categories	Paranormal
Frequency	Monthly
Total circulation (December 2018)	14,816 ^[1]
Year founded	1973
First issue	November 1973 (as <i>The News</i>) <div>June 1976 (as <i>Fortean Times</i> #16)</div>
Company	Dennis Publishing Ltd
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Website	forteantimes.com (http://www.forteantimes.com/)

writes Rickard "encouraged many authors to expand Fort's data and comments into imaginative stories."^[3]

ISSN	0308-5899 (https://www.worldcat.org/search?fq=x0:jrnl&q=n2:0308-5899)
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In the mid-1960s, while Rickard was studying Product Design at Birmingham Art College he met several like-minded science fiction fans, particularly crediting fellow-student Peter Weston's fan-produced Speculation magazine as helping him to "[learn] the art of putting together a fanzine," some years before he created his own.^[3] Attending a science fiction convention in 1968, Rickard obtained Ace paperback copies of all four of Fort's books from a stall run by Derek Stokes (later to run Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed and take a role in the day-to-day running of The Fortean Times).^[3]

After reading an advert in the underground magazine Oz (in 1969) for the "International Fortean Organisation" (INFO), an American group "founded in 1966... by Paul and Ronald Willis," who had acquired material from the original Fortean Society (started in 1931, but in limbo since the 1959 death of its founder Tiffany Thayer), Rickard began to correspond with the brothers, particularly Paul. Rickard was instrumental in encouraging the Willises to publish their own Fortean journal – the "INFO Journal: Science and the Unknown" began intermittent publication in Spring, 1967 – and sent them many British newspaper clippings, although few saw print.

Rickard later discovered that the production was fraught behind-the-scenes as Ronald Willis had been seriously ill, Paul thus finding it difficult to "keep up with things" on his own.^[3] Ultimately, the Willises were instrumental in inspiring Rickard to create his own periodical. Ron Willis succumbed to a brain tumour in March 1975.^{[3][4]} Bearing a date of November 1973, the first issue of Rickard's self-produced and self-published The News was available directly from him.

The News (1973–1976)

The magazine which was to continue Charles Fort's work documenting the unexplained was founded by Robert JM "Bob" Rickard in 1973 as his self-published bi-monthly mail order "hobbyish newsletter" miscellany The News — "A Miscellany of Fortean Curiosities".^[3] The title is said to be "a contraction taken from Samuel Butler's The News from Nowhere",^[3] (although Rickard may be conflating/confusing Butler's Erewhon and William Morris' "News from Nowhere"). The News saw fairly regular bi-monthly publication for 15 issues between November 1973 and April 1976. Debuting at 35p (£1.80/\$4.50 for a year of 6 issues^[5]) for 20 pages, The News was produced on Rickard's typewriter, with headings created with Letraset, during (as Rickard says in #2) the late-1970s blackouts. The first issue featured a cover (which would become briefly the unofficial logo of The News) drawn by Rickard from a Selfridges advert originally created by Bernard Partridge.^[6] From the second issue, pictures and photographs from various newspapers were interpolated within the text. The price was raised slightly for #6 — which also saw the page count upped to 24pg — due in large part to rising postal and paper costs.

Helping behind the scenes was Steve Moore, a kindred-spirit whom Rickard met at a comics convention when the latter was a sub-editor at IPC. The two found they had much in common — including a love of Chinese mysticism — and Moore helped inspire Rickard to publish The News.^[3] The early issues featured some articles by different individuals, but were "largely the work of Bob Rickard, who typed them himself with some help from Steve Moore."^[7]

Key News-people

Moore and Paul Screeton (then editor of The Ley Hunter), both urged on the first few uncertain issues" and Moore would frequently join Rickard to "stuff envelopes and hand-write a few hundred addresses" to disseminate the early issues.^[3] Rickard also highlights amongst the key early Fortean Times advocates and supporters: Ion Alexis Will, who discovered The News in 1974 and became a "constant [source] of valuable clippings, books, postcards and entertaining letters"; Janet and Colin Bord, later authors of Mysterious Britain (Janet also wrote for Flying Saucer Review and Lionel Beer's Spacelink, while it was Colin's Fortean article in Gandalf's Garden that is particularly cited by Rickard as bringing him/them to his attention); Phil Ledger, a "peripatetic marine biologist", and The News' "first enthusiastic fan"; Ken Campbell, Fortean theatre director and playwright;

