

# HOTSHOTS!

[sinc-heartoftexas.com](http://sinc-heartoftexas.com)



## EVERYTHING PROMOTION

K.P. Gresham showed participants in our free August workshop how to create a publicity sheet. A simple but brilliant idea to make every author's life easier. The single document can be accessed whenever an author is asked for information about themselves and their books.

Noreen Cedeno showed attendees useful tools on the national Sisters in Crime website and Kelly Cochran shared sites where authors and readers can connect.

Click for details, [Past Meetings](#).

## ALAMO SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG DEMONSTRATION

Join us **September 8<sup>th</sup>** at 2:00pm in the Laura Bush Community Library. Sarah Stone from Alamo Search and Rescue will join us with her dog, Merci. We will learn about search and rescue, types of dogs used, and the types of cases they are called to work on by law enforcement. Sarah will also give a live demonstration!

Afterwards, members are invited to The Grove to spend time with Sarah. RSVP [KPGresham@aol.com](mailto:KPGresham@aol.com)

For more information about Sarah and Alamo Search and Rescue, visit them at [www.alamoareasar.org](http://www.alamoareasar.org)!

## CONTENTS

Meet Our Members – 2

The Indie Author - 4

Writing an Academic Mystery – 6

What's Happening & Opportunities - 8

---

### OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Noreen Cedeno – President

K. P. Gresham – Vice President

Fran Paino -Secretary

Dave Ciambrone – Treasurer

Kelly Cochran –  
Communications Chair



---

A pleasure to  
meet you!

# Meet Our Members



## **Francine Paino aka F. Della Notte**

Secretary  
Sisters in Crime, Heart of Texas Chapter

Fran Paino has had a varied career in the business of dance, working for many dance companies, schools and notables, including Artistic Directors Ali Pourfarrok, and the late Kaleria Fedicheva. Always considered a storyteller, in 2011, she decided it was time to set her stories on paper. Her passion for ballet, opera, and history fuel much of her writing because they are the fertile fields of conflicts and ghosts.

In 2018, under the pen name F. Della Notte, she created a new series, *The Housekeeper Mysteries*. The first book, *I'm Going to Kill that Cat*, was published in January 2018. The second, *Catwalk Dead* will be out in October 2019.

In addition to crime, mysteries, and paranormal tales, Fran also writes children's books. The second edition of her award-winning *Mama's Little Lady, A Special Pony*, is set for publication in September, in preparation for October's National Bullying Prevention Month.

A native New Yorker and Texas transplant, she loves learning about her new State and enjoys melding the cultures and characteristics of two cities: New York and Austin, where she and her husband now live, under the watchful and loving eyes of their cat, Miss Millie.

Ms. Paino is an active member of the Writers' League of Texas, Sisters in Crime, Heart of Texas Chapter, and Austin Mystery Writers. She is an alumna of Austin's Citizen's Police Academy.

*continued*

---

## Why do you like mysteries?

What isn't a mystery? There is mystery in everything. We wake up each morning, not knowing what precisely the day will hold. Sure, there are certain activities we know and plan for, but the spice is encountering the unexpected – both good and bad. I love taking the unanticipated and weaving it into stories of conflicts, ranging from internal to the consequences of past events that come back to haunt the present.

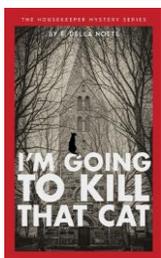
## How many times do you rewrite your first paragraph?

That first paragraph is so important. They frequently set the tone of the entire book. I rewrite them as many times as it takes to satisfy me that the reader will be compelled to read on. That doesn't mean someone must die or face a horrible crisis in the first paragraph. It does mean that I try to set a mood, a sense of anticipation — something coming or about to happen.

## Do you have something you would like to say to aspiring writers?

To aspiring writers, I say the same thing I've always said to aspiring dancers and singers. Do it from your heart! BUT – never stop learning your craft. Learn from other writers, writing courses, organizations. Learn from your mistakes: things you will never allow to happen again. Learn from your successes: what made something work? Always strive to improve.

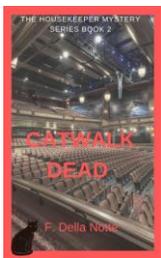
## F. Della Notte's Books



*I'm Going to Kill that Cat* is the first book in the Housekeeper Mystery Series.

Father Melvyn Kronkey, and his intellectual equal and housekeeper, Mrs. B. are pitted against an evil plot. Pulled into a quagmire of greed, envy, and revenge, they must defend the innocent and protect the reputation of the church.

*I'm Going to Kill that Cat* is currently available on [Amazon](#).



**COMING SOON:** *Catwalk Dead* is the second book in the Housekeeper Mystery Series

During a rehearsal for John's new *Macbeth* ballet, the dead body of the stage manager drops to the stage from a spot bridge. The police investigate but find no leads, other than theater superstitions. Weeks later, John's wife, Lisa, is struck by a prop that breaks loose from its fly. The theater is shut down. To save John, from ruin, and worse, Mrs. B. and Father Kronkey begin their own investigation and discover a dangerous vendetta that threatens everyone in its path. Can Mrs. B. and Father Melvyn piece together a puzzle of murder, betrayal, and crime shrouded in superstition, before it's too late? *Catwalk Dead* is threaded with humorous moments provided by quirky characters and a pet cat with an uncanny sense of humans.

*Catwalk Dead* will be available in October 2019.

---

# THE INDIE AUTHOR

BY KELLY COCHRAN

As an independent author, you are responsible for all aspects surrounding getting your book to market and believe me there are a lot! One very important role to getting your book ready is that of the editor. A traditionally published author has the publisher's editors to assist them, but an Indie author has no editor unless they hire one. Hiring your own editor is great choice if you can afford it, but if not, don't fret as there are less expensive options available.

***Editing – Don't be known as the Indie author with an error on every page.***

Even big publishing houses release books with errors, but it doesn't mean that we as Indie authors need to accept the inevitability of errors as our standard of practice. To do the best job possible in editing your book, it is important to understand the different types of editing.

**Substantive Editing** – This is often also referred to as content or developmental editing. It is done at a high level and its intent is to make sure the story makes sense. This type of editing checks for story structure, pacing, character consistency, and more.

You cannot perform this type of editing on your own work. You are blind to your work's weaknesses and will tend to mentally fill in the gaps when they do not appear on paper.

**Line Editing** – The process of line editing can be seen as substantive on a micro level. The person doing this type of editing looks at your work line by line, making edits to improve sentence clarity, identify usage inconsistencies, and working to create better flow.

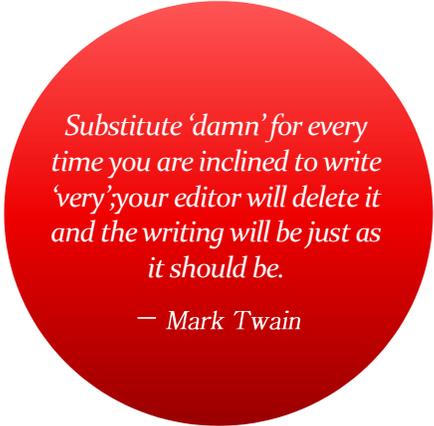
**Copy Editing** – The nuts and bolts of your work are checked during

this type of editing. This type of editing is usually done after revisions based on results of the substantive editing step. A copy editor will go line by line focusing on grammar and punctuation instead of writing style. For non-fiction works this may include fact checking.

**Proofreading** – Technically this is not editing because it does not involve editorial type input, but it is just as important. The goal of the proofreader is to ensure a clean body of work. Proofreading is the last run through your manuscript, identifying typographical errors, missing words, overlooked spelling, grammar, punctuation, and consistency errors.

## Editing without an Editor

Indie authors dream of having an editor, but for most an editor is not in the budget. But, if you publish your first book with lots of errors, readers will let you know and usually will not read your second. So, what do you do? The good news is there are steps you can take to ensure you publish a quality book.



*Substitute 'damn' for 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

*continued*

---

## THE INDIE AUTHOR, CONTINUED

**Reading Out Loud** – Helps find missing words, punctuation issues, and other mistakes. Microsoft Word's Speak command can read text out loud for you.

**Reading Backwards** – Going from the last page to the first page forces you to keep your mind off the story. Makes it easier to catch typos, incorrect word usage, grammar and punctuation problems.

**Critique Groups** – Good critique groups help with substantive editing by identifying plot holes, undeveloped characters, and inconsistencies. A search of the Internet can provide ideas of how to start or find a critique group. The Sisters in Crime Guppy chapter offers online critique groups.

**Alpha/Beta Readers** – The first person to read your book with the intent to provide feedback is your Alpha reader. Reach out to friends or family to do this for you. Be specific about what you want them to look for when they are reading and what type of feedback you are expecting. Do you want both substantive and copy-editing feedback? Provide your Alpha reader with your final draft. Working through pages of half sentences, obvious typos, and character name changes can be discouraging.

The person to read what you consider your publication ready work is called a Beta reader. This should be someone other than

your Alpha reader, so you can get a fresh perspective. Their purpose is to act as an average reader and along the way, provide feedback on any issues they might find including errors that might have been introduced during the revision process. As with critique groups, a search of the Internet can provide information on paid and unpaid Beta readers.

**Editing Software** – Can't afford an editor? Editing software is great place to turn. Even if you have an editor, using software can help you send the cleanest version of your book to your editor.

A search of the Internet will turn up products like Grammarly, Smartedit, and others. I use AutoCrit. The software is designed for fiction writers. Writers can adjust the editing guidance provided by selecting their genre (e.g. mystery, sci-fi).

AutoCrit checks pacing, dialogue, grammar, repetition, passive voice, adverbs, filler words, POV consistency, showing vs. telling, and more. You can even compare your writing to best-selling authors.

The first time I used this software, I discovered I was the "Queen of Was." AutoCrit politely advised me to remove a large number from my writing. I went crazy and tried to remove the recommended number. My voice disappeared. Lesson? You don't have to implement all the recommendations!

### Five Editing Tips



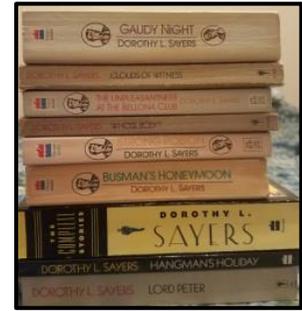
1. Split long sentences in two
2. Discard filler words (e.g. just, very, really)
3. Lose the -ly words (e.g. quickly, suddenly)
4. Cut pronouns - avoid starting sentences with pronouns
5. Replace dialogue tags with action or nothing at all

---

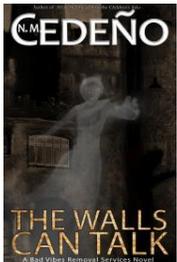
# WRITING AN ACADEMIC MYSTERY

BY N. M. CEDEÑO

Academic mysteries are a timeless subgenre in crime fiction. Found on almost every list of the best mysteries ever written, Dorothy Sayer's *Gaudy Night* is the epitome of British academic mysteries and is one of my favorite books. Several British mystery series that have been adapted for television are set in the university towns of Oxford or Cambridge with students and professors as witnesses and suspects. Academic mysteries fill a popular niche in the world of crime fiction.



While I enjoy academic mysteries, I never planned to write one. Instead, I fell into it. When I was creating my Bad Vibes Removal Services paranormal mystery series and fleshing out my characters, I blithely imagined my main character Lea to be a graduate student in history who happened to have the ability to see ghosts and the ability to sense the emotional history of a location. Since I made her a grad student, I assigned Lea to my own alma mater, the University of Texas at Austin.



After writing several short stories in the series, I decided to write a novel. That first novel, [The Walls Can Talk](#), was set in an Irish castle that had been moved to central Texas, bringing its resident ghost with it. In that book, I developed a subplot involving Lea's graduate work. When I sat down to write the second book in the series, *Degrees of Deceit*, I realized that I wanted to extend Lea's story line and that the natural setting would be the campus at U.T. Austin. Suddenly, I was writing an academic mystery.

Three quarters of the way into the first draft, a question popped into my head. I realized that most of the books set at real universities were British. I wondered, why don't American authors set books at real academic institutions? I consulted Google, looking for an answer. And, I discovered that authors in the United States don't set mysteries at known universities for fear of being sued for "disparaging" the universities.

Which led me to think, British authors do it all the time. Don't British authors fear being sued?

Back to Google. And, yes, British authors fear being sued too. But British authors have a simple solution to avoid legal action because British universities are organized differently than American universities. Oxford, for example, currently has 39 colleges that are separate entities within the larger university. British authors avoid getting sued by creating fictional colleges. This allows British authors to use the well-known buildings, landscapes, and towns around the real universities while centering the plot in a fake college. Dorothy Sayers even placed a hefty author's note at the beginning of *Gaudy Night* explaining how she did this.

Lacking this option, many American authors resort to creating thinly veiled, fictional versions of the university that they want to use as a setting. Consequently, American readers almost never get to read crime novels set among the famous buildings of extant American universities.

Having previously written paranormal and science fiction mysteries, I knew nothing of the complicated legal machinations used by other authors in writing academic mysteries. When I started writing my academic mystery, I jumped into the writing completely blind to the fraught legal matters associated with the genre.

Then, of course, when I discovered the possible legal ramifications, I panicked and stopped writing, afraid that I would have to rewrite my entire manuscript with a different setting. Then, I panicked again, realizing that I

*Continued*

---

## WRITING AN ACADEMIC MYSTERY, CONTINUED

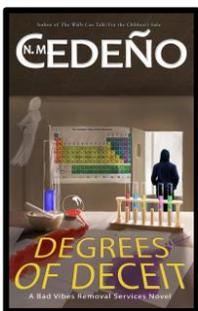
couldn't move the setting to a nonexistent, fictional university because I'd already identified the university Lea attended in the previous, already-published books and stories. I couldn't keep the story line without the setting.

In a state of dread, I called the U. T. Austin legal department, where a nice lady told me that I had the legal right to set a story at U. T. Austin as long as I avoided using the names of any actual university employees, past or present. I researched my characters names to see if they resembled any known employees. None did. Relieved, I finished writing the novel.

Still, a nagging worry grew in the back of my brain. I had nightmares that the answer the legal department woman gave me was too simple. If the answer was so easy, why did other authors avoid setting novels at universities? I asked a few lawyer friends their opinion on the matter. They told me I was right to be worried. The answer I was given was too simple. I could still get sued.

With a complete manuscript hanging in the balance, I set out to try to minimize any legal issues because I really had no intention of disparaging anyone. Most of the novel revolved around a single dorm on the U. T. campus, one that I had lived in as a student. I decided setting the story in a real dorm might be too risky. Someone might think I was writing about actual students in the actual dorm. I couldn't create a fake college, but I could create a fake dorm. I decided to rename the dorm and set the story in a thinly veiled, fictional dorm instead of in a real one.

After renaming the dorm and changing some details associated with it, I sent the completed manuscript off to the editor for review. The editor liked my story and now my academic mystery is finally ready for publication. Following Dorothy Sayer's lead, I've included a hefty author's note explaining that the dorm and the story are entirely fictional.



A college prankster at a university dorm in Texas is spooking the freshmen. The prank-playing vandal comes and goes like a ghost, leaving the students sleep-deprived. Investigators Lea, Kamika, and their boss, Montgomery are called in to identify a perpetrator as the pranks escalate from obnoxious noises in the night to poisons and dangerous threats. As they investigate, the fallout from Lea's accusation that her master's degree thesis advisor, the well-liked Dr. Mortimer Richardson, published her thesis work as his own, threatens her reputation and her partnership at Bad Vibes Removal Services.

Will Lea finish her master's degree? Will the investigation in the dorm be their last case together? And can they catch the culprit before disaster strikes?

Degrees of Deceit, the newest in the Bad Vibes Removal Services Series is available now on [Amazon!](https://www.amazon.com)



***For more information about the author N. M. Cedeño, her other books and short stories, visit her at [www.nmcedeno.com](http://www.nmcedeno.com).***

---

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

*Upcoming meetings, contests, conferences, book signings, etc.*

### Upcoming Meetings

(details at [www.sinc-heartoftexas.com](http://www.sinc-heartoftexas.com))

- September 8– Sara Stone, Alamo Area Search and Rescue with cadaver dog demonstration
- October 13 – Ghosts of Austin, Monica Ballard
- November 10 – So you want to write a series? Karen MacInerney, award-winning author of The Gray Whale Inn Mystery Series.
- December 8 – Christmas Party – featuring excerpts from your stories and culinary samples of what your characters eat.

### Contests/Awards

- September 20, 2019 – **27<sup>th</sup> Surrey International Writers' Conference Contest**  
Short story – 2,500 – 5,000 words (\$15 entry fee – First prize \$1,000 & publication, Honorable mention \$500 plus publication) – Details at <https://www.siwc.ca/writing-contest/>
- September 30, 2019 – **The Ghost Story Supernatural Fiction Award**  
1,500 – 10,000 words. Ghosts, paranormal and more. (\$20 entry fee. Prizes 1<sup>st</sup> \$1000 & pub, 2 honorable mentions \$250 plus pub)  
Details – <http://www.theghoststory.com/tgs-fiction-award>
- October 1, 2019 – **Stories Out Of School**  
Flash fiction - sponsored by the Academy of Teachers. Stories must be between 6 and 749 characters. (Prizes 1<sup>st</sup> \$1000, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$500)  
Details – <https://academyforteachers.org/stories-out-of-school/>

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### NOIR AT THE BAR – SEPTEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>, 7:30 PM

Stop by [Radio, Coffee, And Beer](#) 4204 Manchaca Rd and support our member, author [Laura Oles](#), as she reads from her work. Other crime fiction readings from Puja Guha, Edwin Hill, Amy Gentry, May Cobb, and Meg Gardiner. Possible reading and music by Jesse Sublett. Scott Montgomery from [BookPeople](#) as MC.

## OPPORTUNITIES!

### *Boerne Book & Art Fest*

Sisters in Crime will have a booth at the Boerne Book and Arts Fest, Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, from 10 am to 4:30 pm. A great opportunity for Member authors to sell their books and meet potential readers. Authors will be responsible for bringing and selling their own books.

Any member authors who wish to participate at the booth, selling their books, please contact Noreen Cedeño at [noreenmariecedeno@gmail.com](mailto:noreenmariecedeno@gmail.com) to be added to the list.

### *Texas Book Festival*

Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter is once again sponsoring a booth at this year's Texas Book Festival, Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. All current members are invited to bring books to be sold at the booth for \$10.00 each. Limit 10 copies of each title. Please check out the [sign-up sheet](#) to sign up to work the booth. If you plan to autograph books during your 2-hour slot, please provide an 8x10 photo and brief bio to K.P. Gresham by email [KPGresham@aol.com](mailto:KPGresham@aol.com) or in person at meeting.

If you want us to sell your books, help us out by providing a written summary or sales pitch for your book. Members are responsible for paying the taxes on their sales.