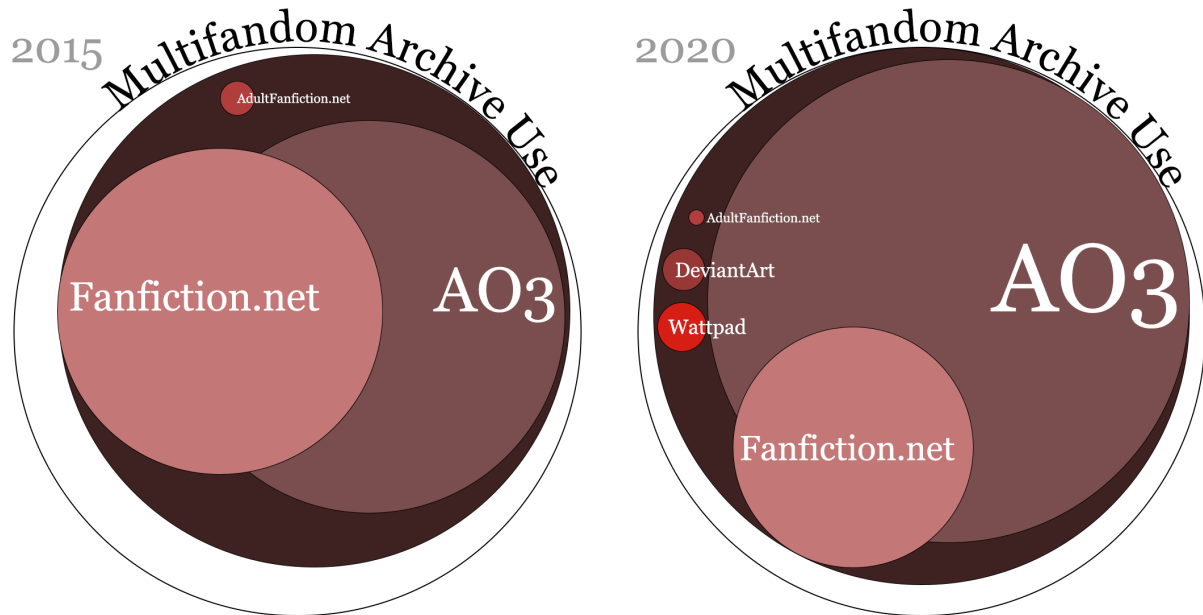


A Fanworks Ecumenopolis:

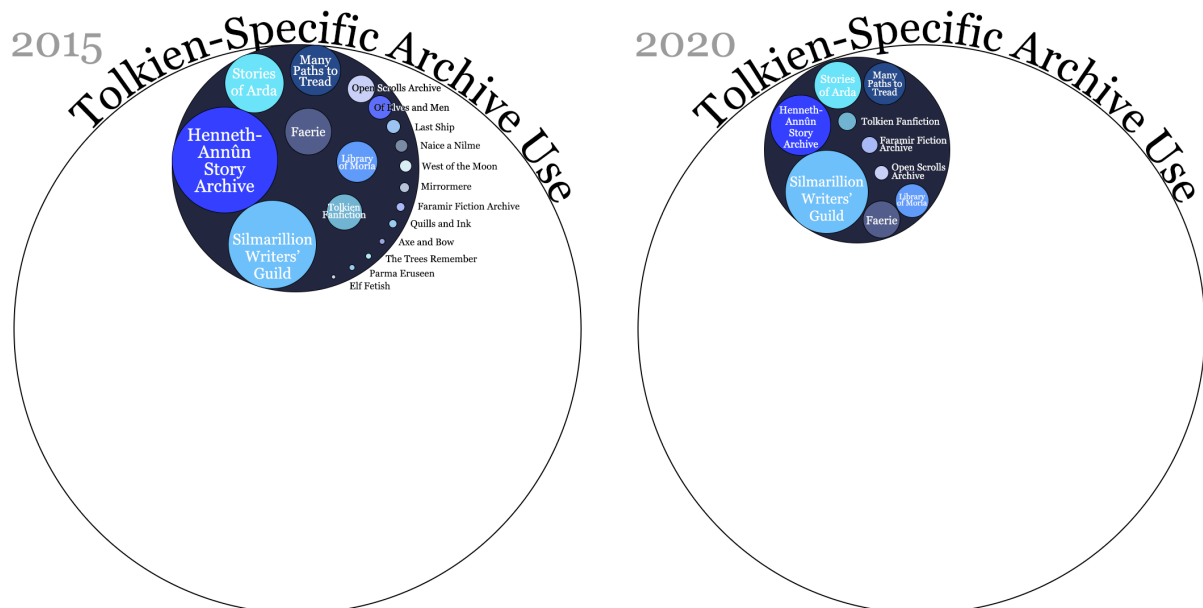
Tolkien Fanfiction Archives and the Implications of Consolidation

1. Tolkien Fanworks Archives Are Disappearing

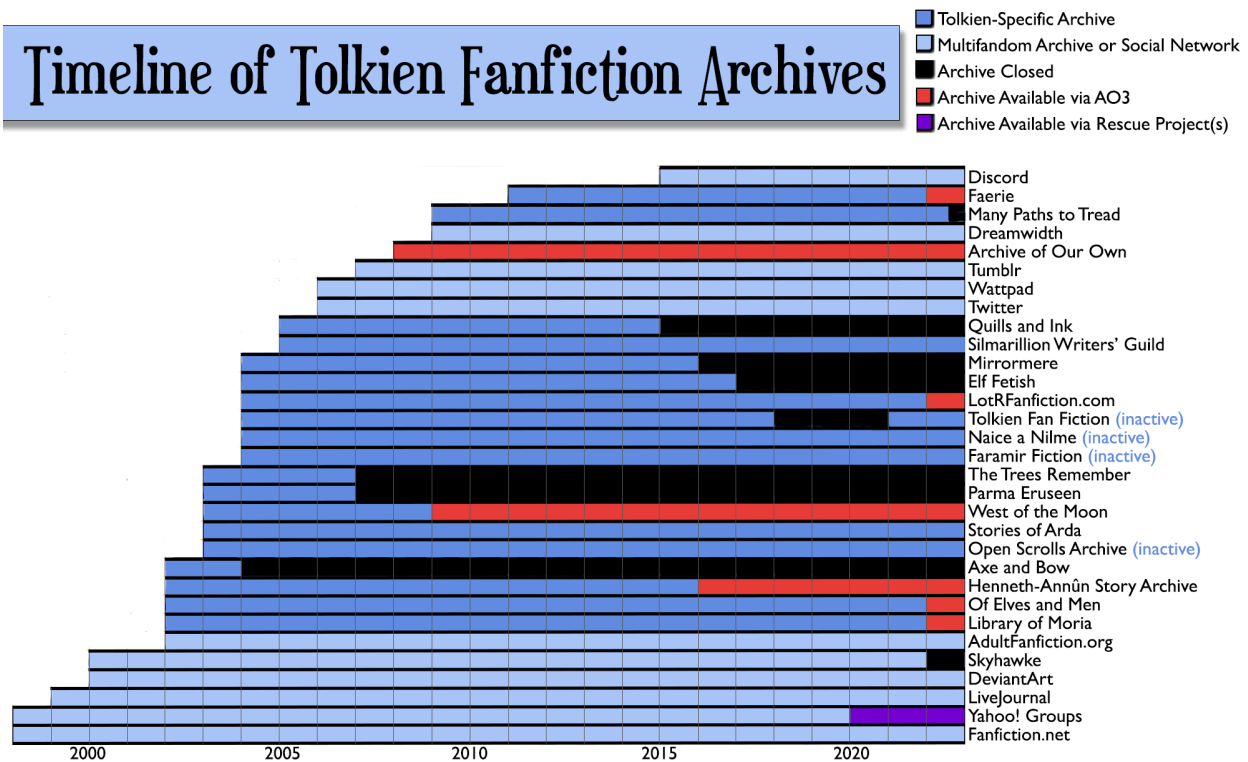
Use of multifandom archives grew slightly between 2015 and 2020. However, AO3's share grew significantly, and nearly all authors (85%) now use AO3.



At the same time, use of Tolkien-specific archives shrunk slightly, and the number of archives available to use shrunk dramatically.



Timeline of Tolkien Fanfiction Archives



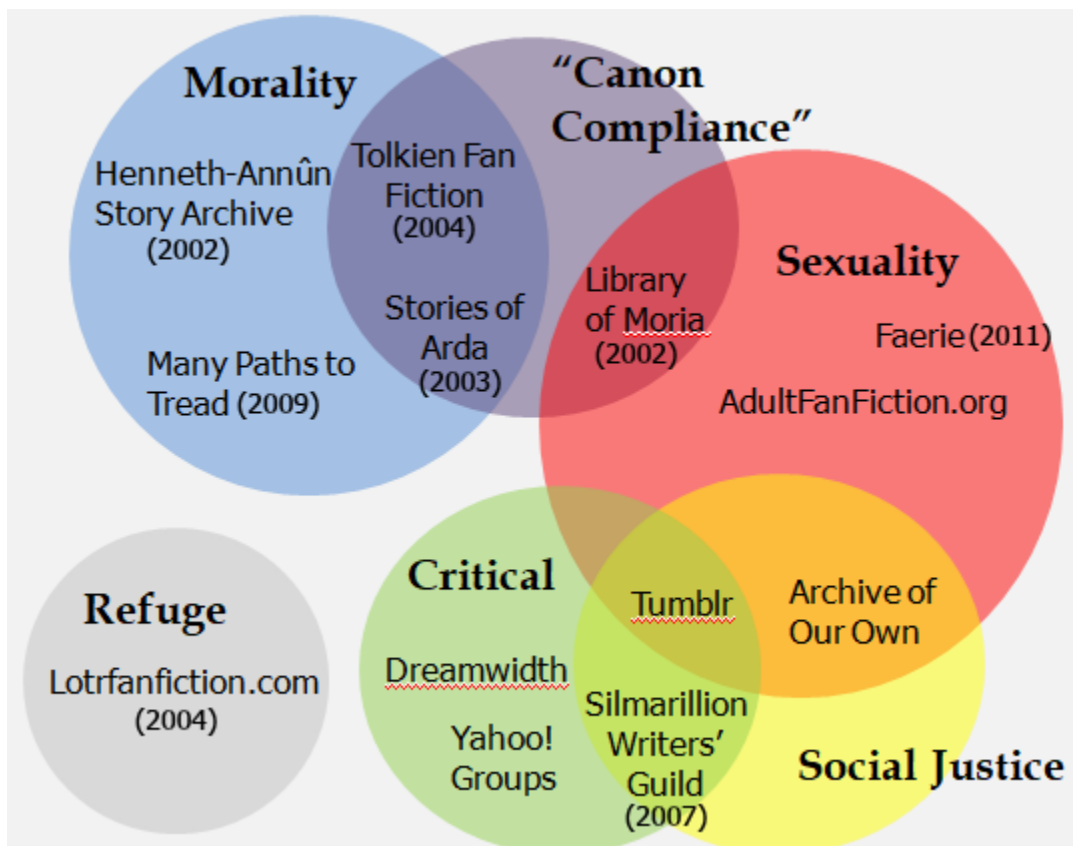
An "archive" for my purposes here is any site built, used, or repurposed by fans to share fanfiction. Archives marked (inactive) have had less than five stories posted in 2022, as of October 9. Dates are from Fanlore.org. The list is not complete, but I hope to add to it. Please email me with corrections at DawnFelagund@gmail.com

Key Takeaways:

- The early-mid 2000s were a time of high creativity for Tolkien-specific archives.
- Archive closures generally occur in the years after a film trilogy ends.
- Exception: There has been a wave of closures in recent years that is not predicted by waning interest post-trilogy.
- Even aside from growing use of AO3 over other archive choices, archive migration via Open Doors means AO3 archives a growing share of Tolkien-based fanfiction.
- There are only two active Tolkien-specific archives remaining.

2. The loss of small archives matters.

1. "All eggs in one basket" = greater chance of data loss.
2. Large archives require more resources to operate. The cost to operate AO3 for five hours pays for the Silmarillion Writers' Guild for a year.
3. Individual community/fandom cultures are flattened and lost. The 2015 Tolkien Fanfiction Survey showed that each archive had a unique culture around issues of interpreting Tolkien's canon, applying Tolkien's morality, incorporating sexuality in fanworks, and using fanworks for critical and social justice purposes.



4. Communities lose autonomy, i.e., how to integrate archiving, resource, and social functions of a community; how to tag and organize fanworks.
5. Fans lose the self-sufficiency of being able to build and manage their own communities. There is attrition of technical know-how and creativity.
6. Technical creativity is still creativity. Archives and communities are themselves fanworks.

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