

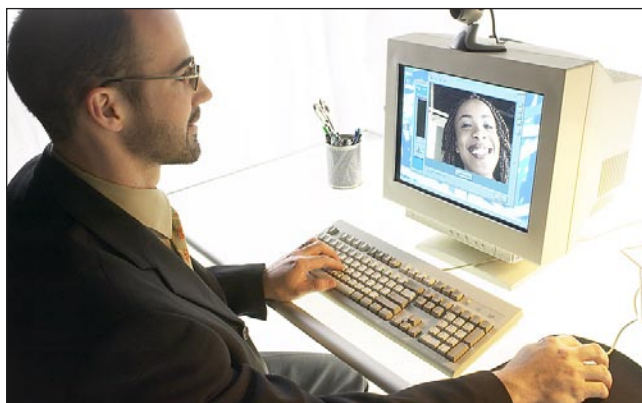


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When and how to connect with editors on social-media sites

A FREELANCER I know recently responded to an editor advertising for writers on Craigslist. After getting no response to e-mails, she tracked the editor down on Facebook asking for a phone number. The editor sent an indignant response, accusing the writer of having no respect for personal/professional boundaries. The writer insisted she'd done nothing wrong. After all, she's a reporter who's used to tracking people down, and this editor had made herself accessible.

Social-media sites present access to editors that writers never had before, but it comes with a confusing protocol. Where do you draw the line between business



Reaching editors through Facebook can yield assignments. But how do you balance a professional side with a personal one?

and personal? "When using Facebook or LinkedIn to contact people personally or professionally, it's a matter of outreach, building trust and relationships," says Rachel Weingarten, author of *Career and Corporate Cool*. "These are simply new tools with

which to do it. There are always boundaries between personal and professional, though sometimes they can seem muddled."

One problem is that editors use networking sites differently. Patti Verbanas, lifestyle editor at *New Jersey*

Life magazine, uses LinkedIn to find writers and sources, Facebook to interact with them, and Twitter to broadcast magazine news. "I get a lot of great ideas on these sites," Verbanas says. "I also discover writers' interests, which leads me to assign them stories in their fields."

While LinkedIn focuses on professional networking, Facebook often ends up as a blend of business and personal, and can skew either way. "Facebook, for me, leans

AN OPEN BOOK

Celebrating failure and rejection

FIRST, WHEN you get rejection letters, instead of becoming immobilized by this, you can experience this rejection on behalf of living beings. In other words, see yourself experiencing this rejection or failure in place of other people—you are taking away their suffering. Therefore, you can be happy about this and rejoice. On the surface, this may seem ridiculous, until you

remember that you are writing to benefit other sensitive beings, and why not benefit them during the process of bringing your work from book proposal to bookshelf?

Second, instead of seeing rejection as undesirable, use your mind and imagination to recognize it as desirable. Think about the ways that it can be desirable for you and your own situation. For me, rejections

and failures concerning my writing have helped me to combat my ego and self-preoccupation, they have made me more resilient, and I have become much more prolific and much less of a perfectionist because I have realized that no matter how perfect my proposal may seem, some people are not going to like it. I have appreciated my ultimate successes more because of the rejections that came before them. But how will rejections

benefit *you*—how will *you* look at them as desirable?

Third, from the perspective of Buddha Dharma, rejections can be seen as obstacles. As soon as you see them as not permanent and lacking inherent existence, then they cease to be an obstacle.

—Joseph Sestito

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“When I write dialogue, I feel as though I’m merely the typist, transcribing what the characters say inside my head.”

—Elizabeth Berg

toward professional,” Verbanas says. “I decided *not* to have friends or family on it, only writers, artists, photographers, editors—people who are colleagues. My posts tend to be professional: I’m hiring for this, anyone know a good source for that?”

LinkedIn helps Verbanas locate writers whose articles she has read. The site requires a specific connection before sending messages, but she fudges this by checking off a bogus category. “Then, in the message, I say I’m trying to reach them to assign something. They always respond,” Verbanas says. “I’ve gotten great writers and editors from that.”

Younger editors who have grown up socializing online often view Facebook and Twitter as places where they can let their hair down. This doesn’t mean you can’t connect to them there, but avoid the hard sell. “I’m Facebook friends with many of my editors, but never once have I used it as a strict tool to gain assignments,” says freelancer and novelist Allison Winn Scotch. “Rather, it’s a way for us to build a friendly relationship, one that I hope will eventually translate into a stronger professional one.”

Joanne Molina uses Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn mainly for her blog, *The Curated Object*, but on LinkedIn she also lists her position as senior arts and culture editor at *Interiors* magazine. Writers approach her regarding both the blog and the magazine.

