

The Eastern Script

Shameless self-promotion since 2011

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



The spring season we have been waiting for has, so far, unfolded slowly, with cool enough temperatures that the bulb flowers are hanging around for a while. They had plenty of time to figure out their 2026 plan during those many months of snow cover.

In this year’s spring newsletter we’re highlighting two of the services we have been providing, reminding you that we do these things as part of clearance reports but can also do them on their own, on as-needed basis: tracking down estate contacts and rights holder research. As the school year winds down, we’re also reminding you about an educational service we offer: a clearances “boot camp.” Read on for more details on those topics and a few others.

Thank you for your continued patronage and support. Eastern Script has entered its thirty-third year of business with plenty of work from clients new and old and for that we are very grateful.

Anne Marie Murphy
President



ESTATES: A COMPLEX WEB OF OWNERSHIP



Photo by Scott Graham on Unsplash

Any individual with an original idea has the right to protect their expression of it during their lifespan and long after their death. That expression can turn into something as substantial as a painting or an invention, or less tangible such as a trade secret (think Colonel Sanders and his famous 11 herbs and spices “Original Recipe”).

An Estate Plan includes details and specific instructions regarding the financial and sentimental value of the work, as well as the management and transferrance of that work after the creator’s passing. They can have complex structures for a variety of reasons, including partnerships, joint ownership, licensing agreements, multiple transferrances and/or descendants, and what the law dictates is allowed in various jurisdictions. Even works that are recognized as being in the public domain may still have copyright restrictions connected to them depending on the copy or version of work identified in an Estate Plan.

These multi-layered Estate Holder structures can present a huge challenge in script clearances. For example, a client might come to us with a novel that they want to feature onscreen but the author passed away in 2019 and the publisher’s licensing agreement for that book recently expired. Who do they now talk to about obtaining permission to feature this work? We would start by reaching out to

the publishing agency who was involved with the previous agreement and find out the names of any individuals or firms that may have worked closely with the creator during the active publishing agreement, such as an agent, legal representation, manager, etc. Then the process becomes following a trail of bread crumbs involving emails, telephone calls, and deep dive internet searching to uncover the current and true holder of the rights to the book.

Here’s an example of our estate research for a quote, from a feature film report:

“Life is the art of drawing without an eraser”

It appears that you are featuring a quote from John William Gardner (1912-2002) who was Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under U.S. President Lyndon Johnson. We find this line attributed to him at many websites. In attempting to source the quote and find a permission contact, we contacted the media affairs office at Stanford University’s John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities. Leslie Anne Patron in that office tells us this: “We are not aware of any restrictions on using Gardner’s quotes, as long as they are properly attributed to him. We went ahead and contacted John Gardner’s family but so far we have not heard back; it is possible they will contact you directly. If we hear anything we’ll let you know.”

Navigating these tricky webs of estate contacts is a task we at Eastern Script are quite familiar with. Because of that, we have built a strong network of estate resources and contacts over time to aid us in the process. Occasionally, we’ll get lucky and the contact is in plain sight. But not every Estate Holder wishes to be so public with their ownership and that’s when tracking them down can be a rigorous puzzle, taking potentially weeks to solve. A past client had this to say about our efforts: “I’m actually very impressed by the frequency with which you often do find estate contacts! For the elusive ones, given the timeframe of most series’ shooting schedules

vis a vis the short window in which we get scripts, I'm not sure even a private detective would be able to track down the elusive estate contacts. Having said, that it would be a cool option to have a private detective on standby."

It was compelling comments like these that got our very own staffer Mark thinking, yes, it would be very useful to have private investigator skills to complement our clearance research. With that, his private investigator training began. We are proud to announce that Mark completed training and brings investigative research skills to enhance our clearance research. By using advanced searching techniques, he is able to take a much deeper look into the layers of an Estate Plan.

We have recently added an "Estates" section to our website page Library of Articles, an already comprehensive resource where you can find information on topics related to the work we do. Visit easternscript.com/resources/ to discover examples of how important it can be to not only ensure you have secured the necessary permission to use a creator's work, but to also be confident you have obtained that permission from the appropriate individual(s).



Photo by Amina Atar on Unsplash

OUR BOOT CAMP – AN INTENSIVE “FITNESS PROGRAM” FOR E&O ISSUES



Photo by Cookieshots on Unsplash

Maybe you are responsible for some part of the education of emerging filmmakers. You might be the person in charge of the IATSE local committee looking for training programs for production coordinators. You might be at a college or university that offers a “Production 101” class that touches on the business side of production... getting insurance, avoiding lawsuits, all that fun stuff. You can join the many organizations that have, over the years, invited Eastern Script’s founder Anne Marie Murphy to share her 36 years of experience with them.

