

Stet

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

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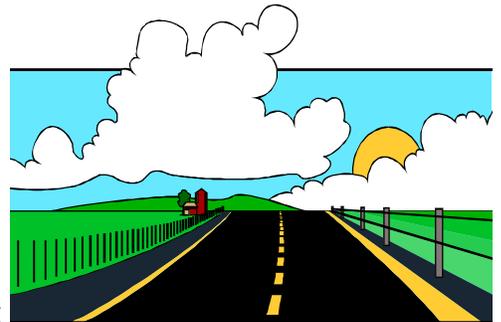
Calendar

MAY PROGRAM

Get a roadmap for IWOC's new Web site

BY JOEN KINNAN

Want to visit a great Web site with a cool design, resources for writers, easy navigation, and a built-in freelancers' job line? Look no further than our own iwoc.org. IWOC's beautiful and functional new Web site is ready for prime time, and the developers Ed Bouchard, Bob Hashioka, and Joen Kinnan will not only tell you all about it, they'll walk you through using the site at IWOC's May 11 meeting at Feltre School. (It'll be live online on a screen.)



As you know if you've attended recent meetings, IWOC has a new focus that should cause you to prick up your shell-like ears. We're going to go all out to help our members get jobs. And we're going to do it through the Web. The redesigned site features several ways to help prospective employers find you.

JOBS, LINKS, BELLS, AND WHISTLES

First—Lazarus has arisen from the dead in the form of a resurrected Job Line that will allow prospective employers to post jobs online in a members-only section. Then there's the spiffy new searchable directory. If you've got a Web site of your own, of course we'll still have your link on the IWOC site, but now you won't need your own site to display a few samples. You can strut your stuff on a page that's clickable right from your profile in the directory. Come to the May meeting, and we'll show you how to do it.

Though we've beefed up the client side, we haven't forgotten that we're writers and we often need online resources and help. There are plenty of links to sites you can use, plus you can sell an old computer, gripe about your projects, or get advice on software in the members-only section, where you can contact other IWOCers.

We're also going to hype the site in mysterious and not-so-mysterious ways so we can generate 47 gazillion hits. There's much more, and you'll learn the rest at the official unveiling during the May 11 meeting. (Don't expect to see the new site until then. We're uploading everything at once.)

Networking begins at 5 PM, the program at 6 PM. No charge for professional members, \$5 for associates, and \$15 for nonmembers. Plan to stay for a buy-your-own dinner afterward at a nearby restaurant. Feltre School is at 22 W. Erie. If you drive, park at either the Oriental Building (\$8) or CPS at 10 E. Ontario (\$9; stamp your ticket at Feltre). ✍

INTRODUCING IWOC'S

NEW WEB SITE

Tuesday, May 11

The Feltre School

22 West Erie

Networking 5:00 PM

Program 6:00 PM

Professional members

FREE

Associate members \$5

Nonmembers \$15

*IWOC meets for a program
and networking the second
Tuesday of every month.*

iwoc

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BOOK REVIEW

Punctuation (?) makes its mark in a bestseller!

BY RICHARD L. EASTLINE

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

EATS, SHOOTS AND LEAVES / Lynne Truss / 209 pp. incl. introduction and bibliography / Gotham Books (U.S. printing of the original British version), April 2004 / \$17.50, hardbound / ISBN 1-592-40087-6

So, the title is a little weird. What is more weird is that this modest (in size) book has created such a stir in the current book scene. Fresh from a best-seller run in England, it now has become available in what the Brits like to call “the colonies.” The publisher has been scrupulously careful in keeping intact even those peculiar-to-us additions of “u” to words such as “favourite.” Forget the spellings, though, and concentrate on the punctuation.

This is a winsome, comfortable excursion into that dangerous territory populated with commas, dashes, parentheses, apostrophes, and other devices that need to mate with the alphabet. The problem is the everlasting confusion as to finding their proper place. Lynne Truss has taken the initiative in a modern-day campaign to expunge the errant marks where unnecessary and install, where required, those that have strayed elsewhere or simply disappeared.

WOMAN ON A MISSION

Who is this Carrie Nation individual—wielding not a hatchet in pursuit of alcoholic beverages but rather a rod to rap the knuckles of the careless and the clueless? She is a popular book reviewer for the *Sunday Times* (London) and a former editor and journalist. The genesis of the book dates to her stint as host for a short series on punctuation presented by the BBC in 2002.

In this slim volume, she delves into the history of our now-familiar marks, inserts usage examples (including some howlers), and then proceeds to lecture the reader, firmly but encouragingly, on handling the merchandise. She artfully accomplishes her mission with the self-confidence that only authority can

muster. The chapters cover not only the expected comma, apostrophe, dash, and hyphen, but also the colon and semi-colon.

About the book's title—there aren't any doubts as to its appropriateness. It stems from a punctuation incident that morphed into a popular anecdote. Seems that a panda wandered into a café, ate some food, fired pistol shots into the air, and scampered away. Headlines followed: “Panda eats, shoots and leaves!” What Truss did was to simply exploit an example of The Misplaced Comma. The wording actually belonged to an encyclopedic entry about the animal's appetite—eats shoots and leaves.

ZERO TOLERANCE

The author has added a subtitle for the benefit of those who stare befuddled at the bold cover title. In small type, the contents are labeled as “the zero tolerance approach to punctuation” and accompanied by an extra-large exclamation point. In her preface to readers in America, she deflects the British claim that the U.S. is primarily responsible for the erosion of language, saying that there is ample evidence in her homeland to weaken such accusations. Differences in word use between the two English-speaking domains are of far less concern than the mayhem in punctuation that is common to both.

You readily can detect the intelligence in her logic as she confronts the punctuation offenders. Her book goes beyond a collection of anecdotes and definitions. The bulk of it deals with usage and rules commingled with explanations and deductive reasoning. Don't squirm—the tone is friendly, if not always calm, and the gestures at educating are neither bothersome nor intimidating.

Whether you decide to add this engaging book to your own reference library or choose to sample it on the sly in a busy bookstore, don't fail to make its acquaintance. And you do know what they say about “its”? For every apostrophe omitted from an it's, there is an extra one put into an its. Right on! 

The pros tell IWOC what they're looking for

BY CONRAD LAWRENCE

What the agency folks want is to see that you've already worked for other agency folks. That's what Micheal Hush, Senior Copywriter from Draft Worldwide; Wendy Jacobs, of the design house Pressley Jacobs; and Kelley Smith of Closerlook, Inc. all agreed upon in a perky, humorous, and provocative presentation at IWOC's April meeting.

Hush, whose background includes seven years at Leo Burnett, said, "You need a portfolio showing five campaigns of successful advertising." He stressed it should be an advertising portfolio, unless you're looking for work in the specialized areas of health or finance. Keep any outstanding "speculative" pieces handy to show if requested.

Jacobs said that she looks for "specialists" with "a conceptual point of view, who can not only write, but develop a concept." She indicated that her design agency is heavily into "branding" and needs someone who can help assemble the big branding tone.

Smith's primary request seemed simple: make sure that you include contact information when you send in samples. Mainly, she looks for problem solvers. "Come in as a business partner. Tie in your experience with what [Closerlook] does." She went on to talk about the benefit of being sensitive to the "economy of scale" and suggested the strategy of being willing to cut your rate after 50 to 100 hours of work. Regarding her marketing firm, she added, "Closerlook is a tech-savvy company. The more presence online the better. Learn to write for the Web. It is an art."

Hush helped define what type of agency to target. There are two kinds of agencies: 1) The big consumer agencies (Leo Burnett, for example, whose primary medium is television; and 2)



Kelley Smith, Wendy Jacobs, and Micheal Hush.

smaller direct market agencies with a myriad of functions. Draft Worldwide, Pressley Jacobs, and Closerlook all fall into the second category.

APPROACH

"Almost every agency has a creative gatekeeper," said Hush. Wendy Jacobs and Kelley Smith both laid claim to filling that position for their respective agencies. These are the people you will want to contact. Hush, who used the phone when he was freelancing, espoused maximizing your past experience. For instance, when making calls, he would say, "This is Micheal Hush from Leo Burnett," even after he'd been dismissed. To find agencies, he recommended *The Big Red Book*, available at the Harold Washington Library.

Smith was big on targeting agencies that "do the things that you dig. What gets one psyched?" Enthusiasm is infectious. She also recommended just showing your top three samples in face-to-face meetings.

As for follow-up, Jacobs felt that calling more than once quarterly is annoying. Hush added that a monthly e-mail would be smart. And Smith said to ask during the initial contact how often the

agency would like to be called. People work with people they like and agencies tend to select a writer based on whether they think that writer can get along with the client.

PRESENTATION

Humor, if you can pull it off, can be helpful. Hush created a brochure that showed him leaving Leo Burnett with all his things in a box, saying that he now had a lot of time available to offer services. He advised keeping your portfolio short (your top five samples) and including actual ads.

Jacobs said she finds books hard to manage and would rather see samples in electronic form. Including straight text is a good idea, too, because reading words in layout form can be challenging. All three advised keeping interviews to 15 to 20 minutes.

CHANGING TIMES

The good news is that the changing nature of communication will open the market to independent writers. Learn to write for the Web. Learn to write for interactive media. Become a specialist. The pharmaceutical and financial areas are hot right now and will be for some time to come.

All three panelists agreed that if you make a good impression on the first job, call backs will be inevitable. If you don't have a portfolio with experience, sell your personality. You could always try the old tried and true practice of finding where the agency people go for happy hour and buy them a drink. There is no substitute for a good portfolio, except possibly a Stoli gimlet. ✍

FYI

WRITING CONFERENCE ON THE BUSINESS OF WRITING FOR JOURNALISTS, AUTHORS & ACADEMICS

"Beyond the Book," a conference on the business of writing, will be held on Monday afternoon, May 10, at DePaul University's downtown campus. Noted Chicago writers will offer insights and information for authors and freelance journalists who want to reach new audiences and new markets.

The latest in an ongoing conference series, "Beyond the Book" is presented by Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), the world's largest licensing agent for text reproduction rights in print and electronic formats. It currently manages rights relating to over 1.75 million works and represents publishers, authors, and other creators. Its licensed customers include major corporations, government agencies, law firms, document suppliers, libraries, academic institutions, copy shops, and bookstores. (See www.copyright.com.)

Scheduled panelists and topics include:

- **Neil Steinberg**, a columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and author, among other books, of *If At All Possible, Involve a Cow: The Book of College Pranks*, on how a full-time newspaper columnist finds time to write books.

- **Laura Hartman**, DePaul University professor of Business Ethics and author most recently of *Rising Above Sweatshops: Innovative Approaches to Global Labor Challenges*, on the demands on academic authors posed by a highly dynamic publishing environment.

- **Barry Silesky**, author of *John Gardner: Literary Outlaw*, and other books, on the business lessons (good and bad) taught by the examples of famous literary figures. Editor of the literary journal, *ACM (Another Chicago Magazine)*, Silesky teaches at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

- **John D. Moore**, MS, C.A.D.C, author of, "Confusing Love With Obsession, on his experiences as a best-selling "self-published" author. His publisher, iUniverse (a Barnes & Noble company), is a leader in the newly emerging Print-on-Demand publishing sector.

To register for "Beyond the Book," you can go online to authors.copyright.com, or call toll-free 800-982-3887, ext. 2420. The program fee is \$25, and takes place at DePaul University's downtown Loop campus, One East Jackson Blvd. The program runs from 2 PM to 4 PM and includes a post-conference networking reception from 4 PM to 5 PM. ✍

Calendar

May 11 (2nd Tuesday)

IWOC monthly meeting: Introducing IWOC's New Web Site. Developers Ed Bouchard, Bob Hashioka, and Joen Kinnan will introduce and walk you through IWOC's new Web site, live online. Learn about the new Job Line, the new searchable directory, and—if you don't have your own site—how you can use IWOC's site for putting samples of your work on a page clickable from your profile. Plus much more. At The Feltre School, 22 West Erie, Chicago. Networking at 5 PM; program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

June 8 (2nd Tuesday)

IWOC monthly meeting: To Be Announced. At The Feltre School, 22 West Erie, Chicago. Networking at 5 PM; program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

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

May 6 / June 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 information, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

May 27 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP monthly lunch: The West Suburban group meets at noon at Poor Phil's at 139 So. Marion, Oak Park. Contact Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065.

**Check out
IWOC's Web site at
www.iwoc.org
user id: iwoc
password: chgowtr**