

The Resourceful Writer



SUMMER 2021

03

*A Quarterly Publication
of the American Society of
Journalists and Authors*

ASJA MAGAZINE

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR RUNNING YOUR WRITING BUSINESS



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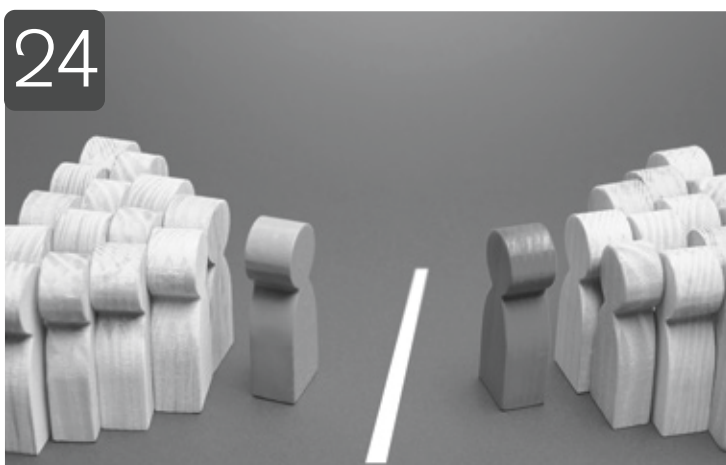
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Publications Chair

Jennifer Nelson

Editor

Stephanie Voza

Creative Director

Christina Ullman, Ullman Design
www.ullmandesign.com

Contributors

Debbie Abrams Kaplan, Carla Furlong,
Margie Goldsmith, Sandra Gurvis, Jeanette
Hurt, Cheryl Maguire, Ami Neiberger-Miller,
Erin O'Donnell, Elisa Shoenberger

Proofreaders

Sally Abrahms, Theresa Barger, June Bell,
Risha Gotlieb, Daria Hong, Leslie Lang,
Sandi Schwartz

Address changes

Send to:
The ASJA Magazine
American Society of Journalists and Authors
355 Lexington Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Phone: (212) 997-0947

www.asja.org

Email: asjaoffice@asja.org

Magazine Editor: magazine@asja.net

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From the President's Desk

ON RESOURCES, RECOVERY, AND RISING UP



LAURA LAING

*Freelance Writer
and ASJA President*

My mother is a librarian. I say “is” even though she’s been retired for more than a decade. Librarians have a vocation, like writers or rabbis. You don’t stop being one simply because you no longer get a paycheck for ordering books or teaching kids the Dewey Decimal System.

After a short stint at Floyd County High School in rural Virginia, she worked in elementary schools, first at Speedwell and then at my first public school, Spiller. Speedwell was new, and my mother’s open-space library was positioned in the middle of the building with a giant hallway passing through it.

One of the kindergarten classes had a hamster that the teacher would put in a clear plastic ball, and it’d chug around the school throughout the day. Sometimes when my mother was reading a picture book to a class of first-graders, this furry mascot would clatter through the library. It became so commonplace that the kids would barely notice. At Spiller, my parents installed two giant antique bathtubs filled with pillows. During their free library time, the kids could lounge in the tubs, reading.

My mother’s libraries were not meant to be quiet places. Instead, they were joyful, humming with the excitement of learning to read, of coming across ideas that could exist only inside the plastic-wrapped binding of a book, of discovering new places, people and things. Her libraries extended the world—something especially important for kids who might not ever leave the rural place where they were born.

The public library of my hometown was tucked in a low-slung shopping center on my route home from elementary school, and I spent as much time there as I did with friends. I checked out stacks of books, and when I felt too restless to read, I convinced the librarians to give me a volunteer job “scanning the shelves.” This meant reading the spine of each book on a shelf to make sure they were in proper order. A mis-shelved library book is as

good as stolen or lost, and I treasured the act of finding something I wanted to read by the numbers and letters listed on its spine. I took this job seriously.

When the city council considered reducing funding for the public library—by this time, in a new structure two blocks away—I asked my father to take me to the meeting so I could speak in favor of maintaining the library’s budget line. I was in the sixth grade, and I can’t remember being afraid. To lose even a tiny part of the library—an hour of it being open or a single book purchase—was like asking me to give up a part of myself. I understood that libraries needed people and books to thrive; these were the two sides of a seesaw, the two halves of an equation. And I had convinced myself that if I simply explained this to the council, they would see their way to fully funding the place I loved the most. (I wish I could remember the outcome.)

These days I enjoy working in libraries. Before the pandemic, I spent at least three days a month writing or editing in one of the Baltimore city or county branches. I am lucky to have many choices. For an intimate space, I like to visit the one in Roland Park, where the poet and essayist Adrienne Rich may have gone as a child. If I need a larger selection of books, I hit the Towson branch, with its sweeping modern architecture and massive collection. But in the winter, I favor the main branch of Baltimore’s Enoch Pratt Free Library system. The radiators hiss and clank, and in one room, I can work alongside rowdy chess games.

I’m thinking about libraries because they are one of my most cherished resources. I miss them terribly. I’ve used libraries to research articles, essays, and college papers. I’ve read magazines that I don’t subscribe to and borrowed DVDs of movies. (These days, I watch movies on Katapult, a free streaming service offered by library systems all over the country.) I’ve spent hours scanning the shelves, looking for a book to check out. If I see the book by someone I know, I’ll take a photo to post on

social media. Sometimes when I come across a book I hate, I’ll turn it so that the spine faces the back of the shelf. Or I’ll position a book I love so that the cover faces the aisle. I like digging around in my change purse to pay library fines, and I am fascinated by the fancy check-out computers that magically know which books are in the stack I’ve placed on the scanner.

The word “resource” has its root in the Old French word *resourdre*, which means “rise up” or “recover.” Isn’t that the most perfect word for this summer, when we’re about to emerge from more than a year of isolation, of separation, of world-wide illness? It’s also remarkable because of libraries, which not only house intellectual resources but also act as an emotional and even spiritual resource for many of us, young and old. Children who practice newfound reading skills in a bathtub full of pillows are discovering (rising to) ideas that will shape their development, their understanding of a much bigger world. And after more than four decades of library love, I long to return so I can fill my cup with comfort, so I can recover.

Indigo Girl Emily Saliers wrote a song called “Rise Up” for the duo’s 2004 album, *All That We Let In*. She sings: “Tend the artist in your charges, you are full invested / Rise up your dead, there’s life in the old girl yet / Rise up your dead.” I’ve never met a writer who wasn’t “full invested.”

Something brings us back to the page, again and again and again, even when we’re surrounded by the anguish of a worldwide pandemic, even when we cannot be in the places that, like libraries, make us feel whole. We provide resources for the world—in our newspaper stories, in our books, in our blog posts. These resources are meant to be shared because they offer recovery or spur revolution, small and large. These are everyday things for us, and they fit perfectly in the hallowed places that house our words, where chess players find competition or a hamster might be rolling along in a clear plastic ball.



STEPHANIE
VOZZA

*Freelance Writer
and ASJA Editor*



*From
the Editor*

LESSONS IN RESOURCEFULNESS

My Nana was a writer. Instead of books or articles, though, she penned contest entries. In the '60s, '70s, and '80s – long before Publisher's Clearinghouse-style sweepstakes – companies held contests and awarded prizes for the best jingles, slogans, and poems.

In fact, my Nana's love of writing is why I'm alive. She met my other grandmother after one of them won a washing machine and the other won a fur coat. The department store that held the contest asked both women to pose with their prizes for the local newspaper. They struck up a friendship, which led to my mom meeting my dad.

When my Nana passed away, I inherited her contesting books. It was then that I realized how resourceful she was. She never let a thought go to waste. She kept "Mom's Record Book," in which she'd brainstorm ideas, slash through those she felt weren't good (often adding the word "Boo"), and circle anything that won (noting the prize she was awarded). Later, she'd refer back to these notes for the next contest, recycling anything she could. Her contesting supplies also included a rhyming dictionary, a guide to song titles, a book of homonyms, and more.

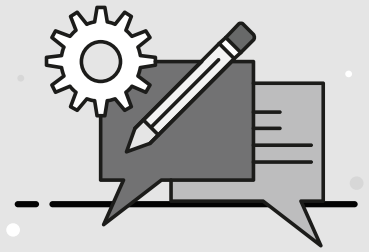
These resources proved to be valuable. In addition to that washing machine, my Nana

won numerous prizes—from 5,000 paper cups to appliances (small and large) to money, trips and multiple cars.

When asked about her secret to success, she borrowed film producer Samuel Goldwyn's line, telling people, "The harder I work, the luckier I get."

My Nana recognized that good resources are vital to a writer's career, and that's what this issue is about. While tools that help you with your writing are important, so are people who can connect you with sources or push you to improve the quality of your work. Using your resources also means maximizing and protecting what you already have and being aware enough to know when a situation no longer serves you.

It's my hope that *ASJA Magazine* is one of your valuable resources. In these pages, your fellow members share tips and advice that can help you grow your writing business. And if you have an idea to share or a topic you'd like to explore, I'd love to hear it. You can reach me at asjamagazineeditor@gmail.com.



NEW ASJA MEMBERS!

JULY 2021

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS

Jules Aron
West Palm Beach, Fla.

Monya de
Santa Monica, Calif.

Deborah Douglas
Chicago, Ill.

Sandra Ebejer
Latham, N.Y.

Kimberly Key
Atlanta, Ga.

Michael Korb
Fort Myers, Fla.

Jenn McKee
Farmington, Mich.

Emily Smith
Bozeman, Mont.

Rachel Weingarten
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Leslie Wooldridge
Washington, D.C.

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Karin Berry
Columbia, Md.

Mary Beth Eastman
Beaver, Pa.

Rachel Leven
San Jose, N.C.

Vicki Mayk
Dallas, Pa.

Mary Rosewood
Livingston, Mont.



ASJA Counts Down to a New Website

»»»» VISIT ASJA.ORG

Sometime this fall, visiting **www.asja.org** will be a completely new experience! We're saying goodbye to our old design and structure — and not a moment too soon. Keep an eye on your email, *The ASJA Weekly* (our Tuesday newsletter) and ASJA Confidential (our blog) for details on when we can unveil our new design.

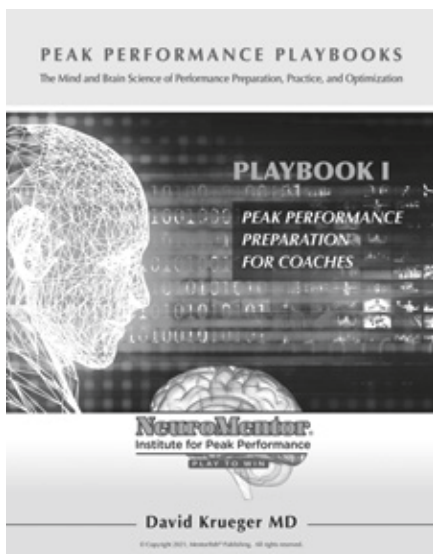
Here's what you'll find:

- **Robust member profiles** that will showcase your experience and talent
- An **expansive resources section** that taps into decades of ASJA expertise
- Easy-to-find **events calendar**
- **Centralized membership information**, where you can find your membership status, conference and webinar signups, and more.

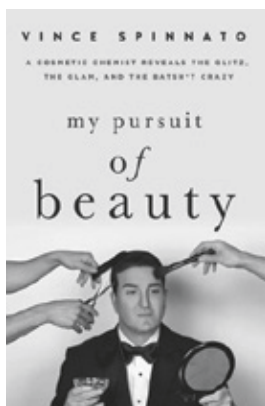


MEMBER NEWS

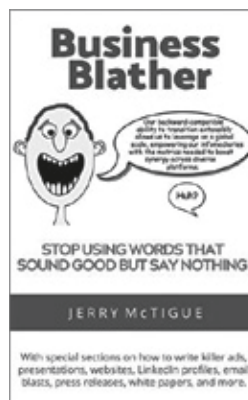
>>>> Book News



David Krueger, MD, launched The NeuroMentor® Institute of Peak Performance Training Program, *Peak Performance PlayBooks: The Mind and Brain Science of Performance Preparation, Practice, and Optimization*, and seven Peak Performance webinars, offering practical guidance for coaches and clients/players to strategically apply the mind and brain sciences to achieve and sustain optimum success.

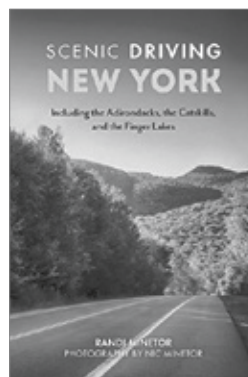


Mickey Goodman's latest book for Vince Spinnato, *My Pursuit of Beauty: A Cosmetic Chemist Reveals the Glitz, the Glam, and the Batsh*t Crazy*, debuted January 10, 2021, and drew praise from Tori Spelling and Lorna Luft, Judy Garland's daughter.

