

Be Your Own Shill

by Molly Weston

Whether you've just published your first book, begun a new series, or can barely make time to deposit your royalty checks, your goals are the same: You want more sales! Even if you have the best possible marketing team, the ultimate sales responsibility depends on you.

Many authors with long backlists are the hardest working promoters. They attend fan conferences, send email blasts and post cards, and tour tirelessly. How can writers with families and small promotional budgets compete?

I've worked with authors, bookstores, and libraries for more than 20 years—lecturing, reviewing, setting up events, moderating panels, writing articles, and training booksellers. I've been a media escort for more than 10 years. I've also listened to writers, booksellers, librarians, and readers—and gleaned information on things that work—or don't. I hope some of these suggestions will help you.

Who's your audience?

Ask yourself about your readers

- Why do they like my books?
- What have readers told me?
- Do my books/characters have a theme with which readers identify?

Identify your readers and determine how best to reach them.

- Is there a local or national organization? Join it—or offer to speak at a meeting. If they have a public event be there with handouts.
- Is there a store, association, or other entity dealing with this audience? Suggest a book sale at one of their special events.
- Who are professionals in this field? Enlist their support with an ARC and perhaps a request for advice or a blurb.
- What magazines or journals serve this group? Send information about yourself and your books to their editors.
- If there is a listserv for the group, join it, introduce yourself as a mystery author writ-

ing about this subject. Ask questions about how to make your books more realistic.

What's your background?

Most of you already have extensive email and snail mail lists. You depend on occasional Dorothy-L posts to keep your name in the forefront. Unfortunately, these aren't enough. Look at yourself. You've got family, friends, business associates, hometown ties, neighbors, people with whom you do business, and a host of people you might have forgotten, but who will remember you. Incorporate these people to your media contact list.

- Ask family for their Christmas card list.
- Use the membership list from clubs or professional organizations, churches, gyms.
- Send a news release with information about yourself (with contact information for an interview) for each new book to the editors of your
 - hometown paper—and to every place you've ever lived. Remember, the smaller the paper, the more likely something will be printed.
 - college alumni association and sorority
 - homeowners' association newsletter
 - current/former company (or that of your spouse) newsletter
 - your children's school librarians
- Enclose a bookmark with bill payments.

Book clubs

- Watch bookstore newsletters, library calendars, and newspapers for book club events. Ask how you can help. Attend the event even if you can't help.
- Contact online book clubs.
- Offer to be a speaker.

Internet

It's not all information overload. Lots of readers depend on posts to learn about new authors, books, and events.

- Keep your site up to date—and interesting. Announce when you've updated it.

- Offer an occasional contest on your site.
- Are you a member of Dorothy-L? Make yourself known (and liked) before your book is out. Then, people will consider you a friend and be likely to buy it.
- Post on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and other social networking sites. Create an event for a book launch. Announce significant changes to your website—and include the link.
- Ask if you can guest blog on some of your favorite blog sites.

Conferences

Attend as many conferences as you can afford (financially and time wise).

- Be a good panelist (good panelists know when to quit talking). Readers don't like panel hogs!
- Pay attention to what others are saying and make pithy comments when appropriate.

Don't be just another author. Be warm, friendly, and available. Remember, your primary reason for being there is to promote yourself and your books. You're not there to visit with your friends. This is business. Meet as many readers as possible. If they like you, they're much more likely to buy your books.

Think like a Scout

Always be prepared!

- Keep a book or two in your handbag/car; you never know whom you might meet.
- Restock business cards, bookmarks.
- Carry a small notebook and pen for jotting contact information—and ideas!

Happy shilling!

Molly is the new editor of inSinC. She reviews and talks about mysteries in Apex NC. Visit her at <http://mysteryheel.blogspot.com>.



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Deadlines & Submissions

- Deadline for articles for the June issue of *inSinC* is April 15.
- Include name, email and mailing address, and phone number with submissions.
- Reprints from SinC chapter newsletters are welcome.
- Send columns, articles, high-res photos, ideas, praise, and story ideas via e-mail to

Molly Weston
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 919.362.1436

Docket

- Members' publications since this edition will be listed in The Docket. Include publication dates when submitting.
- Honors, awards and events of great "pith and moment" should be submitted as short, separate notices without publicity/promotion of individual members.
- Material for The Docket is due April 10 and should be sent to

Patricia Gulley
Weyrcottage@yahoo.com

inSinc

the Newsletter of Sisters in Crime

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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Legend

In 2008, the board of directors of Sisters in Crime implemented a new strategic plan. Three goals emerged from this plan. *inSinc* articles will be marked with icons to represent the appropriate goal.



Advocacy, monitoring, and reporting,



Professional education and career development, and



Membership growth, networking, and forums for members.

JUST THE FACTS • *inSinC* is the official publication of Sisters in Crime International and is published four times a year. • Dues are \$40 for U.S. and Canada, add \$5 for other countries. Address and all other changes can be made by members on www.sistersincrime.org. If you do not use a computer or need a username please contact **Beth Wasson** at 785.842.1325 or sistersincrime@juno.com • Information in *inSinC* is submitted and reprinted from sources listed in each article. Where required, permission to reprint has been granted and noted. SinC does not investigate each submission independently and articles in no way constitute an endorsement of products or services offered. No material may be reprinted without written permission from Sisters in Crime. Sisters in Crime©2010

Marcia Speaks

As I write this, it's January, and pretty much everywhere our members live—even Florida!—it's cold, cold, cold. But 2010 is already shaping up to be a hot year for Sisters in Crime.

Before we go on with 2010, we need to say goodbye and good luck to Bonnie Cardone. After editing *inSinC* for nearly a decade, Bonnie decided to move on to other ventures. Everyone hated to see her go, but we certainly wish her well as she changes focus.

Every time a door closes, however, a window opens. Long-time SinC member, Molly Weston had considered applying for the job nearly 10 years ago, but decided her work schedule would conflict. Now retired, she applied for the position. Welcome, Molly!

You must have noticed *inSinC*'s fresh, upbeat look! We have Molly to thank for that. We think the new *inSinC* banner with bullet holes and ink spots is especially appropriate for *inSinC*! Graphic artist Gina Harrison designed the banner and the new icons that indicate the goal which each article represents.

As you read this, the next issue of *inSinC* is already on the drawing boards, so if you have

ideas for articles—particularly if you'd like to write one!—please let Molly know. You can reach her at mysteryheel@mac.com.

Keeping up the good work

It's exciting to see all the enthusiasm from the members of SinC! Everybody has been most cooperative—from serving on the board, to helping with special projects, to working in their chapters. It's especially important that we continue our efforts in these challenging times.

I urge you to do everything you can to make your local chapters the best they can be. Local chapters are not only crucial in growing our national membership, they are the face of SinC to local bookstores, libraries, and readers.

Do you ask other crime writers if they are members of SinC? You know how much our organization means to you. Why not spread the word? Are your favorite bookstores and librarians members? They should be.

So, what else is new?

Check out the Sisters in Crime website at www.sistersincrime.org where you'll see a lot of changes! Learn how you can subscribe to *Publishers Alley* or help your local library enter



the amazing *We Love Libraries!* Money Giveaway. Two winners have already been announced, but there are ten months left in the year, so if you haven't done so already, tell your friendly neighborhood librarian about this opportunity to win \$1,000 to buy books.

We have a new blog! Thanks to Ellen Hart, our new publicity maven, the internet has been humming with activity, especially mid-week, when *The Burning Question* goes online. Point of view? Pet peeves? Our members let it all hang out.

We've enhanced searchability on the website for all our members, and now you can search for author members. Be sure to log on and update your profile—and don't forget a mug shot! Authors, you can add your latest title, too.

