



InSinC

The Sisters in Crime Newsletter

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March 2009

Deception Detection: How Can You Tell When Someone is Lying?

By Katherine Ramsland

Deception takes many illegal forms, so forensic investigators strive to develop ways to effectively spot it. Offenders might stage a crime scene, falsely accuse, twist facts or feign an illness, but as yet there's no simple formula for tapping a liar. Some are easy to read, others are not, and research shows that even professionals with repeated exposure to deception are poor lie-catchers. However, this skill may improve with training and sophisticated techniques. Let's look at some now in use:



1) Body Language

A popular notion holds that lying takes effort, yielding automatic signals — faster pulse, dilated pupils, compressed lips — especially when the stakes are high. However, honest but anxious people might display similar symptoms, while lying psychopaths show none. In fact, “reading” a person's face is often unreliable.

A better guide involves patience: the key is to question subjects long enough to observe baseline behaviors, so as to recognize heightened stress to specific themes and what people do to calm it. Anxious people freeze, seek exits or prepare to defend themselves and the resulting behaviors can signal potential deception. They include:

- more negative than positive statements
- increased vocal pitch
- overly deliberative responses
- increased shrugs, foot movements and nervous habits
- venting (pulling a collar away)
- protecting the throat
- pointing feet toward an exit
- using obstacles as shields

- blanching, flushing, breath-holding
- incongruence between responses and body movements
- reduced emphatic gestures

None is definitive, but these behaviors occur more often in those with reason to deceive.

2) Statement Analysis

This is a common tool for interrogations. An investigator asks an open-ended question — “What happened?” — which encourages the subject to fill in the blanks, as a recorded oral or written statement. The subject selects the starting and ending points. Analysis then focuses on the description of events leading up to a crime, the crime itself and the aftermath. Detectives watch for a balance of details in each area, noting whether subjects provide more information than necessary or skip something crucial. Also, a change in tone or speed of delivery can indicate degree of comfort or discomfort with the information. Other clues include changes in language when discussing another person, hesitations about some item, shifts in pronoun use or shifts from first to third person.

3) Lie Detectors

The polygraph measures involuntary physiological responses to potentially incriminating questions. While practitioners vouch for its accuracy, research suggests it falls short. Even less impressive are voice stress evaluators. Supposedly, the voice reaches a higher pitch when someone lies but the underlying assumption is that stress-related pitch is equivalent to deception. It's not.

4) Brain Assessments

Psychiatrist Lawrence Farwell claims that all experience is stored in the brain, so the brain will recognize what's familiar to us — even a crime — and signal this with neural impulses. Sensors on a headband monitor a suspect's brain activity while words or images from the crime scene are flashed on a computer screen. Some are relevant, others

not. If the suspect was involved, a distinct activity spike called a MERMER (memory and encoding related multifaceted electroencephalographic response) will reveal that a record of the incident is stored in his brain. While this sounds impressive, the accuracy of “brain fingerprinting” is still under review.

Similarly, researchers at Germany's Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences had subjects make silent but deliberate decisions about calculations before they saw the numbers on a computer screen. Comparing their computations against distinct activity in the prefrontal cortex — “thought signatures” — recorded during their deliberations helped to match the brain activity pattern to the decision process and thus predict future such decisions. The researchers claim this experiment offers the first step toward covert detection of intent — including the intent to deceive.

5) Psychological Assessments

Some psychological tests identify specific types of deception. For example, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2) and the Structured Interview of Reported Symptoms (SIRS) detect malingering or faking a mental illness.

Research on deception detection has been intense in recent years and whether achieved by machine or well-trained humans, proof of sustained accuracy will have a radical effect on the legal system.

Katherine Ramsland is a writer, professor of forensic psychology and former therapist. Among her 34 books are True Stories of CSI, The Human Predator and The Criminal Mind. She has also written more than 900 articles and her next book focuses on serial murder investigations.

This article supports SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.

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Sisters in Crime Newsletter

The mission of Sisters in Crime is to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry.

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Cathy Pickens, Publicity	Roberta Isleib, Past President

Bonnie J. Cardone, InSinC Editor/Graphic Designer Peggy Moody, Web Maven

Beth Wasson, Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 442124, Lawrence, KS 66044-8933;
Phone: 785/842-1325; Fax 785/856-6314; e-mail: sistersincrime@juno.com

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DEADLINES AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The next Sisters in Crime Newsletter will be out in June. The deadline for all submissions is **April 20**.

Members' publications since the last edition of the newsletter will be listed in The Docket. Please include publication dates when submitting. Docket material will be due **April 15** and should be sent to:

Patricia Gulley
1743 N. Jantzen Avnue
Portland, OR 97217-7849
E-mail: Weyrcottage@yahoo.com

Other honors, awards and events of great "pith and moment" should be written up as short, separate notices. These can be as short as a paragraph. No publicity/promotion of individual members, please.

We particularly welcome reprints from SinC chapter newsletters.

Send columns, articles, ideas and praise via e-mail.

Please send mailing address, phone number, and e-mail with submissions. If you have an idea for a story, please query the editor:

Bonnie J. Cardone
805/938-1156
E-mail: bjcardone@hotmail.com

Moving?

Change of address notifications should be sent to both Beth Wasson, SinC executive secretary, P.O. Box 442124, Lawrence, KS 66044-8933 and to Rowan Mountain, Inc., P.O. Box 10111, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0111.

**Visit Sisters in Crime online at:
www.sistersincrime.org**

Promotional materials available to SinC members — Have your bookmarks or postcards designed in color or black and white. SinC's publicity mailing list of 5,000 bookstores, libraries, reviewers, etc. is available via direct addressing through Rowan Mountain, Inc., P.O. Box 10111, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0111. For more information, write Gavin Faulkner. E-mail: faulkner@bev.net. Web: www.rowanmountain.com. Phone 540/449-6178.

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A Year of Change and Growing Stronger

By Judy Clemens, SinC President

We all know the old adage, *The more things change, the more they stay the same*. I'm not sure how apropos that cliché is anymore.

For the five librarians in my county's system who lost their jobs on January 2, things definitely aren't the same. For the patrons, dealing with rotating faces behind the desks, as well as a cutback of hours, things seem to be changing daily.



For the editors told they need to put a freeze on buying books, things aren't the same. And for those of us trying to sell the books we've written, well, things aren't getting easier, are they? (Perhaps that's the one thing that will stay the same. Publishing a book *will* keep getting more difficult!)

On the national front, we have the first African-American president in office. He brings to the White House a mantra of change. With our current economic and foreign situations, we certainly *hope* things don't stay the same.

On personal levels, we all have changes. I am dealing with the severe illness of my father. This year will probably be the first in which I have to learn to live without him. Things will not — can never be — the same.

For writers, change is good, even if some is unwelcome. We learn as we experience new things. I remember long ago reading in a writer's magazine that the more a writer experiences, the better writer she or he will be. It is through change that we learn about ourselves, and our understanding of people and our world deepens. How boring our lives — and thus, our writing — would be if things always stayed the same.

Of course there are the constants, and I'm thankful for their stability. The sun rises and sets, flowers bloom in the spring, and chocolate is satisfying.

One other constant is that a community is necessary in order to survive. That's what Sisters in Crime is. No matter how things change in our industry we are here, together, to try to figure it out the best we can, and to support each other along the way. We're going to have our differences, but that's what makes life worthwhile, too. What a boring existence we would have if we all agreed on everything. It might be *easier* at times, but it would soon become stagnant.

Our industry is going through many changes, and things will never be the same again. But can we fall back on another old adage to get us through? *What doesn't kill us makes us stronger*.

Whether we celebrate or mourn with changes, they shape who we are, and who we are becoming. So let's raise a glass together to 2009. May this be a year of change. And a year of growing stronger.

Judy Clemens may be reached at judy@judyclemens.com.

Bouchercon Writing Workshop: SinC Into Great Writing!

Sisters in Crime will be sponsoring a writing workshop on October 14, 2009, at the Hyatt Regency in Indianapolis, IN, the day before the Bouchercon World Mystery Convention begins. The SinC into Great Writing! program features seminars by Donald Maass, Hallie Ephron and Chris Roerden, along with dinner with keynote speaker Nancy Pickard. The program will run from 1:30 to 9:00 pm.

The Program

1:30 to 5:30 pm: Writing the Breakout Novel with New York literary agent Donald

Maass (www.maassagency.com).

This intensive, hands-on writing workshop introduces powerful techniques for taking your fiction to the next level. (For advanced fiction writers.) Participants must bring the manuscript of a completed novel or novel-in-progress.

5:45 to 7:00 pm: Dinner with Nancy Pickard

Four-time Edgar nominee and winner of Agatha, Anthony, Shamus and Macavity awards, Nancy is the author of 17 novels and dozens of short stories as well as a founding

member and former president of SinC (www.NancyPickardmysteries.com).

7:15 to 9:00 pm (choose one workshop)

(Note: See the preview articles on page 6 in this issue.)

Hallie Ephron: Twisting a Mystery Plot: The Secret's in the Secrets.

Plot is probably "the" critical element in a mystery novel. It has to be surprising, believable and compelling. In this workshop we will talk about how to shape your novel so it delivers — grabbing the reader at the start and ending with satisfying wallop as puzzle pieces fall into place, revealing secrets along the way to keep the reader turning those pages.

Chris Roerden: Don't Sabotage Your Submission

Find out how manuscripts are really evaluated, why 95 percent are rejected almost immediately, and ways you can beat the odds and make it through the approval process toward becoming published.

The cost is \$50 for SinC members, \$150 for nonmembers, Dinner and coffee break included. The deadline for registration at: www.sistersincrime.org is September 22, 2009. NO REFUNDS. Registration will be capped at 200. For questions contact Beth Wasson at: sistersincrime@juno.com.

Discounted conference hotel rates are offered through the Bouchercon website at: www.sistersincrime.org.

This workshop supports SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.

Have Breakfast With SinC at Malice Domestic

SinC's annual Malice Domestic breakfast will be held on Sunday, May 3, 2009, at 7:30 am at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA. Members pay \$20; nonmembers, \$30.

To reserve a spot please send a check made out to Sisters in Crime to Executive Secretary Beth Wasson, P.O. Box 442124, Lawrence, KS 66044. Provide a note with your e-mail address and Beth will let you know when your check arrives.

The deadline for receipt of checks is April 20, 2009. Questions? E-mail Beth at sistersincrime@juno.com.

This project supports SinC's Membership Growth, Networking, and Forums for Members goal.

The Secret to Memorable Characterization

By Elizabeth Lyon

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Most novelists give a lot of thought to the physical attributes of their characters — height, weight, build; hair and eye color; clothing preferences; and perhaps some habitual gestures. As an editor and a reader, more specificity of detail helps me visualize the characters and begin to live “in their shoes.” Yet memorable characters that may even outlive their creators transcend the physical. Think about Sherlock, Miss Jane Marple, Dave Robicheaux, Travis McGee, Stephanie Plum, Lydia Chin, and a host of others.

I believe that attitudes and passions go to the heart of individuality. Attitudes are limiting; they draw boundaries. Passions are expansive; they dissolve boundaries. In my opinion, attitudes and passions are so important that you should focus on developing them in your revisions. Otherwise your protagonist may come across as a conduit for information and an actor seeking an important goal, but will have as little personality as John or Jane Doe. The “affect,” as they term it in psychology, of a character with a subdued personality is flat. Not a fun blind date. Not a quirky or inspiring protagonist or memorable point-of-view character.

Don't let the censoring forces of political correctness keep your characters from having attitude(s). Attitudes broadly refer to strongly held opinions, beliefs, values, biases, judgments, prejudices, superstitions, pet peeves, and preferences — about everything. Out of these attitudes will come moral codes and behavior, political and religious beliefs, personal and lifestyle habits and choices, leisure-time preferences, job choices, favorite channels and programs on TV and radio, games and frequented sites on the internet, selections of magazines and newspapers and books, and so forth.

Here is a description of a protagonist and a minor character in a first mystery, *Murder Uncorked*, by Michele Scott. Notice how the protagonist's attitude colors the descriptions and helps in creating two distinctive personalities:

“Nikki Sands hated her job almost as much as she hated her past. She straightened her crisp white blouse and put on her best smile. She approached the couple at the table she was serving, and couldn't help but notice the woman watching her with that unmistakable glint of self-importance that judged Nikki to be nothing but the pe-

on who was waiting on them. The woman had a glamour-girl theme about her, but that hair needed a good hairdresser. Hadn't she heard that frizzy platinum blonde was passé? Not to mention the Pat Benatar smoldering-eye-makeup look. . . .

“Lately she'd been attempting to try something very anti-L.A. The concept of not judging others — something she found exceedingly difficult to do, especially in this case. . . .”

What underlies the attitudes that your story people hold? This goes back to the nature-nurture debate. Some attitudes seem fueled by heredity and biology, but characters, like any of us, are also molded by outside, or environmental, forces: family, friends, neighbors, community, town, region, country; by particular institutions — religious, educational, political, technological, workplace; and by socio-economics.

Developing Your Characters' Emotional & Intellectual Dispositions

- Attitudes (opinions, viewpoints, mindsets, biases, prejudices)
- Passions (desires, keen interests, needs, yearnings, obsessions)
- Most dominant emotion (sad, mad, glad, inscrutable), hidden or obvious, and how it is shown or expressed
- Sense of humor and expression of it (jokes, puns, silly humor, slapstick, wry, sarcastic, dirty, wholesome, raunchy, perverse, flirtatious, irreverent, political, racial, sexist, etc.)
- Temperament (introvert to extrovert); operating mode (logical thinker to intuitive hunch-taker; sensate/empirically based to feeling/emotionally based)
- Intellectual type (scholarly/abstract, experiential/concrete, quick, slow, bright, dull, methodical, multi-tasking)
- Dominant perception (tactile, visual, auditory)
- Orientation to life (cynic, pessimist, realist, optimist, idealist)
- Hard-wiring (compulsive/thorough, phobic/fearful, vacillating mood/sensitive, impulsive/risk-taking, neuroses/distortions, psychoses/without basis in reality)

When you let your point-of-view character offer a self-description (physical, emotional, intellectual), and express attitudes, the reader adds to a mental file about that character. When you offer a description of another character, the reader adds to two mental files: the one for your point-of-view character and the one for the character being described.

The next excerpt, from *Dust to Dust* by Tami Hoag, follows a beginning scene where protagonist Sam Kovac is grouching about nicotine gum.

“Kovac scowled down at her from the corner of one eye. Liska made five-five by sheer dint of will. He always figured God made her short because if she had the size of Janet Reno she'd take over the world. She had that kind of energy — and attitude out the wazoo.

“What do you know about it?” he challenged.

“My ex smoked. Lick an ashtray sometime. That's why we got divorced, you know. I wouldn't stick my tongue in his mouth.”

“Jesus, Tinks, like I wanted to know that.”

“He'd given her the nickname — Tinker Bell on Steroids. Nordic blond hair cut in a shaggy Peter Pan style, eyes as blue as a lake on a sunny day. Feminine but unmistakably athletic. She'd kicked more ass in her years on the force than half the guys he knew. She'd come onto homicide — Christ, what was it now? — five or six years ago? He lost track. He'd been there himself almost longer than he could remember. All of his 44 years, it seemed. . . .”

What both of these excerpts show is anything but a neutral character channeling information. These two point-of-view characters — Nikki Sands and Sam Kovac — each reveal their attitudes; their descriptions of the other characters and themselves are colored by strong opinions.

The other emotion I have singled out as essential to memorable characterization is passion. Attitudes are limiting and tend to convey being for one thing and against something else. In contrast, passion glows with embracing, open-hearted and zealous pursuit, enthusiastically, fervently, and irrepressibly, of something. Passion is infectious. Agents recognize it and respond favorably to it in query letters as well as in manuscripts, and readers recognize it too. And love to experience it vicariously. In turn readers feel passionate about recommending the book to their circle of friends and family and you have word-of-mouth-sales.

Heroes and heroines should be passionate about their lives, what they are seeking, and what finding or expressing that passion will do not only for themselves but for the people they care about. Passion is single-minded in that it brooks no naysaying. Scarlett O'Hara will save Tara. Frodo will see that the One Ring is destroyed. Your characters must passionately give their all to finding justice, redemption, understanding, or self-respect, as well as do their equivalent of saving Tara and destroying the Ring.

A protagonist who is strong enough to carry a series of mysteries must be passionate. Nevada Barr's sleuth, Anna Pigeon, is a forest service ranger and an EMT who feels passionate about defending the environment and all of life. Mystery writer Earlene Fowler created Benni Harper, an ex-cowgirl, quilter, and folk-art expert whose passions are Gabe, her part-Hispanic, small-town po-



lice chief husband, and her family and friends. She gladly sacrifices to help a neighbor or friend in need. As a child Patricia Cornwall's Dr. Kay Scarpetta watched her father die a slow death. As a medical examiner and forensic pathologist, she is passionate about order and precision. She is patient, driven, and methodical in her pursuit of answers that will bring about justice.

Endow your protagonist and other characters with attitudes and passion, and animate them with your own deep feelings. Breathe life into your characters. It's okay if they were blue babies in your prior draft. Now see them cry and rage, laugh and love, with passion flowing through their veins.

An independent book editor and writing instructor for the last 20 years, Elizabeth Lyon is the author of the acclaimed Manuscript Makeover, and A Writer's Guide to Fiction, A Writer's Guide to Nonfiction, The Sell Your Novel Tool Kit, Nonfiction Book Proposals Anybody Can Write, National Directory of Editors & Writers.

This article supports SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.

Al Blanchard Short Crime Fiction Contest

The Al Blanchard Short Crime Fiction Contest, sponsored by the New England Crime Bake Committee in memory of Al Blanchard, is now open for 2009. Blanchard was co-chair of the first three Crime Bake conferences, a member of Sisters in Crime and president of NEMWA.

The prize is \$100 in cash, publication in Level Best Books' seventh Crime Fiction anthology, a decorative plaque and admission to the Crime Bake conference, where the award is announced. (The winner need NOT, however, attend the conference.)

The submission must be a crime story by a New England author or with a New England setting, previously unpublished (either in print or electronically) and no more than 5,000 words in length. It may include the following genres: mystery, thriller, suspense, caper and horror. (No torture or killing of children or animals.)

The awards committee will consider up to two stories per author. It will also consider a story that has been previously submitted, provided that the story has not been published in the meantime, and has not been submitted more than once to the contest. In addition to the main award, there are four honorable mentions.

There is no entry fee and the deadline for submissions is April 30, 2009. For guidelines on how to submit, visit the Crime Bake website: www.crimebake.org.

This project supports SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.



Crime on Loan

By Mary Boone, SinC Library Liaison

Libraries and Sisters in Crime make a classic pairing, like peanut butter and jelly, chocolate and strawberries, Warshawski and Chicago. One great example of the way our partnership succeeds is the

SinC booth at the annual American Library Association's conference. Word of mouth buzz among attending librarians about the graciousness of SinC authors staffing the booth makes it one of the busiest spots at the conference. In this issue of InSinC, author members are again invited to join thousands of librarians this summer at ALA's annual conference, either by helping to staff the booth or by sending promotional materials for handouts (see page 11 for details). Our presence at ALA celebrates the relationship between SinC and libraries.

It's no secret, then, that SinC members love their libraries, and so, at a recent brainstorming session, the board thought a regular newsletter feature written by SinC librarians would be of interest to the membership. In "Crime on Loan" we'll share insights on how libraries work, ways librarians can help promote your work, observations on what our patrons are reading (and why) and some of our favorite stories about authors visiting our libraries.

Ask any librarian, and you'll hear time and again that many readers meet favorite authors for the first time through books found on the local library's shelves and that those same readers then go on to buy the authors' books. In hard times such as we currently face, library users depend on the library as their source for books by writers they love — your books — the books they would ordinarily buy. Now, more than ever, the local library provides an important place where SinC writers and readers connect and build strong relationships.

Not convinced? Consider these facts and figures compiled by the American Library Association:

- There are more public library buildings in the United States than there are McDonald's — a total of 16,541.
- Visits to public libraries in the U.S. exceed 1.3 billion, and libraries circulate more items than FedEx ships — more than 2 billion books, CDs, DVDs and other materials.
- Sixty-three percent of adults in the U.S. have public library cards.
- Americans go to school, public and academic libraries 50 percent more often than they go to the movies.
- Ninety-two percent of respondents in a 2006 poll conducted by the ALA said that they expect libraries to be needed in the future, despite the increased availability of information on the internet.

Yet even as the tough economy brings more users into libraries, tight city and state budgets are closing library doors and reducing access to their resources when they are needed most. In these hard times the partnership between SinC and libraries couldn't be more important. Your local library needs your support: start with a visit to your library today, be sure every family member has a library card, join the Friends of the Library, help secure your library's place in your community by letting your elected officials know what your library means to you. You can learn more about current issues facing American libraries and how to take action by visiting ALA's website for the public: www.ilovelibraries.org.

This project supports SinC's Membership Growth, Networking, and Forums for Members goal.

Bookstore Database Update

Rhys Bowen reports that replies are finally trickling in to the Bookstore Database update. For some reason she's hearing most from our Midwestern and Northeastern Sisters. What's happening in the rest of the country? It would be good if we could have this new database in place this spring.

Please send Rhys (rhysbowen@comcast.net) the names of any bookstores in your area that members should know about: mystery, indies, author friendly, etc. Also include the names of any stores that have closed recently.

This project supports SinC's Membership Growth, Networking, and Forums for Members goal.

Have breakfast with your
Sisters at
Malice Domestic
Sunday, May 3, 2009
7:30am
Crystal Gateway Marriott
Arlington, VA
Members \$20
Nonmembers \$30
See page 3 for details

Plot Twisting Tips

By Hallie Ephron

At the SinC pre-Bouchercon workshop, I'll be teaching about plotting a mystery. Here's a taste of what I will cover. (For more information on the workshop see page 3.)



In *The Maltese Falcon*, Sam Spade famously says, "Everybody has something to conceal."

I remember reading those words for the first time and circling them. It's as true in mystery novels as it is in life and if you're setting out to plot a page-turner,

you'll do well to focus on your characters' secrets and on the lies they tell to cover them up.

Your villain has secrets — that goes without saying. Otherwise it would be a perfectly obvious whodunit from page one and then why write the book? But victims have secrets, too.

A woman victim of a drive-by shooting may have been searching for her birth mother. Or pregnant with her boss's child. Or the wife of a swindler. Or moonlighting as a hooker. Or have an identical twin who's been searching/pregnant/swindling/hooking — you get the picture. Reveal a secret and you can propel your sleuth onward or slam her investigation into a brick wall and make her rethink her assumptions.

Reveal a secret and you cast suspicion on new suspects who, in turn, tell lies to cover up their own secrets. A man lies about his whereabouts at the time of a murder because he was with his lover. A woman may be reluctant to reveal that she was dead drunk when her best friend was shot. Or a woman who believes her brother is the murderer may insist that she was with him in order to protect him.

Pick your secrets carefully because they'll determine the direction your sleuth's investigation takes. I once (briefly) decided my victim's secret was that she worked nights as an exotic dancer but nixed that when I realized I'd have to go to a strip club to do research. So not my thing.

Here are just a few kinds of secrets:

- grudge
- secret relationship
- past trauma
- past crime
- illness or physical disability
- psychiatric condition
- hidden skill
- hidden phobia
- hidden weakness or vulnerability
- mistaken belief

Tips for Making the Most of Your Story's Secrets

Tip: Give your victim secrets.

- For the victim, create an inventory of secrets.
- List the other character(s) who become sus-

SinC Into Great Writing! Previews

pects when each secret is revealed.

Tip: Suspects lie to cover up secrets that could implicate OR exonerate them.

- For each suspect, list the lies (or misconceptions of others) that cover the secrets they are trying to hide

Tip: Beliefs affect behavior

- Create a timeline showing when other characters believe each lie and know each secret.
- Shape each character's behavior to reflect what they believe.

Tip: Use the revelation of secrets to propel your story forward.

- In your outline, highlight each revelation of a secret.

• Spread out the revelations to keep your reader turning pages.

- Move from small to bigger and ever more surprising revelations.

Tip: Play fair.

- When a point-of-view character uncovers a secret, reveal it to the reader.

Hallie Ephron is the author of the psychological suspense novel Never Tell a Lie. A writing teacher and book reviewer for the Boston Globe, her Writing and Selling Your Mystery Novel: How to Knock 'em Dead with Style was nominated for an Edgar. Check out her website: www.HallieEphron.com.

Voice and Manuscript Submission

By Chris Roerden

"We're looking for a fresh, new voice." This is a positive way of saying, "Rejected because the writing sounds amateur." I prefer the word average.



"That's not me," you say. You've got a thrilling, chilling plot and quirky, perky characters. The way your story develops will show those stuck-up agents and editors a thing or two.

But story development doesn't reveal itself on page one. Voice does. Long before characters and plot can be evaluated on their own merits, 90 to 95 percent of submissions are eliminated, almost unread, voices already showing signs of suffocation by habits of average writing.

Tips for Surviving Early Screening

1. Get the presentation right. Yes, all those tiresome details of mechanics and formatting — which I won't cover except to say one in four writers who submit cannot or will not follow printed instructions. Though this issue isn't "voice" it's clearly amateur. Same "no" pile.

The next tips deal with actual writing.

2. The hook must not only grab interest but also hang onto it for one, two, three chapters without stopping for the deadly duo of backstory and description dump.

3. A prologue may be justified if it ties in with Chapter 1, not if it disguises a weak first chapter with shock 'n' shlock. But if the tie-in is legit, why not incorporate the prologue in Chapter 1 and avoid the bias against this device?

4. Begin with a change upsetting your protagonist's status quo, even when the central crime occurs later. Look at all the early conflict in *Till the Cows Come Home* by Judy Clemens and *Dead Ringer* by Lisa Scottoline.

5. Action is conflict. It isn't whatever moves. If you cannot put conflict on every page, make us feel tension on every page by fueling anticipation of conflict.

6. Postpone backstory (telling what happened before the story opens) to Chapter 3 or later, after firmly hooking us by showing what's happening now. Meanwhile, only hint of the past.

7. Be stingy with description. Work bits of it in with action. Here's how Louise Penny introduces Inspector Gamache in *Still Life*: "[He] knelt down; his knees cracking like the report of a hunter's rifle, his large, expressive hands hovering over the tiny circle of blood..." Efficient, as well as sufficient for a page one image of the character, his actions, and the situation.

8. Dialogue is for dramatizing conflict, revealing character, and advancing plot. Delete chitchat. Putting quotes around conversation doesn't make it dialogue.

9. Select actions and details to help us care about your protagonist. Make us want what she wants, feel what she feels, identify with her weaknesses (one of which increases conflict), and vicariously share her strengths (one of which solves the plot and saves her life).

10. Revise to freshen phrasing, kill old habits, give expressions a twist.

These 10 techniques improve the early evaluation of voice. But what IS voice? Come to my pre-Bouchercon workshop and enjoy examining different authors' voices, analyzing methods for creating emotion, and breaking weak habits. Experiment with the unexpected, twist the familiar, and play with body language.

Chris Roerden has helped writers for 40+ years as an editor and past university instructor of writing. Her Don't Murder Your Mystery won the Agatha for Best Nonfiction and was nominated for an Anthony and a Macavity. She welcomes questions about craft on her Amazon blog: snurl.com/9esdq (then scroll).

The articles on this page support SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.

Interview with an Agent: Ellen Geiger

By S.W. Hubbard

This is one of a series of interviews with leading agents representing the mystery genre. Ellen Geiger is Senior Agent at Frances Goldin Literary Agency, Inc. Among her clients are Donna Andrews, Earlene Fowler and P.J. Tracy. For more information visit: www.goldinlit.com.

SH: What makes a query “pop” for you? What factors do you consider before making an offer of representation?

EG: Representing my existing clients well is my top priority and, if I do a good job for them, they will turn around and recommend me to their writer friends. This is the #1 way agents get their best clients anyway. We do read each and every query letter that comes in here though. Queries that grab me from the outset, that show writing skill, that showcase the author’s background and talent will always



get a response. Factors I consider in offering representation: Is the author really talented, beyond just being clever? Is the author committed professionally to writing or is this just a lark, a retirement hobby or an outgrowth of a class assignment? Does the author have more than one book in him/her — i.e. the return on investment for the agent may not be in Book #1 but in Book #4 or even #8.

SH: What leads you to send the missive we writers all dread receiving — the rejection letter?

EG: The only rejection letter you can really believe is the one that incorporates this standard phrase: “This isn’t right for me at this time,” as everything else is thrown in to soften the rejection or soothe the agent’s guilt. My subjective sense of the market involves assessing what else is out there in this genre, whether the book is too old fashioned in concept or voice (especially with cozies), how fresh the characters are, what the author’s track record is, how strong the project is overall in the context of other writers, and whether, importantly, I can come up with a mental list of four or five editors who I think would like to see it.

SH: How much time is it reasonable for an author to expect her agent will spend preparing and selling her manuscript? Is it worth it to you to pursue deals with low advances?

EG: It really depends. I’ll spend quite a bit of time with my existing clients preparing their novel

for submission if I think it is warranted. If it looks like it’s taking more than two additional drafts though, I’ll ask them to hire an outside editor because I will have lost my critical faculties by that point. I’m helped here by having a literate staff who read alongside me, so we’ll have at least two opinions from the outset. If it’s a major overhaul, I’ll recommend some freelance editors the author can engage from the outset and submit a later draft to me for possible representation.

SH: Publishers seem committed to an “all-blockbuster-all-the-time” philosophy. Is there any hope for moderately successful books and the authors who write them?

EG: Yes, and unfortunately agents fall into that blockbuster mania too. Nobody seems to want to get base hits anymore, just home runs, yet you can best win the ball game with a combination of both (I mean, look at the Red Sox!) I think there’s hope with a new series, but if after a few books the author doesn’t catch fire, the publishers are ruthless these days and their series will be cut. I’ve seen lately though that some authors are able to continue their series at smaller houses, if the demand warrants. Usually, the author has to go to plan B — another series, a stand-alone, a pseudonym, another genre entirely, writing for a different demographic — or some combination of all of these.

SH: The publishing world is littered with authors who got contacts to write one or two books, then can’t make another sale. What’s your advice to authors in this position?

EG: “Littered” is really the right word for it, as this is such a common story these days. Most traditional mysteries are midlisty, so they are a particularly vulnerable genre. My advice is to take a deep breath first. Then see if your agent still has the enthusiasm to continue representing you while you reposition yourself. If so, you’ve won half the battle. You can’t put a price on agent enthusiasm and loyalty. Clients of mine who have found themselves in this predicament have resorted to trying to start a new series that I’d sell to a different house, changing their names, writing for children as opposed to adults, writing for a different genre completely (i.e. cozy to romantic suspense).

S.W. Hubbard has written a police procedural series for Pocket Books and ghostwritten a thriller to be published by Knopf in 2009. Her short stories have appeared in Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine.

This article supports SinC’s Professional Education and Career Development goal.

Maron Receives NC Award

Margaret Maron, SinC’s third president, was one of two recipients of the 2008 North Carolina Award for Literature, the



highest honor the state can bestow. (The other recipient was Charles Frazier, author of *Cold Mountain* and *Thirteen Moons*.) The awards are given in the

fields of Literature, Science, the Fine Arts and Public Service.

The commemorative program for the Awards Ceremony noted in part:

“For introducing readers from Prague to Bangkok to tar heel places and traditions, and serving through her prose as an unofficial ambassador for North Carolina, Maron receives the 2008 North Carolina Award for Literature.”

Maron wrote short stories before beginning a series featuring Sigrid Harald, a lieutenant in the New York City Police Department. The protagonist of her second series is Judge Deborah Knott, of fictional Colleton County, North Carolina. Maron describes the latter series as her “love letters to North Carolina.”

Bootlegger’s Daughter was the first of that series and, in 1993 won an Edgar, an Anthony, an Agatha and a Macavity. There have been many more awards since, including the Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Fiction (2004), the highest award for a North Carolina writer regardless of genre.

Maron’s 25 novels have been translated into more than a dozen languages. Besides being a founding member and past president of Sisters in Crime, she has served as president of the American Crime Writers League and Mystery Writers of America.

This article supports SinC’s Membership Growth, Networking, and Forums for Members goal.

How About Linking Your Website to SinC’s?

Does your website have a link to SinC national’s? Link your website to

SinC’s at:
www.sistersincrime.org

Sign up for SinC’s pre-Bouchercon writing workshop.

You can do it online at:

www.sistersincrime.org

Law and Fiction: Getting the Facts Rights

By Leslie Budewitz

As writers, we want to get the facts right – while telling a good story. This new column will help Sisters in Crime members do both.

A writer asks: What constitutes probable cause to search or arrest?

A case of suspected homicide: A woman is missing. Her husband's alibi for the time his wife disappeared can't be corroborated. He admits having a girlfriend. A neighbor calls police to report recent digging in the backyard. When police arrive, the husband is packed and ready to go.



Do police have probable cause to arrest him or to obtain a warrant to search the home?

Probable cause is a reasonable belief, based on facts, that evidence of a particular crime will be found in a particular place to be searched or that a particular person is responsible for a particular crime — in this case, homicide. "Mere suspicion" is not enough.

The husband's immediate behavior is merely suspicious. That his alibi can't be confirmed and he is involved with another woman do not establish reasonable factual grounds to believe that a crime has been committed or to link him to it. But the third factor — the backyard digging — is sufficient grounds to get a warrant to search the yard. When the yard is dug up and the missing woman's body or clothing is found, the hole is evidence of a crime, linked to the husband, and establishes probable cause for his arrest.

If — before the yard was excavated — the neighbor claimed that the day the wife disappeared, she saw the husband carrying a shovel to the backyard, visibility was good, and she sees reasonably well, then the facts show: 1) evidence linking the digging to a crime and 2) evidence linking the husband to the digging and the crime. Probable cause to search and to arrest would exist even before the yard was excavated. If she'd seen him struggle with the weight of a large bundle or her dog dragged home a scarf belonging to the victim, the showing of probable cause would be even stronger.

The case of the suspected drug dealer: Police go to Bateman's apartment to question him about a suspected drug deal. When the door opens, they see Bateman drop a marijuana pipe. While standing with him in the doorway, officers see other drug paraphernalia in the living room. An officer detects a strong odor of smoke. Officers ask if anyone else is in the apartment; Bateman says he doesn't think so. Officers then hear a voice in the kitchen. An officer walks into the kitchen, finds it filled with smoke and soot and sees a man he recognizes as a convicted drug dealer with an outstanding arrest warrant. After officers enter the apartment, they see a tobacco tin filled with what appears to be marijuana on the living room table.

Do officers have probable cause for a warrant to search the apartment for drugs? Yes. They saw a pipe and other paraphernalia. They smelled, then saw, evidence of cooking but no food, with a known drug dealer in the kitchen. These facts establish a reasonable belief that evidence of drug dealing will be found in the apartment.

Do officers have probable cause to arrest Bateman on the spot? Yes, for possession of marijuana. If possession of drug paraphernalia is illegal in that state, he can be arrested on that charge as well.

A search warrant was obtained and a meth lab found in a closet off the kitchen. Only then did officers have probable cause to arrest Bateman for illegal manufacture of drugs.

(Facts adapted from State v. Bateman, 2004 MT 281, 323 Mont. 280, 99 P.3d 656.)

Probable cause matters because it is the legal minimum of facts that law enforcement must be able to establish before making an arrest or getting a search warrant. If you want to create both defensible and questionable arrests and warrants in your fiction, you've got to understand probable cause.

Leslie Budewitz is a practicing lawyer and a fiction writer. For more columns and help on getting the law right in your stories, visit her website, www.LawandFiction.com.

This article supports SinC's Professional Education, and Career Development goal.

Chapter News

Tell us what you've been doing! Submit news of your chapter's activities (300 dpi photos are welcomed, too) to bjcardone@hotmail.com. The deadline for the next issue (June) is April 20.

Alaska

Alaska Sisters in Crime is sponsoring the 2009 Alaska Reads project and a school selected Halene Petersen Dahlstrom, author of the Rinnie of Alaska mystery series, as our Alaska Reads author. Halene will visit Polaris K-12 school in Anchorage and two village schools on Alaska's North Slope. Alaska SinC is buying books for middle schoolers and for their libraries.

The chapter is working hard to complete *A Stranger Comes to Town: Mystery Authors Explore Alaska*, with stories from many of the 78 authors participating in the 2001 and 2007 Authors to the Bush programs.

The chapter is hosting a retreat in Seward, AK on Columbus Day weekend, October 8 to 12, 2009. We held a reception last fall to honor Scottish author and Lefty award-winner Donna Moore, our 2008 Author to the Bush, who visited Aniak and the Kuspik School District for two weeks. At the reception, Dana Stabenow (on behalf of Alaska SinC) received the 2007 Alaska Contributions to Literacy Award from the Alaska Center for the Book and publisher Sara Juday.

We have many more projects in progress and are seeking grants to continue the Authors to the Bush program as an annual event. We also have an active social network on <http://aksinc.ning.com/> and expect to offer web shorts on writing and publishing topics.

New England

In November 2008, the NE chapter, in conjunction with the NE/MWA, co-hosted a seventh annual Crime Bake mystery conference, featuring Harlan Coben as guest of honor. Plans for the 2009 Crime Bake are well underway and we are proud to announce that the guest of honor will be Sue Grafton. The conference is scheduled for November 13 to 15 and we encourage all mystery enthusiasts to check out www.crimebake.org/index.htm for further details.

At the chapter's December holiday party, members enjoyed sparkling entertainment as award-winning investigative reporter and mystery author Hank Phillippi Ryan interviewed local published mystery writers. In addition, we applauded the efforts of outgoing chapter president, Ruth McCarty, welcomed new chapter president, Rosemary Harris, and feasted on delicious potluck treats. At our February meeting, a number of NE/SinC sisters read aloud from their current works-in-progress, providing attendees with sneak peeks into what we all hope will be the next generation of best sellers.

Northern California

The Sisters in Crime Northern California Chapter is looking forward to 2009 after a wonderful 2008, during which many new

Don't Miss Out!
Join members-only discussions: become a member of the SinC Listserv:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sistersincrime>

members got involved. Highlights of the year included a new traveling library display (organized by Camille Minichino) and a mystery



Above: The new traveling library display debuted last October at the Union City Library.

Below: The SinC cast of "Murder of the Mystery Detective."



game luncheon (with a script written by Penny Warner).

This article supports SinC's Membership Growth, Networking, and Forums for Members goal.

In Memoriam

Donald E. Westlake died of a heart attack on December 31, 2008, while vacationing in Mexico. He was 75. He wrote more than 100 books and 5 screenplays, all using manual typewriters.

Westlake leaves his wife, Abigail, sons, Sean Westlake, Steven Westlake, Paul Westlake and Tod Westlake; two stepdaughters, Adrienne Adams and Katherine Adams; a stepson, Patrick Adams; a sister, Virginia VanDermark; and four grandchildren.

His next novel, *Get Real*, is scheduled for release in April.

Karen Spengler, owner of the I Love a Mystery bookstore in Mission, KS, lost her long battle with cancer on January 1, 2009. She was 56. Spengler is survived by her mother Jean Spengler and two goddaughters, Sarah and Kaitlyn West.

Check us out online:
[www:sistersincrime.org](http://www.sistersincrime.org)

Chapter Spotlight: SinC Los Angeles

When founded? 1989

How many members? 200+

What area does it cover? All of Greater Los Angeles, including the San Fernando Valley.

Website: www.sistersincrime.com

What's special about it?

Diana James (President): Our chapter has grown immensely because of the desire we have to help authors build their careers. We have arranged more than 60 book events over the past two years, placing our authors in libraries, bookstores and other venues!

Our chapter commits several thousand dollars each year to maintain a strong presence at events such as the LA Times Book Festival and the West Hollywood Book Fair.

Every other year we host No Crime Unpublished. This year, we have partnered with SoCal MWA in an effort to grow our conference. It has been renamed California Crime Writers Conference and scheduled for June 13 to 14, 2009.

Our chapter has also produced four anthologies and two cookbooks, all of which have been extremely successful. This gives newer authors the opportunity to build their résumés. Our fifth anthology, *Murder in LA LA Land*, is underway and open for submissions, not only from our own members but those of the Orange County and Hawaii chapters. We hope to see it published by early 2010.

Each year we take on a charity to support during the holidays. In 2007 we assisted a women's shelter by furnishing a lounge/reading room for the residents and providing Christmas presents to each of the women. This year we supported the Glendale Police K-9 unit, which survives solely on donations.

Sarah Chen: Our chapter is an excellent resource for beginning and unpublished writers. When I joined, I had never been published and didn't even think I could write a mystery. But thanks to SinC members, I gained the confidence to write and eventually became a published short story writer. The monthly meetings have such informative and inspirational workshops that it's almost impossible not to want to rush home and write.

The Speakers Bureau puts on wonderful panel discussions all over Los Angeles that allow inquisitive writers to pick the

brains of talented authors. They are also a great way to find new bookstores or libraries that you never would have discovered otherwise.

Lastly, I think one of the best things about our chapter is the end of the year holiday party where unpublished writers read an excerpt from their work in progress. It's such a nice way to validate what you're working on and it gives members who may not be used to the spotlight their moment in the sun.

What activities are upcoming?

Diana: We are offering workshops to our members on short story writing, which ties into our upcoming deadline for the anthology. So far workshops have been led by

established authors Kate Thornton and Robert S. Levinson. We are planning several other workshops for March and April.

Our big news is the California Crime Writers Conference, featuring Robert Crais and Laurie King as guests of honor. It will be held in the Pasadena Hilton, providing a roomy and attractive setting for meeting and networking.

This year's event will take place over two days, with more info, agent sessions and entertainment planned. Info can be found on our website and on page 10 in this issue.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Diana: Our chapter has members from all across the country; writers join to connect with our members and to gain info about this large market. For details on the benefits of membership, contact our membership director, Darrell James, at: membershipsinc@sbcglobal.net.

Sarah: I just returned from the Robert S. Levinson short story workshop, which had an incredible turnout. Levinson provided everyone with amusing anecdotes, writing tips and short story guidelines. The event was hosted by The Mystery Bookstore.

To sum it up, Sisters in Crime/LA Chapter is not only crucial to my growth as a writer but as a proud resident of Los Angeles.

Kathryn Lilley: Our chapter is a dynamic, vibrant community of authors and readers. The speakers and panels are engaging and thought provoking, drawing from the vibrant cultural resources of Los Angeles. As a writer, I feel very lucky to be a member of it.

This article supports SinC's Membership Growth, Networking, and Forums for Members goal.



Coming up: Conferences & Happenings

MAD ANTHONY WRITERS CONFERENCE & WRITERS POLICE ACADEMY HAMILTON, OH

The Mad Anthony Writers Conference and Writers Police Academy will be held April 17 to 18, 2009, in Hamilton, OH.

Attendees will experience hands-on classes in fingerprinting, handcuffing, arrest techniques, weapons, interview and interrogation, kinesics and much more. The conference will also feature K9 demos and classes on gangs, high tech weaponry, hostage negotiations, tours of the county morgue and local police station, and a candlelight night owl presentation by Lee Lofland entitled "Murder, Mayhem and the Macabre: Hamilton's Bizarre Murders." This presentation is not for the faint of heart!

All of the academy presenters are active or retired police officers as well as published authors.

For more information and registration please visit: www.madanthonycbf.org/index.htm.

MALICE DOMESTIC 21 ARLINGTON, VA

Malice Domestic 21 will be held May 1 to 3, 2009, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, VA. Nancy Pickard will be the guest of honor, Elaine Viets, the toastmaster, and Charlotte MacLeod, the ghost of honor. Anne Perry will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award.

For more information and to register for the convention, see the website: www.malice-domestic.org.

CRIMEFEST BRISTOL, UK

CrimeFest, The International Crime Fiction Convention, will be held May 14 to 17, 2009, at the Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel in Bristol, UK. Michael Connelly will be the international guest of honor; Meg Gardiner will be the toastmistress. Other highlighted authors include Simon Brett, Hakan Nesser, John Harvey, Bill James and Andrew Taylor.

For more information and to register, see the website: www.crimefest.com/.

MAYHEM IN THE MIDLANDS OMAHA, NB

The tenth annual Mayhem in the Midlands convention will take place May 21 to 24, 2009, at

the Embassy Suites Hotel in Omaha, NB. Dana Stabenow will be the guest of honor, Jan Burke, the toastmaster, and Zoe Sharp, the Caroline Willner international guest of honor.

Registration is \$100; the SinC Buffet and Mystery Dinner are extra.

This is an intimate convention where everyone will get to know everyone else. Registration is limited to 200.

For more information contact Manya Shorr at 402/444-4822 or mshorr@omahapubliclibrary.org, or Sally Fellows at sallyfellows1@cox.net.

BLOODY WORDS OTTAWA, CANADA

Ottawa will play host to Canada's premier mystery conference, Bloody Words, from June 5 to 7, 2009, at the Marriott Hotel, just steps away from Parliament Hill. This national conference brings together authors, fans, librarians and those in the book industry from across Canada and the United States.

Highlights will include panels of mystery authors, publishers and agents discussing books, the writing process and the publishing industry, while RCMP officers, private detectives, psychologists and forensic experts will deliver sessions on the intricacies of crime, criminals and detection. Author readings will be held in English and French and will be open to the public.

Confirmed authors include international guest of honor Denise Mina from Scotland, Canadian guest of honor Louise Penny, local guest of honor, Barbara Fradkin and mistress of ceremonies, Mary Jane Maffini.

The three day conference includes a Friday evening cocktail party. Registration is \$175.

For more information and registration forms, please visit www.bloodywords2009.com.

CALIFORNIA CRIME WRITERS CONFERENCE PASADENA, CA

Robert Crais and Laurie King will be the keynote speakers for the inaugural California Crime Writers Conference, co-sponsored by Sisters in Crime/LA and SoCal MWA from June 13 to 14, 2009, at The Hilton Pasadena. The event will include an agents' reception, forensics track, craft workshops, query and synopsis seminars, manuscript consultations, and classes for established authors on book contracts, e-publishing, presentation tips, online marketing information, and film/television opportunities.

Confirmed agents include Jill Marsal of Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency, Irene Webb of Irene Webb Literary, and Timothy Wager of

Davis Wager Agency. Faculty members include: Gayle Lynds, Jerrilyn Farmer, Jan Burke and Christopher Rice, along with LAPD detectives, intellectual property attorney Jonathan Kirsch, and publicist Kim-from-L.A. Early registration is \$265 through February 28. For more information, see www.sistersincrimela.com/ccwc.htm or e-mail sistersincrimela@yahoo.com.

HISTORICAL NOVEL SOCIETY SCHAUMBURG, IL

The third semi-annual Historical Novel Society Conference will be held June 12 to 14, 2009, at the Hyatt Regency Woodfield in Schaumburg, IL. The conference has a strong historical mystery presence and features three tracks of panels and presentations, as well as individual pitch sessions with numerous agents and editors.

Margaret George and Edward Rutherfurd are author guests of honor. For more information, see the website: www.historicalnovelsociety.org.

PUBLIC SAFETY WRITERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE LAS VEGAS, NV

PSWA's annual conference will be held in Las Vegas from June 18 to 21, 2009, at the Suncoast Hotel and Casino. Registered attendees may offer a suggestion for a presentation or panel. There is no restriction as to who can serve on a panel.

Presenters include Steve Scarborough, a forensic scientist with more than 30 years' experience in law enforcement; long-time fireman, Dave Doust; and mystery author Sheila Lowe, a court qualified forensic handwriting expert.

Our special guest is Betty Webb, author of the Lena Jones books, who'll be talking about moving from hard-boiled to darn near cozy with her Gunn Zoo series.

For more information and to register, visit the Public Safety Writers Associations website at www.publicsafetywriter.com.

KILLER NASHVILLE MYSTERY AND THRILLER CONFERENCE FRANKLIN, TN

The Killer Nashville Mystery and Thriller Conference will be held August 14 to 16, 2009, at the Cool Springs Marriott in Franklin, TN. The program will feature more than 40 panels and discussions on mysteries, thrillers and general writing and promotion techniques applicable to any genre. Editor and agent appointments will be available.

For more information and to register for the conference, see the website: www.killer-nashville.com.

SINC INTO GREAT WRITING! INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Sisters in Crime is sponsoring a workshop, SinC Into Great Writing!, on October 14, 2009, at the Hyatt Regency in Indianapolis, IN, the day before Bouchercon begins.

The program runs from 1:30 to 9:00 pm and features seminars by Donald Maass, Hallie Ephron and Chris Roerden, as well as dinner with keynote speaker Nancy Pickard.

The deadline for registration is September 22, 2009, and can be done on the website: www.sistersincrime.org. The cost is \$50 for members, \$150 for nonmembers. NO REFUNDS. Registration will be capped at 200.

BOUCHERCON 2009 INDIANAPOLIS, IN

"Elementary, My Dear Indy," will be the theme of Bouchercon 2009, to be held in Indianapolis, IN, October 15 to 18, 2009. Michael Connelly will be author guest of honor; S.J. Rozan will be toastmaster; and Kathryn Kennison will be fan guest of honor.

For more information and registration, see the website: www.bouchercon2009.com.

These announcements support SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.

ALA Annual Conference Chicago, IL

By Mary Boone
SinC Library Liaison

Join Sisters in Crime this summer at ALA's Annual Conference, the largest gathering of library professionals of its kind, attended by approximately 18,000 librarians from around the country and abroad. The conference will be held July 11 to 13 (Saturday — Monday), 2009, at McCormick Place West, 2301 South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL.

SinC will once again host a booth in the conference Exhibit Hall. This is a great opportunity to tell the library community about the benefits of belonging to SinC. And, since it's one of the busiest and most popular spots in the Exhibit Hall, the SinC booth is also an excellent venue for members to introduce themselves to the many conference attendees who seek out our booth each day. These are the people who buy books for their libraries, lead mystery book discussion groups, co-ordinate programs (including author visits) and make reading recommendations to library users. For "local" libraries — such as mine in NW Ohio — Chicago is easily accessible



The Monitoring Project is Expanding — With Your Help

By Julianne Balmain
Monitoring Project Liaison

We still need volunteers to help out with our newly expanded monitoring project. Specifically, we need more volunteers willing to drop into their local Barnes & Noble and/or Costco once a month, note the featured mystery titles called out with special placement — on the front table, for example — and e-mail that information my way by the end of the month for tracking. Sound simple? You betcha. And it should give us a very interesting picture of who is dominating some key retail turf across the nation.



The more people we have reporting what they see at their local stores each month, the more meaningful the data will be at the end of the year. If you'd like to help, e-mail me at julianneb@mindspring.com.

For years, the Sisters in Crime Monitoring Project has tracked mystery reviews in major publications by gender. It's an effective way to assess whether female mystery writers are getting media coverage proportionate to their contribution to the genre. The final numbers for 2008 are still coming in, but so far it looks like reviews of books by men significantly outnumber reviews of books by women. Watch for a full report on the 2008 tallies in the next newsletter.

Starting with the 2008 report, we will be making an increased effort to get the word out about our findings, with the objective of pointing out any areas where parity has not yet been achieved and starting a dialogue about why that might be and how to correct it. With your help, the hot mystery blog topic of 2009 could be, "Does gender play a role in who gets reviewed?"

This project supports SinC's Advocacy, Monitoring, and Reporting goal.

by car or train, making it economical to send carloads of staff members, many of whom will be going just to attend the conference exhibits.

Help Make the SinC Booth a Success

Members can take advantage of SinC's presence at ALA in several ways: by helping staff the booth and by sending promotional materials to be given away to attendees.

Workers are needed for each of the four days the exhibits are open. The Exhibit Hall opens at 9:00 am and the day is divided into two-hour shifts. Because space is tight, two workers per shift is ideal. The booth will be open:

Saturday, July 11, Sunday, July 12 and Monday, July 13, from 9 am to 5 pm. On Tuesday, July 14, the hours will be 9 am to 1 pm.

Books are not sold at the booth. Instead, there is an honored and very popular tradition of SinC authors signing and giving away books. If it is possible for you (or your publisher) to donate one to two boxes of books for you to sign during your shift, please consider doing so. You are responsible for getting your books to the conference but check with your publisher — in most cases they will ship your books with the materials they are sending to the conference for their own booths.

I will register all booth workers for the conference, ensuring that you have badges that will get you into the Exhibit Hall all four days the exhibits are open. If you are able to come to the conference, please do. It's a great time and you'll meet lots of people!

Promotional Materials

If you cannot come to ALA, consider sending either your business card, a bookmark or postcard

that promotes your most recent book. Please send only 50 – 75 copies of one of these items.

Also consider donating a single, signed copy of one of your books to be given away in the booth's popular daily raffles.

Please note that booth space is limited and conference attendees find smaller items easier and lighter to pack for the trip home. Bigger and more is not better in this case.

Area Contact Volunteer Needed

We need someone living in the Chicago area to serve as the local contact. This volunteer receives promotional materials sent by members unable to attend ALA. The volunteer would also help get the materials to McCormick Place West around mid-day on Friday, July 10 and, if possible, help set up the booth. Sisters in Crime will register you for the exhibits and ensure you have an Exhibit Hall badge, which can be used all four days the exhibits are open.

I hope you will join us at ALA in Chicago or will send promotional materials for us to give away on your behalf. If you are interested in participating at any level, contact Mary Boone at boone-ma@earthlink.net for more information. Please put "SinC ALA Chicago 09" in the subject heading.

See you in Chicago in July!

This conference supports SinC's Advocacy, Monitoring, and Reporting goal.

www.sistersincrime.org

By Patricia Gulley

Announcements for new books (please, no reprints), short stories, articles and plays (all relating to mysteries), also nominations and awards, may be sent to Patricia Gulley via snail mail to: 1743 N. Jantzen Avenue, Portland, OR 97217-7849 or e-mail to: Weyrcottage@yahoo.com. Please be sure to put Sisters in Crime, The Docket or InSinC in the subject line — otherwise your e-mail won't be opened.

The deadline for the next The Docket is April 15, 2009.

Books

Glynn Marsh Alam, *MOON WATER MADNESS*, Avocet, March 2009



Lou Allin, *MAN CORN MURDERS*, Five Star, March 2009

Mike Befeler, *LIVING WITH YOUR KIDS IS MURDER*, Five Star, April 2009

Emily Brightwell, *MRS. JEFFRIES IN THE NICK OF TIME*, Berkley Prime Crime, March 2009

Donis Casey, *THE SKY TOOK HIM*, Poisoned Pen Press, January 2009

Jane K. Cleland, *KILLER KEEPSAKES*, St. Martin's Minotaur, April 2009

Blaize Clement, *CAT SITTER ON A HOT TIN ROOF*, St. Martin's Minotaur, January 2009

Meredith Cole, *POSED FOR MURDER*, St. Martin's Minotaur, February 2009

Patrica Crandall, *THE DOG MEN*, PublishAmerica, October 2008

Marlis Day, *THE SECRET OF BAILEY'S CHASE*, Echelon Press, October 2008

Christine Duncan, *SAFE HOUSE*, Treble-Heart Books, March 2009

Carola Dunn, *MANNA FROM HADES: A CORNISH MYSTERY*, St. Martin's Press, March 2009

Dianne Emley, *CUT TO THE QUICK*, January 2009; *THE DEEPEST CUT*, February 2009, both Ballantine Books

Diane Fanning, *PUNISH THE DEED*, Severn House, March 2009

Leighton Gage, *BURIED STRANGERS*, Soho Press, January 2009

Renée Gardner, *AND THE DOG TOOK THE CAT*, PublishAmerica, January 2009

M. M. Gornell (Madeline Gornell), *UNCLE SI'S SECRET*, Aberdeen Bay, November 2008

Margaret Grace (Camille Minichino), *MALICE IN MINIATURE*, Berkley Prime Crime, February 2009

William Green, *RAINBOW SPIES: LA CONCLUSION FRANCISE*, Outskirts Press, September 2008

Rita Lakin, *GETTING OLD IS A DISASTER*, Bantam/Dell, December 2008

Janet LaPierre, *RUN A CROOKED MILE*, Perseverance/Daniel, April 2009

G.M. Malliet, *DEATH AND THE LIT CHICK*, Midnight Ink, April 2009

Evan Marshall, *EVIL JUSTICE*, Severn House, March 2009

Rosemary & Larry Mild, *BOSTON SCREAM PIE*, Hilliard & Harris, August 2008

Shirley Rousseau Murphy, *CAT PLAYING CUPID*, Avon, February 2009

Laurie A. Perkins, *CLIFF HANGER, A RUNNING SCARED SUPENSE*, lulu dot com, October 2008

Sara Rosett, *MAGNOLIA, MOONLIGHT, AND MURDER*, Kensington, April 2009

Sandra Ruttan, *THE FRAILTY OF FLESH*, Dorchester, November 2008

Jeanne C. Stein, *LEGACY*, Ace, December 2008

How to Send Us Your Entry

The format is simple:

Name of author, TITLE OF BOOK,

Name of Publisher, Month to be released.

Name of Author, TITLE OF STORY,

Name of magazine or anthology, Month to be released.

Awards and nominations should be in sentences.

Always put *The Docket* in the subject line of your e-mail. Anything else may be deleted.

Don't send ISBNs, character names, series names or places to buy the books.

Don't send newsletters, publicity sheets or website addresses.

Don't send in colors other than black and white.

Don't send entries older than six months.

Editors of anthologies will not be listed unless they have a story in the anthology.

If you are using a pen name, we can add your real name after it in parentheses. You must tell me if you **do not** want this done.

Susan Arnout Smith, *OUT AT NIGHT*, St. Martin's Minotaur, March 2009

Elaine Viets, *KILLER CUTS*, Obsidian/Penguin, May 2009

Short Stories/Anthologies

Suzanne Baginskie, *THE BIG CATCH*, Woman's World Magazine, January 2008

Leslie Budewitz, *THE AFTERTHOUGHT*, The Whitefish Review, December 2008

J K Cummins, *RAINY DAY FUND*, Woman's World, October 2008

Kaye George, *HANDBASKETS, DRAWERS, AND A KILLER COLD*, Crooked E-Magazine, January 2009

Michael Mallory, *CHRISTMAS GHOSTS*, LA Times Kids Reading Room, December 7, 2008

Beverle Graves Myers, *A CUTTING WIND*, Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine, April 2009

Jeanne C. Stein, *BETTER LUCKY THAN GOOD*, At the Scene of the Crime, Running Press Books, December 2008

Joyce Tremel, *AGATHA*, Mysterical-e magazine, Spring 2009

Elaine Viets, *DEATH OF CONDO COMMANDO*, Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine, May 2009

Non Fiction/Articles

Cynthia Baxter, *TRAVEL WRITING ON DEADLINE*, Mystery Scene, Winter 2008

Julie Kramer, *WEAVING REALITY WITH FICTION*, Crimespree, November/December 2008

Michael Mallory, *BARONESS ORCZY: THE SURPRISING FIRST LADY OF MYSTERY*, Mystery Scene, Winter 2008

Young Adult

Sandra L. Vardaman, *NIGHTMARES CAN BE MURDER*, New Century Publishing, November 2008

Awards/Miscellaneous

Sandi Ault's *WILD INFERNO*, Linda Barnes' *LIE DOWN WITH THE DEVIL*, Carolyn Hart's *GHOST AT WORK*, and Margaret Maron's *DEATH'S HALF ACRE* were named Publishers Weekly Best Books of 2008 as were Mass Market books by Jordan Dane (*NO ONE HEARD HER SCREAM*) and Linda Leal Miller (*DEADLY DECEPTIONS*).

Gloria J. Browne-Marshall was honored with the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Justice Award for her stage play *KILLING ME SOFTLY*.

In the National Best Books 2008 Awards, sponsored by USA Book News, Bruce Cook's (Brant Randall) *BLOOD HARVEST* won the Best Mystery/Suspense category; Morgan Hunt's *FOOL ON THE HILL* won the Gay/Lesbian Fiction category; and Warren Bull's short story, *HEIDEGGER'S CAT*, was a finalist in the Fiction & Literature: Anthologies category.

W. E. Mueller's *WORKING THE CROSSWORD* won The Writer magazine mystery/suspense short-story contest of 2008.

This article supports SinC's Membership Growth, Networking, and Forums for Members goal.

Don't miss
the SinC breakfast
at Malice Domestic
See page 3 for details.

Let's Talk Mystery: Why Do Men's Books Get Reviewed More Often than Women's?

By Nancy Martin

This new series is intended to kickstart discussion about our genre. We encourage members to pick up the discussion on our Listserv, sistersin-crime@yahoo.com.

Experienced reader and respected mystery reviewer Maureen Corrigan recently answered questions about the differences between books written by men and books written by women.

Corrigan, book critic for NPR's Fresh Air, is a critic-in-residence and lecturer at Georgetown University. She is an associate editor of and contributor to *Mystery and Suspense Writers* and the winner of the 1999 Edgar Award for Criticism, presented by the Mystery Writers of America. Corrigan's literary memoir, *Leave Me Alone, I'm Reading!* was published in 2005. Corrigan is also a reviewer and columnist for *The Washington Post's Book World*. In addition to serving on the advisory panel of *The American Heritage Dictionary*, she has chaired the Mystery and Suspense 'judges' panel of the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize

NM: Men always seem to dominate the best-of-the-year mystery lists — not just yours. All of the respected book reviewers tend to favor mysteries written by men, not women. Is that because the genre was essentially created for men and continues to be judged by those standards? Or because the current climate leans toward thrillers? Or is there something inherently "wrong" with the way women write mysteries?

MC: My own best-of-the-year mystery list is dominated by male writers because I am a huge fan of hard-boiled detective fiction and the books that make up that genre tend to be written by men. Not exclusively, as we know, but mostly. I'm not a proponent of essentialist gender theory, so I'm leery of making gender generalizations about why men gravitate toward writing (and reading) hard-boiled mysteries and why women write (and read) "cozies." I don't think there's anything "inherent" about the division and certainly there are a lot of exceptions. For instance, I had wanted to include Fred Vargas — the female author of the great French police procedural series starring Chief Inspector Adamsberg — but the pub dates of her most recent mysteries didn't fall within the chronological confines of my list. I do think, historically and socially, men have been more comfortable with acting "tough" — on the page and in life — and that acculturation accounts for the larger percentage of men who write "tough guy" mysteries.

I also think that reviewers — including myself — take the hard-boiled form more seriously than we do the cozy. The hard-boiled novel tackles "The Big Mysteries" — like the existence of evil, the randomness of violence, and so on. So, when it comes time to assemble a "best-of-the-year list" we reviewers tend to reach for the serious and somber over the lighter-hearted.

I am still a believer in the literary meritocracy. I think if you're a terrific writer — whatever your tone or genre or gender — and you plug away long enough, you're eventually going to be discovered and celebrated. Ideally, while you're still alive.

NM: In your book *Leave Me Alone, I'm Reading!*, you write about your admiration for hard-boiled detective fiction, "because of its focus on smart characters who spent the bulk of their days plugging away at work that gave them identity and purpose." (Here I'm thinking of the passage in *Leave Me Alone*: "...hard-boiled detective novels are modern utopian fantasies about work wrapped in a trenchcoat.") And of your admiration for such characters as Robert Parker's Spenser. But I was also struck by your conclusions about women's lives — which often include the less-than-adventuresome work of child rearing and parent caretaking. Are women's lives too complicated for the utopian fantasy of the mystery novel?

MC: No, I don't think women are at all excluded from the utopian fantasy of work that detective fiction offers. In *Leave Me Alone, I'm Reading!*, I discuss the mystery novels of Lisa Scottoline, Sue Grafton, Sara Paretsky, and Dorothy Sayers — all of which offer utopian visions of satisfying work for women that "reunites head with hand." There's a wonderful old mystery, by the way, by Celia Fremlin called *The Hours Before Dawn*. It was published in 1958 and I don't think it's in print anymore. Anyway, the premise is that a new mother who's sleepless with fatigue sees something that she shouldn't on her nocturnal walks with her newborn infant. I mention that novel because I think there are still so many powerful stories that derive from women's particular "work" experiences that are yet to be written.

NM: If you could create the quintessential female detective from the female-written characters currently being published — one who could be as iconic as Spenser, let's say — what would she be like?

MC: Hmm. If I could create the quintessential post-1960s female detective character who would be as iconic as Robert B. Parker's Spenser, she would have V.I. Warshawski's social conscience, the early Kinsey Millhone's wit, the resolute toughness of J.M. Redman's Mickey Knight, and the physicality of Liza Cody's Eva Wylie. Okay, I know I'm cheating here. I'd vote for Warshawski. Certainly her entrance into the mystery genre is as revolutionary as Spenser's and the novels certainly hold up, both as literary achievements and social artifacts.

Note: To read reviews of Corrigan's "Top Five Mysteries of 2008," go here: www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97030784. Her choices are Dave Zeltserman's *Small Crimes*,

Steig Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Friedrich Glauser's *The Chinaman* (translated from the German by Mike Mitchell,) Richard Stevenson's *Death Vows*, and, although not technically a mystery, Judith Freeman's *The Long Embrace: Raymond Chandler and the Woman He Loved*.

Nancy Martin is the author of nearly 50 books including The Blackbird Sisters Mystery series from NAL and a new series coming from St. Martin's Minotaur. She currently serves as an at-large member of the SinC board, is a founding member of Pennwriters and a charter member of Novelists, Inc.

This article supports SinC's Advocacy, Monitoring, and Reporting goal.

Getting Your Newsletter Via E-mail

Tired of waiting for this newsletter to be delivered by the post office? Many of your Sisters get the news when it's fresh; they receive their newsletter via e-mail, on the day it's mailed. Another big plus is that the e-mail version comes in wonderful, glorious color.

The e-mail version is a PDF, which, unless you have a Mac, you'll need Acrobat Reader to view. Most computers come with this software already installed but free versions are available for nearly every operating system — no matter how old — at www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html. Downloading Acrobat Reader is quick and easy; just follow the directions at the link. Since Acrobat Reader is necessary for viewing other documents you'll come across on the Internet it's a useful addition to your software.

When you get the PDF, you'll have several choices: save it on your computer to read or print out at your leisure or read it on the screen. A huge benefit of the latter is that you can zoom in and make the text bigger — and thus easier to read. Once read, store the PDF in a folder on your computer or burn it onto a CD or DVD for future reference.

Saving the PDF to your computer takes only seconds; the time it takes to print all 16 pages depends on the speed of your printer.

Of course, there are two big advantages to Sisters in Crime in sending your newsletter via e-mail — neither postage nor paper are needed, saving money for other projects and our natural resources.

To sign up for electronic newsletter delivery, e-mail *both* sistersincrime@juno.com and faulkn-er@bev.net.

