



Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

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JULY MEETING PREVIEW

IWOC TELLS ITS STORIES

And they all start with networking. It's hard sometimes for members of IWOC to appreciate just how influential being part of this organization really is — and how far reaching and career enriching membership can be.

At our July 8 program we'll hear at least three former presidents describe the importance of IWOC and how it led them into their current careers. I say at least three because, although just three will make up our panel of speakers, there'll be many other members ready to tell their own tales of success directly attributable to time spent working with and for the Independent Writers of Chicago.

We're billing it as IWOC Tells Its Stories.



IWOC cofounder, second president, and lifetime member Beth Bradfish, PCC, is a writer, musician, and professional certified coach. Along with

Catherine Rategan, she started IWOC because, "I knew that there had to be a resource for people like us that answered questions like how do you get insurance?"

Beth took her corporate writing and training communications a step beyond one-

time assignments and began identifying top performers in her client companies, watching what they did "right," and then organizing their activities so that she could teach others through her writing. Her illuminating observations, listening skills, and motivational reflections, shared with her clients, helped her develop deeper client relationships and took her eventually into coaching. "Listening is my favorite activity," Beth says. "I work with sounds the way painters work with colors. I learned that through scriptwriting for training manuals and videos, some of which were musically scored, I, too, could become a composer. That became the most rewarding part of my work."

A childhood music student who wasn't particularly fond of performing, Beth found a way to combine her two loves, music and writing, into a thriving career. "Being a writer and being part of IWOC, are synonymous for me. IWOC showed me how to manage a business as an independent creative businessperson."

IWOC's fourth president, Ed Zotti, is a long-time stalwart of the organization who presided over the formation of a second corporation called IWOCorp, which we were forced to develop be-



beth bradfish



cause an overly zealous IRS agent misunderstood our intention to be a professional association, claiming instead that we were a for-profit business that benefited individual members through our job line. It took five years to sort that out.

Ed's story speaks to the incalculable value of networking, the backbone of IWOC membership. He has been an independent writer for more than 30 years and is best known as the edi-



tor of "The Straight Dope," a syndicated Q&A column found in the *Chicago Reader* and other publications. The online www.straightdope.com now generates more than 11 million page views per month. Ed has written or edited seven books, including five collections of "Straight Dope" columns. He also is the author of *The Barn House: Confessions of an Urban Rehabber*, described as "a rollicking yarn about a home improvement project that took a man and his family to hell and back."

Ed has become a transit and planning consultant who writes sales proposals and other materials for SPX Genfare, a maker of fare-collection equipment. He has also consulted both with the CTA and the City of Chicago on transit issues.

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Contributors: Jim Kepler, Joan Kinnan, Katherine Mikkelsen, Richard Eastline (mixer photos)

A Little of This; A Little of That



I've decided to take a different tack this month. There's much I want to say that can't fill an entire column and more that tends to get overlooked at public meetings and on our website. What follows is a snapshot of what's been happening during IWOC's past year.

Get Paid to Serve

Have we got a deal for you! The IWOC board of directors has voted to make service to the organization as a board member or committee chair paid positions. Those who serve will have their membership fees waived for the entire term of their service. But wait — there's more! All IWOC members receive six free listings in the Directory, but board members and committee chairs get three *more* listings for a total of nine. That's a savings of way more than a hundred bucks. (Committee members get three more free listings too.)

Call for Nominations

The nominating committee has begun its search for candidates for the 2014-2015 IWOC year, which will begin this October 1. Positions to be filled are president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and at-large board members. We'll also need to fill some committee chairs. This year we're not looking just for warm bodies but intentionally seeking out IWOC members with special talents and points of view who will contribute to the improvement and growth of the organization. Enrollments are nice, but there's a lot more involved in

working on a committee or the board than merely adding to the member roster. We're looking for ideas and new directions that will ensure IWOC remains the outstanding professional association of independent writers in the Midwest. Nominate someone you'd like to see help the group take on new challenges; help members prosper in their careers; and promote the image of entrepreneurial, curious, and talented writers. Self-nominating is encouraged. To serve on the board, nominees must have been a member of IWOC for at least one year. Contact any member of the nominating committee: Jim Kepler <jkepler@adamspress.com>, Betsy Storm <betsystorm@topdrawercommunications.com>, and Sally Chapralis <chapralis@ameritech.net>. We really want to hear from you.

Jobs

IWOC has been in conversation with some other writers' organiza-



tions about integrating our job lines so that we can offer a large-

er inventory of writing assignments waiting to be filled. That group is discussing the possibility of co-hiring a part-time assistant who will both generate job listings and keep the list up to date by weeding out jobs that have been filled or canceled. What do you think about this; does it sound interesting to you?

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President's Column

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Rate Survey

The IWOC Rate Survey currently underway is the first such effort in a few years. The reason we ask our members for information about the rates they charge for a wide variety of assignments is so that we can all gain some idea of where each stands in our billing practices relative to our peers. It is *not*, and never has been, an attempt to set rates for IWOC members. Our members can charge whatever rates they believe are appropriate for the work they do. By making comparisons to what others are charging, however, members can gauge where they stand in the overall market and make informed adjustments to their fee schedules — or not. It's up to them. This year we have opened the rate survey to several other Chicago-based organizations in order to obtain a broader and deeper pool of information. The results will, of course, provide billing guidance to IWOC members, but other organizations will also be able to determine where their members fit into the wider community of Chicago-area writers. Results of the survey will soon be made available to all IWOC members as well as to members of other organizations that choose to participate.

Newsletter

We're, the board, that is, exploring the possibility of making some formatting and content changes to *stet*, our monthly newsletter in order to reflect new technologies now available. See related article on page X for details.

Workshops/Seminars

It's been a while since IWOC presented a workshop, but that will change this month



when on Saturday, July 12, we will present "Management and Leadership for Independent Writers." See the full-page ad in this issue for details. We're responding to comments that our programs are held mostly downtown, and some of our members (1) don't like to drive into the city; (2) hate in-town parking charges; (3) think we have too few nuts-and-bolts programs; (4) believe they're not getting full value from their membership dues; (5) all of the above. We're holding the workshop in the suburbs where there's free parking and a five-minute walk to the Metra station, providing lunch, keeping the price low with no mark-up, addressing issues we've been told members want to learn, and opening the enrollment to the entire writing community. Did I leave anything out?

Workshops/Seminars (more)

What kinds of workshops or seminars would you like to see us present? Negotiating? Hands-on social media? Interviewing techniques? Website building? Developing international clientele? Self-publishing? Public relations/promotion campaigns? Entrepreneurial business practices? Niche marketing? Just tell us, and we'll see what we can do to make it happen. What location(s)

would you prefer? Joint events — other than mixers — with other organizations? We probably can't do it all, but we need you to give us some ideas about where to start.

Programs

We've been playing around a bit with our monthly programs, trying this and that. Programs dealing with effective use of LinkedIn, on-line marketing, and blogging have met with good attendance and lots of positive feedback. In response to some comments about a lack of emphasis on creativity, our May program was a twofer that focused both on being more creative and getting paid what you're worth for that creativity. More creative focus coming up. And more technology that you need to know, including hands-on use of Google analytics and other online tools. We'll also host an attorney-speaker to help you clarify legal issues that you need to know to run an independent-writing small business. We continually reach out to the nearly 500 members of our LinkedIn discussion group and from time to time hold successful mixers with other creative organizations that enable IWOC members to broaden their networking bases. Do you want to see more of this? We're always open to suggestions for programs and events that will help you grow professionally and personally.

Podcasts

Did you know that as a member you can keep up with much of our programming from the comfort

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5.



Amazon Grows & Grows & Grows

The review below is based on what others who've actually seen and tested it have said about the Fire, but it's obvious that Amazon's primary purpose in launching the Fire phone is to sell you a product through which you can buy a lot more of their other products. This warrants a tee-hee or two, but it's risky for Amazon. Still, by most accounts, the phone is solidly built of quality materials, and it offers most features of other phones plus a few new ones. So if you're in the market for a smartphone *and* you like black (the only color it comes in) *and* you're a shopaholic, this could be the phone for you, especially since there seems to be no end to the growth of the Amazon behemoth. Pretty soon, they'll be selling happiness. Oh yeah, to the acquisitive-minded, they probably already do. ■

— The editor

Amazon Kindles a Fire, and It's a New Smartphone With 3D

As if we weren't already hip-deep in smart-phone choices, mighty Amazon has introduced its own version. Called the Fire, this new offering does have some enticing features not found on iPhone, Windows, or Android models. Starting with what's probably the biggest wow feature is the Fire's 13-megapixel infrared camera that has four – that's right, *four* (one in each corner) – lenses that work together to provide 3D motion effects for the back-facing camera. There is also a 2.1 Mp front-facing camera for, what else, selfies.

Other features not found on phones from the usual suspects include a free year of Amazon Prime – free shipping and other goodies – and a universal-scanning-and-shopping app called Firefly. (The better to load up on Amazon's wide

range of for-sale offerings.) There's a physical button on the phone that launches both Firefly and the camera. Another physical button gets you Home. Otherwise, the Fire looks pretty much like anybody else's black smartphone. Both front and back are gorilla glass, and the sides are rubberized, which theoretically makes it easy to use one-handed.

Tilt to scroll sounds dicey to this writer, but that's how one does it. The aforementioned Home button has three functions: press once for a screen carousel, twice for the app selection, and hold to get a voice assistant who will text, write your e-mail, and perform other app functions still in the pipeline. The OS is an altered version of Android Jelly Bean, minus Google add-ons but with added Kindle features like Second Screen and X-Ray.

Firefly is a great selling point. Using the camera and its humongous database, it can identify objects, products, music, pics of celebrities (but not ordinary people), and more and tell you what they are and/or give you the chance to buy them (through Amazon, of course.) It reads QR codes too.

What does the Fire cost? In the U.S., AT&T is the exclusive provider. With a two-year contract, \$199 gets you 32 Gb of storage, \$299 ups storage to 64 Gb. Don't want a contract? You'll shell out \$649 and \$749 respectively.

If you haven't yet bought into a smartphone, and you're a super shopper, the Fire offers a lot of convenience plus the bonus of some pretty spectacular 3D effects — dubbed Dynamic Perspective. If you want the Fire, it won't ship until July 25, but you can preorder now from Amazon and start taking advantage of the free Prime right away. ■

— Joen Kinnan

President's Column

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3.



of your office chair? We now record our speakers, pair the recording with the speaker's PowerPoint or other illustrations, and make those presentations available as podcasts. Go online to www.iwoc.org and click on Member Resources;

there you'll find all the podcasts recorded since we began the practice at the first of the year as well as lots of prepodcast handouts and links from previous programs. This doesn't mean, of course, that you can get the full benefit of IWOC programs by staying at home. There's so much more that goes on during the actual meetings: advice from other members, leads to assignments, introductions to clients, and a lot of helpful and pleasant

conversation. The podcasts are especially valuable when you weren't able to catch all that was said by the speaker and want to go back to listen for all the details.

PRESENCE

IWOC cooperates and collaborates with other similar organizations both in Chicago and across the country. IWOC members are active in Chicago Women in Publishing, Society for Technical Communication, Illinois Women's Press Association, Midwest Writers Association, and many more. Our name is well known throughout the creative community and, more importantly, among client groups who so often are looking for writers and appreciate IWOC as a resource. We have a spiffy new sign that announces our presence at such events as Chicago Creative

Expo, where we also presented a workshop in March on writing press releases that drew more than 60 attendees, and 2013 Chicago Book Expo — we'll be there again this year. We're planning to extend our reach into other events as they become available. Remember: Every time we promote IWOC, we're also promoting YOU.

WEBSITE

IWOC supports what is probably the most comprehensive and helpful website of all the many writing organizations that are currently online. By far the most important features of the site are our members' own websites. Is yours part of the list? If not, it definitely should be because that's a critical asset when you're looking for assignments. Clients do check them out when looking for writers. ■

Stet: Vote on the Format You Prefer

We've been asked to consider changing the format of *Stet* from a print-style newsletter to an e-newsletter. I want **everyone's** opinion on whether you'd prefer this or not. **This is your newsletter**, and I don't want to either change/keep the current format on the basis of a few responses. So below are some of the differences an e-newsletter would bring to *Stet*.

Stet as it is now has many features, such as text justification, drop caps, call-out boxes etc., that — I think, anyway, — add to *Stet's* attractiveness and (I hope) motivate people to read it. For layout reasons, articles longer than one page often "jump" to a nonconsecutive page.

I would preserve as many graphic and other of the print-layout features as I could in an *e-Stet*, but I can't guarantee that I could do everything, so the look would be somewhat different, including that you would just scroll down to see the entirety of each article.

Currently, you receive an e-mail link to the website that brings up *Stet* in PDF format that anyone can read and/or print out. With an *e-Stet*, you'd just open the e-mail. It would *not* be an e-mail with a link to somewhere else. The e-mail *would be* the newsletter.

Because you would view the newsletter by scrolling down on your device rather than going to the next page as in the

current newsletter, whatever material I had could be included without regard to whether there was enough to fill another page.

On the flip side, most of the articles we include now are on the "long-form journalism" side, so there would be a *lot* of scrolling unless we shortened up the individual pieces. Also, PDF files read — and print — in the same format regardless of the device one is using. That's not necessarily true with e-mail clients, though I would test the major ones to be sure they all worked. If you prefer to print out before you read, the results might be variable as well. (I can't say more about

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Management and Leadership for Independent Writers

A One-day Workshop

SATURDAY, JULY 12

TEN O'CLOCK UNTIL FOUR O'CLOCK

Arlington Heights Memorial Library
500 North Dunton Avenue
www.ahml.info

FEE

\$15 IWOC member

\$25 nonmember

Reservations required—please visit www.iwoc.org

Box lunch provided—select dietary preferences when you register

• • •

MANAGING CLIENT MEETINGS: preparing • strategic agendas • staying on point • defining tasks • summing up

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: goals • understandings • schedules • deliverables

SELF-DIRECTED LEADERSHIP: finding/making opportunities to lead • discovering style • delegating • practicing

PRESENTERS: **Jane Ranshaw** has led multiple writing and management workshops for years for the American Management Association, taught at DePaul, designed and presented webinars, and done corporate consulting and instructional design. **Jim Kepler** has taught writing and editing (Roosevelt, Columbia, Lake Forest) and has held board positions with local organizations (MPA, MWA, IWOC) and national organizations, including the Council of Writers Organizations. Both presenters have served as president of IWOC.

Did you know...



More fun with origins of phrases that people use without thinking from whence they came.

Balls to the wall (all-out effort): Has nothing to do with male anatomy and everything to do with aviation. The handles on an airplane controlling the throttle and fuel mixture are topped with ball-like grips. Pushing them all the way back to the wall of the cockpit makes the plane go fast. The first known reference was during the Vietnam conflict, but it might have been used by pilots even earlier.

The whole megillah (a lengthy and usually tedious explanation or account, an involved situation): Has nothing to do with Magilla Gorilla. *Megillah* is the Hebrew word for scroll. On Purim, the book of Esther – lengthy, full of details and meandering – is read in its entirety. It's a bit of a chore to sit through, thus the reference.

Egg someone on (to encourage someone to do something, usually dangerous or inappropriate: Has nothing to do with throwing eggs, egg on the face or any other type

of ova. Comes from the Old Norse *eggja*, which means to incite. The phrase came into use around the middle of the 16th century and meant to provoke or tempt someone.

Steal one's thunder (take attention away from someone's accomplishment): This too is not what you'd think. It has nothing to do with the weather. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, an actor/stage manager/playwright by the name of John Dennis invented a contraption to make the sound of thunder on stage. Alas, his play was not very good and quickly closed. The next production was *Macbeth*, whose director was only too happy to use the inventor's innovative thunder machine. When Dennis heard the tell-tale peals roar out from the stage, he was irate. Leaping to his feet, he shouted, "That is my thunder, by God!" ■

— Katherine Mikkelsen

TESTIMONIAL: "Love the people, love the programs. IWOC membership says you're serious about your profession as a freelance writer." — Catherine Rategan

Print Format or e-*Stet*?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5.

the e-format. I haven't tried it, and because of the work involved, it's not practical to set it up unless we're going to switch.)

One last thing: if we go to an *e-*Stet**, you'd still be able to read it online and view back issues, but there would be two different places to go for the before-and-after formats.

As I see it, here's how it shakes out:

Pros for print style — (1) strikes a blow for the retention of long-form print journalism; (2) PDFs work no matter what system/e-mail program a person has; (3) current "look" would be maintained; (4) one website archive for all back issues. **Cons for print style** — (1) not the latest technology; (2) back-and-forth "jumps" to read articles; (3) must click to view.

Pros for e-*Stet* — (1) latest technology; (2) no back-and-forth jumps to read a single article; (3) no clicking required to view; (4) no page restrictions, i.e., no limits on material. **Cons for e-*Stet*** — (1) may not display the same on all systems; (2) long e-mail, lots of scrolling unless we shorten articles and/or have fewer; (3) would print like an e-mail.

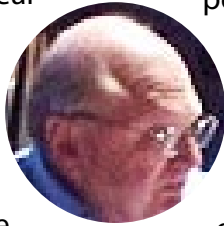
Please, please let me know whether you'd like to stay with what we have or switch to an *e-*Stet**. Click [HERE](#) to reply. All you have to say is "keep" or "switch," though of course other comments are welcome. I need major feedback. Thanks for your help. ■

— The editor

**IWOC Welcomes
New Members
Maureen Connolly
John Wilson**

We Were Mellow Fellows at Marcello's

Get a bunch of writers and editors together — many of whom have never met — and what do you get? An ideal opportunity to share war stories, trade tips, and kvetch about your clients. Throw in some really good food, the beverages of your choice, and a spiffy site, and you've described the venue for the IWOC-



CWIP mixer that replaced IWOC's regular program in June. Members

of both groups must have thought it was a good idea because the place was packed. Forty-eight people showed up, which proved to be too many for Marcello's original front-of-the-house-next-to-the-bar location for the meet-and-greet. So they gave us a really nice private room. Plenty of room there to grab a bite and cruise around looking for old friends and meeting new ones. Attendees who belonged to both groups were in their element. Even the pouring rain that beat down as we were departing didn't dampen the enthusiastic comments of attendees that

it had been a wonderful evening. If you weren't there, you shudda



been. Kudos to Karen Schwartz and Kim Bookless — who did double-duty as a member of IWOC and co-president of CWIP. Thanks also to IWOCer Richard Eastline who took the photos as he does for our regular IWOC meetings ■.

— Joen Kinnan

A Fool-Proof Way to Avoid All E-Mail Scams

Recently I received an e-mail purportedly from the U.S. Postal Service saying I had received a package that was delivered when I wasn't home. "Could be," I muttered hopefully. Then I saw that I was to click on a link, print out a receipt, and take it to **any** post office to pick up my package. They've **all** got my package? I don't think so. This person was an idiot who almost ensnared another idiot, but some scams are pretty hard to spot. So

here are some e-mails you should trash instantly: (1) any e-mail that contains a link but no message, even if it seems to come from someone you know. Chances are that person's mailbox has been hijacked. (Don't send a link-only message either if you want anyone to read it); (2) an e-mail with way too many recipients; (3) an e-mail with an authentic-looking logo but an address that doesn't jibe. But here's the best guarantee yet:

Don't click on *any* link. Just open your browser and manually enter the URL. If it goes to that woman from Nigeria who wants to give you money, you'll be glad you did. ■

— JPK



IWOC HAS MEETING PODCASTS

Missed a meeting? Want to hear the program again? 'Click this pic.

IWOC TELLS ITS STORIES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

Ed was introduced to his career changing, long-time client by fellow IWOC member Bill Gershon at a meeting more than 20 years ago.

"What does IWOC mean to you?" I asked Collin Canright, president number 11.

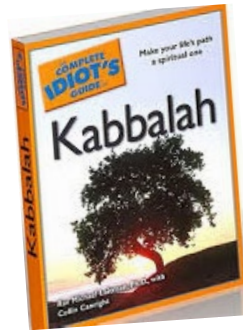
"One of the first things I learned here," he replied, "is that I could indeed make a good living as an independent writer. I learned about the business of writing, and I learned writing techniques I use daily when writing technical manuals, presentations, and articles."

Collin is the principal writer for family-owned (with wife Christina) Canright Communications, which connects companies with their clients and prospects. He writes marketing and technical materials for financial services and technology and association clients and is on the faculty of Wright Graduate University, where he coaches emerging leaders and salespersons.



For 25 years Collin has written about epayments, banking, securities, accounting, and ecommerce in books, articles, system documentation, and marketing materials. He is the co-author or ghostwriter of six books and used his early interest in computers as a springboard for delivering news for Keyfax, Keycom Electronic Publishing Company's interactive videotext service. One of his books is *Electronic Data Interchange: A Guide for Health Care Institutions*; others are the *Idiot's Guide to Kabbalah*, and *Put the Win Back in Your Sales*. He edited the *Journal of Electronic Commerce* and contributed to "Bringing Health Care Online," published by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment, as well as *Cash-flow* magazine, where he wrote about corporate treasury management and electronic banking.

You'll note some common themes here: IWOC offers over and over again many opportunities to learn entirely new skills,



both professional and personal. The message: Leadership creates opportunities. Networking, whether casual or strategic, leads to more opportunities. Career-building rarely grows out of one-time assignments; it's a long-term process that can be nurtured from a variety of seemingly unplanned and unrelated experiences that are actually part of an entire entrepreneurial effort when the independent writer is open to unexpected opportunities.

Put your own stories together and share them at the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, July 8, in room 4G at the Gratz Center, just off Michigan Avenue between Chestnut and Superior. We meet at 5:00 for snacks and networking; the program runs from 6:00 till 7:15 but stick around for lots more conversation and a buy-your-own dinner at Frankie's Scaloppini at 900 N. Michigan (Bloomingdale's). Park there (enter from Walton or Rush) after 5:00 and have your ticket validated at the Gratz Center reception desk or arrange a steeply discounted advance parking permit through SpotHero.com. Several buses run on Michigan Avenue. ■

— Jim Kepler

"A prudent question is one half of wisdom." — Sir Francis Bacon

In the next issue. . .



- **August 12: It's IWOCFest!** We always have a fabulous time on the rooftop at Pegasus. What's not to like? Yummy food, great conversation, and spectacular views. So save the date.
- **President's column:** Don't miss reading what's on Jim Kepler's mind. It's always entertaining and thought-provoking.
- Helpful tips on software, hardware, and/or just plain biz practices, and much more.

