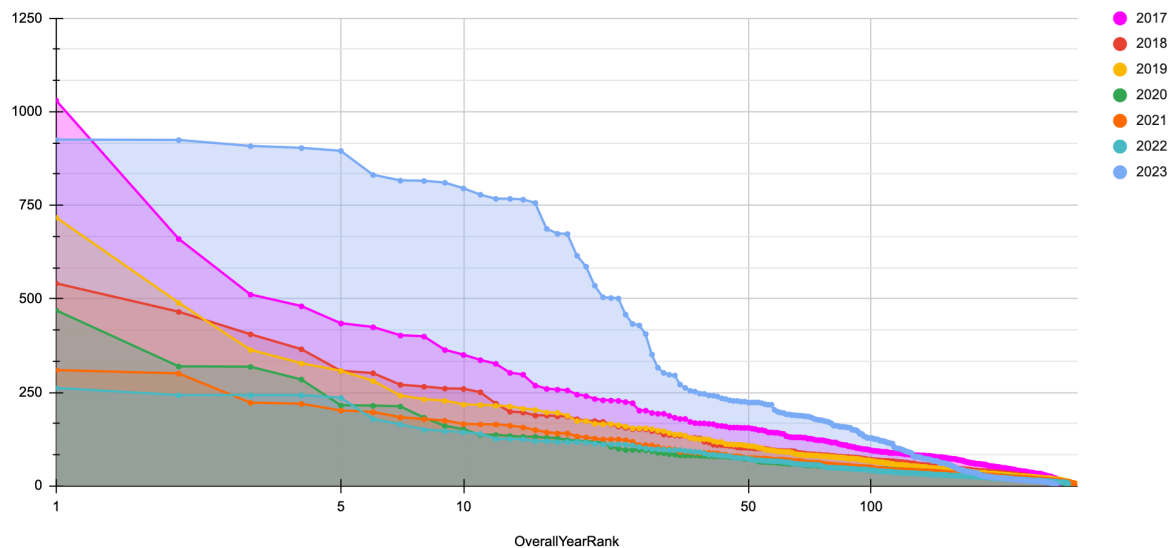


Charting The Cliff

An Investigation Into the 2023 Hugo Nomination Statistics

Votes versus Rank (log scale)



By Camestros Felapton and Heather Rose Jones

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Introduction

This report thoroughly examines the published statistics of the 2023 Hugo Awards nomination stage (Hugo 23 Admin, 2024). It investigates a series of errors, inconsistencies and unusual patterns in the published data and discusses possible explanations.

The report makes use of work done by other people including analysis done by Marshall Ryan Maresca, Jameson Quinn, and Liz Batty, as well as background on the event researched by ErsatzCulture, Arthur Liu, Jason Sanford and Chris Barkley. The use of their work in this report does not imply that they endorse other aspects of the report.

Accompanying this report is a Google Sheets spreadsheet that contains digitised versions of the nomination statistics as well as the equivalent data from 2017 to 2022. Graphs and tables in this report can be found in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Executive Summary

The nomination statistics for the 2023 Hugo Awards (conducted by the Chengdu Worldcon Committee) were released on January 20 2024. The release had been unusually delayed for several months. Once released, the document raised numerous questions among Worldcon members and Hugo Award finalists. Most notably, several potential finalists had been ruled ineligible for reasons not given in the document and which were not apparent to members of the wider public. This issue drew a large amount of public comment.

However, in addition to the eligibility questions, many people raised questions about the statistics themselves which have numerous obvious errors and some implausible numbers.

This report contends that the nomination statistics provided cannot be treated as a reliable presentation of the actual nomination votes by members. The report will show that there are known errors in the listed names of nominees, inconsistencies in the vote totals, inaccuracies in the manner points were calculated in elimination rounds and highly atypical patterns of voting. In particular, there is evidence in the categories of Best Novel and Best Series of a very large number of highly similar votes for the main finalists in these categories, that these votes advantaged English-language works over Chinese-language works and that these votes do not resemble organic voting by members. The exact explanation of these votes is unknown.

Background: Worldcon 2023 and the Hugo Award

The 81st Worldcon was held in Chengdu, China between 18 and 22 October 2023. The Hugo Awards were presented at a ceremony on 21 October (2023 *Hugo Awards*, 2023). Typically, a document giving statistical details of the final voting stage and the nomination stage is released shortly after the ceremony finishes. However, the final voting statistics were delayed until December and the nomination statistics were not released until late January.

The release of the nomination statistics resulted in a social media storm as people sought information from the main Hugo Administrator Dave McCarty (Barkley, 2024). McCarty's answers on his personal Facebook page ranged from the unhelpful to the rude and eventually the comment section became overwhelmed. In a later interview, McCarty suggested that the eligibility decisions were made within the WSFS Rules (WSFS, 2023) but also within the context of a Chinese Worldcon:

"So remember when I said that the administration decisions all came from the WSFS Constitution and all the rules we must follow and remember? And I just talked about it. I had to spend months learning how to bridge culture and learning what everything is right and so there are you know for me that nobody told me any of these decisions. OK, these decisions are all decisions that I made as the administrator understanding the best I can of what the rules are of the administration. You know because it is, it's because there is no "just the WSFS Constitution" on anything. Right the cause for as mad as anybody is. And what whatever they think that I've done anything that they think that I've done. If you actually checked with this Constitution, I haven't broken a single rule. Right. I the administrator, the administrator team is given discretion because we need discretion. We have to make judgment calls. And in this case, you know the ones that people have problems with. The judgment calls I have. I struggle calling them judgment calls. They were clearly not eligible." (Barkley, 2024)

In the same interview, McCarty acknowledged that there were some errors in the released statistics and that there had been challenges for the team administering the awards due to the team being small, inexperienced and due to his own work commitments. One error had been fixed between the first release of the data and a second update (the name of a nominated work had been added in twice). McCarty acknowledged a second error:

*"There was so much of this stuff comes from just straight up, you know, straight up SQL queries from the data, right? The SQL query from the data for the ballot counts in each category actually has a f***ing flaw and it's and it's mistaken. It reported low across the board. So the places where people are rightfully yelling, hey, there are more points in round nine than there are ballots cast in the in the thing they're right, there are more points in round nine because that's not a number that I ever had time to check in the process because at the end of the day how many ballots are in each category isn't material to did we count things correctly? So I never double-check, you know, because I didn't have enough assistance and you know, Joe and I are doing stuff and Joe's learning on the job while we were doing stuff."* (Barkley, 2024) ¹

McCarty's comments strongly suggest several factors in play during the administration of the Hugo Awards:

- McCarty's desire to respond to cultural or political concerns in China.

¹ "Joe" is Joe Yao, a Chinese member of the Hugo Award committee that worked with Dave McCarty

- The demand on McCarty's time to administer the awards, manage his professional work and manage the demands of a complex convention.
- The workload on the Hugo Committee itself was high due to the unique challenges of a Worldcon in China.
- The Hugo Committee was understaffed.
- The Hugo Committee was inexperienced and had to learn a great deal about the process during the running of the award.

In addition to these issues, there was prior reason to expect the Hugo Award statistics to differ from established patterns even if there had been no errors in the process. One big expectation for the 2023 Hugo Awards was that they would enable Chinese fans to showcase the range and depth of modern Chinese science fiction and fantasy. This should have resulted in many nominated works in Chinese and many Chinese fans voting. While there is some degree of translation and publication of English SF&F works in China and vice versa, there was naturally going to be a degree of unfamiliarity with works from one culture for people from other cultures. In addition, many Chinese fans would be new to the process of voting for the Hugo Award and many of the resources that aid English-language fans in voting would not necessarily exist for Chinese fans. Some Chinese publishers such as Science Fiction World did produce guides on how to vote and included a recommendation list (Science Fiction World SFW, 2023).

The issue of the eligibility questions has since been further investigated by fan writers Jason Sanford and Chris Barkley (Sanford & Barkley, 2024). Their report revealed a proactive use of the eligibility checking process by Hugo admins to catalogue potential finalists by the degree to which they held critical views about China. The investigation also quotes a person involved in the process saying that there was:

“collusion in a Chinese publication that had published a nominations list, a slate as it were, and so those ballots were identified and eliminated.” (Sanford & Barkley, 2024)

The investigation by Sanford and Barkley strongly implies direct manipulation of the ballots by the Hugo committee. However, it needs to be clarified what exactly they did. Further evidence of this is contained in a document linked in their report called “Validation” (unknown, 2023) (Sanford & Barkley, 2024). This document shows the listing of a provisional set of finalists given to Hugo admins ostensibly for routine checking of eligibility but used to highlight possible political issues. Notably, the list of nominees does not always correspond with the nominees listed in the nomination statistics. Chinese blogger Zionius has documented the changes between this leaked set of nominees and the published set (zionius, 2024).

Background on the nomination process: E Pluribus Hugo and Eligibility

Hugo Award voting occurs in two stages: a nomination stage and a final vote stage (WSFS, n.d.). Prior to 2017, the nomination stage involved members of the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS) simply listing five nominees per category in a ballot. The top five eligible nominees with the most ballots would become the finalists for those categories.

EPH

From 2013 to 2017, the Hugo Awards faced a campaign by ad-hoc groups of right-wing fans with concerns about the direction of the awards. These groups were known initially as the Sad Puppies and later as the Sad Puppies and Rabid Puppies, and used a system of slates to improve their

chances of getting their preferred works nominated. In 2015 this led to a crisis where most of the Hugo Award categories were dominated by Puppy slated works. Most of these works lost in the final voting stage to a none-of-the-above option known as “No Award”. As a consequence, changes were made to the voting system to reduce the impact of voting blocs. (Quinn & Schneier, 2016, #). In addition, the rules were changed so that each member nominated five nominees but a total of six nominees would become finalists.

The system was adopted under the name “E Pluribus Hugo” or EPH but its technical name is Single Divisible Vote with Least-Popular Elimination (SDV-LPE). The system retains the process of members submitting ballots but the way those ballots are counted has become more sophisticated. (Quinn & Schneier, 2016, #).

The short version of the process was described in 2017 for members:

*“Under **E Pluribus Hugo** votes are tallied like this:*

- 1. First, the total **number of nominations** from all ballots is tallied for each nominee.*
- 2. Next, a single **point** is assigned to each individual voter’s nomination ballot. That **point** is divided equally among all nominees on that ballot. (After the first round of calculation, it is divided equally between the **remaining** nominees.)*
- 3. Next, all **points** from all nomination ballots are totalled for each nominee in that category.*
- 4. Next, the two nominees with the **lowest point totals** are compared.*
- 5. Whichever of those two has the fewest **number of nominations** is eliminated and removed from all subsequent calculations.*
- 6. Back to step 1 with the remaining nominees after the elimination.*

The above steps are repeated until there are only six nominees left. Those six become the finalists.” (Worldcon75, 2017)

There are additional rules for dealing with ties. The process means that the primary factor in determining who/what is a finalist remains their total number of raw votes (i.e. how many people’s ballots they were listed on). However, the points system improves the chances of a nominee becoming a finalist if the people who listed it did NOT list other works that were also finalists. This way bloc votes may win some finalist slots but it reduces the chance of them winning all the finalist slots.

The final rounds (between 9 and 11) of the process are published after the Hugo Awards are presented, along with a long list of the top 15 nominees.

Eligibility

The nomination process has always required the Hugo Administrators to make decisions about which categories nominees should be counted in and whether a nominee is eligible. The process is complex and many decisions are left to the discretion of the Hugo administrators. (WSFS, 2023). Typically, the administrators have opted to make as few changes as is practical leaving more abstract decisions (e.g. is a novel a work of science fiction/fantasy or not) to the voters.

Eligibility decisions have typically been included in the published statistics that are made available after the Hugo Awards are presented. There is no appeal process for eligibility decisions.

The Analysis

This section examines the Hugo Award 2023 nomination statistics (Hugo 23 Admin, 2024) in detail and speculates on the underlying causes. The causes have to be speculative because, without access to the raw data (which is not possible), there are too many potential sources of the patterns in the data to make a definite conclusion.

The Hugo Award nomination process can be conceptually broken into several stages.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Collection of ballots	Cleaning/canonicalization of the ballots	Running the EPH process	Eligibility decisions and withdrawals	Finalist list published	Nomination statistics published
Via a website and by mail	Using consistent names/titles for works. Identifying which names apply to which works etc	Done using bespoke software	Some finalists may not be eligible & some finalists choose to withdraw from the award	Here the process branches off to the final stage of voting & award ceremony.	Data from the previous stages is collated in a document for public consumption.

Issues could occur at any of these stages which might impact later stages. For example, inconsistent data in the final published statistics might be due to an error in the software (stage 3) or may just be an error in compiling the public document (stage 6). As the bulk of the evidence available is the nominating statistics document, all errors, issues and unusual patterns might arise from stage 6 of the process.

Speculation of the intent behind causes is even more tenuous. On some issues, there is evidence from public comment from Hugo Administrator Dave McCarty but anything beyond that is purely speculative.

It is also very important to note that while some of the issues discussed in this report will appear to have advantaged some nominees and disadvantaged other nominees (or communities of fans), **NO** implication should be drawn that nominees themselves were involved in or were aware of these issues during the award process.

Some apparent issues may not be issues at all but organic outcomes from the way individual members voted. For example, we know from the context of the 2023 Worldcon that there would be two groupings of voters that were more distinct than usual: voters in China and voters outside of China. In, say, the 2022 Hugo Awards it would be unusual to see patterns of voting where EPH points indicated nominees with almost no overlap in voters, but in 2023 with works in both English and Chinese text and two communities of fans that have only had limited contact in recent years, such patterns of voting might be expected.

The Approach

After the release of the nomination statistics, many people began examining the data provided. This report aims to collate and systematise that examination. To that end, the nomination statistics from 2017 to 2023 were extracted from PDF documents and placed into a Google Sheets spreadsheet: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12bqjcuGMnSUqNR62SK2GEMBnfe8WqTUq7MvbpQeDkc0/edit?usp=sharing> (Felapton, 2024, #)

Additional calculations were added to the sheet to both replicate the analysis done by numerous fans already and to facilitate further analysis. The shared and public nature of the spreadsheet also enables other people to verify the calculations done and identify any errors made during the analysis.

The data has been analysed at two levels. Firstly at a global level, identifying broad issues that run through the document, particularly when compared with previous years. Secondly, issues within each category. These two levels are complementary as specific categories are both affected by and exemplify the issues raised.

Chinese-language and English-language nominees

Nominees have been classified during the analysis as being either “Chinese-language” or “English-language”. In most cases this is intended as a simple distinction as to whether the published work was produced primarily for an audience in mainland China or for an audience in English-speaking countries (primarily the US). For individual categories (e.g, Best Fan Writer) the classification is on whether they are primarily writing (or editing or creating art) for primarily Chinese or English-speaking audiences.

The primary basis on making the classification was done following the convention used in the published document where the canonical name is given first and the translated name second. The screen shot from the published statistics shows an example (Hugo 23 Admin, 2024).

10	《红石》 The Red Stone	113	60.00	60.00	60.00	75.00	75.00	75.00
11	A Half-Built Garden 《待完工的花园》	78	38.78	42.28	43.20	43.20	44.33	
12	《我们生活在南京》 We Live in Nanjing	77	41.78	44.53	46.53	46.53		

In row 10, 红石 is the canonical name and “The Red Stone” is a translation. Whereas in row 11, “A Half-Built Garden” is the canonical name and 待完工的花园 is the translation. However, the document is not always consistent in this convention and in some cases guesswork and other sources have been used to make a judgment.

Other cases add further complexity. In Best Novella the work 圣物 *Relics* appears to be a Chinese-language work. It is also treated as a Chinese-language work in the leaked validation document (unknown, 2023) and it also appears on the Science Fiction World recommendation list for Chinese voters (Science Fiction World SFW, 2023). However, that list reveals that the novella is actually a story by British Author K.J.Parker published in a collection of his short fiction (Subterranean Press, n.d.) but also in translation in Science Fiction World. As it appears to have been treated as a Chinese-language work throughout the process its classification had been left as Chinese-language.

