



# Mystery Press

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## President's Message:

Labour Day: Time to buy those new notebooks and sharpen those #2 pencils. What's the curriculum for the 2005-2006 INK year?

Classes this year will include topics on research, craft, and the business of writing. You'll have the chance to hear a journalist's perspective on the crime beat; an award-winning novelist's approach to creating characters; a screenwriter's take on the three-act structure; a bookseller's advice on how to give your book an edge; two writers' reports on the latest info on mystery publishing; an ace networker's advice on networking; and more. For extra credit, plan to attend the full-day workshop on Saturday, October 29, which will focus on private investigation.

And, of course, when we meet, we also have Recess (a.k.a. "networking"), a reading by a member like you, and informal shop-talk in the Piano Corner.

December is the traditional time for reflection on lessons learned. This year, you will have an unusual opportunity to assess your own skills as a sleuth. Can you deduce whodunit, when presented with myriad clues and a field of suspects?

We'll have field trips, including one to criminal court to observe a murder trial. We will repeat the ever-popular field trip to the Medical Examiner's Office, for Death in the Gym and the tour of the morgue.

Reading assignment: Mystery Press, and your choice of the books in INK's library. Surfing the Net is also recommended—but visit [www.mysterywritersink.com](http://www.mysterywritersink.com) first.

Writing: You'll be busy writing your own work-in-progress. Consider volunteering to read some pages at an INK meeting, or writing an article for Mystery Press.

Finally, the traditional year-end celebration in June will feature readings by six members of the class, as well as the opportunity to cast ballots for the board of 2006-2007.

This should be a great year for mystery writers!

Anne Jayne

## Table of Contents:

- 1 – President's Message  
by Anne Jayne
- 2 – News from the Ink  
Library  
By Susan Calder
- 2 – Ink Fall Workshop  
Reminder
- 3 – Library Book Review  
Sandra Einarson
- 3 – Pull the Reader In  
Mahrie Glab
- 4 – May Program Report:  
Gun Club Visit  
By Anne Jayne
- 5 – Law Enforcement  
Links List
- 6 – Collected Wisdom:  
Critique Groups
- 7 – Contest Collection
- 8 – Member Good News!
- 8 – Schedule of  
Upcoming

### News from the INK Library

A year ago, when I took on the INK librarian's job, we had about twenty items in the INK library. Now, there are over thirty. If donations continue at the present rate, it won't be long before the library stock is double last year's amount.

I am happy to do the extra work, as I believe the library is a valuable service for INK members. Our books and materials provide information on writing in general (character, plot and scene) and mystery writing in particular (crime scene investigation; death, murder and forensic medicine). There is a growing list of novels and short stories, many written by INK members. And we have recently gone high tech. INK member Fiona Pinnell has started recording our speaker meetings, so you can hear a presentation you missed or take more detailed notes on one you attended. These are suitable for play on CD players or computer CD drives. Currently four sessions are available: Mahrie Glab's talk on writing a mystery (March 2004), Joan Hendrickson on poisons (January 2005), Eileen Coughlan on setting (March 2005) and Jeff Collins on guns (May 2005). Fiona has perfected her methods and plans to continue the recordings this year.

At the June meeting, we received the following library additions:

Carmichael, C.J. *Next of Kin*, novel donated by C.J. Carmichael

Carmichael, C.J. *Seattle After Midnight*, novel donated by C.J. Carmichael

Metikosh, Anne *Undercurrent*, novel donated by Sherry Wilson McEwen and Jayne Barnard

Frey, James, *How to Write a Damn Good Mystery*.

This summer, many of you took advantage of the library by bringing books home. **Don't forget these books are due at the September meeting.**

Library books are available only to INK members. Check the website [www.mysterywritersink.com](http://www.mysterywritersink.com) for a complete list. If you want an item, contact me by e-mail: [susan.calder@shaw.ca](mailto:susan.calder@shaw.ca) or phone 278-0392 and I'll have it for you at the next meeting. The books shuffle between my home and the INK library box at the Old Y. If I miss a meeting, you may take a book

home from the cupboard by signing it out in the notebook provided; if you return a book to the box, please date and initial the notebook.

Finally, I would like to thank those who wrote library book reviews for the INK newsletter this past year. Reviews show others the benefits (or non-benefits) of a book and help you clarify what you learned from your reading. They are practical writing experiences and publishing credits. If you would like to review one of our library books, let me know.

I hope you had a revitalizing summer and are looking forward to a fall plunge into new work.

**Susan Calder Arnold**  
Ink Librarian

### **Ink Autumn Workshop: The Crime Buster**

**One full day with a private investigator!**

**9:45 – 4, Saturday, October 29**  
**Old Y – 223 12th Ave. S.E.**

Speaker: Kevin J. Ripa, owner of J.S. Kramer and Associates ([www.jskramerpi.com](http://www.jskramerpi.com)) Mr. Ripa has worked in the investigative field since 1991. He has served as President and Past President of the Alberta Association of Private Investigators.

**Cost: Members \$25**  
**Non-members \$40**  
**(lunch not included)**

Members have first option on seats until September 13<sup>th</sup>. For registration information and forms, email Sandra Ruttan at:  
[mysterywritersinkcalgary@hotmail.com](mailto:mysterywritersinkcalgary@hotmail.com)

If you have recently received your registration form, please bring (rather than mail) it and your payment to the regular Ink meeting on  
**September 8, 2005.**

### Library Book Review: How to Get Happily Published

by Judith Appelbaum

Published by HarperCollins Publishers, original copyright 1978, this edition published 1992.

#### Reviewed by Sandra Ruttan

*How to Get Happily Published*, by Judith Appelbaum, guides authors from the early writing and editing stages to publication. It is straightforward, easy to understand and Appelbaum uses quotes and story illustrations from people in the publishing business to reinforce her points along the way.

Appelbaum offers provide an excellent basis for understanding things like publishing contracts, how to get an agent, the advantages and disadvantages between having an agent or approaching publishers on your own, and the pros and cons of large and small publishers.

Her comments on using critiquing and paying for editing services before approaching publishers and agents may be helpful to those currently writing a novel. She also explains how to approach agents and publishers, the difference between a query and a synopsis and includes handy tips to save yourself time and money and get your work off the slush pile directly into an editor's hands.

The section on rights and contracts provides advice on negotiating with publishers and enough knowledge to prepare you for the process of signing a deal.

Appelbaum includes a thorough section on the self-publishing option, covering every stage of the production process from editing to artwork, distribution and the marketing of your book.

This book also contains 79 pages of resource references. Company names, addresses and phone numbers are listed for easy reference, along with a brief description of the resource and what service they provide. Whether you need to consult someone regarding marketing or applying for a grant, there is information available that can direct you to experienced professionals.

*How to Get Happily Published* is filled with many tips and insights that can help you make the right choices on your journey to publishing success, and is a valuable reference book for aspiring authors.

### Pull the Reader In by Mahrie Creaser Glab

Distancing our readers isn't desirable. We like them involved and close to the hearts and heads of the characters. Here are two versions of a paragraph typifying "distancing the reader." At least so it seems to me.

Below I've quoted the instructions on word use that I thought of when I started thinking about what was wrong. (The Marshall Plan, page 132) However, I'm not sure this is actually the explanation needed. Maybe the problem is passive tense. Using WAS, ING'S and TO's (okay-- participles and infinities) results in passive constructions and they certainly do distance a reader from the "action" in the story. Either way, I think you can see what I mean.

Considering her options, Jane tried to think of a way to grant the snake freedom without actually touching it. One of the solutions she considered was barbecue tongs, but that would mean lifting the shoe box edge high enough for the slithery little monster to make an escape, so that was abandoned.

Jane considered her options. How the heck could she grant the snake freedom without actually touching it? She could use barbecue tongs, but that would mean lifting the shoe box edge high enough for the slithery little monster to make an escape. No, she wouldn't try the tongs.

**Perceptions in Viewpoint:** When you use viewpoint writing, readers know they are experiencing the story through the viewpoint character's perceptions. Therefore, when you describe acts of perception, the verbs of perception saw, heard and smelled are unnecessary. Simply describe the perception. Instead of writing "He looked out at the street and saw a boy whiz past on a skateboard," write "He looked out at the street. A boy whizzed past on a skateboard."

Don't use: "Sue stopped and listened. She heard leaves crunching behind her on the path." Use: "Sue stopped and listened. Leaves crunched behind her on the path."

Check your writing, drop the perception verbs, and draw your readers into your character's head and heart.

## May Program Report: Gun Club visit

On May 12, 2005, Ink members went to the Steve Johnson Range for Jeff Collins' presentation on handguns. Jeff had a number of handguns available to show us.

### Terminology

The calibre of a firearm indicates the diameter of the bullet, measured either in hundredths of an inch (such as .38) or millimeters (such a 9mm, which is equivalent to .38).

