

# The Eastern Script

*Shameless self-promotion since 2011*

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## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



Thought I'd let you all know about our work on clearance reports for animated projects. They are indeed a different beast so please read on to learn more about our approach.

This issue's main article addresses the setting of your story. There are quite a few things to consider when you decide where you will place the action. I'll bet you didn't know that southern California property values, prank calls to an Illinois midwestern city hall, and the worries of an Oscar-winning production designer are among them!

I've included a reminder to webseries creators who for some reason are coming to us late in the process for having clearance work done.

I've also included a "pretty please" for followers at our new Twitter account – @easternscript. Yes, we're late to the party but I'll try to make up for it this year.

Finally, I'm self-congratulating as we approach our 25th birthday in a few weeks. There is much to reflect on at such a milestone but the main thing I'm feeling is incredibly grateful to the people I work with and for. Without them, Eastern Script doesn't exist. Here's to another 25 years! What does the year 2043 have in store for us?

**Anne Marie Murphy**  
President



## ANIMATION, A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT BEAST.

We work on a lot of animated productions. They're mainly for kids but we've also worked on plenty of more adult content (Archer comes to mind, and speaking of adult content how about Quads?). If you'd like to see a list of some of the animated projects we've worked on over the years, there's a pretty good one here: [www.easternscript.com/credits.html](http://www.easternscript.com/credits.html). Once at the page, after scrolling down to the header "TV Shows – Animated", click on those words to expand a list for your perusal.

A standard live-action tv series clearance report focuses on making sure that your project is not identifying actual people, businesses, and products. Your writer is sitting in a room making up names: a few lawyers, then the judge, a couple of arresting officers, 1 victim and 3 possible perpetrators. Oh and let's not forget the girlfriend, the ex-wife, and the estranged son. You then hire us to make sure that those names don't accidentally get you into trouble. For an animated project, however, there's an additional concern and that is merchandising, especially for children's projects. If your "Sparkle Magic Heart Fairy Gnomes" show finds a lot of little kids in its thrall, you will very likely soon consider the possibility of selling them backpacks, pyjamas, jigsaw puzzles, dolls, etcetera with SMHFG artwork on them. And you can't do that safely unless you already know that there are no conflicting trademark registrations out there. And you don't want to do that trademark research at the end of a successful first season because then it's too late, the sparkle magic heart fairy gnomes have already been named and fallen in love with.

So for animated projects, we do a bit more. Here is a bit more background, from our rate sheet for this work:

*For animation projects, in addition to the standard person, business, and product name searching that we do for a live action clearance report we also check animation types of characters (animals, robots, you-name-it) in anticipation of possible merchandising.*

*We look for those names in the available international trademark databases in class 28 (toys/games) and report our findings, in addition to searching the internet and a list of online character sources.*

*The report will tell you how many registrations we find in the trademark classes searched and then additional fees will apply if you need specifics (owner, goods & services descriptions) on those listings. Further customizing of reports is available for an additional charge. This could be a request for searching in additional trademark classes, searching in specific country databases, etc.*

Although it would seem that a kids' cartoon show would involve less clearance work than a one-hour law firm procedural, I can tell you from many years of experience that the trademark screening we do for animation can be far more time-consuming. We not only search the two hundred or so international trademark databases for conflicts but we also look in a collection of sources that we have developed over the years of working in this niche that cover the world of fictional characters. If you are trying to come up with a unique snuggly one-word name for your adorable kitten fairy gnome, I can tell you that we will be spending a lot of time trying to sort that one out.



## BIRTHDAY TIME, A BIG ONE



On September 3, Eastern Script will celebrate its 25th year in business. We are grateful for the many many wonderful people who have been in our life for all those years. We enjoy going to work each day to find a new set of questions to be answered. We thank our lucky stars for the opportunity to work hard in an industry that creates an infinity of interesting stories year after year.

Anne Marie thanks her colleagues who work “as hard as the day is long” and care about their contributions to all of our projects as much as they care about each other. For the opportunity to work hard for you year after year until suddenly a quarter of a century has passed, *we thank you*.

## SETTINGS: THINGS TO CONSIDER

CBC News interviewed *The Shape of Water*'s production designer Paul Austerberry in early March 2018 about his work on the recent Oscar winner. His job, according to Leva Lucs of the CBC “was to transform some of Toronto's most well-known landmarks into a hyper-stylized version of Baltimore in the 1960s. He mentioned on Friday to host Tom Power of CBC Radio's *q* that if the viewer ‘figured out it was Toronto, we'd be in trouble.’”

I had to laugh.

Mr. Austerberry was not trying to tell the interviewer that, in general, a Toronto setting for a story is a problem. He was

referring to the fact that the setting of the film is 1960s Baltimore and so the clearance work would have been conducted with that city as its focus. They were “shooting Toronto for Baltimore:” industry-speak for telling a story set in Baltimore Maryland but actually shooting the film in Toronto and masking all evidence of Toronto, Ontario. If a viewer watches the film and recognizes enough landmarks and locations to suggest that the story is taking place there, Toronto could well be considered the setting for the story and many story elements would then need re-clearing for a Toronto setting: character names, business names, police department jargon, addresses... the list goes on.

Austerberry's “we'd be in trouble” comment speaks to one of the pressures put on production by the clearance process. Because our job is to help you avoid the trouble that Mr. Austerberry refers to, our order form asks: Setting: Unspecified? Fictional city/town (please specify)? Actual city/town (please specify)? That answer tells us where we will conduct our research. We often work with productions that might not know where the story will be set when they send us the script. In those situations, we ask: “Will you show license plates?” and Will any local landmarks be visible?”

Productions have asked us on numerous occasions to re-do the research for a project because their setting has changed. Perhaps a provincial or state tax lured the project to a locale that is completely different from that which the screenwriter had imagined. We've re-done the research for a new setting, we've helped come up with fake setting names, we've even cleared projects for 2 different settings (in that case, the show had different content for U.S. and Canadian versions).

There are times when the best course of action is to use a completely fictional setting. Here is an example of when that might have been a good idea. The release of the 1992 feature film *Grand Canyon* (starring Kevin Kline, director Lawrence Kasdan) caused some outrage in the city of Inglewood, California, with city officials expressing their disappointment in how their city was portrayed in the film. Per the L.A. Times article published at the time, here is an example of the offending content: “*Kline is threatened by gang members on*



Kasdan explained to the L.A. Times that his goal in making the movie was to encourage conversation about what was happening in America's cities. "In Los Angeles", he said, "we had the fantasy that we could run to our neighborhoods and hide, but that illusion has been dispelled. One wrong turn plants you in enemy territory. There is no safe place any more, no sense of security." Use of a fictional city name would have prevented Inglewood's anger while still allowing Kasdan to make his point. The level of risk involved with using a real city name was surely discussed by the producers and production counsel. If that conversation had ended with a decision to go with a fictional setting, the clearance company could have sent fake place names to use instead.

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## WEBSERIES – PLANNING AHEAD FOR CLEARANCES

Many are the webseries coming to us these days. Sometimes they are spin-off content from broadcast television projects. Others are original content. Regardless of the idea source, they come for clearance reports and often at the very last minute. So I thought it worth a word or two here as reminder: if you need clearance work done for a webseries, please give a shout as early as possible and we'll sort out the rates and what kind of turnaround we can provide. If it's really the last minute, we would have to charge our standard "rush fee" of 50% more and I will tell you that this has happened with more than one webseries in the last couple of years. And also remember that although the scripts might well be much shorter than a standard episodic script, the level of exposure is just as high if not higher; material available on the internet has the broadest possible audience.



## WE'RE ON TWITTER

### THIS IS US: @EASTERNSCRIPT

It's going to take a while for me to get into the regular habit but my colleague Mark finally got me there and I'll do my best to keep it going. For me, it's kind of like the treadmill. Once I'm there it's smooth sailing and I'm glad to have invested the time but getting there...? Well, so many other tasks seem like the best next thing to do.

Please follow us and send input whenever you are so inspired. I'm trying to keep it light yet informative, even if it's just a photo of the office cat asleep on a pile of filing. Pretty much anything is considered post-worthy in our new uber-connected world, *right?*





## RECENT PROJECTS

**CLIFFORD THE BIG RED DOG** – “The award-winning TV series on PBS KIDS follows Clifford and his pals as they play, discover and interact with each other and the inhabitants of Birdwell Island, learning that good friends are what life is all about.”

[www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)

**THE INCREDIBLE 25TH YEAR OF MITZI BEARCLAW** – “The story follows a young Indigenous woman who reluctantly returns to her reserve to help her father care for her mother. When she comes home she encounters three spirits who encourage her to go on adventures.”

[www.nsi-canada.ca](http://www.nsi-canada.ca)

**LITTLE DOG** – “The darkly hilarious creation of actor/novelist Joel Thomas Hynes, led by showrunner/producer Sherry White, **LITTLE DOG** depicts an unlikely hero – and a truly unique world – with a comic edge that's far more evocative of the Coen Brothers than anything you'll see in a Newfoundland Tourism ad.

[www.littledogtv.com](http://www.littledogtv.com)

**OCTOBER FACTION** – “October Faction, from the legendary Steve Niles, is a refreshing take on family, horror, and the monsters we become when we disconnect from each other. A modern mash-up of The Addams Family and Buffy, October Faction takes place in a world where the scariest monsters are often of our own making.”

[www.idwentertainment.com](http://www.idwentertainment.com)

**RABID** – “After years of chatter and rumor, the Soska sisters — filmmakers Jen and Sylvia Soska, known as the 'Twisted Twins' in horror circles — are finally on deck to make their long-gestating remake of David Cronenberg's 1977 body horror classic Rabid.”

[www.indiewire.com](http://www.indiewire.com)

**THE REST OF US** – “Two mother-daughter duos must contend with their grief and complicated relationships with one another when the person who connects them dies.”

[www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)

**STREET LEGAL** – “Over 20 years after it ended, a reboot of the Canadian courtroom drama Street Legal is on the horizon. The CBC tells The Canadian Press it is in development on six new episodes of the series with Bernie Zukerman, president of Indian Grove Productions. The public broadcaster says original cast member Cynthia Dale is attached. It adds that ‘no further details are confirmed at this point.’”

[www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)

**V-WARS** – “After a mysterious disease begins transforming people into vampires, Dr. Luther Swann is pitted against his best friend, now a powerful vampire leader.”

[www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)

