

The Writers Network News, August 2017

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Follow my Write In Style creative-writing blog at <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

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Meet Fellow Writers

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

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CHANGING YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS? HOW TO REMAIN A SUBSCRIBER

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. Go to www.zebraeditor.com, click on the yellow box, and sign up with your new address.

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Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from [www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com), a free service that converts long links to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"Modern English is the Walmart of languages: convenient, huge, hard to avoid, superficially friendly, and devouring all rivals in its eagerness to expand." —Mark Abley, journalist (b. 1955)

Mark Abley is a writer and editor living in Montreal. Mark is a poet, a newspaper columnist, and an award-winning author. He has won both a Rhodes Scholarship and a Guggenheim Fellowship. He is now completing work on a memoir of his father and starting a new book about idioms and clichés.

His most recent book of creative nonfiction is *Conversations With a Dead Man: The Legacy of Duncan Campbell Scott*. To read more about Mark Abley, see his website at <http://markabley.com/>.

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One: From the editor's desk: Impatient Patient

Dear Fellow Writers:

As I write this, I am recovering from abdominal surgery, the fourth time my tummy has been invaded by a surgical knife in the past thirty years. How quickly I forgot how long it takes to recuperate from major surgery! I felt frustrated this week when after having one relatively pain-free day, I found myself doubled over in pain the next day. "Why can't I get better? Why this setback?" I complained.

The next morning I felt a little better, and I mentally counted the days since my surgery. To my surprise I discovered that just seventeen days earlier, I had been lying on an operating table with a surgeon messing around with my innards for a couple of hours. Did I really expect to be turning cartwheels and living pain free in only a few days after such a huge invasion of my body? Where was my logic?

After that moment of stark realization, I settled down and took a nap. I know we heal when we sleep, yet I'd been pushing myself to keep my daily editing schedule despite having to sit with a pillow against my stomach holding my guts together lest I cough, sneeze, or laugh.

By the time I send out this newsletter, more days will have passed and I will be even stronger and better. Maybe I will have learned to be a patient patient, rather than an impatient one.

Oh, for the few folks who want details, I underwent a double hernia repair. Ouch and ouch.

Clients, if I'm a few days late sending your edited manuscript, I know you will understand and sympathize, even better than I do.

Here's to my happy healing!

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

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Electronic versus Hard-copy Editing

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I can't decide the best way to get someone to edit my manuscript. Should I let my editor edit the electronic file, or should I print out the manuscript and mail it to her?

A: The answer depends on several factors, because both methods have potential positive and negative implications.

Having an editor edit your electronic file certainly saves paper and time, because you don't have to print out, box up, and mail or hand-deliver your manuscript. With electronic editing you can send the file immediately by e-mail, and the editor can return your edited file the same way, which could save up to a week of transit time back and forth. It also saves you time at the computer, because you don't have to input every detailed change your editor suggests. As a caveat, though, be certain your editor uses Track Changes, a simple-to-learn method that allows you to click on each change the editor made and accept, reject, or revise each change.

Yes, electronic editing saves you time in the editing phase because you won't have to type in every change; the editor has done them for you, but you still must go through the manuscript word for word and accept or reject each change. You also have the option of blindly accepting all the changes without rereading the file, an act that surely is a true timesaver, but a scary proposition, because differences of opinions between editors and authors are common.

Back to the negative side, having your electronic file edited usually costs a little more, because it takes a little more concentration to work on the computer than on printed paper. It's easy to miss errors on the computer screen.

With hard-copy editing, you print and mail or hand deliver your manuscript. This method takes a little time and a lot of paper and could incur shipping charges, but some people—both editors and writers—prefer to stick to this old way of editing. It has some advantages, too. For example, I don't know why, but it's a fact that the human eye more easily spots errors in printed matter than it spots errors on a computer screen. For that reason creative writing teachers tell writers to print out their manuscripts when reading them for errors.

Besides time and paper spent printing and mailing the manuscript back and forth, another drawback of working with a printed manuscript is that when the manuscript returns to you, you have to input all the detailed changes to your electronic file, and it's easy to miss things, if you aren't careful. On the other hand, you have total and complete control over everything that is done to your manuscript this way. You can easily disregard changes you disagree with, without having to go into the file and electronically reject them. Another advantage is that most editors charge a little less for editing the printed manuscript, because such editing is easier on the eyes. Here's my final point about working with printed manuscripts: Many older editors with the most experience have not switched over to editing electronically. If you want a seasoned editor, you may have to choose hard-copy editing.

In summary, each method has its pros and cons, and your decision may be based on your needs. If speed is vital to you, you may choose to have your electronic file edited. If accuracy and price are more important, you may choose hard-copy editing. Also, depending on the editor you choose, he or she may work only one way or the other, and you will have no choices, other than finding another editor.

Bobbie Christmas, book editor, author of Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing, and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions, too. Send them to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com). Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com).

For much more information on these subjects and hundreds of others of vital importance to writers, order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

Bobbie Christmas's award-winning second edition of WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

FROM FELLOW MEMBERS

Hi Bobbie,

I concur that bad editing simply turns me off. I even mentally edit those banners running at the bottom of the screen on news programs--even TV stations need to watch their editing.

I have made my first adventure into traditional publishing now. Before Rembrandt's Angel, all my books were published via a Canadian publisher. By your definition, I was self-publishing, although they did the formatting, cover art, and some editing for a reasonable price. That "reasonable price" isn't bad for just one book, but it added up to a significant investment for the number of books I have. I decided to try traditional publishing because they make that production investment, not me. I'm satisfied with that choice, but I ended up spending the savings on more PR and marketing. —Steven M. Moore

Author of Rembrandt's Angel, The Midas Bomb, Angels Need Not Apply, Teeter-Totter between Lust and Murder, Aristocrats and Assassins, The Collector, Family Affairs, Gaia and the Golithaths, Pop Two Antacids and Have Some Java, The Golden Years of Virginia Morgan, Full Medical, Evil Agenda, No Amber Waves of Grain, Soldiers of God, Survivors of the Chaos, Sing a Samba Galactica, Come Dance a

Cumbia...with Stars in Your Hand!, Pasodobles in a Quantum Stringscape, Muddlin' Through, Silicon Slummin'...and Just Gettin' By, Fantastic Encores!, More than Human: The Mensa Contagion, Rogue Planet, and The Secret Lab  
<http://stevenmmoore.com>

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Ben Oswald, a longtime member of The Writers Network, proved he has sharp eyes and good wit when he sent me typos he found in the last issue of The Writers Network News. Oh, dear! Even editors need editors, so thank you, Ben. Keep those sharp eyes open and the good catches coming. Ben's tenth book in ten years just hit the market. "It's my first foray into nonfiction and relates some of my experiences as a federal investigator," he says. For more information and to order the book, see <http://www.bfoswaldauthor.com/book-johnny-desilver-candy-cop.htm>.

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How flattered I am! Voyage ATL featured me in a recent article. Dying to know more about Bobbie Christmas? See the Voyage ATL article here: <http://voyageatl.com/interview/meet-bobbie-christmas-zebra-communications-woodstock-everywhere-online/>

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#### MORE MANUSLIPS

Here's a multiple slip from one of the manuscripts I've edited:

His protruding cheek bones (should be cheekbones, one word) were framed by pork chop side burns (should be sideburns, one word).

Here are my questions: What was he doing with pork on his face? It should be muttonchops, not pork chops, and because muttonchops are bushy sideburns, the rest of the sentence is redundant. Correct: His protruding cheekbones were framed by muttonchops. Even better, because it's active voice instead of passive voice: Muttonchops framed his protruding cheekbones.

Folks, I cannot overemphasize the importance of editing. Did you catch the errors? If you aren't sure when two words should be one word, look it up as one word in Merriam-Webster or use a knowledgeable editor who would also spot the incorrect use of pork chops instead of muttonchops.

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HAPPINESS IN A SELFIE?

In Psychology of Well-Being, the University of California Irvine published the results of a study it conducted that determined that if you regularly snap selfies smiling and then share those photos with friends, the activity can help make you a happier person. Perhaps it's because smiling itself makes you feel happier, but the reason doesn't matter. Writers must isolate themselves, if they are to get any writing done. Writers also have a tendency toward depression, perhaps the result of their isolation. Consider stopping now and then, no matter where you are, pulling out your cell phone, smiling, snapping a selfie, and sharing it with friends. As my grandmother used to say, "It couldn't hurt."

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#### SAVE THOUSANDS ON EDITING

Let's face it: editing is costly, because editors must charge for their time and expertise. What if an editor put all her time and expertise into a book that allowed you to edit your own book? You could save thousands of dollars using such a book. PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, is that book. In fact it's the resource that many book editors use.

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS covers all you need 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 hundreds of other subjects.

Order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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EBONY IN TROUBLE?

Magazines everywhere are folding (no pun intended, but still...), and freelance writers are often the losers. I don't know if Ebony Magazine is closing its doors, but some troubling signs are showing up. The National Writers Union has now led a suit against the magazine for failing to pay its freelance writers. The union is representing thirty writers who are owed approximately \$60,000 collectively. On June 3, Ebony set a self-imposed deadline to pay all the back money, but that deadline passed without a complete repayment.

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#### BOBBIE'S BLOGS

Neurotica: Stories of Love, Lust, and Letting Go—If you like relationship stories, I've got a ton of them. Some are funny, some a little sexy, and all true. I reveal some of my stories at <https://neuroticastories.blogspot.com>.

In my Write In Style blog, you'll find more tips on creative writing and other subjects. For my latest blog on people who inspired me to become a writer, see <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

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WRITING TIPS FROM JOHN GRISHAM

WritersWrite.com recently reported a CBS interview with John Grisham wherein he shared a list of writing tips as follows:

- Do write a page every day.
- Don't write the first scene until you know the last.
- Do write your page each day at the same place and time.
- Don't write a prologue.

Grisham also says the idea that an author will create a great character and that character will then take over the action is "total B.S.... Plotting takes work. You have to carefully plot and outline your story before you start, especially if you are writing mysteries, suspense, or thrillers where the plots can be intricate. It takes a lot of work. I spend a lot of time outlining before I write the first word."

He also says prologues are "gimmicks to suck you in."

Grisham said he hopes writers have a job doing something else before they start writing, probably because we gain knowledge from every job we undertake, whereas young writers with little experience have little to write about or worse, make incorrect assumptions about how the world works. He also recommends not keeping a thesaurus nearby.

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Become my friend on Facebook

Follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>

FOLLOW ZEBRA COMMUNICATIONS ON FACEBOOK

Get news, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff for writers.  
Like and follow Zebra Communications at <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

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CMOS ONLINE Q & A

The following issue quite often pops up in manuscripts I edit, and I must repair it. The following question came in to the folks at The Chicago Manual of Style Online:

Q. Which of the following is correct to introduce a list?

1. My service includes:
2. My service includes

Should the colon be used after the word "includes"? From my understanding, a colon should not be used after a verb (or a preposition). Also, the sentence "My service includes" is not a complete sentence by itself.

Read the CMOS response to this question as well as many more questions and answers at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE dictates such things as where commas go, when and what to capitalize, when and how to abbreviate words, when to spell out numbers or use numerals, and much more. If you write books, you will want to know more about Chicago style or be sure to use an editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing

My book on creative writing titled WRITE IN STYLE has won seven big awards. Copies are selling fast on Amazon, but please order it here, directly from the publisher: <http://tinyurl.com/zeq6z5g>. Please note that this book is not about grammar. It teaches writers how to find their fresh voice. If you want a book on grammar, order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter.