A cartridge ("round") is composed of a bullet, powder, and primer, contained in a shell casing ("shell" or "brass"). A number of cartridges is ammunition ("ammo").

The length of the cartridge is indicated by the name: a .44 Magnum is longest, then a .44 Special, then .44. Longer cartridges have more powder, which means that the bullet emerges from the barrel with more spin, more power, and more speed.

There are three types of handguns. A revolver is like the old six-shooter from Western movies. It has a cylinder which holds several cartridges. As each shot is fired, the cylinder rotates and places a new cartridge in position. When all have been fired, the shooter must manually remove the casings and reload.

For semi-automatic and automatic pistols, the cartridges are held in a magazine ("clip"). After the shooter fires a shot, the recoil causes the slide to open; the shell is ejected and the next cartridge moves into position. The shooter reloads by removing the empty clip and inserting a new one. Bad guys should pick up all the brass that has been ejected before leaving the scene of the crime, especially if they have been careless about leaving fingerprints on the casings when loading the clip.

Derringers are small handguns, usually with two barrels. The shooter manually inserts a cartridge into each barrel.

### Handling firearms

How the shooter handles the firearm will be based, in part, on whether it is single-action or double-action.

"Single-action" means that the hammer must be cocked manually. For a pistol, this means pulling the slide back for the first shot.

"Double-action" means that the hammer is cocked and the shot is fired by pulling the trigger.

Amateurs are usually surprised at how hard it is to pull the slide back on a pistol. The way to do this is to grip the slide with one hand, and push the firearm down with the other. Moreover, amateurs may not realize that it is dangerous to put their hands near the slide: thumbs have been broken when the slide snaps back.

Shooters who have received safety training handle firearms with the four basic rules—ACTS—in mind:

**A Assume it is always loaded**

**C Control the muzzle**

**T Don't touch the trigger until ready to fire**

**S See it is unloaded before you hand it to anyone else.**

Amateurs often put their fingers near the trigger when picking up a handgun. Experienced shooters put the finger on the side of the barrel until it is time to fire the weapon.

Experienced people hold the handgun close to the body, so that they can deploy it quickly in any direction. This position makes it difficult for anyone else to grab the firearm.

### Firearm Preferences: Good Guys and Bad Guys

At one time, Canadian police officers carried .32s. Now, most carry 9mm or .38s. Some carry .40s, which offer more power, bigger slugs, and faster speed.

While federal law prohibits civilians from using clips with more than ten rounds, except for .22s, the police are permitted to carry larger clips. In Calgary, officers carry three fifteen-round clips, one in the handgun and two spares.

In Canada, most robberies are committed with large calibre handguns. It is not easy to obtain .25s—which were designed to be easy to conceal—or .32s.

Federal law prohibits ownership of .25s and .32s, as well as any handgun with a barrel length less than 4.5". There is an exception for anyone who legally owned these handguns prior to 1994. These owners may trade among themselves, but may not sell a "prohib" to anyone else. At the owner's death, all "prohibs" are turned over to the government. Thus, these firearms are not readily available.

The guns that are easy to obtain are shotguns. Bad guys steal them, and chop off the handle and the barrel to make the firearm easy to conceal. However, this reduces the effective range of the shotgun, since the pellets spray more widely. Sawed off shotguns are illegal in Canada.

*(continued on page 5)*

Carrying firearms

In Canada, few civilians are permitted to carry concealed weapons. Most people carrying concealed weapons are plain-clothes officers. In many parts of the U.S., permits to carry concealed weapons are fairly easy to obtain.

Many police officers use Kydex holsters, which are made of lightweight plastic and molded to the exact shape of the firearm.

Plain-clothes officers who use shoulder holsters often choose a model which places the handgun on one side, and the additional magazines on the other, so that the weight is balanced. Jackets can be tailored so that they bag out a little on the side, to avoid a bulge.

In the U.S., there is a new trend: fanny pack holsters. These are designed to hold the handgun securely, while allowing the person to remove it very quickly. In response, American police officers have adopted the policy of standing about three metres away from any fanny-pack-wearing person of interest to them, and ordering the person to place the fanny pack on the ground before the cops approach.

Forensic notes

The scoring on a bullet that has been fired comes from the twist, which is determined by the length of the barrel, and the lands and grooves inside the barrel that are designed to give the bullet spin. With current manufacturing methods, it is possible that two firearms made in the same factory will have the same scoring.

