Newsletter of the Northern California Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association

PACEMAKER

Welcome 2014!

President's Address

Greetings to all AMWA Northern California Chapter (NCal) members.

One of the privileges of the chapter presidency is the opportunity to write a personal letter to everyone in the chapter. My letter is to all members, but especially to anyone who is thinking about becoming more active in the chapter but whose available time and other professional development resources are limited.

I recently passed 25 years as an AMWA NCal member. I have been active in the chapter for all that time, variously as an officer, a committee and task force member, a speaker, and a frequent attendee at chapter meetings. I have attended and helped organize the Asilomar conference, sometimes in the same year. AMWA has been integral to my professional life since I first joined the medical products industry in 1988, and continues to be.

AMWA is unique in my experience of professional organizations for the nature of the professional relationships it fosters. For me, its "specialness" has been empowering. I found AMWA to be a supportive environment for expanding my professional skill set in a direction of my choice, repeatedly. One example: I learned about the picky details that can make all the difference in event planning during my tenure as chapter program chair. Another, I learned page layout working on the Pacemaker back in the 1990s, an essential for some writing projects involving high-tech medical hardware and software.

Many other writers could tell you similar stories of professional advancement through AMWA, usually with warm and respectful personal relationships thrown in. If that's what you're seeking in your professional life, you might find it here, too. Here's how to find out: volunteer for a specific, limited task. Most of these will be related to meetings (help the program chair with premeeting logistics or write up the meeting for the Pacemaker).

For other ideas about how to combine professional development with volunteering with AMWA, contact Arushi Sinha, Vice-President of our AMWA NCal Chapter (vice-president@amwancal.org), or me (email: president@amwancal.org).

Maggie Norris, BSc, ELS

The New Frontier of Webinars: Our Chapter's Initial Experience

By Suzanne Canada

Suzanne Canada is the immediate-past-president of the Northern California AMWA Chapter and led the effort to bring our first chapter webinar to fruition.

On the recommendation of several chapter members and in an attempt to reach out to and engage our more than 200 members across California, Hawaii, and Nevada, our chapter decided to try webinars.

Selecting a Service and Training—We identified two services that allowed free trials: GoToWebinar and Maestro Conference. Both services had similar costs and numbers of attendees, and both appeared to be relatively easy to sign up for. Based on the webinar training by Bette Frick of the AMWA Rocky Mountain Chapter, we chose to try GoToWebinar first.

Shortly after signing up, I was contacted by a customer service agent, who scheduled a training webinar, explained how to invite attendees, what messages the attendees would receive, and how to customize the information with a logo, or other information. The agent explained to me how to use the dashboard to control the webinar.

There are quite a few bells and whistles on this software! For example, you can toggle people on and off, turn over the controls to someone else, record the webinar, and run interactive polls during the webinar, or survey your attendees or registrants before or after the webinar. The tool also tracks who registered, who attended, and how much they participated. The best part, in my opinion is the automatic reminders; GoToWebinar sends automatic reminders (1 week, 1 day, and 1 hour before) so you don't have to.

A Trial Run—We first conducted a trial webinar as a board meeting, which allowed the 10 members of the board who attended to try the tool. We identified a few problems and glitches through that trial that allowed us to refine the webinar we would conduct for our chapter members. For example, I did not anticipate that all attendees would need to download software onto their computers. Another glitch was that not all the computers had compatible headsets or speakers. If attendees did not have headsets, a pretty serious feedback issue could arise. The biggest logistical problem from my perspective was that one person could not talk, run the visuals, and control the webinar features all at the same time!

After our trial run, we started a taskforce of myself, our Chapter President Maggie Norris, and our Programs Director Catherine Magill, to ensure that the webinar was a success. We also had help advertising the event via the Members List manager, the LinkedIn Group administrator, and cooperation with our Southern California Colleagues. We developed a strategy to help overcome the stumbling blocks identified by the board. This involved sending out a Quickstart guide and explanation to the registrants about set-up expectations and system requirements.