Sisters in Crime Financial Report

12/31/2008

Balance Sheet (Unaudited)

Assets:

Cash	68,140
Equipment	8,020
Depreciation	-4,757
Investments	144,231
Other Assets	6,266
Total Assets:	221,900

Liabilities:

Payroll Taxes Payable	813
Total Liabilities:	813

Net Worth:

Additional Paid-In Capital	56,599
Retained Earnings	141,832
Net Income, 2008	22,656
Total Net Worth:	221,087
Total Liabilities & Net Worth:	221,900

Profit and Loss Statement 2008 (Unaudited)

Income:

Author's Coalition	99,302
Dividends from Investments	7,639
Events	4,695
Interest Income	644
Membership Dues	64,010
Merchandise Sales	320
Miscellaneous Income	686
Total Income:	177,296

Expenses:

Accounting	1,810
Advertising	200
Amortization	173
Bank Service Charges	19
Board of Directors Expense	779
Computer Maintenance/Repair	328
Conference Calls	299
Contract Labor	16,411
Depreciation	23
Dues & Subscriptions	392
E-Communications	297
Events	28,515
Insurance	2,097
Maintenance-Membership List	695
Miscellaneous Expense	423
Office Supplies	308
PayPal Charges	871
Pension Expense	2,000
Postage & Freight	1,347
Printing - Other	687
Publications	34,819
Public Relations Firm	2,000
Refunds & Returns	160
Salaries	41,306
Taxes	3,280
Telephone	1,022
Travel	13,999
Treasurer Expense	380

Total Ordinary Expenses:154,640

Net Ordinary Income/(Loss):22,656

The InSinC Inquirer: Are Blog Book Tours Worthwhile?

By Bonnie J. Cardone, InSinC Editor

Blog Book Tours — aka Virtual Book Tours — are cheap in terms of dollars spent. Since you don't have to leave home there are no travel costs. Other advantages include: reaching a much larger audience (one specifically interested in you) than is possible with an actual tour, and having your tour accessible online after it is over.

Blog tours are time and labor intensive, however. Appropriate hosts have to be found, contacted and signed up, the tour has to be publicized, and something different has to be planned for each stop, whether it's an interview, an excerpt from your book or a book review, etc.

Also, during each blog stop the author will need to answer any questions posted, not once but several times.

InSinC wants to know: Are blog tours worth the effort?



Roberta Isleib: I think the value is directly related to the hosts you find and the work you put into the tour. There is a ton of work involved: spiffing up your own website/blog, locating hosts, writing the posts for each tour stop, and attending each day's stop and chatting with your visitors. As you write your posts, keep the connection between the host blog, your guest post and your new book firmly in mind.

There's simply no point in turning in a shoddy essay if your goal is to have visitors become intrigued enough with your writing to buy books! And the same with visiting sites on the days they host you: You must plan to stop in several times daily and respond to comments. You want to be a cheerful, interesting presence — like you would at a dinner party, only in this case you can wear pajamas!

Susan Wittig Albert: I'm a big believer in a tour that has a strong thematic continuity, so that people keep coming back for the next post. I also try to choose my hosts carefully — which means finding hosts with the right thematic fit, fairly strong traffic (the stronger the better!) and a habit of promoting their blogs. Peggy, my webmistress, puts up an invitation/application page that spells out all the details. I list the topics I want to post on (thinking "theme" with every topic) and invite hosts to pick a couple.

Nancy Martin: I think everybody in publishing is looking for cheap and easy ways to reach readers and convince them to buy books and blog tours are the latest trend. Because they're cheap (not free, because a writer's time is money) and easy (well, kinda) they seem worth trying. I don't think, however, that anybody has proved Blog Tours are successful.

Blog tours are about sharing readership. By asking a blog owner if you might appear on her space, you're asking that owner to share her (or their) hard-won audience. What can you do in return? You should plan to bring your readers with you. And you should promote the heck out of your appearance to draw traffic to your host's blog.

At The Lipstick Chronicles, we're often asked if writers might use our space for a blog tour. We usually decline — primarily because we don't like to be lumped in with all the blogs that seem to have no unique identity. (We've worked hard to build our brand. We don't want to dilute our product.) We also ask guests to write something that doesn't appear anywhere else on the internet. And — perhaps more importantly — they must write something terrific that will entertain our unique audience. If you're blogging simply to plug your book, you're not a good guest for us. (Our readers want something more than "Here's how I got the idea for my new book.") And we want you to spend the day responding to our backbloggers, whom we've carefully cultivated. If guests make no effort to promote their appearances or to bring new readers to us or don't entertain the ones we've built, we're not inclined to ask them for return visits. To put it bluntly: What's in it for us to have you take up space on our blog?

Joanna Campbell Slan: 1. Organization is the key to making a blog tour work — and to maximizing your efforts. I used an Excel chart and that helped tremendously. (Phone numbers are useful! Total reliance on internet communication can be a problem. If your post doesn't show, pick up the phone and call the host.)

2. Check out the frequency of posts and the longevity of your host blog. Even if the traffic count is good, if the blogger isn't dedicated long term, you could be disappointed.

3. Recognize that some of the benefit may not be immediately apparent. It may come in the form of new opportunities. Because of my tour I was invited to be the guest at two online chats. This alone made my tour work worthwhile.

Dani Greer: Blog book tours are only partially about sharing readership. Too much of that between authors and it becomes very incestuous. Half of your tour needs to be opening new markets and that's an organic process. Finding blogs unrelated to writing, but that fit your book's plot or theme, is the creative way to develop new readership. In the Blog Book Tours yahoo group, we have a three-month session that is broken into these segments:

Month 1: Making your own blog a viral launchpad with a daily posting challenge.

Month 2: Understanding and using all the social marketing sites like Twitter, Facebook, GoodReads and others.

Month 3: Finding the best blog hosts and creating a series of blog stops that engages your fans, new and old.

In Month 4, we support each other's tours. The next session starts on May 1 and participation is limited to 150 members. Go here to sign up during the month of April: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/blogbooktours>. It's free.

Also check the free guide at: <http://quickest.blogbooktourguide.ever.com> for an overview of the process.

Finally, you can hear me blather on about the merits of virtual tours and how to prove to yourself they work by listening to Chris Hamilton of The Florida Writers Association as he interviews me on Blog Talk Radio at this link <http://tr.im/95zd> — one hour chat — easy download.

Bonnie J. Cardone is a freelance photojournalist with more than 1,000 articles and two nonfiction books to her credit along with several unpublished mystery novels.

This article supports SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.

Is There a Virtual Book Signing in Your Future?

By Joanna Campbell Slan

Virtual book signings offer a way to sell books, visit fans and spread the word about your work from the comfort of your home.



What is a virtual book signing? It can be as elaborate or simple as you wish. You will "visit" a venue through the magic of your phone or the internet. You can handle the sign-

ing portion one of two ways: 1.) Sign the physical books and send the signed copies to recipients, or 2.) Sign bookplates, have someone affix them and distribute the books with your bookplates to recipients.

The concept was pioneered by Daniel Weinberg, owner of the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago, IL. The first virtual book signing took place in November 2005 and featured historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. The webcast can be viewed at <http://www.virtualbooksigning.net/learn.html>.

I chose a much simpler format for my Virtual Book Signing. My goal was to partner with the Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League (MAGDRL) to raise money for homeless dogs. With foreclosures on the rise and the economy the way it is, more and more big dogs are being abandoned.

Since my book, *Paper, Scissors, Death*, features a rescued uncropped Harlequin Great Dane, there was a natural fit.

"I was interested because I know there are a lot of readers in MAGDRL and this seemed like a different, unusual and fun fund-raising event. We are always looking for new things to try and this was a big hit with our members," said Joan Schramm, MAGDRL's publicity coordinator.

First, we sent out mailings to the members telling them about the fund-raiser. Then

MAGDRL chose a date for our "book signing" and told members and friends I'd be available online during a certain time period. MAGDRL purchased the books from my publisher.

I added a chat room to my website. You can get a free chat room that's easy to install at Bravenet <http://www.bravenet.com/>. Members of MAGDRL were encouraged to order the book and to share the information with friends. Joan sent out media releases about the event and forms were shared at various meetings of rescue dog organizations. On the form was a place for people to specify how they wanted their books personalized. Buyers could either choose to pick up their books or have them mailed out at an extra charge.

On the appointed signing day and time, we had a lively discussion in my chat room. It helped that I am a dog lover who has owned Great Danes! After the chat, Joan sent me a list of personalized bookplate requests. I created a special bookplate, then signed and returned them to Joan. She affixed them and distributed the books.

For an example of the form, Joan's media release and the bookplate, visit my website www.joannaslan.com and click on the Resources section.

Is a Virtual Book Signing right for you? I was fortunate to find an organized and willing partner to work with. Joan's public relations expertise was extremely helpful. Certainly, you need a publisher willing to sell to non-traditional booksellers as well as a partnering organization willing to help publicize and organize the event. Were the results worthwhile? We sold 51 books and raised \$382.50 for MAGDRL — a nice amount for something that was a lot of fun and not too labor-intensive.

Joanna Campbell Slan is the author of Paper, Scissors, Death, the first book in the Kiki Lowenstein Scrap-N-Craft Mystery series. Visit her website at www.joannaslan.com.

This article supports SinC's Professional Education and Career Development goal.

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for an agent or help with your manuscript?

Check out the Guppies

www.sinc-guppies.org

DEADLINES



- ✓ APRIL 15, 2009 — Deadline for submission of items for the June Docket. Send to Patricia Gulley, 1743 N. Jantzen Avenue, Portland, OR 97217-7849 or e-mail: Weyrcottage@yahoo.com.
- ✓ APRIL 20, 2009 — Deadline for the June InSinC newsletter. Contact Bonnie J. Cardone: bjcardone@hotmail.com; phone 805/938-1156. Other InSinC deadlines are July 20, October 20 and January 20.
- ✓ APRIL 20, 2009 — Deadline for reservations for Malice Domestic XXI breakfast on May 3. Send a check for \$20, made out to Sisters in Crime to Beth Wasson, P.O. Box 442124, Lawrence, KS 66044. For more details, see page 3.



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