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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

POCKETS FICTION CONTEST

Send manuscripts with SASE to:
Lynn W. Gilliam, Editor
P. O. Box 340004
Nashville, TN 37203-0004
ATTN: FICTION CONTEST

Pockets, a 48-page devotional magazine for children ages 6-12, is published by The Upper Room. Launched in 1981, the magazine began as a response to parents and grandparents who wanted a devotional magazine especially for children.

Please indicate FICTION CONTEST on both the outside envelope and the cover sheet.
There is no set theme and no entry fee.
Entries must be postmarked no later than August 15.
Stories should be 750-1,000 words. (Stories shorter than 750 words or longer than 1,000 words will be disqualified.)
Stories must be previously unpublished.
Please include an accurate word count on your cover sheet.
Multiple submissions are permitted, but please submit only your best work.
Past winners are ineligible.
The winner will be announced November 1 at pockets.upperroom.org.
Award: \$500 and publication in the magazine.
Entries with an SASE will be returned.
If you have questions, please e-mail us at pockets@upperroom.org.
Please do NOT send submissions via FAX or e-mail.

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HARPER COLLINS

Romance writers, mystery writers, and more. Would you like to submit a manuscript to a publisher as large as Harper Collins Publishers? Why not? See its website that encourages writers to submit manuscripts, get feedback, and maybe even get published.  
<http://corporate.harpercollins.com/for-authors/submit-a-manuscript>.

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ROOT LITERARY AGENCY OPENS DOORS

Writer's Digest reports the opening of Root Agency by founder Holly Root. Holly worked at several large agencies in Los Angeles and handled New York Times bestsellers, international bestsellers, RITA winners and nominees, and numerous titles named to Best Books of the Year lists by Publishers Weekly, The Washington Post, NPR, the American Library Association, RT Book Reviews, Kirkus, and Amazon. Her specialties include commercial fiction for adults and children and some nonfiction.

Taylor Haggerty at Root Literary represents commercial fiction, focusing on young adult and middle-grade fiction, adult romance, and women's fiction. She also worked at large agencies in Los Angeles before joining Root Literary.
If you'd like to submit a manuscript that fits the agency's needs, send a query letter and the first ten pages of your manuscript in the body of

an e-mail to submissions@rootliterary.com.

The agency does not accept printed submissions.

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BAEN BOOKS  
P.O. Box 1188  
Wake Forest, NC 27588

Baen Books accepts unagented material and is looking for science fiction and fantasy with powerful plots and solid scientific and philosophical underpinnings. "For fantasy, any magical system must be both rigorously coherent and integral to the plot, and overall the work must at least strive for originality."

Seeks books of at least 100,000 words, but if your novel is wonderful, it says to send it regardless of length. Reports within nine to twelve months.

Send the complete manuscript, along with a synopsis. Do not send simultaneous submissions.

Electronic Submissions: Send your manuscript by using the submission form at: <http://ftp.baen.com/Slush/submit.aspx>

Attach the manuscript as a Rich Text Format (.rtf) file. Any other format will not be considered.

Send the manuscript as a single file (do not break it into separate chapter files). The form only accepts a single file, so any synopsis and contact information needs to be in the file with your manuscript.

Your submission must include your name, e-mail address, mailing address, and phone number on both your cover letter and the first page of the manuscript. If you have an alternate permanent e-mail address, include it, in case your primary account goes out of service. Include a plot outline if possible.

You may include your ideal cover treatment, including cover copy, a teaser page, and whatever else you would like.

Hardcopy Submissions for those who cannot submit electronically will be accepted; however, send only in standard manuscript format, double-spaced, one side of the page only, 11/2" margins on all four sides of the page. Photocopies are acceptable if dark and clear.

Font must be a serif font, 12-points or greater.

Title, author (last name only is okay), and page number at the top of each page are mandatory. Include your name, mailing address, and phone number on the first page.

All submissions should be accompanied by a stamped return envelope. Submissions from outside the U.S. should be accompanied by sufficient International Reply Coupons. Send printed submissions to the post office address listed above.

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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.

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 and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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To access past issues of The Writers Network News, click here: 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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