

The Writers Network News, October 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)

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According to Mark Abley's website, Mark is a poet, a newspaper columnist, and an award-winning author living in Montreal. He has won both a Rhodes Scholarship and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

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One: From the editor's desk: This Month in Review

Dear Fellow Writers:

For more than a month the news has been filled with sadness and destruction, from both humans and nature. My heart goes out to all the victims, survivors, and experiencers of all the violence, earthquakes, and weather events of late.

I am thankful that both my cozy home in Metro Atlanta and I have been spared. By the time Hurricane Irma arrived in central Georgia, she was downgraded to a tropical storm, and although the grocery stores ran out of bread and water and I exhausted myself dragging all my outdoor plants and furniture indoors, my lights blinked, but did not go out. I lost neither power nor trees. I endured only a chaotic blend of debris on my driveway and decks and one decorative board on the base of one deck blew down. Meanwhile entire islands were destroyed, countless people are without homes, and many people, including several friends of mine, were without power for days. Indeed, I'm fortunate, and I'm truly thankful.

My worst experience may have been encountering the resident king snake that found refuge from the storm by stretching himself across the length of my garage door. The morning after the storm, I lifted my garage door and found him spread behind my car in a cold-blooded stupor. Chilled and sound asleep, he refused to move, even when I nudged him several times with a stick. Being addicted to my iPhone, I of course took a video of the sleeping giant before I again tried to nudge him awake, but he stayed motionless, chilled to the bone, no doubt. In a flash of brilliance I remembered the long grabber pole that I keep for picking objects off the top shelves of my kitchen cabinets. I poked him with the grabber several times, and he finally lifted his head and struck at the tool harmlessly; he's not venomous. Only then was I able to grip him gently with the grabber and carry him to some nearby bushes. I could then leave my garage without rolling over him. I was, of course, late for my appointment, but when I showed people my video, they understood. I posted the video on Facebook, and some people thought I should have run over the poor guy, but the five-foot fellow is not dangerous to people, but he's deadly to rodents, so I want to keep him around. He shows up from time to time in shocking places in my yard, but this is the first time I've had to move him out of the way. He usually runs away from me as quickly as most people would run away from him.

In the final tally, I dealt with a cold-blooded killer of rats, a mere blip in my electricity, physical labor of moving my plants and furniture indoors and then back out again, a loose board that had to be nailed back into its proper place, and a lot of debris to sweep away. Those things are nothing to compare to the many people who lost power and even lost homes. I hope my Floridian readers are all safe and back in their homes by now and that all future hurricanes stay out over the ocean. Oh, and I hope that Mr. King Snake finds a different place for avoiding the ravages of future storms.

Meanwhile, life always fascinates me and gives me material to write about, here in the Christmas Castle. I hope you are finding something to smile about and write about, wherever you live.

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, 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, click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Writing through Grief

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: My ten-year marriage is ending. I don't feel like writing. Do you have any advice on how to fight through the pain and write?

A: As a veteran of two broken marriages, I feel your pain. I'm sorry you have to go through it. Depression often leads to immobility. Many people need time to go from "overwhelmed" to "productive."

Any loss results in grief, and grief that goes unresolved can lead to mental and physical problems. Instead of thinking of the issue as fighting through the pain to write, think of the fact that writing helps you fight the pain. While immobility keeps you in a depressed state, doing something—almost anything—can get you out of that state.

When I was going through a divorce at the same time my mother experienced gastric bleeding that doctors said might result in her death, I read ON DEATH AND DYING, a book by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. I hadn't thought about my divorce as being a loss that would result in grief, but the book made me realize I was going through a double loss. Kubler-Ross defined the stages of grief, which include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Give yourself time to experience your emotions and progress through the stages toward healing. Do what you need to do to work through the stages of grief. I hope writing will become one of those things, but do not be hard on yourself for not being able to write right away.

Journaling helped me a great deal, and it might work for you, if you can find a place and time that is conducive to writing. I started with "Day One" and wrote down what my then-husband said to our son about our separation and what in reality my husband and I had said to each other. I recorded my surprise that the information differed greatly. From the moment I started my divorce journal, I experienced relief that I could write my darkest thoughts without fear that my husband might read them. Writing my divorce journal did not make me want to write creatively right away, but I unintentionally recorded material I might have forgotten, otherwise. Years later, I returned to the journals and resurrected conversations, events, and emotions to use in stories and memoirs. No doubt that later I would not have been able to rely strictly on memory for all the details, fears, and feelings I suffered through. After time passed, reading those journal entries made me smile, because I was far past those feelings and fears. I could enjoy my triumphant recovery and the fact that my life had become much better than it had been.

If journaling does not work for you yet, don't push it, but sit for a portion of each day with pen in hand and see if anything happens. I mentioned finding a place conducive to writing, and I will reveal mine. I keep my journal in the bathroom. I have to sit on the potty awhile each morning anyway, so while I wait for nature to take its course, I write down my thoughts, dreams, plans, fears, aspirations, conversations, experiences, or whatever else comes to mind. I like the confined space, the quiet, and the solitude while I write and take care of my morning constitutional. See if the same ritual works for you.

You might also sign up for a class of any kind, but especially one that gives writing assignments. Taking one or more classes can provide a happy diversion from grief and add to your social life when you most need it. You can look for places, even online places, with regular competitions to see if assignments and competitions inspire you to write. Join organizations for writers. Hearing other writers talk of their experiences may inspire you to write, but even if not, at least you will be mingling with other writers. Blending with others often helps elevate a person from the depths of grief, even when the person experiencing grief doesn't want to socialize.

As for me, deadlines inspire me. See if giving yourself a deadline helps, but don't be too hard on yourself. You may set a deadline such as "I will write ten pages by the end of each month."

Of all that inspires me, though, critique circles take the lead. When I am a member of an active critique circle, I must bring five new pages to each meeting, so I not only have a deadline, but I also receive encouragement and helpful feedback that keeps me going.

Try any and all my suggestions and see what works for you. On the bright side, your distress about not writing means you definitely are a writer. As a writer, you will get back to writing at some point, either by using some of my suggestions or by finding your own inspiration.

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. Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at 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

Member Judy Loose responded to my comment in last month's newsletter that said that some editors will format a manuscript for a client. She wrote, "There are those of us who format for self-published paperbacks as well as for e-books. Editors that I know don't do formatting. I like to receive an edited manuscript to do the formatting."

I responded, "Thank you, Judy. Perhaps I didn't make it clear that editors may help format a manuscript to make it presentable to a publisher or agent, but we don't format manuscripts into books or e-books. Formatting a manuscript might entail changing a font, removing extra spaces, changing the line spacing, and/or correcting the indents. Only folks like you take that manuscript and lay it out for publication as a printed book or e-book."

Let me make it clear to readers that formatting a book manuscript for submission to a publisher or agent is one thing, and it should follow standard manuscript format. Formatting a book for printing is a completely different thing and can be as creative as the designer and publisher desire. To see the guidelines for standard manuscript format, see http://zebraeditor.com/reports/104_-_standard_manuscript_format.pdf.

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Longtime subscriber Josh Batchelder sold a series of articles to a conglomerate of newspapers with a huge combined distribution. Best of all, the articles not only promote his skills as a graphologist (interpreter of handwriting) but also tout his books. Way to self-promote, Josh! For a list of his books, see https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Josh+Batchelder.

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CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK

The 2017 Literary Writers Conference will take place December 7 & 8, 2017, at The New School's Theresa Lang Student and Community Center, located at 55 West 13th Street in New York City. Authors of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry—learn how to maneuver in the marketplace as informed, empowered, professional writers. See <http://www.clmp.org/literary-writers-conference/>.

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CONFERENCE IN FLORIDA

16th Annual Florida Writers Conference, "What a Character"  
October 19 - 22 in Altamonte Springs, Florida

Whether you're just getting started or midway through a 400-page opus or have published multiple books, the Florida Writers Conference is the one writers conference for you.

This year there are even more reasons why you should attend, ranging from the lineup of agents and editors from leading literary agencies and publishing houses to National Guest of Honor David Morrell and Steve Berry, the Florida Writer of the Year.

I've been a speaker at this conference many times, and I can vouch for it as being one of the best organized, most exciting conferences in the Southeast. I highly recommend it, plus you can sign up to pitch your book to an agent interested in taking on new clients. For more information see <https://floridawriters.net/conferences/florida-writers-conference-2017/>.

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MORE MANUSLIPS

In my Manuslips file I keep a list of errors I find that either tickle my fancy or prove a point about clear, correct writing. Read the example below a few times and determine if you saw any errors.

Crocheted hats covered men's heads made from tree fibers.

Yes, because of the juxtaposition error, the men's heads, rather than the hats, were made of tree fibers. Such would be okay in a sci-fi novel that described aliens, but in a novel set on planet Earth, I would hope the heads were made of flesh and bone. In such a case the sentence should be written this way:

Crocheted hats made from tree fibers covered men's heads.

Have you ever found any funny errors in your own work? If so, share them with me by e-mail. If I use them I won't use your name, should you wish to remain anonymous.

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WRITE A NOVEL IN THIRTY DAYS? YOU CAN DO IT!

It's time to prepare for NanNoWriMo, National Novel Writing Month. It begins November 1, so start mentally formulating your next novel now. Check out NanNoWriMo and register at <https://nanowrimo.org/>. In December I want to hear how you did, so let me know.

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SAVE THOUSANDS ON EDITING

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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THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE RELEASES NEW EDITION, NEW CHANGES

Nothing stays the same forever. In its 17th edition, THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE, the bible for all book editors, has changed its decisions on several things, including the following:

Internet is now lowercased (internet). (7.80)

Email is no longer hyphenated. (7.89) (used to be e-mail)

Decision-making is now hyphenated as both an adjective and a noun.

Uppercase the G in Generations X, Y, and Z. (8.42)

Do not italicize Wikipedia or similar titles. (8.191)

It's now okay to use US (for United States) as a noun, provided the meaning is clear from the context. (10.32) (Used to used only as an adjective)

A direct question introduced midsentence always begins with a capital letter. (6.42)

Although CMOS Online promises to list the significant changes in the 17th edition on its website, many items in the list merely refer readers to sections in the new edition, so unless you buy the new edition, you won't know what book publishers are now following. Once again writers must rely on professional editors who stay up to date on every detail of Chicago style. Nevertheless, here's the link to the web page: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/help-tools/what-s-new.html>

For those who wonder why this month's edition of "The Writers Network News" still follows the style advocated in the 16th edition of CMOS, my copy of the 17th edition has not yet arrived. By the next newsletter, I will be up to speed with the changes in Chicago style, and this newsletter will comply.

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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 a recent mix-up with my medications, see <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

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TERMINOLOGY WRITERS SHOULD KNOW

Misplaced Modifier

Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that add description to sentences. Correctly placed modifiers appear in front of or behind the word they logically describe. A misplaced modifier is a word, phrase, or clause placed in a sentence so that it appears to modify or refer to an unintended word.

Earlier in this newsletter I mentioned incorrect juxtaposition. You're right if you think incorrect juxtaposition and misplaced modifiers can indeed be the same thing.

Examples of misplaced modifiers:

Hail falls from the sky the size of golf balls. (As written it appears the sky is the size of golf balls)

He had his feet up on the sofa watching television. (As written, the sofa was watching television)

She charged into the room, her hair disheveled and breathless. (I'll bet you can guess what this sentence is incorrectly saying about her hair.)

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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

Cell phone or cellphone?

Someone sent the following question to the folks at The Chicago Manual of Style Online:

I have researched this but would like a definitive answer. Is it "cell phone" or "cellphone"? Merriam-Webster shows it as "cell phone" but "smartphone" is one word.

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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25 WORDS THAT ARE THEIR OWN OPPOSITES

While editing a manuscript I often find ambiguous sentences. Sometimes the ambiguity is the result of words that can mean two opposite or different things, leaving the sentence either unclear or sounding as if it means the opposite of what it intended to say. To avoid such errors or if you simply love words, read what Mental Floss has compiled here: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/57032/25-words-are-their-own-opposites>.

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

THE BIG ROUNDTABLE SEEKS ESSAYS

<https://thebigroundtable.submittable.com/submit/21875/narrative-nonfiction-longform-stories>

The Big Roundtable publishes narrative nonfiction and connects passionate nonfiction writers with readers who will support their work. We do this through experimental methods of gathering, selecting, editing, and distributing ambitious narrative stories, and, eventually, researching the reading and sharing behavior around those stories.

All stories must be 100% true. This is journalism.

The inspiration for The Big Roundtable came from the Algonquin Round Table, a group of New York City writers who called themselves “The Vicious Circle” and who’d meet at the Algonquin Hotel in the early 20th century. They were vicious; we are not.

We are looking for original works of narrative nonfiction of between 3,500 and 20,000 words. By narrative we mean a story with a beginning, middle and end, though not necessarily told in that order, propelled by a simple question: What happened next? We publish stories that are grounded in reporting. The reporting should be the engine that drives the narrative. Even if you have a memoir we are looking for stories in which an author's curiosity compelled him or her to find out more, to research and report and challenge those memories.

Writers are paid by reader donations. Every published long-form writer is guaranteed to walk away with a minimum of \$100. Several of our authors have made a several thousand dollars in reader donations. We've recently added a membership program, and we're working to ensure our writers make more in the future.

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ST. MARTIN'S MINOTAUR/MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA
CRIME NOVEL COMPETITION

Sponsored by Minotaur Books and Mystery Writers of America (MWA)

The competition is open to any writer, regardless of nationality, aged eighteen or older, who has never been the author of any published novel (in any genre), as defined by the guidelines on the website (authors of self-published works only may enter, as long as the manuscript submitted is not the self-published work). Only one manuscript entry (the “Manuscript”) is permitted per writer. To be considered for the 2018 competition, all submissions must be received by 11:59 p.m. EST on January 12, 2018. For all details and to submit, see <http://mysterywriters.org/about-mwa/st-martins/>.

There is no entry fee.

Nominees will be selected by judges chosen by MWA, with the assistance of the editorial staff of Minotaur Books, and the winner will be chosen by Minotaur Books editors on the basis of the originality, creativity and writing skill of the submission. If a winner is selected, Minotaur Books will offer to enter into its standard form author’s agreement with the entrant for publication of the winning Manuscript. After execution of the standard form author’s agreement by both parties, the winner will receive an advance against future royalties of \$10,000. On the condition that the selected winner accepts and executes the publishing contract proposed by Minotaur Books, the winner will then be recognized at the Edgar Awards Banquet in New York City in April 2018.

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FUNNY IN FIVE HUNDRED SEEKS NOVELETES

FunnyinFiveHundred.com strives to be the funniest, silliest literary website out there. If you can write a funny flash fiction story or novelette, you've come to the right place.

All work must be original, and unpublished. We don't have the time for copyright permissions, so please do not quote copyrighted material (like songs written after 1920). No attacking public figures, groups of people, no fan fiction, or anything that we think would get this website in too much trouble. Edgy work is great, within reason.

Novelette: We are now accepting longer stories of 7,500 to 15,000 words. These should be humorous, beginning-middle-end stories. We pay \$.01 per word. Our vision for these novelettes is to fill our bookstore with fun, quick, humor-packed stories that are easy reads and are in a specific genre. This is a new venture, so please allow us a month to provide a decision on your work. In addition, do not attempt to paste your manuscript into the Story / Monologue box; rather, please upload a Word document (not PDF) file. Brownie points will go to stories that are well formatted (double-spaced, 12-point font, title, author bio with any books/links that you would like mentioned, and indented paragraphs).

See <http://www.funnyinfivehundred.com/p/submit.html> for submission guidelines.

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PURPLE DRAGONFLY BOOK AWARDS

Accepting children’s books; deadline March 15, 2018

<https://www.dragonflybookawards.com/purple-dragonfly>

Divided into fifty-three distinct subject categories ranging from books on the environment and cooking to sports and family issues, the Purple Dragonfly Book Awards are geared toward stories that appeal to children of all ages. We are looking for stories that inspire, inform, teach or entertain. A Purple Dragonfly Book Awards seal on your book's cover tells parents, grandparents, educators and caregivers they are giving children the very best in reading excellence. Our judges are industry experts with specific knowledge about the categories over which

they preside.

Being honored with a Purple Dragonfly Book Award confers credibility upon the winner and gives published authors the recognition they deserve and provide a helping hand to further their careers.

One book contest winner will be chosen from all entries to receive the grand prize. The grand prize winning book must be outstanding in content, readability, entertainment value, and overall production. The grand prize winner will receive a \$500 cash prize, a certificate commemorating their accomplishment, 100 Grand Prize seals (order more for an additional charge), a one-hour marketing consulting session with Linda F. Radke, a news release announcing the winners sent to a comprehensive list of media outlets, a listing on the website, and a feature on the Dragonfly Book Awards homepage.

All first-place book contest winners of all categories will be put into a drawing for a \$100 prize. In addition, each first place winner in each category receives a certificate commemorating their accomplishment, 25 award seals (order more for an additional charge), a news release announcing the winners sent to a comprehensive list of media outlets, and a listing on the website.

The awards contests are open to books published in any calendar year and in any country as long as they are available for purchase. Books entered must be printed in English. Provided they adhere to the above criteria, we accept traditionally published, partnership published and self-published books.

Entry fees:

On or before March 15, 2018: \$60 per category

After March 15, 2018: \$65 per category.

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NEW AGENT SEEKS ROMANCE NOVELS

Ann Leslie Tuttle joined Dystel, Goderich & Bourret in 2017 after working for twenty years at Harlequin Books, where she most recently was a senior editor. At DG&B, she is actively seeking all kinds of romance, including contemporary, historical, suspense, paranormal, and inspirational.

Send a query letter to atuttle@dystel.com, and include the full query in the body of the e-mail, not as an attachment. Include a sample of the first twenty-five pages of your manuscript (or the closest chapter break) in the body of the e-mail below your query letter.

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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](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.

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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