Our First Chapter Webinar—We invited all members of the Northern California Chapter as well as the Pacific Southwest Chapter to our webinar. A total of 21 members registered, and 15 people attended, including myself and the presenter Tom Gegeny. It appeared to work well, with Tom giving the presentation and me managing the audio and behind-the-scenes questions through the dashboard tool. The postwebinar survey had four responses, and they were all highest possible ranking, except for one person who had minor problems with audio.

Webinars in Our Future?—The webinar technology is wonderful and seemed to work well once we learned how to use it. A monthly or yearly subscription would probably be under-utilized, since less than 10% of our chapter members were able to participate. Other possibilities include charging to offset the cost of a webinar (eg, $5 for 20 participants per month would offset the cost), or sharing the service with other chapters. At the chapter level, it would require a dedicated webinar volunteer to work the technology. There was some concern among the board members that webinars would take away from people attending our chapter meetings. All in all, I think this technology could work well for engaging members of AMWA who cannot attend face-to-face chapter meetings.

The Word Witch

By Maggie Norris

Maggie Norris is a long-time member of the Northern California AMWA Chapter and currently serves as president.

Here's a simple trick for when you're moving or copying content between two or more Word files: use background page colors to help you keep track of the source and the destination. The more visually similar the files, the greater the value of the color clue.
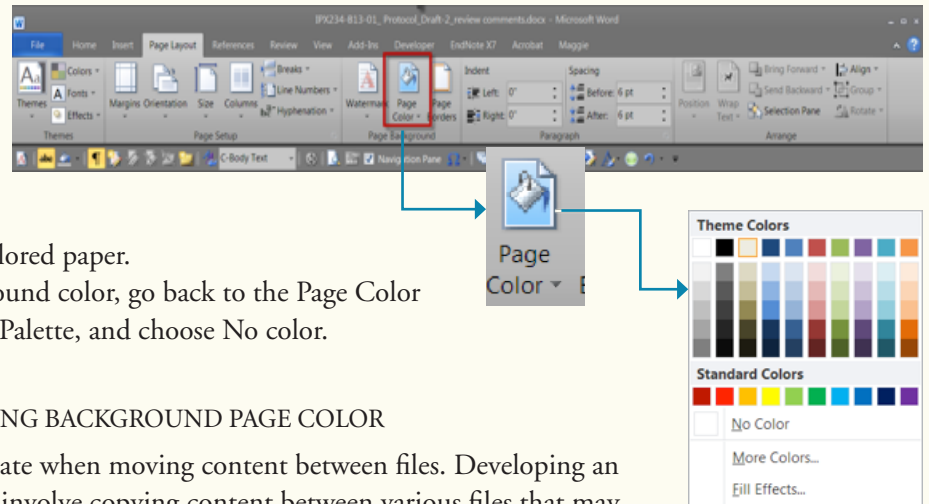
How to Apply Background Page Color

DISPLAY THE FILE IN PRINT LAYOUT VIEW.

With the cursor anywhere in the file, click the Page Layout tab and locate the Page Color icon. Click the icon and choose a color from the Colors Palette. The pane closes and the selected color appears in the document window as a background to your text, much as if you were typing on colored paper.

To remove the background color, go back to the Page Color icon, open the Colors Palette, and choose No color.

SOME IDEAS FOR USING BACKGROUND PAGE COLOR

- Reduce the error rate when moving content between files. Developing an updated draft can involve copying content between various files that may be visually similar or identical. Incorporating comments from numerous reviewers and inserting text from other existing files can mean dozens of instances of copying text, tables, figures, or parts thereof from 1, 2, or more existing files into a new destination file. Even the most attentive and detail-oriented editor can lose track of which file the clipboard content is to go into. One solution is to make the documents visually distinct by adding background color. If the source file is pink and the destination file is green, the editor is less likely to make a mistake.
- Give related files a similar look and feel. Applying the same background color to a group of related files is a stripped-down version of the Document Themes features of Word and much more practical for the work many medical writers do. Which product or project is this synopsis for? If it's purple, it must be for project XYZ.
- Be kind to your eyes. Exposure to the bright white light emanating from the default background in the document window makes my eyes feel tired and strained after a while. A softer hue is refreshing.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BACKGROUND PAGE COLOR

- The file must be in Print Layout view before you can add page background color and the color is visible only in Print Layout view.
- The page background color is visible on screen but by default does not print. (You can override the default, but why would you? Covering the entire page surface with ink would be expensive and, except for the very lightest colors, would result in a wet, messy printed page.)
- If you render a Word file with background color to PDF, the color will reproduce in the PDF and can't be removed easily. If you want a white page background or are planning to print the PDF, remove the color from the Word file first and then render the PDF.
- Receiving a file with a background color can upset some people, although usually only temporarily. Make a point of removing the background color before you send a document out.

Upcoming Chapter Presentations

Leveraging LinkedIn to Get Yourself Noticed

Presenter: Andrew Davis, President, Synergistech Communications
When: Saturday, 8 February 2014, 12-3 PM
Where: Pyramid Alehouse, Brewery, and Restaurant
        901 Gilman Street
        Berkeley, California Phone: 510.528.9880

To register: http://www.eventbrite.com/e/leveraging-linkedin-to-get-yourself-noticed-tickets-10214540967
Enjoy lunch, mingle with fellow AMWA members, and practice your networking skills while learning how to leverage LinkedIn to enhance your opportunities and visibility.

LinkedIn opens up a universe of professional opportunities, but it's seldom used to best effect. With more than 250 million members in more than 200 countries, and two new members joining each second, it's the social network no one seeking work – or workers – can afford to ignore.

Using LinkedIn, you can quickly find out who needs your services, and which skills you'll need tomorrow, by following companies, participating in groups, and watching job postings. Unlike its rival services and the job boards, LinkedIn connects you directly with those who are accountable.

You'll learn how to optimize your LinkedIn profile, get timely answers and insider opinions, network with peers worldwide, hunt for work efficiently, and never be invisible again. Specifically:
- Expand your sphere of influence and network of potential collaborators
- Cull potential employers/clients and employees/contractors, focusing only on the promising ones
- Direct queries only to well-informed, accountable resources
- Learn quickly who knows what, then learn who they know who can help you
- Focus on results, not promises

At least a hundred new members have joined LinkedIn since you started reading this. Are you sure none of them are worth knowing

Andrew Davis has recruited technical communicators in Silicon Valley since 1995, first for Synergistech Communications and then as Director of Talent Development for Content Rules (formerly Oak Hill Corporation). He is a former software industry Tech Writer and is well-known for both understanding and championing the role of content development. At Content Rules he recruited all kinds of technical and marketing communicators, training and globalization professionals, and those with related skills. Andrew enjoys helping those who communicate complex information get ahead by recognizing and refining their value to technology companies. He's candid and connected and, more importantly, he's committed to helping tech industry knowledge workers reach their goals.

Hold the Date:

Geno de Hostas, Director of Research and Preclinical at OneWorld Health, will be speaking on drug development at a nonprofit pharmaceutical company, and specifically, on the efforts of OneWorld Health.
When: 8 March 2014
Where: Delancy Street Restaurant, San Francisco
More information to follow soon.

By
Mimi
Wessling

Mimi Wessling is a long-time AMWA member who is also our Northern California AMWA Chapter webmaster

Where: Asilomar, CA
When: 27 April to 1 May 2014
Registration opens in February 2014

I can hardly wait for the end of April and another Pacific Coast Conference at Asilomar. Don't be suspicious that because I'm one of the co-directors, my anticipation has to do with fear that something will go wrong—not at all. Working with Marla Wilson and Catherine Magill has been one of the most fulfilling things I've done in my 7 years as an AMWA member, and I am thrilled to be part of the preparation of this wonderful event.

