



**I**t used to be that you had to venture away from Southern California to find literary events of quality. Thankfully, that's no longer the case. From San Luis Obispo to San Diego, the area is bursting with book- and author-related festivals. It's no surprise, when you consider Southern California is the No. 1 book-buying market in the country and the *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books is one of the largest fairs in the nation, with an average attendance of 130,000 each year.

"The book reading, buying, and writing community in Southern California is huge, despite some obvious changes in the market," says Corey Roskin, one of the lead organizers of the yearly West Hollywood Book Fair, which attracts visitors from throughout California and beyond.

Those changes include waning author book tours and more people buying online instead of going to bookstores. There's

increased competition for how people spend their reading time; rather than reading novels, teens and those in their 20s are doing more reading online, spending their time perusing things like blogs. Independent bookstores are feeling the crunch.

"While some of Southern California's great independent bookstores continue to thrive—Skylight Books in Los Feliz is expanding, and Vroman's in Pasadena was recently named the best independent in the country by *Publishers Weekly*—others are closing (Dutton's, for one) and there are rumblings of other closings," says Roskin. "Some of the bigger chains, such as Borders and Barnes & Noble, are making shifts in what they're doing to try to tap

into the expanding online market."

Still, most Southland communities have bookstores, cafés, and salons that host author events, as well as literary guilds, civic groups, and nonprofits that make a big deal out of the written word. Book clubs, both private and library-based, abound. Literary fests may seem overwhelming, but they're often worth the extra effort. Here's a lineup of SoCal literary and book events scheduled throughout the remainder of this year and into early 2009.

# The Write Stuff

## A Guide to SoCal's Literary and Book Festivals

By Barbara DeMarco-Barrett

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR WRITERS AND BOOK LOVERS

**ASJA** (American Society of Journalists and Authors) holds sporadic panels and events revolving around journalism. (212) 997-0947; [asja.org](http://asja.org).

**AAUW** (American Association of University Women) branches throughout Southern California and the U.S., Guam, and Puerto Rico host literary luncheons every spring that are open to the public. (800) 326-AAUW [2289]; find local branches at [aauw.org](http://aauw.org).

**IWOSC** (Independent Writers of Southern California) offers seminars and casual get-togethers at least once a month in Los Angeles County. (877) 79-WRITE (799-7483); [iwosc.org](http://iwosc.org).

**Los Angeles Public Library's ALOUD Series** features noted authors reading from their work. Free. (213) 228-7025; [lfla.org/aloud/calendar](http://lfla.org/aloud/calendar).

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SEPTEMBER 26-27

### Central Coast Writers' Conference

Set in picturesque San Luis Obispo, this conference offers workshops focusing on fiction, nonfiction, memoir, poetry, writing for children, freelancing, and screenwriting. One of the friendliest writers conferences around, it includes a Friday night reception, Saturday breakfast, and table talks with the faculty. Cost: \$149. Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo. (805) 546-3132; [communityprograms.net/wc/wcindex.htm](http://communityprograms.net/wc/wcindex.htm).

SEPTEMBER 26-28

### Southern California Writers' Conference, Los Angeles

For writers of fiction, nonfiction, interactive narrative, graphic novels, magazines, and screenplays, this event takes place in Irvine. Cost: Begins at \$275, for the weekend. Crowne Plaza Hotel, Irvine. (619) 303-8185; [writersconference.com](http://writersconference.com).

SEPTEMBER 28

### West Hollywood Book Fair

A colorful book fair with a neighborhood feel, this event hosts nearly 300 authors/poets/performers, 100 booths, and 12 stages. It resembles the *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books, only on a smaller scale.

The Algonquin Literary Award Soiree (cost: \$25) at the Pacific Design Center takes place the night before the fair and benefits PEN in the Classroom, a program for underserved Southern California youth. Free, with free covered parking available directly across the street. West Hollywood Park. (323) 848-6515; [westhollywoodbookfair.org](http://westhollywoodbookfair.org).

OCTOBER 5

### Orange County Children's Book Festival

This all-day book fest features dozens of children's authors and illustrators enthusiastically discussing their books and signing them. This year's special guests are Gary Soto and Jamie Lee Curtis, as well as entertainment and animals from the Nature of Wildworks. Free, with easy free parking. Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa. (714) 838-4528; [kidsbookfestival.com](http://kidsbookfestival.com).



Characters are on hand at the Orange County Children's Book Festival in Costa Mesa.

OCTOBER 11

### Celebration of California Writers Week

Screenwriters Marc and Elaine Zicree (along with me) will celebrate California Writers Week with people who appreciate books and the people who write them. Donations accepted. Orange Public Library and History Center, Old Towne Orange. [calwritersorangecounty.org](http://calwritersorangecounty.org).

NOVEMBER 1

### Men of Mystery

Those who love mysteries, and the men who write them, should pay close attention: This annual event offers more than 50 male authors and a delicious luncheon. Each author has the spotlight for one minute to tell about his work, and, after lunch, Table Talks feature the authors sharing their writing experiences. Cost: \$65. Irvine Marriott. (714) 892-3995; [jhansen36@juno.com](mailto:jhansen36@juno.com); [menofmystery.org](http://menofmystery.org).

NOVEMBER 7-9

### La Jolla Writers Conference

This conference is unusual in that it's mostly agents and editors that head up the workshops. There are also late-night "Red-Eye Workshop Classes" for night owls. The organizers only take 200 attendees, so interested parties should register early. Cost: \$355 (through September 1); \$400 (after September 1). Paradise Point Resort and Spa, San Diego. [lajollawritersconference.com](http://lajollawritersconference.com).

## Two more places to dig...

Search for book-related events by book title, author, or venue at [booktour.com](http://booktour.com), and visit California Authors at [californiaauthors.com](http://californiaauthors.com) for statewide events, authors, reading programs, and event links.

Barbara DeMarco-Barrett is the author of *Pen on Fire: A Busy Woman's Guide to Igniting the Writer Within* (Harcourt, 2004) and hosts Writers on Writing on KUCI-FM. [penonfire.com](http://penonfire.com).

### Newport Beach Public Library Foundation's Manuscripts Literary Events

series features authors, some quite notable, throughout the year at Newport Beach Central Library. Free. (949) 644-3296; [nbplfoundation.org/lectures.htm](http://nbplfoundation.org/lectures.htm).

RWA (Romance Writers of America) has several chapters in Southern California that hold monthly events with authors and workshops. (832) 717-5200; [rwanational.org](http://rwanational.org).

San Diego Writers Ink is a nonprofit whose mission is to nurture writers and those wishing to explore the craft of writing. Weekly events include classes, readings, and salons. [sandiegowriters.org](http://sandiegowriters.org).



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Los Angeles Times  
**FESTIVAL OF BOOKS**  
 IN ASSOCIATION WITH UCLA

Book lovers enjoy a day of browsing at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books.

2009

FEBRUARY 5-8

**Writers Studio at UCLA Extension**

Participants spend four intense days in one of 10 workshops (autobiography/memoir, fiction, nonfiction, personal essay, screenwriting) and work closely with a professional writer. Classes are limited to 18 attendees. Cost: \$700 (early registration); \$775 (after December 5). Westwood 10 Center (adjacent to the UCLA campus), Los Angeles. (310) 825-9415; [uclaextension.edu/writers](http://uclaextension.edu/writers).

FEBRUARY 6-8

**San Diego State University Writers Conference**

For writers of fiction and nonfiction who are hot to sell a book, literary agents and editors are abundant here. Cost: Begins at approximately \$365. Doubletree Hotel, San Diego. (619) 594-2517; [ces.sdsu.edu/writers](http://ces.sdsu.edu/writers).

FEBRUARY 13-16

**Southern California Writers Conference, San Diego**

This conference has been around for 23 years and offers read-and-critique and Q&A workshops for fiction and nonfiction writers. Cost: \$340 (before September 30); \$365 (before December 31). Crowne Plaza in Mission Valley, San Diego. (619) 303-8185; [writersconference.com/scwcmain.html](http://writersconference.com/scwcmain.html).

FEBRUARY 22-24

**Latino Book & Family Festival, Los Angeles**

Since 1997, actor and activist Edward James Olmos has coproduced this multicity event, which is held at different times of the year. The next L.A. event is tentatively scheduled for the Los Angeles Convention Center. Free. [lbff.us](http://lbff.us).

MARCH 13-15

**Weekend of Poetry**

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Writers Conference, Weekend of Poetry is for aspiring poets and experienced scribes. Cost: \$325-\$495, depending on lodging. Santa Barbara. (805) 964-0367; [sbwriters.com](http://sbwriters.com).

APRIL 25-26

**Los Angeles Times Festival of Books**

Attendance in 2008, the festival's 13th year, was a resounding 140,000, all to see the hundreds of speakers, panels, and booths. To some, the festival is a madhouse, with too many people and too much going on, but thousands love it. And it's free, the best deal all year. UCLA campus. [latimes.com/extras/festivalofbooks](http://latimes.com/extras/festivalofbooks).

MAY 9

**Festival of Women Authors**

Confirmed authors for this full day of author talks and signings include Marisa de los Santos and S.J. Rozan. Cost: \$70, including a continental breakfast and luncheon. Irvine Marriott. [litguildoc.org](http://litguildoc.org).

JUNE 20-25

**Santa Barbara Writers Conference**

This 35-year-old conference offers supportive workshops, for newbies to advanced writers, that focus on the reading and critiquing of each writer's work. Cost: \$725 (sign up prior to March 1 for significant savings). Fess Parker Doubletree Resort. Santa Barbara. (805) 964-0367; [sbwriters.com](http://sbwriters.com).

JULY 19-25

**Summer Poetry in Idyllwild**

This annual event for readers and writers of poetry offers a multitude of ways to get your poetry fix. Cost ranges from about \$525 to \$1,125. Idyllwild Arts Academy campus. (951) 659-2171; [idyllwildarts.org/summer\\_poetry.html](http://idyllwildarts.org/summer_poetry.html).

PAUL GOOD



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**Sisters in Crime's** (SinC) original chapter was founded by mystery author Sara Paretsky. Authors, readers, publishers, agents, booksellers, and librarians bound by their love for the mystery genre hold monthly events. Central Coast: [centralcoastsisters.blogspot.com](http://centralcoastsisters.blogspot.com); Los Angeles: [sistersincrimela.com](http://sistersincrimela.com); Orange County: [ocsistersincrimel.org](http://ocsistersincrimel.org); San Diego: [sincsd.org](http://sincsd.org).

**Southern California Writers Association** meets on the third Saturday of the month in Fountain Valley for lunch and a talk by a noted author. Cost: \$20 for members who make reservations in advance; \$25 for nonmembers who make reservations in advance. [ocwriter.com](http://ocwriter.com).

**"Writers Bloc Presents"** is a Los Angeles speaker series featuring authors in an interview format. (310) 855-0005; [writersblocpresents.com](http://writersblocpresents.com). **W**