

The Niche Issue

ASJA MAGAZINE



MAY/JUNE 2017

03

*The Official Publication
of the American Society of
Journalists and Authors*

A CAREER UNLEASHED

*Why one ASJA member is
grateful her work has gone
to the dogs*



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Crafting a Compelling Historical Narrative

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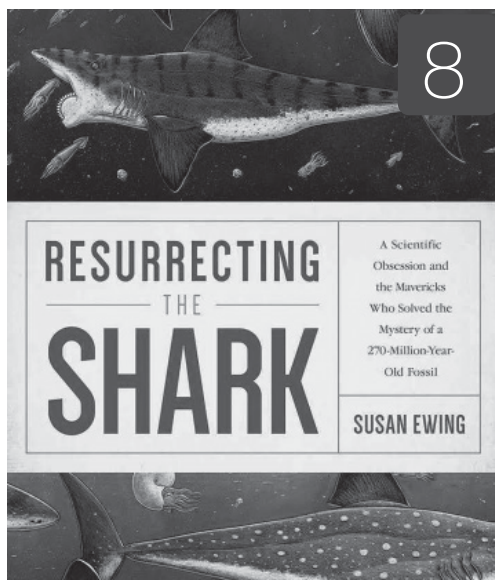
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ASJA MAGAZINE ONLINE

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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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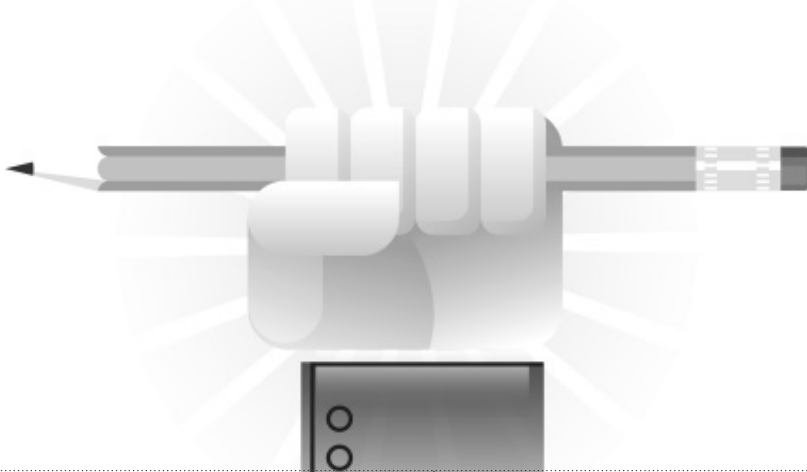
From the President's Desk



SHERRY BECK
PAPROCKI

*Freelance Writer and
ASJA President*

VIBRANT TIMES CALL FOR VIBRANT VOLUNTEERS



These are heady times in American culture. Our constantly active society doesn't permit anyone to opt out. It doesn't allow for time off.

We are expected to stay plugged in. Engage. Wake up. Persist.

Now, engage even stronger.

ASJA is reflective of this greater society, as a whole. As your professional journalistic society, we must stay plugged in and we must engage. This is a crucial time in American culture. Nearly daily, in the last several months, we have been confronted with challenges regarding the First Amendment.

In the midst of it all are some ASJA past presidents who lead ASJA's advocacy efforts. Past President Sally Olds agreed to chair the First Amendment committee on July 1, long before we realized that 2017 would not be business as usual. (Editor's note: For more on Sally's longtime commitment to ASJA, turn to page 18.)

Sally has unabashedly led her committee in a number of efforts. Recently, another ASJA Past President, Mark Fuerst, joined the effort to create ASJA's statement on the First Amendment. The statement is now available for you to share on social media from its post in the news section on the public portion of ASJA's home page at ASJA.org.

This committee has also been busy examining numerous letters and statements from other organizations, and signing on ASJA's support when it makes sense to do so. We've joined the Society of Professional Journalists and others in making our collective voice be heard.

The First Amendment committee stands guard of basic First Amendment rights; thus, its members recently decided that it needed more help. They are in the process of setting up a subcommittee to watch over banned books. (Unfortunately, the business of banning books has also kicked into high gear this year.)

Meanwhile, former president Salley Shannon will spend hours on Capitol Hill this year, introducing ASJA to myriad new members of Congress. During her conversations, I'm certain she'll be touting ASJA members as truth tellers in a world fraught with fake news.

She has also inserted ASJA in conversations at the U.S. Copyright office, recently penning a response to the office's call for comments about the "moral rights" of authors. ASJA is always trying to protect your rights and we are blessed with several members who make this their volunteer business.

It is due to that strong volunteer ethic in ASJA, that I need to recognize a few others this month, too. The New York conference is that time each year that we see, close up, the hundreds of hours of volunteer work that goes into making this organization work.

This year we owe special appreciation to Estelle Erasmus, who chaired the conference with much aplomb. Wendy Helfenbaum chaired Client Connections, and we owe her a big thanks, too, for overseeing an operation that brought dozens of clients in for matching.

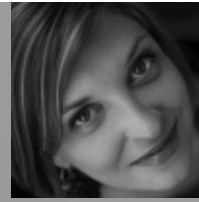
Both of these women would agree that they, alone, were not responsible for the tremendous opportunities that existed at the New York conference. Both worked with magnificent committees that represented all that is good in ASJA.

An important part of ASJA's conference is the annual awards ceremony. Salley Shannon and Janine Latus are due special thanks for wrangling about 350 award submissions and a team of about 60 judges. The entire awards team spent hours of work, culminating in a wonderful ceremony on Friday evening.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of these and many other ASJA volunteers—a list that is too long to run in this particular column. But if you are one of those who gives ASJA precious hours of your week, thank you from the very bottom of my heart.



From the Editor



ALEIGH ACERNI
Editor
ASJA Magazine

YOU DO YOU, ASJA-ERS

One of the things I love most about being part of ASJA is being delighted (and surprised) again and again by the diversity in the careers my fellow members have built. The niches in this issue—from pets (woof!) to historical nonfiction—are just a sample.

Reading about these specialties and how our members turn them into successful, award-winning careers, has made me think differently about my own career, from the way I should display my portfolio on my website to how I can get more out of the interviews and writing I do. I consider myself a generalist, but I certainly have specialties—and I have plans to put that deeper knowledge to work for me in new ways.

If you're on the fence about pursuing a niche, flip to page 24, where Ashley Rodriguez outlines why you might want to (and how to do it). This issue's features all explore how ASJA members make a niche work, but our Shop Talk recaps from Rae Padilla Franceour explore two ways to diversify: by adding a dose of fiction to your writing mix, and by adding trade magazines to your client list (page 12). I'm guessing just about all of us could find a way to turn our niches into a pitch for *Boys' Life*, the Market Report starting on page 30. (And yes, the editors do prefer snail-mail pitches: we triple-checked with Paula Murphey to make sure.)

I'm officially on the niche-hunt, so please email me to tell me all about yours. Of course, I'm always looking for more ideas for *ASJA Magazine*, too. Have a pitch for our upcoming How-To or Technology issues? Send it my way!



Want to write for your peers?
magazine@asja.net

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

»»»» VISIT 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 national or regional Conferences and personally pitch them during Client Connections at all conferences.

► **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.

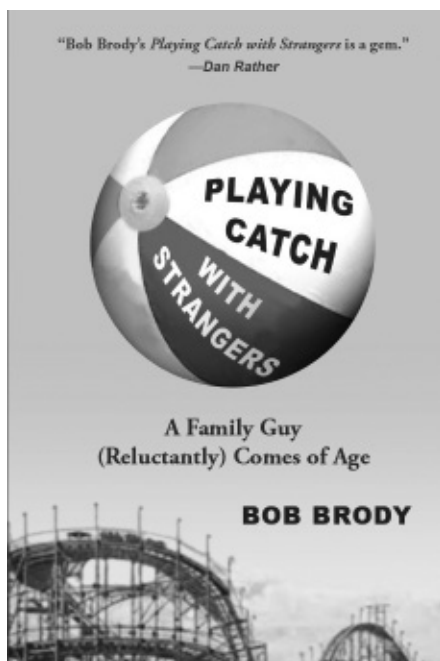
► **ASJA Confidential, ShopTalk, ASJA Weekly:** These digital offerings keep you in touch with your colleagues.

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



MEMBER NEWS

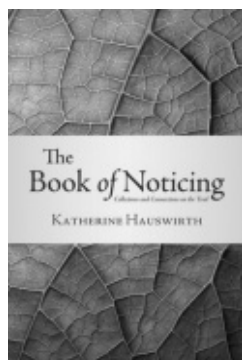
>>>> Book News



Bob Brody's new book, *Playing Catch with Strangers: A Family Guy (Reluctantly) Comes of Age*, will be out from Heliotrope Books on June 20 (Father's Day). The memoir celebrates what Brody calls "my occasional successes and frequent failures, and chronicles my ongoing struggle to attain something approximating adulthood." Dan Rather, former CBS anchor, calls the book "a gem . . . filled with insights, wit, pithy observations, common sense and neighborly decency."

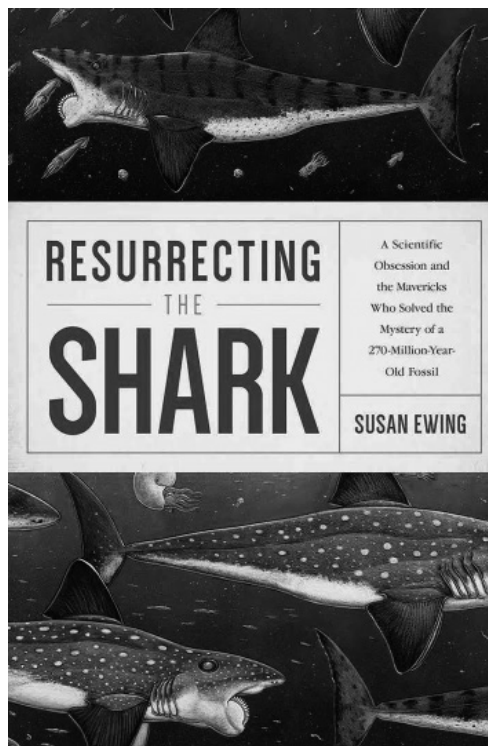
► playingcatchwithstrangers.com

Katherine Hauswirth's book of nature essays, *The Book of Noticing: Collections and Connections on the Trail*, was published by Homebound Publications in May 2017.



Nancy Peske has sold the update to her coauthored, award-winning book *Raising a Sensory Smart Child: The Definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory Processing Issues*—originally published in 2005 and updated and revised in 2009. The new edition will be published by Penguin Random in 2018. Additionally, Polish rights to the book have just been sold.

► sensorysmartparent.com

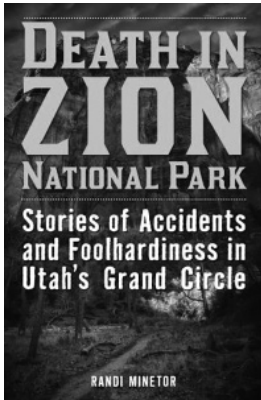
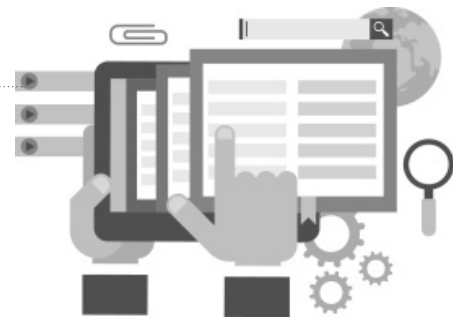


Susan Ewing's new book, *Resurrecting the Shark: A Scientific Obsession and the Mavericks Who Solved the Mystery of a 270-Million-Year-Old Fossil*, is out from Pegasus Books. The book traces the discovery and evolving scientific understanding of an ancient sharklike beast, *Helicoprion*, across more than a century, and features artwork by Ray Troll and augmented reality models by Jesse Pruitt.

► susanewing.com

Linda Morel's essay, "Close Encounters in a Classroom," was published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Inspiration for Teachers* (April 2017).

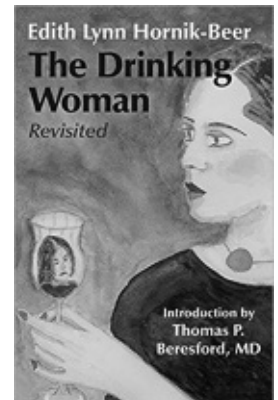
Got news to share with ASJA?
Submit your items at asja.org/members.
Go to MyASJA/What Are You Up To?



Randi Minetor's latest book, *Death in Zion National Park*, arrived in stores May 1. The book chronicles the 92 people who lost their lives during their vacation or on work assignments in the park since the late 1800s. This is Randi's second book in the "Death in the National Parks" series; her *Death in Glacier National Park* garnered national media attention in 2016 and has sold out of park bookstores repeatedly.

► minetor.com/travelbooks

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 on recoverymonth.gov



The Natural Burial Cemetery Guide by Ann Hoffner, including over 125 green burial cemeteries, was published January 1, 2017. With detailed entries and information on green burial, the guide helps people choose where to find this environmentally-sound alternative to conventional burial or cremation.

► greenburialnaturally.org



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.

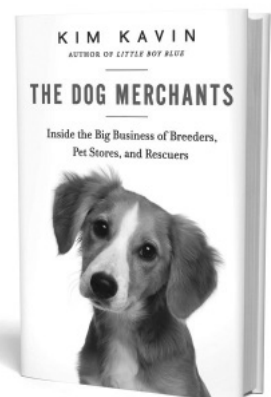
► barrierfreeflorida.com

The latest book of 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.



»»»» Awards & Honors

The Dog Writers Association of America named Kim Kavin's *The Dog Merchants: Inside the Big Business of Breeders, Pet Stores, and Rescuers* best reference book of 2016.





>>>>>>>

PAYCHECK

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

Article, consumer pub (online or print)

900 words

\$450

Article terms: Acceptance

General comments: This is a regular client for me as a Texas travel writer, and it's a true pleasure to write for them. The editors are thorough and professional, open and responsive to pitches, and payment usually covers a portion of travel expenses. This publication is produced by the Texas Department of Transportation and covers Texas travel only.

Feedback: 10

Payment: Timely

BILLY YTZ

Article, consumer pub (online or print)

700 words

\$300

Article terms: Acceptance

Rights and contracts terms

comments: Editor is perfectly lovely to work with. Payment is U.S. funds drawn from a Canadian bank. I wasn't aware that this would create a problem at my banking institution; trying to work through a resolution.

Feedback: 8

Payment: Timely

AMERICAN HISTORY

Article, consumer pub

3,000 words

\$1,000

Article terms: Acceptance

General comments: American History recently got a new editor, Michael Dolan, so if you've queried before (as I had) and not gotten a response, it might be worth trying again. Dolan was a hands-on editor, but easy to work with. I'd be happy to work with him again.

Feedback: 10

Payment: Timely

A MEDICAL WEBSITE, ONE OF THE UBM GROUP

Blog

500 to 700 words

\$1,500

Article terms: Acceptance

General comments: Over three days, I attended six educational sessions at a big Health IT meeting in Orlando, where I live. I sat in on two per day. Then I filed two posts in the evening, each night, for a total of six over three days. It was intense and enjoyable.

Feedback: 9

Payment: Timely

LARGE ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER

Blog

650 words

\$455

Article terms: Acceptance

General comments: Easy and pleasant work. Summarize a research study and do one interview with one of the authors.

Feedback: 10

Payment: Timely

INDIANAPOLIS MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Article, consumer pub (online or print)

900 words

\$110

Article terms: Acceptance

Rights and contracts terms comments:

Online article for magazine website.

General comments: Received payment about three weeks after filing. Editor was fair and congenial, and made few changes. Normally I wouldn't have worked for such a small paycheck, but I wanted to get back in the magazine's freelance fold after more than a decade away. Plus the story was my proposal and I already knew the basics.

Feedback: 7

Payment: Timely

DCI ARTFORM/ SUBARU'S DRIVE MAGAZINE

Article, consumer pub (online or print)

1,000 words

\$1,200

Article terms: POP

Rights and contracts terms comments:

Eight months! Eight months! That's how long it took me to get paid from this direct marketing agency that inexplicably clings to Subaru North America's content contract and produces Drive, the magazine for Subaru owners. I turned in this regional travel piece early, in June 2016. The editor became increasingly less responsive and finally stopped responding to my monthly check-ins about status (was the story accepted?) so I could invoice. Finally, having acquired the direct email of the accounts payable contact person, I invoiced anyway and got paid 5 days later. Lesson one: accounting clerks are your friends. Lesson two: Drive, drive away, from DCI Artform!

Ethical comments: I wonder if Subaru realizes how badly its contractor treats freelancers.

Feedback: 1

Payment: Late

PRIVATE CLIENT

Ghosting

3 posts

\$3,000

General comments: These posts were follow-ups to the book I ghosted for this client.

Feedback: 10

Payment: Timely



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

THE ATLANTIC'S CITYLAB

Article, consumer pub (online or print)
1,200 words
\$350

Rights and contract terms comments:

They take film rights, but will pay you 50 percent if they sell them. I'm not crazy about that, but haven't pitched anything I'd find movie-worthy.

General comments: Pay is a bit low for this online outlet—my assignments have ranged from \$350 for 1,200 words to \$700 for 2,000. But the editors here so far have been a pleasure to work with—responsive and courteous with pitches, and giving one round of smart, fair edits with assignments. They also pay on time with no nagging. I plan to do more for them.

Feedback: 7

Payment: Timely

QUARTZ

Article, consumer pub (online or print)
800 words
\$300

Article terms: Acceptance

General comments: Surprised to see a CJR story saying the editors were super-responsive, because that was certainly not my experience. Editor responded to my pitch right away and then sat on the story I'd filed for months. I did get paid before the story published, but this was a timely story I was really proud of and wanted to see published, so being strung along for months (told "planning to publish this week" and then the editor would go MIA again) was really frustrating.

Feedback: 6

Payment: Timely

SKYWORD

Blog
1 post
\$300

Article terms: POP

General comments: I get about four single-post assignments a month. Lately, I've been getting assignments that are three-parters, for which I get paid \$900.

Feedback: 10

Payment Timely or Late: Timely

WINE BUZZ

Article, consumer pub (online or print)
600 words
\$175

General comments: Class-act editor (who also is an ASJA member). Quality publication; unfortunately it is regional and does not pay well. Always pleased to work with this publication and its patient, professional editor.

Feedback: 10

Payment: Timely

MAJOR BUSINESS

SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY

Teaching
14-week session
\$11,250

General comments: This is the only well-paying division of this major university—because it is the business folks.

Feedback: 10

Ethical comments: Payment is on university payroll schedule, every two weeks.

COSTCO CONNECTION

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

Article terms: Acceptance

General comments: Professional all the way!

Feedback: 10

Paid within: 30 days

WATERWORLD

Article, trade pub (online or print)
1,200 words
\$500

Article terms: POP

Rights and contracts terms comments:

Cover features for a municipal water distribution trade magazine. All assignments come from editor—no pitches. Materials were supplied by editor, plus three to five interviews. Published with minimal edits.

General comments: Editor is reasonable and flexible about timing, has made few changes to submitted work.

Feedback: 10

Payment: Timely

RHEUMATOLOGY NETWORK

Article, trade pub (online or print)
1,000 words
\$800

Article terms: POP

Rights and contracts terms comments: Contracted to write a series of 1,000-word articles on psoriatic arthritis for a rheumatologist audience.

General comments: After writing four articles over two months, the editor claimed she never received the next two articles, even though I showed her the emails I had sent her with the articles attached.