The Malice Domestic conference is just around the corner. Check out the *Calendar* on the left-hand sidebar of the *Home Page* for complete information and learn how to reserve a spot at the *Annual Sisters in Crime Breakfast*. It's easy to register and pay online.

I'll look forward to seeing you at Malice! If you can't make it to Washington DC in the spring, I'll catch up with you on the Sisters in Crime Listserv, Blog, or Facebook page.

It's going to be a great year!

Marcia Talley

A Note from Molly

When Marcia called me a few days before Christmas to tell me I would be the new editor of *inSinC*, it was one of the best gifts I've ever received.

I've been a mystery reader for more than 40 years. What could possibly be better than working with mystery writers? Getting paid for working with mystery writers!

I thought my last job—editing a magazine at UNC-Chapel Hill was the best job ever. Now, it moves down to a distant second place.

You can see already that I like to shake things up. I'm always looking for ways to make things easier to use, more interesting, and more helpful. I'll be watching my email to hear from you—kudos are always good to hear, but I'd really like to know what you'd like to see in your professional newsletter.

What topics do you need to know more about? What are some suggestions for other authors? Have you met or heard someone who would write a good article for us? Have you found a great way of marketing you'd be willing to share? Is there some glitzy new software or gadget that you've found indispensable in your work? Tell us.

Is your chapter involved in something special that you'd like to share? Did you make some great photos at a conference or program? Let me hear about them? Speaking of conferences, do you know about an upcoming one that isn't listed? Let me know.

Molly Weston

Brothers in Crime

by Sandra Parshall

Men in Sisters in Crime? Aren't we supposed to be competing with men? That's an understandable misconception, but men have been part of the organization from the beginning. Equality for women writers is a positive goal; it's not about taking anything away from male writers who have worked hard for their success. Since its creation in 1987, SinC has become a mainstream mystery organization that supports writers of both genders while never losing sight of its original mission.

Recently we asked a few of the many men who are members of SinC why they joined and what the organization means to them. All support parity for women writers, and for some that was the main reason they became members.

Bookseller point of view

Bookseller and nonfiction author Jim Huang, the first man to serve on the national board, says, "I joined and remain a member of SinC because it's the most inclusive, supportive and successful organization in the genre. SinC is the only genre institution that welcomes everyone—writers, readers, librarians, booksellers,—and treats them all as equal partners.

"While SinC's mission is the promotion of women, its programs and services are so strong and inclusive that they benefit everyone in the genre. We see this in many different ways, such as the outreach and opportunities that SinC chapters offer, and the wealth of information and advice every day on the listserv. What I especially like about SinC is that it's almost invariably positive and upbeat. Unlike other organizations, SinC isn't against stuff, we are for education, welcoming all possibilities."

Brothers notice bias

Lee Lofland, author of a guide to police procedure and a blog for mystery authors called *The Graveyard Shift*, observed the damaging effects of bias during his career in law enforcement. "I saw first-hand many of the old-timers treating female officers as less than equal. I once worked for a sheriff's office that prohibited female officers from carrying firearms. Sure, the women were expected to perform many of the same duties. They just weren't allowed to carry a weapon, because fightin'

and shootin' was a 'man's job.' This way of thinking can still be found in nearly every career. SinC is making an effort to right the wrong in the publishing field. I like the fact that I'm able to help in some small way. The group has been extremely supportive. I hope SinC members know they can call on me, too."



Stephen Booth

British author Stephen Booth joined SinC in 2001 after his first Ben Cooper/Diane Fry novel was published in the US. "I was already a member of an organization in the UK called Mystery Women, which has similar aims. As a writer, most of my influences were female. At the time I set out to write my series, the writer I looked to as a role model was Minette Walters. Yet when I came into the business, I was staggered to discover that female writers were having a hard time getting recognized. It seemed to me that women had proved they could do it as well as men about 70 years ago! That was my motivation for joining SinC—many of the writers whose books I was enjoying weren't getting the recognition they deserved, and SinC were the people trying to do something about it.

"The fact that SinC turned out to be such a supportive organization was a bonus. On one of my first trips to the US, when I had some signings scheduled at bookstores in the Los Angeles area, a member I'd never met volunteered to drive me around the city for the day. That kind of support is wonderful."

When Carl Brookins, author of the Tanner and Whitney series, joined SinC in the late 1990s, he was aware that many female writers weren't receiving the same advances, promotion, and review attention as men, and he wanted to help level the playing field.

Personal benefits followed. "No question my name and my books are more widely known because of my membership. I've made good



Carl Brookins



friends among the sisters. I treasure my membership in Sisters in Crime."

Brothers concur

The "brothers" all agreed that joining SinC was a smart career move that allows them to participate in SinC-sponsored conferences, bookstore and library events, and displays at national and regional library conferences.

Author Robert Levinson has been a member of the Los Angeles Chapter for almost a decade. "Friends I'd made through Mystery Writers of America—the likes of Margaret Maron, Barb D'Amato, Jan Burke, and Rochelle Krich—wised me up to the fact the male of the species was welcome. SinC provided an excellent opportunity for building name recognition and sales. Year after year it's been money well invested, with benefits beyond the basics I figured came with the dues."

Jeffrey Marks, a writer and editor and moderator of the Murder Must Advertise listserv, joined SinC more than 13 years ago. He's been a volunteer from the start, first as a review monitor, then as author of a new edition of *Shameless Promotion for Brazen Hussies* and editor of the Ohio River Valley Chapter's first anthology. Of his chapter, Jeff said, "They're a wonderful group, and it was no surprise that I celebrated with them when I won the Anthony this year [for *Anthony Boucher: A Biobibliography*]."

The camaraderie in SinC attracted Lee Goldberg, a mystery author, screenwriter, and TV producer. "I liked the sense of community, the enthusiasm about mystery writing, and the good advice that

See **Brothers in Crime** p. 5

We Love Libraries!

On January 31, just before *inSinC* went to press, Beth Wasson shook up the entries from the **We Love Libraries!** contest and pulled out the first winner of the year. Information Assistant Shari Randall submitted the photo at right from the Kingstowne Library of Alexandria VA. Shari is shown reading Susan Wittig Albert's *Nightshade*, Information Assistant Susan DeRotis is offering Rhys Bowen's *Her Royal Spyness*, and Branch Manager Ted Kavich is presenting Laurie R. King's *The Art of Detection*. The Kingstowne Library will receive a check for \$1,000 to purchase books.

There's still plenty of time to get your favorite library entered into the lottery. Remember, just go to the Sisters in Crime website at www.sistersincrime.org. The link to the **We Love Libraries!** lottery is in the first paragraph.

Congratulations to Shari, to the Kingstowne Library, and to all the library patrons.



Brothers in Crime - Cont'd. from p. 4

was shared by other authors. Writing is a lonely business. SinC makes it a lot less so."

A recommendation from member Jeremiah Healy persuaded Neil Plakcy to join SinC in 2005 after his first Mahu mystery came out. SinC opened Neil's eyes to gender bias in the mystery world. "I'm happy to support SinC's mission, while tagging along for the benefits I get." In Honolulu, where he lives, his chapter is the only mystery group, and he appreciates the networking and education it provides. "I also love getting the SinC Links and hearing the results of SinC outreach to booksellers, publishers, and other industry professionals. These are valuable for both brothers and sisters."

Brothers praise SinC

Chester Campbell is currently SinC's only male chapter president. He joined when his first book, *Secret of the Scroll*, was published, and has served on the Middle Tennessee Chapter's board for several years.



"But my SinC membership *Chester Campbell* has benefited me far beyond what I might have contributed," he said.

