



The SouthWest Sage

Vol. 22, No. 6

The Voice of SouthWest Writers

June 2007

SouthWest Writers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging and supporting all people to express themselves through the written word.

WHITE NOISE

by Pat Browning

My novel was stuck on page 70. I was in a rut, out of juice, badly in need of a change of scenery. I didn't need a complete break, just a little variation in the routine, something more than a brisk walk around the block, something less than a climb up the Matterhorn.

The perfect retreat turned out to be the Irwin Street Inn, a bed-and-breakfast across the street from the post office in Hanford, the small Central California town where I lived. The inn had new owners, a new brunch menu and a new cream tea service. I didn't have to pack a suitcase. I could go home to check my answering machine and read my mail any time I felt the need. The inn was only two miles away from my computer.

I gave the receptionist a signed copy of my first mystery, *Full Circle*, and explained that I needed time away from my desk, with privacy for writing. She gave me the honeymoon suite at a deeply discounted rate. The chef brought me a pot of tea and a plate of chopped egg sandwiches. I invited her to share. She told me the story of her life.

I climbed outside staircases to stand on balconies, making notes of places for a fistfight or a shootout, a hiding place for a body.

For three days I wandered the premises at my own pace, soaking up the inn's ambience. I asked questions about the Victorian furnishings, the polished woods and stained glass windows, the wine-red draperies and flocked wall coverings, the graceful period lamps and tables.



Irwin Street Inn

I climbed outside staircases to stand on balconies, making notes of places for a fistfight or a shootout, a hiding place for a body. I took photos to keep the inn always fresh in my mind. A framed eight-by-ten of a century-old camphor tree in a side yard hangs above my desk today.

I decided to write a short story. It takes place in a small-town inn. The heroine ... well, it's on the back burner at the moment but you can read it one of these days.

I reconsidered the plot of my second novel.

By the time I checked out I felt new again. The "white noise" that made sleep so peaceful and waking hours so restful was simply an absence of the clatter and clutter in my everyday life. I could hear myself think.

When you can do that, everything else falls into place.

An award-winning newspaper reporter and former SWW member, Pat Browning set her first mystery, Full Circle, in California's Central San Joaquin Valley, where she lived for many years before returning to her native Oklahoma. She's working on her second and third mysteries.



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Features

1 White Noise

by Pat Browning

Wherein the author revs her mystery motor by imaginatively racing about the balconies of a nearby bed and breakfast.



5 Book Review

A Tropical Place Like That Review by Wendy Bickel

8 Good Headings Help Website Results by Virginia DeBolt

8 Websites for Writers: Basic Writing Skills by Sandy Schairer

9 Did you Know? Understanding the Publishing World by Scott Lindsay

10 Markets by Eileen Stanton

12 Writing Tip: Active vs. Passive Verbs by Lisa Silverman



Departments

3 From the Editor

4 Classes & Successes

5 Annual Contest Connection

6 June Events & Workshops

6 Book Signings

7 New Members

7 July Events & Workshops

11 Monthly Writing Contest

13 Board Highlights

14 Contests

15 Advertising Rates

15 UNM Press Events

**Join us! First Saturday: 10am-Noon; Workshop: 1-4pm. Third Tuesday: 7-9pm.
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico**

SWW Member Perks: Full listing at <http://www.southwestwriters.com>.
Show your SWW membership card to these and many other fine merchants:

20% discount on books ordered from UNM Press Catalogue. (505) 277-1895. Ask for Luther Wilson when ordering.

NM Educators Credit Union membership available. Call SWW office for details (505) 265-9485.

Member Links on the SWW website for all the world to see for one-time fee of \$5 (good as long as you remain a member). SWW gets thousands of page hits per month, so by linking with us you can raise the ranking of your own website or blog with Internet search engines.

From the Editor

Wondering if you need a literary agent or how to get (or get rid of) one? Then be sure to meet Lois Ruby on Saturday morning, June 2nd. Having slipped into publishing through the backdoor as a librarian for young people in Dallas, Lois now has 13 books in print, so she knows whereof she speaks.



Deborah Finkelstein's workshop that afternoon will offer ways to heighten your awareness so you can show more and tell less. Her focus is fiction but writers of other genres—such as travel buffs and poets—will benefit by learning to create enriched descriptions. Deborah, too, has volumes of experience having taught in New York and Maui, been a UNM adjunct lecturer and taught Creative Writing at Santa Fe Community College.

Mark your calendar for Tuesday evening, June 19, when our own Workshop Coordinator, Loretta Hall, speaks on cheap and easy website building. Loretta speaks from experience, too, as she shows how to build and operate your own multi-page website for \$5 or less a month!



May News

Our meeting on Saturday, May 5th, was busy and entertaining. Artist Bonnie Hayes, SWW's Class Coordinator, presented a test flight of her new Word Birds by introducing a murder of crows, a gaggle of geese, bevy of quail, covey of grouse, a colony of gulls—no,

wait, I got carried away. For a modest fee, you can purchase or order from Bonnie a hand-made Word Bird or two, which will deliver scrolls or plastic eggs complete with greetings you add in your own words. Clever centerpieces, birthday and shower gifts, a pride of eagles is on its way for July 4th celebrations. Perhaps they'll land during our June meetings.



Uma Krishnaswami, May's speaker and workshop presenter, with Brett (SWW's youngest member) and Rob Spiegel.

Uma Krishnaswami from Aztec, NM detailed several delightful picture books at the May morning meeting and delved into dialogue during her afternoon workshop.

Written for children of all ages, picture books, Uma explained are not easily mastered due primarily to restrictions on composition and illustrations—but once you get that down, they provide a delightful writing experience. Her dialogue workshop was thorough and loaded with specific writing examples, exercises and sharing.

Newsletter Biz

In an effort to deliver printed copies of *SWW Sage* nearer the first of the month, we've moved the submission deadline from the 10th to the 1st of the month for the following month; for example, submissions should be sent via e-mail by July 1st for the August issue. Writers' Guidelines will be posted on the SWW website soon.

I'm happy to report that SWW member Lola Eagle has joined the newsletter staff, and we'll have regular Internet coverage by Virginia DeBolt. Our Critique Groups and Odds & Ends sections will return next month freshly updated. If you sponsor a group with room for more or are looking for a critique group to join, please share details with me ASAP by e-mail. Also send me your successes, book signings and reviews, announcements, writing tips, articles, general news and photos, along with ideas for articles you'd like to see us publish. We're here to share information and this newsletter is incomplete without your input.

