

JULY MEETING

E-ow! It's All About E-Writing!

BY STEWART TRUELSEN

E-books, e-publishing, e-literature, e-readers—e-nough already! Is it time to banish the dead-tree form of writing to our dusty book shelves and embrace the “e” form of writing, assuming we haven’t done so already? Do we even have a choice if we want to survive as freelance writers in a fast-changing marketplace for the written word?

We can’t deny that a digital revolution is sweeping the publishing industry at the same time blogs are changing the news business, YouTube has turned Everyman into a television producer, and Facebook and Twitter have made our lives read like open books.

As writers we are left with a long list of puzzling questions: How do you do a book signing for an e-book? Where is the revenue stream in cyberspace for freelance writers? How will all this e-writing be archived for future generations? Isn’t e-writing just writing, or do I need to change my style of writing? Do I need to write more frequently and have a greater web presence? What’s going to happen to newspapers and bookstores?

No one has all the answers because the revolution in writing and publishing is still in the early stages, but the *Chicago Tribune’s* Amy

Guth is both a participant and an astute observer of the digital publishing scene. At the July 13 meeting, she will discuss with IWOC members and guests how the digital age is changing the business of writing and the pleasure of reading.

“Personally, I’m a very sunny optimist in the matter,” said Guth in the *Tribune* just prior to the Printers Row Lit Fest where she participated in a panel discussion about the publishing industry’s new era. She sees it as “an exciting period of evolution, up in the air to a large extent, to become all that we dare to make of it in the years ahead.”

Guth is digital news editor for *Chicago Tribune’s* book section, “Printer’s Row,” co-host of ChicagoNow Radio on WGN, and managing editor for So New Publishing. Guth founded Pilcrow Lit Fest and leads the digital media end of the *Chicago Tribune’s* Printers Row Lit Fest. She is author of *Three Fallen Women* (2006) and co-hosts the Chicago reading series Reading Under the Influence. Guth has written for national publications including *The Believer*, *Monkeybicycle*, *Ninth Letter*, *Bookslut*, and others, and her writing has been included in the anthologies *6S Vol. 2* and *What Happened to Us These Last Couple Years?*.

Her work was listed among StorySouth’s notable fiction of 2007, and she is recipient of a Million Writers Award. Previously, Guth collaborated on several sketch comedy productions at Second City’s training center and hosted/curated Chicago’s Fixx Reading Series. She can be found on Twitter as @amyguth.

If you want to learn more about the new multimedia methods of storytelling, and especially what’s going on in Chicago, you don’t want to miss this chance to hear Amy Guth at the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, July 13. Guth wants to make this a chat, like an online chat only better because we’ll all be there in person, so bring your own observations, and of course those puzzling questions about the digital age and the written word.

The meeting will be held in Room 5008 at National Louis University, 122 S. Michigan Avenue (across from the Art Institute) in Chicago. Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m.; the program is at 6 p.m. The meeting is free for all IWOC members. Nonmembers are invited to attend for a charge of \$15. Plan to stay around for the buy-your-own dinner and priceless conversation and networking at a nearby restaurant.☘

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Joel Kinnan, webmaster
webmaster@iwoc.org

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Editor:

Joel Kinnan

Contributors:

Richard Eastline, Noreen Kelly,
Roger Rueff, Stewart Truelsen

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

Enough Rope

It turns out that the world changed forever on May 20 of this year. Who knew?

And no, I'm not kidding. Because at shortly after 6:00 a.m. PDT on that day, a scientific researcher in San Diego removed a stack of petri dishes from an incubation oven where they had been resting quietly for two days, held one of them up to the light, and spied a set of small, blue dots. And then let out an existential hoot that will eventually be heard 'round the world.

The blue dots, as it happens, marked the presence of *Mycoplasma mycoides* (*M. mycoides*), a bacterium that is a known agent of contagious bovine pleuropneumonia. The mere existence of such bacteria in a petri dish is not remarkable—the bacterium was first isolated in 1898—but these bacteria were different. These bacteria were *synthetic*. That is to say, the genomes that caused them to come to life and reproduce on their own had been designed on a computer, assembled inside yeast cells, and transplanted into the cells of a completely different type of bacterium, *Mycoplasma capricolum*, whose restriction enzymes had been removed.

Inside the petri dishes, the synthetic *M. mycoides* genomes took over the *M. capricolum* cells into which they had been transplanted, reprogrammed the cells according to the instructions encoded in their human-

engineered DNA sequences, and began making copies of themselves, each of which contained an exact duplicate of their original, manmade DNA.

And yes, a quiet, awe-struck "Whoa!" is appropriate here. Because the blue cells in the petri dish (the color of which was encoded by human design) represent what their creators have appropriately described as the first biological organisms in the history of Earth who "have no parents"—that is, whose genome never existed before and is not derived from a mutation of some previously existing genome. In other words, the research team had created *synthetic life*.

Yes. Whoa!

The discovery moment in the San Diego laboratory represented the culmination of 15 years of effort by a research team led and partly financed by Dr. J. Craig Venter, the man who, in the late 1990s, forced the issue of genome mapping by boasting that his private company, Celera Genomics, could map the entire human genome in one-third the time and at one-tenth the cost of the then-current publicly funded effort to do so—the Human Genome project... and then delivered on the boast. When Bill Clinton and Tony Blair jointly announced the completed human genome map in June, 2000, they heralded it as a major step toward the possible eradication of disease. In Clinton's words:



"It is now conceivable that our children's children will know the term cancer only as a constellation of stars."

Barack Obama's official response to the announcement of the creation of synthetic life was somewhat more subdued. Specifically, he announced that within six months the White House bioethics committee would submit a report about the "genuine concerns" raised by the development.

Genuine concerns, indeed.

Whether this development is, in fact, a breakthrough leap on par with the development of the printing press, the steam engine, nuclear weaponry, and the microchip—or whether it is merely the next step forward in genetic engineering—the implications are profound and the questions that pop to mind are legion.

For one thing, what kinds of controls can and/or should be placed on the technology and its use? Human history is rife with examples of technological advances serving as two-edged swords. The same nuclear reactions that propel spacecraft and produce electricity in power plants can be used to incinerate whole cities in fractions of a second. The same knowledge of microbiology that has allowed pharmaceutical companies to create drugs targeting specific diseases has also allowed for biological weaponry.

The creation of an artificially designed organism that can reproduce on its

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Marketing Pro Shares Tips on How to Grow Your Business in a Down Economy

BY NOREEN KELLY

Those who braved the rain to attend the June 8th IWOC meeting were treated to an engaging and entertaining presentation by Gary Glenn, savvy marketing consultant and business owner. Gary shared with us practical wisdom on how he grew his business in a down economy.

Gary Glenn has over twenty-five years experience in the media, communications and advertising industry. He has established three separate business/consulting ventures in his career, including his current business, StitchMine (www.stitchmine.com), which has become the premier provider of quality logo wear and corporate apparel in the Chicago area.

An avid sailor, Glenn used nautical themes to get his points across:



- *When problems first appear on the horizon, recognize the impending challenges.* Reef the sails and adjust your course.
- *Research, research and more research.* Take a bearing of where you are and where you are going. Research what type of business purchases in a down economy and who purchases your product. Keep in mind this question: What are you selling?
- *Maintain your objectives and adjust your plans.* Sometimes you have to change the tack of your sails when the wind changes if you want to stay on course. Other times, you have to change your destination.

Glenn emphasized the importance of preparation and getting back to basics as he offered these universal principles of marketing:

- **Product:** Will this sell? Do whatever it takes to improve the quality, which increases value. One bad piece results in lost business.
- **Price:** What does it take to make a profit? Don't cut quality to make a sale. Don't be afraid to lose a sale. There's always someone who will do it cheaper. Keep in touch with lost customers and educate them on why you're better.
- **Place:** Cross promote with other businesses. Practice collaborative marketing. Don't be afraid to try things. Network.
- **Promotion:** Offer freebies/giveaways. "Network with a buzz" – sing the same tune over and over. Create a brand. How are you perceived? What's the message? Who are you? Why are you different?

- **People:** Who's your dream client? What motivates him or her? If you're not out there selling, you're being out-sold. Be attuned and open to sales opportunities all the time.

More words of wisdom from Glenn:

"Business is like a box of dynamite – you never know when it's going to blow up."

"When all product elements are equal, the principal focus of the buyer is price."

On differentiation: "Never interfere with your enemy when he is in the process of destroying himself." — Napoleon Bonaparte

"Pricing is like a broken elevator – once it goes down, it never goes back up."

Your elevator speech: "Which floor ... the second floor or the top of the John Hancock?"

In the Q&A, Glenn was asked about his remark, "I don't want a 1,000 piece order; I want 10 100-shirt offers." Glenn responded: "The higher the quantity, the less you have to charge. It's about production capability and profitability."

