

The Writers Network News, May 2016

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for local meeting notices today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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Writer's Quote of the Month

Roald Dahl, author of *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), and *Matilda* (1988), said, "A person is a fool to become a writer. His only compensation is absolute freedom."

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Roald Dahl was born on September 13, 1916, in Llandaff, South Wales. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* has been adapted for two films. Over his decades-long writing career, Dahl wrote nineteen children's books. He died November 23, 1990, in Oxford, England.

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One: From the editor's desk: Expanding Horizons

Dear Fellow Writers:

I just checked off few items on my bucket list, and I feel quite good about it. The first item landed on my list around 1988, when I went to Europe for the first time. My employer sent me to Amsterdam and Dusseldorf to write about and photograph several company projects, but I had little time to explore those countries as a tourist. I came home from the Netherlands without having seen a single windmill or tulip. I told myself that one day I would return to Amsterdam as a tourist, and last week I did.

More recent additions to my bucket list included taking a river cruise, instead of my usual ocean cruises, and to see a country I'd never seen. I did both of those, too, because I took a Viking river cruise through The Netherlands and Belgium, and I'd never been to Belgium.

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Many people who heard I was taking a river cruise expressed curiosity and interest and wanted a full report. I gave mixed reviews. The trip had its ups and downs, and I might take another river cruise through other countries sometime, but I'll need time to think it over. The cabin was even tinier than a cabin on a cruise ship, but the real drawback was that my sister and I found the beds uncomfortable. One of the big pluses about the cruise, though, was the small number of travelers onboard the river boat, only about 250, instead of ocean cruise ships that carry 4,000 people or more. Open seating at meals meant that each day at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, I had the opportunity to meet new people and have fresh conversations. Almost everyone I talked to turned out to be well educated, well traveled, and open-minded. Fascinating dialogue ensued, and I learned that many of the travelers had also written books, some of which were sold to traditional publishers and some of which the authors were still writing, trying to sell to a publisher, or planning to self-publish.

Why do I love writers so much? Because of everything I just said about the passengers on the river cruise. Like the river cruise passengers, writers tend to be well educated, well traveled, and open-minded. Does writing make us that way, or do we write because we are that way? I cannot answer that question. All I can say is what I repeat often: writers are my favorite people.

As a result of my trip I learned a great deal of history about the Netherlands, Belgium, and more. I explored a museum dedicated to the memory of the flood that took place in the Netherlands when I was in grammar school. I recall vaguely hearing about it when I was young, but being right where it happened, reading and hearing about the deaths and details and how the country repaired the broken dikes—all those things made history come alive for me.

My sister and I intentionally went in April, despite the fact that the weather was still chilly, because the tulips bloom in April, and we saw acres and acres of tulips and even visited the world's largest floral garden, Keukenhof, outside of Amsterdam. We attended fascinating lectures on the cultivation and history of tulips, and we saw plenty of windmills, from afar and up close, as well.

Everywhere we walked, everywhere we turned, everything begged to be photographed, not only in the gardens, but also out on the cobblestone streets, when we took daily walking excursions through town after town. I came home with photographs, new knowledge, new acquaintances, and a deeper respect for European history.

Sometimes the walking excursions exhausted me, though. Walking on cobblestones for hours, often in streets that slant to ensure the copious rain drains away from the houses, took a toll on my hips and knees. On the other hand, I needed the exercise, and walking is the best way to see the sights up close. Most of the streets were too tiny for a tour bus to travel, anyway.

I might say that cruising expands you in many ways, mentally and physically, because the food on a cruise ship, be it ocean or river cruise, tends to be delicious. Thankfully the portions on my river cruise were appropriately small, so I enjoyed many tastes and indulged in the tiny desserts and still came home weighing the same as when I started.

Yes, the trip had its ups and downs, but one thing that remained stable was the longboat itself. The vessel held steady and the rivers were smooth, so for folks who fear getting seasick, a river cruise may be just the solution. Oh, and you will love the fellow passengers.

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com)  
Author of two editions of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service

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## Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Details of Self-Publishing

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: My writing organization is preparing an anthology. Would standard manuscript format apply? We are unsure of individual submission formats at this point. Please advise.

A: Standard manuscript format applies when submitting a manuscript to an agent or a publisher. Because you are going to self-publish the anthology, you may set the format any way you would like, but if an editor is going to edit the submissions, which I strongly advise, you would do well to ask for submissions in standard manuscript format, which does several things. It gets writers in the habit of using standard manuscript format; it is easy to read; and it gives editors room to work, if they edit the printed copy. Folks who are unfamiliar with standard manuscript format can go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and click on Tools for Writers. There they will find many free reports, including one that explains standard manuscript format.

Q: It's time for me to order my ISBN number and bar code for my self-published book. What do I do now?

A: Go to <http://www.isbn-us.com/home1/> and click on the tab for self-publishers. The price includes a barcode as well as information on how to register your copyright. It's one of the simpler steps a self-publisher must take.

Q: Can you recommend two or three high-quality self-publishers? I have had my book professionally edited and am ready to publish, but I'm on the fence as to who I should hire.

A: Who you choose to publish your book depends on your needs and desires. Some vanity presses have gotten bad press, yet many clients have used the same companies and have not complained. Instead of listing specific publishers, let me make some suggestions.

Evaluate your needs before you begin the decision process. Which is more important to you, a low per-book price or the ability to order only a few books at a time, so you don't have to warehouse them? Do you need someone to fulfill orders for you? Do you want a company with distribution abilities? Do you need help with internal and external design, getting an ISBN number, or preparing a barcode? Would you prefer to work with a local publisher? Go to each printer's or publisher's website to read all about the capabilities of each one and decide which capabilities are the most important to you and your goals.

Think in terms of finding a printer, not a publisher, if you do not need any help with the technical aspects. Printers charge less than vanity presses, who charge for extra services plus a little extra for their wisdom and guidance--handholding, if you will.

If you need help with the technical aspects, investigate the publisher you choose. Check with the Better Business Bureau. Ask for references from clients and call or e-mail the clients and ask probing questions. Be sure the company you choose is reputable.

Ask for samples of the company's products. See if you like the look and feel of the books. If the company will not send samples, go to the next company. Pay attention to how quickly the company responds to your questions and requests. Be sure a human being is a major part of the equation, so you won't have to deal with the company strictly by automatically generated e-mails or through an automated website.

Don't make your decision based on price alone. You usually get what you pay for. For example, some paperback covers curl over time or in heat. Pay a little extra to get a cover that will lie flat for the life of the book.

If you want to use a company that has a higher price and you have been dealing with a human being, you may be able to negotiate a slightly better price. Don't be afraid to ask. Explain that you are considering such-and-such a publisher that charges only (give the price) for the same service, and ask if the company will match that price. Be honest and realistic. Companies deserve to make a profit, but you also deserve to have a good-looking, marketable book.

Send your questions to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com). Bobbie Christmas, book doctor and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions quickly. Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com).

Bobbie Christmas's second edition of *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing* is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

For even more questions, answers, and comments, order the book, *Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing*. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/lxp7n>.

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### Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Anxious/Eager

Be sure to understand the difference between anxious and eager; the two words are not interchangeable.

Anxious means uneasy and apprehensive about an uncertain event or matter; worried (having anxiety). The president was anxious about having to give a speech.

Eager means having or showing keen interest, intense desire, or impatient expectancy. Everyone was eager to see the president speak.

Remember to use my Find and Refine Method to power up your prose. Simply use the Find function and type in the word you seek. If you think you may have used "anxious" where "eager" would be the correct word, type "anxious" in the Find function and keep searching and editing each use of the word throughout the manuscript. You'll be amazed at the easy yet potent results.

For more editing and creative writing tips, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems* here: <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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### Four: Subjects of interest to writers

Free Bobbie Christmas Seminar and Webinar  
*Write In Style, and You Write to Win*  
In-Person Workshop & Live Webinar  
BookLogix in Alpharetta, Georgia, and on the Internet  
April 30  
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

This seminar is not about grammar. It is based on *Write In Style*, Bobbie Christmas's quadruple-award-winning textbook on creative writing. You'll learn how to power up your prose, whether writing fiction or nonfiction. You'll learn all this and more:

How to save time and be objective during revisions by using the Bobbie Christmas Find and Refine Method

Words and phrases to avoid, and why.

How to make your manuscript more marketable, whether self-publishing or submitting to agents or publishers.

How to make your own strong voice come out through your writing.

How to avoid the most common errors that writers make.

Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas has more than 40 years of experience in publishing. She is the author of several books, including her quadruple-award-winning book on creative writing, *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*.

To register for either the webinar or the in-person workshop at our office in Alpharetta, GA, go to <http://booklogix.com/upcoming-events> and scroll down to April 30.

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Member Terry Dodd reports, "Because of one of your newsletter agent leads, I have attracted the interest of an agent." Way to go, Terry!  
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Wahoo! The second edition of *Write In Style* is bringing in big honors!

*First Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing (2nd Edition)* won first place in the How-To Category of the Florida Book Festival, and now it won two more awards. *Write In Style* garnered a bronze-medal IPPY award in the 2016 Independent Publisher Book Awards. The competition drew more than 6,000 entries, so I couldn't be more proud to end up in the top three in my category, Writing and Publishing. For more information and the full list of winners, see <http://www.independentpublisher.com/article.php?page=2045>.

*Write In Style* was also named one of only five finalists in the Writing/Publishing category of the 2016 Next Generation Indie Book Awards. The winner was titled *Book Design Made Simple: A Step-by-Step Guide to Designing and Typesetting Your Own Book Using Adobe InDesign* by Fiona Raven and Glenna Collett (12 Pines Press)

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Why be a writer or editor and work from home?

A new study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute found that Georgia has 5,600 excessive deaths each year. One health factor is long commutes. "If you are sitting in your car, and particularly sitting in your car alone for long periods of time, it's going to cost you," said Dr. Julie Willems van Dyk, one of the report's authors and co-director of the County Health Rankings program. She said that, in addition to social isolation, long commutes can lead to high blood pressure, weight gain, and more air pollution.

I did not read the whole report, but how about the fact that long commutes expose us to more potential automobile accidents? Stay at home and write!

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Purge Your Prose of Problems  
A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Fifth Edition

Save thousands of dollars and edit your own book! Order my proprietary book-doctor desk reference book online at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>. Available printed or as a PDF to store on your computer, ready whenever you need it.

Purge Your Prose of Problems covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction. Get information on grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and much more. The spiral binder lies flat on your desk for easy use. Purge Your Prose of Problems is also available in PDF form, which allows you to keep all this vital information on your computer for ready reference.

Order Purge Your Prose of Problems today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Bad Review? What to Do?

I mentioned last month that Alice Hoffman tried to fight a bad review of her latest book, but to no avail. This month one of our members told me about trying to fight a Kirkus review of a book, even though he paid for Kirkus to review the book. He, too, met with complete resistance, despite pointing out several inaccuracies and bad assumptions in the review. Fellow writers, we must accept that when a bad review—even an inaccurate one—is published, it is highly unlikely that anyone will change it. The only defense is to get many other good reviews that bury the bad one(s), or in this case, submit the book for awards, because the book that got the poor review has since won six—count them, six—awards. Who is right, one sloppy or prejudiced reviewer or several judges involved in selecting the best books out of all submissions to a competition?

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Free Reports for Writers from Bobbie Christmas and Zebra Communications

Report #107 – Find a Publisher for Your Nonfiction Book: Follow the steps Bobbie Christmas took to sell her book, and you will know how to locate the right publisher for your book.

Report #118 – Chicago Style versus AP Style: More in-depth than Report #105, this lengthy report shows folks a great deal of vital information on Chicago style and how it differs from AP style and other styles. This report is for anyone who writes books.

For these reports and more, go to [http://zebraeditor.com/free\\_reports.shtml](http://zebraeditor.com/free_reports.shtml).

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Three things to do before you start writing your book.  
See <http://tinyurl.com/hvp6sqo>.

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Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing answers many questions you wish you could ask an editing expert. Paperback: \$14.95 plus \$4.99 S & H (total: \$19.94 US) E-book: \$8.95. You will save almost \$10 by buying the e-book! To order, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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How Happy (or Miserable) Are You?

Take an interesting battery of tests from the University of Pennsylvania, to learn more about yourself: <http://tinyurl.com/mp58jya>.

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Write In Style is Now Also an E-book

Find Your Fresh Voice at a Lower Price

To order the Kindle version, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/orjp9v2>  
For a B&N Nook version, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/qfo55xu>  
For Kobo click here: <http://tinyurl.com/ouoeejc>

For an autographed printed copy directly from me, write to me here: [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com)

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Print on Demand: What are the Costs?

Print on demand (POD) can be a great way to self-publish, because you print only the number of copies you need, and you don't have to warehouse hundreds of copies and hope that they sell. POD can be costly, too, though. How many copies do you have to sell to recoup your costs? The information that BookLocker.com offers is, of course, slanted toward BookLocker itself, but still, the information is revealing. See the price comparisons among the most well-known companies offering print on demand here: <http://tinyurl.com/gkqn2lh>.

Don't stop there, though. You may be able to find a less-known printer who can beat all these prices. Be sure you know what you are getting for the price, though. Does it include internal and cover design? ISBN and barcode? Covers that don't curl in time? High-quality paper stock? Editing? Be an aware consumer.

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My aunt baked the most delicious treats when I was young. She baked pies, cakes, cookies, strudel, challah, and more, so she spurned baked treats that came from the store. "Those are boughten cookies," she often said in a disparaging way. As an adult I questioned the use of the word "boughten." Was it really a word? The spell checker on my computer says no, but I found a great Merriam-Webster article that answers my question. See <http://tinyurl.com/zo4w6av>.

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Well-trained dog or well trained dog? Which is correct? Read the answer to that question and many more in the latest questions and answers

from the editors of The Chicago Manual of Style. <http://tinyurl.com/a8uzoh2>.

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AuthorEarnings.com reports that self-published book sales and indie-published book sales now outweigh traditionally published book sales.

“Two years ago, the first Author Earnings report revealed the growing market share of self-published e-books. With data on hundreds of thousands of titles, it was suddenly possible to measure the relative sales and earnings power of e-books according to publishing path. By sharing this data, we hoped to help authors understand the changing market in order to make sound decisions with their manuscripts. In the two years since, our quarterly snapshots have revealed emerging trends in the digital publishing world. In two short years, the market share of paid unit sales between indie and Big 5 e-books has more than inverted. The Big 5 now account for less than a quarter of e-book purchases on Amazon, while indies are closing in on 45%.” Read the full report and examine the charts at <http://tinyurl.com/zlgl27x>.

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Become my friend on Facebook and follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>  
Like Zebra Communications on Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

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Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Music Connection  
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Music Connection’s award-winning print magazine can be found in any major bookseller and at all Guitar Center locations in America. It is distributed at major music conferences and conventions where music-makers congregate. The publication is chock-full of inside information, expert advice and exclusive directories (Managers, Producer, Engineers, Attorneys, Publicists, and much more) that can help anyone connect with industry professionals. The magazine also features reviews of new gear, unsigned artists, and exclusive interviews with superstars and behind-the-scenes talent (producers, engineers, vocal coaches, songwriters). Meanwhile, the easy-to-view MC Digital Edition--the perfect companion to the paper edition of the magazine--showcases the print magazine’s entire contents. Thirty percent of its articles are written by freelancers. Pays six weeks after publication. Publishes manuscript one month after acceptance. Buys first rights. No reprints. Responds in one week. Pays \$175 for 3,000 - 3,500 words.

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Our Founder, Dr. Uwe Stender, is a full member of the Association of Authors' Representatives (AAR).

We are always open to strong fiction and all nonfiction projects. Check the agents page and submission guidelines to find the right Triada agent for your project.

We prefer to receive queries via email. Paste your query into the body of the email. We will not download attachments unless we request them.

We do not respond to postal submissions that aren't accompanied by a SASE and will not return any material unless a SASE accompanies the submission. Additionally, because of new postal regulations, we cannot use metered mail for returns. All self-addressed envelopes must include stamps.

Because of the large volume of submissions that we receive, we will only respond to those that follow the above guidelines. Submissions made that do not follow our protocol will be discarded.

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Accepts unagented submissions of romance novels, nonfiction books, and children’s books. Read and follow the submission guidelines.

"Sourcebooks publishes many forms of fiction and nonfiction titles, including books on parenting, self-help/psychology, business, and health. Focus is on practical, useful information and skills. It also continues to publish in the reference, New Age, history, current affairs, and humor categories. Currently emphasizing gift, women’s interest, history, reference, historical fiction, romance genre, and children’s."

We follow a somewhat out-of-date model for book publishing that makes our passion for books central. In short, we believe in authorship. We work with our authors to develop great books that find and inspire a wide audience. We believe in helping develop our authors' careers,

and recognize that a well-published, successful book is often a cornerstone. We seek authors who are as committed to success as we are. To find out more about us, read The Sourcebooks Story or check out The Sourcebooks Advantage. See more at <http://tinyurl.com/h4yv16d>.

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### Six: Got Muse? Leaving Home

Leaving home can mean many things and can be done in many ways, many times. For example, a student can leave his parents' home to go off to college. A younger student might be sent away from home to a boarding school. Sometimes we "leave home" metaphorically, as when we realize we no longer love a spouse and distance ourselves emotionally. Some people leave home and return many times, but each time someone leaves the nest, a whole new world opens up. Sometimes that world is cruel; sometimes it's paradise. New worlds often involve adjustments, difficulties, and even setbacks.

Create a character that in some way leaves home to try a different life. Perhaps it's a woman who leaves a bad marriage. Maybe it's a child who runs away from home at age sixteen. Perhaps it is a character who graduates from college and moves to a new city. What inspires you, when you think of leaving home? Write a story about it and portray the trials, issues, failures, and successes that result from your character's having left home.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Be sure to research all information and study every stipulation before you enter a competition, pitch or accept an assignment, spend money, or sell your work.

REGARDING ADDRESS CHANGES: If your address changes, you must sign up again with your new address; we cannot change your address for you, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Just go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on the yellow box, and sign up with your new address.

To access past issues of The Writers Network News, click here: [http://live.ezine.com/feeds/ezine/886\\_2](http://live.ezine.com/feeds/ezine/886_2).

The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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