

The Writers Network News: Change/August 2022

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Notes:

Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from www.tinyurl.com, a service that converts long links into short ones.

This ezine format that does not support italics, so italics are indicated with underlines before and after words.

Writer's Quote of the Month

You have to know how to accept rejection and reject acceptance. —Ray Bradbury

Ray Douglas Bradbury was an American author and screenwriter. One of the most celebrated twentieth-century American writers, he worked in a variety of modes, including fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and realistic fiction. Among his best known works are _Fahrenheit 451_ and _The Martian Chronicles_.

Moving? You'll Have to Resubscribe

If our email to you bounces, our system automatically unsubscribes you. Before you change your email address, subscribe again with your new address. We cannot add you or change your address, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Please go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and sign up with your new address, and do it before you stop using your old address.

One: From the Editor's Desk: Change

Dear Fellow Writers:

Few of us welcome big changes in our lives. Even changes for the good can be overwhelming. I face such a change, and as would be expected, I'm overwhelmed.

I've decided to move. For close to thirty years I've lived in a three-bedroom house with a full finished basement (where I have two office areas and a huge meeting space) and an oversized garage with workshop space in it as well. Now in my late seventies, I'm ready to downsize, simplify my life, and live in a place that offers help if and when I need it. I'm probably moving to a two-bedroom apartment for active folks over fifty-five. To fit into snug quarters I have to eliminate about 60 percent of my belongings. In truth I probably need even less than that amount, but how does one decide what to keep, what to sell, what to donate, and what to throw away? Argh!

After looking at all my options, I called a service that helps with exactly the transition I'm going through. I found a woman-owned business that will help me from start to finish. It will determine what furniture will fit into my new place and what I might need to buy. It will help me get rid of what I won't need, provide movers, and even unpack everything at the new place. Such a service will be worth every penny I pay for it.

As an editor I instinctively compare such processes to writing a book. After writing the first draft (which equates to my

collection of a lifetime of furniture, photos, clothing, books, and knickknacks), a writer must decide what to do next. Should writers tackle the editing phase without help? That task too can be daunting, and we don't know what we don't know. We won't see our own errors. That's when hiring an editor takes the pressure off, just like my transition consultant will relieve some of my pressure from my move. She'll probably give me ideas and options I didn't know about. A good editor does the same for a writer.

You know what? The task doesn't seem as overwhelming now. Stay tuned for a new address, but it won't be immediate, and my email addresses will remain the same. My phone number may change and an issue of this newsletter may be truncated or late, but those are decisions I've yet to make. I look forward to clearing out, downsizing, and settling into my new home.

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com
Author of two editions of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service, and senior editor of Enjoy Cherokee Magazine

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Members Write:

In last month's issue I mentioned missing the hugs the pandemic had stolen from me. In response Ann Favreau sent a poem she had written titled "Hugs." It closes with the following stanza that conveys a universal message and goes like this:

I won't take hugs for granted now,
Knowing that COVID emphasized how
Important a physical connection can be
For all of us and especially me.

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From Patti Brady I received this note: "Thank you for all the help and encouragement you have given writers over the years for free. I certainly benefitted. Your books helped me immensely. I appreciate the way you have been so open with us about your life and the ups and downs we all encounter in this world. You also provided a sense of community for us working at our desks in semi-isolation. As a fellow Woodstock resident, it was always fun to remember you and your elevated talent were in proximity to me."

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Will Bontrager wrote, "I purchased Write In Style a couple days ago. Now I'm falling all over myself trying to kick my hiney for not buying it earlier. This is the book I've been wanting for years but didn't know it existed."

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I heard from Mark Diamond, "Amen to your COVID column, Bobbie. I'm pissed that the world has dropped all COVID requirements. How irresponsible. It's so hard figuring out whether to rejoin travel activities this summer or keep mostly paranoid and hunkered down."

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From Jill Jennings regarding my information on em dashes: "I learned there is such a thing as an em dash and where to find it. I thought all this time that there was something wrong with me that I got a hyphen when I needed a dash!"

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Thank you all for writing. I hope to hear from even more folks. Your notes inspire me to keep providing this free newsletter for writers.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: How to Break Up a Long Memoir

Q: After five years I have completed my autobiography. After submitting many query letters with the word count of 777,568 I have been informed that as a new author no one is going to take a chance and publish me, because the cost would be great. I am told the book should not be more than 90,000 words. How can you help me to condense my book, and what would the cost be?

