

In Real Life



SPRING 2022

02

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

ASJA MAGAZINE

Special Feature

*ASJA 2022 WRITERS
CONFERENCE*

FINDING THE ROOT OF OUR WRITERLY MISSIONS



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

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Freelance Writer
and ASJA President



From the President's Desk

WRITING IN THE REAL WORLD

A high school friend was goth before black fingernail polish was a thing in Appalachia. Her long, straight hair covered her face, and all of her clothes were black, including a long cape that she wore even in warm weather. She hunched over a bit as if she didn't (and did) want to be noticed. This was the era of the *Preppy Handbook*, which no one in my school recognized as satire. Beth was deeply misunderstood, weird and intellectual. She fascinated me because she seemed unafraid. She wore her strangeness on the outside, at a time when I was desperate to hide mine.

We were in the same 12th grade English class, learning existentialism. I drank those books like I was dying of thirst. The ideas of Camus and Sartre offered something other than the home-grown Christianity and certainty of my small town. They told me it was okay to look inward, and I snuck furtive glances at myself.

As we settled into our desks one day, Beth made a startling comment: What if this isn't real life, but a dream? Perhaps her philosophy-teacher father had told her of René Descartes' dream theory, but for me, the idea was utterly novel.

"Real life" is conscribed for each of us in various ways, and while Beth's question might be a heady way to explore reality, it's useful when I wonder what happens in my head versus what is happening around me. How

often have I mentally written an email without sending it? How often have I misplaced something because my mind was swimming in thought? At the same time, are my thoughts not also "real life"?

Writing requires us to "be in our heads," which might feel like a dream state. I don't know about you, but my writing process requires shutting out as much of the "real world," as possible. I cannot write with music playing. My attention span can be so short that a text or email alert can push me off track. But when I shut out the "real world," I can lose hours to research and writing, looking up to find that my studio is dark or the coffee shop is closing. The psychologist, Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, coined the term "flow" to describe this dream state, and many of us have chased it like a drug. Nothing feels better than to fall into words for hours at a time, whether I'm reading, writing, or researching. But isn't this also "real life"?

As I was growing up, real-life meant being responsible with money, getting an education, keeping a clean house. I know now that it is many more things that are sometimes practical and sometimes not. Those who have lost everything to gambling are still living a real life. In some ways, their lives may be even more "real" than my own, which was founded on privilege and luck and typically traditional choices. My brother, who has no advanced education, has no less a "real life" than I do.

As both of my grandmothers declined into dementia, their lives were no less "real" than when they could bathe and feed themselves and converse with visitors.

Perhaps these thoughts are why I write non-fiction. As a journalist, I am drawn to others' experiences, stories. Peeking into others' real lives sometimes feels like a sacred act, especially when I'm entrusted with translating their stories to the printed page. I am also compelled to tell my own stories, and each time I start an essay, I remind myself that the original meaning of the word means "to try." Lately, I've delved into the classical form of the essay, in which "thinking on the page" is a clear feature. Many questions don't require answers, and sometimes it is enough to attempt meaning and appreciation. (Beth did not answer her question; she merely asked it.)

Whether we're living in a dream or something called "real life," our work as writers is in translation, I think. We are hired to ask questions of those who might have answers and then translate those answers so that readers can understand. The questions themselves are at least as important as the responses.

And because we're independent writers, we often have more leeway in creating our real lives. As long as the bills get paid, we can set up our writing businesses however we please: writing in the dead of night, accepting assignments that are deeply interesting to us, taking off an entire month. Too much of the world doesn't have this kind of freedom, and yes, there are those who don't want it. Real-life is what we say it is, what we can make of the lives we are given.

Beth went on to become an acclaimed poet and then ordained in the Episcopal Church. I've lost touch with her, but I believe she's still in a questioning space. I imagine her wondering aloud or on the page what someone else's "real" is. As philosophical as all of this is, it's at the root of our writerly missions. And what an incredible gift that is.

"Real life" is conscribed for each of us in various ways, and while Beth's question might be a heady way to explore reality, it's useful when I wonder what happens in my head versus what is happening around me.



*From
the Editor*

MORE “WOW” MOMENTS

It all started with a game of two truths and a lie. My tennis instructor Lynda, a former HR director, starts new sessions with getting-to-know-you exercises. During my last session, she asked us to share two truthful facts about ourselves along with one lie. The others had to guess the lie.

Most people were sharing interesting facts like, “I’ve never been in car accident,” “I’m a cat person,” “I was in the Army,” and “I don’t know how to ride a bike.” When it was my turn, I said, “I was a contestant on the Dating Game, I’ve written two books, I was on MTV in my bikini.”

The reaction from my fellow classmates was, “Wow.” Only one person guessed the lie; I was never on the Dating Game (although I did spend the day on the set interviewing host Jeff MacGregor). And then the game paused for a moment, while people asked about my two truths.

On my way home, I wondered, “Do most people go through life without experiences that make others say ‘wow?’” And then I realized it had been a while since my last wow moment. Since that realization, I’ve been on a mission to put more wow moments in my life. I’m blogging about it, too, and working on a book proposal.

What I realized, though, is that most wow moments happen when you push yourself out of your comfort zone. Most happen in person – in real life – and not when you’re

sitting behind a screen. The pandemic took a lot of “real life” opportunities away. It can be hard to put yourself out there when we’ve become used to hibernating at home.

I’ve found that it helps to have a posse who can support you along the way. Many of the people who have encouraged me to go after a wow moment are the friends whom I met at ASJA.

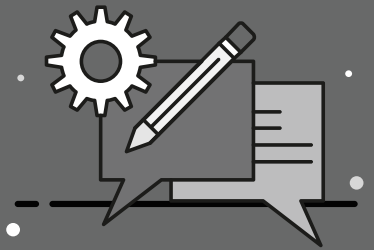
Jennifer Goforth Gregory gave me the courage I needed to create a sign that I held up at a Cheap Trick concert at Content Marketing World. I got a shout out from the stage from Rick Nielson that was videotaped by my friend Leslie Lang. Jodi Helmer pushed me to learn to twirl the baton – a secret desire I shared over a glass of wine (or two) at a conference. And Wendy Helfenbaum inspired me to share my experiences by writing more essays.

As we get ready for the 2022 ASJA Annual Conference, I’m planning to go after more wow moments. What are some of your wow moments? If you see me at the conference, please stop and share.



STEPHANIE
VOZZA

*Freelance Writer
and ASJA Editor*



NEW ASJA MEMBERS!

APRIL 2022

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ASJA EVENTS CALENDAR 2022

Virtual Pitch Slam and Virtual Client Connections

Check the ASJA website
for the latest dates.

ASJA 51st Annual Writers Conference

May 1-2, 2022

Hyatt Regency Jersey City
on the Hudson
Jersey City, N.J.

We love to give away money to deserving writers in need!

The Writers Emergency Assistance Fund (WEAF) is here to help writers through hard times brought on by illness, natural disaster, or other emergency. Since 1982, WEAF has awarded more than 160 grants totaling approximately \$400,000.

You Can Help:

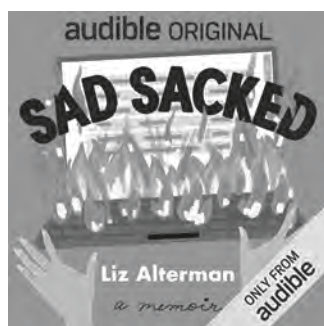
- If you know a qualified writer who is experiencing an emergency, let them know about WEAF.
- If you have had a good year, think about making a tax-deductible donation to WEAF.
- If you want to have a long-term impact, consider naming WEAF as a beneficiary in your estate planning.

To find more information about the WEAF application process and making donations, click the WEAF link on the ASJA website: **ASJA.org**.



MEMBER NEWS

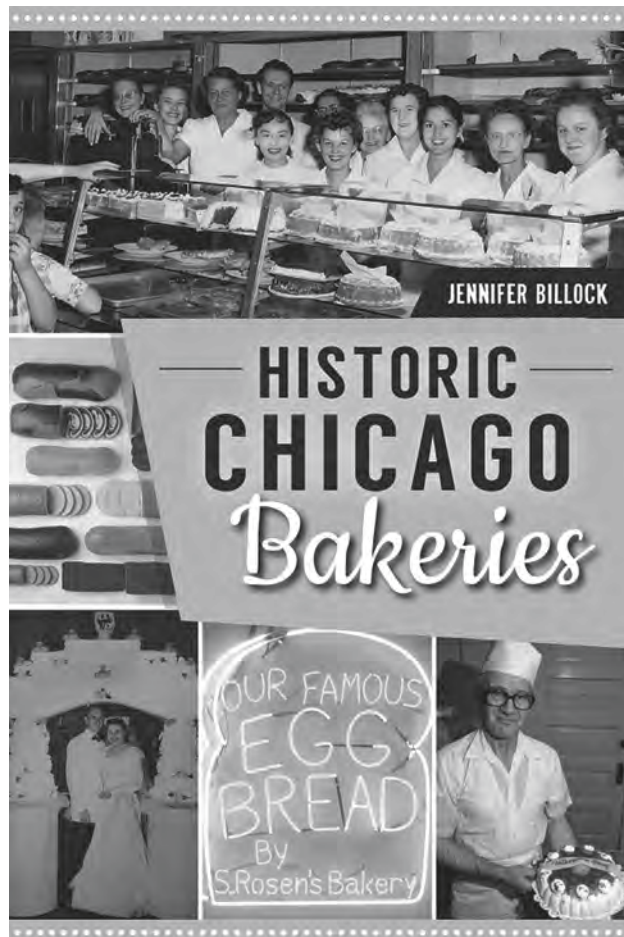
>>>> Book News



Liz Alterman's memoir, *Sad Sacked*, was released by Audible Originals on November 11, 2021.



Liane Starr edited a book, *Stream This Next*, which was released by Rizzoli Books in March 2022. "I am happy to be anyone's source for upcoming articles about TV shows to stream during the long pandemic we're in," she says.

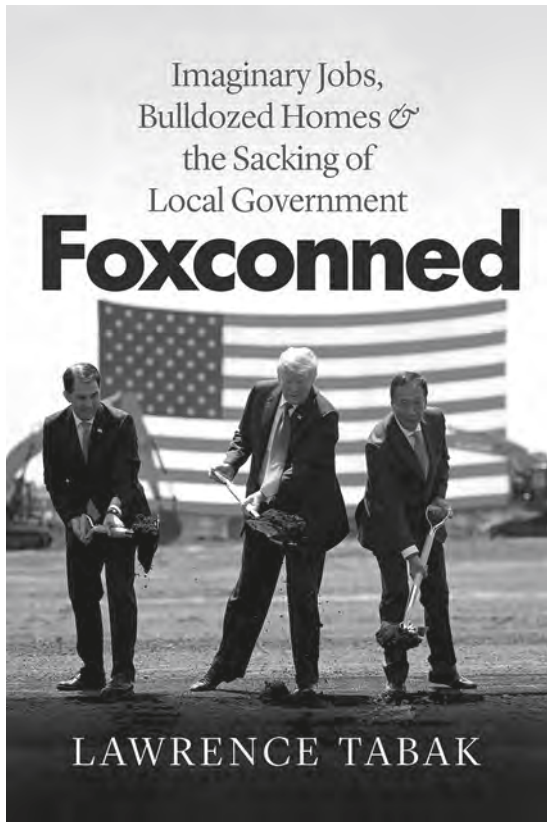


Jennifer Billock's new book *Historic Chicago Bakeries* was released in September 2021. It ranked as the #1 new book in two categories and was #13 overall in travel books on Amazon the week it was released.



**GOT NEWS
TO SHARE
WITH ASJA?**

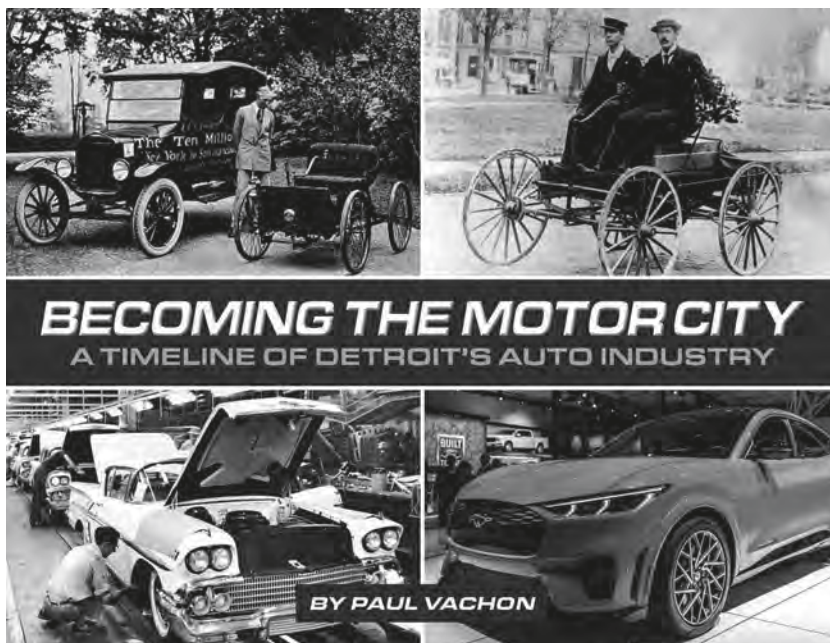
Submit your items at
<https://asja.org/Member-Networking/submit-member-news>



Lawrence Tabak's book *Foxconned: Imaginary Jobs, Bulldozed Homes, and the Sacking of Local Government* is an exposé on economic development fiascos, featuring Asian tech giant Foxconn in Wisconsin. It was released from The University of Chicago Press in November 2021. A starred review in *Publishers Weekly* follows the book's 2020 short list recognition for the J. Anthony Lukas Columbia School of Journalism Work in Progress Award.



Bob Nesoff has sold the movie rights to his novel, *Spyder Hole*. He has also signed with Arcadia Publishers/History Press to produce two books: *A History Lover's Guide to Bergen County*, and the true crime story *Mysterious Mike Malone*.



Paul Vachon's book, *Becoming the Motor City: A Timeline of Detroit's Auto Industry*, was released on September 15, 2021, by Reedy Press. The book is a hardcover coffee-style volume that traces the development of Detroit's signature industry. It's about cars but it's also about personalities, temperaments, corporate corruption, and other interesting stuff.



»»»» Activities, Awards and Accolades



Jennifer Goforth Gregory was nominated for the 2021 “Wake Forest Citizen of the Year.” Her dog rescue program, Doxie by Proxie, has provided forever homes for more than 150 dachshunds in 2021 alone. She runs this all-volunteer program, along with her very successful content marketing freelance career



After writing two articles about the growing childcare crisis — one for *Fast Company* and one for *Insider* — **Lisa Rabasca Roepe** was invited to moderate a discussion about why childcare is a workforce issue at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Talent Forward conference on October 26, 2021



Stephenie Overman was honored for her outstanding contributions to the media profession and her unwavering commitment to excellence by her alma mater, Ball State University (BSU). BSU's School of Journalism and Strategic Communication presented Overman with its 2021 Hall of Fame Award in ceremonies held on September 30, 2021.



JoAnna Haugen was recently named a winner of a *Newsweek's* Future of Travel Awards in the storytelling category. Haugen is the founder of Rooted, a solutions platform at the intersection of sustainable tourism, storytelling, and social impact. She frequently writes about and speaks on these topics.



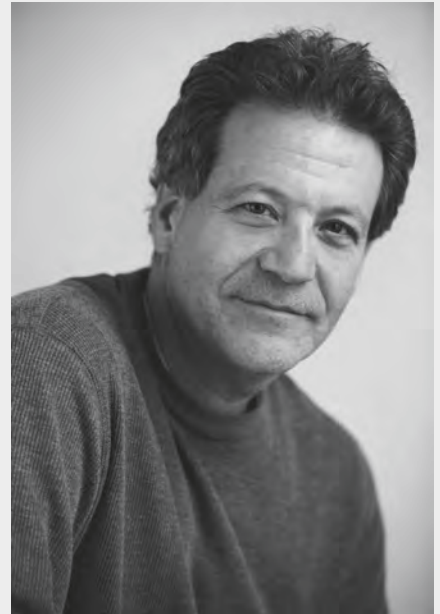
Randi Minetor had the pleasure of writing about the high-tech side of Usher's current residency in Las Vegas for *Projection, Lights & Staging News (PLSN)* in November 2021.



Sandra Ebejer interviewed musician Tom Morello about his new album, his upbringing, and his favorite songs of rebellion and liberation for *AARP The Magazine*. She also interviewed Senator Elizabeth Warren about her inspiring new children's book, *Pinkie Promises*, for Shondaland.



Margie Goldsmith was awarded the Society of American Travel Writers Foundation's highest journalism award, Bronze Journalist of the Year. This makes 96 creative writing awards that she has won since she started freelancing 20 years ago. Goldsmith writes for many magazines, has written three books, and is presently working on her fourth.



Jack El-Hai has launched a new venture as a creative writing coach for physicians. He helps doctors use writing to combat stress, burnout, and disconnection from patients and colleagues.



L.M. Archer published a story on Pix. wine about Dauntless Wine Company, a veteran-owned winery in Oregon helping veterans transition from the battlefield to the vineyard.



>>>>>>>>

PAYCHECK

IAAPA

Category: Trade organization

Scope of work: 800 words

Total fee: \$400

Rating: 3

I've written numerous features for the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) magazine, Funworld, and its news hub. Payment has been prompt in the past, but lately that hasn't been the case. For one recent article, payment arrived nearly 60 days after I invoiced (contract says net 30) and they blamed it on staff changes in accounting. For the next article, I asked to confirm that my invoice had been submitted to accounting. It took nearly a week to get that confirmation and they said payment might be delayed again due to the IAAPA Expo. I also had an editor offer me an assignment, then they gave it to another writer even though I accepted the assignment immediately. The reason? I was already working on another article for them, and they didn't want to overload me. As a long-time freelancer, I'm used to juggling multiple projects and I've never missed a deadline, so this argument doesn't hold water for me. Writers, beware.

OUTVOICE BLOG

Category: blog

Scope of work: 800 words

Total fee: \$300

Rating: 10

This was my first experience writing for OutVoice, a platform that lets publishers manage content and pay freelancers. I pitched a story and found the editor easy to work with. The topic was not very technical, so it didn't take a lot of time to write. Payment arrived the same day I filed (I'd previously filled out some paperwork). Definitely plan to pitch them again!

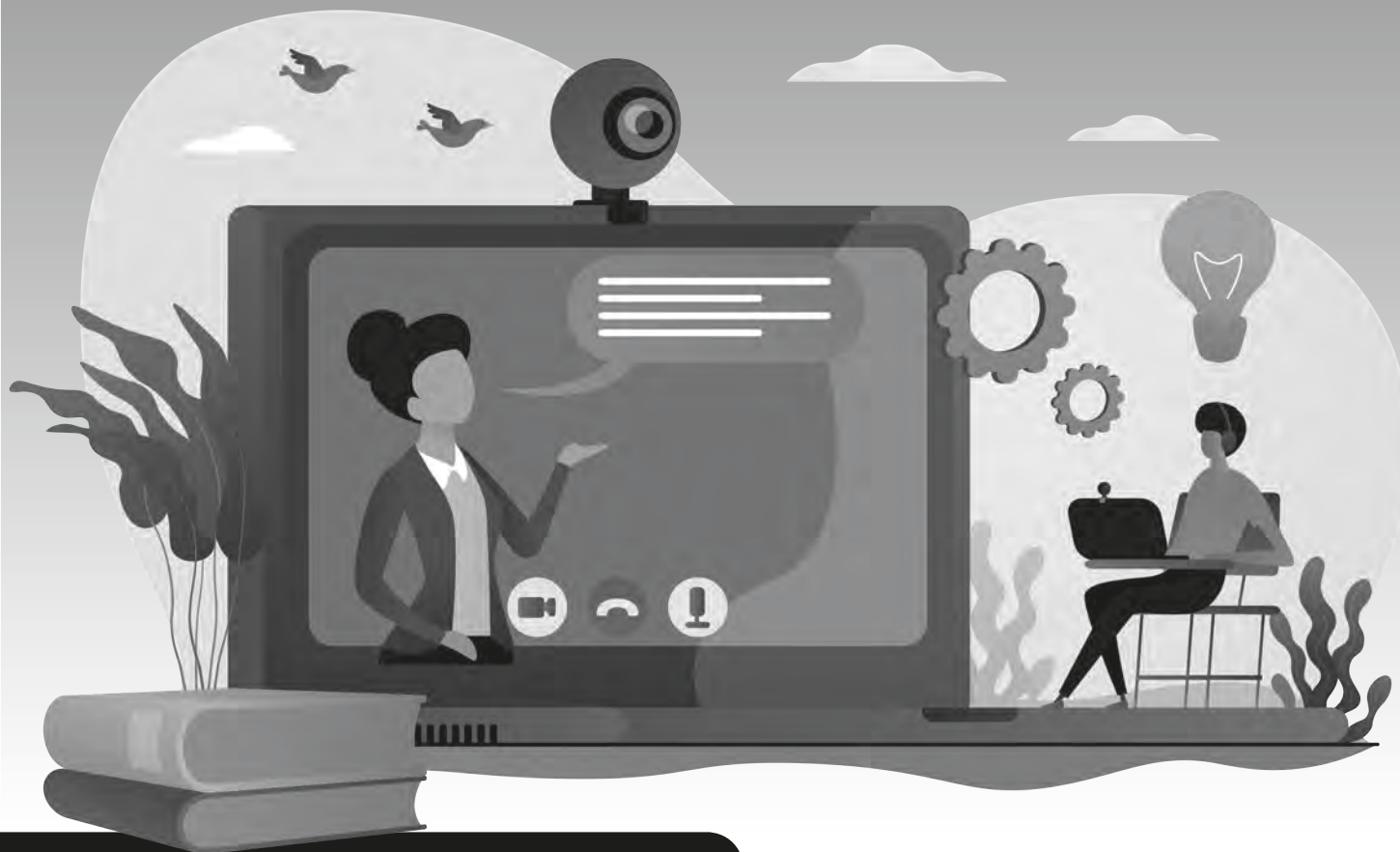


Help your fellow members by submitting a paycheck report. Simply visit the Member section of the ASJA website. Under the Paycheck tab, click on Report a Paycheck. Knowledge is power!



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

Have you heard about the ASJA Virtual Education Committee?



We're a small but very active team passionate about bringing learning opportunities to the ASJA community. To date, we've organized a dozen webinars and masterminds covering topics like how to deliver a cracking TED talk, how to expand your business through coaching and podcasting, and the latest news on the PRO Act and book publishing.

Some other topics you can expect to learn about:

- **How to write standout reported essays**
- **Business tools for freelancers**
- **Diversifying your income streams**
- **Negotiating contracts and pay**

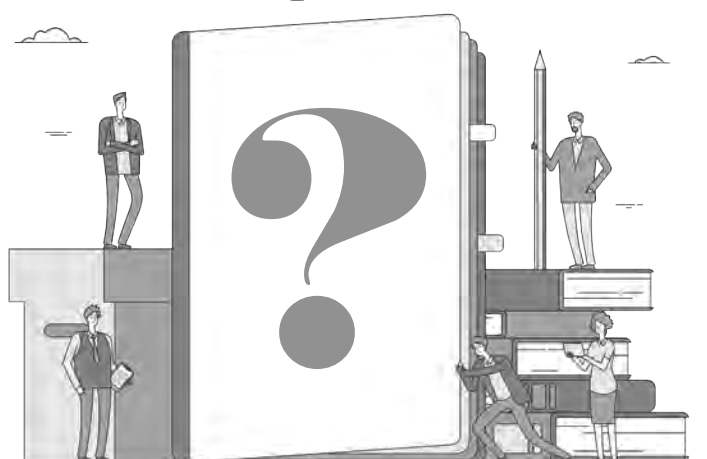
➤ ***If any of this sounds like it might interest you or another awesome freelancer you know, please head to our [Webinars](#) page to see upcoming and past events!*** <

>> Eavesdropping on the Agent



LINDA KONNER
ASJA member and president of
the Linda Konner Literary Agency

ANSWERING WRITERS' BURNING BOOK PUBLISHING QUESTIONS



Dear Linda,

What's the deal about book titles? Everyone tells me that it doesn't matter what title I put on my book proposal because the publisher is just going to change it anyway. Sometimes I just write "title TK," or something relevant to the book but not necessarily all that great. What's your feeling about it?

Title-less

>>>>>>>>

Dear Title-less,

I'm glad you raised this question. If you're working with an agent (or trying to land one), then that's the person who will be seeing your title first, and if you haven't bothered to come up with one (or one that's the first thing you thought of before hitting the SEND button), then you're not making a great first impression.

As an agent, I wouldn't dream of sending out a client's book proposal to publishers without a less-than-stellar title (and accompanying subtitle), even if I have to think of them myself – and I often do. But already, the writer is losing points with me for not trying harder to come up with something smart, catchy, and fresh.

