

# The Eastern Script

*Shameless self-promotion since 2011*

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## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



Big warm June greetings to all of you as we step into our first Pandemic Summer.

The world is very much changed from when the last newsletter joined it. As was true around the world, our work life here was rocked for the first months of the shutdown but more important, Eastern Script and its extended family managed to stay healthy since February.

Too many others were not so lucky. We are grateful for that health and for friendships that grew even stronger and for other things we never gave much thought to before, like noticing an extra roll of toilet paper in the bathroom.

We have a few things for you in this issue, the first is an article about ways to plan ahead combined with a way to fix things when you didn't know enough to plan ahead ("as produced" clearance reports). Then you'll find a Q&A with a person who provides another type of research to the entertainment industry (Lesley Myers). Finally, read about a research service that's frankly way down on my list... a piece of Hollywood history for you ("Bad Research"). "Recent Projects" wraps things up as usual.

Best wishes for good health – and happy summer.

Anne Marie Murphy  
President



## "AS PRODUCED" CLEARANCE REPORTS

Visiting training programs for emerging filmmakers and introducing them to "clearance stuff" is a thing for me. Whenever presented with the opportunity, I will run a dog-and-pony show either in person or via computer to explain the ins and outs of a script clearance report. It's a conversation that gives people the general idea about the legal concepts involved, the content of the reports, how we make them, and what to do with the advice they contain. An hour or two is usually long enough to cover the overview.

To any of you out there at a film school or training program: I enjoy these conversations and am happy to set one up for you. Our website has a list of some of the places where I have made these visits:

[www.easternscript.com/contact-us/staff/anne-marie-murphy-speaking-engagements/](http://www.easternscript.com/contact-us/staff/anne-marie-murphy-speaking-engagements/)

With enough time in advance of this session, it's always helpful for me to read at least one of the scripts from the group I visit. Then I will bring specific notes to move along the clearance process for one of your projects. Plus sending me any questions ahead of time that are specific to your projects makes the session that much more valuable.

One of the worst discoveries you might make as a new filmmaker is that there is this thing called a script clearance report (hence my training visits!) and you didn't get one before production and now your back is up against the wall because of a whole bucket load of things that didn't get checked. There is no shortage of horror stories on this front. An article (Danger: High Clearance: Student Films on the Commercial Market) that provides a few of those stories is archived at our "Resources" page here:

[www.easternscript.com/PDFs/danger-high-clearance.pdf](http://www.easternscript.com/PDFs/danger-high-clearance.pdf)

Read it and weep over the USC award-winning student film that waited 2 years (and then, only in selected European venues) to see the light of day because its music use had not been cleared. There are other "cautionary tales" in the article,

making it a good one to read if you are just beginning to learn what is at stake.

Although it sure might feel like it's too late, we can still help you with a script clearance report if you find out that you need one after your project has been shot and assembled. This is a call we get from time to time and usually it's someone who really needs a hand and needs it quickly. We'll ask for the shooting draft of the script and a link to a means of viewing the completed project online. We watch the film – referring to the script as needed – then compile a list of what needs research and prepare a report for you. We obviously won't be giving our usual multiple standard "clear alternatives" for scripted names in this situation. What we will do, though, is provide as much detail as we can about the conflicts we find and how you can reach that person/business/etc. to make whatever arrangements are needed. You can reach out to me directly for this at [amm@easternscript.com](mailto:amm@easternscript.com) or give a shout to our general inbox at [incoming@easternscript.com](mailto:incoming@easternscript.com).

The best billing approach we've found for "as produced" reports is simply to bill at the options available as if you were ordering the work ahead of production. We have 4 different turnaround times (10, 7, 5, and 3 business days) with 4 different prices. The faster the report turnaround, the more expensive. Whether you meet us with plenty of foresight in the form of training program or with your back against the wall needing an "as produced" report, we look forward to helping out.