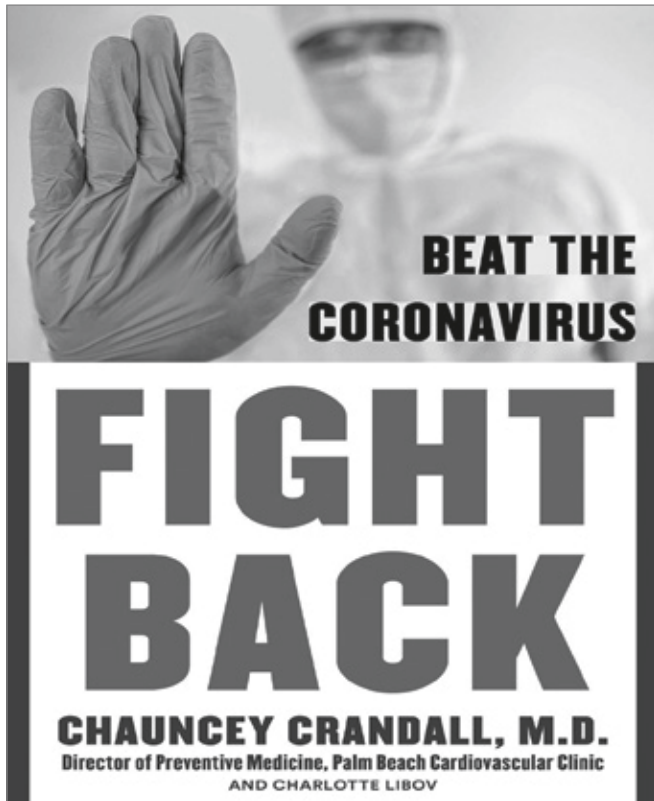


G. Gaynor (Jerry) McTigue's seventh book, *Business Blather: Stop Using Words That Sound Good But Say Nothing!*, was published in January, 2021, by Pick Me Up Books. The writing and speaking guide blasts the pretentious language, bewildering jargon, annoying acronyms, and numbing wordiness plaguing business discourse today, while arming readers with powerful tools and advice for creating clear, concise, high-impact business communications of all types.

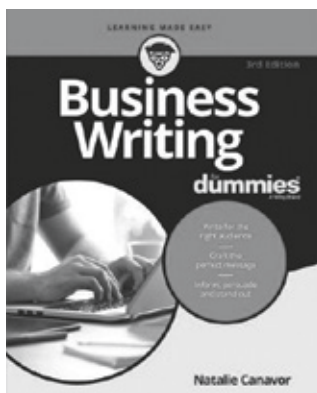
Jyrki Penttinen has released *5G Dictionary: Terminology and Definitions*. It presents essential terms and their common-sense descriptions about the fifth-generation cellular system. Telecommunications is known for the overwhelming amount of abbreviations. The issue is that many entities such as standardization bodies, mobile network operators, device manufacturers, service providers, seasoned professionals, and consumers alike, usually have their own, established "language" when referring to the details of 5G. These different terms and their varying interpretations may often cause confusions. *5G Dictionary* brings a solution to this issue and clarifies the most important 5G-related terms, easing the interpretation of technical documents and communications.



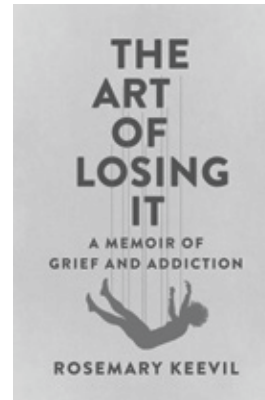
The first of **Randi Minetor's** 2021 books, *Scenic Driving New York*, arrives in bookstores and online April 1. *Scenic Driving New York* provides descriptions, maps, points of interest, and hundreds of color photos to guide readers to the most spectacular places throughout New York, from Long Island's North Shore to the Adirondacks and the Finger Lakes—and places to stop for locally made ice cream on every route.



Charlotte Libov's latest book, *Fight Back: Beat the Coronavirus*, co-authored by Dr. Chauncey Crandall, was published in July 2020 by Humanix Books. She is currently very busy doing Zoom talks based on it. Her most recent discussions have been to the Miami Beach Women's Commission, the Jewish Museum of South Florida-FIU, and to the 100+ employees of a South American-based bank.



Natalie Canavor's 3rd edition of *Business Writing for Dummies* is updated to spotlight effective writing for remote and independent workers. It covers profiles, email, proposals, reports, resumes, pitches, letters, websites, videoscripting, and presentations.



Rosemary Keevil wrote *The Art of Losing It: A Memoir of Grief and Addiction*, by Rosemary Keevil, which was published in October of 2020.



Karen Whiting's editors saved time commuting during the pandemic, so they had more time to send contracts. She has four books releasing this year: *Growing a Mother's Heart*, *Devos for Brave Boys* (a derivative product), *52 Weekly Family Devotions to Help Children Pray*, and *The Super Book of Kindness Crafts*.

Jennifer Billock signed the contract on her latest book, *Chicago's Historic Bakeries*.



Author **Angie Mangino** listens to her audience. By popular demand, *17th Century Tottenville History Comes Alive* is now available in a paperback edition as well as Kindle.

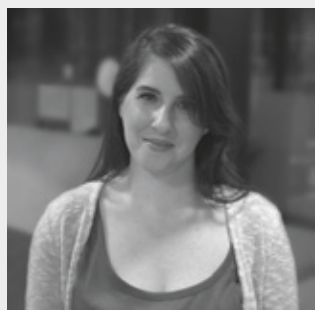


Articles and Accolades

Charles Fishkin has written an article that discusses how organizations can create effective risk management programs to address unwanted risk that can give rise to financial losses or reputational damage. The article further discusses the appropriate role of risk committees as components of a risk management program. The article was published online on Risk.Net, a website for finance professionals.



Ann Hoffner won a Certificate of Merit in the Boating Writers International 2020 contest in the category Gear, Electronics & Product Tests for "Non-Lethal Self-Defense for Boaters," which was published in the 2020 edition of *Ocean Voyager* magazine.



Holly Leber Simmons published a story on pandemic-friendly hobbies for seniors (but really, they're good for any age) in *Northern Virginia Magazine*.

She wrote about historic LGBTQ+ Baltimore, a woman who is restoring her great-grandmother's church, and a planner/realtor/community activist/writer/aspiring ice cream parlor owner, among other stories, as one of two writers for *Inhabit*, the new online alumni magazine from the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at the University of Maryland.

Jen Reeder recently won four writing awards from the Dog Writers Association of America, including The Grey Muzzle Award for the best work about senior dog adoptions, and the DWAA Distinguished Service Award, which honors communications excellence.



Kim Kavin took home top prizes in two writing competitions in February. Her *Washington Post* story about the pandemic halting service-dog training won first prize in the general news category from the Dog Writers Association of America, and her story for *PassageMaker* about the pandemic changing the way people buy boats earned first prize in the Business of Boating category from Boating Writers International. Kim also nearly swept the BWI contest's Issues, News and Analysis category, taking second place for an article in *Soundings* about the pandemic leading countless untrained new boaters onto U.S. waterways, and winning third place for an article in *Yachting* about 3D printing being used in boatbuilding.

Michele Meyer's latest profile, "The Architects of Glamour," on fashion designers Mark Badgley and James Mischka, appears in February 2021's *Palm Beach Illustrated* magazine.



Author/blogger **Wesley C. Davidson** has a new Facebook group “Kids on Drugs: Signs, Risks and How to Get Help!” If you have a friend/family member with substance abuse disorders, you’ll find helpful suggestions.



Being forced to take calculus in the early years of an undergraduate degree might seem innocuous, but it can deny minority students access to an engineering education. **Poornima Apte** explored this hurdle (and others) in her feature, “Solving for Equity,” for the American Society for Engineering Education.



Jennifer Nelson published an essay in AARP’s *The Girlfriend* on one of her favorite food memories from childhood.



Margie Goldsmith’s interviews with Sean Penn, Ja Rule and Geoffrey Kent (founder of Abercrombie & Kent) have just been published in *Business Jet Traveler*. She also published “Finding Love with a Foster Dog” on *Next Avenue*.



Debbie Abrams Kaplan pitched *NJ Monthly* in 2013 about Lonesome George’s mounting in New Jersey. The editor liked it, but then crickets. In 2020, he unearthed her pitch, asking if the taxidermist was still doing interesting things. Debbie’s profile was just published, 7+ years later.



Got news to share with ASJA?
Submit your items at
<https://asja.org/Member-Networking/submit-member-news>



>>>>>>>

PAYCHECK

ALM (AMERICAN LAWYER MEDIA)

White paper

Scope of work: 2,000 words

Total fee: \$2,000.00

Article terms: POP

White paper with clearly defined topic and robust outline provided by client.

I had to do one 30-minute interview

with an expert selected by the client,

who also provided a recording of

the interview (but not a transcript).

Relatively painless editing process.

Fairly quick turnaround. Payment terms

are net 60, so I'm still waiting for

payment (it's not yet 60 days since I

invoiced, but my contact said several

weeks ago that I should be paid

"soon"). Would not work for this client

again given the long wait for payment

and the relatively low pay for the

amount of skill and expertise required

to do this work.

Feedback: 5

ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER

Blog

Scope of work: 1,200 words

Total fee: \$900.00

Article terms: Acceptance

Feedback: 10

Payment Timely or Late: timely

ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER

Blog

Scope of work: 35 hours

Total fee: \$4,375.00

Article terms: Acceptance

Feedback: 10

Payment Timely or Late: timely

LEGALZOOM

Blog

Scope of work: 700 words

Total fee: \$450.00

Great managing editor. Interesting assignments.

Feedback: 10



Help your fellow members by submitting a paycheck report. Simply visit the Member section of the ASJA website. Under the Paycheck tab, click on Report a Paycheck. Knowledge is power!



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



ASJA EVENTS CALENDAR

Summer Virtual Client Connections

June 29-July 1, 2021

July 6-8, 2021

Check the ASJA website for the latest details.

Putting on another virtual conference was no small feat



THE ASJA 2021 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE WAS A ROUSING SUCCESS!



Thank You

Thank you to our conference leaders for their long-term planning and continued focus on making our second virtual conference spectacular, especially:

Conference Chair ▶ Kristine Hansen

Book Track Host ▶ Tara Haelle

Journalism Track Host ▶ Jennifer Billock

Content Marketing Track Host ▶ Jennifer Goforth Gregory

Client Networking Committee Chair ▶ Wendy Helfenbaum

Thank you also to Kellen staff, as well as the many, many volunteers who moderated and spoke on panels, hosted Snack Chats, and worked behind the scenes.



We hope you enjoyed, benefitted, and prospered from it both personally and professionally.



See you in New York in Spring 2022!



>> Eavesdropping on the Agent

ANSWERING WRITERS' BURNING BOOK PUBLISHING QUESTIONS



Q:

If the expert with whom one is writing the book does not have national media experience or thousands of social media followers, does the author (or co-authors) have any chance of getting a publisher? And how important is an author's social media following? Is there a certain number of followers a publisher wants to see? If so, what is that?

I must confess that I—probably like most agents—always start by asking an author/would-be client: What's your author platform like? I actually drill down, having them quantify the size of their current audience via social media followers, recent media coverage of their work, talks to large groups they've given in the past 1-2 years (Zoom talks accepted!), big websites they blog for regularly, popular podcasts they've done, YouTube appearances, etc. In short, whatever they can tell me to demonstrate they have a following that can be counted on for (or at least to seriously consider) buying their book.

Publishers tend to be happiest when those combined figures add up to at least 50,000—a tall order, admittedly, but what can I say? I always tell authors not to blame me, that I'm merely the middleman between them and publishers, but also I'm trying to save everyone a lot of time and heartbreak if they can clearly show that they have a sizeable audience before the book proposal starts circulating to publishers. And unless someone immediately comes back to me with such numbers (and they seldom do—it's like an apartment-for-rent ad that doesn't talk about a doorman—if they don't mention it, they don't have it), I must confess that I then pass, no matter how much I might otherwise like the project, the author and the writing.

So, if I were a writer considering a collaboration with an author, I would start by asking these questions first (and/or doing some online research). If you don't think the platform's there, there's a good chance it will be tough to land an agent and publisher.

That said (and I'm not contradicting myself here!), if you can get paid a decent fee to write the proposal and if that's all the author is seeking now, why not do it? You're not responsible for that author finding an agent and publisher. Your assignment is simply (simply!) to write an excellent book proposal. And maybe refer your co-author to one or two agents. Keep in mind you may not get beyond the book-proposal stage, but that's okay—you will have done your job and gotten paid for it.



LINDA KONNER

*ASJA member and president of
the Linda Konner Literary Agency*

Linda Konner launched the Linda Konner Literary Agency in 1996. She represents approximately 75 authors of adult nonfiction books.

>> Got a Question for Linda?

Send it to asjamagazineeditor@gmail.com.

THE PRO ACT



*What you need to know
and do about it*

DEBORAH
ABRAMS KAPLAN

Freelance Writer



Deborah Abrams Kaplan is an ASJA member and the Advocacy Communications Chair. She is also a co-founder of Fight for Freelancers NJ and USA.

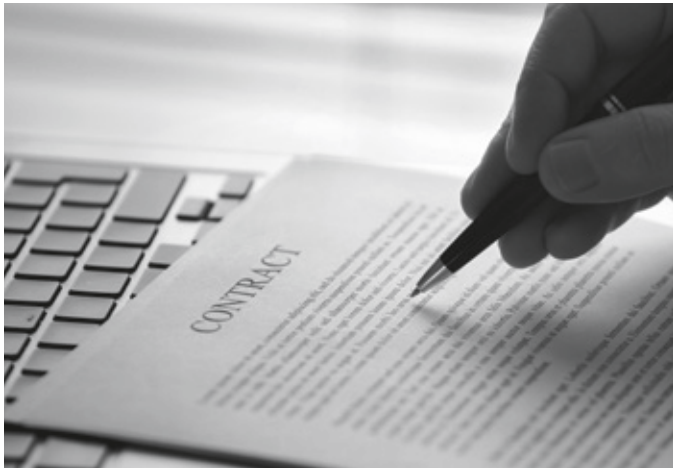
As ASJA members, we've heard about the devastating impact of California's AB5. In fact, ASJA is suing the State of California over the unconstitutional discrimination against journalists. At the heart of AB5 is the narrow ABC Test, written in the 1930s. This 20th-century legislation has not been modernized for the 21st-century work we do. In California, the ABC Test is causing a massive loss in independent contractor income, and for some, their livelihoods.

The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act now threatens our careers on a national level. While the legislation is purportedly aimed at increasing the ability for labor union organizing, it is step one of President Biden's plan to make the ABC Test a federal standard for all labor, employment, and tax laws.



The ABC test is used by employers to determine whether a worker is considered an independent contractor or an employee. The ABC test has become prominent in business because it determines the payment of Social Security and worker's compensation benefits. Depending on the state where the work is performed, the ABC test may also impact wages, work hours, and the availability of unemployment insurance.





LAW FIRMS ARE ALREADY WARNING COMPANIES THAT THEY NEED TO LOOK INTO THEIR INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR RELATIONSHIPS IF THE PRO ACT PASSES.

The House of Representatives passed the PRO Act in 2020, knowing it would not pass the Senate or be signed into law by President Trump. With a 50/50 Senate split and the support of President Biden, the issue is now more serious. The House of Representatives passed the PRO Act on March 9, 2021.

Some writers dismiss the PRO Act, saying it won't have the 60 votes necessary to pass a likely Senate filibuster. However, that assumes the filibuster remains. In March, Senate Democrats expressed interest in abolishing the filibuster. Joe Manchin (D-WV), who previously opposed removing the filibuster and whose vote would be needed to accomplish this, expressed openness to changing the current model to a "talking filibuster," returning the filibuster to the days of yore when senators would have to command the floor for hours upon hours. As a result, it decreases the likelihood Senators would use the filibuster, leaving the legislation potentially open to passage with 51 votes.

The filibuster isn't the only way it could pass. House Democrats have talked about making the bill more palatable to Republicans (we're not sure how). And there's talk about breaking the bill up into chunks and passing smaller, piecemeal bills instead.

Why the PRO Act matters to you

Under federal law, independent contractors cannot unionize. Only employees can. Shrink the definition of who can be an independent contractor (by using the narrow version of the ABC test), and voila – there are now more employees ripe for organizing. One of the proponents' talking points is that this just affects labor law. If you don't want to organize, you don't have to. However, it's not that simple. For example, if you want to write a freelance article for the New Yorker (which is unionized), you would presumably have to join their union and pay dues—for writing just one article. You would be an employee under labor law, and whatever the union negotiated for your rates is what you get.

As a freelance journalist, you would likely fail the ABC Test in the PRO Act. Prong B says, "the service is performed outside the usual course of the business of the employer." If you are writing for a publication, you are in the same business as the employer and you fail the ABC test. If you are a content marketer writing for an agency, you fail the ABC test. You will be considered an employee under labor law.

Law firms are already warning companies that they need to look into their independent contractor relationships if the PRO Act passes. Even though you could still be an independent contractor under employment law, when companies are faced with situations that could put them at risk, they often take the safe approach. What does that mean for you? You could lose work. Companies will want to avoid federal complaints under this ABC Test, leading to a chilling effect in contracting with independent contractors like us.

AB5 in California did not create union jobs, and it created very few W2 jobs. Many companies simply stopped working with California freelancers, and people saw their careers and income evaporate overnight, even if they could pass the ABC Test and prove they were a legitimate independent contractor. (And by the way, becoming an LLC or S Corp won't make a difference. There's no mention in the PRO Act about qualifying as a business, not an employee).



LEARN MORE ONLINE AT THE PRO ACT FAQ WEBSITE: WWW.BIT.LY/PROACTFAQ



While California's AB5 currently has 107 professions excluded, the PRO Act has no exemptions. It is possible to lobby for an exemption – and lobbyists for some professions are doing this now – but how good is a law if we need 107+ exemptions?

What can you do?

While ASJA put out a statement opposing the ABC Test in the PRO Act, right now you should be sounding the alert far and wide. As of mid-March, the bill was referred to the Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. We do not know when the bill will move forward.

Learn more. Visit Fight for Freelancers USA to learn more about the PRO Act, the ABC test, and its implications. The PRO Act FAQ (www.bit.ly/PROActFAQ) will explain how it affects independent contractors, along with talking points you can use with lawmakers, clients, and other freelancers. You can also visit www.bit.ly/PROActResources for more helpful documents, such as phone and email scripts. Join the Fight for Freelancers USA Facebook group to stay on top of events and see how you can advocate.

Call your senators. Tell them how the PRO Act will affect you. Demand they vote “no” on the PRO Act unless the ABC Test is removed. You can meet with legislators or their aides on Zoom. Legislators do not understand how the ABC Test affects legitimate freelancers in their communities. Also, contact senators on the HELP Committee.

Spread the word in other freelancer communities. Many people don't know what the PRO Act is and how it can affect them. Encourage them to speak out.

Write op-eds and articles. Get published nationally. Get published in your local press, the papers, and websites that your representatives and senators read. Publicly call out representatives supporting the PRO Act to tell them how it will affect your career. Publicly praise those who are against the legislation to share why that matters to constituents like you.

We're not Uber drivers. Of course, you know this, but PRO Act supporters can't tell the difference between an Uber driver and a freelance writer who is happy with independent contracting. They think we're all exploited and want to be employees. Let them know we don't.



ASJA 2021 WRITER AWARD WINNERS



First-Person Essay

Winner: "Dead Weight," by Claire O'Brien, in *Hippocampus Magazine*

Honorable Mention: "Sight and Insight," by Liane Kupferberg Carter, in *Longreads*

Opinion/Op-Ed

Winner: "Why It's Important to Push Back on 'Plandemic'—And How to Do It," by Tara Haelle, in *Forbes.com*

Reported Essay

Winner: "Your 'Surge Capacity' is Depleted—It's Why You Feel Awful," by Tara Haelle, in *Elemental*

Profile

Winner: "Liminal Spaces," by Zachary Petit, in *Writer's Digest*
Honorable Mention: "This Bird Survived Because She Never Quit," by John Moir, in *Audubon Magazine*

Lifestyle

Winner: "The Case of the Autographed Corpse," by Jack El-Hai, for *Smithsonian Magazine*

Travel

Winner: "Sunrise Kingdom," by Meg Lukens Noonan, in *Coastal Living*

Social Change

Winner: "What are U.S. Airlines Missing? Women Pilots," by Arielle Emmett, in *Air & Space*

Honorable Mention: "The Next Generation of the French Far Right," by Rebecca Nathanson, in *VICE World News*

Honorable Mention: "The Sins of the Father," by Michaela Haas, in *Medium*

Health

Winner: “Adult Women Struggle with Eating Disorders, Too. Here’s Why Treatment Looks Different,” by Beth Howard, in *Prevention*

Excellence in Reporting

Winner: “Climate Change Turns the Tide on Waterfront Living,” by Jim Morrison, in *The Washington Post Magazine*

Honorable Mention: “When Can We Really Rest?” by Nadja Drost, in *The California Sunday Magazine*

Trade

Winner: “How Manipulating Rodent Memories Can Elucidate Neurological Function,” by Amber Dance, in *TheScientist*

Fitness & Sports

Winner: “The Surprising Role Sports Played in Women’s Suffrage,” by Haley Shapley, in *Teen Vogue*

Content B2C

Winner: “Body Composting Is the Newest Sustainable Death Practice,” by Kelly McSweeney, in *Now* by Northrop Grumman

Long-Form

Winner: “A Legacy of Endless Limbo,” by Lauren Martin, in *Temporary*

Honorable Mention: “The Remote Workforce,” by Dawn Papandrea, in *Monster*

Service (Book)

Winner: *Attainable Sustainable: The Lost Art of Self-Reliant Living*, by Kris Bordessa

Children (Book)

Winner: *Sea Otters, A Survival Story*, by Isabelle Groc

Honorable Mention: *Weird Sea Creatures*, by Erich Hoyt

How-To

Winner: “Talking to Kids about Race,” by Heather Greenwood Davis, in *National Geographic*

Food & Drink

Winner: “Asafoetida’s Lingering Legacy Goes Beyond Aroma,” by Vidya Balachander, in *Whetstone Magazine*

Technology

Winner: “Collision,” by Bhavya Dore, in *FiftyTwo*

Business

Winner: “Get Rich Selling Used Fashion Online—or Cry Trying,” by Alden Wicker, in *Wired*

Blog Post

Winner: “Framed: Practicing Art, Love, and Creativity in My Home,” by Janice Lynch Schuster

Honorable Mention: “Treading Between Coronavirus Worlds,” by Dulce Zamora

Science

Winner: “The Butterfly and the Blaze,” by Matthew LaPlante and Jacob Stuienvolt Allen, in *Eugene Weekly*

The Donald Robinson Memorial Award for Investigative Journalism

Winner: “It’s a national tragedy: What a Devastating Covid-19 Outbreak at a California Slaughterhouse Reveals About the Federal Government’s Failed Pandemic Response,” by Nick Roberts and Rosa Amanda Tuirán, in *The Counter*

The Arlenes: Articles That Make a Difference

Winner: “We Need to Talk About What Coronavirus Recoveries Look Like,” by Fiona Lowenstein, in *The New York Times*

General Nonfiction (Book)

Winner: *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*, by James Nestor

Memoir/Autobiography

Winner: *Memorial Drive: A Daughter’s Memoir*, by Natasha Trethewey

Biography

Winner: *The Unanswered Letter: One Holocaust Family’s Desperate Plea for Help*, by Faris Cassell



Q&A WITH PAUL THEROUX

Travel writer and novelist Paul Theroux, author of 50 books including *The Mosquito Coast* (adapted for a movie of the same name), *The Great Railway Bazaar*, and *The Iron Rooster*, has now published his 51st book, *Under the Wave at Waimea* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). Considered one of America's greatest living fiction and nonfiction writers, Theroux was awarded the prestigious Royal Medal from The Royal Geographical Society, The American Academy and Institute of Arts & Letters Award for literature, and scores of other awards including two-time nominee for the American Book Award. Theroux divides his time between Cape Cod and the North Shore of O'ahu, Hawaii.

Margie Goldsmith spoke to Theroux to find out how he comes up with his ideas and how he brings the work to completion.



"Writing requires a certain patience. ... You need to be alert, and you need to be receptive to ideas and you need to write them."

PAUL THEROUX



MARGIE GOLDSMITH

Freelance Writer

NYC-based Margie Goldsmith, who is a contributor to *Forbes.com*, *Business Jet Traveler* and *Wine, Dine & Travel*, has interviewed such celebs and CEOs as Francis Ford Coppola, Harry Connick Jr., Barbara Corcoran, Sir Richard Branson, Larry Fitzgerald Jr., Terry Bradshaw, and scores of others. She has traveled to 140 countries and written about them all, winning 90 awards for her stories. She is the author of *Screw-Up*, *Nocturnes and Diurnes*, and *Masters of the Harmonica: 30 Harmonica Masters Share Their Craft*.

What is your writing process?

It is to just start with the best mood possible, which is, do not talk to anyone or deal with anything in the morning. Do not read the news. Just sit down at my desk and work all morning till lunchtime. I write in longhand, so a first draft comes from sitting down and writing in longhand all morning. Then I have lunch.

In the afternoon, I often sit on the beach writing, recopying, or reading. It is all done with a pen and a lined white pad. The first draft is scribbled, while the second draft is very carefully written. Then I type it. And I type it continuously, almost in the way that someone would read it. I write very slowly in longhand and type very fast to create a flow.

But all fiction and all travel that I have done is handwritten. I am not a writer in residence. I do not have any other job. I have never had any other job. By not turning down any reasonable offer and by writing and publishing a book almost every year, I have made what I consider a good living.

Besides your travel writing, which lends itself to great story writing, how do you come up with your endless ideas?

That is a difficult question because I have never been short of an idea.

I have written a lot of short stories that I have put away or they took a while to write. But even now, I am working on a novel.

Are your characters real or imagined?

It is fun to write about a real person. First, you are not creating a character, the character exists. I cannot say that I have a bottomless well of ideas, but if you continually write, as I have been, writing itself throws up ideas. The worst thing you can do is stop writing, stop thinking. The best thing you could do is write.



► Paul Theroux has written many travel books and is known for his rich descriptions of people and places.

What about writer's block?

I have a friend who said he has writer's block. He said, he is miserable. I said, "Look, why don't you write about writer's block?"

What about those writers who never write a second book?

A friend talked to me about a writer having difficulty writing a second book. And I said, "Has it occurred to you that maybe he has nothing to write, that there is nothing there?" Emily Bronte only wrote one book. Harper Lee only really wrote one book. That is not a disgrace. If you have a fund of stories, the act of writing, the act of creating produces ideas.



What is required to be a writer?

Real discipline. You are alone. Writing requires a certain patience. And I think you really have to be interested in other people. You cannot be too egotistical. You need to be alert, and you need to be receptive to ideas and you need to write them.

What do you do to relax when you are not writing?

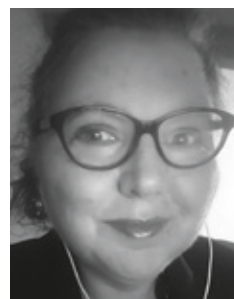
I do something active. I have a one-person outrigger canoe, so I paddle that. I also paddle my kayak, ride a bike – I do not sit. My idea of relaxation is paddling away. Relaxation is getting away from my desk, getting out of the house.

INSIDE » SECRETS

to Working Successfully with PR Professionals

It's an age-old story. Journalists call bad public relations (PR) professionals "flacks." And in turn, PR pros label journalists doing reporting they don't like "hacks." But the reality is that journalists and PR professionals don't have to be at odds and often need each other.

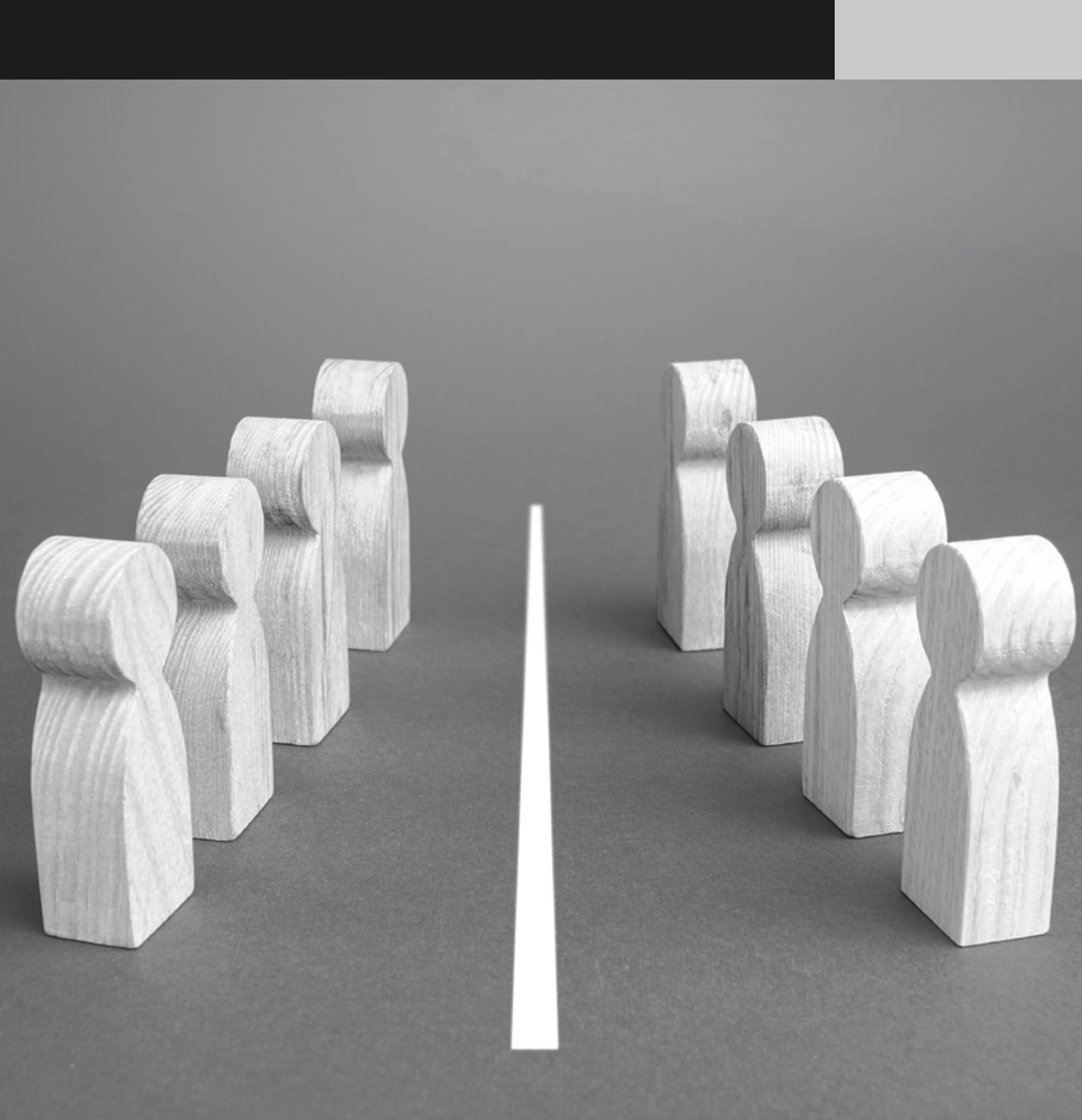
So how can you build successful working relationships with PR professionals that yield great sources and even amplify your work? I've got the inside secrets to share, based on more than two decades of experience as a PR professional.



AMI NEIBERGER-MILLER

Freelance Writer

Ami Neiberger-Miller is an ASJA member and the founder of Steppingstone LLC. She has worked as a PR professional on stories covering Gold Star families, missing and exploited children, addiction, and domestic violence.



The reality is that journalists and PR professionals don't have to be at odds and often need each other."



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1

Assume goodwill and watch for markers of it

Many PR professionals want to share information with reporters that is factual and offer perspective on a topic. They know that the only way a credible story will run is if they work with you. As a result, many are motivated to be helpful to reporters, and some are former journalists.

If you look at the website for the company or organization and see a section labeled 'press,' you know they view you as an important audience. If their online press room contains press releases, statistics, factoids, or high-resolution photos and video, then you know they value putting information in the public sphere.

If you also find contact information for journalists on a deadline, you know that you have found an organization that prioritizes working with you. If your call or email is responded to swiftly, and they strive to update you on progress even if they can't immediately say yes to everything you need, then you know they are trying.

"Developing a mutually beneficial relationship is a win for both journalists and PR pros," said Brigitte Johnson, director of communications and technology for the Society for Public Health Education and a lecturer at Georgetown University.

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2

Realize what a good PR person can do for you

A good PR person is not just a gatekeeper with the keys to an executive or expert's schedule for interviews. We can provide data or statistics, as well as historical information. Increasingly, we provide background research to time-crunched reporters. We send photos, sound files, and video clips to reporters.

We are technology aides now too, helping the boss understand how to set up a Zoom interview with the right lighting so you can get the best quality possible. Some people find any encounter with a reporter holding a camera or recording device nerve-racking, so we also coach clients who are camera-shy.



Particularly in areas of science and technology, in my personal experience, one word can change the meaning so dramatically – and it matters to get it right.”

HELEN SULLIVAN
OWNER OF
INHOUSE
COMMUNICATIONS

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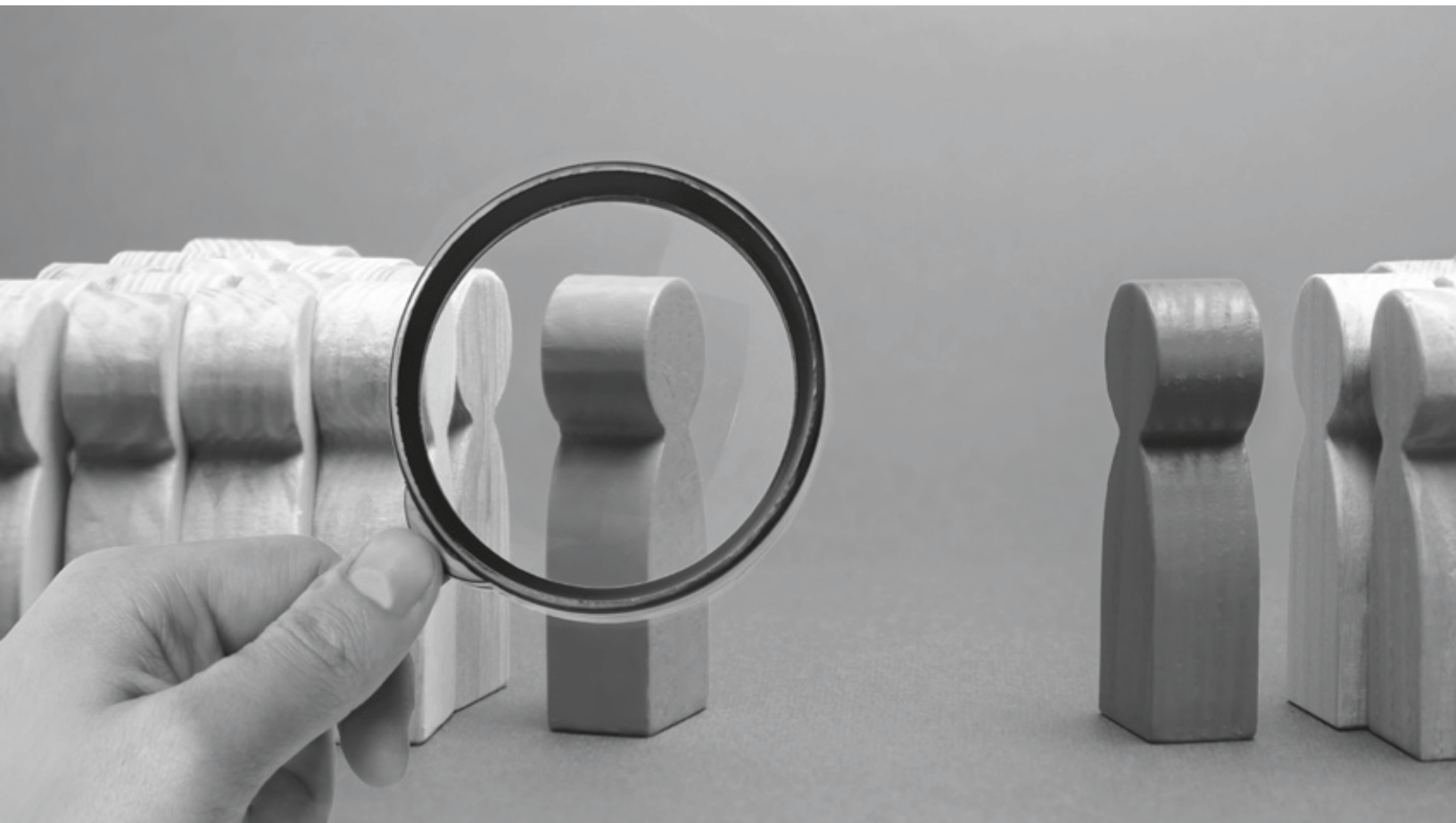
Use our knowledge to your advantage

The right PR person can also help you avoid making critical mistakes. “Particularly in areas of science and technology, in my personal experience, one word can change the meaning so dramatically – and it matters to get it right,” said Helen Sullivan, owner of InHouse Communications.

PR people can confirm what you’ve read, guide you to more sources, or point out subtle distinctions that impact accuracy. “Many journalists assume that they can immerse themselves in a topic for a few days or weeks and somehow know more than someone who has been in the related field for 30 years. Use us! We are not the enemy,” said Sullivan.

Chris Deutsch, communications director at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals says he always appreciates it when a reporter concludes an interview by asking if there is anything they should have asked or should know about. “It shows an openness to going where the story goes, and often I am able to provide them with something they weren’t aware of, or something that deepens their understanding of an issue.”

Reaching out early is also key. “I really love working with journalists and authors, but a pet peeve of mine is when they reach out at the conclusion of a story quickly seeking a quote. It’s clear that an editor told them they needed more, and they aren’t interested in any perspective that may alter the narrative they’ve already established. I don’t ever mind giving a quote, but I can offer much more if contacted earlier in the process,” said Deutsch.



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4

Be clear about the information you are seeking

When you pick up the phone or write an email to a public relations professional, be specific about what you need. Check the website ahead of time and be sure your inquiry is sent to the correct person.

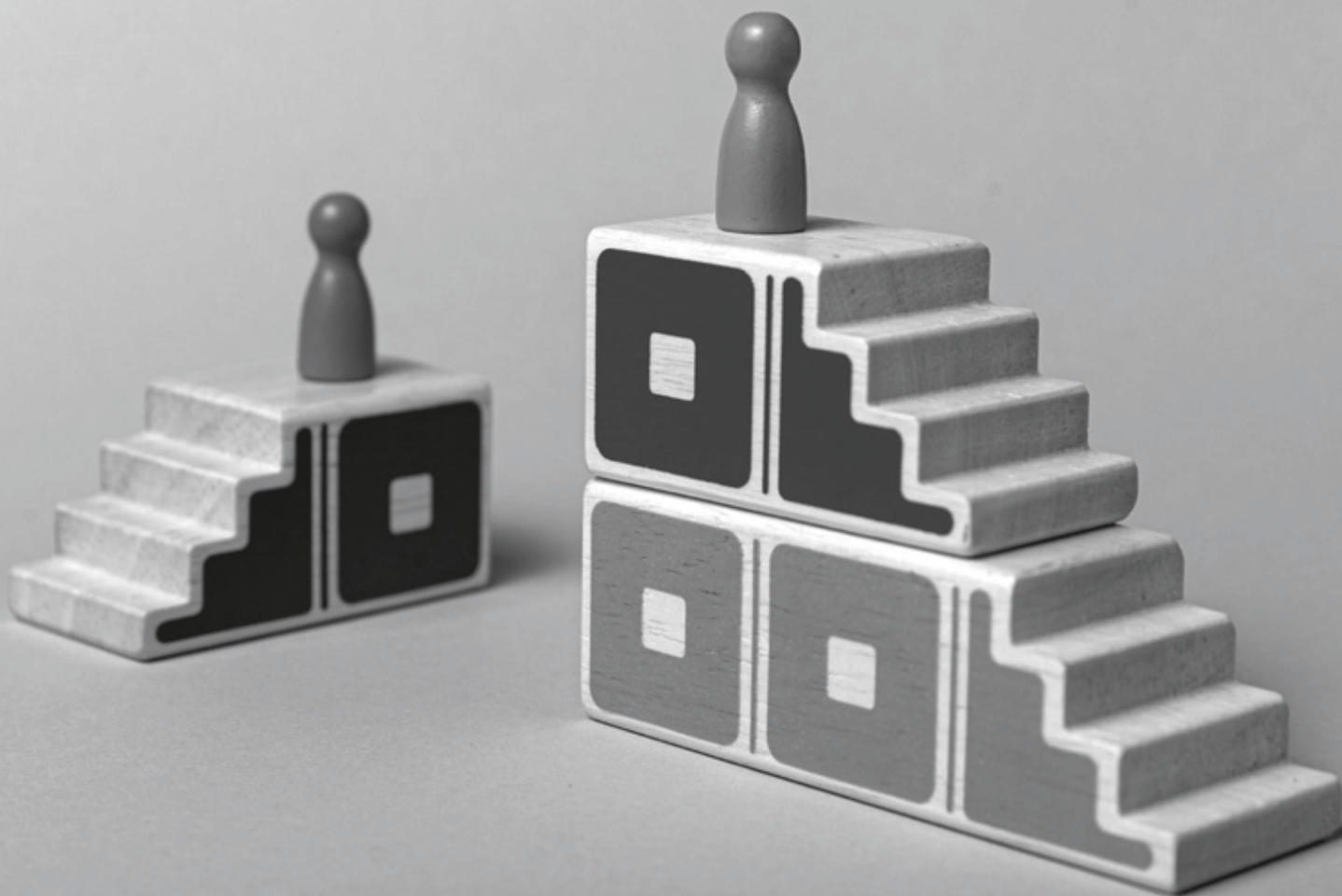
"In my experience, PR pros can best be a reliable source of information when journalists and authors give precise requests regarding the information they need and the format that's most helpful to them and their readers or audiences," said Dr. Sandra Wills Hannon, founder of the Hannon Group, who noted that today's PR professionals provide photos, charts, statistics, interviews, video, and much more. "We can be detailed in our response when we have as much of the context of the story as they can share," said Hannon.

One way to be sure that you fully understand what you are hearing is by taking the time to paraphrase back what you heard before hanging up a phone interview.

"Sometimes we say things, thinking everyone knows what we mean, but what's heard is something not quite right," said Samantha Villegas, director of strategic communication services at Raftelis. "Anytime a journalist has said, 'so what I hear you saying is...' has been helpful for both of us to build clarity."

It's also important for journalists to confirm key details like dates, website addresses, and even the names of the organizations involved. I worked for a nonprofit organization that assisted military families grieving the death of a service member. One of the largest news outlets in the world interviewed one of our staff and included her personal experience with her husband's death by suicide in the published piece but omitted our organization's name.

As a result, other families who might need the help our organization offered could never have found us. I called the reporter and thankfully, he was able to update the copy to add our organization's name, once he realized why it was needed. I was so grateful, that the next time he called, I was definitely going to do what I could to help.



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5

Compassion, expertise, and politeness go a long way

Some interviews are difficult to set up for good reasons – the sources you seek may be processing trauma or a difficult experience.

While working for the organization assisting grieving military families, I put in place one-page screening forms for book and documentary film projects. The forms let journalists know what we might ask about the project and helped me estimate how much time was required to assist them. Someone needing 10 interviews with different people was likely going to consume a lot more of my time than someone requesting one expert to talk to for a chapter in a book.

I could always tell when someone had found the forms online, because they would approach me very differently. Their emails would be politely worded, and their project well thought out. It would be clear the author or filmmaker had experience covering people who have suffered trauma and their politeness said a lot to me about how they might treat our clients. They would pledge to treat our clients with compassion, which gave me more confidence when I had to vouch for a journalist, as I felt the family would be heard and not feel violated.



In my experience, PR pros can best be a reliable source of information when journalists and authors give precise requests regarding the information they need and the format that's most helpful to them and their readers or audience."

DR. SANDRA
WILLS HANNON

FOUNDER OF THE
HANNON GROUP

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6

Loop us in

Sharing your deadlines is key, as the PR professional may be navigating approvals internally for an interview or information, or just trying to prioritize a list of requests. Not all organizations have the bandwidth to respond quickly, so asking well before you need information can help.

You can also let us know to be prepared for calls from a magazine fact-checker. Or tell us probable publishing or air dates. PR professionals can post links to published stories on social media and amplify your reach. While link-sharing may not happen for stories that don't treat a client kindly, most PR professionals will respect journalists who are fair and listen.

How to Earn Money SELLING REPRINTS

CHERYL
MAGUIRE

Freelance Writer



I first heard Kerrie McLoughlin speak during a podcast. She was talking about her book, *Make Money to Write about Your Kids: Get Published in Regional, National & Online Parenting & Family Magazines*. My attention piqued when she explained how to sell reprints to parenting markets around the world (mostly the U.S. and Canada). You can also write original articles for many of these same markets.

I remember thinking, “I already have parenting articles written, and I would love to earn more money by reselling them.”

I bought her book right away and then joined her supportive Parenting Magazine Writers Facebook group. It took me some time to figure it out, but now that I understand the process, I am earning about \$400 to \$500 per month selling my reprints. I spoke to McLoughlin and two other successful parenting writers to learn more about their experience. They offered some helpful tips and advice to writers interested in diving into the reprint writing world.



How writers started selling reprints

McLoughlin first reached out to her local parenting magazine, *Kansas City Parent*, in 2006. After the publication accepted her article, she learned that there were magazines like this all over the world.

"Now I have about 125 articles in circulation, and I still write fresh content when I can. I have been published in 182 different publications, both in print and online. It is a great source of residual income," says McLoughlin.

To find your regional parenting magazine (RPM), check the grocery store, library, or gym like a YMCA. Normally the magazines are located in a stack near the entrance and are free. Most of the magazines are geared towards parents, but some are women or general interest publications. It is also important to note that you must own the copyright to your article in order to resell it.

Sandi Schwartz is another successful parenting writer, ASJA member, and author of a forthcoming

parenting book from Quill Driver Books, which will focus on how nature can help children feel happier and calmer. She and I both learned about the opportunity to tap into parenting reprint markets around the same time and often appear in publications together.

Schwartz's top tip for writers is to read McLoughlin's book, visit her website, and join her Facebook group for updates.

Anytime I read a regional parenting magazine, including the one in my own town, I almost always find an article written by Sarah Lyons. She began writing for her local parenting magazine in 2016. She then did some research about parenting markets and discovered McLoughlin's book.

"I thought it seemed too good to be true, but I worked up the courage to submit some articles, and shortly after that I started having success. As of today, I have had over 1,200 articles published in 152 parenting magazines in just under five years. Most are reprints," says Lyons.

Average earnings

It took about two years of submitting before I built up my earnings to \$400 to \$500 per month from selling reprints. Once I got to know some of the editors and figured out what sells best, I increased my revenue.

Lyons, who has been selling reprints for almost five years, says that she has a wide range of earning: between \$500 and \$1,200 per month. "During the pandemic, it has been around \$500 to \$600. But pre-pandemic I would average \$800 a month, and I only work about 10-20 hours a week," she explains.

McLoughlin says that her earnings vary quite a bit, but currently she makes around \$200 to \$500 per month. "I have earned as much as \$250 for one article, although that is rare," she notes.

Schwartz has been submitting for almost three years and also averages about \$400 to \$500 per month.

Popular articles

One way to increase your earnings is to figure out the types of articles that sell well. My most popular article was "What Type of Camp Will Your Child Like?" and has been published 14 times, leading to earnings of \$625. I probably would have earned more, but due to the pandemic I did not sell it at all this year. Here is a huge tip: the parenting magazines love camp and birthday articles.

Lyons' top selling articles are "The Misunderstood Child: Sensory Processing 101," published 31 times; "5 Tips for Choosing a Pediatrician," published 29 times; and "Creative Consequences for Kids," published 26 times.

"Part of the reason these articles have been so popular is that they are my oldest articles, so they have had more exposure," she explains. "But I think the reason they are successful is because they are evergreen. They can be used any month, any year, and the information stays important and relevant to parents over time. I also feel like articles about special needs, extracurricular activities, NICU experiences, and discipline do really well."



McLoughlin says her most popular article has had many different titles and been published around 35 times, but originally it was named "8 Tips for Holiday Sanity."

"I think it was popular because it really came from the heart and a lot of readers could identify with the stress that comes from feeling pulled in many directions at the holidays. I have made over \$1,000 from this article alone, and it keeps selling," she says.

Schwartz is not sure which article is her most popular, but in the last few months she submitted a couple of COVID-related articles and they have done quite well. One is called "5 Ways to Bring Positivity Into Your Family's Life During the Coronavirus Outbreak" and the other is "COVID-Friendly Ways to Celebrate Halloween This Year."

"The RPM market can be a bit of a game of luck," she notes. "Sometimes an article that I think is timely and will get picked up does not, while other articles that I would never have guessed end up being very popular with the editors. My advice is to diversify and have a broad range of articles to put forward."



"I think the reason they are successful is because they are evergreen. They can be used any month, any year, and the information stays important and relevant to parents over time."

SARA LYONS

Perks and challenges for selling reprints

Lyons is a busy mom of six children who loves writing. “Working with regional parenting magazines gives me flexibility to work when I have time and make extra income for my family. It is also fun, and most of the editors are great to work with,” she says.

McLoughlin says, “There’s so much that I love about writing for RPMs. I can write anywhere, day or night, part-time or full-time, while dictating into my phone and holding babies, driving, or walking at the same time. I love that I can write about what I am an expert on and hopefully help someone with a challenge they might be having.”

Even though there are many benefits of selling your reprints, like anything else, there are some challenges you could encounter. The most frustrating aspects I have dealt with include not getting paid by editors and publications using my article without informing me first.

Schwartz says that the worst aspect of selling reprints is tracking them. “It takes quite a bit of time each month for me to confirm that my articles have been published and then following up with individual editors to check on payments,” she explains.

She also mentioned that some magazines do not inform writers that they printed their article, which she finds very frustrating.

“In her book, Kerrie McLoughlin provides some tricks of the trade to make sure we are able to manage all of our articles successfully. I typically set aside some time at the beginning of each month to track my articles and to check my financial tracking sheet for any unpaid invoices,” says Schwartz.

Advice for getting started

McLoughlin’s advice for someone starting out is to stay organized and keep at it. “Do not get discouraged and do not worry about rejection—just keep moving forward. If you have many queries and reprints in the works and are writing every day, you will get better and you will sell your work,” she reveals.

Schwartz recommends sending one reprint article out once or twice per week. “Keep a tracking system such as in Excel and create a calendar of your articles organized by month based on holidays and other seasonal topics. Be sure to send out your articles two to three months before it would likely run. Also, have a compilation of evergreen articles,” she advises.

Lyons recommends reaching out to local magazines to see if you can write original articles for them, which can later be sold as reprints.

“It is also a good idea to spend time reading several regional parenting magazines to see what type of content they typically publish,” she suggests.

Lyons recommends that before you get started, collect contact information and get organized so that it is easier



to track what has been submitted and the articles that are most successful.

There’s a learning curve about how to submit, but once you figure it out it is easy. Basically, you can submit a single article to over 200 parenting and women’s magazines at once. McLoughlin outlines the process, including editor contact information, in her book.

Schwartz says that she highly recommends this space. “It is an easy way to earn a consistent income writing without a high level of effort or time investment,” she says.

“Just start writing articles and submitting. It is really that simple,” says Lyons.

»» Cheryl Maguire holds a Master of Counseling Psychology degree. She is married and the mother of twins and a daughter. Her writing has been published in *The New York Times*, *Parents Magazine*, *AARP*, *Healthline*, *Your Teen Magazine* and many other publications. She is a professional member of ASJA. You can find her at Twitter @CherylMaguire05.

CARLA FURLONG

Freelance Writer



Get in the Book Proposal *Hot Seat*

A Peek Inside a Successful Workshop

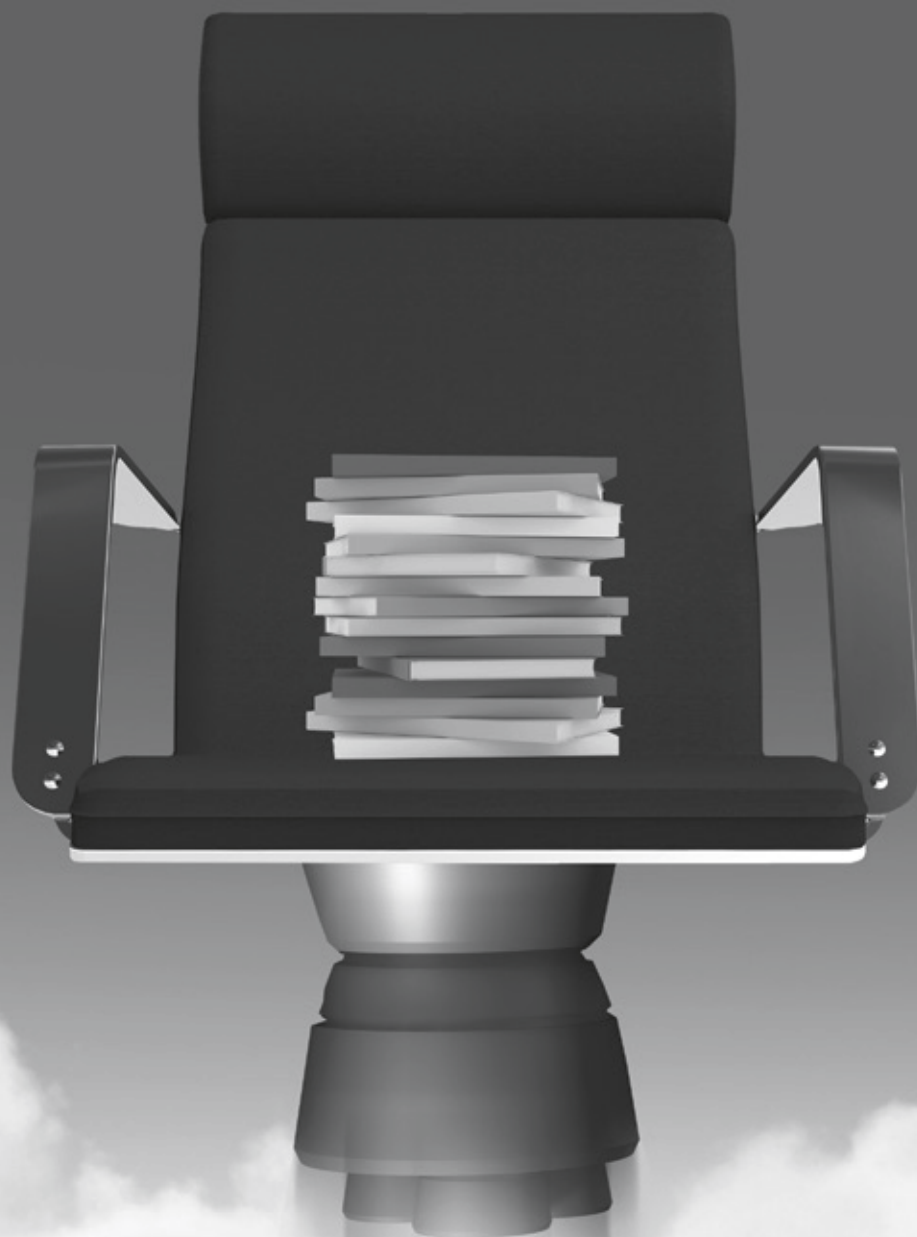
The best measure of the success of any writing workshop is when you come out of it with some writing done and knowledge of the specific steps to follow to get it finished.

I facilitated the April 2020 ASJA Special Interest Group (SIG) on Writing Nonfiction Book Proposals. When I asked participants what they wanted out of this workshop the consensus was clear – to make a real start on their book proposals by the end of the SIG.

The goal of nonfiction book writing is getting it sold to an agent or editor. Research and experience have shown me that there are certain questions editors and agents consistently want answered in a nonfiction book proposal.

Eric Smith, literary agent from P.S. Literary Agency, which represents both fiction and non-fiction works confirms: “At every conference I go to, I sit down with an author, this is what I open with, ‘Tell me about your book?’” It’s a seemingly simple question, he says, but one that trips up a lot of writers.

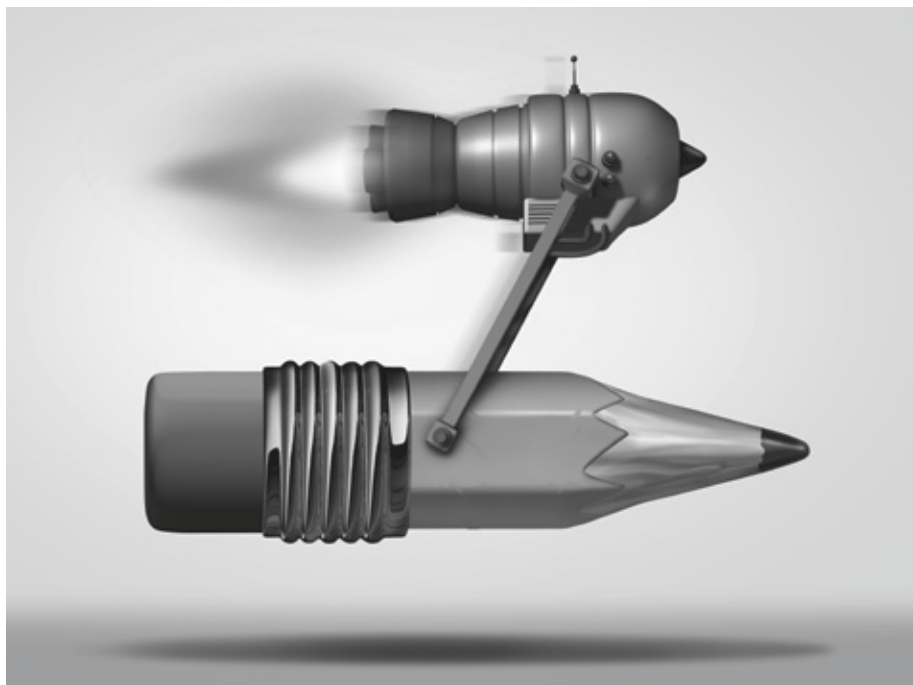
Carla Furlong is a business writer and university educator with experience that spans at least two decades (she’s not admitting to anymore!). An MBA in Marketing and Finance with undergraduate studies in the physical and biological sciences, Carla has specialized in developing corporate materials such as white papers and case studies for the investment, resource and health care industries. Her first book, *Marketing Money* (Irwin Professional Publishing), was one of the first publications to focus on the unique nature of financial communications; her second one, *Marketing for Keeps* (Wiley), one of the first to do the same for customer retention.



Editors and agents want information to make a buying decision. Asking yourself the questions that get to the heart of addressing those information needs and then answering them—clearly, succinctly, and on point—is the shortest route for an author to getting a marketable book proposal accomplished



The Hot Seat was where I peppered participants with questions — my best shot at mimicking the writer's pitch to an editor/agent.



GETTING THE ANSWERS

Editors and agents want information to make a buying decision. Asking yourself the questions that get to the heart of addressing those information needs and then answering them—clearly, succinctly, and on point—is the shortest route for an author to getting a marketable book proposal accomplished.

The SIG was built around the idea of getting something “pitchable” down on paper in four weeks. Writing a complete nonfiction book proposal at a typical count of 50 to 75 pages can quickly eat up six months and more. That makes it important for a writer to quickly know whether their book idea “has legs.”

The goal of this SIG was thinking, researching, and writing through those key questions we know a nonfiction book proposal must answer. Doing that allows the writer participant to hit what's necessary in the least amount of time and test the market viability of an idea.

The focus of any nonfiction book proposal is the Concept Statement, which is the answer to literary agent Smith's “What's the book about?”

It contains elements about the author, as well as the book's angle, structure, style, audience, and difference. This is the heart of any book proposal and links to all the other required proposal sections such as “About the Market,” “About the Competition,” “About the Author,” and “About the Structure.”

Answering a series of preliminary questions that address the concept statement elements is the bridge to building the rest of the book proposal, questions such as “Why are you writing this book?” “What are you trying to say about your topic?” “Why should you say it?” and “Why say it now?”



LESSONS FROM THE HOT SEAT

That meant a tight structure for the workshop, particularly ensuring that assigned homework could realistically be done within the timeframe. As the facilitator, I put together concrete resources I offered to participants each Friday along with a series of questions. Participants were asked to submit homework to the forum the following Tuesday.

Thursday was our group conference call where homework was critiqued and participants subjected to the “Hot Seat,” where I peppered them with questions. One participant likened this to a firing squad where you didn't know which “bulleted” question would be the one to take you out. The Hot Seat was my best shot (excuse the pun) at mimicking the writer's pitch to an editor/agent.

Merlisa Lawrence Corbett, Florida journalist and author of *Serena Williams: Tennis Champion, Sports Legend, and Cultural Heroine*, agrees and admits the Hot Seat was nerve-racking. “It was very real to how a conversation is going to be with a potential publisher,” she says. “You have to think in real-time; it's good practice for the pitch, having to clarify what you are trying to communicate.”

The combination of the facilitator throwing out questions and feedback from participants who pulled no punches (we didn't actually come to blows, I promise you) formed the basis of a lot of participant accountability. Kimberly Yavorski, Philadelphia-area freelance writer says, “I had to come to the table with something (every week), and it got me into the pattern of working to get (my proposal) finished.”

Adds Dawn Reiss, a Chicago-based journalist who has written for the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*: “You were going to be embarrassed if you didn't show up with your stuff. You wouldn't just let us

make a comment; you wouldn't just let it go. You pressed us more for more details, posed different questions, asked the class, 'What does everyone else think?'"

Dr. Jeanette Ashworth, educator, writer, scholar, and consultant, concurs on the accountability: "I feel that a lot of things get lost [in other workshops] and people drop off. I was grateful for the Hot Seat; I wanted to be pushed."

For other participants, the homework, questions, and feedback shook loose part of their established mindset about writing. Megy Karydes, a Chicago-based writer and marketing professional, explains, "The questions showed me where my holes were. There's a trap a lot of writers fall into where we know almost too much. Hearing from others about other ways to approach the proposal really helped."

Even if you didn't agree with the questions, you saw things from another perspective, adds Lawrence Corbett. "When you're on the Hot Seat getting questions you didn't ask yourself, it forces you to look at [your work] from a different perspective."

Sandra Yin, a ghostwriter based in the D.C. Metro area, harkens back to the point literacy agent Smith put forward earlier in this article. "Those were basic questions that were asked but they were so hard to answer and yet so important," she says. "I had to do some research to answer 'What is your book's focus?' That was hard for many of us. You really had to shape and defend your idea."



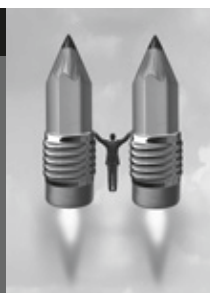
THE RESULTS

So... did this workshop move participant writing projects forward? Yes, at least for a good number. More than a third of participants believed this particular SIG pushed them toward completely or nearly completing their non-fiction book proposal.

Lawrence Corbett was able to dust off a 2012 book proposal and will have it completed by the May 2021 ASJA conference. Karydes' book proposal is "pretty much done," and Yavorski's proposal is finished.

For Yin, her work on a book proposal became more doable. "Before, I would take a class, work on a query, and then it would just fall by the wayside," she says, adding that this time her book idea is solid. "It's become something that exists more than any other book idea I've [ever] worked on."

"We all walked away with actionable items to do after the SIG," says Reiss. "That separates the workshops that are memorable from the ones that are forgettable."



Put Yourself in the Hot Seat:

Questions to answer about your nonfiction book proposal

► What's your book's focus? Make sure this is a focus from your reader's point of view, that is, what's in it for them?

► What's so different about what you have to say than what has been said already on this topic?

► Why are you writing this book? Do you hope it will open the way for a new direction for your business? Will it help you start a new business from scratch or refresh an existing business? What about positioning you toward higher-paying prospects or raising your credibility or increasing your authority so as to attract speaking engagements?

► Who is your audience? Who will read your book and why will they buy it? Why does your target readership need a new book on this topic and how will your book meet this currently unmet need?

► What problem will you solve with who or what decision will you help them with or what opportunity will you allow them to take advantage of?

► How will your reader be changed by what you have to say; what will they now be able to do or how will they be better for having read your book?

► What benefits will your reader get from reading your book: (for example, will they solve a problem, better understand an issue, be able to take advantage of an opportunity, be able to make a decision?)

► Picture the reader you can help the most. What would you say to them about your book? Where will they be after they've learned what you've told them and applied it?

► Ask yourself, 'What do you hope your reader will believe or do or be able to do after they've read your book?'

► How is your book different? AND Is that difference considered interesting or valuable for your primary audience? Remember, your difference can be existing content in a new way or a new format or from a new angle or it can be new content.

► What are the costs and consequences of society (and your reader) ignoring or misunderstanding your book's topic/issue?

CAN THIS CLIENT BE *saved?*

(Or Should They Be?)

In 1953, Dorothy Cameron Disney, an editor at *Ladies' Home Journal*, created a column called "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" (Spoiler alert: 99.9% of the time it could.) It ran for more than 60 years and was arguably the most widely read magazine column in history, spawning a 1994 book by Margery D. Rosen titled (surprise!) *Can This Marriage Be Saved?* The column was turned into a webcast in 2010, almost outlasting the magazine, which became quarterly and print-only in 2014. Both disappeared shortly thereafter.

I read the column for several decades, especially early in my own marriage, which was not savable. It popped into my head again, when, out of the blue, I lost one of my best clients with whom I thought I had a solid working relationship.

Should I stay or should I go?

The unexpected setback got me to thinking: Is there anything a writer can do to avoid the question of save/not save? I broached the topic with three veteran ASJA members: former ASJA president Sherry Beck Paprocki, an author, award-winning magazine editor and journalist; consultant, speaker and author Damon Brown; and content writing and marketing expert and author Jennifer Goforth Gregory. As with the LHJ column, there were several common elements, and while they often refer to "clients" in the context of content marketing, many of the ideas apply to other types of writing as well.



SANDRA GURVIS

Freelance Writer

»» Sandra Gurvis (www.sandragurvis.com) is the author of 17 commercially published books and hundreds of magazine articles. Along with her recently-released *111 Places In Columbus that You Must Not Miss*, her travel titles include *Myths and Mysteries of Ohio*, *Ohio Curiosities* (2nd Ed.), and *Day Trips From Columbus* (3rd ed.) Having recently moved near Sarasota, she is currently working on two projects: *Three Ring(ing) Circus* for Rowman & Littlefield, about the Ringling influence on Sarasota and *Doing Hard Time In Geezerville*, the first of three-part novel on *The Villages*.



» *“It’s not so much a matter of ‘saving’ but stepping back, looking carefully at the client and making an active choice, using criteria other than rates.”*

JENNIFER GOFORTH GREGORY

Chemistry

This was far and away the biggest consideration when retaining and even selecting clients. “Especially from a content marketing perspective, it’s most important to find a fit for both of your strengths, weaknesses, personalities and goals,” Goforth Gregory says. “It’s not so much a matter of ‘saving’ but stepping back, looking carefully at the client and making an active choice, using criteria other than rates.”

“Niche and tone are other qualities to have a match on,” she says. “I learned how to write in what I call a ‘brand voice’ and use different ones with different clients. Not all writers are able to write in all tones, so you need to know which ones work best for you before initiating a relationship.”

For example, Goforth Gregory recently parted ways with an anchor client. “Last year, when we first started, the project had a business focus,” she says. “Because of COVID-19, it ended up being a health project, which is not my area. Of course, neither one of us knew this would happen, but I finally went to the client and told them as much, that they needed to find someone else who was a better fit.” The breakup was amicable: “It becomes more of two people doing business together and deciding if you are a match. It’s not if you’re bad or the client’s bad, it’s just not the right fit.”

Brown says: “Listen to your gut. Does the music fit the melody?”

Mutual respect

You need to work with people you like,” Paprocki says. “In that way, it’s a partnership and you’re not working ‘for’ them but rather ‘with’ them.” She finds that honest communication and setting boundaries are essential for maintaining the relationship. “If the client calls you after 5 p.m. or on the weekends, you need to say something, and if they don’t respect that, then it’s time to re-evaluate. Also ask yourself, is the job low-paying or causing you a lot of stress?”

As Goforth Gregory and many others have found, the scope, parameters and even the pay may shift. “If the relationship is no longer working, refer the client to another writer who is a better fit,” she says. “It will help build up your network for future business, and they will appreciate the fact that you acted responsibly.”

Money, money, money

Even if the money is good, the aggravation may not be worth it. “There are publications and clients who pay big, but their process is like going through a circle of hell,” Brown says. “You may be getting what looks like a big paycheck, but the work takes an obscene amount of time.”

Or the client may be slow to cough up the dough. Another client may pay less, but working with them is a breeze and payments are regularly deposited in your bank account. “As you mature as a writer, you learn how to base your decisions accordingly,” Brown says.

The most successful writers regularly raise their prices and often get what they ask for.

“You have control over what you charge,” Brown says. “If they end up saying ‘yes,’ then you have 25 cents more per word and are getting the benefits of that. If they say ‘no,’ they may be underpaying you anyway. Look upon it as an opportunity to level up.”

Also, Paprocki adds, “make sure the client gives you a partial advance.” This will help weed out the non-starters. “Anyone familiar with the job boards sees plenty of listings for ‘young companies’ and/or ‘fun places to work.’ That’s all well and good but make sure they show you the money.”

Desperation

Many times, writers—especially those early in their careers—think that there’s nothing else out there; that this is the best they can do. They would rather tough it out with what they have than risk being “alone” without clients or income.

To help avoid the rut that can breed desperation, Brown regularly reviews his client roster and goals. “Usually annually, sometimes more often,” he says. “We can be so busy with work and making ends meet that we forget about the big picture. Factors such as what you want to achieve in five years, making time for your family or hobbies and how much you want to earn all come into play. There’s only so much time, energy and ability that you can put into things. You can’t take every client who comes through the door. It’s not black or white. What really matters are your priorities and life balance.”

» *Rather than wait, it’s better to exit with grace and treat the client kindly, even if they don’t return the favor.*

When to say goodbye

Letting go of clients is the hardest thing you can do,” Paprocki says. “But the first moment you daydream about leaving the client may be the time to start thinking about pulling the trigger.”

Often, it’s almost mutual; I had been on the verge of asking my now ex-client for fewer assignments so I could better manage my workload. Then the client called me on the carpet so to speak. Instead of defending myself, I listened carefully what they were trying to say. Of all the things I thought they might tell me, the reasons they gave seemed totally unfounded.

“No matter who you are or where you are in your career, losing a client is upsetting,” Goforth Gregory says. “This has happened to just about every writer who has expanded their business horizons. Give yourself 24 to 48 hours to mourn. Most of the time it’s a business issue, but writers can take it too personally.”

And indeed, after I took some time to process the conversation, I realized it had more to do with the publication’s internal politics than my writing. I also understood that had I been more attuned to their needs, I could have pointed out that the story might not have worked for some of the reasons they killed it.

“Even if one note or one interaction is off, it can get me thinking about under what circumstances this client might stop working with me,” Brown says. “If it doesn’t feel like the partnership we’ve been having or not I what signed up for, that leads me to start questioning.”

Rather than wait, it’s better to exit with grace and treat the client kindly, even if they don’t return the favor. “You will get a better client if you let go of the one that’s not working,” Paprocki says. “It’s almost like it changes your karma and things improve.”

If you even have to ask the question “Can this client be saved?” you may already know the answer. “In some ways, relationships with clients are the same as dating or a friendship,” Goforth Gregory says. “You need to recognize and understand why you are not a match and take it from there. When things get to the point of questioning, it’s usually not worth saving.”

Today’s client (and other) relationships are more “Modern Love” than “Can This Marriage Be Saved?” “Why would you have the same clients in 2021 that you’d had two decades prior?” Brown asks rhetorically. “As your business grows and evolves, so do your clients.”

Rather than looking on these types of changes as failures, understand why they happened and take it from there. “Your name is a business, so treat it as such,” Brown says. “Unless clients are helping you hit your business goals, then it may be time to move on.”



Damon Brown

ASJA MEMBER &

VOLUNTEER SINCE: 2004



ABOUT:

Author of 25 books, including the newest *Build From Now: How to Know Your Power, See Your Abundance & Nourish the World*

PUBLICATIONS/OUTLETS WHERE PUBLISHED:

Many mainstream pubs, including the aforementioned titles. Most notably are my long-running *Inc. Magazine* column and my semi-regular column in *Costco Connection*. Both represent my intention to support the side hustlers.

► What is your writing specialty/focus?

I write, coach, and speak to the side hustlers, the solopreneurs and other non-traditional entrepreneurs. I began as a full-time freelance tech journalist for *Playboy*, *AARP Magazine*, *Family Circle* and other mainstream pubs. Things shifted after I lived in (and then left!) Silicon Valley, started a family, became the primary caretaker of our first baby and a bootstrapping startup founder at the same time. I built two startups while raising our first son. The first startup, So Quotable, led to my first TED talk, and the second startup, Cuddlr, to one of the most popular apps of the year and to selling the business. The experience shifted my focus to serving other non-traditional entrepreneurs like myself — those who didn't look or act like Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs or Elon Musk.

► Please share a proud writing moment:

I started my own book imprint, Bring Your Worth, and the first book, *The Bite-Sized Entrepreneur*, became a best-seller. It was based on my *Inc. Magazine* column. It jumpstarted my successive books, including the new one, *Build From Now: How to Know Your Power, See Your Abundance & Nourish the World* (<https://amzn.to/37NpcUd>), as well as my one-on-one coaching, consulting and speaking career.

I'm sharing that pride with others: finding a market, doing a column with *Inc.* where I kept the second-run rights and then turning that column

into a self-published best-selling book series. We need to see value in our work beyond the quick check and into our passive income opportunities.

► How long have you been an ASJA member?

Going on two decades! It was February 2004, around Valentine's Day, when my colleague and friend Jeanette Hurt and I got our acceptance letters on the same day. Years later, we'd co-author a book, *The Passive Writer: 5 Ways to Earning Money in Your Sleep*, sharing as much wisdom as possible. Becoming a member was a wonderful validation of our freelance careers and an entrance into a truly supportive community.

► How long have you volunteered for ASJA?

For nearly as long as I've been a member. I loved serving as a board member from 2010 to 2016. I volunteered as a speaker nearly every year before and after, keynoting ASJA/SPJ San Diego in 2016 and ASJA Austin in 2018.

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

As a board member, it was for monthly meetings, in-person meetings twice annually and many behind-the-scenes roles like managing the conference tech education track. I now volunteer regularly, gathering editors and agents for the personal pitch, shepherding them for the pitch slam and other matchmaking between representative and writer. It takes several hours to multiple days during those seasons.

► Why do you volunteer for ASJA?

The organization is only as great as what you put into it. I so respect the support I received as an early writer and am happy to share a multiple of whatever I have received.

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

I think it's so important to scale your commitments based on where you are. I served as a board member when I had the focus and time to truly give my best to the organization. I shifted my roles based on personal and professional bandwidth. I'm so proud that I was able to show up fully when I did volunteer and make space for others to volunteer in a higher capacity as my needs and resources varied.

► What are the benefits of volunteering?

Helping feed our community of writers and creators. It helps us nourish the profession and build the future.

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

Businesswise, I love one-on-one coaching creatives and entrepreneurs, doing keynote speeches and recording my #BringYourWorth show three times a week. Beyond that, I love traveling on the road, in a book, or through food. Especially food. Spicy food is a hallmark of my young family! And you can learn so much about culture by what people eat.



ASJA Extraordinary Service ➤ Awards Offered ◀

Thanks to the activism and ingenuity of eight members, ASJA has been on the forefront of the fight against legislation that threatens the freelance business model that our members depend on for their livelihoods. These members were among the first to recognize the dangers of this type of legislation exemplified by California's AB5, New Jersey's proposed NJ S863, and the PRO Act, which the Senate is now considering.

ASJA members in California spoke up quickly and loudly when AB5 was first drafted in late 2018. This bill, meant to protect misclassified and exploited workers, was written in such a way that many independent contractors — including freelance writers — were caught up in its wake. Because of the forethought and involvement of ASJA's California members, ASJA became the lead plaintiff in a civil suit arguing the law violates Article 1 as well as the 1st, 9th and 14th amendments of the US Constitution. These members stayed involved in negotiations and were instrumental in getting the law amended; writers are now included in the more than 100 exceptions written into the law.

In 2019, when similar legislation was introduced in New Jersey, ASJA members in that state quickly organized, built coalitions, and showed a spotlight on the potentially disastrous unintended consequences of using ABC test to distinguish

employees from independent contractors. They met with their representatives and took on powerful opposing forces. Legislators in New Jersey backed down.

When the PRO Act proposed in Congress in early 2020 and again in 2021, it also used the ABC test, and the New Jersey coalition expanded nationwide, building a coalition of more than 1,900 members across the country working together to inform legislators and the public about the problems inherent in using the ABC rule to define who qualifies as an employee.

Together, these ASJA members have inspired and fueled efforts of writers and other freelancers from coast to coast that have created hundreds of resources, articles, op-eds, social media posts, and letters to legislators on this topic.



While the fight is far from over, ASJA would like to stop and recognize the following members for their leadership and heroic efforts on behalf of freelance writers:

Milt Toby
Randy Dotinga
JoBeth McDaniels
Kim Kavin
Jen Singer

Debbie Abrams
Kaplan
Karon Clark Warren
Susan Valot

KEEP FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT!

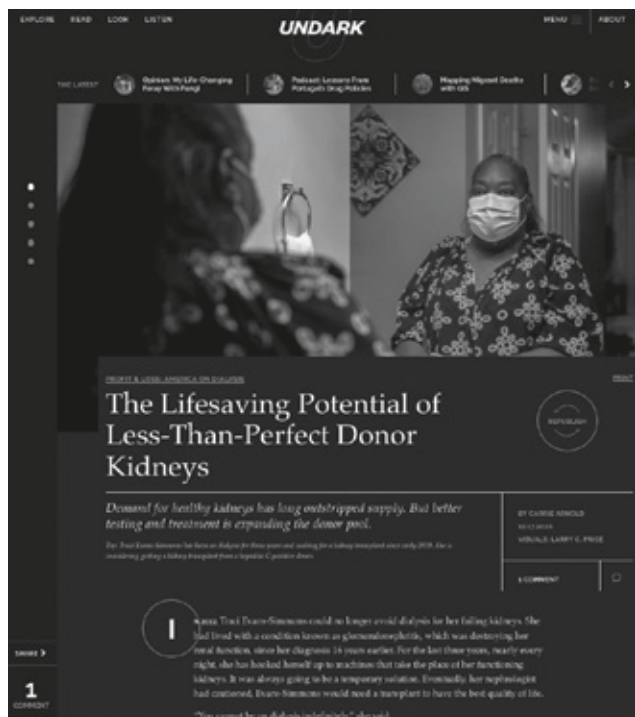
ELISA
SHOENBERGER

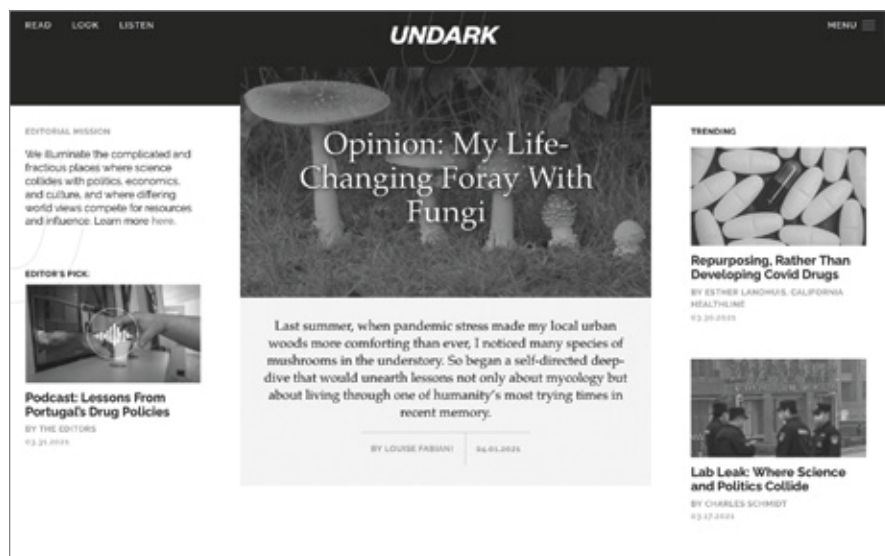
Freelance Writer



Market Report | UNDARK

Founded in 2016, *Undark* is a nonprofit digital magazine that looks at the “intersection of science and society.” The magazine publishes long-form reported articles, short interviews, op-eds, and book reports, as well as stories in other mediums including videos, photo essays, and the *Undark* podcast.





“A sophisticated handling of science and technical detail for a general audience is paramount – though we are not interested in stories that simply cover science for its own sake.”

TOM ZELLER, JR.

Funded by the Knight Science Journalism Fellowship Program from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, *Undark* focuses on stories about the complicated and messy ways that science impacts people's daily lives through cultural, economic, and political lenses. The science covered is broad, ranging from space exploration and medicines to renewable energies.

The magazine also puts an emphasis on the culture of science, such as the impact of funding in laboratories. There's an emphasis on looking at the effects of science on disenfranchised or under-covered populations, explains Tom Zeller, Jr., editor-in-chief of *Undark*.

“A sophisticated handling of science and technical detail for a general audience is paramount – though we are not interested in stories that simply cover science for its own sake,” explains Zeller in an email interview.

Undark receives many environmental and climate change pitches, which means greater competition for those areas, so the chances of assignment are lower. Editors prefer stories “in the here-and-now” rather than purely historical pieces. The magazine does not cover breaking news, including time-sensitive COVID-19 news. The magazine rarely publishes first-person narratives, Zeller says, aside from the op-eds.

Each article goes through an extensive editorial and fact-checking process that can take a few weeks, a month, or longer depending on the project. Zeller says they ascribe to standards laid out by the Society of Professional Journalists. For instance, they do not share quotations or unpublished articles with sources and only permit anonymity for sources in rare circumstances with editor approval.

Undark has only three full-time editors and a few part-time editors, so they do their best to keep up with the pitches. Editors meet on Wednesday at 11 a.m. ET to discuss pitches. Zeller says that if you haven't heard back after a period of time, please do check in.

Zeller stressed that the writers should use the online submission portal instead of directly reaching out to individual editors. Submitted pitches are put in a shared database for discussion at their Wednesday editorial meeting. Sending pitches directly to editors means that they have to manually include it.

UNDARK AT A GLANCE



Pay: Varies for reported pieces depending on the writer's experience, complexity of the project, and other elements. Typically around \$1 a word based on agreed-upon word count (the final version word count doesn't typically change the fee). Op-eds and reviews are paid a flat fee of \$500.

Frequency: Typically publishes four days a week. Tuesdays are reserved typically for third-party partners.

Payment Terms: After fact-checking is successfully completed.

Kill Fee: Yes, 25%, at Undark's discretion.

Rights: 90-day exclusivity on commissioned articles with the right to use the work in perpetuity.

Send pitches or LOIs to: Use the online portal at <https://undark.org/submission-guidelines>.



Elisa Shoenberger is a freelance writer and journalist. She has written for the *Boston Globe*, *Huffington Post*, *Business Insider*, and others. She writes regularly for *Book Riot*, *FF2*, *Loop North News*, and *Sixty Inches from Center*. She is the co-editor and co-founder of *The Antelope: A Journal of Oral History and Mayhem*. In her spare time, she plays alto saxophone.

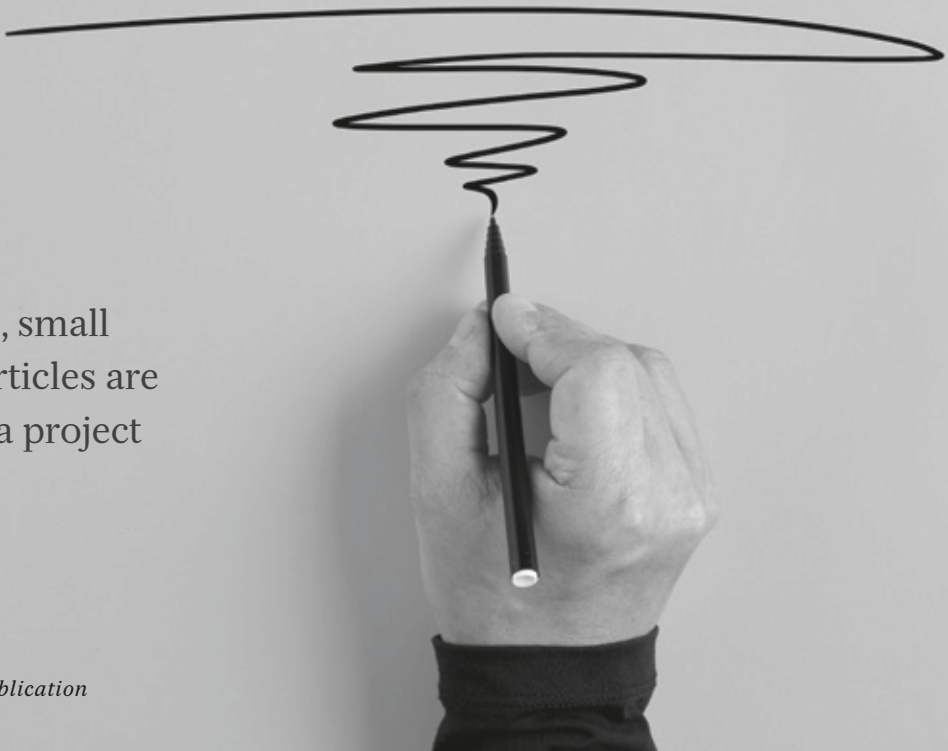
Let's Talk About Rates

JEANETTE HURT AND
ERIN O'DONNELL

*Freelance Writers and
Chairs of Client Connections*

As chairs of Client Connections, we inevitably field questions from ASJA professional members about certain editors who attend our signature event. The questions center on pay, and members will ask, "Why did editor X or Y get invited, given that they pay relatively little?"

FREELANCE



Prestige, passion projects, small advances, and reselling articles are some ways to evaluate if a project is worth it.



The per-word valuation of clients isn't the only standard, nor is it, in our opinion, the most important standard.

Yet every year, those same editors prove to be popular with other writers.

So, who's write, er, right?

As the Client Connection chairs for three years running, we know all too well that not every publication pays \$1.50 a word. And, as experienced freelancers ourselves, we know that there's an important personal calculus involved in choosing clients, often related to our personal hourly rate. If an editor is only going to pay us \$100 for a story, but it takes us 30 minutes to write, then that's a decent hourly rate. If another editor pays us \$1,000 or \$1 per word, but that publication requires five sources and three re-writes, then it's a bad hourly rate.

If the pay is only \$150, but it's an essay we've been dying to write, and it's a niche topic, then it's well worth it. If it's going to be a \$3,000 flat fee, but the client is bat-poop crazy and will require overnight rewrites, then it's not worth the aggravation. If the editor is going to rewrite and revise and edit by committee so that there's no sense of our original writing left...well, that, too, is a factor to consider.

If it's ten cents per word, but it's in a specialty we're just branching out into, then it might be worth our time. If it's ten cents per word, and it's in our specialty, and we can resell a story on the topic, then that might be worth it, too.

If it's a small advance, but this is our first book or our passion project, and we're likely to get royalties, then, yes, we'll go for it. And if we can resell articles from the book and generate paying speaking engagements and build our platform, then, yes, again, we're going to do it.

Prestige is another factor. Jeanette's lowest paying regular gig is *Forbes*. And Erin writes for *WebMD*, an outlet that doesn't pay spectacularly, but has name recognition in her field. Both are helpful for our reputations as writers.

The per-word valuation of clients isn't the only standard, nor is it, in our opinion, the most important standard. Here is how we, personally, evaluate pay:

- Is it in our wheelhouse or is it in an area we're trying to branch out into?
- Is the editor a lovely human being or a monster?
- Is it something we'll have fun writing?
- Is this going to be a slog—a well-paid slog—but a slog, nonetheless?
- Is this a market where we can repackage stories that we've already reported and written?
- What is the per hour rate, and what are the PITA factors?
- And lastly, there's the golden rule of freelancing: If we don't like what a publication is offering, then we don't pitch them.

We'd like to add a word here about generosity with your contacts. Experience has taught us that what works best in creating an exciting lineup of clients at Client Connections is the personal invitations from our members. That means you! Inviting editors who you enjoy working with and you think pay well not only gives you the chance to win terrific prizes in the annual recruitment contest but is also a chance to generate good karma. Think of it as a gift to your fellow members.

We'd also like to give a shout-out to our team of amazing volunteers and invite you to join the effort in making Client Connections happen. Tell us who your dreams clients are—and then play a role in helping us get them on board.

ASJA MAGAZINE

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MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- ▶ Client Connections
- ▶ Virtual education opportunities
- ▶ Annual, regional and virtual conferences
- ▶ Member-only Facebook group
- ▶ *ASJA Magazine*
- ▶ *ASJA Weekly* newsletter
- ▶ Advocacy for freelance writers: AB5, ProAct, freelance "invoice fees" and other issues

▶ For more information about renewing or referring writers, visit: <http://asja.org/Join-or-Renew>