As the Eraser Burns

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HELLO
Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Sarah Maury Swan and I just had my 65th birthday. I’m working on a middle grade novel and have had few magazine articles bought. Some have actually been published. I’m a relative beginner to this business, but unfortunately have a tendency to raise my hand when help is needed. Which is how I ended up being the editor of this newsletter.

How hard can it be to edit a newsletter, right? So I raised my hand when Lara asked for someone to take over the job. Just make up a fancy border and format all the articles being sent my way. Ah ha! What articles?

Well I managed to eke out enough for this issue, but I’m definitely open to many more articles. If you want to try your hand at interviewing people before you submit an interview article to a paying gig, here’s the perfect opportunity. Do an interview of one our region’s many successful authors. I’m sure they’d be happy for the exposure and you’d get in some good practice.

My plan is to have regular columns on conferences, computer help, illustrators and the markets. Any other articles you can think of, please let me know. I’d also like to show case illustrators’ works and I’d love to hear from the poets among us. Of course, please do share any good news. I can also run requests for critique groups. I do need your help and support to make this newsletter a useful tool. I’m open to suggestions.
Illustrator’s Corner

Panda Dreaming, by Helene Estomin

I need information for this column. A lot of you illustrators, I know, would prefer not to give your art away. But for those you who would like to have your work seen, I’m happy to include it in our newsletter.

However, I know there are problems illustrators have to deal with. You can use this column as a sounding board. I’m envisioning something similar to what is in the National SCBWI newsletter. But I need your help.

COMPUTER STUFF

Your Online Network
by Paula Zeller
Moderator, SCBWI_of_MD-DE-WV listserv

We’ve all been there: Working late at night; stuck, swamped, or otherwise out of sorts. Though you might be alone at your desk, you’re not really alone. More than 135 of your colleagues are just an e-mail away via the SCBWI_of_MD-DE-WV listserv.

The listserv connects you with people who can provide support and help you to reach your goals. Have a question or concern? Tap into the collective wisdom and expertise of the many published authors and illustrators who are listserv members. And there are even more ways to network through the listserv. For example, you can:

- **Spread good news.** Did you just make a sale, mail a manuscript, or sign up for a writing course, for instance? Your colleagues know the importance of milestones such as these and are rooting for your success. Please send us all good news.
- **Share information and resources.** The listserv is a perfect venue for alerting members to upcoming conferences, market news, good reads, lessons learned, and other information vital to the craft and business of writing for children.
- **Start or join a critique group.** Just send a message saying where you’d like to meet (online or the general geographic area) and the kind of group you have in mind (for example, fiction, nonfiction, or both).
- **Make new friends.**

To join the listserv, go to [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SCBWI_of_MD-DE-WV](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SCBWI_of_MD-DE-WV), or e-mail PaulaZeller@comcast.net, who will also answer your questions.

Already signed up? Introduce yourself to the group, and take advantage of all that the listserv has to offer. Reminder: Address messages to SCBWI_of_MD-DE-WV@yahoogroups.com.

Should You Be Blogging?
Sure. Maybe? No Way. Absolutely! These are all good answers, and one is right for your writing career.

A blog – short for “web log” – is an online journal that can boost your promotion efforts, whether you are a published author or still working toward that goal. A blog complements your relatively static website because you update it frequently with new articles and commentary. It can be a solo effort, or you might join with other authors to spread the writing work.

Think of a blog as an electronic newsletter full of brief articles, commentary, and anecdotes. Your blog can allow reader comments on what you write, and you can then respond. This virtual conversation leads to a feeling of familiarity for readers, which can be good for sales. Chat informally with your visitors but keep the BSP (blatant self-promotion) low-key; this is a conversation, not an ad, and you want people to come back often.

Start by thinking of a title for your blog, craft one sentence describing your blog, and write a brief profile of yourself. Say you want to blog about dragons. You might choose a blog name “DragonFire,” and describe it as “The blog for those who know, absolutely, that Dragons walk among us.” This description will appear under your blog title. Then write a brief paragraph about yourself, like “I’ve known dragons since I was seven, and now live with 15 or 20 at a time, 

By Peg Silloway

Yes, it takes time. But if you turn out 200 to 300 words, once a week or so, you can have a successful blog. Just remember the basics of focused writing for the Web:

• People reading on line rarely read every word. They scan for something interesting and then move on.
• Know your audience and speak directly to them. Grab them with a good “hook” at the start of your article.
• Focus on one topic per article; keep it concise.
• Avoid long text passages; split up sections with subheadings.
depending on what’s hatching. My favorite is the Norwegian Ridgeback, and I always host at least one Carpathian Cyr.”

