

Vernor Vinge's Books

If you love hard science fiction, I strongly suggest books by [Vernor Vinge](#). I've read all but one of his books and I consider him to be a highly talented writer. (He's also a computer science teacher at a university in southern California.) One of my favorite books of his is [Across Realtime](#). Unfortunately, it's out of print now, but you could check it out of the library or get it from one of the old book sellers online (like [Alibris](#)).

I finished Vernor Vinge's newest book (as of 1999) "A Deepness in the Sky". Wow! As always, Vernor Vinge has outdone himself. There are so many plot twists in this book that I never knew what to expect. At numerous places throughout the book my expectations as to the way that certain subplots would pan out turned out to be completely wrong. And, of course, there were plenty of neat scientific and technological "concepts" that are encountered and explored (For instance, we watch an alien race of spiders go from the industrial age to the electronic age and explore the differences that occur as a result of the spiders' being so physiologically different from humans.). It's science fiction at its best! I highly recommend it!

Vernor Vinge's books (all are good, but the 1st three listed here are my favorites):

- A Deepness in the Sky (ISBN: 0812536355)
- A Fire Upon the Deep (ISBN: 0812515285)
- Across Realtime (ISBN: 1857981472)
- The Witling
- True Names and Other Dangers
- Threats and Other Promises
- Tatja Grimm's World

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Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution

The book is called "Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution". It's divided into three eras.

The first (and my personal favorite) describes the lives of the first true hackers. These are the people from MIT in its glory days in the late 1960s, early 1970s, that defined what it meant to be a hacker. These are scraggly haired, unbathed, pale-faced nerds that slept during the day and lived next to the computer (the TX-0 then the PDP-1, etc.) at night because that was when the computers were available. These are the people who picked the locks of school doors just because they were locked. (To stop them from breaking into places they didn't belong, the administration finally gave them a set of master keys to every door in all the school buildings. This took the fun out of it, so they stopped doing it.)

The second part of the book is about the hardware hackers from the 1970s. In particular, it follows the lives of people from the Homebrew computer club. The third part is about the game programmers of the early 1980s. That's the age of Atari, the Apple II, and a host of other mutually incompatible machines. (Incidentally, I got my start on an Apply //e when I was about 10.)

This book makes me truly nostalgic about the days when computer time was more precious than gold. That's not to say that I'd want to have

computer access restricted like that, but I feel nostalgic about it anyway (despite the fact that I wasn't even alive during the period described in the first section of the book). It's a truly excellent book and I recommend it to anyone who would enjoy knowing more about the mindset of true programmers throughout the ages.

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The Hobbit

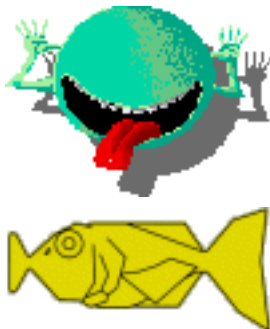
rbh02_gandalf.gif" alt="Gandalf the Grey">



One of the best books of all time is *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien. I was first introduced to this wonderful book when I was a child (That's probably one of the reasons why I like it so much. But, unlike music that I like only because it was popular when I was going through adolescent angst, *The Hobbit* really is some excellent stuff.). I used to listen to the story-book record (a record and book set where you turn the page when you hear the chime) all the time. I still have that story-book record (actually the original one got scratched, but my dad got me another one, so I now have two of them). I also have the 50th year gold-bound edition (it was written in 1939) in addition to three other not-so-special copies. I also have the audio book and the cartoon movie on VHS. I even have a ring that I used to pretend was my Hobbit ring when I was little. It didn't have the inscription on it, but I pretended it did.

⌂ ½

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy



Another phenomenal series of books is *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy of five books. Before I read the first book in the series I had never laughed out loud while reading a book. There were numerous scenes in those books that made me chuckle and I seem to recall that there were even one or two scenes where I laughed till I cried. Incidentally, this is the series of books from which I got the idea for [my last name Fortytwo](#).