

JANUARY MEETING

Self-Publishing: You Don't Need Random House to Publish & Market Your Book

BY STEWART TRUELSEN

By now you should have written your New Year's resolutions for 2011. The Independent Writers of Chicago (IWOC) wishes you luck in keeping



them. We can't help you get fit, stay on a budget, join a cooking class or back up

everything on your computer, but we can help you in resolving to publish and market your book.

If you haven't already started writing a book, that's all right too. The first IWOC meeting of the year, Tuesday, January 11, is the perfect time to give it serious consideration.

The program will focus on marketing and distribution to the book trade for self-published authors. The speaker is Randall McKenzie, vice-president of sales for BookMasters Group/AtlasBooks Distribution of Ashland, Ohio. BookMasters Inc. handles all facets of print production and provides warehousing and fulfillment services. AtlasBooks is a division that markets and sells books to wholesalers, chains, online retailers,

and other retail markets around the world.

With over 40 years of experience, McKenzie is a leading expert in book sales and distribution. Prior to his affiliation with Atlas, he held positions with publishing houses such as Meredith and Health Communications Inc. As director of sales for HCI, McKenzie worked with *New York Times* best-selling authors and books that included the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series.

McKenzie works with national accounts for AtlasBooks, managing 19 field sales representatives and developing programs to help sell new titles. To put it plainly—he can help sell the book you've poured heart, soul, and countless uncompensated hours into writing.

If you have doubts and a bias against self-publishing, you'll definitely want to hear McKenzie and let him answer your questions. "Buyers have had a negative attitude toward self-publishing, but that is slowly changing," he told us. "Consumers don't care where the book is published so long as it looks like it came from a New York publisher." One of the titles he worked with recently is *Change Your Aura, Change Your Life* by Barbara Martin, an award-winning

book about using one's spiritual power.

Basically, you (or anyone else) can look as if you're published by a small, independent publisher, as long as you don't have a bad cover, bad interior, and poorly priced book, McKenzie said. "It's not hard, if you do your homework." He recommends working with a distributor six to eight months in advance of publication so the book can be shopped to major booksellers.

If the bookseller doesn't like the dust jacket, price, or something else, there may still be time to make a few changes.

Writing a book and seeing it in print is a great source of pride as some already know. However, before anyone becomes too starry-eyed at the prospect of a first book signing, you need to consider the costs and effort. At the IWOC meeting, McKenzie will share examples and cost information for independent publishing and compare it to royalty publishing. With a self-published book, the author is responsible for all the upfront costs, including design, editing, and printing. The distributor receives a percentage of sales it helps generate.

Even if you don't have

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Officers

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president@iwoc.org

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Web Site: www.iwoc.org

Joel Kimman, webmaster

webmaster@iwoc.org

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Editor:

Joel Kimman

Contributors: Richard Eastline, Jim Hodl, Joel Kimman, Roger Rueff, Stewart Truelsen

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

New Lang Syne



Cue the gentle guitar music and start the Flash animation. Now downloading a post-holiday message created especially for you!

First, Happy New Year. On behalf of every well-wishing soul on Earth—for whom, at this moment, I claim without proof to serve as authorized representative—here's hoping that the coming year will bring to your life whatever you consider good, healthful, and enriching to both the heart and the pocket book and will purge from your life the painful weights of burdens borne too long or unexpectedly acquired. And that 2011 will be for you a Great Breathing—the filling of your cosmic lungs with positivity and strength and the subsequent exhalation, not only of the "bad air" but also of whatever positivity and strength is left unabsorbed by your system, so that it can drift away and be recycled in the psychic ecosystem of the world.

To replay, scan up a few lines and recue the music.

Second, if the IWOC winter holiday party at Star of Siam was any indication, "auld acquaintance" has not been, at least in our humble circles, "forgot." The pictures on the IWOC Facebook page attest to the good time had by all... un-posed shots of men and women whose common bonds revolve around adventures in the word trade happily raising glasses, forks, chopsticks, and sides of mouths in broad smiles to celebrate the coming-through of another year together. The night was

cold, the room was warm, the food was hot and tasty. We arrived shivering and departed toasty in every respect.

Third, here's a quiz. Name a tax-free, recession-proof asset that holds its value regardless of stock market trending and the worth of which can actually increase when the economy sours. And don't bother Googling or checking the Fidelity Investments research links; I'll give you the answer... it's "friends." Our urge to collect them can likely be found in our evolutionary history and a genetic disposition to acquire allies as a strategy for survival. But so what. Knowing why we have taste buds does nothing to enhance the drinkability of a really good wine or the mellow richness of a perfectly aged cheese. With friends, as with taste buds, the hows and whys relinquish the shotgun seat to the experiential actuality of the phenomenon.

This point was driven home to me last week, as it is every year, by way of an annual pseudo-bacchanal that my posse and I hold at the end of December to ring out the old and in the new. What began well over a decade ago as a simple New Years Eve celebration at a condominium in Mount Prospect, complete with noisemakers, funny hats, games for the children, and the requisite countdown to midnight has evolved into a four-day affair at a rented home near New Buffalo on the Michigan side of The Lake. The children, who at one time were small enough to be packed

together like fidgety sardines on a single couch, now flock in from college and the working world, fill a substantial portion of the house, and take on responsibility for cooking one of the meals... usually a breakfast. And because the posse includes adults who are, if not "foodies," at least "taste-ies," the meals are fabulous family-style affairs, and the children have learned that cornflakes and orange juice alone do not make the grade. The adults set the standards, and those standards include menu items such as (in no particular order): homemade tamales with fresh guacamole, accompanied by high-end margaritas; paella; vegetarian chili; homemade carrot soup; sourdough pancakes; dauphinois potatoes; caramel-chocolate cheesecake; homemade eggnog... to name just a few. And more than one bottle of wine gets opened and drained along the way.

Between the opulent meals, we read by the fire, watch movies on the large TV in the basement, play games, chat, take walks to the beach (some of us in search of naturally formed heart-shaped rocks for our sweethearts), gather in the hot tub (when it's working), visit the local grocery store to restock our supplies, and do a craft project the nature of which is guarded like a government secret by the Craft Coordinator until the time for its doing arrives. One year, we made and decorated battery-operated clocks. Another year, we sewed sock dogs. Another, we put together personalized snow globes, and another we assembled tiny robots that

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How to Write B2B to Enrich Thee and Me

BY JAMES J. HODL

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FREELANCE WRITERS IN THE BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS (B2B) communications market? Where there were once only trade publications, there is now an expanded market that also takes in public relations and the various digital and social media. A panel of B2B market experts discussed freelance opportunities at the November 9 IWOC meeting. Moderated by IWOC board member and B2B specialist Don Talend, the panel consisted of LeJane Carson of Carson Stoga Communications, Tom Hodson of Scranton Gillette Communications, and Don Marsh of Penton Business media.

To start the discussion, Talend asked, **“So what separates B2B writing from other types?”**

Hodson: “B2B is targeted writing aimed at a small but concentrated segment of readers who are in the same type of business or endeavor. While general interest publications try to reach the widest possible audience, B2B is a rifle shot that informs readers on topics of their interests only.”

Marsh: “B2B writing has a narrow focus and content and relates its information in the nomenclature of the particular industry targeted.”

Are any special skills or knowledge required?

Marsh: “When writing for B2B publications, you will deal with people not used to being interviewed. You have to put them at ease to get them to open up. And afterwards you’ll need to fact check their quotes.”

Hodson: “We look people who know how to write and can produce good copy. A good B2B writer can apply good journalism techniques to the market he must cover.”

Carson: “If you have a basic solid writing background, you can pitch ideas to any B2B publication and can gather the necessary information through interviews over the telephone.”

Marsh: “You also can conduct interviews by e-mail, sending out questions and receiving answers in return, which can save your interview subject time.”

But what if I’m not from within the niche industry your publications cover?

Hodson: “Freelance writers must be able to unearth information needed for their articles. Each industry has its fraternity of people who are knowledgeable sources. Once you know them, getting information for articles is easier.”

So how can I get B2B assignments?

Carson: “First find out what a publication or PR agency needs. Then contact the agency sending pertinent writing samples. A lot of writing assignments are obtained through references. But above all, a person needs to know what he/she is writing about and be someone who can meet deadlines.”

During 2010 some print publications went digital. Is this a trend?

Hodson: “Some publications are moving to digital formats, but readers still like to get their hands around the information in the form of a magazine. But writers will have to adapt to the needs of writing for digital publications.”

Marsh: “Some B2B publications are sticking with controlled circulation but are experimenting with digital issues. But print publications aren’t going away as of yet as print still

pays the bills.”

Hodson: “We do produce a digital edition of our trade publications but find that the impact is lost when you take a full-size print publication down to iPad size.”

What about social media? How will they affect the future of writing?

