

Stet

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

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FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Writing for the Web— Building a site from the outside in

LISA MAYER AND HILARY MARSH

All too often, companies and organizations plan and create Web sites without defining the audience or knowing how to reach them effectively. This approach is extremely risky and may cause the site to fall short of its goals.

Writers and usability experts can help. They can define a site's goals, prioritize its audiences, and meet its business needs. By focusing on the communication and business goals for the site, writers increase the value of their own services and their role in creating the Web site! The result? A Web site that is organized and developed with the audience in mind will work for everyone.

Now you can learn how to transform the writer's role from word-smith to strategic partner. Join Hilary Marsh, a content strategy and content management consultant, and Nick Gracilla, developer and user-focused design professional, at IWOC's February 10 program. They will show examples of sites with effective and less-than-effective strategies and content, cover why and how writers can get involved earlier, and illustrate the three elements of Web site creation. You will leave with knowledge and resources that will make you a more valuable addition to any Web team.

Join us February 10 at the Feltre School, 22 West Erie, at 5 PM for networking and 6 PM for the program. ✍

WRITING FOR THE WEB

Tuesday, February 10

The Feltre School

22 West Erie

Networking 5 PM

Program 6 PM

Professional members

FREE

Associate members \$5

Nonmembers \$15

IWOC meets for a program and networking the second Tuesday of every month.

About the speakers

Hilary Marsh, President, Content Company

Content Company is a content management and content strategy consulting firm with corporate, association, and nonprofit clients including Household International, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, the American Hospital Association, and the Donors Forum.

Prior to forming Content Company, Marsh led the content strategy practice of Sapient, an e-business consulting firm. She has spoken about Web content writing, strategy, and management at national conferences for IQPC and Ragan Communications and local organizations. She has taught classes in Web content and information architecture for the University of Chicago. Before focusing on content consulting, she wrote and edited for Web sites, magazines, catalogs, and businesses. Marsh is the founder of NetContent/Chicago, one of only three organizations in the world for people involved with online content.

Nicholas Gracilla, President, Neoteric Design

Neoteric Design has provided site redesign, technical development, and practical usability testing services to the Chicagoland business and nonprofit communities since 1999, working with McDonald's, Shure Inc., the Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce, AmeriSpec, and numerous advertising and marketing agencies.

Gracilla started Neoteric Design after pursuing graduate work at Northwestern University, where he taught courses in Ethics and Philosophy at University College. He is an active member of the Chicago Usability Professionals Association and the Lincoln Park Business Development Institute. He also serves on the board of the Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce. He has given talks and presentations to area Chambers, businesses, and programming groups.

iWOC

Independent Writers of Chicago

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JANUARY MEETING RECAP

IWOC's business is getting you business

BY HARRY KARABEL

In a history-making move, IWOC is channeling its energy, funds, and marketing muscle away from the traditional print directory and into a more active, functional, and user-friendly Web site. At the January 13 meeting, President Jim Leman, Vice President Harry Karabel, our new Parliamentarian and former President Jennifer Oatfield, and Treasurer Alan Laduzinsky delivered the IWOC Board's perspective on the need for change, the plans for change, and the associated price tag in a presentation entitled: "IWOC's Business is Getting You Business."

"It is our responsibility to make sure that IWOC sustains its reputation as 'the place to be' for freelance writers," Jim Leman said. As the downturn in the economy reduced IWOC membership, some members perceived a reduced value in IWOC's ability to help them get new business. As Leman explained it, the Board proposed "... a Web-based solution that would enhance current methods for helping members develop new business and give IWOC a highly visible and dynamic presence on the Web."

IWOC has always produced an annual IWOC directory and mailed it to a database of potential clients. The cost of the print directory is \$17,000. The client database changes constantly, and it has become difficult to determine whether potential clients are actually receiving the book. Members who join IWOC mid-year have to wait until the following year to be added to the directory.

The other methods for marketing IWOC membership are the Job Line and the current Web site. The Job Line has not functioned effectively for several years. The current Web site has an online directory that was constructed by volunteers and relies on older software. The limitations of that software mean it cannot be searched by keyword, is difficult to navigate in places and cannot capture visitor data. In addition, there were no funds for marketing the site. The need to update the Web site was clear.

What became clearer to the Board, on further investigation, was the need to make the Web site the backbone of our marketing effort. (We want to thank the volunteers who have done an excellent job maintaining the Web site with absolutely no budget, including Elizabeth Adelman, Tom Kepler and Joel Kinnan).