John Michell; graphic designer Richard Adams and Dick Gwynn, who both helped with the evolving layout and typesetting of later issues; Chris Squire, who helped organise the first subscription database; Canadian "Mr. X"; Mike Dash and cartoonist Hunt Emerson. Emerson was introduced to Rickard in late 1974, when after seven issues, he "wanted to improve the graphics", which Emerson certainly did, providing around 30 headings for use in issues #8 onwards. (Emerson's still-on-going monthly "Phenomenomix" strip in *FT* had its prototype in #11's three-page "Fortean Funnies").^[3]

Notable News content

Other early contributors included writer and researcher Nigel Watson (Chairman of the Scunthorpe UFO Research Society 'SUFORS'), who wrote "Mysterious Moon" for *The News* #2. Watson would later write a regular column of UFO commentary entitled *Enigma Variations* (from #29), and articles on the subject of UFO-related murders and stories of sexual assault by aliens. Phil Grant wrote about Ley lines for #3 and Mary Caine who revised an earlier article (from *Gandalf's Garden*) on The Glastonbury Zodiac for issue #4, which also saw the debut of the "Reviews" section, beginning with comments on a book by John Michell, the Sphere reprint of Charles Fort's *New Lands* and John Sladek's *The New Apocrypha*. Issues #2 and #3 noted that *The News* was published "with an arrangement with INFO", this was revised from #4 to it being "affiliated to the International Fortean Organisation". From #5, Mark A. Hall produced a section entitled "Fortean USA", continuing on from his earlier, discontinued, newsletter *From My Files*; issue #5 also saw William Porter's article on Llandrillo printed, after being delayed from #4 for space constraints. Janet Bord contributed "Some Fortean Ramblings" alongside William R. Corliss's "The Evolution of the Fortean Sourcebooks" for #7, and issue #8 was the first issue of Vol. 2, after Rickard decided to end Volume 1 with #7 (not #6 as fully bi-monthly titles do), since that issue was dated November '74, thereby attempting to keep each Volume aligned with a year.^[8]

Issue #8 (or, Volume 2, issue #1) saw the special "Christmas present" of headings by Hunt Emerson, after Rickard was introduced to Emerson by Carol and Nick Moore as Hunt was working on *Large Cow Comix*. Described by Rickard as "as much a disciple of George [Herriman]... and my [Rickard's] favourite artists from *Mad* (Bill Elder and Wally Wood)" as Rickard was of Charles Fort, the two got on well, with Emerson producing not only a series of headings, but later strips and covers for issues right up to the present day.^[3] The death of INFO co-founder Ronald J Willis was announced in #9, which described itself as providing "bi-monthly notes on Fortean phenomena", and an index to the first year's issues (#1–7) became available. Colin Bord penned "Amazing Menagerie" for issue #10, while Paul Devereux and Andrew York x=compiled an exhaustive study of Leicestershire in "Portrait of a Fault Area", serialised in #11–12. Issue #11 featured Rickard and Emerson's first "Fortean Funnies" cartoon, while #12 saw a price rise to 50p/\$1.25, a logo change (from Selfridges' herald-on-horseback to the more descriptive Fort's face-encircled) and a tweaking of its tagline to "bi-monthly news & notes on Fortean phenomena." Issue #14 first mentioned Rickard and Michell's then-in-production book *Phenomena!*, which would be more actively trailed from #18. Issue #15 — now with 28 pages — announced that Rickard had decided to bow to popular opinion and retitle his miscellany with a more descriptive title. Thus, with a subtitle of "Portents & Prodigies", *Fortean Times* was born.^[9]

Fortean Times (since 1976)

