

The Purloined Newsletter

A CAPITAL CRIME WRITERS PUBLICATION



Inside this issue:

Message from the President Ken Gibson	2
From the Editor Katherine Hobbs	3
NanoWrimo: Fifty thousand ways to learn to be a writer	4
Oh, the pain of it all...	5
The Capital Crime Writers Short Story Contest for the Audrey Jessup Award	7
Report on the December Christ- mas Event with Maureen Jennings	8
The final bits & pieces	10

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 Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Volume 22, Issue 5—January 2010

Come on out to the CCW meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2010 for a how-to on self editing with special guest: Laura Paquet

Laura Paquet holds a journalism degree from Carleton University. After stints as a business reporter and magazine editor, she became a full-time freelance writer in 1992 and formed a communications firm called Cornerstone Word Company.

In addition to her free lance work, Laura has written three non-fiction books, six novels and two novellas. She's written for more than 80 magazines and newspapers in Canada, the U.S. and Europe, including *National Geographic Traveler*, *Islands*, *enRoute*, *Chatelaine* and *The Ottawa Citizen*.

She also edits fiction and non-fiction, and on the 14th she is going to share with us how to do some razor sharp editing of our own work.



CCW Executive

President—Ken Gibson
president@capitalcrimewriters

VP— Michael Murphy
vp@capitalcrimewriters

**Past President –
Brenda Chapman**
pastpresident
@capitalcrimewriters

**Treasurer –
Rachel Pitcher**
Treasurer@
capitalcrimewriters

**Programs –
Thomas Curran, Alex Brett
& Wynn Quon**
programsworkshops@
capitalcrimewriters

**Membership Secretary:
Darlene Cole**
membership@
capitalcrimewriters

**Newsletter Editor/
Public Relations –**
Katherine Hobbs
613-263-0069
newsletter@
capitalcrimewriters;
pr@capitalcrimewriters

**Webmaster –
Guy Mercier**
webmaster@
capitalcrimewriters

www.capitalcrimewriters.com

**"There are three rules for
writing the novel. Unfortu-
nately, no one knows what
they are."**

M. Somerset Maughan

Message from the President - Ken Gibson

For the second year in a row, the CCW December dinner marked the arrival of winter in Ottawa. About 40 members, spouses and friends made their way through the snow to Robbie's Restaurant on St. Laurent Blvd. for this year's event. The opportunity to see Maureen Jennings, creator of Inspector Murdoch, no doubt motivated them to take on the inclement weather.

As it happens, Maureen almost didn't make it, and it had nothing to do with the weather. We learned on the eve of the dinner, that Maureen's eye doctor had discovered something that might require emergency surgery. As a result of this news, members of your executive went to work developing back-up plans for the evening's entertainment. Emails flew fast and furious. Some of our published authors were contacted about sitting on a hastily formed panel to discuss matters yet to be determined. In the end, Maureen's eye problem was not as serious as originally feared and she advised that she would be coming after all.

I discovered all of this when I got home from work late that afternoon. I just had to read the final email to discover that nothing had changed. Then I was able to delete the preceding 25 emails without reading them. One of the benefits of being away from the computer for a while. I was, however, impressed with how quickly the executive got on top of the situation and went to work to ensure a successful evening. A special thanks to Tom Curran, the principal organizer of the evening, for his calm and organized handling of the situation.

Maureen's presentation was warm and humorous. She focussed on the rewards and tribulations of seeing one's creation move from



**Ken Gibson with December's special guest
Maureen Jennings**

the written page to the small screen - and the loss of control that goes with it. We greatly appreciate Maureen and her husband, Iden, for coming all the way from Toronto in a snow storm to join us for our December dinner. Fortunately, they came by train, and nothing went off the rails. We did have a dogsled on call, just in case.

We were also pleased that Julius Majerczyk, the Book Editor with Ottawa Citizen, was able to join us as a special guest for the evening. It gave him an opportunity to meet some of our authors.

Our Vice-President, Michael Murphy, announced the Audrey Jessup short story contest at the dinner. You will find further details in this newsletter. If you look out the window, April 1 may seem a long time away, but it isn't really, so you may want to use some downtime over the holidays to start writing.

On behalf of the CCW executive, we want to wish you all the best for the holiday season, and we look forward to seeing you at our next meeting on January 13 at Library and Archives Canada.

Ken Gibson



From the Editor, Katherine Hobbs

Just before Christmas a friend emailed me for some career advice. In October she'd quit her job in the beauty industry because of the extensive cross-country travel involved. Her husband owns a business in Toronto and she was based out of the Western US. Burned out with all the travelling she decided to leave. She loved representing the company on the Shopping Channel, and she was good at it — but that was about it for the plus side of constantly being away from home.

On her last day of work she applied for a job with a start up company in the Eastern US. Two months later they offered her the job. It would give her the best title and salary she'd ever had, but she'd written something else in her email that stuck in my mind, and that was: "I can take the travel for another year, but not more."

So I wrote her with a few ideas on options (like moving the family to the States to avoid the travel.) But the overriding comment I made was, "if you can only deal with this job for a year, and then you are going to quit because you don't want to travel anymore after that — what exactly are you planning to do in a year that you can't do right now?"

Meanwhile, thinking through this exercise with her made me sit up and take note of my own life. "What the heck am I doing right now that keeps me putting off my dream to write a book?" If I can give my friend advice then surely I can follow my own counsel!

Reading Wynn Quon's article on NanoWrimo (pages 3 and 4) was another wake-up call for following one's dreams. Wynn's experience was not only enlightening as far as the process and rewards — but somehow he made writing 50,000 words in a month sound fun. NanoWrimo now must go on the life list I write up every New Years Eve —and sometimes end up following :).

But that isn't my only reason for adding this goal to my life list. It was incredibly motivating to listen to Maureen Jennings at the Christmas din-

ner as she discussed her success in getting her books on TV. It reminded me of a CBC radio interview I heard recently on Q with Morgan Freeman. He grew up loving movies, but the movie stars of the day were all white men like Cary Grant, at least until Sidney Poitier came along. When host Jian Ghomeshi asked Freeman if the fact all the major stars were white made him think he couldn't achieve his goal of acting, Freeman was adamant in replying, "Absolutely not. I thought I could be just like Cary Grant."

So, why can't I be just like Maureen Jennings?

To quote from Peter Finch in the film *Network*, "I'm as mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore." I'm my own biggest roadblock and I've had it with my own procrastination! Sigh... now it looks like I have quite a bit of writing work to do in 2010!

But I'll need constant motivation. Part of that will be attending *Bloody Words* at the Richmond Street Hilton in Toronto from May 28-30, 2010. It's the 10th anniversary, and there is a great line-up planned—Linwood Barclay is MC, Giles Blunt a GOH, and from South Africa, author Deon Meyer will attend.

In addition, as part of the birthday celebrations, BW is doing an article in the program book about the **10 years of Bloody Words**. Whether you're an old hand and have attended BW since 1999, or last year in Ottawa was your first time, **BW want to hear about your memories of past bloody cons.**

Did you meet anyone special at a BW? Learn something important? Have a funny or silly experience? Sign your first book at BW? Meet your first author? Get drunk and embarrass yourself completely?

Send in your anecdotes about Bloody Words past. Limit is 150 words. Send your story to publications@bloodywords2010.com. They welcome photos too.

If you are going to BW there is also going to be a special birthday party on the Friday evening! For more information, and to register go to: www.bloodywords2010.com.

As December wanes and the days begin to grow longer as we move into January, I wish everyone a healthy and prosperous year in 2010. May you achieve all your hopes, wishes, and dreams.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Katherine

NANOWRIMO: Fifty thousand ways to learn to be a writer

by Wynn Quon

It's a cross between a write-a-thon and a block party! It's a hurricane of literary madness! It's **Nanowrimo**!

For the uninitiated, that's the **NAtional NOvel WRItting Month**, or "Nano" for short. Every November, thousands of intrepid writers around the world try to crank out a 50,000 word novel. The idea was the brainchild of Chris Baty (suspiciously close to 'batty') who along with twenty friends held the first Nano in 1999. Now ten years later, it's become a phenomenon.

This is my third year of Nano'ing. Last year I flamed out at 25,000 words. My slow-moving barge of a story ran aground and I couldn't get it unstuck in time. This year I'm back with a vengeance. My resolution is that I'm gonna finish come hell or high water. Come to think of it, high water would be just the thing for refloating marooned barges.

Why, you may ask, do people sign up for Nano? For many it's the challenge and sheer fun. For me, it's a way of writing without the voice of the inner critic. If you want to win, there's no time for doubt. Sure there'll be plenty of passages where the writing isn't pretty,

but there'll also be luminous out-of-the-blue moments that make it all worthwhile.

Nanowrimo is a hands-on way of discovering a basic writer's truth -- that to become a better writer you have to write.

Over the years **Nanowrimo** organizers have come up with a slew of ways to keep everyone motivated. There's the kickoff dinner and the victory celebration dinner. There are write-ins at cafés and restaurants, including the infamous twelve-hour marathon of doom!

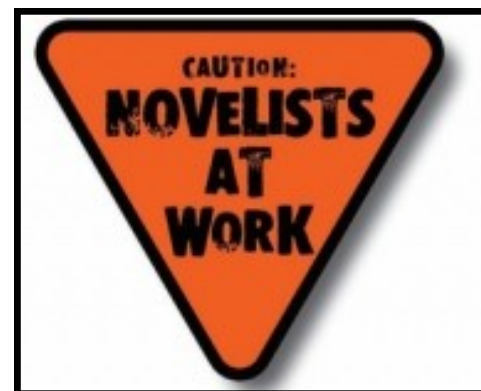
I have no plot. I start typing regardless..

Then there's the pep talks that are sent to every Nano participant. Yes, you too can get an e-mail from the likes of Neil Gaiman, Sue Grafton, Sara Gruen, Tom Robbins or Piers Anthony.

The gun goes off midnight November 1st. I'm up early that day and sit myself down at the keyboard. I have a couple of characters to accompany my female assassin: A pair of twins who kidnap celebrity pets and an evil television executive who juices the ratings for his reality crime show by committing nefarious crimes.

I have no plot.

I start typing regardless. The narrator begins with a description of Helen Skel, the heroine-assassin but suddenly he digresses into a commentary on the contrast between the heroes of old, like the Greek and Norse gods and our own current-day heroes. Don't the latter seem boring in contrast? But is



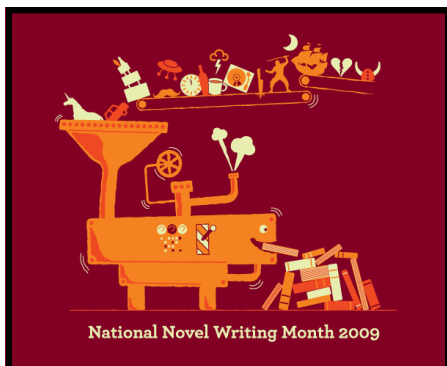
that too hasty a conclusion? The narrator pontificates: How would ancient heroes deal with the daunting challenges of the modern world? Would Odin have the

patience to stand in line while an impudent shopper tries to put more than sixteen items through the express checkout lane? And what about Thor, god of thunder and lightning. Is he a net contributor to climate change?

Surprisingly, the narrator exhausts his shallow knowledge of Norse mythology and goes back to the proper work of describing our heroine, her background and yes, her amazing hideout in a small fishing village in Newfoundland.

And so it goes. During the first week, the assassin plot line thickens. Whenever I get stuck I immediately add new characters or start a whole new storyline. The kidnapper twins are lazing around so I parachute them into medieval England and watch what happens.

On one particularly bad day, burnout rears its ugly head. So I start a children's story about a boy who has trouble with his favorite blue blanket. Strangely enough the boy's tale takes off and I write almost thirty pages.



NANOWRIMO: Fifty thousand ways to learn to be a writer. Cont'd

The days roll by quickly. I'm making sure to crank out at least 1667 words daily. That's the magic number which, repeated thirty times will result in exactly 50,000 words by month-end. I attend a couple of write-ins. A dozen fellow writers show up. In the company of other frenzied lunatics, racking up the word count is a lot easier.

Helen Skel is starting to flesh out into someone believable as she traipses across Europe and the Ural Mountains. She discovers that the television executive is responsible for the grisly death of a young human rights worker in Chechnya. It's the final straw in her moral conversion.

Incredibly, the last two weeks fly by and I'm still on track. On Nov 29th, I figure I'll sprint to the finish line. I set myself a goal of 2500 words. This will take me past 50,500 words to infinite glory! Such a goal requires a meaningful incentive. I go to the Zen Kitchen on Somerset Street with my laptop. If I manage to make it before closing time, I will

order a king-size dessert (Mexican chocolate cake with fresh berry sauce!)

I arrive at the restaurant at 7:30 pm and am able to grab a tiny table that's just big enough for my laptop. I order a drink, take a breath and put the pedal to the metal.

At 8:20 pm, I get a cramp in my arm. I have to stop for a break. A thousand words to go. At 9:00 pm, the plot stalls. I'm used to this by now. I quickly introduce a one-legged ninja into the story and we're back on track in no time.

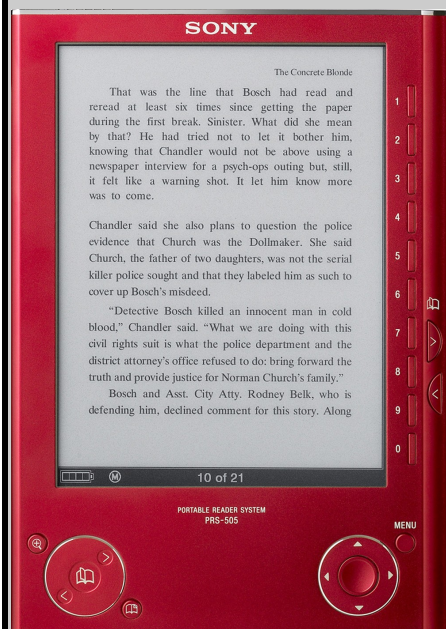
At 9:50 pm the kidnapper twins exhausted from their Arthurian jousting tournament, return to their own century. The boy reconciles with his blue blanket. The assassin finds the evil television executive in her cross-hairs.

She squeezes the trigger.

The chocolate cake is delicious.

Kill the Kindle?

If publishing can survive libraries, used book stores, paperback swaps, eBay, Amazon's used marketplace, et cetera, can it survive the ebook?



Sure music is more ubiquitous than reading, so making comparisons between them may be like comparing apples to oranges, but do you see the demand for a Sony eReader or a Kindle ever rivaling that of an iPod?

The Sony Reader allows free access to over one million books on Google, as well as allowing you to borrow ebooks from *libraries*. (Kindle does not allow for either of these options.)

But will the convenience of paying for a paperback, even a used one, outweigh any desire to download a book for free that can only be read on a computer?

Write in, and let The Purloined know your thoughts on the ebook. We'll try and publish as many of your views as possible in the next issue.

Nanowrimo Facts and Figures:

Where to go to sign up: nanowrimo.org. It's all free though they do ask for donations.

Nano in Ottawa gets more popular every year. 362 Ottawa writers signed up, half of them are newcomers.

Total number of Nano participants worldwide: 167,150

Total number of words written in the month of November:
2,427,190,537 words

You can find the pep talks from famous authors on the website. One of this year's best is from cartoonist Lynda Barry. It's charming and thoughtful, you can find it here here: <http://www.nanowrimo.org/files/main/Lynda%20Barry%20pep%20talk.pdf>



Oh, the pain of it all...

By Katherine Hobbs

Neck Strain

Neck strain is a tear of a muscle or tendon. Your neck is surrounded by small muscles, that run close to the vertebrae, and larger muscles, that make up the visible

muscles of the neck. Neck strain most often occurs when the head and neck are forcibly moved as in whiplash injuries — but it can happen as a result of an awkward sleeping position or poor posture while working at a computer.

The symptoms? Simple. Pain in your neck! When the neck muscles go into spasm you feel hard, tight muscles in your neck that are tender to the touch and cause pain when you move your head.

Strong, supple neck muscles are the best way to prevent neck strain. If you are in front of a computer all day it's important to take breaks and relax your neck muscles and the best way you can do this is with exercise.

Neck exercises should be performed slowly. You need to be very relaxed so shrug your shoulders up and down a few times so they are limp and free of tension. Your breathing should be slow and deep.

Exercise #1: Sit in a comfortable position with your spine straight and eyes closed. Lower your head, bringing your chin toward your chest. Inhale and raise your head, tilt it back as far as possible, keeping your mouth closed. Gently open your mouth to allow the head to tilt back a little farther. Close your mouth, exhale and return your head to

your chest. Do not stretch to the point of pain.

Exercise #2: With your head held straight, inhale and lower your head sideways, bringing the right ear towards the right shoulder. Exhale and return your head to center. Inhale and lower the left ear toward the left shoulder. Exhale and return your head to center. Hold the stretch for about 10 to 20 seconds. Don't overstretch. Perform two to three times on each side.

Eye Strain

Eye strain occurs when you overuse your eye muscles. Any muscle held in one position too long can strain.

When you concentrate on a task such as reading, working at the computer or watching television for any length of time, your inner eye muscles tighten up causing your eyes to get irritated, dry and uncomfortable.

Computer users tend to stare at a glowing screen without blinking for much longer periods than people who use typewriters. This is why many people using computers experience dry eye problems. In addition, computer screens reflect a great deal of glare - from windows, overhead lights and even your own bright clothing. That coupled with the fact that many computer users sit practically face-to-face with the monitor can cause strain.

Tip #1: Keep your face at least 20 inches from the screen. Place all materials you are working with at the same distance as the screen. This reduces strain of your eyes and neck.

Tip #2: To give your eyes a chance to refocus, take a five-minute break once or twice an hour.

Tip #3: Practice some simple exercises, such as:

A) Sit in a comfortable position with your spine straight, your head level and unmoving and breathe normally throughout the exercises. Begin with your eyes gazing straight ahead. Look up to the right as far as possible, then swing your gaze to up left as far as possible and return to center. Next from center look right as far as possible, then left as far as possible and return to center. From center look down right as far as possible, then to down left as far as possible and return to center. Repeat each

three times and return to center. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and rest.

B) Starting with your gaze at down right, swing to up right and back three times. Then go to down center, swing your gaze up center and back three times. Finish by starting your gaze at down left and swinging it up left three times. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, release, and rest.

This time shift your eyes from upper right to lower left and back three times, then from upper left to lower right and back three times. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax.

3. Lastly, rub your hands briskly together for several moments till they feel warm, then cover your closed eyes with your warm palms. Slide your hands downward and caress your eyelids with the tips of your fingers. Don't apply any pressure.





The 2010 Capital Crime Writers Short Story Contest

Deadline to enter is Thursday, April 1, 2010

**Contest is open to all residents of the National Capital Region
aged 18+ and to all members of the Capital Crime Writers.**

SUBMISSIONS: Stories should be:

- Original, unpublished fiction featuring crime
- No more than 3500 words
- In English
- Typed double-spaced on white paper (two-sided is fine)

Submissions that identify the author in the pages of the story will be rejected.

Identifying information must only be found on a separate cover page, which must include:

- Your name, mailing address, email address and telephone number
- Story title and an accurate word count

There is a limit of one submission per author.

You must mail or deliver 3 hard copies of your story submission to:

The Audrey Jessup Contest
1452 Portal St.
Ottawa, Ont.
K1H 6B7
ENTRY FEES:

Please include a cheque payable to "Capital Crime Writers" for:

- \$10.00 entry fee **ONLY** or
- \$25.00 if you wish to also receive a written critique of your work.

To take advantage of the critiquing service, please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope so that we are able to return your manuscript.

PRIZES:

A short list of 5 stories will be announced on April 22, 2010. Prizes will be awarded at a Capital Crime Writers event in June, 2010 with winners asked to read from their stories. Those who have submitted a story will be notified of the time and place of each event by e-mail; notices will also be posted at: www.CapitalCrimeWriters.com

1st Prize:	\$150.00
2nd Prize:	\$75.00
3rd Prize:	\$50.00

(Cash prizes courtesy of Prime Crime books)

Judging will be blind & conducted by a panel of three knowledgeable volunteers.

December 9th Holiday Dinner Event with Maureen Jennings

A writer goes into a cemetery.

"Can I help you?" says the man in the office.

"Yes," the writer answers. "I'm looking for a plot."

A big laugh ensued for this, the third original joke written and related to us by Maureen Jennings, author of nine novels which have inspired both TV movies and a television series. And it's exactly what Maureen talked to us about at December's meeting — giving us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of what is involved in getting your written work lifted from the page to the screen.

The process for Jennings started in 1999 when her book was taken down to Shaftesbury. One year later she received a call asking, "are your books still available for option?" Three years later they began to work on the movie of the week. It was finally released in 2003.

Money is always an issue and affects how quickly things move for the movies, as well as affecting the locations for shooting. Although Jennings's novels are set in Victorian Toronto they were shot in Winnipeg to save money.

Then came the TV series. A team of writers developed the story lines for six programs in the first season. As a creative consultant Jennings had no input until the stories were done. "It was a struggle at first," Jennings said. "I have an opinion, but no vote." She laughed as she recounted some of the changes. "They took out all the Victorian language as they thought it would alienate people."

Jennings talked about how strange it was to give up your character. "Everyone feels they know Murdoch better than you do," she says. When they announced they were going to make his mother an alcoholic, she said, "but she wasn't!" She

had the same response to Murdoch being given a half brother he never knew about. "I didn't either," she quipped. One thing she found very strange was talking to "Murdoch" the actor. Meeting her character face-to-face.

There were 110 people involved in making the show. From wardrobe to set design and everything in between — including the author of the series taking on a small acting role.

It's a bit of a tradition that the writer has a cameo. Jennings was a cook and she had no lines. She laughed as she recounted the feedback from her performance. "You did a beautiful job," said the director. "It was so understated."

To sum up the evening Jennings read from the autobiography Memories and Adventures by Arthur Conan Doyle—a effective passage that made us all want to pick up the book by the infamous author of Sherlock Holmes.



The Ottawa Citizen book editor,
Julius Majerczyk



Maureen Jennings with Thomas Rendell Curran

December 9th CCW Holiday Dinner Event, Scenes from the evening with Maureen Jennings



Maureen Jennings at Robbie's on December 9, 2009 for the CCW holiday dinner meeting.

When the waiter arrived at my elbow I assumed he was a new CCW member, so I stuck out my hand to shake his and said, "Hello I'm Katherine Hobbs." This was much to the amusement of my compatriots at the table, who'd previously ordered and knew exactly who he was. Anyway, he was very polite and told me his name was Doug before bringing me some much-needed wine. Here he is later on making a fancy coffee. Maureen Jennings' husband Iden Ford was trying to capture the blue flame of burning alcohol in this photo, which didn't quite work out, but he managed to capture a few members in the background nonetheless—Denis St. Jean, Gerry Jones, Gail MacDonald and Michael Murphy.



2010 (23rd Annual) National Capital Writing Contest (NCWC)

Deadline for submissions is **Friday, February 5, 2010**

ADULT CATEGORIES

Short Story (max. 2500 words)

Poetry (max. 3 poems per entry packet, each poem not exceeding 60 lines, structured or free verse; *not* haiku)

YOUTH CATEGORY (for writers 13-17 years of age)

Short Story (max. 2000 words)

PRIZES (in each category)

1st Prize: \$500 sponsored by Canadian Authors Association-NCR

2nd Prize: \$250 sponsored by the Ottawa Citizen

3rd Prize: \$100 sponsored by Collected Works Bookstore and Coffeebar

For details, and before submitting, check the National Capital Writing Contest guidelines on:
www.canauthors-ottawa.org

www.capitalcrimewriters.com
Writing wrongs since 1988

Canadian Author's Association January meeting:

Copyright Law, the Internet and the Writer

SPEAKER: Dr. Michael Geist, Canada Research Chair, Internet and E-commerce Law, University of Ottawa. Dr. Geist is an internationally syndicated columnist on technology law issues with regular columns appearing in the Toronto Star, Ottawa Citizen, and the BBC.

DATE: Tuesday, January 12

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Ottawa Public Library, Main Br. Auditorium, 120 Metcalfe at Laurier

How will copyright law and new technologies protect, and promote, a writer's work? Dr. Michael Geist will discuss the latest proposed revisions to copyright law with respect to the Internet, and their potential effects on writers.

Note: Guest Fee of \$10 may apply for non-members.