By Roberta Isleib, Past President

In 2007, Sisters in Crime spent a lot of time looking back — and celebrating. There was a lot to celebrate over 20 years! Through the enthusiastic governance of its founding mothers and successive leaders, SinC has grown to represent nearly 3,500 members. But over the past year, the board began to realize that it was time to take stock of our mission and vision. Were we still on the same path our founders envisioned? Should we be? In order to help focus our future efforts, we voted to hire association management specialist Bob Harris to conduct a strategic planning workshop for the day prior to our annual board meeting in October.

Board members approached the idea of strategic planning (eight straight hours cooped up in a meeting room with a business consultant!) with some trepidation. Some of us imagined agonizing team-building exercises involving trust falls or rope climbs. Others pictured coma-inducing lectures. Our fears were soon allayed by Bob Harris’ personable and interesting approach (and his insistence on bowls of M&M’s.) Before the meeting, Bob studied the organization’s bylaws, financial reports, website, newsletters, incorporation documents and more. And each of our board members had been asked to provide her or his answers to the following prompts:

1. This meeting will be a success for this year and beyond if we...
2. What do you believe should be the top three goals or priorities for the organization in the next three to five years?

Bob explained that an association’s image is made up of the mission, the vision and a tagline. The mission statement is often a sentence or two that answers these questions: “Who are we? Who do we serve? What do we offer?” The vision statement should be a long-term, compelling statement about the intended outcome if the organization is entirely successful. The tagline supplements the image as a short, memorable statement.

We began to examine SinC’s longtime mission statement:

“To combat discrimination against women in the mystery field, educate publishers and the general public as to inequities in the treatment of female authors, raise the level of awareness of their contributions to the field, and promote the professional advancement of women who write mysteries.”

After several hours of discussion, we developed this new statement to guide our strategic plan, which the board believes captures the intent of the original mission but with renewed clarity.

“The mission of Sisters in Crime is to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry.”

From the mission statement, came our vision:

“Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers.”

And our tagline will remain the motto we used for our 20th Anniversary: “SinC into a Good Mystery!”

The remainder of the day was dedicated to articulating our most important goals and then developing strategies and action plans to carry them out. You will be hearing a lot more about these five goals:

- Expanded advocacy, monitoring and reporting
- Professional education and career development
- Membership growth and services
- Networking and forums for members
- Development of association structure and resources

Outgoing, incoming and ongoing board members left the meeting exhausted but filled with enthusiasm for the tasks ahead of us. We will be looking for volunteers to help us on committees. From the beginning, our strength has been our enthusiasm for the tasks ahead of us. We will be looking for volunteers to help us on committees. From the beginning, our strength has been our members. We look forward to continuing to work for and with you for another 20 years — at least.

This project supports SinC’s Association Structure goal.