

The International Costumer

The newsletter of the International Costumers' Guild, Inc.

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<https://www.costume.org>

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Karen Heim, Acting ICG Corresponding / Recording Secretary

By Karen Heim

Hello to all my friends. I've been asked to write a little bit about myself as part of "Know Your ICG Officers."



I'm Karen Heim from the St. Louis Costumers Guild. You may not recognize me, but I'm usually found hanging out with (and costuming with) Nora Mai. She recruited me to be ICG Corresponding Secretary many years ago when she was ICG President, so in a way this isn't a new job for me. On the other hand, my predecessor, Anne Davenport, has put a lot of things in place to define the job more exactly (which I truly appreciate) so it's like a whole new experience.

Although I was already doing a variety of crafts (sewing, knitting, embroidery) from childhood, I really started making costumes when I was introduced to the SCA in 1980. I mostly focused there on 15th and 16th century clothing, but as time went on I wanted to work with periods outside of the SCA mandate.

At the same time, I also found out about Archon, the large regional SF con held in St. Louis, where people were making outfits I couldn't imagine recreating myself (I am mostly self-taught).

Eventually I met people from the local Doctor Who fan club, and through that became one of the original members of the St. Louis ICG chapter, marking my transition from the restrictions of the SCA to the anything-is-possible world of masquerade costuming. In this friend group I brought my historical costume focus to their SF/fantasy costume world, and we all benefited from the exchange of ideas.

Although I have entered masquerades as a solo act, I generally prefer to be in groups bringing an idea to life that can't be realized alone; this often means I'm working with Nora Mai on concepts as varied as frogs in kimono to historical arsenic poisoners. We've been pretty successful, and I'm always happy when what we do is appreciated regardless of whether an award is given. Listing said awards seems embarrassingly egotistical, but I have been part of groups which have been Best in Show at both the regional and international level.

I still feel I have so much to learn about costuming techniques, but I've learned through painful experience I can only pick up one new thing per costume – otherwise I get overwhelmed and the result is not something I can be proud of. Even though I've slowed down a bit as I've gotten older, I never want to give up challenging myself; I believe that's a feeling we all share. As we move

towards a return to an in-person Costume Con, I look forward to seeing what everyone will bring to the table, and I'll try to be worthy of being in such a group of talented people.

In Remembrance: Anne Davenport

By Leslie Johnston



I was extremely saddened to hear of Anne Davenport's passing.

Anne was elected to the ICG Board in 2017 as Recording Secretary, adding the role of Corresponding Secretary in 2025. She was a long-time member of the Silicon Web chapter. She was always willing to step in when help was needed, whether updating governing documents, suggesting ways to support our community, or automating Board processes. Knowing that her health was declining, Anne recently stepped down from her Board roles. I want to recognize her service to the ICG and to costuming fandom through her volunteering, speaking, and competing at so many different cons for

decades.

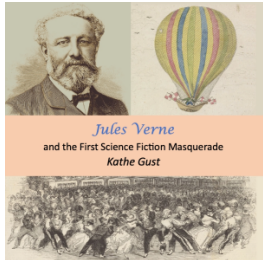
I cannot remember when I first met Anne—probably at a Costume-Con or a Worldcon—but I've known her for many years. I was always astonished by her amazing energy and creativity, and especially by her sense of humor. I cannot count the number of fun hall costumes and humorous masquerade costumes I saw her wear; she always had something new when I saw her. She had been costuming since the 1970s, loved Star Wars, fandom, and science, and she spoke her mind about her politics. She was a rare person and I will miss her so very much.

A virtual memorial is being organized by friends and family in October. Anyone who wants to send a message to Anne's family or receive word about the virtual memorial can contact Terry Neill at stferryneill@gmail.com .

Leslie Johnston
ICG President

ICG Press Publishes First Audiobook

By ICG Press



The International Costumers' Guild Press has just published its first audiobook, *Jules Verne and the First Science Fiction Masquerade* by ICG member Kathe Gust. The book is available in hardcover, paperback, ebook, and now audiobook versions.

Following the publication of her book in late March, Kathe was approached by several members of the costuming community who said that they would love to read it but they are visually impaired. They asked her whether she had ever considered publishing an audiobook version. After going through the book, she thought that the story could be adapted for the audiobook format, and approached the ICG Press with the idea, offering to narrate it herself. Kathe has a degree in speech communications and is comfortable with audio narration.

Several issues would need to be resolved to create an audiobook version. The first was how to handle the many photos and illustrations. The captions in the print and ebook versions were meant to supplement the photos and illustrations. They would not give an audiobook listener a good idea of what was actually depicted. After trying several approaches, the decision was to read the caption, and then to follow that with a short description of the photo or illustration, similar to what is done with assistive audio narration for theatrical productions..

