As the Eraser Burns

COMPUTER STUFF

Yahoo! for Yahoo! Discussion Groups
by Paula K. Zeller, Moderator, SCBWI of MD/DE/WV Discussion Group

Advice, support, and friendship are just keystrokes away when you belong to an online discussion group. Following are six Yahoo groups I recommend.

• cw-biz (Children’s Writing Biz)

Author and writing teacher Anastasia Suen (http://www.asuen.com) moderates this active group, which focuses on the business end of writing and illustrating children’s books. Expect to find market news, along with tips on contracts, marketing, resources, and other practical issues. Subscribe: cw-biz-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

• Just4kidsmagwriters

This group is moderated by author and writing instructor Jan Fields, who also edits two top websites: Kid Magazine Writers (www.kidmagwriters.com) and the Institute of Children’s Literature (www.institutechildrenslit.com). Group members include published and aspiring magazine writers/illustrators. Jan encourages the exchange of “information, good/bad news, guidelines, theme lists, etc.” Subscribe: just4kidsmagwriters-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

• NFforKids

Children’s author Deanne Durrett (www.deannedurrett.com) moderates this lively, focused group, which discusses “the craft, marketing, and publishing” of children’s nonfiction. Recent topics have included market news, top nonfiction titles, and helpful resources. Subscribe: NFforKids-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

• picture-books.

This group discusses “the creation, publication, and uses” of picture books. Subscribe: picture-books-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

• SCBWI of MD-DE-WV

Not yet a member of our region’s discussion group? Give us a try. You’ll
be the first to know about regional meetings and other news. Plus, you will connect with fellow writers and illustrators who can provide support and help you meet your goals. Subscribe: SCBWI_of_MD-DE-WV-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

• Mid-Atlantic SCBWI

Subscribe to our sister region’s discussion group for news, networking opportunities, and more. Subscribe: Mid-AtlanticSCBWI_group-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

NOTE: To take advantage of a Yahoo group’s web features, subscribe at its home page (see http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/groups/groups-19.html for details). To receive e-mails only, send a blank “subscribe” message (no subject line; no message text) to the Yahoo group of your choice (see address at the end of each group description, above).

THE LEARNING SIDE

TOO BAD YOU MISSED IT:
THE PICTURE BOOK CONFERENCE

By Sarah Maury Swan

Not one boring speaker at the December 2 picture book conference, lots of information for illustrators and we were done early. Illustrators Joan Waites and Susan Detwiler and illustrator/author Lulu Delacre stressed self-promotion. Believe in yourself and start with magazines or greeting cards. Highlights magazine always has a hidden picture in it. Why not let it be yours?

Susan suggested keeping your portfolio for the art directors small and easy for them to store.

Lulu Delacre got her start with textbook publishers. She recommends finding your niche and sticking to it.

All three said they didn’t usually meet the author; the editor acted as go between. But feel free to ask for author feedback if you need it.

And figure the project will take close to a year to finish.

Assistant Editor Emily Lawrence from HarperCollins/Katherine Tegan Books concurred that writers and illustrators show be good at marketing themselves and their books. She said non-fiction picture books were often overlooked as a genre for writers and parents. There is a need for non-fiction, but be very accurate.

Ms. Lawrence said illustrations should complement & echo the text. The illustrator should show the unwritten ideas inherent in the story. The author may include art notes, but put them in parentheses and italics to differentiate them from the text. The artist should have a recognizable style.

The advent of computer technology has expanded the artistic horizon in picture books, but the color resolution is still tied to the Cyan Magenta Yellow Key (CMYK) color scheme. However, editors and art directors are turning to “Photoshop” when showing the artist what is wanted.

The editor’s job is to tighten the author’s writing without losing the author’s voice. The text is formatted showing page breaks and spreads before it is sent to the artist. The art notes are sent to the artist also.

Be attentive to the children around you, willing to reinvent yourself, and open to rewrites. Detach yourself from
your work. Ms. Lawrence suggested thinking of your story from the end to the beginning.

If you’re an illustrator with a good story idea, but don’t feel you can write it. Sell the idea with your illustrations and write a “bare bones” story to give the editor the idea of what you’re planning. According to Ms. Lawrence, editors will work with illustrators on fleshing out the story.

Susan Detwiler, Joan Waites and Lulu Delacre all agreed there is an advantage to being an author/illustrator if you are good at both. You must have passion for your story.

Our final speaker, none other than our new RA Mona Kerby, talked about how to become an outstanding picture book writer. Start by reading the past and present winners of the Caldecott, Loretta Scott King, Newbery, Pura Belpre awards, the ALA Outstanding Science Trade Books and the Outstanding Books in the Field of Social Studies, the Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Award books, and the Pennsylvania Young Reader’s Choice Award books. Ask your local librarian to steer you to the award books.

THE BUSINESS SIDE

REWRITE, REVISE & EDIT; A CHECKLIST

1. SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR CHECK:
   Did you check each of the items listed above? Even though this should be standard, it’s easy to miss something when there is so much at stake. Check this one off your list.
2. PLOT CHECK: Did you check for plot inconsistencies?
3. SUBPLOT CHECK: Did you tie up all the loose ends, even within your subplots? Sometimes we take care of the obvious, but miss the bonus parts!
4. CHARACTER CHECK: Are there inconsistencies in your character’s dialog, actions or description? Is the character the same person all the way through the story?
5. CONFLICT CHECK: Did you know your conflict and keep it in mind as the plot progressed? Did your character keep it in mind?
6. RESOLUTION CHECK: Have you worked toward a smooth resolution? Does it make sense? Would another resolution have worked better? Did you write each version to be sure?
7. DESCRIPTION CHECK: Have you described the appropriate items and left others alone. A great description is meaningless if the thing described is not important to the story. Did you use the most effective words to describe? Did you remove weak nouns, verbs and modifiers? Eliminate abstractions and replace them with concrete images. Help your readers visualize what is happening. Keep descriptions powerful. Use powerful nouns
8. VOICE CHECK: Did your voice remain the same throughout? Have you avoided passive voice? Is the author invisible in the story?
9. **CLICHÉ CHECK:** Is your writing cliché ridden or full of unnecessary metaphors? Chop out the obvious ones.

10. **NECESSITY CHECK:** Is every part of the piece necessary? Are there parts that are fluff or filler, but don’t add to or advance the plot? Get rid of those sections.

11. **REDUNDANCY CHECK:** Were you redundant? Did you repeat details, descriptions, facts? Did your character state the obvious, something that is also told in exposition? Be concise, making every word count. It will help you eliminate redundant parts. I find that the three most overused words are *very, that,* and *had.*

12. **REWRITE CHECK:** Did you add extra text during your rewrite? Were you careful? This is the time that most typos occur. We all do it. When adding extra words, or editing out the parts that didn't work, mistakes are inevitable. Simple typing errors, forgetting to delete the rest of an incomplete sentence, or doubling up on added lines happen. Do a triple check!

Lois Szymanski is past Regional Advisor for our region, author of lots of books and a teacher of writing. You will see her smiling face at our conferences.

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**ILLUSTRATOR’S CORNER**

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**It’s Just as Simple as Magic**

By Nina Ayzenberg

Do you believe in Magic? I believe I’m creating magic every day. If your skeptical mind will not set you free to believe, then close your eyes and remember your first favorite fairytale character. Can you recall the wonderful magic you felt?

Often times I’m asked:
- How did you come up with this interesting character or expression?
- Did you take it from a magazine or another book?
- Or find it on the internet?
- Did you copy that funny pose from a photograph?

These questions make me smile. Oh, it’s easy! It’s as simple as magic! Ok, I am going to share my very SACRED SECRET.

Yes, I read books and magazines and scroll the internet. In my contract for a new children’s book, for example, about a Chinese boy who lived in the time of dragon tales, where else I can find information about costumes and tools and household items of that particular period? Even modern stories need a good search for additional information. But this research/preparation is only one part.

The magic comes in the other part of illustrating children’s books—the fun part, when the drawing of the story begins! It is the wonderful new world
and it’s my job to bring those unique characters and delightful events to our world. For me it is a very sacred time, so I make sure nobody will disturb me during my very first reading of the story.

Then my mind wanders through the pages, shifting me to the story’s world; a magical process. This is the essential spark I call LIVING through the MANUSCRIPT. It is the time when I’m living with the story in every moment of my busy life—to not only consider the story concept, but to feel the story, and observe the characters in the right light and angle.

For the several days I will not even touch a pencil; I just live with the story. I’m creating the BLUE PRINT of the storyboard in my mind. It’s always within me, it’s in an air around me and I can sense the urgency of it. Soon my mind tells me the right moment has come to start to drawing. I let the mystery of creation pour out through the pencil onto paper with all the magical details called ILLUSTRATION. BRAVO. Magic Done.

Nina Ayzenberg, born in Russia, holds a Master in Fine Art. Seventeen years in the children illustration field, have produced a dozen Russian books, and now, in the last three years, five American books. The illustration at the head of her article is from THE STORY OF RAP & TAP, by Bill Scott Byrd, available now. She loves her job!

What’s Current in the Market

By Sarah Maury Swan

Sources for this column are Children’s Book Insider, Children’s Writer, Publisher’s Lunch, Harold Underdown’s Purple Crayon site. Contact information for the various publishers can be found in Children’s Writer & Illustrator’s Market (CWIM) or Book Markets for Children’s Writers (BMCW) or Magazine Markets for Children’s Writers (MMCW). Abbreviations are: ch=chapter book; mg=middle grade; ms=manuscript; nf=non-fiction; pb=picture book; YA=young adult

Changing Scene

Melanie Cecka recently took the publishing director reins for both Bloomsbury Children’s Books USA and Walker Books for Young Readers. Victoria Wells Arms became an editor-at-large. (CWIM pg. 120; BMCW pg. 118)

Don’t send any more manuscripts to Ruth Tobar, publisher and executive director of Children's Book Press. She is no longer there. (CWIM pg. 124; BMCW pg. 138)

Victoria Rock migrated from associate publisher of the children's books division at Chronicle to editor-at-large and founding publisher. (CWIM pg 125; BMCW pg. 144)

Janna Morishima, recently Simon & Schuster Graphix imprint editor-at-large, is directing at the new Diamond Kids Group of Diamond Book Distributors. She is looking forward to increasing public awareness of graphic novels. http://www.diamondbookdistributors.com/

Julia Richardson went from editorial director of Aladdin Paperbacks to the newly created job of paperback director for Houghton/Mifflin children's book group. Kate O’Sullivan jumped from editor to senior editor. (CWIM pg. 148; BMCW pg. 241)

Little, Brown Children's Audrey Sclater is the new art director, Nancy Conescu became an associate editor, and Fatimah Khan is now an assistant editor. Tina McIntyre now is director of marketing and Maiko Kyogoku is subsidiary rights assistant. (CWIM pg. 155; BMCW pg. 279)
Running Press Kids has a new senior editor; Kelli Chipponeri. (CWIM pg. 177; BMCW pg. 384)

Call Scholastic's Ellie Berger publisher now. In her new role she will work closely with the paperback group, and the Bonnie Verburg, Arthur A. Levine and Michael di Capua imprints. David Levithan, in addition to his editorial director of PUSH title, added the title of editorial director for Scholastic Press. Andrea Davis Pinkney became an editor-at-large, focusing on working directly with authors and newly-hired Corinne Helman is broadening her role in the business end of the division. eScholastic’s president, Seth Radwell, added the title of Scholastic at Home President. Judy Newman relinquished the At Home title, but still is president of Scholastic Book Clubs. Rotem Moscovich switched from Houghton Mifflin to be associate editor for Scholastic's Cartwheel, and Abby Ranger is now an assistant editor at Scholastic Press. (CWIM pg. 178; BMCW pg. 394)

Penguin's Razorbill lost Liesa Abrams and Margaret Wright to Simon & Schuster Children's Aladdin imprint. Ms. Abrams title is Senior Editor and Ms Wright is assistant editor. Little Simon Inspirations and Simon & Schuster Children's newest acquisition Howard Kids are combining to publish Howard Kids/LSI books as of 2008. Dee Ann Grand, in Nashville, is editor-at-large for Howard Kids/LSI. (CWIM pg. 185; BMCW pg. 280 & 403)

In spring 2007 look for a new children's imprint from Sourcebooks called Jabberwocky. Editor Bethany Brown and associate editor Lyron Bennett start with a juvenile fiction series. They like poetry and want YA, pb. and bb manuscripts designed to encourage the joy of learning in children. (BMCW pg. 408)

Alyssa Eisner Henkin, former Simon & Schuster Books Children's editor is now an agent for children's and young adult books at Trident Media Group. (She was a speaker at two different SCBWI MD/DE/WV regional conferences under her maiden name.)
http://www.tridentmediagroup.com/index.html

Ken Wright recently joined Writers House to develop a list of nonfiction children's and adult writers. He was vp/associate publisher and editorial director for nonfiction and reference at Scholastic. (CWIM pg. 282)

Book Markets

Barrons Educational Series publishes just about everything except romance. Query with your realistic story touching on everyday problems children face today. New Age is good for YA. www.barronseduc.com (CWIM pg. 112; BMCW pg. 469)

Chelsea House Publishers books are for school research projects on science, literary criticism, social studies, etc. They open to proposals for books adding to their existing series. www.chelseahouse.com (CWIM pg. 124; BMCW pg. 136)
Darby Creek Publishing wants unique sports, science, history or biography nf for 8 year-olds on up. www.darbycreekpublishing.com (CWIM pg. 128; BMCW pg. 166)

Dawn Publications focuses on pb—f & nf—designed to encourage children to relate to and care about our natural world. www.dawnpub.com (CWIM pg. 128; BMCW pg. 170)

Good Books (Phyllis Pellman Good, Editor; Good Books, P.O. Box 419, Intercourse, PA 17534) takes a long to time to consider your pb manuscript, but their books are very nice. Might be worth the wait. www.goodbks.com

Hachai Publishing wants pb for 2 to 4 year olds or 3 to 6. Must be on Jewish topics. They also will look at Jewish historical fiction for 7-10 year olds. www.hachai.com (BMCW pg. 225)

First Second Books, an imprint from Roaring Book Press want excellent graphic novels for mg, YA and adults. Must have literary merit. www.firstsecondbooks.com (CWIM pg. 137)

Just Us Books wants queries on African-American YA f for kids 13 or older. www.justusbooks.com (BMCW pg. 258)

ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION AND FACT, 475 Park Ave. S., 11th Floor, New York NY 10016: Dr. Stanley Schmidt, Editor. This “grown-up’s” magazine, crosses over nicely to “bright” teen readers. www.analogsf.com Email: analog@dellmagazines.com

CADET QUEST, a magazine from the Calvinist Cadet Corps, wants action f with a Christian theme for 9-14 year old boys. Check out their guidelines for f & nf at http://calvinistcadets.gospelcom.net/CadetWeb/pages/CadetQuestThemes.html (CWIM pg. 217; MMCW pg. 85)

CHESS LIFE, 3068 US Route 9W, Suite 200, New Windsor NY 12553-7698: Glenn Peterson, Editor. Got a puzzle for teen chess players or dynamite story with a chess-playing protagonist? This is the magazine for you. Website: www.uschess.org Email: editor@uschess.org

Cricket magazines imprint BABYBUG from Cobblestone Publishing wants entertaining and informative, but very short, stories, poems and nf for infants to two-year olds. www.cricketmag.com (CWIM pg. 215; MMCW pg. 72.)

FUN FOR KIDZ upcoming themes are Fun in the City (1/08,) Fun on the Farm (5/08,) Fun with Inventions (1/09,) Fun with Weather (3/09,) Fun with Names (9/09,) Fun with Plants (5/10.) www.funforkidz.com (CWIM pg. 227; MMCW pg. 138)

STEELROOTS MAGAZINE, PO Box 410800, Charlotte NC 282410800: The Editor. If you know or are a professional
skater, snowboarder or surfer, check out this magazine.

**YOUNG AND ALIVE** magazine is no longer.

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**CONTESTS**

**CHILDREN’S WRITER** first contest of 2007 is a personal-experience article targeted toward 13 to 17 year olds; 1200 words max.) Your entry must be in by Feb. 28.

[www.institutechildrenslit.com](http://www.institutechildrenslit.com)

(MMCW pg. 100)

**GOOD NEWS**


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As the Eraser Burns
The MD/DE/WV Newsletter
c/o Mona Kerby, SCBWI Regional Advisor
Graduate & Professional Studies,
McDaniel College
2 College Hill
Westminster, MD 21158-4390

[www.SCBWl.org](http://www.SCBWl.org)

**HIGHLIGHTS** 2007 contest is mystery stories 800 words in length for 5 to 12