

Building Your
Business Issue



SPRING 2020

03

A Quarterly Publication
of the American Society of
Journalists and Authors

ASJA MAGAZINE



YOU, THE
EXPERT!

*Build your subject
matter expertise*

PREVIEW



NYC CONFERENCE



ALSO INSIDE >> Volunteering Can Build Your Network //
Build Your Client List by Landing High-Paying Brands // Build a Writer Website that Works

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Build your subject matter expertise

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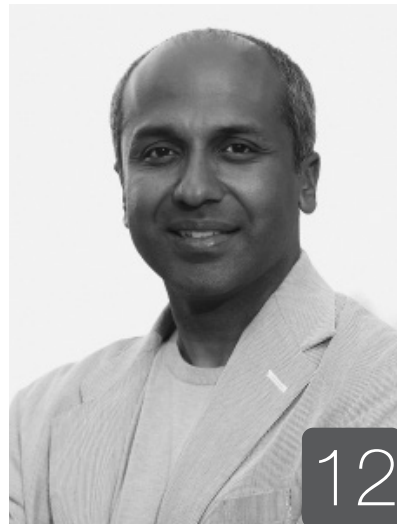
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ASJA MAGAZINE

Quarterly / No. 3

*The Official Publication
of the American Society of
Journalists and Authors*



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Founded in 1948, the American Society of Journalists and Authors is the nation's professional association of independent and entrepreneurial nonfiction writers. ASJA is a primary voice in representing freelancers' interests, serving as spokesperson for their right to control and profit from the uses of their work wherever it appears. ASJA and the ASJA Charitable Trust bring leadership in establishing professional and ethical standards, as well as in recognizing and encouraging the pursuit of excellence in nonfiction writing. Since 2010, the ASJA Educational Foundation has been offering programming that covers all aspects of professional, independent writing for both established and aspiring writers. ASJA headquarters is in New York City.

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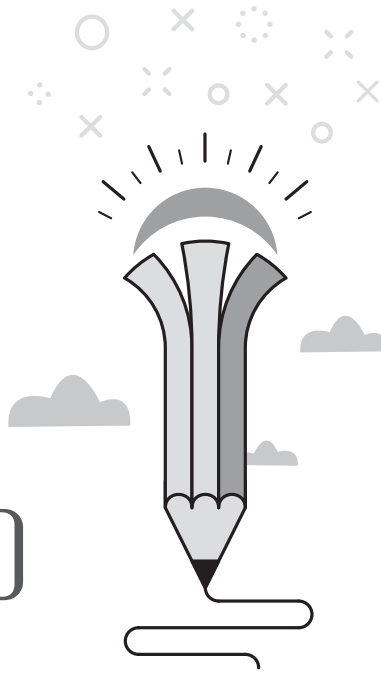
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Writers Emergency Assistance Fund

CHAIR Laura Laing



*From the
President's Desk*



RELEVANCE IN A CHANGING WORLD

A lot can happen in three months, a fact of life that complicates writing a column in early January that won't reach readers until sometime in April. Commentary on breaking news is an obvious non-starter thanks to an insatiable 24/7 news cycle that quickly renders almost everything "old news." An exception might be arguments about the merits of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*. Those probably will continue forever.

The question of relevance is a somewhat bothersome guessing game of fleeting importance for this column: what can I write on deadline today that will matter—or at least be interesting—three months down the road? If I guess wrong, oh well. There's another column to write in a few months.

At an organizational level, though, answering the "relevance question" is more complicated, vastly more important, and always timely. ASJA's mission, in part, is to "be a primary voice in representing freelancers' interests, serving as a spokesperson for their right to control and profit from the uses of their work wherever it appears." It's a lofty goal, but what does it mean?

ASJA's mission is more than words on a page, more than wishful thinking. It's a never-ending challenge for our officers, directors, volunteers, and staff to maintain and enhance the organization's relevance for our members and for the freelance community at large. Are we meeting the needs of this diverse group as they navigate the shifting landscapes—some might rightfully say minefields—of journalism, content writing, and books?

I think that we are, although there's always room for improvement.

ASJA's well-earned reputation as a resource for educational and networking opportunities is the gold standard. The annual conference in New York consistently delivers informative and timely sessions for freelancers at every stage of their writing careers, and the wildly popular Client Connections is an unparalleled networking opportunity for our Professional members. Just as important is the informal networking that goes on when writers, editors, and agents wander the halls for a couple of days.

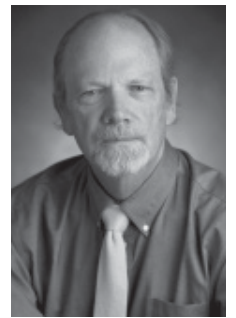
The annual conference always has been held in New York, but is that still the best location? Rumor and some anecdotal evidence suggest that there is one segment of our membership that will never attend an annual conference anywhere outside New York City and another segment, citing cost and inconvenience, that never will attend the conference as long as it's held in the city.

To accommodate members who can't, or won't, make the trip to New York, we've expanded our offerings of Virtual Client Connections and Virtual Pitch Slams. They're getting great reviews from participants who are finding work.

I serve as legal counsel for another industry group, American Horse Publications, that moves its annual conference around the country. We were in Baltimore two years ago, Albuquerque in 2019, and almost in my backyard, in Lexington, Kentucky, for 2020. Some other organizations alternate their conference schedules, holding a national conference in even-numbered years and a series of smaller, regional conferences in odd-numbered years. This scheduling seems to work and might be worth considering for ASJA

MILT TOBY

*Freelance Writer
and ASJA President*



as we try to make our conferences accessible to more people.

ASJA's regional conferences, usually held once a year in the fall, are smaller, successful events, but transforming the annual conference into a roadshow would be difficult. The sticking point to moving anywhere outside New York City is Client Connections. A respectable number of agents and editors showed up for Client Connections in Washington D.C. last fall, nearly 20, but more than 60 participated in the New York version at the 2019 annual conference. We almost certainly wouldn't get that turnout anywhere else.

Relevance these days goes beyond education and networking, though, and involves protecting the rights of freelancers against new, and largely unanticipated, legislative challenges to the way we work. Late in 2019, ASJA and the National Press Photographers Association became plaintiffs in a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of parts of California's new independent contractor law. I'm excited that we took this step, but there is much more to be done to live up to our mission.

In early January, similar legislation was pending in New Jersey and New York and was being considered in other states. ASJA members have been among those freelancers lobbying hard in opposition and they stalled the legislation in New Jersey, at least for the session that ended on January 13, 2020. Similar legislation (S. 863) was introduced the next day, however, when the new lawmaking session began. ASJA needs to be more active in support of these grassroots efforts. One way to do this is to increase our organizational support for ASJA's regional chapters so they can become rallying points in the fight against restrictive legislation.

An important part of the annual conference this year is a business session where you can meet the officers and board members, learn about our accomplishments and plans, and make suggestions about what we should be doing. I look forward to seeing you there!

*From the Editor*STEPHANIE
VOZZA*Freelance Writer
and ASJA Editor*

INVEST IN YOURSELF

In November of 2013, I boarded a train from Detroit to Chicago, not knowing that the trip would change my life. I'd been freelancing (very) part time since my boys were born. With my oldest filling out college applications, I decided it was time to come out of my comfort zone, attend an ASJA regional conference and take my career to the next level.

Standing in line for my box lunch, the writer next to me struck up a conversation. She recognized my name from FLX, a popular freelance networking board, and we had a client in common. When I casually mentioned that the rate was low but the hourly rate worked out okay, her eyes widened.

"I don't know if I should tell you this," she said. "They pay me four times that amount per post."

That writer was Jennifer Goforth Gregory, and that moment taught me the power of having a professional network. I didn't know what I didn't know, but gaining that insight was the empowerment I needed to eventually transform my career.

Before the end of lunch, Jennifer and I exchanged business cards. Once I got home, we became accountability buddies. And today I consider her to be a close friend.

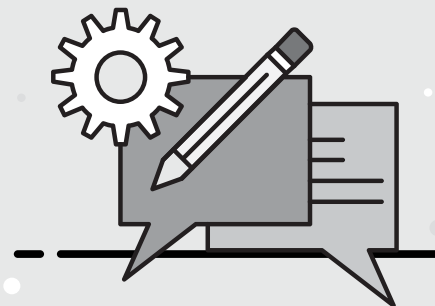
I've attended every ASJA annual conference (and a few regional events) since then. As my network has grown, so has my success. In a few weeks, I'll board a plane for New York City to attend the 2020 event. I'm excited about the possibilities and, even more so, about seeing my writer friends. I know I'll come home exhausted from all of the fun but energized with lots of new information.

I highly recommend investing in yourself by attending an in-person conference. And I highly recommend talking to the person standing next to you in the lunch line. That conversation could change your life.

I hope to see you in NYC!



*Want to write
for your peers?
magazine@asja.net*



NEW ASJA MEMBERS!

APRIL 2020

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS

Joanne Cavanaugh Simpson
Towson, Md.

Robert Cohen, Arlington, Va.

Brunella Costagliola, Clay, N.Y.

Dee Divis, Arlington, Va.

Dan Fellner, Scottsdale, Ariz.

George Hobica, Los Angeles, Calif.

Malia Jacobson, Tacoma, Wash.

Thomas Lee, San Leandro, Calif.

Rick Massimo, Washington, D.C.

Kelly McSweeney, Littleton, Mass.

Addie Morfoot, Verona, N.J.

Ami Neiberger-Miller
Purcellville, Va.

Ashley Powers, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Jennifer Reising, Arlington, Va.

MeLinda Schnyder, Wichita, Kan.

Brigid Schulte, Alexandria, Va.

Haley Shapley, Seattle, Wash.

Holly Simmons, Silver Spring, Md.

Susan Valot, Lomita, Calif.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Iris Manning, Mass.

Suzi Morales, Scotch Plains, N.J.

Monica Pierce, Meridian, Idaho

Alex Ruppenthal, Chicago, Ill.

Meredith Wargo, Kanab, Utah



CLARIFICATION: In "ASJA's National Reporting Project," an article in the Fall 2019 issue of ASJA Magazine, we incorrectly reported and deadnamed the name of a Teen Vogue writer, who is transgender. The correct name of the writer of the story "How Trauma Affects Queer and Trans Youth" is Adryan Corcione. We regret the error.



ASJA >>>>>> Membership Benefits

KNOW SOMEONE WHO MIGHT
BE ELIGIBLE TO JOIN ASJA?
SEND THEM OUR WAY!

ASJA's mission is to be the voice and career
resource for independent, entrepreneurial,
professional nonfiction writers.

VISIT [ASJA.ORG/MEMBERS](https://asja.org/members)

► **Advocacy:** Opportunity to support ASJA's mission to protect the rights of independent writers and inform the freelance community of potential threats.

► **Client Connections:** One-on-one appointments with editors and agents at ASJA's Annual New York Conference and at some regional conferences.

► **Virtual Pitch Slams:** Interactive conference calls during which members get their story pitches heard live with feedback provided by a top editor.

► **ASJA's Conferences, Special Interest Groups (SIGS), and Forums:** Members enjoy multiple networking opportunities, share experiences and tips.

► **ASJA Paycheck:** A rights-and-fees database, which collects member reports of payments and terms to help them negotiate from a position of strength.

► **ASJA Press Card:** Entry to many museums, conferences, and other press events.

► **Freelance Writer Search:** Access to new job opportunities.

► **Discounts:** ASJA's conferences, Publishers Weekly, Delta Air Lines, and AVIS Car Rental.

► **ASJA Magazine:** State-of-the-industry publication providing information, inspiration, and motivation.

► **Emergency Fund:** For members in need.



MEMBER NEWS

»»»» Book News

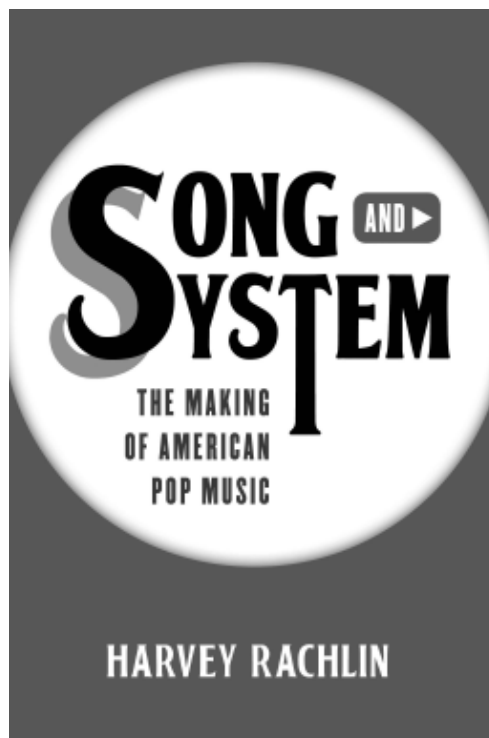
Gigi Berardi's book *FoodWISE: A Whole Systems Guide to Sustainable and Delicious Food Choices* was released January 14, 2020. Described as one of "19 reads that inspire us and challenge us to be better activists, environmentalists, cooks, policymakers, protectors of the planet, farmers, supporters of pollinators and advocates for a better food system" by *Forbes.com*, the book addresses the sheer volume of diet and detox options that can feel defeating and largely unhelpful and already has more than 30 endorsements from worldwide food thought leaders.



Margie Goldsmith's latest book, *Masters of the Harmonica: 30 Master Harmonica Players Share Their Craft* is the Amazon #1 best-seller of harmonica books. The book contains revealing interviews with blues harmonica players including Kim Wilson, Charlie McCoy, Delbert McClinton, Charlie Musselwhite, Magic Dick, and nearly two dozen other consummate performers. Says Gerhard Mueller, Product Manager, Hohner Harmonicas: "There have been books written about how to play harmonica, books on the history of harmonica, techniques and resources,

but never before has there been a book in which 30 harmonica masters share their knowledge of the instrument. *Masters of the Harmonica* is a must-have for harmonica players of every level."

Deciphering Shakespeare's Plays: A Practical Guide to the Twenty Best-Known and Enduring Works by **Cynthia Greenwood** won the Foreword Magazine's INDIES Gold Award for Adult Reference in June 2019. The book invites readers to go behind the curtain to better understand the comedy, tragedy, history, and romance that flowed from the quill of the legendary dramatist.

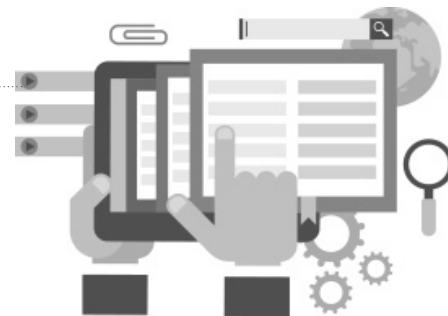


Song and System: The Making of American Pop Music by **Harvey Rachlin** was published in March 2020 by Rowman & Littlefield. The book, Rachlin's 13th, has been praised by several music luminaries. Tony Orlando ("Knock Three Times," "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree") wrote, "Harvey Rachlin never ceases to amaze me. Even after recording my first hit song, I'm still learning from this author. Thank you for writing this one. It's amazing."

Dementia, Alzheimer's Disease Stages, Treatments, and Other Medical Considerations by **Laura Town** has been named by Book Authority as one of the best books on dementia of all time. As featured on CNN, Forbes, and Inc. BookAuthority identifies and rates the best books in the world, based on public mentions, recommendations, ratings and sentiment.

Psychoanalyst Dr. **Alma Bond's** fifth book in her On the Couch series, *Meryl Streep: On the Couch*, was published on December 12, 2019, by Bancroft Press to glowing reviews. The book contains the fictionalized psychoanalysis of Ms. Streep, and gives an intimate portrait of her character found nowhere else in literature. It can be purchased at Amazon.com, BN.com, and BancroftPress.com.

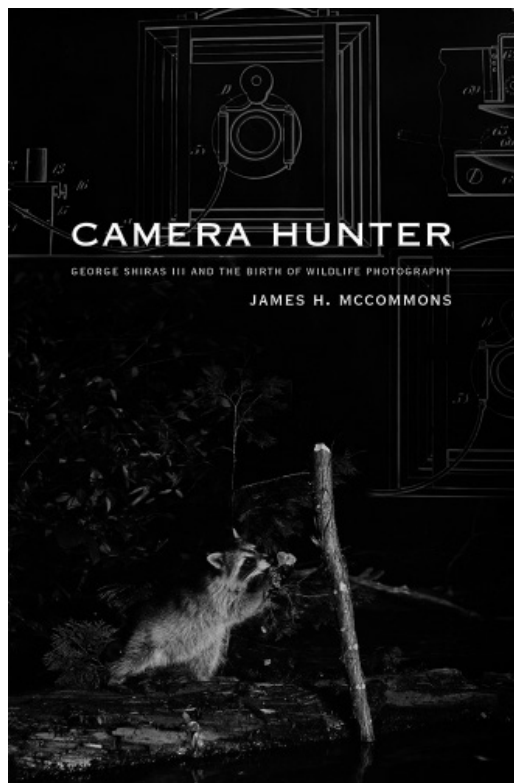
Got news to share with ASJA?
Submit your items at asja.org/members.



10 Publishing Myths by **W. Terry Whalin** was released December 17, 2019, by Morgan James Publishing. The book offers authors the chance to succeed in the publishing world by giving them practical tools and detailed steps they can use to succeed and dodge the myths of the industry.

Arthur Sharp's latest book, *Pluviculture and Meteorological Mumpsimuses: How to Avert an \$11 Million Climate Change Investment*, was released in November 2019. It traces media coverage of climate change back hundreds of years through actual newspaper articles and proves that what we are reading today about climate change hasn't changed for centuries.

James McCommons' latest book *Camera Hunter: George Shiras III and the Birth of Wildlife Photography* was published by the University of New Mexico Press in October 2019. The biography chronicles the life and work of the first wildlife photographer and the inventor of the trail camera. Foreword Reviews calls the book a "thorough biography, an entertaining travel guide, and a rich and detailed history of the early conservation movement."



»»»» Awards, Accolades and Activities

Susan Johnston Taylor has launched Grammar Geek Greetings, a line of humorous, grammar-themed greeting cards available on Etsy for writers, editors, teachers, or grammar geeks.

Sandra Beckwith's Build Book Buzz book marketing site was named one of the top 38 book marketing blogs worldwide by Expertido at the end of 2019 and one of The Write Life's "100 Best Websites for Writers in 2020."

The seven-part series "Feeling Superior," a collaboration by **Melanie Radzicki McManus** and the Minneapolis Star Tribune, won a 2019 silver Lowell Thomas award in the Special Packages/Projects category. McManus wrote the articles and created daily vlogs during her three-week adventure. The Lowell Thomas Awards are considered the Pulitzers of travel writing.

Katy Koontz won a 2019 Folio: Eddie Award for her editor's note on Denise Linn in the March/April 2019 issue of Unity Magazine. The award was in the consumer magazine division, column/blog category for spiritual/religious publications. The Eddie Awards (for magazine editorial excellence) are one of the largest and most prestigious publishing industry competitions and have been a staple in the industry for more than two decades.

Koontz, the editor of Unity Magazine, was also named to the annual Folio: 100 list this year, a list that "shines a spotlight on those who have truly made a significant impact on their company or the industry."

Thomas Lee launched his ghostwriting company Active Voice Editorial Services.



>>>>>>>

PAYCHECK



OPENTABLE

Article, consumer publication

Total fee: \$350.00

I didn't have a great experience with the previous editor, but I naively hoped things would improve under a new editor. Alas, they haven't. She lost my invoice, kept my article in limbo for more than two months (during which time I was constantly hounded by publicists about when it would run), and then finally published the piece under someone else's byline. She did fix the byline issue after I emailed her, but it's been more than 60 days since I invoiced and I still haven't gotten paid. I keep asking for an ETA and getting no response. Very frustrating! Finally learned my lesson and will not write for them again.

Feedback: 1

FRIENDS OF THE ST. PAUL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Speaking gig to talk about my new book

Total fee: \$450.00

Group asked me to talk about my book, with a group of other authors, in a distant part of the state. Although I was separately compensated for mileage, it was not worth doing considering the six hours of driving.

Feedback: 3 (payment was late)

UNIVERSITY

50-minute lecture

Total fee: \$350.00

I lecture once or twice a year before students in a large introduction to creative writing course. I've done it many years and need no time to prepare for the lecture.

Feedback: 10

FAMILY OF ACCOMPLISHED BUSINESSPERSON

Book

50,000 words

Total fee: \$128,680.00

This was a commissioned biography that came to me through ASJA's Freelance Writer Search (FWS). The fee I'm reporting represents 80% of the contracted fee. Client wished to end the project after I finished the manuscript but before I began work on project-managing a published book. Client was unsure where they wanted to take things from this point. Project paid well, but it was difficult working with a client so uncertain and unfamiliar with biographical writing, and with unrealistic expectations.

Feedback: 6

NEXTTRIBE

Article, consumer publication

1,000 words

Total fee: \$350.00

Feedback: 10

THE NEW YORK TIMES WELL FAMILY SECTION

Article, consumer publication

1,100 words

Total fee: \$500.00

Editor is a delight to work with.

Feedback: 10

FAMILY CIRCLE

Article, consumer publication

1,200 words

Total fee: \$2,400.00

Wonderful experience. Incredibly sad this magazine is gone, has been a great market for me.

Feedback: 10

BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS

Article, consumer pub

900 words

Total fee: \$1,800.00

Excellent experience. Edits minimal.

Good pay.

Feedback: 10

NEXT AVENUE

Article, consumer publication

1,000 words

Total fee: \$200.00

Have worked with this editor several times and she is always a pleasure.

Feedback: 10



To protect the confidentiality of information filed with
Paycheck reports, additional details including rights and
more are available at asja.org/paycheck/report-a-payment

CORPORATE WRITING/EDITING

1,200 words

Total fee: \$1,500.00

The piece ended up running more than 1,200 words (maybe 1,500) but I chose not to negotiate for more money because they said they wanted to hire me later for a longer version of this piece. But, then, they changed their minds. I should have asked for more.

Feedback: 8

CALIFORNIA REAL ESTATE MAGAZINE

Article, trade publication

800 words

Total fee: \$600.00

Editor was fabulous to work with. Payment took a little while due to an accounting snafu, but editor helped speed things along.

Feedback: 9

MAJOR MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

1,000 words

Total fee: \$1,000.00

Ghostwriting trade articles under their expert's name. It's become a fairly regular gig for me.

Feedback: 8

LARGE HOSPITAL SYSTEM

Article, consumer publication

1,300 words

Total fee: \$1,300.00

This particular article felt more like a women's \$2/word magazine edit - too many questions. However, for this market I got to bill for the number of words submitted so that made it easier to swallow. Payment was very late, due to some internal issues, which I hope have been resolved.

Feedback: 7



CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

ASJA 49th Annual Conference

April 19 – 20, 2020

New York Marriott Downtown,
85 West Street at Albany Street
New York, N.Y.

ASJA 50th Annual Conference

April 18 – 19, 2021

New York Marriott Downtown,
85 West Street at Albany Street
New York, N.Y.

Virtual Client Connections and Virtual Pitch Slam

TBD (see website for details)

Boost your mid-year bottom line by participating in Virtual Pitch Slam!

Want a guaranteed audience for your perfectly crafted story idea? Join us for Virtual Pitch Slam (VPS), a one-hour interactive phone call during which a guest editor will hear up to 15 pitches from professional members. Bonus: You'll get honest feedback on why your pitch works or not, plus the chance to place your story with a new outlet.

Held every month or so, we've done great Pitch Slams with editors from *Discover*, *Sierra*, *Eating Well*, *Atlantic CityLab*, *TheKitchn.com*, *American Way*, *Boston Globe Magazine*, *Wine Enthusiast*, *PBS*, *Your Teen*, *Preservation*, *The Open Notebook* and more.

We record the event, and it's posted on our members-only website for other writers to listen to (if they didn't snag a coveted pitching slot). Many of the ideas pitched during VPS have been published, so it's a win-win for everyone.

We need your help to find more willing participants: Does one of your editors need pitches? Please send them our way! Get details from Wendy Helfenbaum
wendy@taketwoproductions.ca

NEW YORK 2020

*Get ready for the
49th Annual*

ASJA WRITERS CONFERENCE

»»»» NEW YORK CITY, APRIL 19 & 20, 2020

.....
*FROM THE
CONFERENCE
CHAIRS*



While planning this year's conference, we never could have guessed we'd be fighting against the biggest threat to date against freelancers' lives. Chair Randy Dotinga (based in San Diego) has been lobbying on behalf of California freelancers against AB5, a bill restricting the number of writing projects a freelancer can take on. New Jersey and New York may soon follow suit.

Being a member of a major writers' organization, you know we have your back—and come April we get to all leave our home offices and meet face to face. While I've been attending the conference since 2005, this is my first time doing so as a chair. Each year, I board the plane home to Milwaukee with a smile on my face and a notebook filled with ideas on how to improve my writing business. That energy keeps me juiced up for a long while, making the conference investment well worth it.

In spite of shifting laws and restrictions, there has also never been a better time to be a freelancer. Digital markets, content marketing and ghostwriting are among the editorial opportunities experiencing serious growth—and not all are with the Big Five publishers or newsstand magazines. This year we are focusing on building your niche and marketing yourself to non-traditional markets.

Randy—who organized the conference in 2013—eagerly stepped up to chair this year's conference. With a successful three-year run of chairing VCC now behind me, I agreed to help out as associate conference chair. Building on the success of past conferences, we are bringing back intimate, extended-length Mastermind sessions (an extra fee applies; sign up quickly as we expect them to be sold out like last year).

Three pitch slams give real-time feedback from literary agents, book editors, women's markets and *New York Times* editors. Stay tuned for instructions on how to send in your pitch to the moderators of these pitch slams for consideration. (Don't worry: you'll still get to read it at the mic—we want to hear the pitch in your voice!)

There will also be four different tracks—Journalism, Content Marketing, Books and Craft/Tech.

New this year are 30-minute "Quick Tip" sessions and lunchtime "Ask the

Expert" sessions. And a plenary session offers the latest news about legal threats to journalists and what you can do to protect your career.

Client Connections is your opportunity—in a "speed-dating" format—to meet with editors and agents who hire writers. CC co-chairs Jeanette Hurt and Erin O'Donnell are working hard to assemble the line-up. Info will be forthcoming about how to sign up for the lottery. (And don't despair if you don't get an appointment with your preferred picks. Last year I was waitlisted for three agents and met with one who requested a full read on my novel-in-progress!)

We are also offering free WiFi to conference attendees and working with the hotel to allow for modern-day accommodations like gender-neutral bathrooms, and front-row seating for visually and audio impaired members. We are also pleased to offer a mentoring program. Interested in giving back to the writing community or perhaps you seek a mentor yourself? You can sign up to be a mentor or mentee during conference registration.

A familiar face to many, journalist and tech maven Sree Sreenivasan is our keynote speaker, also hosting his hugely popular annual tech session.

We hope to see you there—and please come over to say 'hi' when you spot us at the conference! — *Kristine Hansen*



Randy Dotinga
CHAIR

Randy Dotinga is a former president of ASJA and has been a full-time freelance writer for 20 years. He is leading ASJA's fight — including a First Amendment lawsuit in federal court — to stop California from devastating freelance journalism via a new law.



Kristine Hansen
ASSOCIATE CHAIR

Kristine Hansen has been a member of ASJA since 2006 and is a food, design and travel writer based in Milwaukee. Past involvements with ASJA include chairing Virtual Client Connections.

NEW YORK 2020

LEIDA
SNOWFreelance Journalist
& ASJA Publications Chair*Always Something*
NEWAN INTERVIEW WITH
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

SREE SREENIVASAN, TECH GURU



Leida Snow, ASJA's Publications Chair, is a widely published, award-winning journalist, former radio news anchor (ABC/NY) and theater critic (WINS-AM/NY). As president of LS Consultants, Leida provides communications coaching to professionals in many fields. @LeidaSnow

PHOTO BY MEGAN MACK

The first time I saw tech guru Sree Sreenivasan was at an ASJA conference in 2006. Google, launched in 1998, was still something of a mystery to most of us. LinkedIn (2003) and Facebook (2004) were babies. Twitter had just been launched. Sree (everyone calls him that) made the tech world seem sexy and irresistible.

Since then, Sree has been almost constantly involved with ASJA, and I've attended several of his other workshops, consistently amazed as he makes the newest apps approachable. "Be an early tester and a late adopter," he advised, introducing me to Otter, a transcription app I then used for our talk.

I sat down for an extended interview with Sree in his Upper Westside apartment in Manhattan. The furnishings are barely noticeable because the wall of windows in the living room has a gasp-inducing view of the Hudson River. I was there in the late afternoon on a clear day: flash to a sunset bursting with crimson and gold.

"It's 17 years I've been involved with ASJA in some fashion, and it's my favorite annual workshop," he told me. "What a speaker needs is an engaged, smart, curious audience that asks lots of questions. And this was the years that we've seen how technology was something that was good to know, and now, as a writer, you absolutely need it."

Sree's presentations at ASJA moved on to blogging and podcasts, and all of the tools, platforms and other "essential parts of a writer's skill set, some of it to create content, others to research with, and yet others to share what you create with the world." Sree will bring his latest social media epiphanies to a keynote and workshop at the upcoming ASJA Annual Conference.

Asked about the changes in social media over time, how filled with racism, misogyny and anti-semitism it is, Sree – who refers to himself as "a brown person," leaned forward. "There is so much hate on the internet, that it can be disheartening and, as a minority, I am exposed to some of it," he confided. "But," he went on, "it's nothing compared to what women go through. That's been one of the eye opening things, that no matter how bad it is for people like me, for a woman to be on the internet, or on a public platform like Twitter, is a handicap."



PHOTO BY LIA CHANG

“What a speaker needs is an engaged, smart, curious audience that asks lots of questions. And this was the years that we’ve seen how technology was something that was good to know, and now, as a writer, you absolutely need it.”

— SREE SREENIVASAN

At least today “most of us are now tech savvy to some extent,” he said. So the warning from him is simply to be careful. As journalists and authors, he said, the internet can be “a wonderful resource for research, and for reaching communities that care about what you’re doing.”

As for being overwhelmed, the pace is only going to get faster, he said. But you don’t have to be on every platform. The key is to find where you get traction: “If you post something and people respond, then you feel like there’s somebody listening.” What you’re looking to do is “low temperature networking, or connections, staying in touch without imposing until you have something that you want to get a response,” he said.

Sree uses Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Also WhatsApp (an encrypted texting platform), texting and email. Sree was a 20-plus year professor at Columbia University’s Journalism school, Chief Digital Officer for New York City and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As writers and authors, he said, “you have to be where the editors are.” Currently, he’s building his own business, Digimentors, a consulting firm of digital and social media strategists, so he has to be “on the platforms where the clients are most comfortable.” We all “have to suck it up and just do it.”

But what’s the value of social media? What is the ROI—return on investment? “You can use it to find story ideas, trends, new sources,” Sree said. “You can use it to connect to new audiences and existing audiences in deeper ways. You can bring traffic and attention to your work. And you can use it to build and enhance your brand.” The fact is that in today’s world a freelancer is an entrepreneur, and “most of us have to hustle.”

NEW CONFERENCE SESSION INFORMATION

Sharpen your pencils and get ready to learn at this year’s conference. Organizers have created three brand new session formats that you won’t want to miss.



▶ **Quick Tips** are shortened 30-minute sessions that offer great advice on a variety of topics of interest to writers. Here’s the line up:

- How to Pitch: Client Connections
- How to Pitch: Pitch Slam
- Quick Tips: Finding Sources
- Quick Tips: Managing the Content Marketing Process
- Quick Tips: Book Marketing
- Quick Tips: How to Search Databases for Historical Articles Like a Pro

▶ **Meet the Masters** are short interview-style talks with some of ASJA’s most enlightening members. Join former ASJA presidents Randy Dotinga and Jack El-Hai for intimate one-on-one conversations with acclaimed authors about the craft of writing.

▶ **Ask the Expert** is your opportunity to learn during two brown-bag lunch sessions. **Find a Home for Your Op-Ed/Essay** with New School writing professor Candy Schulman will provide tips and handouts on developing, targeting and pitching your Op-Ed or personal essay. And **Find Your Story with the Narrative Whisperer** with acclaimed author and journalism professor Mary-Kate Mackey will help you find the story lurking within. The first six signups will receive individual story analysis, and everyone who attends will learn about the discovery process with a step-by-step handout included.

NEW YORK

“Our job is to help you survive and thrive as freelance writers and authors. More than ever before, we’re dedicated to introducing you to editors, teaching you valuable skills, and helping you fight back against the threats facing us today.” — RANDY DOTINGA

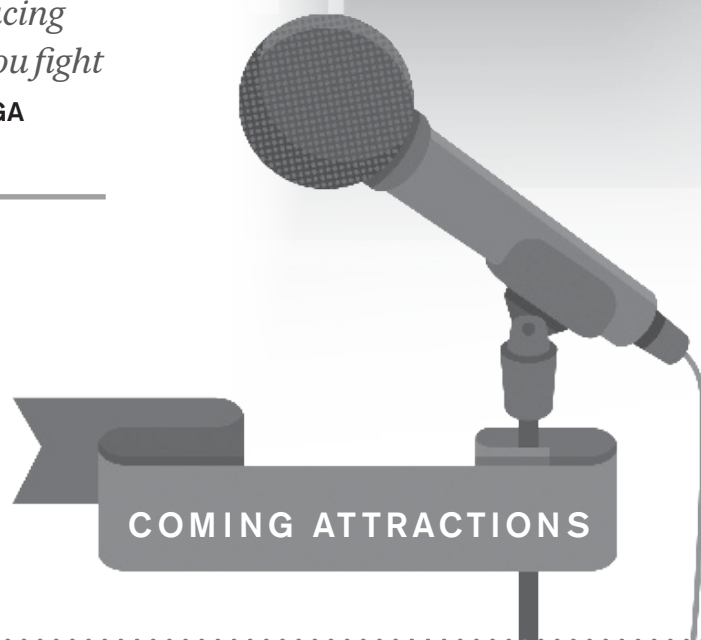
ASJA’S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

»» *Highlights*

Every year ASJA’s Annual Conference offers sessions that will help you grow as a writer and take your business to new heights. This year the organizers have put together a stellar lineup of learning opportunities for independent journalists with a theme “The Independent Writer’s Best Friend.”

“Our job is to help you survive and thrive as freelance writers and authors,” says conference chair Randy Dotinga, a freelance writer and former ASJA president. “More than ever before, we’re dedicated to introducing you to editors, teaching you valuable skills, and helping you fight back against the threats facing us today.”

TO LEARN MORE OR REGISTER, CLICK ON THE CONFERENCE LINK AT **ASJA.ORG**.



More than 50 writing workshops, panel discussions, training sessions, and other events are planned. Let’s take a look at some of the coming attractions:

»» **How to Sell Books by the Truckload on Amazon**

Amazon is a great place to sell books, but most authors (and publishers) underutilize the free systems Amazon offers. Metadata, keywords, and Amazon’s backend systems are often misunderstood and underused. Moderated by Penny Sansevieri, this deep-dive class will dig into all of the great ways Amazon can boost your bottom line.

»» **Talking to Strangers: How to Master the Interview**

Whether you’re talking to people for narrative journalism, content marketing, or your latest blog post, author and writing coach Mary-Kate Mackey looks at the techniques you need for researching first, shaping your questions beforehand, and improvising follow ups during the interview. Strategies include tips for phone interviews or email responses, attentive listening, and fostering your curiosity—no matter how arcane your subject.



»» PLENARY: Under Attack: When the New Law Targets Freelancers

Freelance journalists are under attack: Legislation in California, New Jersey and New York is threatening our right to work as independent contractors. Moderated by Deborah Abrams Kaplan, you'll learn the latest news and hear from ASJA members and attorneys who are on the front lines from coast to coast about the fight to protect our careers.

»» Bestseller Bound: Writing About Parenthood with Purpose Through the Ages

Books about parenting are a booming market. This panel will explore the perspectives of parenting authors, agents and editors on top parenting topics for each age and phase, including when kids are grown and flown. Moderated by Estelle Erasmus, this session includes panelists who will discuss how they developed and marketed their books as well as agents and editors who will talk about what they are specifically looking for.

»» The Journalist's Path into Biography

Are you ready to write a full-length biography? We're here to help you discover whether biography is the right field for you. Beverly Gray will moderate a group of panelists that includes a published biographer, an editor, and an agent. Each speaker will provide insight into the process, and there will be time for panelists to comment on individual biography projects.

»» Solutions Journalism: For a Better World

Solutions journalism is the practice of rigorous reporting on responses to social problems. In this panel moderated by Rhea Wessel, we will look at what's going on in the world of solutions journalism. What is being done to train journalists and work with newsrooms to provide more of this type of journalism? How can freelancers get involved? Who should freelancers pitch? And what makes reporting and writing solutions stories different from others?

»» Find Your Facts! How to Think Like a News Librarian

Journalism professor and former New York Times news librarian Barbara Gray will walk you through some of the latest tips and techniques used by news librarians and fact-checkers to find people, records and information to inform your stories.

»» The Advanced Journalist: Facebook Training

Facebook is the service we love to hate. Yet it's a powerful tool to help journalists background subjects, find story sources, and tap into personal networks. Our friends at the Society of Professional Journalists will provide advanced guidance about putting Facebook -- warts and all -- to work for our benefit.

»» The Advanced Journalist: Google Training

Most of us search for information on Google every day without understanding its full potential as a journalism tool. Our friends at the Society of Professional Journalists will present an in-depth workshop on harnessing the power of Google.

PITCH SLAMS

Pitch Slam: Book Editors and Literary Agents

It's hard work to get your book idea in front of an agent or editor, so ASJA is bringing together a variety of pros who are looking for authors to represent or publish. All you need to do is give your elevator speech in front of everyone. No sweat! Each participant will be moderated carefully to be sure that there is enough time for as many pitchers as possible. Agents and editors will offer on-the-spot feedback.

Pitch Slam: Breaking Into Top Women's Markets

The first half of this panel features assigning editors from the top women's markets sharing insider tips on breaking in. The second half offers the invaluable opportunity to step up to the mic and run ideas by receptive editors who are eager to discover new talent and happy to offer diplomatic and helpful feedback to those whose pitches miss the mark. Leave armed with specifics, personal connections and perhaps an assignment!

Pitch Slam: Get Published in *The New York Times*

Here is your priceless chance to wow editors at *The New York Times*. Join us a brave writers step up to a mic and give a 3-minute pitch to a panel of *Times* editors who will provide feedback. This is a special opportunity for member and non-members to watch, listen, and learn how freelancers show their pitching chops. Note: pitches will be screened before the conference. The moderator will ask for emailed pitches in advance and choose as many as possible to fit into the 1.5 hour time slot.

MASTERMIND GROUPS

Get the Attention of the Big Five with Your Book Proposal

A proposal and an agent are critical to seeking publication at one of the big five traditional houses. In this intimate, interactive class, get one-on-one feedback and advice to craft a book proposal that sells. We'll show you how the primary elements of a proposal (overview, author platform, target audience, and comp titles) reflect what agents and editors are looking for and impact your opportunities for publication. You'll also learn what you can do to increase the chances your work will connect with your prospective publishing partners.

The Idea Machine

We all have ideas for stories, essays, or books hidden away in notebooks, on scraps of paper, in computer files, and (worst of all) in our heads. We'll cover where the best ideas come from, how to safely store and reliably find them, and how to judge their merits.

Each of the mastermind sessions has space for just 20 attendees and is available on a first-come, first-serve basis to ASJA members only. There is an additional charge of \$39.99. Sign up when you register for the conference!



As we prepare for ASJA's Annual Conference, many members look forward to attending Client Connections. It's consistently the top ranked perk of the conference. But how much time do you put into preparing for your meetings?

Q: For this issue's Ask the Editor column, we reached out to some of the repeat clients from Client Connections and asked for their advice on how writers should best prepare for meetings.

Here's what they said:

"Be familiar with our publication and the kind of stories we run in terms of subject, tone, and length. Look through our archives to see whether we have already published something to the pitch you are planning to present. If we have, and you still feel that the pitch could work be prepared to explain with specifics what distinguishes it from the previously published work.

"I'm not overly concerned with resumes, work experience, or previously published work. What impresses me in a writer is the story ideas they present. What distinguishes the story ideas is some combination of originality of vision, conceptual insight, and the discovery of new information that will change the way readers understand something that is important to them—though perhaps they won't know it's important to them before reading the article."

— JACOB SIEGEL, Editor, *Tablet Magazine*

"The biggest mistake I see writers make is that they decide on a topic they want to write about, without thinking of the specific angle. What are the main points you want to highlight in your story, and why are you the best person to tell it?"

"I love when a writer comes prepared, especially with multiple story ideas, usually two or three. Also as an editor I can always tell the difference between writers who have actually taken the time to read the magazine they want to pitch to vs. those who don't."

— GENELLE LEVY, Contributing Editor, *Narratively*

"There are two big things that impress me. First, it's so refreshing when a writer does their homework and knows what we do. Maybe they've chatted with their friends about Skyword and have determined that it's a great place to apply their written talent, or they may have set up a profile and taken some initial steps.

"Secondly, I love when a writer comes to me with a clearly defined subject matter expertise or niche. Although I won't read them in the moment, having samples that demonstrate experience within that niche is also important. Having a defined niche tells me that the writer has done their homework and is setting us both up for success.

"I'm so passionate about connecting writers with new opportunities, but it can be really challenging to place a generalist on client accounts when so many of our customers are looking for writers with very specific experience. I know the people I'm meeting with have incredible backgrounds in reporting and journalism, but that doesn't always translate directly to content marketing. Doing the work ahead of time to narrow down their portfolio to a specific industry or two makes a big difference."

— MOLLY CONICELLA, Associate Director of Community Management, *Skyword*

"Spend time on the site to understand what we do, how we do it, who we write for and what we've written about in recent months. Then, prepare a brief verbal description of your expertise, interests, places where you've written (especially ones with audiences similar to ours) and the kind of stories you're most interested in writing these days."

— RICHARD EISENBERG, Managing Editor and Senior Web Editor, Money & Security and Work & Purpose Channels, *Next Avenue*



Got a question for the editor? Visit the ASJA Periodicals Forum and leave your question on the “taking questions for editors” thread. We’ll try to get you some answers in an upcoming issue.

“The same level of preparation should be put into a meeting with a potential client (King Fish) as with a client. Fifteen minutes on the website will give you a strong sense of clients, breadth of approach, and overall vibe of the agency. If you’re meeting with me, spend 5 minutes on my LinkedIn. I guarantee if they are ASJA rock stars we will know many common people.

“If it were me, I’d call the people I know best and ask them about me and working with King Fish. Then I’d review the last several posts across King Fish social. What are we talking about, and what do we appear to care about? Use some of that knowledge in the conversation and it goes far. Obviously, any material press announcements (new partnerships, new clients) should be read and understood and played-back by the ASJA member during the conversation. We like to know people have made an effort. If none of that happens, we know it and we make a note.

“You may think this is a bit old school, but I am a huge believer in looking someone in the eye, listening, and responding to what I say. Same as any conversation – girlfriend, kid, drinking buddy: listen and respond honestly. If the conversation takes you out of your comfort zone, say so. BSing never works.”

— CAM BROWN, CEO, King Fish Media

“Before meeting with an editor, I recommend coming up with a list of questions specific to the publication beyond basic info like rates and number of assignments. I remember when people ask me thoughtful questions that make me think they want to make our content even better and more meaningful than it is. It’s also smart to have a detailed understanding of the type of content the publication is looking for and the level of expertise they want from their writers.

“When people are confident and can carry themselves through the 9 or 10 minute meeting it makes the entire thing run smoothly. Like I mentioned before, being prepared with thoughtful questions or commentary on current stories makes me know that they’ve done their homework beforehand. Relevant writing samples are also a plus!

“Some of our content is highly specific to certain subject areas, and the conference helped me find people who excelled in those niches. I was able to connect with writers with specialized expertise in autos and credit cards, both of whom have been valuable additions to our team!”

—JACKIE ZIMMERMAN, Contributors Editor, LendingTree

YOU THE EXPERT!



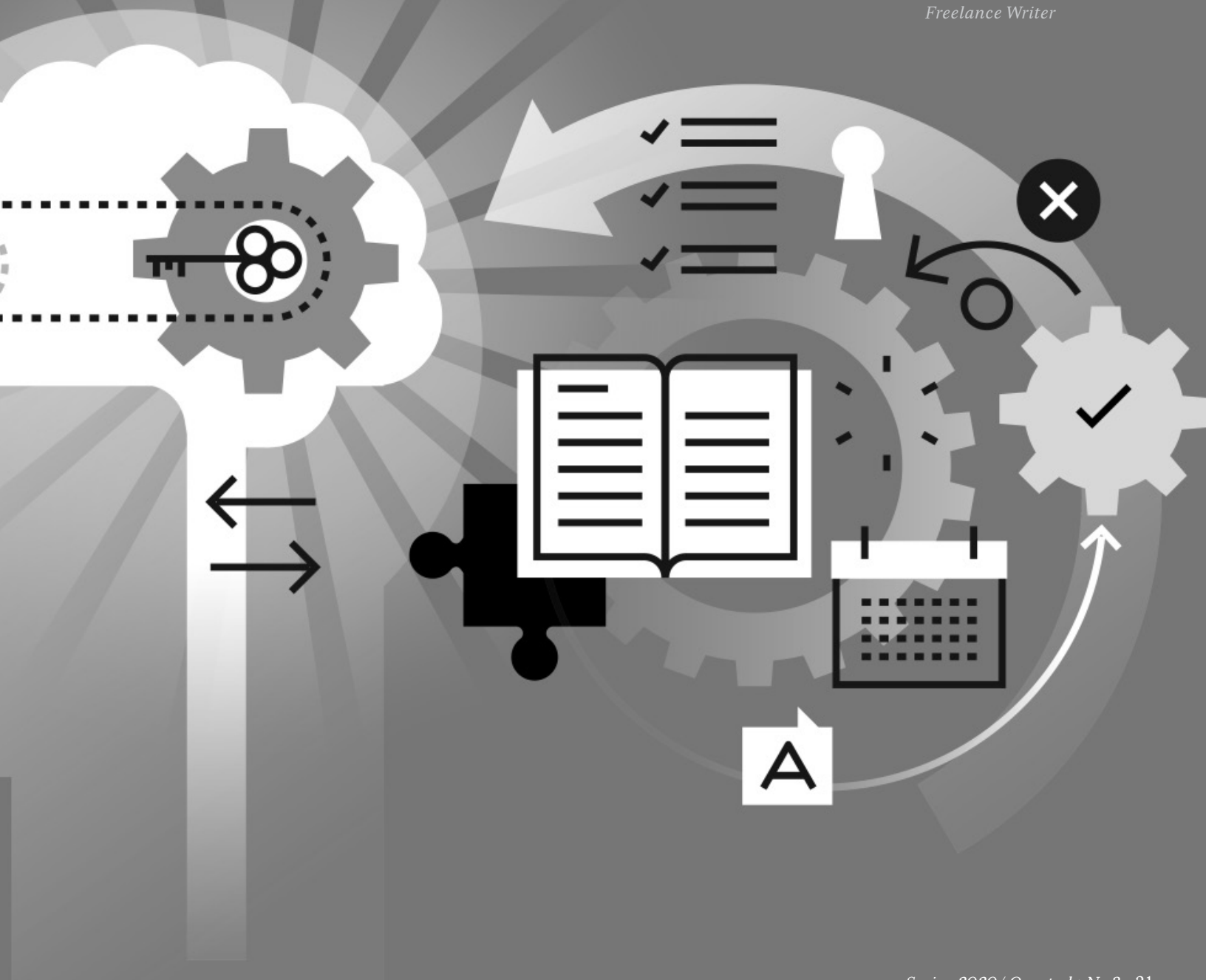


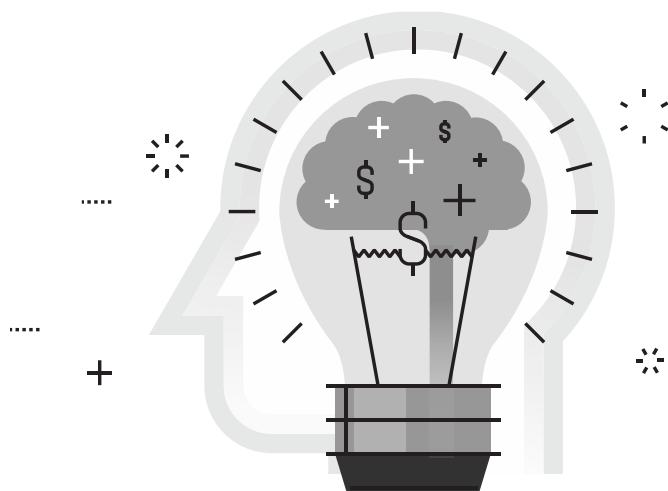
BUILD YOUR SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE



JENNIFER
L.W. FINK

Freelance Writer



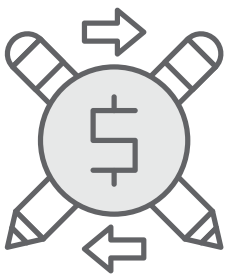


I WANT TO MAKE A LIVING WRITING AND SPEAKING ABOUT BOYS.

Why? Well, because I have four boys. My four children (currently ages 14, 16, 19 and 22) all happen to be male. Long ago, I realized that I'd have to learn a whole lot about boys if I was to effectively parent the human beings entrusted to my care.

What started as simple survival – I needed info to help me figure out what to do when they jump on the couch – turned into a passion. The more I read and learned about boys and their challenges, the more I realized parents around the world were struggling with similar issues. Globally, boys have fallen behind girls academically. Boys are more likely than girls to die of violence, suicide and common health issues. And even though men remain solidly atop most of the world's governments and corporations, today's boys are struggling to understand how they'll fit into the future.





“When I transitioned to a career in freelance writing approximately 15 years ago, my focus was the same as most freelancers: write for money.”

JENNIFER L.W. FINK

Have I mentioned yet that I don’t have a degree in psychology? Or any kind of professional background in working with boys? My degree is in nursing, and when I transitioned to a career in freelance writing approximately 15 years ago, my focus was the same as most freelancers: write for money. So, I wrote about pregnancy and butterflies and show choir and hearing loss – pretty much anything someone wanted me to cover.

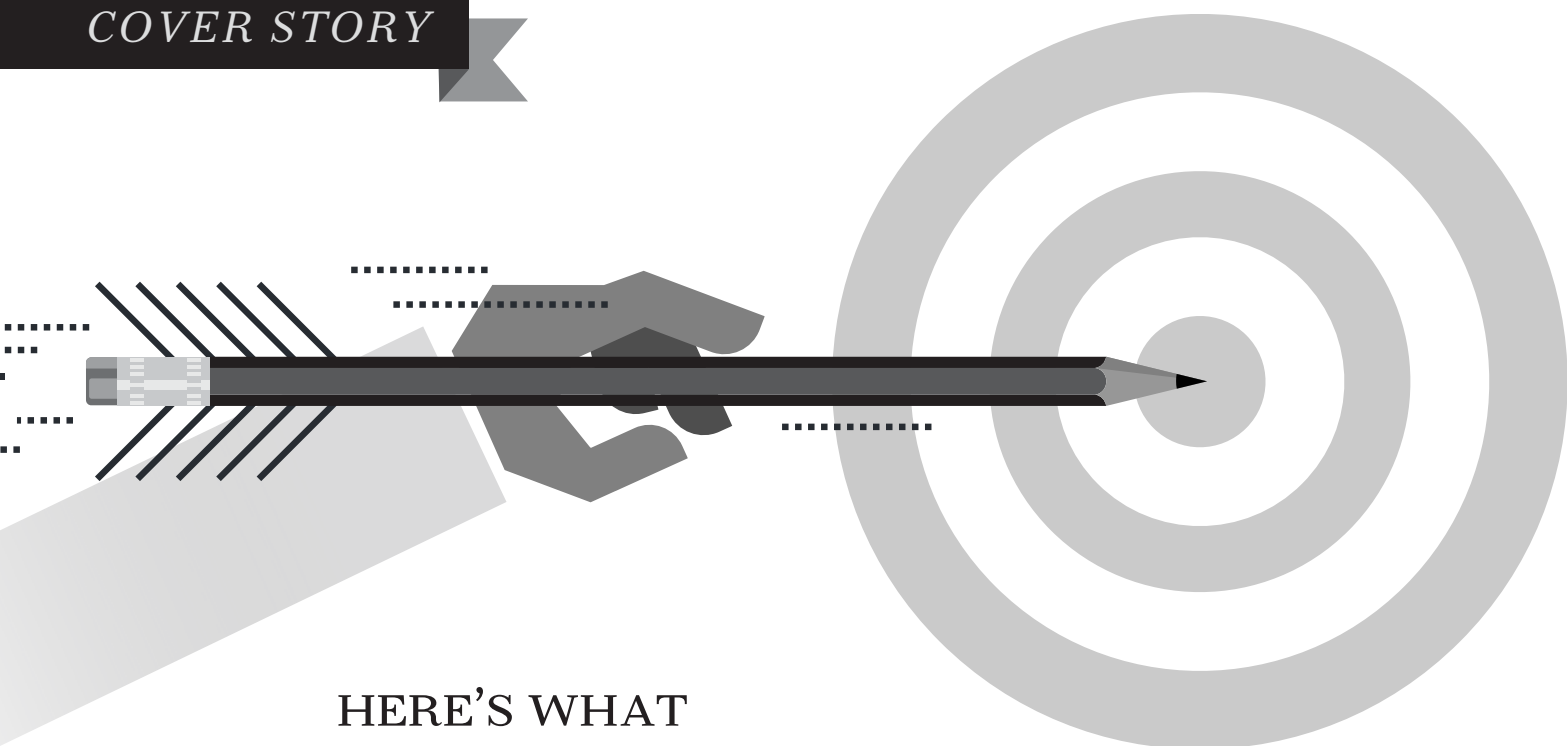
Fred Minnick took a similar approach to freelancing. After serving as a U.S. Army photojournalist, Minnick wrote about his experiences in Iraq and with PTSD. He also wrote about beef. (Minnick is the author of *The Brand That Changed Beef: How the Certified Angus Beef Brand Became a Worldwide Icon of Quality*), local sports, and storm drains.

“I guarantee you I’ve written some of the best technical storm drain articles ever

written in the history of mankind,” Minnick says, “but I don’t care about them.”

His passion was – and is – bourbon, and today, he’s the editor-in-chief of *Bourbon +* (a magazine he co-founded), host of the Amazon Prime series *Bourbon Up* with Fred Minnick and co-founder of the Kentucky music festival *Bourbon & Beyond*, which has featured Stevie Nicks, John Fogerty, the Foo Fighters and the Zac Brown Band. Next up: a podcast combining whiskey and music.

How did Minnick become a bourbon expert? And how can I turn my passion for helping boys into a viable income stream? I asked Minnick and two other subject matter experts: Joan Price, ASJA member and senior sexpert and Janine Latus, a former ASJA board member and expert in sexual assault and intimate partner violence.



HERE'S WHAT THEY TOLD ME:

BUILD ON WHAT YOU HAVE

In 2002, Latus's sister Amy was murdered by her then-boy-friend. The only reason the killer was found was because Amy had taped a message inside her desk, pointing a finger at the man.

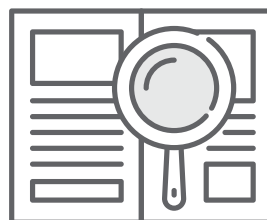
The message began with the words, "If I am missing or dead," a phrase that became the title of Latus's 2007 *New York Times* best-selling book, which also included her personal experience with abuse.

"That led to me being the person you turn to to speak on the spectrum of sexual assault and domestic violence," Latus says.

Similarly, Price's expertise grew out of her experience. When she fell in love in her 60s, she was blown away by the passion she felt – and penned *Better Than I Ever Expected: Straight Talk about Sex After Sixty*. That book led to *Naked at Our Age* (ASJA's 2012 Outstanding Self-Help Book) and *The Ultimate Guide to Sex After 50*. The death of her beloved led to her latest book, *Sex After Grief*.

Price and Latus both write and speak about intensely personal, sometimes painful experiences. Neither planned to become subject matter experts but decided to harness their hard-won knowledge to help others. Both also spent significant time honing their skills and amassing content-specific knowledge.

"In the beginning, if there was something I didn't know, I found the people who knew it and figured out how to translate the information to a lay audience," Price says. She didn't



"In the beginning, if there was something I didn't know, I found the people who knew it and figured out how to translate the information to a lay audience."

JOAN PRICE

enroll in a formal certification program but attended myriad conferences and read voraciously. Similarly, Latus dug into the research on domestic violence and reviewed tapes of her talks to improve her public speaking skills.

Minnick also built upon his unique life experiences. Because he has a background in agriculture, he understands how growing conditions can affect the quality of corn or grain and the resulting bourbon. Thanks to his experience as a photojournalist, he can take pictures for publications. And living in Kentucky – the heart of bourbon country – gives him access that other writers lack. Minnick emphasized these attributes as he was forging his reputation.

BE SELECTIVE

Low- and no-paying gigs can be an important steppingstone when you're working to establish your credibility. Price says her first senior sex speaking engagements were unpaid, part of her initial book tour. She got great reviews and over time, her reputation solidified. "I actually make more money from speaking than writing these days," Price says.

Latus also started speaking for free, for local domestic violence shelters. When event organizers commented positively on her talks, Latus asked them to write a testimonial and share their thoughts with colleagues in other locations. "I started moving up to bigger and bigger audiences, and bigger and bigger paychecks," she says.

Minnick recommends considering the potential impact of a "free" opportunity before saying yes – and thinking through how exactly you'll use that opportunity to move forward. "Exposure models can work, but you've got to use it right. You can't feed yourself off that, but you can use it as a marketing tool."

WRITE A BOOK

The economics of book publishing can be intimidating. Often, the amount of money an author makes via an advance and book sales, divided by the number of hours poured into research, writing and revisions, equals, well, not much.

"If you focus on the advance or what you'll get in royalties, you're looking at books all wrong," Minnick says. "Books are never going to make you money. The whole point of them is that they open doors."

Minnick's 2013 book *Whiskey Women: The Untold Story of How Women Saved Bourbon, Scotch and Irish Whiskey* changed his life. His advance for the book was just \$2,000, and he spent all of that (and more) researching in archives around the world. More than once, Minnick wondered if the gamble was worth it.

"There were times that I was like, 'I've got to give up. I have to get a job,'" Minnick says. He survived financially by taking on other freelance writing assignments and hosting private tastings.

Whiskey Women captured media attention and soon Minnick was on NPR, CBS This Morning, and the BBC. His book and media appearances helped cement his credibility.

BRAND YOURSELF

"If you want to be known as a content expert, you need to look like you're a content expert," Price says. She took her own advice to heart a few years ago when she updated her website, joanprice.com.

"I wanted to look as successful as I wanted to be," Price says. "I invested in a website that would get me to my goals and make me look as if I was already there."

Her visually appealing, well-organized site bills her as an "author, speaker and advocate for ageless sexuality"; it barely mentions the fact that she wrote about health and fitness for years. Probably not-at-all-coincidentally, Price says she gets "more speaking gigs now than I ever did before."

To be fair, chance plays a large part in the journey from journalist to subject matter expert. You can stack the odds in your favor by following these tips.

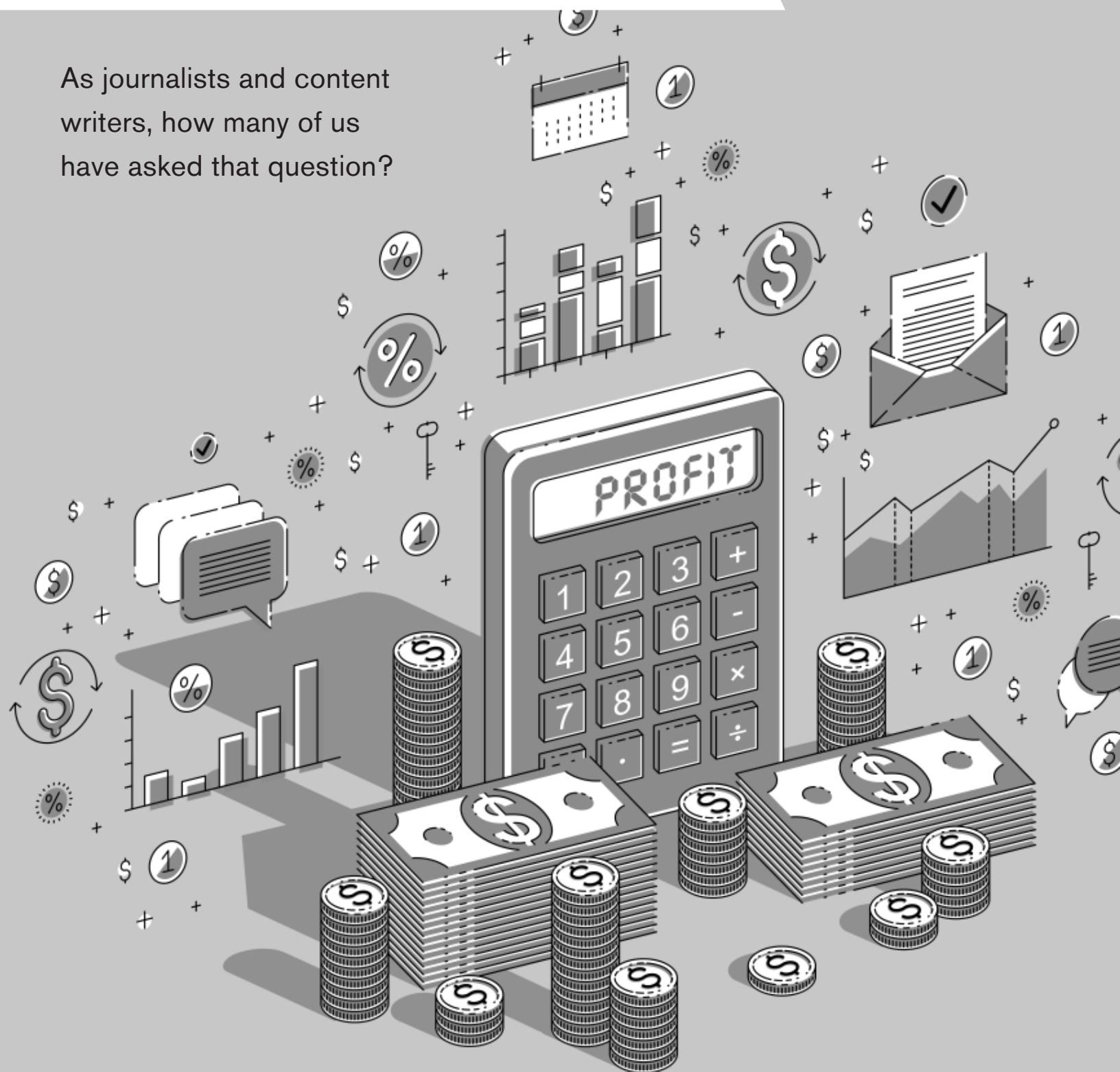
"Some it is luck, some of it is strategy," Minnick says. "It's about being in the right place at the right time, but it's also about delivering."



»» **Jennifer L.W. Fink** is the creator of BuildingBoys.net and co-host of the podcast On Boys: Real Talk About Parenting, Teaching and Reaching Tomorrow's Men. Her writing has been published by *The Washington Post*, *Parents*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *FOX News* and *Parade*. Jennifer has been an ASJA member since 2009.

“HOW CAN I MAKE MORE MONEY AS A WRITER?”

As journalists and content writers, how many of us have asked that question?





TOM
GERENCER

Freelance Writer



»» **Tom Gerencer** is an ASJA journalist, content writer, and career expert at Zety.com who writes about science, tech, health, business, and the outdoors. He's a regular contributor to *HP Tech Takes*, *Boys' Life*, and *Scouting*, with articles in *The Boston Globe Magazine*, *Fast Company*, *Outdoor Life*, *Costco Connection*, and many more. Tom's book *Think Like Google - Build SEO With Empathy* is now available on Amazon.

Volunteering Can Build Your Network

(and your bottom line)

Volunteering opportunity

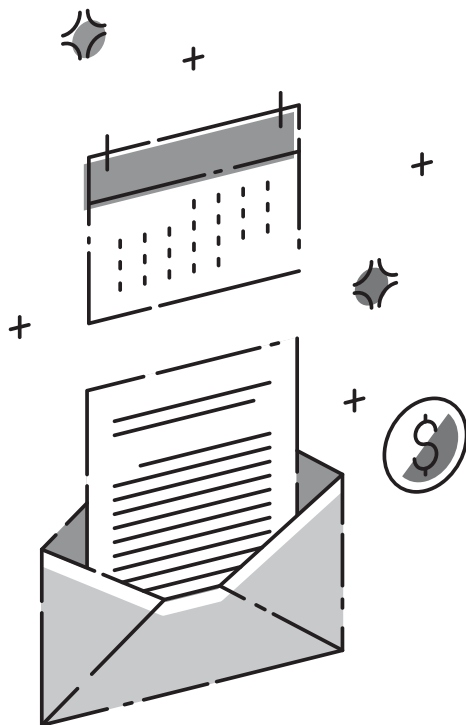


Want an advance peek at the valuable stories in ASJA Magazine? We're looking for volunteers who would be willing to proofread a few articles. If you're interested, contact Editor Stephanie Vozza at asjamagazineeditor@gmail.com.

Quick aside: If you haven't done it yet, buy Jennifer Goforth Gregory's excellent book, *The Freelance Content Marketing Writer* and read it today. It will open up new writing-income worlds for you.



My income has been very healthy for the past six months. Yet, about eight months ago, I was wondering how to make ends meet. The good news? The writers I asked for advice gave surprisingly simple answers. ■ Most of my income comes from one client who keeps shoveling work at me. I've had them for years. I've continued to do good work, and they've rewarded me with ever bigger payouts. But I was always nervous they'd ditch me, and I'd be back to struggling. ■ The advice I'm about to share took away that fear. It started a steady stream of other high-paying clients that keeps growing by the month.



A Different Kind of Marketing

It's easy to fall into the trap of being too busy to do marketing. But often, what we're busy at is working for peanuts. We know great clients are out there who'd pay top dollar for someone like us, but how can we find them?

We're told to write letters of interest (LOI). We're told to contact editors with pitches for stories or freelance gigs. We're told to troll through online "writer wanted" ads and supersize our websites. That's all good advice. But I believe we're overlooking our most powerful tool in turning on the new-work firehose.

To explain how it works, meet Sue. She's a writer. (Nice "I'll kill you in my next book" t-shirt.) She joined the ASJA two years ago. She's gone to a couple conferences. She loves the Client Connections, but they never seem to turn up anything long-term. She's had some good talks with other writers, but she always feels like a fifth wheel during elbow-rubbing time.

How can Sue get her career in shape? She can volunteer.

"Argh! Who has time for that?!?"

I know. But bear with me. You're about to have the scales pulled off.

First, Sue can volunteer at conferences. She'll be there anyway, so she's not wasting time. She can work the bookstore for a couple hours or hand out nametags. It's easy, and she'll have dozens of great conversations with editors and other writers, without feeling awkward.

Then there's volunteering from home. Sue can think up and lead a Special Interest Group (SIG). Or to get a big bang for her time, she can lead a Virtual Client Connection (VCC). Now I can hear you saying, "Again, I don't have time."

The Payoff

Let's say you volunteer to lead a VCC. They say it takes three to six hours, but that may be an exaggeration. The VCC I led involved tweaking and sending a short series of boilerplate emails. It was excruciatingly easy.

In return, I got a list of 12 editors and agents, and their contact info. Some work at big-name agencies or national magazines. Some turned into real, live work. If you volunteer to help with Client Connections at a conference, you get a similar list, but with a lot more editors. And again, the time you spend is minimal compared to what you get.

The biggest benefit by far is getting to know other writers who are too damn busy to take on more work, but are being hounded right now by editors to do just that.

Let me repeat that, because it's world-changing. There are lots of writers in ASJA who are swamped with work and need to pass it on. Hmm. Wouldn't it be good to know those writers?

My first clue to this came at the ASJA NY Conference in May of 2019, where I ran into Linsey Knerl and Sarah Li Cain. They intimated that they'd started doing very well. When I asked how, they both gave the same answer.

"I just started meeting writers. They were busy and looking for other, trustworthy writers to give it to. All of a sudden my income took a big jump from those referrals."

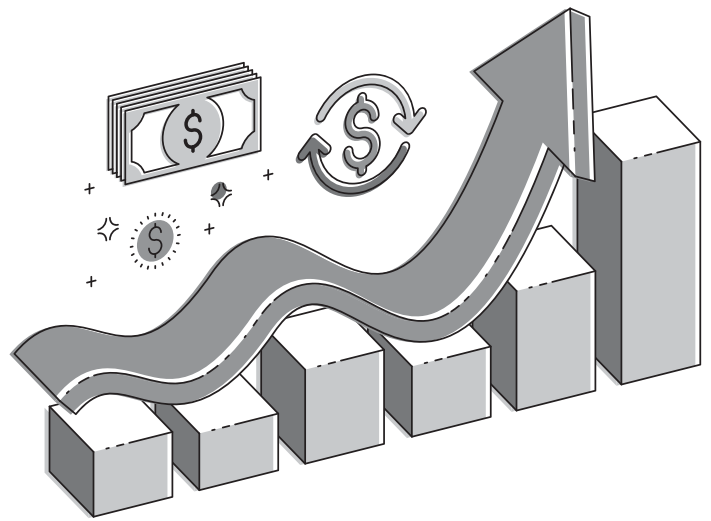
Get it?