For example, in the print and ebook versions, the photo of the Verne's house in Amiens France, where the second masquerade was held, has the caption "Jules Verne house at 2, rue Charles Dubois, c. 1894." In the audiobook version, the additional description is, "Three-story brick building with a four-story tower at left. Verne is in the courtyard and his wife stands on the front steps." The description provides enough information to form an image for the listener without being overly long. Placement is done in a way that falls naturally in with the narrative, and is prefaced by the word "Photo" or "Illustration."

Another issue was how to present citations and references to online sources. Trying to read URLs that appear in the print and ebook versions seemed awkward. The decision was to name the source, but to omit the URL. For example, the citation

Gentlemen's Fancy Dress: How to Choose It by Ardern Holt, 1882.
https://www.google.com/books/edition/Gentlemen_s_Fancy_Dress/ED8CAAAAQAAJM

was read as

Gentlemen's Fancy Dress: How to Choose It by Ardern Holt, 1882.
Available from Google Books.

The final issue was how to produce and distribute the audiobook. Audiobooks have some specific technical requirements. Fortunately, there are enough online articles about the process that it was possible to learn about what is required, including structure, audio formats, and metadata.

It was also necessary to identify distribution partners who can handle audiobooks. Our print distribution partner, IngamSpark, handles print and ebooks but not audiobooks. Fortunately our other distribution partner, Payhip, who distributes our ebook and PDF versions, can also distribute our audiobook versions. Kathe's audiobook became available from them in late May 2026. We have also signed an agreement with Voices by INaudio, one of the largest audiobook distributors, to distribute our audiobooks to their extensive network of sellers. Kathe's audiobook should be available through those sellers by July, 2026.

Now that the ICG Press has the capability to produce audiobooks, we will evaluate future publications to see if they would be suitable for this format. We are also evaluating our current publications.

To learn more about Kathe's book, *Jules Verne and the First Science Fiction Masquerade* and to locate a seller for the audiobook and other formats, visit the book page on the [ICG Press website](#).

Welcome to Costume-Con 44 in 2028!

By Fiona Leonard and Mickey Desai

About Costume-Con 44



We are pleased to announce that Costume-Con 44 is officially open for business! We are Fiona Leonard and Mickey Desai, and we are the co-chairs of the convention. Costume-Con 44 will be held March 24-27, 2028, in the Crowne Plaza Ravinia in Atlanta, Georgia, which is conveniently located near two interstates and public transportation. It is also across the street from a thriving mall, close to dozens of restaurants, a Target, and a Michael's craft and fabric store.

While we have not personally stayed in this hotel, we chose it after canvassing of a number of hotels across the Atlanta landscape. The location is beautiful, and it checks off a lot of our requirements for a

venue. We have heard good things from other groups who have worked with them. They have been very accommodating and are excited to have us.

Our mascot for the convention is a phoenix. The Phoenix is representative of self-regeneration, which seemed appropriate for our effort to breathe new life into Costume-Con. The phoenix has long been a symbol of Atlanta since it was rebuilt in the 1800's after being largely burned to the ground. The artwork for our logo was created by the awesomely talented Joe Phillips, He is a well-known comic book illustrator, steampunk convention vendor, and costumer. He is super fun and entertaining to hang out with, and is our first confirmed guest for CC44!

How You Can Help

We will definitely need help to realize this dream, and we very much welcome the support of the costuming community. We'll need help reaching out to new populations of attendees. We'll need passionate folks to lead panels and workshops, and we'll especially need some well-hydrated folks to help us with sponsorships.

Check out our [Costume-Con 44 website](#) where you can purchase early-bird tickets, make hotel reservations, and learn more about the convention. You can also follow us on [Facebook](#).

Editor's note: This is an excerpt from an article in the August 2026 issue of [The Virtual Costumer](#), the costuming magazine of the Silicon Web Costumers Guild.

Measure of Success Award of the Northern Lights Costumers' Guild

By Northern Lights Costumers

The Northern Lights Costumers' Guild chapter award is known as the "Measure of Success." It is presented to a novice or journeyman costumer who does not receive any other awards in a masquerade competition, but we feel shows promise and should be recognized for their efforts. The award is meant to encourage newer costumers to stay on track and keep competing. Northern Lights members are not eligible for the award.

The award was created in 2006, and has been presented ever since at local and regional conventions such as Arisia. A group of Northern Lights members who are in the audience during the competition select the recipients. The decision often must be made quickly once we know which eligible entries have received other awards in their divisions. That means we need to have a list of potentials, listen to all the awards given, and then very quickly decide among any remaining entries. The challenge is to keep everyone from leaving before we

get a chance to award it! We do try to liaise with the MC so that they will fit us in, but sometimes in the rush of applause for Best in Show, the MC forgets that there's one more thing...

Recipients of the award receive a certificate, a Northern Lights "Measure of Success" retractable tape measure, and a one-year membership in Northern Lights.



Photo: Jill Eastlake

Northern Lights most recently presented a Measure of Success award at Arisia in January 2026 to Liora S., a young adult entry who competed in the novice division. Her original creation, "Kiko Kitsune" represents a high-ranking and benevolent fox spirit in Japanese folklore. The entry included a Japanese kimono, geta (raised wooden sandals), and a beautiful hand-painted fox mask that she created.



Photo: Michael Meissner

Gmail Feeding Emails To AI – How to Disable These Settings

By Philip Gust



AI is rapidly being deeply integrated into products from major software companies. For example Google Gmail now includes smart features that allow it to scan your emails and attachments to predict text while you type, categorize your inbox automatically, and generate summaries and suggestions. These sound helpful, but the trade-off is that your emails are continuously processed and analyzed in the background. Google says this is to improve your

experience,

A recent YouTube video describes how default settings in Gmail also enable Google to use your Gmail messages to train their AI models. This includes private emails, receipts, invoices, and sensitive documents in your inbox. The video points out that this may be turned on by default. For some ICG members who have personal Gmail accounts, this may raise privacy concerns about having their entire email history feeding any AI model now or in the future. The ICG also relies on Google for Non-Profits, including Gmail accounts, for much of its technical infrastructure, and messages in these accounts may also be used for this purpose .

The video walks users through turning off two Gmail settings to help ensure their privacy. These settings must be turned off for each Gmail account. The steps shown in the video take less than two minutes to modify. However this may result in most of the convenience features provided by Google's AI systems no longer being available for Gmail accounts that take these steps.. Users will need to evaluate their level of comfort and decide whether to disable these features.

Watch the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RM_KkldTXfs

Philip Gust
Chair, ICG Technology and Web Committee

Still Time to Apply For a 2026 Marty Gear Fund Grant

By Marty Gear Fund



photo: Stephen Lesnik

There is still time to apply for a 2026 Marty Gear Costuming Arts & Sciences Fund grant. The Marty Gear Fund is an International Costumers' Guild program to provide grants in support of projects by ICG members that advance the art and science of costuming and benefit costumers in general or in specific groups. These are grants, not loans, and do not require repayment. The Fund was established in 2013. It still has \$2,000 available that will disappear at the end of 2026 if no grants are made.

The Fund was named in honor of Marty Gear, who was one of the founders of the ICG and its executive director during its formative years. In 1991, he became the second costumer to be awarded the ICG's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Any ICG member may apply for a grant, using the application form on the ICG web site. When a grant application is received, the Administration Committee reads it to assure it is complete. then sends it to two members of its panel of reviewers to evaluate its content, proposed timetable, and requested funding. The panel consists of highly experienced costumers appointed by the ICG president — truly masters of our art. They may request additional information in order to complete their review.

If the panelists recommend approval of an application and the amount to award, the applicant is notified and payment is arranged. For applications that will take an extended period to fulfill, payment may be spread over several tranches.

If you have an idea that may be beneficial to all costumers or some of us, put it on an application to the Marty Gear Fund now so that the Fund has time to consider your application for this year. You can learn more about the Fund, read about past grants awarded, and submit your application at <https://www.costume.org/wp/marty-gear-costuming-arts-and-sciences-fund>.

About the International Costumers' Guild

The International Costumers' Guild (ICG) is an affiliation of hobbyist and professional costumers, dedicated to the promotion and education of costuming including cosplay as an art form in all its aspects. The ICG is a U.S. 501(c)(3) non-profit, educational organization.

Benefits

Member benefits include participation in local Chapters and Special Interest Groups (SIGs), voting rights, eligibility for grants, online forums, social media, learning and volunteer opportunities, and announcements about ICG business and activities. Chapters and SIGs are eligible for tax-exempt status, Quickbooks, web hosting, Zoom, and Google Workspaces.

ICG Officers

- **President:** Leslie L. Johnston (president@costume.org)
- **Vice President:** Nora Mai (vice-president@costume.org)
- **Treasurer:** Jeanine Swick (treasurer@costume.org)
- **Corresponding Secretary:** Karen Heim (corr-secretary@costume.org)
- **Recording Secretary:** Karen Heim (rec-secretary@costume.org)

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The International Costumer is published by the ICG Editorial Board. We welcome short costuming articles, book reviews, event reports, and news items. For the latest content, visit the [International Costumer webpage](#).

ICG Editorial Board: Kathe Gust, Philip Gust, Betsy Marks, Patrick O'Connor, Kevin Roche, Jeanine Swick, Randall Whitlock.