Likewise, in Semiprozine, what is listed as 未来纪事 *Future Science Fiction Digest* is the English-language magazine of the same name, which is clearer in the leaked validation list. Why it appears as a Chinese-language magazine in the published stats is unclear, it did publish eligible translated work by Chinese authors in 2021, and it also appeared on a recommendation list (FAA, 2023) so possibly many of its nominations were from Chinese fans.

Meanwhile, *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*, which also appears on the Science Fiction World list is classified as English-language because in this case it was listed under its US publisher, and because it was treated as English-language work through the process.

Even so, readers should be mindful when interpreting the data that the distinction between the two classifications has fuzzy edges and some classification may be disputable or wrong. Both the validation list and the Science Fiction World list have been included in edited form in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Eligibility Questions

Fifteen nominees who had qualified as finalists during the EPH process were withdrawn from consideration. Nine of these nominees had short explanations provided in the document that included the nominee choosing to withdraw from the award and prior publication of a work outside of the eligibility period. However, 6 of these nominees were indicated only with an asterisk and the statement “- Not eligible (不具备提名资格)”.

- *Babel* in Best Novel
- 涂色世界 *Color the World* in Best Novelette
- 尽化塔 Fongong Temple Pagoda in Best Short Story
- *Sandman Episode 6: The Sound of Her Wings* in Best Dramatic Presentation - Short Form
- Paul Weimer in Best Fanwriter
- Xiran Jay Zhao in the Astounding Award

Of these, only one (涂色世界 *Color the World*) has an eligibility issue identified by fans in relation to the WSFS rule.

The issue has garnered media coverage and people have speculated that the underlying cause was some form of government or self-censorship. This appears to have been confirmed by the statement made by Dave McCarty (Barkley, 2024). However, no official explanation has been made. However, the surrounding evidence (including McCarty's statements) confirms that this was an issue at stage 4 of the process. Additional evidence from the investigation by Sanford and Barkley suggests that there may have been an active slate and removal of some ballots because of the slate, which would imply issues at stage 1 and stage 2 of the process. (Sanford & Barkley, 2024)

Global Issues

These issues apply across multiple categories.

1. Ballot totals and EPH totals are inconsistent in multiple categories

In each category, the nomination statistics show the name of the category and the total number of ballots cast for that category. The image shows, as an example, Best Novel.

2023 Nomination Stats

2023 提名数据

Best Novel (1,637 Ballots) 最佳长篇小说 (1,637 张选票)

Place	Finalist/入围作品	N	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1	Legends & Lattes 《传奇与拿铁》	831	202.35	203.56	206.90	206.90	207.78	210.45	210.45	211.45	214.28
2	Nettle & Bone 《荨麻与骨头》	815	193.50	195.75	198.92	198.92	202.58	207.50	207.50	207.67	218.17
3	Babel * 《巴别塔》	810	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93

The column marked “9” contains the EPH points for that round. As the points are the sum of a single point per voter, the total number of points should equal or be less than the total number of ballots.

Typically, this total of points is less than the number of ballots because some votes will have only listed nominees who were already eliminated in earlier rounds.

On 21 January 2024, author Marshall Ryan Maresca pointed out on social media that the EPH point totals for round 9 and the listed number of ballots per category were inconsistent.

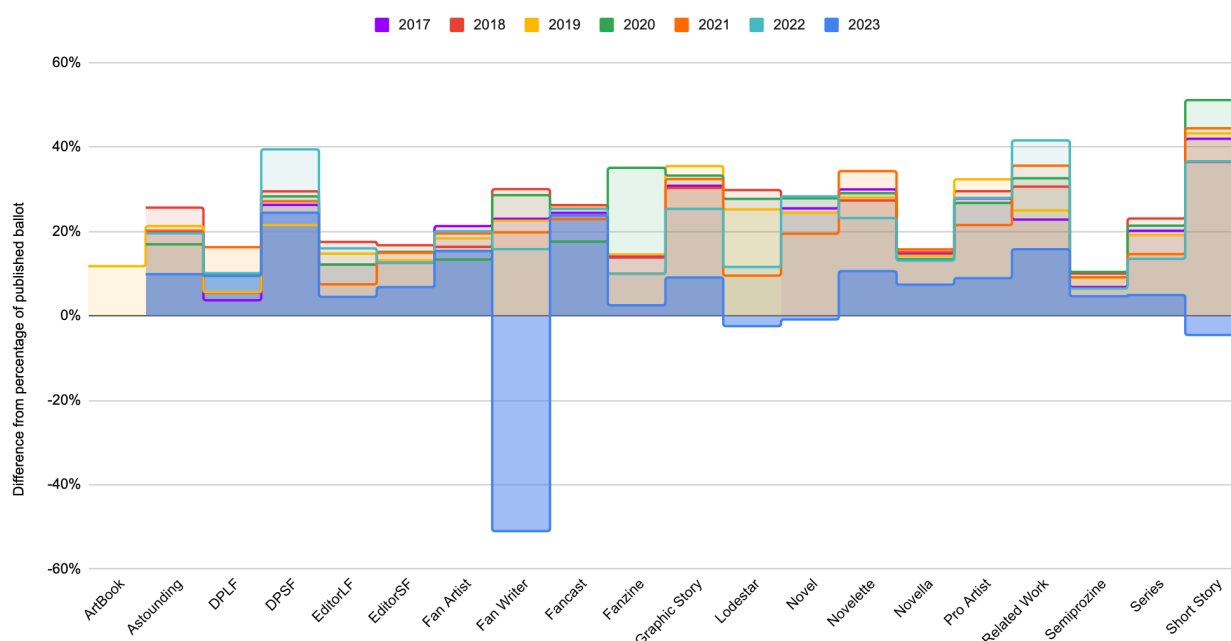
“Marshall Ryan Maresca · 21d @mrmaresca.com

Further mathing (please double-check my work, I would LOVE to be wrong), but I have four categories at over 100% (Novel, Short Story, Fan Writer and Lodestar), and most of them over 90%, which is statistically ODD.”

<https://bsky.app/profile/mrmaresca.com/post/3kjhj5euxn42p>

In tab 7. *Category Totals* of the accompanying spreadsheet (these figures were recalculated for every category from 2017 to 2020. Only in 2023 did the EPH totals in this round exceed the ballot totals.

The following stepped area chart (7. *CategoryTotalsGraph*) shows the difference between the ballot totals and the EPH total as a percentage of each ballot total. Positive values indicate that the overall number of ballots cast is higher than the number of ballots still in play in the final rounds. Negative values indicate that there are more ballots in the final EPH rounds than were apparently cast.



In four categories, the percentage is negative with Best Fan Writer showing the largest departure from expectations. In other categories, the value is positive but low compared to previous years, which may be an error or could indicate more ballots than usual included one of the top 15 nominees.

With this issue, a limited explanation has been given by Dave McCarty (see earlier quote). According to McCarty an issue with an SQL query meant that ballot totals were underreported “across the board”. Why this error was not fixed or why the ballot totals were not manually updated was not explained given the additional time that was available for the production of the statistics.

McCarty’s explanation frames the issue as a stage 6 issue, i.e. something that impacted the production and publishing of the statistics. However, the proposed cause (an error in a SQL query)

implies potential issues at earlier stages. In particular, if ballot totals per category have not been correct at any stage of the process, it implies that the Hugo Administration team would have had difficulty verifying aspects of their work during the process.

2. High vote totals & unusual patterns in those totals aka ‘The Cliff’

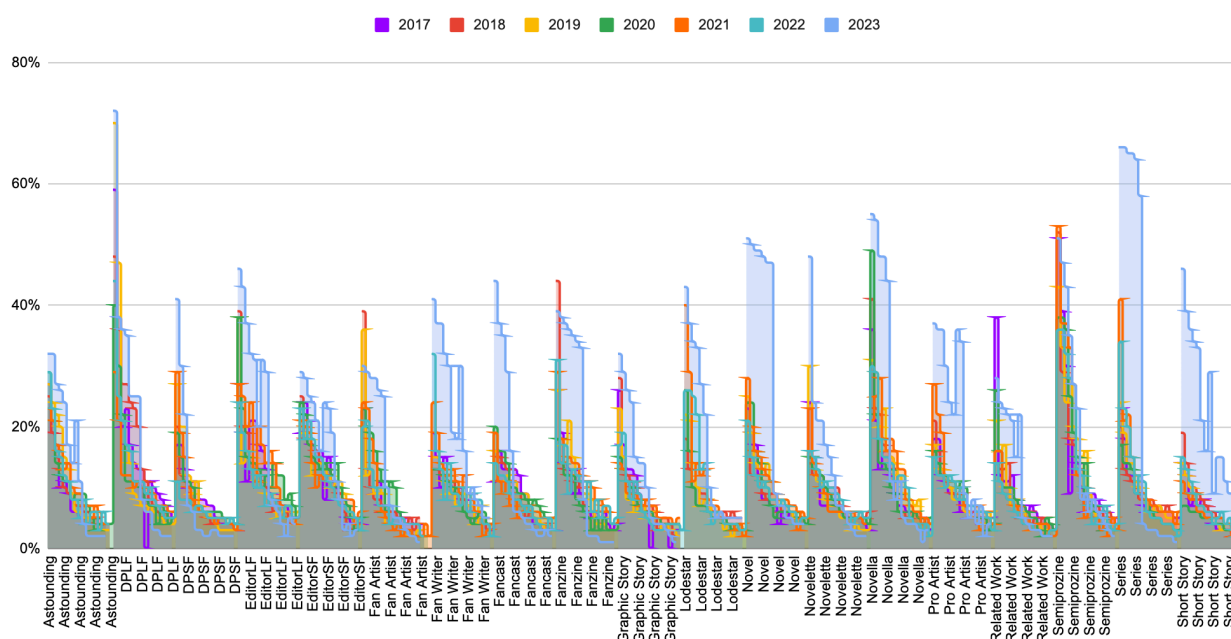
It is not unusual historically for the top-ranked novel at the nomination stage to have one of the highest totals among all the nominees. However, many people reading the nomination statistics noted that the top 7 finalists in Best Novel all had vote totals greater than 750.

On 20 January, on her blog Heather Rose Jones described the issue:

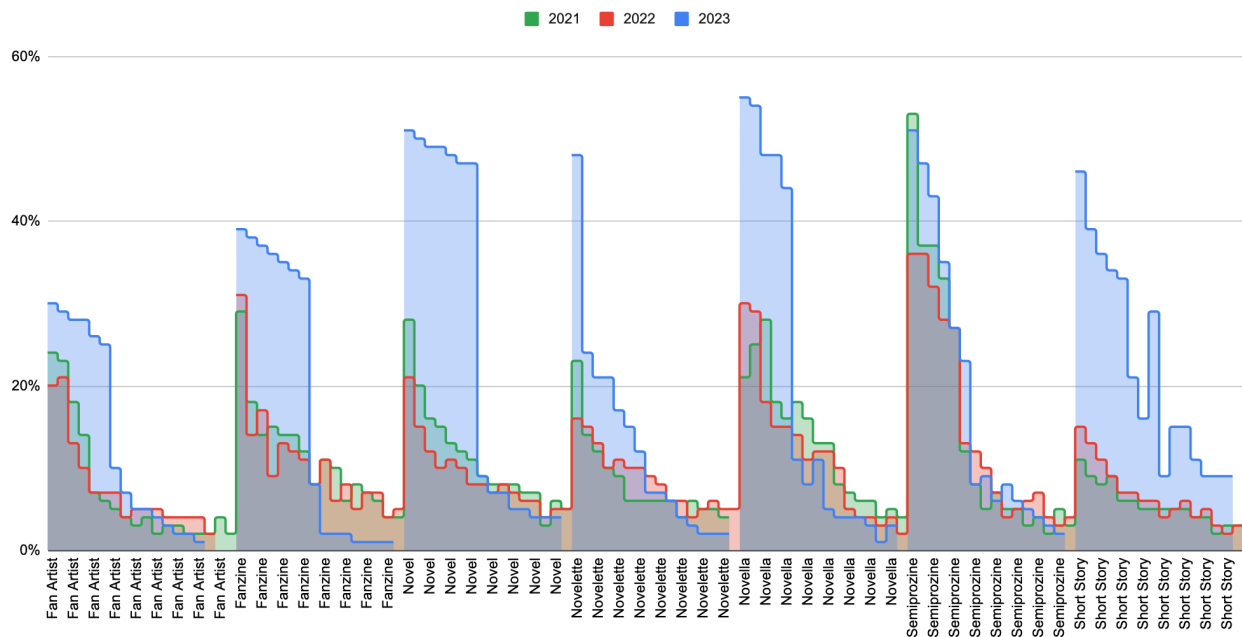
“The anomaly that caught my attention was the “distribution cliff” in multiple categories, where there was a massive gap between the number of nominations for a small group of items, versus the “long tail” that we normally expect to see for this type of crowd-sourced data.” [A Comparison of Hugo Nomination Distribution Statistics | Alpennia](#) (Jones, 2024)

In a two-part analysis of the data, Jones considered vote totals for a range of years chosen from 2011 to 2023. Her analysis included 2015 in which the Sad Puppy slates had dominated the nominations. In a series of graphs over two blog posts, she demonstrated that the distribution of votes for some categories in 2023 was highly unusual even compared to the exceptional year of 2015.

For a more in-depth analysis both posts should be read in full, but for this report, a similar graph has been produced that shows the “cliff” referred to. The data can be found in tab *2.CliffTable* in the accompanying spreadsheet and the stepped area graph can be found in *2.CliffChart*.



The cliff-like distributions are most notable in Best Novel and Best Series but other categories also show some features of the unusual distribution. To show this more clearly, here is the same chart with fewer categories and years.



Best Fan Art, Best Fanzine, Best Novel, Best Novella and Best Series each have the cliff-like distribution. By contrast Best Semiprozine is very similar to previous years, whereas Best Novelette and Best Short Story differ from previous years to some degree but do not have a clear cliff-like distribution.

A different way of considering the cliff is by looking for big changes in the number of nominations based on the rank order of the nominations. For example, in terms of raw number of nominations in Best Novel *The Kaiju Preservation Society* has the seventh highest total² at 765 votes. The next highest is 造神年代 *Age of the Godmakers* at 150 votes or 19.6% of the *The Kaiju Preservation Society*'s vote. This is unusual, the proportional change going down the ranks of nominees is not typically so noticeable. The mean proportion for 2017-2022 data is about 89% (see 16.ProportionalRankChange) and while there are some more drastic drops in those years, they are rare.

² The novel itself is ranked 6th after the EPH elimination process

For all categories over all years 2017-2023 here is every nominee where that equivalent percentage is less than 40%. Of the 17 examples, 12 are from 2023 and the most severe drops are in the categories with cliff-like distributions.

Year	Category	Finalist	%ofPrevRank
2023	Novel	Age of the Godmakers	19.61%
2023	Novella	What Moves the Dead	25.20%
2023	Series	The Nsibidi Scripts	6.37%
2023	Related Work	Buffalito World Outreach Project	31.93%
2023	DPLF	Sandman, The (Season 1)	31.85%
2023	DPSF	The Expanse: "Babylons Ashes"	30.94%
2023	Pro Artist	Tommy Arnold	39.13%
2023	Fanzine	The Full Lid	25.35%
2023	Fanzine	Speculative Fiction in Translation	27.27%
2023	Fancast	Kalanadi	35.71%
2023	Astounding	Ai Jiang	34.18%
2023	Semiprozine	Beneath Ceaseless Skies	37.70%
2021	Video Game	Animal Crossing: New Horizons	27.87%
2019	Fan Artist	Ariela Housman	35.24%
2018	Fanzine	Journey Planet	31.21%
2018	Fan Artist	Geneva Benton	32.59%
2017	Related Work	Words Are My Matter	31.37%

3. Unusual EPH Ratios

The EPH points are calculated by dividing a single point per ballot for each of the nominees on that ballot that have not yet been eliminated. This means that by looking at the ratio of the total number of votes for a nominee and the EPH points for that same nominee you see a kind of average that indicates the number of nominees still in play that the given nominee shares a ballot with. For example, in Best Novel the book *Legends & Lattes* had a total vote of 831 and in Round 9, 202.35 points. 831 divided by 202.35 comes to 4.10674574 or approximately 4.

