

# Stet

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

## IN THIS ISSUE . . .

1/IWOC February Meeting

2/President's Message

3/January Recap

4/IWOCers in the News

5/Rate Survey

6/Calendar

## IWOC'S FEBRUARY MEETING

### *Providing TLC for your PC and other expert advice*

BY JAMES J. HODL



There was a time when the only maintenance necessary for writers to keep writing was sharpening the point on their quills and filling their inkwells. Even as little as 20 years ago, the major maintenance task was changing typewriter ribbons as needed. With the arrival of the computer era, those days of quaint simplicity are gone forever. Today we deal with problems ranging from setting up and linking computer with printer to extracting a nasty piece of spyware from the computer's registry.

"Contrary to public perception, you don't need extensive technical know-how to keep your computer running properly. You just need to provide your PC with a little TLC, and engage in a few important preventive measures," says computer expert Jeremiah F. (Jerry) Bransfield, owner of Chicago-based 312-543-4427.com. In his presentation "How to Love Your Computer," Bransfield will offer his theories for achieving computer reliability at the next IWOC meeting on Tuesday, February 14 (Valentine's Day).

The topics Bransfield will explore include how to properly set up and network a computer, how to design a database, and how to set up broadband access to the Internet. He will review the latest computer programs and make recommendations on which are best for professional writers.

Bransfield also will explain how to solve common computer problems. He will review the latest software for deflecting spam, and preventing uninvited intrusions of assorted viruses, worms, Trojan horses, spyware and adware; and how to properly install the software. And Bransfield will discuss the future of WiFi (and its successor technology WiMax) that will make one's laptop as computer-connected as your home office PC.

At the conclusion, Bransfield will answer your computer questions.

Bransfield has 17 years experience in maintaining computers. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in computer sciences from Loyola University and a Master of Science in information systems from De Paul University. He worked as a network administrator for Chicago-based Robert F. Coleman & Associates and as a programmer for other firms before opening his computer consulting business in 1999.

To learn "How to Love Your Computer," attend the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, February 14 at the Chicago Athletic Club's 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Lakeshore Room, 12 S. Michigan Ave. Come at 5 p.m. to network with other professional freelance writers over gourmet cookies and coffee. The main program begins at 6 p.m. Admission is free to IWOC professional members; \$5 to associate members, and \$15 to nonmembers.

Following the meeting, attendees are invited to go to a nearby restaurant for a buy-your-own dinner for further networking (computer or otherwise). 

**"How to Love Your Computer"**  
**Jerry Bransfield**  
**Tuesday,**  
**February 14th**  
**Chicago Athletic Association**  
**12 South Michigan Avenue,**  
**7th Floor, Lakeshore Room**  
**Networking 5:00 PM**  
**Program 6:00 PM**

**Professional members free**  
**Associate members \$5**  
**Nonmembers \$15**

# iWOC

Independent Writers of Chicago

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### Editor:

Mary Madigan 630/267-4578

### Contributors:

Richard Eastline, James J. Hodl, Harry J. Karabel, Ellen Krupp, Mary Madigan

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Building our brand

BY HARRY J. KARABEL

To get this column kick-started, I first asked myself: what are the earliest advertisements you remember? Having labored in advertising for many years, I was surprised by my answers. Here they are, in the order they came up.

*Run a little faster, jump a little hiiii-gher! The kid in the Red Ball Jets!*

And who can forget:

*Half the fun of having feet is Red Goose Shoes!*

This of course begs the question: what's the other half of the fun? When I thought longer and remembered, not the commercial, but the logo and the branding for Buster Brown shoes, the weirdness hit me like an icy shiver on a hot day. Why do I only remember shoe commercials? Didn't they advertise anything else to children way back when? Or do I just have some strange fascination with feet?

## EARLY INFLUENCES HELPED SET BRAND LOYALTY

Well, no. But my mother was a shoe model. Once a year there was an industry show at the Conrad Hilton and she wore tiny shoes (she was a size 3) for buyers in a ballroom. She was paid well, and she got to keep all the shoes she wore. She had lots of shoes. She had more shoes than my wife and teenage daughter currently have collectively right now, a fact that staggers my pretty healthy imagination.

But I never really had lots of shoes, then or now. You had a pair of dress shoes to wear to school and church, and a pair of play shoes that you wore everywhere else. I do remember that Red Goose and Buster Brown shoes were perceived as pricey. Like a good consumer I asked for them, of course. My parents just said no, or cursed the television.



I was the proud owner of at least one pair of Red Ball Jets. That's because they were sold at Sears. I remember how thrilled I was to wear those shoes and hoped the other kids could see that red ball on the heel—as unobtrusive a corporate stamp as you could possibly imagine. Sears was my parents' credit crutch. When their children did stupid things

like wear out shoes when there was no money for new ones, we went to Sears. I can still picture the shoe department in the store on 59<sup>th</sup> and Western. I can still smell it. If I got dress shoes, I also got a jar of that liquid polish with the applicator cap. I can smell that, too.

## MEMORABLE ADVERTISING MADE LASTING IMPRESSION

It's not that I don't remember toys I had when I was a kid, or those live commercials on the variety shows with the dancing cigarette packs. This was the mid to late fifties and I believe they were probably more careful what they tried to sell to children. I had an "exact replica" of Davy Crockett's Flintlock Rifle and his Coonskin Cap. I had a Roy Rogers six-gun, Robin Hood's Feathered Cap and his Bow and Arrows. Those characters all had television shows and I suppose that's how I was drawn to the products. But the memory is pretty vague. I do, however, remember the shoe brands and can still sing their jingles. Why? Good advertising! (Be honest about it. You thought I'd never get to the point.)

## BIGGEST AD CAMPAIGN IN IWOC HISTORY TO BE LAUNCHED THIS YEAR

IWOC is about to embark on a more concerted effort—perhaps the most concerted effort in its history—to advertise our members, our members' services, and the value of membership, in that order. We're the best in town. Why not flaunt it? We're starting out with three months of airtime on WBBM's web

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Multiple solutions emerge from roundtable exchange

BY DIANA SCHNEIDMAN

"What would *you* do if . . ." That was the question of the evening at the January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, when former IWOC president and communications consultant/writer Jim Kepler led a stimulating roundtable discussion of the challenges we face as freelancers.

From the sharing of their experience in resolving the trials and tribulations of the freelance life, participants provided tips that can help us all be more successful. But, perhaps the most important lesson to be gained was: **No single solution to a problem works best for everyone.** Experienced freelancers can succeed with diametrically opposed practices.

Here is a sampling of the situations and solutions discussed at the roundtable:

**Situation One:** *I find it really hard to discuss money with clients. When they ask what I charge, I stumble around and say something like, "What's your budget?" or "What do **you** think it's worth? Somehow, we settle on a price, but then when I get deep into the assignment, I find that I'm not doing much better than breaking even. What's an easy way to control the question and get a decent rate?*

Ask the prospect for a price before suggesting one yourself. In negotiating, he who speaks first loses, goes the common wisdom.



Sometimes the prospect's first number is higher than yours, so why leave money on the table? And when naming your figure, don't be tentative. You're worth it, aren't you? Remember, all we have to sell is our time, and our time is in limited supply.

Better yet, don't name a price during the initial conversation. Work with the numbers at home rather than prematurely blurting out a low figure.

**Situation Two:** *What do you do if the client changes the nature of the assignment or some other key factor after you've already completed a first draft? How many revisions will you do?*

Many of our members rely on contracts to clarify the project up-front and to specify how many drafts they will do at the agreed-upon price. A letter of agreement must be signed and returned by the client before work begins. It typically specifies the number of revisions—perhaps one major rewrite and a second revision limited to wordsmithing. The contract may also specify that the client will approve an outline before writing begins, pinning down what will be written before a lot of time is expended.

Other experienced IWOC members never use a contract. They manage the client relationship verbally rather than in writing.

*(Continued on page 4)*

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## BUILDING OUR BRAND

*(Continued from page 2)*

broadcast, 100 commercials a month for 3 months beginning March 1. We'll see what kind of response we get, and then possibly try another run. We're going to start advertising in the *Reader* in addition to the regular ad in the *Tribune* Book Section. We ran a display ad in the American Marketing Association's annual publication that goes out to all its members. We're looking at buying air time on WFMT and WBEZ. We are also investigating putting a display booth together so that we can participate in Chamber of Commerce events.

We have a great product and, surely, enough resources to talk and write about it well. And we're not wasting any time talking to kids who might need shoes. We're carefully looking for opportunities to reach business people who might purchase our services, and other writers who might want to join us. All advertising directs them to the website. So we're making sure that

the website continues to be responsive to potential clients' and members' needs. Ed Bouchard and Joen Kinnan are keeping us a step ahead of the curve.

We're investing our money in our future. We may not have the cash to permanently imbed the IWOC logo on the brain of business people everywhere. We may not have a celebrity spokesperson, and we certainly won't have a catchy jingle. But we have a responsibility to IWOC members present and future to build our brand. We have a great, important story to tell. And we have plenty of people who know how to tell it.

Well, it's been a long day and it's just about over. The column is the last thing I had to write today. So I'm going to take off my Reeboks, and put on the new slippers I got for Christmas. L.L. Bean. They don't have a jingle either. 

## Past president Jim Leman wins writing award

Suburban Grayslake freelance writer Jim Leman recently earned a Silver Award from the International Automotive Media Association for an interview he conducted with David Shelburg, CEO of China Motor Corporation, last year.

Leman was managing editor for *Dealer* magazine when he conducted the interview, which was published in that national publication's June 2005 edition. Shelburg is one of two noteworthy automotive talents who claim to be importing vehicles made by Chinese auto makers in China into the U.S. Malcolm Bricklin and his Visionary Vehicles venture is the better known of the two, though Shelburg claims to have been working longer than Bricklin to make his venture a success.



In 2004, Leman was half of an editorial team at *Dealer* magazine that earned a gold award from the International Automotive Media Association for an interview conducted with Chris Denove of J.D. Power and Associates.

Leman now freelances for *Wards Dealer Business* magazine and authors a regular column on collector cars for the *Daily Herald*, the Chicago area's third largest daily newspaper. He also writes for various national automotive and management consulting companies.

The annual International Automotive Media Association awards program recognizes and encourages excellence in all forms of automotive media. 

### MEMBERSHIP

#### *IWOC Welcomes New Members*

IWOC continues to grow with the addition of new members. **Chris Petrakos** and **Chuck Coffin** joined us in January.

Welcome, Chris and Chuck. We're delighted to have you, and we hope to see you at our monthly meetings.



### JANUARY RECAP

*(Continued from page 3)*

**Situation Three:** *Should I state my fee on an hourly basis or per project?*

Our members do both but many prefer per-project agreements. First, the hourly fee may scare off a potential client. He or she may exclaim, "Even I don't make that much money!" But don't forget, a freelance hour is different from a corporate hour. Corporate employees don't need to market their services and perform uncompensated administrative tasks. Plus they receive insurance and other benefits in addition to salary.

Second, hourly rates penalize the experienced writer. The faster and better you write, the less you are paid for the assignment.

Third, the real issue: What is the value of the piece to your

client? Your compensation should be commensurate with the benefit your client will enjoy.

Still, some of our members charge by the hour. This helps them manage the risk of underestimating how long an assignment will take, but it may mean trimming the final invoice if the assignment takes less time than projected.

**Situation Four:** *I joined IWOC eight months ago, and I haven't landed a single job yet as a result of my membership. I've even attended a couple of programs. I'm wondering whether I should renew this fall. What do you think?*

Yes, you should rejoin. But more than that, get involved! Membership in IWOC really works, say meeting participants.

Don't forget, your IWOC friends are here to advise you and commiserate when you face the business challenges we all encounter. 

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## Rate survey rates with IWOCers!

BY REBECCA MAGINN

**Y**ou've been asking. The results are now in!

The rate survey is a unique and prized benefit of IWOC membership. It summarizes your fellow IWOCers' answers to a number of questions regarding, among other things, their rates, business practices, and background and experience. Having access to this information from our peers helps us all manage our professional affairs more effectively.

Undeniably, the most anxiously awaited blessing this 2005 survey brings is a comprehensive new compilation of rates that members are charging for their work. (We've been working with data from 2000, the year of our last survey.) The rates are presented in table form, with average, minimum and maximum figures reported for four dozen specific types of work, from advertising/marketing communications to Web page design. What an invaluable asset—to know, when putting together an estimate or setting the hourly fee for a job, what our colleagues are charging. This not only helps us keep our prices competitive and fair to our clients, but also ensures that we don't short ourselves when it comes to pricing our product. We work hard for that



money!

The rate survey is more than rates. It is a resource for other useful reference facts. (For example, the average gross income of respondents was \$55,278, while the maximum was \$189,302.) You'll also find information here on how other writers handle overdue bills, whether they ask for up-front money or charge rush fees, and how they acquire new clients. (Networking/

referrals brought in the most new business, followed by the IWOC directory. Writers' Line was also successful for some. IWOC membership just keeps giving!)

Thank you to all members who took the time to complete the survey. Without you, this great tool would not exist. The biggest thanks go to Diana Schneidman, who spent many hours tabulating the results. I think we owe her a drink—or two!

Look for your copy of the rate survey to show up in your mailbox in the near future. It will also be permanently posted on the Web site, in the Members Only section.✍

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### ANNOUNCEMENT

#### *HOLLYWOOD COMES TO CHICAGO: Screenwriters Expo Feb. 11 and 12*



**C**urrent and prospective movie writers, and those with ideas for movie scripts, are invited to the Screenwriters Expo 2006 Feb. 11 - 12 at the James R. Thompson Center/State of Illinois Building, 100 W.

Randolph Street, Chicago. The seminar will feature top Los Angeles literary agents and managers, representatives from major Hollywood production companies, and Shane Black, a pioneer screenwriter of the action genre who gained fame with his *Lethal Weapon* screenplay.

Co-sponsored by The Illinois Film Office, The Screenwriters Group of Chicago, The Discovery Center, American Airlines, Movie Magic Screenwriting Software, and SUNSET-SCRIPT.COM, the seminar's goal is to connect talented Chicago area writers with the biggest players in Hollywood's entertain-

ment industry.

The two-day event will include seminars, panel discussions and presentations filled with tips on writing for the screen, pitching screenplay ideas and dealing successfully with agents and industry managers or executives. It will culminate with a one-on-one open pitch session in which participants will present their movie or book ideas or manuscripts to the guest speakers and begin to build a network of industry contacts.

For more information, or to register, call 866-665-8500 or visit [www.SUNSETSCRIPT.COM](http://www.SUNSETSCRIPT.COM). Be sure to give Promotion Code 202, to let Expo organizers know you learned about the event through IWOC; a portion of your registration fee will go to IWOC.✍

ANNOUNCEMENT

**Illinois Woman's Press Association meeting:  
Saturday, February 18**



Just 2 weeks before the 2006 Oscars, IWPA will roll out the red carpet for two hometown filmmakers: Rosie Goldberg who wrote and directed "Bloom" and Marisol Torres, who wrote and directed "Borica." Both are Chicago-based films and accepted into prestigious film festivals. Visit their websites at [www.bloomthemovie.com](http://www.bloomthemovie.com) and [www.boricuamovie.com](http://www.boricuamovie.com)

Come find out how they got into the film business and what it takes to become a screenwriter. This discussion will be moderated by Jan Huttner of the Films42.com website and a Chicago film critic. It will be Saturday, Feb. 18, at the Chicago Athletic Club, 12 S. Michigan Ave. in Chicago. Registration and networking begins at 11 a.m. Lunch will begin at 11:45 and the speakers at 12:45. Cost is \$30 for members, their guests and fulltime students and \$40 for nonmembers. To reserve a spot, email [iwpa@comcast.net](mailto:iwpa@comcast.net) or call your reservation into the Meeting Hotline at 312.458.9151. You can pay in cash or check at the door. Go to [www.iwpa.org](http://www.iwpa.org) for more information.✍

ANNOUNCEMENT

**Midwest Writers Association meeting: February 16**

IWOC members are invited to attend the Midwest Writers Association's meeting featuring author Jay Bonansinga on Thurs. Feb 16 at Hackney's, 1514 East Lake in Glenview.

Bonansinga will speak on why writers need to enhance their skills and diversify, branching out from inhibiting specialty areas. He has written nonfiction books, such as *The Sinking of the Eastland*; authored thrillers; collaborated on screenplays; written short stories and other material.

The session begins with a networking period at 6 p.m. and costs \$16 (including dinner) for members, \$21 for nonmembers. Reservations are required; the deadline is Feb. 13. Contact Julie Kramer, [jkramer229@aol.com](mailto:jkramer229@aol.com).✍



## Calendar

**February 14 (2nd Tuesday)  
IWOC Monthly Meeting:  
"How to Love Your Computer"  
with Jerry Bransfield**

Presentation on maintaining your computer for best performance and fewest problems. At the Chicago Athletic Association, 12 South Michigan Avenue, 7th Floor, Chicago. Networking at 5 PM; program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

*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 2nd (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 23rd (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 for more information.

Check out  
IWOC's Web site at  
[www.iwoc.org](http://www.iwoc.org)