After fifteen issues of *The News*, issue #16 (1976) saw the magazine renamed *Fortean Times*, which "new title emerged from correspondence between Bob Rickard and Paul Willis" — the two having talked of creating a Fortean version of *The Times* newspaper, "full of weird and wonderful news and read by millions worldwide".^[7] Its cover bore the descriptive text "Strange phenomena — curiosities — prodigies — portents — mysteries," while the inside cover kept the 'Fort face' logo from later issues of *The News* but bore the revised legend "A Contemporary Record of Strange Phenomena".^[10] Included within was an offer for a "4-colour silk-screened poster" created by Hunt Emerson for this landmark issue. From the start, this new format compounded earlier financial difficulties for Rickard, following on from #14's plea: "we need more subscribers or we die!".^[11] (*Fortean Times* issues #16–18 — as *The News* #1–15 before them — were solely edited, published and in large part written & typed by Rickard himself. Even by passing on rising postal and paper costs to the readership — which Rickard constantly reiterates that he is loath to do, the early *Fortean Times* was constantly facing an uphill financial battle.) Early editorials of the new *FT*, therefore (in fact beginning with *The News* #15) featured a notification of donations received, naming and thanking the hardcore readership (which

included many current and future-contributors) for monies received, which aided the move towards higher production values. With donations helping to offset costs, the price was held at 50p up until issue #20, whereupon the magazine dropped to a quarterly schedule from Spring 1977 (Issue #21) — but raised the page count (and price) to continue producing the same amount of material for the same yearly fee (40pg, 75p ea. or £3/year).

Issue #18 saw a new semi-regular feature entitled "Fortean Corrigenda," aimed at correcting "errors in the literature" that had crept into various Fortean works through misquotation or other difficulties. After 18 more-or-less solo-produced issues, long-term supporter and helper Steve Moore was credited as assistant editor for issues #19–21, becoming co-contributing editor (with Phil Ledger, Stan Nichols and Paul J Willis) on issues #22–26 and 'associate editor' from issue #27. He was joined by contributing editor David Fideler, and subsequently (also as co-associate editor) by Paul Sieveking (#28—) and Valerie Thomas (#31–32). Issue #20 announced that Kay Thompson (a staff member of *Ley Hunter* magazine, then under the editorship of Paul Devereux, with whom *FT* shared an address for several issues) would be helping to type parts of subsequent issues to further delegate the burden from Rickard. He, Moore and Sieveking were also later joined editorially by author Mike Dash (who is mentioned as particularly overseeing the publication of scholarly occasional papers), before Moore moved from full editorial to largely correspondent duties for a dozen issues after #42, returning as a contributing editor in Autumn 1990 (#55). The four — Rickard, Sieveking, Dash and Moore — are often collectively referred to as "The Gang of Fort," after the Gang of Four.

Issue #21 saw the debut of *FT* semi-regular column "Strange Deaths" (later descriptively subtitled "Unusual ways of shuffling off this mortal coil"), while issue #22 updated *FT*'s to include (Ivan T. Sanderson's) The Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained (SITU), alongside INFO. Issue #23 featured an article by Robert Anton Wilson on, aptly, "The 23 Phenomenon,"^[12] made available a second Index (1975, to *The News* #8–13) and included a 12-page 'Review Supplement', issued as a separately bound supplement since the-then printers had difficulty binding more than 40 pages. With #24, the printers were changed to Windhorse Press to overcome this difficulty, and *FT* became officially 52 pages in length, the changes cemented in issue #25 with a new font for the title and a change of address — c/o London-based "SF and cosmic" bookshop Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed, run by Derek Stokes (who had sold Rickard the four Fort books ten years previously). The same issue ran an obituary for Eric Frank Russell, of whom Rickard was a considerable fan. He writes that Russell turned down an invitation to contribute material to *The News* back in 1973, having "earned his rest" after 40 years as an active Fortean. Rickard further states that Russell was one of the key Fortean-fiction writers he read in Campbell's Astounding Science Fiction and Analog, and the author of "the first Fortean book I [Rickard] ever read": Russell's *Great World Mysteries*.^[13] Issue #26 trailed "a special series of 'Occasional Papers' in Fortean subjects" to be edited by Steve Moore, and #27 — the 5th Anniversary issue — welcomed Michigan-native David Fideler (whose *Anomaly Research Bulletin* was then due to cease publication, although its subscribers, *FT* promised, would be absorbed by them) as *FT*'s "man in the New World".

