

SISTERS IN CRIME

RAISING
WOMEN'S VOICES
FOR THIRTY YEARS





Sisters in Crime: Raising Women's Voices for Thirty Years.
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The mission of Sisters in Crime is to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers.


This report is available online at
www.sistersincrime.org/RaisingWomensVoices



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Immediate past president Leslie Budewitz interviews
Founding Mother Sara Paretsky. Watch the film at
SinC's YouTube channel <http://bit.ly/2xamR45>

IN 1986, A GROUP OF WOMEN CRIME WRITERS, frustrated with the obstacles they faced in publishing, met at Bouchercon in Baltimore to plot a path toward being treated as the equals of male writers. They gathered again in May 1987 during Edgars Week in New York to formally establish the organization, Sisters in Crime (SinC). The group formed a steering committee and held the first membership meeting at Bouchercon in 1987, establishing a tradition that continues.

This year, we celebrate the 30TH Anniversary of Sisters in Crime, an organization that has changed the lives and careers of crime fiction writers, readers, and all those who love a good mystery.

For this Publishing Summit report, we surveyed the past presidents on a range of topics, and identified themes that illustrate SinC's growth and development as an organization. Our founding mother, Sara Paretsky, gave us a typically thoughtful interview, available on our YouTube channel [<http://bit.ly/2xamR45>]. We also dug into SinC's archives to identify the phases of our development, turning points, and key projects—discussed in sidebars and noted on the timeline—in the belief that an organization that understands its past can best create its future. We hope this look at our extraordinary organization through the eyes of the extraordinary women who have led it inspires you, as it has us.

Historian and SinC member Susanna Calkins identifies three phases in SinC's growth:

- ❖ A Sisterhood is Born: Formation and organization (1986–93)
- ❖ The Growth Phase: Maintaining the vision and staying on target (1990s and early 2000s)
- ❖ A New Vision of Inclusion (2009 to the present)

SISTERS IN CRIME ~ PAST PRESIDENTS

Sara Paretsky	1987-88	Chicago IL
Nancy Pickard	1988-89	Merriam KS
Margaret Maron	1989-90	Willow Spring NC
Susan Dunlap	1990-91	Albany CA
Carolyn G. Hart	1991-92	Nichols Hills OK
P. M. Carlson	1992-93	Ithaca NY
Linda Grant	1993-94	Berkeley CA
Barbara D'Amato	1994-95	Chicago IL
Elaine Raco Chase	1995-96	Ashburn VA
Annette Meyers	1996-97	New York City
Sue Henry	1997-98	Anchorage AK
Medora Sale	1998-99	Toronto Canada
Barbara Burnett Smith	1999-2000	Austin TX
Claire Carmichael McNab	2000-01	Los Angeles CA
Eve K. Sandstrom	2001-02	Lawton OK
Kate Flora	2002-03	Concord MA
Kate Grilley	2003-04	Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands
Patricia Sprinkle	2004-05	Mableton GA
Libby Hellmann	2005-06	Northbrook IL
Rochelle Krich	2006-07	Los Angeles CA
Roberta Isleib	2007-08	Madison CT
Judy Clemens	2008-09	Ottawa OK
Marcia Talley	2009-10	Edgewater MD
Cathy Pickens	2010-11	Charlotte NC
Frankie Bailey	2011-12	Albany NY
Hank Phillippi Ryan	2012-13	West Newton MA
Laura DiSilverio	2013-14	Colorado Springs CO
Catriona McPherson	2014-15	Winters CA
Leslie Budewitz	2015-16	Bigfork MT
Diane Vallere	2016-17	Los Angeles CA



Somewhere in time—no one seems to remember when—members began referring to the past presidents as “goddesses.” It’s good to laugh at ourselves now and then!

1986

October

Women mystery
writers meet,
at Bouchercon
Baltimore

Part 1. The Sisterhood is Born: *The Early Years*

In the beginning, the primary goals were to establish camaraderie and support and address imbalances in reviews while getting the organization going. Early leaders mention several triggers: In 1986, B.J. Rahn organized the first conference on women in the mystery at Hunter College in New York City. Phyllis Whitney wrote an infamous open letter to the Mystery Writers of America, noting that in its forty-one years, only seven women had been awarded the Edgar for Best Novel. Women, Sara Paretsky (1987–88) says, wrote thirty percent of the published crime novels, but books by men received seven times the number of reviews.

In October 1986, Paretsky convened a meeting of women in the mystery community at Bouchercon in Baltimore. Twenty-six women attended. They met again twice during Edgars Week in New York in May of 1987, and formed Sisters in Crime. By the 1987 Bouchercon in Minneapolis, a steering committee had been established, with members Sara Paretsky, Nancy Pickard, Sue Dunlap, Kate Mattes, Betty Francis, and Charlotte MacLeod. Paretsky served as the first president. When the first elections were held in 1988, Pickard became the first elected president.

The biggest challenges, as Nancy Pickard (1988–89) saw them, were to “get the publishing world to take us seriously, get female writers recognition and respect equal to that accorded to male writers.” Money, contracts, and publicity were all factors.

From the beginning, Paretsky notes, the goal was to create what she terms “an inclusive organization.” Membership was not restricted to published writers; the unpublished were welcome. Readers, librarians, booksellers, and women in publishing all took an active role in building the organization.

When Pickard asked Margaret Maron (1989–90) to be her vice president, Maron says “we both agreed that Sisters should be *for* as much as possible and not *against*.” The

“We were just beginning to hear from a lot of women in fiction and in mystery in particular about ways in which that world was very much out of balance. A lot of women writers were being ignored by libraries and bookstores. Flo Kennedy, one of the great civil rights and women’s rights lawyers, said ‘Don’t agonize, organize.’ I thought, either we need to organize, or we need to button our lips.”

—SARA PARETSKY

“I don’t know what the organization is going to do, but it’s Sara Paretsky, so it’s bound to be interesting.”

—LINDA GRANT, QUOTING SUE DUNLAP

**1987
May**
SinC formed
at meetings
in NYC

**1987
October**
First membership
meeting, at
Bouchercon
Minneapolis

"It was a time of excitement, hope, expectation. We needed women writing about women to be taken seriously and supported by the publishers in a way equal to that of men."

—SUE DUNLAP

OUR MISSION & OUR VISION

1987 Mission Statement: To combat discrimination against women in the mystery field, educate publishers, and educate the general public as to the inequities in the treatment of female authors, raise the level of awareness of their contributions to the field, and promote the professional advancement of women who write mysteries.

2008 Mission Statement: The mission of Sisters in Crime is to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry.

Vision Statement: Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers.

Tagline: SinC into a Good Mystery!

president would serve as leader and spokesperson, with the vice president overseeing the committees, a structure still in place. Those tasks included creating by-laws, setting up the review monitoring project, membership, and publicity. Maron also suggested the nickname "SinC," as in "in sync," setting the overall tone.

Pat Carlson (1992–93) notes that the founders intended SinC to be a truly national organization, and actively looked for board members from across the nation. Most early presidents came from the board. When the steering committee was formally structured into a board, the immediate past president served as an advisor to the president and vice president. This structure continues, and the close relationships that form result in a natural "kitchen cabinet."

Work Hard, and Handle with Care

Early leaders knew that the organization was fragile and needed careful nurturing. "The job I felt I took on was to make sure the organization survived when it looked to me as if it might die within months," Pickard said. "I didn't want to be the visible leader at all, but I felt I had to, and that it would be cowardly not to. It was a test, to me, of my own character. I ended up being glad I did it! We did survive, obviously, which was due to the hard work and stubborn determination of many women and the quiet support of many others, women and men. Also, the world was ready for us, or at least starting to be."

Later leaders expressed a similar push-pull; writers are often introverts, energized more by solo

**1988
October**

First elections held, at
Bouchercon San Diego

**1988
Fall**

First chapter forms, in
Los Angeles

than group activities. But as Cathy Pickens (2010–11) said, “SinC had meant so much to me, in kick-starting my publishing career and in educating me, in giving me a group that rallies around each other that I couldn’t say no when invited to have maybe a little chance to help with something that had meant so much at opening the world of crime writing, for writers, and ultimately, readers.”

The work itself energized SinC’s early leaders. “My term was so early on that the major accomplishment was consolidating members into one large organization. It was really the beginning of connecting as a group, of feeling the validity and importance of our commitment to mysteries and each other,” Sue Dunlap (1990–91) says. That feeling of connection is echoed by other presidents, and remains one of the key reasons for joining SinC and for volunteering, at the national or chapter level. Pickens summed it up. “I got to see up close the power of a group of people that thinks beyond one person’s interest and supports and encourages the whole.”

That early cooperative spirit still defines SinC. Maron sent Paretzky rolls of stamps, in those days before e-mail. When a member suggested a project, Maron recalls, the steering committee suggested the member take it on. Both *Books in Print* and *Shameless Promotion for Brazen Hussies*, and many later projects, got their start this way.

As Pat Carlson said, they were wary because many members had experienced “the old-boy cliquishness of MWA,” including the problems that prompted Phyllis Whitney to write her letter in 1986. For that

2013 Mission Statement: Promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers.

Vision Statement: Serve as the voice for excellence and diversity in crime writing.

Tagline: SinC Up with Great Crime Writing!

Values Statements:

- Values are the guiding principles embraced by the SinC team.
- Promote respect and embrace diversity
- Continue our non-hierarchical tradition
- Support members along the publishing continuum
- Advocate for women crime writers
- Cultivate a positive presence within the crime writing community
- Educate and inspire
- Foster integrity and ethics
- Celebrate writing excellence

1989

- Membership reaches 400
- *Shameless Promotion for Brazen Hussies* first published



Catriona McPherson
and Celine.



Margaret Maron found this fluffy white critter in a toy shop in Raleigh, and sent her to the next president, Sue Dunlap, who was so pleased that she apparently tossed out the official seal with the packaging. Marcia Talley later named her Celine. Around her neck are key chains and mementos from her travels.

reason, the board decided not to sponsor awards, and to discourage chapters from doing so.

Board members did not agree on everything. Paretsky was deeply concerned about the prevalence on the page of violence against women, the subject of her talk at the 1986 Hunter College conference. At the May 1989 meeting, members heard from academic researchers studying the subject. Ultimately, the board decided not to sponsor additional research on the subject.

Inevitably, the founding members and early presidents faced backlash. Some men—and it must be said, some women—did not see the need for an organization focused on expanding opportunities for women. Words like “censorship” and “anti-men” were used. Nancy Pickard says the climate for women crime fiction writers “mixed great enthusiasm, hope, and support with harsh, sexist criticism and contempt.”

A 1991 article by a male book critic quoted a male publisher as calling SinC “a divisive organization.” That reaction isn’t surprising. A negative response often signals that a movement has found its target. Equality can threaten those who have benefitted from inequality. Changes can look like loss to those who’ve been on top.

*“My agenda? To survive and to spread the good word about us. ...
To get the world to see us in a positive light.”*

– NANCY PICKARD

1991
Books in Print
launches

Adding Up The Numbers

Since the beginning, SinC has understood the value of reviews to published authors, and the Review Monitoring project remains central to the mission, documenting the imbalance and advocating for changes. And we have seen change.

Judy Clemens (2008–09) served as Monitoring Project coordinator before becoming president. She noted a major discrepancy not only in the number of reviews by gender, but also in editors' openness to hearing about it.

Spreading The Word

Publicity efforts were key, focusing on the organization and on helping members learn how to promote themselves. Linda Grant (1993–94) recalls members mentoring her on self-promotion in 1988, at her first Bouchercon, triggering the realization that the entire membership would benefit by pooling their experience. Grant is one of several past presidents whose first position on the board was publicity chair.

In 1991, Sue Dunlap created the first version of *Books in Print (BIP)*, which was distributed to members, booksellers, and libraries twice a year until 2001; changes in publishing and SinC's tax status forced its discontinuation in 2009. *BIP* demonstrates the hands-on, personal approach SinC has always taken. Paretsky notes that these efforts had a demonstrable effect that benefitted publishers, booksellers, and librarians in addition to writers. As readers discovered new authors, mystery readership expanded.

Library outreach has always been critical. In addition to sending *BIP* to libraries, SinC designated a board member as library liaison. SinC began attending the American and Public Library Association annual meetings in the late 1980s, and continues to do so. The meetings are a great opportunity for individual members to meet librarians and sign books, and for the library liaison and other members to chat up the organization, including the "We Love Libraries!" grant program, started in 2010.

This illustrates another common thread. Throughout its history, SinC has responded to its members' needs and concerns by implementing initiatives. The Monitoring Project and *BIP* were two early examples. Others include "We Love Libraries!," "We Love Bookstores!," "We Love Short Stories!," and the self-publishing discussion list.

1992

Beth Wasson
hired as Executive
Secretary (later
Executive
Director)

THE MONITORING PROJECT

“We worked on the Review Project, getting percentages of books by women that were reviewed in newspapers across the country. The results were surprising, and subsequently discouraging in that they hardly improved [in those early years]”

– SUE DUNLAP

In 1986, Sandra Scoppettone, a founding SinC member, reported that the *New York Times Book Review* had not reviewed a book by a woman in months. SinC volunteers analyzed the book reviews appearing from 1985–1987 and determined the percentage of reviews of female-authored books dropped from fifteen to six per cent. A protest letter from SinC was sent to the *New York Times Book Review*. Although the letter was never acknowledged, the percentage of reviews of works by women authors rose to twenty-three percent in 1988. Seeing these results and believing the reviewing by many publications was skewed, Sisters in Crime implemented a wider-scale Monitoring Project.

Following that initial count, SinC volunteers have continued counting and tallying reviews of books by male and female authors published in a variety of media sources. At the end of each year, the review totals are analyzed on a percentage basis by individual publication and grouped by publication type. A summary of these results is published on the SinC website and in the *inSinC* quarterly. In recent years, they also have been made available to the public through media sources. The statistical results from the past thirty years demonstrate improvement in reaching parity, especially in social media and digital publications. The publications monitored have changed over time, but the importance of the Monitoring Project can be seen in the generally consistent upward trend of the percentage of women

authors reviewed in the publications tallied. The numbers SinC monitors have gathered coupled with outreach to the publications demonstrate that SinC’s informal watchdog presence has indeed made a difference in the number of reviews accorded women authors.

“Book reviews were few and far between ... the monitoring committee mapped them ... which is why we hit the libraries, the speakers bureau, and the reviewers with a lot of PR.”

– ELAINE RACO CHASE

The past presidents’ interviews highlight their consistent belief that the Monitoring Project is key to the goal of equal treatment of male and female authors.

“The number of reviews of books by women isn’t as disparate as it once was, and I do credit SinC with a major role in triggering that change.”

– LESLIE BUDEWITZ

1992

Breaking and Entering
first published

Part 2. The Growth Phase: *Maintaining the Vision and Staying on Target*

Over the years, the organization evolved as more women began writing and getting published across the crime fiction spectrum.

Chapters Emerge and Evolve

Chapters began to spring up—the first chapter was formed in Los Angeles in 1988, with Phyllis Zembler Miller as the first president. By 1992, SinC had fifteen chapters, and in the fall of 2017, fifty-two chapters. “Local chapters were a good challenge,” Pat Carlson says. Wendy Hornsby served as the first chapter liaison, “looking to find the best ways of combining the national organization’s reach and the local chapters’ connections.” As much communication migrated to the web, the Internet chapter was formed, and continued to provide a connection for many years.

Judy Clemens recalls the ongoing challenge of making sure chapters “felt part of national, and weren’t just out there as their own entity.” The question of how to best serve the chapters while also serving members who aren’t part of a chapter is always up for discussion.

“Support and Information Groups” (SIGs), were created to serve members who shared a common interest but not geography. The Writers of Color and Children’s Writers SIGs have since disbanded, but the Guppies, formed by new and unpublished members in June 1995, later became a formal chapter. (Although originally short for the nickname “the Great Unpublished,” “the Guppies” has since been formally adopted as the chapter name, and all SinC members are welcome, regardless of publication status.) It is now SinC’s largest chapter.



CHAPTERS

SinC chapters were a grassroots movement that grew out of members' desire to meet more often than twice a year at Malice Domestic and Bouchercon. Six chapters—New England, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chesapeake, and Mid-Atlantic—were recognized by 1990. Chapters blossomed in the 1990s, numbering forty-eight by 1999.

Over the years, as participation in chapters grew, a few chapters also disbanded. The German chapter chose to end its affiliation with SinC rather than admit men as members, while another chapter found SinC's goals and policies too restrictive. Some small chapters found recruiting leaders to be an insurmountable challenge. Another factor is the steady decline in members who identify solely as readers. As *inSinC* editor Molly Weston, long active in the book community as a literacy advocate, media escort, and mystery blogger, notes, the Internet has given readers new resources for finding new books and authors. As a result, SinC has lost chapters that comprise mainly readers. But chapter growth continues as members seek to join a local group of committed, enthusiastic volunteers backed by a supportive national organization.

In 2017, nearly 2000 of SinC's 3800 members belong to one or more of our fifty-two chapters. Chapters are often a member's first contact with the organization. Membership ranges from ten to more than a hundred; the Guppies, which meets primarily online, is an outlier with almost seven hundred members. Chapters provide members with networking, educational programs, and a chance to celebrate accomplishments. They can be found at book festivals; they publish anthologies and organize writing workshops. The success of SinC chapters is a tribute to the tremendous amount of effort and organization donated by chapter leaders in thirty-five states, Canada, and online.

Maintaining contact and communication with more than fifty chapters, each with their own changing boards staffed by busy writers, requires hard work and good systems. The appointment of a board member as chapter liaison, the creation of the chapter leadership listserv, and dedication of staff time have all helped facilitate communication. Authors Coalition funds (discussed below) allow National to provide grants up to \$1,000 a year for chapter events. Uses include conferences, workshops, anthology launch parties, library programs, participation in book festivals, and much more. In 2016, the board created a chapter startup checklist and began providing \$500 startup grants to new chapters, along with guidance on tax and legal issues.

Staff Add Stability

SinC's rotating board gives it continuity, while always bringing in fresh voices. Key to solidifying the organization were the 1990 election of Mary Lou Wright as treasurer and the 1992 hiring of Beth Wasson.

Though Wright was not the first treasurer, she was the longest-serving, and provided professional financial management. After five years, the board voted to make the position an appointed one, which Wright held for several more years. The treasurer is a non-voting member of the board, responsible for budgeting, reviewing finances, and preparing financial reports, and working with SinC's tax accountants. Wright's work helped SinC establish a solid financial footing.

1994
*Shameless
Promotion
for Brazen
Hussies*
updated

Hiring its first paid employee is a key point in the growth of any non-profit. In 1992, the board hired Wasson as Executive Secretary. In 2013, she was made Executive Director, managing day-to-day operations and responding to the needs of members and the board, as well as dealing with myriad details. Hank Phillippi Ryan (2012–13) calls Wasson the “knower of all knowledge ... the core of the organization.” Leslie Budewitz (2015–16) notes her ability to manage details large and small while always being in tune with SinC’s mission and values. And she loves a good mystery!

In 2010, Sarah Glass was hired as webmaven, to help navigate SinC’s move to a new website and database management system. While still keeper of the web, she now also works with the publicity liaison as Social Media Coordinator and with the chapter liaison as Chapter Relations Administrator.

Also in 2010, Molly Weston became editor of the re-christened *inSinC* quarterly. Her experience in the mystery and library communities have made her a steady presence and an important resource for the board.

Structural Changes Add Maturity

The SinC trademark was registered in 1993. Annette Meyers (1996–97) arranged for SinC’s archives to be housed at Douglass College, now part of the Special Collections and University Archives in the Alexander Library, at Rutgers University. The location is fitting, Meyers notes, because it holds many feminist archives, including those of early suffragists and other women writers.



“I am grateful for the support and friendship of Beth Wasson and Mary Lou Wright during my presidential year. They were always there when I needed them.”

– KATE GRILLEY (2003–04)



Sisters staff Molly, Beth, and Sarah at Malice 2016 with a new friend.

1995

Guppies form
as a Support &
Information Group

"I remember a few [moments] when I was ready to commit a real-life murder, but I won't go into those."

— ANONYMOUS

"I'm not sure how my telephone managed to not explode!"

— ELAINE RACO CHASE

An organization needs to reconsider itself occasionally. In 2002, Barbara D'Amato (1994–95) led a committee formed to evaluate SinC's goals and report to the board. Strategic planning sessions were held in 2008 and 2013, and another is in the planning stages.

During these years, structural changes solidified the organization and made outreach and communication easier. SinC moved to the web and email, as did chapters. Creation of national and chapter listservs led to more sharing of ideas and information, which was so key to the founders. The national listserv began in March 2006, allowing members to talk directly with each other online. Eventually, SinC began using association management software, allowing most administrative functions to be handled through the site, including renewals, event registration, and the member directory.

But there were growth pains. Along with the decision against sponsoring awards, the board prohibited anthologies, to keep an egalitarian footing and avoid internal competition. Some chapters saw anthologies as a critical opportunity to help members get published, often for the first time, and to promote the chapter, as well as the national organization. (The Sisters in Crime anthologies edited by Marilyn Wallace and published between 1989 and 1992 are unrelated to SinC.) Eventually, the board adopted the current policy, which permits anthologies and establishes guidelines for blind submissions and judging. This illustrates another hallmark of the organization:



Susan Dunlap, Linda Grant Williams, Nancy Pickard, Betty Francis (outgoing treasurer) and Dorothy Sucher (incoming treasurer) at 1989 Bouchercon in Philadelphia

1996
National
convention
held in
Houston

a willingness to re-evaluate and make changes, in response to changes in the publishing world and in members' needs, while maintaining the core values and furthering the mission.

In 1997, SinC joined the Authors Coalition of America, with help from the Authors Guild and the late Paul Aiken, who helped Meyers assemble the required information about SinC's published author members. The AC manages distributions of funds paid, largely in Europe, for international copyright distributions of members' work. Membership in AC required a change in bylaws and mission to focus on authors, in keeping with AC rules, but by that time, a large percentage of SinC's members were writers. The initial payment was far more than expected, and allowed SinC to expand programming aimed at writers. As funds drop, however, SinC will need to develop additional revenue sources and continue strong financial management.

Before the Internet, writers often had trouble finding information about our organization and about the publishing business. Now, writers are flooded with information. SinC Links, a monthly e-blast, began in 2009, sharing useful articles gathered from the web. Harkening back to the founders' concerns that the lack of information on sales hampered women writers' ability to negotiate for parity, SinC Links also includes news of recent deals, providing members info on which editors and publishers are buying what books from what agents, and for how much.



THE AUTHORS COALITION

Becoming a member of the Authors Coalition of America (AC) was a pivotal moment in SinC's growth, and an important achievement for the organization and board. The Authors Coalition was incorporated in 1994 by ten founding organizations. The mission is to create a distribution system for royalties on copyright-protected work produced by American artists and distributed abroad, by photocopies and in some countries, digitally. The system is not title-specific; that is, funds are collected and distributed to creators' groups, not individual authors. The AC comprises twenty-two groups, all national organizations with more than five hundred paying members. Funds are distributed to the groups, which must use them for the general benefit of all authors. Funds are meant to be used for programs, and cannot be used for operating or administrative expenses.

All non-profits rely on a mix of contributed and earned income, but for membership organizations, contributed income can be challenging. SinC's AC membership gives us a greater capacity to serve our members. Although funds are declining as distribution of copyright-protected work drops, and are impacted by the relative strength of the American dollar, they remain critical. Authors Coalition funds allow us to provide event grants to chapters, to create annual publishing summit reports, to present SinC into Great Writing workshops at Bouchercon, to fund the Speakers' Bureau, and to finance many other initiatives that support mystery writers. The impact of these and other programs is exponential.

1997

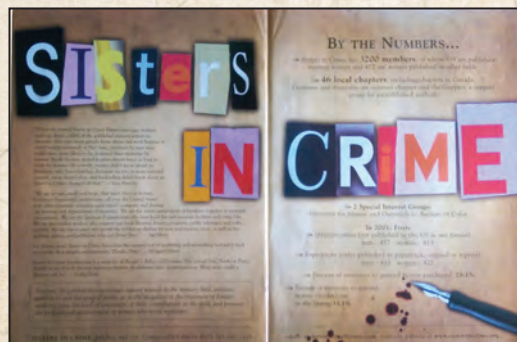
SinC joins Authors Coalition

1997

SinC
Archives
established

"It was a stressful year, but ... we were on the cusp of major changes and had to struggle through this!"

— ROBERTA ISLEIB



Under the lead of the late Barbara Burnett Smith (1999–2000), SinC surveyed writer members in 2000 on money, publicity, and other details, so authors could learn what publishers were paying and what support they were providing. Although some members did not think the project was a good idea, others believed writers needed to know.

In 2002, SinC celebrated its 15TH Anniversary by buying the cover of *Publishers' Weekly* and a four-page ad inside the mystery issue. President Eve Sandstrom (2001–02) calls seeing the cover “a thrill.”

SinC's library outreach expanded in January 2010 with the “We Love Libraries!” program, a monthly draw granting a library \$1,000. By the end of 2017, SinC will have given American libraries nearly \$100,000 to buy books. Although the libraries aren't required to buy books by SinC members, most do, giving the organization greater visibility and members greater purchases and readership. Grants are typically celebrated in an event with nearby members and the local chapter, if there is one, allowing the chapters and their members to forge a closer bond with the winning library. Grants are paid for by AC funds.

AC funds also allowed SinC to expand its programming. In 2009, we held the first SinC into Great Writing (SIGW) workshop, the day before Bouchercon. In recent years, the immediate past president has organized SIGW, giving members low-cost access to high-level education. Topics have included a day of forensics, individual speakers on craft, and an afternoon crammed with tips on writing characters different from ourselves.

As self-publishing became a viable option, additional questions and structural issues arose. As Judy Clemens said, “It was a challenge to know how to help those of our authors who were traditionally published, how to encourage authors to work toward traditional publication, and how to help authors know the benefits/downfalls of the different kinds of publishing. It felt like a real dividing line many times, and got quite contentious. I don't feel like the challenge was over by the time I left the board, but I do feel we made some inroads to understanding each other.”

1998
Breaking & Entering
published

For years, *BIP* provided booksellers and librarians the opportunity to find details on current and forthcoming mystery and crime novels for adults and children, anthologies and collections, and nonfiction and reference books by members. Roberta Isleib (2007–08) recalls that the rise of self-publishing led to discussion of whether self-published writers could appear in *BIP*. Would including them help the target audience, booksellers and librarians, or diminish the impact of *BIP*?

Tax-exempt Status Expands Opportunities

In 2011, after a three-year process, SinC finally received tax-exempt status from the IRS as a 501(c)(6) business league. This significant structural development resolved the debate over *BIP*.

SinC incorporated as a non-profit in the late 1980s, but an effort to obtain tax-exempt status failed because the application was made under the well-known 501(c)(3), as an educational charity. SinC failed the test because of its promotional efforts. As Cathy Pickens, a business lawyer, explains, charities can't promote members; it didn't matter that SinC's promotional work was egalitarian. But the influx of Authors Coalition funds forced SinC to reconsider its tax status. The 2008–09 Board authorized Pickens, then a board member, to work with an attorney who specialized in tax law for associations. SinC's advocacy mission made it a business league, under 501(c)(6). The previous denial, unfortunately, created a higher barrier for the new application, resulting in a lengthy investigation. Approval required SinC to stop all activities that could be interpreted as promoting individual members.

HAVE YOU READ SINC'S PAST PUBLISHING SUMMIT REPORTS?

SinC began issuing Publishing Summit Reports in 2007. The initial studies focused on traditional New York publishing, interviewing publishers, editors, agents, and others, and then branched out to include distributors, consolidators, new technology companies, and bookstores.

2007: *Conversations with New York Publishers*

by Roberta Isleib

2008: *New York: Publishers, Agents, and Barnes & Noble HQ*

by Nancy Martin, Judy Clemens, Jim Huang, and Roberta Isleib

2009: *The Role of Distributors and Wholesalers*

by Judy Clemens, Jim Huang, Nancy Martin and Marcia Talley

2010: *Epublishing: Amazon, Google, Apple, Smashwords*

by Marcia Talley, Cathy Pickens, Ellen Hart and Jim Huang

2011: *How Readers Find Books*

by Frankie Bailey and Cathy Pickens

2012: *The Current State of Publishing in New York*

by Frankie Bailey and Cathy Pickens

2015: *Independent Bookstores: Our Partners in Crime*

by Micki Browning, Laura DiSilverio, Barbara Fister, Jim Huang, G.M. Malliet, Nancy Martin, and Catriona McPherson

2016: *Report for Change. The 2016 SinC Publishing Summit Report on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Mystery Community*

by Catriona McPherson, Frankie Bailey, Leslie Budewitz, Barbara Fister, Julie Hennrikus, Susan Shea, and Molly Weston

Read them on the SinC website:
www.sistersincrime.org/SummitReports

2000

Survey on
money and
publicity

Chief among them was *BIP*, which Pickens calls “a SinC hallmark. It had helped SinC raise the visibility and marketability of members when women got few reviews and little notice, and gave both the organization and individual members a way to connect with libraries and bookstores.” But its usefulness was waning, as traditional catalog ordering gave way to electronic ordering, and electronic publishing grew, and it was eliminated in 2009 as part of the application process.

Tax-exempt status, while a positive structural change, forced another internal change that was uncomfortable for some members. For the first time, SinC created two membership categories, to comply with IRS requirements to distinguish business members from others. In keeping with the determination, from SinC’s beginnings, to be open to all with an interest in the mystery and crime fiction by

“I’ve never been involved with a board which works as hard as the SinC board does.”

— CATHY PICKENS

women, the categories do not depend on status as a published author. Instead, the two categories are “professional,” defined as “an author pursuing a career in mystery writing, a bookseller, a publisher, a librarian, an editor or one who has a business interest in promoting the purposes of Sisters in Crime,” and “active,” defined as one “who does not have a business interest in promoting the purposes of Sisters in Crime. This includes, but is not limited to, fans and readers.” Professional members pay higher dues. As Pickens says, “we tried to make clear that [the categories] didn’t change our culture or our inclusiveness.”