Put another way – don't you wish you had a big, fat marketing engine in touch with hundreds of high-paying editors who could pull you up out of the soup?

You do. It's called the member writers of ASJA en masse. Get to know them, and soon they'll be introducing you to editors who want writers like you. Soon, instead of saying, "Could you please hire me?" you'll be saying, "Sure, I can fit you in."

Sarah puts it this way: "I've found that writers want to find other writers if they have a lot of work. Helping someone commiserate or giving small pieces of advice means you're top-of-mind when they need to pass on jobs. I've also paid it forward when I've had a surplus or when a project wasn't the right fit."

Now, you don't have to volunteer in order to meet new writers. But it's soooo much faster! "I would say that about half of the new work I've gotten through the association came from referrals from people



I worked with in a volunteer capacity," says Linsey. "I met new people with each position, and it was natural for each of them to pass along leads or answer my questions about finding new work. When you have spent so much time working together, they become trusted colleagues that you feel comfortable sharing job intel with."

So how can we find time to do it? According to Linsey, some of it is just your marketing time in disguise. "Most of us already give of our time in some volunteer way, so when you're prioritizing which charities or causes you support in 2020, consider if ASJA fits your values and how they may benefit from some of this allotted time. And since we should all be spending at least five to 10 hours a week seriously networking and marketing, it's simple to allocate two to three hours (max) to the organization. It's a more natural way to market, IMO, so you really are getting a good return on your time investment. Much better than cold calling or pitching!"

Sarah agrees. "Schedule it in like you would any marketing task. Don't feel like you have to do it often. You can start at local meetups once a month."



Building Your Network

Finally, volunteering can also help you deal with that awkward feeling at conferences. "I knew about 15 new people within a week," Linsey says. "Many were long-time members with impressive freelance careers. Once you get on a first-name basis with people like that, it's a nice confidence boost. And you can recognize them at events and go up and say 'hi' and have lunch or whatever, and it's not awkward at all. Because you've already worked together virtually and can say that you've accomplished something together."

Sarah puts it a different way: "I can be a bit of an introvert, so volunteering helped me get out of my shell a bit."

Sign me up, right? But how can a new volunteer get started? As Linsey says, it's easy: "Read the ASJA Weekly newsletter and look for calls for volunteers. Keep your eyes on opportunities and don't hesitate to jump in and offer even a few hours of your time. There are jobs of all sizes, so even if you don't feel like you can commit to a large job, there will be something for you!"

so you can focus on clients.

INSIDER TIPS FROM A SALES EXPERT >>>>>



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CHRIS
GILLESPIE

Freelance Writer

Today, millions of Americans are cutting themselves free. They're saying goodbye to bothersome safety nets such as pension plans, employer-sponsored health insurance, and the eight-hour work day. Some were forced—since 2004, more journalists have lost jobs than coal miners—but many chose this life and God bless em'. There is nothing more American than rejecting the gains of a century's worth of labor activism in the name of personal freedom. I am among these brave pioneers.

As many of us free people know, freedom has big, Purdue Pharma-sized side-effects. There's the perpetual income anxiety, biblical-sounding trials like "feast and famine," and having to show up to a WeWork where the kids play GaryVee videos and say "rise and grind" unironically. But since you're here and complaints won't make us dinner, let's consider that there exists a playbook for surviving the freelance economy. It's practiced by millions of sales professionals but is unknown to most writers. If you expect to survive, you'll need to adopt it.

Sales Is a Skill

My background is nonstandard for an ASJA member. Whereas most first pursue their passion for writing and then learn to make money with it, I began with making money and have learned to write. I spent nearly five years in Silicon Valley selling software. For all those startups' faults, they provided me a stream of coaches, books, and courses in generating a consistent stream of revenue against all odds. These artifacts are the ultimate tonic to freelancing's horrors.

When I switched to writing, the gripes of fellow freelancers made little sense to me. Questions like, "Where do I find clients?" and "Why don't companies pay on time?" had

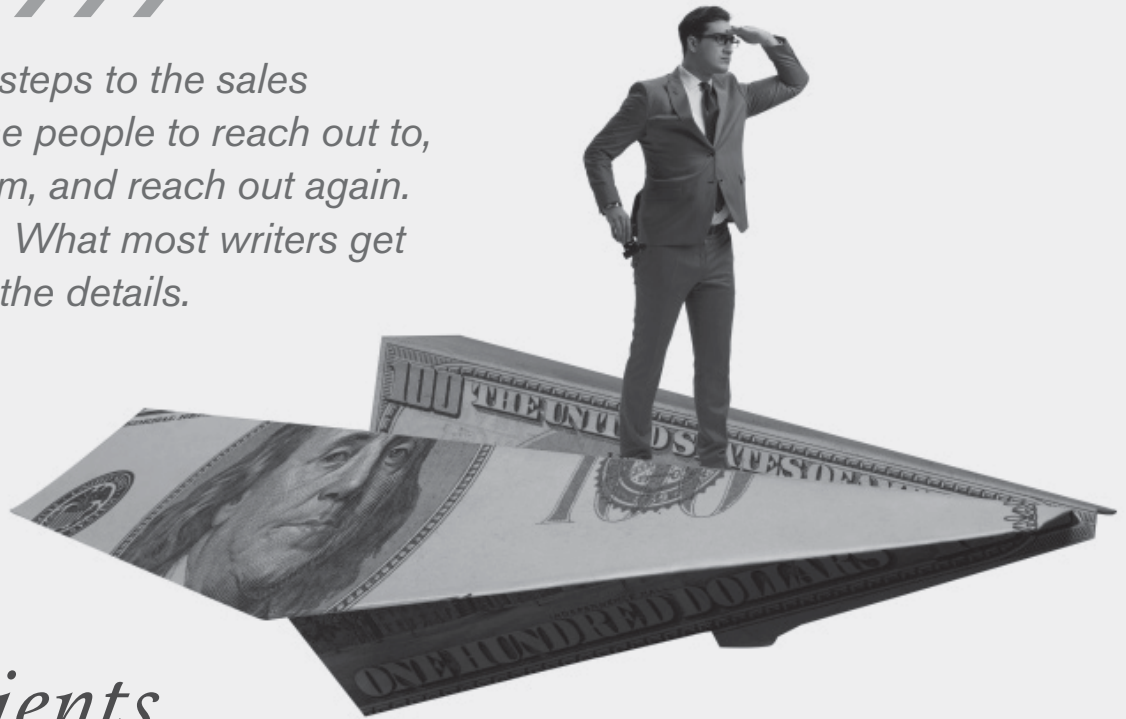
empirical answers. There were specific plays to run for each. I've spent the past four years writing about them.

I'll share my biases up-front: I write exclusively for brands and know little about publishing books or selling screenplay options. I also think sales is fun. After being dragged into the profession kicking and screaming, I was relieved to find that it's not about conning people out of their hard-earned money. Lying always catches up with you. All the best salespeople I know are incorruptibly honest. Instead, sales is about matchmaking. It's about searching for those people to whom your writing looks like a life preserver. When you sell to them, they'll thank you. I see sales as an act of service. The thanks becomes addictive.

THE PROCESS



There are three steps to the sales process: Choose people to reach out to, reach out to them, and reach out again. That's the basis. What most writers get hung up on are the details.



1

Find Clients

I recommend writing for businesses that sell to other businesses (B2B). They value articles very differently than publications. Whereas Vice pays \$500 for a 1,500-word article that takes three weeks to report and write, a B2B software startup will pay the same thing for a 500-word article that takes one afternoon. The topics are different, but not too different. Any consumer topic you're versed in has a bunch of B2B companies that support it. If you like personal finance, write for Braintree, PayPal's B2B arm. If you're into travel, write for a corporate travel booking software like Egencia, and so on.

Start by making a list of 20 companies to contact. You can also go to the career site LinkedIn and search for writing jobs in your field. Any company posting writing jobs likely

also hires contractors. Alternatively, Google "top companies in X industry," or pick a conference for that industry, such as RSA or Dreamforce, and look at the sponsors.

Use LinkedIn to make a list of two or three contacts at each of those companies. The people with an interest in hiring you will be the chief marketing officer, head of marketing, VP of marketing, director of marketing, or anything involving "content," "content marketing," "editorial," "demand gen," and occasionally, "product marketing."

When you present the right people with your credentials, they will think you are the one saving them, not the other way around. Editors at consumer publications may be inundated with pitches but in the B2B world, many respond same-day.



How much money do companies spend on content?

For scale, companies spend an average of 11 percent of budget on marketing, and 26 percent of that marketing budget on content. A company like Slack, which is doing \$401 million in revenue, is probably spending \$11.5 million between writing and design.

2 Contact Them

Send a concise pitch via email, LinkedIn, or through a mutual connection. Don't bother with the acronym LOI—nobody here knows that and it looks like “LOL.” Instead, name drop companies you've worked with.

Getting noticed is mostly about showing that you've written for similar companies. I call this flashing the badge. Marketers are busy. All they want to see is that you've written on similar topics for a competitor, a household-name publication or newspaper, or at least companies in their industry. Flash your badge and they'll whisk you in. Personalize your note as much as possible but be brief. The hallmark of a novice writer is an essay-length application. Your goal is not to answer all their questions—it's to get them to respond. Under no circumstances talk about how you write for businesses in unrelated fields. People want an expert in their niche, not a generalist.

➤ How to earn your first badge

If you don't have logos for the industry you want, self-publish on Medium, Business2Community, Business.com, or any industry publication that takes submissions. This works like a ladder: Those articles will earn you work with Tier 3 companies, which earn you work with Tier 2 companies, and so on until you're writing for IBM.





3 *Contact Them Again (and again)*

Reach out at least five times per person over the course of three weeks, for all 20 companies. Every outreach is known as a “touch,” and could occur via email, social media, or voicemail. My personal favorite is LinkedIn InMail: My cold outreach response rate there is 10 percent, which is a good rate and should tell you something about how many touches you’ll have to send. You’re competing with thousands of other messages. Timing could be off. You just never know, so you have to keep it up.

Record the responses in a spreadsheet. When someone declines or doesn’t reply after five touches, cross them out and try someone else at the company. When you run out of contacts at a company, they don’t need saving. Replace it with a new company.

➤ How to Set Outreach Goals

Estimate the average monthly pay for a new client (\$1,000), the percentage of calls that turn into paying clients (50%), and the percentage of emails or outreach touches that turn into calls (5%), and decide how much you’d like to make per month. Do the math.

Desired monthly income (\$10,000) / pay per client (\$1000) / call conversions (50%) / outreach conversions (5%) = 400 touches per month

Play with the numbers. If you double your outreach conversions, you halve the number of emails you need to write. Good outreach pays handsomely.



“HERE IS THE GREAT IRONY OF SALES AS A FREELANCER: ONCE YOU GET REALLY GOOD AT SELLING, ONE DAY, YOU WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO. YOUR FAVORITE CLIENTS WILL LATCH ONTO YOU AND YOUR WRITING AND A FEW WILL PROVIDE ENOUGH CONSISTENT WORK THAT OUTREACH BECOMES IRRELEVANT. THEN THEY’LL ALL REFER THEIR FRIENDS.” – *Leslie Lang*

Fluctuating Effort Equals Fluctuating Income

Outreach feels weird at first. You won’t like it. But for the habit to form, three things must be present: A trigger, an action, and a reward.

Your trigger is a calendar invite. Set a bright red, 90-minute calendar event for Tuesday and Thursday morning. For that entire time, reach out to as many people on your list of 20 as you can. The action is the thing you do every time that trigger fires—write and send outreach. The reward is any kind of positive feedback, from “thanks, but not the right time” to “Let’s talk, how’s tomorrow?”

Always keep next steps on the calendar. No matter what follows your call, always agree on a calendar date when you’ll revisit and decide whether they’ll sign a contract and move forward. The greatest waste of your time is having a bunch of calls where people say “I’ll get back to you but never do.” That wastes mindshare. If they won’t commit to a check in, it’s a sign they’re not committed, and you shouldn’t invest too much either.

Start Today

The reason for freelance income feast and famine isn’t, as is commonly thought, a lack of knowing who to reach out to and what to say. It’s a matter of fluctuating activity. It’s counterintuitive, but the time to step up your outreach effort is the moment you land a new client. By the time this newest project is complete, the messages you send now will start to bear fruit. If you adopt no other lessons from this article, be infallibly consistent about your outreach.

Here is the great irony of sales as a freelancer: Once you get really good at selling, one day, you will no longer have to. Your favorite clients will latch onto you and your writing and a few will provide enough consistent work that outreach becomes irrelevant. Then they’ll all refer their friends.

» **Chris Gillespie** is CEO and editor in chief of Find A Way Media, a boutique writing shop that helps B2B brands ditch the jargon and grow by telling stories. Follow his newsletter for writers at findaway.media/newsletter.





