

Stet

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

APRIL MEETING

Writing for Children Isn't Kid Stuff: A How-To Primer for Breaking Into the Field

BY JAMES J. HODL

THE FICTION AND NONFICTION MARKETS ARE BOOMING FOR YOUNG READERS. LEARN HOW YOU CAN CASH IN.

There is a market beyond those served by most independent writers that offers substantial opportunities. The youth market covers children from beginning readers to teens, and it has its own special needs and rules. But how can a writer break into this market?

Author Marlene Targ Brill will explain all in her presentation "Writing for Children Isn't Kid Stuff," which will be the centerpiece of the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, April 10.

A lifelong resident of the Chicago area who currently lives in Wilmette, Brill describes herself as an author who serves "all markets from preschool to death." But her greatest success has been in the youth market as an author of mainly factual books about real people, history, or simply about the world in general.

Often the subjects of these books are children who made a difference, ranging from the young boys who helped deliver the mail in the 1860s as part of the Pony Express to Margaret Knight,

an adolescent girl pressed into factory work a century ago who invented machinery that was safer for other factory kids to tend.

Other times, Brill writes about renowned adults in a way that relates to young readers. Her current best seller, *Barack Obama: Working to Make a Difference*, tells his life story with emphasis on his childhood growing up in Hawaii and Indonesia. Her upcoming book for kids tells the story of Marshall Major-Taylor, a black bicycle racer who was World Champion in 1900 and almost annually won the big bicycle race in France long before the Tour de France and Lance Armstrong.

During her presentation, Brill will explain the special needs for writing in different age groups, especially the tween and teen book markets that are currently exploding. At each level, Brill notes, the rules change from vocabulary to sentence structure; but the need to interest and involve the reader remains the same. This is especially true in Brill's biggest selling book

Tooth Tales from Around the World, which explains – among other facts – that in many parts of the globe, a mouse rather than a fairy may swap a lost tooth for cash or other rewards.

Brill also will enlighten us about how writers can approach publishers to get their books and articles for children published and how to deal with them afterwards.

"Writing for Children Isn't Kid Stuff" will be the central presentation at the IWOC meeting to be held Tuesday, April 10 at the Chicago Athletic Club's 7th 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, including a brief business meeting, begins at 6 p.m. Admission is free to all IWOC members and \$15 to nonmembers.

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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Becky Maginn 773/935-8410

Web Site: www.iwoc.org

Joel Kinnan, webmaster
webmaster@iwoc.org

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Editor:

TBA (Joel Kinnan this month)

Production Editor:

TBA

Copy Editor:

TBA

Proofreader:

TBA

Contributors:

Jim Hodl, Joel Kinnan, Paula Shevick

GUEST COLUMN / JOEL KINNAN

Writers: Bring on your "A" Game

We hope to have Harry's president's column back very soon. In the meantime, this is another column from a bygone issue of Stet.

As a former English Teacher Person, I've made it a lifelong crusade to better people's grammar whether they're up for it or not. (I recently received a note from a friend that began, "Just read this letter, don't edit it.")

People like me are doomed to go through life muttering, "You lie down today, you lay down yesterday, you have lain down many times." The battlefield on that one looks like Little Bighorn, but I persist.

When it comes to language carnage, most people have surrendered to the easy way out and say "Everyone ate *their* (instead of the proper *his* or *her*) lunch" and similar atrocities. We can blame our fear of the PC Police for those bits of awkwardness. Still, I think as writers we ought to get it right in print, even if we talk like Mike Ditka. It's not that hard to be grammatical. Look it up. (If you call yourself a writer and don't own a grammar/style manual, shame on you.)

In this grumpy but public-spirited vein, I offer the following tidbits of usage gleaned from *A Treasury for Word Lovers* by Morton S. Freeman.

What's the difference between *all ready* and *already* or *all together* and *altogether*? *All ready* refers to a state of readiness, whereas *already* means "previously." *All together* means "in a group," but *altogether* is the equivalent of "in

all." Here's a nifty test to see if you've got it right: In a sentence where the "all" word is correct, the meaning won't be changed if you omit it. Thus, "they left *all together*" is correct because "they left together" means the same thing. The same is true of "they are all ready" and "they are ready." When the *al-* prefix is the correct choice, it can't be removed without changing the meaning. "He has *already* done that" makes sense, but "he has *ready* done that" is meaningless.