Anne Jayne

**The Calgary Herald article on  
Mystery Writers Ink is available on  
Deborah Nicholson's website**

[www.deborahnicholson.com](http://www.deborahnicholson.com)

**Cozy? Classic Whodunit? Suspense?**

**Not sure which mystery sub-genre you  
are  
>writing?**

**Check out [www.mysteryguide.com](http://www.mysteryguide.com)**

**for seventeen sub-genre descriptions.**

A convenient collection of links to various law enforcement websites (courtesy of Jack at Hardway.com)

FBI

<http://www.fbi.gov>

DEA

<http://www.usdoj.gov/dea>

SECRET SERVICE

<http://www.ustreas.gov/uss>

US MARSHALS

<http://www.usdoj.gov/marshals>

US BORDER PATROL

<http://www.cpb.gov>

TEXAS RANGERS

[http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director\\_staff/texas\\_rangers/](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director_staff/texas_rangers/)

INTERPOL

<http://www.interpol.com>

SCOTLAND YARD

<http://www.met.police.uk/>

### **Collected Wisdom: Critique Groups**

Members of the Short Mystery Fiction email list, including many well-known authors of both short and long mystery fiction, have recently had a spirited discussion on the benefits and weaknesses of feedback/critique groups. Between them all, they have tried many groups using many formats, over many years and in many cities. Their collected wisdom, distilled:

- 1) Groups work better if everyone is writing at approximately equivalent levels of competence in the basics: grammar, sentence structure, plot, character development. Don't join/start a group with someone until you've seen their work and recognize that you can both learn something from this person and possibly teach them something as well.
- 2) Groups work better if
  - a) the person whose work is being critiqued asks specific questions rather than leaving it up to each reader to decide what's important. (ie 'does this character come across as bossy, or as concerned? Why?' 'Where were you bored? What did you want to know next about so and so? Where were you confused? Where did something not hang together for you?'), and
  - b) readers will tactfully tell you other things you need to know but didn't realize you needed to ask.
- 3) Groups work better if all participants are working in the same or similar genres, and have understanding of the basic conventions of the genres. Mysteries, for example, focus heavily on plot; romances focus on the relationship between the main characters. Romantic suspense tries to walk the line between the two.
- 4) Groups work better if everyone cuts everyone else a bit of slack, and doesn't assume personal motives are behind each negative comment (sometimes they are, but not half as often as we may imagine). If you're really upset by a comment, remind yourself it is one person's opinion, and you are free to ignore it once you are confident that accepting it won't make your work stronger. *(continued next page)*

5) Groups work better if they put some time into developing a common vocabulary for discussing the writing, perhaps by developing or adapting a 'critique sheet' (there's a comprehensive one in the Ink library, in the back of 'Writing Mysteries' by Margaret Lucke, and another was mailed out with the June newsletter), and/or by jointly critiquing some published novel/short story by an author nobody is personally acquainted with.

6) Groups need to find a distribution and feedback method that works for them: you might hand out copies the meeting before, or email files the week before, or rely on everyone being able to read fast on-site (or be read aloud to); you may decide to give feedback on everyone's work at every meeting (in which case set a maximum page count per author), or allot time to one or two members' work per meeting.

The on-site-reading method is not recommended for serious feedback, as often people will feel pressured to spot the weaknesses or strengths but not feel they have time for both. They may either soft-ball or hard-ball their feedback because they haven't time to formulate their impressions both thoughtfully and tactfully. Giving readers time to really read your work and think about it both shows your confidence in your writing and lets them appreciate the subtle charms that a fast read may overlook.

7) Groups don't need to waste group time explaining every circled comma if it's marked on a copy the author will get back. Save group time for the big questions, where opinions may differ and open discussion will be of maximum help to the author.

8) It is nigh impossible to find even 3 people to do all of the above consistently, and if they do, there will be at least one of them missing for every second meeting. Try to ensure that everyone in your group has the same level of commitment, even if Life gets in the way.

9) In addition to the helpful comments and suggestions we receive from the members of the group on our own work, we benefit from the time and effort put into critiquing theirs. When I cast a sharp eye on someone else's writing, and pick up on something wrong or improbable – I may well realize I've done the same thing myself.

10) Groups DON'T work if the feedback is all negative or all positive; nobody's work is all good or all bad. Strive for balance. Find things to praise even/especially in work you don't like. Look for the positive feedback buried in a comment that may seem all-negative at first glance.

11) Groups DON'T work if the first-draft feedback is limited to superficial corrections like typos or suggested word changes. No first draft is so perfect that it could not be made stronger by tinkering with the way characters impact the reader, or by shifting a scene here or there to enhance the tension, or by correcting any areas that confuse the majority of readers.

12) Groups DON'T work if the other readers think you should rewrite your story to suit them; or if you think the other writers should accept every suggestion you make and be thankful for it.

13) Groups DON'T all work for everyone; if you're not getting useful feedback in exchange for your own efforts, and you regularly go home more frustrated than excited about the group and the project you're working on, that group is not working for you. First, try to identify what specifically is not working for you, and see if it can be changed. If the rest of the group is happy the way things are, bow out gracefully and find another group or writing buddy.

There will be contact sheets at the September and October Ink meetings for anyone interested in:

In-person writing support group

Email-based writing support group

Being matched with a writing buddy

### The Contest Collection:

**2005 CBC Literary Awards:** Put your talent to the test and enter the 2005 CBC Literary Awards. There are three categories, short story, poetry, and, new this year, creative nonfiction. Entries can be in English or French. The deadline for submissions is November 1st, 2005. To find out how to enter, visit our website at: <http://www.cbc.ca/literaryawards/> Or request a print entry form by calling us toll free at 1-877-888-6788.

**Writer's Digest.com** short fiction contest with five categories: Romance; Mystery/Crime; Sci-Fi/Fantasy; Thriller/Suspense; Horror. Entry Deadline: Tuesday, November 01, 2005. For info go to: <http://www.writersdigest.com/contests/PopFiction/>

**FreeFall Magazine**, published twice yearly by the Alexandra Writers Centre Society, announces its fall Contest. The theme is *Prairie – inner/outer landscape, denizens, coulees, flora and fauna*. Entries must be postmarked by October 1, 2005. For more information, see their website at: <http://www.alexandrawriters.org/ctest.html>

**St. Martin's Press/MALICE DOMESTIC CONTEST for the Best First Traditional Mystery Novel** : open to any professional or non-professional writer, regardless of nationality, who has never been the author of a published traditional mystery, as defined by the guidelines. All entries must be received or postmarked no later than October 15, 2004. An official entry form must accompany the submission. See the website at <http://www.minotaurbooks.com/minotaur/malice.html> or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: St. Martin's Press Malice Domestic Contest / Thomas Dunne Books /St. Martin's Press / 175 Fifth Avenue / New York, New York 10010

**And, Last and Best: The GOOD NEWS!**

[right where you'll see it every time you check the schedule]

**Eileen Coughlan's** second book, 'Grizzly Lies,' was #2 bestseller in Calgary this summer, thanks in part to being selected by **The Literary Press Group of Canada** for its summertime 'Take a Joy-Read' promotion.

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**Sandra Ruttan Einarson** has been invited by four agencies to submit portions of her manuscript, *Echoes & Dust*. One agent has asked for several chapters and another agent is currently reviewing the entire manuscript.

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**Lorna Schultz Nicholson** landed an agent in London, England.

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**Sharon Wildwind's** second mystery novel "*First Murder in Advent*" is finished and off to her agent.

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Fifth House Publishers and the Aero Space Museum of Calgary cordially invite you to the launch of **Shirlee Smith Matheson's** newest book: *Lost: True Stories of Canadian Aviation Tragedies*

**When:** Thursday, October 6 at 7:30 PM

**Where:** Aero Space Museum of Calgary • 4629 McCall Way NE, Calgary, AB T2E 8A5

For more information: (403) 250-3752 Ext. 108

**Meeting Schedule:****Second Thursdays, Old Y**

**7:00 to 9:00 p.m.** (except where noted)

**September 8, 2005**

Speaker: John Gradon, crime reporter for the Calgary Herald.

October 11, 2005

Speaker: Marie Jakober  
'Compelling Characters'

November 8, 2005

Speaker: Diane Scott  
Three-Act Structure

December 13, 2005

Murder Mystery Night

**Coming in the New Year:**

- How to get published in the crime-writing world & more hot topics from mystery conferences
- For Sale: how bookstores purchase book & what you can do to give yours an edge
- Networking
- John Howard Society: working with parolees and what causes people to re-offend

## Mystery Writers Ink Society

223 – 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW, Calgary Alberta T2R 0G9

**Mission Statement:** *Mystery Writers Ink shall support writers of mystery fiction by providing networking opportunities and by educating and informing writers about writing techniques, publishing, and marketing.*