

AS THE ERASER BURNS

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HELLO AND GOODBYE (Sorta)

We have a new Regional Advisor, **Mona Kerby**, but our beloved Lois is not going too far away. She's prompting from the wings until Mona has learned her lines.

Mona is the graduate coordinator of the school library media program at McDaniel College in Westminster, Maryland. She has published eleven books for children and young adult readers. Two of her nonfiction titles, *Asthma* and *Cockroaches*, were named to the Outstanding List of Science Trade Books. Her fiction book, *38 Weeks 'til Summer Vacation*, was selected by children in Minnesota as their favorite

and received the Maud Hart Lovelace Award. Her first picture book, *Owney the Mail Pouch Pooch*, will be published by Frances Foster, Farrar Straus & Giroux in 2008.

As RA, Mona's looking forward to putting our region on the national radar screen. She's also hoping to establish a children's literature center at McDaniel College. Her dream is to meet the needs of our region's writers, teachers, school librarians, and students.

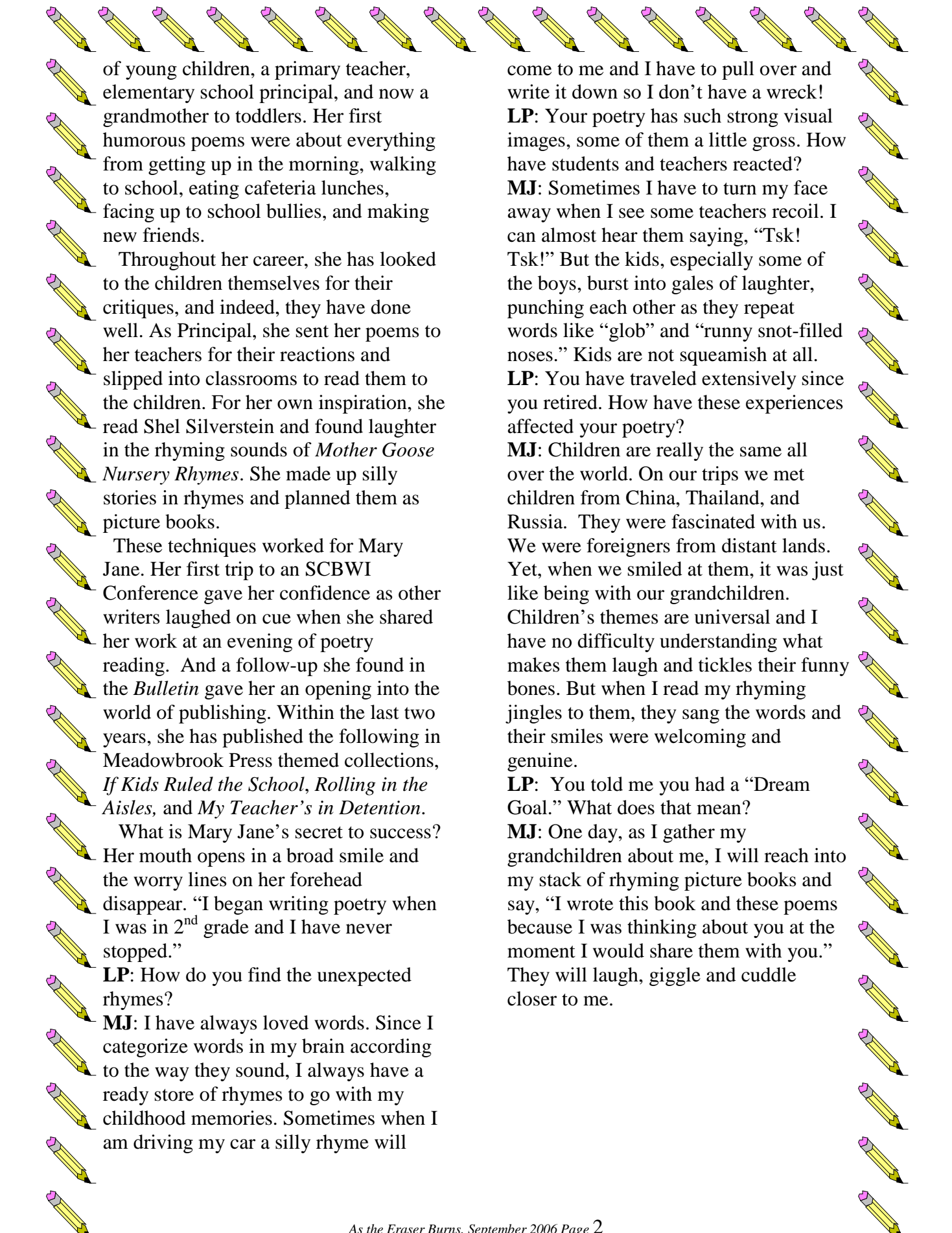
Please give Mona a warm and supportive welcome. I'm sure she'll need volunteers to put on conferences.

Never one to sit around twiddling her thumbs, Lois Szymanski is already up to her eyeballs in new projects and we're sure she'll still be seen at SCBWI functions. Wish her well and give her thanks for her past work on our behalf.

WHO ARE WE?

Profiles of Regional Authors and Illustrators
Talking with Mary Jane Mitchell
By Liz Paterra

Mary Jane's contributions to children's love of poetry span her years as a mother



of young children, a primary teacher, elementary school principal, and now a grandmother to toddlers. Her first humorous poems were about everything from getting up in the morning, walking to school, eating cafeteria lunches, facing up to school bullies, and making new friends.

Throughout her career, she has looked to the children themselves for their critiques, and indeed, they have done well. As Principal, she sent her poems to her teachers for their reactions and slipped into classrooms to read them to the children. For her own inspiration, she read Shel Silverstein and found laughter in the rhyming sounds of *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes*. She made up silly stories in rhymes and planned them as picture books.

These techniques worked for Mary Jane. Her first trip to an SCBWI Conference gave her confidence as other writers laughed on cue when she shared her work at an evening of poetry reading. And a follow-up she found in the *Bulletin* gave her an opening into the world of publishing. Within the last two years, she has published the following in Meadowbrook Press themed collections, *If Kids Ruled the School*, *Rolling in the Aisles*, and *My Teacher's in Detention*.

What is Mary Jane's secret to success? Her mouth opens in a broad smile and the worry lines on her forehead disappear. "I began writing poetry when I was in 2nd grade and I have never stopped."

LP: How do you find the unexpected rhymes?

MJ: I have always loved words. Since I categorize words in my brain according to the way they sound, I always have a ready store of rhymes to go with my childhood memories. Sometimes when I am driving my car a silly rhyme will

come to me and I have to pull over and write it down so I don't have a wreck!

LP: Your poetry has such strong visual images, some of them a little gross. How have students and teachers reacted?

MJ: Sometimes I have to turn my face away when I see some teachers recoil. I can almost hear them saying, "Tsk! Tsk!" But the kids, especially some of the boys, burst into gales of laughter, punching each other as they repeat words like "glob" and "runny snot-filled noses." Kids are not squeamish at all.

LP: You have traveled extensively since you retired. How have these experiences affected your poetry?

MJ: Children are really the same all over the world. On our trips we met children from China, Thailand, and Russia. They were fascinated with us. We were foreigners from distant lands. Yet, when we smiled at them, it was just like being with our grandchildren. Children's themes are universal and I have no difficulty understanding what makes them laugh and tickles their funny bones. But when I read my rhyming jingles to them, they sang the words and their smiles were welcoming and genuine.

LP: You told me you had a "Dream Goal." What does that mean?

MJ: One day, as I gather my grandchildren about me, I will reach into my stack of rhyming picture books and say, "I wrote this book and these poems because I was thinking about you at the moment I would share them with you." They will laugh, giggle and cuddle closer to me.