2023 Nomination Stats

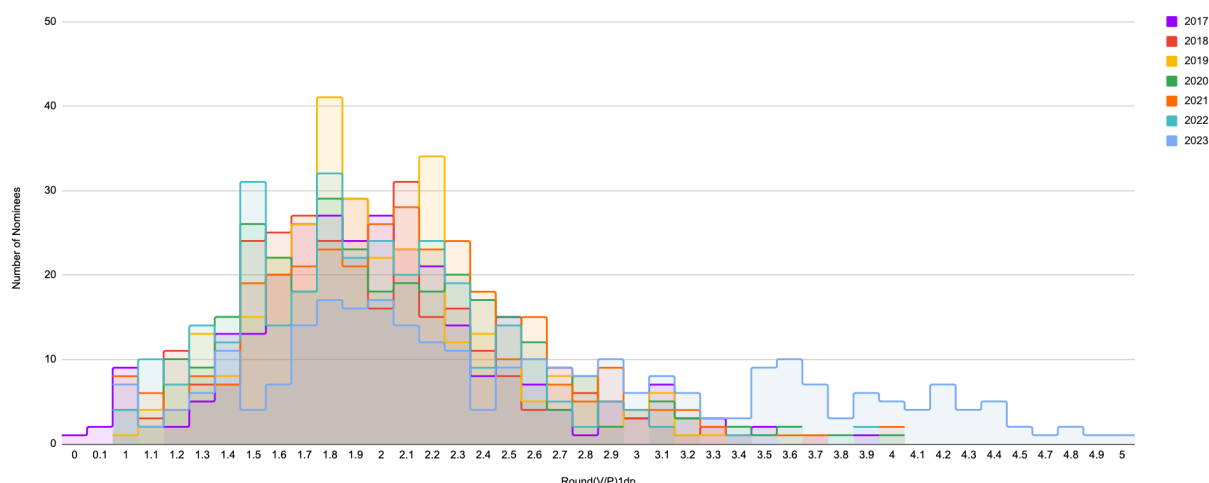
2023 提名数据

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1	Legends & Lattes 《传奇与拿铁》	831	202.35	203.56	206.90	206.90	207.78	210.45	210.45	211.45	214.28
2	Nettle & Bone 《荨麻与骨头》	815	193.50	195.75	198.92	198.92	202.58	207.50	207.50	207.67	218.17
3	Babel * 《巴别塔》	810	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93	164.93

In other words, in general, people who had voted for *Legends & Lattes* had also voted for 4 other nominees that were still in play by round 9. This number is not typical.

In the accompanying spreadsheet *3.EPH-RatiosTable* shows the distribution of these ratios when rounded to one-decimal place. The following graph (*3.EPH-RatiosChart*) shows the distribution graphically for 2017 to 2023.



In most years, these ratios, with very few exceptions, lie between 1 and 3 and are clustered around 2. In 2023 there is a notable set of much higher values.

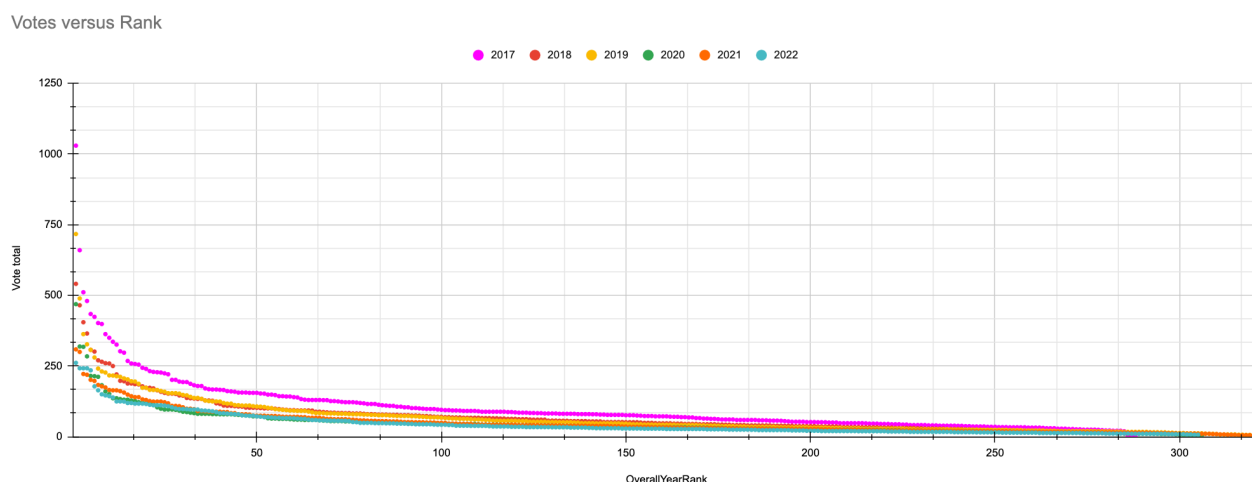
The categories and nominees with high ratios include those identified in the previous issues including Best Novel and Best Series.

The high ratio suggests ballots with a high degree of similarity, coupled with the numerically high vote and the “cliff” distribution implying a large number of voters voted for a very similar set of candidates in very high numbers in some categories.

4. The Ranked Distribution of Votes is Unusual

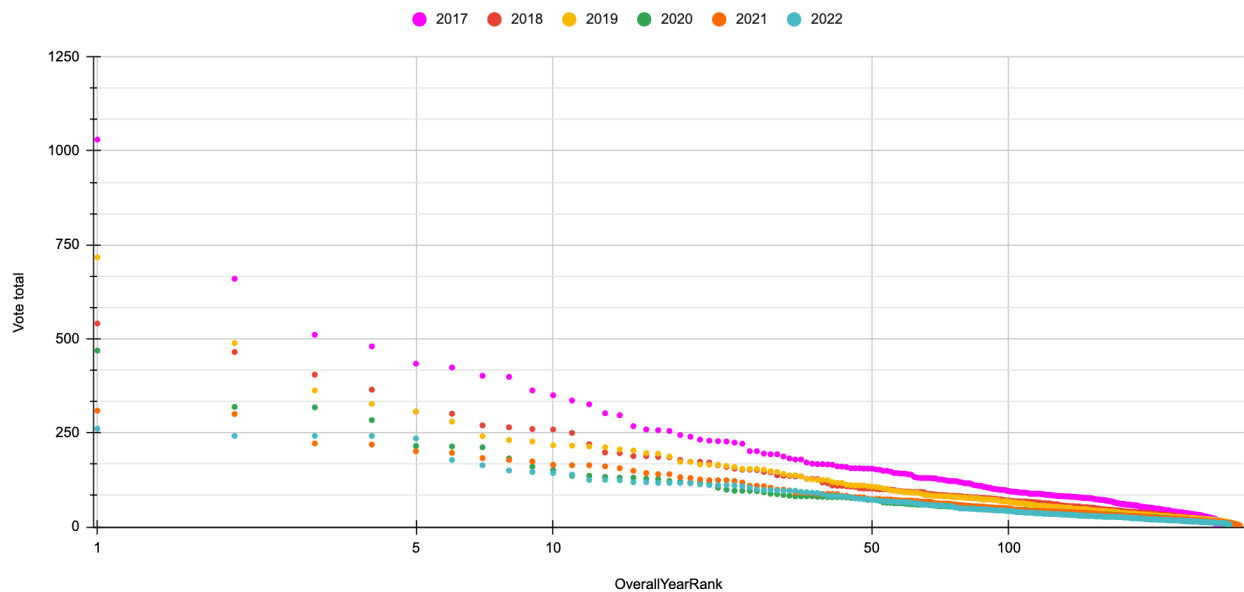
In Heather Rose Jones's analysis, she describes the typical distribution of ballots as having a long tail and a distinctive curve. The distribution can be looked at across all categories together by ranking every nominee in a given year's published statistics and comparing that rank against their total vote.

This ranking is provided in Table *5.YearRank-Votes* and organised further in *5.YearRankTable*. The following graph shows the distribution for the years 2017-2022.



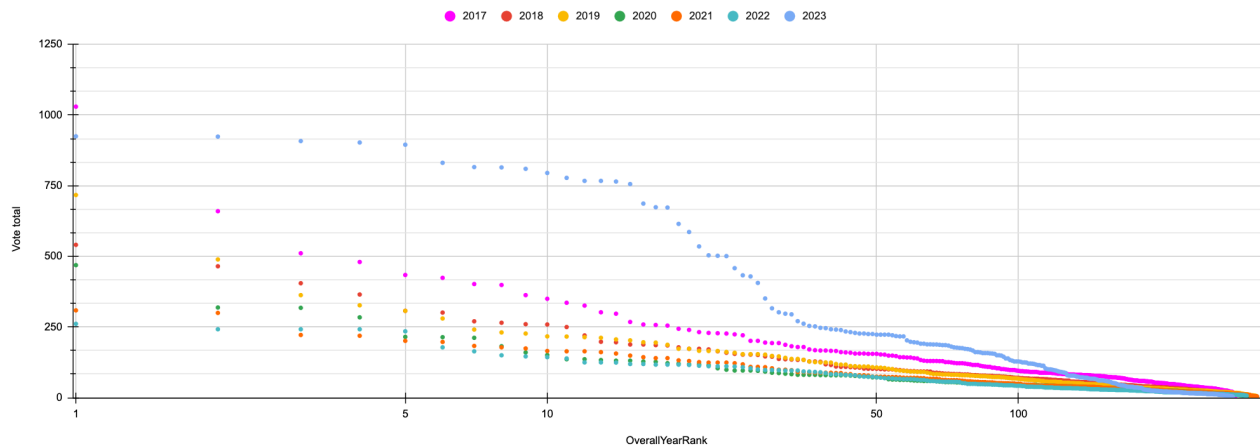
Although there are differences each year, as we would expect, the overall pattern of the distribution is similar. Because their highest-ranked nominees have the bulk of the votes and because there is a long tail of low-scoring nominees, the same information can be better displayed using a logarithmic axis for the rank.

Votes versus Rank



Here is the same graph but with 2023 included (*5. YearRankChart*).

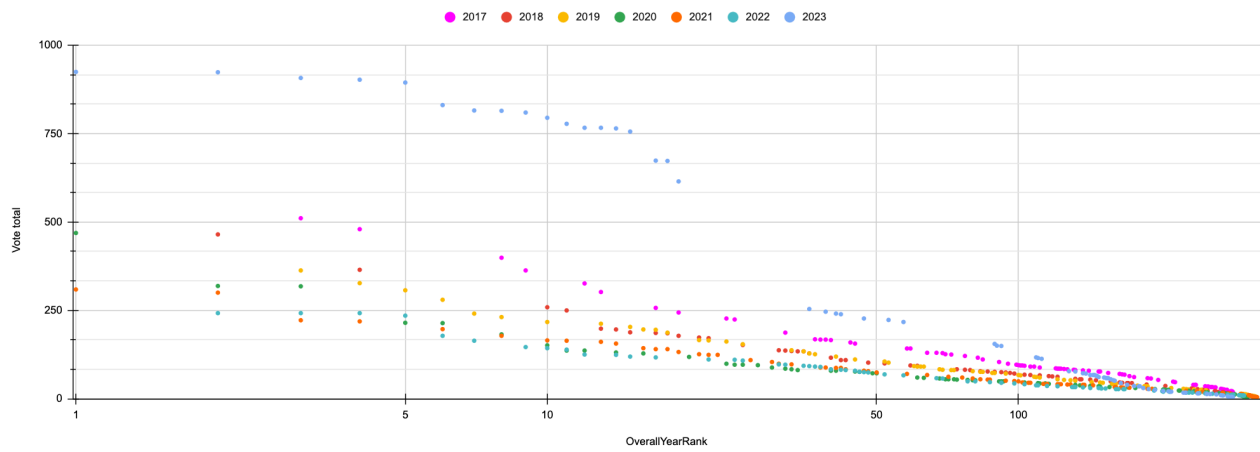
Votes versus Rank



The distribution is not similar to previous years. It appears to be in at least three different sections with different characteristics.

In her “cliff” analysis Heather Rose Jones classified Novel, Novella, Series, Fanzine and Fan Artist as being examples of an “Extreme Cliff” distribution. Plotting those categories highlights the unusual nature of the distribution.

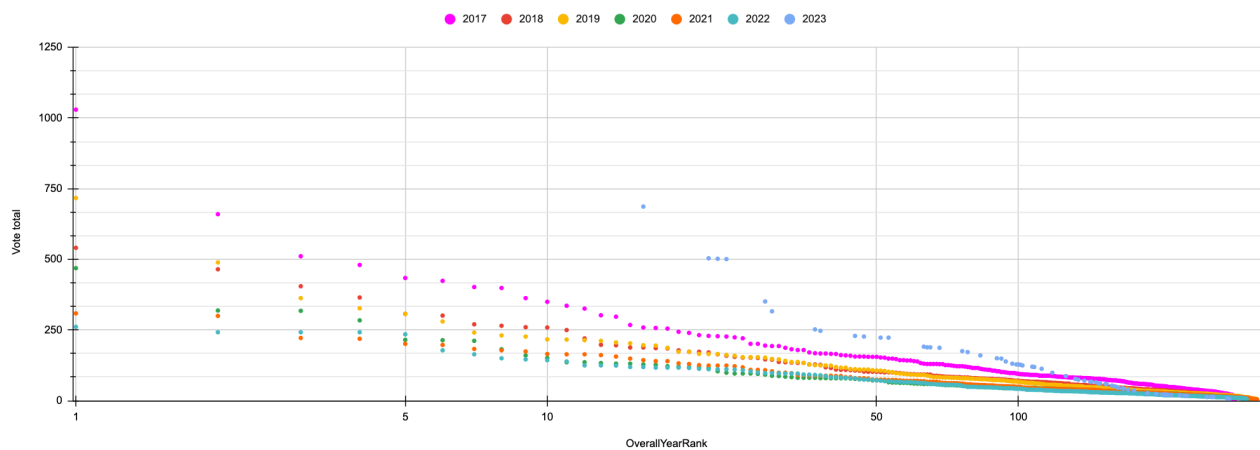
Votes versus Rank



A middle section has simply vanished in a way that is not perceptible in the earlier years with the same categories removed.

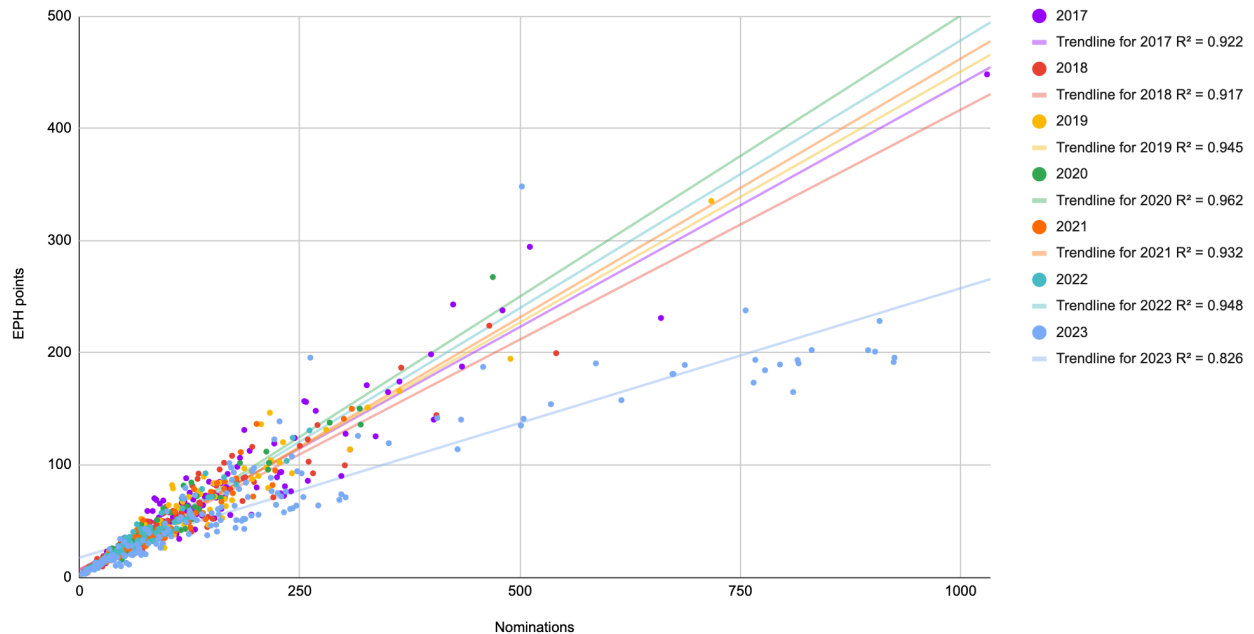
Filtering out nominees from 2023 only that were in English demonstrates that the unusual structure is largely (but not completely) with English nominees.

