

# Astrophysicist also science fiction writer

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A U.S. physics professor says he's found writing science fiction offers him an opportunity to play around with scientific concepts.

For five years stories written by Vanderbilt University astrophysicist Robert Scherrer have been published regularly in the monthly magazine Analog Science Fiction and Fact and the semiannual journal Paradox.

"There are some similarities between doing theoretical physics and science fiction," Scherrer said. "I refer to both of them as disciplined daydreaming ... but you can't just dream up anything. It has to be within certain confines.

"It's well known in physics that you have to obey the laws of physics, but science fiction writing has its own set of laws," he told Exploration, the university's online research magazine. "You can't have warlocks and wizards and unicorns prancing through the scenery."

The chairman of Vanderbilt's Department of Physics and Astronomy since 2003, Scherrer says his science fiction writing approach is to toy with a scientific concept and see how it might work out if pushed to an extreme.

"That's just one of many ways to do science fiction, but it's the closest to doing science, I think," he said.

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