

SouthWest Sage

June 2010 www.southwestwriters.com

The Real Price of Computers in Writing

by Dr. Larry W. Greenly, D.C.

Most writers have long ago tossed away their old typewriters in favor of computers. With effortless cut-and-paste, spelling and grammar checking, word wrap and myriad other features, it's far easier to turn out a professional-looking manuscript on a computer. But as with most things, computers have a downside. Unless used correctly, they can actually be harmful to your health.

For example, if your eyes feel tired and achy after long periods of computer use, perhaps you've been squinting from unwanted glare reflected from your monitor screen. Some remedies include placing your monitor so it doesn't reflect the offending lamp or window. Perhaps you can turn off the light or close the curtains. If you still have an older cathode ray tube (CRT) with a convex screen, replacing it with a flat panel monitor will significantly cut glare.

Does your bottom hurt? It's probably because you're sitting on a hard chair or a cheap one with thin padding. Using a pillow is possible, but a well-padded, ergonomically shaped office chair is well worth the money. And check whether one with arms or not is better for you.

Have you wondered about your headaches, neck or shoulder pain? If you look at the profile of most people while they're using computers, you'll notice their necks and shoulders are thrust forward and their heads are tilted upward. Sitting in this posture for long periods of time can lead to neck and shoulder muscle tension, which manifests itself as a throbbing tension headache at the base of the skull or radiating over the eyes.

Leaning forward with your arms also forward while typing can lead to shortened pectoral muscles on your chest and achy muscles in your back, while also ruining your posture. It's important to get up occasionally and walk around. Move your head through its range of motions. An easy way to stretch your pecs is to stand in a doorway with your hands on each jamb at shoulder level. Lean through the doorway several times as if you were doing a pushup.

A common disorder today is carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) from long periods of typing on a computer keyboard or

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Painless Book Promotion For the First-Time Author

by Patricia Fry

Clients and students often ask me, "What is the best way to promote a book?" This seems like a reasonable question, doesn't it? But it's actually pretty difficult to answer in any sort of definitive way. How do I respond? I tell authors, "It depends on you and it depends on your book."

No, this is not a cop-out. Authors come in different sizes, shapes, temperaments, interests and abilities. Book projects fit into an assortment of categories and are designed to attract a variety of audiences. You would promote a book of your grandmother's recipes differently than you would the story of your father's military career. Of course, your book for old car enthusiasts wouldn't draw the same readers as would a book of pet stories. And the way you approach these varied audiences will differ as well.

Let me offer you some basic tips for promoting your book. These are general ideas that any author can and should engage in right out of the starting gates (or, should I say the publisher's swinging doors).

Before Your Book is a Book

Yes, you should be thinking about promoting your book even before you start writing it. Know who your target audience is. Make sure this is a large enough segment of people to support your book. And keep this audience in mind with every word you write. If you can't justify writing the book you have in mind, because the market is saturated or because there just isn't enough of an interest, consider tweaking it to fit the current needs of your audience.

This is also when you should be designing and developing your website and building your mailing and emailing list.

Consider establishing a blog. Create a newsletter or e-newsletter and start circulating it to your potential audience. This is a good step toward building your platform (your following, your way of attracting readers).

I also recommend submitting articles or stories to a variety of publications as a way to become known as an expert in your field or as a writer in your genre.

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President's Message

Once again I find myself complimenting our SouthWest Writers board and members. The contest committee has been hard at work, putting in tons of man hours--sorting, processing and distributing the hundreds of contest entries. This is no easy job, nor one taken lightly. Each and every entry is important and the committee does its best to make sure the submission is judged fairly.



**President
Melody Groves**

And thanks to *you*, the writers who entered the contest! While sometimes it's a bit scary to send in the first twenty pages, there's also something exhilarating about it. Congratulations for entering. That in itself is a major achievement.

Speaking of achievements, check out the Sage's "Successes" page. Our members are busy—and successful—writing, speaking and promoting their work. Send in your success (it's less scary than submitting to the contest). We'd love to fill the entire page!

Summertime with SouthWest Writers promises to be a memorable few months. While the contest is being judged, we're still busy offering classes, workshops and the lure of the next great conference. Coming up September 11, the conference committee has already confirmed senior editors and agents who are looking for material and can acquire. The evening before the conference, the banquet recognizing the contest winners promises to be something truly special. Mark your calendars. You definitely don't want to miss this.

Here's wishing you a safe and full-of-writing June.

Melody

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Patricia Ruta
Judy Kaul

SouthWest Sage Advertising Rates Worldwide Internet Circulation

The SWW website receives thousands of page requests every month.

Business card size: \$20 1/4 page, vertical: \$40 1/3 page, horizontal: \$50
15% discount for 3 mos. 20% discount for 6 mos.

Deadline: 1st of each month for the following month.
Payment due with camera-ready ad copy in .jpg format.

Annual Membership in SouthWest Writers

Individual: \$60 (\$100 for 2 years), Two people \$50 each,
Student 18 and over: \$40, Under 18: \$25
Requires proof of student status

Outside U. S.: \$65, Lifetime Membership: \$750

Download the *Sage* from www.southwestwriters.com

Join us first Saturday: 10 AM-Noon: Third Tuesday: 7-9 PM
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE,
Albuquerque, New Mexico



SouthWest Sage

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Cinderella Story for Novelist by Sandra Toro

For those writers who have novels languishing in a drawer, this is a story of encouragement and hope.

Paul Harding, dubbed Mr. Cinderella by *The New York Times* in April, graduated from the Iowa Writer's Workshop having written a "slow, contemplative, meditative, quiet book" about the deathbed memories of a New England clock repairer whom he named *Tinkers*. He sent the novel out to a handful of agent and editors in New York City and received rejection letters back from all of them.

Three years later, after storing the book in a drawer, he sent it out again, this time to small independent presses. Tiny Bellevue Literary Press paid him a thousand-dollar advance, published the book with a first printing of 3,500 copies and distributed it to independent book sellers. Between then and now, it sold seven thousand copies. The book won glowing reviews from *The New Yorker* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

In April, 2010, *Tinkers* won the Pulitzer prize for fiction. This was the first time a book published by a small independent press had won the Pulitzer prize for fiction since 1981. Within an hour of the Pulitzer announcement, Random House sent out a news release boasting of a two-book deal with Mr. Harding. The Guggenheim Foundation also announced they had awarded him a grant for his writing. Mr. Harding assures us this won't be "catastrophic success."

CONGRATULATIONS to the winners of the SWW 2010 First Quarter Writing Competition Winter Memory

1st Prize: John Kennedy, Albuquerque, NM: no title

3rd Prize: L. Coffin, Saratoga Springs, NY: "Winter Memory"

3rd Prize: Doug Ellerbusch, Anaheim, CA: "Vroom Vroom"

Honorable Mentions:

Karen Higgins, Albuquerque, NM: "Brownie, Blizzard and Bedazzled"

Will Young, Albuquerque, NM: "When Grandpa Met Santa"

Michael Callahan, Lompoc, CA: "My New Christmas Outfit"

Grant Writing: It's Not Just for Masochists

by Scott Jones

In this article I try to answer a small question – on the way to writing the Great American Novel, should you also become a grant writer?

Grants are a fundamental tool of public policy and institutional charity – grants are drivers that enable governments and foundations to actually deliver on their goals. The amazing and intriguing thing about a grant offer is that some human being is sitting behind it, just waiting to hand your organization money. A grant is not free money by any means – but it is an optimized way of getting the right thing done in the right community. Grant *writing* is part of the noble art of freelancing and that's where you come in.

As well as a way to use your craft for a common good, grant writing is a path to work your way into a specialized paying profession. While I am *not* qualified to advise you on how to obtain a full time grant writing job working for a university or a hospital, I can tell you a bit about what I have learned on the front end of grant writing.



Get a start: You can easily begin as a volunteer and move into professional services later, once you have a track record.

Get an organization: You don't have to start by writing grants for a medical school. A quick look around will show you many organizations that need volunteer grant writers – local organizations are often hopeful, terrified, desperate, and ready to be grateful for your amateur efforts. I started by writing grants for wildfire defensible space and since have expanded into helping out with community recycling and fire department equipment funding. I've had two other opportunities that I've had to turn down: your problem will be selecting the right organization.

Get a mentor: Grant writing is like all writing – there are accepted skills, structures and strategies that allow your grants to compete. A wise historian or record-keeper in your organization can help you with style and content – and a stack of paper. Your predecessor, often another grant volunteer turning things over to you, can also give you key insight. Your first questions are easy: "Who gives out grants?" "How much is available?" "What is my calendar for application?"

Get scientific and political staffers: You're going to need subject-matter expertise that you can never ever develop personally. Your strategy is to build content-smart teams

that support you. Interview for your first expert like you would interview a potential new hire in your private business. With that first person, you can follow his network to build a full team. Don't be afraid to ask for a lot of free effort – experts love to help. My team got our first expert out of the organization who was offering the grant – a local forester from NM Forestry Division.

Follow the rules: The forms that you'll be using allow the Grantor to fairly evaluate what opportunity you're offering in a way that works for them: you must use the forms. Here are some additional ideas for a strong application. First, have a strategy of differentiation in your application – don't be a me-too community. Second, start every major section with an executive summary that makes your case succinctly and strongly. Third, answer all the questions. If the answer is "not applicable," say why. Fourth, give the Grantor clear commitments of what your organization will accomplish and how it will be measured. Fifth, make those commitments reasonable, and be very careful not to over-extend your organization. Sixth, quote hard-hitting facts that make your case – and don't dilute your case with weaker arguments. Seventh, detail your organization's track record, proving that you can execute. Eighth, avoid passive verbs and long sentences. Ninth, don't fill space just because you have room left in the box.

Get the right mix of bureaucracy and creativity: All that paperwork (or e-work) is there so that the Grantor can evaluate competing applications head-to-head fairly. Applications get thicker and more demanding every year, both to help the Grantor's evaluation and to keep him from being bamboozled by a misleading or lying application. The Grantor wants to give you the money, and is only trying to ensure that you are the best fit. Your job is to make giving you the grant an easy decision for the Grantor, and that means a good-hearted, happy attitude towards the process and the paper. Creativity within the structure is essential to winning, but doing the paperwork well is essential to being considered at all.