Carson: “Twitter and Facebook are adding spontaneity to the media. If you are a good writer, you can convert to writing for social media.”

Marsh: “With social media, we can break news between issues and alert readers as soon as the news feeds are on our regular digital-issue site.”

Hodson: “I find social media to be a time vampire. I Twitter for all three of our publications. But I do find social media to be a way to reach out to those who don’t receive the publications. They learn we exist and will subscribe.”

Marsh: “Ignore social media at your own peril.”

Carson: “You also can use blogs to get your information out.”

What about writing for B2B public relations agencies?

Carson: “B2B public relations is moving into a more digital world. Writers will need to do research so they will know the needs of various publications and the reporters who work for them. In the past, you might have mailed press releases to publications and then followed up with telephone calls to the reporters. But today press releases are distributed about 80 percent by e-mail and reporters will contact you if they are interested. You use the telephone a lot less than you did in the 1980s.”

How can freelance writers improve their chances of getting printed in your publications?

Hodson: “Know what a publication’s niche is, then call with ideas I need. Do your homework and don’t waste my time. Don’t use voice mail as all e-mails can now be read over cellphones. And if I’m interested, I’ll call you.”

So how can I pitch articles to B2B communications operations?

Hodson: “When pitching an article, call first. If we think it has possibilities, we’ll ask you to elaborate in an e-mail. Don’t send nice articles we can’t use.”

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Some Word Gifts Worth Keeping

Being a Short Compendium of Useful Internet Programs for Computers & Mobile Phones

By Richard L. Eastline

With the traditional season of gift buying, giving, and exchanging still in our minds, perhaps we may have forgotten to bestow thanks on some inanimate partners that help us in our occupation. So, here's an opportunity to be a donor and definitely receive some worthwhile benefits in return.

Portable Apps Suite for Flash Memory Drives

How's this—a computer on your key chain! It's almost true and for writers working on-site this is long overdue. A generic flash drive even in



what is today's minimum size, 2GB, easily accommodates the complete Portable Apps Suite, a cornucopia of nearly a dozen utilities. Best of all, it's free and available for PC, Mac, and Linux computers.

Essentially, it operates on its own platform-neutral system that, when the flash drive is inserted into a computer, creates its own home page displaying the program choices you've installed. So, a client's computer can be locked down, so to speak, inasmuch as all you need are the operating system, monitor, keyboard, and mouse. Produce your content, edit, and output to an available source. Any text

can be re-formatted to match the client's word processor. Remove the flash drive and take your work home or delete it after client copying.

The list of programs keeps growing with emphasis on compressed versions of familiar titles. Included in current downloads are Firefox browser, Mozilla Thunderbird (e-mail), Mozilla Sunbird (calendar and organizer), and the featured player, Open Office (an established, compatible competitor to MS Office and WordPerfect Office).

Also available are matching open-source utilities: Clam Anti-Virus, Pidgin Portable (messaging), Sumatra (PDF reader), KeePass Safe (password agent), Cool Player (audio player), plus some games. Depending on what you choose to include, the total size of the suite could vary from around 50MB to 350MB. For the smallest-size download, an adequate word processor replaces Open Office.

Everyone also gets some proprietary goodies: a back-up utility along with features such as custom icons, autoplay option, and quick-start shortcuts. (www.PortableApps.com)

Internet Browser for Cell Phones

Regardless how "smart" your mobile phone is, you'd be losing out by not adopting a very well-educated Internet browser offered free by Opera. While the computer-based version has been around for years (chasing the

better-known competitors such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, and Safari), its junior-sized sibling has been hidden in the shadows awaiting popular discovery. Its time has come.



Contained within a ridiculously small download is a fast, versatile, feature-rich utility that helps bolster the claim that cell phones are truly becoming miniature computers. Available as either Opera Mobile or Opera Mini, the browser works with a wide assortment of the most familiar brands and models. Opera's website has a full listing of compatible phones—the more sophisticated ones for Opera Mobile and the older (shall we say "dumb") phones matched to Opera Mini.

There even are several versions of software, all still available, that go from basic on up, so you're welcome to try all in finding out which works best with your phone.

Version 4.2 of Opera Mini was tested for this report. It offers a higher level of security plus some improved features over 3.1 while 5.1 ratchets up the capability via tabbed pages and touch-screen usage; however, it has just passed the beta stage and hasn't ironed out some kinks.

The test installation, by the way, was done on a phone not included in Opera's list-

ing—LG420G— but it performed well and allowed for most of the included features to be accessed. Probably one of the most valued is the compression of web page file sizes (less than 20% of the normal bandwidth) that's done by Opera's servers before sending to the phone. This means that even cell phones without high-capacity memory can be well-served.

Zoom controls allow small type to be more easily read and screen content can be switched from landscape to portrait modes with two key clicks. Bookmarks, along with auto-completion of website addresses, history of recent pages read, and shortcut keys are just about standard on all versions of the browser. The program will typically reside in a cell phone's "other files" or "applications" options. It can be downloaded directly to your phone or saved to your computer and then moved to the phone either via USB or BlueTooth file transfer depending on the phone model.. (www.opera.com/mobile)

Software to Adapt Pages to Booklets

This one isn't a freebie but for many writers who prepare mock-ups of folders, brochures, and guides, there is no better computer print program available than FinePrint. It's been around for several years and has become a much-admired utility even without the

Continued on page 5.

Let's Get Organized!

BY JOEN KINNAN

This time of year nearly all of us vow to do better at something, whether it's lose 10 ugly pounds (cut off your head; no, I really didn't mean that) or maybe get better organized. So, in the spirit of the season, here are two organizational tips to work (and play) more efficiently.

Social media accounts can take up the better part of one's life: we check out LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, who knows how many blogs, and we've just learned to do a bunch more stuff on Google. Keeping up is so exhausting, we have no time to do actual paying work. Hootsuite to the rescue!

Hootsuite.com is a one-stop site from which to manage all your social media accounts, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Wordpress.com, and Ping.fm. Google has a similar feature, but Hootsuite offers more: one-step updates for all your social media, real-time analytics so you can see how well your message is getting across, a customizable interface, scheduled releases that let you pick the optimum time to send your latest tweet (or whatever) to a breathlessly waiting world, and more. There are also iPhone and Android apps, so you can do all this at the bus stop.

A basic (free but with ads) membership in Hootsuite lets you track five social networks and gives you limited analytics, but for \$5.99/month, you get the whole shootin' match ad-free. (The paid version gives you a 30-day free trial, so it's risk-free too.)

Here's something that works equally well for the globe-trotting writer or the person who simply wants to roam around with a lean-and-mean netbook. Simply install gotomypc.com on the computer you'll want to access (home or office), and you can connect to all your main computer's programs and files from your local Starbucks or a client's office in Timbuktu using your netbook. Think of it! Your netbook stays clutter free, but you can access anything that's on your workhorse computer back home. No multiple installation lockout worries: I don't know about you, but I have a pretty big hissy fit when some nerdy geek from Microsoft tells me I can't install a program I've paid for on another of my very own computers. There's no need to buy that external DVD you don't otherwise want, either. (A caution: You don't need gotomypc if you never go anywhere with it, and you simply want to link two computers in your home. Set up a home network instead.)

Gottomypc costs \$9.95/month or \$99.00/year, but you get a 30-day free trial so you can opt out if you find you don't need it. To make gotomypc work, your main computer has to be on and connected to the internet. Gotomypc.com has very clear explanations of the security features that make this safe. Oh, and there are also apps for your Microsoft mobile devices. 🐣

IWOC
WELCOMES
NEW MEMBER
NANCY
SOLOMON

IWOC
WELCOMES
NEW MEMBER
WILLIAM
HORSTMAN

November Wrap-Up — Continued from page 3.

What are freelance writers doing wrong?

Marsh: "Some don't respect deadlines."

Hodson: "We need clean copy that requires few if any edits. And we want articles to be factual, not commercials."

Carson: "We need writers who are nimble and work quickly. And who write on the topic we discussed."

Are there any other types of writing you need from freelancers?

Carson: "We do white papers for clients. Also brochures. We can use freelancers who can work with vendors."

Hodson: "My company is expanding into custom publishing and we will need freelance writers to help produce them. We also are starting an online magazine." 🐣

Word Gifts Worth Keeping — Continued from page 4.

usual hype accorded to programs of proven value.

FinePrint works directly with your printer(s) to smoothly convert standard-page size content to two-up, four-up, or



booklet versions. It shines brightest in performing the magic of booklet compilations. Say that you have a document (text alone or text with images) consisting of 12 pages. An instruction manual or a lengthy report would lend itself to booklet format. Or, these could be a dozen isolated pages from various documents or even websites that need to

be gathered together. Instead of being produced as 12 sheets printed one-side only or six sheets printed two sides, they can be output as three sheets (two-up per side), each page being half-size and in the proper sequence for collating. The caveat here is that the printed content is smaller than the original so that type sizes should initially be at least 14-pt. As for other options, outputting two-up on a standard sheet of stationery could serve as a convenient means to post a two-page report for bulletin boards, or a four-up as a one-sheet visual of a four-page document for your files (like a photographer's proof of a strip of photos).

Use is as simple as one could ask for, requiring only easy installation of a 5.5MB downloaded file. FinePrint then appears on your list of printer choices when selecting output for a document. In choosing it, the software's screen page allows you to pick the revamping option, advises how many sheets of paper are needed, and shows the pages (via scrolling) in reduced form. Make your choice and designate the actual physical printer to do the work. You also can save the job as a file in .jpg format for future re-use. For booklets, depending on your printer's capability, the sheets can print either two-sides automatically or else the stack needs to be re-inserted for the back-sides to be processed. Sold online only as a download for \$50 from www.fineprint.com. Compatible with almost all versions of Windows with updates right through Win 7. 🐣

January Meeting, Continued from Page 1.

a book proposal in mind, you could very well run across a client who needs a book written for a commemoration or to help sell a product, service, or idea. You could easily land that job — and score points with your client — if you're knowledgeable about self-publishing and can steer the client in the right direction. Many clients *want* books for one reason or another. They just need a nudge to take the plunge. Presto! You've got a book under your belt, and your client pays you *and* picks up the cost of publication.

Be sure to start the year off right by attending the Tuesday, Jan. 11, IWOC meeting—in fact make monthly meeting attendance one of your resolutions; it will pay off for you. Networking and snacks begin at 5 p.m., the program at 6. Nonmembers are cordially invited. The meeting is \$15 for nonmembers and free to members. The location is National Louis University (across from the Art Institute), 122 South Michigan Ave., **Room 4020** (new room on 4th floor this year). Plan to stay after the program for a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant. See you there! 🍷

President's Column. Continued from Page 2.

would skitter across the tabletop when turned on. This year, we mixed coarse granulated sugar with essential oils to create personalized body scrubs the fragrances of which are meant to balance energy, ward off demons, invoke passion, or keep one from disease when robbing graves ("Thieves Oil"... long story).

And, of course, on New Years Eve, we don the funny hats, blow the horns, countdown twice (because the house is located right at the edge of the Eastern/Central time zone border), kiss our sweethearts, toast the new year and each other with good champagne, and finish off the toasting with chocolate liqueur. We also write our hopes and wishes for the coming year on flash paper, toss them together in a fireproof bowl, ignite the lot and send them to the heavens in a brief and brilliant burst of ash-free flame.

How I fell into this exquisite posse, or watched and participated in its forming around me, is a matter best left to a memoir. For the moment, of the moment, in the moment, it was only to be enjoyed and reveled in... with hopes to do so again and again for as long as the posse lasts. It will not last forever; I know that. The Second Law of Thermodynamics has already foreseen its demise and will take us all in time, probably piecemeal.

In the meantime, we will gather at the end of each year, as we did last week, for our days-long celebration of trotting onto the playing field of the new year together as a team. We will raise our glasses at midnight, shout "Happy New Year!" and hug each other breathless... and by so doing stick a collective middle finger in the face of the Second Law. But the Law is patient and takes no offense. It will not hasten our demise in retribution; it will just let our lives play out.

May this year be filled to overflowing for you with all good things—especially friendships. And if you're looking to add to your personal stash, consider IWOC. We don't advertise that as a membership perk, but maybe we should. More than one solid friendship has had its seams welded together by the sharing of common struggles and concerns, including the kinds we face as freelance writers. Just saying.

And with that I bid you, as I did at the start, Happy New Year! (May all of your redundancies be blessings!) 🍷

Calendar

January 11

IWOC Monthly Meeting. Learn about how you can self-publish and market a book. Speaker is Randall McKenzie, an expert in the field. The meeting will be held at National-Louis University, Room 4020, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program at 6 p.m. Networking at 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15 at the door, \$10 with online preregistration; IWOC members free. Buy-your-own dinner follows. Nonmembers welcome. For more information, call 800/804-4962 or visit www.iwoc.org.

February 8

IWOC Monthly Meeting. Check the website for details that are coming soon.

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.

January 25 (4th Tuesday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Join near-west suburbanites for a noon lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. Check before you come. This lunch is monthly only if there are enough people who can attend. Note: The lunch is now on the 4th Tuesday, not the 4th Thursday as it had been in the past.

February 3 (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 Coming Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG