



# Stet

## Independent Writers of Chicago

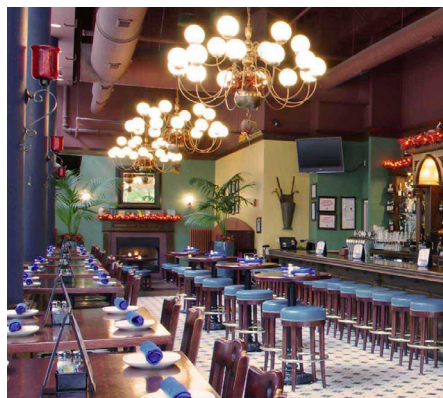
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YOU ASKED FOR IT, SO HERE'S OUR FIRST NETWORKING EVENT

## IWOC & C3 meet & greet at June D4 mixer

A writer walks into a bar . . . no, this isn't the beginning of a joke involving talking penguins or the like. It's IWOC's inaugural event to reach out to members of other organizations for our mutual benefit. And we've got a great pairing this Thursday. We're networking with the Chicago Creative Coalition (C3). For those who don't know, C3 members are photographers, designers, and other creatives.



Are you beginning to get the picture? Let's say Rita Writer strikes up a conversation with Flashy Fred the photog. After a bit of miscellaneous chit-chat and a couple of really cheap sliders, Fred discovers that Rita is mad about gardening and would love to write about it. As it happens, Fred's upcoming assignment is a photo shoot at the Botanic Garden, and he has to come up with a writer. Voila! Green thumbs entwine, and the happy couple has a snort to

.....  
*Can writers find things to talk about with other creatives? You betcha. Work.*

celebrate. It could happen, but not to you if you don't attend.

Come to D4 Irish Pub and Café, 345 E. Ohio Street in Chicago this Thursday, June 21 at 5 PM and make some new friends. Reduced prices will be in effect until 6 (this is buy-your-own) — sliders \$1, select appetizers \$5 — but the event lasts until 7. You'll be glad you came, and who knows? You might meet Fred with a job just made for you. ■

— Joen Kinnan

### Editor's Note

A thousand pardons for getting *Stet* out so late this month. Read my tale of woe on page 5 and you'll understand part of the reason. I've also been trying to work with two guys jabbering constantly in Spanish in my kitchen, while hammering, sawing, raising clouds of dust, and otherwise driving me crazy as they replaced my cedar ceiling. Unhappily, there's only a half wall separating my office from the scene of the mayhem. The ceiling, however, is stellar. And the chatty guys were terrific workers.

The newsletter is also two pages short. We're missing the May recap, which will appear next month, and I just ran out of time to fill the void with anything else. And it hasn't been proofread for the same reason. So if you notice any errors, no matter how egregious, keep them to yourself for a day or two. Otherwise, I'm likely to bite your head off.

On the plus side, there's probably not *everything* you ever wanted to know about blogging in this issue, but there's a boatload. And, there's a cute cartoon on the back page that made me laugh, which — considering the mood I'm in and the raging headache I haven't had time to do anything about — is surely testimony that it is at least slightly funny.

Other than the trifling annoyances I hinted at, it's been a great day. ■

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### Stet Editor

Joel Kinnan

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# Eat, Drink, and Get Even More Creative



**T**his Thursday, June 21, is the first of IWOC's planned joint activities with another Chicago-area professional organization. Instead of our usual venue, come to the D4 Irish Pub & Café at 345 E. Ohio Street, from 5:00-7:00 pm, to meet and mingle with other creative professionals from C3, the Chicago Creative Coalition. To check out their website, visit <http://www.chicagocreative.org/>.

Come by 5:00 if you want to try D4's popular \$1 sliders and \$5 appetizers, served from 4:00-6:00. After 6:00, they charge regular prices, and there are vegetarian appetizers, salads, and a veggie burger.

We'll get to eat, drink, and exchange ideas and experiences with fellow creatives in a relaxed, casual atmosphere. The C3 group has about 50 members, most of whom are art directors, graphic designers, illustrators, photographers, and web designers and programmers, along with a sprinkling of copywriters, including IWOC's own Brent Brotine. So this get-together opens up new possibilities for creative collaborations. C3 usually meets on the north side, but for this joint venture, they are venturing with IWOC into the wilds of Streeterville.

In case you're wondering about the name "D4" (I was), it turns out that is the postal code for Dublin. So you can feel you are hoisting tankards with Jimmy Joyce and Leopold Bloom. One recent guest described D4 as "cozy and esthetically pleasing" with an atmosphere that reminded him "of an old train station."

Speaking of trains, if you come on the Red Line, get off at Grand and walk

east two blocks past Michigan. Enter on Grand Avenue.

This is a way to "chill out" and celebrate the second day of summer. In the fall, we're planning to get-together with another organization as part of IWOC's plan to get more involved with other groups in Chicago's creative and business scene. There'll be more information on this later.

## More summer networking

For our next regular meeting on Tuesday, July 10, we'll be back at National-Louis University with more hands-on basic training in social media, which all participants asked for at the end of our March social media program. This time, we'll begin with Roger Rueff giving a more in-depth tour of IWOC's new website, including how to use the new Forums and tips on improving our online profiles as sales tools. In the second half of the program, Sylvia Alston will lead a practical hands-on session in getting the most out of LinkedIn. Since we'll only be dealing with LinkedIn this time, we'll be able to explore more of their site.

We'll shorten the socializing to half an hour and start the program early at 5:30, to make sure there's enough time for both parts of the program.

And in August—IWOC hosts Olympics closing ceremony!

If you can't make it to London, don't worry. The Olympics end on August 12, so at IWOCFest on Tuesday, August 14, we can celebrate that Chicago was spared the 2016 Games. Raise your glasses in thanks to Rio! More details to come soon on the website and by e-mail. ■



# How to make your blog work for you

Last month's *Stet* included some suggestions for blog-hosting sites along with a few guidelines on what to look for. A hosting site and a domain name are the "bones" of every blog, and if you have a website, you don't even need another domain name; you can attach your blog to your website. Getting set up is the easy part, though. To be successful and attract followers, you need to give some thought to what you want to accomplish with the blog. Below are 10 tips from experts to help you plot your course.

**1 Define your principal goals**  
Are you trying to define yourself as an expert in your field? Promote your business? Simply share your ideas and opinions? Define both short- and long-term goals.

**2 Define your target audience**  
The design and content of your blog will differ markedly depending on whether your audience is corporate professionals, friends, or someone else. "Anybody" is probably a poor choice.

**3 Be consistent in message**  
Your blog is part of your brand, and it represents a specific message and image, so stay on target. Consistency will help achieve reader loyalty.

**4 Update the blog frequently**  
A busy blog is a useful blog, and timeliness is often key. You lose your audience when they don't find something new.

**5 Be welcoming and inviting**  
Blogging has a social impact, so invite your audience to join a two-way conversation. Ask for com-

ments, respond to questions, and ask a few yourself. Continue the conversation by leaving comments on other blogs asking readers to visit *your* blog.

**6 Be highly visible elsewhere**  
Your blog's success will be partially dependent upon efforts you make outside your own blog. Comment on others' blogs, participate in social bookmarking on sites such as Digg (digg.com), and StumbleUpon (StumbleUpon.com), join LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and possibly other social networking sites. No matter how compelling your content is, if you build it, they *won't* come unless you also work hard outside your blog site. Good SEO doesn't hurt either.

**7 Take risks and try new things**  
There are lots of tools available to bloggers. Step out of your comfort zone and try them. Hold a contest, add plug-ins, keep your blog fresh by making changes, but don't go overboard by using every bell and whistle that's available. And, when you make changes, see how your followers respond to them.

**8 Seek help when you need it**  
If you're a newbie, there will be a lot to learn, but fortunately bloggers are a closely knit bunch, and most of them will be glad to help if you just ask. Even experienced bloggers don't know everything about blogging, and new tricks continually pop up.

**9 Keep on learning new things**  
Okay, people have helped you, and you're up and running, but don't just stand pat. Take the time to research recently added features and tools, and try some of those

new tricks. The blogosphere changes quickly. Keep up with it; many innovations might make your blogging tasks easier.

**10 Be yourself and enjoy**  
Establishing a successful blog with a host of loyal followers requires a lot of effort, so the last thing you need is to try to emulate somebody else who's made the grade. Learn from others for sure, but let your own personality shine through. Make your blog uniquely *you* and have fun with it.

One extremely important thing that isn't on this list — though it may be implied — is to choose the topic(s) you want to blog about very carefully. Pick something that really interests you and that you know something about. You're going to spend a lot of time with it, so be sure there's enough to talk about virtually endlessly.

Consider carefully whether you want to tackle something controversial, especially if you want to use your blog as a springboard to paid blogging jobs. If it's controversial, there will be those who don't share your viewpoint, and some might otherwise be potential clients.

Another point to think about: what is your strongest writing style? The topic will set the tone of the site and even the look. Do you want to be witty, sardonic, deadly serious, or what? If you want to show off your cleverness and humorous turns of phrase, you won't want to write about a rise in teenaged suicide, for example.

This is a lot to think about, so plan carefully. See the article on page 4 for some info about blogging for pay. ■

# Did you know...



Words are the bread-and-butter of writers, and what is more fun than a play on words? In short, punography. Here are a few gems, courtesy of Jim Kepler. Caution: these are just for groan-ups:

I changed my iPod's name to Titanic because it's syncing.

When chemists die, they barium.

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid, but he says he can stop anytime.

I'm reading a book about gravity, and I can't put it down.

A dyslexic man walks into a bra ...

I tried to catch some fog, but I mist.

I used to be a banker, but then I lost interest.

Velcro: What a ripoff!

I do not enjoy computer jokes. Not one bit.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

That French pancake house is haunted, and it gives me the crepes.

Broken pencils are pointless.

I didn't like my beard at first, but then it grew on me.

The cross-eyed teacher lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils.

A girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore. ■

# To Blog or Not to Blog for Pay: That Is a Business Question

Not so long ago, savvy internet users were talking about writing "web logs," which quickly became "weblogs," and then simply "blogs." Now blogging is all the rage, and individuals everywhere are doing it, but more importantly, so are businesses of all kinds, celebrities, politicians, and others who want to maintain high profiles. Enter an opportunity for independent writers. Many, if not most, of these high-profile seekers have neither the time nor the skills to maintain their blogs themselves. So they hire people to do it for them. As other opportunities have shrunk — in print journalism, for example — blogging is on the rise. And it can be among the better-paying freelance gigs available today, though there are plenty of 25-bucks-for-600-words "opportunities" on jobsites too.

Is carrying the water for clients on their blogsites for you? Consider the advantages and disadvantages: It's steady work, and, with the right client, a pretty good paycheck. Those are pluses. Also, successful blogging can give you, as well as your client, a pretty high profile, which can lead to other well-paying ventures.

On the other hand, blogs have voracious appetites. They generally have to be fed weekly, if not daily. Coming up with fresh ideas and clever ways to express them can become a never-ending burden. (Depending on the client, you may or may not get much help with blog topics.) Too, many bloggers-for-hire are responsible for developing ways to increase readership. So you might have to

be knowledgeable about search-engine optimization (SEO), social media, and more.

If you've never done any blogging, it may be hard to tell whether you'd like to try writing a blog for pay. The best way to decide is to establish a blog for yourself, work with it, and try to develop a following. If you're successful, and your blog takes off, that's also a great selling point for your services. Conversely, a blog that only your grandmother and a few close friends visit is not. So you'll need to improve its lure before you go prospecting for blog clients.

Let's assume that you've launched your own blog site, attracted a following, and now you want to find paying blogging work. (You're unlikely to find it if you haven't done that.) Where do you look? You might want to start with your own clients. Find out if they have blogs, and if not, develop a proposal that contains a compelling argument detailing what you plan to do for them and why that will be beneficial.

There are also numerous Internet job sites that cater to bloggers, but a cursory check of a couple suggests they're mostly of the low-ball variety. (Google "blog for hire" if you want to see what's out there.) Pay is generally per post, and blogger jobs may also include tweeting, SEO, or other add-ons. (See related article on page 3.) ■

*Bloggers are in great demand, and the work is steady. As with all things Internet, pay is all over the map, but there are well-paying gigs for the talented.*

— Joen Kinnan



## A Pro's Backup Advice

According to Andrew Wareham of TSI Chicago, the data-recovery firm I chose, external hard drives can fail from overheating, falling on the floor, or even from just falling over. A clicking noise, such as I heard, is almost always a death knell. Wareham recommends external hard-drive backup, but he also thinks everyone should take the precaution of storing data outside the office as well. You could have a fire, a power surge that fries all your equipment, etc. He suggests backing up on the cloud. (Check the February *Stet* for some ideas on that. Some cloud-backup sites are free, and others are inexpensive.)

If you ever do need data-recovery services, though, I found Wareham very helpful. He charged me for only one hour, but I think he spent longer, and he explained everything clearly. ■

— *The editor*

### A CAUTIONARY TALE

## If It Goes Click-Click-Click, Watch Out: It's a Catastrophe

The really scary creature pictured above wasn't actually lurking in my external hard drive, but it might as well have been. I had all my files, and I do mean *all* stored on a nifty Maxtor external drive. (Did I have a good reason for this? No, except that it was a big drive, and I didn't have to worry about space.) Since I had recently changed computers, I took the precaution of buying another external drive for backup. Not bothering to read the directions, in manlike fashion, I backed up everything. Or so I thought; I didn't bother to check. Fast forward a day or two: my Maxtor suddenly began going click-click-click like a horse clomping down a paved road. Horrors! Well, not to worry, I'll just restart the computer a couple of times, and the clicking will go away. (Very bad move.) Not only didn't the clicking cease, now the Maxtor had, for all practical purposes, vanished. My laptop severed all ties in an instant. I still wasn't too worried. Didn't I have everything backed up on the new external? In

a word, no. The wretched program had backed up every blessed thing on the laptop but *nothing* on the Maxtor.

Obviously, I needed help, and I'm telling this story so you'll know what's out there should you have this experience and don't have handy access to a pistol to kill yourself. (Or better yet, so it doesn't happen to you.) Here's what I learned:

First, if the hard drive in question starts making funny noises, *turn off the computer immediately, and don't turn it back on again*. If you do, you're taking minutes off the hard drive's already extremely limited life expectancy. Second, this is not a job for Sammy Savvy, the tech-friendly computer guy who helped you set up your Mac. You need a data-recovery firm. These people have "clean rooms" — think dust-free lab and people wearing gloves — and specialized equipment and programs. There are loads of them out there, but they don't come cheap. Rates start at \$150/hour and go up from there. (There are com-

panies that don't charge anything unless they can recover your data, but I've been told that their rates for recovery are inflated to cover their time.)

You might think that it wouldn't take long to recover even a large amount of data, given the speed of today's computers. You might think that, but you'd be wrong. When data are recovered from defective drives, it's done bit by bit, not a file at a time. So it's agonizingly slow.

Data-recovery experts have programs that tell them whether the drive is in its death throes. In the case of my poor Maxtor, the drive had exactly seven minutes to live. Not enough time to recover anything. I could have opted to try a company with even more sophisticated tools. Cost: minimum \$1000 but more likely \$5000. I passed on that. Goodbye client files, so long family pictures, farewell *Stet* template, and so on. I'm a belt-and-suspenders person from here on out, but it was a hard lesson. ■

— *Joen Kinnan*

# Types of Posts

Most people think of blogs as glorified discussion groups, but there are many other types of posts you can use, depending on what you want to write about. You can **interview** interesting or unusual people. Another possibility is to post **reviews** of books, software, other sites, or just about anything that would appeal.

**News** items are short of-the-moment posts that announce something new in the general category that your blog covers. For example, Microsoft's announcement that the company is releasing a tablet to rival the iPad could appear on a blog about technology. You can see that news posts could appear on many different types of sites where they would generate discussion.

**Hack** posts are not what you think. A hack post typically shows the reader how to do one thing quickly and easily. Hack posts often contain code that the reader can copy and paste for his/her own use.

A **resource** post can be something that will draw readers back to your blog again and again. Some re-



source posts are websites that contain useful information. The trouble with those is that, after the first visit, people won't need your blog to get there. Much better is to have the useful information on your own site so people will come there to get it.

**Tip** posts alert readers to new products, plug-ins or other useful resources.

A **showcase** post is just what it sounds like: It shows something

off. Showcase posts often contain graphics or photos. A blog about automobiles, for example might showcase a new model of a particular car.

If you're design oriented, an **infographic** post can add spice to your site.

Finally, a **tutorial** post gives a reader step-by-step instructions to achieve a specific result. For a gardening blog, the post could be about how to prune a rose bush, for example. ■

## In the next issue



- **July 10 meeting:** Get hands-on coaching on how to use social media. Bring an Internet-accessible laptop, iPad, smart phone, etc.
- **President's column:** Read Dave Epstein's always interesting and informative remarks.
- **Tips, tricks, and other useful information:** Don't know what it will be yet, but it will be handy to know.
- And much more.