We've had weekly teleconferences about all aspects of the Conference: who should give the keynote talk, which possibilities among the many ideas for Open Sessions would be most interesting for our membership, which workshops to offer so that those members working on AMWA certificates have the broadest range of possibilities. All this discussion has taken place in an atmosphere of excitement that came out of memories of past Asilomar conferences, both the ones our Northern California Chapter hosted and the ones our colleagues in the Pacific Southwest Chapter hosted in alternate years.

What's all the excitement about? Opportunity. The opportunity to spend time in beautiful natural surroundings while expanding our intellectual scope, establishing contacts with other AMWA members and their guests, and hearing a keynote speaker who inspires us to think differently—all this free of the duties that fill our everyday lives. At meals, the opportunity to have great conversations, eat good food (that we don't have to prepare), and leave without doing the dishes! Thinking back, chance conversations at meals have provided connections that led me to some of the most interesting work I've done as a freelance writer. At the same time, if you're just wanting some quiet time, long walks on the nature paths by the Monterey Bay, with that fresh Pacific air, are incomparable.

The Program

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Roy Meals, an orthopedic surgeon—and more. He's a writer who wants to inspire us to look at medical writing creatively, from unusual viewpoints. He has published books for different audiences, from hand surgeons to writers like us, who use and abuse our hands constantly as we type away, trying to meet the proverbial deadline. (His book, *The Hand Owner's Manual*, has a 5-star rating on amazon.com).

Workshops for credit will be offered in four certificate programs: Introduction to Cancer Pharmacology (Science and Medicine); Advanced Data Presentation: Tables, Graphs, and Charts (ADV); Statistics for Medical Writers and Editors (ES/G/SG); and Fundamentals of Ethics and Practical Applications (RR).

Open Sessions, which are free of charge to registered attendees, encompass a wide range of interests: Our president Maggie Norris (our own Word Witch) will present a seminar on Word 2010 for writers and editors. Peter Binfield, Co-Founder of PeerJ Publishing in San Francisco, will share insights on the future of Open Access publishing. Aaron Van Etting, Director of Regulatory Writing at Amgen, Inc., will provide an overview of regulatory writing. Denise Cooluris, a naturopathic physician, will present a basis for understanding naturopathic medicine from the bottom up and will discuss how integrative medicine differs from and is related to alternative and conventional medicine. Alisa Bonsignore, a writer and strategist, will put the business of freelance writing into the context of the job seeker: how do we present ourselves?

Registration forms will be posted on the www.amwancal.org website very soon. Hope to see you there!

Events Around the Country

Mid-Atlantic Chapter Conference • 14 March 2014 • Gaithersburg Marriott Washingtonian Center, Gaithersburg, MD

Delaware Valley Chapter 12th Annual Freelance Conference • 22 March 2014 • Hilton Philadelphia Airport, Philadelphia, PA

The Delaware Valley Chapter 18th Annual Princeton Conference • 26 April 2014

The AMWA 74th Annual Conference • 8-11 October 2014 • Memphis, TN

Notes from AMWA Board of Directors Meeting

Details provided on the North Central Chapter Website

AMWA Board of Directors Fall 2013 Report

Wednesday, 6 November 2013

Notable highlights from the North Central Chapter Website (http://amwanorthcentral.org/chapter/?p=3619):

- AMWA staff is addressing technological glitches in the freelance directory and forums on the new AMWA website. Staff also will provide additional education to support use of the new forums and then explore potential enhancements. AMWA will issue a statement to all members regarding next steps.

- An article is in development to present the full results of the Member Needs Assessment Survey in an upcoming issue of the AMWA Journal. The first full-color issue of the Journal is scheduled for Spring 2014 to allow for potential increase in advertising revenue.

