



Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

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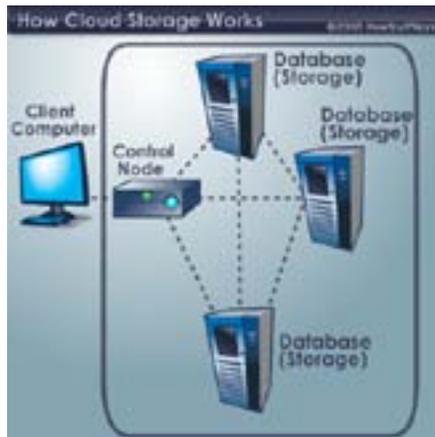
NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO FEBRUARY IWOC MEETING

IS THERE A CLOUD ON YOUR HORIZON?

Intro to file backup on the cloud: Is it for you?

Are you up on the cloud? Notice that we said *the* cloud, not *a* cloud, so we're not talking about whether or not you had a great day. We're referring to that huge internet "cloud" that is all the rage today. What is it, and can it do anything for you? Actually, you already use it if you have Hotmail, watch a video on YouTube, or keep photos on Flickr or Picasa. Using the cloud simply means that you perform some sort of function or store something on the Internet, rather than on your own computer.

There are legions of ways to use the cloud, but in this article we're going to focus on data storage. As a writer, you probably have tons of data on your computer, a great deal of which you need to keep. If you're prudent, you have your files backed up on an external hard drive, but hard drives can fail. Cloud storage gives you an extra measure of security. Today there are many companies that offer free or low-cost data storage.



How does it work? As the accompanying graphic shows, when you send your files to the cloud, they're stored on not just one server but several in different locations, so that if one server goes down, your files are still accessible on another that you can access at any time.

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Keeping files on the cloud means you can access them from any Internet-capable device.

Keeping files on the cloud also means you can access them from any computer or handheld device that has Internet capability. Say you're in a client meeting, and

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Talk to the Board

Before summarizing key findings of the membership survey conducted just before the retreat in December, I have an important request:

We need more frequent, informal, and easier ways for two-way communications between members and the board.

A little of this can, and does, happen at our meetings, but the programs and general socializing limit these opportunities.

Options to foster communication include: setting up a forum in the members-only section of our website; adding a members-only section to our IWOC Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/iwoc.org?ref=ts>); putting a member-feedback column in *Stet*. We already have a LinkedIn group (sign-in to LinkedIn, choose "Groups" and then "IWOC"). Please do use the sites we have and suggest other ideas to foster ongoing two-way feedback between members and the board.

If you have ideas to improve IWOC or current concerns, for now simply e-mail me at president@iwoc.org until we come up with a more organized approach. I welcome such comments and will raise them at board meetings. ■ — Dave Epstein

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Stet Editor

Joel Kinnan

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Listening to IWOC: Membership Survey Recap

The discussion at the December Board-Plus Retreat, summarized as "Shaping IWOC's Future" in the January *Stet*, was largely shaped by findings from the online Membership Survey done in late November. The survey was designed to get the perspectives, thoughts, concerns, and desires of all IWOC members as the basis of our thinking about the IWOC's future plans.

Survey participation was good by normal standards: more than a third of all members responded (35 out of 95). That's usually considered a good response rate and a representative sample. However, we all wished we had heard from the other 60 members. IWOC can do a better job of meeting members' needs and gearing up for today's new demands — and tomorrow's—only when we all give our views.

So thanks again to the 35 members who did speak up. Here are some key points that emerged from the statistical responses and comments (not presented in the order of the survey questions):

Meeting attendance

In answer to "How often do you attend IWOC meetings," 34% said regularly, and 66% said occasionally or never (51.4% occasionally; 14.2% never). This is so close to the 35 members responding versus 60 not that it seems to be more than coincidence. Reasons for not attending varied widely, and 34% gave no response. There were eight specific comments, most of which mentioned lack of time or programs that were not relevant to the member's specific writing interests. Several members said they liked some pro-

grams, but skipped those outside of their writing interests. One comment shows that it is hard to solve this challenge: "I recognize there is a diverse membership with many different interests and needs. They can't all be met all the time."

