

SINC EVENTS: GOOD FOR US AND GOOD FOR YOU!

By Roberta Isleib

In the fall of 2005, SinC executive secretary Beth Wasson suggested I organize a breakfast for librarians that would coincide with the Public Library Association convention in Boston and help celebrate our 20th anniversary. Frankly, I thought she was out of her mind.

Sure, I was happy to support SinC activities by sending bookmarks to trade show booths and taking a turn signing books at the New England Independent Booksellers Association (NEIBA) booth. But I certainly didn't have the experience to plan a meal for 100 librarians, long distance. Beth assured me that dozens of SinC volunteers have taken on jobs like this. So with her gentle nudging and firm support, I found a restaurant, chose a menu, and planned a program. And with the help of our library liaison, Doris Ann Norris, and our PR maven, Kathy Wall, we spread the word. The event was a sell-out—a huge hit that included a panel on the New England crime scene (to go with the Boston setting,) and 25 additional SinC authors schmoozing with tables of librarians. Not only did individual authors make connections with librarians, our organization was highlighted as a friendly, supportive, smart group of women (and a few men too) who happen to write great books. After breakfast, we trooped over to our convention booth and saw more Sisters in action. The tiny Sisters in Crime booth was positively humming with authors, all promoting SinC under the eagle eye of Doris Ann Norris.

Across the country, many SinC members have gotten involved with similar projects to publicize our organization and our members. These projects are great for Sisters in Crime, and good for our authors too.

Pamela Cable, a member of the High Point, NC chapter, organized the SinC booth at the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance (SIBA) convention in 2006. Said Pam: “Events like this one are a HUGE deal for SinC. Sisters in Crime steals the show every year. Booksellers flock to the table to get the next signed book from one of our authors. The booth this past year absolutely rocked. The decorations were great, but the authors were better—fabulous and upbeat all day. I love the sisterhood of this organization, and I think every SinC member should experience a trade show like SIBA at some point in her career.”

Patti Sprinkle, who has also organized the SIBA booth, agrees: “The Sisters in Crime booth built an enormous amount of goodwill for SinC in the region; we always had lines of booksellers waiting to get signed copies of our author's books and seldom had many copies of BIP or other promo items left over. We also made it a point to try and stay in the same hotel or, on Jekyll Island, in a big rented house, and had a big party on Saturday night, so we built a lot of camaraderie among the members who participated. And when the event was in Atlanta and the Atlanta SINC chapter helped with the party, our local members got to meet national author members they would not otherwise have met.”

Sandy Tooley, who worked on both Book Expo 2004 and the ALA conference in 2005, described big benefits to both the organization and to her as an author. “Many of the librarians who knew of SinC were eager to see our booth

and specifically sought us out. We had an excellent location for each show, handed out a lot of information on joining SinC to those who were unfamiliar with our organization. Literature from authors was also available to those attending. We had drawings at the ALA show and collected over 600 names for our mailing list.

“For the ALA, I had a new release so I was able to hand out advanced reading copies to librarians interested in mysteries. I was also able to set up library appearances with local libraries. For the BookExpo, the Traditional Signing area allowed me to sign and give away 100 copies of my titles which brought a lot of new readers to my series.”

SinC treasurer Kathy Wall summarized the advantage of participating in an event this way: “I think it's the best thing an author can do to promote her own work—interact directly with the folks who sell their books.” Willetta Heising, who has organized the SinC booth at the Great Lakes Booksellers Association, agrees. “The annual trade shows held by regional booksellers associations during September and October offer great promotional opportunities for authors with new fall or winter books. Authors should know which bookseller region they live in (<http://www.bookweb.org/orgs/286.html>.) If they're smart, they'll learn which booksellers are the most influential in their region and get to know them. What better way to start than participating in a Sisters in Crime event?”

In 2006, Sisters in Crime provided funds to eleven events and sent materials to many more. If there is a book fair, bookseller or library trade show, or

other book event near you that doesn't have a Sisters in Crime presence, let us help you get one rolling! Contact the national office to talk it over

NUTS AND BOLTS

1. Grants are available for many kinds of events and at varying levels of support. An application for funds and new guidelines for SinC events are listed at <http://www.sistersincrime.org/grants.html>
2. SinC pays for various kinds of expenses such as booth rental fees, badges, and advertising. Funds must be applied for annually.
3. Events must be open to all SinC members, without exception.
4. The national office supports regional events by providing money, materials, advice, SinC banners, and patient guidance from Beth Wasson.
5. SinC members arrange for booth space, organize authors and members to people the booth, collect promotional materials from authors for give-aways, arrange for badges, set up and tear down displays.
6. Current Sisters in Crime-sponsored events can be found in the newsletter and on our website: <http://www.sistersincrime.org/events/>