

MAY MEETING

May Panelists to Tell What Websites Can Do for Independent Writers

BY SHERREE GEYER

As the Internet's popularity continues to soar and e-mail remains the preferred means of communication between writers and clients, the need for independents to establish a web presence becomes paramount to business success.

Lisa Holton, an IWOC member and head of The Lisa Co., Evanston, Ill., and Amy Lillard, principal of AmyLillard.com, will discuss the benefits of websites to freelance writers during a moderated panel discussion at IWOC's May meeting.

Holton and Lillard — who write newsletters, press releases, brochures, website and multimedia copy — boast top-notch websites with state-of-the-art designs, crisp graphics, and easy-to-navigate pages that contain writing samples and biographical, capability, and contact information.

Holton, who established her site in 2003 as a marketing and Internet optimization tool, says "a writer needs a well-designed place on the web that serves visitors." She adds, "Make sure you're being picked-up by search engines."

Holton calls her site a calling card, one that "allows me to save time and money on marketing."

"If someone contacts me, I can always direct them to my website for writing samples and an overview of what I do. I don't mail out portfolios unless they're requested," Holton explains.

Lillard, who established her site last year to launch her freelance business, says her website represents "my ultimate resource, advertisement and source of pride. It is instrumental in locating clients, showing-off my work, and establishing

myself as a genuine, trustworthy source for copywriting." She adds, "For freelancers, a website is a very cost-effective method for building a reputation."

IWOC's website panel discussion will be held on Tuesday, May 9 at the Chicago Athletic Association located at 12 South Michigan Avenue. Networking begins at 5 p.m. and the program at 6 p.m. Cookies, coffee, tea, and soft drinks will be available.

Admission is free to professional members; \$5 for associate members; and \$15 for nonmembers. After the program, attendees are invited to carry this Internet discussion offline to Miller's Pub for a buy-your-own-dinner. The price is reasonable, and it's a great chance to get to know your colleagues better. Guests are most welcome. ♦

Renewal Reprieve: Renew This Week!

Most IWOCers have already renewed, but if you haven't, you still can do it this week and be sure you'll be in the print directory. Do it via PayPal (easiest) or download paper forms and send a check to the office. You don't want to miss out on the big things we have planned for IWOC throughout the year. And the online and print directories are the cheapest advertising you'll find anywhere. Please renew NOW!

IWOC ON WBBM

IWOC has signed a contract with WBBM web radio to advertise our services and Writers' Line. Watch your e-mail for info on how to tune in. It's coming soon.

iwoc

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GUEST COLUMN/RICHARD L. EASTLINE

About that cheap advertising piece . . .

You know it as your business card, the least expensive printed form of self-advertising. Often, it's your only promotional tool. But, whatever status it has in your business portfolio, that ubiquitous personal identifier should be working with maximum effort in selling your name and services. Is it?

When was the last time you gave it a performance review-if ever? Like any other employee or vendor, it warrants evaluation. You might not be able to measure how well it has succeeded against others in bringing new work, or how efficiently it stacks up in results compared to your website. Yet, you surely want to believe that when you hand out your business card-the more often, the better-you do it with confidence in the message it delivers and the way that message looks.

There's a whole "new" design ethic based on simplicity that's replacing the dazzle of the '90s and entry years of this new century. It's related to the trend that characterizes everything from appliances to lifestyles. "Simple" doesn't have to equate to "plain" or "common" (although there's nothing wrong in that, as noted by the popularity of products from Apple®). In business cards, the cute clip-art and the extravagant use of color are stylistic elements giving way to clean backgrounds and intelligent choices in typography. Type has "color" and character in itself, providing attitude as well as information.

Check the cards you carry, whether custom-designed or created from a general software program. Do they convey a sense of professionalism? Do they impart the character and identity of your services?

Here's an overview of business card thinking today from key market segments: sales directors, design studios, and placement firms:

- Use standard-size cards, either single or folded panel (3 1/2" x 2"). Odd-sized cards may get initial attention but often are scrapped simply because they don't fit desk organizers or scanning templates.
- Keep backgrounds light-colored on one side to allow for writing brief notations (such as first impressions, date of interview, emergency contact, etc.) by the recipient.
- Consider that fewer colors are less distracting and, used in moderation, give extra emphasis to those elements that are highlighted in the dominant color.
- High-quality, smooth paper stock wins over glossy coated papers or plastic-based materials. Both extra-thin and extra-thick cards seem neither to impress nor annoy recipients.
- If your business name isn't connected to a defining service or specialty, then make certain that some kind of descriptive wording is shown. A popular practice is to list or succinctly describe principal specialties on the back. Although not everyone checks the reverse of a business card, any percentage of those who do will be to your advantage - particularly if the information presents related services that the prospect now might associate with you that otherwise would not be inferred from your business name.
- In addition to showing the usual address, phone, and fax data, an e-mail address is becoming the most important contact option (more valuable than a fax number). If you have a website, an e-mail address based on your domain is considered more businesslike than one associated with AOL, etc.
- Printing cell phone numbers draws mixed opinions. Whether for privacy or calling-cost reasons, the card providers prefer to omit this, whereas prospective clients (vs. active clients) don't seem to care one way or the other. The common solution suggests personally writing the number on a selective basis.

Finally, remember the adage: "Those who break the rules get attention." None of the above-listed recommendations can technically be called a "rule," so it's all optional. But also keep in mind that standing too far apart from the rest of the competitors keeps you out of sight, out of mind. ♦♦



APRIL MEETING RECAP

Medical Writing Program a Hit

BY LINDA WOLIN

The April 11 IWOC program on medical writing and editing was a resounding success for both content and attendance. Approximately 50 members and guests were present.

Our speaker, Kirsta-Wilson Kersta-Wilson is an experienced medical writer and editor who is Program Manager for Environmental Health Consulting, Inc. She also writes for her own company, Image Diary, which has client needs for medical writing and editing, web based training, image manipulation, essay development, and communications.

Kirsta-Wilson's discussion provided excellent information, as well as a charming review of her own involvement with the medical writing and editing field. She told us about marketing trends that are impacting job creation in medical editing and writing, courses and tools available to enhance skill levels, and web sites for both research and job listings.

Regarding marketing trends impacting job creation, Kirsta-Wilson mentioned the aging U.S. population, which is fueling increased work in all aspects of medicine, the increasing availability of medical information online, and the ongoing need for pharmaceutical companies to provide documentation to the FDA for new drug submissions.

Kirsta-Wilson emphasized that we are fortunate to have locally one of the top

three programs in the U.S. for medical writing and editing at the University of Chicago. Coursework for certification is given in four-course modules. Courses may be taken either once weekly over a 10-12 week timeframe or during a three-day fulltime intensive regimen with assignments to be completed during the following month. The four courses for each certificate involve both required and non-required courses. (Tuition is \$1300 per course.) Courses are also offered by AMWA (American Medical Writers Association) which, upon proper completion, provides one to five certificates.

Kirsta-Wilson and program co-chair Sherree Geyer mentioned the benefits of association membership. Regarding job postings, Kirsta-Wilson mentioned that association memberships in IWOC, AMWA, and/or the National Association of Science Writers may be helpful as access to job list-servs, and volunteering and networking in IWOC and other organizations may provide important leads or referrals.

Kirsta-Wilson's handouts included a bibliography of useful websites, which were quickly snatched up after the meeting.

For additional information, contact Kirsta-Wilson via her email addresses: kirsta@imagediary.com or scottie@environmental-healthconsulting.com. ♦



IWOC Is Us

BY JOEN KINNAN

No, my grammar hasn't deserted me. The headline refers to that old Pogo saying, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." We *are* IWOC, and if we don't behave professionally with clients and potential clients, it not only reflects badly on us personally, but also on the organization as a whole.

The board has dedicated this year to really putting IWOC on the map. We've got a great ad in the American Marketing Association Year Book, we're about to hit the internet airwaves with an ad on WBBM web radio, and we're looking for other venues to promote ourselves and Writers' Line.

So it seems likely that more and more members will get their first contacts with potential clients through IWOC itself. We hope so. We know that's what members want, and we aim to please. It's our responsibility to do that for you.

However, you have a responsibility too. We recently had to pull an ad from Writers' Line because a client complained that she was treated rudely by an applicant for the job. The merits of the complaint are unimportant. What matters is that someone else in IWOC won't have a chance to get that job. That isn't fair to the other members. And we look bad.

So let's all drag out our best business Ps and Qs when responding to job solicitations that come through IWOC. E-mail is a great and fast way to get information to a potential client, but we shouldn't bang out our responses like chimpanzees on their way to a fire. Do you spell-check? Punctuate? Capitalize properly? "Please," "thank you," and "I'd appreciate it if" don't hurt anything either. We're *writers*, for heaven's sake. What kind of an impression does it make if we misspell, grunt our way through a response, and otherwise behave as if we're taking a time test? We wouldn't be so cryptic on paper, so why revert to that style in an e-mail?

We all know potential clients can be rude and objectionable, but striking back won't help matters. If a writer-seeker really goes beyond the pale, report it to Writers' Line chair Dianne Rowland.

If we all remember that our professional standards – and IWOC's – are on display whenever we communicate with anyone, in any modality, about the work that we do, we won't have to worry that the enemy is us. It won't be we, either. ♦

Free Journalism Courses Online

Journalism is a great writing field. You do the pitching. Loads of potential clients. Riches galore. Well, maybe not so much. Still, if you'd like to try your hand but don't have the background, here's an option for you. They may not be the equivalent of four years of J-school, but the Poynter Institute of St. Petersburg, Florida offers free online interactive courses through their News University: <http://www.newsu.org/>.

Register with Poynter first at <http://www.poynter.org/>. You can also sign up for their free e-mail newsletters. ♦

Short Takes – Good Stuff

IWOC board member **Roger Reuff** has very exciting news. His new play “Grande Hysterie” will have its world premiere right here in Chicago this fall. The play opens the 2006-2007 production season for the Chicago Dramatists. The play is scheduled to run from September 22 to November 5. It will be directed by Russ Tutterow, artistic director of Chicago Dramatists. Details will be available soon on the Chicago Dramatists website at www.chicagodramatists.org.

Still on the art beat . . . Former board member **Conrad Laurence** invites us all to a free staged reading and discussion of his stage play “Commute” on Sunday, May 7th at 6 p.m. upstairs at the Red Lion Pub, 2446 North Lincoln. Conrad’s note says, “‘Commute’ is a study in the relationship between amendments and forgiveness. A man destined to die for a heinous, brutal crime finds forgiveness through the act of amendment, and his crime is commuted. Or is it really?”

Lynn Sanders’ Park Avenue Productions has produced a new patient safety film “Things You Should Know Before Entering the Hospital.” The film is designed to help patients take more active roles in their own health-care.

After a wonderful run as *Stet* editor, **Mary Madigan** is stepping down to devote more time to her business projects. She’s done a terrific job, and we all want to thank her for it. We sent out a call for volunteers to replace her and were overwhelmed by the response. So we’ve got a great team assembled to take over. Plans aren’t finalized yet as to specific roles, but at this point, I believe our new *Stet* staff will include: **Rosetta Gervasi, Ed Cooper, Warren Silver, Cathy MacArthur, Chris Petrakos, and Peggy O’Connor**. Many thanks to all of them for volunteering. We hope to be organized by next month.

Longtime IWOCer **Robert Shoemaker** is recovering from hip replacement surgery in his new home in Portland, Oregon. We all wish him a speedy recovery.

If you have news you’d like included in *Stet*, for the time being, you can send it to webmaster@iwoc.org. I’ll pass it along to the appropriate *Stet* person.

It’s Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers’ Line

Browse Resources

See What’s Doing in IWOC Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG

Calendar

May 9

“What Websites Can Do for Independent Writers”

IWOC monthly meeting. Moderated panel discussion. Panelists are IWOCer Lisa Holton and Amy Lillard, principal of amylillard.com. Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Ample parking and the El nearby. Buy-your-own dinner follows at Miller’s Pub. Networking at 5 PM, program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

June 13

IWOC monthly meeting. Program to be announced. Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Ave., 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 usually meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but it’s best to call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there’s no group in your area, why not start one? Contact webmaster@iwoc.org for info.

May 25 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP monthly lunch. Join near-west suburbanites at noon for an outdoor lunch at Poor Phil’s, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park (summer location). For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065.

June 1 (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 info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

IWOC WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

IWOC is delighted to welcome four new members this month:

Rebecca Hunter

Lisa Richter

Robert R. Vaughan

Jennifer Lyng

And we’re especially pleased to welcome back six familiar faces, returning members:

Ed Zotti

John Reynolds

Barb Dillard

Neal Lorenzi

Kristin Monkman

Kevin O'Brien