Verbanas and Molina wel-

10 YEARS AGO

Physical details establish a secondary character

OFFER THE visual basics: a swatch of hair color, a suggestion of build, an indication of age. Does the character wear eyeglasses? Are her eyes a disturbing shade of gray? Is it apparent that he had battled acne as an adolescent? The visual detail can be brief, but it has to give readers enough for them to conjure up the character as a living and breathing being—to create a picture of the person in the mind’s eye of the reader. Here’s how Stephen Dobyns creates a thumbnail sketch of a secondary character in his thriller, *Boy in the Water*. Meet Chip Campbell, a history teacher and swim coach at a fictional New England prep school: “Chip had a round face and the look of a former athlete who has gone to seed. His short hair was brushed back in a ragged flattop.” Right off we have a sense of his appearance.

—From *Chris Bohjalian, The Writer, December 1999*

come writers to reach out on networking sites, but Verbanas rarely connects to anyone without a referral from someone she knows. Molina appreciates a short message explaining who the writer is and what they have in common. A member of an arts group she belongs to on LinkedIn introduced herself this way and ended up scoring numerous assignments.

“I was impressed with her background and clips, but also with the way she communicated her ideas and passions,” Molina says. “If I met her in person, there would be pressure to engage me in a short amount of time, things might not go as well. But chatting over e-mail and following her on the social-networking sites allows for an extended conversation—and a much more sincere and relaxed one at that.”

Molina likes LinkedIn for the insights it provides on writers—their education, outside interests, what they’re working on. “If someone

speaks another language, loves contemporary poetry, or just read a great novel—these things are nice to know if you’re going to be writing articles about culture,” she says. “It’s also useful to know if a writer is traveling to a place where I’m thinking about developing a feature.”

Online networking is like a conference cocktail party. If you run into an editor, you

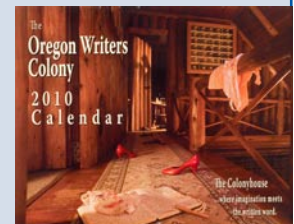
probably figure he’s there to relax, not listen to a sales pitch. If he brings up business, fine. Otherwise, you make small talk, share a few laughs, discover some common interests. Now you have a personal bond and the next time you pitch, he’s more responsive. Approach social media the same way, and you can’t lose.

—Cathleen McCarthy

Writers take off their clothes for a charitable cause

THE OREGON Writers Colony (OCW) has held workshops, retreats and conferences at Colony-house, a log home in Rockaway Beach, Ore., for more than 25 years. But the house that overlooks the Pacific Ocean was built several decades ago, and isn’t accessible to writers with health problems or physical disabilities. That’s why the group plans to add an annex with an elevator and additional rooms by 2012.

In a *Calendar Girls* move, OCW convinced several authors to pose without clothes—and with strategically placed laptops,



A tongue-in-cheek calendar aims to raise money as well as eyebrows

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Take Note

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books and other props—for a 2010 calendar to raise money for the renovation project.

As you can imagine, the writers brought their sense of humor to the shoots. The good-natured women playing pinups include Sage Cohen, author of *Writing the Life Poetic: An Invitation to Read and Write Poetry*, and Elizabeth Lyon, author of *Manuscript Makeover: Revision Techniques No Fiction Writer Can Afford to Ignore*. Representing the men are Peter Carlin, author of *Paul McCartney: A Life*, and Robert Dugoni, author of *Wrongful Death*.

The calendar sells for \$19.95 at www.colonyhouseaccesscampaign.org/cal.html.

—Sarah C. Lange

Company unveils an ‘ATM’ for books

ELECTRONIC readers like the Kindle have been hyped as the key to book publishing’s future. But some industry insiders are betting on the continued viability of old-fashioned paper books produced with a 21st-century twist: print-on-demand (POD) technology. POD refers to the digital-printing process that allows one book to be printed and bound in minutes.

Jason Epstein, former editorial director of Random House and current chairman of On Demand Books, asserts that POD will play an important role in book publishing for many years to come. He notes that the emergence of e-books has provided “powerful inducements for publishers to digitize their lists,” and he sees this move to digitization as a complementary fit for POD.

His company recently unveiled its latest iteration of what he envisions as an “ATM for books”: the Espresso Book Machine (EBM). The EBM is not much larger than a

high-volume photocopying machine and has been designed for use in almost any library or bookstore. It can print and bind a 320-page, quality paperback book with a four-color cover in as little as four minutes at a cost of “about one penny per page.”

Books can be created from digital files purchased from mainstream publishers, public-domain works available on the Internet, or files supplied by a customer who’s interested in self-publishing. The POD process eliminates many of the infrastructure costs associated with traditional publishing and bookselling like warehousing, inventory management and shipping.

More than a dozen Espresso machines are currently in use in libraries and bookstores around the world, and the company is hopeful that many more retailers will eventually employ the devices, ensuring that no book need ever go out of print.

