

THE INVISIBLE CITIES NETWORK

Support-networking for writers, self-publishers, musicians and artists since 2001



❖ Where are ICN meetings held?

ICN Meetings

Invisible Cities Network meetings are at CAFE VAN HOUTTE, 272 Ste Catherine Street, near the Berri Metro. At one recent meeting, we did a cold reading of David J Cox's developing play-script, provisionally entitled, 'Cell phones and closets.' As a rule, members are invited to share their creative works-in-progress, whether it be fiction, poetry, essay, music or anything else. People quite often bring their musical instruments to perform. The atmosphere is relaxed and supportive, and full of humour. We offer what we hope is helpful feedback, positive critiquing and suggestions for development of the work-in-progress. Part of the evening is devoted to planning future events and initiatives, discussions about public venues, rental fees, equipment and such business. There is always time for striking up personal and professional connections amongst members, as well.

❖ How has IC evolved in the last few years?

The 'Indy' movement

After a long spell, living in Europe, I returned to Montreal and found that the concept of self-publishing, contrary to in London, UK, was still being regarded as a rather poor cousin. A web search turned up little or nothing in the way of established organisations dedicated to self-publishing. Therefore in April 2001 we set up the first writers' group based on the Plateau, with the intention of inviting any would-be and actual self-publishers in Montreal. From there we evolved into a grassroots 'indy' movement, attracting independent artists of all disciplines: writing, publishing, drama, Spoken word, music, sculpture, photography, graphic arts, fine arts, and so on. There are now 350 or so members on the ICN mailing list. ICN has staged about half a dozen Spoken Word and cabaret performances. Literally hundreds of artists and writers have attended an estimated 60 or so meetings over the last five years. Participants span the age range from 20 to 50 plus. Certainly they are a mix of students, employed and self-employed people, as well as retirees, who share an interest in — often a passion for — literature, music, art, writing, self-publishing and/or collaborative performing.

**By Artists
For Artists**

It is important to stress that the ICN network is a proudly independent organisation that receives no outside support or funding of any kind. Our rules and regulations are kept to a strict minimum. There is very little bureaucracy. As a loose network of artists and writers, our aim is to create a public showcase for ourselves and our work. In this way we differ from other established groups of our kind



**ICN
Conference
2005**

Apart from ICN public performances, our most ambitious event to date by far was the 'Book & Creative Arts Conference' held in Sept 2005. 125 people attended, among the more well known attendees were Pat Donnelly of the Montreal Gazette who praised the event highly, Peter Wintonick, documentary film maker, winner of the 2006 Governor General's award, and cartoonist, Terry Mosher, 'Aislin.' It turned out to be a truly extraordinary day, and I hear that people were still talking about it months afterwards. I truly believe that one reason it was so successful (aside from the really engaging speakers, expert panelists, published book & CD display, live entertainment, coffee on tap and marvellous food) was the fact that so many of us already knew one another through our network. And so many conference attendees who were newcomers were welcomed and easily integrated into our community on that day.



INTERACTIVE SHOWCASE

ICN also collaborated on the first INTERACTIVE SHOWCASE event held at the Mainline Theatre space in the spring of 2006. This independent concept (networking opportunities for business and the arts) is currently being explored and developed as a special project by ICN member, David J Cox. David's second Interactive Showcase was featured as one of the concluding events of the 2006 Fringe Festival held at Parc des Amériques on blvd St. Laurent. CJAD radio host, Stuart Nulman, attended as guest speaker that day. The third Interactive Showcase at Café Van Houtte near Berri Metro, 1 December, 2006, raised \$500 for Children's Wish Foundation.



Our Website

Our new dedicated Invisible Cities Network web site: <http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org> launched in May 2005, offers a showcase to emerging artists and their productions and events. Very popular still are the regular ICN email announcements posted virtually daily. This is how members share and receive news on their upcoming productions and events. We have archived literally hundreds of messages of thanks from the ICN membership for this service alone. Interestingly, apart from the local arts community, the ICN updates reach a number of recipients in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Europe and the UK. Now and then, writers contact us out of the blue; recently, it was an ex-patriate from Berlin, Germany, who was seeking information about publishing his manuscript. Quite often writers confuse us with traditional publishers, and we respond as helpfully as we can.

An Invitation

With that in mind, we encourage similar groups in other cities to set themselves up under the Invisible Cities banner if they wish. We offer to share our mission statement as a Self-publishing support group, as well as any other info and documentation that might assist them. We would love to see a proliferation of self-publishing self-promoting groups setting themselves up in other Canadian cities, hopefully linking to our original ICN web site. It is more likely, however, that we in Montreal will continue to develop along the lines of an autonomous grassroots movement than as a formal national association.

Self-publishing Workshops

We share expertise and offer training and support in Self-publishing. This was one of our early mandates and continues to be at the heart of what we are trying to achieve. With that in mind, we offer a day-long workshop-seminar along with a course-book in Self-Publishing. Details are posted on the ICN web site. For more details, see: <http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-index.php?page=support+and+training>

Radio CKUT, 90.3

We also liaise and co-operate with current hosts of Radio CKUT's Monday, 11.30am to noon literary arts & discussion show 'The Flipping Birds' on (90.3FM). Both radio hosts, JJ Locke and David J Cox, are ICN members, as it happens. This is no coincidence. I regard it as a sign of our successful development and expansion. ICN regularly refers and recommends artists and author-publishers to be interviewed on this show.

Collaboration ELAN CAA CWS Yellow Door

Whenever possible, we collaborate with the staff at ELAN (English Language Arts Network), as well as the organiser of the Yellow Door Poetry Readings (Ilona Martonfi), Canadian Authors' Association (Ken Kalman), and Canadian Writers' Society (Aniko Koranyi Bergman and Rosalie Avigdor). Almost all of these groups were represented at the ICN Conference Fair in 2005.

❖ Why the name Invisible Cities? Are you more visible today?

Making the Invisible visible

Yes, as a fledgling group with an experimental mandate we certainly began under the veil of invisibility. Our co-founder, Cristina Perissinotto, now a professor at the University of Ottawa, was the first to coin our name and identity: Invisible Cities, inspired by the book of the same name by Italian author, Italo Calvino, in which he describes a series of imaginary cities, symbolic of deeper realities or states of mind. I interpret the term somewhat differently. For me, 'Invisible Cities' aptly expresses the notion of artists of all disciplines toiling in obscurity, often in isolation, who nonetheless exist and are real. We are certainly more visible today, five years on. Our intention — and this too is a work in progress — is to become more and more visible, individually and collectively, with the passage of time.

Who in ICN who is doing really well with a book of their own?

I would define 'doing well' as a combination of several things: first of all, producing a good book, promoting it actively, attracting critical reviews, and finally achieving sales. I don't have up-to-date details on all our authors' progress. However, having said that here are some of the facts:

Listing some Author-Publishers near you...

1. Acclaimed novelist and poet, **Ann Diamond**, recently brought out her self-published novel through lulu.com entitled **My Cold War**, and has received a number of admiring reviews. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=131
2. **Irene Even**, of Yardena Publications, has received enthusiastic critical reviews for her memoir, **A Life of the Twentieth Century**. She has been invited to the Thornhill, Toronto branch of Chapters Bookstore in October 2006 to present a public reading of her book. Her illustrated memoir is also presently available in selected independent Montreal bookstores. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=15
3. Bilingual author, **Pierre Lasry**, of Midbar Publications, won the prestigious J.I Segal award for his novel, **Une Juive en Nouvelle France**. He also penned the English version of this book entitled, **Esther, A Jewish Odyssey**. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=41&highlight=lasry
4. **Christina Manolescu**, of Prince Chameleon Press, has just published a novel entitled, **Baglady**, illustrated by **Mary Fitzpatrick**. The novel 'Baglady' was a selection of the Roxboro Library Reading Club. Both author and illustrator were recently invited to address the group. <http://www.princechameleon.com>
5. **NAT Grant**, who publishes with Llumina Press, is a well-known personality who has attained considerable success with her first two Montreal-based espionage novels in the **Race Series**. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=13
6. **David J. Cox** has just published his first illustrated volume of poetry, **Love Pulp**, from Words Written Write. <http://www.wordswrittenwrite.com>

7. **Leila Peltosaari** of Tikka Books has just brought out her latest non-fiction book called, **Dancing with Fear, Tips and Wisdom from Breast Cancer Survivors**. More details at <http://www.tikkabooks.com>
8. **Alex MacLeod**, who publishes with Trafford, presents a very unusual and fascinating book entitled, '**The Splendor of the Goddess**.' It has garnered praise from people such as Jeanette Paul of WARM (Writer's Association of Resourceful Minds), and Harvey Shepherd of the Montreal Gazette. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=60
9. **Angela Leuck** brought out her latest volume of Haiku poetry, **Flower Heart**, published collaboratively with **Gingko Press**.
10. Sculptor and Publisher, **Bozena Happach**, of INHOUSEBOOKS, recently launched a new book by **Stan I.S. Law**, entitled: **One Just Man**. Stan I.S. Law's short story *Around the World* was short-listed for 2005 CBC Literary Award. See: <http://inhousepress.netfirms.com>
11. **Catherine Kierans**, of Kerrycroft Editions, published a book of her research on dogs and their owners entitled: **Unconditional Love**. Her book launch at Nicholas Hoare Bookshop on Greene Avenue attracted a sell-out crowd: http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=35
12. **D. B. Crawford's** novel, **Hideaway**, published with BookAmerica, is being considered for adaptation to a screenplay. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=67
13. **Trina Wilko**, Faculty Supervisor in Early Childhood Education at Concordia University, Montreal, as a direct consequence of last year's ICN Conference, got inspired and brought out her first book, 'The Lively Lines of Linus,' a learning activity book for children. Trina published with Trafford. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=111
14. **Barbara Sala**, illustrator and fine artist who publishes with Trafford, introduces both French and English versions of her illustrated children's story, **Celestine and the Magic Geranium**. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=38&highlight=sala

15. **Michel Semienchuk** took the ICN self-publishing seminar and published his first novel under the imprint, Sweet Baby Jenkins Press. http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=45&highlight=michel
16. **Ruth Badanes Reiner** has just brought out a warm-hearted funny book about modern families and divorce called **Divorce: Dips, Dives and Daffodils**.
17. **Whilma Kinsey**, of Sienna Publications and Design, took ICN's Self-publishing workshop and went on to self-publish her book, **Flying on the Ground**. She has been quite successful, particularly with employees of the national airlines who recognise the realities of the world she describes.
18. **Cynthia Morris**, artist and teacher, attended one ICN meeting when she was just starting out; consequently she produced and published an illustrated memorial booklet for a deceased teaching colleague. The book is now being used as a reader by adult ESL students at her school.