Please join me in welcoming Wendy Bickel to the SWW Board. Wendy delivers a nicely varied background with a great personality, and is sure to be a valued member of the team. And don't overlook the blurb about Rob Spiegel on our cover this month.

Until next time, keep on writing.

Peggy

Your Advertisement Here

SouthWest Sage
**is read by people all over the world
 because it's published each month on
 SouthwestWriters.com**

Affordable ad rates on page 15.

Classes

Classes are held at the SWW conference room at *3721 Morris St. NE Suite A* in Albuquerque, which is available to members wishing to teach classes about writing. SouthWest Writers is not responsible for the opinions and teaching methods of the instructors. However, we welcome helpful criticism or comments on any class, and these should be forwarded to the office.

Awakening Imagination & Improving Writing through Creative Visualization

This series of classes will explore your imaging skills, awaken your creativity, and improve writing at all levels. Learn basic visualization techniques to apply to your writing techniques and manuscripts. Sandy Schairer, PhD, has used creative visualization for over 20 years, and is offering this exciting experiential technique to fellow writers. Sandy is the author of *ABC 123*, an anthology of humorous flash fiction and several e-books.

June 6, 13, & 20, 7-9pm, SWW Conference Room:
\$45 members, \$55 non-members; for 4 to 15 people.

How to Get Your Book Published

Ready to get your non-fiction book published? Want someone to buy your novel? Rob Spiegel and Melody Groves will teach two sets of classes to propel you on your way to fame and fortune.

The first series of 5 classes address issues of non-fiction and will cover finding markets, writing queries (these will be critiqued by Rob and Melody), writing proposals (also critiqued and shared with the group), attending conferences (why that's crucial), and finding an agent. Cost is \$69 for members and \$79 non-members.

6:30-8:30pm beginning Monday, July 9; consecutively through August 6.

Fiction Classes

The fiction classes will address markets, the submission process (proposals), writing the synopsis (critiqued in class) as well as suggested conferences (why you should attend) and finding an agent. These classes start on Monday, September 10 and run through Monday, October 8, 6:30-8:30pm. Cost is \$69/\$79.

Rob is the author of six published non-fiction books. Melody is the author of one published non-fiction book and two fiction books with two more non-fiction and another fiction under contract.

Free Writing Class for Seniors

SWW offers a free writing class at Bear Canyon Senior Center every Monday from 3:00- 4:15pm. Taught by Larry Greenly and Rob Spiegel, classes are free to members of any Albuquerque Senior Center. Membership is open to anyone over 50 and annual dues are \$13. Bear Canyon is two blocks north of Montgomery, one block east of Eubank.

The class covers all forms of writing, from fiction and non-fiction to memoirs and poetry. During the first half of the class there's a lecture on the principles of good writing. In the second half of the class the instructors look at students' work.

Successes

Virginia DeBolt reports: I've been writing for my blogs and recently took on an official writing job as a Contributing Editor at BlogHer (<http://blogher.org/blog/virginia-debolt>). I just finished an article called "Floats 101" for the prestigious web magazine, *Digital Web* (<http://www.digital-web.com/>). My web design book, *Mastering Integrated HTML and CSS*, was released a couple of months ago, which I hope will bring in some nice PR, and my story, "The Tomato Patch Smoocher," was published at The Elder Storytelling Place (<http://www.ronnibennett.typepad.com/elderstorytelling/>), a wonderful new blog currently looking for stories from elders. Anyone over 50 qualifies. Lastly, my interview in A Little Red Hen (http://alittleredhen.typepad.com/a_little_red_hen/2007/01/virginia_debolt.html) explains how I came to be that rarity known as an elder geek, and how I feel about life after 60.

March 2007 marked publication of the first article by **Michelle Holtby** in *New Mexico WOMAN* magazine. Entitled "Listen to This," it featured the New Mexico Jazz Workshop and discussed classes for kids and adults offered to increase awareness and appreciation of jazz and the summer concert series "Jazz and Blues Under the Stars" at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History Amphitheater.
page 4

Richard E. Peck now does a monthly humor column in ACCENT Albuquerque and a monthly golf column in *Sun Country Golf*. He's just finished JACKALOPE CASINO, the second crime novel in his New Mexico series.

Jeanne Shannon has a poem in the online magazine *Midway Journal* (www.midwayjournal.com). Another of her poems is included in the anthology titled *Earthships: A New Mecca Poetry Collection*, released on May 9 from Horse and Tiger Press, the publishing arm of New Mexico Poetry Tangents.

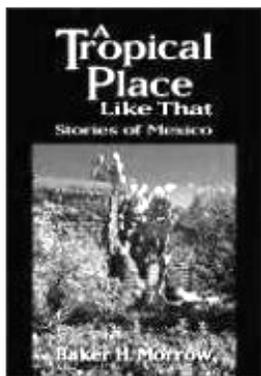
Peggy Herrington was spotted with a group of friends out on the town celebrating her appointment as editor of the *SWW Sage*.

James McGrath Morris reports: A couple of years ago I spoke to one of your meetings. I am now moving to New Mexico and, of course, will become a member. Please tell others about the online newsletter I publish for those interested in news about biographies. To subscribe go to <http://www.thebiographerscraft.com>. There is no charge and our mailing list is never shared with others.

A Tropical Place Like That, Stories of Mexico

Review by Wendy Bickel

Baker H. Morrow wields a pen as an artist might use a brush, painting a vivid picture of life in rural Mexico in the 1960s. In *A Tropical Place Like That, Stories of Mexico*, University of New Mexico Press, 2006, Morrow's deft hand brings the people in his eleven stories to life, from the fat boatman "with an unkempt graying mustache... [and teeth] all outlined neatly in gold," to the flower seller "in scuffed black pumps and a gray dress... thirty or so, looking fifty, with three lower teeth missing and a green ribbon wrapped around her hair," to the train steward "whose face looked like mashed beets."



The central figure in Morrow's stories is Louis Becton, an affable 21-year-old American living in Zacapu, in the highlands of Michoacán. Becton soaks up the culture with warm acceptance and a refreshing lack of either criticism or praise. People are described, not judged. However, even the most fair-minded person cannot always be objective, as reflected by the delightful description of Becton's landlord as a "shadowy irresponsible absentee lowlife."

In contrast to the vivid descriptions of the locals, Becton is painted with meager strokes. This serves to keep the focus on the intriguing people he meets. In "Middle Class," the Frésquez family invites Becton to dinner, hoping to confirm their speculations about his table manners and make certain that their transition to middle class is on track. "The Flat" is a poignant story of a tire repairman and his petite wife, who fear that their prayer for children has brought disaster to another family. In "A Cathedral Half in Gray," ancient history stretching back to the Aztecs still affects attitudes, and a half-built cathedral from the early 1900s provides a family with a unique place to call home. A beekeeping demonstration goes badly awry in "What Would Sir Edmund Do?"

Throughout these stories, Becton is a keen participant in local activities, even serving as godfather when one is needed on extremely short notice. Yet he remains an outsider, a gringo. Becton's perspective allows him to see everything with a fresh eye and to notice details that might seem mundane and unimportant to a local. This is both his strength and his weakness. As one acquaintance tells him, "You'll never change your heart into a Mexican heart. You're an Anglo."

Wendy Bickel is a member of both SouthWest Writers and the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators. Her interests include picture books, middle grade and young adult novels, fantasy, science fiction and nonfiction.

SWW Annual Contest Connection

by Jeanne Shannon

Sincere thanks to the volunteers who helped process the hundreds of contest entries and send them to the judges and critiquers. Volunteers were **Harold Burnett, Lola Eagle, Melody Groves, Carol Riley, John Candelaria** and **Terry Sachko**.

Thanks, too, to **Larry Greenly**, for doing the initial entry screening, answering questions, and helping resolve issues.



Critiquers and judges must complete their work by August 1. At that point we will learn who the top three winners are in each category. We will notify you by mail if you are in the top three, but we will not announce first-, second- and third-place winners until the awards banquet. We will call winners who are unable to attend the banquet and let you know your winning status.

The awards banquet will be held on Saturday, September 22, at the Albuquerque Marriott Hotel, 2101 Louisiana Blvd. NE. Details will be available soon.

As you can see from the letter below, entering the contest has led to publication for some of our contestants. A few years ago, my friend Paula Hampton found a publisher for her novel *The Reluctant Tutor* as a result of winning the contest. Maybe that will be the case for some of this year's winners. Could that be you? Good luck, and thanks to everyone who entered.

I took third place out of 97 entries in the 2000 SWW Annual Contest in the Mystery genre. It's been a long, tortuous road to publication, but I want to acknowledge that contest as part of the reason I finally made it.

Poison Pen (Capital Crime Press) came out in trade paperback last month with a starred review in *Publishers Weekly*. As a result, Penguin has acquired the rights to the first two books in the Claudia Rose series and luckily I have Kristen Weber as my editor. Penguin will re-issue the book in mass market paperback next April.

The contest critiques I received from Sara Ann Freed and Tom Colgan started me on the road to saleable writing. The reviews have been gratifying, and I'm grateful to Betty Levin, SWW member now in California, for pushing me into entering.

Thanks, SWW!
Sheila Lowe

June SWW Events & Workshops

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

Saturday, June 2 from 10am to noon

Secret Agent Confidential Files: How to Get, Keep, and Fire an Author's Agent

Let's face it – we're in the desert, far from the national publishing hubbub in the high-rise canyons of New York. This workshop explores why it's important for authors to have representation, and how to nourish the triad of author/agent/editor. There will be funny and horrifying stories from the confidential files, to boot.

Lois Ruby sneaked in the back door as a writer for young people. That is, she was a Young Adult librarian for the Dallas Public Library, and after reading a thousand books in her department, decided she could write the stories herself. Her first book was published in 1977. Since then, twelve more have seen print. Her latest, *Shanghai Shadows*, is a spy/survival/love story about European refugees who escaped Hitler's ravages by fleeing to China.

Raised in California and seasoned in Texas, Lois spent half her life in Kansas, the locale of several of her novels, including the best-known, *Steal Away Home*. The Rubys relocated to Albuquerque in 2003.



Tuesday, June 19 from 7 to 9pm

Cheap & Easy Website Building

You don't have to be an HTML whiz—or hire one—to establish your presence on the Internet. **Loretta Hall** will show how to build and operate your own website for \$5 a month or less. Her design tips will help you make your site look professional and appropriate for your writing genre.

Loretta admits to being enough of a control freak to resist delegating any aspect of her freelance writing business. In 2001, she developed what is now an inexpensive 25-page website to stimulate interest in the subject of one of her nonfiction books. Each day, the site averages 550 page views by 150 unique visitors from around the world. Despite being HTML-illiterate, Loretta received a regional Award of Excellence for that website from the Society for Technical Communication in 2007.



SWW programs are rarely cancelled, but it is possible depending on the weather. If you have doubts about a program taking place or about the time or topic, call the SWW office (505) 265-9485 during business hours, M-F, 9am- noon.

Saturday, June 2 from 1pm to 4pm

Workshop: \$20 for members, \$30 for non-members Fiction Workshop

After taking this workshop by **Deborah Finkelstein**, you will improve dialogue and description in your writing. Humans spend most of their time relying on vision. In this workshop, you will heighten your awareness of other senses, and discuss how these details can reveal place, time, characterization, and other important elements in your writing. You will learn ways for writing to show more and tell less, and discuss writing realistic dialogue. You will participate in interactive writing exercises and discussions.

Although the focus will be fiction, elements of the class may be useful to writers in other genres such as travel writers or poets trying to enrich their descriptions. For the past six years, Deborah Finkelstein has taught Creative Writing: Short Stories at Santa Fe Community College, where several of her students have gone on to publish books and win awards. She also teaches in New York and Maui, and is an adjunct lecturer at UNM. Currently, she works as a Literary Project Manager, where she works with fiction writers, journalists, playwrights, and others on editing their work and submitting it to festivals and publishers. Visit her website at www.seminarsuite.com

Book Signings

Saturday, June 2nd, 9am-1pm: 3rd Annual Chama Book Fair. A host of New Mexico writers, editors, and publishers, including SWW members David J. Corwell and Jerry Davis, will discuss and sign their works. *Cookin' Books*, Chama. (505) 220-4933 or jill.lane@jillevents.com.

Friday, June 8, 4-8pm: Multiple Author Book Signing. David J. Corwell, Ronn Perea, Sandy Schairer, and Lela Belle Wolfert will discuss and sign their works. Westside Hastings (Coors Rd. and Montano), Albuquerque. (505) 898-0624 or dcorwell@hotmail.com.

Monday, June 11th, 6:30-8pm: Writers to Writers-Cheap and Easy Web Site Building by Loretta Hall. Westside Hastings (Coors Rd. and Montano), Albuquerque. (505) 898-0624 or dcorwell@hotmail.com.

July SWW Events & Workshops

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

Donations of refreshments at regular SWW meetings are gratefully accepted! Please consider providing this valuable service to our organization.

Saturday, July 7 from 10am to noon

Poetry: Words Sizzling with Meaning

Moderators: Larry Castillo-Wilson and Billy Brown will host a panel of prominent New Mexico Poets. Vital issues in poetry today will be discussed and debated including:

- The relationship between traditional and experimental poetry
- The current domination of experimental poetry
- The relationship between feeling and ideas in poetry
- Should poetry be a gadfly?
- What is poetry?
- What will the reading of poetry bring to your life?

An opportunity to present questions to the panel will be provided.



Tuesday July 17, 7 to 9 p.m.

Writing the Non-Fiction Novel

Lucinda Schroeder will explain the fiction techniques she used to write her creative non-fiction crime novel. She will explain how these techniques can add color and depth to your fiction or non-fiction novel.

Lucinda has a B. A. degree in Criminology from the University of Maryland, and worked for 30 years as a Special Agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which took her around the country and around the world investigating crimes against wildlife. She did extensive undercover work, served as a firearms instructor, and taught special investigative techniques such as lie detection to other agents.

Since retiring in 2004, Lucinda wrote a book about a case she conducted in Alaska that was published by Lyon's Press in April 2006. *A Hunt for Justice* profiles how she posed as a big game hunter to infiltrate and stop an international ring of poachers. Tony Hillerman said, "This is a true story that reads like a mystery."

Lucinda has been a member of SouthWest Writers for 12 years, and has spoken at several SWW conferences on crime related topics. She is also the current president of the Sisters in Crime Albuquerque Chapter of Croak and Dagger and runs a low-profile business called the "Crime Connection," in which she works with writers on anything crime related.

Saturday, July 7 from 1 to 4pm

Workshop: \$20 for members, \$30 for non-members

Your Novel, From Idea to Contract

Paula Paul will guide you through all the steps of creating a novel from plotting to creating believable characters, to writing, finishing, editing and selling.

The award-winning author of 22 novels and numerous articles, Paula Paul has written as a freelancer and a staff writer. Her novel *Crazy Quilt* recently won a Willa Award for literary fiction from Women Writing the West. She has won the New Mexico Zia Award twice, the Texas Institute of Letters Award, a National Press Women's Award for novels as well as several state and national awards for journalism. Her 23rd book, a literary novel called *Inherited Sins*, will be published by UNM Press in 2008. Her most recent novels, *Barefoot Girl* and *The King's Nun* were published by New American Library, a division of the Penguin Group.

For information about benefits
for SWW members contact:
Cheri Eicher

INDEPENDENT MEANS

Group Benefits
(505) 299-5919
(800) 883-4310

Independentmeans@comcast.net

Welcome New Members

Wendy Traylor
Connie Stevens
Audrey Hansen
Wayne Micosz
Tamara Cole
Benny Kjaer

Melissa Jones Witt
Jacquelyn Bickel
Julie Fulcher
Elisa Sapienza
Jacquelyn Richmond
David O. Baldwin

Vickie Dean Mayhew

Good Headings Help Website Success

by Virginia DeBolt

Have a Web page or blog? The headings you use are more important than you may realize. In Web terms, headings are the h1, h2, h3, h4, h5, and h6 elements in HTML. Here's what good headings do:

- help readers understand your content and the purpose of your site
- improve your search engine placement
- improve accessibility

Help Readers Understand Your Site

Headings create a hierarchy of importance. They give critical information about your Website in the form of site names, section names, article names, and other organizational markers. The most important heading is the h1. It's often used for the name of the site. The next most important heading on the page is an h2. Depending on the page, you might only have one h1 element, but you could have several h2 headings. For example, h2 elements might be the titles of the main contents of your page or of individual blog posts.

Improve Search Engine Placement

Accessibility and search engine results are related. Consider the search engines to be your most important blind user. A heading that would help a user with an assistive device such as an aural screen reader will also help the search engines. A user browsing with a computer might see your pages one way while a search engine or someone using an assistive device (or a mobile device) sees something a bit differently.

The words you use in headings are more important than words in your text. So a well-organized page with informative words in the headings tells a search engine what your page is about and can help people looking for that information find your page. If you've heard of keywords in relation to search engines, headings are a good place for your keywords.

Did you know that a screen reader user can navigate your site using keyboard commands that jump from heading to heading? That means a few keystrokes can reveal the structure of your page. A screen reader user can choose content they want to read within seconds based on a quick run through the headings, assuming your page is sensibly organized and has headings labeling the key sections of the page.

Improving your headings helps you attract visitors and it helps your visitors navigate and understand your site. Sharpen up those h1, h2, and h3 elements!

Virginia DeBolt writes books about web design and blogs at <http://first50.wordpress.com>, where you are invited to participate in short writing practice activities. Her homepage is www.vdebolt.com.
page 8

Websites for Writers: Basic Writing Skills

by Sandy Schairer

The Internet is more than just chat rooms, *ahem* pictures, movie times, email and outrageous opinions on blogs. Besides being a gigantic dictionary with encyclopedic detail on every subject you could possibly think of, it's also an enormous school where you can learn the craft of writing and improve your skills on a myriad of free websites.



Below are three websites for basic writing skills that all writers need to master in order to submit to contests and publishers. Believe me, you might be the best creative writer in the universe with a glorious writing style and a plot to rival *The Da Vinci Code*, but if your basic skills aren't up to professional quality, your writing career will come to a sudden halt before it starts. Keeping up is especially important because the basic rules seem to change every decade or two and predictably faster now that we are part of the computer generation, like-it-or-not.

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/writingskills1.html>
Basically a "homework" assistance site, this site offers basic as well as advanced skills in writing all types of essays. Essays are basically articles! Why not get a jump on the talented young people coming out of school with these skills honed to perfection?