Feedback: 1

Payment: Late

Ethical comments: The editor, Amy Reyes, is to be avoided. She sent me a childish email claiming she had told other editors at UBM Medica that my articles were never delivered. I checked with the head of her division and no such emails had been sent by her. She stiffed me for the payment of one article, which I gladly accepted just to get out of the rest of the contract. Every other editor at UBM Medica has been a dream to work with, except her.

THEATRE TECHNOLOGY

Article, trade pub (online or print)
2,500 words
\$950

Article terms: POP

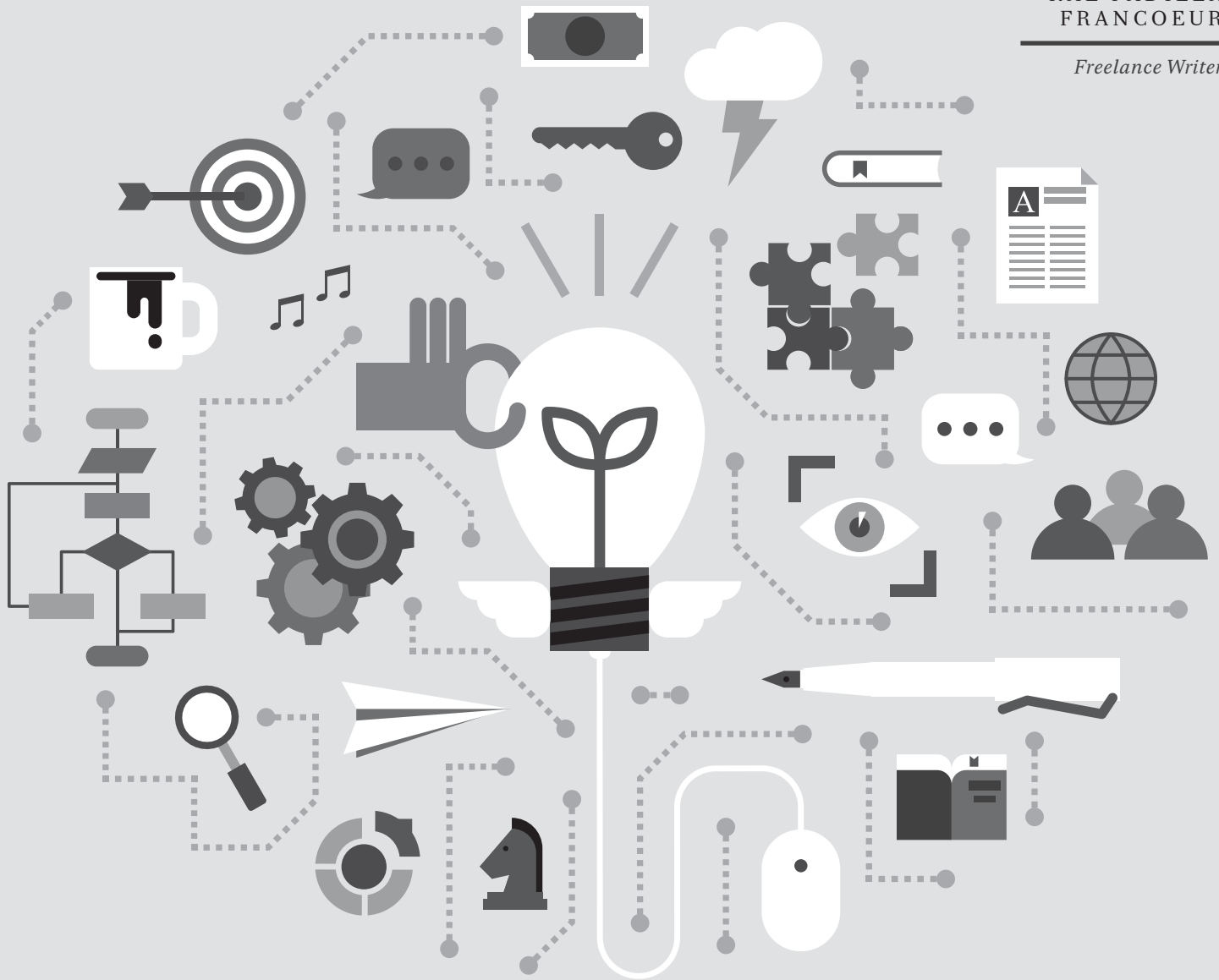
Rights and contracts terms comments:

Top theatre technology trade magazine, architectural stories, usually with eight to 12 weeks of lead time.

General comments: Assignments come from my editor; some materials supplied. Four to six interviews. Very nice experiences to date with editor I knew during my PR days. Very few edits.

Feedback: 10

Payment: Timely



SHOP TALK

Adding fiction to your writing mix

Journalists have a lot to be grateful for. They can write fast and smart at the same time. Looming deadlines are a thing of beauty. Writer's block is a fairy tale. And they carry an enviable cache of writing tools that serves them beyond the newsroom.

Cari Noga, a veteran newspaper reporter from Michigan, used what she knows about writing to achieve an important goal. She wanted to write and publish a novel. *Sparrow Migrations* came out in 2013 as a self-published novel. She worked on distribution and publicity systematically and strategically, which led to impressive internet download numbers. Amazon's imprint, Lake Union, picked up the book in 2014, and she has another novel due to publish in 2018. Hers is a story of skill, discipline, and goal setting. Thick skin and quick pivots helped, too.

Noga leveraged what she knew, learned what else she needed to know, and then rode an energetic curiosity to create a work of fiction that, she says, is modeled after the kind of book she herself would want to read. As a guest on Shop Talk, Noga walks us through the journey she took from newspaper reporter to novelist, pointing a way for others interested in taking a similar course. Here are the key points from her interview.



"Publishing is a lottery, and the only way you win is if you play."

CARI NOGA

Journalists need structure. When you give up the structure of a day job, as Noga did, there's a danger you'll loosen your grasp on your hourly planner and become less, not more, productive.

Know your goals. "Publishing is a lottery, and the only way you win is if you play. I wanted a book. My dream was always to write a novel."

Schedule writing time and stick to it. "I found 10 hours a week I thought I could set aside for this writing." When Noga decided to go all in on NaNoWriMo—National Novel Writing Month—she did the math: 1,667 words a day to produce a 50,000-word novel by the end of November. "I never read what I had written the day before. I did not self-edit. I just kept going forward with it." Her writing hours were 5:30 to 7:30 a.m. and 9 to 11 p.m. "If you do it long enough, it becomes a habit."

Find helpful resources. Noga agrees with Stephen King's advice in his book, *On Writing*—to write fiction, read fiction. "True, it's harder to enjoy a book when asking 'How did they do that?' You're anticipating, evaluating, and comparing all the time," she says. Noga learned a lot from NaNo, which aims to get you through a first draft in a month's time. And she speaks highly of the following books, *No Plot, No Problem* by Chris Baty and *Goal, Motivation and Conflict* by Debra Dixon.

Be ready for aha moments. "It came as a revelation to me, as a journalist, that you could mine your own life for your material." Noga was also surprised to learn that she could use character rather than story as the entry point to her novel. Once she figured out who her protagonist was, ideas and characters began to form quickly.

Use what inspires you. Because she spent 10 years covering hard news, Noga gravitates toward newsworthy events. To write *Sparrow Migrations*, she paired autism with the Airbus landing on the Hudson River to get traction on her story. She folded in birds because the autistic boy who was her protagonist loved birds and there was an ornithologist on the plane. Piece by piece, Noga built a compelling story that flowed authentically and without contrivance.

➤➤➤➤ FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cari Noga | carinoga.com | cari@carinoga.com

Welcome new ASJA members!

Matt Alderton
Chicago, IL

Judy Batalion
New York, NY

Terena Bell
New York, NY

Chauntel Brusie
Lapeer, MI

Kelly Burch
Claremont NH

Ruth Ebenstein
Southfield, MI

Lauren Gravitz
Hummelstown, PA

Sharon Guynup
Hoboken, NJ

Heather Kerrigan
Rootstown, OH

Amy Kraft
New York, NY

Bridget Kuehn
Brookfield, IL

Dawn MacKeen
Newport Beach, CA

Gwen McClure
Australia

M. Carolyn Miller
Golden, CO

Lilly O'Donnell
New York, NY

April Orcutt
San Anselmo, CA

Holly Rizzuto Palker
Short Hills, NJ

Carla Passino
Twickenham, UK

Louis Postel
Lexington, MA

Monica Prella
Mammoth Lakes, CA

Jessica Proter
Catskill, NY

Haniya Rae
Brooklyn, NY

Jan Brideford-Smith
Freeville, NY

Marcelle Soviero
Wilton, CT

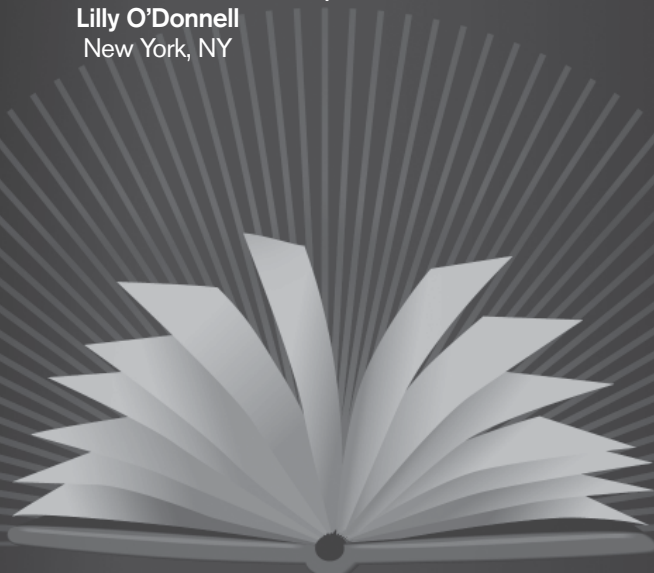
Hilary Sutton
Lynchburg, VA

JoAnn Stevelos
Albany, NY

Sara Toth Stub
Jerusalem

Flora Tsapovsky
El Cerrito, CA

Katy Tynan
Hudson, MA



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

RAE PADILLA
FRANCOEUR*Freelance Writer*

SHOP TALK

Writing for trade magazines

Trade magazines can be much more than another source of income for freelance writers. Industry publications offer interesting, challenging work for journalists, often minus some of the hassles of writing for other types of markets.

Freelancer and ASJA member Karen Kroll, Shop Talk's February guest speaker, started writing for industry publications after leafing through a magazine her husband brought home from work. She sent the editor a query about cash flow and got the assignment. In a recent Shop Talk, she explained the nature of trade work, how to find it, rates, and editorial oversight.

Kroll's specialty is corporate and consumer finance and business. Her impressive portfolio includes articles in *AARP Bulletin*, Bankrate.com, Business Finance, CFO, CreditCards.com, and many other publications, including trade magazines. She writes white papers, case studies, blog posts, and reports for numerous corporate clients. And her topics range from retail trade concerns to IT systems, human resources, insurance, supply trends, internal audit, building trends, and more.

Freelancers considering trade publications must orient themselves, says Kroll. "When you're writing for trades, your focus is on helping business people do a better job running their business. You're concerned with best practices, ideas your readers can adopt, case studies, changes in their industry. You rarely focus on the consumer," she says.

The writing tone in these publications is business casual, authoritative, and helpful, without becoming preachy and academic. "Friendly but not easy breezy," Kroll says. "Stories tend to be narrow and deep." Generally, pay averages between 50 cents to a dollar a word. The more technical the story is, the higher the rate, as a rule. And since editors often provide both story ideas and suggested sources, a lot of time is saved on preliminary work. As a rule, editors also welcome pitches.



Trade publications want strong writing and research, but editors aren't as nitpicky as some consumer magazines can be.

KAREN KROLL



»»»» FOR MORE INFORMATION

Karen Kroll | Karen@KarenKroll.com

»»»»

ADVANTAGES

- Trade publications want strong writing and research, but editors aren't as nitpicky as some consumer magazines can be. "It saves a lot of angst and, overall, it can be more pleasant," says Kroll.
- You can build up expertise in an area and leverage that expertise in consumer-facing markets.
- The work is not dull. When Kroll wrote about cargo insurance, she discovered it is one of the industry's oldest forms. Edward Lloyd, owner of a London coffee house near the waterfront, started the business after repeatedly hearing how hard it was to secure marine insurance. He founded Lloyd's of London.
- You can build solid editorial relationships that yield additional assignments.
- Once you have your foot in the door in a trade, access in that field is improved.
- Anecdotal, trade publishers tend to be a little more stable than the consumer publication industry.

»»»»

DISADVANTAGES

- Probably the biggest deterrent for many journalists is that most trade stories are going to be lower profile, says Kroll.
- There can be a big learning curve, especially in the more technical fields.
- Sometimes you have to dig to find people with specialized expertise who are willing to talk. Sources, concerned about revealing trade secrets, may decline to be interviewed.

How does writing for the trades compare with corporate writing?

- »» Typically corporate writing has more of a marketing angle. Companies want to be seen as thought leaders. And, usually, trade writing is straight reporting, while corporate writing can have an agenda.
- »» Corporate writing usually involves multiple departmental reviews, which is not the case with trade publishing.

How do you get that first assignment?

- »» Rely on your expertise and experience. Google can be a good starting point; search for trades in your fields.
- »» Research trade associations, which often have publications.
- »» ASJA offers members Client Connections at its conferences and Virtual Client Connections throughout the year.
- »» Send a letter of introduction and pitch a story.
- »» Consult trade publication editorial calendars for topics and deadlines.
- »» Keep in mind that more and more editors want an entire package—photos, one or two sidebars, a chart.
- »» Maintain a strong marketing effort. Keep your website and LinkedIn profiles updated and share work on LinkedIn.
- »» Other resources: The American Society of Business Press Editors (ASBPE.org), Society of American Business Editors and Writers (SABEW.org), LinkedIn groups with specialties; the job listings on GORKANA.com (go to the 'products' tab), Freelance Success magazine; SmartBrief.com for trade industry newsletters; and media directories like Bacon's directory of periodicals in library reference sections.

>>>> *Protecting Yourself*DAVID
LEICHTMAN

Leichtman Law PLLC

WHO'S ON FIRST, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

In this column we have previously reported on ASJA's advocacy against the wholesale copying of books by Google in its Google Books project, and the abuse of the copyright "fair use" doctrine by Google in connection with its scanning, storing, and display of millions of "in copyright" works. Unfortunately, the lower courts agreed with Google, finding that its "snippets" program had a sufficient "transformative purpose" and that the length of the "snippets" was not "too much." The Supreme Court declined to take the case. But the Second Circuit Court of Appeals has heard the criticism, and recently acted to scale back the expansiveness of its earlier rulings concerning the doctrine of "transformative use."



Fair use decisions by courts and juries are not always uniform, and there are no simple rules, as courts and juries generally weigh the equities of the parties' positions.

WHAT IS THE WHO'S ON FIRST CASE ABOUT?

In *TCA Television Corp. et al. v. Kevin McCollum, Robert Askins, Hand To God LLC, The Ensemble Studio Theater, Inc. and Manhattan Class Company, et al.*, the Second Circuit confronted a section of the Broadway play, *Hand To God*, where a character recites the entirety of the first part of the famous Abbott & Costello “Who’s on First” routine. While the plaintiffs ultimately lost the case because of a break in the chain-of-ownership title, the main portion of the case concerned whether the use of the routine was a “fair use” under the Copyright Act.

HOW DID THE COURT DECIDE THE FAIR USE ISSUE?

The author and producers of the play argued that their use of the “Who’s on First” routine was a fair use because it was used to depict a critique of the social norms in a small Bible-Belt town. The defendants argued it was used for a “transformative purpose” because the original was used for comedic purposes and therefore the purpose in *Hand To God* was different. The Court rejected that notion, finding that while the explanation offered did describe *Hand To God* as a whole, it did not explain why the main character in the play needed to perform the routine with a sock puppet in order to further the claimed “transformative purpose.” Importantly, the Court stated: “Otherwise, any play that needed a character to sing a song, tell a

joke, or recite a poem could use unaltered copyrighted material with impunity, so long as the purpose or message of the play was different from that of the appropriated material.”

Instead, while the play as a whole was a critique of Bible-Belt society, there was no critique of “Who’s On First” intended, and therefore the argument for “transformativeness” failed. The Court distinguished situations where the defendant’s claimed use of data as a fair use can be made without altering the original work—from situations where the creative aspects of a work are placed within another second creative work. The fact that the claimed use of “Who’s on First” was used for obtaining “dramatic attention” rather than as a “comedic schtick” did not help the defendants because the lack of critical bearing on the substance of the original work diminishes the fairness of the claimed secondary use. This leaves hope that the Google Books decision will be constrained to its very particular facts.

After concluding that the use in *Hand To God* was not “transformative,” the Second Circuit then went on to examine the other factors courts consider in a fair-use analysis. Concluding that the use was for commercial purposes, that the nature of the copyrighted work was highly creative (as opposed to factual), and that there was an existing licensing market for the “Who’s on First” routine that would be harmed by permitting unlicensed uses, the court concluded that the author of *Hand To God* took too much to serve any legitimate purpose. The use was thus not a fair use.

WHY DOES THIS CASE MATTER TO ME?

There are two takeaways from the *Hand To God* case for journal and book authors.

First, as a user of raw materials in your work (whether it be nonfiction or fiction), don’t take more than you need to make your point. Comment and criticism of the original are still paramount, notwithstanding the lack of those aspects in the Google Books case. So if you are going to use someone else’s copyrighted work as raw materials in your own work, make sure there really is a justification rooted in the original work itself, as opposed to it just being a convenience for you.

Second, when you see your work being used in someone else’s work without license, consider how much they used and whether it really transformed your work or was simply copied and used essentially for the same purpose as your own work and may impact the market for derivative uses of your work. It always helps if you (or your publisher) have already established a licensing market for derivative uses of excerpts of your work, as courts tend to favor the author if their work is available readily for license at the time of the infringement. For that reason, it may be time for you discuss the licensing alternatives available with your publisher.

Last, it is important to remember that fair use decisions by courts and juries are not always uniform, and there are no simple rules, as courts and juries generally weigh the equities of the parties’ positions. So remember to consult your friendly author’s lawyer before deciding what action to take!

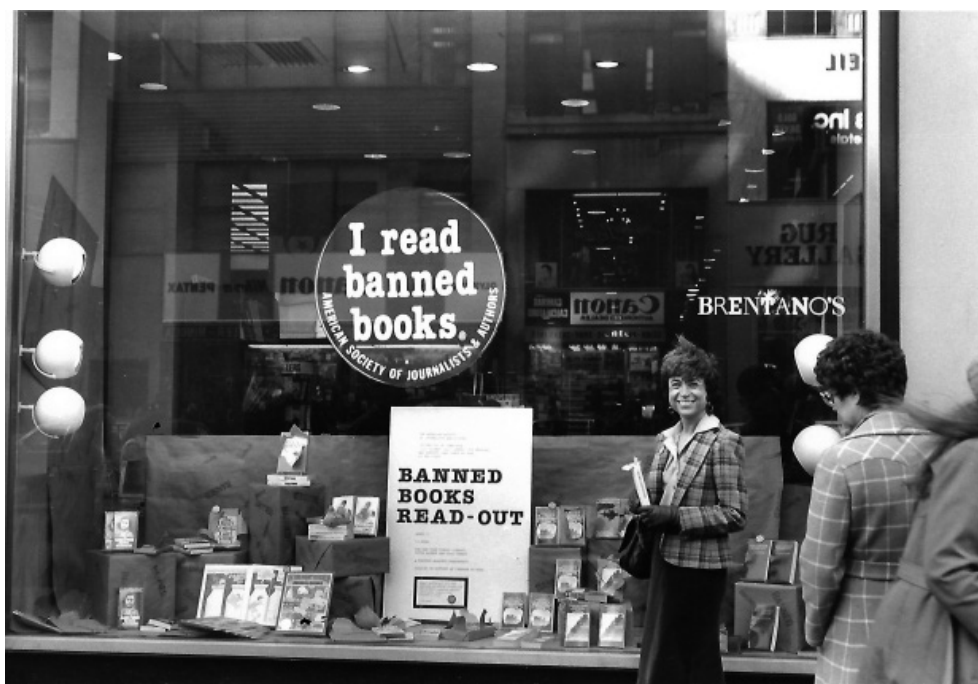




»» Sally Wendkos Olds NEW YORK, NY

ASJA MEMBER SINCE: 1969

WRITING SPECIALTY/FOCUS: FAMILY
ISSUES, RELATIONSHIPS, WOMEN'S
ISSUES, HEALTH, SEXUALITY

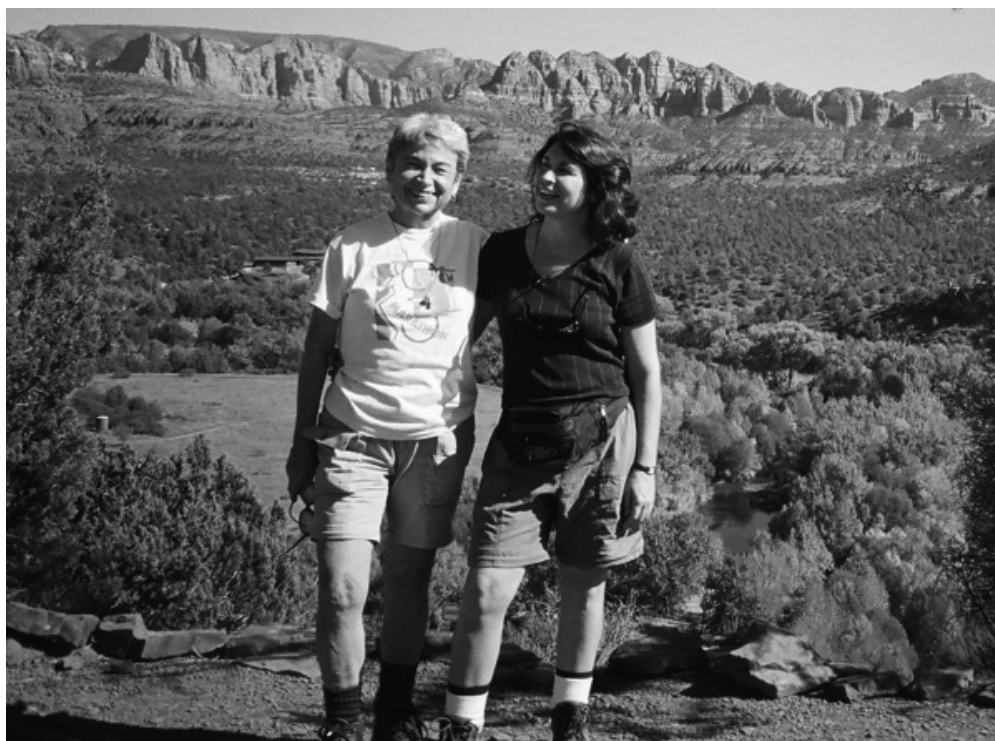


Recent/favorite project (or work that you're especially proud of): My favorite project is still my first book, *The Complete Book of Breastfeeding*, first published 1972 and updated and revised for a fourth edition released in 2010. It has given me such great pleasure over the years to hear from the many moms who called it their "Bible." I also have gotten pleasure from the 10 other books I have either written or coauthored, but the first is still my baby.

How long have you been an ASJA member? Since 1969! I had the absolute minimum of credits to meet the eligibility requirements for what was then the Society of Magazine Writers.

How long have you volunteered for ASJA? Since soon after I joined. I co-chaired an early annual conference and chaired other committees, including Program, Membership, Nominating, and others. I was president for the term 1981-1982.

»» As an organization of writers, ASJA is committed to *preserving the freedom* to report, to write, to read, and to publish. We protest any efforts that seek to abridge that right and we commend individuals and organizations that live by these principles.



What kind of volunteer work do you do for ASJA?

I currently chair the First Amendment Committee, which is dedicated to protecting the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. As an organization of writers, ASJA is committed to preserving the freedom to report, to write, to read, and to publish. We protest any efforts that seek to abridge that right and we commend individuals and organizations that live by these principles. We belong to the Free Expression Network (FEN), which alerts us to First Amendment issues nationwide.

ASJA created this committee in September 1981. Alarmed by the removal of books and periodicals from libraries, schools, and newsstands, its first action was a read-out on the steps of the New York Public Library, where we wore our red-and-white "I Read Banned Books" buttons. ASJA still distributes these buttons, and members wear them proudly. Working with other organizations, committee members continue to plan Banned Books Week, held annually during the last week in September (BannedBooksWeek.org).

The First Amendment Committee also oversees two important ASJA awards: Conscience in Media awards, which are given to individuals and organizations

who show extraordinary courage in their commitment to bringing the truth to the American public, and Open Book awards, which are given to those who take strong stands supporting the freedom to read.

Our work has become more essential recently as the First Amendment is being assailed every day in our country. As a result, current committee members Larry Atkins, Beryl Benderly, Claudia Caruana, Mark Fuerst, JoBeth McDaniel, and Pat McNees are spending more time than ever on this work. When we hear of threats to the First Amendment, we assess the level of danger, and then decide whether the issue is within our purview. If the committee votes to take a stand on an issue, we consult ASJA's Executive Committee to determine if ASJA will make a public statement, possibly by joining an amicus brief or signing onto a letter or statement. Recent letters and statements have:

- Urged Congress to stop the assault on fair housing and preserve access to public data;
- Supported freedom of the press, along with the National Coalition Against Censorship and the American Society of News Editors;

- Urged Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly to reject any proposal to require visa applicants or others wanting to enter the United States to provide login information to their online accounts as a condition of entry.

ASJA also joined an amicus brief to protect the right of photographers to photograph public actions of the police.

Why do you volunteer for ASJA? ASJA has helped me so much over the years that I feel lucky to be able to give back.

How do you fit volunteering in with your work commitments? Although I still write some articles about topics that interest me and that can be helpful to readers, I'm selective about how I spend my time. I spend more time volunteering these days than I do writing.

What are the benefits of volunteering? Instead of feeling helpless against the current onslaught against freedom of the press, I feel that I am doing my own small part in helping to keep our press as free as the Bill of Rights proclaims it should be.

What do you like to do when you're not writing? As you can see by the photo with my daughter Dorri (an ASJA member and a prolific writer), I love spending time with my family. In addition to Dorri, I have two other daughters and five grandchildren. I have always loved to read—including banned books! I also take advantage of so many of the riches Manhattan offers, including theater, art, and special events like *Le Diner en Blanc* (the surprise annual outdoor party for which everyone has to wear white). And it's always an adventure finding interesting people to meet—and to write about.





JEN REEDER

Freelance Writer



A CAREER *Unleashed*

»» WHY ONE ASJA MEMBER IS
GRATEFUL HER CAREER HAS
GONE TO THE DOGS

There are typically two responses when I tell someone I'm a freelance journalist who specializes in dogs. If I'm lucky, they'll whip out their phone and show me photos of a beloved pup. But more often than not, I'm met with a look of confusion. Sometimes they'll even scoff, "Surely you don't just write about dogs." To which I'll quip, "Well, sometimes cats. And the occasional horse."



The Healing Power of Pets

Mounting evidence of the human-animal bond creates opportunity—and great responsibility—for the veterinary profession

By Jen Reeder



I found my niche a few years ago when an essay I wrote titled “I’ve Become a Crazy Dog Lady, But I’m Okay With It” went viral, and women around the world shared photos of their dogs and proclaimed, “I’m a crazy dog lady, too!” My beat might not be prestigious, but it’s certainly fun.

I usually write around 50 articles a year, and almost all of them relate to dogs in some way. I’ve written about pet-friendly travel destinations for newspapers and magazines, profiled a woman who rescues wolves and wolf-dogs for an environmental organization, and covered canine pacemaker implantation for a veterinary trade publication. I visited a Colorado prison to meet inmates training rescued dogs for adoption and cuddled Chihuahuas recovering from anesthesia at a spay/neuter clinic on the Navajo Reservation. I’ve interviewed truckers who volunteer to drive at-risk dogs to no-kill animal shelters, and military veterans with PTSD whose service dogs have helped them overcome suicidal thoughts and drug addiction. The story possibilities are endless.

For service pieces, I don’t always need to interview an expert. I can write from experience about tips for hiking and camping with dogs, the benefits of volunteering with a therapy dog, and—I’m hesitant to admit—how to play Pokémon Go with a “PokéDog.”

»» Jen Reeder is president of the Dog Writers Association of America. Visit her online at JenReeder.com.



“I’ve found being a dog writer also makes my job as a journalist easier. I’m familiar enough with the dog world that during interviews, I know the right follow-up questions to ask (or what to ask in the first place).” JEN REEDER

I frequently interview veterinarians who tell me the human-animal bond has evolved in the past few decades; dogs aren’t animals chained in the backyard, but family members who share our beds. This creates opportunities for pet writers not just in niche publications but general interest magazines. When I met *Family Circle*’s health editor Lynya Floyd at the 2016 ASJA conference, I pitched her a medical story that in retrospect wasn’t the greatest. But after hearing about my background, she leaned in and said, “We’re always on the lookout for stories about pets.” So after the conference, I sent her a pitch about reasons to adopt senior dogs. She forwarded it to the pet editor, and suddenly I had a \$2/word assignment. (Thank you, ASJA!)

I’ve found being a dog writer also makes my job as a journalist easier. I’m familiar enough with the dog world that during interviews, I know the right follow-up questions to ask (or what to ask in the first place). I keep getting raises from anchor clients without requesting them. And interviewing someone about pets leads to more story ideas about pets. For instance, when a receptionist at an animal hospital put me on hold to speak to a veterinarian, a recording played an ad for an in-house pet loss support group. I pitched the idea and landed an \$1,800 assignment.

Awards season for pet writers can be lucrative, too. The Cat Writers’ Association (CWA) and the Dog Writers Association of America (DWAA) both host annual writing contests with big cash prizes. Last year at DWAA, I won the \$1,500 AKC Microchipping Awareness Award for an article I’d written for a health blog—for \$300. (I was the picture of grace when my name was called at the awards banquet and I hollered, “I’m going to Disneyland!”)

One of my favorite aspects of being a pet writer is getting to meet people who love animals. Several years ago at an ASJA conference, I met fellow member Michele Hollow because people kept saying, “Oh, you’re a pet writer? So is she—go talk to her.” I’m so glad I did! Michele has become a terrific friend who has introduced me to other writers, shared editor contacts, and wrangled me a ticket to an invite-only pet summit where I met celebrity dog trainer Victoria Stilwell—a valuable contact that has led to two assignments so far.

I’m hoping to connect with even more pet writers as the new president of the

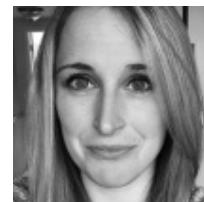
Dog Writers Association of America. I’ll be representing DWAA on a panel of “content experts” later this year at the 2017 Blog-Paws Conference. Who knows where these opportunities might lead?

Of course, I realize I won’t break news that, say, influences an election or wins a Pulitzer. It’s impossible to take yourself too seriously when you have paw prints on your business card. But I know I’m lucky to spend my time researching and writing about my passion, and most days, I love what I do.

Plus, I get to share my headshot with my dog.



Do You Need a Niche?



ASHLEY
RODRIGUEZ
Freelance Writer



»»»» HOW TO DECIDE IF YOU DO—AND DECLARE ONE

When I decided to delve into freelance writing a few years ago, I wasn't sure where to begin. I had been a journalism student during undergrad, but never once had a course or even a simple conversation—about freelancing. The most recent knowledge I had was from a seminar I attended during high school over a decade ago. Certainly things had changed.

Eventually I did get started. And the very first publication I wrote for solidified the niche that I still have four years later. It's helped me break into new publications time and time again, simply by applying my “expertise” to other industries.

Not everyone has a niche. Some writers go through life as a jack-of-all-trades or a renaissance woman. I have never been that, in my writing life or my personal life. I'm good at some things and mediocre at best at others.

Declaring a niche is like declaring a major. It can change and evolve over the years, so if you're feeling a little noncommittal at first, that's OK. Unlike a college major, you're not wasting loads of time, effort, and money by switching areas of study a half-dozen times. (And your parents likely won't care as much either.)

So how do you know if you *should* declare a niche? And then *what* niche? Here are a few things to consider.

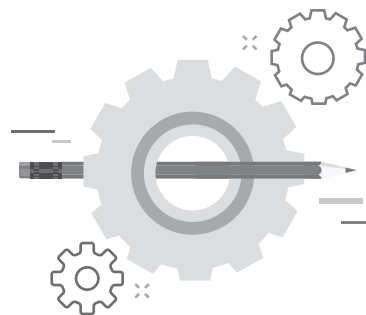
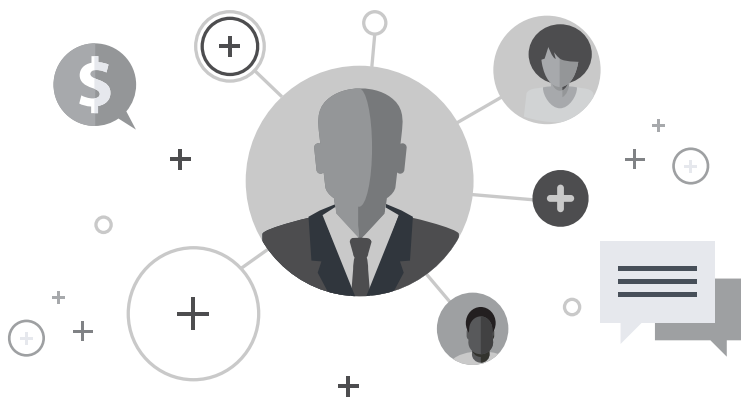


Has there been a story, or series of stories, that I've really enjoyed writing?

The best place to figure out how you should move forward is by looking back at what you've written in the past. Maybe you wrote a healthcare series several years ago and you were engaged, excited, and couldn't stop writing. Healthcare might be your niche.

Is there an industry in which I have a lot of contacts and sources?

Maybe there hasn't been a topic that you've fallen head-over-heels in love with, but you do have a lot of connections to sources and research that can be a foundation for your work. Sometimes the most difficult part of writing isn't coming up with the topic, but rather finding the right people to interview who add credibility to your piece.



Is the topic broad enough to allow me to develop enough content?

While it's great that you're passionate about an incredibly specific sub-sector of a small industry that few people know exist, step back and think of the bigger picture. Could you get a dozen stories out of it? Two dozen? Is it enough to make a career out of?

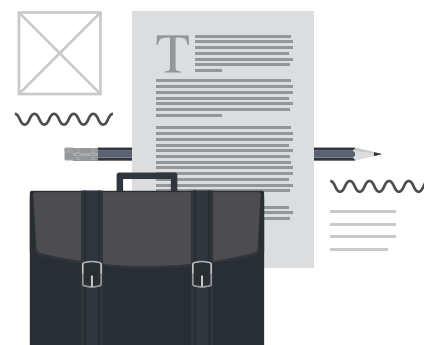
Are there enough publications that cover the topic?

We've all seen those obscure trade outlets that make us scratch our heads like, "I guess there's an audience for *everything*." But when considering a niche, take a look at the publications you could potentially pitch. You may need to get a little creative and use your knowledge of the topic to expand to other outlets, but make sure you're not getting so specific that you end up with only a handful of opportunities. Unless, of course, they give you continuous work and pay well. Then, congratulations!



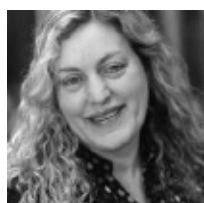
Will I like writing about this for a while?

The thing about declaring a niche is that sometimes, even without trying, you get pigeonholed and it's hard to escape. It's like moving in with a significant other. Are you ready to be committed? If it falls through or you get sick of it, do you have an escape plan? It may be worth it, if you declare a niche, to occasionally stay connected to the outside world by writing about a different topic entirely for another publication—just to keep one foot in the door elsewhere. Stay in touch with editors, too, even if you're not currently writing for them. You can never be too prepared.



HOW AN ASJA
MEMBER'S

Personal *EXPERIENCE* *informs her work*



CHERYL ALKON
Freelance Writer

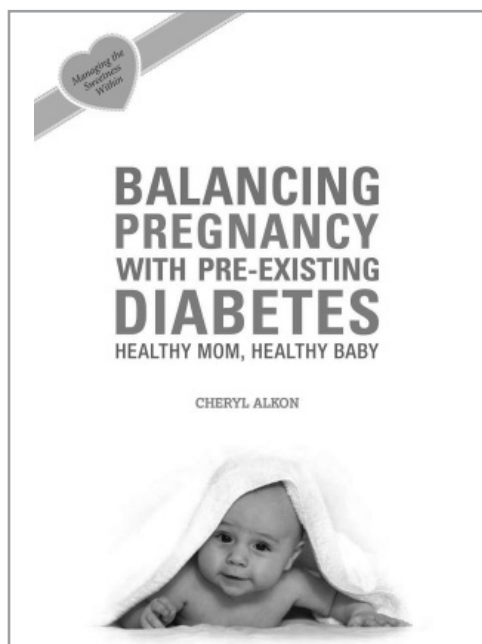
This summer, I will mark four decades of living with type 1 diabetes. That's 40 years of taking insulin both by syringe and via insulin pump, paying close attention to everything I eat, trying my damndest to walk the tightrope of optimal blood sugar control while so many factors—stress, exercise, too much or too little medication, hormones, food choices, you name it—threaten to make those blood sugar numbers soar or plummet. And that's just what I do to stay healthy every day.

So writing about it all makes sense. And cents. In my case, I write about diabetes because it's a way to make a living out of something I'm doing anyway. When I was beginning to think about getting pregnant, I couldn't find an insider's guide about the topic—so ultimately, I wrote it. *Balancing Pregnancy With Pre-Existing Diabetes: Healthy Mom, Healthy Baby*, was published in 2010 by Demos Health. For the tiny percentage of the world's reading population who can relate to this topic, my book is there for them. I still receive emails and praise from women around the world, years after publication, who thank me for writing it.

But diabetes (particularly diabetes and pregnancy) isn't the only disease in town. I also write or have written about cancer, otolaryngology (ear, nose, and throat stuff), Gaucher disease, allergies, Crohn's disease, and more. And sometimes, I cover nonmedical stuff like business trends for franchise owners, parenting issues, and, once, a feature on my neighbor's astonishing flowers for a gardening website—just because it was interesting and the opportunity arose.

WHY SPECIALIZE?

Specializing in a topic can mean you know it intimately, or at least better than the average person on the street. This can come out of your life experience, as mine has, or because something really interests you. (Thankfully, I don't have personal experience with every condition I cover). But digging deep into a topic can help set you apart when pitching editors who want new or newsworthy story ideas, or want professional writers who already know a subject well. It can also help you command higher rates from editors who are able to pay more to writers who know the subject well and can deliver clear, well-researched, and fact-checked copy that's a great fit for the publication or website. Doing so can mean less work for the editor to get the story into shape. As a result, that editor is also more likely to hire you again. (And hopefully again, when that editor inevitably moves on to a different position at a title that hopefully uses freelance writers).





It can also shorten the time you spend researching a story, because you likely already know the basics of something and can jump in with deeper questions and thus, glean juicier analysis from your sources. And finally, it can be easier to recycle story ideas for different publications and audiences after you've written about them before. I've covered topics such as medical office renovations both for a general physician website as well as for a specialty-specific trade magazine. I've written about finding childcare for kids with special needs for *USA Today*, a Gannett custom publication called *Back to School*, a magazine for families touched by muscular dystrophy called *Quest*, and for a college alumni magazine that featured a profile of one of the childcare providers I interviewed for the initial story in *USA Today*. One topic, four assignments. Re-slanting the same ideas for different audiences is a great way to get more mileage and money out of the topic.

Since I'm always open to finding new clients, I don't stick solely with medicine and health. But using a specialty can be a way to crack a new market. I've written consistently for a travel editor I met at the 2016 New York ASJA conference who edits blogs for several hotel websites. While I don't know the ins and outs of travel, I've pitched and published stories on sleeping better while on the road, as well as how to travel better with kids—both based out of my own experiences. Having clips in a certain topic can make it easier to stand out when you hear about opportunities from other editors who need similar copy. I answered a job ad about a year ago from an editor at an association for oncologists. I'd written several stories for a trade title for this group of doctors before, and the editor told me that very few of the people who responded to the ad had the kind of clips she was seeking, which made me stand out. This week, I finished writing my seventh story for her.

MAKE SPECIALIZATION WORK FOR YOU >>>>

1. Turn your knowledge into a beat. What do you already know well? What do you already do? How can you sell that knowledge? Some beats, like healthcare, technology, medicine, business, and finance, tend to pay more. If you're genuinely interested in these topics, great—follow the money. But if you love, say, the arts, can you focus on business strategies for artists? Love entertainment? What perspective can you offer that's not already out there? Figure out how to leverage that knowledge to your benefit.

2. Slant and re-slant. Look at the stories you've already written. How could you rework an idea to a different title? I've covered telehealth for Office Depot's healthcare website and again for *Modern Healthcare's* custom division. Think also about the different audiences that care about your topic. With health and medicine, there are patients, physicians, patients' families, and physicians' colleagues/employees. Who are the people that care about your topic? What stories can you tell them, or what information can you provide to make their lives easier, their jobs better, their families happier?

3. Rise to the challenge. As someone who has used technology to manage my diabetes for a long time, I told a potential client I could easily blog about medical devices. The client, an engineering/manufacturing firm, sent me an assignment where I had to use Google to define half the words in the assigning email, and the device the company worked with had nothing to do with patients and diabetes. Writing the first post was tough, but the client liked it, and I wrote for them for a year. Be open to learning new things even when you think your specialization and pre-existing knowledge will pull you through.

4. Think about related fields. Medicine and health are big, but they are tied to insurance. When an insurance client approached me about blogging for them, I thought about how much I know about using health insurance as a patient. My pitches, and subsequent stories, reflected that insight.

5. Network. Freelancing can be lonely, but getting involved in groups like ASJA helps you find your people. If you are active in real-time and online writing groups, sincerely sharing advice and leads about potential opportunities for others, others may do the same for you—particularly if you become known as a writer who covers certain topics. You never know where your next gig will come from, but if you're the writer who covers, say, museums and real estate, it's likely people will think of you when they hear about an editor looking for writers who know that field.

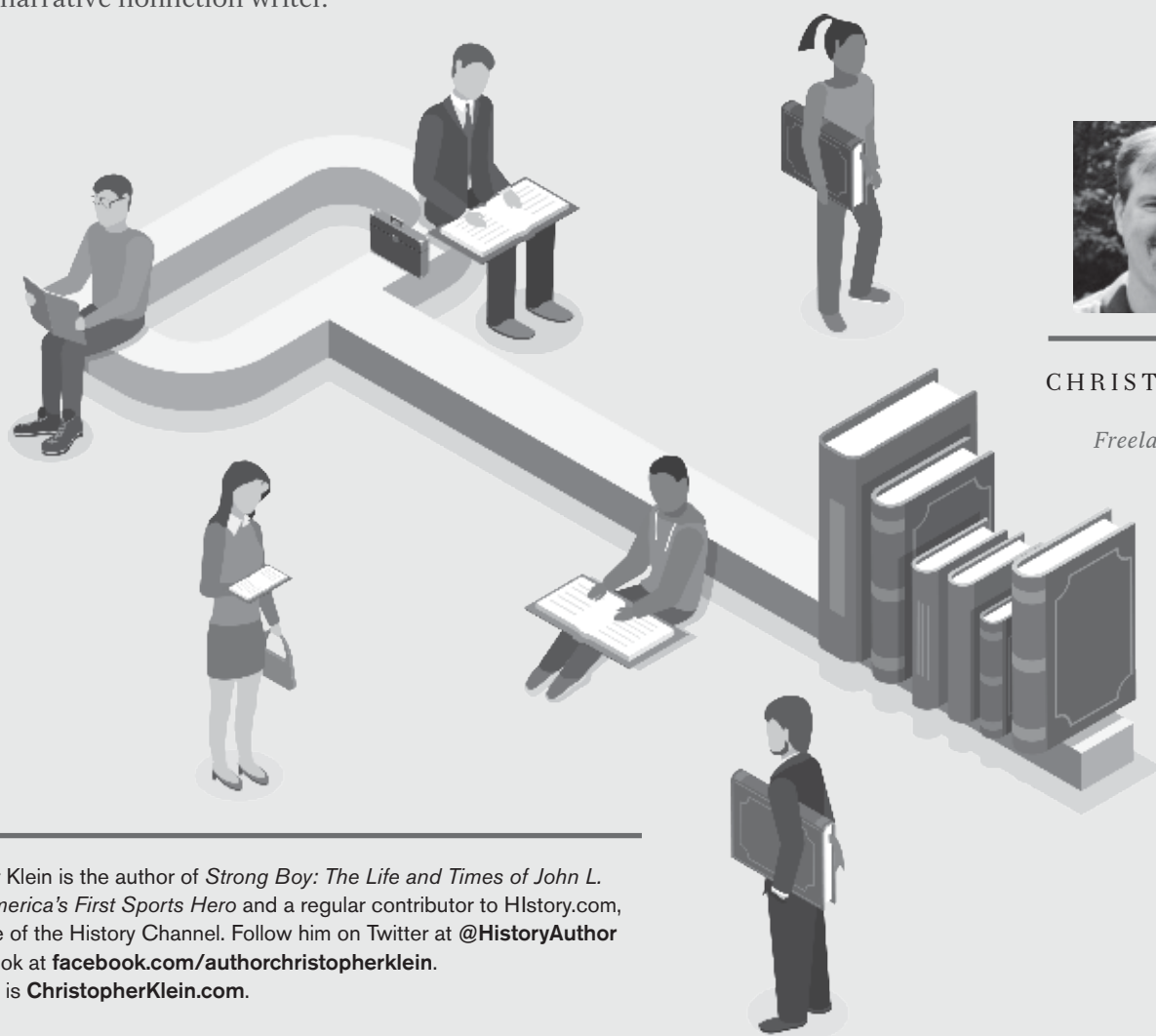
6. Be open to opportunity. When a family friend told me she had a college friend who is an editor for a magazine for Dunkin' Donuts franchise owners, I sent him clips and a letter of introduction. I don't drink coffee, and donuts wreak havoc on my blood sugar levels, but I'll write about nearly anything for a good assignment. While the knowledge you acquire as a writer who specializes might not directly apply to your next assignment, the research, reporting, interviewing, and writing skills you have can make any editor happy if you do the job well. So while I have little in common with the people who run Dunkin' Donuts franchises, I know how to track them down and ask them questions that elicit interesting anecdotes and insights. And doing that well, on deadline, with clear copy, is what any editor wants—no matter what specialized information the writer knew before she accepted the assignment or whether she actually ever eats at the restaurant she's writing about.

CRAFTING A COMPELLING

»» *Historical Narrative*

EMPLOY THESE TIPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR STORY—AND KEEP THE READER ENGAGED

Looking for a gig that allows you to travel through time? Well, unless your name is Doctor Who or you have a tricked-out DeLorean sitting in your driveway, history writing is your best bet. ■ It's unfortunate that so many history tomes are as dry as a Baptist preacher's liquor cabinet, particularly since the key to writing compelling history is hardly a well-guarded secret. In fact, it's screaming at us from right inside the word "history" itself—story. Think about the most plodding history books and articles you've ever read, and it's likely that they were devoid of characters and plot. ■ The following are some tips for crafting captivating history narratives that I've picked up over the course of writing three history books and nearly 500 articles for the History Channel's website. Even if you don't pen stories plucked from the past, these pointers can help enliven the prose of any narrative nonfiction writer.



CHRISTOPHER
KLEIN
Freelance Writer

Christopher Klein is the author of *Strong Boy: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan, America's First Sports Hero* and a regular contributor to HHistory.com, the web site of the History Channel. Follow him on Twitter at @HistoryAuthor and Facebook at [facebook.com/authorchristopherklein](https://www.facebook.com/authorchristopherklein). His website is ChristopherKlein.com.



The handoff of history from generation to generation can be like the telephone game you played as a kid where the message gets garbled as it passes from person to person. Like a perpetual virus, a mistake that makes its way into print can infect anyone who comes into contact with it later, so always be vigilant. Double-check all your facts, or you too might have Lincoln wandering around the Oval Office.

1 WRITE CINEMATICALLY

Sure, odds are that Steven Spielberg or Martin Scorsese won't be optioning your next story, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't keep the big screen in mind as you write. Build your narrative as a collection of scenes. While expository passages will likely be necessary to provide context, don't overload readers with background information that derails the story's momentum. Move your "lens" around from wide angles to extreme close-ups, landscapes to characters. Use details harvested in your research to paint colorful images in the minds of readers, and consider the classic three-act structure of screenwriting—setup, confrontation, and resolution—to shape your narrative arc.

2 WIELD ACTIVE VERBS

The easiest scenes for me to write in my last history book—a biography of a hard-hitting, hard-drinking bareknuckle boxer—were those inside the ring. The nonstop movement that propelled the scene forward also demanded the use of active verbs. Go through your prose and highlight weak verbs such as "was," "were," or "had been." If there's a way to rewrite a sentence to replace passive verbs with active ones, do it! Also be on the lookout for adverbs serving as crutches propping up weak verbs. Better for a character to have "bolted" rather than have "left quickly." Pruning those adverb/weak-verb combinations will allow your writing to blossom.

3 AVOID BLOCK QUOTES

Thumb through some of the bestselling narrative history books by authors such as Erik Larson and Candice Millard, and you'll notice that they employ block quotes sparingly or avoid them altogether. Big chunks of indented text not only interrupt the narrative flow, they also scream "page filler" and tempt the reader to morph into a skimmer. You worked hard to grab the reader's attention. Don't take any chances in letting it go. Remember that yours is the voice readers want to hear.

4 DON'T SHOW OFF YOUR RESEARCH

If you're a history buff like me, you could probably spend your whole life absorbed in the research phase of a story. Donning white gloves to explore historical treasures buried deep inside archives or mining lodes of vertical files in hopes of unearthing precious nuggets of information never ceases to thrill. Unfortunately, that dreaded time always comes for writers to, you know, write. When you invest so much time researching a story, it can be tempting to pour everything you found into the narrative. However, if the research isn't essential to the story, send it to the cutting room floor and repurpose it later for a blog or social media post if you like.

5 STAY IN YOUR TIME PERIOD

Once you have transported a reader back to the past, make sure the time machine remains parked there. Since history bears so many lessons for the present, it can be tempting to drop a contemporary connection into the middle of an historical narrative, but save it for a conclusion or epilogue if at all possible. To keep your reader enveloped in the past, be careful about the

metaphors and descriptive words you use. A reference to an "electric atmosphere" may aptly capture the spirit of the age of Edison but appear out-of-place in the age of Caesar. A corollary to this tip is to remain watchful for anachronisms. For example, one prominent cable news personality turned bestselling history author referred to Abraham Lincoln sitting at his desk in the Oval Office in one of his books. Only problem is that the Oval Office wasn't built until more than four decades after Honest Abe and Mrs. Lincoln settled into their box seats at Ford's Theatre to watch *Our American Cousin*.

6 DON'T SOUND LIKE A FOURTH-GRADE BOOK REPORT

"History is just one damn thing after another," as the saying goes, but don't let your writing become a laundry list of facts. You're a storyteller, not a chronicler. Immerse the reader in the action from the very first sentence and leave the rote recitation to the elementary school set.

7 TRUST, BUT VERIFY

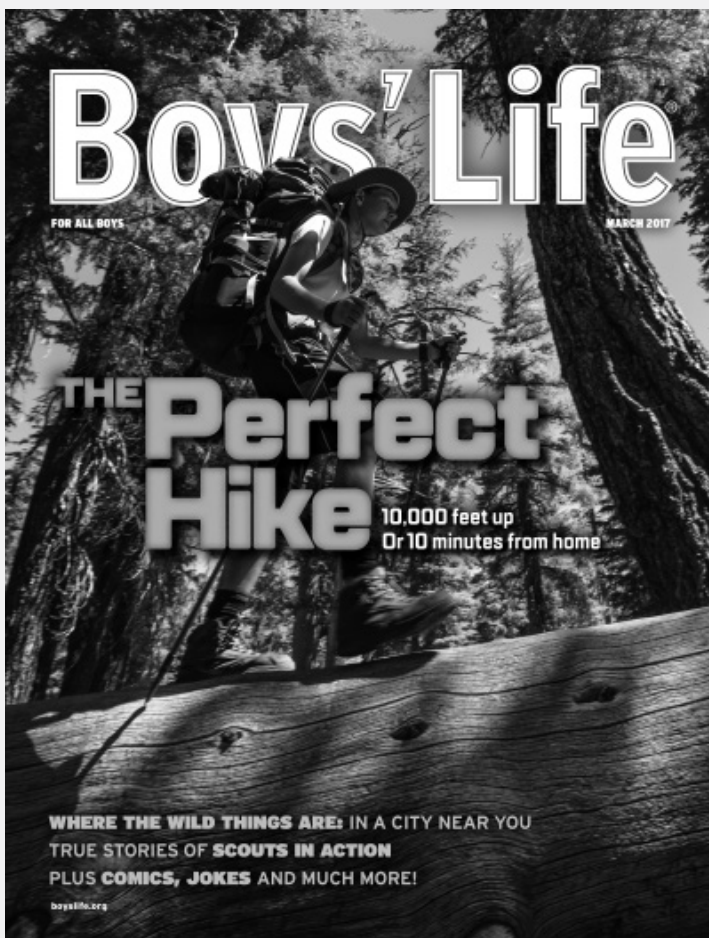
While the previous pointers will help animate your prose, never forget the two cardinal rules about writing history: 1. Get the facts correct. 2. See number 1.

If you pepper your text with "alternative facts," then you're writing historical fiction, not narrative history. Perhaps now more than ever, writers of history have a responsibility to make sure they are disseminating accurate information. Always strive to tap primary sources for research first, and if it's necessary to rely on secondary sources, remember the Russian proverb, "Trust, but verify."



»» Market Report | BOYS' LIFE

Boys' Life may not be the only single magazine to have published the work of Isaac Asimov, Van Wyck Brooks, Bruce Catton, Bobby Fischer, Alex Haley, Jeff Kinney, Gary Paulsen, Ernest Thompson Seton, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Henry Winkler. But it's certainly the only magazine to do so that also employs its own mailburro. That would be the fictional Pedro, who in 1947 gave up a cushy life at Philmont Scout Ranch for an equally cushy job responding to readers' letters and annoying The Boss.



The juxtaposition between serious writing and occasional silliness is one reason *Boys' Life* is still in business 106 years after its first issue appeared. It also helps explain why readers named it the hottest kids/teen magazine in Adweek's 2016 Magazine of the Year awards. (It bested *J-14*, *National Geographic Kids*, *Seventeen*, *Sports Illustrated Kids*, and *Teen Vogue*, the magazine Adweek's editors selected.)

Boys' Life is the official youth magazine of the Boy Scouts of America, but the content is not limited to Scouting topics. As Managing Editor Paula Murphey explains, "BL's mission is to entertain and educate America's youth, promoting literacy and helping to create the leaders of tomorrow, all through a proven content mix of information, instruction, and inspiration."

While most subscribers are either Cub Scouts (boys in elementary school) or Boy Scouts (boys in middle school and high school), only about half the content relates directly to Scouting. In fact, the magazine focuses as much on promoting literacy as it does on promoting the BSA. "Whether it's comics, jokes, and fiction or articles about adventure, technology, science, nature, entertainment, games, cars, sports, etc...whatever compels a youth to read is what we'd like to feature in our magazine," Murphey says.

Of course, what compels a seven-year-old to read is quite different from what interests a 17-year-old. For that reason, *Boys' Life* (unlike its competitors) publishes two different editions each month: one for readers ages 6 through 10 and one for readers ages 11 through 17. "Generally, there are about 12 pages of content that vary between the two versions," Murphey says. "You need not pitch for a specific edition; our editors will determine which is appropriate for your piece."



Murphey says her staff works four months in advance and schedules major features and fiction a year ahead. Special issues include an annual holiday gift guide (December) and a biennial fishing issue (April).

Major articles run 500 to 1,500 words, while departments run up to 600 words. Most of the magazine is open to freelancers, although you probably shouldn't mess with Pedro. (After 70 years at the magazine, he has plenty of job security.) Also, fiction is by assignment only, so there's no reason to query or send an unsolicited manuscript.

The key to breaking into this market is to submit a specific query with some sort of news hook. "We get a lot of queries for 'isn't it interesting?' stories," Murphey says. "There should be some kind of newsworthiness or timeliness behind the story—a recent discovery, a new application for something, etc. Not just a story about firefighting gear, but one about the latest and greatest tech-loaded firefighting gear. Not just a 'didjaknow' about the giant squid, but a feature driven by the latest discoveries associated with the giant squid."

It's also important to think from a kid's perspective. Don't profile a chef at a famous restaurant; profile a chef for a winning pro sports team. Don't write about the latest advances in Doppler radar; write about a former Scout who drives into tornadoes to learn more about them. (Actually, don't write about that topic either; it's been covered recently.)

As the roster of past contributors shows, *Boys' Life* is interested in seriously good writing—even if the subject matter isn't always serious. "There should be an element of reporting: Conduct interviews, get original quotes from the experts and key players, do your homework," Murphey says. "Don't just do 'term paper' research and Google a piece into shape."

It's also important to get the tone of your writing right. "One challenge of writing for children's publications is getting on the reader's level without being condescending," Murphey says. "In other words, don't be too sweet, too cheery, or preachy in tone. Youth don't want to be patronized or lectured. Avoid lots of '!!!' and '???' in your approach, and don't be afraid to use sentence constructions other than simple. We want to approach readers with brevity, clarity, and simplicity, without being simplistic."

Finally, if all else fails, you can always submit a joke for the Think & Grin department. You won't get paid, but you will receive an Official *Boys' Life* Contributor patch if your joke is used. But don't head to the website for opportunities: Although *Boys' Life* has an active website, BoysLife.org, most original content there is generated in house.

BOYS' LIFE AT A GLANCE



Frequency: Monthly

Rate: \$1/word

Circulation:

1,000,000 (60 percent for lower-demographic edition; 40 percent for upper-demographic edition)

Kill fee: Yes, standard in contracts

Rights: All rights

Payment: On acceptance

Whom to query:

Features: Paula Murphey;
Departments: Clay Swartz

Address queries to the
appropriate editor at:

Boys' Life
Boy Scouts of America
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015-2079

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