

NOVEMBER MEETING

Understanding the Training Marketplace: Writing for Learning

BY DAVID EPSTEIN

Learning, training, and corporate education have many potential needs for writers. What's the field like? What are current opportunities for writers, and what new possibilities may be emerging because of new technologies? What is this field even called? Howard Prager and Darrell Katz are senior leaders in Lake Forest Corporate Education and have extensive experience in workplace learning and performance. They'll help you get a better grasp of the field as well as offering ideas on where and how to look for various writing opportunities. Come with questions, thoughts, and the desire to learn about this profession that meets the needs of adult learners.

Howard Prager

Howard Prager is a proven leader in business education with over 20 years experience in curriculum design, innovative



learning solutions, and business performance consulting. Prager is Director, Lake Forest Corporate Education, Lake Forest Graduate School of Management. Working closely with senior management of Fortune 500 companies, he is responsible for the sales, design, delivery, and academic quality of programs. His leadership program for Simonton Windows received triple honors: ranked as one of the Top 5 Leadership

Development programs by *Executive Excellence Magazine*, won the Best Practice for Corporate/College Partnerships, and named Excellence winner for Measurement by Corporate University Exchange in 2006. Before coming to Lake Forest, Prager was president of a training consulting firm, The Next Step. Prager is active in both the Chicago and national chapters of the American Society for Training and Development, (ASTD) having held numerous offices. He is also a gifted speaker and author of numerous articles.

Prager holds an MBA from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan and a BA in Psychology from Northwestern University.

Darrell Katz

Darrell Katz recently joined Lake Forest Corporate Education as an Account Manager. His background includes entrepreneurship, management, training, and sales. Katz has had his own firm, Impact Training Solutions, for the past ten years and has worked with numerous clients in project manage-

ment, leadership development, system integration, and learning management systems. His clients included



Shure, Georgia Pacific, Pactiv, Kraft, and Brunswick. Previously, Katz was Manager of Training and Professional Development for Tenneco and had earlier held various management positions with Lockheed-Martin, including R&D, Production, and Environmental Operations.

Katz earned two B.S. degrees from Indiana University with majors in Microbiology and Journalism, and holds an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m. and the meeting at 6. Nonmembers are cordially invited. The meeting is free for IWOC members and \$15 for nonmembers. Plan to stay for a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting. The location is National-Louis University, 122 South Michigan, Room 5008 (across from the Art Institute). See you there! 🍷

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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 ©2008 by Independent Writers of Chicago.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

In Praise of the Side Door

(President's note: The views expressed in this column are my own and should not be construed as representing those of IWOC or its members. The IWOC community of freelance writers is diverse not only in its talents but in its opinions and political views.)

It's funny how much of what we end up doing in life comes to us by way of a side door—some opportunity we never foresaw that just sort of popped up and said, "Open me!" Or a narrow, overgrown path we started down that didn't look like much at first but spread out into a two-lane road, which then became an interstate superhighway. Or a taste for something that became a passion and then an addiction. Something we never intended to do... it's just that one thing led to another and, well... we ended up where we are.

I'm thinking of that in my own life, this morning—not so much in relation to the peculiar, herky-jerky route that led me from engineering to writing plays, but more in terms of another type of writing I've been doing lately... political commentary. The playwriting was something I had wondered about for years and even attempted one summer in high school, when I tapped out a 45-page play in my basement on erasable velum typing paper... a play that I hope has been incinerated somewhere or at least is decaying in a landfill. The political commentary is new.

I've always been a philosophical bloke. I remember walking to school one morning in fourth grade and thinking that I wanted to be a Lutheran minister when I grew up. The thought was abruptly arrested by my father's voice in the back of my head: "There's no money

in it." And I used to play a mind game with myself on the way to school in which I'd think of a common word and twist it around in my head until it seemed completely foreign to me and I didn't have a clue what it meant. I called this "voluntary unfamiliarity" and credited it with keeping my neural paths clear of ruts (which might have been true). And no, I've never smoked anything... not even tobacco.

But the political junkie-ism came upon me slowly. It emerged first in the mid-1980s, when I was still an evangelical Christian, attending a Baptist church, and saw from the inside the first stirrings of the political beast that grew to become the Moral Majority and later spawned organizations like Focus on the Family, American Family Association, American Center for Law and Justice, and Family Research Council.

I remember the sincere and earnest discussions among my fellow evangelicals regarding whether this was truly the work of Christ or a dangerous mating of His Church and the World—akin to whoring. I don't have to tell you which view won out... and which I think proved true.

The election in 1992 was the first in which I cared deeply about the outcome. I had voted for Ford and Reagan (twice) and Bush the Elder (the first time), but by then it was time for a change—not only because it



was, in fact, "the economy, Stupid" but because it was apparent that the creeping vine of Religious Right ideology had wrapped itself around the spinal cord of its Republican host and was bending it to its will. The Grand Old Party of Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had commanded the European Theater of Operations in World War II, championed the U.S. interstate highway system that bears his name (the idea for which he got from Hitler's Autobahn), and whose warnings about the dangers of the "military-industrial complex" have proven uncannily prophetic over the years... had been turned into a religious hand puppet.

In 1996, I didn't worry too much... and then came 2000.

Whoa.

My body started tensing long before November that year, not only because I saw Bush the Younger as unqualified for the office—which history will judge (but the preliminary reports are not good)—but because I saw in him the arrogant and incurious self-interest masquerading as godly righteousness that I had observed in the worst examples of my Christian brethren.

He was the hand breaking out of the puppet. And he reminded me very much of Dan'l Hollis. Hang on, I'll tell you...

Continued on page 4.

The Inside Scoop on How to Get Published

GIVE PUBLISHERS WHAT THEY WANT, NOT WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO HAVE

BY BEVERLY SIMON

Aspiring authors hope that their book ideas or manuscripts will be received by publishers with eagerness and excitement equal to their own. But when the rejection notice comes, or there's no response at all, the author wonders, "What are they looking for, anyway?"

At our October 14th meeting, Lisa Scacco, Production and Operations Manager of Lake Claremont Press, provided answers and valuable insight from a publisher's perspective. Lake Claremont Press is a Chicago publishing house, specializing in non-fiction, regional history paperbacks. Scacco has more than 20 years of experience in the business and works with authors from the point of contract signing through sales and marketing support. Scacco enlightened and entertained us with her knowledge, wit and enthusiasm.

What it looks like from the publisher's side of the desk.

Lake Claremont Press gets approximately 500 proposals/queries per year. They will publish 7. So, how do they make their selections? What factors make a book attractive to publishers?

The answers come from questions that you, the author, need to ask yourself:

- Will it sell?
- Is there an audience for this topic, and if so, how large?
- Does it cover the topic for the first time or give a new perspective?

- Does it take us forward in the discussion?
- It is an out-of-the-ordinary idea or an unfulfilled niche?
- Is it relevant to current times or an event?
- Does my style draw in the reader?

Most importantly, always keep the reader mind. Don't write on a topic merely because it interests you. Know what readers want and can relate to.

How do I find a publisher who is interested in my idea?

First and foremost, select a publisher who publishes your kind of book. Go to the library or bookstore and see who publishes what. Two helpful resources on this topic are *Literary Marketplace* and *Writers Market*.

Do your homework.

Once you find the right publishers, follow their guidelines; otherwise, your proposal will be eliminated automatically. Some publishers prefer queries rather than manuscripts. Some will take e-mail submissions but assume that they won't. Double-space and use one-inch margins. Submission guidelines can usually be found on their websites, or you can call and request them.

Your pitch implies a lot about you as a writer. It's not just the storyline – it's how well you've organized the pitch and clips. Take small steps. Don't pitch writing a column; first pitch a story. Demonstrate famil-

ilarity with the publication. Write a good cover letter. Provide a chapter or sample, table of contents, outline, etc. Send your best – don't save it for the manuscript. For fiction, you'll typically need to send the first three chapters and a synopsis of 5-10 pages. Show growth or change in the protagonist.

Bottom line...know what they want published and how they want it submitted!

Do I need an agent?

That's something most authors wonder about. The answer is: It depends. Outside of New York, there are plenty of options. If you have a big money book, you need an agent. It's about the strength of the idea and the writing. Some publishers will not take unagented submissions.

How do I find an agent?

Go to writers' conferences. Network and get referrals.

Look for books like yours and check the dedication page; people often thank their agents. Look up agents and see what types of books they work with. Find their websites. They often have guidelines for the first contact. As with the publishers, show familiarity with the agent's work. Be open to advice and don't bug him or her. Determine timeframes and call frequency upfront.

Are writing opportunities diminishing?

Authors worry that the hi-tech digital world has diminished opportunities for writers. Actually, people are content hungry! Print may be diminishing, but there are now more opportunities for writers: internet, blogs, Facebook, etc.

Parting words of wisdom from Lisa Scacco

"Do your homework."

"If you're not reading, you only have one book in you!"

Holiday Party December 9

Cafe Iberico

Delicious Food, Free Table Wine

Santa, Fun, Frivolity

Save the Date. Details to Come

When I was in graduate school and living in Denver, my now ex-wife and I attended Bellevue Bible Chapel—a church that I had also attended as an undergrad, before I moved to Louisiana for a job. Each Bible Chapel runs by its own rules, and many Bible Chapels don't have ministers, either rotating that function between church elders or conducting services in a purely democratic fashion where anyone seated in the sanctuary can stand up and pray out loud, read a passage from Scripture, or suggest a song.

Bellevue Bible Chapel had operated in the latter way for years, but for some reason in the early 1980s they decided to hire a minister. After interviewing several prospects and hearing them preach, they settled upon Dan'l Hollis, a folksy Dallas Theological Seminary grad whose cheery arrogance and defiant incuriosity set my teeth on edge. As an adult male in the church, I was invited to cast a vote as to whether or not Dan'l should be hired. I voted "no"... which proved to be against the consensus.

A week or so later, one of the church elders, Bill James—a kind man and good friend whom I'd known since I was in high school—took me aside after church and asked me about my vote. He told me that I was the only "no" vote and wanted to know why I thought that Dan'l shouldn't be hired. I mentioned Dan'l's arrogance and incuriosity and a feeling I couldn't put my finger

on, which, in retrospect, I would now call "lack of wisdom." I told him I thought Dan'l would end up destroying the church and that if he were hired, my conscience would compel me to find another church.

They hired Dan'l, and my wife and I left, never to return.

Less than three years later, Bellevue Bible Chapel had split into two warring factions of equal size—those who loved Dan'l and those who despised him. In the end, those who despised him banded together and formed another church where they could worship sans Dan'l. Bellevue was torn asunder, and I'm not sure the wounds ever healed.

So when the Supreme Court stopped the Florida recount in December, 2000 and, thereby, handed the presidency to the candidate whose father had appointed two of its members, I felt frustrated and frightened. It was Dan'l Hollis all over again. And when a good friend asked me about my fears, I predicted that Bush would do the same sort of thing to the country... and would tank the economy and get us into a war to boot. I actually did say, "Mark my words. By the end of his first term, we'll be at war." (I wish I could pick stocks hat well.)

Which brings us to my current side door... political commentary.

When John McCain announced that he had picked Sarah Palin as his running mate, my first thought, like most of the

country, was, "Who?" Then, as she revealed herself—or tried not to—to the electorate, it quickly became apparent to me what she was... another Religious Right hand outside the puppet. This one with fingernail polish.

Folksy? Check. Incurious? Check. Arrogant? Check. Lacking wisdom? Check. Respectful of scientific inquiry? No. Thoughtful? No. Willing to admit to a moral error? No. Simplistically viewing the world as black or white? Check.

She wasn't the political continuation of George W. Bush... she was Dan'l Hollis with lipstick.

So in early September, I did something I've never done before... I wrote an essay titled "Sarah Palin's True Religion" to post on the Chicago Tribune website. I'd never posted anything before and must have done it incorrectly, because it never showed up on the site. So I did something else I'd never done before... I e-mailed the essay to some of my friends. And I guess to my surprise, they didn't mind.

Then, a couple of weeks later, I sent out another e-mail and blind-copied the friend list, pointing to a link for the first Katie Couric interview with Palin. The next day, I sent out another link and offered light-hearted commentary. Then came a Powerpoint file that humorously illustrated the origins of the subprime mortgage mess. Then more forwarded links with expanded commentary. Palin being blessed to protect her from witch-

craft... McCain referring to a campaign crowd as "my fellow prisoners"... Palin's ridiculous spin on the initial Troopergate report... The link between Ayers and Annenberg... The lobbyists on McCain's staff... Voter suppression... Joe the Plumber... The Tribune endorsement of Obama... The al-Qaida endorsement of McCain... Palin's ignorance regarding the role of vice president... The polls... The truth about "fruit fly" research.

You get the idea.

The thing is, I'm having a blast and so are my readers. I've had requests to be added to the blind-copy list, and one of my readers has decided to change her vote—I won't say which way (except that I'm pleased). I've also been told by at least three readers that I should be blogging.

We'll see. The desire might leave me after November 4, but if it doesn't...

The point of this long, rambling discourse is that I've never aspired to writing political commentary... or to blogging. Or to writing a newsletter column like this one, for that matter. But one thing led to another, and here we are. Will it morph one day into something I do for money? Who knows. But even if it doesn't, I'm following my heart and having fun. And thankful for the side doors that led me here.

Finally, I'm reminded of a time in Louisiana when two of my friends, Dick Swensen and Bob Wallace, went fishing with their boys in the Atchafalaya Basin, casting lines from

concrete embankment under an overpass. The fish weren't biting that day, but my friends spent a good part of the morning chasing away crabs that kept crawling up the embankment. Finally, they put down their poles and started crabbing... and came home with two large coolers full of crab.

We feasted that night on their willingness to open up the side door. 🍷



Stet is not published in December, so —



Calendar

November 11

IWOC Monthly Meeting. "Writing for the Training Marketplace." Oh, the opportunities to be had in writing for learning, training and corporate education! Howard Prager and Darrell Katz, senior leaders of Lake Forest Corporate Education, tell where and how to look for gigs in this surprisingly opportunity-filled field that meets the needs of adult learners. Tuesday, November 11th at National-Louis University, Room 5008, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program 6 p.m. Networking 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15; IWOC members free. Buy-your-own dinner follows. Nonmembers cordially invited. For more information, call 847-855-6670 or visit www.iwoc.org.

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.

December 4 (November-December lunch)

IWOOP Holiday Lunch. Near-west suburbanites will meet at noon on December 4th for an over-the-holidays lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. Before you show up, check to see if this lunch is still on. It's a busy season.

December 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 info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

**IWOC Welcomes
New Member
Jenifer Bystry**