Tax-exempt status was retroactive, resulting in a large refund. The ongoing tax savings support many programs SinC could not otherwise afford to provide.

But even as SinC became “part of the landscape,” as Sue Dunlap put it, and an organization which editors advised writers to join, as Catriona McPherson (2014–15) heard when she moved to the U.S., SinC’s core message wasn’t always welcome. More than twenty years after SinC’s founding, Judy Clemens “felt a bit that we were seen as the ‘aggressor’ and the organization that wasn’t wanting to play with others.” Others didn’t want to listen “when I tried to talk about the discriminatory things I saw in the industry, and [felt about SinC like some] people view feminism—as something that they didn’t understand, so therefore didn’t like.”

Part 3. A New Vision of Inclusion

As publishing changes, the challenges both women writers and the organization face also change. Over the years, some have questioned whether the organization is still necessary. The answer is yes, as the growth in membership to 3,800 in 2017 demonstrates. SinC may be needed now more than ever, as respect for female authors and female characters has become as important as review space. The story of women in publishing mirrors that of women in other public spheres: When women pay attention, our situation improves. When we don't, it falters.

We Value All Women

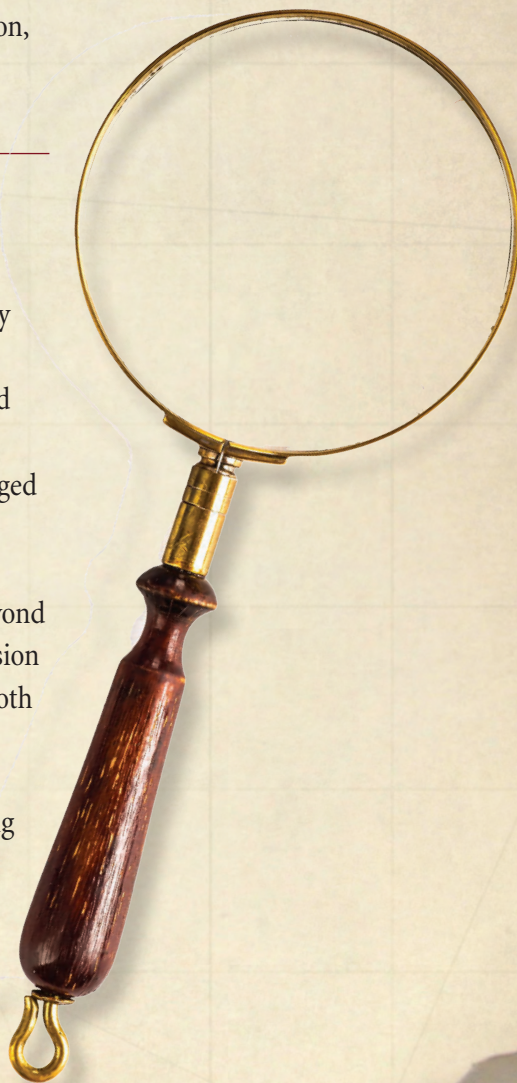
As writers, we are always responding to the world around us. In 2013, the board held a strategic planning session. Rewriting the tagline and mission statement “was surprisingly inspirational,” Hank Ryan says, “and reinforced the great sense of history and legacy—but focused on the progress women have made in the publishing and mystery world.” The session also organized a new committee system and streamlined some administrative processes. “It was an unforgettable weekend of intense conversation and philosophical and practical debate,” Ryan says, “and I think it changed the organization.”

One of those changes was the articulation of a vision that, for the first time, went beyond gender. The mission statement remains focused on women crime writers. But the vision statement—to serve as the voice for excellence and diversity in crime writing—is both an aspiration and a challenge.

As SinC's first African-American president, Frankie Bailey (2011–12) wanted to bring more authors of color into SinC, and make more connections with academic writing programs. But she found herself unsure what initiatives she could push “without seeming to have a personal agenda (in the more negative sense of the term).”

The time had clearly come for a broader vision.

“I wanted to work on wider diversity because reading what Sara Paretsky had said in the 1980s when SinC was born reminded me horribly about what I was hearing from gay writer friends and African-American and Latina friends,” Catriona McPherson said.



2002

October 21

SinC celebrates its 15TH anniversary by buying the cover of *Publishers Weekly*

OUR GRANTS

In 2014, SinC awarded the first Eleanor Taylor Bland award for an emerging writer of color. The \$1,500 grant combines SinC's goals of promoting diversity in crime fiction and promoting education and professional development. Bland, who died in 2010, was a pioneer in crime fiction. In 1992, she created one of the first female African-American police detectives, who went against the grain of stereotypes in much of U.S. popular culture, in a series that highlighted social problems of the time. Also a short story writer, she edited a collection of crime stories by African-American authors, and understood that crime fiction could broaden its appeal by opening its doors to the kinds of characters, societal situations and perspectives, and potential for creativity that authors of color would bring. The award was the creation of Libby Fischer Hellman (2005–06) and Chicago chapter member Mary Harris. The winner serves on the next year's committee, helping to develop future leadership as well.

Also in 2014, SinC began awarding academic research grants, up to \$500, for the purchase of books to support research projects that contribute to our understanding of the role of women or under represented groups in the crime fiction genre. Possibilities include research on women mystery writers, on the position of women writers in the crime fiction marketplace, or on gender, race, or ethnicity as an aspect of crime fiction.

And in 2015, SinC became the administrator for the Dorothy Cannell Guppy Scholarship, offered by an anonymous donor to honor one of the most enduring author/agent partnerships in mystery publishing. The \$1,000 scholarship allows an aspiring or published mystery author who belongs to the Guppies chapter to attend the annual Malice Domestic convention, celebrating the traditional mystery.



And she understood that as a straight, white, able-bodied woman, she could do the work without the fear of agenda that Bailey expressed.

Bailey and McPherson hoped to host a SinC conference or workshop on diversity, in publishing and on the page. But plans for the 2016 Hollywood Conference were already underway, so the topic became the focus of the 2016 SinC into Great Writing Workshop, “Writing Our Differences,” held by great synchronicity in New Orleans, perhaps the country’s most multi-cultural city. Members spoke about native cultural settings, disability in plotting, writing LGBTQ characters, and the particular challenges of writing dialogue for characters unlike ourselves, and heard from a publisher and a *New York Times* bestseller and MWA grandmaster—bringing SinC’s mission and vision to life in one too-short afternoon.

But as McPherson says, “that was just one day at Bouchercon.” She chose to focus her Publishing Summit report on diversity, hoping to identify the concerns of diverse writers and take them to the larger publishing world. She and her team quickly discovered that “the act of listening to these writers (and agents and editors) and reporting their experiences *was* the work of the summit. It had rarely, if ever, been done.” A membership survey also revealed that membership in historically disadvantaged groups is reflected in publishing experiences—African-American and LGBTQ writers find it much harder to get a publishing deal with Big Five publishers than straight white writers, male or female. In other words, the

2004
*Breaking
& Entering*
updated

situation mirrored that of thirty years ago, when SinC began.

Just as sobering was the realization that SinC's members are older and whiter than the population at large, and that a significant percentage of our membership is disabled. The team, and board, concluded that specific outreach was essential for SinC's health and growth as an organization, and to serve the needs of our members. The resulting *Report for Change* emphasizes the totality of women crime writers' experiences, and tells the story of members who are not always heard. It provides guidelines for chapters on improving access and accommodating members with disabilities, and a discussion of what it means to be an ally. The survey, report, and response all provide critical data for membership growth and program development. The work of listening to our members and helping them find an audience—publication and readership—is what started SinC 30 years ago, and it continues.

What does that work look like? Using their listserv and meetings at Malice and Bouchercon, chapter leaders have shared ideas on recruiting diverse writers, and specific ways to make chapter programs more accessible to members with visual or hearing impairments. The board has actively recruited authors for board seats and other volunteer positions to create more diversity. It also hired an outside publicist to work on increasing publicity in the national publishing media for the *Report for Change*, the Monitoring Project, and the Eleanor Taylor Bland grant.

"Unless we're looking after women of color, queer women, and women with disabilities, we're not really looking after women."

– CATRIONA MCPHERSON



2012 Summit Trip: Sandy Harding (NAL), Laura DiSilverio, Natalee Rosenstein (Berkley), and Roberta Isleib

2006

- 20TH Anniversary
- National listserv created

2006

November

"SinC Goes to Hollywood" held

A VIEW FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

SinC surveyed its members in 2011 and again in 2016.

In the 2011 survey, the most commonly-cited reason for joining SinC was “to be part of a community devoted to the mystery genre,” followed by “to support equality for women writers.” Most members (75 percent) felt progress had been made since the organization’s founding, but a large majority felt work remained for women to achieve equity in the industry. In 2016, we asked members if they felt it was getting easier or harder to get published today than in the past. The results were inconclusive. Some found it easier and some harder, but most felt it was neither easier or harder—just a changing publishing landscape.

From both surveys, we learned that a majority of our membership is 55 or older, and more than 90 percent are women. The 2016 survey examined our demographics in greater detail. We are more white than the general population, with 93 percent of our members being non-Hispanic whites—a situation reflected in the makeup of the publishing industry itself. African American membership is at 3 percent, Asian and Native Americans are at 2 percent each, and only 1 percent are Hispanic/Latino. We are closer to the national average in terms of members having disabilities (12 percent), and we have a fairly robust LGBTQ representation (6 percent).

In our 2016 survey, we learned that our published members are overall more likely to be traditionally published than self-published, with many writers involved in both kinds of publishing. Writers of color and LGBTQ writers were much more likely to self-publish their work, which suggests traditional publishers present higher barriers for writers who aren’t straight and white. Our *Report for Change* concludes with a number of suggestions for improving the situation for all.

And because excellence and diversity are closely tied, Leslie Budewitz recruited one of the speakers from the “Writing Our Differences” workshop, Greg Herren, a gay male author, to coordinate a regular column in *inSinC Quarterly*. Called “Continuing the Conversation,” it highlights the insights, experiences, and perspectives of a wide range of members. As SinC has demonstrated for thirty years, increased understanding helps us as writers, readers, and as an organization.

Education Programming Takes a Step Forward

SinC’s re-focused mission also emphasized education. The new Education Committee, led by Hank Ryan and Laura DiSilverio (2013–14), created the Speakers’ Bureau. Beginning in late 2015, SinC National funds twelve classes each year. Chapters choose speakers from a vetted list of members, all national best-selling or major award-winning authors, professional editors or agents, or experienced presenters. Every chapter has an opportunity to participate, and response has been terrific.

SinC held its first Hollywood conference, called “SinC Goes to Hollywood,” in November 2006, organized by Lisa Seidman, Mae Woods, and president Rochelle Krich. Members were offered a pitching workshop, a studio tour, and a day of panels and pitching opportunities at the Writers Guild of America. In April 2016, the Education Committee presented “Adapting to Hollywood,” organized by Seidman, Woods, and the LA Chapter, again with a pitching workshop and

2009
SinC Links
begins

opportunities, and panels and talks on many aspects of turning books into film.

Also in 2016, the board created a new board position, Education Liaison. The board continued to refine the organization's structure, creating more focused budgets, job descriptions, and publicity plans.

Member needs continue to drive new programming. At Bouchercon Raleigh in 2016, a member approached Leslie Budewitz, not twelve hours into her term, pleading with SinC to "do something" related to short stories. More conversations led to "We Love Short Stories!," a campaign of *inSinC* articles and discounted subscriptions aimed at promoting short story writing and reading. "It was completely unexpected," Budewitz said, "and members have embraced it, showing me that it was the right project at the right time."

It's a Circle

In 2016, SinC received MWA's Raven Award, recognizing outstanding achievement in the mystery field outside the realm of creative writing. Named Sara, for our founding mother, our Raven travels to Bouchercon each fall and lives with each president. It's a terrific symbol of the change in relationship between the two organizations. Frankie Bailey, who also served as Executive Vice President of MWA, noted that the working relationship with MWA had improved over time, largely because so many SinC members were also members of MWA.



"Honestly, I love SinC more than ever. And I became a goddess. What beats that?"

– LESLIE BUDEWITZ

2009

Books in Print
eliminated

2009

SIGW begins
at Bouchercon
Indianapolis

"I wish I could do it again, knowing what I know now."

– HANK PHILLIPPI RYAN

"We are better friends with other organizations now (especially MWA), and perhaps viewed in a little better light today," Judy Clemens says. In her view, SinC has benefitted not only women writers, but the industry itself.

Bailey noted the value of keeping former presidents in the organization, first as a board member while immediate past president—what Budewitz calls "the big sister" role—and as lifetime members. "This continuity," Bailey says, "has been really important to the success of SinC and to the sense of sisterhood." Ryan notes that joining the board as vice president made for "a steep learning curve," and in retrospect, wishes she had been on the board longer before becoming president.

No one ever felt they'd had time to do all they wanted. "There's a tension between wanting to do new projects and improving the projects we're already doing," as Leslie Budewitz put it. "We get lots of ideas," McPherson recalls Budewitz saying, "and there's no shame in some of them falling away. The ones that survive are the ones meant to survive."

"I deeply appreciated that SinC was founded as a feminist organization, and that its bylaws and history favor consensus management," Budewitz said. "I felt it hugely important that every board member get to speak her mind and do her job, and that when we disagreed, we kept talking until we found common ground. I can remember only one issue where we failed to do so, and rejected a motion on a tie vote."



Leslie Budewitz, Catriona McPherson, and Sara Paretsky celebrate our Raven at the 2016 Edgars

2010
"We Love Libraries!" grants program begins

2010
Breaking and Entering (3d ed) published

But the Work Isn't Done

What challenges do these experienced leaders see?

As the publishing world changes, SinC's foundation and core principles are more important than ever. The founders, Pat Carlson says, "set up such a good framework for avoiding organizational pitfalls while allowing flexibility in responding to changing times."

"The biggest challenges [now]," Carlson says, "come from the shifts in publishing itself, the economic devaluation of a writer's work in an age of e-piracy and bottom line corporations. But if any group can take it on, it's Sisters in Crime."

Several past presidents expressed concern about respect for women authors and the stories they tell. "Respect may have eclipsed reviews as the key issue, because so many women write traditional mysteries, including cozies, which are not always given the same respect as other subgenres. As in the larger literary world, crime fiction focused on women's lives, or without much blood and guts, is too often dismissed as light, escapist, or unrealistic. As if Jack Reacher weren't as much a fantasy figure as Jessica Fletcher," Leslie Budewitz says. "Continued vigilance is critical."

"Some things haven't changed that much—male writers get bigger book contracts and more press. Many women [are] still in the cozy ghetto," Roberta Isleib says. "I'm worried about the effects of Amazon on the publishing industry."

"These days, SinC is mainstream, but still quite radical."

— SARA PARETSKY

"What I think we need to keep pressing on is the idea that men tell universal stories (about men) and women—or people of color, or queer writers—tell niche stories about niche characters. Each book is particular and all books are universal."

— CATRIONA MCPHERSON

2010

Sarah Glass hired as web maven

2010

2010-11 Partner with Bowker to study of mystery readers' buying habits

LEARN MORE

This is not a complete history of Sisters in Crime. Other historical perspectives include “Sisters in Crime at the Quarter Century: Advocacy, Community, and Change,” a 2011 paper by Barbara Fister, a past SinC board member. <http://homepages.gac.edu/~fister/SinCPCA.pdf> and “A Brief History of Sisters in Crime” by Lora Roberts (2003), archived on the SinC website.

SinC’s archives are located at the Douglass College, now part of the Special Collections and University Archives in the Alexander Library, at Rutgers University. The index and some materials are available on line.

<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/sic/SinCfindingaid.shtml>

Watch video interviews with founding mother Sara Paretsky and Marcia Talley on our YouTube channel.

<http://bit.ly/2xamR45>

The complete surveys, including responses by future past presidents, will be available in SinC’s archives.

“It’s getting better,” Marcia Talley notes, but “women crime writers are still under-reviewed, unpaid, and under appreciated. Our biggest challenge remains getting respect for what we write.”

Meeting member needs remains central. Ryan stresses the importance of providing for the veteran published authors as well as the newer writers. “There’s a real possibility of SinC becoming too much an organization that attracts new writers, offers a valuable education—and then sees those members grow out of the organization.” The Speakers’ Bureau and SIGW help continue a writer’s education, of course, but in what other ways do we “honor them, focus on them, reward them, embrace them?” Busy schedules make chapter meetings harder to attend, “and the advent of everything-by-email has diminished the community feel that was always present when people meet face-to-face. [The] glue of an organization cannot hold when no one ever sees each other.”

2011
Tax-exempt
status
approved

SIN'S PUBLICATIONS

Early on, SinC's leaders realized that members were hungry for education on key topics: promotion, publishing, and perseverance. The result: three books, two revised, over twenty years, geared toward Sisters helping Sisters. These editors and contributors donated time and expertise to undertake something special that benefits the membership every day.

Shameless Promotion For Brazen Hussies

Editors: Linda Grant (1989 and 1994), and Roberta Isleib (2011)

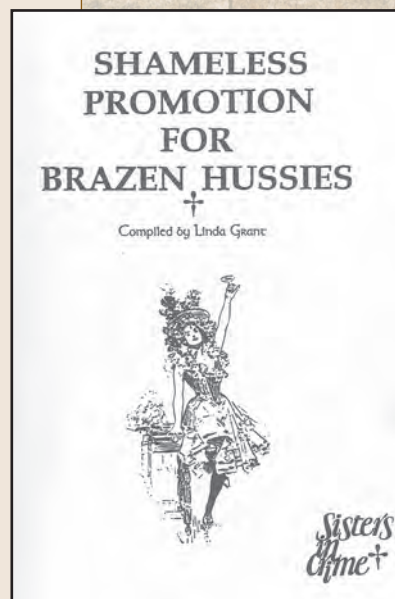
In her book, *Sisters on the Case*, celebrating the 20TH anniversary of Sisters in Crime, Sara Paretsky says of SinC's first publication, *Shameless Promotion for Brazen Hussies*, "Too many of us had been raised to think that only a brazen hussy tooted her own horn—and we knew that if we wanted people to hear about us, we were going to have to start shouting our names in public."

Linda Grant recalls a conversation with Sharyn McCrumb, who introduced her to the lifeblood of a published author: self-promotion. Grant suggested someone collect the best ideas to share the experience. She ended up being that someone. She tapped the SinC grapevine and contributions rolled in, including advice and a timeline from Paretsky, and a three-page primer from Charlotte McLeod.

Grant put the book together the old-fashioned way. "There were no fancy graphics programs, no graphics programs at all. Production was strictly cut and paste. Submissions were typed and mailed in. I cut them up and laid them out. . . . When I went to Bouchercon in Philadelphia [in 1989], I took along a file of mostly finished pages, copy submitted by Sisters, and graphic designs. I finished laying out the booklet on the table in my hotel room."

The final book was printed on a copier, compiled and stapled at a copy shop. Grant handled distribution herself. "My goal . . . was to make the booklet as useful as possible with the least expenditure of my time and members' money. I asked people to send me a check for \$5.00 to cover copying, an address label, and \$1.05 in stamps. That way all I had to do was print up copies, put them in envelopes, attached the address labels and stamps, and mail them." Grant's 1994 update of *Shameless* followed a similar path, although it grew to a fifty-page edition copied and bound by a printer.

Though quite proud of her (and her team's) efforts, Grant wonders if this publication contributed to publishers' reliance on authors to promote their own work. "As SinC members became better at promotion and more of them actively promoted their books, publishers came to expect that authors should do their own promotion. This might have happened without SinC and *Shameless*, but we probably contributed to it."



2011
*Shameless
Promotion for
Brazen Hussies*
(3d ed) published

In 2011, Roberta Isleib took on a major update. She brainstormed with SinC board members, including Nancy Martin and Marcia Talley, to find contributors with particularly strong promotional skills. “I think we ended up with a pretty good cross-section of the topics that were in the forefront at the time,” says Isleib. Within six weeks, articles and tips were in hand.

As a new writer, “SinC materials became my introduction to what it meant to be a professional and who was doing what, from a behind-the-scenes professional perspective.”

—CATHY PICKENS

While Isleib says the revised *Shameless* could have been made more widely available, especially as more writers began to choose self-publishing, the board was not thinking of *Shameless* as a book to market. “We were thinking of it as a resource for Sisters in Crime members.”

Because promotional trends come and go (and sometimes it feels as if you barely hear about one trend when another swoops in and replaces it), Isleib suggests that future updates be more fluid. “Not so sure these days that it would be a book . . . Maybe articles or YouTube videos” on the “Promoting Yourself” page of SinC’s website.” Regardless of the medium, though, sharing information on promotion remains key to SinC’s mission.

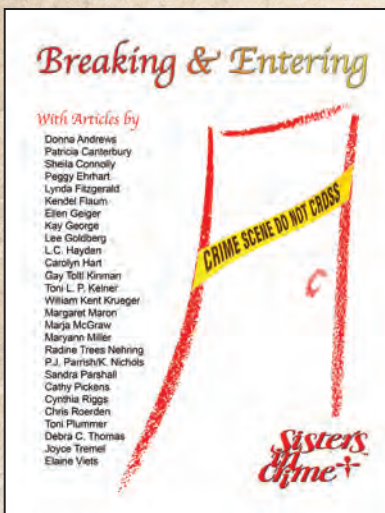
Breaking And Entering: The Road To Success

Editors: Jan Burke (1992), Denise Swanson (2004), and L.C. Hayden (2010)

Shortly after signing a contract for her first book, Jan Burke agreed to create a much-needed companion to *Shameless Promotion*. “SinC’s unpublished writers were looking for a guide. It would be similar to *Shameless*: practical, but motivational; short, but sweet.”

Burke gathered advice from published authors, agents, and friends in the SinC Community. Her sister Sandy Cvar drew “Oracle of Publishing” cartoons, with dialogue from Burke and Wendy Hornsby. As with Grant’s *Shameless*, the physical work was done by hand, on the dining room table, and by mail. “There were a few bumps along the road, but with the help of Beth Wasson and the encouragement of others, we managed to produce the first *Breaking and Entering*.”

“I don’t think the most forward-thinking of us could have envisioned how much the world of publishing would change in the ensuing years, let alone the changes in communication that were to come,” Burke says. “I’m glad that Linda called on me to create *Breaking and Entering*, so that I could in some way pay it forward a little bit. I hope members of SinC will remember to look around them at their next meeting and thank those who do all that makes SinC possible, and consider what they can do to add to that legacy.”



Denise Swanson spearheaded the 2004 update. “I took on the project because so many wonderful writers had helped me when I was first starting out and I wanted to repay their kindness,” she says.

For example, when asked to take on a revision in 2010, L.C. Hayden decided to start from scratch. She sent a wish list of info members might want or need to the membership, and sorted carefully through the many submissions. She also reached out to experts. For example, “I wanted something about getting your book onto the big or small screen. . . . When I approached Lee Goldberg, he immediately accepted, as many others did.”

At that point, self-publishing and digital e-books still divided many authors. Some authors, Hayden says, “thought that self-publishing would definitely put an end to any dreams of becoming a ‘real’ writer.” But she wanted to help her Sisters embrace the new landscape. Wrangling the topic was a challenge, but she believes that ultimately, the article helped lay the groundwork for future discussions on self-publishing.

Members loved the updated *B&E*. An update may be due, and promoted beyond SinC. “Publishing keeps changing every day. The way to do books, write them, put them together, etc.—that all changes according to technology and peoples’ needs,” Hayden adds.

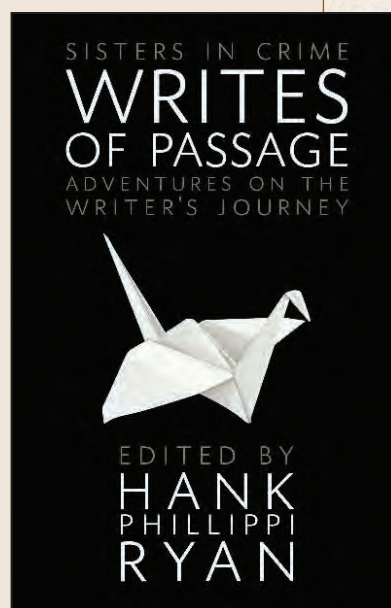
Writes Of Passage

Editor: Hank Phillippi Ryan (2014)

When Hank Phillippi Ryan became president, she wanted to leave a legacy. After discussions with Beth Wasson, what started as an idea for a mentoring project morphed into something more evergreen and valuable to authors at all stages of their careers. “I offered to do a book on the writing life, the author’s journey from beginning to end. People’s very personal experiences, not like a class or a lesson or a seminar, but one crystalline lifetime moment that changed them forever.” This epitomized her SinC journey and SinC’s pay-it-forward philosophy.

The book is arranged by phases of authors’ lives: Beginning, Learning, Belonging. “I wanted to illustrate the pitfalls and the doubts, as well as the joys and the successes,” Ryan says.

Ryan reached out to members from all regions, subgenres, and levels of experience, and invited them to contribute. With much direct communication, Ryan edited and organized the essays, with veteran



2012

SinC begins co-sponsoring the Writers' Police Academy

editor and SinC member Elaine Will Sparber as project manager. "It would have been impossible without Elaine. She did all of the administrative work, and all of the administrative emailing, and the pre-production."

The book initially took the same path to publication as previous volumes, using a self-publishing company. "It was a complete disaster . . . Terrible printing, unacceptable cover production, and delays at every turn. I still have cartons of bad copies of the book in my basement, books I refused to pay for because they were such poor quality." Ryan quickly revised the plan, asking the board to authorize a contract with a traditional publisher. "The moment Henery Press took over, the entire enterprise was fabulous. With a gorgeous new cover, and lots of promotion, and perfection in every way."

Well, except one way. Even though each contributor retained her own rights, the change in publication status confused some. Without legal guidance or precedent from previous volumes, much conversation was required, and in a "good news from the bad" move, the board developed a policy for future publications.

Ryan was finally able to share her project with the membership and the mystery world. It was a hit. *Writes of Passage* won the Triple Crown of mystery awards: Agatha, Anthony, and Macavity. "I know this book is treasured, and beloved. The essays are lovely and generous, and I am very proud of it."

The Sisters in Crime Writing Series showcases the potential to not just educate the membership, but also how to pay it forward.

2014
Writes of
Passage
published

Epilogue

While building and guiding SinC, our leaders—presidents and other board members—continued writing crime fiction. While their protagonists occasionally battle a street tough or tumble off the hood of a speeding car in the pursuit of justice, they also use their wits, determination, and problem-solving skills to fight crime—the same skills their creators use to battle discrimination, advance the recognition of women crime writers, and promote professional development.

With help from many quarters, within the membership and outside it, SinC's founders created an organization that values the needs of all its members, whether they are readers or writers. An organization that fights for diversity, and isn't afraid to look inward, find itself wanting, and model a path for change. An organization that supports and includes, that looks to expand shelf space—literally and figuratively; that encourages writers to get a seat at the table not by unseating someone else but by building a bigger table.

Our surveys and interviews highlighted the importance of our feminist origins to the work Sisters in Crime does today. While many of our current programs and projects are not specific to advancing members as women, we still look through the women-centered lens of our founders.

As Pickens says, “SinC started as an important feminist voice. But ... SinC has continued to adapt and change. That's the sign of a vital, viable organization.”

Here's to the future.

2014

Eleanor Taylor Bland award for emerging writers of color created

2014

Academic grants begin

Part 4. And What About the Future?

ALICE: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

THE CHESHIRE CAT: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

—LEWIS CARROLL, *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*

To the question, “What would you like to see SinC focus on in the future, and why?” the past presidents provide the kind of thoughtful, creative responses that remind us why they have been good stewards of Sisters in Crime. Aside from big helpings of love for the work SinC continues to do, after thirty years, to promote the careers of women crime writers, the past presidents’ answers about future directions fall into two broad categories: (1) practical suggestions about programming, and (2) an exploration of SinC’s values.

Practical Suggestions

Half the respondents mentioned different kinds of *education*, both in terms of the publishing industry and the writer’s craft, as key to SinC’s future. Teaching ourselves how to navigate the rapidly changing and often impenetrable world of book publishing is key. Some ideas for instruction:

- The phenomena of e-books and self-publishing
- The effects of Amazon on book publishing in general
- Business training/marketing mentorship for authors

Ways to provide craft and industry education:

- Cooperative and joint programming with other writers’ organizations
- A repeat of the 1996 SinC conference, perhaps attached to *Malice*, so valuable in creating individual connections
- Retreats, keeping the organization relevant to veteran writers
- Update the SinC publications *Shameless Promotion for Brazen Hussies* and *Breaking and Entering: The Road to Success*.

2015
“We Love Bookstores!”
grant program
begins

2015
SinC begins
administering
Dorothy Cannell
Guppy Scholarship

Exploration of Our Values

In this broad category, the answers tended along two lines: (1) diversity, and (2) continued relevance. These past presidents urge SinC to devote more attention to *diversity* of several sorts:

- Reaching out to writers of color, LGBTQ writers, and writers with disabilities
- Encouraging younger voices, both on and off the page
- Expanded outreach to readers
- A continued emphasis on professionalism and creating a supportive community

Greater efforts by SinC in these areas lead to greater understanding—and more compassionate storytelling.

In terms of *continued relevance*, the past presidents see the need to balance objectives and programming between attracting new writers and retaining established writers, who are among the true assets of Sisters in Crime; otherwise, we can run the risk of nurturing writers who then feel they outgrow the organization and leave. The Speakers Bureau, mentorship programs, and retreats are all ways of drawing on the experience of our “vets.” Brainstorming additional ways to be valuable to these established writers in terms of honoring their contributions to the field is strongly recommended.

*Be nimble. Be observant.
Be a team.*

—PAT CARLSON

*We have much to offer to all levels of
writers.*

—HANK PHILLIPPI RYAN

2015

Writes of Passage wins
Agatha, Anthony and
Macavity awards

2015

Speakers
Bureau begins

Part 5. Sisters Magic

At the center of the survey are three questions designed to stimulate more personal memories of the past presidents' time in office: questions about favorite moments, impact on their lives, and—as “wise elders” of what Nancy Pickard calls at its genesis, “this new and startling organization”—advice for those stepping into leadership roles, either as president or board member. So, this is the section of the report that really can't be quantified. These answers elude data and the comfortable back-up of thumbing through the Archives. What you have in this section is tender and sharp, by turns, and comes from interior places every bit as wonderful and mysterious as the novels and stories that arise from them. The heart, after all, has its own Archives. Here you will find examples of what Catriona McPherson calls Sisters Magic!

Q: What was your favorite, most fun, or most surprising moment as president, or as a board member?

All of the respondents' answers to this question speak in one way or another to the idea of *community*. Maybe that idea is implicit in organizational life, where colleagues must learn to pull together as a team to achieve goals, but there's something else at work at the heart of Sisters in Crime. Community is an ideal that sparked SinC into life thirty years ago: A belief that, in numbers, women crime writers can find professional support in a field that has historically been less than welcoming; in numbers, women crime writers have a stronger voice and can change the landscape of the industry.

Take a look at a sample of the past presidents' short answers to this question about favorite moments, and consider how each is really a comment on *community*:

- ◆ Traveling to newly formed chapters and meeting with the excited members
- ◆ Setting up the 1996 SinC convention
- ◆ The friendships and good times
- ◆ Planning and celebrating our 20TH anniversary
- ◆ Receiving the SinC “seal” at the annual membership meeting where new officers are installed
- ◆ After a hotel fire alarm went off and the building cleared, regrouping in the lobby, where board members formed a circle and finished the meeting!

2016
April

- ◆ “Adapting to Hollywood” held
- ◆ SinC receives MWA’s Raven Award

It's worth noting that five of the past presidents hailed trips to the Publishers Summit meetings as their favorite moments during their tenure: "eye-opening," "educational and motivating," "fascinating," "an unforgettable weekend of intense conversation and philosophical and practical debate." And Cathy Pickens's charming memory of "a shockingly magical array of rock-star librarians in New Orleans" reminds us all that the community of Sisters in Crime is strengthened by other hard-working, talented communities. Those points of intersection are powerful.

These four delicious anecdotes below provide a glimpse into the reality of life in the trenches as a leader of Sisters in Crime. The first three tales are straight out of Dorothy L. Sayers's playbook, when she drily noted: "Every great man has a woman behind him ... And every great woman has some man or other in front of her, tripping her up."

- ◆ *As president, it was at a meeting we had in an otherwise-empty bar, in the morning, during Edgar Week. There was one man there, a fellow who had tried to cause trouble for us by being unrelentingly negative and aggressive toward us. He kept raising his hand to talk and I kept ignoring him. He finally said, "Aren't you ever going to call on me?" I looked at him, said, "No," and we went on with our meeting. It was very satisfying. —Nancy Pickard*
- ◆ *I was amused at the letter from a prolific old-timer (male) who wrote "pulp thrillers" for decades. He called himself "the fastest typewriter in the East." He thought Sisters in Crime should give him a special award because in the days before women were able to sell many mysteries, he had published several using a female nom de plume, thus paving our way! When I stopped laughing I wrote back politely saying only that SinC gave no awards of any kind. —P.M. Carlson*
- ◆ *The highlight was accepting the Raven Award from Mystery Writers of America, honoring SinC's contributions to the field of crime fiction outside of creative writing. The party was great, but the best part was getting to represent SinC as it received one of the highest honors in the mystery field, from an organization whose members, frankly, did not support SinC's efforts when we started. —Leslie Budewitz*

Finally, there is this anecdote that speaks to what's ineffable, and defies even the best efforts of crime fiction writers to Explain It All. Isn't it nice to know that some things streak clear out of the realm of mere solution? Some mysteries abide.

- ◆ *There was a moment at a SinC breakfast in my year that sums up Sisters for me. A just-about-to-debut author, at her first Malice, was helping herself from the buffet after*

"Networking ... is probably the basis for 99.9 percent of professional success."

—EVE SANDSTROM

2016
May
"We Love Short Stories!"
campaign begins

2016
September
Report for
Change issued

the main stampede. I was out there getting more coffee. I asked about her book and she said it was a paranormal cozy. We walked into the room and I invited her to join the table I was at, where there was one free seat. Alexia Gordon, later a Lefty winner and Agatha Award nominee for Best First Novel, sat, put her coffee and plate down, spread her napkin on her lap and turned to say hello to whoever was beside her. That, as it happens, was Charlaine Harris. Sisters magic.—Catriona McPherson

“I got to see up close the power of a group of people that thinks beyond one person’s interest.”

— CATHY PICKENS

Q: What impact, if any, did serving as president have on you personally or professionally?

In terms of personal or professional impact, the respondents mention greater focus, confidence, visibility, networking, growth, belonging—and lasting friendships. A few mention their presidential year as a time of self-discovery, and each was surprised by the surfacing of latent abilities: she discovered she was a teacher, or a connector, or “a bit executive.” For all the benefits—personal or professional—of serving as a leader of Sisters in Crime, the presidential year comes with a price. Three respondents mention the tremendous amount of work it entailed, exhaustion at the end of the year, and a heavy toll on her productivity as a writer.

Two respondents answered simply that it was an honor to serve—a brief and interesting response that can’t be pigeonholed easily. Is an honor a personal impact? A professional one? Both? Something else altogether? Maybe it’s the kind of conclusion that’s reached after all the work, the sacrifice, and memorable moments, and the friendships are quietly reviewed. Elaine Raco Chase makes the point that she did not link her leadership role in SinC to any pursuit of professional benefits: “I did not use my presidency to exploit my writing or books. I used the connections I had made before SinC to expand SinC.”

In some cases, it’s difficult to tease apart the personal and the professional. Is “networking,” which appears frequently, purely a professional perk? Do “focus” and “confidence” apply only to personal growth? These overlaps are rich areas, pointing to the fact that who we are, essentially, and what we do as writers are inextricably tied.

2017
Membership
reaches
3800

2017
Self-publishing
listserv begins

Q: What advice would you offer future SinC presidents or board members?

The answers to this question fell into two broad categories:

- ◆ Paying attention to the mission of Sisters in Crime
- ◆ Seeing other Sisters as resources

There's the work, of course. Aside from the breakfasts, the camaraderie, the jovial passing of the official seal, the informal Sister meetups at a convention hotel's lobby bar, the moments of flashing eye contact with other Sisters when you know you're kindred spirits in ways that rocket beyond even the writing career goals that brought you together—before and after all those fulfilling times, there's the work. Sisters in Crime is a still-young, international arts organization with a mission that does not deviate: Support the professional lives of women crime writers. To accomplish that from one year to the next takes true and unswerving attention to many projects.

A few past presidents focus on the mission. Hank Phillippi Ryan stresses the importance of following up on productive brainstorming sessions: Nothing happens unless you can then identify goals, make decisions, and implement them. Prior experience on the SinC board is valuable for an incoming president, she notes: "I don't think anyone expects a new president to know the ropes instantly, but if the ramp up is steep, it can be daunting." And lest you linger too long in Olympian clouds, Cathy Pickens cautions: "Forget 'making your mark' or having an agenda. Listen to what requires your skills."

"Celebrate and mourn and be angry with each other. We're in this together!"

—JUDY CLEMENS

This is strong, practical advice for advancing SinC's mission—and working on that mission, to support the professional lives of women crime writers, occurs through projects of all kinds. How best to find balance between the demands of SinC's ongoing or new projects and the demands of your own Work in Progress? It begins with you. Leslie Budewitz advises scheduling your writing time and your SinC time. Time management!

But what happens when an issue crops up that exceeds your own knowledge or expertise? Half of the respondents point to that second broad category of advice to future presidents and board members: other Sisters are the first line of defense. Never hesitate to ask for help. Tap into the wisdom of your predecessors. Sisters have "a wealth of expertise" Marcia Talley notes. If you don't have an answer, someone else in

2017
SinC joins ALA's
United for Libraries

2017
30TH
Anniversary

the organization does. What a resource—and a comfort. In the daily activities of the presidency, “stress teamwork,” “be creative,” “delegate,” “keep the members in the loop,” and “listen, and consider.” As Libby Hellman notes, “Very few people have an ax to grind.”

“Go for it!”

—KATE GRILLEY

Finally, nearly thirty years after her own presidency, Nancy Pickard sums it up:

“Have fun. Be brave. Love your sisters. Don’t do too much. Don’t do too little. Don’t forget to laugh.”

If there’s a formula for Sisters Magic, this could be it.

Acknowledgments

The *Raising Our Voices* team extends thanks to the past presidents of Sisters in Crime who responded to our survey, sent us articles they'd written and notes from their personal files, hauled out photos, and spoke with us by phone. They have been as generous of time and spirit in helping us look back as when they served on the SinC Board.

Our thanks as well to Jan Burke, Denise Swanson, and L.C. Hayden for talking about the history of SinC's publications, and to former board member Barbara Fister, for making sense of the survey statistics. Barbara Fister and Lora Roberts wrote earlier pieces which, along with information gathered on the introductory pages to our digital archives, provided much needed perspective.

We are beyond grateful to Beth Wasson, not only for her administrative skills for the past twenty-five years, but also for dredging up dates, sharing her perspective, and embodying daily the SinC spirit.

Thanks to designer Gina Harrison, Gigi Pandian, SinC's Publicity Liaison, and Sarah Glass, SinC's Social Media Coordinator, for their work in making this report so beautiful and spreading the word.

Finally, SinC's strength lies in its membership. *Thank you.*

Appendix A: Publishing Summit Team



Leslie Budewitz blends her passion for food, great mysteries, and the Northwest in the Seattle Spice Shop Mysteries and the Food Lovers' Village Mysteries, set in Jewel Bay, Montana. The first author to win Agatha Awards for both fiction (Best First Novel, 2013) and nonfiction (2011), she lives, writes, and cooks in Northwest Montana. She is a board member of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of MWA and the immediate past president of Sisters in Crime.

Shelley Costa is a 2004 Edgar Award nominee for Best Short Story, and 2013 Agatha Award nominee for Best First Novel. She is the author of two mystery series, as well as short stories which have appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Blood on Their Hands*, and *The World's Finest Mystery and Crime Stories*. She teaches fiction writing at the Cleveland Institute of Art.



Susanna Calkins writes award-winning historical novels. She became fascinated with seventeenth-century England while pursuing her doctorate in British history. A former pirate, she once served on the Golden Hinde—a museum replica of Sir Frances Drake's ship—now dry docked in the Thames. She teaches at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Debra H. Goldstein is the author of several mysteries, including a forthcoming series featuring twin sisters, calling on her years of "research" as the mother of twins. Her short stories have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies including *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, *Mardi Gras Murder*, and *The Killer Wore Cranberry*. Judge Goldstein is president of the Guppies, a member of the SinC Atlanta chapter, and a member of the national SinC board, serving as monitoring project coordinator.





Julie Hennrikus is former president of SinC-NE and serves on its Crime Bake Committee. The executive director of StageSource, a service organization for theater artists and companies in the greater Boston area, has published several short mysteries. She writes the Clock Shop Mysteries as Julianne Holmes and the Theater Cop Mysteries as J.A. Hennrikus. She serves on the national SinC board as

Authors Coalition representative and Grants Coordinator.

Kendel Lynn is a Southern California native who now parks her flip-flops in Dallas. She is the author of the Elliott Lisbon series, and a nominee for the 2013 Agatha Award for Best First Novel. Kendel is the Editorial Director of Henery Press, the immediate past president of SinC North Dallas, the vice chair of Bouchercon Dallas, and the vice president of Sisters in Crime.



Karen Pullen began adult life as an engineer but twenty years in a cubicle sent her to more fun: mystery writing. She's published two novels and a short story collection, and edited an Anthony-nominated anthology. She owns a bed and breakfast in Pittsboro, North Carolina. She is the Chapter Liaison on the national board.

Molly Weston has read mysteries voraciously for more than half her lifetime. When not reading, she's often found talking about her favorite genre at monthly Molly-on-Mysteries programs. She edits *inSinC*, the Sisters in Crime quarterly and has brought countless mystery authors to the Triangle and introduced them to North Carolina readers. One of the few times in her life she's been speechless was when she learned of receiving the MWA Raven Award.



Mae Woods is a writer and producer who has also worked as a film development executive and story analyst, and has written for major entertainment companies. The co-editor of a SinC/LA anthology, her short stories were published in *Murder on Sunset Boulevard* and *Last Resort*. The co-chair of both SinC's Hollywood conferences and a past president of the LA chapter, she now works as an oral historian for the

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Appendix B: Survey of Past Presidents

Dear past president of Sisters in Crime:

This year marks the 30TH Anniversary of Sisters in Crime. As part of our celebration, I'm asking all former presidents to share their thoughts and insights, to help us better understand what was going on in the crime fiction world when SinC began, what SinC has achieved, what challenges we have faced, and where we, as an organization, should be headed in the future. As president in 2015–16, I was enormously grateful for the guidance, help, and support my predecessors offered, and I hope you'll help me now, in that same spirit. I believe this is an important initiative, and deeply appreciate your participation. The responses will be discussed, thematically, in our annual Publishing Summit report, and maintained in our archives.

If you dealt with a specific issue, such as whether to form local chapters, SinC's corporate and tax status, or the decision to discontinue *BIP*, please discuss that. If specific programs, such as joining the Authors Coalition, or starting SinC into Great Writing, the Publishing Summit, or the Speakers' Bureau occurred during your time, please tell us. Projects don't always start or end during a president's one-year term, so think broadly. And if you need help with dates or other details, or need to update your contact information, please contact me, leslie@lesliebudewitz.com, or Beth Wasson, admin@sistersincrime.org.

If you'd like a portion of your response kept confidential, please note that. And if the survey gives you any trouble, please let me know.

The survey is being conducted through SurveyMonkey. Follow this link: Here's the link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SinCPres2017> The link will allow you to save and edit your response; just remember to hit "submit" when you're finished. (Huge thanks to Susanna Calkins for her assistance.) I estimate you'll need at least an hour. Please respond by May 31, 2017.

In appreciation and sisterhood,

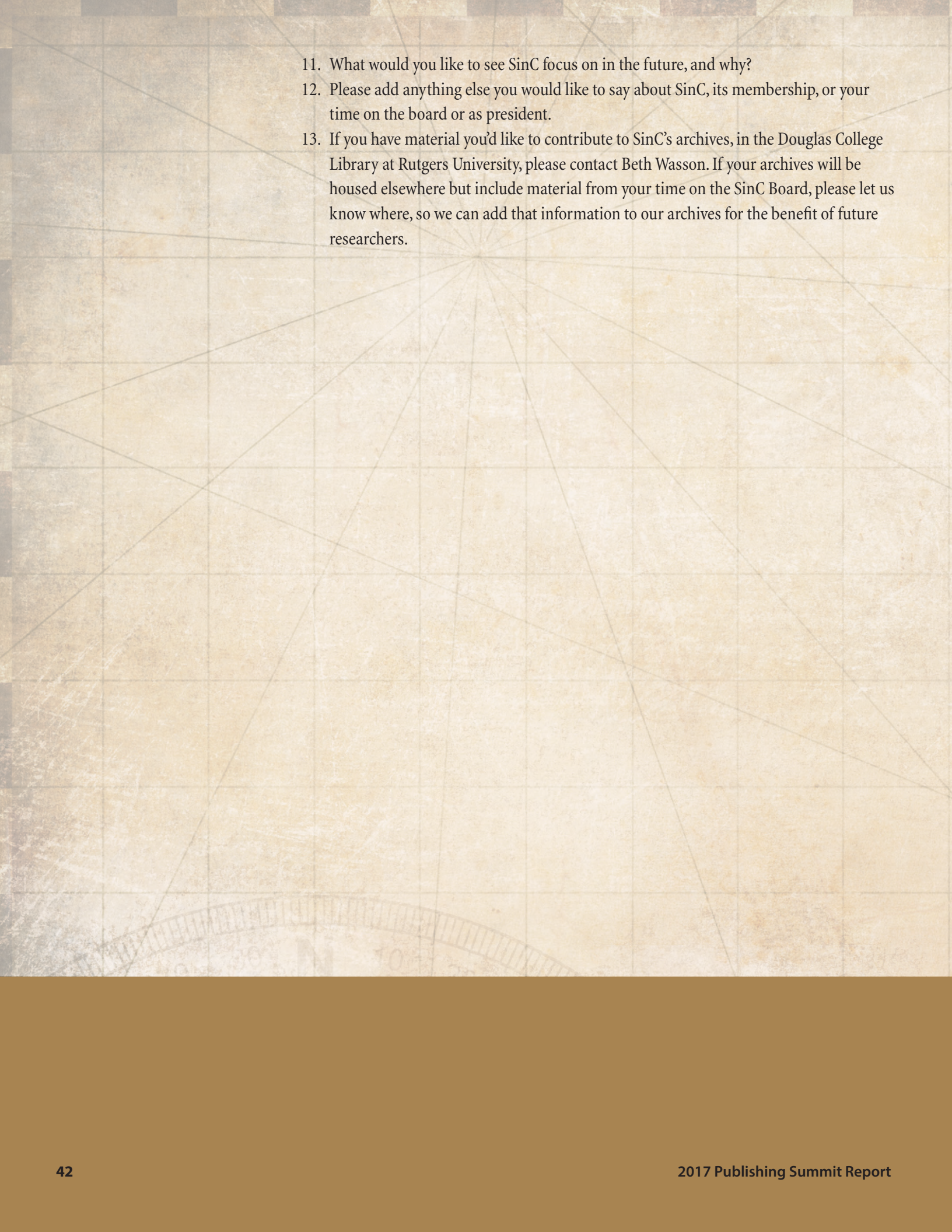
Leslie

Leslie Budewitz

Immediate past president – Sisters in Crime

This survey is intended to capture your thoughts and insights--as a former President of Sisters in Crime--to better understand where our organization began, what we have achieved, what challenges we have faced, and where we, as an organization, should be headed in the future. Responses will be presented to the membership in our annual Publishing Summit. Please answer in as much detail as you'd like. Please note any responses you wish to keep confidential. The survey may take over an hour to complete, but you do not need to complete it in one sitting. PLEASE BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME in the survey, in the first question. Thank you so much.

1. When and why did you join Sisters in Crime? What did you know about the organization and expect of it before you joined? (Please add your name to this response.)
2. If you served on the board before becoming president, please tell us in what capacity and your responsibilities. Why did you agree to become president? For example, did someone encourage you—and who? Did you take the job to tackle or complete a particular project?
3. What did you hope to accomplish or achieve during your term, and were you able to do so? (Possibilities: programs, publications, internal policies and structural changes, relationships, ongoing committees.) Did you have expectations that could not be met? Please explain.
4. What challenges or obstacles did you face during your presidency? Were you aware of those challenges before you became the president? Were you able to overcome those challenges? Please explain.
5. None of us manages the responsibilities of a position of this scope alone. Who was in your “Kitchen Cabinet,” locally or at the national level, and how did they contribute?
6. What was your favorite, most fun, or most surprising moment as president, or as a board member?
7. What impact, if any, did serving as president have on you personally or professionally?
8. What advice would you offer future SinC presidents or board members?
9. Please describe the climate for women crime fiction writers when you were on the SinC board. What did you see as the biggest needs and challenges facing women crime writers during your time on the Board? What needs and challenges do you see today?
10. During your term, how did other organizations, other writers, the publishing community, and others view Sisters in Crime? How have those perceptions changed over time?

- 
11. What would you like to see SinC focus on in the future, and why?
 12. Please add anything else you would like to say about SinC, its membership, or your time on the board or as president.
 13. If you have material you'd like to contribute to SinC's archives, in the Douglas College Library at Rutgers University, please contact Beth Wasson. If your archives will be housed elsewhere but include material from your time on the SinC Board, please let us know where, so we can add that information to our archives for the benefit of future researchers.

SINC GODDESSES

