

The IWOSC Insider



What's Inside:

- Page 1: Upcoming meetings; IWOSC /PALA merger**
Page 2: President's Message — IWOSC contest; News You Can Use — Sharon Goldinger
Page 4: Build Your Platform Before you Write — Steven Sanchez
Page 6: Words A La Mode — Grammar for Grownups — Flo Selfman
Page 8: Member News; Book Covers & Articles
Page 9: Opportunities
Page 10: IWOSC/PALA Online; Recordings of Past Meetings
Page 11: IWOSC/PALA Board & Staff

Publishers Special Interest Group

The Publishers Association of Los Angeles (PALA) is now a special interest group of IWOSC.
 — See page 2 — for the details and how it will positively impact you!

Coming Up

Phone Seminar

Crafting the Best Query and Proposal
Wednesday, April 17 at 7:00 p.m.

Nearly all books are sold with a proposal that enlists the aid of a literary agent in convincing an acquisitions editor at a publishing entity to advance funds to a writer with an idea. Grab paper and pen and your best idea for **nonfiction or fiction**, and learn how to write irresistible query letters and book proposals, including the do's and don't's! Members: \$15. Non-members: \$35.

[Read about it here.](#)

Each January and July: ***Publishing Brainstorming.*** YOUR questions answered. MEMBERS ONLY.

And don't miss ***IWOSC Reads Its Own*** twice a year at Vroman's Book Store in Pasadena. See page 6 for details.



President's Message

A contest for you!

We're all winners, so why not show that off a bit.

It is time to update our logo.

It's served us well for lo these many years, but it is getting a little tired. If you have a design that you think might work, we'd love to see it. We will use it everywhere, so you must be okay about that. If we receive a submission that looks good to the board, the winner will receive a free one-year membership (or renewal) and two seminar passes.

Here are some guidelines:

- It's best if it can be reproduced in color AND black and white (tricky)
- We would love to have a compact design that has the word "writer" included.
- Graphics must be legal for us to use and we should try to avoid cliché.
- Please keep it simple, elegant, and friendly.
- This will be the IWOSC logo alone, not including PALA on the logo.



PLEASE SEND YOUR IDEAS

TO: [gary.young at iwosc.org](mailto:gary.young@iwosc.org)

SUBJECT: LOGO

We cannot promise you riches beyond your imagination as a winner, but it *sounds like a deal?* *Go for it!*

The Publishers Association of Los Angeles (PALA) – IWOSC special interest group

Our members now receive the same programming that we normally enjoy, *plus* the additional resources of The Publishers Association of Los Angeles (PALA). There will be no change in your fee structure. Together, there will be more efficient administration, and increased visibility. And with the help of Steven Sanchez and Sharon Goldinger of PALA, we have come to an exciting future for both groups.

News You Can Use

from Sharon Goldinger

[\(PeopleSpeak\)](#)



Questions to Consider When Plotting a Scene

Many complicated factors go into the construction of a good scene and it can save you time and effort to plan your scene in advance. Novelist C.S. Lakin (author of *The 12 Key Pillars of Novel Construction*) offers some tips to consider when planning and writing your scene. You can read them all [here](#).

(cont'd on page 3)

(Cont'd from p.2)



Small Presses Database

The Small Presses Database, maintained by *Poets & Writers* magazine, is a helpful database you can consult to research publisher interests, contact information, and submission guidelines. You can find the Small Presses Database [here](#).



The 100 Best Websites for Writers List

The Write Life blog has published its annual list of the best websites for writers. You'll find websites for freelancing, inspiration for writers, writing tools, tools for blogging, editing resources, podcasting resources, and more. You can browse the full list [here](#).



Balancing Your Submission Budgets

Journal submissions usually involve a small fee, but for writers on a budget, managing submission fees can be a complex and expensive process. [This article](#) gives you some tips to help you minimize expenditures, maximize profit, and identify a strategy that works for you.



