

MARCH MEETING

You Wrote It, but Do You Still Own It? Legal Panel to Talk about Copyright Law

BY JAMES J. HODL

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY EXPERTS TO WEIGH IN ON WHAT RIGHTS WE HAVE AND HOW WE CAN PROTECT THEM

How much ownership do you have in the articles and other materials that you write? Those who retain at least some ownership can continue to profit from their writing through reprinting in other media or posting on the Internet. And what are your rights should you find your writing being reused by others without permission?

To get answers, IWOC is assembling a panel of experts on "Intellectual Property Rights and Copyrights" for our meeting on Tuesday, March 13.

Scheduled to participate on the panel are:

E. Leonard Rubin, an intellectual property rights attorney with the Chicago law firm Sachnoff & Weaver Ltd., who is a noted expert on copyrights and Internet law as they apply to writers.

Diana Laskaris, a property rights attorney with her own practice, Laskaris Law, who specializes in copyright law as it applies to persons who author books and screenplays. In 2003, Laskaris also founded the Chicago Writers Association, which provides assistance and advice to novice and experienced writers.

Natalie A. Remien, an associate in the Bell Boyd

& Associates legal firm, concentrates her practice in intellectual property rights litigation. She has represented many firms on enforcing trademark and copyright portfolios.

The world of intellectual property rights has changed greatly during the past decade, the experts say. The commercializing of the Internet has provided new venues for the sale of articles and other writing, but it also has created new opportunities for piracy. The recent New York Times Supreme Court case established that, unless a publication states in its contract that agreed-upon prices cover reprinting on its web site, a writer is entitled to additional compensation for his work's republication on the publication's web site.

Transmission of unpublished writing and story concepts over the Internet also has made it easier for intellectual property to be viewed by unauthorized eyes and copied.

But where do writers stand when their writing appears without permission on a web site? Witness the recent lawsuit of Harlan Ellison vs.. AOL, in which the noted sci-fi/fantasy

writer sued the Internet company for not policing the sites posted on its bandwidth reprinting his copyrighted stories and offering them for free downloads. Or consider recent charges that the writers of the movie Dodgeball stole the plot and major characters from an inexperienced writer trying to break into the movie business.

The panelists will explain not only where writers stand under the law, but also how they can gain the necessary copyrights to protect their intellectual property from poaching. They also will take questions from attendees.

The IWOC meeting will be held Tuesday, March 13 at the Chicago Athletic Club's 7th Floor Lakeshore Room, 12 S. Michigan Ave. Come at 5 p.m. to network with other members and guests over gourmet cookies and coffee. The program begins at 6 p.m. Admission is free to all IWOC members and \$15 to nonmembers. Guests are encouraged to attend.

Attendees are invited after the meeting to continue discussing the presentation or simply network with other independent writers at a nearby restaurant over a buy-your-own dinner. ♦

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Stet is published 11 times per year by the **Independent Writers of Chicago**, PMB 119, 1800 Nations Drive, Suite 117, Gurnee, IL 60031, 847/855-6670. Internet address: www.iwoc.org. Copy submissions and advertising materials are due by the 15th of the month preceding publication. All submissions and ideas will be considered. The subscription rate of \$1 per year is included in the annual membership dues. Copyright ©2006 by Independent Writers of Chicago.

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GUEST COLUMN / JOEL KINNAN

Take the Byte Out of Techno-Babble

I originally wrote this column (with some modifications) in 1998, but the resource is still applicable, and unfortunately so is the proliferation of computer jargon. In fact, we now have nine more years of it!

Ballistic tracking" might sound like an apt moniker for your blood pressure reading when you encounter yet another incomprehensible computer phrase while trying to make sense of the infernal machine sitting smugly on your desk.

But of course, it isn't. It's another rotten piece of techno-babble, one of many diabolically designed to drive every breathing being to the brink of insanity. I really love it when I finally latch onto the actual words represented by one of those three-consonant acronyms, and I *still* haven't the foggiest notion of what they're talking about. What a thrill to discover that DCT stands for "discrete cosine transform!" Oh, yeah, that helps a lot.

Most computer jargon isn't quite that esoteric, but it's still a pain to bumble through when you're trying to install new hardware or software or make sense of your Help files. In short, when you're trying to *use* the wretched technology.

Enter PC Webopaedia. In *plain English*, this internet resource explains over 3000 computer terms (and some typographic ones) in a way that is completely understandable. It's nicely cross-referenced, and you can click on additional terms in the definition to find out *their* meanings.

Take Webopaedia's definition for the internet search engine Yahoo!, for example. PC Webopaedia tells you that Yahoo! is short for

Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle and that it is a worldwide web directory. How simple. How refreshing. The listing also tells you about Yahoo's founders — apparently clever devils with a way with words — and gives a brief background and history.

Finding terms or acronyms is a piece of cake. Type in a search term, click on the search button, and you're off. New terms are added all the time. (Does that surprise anyone?) You can even suggest terms yourself. (I have several I'd like to add, but I don't think they accept profanity.)

PC Webopaedia isn't just for the technological jet set or Bill Gates-type geeks. You'll find understandable definitions for terms you hear all the time, like ROM and RAM, or bits and bytes. So if you've been avoiding polite society because you're woefully ignorant of even the basic terms, PC Webopaedia will help you stand tall again.

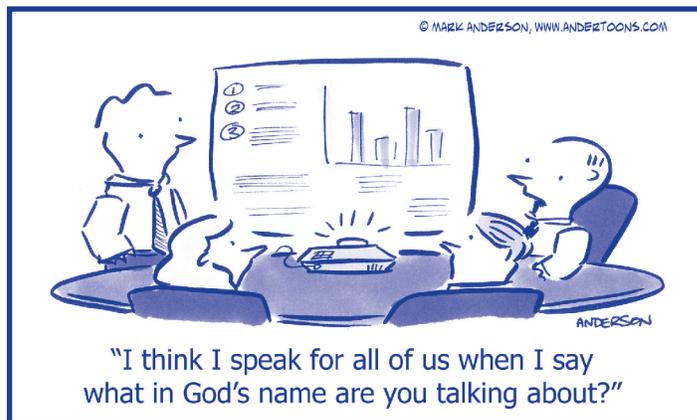
On the other hand, nothing seems to be too obscure.

How about a snappy definition of BEDO DRAM? (The people who think these things up have *got* to be mentally *unusual*. BEDO DRAM, good grief. It sounds like something used to unclog drains. "Hand me that can of BEDO DRAM...")

I'm not going to give you the definition of BEDO DRAM because I've forgotten it, so you'll have to look it up if you care, but you should know what you're getting when you buy new software or — especially — a new computer. Maybe even if you're thinking of switching to Vista (which I fervently hope isn't an acronym, but it probably is.) PC Webopaedia can really help you figure out what's in the box in layman's terms.

Look for a link to PC Webopaedia on the IWOC website soon, but to go there yourself, the address is <http://www.webopedia.com>.

If your mouse has "ballistic tracking," it moves proportionally farther when your hand moves faster. ♦



Be a Clever Writer: Surprise Your Readers with a Dash of Paradox

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

Oxymoronica / Mardy Grothe / 246 pp. incl. introduction and index / HarperCollins, 2004 / \$14.95 list (hard cover) / 0-06-053699-3

BY RICHARD L. EASTLINE

Surely many have faced this potential block:

You want to characterize what may be an improbable point or inject a touch of irony to perk up reader attention. And, it should be done with panache, preferably terse and catchy in expression. You never had this come up? Lucky you — or do you just steer clear of this potential writer's block when you sense it coming?

Well, fear not. If the solution would seem to point to something clever, such as

"If this thing starts to snowball, it will catch fire right across the country."

— Canadian politician

using an oxymoron, professional help is as close as your book shelf.

Add one more variation on the thesaurus theme. Here's an outstanding compilation of nearly 1,500 quotations that sustain the adroit punch we associate with the provocative language of oxymorons. The book's title is the author's own play on defining such a collection, stating that the incongruous elements in the quotations usually do make sense. Mardy Grothe is both a marriage counselor and a management consultant, something of a paradox in itself, but perhaps essential to the quest for detecting wit

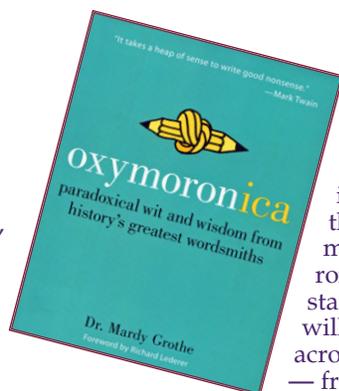
masked with what appears to be illogical, or vice versa. ("Anonymity is my claim to fame," says Fred Stoller.)

The introduction sets the stage for this program of essentially one-liners and deftly clarifies, while expanding, the author's appreciation of the characteristics of "oxymoronica."

Don't expect to find a tightly defined subject index. Rather, there's a relatively loose separation

of the contents using very broad categories consisting of the human condition; sex, love, and romance; politics; insults; artistic and literary expression; and a miscellany labeled "inadvertent oxymorons" (a treasury of quotations by well-known personalities). There is an index, but other than referencing some very general topics, such as literature or sentimentality, it's given over to listing the contributors and sources.

Grothe fudges somewhat in the boundaries for his choices. Some of them should be more correctly categorized as mixed metaphors—no less humorous



but lacking the irony inherent in the most literary of memorable oxymorons. ("If this thing starts to snowball, it will catch fire right across the country" — from a Canadian politician.)

Oxymorons, being word combinations, often deal with aspects of writing, so authors are fair targets in this game of word darts. Take heed of Winston Churchill's admonition that "an extemporary speech is not worth the paper it's written on" or the observation of Elmore Leonard that "if it sounds like writing, I rewrite it."

If we think of an oxymoron as a seemingly self-contradictory statement, we must also acknowledge that it nonetheless can express a common truth. At the least, it will nourish the mind momentarily with a skillfully worded observation. And that's what you'll discover in this "greatest hits" (truly) collection.

Other than being a superb assembly of pithy remarks, philosophical and otherwise, which can fit well into a writer's otherwise straightforward exposition, Grothe's book is itself a good "read." Don't be at all surprised to find yourself going beyond your initial search as you get caught up in these simplest of word games. You may even become an advocate for E.B. White's dictum, "Be obscure clearly!"

Daylight Savings Time

Most people know that daylight savings time begins this Sunday, March 11, which is three weeks earlier than in the past. But did you know that, if you have an older computer, it probably won't change the clock on your computer automatically? If you keep scheduled appointments in Outlook or another program, that could cause you to be an hour off.

You can easily fix this yourself, however. If you have the clock running on your task bar, just double click on the time, and a screen will come up where you can change to the proper time. (You may have to readjust in the fall also because DST also lasts longer than before.)

Or, if you have a PC running windows, you can go to <http://www.Microsoft.com> and click on "how to update your computer" in the Daylight Savings Time display on the home page. Just follow the directions. ♦

**IWOC Welcomes
New Members**

**Joan Franke
Betsy Storm**



"We dazzled them with our presentation; we amazed them with our concepts! They were all set to sign, but nobody in our office uses pens anymore."

Practicing your Skills: Approaches to Cold-Calling

BY CHRIS BENEVICH

When Joen approached me to write this piece, she asked me to address certain questions, such as how many cold calls equal a sale? Could I make any suggestions for those who find cold-calling unctuous? What can I say to people who pick up the phone and think only of rejection?

I don't think I really have much to say on this that hasn't already been said by Jim Leman, *The Well-Fed Writer* series, or any number of motivational speakers around the world. But, perhaps my pastiche of thoughts will speak to you in some way.

There's no magic number

Cold calls are part of my overall marketing and visibility strategy. Yes, I've landed business this way, but I don't approach cold-calling as a ratio of calls to sales. I do it because different people hear messages in different ways, and I want to ensure that I cover all the bases and portals and channels in as many voices as possible when talking about how I help companies. When I put on my marketing-writer hat, I think it's important to practice what I preach.

This is the first in what we hope will be a series of columns with tips and ideas from our members. Please share your talents with us, whether it's software shortcuts, tools you find useful, ways to combat writer's block, interviewing techniques that work, business strategies, or anything else that helps you in your career. Networking is the name of the game, so please share. Contact Joen Kinman at webmaster@iwoc.org or jpkinnan@comcast.net.

Find your 'tude

When I go into a cold call or a pitch, of course I've made the basic preparations such as researching what this company might need that I can provide, how I'll make a connection with the person I reach, and how I'll respond to different inquiries.

Mentally speaking, I just remember it's counterintuitive for a company not to take advantage of my brain power,

as my clients attest at ChrisBenevich.com/testimonials.htm.

To me, all the "no thanks" (a very uncommon response, by the way) are just a bunch of lost connections companies could have made with consumers, lost revenue, lost strategic thinking, lost perspective, lost creativity, lost smarts; you get the idea. Have compassion for yourself and remember what potential clients lose when they don't choose you.

Practice makes permanent

One of my former piano instructors said, "Practice doesn't make perfect. Practice makes permanent." If you're not comfortable on the phone, don't wait until you're ready. Just put in the time and start. ♦♦



Calendar

March 13

IWOC monthly meeting. Tuesday, March 13th, Panel of lawyers will talk about guarding your intellectual property rights. Chicago Athletic Club's 7th Floor Lakeshore Room, 12 S. Michigan Ave. Program 6 p.m. Networking 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15; IWOC members free. For more information, call 847-855-6670 or visit www.iwoc.org.

April 10

IWOC monthly meeting. Former IWOCer Marlene Targ Brill will talk about breaking into the teen fiction and nonfiction market. **Save the date.**

May 8

IWOC monthly meeting. Barbara Gregorich will discuss fact collection and interviewing techniques for assembling information. **Save the date.**

June 12

IWOC monthly meeting (rescheduled February program). Word maven Erin McKean will introduce us to little known reference works and we'll have fun with some unusual words. **Save the date.**

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

March 22 (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.

April 5 (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.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in IWOC Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG