

# ASJA MAGAZINE

02

MARCH/APRIL 2017

The Official Publication  
of the American Society of  
Journalists and Authors

## SCALING THE GREAT FIREWALL OF CHINA

*How author Mei Fong found a way to get  
her bestseller into chinese hands*



ALSO INSIDE >> Special Section: The NYC Conference  
The Work-Life Balance of being writers

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# ASJA MAGAZINE

Vol 67 / No. 2

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ASJA MAGAZINE ONLINE

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Founded in 1948, the American Society of Journalists and Authors is the nation's professional association of independent and entrepreneurial nonfiction writers. ASJA is a primary voice in representing freelancers' interests, serving as spokesperson for their right to control and profit from the uses of their work in online media and elsewhere. ASJA and the ASJA Charitable Trust bring leadership in establishing professional and ethical standards, as well as in recognizing and encouraging the pursuit of excellence in nonfiction writing. Since 2010, the ASJA Educational Foundation has been offering programming that covers all aspects of professional independent writing for both established and aspiring writers. ASJA headquarters is in New York City.

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Currently being reorganized

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*From the President's Desk*



SHERRY BECK  
PAPROCKI  
*Freelance Writer and  
ASJA President*

ASJA's Value Proposition:

# WE EXCEL AT ORIGINAL REPORTING



There's a phrase that pops out from many of the help wanted ads I see for writers. "Original reporting required," they say. Sometimes, there's a comment from someone who responds: "What is original reporting?"

That makes me want to shout: original reporting is what ASJA members do on a regular basis. We clearly understand that our work as professional freelance writers entails chasing down the facts and reporting the truth. Occasionally, we're asked to offer an opinion piece and, in those cases, we may even struggle to come up with an opinion. Our work is so engaged with reporting the facts from other sources that we may struggle when it comes to writing about our own opinions.

That's one reason I was appalled at the unveiling of the fake news industry, and all it involves, during the 2016 presidential campaign. How dare these fake news writers take our profession and reshape it into an absurdity that may have influenced the presidential election?

How dare we devour that news, assume it's correct, and spread it across the universe without clear evaluation? I was as frustrated about this situation as anyone else who has spent their life in the publishing field. But then, a project I was working on made me rethink my opinion.

While doing some research for the project I realized that in this country, citizens have been evaluating the news and news biases since before the time this country was founded. In 1729 Ben Franklin purchased The Pennsylvania Gazette and wrote articles

under various aliases. In 1847, Frederick Douglass launched his abolitionist newspaper, The North Star, and others followed. The first female presidential candidate, Victoria Woodhull, and her sister launched *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* in 1870.

I don't need to point out that not everyone in this country loved all of the views these writers and publishers expressed.

Then the Web came onto the scene in 1989 and anyone had the opportunity to post anything, well researched or not, and upload it to the Web. Our skills at evaluating the truth were sharpened.

As much as we want to blame Facebook and its kin for the spread of new news genres, social media is not the culprit. It's just the latest in a variety of methods used for delivering information. Intelligent readers now, and always, are required to sift through information and evaluate the facts to help reveal the ever-elusive truth.

That's where our work as freelance writers comes in. Intelligent writers will continue to produce well-researched articles and books that are based on original reporting of the truth, as we know it. That's our cumulative value proposition.

In fact, could it be that the value ASJA members bring to any project has actually grown in recent months? Ironically, as I was finishing this column, a content marketing e-newsletter arrived with a headline that said: Maintain Brand Integrity in the Climate of Fake News.

How better to do that than to hire a trusted writer with a thick portfolio of work?



*Want to write for your peers?*  
[magazine@asja.net](mailto:magazine@asja.net)

The dozens of editors and agents who will meet with ASJA members during Client Connections and other events at ASJA's upcoming New York Conference are there for a reason. These editors and agents understand that ASJA members deliver when it comes to original reporting and good writing.

Conference Chair Estelle Erasmus has spent months putting together an awe-inspiring slate of opportunities, classes and networking events for ASJA's Pivot Publish Prosper Conference.

There's so much that will be happening during these two conference days, I hope that you'll be able to join us to network with some of the best writers, editors and agents in the business.

Before we meet up in New York, though, do me a favor. The time has come to add that phrase "original reporting" to the list of skills on your website, your resume, and your LinkedIn profile.



*From the Editor*



ALEIGH ACERNI  
*Editor*  
*ASJA Magazine*

# SPRING AWAKENING

I've spent a lot of time in the past few months thinking about real news, fake news, press conferences, journalism, and how the meaning of the word "truth" seems to have shifted basically overnight. And as the mother of a 3-year-old, I wonder how this shift will shape both her education and the way she views the world as she continues to grow.

But life with a 3-year-old will remind you pretty quickly that human nature often makes us believe what we want to believe. (I re-learn this lesson every time I ask her to put on a coat because it's cold outside—and then she promptly responds that it is not, in fact, cold. Facts? Irrelevant.) The ability to think critically, to be willing to change your opinion based on facts and information, is not innate.

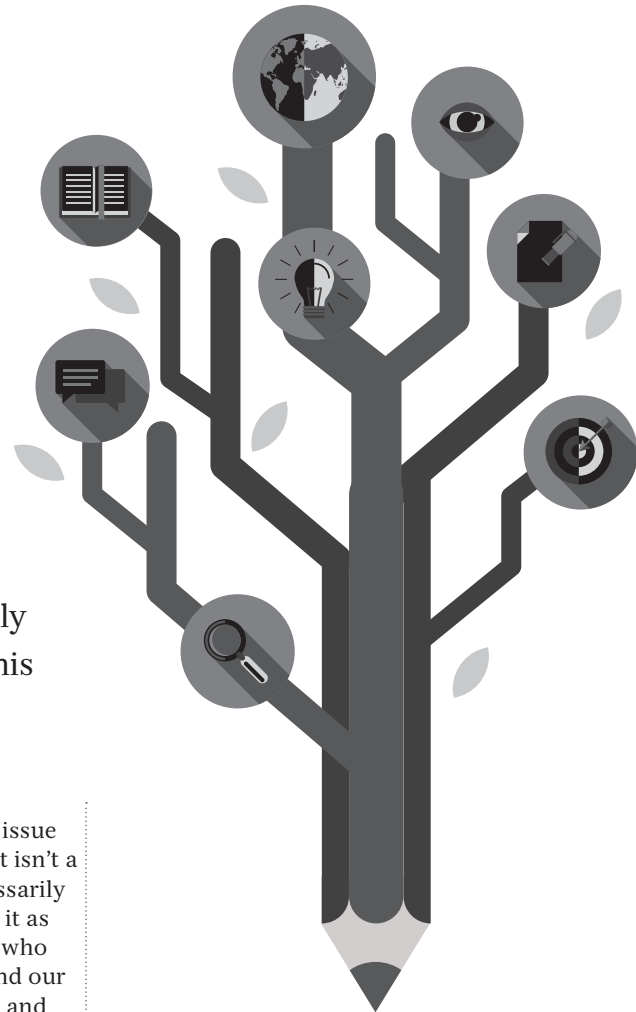
Through ASJA, I have connected with so many smart, thoughtful writers. I am grateful for the great work ASJA members do and how it makes a real difference in the world by inspiring, educating, and entertaining their readers. I can't imagine a world without those voices, without that work.

Randy Dotinga's Q&A with ASJA member Mei Fong is a great example of how our work—our livelihood—can have a huge impact, and how sometimes a dose of selflessness, a sense of mission, goes hand in hand. And it's just one more balancing act many of us juggle as freelancers. (If you want to flip to it straightaway, it starts on

page TK). The Market Report in this issue is unconventional in a similar way. It isn't a high-paying market. It doesn't necessarily come with bragging rights. But I see it as another way for us as professionals who care about our craft, our industry, and our profitability, can support each other and journalism, through our work. That piece on contributing to The News Literacy Project, begins on page TK.

This issue is primarily about work/life balance, though, and there's a lot to dig into on the following pages, from tips on squeezing in a vacation (and how to preserve it) to juggling the pressure of being a working parent and a working caregiver to aging parents, and even tips on time management and fitting in a freelance career around a day job.

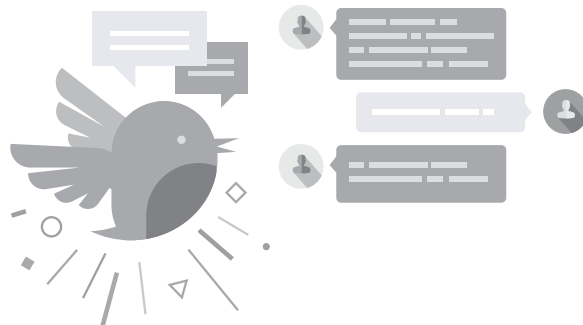
I hope to see you all at the New York Conference this May. You'll find an insider's guide from this year's conference chair, Estelle Erasmus. I hope you find it helpful, and I'd love your feedback!



## »»»» CORRECTION

*A byline was omitted from the recent remembrance of ASJA member Dodi Schultz. The piece was written by Sally Wendkos Olds. We sincerely regret the error and are grateful to Sally for her work putting the piece together.*

# YOU CAN SUCCEED AT SOCIAL MEDIA



As writers, our first commitment with our craft is to make money, and then find a balance with our family and friends. Yet editors and agents want our social media numbers to convince marketing and sales people to purchase our books. How do we find the time and energy to grow a convincing social media presence?

I understand and have the same challenges. Yet my Twitter followers are growing at about 100 new followers a day, and I'm currently at more than 196,000. I spend about 30 minutes or less on social media each day. Through trial and error, I've developed a simple system that I use consistently. This consistent, steady growth is a foundation of my efforts.

Who is your target reader? For example, my readers are writers or would-be writers interested in different aspects of publishing (books or magazines). I keep my audience in mind with every tweet, and I tweet about a dozen times a day with different content. I subscribe to different blogs in my target market and select their content to pour into my tweets. Also I mix in my own content from my blog and online articles. Or I highlight products that I sell or radio interviews I've done for my books, plus a link to purchase the book. Since 2009, I have tweeted more than 34,000 times.

There is a simple reason for my social media numbers, I continue to take five quick actions every day and spend less than 30 minutes a day on Twitter. Here are those five areas.

## »» 01. Refollow

Every day I use a simple tool called Refollow ([re-follow.com](http://re-follow.com)). In less than five minutes, I can follow 800 new people—but not just anyone—people who are in my target market. I'm targeting individuals who are interested in publishing (books or magazines). It is a critical aspect of using this tool.

About once a week, I'll get an error message that Twitter says I've maxed out my new followers and I can come back tomorrow. I looked and I had only followed about 190 people instead of 800. I've learned to wait about 30 minutes and return to Refollow. Then I repeat the process, and follow more people, and the tool begins again to reach new people. Don't believe the error message: persistence pays off with reaching 600 more people each day than Twitter says they'll allow.

## »» 02. Manage Flitter

A second tool I use every day is Manage Flitter ([manageflitter.com](http://manageflitter.com)). I use this tool to eliminate people who have not set up their profile, don't speak English, and are fake or spam followers. Also it allows me to quickly unfollow people who are not following me back.

## »» 03. Scan your Twitter feed

About once a day, I will scan through home feed on Twitter. I do it on my desktop computer so it is easy to see. I'm looking to block porn, non-English tweets (non-Roman scripts) and anything offensive. This process

is quick and I page through my feed. I know I don't catch everything, but it is something simple that I do to maintain my followers.

## »» 04. Respond to direct messages

I use Hootsuite to monitor my direct messages and respond to them. This tool is free and easy to use. The engagement is one of the key reasons to use Twitter. Also notice my Twitter profile includes my personal email address. Often my new followers will email me for help—and I always respond point them to my blog, my free teleseminars, and my other free writing resources. My personal goal is to answer these emails within 24 hours and often I do it quicker. These writers are surprised that I answer, since most publishing communication goes into a black hole, whereas I provide solid writing resources.

## »» 05. Tweet valuable content

I use Hootsuite to schedule my tweets almost every hour throughout the working hours of a day. Throughout my day I read content from others, and I pass along this valuable content about publishing to my followers. My active tweeting builds followers. Also notice for almost every tweet, I include an image (which is part of Hootsuite). It's been proven using images gets more attention for your tweets. The regular reach to my target audience pays off—and will for you as well. Several of my Morgan James authors have started using these tools and growing their own numbers. You can do it too—but it will take consistent effort.

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»» W. Terry Whalin, a writer and acquisitions editor at Morgan James Publishing, lives in Colorado. A former magazine editor, Whalin has written for more than 50 publications including *Christianity Today* and *Writer's Digest*. He has written more than 60 nonfiction books including *Jumpstart Your Publishing Dreams*. His latest book is *Billy Graham, A Biography of America's Greatest Evangelist* and the book website is at: <http://BillyGrahamBio.com> Watch the short book trailer for *Billy Graham* at: <http://bit.ly/BillyGrahamBT> His website is located at: [www.terrywhalin.com](http://www.terrywhalin.com). Follow him on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/terrywhalin>



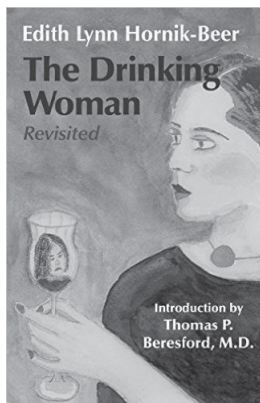
# MEMBER NEWS

## >>>> Book News



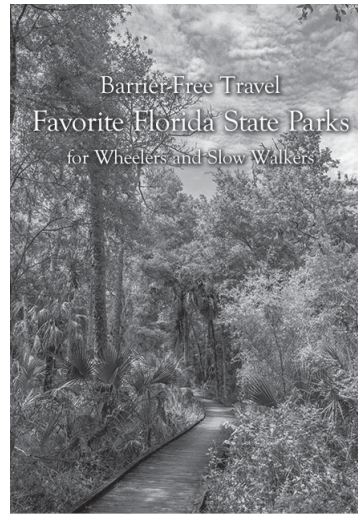
The latest book from Dr. **Jyrki Penttinen**, *The Wireless Communications Security*, presents security threats and protection mechanisms in current and future mobile networks. The book summarizes key aspects and evolved technologies including the most important security aspects and solutions of cellular networks and ever growing Internet of Things (IoT) for protecting end-users, network operators, and service providers against cyber attacks.

▶ [wiley.com](http://wiley.com)



The book, *The Drinking Woman* by **Edith Lynn Hornik**, has been updated and has come out through the Authors Guild's arrangement with Open Road as *The Drinking Woman Revisited* by Edith Lynn Hornik-Beer with a forward by **Dr. Thomas P. Beresford**. Her other book, *For Teenagers Living With A Parent Who Abuses Alcohol/Drugs*, has been featured at

▶ [recoverymonth.gov](http://recoverymonth.gov)



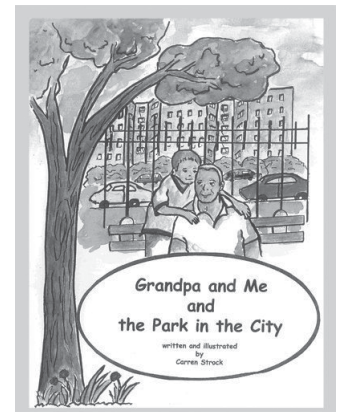
Candy B. Harrington

**Candy B. Harrington** recently released the fourth book in her Barrier-Free Travel series, *Barrier-Free Travel; Favorite Florida State Parks for Wheelers and Slow Walkers*. The guidebook includes detailed information about accessible trails, sites, lodging options, tours, and attractions in 12 of the author's favorite Florida state parks.

▶ [barrierfreeflorida.com](http://barrierfreeflorida.com)

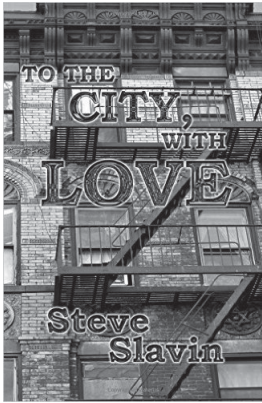
*Grandpa and Me and the Park in the City*, written and illustrated by **Carren Strock**, celebrates the bond between a child and his grandfather, and the rewards that effort and persistence can bring. This book celebrates diversity, showing people of different ages, ethnicities, shapes, and sizes enjoying city life together. It lends itself to inter-generational, ethnic, and urban study theme units for elementary school teachers. The effective rhyming and eye-catching colors makes this a good choice for a read-aloud.

▶ [carrenstrock.com](http://carrenstrock.com)





## Welcome new ASJA members!



**Steve Slavin's** short story collection, *To the City, with Love* (Martin Sister's Publishing, November), is a highly fictionalized collective memoir. A lifelong New Yorker, he shamelessly appropriated the anecdotes of scores of friends and acquaintances, including those of fellow writers. You might want to see if any of your stories appear in the book.

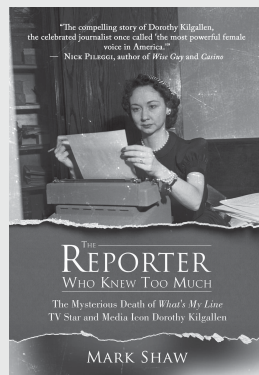
### »»»» Awards & Honors

*Noor: A Champion Thoroughbred's Unlikely Journey from California to Kentucky*, by ASJA Vice President **Milton Toby**, was judged the best non-fiction book about horse racing at the recent EQUUS Film Festival in New York. Noor previously won an American Horse Publications editorial award as the best equine book of the year.

### Other News

**Mark Shaw**, author of *The Reporter Who Knew Too Much*, appeared on two national podcasts: BlackOpRadio (Dec 15) and History Personified (Dec 16), regarding the mysterious death of media icon Dorothy Kilgallen.

▶ [thereporterwhoknewtoomuch.com](http://thereporterwhoknewtoomuch.com)



**Liz Alton**  
Melrose, MA

**Betsy Andrews**  
Brooklyn, NY

**Ann Babe**  
New York, NY

**Julie Bettinger**  
Tallahassee, FL

**Brook Bolen**  
Fancy Gap, VA

**Richard Conway**  
New York, NY

**Pete Croatto**  
Ithaca, NY

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**Juli Fraga**  
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**Lisa Liebman**  
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Decatur, GA

**Delia O'Hara**  
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**Hillary Richard**  
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**Jillian Richardson**  
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**Beejoli Shah**  
Austin, TX

**Elizabeth Skwarecki**  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Tanisha Sykes**  
Teaneck, NJ

**Sarah Watts**  
Montgomery, IL

**Craig Werner**  
Madison, WI

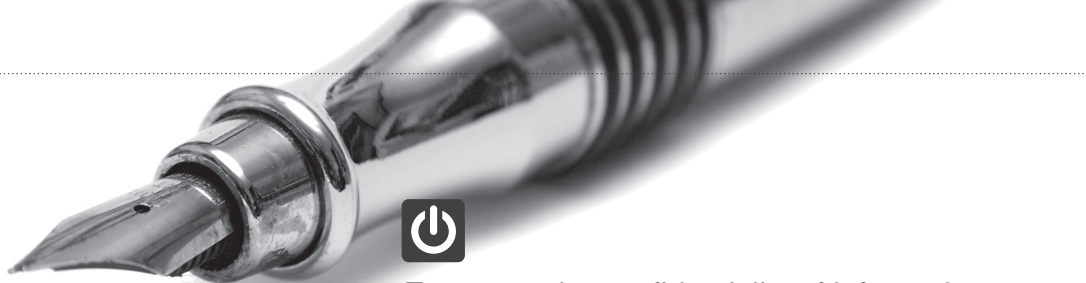
**Rosie Williams**  
Barre, VT

**Sharon Van Epps**  
Seattle, WA

**Julie Vick**  
Louisville, CO

**Anne Zaleski**  
Lakewood, OH

Know someone who might be interested in becoming a member? Refer them to ASJA at:  
[www.asja.org/how-to-join](http://www.asja.org/how-to-join)



To protect the confidentiality of information filed with Paycheck reports, additional details including rights and more are available at [ASJA.org/members/paycheck](http://ASJA.org/members/paycheck).



# PAYCHECK

## WEBSITE FOR BIG MEDICAL PUBLISHER, UBM

Blog  
700 words  
\$400

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**General comments:** Love working for this client, whom I met through Client Connections. Pleasant, professional and easy to please. Thank you ASJA for helping me land this gig! This is the 4th post I have done for them so far.

**Feedback:** 10

## WRITERS MARKET

Article, trade pub (online or print)  
2,400 words  
\$1,200

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**Feedback:** 10

**Payment:** Timely

## AAA TEXAS JOURNEY

Article, custom pub  
1,000 words  
\$1,000

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**Feedback:** 10

**Accepted, killed, completed:** Accepted

**Within number of days:** 30

**Paid within days:** 60

## HARVARD MAGAZINE

Article, custom pub  
800 words  
\$500

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**Rights comments:** Surprisingly decent contract. No changes needed, something I haven't encountered for ages.

**General comments:** Very slow editorial process. Turned in story in April, got it back for rewrite in October, paid in December.

**Feedback:** 6

**Payment:** Timely

## THE JEWISH WEEK

Article, consumer pub (online or print)  
900 words  
\$250

**Rights comments:** They accepted the article Aug. 3 but didn't pay for four months. They wanted WMFH, but because this had not come up in our correspondence until after they published the article, they sent me my check, telling me they could never accept anything else from me unless I signed the WMFH contract. "Our lawyers insist on it."

**General comments:** The editor accepted my proposal within days, and then accepted the complete article very promptly. The piece was nicely showcased, with minimal editing except for the terrible title they gave it, and everybody was very nice—but it was the worst contract I have seen in 40 years of writing.

**Feedback:** 3

**Paid within days:** 120 after acceptance

**Ethical comments:** They said their lawyers insisted on this contract, which is modeled on the one The New York Times uses. They offered an addendum, which they said their other freelancers who objected to the WMFH contract were willing to sign, but I couldn't see how it changed the terms significantly, so I would not sign. They paid me but said they could never use me again unless I signed.

## TV PRODUCTION COMPANY

Speaking  
3 hours  
\$1,000

**General comments:** I was interviewed on one of my book topics for a Japanese documentary on the subject.

**Feedback:** 10

**Payment:** Timely

## PACE COMMUNICATIONS

Article, custom pub  
950 words  
\$950

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**Rights comments:** Awful indemnification clause!

**General comments:** Editor was nice to work with, but the business side seems really disorganized. My articles were a rush job, so I started before I got the contract (I know, I know, my mistake) and it took several weeks and multiple follow ups before I finally got the contract (they explained that their system was down but I wish they'd just told me that so I wouldn't have bugged them repeatedly). Then once I sent in my contracts and invoice, I heard crickets. Only after I inquired about where my direct deposit was did they tell me that a page was apparently missing from the contract, so they couldn't pay me. So I resubmitted the contracts and asked for confirmation, but I got crickets until I called to follow up yet again. So frustrating to have to continually nag for a contract and payment!

**Feedback:** 6

**Payment:** Late

## THE CRIME REPORT

Article, trade pub (online or print)  
600 words  
\$250

**Article terms:** POP

**Rights comments:** I did an interview for another project and decided I could produce and pitch a Q&A to other publications. It had a tight time peg. The first place I pitched refused, leaving me only one day to make some money from the transcribing I'd already done. So I sold it to this news site that pays poorly.

**General comments:** They acted quickly, gave it minimal editing, and were easy to deal with. Slow pay and low pay are the two negatives.

**Feedback:** 7

**Payment:** Late

### PROSPECT.ORG

Article, consumer pub (online or print)  
850 words  
\$250

**Article terms:** POP

**Rights comments:** Web editor contacted me and invited me to write a commentary/analysis on an event that had just occurred. Despite the low fee, I accepted because I had a lot of background on the topic and hoped for more work from a new client.

**Rights comments:** Due to sloppiness and rush job, they didn't send me a contract until the eve of publication. It contained an unacceptable indemnification clause. I pushed back. They wouldn't budge. I reluctantly agreed to it because the piece would have gone stale quickly and couldn't be reused elsewhere. I made it clear I'd never write for them again if they wouldn't negotiate on that clause. Book agent for this book? Yes

**General comments:** The editor was pleasant and competent, and understanding of my stance on the contract. But the combination of low fee, terrible fee, and slow pay means this was a one-shot, disappointing assignment for me.

**Feedback:** 2

### NEXTAVENUE.ORG

Article, consumer pub (online or print)  
1 post  
\$350

**Article terms:** POP

**General comments:** Easy to work with. Wish pay were a little higher, but I was happy to finally find this story a home.

**Feedback:** 6

**Payment:** Timely

### ESSEX PUBLISHING

Books  
40,000 words  
\$50,000

**Rights comments:** Work made for hire, common for corporate history books. Book agent for this book? Yes

**General comments:** Essex publishes corporate history books for its clients. The people there (particularly editorial head Peter Hawes) are pros and are good to work with. This project ended up not as profitable as I expected because of late changes and slow responses from the client. Everything dragged on longer than planned.

**Feedback:** 7

### MANSUETO VENTURES

Article, consumer pub (online or print)  
1 post  
\$400

**Article terms:** POP

**General comments:** Mansueto publishes Fast Company. I love the prestige of writing for FastCompany.com, but the amount of time it takes to get paid borders on ridiculous! You cannot invoice until the end of the month in which your story appears, so if you have a story filed in July that doesn't run until August, you may not get paid until December or later. Once it had been 90 days since invoicing, I followed up via email and got crickets. Then I used the dial-by-name phone directory to reach the Accounts Payable person and left a voicemail asking the status on my invoice. Within an hour I got an email with direct deposit details, but I hate having to chase down payment, especially when the pay is already low considering the amount of work that goes into each of these stories.

**Feedback:** 3

**Payment:** Late

### CASPER SLEEP

Blog  
800 words  
\$350

**Article terms:** POP

**General comments:** Casper publishes a blog about sleep called Van Winkles, so I wrote several pieces for that. However, the level of reporting expected was not aligned with the low pay rate and during the editing process several snarky comments were inserted into the published story without my prior review.

**Feedback:** 6

**Payment:** Timely

### HEADSPACE

Blog  
1 post  
\$300

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**General comments:** Headspace (the meditation app) publishes a great blog called the Orange Dot that covers happiness, relationships, mindfulness, etc. They are easy to work with (responsive, flexible on timelines, minimal edits, etc.), but sometimes it does take awhile for posts to be published. Fortunately, it's not pay on publication!

**Feedback:** 10

**Payment:** Timely

### VESTED MAGAZINE

Article, custom pub  
1,000 words  
\$1,000

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**Rights comments:** I never signed a contract so I assume I sold FNASR.

**General comments:** The client provided the idea and sources, which made these articles easier than they would be otherwise.

**Feedback:** 7

**Payment:** Timely

**Ethical Comments:** Because this was a corporate client, I was able to get a 50% down payment.

### GOOD

Article, consumer pub (online or print)  
1,000 words  
\$500

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**General comments:** This is definitely among my favorite publications and favorite editors! Smart, responsive editing, reasonable timelines, and values good storytelling about issues that matter.

Sometimes it can take awhile to get the green light on a pitch and get a story published, but I'm always excited to share these stories.

**Feedback:** 9

**Payment:** Timely

### PILLPACK

Blog  
1,000 words  
\$800

**Article terms:** Acceptance

**General comments:** Pillpack publishes a beautiful, smart online magazine called Folks that challenges our preconceptions around health and medical conditions.

Q&As pay \$400, while features with 1,000-1,200 words pay \$800. The editor is great to work with (minimal editing, flexible on timelines, receptive to ideas, publishes quickly with minimal edits). I did have to nudge them about payment, but I think that was an honest mistake and I hope to continue writing for them.

**Feedback:** 8

**Payment:** Late



RAE PADILLA  
FRANCOEUR

*Freelance Writer*

# SHOP TALK

## *Lessons from Content Marketing Institute's Annual Conference*





**M**any journalists find that producing content for business and nonprofit organizations makes good use of their existing skills set. They pivot comfortably between journalism and content writing. The work can be interesting, challenging, available, and, often, it pays well. But journalists need a way into this lucrative field.

ASJA journalists and content writers Elizabeth Hanes and Leslie Lang attended the Content Marketing Institute's annual conference, Content Marketing World ([contentmarketingworld.com](http://contentmarketingworld.com)) in Cleveland this past September, and agreed to speak with Sandra Beckwith for a recent Shop Talk episode. If you want to network, meet potential clients and learn about the content marketing industry, this conference is the place to be. Hanes, "the nurse who knows content," writes consumer-oriented content for healthcare organizations. Lang writes about business, travel, tourism, hospitality, nonprofits, and ancestry from her home in Hawaii. Both found the conference extremely beneficial.

### Conference basics

The conference is for people in the content marketing industry. More than 3,600 people attended in September. They traveled from more than 50 countries and represented 550 companies. It's a trade-show, with exhibitors, panels, keynote addresses, and scores of networking opportunities for people who do content marketing for their companies. It is not geared for writers, but attendees are among those that hire writers. The many sessions provide a window into the world of content marketing. "You can network, but you have to put a lot of effort into it. They aren't expecting to meet writers," says Lang, whose connections led to work that more than paid for the cost of the conference. Hanes concurs: "This is like a feast for freelance writers."

Content marketing goes beyond white papers, copywriting, and blog posts. It includes podcasting, infographics, video, and more. A keynote address by the Kellogg's marketing director focused on the importance of storytelling. Legos shared fascinating anecdotal information about its content marketing and REI, another of the presenters, talked about long-term content strategies. Podcasting and video were trending topics at this year's conference.

### TAKEAWAYS >>>>

**>>> Podcasts are huge.** Podcasts, like radio spots, are often scripted, especially intros, conclusions and follow-up questions. More people listen to podcasts than use Twitter. The average listener hears five shows a week.

**>>> Get comfortable with the lingo.** Content marketing has its own language. Knowing the lingo means you can communicate with a prospective client as a peer. Hanes pitched herself as a "freelance nurse writer for drip campaigns."

**>>> Content writers do a lot of preparatory research.** Here are five resources that can help. BoardReader is a search engine for discussion groups and forums. If you're researching a topic or a question you'd like to write about, you plug in the question and see what people are asking about it. *Übersuggest* vets and suggests keywords. A search of *Google Books* allows you to see what authors are writing about a topic. *U-Goer Five* is a text editor that helps you reduce complex ideas into concise language with the most 1,000 most commonly used words.

**>>> Planning to attend in 2017?** Download the app. Make sure to download and use the conference app, which also facilitates social meetings and networking.

**>>> Strategize your conference goals in advance.** There are scores of sessions, thousands of attendees, and many offsite get-togethers. Plan for which keynote addresses, panel sessions, and after-hours cocktail parties you'll attend. Build in some down time, as well, because the experience can be overwhelming.

**>>> Do some cold calling.** The vendors on trade show floor are your prospective clients. Find ways to introduce yourself. Don't forget business cards.

**>>> Being a former attendee can lend credibility to future clients.** If you position yourself as a content writer, you should attend. Being able to say that you were an attendee shows clients your interest and commitment. "This is where you go to learn about content marketing," says Lang. "It takes a lot of effort to network at this thing because they are not looking for writers. I picked out some companies I was interested in, messaged them on the app and met them."

**>>> It's not necessarily as expensive as it seems.** The cost is \$895 for the early bird registration, but that deadline has passed. If you're interested, check in with ASJA in case there's an ASJA discount. Hotel room fees are less expensive than New York and there's an abundance of free food.



# »» *Laura Laing*

## BALTIMORE, MD



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WRITING SPECIALTY/FOCUS: CURRENTLY CREATIVE NONFICTION, IN PARTICULAR LITERARY ESSAYS AND LONG-FORM NARRATIVE REPORTING

**Writing specialty/focus:** An ever-moving target these days! I was a generalist, then focused on writing math curriculum and books, and now I'm focused on creative nonfiction, in particular literary essays and long-form narrative reporting.

**Proud writing moment:** In 2007, I was fortunate to report and write a long-form feature for Baltimore's *City Paper* about Leon's, the oldest gay bar in Baltimore. I spent weeks sitting in this hole-in-the-wall bar, talking to bartenders, regular customers, the owner, and a resident historian about how the place started as a place for gay men to gather in 1957, as well as its role in the free-flowing 70s and then the AIDS crisis. The stories were amazing, and I ended up winning a Maryland journalism award for the piece. Here's a secret: I go back and read that piece once and while, when I'm feeling like a failure or an imposter.

**How long have you been an ASJA member?** I have no idea! The forum says I joined in 2011, but I'm sure I was a member long before then. (How do I find out?)

**How long have you volunteered for ASJA?** I started volunteering at the first conference I attended, doing little things like helping with setup or mentoring. About four years ago, I became co-editor for *The Word*, our former blog. I moved from that to Publications Chair last year, when I joined the board.



**What kind of volunteer work do you do for ASJA?**

I am a board member and the chair of the publications committee, which oversees the production of the magazine and ASJA Confidential. The publications committee produces *ASJA Magazine* and ASJA Confidential. The magazine is perhaps the most visible benefit of membership. ASJA Confidential is becoming one of the most popular resources for our members, and we're excited about its move to online.

As chair, I oversee several paid contractors, editors for our publications, and our designer. We count on scores of volunteers to help provide the content for these publications. We need writers for each of our issues of the magazine. We need members who are willing to be interviewed for these stories. And we need proofreaders.

The best thing about working on ASJA publications is that our members are naturally well qualified for these roles. Sometimes we need to beat the bushes to find folks, but it's truly rewarding to see the stellar work they provide. I've edited trade publications in the past, and working with non-professional writers is much, much tougher!

**How much time to you spend per month volunteering for ASJA?**

I probably spend a total of 20 hours a month on average—maybe a little less. I love collaborating with the editors and working with our volunteer writers. I also really enjoy creating systems for better efficiency and better content. I don't want us to put out a half-cooked publication, and so I'm happy to put in the work needed to make our publications the best they can be at that moment in time—and look for ways we can improve over time.

**Why do you volunteer for ASJA?**

I blame my parents. They belonged to many organizations when I was a kid, and they always found ways to personally contribute to the work being done. They taught me that it's very rewarding to get my hands dirty. I don't feel really invested in an organization until I volunteer.



**How do you fit volunteering in with your work commitments?**

There are times when my ASJA responsibilities clash with work deadlines, but at this point in my career—and with my family—I have more control over my schedule. Right now, it's Saturday morning, and I'm sitting in front of a big fire writing my responses to these questions. I've spent the last two hours working on ASJA stuff. I don't have any pressing work to do this morning, and I'm loving the warmth of this fire, so why not do a little proofing, think about the upcoming issue of the magazine, and send out some emails coordinating content for our publications?

In addition to my work and my volunteer duties, I'm now a student in the Goucher College MFA program in Creative Nonfiction. For 20 days of the year (10 days in August and 10 days in January), I'm in residency on campus and completely unavailable for work, volunteer or family commitments. I plan well in advance for this time, so no one is left hanging.

**What are the benefits of volunteering?**

The biggest benefit for me is that it feels great to volunteer. I like being involved in top-level decisions about our organization, and I believe I have a lot to offer. Selfishly, I enjoy being able to move ASJA in directions

that are important for its members—exploring areas that are not necessarily well known (like content marketing and creative nonfiction), while responding to specific needs and requests. It's very rewarding to be part of ASJA leadership at this time in journalism and publishing. And of course, I get to know some of the most amazing writers out there—some who are members of ASJA and some who are not yet members. It's exciting to be able to discuss craft and business development with such smart and talented people.

**What do you like to do when you're not writing?**

I have a wife of 30 years and a 16-year-old daughter; so much of my non-writing time is spent in the kitchen or in the car. (The 16-year-old is about to get her license, though, so I might be at home more often.) I adore watching movies—sometimes seeing as many as five in one week. At least half of my job is reading, so my house is strewn with newspapers, magazines, and books. I also foster cats and kittens for the SPCA. These little guys hang out in my office, making it a very stinky place at times! And recently, I've fallen in love with Bikram yoga, which is very strange, because I hate sweating and I hate exercise. There's something calming about repeating the same poses in a 105-degree studio for 90 minutes.

# Know someone who might be eligible to join ASJA? Send them our way!

»»»» VISIT [ASJA.ORG/MEMBERS](http://ASJA.ORG/MEMBERS)

Explore the Forums to get more information on each.



▶ **Peer Influence:** As a group, ASJA members write for all of the major publications, author hundreds of books each year, talk at TED, produce innovative apps, teach at top universities, become *New York Times* best-sellers, and much more. Why wouldn't you want to hang out with us?

▶ **Advice and Advocacy:** Whether it involves actions by Congress, interference of copyrights, or other parts of your contracts, ASJA advocates and educates with its various committees. And ASJA's PayCheck database gives you negotiating strength with inside info where it counts.

▶ **Continuing Education:** Keep abreast of the continually changing markets to sell your work in today's publishing environment. With ASJA's help you can continue to thrive among the most successful, independent and entrepreneurial journalists and writers in the world.

▶ **Face-to-Face Access:** ASJA lets you rub elbows with top editors and agents at Members-Only Day at every Annual Conference, and personally pitch them during Client Connections at all conferences. **New for 2016:** Virtual Client Connections (VCC) lets any ASJA member participate via Skype!

▶ **ASJA Forums:** Think of private rooms where you can have confidential conversations with your professional peers, and where Special Interest Groups (SIGs) bring small groups together in sharp focus.

▶ **ASJA Magazine:** Our state-of-the-industry publication provides you with information, inspiration, and motivation.

▶ **ASJA Confidential, ShopTalk, The Word blog, Tuesday Talks, ASJA Weekly:** These digital offerings keep you in touch with your colleagues.

▶ **Regional Conferences and chapter events:** Watch for announcements soon regarding happenings all over the country in.

▶ **Discounts on Services You Need:** LexisNexis, Poynter's News University, *Publishers Weekly* and other magazines, MDLive telemedicine, and more!





# CONFERENCE CHAT >>



ESTELLE  
ERASMUS

*Freelance Writer and  
Writers Conference Chair*



*I am so excited to be Chair of this year's annual conference in New York, and I hope you have already saved the date May 5 and 6 in your calendar. We'll be back at the Roosevelt Hotel, and have planned some exciting sessions and keynote speakers for you.*

**T**his year we have four – count them – four keynote speakers. On member's day, Vanessa Hua, author of *Deceit and Other Possibilities* (called a “searing debut” by *O*) will talk about how her fiction builds on her journalism and visa versa, in her talk, “Shedding A Light on Untold Stories: Settings with Impact.”

Lane Shefter Bishop, CEO of Vast Entertainment, has been called the “Book Whisperer” by CNN, and she will talk about how you can sell your project in a single sentence: Advice from the front lines of Hollywood (from her eponymously-named book). Her company buys projects even before they are published, so she is someone you want to be in the same room with.

For nonmembers day, Jenny Blake, former Google executive and author of *PIVOT: The Only Move That Matters is Your Next One*, will shepherd you through the changes happening in your career, as you reinvent yourself over and over. ASJA member Andrea King Collier will speak about what she gained and lost while becoming a political activist through her writing, and as an added bonus, will offer a mini-gridding workshop, from her popular course.

And that's not all. I'm excited to announce that Nicole Feliciano, CEO/Founder of Mom Trends Media, and author of the new book, *Mom Boss: Balancing Entrepreneurship, Kids and Success* (named

one of top 50 Twitter moms by Cision), will speak on “Building Your Platform Using Social Media.” She's an expert on the subject, with more than 65,000 Twitter followers and relationships with top brands.

We also have editors from many publications joining us at the conference, such as Next Avenue/PBS, Brain, Child, The Washington Post, Parade, Rolling Stone, The Atlantic, Dame, Pacific Standard, and Hearst publications.

Lots more planned, and I'll keep you posted through updates in Tuesday Talk, ASJA Confidential and the ASJA Weekly.

In the meantime, get on Twitter if you haven't yet, and follow us at @ASJAhq for the newest conference announcements through the hashtag #ASJANY17. I'll be tweeting too, now and throughout the conference at @EstelleSErasmus. Follow ASJA on Facebook as well: <https://www.facebook.com/ASJAinc>.

I'd also like to thank the ASJA board, staff, and particularly Board President Sherry Beck Paprocki, for their support, encouragement and wisdom as I plan this year's conference.

Can't wait to see you there.

Estelle Erasmus



# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS >>



## Keynote/Plenary Speaker: Andrea King Collier

Andrea King Collier is a multimedia journalist, essayist and author. She's been on the full-time freelance path for over 25 years.

Her specialties are essays, health and wellness, health policy. Her work appears across print, online, and broadcast outlets, including *Salon*, *National Geographic*, *The Plate*, *Civil Eats*, *Ebony*, *AARP Magazine*, *Next Avenue*, *NBCBLK*, *Washington Post*, *Pacific Standard*, *Town and Country*, *Essence*, *Heart and Soul* and others.

She is the author of *Still With Me... A Daughter's Journey of Love and Loss* from Simon and Schuster and *The Black Woman's Guide to Black Men's Health*, from Warner Wellness. Her work has also been anthologized in the *Best Food Writing Series*, and the *O Magazine Book of Happiness*, to name a few.

She also teaches online courses for writers on craft and the business of sustainability for freelancers. Collier has served as a ASJA board member. She is also a member of the National Association of Black Journalists and the Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ). She is a current AHCJ Great Lakes Fellow. She is also the creative director of the Symposium for Professional Food Writers.

Collier is a graduate of Indiana University in Journalism and Political Science. She is based in Lansing, Michigan. She can be reached [www.andreakingcollier.com](http://www.andreakingcollier.com) Follow her on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/andrea.collier> on Twitter @andreaecollier and on Instagram: [www.instagram.com/andreakingcollier](http://www.instagram.com/andreakingcollier)



## Keynote Speaker: Jenny Blake

Jenny Blake is an author, career and business strategist and international speaker who helps people organize their brain, move beyond burnout, and build sustainable, dynamic careers they love. She is the author of *PIVOT: The Only Move That Matters is Your Next One* (Portfolio/Penguin Random

House, September 2016), and *Life After College* (Running Press, 2011), which is based on her blog of the same name. With two years at a technology start-up as the first employee, five years at Google on the Training and Career Development teams, and over five years of running her own business, Jenny combines her love of technology with her superpower of simplifying complexity to help clients pivot their career or business.

Jenny created her first website, *Life After College*, in 2005, then released a book of the same name in 2011 that was featured in Target's 2012 graduation display. She has been featured on *Forbes.com*, *US News & World Report*, *Real Simple* magazine, and has spoken at major universities and top companies such as Columbia, TEDxCMU, Yale, Parsons, MIT, UCLA, Google, Intuit, KPMG and Best Buy.

Today you can find her at [JennyBlake.me](http://JennyBlake.me), where she explores systems at the intersection of mind, body and business. Jenny is a yoga fanatic and avid book worm. Dogs, dancing, gadgets, writing, traveling, and long meals with friends all make her pretty happy too. Jenny is based in New York City, where she imagines she's starring in a movie whenever she walks through its crowded streets. Subscribe to the Pivot Podcast and follow her on Twitter @jenny\_blake.



## Keynote Speaker: Lane Shefter Bishop

Lane Shefter Bishop is a multi-award winning producer/director who has received numerous accolades for her work including an EMMY, six Telly Awards, a Videographer Award, three Communicator Awards, a Sherril C. Corwin Award, an Aurora Award, a Davey Award, a New York Festivals Award and the DGA Fellowship Award for Episodic Television.

Currently Ms. Bishop is the CEO of Vast Entertainment, THE go to book-to-screen company, with numerous projects. Ms. Bishop is also the former EVP of Motion Pictures and Television at TwinStar Entertainment.

In addition to her scripted fare, Ms. Bishop also has extensive experience in reality television. Vast is currently partnered on all non-scripted programming with Bishop-Lyons Entertainment, which has a first-look deal with ITV Studios.

Ms. Bishop is also a three-time speaker at the WGA as well as at numerous writers conferences around the country and is author of the book *Sell Your Story in a Single Sentence: Advice from the Front Lines of Hollywood*, published by prestigious W.W. Norton & Company in May of 2016.

Ms. Bishop began her work in the industry at Moxie Productions, where she produced and directed projects for such networks as ABC, Showtime, HBO and MTV. She has directed numerous television shows and six feature-length motion pictures, including *The Day Laborers* (aka Los Jornaleros), which received Official Selection in Edward James Olmos' LA Latino Int'l Film Festival, Cine Accion (San Fran), OutFest (Hollywood), Reel Affirmations (Wash DC), NewFest (NY) as well as the Milan International Film Festival (Italy). The film was distributed through HBO and Blockbuster. Ms. Bishop is currently in discussions to direct the feature film *Dead by Midnight*. Ms. Bishop is currently in discussions to direct the feature film *Dead by Midnight*.

Ms. Bishop holds a B.A. in Literature from UC Santa Barbara and an M.F.A. in Production from USC's School of Cinema/Television. She is a director-member of the Directors Guild of America and the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Follow her on Twitter at @LaneShefterBishop



## Keynote Speaker: Vanessa Hua

Vanessa Hua is a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and author of *Deceit and Other Possibilities*, which *O, The Oprah Magazine* calls a "searing debut." For nearly two decades, she has been writing about Asia and the diaspora in journalism and in fiction, examining the ways immigrants bring their traditions, their histories, and their ambitions to America. She received a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award, the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award, a Steinbeck Fellowship in Creative Writing, as well as honors from the Society of Professional Journalists and the Asian American Journalists' Association. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *FRONTLINE/World*, *Washington Post*, and elsewhere. She has filed stories from China, South Korea, Panama, Burma and Ecuador. Her novels are forthcoming from Ballantine.

Her website is [www.vanessahua.com](http://www.vanessahua.com) and you can find her on twitter at @Vanessa\_hua

#ASJANY17

# Apply to Join our ASJA 'Ask the Experts Team'

## FOR THE NYC CONFERENCE

ASJA is the aspirational membership organization for journalists, authors, nonfiction, and literary nonfiction writers everywhere. So let's shine a light on our resources at the ASJA NYC Conference—the expertise, vast experience, and wisdom of our seasoned members who are also writing coaches, teachers, and publishing experts.

Here is your opportunity.

We will be taking our wondering mentoring program helmed by Greg Breining to new heights this year by rebranding it as "ASJA Experts." Our ASJA Experts team will be publicized in our own and other media, and will be taking center stage as the go-to resource and inspiration for writers who aspire to join ASJA.

If you can share your expertise at the ASJA Conference on nonmember's day, May 6, please submit your bio, ASJA profile, headshot, and a few sentences on why you want to share your knowledge with nonmembers. We are looking to build a team of up to 15 ASJA Experts to help promote the wonderful benefits of ASJA on nonmembers' day.

We will also be highlighting the ASJA Experts (individually and as a team) in our promotions for the conference, and in other media opportunities that may come up.

Greg Breining, who will continue to lead the mentoring program, is our first expert. A little about Greg: he writes about travel, science, and nature for *The New York Times*, *National Wildlife*, *Audubon*, *Discover* and many other publications. He also writes features about science and medicine for several universities and institutions such as the Mayo Clinic. His books include the travel memoir *Wild Shore: Exploring Lake Superior by Kayak*; *Super Volcano: The Ticking Time Bomb Beneath Yellowstone National Park*; and travel guide *Paddling Minnesota*. Find him at [gregbreining.com](http://gregbreining.com) and [breezearts.com](http://breezearts.com).

Greg will be a mentor in the following areas: freelancing as a business; making a living writing feature stories; writing about travel, science, and nature; pitching to new markets and clients; publishing with regional and university presses; and the craft of magazine and website feature writing.



Submissions will be reviewed and approved by the ASJA board, the Conference Committee and Greg. Please send submissions to [ASJAoffice@asja.org](mailto:ASJAoffice@asja.org). Deadline is March 20. The ASJA Experts Team will be announced in April.



ESTELLE ERASMUS

ASJA Conference Chair &amp; Freelance Writer

# A Big, Whopping Thank-you to the ASJA Conference Volunteers

No man or woman is an island. That's because it takes a village to get any undertaking off the ground—particularly a conference. I have been working hard, with the support of the board, particularly indefatigable and wise Board President Sherry Paprocki, as well as the stellar Kellen staff led by interim Executive Director Holly Koenig, to build a conference that will fulfill its theme of Pivot. Publish. Prosper, through workshops focused on craft and how-tos, editor and agent information and connections, and the hottest technology, social media, and platform-building advice from the experts available.

With session titles including: The 80/20 Rule for Joining the 100K Club as a Freelance Writer, I'm Back! Reviving Your Career When It's Stalled, Writing Book Proposals with Teeth: Insider Secrets from a Sales Director, Using Smartphones to Tell Stories, Ghostwriter for Hire: The Six Strategies to a Six-Digit Income, Food Writing Pitch Slam, How to Pitch a Hit, What Editors Want You to Know, The A-Zs of Putting Together an Anthology, and more, we continue to show how ASJA is building the future for freelance writers who are making a career of publishing in all its many forms. And we want to help our fellow writers and those who aspire to become ASJA members to survive and thrive in both tough and easy economic times.

We even have a three sessions that fall under the umbrella of Build Your Platform on members' day. The Makings of a Bestseller, The Writer's Website: Quick Fixes, Strategies and Good Siteing, and Advice from an Influencer: How to Get Noticed on Social Media

But it's a Herculean feat to get a conference off the ground, and I'm so grateful for volunteers like Greg Breining, heading up our ASJA Experts mentoring program; board member and head of membership, Jennifer Goforth Gregory, who will be sharing tips on what freelance writers need to do to get that (seemingly elusive) ASJA acceptance, Wendy Helfenbaum, who has worked diligently to create opportunities for you via Client Connections, and everyone else who is pitching in to build a memorable conference experience for us all.

Here, straight from their mouths of the volunteers I have been working closest with on why they do what they do for ASJA conference and what it means to them. I feel honored to be working with them.

KAREN KROLL, WELCOME COMMITTEE COORDINATOR

*"I'm excited to be coordinating the efforts to help new ASJA members meet others and feel at home in the sometimes chaotic atmosphere of a*

*conference with hundreds of attendees. We're planning an interactive getting-to-know-you activity on Friday morning that will help them connect with other ASJA members. During lunch sessions, also on Friday, they'll be able to learn more about the organization from long-time ASJA members. We'll also be using social media during the conference to address their questions as quickly as possible."*



LEIDA SNOW, IN-KIND PROMOTIONS COORDINATOR

*"I'm looking forward to coordinating in-kind contributions for the ASJA conference. I'm excited by the challenge, and looking forward*

*to the satisfaction that comes with participating. I highly recommend getting involved."*





EMILY PAULSEN,  
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

*"I look forward each year to volunteering at the ASJA conference. It's how I meet new people and keep up with colleagues, even as I help people get the most out of the conference. That's why I'm thrilled to be helping coordinate some of the volunteer efforts at the conference. Together we can make the conference more useful for members, more welcoming for nonmembers, and run more smoothly for everyone."*

CAROLYN CRIST, SESSIONS COORDINATOR

*"For me, 2017 is the year to get more involved and give back. I'm finally feeling comfortable enough in my full-time freelance career to think outside of my concerns and myself and consider how I can help others jump into freelance or improve the freelance field in general. By volunteering as an ASJA sessions coordinator, I want other members to feel as welcome as I did the first time I attended the annual conference."*



SOPHIA MCDONALD BENNETT:  
PUBLIC RELATIONS COORDINATOR

*"I'm so excited to be part of ASJA—I just joined a few months ago—and I'm thrilled to be doing PR and promotions for the annual conference. Volunteering is such a great way to meet people and learn more about the organization, so getting involved will help me get even more out my membership. In addition, volunteering in this capacity lets me get my fingers back in two parts of my former professional life that I loved—PR and event planning."*



CHERYL ALKON, MEALS COMMITTEE COORDINATOR

*"One of the best things about the ASJA conferences is talking with those who get it—the life of a freelance writer who is always seeking out potential new opportunities and connections—and the meals are one way to make this happen. [Alkon has coordinated the networking lunches and dinners for the past few New York conferences.] The networking meals are a great way to get to know people who share your interests, who are open to meeting others, and who may have the insight or information you're looking for when you're trying to crack a new market, find just the right source, or help bring your income to the next level. Similarly, you could be that resource for the people sitting with you at the lunch table."*

If you're interested in hosting a lunch or dinner on the topic of your choice, email Cheryl Alkon at [calkon@icloud.com](mailto:calkon@icloud.com). We all look forward to seeing you at the ASJA Conference this May.



ESTELLE ERASMUS

ASJA Conference Chair &amp; Freelance Writer

## UPFRONT >>

# with Lisa Sharkey

### HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS

Lisa Sharkey is the Senior Vice President and Director of Creative Development at HarperCollins Publishers, as well as a professor at Pace University. I am thrilled to announce that she will be doing a session for us on members' day (Friday, May 5), called *Facebook Live and Beyond: The Future of Author Promotions*. She will stream the session via Facebook Live and place it on the HarperCollins Facebook page, which has more than 40,000 followers. Her authors, combined, have millions of followers. ■ I got to ask Lisa a bit about her pivot from broadcast journalism to book promotions and how she came up with the innovative concept of having HarperCollins authors do Facebook Live programs, a tactic that has been covered in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Publisher's Weekly*.



Awareness of authors and books is what sells books, whether it is a hand sell in an independent bookstore or a Facebook Live video shared by a friend to another friend's page. **—Lisa Sharkey**



*You made a big career change 10 years ago, pivoting from broadcast journalism to publishing. Can you talk about one or two things that were necessary for making that switch successful?*

Making the switch was a bold and scary move for me, as I did not know much about the world of publishing. I made sure to learn about the corporate culture, raise my hand constantly, and never to assume any knowledge. I had to learn to slow down because television news moves at a much faster pace. One day, a few months after I started, my boss came to me and said, "You know, you don't have to have a million ideas a day." I had to adjust my rhythm in order to be OK with that. I still have a lot of ideas, but I have learned to breathe a bit more. On a professional front, I asked for a coach who worked with me for the first year to help me navigate the publishing landscape. She was very helpful and was able to get feedback for me from my colleagues. Thank goodness I did that. It provided me with someone I could trust to help me, as it was her job to make sure I succeeded.

*What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of authors being able to control their own exposure through tools like Facebook Live?*

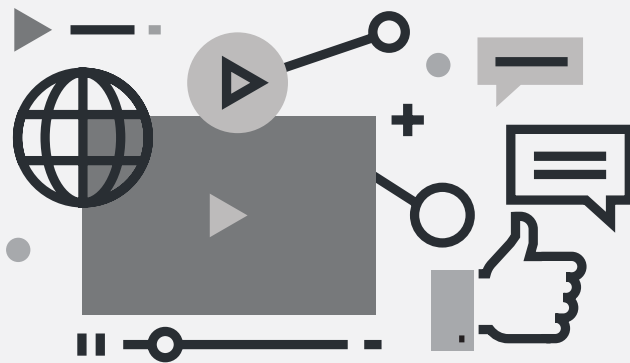
Authors have had only positive things to say about their Facebook Live experiences. The ability to simply turn on a phone, press "Go live," and then connect with their fans is so refreshing. The audience loves it and the authors enjoy hearing directly from those who are reading the words they have written. It has been a win-win.

*How did you come up with the Facebook Live program idea for your authors?*

As someone who produced live television for more than 20 years, I am very comfortable with the concept of extemporaneous programming. When Twitter introduced Periscope, I immediately embraced it, all the while secretly hoping that Facebook would also jump on board the live bandwagon. As soon as that happened we met with the book folks at Facebook, and I asked them if they would support a daily schedule of live programming with themed days, Monday through Friday. We decided to start on June 6, which gave us just a few weeks to get ready. Once we began, with no additional staff or resources, there was no turning back. It took a while to explain the programming to my colleagues, and we have had countless calls with authors helping to teach them the best practices. It has been exhilarating and also exhausting. But 10 million views later, we are not complaining.

*What advice do you have for authors who just aren't comfortable "going live"? Is it a necessity? Is it going to make or break book promotions or your ability to get a contract?*

This is not a mandatory program. We may occasionally have to gently twist some arms, but if we think an author really is opposed to going live, we simply move on to another author.



*There's been a lot of talk about the importance of an online platform for people interested in publishing books. Is that still important, and how has it changed in the last few years?*

If you want to reach the largest possible audience, then you have to be everywhere books are sold and are talked about. If you are not online in some fashion, then you are not doing yourself any favors. It is important, and has become even more important, given the fact that a majority of Americans are online around-the-clock. Their phones are practically glued to their hands, so you need to be able to get their attention, and if they are constantly looking at their phones, for goodness sakes, you should be talking to them there.

*Do you have any statistics to share, to give a sense of the potential impact of this tactic?*

I can say that we have had 10 million views, hundreds of thousands of likes and shares, and page growth. Our reach has been phenomenal. Awareness of authors and books is what sells books, whether it is a hand sell in an independent bookstore or a Facebook Live video shared by a friend to another friend's page. There is no downside to this.

*Any advice on execution? What should authors talk about when they go live?*

Authors need to plan for these live segments and not simply wing it. They need to pick a time and a date and not only tell their friends, relatives, and fans about it, but also ask them to share. They need to be ready, willing and able to answer any and all questions that come in with grace and humor, and remember not to take it too seriously when they are on camera. Facebook is also rolling out Facebook Live Audio, so authors (who are notoriously camera-shy) will have an alternative, which is like a live radio program or podcast, that still allows their readers to interact with them in real time.

*Anything else you want to tell ASJA members who will be attending your session?*

Do not be afraid to try something new, especially if you have passion for the project.



NEW  
YORK  
CITY  
2017

# PIVOT • PUBLISH • PROSPER

ASJA WRITERS CONFERENCE  
MAY 5 - 6

## 46TH ANNUAL WRITERS CONFERENCE

Roosevelt Hotel,  
New York City

The publishing industry occupies very different terrain than it did even a decade ago. With the industry shift from print to digital, new media for authors, the influx of content marketing, and revolving editors, freelancers—experienced and new—need to build their platforms while developing creative business strategies.

Never before has it been so essential for successful writers to Pivot in order to Publish and Prosper.

Join us in NYC for two days of education, connections; tips, tricks and strategic moves from seasoned journalists and authors, plus top social media and website experts, pr pros, editors, agents, content buyers, and more.

Our dynamic keynote/plenary speakers will show you exactly how to pivot, sell your project in a single sentence, find new venues, maximize strengths, and use your experiences to make an impact. The panels, sessions, coaching, and workshops with a focus on craft and practical how-tos, will inspire, motivate and empower journalists, nonfiction and literary nonfiction writers at all stages of their careers.





ASHLEY  
RODRIGUEZ  
*Freelance Writer*

# WRITING IS THE “LIFE”

*in my work-life balance*



Over the last four years that I've been freelance writing, I've written pieces of stories on airplanes, in airports, at airport bars, at hotel bars, at restaurant bars (an intervention *may* be needed), in my home office, on my couch, in my bed, and, if I remember correctly, I once wrote a few pages sitting on the floor of a train station because I couldn't find a seat.

I wish I could say I live the luxurious life of a jet-setting freelance writer, but I can't. It's my full-time—more than full-time, if I'm being honest—career at a public relations agency that takes me all across the country. In 12 months, I've worked on assignments while in or en-route to Fort Lauderdale, Dallas, San Antonio, Santa Barbara, New York City, Las Vegas, Atlanta, Charlotte, and countless other cities I can't even remember.

I started freelance writing four years ago because I was bored. I was an account manager at a PR firm with responsibilities that kept me busy during the day, and my then-husband worked in the wine industry, which often resulted in him having late nights and the occasional trip overseas. I was home, with a cat, and bored. I had been a wide-eyed j-school kid eager to break into the newspaper business—except I graduated in 2008, quite possibly the

worst time to enter the workforce waving a print journalism degree like it meant my employment opportunities were endless. With all the free time I had, I decided to launch a side gig.

Two years in, as I climbed the ladder at the agency, began managing half a dozen teams, and started writing for several more publications, my workload increased tenfold. It was becoming increasingly difficult to allocate time to this side gig of mine. It took a lot of late nights, early mornings, weekends, and, of course, coffee and wine. Three years in, my hairstylist found my first grey hairs. Whether I can attribute those to PR or freelancing, I'm not quite sure. Probably a combination of the two.

It was no surprise to me, when *Forbes* released its annual ranking of the most stressful jobs in 2017, that public relations executive was at #8. Broadcaster and

newspaper reporter ranked #10 and #6, respectively. I had to laugh. My two careers, the two things I do daily, were some of the most stressful jobs on the planet. (Although I still find it hard to believe they're ranked on the same list that includes police officers, firefighters, airline pilots, and enlisted military personnel—people putting their lives in danger. But I digress.)

Friends, family, and coworkers have told me I work too much. (“You need a better work-life balance, Ashley!”) They've asked me why—and how—I continue to deliberately juggle a hectic day job with a side gig. I don't necessarily *need* the money and, at this point, I have no intention of becoming a full-time freelance writer. The truth is, writing has been my passion since I was about 15 or 16 years old. I've always said I love talking to strangers (that is what we do, am I right?). I love looking at a blank screen and taking on the challenge to fill it with words that best tell that stranger's story. So I continue to do it.

Despite how it looks from the outside, and despite what *Forbes* reports, writing really is the “life” in my work-life balance. It challenges me and centers me, and I'm convinced it will prevent my brain from turning into mush as I age. It's something that, as long as my fingers continue to work, I can do for the rest of my life.



RANDY  
DOTINGA  
*Freelance Writer*

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*Scaling*  
*THE GREAT*  
*FIREWALL*  
*OF China*

*Author Mei Fong found a way to get her  
bestseller, One Child, into Chinese hands*

A black and white portrait of Mei Fong, a woman with long dark hair, looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt under a dark jacket. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a brick wall.

# Q & A

WITH  
*Mei Fong*

In early 2016, ASJA member Mei Fong's book *One Child: The Story of China's Most Radical Experiment* reached bookstores and immediately garnered great acclaim from American and British newspapers.

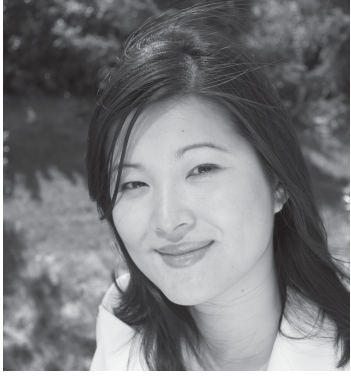
"Fong's fine book is a moving and at times harrowing account of the significance of decisions taken by a small coterie of men with too much faith in science and ideology, and too little in humanity," raved *The Guardian*.

The response was great news for the Pulitzer Prize-winning Fong, a former China correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. But there was a catch the size of the world's largest nation.

No one in China could read her book, because no one would publish it there. Publishers balked in Hong Kong and Taiwan too.

Now, she's found a solution, one that reflects her savvy, generosity, and commitment to access. She has published the book in Chinese for free via PDF at [MeiFong.org](http://MeiFong.org), instantly scaling the Great Firewall of China. While it's not clear how many copies have been downloaded, her decision is striking a blow for freedom in a repressive country.

Her decision to publish the book in this unusual way was a matter of integrity, says Fong, who spoke from her home in Maryland about the book and her unusual Chinese distribution plan. "I wrote this book about China," she tells *ASJA Magazine*. "This way I'm ensuring that my version gets out, and I think that matters."



“Books are not just big heavy things that you have to carry around with you. I could *disseminate this digitally*. The barriers would be translation and distribution. Could I use technology to do this, *to scale the Great Firewall?*”

MEI FONG

# Q & A



## *What was the impetus for your book?*

I had been working as a China correspondent with *The Wall Street Journal* since 2003. A lot of foreign correspondents write a book when they finish their tour of duty, but some about China are horrid with clichés like "tiger jumps over the wall" or "the bamboo curtain." I thought about what I'd want to write about if I wrote a book, and I kept going back to the one-child policy. At that point, it had been going on a little bit over 30 years. It was past its sell-by date, and there was a lot of discussion about whether it should continue: How did it change the population? Did it do the things it had promised to do? All the big questions.

I assumed that someone had written about this obvious topic, but there was no trade book for the general population about the implications of the One Child policy.

## *What about writing the book affected you personally?*

I covered the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan, which is like China's Appalachia, very poor and very populous. It also happened to be the epicenter of the One Child policy, where they required you to be sterilized after your first child. I followed a group of migrant workers to their hometowns after the quake, spending days taking trains, buses, and boats. At the end of it, they discovered that many of their families have been killed. A lot of people lost their only children.

## *You now have twin 6-year-old children. At the time you were working on this story in China, you were trying to get pregnant yourself. What happened?*

There are all these powerful emotions that I felt were important to tease out in the book. What happens when this powerful desire to reproduce is thwarted by government policy? As I'm doing all these stories, I discover I'm pregnant. Then I had a miscarriage in China. While I was reporting on all these things, I was painfully trying to deal with a tragedy in my own personal life.

Later on, I tried IVF services in China, and I discovered one of the weird things about technology there. A lot of Chinese women used IVF services, but not because they were infertile. They wanted to have multiple children and get around the One Child policy, since it didn't apply if you had more than one child in one live birth.

*You received a warm reception from reviewers when the book came out in 2016. And you even got a boost from China itself, right?*

When I was sending the media proofs out, China made an announcement that they were moving to a two-child policy, allowing married couples to have more than one child instead of facing forced abortions and fines if they did so. The big irony is that it's much easier to prevent births than to encourage them. China will go from being the world's most populous nation to a worker shortage since births have been below replacement level for the last 20 years. They can't keep their engine going without people to power it.

As a result of the new policy, the book got an avalanche of publicity that most journalists are lucky to get, and I was doing media interview after media interview. I'm probably the only foreign journalist to get a boost from the Chinese Communist Party.

But while I'm doing all these interviews with this great news peg, I can't get the book published in Chinese.

*Why did you face such a challenge on the publishing front?*

One of the things they wanted in China was a right to alter any sensitive content. That's pretty standard, and sometimes the cuts can be small or major.

*Did you think you wanted to do that?*

You want to reach this major readership, one-sixth of humanity. And the middle class in China is bigger than in America. A lot of people make that compromise. I was a pragmatist, and I was willing to consider it, but not say, "take my book wholesale and do whatever." My original publisher there said they didn't think they could get this past the censors.

*You also couldn't get published in Taiwan or Hong Kong, where activists feared that publishers had been kidnapped by the Chinese in 2015. Did you think about just giving up in China and these other markets?*

I could have said, "It's OK, I can't do it." But it's a book about China. I spent four years of my life full-time reporting this book, and most of the people who are involved can't read it because there's no [Chinese] version. When author Iris Chang wrote *The Rape of Nanking* [in 1997], it was a major bestseller, but she couldn't get it published in Japan. She thought about smuggling copies in, but it never went anywhere.

Now things are different. Books are not just big heavy things that you have to carry around with you. I could disseminate this digitally. The barriers would be translation and distribution. Could I use technology to do this, to scale the Great Firewall?



*How did you deal with the costs, both for yourself and for potential buyers of the book?*

The translation costs \$8,000 to \$10,000. If I pay for it myself, I can get it done. As for the book's cost, if I really want to get big and wide traction, I need to do it for free and need to disseminate it as a file that can't be traced. So I decided make the PDF version free. It's also available in Chinese in a Kindle version for \$2.99.

I decided to build in another factor, which was crowdfunding through virtual tip jars. I've covered a quarter of my costs. I wanted to show if you could pay for it in some way yourself, others will consider doing it too.

*The Chinese haven't stopped the book yet?*

Not to my knowledge. People take down things all the time, but because it's in PDF files, people can email it, and it can spread like a virus.

*What are some lessons from your story about trying to reach a Chinese audience?*

If you're a writer or documentarian, there's a sense that you need to reach your audience. And if they're blocked off by high distribution costs or censorship, you'll have to think of more creative ways of doing it. There's also a matter of integrity. I wrote this book about China. This way I'm ensuring that my version gets out, and I think that matters.

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# BEING A WRITER & “HAVING IT ALL”

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*Point*

*by Laura Vanderkam*

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*Counterpoint*

*by Stephanie Bernaba*

“Being able to *focus on work* while working, and the kids when not, is liberating.”

LAURA VANDERKAM | Freelance Writer



## »» POINT: The Real Secret to Having it All

In the past decade, I have written five books. I have written hundreds of articles, blogged most days, and I give dozens of speeches per year. I am also raising four small children with a husband whose work brings him to such convenient locations as Nigeria. From time to time, people ask me that loaded question: How do you do it? My first answer: Read my book. (Seriously, it's called *I Know How She Does It!*)

But my second answer is the real one: My husband and I have full-time childcare. Every weekday morning, my nanny walks through the door at 8 a.m. I help get my oldest two kids to the bus, but after that, I retreat into my home office. She does her job. I do my job. My life would not be possible without this sort of home support that no one would question if I were an executive at a company (or male), but is sometimes seen as optional for writers who happen to be moms. I know for me it isn't. Having a good “home team” has helped my career in all sorts of ways.

First, having high-quality, reliable childcare makes me more professional. I am not “finding time” to write amid everything else in life. I have blocked out the time, Monday through Friday, roughly during business hours. I have the mental space to think big about what I want to write, and the time to execute against those ideas. I am not trying to distract my children while I answer a few emails. I know they are being well cared for, so I can focus on getting my job done.

Second, having regular childcare hours allows me to seize opportunities. If an editor wants to meet for lunch, or a radio show wants to interview me, I can say yes without checking to see which sitter is available. I'm more willing to meet sources for coffee, or go to networking events, knowing I have the time.

Finally, childcare lets me relax. Since I work during normal work hours, I don't have to wake up at 4 a.m. to work, hoping I can crank out a story before the baby starts howling. I don't have to force all calls to nap time, knowing that Murphy's Law means it is inevitably the day you have a 1:30 p.m. call with your biggest client that your baby who naps religiously at 1 p.m. elects not to. My family can spend weekends doing family things, rather than my handing the kids over to my husband so I can do what I didn't during the week.

To be sure, childcare is not cheap. When we just had one kid, we went the daycare route, but at 2+ kids, hiring a nanny makes more sense. Covering a full-time salary (and, I should add, payroll taxes, paid vacations, and the like) adds a certain fire to negotiations.

But here's the thing: Writing is a business like any other. There are costs required for optimized outputs. If you were starting a hat-making factory, you wouldn't refuse to buy the machines that make hats on the grounds that you couldn't afford them. You'd figure something out, follow your business plan, and trust that the ensuing revenue would allow you to recoup the costs. It's the same with childcare. You may not clear much at the beginning, but if you keep building your business, over time your income will rise, and your childcare costs will likely fall as your kids go to school, or can sometimes fend for themselves.

Of course, not everyone with small kids needs full-time coverage. The flexibility of writing as a career can certainly help keep costs lower than they would be for someone required to be in the office for 40 hours a week (plus an hour-long commute). I also don't keep total separation between work and life. While I aim to work during business hours, I do take time off to volunteer at my kids' schools, to play with the baby when I'm taking a break, or chat with the kids when they get home. But I have been struck by, over the years, how many people who tell me they are “terrible” at time management turn out to be work-from-home parents trying to get by with as little childcare as possible. They feel pulled in lots of directions at once, because they are. Being able to focus on work while working, and the kids when not, is liberating. Maybe a super human can do both. But most of us can't do that, which is why childcare is my secret to having it all.

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Laura Vanderkam is the author of several time management and productivity books, including *I Know How She Does It* (2015), *What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast* (2013), and *168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think* (2010). Her next book, *Off the Clock: Secrets of People with All the Time in the World*, will be published by Penguin Random House in 2018. Her work has appeared in publications including *USA Today*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Fortune* and *Fast Company*, and she has spoken at events including SXSW, TEDWomen, and Fortune's Most Powerful Women Next Gen Conference. She lives outside Philadelphia with her husband and four children, and blogs at [LauraVanderkam.com](http://LauraVanderkam.com).

## »» COUNTERPOINT: *What Does 'Having it All' Even Mean?*



“When we just need to get this done? The work doesn’t suffer, but our *families probably do.*”

STEPHANIE BERNABA

| *Freelance Writer*

I'm definitely not a nine-to-fiver, have been writing professionally for almost seven years, and continue to maintain a precarious (at best) work-life balance. I have three young children, aging parents (and parents-in-law), and two sitters on call at all times. And I tend toward overwork.

It takes very conscious efforts for me to buckle down and, say, chop a few carrots and throw a roast in the Crock-Pot, put away my kids' school clothes, or sit down with them to do homework, because my mind is always elsewhere.

I am terrible at life's minutiae, and often feel I live the life of Dalton Trumbo, or Kim Barker of *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*, working alone until the wee hours, eagerly signing onto assignments with high stakes and disruptive time commitments at the cost of my family. I dream of a home where maids, assistants, and nannies take care of all things domestic, so I can fully immerse myself in my work.

I've pulled my car into ditches and hopped out with my kids in the car to take pictures because the sun was at *just the right angle*, I've planned entire excursions around the photographic integrity of the event, and I've shown myself outwardly more enthusiastic about my work than my domestic situation.





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Stephanie Bernaba has been writing personally since she was three apples tall, and professionally since 2011. She has a particular affinity for sociological phenomena, life in the digital age, music, movies, and discovering how best to raise a family in a chaotic world. Her work has been featured by publications such as *The New York Times* and HuffPost Live, she was named a BlogHer Voice of the Year in the Humor category in 2014, and was featured during the 2014 season of the nationally-acclaimed Listen to Your Mother series. When she's not mixing it up at her own website, White Orchid Media, you can read her column at Rhode Island Parent Magazine, where she leads local folks to the best of family-friendly entertainment, shopping, and food.

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My mind is always on writing, and I only hold onto a lingering belief that I can harness the domestic prowess about which most women only dream. I've always chosen to get out there and hustle instead—to conquer, to be the best, to earn respect and notoriety. I've literally allowed nothing to stand between my dreams and me, and I'm not sure that's a good thing.

And this is all so ironically the opposite of what I wanted as a child: a warm, safe home, children, a Labrador Retriever, a doting spouse, and all the Pottery Barn money could buy. So why am I holed up alone in a hotel room in Los Angeles? Why am I beating the freezing cold see this year's Screen Actors Guild nods? What happens when we have all we felt we ever needed, and it's just not enough? When we *need* to break free to be 'ourselves'? When we *just need to get this done*? The work doesn't suffer, but our families probably do.

And what do my children learn by watching me? That Mommy's more concerned about DiCaprio than clean socks? That Mommy's TSA PreCheck ID is more easily recalled than the pediatrician's phone number? That Mommy and Daddy

haven't sat down together for a meal in over a week? That Mommy's *just too preoccupied to care*?

It's easy to brush all that family stuff aside when you're looking for that invisible pat on the back from your adoring public. It's so easy to take that all for granted when you're running roughshod all over the country chasing a story.

Recently, though, I've felt the tug of domestic life, the glimmer of loneliness, in the twilight of my laptop screen. I started to feel I may have been doing this backwards, falling short as a mother and wife in exchange for success in the outside world. I've tried so hard to set that Crock-Pot. I've tried so hard to get those lunches made the night before. I've tried so hard to sit and read with my first-grader. But I've still caved to the piece I'd be waking up to write, watching videos and streams, or jotting notes on my Galaxy, yearning only to be tapping those keys.

I have aging family to visit, commitments in the community, and domestic fires to fight, and even though I could make a very strong argument against domestic bliss, the truth is I'd have none of what I have today

*without* my family's love and support. And they *need* me. I've resolved that I owe it to them to cool off a bit, and to focus on them.

It all starts and ends with your family, I've found, and that's what I'm coming to embrace. Without them, I'd be completely unhinged. I wouldn't know hugs or cuddles, love or praise. So, I'm doing what I can. I'm prioritizing. I'm saying no more often. I'm weighing the value of my actions, emotionally and financially. And I'm learning a new mantra: *If it doesn't work for my family, it doesn't work for me.*

I am coming around to the idea that everything might actually happen for a reason, and that God doesn't give you more than you can handle. So, I can handle the work, I suppose. And I can handle the family. And I actually can put down the phone for a few minutes, because I can catch up later. And everything may still work out the way it's supposed to.



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YES YOU CAN *TAKE A*  
*VACATION*

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*By Setting Expectations*



RANDI MINETOR  
*Freelance Writer*

»» *Randi Minetor is the author of Death in Zion National Park (Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), Death in Glacier National Park (2016), Hiking Waterfalls in New York (FalconGuides, 2014), and more than 30 other books on nature and travel in New York and the United States. She lives in Rochester, NY.*

Remember that fantasy you had about setting your own hours when you decided to become a freelance writer? For most of us, it only took a few months before we realized that our time was not our own. The demands of editors, clients, and ever-looming deadlines made it hard to imagine that we would actually be able to spend more time with family, get the time we crave to tend to our homes and gardens, or take anything like a vacation.

In my 19 years as a freelancer, I went from serving corporate clients to writing books and magazine articles. Writing about America's national parks, New York state's best hikes, and nature in the northeast region became a big part of my career as well as my leisure time, so my husband and I spend many days and weeks on the road each year. I had to create a system for letting my editors know when I would be out of the office. Trial and error helped me determine the best ways to do this—and, equally importantly, how to get time to unplug and power down on vacations to visit family and—what else?—more national parks.

With some planning and some setting of clients' expectations, vacations can be a part of any freelance writer's annual plan. Here are some tips to help you get there.

## 1 MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR NEED FOR PEACE.

our writing skill is a superpower, but you are not superhuman. You have a need and a right to get away and enjoy some time off, just as your editors and clients do. It's the rare client who will abandon you because you dared to take a week or two off (and if such a client does dump you, he/she probably wasn't worth keeping).

## 2 ALERT YOUR CLIENTS SEVERAL WEEKS IN ADVANCE.

Drop your clients a quick message: "Hey, just letting you know that I plan to be out of the office from July 1 to July 10. Is there anything I can take care of for you before I go?" Not only does this set their expectations appropriately, but it can also result in a nice pile of projects in the weeks before you go. Clients will thank you for being proactive and looking out for them.

## 3 REMIND CLIENTS A WEEK BEFORE YOUR VACATION.

It's just another heads-up, but it helps keep your short absence at the top of their consciousness. Also, let them know how much you intend to be online and responsive to their inquiries. It's valid to say, "I'll be out of the country on a cruise, so I won't be checking messages until July 8." This will keep clients from trying to reach you unless it's truly an emergency. (If you will be offline, don't forget to set your email auto-responder. Some clients will need that additional reminder that you're gone.)

## 4 KEEP YOUR PROMISES.

You're going to earn your vacation through the increase in your workload before you go. If you promised a client that you'd finish an assignment, do it, even if it means you're packing at midnight.

## 5 CHECK MESSAGES ONCE A DAY—FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.

If you have left the door open for clients to contact you once you're on vacation, set a daily time for this: "I will check my messages once a day, and will respond between 8 and 10 a.m. Eastern Time." The morning is a far better time for this than the end of the day. There's nothing worse than listening to a voicemail at 11 p.m. and finding out that there's a problem, and having the whole night to stew about it before you can resolve it. If you will be truly offline or unable to access messages—say, on a cruise in Alaska—tell them this in advance as well.

## 6 EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY... LOOSELY.

Some people find the constant availability of email, texts and Facebook Messenger intrusive, but I actually find these tools especially freeing when I'm on the road. I can see with a quick glance that all my email is spam, or I can provide a fast answer to a client's simple question—and then go on enjoying the national park I'm visiting without worrying that someone needs me back home. I'm old enough to remember the days when my boss left multiple phone messages at my hotel, and then was not available when I called in, making my entire vacation a cat-and-mouse game. Don't let your editor or client torture you on vacation (yes, some do this deliberately); use technology when necessary to clear up issues quickly.

## 7 DON'T LET CLIENTS THINK THAT YOU WILL START NEW WORK ON VACATION.

We all have had one client or editor who does not respect the concept of personal space. You can get control of this relationship if you've provided this client with plenty of advance warning. Make this a part of your message: "I can handle short edits or questions while I'm gone, but I won't be able to initiate new work." There's no point in taking a vacation if you're going to work the whole time. Your laptop won't be much good when it's full of the sand your family kicked into it to get you to stop working on the beach.

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*While freelancers rarely disconnect completely, these guidelines will help you make the time you need to relax, refresh, and reconnect with your family and friends. Whether your travels take you to the same cottage by the lake every year, to exciting cities around the globe or to a new wilderness adventure every season, you can set and manage expectations and still come home to happy editors, clients, and family.*

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# 4



MIA TAYLOR

| *Freelance Writer*

# TIPS

## *to Surviving (and Thriving) as a Sandwich Generation Freelancer*

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**B**ecoming a member of the sandwich generation crept up on me, without my planning for it or even realizing it was happening. I spent years, no decades, actually, as a carefree single, focused on building my journalism career. ■ And then slowly, a series of life changes put me in a different demographic—amongst those in their 30s or 40s who are raising children and caring for elderly parents—all while trying to still juggle a career. In my case, a freelance writing career.

My shift to freelancing began when I had my son, which inspired me to want to work differently. Rather than toiling away in a cubicle at a nine-to-five job, I wanted the freedom to work from home, on my schedule, so that I could fully enjoy my son's early years, before he headed off to school and was too busy for mom.

Not long after that, my elderly mother became a widow, a change that also involved shifting priorities significantly so that I could look after her.

To say my days are busy, if not downright crazed in some cases, would be an understatement.

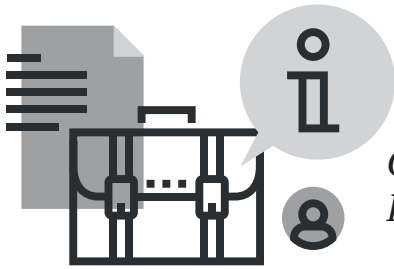
As my life morphed however, so did my time management skills.

As a reporter who filed sometimes two stories a day while working in newsrooms at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and other smaller papers

throughout my career, time management had always been critical.

But now as a freelancer I'm responsible for much more. In addition to merely researching and writing stories, I'm also the one in charge of Mia Taylor Inc.—which requires marketing myself, bringing in new business, and pitching new publications (which for me is about as fun as having a root canal or filing taxes).

What I've learned over the past few years while freelancing for *TheStreet.com*, *TheSimpleDollar.com*, *Cheapism.com* and *Spinal Column Magazine*, is that I work harder now than ever before, in order to complete all these tasks. But I do it on my terms. I've learned how to juggle quite well, spend quality time with my son and mother and keep my household running.



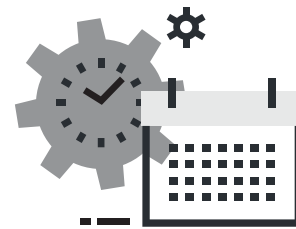
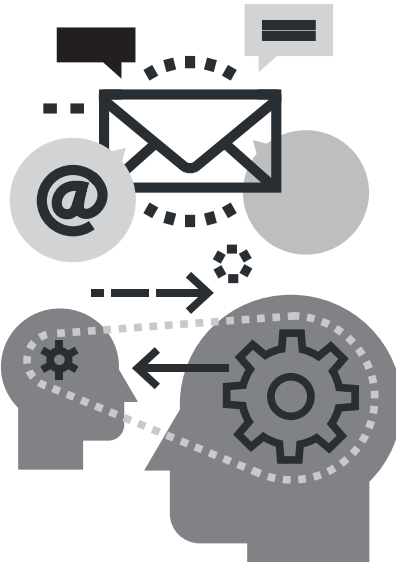
# No 1

## CREATIVE AGENCY REPRESENTATION

Marketing myself is definitely not my forte. One of the hacks I've found useful was to sign up with Vitamin T ([vitamintalent.com](http://vitamintalent.com))—a national talent agency that does the work of finding me work. Remember the old temp agencies that were used as stopgaps, and would place you in clerical jobs or other light receptionist work for a few days or weeks? Vitamin T (and there are other similar agencies) is nothing like that. They exclusively represent creative types: developers, writers and the like. During the course of working with them I've been connected with gigs at local advertising agencies, marketing companies, content creation companies, and more. I have written blogs, press releases, web articles, white papers, and feature articles for a local university. I would have found none of this work on my own. And I didn't have to lift a finger to find it.

# No 2 HARO

Somehow during more than a decade as a reporter, I never heard of Help a Reporter Out. Maybe it didn't exist back then. But this incredibly useful service saves me inordinate amounts of time finding sources for stories. As a reporter, you submit a query to HARO explaining what type of story you're working on and what type of sources you're seeking. HARO sends that query out to its enormous membership, while I'm out shopping, doing chores, working on other stories, whatever I need to be doing. And before I know it, my inbox is filled with pitches from sources wanting to participate in my story. Gone are the days of spending hours and hours tracking down sources. The sources come to me.



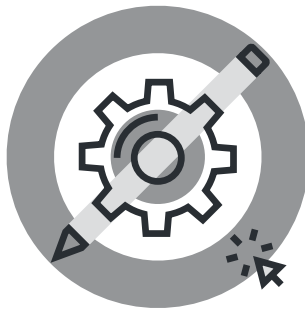
## CALENDARS (OLD-FASHIONED ONES)

# No 3

My friends can't help but chuckle when I flip open my Day-Timer calendar. You know the actual paper calendars that include a page for each day of the year, and even hour-by-hour breakdowns. In today's age of digital everything, my Day-Timer seems woefully antiquated. But to me it is an invaluable visual taskmaster. I use it to block out my time down to the hour, highlighting in different colors my varying to-do items in a day or week. Red highlighter for story deadlines, yellow for interviews, and green for marketing activities. For me, the visual reminder right in front of me all day long keeps me on target and on schedule. It allows me to clearly and concisely allot my time and maintain that schedule.

## PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS

# No 4



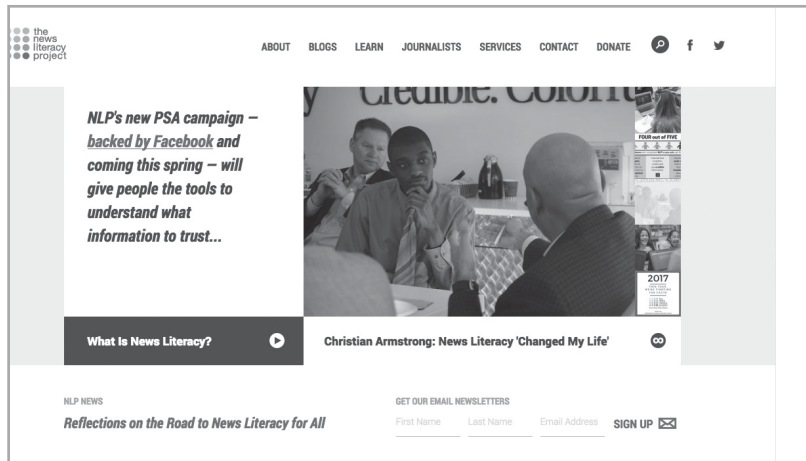
Over the past year or more, I've joined a few key professional organizations. And while nearly all professional organizations have their value, I've found a few of them particularly help me with marketing myself and my stories, helping to get my name out there and my work in front of more people, with less effort. In addition to ASJA, my North American Travel Journalist Association membership is invaluable. In particular, every Tuesday NATJA hosts Twitter Tuesday, during which organization members share each others most recent work on their Twitter accounts. The value of this has been tremendous—sometimes as many as 30 members tweet my stories from their accounts, exposing my work to readers I would otherwise never have reached.

So, does every day or every deadline turn out as planned? No. I definitely still win some and lose some. I have yet to reach a six-figure year. But this year I came closer than ever and had a handful of firsts: my first front of the book piece in *Westways Magazine* and my first speaking engagement at a professional conference. Both of which were on my bucket list. I can't say I'm a 100 percent success. But I continue learning at every turn and enjoying (almost) every day.



# Market Report

THE NEWS LITERACY PROJECT



JOBETH MCDANIEL  
Freelance Writer

Concerned about fake news? Consider helping out with The News Literacy Project, which provides free media literacy programs to middle and high schoolers in 49 states. Alan Miller, CEO and founder of NLP, invites ASJA members to get involved in these ways—starting with paid writing gigs.



## THE NEWS LITERACY PROJECT'S TEACHABLE MOMENTS BLOG

»» **Write for Teachable Moments, the NLP media literacy blog.** This blog got its name from the term NLP staff uses internally to refer to examples of information or digital trends that can be turned into news literacy lessons. Whether it's a news organization moving too fast on a breaking story and getting vital details wrong, a hoax video that goes viral, or an example of the increasingly blurred line between advertising and journalism, teachable moments are all too common.

The blog seeks two kinds of entries: The first is a short piece (200 to 400 words) that focuses on a single news literacy skill or concept—a particular image circulated out of context; an event that demonstrates the importance of press freedoms; an example of information that underscores

the changing role of primary sources in the digital age, or even a personal anecdote about an experience the author had as a consumer of information.

The second is a longer feature (800 to 1,200 words) analyzing notable news literacy teachable moments—lessons learned from major breaking news events, breaches of standards or complex and important topics like native advertising or user-generated content. A website redesign is slated for 2017, and will offer additional opportunities for freelancers.

NLP pays \$100 for most pieces and up to \$150 for longer pieces upon acceptance and publication. All the pieces will include a byline and a credit line referencing books, websites or other professional credits. Email [Lesliehoffecker@thenewsliteracyproject.org](mailto:Lesliehoffecker@thenewsliteracyproject.org).

**Frequency:** Monthly, with plans to increase frequency soon.

**Rate:** \$100 to \$150 per story

**Submit queries:**  
[lesliehoffecker@thenewsliteracyproject.org](mailto:lesliehoffecker@thenewsliteracyproject.org)



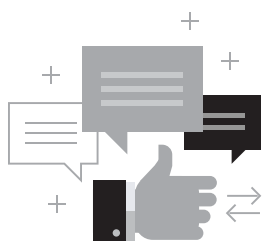
»» **Become a volunteer journalist fellow with NLP.** Currently, 400 journalists visit after-school media literacy programs in New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Programs will soon expand to Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Charlotte, Miami, and Lexington, KY. Fellows are also needed to work with students in online virtual classrooms. If you'd like to be added to the fellows program, send a note with your journalism bio and headshot to [info@thenewsliteracyproject.org](mailto:info@thenewsliteracyproject.org).



»» **Spread the word about NLP's virtual classroom.** Media literacy classes are now being taught to 106,000 students in 49 states (not yet Hawaii) through their virtual classroom. Here's a link to an NPR story about NLP in the classroom: [http://bit.ly/ASJA\\_TNLP](http://bit.ly/ASJA_TNLP). You can try out the virtual classroom here: <http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/checkology>.



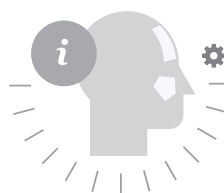
»» **Sign up for the NLP newsletter.** In it, you'll find event information and opportunities for volunteering. (Sign up at [thenewsliteracyproject.org](http://thenewsliteracyproject.org)). Follow NLP on Twitter @ [TheNewsLP](https://twitter.com/TheNewsLP) and follow them on Facebook at [facebook.com/TheNewsLiteracyProject](https://facebook.com/TheNewsLiteracyProject).



»» **Consider writing about NLP or attending its partnered events.** Upcoming programs in March include one called Facing History, about Ferguson, MO.



»» **If you teach, incorporate NLP lessons into your classroom.** Though most curriculums are designed for middle and high school students, several are suitable for college students and adults, especially three segments: Branded Content, Algorithms, and Watchdog Journalism. NLP also welcomes feedback on these and other lessons offered for free online.



»» **If you are hosting a conference panel, consider inviting a NLP staffer from New York, Washington D.C., or Chicago.** New York staffers include the VP of digital media.



»» **Consider NLP for local journalism events.** NLP partnered with ASNE for two years to create roundtable discussions across the U.S., focused on local issues. That two-year grant just ended, but NLP is always looking to partner on media education projects.



»» **Make a tax-deductible donation to help NLP further its mission.** Click "Donate" on the home page of the site.



»» **Write about NLP.** ASJA members who have further questions or would like to feature NLP in stories should email CEO Alan Miller, a former LA Times journalist who lives in Bethesda, MD: [alanmiller@thenewsliteracyproject.org](mailto:alanmiller@thenewsliteracyproject.org).

# ASJA MAGAZINE

American Society of Journalists and Authors  
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New York, NY 10017

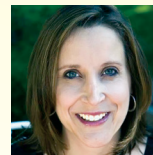
PERIODICALS



ASJA WRITERS CONFERENCE  
MAY 5 - 6

ASJA'S 46TH ANNUAL  
WRITERS CONFERENCE  
Roosevelt Hotel, New York City

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



### Lane Shefter Bishop

AUTHOR

*Sell Your Story in a Single Sentence: Advice from the Front Lines of Hollywood*



### Vanessa Hua

AUTHOR

*Deceit and Other Possibilities*



### Jenny Blake

AUTHOR

*PIVOT: The Only Move That Matters is Your Next One*



### Andrea King Collier

MULTIMEDIA JOURNALIST,  
AUTHOR

*Still With Me... A Daughter's Journey of Love and Loss*



WWW.ASJA.ORG