Ways to Repurpose Blog Content

An easy way to get more mileage out of your blog content is to repurpose and transform your content so that you can cycle back through your old material and reuse it in new forms. Rebekah Radice offers several ways to transform your blog content into other formats, from video to podcasts to infographics. Read all 11 tips [here](#).



The Growing Importance of Intellectual Property

The Passive Voice blog provides a detailed look at the importance of intellectual property for authors who are at risk of having their ideas taken by a major publisher. [This blog post](#) explains all the ways typical contracts between authors and traditional publishers are incredibly unfair and one-sided agreements.



2019 Book Fair List

New Shelves Books has assembled a list of the biggest book fairs in the world, including 2019 dates and links to information about each fair. [This list](#) is a valuable resource you can use to help market your books in domestic and international markets.



Why Indie Authors Need Literary Executors

It's important for indie authors to appoint a literary executor to make decisions about licensing future intellectual property rights (e.g., translations, movie or TV deals, audiobooks) that may not have been licensed at their time of death. In [this post](#), Maggie Lynch addresses the issues around this important topic.



A Guide to Getting More Reader Reviews

Obtaining reader reviews on retailer sites is critical for driving book sales. [This guide](#) shares some tried and tested strategies to generate more reader reviews on retailer sites. It will also help you learn what practices to avoid so retailer sites don't remove them. If you've struggled to get reviews or simply need more, check these out!



Build Your Platform...BEFORE You Write Your Book?

By Steven Sanchez

So many people are publishing books these days (675 million print books published in the US alone last year), the new challenge isn't getting published, it's getting noticed. Getting your book in front of people who might want to buy, and read, your work is the real challenge today for your success as an author. The answer everyone keeps pointing to? Your "Platform."

What's an "Author Platform" and Why Do You Need One?

A decade or so ago, when the internet was forcing the biggest change on the publishing world since the printing press, agents and publishers started talking about the need for authors to have a "platform." I remember hearing agents and speakers telling writers things like "we only publish writers with a large platform," or "build your platform BEFORE you write your book." This was new advice that even most agents and publishers didn't completely understand. They just knew it was critical to an author's success.

Simply put, a "platform" is YOUR ability to get in front of as many prospective buyers of your book as possible. Picture a speaker on a stage in front of an audience. We used to think of the stage as the platform. But that's backwards. The bigger the AUDIENCE, the more people you can get in front of, the more potential buyers there are for your book. But it's not just the size of your audience that makes the difference, it's YOUR ABILITY to get in front of prospective consumers of your writing, and PERSUADE them to buy, and continue buying, your books.

Sound intimidating? It's not as hard as it may seem. And you DON'T have to be pushy or a marketing expert. Let me suggest three simple ways you can build your author platform:

Step #1: Your "Place"— Have a Useful Website

I've been "publishing" people and companies on the internet for over 20 years. The key to success used to be getting found in search engines like Google, which led to people coming to your website, which eventually translated into sales. But nothing happened if you didn't HAVE a website, so Step 1 was putting up a website. Over the years we learned it didn't have to be fancy; it just needed to provide information people wanted. Info about you. Info about your subject. Info about useful resources you like. Info about books or products you have for sale. Whatever they might want to know about you and your world. Consider the websites you use most frequently. You use them because they provide what YOU want, not because they're pretty or flattering to the owner. The first step to building a successful author platform is building a USER-friendly website where potential book purchasers can learn more about you and your writing.

I tend to recommend WordPress because it is used on about 25% of the world's websites and can do amazing things. But it does have a bit of a technical learning curve. Worth your learning since it will be your home on the internet, but if you like something else, like Wix or Weebly or Squarespace, that's fine. Just pick something that YOU can and will use. Again, it doesn't have to be fancy; it just needs to be easy for you to change and for your readers to find what they want.



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Step #2: Your “Readers”--Find People Who Would Be Interested in You

Now that you have your “home” on the internet, you need to find people you would want to invite over for a visit. People you like and who would like you. Yes, YOU will need to do this. Don't expect this from your Agent or Publisher. They're not YOU and can't represent you as well as you can. But here's more good news: the internet is your best ally. Half the world's population is on the Internet; more than 300 million people in the US alone. The maturing of the Internet means there are now websites that have ALREADY gathered people interested in the same things you are writing about. So, it's time to do a little research. Do you have a list of the websites, public forums, associations, user groups, Facebook pages, YouTube channels, LinkedIn groups, Pinterest boards, etc. related to the things you are writing about? You just need to find those places related to the things you are writing about and start interacting with the people who are also there. People who are already interested in the same things you are. Be helpful. Be interesting. And tactfully let them know you have a website and a book. And slowly, your “tribe,” your followers, will grow.

Let's say you're writing about something as specific as “underwater basket weaving.” Believe it or not, Google can connect you to more than 1.8 million places related to that subject. You WILL be able to find blogs, forums, Facebook groups, Instagram feeds, Pinterest boards, YouTube channels, etc., on this or whatever subject you are writing about. Getting on page 1 of Google is no longer the Holy Grail; finding “your people” is. Use Google to find your genre-specific places and then start building relationships with your like-minded readers.

#3: Your “Opportunities”--Leverage Other People's Efforts to Build Relationships

This is what makes the difference between pros and amateurs, between wasted time and money, and influential (and financial) success as an author. You can leverage the work, websites and workshops other people have created and connect with “your people.” Where do YOU go for information about the things you like or are writing about? Do you have some favorite blogs or podcasts you follow? Maybe you could be a guest blogger or interviewee. Do you share with friends on Facebook? Then maybe you should have a page there too. Do you look for things or get ideas on Pinterest? Maybe you should have a couple boards there too. Do you attend associations or groups or conferences that have speakers? Maybe you could become a contributor there as well. Do you watch videos on YouTube? Maybe you could use the camera on your phone to talk about your book, your subject or your world. Again, you don't have to be fancy. In fact, people tend to mistrust fancy. They want authentic. They want to know you're as real as they are and they want to get to know YOU.

And if you want to build your tribe faster? Then yes, you can buy ads on Amazon, gather a group on Facebook or LinkedIn, guest blog on hundreds of specialty sites, post videos on YouTube and pictures on Instagram, post other people's stuff on your own topic-oriented Pinterest boards and even hire a virtual assistant or marketing firm to help you with some of the work. YOU can go as fast or as slow as YOU want. It's all up to YOU.

That's the difference of the PROS: They have a place. They have readers. They have opportunities. Successful authors have, find, and leverage all three. The possibilities for connecting with prospective readers are legion. You just need to do a little creative thinking, step out of your comfort zone, and be willing to try to connect with your readers. They're out there. And like publishing, it's never been easier to make the connection. So, are you ready to go PRO? Do you have a website? Do you know where your readers are? Are you trying to build relationships with them? If your answer to any of the above is no, then you know a good place to start working on your Author Platform...even before writing your book.

And if you've found a helpful resource, or would like me to address something technical in a future column, send me a note at steven.sanchez@IWOSC.org. There's never been a better time to be a writer!



Words A La Mode
 from Flo Selfman
wordsalamode.com



Grammar for Grownups

Before You Send Your Baby Out into the World...

By Flo Selfman © Flo Selfman 2019

You've toiled, sweated, laughed, and cried, and now your baby is almost ready to go out into the world. Whoa! Not so fast! In your zeal to get it "out there," don't do what so many authors do: don't send it out before making sure that there are no loose ends – no missing buttons, frayed threads, moth holes, scuffed shoes. In other words, this IS the time to "sweat the small stuff."

Before turning your manuscript over to an editor, copy editor-proofreader, or agent, take a few deep breaths and follow all the steps on your own. You will save an editor's time and your money.

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you work, making the pre-publication or printing process easier and saving embarrassment later.

I still have a huge shelf of reference books: several dictionaries, a thesaurus, dictionaries in several languages, specialized dictionaries (cooking, music, medicine, cultural literacy, pronunciation of names, and more), plus grammar, style and usage manuals. Now we can easily access much of this information by a simple Google search. It's really a godsend, isn't it? But I still look some things up in print books.