A NEW, DYNAMIC WEB SITE

The new Web site will contain, among other valuable new features, a completely searchable online directory that can be readily updated at any time. Individual member listings can be more in-depth, and members will also have the option of creating their own linkable Web pages. Navigation will be simplified, and the Job Line will be much simpler for potential clients to use.

The new look of the site should create a more positive first impression of the organization and its membership. Directories can be printed on demand for those who want them, and a quick-print run of directories will be made

the first year for those clients who desire one.

Because the Web-based directory is less expensive than the more traditional printed one, the leftover funds will be used to market the Web site and the value of IWOC's members and membership to potential clients. "The Web solution gives us the opportunity to drive clients from almost anywhere to IWOC members," Jim Leman explained.

A change this dramatic requires support from the membership. When the presentation was completed and questions were answered, President Jim Leman asked for a vote from the membership to move forward on the Board's proposal. The support was unanimous!

The Board is currently reviewing proposals from vendors for retooling the Web site and hopes to have a vendor decision in February. The new site could be up as early as April.

YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Regardless of the vendor chosen, IWOC will need members to function as Webmasters. We also need people to help market the new site.

If you are interested in helping out, please contact:

Jim Leman:
jleman@newsletterbureau.com
847-231-5682
or
Jennifer Oatfield:
Jennifer@joatfield.com
773-763-7948

IWOC and Chicago Women in Publishing co-sponsor March 9 program with novelist Audrey Niffenegger

BY MARILYN HOPKINS

Audrey Niffenegger, a Chicago writer, visual artist, and teacher, grabbed the brass ring the first time out with her highly acclaimed debut novel, *The Time Traveler's Wife*. On March 9, she will reveal how she wrote it, got it published, and the whirlwind life she's been living ever since.

You'll learn more about her, her book, and the program in next month's *Stet*, but we want you to mark your calendars now for this special event. And please note that our March meeting will be at a different location.

CHANGE OF PACE, CHANGE OF VENUE

IWOC is co-sponsoring this special event with Chicago Women in

Publishing (CWIP), and we'll be meeting at the Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Avenue, just south of Madison Street, to accommodate a larger crowd.

Our usual schedule will be slightly altered, with networking from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. and the program from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. or thereabouts.

Regular meeting fees apply: members free, associates \$5 and non-members \$15. There'll be coffee, tea, cookies and brownies, and a chance to meet new and old friends. Plans for our usual Dutch Treat dinner are still in development. We'll have more information in next month's *Stet*.

If you're planning to attend, please call the IWOC office at 847/855-6670 so we'll know how many people to expect.

The Chicago Athletic Association (CAA) is easy to reach by any El train or bus coming into the Loop or along Michigan Ave. Best parking is in the Grant Park North Garage. If you're heading north on Michigan, use the entrance at Madison. If you're heading south on Michigan use the entrance at Washington. Park on the lower level and use the Monroe pedestrian exit.

Mark your calendars for March 9th. Bring your questions and your literary friends for an interesting evening with Chicago's own Audrey Niffenegger. ✍

Review: Software that helps you find the right word

BY RICHARD L. EASTLINE

This is another in an irregular series devoted to books and Internet sites that are popularly classified as reference source material.

Word Menu (software), by Stephen Glazier
For Windows ver. 98 and later or Mac OS X (10.1 or greater)
Minimum of 12.7MB file size
\$34.95 downloaded from their Web site
(www.wordmenu.com). Free trial available.

Somebody once said that only smart people should tackle the *New York Times* crossword puzzle. Others no doubt observed that accepting the challenge is what made them smarter. In the end, one and all profit by increasing their word familiarity. And so it is with Word Menu, the downloaded software.

You may possess a wide-ranging vocabulary—but the words just don't come to mind within the context of thoughts that you're trying to put into prose. That's the time for a quick survey of nouns or verbs or whatever else that may relate to the issue! One solution is to call upon the newest offering by Stephen Glazier, issued by Wright Brothers Referenceware.

It's not a thesaurus or a dictionary, but rather a loose blending of these tools, seasoned with a touch of almanac. Word Menu was derived from a Random House project in the early 1990s headed by Glazier. The result is a new breed of references based on a far-ranging collection of subject families, which are then divided into more specific relatives before becoming progeny in the form of names, places, and things—each of which is then properly described. All of that may seem too obvious, but just try to locate any published clone with the variety and scope of Glazier's software.