**"I listened very, very carefully to the world around me to pick up the signals of when trouble was coming. Not that I could stop it. But it made me observant."**

Sonia Sotomayor,  
Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States

## CONVERSATION WITH LESLEY MYERS: PRODUCTION CLEARANCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES



Photo by Bernard Spragg

From the Referrals page of our website, here is some background:

*Lesley works directly with crew, producers, production counsel and rights-holders to ensure intellectual property, copyrighted material and trademarks are cleared to appear on-camera. Lesley provides script breakdowns and reviews script clearance reports with an eye to ensuring recommendations are implemented. Lesley also works on requests from production departments (i.e. sets, props, costumes, etc.) making direct approaches to rights-holders to secure permissions. By the end of filming Lesley provides detailed documentation to producers for inclusion with deliverables to studios and distributors.*

**ES:** What would you say are the most important skills in your toolbox?

**LM:** Having a solid grasp of what each department needs and how they work is the most important skill I employ. While I represent the needs of the legal team I have to be aware of the needs of the rest of the creative team (Writer, Director, Designer, Actor etc.) and the crew who will be handling the

material on-set (Props, Set Dressing, Costumes etc.). All of these people have a stake in how a copyrighted item will be used and this collection of needs affects the way I approach a clearance request. Basically it boils down to understanding the creative context of how the copyrighted material will appear onscreen and applying that knowledge to my discussions with the copyright holder.

**ES:** What jobs in your past led you to this role?

**LM:** Production Coordinator and Art Department Coordinator for sure, but one job I credit for providing me a deeper understanding of how a film project goes from development through to final delivery is Production Supervisor. In this role I participated in film projects for their full life-span, from pitch right through to release. As this was for a Canadian independent production company we didn't have studio resources to rely on. I learned about the potential for devastating consequences should deliverables be missed. When the Post Production and Legal team are trying to wrap things up it is too late to discover a project is missing documentation, agreements and clearance releases!

**ES:** Which person in the production office typically hires someone in this position? Once underway, which people in the production will be on the cc: for your reports?

**LM:** Depending on the project I've been interviewed by Producers, Studio Reps, Art Department and Story Department but typically it's the PM or Line Producer who hires me. My final Clearance Report goes out to Producers, Production Staff, Art Department, Legal Counsel as well as various Studio representatives.

**ES:** I don't recall this position existing when I started out in script clearances many years ago. Do you know much about how this job became a free-standing role (e.g. "budgets are bigger/it can be afforded," "more awareness of the need")?

**LM:** Oh yes I remember those days too... The first clearances I did were when I worked as an Art Department Coordinator on "Getting Away with Murder"(1996). That film included my first approach to a sports franchise – I remember thinking that the MLB requirements were so over-the-top

(i.e. permission required from the league, the team and the player), but now these multilevel permissions are standard. At that time it was normal to rent unattributed artwork from prop houses and create graphics using crew names. Now of course the understanding of copyright has expanded greatly and we don't put artwork on a set without a release. The Art Department also has changed, employing talented Graphics Artists who create designs in-house... and as a result I rely on Eastern Script to clear the many names we need for people, businesses and products!

How I contact the rights-holder has changed too. I used to have a library of yellow pages in my kit for locations all across Canada and the USA – I used to beg cast & crew to bring me their local phone books when they flew into Toronto. Now it only takes a simple Google search to find the head office for a trademark or copyright holder, but sadly there are no longer helpful receptionists standing by and it sometimes takes considerable sleuthing to reach a decision-maker who will evaluate and approve my pitch.

Another reason the Clearance job has grown is because the guidelines change from show to show. This can be due simply to format - broadcast television avoids copyrighted materials so as not to cross potential advertisers whereas feature films typically want to see brand names to provide a truthful representation of the world. Copyright is a complex area of law and is constantly evolving as court challenges are constant in Canada, the USA and abroad. Productions are typically being produced under a Canadian legal entity for a US parent or distributor and there is a combination of Canadian Production Counsel and US Studio Legal representation. In any event, I spend a lot of time on each project working to understand the guidelines in place and supporting the crew in obtaining releases from the copyright holder.

Finally, I have to provide clear and detailed records of all the decisions, cleared names and permissions collected during production. Questions arise at all stages of production, post-production and delivery so the breakdowns have to be solid. I also provide information regarding any non-standard contract agreements, credits or restrictions.