A final word on focus: The Grantor is your number-one customer – and you probably thought it was your organization! You're going to enjoy this, even if it hurts.

Scott Jones retired from geophysics and technical management in 2006. Since then, he has tried to convince himself and others that he is a writer. Scott has received an honorable mention in the E. M. Koepfel Short Fiction Contest, and been a finalist in the Glimmer Train Fiction Open. He's also received an honorable mention in the unpublished-nonfiction-book-chapter category for the CNW Annual Competition. There are three novels in the drawer and a book of short stories strewn around the hard drive.

From *Blackberry* to The Wildflower Press—How I Became a Small-Press Publisher

by Jeanne Shannon

In the summer of 2009 I celebrated with Karen McKinnon the appearance of her memoir, *Set in Motion*, which I published through my imprint, The Wildflower Press. It was the 13th Wildflower Press book to appear since 1999, when I published a chapbook of poems, my own and Carl Mayfield's, titled *Sometimes the Light*.

But my publishing venture began long before the nineties. I can trace its origins to a summer evening in 1955 when I sat in the periodicals room of McConnell Library at Radford College in Virginia and perused the poetry magazines. The collection included *Poetry*, which was *the* poetry magazine at the time. But the magazine that absorbed my interest was *The Lyric*, edited by a woman in the nearby town of Christiansburg. It was as attractive and professional looking as the prestigious *Poetry*, and the thought came to me that I would like to publish a poetry magazine. If a woman "just down the road" could produce a magazine like *The Lyric*, why couldn't I? (Incidentally, *The Lyric* is still around and in its 90th year.)

The thought of publishing a poetry magazine went away when "life"—graduation from college, my first job, marriage, moving to Arizona and then to New Mexico—got in the way, but the thought returned in the mid-1970s. At that time I was subscribing to a "little magazine" from California called *Community of Friends*, and the editor, Moses Yanes, offered economical printing services to other poetry publishers. Now seemed like the time to begin the poetry magazine, and so *Blackberry* was born. (Thank you, Moses, wherever you are.) Soon another serendipitous incident occurred. At work I met a graphic designer who told me he had grown up in Tom's Creek, Virginia, in my home county, and I said to him, "I'll bet you know what a blackberry vine looks like." Yes, he did, and he agreed to design the cover of my magazine, featuring a thicket of blackberry canes like the ones I remembered from childhood. (Thank you, Clyde McFalls, wherever you are.)

The first issue of *Blackberry* appeared in 1975, and the avalanche of submissions began. In those days the only way to send submissions was by postal mail, and my mailbox overflowed almost daily. Subscriptions, of course, were few and far between. At first I had visualized *Blackberry* as a way to publish my own poems without having to deal with the tastes and opinions of editors, but I soon became more interested in helping other poets get their work into print. When I became tired of the labor and expense of producing the magazine, I stopped publishing it with issue 11 in 1981.

The "publishing bug" hadn't left me, however, so with the demise of *Blackberry* I began publishing a series of poetry broadsides called "Wildflower leaflets," and I called my imprint for them "The Wildflower Press." Each "Wildflower" featured a drawing of a flower on one side and poems on

the other. I also published two modest anthologies, *The Wildflower Collection* and *Queen Anne's Lace*.

Just before I retired from my job as a technical writer, I brought out the 1999 chapbook. Shortly after my retirement in 2000, Phyllis Hoge Thompson asked me if she could publish her memoir through my press. And so The Wildflower Press was officially born, complete with a City of Albuquerque business license.

That first book was Thompson's *The Painted Clock*, a memoir of the years she spent in the New Mexico ghost town of Mogollon. Then came three other memoirs: Psychologist Maryhelen Snyder's *No Hole in the Flame* (about the sudden death of her husband); Harvena Richter's *Passage to Teheran* (describing her trip on a motor scooter through the Middle East in 1956), and my own *Stars Scattered Like Seeds* (poems and stories drawn from my early life in Virginia). I also published *Accidental Magic*, a collection of poems by the late Peggy Pond Church, gathered and edited by her family members. That was a Wildflower Press best seller. It went into a second printing and was the subject of a column by Jim Belshaw in *The Albuquerque Journal*. Other poetry books included Constance Hester's *Call Me Myriad* and Phyllis Hoge Thompson's *Letters from Jian Hui*. Then came a second edition of *No Hole in the Flame* and Karen McKinnon's *Set in Motion*. Helping others get their words into print was still what made the effort of publishing worthwhile.

A few years ago—serendipity again—I was introduced to the University of New Mexico librarian in charge of the Center for Southwest Research (CSWR), and as a result all the issues of *Blackberry*, all the Wildflower leaflets, and Wildflower Press books are archived there. Thank you, CSWR!



SWW 2010 Second Quarter Writing Competition Short Fiction

Now here's a challenge. Write a fiction story, 500 words limit. It MUST contain a man or a boy (any age), a dog, and a pair of scissors. The setting is your choice. Don't forget--all stories have a beginning, middle and end, and contain conflict. Postmark deadline: June 30, 2010. Please note if you grant publication permission. All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail entries to SWW Quarterly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

Program Location: New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE, Albuquerque

Saturday, June 5
10:00 a.m. to noon

Lucia Zimmitti

***Create Vivid, Memorable Characters:
Breathe Life into Fictional People***

There's no way around it: If your characters are uninteresting or inauthentic, your story won't get an agent's/publisher's attention. Pick up essential character-building tips and approaches and learn how to create characters with the "it-factor" readers crave. We'll discuss why certain characters are so endearing to readers and why others prove to be just plain annoying; how to get your reader to feel more connected to your fictional people; exercises for getting to know your characters better before you manipulate them in a scene. Don't miss it—your characters are counting on you!

Lucia Zimmitti has been guiding people in the art of writing for years, both as a high school English teacher and a writing instructor at the college level. She currently works as an editor, consultant, and writing coach. Lucia has presented writing workshops and seminars at various conferences and retreats across the country. She was recently interviewed on National Public Radio about her method for encouraging and inspiring writers. You can reach her at www.ManuscriptRx.com.



Tuesday, June 15
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

James McGrath Morris

***I See Dead People: Researching Lives
from the Past***

Conducting the research necessary to write a biography, a history, or a historical novel can be daunting. In this talk, author James McGrath Morris shares the techniques, tools, and tips necessary to become a sleuth of the past. He will cover conducting archival research, using the latest electronic research (particularly newspapers), and methods of organizing one's work.

James McGrath Morris spent five years working on *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power*. His previous book, *The Rose Man of Sing Sing: A True Tale of Life, Murder, and Redemption in the Age of Yellow Journalism*, was selected as a *Washington Post* Best Book of the Year for 2004 and was optioned as a film and released as an audio book. He is the editor of the monthly *Biographer's Craft* and one of the founding members of Biographers International Organization.



Photo by Michael Mudd

Saturday, July 3
10:00 a.m. to noon

Irene Blea, Ph.D.

When Genealogy is Not Enough

Dr. Irene Blea took an interdisciplinary approach to writing her first novel, *Suzanna*. She will discuss what she did when genealogy was not enough while exploring family history. She visited northern New Mexico villages on the Santa Fe Trail, conducted research in libraries, historical societies, the Fort Union archives and talked with people in villages where the Trail entered New Mexico territory.

Dr. Irene Blea, a native New Mexican, graduated with a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Colorado-Boulder. For twenty-seven years she wrote textbooks for university classroom use on race and gender relations. She retired from California State University-Los Angeles, as a tenured, Full Professor and Chairperson of the Mexican American Studies Department, the first and largest department of its kind in the nation. Blea has written seven textbooks and over thirty articles on U.S. Hispanics. Visit her at www.Facebook.com.



Tuesday, July 20
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Partnering with Bookstores -- a Professional Panel

You can learn tons about what's selling in your market by searching the bookstores and talking with the stores' book buyers. You can also benefit from a close relationship with stores when your book arrives. In this program three bookstore professionals will discuss effective ways writers can work with bookstores. The panel will include Harold Burnett, John Hoffsis and Laura Kuechenmeister.

Harold M. Burnett -- Southwest Writers Treasurer -- has decades worth of experience as a bookstore owner in Los Alamos.

Laura Kuechenmeister is the event promotions director and marketing professional at Bookworks.

John Hoffsis has owned and operated Treasure House Books & Gifts in Old Town Albuquerque since February of 1999.

DIMENSION IN FICTION AND NARRATIVE NON-FICTION**Sean Murphy****Saturday, June 26th****9:30-4:30**

\$79 members, \$89 non-members (fees include lunch)

New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank north of Spain

In this hands-on one-day workshop we'll examine and practice the elements that make up a fully dimensional work of fiction. One of the distinctions often made between literature and fiction designed simply for entertainment or diversion is the richness not just of the primary elements such as plot and character, but of aspects such as sensory detail, style and tone, sense of place, thematic ideas, imagery, symbolism, and literary devices such as personification, metaphor and foreshadowing. We'll work together in exploring how these and other elements fit together and support one another in a fully realized piece of fiction or creative nonfiction. Bring your writing materials and ideas for a strong day of inspiring writing!

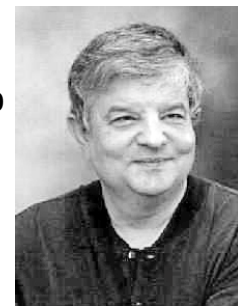
Sean Murphy is the author of *The Hope Valley Hubcap King*, *The Time of New Weather*, *The Finished Man*, and first place winner for best novel in the National Press Women Communication Award. To learn more about Sean Murphy visit his web page at www.murphyzen.com.

WRITING GREAT DIALOGUE**Melody Groves****Wednesdays, July 7, 14 & 21, 6:30-8:30 pm**

\$49 members/ \$59 non-members. Class limited to 14. SWW office, 3721 Morris NE

Ever wonder how writers get their characters to sound like they're really talking? How to get each character to sound different? This class is for fiction and non-fiction writers who desire to bring their characters to life. Writing good dialogue is listening to the voices in your head.

Melody Groves is the author of two non-fiction books (*Ropes, Reins and Rawhide: All About Rodeo*, and *Praising the Bar: Historic Bars of the Southwest* (2011)), four Western novels (*Border Ambush*, *Sonoran Rage*, *Arizona War*, and *Kansas Bleeds* (2011)), two screenplays, and numerous magazine articles. She is the president of SouthWest Writers, publicity chair for Western Writers of America, and a member of the New Mexico Gunfighters Association. Her website: www.melodygroves.com.

**"EVERYBODY MUST GET HONED"--
A CLASS IN ADVANCED SCREENWRITING****Rick Reichman****Sundays, June 6 - August 1, 6:30-9:00 p.m.****(no class July 4)**

\$160 members, \$170 non-members, Class limited to 14 SWW office, 3721 Morris NE

Yes, I've been taking a nostalgic listen back to the sixties. But I've also been thinking about this summer of 2010. If you are in the midst of a screenplay, want to learn or sharpen your pitching skill, and want to progress your script, I and SouthWest Writers are offering once again an eight-week Advanced Screenwriting class. We'll talk about writing, practice and critique each other's pitching, and read and craft our screenplay scenes.

Rick Reichman has optioned two screenplays and has written two books on screenwriting. His students have sold scripts to many of the major Hollywood studios and have sold scripts to or worked on the TV shows "Roseanne," "Home Improvement," "Xena—Warrior Princess," and many others. One of his students is currently co-executive producer of the CBS hit "The Mentalist."

HOW TO FORM AND MAINTAIN CRITIQUE GROUPS**Melody Groves****Saturday, July 17, 1:00 pm-4:00 pm.**

\$25 members/ \$35 non-members (snacks are included) Workshop limited to 14 SWW office, 3721 Morris St.

Does your novel contain enough sub-plots? Is your non-fiction article or book clear? Is your poem saying what you think it should? And does your screenplay contain enough reversals? If you're not sure, you need a critique group.

Critique groups, usually 4-6 people, serve as junior editors, pointing out strengths and areas needing improvement in writing. You read theirs and comment; they read yours and comment. It's truly a symbiotic relationship. And the input is invaluable. However, forming or finding one, maintaining one is harder than it seems.

Through this workshop, we'll practice a quick critique, discuss the mechanics of critique groups, and hopefully, form a few on the spot. Kind of like a marriage made in Heaven.

Register for classes and workshops online at www.southwestwriters.com or call 265-9485.

Successes and Announcements

Karin Bradberry won first prize in the 5th Annual *Writers' Digest* Poetry Contest for her villanelle, "Javelina." She will receive a \$500 award and the poem will appear in the July/August issue of *Writers' Digest*.

Karin Bradberry's article, "Think Like a Lawyer: Building Persuasive Arguments in an Intervention Program," was published in the spring edition of NMCTE's *New Mexico Language Journal*. It describes the developmental writing course she created for Gilbert L. Sena Charter High, where she has been teaching language arts for six years. The real success belongs to the school's students: they recently scored among the highest in the state on the composition portion of NMHS Competency Exam.



Andy Mayo won first place in the *albuquerqueARTS* flash fiction contest with his story "Living With." He received his \$100 prize at a SWW meeting in April.

(photos of Bradberry, Mayo and Stablein by Peggy Spencer)

Marilyn Stablein's first collection of poetry, *Splitting Hard Ground*, was recently published by La Alameda Press, Albuquerque. She has a poem in the new issue of *Sin Fronteras* magazine published in Las Cruces as well as new work in the *Chokecherries* anthology published by SOMOS (Society of the Muse of the Southwest) in Taos.



Several SouthWest Writers members recently have had works selected for publication in the anthology *New Mexico Voices*. They include **Melody Groves**, **Marilyn Stablein**, **Irene Blea**, and **Ruth Friesen**.

The second annual "**Scare The Dickens Out of Us**" ghost story contest offers \$1000.00 first place, \$500.00 second place and \$250.00 third place prize money for a new, original ghost story up to 5000 words. Full rules are available at www.clarklibraryfriends.com. Entries will be accepted from July 1 to October 1.

"**To a Wild Rose**" Poetry Contest for the best poems about a flower, cash prizes of \$50, \$25, and \$15 and publication by The Wildflower Press. Poems may be in any form or free verse, not have been published or be under consideration for publication elsewhere nor entered in any other contest. Entry fee: \$3.00 per poem or 3 poems for \$5.00. Postmark deadline: June 30. Put each poem on a separate page with your name and address at the top of the page. Send one copy of each poem along with entry fee to The Wildflower Press, P.O. Box 4757, Albuquerque, NM 87196-4757.

Suspense Magazine is giving away four free electronic issues to all SWW members. They are looking to increase readership and awareness for all authors in the suspense/thriller/mystery/horror genres. To receive the free issues, email editor@suspensemagazine.com. Preview the magazine at www.suspensemagazine.com.

Professional Writers of Prescott's annual writing contest deadline is May 29. With three categories---fiction, non-fiction and poetry, prizes of \$100, \$50 and \$25 will be awarded for first, second, and third place in each category. The finalist judges are highly-qualified college level instructors. Visit www.prescottwriters.com for full details.

The **International Cat Writers Association** (CWA) is now accepting entries for its 17th annual Communications Contest with more than \$12,000 in prize money in its kitty. CWA's writing competition is open to work published between June 16, 2009 and June 15, 2010. Entries must be published in magazines, newspapers, newsletters and online or on the air. Entry deadline is July 1. For more information visit www.catwriters.org.

The Writers' Bridge, an international freelance cooperative that connects writers with fresh ideas and new markets, is offering a one-month free trial membership. They provide an e-digest of writing jobs gleaned every weekday from 450 online sources. For more information, visit www.thewritersbridge.com.

Reading New Mexico, connecting New Mexico books with the world, www.readingnewmexico.com, is dedicated to reviewing books with a connection to the Land of Enchantment. Its list of reviewers includes SWW members **Dr. Irene Blea**, **Lola Eagle**, **Jerry Davis**, and **Jim Thompson**.

The College of Santa Fe will host a writers workshop July 8-11 in Santa Fe on the CSF campus. Seven writers including Mark Behr, Percival Everett, Bill deBuys, Greg Glazer, Pam Houston, Michael McGarrity and Malena Morling will lead workshops in fiction, non-fiction and poetry. For more information visit http://csf.edu/summer_workshops/writers.



Receiving awards at the New Mexico Press Women's conference are Kay Grant, Ruth Friesen, Sherri Burr, and Rose Marie Kern.

Revising Fiction: How to Avoid Writing Information Dumps

by Kirt Hickman

Sooner or later, we must all incorporate technical information (real or fictitious) into our fictional narrative. This can be tricky because this kind of information often comes from beyond the realm of your reader's experience, yet you must educate your reader without slowing the pace of the story. Here are some tips for doing this.

First, don't write every detail you unearthed during your research. Include only facts being observed, heard, or considered by your viewpoint character. Doing so makes the information immediate and important.

Second, don't stop the action to drag your reader through a lengthy instructive sidebar. One way around this is to have an expert character explain the technical details to a novice. Consider the following information dump:

It's costly and time consuming to develop a new metal technology for use in nanochips. Manufacturing issues alone include developing processes to apply and remove the new alloy, and integrating both operations into existing manufacturing procedures, not to mention fabrication of the alloy itself, which requires the purification of all of the constituent metals and combining them into a uniform-composition material.

This is certainly a concise way to address these technical issues, and the character might even be considering these facts, which would make the information relevant. Nevertheless, you must find a way to make the reader care. Here's how I handled this technical download in my science fiction novel, *Worlds Asunder*:

When Michelle arrived, she was unsure of what she was going to say. The conclusion she'd drawn was far-fetched, to say the least, almost to the point of absurdity. She'd present her opinions, of course, but the data she'd use to support them was fairly technical and she wasn't sure how much Chase would really understand. There was also no way to know if she'd missed anything in her analysis. So she'd tell the story, just as clearly as she could, and let him decide if she was out of her mind.

This paragraph makes the reader curious about Michelle's discovery. I proceed with the scene's technical content only after I've piqued the reader's interest:

"We've been trying to determine the purpose of the alloy. And the bottom line is, there isn't one."

"What do you mean?" he said after a moment's pause.

"I mean that someone went through the trouble and

expense of developing a new metal composition for nanochip manufacturing, an alloy that nobody's ever used or experimented with before—for this purpose or any other that I can find in the literature." Her hands gestured her exasperation as she spoke. "Then they supposedly classified the process, kept it top-secret, and made sure that nobody else in the worlds has it. Am I right so far?"

"Yes. Go on."

"Well, they must've had a reason. Nobody would design a technology, develop it to the point of manufacturability—which generally takes years to do—and then classify it, unless it was better for some application than anything already available."

"Makes sense."

"So the guys in the lab and I have been asking ourselves the questions, 'In what way is this alloy better than those used in the commercial sector?' and, 'To what application would that improvement best be employed?'"

He placed his mug on the table. "What did you find?"

"I'll show you." She turned her thinpad so Chase could see the display right-side up. "We started with the obvious, electrical characterization. The resistivity of the alloy is slightly higher than that of the standard. For reasons of internal heating and power consumption, low resistivity is categorically better than high. Then, because the chip was used for a space application, where temperatures can vary by several hundred degrees from sunlight to shade, we did a temperature response analysis. The response is virtually the same as that of the standard, though the melting point of the new alloy is two degrees lower."

Michelle displayed a variety of results for a wide range of physical tests, including material hardness, reliability, corrosion resistance, and others. She stopped to explain the significance of the various aspects of the graphical data and answered any questions that Chase asked.

It takes longer to convey the information this way, but if you get the reader caught up in the story, he won't recognize you're feeding him a large technical download. Strive to achieve this in your manuscript.

Kirt Hickman, author of Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness and the award-winning science-fiction thriller Worlds Asunder, has sold nearly a thousand books at signings in the past year. He has been teaching classes for years and was awarded SWW's "Instructor of the Year" award in 2009.

The Real Price of Computers in Writing, continued from page 1

using a mouse. Symptoms of numbness or tingly feelings in the first three or four fingers is an indicator of CTS. See fig. 1.

Women are afflicted with CTS five times more frequently than men; young people are infrequently afflicted. CTS can be bilateral, but it's more common on only one side—usually the dominant hand.

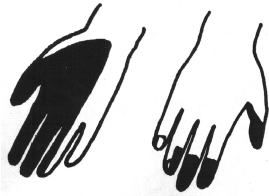


Fig. 1. Innervation of the median nerve.

People with serious cases of CTS may also suffer muscular weakness, clumsiness and muscular wasting in their hands. Tingling in their hands at night will awaken them, and they will attempt relief by shaking their hand or hanging it over the side of the bed.

Carpal tunnel syndrome arises from compression of the median nerve as it passes under the *flexor retinaculum* and through the carpal tunnel in the wrist. See fig. 2.

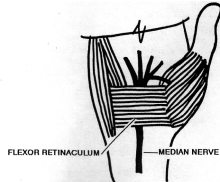


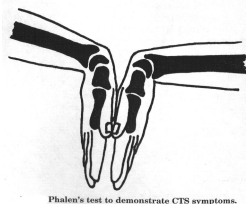
Fig. 2. The median nerve as it runs under the flexor retinaculum.

People who experience CTS are frequently those who perform repetitive motions with their wrists flexed, such as hairdressers, grocery checkout clerks, data entry clerks and—no surprise—writers.

One often-overlooked cause of CTS is a person's sleeping habits. If you find yourself sleeping with your hand flexed against your face, you may want to wear what's called a cock-up splint on your wrist at night. This simple act may cure your CTS.

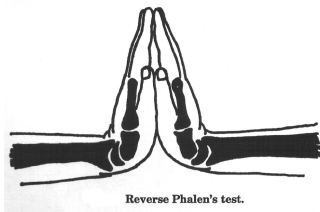
A number of simple tests can help determine if you have CTS. If one or more of three orthopedic tests below reproduces your symptoms or gives you "electric shocks" in your fingers, a visit to your physician may be warranted for further testing.

Phalen's Test: Hold your wrists fully flexed against each other for 30-60 seconds. See fig. 3.



Phalen's test to demonstrate CTS symptoms.

Reverse Phalen's Test: Hold your wrist fully against each other for 30-60 seconds. See fig. 4.



Reverse Phalen's test.

Tinel's Sign: Forcefully tap your wrist over the median nerve on the inside of your wrist with your other middle finger.

Conservative treatments of CTS, such as those which follow, may bring relief without requiring surgery:

Take typing breaks. Shake your hands and stretch them.

Vitamin B-6, 50-100 mg/daily.

Niacin (Vitamin B-3), 50 mg/daily. When first using niacin, you'll experience a harmless flush of heat and reddened skin when surface blood capillaries expand and allow more blood flow. This effect will disappear after 20 minutes or so and won't even appear once your body gets acclimated. Time-release niacin is also available, which greatly minimizes the flushing. (If using time-release niacin, you might want to increase the daily total to 1,000 or 1,500 mg/daily, which will improve your cholesterol levels as an added benefit.)

Use a wrist splint while sleeping and perhaps during the day.

Get a massage to loosen your neck and shoulder muscles. The median nerve exits the neck and travels to the fingers.

Chiropractic therapy may help by mobilizing the wrist bones and neck vertebrae. Ultrasound therapy over the median nerve may also be beneficial.

If all else fails, surgery can relieve pressure on the median nerve in the wrist.

Why didn't writers decades ago seem to get CTS? The answer is that writers used typewriters and had to move their hands and fingers all over the keyboard to type something. At the end of each line (remember the "ding?"), the writer would have to stop typing while one hand manually shoved the carriage across to the beginning of the next line.

With automatic word wrap today, there is no need to move a carriage. And computer keyboards are flatter and more compact than the old typewriter keyboards. As a result, computer users have their wrists unnaturally flexed, ulnar-deviated (bent to the outside) and pronated (twisted down on the thumb side) for long periods of time without rest breaks.

Ergonomic keyboards may look odd and take some getting used to, but they naturally accommodate a less stressful typing position. Padded keyboard wrist rests installed in front of the keyboard may also help.

Remember to take regular breaks, stretch and shake out your hands. You just might write the great American novel. At least you won't hurt yourself.

Larry Greenly, freelance writer/editor and former SWW president, has written medical columns in peer-reviewed professional journals for 13 years and has given medical lectures at physician-relicensure seminars. He is also an officer on the board of directors of New Mexico Physicians of Chiropractic Medicine.

Book Promotion, continued from page 1

Once Your Book is Published: Now is the time to hit the book promotion trail. And how long will you need to promote that book? For as long as you want it to sell.

Use Your Mailing List. Now is the time to send postcards with your book cover and ordering information printed on them or other promotional material to your mailing and e-mailing list. Keep adding to your mailing list and use it throughout the next few years each time you have an announcement to make regarding your book. Continually spotlight your book by announcing awards, upcoming presentations, sequels to the book and so forth.

Get Involved in Social Media. Once you have a website showcasing your book, a blog and, perhaps a newsletter, expand your reach by getting involved in some of the social media opportunities. Check out Twitter at <http://twitter.com>, Linked-in, www.linkedin.com and FaceBook, www.facebook.com. Use these means to keep your name and your book's title in front of your audience.

Book Signings: Do signings at your local independent bookstores, the library, appropriate retail stores (related to the theme or genre of your book) and so forth. Not only do these occasions create great exposure for you, they groom you for larger speaking opportunities. Get out and speak to your audience as frequently as possible.

Book reviews: You can solicit book reviews from magazines, ezines, newsletters and websites related to the genre/topic of your book. And sometimes these opportunities can number in the triple digits. Study my blog post <http://www.matilijapress.com/publishingblog/?p=710> to learn how to get more meaningful book reviews for your book.

As much as we would like to believe so, people will not swarm to buy your book as soon as it is published—at least not without some promotional effort. It's up to you to get the proper amount of exposure for your book—to get out and tell people about it. Once you are an author, you must remove your writing hat and don your book promoter hat. Book promotion is time-consuming. It takes creativity and persistence. Follow the suggestions outlined above to jump-start your marketing plan and then keep adding to it. You'll soon learn what works for your particular project and what doesn't.

Patricia Fry is the author of 31 books, including The Right Way to Write, Publish and Sell Your Book, www.matilijapress.com/rightway.html. She is the Executive Director of SPAWN (Small Publishers, Artists and Writers Network) www.spawn.org. Patricia also works with other authors on their projects. Currently, she is offering a self-editing course for authors.

IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT HOW-TO BOOKS

by Ethel Forman

After twenty years of teaching the sciences and writing manuals, proposals and articles, as well as a study skills coloring book, I've learned how to "tell you what to do" to succeed in learning easily.

I. Write what you know. Whether you are writing for really young children or tweens or teens, one thing is for certain: They will spot a phony every time! A how-to book must show that you really truly do know how to do whatever it is you are describing.

When I retired after twenty years from teaching the sciences, I thought to myself: What have I learned? The answer was very clear. I could study and learn easily. The last ten years, on first-day classes, I told my students, "This is the year you will learn to study easily."

II. Have a desire to communicate. A teacher/writer/adult has a desire to communicate to the ones who come after. The ancient one who first constructed a wheel passed his/her knowledge to others. Through the ages, that knowledge has been expanded and refined by successive generations until today there are many kinds of wheels being built around the globe.

My credo has been the statement by George Bernard Shaw:

Life is no brief candle to me
It is a sort of splendid torch
Which I have got hold of
For the moment,
And I want to make
It burn as brightly
As possible
Before handing
It on to future generations.

Whatever, wherever, I can—I want to hand on the knowledge I have gained in my lifetime's experiences.

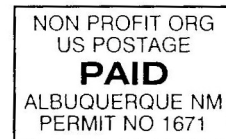
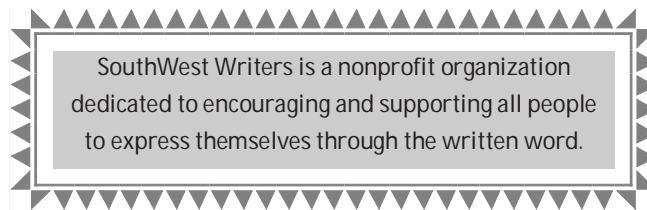
III. Choose the format. On leaving the classroom, I had become painfully aware that today's youth have changed. Due to TV, iPods, texting or whatever the latest technology offers, the adult's voice is not heard. Zilch, nada, no adult voice enters their brains. I once compared their brains to rocks in a mountain stream which had not gotten wet inside! Art and Music do penetrate.

Even the gang graffiti one sees on buildings and rail cars often have artistic merit. So, I knew that "doing art" might capture the interest of my audience. Aiming for the upper

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How-To Books, continued from page 11

elementary, junior high, and yes, GED students, my pictures-to-be-colored were detailed and demanding enough to be out of the Crayola league. The book specifies colored pencils should be used.

IV. The instructive voice should not come from an adult. I chose a Great Horned Owl. Everyone knows that owls denote wisdom, right? Even from the time of Athena and Pooh to Harry Potter, owls bring learning (well, in Potter's case they bring messages, don't they?). I gave the owl all of the "tips" I taught my students over the years. Just as a tennis coach teaches the skills a player needs to succeed, a football coach his/her team, the writer can give study tips. But, and this is important, the reader should be encouraged to become involved, to do it themselves.

V. Develop an intimacy between writer and reader. The reader is drawn into caring. The reader of a how-to book must invest something of him/herself to want to know how to do whatever it is the author is communicating. Cookbooks are how-tos. Well-written, the reader is inspired to try that recipe right now! Especially chocolate desserts, eh?

VI. Look for your niche audience. In your mind look into the faces that are listening to you. Have you lost them with

an unknown word? Do you have "illusions about your allusions," as I was taught?

VII. Market your work. Having decided which way to proceed with my coloring book, I investigated the market. To be classified as a book deserving of an ISBN number, there must be a minimum of 52 pages. Try www.ISBNdb.com in Wikipedia for further information about that great database. With the Dedication, Instructions for Use, Table of Contents, my coloring book earned its ISBN number.

VIII. Publishers have agendas. Not one that I approached was interested in a time management coloring book. A writer must be ready for this. I self-published. The independent publishing house in my home town taught me most of the things I really needed to know. And, the price wasn't too bad. To see the finished work, go to my web site, www.studyhelpsforkids.com

Ethel Forman and her husband Howell created Ahead of Time, (www.studyhelpsforkids.com) a coloring book featuring study skills, which is used in after-school programs of the Boys & Girls Clubs and several Lubbock City after-school programs. A graduate of Converse College, South Carolina, Ethel has a Masters in Biology from Southern Methodist University. Ethel and Howell have been married over 60 years.