



Carindale Writers Group newsletter

5 May 2011

Present: Dawn, Len, Hilary, Ed, Brian, Nick, Jeff P., Jane, Sandy, Leslee-Anne, Dorothy, Maria S., Suellen, Bev, Jeff M., Judith, Wendy, Debby, Heather.

Opening discussion. As we settled into our meeting, Nick asked a very pertinent question: Who polices the sales of e-books by e-publishers to ensure authors receive their proper dues? There don't appear to be any transparent audits in place. As it currently stands, we can only take the word of the publisher as to the number of copies of e-books sold, from which price the author is paid either a percentage or a set fee per book.

Several useful paths were suggested to find an answer to this question.

1. The Queensland Writers Centre has a legal department we could approach to find out more. The Carindale Writers Group pays an annual group membership fee to QWC. As such, I believe we are entitled to avail of their facilities.
2. This is an issue of growing global concern so it might be worth contacting your local Member of Parliament to learn what's being done about it on a national or even international level.
3. A 'Letter to the Editor' of your preferred newspaper might yield more immediate answers.

Of equal concern is the possibility opened up by the internet for disreputable people to copy the original work of others, not only books but also graphics such as photographs and cartoons. How to block this illegal activity and to protect your own intellectual copyright is becoming necessary knowledge to those who wish to publish on the internet.

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Congratulations to Maria Scully who has recently had her story published in relation to being a cancer survivor, and her participation in the Mother's Day Classic event. Maria finished amongst the top ten last year, 2010.

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To respect all members present, and their work, it is recommended that late-comers to the meeting enter as quietly as possible. Could we also consider turning off our mobiles phones for the duration of the meeting, or at least keeping them in silent mode. This would help to keep distractions to a minimum.

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Today's featured reader.

Brian Rowell was our featured writer and reader for this meeting. Brian's novel doesn't yet have a title. He suggests the name of the main character, Martin Moran, will identify it for now.

Brian's novel is primarily to do with the revenge sought, in the form of a confession, by Martin Moran, for the imprisonment and seven years hard labour he suffered when he was wrongfully accused of the murder of his young son Liam. The part of the novel we heard on a previous occasion from Brian was set to the backdrop of the mining industry in the last century. Today we heard two further chapters which encompass the passage of time for the main character.

As the book moves along the scene has changed so that it is cleverly and evocatively set in a world of fishing trawlers. In the years between the two world wars there was a lively sea trade between the north east coast of England and several of the Baltic sea ports. Some of Brian's background research yielded true stories upon which he based some of his fiction.

The protagonist Martin Moran engineered an encounter on board a small fishing boat with Dalton town's local publican, Jack Butler, the man he knows to be the indirect cause of young Liam's death. Not alone has Butler brought about the loss of his son, but the deed also cost Martin his wife Siobhan.

Brian's writing and his story-telling ability are to a very high standard. He has fluidly mastered the use of dialogue, which he used throughout the first chapter he read today to dramatically move the story along. There was one particularly malevolent expression: "Ice formed around each word Martin Moran spoke." Very descriptive too was the "pulpy waistline of the publican," and the "silvery path of the gibbous moon on the waves." With The Sparrow's connivance, Martin secretes himself on board the 'Sirius', Butler's own coble, until they leave the harbour. By the end of this action-packed chapter, Jack Butler has got his just deserts but the little fishing boat, the Jessie, has been blown to smithereens in the water, and Martin finds himself floating out to sea, not much caring about life any more.

The pace changes a good deal in the second chapter we heard today. Martin Moran has been rescued by a Latvian trading vessel. We are treated to a great deal more description but less dialogue in this section of Brian's book as he describes life in Riga, Latvia's capital. Martin seems to have been most fortunate in that the captain of the boat which rescued him has taken him in, given him room and board and even a job as a regular deck-hand on board his boat, the Dvina. Some time elapses as the story moves on and we wait to see what happens next to Martin, who at this stage of his life doesn't ever reveal his surname in case the English police are now legitimately seeking him for murder.

There were only a few observations made during the round-table critique of Brian's work. One of our members suggested it would be helpful to the reader if the writer could find a way to reiterate the ages of the characters, to remind us of them now that quite some time has passed since the story began. It would also be helpful near the start of this part of the work to hark back briefly to the time in which the novel is set.

The drama and action of the first chapter was much admired and obviously engaged all the listeners. Martin Moran's hatred for Jack Butler, the man who had murdered his son Liam, came across very clearly, yet in the second chapter we saw a more contemplative Martin, a man displaying a sense of resignation to his daily life.

The sequence in the second chapter of some of the narrative inserted between periods of dialogue between Martin the lodger, and others in the family, was queried. All in all though, those critiquing the work described it as vivid and very exciting. We await with anticipation the next instalment.

Suggested exercise.

Our subject for today was Food Adventures, a topic that appealed to many of our writers – but then, who doesn't like food?!

Jane's story was called Fifteen Years Ago. A mother and daughter had to break up their night's sleep as they cooked their many scones round the clock to sell at Christmas time, making a few but essential dollars profit for each cake.

Jeff P. wrote a story from his childhood called Flies In My Rice. The first time a family member came across the addition of currants in his rice pudding he refused to eat it, thinking they were flies. Once he had tried it, he found he liked it better than he'd expected.

Jeff M. recounted a further excerpt from his novel, Fusilier Of The Line, which covered the preparation of some of the food eaten by the soldiers of that time, 1812. Corn meal was used as the basis for bread which was toasted over open fires. Jeff described the soldiers making a pease pudding and having to boil it in a calico cloth, which cloth was probably stolen from a peasant's washing line!

Dawn then gave us an excerpt from her novel, set in the 1920s, on the storage of corn meat in a barrel of brine. We learnt of the importance of the store room and planting the right herbs to be used in preserving food during that era.

Bev wrote Cooking Classes With Nanna. Nanna was very accomplished and also a very strong personality. Her talents extended beyond the domestic arena. She took on many jobs considered more suitable to the men folk. When it came to baking, she was queen of the kitchen. She was also a hard task-master but allowed to be, as she taught her granddaughter so well. The washing-up however, was always left to others.

Debby read aloud her story called Caffrey's Confection, a poignant tale of baking treats for her brother John and his friend Catherine; two children who were well enough to be allowed temporarily out of hospital. She and the children ranged in age from ten to fourteen. Not long after first making friends with Catherine during their cooking escapades, Debby was desolated to learn Catherine died of the gangrene that had set in in her leg after she fell in her home farmyard.

Heather wrote a story called The White Truffle, the most expensive and luxurious to be had. Her neighbour made her a present of it, fully expecting her to use it in a gastronomic triumph of a dish to share the following weekend. Over the intervening days Heather made several attempts at risotto to include the truffle, making mistakes every time but improving with every effort till she was able to present a wonderful truffle risotto to be enjoyed by all.

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Suggested exercise for next time is **Hair**. You could write about the loss of it or gaining it where it's not wanted ☺; disasters suffered at the hairdressers or the musical of the same name.... there are lots of opportunities to get your creativity going.

We hope to have time to hear the short exercises from some of our members who often seem to be writing one exercise behind. As always, any writing you do is better than none and helps to hone your craft, so we encourage you to keep working away at it.

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Our next meeting at the Holland Park Library is **19 May**. Start time 10am prompt.

Providing encouragement through sharing and discussion

Dorothy Vicary will read some of her work for us then. Our featured reader for the following meeting on 2nd June will be Jane Furey. On 16th June Dawn Johnson will feature her work.

A useful reminder here when it comes your turn for featuring your work. What you read aloud is not necessarily a word count to be adhered to. It's more about giving the listener a reasonable extract through which to get a feel for the writing and to be able to offer encouragement and suggestions about it. We have time constraints with our meeting so we do need to keep this part of our program to within certain time limits. If you can therefore keep to within 20 minutes or so for the work you read aloud, that should give enough time for those present to tell you how they have been touched by the story and to critique it, should the featured writer/reader want this feedback.

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Writer's websites

Jane has once again suggested some websites as being helpful to writers.

http://slb-ltsu.hull.ac.uk/awe/index.php?title=Punctuation_of_direct_speech

<http://www.stumbleupon.com/su/AMzjFP/www.guardian.co.uk/edinburgh/2011/apr/14/edinburgh-sara-sheridan-digital-rights>

<http://www.australianwritersrock.com/do-you-want-me-to-add-your-book.html>

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Chip's Computer Tips

How to Clean Your PC, Inside and Out

Cleaning a PC is more than just uninstalling a few apps and wiping off the case. Here's how to defeat dust, gunk, and other unmentionable material that gets lodged inside your desktop system.

Cleaning a computer isn't rocket science, but certain techniques do carry more risk than others.

The next thousand words or so will change your life for the better. Like bathing a cat, taking a computer from filthy to fresh can be a difficult task at best, but it's well worth the struggle, time, and messy after-effects. (Fewer scratches involved, thankfully.)

Carry out those procedures that you feel comfortable doing – any will give longer life to your PC. It will also run cooler.

Not only will cleaning your PC help you get rid of the gunk and other crusty unknowns that lurk within devices such as your keyboard and mouse, but you'll also be able to rid your system of the dust, hair, and assorted debris that make it look as if you had been storing it in your attic the past three years. Aesthetics aside, you'll be doing a great service for the components that help your PC stay cool: Fans can keep spinning happily if they aren't coated with dust and grime, heat sinks can cool better if gunk isn't impeding their tightly packed fins.

Just go as far as you feel comfortable with any of the following:

Cleaning the Keyboard and Mouse

Turn off your computer power and remove power plug from the back of the computer. Then unplug your keyboard and mouse. (Since the power is off, you don't need to unplug anything—it's just for easier access.) If you don't know which cables, trace them back from the units to the back of the computer case.

I use mentholated spirits from Woolies with cotton swabs as a cleaner. You can just clean the surfaces of the keyboard this way or go further. You can buy isopropyl alcohol almost anywhere from Crazy Clarks to Bunnings. Alcohol evaporates and does not harm any electrical circuits in your computer, because it isn't conductive. Your option.

Gently pop the keys off the keyboard, and you can expose the crud underneath. Turn off the computer. Start by gently brushing the cleaning solution over the keys; I recommend that you spray a paper towel or a wipe instead of drenching the keyboard in cleaning fluid (isopropyl alcohol best). To do a more thorough job, however, you'll want to use a capped pen, a mechanical pencil, or a closed pair of scissors to pop the keys up and off the keyboard. Once you've done that, commence deeper cleaning of the underlying surface. You might want to do this cleaning in batches of keys, just in case you forget which keys go where.

The simplest way to clean a keyboard is just to take cotton swabs, dip them in the alcohol and wipe around all the keys.

The "fun" method involves sticking your keyboard in the dishwasher and letting nature take its course. A few caveats: Gaming keyboards and wireless keyboards carry with them a greater degree of risk than standard keyboards do. To put it another way, you should steer clear of this method if your keyboard has a tiny display attached. Cover any open USB ports with plastic and tape, and, if you're cleaning a wireless keyboard, remove the battery prior to the washing. Set the dishwasher on a normal temperature with no heated drying--just air--and make sure that the keys are facing down.

Once the keyboard is done bathing, you must let it dry completely before attempting to use it. Put it upside-down on the dish rack for a few days, stick it in sunlight for a few days, blast the insides with a vacuum cleaner hose. You'll find no perfect solution to getting every last bit of water out of the keyboard--you'll just have to be patient, lest you paperweight your device.

You can use the same techniques on your mouse that you used to clean your keyboard--that is, a gentle brushing with a cleaning wipe or a moist towel. Depending on the variety of mouse, you should be able to pop the primary clicking buttons off in a manner similar to a keyboard's keys, giving you access to the dirty bits underneath. You can also use the same cleaning cloth to wipe the gunk that typically sticks to the pads on the mouse's underside.

If you're still rocking a legacy mouse with a ball, remove the cover on the bottom of the mouse and give the sphere (as well as the area in which the mouse ball sits) a good wipe. And for the 99 percent of you who have moved on to optical mice, a cotton swab gently inserted into the area of the LED should be sufficient to remove any debris that has collected.

Deep-Cleaning the PC

Most PC cases open from the left side. You will find two screws behind the left panel. Usually, you can remove them by hand and then slide the panel back and it comes loose. Lay the PC on its side for easy access. You don't need to remove anything else to do your clean up

Of course, that's just the first step. Next up is the CPU. Just wipe it down with the alcohol using a cloth and/or cotton swabs.

Providing encouragement through sharing and discussion

Now you're probably asking yourself why I haven't covered cleaning other parts of a PC--such as the hard drives, the graphics card, or the motherboard itself. The same tactics you used to clean the fans and the heat sink will also work for cleaning everything else. If you're just looking to give your desktop system a once-over, then I recommend that you use a combination of a vacuum hose or a compressed-air canister: Blow or suck the dust out of the graphics card's fan and cooler, the motherboard, or the hard drives, and position the vacuum hose near the plume of ejected material so that it troubles your PC no more. Along with the vacuum cleaner, you can use alcohol and a swab, too, to get into the heat sinks and the like. Note that I left out cleaning the processor - that's special and below the heat sink. Don't try taking it out. Just clean around it. No, I'm not crazy.

Once again, the alcohol doesn't conduct electricity, and, more important, its speedy evaporation will assist you as you work toward eliminating each and every drop of liquid from the board's nooks and crannies before you replace the cover. This method isn't for newbies, but it will definitely make the inside look as if it were brand-new.

FN KARMATZ

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