Votes versus Rank

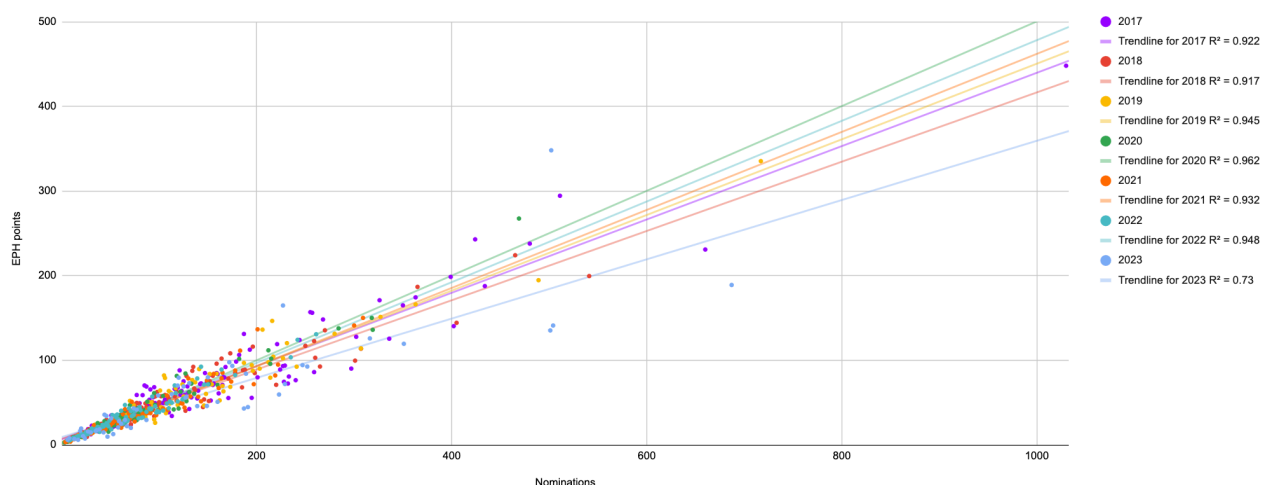


5. The Relationship Between Raw Votes and EPH points is unusual

The distribution of raw votes is atypical in other ways. Plotting the raw votes against the first set of EPH points shows a relationship for the years 2017-2022 that is quite different to that of 2023 (6.RawVephTrend).

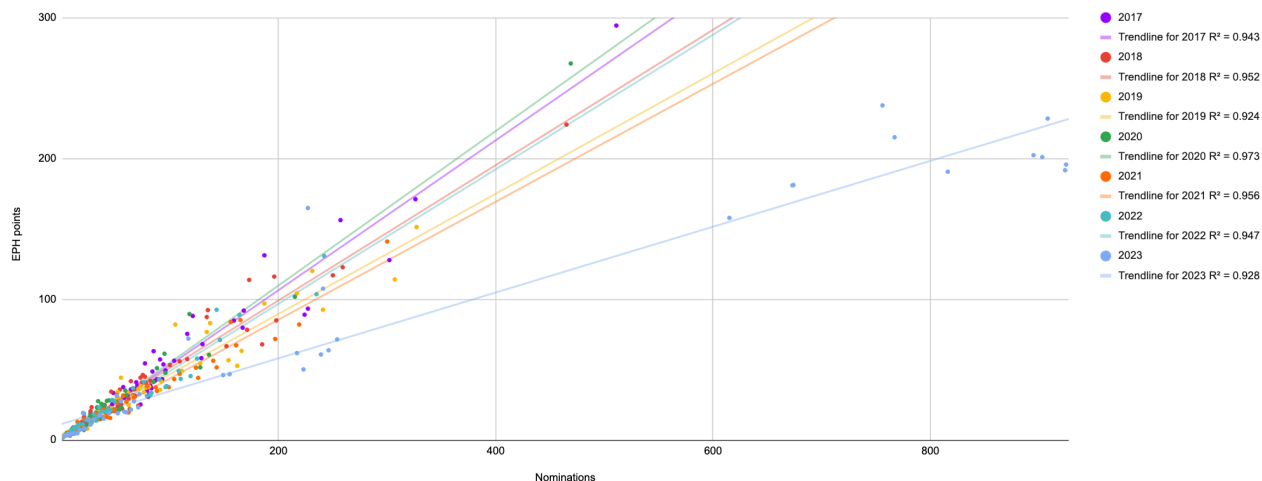


The blue line indicating the line of best fit for the 2023 data is at a very different angle to previous years and in addition the 2023 data is more loosely clustered around the line. Remove English-language nominees and the graph changes notably.

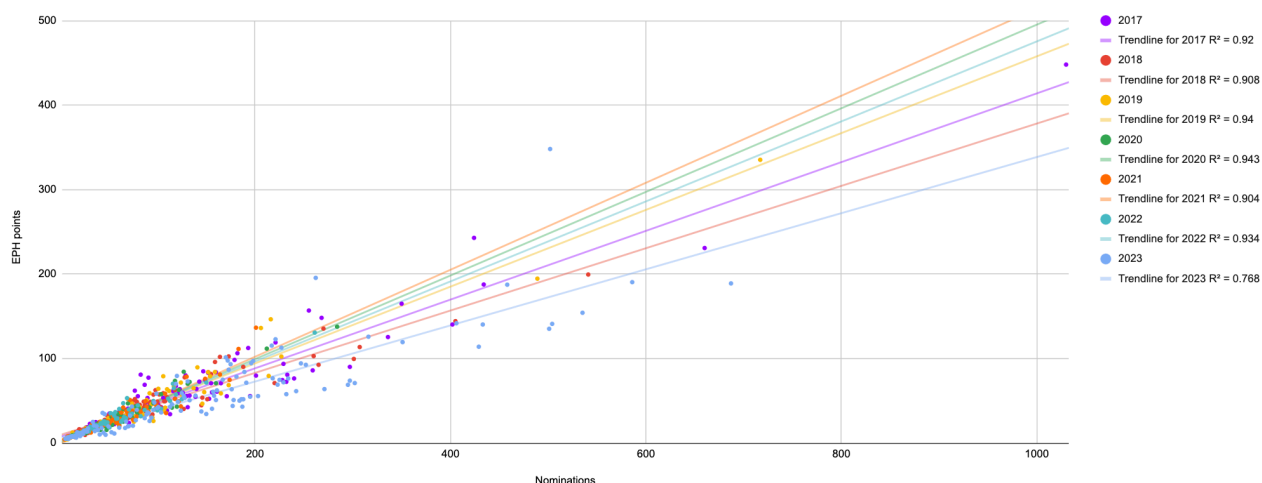


The relationship moves closer to that of previous years. The fit (measured by R²) is reduced but otherwise, it is less obviously different than data from previous years.

Much of the difference is accounted for by the categories that have a cliff-like distribution (see earlier section). The graph below only includes data for Novel, Novella, Series, Fanzine and Fan Artist:



Whereas plotting only the categories that did not show the cliff-like distribution has a similar impact as only plotting Chinese-language works.



6. Discussion of issues 2-5

Issues 2 (the cliff), 3 (the ratios), 4 (the distribution) and 5 (the trend) all appear to be related and connected to nominees that were primarily English-language nominees. In each case, the numbers are very unusual compared to past years. Note only that the high number of votes and the high EPH ratios for Best Novel and Best Series describe very unusual voting patterns.

For a set of English language nominees in multiple categories there appear to be sets of ballots that were very similar in nature, to a degree greater than seen in 2015 when there was a known and very visible slate campaign. If the data is to be believed, the 2023 Hugo nomination process had highly coordinated voting occurring.

What might explain this? Here are some purely speculative possibilities:

- A slate campaign for English-language works. If there was such a slate it was surprisingly quiet and it would be hard to see how such a slate campaign could work without widely announcing it and giving voters a reason for adopting it. The works advantaged by such an imagined slate were all plausible finalists from a variety of writers. It is also hard to see why Chinese members would participate in such a slate, implying it was primarily English-speaking voters. See the 'Rally Round Theory' below for a longer discussion.

- Ballot-stuffing. For votes to be very highly coordinated would more likely involve a small number of people voting multiple times. This would be easier to keep secret. However, if this was the case, the result would be a set of finalists that were otherwise very predictable.
- A processing error. If a small number of ballots were accidentally duplicated multiple times this would lead to data that was highly coordinated.
- A publication error. The published numbers are not the actual numbers used to determine the 2023 finalists. Dummy data used to test the export of results from the system was used instead, updated to reflect the actual finalists but not the actual votes.
- Vote tampering within the award process itself i.e. intentional changes to the numbers by people who control the data to achieve specific results.

As mentioned earlier in this report, an underlying hypothesis is that organically the 2023 Hugo statistics would show some unusual features just because it was an unusual year. That possibility can never be wholly eliminated but given that most of these issues advantaged English-language nominees disproportionately, it seems unlikely that it was due to voters in China approaching their ballot choices differently.

The Rally Round Theory

In an apology letter posted on File 770 explaining her role as a 2023 Hugo administrator, Diane Lacey suggested that she had been given an explanation for the cliff (Lacey, 2024). In the comments to the post, Lacey suggested the following:

“This year, perhaps because Western fans may have been concerned that their favorites would be swamped by the Chinese fans, that number skyrocketed and thus there were these skyscrapers of nominations on the ballots and a precipitous drop following them. This makes sense, as I said, it agrees with what I’ve seen in the past, but also because, as I think I mentioned when talking to you, that my recollection was that those from the “slate” were from the top nomination spots, not the middle.”

To further explain, the above was the result of a conversation with Dave McCarty, but made sense to me based on my previous work with the Hugos. I was never privy to the actual nomination numbers from Chengdu.”

<https://file770.com/diane-laceys-letter-about-the-2023-hugos/#comment-1606546> (Lacey, 2024)

This is a reasonable-sounding explanation that can be called “The Rally Round Theory”. However, when considering it in detail it has several issues. The cliff in Best Series involves several hundred voters (possibly 600 or 700) with very similar ballots, more similar than we would see from the recommendation list and possibly more similar than even the Sad Puppy slate. All these voters would have needed to agree on a distinct subset of English-language works and excluded others. These same voters would have needed to reach a similar agreement in several other categories and again voted with notable discipline. They would also have had to agree to do so proportionately, so, for example, voting in far fewer numbers in Best Fanzine. These voters would not have known in advance which categories might be popular with Chinese fans or how many Chinese fans would vote but there are no examples of a cliff that was too small. Further, these several hundred voters would need to have done this without leaving recorded evidence in the general Hugo fandom.

7. EPH Fractional Part

When calculating the individual points from a voter that are allocated to a nominee they listed on their ballot there are five possible values: 1 (they have only one nominee), $\frac{1}{2}$ (they have two nominees) $\frac{1}{3}$ (they have three nominees), $\frac{1}{4}$ (four nominees) of $\frac{1}{5}$ (five nominees). On spreadsheets

or in computer programs these numbers might be displayed as decimal fractions or stored as floating-point numbers. However, this can lead to inaccuracies when large numbers of such fractions are added together.

Some EPH software deals with this issue using some simple arithmetic. If you add $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{5}$ together you get $\frac{77}{60}$. The common denominator between these fractions is 60. Therefore, if instead of dividing 1 point per voter to calculate the points, the software divides 60 points then all the calculations can be done with integers. The final results can then be divided by 60 at the end to show values correct to two decimal places.

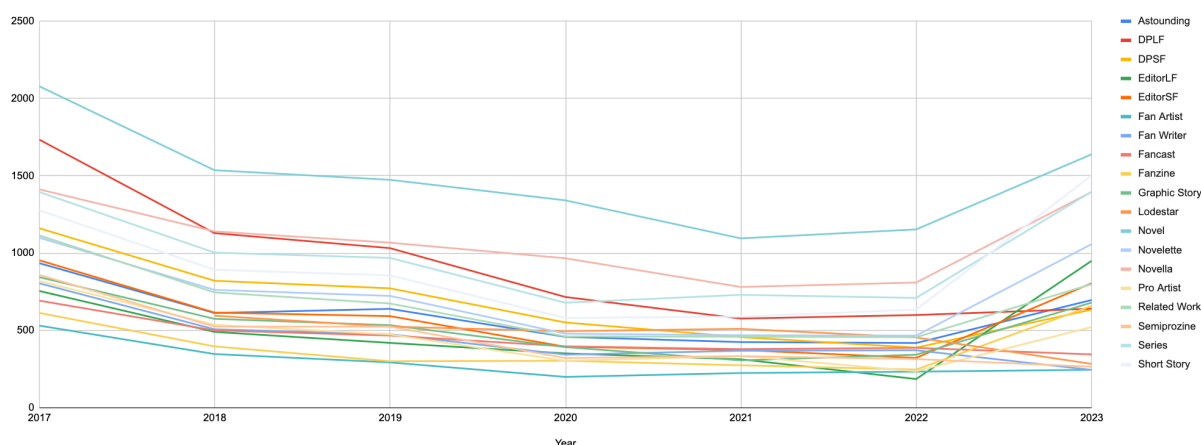
To examine this aspect of the 2023 results, the tabulated EPH scores were altered to leave only the fractional part (see Table 1.*EPHFraction*). Each fraction was compared with a list of all the numbers from 0 to 0.99 written to 2 decimal places. 60 of those numbers represent roundings of fractions of 60 and represent the fractional parts we should be seeing in a calculation of EPH points.

From 2017 to 2023 there are 45 cases of a nominee having an EPH value at some stage that does not appear to be a fraction of 60 written to two decimal places. Of those 37 are in 2023 and 8 are in 2020. The issue does not appear in any other calendar year.

In this case, a plausible explanation is that the software used in 2023 did not handle the points as integers. Alternatively, there may be typographical errors in the numbers recorded. There is some evidence that the numbers contain typographical errors as *The 2022 #BlackSpecFic Report* in Best Related Work shows an arithmetically impossible decline in its EPH points between rounds (see later section on Best Related Work).

8. Inconsistent Change in Ballot Numbers Compared With Past Trends

A number of categories showed an increase in ballots cast from 2022. This is unremarkable as the total ballots cast in 2023 had increased to 1847 from 1368 in the previous year. However, this increase was not spread evenly across the categories. The graph (13.VoteTotalChart) shows some categories with a marked increase and some either relatively steady or with a decline.



Looking at these figures as a percentage of the total ballots for each year removes some of the impact of the change in overall numbers (13.VoteTotals%Transpose). The final column “23-22” shows the difference between 2023 and 2022. I’ve highlighted some categories that had larger increases.