As a copy editor, I use Google to search spelling and definitions – but I also have a big paperback dictionary within reach. I check not only spelling but also usage and alternate spellings and hyphenation. If it's French, does it have an accent? Is there a capital letter? The dictionary also tells me spellings that are chiefly British; for example, *gray* is preferred (Amer.); *grey* is the British spelling. Unless you're writing for a British readership, use the American spelling. It tells parts of speech and whether a noun is singular or plural. This is important when choosing whether to use a singular or plural verb. (A collective noun, in American English, takes a singular verb. Coldplay performs, not Coldplay perform.) When multiple sources offer two or more alternatives, you have to choose the best one. If you're not sure, ask an expert.

When reading through Google selections, pick your preferred sources. Some grammar bloggers' answers are just opinions – and they're often incorrect.

The Chicago Manual of Style is the bible for the publishing industry. You may sign up for monthly Q&A's from CMOS, or a trial subscription. It is not practical for everyone, however, as it is highly complex and specific. If you don't know exactly what you are looking for, you probably won't be able to find it easily in this book. <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html> Other excellent style guides are available – even in the "Dummies" series.

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The *AP Styleguide* is the bible for *journalism*, but not for book publishing, as items are treated differently. It was created by journalists working for the Associated Press. <https://www.apstylebook.com/>

Dan Poynter's book *The Self-Publishing Manual* is extremely useful, whether or not you are self-publishing. Sadly, Poynter died several years ago, but he left an indelible mark on self-publishing. He was a great friend of IWOSC and spoke several times at our events. If you get his book, be sure to get the latest edition. I also recommend *The Therapist Writer* by longtime IWOSC member Sylvia Cary. You don't have to be a therapist to derive great value from this book, and Sylvia's writing is clear and down-to-earth. These books and others take you through the entire process, from idea to writing, editing, publishing, and marketing.



Dan Poynter at IWOSC with (left) Gary Young and then-president Flo Selfman. (Steve Wiener in back holding the IWOSC logo.) 1.21.14

There are many excellent grammar references available. If you are going to buy one, don't do it in a rush. Spend some time at a major bookstore browsing the section. Get the bookseller's advice, or ask a librarian first. Have a recent dictionary handy, as new words and usages are added yearly (I still use a print dictionary, in addition to online sources).

DO NOT leave proofreading to graphic designers. They usually see words as *graphic* elements, *not grammatical* elements. The graphic designer does not take responsibility for proofreading; the client does (except in rare cases where a graphic designer hires a proofreader). Be sure the person or people who proofread your manuscript and/or book cover know how to proofread. Don't entrust your precious book to someone who is not a proven expert.

In American English, periods and commas go **INSIDE** quotation marks. Colons and semicolons go **OUTSIDE** quotation marks. Period. Doing this in advance is a big help to an editor. Question marks go inside or outside, depending on the sentence.

Don't proofread only once. Have more than one person read it. Our eyes tend to skip over certain words or phrases because we "know" what they say. Even a pro will go through a manuscript multiple times.

If possible, give your copy editor a list of character names, spelled the way you want, and also made-up words. I just worked on a sci-fi book that contained words in a language that the author created. She was able to provide me with a list of these words, and the manuscript contained a glossary at the end.

Be better than your technology. Spell-check and grammar-check are wonderful but they don't catch everything.

Just give your baby one last touch-up and you're on your way.

Member News



Take a look at some of the books and articles from our members.
And remember, we are all about journalism, publishing, fiction and nonfiction books, etc!

• **Three recent articles by Jane Neff Rollins:**

- Labor Union Documents: Genealogically Relevant Sources. "FGS FORUM" (magazine of the Federation of Genealogical Societies), Spring 2019.
- "Generations: Find Out How the Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918-19 Affected Your Pennsylvania Ancestors." *Pennsylvania Legacies* (magazine of the Pennsylvania Historical Society), Spring 2019.
- "The Spanish Flu Outbreak in 1918-19 and How it Affected Your Ancestors." *Crossroads*, Summer 2018.