Murphy has visited with many film program students across North America whose minds are blown by the many categories of things that can go wrong when you are unfamiliar with script clearance and title search issues. She has shared her many cautionary fables with this diverse list of film industry organizations:

- Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television
- Canadian Film Centre
- Emerson College Los Angeles Center MFA screenwriting program
- Harvard Square Scriptwriters
- Montreal Film Festival producer's insurance panel
- National Screen Institute
- Ontario Media Development Corporation
- Queen's University Department of Film Studies
- Rhode Island International Film Festival ScriptBiz workshop
- Whistler Film Festival Society talent program

Working from a PowerPoint presentation and reading from selected articles that illustrate points being made, she explains the categories of problems that are prevented by getting yourself a good script clearance report and title search. She answers the many questions that filmmakers bring to these sessions, whether her answer is the complex "Let's look at the chart showing when works enter the public domain in the U.S." ... or if her answer is the simple: "That question goes to production counsel." This level of instruction comes in handy when a novice receives a clearance report and does not know what to do with the information in it. Think of the Boot Camp as a user's manual for the reports needed for your errors & omissions insurance.

Finally, here are some pats on the back from two recent program participants:

"Through online sessions, participants learn the meticulous process of ensuring a film's script and title complies with copy-right laws, mitigating potential legal challenges. This interactive experience not only sharpens their attention to detail but also cultivates a deep understanding of the legal landscape that underpins creative filmmaking and their responsibilities."

"This business area of script development is an obscure area for many student writers and Murphy's presentation sheds important light on that process."

Gather your group and benefit from walking through a clearance report and title search with an industry veteran. Contact us for information about booking and pricing. And please note: this is not a class for learning how to enter this line of work. Although there is some explaining of how the work is done, it is not a training session for becoming a script clearance professional. To-date, the only prep we are aware of for doing this for a living happens on-the-job, if you are lucky enough to find work at a script clearance company.

For more information about booking and pricing, visit our website:

easternscript.com/services/boot-camp



Photo by Mark Olsen on Unsplash

TRACKING DOWN THE ELUSIVE RIGHTS HOLDER!



Photo by Olena Bohovyk on Unsplash

Are you working on a project that is based on someone else's life or someone else's creative work? Perhaps you were inspired by a short story you read and have turned it into a screenplay.

If you know your way around the legal landscape of this industry then you have already tracked down the author of the story and sorted out the "rights issue." You have based your screenplay on a copyrighted work whose author signed off on your adaptation. The author might want a few things... input, review of your adaptation, money...

Or maybe you are at the beginning of this process and are having a heck of a time trying to locate the author.

You've contacted the publisher who told you they do not own copyright and have no idea where the writer is now. And you've looked around a bit but found nothing for this author for whom that story was a one-off literary creation. He died decades ago and you don't know what to do next.

We have helped many projects at this starting point over the years and can probably help you too. As part of our script clearance reports, we have for decades been tracking down trademark holders, copyright owners, defunct manufacturers, deceased poets, publishers of out-of-print magazines, etc. We have quite a few tricks up our sleeves here, having been on this chase more than once since 1993. And one of our staff members recently added the helpful skills of a private investigator to his toolkit.

So if you are stuck looking for a rights holder, [contact us](#). We'll do a "next level dig" so that you can proceed with the confidence of a signed agreement with any underlying rights holder. Worst case scenario: if the search brings us nothing, you'll have a record of everything we tried that you can share with production counsel as your "due diligence" evidence.



CURRENCY USE – UPDATE



Photo by Jason Leung on Unsplash

In our Winter 2025 newsletter, we published an article about the use of currency on screen. It covered both U.S. and Canadian currency. Since then, we learned of an update that the Bank of Canada made to its policy on commercial use of Canadian money. We find no changes for U.S. currency at this time.

We contacted a spokesperson for Bank of Canada to clarify details of the policy and received the following information:

As outlined, advertisers, publishers and other commercial users must obtain the Bank's written permission to reproduce images of Canadian bank notes – be it physical, digital, or on screen. This includes film and television use.

The Bank recognizes that currency is an important symbol of value and that there are plenty of legitimate reasons for wanting to show images of Canadian bank notes. We will usually consent to film and television use, provided:

- *There is no risk that the reproduced image(s) could be misused by counterfeiters (still images of entire bank notes, for example), and*
- *The image does not tarnish the dignity and importance of currency to Canadians.*

Reproduction requests can be submitted directly through our [online form](#). We ask for 3 to 5 business to process any request.

Part of the response references the security of cash on set (counterfeiting risk) which we advocated for in our original article. But obtaining permission via the online form is a new development for us, and this will now be our standard advice. Luckily, it doesn't appear that obtaining permission is difficult or time consuming, so hooray for small mercies! ■

For more helpful and informative articles, visit our "Library of Articles" section on the resources page of our website:
easternscript.com/resources

RECENT PROJECTS

GRANVILLE GIRLS (TV Series)

“Netflix has given a greenlight to a new 8-episode historical romance series, *The Granville Girls*. The scripted series from showrunner and writer Adriana Maggs and Canadian indie producer Shaftesbury is based on *The Gilbert Girls* book series by Cat Cahill. The writer’s historical romance books are usually set in rural Colorado, but *The Granville Girls* will be shot north of the U.S. border amid the picturesque Canadian Rockies.”

By Ethan Vlessing www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/netflix-romance-drama-the-granville-girls-1236402875/

LILLIAN, NEXT DOOR (Feature film)

“WME Independent has boarded worldwide sales right to the spy story *Lillian, Next Door* starring four-Time Oscar nominee Jane Alexander, Marco Pigossi, and Kanoa Goo. Production is scheduled to begin this month in Nova Scotia, Canada, with Janice Engel (*Raise Hell: The Life & Times Of Molly Ivins*) directing the story for Wild at Heart Films, Emotion Pictures, and Snarky Elephant Productions.”

By Jeremy Kay www.screendaily.com/news/production-scheduled-for-canada-on-lillian-next-door-with-multiple-oscar-nominee-jane-alexander/5215499.article

INTO THE DEEP BLUE (Feature film)

“Erika Prevost (*The Boys*) has signed on to star alongside Sara Waisglass and Damian Hardung in *Into the Deep Blue*, an adaptation of the coming-of-age romance novel by Nicholl fellow Jennifer E. Archer. Adapted for the screen by Archer and slated to shoot this year, the film follows Nick (Hardung) and Fiona (Waisglass), lifelong friends who lean on each other through grief after losing their mothers, only to discover that healing may require confronting the deeper feelings they’ve long kept buried.”

By Matt Grobar deadline.com/2026/01/into-the-deep-blue-movie-casts-erika-prevost-1236683275/

MIDDLEBRIDGE MYSTERIES (Audiobook)

“From Canadian Screen Award winner Ken Cuperus, the creator of *Mistletoe Murders*, comes the highly anticipated spin-off series, *Middlebridge Mysteries*, featuring a stellar ensemble cast including Charles Van der Vaart (*Outlander*) and Mason Temple (*Ginny & Georgia*). *Middlebridge Mysteries* takes us back to school and along for a wild

ride as Violet finds herself embroiled in unexpected and dangerous situations, with only her wits to protect her.”

youngcreativepress.com/audiobook-review-middlebridge-mysteries-by-ken-cuperus/

MATTERS BEYOND (Animated feature)

“Cutting Class Media and Lakeside Animation have started production on the adult animated comedy feature, *Matters Beyond*. The feature is created by Daniel C. Katz (*Super Turbo Story Time*), who will also serve as writer, director and producer. The film focuses on a man who dies minutes after discovering life’s purpose and decides to embark on quest through purgatory for reincarnation.”

By Nicholas Sokic playbackonline.ca/2024/09/19/cutting-class-lakeside-to-produce-adult-animated-comedy-feature/

STEVIE AND THE SACRED ANIMALS (Animated series)

“A new Indigenous-led kids series is officially on the way. Manitoba’s Eagle Vision and Ontario’s Sinking Ship Entertainment Inc. have secured the greenlight for *Stevie and the Sacred Animals*, a 52-episode preschool show (11 minutes each) commissioned by CBC as lead, with APTN, Knowledge Kids, and TELUS Independent also on board. Production begins this spring, and the series is set to premiere in 2027.”

by Johnnie Jae redpopnews.com/stevie-and-the-sacred-animals-brings-anishinaabe-storytelling-language-to-preschool-tv-with-a-2027-premiere/

PLAY THE EDGE (Feature film)

“The Baltimorons star Liz Larsen, Dennis Boutsikaris and Zack Robidas have nabbed lead roles in *How to Rob* director Peter Horgan’s next movie, *Play the Edge*. Horgan’s sophomore crime feature follows a recently demoted pizza chef who plans a Christmas Eve robbery to get back at his boss, only to win the lottery just as the armed robbers he hired are about to arrive. The holiday thriller set in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and to shoot locally, will see what happens when the chef tries to put the brakes on a crime already in motion, according to a synopsis from the producers.”

By Etan Vlessing www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/liz-larsen-play-the-edge-peter-horgan-1236503481/