—Dan Sarluca

DUELING WITH WORDS

Writing a book one sentence at a time

SOME PEOPLE are intimidated at writing a book because they think we authors have the whole book in our heads when we start. Heck, most of us don’t have the whole book in our heads when we finish. They think that it’s all there, we write it down, and we’re done. Don’t I wish.

Some of us (like myself) prefer to work with an outline. I’ve discovered that I like to work with a very detailed outline. Of course, I can change it (and I always do), but I know it’s there like a security blanket. Other brave souls come up with an idea and just strike out on their own, no outline, no nothing—they feel that to write anything down would sully the creative process. Most authors are somewhere in between. But all of us have one thing in

common: We all have to write our books one sentence, one scene, one chapter at a time.

I absolutely must work this way. Of course I have my outline, but when I’m actually doing the writing I have to force myself not to think much beyond the one moment in that scene that I’m writing. When the sheer enormity of what I have to accomplish pushes its way into my thoughts, my poor little brain just short-circuits—actually it freaks out. If I continue along like this, one of two things will happen: I’ll have a panic attack, or my head will explode from the sheer volume of words.

Questions start running in my head.

How am I going to get from here to there? Oh crap, I forgot to include that character. Do I really need that character? Should I save him and his subplot for the next book? How is that subplot ever going to fit in? In short, I try to do what I don’t think any author can do—have the entire thing in my head at one time. It’s kind of like looking at pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope. I don’t know about you, but my jaw drops open at just how vast the universe is. The same is true (on a much smaller scale) of my books’ universe. It’s just too big to comprehend all at once.

If you try to comprehend your entire book while you’re writing, you lose the immediacy of the sentences

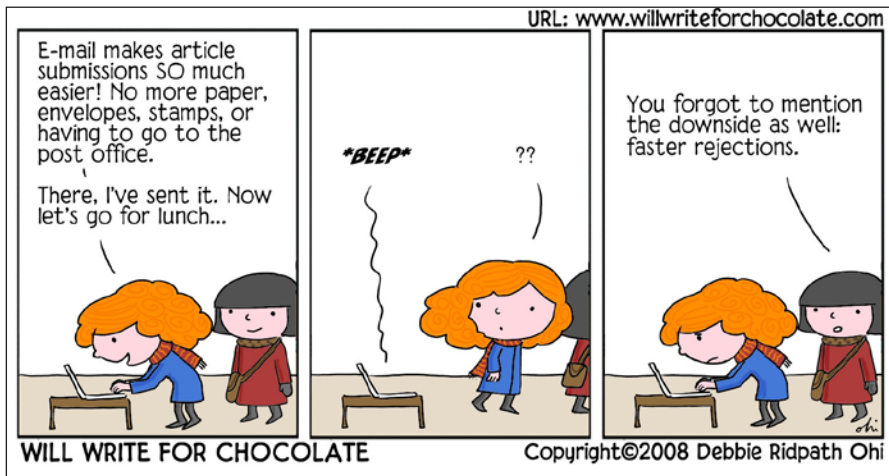


Jimmy Allen Photography

Lisa Shearin

“Of every four words I write, I strike out three.”

—Nicolas Boileau



New Web site offers reading resources

THE LIBRARY of Congress' Center for the Book debuted a new Web site, www.read.gov, at this year's National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. The site offers plenty of resources for readers, with separate pages devoted

to the interests of kids, teens and adults.

One of the highlights of the site is "The Exquisite Corpse Adventure," a collaborative story project in which a different writer and illustrator will contribute an episode to the ongoing narrative every two weeks. The episodes will be available as interactive digitized texts that mimic the feel of a printed book. Scheduled to participate in the yearlong project are Kate DiCamillo (*Because of Winn-Dixie*), Daniel Handler (aka Lemony Snicket), Linda Sue Park (*The Kite Fighters*), Katherine Paterson (*Bridge to Terabithia*), Gregory Maguire (*Wicked*) and many others.

The site also features digitized works of such classics as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven."

Resources for parents and teachers include lesson plans for *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, *The Great Gatsby* and *The Grapes of Wrath*.

And finally, visitors to the site will find videos of their favorite authors—including Stephenie Meyer, Neil Gaiman and Stephen King—speaking at various events. Published and aspiring mystery writers will want to view the panel discussion of five authors on the craft of writing mysteries.

—S.C.L.

you're writing, the intimacy between the characters in that scene. You lose that emotional human (or elf or goblin) touch. The realness of two people who care about each other, hate each other, or are about to betray each other—their intimacy/connection/animosity is lost unless you immerse yourself in their moment, get into their minds, and understand what they're feeling. Only then can you accurately convey your characters' emotions and make the words come to life on the page—one sentence, one scene, one chapter at a time.

—Lisa Shearin, author of *The Trouble With Demons* and other fantasy-adventure novels, blogs about fiction writing at www.lisashearin.com/blog.cfm.

Writer

NEXT ISSUE

JANUARY 2009

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Tracy Chevalier on putting the story first, and history second

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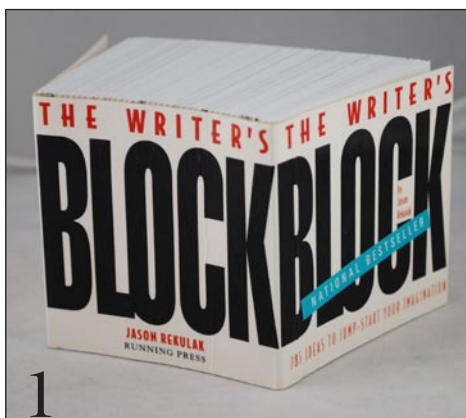
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Take Note

“Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it.”

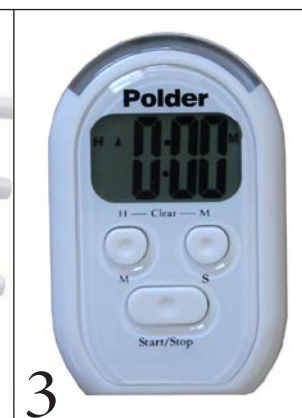
—Maya Angelou



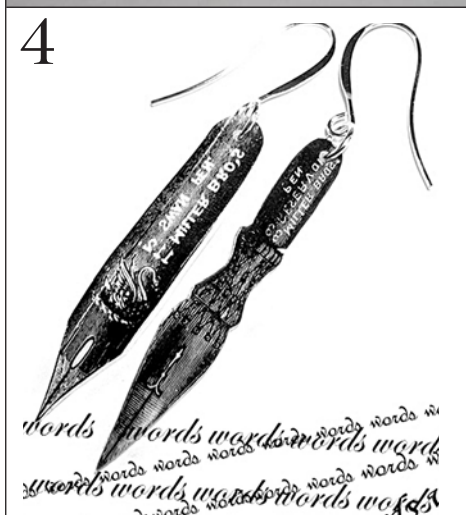
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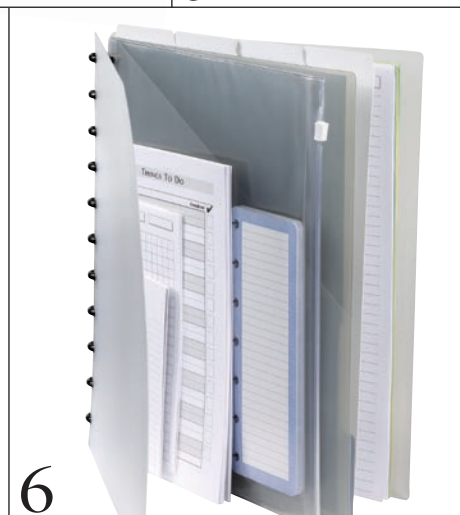
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6

Cheer your writer friends with these stocking stuffers

NEEED HOLIDAY gifts for your fellow writers? Or are your friends and family asking what's on your wish list? Here are a few ideas that might make writing even merrier.

—Ligaya Figueras

1. The Writer's Block

A 3-inch square block book filled with 786 ideas to shake off writer's block and get your imagination going. \$9.95. www.shakespearenden.com.

2. Yoropen

The sleek Yoropen EX model refillable ballpoint pen allows you a clear field of vision as you write, and the adjustable ultra-soft grip shapes to your

hand. Single: \$9.99, 12-pack: \$110.40. www.yoropen.ca.

3. Perfect Timer for Writers

Small, portable and easy to use. Choose the classic timer chime, vibrate setting, flashing-light setting—or all three at once—to meet your daily writing goal. \$13.25. www.ninthmoon.com.

4. Pen Nib Earrings

Wear your profession on your ears. These elegant earrings featuring Victorian-fountain-pen nibs are made of white plastic coated with varnish and shiny silver-plated ear wires. \$15. <http://tillybloom.ecrater.com/product.php?pid=2383166>.

5. Sony Digital Voice Recorder

The compact Sony ICD-UX70 makes interviewing and note-taking a snap. It features five recording modes, up to 290 hours of recording capacity, and convenient direct USB connection. Headphones included. \$59.97 (on clearance at press time). www.sonystyle.com.

6. Circa Simply Irresistible Sampling Kit

Experience Circa's trademark customized flexibility with this sampler filled with dozens of note-taking and workbook tools to help you organize your writing projects. What's more, it comes with a \$40 Circa gift card good toward other Circa products. Write on! \$40. www.levenger.com.