

MAY MEETING

Association Publishing: It's a Hot Market for Freelance Writers & Editors in Chicago

BY DAVID EPSTEIN

The Chicago area is second only to Washington, DC, as a headquarters for not-for-profit organizations. Three of the largest fraternal organizations are located here (Elks, Lions, Rotary), and we would boast an A-to-Z array of industry, professional, and educational associations, except that AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) stubbornly chooses to stay in Silver Spring, MD.

The IWOC meeting on Tuesday, May 13, is your chance to learn more about the scope and needs of association publishers in Chicago, and the potential for freelance editors and writers to help fulfill their endless demand for copy for quality professional publications.

IWOC members and guests will hear from publishing executives at two leading Chicago-area organizations. Jean Roberts, director of production and manufacturing at the American Medical Association, will discuss the extensive publishing program of one of the largest and best-known professional associations. Jay Strother, who as group publisher of SmithBucklin has overall responsibility for more than 30 client publications, will explain how his

operation fulfills the publishing needs of some of the 200-plus trade associations, professional societies, technology user groups, and government institutes/agencies served by his company.

Publishing of professional resources and news about industry developments and association activities just happens to be one of the most valuable services such organizations offer to their members. As commercial publishers have consolidated and relocated elsewhere, the magazines, journals, books, and websites of Chicago-based not-for-profit organizations may well have become the liveliest publishing market in town.

As director of production and manufacturing, Jean Roberts oversees development, copy editing, and production of the American Medical Association's extensive publishing program, other than JAMA, the association's weekly, and the Archives journals. She is responsible for the quality and timeliness of a large family of professional and reference books, newsletters, electronic publications, and online resources. Jean's more than two decades of publishing experience also include positions as a project manager and later develop-

mental editor at Richard D. Irwin, Inc., a major publisher of business education textbooks, which is now the key component of McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Jay Strother is the group publisher at SmithBucklin, the world's largest association management company. As senior manager of the company's Publishing and Editorial Services Department, Jay oversees a group of editors, production staff, and advertising sales professionals. Jay has nearly two decades of association publishing experience, including positions as associate publisher and editor-in-chief for the 10,000-member Association of Legal Administrators and Director of Publications for the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m. and the meeting at 6. Nonmembers are cordially invited. The meeting is free for IWOC members and \$15 for nonmembers. Plan to stay afterwards for a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant. Remember: the location is National-Louis University, 122 South Michigan, Room 5008. National-Louis U. is across the street from the Art Institute. 🍷

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Cynthia Mikal, Roger Rueff.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

The Language of One Who Hopes

As I was walking up Michigan Avenue the other night with a friend and fellow writer, it suddenly struck me to ask her if she'd ever heard of Esperanto. The question didn't burst out of the blue, of course (I'm not demonstrably psychotic and don't hear voices on weeknights), but I honestly can't recall what sort of conversational Brownian motion brought us to the point where the subject was in any way relevant. It's likely that we'd been discussing language in general, as writers are wont to do. In any case, the answer was no—she'd never heard of Esperanto. Which

allowed me to wallow briefly in that strange delight one feels when one finds a virgin audience for an obscure subject one finds of mild interest and knows at least a little bit about. I don't hang my life on such moments, but neither do I allow them to escape unwrapped.

I first heard of Esperanto in the mid-1960s at a time of grammar school innocence for me, when the world seemed large, the Russians were the universal bad guys, James Bond plots seemed less implausible (though even as a child, I found myself wondering about the outside-the-story lives of the minions who made up the personal armies of men like Goldfinger and Dr. No), and my interest in international

affairs was wet-nursed by a Saturday morning kids' show called "The Big Blue Marble," sponsored by IT&T. I knew nothing about Esperanto at the time except for its name, but the very idea of it fascinated me... a universal language... a way we might all understand each other clearly... now wouldn't that be something. In the polyglot world of that

**Intelligentaj personoj lernas
la internacian lingvon.
(Intelligent people learn the
international language.)**

**Esperanto havas facilajn
regulojn.
(Esperanto has easy rules.)**

era, differences in languages seemed like unnecessary barriers to me... artificial walls between peoples.

Even as a kid, I had a strong interest in language. I took classes in French, and in junior high school I was in a competitive spelling class and went to the Colorado-Wyoming state finals—where I bowed out near the top on the word "predecessor," which I accidentally spelled with one "s." I knew the word had two esses, of course, but I crumbled under the pressure of being in a local television studio, less than a half-hour from going on the air live to all of Greater Denver. (My friend Richard succumbed to the same pressure and ended up bowing out eight places



before me, having added an unnecessary "u" to the word "vagabond.") The moments we wish we could have back.

When I first heard of Esperanto, I assumed it was a modern construction—something cooked up 60s-style to bring the world together for the Age of Aquarius. Only when the remembrance of it came to me a few years ago did I do

a little research and discover the truth... that it preceded the Summer of Love by roughly 80 years.

Esperanto was "invented" (read "published") in 1887 by Dr. Ludvic Lazarus Zamenhof, a Polish ophthalmologist and philologist whose upbringing exposed him to many dif-

ferent languages—including Russian, German, Polish, and Yiddish—and who later studied French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and English. He never meant for Esperanto to replace the world's many languages. Rather, he hoped it would serve as a second, common language that would allow people of all nationalities to communicate clearly with each other while retaining the cultural identities of their respective homeland tongues.

What makes Esperanto attractive is its simplicity. The Esperanto alphabet, for example, contains 28 letters... but each letter corresponds to only one sound, and each sound corresponds to only one

Continued on page 5.

The Karma of IWOC

BY CYNTHIA MIKAL



For the April meeting, we had a panel discussion. Dave Epstein, as program chair, put it together for members and new members. The topic was why an IWOC membership is a real investment in improving your bottom line. I have to say that one of the biggest things that I got out of it was “the karma of IWOC.” Whatever you put into IWOC, you get out. By the way, I am new member Cynthia Mikal, and while I have been coming to the meetings for a while, this was my second meeting as a member. I want to thank everyone for being so welcoming and helpful, just as this panel was. But let’s look at what the panel had to say.

The panel consisted of Jim Kepler, Catherine Rategan, Jeff Steele and Jennifer Lyng.

Jim started out the evening by asking for a show of hands of those who had their business cards with them. Jim lives in a 19-unit building, and he only half jokingly said he even takes his with him when he goes to the basement. He has found that work comes from all kinds of places, and it is important to be ready to take advantage of the opportunities by having those cards with you. Jim does very little writing at this point and is happy to try and keep it that way. He produces books that have small sales potential in the general public such as family biographies. He attended his third meeting as a new member and, while getting a ride home from the meeting, also got a job. That job would have paid for about 50 years

worth of IWOC meetings! Jim emphasized that other members can be a great reference for you for work.

Jim also met people at IWOC who were relentless in their pursuit of networking, and this resulted in a great deal of work for both Jim and for his wife. A few places to look for referrals – former members, IWOC directory, IWOC book fair, lick-and-stick parties for IWOC mailings (editor’s note: alas, we don’t do these any more), coffee after church, neighbors, and IWOC networking.

Jim also stated that IWOC is not just a source of work; it is a source of friendship. He finished by saying that he likes what IWOC stands for. As examples, he referred to the times when IWOC supported Salmon Rushdie when Rushdie received death threats from radical Muslims after publication of his controversial novel *The Satanic Verses* and when we joined the National Writers’ Union in opposing the New York Times policy of reusing journalists’ work without paying them for it. Jim mentioned that he would like to see us take a stand now against Amazon’s new policy of requiring authors of print-on-demand books to use Amazon’s printer instead of their own.

Catherine spoke next and started by mentioning that – as cofounder of IWOC – her original intent was for it to be an organization that could help writers get better health insurance rates. She soon changed to: We are all in this together as

writers, and we should be standing up for each other and referring work to each other.

Catherine emphasized that you should make it easy for people to find you and work with you. As a writer, you should be pleasant and agreeable. You must have a website and a brochure to hand or send out. You must be willing to acquire new skills. Early in her career, she wrote ‘Dippity Doo’ commercials and ads for Maybelline eye makeup. After that experience, when she started her own business, she not only needed to acquire more skills, she was ready to!

Catherine’s advice: when you refer work to others, karma will step in; when you make cold calls, that sets up a positive force field and things will come back to you; when someone asks, “Can you...?”, say YES!, and then go find out how to do it, usually by calling another IWOC member for advice.

She mentioned that as a writer you provide a service that others want and you can use that to trade for things you want or need. She advised that you should make sure you get a good database program and keep good records. She also briefly discussed incorporation. She began as an S corporation but found that a C corporation was much better for her. She wrapped up by saying that what you give will come back to you, and she gets more business from people calling her than by having to make calls herself.

Jennifer spoke next and

said: “Work on your profile. That is what people see when they are looking for a writer on the IWOC website.” She has gotten calls from the directory too, so she advises keeping your profile updated and putting clips on it. This remark led to a brief digression and discussion on how many clips you can put on the IWOC website. The answer: you can put up as many clips as you want, but they have to be in one of the three allowed files. You can contact Joen Kinnan for more information.

Jennifer mentioned a project that she got from Finland. She never would have cold-called someone in Finland, but they found her through the IWOC website and called.

She also suggested networking with other members to share stories, exchange ideas, and give a heads-up about problem clients you may have encountered.

Also for Jennifer, IWOC is not just about work. She has made many friends in IWOC whom she sees regularly. IWOC friends can also be mentors: people to bounce ideas off and call when you have questions.

Jeff doesn’t believe that IWOC talks enough about the return on the investment of membership. He wanted to be on the panel to talk about how much he has gained monetarily by being a member and how that makes the membership fee a pittance. He was initially skeptical that IWOC would do anything for him, but he joined anyway. Without expectations, he attended

The Karma of IWOC

Continued from the previous page.

one or two meetings a year, did not check the writers' line, did not think the directory would be helpful. One day in August, the phone rang and it was someone looking for a writer, and thought that Jeff would be a good fit for this project. So in the unbelievably hot summer of 1995, he boarded the

of dollars from his IWOC membership. Jeff actually sat down and quantified his income from IWOC: Zero dollars for first 3 years and since then a total of \$122,695 which after taxes would pay for membership in IWOC for 564 years.

Here are some other tidbits from the panel: Jim: Handing

it pays off." Jim added that he knew of two members who had made \$27,000 and \$30,000, respectively from the writers' line jobs.

From the audience, Joen Kinnan noted that her first job in writing was from the *Chicago Tribune*, but every other one since has had an IWOC connection. Jim Kepler gave her the best client she has ever had: he was a great person and a client for 15 years and she made wonderful money. She also reminded us that, by being online, we are advertising to the whole world for the mere price of a membership fee.

Also from the audience, Roger Rueff commented that he was a member for a while, quit, and re-joined. Then Harry Karabel called him with a referral that earned him enough over two years to pay for 300 years of membership. He also cited the fantastic friends he's made through IWOC.

All this high praise for becoming active prompted Catherine to make a pitch: there is a seminar coming within the next few months, and there will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer.

At the end of the program, benefits committee chair Jean van Rensellar, who presented a list of possible benefits IWOC could offer to get feedback on what piqued our interest the most. She will work on those items and get back to the membership. ♣

There is no May Question of the Month, but we want to know what you'd like to know. Send to Karen Schwartz at writersks@sbcglobal.net or Joen Kinnan at jpkinnan@comcast.net. We welcome all suggestions whether work-related or not.

IWOC Renewal

BY JOEN KINNAN

It's almost time for IWOC renewal again. If you attended last month's meeting, you got plenty of testimonials about what IWOC membership means — both personally and financially — to some of IWOC's longstanding members. If you weren't there, be sure to read Cynthia Mikals' thorough recap that begins on page 3.

The membership drive will begin late this month, so watch your e-mail for an announcement as to when you can begin to sign up. As usual, you'll be able to reup either via PayPal and an online form or by mail with a check. As soon as possible after renewals close, we'll be publishing a new print directory, which is good news for those who joined too late to make the directory last year.

If you joined after January 1, 2008, you do not have to renew. You are paid up. If you joined sometime after last year's renewal closed, you may get a rebate on a portion of this year's dues. You'll be notified if that is the case.

As of this writing, we expect dues to be the same as last year, with the same five free listings, plus three more for those who work on committees. Join a committee and take advantage of this freebie. You'll be glad you did. ♣

Sad News

We're sorry to report the death of Tim Unsworth, a longtime columnist for the *National Catholic Reporter*, who spoke about writing for religious publications at an IWOC meeting a few years ago. He was a witty and charming man.

"Handing someone your business card is not networking. You have to talk to people and put a little effort into it."

