



# Stet

## Independent Writers of Chicago

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DECEMBER HOLIDAY BASH WILL PUT IWOCERS IN A FESTIVE MOOD

## iCaramba, Es Tiempo de Fiesta!

**A**y, chicas y chicos, put a rose behind your ear, grab your flamenco guitar, and come on down to Café Iberico next Tuesday, December 11, for our annual winter holiday fun-and-food fest.

We've been there before, and we've always had a smashing time. What's not to like? The food is terrific, and there's a great variety. Naturally, there will be plenty for those who don't want to sample *el toro*. (Actually, I don't think *el toro* is on the menu for anyone.) And you can purchase wonderful Spanish wine — or any other kind — at the cash bar. Other libations too. You'll want to save room for dessert. We're promised a *bizcocho borracho* (Spanish for "drunk cake") that is out of this world.

Another treat: this year we'll have our own private dining room — *la bodega* — the picturesque room shown on the right. So Santa won't absentmindedly pass out our trinkets to a bunch of traveling salesmen.

There's more: Bring a gently used book, and you can trade it for one you haven't read. The exchange isn't

meant to be pick-a-pig-in-a poke, so please don't wrap your book.



For all this, we've still kept the price at \$30 per person. The festivities begin at 6:00 p.m. Café Iberico is located at 737 North LaSalle, just a few doors south of Chicago Avenue. There is valet parking as well as nearby parking lots, and the restaurant is accessible to the Brown, Purple, and Red lines of the El.

It's going to be a splendid evening, so don't wait. Click your castinets — better make that your mouse — [HERE](#) to go online and register. See you there! ■

## Holiday Customs

**D**uring this festive season, we thought it would be fun to tell you about some winter holiday customs around the world..

In China, the New Year — occurring at the end of January — is the big occasion for celebration. Ancestor worship is a big deal, and families bring out paintings and portraits to honor them.

The Danes have their festive dinner on Christmas Eve. The meal features rice pudding baked with a single almond inside. Whoever gets the almond is guaranteed good luck in the coming year. Children set out glasses of milk for the *Juulnisse*. Of course you knew that those are the elves that live in people's homes. (If there are any elves living in my home, I wish they'd clean it.)

Finns have their holiday dinner on Christmas Eve too and eat the leftovers on Christmas, so they can just rest and relax. December 26, everyone troops around visiting friends and relatives, drinking glogg, and eating tons of baked goods.

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Stet is published 11 times per year by the Independent Writers of Chicago, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1032, #W686, Chicago, IL 60604-4434, 800/804-4962. Internet address: [www.iwoc.org](http://www.iwoc.org). Copy submissions are due by the 15th of the month preceding publication. All submissions and ideas will be considered. Copyright ©2012 by Independent Writers of Chicago.

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# No Room in the Inn



By now you've probably heard that IWOC needs to find a new meeting location for 2013. National Louis University has consolidated more classes in less space and has no spare rooms for us. Hence the seasonal reference in the title of this column. Without intending any irreverence, and with due respect to Pope Benedict's recent statements about the historicity of the Christmas story, I want to say that I think we'll manage something more comfy than a stable and a manger. However, I do not hope for a "star of wonder."



The facilities manager at National Louis did find us a room for our January meeting, so we'll be in room 5008 on January 8. We'll be at National Louis for the program titled "Know Your Freelancer Legal Rights," presented by a law firm partner who specializes in legal issues of literary expression, new media, and intellectual property. This is valuable information from an expert source, so I hope you can be there.

As last year, there will be no IWOC meeting in February, as we've had bad luck with February weather for

several years. For our March meeting, on Tuesday, March 12, we'll be in our new quarters. We are searching from now through January and, although we can't expect to accomplish much in the week from Christmas through New Year, we will work hard to find our new home by the end of January.

Several board members and other IWOC members have already volunteered to work with me on the search so that we can divide up the tasks efficiently, take full advantage of members' collective knowledge of the Chicago area and get a broad variety of

thoughts and perspectives. I want to thank the following people who have already agreed to work on the search team; or provided useful suggestions about locations to check; or offered to help with research and phone calls: Laura Stigler, Jenni-

fer Lyng, Ann Kepler, Laurel Johnson, Joel Kinnan, David Steinkraus, and Maitland Young. Jen Lyng and Roger Rueff also gave me a link to a map showing the geographical distribution of IWOC members (just places, no names), which I will share with the search team. This, correlated with major public transit routes, will be very useful in helping us identify locations convenient to the majority of our members.

Other members whose project schedules don't allow them to participate

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# No Room in the Inn

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## THERE WILL BE AN UPDATE ON ROOM-SEARCH PROGRESS IN THE JANUARY STET, BUT PLEASE CONTACT DAVE EPSTEIN IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR A SUITABLE VENUE

actively right now have offered useful ideas. I'll be contacting a few more people to help on the actual search team. If you are willing and able to help (and haven't heard from me yet), please call or e-mail me.

Any location we ultimately select will have to meet the following essential requirements:

- 1 Seating capacity for at least 40-50 people (with some flexibility of seating arrangements)
- 2 Convenient accessibility by public transportation from the areas where most members live
- 3 Convenient and lower cost (perhaps even free) parking than the present location requires
- 4 Acceptable accessibility for those people with mobility problems
- 5 Permission to bring in light refreshments from a caterer we choose, as we do now
- 6 Ability to charge nonmembers for admission to meetings and possibly workshops
- 7 Computer and web connections (either Ethernet or wi-fi), including video projection
- 8 A comfortable and pleasant space in a safe area and one befitting a professional group

Rental cost will also be a major consideration, and the search committee will check for any additional fees that various places might charge (e.g., catering, insurance). Our current cost at

National Louis is \$260-280 per meeting, including food. That is very modest, at least for the downtown area, and it may be difficult to match that, but we'll shop and negotiate for a good deal.

With suggestions from various members, I've begun to compile a preliminary list of potential locations, including other downtown campuses, cultural and community centers, etc. Please feel free to send any suggestions for likely places to [president@iwoc.org](mailto:president@iwoc.org). I'd rather cast the net a bit too widely at first, as we can always narrow it down.

The next step will be to share with the search team the preliminary list, as well as the member-distribution map and major CTA routes, plus other relevant information. I'll ask for any further comments and suggestions on these and other potential locations and on how best to organize the search. By mid-December we'll have divided up the various tasks and begun contacting the most promising locations to get specifics, including room sizes and rental rates. As we proceed, we'll winnow down our list to the most promising contenders and then narrow down to 3-5 locations, which we can check out on site. The goal is to get down to the finalists by the second or third week in January and start final negotiations.

There'll be an update on search progress in the January *Stet*. Meanwhile, if you know any specific places that might meet our size, cost, and accessibility requirements, please send an

e-mail to [president@iwoc.org](mailto:president@iwoc.org), where I'll be looking for your ideas and comments.

And as the season of rejoicing—and shopping mania—is already upon us, I want to wish all and each of you a



**There's got to be a meeting room in here somewhere. I know there is!**

truly joyful and meaningful celebration of whichever of our spiritual holidays you observe. If you don't observe any, then I wish you a festive and happy holiday season—and to all of you and your families, I wish a healthy and prosperous New Year. ■

**"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it."**

**—Winston Churchill**

# Did you know...



In keeping with the “word” theme of this page, below are some odd words that were once found in dictionaries of the time.

**Aquabib**—a water drinker. Coined in 1781, this word survived until 1883, but it certainly would be apropos today given the prevalence of the bottled stuff.

**Blateration**—It’s even more onomatopoeic than “babble,” which is what it means. Alas, it lived and died in 1656.

**Boreism**—the behavior of a boring person. Can’t imagine why the word died out—it would be so useful—but it lasted a mere six years from 1833-1839.

**Brephophagist**—One would hope there wasn’t much use for this word since it refers to a person who eats babies, but it was around for 144 years, until 1875.

**Diffibulate**—Sounds like a medical procedure, doesn’t it? It’s actually a mouthful that simply means “to unbutton.” First and last used in 1651. No wonder.

**Foppotee**—Another one-year wonder (1663). I’d love it if it meant what it sounds like, but it means “simpleton.”

**Pigritude**—This one really does mean what it sounds like. If you’ve got pigritude, you’re lazier than a dead dog. A 17th century gem.

**Prandicle**—We’d call it a “snack” today, but in the 17th century, having a *prandicle* made those few quick bites sound a lot grander.

Enough of this blateration. I don’t want to be a boreist, so I’m going to diffibulate my sweater and go grab a prandicle.

— Joen Kinnan

# Words Well Lost

The English language has many words, and we keep adding more. Long ago I was taught that there are about 6,000 different words in all the plays of Shakespeare. Compulsively, I fact-checked this, learning that, according to a young lady named Simhan Kurana, his “vocabulary spanned over 29,000 words” (see <http://quotations.about.com/b/2006/04/22/shakespeare-had-some-vocabulary.htm>). Ms. Kurana gave no source, and someone challenged her claim. Someone else gave

a link to an unquestionably reputable scholarly source, “Shakespeare’s Vocabulary: Myth and Reality,” by Hugh Craig in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Volume 62, Number 1, Spring 2011. Prof. Craig, who had the benefit of computerized text analysis, does not

give a specific number but denies that Shakespeare’s vocabulary was significantly larger than those of other playwrights of his day (though they, too, had rich vocabularies). Two other professors in an exhaustive 1986 study gave estimates ranging from 15,000 to 30,000 words.

Whether he used 6,000, 15,000, or 29,000 words, Will most certainly had his way with many words—and left our language far more pregnant with meaning than it had been before.

Almost a century and a half after Shakespeare’s death, Dr. Samuel Johnson, with six assistants, compiled a dictionary defining 40,000 words, which even included some “vulgar phrases.”



There is no doubt that writers of English can draw on an ample vocabulary, which makes one wonder why writers of “business English” seem compelled to extend it even further with words and phrases that seem not quite necessary and somewhat less than clear.

However, instead of indulging in the usual mockery of business clichés, I will attempt here to rescue some of these maligned expressions by creating example sentences that give them a useful and meaningful context. To wit:

At the end of the day, I hope to be sound asleep, but this deadline will probably prevent that happy outcome.

As we were thinking outside the box, a violent brainstorm struck, and our entire row of ducks was blown to hell and gone.

As her problems mushroomed, Alice pondered frantically, “Shall I upsize, downsize, rightsize—or just give up and capsized?”

Trying for another bite at the apple, the CEO broke her tooth biting down on her core competency.

The minister found himself preaching to the choir because they were the only ones on the same page with him.

When the going gets tough, the actionable will operationalize.

Going forward, as we approach the fiscal cliff, we might want to consider going backward.

Yes, business English has endless possibilities, and it is our duty as writers to push the envelope by leveraging them to full optimization—proactively. ■

— Dave Epstein

# WordPress: Create a Website or Blog

On Tuesday, November 13, Nicole Crimaldi Emerick, founder of MCG Media, Inc., presented her WordPress Setup Camp. “WordPress changed my life!” said Nicole, “It opened up a whole new world for me.”



Nicole began with her story of evolving from full-time banker to full-time blogger: “I committed two hours before

work every morning to learning and writing.” Her site, [www.ms-careergirl.com](http://www.ms-careergirl.com), grew quickly to the point where she was able to leave her banking job. As her blog grew, she attracted the attention of recruiters, which landed her a full-time position as a social media strategist. Her commitment to writing paid off!

## Social Media Writers Needed

Blogs, e-mail, SEO copywriting, content development, review writing... Nicole stressed that the demand for writers adept with social media is growing quickly. Writers are even being hired to maintain Facebook and Twitter accounts for others. Look for job postings at advertising and PR agencies, staffing agencies, even Craigslist. A good client typically pays at least \$50 per hour.

## Why Use WordPress?

WordPress is a platform that makes it easy to create anything from a simple blog to an online portfolio to a complex web store. Even huge companies build their entire sites on WordPress.

## Two Versions of Word Press:

- WordPress.com is an easy, no-cost way to get started. You have access to most WordPress tools, your

blog lives on the WordPress site, and you never have to worry about technical glitches or software updates. You just create an account, make a few choices and start writing. Because it is free, you may end up with ads on your site.

- WordPress.org is a self-hosted version that offers more options for customizing the look and functionality of your site. The software itself is free, but you need to find a host (e.g. HostGator, GoDaddy, Bluehost) and you are responsible for keeping the technical under-



pinning up to date. Hosting generally costs less than \$100/year. In addition, you can purchase more interesting templates, plugins, and other tools to enhance your site. WordPress.org also gives you the option of avoiding ads placed on your page.

If you start with WordPress.com and later decide to switch to WordPress.org, for \$129 WordPress has Guided Transfer to help you make the switch.

## Get Your Domain Name

To demonstrate how easy it is to get

started, Nicole created a new WordPress.com site as she spoke with us. “Your domain name is your most important investment,” said Nicole. Type in your desired domain name on the WordPress.com page. If it is available, you can purchase through WordPress for \$18.

Once you get your name, enter your e-mail address. Note that only one e-mail address can be associated with your WordPress account, so make sure it is an address you will keep for a while. WordPress will send you a confirmation e-mail: follow the directions and you’ll be logged in and ready to start building your blog.

## Start Writing

Once logged in, you’ll see that WordPress looks similar to Microsoft Word, with buttons for formatting copy, adding photos, and uploading files. At the top right-hand corner of your screen is a grey Help box with

very clear directions. Nicole pointed out a few features that are especially helpful for writers in the Posts > Add New screen:

- **Visual / Text Tabs at right end of gray bar.** Click Visual to write directly in WordPress. Choose Text if you are pasting from a Word document so the formatting will convert properly.
- **Kitchen Sink.** More formatting options are available by clicking the button farthest to the right in the grey bar.

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# WordPress: Create a Website or Blog

- **Publish.** Under the right-hand column are choices for saving a draft or scheduling a publishing time.
- **Categories.** These are the bigger topics that you'll discuss on your site. Nicole suggests selecting 3-7 specific topics. "Historical Fiction" is more precise than "Fiction." Then uncheck "Uncategorized" and check the categories that apply to the post you are writing.
- **Tags.** Add keywords specific to the post: "Harry Potter" or "50 Shades of Grey." Think about what search words you would use to find the information that is in your post.
- **Appearance > Themes.** Choose a template for the look and organizational structure for your pages. Some are free; others are available

for about \$50. Most can be tweaked a bit, but consider hiring a web designer for major customizing.

## Attract Web Crawlers

Search engines have evolved: now content quality matters more than the number of links in a post. More search-friendly posts include a couple of good paragraphs, a photo, plus an inbound link or two. In addition...

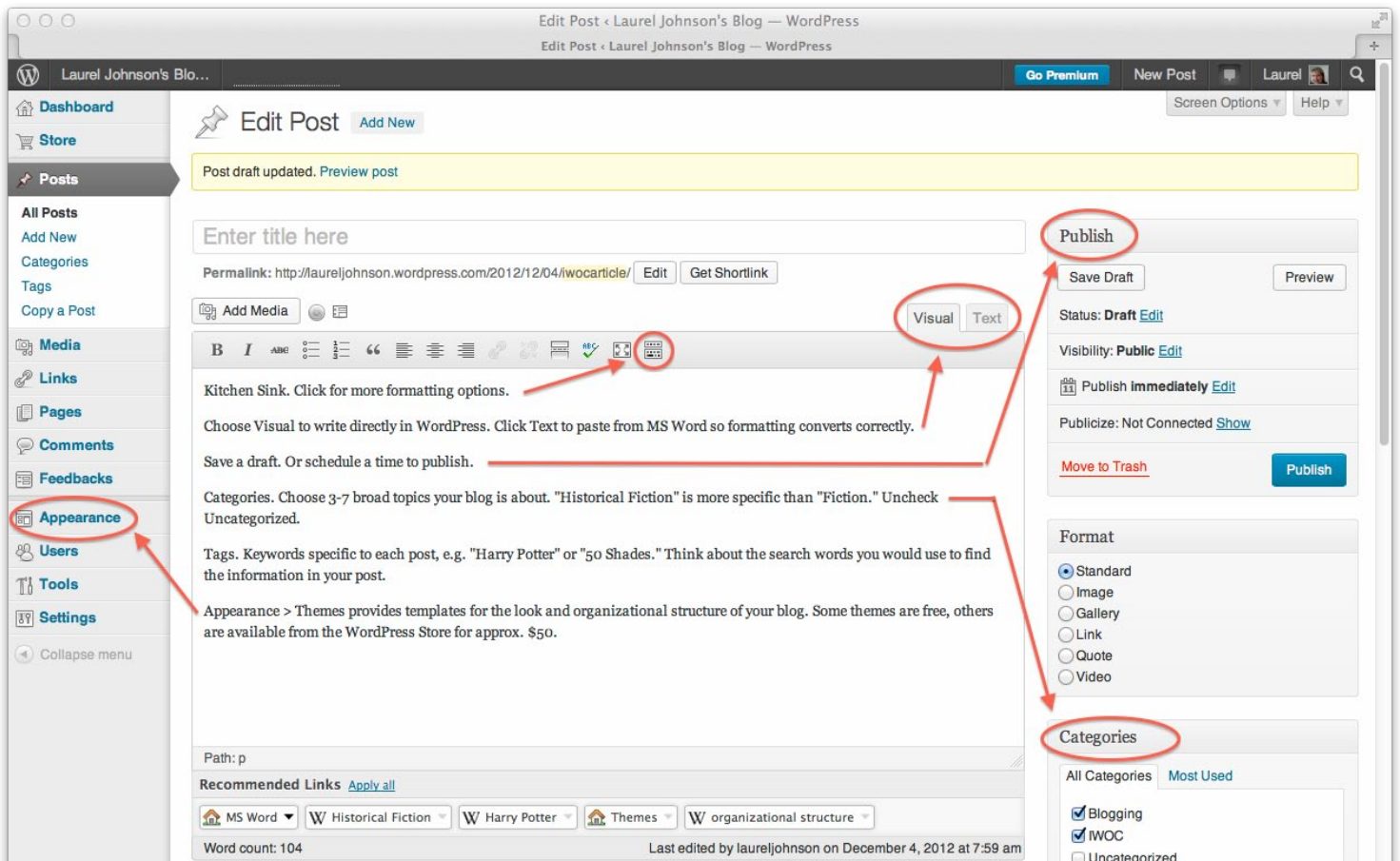
- Keep writing! More pages equal more visibility. If you have pages that are out of date, just update the information and republish. No need to delete old posts.
- Share. Just drag the buttons for your LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, and other accounts. Also link your blog to your

web site or online portfolio if they reside elsewhere.

- Use Permalinks. These are shorter, more memorable URLs to use in tweets or other messaging to link back to your new post. Try to use natural language keywords in your permalink to encourage web crawlers to find you.
- Invite comments. You'll learn more about what your audience wants. Look under Manage Comments to adjust the settings to your comfort level.

Nicole presented all of this information in an hour, along with a hands-on demonstration. That just shows how easy it is to start and publish on the WordPress platform. ■

— Laurel Johnson



# Winter Holiday Customs Around the World

For Scots, a big holiday is Hogmanay on December 31. There's a tradition called "first-footing," in which the first visitor to cross the threshold will bring the family good luck for the coming year *if* the guest is dark-haired and male. Why this peculiarity? In olden days, a redhead or a blonde was probably an invading Norseman.

Jews everywhere celebrate Hanukkah, but there are some local differences. In Yemen, children go from house to house to collect wicks for the Menorah. In Yemenite, they chant, "O father Salim, give us a present." If

they get the wicks and gifts, they respond in Hebrew, "Sleep well." If they get nothing, they shout in Yemenite, "You miser, may your wicks be as dry as your bones!" (Good grief, kiddie blackmailers.)

In Aden, Jewish children wear blue clothing on Hanukkah because blue is the color of the heavens, the abode of the Holy One who sent the miracles of Hanukkah.

In Israel, the fifth night of Hanukkah is solemn in remembrance of the Turks' expulsion of the Jews from Tel

Aviv and Jaffa in World War I. Hanukkah gifts are de-emphasized in Israel.

In North Africa, the seventh night of Hanukkah is a special celebration for women.

Hindus in India observe this time of year by placing clay oil lamps on their roofs in honor of the return of the sun. Similarly, Pagans celebrate the winter solstice as the rebirth of light, a new beginning.

However and wherever you celebrate, may your holidays be joyful and the New Year be prosperous. ■



## In the next issue. . .



- **January 8 Meeting Preview:** "Know Your Freelancer Legal Rights." A new topic for us.
- **President's column:** You always learn something interesting in this often surprising column.
- News and ideas to get you off on the right foot in 2013.
- Tips and tricks you can use to work smarter and better.