Anthony Award winner Simon Wood reaped the rewards of sisterhood even before he joined. "When my first book came out, a couple of sis-

ters from the local chapter (Northern California) went out of their way to get me speaking events and to help get my name out there. They were doing this because they thought I was a sister." Impressed, he became a member. "Over the six years I've been a Mr. Sister, no other organization has helped me like SinC. This generous environment makes it easy for me to pay it forward to others."

D.P. (Doug) Lyle, MD, author of mysteries, forensic reference books, and the *Writer's Forensics Blog*, credits the late Barbara Seranella with introducing him to SinC a decade ago. "I joined because it is a well-respected national organization for writers. We guys have always been welcomed. I hope that other male writers are not put off by the title of the group."

In praising SinC as "one of the best organizations in the mystery community," William Kent Krueger offered an interesting aside: "One of the things I appreciate most about the organization is the leadership of women, which tends to be dynamic, well considered, and fair minded."

While SinC furthers the careers of all members, its core purpose remains the pursuit of equality for women writers. As the former owner of *The Mystery Company* in Carmel IN,⁹

Jim Huang still sees a difference in the way books by women are published, promoted, and reviewed. "Generally speaking, female mystery

writers are treated better than they were when SinC was born, but there are still disparities, especially in promotion and marketing. We receive more advance reading copies of new mysteries by men—significantly more than women. Books that publishers clearly intend for the 'women's market' are more likely to be paperback originals, so they aren't reviewed as often. I have a sense that series by women are less likely to stay in print intact—i.e., for all titles to remain available through the life of a series."

Some might point to bestselling mysteries by women and declare victory in the struggle for equality, but Jim disagrees. "What, two or three women hit the bestsellers lists and everything is hunky dory? The mission still matters—the review monitoring numbers are proof. The real question is why should anyone fear SinC's mission? Participation in our genre is not a zero sum game. The equity we seek isn't just good for women, it's good for the genre as a whole. A diverse genre is a stronger genre."

Bob Levinson sums it up: "Any author or fan who knows SinC exists, but hasn't joined, should recognize he's not doing himself a favor. She's not doing herself a favor. They're not doing themselves a favor. Hell, you know what I mean..."

Sandra Parshall is chapter liaison for SinC. Her Rachel Goddard mysteries are published by Poisoned Pen Press. Sandra's website is www.SandraParshall.com



New England Crime Bake Library Panel

by Sheila Connolly

At the sold-out 2009 New England Crime Bake conference, sponsored jointly by Sisters in Crime-New England and New England Mystery Writers of America, I served as moderator for the conference's first librarians panel, titled "Mystery-loving librarians reveal the world behind the check-out desk—how they pick mysteries and introduce authors to their patrons."

The panel brought together New England librarians Jennifer C. Harris from the Plymouth MA Public Library; Kathy Meeker, director of the Scituate MA Town Library; and Jane Murphy of the Westport CT Public Library. All are actively engaged in promoting mysteries to their library patrons and each presented different avenues for promotion. In fact, the Scituate library, in partnership with the SinC-New England, had recently completed a year-long \$10,000 Readers' Advisory Grant devoted to Mystery and Suspense Fiction, awarded by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and Kathy Meeker shared the results with the group.

All the librarians agreed that mysteries are among the most popular books in their libraries. That should be good news, right? The issue that we wanted to address was how to get writers and librarians together.

Panel Focus

- To explore how librarians can utilize writers for library programs, and
- To show writers how they should approach libraries to make themselves known.

The resulting discussion, in a room filled with both writers and librarians (and, we hope, readers!), was stimulating and in some cases surprising. Topics ranged widely, including

- How mysteries can be catalogued for maximum exposure and accessibility,
- The opportunities to present a variety of speakers programs tailored to individual libraries,
- How current budget cuts affect book acquisition and programming, and
- The role that audio-books and electronic books play now and may play in the future.

One point often raised by the librarians: Writers, use your librarians! They are an excellent resource at all stages of your career. Don't wait until you're published or nearly there.

- Use them for research for your books and
- Tap them for information on the publishing community, or how to find an agent or a local writers group.

Then when you have a book in hand, you've already established a personal relationship.

Once the book is published, what?

Sisters in Crime-New England has a long-standing and well-utilized speakers bureau which matches libraries, bookstores, and other organizations with local writers; a number of other SinC chapters do as well. But what if a local chapter does not have a coordinator to handle this, or a writer doesn't have access to a local chapter? How does a writer get her books in front of the right people in a library? It's easier than you think.

- Libraries love programs that are affordable and don't require a lot of planning on their part; in return, they can publicize your event to their patrons and to the local community, through newsletters and the press.
- Librarians know what their readers like, and can offer suggestions for emphasizing one or another aspect of mystery writing; they may request a focused presentation on plotting or other specific aspects of the mystery genre, or they may simply ask that you talk about your writing process and how you got published.
- Friends of the library or mystery reader groups may participate in or even manage the programming opportunities for the library. Get to know these groups.

When your book is coming out, get in touch with librarians in your town and in other towns—your local connection is appealing. Stop by, introduce yourself, leave a few bookmarks, or even a book.



How libraries choose books

They rely on the major review sources such as *Library Journal* and *Publishers Weekly*, and the catalogs that publishers send out or make available online. As many of you may know, reviewers pay little attention to original mass-market books, so a paperback writer has to make a greater effort to capture librarians' attention. Send a short letter or email (think back to your querying days) describing your book and offering to speak at the library. If you use snail mail, include a few bookmarks. Do not swamp the library with frequent updates or long appeals—simply let them know when you have a new book coming out, and that you're interested in talking to the library's patrons. Librarians are busy people, so keep it simple.

Have you discussed audio book options with your agent and publisher? These have become increasingly popular with library patrons. Are your books available in any or all electronic formats? While not all libraries have the resources to provide electronic readers to their users, they may be able to make available limited-term downloads. Again, this is something to discuss with your agent or editor.

The bottom line

Librarians can be valuable resources in spreading the word about your books, and you as a writer should make the most of the opportunities that libraries present. Get to know your local libraries—not just the one in your town, but those in surrounding towns or even the state. Use your libraries, and everybody wins!

Sheila Connolly writes the Orchard Mystery series and as Sarah Atwell she writes the Glassblowing Mystery series. Both are published by Berkley Prime Crime. Another series, titled the Museum Mysteries, is slated for fall 2010, also from Berkley. Sheila lives and writes near Cape Cod MA.

We Love Libraries

Have you told your favorite library about SinC's "We Love Libraries" lottery? Monthly grants of \$1,000 will be awarded through December 2010. Get full details for applying at sistersincrime.org. At the end of each month, a random drawing will be held and the winner announced.

Burning Questions

by Ellen Hart

This past year, during the Bouchercon in Indianapolis, I joined the national board of Sisters in Crime. Boy, was I surprised. It's nothing like you'd imagine.

Sitting around a table in a smoke-filled room, located down a back alley just off the convention hotel, I learned that I was being put in charge of the national blog.

By the way, many of the board members love cigars. I was given a box and told to go home and try them out. Apparently there are a couple of camps when it comes to our image—the women who wear fancy hats and knit, and the women who smoke cigars and drink. There's another camp. Actually, it's just one person.

Fancy hats? Other side of the table!



She likes to do origami while humming Nine Inch Nails tunes, but she isn't very vocal.

Back to the blog

I realized fairly quickly that my new compatriots were tasking me, the only person in the room who had never so much as written a blog, to bring new life to ours. I squared my shoulders and took the plunge. While waving smoke away from my face I told myself that it was always good to learn a new skill.

As the second bottle of bourbon was being passed around and the knitters changed needles, I muttered something about finding authors to write a new blog every Monday. We were on to other matters by then, but I kept muttering. On Wednesdays, I would post the **Burning Question of the Week**. The blog would become the membership's national water-cooler, where we could all stand around and shoot the publishing breeze.

So far this year, we've posted blogs by Robin Agnew, William Kent Krueger, Libby Hellmann, Rhys Bowen, Sheila Connolly AKA Sarah Atwell, Donna Andrews, Cara Black, Hallie Ephron, and Nancy Martin. And Wednesday's **Burning Questions** continue to, well, burn.



If you're interested in doing a blog for the national website, please contact me at ellenhart@earthlink.net. And if you'd like to suggest a **Burning Question**, I'm always here to listen.

So, check out the new blog! It's at <http://sisters-in-crime-sinc.blogspot.com> or you can access it at our website at www.sistersincrime.org.

As for me, I figure it's time try one of those cigars. (I think I might prefer origami.)

Ellen Hart is the author of the Jane Lawless series, She serves on the board of Sisters in Crime and is the new publicity chairperson. Ellen lives, writes, and folds origami in Minneapolis MN. Her website is www.ellenhart.com.

New England Crime Bake

Crime Bake Librarians Panel featured Jennifer Harris, Sheila Connolly, Kathy Meeker, and Jane Murphy



Photo by Maureen Walsh



Photo by Maureen Walsh

Paula Munier (left) and Rosemary Harris (right), Crime Bake co-chairs, presented Kate Mattes, SinC co-founder and owner of Kate's Mystery Books, with a special award for her contributions to the New England mystery community at the 2009 Crime Bake conference.

It Doesn't Take a Bloodhound to Track Book Sales

by Nancy Martin

With the mystery genre market continuing to tighten, the writers who survive to keep writing books are those who are not just good storytellers and word-smiths, but good businesswomen, too.

One important business skill to learn is tracking sales. In the era when sales in the first few weeks are so vital, keeping on top of sales numbers can help a writer decide where to best deploy PR resources, how to most efficiently partner with your publisher and publicist, and even when to give up your own marketing efforts in favor of buckling down to write your next book.

How to track

But how does a writer find out how her book is selling? How do you crack the code? The good news is that you probably have several excellent allies already.

- Your best source of information is your editor. These days, most editors have early sales numbers at their fingertips. Every Monday, many of the large publishing houses receive reports from the big chains and some independents. All you have to do is ask how your book performed the previous week. Of course, a lot of editors don't have the time to answer questions from every single author. But if you ask nicely and don't whine or throw blame if you don't hear what you want (if you can't handle the truth, you're ruining your chances of receiving this info in the future!) you should be able to get a weekly sales report from your editor.



- Chances are, your agent is your next best ally in the quest for sales numbers. Many agencies subscribe to *Bookscan* and have easy access to sales. (If you're looking for an agent, one question to ask during the interview process is whether or not the agency subscribes to *Bookscan* and other industry publications designed to keep professionals in the loop.) If your agent doesn't receive *Bookscan*, she's the one who can request information from your editor. Again, the friendly, yet businesslike approach is probably best. Don't be shy. Your agent works for

you; but demonstrate that you want to be a partner on the business side of your career.

- Your favorite independent bookseller is your best friend in many ways—tracking sales included. Jim Huang, formerly of The Mystery Company in Indianapolis said, “find out which local stores report to *Bookscan*. If we (the stores) report through the ABA system, we get weekly *Bookscan* sales reports in return. Most titles aren't going to sell enough to make the national lists, but there are three special lists that might be of interest. I receive top 50 mystery, top 50 suspense/thriller and top 50 Indianapolis metro area lists each week. These lists show not just weekly but year-to-date sales. The local list shows our area sales, but there's also a column for national sales too.”

Using the numbers

Once you have good sources for sales figures, keep a chart. (You can make a spreadsheet, if you're that type, but I just scribble on a note pad.) How many copies of your new release are sold the first week of availability? If your first numbers aren't strong, perhaps there's a glitch in distribution. Some stores receive their copies, open the boxes and immediately stock shelves. But other stores either don't get their shipment in a timely way, or they lose the books “in the back.” Can you do anything to improve store performance? Perhaps not on a national scale, but certainly in your region or amongst the many mystery independents.

- Send a well-timed, but personal e-mail.
- Mail bookmarks along with a pre-publication thank you gift to the sales staff.
- Make a blitz of bookstore drop-ins the first week. Drop-ins are usually best accomplished in a small geographic area. Ask a friend to drive the car, while you dash into stores with gift bags for the sales staff and a prepared pitch. Ask if you can sign copies, and perhaps the staff will put stickers on the books and place them prominently in the store. If not, keep smiling and proceed to the next store. In a week, you might be able to hit dozens of stores in your state.



As time goes on

- Does your book continue to sell well the second week, let's say, when your publisher pays for co-op space in Barnes & Noble? If so, maybe you and your agent should lobby for two weeks of co-op space for the next book. What about the third week of release?
 - Is there a bump in sales when your ad in *Romantic Times (RT)* magazine hits subscriber mailboxes? (If so, you know that money was well spent.)
 - Does your local mystery bookstore sell loads of copies the day you run a link advertising autographed copies from your blog? Great! Do it again—soon!
 - Chart when your sales peak and when they begin to slide.
 - Watching your Amazon ranking will only make you crazy because they're not hard numbers and don't—yet—reflect a big percentage of overall sales of your book. The ranking simply represents an ever-changing algorithm that pits your book's performance against the sales of hundreds of thousands of other books.
- Likewise, the numbers you might have learned by calling distributor hotlines aren't as useful as hard sales numbers either, but a distributor can let you know whether or not your titles are in print and available in warehouses.
- Perhaps your best partner in learning about your presence in warehouses is—once again—your local independent mystery bookstore. Such a bookseller can check warehouse supplies for you. All it takes is a well-nurtured relationship.

See *It Doesn't Take a Bloodhound* p. 9

Keeping books in print

A few years ago, an editor once confided that if each book in my series sold 300 copies every month, the publishing house would most likely keep the whole series in print. (If one book in the series goes out of print—particularly the first—the rest of the books will soon slide into nothing, too. Readers like to get their hands on a complete series.) From that information, I decided I needed to do something every month to keep those 300 books moving out of stores: store appearances, blog tours, a friendly phone call to an indie store, teaching writing workshops—all kinds of efforts that move books. Do whatever works for you. Perhaps that number has changed since I heard it, but 300 copies isn't a lot. That steady trickle of new readers finding your series, however, makes a huge difference when your next book launches.

These days, the first four to six weeks of sales are what really matter. If your books continue to sell at high volume after that—congratulations! You may be on the path to staying in print for a very long time. Perhaps Oprah has discovered you, or your book has been adapted into a popular television series. Or the magical word-of-mouth phenomenon feeds the sales momentum.

Pestering anyone for sales numbers beyond the first six weeks is probably just that—pestering. Everyone has moved on. Bestseller lists have begun to show newer books, and booksellers are busy with current releases. And besides, it's time for you to start looking ahead to the next book. Royalty statements will be the best source for longterm sales info.

During the first six weeks, though, you want as much sales velocity as you can get. Early velocity—lots of books sold in a short amount of time—bodes well for the future. Booksellers get excited. They may have a new big author on their hands! Publishers are thrilled. The sales department starts looking ahead to the nail down orders for the next book. If your new release appears on bestseller lists, it can generate excitement among readers who start hungering for your next book and come snooping around your website looking for more info. All this early publication buzz makes the author—or, rather, your sales numbers—look good on paper for future contracts.

Print runs and sales

Of course, good sales velocity depends a lot on print run. You can't sell books that aren't in print. So you want a big print run! But if there are lots of unsold books—and therefore returns—that's bad for an author's sales reputation. So you want a small print run! See the conundrum? Setting a print run is a delicate balance—part science, part art. It's best left to the experts at your publishing house. Advance orders—the requests for stock that booksellers send to the publisher's sales department months before publication—determine print runs. When deciding upon advance orders, most booksellers look at past sales numbers and those all-important early sales. This circles back to the importance of good velocity in the first six weeks of a book's release. The more you can help sell books during that crucial time, the better.



What really sells your books, however, is—more books. Frontlist drives the backlist; and backlist drives the frontlist. Perhaps the best takeaway message is probably this:

Stay informed, but don't go

so crazy tracking your sales that you can't write the next book. For me, that means not getting obsessive. I like hearing my numbers during those early weeks and reading my royalty statements when they come to determine how best to help sell the next book. But more than that distracts me from writing—the real business of being a writer.

Nancy Martin is the author of The Blackbird Sisters mystery series and Our Lady of Immaculate Deception, due in stores March 2, 2010. She serves on the board of Sisters in Crime, edits SinC Links, and is a member of the Summit Team. She teaches writing workshops, and she loves her agent. Nancy's website is at www.NancyMartinMysteries.com.

Briefly...from Beth

Need user name or password?

The new SinC website issued user names and passwords on September 1, 2009. Many benefits of your SinC membership are posted to the "members only" section of www.sistersincrime.org. Please contact me at sistersincrime@juno.com if you need your user name and password. You may also request it on the web site.

Calling all published authors

All SinC authors who would like their most recent book title and a promo picture on the SinC website can do so in a few quick minutes.

- Log in
- Your member profile will come up—many of you already have information entered—check to make sure it is correct.
- Scroll down to "Most Recent Title" and begin entering your author information.

Librarians, booksellers and mystery lovers search this data base daily.

SinC Breakfast at Malice

May 2, 2010, 7:30 AM
Crystal Gateway Marriott
SinC Members \$20, Non-Members \$30

Come join your "sisters" at the annual SinC Breakfast at Malice.

Please try to pay online. The listing for the breakfast is on the "Calendar" on the left side of the SinC website. It saves time to pay on the site with Master Card or Visa. If you would like to send a check, the deadline is April 21, 2010 in Lawrence ks.

To reserve your spot, pay \$20 online or send a check to:

Sisters in Crime
PO Box 442124
Lawrence KS 66044

by April 21, 2010 and send your e-mail address for confirmation. Guests are welcome and the cost for non-members is \$30.



Conferences & Happenings

Left Coast Crime

Los Angeles CA • March 11–14

Jan Burke and Lee Child will be the guests of honor at “Booked in LA” (AKA Left Coast Crime), at the Omni Hotel in Los Angeles. Janet Rudolph will be fan guest of honor and Bill Fitzhugh will serve as toastmaster.

The event will feature three tracks of panels and presentations, including one tailored to published writers, as well as local crime-related tours, special events, and a charity auction. For more information and to register online, visit <http://www.leftcoastcrime.org>.

Malice Domestic 22

Arlington VA • April 30–May 2

“If traditional mysteries are your cup of tea...” plan to attend Malice Domestic at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington VA. Parnell Hall will be the guest of honor; Rhys Bowen the toastmaster; and Mary Higgins Clark the lifetime achievement award recipient. Fan guests of honor will be Tom and Marie O’Day. Malice Domestic will remember Edward Hoch.

Complete the Mystery Author Information section of the registration form to be considered for programming. The conference website is at www.malicedomestic.org. The SinC Breakfast will be at 7:30 on Sunday morning.

Crimefest

Bristol UK • May 20–23

The international crime fiction convention will be held at the Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel in Bristol UK. Colin Dexter will be a featured guest and the toastmaster will be Gyles Brandreth. For more information see the website at www.crimefest.com.

Mayhem in the Midlands

Omaha NB • May 27–29

Mayhem in the Midlands’ guest of honor will be Deborah Crombie; toastmaster, Marcia Talley; Caroline Willner Special Guest, Steve Hamilton. All inclusive registration is \$100. Options include a Sisters in Crime buffet. Visit the website at www.omahapubliclibrary.org/mayhem or contact Sally Fellows at sallyfellows1@cox.net or Manya Shorr at mshorr@omahapubliclibrary.org.

Bloody Words X

Victoria, Vancouver Island, Canada

May 28–30

The tenth Bloody Words convention will be held at the Hilton Hotel. Guests of honour are Deon Meyer and Giles Blunt, with a sad farewell to Lyn Hamilton. Linwood Barclay will be master of ceremonies. The conference fee is \$175. For more information visit www.bloodywords2010.com.

PSWA Annual Conference

Las Vegas NV • June 17–20

Simon Wood will be the keynote speaker at the Public Safety Writers Association’s (PSWA) annual conference at the Orleans Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas. Conference details and registration can be found at <http://www.policewriter.com>.

ThrillerFest V

New York NY • July 7–10

The Grand Hyatt will host the “summer camp for thriller readers, fans, writers and industry professionals.” The conference sponsored by the International Thriller Writers will feature Ken Follett as thrillermaster. Other special guests are Harlan Coben, Gayle Lynds, Lisa Scottoline, and David Morrell. On-line registration can be found at the website <http://www.thrillerwriters.org/thrillerfest>.

Theakstons Old Peculier Crime Writing Festival (AKA Harrogate)

Harrogate UK • July 23–25

The recently refurbished 300-year-old Crown Hotel is home to the self-proclaimed “biggest and best crime fiction Festival in Europe.” Joining Programme Chair Stuart MacBride will be Ian Rankin, Christopher Brookmyre, Jeffrey Deaver, Joanne Harris, Jeff Lindsay, and Karin Slaughter. Further information is available at www.harrogate-festival.org.uk/crime.

Book Passage Mystery Writers Conference

Corte Madera CA • July 22–26

The conference will cover everything mystery writers need—from developing ideas and writing skills to finding a publisher. Sponsored by the Book Passage bookstore, this year’s faculty will include Michael Connelly, Sheldon Siegel, Jacqueline Winspear, and many more.

Complete information is at the website www.bookpassage.com.

Mystery Florida

Sarasota FL • August 12–14

“The conference to die for” offers one day dedicated to seminars and panels directed to people who write or want to write but can’t seem to get past the manuscript stage. The second day is devoted to panels by well-known Florida mystery writers who will discuss the ins and outs of writing in their genre. The event will be at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota. Conference details and registration information can be found at www.mysteryflorida.com.

St. Hilda’s

Oxford UK • August 13–15

The St. Hilda’s Crime and Mystery weekend will be at St. Hilda’s College, Oxford UK. Eileen.roberts@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk is the contact. Telephone 01865 373753.

Magna cum Murder

Muncie IN • October 29–31

The “house party for 300 of your closest friends,” will be at the Horizon Convention in downtown Muncie IN. Charles and Caroline Todd will be guests of honor at the 14TH Ball State University event. The all inclusive registration of \$215 is due by October 1. See the website at www.magnacummurder.com.

Bouchercon 2010

San Francisco CA • October 14–18

The World Mystery Fan Convention honorees will be Lee Child, distinguished contribution to the genre; Denise Mina, international guest of honor; Laurie R. King, American guest of honor; Eddie Muller, toastmaster; and Maddy Van Hertenbruggen, fan guest of honor. The conference hotel is the Hyatt Regency San Francisco. Registration is \$195. Complete details may be found at www.bcon2010.com.

The Mystery Company Closes

We’re always sad when a mystery bookstore closes. The Mystery Company closed its doors in early February. Authors and readers alike mourn this loss to the mystery community.

Before You Kindle

by CJ Lyons

Many authors are now experimenting with alternative routes of finding their audience. Electronic self-publishing via Kindle and other formats is one of those paths.

Here are five things you should know before walking the path of electronic self-publication:

Why self e-publish?

Like many authors, once I was firmly established with mainstream publishers, I never thought about e-publishing or self-publishing, much less doing both, but then I found myself with four manuscripts that for a variety of reasons never made it to publication. I wanted these books to find an audience but I didn't want to tie them to contracts I might later regret, especially as these four novels were all romantic suspense/thrillers and my career is moving to more mainstream suspense/thriller. So, I decided to perform a self-publishing experiment.

Who should self e-publish?

Self e-publishing is especially suited to authors who are already published, especially if they own the rights to a backlist. Published authors can build on already established name recognition and readership to find new readers.

Anyone deciding to self-publish should have a good grasp of their target audience. You want to build an audience who will stay with you and help spread the word of your books—and that means making a promise to always deliver a high quality read. In other words, just as in mainstream publishing, self e-publishing is all about the reader. It's not about clearing your closet of dusty manuscripts just because you can.

What books are best suited?

Unless you plan on giving your work away free, your goal is to attract paying customers. The books you self e-publish need to be just as good as any book a mainstream publisher is selling.

If you own the rights to a backlist, they've already been professionally edited, so you're good to go. Be aware that publishers own the cover art, so you'll need to create a new cover for your e-book.

If you're planning to publish a book not previously published, be certain it is professionally edited. Do not rely solely on your critique part-

ners or Great Aunt Martha who gushes to her bridge club about your writing!

Remember, not only are you competing against *The New York Times* bestsellers, you're also selling a product to a consumer. If you expect to win their hard-earned money—and more importantly, their time, attention, and future sales loyalty—then you need to create a worthy product.

How to do it?

I thought this would be difficult, but it actually was quite easy—though tedious and time-consuming. All the major e-pub sites have guidelines available. I used Amazon, Scribd, and Smashwords. I also loaded my books onto Lulu after several readers requested an avenue to purchase print copies. (Since books printed by print-on-demand (POD) technology are more expensive, I kept the prices as low as I could. I essentially make no profit from these sales, they're more to generate goodwill.)

- First create an account at the sites where you will upload your books, track sales, make revisions to your final product, and, at some sties, interact with customers.
- Read each site's guide to formatting and follow it closely. Usually this comes down to stripping all formatting from your manuscript and exporting it in the format the e-publishing site requires. I found the Smashwords guide to be very thorough with a lot of trouble-shooting tips, so I start there, transforming my document to one suitable for Smashwords and then simply export it as an HTML file for uploading to Amazon.

This step is the most time-consuming because you must go through every line of the manuscript ensuring that no errant formatting remains and that the resulting manuscript is readable.

- Upload the re-formatted manuscript to each site and proofread it (again!) to ensure nothing is lost in translation.
- Add cover art, a description, tags, and set a price. Hit "publish" and you're done!

What about the money?

Some authors choose to give their work away in order to gain new readers or as a promotion tied to other books, but most of us hope to earn some income from our e-published books.



I experimented, setting various price points for my four novels. The first, *Nerves of Steel*, I set at \$3.99. The next two, *Chasing Shadows* and *Lost in Shadows*, were a bit shorter than my other two novels. I priced them at \$2.99. The last, *Borrowed Time*, was the oldest manuscript of the group, and I priced it at \$1.99.

My results? In the first week, with no advertising or promotion, *Nerves of Steel* sold 42 copies on Amazon and four on Smashwords; *Chasing Shadows*, 85 copies on Amazon and 10 on Smashwords; *Lost in Shadows*, 49 copies on Amazon and nine on Smashwords; *Borrowed Time*, 37 copies on Amazon and four on Smashwords. Each of the books sold three trade paper copies on Lulu.

Since that first week, I'm averaging about 50–55 sales a day on Amazon. It's not a huge amount of money, but I'm on track to make more in a year than I would if I took any of the offers from mainstream publishers I received for these particular manuscripts—all with no expenses incurred other than my time and a few dollars for stock art I used in the cover design.

Self e-publishing can have a place in an author's career path, whether to keep a backlist alive, to try new genres and markets, to use as a promotional tool in conjunction with traditionally published books, or to generate a little income on the side.

As a pediatric ER doctor, CJ Lyons has lived the life she writes about. In addition to being an award-winning medical suspense author, CJ is a nationally known presenter and keynote speaker.

Her second novel, Warning Signs, was released January 2009 and the third, Urgent Care, was released October 2009. To learn more about CJ and her work, go to www.cjlyons.net.

Why I'm Still a Guppy

by Sandra Parshall

You're a published writer now. Why are you still in the Guppies? "I hear that question a lot from SinC members who think the Guppies Chapter is strictly for beginners and publication means automatic "graduation" from the group. My short answer is that I have many good friends among the Guppies and would miss them terribly if I left. The long answer would be a list of every piece of information and advice, every word of encouragement and consolation I've received over the years from these remarkable fellow writers—gifts I can repay only by remaining in the group and helping those who aren't as far along in the writing and publishing process as I.

Cristina Ryplansky, now writing the Domestic Diva Mysteries as Krista Davis, served as the first president of the Guppies and is also still a member. "I remember standing in my local bookstore looking through books on writing to find out how long a manuscript should be and what size font to use," Cristina says. "Such simple questions could have been easily answered, but I didn't know anyone with the answers. Enter the Guppies.

"Some people think that once a writer has an agent or is under contract, she's home free. The truth is that every phase of writing has its own set of new experiences and, consequently, new questions. Even now, the Guppies remain my main link to the writing community. How could I possibly leave them? And I'm thrilled when I can help someone avoid the mistakes I made (keep those queries short!). Now that I'm

"Inspector" Joe Finder gets the cuffs on Guppy Hank Phillippi Ryan at the New England Crime Bake



Photo by Maureen Walsh

the middle sister I can offer some of those quick answers to the newcomers, and I'm grateful for the critiques, information, and friendships with my more experienced Guppy sisters."

The Guppies formed in 1995 as a small, nameless special interest group for unpublished SinC members who initially exchanged articles about writing and publishing by regular mail. As the group grew, snail mail critique circles formed. Diane Gottfryd came up with the name Guppies, for "Great Unpublished." After the Guppies went online with an e-mail listserv 10 years ago, membership boomed and recently hit a record 400. A few years ago, the Guppies became an official chapter of SinC.

Success stories

Daryl Wood Gerber AKA Avery Aames, author of the forthcoming Cheese Shop Mysteries, describes the Guppies experience as life-altering. "Joining the Guppies is perhaps the most important thing I did for my writing career. I lived in a city where I couldn't find an active writing group. Sisters in Crime suggested the Guppies. While working from my office, I found writers online who were just like me—authors with passion who needed information, inspiration, and support.

"Because of the group, I learned how to find agents and I discovered the right and wrong way to submit a manuscript. I linked up with a fabulous critique group that challenged me (and continues to challenge me) to be the best writer possible. Because of the Guppies' posts, I could see that I wasn't the only one getting rejected, which helped soften the blow. And I was hearing success stories which gave me hope that I, too, would succeed."

Successes were scarce at first, but now hardly a week passes without an announcement of another Guppy triumph. Many of us have published mystery novels and short stories and recognition has come in the form of award nominations and wins. One award winner is Hank Phillippi Ryan, whose distinguished career in TV news didn't begin to prepare her for book publishing. "The world of publishing is mysterious and lots is unknown and even unknowable," Hank says. "It's easy for a newbie to feel lost. But swimming with my Guppies, the world was less terrifying and intimidating."

Acknowledgements increase membership

A lot of acknowledgments pages mention the Guppies, and those nods lead new members to the group.

"I discovered the Guppies when I grabbed Lorraine Bartlett's first novel from my library's local author shelf," recalls Lisa Bork, author of the new Broken Vows series. "Upon e-mailing Lorraine, I learned about all the opportunities membership offered, including critique groups and manuscript swaps. Having frank and objective feedback from others who understood the mystery genre improved my writing exponentially...Now that I'm published, I plan on remaining a Guppy in order to give back as well as to see all my Guppy friends publish their first novels, too. Guppies rock!"

Lorraine, who writes the Booktown Mysteries as Lorna Barrett and the Jeff Resnick series as L.L. Bartlett, joined the Guppies early and is always happy to hear that she's helped bring in new members. She reports, "The Guppies offer a lot to the unpublished author, not the least of which is unswerving support. Critique groups, Agent Quest, and all the other subgroups, are terrific ways to network and improve one's craft. I enjoy the support of my Guppy sisters and I hope they feel I'm giving back to them as well."

Some Guppies get together at conferences, launch parties, and signings, but the e-mail list and subgroups remain the heart of the chapter—the places to go with research questions, pleas for advice, and both good news and bad. For many, the online exchanges are their only contacts with other members. "Without ever personally meeting my fellow Guppies, they are my friends," says Beth Solheim, author of the upcoming Sadie Witt series. "I smile when I see their names. I'm in awe of the time Guppies are willing to devote to helping others reach their goals. Membership in the Guppies helped me achieve success by offering continual encouragement...Their query and synopsis critiques are invaluable and helped me hone my skills. Guppies are always ready to offer agent and publisher suggestions and to send updates on trends, upcoming conferences and classes."

See *Why I'm Still a Guppy* p. 13

Submission Guidelines

by Molly Weston

Of course you know how to write—you're an author! But. Do you know how to submit your work to a third party (such as *inSinc*) who will format it? I won't claim to know the recommendations for every publisher, but these guidelines will start you on the right track.

- First, forget some of the things your typing teacher may have told you years ago.
 - No more double spaces after punctuation or before and after dashes.
 - No more all caps or underlines (you can indicate them by a symbol and reference the symbol at the beginning of the document, i.e., “* =all caps,” “# =bold,” etc.).
- Suggest your own title—but keep it short to fit on one line.
- Use titles without colons and semi-colons.
- Suggest subheads.
- Because computer incompatibility still doesn't recognize the symbols for em dashes across platforms, use double hyphens (remember no spaces surround them) for em dashes.

- Save your document in plain text if possible. Word is notorious for including formatting and style sheets that interfere with desktop publishing programs.

Photos and graphics

Pictures bring columns alive!

- If you're a new author to the publication, always enclose a photo of yourself.
- Include the entire picture at the highest resolution possible (300 DPI is preferable. This means the photo size will likely be very large—usually 100KB to 1 MB as a compressed TIFF file. A camera JPEG photo should be more than 70 KB. (You may not be able to send more than one or two pictures in a single e-mail.)
- Almost every photo will need to be re-sized and/or cropped to fit the space in a layout—but allow the layout person to handle that. A photo that has been cropped or re-sized usually cannot be enlarged! This may well result in the omission of your photo.

- Identify the people (L-R) with names and pertinent information. Sending a suggested caption is always appropriate.
- Include photo credit.
- If you've got a Facebook or other account with photos or other artwork, send along the link.
- If you're writing a column that's heavy with numbers, consider including a graph that helps the reader understand the text.
- If your topic is one that has particular graphic associated with it, send a symbol that would identify it—or a website where the layout artist can find several from which to choose.

When in doubt

Feel free to contact the editor or layout artist with questions before you struggle with options. Nobody knows all the rules and jargon for everything. Asking is good! For *inSinc*, e-mail me at mysteryheel@mac.com.

Why I'm Still a Guppy - Cont'd. from p. 12

Information abounds

Meredith Cole, winner of the Malice Domestic/St. Martin's Press Award with her first book, *Posed for Murder*, wishes she had joined the Guppies sooner. “The Guppies are one of the most supportive and informative groups on the web. At conferences you're never alone—there are always a few fellow Guppies to meet up with. I've had book signings in out of the way places, and I've been so pleased when people with familiar names show up and say they've been following my career through the group.

“Why stay? I learn a lot from the other published writers in the group who share their insights with the rest of us. I enjoy hearing about the triumphs and tribulations of my fellow authors on their road to publication—and I think I would miss everyone.”

Elizabeth Zelvin, author of the Bruce Kohler mysteries, credits the Guppies with teaching her “most of what I know about the craft of writing today's mysteries and the business of getting them published.” She found critique

partners who helped make her first book, *Death Will Get You Sober*, publishable. “The Agent Quest subgroup gave me solid information about specific agents and taught me how to write a pitch, a professional query letter, and a good synopsis. You can make a million mistakes through ignorance when you're writing your first mystery and trying to get it published. Guppies is the best resource I know of to avoid making most of those mistakes.”

A Guppy for seven years, Liz stays because “Guppies still rejoice at my successes and support and encourage me through the struggles and disappointments that don't vanish once the book is published. Guppies all over the country have housed, fed, and driven me around on my book tour, found me speaking engagements, and bought my books. Above all, they're friends. I also stay so I can pass on some of the help I have received.”

Sheila Connolly, who writes the Orchard Mysteries and (as Sarah Atwell) the Glassblower Mysteries, wonders how aspiring authors survived before the internet. Of all the writers'

online groups she belongs to, she still finds the Guppies the most helpful. “The Guppies stand out because of their consistent enthusiasm and encouragement. We've watched a lot of members claw their way to publication, and they stay in the loop, mentoring those who hope to follow them. It's online networking at its best. Guppies helped me to stay the course.”

Lorraine adds, “There's no reason for unpublished SinC members to go it alone. The archives alone are a treasure trove of information, and the Guppies' bi-monthly newsletter is the best I've seen—for both published and unpublished authors. Membership is a bargain at \$12 a year. No other professional writers organizations offer the unpublished all the services and support that the SinC Guppies do.”

Sound good? Go to www.sinc-guppies.org for more information. Then come on in—the water's great!

As with other SinC chapters, membership in the international organization is a prerequisite for membership in the Guppies.

Law & Fiction

Getting Facts Straight

By Leslie Budewitz

What is the right to a speedy trial? The Sixth Amendment to the US Constitution says:

"In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury ..."

State constitutions provide the same guarantee.

The Supreme Court established guidelines for analyzing speedy trial claims in *Barker v. Wingo* (1972). The Court recognized that delay skews the fairness of the entire judicial system. The government must diligently pursue charges it brings and cannot leave them hanging, unresolved, over a defendant's head. The remedy for violating the right is dismissal of the charges.

Considering the facts

Four factors must be balanced, based on the case facts:

- Length of delay. The trigger period varies by state, running roughly 90 to 200 days from arrest, indictment, or custody to trial. Length alone is not typically dispositive; shorter delays may violate the right, while longer delays may be permitted.
- Reasons for delay. Delays are charged to the party responsible. A defendant cannot complain about a delay attributable to him or his conduct or condition—e.g., a postponement he requested, time to brief a motion he filed, a rescinded plea, or his unavailability for trial because he fled the jurisdiction or was mentally ill. Once he demonstrates sufficient delay attributable to the prosecution, the burden shifts to the prosecution to prove the lack of prejudice. The defendant then has a final chance to establish prejudice. The Speedy Trial Act

of 1974 specifies what delays will be counted in federal prosecutions.

Even if the threshold delay is not shown, the defendant may still demonstrate prejudice. Courts have held that intentional delay by the prosecution may eliminate that need.

- Assertion of the right. To preserve the right, the defendant must assert it before trial. The prosecution may request a signed waiver, e.g., before requesting a mental exam or when new evidence is discovered. Waivers are usually time-limited. As in the Beltway Sniper case, the trial judge may order the right waived because of trial complications, logistics, and expected length.
- Prejudice. Courts recognize that prejudice can be hard to show. The three traditional bases—the problems speedy trial is intended to prevent—are:
 1. pretrial incarceration;
 2. anxiety and concern; and
 3. impairment of the defense, particularly from the death of witnesses and fading memories.

Practical effects

Some practical effects of the right to a speedy trial:

- Limited time can harm both sides' preparation;
- As the trial date approaches, prosecutors and defense lawyers work longer days;
- A short time to trial gives skittish witnesses less time to change their stories—or disappear altogether;



- Police officers and crime lab witnesses may be called to testify on short notice, taking them off the streets or away from their microscopes;
- Slow lab results may force trial delays—or an approaching trial date may force lab techs to put other work on hold; and
- the criminal trial calendar may bump civil trials at the last minute.

If your suspect is cooperating with the protagonist's investigation, she may request that trial be delayed and sign a waiver. If not, or if the judge denies the request, use a rapidly approaching trial date to pressure your protagonist and raise the stakes.

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, <http://www.LawandFiction.com>.



🔪 Masters of Mind and Body

by Katherine Ramsland, PhD



In 2003, John Jamelske was charged with kidnapping a sixteen-year-old girl. Shocking details emerged about five more women held captive in his filthy dungeon. Besides sexually assaulting them, Jamelske had starved them to keep them under control.

We've all heard about "sex slaves" enduring years of such forced captivity. Some escape or are rescued, but others are killed. Often, their bodies or body parts are kept nearby. Among offenders whom we can label as "collectors" are Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy, Dennis Nilsen, Marc Dutroux, Ed Gein, Gary Heidnik, Vera Renzi, and Marty Graham. Some are lone predators, others have partners. Most, but not all, are male.

Collectors

Whether their trophies are dead or alive, "collectors" share certain traits. They're not hobbyists, like someone collecting string or celebrity autographs. Their needs and desires are far more deviant. In particular, they thrive on feelings of domination, and many have modeled themselves on a novel published in 1963 (and made into a film).

The Collector, by John Fowles, features Frederick, a lonely entomologist who abducts a woman named Miranda. He keeps her in a locked dungeon on his secluded property, where he can hold her indefinitely. She resists, but time is on his side. Although he expects that she will eventually love him, he treats her like a specimen in his butterfly collection. It's just an experiment and she's just a thing. He can manipulate the outcome to his satisfaction.

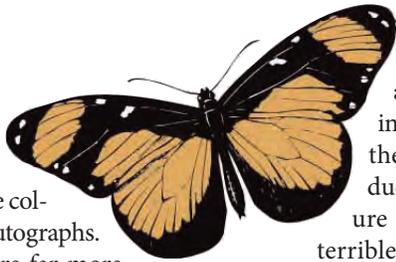
Because Miranda does grow submissive, the story delights predators: Holding her

captive worked! The message they see is that, with patience, captives can be made into willing slaves. Dahmer formed such a plan when he damaged the brains of drugged victims to make zombies. California killers Leonard Lake and Charles Ng used torture. Lake owned a cinder block bunker on a remote property, where he and Ng "screened" an estimated 25 people. Lake was supposedly gathering female slaves for a satanic cult, so he wanted perfectly submissive women. Those who resisted were raped and killed.

Inadequate personalities

The need to possess people signals weak or inadequate personalities. Collectors are often deluded. Some believe they're entitled to do whatever they want to another person. Others insist they were "benefiting" their abductees, e.g., introducing them to sexual pleasure or saving them from a terrible world. As crazy as it sounds, inside their private fantasy it makes sense to them. They have no empathy or sympathy. To them, others are merely objects for their gratification. They have no appreciation for the terror and pain another person might experience, except to be narcissistically pleased that they can elicit these things.

Strangely enough, despite the long list of sexual dysfunctions included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, there is no designated category for the perverse desire to possess another person for sexual pleasure. (Necrophilia covers sex with the dead, but not the desire to keep bodies around.) Even lists that expand on sexual deviance beyond the *DSM-IV* fail to fully define this condition.



Yet, the behaviors collectors share in common offer some pretty obvious clues.

Control issues

A pathological need for control is evident in the meticulous logs that many collectors keep: It's a record of their mastery as well as a means of reliving their deeds. Robert Berdella, for example, recorded each word his unwilling male captives said. As if a scientist performing an experiment, he noted the exact amounts of the injections he gave, the times he gave them, and how each "slave" responded to various fiendish tortures. He also recorded dates on which each one died.

A more speculative idea is that keeping "slaves" or killing them for their corpses are attempts to achieve stability in a chaotic world. Turning people into "things" soothes primitive fears inspired during a childhood in an unstable home. To identify such patterns among collectors, we'd have to examine their development in detail, but the rigid regimen that many follow affirms this idea as a productive avenue for future study.

Katherine Ramsland is a writer, professor of forensic psychology and former therapist. Among her 37 books are The Human Predator and The Forensic Psychology of Criminal Minds. She has also published 16 short stories and more than 900 articles.



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The Docket

by Patricia Gulley



Books

Richard Brawer, *Beyond Guilty*, L & L Dreamspell, February
Tracy L. Carbone, *The Man of Mystery Hill*, Quake, January
Meredith Cole, *Dead In The Water*, St. Martin's Minotaur, May
Julie Compton, *Rescuing Olivia*, St. Martin's Minotaur, February
Sheila Connolly, *Red Delicious Death*, Berkley Prime Crime, March
Patricia Gussin, *The Test*, Oceanview Publishing, October 2009
Jeffrey Avalon Friedberg, *Black Road 2012*, INDI Publishing Group, November 2009
Barbara Graham, *Murder by Artifact: The Murder Quilt*, Five Star, November 2009
Beth Groundwater, *The Epsilon Eridani Alternative*, Virtual Tales, December 2009
Karen Harper, *Down River*, Mira Books, February
Kelly Irvin, *A Deadly Wilderness*, Five Star, January

Sue Ann Jaffarian, *Corpse on the Cob*, Midnight Ink, February
Mary Kennedy, *Dead Air*, Penguin, January
D. P. Lyle, *Stress Fracture*, Medallion Press, April
Evan Marshall, *Dark Alley*, Severn House, March
Nancy Martin, *Our Lady of Immaculate Deception*, Minotaur, March
Deanna Raybourn, *The Dead Travel Fast*, Mira, March
Hank Phillippi Ryan, *Drive Time*, Mira, February
Alexandra Schiller, *The Case of The Imaginary Imam*, Conscious Publishing, November 2009
Heather Webber, *Truly, Madly: A Novel*, St. Martin's Press, February
Nancy Means Wright, *Midnight Fires*, Perseverance Press, April

Short Stories & Anthologies

Larry & Rosemary Mild, "Slim Chance," Fall, "Statistically Slim," Winter 2009, both at *Mysterical-E*

Judith R. O'Sullivan, "Death Of A Cougar," *Deadly Ink 2009 Short Story Collection*, July 2009
Hank Phillippi Ryan, "On The House," *Quarry*, Level Best Books, November 2009
Nancy Means Wright, "Ivory," *Quarry*, Level Best Books, November 2009 and "Box Car," *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, February

Non Fiction/Articles

Amnon Kabatchnik, *Blood on the Stage: Milestone Plays of Crime, Mystery and Detection, An Annotated Repertoire, 1925-1950*: Scarecrow Press, November 2009

Awards & Miscellaneous

Patricia Crandall's story, "Not Suitable Viewing for Children," won an Honorable Mention in *Northern Stars Magazine* Jan/Feb short story contest.
Susan Lindgren's work-in-progress, "Forgotten Treasures" was shortlisted for the Crime Writers' Association (UK) 2009 Debut Dagger award.