

Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago



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ARE YOU USING PROTECTION?

How-tos for privacy and security on the Internet

WOC kicks off the New Year by presenting Bruce Carlson, principal at Technology Made Simple, Inc. Many members who responded to our recent survey mentioned computer-related issues, such as social media and online security, as subjects they would like to see addressed in future programs. This is your board and programs committee's direct response to your comments and your opportunity to have your questions answered both during the program and at dinner afterward by an expert in small business Internet marketing and protection.

With the use of the Internet so pervasive today, privacy and security have become much talked about and much worried about topics. The devices we use today vary from laptops to tablets to smartphones. Our communications channels include e-mail, texting, social media, audio and videoconferencing, remote access, and file sharing.

The IWOC January meeting about privacy and security concerns will offer a perspective on balancing the risk vs.



reward question as we delve deeper and deeper into the world of shared, hosted, and stored information and communications.

Stepping away from privacy is a choice we make once we expose ourselves to the Internet, whether or not that exposure is intentional, indirect, or becomes accidentally accessible for possible malicious intent. Social media provide the greatest opportunity for loss of privacy, yet they are the preferred communications mode for today's generation. However,

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Stepping away from our privacy is a choice we make when we expose ourselves to the 'Net.

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Like it?

Dear Reader,

It's been years since Stet had a new look, and we thought it was due for a facelift. We've gone to a largely three-column format (instead of four), which opens up space for bulleted or numbered lists, graphics, etc. We've also changed the color scheme a bit, justified the columns, modernized the logo a tad, and changed (and enlarged) the text fonts along with using spaces between paragraphs instead of indents. We think it's fresher, more readable, and more contemporary, but you be the judge. Consider this issue a work-in-progress, and tell us what you think.

This issue is brief because of the holidays and the fact that we slapped together something for December when there ordinarily isn't an issue, but we hope to add more features in coming issues. What would you like to see: book reviews? news about writers and/or members? techie/software tips? Or what? Please let us know what you think of the new format and what features you'd like us to add.

Send your opinions and suggestions to stet@iwoc.org. It's your newsletter, and we want you to read it, so please give us ideas.■

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Shaping the future of IWOC



At the start of a new year many people and organizations take stock of what they've been doing in the past year, where they want to go next, and what they might want to continue or change. The IWOC Board began last spring to discuss the need to clarify our strategic



goals and direction. In our Stet archives, I learned that the last time this had been done was February 2003.

It was obviously high time to reexamine the goals of IWOC and assess how well we are meeting them. So the Board agreed to do a half-day Retreat, which was done December 3 at The Carleton Hotel in Oak Park. It became a Board Plus Retreat, because in order to broaden our perspective beyond the ten Board members, we invited eight very active IWOC members, including two past presidents and the chairs and members of the Membership, Marketing/PR, Programs, Seminar, and Writer's Line committees. To harness this wealth of experience and IWOC knowledge, we engaged Marly Heidkamp, an experienced organizational consultant. She helped us make the meeting a lively, enjoyable, and very productive session.

To get a sense of what members were thinking and provide facts to discuss, we sent a survey to all IWOC members. We got 35 responses, which is a good response rate, but all of us at the Retreat really wish we had heard from everyone. A summary of the survey findings will be sent out shortly to all members as a separate item.

In a mere five hours, with a lot of lively discussion, we established a consensus that:

■ Professional freelance editors and writers need a strong organization to support them with tools, resources, learning opportunities, and networking to help them in their business.

■ This need is even greater today because

so many professional or aspiring writer/communicators are moving away from corporate careers toward self-employment whether by choice or circumstance.

■ Although there are other Midwest organizations for writers and/or editors, IWOC is unique in focusing strictly on professional writers of nonfiction prose and emphasizing their needs as small business owners.

■ So IWOC is vitally important to people in our line of work and is well-respected by those who know of it, but—

■ Too few people—both potential members and potential clients—actually know IWOC and the rich talent pool our members constitute, and also—

■ IWOC perhaps has been trying to be all things to all writers and would better serve the needs of independent professional nonfiction writers if we focused more sharply on helping them with tools to strengthen and build their writing businesses.

The first outcome of this discussion was a clear, concise purpose statement. IWOC exists to "Provide tools, support, connections, and opportunities in a friendly, supportive environment to help independent writers succeed in their business." In line with this purpose, we decided that IWOC's central function is to build linkages between member writers and potential clients and client groups.

Nothing startling or revolutionary there. We are who we thought we were. But this clear definition lets us focus more firmly on what we want to do—as well as what we do not want to do. For example, it says we try to help writers improve their success as business people. We decided we are an organization for nonfiction prose writers (including nonfiction book authors), but not poets, novelists, or short story writers.

In the rest of our crowded hours we worked to figure out what IWOC should continue doing, stop doing, and begin doing in order to support that purpose statement. Where are we achieving that purpose and

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These people are having a really good time!

Holiday fun

The Holiday Party was a boatload of fun as it always is. Thirty happy revelers, all done up in their best bib and tucker, descended on the Star of Siam determined to have a festive evening. And festive it was. Jane Ranshaw outdid us all with her "holiday-light" necklace that was actually electrified. (Your editor took a surreptitious peek to see if she was tethered to a cord but no such thing.)

There was a tempting selection on the book table, and everyone gravitated to it, as we sipped our libations and munched on some yummy apetzers.

The main courses were just as good, and soon Jim Kepler, aka Santa, came bearing gifts that were guaranteed to please, thanks to Betsy Storm, Santa's personal shopper. A wonderful night! ■



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the choice to operate within the world of social media can be managed and protected, within reason, for privacy concerns.

Security concerns related to operating within the Internet can take many forms. From traditional attacks such as viruses, rootkits, spyware, and malware, to more insidious methods such as spoofing, spamming, phishing, squeezing, and slamming, the tools of the modern hacker are numerous. Formal tools and techniques exist to minimize these attacks, but the methods of today's hackers are becoming increasingly more creative, and hidden, and diabolical.

Knowing not only how to protect yourself but also what actions to take should you suspect you have been hacked are equally important. Hackers can create attacks that annoy, probe, and hijack information and your device. Often, the weak point is nothing more than weak passwords, yet so many users continue to choose easy-to-guess passwords. It is a problem—perhaps a disaster—just waiting to happen.

Information is key, and Bruce will both provide valuable insights on the game of privacy and security within the Internet world.

IWOC members, guests, and total strangers are welcome. The meeting is on Tuesday, January 10, 2012, at National Lewis University, 122 South Michigan Ave., Room 5033, in Chicago – across

Eat & Greet
IWORP: Feb. 2
A&T Grill, 9am, 7030 N. Clark. Call Esther M., 773/274-6215
IWOOP: Jan. 24
Poor Phil's, 12pm, 139 S. Marion, Oak Park. Barb D., 312/642-3065

Meetings
Jan. 10. Great speaker, Bruce Carlson, will tell all about Internet privacy and security. A must-attend meeting.

Visitors are always welcome at all events

Check this: not always on.

the street from the Art Institute. Admission is free to IWOC members, \$15 for nonmembers who pay at the door, and \$10 for nonmembers who preregister at www.iwoc.org./calendar.htm. Social hour with snacks and beverages starts at 5 p.m. The program runs from 6 p.m. to approximately 7 p.m., and there will be plenty of time for questions. After the meeting, attendees are invited to reconvene at a nearby restaurant for a buy-your-own-dinner to continue the conversation, catch up, and wind down. Bruce will join us for dinner. For more information, please contact IWOC at 800-804-IWOC (4962) or go to www.iwoc.org./iwoc.events.htm. We'll see you there. ■

To increase IWOC's visibility among both writers and the business and nonprofit communities throughout Chicagoland.

To position and promote IWOC members collectively as a rich talent pool with a broad range of communication skills to meet the diverse needs of many clients.

To achieve that goal by developing an online presence and social media strategy to increase IWOC's online visibility and credibility.

To enhance the tools we already provide and create new tools and resources to help members connect with clients, improve their client service, and learn new ways to market and manage their professional writing businesses (for example, we'll look at features provided by organizations like AWJ, Media Bistro, and SocialMediaClub.org).

This is a good beginning, but it is only a beginning. We'll be working throughout the year to flesh out and implement these priorities. There'll be more activity and focus on our web and social media presence; new efforts to build joint activities with other writer, content producer, and business organizations; new efforts to promote IWOC as the go-to source for professional writing talent in this region, and to build linkages between our member talent pool and the clients who need our expertise.

I hope you can see where this effort creates value that will pay off for you. We need all of us to work together to mine that value.

All the best for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year, full of creative writing assignments and satisfied clients. ■

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2.

where are we missing the mark? For instance, we decided that, while we want to help members find more clients and build strong client relationships, we are not a job-finding or employment agency. This may change the way we operate Writers' Line.

Recognizing that we are a small, all-volunteer organization with limited resources of time, energy, and funds, we established priorities so that we can make the best use of our strengths and resources and focus on action plans that will yield the best return for our investment of effort. We decided to focus on three primary audiences:

Writers: Particularly unemployed professional writers and new or recent college graduates seriously considering writing careers

Potential clients: PR/marketing agencies, corporate marketing and marcom managers, and recruiting agencies and outplacement firms focused on creative professionals

Related professional groups: Partnering with designers, media producers, and videographers, and building alliances with organizations serving such related groups as well as business associations involved in marketing (e.g., Business Marketing Association).

We decided that our highest priorities in reaching out to these audiences are: