GCLS AWARDS PROCESS

Final Report for
GCLS Board

Prepared by

2018 Independent Review Committee

June 11, 2018

Golden Crown Literary Society (GCLS)

- ➤ **Mission Statement:**

  - ■ *To increase the visibility and quality of lesbian-themed literature.*

- ➤ **Goals:**

  - ■ *Recognize and reward quality literary works about women who love women.*

  - ■ *Provide learning opportunities, encouragement and assistance to new and established writers in developing their craft.*

  - ■ *Provide opportunities to promote lesbian-themed literature, including events that bring readers and writers together.*

  - ■ *Be inclusive of friends/supporters of literature that celebrates women who love women.*

Independent Review Committee (IRC)

➢ **Goals:**

- Conduct an independent review to ensure the quality, integrity and prestige of the GCLS awards process, a key component of GCLS's stated mission: "*to increase the visibility and quality of lesbian-themed literature.*"

- Make recommendations for how the GCLS awards process can be improved so best books have an even better chance of being recognized as GOLDIE finalists and GOLDIE winners.

- Suggest ways to implement recommended improvements in the 2019 awards process and beyond.

IRC Action Steps: Completed through July, 2017

➢ Participated as "faux nominator" and "faux judge" for real-time experience with GCLS awards process.

➢ Evaluated effectiveness of OpenWater awards management software for accepting, processing and judging GOLDIE nominations.

➢ Contacted key stakeholders via qualitative and quantitative surveys for opinions on ways to improve the awards.

- Awards administrators and board liaisons *(findings reported 8/15/16)*

- Publishers *(findings reported 9/22/16)*

- Awards nominators *(findings reported 11/21/16)*

- GOLDIE judges *(findings from former 2015 judges reported 12/12/16; findings from 2016 judges reported 3/19/17)*

- GCLS membership *(findings reported 5/31/17)*

➢ Analyzed key metrics to supplement survey results *(findings reported 1/5/17).*

➢ Proposed awards categories and category structure for 2018 *(completed 4/10/17 and revised 6/6/17).*

Changes Adopted for 2018 Awards

➢ The IRC proposed, and the GCLS board agreed to, several changes for 2018:

- **Judged Categories**
  - Debut Novel replaced Debut Author – only novels are eligible
  - Dramatic/General Fiction renamed General Fiction
  - Creative Non-Fiction renamed General Nonfiction
  - Traditional Contemporary Romance renamed and split into three categories:
    - Contemporary Romance: Short Novels (40,000-70,000 words)
    - Contemporary Romance: Mid-Length Novels (70,001-85,000 words)
    - Contemporary Romance: Long Novels (85,001+ words)
  - All Novel entries must be at least 40,000 words in length
- **Nominations**
  - Nominators have one chance to correct poorly formatted books
  - Nominators have opportunity to provide link to purchase nominated book
- **Judges**
  - Names listed alphabetically after Awards Ceremony (unless judge opts out)
  - Free one-year GCLS membership for judges completing three consecutive terms (must complete all assignments)

Changes Adopted for 2018 Awards

➢ **Finalists / Winners:**

- ■ At least **six entries** are required in a judged category for a GOLDIE to be awarded.

- ■ The **25% - 10% Rule** determines finalists and winners based on the number of judged category submissions:

  - • 25% of entries are finalists
  - • 10% of entries are winners

NOTE: EXCEL formulas used for rounding to the nearest whole percent.

NUMBER ENTRIES SUBMITTED	25% - 10% RULE FINALISTS #	%	WINNERS #	%
1	0	0%	0	0%
2	0	0%	0	0%
3	0	0%	0	0%
4	0	0%	0	0%
5	0	0%	0	0%
6	2	25%	1	10%
7	2	25%	1	10%
8	2	25%	1	10%
9	2	25%	1	10%
10	3	25%	1	10%
11	3	25%	1	10%
12	3	25%	1	10%
13	3	25%	1	10%
14	4	25%	1	10%
15	4	25%	2	10%
16	4	25%	2	10%
17	4	25%	2	10%
18	5	25%	2	10%
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26	7	25%	3	10%
27	7	25%	3	10%
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34	9	25%	3	10%
35	9	25%	4	10%
36	9	25%	4	10%
37	9	25%	4	10%
38	10	25%	4	10%
39	10	25%	4	10%
40	10	25%	4	10%
50	13	25%	5	10%
60	15	25%	6	10%
70	18	25%	7	10%
80	20	25%	8	10%

Changes Adopted for 2018 Awards

➢ As a result of 2018 changes, 318 entries yielded 81 finalists (25%) and 31 winners (10%).

  ▪ Comparable numbers for 2017 were 334 submissions, 102 finalists (31%) and 38 winners (11%).

JUDGED CATEGORIES: 2018 GOLDIES	ENTRIES #	FINALISTS #	WINNERS #
Anthologies/Collections (Fiction)	9	2	1
Combined Nonfiction*	8	2	1
Contemporary Romance: Short Novels	31	8	3
Contemporary Romance: Mid-Length Novels	40	10	4
Contemporary Romance: Long Novels	33	8	3
Debut Novel	37	9	4
Erotica	11	3	1
General Fiction	18	5	2
Historical Fiction	14	4	1
Mystery/Thriller	22	6	2
Paranormal/Horror	9	2	1
Poetry	10	3	1
Romantic Suspense/Intrigue/Adventure	34	9	3
Science Fiction/Fantasy	29	7	3
Young Adult Fiction	13	3	1
GRAND TOTAL	318	81	31

*Anthology/Collections (Nonfiction) and General Nonfiction combined due to fewer than 6 entries in respective categories.

2019 Awards: IRC Action Steps

I. Recognize that **participation** of readers, authors, editors, publishers and volunteers with judging experience is vital for identifying and implementing improvements in the 2019 GCLS awards process.

II. Recruit GCLS members for subcommittees to review and propose changes, as appropriate, in how judges are recruited and assigned to categories, the composition of judging panels, feedback to entrants and other **judging-related issues** for the 2019 awards.

III. Recruit GCLS members for subcommittees to revise, pretest and publish **evaluation instruments** for all judged GOLDIE categories in time for the 2019 awards.

IV. Work with awards administrators, board members and other volunteers on **implementation** of recommended improvements for 2019.

IRC Action Steps: Participation

I. **Recognize that participation of readers, authors, editors, publishers and volunteers with judging experience is vital.***

- After the 2017 GCLS convention, the IRC sent a SurveyMonkey recruitment survey to approximately 60 GCLS members who had expressed interest in participating. Based on interests determined via the recruitment survey:

  - 20 volunteers worked on judging-related teams.

  - 23 volunteers worked on evaluation instruments.

- Additional outreach efforts included:

  - Sending SurveyMonkey pretests of proposed 2019 evaluation instruments to various GCLS constituencies for input and comments.

  - Presenting IRC recommendations and board actions at the 2018 GCLS convention in Las Vegas.

  - Preparing documents on adopted changes in the 2019 awards, as well as revised category definitions, judging guidelines and evaluation instruments, for subsequent posting on the GCLS website by awards administrators and board volunteers.

IRC members and other GCLS volunteers participating in this effort are named in the final section of this report.

IRC Action Steps: Judging-Related Issues

II. **Recruit GCLS members for subcommittees to review and, as appropriate, propose judging-related changes to improve the 2019 awards process.**

- Led by the IRC's Rosa Moran and chair Jenny Fielder, 20 volunteers worked on six judging-related tasks:

  - Codify procedures for recruiting and vetting judges; suggest ways to improve these and related procedures.

  - Codify procedures for assigning judges to a given category; find ways to balance judging panels to include authors, editors and readers.

  - Brainstorm ideas for recruiting non-GCLS judges; work with awards administrators, board members and other volunteers to implement these ideas.

  - Develop ways to provide feedback to authors/editors on how judges scored their books.

  - Suggest ways to beef up training for judges on how to evaluate books in their category; work with awards administrators, board members and other volunteers to revise training materials to reflect changes in evaluation instruments for 2019.

  - Recommend additional judging aids to improve the judging experience; investigate ways judges in a category might communicate with each other (or a lead judge) to improve judging outcomes.

IRC Action Steps: Evaluation Instruments

III. **Recruit GCLS members for subcommittees to revise, pretest and publish evaluation instruments for all judged GOLDIE categories for 2019.**

- Led by the IRC's Jenny Fielder and author/editor Shelley Thrasher, 23 volunteers:

  - Revised category definitions, judging guidelines and evaluation items for all genre categories comprising four "primary" GCLS groups – Fiction Anthologies/ Collections; Fiction Novels; Nonfiction; and Poetry.

  - Reached agreement on "essential elements" of award-winning novels, plus one genre item, to be used to determine Debut Novel finalists and winners.

  - Embarked on a rigorous program to secure input on category definitions, judging guidelines and evaluation items, including:

    – Sending SurveyMonkey pretests to 2016 and 2017 GOLDIE finalists in a given category for their input and comments.

    – Sending SurveyMonkey pretests for two new categories – Humorous Novels and New Adult Fiction – to interested GCLS members.

    – Sending SurveyMonkey pretests to 2016-17 judges in each genre category.

    – Sending SurveyMonkey pretests to 2018 judges, asking for feedback on the new approach.

    – Writing personal emails to those completing SurveyMonkey pretests, thanking them for their participation and responding to specific suggestions.

IRC Action Steps: Implementation

IV. **Upon request, work with awards administrators, board members and other volunteers to implement recommended improvements for 2019.**

- Awards administrator Watty Boss worked closely with the IRC to ensure recommendations are practical and can be implemented in a timely fashion.

  - Steps required for successful implementation by awards administrators include:

    – Finalizing all descriptions and judging guidelines in time for entrants to determine in which categories to nominate their books.

    – Finalizing all evaluation instruments to be used for 2019 judging.

    – Incorporating into the awards management software any changes in procedures for recruiting, vetting and assigning judges.

    – Incorporating board-approved descriptions, judging guidelines and evaluation items – by category – into the awards management software.

    – Revising training aids for judges to reflect changes in evaluation instruments for 2019.

Final Report to GCLS Board

Team Report

on

Judging-Related Issues

IRC Research Findings: Judging-Related Issues

➢ For the most part, 2016 GOLDIE Awards judges had positive views about their experience with the judging process.

- More than eight in ten "strongly agreed" that they understood the rules and requirements for becoming a judge (88%) and found it easy to volunteer to be a judge (81%).

- Judges felt they received sufficient training on "what to consider as I judged books in my category" (88% "strongly agreed") and, to a lesser extent, on "how to use the OpenWater awards software for judging books" (72%).

- About three-quarters of judges agreed strongly that they could call on awards administrators if they "had questions or comments" (77%) and that they received sufficient communications throughout the judging process (74%).

➢ "Former judges have suggested a variety of ways to improve the GCLS judging process," 2016 judges were told. Then, they were asked how much they agreed that "each of the following ideas should be adopted by GCLS."

- Eight in ten supported two approaches to improve the quality and composition of judging panels: "balancing judges to include readers, authors and editors" (81% agreed), and "beefing up training on how to evaluate books" (79% agreed).

- Seven in ten felt authors should be given feedback on how judges rated their books on specific dimensions (72% agreed).

➢ Despite high ratings overall, only five in ten 2016 judges (51%) said they were "very likely" to volunteer to be a judge in the future, while two in ten (19%) said they were unlikely to do so.

2019 Recommendations: Judging-Related Issues

➢ **Increase judging pool:**

  ▪ Enhance efforts to recruit a larger pool of potential judges, both from within and outside GCLS.

➢ **Document procedures:**

  ▪ Review existing GCLS documents on procedures for recruiting, vetting and assigning judges. Update documents to reflect changes in the 2019 awards cycle. Identify any additional procedures that should be codified.

➢ **Beef up training:**

  ▪ Focus enhanced training efforts on three key areas:

    1) Judging standards/education, to ensure judges understand even more thoroughly what constitutes a well-written book, anthology, short story or poem.

    2) Subjectivism, to reiterate that judges must be unbiased and equally critical when reading and rating all GOLDIE entries.

    3) Communication, to encourage judges to engage in an open, continuing dialogue with awards administrators and trainers – and perhaps former judges or even each other – before, during and after the judging process.

➢ **Enable feedback:**

  ▪ Structure evaluation instruments so qualitative feedback and/or quantitative scores potentially can be made available to authors/editors upon request.

2019 Key Changes: Judging-Related Issues

➢ **Specific enhancements and/or changes for 2019 judged awards include:**

- Forming a board-appointed "judge recruitment committee" to devise and execute strategies for recruiting both GCLS and non-GCLS judges.

- Redoubling efforts to assign a qualified editor to every judging category.

  - This has proven difficult, as not enough editors apply to cover all categories, and their participation must be limited to categories containing books they haven't edited.

- Asking judges for comments that potentially might be used for feedback to help authors/editors improve their craft:

  - *Please summarize your overall thoughts about this book. Constructive criticisms, if any, would be especially helpful. An edited version of your insights and those of other judges—absent any identification—may be shared with the author(s).*

- Adding this language to the current requirement that judges must inform awards administrators immediately if they believe an entry does not fit in the assigned category and should be moved elsewhere:

  - *If the entry remains in the category, judges must agree to evaluate the entry without prejudice, even if they disagree with the decision.*

- **NOTE**: The following IRC recommendation was <u>rejected</u> by the GCLS board:

  - Allowing publishers to apply to be a GOLDIE judge as long as they agree to this stipulation:

    - *If you are the publisher of an anthology or book submitted in the category you are judging, this represents a definite conflict of interest and must be reported immediately to the awards administrators. Publishers should not apply to judge categories that include books published by their company.*

2019 Key Changes: Judging-Related Issues

➢ **Specific enhancements and/or changes for 2019 judged awards include:**

- Clarifying and publicizing procedures for assigning finalists/naming winners, namely:

  1) *Multiple books by authors and/or co-authors may be submitted for judging in a single category.*

  2) *Only one book by the same author(s) may proceed as a finalist in that category.*

  3) *If two or more books authored by the same author(s) are ranked as finalists in the same category, immediately following the tally of judges' scores, the highest-ranking book by this author shall be retained and the other books in that category by this same author will be eliminated from the competition.*

- Allowing multiple entries in a category, but including ONLY the highest scoring book in the list of finalists, automatically means a given author/editor can win only one GOLDIE per category. The IRC favors this approach because:

  – A greater number of authors/editors potentially will be named among GOLDIE finalists.

    » This should help ameliorate the impression that certain people and publishers dominate the awards.

  – GCLS has small categories (for entries numbering 6 through 14) for which there are now only three finalists and one winner; if procedures don't restrict the number of finalists, a small category potentially could have a single author/editor named as finalist #1, #2 or even #3.

2019 Recommendations: Increase Judging Pool

➤ Enhance efforts to recruit a larger pool of potential judges, both from within and outside GCLS. Current GCLS recruitment efforts, plus IRC suggestions, include:

- Email, other lists

  - Annual *Call for Judges* email sent to all GCLS members, as well as to people and organizations on GCLS Press Release mailing list (*Windy City Times, Curve, etc.*)

    – Suggestions: Include prior-year nominators in the *Call for Judges* to expand the available judging pool. To determine effectiveness of outreach efforts, add this question to the *2019 Judge Application Form*: *If you are not a current or former member of GCLS, please tell us how you learned about the GOLDIE Awards and our call for potential judges.*

- Personal contact at annual conference, other GCLS-sponsored events

  - Awards administrators currently identify people interested in being a judge, an effort that also should be a priority of GCLS board members and other volunteers.

    – Suggestions: Place special emphasis on recruiting experienced GCLS authors and editors. Recruit from among keynote and other speakers, writing academy instructors and students, etc.

- Social media platforms, other media

  - Links to *Call for Judges* are posted on GCLS Facebook and Twitter pages, along with other awards activities/deadlines.

    – Suggestions: Make recruiting judges a continuing priority on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms (LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.). Reach out to book clubs, online reader chats, bloggers and others in the literary community for potential judges. Place ads for judges in LGBT publications.

➤ Enhanced efforts should focus on potential judges with the literary and professional credentials – writers, editors, publishers, college professors, judges of other LGBT awards, book club participants, etc. – required for an exemplary and diverse judging pool.

2019 Recommendations: Increase Judging Pool

➢ Form a board-appointed "judge recruitment committee" to devise and execute strategies for recruiting GCLS and non-GCLS judges both in the US and internationally. Here are some suggested sites to consult:

- International LGBT organizations
  - This link provides information about numerous international LGBT organizations: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_LGBT_rights_organizations
- LGBT bookstores
  - This link provides addresses and phone numbers for LGBT bookstores across the US and Canada: http://www.qrd.org/qrd/www/media/print/bookstores/
- Pride centers
  - This link provides information for 34 Pride Centers in 20 US states: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_LGBT_community_centers_in_the_United_States
- LGBT community centers
  - This link provides information on numerous LGBT community centers across the US: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:LGBT_community_centers_in_the_United_States
- LGBT-related organizations
  - This link provides information for numerous LGBT-related organization across the US and internationally, including those specifically targeting bisexual and transgender communities, military, veteran, collegiate, medical, human rights and political organizations: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Lists_of_LGBT-related_organizations
- Colleges and universities
  - This link provides information about the top 30 "LGBT-friendly" universities in the US, each of which should have established LGBT student and resource centers, advisors and professors: https://www.campuspride.org/campuspride2016top30/
- Indie book publishers
  - This link provides information on 101 Indie publishers across the US (not necessarily LBGT only): http://bookmarket.com/101publishers.htm

2019 Recommendations: Document Procedures

➤ Review existing GCLS documents on procedures for recruiting, vetting and assigning judges. Update documents to reflect changes in the 2019 awards cycle. Identify and then codify additional relevant procedures for 2019.

➤ Documents <u>reviewed and updated for 2019</u> include*:

   ▪ **Award Category Descriptions.** This document contains Award Category Descriptions and Judging Guidelines for each of the 19 judged GOLDIE categories for 2019.

   ▪ **Awards Changes.** This document reiterates and updates 2018 changes, as well as 2019 changes.

   ▪ **Awards Nomination Process.** Beginning with the 2015 GOLDIE Awards, GCLS instituted a new process for nominating books using the online Awards Management/Judging system provided by OpenWater. This document contains reminders about the program.

   ▪ **Eligibility for Awards.** This document summaries eligibility requirements for books to be submitted for 2019 GOLDIE awards.

   ▪ **Judge's Agreement.** This document stipulates elements to which a potential judge must agree in four specific areas: (1) Confidentiality; (2) Conflict of Interest; (3) Ownership of Books and eBooks Received; and (4) Pledge of Understanding of my Responsibilities as a Judge.

   ▪ **Judge Application Form.** This form elicits information from potential judges and requires their eSignature to the formal **Judge's Agreement**. A main goal of the updated document is to give awards administrators better information to help them vet and assign judges.

   ▪ **Judging Process, Rules and Regulations.** This document highlights efforts undertaken annually by GCLS to "greatly reduce the prospect of favoritism, influence or other undesirable effects." The focus is on five key areas: (1) Judge Qualification and Selection; (2) The Judging Process; (3) Rules and Regulations to Determine Winners; (4) Rules & Regulations Governing the Ann Bannon Popular Choice Award & Tee Corinne Award for Outstanding Cover Design; and (5) Finality of Decisions.

Copies of documents are available upon request.

2019 Recommendations: Document Procedures

➢ Review existing GCLS documents on procedures for recruiting, vetting and assigning judges. Update documents to reflect changes in the 2019 awards cycle. Identify and then codify additional relevant procedures for 2019.

➢ Documents <u>newly codified for 2019</u> include*:

▪ **Procedures for Assigning, Vetting Judges.** This document outlines the (1) preparation, (2) assignments and (3) adjustments that awards administrators undertake each year to assign and vet judges.

▪ **Procedures for Independent Verification of Awards.** Two members of the IRC were asked to verify results for the first and second rounds of voting for the 2018 Ann Bannon and Tee Corrine specialty awards, and for finalists and winners in all 2018 judged categories. This document summarizes procedures followed in this independent verification of results.

• Given that the GCLS board has authorized independent review of voting results going forward, documentation of verification procedures is a must for consistency from year to year.

➢ The ultimate goal is for GCLS to post all judging-related documents on its website for perusal by the membership and other interested parties.

Copies of documents are available upon request.

2019 Recommendations: Beef Up Training

➢ Focus enhanced training efforts on <u>judging standards/education</u>, to ensure judges understand even more thoroughly what constitutes a well-written book, anthology, short story or poem.

- ▪ Team members working to revise evaluation instruments were asked to consider these two main questions:

    1) *What are the <u>essential elements</u> of an award-winning novel, anthology, short story, poetry collection, or work of nonfiction?*

    2) *What are the <u>essential elements</u> of an award-winning book in your genre category?*

    - • Answers to these questions led to the category descriptions, judging guidelines and evaluation items recommended by the IRC for 2019 awards.

- ▪ <u>The IRC supports</u> forming a board-appointed "judging education committee" to devise and execute strategies to train judges on essential elements embodied in the 2019 evaluation instruments. Approaches might include:

    - • Asking experienced judges of good standing to share their approach – hands-on tips about how they schedule their reading, take notes, complete open-ended questions, etc.

    - • Revising existing training documents, webinars, links, etc., to reflect the new instruments and approach.

    - • Tapping the expertise of GCLS presenters, panelists, writing academy participants, etc., to revise and/or devise appropriate training materials for 2019.

2019 Recommendations: Beef Up Training

➢ Focus enhanced training efforts on <u>judging standards/education</u>, to ensure judges understand even more thoroughly what constitutes a well-written book, anthology, short story or poem.

  ▪ Additional suggestions from the "beef up training" team and <u>endorsed by the IRC</u> include:

    • Revising and/or enhancing the training materials currently available at <u>https://goldencrown.secure-platform.com/a/page/judging/training#trainingmaterials</u>.

      – Enhance the <u>current guide</u> *to teach judges how to break a book into components – grammar, plot development, character development, etc. – so that each component can be addressed separately, then as a whole.*

      – Review the <u>current glossary</u> to be sure it provides *examples of technical rules that are most often violated. It would include such things as POV (Point of View), Head Hopping, Passive Voice, Mixing tenses, Plot holes, Loose ends, Over-use of adjectives, Run on sentences, Technically...or realistically inaccurate sentences (ex: ''Her eyes flew to the woman across the room'. Gazes fly... eyes stay in their sockets!), to name a few.*

    • Using an approach similar to *The Hero's Journey* as a training guide for teaching judges the basic mechanics of storytelling (plot structure, voice, POV, etc.). More information on this technique can be found at: <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hero%27s_journey</u>.

    • Using a checklist for critiquing entries, similar to those available at: <u>http://www.crayne.com/howcrit.html</u>, <u>http://www.crayne.com/download/casiltip.txt</u>, or <u>https://writerswrite.co.za/the-7-critical-elements-of-a-great-book/</u>.

2019 Recommendations: Beef Up Training

➤ Focus enhanced training efforts on <u>subjectivism</u>, to reiterate that judges must be unbiased and equally critical when reading and rating all GOLDIE entries.

- As expressed by the "beef up training" team:

  *Judges need to be unbiased and equally critical while reading all books they are assigned…even if the books are **not** written by their favorite authors…and **especially** if the books **are** written by their favorite authors. Judges also need to be able to judge books against a standard rather than against the other books in the category.*

- <u>The IRC agrees</u> that "subjectivism" is a main goal and, as such, is an important part of current training efforts. These efforts to ensure judges are "unbiased and equally critical" should continue to be emphasized and improved.

- Revised evaluation instruments for 2019 proposed by the IRC are structured so judges are "able to judge books against a standard rather than against other books in the category."

  - Essential elements of an award-winning novel, anthology, short story, poetry collection, or work of nonfiction – plus genre-specific items – are crucial underpinnings of the new evaluation instruments. Each book is rated independently on a 1-to-10 scale, something to be stressed repeatedly during training.

  - Judges are asked to inform awards administrators immediately if they believe an entry does not fit in the assigned category and should be moved elsewhere. If the entry remains in the category, judges also should agree to evaluate the entry without prejudice, even if they disagree with the decision.

2019 Recommendations: Beef Up Training

➢ Focus enhanced training efforts on <u>communication</u>, to encourage judges to engage in an open, continuing dialogue with awards administrators and trainers – and perhaps former judges or even each other – before, during and after the judging process.

▪ As expressed by the "beef up training" team:

Judges need to be able to talk to each other and to the administration to resolve questions or conflicts they may encounter during the judging. This would include review sessions with other judges during which they could explain or defend their position on any particular book. Individual judges should never be surprised by final winners in the categories they are judging.

▪ Ideas put forth by the team – <u>which the IRC</u> does not necessarily endorse but <u>agrees should be explored</u> – include:

- *Recommend using a "<u>buddy system" for judging</u>. This would provide judges with partners to discuss questions and concerns about the technical aspects of assigned books and the judging criteria. Buddy pairings could be made across assigned categories in order to ensure independent scoring. This pairing would strive to match more experienced with less experienced judges.*

- *Recommend setting up a <u>voluntary "team leader" for each category</u>. The leader would be the interface between the judges in a particular category and the administrators. That person would work with administrators to obtain answers for individual judges, and would not be responsible for reading any of the books in the category.*

- *Recommend a <u>scheduled meeting with all judges</u> approximately halfway through the judging process (after the second big drop of books are entered into the contest). This could be a good opportunity to keep the judges on track and motivated.*

- *Recommend judges from each category <u>confer with all of the other judges in the same category prior to submitting final judging forms</u>. The goal of this meeting is not to sway judges' opinions, but to understand how other judges came to their conclusions.*

2019 Recommendations: Beef Up Training

➢ Focus enhanced training efforts on <u>communication</u>, to encourage judges to engage in an open, continuing dialogue with awards administrators and trainers – and perhaps former judges or even each other – before, during and after the judging process.

  ▪ IRC research indicates that about three-quarters of 2016 judges agreed strongly that they could call on administrators if they "had questions or comments" (77%) and that they received sufficient communications throughout the judging process (74%).

  ▪ <u>The IRC agrees</u> that it is a worthwhile idea to explore communication within the judging teams, and that such communication must be done in an unbiased manner and for mutual support and discussion.

    • <u>The IRC disagrees</u> that judges should be asked to compare evaluations and to "explain or defend their position on any particular book" in conversations with other judges. Rather, judging is against set criteria in order to be objective and quantifiable. Judging outcomes must never be subjective and potentially dependent on how loudly or eloquently a person can speak.

  ▪ <u>The IRC recommends</u> that questions about technical aspects and judging criteria continue to go to awards administrators.

  ▪ <u>The IRC encourages</u> the board to be open to some sort of communication between members of the judging team (within their categories and/or the entire team) or perhaps with a team facilitator or "coach." Discussions might take place via online groups, traditional forum software, or awards management software.

  ▪ <u>The IRC endorses</u> the current practice of monthly updates to judges from awards administrators. Additional communication with judges should be encouraged – assuming there is a specific reason and format for doing so – on the part of trainers, facilitators, former judges and/or other appropriate parties.

2019 Recommendations: Enable Feedback

➢ Evaluation items are structured so that qualitative feedback and/or quantitative scores potentially can be made available for author/editor feedback. Primary goals would be to:

   1) provide authors/editors with feedback to help them improve their craft, and

   2) make the judging process more transparent to GOLDIE nominees.

➢ Qualitative feedback:

   • Qualitative feedback from judges could be shared <u>upon request</u>, based on responses to this open-ended question:

   Please summarize your overall thoughts about this book. Constructive criticisms, if any, would be especially helpful. An edited version of your insights and those of other judges—absent any identification—may be shared with the author(s).

   • Awards administrators, board liaisons and/or other designees would need to edit judges' remarks and distribute them as appropriate.

   • <u>The IRC's current recommendation</u> is to wait until after 2019 judging to determine if, indeed, this approach is viable going forward.

➢ Quantitative feedback:

   • Quantitative scores could be shared with author(s)/editor(s) <u>upon request</u>.

   • Statistics readily available via OpenWater for feedback include: total score; average score; numerical rank; and percentile rank. Other statistics – such as quantitative scores on given items or groups of items – would be more fruitful in helping authors/editors improve their craft.

   • <u>The IRC's current recommendation</u> is to wait until after 2019 judging to determine if, indeed, this approach is viable going forward.

Final Report to GCLS Board

Team Report

on

Evaluation Instruments

IRC Research Findings: Evaluation Instruments

➤ Several ideas for improving GOLDIE evaluation instruments had significant support from judges and key stakeholders in 2016-2017 research. These include:

- Clarifying and revising category descriptions and judging guidelines.

- Revising evaluation items to be more easily understood by judges.

- Eliminating redundant items in evaluation instruments.

- Revising genre-specific items to be more reflective of their category.

- Ensuring that rating scales make sense, based on questions asked.

- Limiting the number of sections that must be summarized in open-ended comments.

- Letting judges proclaim a book unworthy of an award early on so they don't have to keep reading clearly inferior books.

  - The IRC's recommendation is to table this latter idea for now, focusing instead on validating the new instruments. Feedback on preliminary drafts of questions intended for this purpose proved problematic and will need to be revisited when 2019 judging is complete.

IRC Research Findings: Category Definitions

➢ Category descriptions should tell readers what type of books they can expect – contemporary romance, mystery, science fiction, nonfiction, historical, erotic novels, etc.

➢ Category descriptions should make it easy for authors, publishers and others to choose the appropriate categories in which to nominate books.

➢ Categories should be exhaustive, meaning all qualified GOLDIE nominees have a place to be judged.

➢ To the extent possible, categories should be mutually exclusive, meaning all qualified GOLDIE nominees will be judged with "like" books – novels with novels, nonfiction with nonfiction, etc.

➢ Categories should be reevaluated after every awards cycle to be sure they reflect reader interests and publisher priorities.

  ▪ Categories with insufficient entries should be the focus of recruitment efforts and, if unsuccessful, merged with other categories or dropped.

2019 Key Changes: Evaluation Instruments

➤ **Specific enhancements and/or changes recommended for 2019 judged awards include:**

- Judges will rate all nominees on a 1-to-10 point scale rather than the 1-to-5 point scale used previously. Specifically, judges are told:

    - *Using a 10-point scale where "1" means you "Totally Disagree" and "10" means you "Totally Agree," please indicate how much you disagree or agree that each of the following statements describes this GOLDIE entry.*

        – Statements are intended to capture the essential elements of award-winning novels, anthologies, short stories, poetry collections, or works of nonfiction, as well as essential elements of award-winning books in genre-specific categories.

- To reflect growing diversity, all GOLDIE categories include this in proposed judging guidelines:

    - *These books must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.*

        – NOTE: The following IRC wording was rejected by the GCLS board: *These books must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about lesbian, bisexual, queer, transgender, sexually fluid, asexual, and other women who are attracted to women.*

- By eliminating and restructuring items, the number of closed-ended questions has been reduced significantly, typically by one-third to one-half. Open-ended questions have been reduced from eleven to two.

- GOLDIE entries must adhere to these length requirements:

    - Anthologies/collections – a minimum of three individual pieces totaling at least 40,000 words.
    - Novels – a minimum of 40,000 words.
    - Nonfiction books – a minimum of 40,000 words.
    - Poetry – submissions must be at least 48 pages long, and at least 50 percent "new" poems.

2019 Key Changes: Categories

- ➢ **Specific enhancements and/or changes recommended for 2019 judged awards include:**
  - ▪ GOLDIE categories are differentiated by four exhaustive, mutually exclusive "primary" groups:
    - ▪ **Fiction Anthologies/Collections**
      - – This primary group has two categories: **Fiction Anthologies**, for multi-author works, and **Fiction Collections**, for single-author works.
      - – <u>Aggregation Rules</u>:
        - » Evaluation instruments are "parallel," meaning categories can be combined for judging if either does not achieve the required six entries
    - ▪ **Nonfiction**
      - – This primary group has two categories: **General Nonfiction**, for books of narrative prose, and **Nonfiction Anthologies/Collections**, for multi-author anthologies and/or single-author collections.
      - – <u>Aggregation Rules</u>:
        - » To the extent possible, evaluation instruments are "parallel" and can be combined for judging. This is the only category in which books and anthologies/collections are combined.
    - ▪ **Poetry**
      - – This primary group has two categories: **Poetry Anthologies**, for multi-author anthologies, and **Poetry Poems/Collections**, for single-author poems or collections of poetry.
      - – <u>Aggregation Rules</u>:
        - » Evaluation instruments are "parallel" and can be combined for judging purposes.

2019 Key Changes: Categories

➢ **Specific enhancements and/or changes recommended for 2019 judged awards include:**

- ▪ **Fiction Novels**

    - • This primary group has 13 categories:

        1. **Contemporary Romance: Short Novels**
        2. **Contemporary Romance: Mid-Length Novels**
        3. **Contemporary Romance: Long Novels**
        4. **Erotic Novels**
        5. **General Fiction**
        6. **Historical Fiction**
        7. **Humorous Novels** *(new category)*
        8. **Mystery/Thriller/Crime**
        9. **New Adult Fiction** *(new category)*
        10. **Paranormal/Occult/Horror**
        11. **Romantic Blend**
        12. **Science Fiction/Fantasy**
        13. **Young Adult Fiction**

    - • Aggregation Rules:

        – Genre items for the three **Contemporary Romance** categories are identical, meaning entries can be combined and/or otherwise grouped for judging purposes.

        – Though not identical, genre items for **Paranormal/Occult/Horror** and **Science Fiction/Fantasy** are "parallel" and can be combined if either does not achieve six entries.

        – All remaining novel categories have distinct, genre-specific items that <u>cannot</u> be combined for judging purposes. Categories with fewer than six entries will not be awarded a GOLDIE but will remain eligible for Debut Novel.

        – Finalists and winners in **Debut Novel** will be determined by cross-novel scores on seventeen "essential elements" and this final parallel item common to all categories:

        This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the (GENRE) category.

2019 Key Changes: Categories

➢ **Specific enhancements and/or changes recommended for 2019 judged awards include:**

▪ **Fiction Novels (continued)**

• Judges will be asked to rate books on 17 essential elements of award winning novels:

1. *The opening of this novel draws readers into the story and makes them want to read further.*

2. *The premise of this novel does not depend too heavily on implausible coincidence or far-fetched circumstances that are inappropriate for this type of book.*

3. *This novel has enough conflict—that is, obstacles standing in the way of characters achieving their goals—to keep readers interested.*

4. *The plot of this novel is free of holes and logical inconsistencies—dropped story lines, puzzling disappearance of characters, underdeveloped or contrived story elements, actions leading to illogical consequences, etc.*

5. *This novel is appropriately paced. The story moves along smoothly without being too spare, rushed, saggy, bloated, or cluttered with unnecessary detail.*

6. *By the end of the novel, the author(s) has reasonably resolved all important plots, subplots, and character conflicts other than those clearly intended to remain unresolved.*

7. *This novel features compelling, three-dimensional main characters with credible strengths and flaws.*

8. *Secondary and/or minor characters are appropriately developed and do not detract from the main characters or plot.*

9. *The characters in this novel are portrayed in a believable way—dialogue is reflective of age and social class, actions are consistent with personalities, career levels are age-appropriate, backstories help deepen reader understanding, etc.*

10. *This novel has engaging, natural-sounding dialogue that brings the characters to life.*

11. *This novel is written in an engaging style. The story flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structure and length; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the novel; etc.*

12. *This novel is virtually free of such distractions as factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, unnecessary repetition, paragraph structures that don't make sense, and confusing or missing dialogue tags that make it difficult to know who is speaking.*

13. *Point of view is clear. The novel does not jump unnecessarily from the "head" of one character to another within a given scene or describe things a given character can't possibly know, see, hear, or feel. Point-of-view transitions within a scene, if any, are clearly signaled to the reader.*

14. *This novel has an effective balance between "showing" what happens (via actions, dialogue, and/or vivid details from a given character's point of view) and "telling" what happens (via explanations and summary).*

15. *This novel has a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of this story.*

16. *This novel has elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, a distinct voice, enjoyable confusion, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.*

17. *This book includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to women.*

2019 Key Changes: Categories

➢ **Specific enhancements and/or changes recommended for 2019 judged awards include:**

  ▪ **Fiction Novels** *(continued)*

    ▪ Several categories have significantly revised definitions:

    • **Contemporary Romance** is a modern (set within the past 25 years) love story in which the main characters overcome differences or challenges to achieve and/or sustain a romantic relationship. The love story must be the main focus of the novel, and it must have a happy or hopeful ending. This category is distinguished by novels whose main plot focuses on the obstacles a new couple faces to get together or the threats an existing couple must overcome to stay together. Sequels, series, and standalone novels in which the main plot centers on issues such as children, illness, career upheavals, etc., are eligible only when these issues significantly threaten the romantic relationship (i.e., sufficient to consider it the main plot). This category includes novels in which the main characters fall in love, as well as other romantic plots in which characters already may have fallen in love (e.g., a sequel or series based on a story in which the characters fell in love in an earlier book; a standalone story of an established couple experiencing difficulties in their romantic relationship).

    • **Romantic Blend** includes novels with two interwoven plot lines—a significant romance and a complex storyline involving elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events. For GCLS purposes, romance is defined as a love story in which the main characters overcome differences or challenges to achieve and/or sustain a romantic relationship. Suspense often includes a mystery, crime, chase or search with imminent personal and/or social peril. Intrigue often includes puzzles, covert identities, and/or corporate or geopolitical spy craft with both immediate and long-term consequences. Adventure often focuses on an unexpected physical trial where nature is the antagonist, or a purposeful quest for achievement where failure holds physical or psychological consequences for the protagonist(s). Dramatic events often are central to stories of social activism, legal or courtroom dramas, political power struggles and/or other externally inspired plots. Focus may shift throughout the novel from the romance to elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events and back again. Culmination of storylines in these novels must achieve an emotionally satisfying romance and resolve issues of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events. More than one of these elements may combine as they blend with the romantic arc.

      – NOTE: The former **Romantic Suspense/Intrigue/Adventure** category has been redefined to provide a more precise definition of "romantic" and also to include Dramatic Events.

2019 Key Changes: Categories

➢ **Specific enhancements and/or changes recommended for 2019 judged awards include:**

- **Fiction Novels** *(continued)*

  - Several categories have significantly revised definitions:

  - **Mystery/Thriller/Crime** includes novels in which a mystery, puzzle, chase, or search, particularly in the realm of crime, is central to the main plot. In **mystery** novels, a crime typically is committed early on, and the story focuses on discovering who committed the crime and why. Subgenres include cozy and hard-boiled mysteries; police procedurals; medical, scientific or forensic mysteries; and legal or courtroom dramas. In **thrillers**, the focus often is on stopping a crime or event beforehand, capturing the villain(s), solving/resolving the issue, and/or preventing another, potentially more devastating crime or event from occurring. Subgenres include political thrillers (set against the backdrop of a political power struggle); epic thrillers (perhaps threatening an entire community, city, or country); and psychological thrillers (in which the threat is more contained—for example, to the protagonist, her partner, and/or other family members). In **crime** novels, the focus typically is on the contest of wills between protagonist and villain. Subgenres include certain types of police procedurals, "noir" books with a morally compromised hero, and perhaps even a mystery/thriller blend.

    - NOTE: If the novel includes two interwoven plot lines – a significant romance and a complex storyline involving elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure and/or dramatic events—the book belongs in Romantic Blend. Supernatural thrillers should not be entered in this category but in Paranormal/Occult/Horror or Science Fiction/Fantasy.

  - **Paranormal/Occult/Horror** includes novels with familiar or recognizable settings in which the occult (vampires, werewolves, shape-shifters, zombies, witches, warlocks, etc.) or paranormal (ghosts, spirits, psychics, etc.) constitute a major part of the plot, as well as novels in which events of horror cause overwhelming feelings of fear, dread, or shock. Typically, paranormal novels are set in our current world as we know it—as opposed to an entirely new world—but with a paranormal/occult/horror twist. Novels with an alternative or futuristic setting should be entered in Science Fiction/Fantasy.

  - **Science Fiction/Fantasy** includes novels in which a significant portion or aspect of the story is set in a fantastical, future, or parallel world. Generally, these alternative settings include resources not currently available to humanity (magical abilities, alien experiences, yet-to-be invented technologies, etc.). Typically, science fiction stories are set in a futuristic setting, while fantasy novels take place in an alternative, entirely new world. Novels set in our current world as we know it, but with a paranormal/occult/horror twist, should not be entered in this GCLS category.

2019 Key Changes: Categories

➤ **Specific enhancements and/or changes recommended for 2019 judged awards include:**

- ▪ **Fiction Novels** *(continued)*

  - ▪ Several categories have significantly revised definitions:

    - • **Erotic Novels** include novels that contain a high level of sexual content, especially stories about erotic sexual interaction. The sex must be such an inherent part of the plot, setting, narrative, characterization, etc., that it could not be removed without damaging the storyline. In this category, sexual interactions are central to the work, though stories may contain elements of other genres (romance, paranormal, historical, etc.).

    - • **General Fiction** novels may address any subject or theme…Books in this category can break traditional fiction-writing conventions—endings may be upsetting or ambiguous, plot exposition may not be primary to the story, the author may employ new twists in dialogue or structure, etc. General fiction books can be a combination of any number of genres of fiction that cause them to lie outside the limits and rules of those specific genres.