If classical music gives you the snores, are you *disinterested* in it or *uninterested*, or do they mean the same thing? *Uninterested* means "lacking interest," so that's the proper choice. *Disinterested* means "impartial" as in "The judge appointed a *disinterested* observer." (Never mind that judges don't do that around here. You get the idea.)

To *use* or to *utilize*? The word *use* means "to employ or put into service." *Utilize*, on the other hand, connotes using something in a different way than the purpose for which it was intended. "We utilized the old tires to make swings for the children" is correct. "The company utilized its resources well," is not, unless the CEO is referring to skimming off a bit of the lolly for his own purposes.

Plain old *use* is almost always the appropriate word, but try telling that to your clients. Medical

people and business folk *love* the word *utilize*. They use it every chance they get. (They, of course, would say they *utilize* it.) Sadly, this fight appears to be lost forever, so I generally refrain from telling people who want to utilize my services what they can use and where they can use it, though I'm sorely tempted.

Would you say, "Is this present for I?" Of course not, but just add another object to that phrase, and see how many people crash and burn. "Is this present for Sally and I?" they trill blithely. No, no. If the word was *me* in the first instance, it's *me* in the second as well. All you have to do to check that one out is to remove the second part of the compound. So if you wouldn't say, "Me went fishing," you wouldn't say "Jim and me went fishing" either.

If all this strikes you as picky, picky, let me ask you: What is it that distinguishes a professional writer from anyone else who strings words together? I have always thought professionals were those with expertise in the tools of their trade beyond the layman's.

The basic tool of our trade is the appropriate use of language. So what if the client doesn't know the difference. We should. Unfortunately, the usage battlefield is littered with corpses. In the immortal words of Pogo, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." (Of course, we all know that *us* should be *we*.) 🐉

Legal Panel Gives Valuable Advice on Writers' Rights, Book Contracts, and Copyright Law

BY PAULA SHEVICK

What if you wrote an article for the *New York Times* and then discovered copies of the article were copied to an electronic medium for all to use without any payment going to you?

Or what if you wrote the lyrics for a song that was illegally downloaded by a college student? Would you be compensated once the student was penalized?

And what if you hired someone to fill your website with content? What could prevent him from claiming to own your website?

These are real issues any writer could face, and if you had heard the panel of three lawyers who spoke at the March IWOC meeting, you'd seriously ask yourself if you were qualified to face these and other issues of a writer's property rights without a lawyer.

On the panel were Leonard Rubin, attorney at Reed, Smith, Sachnoff & Weaver and past president of Lawyers for the Creative Arts, a team of 400 lawyers who represent writers and artists in the Chicago area for a reduced fee or for free, based on need. Joining Rubin were Natalie Remien, attorney at Bell Boyd & Lloyd and Diana Laskaris, an independent attorney specializing in business law.

Supreme Court Backs Writers
Rubin began with a summary of the 1994 lawsuit Jonathan Tasini, the National Writers Union president, brought against the *New York Times*, *Newsday*, and *Time*,

Inc. because they wanted to reproduce electronically the works of writers without paying them.

At one point, when the suit reached the Supreme Court, these media were claiming that if the writers won, there would be gaping holes in the electronic records of the written media. In other words, they were trying to pretend the case wasn't about money—fair payment to the writers. The Supreme Court insisted on recognizing this monetary point and ruled in favor of writers in a 7-2 decision.

CD Controversy Remains

And are artists and writers compensated when record companies, with their sophistication, seize the illegally downloaded CDs from college students?

Rubin commented that it's very easy to commit recording piracy. But record companies respond by crawling the internet and looking at the service provider from whom they have the legal right to subpoena the names of the people doing the downloading. Rubin concluded with the observation that no one is certain that these record companies are compensating the artists.

Register your Writing

This leads to the importance of a writer's applying for and registering his or her most important writing. Remien said that writers must have registered their writing to sue. She added that trademarks and trade secrets must also be registered. A trademark is any

kind of design, word, or symbol that identifies your work. A trade secret is any device, such as a customer list, which gives you advantage over your competition.

It's not always obvious who owns rights to a work. Here are some examples:

If a writer does work for hire, he or she isn't legally the author. The person who employs the writer is



Heh, heh. She wrote it, but now it's all mine! Internet, reprints, the whole ball of wax.

the author. A copyright can only be obtained by the author of a work. (However, the term "work made for hire" applies only to certain specified types of work, not to everything one writes for a client – Editor.)

A photographer who works for the paper doesn't own the pictures he takes for the *Tribune*, but a freelancer might sell only first rights.

If you develop a website and pay someone to fill it with content, you must have a contract saying that the rights are assigned to you.

Protect your Book Rights

Moving on to the subject of writing books, Ms. Laskaris offered this advice: Hold on to your work if the deal isn't

good; if your work is good, you can afford to. Be careful. Write into your agreement that if your book doesn't sell, you don't have to give the advance back to the publisher. What if they don't publish the book at all? In the agreement, make sure the rights will revert to you if the publisher doesn't publish or goes out of business. Also, ask if you can have input in choosing a cover.

Other questions to nail down: How much rewriting is required? Does the publisher have other writers who will do the rewrites or will you? Will your name still be on the book if you have help polishing it? And beware that the publisher may decide not to publish your book right away but put it off for another year.

Can You Speak Contract?

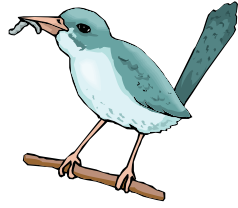
Contracts aren't necessarily easy to read. You might not know what's normal in a contract. For example, Simon and Schuster has a 14-page single-spaced contract, which most people with no legal training can't digest beyond the first four pages. It's wise to hire a lawyer to read these types of contracts.

Finally, it's wise to look to an attorney or agent-attorney to help you sort through which issues are important to fight for and which to leave alone.✍

IWOC Welcomes
New Member

Heidi Arnold

It's Time to Re-Up: IWOC Renewal Begins on April 16



As many members will recall, several years ago we changed the IWOC membership renewal period from September to April. Sooo, it's that time again. Anytime between Monday, April 16 and May 15, you can go to the Members-Only page and renew online through PayPal. It's really fast and easy, and you can pay with a credit card if you want to. We aren't raising dues, still just \$150 for professional members; you get a generous five free listings plus three more if you work on a committee (after that, extra listings are \$10 apiece); and being listed online is now free. Where else can you get a year's worth of advertising to the whole online world of potential employers for that kind of money?

Such a bargain! But there's more: free admission to meetings, a couple of great parties, *Stet*, a wonderful resource page, the Writers' Line (we're going to eliminate the plethora of fulltime jobs listed, and we now have some A-1 resources for finding better-paying prospects), listing in the print directory (sent to you and all employers who request it), and perhaps best of all: the opportunity to network with colleagues.

Anyone who joined *after* January 1, 2007 does *not* have to renew. If you joined at any other time last year, you do have to renew, but you'll get a rebate for one, two, or three quarters depending on when you joined.

Those who really want to use the paper forms and send a check to the office can do so. The forms will be downloadable from the Members' Only page too, or you can request that the office send them to you.

Be an early bird and sign up on the 16th before you forget. Contact webmaster@iwoc.org if you have any questions. 🐦

We're Moving Our Meeting Site

Regretfully, we are leaving the Chicago Athletic Association meeting site. The building has been sold to a developer, and the CAA is closing. The April meeting will be there as scheduled, but we're not sure about May. We're looking for another nearby downtown site, and we'll let you know as soon as we have a new place lined up. Watch your e-mail. And, if you have any ideas for a meeting place, please contact Joen Kinnan at jkinnan@comcast.net or Roger Rueff at r.rueff@writenowinc.com. We need any input ASAP. 🐦

Print Directory

The print directory is at the printer. You should be receiving your copy soon. We will print another directory at the close of membership renewal, but it takes some time to compile the directory, so we're giving you this interim directory too.

Don't forget to write off your IWOC dues and other IWOC expenses on your income tax. That's another reason IWOC membership is so economical.

Calendar

April 10

IWOC monthly meeting. Tuesday, April 10th. Former IWOCer Marlene Targ Brill will talk about breaking into the teen fiction and nonfiction market. 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.

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.

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.

May 24 (4th Thursday)

IWOOPers are taking a brief hiatus. The monthly lunches will resume in May. 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.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in IWOC Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG