The Whedon Studies Association

[1] The Dickens Society, the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association, the Flannery O'Connor Society—for generations, scholars have been banding together to support each other in the study of admired works of important creators. We are using the first 2009 issue of this journal to announce the official formation of the Whedon Studies Association, a non-profit organization devoted to the study of the works of Joss Whedon and his associates.

[2] The word "official" is purposefully chosen. In an informal sense, there has been an "association" of Whedon scholars since October of 2002, when University of East Anglia at Norwich professors Carol O'Sullivan, Claire Thomson, Catherine Fuller, and Scott MacKenzie hosted over 200 scholars for the first international conference on Joss Whedon, focusing on his first and most famous television show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Since then, scholars have gathered at places as far-flung as Adelaide, Australia (convener Geraldine Bloustien), Istanbul, Turkey (convener Tuna Erdem), and Nashville, Tennessee (convener David Lavery and co-convener Rhonda Wilcox). The latter was the location of the first of the biennial *Slayage* conferences, the regular meetings of which have supported the extensive growth of Whedon scholarship. Whedon scholarship now includes the publication of a journal (once specifically on *BtVS*, but now open to submission on any Whedon-associated work); multiple scholarly books in any given year; articles published in a variety of scholarly venues; annual awards for the best work in the field; dissertations and theses by Ph.D.'s, M.A.'s, and honors undergraduates; a comprehensive bibliography of books, articles, and conference papers in the field (maintained by Alysa Hornick), and more. It seems only appropriate that this very active scholarship should be supported by an official association, and during the course of 2008, Tanya Cochran, David Lavery, and Rhonda Wilcox took the steps to legally establish the Whedon Studies Association.

[3] It is our hope that this organization will further the study of the work of Whedon and his associates long after the current generation of scholars is active. As a peer-reviewed journal, the *Slayage* journal—now officially the Whedon Studies Association journal—is a complex and challenging enterprise; David Lavery, who originally conceived it, and Rhonda Wilcox, the other founding editor, hope to see it continue after their eventual retirement. It should also be noted that the establishment of this non-profit organization will facilitate the literal "association," the gathering, of Whedon scholars. While the WSA still plans to arrange conferences in connection with sponsoring universities, the establishment of the WSA as a legal entity will give greater independence of decision-making, particularly in terms of choice of location (e.g., the WSA hopes to return the next conference to a hotel setting).

[4] We invite all Whedon scholars, whether writers or readers, to join the organization. Please send your name and email address to the WSA's secretary/treasurer Tanya Cochran at wsamembers@gmail.com. (Please send in your name even if you have been

previously associated with the *Slayage* conference or other related scholarly endeavors.) Those who enroll in the WSA will receive first notice of new issues of the journal; information about upcoming conferences; shared calls for papers for upcoming books; announcements of association meetings; and more. In terms of the organization's finances (and, as Buffy discovered in season seven, there are indeed costs for simply existing), the WSA proposes to operate in a fashion somewhat similar to NPR (the U.S.'s National Public Radio). For anyone who can provide monetary assistance, $25.00 is the suggested contribution for those who are employed full-time; $10.00 is the suggested contribution for those employed less than full-time (presumably most students). However, we invite all devotees of Whedon scholarship to join the association, with or without financial contribution. We propose to call those who join in the first year "charter associates." We hope for hundreds of WSA scholars to gather face to face at the next *Slayage*/WSA conference in 2010.

Rhonda V. Wilcox