

Stet

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

AUGUST MEETING — IWOCFEST

It's IWOCFest! Fun and Frolic in the Heart of Greektown on August 8

BY JOEN KINNAN

On August 8, the coolest party in town — we hope literally — will be on the rooftop at Pegasus Restaurant in Greektown. Can't you just feel that refreshing evening breeze already?

IWOCers, friends, and guests will gather for our annual summer bash at 6 p.m. We'll toast our success, tell a few tall tales, and in general have a rousing good time. There will be a cash bar, but IWOC will pick up the tab for the dinner wine, and we'll have tons of delicious food served family style. (No one will notice you're having a third help-

ing of that yummy dish.)

If you're a new member, it's a great chance to get to know your colleagues in a really relaxed atmosphere. Bring your friends, your family, your clients, or come alone. You'll have fun.

The details: Pegasus is at 130 South Halsted in Greektown. There's valet parking, parking across the street,

and some street parking.

Public transportation is nearby too. The party begins at 6 p.m. The cost is just \$25 (lower than last year) if you reserve in advance. You can also pay at the door (\$30). In case of rain, we'll move the party indoors. Sign up through the PayPal link on the website or the link on your recent email. You still have time to send the office a check if you'd rather.

Mail the check (payable to IWOC) to IWOC, PMB 119, 1800 Nations Drive, Ste. 117, Gurnee, IL 60031. See you all there rain or shine! ♡



Society of Professional Journalists to Convene in Chicago, August 24-27

The SPJ is holding their annual convention in Chicago this year, and they're hoping to see some IWOC journalists there. Advanced registration (by August 16) is \$210 for members of SPJ and \$310 for nonmembers. At the door, registration is \$260 for members and \$360 for nonmembers.

There will be an opening night reception on Thursday, August 24, from 7 to 10 p.m. (cost \$60), and an awards luncheon on Friday, August 25 at noon featuring *New York Times* columnist Samuel G. Freedman (cost \$40). Bill Kurtis will be the keynote speaker at the Friday morning session of the conference. Perhaps of greater interest to IWOCers are the half-day workshops offered. All half-day workshops cost \$25, and all are on Thursday, August 24 from 1-5 p.m.

The topics include: Workout on the Web: Personal Productivity Training for Journalists; at the Columbia College Journalism Department Lab. Trainer: Barbara K. Iverson, Journalism Department, Columbia College. At the Hyatt Regency Chicago: Going Live! Hands-On Training for Better Reporting. Trainers: Herb Brubaker, president, Television News Center; Steve Taylor, correspondent, ABC News; Art Norman, co-anchor, NBC 5 News.

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HR 5439 Threatens Copyright Protection

BY JOEN KINMAN

Stet is indebted to IWOCer Lisa Holton who brought this matter to our attention.

Well, they're at it again. We all know about the ways in which writers — and others in the creative media — have had their compensation whittled down with “buy all rights for all media” contracts from newspapers like the *Chicago Tribune* and other big-city dailies. For those who've been sleeping under rocks, if you sign one of these contracts — and you usually have to if you want to sell your piece — you will get no additional compensation no matter where or how the newspaper uses your material. It may show up on the internet, or in a CD, or on Mars, for all I know. So an article that you originally wrote for one newspaper can be disseminated far and wide, and you won't get another dime for the reuse of your work. The same is true for lots of corporate work.

Now comes a new indignity: Representative Lamar Smith (R-TX) has introduced HR 5439, the “Orphan Works Act of 2006.” In a nutshell, the Orphan Works Act would provide anyone the legal right to use a story, an image, art, or certain other intellectual properties simply because they couldn't find the owner of the copyright after a “reasonably diligent” search. Though there is some language describing what “reasonably diligent” means, it's not very definitive. The would-be pirate has only to “try” to find the author or artist. If that effort is unsuccessful, Blackbeard can go ahead and use the work without payment because the unfortunate work is considered “orphaned.”

To add insult to injury, the bill also limits what the copyright holder can recover from someone who purloins his/her work without compensation. The bill specifically limits recovery to “reasonable compensation” for actual use. One might get attorney's fees or “full costs,” but that's up to the court, and rather than spelling out how damages might be awarded, the bill specifically absolves the infringer from having to pay any damages if said infringer made an effort to find the copyright holder.

So in effect, people and organizations who want to use someone else's work might as well go ahead and give it a shot without looking for the copyright holder. If they get caught, all they're likely to have to pay is what they would have legitimately paid in the first place, and even that amount may be set by the court.

