



The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

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Good Record-keeping Helps at Tax Time

By Eileen Reppenhagen, CGA and writer

Dear Tax Detective: Most of us have day jobs, so how do we handle our writing income and expenses over the period of a year?

Signed: Ticking along

Dear Ticking Time Bomb: Keeping proper books and records for your business of writing is required by the Income Tax Act. Every business starts with one sale and grows. If there's no system in place to keep records, it can start to sound like a time bomb every time you put your head on your pillow.

It doesn't matter what kind of business you have, records must be created. Records include a sales journal, recording the sale date, with a record of when receipts are received, a purchases journal to record the purchase date and the date of payment. If you have a separate bank account, that's another journal. Sales should be kept in numerical order, purchases in alphabetical order, and bank statements with deposits and cancelled cheques in month order.

At year end, add up the journals to record on Form T2125 of your tax return. If purchases include capital assets, those are recorded on separate schedules and a portion of the cost amortized according to what Class they fall into. Special rule: computers, Class 52 purchased after January 27, 2009 and before February 1, 2011 are amortized at 100%. More record-keeping and tax information, including this free link, www.taxdetective.ca/artistswriters_links.html are found in my TaxLinks subscription for \$30.

Signed: Eileen Reppenhagen, CGA, aka TaxDetective



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From the editor's desk

Last January I sat with a prolific writer in her sunny apartment overlooking a busy harbour. I marveled at her 20 novels and 750 poems that are lovingly and safely stored. She told me, now she is in her mid-eighties, that she has named her son as her literary executor. I congratulated her on her writing and planning, and then discovered to my horror that none of it has been published. She proudly handed me all the acceptance letters and contract offers. Did she not want the mss published? "Oh, yes!" she said.

Over a cup of tea and a sandwich, I finally learned why this body of good writing lies unread and unwanted: "Jane" refuses to have her writing edited by a publisher. When I explained how much the partnership of an author and a good editor can improve one's work, I received a verbal smack. What a waste and so sad—I only hope that her son will get her work published when she's in heaven.

I am pleased to introduce the guest writer of this season's lead article—**Eileen Reppenhagen**. She is a prolific freelancer herself and, of course, an accountant who understands "us writers" at tax time.

Eileen taught me how to organize my writing business, and a business it is! Here she does not tackle the issue of expenses, but I'm hoping that she will outline these rules for us in another article soon.

Julie H. Ferguson

Taking the Risk: Writing About Those We Know

by Joyce Gram, writer and editor

I once heard it said that if you are not willing to take the risk of writing about those closest to you, you will never succeed as a writer. Now, that may be a little overstated, but it points to a dilemma many of us face: Some of the best material in our heads, for both fiction and nonfiction, involves family, friends, enemies and acquaintances. Yet we shy away—nay, cringe—from exploiting these riches for fear of offending someone or courting criticism.

Author Jane Christmas has overcome any fear she might have felt. In her book *Incontinent on the Continent: My Mother, Her Walker, and Our Grand Tour of Italy*, Christmas recounts in unflinching detail her five-week car trip in Italy with her mother. It was not pretty, and if reviews on Amazon are any indication, not every reader took kindly to her honesty. But the book has been a hit—and I understand why: it's deeply real, and many of us can relate.

Anne Lamott would certainly approve. In *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Lamott exhorts writers to write from their memories. "Use these memories," she says. "They are yours." She is mindful, of course, of defamation, but it's not a problem. For fiction, her answer is to change everything that might point to a person specifically. "Leave out his kleptomaniac leanings. Leave out the kind of car he really drove and the fact that he hated smokers so much that he planted a tiny tree in the ashtray." Using your memories is about becoming conscious, about writing from a place of insight and simplicity and real caring about the truth. "If something inside you is real," Lamott says, "we will probably find it interesting, and it will probably be universal.... Risk being unliked. Tell the truth as you understand it. If you're a writer, you have a moral obligation to do this. And it is a revolutionary act—truth is always subversive."

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Reference: Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

Events/courses for Writers

March 10: The Writers' Union of Canada annual symposium, *Secure Footing in a Changing Literary Landscape*. SOLD OUT! But in Vancouver each spring.

March 21: E-books, E-readers, E-publishing: Are You Ready? Ideal for writers considering publishing in electronic formats and those interested in learning more about e-readers. Shadbolt Centre for the Arts (Studio 103), 6450 Deer Lake Ave., Burnaby. **Free** but you must register at 604-291-6864 after March 1 (quote barcode #245132).

April 4: First session of spring term of **Port Moody Writers' Group** on Monday evenings (7-9:30pm). Call 604.469.4561 and ask for "Creative Writing." Ends June 6; \$80.00 approx. Space available.

April 4: Introduction to Creative Writing with Ed Griffin. Six Mondays at 11:30 to 1:30, the Newton Cultural Centre, Surrey. \$75.00 + manual at \$15.00. Register at 604-585-2787 or info@artscouncilofsurrey.ca.

July 8-10 : A boutique writers' festival on Bowen Island. Details soon for *Write on Bowen* at www.biac.ca/writersfestival/. Annabel Lyon is the keynote speaker.



Wild African Penguin
Boulders Beach



The Cape of Good Hope
South Africa

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www.beaconlit.blogspot.com



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