

B&W: You have been a very active part of the online Harry Potter fandom and now, you have written a book about your activity. When did you decide to write about your experiences?

Tom: I had the idea back in autumn of 2009. That was actually when I wrote down the majority of the first version of the manuscript.

The thing was that I wanted to conserve the memories of that special time and further make them educible as well.

However, it so happened that I wrote two novels before I published this book. I did not manage to finish “Chronicles of a Harry Potter Fan” before June 2012.

B&W: Your book was initially released in German back in 2012. How did the fan community react to it?

Tom: I remember that a lot of fan based websites from all over the world reported about my book after its initial release - back in November 2012.

They did it without having read the book – just because they still knew very well who I am, which role I played within the online fandom and what impact I had on it.

With other words, my reputation was enough for them to know that the book would have interesting content.

It was really nice to see that people still remember my activity, although the time when I was really active was years ago.

B&W: The German original was released as printed book. Why is the English version available as e-book only?

Tom: Well, for two reasons basically:

First of all, an e-book can be offered much cheaper: I want the book to be accessible to everyone who is interested, so it has to be easily affordable.

The second thing is the distribution: International shipping of a book is not cheap at all. It would raise the price for the individual buyer up to a quite high sum.

An e-book neither needs to be print, nor to be shipped. It's the same content but costs the buyer just a fraction of a print version.

B&W: Were there any changes made to the German version?

Tom: Talking about the text content, there were no changes made.

The illustration, however, was improved a little bit. While some images are only greyscale in the German original, they are all colour images in the English version. Further, the English E-book contains one additional graphic as well.

B&W: Back in 2007, you founded Dumbledore's Army, an international network of fans and websites. What was the idea behind the organisation?

Tom: Indeed. It was soon after I had founded the Knight Bus, a huge link directory for Harry Potter websites, when I noticed that the fan community had changed. I had to realise that the peak of the Harry Potter era was over. Because there was not such a crowd of fans any longer, I considered it important for the remaining fan based websites to collaborate a bit closer.

B&W: From your experience with creating the DA, do you think the fandom will continue despite there being no new movies or books?

Tom: From my perspective, it appears that the fandom will definitely continue - in close future at least.

That is thanks to the fact that so many people all around the world aren't willing to let Harry Potter emerge completely from their everyday live.

B&W: What do you think is so impactful about the Harry Potter series? How does it connect with so many from all over the world?

Tom: Basically, I don't believe that there is just one thing that is responsible for the massive success of the Harry Potter story – it is rather a good combination of several key factors I suppose.

One of them is certainly the idea of escapism. You know, as Harry escapes his disillusioning reality and enters this wonderful world of wizardry. I guess a lot of people like to project that to them.

Another reason might be that the story features so many fantastic things ... I mean abilities, creatures, locations and objects, which cannot be found in reality.

And further, it's also the values which Joanne K. Rowling put into her novel series.

B&W: You talk in the book about finally making contact with Emma Watson's dad to get the keepsake box to her for her birthday. What did it feel like to

break down that wall and actually make contact? (And how much work did it take to get to that point of contact?)

Tom: It felt amazing! Really, it was a highlight of my activity in the fandom.

Emma's father was so gorgeously polite and supportive. He gave us the feeling that it was totally okay - and even valued that we wanted to send a present to Emma.

So naturally, when I first learned from my organisations' members that we actually got a reply, I could hardly trust my senses. It seemed so unreal - you know, when I had started my activity on Emma Watson Empire pretty exactly three years prior to that, back in spring 2005, it had seemed so unlikely that I would ever get any chance to contact Emma - and suddenly it appeared that this highly improbable, almost impossible thing was actually about to occur.

But of course, working towards this moment was an odyssey. As previously indicated, I had been active on Emma Watson Empire for 3 years already. Additionally, I had founded the Knight Bus and in further course the DA. So, countless hours had been invested into my virtual projects by then.

B&W: Do you have a best or favorite experience so far?

Tom: Probably, the best experience which I have made with Harry Potter was the time when I started to become a fan back in the end of 2004.

When it comes to my activity in the fandom, it is hard to think of a favourite moment actually. I remember that every time when I planned a fan action and when I was close before sending it was great.

And naturally it was wonderful when we got the reply of Emma's father.

And of course, there was the creation of the Knight Cruiser - when a friend of mine and I turned a classic limousine into a Potter-style cruiser - in order to use it as a website mascot.

So, as you can see, it is quite hard for me to think of one favourite experience. Really, there were so many!