Admittedly, this law is probably a greater threat to artists who have spiffy illustrations spread all over the internet — who knows, maybe someone will steal my “party Pegasus” from the IWOC website — but it definitely places an ominous cloud over writers too. And aren't all we creative types in this together anyway? (Just so you know: we *bought* the cartoon on the next page.)

Big search engines (e.g., Google), libraries, universities, and others of this ilk are solidly behind this bill. Why not? They use reams of other people's work, and it will make their lives a lot easier if they don't have to be picky, picky about finding and getting permission from copyright holders, not to mention compensating them. The bill is also supported by the trade groups that represent the major copyright industries, including the music, movie, book, and software industries. All would benefit from the bill. While the bill would weaken the copyright protection afforded to all creators, it would primarily harm individuals and very small businesses. Us, in other words.

With all that clout behind it, it will be an uphill battle to prevent enactment of this bill. But if you'd like to be David to their Goliath, what can you do to help this bill bite the dust? Write, call, or email your congressperson for starters. According to the website www.illustratorspartnership.org, Representative Howard Berman (D-CA) and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) appear to be sympathetic to the copyright holders' plight. You can contact them too. And email your friends and colleagues and ask them to join the fray. This column is my opinion, but if you'd like to see IWOC take a formal stand on this issue, let anyone on the board know how you feel. Don't know who's on the board? Look at the masthead to your left.

By the way, I didn't contact Representative Lamar Smith to ask if I could use his picture. Of course I would have, but there are just sooo many Smiths I didn't know where to look. A pity, but oh, well, I kind of think he might be an orphan anyway.♣



SPJ Convention August 24-27

Continued from page 1.

Also at the Hyatt Regency Chicago: The Business of the News Business. Moderator: Paul Davis, senior vice president, Foundation for American Communications. Faculty: James K. Gentry, Ph.D., professor, University of Kansas; Debra Schwartz, media analyst, Credit-Suisse.

The final workshop is offered on Friday from 9-11 a.m. as well as on Thursday 1-5 p.m. at Chicago Tribune Tower. The topic is: Mindreading Your Audience: How to Get People to Pay Attention When (They Think) They Don't Care. Trainer: Charlie Meyerson, senior producer, chicagotribune.com.

For more information about the SPJ conference, go to www.spj.org. You can get all the details and download a registration form from there. ♦

IWOC and SPJ Freelancers to Gather at a Local Watering Hole

Whether or not you attend other events connected with the SPJ conference, you'll want to join IWOCers and SPJ freelancers for a get-together on Friday night, August 25 at about 7:30 p.m. at a downtown spot. This is nothing official, and it only costs what you want to spend on food and drink. It's a great opportunity to mingle with freelance journalists from all over the country. Hear their war stories. Find out what pay rates are elsewhere. Maybe you'll even get some leads on new places to write for. It should be lots of fun, so put it on your calendar.

We haven't picked a spot yet — it should be accessible to the Hyatt Regency — but we're open to suggestion. Some ideas so far: the original Billy Goat (pros: historic site, out-of-towners might like to see it; cons: a real dump) and Miller's Pub (pros: a fun place; cons: awfully noisy). To give us more ideas and to tell us you're coming, send an email to webmaster@iwoc.org or jpkinnan@comcast.net. And please note: the time has been moved up to 7:30 p.m. so we won't get home so late. You'll be notified by email about the location. ♦

Become a Mover & Shaker

IWOC elects officers for the coming year in September, and we're always looking for new blood, so if you're interested in serving on the board or a committee, contact president Harry Karabel at ironyrules@comcast.net. Public relations people: the PR chair is vacant. Let's not make the same people keep doing it all.

Calendar

August 8

IWOCFest. Pegasus restaurant, 130 S. Halsted in Greektown. Party begins at 6 p.m. \$25, advanced reservation. \$30 at the door. See page 1 for complete details.

August 25

IWOC-SPJ Freelance Get-Together. An opportunity to meet and party with other freelance journalists from around the country. See the adjacent story for details.

September 12

IWOC monthly meeting. Election of officers and program TBA. Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Ample parking and the El nearby. Buy-your-own dinner follows at a nearby restaurant. Networking at 5 PM, program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates free, nonmembers \$15.

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there's no group in your area, why not start one? Contact webmaster@iwoc.org.

August 24 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP monthly lunch. Join near-west suburbanites at noon for an outdoor lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park (summer location). For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065.

September 7 (1st Thursday)

IWORP monthly breakfast. Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

IWOC WELCOMES NEW MEMBER

JON THRELKELD

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

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WWW.IWOC.ORG