



Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- MARCH MEETING PREVIEW 1
- SOCIAL TO THE MAX 1
- PRESIDENT'S COLUMN 2
- DID YOU KNOW 4
- OFFICE ON THE CLOUD 4
- IWOC APRIL WORKSHOP 5
- AMERICAN WRITER'S MUSEUM 6
- CHICAGO'S HOMIES 6
- EVENTS, PEOPLE, SPEED 8

MARCH MEETING PREVIEW

Social media basics for writers: what do you do after you sign on?

At the March 13 IWOC meeting, five coaches who use social media for business and networking will provide hands-on basic training in how to use LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. This practical workshop is geared to IWOC members and guests who have started to use social media for business purposes, or want to begin, but are not sure how to use the applications effectively and prudently. Here's your chance to learn social media tactics and etiquette from more experienced users.



So come get your "tweet" wet in the social media surf. You can bring any electronic device that gets you online--a laptop, notebook, netbook, iPad (or any tablet computer), even a smartphone if that's how you prefer to surf the net. National-Louis has wi-fi connectivity throughout the building. **Do remember to charge your battery before coming.**

Adjusted program timing: We'll cut our usual 5:00-6:00 social hour a bit short and **start the program earlier than usual at 5:45 pm.** This allows time for brief preliminaries, followed by a short presentation on managing social media, and then

about 45 minutes for social media practice and Q&A until 7:15.

Our coaches are four IWOC members and a first-time guest, Jennifer Rapp Peterson. She will start the program with a short overview of tactics and software tools to

help manage and coordinate various social media applications and use your social media time efficiently. Jennifer is founder and co-owner of IndieMade, a local web hosting service

that helps creative independent ("indie") entrepreneurs build and enhance their websites and online presence. The IWOC

Learn to use Social Media effectively for your business.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7.

Social to the Max

Can't get enough social networking? Sure, you're signed on to some of the majors, but if you want more, there are at least 400 to choose from. Here are a few:

MySpace.com is an international site that offers e-mail, a forum, communities, and weblog space.

Bebo.com offers blogs, lets you share photos with music, and allows you to draw on members' White Boards.

Orkut.com is a Google site that offers social networking and discussion.

Friendster.com is a global social network that emphasizes friendship and meeting new people.

Want to create your own social network? Try **Ning.com** where you can create, customize, and share a social network.

Meetup.com helps people with shared interests plan events and facilitates off-line group meetings.

CafeMom.com is apparently a place for mothers to vent about their kids. One post: "Do you spank, and if so, what do you use?" Is she thinking of a tire iron? (Maybe this one is not for the nonviolent.) ■

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Stet Editor

Joel Kinnan

Contributors: David Epstein, Joel Kinnan, Betsy Storm



Conversations with IWOC

My column in the February Stet was titled "Listening to IWOC." This month I want to talk about new developments in how IWOC communicates with its members and with the outside world—some of whom we want to attract as members, others as clients.

Searching for a title to "grab" you, I thought about converting *My Dinner with André* into *Our Dinners at Exchequer*. But that seemed a trifle *chi-chi*, not say obscure, or should I say "recherché"? (*Sacre bleu!* For how many years have I yearned to work that word into a piece of prose?!)

I was then tempted to play with *Tuesdays with Morrie*. After all, IWOC meets on Tuesdays, and (as I just learned from Google) one of the stars of the 2002 off-Broadway production was Alvin Epstein (no relative), who, according to *Daily Variety*, was "breath-taking. You'll Laugh! You'll Cry!" (Ye gods! I could be a famous theater critic if only I could write like that!)

Nonetheless, it seemed that alluding to "An extraordinary contribution to the literature of death" (*Boston Globe*) was not appropriate for describing new plans to open up a flowing back-and-forth multi-logue (not merely a "dialogue") among our members and between members and the Board. We also need to liven up our website and our overall web presence, and create attractive communications with members, prospects, and potential clients. This includes Stet, which Joel continues to edit monthly, other print and online communications, including information materials for new and prospective members, and presentations in libraries and similar

venues. We may also adopt a new e-mail method that can reduce the IWOC clutter in our inboxes.

Three of the chief needs identified in the recent Membership Survey are improving our marketing communications (both marketing and PR), building a more dynamic and compelling online presence, and reaching out to recruit more new members (good news—we've already gained several since November).

What we're doing so far

At the February Board meeting, the Board reviewed and approved a proposal for a reorganization of our marketing communications and website that had been worked out by Joel Kinnan, Roger, and me, with advice and suggestions from several other members.

