

\*\*\*The following is an excerpt from the foreword of **HARRY, A HISTORY** by Melissa Anelli, award winning web-mistress of The-Leaky-Cauldron.org\*\*\*

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## Foreword (Excerpt)

By J.K. Rowling

Not until sometime in 2002 did I finally crack, and do the thing that people assumed I did daily. I Googled Harry Potter.

I knew, of course, that there were fan sites out there. My postbag was full of mentions of them, my readers assuming that I was au fait with what was happening online. My PA, Fiddy, had had contact with a few of the webmasters. But I was still utterly unprepared what I found during that first, mammoth trawling session.

The fan sites were so professional-looking; easily up to the standard of any of my publishers' sites. And they had tens of thousands of visitors. They had forums, message boards, editorials, rolling news, fan art, fan fiction, quotes of the day from my books... and the shipping wars... my God, the shipping wars...

I had already heard of 'The Leaky Cauldron'; it was one of the biggest and most popular Harry Potter sites on the net, and I had been told about a couple of great things they had done (freeing the already-free Dobby got my attention). But I had never seen it for myself, never realised exactly what went on there. I sat and read editorials, predictions, theories that ranged from strange to wild to perfectly accurate. I was, frankly, stunned... and I remain stunned.

Reading the book you now have in your hands has been an astonishing experience for me. It is as though I have, at last, achieved the ambition I held for years: to go along to a bookshop at midnight on Harry Potter publication night, in disguise, and simply watch and listen.

At long last I understand what was going on while I was holed up writing, trying to filter my exposure to Potter-hysteria. A great chunk of my own life has been explained to me; Melissa has filled in an enormous number of blanks, taken me to places I wish I could have visited with her (like the House of Pancakes, to meet the

US's most prominent anti-Harry Potter campaigner); explained jokes that fans assumed I understood, introduced me to people they thought I knew, filled me in on arguments I had inadvertently started. She has reminded me of incidents I had half-forgotten in the furor surrounding every publication from 2000 onwards – the stolen truck full of copies of 'Order of the Phoenix', that irksome 'Green Flame Torch', and the endless War On Spoilers . . .