A: The advice you received is correct, that publishers prefer most first-time authors to keep their books at or under 100,000 words. Because the length of a manuscript affects the cost to produce it as a book, publishers rarely accept manuscripts of 500,000 words or more, unless the author is already established and has a strong fan following.

You have put a great deal of work into your book, though, and deleting about 90 percent of your words could be heartbreaking, if not impossible. I feel for you and I can help, but not right away. Let me explain.

I help authors, rather than scalp them, so let me make some comments and suggestions. Because I, like most editors, charge by the word, you can save a great deal of money by reducing the word count yourself before sending the book for editing, but wait! You won't have to cut out almost 700,000 words if you follow my advice.

First, is the book an actual autobiography? Autobiographies cover the lives of celebrities, politicians, and other well-known people. Autobiographies reveal personal information that readers want to know about the subject's life history, how the person grew up, what drawbacks the person faced, how that person overcame adversity, and in what way the subject of the book finally triumphed. If the author is, however, simply an ordinary person who led an interesting life but is not a famous person, then it must be labeled a memoir, rather than an autobiography.

If indeed it is a memoir, we're in luck. Memoirs give authors many ways and opportunities to break their manuscripts into several. Rather than being a straight timeline and litany of facts like an autobiography, memoirs can be separated into

stories about specific incidents. For example, I've broken my memoirs into three books by making one strictly about my life with animals. One is about unusual or funny incidents that happened to me at work. A third one covers odd or hilarious events I've experienced in my dating life.

In your case, perhaps one manuscript can concentrate on interesting incidents that happened to you during your youth and teen years. A second manuscript could cover events when you were in your twenties. Other manuscripts could concentrate on your thirties, and so forth. After you've broken the document into five or more manuscripts, you can go through each one and decide which chapters or incidents are the weakest, least interesting, or least important and delete them.

Next you can read books such as mine, *Write In Style*, to learn which words and phrases you can find and delete to make the writing even tighter and stronger.

Soon you'll find you've reduced the single manuscript of more than 777,000 words into five or more tightly written memoirs that may be closer to 100,000 words each. Only then is it time to send one or more of the manuscripts for editing. Be sure to request that your editor also delete any weak segments or wordy phrases and make suggestions on how to cut down the word count even more. Not all editors will make such suggestions unless you ask them to do so.

I look forward to collaborating with you, but I want to give you the best deal for your dollar. If you can cut the book into at least four books, I can help with each one much easier and more economically than trying to cut the 777,000 words down to 100,000. In the end a much larger portion of your words and message will be preserved by breaking the one manuscript into several, and I'm sure you'll be much happier, as well.

Bobbie Christmas is a book editor, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, and owner of Zebra Communications. She will answer your questions too. Send them to [Bobbie@ZebraEditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@ZebraEditor.com) or [BZebra@aol.com](mailto:BZebra@aol.com). Read Bobbie's Zebra Communications blog at [ZebraEditor.com/blog/](http://ZebraEditor.com/blog/).

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 from Amazon at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ppcdkd> or buy it directly at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.  
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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

Creative Writing Tip: Blond, Blonde

Blond (adjective): yellowish in color. David's hair bleached blond in the summer.

Blonde (noun) for many years referred to a female with blond hair, as in this sentence: The blonde in the bikini sipped a soda. The folks at CMOS now recommend using blond for the adjective, not a noun, regardless of gender.

Blond (noun): In 2021 the folks at The Chicago Manual of Style began advising against using either blond or blonde as a noun except in a direct quotation, advice that applies equally to brunette or redhead. It discourages writing that reduces people to physical characteristics or gender stereotypes (as in a phrase such as "the blonde in the front row").

Redundant: blonde woman

(Excerpt from *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book doctor's desk reference*, available only at [ZebraEditor.com](http://ZebraEditor.com).)

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Who will buy your book?

Regardless of whether you hope to sell your book to a publisher or want to self-publish, your book must first be marketable. Zebra Communications edits manuscripts with marketability in mind. Two of the three services we offer include developmental editing and an extensive report filled with advice, explanations, and suggestions on how to improve the manuscript's marketability even more. Look for our services, pricing, reviews, and more at www.ZebraEditor.com. Zebra Communications: Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability

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The State of the Bookselling Industry, Looking Back at Where to Submit, and More

<https://tinyurl.com/yc463u9k>

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Easy Access to Bobbie's Blogs

Read creative writing tips as well as some of my personal experiences. Access the Write In Style blog here:

<https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>

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Query Tracker

Ready to find an agent? Query Tracker claims to have helped close to 4,000 writers find agents for their books. It's free, but you have to sign up. It lists more than a thousand agents, lets you organize and track your queries, and more. See <https://tinyurl.com/5n8cft28>

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Manuslips

I keep some of the funnier errors I find in manuscripts when I edit. We all make what I call manuslips, but a good editor will catch and repair them. Here's a recent manuslip I caught while editing a client's book:

Sometimes we are dump-founded to answer love-related matters.

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Be My Friend on Facebook

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

Follow Zebra Communications on Facebook for news for writers, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff. <https://tinyurl.com/ydyn3pcu>.

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CMOS Online Q&A

This month someone posed the following question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online:

Q. Should there be a comma after "also" when it begins a sentence?

To get the answer to this question and many more based on Chicago style, go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

The Chicago Manual of Style sets the standard in book publishing for issues such as punctuation, capitalization, and much more. If you write fiction or nonfiction books, you will want to know about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing

Have you removed all the superfluous words in your manuscript? Write In Style tells you what to look for and change or delete. Watch all your writing improve with tips from this brilliant book on creative writing.

We've been told to write tight, but how can we know when we've overwritten? In five-award-winning Write In Style you'll learn how to find and delete or rewrite words, sentences, and phrases that weaken your writing.

Write In Style leaves grammar to the grammarians. Instead it uses humor and expertise to show writers how to tighten and strengthen their writing style and create a fresh voice. Available as an e-book or printed.

Order your copy today at <https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>.

Want to buy the book in Kobo through Rakuten? Easy. Go to <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/write-in-style-3>

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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

The Puritan

The Puritan seeks submissions all year round, from anywhere in the world.

Our current publication rates stand as

\$100 PER INTERVIEW,

\$200 PER ESSAY,

\$100 PER REVIEW,

\$150 PER WORK OF FICTION, AND

\$25 PER POEM (OR PAGE, CAPPED AT \$80 FOR POEMS RUNNING FOUR PAGES OR MORE).

Check back with the magazine regularly; The Puritan is working ever assiduously to increase these figures. Please note that we can ONLY issue payments using etransfer, PayPal or a cheque in the mail. We also pay in CAD. If you cannot accept payment via etransfer, PayPal or cheque from a Canadian bank, we cannot accept your submission.

All submissions received by September 25 are considered for the fall issue, published in November. Those received by December 25 are considered for the winter issue, out in February.

Send all questions and messages to [puritanmagazine \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:puritanmagazine[at]gmail[dot]com).

Please note that we CANNOT accept email submissions. They will be discarded.

We are open to simultaneous submissions. If your work is accepted elsewhere, please send a message via Submittable.

Email notifications of withdrawals will be ignored as we simply cannot keep up with the volume of them.

For more information and to submit, go to <https://puritan-magazine.submittable.com/submit>

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Sunbury Press is a rapidly growing publisher of a wide range of categories represented by six imprints. We typically receive approximately 1000+ proposals a year, publishing roughly 50 of them (about 5%). We choose to invest in those opportunities that we feel have the best chance in the current marketplace. We are always seeking new titles to publish including: history, historical fiction, police procedurals, crime thrillers, horror, steam punk, young adult, current events, science, reference, art history, ANY local/regional history, humor, spiritual/metaphysical, self-help, professional, memoirs,

etc. If we didn't mention your category, try us anyway!

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Needs

Poetry and prose from authors interested in the creation, sharing, and transmission of ideas, imaginings, and experiences. Getting rich or famous from publication here is unlikely, but more people in more places actually read ICONOCLAST than the vast majority of other small press literary magazines.

Full guidelines here: Submission Guidelines — IconoclastLiteraryMagazine.com

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Send it in the body of an email to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com. Deadline: 18th of each month.

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

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