Roger demonstrated a new website that he's been developing with Wild Apricot, a web-based content management and member services platform for small to medium-sized membership organizations. With the Board's authorization, Roger is now completing this website, which we expect to launch within the next six to eight weeks (possibly sooner). He will become webmaster, and Joel will continue to work with him, handling the enrollment of new members during the year and the end-of-year membership renewal drives, as she does now.

All IWOC members owe her huge and richly deserved thanks for all the work she puts in on membership enrollment every year, while also

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2.

producing *Stet* and having maintained our existing website for close to a decade.

Joel's work on membership and *Stet* fits perfectly with a larger role I asked her to take on as Membership Communications Coordinator. This new role embraces the editing, production—and enhancement—of *Stet*, as well as working with the Membership and PR committees to develop new materials such as flyers, posters, and other materials to attract new members and promote IWOC's activities and exhibits. IWOC is going to be far more visible at events like the WBEZ "Making Your Own Job" resource fair in January and others coming up soon. We need great new materials to help us show a lively, contemporary, web-savvy face to the world.

I hope you've noticed that Joel has already considerably refreshed the design of *Stet*, and that the February issue marked the start of her plan to enhance it with new content and other features intended to be useful and/or entertaining to writing professionals. She welcomes new story ideas and, even better, contributions from other members. And please do give us your comments and suggestions on the new *Stet* as it evolves.

Our Membership team this year is Brent Brotine, Jeff Steele, Jennifer Oatfield, and Ellen Krupp. The PR team is Laura Stigler and Katherine Mikkelson. Together with Joel, they can plan and put on public presentations to people interested in freelance writing and create a new membership packet designed to show new members how to get the most benefit out of IWOC and how to get active as soon as they join. Some of these materials may appear both on

our new website and in printed form. The Membership team and Joel have already updated a PowerPoint presentation IWOC used about ten years ago, and Brent and Jeff are planning to schedule the first presentation soon, probably at the Evanston Public Library.

Some other initiatives

As suggested by several members in the survey and elsewhere, starting at the March meeting, I will revive a former practice of introducing each IWOC meeting by giving a 5-minute summary of the Board meeting highlights before the speakers are introduced.



The Art of Conversation, René Magritte, 1950.

Last month I also asked members to suggest an efficient way to open an ongoing two-way dialogue between the Board and the members at large. One good suggestion was to use a list serve approach, which has several advantages over e-mail. Those of you who already subscribe to various list serves know that, instead of being bombarded with multiple e-mails and the infernal "Reply to All" an-

swers, which breed like locusts, you subscribe to a list serve (essentially a big e-mail group) and can elect to receive only a daily or weekly digest (table of contents), instead of each message when posted. These services also keep track of message threads, linking replies and comments to the older messages they answer.

Roger says Wild Apricot provides an easily manageable forum feature, which allows creation of multiple e-mail groups. Instead of creating a separate list serve, we may be able to use this feature for all members, as well as various subgroups, like the Board and committees. That can

make all our lives easier by reducing the remorseless barrage of IWOC messages. We can then just scan our weekly or daily digests, deciding which to read and which to skip.

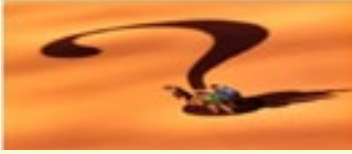
This also reduces the waste of web bandwidth, which could become a problem as serious as all the trees we've slaughtered with paper mail, brochures, and

seemingly endless copies.

(Usage note: You may wonder why I write "list serve" instead of the more common "listserv". It turns out that Listserv is the name of the company that leads this field and their main product, so I have decided to stop using it as a generic term.)

Anyway, that'll do for now. More to come. ■

Did you know...



Since we're all writers, we thought it might be fun to check out the origins of phrases people use all the time without thinking.

I have a frog in my throat: In the Middle Ages, physicians believed that secretions from frogs could cure coughs. So patients went around with frogs on their tongues until their docs thought they'd stopped hacking. (Ugh!)

Mind your Ps and Qs: In British pubs, beer is measured in pints and quarts, so a patron should keep track of how many Ps and Qs he downs if he wants to stay reasonably sober.

Keep your shirt on (when said to calm a person): A man used to take off his shirt before starting a fight so the shirt wouldn't be ruined. Hence, "keep your shirt on" meant "stay out of the fight."

She gets my goat (upsets me): Farmers believed that keeping a goat in the barn with cows had a calming effect on the cows, so a person who wanted to cause trouble for the farmer would steal the goat.

— Joen Kinnan

Moving your "office" to the cloud: Is it for you?

Last month we told you about how you could store or back up your documents on the cloud, but you can do more than that: you can operate your whole office—word processing, presentation software, invoicing, etc.—from the cloud. (To refresh your memory, in computer terms, the "cloud" is basically a contemporary term for the Internet.) Why would you want to do that? Well, for one thing, if your "office" were on the Internet, you could access it from *any* Internet-capable device anywhere, not just your own computer. And, if you often collaborate with other people, everyone would be able to work on the project any time. Plus, most cloud-computing providers own the software, so you don't have to buy costly updates every time a new version or upgrade comes out.

There are many providers of cloud office applications, but we're going to focus on three: Google Docs, Zoho, and the elephant in the room: Microsoft.

If you use gmail, you're already using one of Google's cloud services. Google Docs is a suite of products that lets you create, store, upload, and share different types of documents, such as word processing files, spreadsheets, and other file types, including images and videos. Google Docs has its own word-processing, presentation, and spreadsheet formats, but not to worry, Google Docs can convert to and from MS

Word, PowerPoint, and Excel, respectively, as well as other common formats. Google Docs even has a drawing program. And it's all free for you to work on alone or share with others in real time. Google Docs lets you set permissions for

other users document-by-document, so you only share relevant files with collaborators or friends and family.

Zoho, which was an early entry into cloud computing, offers three types of applications: collaborative (chat, meeting, mail, share, etc.); business (books, reports, invoice, etc.); and productivity (calendar, notebook, writer, planner, etc.). The writer application also allows you to post to a blog. Zoho is not free. Pricing is usage-based, and services are priced separately. The website says that every service has a free edition for individuals, but it's unlikely that "individuals" refers to people who are trying to make money.

Microsoft came late to cloud computing, chiefly because a principal source of their revenue comes from software sales, and they hesitated to diminish that revenue stream. (Google, in contrast, makes its money from advertising.) Now, though, MS has embraced the concept, but unless you

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Essentially, personal cloud computing means you have all the data you need for everything you do at your fingertips, anytime, anywhere, and it's synced to all your internet-ready devices.

have Windows 7, you won't be able to take advantage of what they offer for very small businesses, such as ours. The key feature in Windows 7 is Windows Live, which includes SkyDrive, the app that allows you to store and share files on the cloud. There are other Live apps for photos and movies, and they're all free for the download. As with other cloud apps, with Live apps, the beauty is in being able to synchronize all your internet-ready devices and share or collaborate with others. ■ — Joen Kinnan

An IWOC Workshop

Freelance Writing/Communications: The Starter Kit (but not just for novices)

Just a smattering of the challenges that keeps IWOC members so committed to their craft over many years (and yes, even decades) are: continual encounters with new assignments (or search for same); more effective ways of approaching even less-than-fascinating assignments; and a nonstop array of emerging technologies to learn and possibly even befriend.

With lifelong learning in mind, please consider joining IWOC next month for a workshop that features a full lineup of sessions spotlighting more than a dozen experts in their respective areas. While the event was conceived to target advanced-level college students and new writers, everyone is welcome.

Here's a glimpse of what's in the works, with nearly all programs led by IWOC members:

Session 1

SETTING UP YOUR FREELANCE BUSINESS

Session 2

EXPLORING SPECIALTIES WITHIN THE FREELANCE WRITING
AND COMMUNICATIONS MARKETPLACE

Session 3

WINNING NEW AND REPEAT BUSINESS

Session 4

DELIVERING A PROJECT FROM START TO FINISH

Session 5

A NEW WRITER'S THOUGHTS ON MAXIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE FREELANCE LIFE

Session 6

OPEN MIC Q AND A

DETAILS:

Date: Tuesday, April 17

Time: 5:45 to 9:30 p.m.

Location: National Louis University

122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago IL (Room TBD)

Cost: \$25 for IWOC members; \$40 for nonmembers

Note: Advance registration and prepayment are required.

(You will receive a link to preregister via e-mail)

Hope to see you there!

— Betsy Storm



A projected design for the new American Writer's Museum

Chicago's Homies

If you're from this area and you wonder why you became a writer, maybe it's something in the water. Chicago and its environs have spawned a whole boatload of writers. Wikipedia lists 238 pages of them, but some, I think are like my postman who wrote a book about his mail route. (I bought it, and it wasn't a world-beater.) Famous writers abound, though: Franklin P. Adams, Nelson Algren, Saul Bellow, Ray Bradbury, Gwendolyn Brooks, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Raymond Chandler, Michael Crichton, Finley Peter Dunne, James T. Farrell, Ernest Hemingway, Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur, Barack Obama, Mike Royko, Carl Sandburg, Studs Terkel, and Irving Wallace are among the really well-known. So if you'd like to have a shot at fame, skip the Dasani and have a glass from the tap. It could happen. ■

— The editor

WINDY CITY WILL BE SHOWCASE

New American Writer's Museum to Come to Chicago

Despite the fact that Ernest Hemingway is reported to have described his hometown of Oak Park as a place of "broad lawns and narrow minds," there's a Hemingway Museum there. Ditto a Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum in Hannibal, Missouri, and no doubt many other sites that celebrate famous American authors. But there has been no one museum devoted to American writers and the American literary tradition. Now the two-year-old American Writers Museum Foundation (AWMF) aims to remedy this oversight. And the foundation has chosen Chicago as the site for the museum!

Strangely, AWMF's founder and president is retired *Irish* businessman Malcolm O'Hagan. (Well, the Irish have a pretty good literary tradition themselves, and they've *already got* such a museum, so maybe it isn't so odd.) The foundation's website says the museum

will explore the influence of American writers on our history, identity, culture, and our daily lives.

Though the concept is still under development, major themes have emerged. One of their goals is to "take people by the hand and show them what they're missing when the don't read." So the museum will offer traditional items like manuscripts and personal memorabilia, but rather than trying to build a large collection, it will rely on loans for many of these things. Instead, the focus will be on interactive exhibits and "experiences." A spokesperson says the museum will "make significant use of multimedia interactive technology to take stories from between the covers of a book and display them in a very engaging way." So maybe we'll get to watch Tom Sawyer whitewash a fence? Or hang out with street toughs with Studs Lonigan? Or best of all, mingle with the upper crust at one of the

glitzy soirees made famous by F. Scott Fitzgerald? (Let's not have any scarlet A's, though.) What fun! I can't wait, and it may not be too long.

Within months, the foundation hopes to have garnered enough seed money to launch a full-fledged capital campaign. It has already received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop the concept, it's planning a traveling exhibit on American immigrant literature, and it's seeking to develop an association of existing authors' museums and homes to share information and become collaborators in the new museum venture.

We writers can get involved too. The AWMF has a website with a survey where the public can share opinions and feedback. Ideas are welcome: www.americanwritersmuseum.org. ■

— Joen Kinnan

member coaches are Brent Brotine and Sally Chapralis for LinkedIn, Veronica Hinkle for Facebook (also coached by Jennifer), and Adam Smit for Twitter. All of them are familiar with one or more of these applications.

Social media are in the professional genes of writers. Modern journalism began around 1700 with social media in print. Writers like Joseph Addison and Richard Steele (and the “Grub Street” hacks) hung out in London coffee houses, observing social chit-chat about business, society, literature, and politics. Then they wrote daily “posts” reporting and commenting on “trending” topics for the newly educated affluent urban middle-class. Addison and Steele’s *The Tatler*, launched in 1709, was a kind of Twitter, daily news sheets of breezy short items, often with a satirical bite. *The Spectator*, started two years later, ran entertaining magazine-length features, “a Sheet-full of Thoughts every Morning, for the benefit of my Contemporaries” published by the nameless and amusing “Spectator” of contemporary society. What’s that, if not an eighteenth-century blog?

So with social media we are returning to our roots as writers. Reading and posting on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are just an electronic way to get “LinkedIn” to our social and professional worlds, define the “Face” we want to present to friends, associates, and clients, and keep up with the “Twitter” of current events, trends—and sometimes fads—any of which could become leads to business or writing ideas.

After Jennifer’s presentation, we’ll break up into 5 groups of 5-8 people at separate tables, each with a coach who will focus on a single application. After about 20 minutes, you can move to a different group if you wish, or stay with one application for the full 45 minutes. In addition to answering your questions, coaches will show how to navigate and use the major features and sections of each application. For example:

For LinkedIn: What’s under the tabs for Home, Profile, Contacts, Groups, Jobs, etc? What are the basics of a good Profile? How can I see other people’s Profiles? How do I find relevant Groups and make new Connections? What can I do with 1st, 2nd, or 3rd degree connections? What’s the value of following a given Company?

For Facebook: What’s the difference between your Wall, Profile, and Home? What’s the difference between “like” and “comment” and “share”—and when should I do one or the other (or not do any)?

For Twitter: How do I find and select people, groups, or events to “follow”? How can I use Twitter to build up my own visibility and stay in touch with clients?

Coaches can cover more general questions as they are raised, such as:

- How can any of these applications benefit me and my business?
- How can I justify the time spent on social media? How do I manage that time efficiently?
- How can I find and connect with new people and online groups useful to me? What’s the proper etiquette for getting introduced?
- How can I use Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter for business purposes, to stay in touch with clients and to identify and market to new prospective clients? Which application is best for which purposes and situations?
- What are the options for setting privacy and sharing controls?

Bring your questions and **remember to bring a laptop, notebook, netbook, iPad (or any tablet computer), even a smartphone. And remember to charge the battery!**

Visitors are welcome. The meeting is on Tuesday, March 13, at National Lewis University, 122 South Michigan Ave., Room 5033, in Chicago (across the street from the Art Institute). Admission is free to IWOC members, \$15 for nonmembers who pay at the door, and \$10 for nonmembers who preregister at www.iwoc.org/calendar.htm. Social hour with snacks and beverages starts at 5 p.m. The program will run from 5:45 p.m. to approximately 7:15 p.m., and there will be plenty of time for questions. After the meeting, attendees are invited to reconvene at the Exchequer Restaurant for a buy-your-own-dinner to continue the conversation, catch up, and wind down. For more information, please contact IWOC at 800-804-IWOC (4962) or go to www.iwoc.org/iwoc.events.htm. We’ll see you there. ■

— Dave Epstein



MWA tackles website design

The Midwest Writers Association March meeting will feature a lively discussion about websites. Whether you've had a website for years or are still a little gun-shy, a panel of experts will show you how to embellish your site with dynamic video. Web designer Steve Zissman from Dynamic Image Website Design will show you the basics and MWA member Reno Lovison will discuss adding video. IWOC and MWA member Brent Brotine will talk about his experiences with his own two websites.

The meeting is set for Wednesday, March 14 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie. Light refreshments will be served. Check-in is set for 7:00 and the meeting will start promptly thereafter. There is no charge for the program, but RSVPs are requested to Rachel Madorsky at quasimur@yahoo.com or Liz Cunningham at LizCunn125@aol.com.

On April 18, MWA will hold an e-publishing seminar at Hackney's Restaurant in Glenview. Jim Kepler will moderate. The keynote speaker will be Peter Lynch of Sourcebooks Publishing in Naperville. ■



Notes About IWOC Members

Jeff Steele — Kudos to Jeff who captured custom publisher QuinStreet's "Best of Month Copy Award" for January for his personal-finance column "2012's Twelve for Twits." Click [HERE](#) to read this truly hilarious tongue-in-cheek round-up of financial gaffes.

Jane Ranshaw — Jane presents interactive monthly webinars with writing and writing-related tips for freelancers. To get on her e-mail list for announcements of the topic and when the seminar will be offered, e-mail her at jane.ranshaw7@gmail.com.

Have news you'd like to share? It's free PR. Send it to stet@iwoc.org.

SPEED, SPEED, MORE SPEED!

Internet providers knock themselves out to advertise that their upload and download speeds are faster than anyone else's. (You'd think you had only two minutes to live and you wanted to spend them sending photos of your cat in a party hat to someone you barely know.) Notwithstanding that the nanosecond race is a bit ridiculous, we've grown accustomed to expecting really fast connections. So what are the real upload-download facts? First, by design, upload speed is almost always slower than download speed. Why? Providers reason that users do a lot more downloading than uploading, so they give priority to downloading. Second, advertised speeds in either direction are almost always the maximum possible, i.e., everyone in the world who could possibly be on the Internet is in the bathroom during your upload/download moment. (Hence the phrase "up to" usually precedes the max advertised speed.)



In the next issue



- **April 17 workshop:** Learn more about this upcoming writing seminar for beginners and those who want to brush up.
- **President's column:** Read Dave Epstein's always interesting and informative remarks.
- **More about technology:** We'll have another useful article.
- And much more.

Want to see if the transfer speeds on your computer are superman/woman-ish? There are a number of sites that will let you test speed for free without trying to sell you some ancillary service. Try:

- speakeasy.net/speedtest/
- bandwidth.com/tools/speedTest/
- testmy.net/upload
- www.dslreports.com/tools

The last one is on a site that includes other internet tools and resources, including a directory of other speed tests. If you try several, you should find the speeds are comparable on all. ■