Category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	23-22
Astounding	38%	34%	35%	29%	34%	30%	38%	7%
DPLF	70%	62%	57%	45%	46%	44%	35%	-9%
DPSF	47%	45%	43%	35%	36%	28%	34%	6%
EditorLF	31%	27%	23%	22%	25%	13%	51%	38%
EditorSF	39%	34%	33%	25%	30%	23%	43%	20%
Fan Artist	21%	19%	16%	12%	18%	17%	13%	-4%
Fan Writer	33%	28%	26%	21%	29%	27%	13%	-14%
Fancast	28%	27%	26%	25%	30%	28%	19%	-10%
Fanzine	25%	22%	17%	19%	22%	18%	35%	18%
Graphic S	34%	32%	30%	25%	24%	25%	37%	12%
Lodestar		33%	29%	31%	41%	33%	15%	-18%
Novel	84%	85%	82%	85%	88%	84%	89%	4%
Novelette	45%	42%	40%	30%	37%	34%	57%	23%
Novella	57%	63%	59%	61%	62%	59%	75%	16%
Pro Artist	33%	29%	26%	19%	27%	17%	28%	11%
Rel Work	45%	41%	37%	29%	37%	33%	43%	10%
Semipro	35%	29%	29%	20%	27%	23%	14%	-9%
Series	57%	55%	54%	43%	58%	52%	76%	24%
Short Story	52%	49%	47%	36%	47%	46%	81%	35%

Aside from Best Series, the categories with big increases also had some Chinese-language finalists. So the increase may just be that some categories had more interest from local fans than others. However, that makes the increase in Best Series more unusual. Also, there are categories with declines that had notable Chinese-language finalists (e.g. Best Fan Writer).

The Science Fiction World recommendation list had suggested works in:

- Best Novel (6 works)
- Best Novella (7 works)
- Best Novelette (9 works)
- Best Short Story (8 works)
- Best Editor Long Form (6 people)
- Best Editor Short Form (4 people)
- Best Related Work (2 works)
- Best Graphic Story (2 works)
- Best Pro Artist (5 people)
- Best Fanzine (1 work)
- Astounding Award (2 people)

There is some overlap there with categories with increased voting and the categories on the recommendation list.

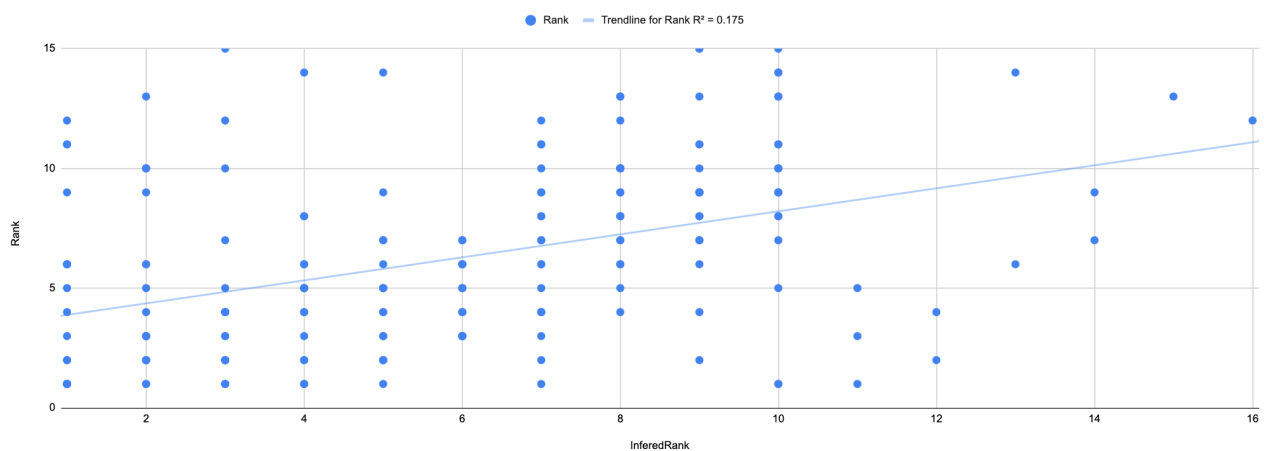
9. Published nomination rankings and the leaked “validation” rankings

As already discussed, the leaked document also included a document used by Hugo admins to check eligibility (Sanford & Barkley, 2024). The list showed a selection of nominees with rankings. The rankings for finalists appear to be always “1”, a feature also present in the published rankings of Best Series (see the category section later in this document). Not all the nominees listed in the leaked document appeared in the published stats and the order of the nominees was different (zionius, 2024).

Key data from the leaked document was added to the spreadsheet that accompanies this report. The eligibility comments and vetting comments were not included. Names listed were matched with names in the main data set (D.LeakedValidationList).

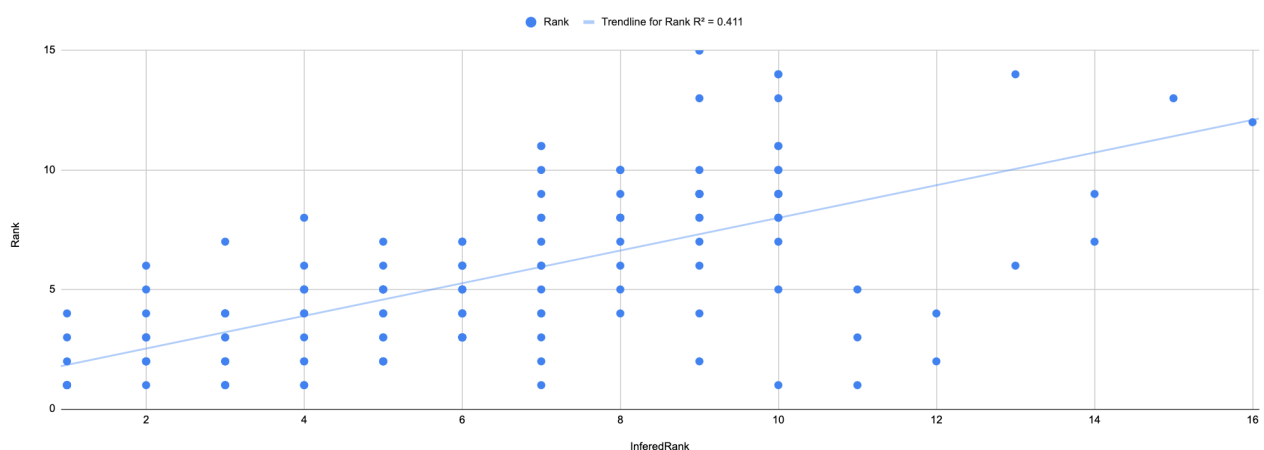
The following chart shows the relationship between the ordered rankings (“inferred rank”) in the leaked document with the final rankings (D.ValidaChart).

Rank vs. InferredRank



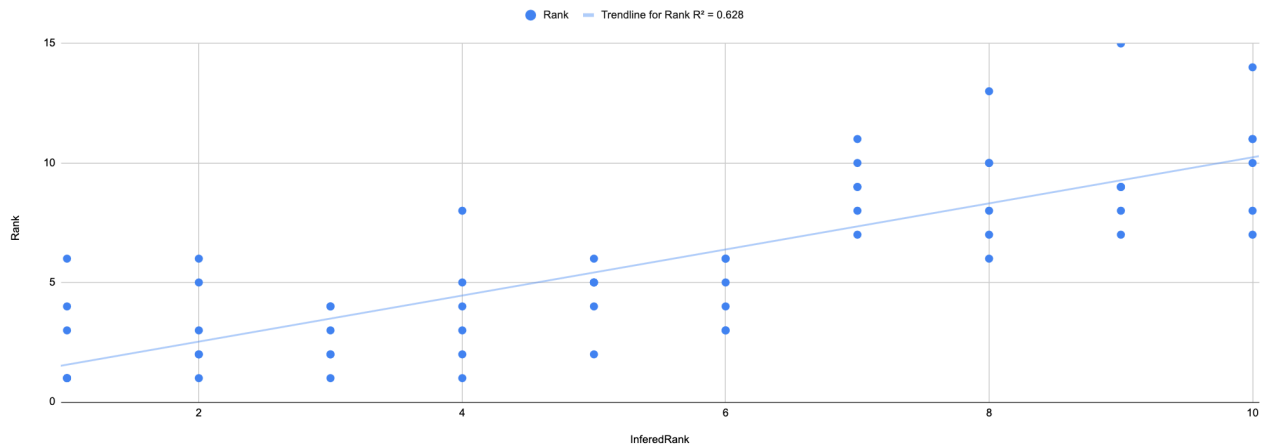
The relationship is not strong but when the same graph is drawn showing only the English-language works, the relationship is stronger.

Rank vs. InferredRank



Curiously, when only the nominees from categories that had shown a drop in the percentage of nominations compared to 2022 (see previous section) were plotted, the relationship becomes quite strong.

Rank vs. InferedRank



The nominees in these categories showed less change in their order from the leaked validation list to the published stats than others.

Five nominees appear on the leaked validation lists which do not appear in the published statistics, of which four appear to be ranked as finalists. All of the missing works appear to be Chinese-language works.

The average change for the works that remain is different between English-language and Chinese-Language nominees.

Category	Chinese	English	Grand Average
Astounding	-3.50	0.88	0.00
DPLF		-0.50	-0.50
DPSF		-0.30	-0.30
EditorLF	-4.67	3.75	-1.30
EditorSF	-2.25	2.00	0.11
Fan Artist		-1.00	-1.00
Fan Writer	-2.00	0.25	-0.20
Fancast	-5.00	-0.11	-0.60
Fanzine	-3.00	0.75	0.00
Graphic Story	-5.00	-0.89	-1.30
Lodestar		-0.10	-0.10
Novel	-8.75	5.13	0.50
Novelette	-2.40	1.00	-0.70
Novella	-4.67	2.17	-0.11
Pro Artist	-1.50	-0.83	-1.10
Related Work	0.00	-0.71	-0.50
Semiprozine	0.00	0.00	0.00
Series	-8.00	4.18	1.57
Short Story	-2.20	7.50	0.57
Grand Total	-3.53	0.85	-0.23

The status of the rankings in the leaked document is unclear. There might not have been an intentional order to the list but maybe a bias at putting the nominees written in Chinese characters near the top of the list. That could explain the results. However, all of the lists are presented with rankings on them, which would be odd to include if the order of names had been shuffled.

Category Specific issues

The issues discussed above appear across multiple categories, but some issues are better discussed within a specific category. In some cases, the issue may exist more generally but is only readily observable in one or two categories. Global issues that affect a specific category (such as the 'cliff') will be discussed within that category.

The categories are presented in the order that they appear in the nomination statistics.

1. Best Novel

Best Novel exemplifies a number of the issues already listed.

- It has a notable potential finalist that was ruled ineligible: Babel
- The published ballot total (1,637) is 15 ballots less than the round 9 EPH total (1,652)
- It has high vote totals that drop off rapidly for lower ranked nominees i.e. "the cliff"
- The ratio of raw votes to EPH points is high for the top finalist (close to 5 for Babel)
- The category forms part of the more anomalous sections of the ranked distribution
- Several finalists have anomalous EPH fractional parts

The comparison of the final set of nominees and the leaked list (zionius, 2024) shows one Chinese novel that does not appear on the official long list. The order (possibly the rank) of the novels on the leaked list does not completely match that of the official list.

However, these issues are not the only issues in Best Novel.

1.1 Babel's EPH points do not change

The EPH points for *Babel* stay at 164.93 for all of the published rounds. It is not wholly unusual for a nominee that lasts for several rounds in the final stages to have no change in its points. It has occurred several times in Best Fan Artist in previous years. In 2017 many of the nominees included in the Rabid Puppy slate had no change in their EPH points. However, it is unusual for a high-profile nominee in Best Novel to show no changes.

We will return to this issue.

1.2 EPH Point changes: three nominees have oddly connected votes

Three nominees *The Mountain in the Sea* (published in English), 红石 *The Red Stone* and 余光 *Residual Light* (both published in Chinese) form a set where votes pass upwards from one to the other until the last one is eliminated. This is easiest to see in this data from the main data in the accompanying spreadsheet (tab 2017-2023data). The table shows the change in EPH points after each round.

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Legends & Lattes	1.21	3.34	0	0.88	2.67	0	1	2.83
Nettle & Bone	2.25	3.17	0	3.66	4.92	0	0.17	10.5
Babel *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nona the Ninth	1.13	1.5	0	2.75	1.92	0	0.5	7.25
The Spare Man	1.08	1.33	0	1.34	6.25	0	1.33	6.17
The Kaiju Preservation Society	0.55	1.25	0	1.05	2.58	0	0.17	4.33
The Daughter of Doctor Moreau	2	0.59	0	2	0.5	0	0	3.83
Age of the Godmakers	3.63	4.33	0	9.22	4.58	0	1.34	
The Mountain in the Sea	1.25	0.25	7.5	0.5	0.92	38		
The Red Stone	0	0	15	0	0			
A Half-Built Garden	3.5	0.92	0	1.13				
We Live in Nanjing	2.75	2	0					
Residual Light	0	0						
The Prophet Machine	0.75							
Stories Bygone on Mars								

When 余光 *Residual Light* is eliminated all its points go to 红石 *The Red Stone* (R4D) & *The Mountain in the Sea*, and when 红石 *The Red Stone* is eliminated (R7D) all its points go to *The Mountain in the Sea*. Of course, no rule says fans of Chinese novels can't nominate a novel in English but it is still an unusual pattern.

This pattern was noticed by voting expert Jameson Quinn who is also an expert in the EPH voting system. On social media, he commented on the unusual pattern of votes.

"Jameson Quinn· 20d @voter.bsky.social

Looking at other rounds, 2023 has anomalies in two eliminations. First, look at The Red Stone 《红石》. Eliminated with 75 points from 113 noms. Then, 38 of those points transfer to The Mountain in the Sea; 0 to any others."

<https://bsky.app/profile/voter.bsky.social/post/3kill3fiejj2z>

1.3 Were the votes being counted at all?

To further complicate matters, several voters noted that while they had submitted ballots that listed both *The Mountain in the Sea* and *Babel*, no points at all shifted to *Babel* once *The Mountain in the Sea* was eliminated. This is impossible unless there were errors in the published table or some votes were not counted at all.

To investigate this further 20 people volunteered their ballots for Best Novel and Best Series so that the number of points from those 20 could be calculated through the rounds. While 20 self-selected volunteers is not a representative sample of the Hugo voters, it is sufficient to calculate the points their ballots generated.

Several of the 20 people had voted for at least one of the finalists and one of either *A Half-Built Garden* or *The Mountain in the Sea*. Points from these ballots should have been added to the finalists when these two works were eliminated.

After calculation of the points, *Babel*, *Nettle & Bone*, and *Nona the Ninth* all received more points from the 20 volunteers than those nominees did in the published stats.

1.4 Discussion of Possibilities

It would be a very serious claim to state that legitimately submitted ballots were not counted in the 2023 Hugo Awards. If we assume this is the case then essentially the 2023 Hugo Awards are fiction. However, there are less dramatic (but still concerning possibilities).

- The points shown for *Babel* are incorrect and are due to a copying error when assembling the report. This would not explain other issues though.
- The label saying *The Mountain in the Sea* is incorrect and the data shown is for some other work, possibly a Chinese novel. If *The Mountain in the Sea* was eliminated in a much earlier round then any change points because of its elimination would already be accounted for.

Both these explanations point to issues at stage 6 of the process. However, the broader issues (such as the Cliff) appear too systematic to be simply due to clumsy cut-and-paste errors.

2. Best Novella

Best Novella has fewer global issues than Best Novel. It does have high vote totals for the top-ranked nominees but the cliff-like distribution is less pronounced. Even so, the top 5 nominees have raw votes that account for between 44% to 55% of the ballots cast in this category. The previous highest percentage in this category was 49% in 2020 but in that year the next highest was at 22%.

The table shows the spread for the top 10 nominees 2017-2023 (2.CliffTable)

Place	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	36%	41%	31%	49%	21%	30%	55%
2	21%	23%	29%	22%	25%	29%	54%
3	13%	22%	20%	14%	28%	18%	48%
4	16%	17%	23%	14%	18%	15%	48%
5	16%	16%	16%	13%	16%	15%	44%
6	12%	15%	15%	10%	18%	14%	11%
7	9%	13%	14%	9%	16%	11%	8%
8	7%	6%	12%	6%	13%	12%	11%
9	7%	6%	9%	5%	13%	12%	5%
10	6%	5%	9%	5%	8%	10%	4%

Interestingly, the nominees in sixth and seventh place do not have high percentages but are by authors whose works did have high percentages in Best Novel or Best Series. *What Moves the Dead* by T. Kingfisher only received 11% of the ballots in this category³ while Kingfisher's novel received 50% of the ballots in its category. Likewise, *Where the Drowned Girls Go* by Seanan McGuire only received 8% of the ballots in Best Novella but *October Daye* by the same author received 58% of the votes in Best Series. Of course, people don't just vote based on author name recognition but the difference in scale of the vote for these authors' works in Novella compared to

³ *What Moves the Dead* also did not appear on the leaked validation list.

Series and Novel is notable. It is even more extraordinary as both these works were finalists in Best Novella.⁴

2.1 EPH point changes

Throughout the 2023 statistics, there are unusual patterns in how the points for each nominee change as the rounds progress. In Best Novel, we saw an example of this with three works that connected with some of the other issues in Best Novel. Here the changes are unusual but not necessarily problematic.

Lng	Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
En	Even Though I Knew the End	4.19	0	3.01	0	0	2.5	0	6.24
En	A Prayer for the Crown-Shy	1.77	0	2.29	1.09	2.83	2.92	8	13.08
En	Into the Riverlands	2.05	0	1.16	0	0	2.67	0	3.97
En	Ogres	0.25	0	0.46	0	0	3.42	0	0.3
En	A Mirror Mended	0.08	0	0.6	0	0	0.83	0	6.77
En	What Moves the Dead	0.96	0	0.69	0	0	2.08	0	5.93
En	Where the Drowned Girls Go	0	0	0	9.5	13	0	22	0
Ch	Relics	0.13	0	0.08	0	0	1	0	
Ch	Immortality	0	0.17	0	4.25	6	0		
Ch	Pagoda	0.17	0	0.92	0	0			
Ch	Huang Ni Bang	0	0	0	4.16				
En	High Times in the Low Parliament	0	0.17	0					
Ch	Silent Valley	0.63	0						
Ch	Adversarial Examples	0							
En	The Bruising of Qilwa								

When *The Bruising of Qilwa* is eliminated the points of the top 6 increase (all in English) as well as three of the works in Chinese. When *Adversarial Examples* are eliminated only two Chinese works increase points. When *Silent Valley* is eliminated the same works that gained points in round 2, gain points again (and the ones that didn't gain points in round 2 don't gain points here either). In round 5 only three nominees gained any points, including *Where the Drowned Girls Go* which up until now had gained no points. From there, in each round, points go either mainly to the top 5 nominees or go specifically to *A Prayer for the Crown-Shy*, or *Where the Drowned Girls Go*.

On the table, a cluster of five works have been highlighted. For these figures to be correct, a number of ballots must have had some combination of these five novellas on their ballots and no others. People do strange things of course and maybe all we are seeing is people doing strange things. However, in context, it is very odd to see an apparent distinct voting bloc that connects these works. Is this an obvious error? No, but it is something that somebody checking the data should have spotted and thought "This looks odd". Odd-looking data may be fine but it may indicate some other underlying process error.

⁴ *Where the Drowned Girls Go* made it to sixth place when *A Prayer for the Crown-Shy* was withdrawn by its author.

3. Best Novelette

Novelette did not have a cliff-like distribution to the extent of other categories and in many ways has fewer unusual features than other categories. It also has a mix of Chinese-language and English-language finalists.

涂色世界 *Color the World* was deemed ineligible without explanation but apparently, it was published before 2022 and hence was legitimately disqualified.

Two Hands, Wrapped in Gold by S.B. Divya was withdrawn by request of the author. Interestingly, in a blog post about her decision, the author said the following:

“Along with many other writers, I signed a petition last year against hosting the 2023 World Science Fiction Convention (AKA “WorldCon”) in Chengdu, China. The reason was to protest the Chinese government’s treatment of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang province. I believe that mass human rights violations and possible genocide have occurred in the region. “ [Withdrawing FROM Hugo Award Nominations — S.B. Divya](#) (Diya, 2023)

In broader speculation about the disqualification of four of the nominees, prior statements of this kind have been suggested as reasons why the nominee was disqualified. If this is the case it is odd that Divya was not disqualified but instead was notified that she was a finalist.

The ninth-ranked nominee 菌歌 *Song of Fungus* also appears in Best Short Story. An explanation has not been given as to its status or eligibility in either category.

In the initial publication of the nomination statistics, the 10th-ranked nominee was listed as 图灵大排档 *Turing Food Court* which also appears as the 12th-ranked nominee. This was explained as a copy-paste error and a new version of the document was published with the 10-ranked corrected to 新贵 *Upstart*.

3.1. EPH point changes

Best Novelette does show some unusual patterns in the changes of points through rounds but in context, they are more explicable. Here when Chinese-language works were eliminated the points of some other Chinese works increased and similarly with some English-language works. However, the groupings aren’t exclusive. When Solidity is eliminated in the first published round, Turing Food Court increases, also *Murder By Pixel...* and *If You Find Yourself Speaking to God...* both gain some points when Chinese-language works are eliminated. Notably, when *Song of Fungus* which had also been published in English in 2022⁵ was eliminated, points of works in both languages increased.

⁵ *Do You Hear the Fungi Sing?* by Chen Qiufan (translated by Emily Jin) in the climate change anthology [Tomorrow’s Parties: Life in the Anthropocene](#) published by MIT and edited by Jonathan Strahan (Strahan, 2022, 135)

Lng	Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Ch	The Space-Time Painter	0	7.17	0	0	0.5	0	0	0
Ch	Color the World	1.16	0.5	2.44	0.08	2.63	6.5	1.25	12.67
En	The Difference Between Love and Time	1	0	0	1	0	0	3.5	0
En	A Dream of Electric Mothers	1	0	0	1.33	0	0	3.17	0
En	Two Hands, Wrapped in Gold **	0.33	0	0	0.09	0	0	10.83	0
En	We Built This City	1.33	0	0	1.17	0	0	2.92	0
En	If You Find Yourself Speaking to God...	0	0.17	2.26	0.67	3.38	6.5	0	13.67
En	Murder By Pixel: Crime and...	0	0.67	0.51	0	1.89	5.16	0	
Ch	Song of Fungus	0	0	0	2.34	0	0		
Ch	Upstart	0	0	0.39	0	2.8			
Ch	Flowers of the Old Times	0	0.17	1.05	0				
Ch	Turing Food Court	0.67	0	0					
Ch	Whitehead Sparrow	0	0						
Ch	A Collection of the 5th Lenghu Award...	0							
En	Solidity								

4. Best Short Story

In Heather Rose Jones' analysis of the “cliff” distributions in 2023 data, she did not regard Short Story as an example of the issue (Jones, 2024). However, the vote totals are much higher than in previous years and the distribution of the votes is somewhat different. Short Story is also the strongest category in terms of representation of works in Chinese.

尽化塔 *Fongong Temple Pagoda* would have been a finalist but was ruled ineligible without explanation. As mentioned previously, 菌歌 *Song of Fungus* also appears in this category. It gained more votes in Best Short Story than in Best Novelette but ranked lower because of the overall high vote totals in this category.

4.1 EPH point changes

There are some interesting voting patterns in this category.

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
On the Razor's Edge	5.5	5.5	0	7.74	15	30.5	0	18.47
Rabbit Test	0	0	0	0	0	0.66	0	23.81
D.I.Y.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21.88
The White Cliff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20.86
Zhurong on Mars	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19.97
Fongong Temple Pagoda	4.47	5.38	0	16.32	16.08	23	0	0
Resurrection	2.84	4.46	0	14.7	14.25	24.17	0	0
Destiny Delayed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Tongji Bridge	0	0	58	0	0	0		
Lonely Room	4.47	10.8	0	7.61	28.42			
Memories in Snow	12.8	17.46	0	10.44				
437 Birth of Hotpot	5.25	4.67	0					
Unfaced City	0	0						
2039: Era of Brain C...	6.47							
Song of Fungus								

After 菌歌 *Song of Fungus* was eliminated, the nominees formed four distinct groups.

- 无面之城 *Unfaced City* and 通济桥 *Tongji Bridge* are a pair of works distinct from the rest. Once 无面之城 *Unfaced City* is eliminated only 通济桥 *Tongji Bridge* increases in points. When 通济桥 *Tongji Bridge* is eliminated the other nominees gain no points from it.
- 火星上的祝融 *Zhurong on Mars* and 白色悬崖 *The White Cliff* have no change in points until the final round.
- The other works in Chinese-language generate additional points for the other Chinese-language nominees when they are eliminated. The exception is 孤独终老的房间 *Lonely Room* which additionally passes a small number of points to the English-language work *Rabbit Test*.
- When *Destiny Delayed* is eliminated it passes points to all the nominees left, except for 还魂 *Resurrection* and 尽化塔 *Fongong Temple Pagoda*.

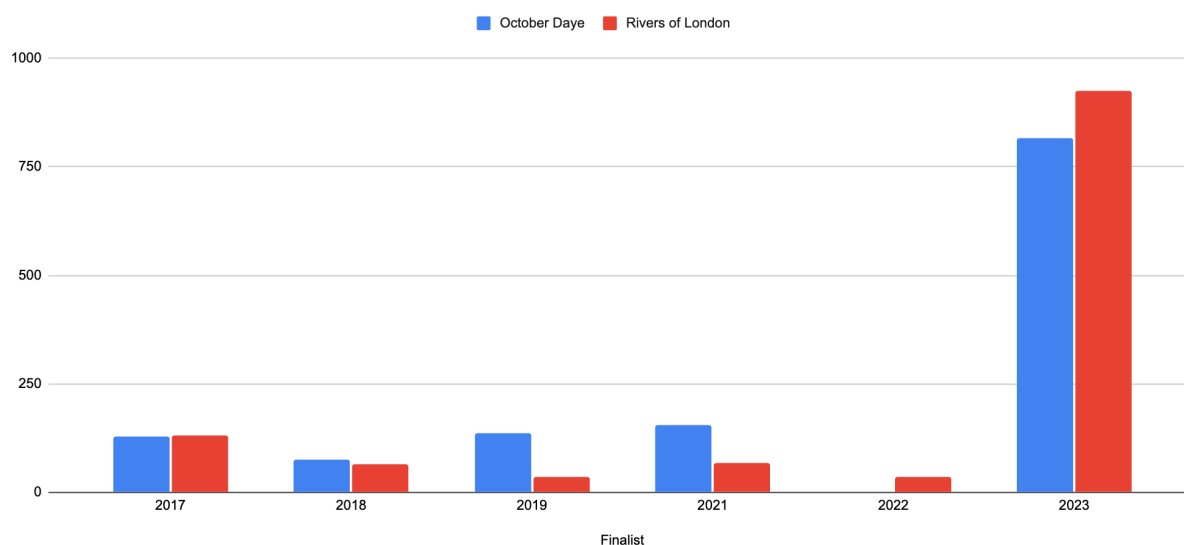
If we assume these patterns are organic, it implies quite distinct voting blocs among Chinese fans for this category.

5. Best Series

No nominees were disqualified or withdrawn from this category. The top six nominees all had very large vote totals. The top four all had totals greater than 900, representing over 65% of the ballots cast in this category. To give a sense of the scale of this consider the eventual 2023 Hugo winner for Best Series, *The Children of Time Trilogy*. At the nomination stage, this series appeared on 903 ballots and yet, in the final voting stage several weeks later this same series only received 370 first preference votes. The size of the increase in votes for works in this category can also be seen by

looking at two series that have appeared regularly in this category: *The October Daye* novels by Seanan McGuire and *The Rivers of London* novels by Ben Aaronovitch (15.BestSeriesChart):

October Daye and Rivers of London



Aside from the extraordinary size of the vote in this category, there were no other major features of note. There are no obvious patterns in the EPH point changes. The votes collected from 20 volunteers (see the Best Novel section) showed no obvious discrepancies in the point totals. The published stats have a “1” rather than a rank next to the finalists' names. This appears to be how the list is generated from whatever system was used. The eligibility list published in Sanford & Barkley’s report shows similar features in the provisional results (Sanford & Barkley, 2024).

6. Best Graphic Story or Comic

This was another relatively normal-looking category with a more proportionate vote total and no unusual features. With EPH point changes, the one Chinese-language nominee’s points were distributed mainly to *Cyberpunk 2077: Big City Dreams* which has a fanbase in China.

7. Best Related Work

In her analysis, Heather Rose Jones classified the vote distribution of Best Related Work as “non-typical” (Jones, 2024) because there is more of a gradient in the set of nominees clustered at the top. While the category does not show the full features of the cliff-like distribution it also isn’t completely lacking them. The vote totals are moderate in size but there is still a jump from the 7th highest⁶ nominee (119 votes) and the next highest (38 votes).

7.1 EPH point changes

Here is where the rules of arithmetic start to wander off. The 2022 *#BlackSpecFic Report* has 10.43 initially but in the next round, it has 10.42. This is, presumably, a typo but it is a very unusual typo and raises further questions.

The numbers for the *Buffalito World Outreach Project* do some even stranger things. By the penultimate round, the nominee has acquired 31.41 points when it is eliminated. In the next round the total additional points the other nominees gained was 45.42. In other words, about 14 points

⁶ I mean the seventh highest in terms of raw votes. Because of EPH, the seventh placed nominee had 176 votes.

have appeared from nowhere. Nor could this be a simple typo. None of the nominees have a clear extra 14 points nor do any simple combination of nominees. The extra points are spread among them

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Terry Pratchett...	1.67	0	0.42	1.33	0.83	2.42	1.67	2.08
Chinese Science...	0	0	0	0	0	0.05	0	13.11
Blood, Sweat & Chrome...	0.16	0	0	0.75	0.17	0.88	0	13.27
History of Chinese Scien...	0	0	0	0.66	1	0.97	0	8.67
Still Just a Geek...	1.25	0	0	0.67	0.5	0.08	0	4.05
The Art of Ghost of...	0	0	0.25	0	0	0	0.17	0
The Ghost of...	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.24
Buffalito World Outreach...	1.42	0	0	2.16	0	0.05	0	
Slaying the Dragon...	0	0	6.75	0	0	0		
Fight, Magic, Items...	0.17	1	0	0.58	0.67			
The Visual History...	0	0	0	0.5				
Putting the Fact in Fant...	1.25	0	0					
2022 #BlackSpecFic...	-0.01	0						
Cosplay: A History...	0.5							
Bridging Worlds...								

8. Best Dramatic Presentation - Long Form

The most surprising aspect of this category was the lack of any Chinese-language entries in the longlist. Possibly this was due to the field being too broad for voters to develop more of a consensus. At the business meeting of the 2022 Worldcon in Chicago the 2021 Rwandan science fiction musical *Neptune Frost* was given extended eligibility for the 2022 award because of its limited release (Chicon 8/WSFS, 2022). With 15 ballots *Neptune Frost* managed to just make it onto the longlist, which is very creditable but also further highlights the surprising absence of any Chinese-language-produced films.

The eligibility of nominees in this category each year is influenced by necessary decisions by the Hugo administrators on whether to include a whole season of a TV series in this long-form category or include individual episodes in the short-form category. The Star Wars spinoff show *Andor* and comic-book adaptation *The Sandman* were both removed from this category per clause 3.8.3 (Hugo 23 Admin, 2024) (WSFS, 2023). More unusually, the Predator sequel *Prey* was withdrawn from the award by its production company for unknown reasons.

The top nominee was the multiversal drama about an ethnically Chinese family in America *Everything Everywhere All at Once* which gained 72% of the ballots cast. While this was a very high proportion, the vote distribution was otherwise not particularly strange or unusual and the combination of critical acclaim and popularity of this film among fans probably accounts for the very high numbers. The popularity of the film was also evidenced in the final voting stage where it received a similar number of votes.

9. Best Dramatic Presentation - Short Form

The statistics for this category are one of the hardest to follow due to the many changes to the works listed.

- *Sandman Episode 6: The Sound of Her Wings* was one of the nominees disqualified without explanation.
- *Severance, S1.E9, The We We Are* was removed because the whole series of *Severance* had qualified for Best Dramatic Presentation - Long Form.
- 《深海》*The Deep* (a short CGI animated film) was disqualified because it had been released prior to 2022.

As a consequence of three nominees being excluded, the ninth-placed nominee *She-Hulk: Whose Show is This* became a finalist. This nominee only had 15 votes, which is low in this category even for a ninth-placed nominee. The table below shows all the Short Form nominees with 15 or fewer raw votes from 2017-2023. Six of them are from 2023.

Year	Place	Finalist	Nom
2023	8	The Deep ***《深海》	10
2023	9	She-Hulk: Whose Show is This?	15
2023	12	Star Trek Strange New Worlds- Spock Amok	14
2023	13	Doctor Who - The Power of the Doctor	14
2023	14	Star Trek Lower Decks- Hear All, Trust Nothing	11
2023	15	Our Flag Means Death - "Wherever You Go, There You Are"	10
2022	14	Resident Alien: Heroes of Patience	15
2022	16	Arcane: League of Legends: The Base Violence Necessary...	15
2021	16	Haunting of Villa Diodati Doctor Who	15

There are what look like odd changes in EPH points in places in this category but all the nominees eliminated had 16 or fewer votes, so point changes were small.

10. Best Editor Long Form

This category had higher than normal votes for the top nominees but similar figures for lower-ranked nominees. This is the first category that has individuals as nominees rather than works such as stories or dramas. As a consequence, we can make a direct comparison between individual nominees and their votes in previous years. The table below (10.EditorsLFPivot)

Finalist	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
David Pomerico						78
Sarah Guan		31	42	61	23	39
Sarah Peed				14		297
Priyanka Krishnan			49			271
Ruoxi Chen					44	302
Carl Engle-Laird	21		30	42	12	295
Lindsey Hall						406
Lee Harris	36	22	35	43	30	433

As you can see Sarah Guan received more votes in 2023 than in 2022 but less than she got in 2021. Lee Harris, on the other hand, has been receiving 20-40 votes for several years but received

433 in 2023, making him by far and away the most popular long-form editor at a Hugo nomination stage in six years. The big increase in interest in this category for English-language editors has no obvious explanation.

However, the larger vote numbers make more sense for other nominees. For example, 姚海军 Yao Haijun is the notable editor of Science Fiction World and a past winner of the Chinese Science Fiction Nebula Award for Best Editor (Simon & Schuster, 2024).

It is not implausible that a category that has not generated much interest in previous Hugo Awards might gather more interest in a Worldcon with a very different cultural context. However, it is odd that if we measure this new interest in ballots cast, more of this attention went to editors of English-language novels in Western countries. This category had a nearly even split of editors from both sets of languages but of the top 10 nominees, only three were from China.

This raises the question of who was voting in this nomination stage. There is no breakdown of voting numbers that distinguishes between voters from within China and voters from outside of China. However, it is reasonable to assume that many of the voters from outside of China were people who had participated in Hugo voting before and who would likely vote in ways not vastly dissimilar to previous years. In which case, the more unusual voting patterns would therefore be from voters from within China. Yet that assumption falls apart when looking at the specifics of categories like this one.

10.1 EPH point changes

The mystery only deepens when the point changes during each round are looked at.

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Lee Harris	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4.3
Lindsey Hall	0	0	0	2.84	0	0	0	1.45
Yan Huan 颜欢	0	0	0	0.42	0	0	0	0.85
Ruoxi Chen	0	0	0	1.83	0	0	0	19.44
Sarah Peed	0	0	0	1.84	0	0	0	18.54
Yao Haijun 姚海军	3.68	3.12	0.72	0	7.74	16.17	36	0
Carl Engle-Laird	0	0	0	0.83	0	0	0	19.28
Priyanka Krishnan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
David Pomerico	1.73	2.87	0.55	0	4.91	10.17		
Dai Haoran 戴浩然	1.6	2.53	0.22	0	3.91			
He Ziheng 贺子恒	1.2	2.45	0.05	0				
Chen Yao 陈曜	0	0	0					
Zhong Ruiyi 钟睿	0	0						
Li Wenyi 李闻怡	1.14							
Sarah Guan								

When Sarah Guan is eliminated, the points increase for Li Wenyi 李闻怡, He Ziheng 贺子恒, Dai Haoran 戴浩然, David Pomerico and Yao Haijun 姚海军. Likewise when Li Wenyi 李闻怡 is eliminated the same nominees gain points. When Zhong Ruiyi 钟睿 is eliminated, the same group gains points but nobody else does. When Chen Yao 陈曜 is eliminated the points change for a

different set of editors, most of whom are English-language editors but not all. Meanwhile, Priyanka Krishnan's points don't change at all but when she is eliminated the points of everybody but Yao Haijun 姚海军 increase.

We will see a similar but more explicable pattern in Best Editor - Short Form. In that category, the split is simply between editors working in English and editors working in Chinese languages. However, in Best Editor - Long Form category, we appear to have two distinct, non-overlapping groups of editors who have a mix of backgrounds within each group.

One explanation might be that the labels are wrong but this would have to be the case for several nominees including a finalist.

11. Best Editor Short Form

It is interesting to compare this category to Best Editor - Long Form. Top-ranked nominees are getting more votes than usual but not as disproportionately as in Long Form. Here is an equivalent table showing editors who have been nominated in previous years.⁷

Finalist	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Trevor Quachri	39	23	24	19		15	21
Sheree Renée Thomas						67	203
Donald Ekpeki Oghenechovwe					23	59	227
Lee Harris	98	108	110	51	41	33	29
Scott H. Andrews	80	54	63	40	31	39	196
Sheila Williams	149	84	61	60	45	49	184
Lynne M./Michael D. Thomas	227	155	82	55	39	34	156
Jonathan Strahan	165	103	79	87	79	47	195
Neil Clarke	155	101	108	92	71	72	234

Curiously, Lee Harris who received an unprecedented 433 votes for Long Form only received 29 votes in Short Form.

⁷ Mur Lafferty has been nominated multiple times but in previous years it was a joint nomination with S.B. Divya, whereas this year it was a joint nomination with Valerie Valdes. I've counted them as a "new" nominee for 2023.

11.1 EPH point changes

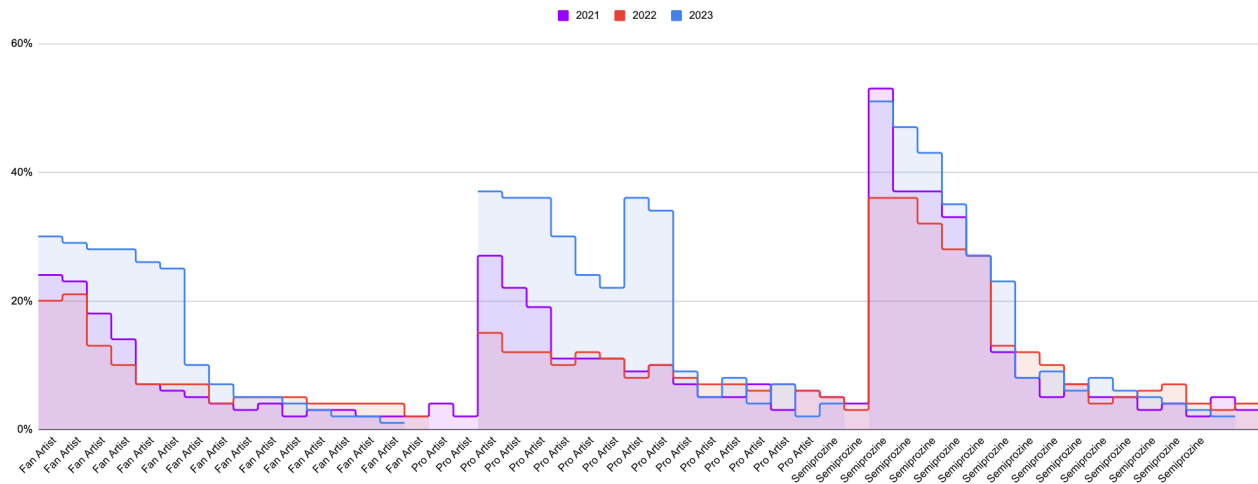
The pattern here is both familiar and different.

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Neil Clarke	0	0.47	2	0.5	0	0	9.31	16.52
D.E.Oghenechovwe	0	0.8	2.25	0	0	0	1.15	0.71
Sheree R. Thomas	0	0	1.75	0	0	0	8.2	16.01
Scott H Andrews	0	0	0.33	0	0	0	0.35	2.05
Wang Xu 汪旭	0.38	0	0	0.75	7.33	24.34	0	0
Yang Feng 杨枫	0.09	0	0	0	4.99	9.34	0	0
Jonathan Strahan	0	0.22	0.42	0	0	0	7.93	15.6
Sheila Williams	0	0	0.08	0	0	0	7.57	
Lynne M. & M.D. Thomas	0	1.22	0.67	0	0	0		
Latssep 拉兹	0.22	0	0	0.25	4.66			
Li Kegin 李克勤	0.05	0	0	0.08				
Liu Weijia 刘维佳	8.8	0	0					
Lee Harris	0	0.08						
M. Lafferty & V. Valdes	0							
Trevor Quachri								

Of course, in an ideal world we would want less distinct groupings of votes but in the specific context of the 2023 Worldcon, there is a simple rational explanation for how the votes have split in this way. The only anomaly is Trevor Quachri, whose points transfer to the Chinese-language editors. This contrasts sharply with Long Form where there is also a split but not one that is much stranger..

12. Best Professional Artist

If Best Professional Artist has a cliff it is an oddly shaped and eroded one as can be see in the graph comparing it with Fan Artist (which has a cliff) and Semiprozine (which doesn't).



Of the twelve nominees that have had three-digit raw votes from 2017-2023, eight of them were from 2023. The high totals are only high relative to a category that historically has not drawn many votes. The highest vote was for 赵恩哲 Zhao Enzhe at 191 votes which drops the highest three-digit vote to Sija Hong 六厘⁸ at 115 votes. The vote totals then drop precipitously, so that ninth-placed artist Tommy Arnold receives 45 votes. That vote total isn't atypical for Arnold. In 2022 he got only 23 points in this category but his high point was in 2021 when he came second with 75 votes.

12.1 EPH point changes

With other categories I distinguished nominees by the language they were originally published in or the language they primarily worked in. That makes less sense for this category. In addition, more than one artist is Chinese but based in the US.

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Zhao Enzhe 赵恩哲	0	0.16	0	0.47	0	0.5	0	8.85
Allyssa Winans	0	0	0	0.33	0	0.34	0	8.51
Paul Lewin	0	1.16	0	0.62	0	2.67	0	7.65
Kuri Huang Kuri	0	0.5	0	0.45	0	2	0	4.07
Guo Jian 郭建 *	2.49	0	2.8	0	5.5	0	7.83	0
Sija Hong 六厘	2.48	0	3.72	0	3.67	0	6.83	0
Zhang Jian 张舰	0	0	0	1.45	0	0.5	0	9.13
Manzi Jackson	0	0	0	0.92	0	0.25	0	
Tommy Arnold	0.4	0	1.38	0	2.67	0		
Micah Epstein	0	0.17	0	0.1	0			
Christina Mrozik	0.39	0	1.21	0				
Fei Fei Ruan	0	0	0					
Joe Wilson	0.52	0						
Maurizio Manzieri	0							
Xie Chunzhi 谢春治								

⁸ Sija Hong 六厘 is Chinese but based in New York (Hong, 2024)

As with other categories, there are some partially distinct blocs of nominees here but no obvious external way of distinguishing them.

13. Best Semiprozine

One of the least unusual categories. Many repeat finalists received similar-sized votes as in previous years and Uncanny received exactly the same number of votes (113) as it did in 2022. The overall distribution of votes had no cliff-like aspect and was very similar to previous years. Even the fractional parts of the EPH points had no erroneous values.

Finalist	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Strange Horizons		151	173	115	124	100	133
FIYAH		66	96	61	174	111	124
Uncanny	434	270	227	122	122	113	113
Escape Pod	58	69	79	80	91	87	92
khōréō						32	70
Podcastle	46	37	48	45	39	39	61
Beneath Ceaseless Skies	259	146	107	120	109	83	23
Giganotosaurus	82	51	28		16	23	20
Clarkesworld	45	34		18	13	13	10
Anathema Magazine					17		9
Space Cowboy Presents ...					5	11	6

There are three Chinese-language magazines 世界科幻动态 *World Science Fiction Updates*, 未来纪事 *Future Science Fiction Digest* and 舱外 *Outside*. In the EPH point changes, the points are largely distributed on language lines but not exclusively (e.g. when 来纪事 *Future Science Fiction Digest* is eliminated most of the points are gained by 世界科幻动态 *World Science Fiction Updates* but a small number of points end up with khōréō and FIYAH.

The singular and puzzling thing about the Semiprozine category is how normal it is. That shouldn't be a problem but it runs counter to any explanations that attempt to account for the unusual features in other categories as simply organic choices.

14. Best Fanzine

The cliff-like distribution of some key categories is very notable in terms of raw numbers of Best Novel and Best Series. The top-ranked nominees in Best Fanzine have more modest votes, ranging from 217 to 254, but the biggest vote a fanzine received in recent years was 173 votes for *File 770* in 2018. Best Fanzine is important in terms of the culture and the history of the Hugo Award but it is not a category that draws many votes. Until recently a rule requiring categories to receive at least 25% of the overall ballot put Best Fanzine in danger of automatically falling to No Award (Wakaruk & Rokne, 2022). The increase in nominations in this category would be welcome if it wasn't so odd. Whatever theories people might have about the cliff distribution in Best Novel and Best Series also need to be taken into account in Best Fanzine.

The drop between the top seven finalists and the eighth-ranked finalist is sharp. *Black Nerd Problems* has 217 votes followed by *The Full Lid* with only 55 votes. Interestingly, of the most notable "cliff" categories, Best Fanzine has two Chinese-language nominees benefitting from the higher vote.

14.1 EPH point changes

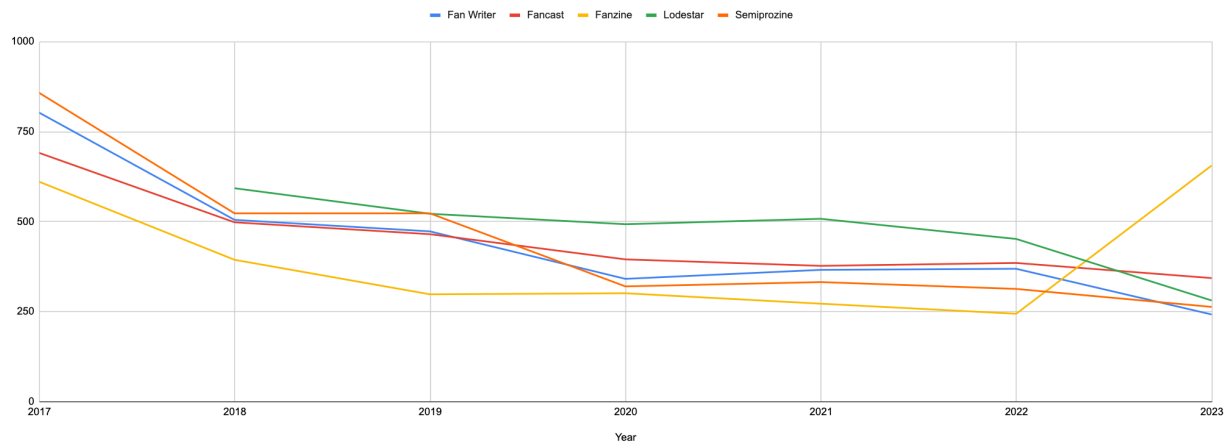
The point changes here are largely consistent with points from Chinese-language works mainly going to other Chinese-language works and similarly with English-language works.