- The Education Committee is making changes to workshop requirements for certification, expected to go into effect in 2014: Some workshops will be assigned to more than 1 certificate program. An individualized Specialty Certificate will be available (one specialty ethics workshop plus any other seven specialty workshops). The Business Certificate will be discontinued. Any AMWA users who visit their profiles on amwa.org can now view their AMWA workshop curriculum history.

- Staff has developed a draft of a new registration process to support chapters that hold conferences offering AMWA workshops. Staff is revising the Chapter Conference Handbook to reflect the new process.

- Staff is working with the Medical Writing Certification Program Commission to finalize eligibility requirements and update the timeline of commission and exam development activities.

Northern California Chapter Board of Directors, 2013-2014

President: Maggie Norris
      email: president@amwancal.org
Vice-President/President-elect: Arushi Sinha
      email: vice-president@amwancal.org
Secretary: Joan Brodovsky
      email: secretary@amwancal.org
Treasurer: Kariena Dill
      email: treasurer@amwancal.org
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      email: membership@amwancal.org
Programs Chair: Amanda Jacobson
      email: events@amwancal.org
Newsletter Editor: Caren Rickhoff
      email: newsletter@amwancal.org
Job List Coordinator: Arushi Sinha
      email: joblist-subscribe@amwancal.org

We would like to say a special thanks to Ruth Linden for serving as treasurer of our chapter. Her contributions are greatly appreciated, and we wish her well in her future endeavors.

Kariena Dill has volunteered to become our new treasurer. Please extend a warm welcome to Kariena.

Nonelected Positions
Web Administrator: Mimi Wessling
      email: web-admin@amwancal.org
Immediate Past President: Suzanne Canada
      email: immediate-past-pres@amwancal.org

Recent Guidance Documents Issued by the FDA

Category	Title	Type	Date
Procedural	Dear Health Care Provider Letters: Improving Communication of Important Safety Information	Final Guidance	01/22/14
Advertising	Fulfilling Regulatory Requirements for Postmarketing Submissions of Interactive Promotional Media for Prescription Human and Animal Drugs and Biologics	Draft Guidance	01/13/14
Procedural /Clinical/ Medical	Qualification Process for Drug Development Tools	Final Guidance	01/06/14
Labeling	Naming of Drug Products Containing Salt Drug Substances	Final Guidance	12/24/13
Generics	Size, Shape, and Other Physical Attributes of Generic Tablets and Capsules	Draft Guidance	12/09 /13
Biopharmaceutics	Bioequivalence Studies With Pharmacokinetic Endpoints for Drugs Submitted Under an Abbreviated New Drug Application	Final Guidance	12/04/13
Advertising	Product Name Placement, Size, and Prominence in Advertising and Promotional Labeling	Draft Guidance	11/18/13
Clinical/Antimicrobial	Pulmonary Tuberculosis: Developing Drugs for Treatment	Draft Guidance	11/05/13
Clinical/Antimicrobial	Acute Bacterial Skin and Skin Structure Infections: Developing Drugs for Treatment	Final Guidance	10/16/13
Clinical / Antimicrobial	Chronic Hepatitis C Virus Infection: Developing Direct-Acting Antiviral Agents for Treatment	Draft Guidance (revised)	10/16/13
International Conference on Harmonisation; Quality	Q4B Evaluation and Recommendation of Pharmacopoeial Texts for Use in the ICH Regions: Annex 14: Bacterial Endotoxins Test General Chapter	Final Guidance	10/15/13
International Conference on Harmonisation - Quality	Q3D Elemental Impurities	Draft Guidance	10/15/13
Clinical / Antimicrobial	Community-Acquired Pneumonia — Developing Antimicrobial Drugs for Treatment	Draft Guidance	01/09/14
Clinical/Medical/Procedural	Qualification Process for Drug Development Tools: (Attachment) Qualification of Exacerbations of Chronic Pulmonary Disease Tool for Measurement of Symptoms of Acute Bacterial Exacerbation of Chronic Bronchitis in Patients With Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	Draft Guidance	01/09/14