

## The Writer's Tool Chest

By Lisa Gardner

For writers, inspiration comes from everywhere. Information on publishing, however, is a bit trickier to find. Following are a list of books and websites, I've found helpful over the years. Also, I've included a list of good reference texts for people researching murder and mayhem. In all honesty, I have a lot more books in my office. But here are the ones I think are most helpful.

### Books on Writing:

I don't read a lot of books on writing—frankly, I still think the best way to learn how to write is to write. A lot. But if you want to read as well, here are some suggestions. I enjoy Syd Field for his pacing and plotting; Stephen King and Anne Lamott for their insights into a writer's life; Jayne Ann Krentz for her wonderful look at why we read what we read; and finally the annual editions of *Writer's Market* and *Guide to Literary Agents* for overall information on the publishing market.

Field, Syd, *Screenplay: The Foundation of Screenwriting*, Dell Publishing, New York, ©1994.

Field, Syd, *The Screenwriter's Workbook*, Dell Publishing, New York, ©1998.

King, Stephen, *On Writing*, Scribner, New York, ©2000.

Krentz, Jayne Ann, *Dangerous Men & Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance*, New Cultural Studies, ©1992.

Lamott, Anne, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Doubleday, New York, ©1994.

Sambuchino, Chuck, *Guide to Literary Agents 2008*, Writers Digest Books, ©2007

Sambuchino, Chuck, *Writer's Market 2008*, Writers Digest Books, ©2007.

### Writing Websites:

While there may be a shortage of mainstream educational classes on popular fiction writing, there are fortunately many excellent writing organizations to assist the aspiring writer and/or established author. I think Romance Writers of America (RWA) is still the best group for writers. If you're a published author, they have excellent resources to assist with navigating publishing's often-murky waters. If you're an aspiring writer, the local chapters, monthly magazine, and annual conference are some of the best

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sources of publishing tips and writing do's and don'ts. If you are more inclined toward suspense (like me), one of RWA's many subchapters, the Kiss of Death Chapter, focuses primarily on romantic suspense novels. They offer a fabulous roster of on-line writing classes, as well.

Mystery Writers of America is also excellent, but you must be published to join.

The website links are:

Romance Writers of America: <http://www.rwanational.com/>

Kiss of Death Chapter of RWA: <http://rwamysterysuspense.org/>

Mystery Writers of America: <http://www.mysterywriters.org/>

Finally, there are a couple of good websites for finding a reputable agent. Miss Snark, alas, has ended her blogging ways. The website, however, [www.MissSnark.com](http://www.MissSnark.com), still includes many valuable links, including the top 20 agents to **avoid**, always good to know when sending out queries. This same list also discusses many disreputable practices used by unethical agents. You should familiarize yourself with these practices, that way when your agent search ends with someone wanting you to pay him money, you'll know something is wrong. Another website, Writers-publish.com does a decent job of detailing the proper role of an agent, as well as discussing guidelines for query letters.

Miss Snark: [www.MissSnark.com](http://www.MissSnark.com)

Writers Publish: [www.writers-publish.com/](http://www.writers-publish.com/)

## **Suspense Reference Books:**

If you read my previous article, "Confessions from a Research Geek," then you know I think the best information comes from interviewing experts in the field. Before approaching a police officer, FBI agent, or ME, however, it's always good to do your homework.

Following are some textbooks and true crime novels I've found helpful as basic primers on law enforcement procedures and/or law enforcement life. You can find even more books courtesy of Amazon.com or my personal favorite, Paladin Press. Paladin Press ([www.paladin-press.com](http://www.paladin-press.com)) offers an impressive number of how to books focused on martial arts, guns, and tactical units, positioning itself to be "publishers of the action library." (Action library? Isn't that up there with military intelligence? I don't know, but you can judge for yourself.)

## ***Criminal Psychology:***

Hickey, Eric W., *Serial Murderers and Their Victims*, Wadsworth Group, California, ©2002

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Moffat, Gregory K., *Blind-Sided: Homicide Where It Is Least Expected*, Praeger Publishers, Connecticut, ©2000

Samenow, Stanton E., *Straight Talk About Criminals*, Aronson, Inc., New Jersey, ©1998.

## **FBI Resources:**

DeLong, Candice and Petrini, Elisa, *Special Agent*, Hyperion, New York, ©2001.

Depue, Roger L. and Schindehette, Susan, *Between Good and Evil*, Warner Books, New York, ©2005

Douglas, John and Olshaker, Mark, *Journey Into Darkness*, Pocket Books, New York, ©1997.

Douglas, John and Olshaker, Mark, *Mindhunter*, Pocket Books, New York, ©1995.

Kessler, Ronald, *The FBI*, Pocket Books, New York, ©1993.

Theoharis, Athan G., *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide*, The Oryx Press, Arizona, ©2000.

## **Homicide Textbooks:**

Fisher, Barry A.J., *Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation, Fifth Edition*, CRC Press, New York, ©1993

Fox, Richard H. and Cunningham, Carl L., *Crime Scene Search and Physical Evidence Handbook*, Paladin Press, Colorado, ©1992

Geberth, Vernon J., *Practical Homicide Investigation, Third Edition*, CRC Press, New York, ©1996

Rapp, Burt., *Homicide Investigation: A Practical Handbook*, Loompanics Unlimited, Washington, ©1989

## **True Crime:**

Bass, Dr. Bill and Jefferson, Jon, *Death's Acre*, Berkley Publishing Group, New York, ©2003

Britton, Paul, *The Jigsaw Man*, Bantam Press, New York, ©1997

Burnside, Scott and Cairns, Alan, *Deadly Innocence*, Warner Books, New York, ©1995

Davis, Don, Any Title

Jackson, Steve, *No Stone Unturned: The True Story of the World's Premier Forensic Investigators*, Pinnacle, ©2003

Rule, Ann, Any Title