• **G. Lloyd Helm** has been a ne'er do well scribbler for 50 years, having published poetry and short stories in a wide variety of literary anthologies, magazines and newspapers including *The New York Poetry Anthology*, *Stars and Stripes News*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Antelope Valley Press*, and *The Antelope Valley Anthologies*. He is supported by his long suffering wife. His most recent work has been on two novels, "Serpents and Doves" a novel of the mid '60's and "Borrowing a Moose Head from Cole Porter" a novel of Indiana."

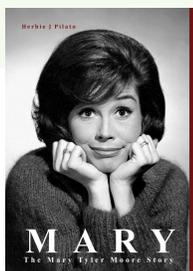


Calling for Your Book Covers, Articles, Websites

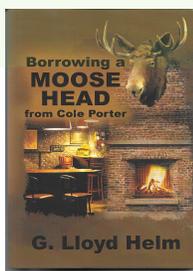
Send us graphics of your latest book cover, or a short 75 or fewer words *about* your latest published article, book signing, best-seller rank, etc. We would also like to list our member's websites in the newsletter, so please send your URL to gary.young@iwosc.org with the subject line: **NEWSLETTER**

Some Recent Member Publications

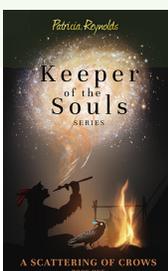
Herbie J Pilato



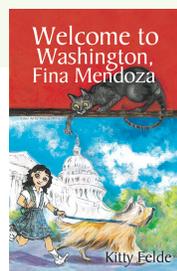
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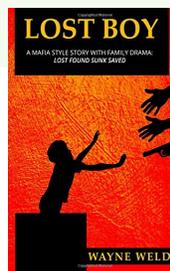
Patricia Reynolds



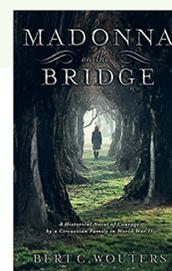
Kitty Felde



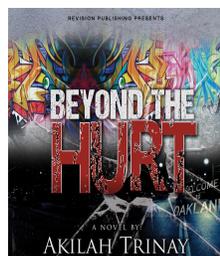
Wayne Welde



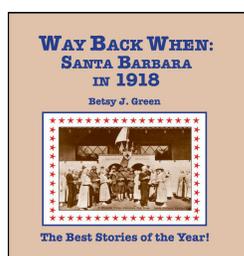
Bert C. Wouters



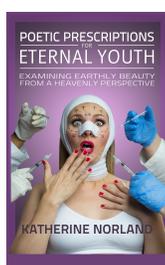
Akilah Trinay



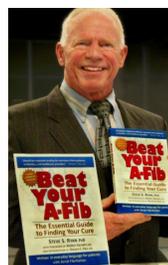
Betsy J. Green



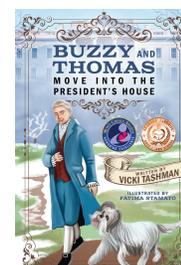
Katherine Norland



Steve S. Ryan



Vicki Tashman





Opportunities



1. Our biannual event, "IWOSC Reads Its Own," at Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena will return in September. A popular benefit of an IWOSC membership is the chance to participate in "IWOSC Reads Its Own." It's a special opportunity for writers to showcase and share their work. Readings may be published or works-in-progress, all genres. First-time readers as well as repeat readers are welcome. Friends and family are welcome to attend this free event, but only current IWOSC members may read. If accepted, please have a short bio ready to submit for the program. If you would like to read, look for our email announcement in August, but act fast. Spaces fill up! Ruth Frechman, Author of *The Food Is My Friend Diet* and *The Food Is My Friend Diet Quick & Easy Cookbook* — soon to be published

2. Four IWOSC members, have started this group, meeting monthly in the Mid-Wilshire, Westside, and the surrounding LA area. We, **Writers Critique group.** would welcome 2-3 new members. We meet 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month at homes. This meeting time could be flexible, though daytime, during the week, is preferred. Current members write in the fantasy, cozy mystery, young adult, and literary genres. We welcome all genres and friendly faces. Let us know on the *Yahoo list serve* if you are interested, and our member, Sharon, will get in touch. Best to all, Shirley Skeel

3. Nathan Schulhof has changed the world! From the first word program for Apple, to creating marketable downloadable music, the Mp3 Player, more commonly known as the iPod, the shoppingcart for the Internet, and more! He hosted the Wango Tango pop concert in 1998 and livestreamed it, reaching 8 million people, before broadband! According to IWOSC member, John Seeley, with whom he has a professional relationship, they are looking for representation or contacts for movie studios, etc. john@heartfirepress.com

4. Have you attended one of our satellite meetings? They are free for nonmembers as well as members. They meet throughout the greater Los Angeles area. You can bring something to read, a question about something having to do with writing or publishing, or just enjoy the company of your peers. For a schedule of meetings, please go to our website: <https://iwosc.org/>

5. BRAINSTORMING: Answers to Your Most Puzzling Publishing Questions

Meeting in July and January, this members-only meeting covers topics that you personally need to discuss.

- Want some feedback on potential titles for your next book?
- Need help with finding a distributor?
- Have an opinion about a potential cover design?
- Not sure if you should spend money on exhibiting at an upcoming trade show?

YOUR questions can be answered. Look for the email announcement in June.

6. Margaret Starbuck is offering IWOSC members discount tickets (\$20) to see the production of Brian Friel's "Faith Healer" at the **Odyssey**. This magical Irish masterpiece tells the story of Frank Hardy, an alcoholic showman gifted with an inconsistent ability to heal the afflicted. Through four monologues the play explores faith, failure, and memory. This is an opportunity to experience Friel's masterful and poetic use of long form monologue. March 23rd-May 12th, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 2pm. For the discount promo code, contact Margaret at margaret@odysseytheatre.com. For more info: <http://www.odysseytheatre.com>.



IWOSC/PALA Online Discussion



Members and guests ask questions and share resources via *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *Pinterest*. This is a great opportunity to share ideas (not so much the commercial stuff) and perhaps gain points for your SEO. FYI, we are phasing out our Yahoo List Serv.

Recordings of Past Meetings



If you missed a meeting or need to hear the information again, we have recorded each of our meetings in MP3 format.

If you would like to receive a copy via e-mail, please contact <https://iwosc.org/buy-recordings/>

Please select the recording (name *and* date if possible), order it, and proceed to the PayPal page. Members pay \$5 and nonmembers pay \$15.

Once the recording is ordered, we will send you a LINK (not the actual recording) to a password-protected location, where you can download the recording automatically.





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Roberta Edgar Vice President
Steven Sanchez Vice President
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Gerald E. Jones Outreach
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Erika Fabian At-large
Ina Hillebrandt At-large
Craig O'Connor At-large
Robin Quinn At-large

Flo Selfman Ex Officio / Immediate Past President

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Orange County
 Pasadena/Altadena Satellite — Jane Neff Rollins
 South Bay Satellite — Barbie Herrera
 Ventura County Satellite (Thousand Oaks) — Kathleen Kaiser
 West San Fernando Valley Satellite — Sylvia Cary

LA Times Festival of Books

Roberta Edgar Chair
Lyn Corum Volunteer Coordinator

Vickey Kalambakal IWOSC Office Administrator

Deborah Shadovitz Website

IWOSC.org

Independent Writers of Southern California – Since 1982

IWOSC is one of LA's longest-running professional writers' organizations. We welcome people at any level of their writing career to learn about the changing worlds of writing and publishing. Come learn from experts, hone your skills, share your knowledge and experiences, and more. IWOSC is based in Southern California and meets in Culver City and various local satellites. However, our webinars service writers and publishers worldwide.

PALA is a special interest group of IWOSC. Founded in 2003, PALA serves small to medium-sized publishers, including self-publishers, with a wealth of up-to-date information covering this constantly evolving field.

Publishers Association of Los Angeles (PALA) is a special interest group of IWOSC.

IWOSC

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