HOW IT WORKS

So, how is the information actually presented? After all, this is software using a computer screen rather than a book with pull-out charts. Picture, if you will, the familiar file manager "tree" in Windows or Mac that graphically displays the primary folders and subfolders, which in turn open up to reveal file names. In Word Menu, the same visual style is employed.

As an example, try "Arts and Leisure" as the primary category. Under that, skip down through Fine Arts, Literature, Performing, or Applied Arts (there are more) to "Leisure and Recreation," which then offers "Holidays, Celebrations, Special Events," etc. Open a subfolder and you encounter a list of dozens of pertinent words in alphabetic order (such as exposition, extravaganza). Upon selecting one, you are then presented with a brief description. Try yet another search: choose a word ("dog") and get associate compound-word examples such as bench dog, sheep-dog, and more.

If you judge this approach to finding words to be potentially useful, then take advantage of the Web site offer for a two-week trial of the full program (not a "lite" version). Or, just go to the site and browse the sample pages as a free walk-through. The price is for a downloaded file of substantial size. Neither a disk nor a companion hard copy is available.

Wright Brothers Referenceware offers other guides for writers, which are sold only as software but available on disks as well as by downloading. The specialty apparently is screen-writing and character/plot organization.

Prices range from about \$100 to \$250 per title and descriptions plus ordering information can be found on the same Web site along with Word Menu. ✍

FYI

NEW IWOC OFFICER NAMED

Jennifer Oatfield is the new IWOC Parliamentarian, replacing Christine Foster, who has moved to Atlanta, Georgia.

DID YOU GET STIFFED BY HERITAGE MEDIA?

If you didn't get payment from Heritage Media, long-time IWOC member Jerry Detra wants to know.

Heritage Media of Carlsbad, California, was in the business of creating coffeetable/history books, with paid insertions (profiles) in the back of the book. With the economic downturn, Heritage ceased doing business as Heritage and continued at the same address as Imprint Publications. A number of IWOC members and other Chicago freelancers wrote for Heritage and some report they haven't received payment.

One of the profiles Detra wrote was for Sanchez and Daniels, a well-connected Loop law firm. A rep from S&D called him a few months ago to ask what ever happened to the books they ordered, and Detra realized that not only had the writers been stiffed but the clients too.

Sanchez and Daniels now wants to file a class action law suit and asked Detra to help gather names of writers and clients who got stiffed by Heritage. Such a law suit would be a service to writers and their clients, says Detra.

Contact him at 4525 N. Rockwell St., Chicago, IL 60625, 773-539-9746, or jdetra@ameritech.net

INVITATION TO A WEB ZINE

Interested in learning more about Chicago's visual media profession? If so, this recently received message is for you:

Are there IWOC members who would like to be on our E-mail alert to receive notices of new issues of our Web zine, ReelChicago.com? All they have to do is register on the site and they'll automatically be notified.

Ruth L Ratny
www.ReelChicago.com
Phone: 312/274-9980

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Must be cabin fever

favorite new word: **hypergraphia**
or the compulsion to write; obsessive writing;
opposite of writer's block

described by neurologist Alice W. Flaherty
in *The Midnight Disease: The Drive to Write,
Writer's Block and the Creative Brain*,
published in January

Calendar

February 10 (2nd Tuesday)

IWOC monthly meeting: Writing for the Web. Hilary Marsh, President of Content Company, and Nicholas Gracilla, President of Neoteric Design, discuss **Web site planning, writing, and usability.** At The Feltre School, 22 West Erie, Chicago. Networking at 5 PM; program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

March 9 (2nd Tuesday)

IWOC monthly meeting: Novelist Audrey Niffenegger. The author of the hot, new novel *The Time Traveler's Wife* reveals how she wrote it, got a six-figure publishing contract, and more. Co-sponsored with Chicago Women in Publishing (CWIP), and presented at the Chicago Athletic Association, 12 South Michigan Avenue, south of Madison Street. Please call the IWOC office 847/855-6670 if you plan to attend. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15. Come and check it out!

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted. The groups welcome nonmembers.

February 5 & March 4 (1st Thursday)

IWORP monthly breakfast. Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more information, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

February 26 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP monthly lunch: The West Suburban group meets at noon at Poor Phil's at 139 So. Marion, Oak Park. Contact Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065.

**E-mail your announcements to map133@aol.com.
Please refer to "Stet" in the subject line.**

**Check out
IWOC's Web site at
www.iwoc.org
user id: iwoc
password: chgowrtr**