



Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

▪ JULY MEETING PREVIEW	1
▪ PRESIDENT'S COLUMN	2
▪ A FONT BY ANY OTHER NAME	4
▪ EXPLORE FONTS FOR IMPACT	4
▪ JUNE MIXER REPRISE	6
▪ WHAZZAT MEAN?	6
▪ DID YOU KNOW?	7
▪ MULTITASKING	7
▪ NEXT ISSUE & CALENDAR	8
▪ QUOTE	8

PANEL TO GIVE LATEST TIPS AND STRATEGIES AT THE JULY 9 IWOC MEETING

Finding and Retaining Clients: A Sure Path to Success

Finding clients in today's fast-paced marketplace requires a nimble mind and an up-to-the-nanosecond knowledge of what works. But *getting* clients is only half the battle. *Keeping* those clients over the long haul is what provides the icing on the cake. It is *way* easier to have a stable of clients that you work for repeatedly than to be constantly beating the bushes for new ones. Plus, it costs money: some estimates claim it could cost as much as ten percent more to find new clients than to keep existing ones. So retaining clients should be a primary goal, and this presentation will tell you how to do it.

Competition is fierce for *any* client, with new candidates being thrown out of work and into the freelance market daily. So to learn the latest on how to bag 'em and tag 'em, come to the July 9 IWOC meeting, "Finding and Retaining Clients."

We've got three seasoned pros who will get you going on new strategies and verify the tried-and-true that still work. Our panel includes executive recruiter Lynn Hazan, a specialist in mar-

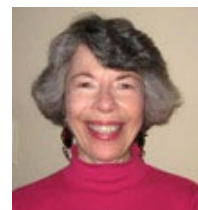
keting communications and a dynamo in her field; former IWOC president Sally Chapralis, a public relations and corporate communications *pro par excellence*; and longtime IWOC member Jeff Steele, one of the busiest, most prolific freelance writers around.

Hazan will set the table with food for thought about presenting your best image. She will talk about the ways in which freelance writers can re-brand themselves to operate a successful writing, communications, or consulting business. She will talk about:

- How you define yourself. (Do you see yourself as a business owner or as a freelancer? What is the difference between the two?)
- Why it's necessary to be a subject-matter expert.
- Why it's important for you to know the reasons clients should hire you. (What makes you unique and special?)



Chapralis will rely on her long-time experience and personal savvy to deliver excellent tips on how to initiate and nurture a client relationship. She will cover:



- How developing a specific proposal/letter of agreement for a client establishes a good client-writer relationship.
- How to tailor the assignment to the client's needs and specifications, i.e., writing for a particular audience, keeping the right tone, and adhering to the requested word count.
- How suggesting to a client new ideas/projects can bring you new projects.
- Why staying in touch with a client during and after a project pays excellent dividends.
- How and what she's learned from the mistakes she's made with clients.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5.

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To Arms, Citizen Journalists!



Like last month's article about the sacking of the *Sun-Times* photo-journalists, this is another commentary on ominous developments in journalism. Only in this case, the danger comes not from overpaid executives trying to pinch the last penny out of print media, but from libertarian activists who want to liberate information from the toils of government, big business, or commercial publishers. It's also another installment in *Stet's* continuing coverage of the benefits and challenges for writers posed by runaway technology, such as "drone journalism."

It seems paradoxical that a secretive group, whose members disguise themselves with a sharp-chinned, mustachioed, ruddy-cheeked, white jester's mask when appearing in public, should launch a very public website. But that is exactly what Anonymous, the "hacktivist" collective that likes to embarrass governments and large corporations by disclosing their secrets, has now done. To see this site, go to anonnews.org. There you will be greeted by the headline, "AnonNews - Everything Anonymous" and a form listing their "Latest press releases," as well as "Latest external news sources," most and least popular external news sources, and other "Anonymous-related websites."

Most journalists hanker for a byline, so for a news site deliberately to be

"Anonymous" seems odd. It arouses echoes of an eerie melodrama in which a beautiful but fire-scarred movie star becomes a recluse hiding in a gloomy, cobwebbed mansion. Moreover, the idea of anonymous (and often unsourced) reporting raises questions of accountability and trustworthiness. However, as we see all around us, bizarre things are happening in journalism.

"Information wants to be free" is a favorite slogan of Anonymous and fellow hacktivists like Julian Assange, the clown prince of WikiLeaks, Pfc. Bradley Manning, and now Edward Snowden, the NSA's leaky faucet. Notice that they don't care if the information they reveal is "correct" or "true" or "fact-checked" or "objectively presented"—they just want it to be "free."

This poses a threat for writers as professional collectors, researchers, and communicators of information. Once you "free" information and invite anyone to publish it "Anonymous-ly," the next logical step is that idealistic "citizen journalists" ought to work for "free," and professionals who charge for their work become "mercenaries for hire" (literally, "free lances"). Publishers like Sun-Times Media Group, cable news channels seeking to replace professionals with volunteer freelance "I-reporters" with iPads, and "press barons" like Rupert Murdoch drool with delight over these new trends in "content generation." Web-based content mills like Demand Media Studios and "hyperlocal news" publishers like Patch.com use techniques like online competitive

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3.





President's Column CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2.

bidding get “writers” to work for rates like 10-15 cents per word, which won't even pay for a diet of peanuts.

ANONNEWS: A JOURNALISTIC FREE-FOR-ALL

Right upfront, AnonNews.org declares that it “is an independent and uncensored (but moderated) news platform for Anonymous. Anyone is welcome to post a submission, and can do so by clicking the “Add” button for a category.” If you click on the FAQ button, you'll find the question, “Isn't AnonNews just for AnonOps?” (Note: AnonOps are a worldwide network of Anonymous volunteers who maintain a chat network for “a safe, secure platform for free discussions of ideas.”) Their answer is: “AnonNews is not just for AnonOps”:

“AnonNews was made for anything involving Anonymous — that means you do not need to be affiliated or involved with a specific network or group. No matter who [sic] you are affiliated with — or whether you are affiliated with anything or anyone at all! — you're welcome to post on AnonNews, as long as you follow the same relevancy guidelines as everyone else.

“AnonNews also does not promote any particular group or network over another — this is a ‘neutral’ site, not taking any sides.”

This statement of principles suggests admirable journalistic balance and fairness, though the actions of Anonymous hacktivists seem sometimes to imply a vague political agenda — perhaps nothing more than a general anarchic libertarianism peevisly opposed to all governments and large organizations.

According to *The Huffington Post* on June 4, “The news-gathering group

plans to make its websites more collaborative than traditional news sites. A ‘social chat feature’ will replace a comments sections and Twitter will be deeply integrated into the page Previously, the group said that it wanted to feature the contributions of ‘citizen journalists’”

THE IRONIES OF ANONYMOUS

Although Anonymous contends that information should be “free,” they realize they need money to collect it and run multiple websites. However, they shun authoritarian capitalist strategies like issuing stock or seeking foundation or corporate grants to get AnonNews online. Instead, they used a tech-savvy and politically correct method called “crowdsourcing” to fund the launch. They achieved 1 million followers on Twitter and have raised about \$55,000 since April 2013. They continue to seek donations through PayPal and other online donation sites.

Although they need PayPal, in 2010 four Anonymous British hacktivists briefly shut down PayPal (and VISA and Mastercard) because these payment services refused to process donations to WikiLeaks. Yet Anonymites ought logically to admire Elon Musk, founder of PayPal, who is a radically libertarian free-market entrepreneur. He has another project to create a floating oceanic community in international waters, which would be subject to no government and have no regulations, except presumably the rules of Social Darwinism (i.e., “the strong thrive; the weak serve or perish”).

AnonNews also requests donations

made in “bitcoins,” which are a “cryptocurrency” (i.e., an encrypted digital “currency”) invented by an anonymous developer using the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto (see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitcoin). Bitcoins are designed to be a virtual and unregulated payment system controlled by no government or banking system. In other words, “free”— and virtually untraceable — money pays for “free” information (and probably other dubiously legal activities and commodities). How delightfully fitting that a fictitious — and extremely volatile — “currency” was invented by an imaginary “person” who masks him/her/themselves behind a fake identity, just like the “free” journalists of Anonymous who disguise themselves to reveal “the truth.”

THE ANONYMOUS JESTER'S MASK

The mask represents Guy Fawkes, a



Roman Catholic conspirator who tried in 1605 to blow up the House of Lords and King James I — and was hanged, drawn, and quartered for his pains. Although the custom is fading away, for two centuries and more, children in England and many other Com-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8.



Exploring Fonts for Impact

The story below discusses which fonts give a writer's work maximum credibility, but in newsletters, posters, and other more visual pieces, we sometimes crave the Wow Factor. I once designed and wrote a taxi-industry newsletter, the name of which was "Roadwise." Imagine my delight when I discovered Slipstream, which looks like this: **ROADWISE**. Movement! One could just picture those cabbies whizzing along. (Naturally, I used it only for the name, but it was the perfect title font.) So if you need graphic impact from a font, explore what's out there. Just google "font sources" to get started. Many fonts cost money, but dafont.com has *tons* of both letter and dingbat fonts for free. There's dreck, but some gems too. Need Egyptian hieroglyphics? Aztec symbols? A graffiti look? They've got 'em. They've even one called Cocksure, but you *don't* want to know what that looks like. ■

— The editor

A Font by Any Other Name Tells a Different Story

Most of us have heard that serif fonts are easier to read than sans serif (sometimes true, sometimes not, depending on the font), but beyond that, we may not have paid as much attention to the fonts we choose as we should have. True, the words we use hold power, but the aesthetic manner in which they're presented affects the way we read and process information too.

Case in point: Last summer physicists released one of the most significant scientific findings of the decade, the discovery of the Higgs boson particle. This little rascal is so important that it's been dubbed the "God particle" because it may explain why atoms stick together. The discovery should have been greeted with awe and admiration, but instead, people laughed. Why? Because the finders inexplicably chose the Comic Sans MS font for their

press release. The moral of the story: if you've got something serious to say, choose a "serious" font.

Further insights into the way fonts can affect our reactions came from a *New York Times* experiment conducted on unsuspecting readers of their online publication. All readers got the same story, which was a scientific study of optimism versus pessimism, but some readers saw it in the Baskerville font, others in either Computer Modern, Georgia, Helvetica, Times New Roman, Trebuchet, or the much maligned Comic Sans MS.

Later, all readers of the article were asked to evaluate whether they found the results of the study believable. Some 40,000 responded, and the results were weighted to evaluate which fonts inspired more confidence. Here's what the *Times* discovered: Those who got the Baskerville text wholeheart-

edly believed the study, while those who got the Georgia version found it less convincing, even though Baskerville and Georgia are apparently quite similar serif typefaces. Computer Modern — another pretty similar face — didn't fare quite as well either. (The other fonts scored lower.) The theory: Baskerville had the most "starch" of all the fonts tested and therefore the information appeared to be more reliable.

Another interesting test involved a university student who wrote 52 essays in three different fonts for his classes. When he used Times New Roman, his average grade was A-; Trebuchet MS, B-; and Georgia, A. When he switched to Georgia, his grade climbed, even though he said he had reduced his time and effort. His theory on why he fared better with Georgia than

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5.

Finding & Retaining Clients: A Sure Path to Success

Continued from page 1.

Steele has a superb record in retaining clients (see bio further on), as exemplified by the fact that he still serves six for whom he began writing no later than 2004. He will wind up the formal presentations by discussing:

- How the ability to “read” your clients’ unique personalities and needs relates to client retention.
- How keeping clients in general relates to *writers’* keeping clients.
- How taking a “big picture” view helps in retaining clients.
- How to successfully retain a client when you’ve made a mistake and the client is a bit disappointed in you.

Following the formal presentations, the panel will have a Q&A among themselves and with the audience.

ABOUT THE PANELISTS

Lynn Hazan is president of Lynn Hazan & Associates and is in her 29th year as a successful executive recruiter, specializing in marketing and communications. Hazan places

candidates in fulltime, freelance, temp, and temp-to-perm jobs in corporate, agency, entrepreneurial, and not-for-profit positions.

Sally Chapralis joined IWOC in the early 1980s, before leaving her last staff position, to learn more about the business of freelancing. She formally established Sally Chapralis & Associates, Business Communications and Public Relations, in 1984 after having worked fulltime for magazine publishers, agencies, and other for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Her freelance assignments include articles, web site content, newsletters, PowerPoints, and other business communications, as well as public relations and media contact. Chapralis lauds IWOC — its programs, resources, and members — for helping writers become professional and successful.

Jeff Steele has written three or four thousand bylined articles in a freelance career lasting almost a quarter century. His long-term clients include a *Chicago Tribune* editor (first assignment: 1992), a trade magazine (1993) a west suburban PR and advertising



agency (1995), an Aurora-based national association (2001), a west suburban custom publisher (2003), and another *Tribune* editor (2004). In addition, he wrote consistently for special sections of the *Los Angeles Times* from 1998 to 2011.

The meeting will be held at the Gratz Center adjacent to Fourth Presbyterian Church on Michigan Avenue across from the Hancock building in Chicago. Networking, with snacks and beverages, begins at 5:00 p.m., followed by the program at 6:00 p.m. The meeting is free for IWOC members. Nonmembers pay \$10 with online preregistration and payment or \$15 at the door. (First-time visitors attend for free if they pre-register online.) All attendees are welcome to join IWOC members and the speakers at a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting. Discounted parking is available at the 900 N. Michigan self-park garage, if you pick up a voucher at the Gratz Center on the way out. ■

— Karen Schwartz

A Font by Any Other Name . . .

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

the others: everybody uses Times New Roman so it might have been a relief to the grader to get something a bit different (both are serif fonts), and Trebuchet, a sans serif, might have been harder to read and also less “academic.” Other studies of Georgia vs. Times New Roman have found Georgia to be the overwhelming favorite as being “sharper, more pleasing, and easier to read.”

Many other factors play into a document’s readability and the impression the document makes. Type size, letter- and word-spacing, leading, column width, justification, and the piece’s purpose all count. One wouldn’t use the same faces for a book as for a poster, for example. And some serif fonts have sweepy serifs that make them more unreadable than a good sans serif font like Helvetica.

Still, I think this information has implications for us writers. Often we submit our work to clients in ordinary manuscript form. If there’s even the slightest chance of a subliminally more favorable impression of work due to the font, I don’t know about you, but I’m going for it. Baskerville, here I come! ■

— Joen Kinnan

Chicago Writers Mix It Up in June!

A motley crew of Chicago writers from three different organizations, plus various unaffiliated scribes, enjoyed an amiable and exuberant social mixer in early June. We found The Dog's Bollox on Lincoln Avenue just north of Belmont to be, one might say, a very congenial hangout.

Your intrepid reporter participated in so many lively conversations that he forgot his digital camera was in his briefcase. Besides, he would not have broken up what Mr. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster liked to call "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" by sticking any camera — even an iPad — in people's faces.

In brief, we have no photos, so you'll have to make do with a pen portrait (if

one may still use that archaic phrase while etching electronic characters upon a glass tablet).

Picture a literal "chat room," filled with live people, not Facebook friends. This cozy urban grotto is recessed behind a small restaurant where booths and tables are ranged along a bar well-stocked with multi-hued bottles. Our grotto, a cool refuge on the first really hot summer day, buzzes with lively talk, produced by dozens of writers gathered like sociable forest denizens around a waterhole. For once they are not crouched alone in

front of glowing monitors, but relaxing in small groups around tall cocktail tables in this shady oasis. Occasionally some wander over to the tables at one end of the grotto to sample the tasty hors d'oeuvres. Then back to the chats. It's a rather civilized waterhole.

We plan to do more of these. If you missed this one, hope you'll join us next time. We may well use The Dog's for future gatherings. Many thanks to Jennifer Lyng Rueff for selecting the place and making the arrangements. ■

— Dave Epstein



Whazzat Mean? Techno Gibber Defined

Below are some (mostly) computer or Internet-related terms for which you may or may not know the meanings.

4G — No, it's not the grams of fat in your candy bar (you wish!). Actually 4G stands for "fourth generation," and it refers to the technologies that conform to the current requirements of the International Telecommunications Union. So if you have a 4G cell phone, it must transmit data at least at 100 Mbps (that's megabits per second).

Beta Software — Party software developed by some goofy fraternity geeks? Wrong! It's software that is still in the testing stage so it may not work properly. Sometimes the masochistic among us volunteer to use it to ferret out the bugs.

Bitmap — Think it's a tiny map that will fit in your wallet? Wrong again. Most images you see on the computer are bitmaps, and they're composed of many, many tiny dots or pixels. (Common bitmap file types include BMP, JPEG, Gif, Pict, PCX, and Tiff.) Zoom in on a bitmap, and it looks hideous: very clunky and blocky. In contrast, **vector graphics** use paths — lines, squares, wavy shapes, etc. — so one can resize them much larger without affecting the quality of the picture.

Dashboard — Not the one on your car, you silly thing. A dashboard is a user-interface feature that gives you access to other features and widgets. Think of it as a sort of clickable table of contents.

Camera RAW — If photos are camera RAW, you may hope you've stumbled

onto a bunch of nudie pictures, but you haven't. Camera RAW pictures are completely unprocessed photos. Most digital cameras process and compress photos as soon as one takes them, but photog pros like to make their own adjustments. With the Camera RAW option, they can control everything. (If you have this option and want to use it, be aware that your files will be much larger, and you'll have to edit contrast, color, etc., yourself.)

Gigaflop — Although it sounds like an apt term for a gigantic failure on Broadway, it's actually a unit of measure for the calculating speed of a computer equal to one billion floating-point operations per second. (If you understand this, please explain it to me. I love the word, though.)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8.

Did you know...



If your writing needs some spicing up, consider using chiasmus. Chia what? Chiasmus (key-AZ-məs) is a figure of speech that uses parallel phrases in reverse order to make a statement. Take this well-known example from the advertising world: I am stuck on Band-Aid, and Band-Aid's stuck on me.

Chiasmus has been used in almost every type of writing imaginable.

Scripture: But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. — *Matthew 19:30*

Song: Do I love you because you're beautiful? Or are you beautiful because I love you? — Rodgers and Hammerstein, *Cinderella*

Politics: People the world over have always been more impressed by the power of our example than by the example of our power. — Bill Clinton, 2008 Democratic National Convention

Fiction: You forget what you want to remember, and you remember what you want to forget. — Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Film: When a defining moment comes along, you define the moment, or the moment defines you.— Kevin Costner, *Tin Cup*

My favorite writing-related chiasmus put-down is credited to Dr. Samuel Johnson, compiler of *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755): Your manuscript is both good and original; but the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good. ■

— Katherine Mikkelsen

WHAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW

Multitasking: Boost or Blunder?

The word “multitasking” is a relatively recent addition to our collective lexicon. Doing more than one thing at a time isn't new — who hasn't petted the cat while reading? (I know, people without cats) — but today's plethora of technologic devices makes it almost impossible *not* to be distracted by something that derails our original train of thought. Often that's annoying. Yet the urge to try to do several things at once seems irresistible to some folks.

Do we really accomplish more faster when we switch merrily back and forth among two or more tasks? Brain researchers say “definitely not.” Study after study finds that when we do two things at once, both efforts suffer.

Reading our e-mail while talking on the phone isn't really doing two things at once anyway. Experts call it “rapid toggling between tasks.” In other words, we're constantly switching contexts.

There's a cost to this rapid to- and fro-ing. Some researchers say multitasking reduces productivity by as much as 40 percent. One study found that a typical office worker works only 11 minutes before he/she is interrupted, but it takes about 25 minutes to get the brain focussed back on the original task. This study didn't evaluate the quality of work produced by hopscotching around.

Other studies have, however. Recently the *New York Times* ran an article (“Brain Interrupted”) for which they commissioned an experiment. At Carnegie Mellon University, three groups of students took a cognitive skills test that consisted of reading a brief passage and then answering questions about

it. Group A simply took the test. Groups B and C were warned that they might be interrupted with an instant message containing further instructions. During the initial test, both groups B and C *did* get two instant messages. Then all three groups took another similar test with the same instructions. This time Group B was interrupted, but Group C was not. They anticipated a message that never came.

What were the results? Researchers expected that Groups B and C would make mistakes on the first test, and they did, but the results were much worse than they expected. Both groups had 20 percent fewer correct answers than Group A,

which served as the control group. According to the *Times*, interruptions made Groups B and C 20 percent “dumber.”

The results of the second test were interesting. This time Group B was still dumber than the control group, but not so much. This time they had only 14 percent fewer correct answers. Dr. Eyal Peer, a psychologist and one of the test givers, speculated that people who are interrupted can learn to deal with it somewhat more effectively.

The real eye-opener was Group C. On the second test, they improved by an astounding 43 percent and even scored better than Group A. This result suggests that Group C steeled themselves for interruption (though it never came) and therefore put more effort into concentrating.

What does all this mean to us writers? Well, we can still walk and chew gum. Talking on our cells while driving? Definitely not. But when it comes to our bread-and-butter work, the lesson is we'd best *try* not to jump from one thing to another. Interruptions are inevitable, though. The good news is that we apparently can learn to focus more intently in anticipation of them. ■



— Joen Kinnan

President's Column

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3.

monwealth countries have made Guy Fawkes effigies and burned them in bonfires with fireworks on November 5, the anniversary of this Gunpowder Plot. Anonymous adopted the mask after it was used in the 2005 movie, *V for Vendetta*, where it is worn by a man fighting against a totalitarian regime in the UK in the late 2020s.

And here's another ironic capitalistic entanglement for Anonymous. One of their major issues is protesting against the evils of copyright and licensing, which deny the "freeness" of information. However, Warner Brothers owns the copyright to the movie. Anonymous has made the mask a best seller on Amazon, so every time one is sold (for about \$6.49), Time-Warner collects a royalty. As William Bendix used to say on *The Life of Riley*: "What a revoltin' development this is!"

So, get to work Citizen Journalists! You, too, can expose the evil machinations and dire plots of the Koch Brothers, Big Oil, Evil Tyrants, the Obama-Christie Mutual Respect Cabal, web and e-mail snooping by the NSA and other government agencies, or whatever conspiracy or anarcho-fantasy your "free" mind can dream up.

As for those of us who expect to be paid for gathering and writing "free" information, we must face Marie-Antoinette clients who say, "Let's pay them with cake!" To that, we may answer in the immortal words of Karl Marx (more or less): "Writers of the World, Unite!! You Have Nothing to Lose but Your Bylines!!" ■

[Editor's note: If you disagree with the opinions in this column, you're welcome to send Stet a rebuttal.]

IT'S EASY BEING A HUMORIST WHEN YOU'VE GOT THE WHOLE GOVERNMENT WORKING FOR YOU. — WILL ROGERS

In the next issue. . .



- **August 14 IWOCFest preview:** Mark your calendar now. This fun-filled fest is always a can't-miss event for IWOCers and friends. Location TBA.
- **President's column:** What interesting facts and thoughtful insights will our prexy come up with next? This column is always a great read.
- **Helpful tips on software, hardware, and/or just plain biz practices, and much more.**

Whazzat Mean?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6.

Kibibyte — Gigaflop sounds like an adorable name for a fluffy little dog, and kibibyte might be something one would feed him. But it isn't. A kibibyte is a unit of data storage that equals 2 to the 10th power or 1024 bytes. (You must be pretty excited to learn this valuable bit of info. I dare you to try to work it into a conversation.)

Querty — You probably recognize this as the term for a standard keyboard, but did you notice that it's called that because q-w-e-r-t-y are the six letters at the top of the keyboard? Duh, I didn't.

NIC — This isn't where they put you if you heist some goods from the back of a truck, although it's pronounced the same way. "Network Interface Card" is what this baby stands for. Without one, your computer won't connect to a network. NICs usually connect through the Ethernet.

MAC Address — This acronym has nothing to do with Apple. It stands for "media access control address," and it's a hardware identification number that uniquely identifies every device on a network. There now, don't you feel smarter? ■ — Joen Kinnan