BUILDING A Website THAT WORKS

»» How to create your writer website

CAROLE
HAWKINS

Freelance Writer

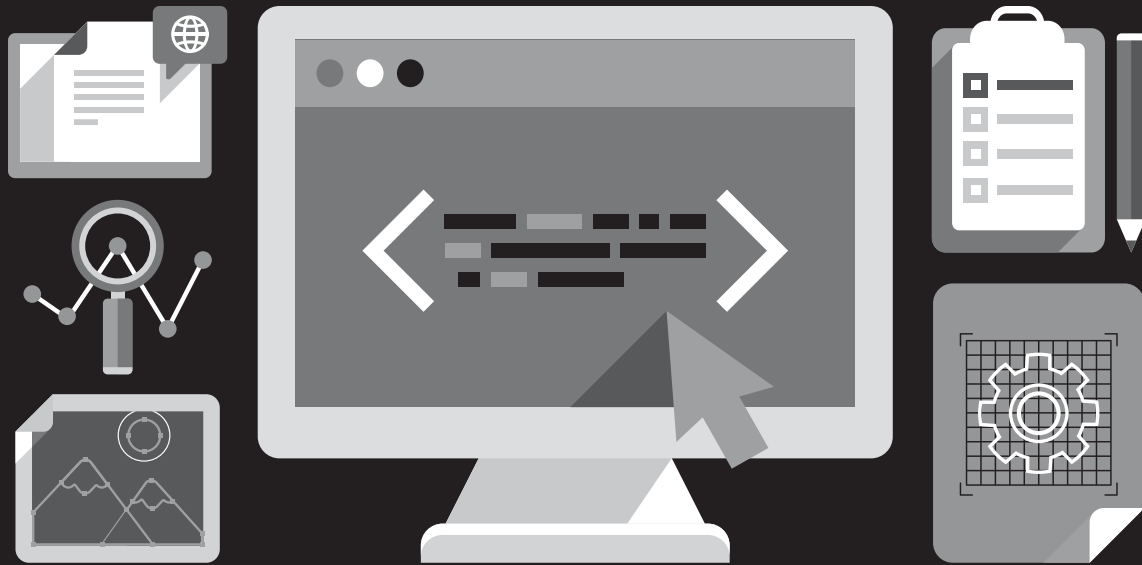


Does your writer website bring you work?

Unless you have a marketing background, it may not be obvious how a website can attract a client, build their confidence in you, or help you close a sale. How do you create that kind of website, instead of a vanity page that's simply floating in cyberspace, unhinged from your target market?

Good writer websites click off some basics. After a landing page, they often contain an About Me page, writing samples, testimonials, a Contact page and sometimes a blog. But writer websites are also like fingerprints—designed a bit differently, depending on the kind of writing you do and what it takes to convince your particular clients to call.

»» **Carole Hawkins** is a Jacksonville, Fla.-based freelance journalist and corporate writer. Her split-personality work life includes enterprise and business reporting for news outlets, as well as health, technology and real estate writing for companies. Her current clients include the *Florida Times-Union*, *Super Lawyers*, *Baptist Health* and *Florida Blue*. She formerly worked as a reporter for the *Florida Times-Union* and the *Jacksonville Business Journal*, and she is the author of two school library books.



A GENERALIST

Dawn Reiss is a Chicago-based freelance journalist. Over the course of two decades, she'd done everything from covering the Rod Blagojevich trial for *Time* magazine, to business reporting for *U.S. News* and *World Report*, to writing travel, healthcare and parenting stories for multiple outlets. For years she'd used a Media Bistro portfolio page to get assignments. But then the freelance job site changed their search algorithm and her leads evaporated overnight.

So, Reiss ramped up direct outreach to editors, which meant pitching them story ideas. She wanted a website so she could easily link her emails to exactly the right clips from her diverse portfolio. Reiss also organized her website in a way that sent her visitors the message that she was not a niche writer; she could handle lots of different things.

"It was important for me to have just a few navigation points at the top, because people can easily become overwhelmed by my experience," she said.

Five menus and 18 submenus lead to pages that highlight each of her skillsets and writing beats. The design recently helped Reiss land an assignment with a *Washington Post* editor, who said she was impressed by the breadth and range of the work she had seen on the site.

"It was enough for her to call me and say, 'Let's talk,'" Reiss said.

A CONTENT MARKETING WRITER

Jennifer Goforth Gregory is a veteran content marketing writer who began her career working as a software engineer for IBM. Like Reiss, Gregory includes lots of clips on her website. That's because corporate clients typically hire people for their experience in a business niche. Gregory's website has six portfolio pages—one for each of her specialties—with links to nearly 100 stories in all. But Gregory's website is more than a portfolio. She expects it to also generate leads.

"People who want journalists respond to pitches. But people who want content marketing writers—they come looking for us," she said. "They look at our LinkedIn profiles and they look at our websites. I get a fair amount of work from cold inquiries. Even Fortune 500 companies have contacted me through my website."

To drive those leads, SEO matters. Gregory found career-changing success in 2013 when she began to blog. She started getting more work, developed niches, and eventually used her blog's content to write a book. At one point, she claimed the top-ranked position on a Google search for technology content marketing writing.

Blogging takes time to produce results, and it isn't a fit for everyone, Gregory said. But if you have a writing niche that you can also blog about, a blog page will help drive prospects to your website.

"You're not marketing to everybody who needs a writer. You're marketing to the people who are going to love you, and you're going to become their favorite freelancer. There's no perfect client, only a client that's perfect for you."

– JENNIFER GOFORTH GREGORY

A GHOSTWRITER

Pete Gerardo is a marketing communications specialist whose body of work includes white papers, articles, blogs and over 40 ghostwritten books. After spending nearly two decades as a fulltime freelancer, he still didn't have a writer website. (Full disclosure, he's my brother, and definitely a technophobe.) He blames ignorance and inertia for the delay. He didn't know how to drive clients to a website, and he was already able to find market-rate projects by combing through online job sites. Those clients referred him to new ones.

His book clients disappointed, though. Their projects never paid above \$13,000—too little to justify the time spent. Then, a ghostwriting consultant gave him some advice: He could win premium book clients by pairing a Google AdWords campaign with a ghostwriter website. Within weeks of launching the strategy, Gerardo picked up a book contract that paid comfortably over \$30,000.

Like Gregory, Gerardo wanted his website to generate leads, but with a twist. He wanted only qualified book ghostwriting leads. He added a fees page and also a page about client participation, so prospects would screen themselves out if they didn't have the ability or will to really write a book.

"I didn't want a lot of people getting me on the phone for an hour or two talking about their project, only to learn afterwards they weren't going to spend \$30,000," he said.

THE DETAILS

There were other choices the writers made when designing their websites that depended on their goals.

Gregory noticed her content marketing prospects always asked about her experience. So, she listed the logos of her clients' companies on her website—IBM, Epson, Adobe, Samsung, Microsoft, and AT&T.

"It's like a testimonial," she said. "I don't have to say anything. Those brands communicate so much."

Also, Gregory noticed some of her best content writing samples were ones that didn't have a byline. She posted them anyway (unless she'd signed a non-disclosure).

"I have never had anybody question whether I wrote them," she said.

Writers often quibble over what kind of contact information to include. Phone numbers? Email addresses? Or just an online form with a Submit button? Gerardo decided to put an "Email Pete" button on every page of his website. But he left out his phone number to ward off weak prospects. Reiss included her email and phone number, but formatted them with "DOT" to screen out web crawlers.

"It's surprised me, the number of people who've reached out to me through my site, both editors and sources," she said.

One point is hotly debated: Should you hire a professional website designer, or go the DIY route? Gerardo and Gregory both hired professionals.

"She designed a slideshow of testimonials superimposed over a photo of my desktop. I wouldn't have known how to do that," Gerardo said.

"Writers are not graphic designers. My time is better spent building my business," Gregory said.

But Reiss made her own site. Affordable developers couldn't deliver the look she wanted. And, she was writing enough that she wanted to be able to update her content quickly.

"If I've got three new stories, I don't have to wait for some developer to put it on the back end," Reiss said. "I'd heard that over and over from other journalists."

Where the writers converged was on their advice about the look and feel of the site. Keep it uncluttered. Make it personal, they said. Reiss said to pay attention to white space, and create visual cues by including plenty of photos. Too much text makes a page look heavy.

Gerardo said you should put most of your creative thought into your Home page, because that's where you'll make your biggest impression. Also, he used actual photos of his office. Not stock images taken from the internet that other writers might use, too.

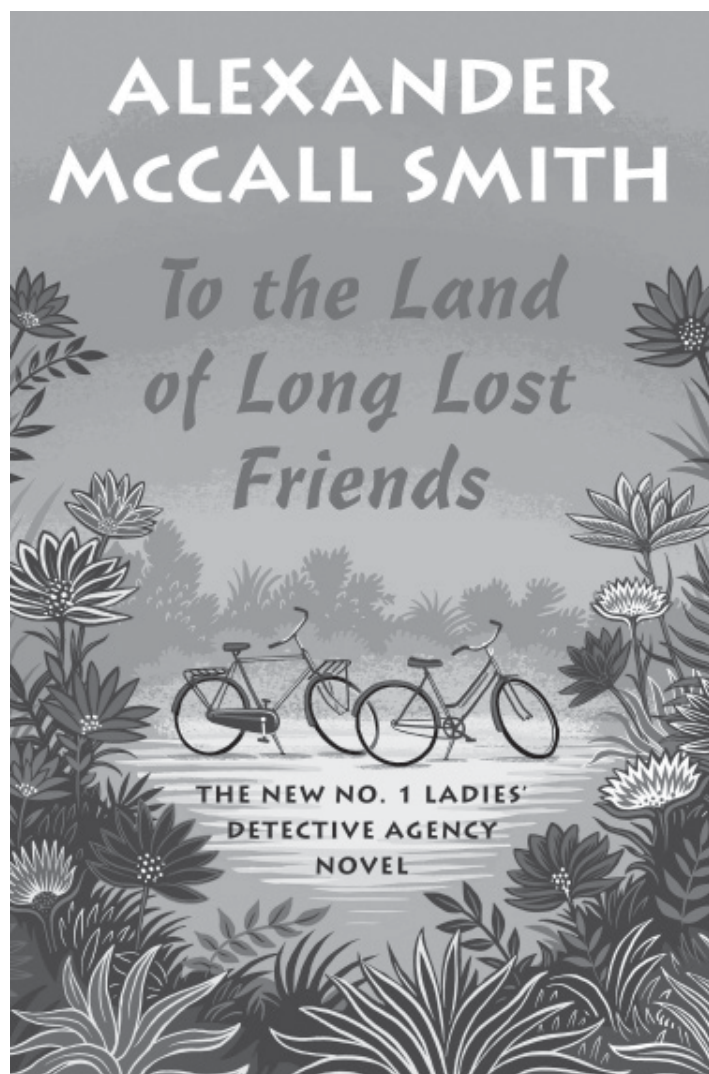
Gregory said whatever you do, make sure you love it.

"You're not marketing to everybody who needs a writer," she said. "You're marketing to the people who are going to love you, and you're going to become their favorite freelancer. There's no perfect client, only a client that's perfect for you."

A DAY IN THE

life

➤ of Alexander
McCall Smith



➤➤ **Wendy Lyons Sunshine** (polishedwriting.com) enjoys interviewing and partnering with experts. Her most recent collaboration, *Raising the Challenging Child* (raisingthechallengingchild.com), is a treasure trove of parenting secrets from child welfare specialists, published January 2020 by Revel.

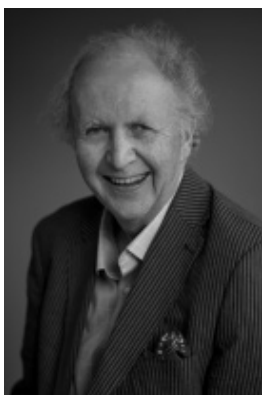
WENDY LYONS
SUNSHINE

Freelance Writer



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Literary rock star Alexander McCall Smith celebrated the close of 2019 by headlining a U.S. Library of Congress speaking engagement and delivering a BBC radio reading in partnership with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The UK law professor-turned-fiction writer has been published in 47 languages and penned more than 100 books, including the best-selling *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series, which has sold more than 20 million copies in English alone. Set in Botswana, where the author once lived and still visits annually, the series features mild-mannered sleuthing by proprietress Mma Precious Ramotswe and her extended clan. ■ Readers embrace Smith's fiction for its sly humor, warmth, forgiveness, and picturesque escape. Wendy Lyons Sunshine asked the prolific, globetrotting author for an insider look at his workday.



“As for the ideas, they just come to me, and that might be at any time. I write them down in one of my notebooks and every so often I go through these notebooks and extract something for use in a novel.”

— ALEXANDER MCCALL SMITH

>>> What's your writing routine? Do you have a morning ritual?

I find it very important to have a routine when it comes to writing. I usually get up very early in the morning—three or 4 o'clock—and work until breakfast. I may then write for a couple of hours later in the day. I write just about every day, including those days when I am on tour. I write in trains and planes. I sometimes go away to write, either to our house in the Highlands of Scotland or abroad somewhere. I have just returned from India where I was writing while staying at an old fort overlooking a holy river.

>>> What are your favorite writing technologies?

I use a word processing program on a computer—either a laptop or a desk machine. I sometimes write shorter pieces with a pen; certainly I use a pen and notebook for notes and for occasional paragraphs. I love the feel of the nib on the paper—it is a very satisfying, physical feel. I do not dictate, as I find that if I do it sounds a bit stilted. My natural voice comes out through typing.

>>> Do you work in isolation or rely on someone for feedback or assistance with manuscript organization or review?

Writing is a pretty solitary business. However, I very much appreciate the input of my editors. I show my manuscripts to a couple of friends, too. I have an assistant who runs my office and deals with just about everything, but I do not burden her with my manuscripts most of the time.

>>> When you're writing do you listen to a certain kind of ambient music or insist on silence at certain phases throughout the day?

I find that I can listen to music when I am writing, and I think that it helps the creative process. One has to be careful to choose the right music, though. I have certain forms of music that go with certain books. For example, before I start writing a chapter in my Isabel Dalhousie series, I will listen to Mozart's "Soave sia il vento" trio from *Così fan tutte*. That is a gorgeous, peaceful piece and it puts me in the right mood for those particular novels. I will also listen to [Estonian composer] Arvo Pärt when I am writing the Dalhousie novels.

>>> How do you keep multiple series' story lines straight and how do you replenish the well of ideas?

I just hope that I don't make too many mistakes! I should be more organized; I should have a database of who has done what in which book, but I'm afraid I don't. As for the ideas, they just come to me, and that might be at any time. I write them down in one of my notebooks and every so often I go through these notebooks and extract something for use in a novel.

>>> What kind of recharge breaks do you take during the day?