New possibilities for meetings and other activities

There were negative comments about our present location, such as, "I'm afraid the location is a real turn-off." Another respondent seldom comes for various reasons, including "especially the location, which is just dreary." Someone mentioned another organization that "held a great meeting" at a Northside restaurant, which charged \$100 for a banquet room (**note:** affordable to IWOC) and "threw in hors d'oeuvres and a 10% discount on dinner." I am going to ask a few non-board members to look for alternate venues for next year, while keeping in mind such needs as:

- Affordable cost
- Attractive space that allows both socializing and presentations
- Accessibility by Chicago public transportation as well as availability of free or economical parking for members who drive from other areas.

Regular meetings are a key element of IWOC, but perhaps they should not be the only kind of joint member activity. Meeting attendance may not be the sole criterion of IWOC's success, and we need to think of other ways to get more members engaged. Along those lines, we're trying fewer regular meetings, but more events of other kinds

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2.

this year, such as joint networking with other groups and participation in some public events like the WBEZ "Making Your Own Job" fair where we exhibited on January 26.

One of members' highest priorities, expressed in responses to several questions, was for joint networking activities with other groups that share some interests and/or include people from business or professional fields who need writers. In answer to "How can IWOC best promote itself to potential members," the highest response was "Joint activities with other writer organizations" (71%, or 24 people), and the second was "Presentations at public venues, such as libraries (56%, 19 people). There were eight comments suggesting joint activities, which were the most comments on any single topic.

What about social media?

In third and fourth place behind joint activities and public presentations, came suggestions to promote IWOC through our Facebook page (32%) and by opening our LinkedIn page to non-members (29%). But only 24% of survey respondents use the LinkedIn group, only 12% visit the Facebook page, and **zero percent** follow IWOC twitter account (Including, I confess, me). I suspect almost no one knows we are on twitter. From the following comments, some members (maybe many) obviously aren't aware of or never use our Facebook and LinkedIn pages:

- "Didn't know about IWOC LinkedIn group."
- "How do I join the LinkedIn group?" (A question that will be answered shortly)
- "I think this question should have included our Facebook and twitter pages. I haven't used them yet, but plan to start."

Interestingly, one comment was, "Currently, I think clients are looking on LinkedIn, and that's it." That may be an overstatement, but LinkedIn has become a serious tool for recruiters and hirers seeking skilled professionals, including writers. "How to use Internet tools, such as social media, to enhance your business" was the second highest response (65%) to which topics respondents most wanted to hear about in our programs — *yet we are barely using our own social media offerings.*

True confession: Until recently, I seldom visited our Facebook or LinkedIn pages. I am now using them and encourage others to visit regularly, "like" IWOC on Facebook (builds our Facebook popularity), join in the LinkedIn discussions, or offer useful information and ideas. As an organization, we need to mount a systematic campaign to promote and increase the usefulness of our social media pages to members and to attract outsiders (including potential members — and clients) by posting interesting events and helpful information and expert tips for writers — and also to people like marketing directors or executives who need coaches or speechwriters, etc.

Finding work through IWOC

The top reasons for joining IWOC were "To find work as a freelance writer" (83%) and "To network with other freelance writers (80%). The next two were learning more about the business end of freelancing (74%) and learning from program guest speakers and participants (71%). Only 37%, however, expected IWOC to be a place for directly meeting prospective clients.

Over and over in different ways survey respondents voiced their need for IWOC as a major aid to finding work or clients and improving their marketing



and business skills as freelance writers. The top-ranked subject requested for programs was "How to find writing work in a specific field" (68%). Numerous comments backed this up:

Which factors and/or topics are most important in meetings?

- "How to find and manage leads better"
- "Getting more work"
- "How to find more work"
- "Getting work is always a priority"
- "I, like most IWOCans, appreciate the presentations involving someone who can either provide work or point us to someone who can."
- "I just would like to see more help learning about or linking up with prospective clients."
- "Anything to do with money — setting rates, collecting, even financial planning."

Although several respondents reported finding good assignments through IWOC, more people said IWOC has not helped them find work through referrals, leads, and job postings, although some mentioned that this is partly due to the weak economy. Someone said, "We need a new approach to Writers' Line." Whether the answer is improving Writers' Line or developing other work-finding tools, this is clearly an essential need we must address in coming months. It's already on the board's

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Did you know...



Did you realize IWOC is a global organization whose tentacles extend even to the Philippines? I was innocently Googling IWOC to check on our current search ranking, when I discovered our foreign affiliates in Canada, Europe, and — yes — our confidential Manila files:

IWOC: Independent Writers of Chicago

IWOC: International Wizard of Oz Club — This is either our chapter for fiction writers — or perhaps, our fictional chapter.

IWOC: Impreza Web Owners Club (car club; UK) — This one is for Subaru owners (like me).

IWOC: International Wheel of Colour Association (UK) — Clearly we are international, diverse, and anything but dull!

IWOC: Ignace-White Otter Country (Canada) — For IWOC's many animal lovers.

IWOC: Immanuel World Outreach Center (Philippines)

You can verify this at <http://www.acronymfinder.com/IWOC.html>. And Chicago clearly is IWOC's head office!

— Dave Epstein

This word means *what*? Check Wordnik

Need to find one or more meanings of a word? We can reach for a dictionary or visit a thesaurus. Or, perhaps just ask an old friend. As of now, we have a new friend—an Internet buddy called “Wordnik” (or, more specifically, www.wordnik.com). If you haven’t as yet been introduced, now is a good time to become acquainted with a most useful website that happens to be free, informative, and very engaging.

Wordnik tracks definitions from a variety of sources. Unlike a Wikipedia project, it does not accept (for now) any submissions of user-provided definitions. Its sources include the most prominent news media, books that are included in the Gutenberg Project, and the Internet Archive. What it does do is to assemble several aspects of a given word, such as synonyms, hyponyms (words that may be either more abstract or generic to that word), hyponyms (words that are more specific than the given word), and words that might be used in a similar context. Equally helpful, there is also a reverse dictionary section. As

expected, there you will find words that contain the given word within their own definitions. Enough? There’s still more.

To save you time and frustration, Wordnik has compiled some 30,000 lists that reflect the many categories just described. Among these you can choose from such tempting titles as Rediscovered Words, Generation-Next Words, Tasty Words, British Slang, Very Silly Words, Awkward Sounding Words, Newsworthy Words, and others that skirt the line between sensible and non-sensible.

Making the venture more personal, users can log in and add comments on word pages and list pages. That’s where you get the opportunity to present your own opinion about a word’s meaning (real or implied) or to offer additional examples of a word’s usage. And, just for fun—or to increase your vocabulary score—click on the header for Random Word and delve into the inner workings of a word possibly unknown to you, thereby gaining the right to add or banish it from your lexicon. Also, if you’re addicted to Facebook and similar social exchanges, you’ll feel at home in Wordnik’s Community. That page offers mundane coverage of lists created by your fellow Wordniks, the latest comments on specific words, etc. It’s even possible to establish a personal profile page where you can track your history of word searches, view your personal lists, or read comments by others in response to your remarks and opinions. (Presumably, these are monitored to insure good behavior.)

.....
Choose from options like Rediscovered Words, Generation-Next Words, Tasty Words, British Slang, Very Silly Words, and more.

However, not any of these participatory actions should be considered to be required. The site is there for any and all to use as an open resource. For an example of Wordnik in action, access the site and take a glance at the list presented

in the Related Words sub-section of About Wordnik. You may well conclude that the underlying philosophy of the site is worthwhile, thereby adding an easy, and interesting, way to implement your word-processing tool kit. ■ — Richard M. Eastline

How to gain privacy & security on the Internet



Technology Made Simple is not only the name of Bruce Carlson's company, it also describes his style of presentation. Carlson addressed the title topic in January with an easygoing conversation amplifying his slides/handout. What little jargon and techspeak was necessary he explained in layman terms while providing us a great deal of useful information and specific recommendations.

First he addressed some common misperceptions about electronic security and some best practices to apply:

I have virus protection; I am protected. — Viruses are now only 10 to 20 percent of all threats. Most attacks come from the web and downloaded content. While an anti-virus is still a requirement, added measures are called for. These include a firewall and additional software like Malwarebytes that scans for spyware, adware, malicious links, browser hijackers, and other infections.

I am using Norton or McAfee; I am protected. — These tend to slow computer operation and are only 70 to 80 percent accurate. There are less intrusive, more accurate anti-virus programs available such as Carlson's preference, Avast.

I use a Mac; I am protected. — Mac use is growing; to the point it now has 10 percent of the market. Mac's small market share in the past made them a less attractive target for hackers. But, now they've become vulnerable.

Best practices we may not be using now include not only virus and spyware protection, but also you should:

Get an e-mail filtering service if you are on your own domain.

Buy a higher quality router/firewall such as Sonicwall. While somewhat expensive at about \$300, it will pro-

vide greater protection than the router provided by your ISP. If you don't upgrade, at least check the security version on the router supplied by your ISP. If it is WEP (easily cracked by even newbie hackers), an upgrade to WPA or WPA2 is called for. Look at online articles (http://www.nowiressecurity.com/articles/upgrade_wifi_security_wep_wpa2.htm is one) or contact your ISP's tech support.

Use multiple e-mail identities, perhaps one for work, one for friends and family, and another for online shopping.

Use multiple strong passwords. Using the same password everywhere is a no-no; each site that calls for a password should have its own unique one. Those should include at least one capital, one number, and one special character like a dash or underscore. Eight characters is the minimum, but twelve becomes practically uncrackable. Worried about remembering all those passwords? Carlson recommended Roboform as a secure storage method.

Ignore suspicious e-mail attachments. Some tip-offs are: only a picture in the body, no addresses in the To: or Cc: fields, long reply URLs, poor grammar or misspellings, and dubious claims or warnings.

Carlson then turned to ISPs and methods of attack: AOL, MSN, and Yahoo harbor 70 percent of viruses since they are so widely used. Therefore, it's best to avoid e-mail accounts on those services.

Some methods of attack are:

Phishing — An attempt to sucker you into doing something you would not do if informed. These attacks often look like e-mails from legitimate sources, like a utility or bank, but the links they contain actually redirect you to sites that want to collect your con-

fidential passwords, SSN, and the like.

Spoofing — An open Wi-Fi connection invites malefactors to masquerade as your IP address while they work their schemes. You could be black-listed as a result.

"Robotizing" your computer — Malicious software that enables a remote computer/user to monitor everything on your computer and actually control it for devious purposes.

Firewalls do not always detect attacks. Set up good scanning tools on day one and scan weekly with a variety of tools. Once your computer is infected, it can be too late. If your computer is compromised, SSL (Secure Socket Layer) sites will not protect you because the malware is already active. If suspicious, get a professional (not the Geek Squad) to inspect your computer.

When using public Wi-Fi, be careful about connecting to confidential sites.

Lastly, Carlson offered a few cautions about social networking that apply to e-mail as well:

Skimming tools are out there that constantly capture and store materials from sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, even if you change your profiles on those services.

Think before you send. Assume all communications are saved. If you say it or post it, it will be remembered forever. Also, voicemails, and even texts on smartphones, never go away.

Apply password security to all sites, and do not share passwords.

To conclude the meeting Carlson offered to respond to further questions by telephone or e-mail at 847-236-0336 or bruce@technologymadesimple.net. ■

— George Becht



Photo from the American Free Press

Google Goodies

How about that photo on the left! Not to be too “punny” about it, it’s a real eye-catcher. You can find this and literally millions of other photos, clip art, cartoons, charts, graphs, and symbols at Google Images. Some of them are copyrighted and some cost money, but many are free for the copying.

How does one copy an image? Simple. Right-click on it and either click “copy” or “save image,” e.g., as a jpeg.

There’s a search box at the top of the page so you can type in what you’re looking for. And, on the left there are ways to narrow your search, such as by color. I found 370M results for “purple cats.” Really. You can also specify that you only want faces, clipart, etc. Check it out. You’ll love it. ■

— The editor

EYE-IN-THE-SKY REPORTING

We have seen the future of journalism — and it sees us!

Respectable “mild-mannered reporter” Clark Kent left the flying to Superman. But with modern technology, he can really fly — and can use X-ray vision.

Looking for useful information about technology for writers, I Googled “journalism technology.” Near the top of the list was “Drone Journalism.” I clicked on the link, expecting to read a tragic article about the plight of other down-trodden writers laid off from newspapers and laboring as “drones” cranking out copy for websites at 15 cents a word.

It was far more dramatic than that — in fact, downright scary!

According to ijnet (International Journalists’ Network), “a drone, or unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), can become an eye-in-the-sky witness taking pictures or video of protests or other

breaking news events.” So these drones are robot journalists with superpowers. And we thought they were just for killing Al Qaeda terrorists.

“I think drones — small, cheap, easy-to-use vehicles that can fit in a small bag and be carried into the field by a reporter — offer a major opportunity to improve certain kinds of reporting,” said Professor Matt Waite of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who recently founded the Drone Journalism Lab, in an interview with *Los Angeles Times* database producer Ben Welsh.

And yes, there is really a Drone Journalism Lab just established in November 2011 in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nebraska. And they are working on or with cute little projects like “eye3 ... a project to create a professional-quality yet affordable flying robotic

camera platform, or Drone.” (Our picture is a high-end version.)

So, that’s how super-journalists are getting those “as it happens” overhead shots of demonstrations in Egypt and civil war in Libya. Next time you hear a buzz overhead, it may be a drone piloted remotely by a former colleague from some newsroom. Far more exciting than twitter.

You can learn more about sci-fi journalism at:

mashable.com/2011/12/19/drone-journalism/.

dronejournalism.tumblr.com/about.

theatlanticwire.com/technology/2011/11/drone-journalism-new-human-journalism/45147/. ■

— Dave Epstein

you want to show others some part of the project you're working on. You *could* lug your laptop or copy the project to a thumb drive and plug it into somebody's computer there, but if the project is on the cloud, you could simply pull out your iPad and go to the document. You can also authorize others to access a *specific* document so you can work collaboratively on a project that's on the cloud.

Is data stored on the cloud safe from loss or prying eyes? The redundancy offered by storage on multiple servers makes it unlikely that you'll lose your files, and storage companies use complicated encryption to discourage hackers.

Not all cloud storage companies accept any kind of data. Flickr and Picasa, for example, accept only graphics files, YouTube only videos, but many companies offer storage for all types of files. Some store limited amounts of data for free but add fees for larger amounts. (Beware ma-and-pa companies that may be totally free but use only a single server as backup.) In addition to reliability and safety, look for companies that offer decent customer support and ease of use. All those mentioned here offer 30-day free trials.

Sugarsync (sugarsync.com) ranks #1, according to one rating service. It has an intuitive interface and good support. Cost is \$4.99/month for 30 GB of storage. One drawback: no file-search feature.

EgnyteHybridCloud (egnyte.com) ranks #2. Their special twist is that they back up both locally and on the cloud, but the service is pricier: \$9.99/month for 20 GB for one user, and it looks to be designed for larger operations.

OpenDrive (opendrive.com) [#6] allows you to customize your plan, starting with 5 GB for free, \$5 for 50 GB.

Other popular cloud storage sites include Google Apps (google.com/apps/business), Box (box.net), Mozy (mozy.com), Carbonite (carbonite.com), and ADrive (adrive.com). These sites back up automatically as you add files. To see the pros and cons of each and where they rank (except Google, which isn't ranked), go to toptenreviews.com, which also lists features. ■ — Joen Kinnan

the strong preference for e-mail reflects the technology with which most members are currently most familiar. As more members become adept with social media, and IWOC uses and promotes them more effectively, we will probably see a shift toward the newer online communications media.

Areas needing improvement

The survey asked respondents to select the areas of organization performance where they thought IWOC most needs improvement. They answered that the biggest need is marketing and PR (64%), second is job-finding tools (55%), and third came IWOC's online presence, including website and social media (42%). Although we only asked people to pick three, it's important to mention that number 4 is "Outreach to and recruitment of potential members." Strengthening that underlies all our efforts to build an IWOC that continues into the future.

We're making a good start. We've already had four new members join since November, and at last week's WBEZ "Making Your Own Job" resource fair for the self-employed, people flocked to our IWOC table and went away excited about what IWOC can do for them. I think we'll see them again soon.

So now, we simply have to do it! ■

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3.

to-do list, and we welcome constructive suggestions from all members.

In response to the question, "Which features of IWOC membership do you find most useful? (Pick three.)," number 1 at 82% was "Listing in IWOC website Find a Writer member directory." Monthly meetings and programs came second, but far behind, with 56%. In third place with 50% was networking opportunities.

The next question was, "Which methods do you deem most effective for being kept informed of IWOC matters? (Pick four.)" Again, the top ranking — e-mail with 88% (30 people) — was far ahead of the IWOC website at 59%, and the *Stet* newsletter at 50% (either PDF or e-mail version). Number 4 was the automatic IWOC robo-calls (which two people really resented).

As noted previously, IWOC's LinkedIn group ranked number 5 (24%), Facebook page number 6 (12%), with the twitter account in last place at 0%. It seems likely that

WBEZ EVENT IS A HIT

IWOC scores at resource fair

Radio station WBEZ selected IWOC as the only professional writers' group invited to participate in their resource fair for the self-employed on January 26. This event, "Making Your Own Job," developed from WBEZ's desire to promote resources and networks to support the soaring increase in independent professionals and workers revealed by the station's recent Front and Center series on work around the Great Lakes.

IWOC responded immediately, organizing a table exhibit with bookmarks, candy, and posters. The table was staffed by Jim Kepler, Adam Smit, Jennifer Lyng, Roger Rueff, George Becht, and Dave Epstein. The whole event was a huge success, attracting so many people that, unfortunately, 150 had to be turned away because the room became too crowded.

Dozens of eager visitors continually stopped at the IWOC table, delighted to discover resources they needed and engaging in enthusiastic conversations with us about the realities of freelance writing. Many said they will come to IWOC meetings soon and at

least some are likely to join. In addition, we made new contacts with several other independent organizations that offer great potential for various kinds of collaboration with IWOC.

Stay tuned for more — and watch for further developments on IWOC's Facebook, LinkedIn, and twitter pages.

— Dave Epstein

1 Comment from Jeff Steele: I got the sense from many of the people who shyly approached the IWOC table that they had long been burdened with a concern. They were either considering freelance writing or had begun freelancing but worried there might not be any friendly and supportive local group of writers to which they could turn for collegial help, resources, and inspiration.

After just a few short minutes talking to the IWOCers present, these visitors to our table began showcasing grins and a real sense of excitement. Many seemed to go away jazzed that the very group they hoped was out there *was* -- and they were welcome to join us.

2 Comment from George Becht: The WBEZ event on 26 January was a more than worthwhile hour and a half. Others will tell you how well-received the IWOC presence was. But I'd like to share two great resources with those who didn't attend:



IWOC Welcomes New Members

Jan Klingberg
Deb M. Quantock

And Returning Member

Ellen M. Hunt

1. Look at indiemade.com. The engaging principals offer "easy & affordable DIY websites for indie businesses." If it can be arranged, IWOCers will do well to attend a session where indiemade will lead attendees through setting up their own websites then and there.

2. Two (of 63 nationwide) Small Business Development Centers were represented. These are sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration and foster the development of small businesses. Both representatives said they would welcome pitches from writers and would pass the information on to their small business clients.

3 Photos from the WBEZ fair:



In the next issue



- **March 13 meeting:** Get hands-on coaching on how to use social media. Bring an Internet-accessible laptop, iPad, smart phone, etc.
- **President's column:** Read Dave Epstein's always interesting and informative remarks.
- **Technology article:** Find out more about what you can do on the cloud.
- And much more.