COMPUTER STUFF

How to Find Experts via Listservs By Paula K. Zeller

Moderator, MD/DE/WV SCBWI Listserv

Research is your key to authentic, believable writing in any genre. Perhaps one of the greatest research challenges is finding experts who can answer your tough questions and confirm the accuracy of your work. Mary Bowman-Kruhm, SCBWI member and author of more than 30 books, is a research pro who finds her subject matter experts through listserv discussion lists: e-mail systems that let you exchange information with groups of people interested in particular topics.

“When I begin research, I immediately join a listserv on that topic,” Bowman-Kruhm says. She recommends finding listservs by googling the name of your topic followed by “listserv,” or searching lists of groups at sites like <http://groups.yahoo.com>.

In researching her biography of Margaret Mead, Bowman-Kruhm found anthropologists in five states and three countries, all via listservs. “I was amazed how willingly these busy professionals contributed,” she says.

Bowman-Kruhm says that when joining expert listservs, she is honest about her naiveté: “I ‘lurk’ around for a while to get a sense of the conversation before I post. Then I admit to not being an expert in the field and state upfront that I am researching a book for young people.” She advises writers to ask specific questions, for example: “Louis Leakey loved public speaking. Does someone who heard him speak have a favorite memory of that occasion that teens would enjoy reading about?”

Bowman-Kruhm cautions writers to follow the usual research rules when

relying on these experts: Ask permission before quoting a person’s post, and double-check all information.

The rewards of such meticulous research are many. Bowman-Kruhm’s Margaret Mead experts “enriched the manuscript immensely.” And all three who volunteered to vet the Mead bio agreed to vet the Leakey book as well – “all because they want young people to get accurate information about their field.”

In next issue: Listserv discussion lists for children’s writers.

THE LEARNING SIDE


















Is This Course Right for You? By Deborah Paula Clayman (a.k.a. Deborah da Costa)

Before signing up for that class on *Writing for Children*, be certain your instructor is qualified. Some things to consider:

1. The **primary** focus of the instructor’s own writing should be **children’s** literature;
2. The instructor should be **up to date** on the field of children’s literature—regularly attending conferences and being an active member of SCBWI. Experience dealing with one or more children’s book editors is a must;
3. Ideally, but not a rigid requirement, the instructor should have a **relevant background** in dealing with children and children’s literature: a children’s librarian, or a reading specialist, for instance.

The course itself should follow a coherent and logical course outline, and should provide the following information through discussion and handouts:






1. Recommended resources;
2. Types of children’s literature;
3. Manuscript formats;




4. Suggestions for plot and character development;

5. Information on publishers;

6. Sample query and cover letters.




Your writing class should encourage reading and writing in the children's genre. It is desirable if a specific time period is set aside to share or stimulate written work. However, the instructor should not be expected to edit your work or rewrite it. Rather, critiquing with a partner or in small groups should be encouraged.




Finally, professionalism should be encouraged in the following areas:




1. How to submit your work;






2. How to make a tracking chart;




3. How to form and nourish a supportive critique group;



4. How to work with agents, illustrators and publicists.



If your course does all the above, all you have to do is **read, read, read; write, write, write;** network at conferences, and keep learning. With perseverance and a little luck you will eventually get published.




Dr. Clayman teaches writing courses at Howard Community college. Her first picture book, SNOW IN JERUSALEM, was even translated into Italian, and second picture book, HANUKKAH MOON, is due out in 2008.



THE BUSINESS SIDE





Subsidy publishing:




The vanity press of the 21st century








By Margaret Speaker Yuan








There's an old phrase my grandmother (a teacher of Latin) use to quote, "Caveat emptor." It means 'Let the buyer beware.' When authors considers publishing through subsidy presses, it's a phrase that should be remembered and used frequently.








Subsidy publishing is the new name for an old scam, the vanity press.