Paul Sieveking and *FT*'s format change

In 1978, mutual friend Ion Will introduced Rickard to Paul Sieveking, who recalls that "the Forteans used to meet every Tuesday afternoon above the science-fiction bookshop Dark They Were And Golden-Eyed in Soho, a shop run by Derek Stokes, to open post and interact. (Indeed, this was the semi-official address of *FT* until that shop closed. With #35, Summer '81 the address was changed.) Sieveking joined the *FT* team with #28 as co-associate editor, and writes, highlighting the intrinsic early difficulties in printing *FT* that that issue "was printed by an Israeli entrepreneur in northern Greece and shipped to London."^[14] That issue (#28), bearing a cover blurb of "Strange Phenomena", featured an early advert for the bookshop Dark They Were And Golden-Eyed, drawn by Bryan Talbot, while the editorial promised that the *next* issue would not only see the availability of Index 1976, but be in a "larger and more professional format, typeset throughout, [with] better graphics, layout and legibility."^[15]

Indeed, #29, under a cover by Hunt Emerson,^[16] was printed fully typeset in A4 (thanks to art director Richard Adams of AdCo and, according to Rickard's preface to *Yesterday's News Tomorrow*, Dick Gwynn) and even distributed on a limited basis through WH Smiths. The move away from production on Rickard's typewriter gave "The Journal of Strange Phenomena," (as it was now subtitled) greater ability to produce longer, better laid-out articles. These opened with a seven-page guide to "Charles Fort and Fortean Times" by Bob Rickard, explaining the background and philosophy of *FT* as well as outlining the influence of Fort

"who", writes Rickard, "is still largely unknown",^[17] and also included the first of Nigel Watson's "Enigma Variations" columns and Loren Coleman's "Devil Names and Fortean Places" article sat alongside comments by Colin Bord, Tim Dinsdale, VGW Harrison and Rickard on Anthony 'Doc' Shiels' 1977 "Nessie" photographs. The magazine itself dropped the description 'non-profitmaking' from its publication information, and ceased to name its stated-affiliations to INFO and SITU and 'other Fortean journals' in favour the more general aim to be a "friend to all groups and magazines continuing the work of Charles Fort".^[18] It also contained a considerably higher number of adverts, including both inside covers — making the page count slightly higher than previous issues, which had previously counted the cover as page 1 — and an early advert by Brian Bolland for Forbidden Planet (which would ironically begin to take off only after the closure of Stokes's Dark They Were And Golden-Eyed).

Issue #30 announced that while "over the last couple of issues [the] subscriber list... nearly doubled," so too had the "printing, production and postage bill," necessitating a price rise to 95p/\$2.50 — albeit softened by another length increase, to 68 pages. Now published not merely by Rickard, but by 'Fortean Times Ltd', it was typeset by Warpsmith Graphics and printed by Bija Press. The cover was painted by Una Woodruff (whose *Inventorum Natura* was reviewed within) to illustrate John Michell's article on "Spontaneous Images and Acheropites," drawing on his 1979 Thames & Hudson book dealing with — and titled — "Simulacra". Bob Rickard produced an article on one "Clemente Dominguez: Pope, Heretic, Stigmatic;" Michael Hoffman speculated on the occult aspects of a serial killer in "The Sun of Sam;" Robert J. Schadewald wrote about "The Great Fish Fall of 1859" while Hunt Emerson produced the first cartoon strip under the title "Phenomenomix".

Sieveking took over full editorial duties from Rickard with #43, helming the subsequent four quarterly issues (to #46) to give Rickard a chance to "revitalize",^[19] which he did, returning with #46 to the position of co-editor. Moore, Dash and Ian Simmons (and others) variously edited the magazine for the next 18+ years, and although main editorship passed from Rickard and Sieveking to David Sutton in 2002, they both continue to contribute — Sieveking continues as before, editing and writing most of the Strange Days news section and editing the letters pages, and acting as the main quality-control proof-reader, as well as producing the occasional feature (while Sieveking's wife edits the "Reviews" section).

During the 40+ years of its publication, *Fortean Times* has changed both format and publishers on a few occasions. Early issues (particularly of *The News*) were produced in black & white (for ease of photocopying), and the whole was largely produced by typewriter until #29. Colour, professional printing (and wider distribution) followed and a 6.5 x 4.5in size held sway for several years before the magazine settled into its "normal" A4 (magazine) size in the 1980s, after which glossy covers followed. Several changes of logo and font have occurred throughout its life.

General content

The identification of correct original sources by contributors is a defining feature of the magazine, as it was for Charles Fort himself. However, the "fake tits" of these reports is not as important. The magazine "maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and the unorthodox" and "toes no party line". The range of subject matter is extremely broad including, but not limited to, the following:

- General Forteana
- Anomalous phenomena
- Apparitions
- Bizarre deaths
- Conspiracy theories
- Crop circles
- Cryptozoology
- Cults and would-be Messiahs and prophets.
- Fringe science
- Hoaxes
- Millennialism, eschatology, and cases of mass hysteria.
- Mutants (human and animal)

- Parapsychology
- Religious phenomena (stigmata, appearances and simulacra and miracles, etc.)
- Natural simulacra
- UFOs
- Urban legends

Fortean Times also frequently covers the Ig Nobel Prizes, as well as unusual aspects of mainstream science and research.

Current content

The magazine's current regular contents include:

- Three or four feature articles
- **Strange Days**, a wide-ranging overview of odd and interesting stories mostly culled from the world's newspapers. Some feature in particular sections, including:
 - *Science*
 - *Archaeology* (usually by Paul Sieveking and Paul Devereux)
 - *Ghosts*, in a column titled *Ghostwatch*
 - *Alien Zoo*, Dr. Karl Shuker's regular discussion of cryptozoological matters
 - *Necrolog*, obituaries of Fortean-relevant individuals
 - *Strange deaths*, a long-running round-up of the odd manners in which some people meet their ends
 - *The UFO Files*: "Flying Saucery", is Andy J. Roberts and Dr. David Clarke's "regular survey of the latest fads and flaps from the world of ufology"; "UFOcal Points" is Jenny Randles' "round-up of sightings and hot-spots from around the world"

Clippings for most of Strange Days' stories are requested from, and supplied by, the readers of FT

- **Mythconceptions**, which debunks modern myths, old wives' tales, etc. (in a similar manner to, for example, Snopes.com)
- **Classical Corner**, in which Barry Baldwin reviews Fortean events from ancient times
- **Fortean Bureau of Investigation**, which typically revisits and reassesses older Fortean cases
- **Forum**, featuring three or four shorter articles on diverse topics
- **Reviews** of Fortean, science fiction/fantasy and related books, films and computer games
- A letters page, incorporating:
 - *Simulacra Corner*, photographs submitted by readers of (typically) naturally occurring objects which appear to be in the shape of something else
 - *"it happened to me..."*, readers' stories of strange personal occurrences
- **Fortean Traveller**, "a guide to various sites of interest to the traveling Fortean"
- **Phenomenomix**, a comic strip by Hunt Emerson

Praise and criticism

Most of the articles in *Fortean Times* are written in the style of objective journalism, but this is not a mandatory requirement and some articles focus on a specific theory or point of view. Although such articles are presented as the opinion of the author and not the editors (who claim to have no opinions), this has occasionally led to controversy. In January 1997, the magazine ran an article by David Percy under the headline "FAKE! Did NASA hoax the moon landing photos?". The article outraged many readers and led to the magazine's most vigorous postbag up to that time. In August 2000, the magazine's cover headline was "UFO? The shocking truth about the first flying saucers". The article in question, by James Easton, proposed a mundane explanation for Kenneth Arnold's sighting — American white pelicans. This suggestion so outraged ufologists that many of them still use the term "pelican" or "pelicanist" as a pejorative term for a debunker.^[20]

Most Fortean researchers contribute articles, criticism or letters to the magazine. It has also attracted more widespread coverage and praise. *Fortean Times* #69 claims that "extracts from *FT* have featured in at least three publications used for teaching English as a foreign language." Lynn Barber of *The Independent on Sunday* newspaper described writing in *FT* as "a model of elegant English."^{[21][22]}

UnConvention

The magazine has organised an "UnConvention" (or *UnCon*), most years since 1994 (the "missing" years being 2001, 2005 and 2009), at various venues in London (the University of London Union, the Institute of Education, the Commonwealth Institute and, in recent years, Friends House). Many "hot topics" of the day have been discussed, such as the Ray Santilli "alien autopsy" film at the 1996 UnCon, and the death of Diana, Princess of Wales at the 1998 event, which also saw Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince discussing Templar conspiracies and hidden symbolism in the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, years before these were turned into mass media subjects by *The Da Vinci Code*. Besides the formal lecture programme, UnCon normally features exhibits by organizations such as the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena and the Centre for Fortean Zoology. The event often ends with a panel discussion, as was the case in 2002 when the subject was "*Is Ufology Dead?*". This was widely reported in the British media as an "official" statement by *Fortean Times* that "Ufology is Dead".^[23]

Related projects

Fortean Studies, the magazine's more-academic sister-publication published yearly volumes in the late 1990s. The seventh and last issue was published in 2001.

Its website tracks Fortean news stories, holds a small archive of articles and photographs, and supports a busy internet forum for discussion of Fortean topics.

The magazine has also occasionally published both academic and lighthearted books on various aspects of Fortean.

Collections and spin-off books

Many of the earliest issues of *FT* were collected in book format in the early 1990s. In recent years, the print volumes have been overtaken by digital files, available on CD. In addition, several smaller collections have been compiled on various themes and sold, or given away as 'free gifts' with the magazine. A more academic journal, *Fortean Studies*, has also been printed and is an ongoing venture. In the late 90's Polygram Spoken Word released an audio version of several Fortean stories, written and produced by Steve Deakin-Davies and featured Brian Cant and Joanna Bowen amongst its actors, this project was licensed from John Brown Publishing. (c) 1997 Polygram Record operations ltd, Speaking Volumes no: 5361444)

Fortean Tomes

Starting in the very early 1990s, *Fortean Times* produced a number of facsimile editions collecting the earliest issues of the magazine, in their entirety, including advertisements. These collections, prepared and edited for print by Paul Sieveking (including hand-corrections to early typographic errors) are now out-of-print. It further appears that although demand was such to warrant reprints of several volumes, after collecting up to #77 it was decided that the previous volumes had not sold well enough to continue completely up to date. (Concern over the likely cost of reprinting issues in the new full colour format led to a publishing decision to stockpile 500 unbound run-on copies of each number to provide the basis of future reprint editions, and this project resulted in one further collection — "Snakes Alive!", collecting #93–97 — but the in-between issues #78–92 have not yet been collected in trade format.)

(The early collections, like the earliest magazines, were published in smaller, 6.5 x 4.5in format)

- *Yesterday's News Tomorrow: Fortean Times Issues 1–15* (John Brown Publishing, 1992 2nd ed. 1995) [ISBN 1-870870-26-3](#)
- *Diary of a Mad Planet: Fortean Times Issues 16–25* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 2nd ed. 1995) [ISBN 1-870021-25-8](#)
- *Seeing Out the Seventies: Fortean Times Issues 26–30* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1990^[24]) [ISBN 1-870021-20-7](#)
- *Gateways to Mystery: Fortean Times Issues 31–36* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1993) [ISBN 1-870870-37-9](#)
- *Heaven's Reprimands: Fortean Times Issues 37–41* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1994) [ISBN 1-870870-52-2](#)
- *If Pigs Could Fly: Fortean Times Issues 42–46* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1994) [ISBN 1-870870-47-6](#)
- *Fishy Yarns:*^[25] *Fortean Times Issues 47–51* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1994) [ISBN 1-870870-48-4](#)
- *Bonfire of the Oddities: Fortean Times Issues 52–56* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1995) [ISBN 1-870870-61-1](#)
- *Strange Attractors: Fortean Times Issues 57–62* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1996) [ISBN 1-870870-73-5](#)

(The later collections were of a larger — A4 — size)

- *Plumber from Lhasa: Fortean Times Issues 63–67* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1996) [ISBN 1-870870-79-4](#)
- *Memories of Hell: Fortean Times Issues 68–72* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1997) [ISBN 1-870870-90-5](#)
- *Mouthful of Mysteries: Fortean Times Issues 73–77* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1998) [ISBN 1-870870-66-2](#)
- *Snakes Alive!: Fortean Times Issues 93–97* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1998) [ISBN 1-902212-04-5](#)
 - "Fortean Times" Index by [Steve Moore](#) (John Brown Publishing Ltd, October 1997) [ISBN 1-870870-68-9](#)

CDs

In the mid 2000s (decade), *FT* began to release a series of digital archives. Beginning with more recent issues (presumably for reasons of ease — more recent issues would be more readily available as digital files), they have also begun to re-release the earliest issues — it appears that the digital archive CD format has taken over from print collections.

- Issues 1–15 CD (*The complete The News*)
- Issues 16–25 CD
- Issues 26–30 CD
 - Issues 1–30 3-CD boxset
- 2001 CD Archive (*Issues 142–153*)
- 2002 CD Archive (*Issues 154–165*)
- 2003 CD Archive (*Issues 166–178*)
- 2004 CD Archive (*Issues 179–191*)
- 2005 CD Archive (*Issues 192–204*)
- 2006 CD Archive (*Issues 205–217*)
 - 2002–2005 4CD Archive

Fortean Studies

A sister-publication *Fortean Studies* began in the mid-1990s and was edited by [Steve Moore](#). In the words of frequent-contributor [Neil Nixon](#), it "compiled serious research and opinion on a range of paranormal and conspiracy related issues", and was a more academic counterpart to *FT*.

- Rickard, Bob (producer) & Moore, Steve (ed.) *Fortean Studies: Volume 1* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1994) [ISBN 1-870870-55-7](#)
- Rickard, Bob (producer) & Moore, Steve (ed.) *Fortean Studies: Volume 2* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1995) [ISBN 1-870870-70-0](#)
- Rickard, Bob (producer) & Moore, Steve (ed.) *Fortean Studies: Volume 3* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1996) [ISBN 1-870870-82-4](#)
- Rickard, Bob (producer) & Moore, Steve (ed.) *Fortean Studies: Volume 4* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1998) [ISBN 1-870870-96-4](#)

- Rickard, Bob (producer) & Moore, Steve (ed.) *Fortean Studies: Volume 5* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1998) ISBN [1-902212-14-2](#)
- Rickard, Bob (producer) & Moore, Steve (ed.) *Fortean Studies: Volume 6* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 1999) ISBN [1-902212-20-7](#)
- Simmons, Ian & Quin, Melanie (eds.) *Fortean Studies: Volume 7* (John Brown Publishing Ltd, 2001) ISBN [1-902212-36-3](#)

Other titles

- *Wild Man: China's Yeti* by Yuan Zhenxin and Huang Wanpo with Fan Jingquan and Zhou Xinyan, edited and introduced by Steve Moore. Fortean Times Occasional Paper no.1, 1981. No ISBN or ISSN assigned
- *Toad in the Hole: Source Material on the Entombed Toad Phenomenon* selected and annotated by Bob Skinner. Fortean Times Occasional Paper no.2, 1986. ISSN 0260-5856
- *The Halifax Slasher: An Urban Terror in the North of England* by Michael Goss. Fortean Times Occasional Paper no.3, 1987. ISSN 0260-5856
- *The World's Most Incredible Stories: The Best of Fortean Times* by Adam Sisman and [Hunt Emerson](#) (May 1992)
- *Fortean Times 1993 Diary* by [Paul Sieveking](#) (December 1992)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Strange Deaths* compiled by [Steve Moore](#), illustrated by Etienne (John Brown Publishing Ltd 1994) ISBN [1-870870-50-6](#)
 - US edition: *The Comedian Who Choked to Death on a Pie—and the Man Who Quit Smoking at 116: A Collection of Incredible Lives and Unbelievable Deaths* (November 1996)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Weird Sex* (September 1995)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Life's Losers* by Ian Simmons, illustrated by Geoff Coupland (October 1996)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Inept Crime* compiled by [Steve Moore](#), illustrated by Geoff Coupland (October 1996)
 - US edition: *The World's Stupidest Criminals* (June 1998)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Exploding Pigs and Other Strange Animal Stories* by Ian Simmons (October 1997)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Bizarre Behaviour* by Ian Simmons (October 1998)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of More Strange Deaths* by [Paul Sieveking](#) (October 1998)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Unconventional Wisdom* (1999)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Close Shaves* by [Steve Moore](#) (John Brown Publishing Ltd October 1999) ISBN [1-902212-18-5](#)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of Medical Mayhem* by [Paul Sieveking](#) and Ian Simmons (October 1999)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Book of the Millennium* by Kevin McClure (September 1996)
- "*Fortean Times*" *Presents UFO: 1947–1997 – 50 Years of Flying Saucers* by Dennis Stacy and [Hilary Evans](#) (May 1997)
- *Aliens Ate My Trousers: Crazy Comics from the Pages of "Fortean Times"* by [Hunt Emerson](#) (March 1998)
- *Weird Year 1996: The Best of Strange Days* by James Wallis and Joe McNally (November 1995)
- *Weird World 1999* by [Mark Pilkington](#) and Joe McNally (November 1998)
 - (*Barmy Sutra* by [David Sutton](#) — *planned for 2001; unpublished*)

See also

- [Fortean TV](#)
- [List of magazines of anomalous phenomena](#)

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8. Rickard, Bob (July 1974). "Editorial". *The News* #5.
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15. Rickard, Bob (Winter 1979). "Editorial". *Fortean Times* #28.
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17. Rickard, Bob (Summer 1979). "Charles Fort and Fortean Times". *Fortean Times* #29.
18. Rickard, Bob (Summer 1979). "Editorial". *Fortean Times* #29.
19. Rickard, Bob (Autumn 1984). "Editorial". *The Fortean Times* #42.
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21. Rickard, Bob; Sieveking, Paul (June–July 1993). "Editorial". *Fortean Times* (69). p. 4.
22. Barber, Lynn (25 April 1993). "[Unknown]". *The Independent on Sunday*.
23. Rickard, Bob; Sieveking, Paul (July 2002), "Saucers Smearred", *Fortean Times* (160), p. 4
24. Copyright and Introduction date information imply that this was the first book to see publication, possibly followed by "Diary of a Mad Planet", and *then* "Yesterday's News Tomorrow".
25. Published as a hardback

External links

- [Official website](http://www.forteantimes.com/) (<http://www.forteantimes.com/>)
 - [A Fortean Society site](http://www.frogboy.freeuk.com/iwfs1.html) (<http://www.frogboy.freeuk.com/iwfs1.html>)
 - [Blather.net on Uncon 2006](http://www.blather.net/blather/2006/05/forteantimes_uncon_2006.html) (http://www.blather.net/blather/2006/05/forteantimes_uncon_2006.html)
 - [40th anniversary](http://blog.humbleself.com/2013/12/pigeon-guided-missiles-ninja-dwarves-giant-amoebas-in-the-sky-the-fortean-times-has-got-them-covered-126/) (<http://blog.humbleself.com/2013/12/pigeon-guided-missiles-ninja-dwarves-giant-amoebas-in-the-sky-the-fortean-times-has-got-them-covered-126/>)
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