But remember it’s possible someone else may already have chosen the same blog name you want, so have a couple of alternates ready.

To get started, try Blogger.com. It’s a free service and you’ll be up and running with your own blog in minutes. Follow the instructions, choose a template (the appearance of your blog), and write your first post - usually a “welcome to my blog” article. Then be sure your blog address goes in your email signature line, on your web site, your business cards, and on everything you send or hand out.

Congratulations – you’ve joined the blogosphere!

Peg Silloway is a freelance writer in Columbia, MD. Her blog is The Peg Board, and she writes blog content for others at I Blog For You. For a free list of blog resources, email Peg at Peg@WordLens.com; please put “SCBWI Blog Article” in the subject line.

Conferences

BENEFITS OF ATTENDING A CONFERENCE
by Paul Lagasse

As a writer, you treat your skill and talent with the same care that auto collectors treat their prized sports cars. You love polishing the bodywork to a high gloss and tweaking the engine for maximum performance. You know what it sounds like when everything is running perfectly, and you love taking your creation out for a spin to impress your readers and editors.

But a sports car can’t run without gasoline, and your creative life needs fuel too. Interaction is the fuel that powers creativity and at MD/DE/WV Region conferences you’ll find only premium grade.

Thanks to your Regional Adviser Lois Szymanski and her merry band of volunteers, every year there are more and bigger conferences, for more audiences, offering more types of programs, than the year before. For the first time, this year’s annual regional meeting at McDaniel College will be a two-day event.

You can’t learn if you don’t go. Why should you tear yourself away from your writing or, let’s be honest, from the chores you’re doing to avoid writing? Here, in no particular order, are some of the most persuasive, no-excuses, can’t-lose benefits of attending your chapter’s writing conferences.
Expert Critiques. Outside of Book Expo America, where else are you going to find a building full of editors and agents – all of whom want to meet writers? For a ridiculously affordable fee (compared to their usual hourly rates), you are guaranteed fifteen minutes of their complete, undivided attention – that translates to 60 elevator-pitches worth of time, if you’re counting. At worst, it’s great practice for when you find yourself in an editor’s office in New York. At best, it might land you there.

Insider Tips and News. For a lot less than the subscription price of Publisher’s Weekly or Editor and Publisher, you’ll find out who’s looking for what where. Discover what editors and agents want to see more of, and what they wish they’d see less of. Sometimes, they’ll even tell you how you can bypass their firms’ slush piles and land your submission right on their desks – it’s their way of thanking you for attending their presentations. When’s the last time an editor did you a favor like that?

Programs You Asked For. You’ll find workshops, panels, and presentations led by fellow writers and illustrators who are happy to share their hard-earned knowledge and answer your questions. Want to know how to create a marketing plan? Need to negotiate a contract? Trying to get reviews? Thinking about print-on-demand? You’ll not only get all the information you need, but you’ll get a lot of empathy too. Many sentences tend to begin with: “I thought I was the only one who . . .” And then maybe next year you can return the favor by offering a workshop of your own.

Networking. Over food and drinks (MD/DE/WV conferences are usually held at places with really good catering) you can commiserate with fellow writers and illustrators, pitch editors and agents, find critique groups, and generally put faces to the names of people who post on the region’s e-mail list (you’re subscribed, right?) and publish in As the Eraser Burns. Bring business cards, clips, and giveaways because you’ll be handing them out; bring a folder because you’ll be collecting them. Besides, you need to practice working the crowd for the cocktail party reception announcing the publication of your novel.

Professional Development. Conferences look good on your resume, website, and query letters. They tell editors and agents that you’re serious about your writing or illustrating career. In addition, they might be tax deductible as professional expenses, so it’s not like you’re throwing the money away.

Show Support for Your Region. Success is measured in terms of memberships, registrations, and attendance. Everybody – every body – counts. We’re a small and scattered region, so the more people the conference coordinators can get to attend an event, the more they know that they’re reaching the greatest number of members they can. Conferences are also an opportunity for you to voice your ideas and opinions about the conference and about issues that matter to you. What can the region be doing? What works and what doesn’t? What should conferences have more and less of? Knowing that you have a say in what happens in your region, and knowing that people will listen to what you have
to say, is empowering both personally and professionally. And if those aren’t enough good reasons, there’s this one: **It’s the Most Legitimate Excuse for Not Writing That We know of.**

Attending a writers’ conference is the next best thing to writing. And since you’ll be in the same room with many other writers—all of whom, remember, are using the same excuse—you can pretty much guarantee no one there is going to call you on it.

**Conclusion** – We’ve all heard that writing is a solitary endeavor. However, that shouldn’t mean that you live your writing life in isolation. So get out of the garage, get to the gas station, and fill ‘er up before heading on down your creative road.

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**People Who Write for Children Are Different.**

By David M. Cohn

You’re one of them, so you know what I mean.

*The Highlights Foundation Writers’ Workshops were established to encourage the careers of children’s writers and illustrators by offering workshops and other types of support to talented individuals. We know how important it is to gather the kinds of top-notch curricula, faculty, and staff that bring real meaning—real inspiration—to the special work you do.***

Our Founders Workshops are held in northeastern Pennsylvania. Each is a single-topic session, three to seven days, with eight to fifteen participants. Like the Writers Workshop at Chautauqua, supportive authors and editors determined to help writers meet their goals. Our week-long working retreat will provide you with the time and atmosphere to write, and will provide daily group critique sessions where you can obtain valuable feedback.

**Two Very Special Summer Writing Retreats**

We still have a few seats for our guided writing retreat. And, only one spot for Carolyn Yoder’s Alumni Writers’ Retreat.

**Room to Create: A Working Retreat for Children’s Writers and Illustrators**

Ever wish you could be dropped off on an island? No chores, no cooking, just a restful space to write your heart out? Well, we do not have an island. And there is not complete isolation, because in the evening a group of like-minded writers gather on the screened porch to critique and hear from editors and authors . . . but that’s optional. If you prefer, you can stay on your “island” and let your pen fly. Go for it.

“Our Room to Create” provides the solitude, the space, and the ambience. Immerse yourself in your writing with a retreat format that allows you to devote all day long to developing and grooming your work. And in the evening, enjoy the support and guidance of experienced professionals—an editor, an author, and a publisher. Enjoy camaraderie and inspiration as you receive feedback on your writing, participate in group manuscript critiques, and informally discuss the field of children’s publishing.

July 8-15 • Tuition: $895 • Limited to 15 participants
Carolyn Yoder Alumni Writers’ Retreat

This is a special and unusual retreat that is open only to graduates of Carolyn P. Yoder’s workshops. Participants will come together for seven days and evenings to write, relax, eat, play, and then write some more.

This workshop will include
• one-on-one critiques with Carolyn;
• group critiques;
• some lectures; and
• lots of time to write!

There is no assignment, but attendees are encouraged to bring to the retreat works in progress—nonfiction or historical fiction.

August 12-19 • Tuition: $1,095 • Limited to 14 participants

FALL 2006 FOUNDERS WORKSHOPS

September 7-10
A Crash Course in the Business of Children’s Publishing
Workshop Leader: Carolyn P. Yoder

October 12-15
Real People, Great Stories: The Art of Writing Biography
Workshop Leader: Carolyn P. Yoder

October 19-22
The Hero’s Journey: Bringing the Power of Mythic Structure to Your Writing
Workshop Leaders: Kim T. Griswell, Marileta Robinson

October 26-29
Writing Novels for Young Adults
Workshop Leader: Rich Wallace

November 2-5
Writing to a New Level
Workshop Leader: Susan Campbell Bartoletti

November 10-12
Writing Fiction for Children’s Magazines
Workshop Leaders: Paula Morrow, Marileta Robinson

November 16-19
Writing Your First Novel
Workshop Leaders: Sandy Asher, Wendy Schmalz
www.highlightsfoundation.org

Whether you’re interested in improving your craft with the help of a master, finding the time and space in which to work, or marketing yourself and your books, choose any one of our workshops to help achieve your dream.

I do not know if any of the Founders Workshops is right for you. If you want to discuss it, feel free to e-mail me at my personal address, davidmcohn@aol.com, or call me at 570-251-4556. If you’d like to apply, do not hesitate to call Jo Lloyd, program assistant, toll free at 877-512-8365.

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PS: Only two openings left at our Writers Workshop at Chautauqua, July 15-22, 2006.
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, The Writer, & Writer’s Digest. 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)

Peripatetic Editors

Margaret Raymo is now editorial director of Houghton Mifflin Children's department, still reporting to publisher Alan Smagler. Raymo is the editor for Chris van Allsburg and Daniel Pinkwater, among others. (CWIM pg. 137/BMCW pg. 240)

UK publisher Boxer Book's new releases will simultaneously be published in the US by Sterling, starting in spring 2006. Their focus is on baby/toddler books and picture books. (CWIM pg. 190/BMCW pg. 416)

Simon & Schuster Children’s recently promoted are: Nicole Russo to publicity manager; Samantha Wolfert to publicist; and Katherine Devendorf to senior production editor at Simon Pulse and Simon Spotlight Entertainment. (CWIM pg. 187/BMCW pg. 400)

Andrew Smith, new v-p of marketing and associate publisher for Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, is answering to absent new publisher, Megan Tingley. The new boss of Tingley is her recently born baby, Josephine. Tingley is on maternity leave until July. To add to the flux, publisher David Ford left for a move to London. (CWIM pg. 149/BMCW pg. 274)

Farrin Jacobs moved from Red Dress Ink to HarperCollins Children's to be executive editor, focusing on teen fiction. She also co-authored the upcoming SEE JANE WRITE: A Girl's Guide to Writing Chick Lit. (CWIM pg. 131/BMCW pg. 227)

Book Markets

Word has it Mexico’s appetite for Hispanic-themed American children’s books is growing. A strong manuscript sent to a multicultural publisher has good chance of publication. Arriba! The June issue of Children’s Book Insider highlights Luna Rising, an imprint of Rising Moon, as a house looking to preserve Latino culture in the USA. (CWIM pg. 180/BMCW pg. 373) BMCW lists bilingual publishers and CWIM lists multicultural publishers.

Albert Whitman & Company in particular wants multicultural themes and fiction/nonfiction with physically or mentally challenged characters. They publish picture books, chapter books, and middle grade fiction. They also would like to see nonfiction for 3 to 12 year olds. (CWIM pg. pg. 198/ BMCW pg. 451)

Once again All About Kids is open for submissions. But hurry, the transom closes in August. When you do submit, make sure your return envelope has your
Another fantasy/sci-fi publisher is **RP Books/Reagent Press**. Publisher **Jeannie Kim** also wants mystery and contemporary fiction to tickle the interest of 7-12 year olds. For nonfiction, concentrate on science and environmental middle grade manuscripts. (BMCW pg. 379)

**Stone Arch Books**, like companion company Capstone Press, is interested in enticing the reluctant reader to become a happy reader. Capstone publishes nonfiction; Stone Arch wants fiction for grades 3-9. (BMCW pg. 528)

For you nf science types, look to **Two-Can Publishing**. The age range is 2-12 and Editorial Director **Jill Anderson** likes “creative” nonfiction focusing on science, math, history and world cultures, among other areas. (CWIM pg. 194)

Magazine Markets

The editors **American Girl** magazine want to build girls’ self-esteem and confidence and stimulate their curiosity. Stories sent to them should have 8-12 year girls as the protagonists. The magazine also has crafts, recipes and how-to articles. (MMCW pg. 53/CWIM pg. 221)

**Rainbow Rumpus**, an on-line magazine for children with lesbian, gay, bi- or transsexual parents, is open to stories from the child’s perspective about families of color, dads as parents, and boys as protagonists. More information is available at [www.rainbowrumpus.org](http://www.rainbowrumpus.org). Submit by email to **Laura Matanah**, Publisher at editor@rainbowrumpus.org.
FEELING CONNECTED- By Sarah Maury Swan

I love doing the market column. It makes me feel connected to this business I’m trying to break into. It also helps me figure out where to send my manuscripts. I thought I’d let you know some of my sources. That way, you can be connected too.

I subscribe to the Institute of Children’s Literature newsletter, Children’s Writer, because it has good market information and good articles. It also has contests throughout the year.

www.ChildrensWriter.com or Children’s Writer, 93 Long Ridge Rd., West Redding, CT 06896

On-line, I subscribe to Children’s Book Insider which has loads of market information. www.write4kids.com or Children’s Book Insider, 901 Columbia Rd, Ft. Collins, CO 80525

PW Children's Bookshelf [ChildrensBookshelf@email.publishersweekly.com] lets me know what’s going on in the industry.

Publishers Lunch lets me know who’s selling what to whom using which agent. publishersmarketplace@yahoo.com