Market Report: *Fitness* • Using Quotes Legally • More Tax Tips

The ASJA Monthly

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Negotiation Fever!

by Sophia Dembling

Juggling Tasks

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2005 Conference Preview

"We Write What You Read"™

The ASJA Monthly

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The paper copy now goes out only to ASJA members. Non-members can access it on the ASJA Web site. If you want to give your paper copy to a non-member, please pull out the confidential section and hand over the public section remaining.

ASJA Confidential
FOR MEMBERS ONLY

Interested in the contents of the entire newsletter, not just the public section? As an ASJA member, you'll receive all 32 pages, including trade secrets, market information and publishing contacts.

FEATURES

COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

The ASJA Confidential is a special section for paid ASJA members only and contains exclusive industry information. We ask that members who receive the Confidential section keep the information contained therein confidential.

Gearing Up for a Great Conference

This year, ASJA's annual conference, scheduled for April 16-17, has a theme sure to resonate with every freelancer: "Better Bylines, Bigger Bucks." And this career-boosting event, which draws hundreds of attendees each year, will be packed with intriguing innovations and bonuses for writers at all levels, thanks to months of brainstorming by co-chairs Bob Bittner and Minda Zetlin, along with their team of creative volunteers. Here's a look at some of the highlights.

• **Three tracks of panels for diverse interests.** For people who are new to freelancing, a special "Breaking Into Print" track provides smart, jargon-free guidance on the basics, including "Finding Great Ideas" and "How to Sell Your First Article." (I will be moderating a panel on contracts, which will include contracts committee chair Erik Sherman and publishing lawyers.)

A separate "Business of Writing" track, aimed at more experienced writers, offers lively new sessions, says Minda. "'Secrets of Power Pitchers' will feature speakers like Sally Stich, who are extremely successful and prolific, telling you what to do, including finding clever titles that sell your idea. We'll also have a panel on the no-query approach, with people like Sam Greengard who have built impressive careers through networking."

Offered for the first time ever will be a third track targeted to authors, called "All About Books." Some panels will be for first-timers, and others will be for those who want to build on the publishing successes they've already had, such as "After the First Book" or the panel on collaborations. And both authors and journalists can benefit from an upbeat session on "Getting Past Rejection" with an agent, editors, and a psychologist, plus an extremely persistent writer who sold her book after eight years of rejection.

• **Supersized sessions on popular topics.** In 2004, one of our best-attended programs was Sree Sreenivasan's "Smarter Surfing" workshop. But while Sree can whip through an amazing amount of information in an hour, people left hungry for more, says Bob. "This year, he'll have two hours, so you'll leave with twice as many fantastic tips on how to get the most out of the Web—and find the facts you need, fast."

A double session with Andrea King Collier will delve into career planning how-to, Bob adds. "Part one will discuss developing a business plan, which can be an incredibly powerful tool, since most writers are passengers instead of drivers." The second part has the scoop on following through with your plan as it lifts you to the next level.

We're also introducing "bonus sessions" after the panels on do-it-yourself publicity and six-figure freelancing. The speakers will be available at a smaller, more informal gathering to answer your questions, or chat about their topics in greater depth.

• **Expanded Sunday workshops.** For the first time, we'll have specialized tracks on Sunday—as well as a tasty continental breakfast, courtesy of iUniverse.com, which is hosting a workshop on self-publishing. As discussed in my December president's letter, this is the company behind ASJA Press, our self-publishing program, which was launched by energetic volunteers like Shirley Camper Soman, whose most recent iUniverse title is *Let's Stop Destroying Our Children*.

Sunday's writing track includes workshops on query letters and essay writing, while the book track will address crafting winning book proposals. Bill Dyszel, author of such books as *Microsoft Outlook for Dummies*, and ASJA Webmaster Bruce Miller will share great techie tips on topics like the best software for writers. And we'll also have an agents' roundtable that will start with speeches, then break into small groups so the audience gets an opportunity to talk with each agent individually.

As usual, the conference will offer one-on-one mentoring by experienced ASJA professionals, plus our unique Idea Marketplace, a free trade show of hot concepts from top public relations agencies, businesses, the government and private individuals. Stop by to find ready-to-sell story ideas to pitch to your favorite editors. Other treats include the Saturday lunch with keynote speaker H.G. "Buzz" Bissinger, author of the bestseller—and now feature film—*Friday Night Lights*, and a relaxing cocktail party with a drawing for prizes with "writer appeal."

I hope to see you at the conference! ASJA

LISA COLLIER COOL of Pelham, New York, is president of ASJA. E-mail prez@asja.org.

The Society Page

New and noteworthy member happenings

Jack El-Hai

Jack El-Hai goes on tour in February to promote his new biography, *The Lobotomist: A Maverick Medical Genius and His Tragic Quest to Rid the World of Mental Illness* (John Wiley & Sons). He'll visit Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C., for bookstore events, lectures and media appearances … Just out is *Melanie in Manhattan* (Knopf), the fourth novel in **Carol Weston**'s series for kids, ages eight to 12, about a fifth grader who keeps a travel diary. *Girltalk*, fourth edition won an iParenting Media Award. *For Girls Only* was featured in the Girls' Inc. Reading Room in December … The fourth book of **Michael S. Broder, Ph.D.**, *The Secrets Of Sexual Ecstasy* (this one co-authored with wife, sexologist and fellow psychologist Arlene Goldman, Ph.D.), was just released by Penguin/Alpha Books as the first in their new series, *Psychology Today: Here To Help* … **Leah Ingram** ended 2004 with four books under her belt, three of which are already in bookstores. They include *The Complete Guide for the Anxious Bride*, *Plan Your Wedding In No Time* and *Buying & Selling Your Way to a Fabulous Wedding With eBay*. *The Everything Etiquette Book*, second edition, will be out later in 2005 … **Alma Bond** has read portions of her book, *The Autobiography of Maria Callas, a Novel*, for Treehouse Productions. The readings, interwoven with arias sung by Callas, will be aired by National Public Radio in most markets on January 30 … **Kelly James-Enger**'s second novel, *White Bikini Panties* (Strapless, November 2004), received a "Top Pick" from *RT Book Club* magazine and an impressive review by *Publisher's Weekly* … Japanese rights for **Allison Kyle Leopold**'s book, *The Joffrey Ballet School's Ballet-Fit* (St. Martin's Press), a comprehensive guide to adult ballet, written with Joffrey School faculty member Dena Simone Moss, have been sold to Kenko Journal Publishing in Tokyo. The Japanese edition is slated for publication in 2005 … **Anne Hart**, author of ASJA Press and iUniverse.com books, has been hired to teach creative writing, journalism, communications and organizational communication management courses online for Indiana Wesleyan University. Her personal history research articles are published in the Nov./Dec. 2004 issue of the new *Everton's Family History* magazine and in the Oct. 2004 issue of *Family Chronicle* magazine … A new book by longtime ASJA member **Antoinette Bosco** titled *Miracles Abound: When We Open Our Hearts to God*, was just released by Twenty-Third Publications. On January 26, St. John's University awarded her its St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Medal for modeling her life in "compassion for and service to the poor." … **Stefan Bechtel** has signed a contract (his seventh) with Kensington to write a book about Hurricane Camille, one of the greatest storms of the 20th century, which came ashore in Mississippi during the same weekend in 1969 as Woodstock. Tentatively titled *Category Five*, the book is scheduled for hurricane season 2006 … This month, **Terry Whalin**'s latest book, *Running On Ice* (New Hope Publishers), was released. It was co-authored by Whalin and Vonetta Flowers, the first African American to win a gold medal in the Winter Olympics (2002 women's bobsled). Olympian Jackie Joyner Kersee wrote the foreword and Bob Costas, NBC Sports, endorsed it. ASJA

Carol Weston

Alma Bond

Anne Hart

Terry Whalin

Send your member happenings to newsletter@asja.org. Upload photos at www.asja.org/upload. Please keep your entries to 50 words or less. Submissions may be edited at the discretion of the editor.

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Countdown to the Conference: Make Your Plans Now!

by Robin Warshaw

Okay—it's officially time to start taking these articles about the 2005 ASJA Writers Conference weekend seriously. We're just two months away from the event that attracts more working nonfiction freelancers than any other—and brings them back, year after year.

For members, the weekend begins with the Annual Members Day on Friday, April 15 (and it's deductible on your Schedule C).

Our wildly successful Personal Pitch sessions will return. If you attended last year, you know what the excitement is all about. If you didn't make it, you won't want to again miss the vertigo-inducing sight of editors and agents sitting at little tables *waiting* to talk with professional writers. You sign up, you sit down, you take your shot. But you can't win if you don't play, so be sure to register early.

Members Day has lots more to recommend it: panels on professional issues, the announcement of ASJA Award winners at the luncheon and the incomparable opportunity to meet and connect with other ASJA writers from across the U.S. and beyond. At the end of the day, we gather for drinks, conversation and to welcome new members.

The weekend continues with the main conference on Saturday, April 16 and intensive workshops on Sunday, April 17. If you haven't yet received your copy of the conference brochure, you'll be getting it any day now. When it arrives, you'll see for yourself—in our new, highly readable format—the terrific line-up of speakers, panels and workshops.

Here's just a peek at the themes of some of the new Saturday sessions:

• *After the First Book*: Was that thud the sound of your career following the publication of your first book? How do you develop a long-term career plan, whether for a second book, or a fifth, or more?

• *Secrets of Power Pitchers*: We're not talking about Curt Schilling here. If your good ideas aren't connecting with editors, maybe this panel will help increase your winning percentage.

• *Getting Past Rejection*: Are you noticing a trend? Yes, I'll be attending this one, too. This panel includes a psychologist—and, based on New York City therapy rates, it's a bargain.

• *Investigative Techniques in Narrative Nonfiction*: When the reporting is heavy and deep, how do you figure out what you need, find the details and make your story flow?

• *Working Together: The Inside Scoop on Collaboration or Ghostwriting*: Ready to step into someone else's shoes? Don't sign that contract until you hear the advice from this session.

The Saturday conference also features innovative two-part panels, bonus sessions, the Idea Marketplace, luncheon speaker H.G. (Buzz) Bissinger (author of *Friday Night Lights*) and, of course, expert panelists including book and magazine editors, agents, publicists, writers and even lawyers. Full details are in the conference brochure or check out the schedule online at www.asja.org.

Stay for Sunday and you'll find new three-hour workshops on using technology to aid your writing, as well as in-depth sessions on queries, essays, book proposals and agents.

Registration information for members is at www.asja.org/members/wc/wc.php .

See you in April! ASJA

Members: Register online at www.asja.org/wc/wc.php, or send in the form found on page C5 in the Confidential section

Quotable

"February was like a snake with a broken back. It could still bite."

—Jessamyn West

Moving?

Be sure to let us know.

Kindly mail or fax your new info to the ASJA office, or e-mail staff@asja.org ...

... and NOT to your newsletter editor.

Stop by the Phorum and check out the few dozen conversations going on at once. Take part in—or eavesdrop on—only those you're interested in. Skip the rest. So, pour yourself a cup of coffee or make a cup of tea, and take a break at the Phorum.

www.asja.org/members/phorum

Betsy Amster

The No-Nonsense, Whimsical Literary Agent of Los Angeles

by Barbara DeMarco-Barrett

Common wisdom has it that you should get to know an agent before you sign with them. "An author/agent relationship is like a marriage," you hear over and over again. That makes sense. So before I signed with Los Angeles literary agent Betsy Amster, I got to know her and observed her with her clients, some of whom I referred to her or who had been on my radio show. But it wasn't until after Betsy was a guest on my show twice and sat on a panel at the ASJA/University of California, Irvine, writers conference in October of 2002 that I asked her to take a look at a project I had tried to sell, to no avail. I liked Betsy's no-nonsense style, her whimsical sense of humor and the fact that she said if she wasn't an agent, she'd be a lawyer. I also liked that she had an editing background. Before opening her agency in 1992, she spent ten years as an editor at Pantheon and Vintage and two years as editorial director of the Globe Pequot Press. She runs occasional publishing workshops at The Loft, a literary center in Minneapolis, and at one of the best writers conferences west of the Mississippi: the Squaw Valley Community of Writers.

BDB: What drew you to agenting and what keeps you agenting?

BA: I had the opportunity to start my own business when I moved to Los Angeles in 1991. I had spent ten years as an editor at Vintage and Pantheon and then two years as the editorial director of the Globe Pequot Press, which was owned at the time by the *Boston Globe*. I discovered my inner entrepreneur at Globe Pequot, where I had to acquire the entire list on a limited budget. I learned to track down interesting writers, persuade them to work with us, and then launch their projects from scratch. Becoming an agent was the logical next step, especially given the fact that there were so few agents in Los Angeles at the time. I adore what I do and can't imagine doing anything else.

BDB: What do you especially like to see come in the door?

BA: I handle literary fiction, a smattering of commercial fiction, narrative nonfiction, gift and lifestyle books, and books on psychology, self-help, social issues, popular culture, women's issues, parenting, gardening and cooking. I'm looking for fiction that takes my breath away or makes me laugh; narrative nonfiction that takes me somewhere I haven't been before; and category nonfiction where the author has a truly original idea for a book and the platform to support it.

BDB: Describe what you mean by platform.

BA: By platform I mean some form of national or at least regional recognition, public speaking experience or previous publications, and appropriate credentials (for example, if you want to write self-help, you generally need some sort of degree in psychology, or publishers will be reluctant to consider your proposal). Novelists don't need a platform per se, but it doesn't hurt for them to have ideas about how to market their work and a burning desire to reach reading groups. A number of my novelists come out of PR, and they've been in a good position to think creatively about how to get attention for their work.

BDB: Do you ever find treasures via the slush pile or do you work by referral only?

BA: Most of my projects come to me via referral, but I do sell a handful of projects every year that have come to me unsolicited.

BDB: What about when a prospective client has had a project with an agent and wants to leave them to find another agent?

BA: I try to find out whether the prospective client wants to leave

Barbara DeMarco-Barrett, editor of *The ASJA Monthly*, is Southern California chapter president. She hosts *Writers on Writing*, a weekly show on KUCI-FM and on the Web at www.kuci.org and is author of *Pen on Fire: A Busy Woman's Guide to Igniting the Writer Within* (Harcourt/Harvest, October 2004). Visit her Web site at www.penonfire.com.

the other agent for reasons that make sense to me or not. The situation is complicated if the other agent has already submitted the project widely. As often as not, I counsel writers to stay where they are and try to make the situation work.

I'm most comfortable when a prospective client has already terminated their relationship. A number of the projects I've placed were represented in earlier incarnations by other agents. The authors came to me months or even years later.

BDB: Sometimes authors, or aspiring authors, are nervous about having an agent so far from New York. How do you assure them they shouldn't be nervous?

BA: I don't generally find this to be a problem, especially when prospective clients understand my track record. It's not at all difficult to have access to editors in New York. And I must admit, I love my long leash.

BDB: Are your clients exclusively from the West Coast?

BA: I have clients all across the country, although I do believe the fact that I'm a West Coast agent is part of my "brand identity." New York seems far away to a lot of writers in the West, many of whom like the idea of having an agent in the same or an adjacent time zone.

BDB: How do you like to be approached? (snail mail? e-mail?)

BA: I prefer snail mail sent to Betsy Amster Literary Enterprises, P.O. Box 27788, Los Angeles, CA 90027-0788. E-mail is info@amsterlit.com.

BDB: What about follow-up—are e-mails or calls okay, and if so, how soon after submission is proper to follow up?

BA: It depends on how a writer comes to me. I tend to respond most quickly to writers that have been referred to me by editors or other writers, largely because these projects don't go through the readers who scan my slush pile for me. Processing promising projects that come to us through the slush pile takes longer—sometimes as long as a month or two, depending on how much material we're getting.

BDB: If you like what someone has sent you, how will you respond? (e-mail? phone call?)

BA: I like to call—it's the beginning of a relationship, after all!

BDB: Do you consider yourself a per-project agent or an agent for the long term?

BA: I'm definitely an agent for the long term. Building an author is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the job.

BDB: What's the ratio of fiction to nonfiction that you handle?

BA: I handle about 1/3 fiction to 2/3 nonfiction.

BDB: How do your criteria for the fiction you handle differ from the nonfiction? In other words, are you likely to handle a nonfiction project you see as saleable but don't love (I'm assuming you must love fiction to take it on)?

BA: No, I still need to love or at least admire it! I see projects that seem entirely viable, but that don't do anything for me, and I don't tend to take them on. Part of what I'm selling is my enthusiasm.

Anything the author and I can do to help an editor and his or her house fall in love with a project is worth doing. This generally takes some thought and creativity. The more the author and I can put our heads together, the better.

BDB: Describe your dream client/dream project.

BA: My dream client is someone I can conspire with. What's entertaining to me about book publishing is that although it's organized into conglomerates whose size can be alarming, you *sell* to individual editors who share your taste and are susceptible to your enthusiasm. Anything the author and I can do to help an editor and his or her house fall in love with a project is worth doing. This generally takes some thought and creativity. The more the author and I can put our heads together, the better.

My author Maria Amparo Escandon is a case in point. When I was selling her first novel, *Esperanza's Box of Saints*, she came up with the idea of packaging each manuscript in a box full of milagros, prayer cards, and other religious paraphernalia. The publisher made it a lead title and used the same approach when they sent galleys to review outlets and key accounts. When I submitted her latest novel, *Gonzalez & Daughter Trucking Co.*, we packaged it with a model truck just like the truck in the book. You have to use this approach selectively, but when it works, it really works.

I also value clients who are what I call "inspired perfectionists"—in other words, writers who are incredibly creative but also have the patience and the focus to get everything right before their material is submitted.

BDB: Your client from hell?

BA: Someone whose expectations are unrealistic. I also have trouble with writers who don't take feedback well. I think I have a keen sense of what editors want to see (and also what turns them off), and I like to be able to implement that.

BDB: How involved do you become with the editing/revising of a proposal or manuscript?

BA: I get very involved, since I used to be an editor, and I know how high the bar is. ASJA

A Few Minutes With ...

Learn more about fellow ASJA members: what they're reading, what they're writing, what makes them tick.

Gary Legwold

Place of residence Minneapolis, Minnesota.

If you could tell people to do just one thing for their writing, it would be... Follow the buzz. Whenever I get an idea, I get a buzz in my belly, a flutter of excitement. My advice is to follow those ideas because they are money. Be keen on noticing them. Carry a notebook, and don't censor yourself.

What author makes you laugh? Most books do if they are well written. Good humor is good writing, and vice versa.

What book gives you hope? Actually, the better question is, what books don't? I find hope in most books. Those that don't have some form of hope I don't finish and certainly don't recommend.

What are you reading now? I'm collaborating on a get-wealthy book, so I'm reading wealth books already on the market. Some are good.

One thing you must read during the day is ... The newspaper.

The one event that made you know you were a writer. I was hiking alone in Glacier National Park and walked in on a dinner in a large cabin near my campsite. People were asked to stand then state their name and occupation. It was not simple to do it; I felt the need to explain where I had been published, the type of writing I did, and maybe even apologize for following my dream. But I resisted. I said, "My name is Gary Legwold, and I am a writer." Then I sat down and held my head high. The food was good.

On your last trip, what did you bring to read? What don't I bring? I bring too much and end up reading too little. For sure, I bring a novel and some *New Yorker* magazines.

You're at a party with three authors, living or dead. They are: Dickens, Steinbeck, Stephen King.

Best writing secret? Join a writer's organization. You'll gain confidence, which will show in your writing.

Who is your author hero? Right now it's Rich Wallace. He writes young adult novels that boys like. Same with Pete Hautman. I'm writing a young adult novel for the same audience.

Favorite quote? "Illness is a doctor to whom we pay most heed. To kindness, to knowledge, we make promises only. Pain we obey." —Marcel Proust ASJA

GARY LEGWOLD has written five non-fiction books (including two collaborations) and more than 600 magazine articles for such publications as *Better Homes and Gardens, Esquire, Consumers Digest, Sport, Tennis, The History Channel Magazine* and *Experience Life*.

Q&A

by Florence Isaacs

Q: I have been asked to update my book, published several years ago. The word count remains the same, but 25 percent of the copy must be replaced with new material. What is the going rate for such a project?

A: It depends on the amount of work involved—the size of the book, the amount of new research, interviews, reporting and writing required, the sales expected to be generated—and the author's clout. I've heard of fees of $3000 for a relatively short book and $4000 for a longer one. In both cases, the writers felt the update would rejuvenate sales and that it was in their own best interests to cooperate. Someone else expects $10,000 for the forthcoming update of a medical book, although the money will be shared with a collaborator. In other cases, fees may reach $15,000 or more. Conversely, there may be no fee at all if a book hasn't sold well, but the publisher and author want to keep it out there.

Q: My new book was slated to debut in June 2005, but the publisher has just decided to postpone publication for a year. This is the second one-year postponement. It's a terrible disappointment in general, but I'm also concerned that other, competing books could come out during that time or that my subject could seem less urgent by then. Is there anything I can do?

A: What does your contract say? Many contracts specify that a book must be published within 18 months of acceptance, unless a delay is due to an "act of God." I know of one situation similar to yours where the agent threatened to withdraw the project and sell it elsewhere. That threat, plus the fact that the expert co-author had just been signed for important new speaking engagements that enhanced the platform, led the publisher to reconsider. The title was reinstated in its original pub date slot—and someone else's book was postponed instead. The point is, the one who screams loudest gets heard (assuming, of course, that the publisher really *does* want your book).

Q: I am about to sign a contract with a publisher for my first book. How much say over the cover art can I expect? What if I don't like it—can I veto it?

A: You can usually get cover consultation in your contract. Agent and ASJA member Nancy Love observes, "My experience is that publishers want to keep the writer happy. They count on you to publicize the book so they want to insure cooperation—and they will bend to reasonable requests (but not 'change the background color to blue instead of red'). They will not agree to a cover veto. Well, maybe Dan Brown gets it."

Q: What's the fastest and easiest way to contact celebrities for article interviews—or for requests for cover blurbs for a book?

A: A fast survey of some ASJA members and other writers produced these suggestions: (1) Try Googling the celebrity's name. You'll be surprised how many people, including movie stars, come up this way. (2) Ask around. Somebody you know may have a connection. One author just got a cover blurb from a famous writer through a friend whose child went to school with the celebrity's daughter. (3) In cases of Hollywood personalities, start by checking with the appropriate guild. For an actor, call the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) at (323) 549-6737 and ask for "actors to locate." You can inquire about three names, and in each case receive the name and phone number of the agency representing the celebrity (and possibly the publicist, too). If the actor is an old-timer, his or her direct contact number may be provided. (4) Try www.whoRepresents.com to find celebrities' representatives, although you must pay a fee. (5) Don't forget our own ASJA directory. Some of our members are experts on certain topics in their own right and might be considered celebrities. Others are celebrities as authors—or they've collaborated with celebrities and might be able to supply contact information. ASJA

ASJA past president **FLORENCE ISAACS**'s latest book is *Change Your Mind, Change Your Body* (Atria Books), co-authored with Ann Kearney-Cooke.

QUERY PROJECT

Strengthen your query writing skills by reading query letters that landed assignments. ASJA member Pamela Kramer has collected successful queries and they're now on the Web site at www.asja.org/members/qp/qp.php

If you have a successful query to contribute, send it to queries@asja.org. You can choose whether to include your name and the editor's name. It would be helpful to include information about how established, if at all, you were with the magazine when you netted the assignment.

Remember, like PayCheck, the Query Project will succeed only if ASJA members contribute

Juggling Tasks

Making precious time count

by Lisa Iannucci

A few months ago, Nancy Henderson Wurst had been laboring on a time-consuming book project while simultaneously juggling several magazine article deadlines. To stay ahead, Nancy hired a transcriber, paid a friend to clean her home and turned down additional, more complicated, assignments. In the midst of her writing frenzy, Nancy posted a request on the ASJA board asking for organizational tips from other more experienced jugglers on how to handle long- and short-term projects.

Boy, could I relate to Nancy's post. I also had a book due, articles to finish and queries to write to prevent a dip in the workflow (don't even talk about laundry and dirty dishes). Although I meet my deadlines, my organizational skills are sorely lacking.

Nancy received a few good suggestions, but I wanted to know more. For example, how should I organize my time to write the book? Should I work on it for an entire day or break it down into a few hours each day? How should I fit in the magazine articles? Should I work on any projects simultaneously?

I knew that I could learn so much more to help increase productivity, keep paperwork disarray to a minimum and reduce my stress level. So I decided to interview several ASJA members who are well versed at completing multiple short- and long-term deadlines regularly. We discussed successful time management and organizational strategies. Interestingly, I learned that how one juggles projects is as personal as one's writing style. There wasn't a tip that fit every writer's personality; instead, the key was to find the style that fit me.

For example, when I spoke with Andrea King Collier, she was working on a men's health book, finishing a novel due in the fall, writing four articles and two to three speeches a month, as well as writing a weekly newspaper column and completing corporate work. Phew!

Andrea is structured. She organizes interviews over several days and sets aside a day or half-day to write the piece. Folders hold her digital interviews, articles, e-mails and research. She also sets aside a day for queries, invoice follow-up and drumming up new biz. Andrea writes in the morning, and conducts interviews and answers correspondence and e-mail in the afternoon. At night, she works on her novel and the newspaper column.

Brenda Lange completes one young adult biography annually for Chelsea House in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, and monthly articles for regional publications. She is also structured, but focuses her days, even weeks, on one project at a time while forgetting about other assignments.

"I create niches of time for each project rather than trying to work mornings on one project and afternoons on another," says Lange. "I get more done on full days than a little here and there." However, even when she works on the books, she often approaches each chapter as if it were a 3,000- to 4,000-word article, finding it overwhelming to think of the book as a whole.

Pat McNees prefers to toggle between assignments, instead of working on chunks at a time. "I can escape from one project to the other," says McNees. "While I am writing about Easy A project, some of the problems in Complex B project sort themselves out in my head."

Erik Sherman writes several magazine articles each month and sometimes a book at the same time, but doesn't see a difference in how to handle short- and long-term projects. He wants writers to throw out the notion that the worlds of magazines and books are entirely different.

"Basic things apply," says Sherman. "You come up with an idea, pitch editors—although the book pitch is more complex—research, interview and pull materials together."

Sherman says writing a book is like eating your way through a large feast. "You don't pile it all on your plate at once; you have to break it down," he says. "Break down the projects into very manageable

Lisa Iannucci, founder of www.youngwidowsandwidowers.com, is an expert on single parenting issues and health topics.

pieces. What you are really doing is this series of small tasks; some are devoted to articles and some are devoted to the book.

"Get the most important thing done each day," says Sherman. "You can push other stuff to the next day, but at least you can say I got the most important thing done. Your effectiveness goes up."

Brette Sember creates a list of important to-do's on book and article projects like Sherman said, but doesn't dictate what she should work on each day. "I'm not heavily structured," she says. "I see what I feel like doing that day, whether a chapter or an article. I know what I need to get done that week. I'm not so structured because sometimes I have responses from queries, or interviews scheduled and have to deal with that. If I have a big chunk of time, I like to work on the book, plug away and be productive. If I don't have such a big chunk of time, I'll work on an article."

"Get the most important thing done each day," says Erik Sherman. "You can push other stuff to the next day, but at least you can say I got the most important thing done. Your effectiveness goes up."

Jennifer Lawler enjoys working on short-term and long-term projects and can even work on them simultaneously by grouping like tasks together. For example, she is working on a book with a co-author, an article for *Family Circle* and editing a martial arts quarterly. When she is researching, she completes research for all weekly projects at the same time. "It's easier to do similar tasks, even on unrelated subjects," says Lawler.

Lawler also groups phone calls for all projects. "I keep a list of things that I need to do that crop up in the conversations," says Lawler. "At the end, I set aside about half an hour to do simple tasks (like forwarding an e-mail, looking up a resource, etc.) that I had promised, just to clear them off my desk."

Sondra Forsyth, a contributing editor at *Ladies' Home Journal*, magazine and Web writer, writes at least one book a year. To keep tasks straight, she relies on a color-coded deadline and events schedule, which is stored and updated on her computer. Each book and magazine responsibility is designated a different color, so Forsyth can clearly see what she needs to accomplish each day. She also makes certain to give herself some R&R time; it's in pink.

"However, you don't know what's going to be a priority for a given day," says Forsyth. She also says you can't predict when an editor will need a revision and you can't control the interviews either, so get them done early. Forsyth's schedule is flexible, but the color-coded system still keeps her in check for the week.

These were all great tips, but I still couldn't figure out which style was best for me, so I asked Sheila Delson, president of FREEDomain Concepts, a professional organizing company in Poughkeepsie, New York, for advice.

She agreed that a writer's work style is a personal thing. "You have to have an awareness of what is your most effective time of day to work, when you have the highest level of energy, and use that time of day to do activities that require more of you," says Delson.

Delson also explains that to juggle successfully, I needed to determine my "learning style." Can I work on something for a period of time like Lange or, if I linger too long on one task, will I need to break concentration and move on to other tasks, like McNees? Once I knew my best writing time of the day and my learning style, I would know how to juggle efficiently.

Jan Jasper, author of *Take Back Your Time: How to Regain Control of Work, Information, and Technology* and a productivity consultant in the New York City area, suggested that I also work backwards to achieve my goals. "Working backwards and knowing how many chapters you need to write each week or month to meet your deadlines is the key to productivity," says Jasper. "Don't get to the point where you're frantically up against a deadline. The more you work backwards, the more in control you'll be. If something unexpected comes up, you're not in dire shape."

I mulled over this advice and realized that I prefer working on more than one project each day and I write best in the morning hours. I altered my schedule to accommodate my new knowledge and found myself more focused and productive. Juggling seemed to be getting easier and I even picked up additional work along the way.

What about all the paper? Although many panelists at this year's conference urged writers to become paperless, some writers, like McNees and me, need the stacks visible. "I envy people who can put everything in file folders and away, out of sight," says McNees.

Delson explained that it's actually okay if we need piles to be visible. "Some people are visual and need to see their work," says Delson. "Just organize and perhaps even color-code the projects. Have separate files for each job and move everything else away from you when you're working on that project," says Delson.

Now my time is managed better and I'm more organized, but based on Nancy's initial post, we both knew that feeling overwhelmed was another juggling problem. Brette Sember had a final piece of advice; remember Anne Lamott's book, *Bird by Bird*.

She told a story about Lamott's brother writing a report about birds and he wasn't getting it done. The advice his writer-father gave to him was to take it bird by bird, says Sember. "One tiny piece at a time, don't freak out at the big picture. Just write it a chunk at a time and keep going. Fix it later." ASJA

Tax Tip$

by JULIAN BLOCK

The Right Ways to Write Off Your Travels

Some reminders for freelancers on the right way to write off trips to writers' conferences and other kinds of deductible travel without raising questions by the IRS.

The tax code imposes tight restrictions on deductions for travel that combines business with pleasure. Nevertheless, the IRS blesses some of these travel costs. Here are several tips on frequently-missed breaks for vacationers.

Business Travel With Your Spouse: The feds are absolutely unyielding when your spouse accompanies you to a meeting for writers or some other kind of business-related activity. No write-off for the portion of the outlays attributable to your spouse's travel, meals and lodging unless these three requirements are met: (1) the spouse (or dependent, or any other individual) is a bona fide employee of the outfit that pays for the trip; (2) the spouse undertakes the travel for a bona fide business reason; and (3) the spouse is otherwise entitled to deduct the expenses.

Tip: Tax relief remains available for lodging costs even when your mate tags along just to see the sights. Claim a deduction for lodging based on the single-rate cost of similar accommodations for you, not half the double rate you actually paid.

Example: You and your spouse go by car to a conference for writers in St. Louis, where the two of you stay at a hotel that charges $150 for a double room and $130 for a single room. Besides deducting the entire round-trip driving (the driving costs the same whether your spouse accompanies you or not), claim a per-day deduction for your hotel room of $130, rather than just $75, half of $150.

Charitable Travel: As a volunteer worker for a church, university or other philanthropic organization, you get to deduct unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses, including travel. Say you are elected or appointed to attend a church convention as a delegate. You can deduct reasonable amounts for travel, lodging and meals (100 percent deductible, unlike business meals, which are only 50 percent deductible). No deduction for other personal expenses, such as sightseeing or theatre tickets. Similarly nondeductible are expenses of accompanying family members.

Be aware that IRS regulations take direct aim at disguised vacations. There must be no significant element of personal pleasure, recreation or vacation.

To illustrate, John Hickey takes his Boy Scout troop camping and is on duty throughout the trip. John is entitled to deduct his payments of expenses for himself and for boys who belong to the group, but not for his own children. It makes no difference that he enjoys the trip or is supervising scouts.

Investment Seminars: No deductions for costs incurred by investors to attend conventions, seminars or similar meetings at which they obtain information that helps them to plot strategies. Disallowed expenses include travel to the meeting site, attendance fees and meals, lodging and local travel while attending.

The disallowance applies solely to outlays made for *investment* reasons, like those of an investor seeking to obtain information about whether to buy or sell particular stocks. It does not apply to costs incurred for *business* reasons, like those of a financial adviser who meets with prospective clients as part of his job.

An example: International Investments holds a convention at which stock market investors pay for the opportunity to discuss strategies with representatives of brokerage firms and listen to presentations from executives about their companies. Result: The seminar rules bar deductions of expenses by investors, but not deductions of expenses by stockbrokers and others who are at the conference for business reasons. ASJA

JULIAN BLOCK, ASJA, is a nationally recognized attorney. This article is excerpted from his *Tax Tips For Freelance Writers And Photographers*. Send $9.95 for an e-mailed copy or $14.95 (in the U.S.) for a postpaid copy to: J. Block, 3 Washington Square, #1-G, Larchmont, NY 10538-2032. Contact him at julianblock@yahoo.com.

Tech Talk

Master of Your Domain

By Todd W. Carter

Q: How do I register a domain name? How much does it cost? Does the price include Web hosting?

A: First, you need to decide on your domain name. If your name is John X. Smith, check to see if johnsmith.com or johnxsmith.com is available. If not, you'll need to be a little more creative. But that's why we're writers.

You can check on a domain name's availability through something called a whois service. Many domain registers let you look up names to see if they're available. While you may not use their domain registration service, whois.net and register.com are good places to check on name availability.

Once you have a name, you need to register it for a minimum of one year. Prices are as low as $8 or so a year and as high as $30-40. You're paying for the same service no matter where in that range your registration fee falls. If you find a cheap price, you may want to register your domain for multiple years.

Domain name registration usually does not include Web site hosting. In fact, many domain name registrars only register domain names and are not in the Web hosting business. Some others are more diversified, however, and can be a one-stop shop for domain name registration and Web hosting. Many Web hosting companies provide domain registration as a small profit center and as a convenience to customers.

Expect to pay between $3.95 (really) to $30 a month for basic Web hosting service. Many companies, small and large, can provide inexpensive Web hosting because much of the process of setting up small accounts is automated. They also can fit many small Web hosting accounts on one computer server. Unless your site receives a large amount of traffic, I don't think you'll need to pay more than about $10 a month for hosting.

Q: What is defrag software? Do I need it?

A: Running defragmentation, or defrag, software is one of those things nearly every Windows computer user should do, but rarely does. I try to do it at least once a month and I think it keeps my system running a little faster because of it.

Basically, the software unscrambles your hard drive, moving related data clusters closer to each other. Every time you save something to your hard drive, Windows finds empty spots to store the information. But the empty spots may be far away physically from each other, forcing your hard drive to later work overtime to move from location to location to grab the data it needs. The more work it must do, the longer you must wait. This is why defrag software is necessary.

A perfectly adequate defrag tool comes with Windows XP. It's called Disk Defragmenter. You can reach it from Start → All Programs → Accessories → System Tools. From my experience, it's a little slower than such third-party defrag tools as Symantec's Norton Speed Disk defragmenter. In addition, the Windows XP freebie provides less detail about the current state of your hard drive. Still, waiting aside, it's better to run Disk Defragmenter than nothing at all.

A little known fact: You can defrag your iPod, too. After all, your iPod is just a hard drive with an interface and a fancy case. I'm not sure I have enough songs on my iPod (yet!) to see a difference, but I suppose it could shed a millisecond or two when accessing a song.

An Off-Site Backup Update

In my last column, I suggested some off-site backup services. One that I didn't mention is Online File Folders from Godaddy.com. The service costs $9.95 a year for 1 GB of storage space or $19.95 annually for 2 GB. Windows users can download a handy software program that makes it easy to synchronize files between your PC and your storage area. Unfortunately, as I discovered, there is a 200 MB file limit on uploads.

Must-Have Software

Searching through a hard drive of information is easier now that Google has a desktop searching client, Google Desktop Search. But finding an e-mail is still faster when using a software program called Lookout. Lookout is a Microsoft Outlook add-on that's so good that Microsoft bought the company and now offers it for free. It's incredibly fast and, at least for me, has nearly a 100 percent success rate. It searches Outlook's e-mail messages, as well as the software's contacts, calendar items, notes and tasks. Lookout also can search files on your computer. Search results appear instantly because Lookout constantly indexes your files, similarly to how Google searches and indexes Web pages. You can download Lookout from www.lookoutsoft.com/lookout/download.html. ASJA

I'll answer technology questions nearly every month in this space. Please send your questions to asja@toddcarter.com. If you don't send any, I'll have to make them up! Questions are edited for brevity—and hopefully my answers are, too. I keep hyperlinked copies of my columns at www.toddcarter.com/asja, which houses a blog where you also can comment on each column.

Todd W. Carter is the author of *Wireless All-in-One Desk Reference for Dummies* (John Wiley & Sons, 2005), *How to Do Everything with Your TiVo* (2004, McGraw-Hill), *Microsoft OneNote 2003 Visual QuickStart Guide* (Peachpit Press, 2004) and *Teach Yourself Visually Wireless Networking* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003).

Quotable

"I always know the ending; that's where I start."

—Toni Morrison

WriterL.com

In this occasional column, we take look at Web sites of interest particularly to writers. If there's a Web site you think should be featured in The ASJA Monthly, *write to newsletter@asja.org and tell us a bit about it.*

One recent day when I visited www.WriterL.com, a journalist whose craft I admire kicked off a discussion about telling stories through multiple characters. Nonfiction narratives cannot always focus entirely on one person. Sometimes, to be faithful to reality, the story must alternate among the perspectives of multiple individuals. The introduction of too many characters, however, can cause confused readers to exit before reaching the end.

What to do? The WriterL discussion leader offered these suggestions, based on her experience crafting periodical features and books:

1. "Stick with as few points of view as possible. Ask yourself what each potential character offers to the story and whether that contribution is essential."
2. When a character re-enters after an absence of many words, offer readers a defining characteristic as a descriptive reminder.
3. Perhaps change the narrative voice to reflect the mannerisms of each character.
4. Include a concise list of characteristics, including their relationships with one another.
5. Bring each character's saga to a conclusion somewhere in the narrative.

> A writer can only impart that sense of movement if she knows exactly where she's going, if the flow and conclusion of the piece is firmly in her mind and she's doling it out bit by bit to the reader.

WriterL offers such nuts-and-bolts presentations, followed by reactions from numerous members, five days a week most weeks of the year. The discussions are helpful about 95 percent of the time. In other words, WriterL is worth joining. After a first year payment of $25, annual dues cost $20. That sum might soon rise.

The online discussion group is the brainchild of Jon and Lynn Franklin, who also initiate topics, moderate and participate as needed. Many ASJA members know Jon's name as author of *Writing for Story*, one of the most influential (and controversial) books ever published about the how-to aspects of narrative nonfiction. He won two Pulitzer Prizes as a newspaper feature writer before founding the listserv and teaching at the university level. His wife Lynn is an author and writing coach. Their home base is P.O. Box 206, Sunderland, MD, 20689. The e-mail address is writerl@chesapeake.net.

The Franklins say they intended WriterL discussions to focus on high-level reportage in tandem with narrative nonfiction writing, which others might think of as feature writing or explanatory journalism. Related topics include markets, jobs, privacy law, media criticism, literary agents, contracts and, "eternally," as the Franklins phrase it, "the pedigree of editors." A lot of the participants write and edit primarily at newspapers. Quite a few, however, write part-time or full-time for magazines (as staff or freelance). Some write books. Unlike within ASJA, some WriterL members are novices. Their questions are often excellent discussion-starters, however.

The Franklins emphasize that the online conversation is "informed, civil and on-point. It is, as one member put it, 'a welcome haven from the chaos of the Net.'"

I agree. After meaning to join WriterL for nearly a decade—I am a disciple of *Writing for Story*—I finally paid my fee in early 2004. I have read the postings avidly since then. When I joined, Lynn Franklin sent me postings from the past months so I could follow the ongoing discussions.

"Most new members spend a few weeks getting acquainted with the tone of the list before joining in," Lynn wrote. "As you'll see, WriterL has a definite atmosphere. We don't allow flaming and try to remain professional and courteous even when debating issues."

Postings are sent to Lynn's e-mail address. The discussion topics are separated into various headings. Occasionally, more than one thread is going on simultaneously. Most postings run between 1,500 and 2,000 words, though I have seen some useful posts longer than 2,000 words, others quite a bit briefer than 1,500 words.

It seems appropriate to end with a posting on, well, endings. After reading a thread on how to close stories effectively, Jon Franklin weighed in:

"The effective story moves, which means that every thought and set of thoughts lead naturally to the next >>

STEVE WEINBERG writes magazine features, book reviews and books from Columbia, MO.

>> thought or sequence of thoughts. We go to a lot of effort to put ourselves in our readers' place and to try to divine exactly what the reader wants to know, right now. It's almost like your words and sentences create a vacuum in the reader's mind, and you have to fill that vacuum immediately. That gives a sense of movement. A writer can only impart that sense of movement if she knows exactly where she's going, if the flow and conclusion of the piece is firmly in her mind and she's doling it out bit by bit to the reader.

"It's like coaxing a horse or a dog with treats. The treats have to come bit by bit, in a more or less steady flow. The old image of the mule with the carrot on a stick does not, in fact, apply; mules are pretty smart and after awhile would figure out that they will never get the carrot. The reader is no dumber than that mule. Endings, of course, are especially big carrots that leave the animal satisfied.

"The confusion comes in when the writer and/or editor misunderstands this and, thinking in terms of suspense, actively withholds information that would logically be doled out in the course of the narrative…That doesn't work. Suspense isn't achieved by withholding, but rather by writing a piece that moves right along until it comes to a natural end. If you withhold something until the end, you don't create suspense; you create anger. The reader feels tricked … the reader wants to be a participant in the unfolding of the story. Withholding information that would naturally fit high in the story shuts the reader out; the story ceases to be an experience and becomes, instead, a dirty trick."

WriterL is no dirty trick. It seems to me that it offers something of value for every serious writer. ASJA

What's in Store will return next month.

Member Book Signings & Events

Nancy Christie 2.16 Talk & signing: *The Gifts of Change*, Joseph-Beth Booksellers, Lyndhurst, OH 7 p.m.

Barbara DeMarco-Barrett Host of "Writers on Writing," KUCI-FM; listen online at www.kuci.org **2.3** Joyce Maynard **2.10** Kate Braverman **2.17** Mary Roach

Susan Tyler Hitchcock 2.01 Reading & signing: *Mad Mary Lamb*, Fountain Bookshop, Richmond, VA 6 p.m. **2.16** Talk: *Writing for Career, Writing for Hire,* Barnes & Noble, Charlottesville, VA 7 p.m.

Nancy Rubin Stuart 2.22 Lectures & book signings: *The Reluctant Spiritualist: The Life of Maggie Fox*, National Arts Club, NYC, 8 p.m. **2.24** Boston Public Library, Boston, 6 p.m.

Alice Shane 2.14 Class: Five-week course in business journalism. New York University. Woolworth Building, 15 Barclay St., New York, NY. Mondays, 6:20 p.m. - 8:40 p.m. Through March 28. (Course #X32.9502)

Carol Weston 2.10 Book signing: *Melanie in Manhattan*, Corner Bookstore, NYC **2.12** Book signing: *Melanie in Manhattan*, Diane's Books, Greenwich, CT 1 p.m.

Member Web Sites

Victoria Brooks, www.GreatestEscapes.com
Gene Meyer, www.authorsden.com/eugenelmeyer
Joan Oleck, www.joanoleck.com
Scott S. Smith, http://users.adelphia.net/~sssmith2

Members: Send your Web site address to newsletter@asja.org

ASJA Mission and Administration

Founded in 1948, the American Society of Journalists and Authors is the nation's leading organization of independent nonfiction writers. ASJA is a primary voice in representing freelancers' interests, serving as spokesman for their right to control and profit from the uses of their work in the new media and otherwise. ASJA brings leadership in establishing professional and ethical standards, and in recognizing and encouraging the pursuit of excellence in nonfiction writing. ASJA headquarters are in New York City.

Calendar

ASJA 2005 ANNUAL WRITERS CONFERENCE

BETTER BYLINES, BIGGER BUCKS:
SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL FREELANCE WRITING

Don't miss the career-boosting event that attracts hundreds of freelance writers every year! Whether you're new to freelancing or a long-time pro, you'll gain inside information from editors, agents and publishers, find inspiration and learn new ways to increase your writing income.

Keynote speaker H.G. (Buzz) Bissinger, author of the best-selling *Friday Night Lights* (now a major motion picture), highlights the conference's Saturday luncheon. Buzz has written for prestigious magazines and newspapers, won the Pulitzer Prize, and spent a season writing and co-producing *NYPD Blue*.

Open to all, the 2005 ASJA Writers Conference features a Breaking into Print track, with sessions including Finding Great Ideas and Selling Your First Article, and a Business of Writing track, for more experienced writers that's focused on building your career for the long-term.

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SPECIAL CONFERENCE PREVIEW ON PAGE 5

Coming Soon

- More on queries
- Voices: book publicist Kim Dower
- Lessons from working at Trader Joe's

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