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Journey Planet	0	0	1	0.08	0.92	0.42	0.21	2
Nerds of a Feather	0.13	0	0	0.17	0	0.92	0.91	0
Hugo Book Club	0.33	0	0	0	0	0.58	0.42	0
Galactic Journey	0.05	0.16	0.5	0.42	0	1	2.05	0
Chinese Science Fiction Express	0	0	0	0	1.41	0	0	21
Zero Gravity Newspaper	0.26	0	0	0.34	0	0.5	0.55	0
Black Nerd Problems	0.46	0	0	0.25	0	0.75	0.8	0
The Full Lid	0	0	0	0	1.42	0	0	
Speculative Fiction in Translation	0.21	0	0	0.5	0	0.17		
Runalong The Shelves	0.55	0	0	0	0			
<42 History>	0	0	0	0				
The Rec Center	0.05	0	0					
Banana Wings	0	0.17						
Portable Storage	0							
Women Write About Comics								

Alasdair Stuart's newsletter *The Full Lid* appears to be in a mini-bloc with Chinese fanzines *42 History* and *Chinese Science Fiction Express*. Aside from 2 points that transfer to Journey Planet, all of *The Full Lid*'s points go to *Chinese Science Fiction Express*. Is this data actually the data for *The Full Lid* or is it a labeling error?

15. Best Fancast

This is another down-ballot category that usually does not get as much attention but which this year had a bit of a cliff. It is neither as cliff-like as Fanzine nor as cliff-free as Semiprozine. Interestingly, like Semiprozine but unlike Fanzine, the overall number of ballots cast is pretty similar to previous years. The graph below (13.VoteTotalChart) shows the changes in ballot totals for several "down ballot" categories which declined plus Fanzine, which increased.



15.1 EPH point changes

The point changes nearly, but not quite, make sense. There is an interesting double-elimination which is part of EPH but rarely happens at this stage. Three rounds in, two nominees have equal raw votes and equal points, so they both (correctly) are eliminated.

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D
Hugos There	0	0	0	0	0.67	0	0.42
Octothorpe	0	0	0	0.66	0.17	0.5	0.42
Hugo Girl	0	0.67	0	0	1.66	0.84	1.33
Coode Street Podcast	0	0	0	0.75	0.67	0.33	1.92
Worldbuilding for Masochists	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kalanadi	0	0.16	0	0.09	0	0.5	0.25
FANAC Fan History Videos	0	0.17	0	0	0	0	0
Skiffy and Fanty	0	0	0	0.08	0.17	0.33	
Sword & Laser	0	0.17	0	0	0.5		
If this Goes On	0	0	0	0			
Doctor Who: Verity!	0	0	0				
ReReading Wolfe Podcast	0	0					
<Science Fiction Fans>	0	0					
Jay & Miles X-Plain the X-Men	0						
<Voyage in Science Fiction>							

Worldbuilding for Masochists has no changes in points at all, which is odd. The podcast was a finalist in 2021 and 2022 and on the longlist in 2020. In each of those years, it had some point changes as the rounds progressed.

16. Best Fan Writer

Best Fan Writer's most notable feature is the unexplained disqualification of Paul Weimer. He may have been disqualified because a Hugo Admin mistook his visit to Nepal for a visit to Tibet (Sanford & Barkley, 2024), which, if true, is very weird.

Meanwhile...

16. EPH point changes

There are some interesting things going on, some of which make sense and some that make less sense. The list is a decent field of fan writers and is enhanced by two Chinese fan writers, 河流 RiverFlow and 天爵 HeavenDuke⁹.

As with other categories, the points typically do not pass from English-language writers to Chinese writers. However, there is one exception. Molly Templeton who writes for Tor.com¹⁰ gets no points when James Davis Nicoll, Stitch and Charles Payseur are eliminated. However, when Templeton herself is eliminated, only RiverFlow and HeavenDuke's points increase. This is another example where it does appear as if the data is labeled incorrectly. Is this perhaps, not Molly Templeton but a Chinese fan writer whose name has been pasted over or omitted?

Finalist	R2D	R3D	R4D	R5D	R6D	R7D	R8D	R9D
Jason Sanford	1.25	0	0	0	0.67	0.16	1.17	4.75
Chris Barkley	0	0.34	0	0	0.08	0	0.75	3.98
Paul Weimer *	0.08	0.33	3.25	0	2.02	1.17	2.17	7.7
@MicroSFF	2.16	0.17	0.17	0	0.91	0	4.75	1.8
Bitter Karelia ¹¹	0	1.25	0.42	0	0.6	0	0.91	1.14
RiverFlow	0	0	0	5.33	0	0	0	0
HeavenDuke	0	0	0	1.83	0	0	0	0
Camestros Felapton	0	0	1.16	0	0.35	0.5	1.34	
Arturo Serrano	0.58	0	0	0	3.27	0.33		
Alex Brown	0.09	0.58	0.17	0	0			
Alasdair Stuart	0.08	0.25	0.25	0				
Molly Templeton	0	0	0					
Charles Payseur	0.08	0.09						
Stitch	0							
James Davis Nicoll								

17. Best Fan Artist

This is another category of extremes. The top-ranked nominee España Sheriff's ballot of 72 votes might not sound impressive but it is the highest in this category aside from Likhain in 2017, 2018 and 2019 who scored over 100. Despite an overall low vote, this is still, somehow, a category with a cliff. It isn't a very tall cliff but it is quite visible particularly if you look at the share of the vote.

⁹ Mistakenly written "HeavenDule" in the document.

¹⁰ Tor.com is now called 'Reactor'

¹¹ Bitter Karelia's surname is misspelled in the published statistics as "Karelia" is left here uncorrected to aid checking of the data.

Place	Finalist	%Votes
1	Espana Sheriff	30%
2	Alison Scott	29%
3	Richard Man	28%
4	Iain Clark	28%
5	Laya Rose	26%
6	Orion Smith	25%
7	Dante Luiz	10%
8	Jessica Holmes	7%
9	Sara Felix	5%
10	Phoenix Data Art	5%
11	Rosie Thorns	4%
12	Sue Mason	3%
13	N'kai DeLauter	2%
14	Marceline	2%
15	Maya Hahto	1%

There are zero nominees from China in this category. This is even more remarkable given that the lowest-ranked nominee has only 3 votes. This has happened before in this category (in 2020) but it is notable that one Chinese artist and four friends voting for them could have made a significant difference to this category.

I won't cover the vote transfers in this category. Visually, the patterns look odd but there are so few voters that the point changes come down to individual decisions.

18. Lodestar Award

Lodestar might have almost escaped with no comment. Unfortunately, it is another category in which its overall total ballots is less than the number of people in the first round listed. Aside from that the category had a moderate decline in votes.

However, even Lodestar has its quirks and this time it is another duplicate.

In the Serpent's Wake appears twice:

Lodestar Award (280 Ballots) 北极星奖 (280 张选票)

Place	Finalist/入围人员	N	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
1	The Golden Enclaves 《黄金飞地》	121	59.43	59.77	59.77	60.85	61.85	61.85	62.33	63.00
2	Dreams Bigger Than Heartbreak 《梦想比心碎更大》	104	36.35	36.52	37.02	37.68	37.85	38.35	38.57	39.62
3	Bloodmarked 《血痕》	94	30.13	31.30	31.80	31.88	32.38	32.72	34.03	35.25
4	Akata Woman 《阿卡塔女巫》	91	35.43	36.10	37.52	37.60	38.52	39.35	40.53	40.53
5	In the Serpents Wake 《巨蟒觉醒》	75	20.55	20.88	20.88	20.88	21.38	21.88	22.22	22.27
6	Osmo Unknown and the Eightpenny Woods 《无名欧斯莫和八便士森林》	61	22.20	22.70	22.87	23.53	23.53	23.70	23.83	23.83
7	In the Serpents Wake 《巨蟒觉醒》	29	18.15	18.23	18.73	19.23	19.73	19.73	19.83	20.33
8	Ballad & Dagger 《歌谣与匕首》	19	8.87	8.95	9.53	9.53	9.95	10.12	11.12	11.17

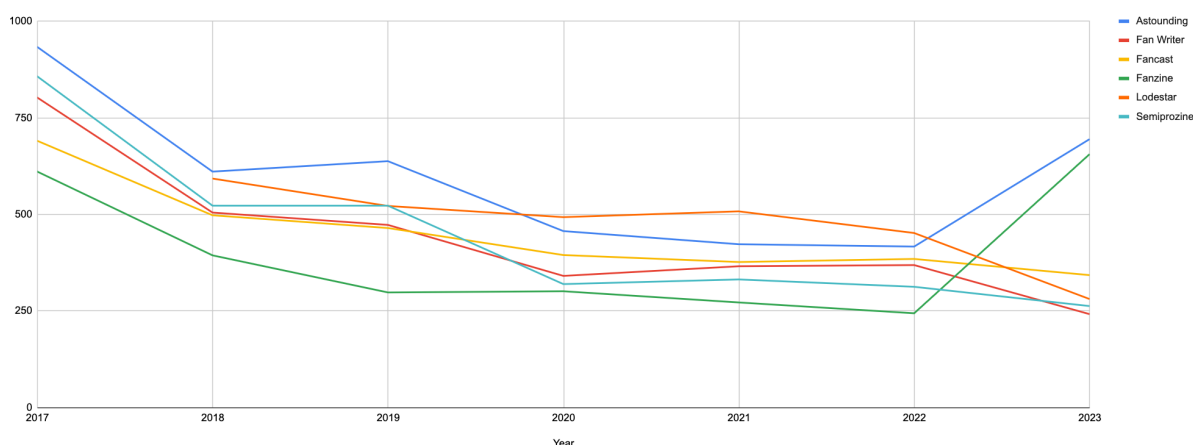
Using the leaked validation sheet (Sanford & Barkley, 2024), the likely missing entry is *Unraveller* by Frances Hardinge. This is flagged in that sheet as “published in 2023” but it appears to have been published in 2022 so was eligible. I assume it is missing because of a cut-and-paste error.

19. Astounding Award

The Astounding Award for Best New Writer traditionally sits at the end of the ballot and traditionally kicks off the award announcement. It, like the Lodestar, is technically not a Hugo Award but follows almost the same rules. The difference is that this award has its own eligibility criteria to define what counts as a ‘new’ writer.

The category has the high-profile disqualification of author Xiran Jay Zhao. The published nominees were primarily authors who publish in English but with three Chinese-language authors, two of whom were finalists.

The category had a small increase in ballots compared with the previous years and is not unlike Best Fanzine in this regard.



However, there isn't much evidence of a cliff-like aspect to the vote distribution but there is a big drop between the 9th lowest vote Sue Lynn Tan (79 votes) and the 10th lowest Ai Jiang (27 votes). The EPH point changes are largely unremarkable other than the same distinct split in point changes which separates Chinese-language authors and English-language authors.

Discussion

Earlier in the document I divided the Hugo process into six conceptual stages.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Collection of ballots	Cleaning/canonicalization of the ballots	Running the EPH process	Eligibility decisions and withdrawals	Finalist list published	Nomination statistics published
Via a website and by mail	Using consistent names/titles for works. Identifying which names apply to which works etc	Done using bespoke software	Some finalists may not be eligible & some finalists choose to withdraw from the award	Here the process branches off to the final stage of voting & award ceremony.	Data from the previous stages is collated in a document for public consumption.

Based on the data we have, Dave McCarty's comments (Barkley, 2024), the leaked emails (Sanford & Barkley, 2024) and the broad timeline of events, we can make some reasonable inferences about the kind of errors this document has.

1. Stage 1: There have been claims of slate voting by Chinese fans and there were recommendation lists put out by publishers in China (Science Fiction World SFW, 2023). This in itself is not surprising or alarming. The objection to slate voting is a culture that has evolved around the Hugo Awards over many years but it gained extra significance during the Sad Puppy conflict. A fan community new to the Hugos are unlikely to be immediately aware of the largely social prohibitions around slates. Further, Chinese fans would have less access to the resources used by Hugo voters in the past to help them identify eligible works.
2. Stage 2: Based on comments made by Hugo admins (Sanford & Barkley, 2024) some ballots appear to have been removed during stage 2 or as part of an iterative process across stages 2, 3 and 4. The impact on the votes is unclear but in Best Novel at least, some nominees have disappeared. In other categories, the ranking may have changed (zionius, 2024). Even assuming there was severe slate voting it is not normal practice to remove votes. However, Hugo admins have removed illegitimate votes (i.e. votes where a single person has voted more than once) but it is unclear if that is what is alleged here. It is also unclear if the ballot removal process was done correctly i.e. whether some legitimate ballots were also removed.
3. Stage 3: McCarty's comment about SQL errors (Barkley, 2024) and the rounding errors present in the EPH figures, strongly suggest that the software used has not been as rigorously tested as the software used in previous years. The extent to which errors in the software is the cause of other anomalies is unclear.
4. Stage 4: The eligibility included a vetting process focused on potentially controversial views. (Sanford & Barkley, 2024). In addition to the dubious disqualification of some finalists, this vetting task would have added additional workload to a Hugo team that, apparently, was already over-stretched. What the impact of this was beyond the disqualifications is unclear.
5. The list of finalists that WSFS members voted on matches the list published in the document. Beyond that, the accuracy of that list is difficult to judge.
6. The correction of "Turing Food Court" demonstrates that the production of the document required a degree of manual copy-and-paste steps. It is very likely given the data that some of the anomalies arise out of typographical or copy-paste errors.

This list suggests that there are likely errors and manual interventions in the statistics throughout the process. However, it does not by itself explain the observed anomalies.

Diane Lacey’s comments about the cliff (Lacey, 2024) imply that Dave McCarty was aware of this feature in the data. It would be unsurprising for the people doing the counting not to notice the presence of a very large number of very similar votes.

The following table attempts to show the varying impact between the two groups of nominees across many of the issue highlighted in the report.

Issue	English	Chinese	Total
Nominees	221	64	285
%Nominees	77.5%	22.5%	100%
EPH Fraction Issues	20	17	37
% Impacted	9%	26.6%	13%
Cliff top - very high & similar totals in a category	23	2	25
% Impacted	10.4%	3.1%	8.8%
EPH Ratio ≥ 4	26	5	31
% Impacted	11.8%	7.8%	10.9%
Percent of vote $\geq 40\%$	28	2	30
% Impacted	12.7%	3.1%	10.5%
Negative rank change from validation to published	42	41	83
% Impacted	19%	64.1%	29.1%
Negative rank change from validation to published < -2	14	27	41
% Impacted	6.3%	42.2%	14.4%

The impact of these issues was quite different between the two groups. The “cliff” primarily advantaged English-language works. The changes between the leaked validation list rankings and the published rankings primarily disadvantaged Chinese-language works. Apparently neutral impact issues such as the rounding errors on the EPH fractions also disproportionately impacted Chinese-language works.

It is reasonable to conclude that not only were there issues throughout the process, the net impact of those issues disadvantaged Chinese-language works more than English-language works.

Further Reading

Between the beginnings of the research for this report and the publication of the report, there have been numerous news articles, blogposts and social media commentary on the broader issues of the 2023 Hugo Awards. Below are some places to read insights by fans on the issues that have not already been cited in the report but which provided background to the report.

- Arthur Liu/Heaven Duke is the founder of the Chinese Science Fiction Database which is an invaluable resource in cataloguing Chinese science fiction <https://csfdb.cn/> . Additionally, he has provided a great deal of insights into the experience of Chinese fans on his Twitter/X account <https://twitter.com/HeavenDule> (Chinese Science Fiction Database, 2024) (Liu, 2024)
 - File 770 has a well earned reputation for its coverage of science fiction fandom. It has had ongoing coverage of the Chengdu Worldcon since it was first proposed. This link covers all the relevant articles <https://file770.com/tag/chengdu-worldcon/> . In addition, File 770 carried many updates and additional discussions by British fan Ersatz Culture, who covered many of the issues Chinese fans were experiencing with the convention <https://file770.com/tag/ersatz-culture/> (Glyer, 2024).
 - German fan writer Cora Bulhert has two lengthy posts covering the developments in the issues around the 2023 Hugo Award statistics with links to additional articles: <http://corabuhlert.com/2024/01/21/the-2023-hugo-nomination-statistics-have-finally-been-relaxed-and-we-have-questions/> and <http://corabuhlert.com/2024/02/15/the-2023-hugo-nomination-scandal-gets-worse/> (Bulhert, 2024) (Bulhert, 2024)
 - Similarly the Astrolabe newsletter by Aidan Moher has an article that was regularly updated as the story unfolded <https://astrolabe.aidanmoher.com/astrolabe-36-panic-at-the-hugos-2023-controversy/> (Moher, 2024)
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