Subsidy publishers promise to get books into print FAST FAST FAST, but there's a catch. The author will have to pay for the book. Unless the author happens to employ one of the legitimate subsidy houses and has solid experience in the business end of publishing, the money is likely to be wasted. The books simply will not sell if they do not meet some minimum standards of production and editing.




The old-style vanity presses were well-known in the industry for publishing any book that the author was willing to fund. The presses produced books that were not edited, had poor cover designs, were not typeset, were not proofread, frequently lacked indexing (for non-fiction works), and most importantly, were not marketed at all. Bookstores would not touch books from vanity presses.





Contemporary subsidy publishers often claim that they only publish books they feel are marketable, yet inquiries prove otherwise. Many subsidy presses also claim that they rigorously edit their books and employ fabulous cover designers, typesetters, and illustrators. Whether these claims are credible depends on the publishing house.





For authors, there are a few simple questions that will help determine if spending money to publish a book is worthwhile.



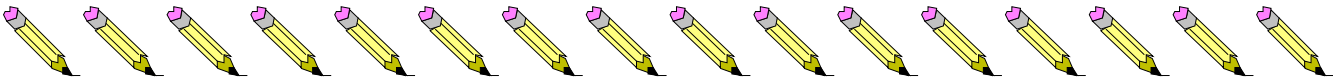
1. What is your business plan?



If you haven't written a business plan, stop here and write one. If you have written one that ends at "Get my book published," go back and finish it. The business plan should include goals for sales and future business as well as your plans for how to accomplish those goals.



2. What exactly are you buying if you pay for the production of your book? At very least, the subsidy house should



provide copy editing, cover design, registration of the copyright (in the author's name), interior design or typeset, a galley for the author to read, proofreading, Library of Congress cataloging, ISBN, indexing (for non-fiction), and bar coding. If the author doesn't know what all of these details are, and if the subsidy publisher isn't willing to educate him or her, it's not time to buy.

Another key factor in any subsidy contract is the print run. The number of copies of the book that the publisher will print depends on many factors. The contract should specify the number of copies to be printed, where they will be stored, and who pays for both storage and insurance.

3. What marketing services are included in the deal?

Again, at very least, the publishing house should provide back cover copy, which is the key element in selling a book. Having the author write the back cover copy is usually a dead giveaway that the house isn't expecting to sell many books. Back cover copy is usually written by people who have solid advertising or marketing experience. Writing marketing copy is a completely different skill from writing a book.

4. Will the book be sent out for review? How many copies, and where will it be sent? Will press releases be mailed to the media? Who will follow up with the media? Will the book be sent to trade shows?

If the subsidy publisher is not prepared to follow through on marketing, the author has a decision to make. Marketing is a critical step in the success of a book. If the publisher is not going to market the book, the above tasks will still have to be done, usually by the author. If the author does not have

experience in these areas, or is unwilling to devote the energy, money, and time that is needed to perform them, it's not time to buy.

5. When is the payment for the books due? Is financing available? Distributors and bookstores may delay payment to the author up to 90 days. There will most likely be a portion of payment withheld in case books are returned. If the subsidy house demands payment up front, the author will have to carry unsold inventory. Cash flow can be a problem. If the subsidy publisher will not allow payment 90 days or more after delivery of the books, or does not have financing available, again, it may not be a company that the author wants to hire.

6. Is the author willing to undertake all the tasks involved in opening a small business that will market the book? These tasks include but are not limited to making sales calls both in person and on the phone, finding a distributor for the book, making more sales calls, bookkeeping that includes tracking all the expenses of the book production and marketing, making more sales calls, creating and sending out marketing materials, selling at trade shows, packaging and shipping books, answering media inquiries, and then there's always making more sales calls.

Many authors in traditional royalty-based publishing complain that they're responsible for marketing the book in any case, so why not publish with a subsidy house? There's one simple answer: the author is not facing thousands of dollars of potential loss if the book doesn't sell.

One item that has not been mentioned is writing more books. The choice for an author who publishes his or her own book is whether to spend two to three years publishing and selling the book or

whether to spend two or three years writing.

The last question of all is perhaps the most important.

7. What, in the final analysis, is to be gained by paying for the publication of a book?

The hope is that we'll save time by getting into print faster than we would if we send our work to traditional royalty-based houses. The hope is that we'll make money from selling our books. It has happened in the past. John James Audubon, Beatrix Potter, Lewis Carroll, and L. Frank Baum all published their own works, at least initially. They had a vision that we all share: success in sharing our works with the public.

The reality is that publishing is a business. If it is approached like a business, with consideration for the bottom line, for marketability of the product, and for an understanding of the demands of running a small business, it is possible to create a successful book through subsidy publishing. It's also risky, time-consuming, and full of obscure and boring details.

My personal decision has been to seek a royalty-based publisher for my works. I self-published two activity kits for children that sold successfully at book fairs and at toy stores, however I decided not to continue the business because marketing the kits simply absorbed too much time. I didn't have time for my main job as a writer, which is to write.

Margaret Speaker Yuan is the author of eight books for middle school readers. She is one of the founding members of The StorySmiths, an editorial services firm specializing in children's literature. She is the Regional Advisor for SCBWI in the San Francisco North & East Bay region. Reprinted with kind permission from the Kansa SCBWI newsletter IN THEWIND May 2006 issue and author Yuan.

To Market, To Market

Part IV: Building the Buzz in Advance

By Michelle Y. Green

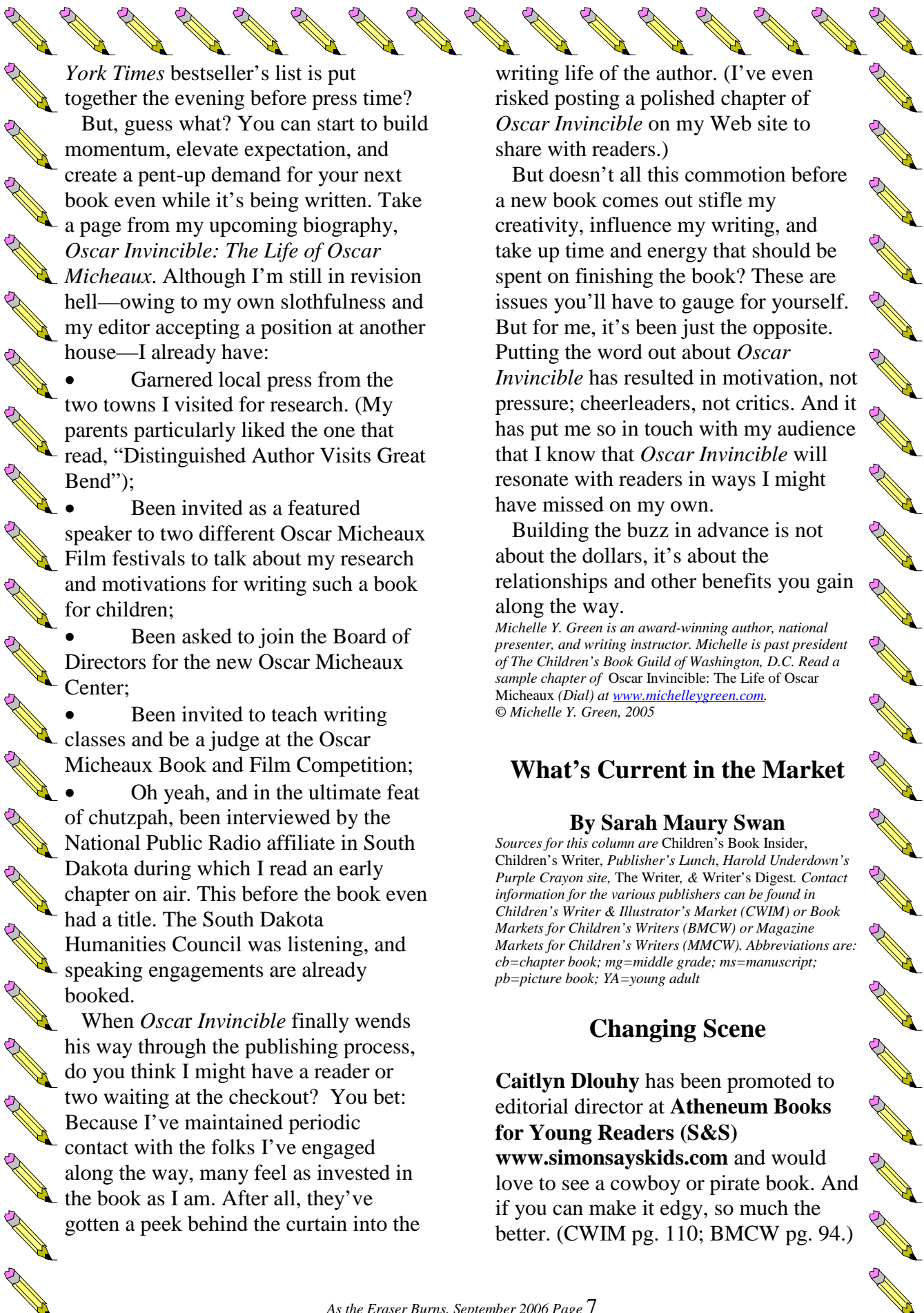
"Marketing is everything you do to create a positive impression with your audience," says author Michelle Y. Green, whom Dial's marketing department calls "The Machine." In this last article of a four-part series on self-promotion, Michelle talks about creating momentum for a forthcoming book as another strategy for both self-promotion and support. Read Parts I, II, and III of "To Market, To Market" on her Web site

(www.michellygreen.com), which draws more than 1,000 unique users a month.

All I wanted to do was write a book. It was somebody else's job to promote it, right? If you still believe this, I suggest you do one of two things: (1) go back and read the first three parts of this series until you change your mind; or (2) take a nice, long walk in the forest and wait for the Seven Dwarves to show up.

It was my first publisher who set me straight early on. Being the author of a children's book is both *business* and *art*. The artist in me is concerned with writing the very best story I can. But if the business side of me does not do her job, I am making a decision to diminish my own voice. How? By limiting the number of readers who will hear it.

There are two key times to promote your book. When it comes out, and *before* it comes out. Think about it. Your publisher systematically spends time and money in promoting your new title months and months before your book hits the loading dock. Unbound galley's are sent to reviewers. Ads and blurbs are prepared for trade catalogs and periodicals. Advance copies are sent to people of influence. Bulletin boards are seeded with discussion topics. Plans, if any, are made for author signings at conferences. Your publisher knows the importance of having people talk about your book before it comes available. Do you think for a moment that *The New*



York Times bestseller's list is put together the evening before press time?

But, guess what? You can start to build momentum, elevate expectation, and create a pent-up demand for your next book even while it's being written. Take a page from my upcoming biography, *Oscar Invincible: The Life of Oscar Micheaux*. Although I'm still in revision hell—owing to my own slothfulness and my editor accepting a position at another house—I already have:

- Garnered local press from the two towns I visited for research. (My parents particularly liked the one that read, “Distinguished Author Visits Great Bend”);
- Been invited as a featured speaker to two different Oscar Micheaux Film festivals to talk about my research and motivations for writing such a book for children;
- Been asked to join the Board of Directors for the new Oscar Micheaux Center;
- Been invited to teach writing classes and be a judge at the Oscar Micheaux Book and Film Competition;
- Oh yeah, and in the ultimate feat of chutzpah, been interviewed by the National Public Radio affiliate in South Dakota during which I read an early chapter on air. This before the book even had a title. The South Dakota Humanities Council was listening, and speaking engagements are already booked.

When *Oscar Invincible* finally wends his way through the publishing process, do you think I might have a reader or two waiting at the checkout? You bet: Because I've maintained periodic contact with the folks I've engaged along the way, many feel as invested in the book as I am. After all, they've gotten a peek behind the curtain into the

writing life of the author. (I've even risked posting a polished chapter of *Oscar Invincible* on my Web site to share with readers.)

But doesn't all this commotion before a new book comes out stifle my creativity, influence my writing, and take up time and energy that should be spent on finishing the book? These are issues you'll have to gauge for yourself. But for me, it's been just the opposite. Putting the word out about *Oscar Invincible* has resulted in motivation, not pressure; cheerleaders, not critics. And it has put me so in touch with my audience that I know that *Oscar Invincible* will resonate with readers in ways I might have missed on my own.

Building the buzz in advance is not about the dollars, it's about the relationships and other benefits you gain along the way.

Michelle Y. Green is an award-winning author, national presenter, and writing instructor. Michelle is past president of The Children's Book Guild of Washington, D.C. Read a sample chapter of Oscar Invincible: The Life of Oscar Micheaux (Dial) at www.michellegreen.com. © Michelle Y. Green, 2005

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, 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). Abbreviations are: cb=chapter book; mg=middle grade; ms=manuscript; pb=picture book; YA=young adult

Changing Scene

Caitlyn Dlouhy has been promoted to editorial director at **Atheneum Books for Young Readers (S&S)** www.simonsayskids.com and would love to see a cowboy or pirate book. And if you can make it edgy, so much the better. (CWIM pg. 110; BMCW pg. 94.)

Delacorte editor **Joe Cooper** has left. **Valerie Hussey**, president and publisher of Canadian **Kids Can Press**, figures 27 years is enough. **Karen Boersma**, with the firm since 1998, is taking over. Editor **Rebecca Davis** is no longer at **Greenwillow**.

Emilie Buchwald, former publisher of Milkweed Editions, is starting a new company, **Gryphon Press**, which will focus on inspiring K-3 readers to care for animals, especially pets.

Harper Children's promoted **Andrea Pappenheimer** to associate publisher.

Martha Rago is now associate creative director.

Be sure to check with **Magination Press** to see who's taken over for Editor

Darcie Johnston & Associate editor **Kristine Enderle**.

Sarah Sevier, associate editor at **Margaret McElderry Books (S&S)**, has moved to **HarperCollins**.

Ben Schrank, formerly editorial director at Alloy Entertainment, is taking over presidential and publishing duties at Penguin's teen/tween imprint **Razorbill**.

Simon & Schuster is merging **Pulse Aladdin** and **Pulse PAM**, publishing all teen paperbacks under the Simon Pulse banner. Aladdin executive editor

Jennifer Klonsky will now work on Simon Pulse full-time. **Sangeeta Mehta**, from Little, Brown, is now associate editor at Pulse. **Raquel Jaramillo** left **Holt** to be **Workman's** director of children's publishing.

Book Markets

Alfred A. Knopf doesn't mind "edgy" and is looking for toddler pb, mg & YA, but no chapter books or series.

www.randomhouse.com/kids (CWIM, pg. 152.)

Send your 3rd- to 6th-grade chapter books to www.Ebooksonthe.net, but don't send pb mss, especially ones that have poor or no illustrations. Query Arline Chase at publisher@ebooksonthe.net. (BMCW pg. 182.)

Surprise! Surprise! Bob Jones University has a trade fiction press called **Journey Forth** and they're looking for mss. Nothing too religious, but the ms must be well written.

Guidelines are posted on their website: www.journeyforth.com. (BMCW pg. 258.)

Nonfiction publisher **Watson-Guptill**—www.wgpub.com—wants mss. for the arts with a "how-to" angle. (BMCW pg. 422;

Another religious publisher, **Zonderkidz**, also wants non-preachy, well written pb. mss. Upper age limit is 12 years. www.zondervan.com

Magazine Markets

The **Children's Better Health Institute** wants health-related stories, articles, and activities with health-related themes, such as exercise, sports, safety, nutrition, hygiene, and drug education. Guidelines: http://www.cbhi.org/cbhi/writersguide_lines.shtml (Look under individual magazines in MMCW-*Humpty Dumpty* is one-pg. 151.)

Clubhouse (MMCW pg. 288) wants articles and stories with a biblical slant for 8-12 year olds. They are inundated with middle-class family stories, so send them something different. They are interested in science and nature stories.

www.clubhousemagazine.com

Discovery Trails, for boys and girls 10-12, wants mysteries, serials, humorous, adventure and ethnic stories in which realistic characters use Bible principles to solve problems.



<http://www.gospelpublishing.com/store/startcat.cfm?cat=tWRITGUID>

Home Schooling Companion for kids ages 3 to 7 wants Arts, Crafts Projects, Literature Study Guides, and Pre-School Units articles. Subjects include: Art; Music; Food; Life In The Renaissance; Copernicus; Gutenberg's Printing Press; Leonardo da Vinci; Michelangelo; Nostradamus; Protestant Reformation—Martin Luther; Medici Family; The Inquisition; War Of The Roses; Galileo; Dante, and Shakespeare. Guidelines:

http://www.homeschoolingcompanion.com/freelance_writers.php
submissions@homeschoolingcompanion.com

JAKES Magazine/Xtreme JAKES is the National Wild Turkey Federation's publication for its teen members ages 13-17. Article ideas must be outdoor related with an emphasis on education and entertainment. Topics on traditional outdoor pursuits or popular extreme sports such as snowboarding, rock climbing, etc., are needed.

http://www.nwtf.org/tv_magazines/Writers_Guidelines.html

KidTime targets children ages 7-12. Fiction stories on children's life experiences are wanted.

<http://www.kidtimemagazine.com/guidelines.html>

Pack-o-Fun wants inexpensive, innovative, quick, and easy-to-make projects with broad appeal. Including recyclables will give you a better chance of having your article bought.

<http://www.pack-ofun.com/guidelines/>

Parent-Teen Online is open to a wide range of subject matter relevant to families with teenagers and preteens. Articles may be addressed primarily to parents, to teens, or both.

<http://www.parent-teen.com/guidelines.html>

Spellbound, quarterly fantasy magazine for children, accepts fiction up to 2500 words and poetry up to 36 lines.

<http://www.eggplant-productions.com/spellbound/guidelines.asp>

Teen People is quitting print publication and going on-line only. Submit a well organized and detailed query letter on a possible story idea along with your resume and clips. Stories with an Entertainment slant, address the query to Susan Pocharski, Executive Editor for Entertainment. If the story has a Real Life/Teen peg, address the query to Tina Johnson, Executive Editor for Real Life section. You should **fax** all of your paperwork to **212-467-4633**.

Entertainment coverage is also the focus of **Tiger Beat** (MMCW pg. 255) and **Bop** (MMCW pg. 69.) But you must know how to approach celebrities at events and conduct interviews.

U Magazine & U-Turn Magazine are published by USAA, which provides financial services to military personnel.

U Magazine is aimed at 9- to 12-year-olds to give them skills to deal with family, finances and citizenship. *U-Turn*, for 13- to 17-year-olds, is designed to give teens the life skills needed to become adults, including driving, career choices, etc. (MMCW pg. 262.)

www.usaa.com

GOOD NEWS!!!

Deborah P. Clayman's (a.k.a. **Deborah da Costa**) book *Hanukkah Moon* is due out next year.

Susan Detwiler's illustration for the poem *Chew Toys* by Cynthia Porter appears in the September 2006 issue of *Highlights for Children*. She licensed three images for jigsaw puzzles to Blue Sky Brands. She produced eight illustrations for *Words & Numbers*, an on-line educational publisher, for their biology and earth science books.

Amy Hansen's book *How Things Work* is finally out!

Gretchen Laskas' YA novel *The Miner's Daughter* is coming out in February.

As the Eraser Burns
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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 of 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. Please use this column as a sounding board.