I have an exercise bike and I do spells of exercise on that. I go out for coffee in a nearby coffee bar. When I am writing at our house in the Scottish Highlands, I go out and walk by the sea, which is directly outside our house. Sometimes I will go out for a row in a boat to take a break.

>>> What's your typical lunch? Do you have any favorite snack or beverage?

Lunch will be beans, tomatoes, olive oil. Sometimes a can of sardines. I follow a low carb diet. I like meeting friends for lunch, which I will do once or twice a week. I love talking over a slow lunch. At my desk, I drink redbush tea or ordinary tea.

>>> What are your busiest days like?

My mornings are often taken up with correspondence. We get letters and requests from all over the world. We try to reply to everything. I reserve certain periods for tours, of which I do probably five or six a year, including an annual US tour. I try to keep spells free of all obligations so that I can write.

>>> What's your favorite part of the writing day and why?

I am at my best in the morning because I think my mind is fresh. I am not so good after lunch—when I tend to take a siesta. I find that if I work too late at night it makes my mind active and I don't get to sleep very well. That can be difficult if you are getting up at four, which I often do.

Learn more about Alexander McCall Smith at alexandermccallsmith.com.

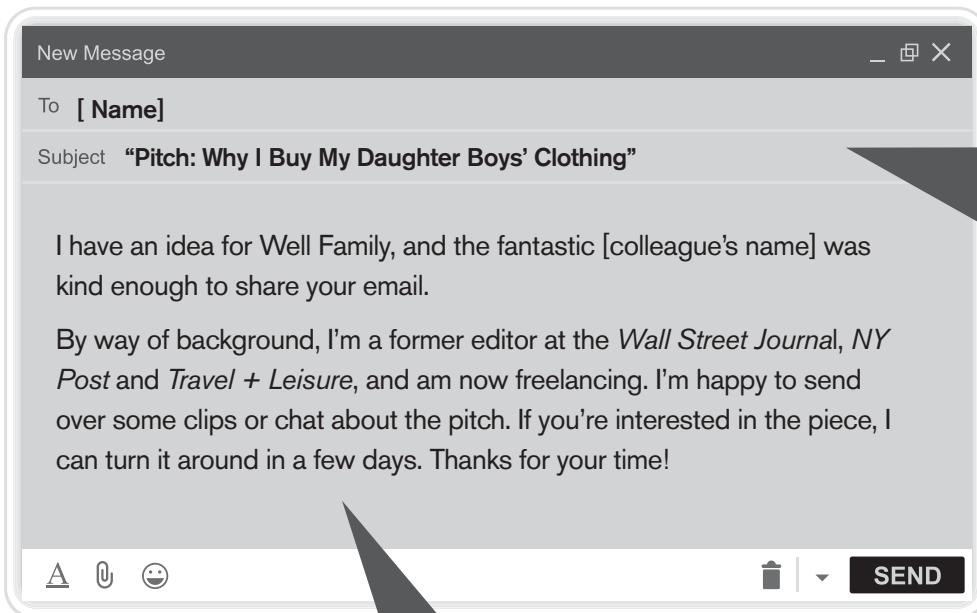


PITCH PERFECT >>>>

with Sara Clemence

Reading a pitch that landed a writer an assignment can help you improve your own marketing efforts—especially if you can pair the words with some behind-the-scenes insights. In this issue, we get to peek at an email ASJA member Sara Clemence sent to an editor at *The New York Times* that resulted in a story in the newspaper’s Well Family section.

EMAIL TO THE EDITOR



I try to include a headline with my pitches—and sometimes a dek. A good headline can really help sell an idea, because the editor (hopefully) can “see” it in their publication. Also, as an editor I looked for pitches that had very clear angles, and a strong headline demonstrates up front that you have that.

I hadn't written much about gender issues and hadn't yet been published in the *Times*. So I focused on the fact that I'd been an editor for prestigious publications, hoping that would speak to my credibility.



THE PITCH

My Daughter Wears Boys' Clothing

And it's my choice, not hers.

Camouflage pants with reinforced knees. Blue ankle boots with lug soles. Boxy, flannel-lined jeans. They all are, or have been, staples of my daughter's wardrobe.

It's not because she has a particular preference for "boys" clothing—at 2 ½, she doesn't express much of an opinion at all about what she wears. Mainly, it's because boys clothes are better than girls' clothes.

They're almost always more practical and more rugged than girls' garments, with pockets that can hold rocks and shells, knees that withstand falls, and colors that hide stains. And, unlike the flimsy leggings and sparkly cap-sleeved tees that are designed for little girls, they send my daughter an important message: that it's more important to do stuff than to be decorative.

A lot has been written about gender differences in children's clothing, but it's always about colors, motifs, and other surface issues. I've never seen anyone dig into the functional differences—much less explain why they exist. I'd love to do both, with some historical and business perspective mixed in.

I think [the pitch was accepted because] it fit nicely into the zeitgeist. Gender and parenting issues are so big. I also think it felt like a fresh perspective on something every parent does—buy clothing for their kids—but might not think critically about.

Take a look at the published story by visiting:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/28/well/family/the-gender-divide-in-preschoolers-closets.html>



PAUL VACHON

Freelance Writer



Market Report | HEMISPHERES



Paul Vachon is a Detroit-based writer and author who writes on Detroit history, Michigan travel, plus general feature stories.

Inflight magazines represent a market segment that, fortunately, has remained stable in recent years. While air passengers have other diversions, such as movies and available Wi-Fi at 30,000 feet, a sizable chunk enjoying passing time while reading a review of Chicago's current theatre scene or an explorer's account of a venture into the Andes of South America.

Hemispheres, the publication found on United Airlines flights, is an especially classy member of this group. In fact, the book is so well produced that it could be taken from its seat pockets and placed in the periodical rack at Barnes and Noble and compete with some of the glossiest travel mags. Not a bad clip to add to your portfolio.

A fixture since 1992, the magazine has for the last decade been produced by Ink Global, a specialist in travel media. *Hemispheres* is distributed bimonthly and is placed on all United flights, both domestic and international. While the magazine contains a bevy of information useful for air travelers (airport diagrams, tips on clearing customs, etc.), most of the pages are devoted to the feature well and three major departments, two of which the editors accept pitches for: Navigator and Diversions.

Navigator is the front-of-book section that profiles popular and up and coming trends. It can take in a wide swath of possibilities: hotels, restaurants, neighborhoods or other topics of popular interest. While a news peg is desirable, a link to an identifiable trend can also suffice. The topic does, however, need to have focus. Instead of a piece on the growth of boutique hotels, a good idea might be, "boutique hotels that include libraries," says EIC Ellen Carpenter.

Diversions casts a light on culture. "It can include material on film, TV, art exhibits, museums, and shopping," explains Carpenter. It can also cover business and sports. She gives a recent example of store opening in Singapore that offers clothing by local designers, a rarity for the tiny island nation.

Pieces in both departments run between 250 and 400 words.



Three Perfect Days, a photo heavy diary of 72 hours spent in an exciting destination, is a major part of *Hemispheres*. While the editors do not accept pitches for TPD, it does assign freelancers with whom they have a well-established relationship for this department.

Carpenter stresses that experiencing the subject personally is essential to writing a quality piece. "If you're covering a new restaurant, enjoying the food and taking in the overall experience allows the writer to really see what makes it special."

For this reason, freelance-generated material is either contributed by scribes local to an area, or by writers who travel frequently.

For the feature well, the editors are looking for stories more focused on a destination than on the trip itself. The online writers' guidelines say features must be "a substantial read. One recent piece takes the reader through the remote backstreets of Rome, selecting locations far less visited than the Vatican Museum or the Sistine Chapel. Another shares the personal story of a young

woman from Colorado who never learned to ski but decides to take up the sport after age 30. Feature articles typically run between 2000 and 2300 words.

One ironclad rule is that all contributions to *Hemispheres* must relate to a United Airlines destination. A city served by a United partner does not qualify. A destination is defined as being within 100 miles of a United airport.

Hemispheres purchases full copyright to the piece, however, Carpenter adds, "We always allow writers to include their stories in a book or anthology as long as they credit *Hemispheres*. But they are not able to republish the story in another magazine, website, or paper.

Writers are not responsible for graphics. Ink usually partners with local photographers or in some cases may fly in someone.

Stories are planned out several months in advance—typically four to five months, often for seasonal considerations. After receiving an assignment, writers typically have about a 30-day turnaround.

Hemispheres offers above average compensation. "Most stories pay a flat fee, but it generally works out to one dollar per word," explains Carpenter. Payment is made on acceptance.



THE FALL FASHION ISSUE HIGH STYLE IN BIG SKY COUNTRY, FERRARI'S LATEST CONVERTIBLE, REBUILDING THE BOLSHOI THEATRE, THE HEMI Q&A WITH TRAILBLAZING DESIGNER DONNA KARAN, TENNESSEE'S FINEST HAM AND THE BEST NEW GADGETS FOR GAMERS ON THE MOVE



HEMISPHERES AT A GLANCE

Fees: A preset flat fee, but generally around \$1 per word

Story Lengths: Between 250 and 400 words for FOB departments, 2,000-2,300 for features

Frequency: Bimonthly

Payment Terms: On story acceptance

Kill Fee: No

Rights: All rights



“Volunteering for ASJA is important to me because it means we get to keep having such wonderful resources, and we all make invaluable connections and form friendships. I consider it my part in lifting everyone up so we can lift up the career.”



Jennifer Billock

► **What is your writing specialty/focus?**

I focus on travel, food, history, and culture.

► **In which publications/outlets have you been published?**

The New York Times, Smithsonian, The Atlantic, Playboy, Marie Claire, National Geographic Traveler, CN Traveler, Wired, BBC, Travel+Leisure, and more.

► **Please share a proud writing moment.**

My first National Geographic Traveler byline was one of my proudest moments. I'd been going back and forth with the editor for a couple years trying to find something that fit. One day I had the perfect idea and it was accepted within minutes. I was so happy!

► **How long have you been an ASJA member?**

Going on three years.

► **How long have you volunteered for ASJA?**

Since I joined!

► **What kind of volunteer work do you do for ASJA?**

I've acted as a mentor in the mentorship program, been a peer in the peer-to-peer program, helped contact editors for Virtual Client Connections, and now I'm the chair of the Special Interest Groups.

► **How much time do you spend per month volunteering for ASJA?**

About five hours when SIGs aren't running, about 10 when they are.

► **Why do you volunteer for ASJA?**

I like to support others through the mentorship and peer-to-peer programs, and the SIGs are such a great opportunity to learn (for me and everyone else involved). Volunteering for ASJA is important to me because it means we get to keep having such wonderful resources, and we all make invaluable connections and form friendships. I consider it my part in lifting everyone up so we can lift up the career.

► **How do you fit volunteering in with your work commitments?**

I'll usually take an hour at the end of the day to do my ASJA items, and if I can't do that, then I put in an hour on the weekend. It's pretty seamless because I schedule my day thoroughly.

► **What are the benefits of volunteering?**

Getting more involved in the association, meeting colleagues, making new friends, getting my name out there, supporting ASJA and its educational endeavors.

► **What do you like to do when you're not writing?**

I travel, read, knit, crochet, exercise, and bake. I also enjoy hanging out with my partner and my family and friends, and spoiling the crap out of my niece and nephew. I moved to a new city at the start of the year, so I spend a lot of time getting out and experiencing it also.



HOLLY
LAWRENCE

Freelance Writer

Freelancing Is a Real Job

Our profession comes with one guarantee: We are sure to encounter people who will tell us we cannot—and should not—be a freelance writer. In the past several years since I became a writer, I've had my share of naysayers who pounce at the first mention of what I do for work. Perhaps these comments sound familiar to you:

It's really hard to be a writer. [Perceived translation: You don't have what it takes.]

You should forget about being a freelance writer and try something else.

There are too many unemployed journalists out there with years of experience over you.

You'll never get published in that magazine.

It's impossible these days to get a book published.

Anyone who tells you they make good money as a freelance writer is lying.

(And one of my personal favorites when a recruiter scans my resume) I see that you've been freelancing for quite some time. When was the last time you had a real job?

“

Understanding myself and having full confidence in my career choice as a writer, even with its many challenges, has been my best defense against my naysayers.

Consider this negativity as a test of your commitment toward finding your place in the world.

I like to compare it to finally finding your dream home after years of feeling detached from other places. You take your first tour of the house and immediately know that you belong there. Walking through each room, however, you maintain a realistic view of challenges you will encounter. You assess the house's imperfections in need of repair as well as the financial sacrifices you will need to make.

Suddenly, naysayers appear at the scene, bringing a litany of reasons why that house is not right for you. Somehow, you are energized by these challenges, not discouraged. And the choir of naysayers fail at changing your mind. You have arrived home to an understanding of who you are and what you want in life.

I arrived home when I reinvented myself as a writer. I spent decades in a string of unfulfilling jobs, even though my bills were paid. By 2016 when I turned 55, my ability to find a job in my former work areas diminished. I became a writer in response to my own personal crisis and my need to find purpose and a platform for my legacy. I started writing for PBS *Next Avenue*, covering social issues that affect adults of my generation.

Understanding myself and having full confidence in my career choice as a writer, even with its many challenges, has been my best defense against my naysayers. I knew that I had arrived home the day that my first bylined article was published, and again when I joined ASJA and attended the 2019 Writers Conference. I have learned who I am, what my purpose is, and how I want to live and be remembered.

A new decade has arrived, and I have a long way to go in developing my writer's voice and freelance writing business. However, my identity as a writer is established, and my published work will be my legacy. We know that we have found our place as writers when giving up, and giving in to the challenges of our profession, is no longer an option.

»» **Holly Lawrence** is a former nonprofit executive, marketing and conference director who considers writing as her ultimate career reinvention. She covers social issues and policy, living, work, and purpose. Her work has appeared on PBS.org and affiliate sites, *Next Avenue*, *Forbes*, *MarketWatch*, and *MONEY's* Retire With Money. Follow her on Twitter at [@hollyjlawrence](https://twitter.com/hollyjlawrence).

ASJA MAGAZINE

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PERIODICALS

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