

What's Going On

4A The Babylon Line

A new play at Lincoln Center takes place in 1967 Levittown on Long Island



8A Cyndi Lauper

Lauper comes Home For The Holidays at the Beacon and raises money to help out homeless LGBTQ youth



Plus Camps & Schools Holiday Guide

Around our schools and gift ideas

A Written World Where Characters Count

Hicksville Public Library's Debbie De Louise creates mystery series

BY FRANK RIZZO

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"Tell me a story."

That age-old human need to give shape to and make sense of messy, chaotic life feeds the ever popular publishing industry, which puts out tens of thousands of fiction titles each year.

Debbie De Louise is a relative newcomer in this crowded field, hoping to make the transition from self-publishing to having her books released under the imprint of a large, established publisher.

The Hicksville resident, a reference librarian at the Hicksville Public Library, recently published her third novel, and second in the Cobble Cove mystery series. *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* follows *A Stone's Throw* in chronicling the adventures of Alicia Fairmont, a librarian who leaves Long Island for a fictional upstate town after her husband is killed in a hit-and-run, finds love with a local newspaper publisher, and gets herself drawn into mysteries with what De Louise calls "a twist."

In picking the popular mystery field, De Louise has chosen a well-trod path with a surplus of accomplished scribes. This does not faze the lifelong writer, who has published in what she called "a variety of genres."

"Every plot has been taken," she admits, "but it's the characters that make the story. I tend to write character-based books. Of course, there is [plot and] action, but I tend to delve into the characters."

As with any writer, ideas come from a wide variety of sources.

"I've used events from my life, things I've read about, things I've watched on TV," she said. "But everything is fictionalized. If I recall something that happened to me that is unique, I might put it into a book, but I want to make it better. I modify it so that it's more interesting than what really happened."

From Manuscripts To Electrons

As with many writers, De Louise is used to rejection, starting in the pre-Internet era when things were done through what is now called "snail mail."

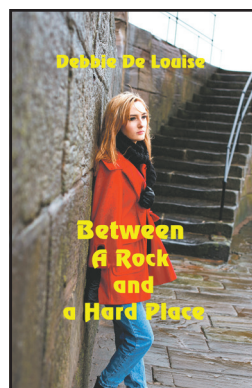
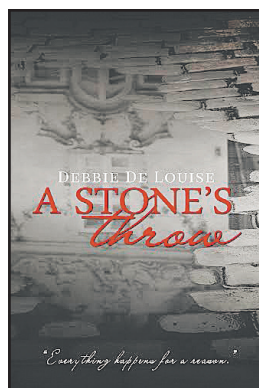
"My manuscripts used to be mailed—they weighed a ton," she recalled of the thick stacks of typewritten pages.

"Today, they're emailed, which is good and bad...it increases the number of queries publishers receive," she said. "It takes quite a bit of time for publishers to get back to you."

Social media has opened up a new world of possibilities for aspiring authors—not just for queries,



Author Debbie De Louise shows off her books at the Hicksville Public Library, where she is a reference librarian.



but in connecting with other writers.

With the revolution in desktop publishing and emergence of Internet-based publishing firms, opportunities to introduce one's written work to the reading public have expanded.

De Louise managed to get interest in her Cobble Cove mysteries via a Twitter "pitch to publishers" process (reduced, of course, to "pit2pub"). "You have to compose a tweet that will attract the attention of a publisher or editor that participates," she related.

Her tweeted query for her first novel was: "#A, #RS Widowed librarian finds audio recording that implicates her new lover in husband's murder." She went on to note "that #A stands for Adult and #RS

is romantic suspense. That's how I was targeting it at the time, but it turned out to be more of a cozy mystery."

In the case of *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*: "Husband & Wife #M authors risk their lives to save their kidnapped twin babies in a case more puzzling than their own books." (#M is for mystery.)

"There were lots of responses to my tweets," she noted.

Up The Publishing Ladder

De Louise rode the wave of the self-publishing movement. In 2008, through booklocker.com, she made her author debut with *Cloudy Rainbow*, a romantic mystery with paranormal elements that was inspired by her cat.

Her sophomore book, *A Stone's Throw*, was published by Limitless Press, while her latest is on the Solstice Publishing label. Going through established publishers allowed her to plug into a support system that she would not otherwise have access to. It allowed for more promotional and networking opportunities.

"I've written another book, which has not been queried," De Louise said of a work that is not part of the mystery series. "I intend to find an agent—and I've had responses from them—and look for a large publisher. I'm confident because I feel that with each book I'm growing, I'm getting better."

About The Author

De Louise wrote the following on Amazon: "I have a BA in English and an MLS in Library Science. I received the Lawrence C. Lobaugh Memorial Award in Journalism from Long Island University/C.W. Post for my work as features editor on the student newspaper. I'm a member of the Cat Writer's Association and Sisters-in-Crime Association and have published articles in *Cats Magazine* and *Catnip* (Tufts University Veterinary Newsletter). My short mystery, "Stitches in Time" was published in the *Cat Crimes Through Time Anthology*, (1999). I live on Long Island with my husband, daughter, and two cats."

The Author Talks

De Louise will give a talk at the Hicksville Public Library, 169 Jerusalem Ave., on Friday, Dec. 9 from 2 to 3 p.m. She will share excerpts from the book and answer audience questions. No registration is required.