— Jim Kepler

train and went to Hinsdale, walked a mile and a half and was just early enough to sit and dry off before his appointment. The interview went well, but he did not hear anything back until December. He is still working for that client today. That incident was his first awareness that IWOC could be helpful, but he still didn't put much into IWOC. In 2003, he was getting to be a better, faster, and more efficient writer so he decided to get more involved. He became co-membership chair. Everything started to click once he got more involved. He started meeting members and remembering their names. Through IWOC, he got another client, and that resulted in his writing for three magazines. He got "roped into helping with the boot camp," met an editor there and started writing for several of his publications. Since then, he has gotten work from another panel and from more referrals and is making tens of thousands

someone your business card is not networking; you have to talk to people and put a little effort into it." He has put IWOC's Professional Standards on a tri-fold that includes his name and the number of years he's been a member. He includes this in his correspondence to his clients. He says this is one way to put the organization behind you so you are not out there by yourself. He also touted Chicago as a great marketplace: "When rates in Chicago were averaging \$40-50/hour, DC was \$20, and when Chicago was averaging \$100/hour, San Francisco was \$60."

Catherine: "Membership marks you as a professional." She reminded us that there is a rate survey on the web-site; if your fees are questioned by your clients, you can refer them to that.

Jeff: "You have to be involved to get the most out of IWOC and you also get more friends, colleagues and associates, and the longer you are a member, the more

letter. Consequently, one doesn't encounter the goofy quirks of English, where, for example, the letter combination "gh" can be pronounced either as a hard "g" ("ghost"), an "f" ("laugh"), or not at all ("night"). As a result, one can easily and confidently pronounce any Esperanto word upon first encounter.

Pronouncing words is only a first step in speaking a language, of course; there's that whole nasty business of grammar. And that's where Esperanto really shines... because it's built on only 16 grammatical rules. All singular nouns, for example, end in "o"—all plural nouns end in "oj" (pronounced "oy"). All adjectives and adverbs end in "a" and "e," respectively. Nouns are not subject to grammatical gender, the one definite article is "la," there is no indefinite article, verbs undergo no change with regard to person or number... and so on. Congratulations... you have just read a substantial portion of the entire set of grammatical rules for Esperanto. It must be noted that Esperanto has undergone slight modifications over the years and that it is not the only constructed language in the world. There's Ido (a variation of Esperanto), Interlingua, Novial, Occidental... and even Klingon. But it is one of the most widely spoken of the constructed international auxiliary languages and might have as many as two million speakers worldwide. In addition to television and radio stations that broadcast in Esperanto, there are Esperanto-promoting communities on the Internet and even travel exchange programs that will offer you a free place

to stay in a foreign country as long as you promise to speak only Esperanto. (By the way—a fun fact to know and tell... only one movie has ever been filmed entirely in Esperanto... a 1965 horror film called "Incubus," starring William Shatner. I guess it would have been too much to expect him to speak Klingon.)

Oddly enough, Esperanto's great strength is also its weakness—at least to me. That is, its simplicity and ease of use renders it devoid of slang and dialectical variation. It is also empty of the archaisms that can imbue a sentence with meaning drawn from some common human experience in the deep past. In my youth, the absence of such things would have recommended the language all the more. I wanted the world to be clean and efficient—as it never actually has been. But as I've grown older, I've come to appreciate the beauty that a language owes to its flaws. Just as the color in a ruby or sapphire is imparted by flaws in its chemical construction, the flaws in a language are partly a credit to its richness.

So here I am defending flawed languages like English... maybe I'm demonstrably psychotic, after all. Still, the idea of Esperanto appeals to me—and as long as it retains its auxiliary status on the world stage, I'm all for it. If nothing else, I like its name, which derives from the pseudonym under which Dr. Zamenhof published the first book of Esperanto, "Unua Libro" in 1887... "Doktoro Esperanto." In Esperanto, the word "esperanto" means "one who hopes." ♪

Calendar

May 13

IWOC Monthly Meeting. Jean Roberts of the American Medical Association and Jay Strother of SmithBucklin will talk about association publishing, which is a very big market for freelance writers in Chicago. Tuesday, May 13 at National-Louis University, Room 5008, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program 6 p.m. Networking 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15; IWOC members free. For more information, call 847-855-6670 or visit www.iwoc.org.

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.

May 22 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Near-west suburbanites meet at noon on the 4th Thursday of the month for lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. This group doesn't always meet in bad weather in winter, so be sure to check to see if there is to be a lunch meeting this month before you show up.

June 5 (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.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

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WWW.IWOC.ORG

***IWOC Welcomes New Member
Belinda Fuller***