

Schrodinger's Petshop Member Handbook

By Holly Lisle

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Part One—Purposes and Goals

Schrodinger's Petshop, established in May of 1988, grew out of a core of aspiring science fiction and fantasy writers who wanted to write better and sell our work, and who weren't able to find a writers' group or program that met our needs and interests. We've met on a regular basis since, constantly growing and changing to meet the needs of our admittedly esoteric membership.

Our main goal is to help each other get published. We do this by presenting and participating in workshops on our varied areas of expertise, by reading and critiquing each other's work, and by encouraging each other to submit finished works. We also provide networking, contacts with professionals in the field, and a chance to meet other local talents with similar interests.

Some of our members have gone from unpublished writer to pro since joining, others have published in both commercial and small presses, and still others are just now beginning to

submit work. Some are still learning how to finish work.

Writer Requirements

We are open to members of all levels of experience, and of all ages and interests. We have members who are experienced in novel-writing, in short-fiction writing, in non-fiction, and in poetry. However, we are strongly biased in favor of science fiction, fantasy, and horror (speculative fiction) subject matter. We are not a general-interest writers' group. If you want to write mainstream or non-fiction or works in other genres, but have no interest in speculative fiction, we are not the group for you.

While we have a great deal of fun at our meetings, we are not geared toward socializing. We are a working writers' group, and our main premise is that writers write. If you join, be prepared to read what you are working on, to take criticism, and also to give it. We'll help you achieve your goal of getting your stories into print—your goal is one we share.

Welcome to Schrodinger's Petshop.

Schrodinger's Petshop Rules of Order

Here are the rules of order used at meetings—far better in my opinion than Robert's Rules of Order.

- 1) No throwing of objects not actually owned by you.
- 2) No duelling indoors.
- 3) Absolutely no blood on the carpet, or on any latex flat-painted surface.

- 4) Anyone making allegations of questionable parentage about another writer must be prepared to provide proof.
 - 5) Payment for all emergency medical services and supplies required during the course of the meeting are the sole responsibility of the person or persons who made them necessary.
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Schrodinger's Rules of Critiquing

- 1) Critique the writing, never the writer. Never say, "You are..." or "You should..." Instead say, "The writing is..." or "The story should..."
- 2) Find what is right in each piece as well as what is wrong.
- 3) Don't say, "This is how I would write it;" how you would write it isn't the point.
- 4) Remember that subject matter is personal. You don't have to like a story to give it a fair critique.
- 5) Remember what your biases are and critique around them.
- 6) Remember that real people wrote this stuff, and real people have real feelings.

Things you may not say while critiquing.

"That's awful."

"That's stupid."

"You couldn't write your way out of a paper bag."

Schrodinger's Rules of Being Critiqued

- 1) Listen. The person who is speaking has taken the time to listen to your work, and wants to help you find ways to make it better.
- 2) Wait until everyone has finished critiquing before making comments.
- 3) Explain only if necessary. Don't rebut.
- 4) Take notes.
- 5) Realize that everything can be improved.
- 6) Be willing to make changes. Conversely, don't change anything you feel must remain in order to make the story yours.

Things you may not say when being critiqued.

"You're wrong."

"You're an idiot."

"Your mother was a hamster and your father smelled of elderberries."

General Information

Meetings are on alternate Wednesdays, beginning at 7:00 p. m. unless otherwise noted.

Traditionally, members bring food and drink to the host's house to share. No alcohol—some of our members are under-age.

Bring something you are working on to read.

Bring pen or pencil and paper (you'll need a notebook with tear-out pages so that you can give other members your critiques.)

For the time being, there are no dues, but stamps used for mailing the newsletter are needed. Note: for special members, (i. e., members who do not attend meetings but still want to get the newsletter,) stamps have become a necessity. We mail bi-weekly. Twenty-six first-class stamps will keep you up-to-date for a year.

Bring friends. We'll find someplace to seat everyone.

Meeting sites rotate among members who have volunteered to host. You'll find a starter kit of maps folded into the back of this handbook. Glue, staple, or otherwise affix them to your handbook, or some other convenient location—but don't lose them. Members move, and maps change—you'll get updates as they become necessary.

You'll find a current memberlist with the maps. This is for your convenience—but strictly confidential. You'll note familiar professional names among our members, as well as folks who don't want their phone numbers or street addresses generally available.

Benefits of Membership

The biggest benefit is obviously the privilege of attending meetings (and sometimes the honor of hosting one). At meetings, your work is heard by professionals, semi-pros, and

aspiring writers, and critiqued on the basis of its marketability. You will get marketing information and occasional updates on markets, meet folks who can help you make professional connections, and have a lot of fun.

Membership Guidelines

Attending meetings is a privilege and not a right. Memberships can be revoked—for failure to follow critiquing rules, for failure to follow protocol in being critiqued, or by a general vote of the other members.

As a member, you'll also receive the newsletter HyperspaceZ00, which comes out every other week and keeps you up to date on Petshop events and the doings of its members. The Z00 also contains columns on writing, book reviews, and other things you may find useful.

Petshop members occasionally travel in packs. If you're going to a con and other members are going, you can save some money by rooming together.

We are currently discussing the possibility of hosting a SF convention in Fayetteville. This isn't a sure thing, but certainly something to keep in mind if you enjoy cons and would like to become involved in running one.

About Writing for the HyperspaceZ00

The Z00 has added an Outside Opinions column. If you would like to submit an article, maximum word length for a single article is 600 words. Maximum series length is three issues. I'm open to any aspect of writing, from articles on technical writing to personal experiences to how you do research. I require professionally formatted submissions—that is, typed, double-spaced, with your name, title, and page number at the top of

each page. I don't pay. I'm not a professional publication. If you send something to me, do it for the experience you'll get, or because you can share something of relevance with our membership, or because you love the Petshop. You'll retain all rights—because of our limited membership and mailing list, professional publications will not even consider a previous publication with us as the use of your First North American Serial Rights.

Note: If you submit a piece that has been published elsewhere, make sure you still own reprint rights on it and can legally do so. I don't want to infringe on anyone else's copyright.

Schrodinger's Petshop Press

We're considering doing chapbook-style publications of members' work. Format would be similar to what you see in your hand-book, printing costs would have to be absorbed by the members involved in each project, and marketing would be up to the interested individuals.

This is just something we're thinking about for the time being—if you're interested, let me know. The chapbook format would lend itself nicely to speculative fiction poetry, small collections of short stories, or individual printing of novelettes. I confess that I'd like to see theme-centered collections of short stuff, Schrodinger's Petshop Travels In Time, The Magical Petshop, and even ZOOfolk & Deals With The Devil.

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