Another audience member asked, "How does your presentation apply to the service of freelance writing?" Glenn replied that differentiation and pricing apply to services, as well as to products. "Don't think of yourself as a commodity. How are you positioning yourself? Consider yourself as a differentiated product," Glenn advised.

A freelance writer newbie asked about tips for starting a business. In addition to sailing, Glenn also has an interest in playwriting, and he suggested thinking about the process of identifying your customer as building a character. Another tip: "Business is a quality game, not a numbers game."

Glenn left us with these valuable pointers:

- **Don't sacrifice quality.**
- **Sell ... sell ... sell.**
- **Follow the plan.**

At the end of his presentation, Glenn practiced what he preached and awarded three free StitchMine gift bags for those alert audience members who correctly answered his questions, based on content from the presentation.

A Dictionary for Connoisseurs (Complete with Tour Guide)

This is yet another review in an irregular series devoted to books and Internet sites that are popularly classified as reference source material.

BY RICHARD L. EASTLINE

The Lexicon / William F. Buckley Jr. / 166 pp. plus introduction, illustrated by Arnold Roth / Harvest Div. of Harcourt, Inc. / Small-format paperback / 1996 / ISBN 978-0-15-600616-3

Yes, it's THAT William Buckley—the late, self-anointed champion of expansive vocabularies. It would be churlish to deny his earned reputation as a master of articulation.

But, behind the cool, seemingly aloof personality that felt so comfortable around orphaned words was this frustratingly difficult, but somehow admirable defender of the faith. The “faith,” of course, being the preservation and propagation of what might be termed civilized discourse.

Buckley didn't need to brag about his resourceful inventory of words to fit any occasion; he simply used them in everyday communication as if they were necessarily the appropriate choices for the occasion. Never mind the dropped jaws, popped eyes, or bedazzled expressions of listeners or readers. To him, those responses were the equivalent of applause.

So, then, what about the book? It's a dictionary—somewhat. There are Buckley's choices of words put forth in alphabetical order, each followed by a terse definition but without giving its typical pronunciation or even a hint as to origin.

However, the (roughly) 1100 entries are partnered

with some of the oddest text examples, which employ the specified word in anything but everyday usage.

Initially, there is a sense of puzzlement about these choices. Some could be

judged as commonplace statements, many more as having been lifted out of overheard conversations, and some as acerbic observations, a la G.B. Shaw. Why use them? Obviously, you skipped reading the introduction, which reveals that all of these citations have been extracted from the author's own writings. These are words that Buckley has actually tasted, in a sense, before recommending them to you.

There are entries throughout the pages (many accom-

panied by wonderfully demented drawings in New Yorker style by Arnold Roth) that today are not as esoteric as they may have once been.

And, of even more interest, is the discovery of

words that you might have thought to exist but never saw evidence that they do—such as verb forms for some everyday nouns and vice versa.

Examples: “contemn” (verb / to view or treat with contempt) and “defi” (noun / a challenge or rejection of).

Nearly all of the selected words are in English with a smattering of Spanish and Latin entries. Some words seem to be more equal than others by their appearance in both noun and adjectival form.

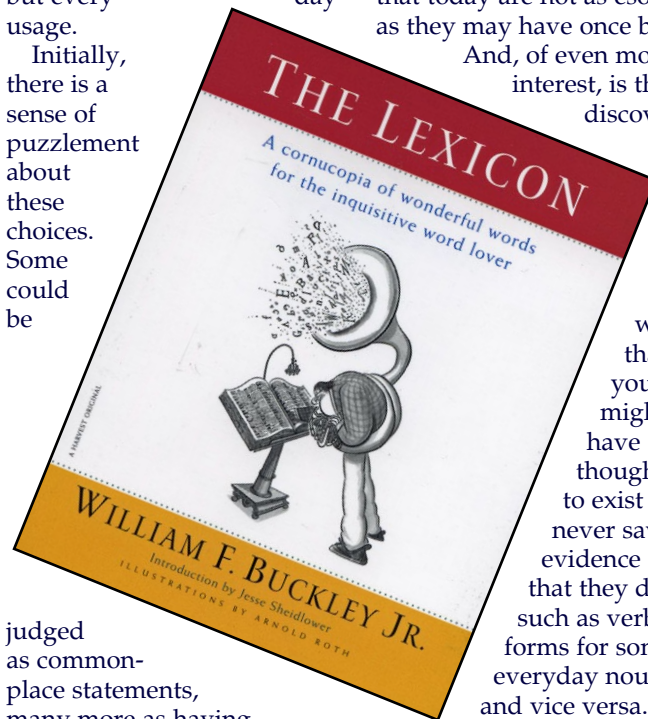
All in all, the collection is a readable mixture that entertains, educates, and even

stimulates the urge to try using at least a few of what may be termed “Buckley Building Blocks” for the adventurous writer.

Credit the author with stirring the status quo. He never acquiesced to proposals to dumb-down the capacity for writing and speaking intelligently. Buckley may have gone over the top in his practice and his preaching but he did much to reveal the beauty and power of vocabularies that go beyond the mundane. He did succeed in showing that “difficult” words are often difficult only in our decision to use them.

Enhancing vocabularies was an obsession in which he excelled (as opposed to his obsession to be regarded as an accomplished harpsichordist, which he wasn't). “Lexicon,” incidentally, can mean “a special vocabulary” as well as “a dictionary.” How appropriate. ♡

NOTE: You may find this pocket-size book on the tables of discounted titles in bookstores (remember them?) so the cost will vary from its list price of \$12. If, by chance, you have a copy of Buckley: The Right Word, then you already own The Lexicon as the contents originally were part of that volume.



President's Column Continued from Page 2.

own, without our help—well, that might be a three-edged sword... the kind that creates a wound that doesn't close up and never heals.

At the moment, the efforts and methods required to produce synthetic life require funding at the level of nation states, but what happens as the technology is refined, simplified, and made cheaper and more accessible. Who could have imagined 100 years ago that in 2010, one could walk into a Walgreen's drug store and choose from an array of home pregnancy or paternity tests? Or that someone with diabetes could prick his/her finger and get a quick and accurate reading regarding his/her blood sugar level? Or that nation states could be frightened by the prospect of suicidal extremists getting their hands on nuclear material?

The discovery raises philosophical questions, too, along the lines of "What is life?" But a more-immediate concern in our capitalist-dominated world is, "Who profits from this?" In a live roundtable discussion after a Discovery Channel special on the breakthrough, Dr. Venter offered that the Supreme Court had long ago decided that life forms could be patented—a possible reference to the Plant Patent Act of 1930. Then he and *New Yorker* science writer, Michael Specter—who should have been outfitted with tight pants, a pair of pom-poms, and a sweater bearing a large "V"—averred confidently that any company that profited from the technology would be paying taxes on their profits, and the taxes would constitute payback to the U.S. government for the seed money it had put up to get the project going. Neither mentioned the words "offshore corporation," "Bermuda," or "tax haven." To do so might have pricked a pin in the happy balloon filled with the euphoria of discovery and the heady feeling of profits on the horizon.

And neither mentioned the special nature of this particular discovery—the fact that it can make copies of itself. If I patent a new type of toilet, I can manufacture and sell it to my heart's content, confident that anyone who prefers another design can continue to use and flush theirs without fear of mine taking over. My toilets would not reproduce and go around installing themselves in the world's bathrooms.

But a living organism is gifted with the special ability to take molecules in its surrounding environment—call them "nutrients"—and use them to reproduce. And if, even by accident, it proves to be particularly robust in a given environment, it could end up completely dominating that environment. And if it happens to carry an unseen "patent" on its genetic structure—a characteristic of its genetic structure that cannot be measured outside a court of law—then its dominance can affect more than its mere physical environment; it can affect the lives and livelihoods of people associated with the environment (see Monsanto, genetically modified corn and soybeans).

If you're thinking this all sounds pretty scary, join the club. There are no dues and no dotted lines to sign on. All you need is the capacity for healthy trepidation and a basic understanding of human nature.

And the feeling that on May 20, this year, we as a species might have finally woven ourselves a sufficient amount of rope. 🐦

Calendar

JULY 13

IWOC Monthly Meeting. Join us to hear expert Amy Guth discuss e-writing and what it means for independent writers. The meeting will be held at National-Louis University, Room 5008, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program 6 p.m. Networking 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15; IWOC members free. Buy-your-own dinner follows. Nonmembers welcome. 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.

JULY 27 (4th Tuesday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Join near-west suburbanites for a noon lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. Check before you come. This lunch is monthly only if there are enough people who can attend. Note: The lunch is now on the 4th Tuesday, not the 4th Thursday as it had been in the past.

AUGUST 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.

IWOC Welcomes New Members
Kathleen Loudon
and
David C. Hammond

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in Coming Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG