

Sin C into a Good Mystery!



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**STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT
2013-2018**



Sisters in Crime 2013–2018 Strategic Planning Report.

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SISTERS IN CRIME (SinC) is comprised of 3600 members in 48 chapters worldwide, offering networking, advice and support to mystery authors. Members are authors, readers, publishers, agents, booksellers and librarians bound by their affection for the mystery genre and support of women who write mysteries. SinC was founded by Sara Paretsky and a group of women at the 1986 Bouchercon in Baltimore.

In June of 2013, the enthusiastic volunteer leaders and staff of SinC met in Chicago, IL to continue the progress made from the past strategic plan conducted in 2008.

Planning Session Leaders and Staff

- Hank P. Ryan, *President*
- Beth Wasson, *Executive Secretary*
- Laura DiSilverio
- Sally Brewster
- Martha Reed
- Marcia Talley
- Frankie Bailey
- Barbara Fister
- Kate Flora
- Judy Clemens
- Sarah Glass
- Cari Dubiel
- Molly Weston
- Bill Pawlucy,
Association Options, LLC
(facilitator)

Prologue

In 2008, the Sisters in Crime board came together to construct a strategic plan that has guided this organization for the past five years. It kept us on track to attain non-profit status as a [503.c.6] organization that reduced our taxes and thereby increased the size of our spendable budget, helped us increase our membership, enabled us to increase the number and types of educational opportunities we offer our members, kept the monitoring program on point, steered us toward robust social media and website presences, and much more. That plan is largely responsible for SinC being the dynamic, growing, engaged organization it is today, and we owe its drafters a debt of gratitude.

However, half a decade has gone by and those years have been filled with change—some might even say chaos—for the publishing industry and our members. The rise of the e-book has spawned changes in publisher relationships with Amazon and other booksellers, affected authors' contracts with publishers (and their income stream), and opened up a world of inexpensive self-publishing to authors new and established. The proliferation of social media sites and interactive web technologies has made it possible—imperative?—for authors to keep in touch with readers in new and more personal ways. The demise of many brick-and-mortar bookstores fills us with sadness and adds confusion to the publishing landscape. Almost every SinC member we talk to is struggling to figure out the most effective and efficient ways to publish and promote their books, or simply find good books to read. Questions abound: Do I self-publish or find

a traditional publisher? Can I still trust Goodreads now that it's been swallowed up by Amazon? Do I need to Facebook and Tweet? Perhaps only two constants remain. First, readers continue to crave stories. And second, good writing is good writing, whether it's delivered on paper, digitally, by implanted computer chip, or Vulcan mind-meld.

In light of the massive changes on-going in our biz, the SinC board decided it was time to re-examine our mission, vision, and goals; in short, we embarked on another round of strategic planning, one we're hoping will guide us through the next five years as effectively as the last plan brought us from 2008 to 2013. The current board, augmented by three past presidents, gathered in Chicago from 26–28 June 2013, hired a strategic planning expert to facilitate our discussion and got down to it. The room crackled with energy. Ideas flew. Discussion grew loud and darted off on tangents (mostly useful) as we tried to voice the many, many thoughts racing through our brains. The sense of commitment to SinC raised goosebumps. We emerged at noon the second day, weary but satisfied, confident that we had gone a long way toward constructing not only a strategic plan but also relationships that would serve as a bridge from SinC's past to its future, better link chapters with national, and connect our members with each other and the opportunities they're seeking.

We've attached the entire report so you can see where your organization is heading and we hope you'll digest it, send us your thoughts, and think about ways you can contribute to SinC's future.



A report can't convey the sense of collegiality and commitment that went into constructing it, however, and we want to assure you that everything in this plan was earnestly discussed and debated before we reached consensus. Perhaps the most difficult thing we did was re-cast the mission and vision statements. Although they are not hugely different from the 2008 versions, we want to give you a peek at our reasoning before you launch into the whole report.

In 2008, our mission was "To promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry." Our new mission statement reads "Promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers." The concepts of "professional development" and "advancement" carry over. We dropped the phrase "to achieve equality in the industry" not because we think male and female crime writers operate on a level playing field, but because we think the idea of promoting recognition of women crime writers in the new statement encapsulates our unchanged commitment to ensuring women crime writers receive the reviews, publishing opportunities and awards their excellence demands.

With our vision statement, we all knew that we wanted to go beyond "Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers." Now, our vision is to "Serve as the voice for excellence and diversity in crime writing." We're all about getting better at our craft, helping others get better, and being inclusive. We're about raising the bar for crime writing, whether you're a reader, a writer, or both, whether you're young or not-so-young, male

or female, whether you belong to a chapter or don't, or if you're self- or traditionally-published. We're about excellence across the crime fiction spectrum from serial killers and vampire thrillers to librarians with a herd of cats solving mysteries, and every sub-genre in between.

In closing, we want to thank the members of the strategic planning team—Frankie Bailey, Sally Brewster, Judy Clemens, Cari Dubiel, Barbara Fister, Kate Flora, Sarah Glass, Martha Reed, Marcia Talley, Beth Wasson, Molly Weston—for their time, energy, ideas, and dedication. We also want to thank Bill Pawlucy of Association Options for facilitating. Finally, we thank each and every one of you, SINC members, for your commitment to Sisters in Crime and to that magnificent passion we share: excellent crime writing.

2013

Hank Phillippi Ryan, President

Laura DiSilverio, VP/President-elect

Strategic Plan Alignment & Adoption

The President is responsible for the mission and direction of the organization. Following adoption of the plan, the President should appoint goal champions with a focus on creating quarterly plans to meet the overall goals of the plan. Staff should monitor and report on progress by creating and monitoring a business/action plan every quarter as noted.

Mission, Vision and Values Statements

The mission statement defines the organization and its purpose. Combined with vision and values statements, they help to distinguish SinC from other organizations while communicating purpose and value to its clients, prospects and stakeholders.

Mission Statement

Staff recommended a short and clear mission.

Existing	Revised
"To promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry."	"Promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers."

Vision Statement

The vision is a compelling statement of how SinC will be perceived in the future. The vision was revised to reflect the current state of the industry.

Existing	Revised
"Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers."	"Serve as the voice for excellence & diversity in crime writing"

Values Statement

Values are the guiding principles embraced by the SinC team.

Existing	Revised
None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote respect and embrace diversity • Continue our non-hierarchical tradition • Support members along the publishing continuum • Advocate for women crime writers • Cultivate a positive presence within the crime writing community • Educate and inspire • Foster integrity and ethics • Celebrate writing excellence

Tagline

A tagline is a phrase or catchword that becomes identified or associated with a person, group, product, etc., through repetition.

Existing	Revised
"SinC Into a Good Mystery!"	"SinC Up with Great Crime Writing!"

Goals

Goals are the areas where the volunteer leaders and staff intend to allocate resources in order to achieve the mission and best serve its client partners. Some organizations consider goals as their *core competencies*.

2013–2018 Strategic Goals

After input to the facilitator and extensive first day discussions, the board set four goal areas or core competencies.

- 1. MEMBERSHIP GROWTH, RETENTION & VALUE CREATION**
(Goal Champion: Frankie Bailey with Kate Flora and Molly Weston)
- 2. CHAPTER RELATIONS**
(Goal Champion: Martha Reed with Hank P. Ryan)
- 3. THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY & PROMOTION OF THE PROFESSION**
(Goal Champion: Barbara Fister with Cari Dubiel)
- 4. EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**
(Goal Champion: Laura DiSilverio with Marcia Talley and Cathy Pickens)

GOAL 1. Membership Growth, Retention and Value Creation

GOAL STATEMENT

Increase members worldwide annually by 5% and reduce membership losses by 50% while diversifying the membership base.

STRATEGIES & TACTICS

- I. Create a task force to identify potential members younger than 40**
 - 1. Identify ambassadors younger than 40 to reach out to potential members*
 - 2. Approach creative writing programs to reach young aspiring writers (i.e., theatre writers, drama writers, etc.)*
 - 3. Create recruitment materials targeted to specific audiences*
 - 4. Develop a mentoring program*
 - 5. Identify and target writers in schools*
- II. Lure more published crime writers to SinC, increase 10% annually**
- III. Increase visibility with librarians, academic scholars and others**
 - 1. Continue We Love Libraries program*
 - 2. Raise profile with ALA, PLA, PCA, AWP and other major conferences*
 - Collect data on member recruitment efforts from conferences*
- IV. Resurrect Membership Committee**

..... GOAL 2. Chapter Relations

GOAL STATEMENT

Strengthen communication and work collaboratively with our chapters to increase partner opportunities in education, knowledge and resources.

STRATEGIES & TACTICS

I. Disseminate and Recognize Excellent Strategies

1. *Establish a clearinghouse for best practices and sharing*
2. *Create online forum for chapter presidents*

II. Increase Chapter Interactions & Data Collection

1. *Survey chapters to identify quality programs and initiatives useful to other chapters*
2. *Communicate with chapters about what their needs are from national*
3. *Survey chapter members' talents/skills, which translate to program/committee membership*
4. *Ask chapters for their strategies for attracting new members*

III. Develop Chapter Presidents & Vice Presidents' leadership training

1. *Develop training that will aid in their professional development*
2. *Develop best practices program or document*

IV. Develop an ambassador program

1. *SinC national leaders visit/attend local chapter meetings*
2. *Equip chapters with the basic national message to ensure that they are aware of all activities*
3. *Coordinate Internet "visits"*

V. Publicize chapter grant availability

..... GOAL 3. The Voice of the Industry & Promotion of the Profession

GOAL STATEMENT

Monitor, analyze and publicize (MAP) key industry data to highlight trends and issues

STRATEGIES & TACTICS

I. Pitch monitoring reports

1. *Identify storyline hook*
2. *Utilize social media charts*
3. *Utilize Twitter*

II. Collaborate with other related professional organizations

1. *Develop proposals for conference panels and poster sessio*
2. *Assist conference organizers with finding speakers*
3. *Target regional conferences of national/international organizations*

III. Target tech savvy members with Sync/SinC App (Sync2SinC)

1. *Assess purpose of the App to determine feasibility*

IV. Develop “We Love Bookstores” Program

V. Optimize public speaking opportunities

1. *Publicly acknowledge female authors you like to read and mention SinC*

VI. Develop & utilize SinC promotional items to promote the brand

1. *Develop SinC luggage tags (e.g., “Hello, my name is . . . Ask me what I am reading”)*
2. *Launch bumper stickers/contest*
3. *Use SinC tote bags in public*
4. *Develop SinC T-Shirts*
5. *Establish online store*

VII. Use social media to inform public of results and gain key insights into issues

1. *Develop call to action for messaging*
2. *Offer articles on monitoring, etc. to magazines, local papers (noted that media outlets need material, which will increase the likelihood of acceptance)*
 - a. *Alumni magazines*
 - b. *Trade publications*

VIII. Develop a cohesive PR strategy

1. *Create an ad-hoc committee to evaluate the potential hire of a public relations professional (hire or contract) and make a recommendation to the SinC board*

IX. Explore ways of providing information about women writers online, including sponsoring a possible Wikipedia edit-a-thon.

X. Develop a speaker’s bureau

1. *Develop map to check for speakers locally. Name it “Speakers Connection”*

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GOAL 4. Educational Excellence

GOAL STATEMENT

Offer timely information and education related to the craft and business of writing across the evolving publishing spectrum.

STRATEGIES & TACTICS

I. Generate six webinar/videos per year with topics to be determined

1. *Topic: Social Media—What Works*
2. *Topic: What Librarians Want*
3. *Topic: What Are Your Goals For Your Book? Realistic Expectations For Traditional Authorship and Self-Publishing*
4. *Topic: How To Be a Panelist—No HOGS!!!*
5. *Topic: The Importance Of Editing For a New Author Who Thinks Their Book is Done*
6. *Topic: Six Strategies For Using Social Media*
7. *Topic: “23 Things for Writers” self-paced training on 23 online tools*
8. *Identify already developed Webinars via partnerships and other means to introduce to the membership*

9. *Using “Shindig”-type interactive workshops*

10. *Programs for YA & Juvenile mystery writers*

- II. **Subsidize WPA & similar programs in different geographical areas**
- III. **Develop or link to online Glossary of Writer’s terms, “insider terminology”**
- IV. **Publish FAQ schematic “What if” (what will happen with your book?)**
- V. **Develop seminar/article/handbook topics**
- VI. **Develop data-driven insights via surveys of mystery readers and other means**

Next Steps

- Set quarterly meetings by goal champions (staff to coordinate with SinC leaders)
- Develop a 1-year business plan (including budgets and timelines)
- Refine quarterly goals to make them actionable and results oriented
- Develop collateral for promotion on Website, to members and for leaders
- Review plan progress quarterly
- Review of plan progress annually
- Update plan in full by the last quarter of 2018



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in
Crime* †[®]

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