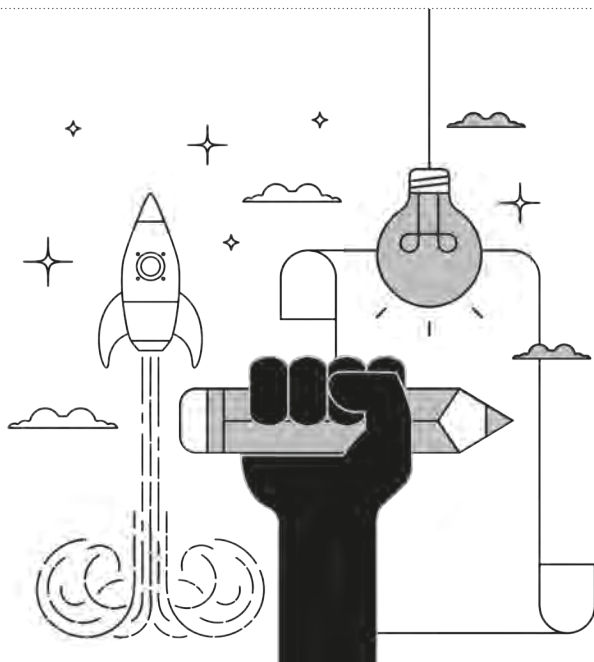
True, a title often does get changed by the publisher (as in, "Linda, is your client wedded to the title on the proposal?" to which I always answer "No." Why discourage them at this early



Got a Question for Linda?

Send it to asjamagazineeditor@gmail.com

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



date?). But as I remind my clients, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression, and an outstanding title/ subtitle combo helps get your foot in the publisher's door.

So it's definitely worth the time and energy to try to come up with something terrific. A couple of tips:

1. The title should ideally be brief and punchy – aimed to catch a reader's attention. It can be a little intriguing or vague about the subject of the book, but then ...
2. That's what the subtitle is for: to clarify and crystalize precisely what the book is about, who the target reader is, and what they can hope to get by buying it. If it's a prescriptive (how-to) book, what is the PROMISE the book makes to the reader? What problem will it help the reader solve? That should come across loud and clear in the title and subtitle.

I have frequently been told by editors that the projects I sell them have excellent titles. Sometimes these come from the writer's brain, which is wonderful and makes me immediately receptive to the project. Other times I've tweaked (or completely rewritten) what an author has done, but it's all for a worthy cause, i.e., catching an editor's eye, selling the book, and getting a nice advance.

Some of the favorite titles that have appeared on my clients' books include *The Wedding Dress Diet*, short, snappy, and is there any doubt what the book is about?; *Nincompoopery: Why your customers hate you and how to fix it*, an entertaining business book offering serious advice; *All Men are Jerks (until proven otherwise)*, a dating book by the late, longtime ASJA member Daylle Deanna Schwartz; *Morgue: A life in death*, a memoir from a noted medical examiner; and another fun book on dying, *Death for Beginners*, a semi-serious guide to planning one's own funeral.

You're a writer – you can do it! And if you're absolutely sure that you're "just not great with titles," as I've heard from more than one client, then invite some people over for drinks and apps (or do it via Zoom), summarize the book for the gang and brainstorm. The perfect title for your book is out there!

Dear Linda,

I want to write a book, and I have a couple of ideas I think are good. But, as a journalist for many years, I'm not sure if I can tell whether a subject is book-worthy. Advice?

Roger

>>>>>>>>

Dear Roger,

Just yesterday, I started pitching a new, terrific project to book publishers, a narrative nonfiction book about a casino that was wracked by scandal during the process of getting its state license. One of the first responses I received from a major publisher was, "This strikes me as a magazine piece, not a book." Well, tell that to the authors, who put together a detailed 39-page proposal explaining why they thought it was a book!

Over my years as an agent, I have heard the book-vs-article rejection from book publishers many times. Of course, they could be right. (Every now and then, a publisher is.) So, it will save time and effort if you can determine from the outset whether your subject – and your particular take on that subject – warrants a 275-page book or a far shorter piece of writing.

I always advise clients to test this book-vs-article conundrum by first creating a table of contents, summarizing each of your 10-15 chapters with a sentence or two. If you can do that comfortably without padding. There may be a problem if you find it challenging to expand your topic to that length.

Another helpful trick: go on Amazon and see what's already out there on your topic. (That's also an important step because you'll need to check your competition.) If you see similar books out there published by publishers and not much shorter self-published "books," that's helpful and encouraging for your project. But if you find nothing on the subject, while that might be a sign that there's a book niche waiting to be filled, it might also indicate that it's not a subject book publishers are especially interested in publishing.

So, try this before you spend the next month working up a 40-page book proposal and sample chapter. You may save an agent, many editors, and mainly yourself a lot of time and disappointment.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Anisfield-Wolf Award Founder Championed Diversity a Century Ago

When she founded the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award (AWBA) in 1935, Edith Wolf was so far ahead of the Civil Rights Movement curve that there was no curve. Rosa Parks's arrest and the Montgomery Bus Boycott were still two decades away. Wolf's innovative award was the first – and it remains the only – prize recognizing “books that have made important contributions to our understanding of racism and our appreciation of the rich diversity of human cultures.”



CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTON

Freelance Writer

“She bet the family fortune that this would improve our civic lives, that we would be less racist and more humanistic, if we were better readers,” says Karen Long, former book editor for *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*. Long manages the award program for the Cleveland Foundation, which has administered the prize since Wolf's death in 1963.

PBS superstar Henry Louis Gates Jr., the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard, has served as jury chair since 1996. Internationally known writers and scholars Rita Dove (University of Virginia), Joyce Carol Oates (Princeton University), Steven Pinker (Harvard University), and Simon Schama (Columbia University) comprise the rest of the jury.

“Thoughtful, provocative writing about cultural identity has been rare in this country, so that makes it even more remarkable that in 1935 – 20 years before the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education* – a Cleveland poet with a strong sense of social justice created a book prize to honor writers who have contributed to our understanding of race and racism,” Gates wrote of the prize.

Christopher Johnston has published more than 3,500 articles in publications, including *American Theatre*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *History Magazine*, and *Scientific American*. His book, *Shattering Silences: Strategies to Prevent Sexual Assault, Heal Survivors, and Bring Assailants to Justice* (Skyhorse), was published in 2018. He is an ASJA board member.



*AWARD FOUNDER
EDITH WOLF ESTABLISHED
A JURIED AMERICAN
BOOK PRIZE FOCUSING
ON WORKS THAT ADDRESS
RACISM AND DIVERSITY.*

AWBA's Canon Powerful Resource for Writers

Today, award winners from 86 years are a valuable resource for students, scholars, diversity professionals, teachers, and writers. Winners include many significant poets, playwrights and authors of fiction and nonfiction, including Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, Zora Neal Hurston, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Andrew Solomon. Seven recipients have also won Nobel prizes: Ralph J. Bunche, Nadine Gordimer, Martin Luther King Jr., Toni Morrison, Gunnar Myrdal, Wole Soyinka, and Derek Walcott.

The awards are presented in Cleveland's historic Playhouse Square every fall. However, because of the pandemic, PBS for the past two year instead produced documentaries hosted by Gates.

Long, who manages the award program, said the Cleveland Humanities Collective, a joint venture between Case Western Reserve University and Cuyahoga Community College, has applied for funding for the past few years from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to convene faculty from throughout the U.S. who teach from that year's AWBA winners. Last year, there was

so much interest they had to schedule several Zoom sessions instead of one. It was also the first year that Historic Black Colleges and Universities faculties began incorporating the AWBA books into their curricula.

Honoring Edith Wolf

Lisa Nielson, who became Case Western's first Anisfield-Wolf SAGES Fellow in 2011, is writing a biography of Wolf and a history of her groundbreaking book award. She is a historical musicologist specializing in women's studies, and her classes focus on the AWBA's mission of fostering cultural tolerance and diversity as well as her own research.

This year, Nielson has employed Ilya Kaminsky, the hearing-impaired author of *Deaf Republic*, a 2020 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award winner, to teach her students that you don't have to speak to communicate and that silence can wield its own power.

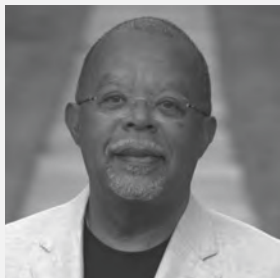
"When is it important to be silent in a penetrating fashion?" Nielson asks her students. "What is the power of withholding, such as withholding your money or voting with your dollars? What is the power of simply showing up and being silent? We don't have to constantly yap and shout."

Why Wolf Created the Award "Still a Mystery"

"The history of the awards is a history of America and the history of our struggle to understand what Edith termed 'race relations' in her will," Nielson says. "She was a deliberate woman and a woman of few words, very private, so any notes she left were pithy and written on little notecards."

Edith Wolf's father, John Anisfield, immigrated to Cleveland at 16 from a German-speaking region of Poland near Krakow. He earned his fortune in the garment industry and real estate. Though Jews faced discrimination at that time, he became such

ANISFIELD-WOLF BOOK AWARD JURY



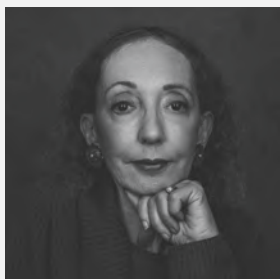
HENRY LOUIS
GATES, JR.

*Alphonse Fletcher
University Professor and
Director of the Hutchins
Center for African &
African American
Research at Harvard*



RITA
DOVE

University of Virginia



JOYCE
CAROL OATES

Princeton University



STEVEN
PINKER

Harvard University



SIMON
SCHAMA

Columbia University



*Wolf used literature as a means
to explore radical prejudice and
celebrate human diversity.*

a beloved figure in the broader business community, Nielson says, that he was invited to join several Christian business organizations. He also became a respected philanthropist and started Anisfield Camp for Jewish women; today, the camp is part of Cleveland's Mandel Jewish Community Center.

After retiring early to manage his charitable work, Anisfield taught his daughter to administer his philanthropic pursuits and manage the family estate. A published poet and civic activist, Wolf "used literature as a means to explore radical prejudice and celebrate human diversity." She was active with the Cleveland Public Library for 20 years, ensuring that the library had books from all cultures and served as a forum for citizens to debate the issues of the day.

After Anisfield died in 1929, Wolf's husband, Eugene Wolf, ran Anisfield's businesses until his death in 1944, when Wolf herself took them over. During that time, her New York friend, Amy Loveman, one of the founders of *The Saturday Evening Review*, consulted with her about starting the book prize. *The Review* served as the first administrator of the award.

"When she started the prize, Edith was clearly thinking about what was going on during the 1930s, one of the worst times for the abuse and murder of black people," Nielson says, adding that although Wolf declined to serve on the jury, she was consulted about the winners. "She was very good at business, and even though she seemed kind of shy and retiring, everyone was terrified of her in a good way."

Anisfield-Wolf's Mission of Diversity

Since taking the reins in 2013, Long has continued to expand the prize's reach. In 2017, she helped Case Western add a second Anisfield-Wolf SAGES Fellow, Gabrielle M.W. Bychowski, the university's only transgender faculty member. Bychowski, who holds a doctorate in the English language and literature with a concentration in transgender and disability studies, teaches seminars on diversity, ethics, and social justice.

"Gabby is the first person to teach transliterature in our region," Long says. "She is an exemplary, brilliant human being who keeps her doors open to anyone, and I know she has saved lives just from talking with people during her office hours."

Nielson says Long has built the AWBA canon into other institutions' curricula, from a network of Northeast Ohio schools to the HBCU institutions. She hired a digital communications manager, Tara Pringle Jefferson, and added fellows at Cleveland State University (Kamden Hilliard) and The Cleveland Foundation (Zachary Thomas). She also hosts the Anisfield-Wolf podcast, The Asterisk*.

"The AW canon allows me to read, reflect, and reckon with race," says Derrick L. Williams, a Cuyahoga Community College professor of communication studies. "In addition, it encourages me to wrestle with and write about race." Williams is a member of the Anisfield-Wolf Symposium, a group of faculty, writers, and others who meet throughout the year.

"Created at the height of the Great Depression, when America was still in the grip of Jim Crow segregation, the prize shows that there were good, sensitive people across the color line who recognized that through art, scholarship and literature a contribution could be made to racial harmony," Gates concludes in a recent interview.

For journalists or writers with questions about AWBA's canon for any racism, diversity, equity, or inclusion stories they are researching, Nielson says she is happy to advise or connect to the best resources. Her email is: len12@case.edu.

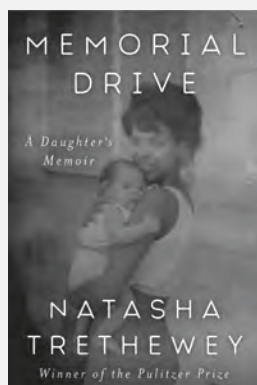


Opening Minds. Challenging Minds.™



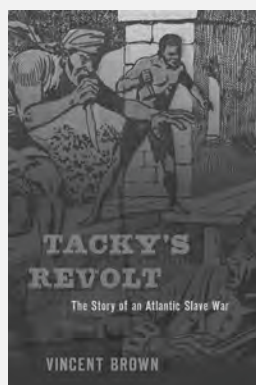
Today, award winners from 86 years are a valuable resource for students, scholars, diversity professionals, teachers, and writers.

ANISFIELD-WOLF BOOK AWARD WINNERS 2021



Nonfiction

Co-winners Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of An Atlantic Slave War* and Natasha Trethewey, *Memorial Drive*



Poetry

Victoria Chang, *OBIT*



Fiction

James McBride, *Deacon King Kong*



Lifetime Achievement

Samuel R. Delany

Artificial Intelligence's Impact on the

FUTURE *of* WRITING



JOHN PERAGINE

Freelance Writer

John Peragine is an author of 14 books, has ghostwritten over 100 others, and writes for *The New York Times*, Reuters, Bloomberg, Today Show, *Writer's Digest*, *Wine Enthusiast*, and more. His newest book *Max and the Spice Thieves* launched Fall 2020.



Remember in the Jetson's cartoon how everything in the future was based on convenience? They had robotic maids, and machines ran everything. Automation, comfort, and speed impacted everything in their lives.

Almost everything in that silly Hannah Barbara cartoon has now become part of our daily lives, if you think about it. There are even flying cars, although not quite available for the public yet (but we are close).

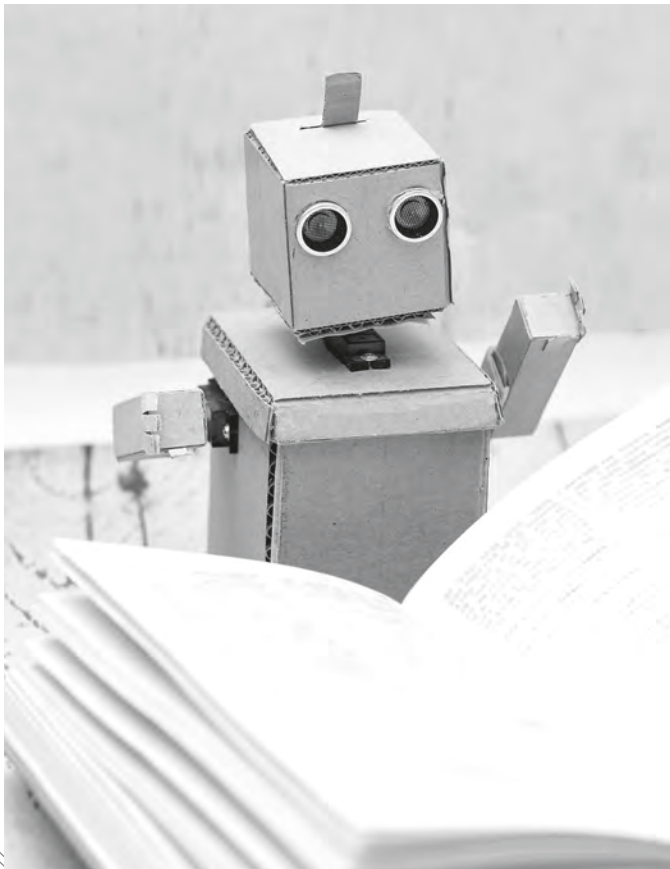
We live in a time when machines think for themselves and make decisions for humans, sometimes referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We are not quite at the point of Skynet and the rise of terminators, but we live during a time when machines are taking over many of the processes once reserved for humans. Writing is one of the tasks in which machines are beginning to take hold.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is everywhere. It turns on our lights, monitors security cameras, controls our thermostats, and even anticipates what we want to buy based on our choices in the past. If you go on any website or social media platform, AI follows and learns everything about you.



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Since AI programs are great at learning, they can study an author's writing style and then write in that same way.



AI AND FAKE NEWS

The way people read the news has also changed dramatically over the last decade. Newspapers are closing, and people can pick up their phones to see up-to-date weather and news with the push of a button. But is all of the news we are reading written by humans?

According to a study in 2017, there were 23 million bots on Twitter (8.5% of all accounts), 140 million bots on Facebook (5.5% of accounts), and about 27 million bots on Instagram (8.2% of those accounts). To put this in perspective, that combined force of bots equals about half of the United States population.

This army of bots is non-distinguishable from real people. They can respond to conversations like humans and share information. Some of that information is data they collate and put together. They learn what people want to read and are designed to give people what they want. News, even fake news, is shared with the public. People accept it because it is almost impossible sometimes to distinguish fact from AI fiction.

There is no morality associated with AI. The machines act according to those who create and program them, so the moral questions lie with the programmers. The consequence is that people who write material compete against bots, making a much more exciting story because the bot version lacks resources or the truth.

AI IN THE JOURNALISM SPACE

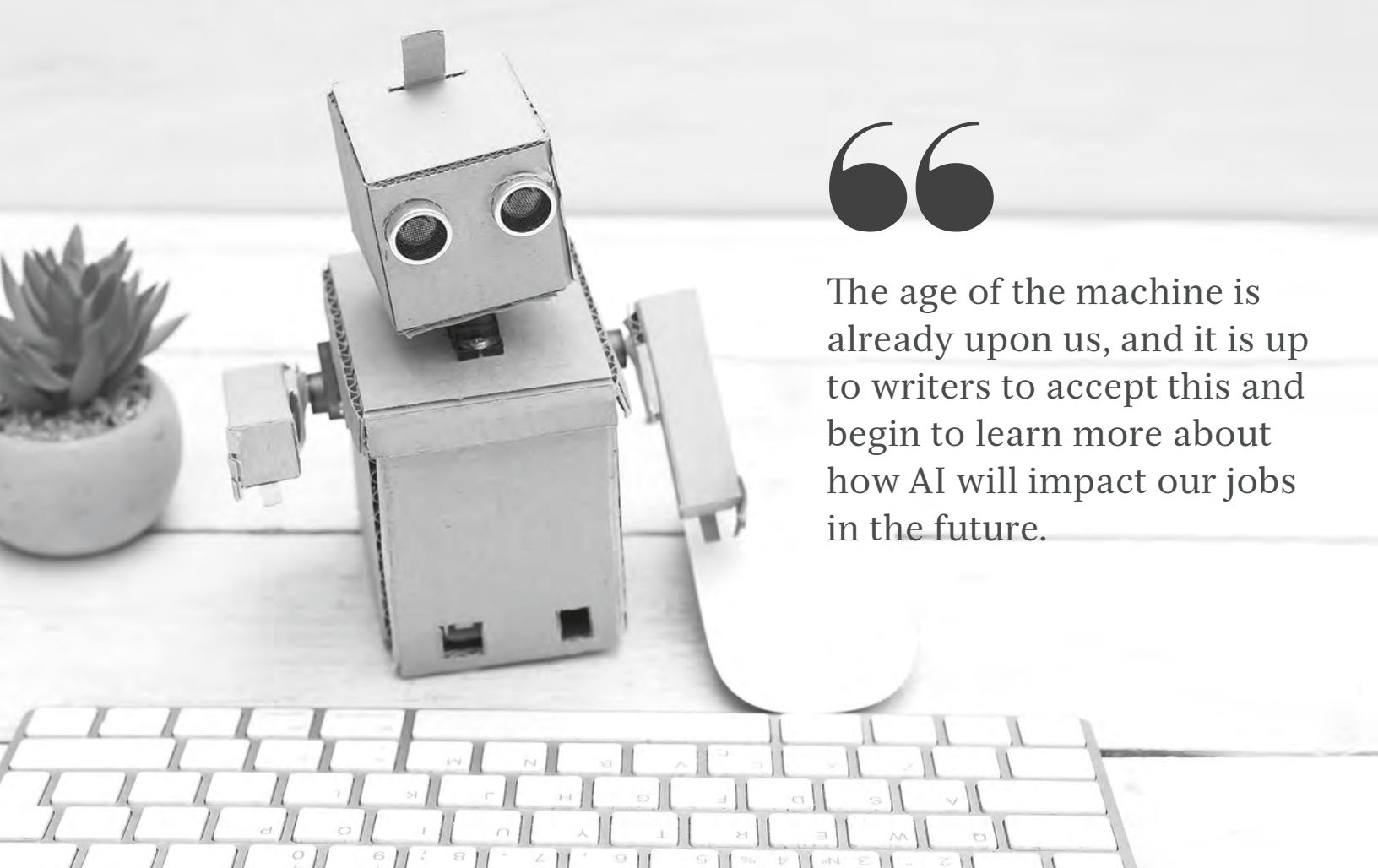
AI does not require a salary, sick pay, or time off. Everything AI learns is never forgotten. It can follow trends and monitor news channels with lightning speed. It is quicker at writing and distributing news than humans. In a culture of news channels wanting to be the first to release a story, AI can give them that advantage.

The question often asked is, can AI write as well or as clearly as humans? When you ask Alexa a question, how long does it take it/her to respond? Granted, the information she gives you is in a semi-robotic voice, but the technology of making AI sound more human improves constantly. AI can study voice patterns and learn how to speak more human-like. If you consider the complexity of human language, writing is much simpler to learn. Writing does not require understanding emotions, pitches, dialects, or accents. It is merely the arrangement of 26 symbols on a page.

AI CAN WRITE FICTION

Every year Japan awards the Hoshi Literary Award. In 2016, the competition opened up to AI-generated stories. In that same year, it almost won. It wrote a novella called "The Day a Computer Writes a Novel." There were four rounds of the competition, and the piece made it through the first round.

Do not be too alarmed, because in that case, a human writer crafted the parameters of the piece. Using that algorithm, the AI could produce a structurally sound novella. It lacked nuance and some creativity. The one thing that AI learning machines still lack is creating ideas independently. However, researchers are working on this by creating neural networks – AI structures that function much as the brain does by creating algorithms that work with one another. They learn, adapt, and change.



“

The age of the machine is already upon us, and it is up to writers to accept this and begin to learn more about how AI will impact our jobs in the future.

In June 2021, the Beijing Academy of Artificial Intelligence (BAAI) announced they had created the world's largest neural network. It utilized 1.75 trillion parameters, and they call it WU DAO 2.0. WU DAO 2.0 as the program driving Hau Zhibing, China's first virtual student. It learns from text and image input and can write poetry and paint pictures.

AI is good at writing many genres and forms; all it needs are the parameters to work with. What if we could put the *Chicago Style Manual* in your brain? You would be able to write flawless, structurally-perfect copy.

Since AI programs are great at learning, they can study an author's writing style and then write in that same way. Can you imagine a whole slew of new Stephen King books written with the assistance of AI?

However, there are still several limitations of AI. Language models do not require the understanding of words. It can perfect form and structure, but cannot pick up on syntax. It still needs human brains for that. AI writes because it is programmed to do so. While it can present information in a written fashion, it assigns no meaning or context.

Since AI lacks context and does not grasp the meaning of words, it still requires humans to correct its bad writing and edit it for flow, emotion, and even descriptions.

WHAT DOES AI MEAN FOR THE FUTURE OF WRITERS?

We still need humans to program and put in the parameters of writing. AI can grab a story and piece together an article, but it is only based on the available data. It is not hitting the streets and asking questions. It scans social media and other sources of data

to gather information. Humans still need to vet that information before it is released to the public.

Wages may be affected, and some traditional writing jobs may be lost. Since AI does not need a salary, it can crank out writing 24/7 without complaint. One of the areas that AI excels at is copywriting. It knows the words, structure, and trends. It knows what people want to hear and read about because it can study them. AI can write quickly and give numerous versions of the piece to choose from.

In 1997, IBM's Deep Blue computer defeated the world chess player Gary Kasparov at his own game. After that, there were further competitions of humans against machines. Sometimes the machines won, and sometimes it was the humans. They took it one step further and created "centaur" teams. These were combinations of humans and AI working together. They essentially fill in the gaps of each other's abilities. The centaur teams could beat both the person and machine working alone. The centaur approach is needed for the future of writers and machines.

Writers need to be open to new technologies and AI to enhance their abilities and writing skills. Many AI programs can help us edit our work, find the information we need for a piece quickly, and even provide us with suggestions of what to write about. AI needs us as much as we are becoming reliant on it. It is only as good as the data and parameters we give it.

The age of the machine is already upon us, and it is up to writers to accept this and begin to learn more about how AI will impact our jobs in the future. If you are still on the fence about AI and how it is being utilized, would you believe that AI wrote this article? How would you know?



We'll see you Sunday, May 1 and Monday, May 2!



This event will be our first in-person conference in three years. And honestly, it's about time. We've all been missing each other and the priceless opportunity to get together to learn and network face to face. We're coming back to in-person in a big way, with three session tracks (journalism, books, and content marketing), a bookstore, Client Connections (members only), keynote speakers, and lots of opportunities to meet other professional freelance writers.

➤ *Registration is open.
Check the ASJA
website for details.*



New location: Jersey City

It's just across the Hudson River from our previous hotel — an easy ride on the New Jersey PATH Train or if you want a more scenic route, the New York Waterway Ferry. From there, you'll be at the Financial District, where you can continue to the World Trade Center or take the subway, a taxi, or Uber/Lyft to anywhere in Manhattan. And getting to Jersey City is a cinch flying into Newark Airport.

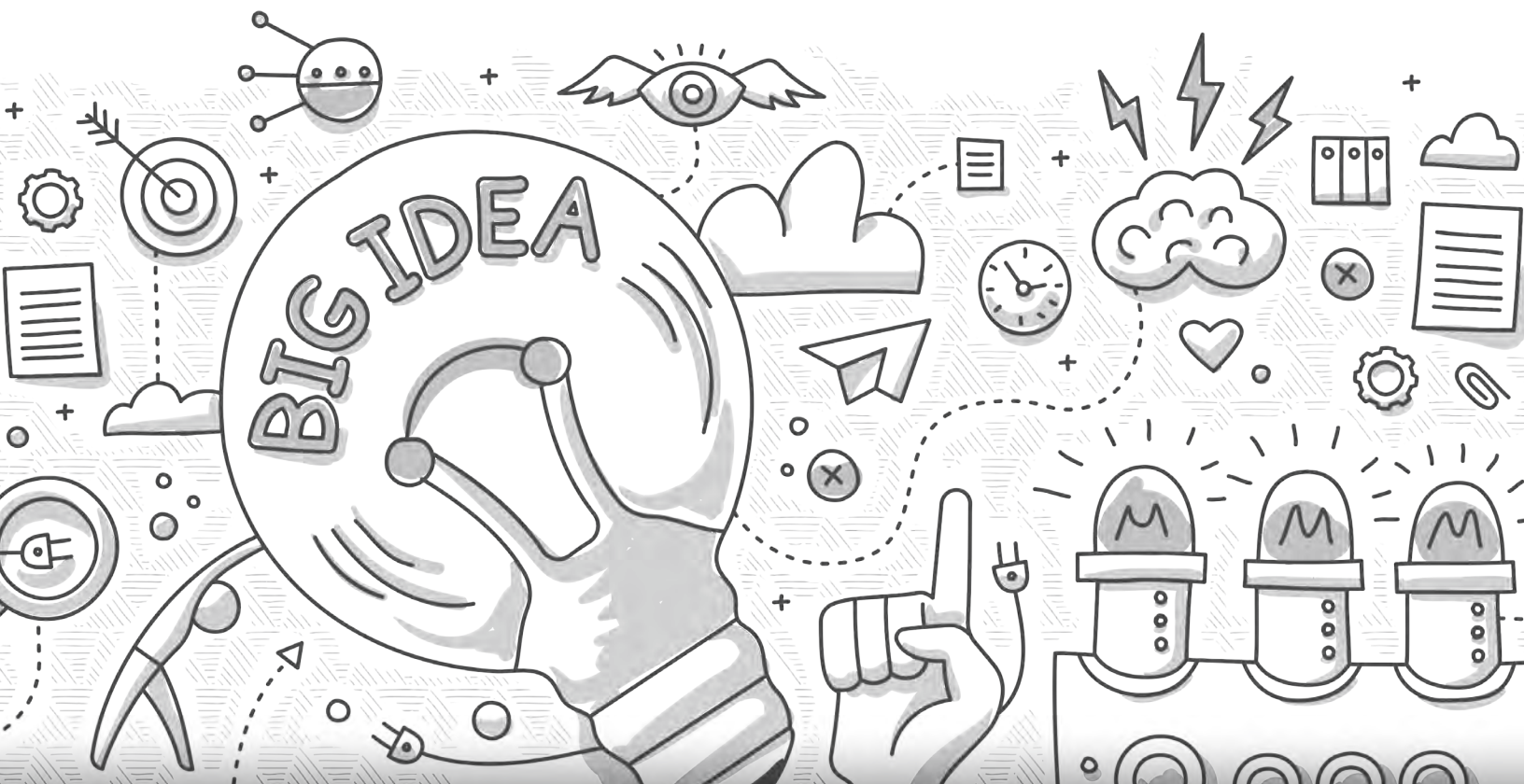


As freelance journalists and authors, we collaborate with editors, agents, publishers, designers, and multimedia experts. At the 2022 conference, we will explore how collaboration helps us succeed. Our three tracks will have interactive, dynamic programming that benefits freelancers in all phases in their careers. Also available are members-only mastermind programs for small groups led by freelance experts.

We're also meeting in a different space. The 2022 conference won't be in New York City — it'll be in Jersey City, N.J., a quick hop over the Hudson River. We're excited to see you at the Hyatt Regency Jersey City on the Hudson. The venue change is a good one. We'll get more bang for our buck, and the views of New York are a phenomenal backdrop. Plus, it's on the waterfront, so New York City is just a train or ferry ride away.

With more than 900 members, ASJA is the country's leading and most prestigious association of successful journalists, authors, and nonfiction and literary nonfiction writers, and there's never been a better time to talk about collaboration and networking.

Join us at the conference in 2022 for a plethora of networking opportunities, exceptional programming, and the enjoyment of being around like-minded people. Both days of the conference will be open to non-members. ASJA is excited about expanding this opportunity to those who want to learn more about the world of journalism and literary nonfiction.



Meet Your ASJA 2022 Conference Team

CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS:

JENNIFER BILLOCK AND JUDY NAUSEEF



JENNIFER
BILLOCK

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Website:
jenniferbillock.com

Jennifer Billock is an award-winning writer, bestselling author, and writing coach, generally covering some combination of food, travel, and history. She edits the *Kitchen Witch Newsletter* and teaches food and travel writing classes. She is dreaming of an around-the-world trip with her Boston terrier.

"My greatest hope for the conference is that attendees come away with actionable steps they can take to not only enhance their careers, but also to increase their business," Billock said. "I've gotten that from every ASJA conference I've been to in the past, and I'm excited to be able to provide that same level of quality programming for our members (and non-members!)."



JUDY
NAUSEEF

Twitter:
[@judynauseef](https://twitter.com/judynauseef)

Website:
judynauseef.com

Judy Nauseef is a freelance writer and landscape designer specializing in sustainability and gardening with climate change. She writes about native plants, habitat gardens, prairie designs, and stormwater management. She also writes travel articles, book reviews, and contributes to horse publications. She is the author of the book *Gardening with Native Plants in the Upper Midwest: Bringing the Tallgrass Prairie Home*.

"What I hope members get out of the conference is what I benefit from," Nauseef said. "It is being able to think, learn, and discuss writing in a continuum without having to stop for the normal, daily interruptions. It is also when I say I am a writer, there is an immediate understanding and acceptance. It is the time to absorb what I am hearing in the sessions and the chance to talk with the speakers."

TRACK HOSTS:

JENNIFER BILLOCK (JOURNALISM), TOM GERENCER (CONTENT MARKETING), SUSAN SHAPIRO (BOOKS)



TOM
GERENCER

Twitter:
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Tom Gerencer is a writer and editor in the fields of careers, tech, business, and the outdoors. He's a regular contributor to *HP Tech Takes* and *Boys' Life*, with articles in *The Boston Globe Magazine*, *Fast Company*, *Outdoor Life*, and *Costco Connection*, and editing clients like Groupon, Poker.org, and Adorama. Tom has written more than 1,500 high-traffic articles with more than 70 million readers worldwide. His book for the Discovery Channel, *How It's Made*, is scheduled for publication in 2022. *Think Like Google – Build SEO With Empathy* is available on Amazon, and he is the author of a collection of short, funny science fiction stories called *Intergalactic Refrigerator Repairmen Seldom Carry Cash*.

"The ASJA conference gives you a massive dose of inspiration and insight from successful freelancers a few steps up the income ladder. They share their secrets so you can boost your earning power quickly," Gerencer said.



KRISTINE
HANSEN

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Kristine Hansen is a food, design, and travel writer based in Milwaukee. She contributes to *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, *TravelandLeisure.com*, *Fodors.com* and *NationalGeographic.com*. An ASJA member since 2006 and a past conference chair, Hansen serves on the Scholarship Task Force, awarding conference scholarships to BIPOC students and journalists. She's also the author of two books, *Wisconsin Cheese Cookbook: Creamy, Cheesy, Sweet and Savory Recipes from the State's Best Creameries* and *Wisconsin Farms and Farmers Markets: Tours, Trails and Attractions*. Her third book, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Wisconsin: How America's Most Famous Architect Found Inspiration in His Home State*, publishes in 2023. Hansen is a student in Stanford University's Online Certificate Program in Novel Writing, where she's working on a historical-fiction novel.

"Participating in Client Connections at past ASJA conferences has taught me how to pitch books, including both nonfiction and fiction, to editors and agents," Hansen said.

A Few Sessions to Anticipate

We have a range of dynamic, interactive, and fulfilling sessions planned for this year's conference. Here's a taste of what you can expect:



IMMERSED IN THE DETAILS: IMMERSION JOURNALISM, STORYTELLING, AND CHANGING BOUNDARIES OF THE GENRE

Immersion reporting is an all-consuming investment of time, money, and self. It is also increasingly fraught with challenges, from social media and media-savvy subjects to changing viewpoints on writing about marginalized groups and #OwnVoices. This interactive panel discussion will explore the changing craft and expectations in immersion journalism, alternative time and funding sources, and how to navigate the relational aspects of this reporting. With a broader understanding of how this genre's traditional boundaries can be blurred to serve the subject better, attendees will develop an action plan that takes into account the complexities inherent in this type of writing.

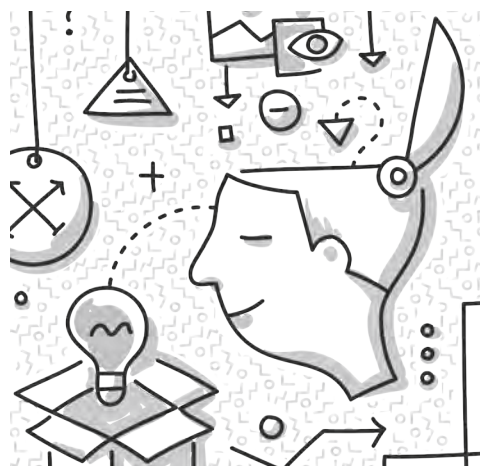


PITCH AND GET YOUR WRITING NOTICED (IN REAL TIME)

Want to get the attention of an assigning editor? Here's your chance. In this workshop and interactive pitch session, Estelle Erasmus – “All About the Pitch” columnist for *Writer's Digest* – has compiled a panel of prolific assigning editors looking to fill their pages. Bring your pitch for an instant analysis from the editors as well as Estelle's Edge (publishing wisdom) and learn what works – and what to avoid. Expect to hear from editorial luminaries like Iris Krasnow, senior editor of *The Ethel/AARP*; Alan Henry, service and games editor for *WIRED*; and Noah Michelson, editorial director at *Huffington Post Personal*.

DIVERSITY ISN'T A BUZZWORD: WHY AND HOW TO BUILD A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE INDUSTRY

Many organizations promised to do better in response to the Black Lives Matter protests and #publishingpaidme – but what does “doing better” look like? Susette Brooks, the director of multi-cultural marketing at Penguin Random House, will explain growing cultural shifts, why the writing industry must push forward, and how we can start. Brooks will draw on her experiences leading DEI initiatives for a literary magazine, a state library, and a publishing company. This is a not-to-miss discussion with a leading expert.



HOW TO SELL MORE BOOKS: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR BIGGER BOOK SALES

Laying the foundation for success is a key factor that will determine whether your book will make it or not. “Branding” and “platform” are terms we hear a lot, but does this matter to book sales? (It does.) This session will break down creative ways to build a foundation to support your book and build your success. This session demystifies topics such as “brand” and “author platform” and will teach attendees a simple pathway to boost book sales.

A Note from the Client Connections Team

First, thanks to the Client Connections team – Denise Palazzo, Cari Shane, and Sarah Ludwig Rausch – for all the hard work they've put in to pull together such a wonderful program!

Client Connections, an extremely valuable members-only program, will return to its face-to-face format in 2022. Client Connections will be held on the second day of the ASJA annual conference, May 2.

At this highly focused networking event, publishers, editors, literary agents, and writers sit down for nine-minute one-on-one meet-and-greets to explore how they can work together.

Participants pitch story ideas, book proposals, or expertise – and sometimes walk away with assignments and long-term business relationships, though follow-ups are par for the course.

Some of the agents and editors we've signed up include Donna Talarico from Hippocampus Magazine's small press division; Cam Brown, CEO of Kingfish Media; William Wolfslau from Gotham Ghostwriters; and John Willig from Literary Services Inc.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: ALAN HENRY



We're excited to announce Alan Henry will be the keynote for ASJA '22! Alan is currently the service editor at *WIRED* and was previously with *The New York Times*' Smarter Living newsletter and Lifehacker. His debut novel *Seen, Heard and Paid: The New Work Rules for the Marginalized* will be hitting shelves on June 7, 2022 via Penguin Random House. It's sure to be a can't-miss discussion!

WHAT MEMBERS ARE SAYING ABOUT OUR CONFERENCE

“I was a new member in 2019 and attended the conference that year. Meeting the group of high-earning writers who supported one another to reach their goals was life-changing. It gave me the push I needed to leave my full-time job and turn my lucrative side-hustle freelance business into a full-time gig. I will be forever grateful to all who were so welcoming and encouraging.”

KATIE NAVARRA BRADLEY

“I attended my first ASJA conference in 2011. I was blown away by the sense of community and networking from other members. And I walked away with new editor connections that led to assignments that covered not only the cost of the conference and related expenses but also my annual dues. While I haven't attended every conference since, every time I do, the results are the same: quality networking, strong community and new editor connections that lead to paid work. I've also volunteered, working at the members' check-in desk, helping with Client Connections and hosting sessions and panels. It's been a great way to not only meet other members and editors, but also give back to an organization that gives so much to me.”

KARON CLARK WARREN



WORLD WIDE WRITING WEB



Tips on Promoting Your Business Online



MARK RAY

Freelance Writer

Mark Ray is a freelance writer and editor specializing in health care, content marketing, and any writing that makes a difference. He has written for *Scouting*, *Eagles' Call*, *Presbyterians Today*, *Kentucky Homes & Gardens* and other publications.



Kelly McSweeney didn't have a website for her first two years as a freelance writer. Instead, the Boston-based ASJA member put her clips on LinkedIn and solicited clients there.

"It actually took me a whole two years before I made a website," she says. "Once I did it, it was so much easier than I thought."

Two Paths to an Online Presence

Since she was accustomed to posting content on clients' websites, McSweeney decided to build her site instead of hiring a developer. As she researched which platforms people liked, she saw a common theme. "I noticed that a lot of website developers said they didn't like Squarespace because it was too simple and there weren't enough options," she says. "That sounded great to me."

So McSweeney opened an account, picked a small-business (not portfolio) theme, and started building her site. Years later, it's still very much a work in progress. "I've kind of tweaked the way I position myself as a brand over time," she says. "My website still years later is not perfect, and that's never prevented me from getting work."



"My website still years later is not perfect, and that's never prevented me from getting work."

KELLY McSWEENEY





Toronto-based ASJA member Jane Langille also set out to build her own website. She wasn't as successful. "I consider myself fairly tech savvy, but I just wasn't figuring out how to make some of the functionality of the theme work design-wise," she says. "I thought, 'You know what, I'm just going to bite the bullet and pay somebody else to do it.'"

She actually hired two design firms. After the first let her down (and refunded her deposit), ASJA colleagues recommended Sumy Designs, a two-person shop based in Indiana and Texas. She contacted them at the end of December 2017, and within a month, the site was live. "At the time, they said I was their fastest turnaround client ever," she says. "I was ready to go and had all my content ready."



As writers, we're used to creating content for our clients — and that's just what your website should be, according to McSweeney. "It's not for you; it's for your potential client."

The Content

As writers, we're used to creating content for our clients — and that's just what your website should be, according to McSweeney. "It's not for you; it's for your potential client," she says. "Think about what they would do when they landed on your website. Make it easier for them to find you and know you're the right match."

For Langille, that means organizing clips by project type — features, annual reports, white papers, etc. She says clients don't necessarily realize that skills translate from one type of project to the next. "Clients think, 'I need an X, Y, Z and I need it soon and who can write this kind of stuff for me?'"

But your clips (and the rest of your site) also need to clarify what type of writing you do. According to Amy Masson of Sumy Designs, that probably means different pages or sections for each niche. "You need to have a way to separate out that portfolio," she says. "People who are looking for medical writing are not looking for travel writing."

Masson recommends linking to stories on client sites when possible. "You can't always do that — sometimes things are behind a paywall, sometimes things are no longer online and they're really good pieces you want to include — but for the most part I like having them link to where they actually exist," she says. (PDFs are the go-to alternative when live links aren't possible.)

Another critical site element is an "About Me" page that describes your background and niches, clarifying that you're a businessperson, not a hobbyist. "I think it's a smart thing to show other people that you're taking your business seriously," Langille says.

At the same time, your site can give potential clients a sense of your personality. "A lot of the work I do for clients is very serious and complicated and straightforward, and my website is a little bit more playful than that," McSweeney says. "I have had clients tell me directly, 'I hired you because I want our website to sound like your website.'"

McSweeney's playfulness extends to her photo, which she says is an essential site element. "I actually moved away from professional headshots and toward more casual photos that I've taken with portrait mode on my iPhone," she says.

Finally, you need a way — make that ways — for potential clients to contact you. "Different people use the internet different ways, so

it's important to think about who's going to contact you and how they're going to want to contact you – not how you want to be contacted,” says Masson. “Put a phone number, put an email address, put a form. If you do social media, put your social media.”

You could even add a Calendly link, as Sumy Designs does on their site, to allow potential clients to book time on your calendar for a free consultation. “Including that in a call to action if you'd like to get appointments scheduled I think is a great idea,” Masson says.

Care and Feeding

No matter how perfect your new website seems, Masson recommends reviewing all the content every quarter to check for broken links and ensure everything's up to date.

McSweeney makes much more frequent updates, often tweaking her site while she's procrastinating on client work. “We are used to this idea that your words have to be some kind of permanent record,” she says. “But a website is not that.”

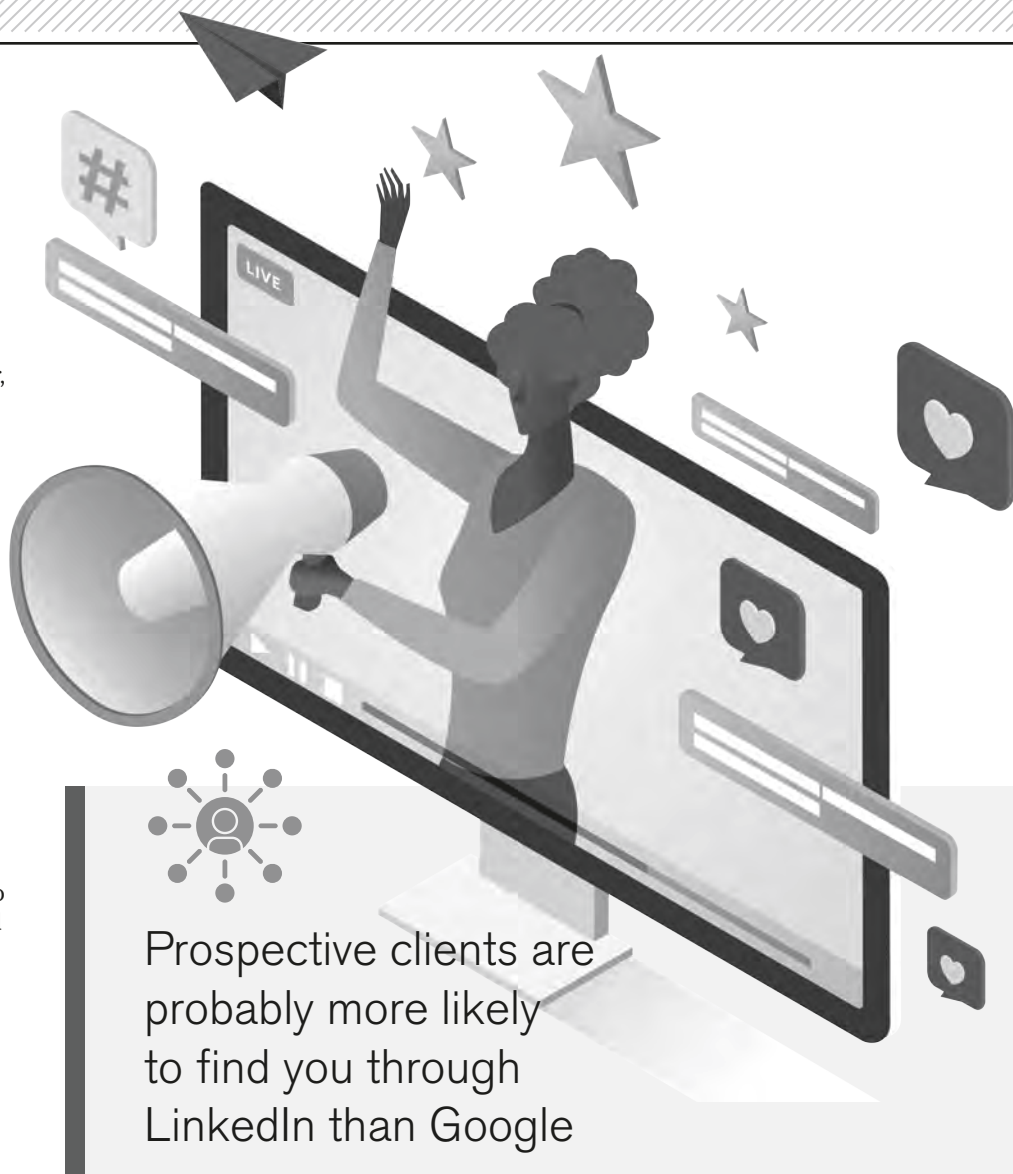
What about LinkedIn?

ASJA member John Peragine has a website, but he depends exclusively on LinkedIn to promote himself. “I have consistently received new clients as this platform, when properly utilized, is a freelancer's best option,” the Davenport, Iowa, writer says. “I don't have to pay hundreds of dollars in advertising. When people contact me, they have already vetted me and they are ready to talk business.”

In fact, prospective clients are probably more likely to find you through LinkedIn than Google. (To see how low you rank on Google, search for “freelance writer” plus your niche or location.) “It would be really competitive and really hard to rank for a keyword like ‘freelance writer,’” says Masson. “It would be very, very expensive to try to get on page one for that.”

As with LinkedIn, you could also rely on a site like Contently to host your clips. Setup is easy, but there's typically no way to add a bio, testimonials, or other content. What's more, you're more like a renter than a homeowner at such sites.

“You're adding your bricks to somebody else's house,” Langille says. “Build your own house, then add a few bricks to somebody else's house.”



Prospective clients are probably more likely to find you through LinkedIn than Google

DON'T FORGET TO CREATE YOUR PROFILE ON THE NEW ASJA WEBSITE



The new ASJA website offers members a quick way to build an online presence. Each member can create a member profile that includes, among other things, a career overview, a list of specialties, social media handles, ASJA and other awards, a list of top periodical and client credits, and up to 11 work samples.

“For those members who haven't invested in their own site, the profile will be an attractive and effective way for members to enjoy a web presence without the commitment and expense of their own website,” says Darcy Lewis, who chairs the website committee. “Those who already maintain their own websites can continue to do so while also enjoying access to this self-promotional tool that's included with all membership dues.”



HOLLY LEBER
SIMMONS

Freelance Writer



REFERRALS

HOW TO GIVE THEM
AND GET THEM





A FEW MONTHS AGO,

I got an email from fellow ASJA member Lisa Rabasca Roepe. The subject line was: “Are you looking for some marketing work?”

“A client reached out to me to do some (newsletter) writing but that just isn’t my jam,” she stated in the email. “If you would like an introduction, let me know.”

Lisa and I have only very briefly crossed paths before, but she was familiar with my work as editor of the ASJA Weekly newsletter, so when her client was looking for help with a newsletter, I was someone who came to mind. I was grateful to Lisa for the referral and the opportunity to be part of the ASJA network that allows fellow writers to know me and my work even if we are not well-acquainted in our personal lives.

But what does a referral actually refer to? Is it:

- A. Getting an email or a call from an editor who says, “Hi, Jane Smith told me you would be great for this work, are you interested?”
- B. Telling a friend or colleague you are looking for work in a certain niche and them saying, “Call Bob at Company X, I do not know if he is looking for anyone but tell him you know me?”
- C. A fellow writer getting in touch and saying, “A client has this assignment she needs done, but it is not my bailiwick? Can I introduce you?”
- D. All of the above.

The answer is D, all of the above. When considering referrals – whether you ask for one from a client or a colleague, refer a fellow writer to a client, or make introductions – here are some matters to consider.

GO ORGANIC

In querying ASJA, the word “organic” came up frequently when discussing referrals. But what exactly does “organic” mean? To Jennifer L.W. Fink, organic referrals happen through relationships developed over time.

“I frequently refer work to other ASJAers and writing friends because I know their areas of expertise through our relationships over the years,” she said. “If I see something that’s a good fit for them, I’ll refer them. Similarly, my writing friends do the same for me. If I am very slow on work, I may put out word to my friend: ‘Hey, I need some work. Please keep me in mind.’ I do the same for them.”

BE SOCIAL

One way to keep up your correspondence with fellow writers, as well as past and present clients, is to have a presence on social media. This does not mean choking up others’ feeds with constant self-promotion or borderline stalking them. Instead, simply engage. Like or comment on some of their posts, especially if you have something interesting to say.

“Staying active on social media and joining smaller writer networking groups has helped a lot,” said Debbie Abrams Kaplan. “People get to know your niches and think of you when they hear about something. I keep a running list of writers in certain niches to refer work to. I am also happy to post requests for writers on Facebook groups with the caveat that I’m not screening the writers.”

DO UNTO OTHERS ...

As Deborah Lynn Blumberg said, “referrals beget referrals.” Keep in touch with your fellow writing colleagues, not just to tell them what you are up to, but to keep abreast of what they are up to as well.

Building relationships with fellow writers is a way not just to become familiar with their work but to learn what they are like as people and as prospective co-workers.

“To refer someone, I always want to be familiar with their writing and know they’re dependable, a nice person and pleasant to work with,” Blumberg said. “They turn in clean copy and on time.”

Indeed, we want to feel confident that someone we refer reflects well upon us, so don’t hesitate to check in with a client to see how things worked out with your writing colleague.

And, of course, show your gratitude. Jennifer Billock knows it always feels nice to be appreciated, so she likes to send a \$5 Starbucks gift card to any fellow writer who refers her to a new client as a thank you.



“Is there a way we can think about our own referrals in a way that helps lift up other writers who might not have those networks and connections that we more privileged writers do?”

MELANIE PADGETT POWERS

THINK ABOUT DIVERSITY

Melanie Padgett Powers raised an important point: Consider diversity in your referrals. Look at the people you are referring. How many of them look like you, think like you, have similar experiences?

“People tend to recruit, recommend, and refer in business other people that look like them,” said Padgett Powers. “Is there a way we can think about our own referrals in a way that helps lift up other writers who might not have those networks and connections that we more privileged writers do?”

As to how to begin lifting up other writers, Monya De had an excellent first step: “Make it a goal to refer three marginalized people per year.”



“We gain more in good will and mutual trust from freely offering and accepting referrals than from turning it into a transaction.”

KATHERINE REYNOLDS LEWIS

MAKE USE OF ASJA RESOURCES

Here is yet another reason to update your member profile on the new ASJA website if you have not already done so. Sometimes a referral is not just about sending someone to a specific person, but rather to a resource.

“If I know someone’s work is a terrific fit with the client, I’ll do a referral. But if not, I’ll typically suggest they post the job on the ASJA site or do a search by keyword,” said Nancy Peske.

Indeed, Jane Langille noted on the ASJA group Facebook page: “The “Find a Member” feature on the new website works well! I just used it to refer other writers to someone who contacted me about writing web pages for a niche area I don’t cover.”

BLESS AND RELEASE ... TO SOMEONE ELSE

Sometimes, we outgrow clients for one reason or another. Maybe we move away from a specific niche, or our rates increase, but the client’s budget does not (terrible when that happens, isn’t it?), or one of a dozen other reasons.





When Dava Stewart outgrows a client, she tries to make the best of it for herself and the client and her fellow writers. “I describe the situation to a writer/friend/colleague and ask if they’d be interested in a referral and during the breakup conversation ask the editor if they’d like a referral (to another writer).”

SHOULD MONEY CHANGE HANDS?

“Please address how to handle it if someone asks you to pay them for referrals,” said Katherine Reynolds Lewis, co-founder of the Center for Independent Journalists. The keyword here is “ask.”

Let’s say a client has an assignment, and it is not up your alley, but you introduce them to another writer. Lewis points out that it would not be inappropriate for you to accept a “finder’s fee,” if the client offers. However, what would not bode well is for you to tell the client, “I’ll introduce you to another writer if you pay me.”

Likewise, if you ask a fellow writer for a referral to a potential client, and the other writer says, “Sure, I’ll introduce you, but if you get a gig with them, you have to give me 10 percent of what you earn.” To do so would be short-sighted at best.

“We gain more in good will and mutual trust from freely offering and accepting referrals than from turning it into a transaction,” Lewis says.

Holly Leber Simmons is a writer and editor based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her areas of coverage include the arts, culture, health and nutrition, cooking, family and gender issues, sex and romantic relationships, sustainable living, religion and personal profiles.



Tools of the Trade

DICTATION AND TRANSCRIPTION: DRAGON AND OTTER

Writers are a lot like hand models. If something happens to our hands or arms, our ability to work is severely curtailed. Not many of us can whip out a million-dollar insurance policy for our hands, so we need to work around that tendonitis, carpal tunnel, arthritis, bursitis, and doctor's orders to elevate, keep it still, and let it heal. We need to get the words out and organized without actual typing. Luckily, AI voice-to-text software does just that.



"It's important to distinguish between dictation apps like Dragon and transcription apps like Otter. They function differently and have different purposes."

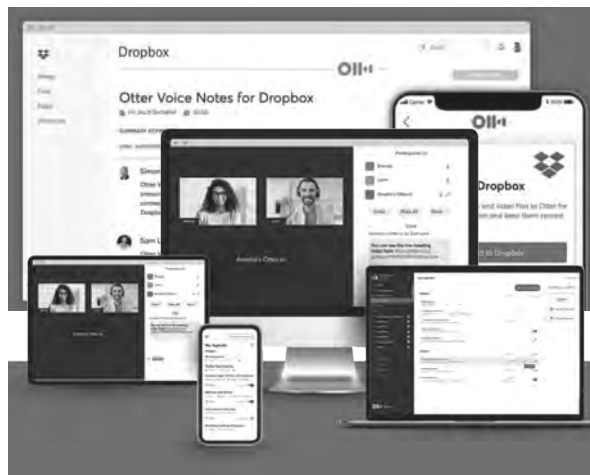
JACK EL-HAI



SHARON NAYLOR TORIS

Freelance Writer

Sharon Naylor Toris is the author of *The Stories of This House* (Tarcher/Perigee, 2022).



It's a good help if you're hand-injured, and it also allows you to work well even without the injury, both when you're wanting speed and efficiency for your projects and during your travels and commutes. While on vacation, you may experience issues with your laptop's typing mode, so a quick jump to your voice-to-text comes to the rescue in a moment. No happy hour missed, and no expensive computer help in a faraway land.

Sometimes you just want some AI assistance in streamlining your work. This article started as a spotlight on Dragon, with several of our members praising it as "state of the art." But a lively discussion on the ASJA Facebook page merely included Dragon in a roundup of tech tools for voice-to-text options. We also split the field into two functionalities.

Member Jack El-Hai says, "It's important to distinguish between dictation apps like Dragon and transcription apps like Otter. They function differently and have different purposes." For example, Dragon dictation is designed to interpret your and others' voices into text as it's learning how to do so like the AI app it is. Otter, a transcription app, takes recordings of your interviews, research, narratives, and even Zoom calls and transcribes them into text for your use.

Leslie Lang points to efficiency and lower cost for AI transcription. "[It's the] need for speed!" says Lang. "I use transcription [software] to spend less time on transcription, which is to me the most tedious part of the job, and more on actually writing. I can get so much more done in less time when I outsource transcription. I was using rev.com, a transcription service done by real people at \$1.25/word, to speed up my work process. When the much cheaper AI transcription started becoming a thing, I gave it a try.

"I have noticed a big change from the early days to now. It wasn't very good at first, but now, in some (but not all) situations, it can be amazing. I don't completely understand why sometimes an AI transcription is very good and sometimes it's very poor. It must have something to do with how people speak, but it's certainly not always obvious."

An important factor is being able to transcribe voices with accents. "Otter is not solely U.S.-focused, because I interview a lot of people from other countries and find



VOICE-TO-TEXT

In its current moment of evolution, voice-to-text technology allows you to:

- Compose documents
- Search the web
- Compose and respond to emails
- Record and transcribe interviews
- Select, format, edit, and move around documents
- Add and edit tables
- Open help and communicate with online help desks
- Record and transcribe interviews, including Zoom meetings
- And more

it can be really good with many different accents. In fact, sometimes it understands words I do not catch. That is incredibly helpful!" Lang says.

Keep in mind that Otter isn't a perfect process. Several members say that Otter doesn't get everything right. "I find AI transcription to be really good in some cases, and not as much in others. If I just interview someone for a quote or two, it can be great. I can review the transcript, pull out a quote, and if there is any question about its accuracy, it's easy to check it against the audio," says Lang. When content from an article needs to be flawless in large chunks, you may need to perform several steps to check the material against your video and the AI transcript. Lang says that takes a lot of time but is still faster than doing the entire transcript manually.

Conversations with editors, too, can get the AI treatment: "I have, with permission, recorded conversations with editors that I might want to review later, and then had those transcribed so I can save the transcription in the appropriate folder for that job. You can really use it for anything

you'd like to have a printout of," says Lang.

Of course, while many of our members sing the praises of Otter.ai, others speak of iPhone speech dictation, MacBook dictation, and other tools that work for them. Simply put, we're exploring ways to save time in bringing our research and words to the page so that we may be more efficient, overcome physical and locational challenges, and be able to access an editor's verbal instructions without having to email them for a reminder.

Randy Dotinga says, "Otter.ai is awesome, a huge time saver and very cheap. I just discovered its search function can search all your transcripts, which is very handy." Visit Otter.ai for current pricing, which is free for basic functions and \$8.33 per month for expanded tools such as importing pre-recorded files and using custom vocabulary and more.

Teresa Zumwald says, "Otter changed my writing life." We live and work in a world where technology can catapult productivity, yield, and profit. Programs like Dragon and Otter elevate us and our work. The advantages are ours.



Jennifer Goforth Gregory

WRITING SPECIALTY/FOCUS:
B2B Technology Content Marketing

ASJA MEMBER SINCE 2013

PERSONAL PASSION:
Dachshund rescue, Doxie by Proxie

ASJA BOARD MEMBER SINCE 2014

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

I focus on writing B2B technology content marketing. Previously, I was a freelancer and wrote three regular columns for four years for *The (Raleigh) News & Observer*. I've learned the hard way that I can't write B2C content, but I have to relearn this lesson every few years by taking on a project that turns into a disaster.

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

I mainly write for big tech companies, such as IBM, Microsoft, Adobe, IEEE, Experian, Verizon, and AT&T. I usually work through content marketing agencies but occasionally work directly with companies. I used to work for IBM full-time as a technical writer, so IBM has always been a big freelance client for me.

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

While attending an ASJA session at the 2013 conference, I got the idea to start a blog on content marketing. Based on the urging of my accountability buddy Stephanie Vozza who I met through ASJA, I turned the blog into a book. I also started a very active Facebook group that now has more than 7,000 writers. My proudest writing moments have come from helping writers build their content marketing business. I save every email and Facebook message from writers sharing how my book and blog have changed their lives and careers.

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

I've been an ASJA member since 2013. Being

accepted had been my goal for several years and I danced around my kitchen when I got my acceptance email.

How long have you volunteered for ASJA?

I joined the board of directors in July of 2014, about nine months after joining ASJA. I have been serving in at least one role ever since that time.

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

I served as co-chair for the NYC Client Connections in 2015 and 2016 with Wendy Helfenbaum. I was also Membership chair from 2015 to 2019. During that time, I started the Virtual Client Connections (VCC) and Special Interest Groups (SIG) program. I also launched the Ambassador Program, which pairs up non-members and members at in-person conferences, new member orientation, and the fall membership drive. I served as VCC chair from 2015 to 2018 and still volunteer as the VCC registration guru. I was also ASJA Secretary for two years, from 2017 to 2019, and served on the

ASJA executive committee. From 2019 to the present, I have served as the Membership Acceptance Chair. I also was the Content Marketing Track Chair for the virtual conferences in 2020 and 2021. I am currently serving as the interim ASJA Membership Engagement Chair until March 2022.

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

From 2015 to 2019, when I was on the board of directors, running VCC and serving as Membership Chair, I spent at least 20 to 30 hours a week volunteering for ASJA.

► **Why do you volunteer for ASJA?**

I wouldn't be where I am in my career without the help of other freelance writers, and I strongly feel that we have to help each other — we are each other's colleagues, not competition. I've also benefited greatly from my involvement with ASJA, from finding my accountability buddy Stephanie Vozza to earning several hundred thousand dollars in work that I've landed from ASJA programs or connections.



"I wouldn't be where I am in my career without the help of other freelance writers, and I strongly feel that we have to help each other."

JENNIFER GOFORTH GREGORY



ASJA helps writers connect with each other and with the resources we need to be successful in our careers. It's easy to feel alone as a freelance writer, and ASJA brings us together.

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

I believe you make time for things that matter to you. I've stayed up many nights till 3 a.m. working on ASJA projects because I believe in the organization and feel strongly about helping other writers.

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

ASJA is an organization where you get out of your membership what you put into it. You don't simply pay your dues and magically get \$100,000 in ew work. Volunteering is one of the best ways to get involved and meet other writers. Building your network of writers is invaluable both for support and referrals. Most of my best new clients come from referrals from ASJA membership.

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

I am VP of a dachshund rescue, Doxie by Proxy, and save dachshunds from kill shelters. In 2021, I personally saved over 160 wiener dogs. I also have two college kids that are nearby that I try to see whenever possible. Since my kids went to college last year, I started going on hikes with Meetup groups in my area, which has helped me take advantage of the freedom that being a freelance writer provides me.

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



ASJA >>>> Membership Benefits

Did you remember that ASJA provides membership benefits that go beyond this magazine, the annual conference and Client Connections, Pitch Slams and Special Interest Group (SIG) events?

» Some benefits you may not have taken advantage of lately include: «



Delta Airlines

Special discounted airfare for ASJA members traveling across the world, up to 10% of the fare.



Avis Car Rental

A corporate discount program for ASJA members to enjoy low rates.

SHARON
NAYLOR TORIS*Freelance Writer*

Sharon Naylor Toris is the author of 35+ books, two novels, and many to-do lists. She lives with her husband Joe in Morristown, N.J.

Market Report |

WRITER'S DIGEST

Remember the writer's magazines you started reading when you were just a beginning freelancer, eager and wide-eyed, flipping through pages and looking for all the answers. An interview with Nora Ephron, Sebastian Junger, Sarah Addison Allen? Your heroes were in there. Secrets were in there. So, what made you think you outgrew that writer's magazine? Why did you turn away?

What was it about learning from a writer's magazine that made you count yourself out from writing for it? If you are among the many writers who slapped a big "For Beginners" label on your formative writing resources and walked off to profitable pastures, you should probably come back to this particular writer's magazine that you tricked yourself into thinking you outgrew. You haven't. And you have the experience and finely-honed writing skills they are looking for. And they are a market with a reputation for paying quickly.

It is time to look at *Writer's Digest Magazine* for your next handful of article assignments. Because, like a good treat, you won't be able to stop at just one.

I spoke with Amy Jones, Editor-in-Chief of *Writer's Digest*, to find out about the columns and mini-features she is looking for.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN TERMS OF COLUMN AND FEATURE TOPICS?

Amy and her team are looking for ideas for the following sections:

- **WD 101** (beginner/refresher craft and business advice)
- **IndieLab** (self-publishing)
- **MFA Workbook** (they are not looking for "here is why you should attend an MFA program" articles, but rather, writing techniques/exercises/instruction)
- **For All Ages** (children's, middle-grade, young adult craft or business advice) columns
- **Mini-features for Inkwell**, which do not need to be connected to the issue themes

MAIN FEATURES CONNECTED TO ISSUE THEMES

They are also looking for main features connected to issue themes for the July/August 2022 issue and beyond. They encourage writers to get creative with their pitches on the issue topics:

May/June 2022: Tech for Writers

All the ways that technology appears in writing and how tech can help writers be more efficient in their craft and business.

July/August 2022: At a Crossroads

Writers will inevitably hit a crossroads where they must decide how to move forward, either in the drafting of a work-in-progress or in making choices about their career. Or, perhaps your work is at the intersection of two or more genres. This issue aims to help writers work through the tough parts of writing.

September/October 2022: Sinister Stories

This issue is exactly what it sounds like: How to write the creepy, horrific, unsettling, evil in fiction and nonfiction. Plus, how to identify and avoid potential scams or those who would take advantage of writers on the business side.

November/December 2022: Writing "The End"

Writing "The End" is a monumental achievement for writers, but what comes next? In this issue, they aim to explore everything from crafting compelling endings in all types of books (fiction, nonfiction, children's) to what to do after writing "The End" to writing character deaths and apocalyptic fiction to saying goodbye to opportunities that are not working for you anymore.

January/February 2023:

Finding Success Inside-the-Box

This issue will explore proven ways to find success in 2023. We often hear the phrase "think outside the box," but tools inside the box exist for a reason. Think happily-ever-after's in romance novels, mysteries that are solved at the end of the book, querying techniques that haven't changed even as they moved from snail mail to email, poetic forms to guide your verse.

More details about columns and Inkwell can be found at their submission guidelines page: www.writersdigest.com/resources/submission-guidelines.

The editorial calendar for 2022 can be found here: www.writersdigest.com/resources/editorialcalendar

THE COLUMNS AND FEATURE CATEGORIES: WHAT TO PITCH

Inkwell: This upfront section of the magazine is the best place for new writers to break in. Each Inkwell features a 1,600-word lead story that kicks off the magazine, in the form of an opinion-based piece. Inkwell also features short pieces of 300-600 words (trends, humor, insight on news that will still be relevant when the next issue hits stores, weird and intriguing tidbits about the writing world), as well as 1,200-word features. Please note that all product and book reviews are handled in house – as are columns like Breaking In, Poetic Asides, and Worth a Thousand Words. Include Inkwell and the name of your piece in the subject line of your query.

Author Profiles: These are profiles of prominent, specialized, or lesser-known authors that are placed in Inkwell and can include both debut and veteran writers. They generally run at 800-1,200 words. Please do not pitch profiles on authors who have been recently featured in the magazine or other writing magazines.

5-Minute Memoir: This recurring column features 600-word essay reflections on the writing life. The essays they love most are those with a strong narrative element, relaying an experience and its subsequent wisdom and takeaways for writers. Please include 5-Minute Memoir in the subject line of your submission and paste the essay in the body of your email.

NEW COLUMN! WD 101: Beginning with March/April 2021, this new column plays on the 101 years of *Writer's Digest* and the concept of 101 helpful advice. The guest written, 1,200-word piece will aim to offer writing business basics for those who need a refresher or for those just beginning. Topics may include tips for selling poems/articles/novels, etc.; contract negotiations; freelancing basics; different types of rights sales; types of editors; legal considerations; explanations of concepts and terms; and more.

MFA Workbook: Beginning with March/April 2021, the Writer's Workbook column will change to be the MFA Workbook. Rather than sharing excerpts from WD books as done previously, this column will be written by a different MFA student/teacher each issue. These articles will serve two purposes: 1) to provide an opportunity for MFA candidates to get bylines in a national publication in service of their degree and 2) offer MFA-type instruction/tips to writers who are not in MFA programs. Generally craft-focused with an emphasis on writing exercises and techniques (as opposed to touting the benefits of an MFA program), this column may occasionally include a business-based column if it is connected to what is learned in an MFA program (for example, successful networking). Please include MFA Workbook in the subject line of your submission and paste the essay or pitch in the body of your email. These articles should be about 1,600 words.

Writing Technique Articles: These features highlight a writing method and detail how to use it successfully, such as how to write an effective lede. They typically run at 1,200-2,500 words. Articles may cover fiction, nonfiction, freelance, poetry or scriptwriting techniques. Writers must have published successfully in the area they're writing about.

For All Ages: Beginning in the March/April 2022 issue of *Writer's Digest*, there will be a new 1,200-word, guest-written column about the craft of writing and the business of publishing for children, middle grade, and young adult readers (though they argue those books can and should be enjoyed by adults as well). With six issues per year, two issues will focus on children's books, two will focus on

WRITER'S DIGEST



WRITER'S DIGEST AT A GLANCE



Article lengths: Columns run between 1200-1600 words each. Inkwell features are between 1200-1600 words. Main features are between 2000-2500 words.

Pay rate: 50 cents/word

Rights: First world rights plus the option to reprint on the WD website for a \$30 flat fee and/or in a WD special interest publication for 25% of the original fee.

Contact: Send email queries to the acquisitions editor at wdsuggestions@aimmedia.com. Please do not send attachments. The wdsuggestions email is monitored by several editors and is the best format for submission. Please include your bio, why you are qualified to write the article, and a sample clip or two if available.

middle grade, and two will focus on YA. Topics should be specific and written by those with experience in that area. Examples include: rhyming or page turns in picture books, advice for setting up school visits to connect with readers, using accurate and contemporary language and references for YA, etc.

Market Reports: These are market reports highlighting publishing trends in a particular market. There are several essential elements in market reports. Anecdotes, specific examples, and quotes are important here, too. Interview and quote relevant sources. Describe the market including its target readership. Explain how to find ideas for the market. Point out how writers can generate salable ideas and provide tips on matching ideas to publications.



How to Make Editors Love You

(So You Get More Work!)



THOMAS GERENCER

Freelance Writer

Here's a quick rundown of how to keep editors happy and become indispensable so you get more assignments. This is inside info from a writer-turned-editor who built several solid and profitable relationships with editors along the way.

1. RESPECT THEIR TIME

"Editors are all about one millimeter away from a heart attack." I said that to the editor of *The Boston Globe Magazine* (when he called me to apologize for his lack of communication). He guffawed with relief, signaling that I'd hit it on the head.

Now the bad news: writing is not a two-way street. Editors are often late. As long as they're not late with your payment, it's fine. But you'll trip them up if you miss a deadline. Writers who consistently miss deadlines get passed over in favor of those who don't.

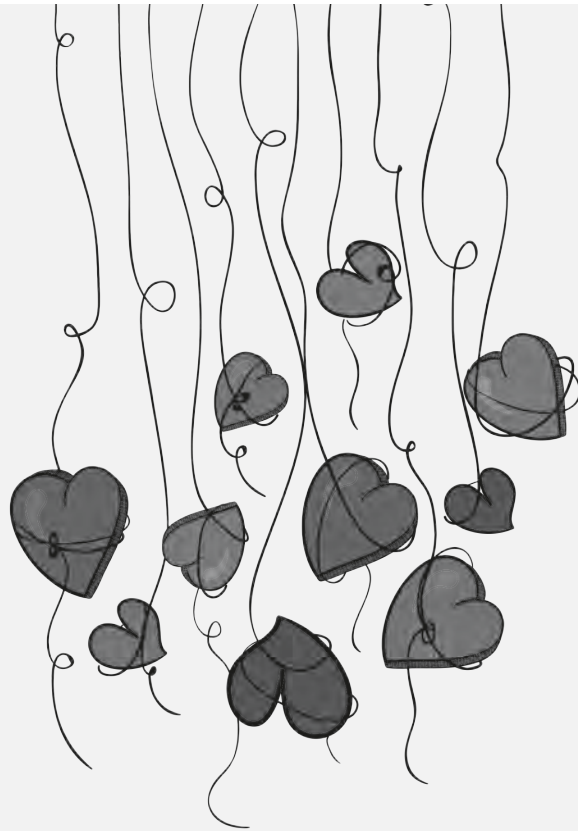
2. DON'T FEAR THE GHOSTS

"Was it something I said? Something I did? I must be a terrible writer, and I'll have to eat Ramen for the next three years." Stop. Because editors are busy, they'll ghost you. You'll send an LOI, a highly-polished article, or a checking-up email, and — crickets. Don't worry. Do good work, then move on.

It's okay to ping an editor in two weeks. After that, give it a month. Then two months, six, then every six, with zero expectations. But — don't stick with editors who make you work too hard or treat you like garbage. Writing is a numbers game. You have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find a prince.

3. DON'T ARGUE WITH FEEDBACK

As a writer, I used to push back on feedback. That's a nightmare for an editor. It's fine to argue a little, but once the editor says no thank you, say okay and move on. Make life easy on yourself and your editor, and you'll get more work. "No worries at all" is music to an editor's ears.



4. BE PROFESSIONAL

Don't get too chummy. Sure, editors and writers can be friends, but don't forget they're still your clients. Don't cross lines into unprofessional speech or take liberties with how you treat them. Even when my editors take a harsh tone, I work hard to keep my side of the table clean. Then if and when they feel better, their respect for me skyrockets.

5. PROOFREAD ONE LAST TIME

I got a great piece of advice from an editor several years ago: "You're a good writer, but you're sloppy. I know your eyes are bleeding and you're tired once you've finished writing, but come back one last time and proofread before you turn your work in." Since I started doing that, editors tell me, "You're such an easy edit." Easy = more assignments.

One last tip: Ask for a style sheet before you write. Then read it and check your work against it. You'll make the editor jump through fewer hoops. Make their lives easier, and they'll beat a digital path to your keyboard.

» Tom Gerencer is a content writer and editor in the fields of science, tech, business, and the outdoors. He's a regular contributor to *HP Tech Takes* and *Boys' Life*, with articles in *The Boston Globe Magazine*, *Fast Company*, *Outdoor Life*, and *Costco Connection*, and he works with editing clients like Groupon, Poker.org, and Adorama. Tom has written over 1,500 high-traffic articles with more than 70 million readers worldwide. Tom's book, *How It's Made*, for the Discovery Channel, is due out in 2022. His book, *Think Like Google — Build SEO With Empathy*, is now available on Amazon.

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