**ES:** Is there a difference in your role/responsibilities at a feature film vs. a series?

**LM:** It is basically the same, however sometimes in television I seem to do more research – the creative team identifies a need but very often it is a general idea and I might provide them an approved public domain archive or a product placement company to work with. For features, the creative team typically identifies specifically the item they want to use and I then work on sourcing that exact item or image and ideally securing permission from the copyright holder.



Photo by Sarah Pflug via Wunderstock

**ES:** Can you share a few recent horror stories of things that were, maybe, crazy complicated, insanely last minute, seemed impossible when first asked – etcetera?

**LM:** Oh there are so many stories...

On a recent feature film the Designer asked for an original edition art book for use as a hero prop. The Artist's Estate and the Publisher in France refused at first but after a long back and forth email conversation in which we promised to show the book in an authentic, respectful, and positive manner, they finally granted permission! Then, we got our hands on that expensive first-edition book and it was far too delicate to be used as a prop. We went back to the publisher for permission to reproduce the slip cover of the book, and we were refused because (throwing our own argument back in our face)... it would not be "authentic"! Finally, after several more



emails, in the interest of “the preservation of an esteemed publication” they allowed us to make a reproduction of the cover. On-screen one would never know the difference.

The worst is when you ask for permission from a group – for example, to use a clip from an old sitcom for use as playback on a television screen. Seems simple, and the Producer is willing to pay SAG fees, then one of the original actors simply says “no”.

Tattoos are one of my least favourite things to clear because the copyright is typically held by the Tattoo Artist and by their nature, tattoos are often acquired quite randomly! On one very challenging show an elaborate neck tattoo was established on a character at a key script point – it was prominently displayed in-frame before anyone thought to check. The actor had gotten this tattoo in jail and it was created by multiple artists with names like “Big Joe” so it was simply impossible to clear.

**ES:** Would you explain the difference between what you do as an outside contracted service and what a person working as IATSE/DGC clearance coordinator would do?

**LM:** That is a complex issue as well, but the basic difference is that my work is very much that of a consultant and the client controls the result of the work I do but not how it will be done. As an independent Clearance Services provider, my work is done off-site and I have discretion over how long and when I work. In negotiating with copyright holders on behalf of the Producer, I must apply my understanding of filming, business affairs, budget and legal requirements and I am accountable to the Producer, but also to the Studio and Production Counsel who may have separate interests in terms of how legal affairs are managed and risk is to be avoided.

At the end of the day, I am always fascinated and challenged by the work and I love what I do.

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Photo by Alexey Turenkov

## BAD RESEARCH

I've always loved movies and always loved finding things out, so a research job in a Hollywood setting was ideal for me. I moved to southern California for the second time in August of 1990 where I started a Master's degree in film history at a school only a few miles from Hollywood and Vine: the UCLA campus in Westwood. Much to my parents' chagrin, I'm sure, I had no specific career in mind with that plan but I knew it would place me in an academic or professional area that I would love. It did.

The words Hollywood and research, when combined, can bring many activities to mind. There are so many types of research in the entertainment industry. Ours is only one small slice of it. We read scripts to make sure that the story elements don't identify real people or businesses who might be able to take legal action against the project's producer for any number of reasons (invasion of privacy, trademark infringement, passing off, copyright infringement, etc.). We also do some fact-checking. So, we spend most of the day finding things out. On a recent morning, for example, I needed these answers:

- Are there any salad or vegetable products in the world called "Masked Veggies"?
- What is the age of and who was the composer of the tune "Jingle Bells"?
- Are there any prominent animal characters by the name Gameshow Gator?
- Do sandhill cranes dance? if yes, do they dance to express happiness

Even more Hollywood research happens in the writer's room where they undertake substantial fact-checking and confirming historical accuracy. The art department (props, costumes, set decorators) is looking into its own sources to get things right, making sure that the street lights in the 1912 New York City melodrama are accurate for the time and place, that the buttons on the Crimean War soldier's uniform are historically accurate, that the shape of the Coca-Cola bottle is

right for the murder mystery set in 1899 Tennessee. All this research: so much fun in the chase, so much time involved to get the proper details, so important to making a good product.

During the early weeks of the pandemic lockdown, however, I read about the existence of an amazingly immoral perversion of Hollywood + research in a wonderful book by film historian Jon Lewis called *Hard-Boiled Hollywood* (University of California Press, 2017). From the back cover:

*"Hard-Boiled Hollywood focuses on the lives lost at the crossroads between a dreamed-of Los Angeles and the real thing after the Second World War, where reality was anything but glamorous."*

In his 2017 book, Lewis discusses the infamous death of the Black Dahlia, the connections between the Mafia and the Hollywood studios, the dark chapter of HUAC, and the unhappy demises of actresses Barbara Payton and Marilyn Monroe. He paints a dark picture of life after the second World War in Hollywood, a city filled with dreamers (they had been going there for decades) who often found their only way "in" was by some form of crime. He also writes at length about gossip columnists Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons and their involvement in various sordid chapters of the era. Another contemporary publishing world figure Robert Harrison (publisher of *Confidential* magazine) figures prominently in Lewis' narrative too.

Enter Marjorie and Fred Meade who, according to Lewis: "ran the dubious outfit Hollywood Research, which blackmailed celebrities into paying hush money to Confidential to forestall publication of embarrassing items and on occasion, in a twist on Hopper and Parsons' many quid-pro-quo deals, suppressed a negative story in exchange for embarrassing items about other celebrities." I saw that business name and got up, got a sticky note, and flagged it for looking into further. Hollywood! Research! That's what I do!

Internet searching brought me further details about the company, such as this in [Vanity Fair](#) article from Neal Gabler's (April 2003) "[Confidential's Reign Of Terror: Inside the magazine that catalyzed the celebrity tabloid culture](#)":

*"Marjorie and Fred Meade arrived in L.A. in January 1955... But when Fred's fiberglass business began failing, Harrison gave them \$150,000 to start Hollywood Research Inc. The bureau, which Harrison would incorporate that July, consisted of Marjorie and Fred. Its primary function was to collect affidavits from sources and send them on to New York, where they would be converted into articles."*

In other words: Hollywood Research spent its days following up leads in order to "put the squeeze" on celebrities who had been involved in any range of activities that they might consider paying hush money for. The assistant attorney general at the time claimed that "Records will show that they [the Meades] bought stories from people of the night life, questionable characters, private detectives."

[latimesblogs.latimes.com/thedailymirror/2007/08/confidential-te.html](https://latimesblogs.latimes.com/thedailymirror/2007/08/confidential-te.html)

Wikipedia adds that Marjorie Meade would prepare the stories for Confidential and "once a proposed story was assembled, usually either she or an agent visited the subject and presented a copy with a 'buy-back' proposal."

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidential\\_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidential_(magazine))

Adding her research to a profile of the company, author/attorney Joanna Elm describes skills which would certainly intrigue me in a job applicant at Eastern Script: "The Meades also worked on hundreds of 'verification' assignments for [Confidential](#). They searched material in the public record — land titles, birth and death records, criminal records — to confirm Confidential articles."

[www.joannaelm.com/tag/confidential-magazine/](https://www.joannaelm.com/tag/confidential-magazine/)

I'm sharing all this as evidence of pandemic lockdown time well spent in expanding my understanding of the role of research in Hollywood history. Hollywood + research does not always equal accurate buttons on soldier's uniforms. There are many motivations for finding things out.

#### For further reading:

[Mr. Confidential: The Man, His Magazine & The Movieland Massacre That Changed Hollywood Forever](#) (Samuel Bernstein, Walford Press, 1st edition, November 27, 2006).



Photo by Shinya via Wunderstock



## RECENT PROJECTS

**DENIS AND ME** – “Aimed at six- to nine-year-olds, Denis and Me will revolve around the world of Denis (who is featured in the show as an eight-year-old) and his cat sidekick Sir Meows A Lot. Diana Moore (Ollie the Boy Who Became What He Ate, Stella and Sam) and Headspinner’s Michelle Melanson are developing the project with Kopotun, who has more than six million subscribers and two billion views on his YouTube channel.”

Alexandra Whyte, [kidscreen.com/2018/09/27/headspinner-to-take-youtuber-denis-daily-to-tv/](https://kidscreen.com/2018/09/27/headspinner-to-take-youtuber-denis-daily-to-tv/)

**DONKEY HODIE** – “The imaginative puppet series follows the adventures of Donkey Hodie, the granddaughter of the original Donkey Hodie character (now known as ‘Grampy Hodie’), a puppet from MISTER ROGERS’ NEIGHBORHOOD, who appeared in 59 episodes of the beloved classic children’s show from 1968-1993. The new multiplatform show is filmed at WTTW, the flagship PBS station in Chicago.”

[www.fredrogers.org/2020/01/10/pbs-kids-announces-donkey-hodie-premiering-winter-2021/](https://www.fredrogers.org/2020/01/10/pbs-kids-announces-donkey-hodie-premiering-winter-2021/)

**DOOMLANDS** – “Quibi has handed a series order to Doomlands (working title) an adult animated comedy from Josh O’Keefe, Josh Bowen (Gary and His Demons) and Look Mom! Productions, a Blue Ant Studios company that specializes in original animated programming for teens and adults. Created and directed by O’Keefe, in Doomlands (wt), the infamous Danny Doom and aspiring bartender Lhandi sling beers across a hellish wasteland in their mobile subterranean pub: The Oasis. In order to survive, all the crew needs to do is not kill each other.”

DenisePetski, [deadline.com/2020/04/quibi-orders-adult-animated-comedy-series-doomlands-josh-okeefe-look-mom-productions-1202909467/](https://deadline.com/2020/04/quibi-orders-adult-animated-comedy-series-doomlands-josh-okeefe-look-mom-productions-1202909467/)

**HAZY LITTLE THING** – “Follows writer Billie through a birthday weekend full of friends and family rushing to her ‘rescue’ after she ‘accidentally’ threatens suicide on social media.”

[www.imdb.com/title/tt10343642/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10343642/)

**HOTEL PARANORMAL** – “Dan Aykroyd is lending his familiar voice to an eerie new series. In the first look at Hotel Paranormal, T+E’s new original 10-part documentary series follows the terrifying and unbelievably true stories of regular people who have come face-to-face with ghostly hotel guests, narrated by the Canadian icon.”

Aynslee Darmon, [etc.canada.com/news/642575/dan-aykroyd-narrates-hotel-paranormal-in-eerie-first-look-at-upcoming-docuseries/](https://etc.canada.com/news/642575/dan-aykroyd-narrates-hotel-paranormal-in-eerie-first-look-at-upcoming-docuseries/)

**MAGNIFICENT BEAST** – “Why is pork a forbidden food for Jews and Muslims? In a search for the historical roots of the pig taboo, the filmmakers travel around the world interviewing archaeologists, religious scholars, hunters and pet pig owners. Their journey reveals the many ways this intelligent and complex animal has found its way into religious scripture, onto our dinner tables, and even into our homes.”

[www.facebook.com/magnificentbeastmovie/](https://www.facebook.com/magnificentbeastmovie/)

**TELL ME I LOVE YOU** – “A romantic comedy set in beachfront Malibu, and the vibrant Hollywood music scene... Tell Me I Love You tells the story of three talented young musicians (Ben, Ally, Melanie) roommates, bandmates and ex-lovers who pull off a hilarious scam to pay for their first album.”

[tellmeiloveyouthemovie.com](https://tellmeiloveyouthemovie.com)

**THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE THIS, ANYPLACE** – “looks at the transformation of a much-loved Toronto landmark, the Honest Ed’s block, through the stories of its community members who are forced to relocate when it is sold to a developer. The film chronicles the evolution of their lives as they reconcile their history with the future, all while facing the biggest housing crisis the country has ever seen.”

[www.theresnoplacelikethisplace.com](https://www.theresnoplacelikethisplace.com)