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Capital Crime Writers is an organization of writers and editors working in the mystery field, as well as readers who love the genre.

We meet on the second Wednesday of each month to discuss writing and crime. Meetings are suspended in July and August for the summer.

Membership fees are: \$30 per year, \$15 corresponding.

Meetings are held in Room 156 at the Library and Ar-chives Canada, 395 Wel-lington Street beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Volume 21, Issue 1 - September 2008

Next Meeting — September 10, 2008

Critique Groups 101

Are you wondering how to start a critiquing group? Are critique groups are really worth the effort - and what exactly do they do, anyway? How about online critique groups, are they as good as face-to-face?

Join us at the September CCW meeting to discuss these issues and more. A list will be circulated for those interested in forming a group to leave their contact information.

Bring your questions! I look forward to seeing you in September.

Bev Panasky

Program Director

September is membership month!

We rely on our members to contribute their ideas, opinions, and knowledge so we'd be thrilled to have you back to help make this another exciting crime filled year. We don't want to nag, cajole, or pester you regarding the yearly membership fees as we think a gentle reminder will do given all the benefits membership gives you:

- Member specific website
- Monthly newsletter
- Monthly information sessions specific to crime writing
- Networking possibilities
- Free publicity for your published works and events.

You can pay the yearly \$30.00 (full membership) or \$15.00 (corresponding membership) at our September meeting by cheque or cash OR go to our website to find out how to mail your cheque in.

Thank you for your ongoing support! **Darlene Cole**

Membership Secretary

From the President-Susan Gates

The CCW Executive

President—Susan GatesChair@capitalcrimewriters.com

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Past President –
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Substitute damn every time you are inclined to write very; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be.

Mark Twain

My novel has lived in my head for over five years. This was to be the summer that I dug it out and committed it to kilobytes. But my summer of productivity turned into a season of fear. What if I can't do the story justice? What if my skill level isn't sufficient to bring it to life the way I see it play out in my head? How do other writers deal with this quandary? How does anyone ever even start writing a novel?



Thankfully, after eight years of Capital Crime Writers' membership, I have the privilege of knowing several people who have been brave enough to strike out on this road. I asked around. Nothing I heard sounded like the magic bullet I was hoping would eviscerate my fear.

But a quote did. In a newspaper article about the author Harlan Coben, he quoted E. L. Doctorow, author of *Ragtime*. "Writing [a novel] is like driving at night in the fog with just your headlights on. You can see only a little bit ahead of you, but you can make the whole journey that way."

Don't get me wrong, I hate driving in the fog and would never choose to do it when I had options. But if my life depended upon it — I could do it and succeed. Many writers will attest to the difficulty and hard work of writing but also to their unquenchable drive to do so.

Capital Crime Writers is just the place for you if this sickness, this obsession about writing afflicts you. A supportive group where you can share your weaknesses, fears, triumphs and rejections with others who understand. A group that offers speakers, panels and workshops designed to give you the information and skills to bring that crazy notion in your head to life on paper that then, with luck, re-broadcasts it in the minds of your readers.

This year marks the start of our 20th anniversary at Capital Crime Writers. It's only conjecture on my part, but I imagine our founders never imagined a membership that hovers around 70 and a list of published novelists and short story writers that can fill an entire web page. Despite the fog that surrounded their idea, they put aside any fear or trepidation and set out on this journey. Twenty years later, the fog has lifted enough for us to see how successful that trip has been.

Aspiring and published crime writers across this country covet our group, unique in Canada. It is my hope that we will take the time and space this year to recognize those who founded and nurtured Capital Crime Writers. And that their stories will inspire you to join in keeping this terrific organization alive for years to come.

I look forward to welcoming you all to the Library and Archives Canada on September 10th for the start of our new season. We'll try something a bit different to start the meeting, taking a few moments to get to know one another better in the hopes that the support aspect of CCW will blossom.

Me and my fear will be quivering to greet you.

Susan



Reading Susan's message about her being a member of the CCW for the past eight years caused me some reflection over my own time with the CCW.

I joined CCW about four years ago on a recommendation from Melanie Fogel, who declared "CCW is the best writing group in Ottawa -whether or not you want to write mystery -- it's the one to join." So I did. And my affiliation with the CCW over the past few years has proved Melanie's directive to be true.

I'd taken a writing course from Melanie -- wanted to write anecdotal travel stories as I'd had some success with that in the Vancouver Sun. But mystery was new to me. It wasn't even a genre I'd particularly read much of either.

Trying to learn how to write it is hard -- and I'm not sure if I'll ultimately end up doing so -- but what I've discovered is that it doesn't actually matter if I write mystery or not. The CCW has opened my eyes to so many different aspects of writing -- even the business side of it.

And attending a CCW meeting is great -- it's like listening to a CBC radio segment on steroids. When I tell people

From the Editor—Katherine Hobbs

outside of the group about the subjects we've covered, they are enthralled. It's great party fodder -- if your friends don't mind discussing blood spatter, psychopaths and serial killers. And who doesn't?

And now the CCW is about to celebrate 20 years in exisence. Wow!

But speaking of anniversaries, this August I attended the Edinburgh International Book Festival. It was celebrating its 25th year, with over 700 events in 17 days. Ian Rankin opened the event by interviewing a mystery guest -- who turned out to be Prime Minister Gordon Brown

Brown's literary credentials are surprisingly impressive -- he's written a short story for children and published several works of non-fiction.

Despite the rainy weather rattling the tent throughout the entire interview (which was but one of the vicious downpours, bellowing wind and flooding episodes I suffered almost every day while in Scotland), the British prime minister quoted from Mark Twain, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and his father.

Perhaps in five years we'll have our PM attend the CCW 25th event -- whoever that PM may be... isn't someone calling an election shortly?

There is a fringe theatre component to the Edinburgh festival as well, and I attended a play written by the awardwinning novelist Denise Mina, who is also the International Guest of Honour for Bloody Words 2009.

It was called A Drunk Woman Looks at The Thistle (the thistle being a euphemism for Scotland). It's a funny, smart and argumentative dissection of the idea of national Scottish identity, performed by Scottish comedienne Karen Dunbar

Denise cautioned me beforehand that I might find it too raunchy, but it either takes a lot to shock me, or maybe I just didn't understand all of the dialogue! The accents are tough, and the brilliant Karen Dunbar can do them all. At least I could understand when she said things like "I need to use the lavvy really, really badly". Because with all the rain in Scotland, I often thought of water.....

And to round out my Edinburgh festival experience (it's six festivals in one!) Paul Kelly, the Australian songwriter and musical icon was performing 60 of the songs in Mentioning this at a dinner his extensive repertoire at the Famous Speigeltent over a three night period.

And he performed them alphabetically, going from A to Dan Kelly — who adds some parts) mandolin and guitar.

What I'd give to have a memory like Paul's — that's a lot In closing, I hope this season of lyrics to remember. But what I'd also give to be able to write songs like that. Pure poetry.

And yeah it rained those three nights too — the sound of the rain falling rhythmically on the tent provided a perfect complement to Paul's acoustic rendition of Midnight Rain.

Thankfully that night, because the rain was hurling down in torrents, the busker (who'd been outside for the first two nights yelling through a megaphone to attract people to the burlesque show featuring "Kitten") was mercifully absent. As a backdrop to Paul's singing we'd had to listen to the busker shouting things like. "C'mon you bastards, buy a ticket, it's only 3 quid," and it was somewhat distracting.

And just to digress ever so slightly from the arts to talk about killers — whenever anyone found out I was from Canada they'd talk about the beheading on the Grevhound bus out West.

While on the bus from Glasgow to Scotland I found myself hoping no one would sit beside me — and examining every face that got on the bus for any hint of craziness. party, I was told, "perhaps they should be more frightened of you. You're Canadian."

All in all it's nice to have a Z accompanied by his nephew national reputation (whatever it may be) and have somegreat falsetto (he sings the girl thing that happened in Canada actually make it onto the European news.

> of The Purloined newsletter will include lots of stories from you. Please don't make me have to write long meandering discourses like this one any more than I have to! For now just be glad I've run out of room, and can't share with you details of my visit to Butterfly World. It started on a bus...

> > See you September 10!

Katherine

Forensic corner: G is for Guillotine

One weekday afternoon just prior to the 2000 Academy Awards I decided to run down to the local theatre to see a showing of The Widow of derer to redemption, the St. Pierre. It was a last minute decision and the house lights were down by the time I settled in my row. As my eyes adjusted I realized there was only one other person in the theatre. A man — sitting at the other end of the row I'd chosen.

my tears started, and by the end I was choking and sniffling loudly. Before the house lights came up my sole companion in the theatre had shot out of his seat and the theatre, leaving me to dry my eyes and blow my nose and compose myself in private.

The film is based on a true story which took place in 1849 on the island of Saint-Pierre et Miguelon. A drunk man commits a senseless murder. He is sentenced to death and must wait in the custody of the captain number of seconds, of the island's quard until a guillotine can arrive to be humane, the guillotine still seems to me such an awful way to go.) of a second???)

Anyhow, during the months of waiting, the convict becomes the protégé of the captain's wife. As she guides the murmen of the small French elite who govern the islands criticize her husband for the latitude he aives his wife.

The captain further offends the French elite with his growing defense of the murderer.

It takes months for the 'widow-maker' to arrive. Halfway through the film And what does the Captain do when the guillotine final reaches the island's shores? You have to rent this extraordinary film to find out.

> But why am I telling you this, you ask? This film presents a stark and profound contrast between the cruel machinery of human justice and the glory of Christian mercy.

And it's that cruel machinery that fascinates me. I once read that when the head is severed by a guillotine the brain remains aware for a which is a fairly significant amount of time from Martinique. (Created judging by the close performances in the Olympics this year! (9/100th's

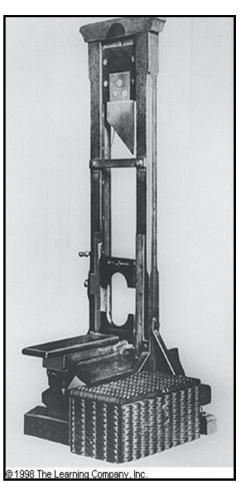
However a bit of research revealed that the person guillotined becomes unconscious very quickly and dies from shock and anoxia due to haemorrhage and loss of blood pressure - usually within less than 60 seconds.

Another article indicated that the human brain has enough oxygen stored for metabolism to persist about seven seconds after the supply is cut off. However, as in

hanging, the heart continues to beat for some time after decapitation.

However various experiments made on quillotined heads seems to show that little consciousness actually remains after two to five seconds of separation from the body.

This device is no longer used for executions, so whatever the exact amount of time it takes to die is no longer an issue. Death by quillotine may have been one of the least cruel methods of execution, but it held a high deterrent value because of its gruesome perception. Just rent The Widow of St. Pierre and see first hand!



The **guillotine** was a device used for carrying out executions by decapitation. It consists of a tall upright frame from which a heavy blade is suspended. This blade is raised with a rope and then allowed to drop, severing the victim's head from his or her body.

The device is noted for long being the main method of execution in France and for its use during the French Revolution. The guillotine also became a part of popular culture, celebrated as the people's avenger by supporters of the Revolution.

Summer Events: Robin Harlick attends local Book Club



(Back row I-r:) Irena Wosk, Marilyn Langstaff, Sara Camblin-Breault, Heather Allen;

(front row) Sarah Nugent, author Robin Harlick, Angela Dawson. Photo taken by Kimberly Rafuse.

Here is a photo of our book club (minus Kimberly who took the picture) during our 31 July meeting which was attended by **Robin Harlick**, author of *The River Runs Orange*.

We had a great evening with Robin, who was funny and engaging. She told us how she feels all her books will have some sort of an Aboriginal connection. Her fourth book is evidently set in the North and she is considering doing some research in the West as well for future novels in her Meg Harris series. She also shared some interesting insights about creative writing classes and publishers.

On behalf of all our members in Books & Pages, I want to thank Robin for coming to our book club, and to Capital Crime Writers for linking us up. July is traditionally our mystery month and we hope to have another interesting local author join us next year.

Regards,

Marilyn Langstaff

Note from the Editor: Thomas Rendell Curran was the guest author at Marilyn's book club meeting last season.

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Scene of the Crime: Wolfe Island, Ontario by Susan Gates

Date of Offence:

Saturday, August 9, 2008 Offences: Conspiracy to commit dangerous crimes: Communication for the purposes of Solicitation **Investigating Officer:** Sqt. S. Gates, Capital Crime Writers detachment **Persons of Interest:**

New York Times bestseller Joy Fielding; Humourist and thriller writer Linwood Barclay; Cuban exile and political suspense writer Jose Latour; Local dangerous dame & smartypants (with her THREE mystery series) Mary Jane Maffini, and next June's Bloody-Words honoree, mystery doyen Louise Penny

Under the cloak of a perfect summer Saturday, hidden behind the 1000 Islands Poker Run cigarette boat races and competing for ferry space with wild bands headed to the Wolfe Island Music Festival, the five suspects flaunted their trade in plain sight of the United Church crucifix and the Anglican church altar, As brazen a bunch of conspirators this officer has never seen.

Disguising themselves as former journalists, actors, financial analysts and librarians, the cabal discussed their plans for murder, political intrigue, civic and domestic unrest. Charm, foreign accents and humour were all deployed to divert the casual attendee from the deadly havoc these five have wrought.

This observer witnessed many occasions on which the unsubs communicated for the purpose of soliciting more readers and greater book sales. Methods employed were casual chats over morning coffee, readings of said crimes, elbow-rubbing at lunch, scholarly chats during a panel discussion, and pieeating at supper. The leader of the pack, Joy Fielding, even submitted to an intimate (dare I say



quasi-pornographic?) interview in full view of the other, primarily unsuspecting, witnesses.

Evidence of these crimes were rampant with books flying off the shelves of Kingston crime purveyors, As the Plot Thickens, and with the suspects ratcheting up the charisma and nonchalance to autograph their work.

2008 Grant Allen **Award Recipient** Joy Fielding is arilled by the mob after her formal interrogation by 'Det.' Orland French.



The long and the short of the criminal conspiracy: Louise Penny (right) piques demand by reading from her forthcoming novel and Mary Jane Maffini (left) heats up the proceedings reading from her 'Too Hot to Handle'.

The Crown Attorney will be dismayed to learn that this officer lost valuable evidence somewhere between the tortuously tempting Wolfe Island bakery, the windy ferry ride back to Kingston and the brickenclosed brew-pub patio that awaited this - Monitor the activity (off-duty) officer.

Recommendations for pursuing this case:

- Interview the suspect's abettors —



"organizers" and fellow scribes Violette Malan, Sue Pike and Barbara Fradkin.

- Send more members of this detachment next time the gang gathers — August 2009.
- on the website: www.sceneoftherime. ca That big cheese Peter Robinson is rumoured to be the 2009 Guest of Honour.

Author Profile: R.J. Harlick

To start off the new season, author R.J. (Robin) Harlick talks to The Purloined.

What do you love about being a writer?

A tough question. There are so many aspects I love about writing. I love the creation process, creating my own world and the people that inhabit it. I love putting my protagonist, Meg Harris, into tricky situations from which I have to figure out how to extract her. And I love fooling the reader, keeping him or her guessing the outcome until the very end. In fact I'm in a quessing game myself when writing the first draft, as I usually have no idea how a story will end until I get there. And I love playing with words. I view them as my palette. They can be mixed and shaped in an infinite number of ways to create moods, scenes, people, emotions, and of course, stories.

If you were not a writer, what would you want to be?

At this point in my life there really isn't anything else I want to be. I had a successful career in Information technology. But after more than 25 years of 12 hour days climbing the corporate ladder, I

decided enough was enough, time to do what I had always dreamed of doing, fiction writing. When I started out, I wasn't sure if it was for me, but I auickly found myself immersed in my world of words and enjoying every minute of it. Mind you there are moments, when I feel like I'm hitting my head against a brick wall, usually in the middle of a book when the words refuse to budge, let alone flow, but invariable the wall tumbles

What location has the most impact on your writing?

The great Canadian outdoors and more specifically the wilds of West Quebec, where I spend more than half my time at my cabin surrounded by endless miles of forest, lakes and rivers. So when I set out to write my first book, Death's Golden Whisper, I didn't think twice about the setting. I knew it had to be this wilderness.

What crime novel has reading? had the most influence on you?

I'm not sure that any one crime novel has had an influence on my writing. I suppose it is essentially the genre itself. I have always loved reading mystery books from the moment I picked up my first one, no doubt an Agatha Christie, so when I decided to write fiction, I automatically looked at writing a mystery.

Which fictional or nonfictional hero do you admire the most?

I am not sure that I admire him, but I find him one of the most compelling and the words pour out. and complex heroes I've ever encountered in fiction and that is Francis Crawford of Lymond. A Scotsman, he is the central character of Dorothy Dunnett's six volume Lymond Chronicles set in the 16th century. The action is driven by the intrigues of the French and Scottish courts when Mary Queen of Scots was living in France and takes the reader to the hills of Scotland, the shores of the Loire River, the snows of Tzarist Russia and the deserts of the Ottoman Empire.

What are you currently

I'm finally reaching the end of the pile of books I picked up at the various conferences I was at in the spring. Some good, some not so good and only one I couldn't finish. Some of the good ones were Anne Emery's Sign of the Cross,



Michael Rose's The Tsumani File and the six Tony Hillerman books I bought at the Malice Domestic silent auction.

If you could have dinner with any person (living or dead), who would that be?

I'm afraid I'm rather boring.... My husband, Jim, at a sumptuous 3 star restaurant in France. We've had some memorable meals during our trips to France, I wouldn't mind another.

What is your idea of misery?

Sopping wet, with rain drops dripping off my nose, in a canoe in the pouring rain a day or more from put-out, wet snow clumping on my skis rendering them unskiable with many more kilometers of trail to go, black flies in my eyes, my hair, my nose.... and the list goes on.

Summary Results of the 2008 Member Survey

We wish to thank those members who participated in the survey we conducted last June. Thirty-nine valid responses were received. This compares to 23 responses to last year's survey.

While almost everyone is writing crime fiction, the respondents are almost evenly split between published and unpublished writers, reinforcing CCW's role as a development group for aspiring, as well as established, authors.

The members had some difficulty ranking the benefits of CCW membership. As one member indicated: "I can't put them in order as all are important at different times." An analysis of the numbers places the monthly meetings as the most important benefit, slightly edging out the newsletter. The opportunity to mingle with others was cited as the third in the survey. While it is ranking benefit and the website was not far behind.

About half of the respondents attended the Christmas dinner but respondents only attended an average of 3 ½ of the remaining eight meetings during the year. As this was a concern to the from the survey in its Executive, we asked why? Only a few mem-

bers had problems with the meetings being held on Wednesday nights. Most of the absences were accounted for by illnesses, business travel, the demands of children, winter vacations and other everyday activities and occurrences. A significant number blamed last year's horrific winter weather for keeping them at home. One apologetic member said: "I'll do better from now on, Promise."

A number of members expressed a desire for greater networking opportunities and social interaction at meetings. The Executive has taken this under advisement and will see how we can build more social interaction into next year's schedule.

This summary only scratches the surface of all of the many useful suggestions and comments that we received evident from the responses that a number of things can be improved. the Executive is gratified by the overwhelming number of positive comments on the content of meetings, the newsletter and the website. The Executive will build on the constructive suggestions continuing attempt to enhance your membership experience in CCW. We look forward to seeing you in September.

Ken Gibson, Vice President CCW

Things Agents Don't Want to See in Your **Manuscript**

By Bill Newman

Writer's Digest recently published an article called Literary Agents. Here are some points it raised on the topic of what annovs agents when they read the first few chapters of manuscripts that are sent to them.

Prologues. Try to avoid them. It's better to put the back-story later in the novel.

A hook in the first chapter is a good idea, but don't make it ridiculous. "He turned the corner and saw two men arming a thermo-nuclear device."

Lengthy descriptions of the main characters. "She had long blonde hair that hung down to her shoulders,

piercing eves the colour of emerald, the creamy complexion of a newborn baby, blah, blah.

Switching POV in midparagraph is distracting. Better to wait for a scene change.

A first chapter with nothing relevant in it is a waste of reading time.

Starting with a scene that turns out to be a dream is a no-no.

Spending the first chapter telling the killer's story. The main character should be introduced first. The hero/ heroine should not be too perfect. Character flaws help create con-

Inauthentic dialogue will throw off the reader. Make it sound real. Ha! Easier said than done.

Some writers feel the need to give the reader an information dump in the first few chapters. It should be interspersed with the story and the character development.

Hope that helps. Writers Digest also published a list of agents currently seeking writers.

Blog Book Tours: Part 1 — Setting up the blog

So your book has been published. Now it's time for a book-signing tour. Is your publisher going to pay for that? Or maybe your book advance can cover the costs? No? Why not think about a blog book tour, or a virtual book tour, instead?

This can not only save you time and money, but may just reach a larger and more interested audience via the internet. And after all, you can tour from the comfort of your home, help save the environment (think about those rising fuel costs!) and your tour lives on forever online. All you need to make it successful is a good blog and some creative planning.

So how do you get started, you ask? Well, first you'll need to set up your own blog. You can get a free blog page at:

www.blogger.com/start or

http://wordpress.com

Then, you need to start writing -- but you have to make it a good blog. Remember, you're a writer. Make sure the content is indicative of what you do for a living. Show off — make it exciting. After all you want your readers to keep coming

back. And don't forget to post regularly -- at least once of twice a week. Don't write in your blog, "sorry I'm not posting more often." Just post!

Driving traffic to your blog

Make sure your blog has a site meter and **book-marks** for your fans to stay in touch easily. There are plenty of them, like social bookmarking websites Digg and Del.ico.us — which are an excellent method of gaining large quantities of traffic in a short space of time.

Bookmark: StumbleUpon

StumbleUpon has over a million users and generally refers a lower (but still significant) amount of traffic at a more consistent rate, whereas sites like Digg can send thousands of hits in the space of a few days for promoted stories which have made the frontpage.

StumbleUpon works by downloading a toolbar which allows you to rate a website as thumbs up or down and view relevant websites (by clicking Stumble!) based on your own preferences.

To begin receiving traffic from StumbleUpon you must have at least one of your webpages submitted.

You can add this yourself by downloading the toolbar (pictured below) and browsing to your website. Selecting the thumbs up 'I like it!' button will add this page to StumbleUpon.

Here is some information taken from the StumbleUpon site on how to improve traffic to your blog:

Rating websites
Get involved in the community and rate some of the websites you visit.

That helps your website appear for Stumble-Upon users who have similar interests to your own, and therefore they will be more likely to rate your site with a thumbs up! The more votes you can get in a short period of time the more traffic you will receive.

Adding friends

By adding friends you will increase the amount of users who will see your newly added webpages,

making them more likely to give your site the thumbs up.

Submit new webpages
Once you have created a
new blog post, and submitted the URL to StumbleUpon using the toolbar,
promote your own website. It helps to increase
the amount of your webpages present in the
StumbleUpon database
and improve the likelihood of your site being
'stumbled upon'.

<u>Carefully selecting topic</u> titles

It is important to categorise webpages carefully to ensure that it will be displayed to relevant users.

Adding multiple tags
By using multiple tags
you can help to attract a
wide range of users and
by keeping these as relevant to the content as
possible will help to keep
the traffic targeted.

Bookmark: Digg

Digg is a place for people to discover and share content from anywhere on the web. Everything on Digg — from news to videos to images to Podcasts, is submitted by people on Digg.

(continued on page 10)



Bill Newman's novel **Venture** is available in e-book format on Sept 10, and in print next January. The genre is romance/crime. It can be obtained from http://www.bookstrand.com/



Synopsis:

In her hometown, Sydney, Australia, biochemist and DNA expert, Lydia meets John, a British scientist working on a top-secret navy project. After an intense couple of weeks together, he is called back home, and learns he has been fired. Lydia persuades John to return to Sydney to develop a radical new invention of his. She helps him get his invention working. Life seems sweet until she discovers she must contend with his former girlfriend and a shady Russian outfit posing as venture capitalists who are trying to steal the invention. When the Russians play hardball, Lydia realizes she must literally put her life on the line to save everything they have built for themselves. Venture is a fast paced and often humorous romance story set against the background of industrial espionage.

A reader's comments: "Bill, I just gave in to your incredible storytelling ability. I loved the humour between John and Lydia and I found the characters fully rounded and really compelling. And I loved the credible feelings of a 'just beginning' couple (each dealing with others' pressure to marry and jealousies

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Blog Book Tours: Part 1 — Setting up your blog

(Continued from page 9)

Once something is submitted, other people see it and Digg what they like best. If your submission receives enough Diggs, it is promoted to the front page for the millions of visitors to see.

Digg is all about sharing and discovery, so there are conversations that happens around the content. Digg is committed to giving every piece of content on the web an equal shot at being the next big thing.

Next month: This feature continues — the next step in taking your book blog tour is Cyber-schmoozing.