<http://www.wonderfulwritingskillsunhandbook.com/> Interactive Learning *The Wonderful Writing Skills (Un)Handbook*. In this program you will use the writing process to learn writing skills. There are two ways to work this program, so the webmaster says. 1. Your way. Create your own path to learn what you need to learn on your own. 2. This web author's way: "a suggested approach to learning called the *Lernatron!*"

<http://www.betterwritingskills.com> *Better Writing Skills*
Here you'll find a range of jargon-free downloadable e-books (PDF files) that will make you a better writer. These e-books will help you with **business proposal writing, report writing, term papers, technical writing, grant writing, creative writing** and more. The website also contains the following free goodies: back issues of BWS's writing-tips newsletter; lots of useful writing tips; and reprintable articles that you can use in your newsletters and websites.

Sandy Schairer, PhD, long-time member, presently serves on the SWW Board. She is recipient of the Parris Award 2004 and author of 123 ABC Extremely Short Stories for Busy People, an anthology of humor and flash fiction, and several adult fiction short e-books under the pen name Diantha Wilde.

Did You Know? Understanding the Publishing World

by Scott Lindsay

Sometimes putting things in perspective is useful when trying to gain a clear understanding of the many facets of the publishing world. This article is intended to provide some random statistics to help you understand the publishing world a little better.

Did You Know?

Nearly 80% of all book titles made available each year are published by small publishers or are self-published.

Nearly 50% of all book sales are attributed to the five major publishing houses in New York (Random House, Penguin Group, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, AOL/Time Warner).

The top five publishing houses account for over \$5 billion annually in both national and international sales of books.

Christian books (all categories and all publishers) comprise more than \$4 billion in annual sales.

More than 50% of all books sold are fiction.

Most first edition print runs are 5,000 or fewer copies.

In order for a fiction book to be declared a success it must sell 5,000 copies.

Book sales account for \$25-30 billion in annual revenue.

One third of total book sales occur in the United States.

The people of Los Angeles buy more books than any other city in the United States.

eBook sales increased 1442% in January 2003 over January 2002. (*PublishersWeekly*)

There are 15,000 stores in the United States that sell books and slightly more than half of them are actual bookstores.

Amazon.com book orders account for roughly 5% of all book sales and for \$3 billion dollars in annual book sales.

A bookstore visitor will spend less than 30 seconds looking at a book to determine if they are interested.

According to the Jenkins Group:

1. 81% of the population feels they have a book in them.
2. 27% would write fiction.
3. 28% would write on personal development.
4. 27% would write history, biography, etc.
5. 20% would do a picture book, cookbook, etc.
6. 6 million have written a manuscript.
7. 6 million manuscripts are making the rounds.
8. Out of every 10,000 children's books, 3 get published.

This information is designed to show both opportunity and the need for intestinal fortitude in seeking a publisher for your work.

It is clear the publishers are finding success and that authors are being discovered. The real key to any writer's success is that they first hone their craft and then believe enough in what they have to offer that they persevere.

It is not uncommon to see successful authors shop a manuscript to multiple publishers before finding a match. The same will likely be true for an undiscovered talent.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was, "Rejoice when you see a rejection slip, you are that much closer to finding the right publisher."

Scott Lindsay is a web developer and entrepreneur. He founded FaithWriters (<http://www.faithwriters.com>) and other web projects. FaithWriters has grown to become one of the largest online destinations for Christian writers. Members include writers from all around the world. Visit the website at <http://www.faithwriters.com>

WRITERS WORKSHOPS

July 13-15 Sean Murphy and Tania Casselle

SIZZLING SHORT FICTION

July 21 Sarah Lovett

MAKE A GOOD SCENE GREAT!

July 28 Madge Harrah

WRITING CHILDREN'S CHAPTER BOOKS

August 4 Lesley King

THE ESSENCE OF TRAVEL & FOOD WRITING

August 11 Rick Reichman

SCREENWRITING

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Sage



Award-winning Eileen Stanton is an author, co-founder and past president of SWW, and long-time teacher at three universities, including the University of New Mexico. Having honed her interviewing talents over 15 years on the radio and in thousands of articles, Eileen brings this expertise to the Sage Markets column each month. Contact her at estanton@cablone.net.

MARKETS

by Eileen Stanton

You may have already realized that the key to getting published is to find a savvy agent who loves your work and believes in you. That's why I invited four agents to this year's conference, "From Start to Sales III," sponsored by UNM's Adult Education Department with the help and cooperation of SouthWest Writers. For this Markets' column, I interviewed Phil Lang, the one person in a successful literary agency who handles almost all of the manuscripts that come through the doors.

Q. First, tell me about your background and what led you into the literary agency business.

A. I never imagined I would find myself in this business. I had a one-track mind after my college: I was going to earn my M.F.A in creative writing and, in the process, write a novel. As I was finishing my masters and the novel, the "What now?" moment hit me hard. So many of my classmates were taking jobs that had nothing to do with their degree because they needed a paycheck, and I wanted to avoid a similar path. I wanted a profession that not only paid my student loans, but also utilized the education in which I invested. Luckily an internship came up at Reece Halsey North. I quickly became fascinated by how books get out to the public. I was surprised by how much work and how many people were required to get a book into a bookstore, and I was very interested in the business side of the equation. I immediately discovered that the writing of a book is only a step in the process, and that it was up to dedicated and resilient people like Kimberley Cameron and Elizabeth Evans (Reece Halsey North agents) to get great literature to publishers. After my internship concluded, Ms. Cameron graciously offered me a full-time job at the agency. I am beyond grateful to have a job I love and believe in.

Q. I understand that you read most if not all of the manuscripts that arrive at Reece Halsey North Literary Agency. What signs signal a good writer?

A. Original ideas, original voices, original settings, original time periods. I look for literature that makes me interrupt Ms. Evans and Ms. Cameron and say, "Stop what you're doing. You have to read this." The greatest advantage of working at Reece Halsey North is that we dedicate our time and energy to projects we love. Staying steadfast to this credo keeps our minds sharp, the quality of our work at its highest, and our persistence unyielding. Also, the query letter itself often times can show the quality of the writer. In a dream world we would be able to read the entire manuscript of every submission, but that's simply not possible, which is why the opening pages are crucial. The writing needs

to gain momentum from the first word. A reader, editor, or an agent will not put a potential project down if the writing doesn't let them.

Q. What common mistakes do you find that will turn you and the agents off?

A. Poorly written query letters are one of the quickest ways to turn an agency off. A query letter is a formal contact intended to pique my interest in a project. A query letter that is not taken seriously demonstrates that the writer doesn't treat his or her work seriously. I'm not saying that a query letter can't make me laugh or smile, but it is the first impression between two people who may become business partners.

Q. Your agency handles fiction and non-fiction. What genres of fiction are you looking for?

A. We look for great writing. We are not as concerned with filling a quota in a particular genre. We always stand behind great writing.

Q. What genres of non-fiction have recently been successful sales for your clients and agency?

A. Memoir, biography, self-help, political, humorous non-fiction, how-to; again, the quality of writing prevails.

Q. Does the Reece Halsey North Literary Agency take query letters by e-mail or regular mail? And if they're interested and the book is finished, will they want the whole manuscript or just the first three chapters?

A. We've recently changed our policy to e-mail. The turnaround is so much faster, which is better for everyone. We typically ask for the first three chapters, but if the writer blows us away, we'll ask for an exclusive on the entire manuscript.

Q. What genre do you personally like, and why?

A. I am a literary fiction junkie. The simple answer is because that's what I like to write, but we all know there's more to it. When it comes to literary fiction, there is as much joy in dissecting how the writer has put the novel together as there is in following the lives and events of the novel. As is the case with any true art form, literary fiction can change the way you think and see the world. Powerful stuff. Personally, a murder mystery or romance just can't do that.

SWW International Monthly Writing Competition

Congratulations to the winners of the February and March 2007 SWW International Monthly Writing Competitions! We had many wonderful entries.

February 2007 Winners: Romance



1st Prize: Judith Waller Carroll, Hot Springs, AR, for *Tall Handsome Stranger*

2nd Prize: Jim & Carol Riley, Albuquerque, NM, for *Romance Wisconsin Style*

3rd Prize: Jan Fenimore, Rio Rancho, NM,

for *The Ferris Wheel*

Honorable Mention: James Reinke, Rochester, MI, for *Falling in Love: A Prequel to a Series of Unfortunate Events*

Judge's remarks

Good stories in this bunch. Follow the rules. If they state up to four pages, that doesn't mean more than four pages. Learn the correct usage of ellipses and semicolons.

March 2007 Winners: Children's Novel

1st Prize: Jacquelyn Bickel, Albuquerque, NM for *The Trackers of Datarra*

2nd Prize: DelShirel Gladden, Colorado Springs, CO for *Civera's Curse*

3rd Prize: Vickie H. Moss, Chattanooga, TN for *The Banana Boat*

Honorable Mention: Suzanne Goldsmith Hirsch, Bexley, OH, for *Quitsa's Bands*

Judge's comments

Many intriguing ideas, but some writers don't know how to run with them or create a marketable story. A main character should have a problem that s/he must solve. As important as plotting and characterization are, they are just raw materials. The story must be told smoothly, interestingly, effectively and professionally.

A character's growth must come from the character as a result of what happens in the story. A writer should show their character rather than telling about him. Most beginning writers do not reveal this through action, dialogue, thoughts and feelings of the viewpoint character, or even narration. Most beginners do not use the correct words for the age group they're writing for. Some believe that a children's book is for any age—not so.

These problems can be overcome. Join a writers' group and attend workshops. If none is available, there are excellent books on these subjects. Writers must know how to write to succeed in the book business. Writing is not a game of hit or miss, especially when writing for children. There are more restrictions on writing for children than any other genre. The sooner you learn the rules, the sooner you will be on your way to publication.

Now that some of you have been "spanked," congratulations to everyone who entered this contest. Entering contests is a good way to polish your writing and get feedback. Keep writing and don't get discouraged. Children's writing is difficult. One local writer made his living for 30 years as a professional writer. He began writing children's books three

years ago and was astounded at how much he had to learn and how difficult children's writing is. He likens it to starting to crawl before learning how to walk. But he's read every book on the subject and persevered, and his writing for children has improved tremendously. Don't give up! You can do it.

Enter the June 2007 Contest

Non-fiction Article

Here's your chance to learn how to write a real-world article! Winners will receive cash prizes and be considered for publication in *Prime Time*, New Mexico's newspaper for the active 50+ community, www.primetimemonthly.com. You do not need to live in the Southwest to enter.

Write a double-spaced, 500-700 word article on either topic (with suggestions) below:

A. Living Better with Less: With all the advancements in modern technology and countless goods and services at our disposal, what do we really need to make us happy? What are some ways to live simpler, happier lives in an era where everything is bigger, better and faster?

B. Who Are You Calling Ma'am/Sir?: Conveniently packaged titles like: "baby boomers" and "generation Xers" inevitably feel like they're either boxing people in or leaving them out. Sometimes people are placed in groups by default because it's unclear which box they fit into. What are some insights, analyses, and/or experiences about finding ourselves toggling between these identities? You might want to ask, what new ways might we approach aging in the future? What assumptions need to be broken down?

Winners are subject to editing. Polish your work and have fun. Postmark deadline: Saturday, June 30, 2007.

Instructions

- Open to any writer in the world.
- Original, unpublished work only.
- No cover sheets.
- Print the following on first page: Name; Address; Phone; E-mail (if any); Category Name.
- Manuscripts prepared in standard format: 1" margins, double-spaced unless otherwise specified.
- Entries are not returned, so no need for an SASE.
- \$5 entry fee for SWW members; \$10 non-members.
- You may enter more than once, but an entry fee must accompany each entry.
- Decisions of the judges are final.
- Prizes: \$50 1st Prize; \$30 2nd Prize; \$20 3rd Prize and certificates.
- Mail entries to:

SWW Monthly Writing Competition
3721 Morris St NE, Ste A
Albuquerque, NM 87111

(Print category name under your return address)

Writing Tip: Active vs. Passive Verbs

by Lisa Silverman

Jenny was being served her apple martini by the bartender just as the front window was shattered by a speeding Humvee, and Jenny was thrown from her stool.”

OR

”The bartender was serving Jenny her apple martini just as a speeding Humvee shattered the front window and threw Jenny from her stool.”

Which sentence jumps off the page? Notice that I didn’t alter a single word, aside from changing each verb from passive to active voice.

If you haven’t heard those terms before, here’s a simple definition: Passive voice makes the subject into the (passive) object of the verb. Active voice means the subject is the (active) person or thing performing the action of the verb. In the second clause, the window isn’t doing the shattering—the Humvee is. The window is the object of the shattering. So shouldn’t the Humvee be the subject? Ancient grammar swamis say yes.

You’ve got to know the rules before you can know how to break them.

But, you say, the sentences don’t seem that different to me. Wrong. Try this: count the words. Okay, fine, I’ll do it for you. The first example contains 28 words, the second 23. Multiply that difference (five, math whiz) by the number of sentences in a manuscript. My example was extreme, so let’s be conservative and say you save one word every fifth sentence by going through your manuscript and changing as many verbs as you can from passive to active.

Take a manuscript of 300 pages, with an average of 300 words per page, and sentences of about 10 words... that’s 9,000 sentences. Damn. No wonder finishing a manuscript is hard. Result: you’ve just cut 1,800 words, or six pages, from your manuscript.

Why would you want to cut six pages from your magnum opus? Maybe you don’t. Maybe you want to fill those six pages—or twelve, if you’re one of those ambitious people who writes 600-page manuscripts—with useful information about plot, character, or theme, instead of useless words such as was, were, by, and that annoying suffix “-ing.” But it’s okay to simply cut. Honest. Quality is more important than quantity.

Even if you don’t see the difference in my one example, use active verbs consistently and your writing will pop as it never did before. The reason is self-explanatory: it’s more active, and useless words aren’t bogging it down. Repeat after me: useless words are bad words.

The Exception That Proves the Rule

F. Scott Fitzgerald used the passive voice. I’m sure of it. But when he did, I’ll bet he had a good reason. My example might be taken from a novel in which Jenny is the protagonist. Her true love, perhaps, is driving the Humvee. (The Humvee is not “being driven by” her true love.) So Jenny, not the bartender, should be the focus of the sentence. With this rule, as with all others that are meant to be (occasionally) broken, always be aware of why you’re breaking it.

You’ve got to know the rules before you can know how to break them. And no one knows all the rules. Not even me.

Lisa Silverman is a freelance book editor and works in the copy editing department at one of New York’s most prestigious literary publishing houses. She has also worked as ghostwriter and literary agent representing both book authors and screenwriters. She founded <http://www.BeYourOwnEditor.com> in order to provide writers with free advice on writing and publishing.



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Best True Headline

In the opinion of Dave Barry, *Washington Post* columnist, the best true headline ever to appear in an actual newspaper would be from the *Petersburg Progressive-Index*, over a story about a mishap during the 2001 Bike Week gathering of motorcyclists in Florida. It read: "Skydiver lands on beer vendor at women's cole-slaw wrestling event." Other finalists

An article from the *Watertown Daily Times* stating that the Lewis County Board of Legislators had authorized creation of a petty cash fund "for the weekly purchase of dry ice, used for incest control."

An article from the *Harrisburg Patriot-News* headlined: "Smoking organ causes stir at nursing home."



SouthWest Writers Recent Board Highlights

Reported by Sandy Schairer, Secretary

In addition to planning programs, conferences, workshops, contests, classes, refreshments, publicity, managing the critique service, coordinating volunteers and handling the finances and policies of SouthWest Writers, the board follows Robert's Rules of Orders guidelines. We have an established set of BYLAWS and detailed Policies and Procedures.

In addition, the board always hears, discusses, makes motions and decides on a case-by-case basis all actions that involve money. All meetings are open to members in good standing should you want to see the board in action. We meet on the first Tuesday of every month.

Here are some recent motions from the last few meetings:

It was moved that a disclaimer be added to "flyers" and the SWW Website when advertising classes. (See the disclaimer in the *Sage* with announcements of classes.)

It was moved that SWW place a 1/8th page ad (5 in. by 2.9 in.) in the ABQarts newspaper for \$230. Approved and done!

It was moved that Wendy Bickel be accepted as a new Board member. Approved unanimously. [Welcome, Wendy!]

It was moved that Melody Groves be appointed as Chair of Nominating Committee for upcoming elections of 2008 Officers. [Yes, already.]

It was moved that SWW change accounts from Bank of America to New Mexico Educators Federal Credit Union and buy the new credit card machine. Approved and done.

For details, see the notebook with official minutes and financial reports filed in the office or contact any member of the board. Secretary Sandy Schairer may be reached at sandyschairer@southwestwriters.com

The next Board Meeting will be held at the SWW office on Tuesday, June 5 at 6 pm.

First Pages

Learn the bare bones
method to launching
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For: writers of fiction and nonfiction
books, stories and articles

When: June 16, 9 am to 12 noon

Where: 3rd Street Art Space,
711 3rd St. SW, Barelax

How Much: \$60

How: for information and to sign up:
e-mail emily@emilyesterson.com
or call (505) 553-2671

Who: Albuquerque writer and editor.
Emily Esterson has hundreds of articles,
two books and various other projects in
print. She worked as a national magazine
writer and editor for 15 years.

Emily loves teaching writers

Contests

This information is provided as a convenience. Before entering, be sure to check the listed website information or write the sponsors to make sure a contest is right for you. And don't forget to enter SWW's International Monthly Contest.

Deadline 6/10/2007 (online): Short Stories. Electric Dragon Cafe Quarterly Contest. No entry fee. Prizes: \$25 gift certificate, \$10. Winning entries will be posted on ElectricDragonCafe.com. Details/Restrictions: science fiction, fantasy or horror with fantastic elements. 3000 words max. Theme: Alternate Histories. Submission guidelines and information: <http://www.electricdragoncafe.com>

Deadline: 6/10/2007 (email): Poetry. *WTF Magazine*. Entry fee: \$6.00 Canadian for up to 3 poems, 60 line max each. Awards: \$100, \$50, \$25. Winners and up to 25 honorable mentions will be published in *WTF Magazine's* July/August 2007 Issue. Submission guidelines and information: <http://wtfmag.ca/contests/poetrycontest/poetrycontest.html>

Deadline: 6/15/07 (online or postmark): Books. First-Chapter-of-a-Novel Contest. Literary Market Place. Crime fiction author, C.J. Box, who writes the Joe Pickett novels, will be part of the celebrity panel selecting the winners from the judges' short-list. Prizes: First place: \$500, two-volume print version of *Literary Market Place* (\$299.95 value), interview on The Writing Show, chapter posted on The Writing Show website. Two second prizes: \$100, chapter posted on the Writing Show website. All entrants receive 750 words of feedback and one week free access to LiteraryMarketPlaceOnline.com (a \$19.95 value). Entry fee: \$45. Submission guidelines and information: http://www.literarymarketplace.com/lmp/us/index_us.asp

Deadline: 6/15/2007 (postmark): Essay. "Dig to Write," Neeman House Publishers. No entry fee. Award: \$500. Submission guidelines and information: info@neemanhouse.com

Deadline: 6/24/2007 (online): Short stories. Pagan Fiction Award. No entry fee. Prize: \$500. Details/Restrictions: We seek original, unpublished short stories (3,000 to 8,000 words) featuring Pagan motifs. All genres welcome. All experience levels welcome. Submission guidelines and information: <http://www.pangaia.com/Fiction.htm>

Deadline 6/30/2007 (online): Short stories, fiction and non-fiction. Flash Fiction. No entry fee. Prize: \$100 Visa Gift Card. Details/Restrictions: The challenge of flash fiction is to tell a complete story in which every word is absolutely essential. In our first flash fiction contest we are challenging writers to write a flash fiction piece that is between 480 and 500 words. Submissions and information: <http://www.fanstory.com/contests.jsp#tellastry>

Deadline: 6/30/2007 (postmark): Short stories. Rejected Fiction Writing Contest. Entry fee: \$10.00. Prizes: 1st prize: \$200.00; 2nd prize: \$100; 3rd prize \$50.00. All winning stories published in *The Rejected Quarterly*. Details/Restrictions: Fiction to 8,000 words. All submissions must be accompanied

by 5 rejection slips (or copies thereof). Limit 2 submissions per individual. Submission guidelines and information: <http://www.rejectedq.com>

Deadline: 7/1/2007 (postmark or online): Scripts/Screenplays, Industry Door Opener Screenwriting Contest. Entry fee: \$40. Prize: \$1000, 1 year option with Storytime Entertainment, copy of Final Draft or MovieMagic Screenwriter. Details/Restrictions: Script must be in English, 85-130 pages in length, all genres, original material, must be registered with WGA or copyright, must be 18 years old. Submission guidelines and information: <http://www.stickvillemovie.com/contest.html>

Deadline 7/1/ 2007 (postmark): Short stories, poems, essays, articles, true stories, novels/novellas published and unpublished. Arizona Authors Association. Entry fees: \$15 to \$30. Prizes: \$100 in each category and publication or author feature in the *Arizona Literary Magazine*, as well as a *PushCart* nomination for poetry and essay categories. The unpublished novel winner will see his/her book published by AuthorHouse.com with national distribution through Ingram and sales on Amazon.com, B&N.com and Author House online store. Submission guidelines and information: <http://www.azauthors.com/contest.html>

Deadline: 7/1/ 2007 (postmark): Books. Hillerman Mystery Competition. No entry fee. Prize: Publication and advance against royalties of \$10,000. Details/Restrictions: Open to all writers who have never been the author of a published mystery. Submit book length manuscripts. Murder or crime and the solving of it must be central to the story. Submission guidelines and information: http://www.thomasdunnebooks.com/pdfs/hillerman_rules_2007.pdf

Deadline: 7/1/ 2007 (postmark): Books. Michigan Literary Fiction Awards. No entry fee. Prize: \$1,000 advance and publication. Details/Restrictions: To qualify, contestants must have previously published at least one literary novel or story collection in English. You must submit one copy of a previous book of literary fiction that you have published. Submission guidelines and information: <http://www.press.umich.edu/fiction/>

Deadline: 7/29/2007 (postmark or online): Romance. The Just Write Exceptional Fiction Writing Contest. Entry Fee: \$15. Prizes: 1st place=\$1000.00, 2nd place=\$600.00, 3rd place=\$300.00. Details/Restrictions: Short stories up to 6000 words, or up to 3 chapters from a novel. All fiction genres accepted. All work submitted must be unpublished. Winners who place 1st-10th will be recognized. Submission guidelines and information: <http://jwbookstore.com/page/page/4424767.htm>

UNM Press Events

Saturday, June 9th at 3pm
Jeanette Boyer, *Junkyard Dreams*
Borders – West Side
 10420 Coors Bypass NW
 Albuquerque, NM
 (505) 792-3180

Also:
Sunday, June 10th at 2pm
Borders – Uptown
 2240 Q Street NE
 Albuquerque, NM
 (505) 884-7711

Book Talk & Signing

Political and compelling, *Junkyard Dreams* is a vivid portrait of the intrinsic value of land in the west and the conflict between materialism and family tradition that shows that for every person opposed to the rapid growth of the western real estate bonanza, another two people are scheming to profit from it.

Thursday, June 14th at 7pm
Max Evans, *For the Love of a Horse and Bluefeather Fellini*
Bookworks
 4022 Rio Grande Blvd. NW
 Albuquerque, NM
 (505) 344-8139

Book Talk & Signing

In *For the Love of a Horse*, western writer Max Evans shares his favorite horse stories while his novel *Bluefeather Fellini*, a classic of American fiction, tells the story of the travels of Bluefeather Fellini, a half-Pueblo Indian and half-Italian who is repeatedly drawn back to his mother's home in Taos, New Mexico.



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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.

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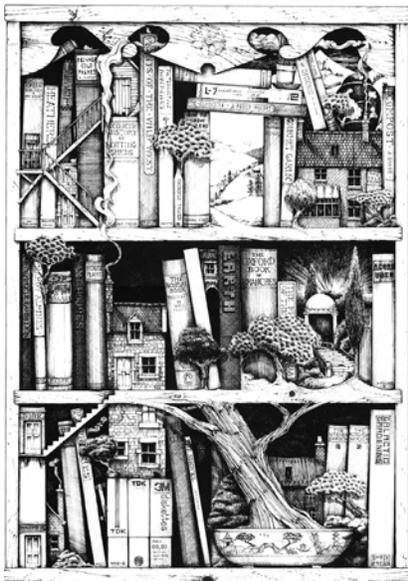
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Rob Spiegel: A Man for All (Writing) Seasons

Journalist, author, editor, columnist, teacher, lecturer and entrepreneur *par excellence*, current SouthWest Writers' Vice President Rob Spiegel is well-equipped for finding and coordinating speakers for meetings and workshops. Google him and, among other things, you'll learn that after founding *Chile Pepper* magazine for a mere \$1500 and selling it for a cool \$1.5 million, Rob wrote the book on one of today's hottest business trends: *The Shoestring Entrepreneur's Guide to the Best Home-Based Businesses*. Rob will be running for president in 2008. No, not *that* president--SWW's.