    - • **Historical Fiction** novels are comprised of narratives that take place at least 25 years in the past and provide a realistic reconstruction of life in the historical time period in which they are based. The story must be predominantly set in a historical period, even if some of the scenes take place in the present. Historical novels should come as close to reflecting historical reality as possible.

    - • **Humorous Novels** range from light and bubbly, to dark and warped, and include comic situations, wry observations, satirical setups, or all of these and more. This category includes any novel that tells the story primarily through humorous devices—absurdity, hyperbole/exaggeration, incongruity, sarcasm, slapstick, surprise, irony, puns, etc. In this category, humorous elements must be part of the main plot/theme of the novel. There can be romantic elements, but they are not necessarily the main focus.

    - • **New Adult Fiction** includes novels written primarily for, and targeted to, readers aged 18 to 29. In New Adult Fiction, at least one main character must be aged 18 to 29 and dealing with one or more life "firsts"—e.g., first job, first apartment, first serious relation—and/or with adult situations for the first time. New Adult Fiction focuses on life after legal age, and how one deals with the beginnings of adulthood.

    - • **Young Adult Fiction** includes novels written primarily for, and targeted to, readers aged 12 to 18. Young adult books can be romances, historical fiction, science fiction, or any other genre, but they must focus on themes, characters, situations, and/or issues of interest and importance to 12-to-18-year-olds. Language must be readily accessible to young people in the targeted age group.

2019 Recommendations: Length Requirements

➢ All GCLS categories must meet specified length requirements. Specifically, to qualify for judging:

- **Anthologies/collections** must have:
  - A minimum of three individual pieces totaling at least 40,000 words.
- **Novels** must have:
  - A minimum of 40,000 words.
- **Nonfiction books** must have:
  - A minimum of 40,000 words.
- **Poetry** must meet these requirements:
  - Submissions must be at least 48 pages long.
  - At least 50 percent of the poems must be new, meaning not previously published.
    - Previously published poems include those that have appeared in print in any format (book, journal, anthology, magazine, etc.) or anywhere publicly online (including the nominee's blog or Facebook page but excluding critique groups).

2019 Recommendations: Diversity

➤ To reflect growing diversity, all GOLDIE categories include this stipulation in proposed judging guidelines:

   ▪ *These books must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.*

      • This wording is consistent with two primary GCLS goals: (1) *recognize and reward quality literary works about women who love women*, and (2) *be inclusive of friends/supporters of literature that celebrates women who love women*.

➤ Every evaluation instrument asks judges to rate nominees on this item:

   Using a 10-point scale where "1" means you "Totally Disagree" and "10" means you "Totally Agree," please indicate how much you disagree or agree that:

   This book includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to women.

Totally Disagree									*Totally Agree*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*

➤ Judges' training should consider emphasizing this operational definition of "significant":

   ▪ *The main character(s) identifies as a lesbian or other woman attracted to women, and/or the main character(s) is or ends up in a relationship with another woman, and/or the theme or plot deals with issues and situations faced by women who are attracted to other women.*

2019 Recommendations: Evaluation Items

➤ Judges will now be asked to rate all nominees on a 1-to-10 point scale rather than the 1-to-5 point scale used previously. Specifically, judges will be told:

▪ *Using a 10-point scale where "1" means you "Totally Disagree" and "10" means you "Totally Agree," please indicate how much you disagree or agree that each of the following statements describes this GOLDIE entry.*

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

➤ Using a 1-to-10 scale allows for greater discrimination in scores and can be easily programmed into awards management software.

➤ Here is the prior 1-to-5 scale, which all too often did not "match" the question being asked:

a) Excellent (5)

b) Above Average (4)

c) Average (3)

d) Below Average (2)

e) Poor/Unacceptable (1)

a. Excellent (5) b. Above Average (4) c. Average (3) d. Below Average (2) e. Poor/Unacceptable (1)	Does the writing move you along through the story with mastery and effectiveness?
a. Excellent (5) b. Above Average (4) c. Average (3) d. Below Average (2) e. Poor/Unacceptable (1)	Do the timelines make sense so that you are grounded and know where you are in time? Where needed/appropriate, are you given cues (or dateline/chapter headers) that allow you to keep track of when and where you are?

2019 Recommendations: Evaluation Items

➤ All closed-ended items are written as statements, and judges are asked how much they agree or disagree with each one on a 1-to-10 point scale (totally disagree) to 10 (totally agree) point scale.

- The resulting numerical scores from each judge are averaged to determine finalists and winners in the category.

- The tie-breaker protocol remains the same:

  - FINALISTS: In the event that there is a tie for the last ranked finalist position, there shall be more finalists than the calculated 25% for that category.

  - WINNERS: In the event that in a category where there is a tie for the last ranked winner position, a reserve judge will read and evaluate the two books in question. The reserve judge's scores will be added to the totals of the original judges' scores for each book and the scores will be re-calculated to determine the winner.

➤ By eliminating and restructuring items, the number of closed-ended questions has been reduced significantly – typically by one-third to one-half. For example:

- Poetry items now number 25 vs. 40 in 2018, a 38% reduction.

- Contemporary romance items now number 24 vs. 49 in 2018, a 51% reduction.

- Young Adult Fiction items now number 25 vs. 49 in 2018, a 49% reduction.

2019 Recommendations: Evaluation Items

➢ Judges are asked to complete only two open-ended items, versus 11 in 2018.

- ▪ This open-ended question is the first asked in all categories:

  Thinking back on the GOLDIE entry you are about to judge, what were your overall impressions, positive and/or negative?

  - – The purpose is threefold:

    1) to focus judges' recall specifically on the entry they are about to rate;

    2) to respond to concerns in pretests that judges should be given more opportunity to express their views; and

    3) to give awards administrators a quick way to check if they become concerned that a particular judge isn't satisfactorily fulfilling her obligations.

- ▪ This open-end will be the final question asked in all categories:

  Please summarize your overall thoughts about this book. Constructive criticisms, if any, would be especially helpful. An edited version of your insights and those of other judges—absent any identification—may be shared with the author(s).

  - – The primary purpose would be to provide authors/editors with feedback to help them improve their craft. This also would provide a quick check for awards administrators if they have issues or concerns with a particular judge.

IRC Approach: Evaluation Items

➢ Initially, the focus was on "revising" current evaluation instruments. However, teams moved quickly to focus on "re-conceptualizing" and then "restructuring" how GCLS entries are judged in each category.

➢ These became the two main questions team members considered:

- *What are the essential elements of an award-winning novel, anthology, short story, poetry collection, or work of nonfiction?*

- *What are the essential elements of an award-winning book in your genre category?*

➢ Answers to those questions led to the category descriptions, judging guidelines and evaluation items detailed in this report.

➢ Other evaluation-item approaches included:

- Making sure "essential elements" are not repeated in genre-specific items.

- To the extent possible, designing instruments with "parallel" items so small categories can be combined as necessary.

- Writing items so volunteer judges can understand and be trained on them more easily.

IRC Approach: Four Primary GCLS Groups

➢ GOLDIE categories are differentiated by four exhaustive, mutually exclusive "primary" groups:

- **Fiction Anthologies/Collections**

- **Fiction Novels**

- **Nonfiction**

- **Poetry**

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            ┌──────────────────────────┐
            │   GCLS GOLDIE AWARDS:     │
            │   FOUR PRIMARY GROUPS     │
            └──────────────────────────┘
```

| Fiction Anthologies/ Collections | Fiction Novels | Nonfiction | Poetry |
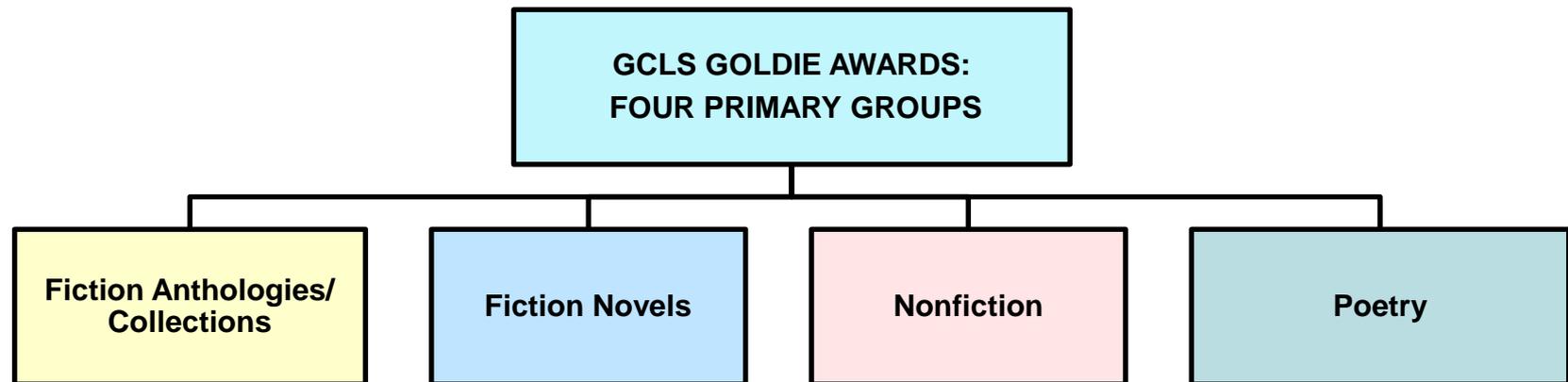
➢ These four primary groups, as well as categories within each group, are highlighted in subsequent sections of this report.

FICTION ANTHOLOGIES/COLLECTIONS

Category Definitions

Judging Guidelines

Evaluation Items

Fiction Anthologies/Collections: Categories

➤ The primary **Fiction Anthologies/Collections** group has two categories:

▪ **Fiction Anthologies**, for multi-author works.

▪ **Fiction Collections**, for single-author works.

➤ These two categories will be combined if either does not achieve the required six entries.

➤ Evaluation instruments are "parallel," so the two categories can be combined for judging purposes.

➤ Based on 2018 submissions, five judges will be recruited to read both of the **Fiction Anthologies/Collections** categories.

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                    │  GCLS GOLDIE AWARDS:     │
                    │  FOUR PRIMARY GROUPS     │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
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| Fiction Anthologies/Collections | Fiction Novels | Nonfiction | Poetry |

- Fiction Anthologies
- Fiction Collections
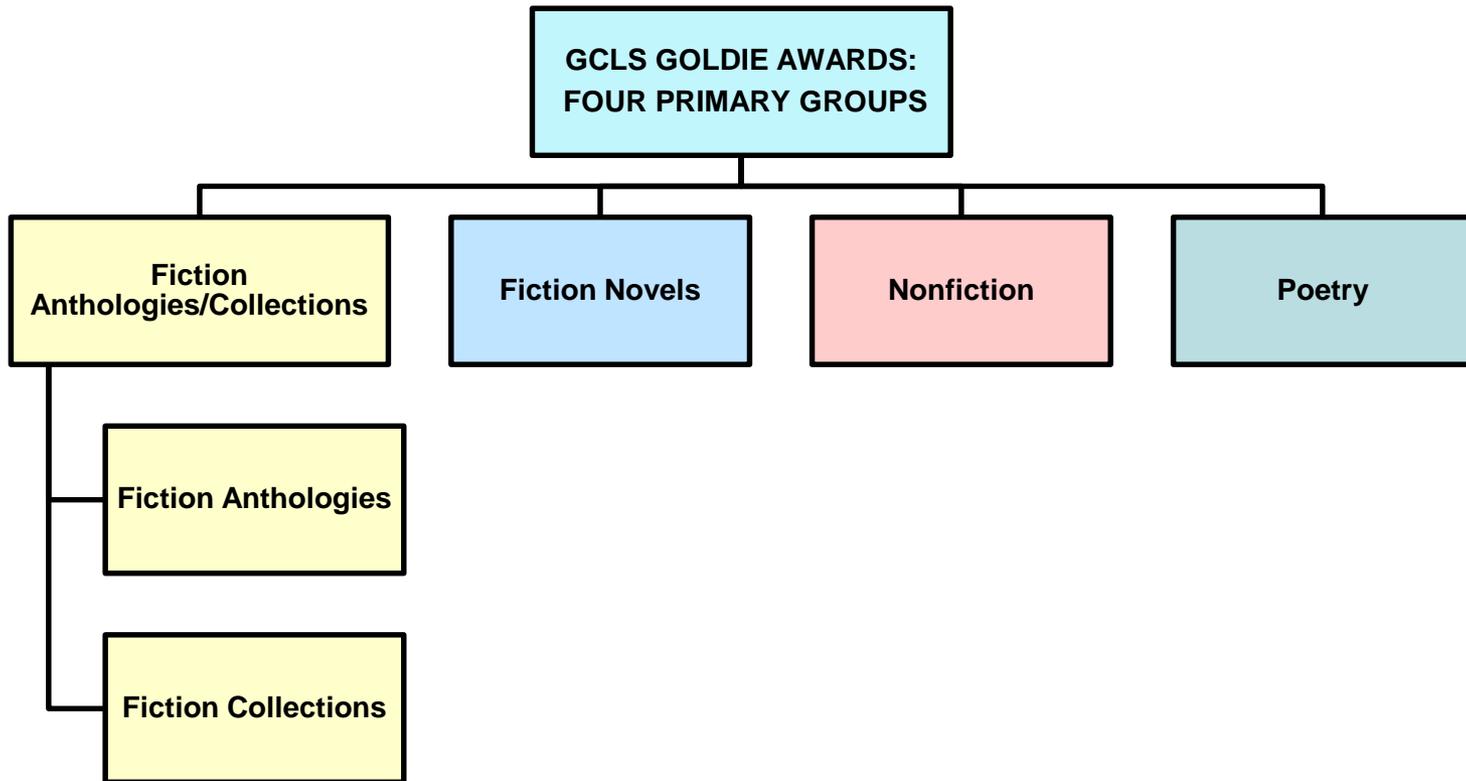
Fiction Anthologies

Definition: This category includes multi-author anthologies containing fictional works that share a theme, purpose, style, approach, and/or source (e.g., related works from a single publisher, authors from a certain geographic locale, works about a specific vocation or pastime). All entries must be fictional works chosen by the compiler(s)—a single editor or publisher, a group of editors, a group of authors, etc.

Judging Guideline: These anthologies must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. Individual pieces in the anthology should be self-contained yet contribute to the book's overall quality. For GCLS purposes, anthologies devoted to poetry should not be entered in this category but in the appropriate poetry category.

Evaluation Items:
1. This anthology has a compelling theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
2. This anthology is organized in an effective manner, flowing smoothly from beginning to middle to end, with individual pieces placed strategically.
3. The individual pieces in this anthology consistently reflect, illuminate, and/or reinforce important facets of its theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
4. The individual pieces in this anthology contain fresh, interesting, entertaining, and/or informative elements relevant to its theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
5. The individual pieces in this anthology are self-contained and able to stand alone. Each piece can be comprehended in one reading.
6. The opening of the individual pieces in this anthology draws readers into the story and makes them want to read further.
7. The individual pieces in this anthology do not depend too heavily on implausible coincidence or far-fetched circumstances that are inappropriate for this type of work.
8. The individual pieces in this anthology have sufficient conflict—that is, obstacles standing in the way of characters achieving their goals—to keep readers interested.
9. The individual pieces in this anthology are free of plot holes and logical inconsistencies—dropped storylines, puzzling disappearance of characters, underdeveloped and/or contrived story elements, actions leading to illogical consequences, etc.
10. The individual pieces in this anthology are appropriately paced. The writing skillfully moves the story along without being too spare, rushed, saggy, bloated, or cluttered with unnecessary detail.
11. By the end of each piece in this anthology, all important plots, subplots, and character conflicts are reasonably resolved, other than those clearly intended to remain unresolved.
12. The individual pieces in this anthology feature compelling, three-dimensional main characters with credible strengths and flaws.
13. The characters in the individual pieces in this anthology are portrayed in a believable way—dialogue is reflective of age and social class, actions are consistent with personalities, career levels are age-appropriate, backstories help deepen reader understanding, etc.
14. The individual pieces in this anthology have engaging, natural-sounding dialogue that brings the characters to life.
15. The individual pieces in this anthology are written in an engaging style. The writing flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structures and lengths; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the book; etc.
16. This anthology is virtually free of such distractions as factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, unnecessary repetition, paragraph structures that don't make sense, and confusing or missing dialogue tags that make it difficult to know who is speaking.
17. Point of view in the individual pieces in this anthology is clear. The writing does not jump unnecessarily from the "head" of one character to another within a given scene or describe things a given character can't possibly know, see, hear, or feel. Point-of-view transitions within a scene, if any, are clearly signaled to the reader.
18. The individual pieces in this anthology have an effective balance between "showing" what happens (via actions, dialogue, and/or vivid details from a given character's point of view) and "telling" what happens (via explanations and summary).
19. The individual pieces in this anthology have a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of the story.
20. The individual pieces in this anthology have elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, a distinctive voice, enjoyable confusion, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.
21. This anthology includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to women.
22. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Fiction Anthologies** category.

Fiction Collections

Definition: This category includes single-author collections containing fictional works that share a theme, purpose, style, and/or approach. All entries must be fictional works chosen by the compiler(s)—a single author, editor or publisher, a group of editors, etc.

Judging Guideline: These collections must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. Individual pieces in the collection should be self-contained yet contribute to the book's overall quality. For GCLS purposes, collections devoted to poetry should not be entered in this category but in the appropriate poetry category.

Evaluation Items:
1. This collection has a compelling theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
2. This collection is organized in an effective manner, flowing smoothly from beginning to middle to end, with individual pieces placed strategically.
3. The individual pieces in this collection consistently reflect, illuminate, and/or reinforce important facets of its theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
4. The individual pieces in this collection contain fresh, interesting, entertaining, and/or informative elements relevant to its theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
5. The individual pieces in this collection are self-contained and able to stand alone. Each piece can be comprehended in one reading.
6. The opening of the individual pieces in this collection draws readers into the story and makes them want to read further.
7. The individual pieces in this collection do not depend too heavily on implausible coincidence or far-fetched circumstances that are inappropriate for this type of work.
8. The individual pieces in this collection have sufficient conflict—that is, obstacles standing in the way of characters achieving their goals—to keep readers interested.
9. The individual pieces in this collection are free of plot holes and logical inconsistencies—dropped storylines, puzzling disappearance of characters, underdeveloped and/or contrived story elements, actions leading to illogical consequences, etc.
10. The individual pieces in this collection are appropriately paced. The writing skillfully moves the story along without being too spare, rushed, saggy, bloated, or cluttered with unnecessary detail.
11. By the end of each piece in this collection, all important plots, subplots, and character conflicts are reasonably resolved, other than those clearly intended to remain unresolved.
12. The individual pieces in this collection feature compelling, three-dimensional main characters with credible strengths and flaws.
13. The characters in the individual pieces in this collection are portrayed in a believable way—dialogue is reflective of age and social class, actions are consistent with personalities, career levels are age-appropriate, backstories help deepen reader understanding, etc.
14. The individual pieces in this collection have engaging, natural-sounding dialogue that brings the characters to life.
15. The individual pieces in this collection are written in an engaging style. The writing flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structures and lengths; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the book; etc.
16. This collection is virtually free of such distractions as factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, unnecessary repetition, paragraph structures that don't make sense, and confusing or missing dialogue tags that make it difficult to know who is speaking.
17. Point of view in the individual pieces in this collection is clear. The writing does not jump unnecessarily from the "head" of one character to another within a given scene or describe things a given character can't possibly know, see, hear, or feel. Point-of-view transitions within a scene, if any, are clearly signaled to the reader.
18. The individual pieces in this collection have an effective balance between "showing" what happens (via actions, dialogue, and/or vivid details from a given character's point of view) and "telling" what happens (via explanations and summary).
19. The individual pieces in this collection have a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of the story.
20. The individual pieces in this collection have elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, a distinctive voice, enjoyable confusion, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.
21. This collection includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to women.
22. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Fiction Collections** category.
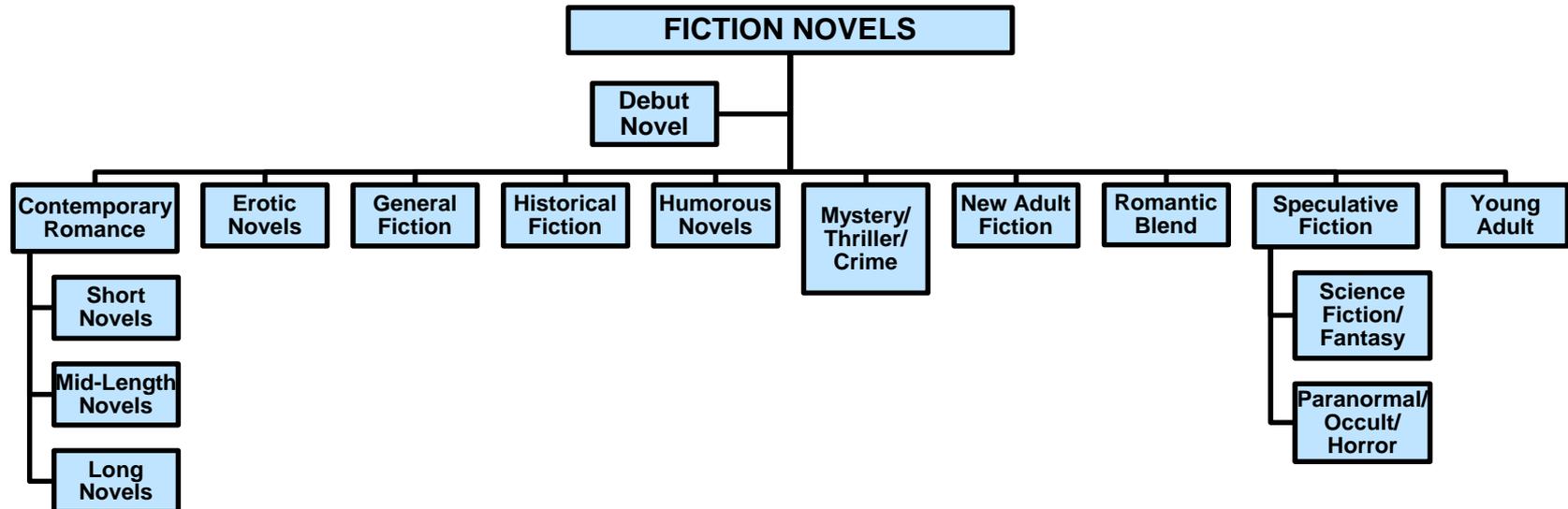
FICTION NOVELS

Categories

Cross-Novel Essential Elements

Fiction Novels: Categories

➢ The primary **Fiction Novels** group has 13 categories, including three subsumed under Contemporary Romance and two under Speculative Fiction.

  ▪ Genre items for Contemporary Romance are identical, meaning entries can be combined and/or otherwise grouped for judging purposes.

  ▪ Though not identical, genre items for Science Fiction/Fantasy and Paranormal/Occult/Horror are "parallel," meaning they can be combined if either does not achieve the required six entries.

  ▪ All remaining novel categories have distinct, genre-specific items that cannot be combined for judging purposes. Categories with fewer than six entries will not be awarded a GOLDIE but will remain eligible for Debut Novel.

➢ Finalists and winners in Debut Novel will be determined by cross-novel scores on "essential elements" and the final parallel genre item common to all novel categories—*This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the (GENRE) category.*

➢ Nominees in two new categories for 2019 – Humorous Novels and New Adult Fiction – will be asked to pick a second category in case the new category does not achieve the required six entries.

➢ Five judges will be recruited to read entries in each novel category, based on 2018 submissions.

Fiction Novels: Essential Elements

➢ **Opening/Premise**

1. The opening of this novel draws readers into the story and makes them want to read further.

2. The premise of this novel does not depend too heavily on implausible coincidence or far-fetched circumstances that are inappropriate for this type of book.

➢ **Plot**

3. This novel has enough conflict—that is, obstacles standing in the way of characters achieving their goals—to keep readers interested.

4. The plot of this novel is free of holes and logical inconsistencies—dropped story lines, puzzling disappearance of characters, underdeveloped or contrived story elements, actions leading to illogical consequences, etc.

5. This novel is appropriately paced. The story moves along smoothly without being too spare, rushed, saggy, bloated, or cluttered with unnecessary detail.

6. By the end of the novel, the author(s) has reasonably resolved all important plots, subplots, and character conflicts other than those clearly intended to remain unresolved.

➢ **Characters**

7. This novel features compelling, three-dimensional main characters with credible strengths and flaws.

8. Secondary and/or minor characters are appropriately developed and do not detract from the main characters or plot.

9. The characters in this novel are portrayed in a believable way—dialogue is reflective of age and social class, actions are consistent with personalities, career levels are age-appropriate, backstories help deepen reader understanding, etc.

10. This novel has engaging, natural-sounding dialogue that brings the characters to life.

Fiction Novels: Essential Elements (continued)

- ➢ **Writing**

  11. *This novel is written in an engaging style. The story flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structure and length; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the novel; etc.*

  12. *This novel is virtually free of such distractions as factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, unnecessary repetition, paragraph structures that don't make sense, and confusing or missing dialogue tags that make it difficult to know who is speaking.*

  13. *Point of view is clear. The novel does not jump unnecessarily from the "head" of one character to another within a given scene or describe things a given character can't possibly know, see, hear, or feel. Point-of-view transitions within a scene, if any, are clearly signaled to the reader.*

  14. *This novel has an effective balance between "showing" what happens (via actions, dialogue, and/or vivid details from a given character's point of view) and "telling" what happens (via explanations and summary).*

- ➢ **Setting/Reader Impact**

  15. *This novel has a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of this story.*

  16. *This novel has elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, a distinct voice, enjoyable confusion, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.*

  17. *This book includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to women.*

- ➢ **Cross-Genre Item**

  18. *This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the (GENRE) category.*

FICTION NOVELS

Category Definitions

Judging Guidelines

Genre Items

*Contemporary Romance**

Definition: Contemporary Romance is a modern (set within the past 25 years) love story in which the main characters overcome differences or challenges to achieve and/or sustain a romantic relationship. The love story must be the main focus of the novel, and it must have a happy or hopeful ending. This category is distinguished by novels whose main plot focuses on the obstacles a new couple faces to get together or the threats an existing couple must overcome to stay together. Sequels, series, and standalone novels in which the main plot centers on issues such as children, illness, career upheavals, etc., are eligible only when these issues significantly threaten the romantic relationship (i.e., sufficient to consider it the main plot).

Judging Guideline: This category includes novels in which the main characters fall in love, as well as other romantic plots in which characters already may have fallen in love (e.g., a sequel or series based on a story in which the characters fell in love in an earlier book; a standalone story of an established couple experiencing difficulties in their romantic relationship). These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Genre Items:
1. This novel contains a compelling romantic relationship featuring two characters who exhibit—through realistic interactions—emotional and physical chemistry with each other.
2. This novel depicts a love that is so special, it is clear by the end of the book that this couple belongs together.
3. It is believable that the two characters in this novel would be attracted to each other, despite any differences in personality, education, status, or values.
4. The story is driven primarily by a romantic plot—i.e., a plot that centers on the challenges a couple must overcome to be together, or to stay together.
5. In this novel, the challenges that must be overcome are sufficiently complex, as opposed to overblown minor obstacles or simple misunderstandings that might be resolved easily with a brief conversation.
6. This novel has an emotionally satisfying ending for the couple, one in which they are happy and/or hopeful because they face their future together; a couple need not be in a fully committed relationship by the end of the book, but they both should feel happy where they are.
7. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Contemporary Romance** category.

*Definitions, judging guidelines and evaluation items are identical for the three Contemporary Romance Categories: Short Novels (40,000-70,000 words), Mid-Length Novels (70,001-85,000 words), and Long Novels (85,001 plus words).

Erotic Novels

Definition: This category includes novels that contain a high level of sexual content, especially stories about erotic sexual interaction. The sex must be such an inherent part of the plot, setting, narrative, characterization, etc., that it could not be removed without damaging the storyline.

Judging Guideline: In this category, sexual interactions are central to the work, though stories may contain elements of other genres (romance, paranormal, historical, etc.). Sexual relationships must be a driving force, with intensely erotic scenes that flow naturally from the overall story or premise. For GCLS purposes, all physical and/or sexual encounters in erotic novels must reflect mutual consent. These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Genre Items:
1. The erotic scenes in this novel flow naturally from the overall story.
2. The plot of this erotic novel is appropriately developed within the context of its sex-centered story.
3. This novel employs imaginative, innovative, and/or unique ideas within the sex-centered boundaries of erotica.
4. This erotic novel is sufficiently provocative, alluring, and/or sexy to kick up the reader's heartbeat a few notches.
5. The dialogue in this erotic novel—particularly in sexual situations—naturally reflects the character who is speaking.
6. Clarity of spatial relationships is particularly important in sex scenes. Readers of this erotic novel are almost never confused about which characters are doing what to whom, where these sexual interactions are taking place, how they could have gotten themselves into the various positions described, etc.
7. The author(s) skillfully negotiates the complex nuances of consent. This erotic novel is free of disturbing scenes, episodes, physical encounters, and other coercive scenarios of non-consensual sex.
8. Readers will remember this book as a hot, sexy, and exciting erotic novel.
9. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Erotic Novels** category.

General Fiction

Definition: General Fiction novels may address any subject or theme. Careful use of language, style, and technique may be as important as subject matter, and character development may or may not take precedence over plot. Books in this category can break traditional fiction-writing conventions—endings may be upsetting or ambiguous, plot exposition may not be primary to the story, the author may employ new twists in dialogue or structure, etc.

General fiction books can be a combination of any number of genres of fiction that cause them to lie outside the limits and rules of those specific genres. For GCLS purposes, examples include a dramatic story for which a romance is not the primary arc, a love story that does not have a happy or hopeful ending, character studies, or fresh genres not included in other categories.

Judging Guideline: These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. In this category, judges may encounter styles that do not adhere to traditional genre-writing norms and expectations.

Genre Items:

1. Fans of general fiction novels absolutely will want to read this book, maybe even more than once.

2. This novel contains fresh, interesting, insightful, and/or entertaining elements relevant to its premise, plot, theme, style, and/or approach.

3. The writing in this novel is consistent with the style, approach, and/or techniques used by the author(s) throughout the book, even if those techniques are experimental and/or unconventional.

4. This novel employs imaginative, innovative, and/or unique ideas to put a clever twist on often-used stereotypes, themes, and approaches.

5. This author(s) writes in an engaging way that evokes the senses (e.g., sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) in pleasing proportion.

6. This novel will move readers in one or more important ways—perhaps by making them laugh or cry or experience a sense of wonder, hope, sadness, nostalgia, joy, purposeful confusion, and/or other emotions.

7. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **General Fiction** category.

Humorous Novels

Definition: Humor ranges from light and bubbly, to dark and warped, and includes comic situations, wry observations, satirical setups, or all of these and more. This category includes any novel that tells the story primarily through humorous devices—absurdity, hyperbole/exaggeration, incongruity, sarcasm, slapstick, surprise, irony, puns, etc.

Judging Guideline: In this category, humorous elements must be part of the main plot/theme of the novel. There can be romantic elements, but they are not necessarily the main focus. These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Genre Items:
1. Fans of humorous novels will absolutely want to read this book, maybe even more than once.
2. Humorous details are skillfully woven throughout the novel's plot, dialogue, and other character interactions.
3. This novel contains fresh, interesting, and/or entertaining humorous elements relevant to its premise, plot, theme, style, and/or approach.
4. The author(s) of this novel skillfully uses one or more humorous techniques—absurdity, hyperbole/exaggeration, incongruity, sarcasm, slapstick, surprise, irony, puns, etc.—to engage the reader.
5. This novel employs imaginative, innovative, and/or unique ideas to put a surprising or unexpected humorous twist on often-used stereotypes and themes.
6. Readers will be moved by the humorous elements in this novel in one or more important ways—perhaps by making them laugh or cry or experience a sense of wonder, hope, nostalgia, joy, purposeful confusion, and/or other emotions.
7. When thinking back on this novel, readers will recall elements of humor that stayed with them long after the book was finished.
8. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Humorous Novels** category.

Historical Fiction

Definition: These novels are comprised of narratives that take place at least 25 years in the past and provide a realistic reconstruction of life in the historical time period in which they are based. The story must be predominantly set in a historical period, even if some of the scenes take place in the present. Historical novels should come as close to reflecting historical reality as possible.

Judging Guideline: In this category, the historical elements must be part of the main plot/theme of the book. There can be romantic elements, but they are not necessarily the main focus. These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Genre Items:
1. Fans of historical fiction will absolutely want to read this novel, maybe even more than once.
2. The details in this novel are accurate for the historical time period in which the novel is set as far as events, dress, technology, and everyday life are concerned.
3. The characters in this novel accurately reflect the values, beliefs, and knowledge of the historical time period. Any exceptions are appropriate within the context of the story.
4. The descriptions in this novel transport readers into the past by painting a vivid picture of the historical time period.
5. The dialogue in this novel fits the historical time period.
6. The events recounted in this novel could realistically have taken place during the historical time period in which the novel is set.
7. Historical details are skillfully woven throughout the novel's plot, dialogue, and other character interactions, rather than dumped in information blocks that stop the momentum of the story.
8. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Historical Fiction** category.

Mystery/Thriller/Crime

Definition: This category includes novels in which a mystery, puzzle, chase, or search, particularly in the realm of crime, is central to the main plot. In **mystery novels**, a crime typically is committed early on, and the story focuses on discovering who committed the crime and why. Subgenres include cozy and hard-boiled mysteries; police procedurals; medical, scientific or forensic mysteries; and legal or courtroom dramas. In **thrillers**, the focus often is on stopping a crime or event beforehand, capturing the villain(s), solving/resolving the issue, and/or preventing another, potentially more devastating crime or event from occurring. Subgenres include political thrillers (set against the backdrop of a political power struggle); epic thrillers (perhaps threatening an entire community, city, or country); and psychological thrillers (in which the threat is more contained—for example, to the protagonist, her partner, and/or other family members). In **crime novels**, the focus typically is on the contest of wills between protagonist and villain. Subgenres include certain types of police procedurals, "noir" books with a morally compromised hero, and perhaps even a mystery/thriller blend.

Judging Guideline: In this category, the major focus is on catching criminals, saving the day, and solving crimes. All entries must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. For GCLS purposes, no love story or personal issues for the main character(s) should ever constitute the main plot (though minor subplots of romance or personal issues may exist). If the novel includes two interwoven plot lines – a significant romance and a complex storyline involving elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure and/or dramatic events—the book belongs in Romantic Blend. Supernatural thrillers should not be entered in this category but in Science Fiction/Fantasy or Paranormal/Occult/Horror.

Genre Items:
1. Fans of mysteries, thrillers, and/or crime novels will absolutely want to read this book, maybe even more than once.
2. Details relevant to this mystery, thriller and/or crime novel are skillfully woven throughout the book's plot, dialogue, and other character interactions.
3. The author(s) successfully uses one or more techniques appropriate to this mystery, thriller and/or crime novel—red herrings, shadowed clues, overt clues, unexpected plot twists, an inciting incident or turning point, etc.—to engage the reader. Remember, a quality book might employ only one or two such techniques and still be highly engaging to readers.
4. This mystery, thriller and/or crime novel imaginative, innovative, and/or unique ideas to put a surprising or unexpected twist on often-used stereotypes, themes and approaches.
5. This mystery, thriller and/or crime novel contains sufficient suspense, tension and/or increased risk for the protagonist(s) to keep readers keenly interested in finding out what happens next.
6. The author(s) concludes this mystery, thriller, and/or crime novel in a satisfying way.
7. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Mystery/Thriller/Crime** category.

New Adult Fiction

Definition: This category includes novels written primarily for, and targeted to, readers aged 18 to 29. In New Adult Fiction, at least one main character must be aged 18 to 29 and dealing with one or more life "firsts"—e.g., first job, first apartment, first serious relation—and/or with adult situations for the first time. New Adult Fiction focuses on life after legal age, and how one deals with the beginnings of adulthood.

Judging Guideline: In this category, new adult themes must be the focus. These novels can be romance, science fiction, or any other genre, but must focus on the 18 to 29 age group. Events do not necessarily have to take place in the present. These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Genre Items:
1. This novel should be of considerable interest to new adults aged 18 to 29.
2. This novel successfully focuses on one or more of the life "firsts" that must be central to new adult themes— complex rites of passage (e.g., first job, first apartment first serious relationship), evolving identities and friendships, uncertain futures with increased responsibilities, increasing self-awareness and growth, etc.
3. The details in this novel are accurate for the time period(s) presented as far as events, dress, technology, popular culture, and everyday life are concerned. Exceptions, if any, are appropriate for this type of work— science fiction, fantasy, paranormal, alternative histories, etc.
4. This novel has natural-sounding dialogue that realistically reflects people in the new adult age group.
5. Characters of various races, classes, cultures, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., portrayed in this novel are presented in ways that avoid stereotypes.
6. By the end of the novel, one or more of the new adult characters develops and/or changes in significant ways or—in the case of an anti-hero—provides an encouraging lesson by this failure to do so.
7. This novel has a strong supporting cast of secondary characters that helps one or more of the new adult characters develop and/or change in significant ways.
8. Others who have read this novel will be highly likely to recommend it to a relative, friend, or other acquaintance aged 18 to 29.
9. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **New Adult Fiction** category.

Paranormal/Occult/Horror

Definition: This category includes novels with familiar or recognizable settings in which the occult (vampires, werewolves, shape-shifters, zombies, witches, warlocks, etc.) or paranormal (ghosts, spirits, psychics, etc.) constitute a major part of the plot, as well as novels in which events of horror cause overwhelming feelings of fear, dread, or shock.

Judging Guideline: In this category, paranormal, occult, or horror elements are essential to the story. Though subplots of romance and/or drama may exist, the major focus does not have to be on love and romance. These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. Typically, paranormal novels are set in our current world as we know it—as opposed to an entirely new world—but with a paranormal/occult/horror twist. Novels with an alternative or futuristic setting should not be entered in this GCLS category but in Science Fiction/Fantasy.

Genre Items:
1. Fans of paranormal, occult, and/or horror novels will absolutely want to read this book, maybe even more than once.
2. The author(s) effectively integrates recognizable features of paranormal, occult, and/or horror into the plot of this novel.
3. This novel weaves together tone, mood, and imagery to create a complex, internally consistent world.
4. Readers will be able to suspend disbelief and lose themselves in this story, despite its otherworldly elements.
5. This novel will evoke emotion in readers—e.g., by scaring them (in the case of a horror novel) or fascinating them (in the case of a paranormal and/or occult novel).
6. This novel employs imaginative, innovative, and/or unique ideas and puts a surprising or unexpected twist on often-used stereotypes and themes (vampires, ghosts, werewolves, etc.).
7. The paranormal, occult, and/or horror elements of this novel seem logical—e.g., paranormal creatures adhere to clearly defined rules and limitations.
8. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Paranormal/Occult/Horror** category.

*Romantic Blend**

Definition: Novels in this category include two interwoven plot lines—a significant romance and a complex storyline involving elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events. For GCLS purposes, **romance** is defined as a love story in which the main characters overcome differences or challenges to achieve and/or sustain a romantic relationship. **Suspense** often includes a mystery, crime, chase or search with imminent personal and/or social peril. **Intrigue** often includes puzzles, covert identities, and/or corporate or geopolitical spy craft with both immediate and long-term consequences. **Adventure** often focuses on an unexpected physical trial where nature is the antagonist, or a purposeful quest for achievement where failure holds physical or psychological consequences for the protagonist(s). **Dramatic events** often are central to stories of social activism, legal or courtroom dramas, political power struggles and/or other externally inspired plots. Focus may shift throughout the novel from the romance to elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events and back again. Culmination of storylines in these novels must achieve an emotionally satisfying romance and resolve issues of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events. More than one of these elements may combine as they blend with the romantic arc.

Judging Guideline: Judging in this category should not give undue weight to either the romance or the suspense/intrigue/adventure/dramatic events but consider both storylines together. The romance must have a happy or hopeful ending. These novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. This category is not to be confused with Mystery/Thriller/Crime Novels (where a mystery, thriller, and/or crime constitutes the main plot line) or General Fiction (where romance with a happy or hopeful ending does not constitute a significant plot line).

Genre Items:
1. This novel skillfully blends its two interwoven plot lines—a significant romance and a complex storyline of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events—into a unified, pleasing whole.
2. This novel contains a compelling romantic relationship featuring two characters who exhibit—through realistic interactions—emotional and physical chemistry with each other.
3. It is believable that the two characters in this novel would be romantically attracted to each other, despite any differences in personality, education, status, or values.
4. Details relevant to the suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events of this novel are skillfully blended throughout the book's plot, dialogue, and other character interactions.
5. This novel contains sufficient suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events to keep readers keenly interested in finding out what happens next.
6. This novel has an emotionally satisfying romantic ending for the couple, one that is happy and/or hopeful. A couple need not be in a fully committed relationship by the end of the book, but they both should feel happy where they are.
7. The author(s) resolves issues related to the suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events in this novel in a satisfying way.
8. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Romantic Blend** category.

*Romantic Suspense/Intrigue/Adventure redefined to provide a more precise definition of "romantic" and also to include Dramatic Events.

Science Fiction/Fantasy

Definition: This category includes novels in which a significant portion or aspect of the story is set in a fantastical, future, or parallel world. Generally, these alternative settings include resources not currently available to humanity (magical abilities, alien experiences, yet-to-be invented technologies, etc.).

Judging Guideline: In this category, futuristic and/or fantastical events are essential to the story. Though subplots of romance and/or drama may exist, the major focus does not have to be on love and romance. All entries must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. However, the gender norms and social mores of the futuristic or fantastical setting may differ substantially from those of the "real" world. Typically, science fiction stories are set in a futuristic setting, while fantasy novels take place in an alternative, entirely new world. Novels set in our current world as we know it, but with a paranormal/occult/horror twist, should not be entered in this GCLS category but in Paranormal/Occult/Horror.

Genre Items:
1. Fans of science fiction and/or fantasy novels will absolutely want to read this book, maybe even more than once.
2. The author(s) effectively integrates recognizable features of science fiction and/or fantasy into the plot of this novel.
3. This novel weaves together tone, mood, and imagery to create a complex, internally consistent world.
4. The plot, characters, and setting of this novel allow readers to suspend disbelief and lose themselves in the story, despite its futuristic and/or fantastical elements.
5. This novel will evoke an emotional connection with readers, fascinating them with its futuristic and/or fantastical setting.
6. This novel employs imaginative, innovative, and/or unique ideas and puts a surprising or unexpected twist on often-used stereotypes and themes (swords and sorcery, galactic exploration, etc.).
7. The science fiction and/of fantasy elements of this novel seem logical—e.g., technological and/or fantastical capabilities adhere to clearly defined rules and limitations.
8. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Science Fiction/Fantasy** category.

Young Adult Fiction

Definition: This category includes novels written primarily for, and targeted to, readers aged 12 to 18. Young adult books can be romances, historical fiction, science fiction, or any other genre, but they must focus on themes, characters, situations, and/or issues of interest and importance to 12-to-18-year-olds. Language must be readily accessible to young people in the targeted age group.

Judging Guideline: These young adult novels must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Genre Items:
1. This young adult novel should be of considerable interest to readers between the ages of 12 and 18.
2. This novel successfully focuses on themes, characters, characters, situations, and/or issues important to readers aged 12 to 18—puberty, bullying, family dysfunction, peer pressure, love, sexuality, coming of age, learning to use newfound powers well, etc.
3. The details in this novel are accurate for the time period(s) presented as far as events, dress, technology, popular culture, and everyday life are concerned. Exceptions, if any, are appropriate for this type of work— science fiction, fantasy, paranormal, alternative histories, etc.
4. This novel is written at a language level that most young adults would enjoy and understand without significant effort.
5. Characters of various races, classes, cultures, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., portrayed in this novel are presented in ways that avoid stereotypes.
6. By the end of the novel, at least one young adult character matures and/or gains wisdom in significant ways or—in the case of an anti-hero—provides an encouraging lesson by this failure to do so.
7. Others who have read this novel will be highly likely to recommend it to a relative, friend, or other acquaintance aged 12 to 18.
8. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Young Adult Fiction** category.
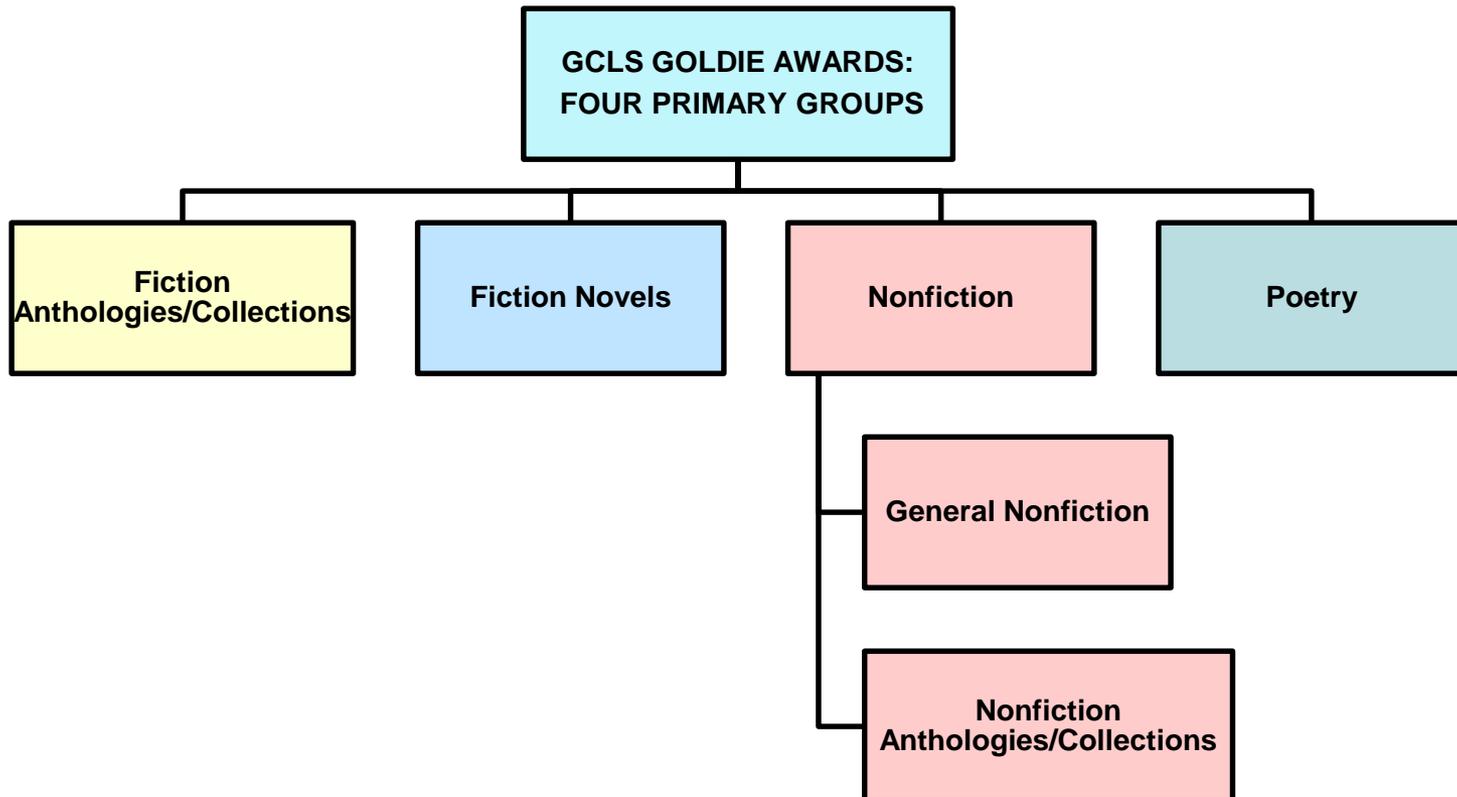
NONFICTION

Category Definitions

Judging Guidelines

Evaluation Items

Nonfiction: Categories

- The primary **Nonfiction** group has two categories:
  - **General Nonfiction**, for books of narrative prose.
  - **Nonfiction Anthologies/Collections**, for multi-author anthologies and/or single-author collections.
- These two categories will be combined if either does not achieve the required six entries.
- To the extent possible, evaluation instruments are "parallel," meaning categories can be combined for judging purposes.
- Based on 2018 submissions, five judges will be recruited to read both of the **Nonfiction** categories.

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                    GCLS GOLDIE AWARDS:
                    FOUR PRIMARY GROUPS

   Fiction            Fiction Novels      Nonfiction          Poetry
   Anthologies/
   Collections
                                          General Nonfiction

                                          Nonfiction
                                          Anthologies/Collections
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General Nonfiction

Definition: This branch of literature comprises works of narrative prose dealing with or offering opinions or conjectures about facts and reality. General Nonfiction includes, but is not limited to, such topics as humor, commentary, travel writing, historical accounts, personal narrative, memoirs, and biography.

Judging Guideline: Entries in General Nonfiction must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Evaluation Items:*
1. This nonfiction book has a compelling premise that draws readers in and makes them want to read further.
2. This nonfiction book broadens the reader's perspective via fresh, original content that informs, educates, and/or entertains.
3. This nonfiction book is clearly organized and stays appropriately on target.
4. This nonfiction book is written in an engaging style. The writing flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structure and length; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the book; etc.
5. This nonfiction book has a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of the people, situations, and events described.
6. This nonfiction book appears well researched and/or authentically sourced in a manner consistent with its overall theme, style, and/or approach.
7. This nonfiction book is virtually free of such distractions as factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, and paragraph structures that don't make sense.
8. This nonfiction book has elements (themes, commentary, personal narratives, evocative writing, etc.) that will linger in a reader's mind long after the book is finished.
9. This nonfiction book includes significant themes, commentary, personal narratives, and/or other content about women who are attracted to other women.
10. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **General Nonfiction** category.

Evaluation items will be used for scoring purposes if the two nonfiction categories must be combined due to insufficient entries.

Nonfiction Anthologies/Collections

Definition: This category includes multi-author anthologies and/or single-author collections of nonfictional works dealing with or offering opinions or conjectures about facts and reality. Topics may include, but are not limited to, humor, commentary, travel writing, historical accounts, personal narrative, memoirs, and biography. All entries must be nonfictional works chosen by the compiler(s)—a single author, single editor, group of authors and/or editors, etc.

Judging Guideline: These anthologies/collections must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women. Individual pieces in the anthology/collection should be self-contained yet contribute to the book's overall quality. For GCLS purposes, anthologies/collections devoted to poetry should not be entered in this category but in the appropriate poetry category.

Evaluation Items:*
1. This nonfiction anthology/collection has a compelling premise that draws readers in and makes them want to read further.
2. This nonfiction anthology/collection broadens the reader's perspective via fresh, original content that informs, educates, and/or entertains.
3. This nonfiction anthology/collection is clearly organized and stays appropriately on target.
4. This nonfiction anthology/collection is written in an engaging style. The writing flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structure and length; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the book; etc.
5. This nonfiction anthology/collection has a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of the people, situations, and events described.
6. This nonfiction anthology/collection appears well researched and/or authentically sourced in a manner consistent with its overall theme, style, and/or approach.
7. This nonfiction anthology/collection is virtually free of such distractions as factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, and paragraph structures that don't make sense.
8. This nonfiction anthology/collection has elements (themes, commentary, personal narratives, evocative writing, etc.) that will linger in a reader's mind long after the anthology/collection is finished.
9. This nonfiction anthology/collection includes significant themes, commentary, personal narratives, and/or other content about women who are attracted to other women.

Genre Items:
10. This nonfiction anthology/collection is organized in an effective manner, flowing smoothly from beginning to middle to end, with individual pieces placed strategically.
11. The individual pieces in this nonfiction anthology/collection consistently reflect, illuminate, and/or reinforce important facets of its theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
12. The individual pieces in this nonfiction anthology/collection contain fresh, interesting, entertaining, and/or informative elements relevant to its theme, purpose, style, and/or approach.
13. The individual pieces in this nonfiction anthology/collection are self-contained and able to stand alone. Each piece can be comprehended in one reading.
14. The individual pieces in this nonfiction anthology/collection are appropriately paced. The writing skillfully moves the narrative along without being too spare, rushed, saggy, bloated, or cluttered with unnecessary detail.
15. The individual pieces in this nonfiction anthology/collection are written in a style appropriate for this particular work.
16. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Nonfiction Anthologies/Collections** category.

Evaluation items, plus the final genre item #16, will be used for scoring purposes if the two nonfiction categories must be combined due to insufficient entries.
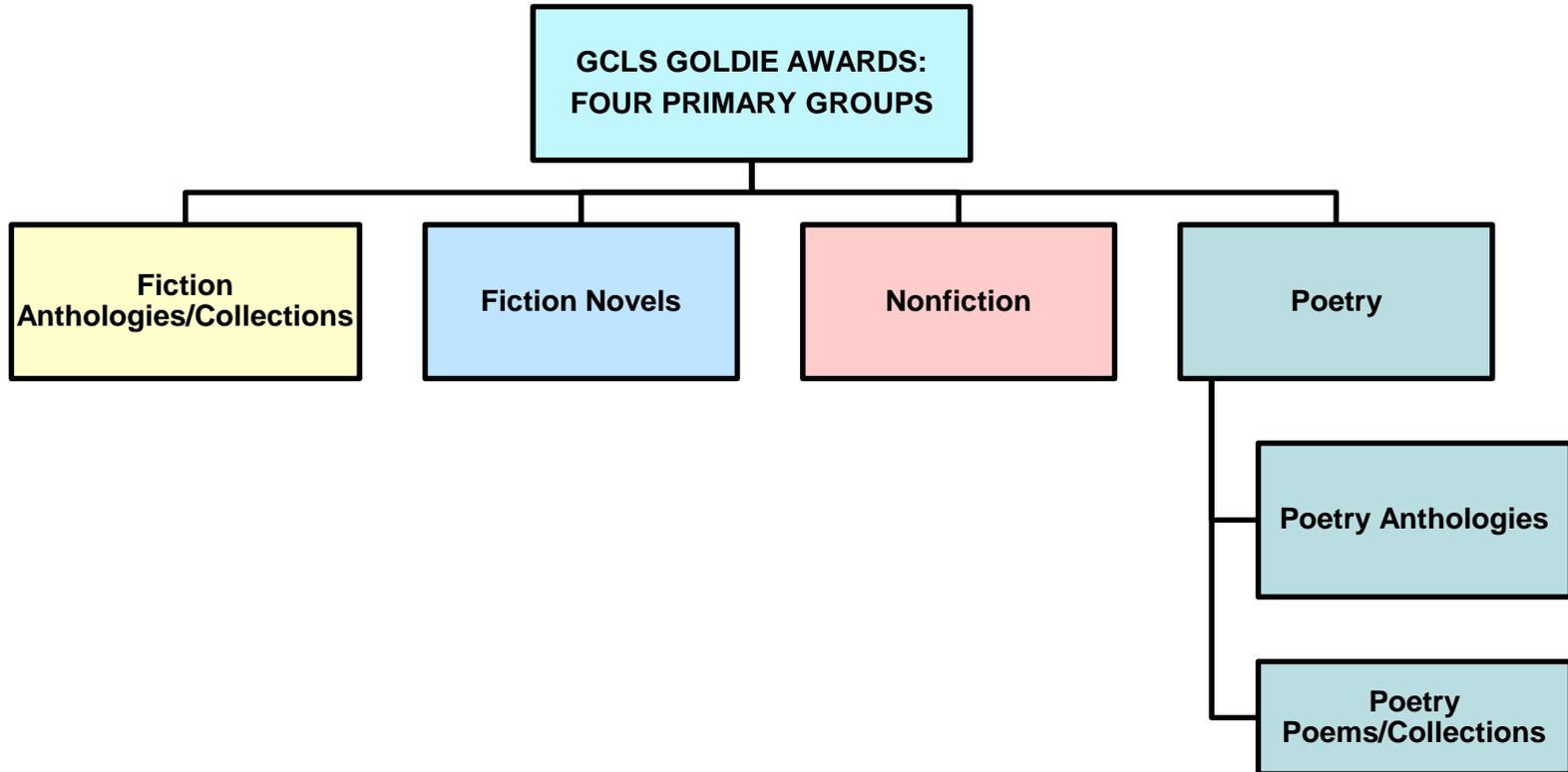
POETRY

Category Definitions

Judging Guidelines

Evaluation Items

Poetry: Categories

- The primary **Poetry** group has two categories:
  - **Poetry Anthologies**, for multi-author anthologies.
  - **Poetry Poems/Collections**, for single-author poems or collections of poetry.
- These two categories will be combined if either does not achieve the required six entries.
- Evaluation instruments are "parallel," so categories can be combined for judging purposes.
- Based on 2018 submissions, five judges will be recruited to read both of the **Poetry** categories.

GCLS GOLDIE AWARDS:
FOUR PRIMARY GROUPS

Fiction Anthologies/Collections

Fiction Novels

Nonfiction

Poetry

Poetry Anthologies

Poetry Poems/Collections

Poetry Anthologies

Definition: This category includes multi-author anthologies of poetry. Entries will be combined with Poetry Poems/Collections if either category has fewer than six entries.

Judging Guideline: Poems must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Evaluation Items:
1. The poets in this anthology present their chosen pieces in a mindful manner, not a haphazard one.
2. The poets in this anthology present their poems in a way that seems neither heavy-handed nor needlessly
3. The poets in this anthology present their poems with the power and/or authority they sought to convey
4. This work is highly successful for its poetic genre, with each poem contributing to the whole and all poems working together with pleasing unity.
5. These poems offer sufficient variety in poetic forms—either by using various poetic forms (haiku, sonnets, sestinas, free verse, etc.) or by sticking to one compelling form throughout—to keep readers engaged.
6. These poems offer sufficient variety in tone, style, and content to keep readers engaged.
7. These poems create a strong sense of place and circumstance in all poems that require it.
8. These poems flow in a crisp, powerful way, never becoming too cluttered with trivial detail.
9. These poets possess distinct, consistent voices that complement one another.
10. These poets create clear images that trigger emotions and thoughts.
11. These poets use a rich variety of exact, precise words.
12. The style of writing (e.g., economical, lush, flowery) of these poets underscores the content of their poems.
13. These poets write in an engaging way that evokes the senses (e.g., sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) in pleasing proportion.
14. These poets avoid clichés, instead using effective images, symbols, and figures of speech (metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, etc.) to engage the reader.
15. These poets successfully employ imagery, symbols, figures of speech, or other poetic techniques to prompt readers to imagine or evoke memories, feel deeply, and arouse other emotions/senses.
16. These poets pay appropriate attention to the sound of the words, using such devices as assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, etc., to engage readers if the poems were read aloud.
17. These poets skillfully use free verse, rhyme, and/or meter to engage the reader. If the poet writes in free verse, line breaks and line shapes have rationales, rather than sounding like cut-up prose. If she uses rhyme and/or meter, these conventions sound natural and unforced.
18. These poets use unexpected phrasing, coined words, puns, unusual punctuation and/or spelling, or otherwise plays with language in a pleasing, effective way.
19. These poets skillfully use a variety of poetic techniques—sound patterns, syntax, line breaks, double meanings, repetition, visual appeal, etc.—to engage the reader.
20. Characters of various races, classes, cultures, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., portrayed in these poems are presented in ways that avoid stereotypes.
21. Readers will be moved by these poems in one or more important ways—perhaps by making them cry or laugh or experience a sense of wonder, hope, sadness, nostalgia, joy, purposeful confusion, and/or other emotions.
22. These poems have elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.
23. These poems will make readers want to read more of the work of these poets.
24. This book includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to other women.
25. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Poetry Anthologies** category.

Poetry Poems/Collections

Definition: This category includes single-author poems or single-author collections of poetry. Entries will be combined with Poetry Anthologies if either category has fewer than six entries.

Judging Guideline: Poems must include significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other lesbian-oriented content—i.e., literary works about women who love women.

Evaluation Items:
1. This poet presents her chosen pieces in a mindful manner, not a haphazard one.
2. This poet presents her poems in a way that seems neither heavy-handed nor needlessly indirect.
3. This poet presents her poems with the power and/or authority she sought to convey.
4. This work is highly successful for its poetic genre, with each poem contributing to the whole and all poems working together with pleasing unity.
5. These poems offer sufficient variety in poetic forms—either by using various poetic forms (haiku, sonnets, sestinas, free verse, etc.) or by sticking to one compelling form throughout—to keep readers engaged.
6. These poems offer sufficient variety in tone, style, and content to keep readers engaged.
7. These poems create a strong sense of place and circumstance in all poems that require it.
8. These poems flow in a crisp, powerful way, never becoming too cluttered with trivial detail.
9. This poet possesses a distinct, consistent voice.
10. This poet creates clear images that trigger emotions and thoughts.
11. This poet uses a rich variety of exact, precise words.
12. The style of writing (e.g., economical, lush, flowery) of this poet underscores the content of her poems.
13. This poet writes in an engaging way that evokes the senses (e.g., sight, sound, touch, smell, taste) in pleasing proportion.
14. This poet avoids clichés, instead using effective images, symbols, and figures of speech (metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, etc.) to engage the reader.
15. This poet successfully employs imagery, symbols, figures of speech, or other poetic techniques to prompt readers to imagine or evoke memories, feel deeply, and arouse other emotions/senses.
16. This poet pays appropriate attention to the sound of the words, using such devices as assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, etc., to engage readers if the poems were read aloud.
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18. This poet uses unexpected phrasing, coined words, puns, unusual punctuation and/or spelling, or otherwise plays with language in a pleasing, effective way.
19. This poet skillfully uses a variety of poetic techniques—sound patterns, syntax, line breaks, double meanings, repetition, visual appeal, etc.—to engage the reader.
20. Characters of various races, classes, cultures, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., portrayed in these poems are presented in ways that avoid stereotypes.
21. Readers will be moved by these poems in one or more important ways—perhaps by making them cry or laugh or experience a sense of wonder, hope, sadness, nostalgia, joy, purposeful confusion, and/or other emotions.
22. These poems have elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.
23. These poems will make readers want to read more of the work of this poet.
24. This book includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to other women.
25. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Poetry Poems/Collections** category.

GCLS Member Participation

Judging-Related Team Volunteers

Evaluation Team Volunteers

Independent Review Committee Bios

Judging-Related Team Volunteers

TASKS	TEAM LEADERS	TEAM MEMBERS
Codify procedures for recruiting and vetting judges; suggest ways to improve procedures for 2019.	Michelle Lisper	Stephanie A. Allen, Karen Badger, Lori Lake, Paula Martinac, Liz McMullen, Patty Schramm, Carsen Taite, Caren Werlinger
Brainstorm ideas for recruiting non-GCLS judges; work with awards administrators and other volunteers to implement ideas.	Stephanie A. Allen	Ann Aptaker, Karen Badger, Jessie Chandler, Patty Schramm, Carsen Taite
Codify procedures for assigning judges to a given category; find ways to balance judging panels to include authors, editors and readers.	Georgia Beers	Fay Jacobs, Lori Lake, Michelle Lisper, Eileen Marks, Franci McMahon, Carsen Taite, Caren Werlinger
Develop ways to provide feedback to authors/editors on how judges scored their books on specific dimensions.	Susan Meagher	Melissa Brayden, Pamela Buchmeyer, Jessie Chandler, Liz Gibson, Franci McMahon, Liz McMullen
Suggest ways to beef up training for judges on how to evaluate books in their category; work with awards administrators and other volunteers to revise training materials to reflect changes in evaluation instruments.	Karen Badger	Ann Aptaker, Pamela Buchmeyer, Sandy Lowe, Eileen Marks, Susan Meagher, Caren Werlinger
Recommend additional judging aids to improve the judging experience; investigate ways judges in a category might communicate with each other (or a lead judge) to improve judging.	Franci McMahon	Melissa Brayden, Liz Gibson, Lori Lake, Michelle Lisper, Sandy Lowe, Eileen Marks, Paula Martinac

Evaluation Team Volunteers

AWARD CATEGORIES: 2019	TEAM LEADERS	TEAM MEMBERS
Anthology/Collections: Fiction	Alissa McGowan	Nancy Ashmore, Sandra Gerth
Anthology/Collections: Nonfiction	Cheryl Pletcher	Shelley Thrasher, Salem West
Anthology/Collections: Erotica	D. Jackson Leigh	Sacchi Green, Nell Stark, Shelley Thrasher
Contemporary Romance	Rachel Spangler KG MacGregor	Lynn Ames, Sandra Gerth, Jeanine Hoffman
Erotic Novels	Sacchi Green	Karin Kallmaker, D. Jackson Leigh
General Fiction	Salem West	Lynette Beers, Barb Sawyer, Carol Rosenfeld
General Nonfiction	Cheryl Pletcher	Shelley Thrasher, Salem West
Historical Fiction	Sandra Gerth	Nancy Ashmore, Lynette Beers, Jeanine Hoffman
Humorous Novels	Carol Rosenfeld	Barb Sawyer, Ann McMan, Cindy Rizzo
Mystery/Thriller/Crime	Erica Abbott	Lynn Ames, Michelle Grubb
New Adult Fiction	Rachel Gold	Sacchi Green, Cindy Rizzo, Rachel Spangler, Claudia Wilde
Paranormal/Occult/Horror	Sandra Gerth	Barb Sawyer, Alissa McGowan, Nell Stark
Poetry	Shelley Thrasher	Rachel Gold, Leslea Newman, Carol Rosenfeld
Romantic Blend	Karin Kallmaker	Erica Abbott, Lynn Ames, Michelle Grubb
Science Fiction/Fantasy	Nell Stark	D. Jackson Leigh, Jeanine Hoffman, Alissa McGowan
Young Adult Fiction	Cindy Rizzo	Nancy Ashmore, Rachel Gold, Rachel Spangler

Independent Review Committee Bios

➢ **Donna Brown**, a member of GCLS since the beginning, served as a GOLDIE judge for one term. Except for volunteering at the conventions, she has had no involvement in the organization in a governing capacity. Donna is an Administrative Assistant for the Hampden County (MA) Sheriff's Support Services Department.

➢ **Jane Chen** has attended three conferences and awards ceremonies. She won a GOLDIE in 2010 writing under the pen name Trinity Tam (with wife Nell Stark) for *everafter.* She had never served as a judge or been involved in the awards process in any capacity prior to her review committee work. Jane is a vice president of marketing at Live Nation and holds a BA in East Asian Studies from Harvard University.

➢ **Virginia Dodge (Jenny) Fielder**, a GCLS member for six years, has attended nine conferences and awards ceremonies. Prior to her appointment as committee chair, she had never served as a judge or been involved in the awards process in any capacity. A long-time partner of GOLDIE winner KG MacGregor, Jenny is a retired corporate executive and researcher for the newspaper industry. She holds a PhD in Mass Communications from Indiana University-Bloomington.

➢ **Leigh Howell** has been attending GCLS conferences with her sister, Lynne Pierce of Lesfic Unbound, for seven years and been a member for six. A high school English and Drama teacher for 38 years, Leigh served as an editor for Blue Feather Books. She lives with husband Steve and enjoys spending time with her two grown children, Stephanie and Drew.

➢ **Mary Jane (MJ) Lowe**, a member of GCLS since 2004, has attended 11 conferences. She served on the Board of Directors in 2008-2010 and as Awards Administrator for 2012-2014. Working as a librarian for a range of public entities, MJ holds an MA in History from Western Kentucky University, and an MS in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

➢ **Elaine (Lainie) Lynch** has attended 11 conventions and served as a GOLDIE judge five times. She has been reviewing books since 2005. A graduate of Villanova University with concentrations in English, Economics and History, Lainie is a retired corporate banking operations manager with a focus on Quality Control. She is married to GOLDIE winner Lee Lynch.

➢ **Rosa Moran**, a GCLS member since its inception, has attended all conferences and awards ceremonies. She served as a judge for four years early on and has presented awards four times. Rosa works as a Systems Developer in the Department of Information Technology with Prince William County (VA) government. Rosa holds a BA in Public Administration with a minor in Information Systems from George Mason University.

➢ **Sharon Owens** is an avid reader who has belonged to GCLS for seven years and attended five conferences. She has not previously been involved in the awards process, although she helped present an award at the 2016 and 2017 conferences. Sharon is a retired library worker and former attorney.