

## President's Message

Catherine Magill, PhD



Welcome to the late summer edition! I hope you all are enjoying the warm afternoons and the cool evenings and mornings.

It's time to think about chapter elections and we are looking for a "few good men and women" to help run the chapter. Open positions include chapter secretary, membership liaison and vice-president (president-elect).

With the exception of VP all these positions are one-year commitments, and I'm sure you would find them an excellent way to contribute to the chapter with a very minimal time commitment.

If you have a little bit of time to spare (it really doesn't take much time, trust me!) and you'd like to amp up your networking activities, these positions are the way to do it!

We love to have new members participate in keeping the chapter alive and active, and the chapter can't function without volunteers. The commitment entails just two telephone conferences annually and, depending on the position, doing the attendant duties—which usually aren't that time-consuming...

I have really enjoyed networking with other medical writers through my board membership. If that isn't enough, I have found that being active in the chapter has helped jumpstart my medical writing career in ways I could never have imagined when I first volunteered.

I can't recommend volunteering in the chapter highly enough, particularly for those who are new to freelancing and need help getting their name out there.

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## Off to the Land of Lakes

Chapter stalwart Naomi Ruff has traded San Francisco Bay for Lake Superior: in early September she and her husband, Matt, moved to Duluth, Minnesota. Naomi joined AMWA in 2000. During her 8 years with this chapter, she served as secretary, newsletter editor, vice president, and president; and as director and registrar for the Pacific Coast Conference. Some of our members remember her well.

### Dan Liberthson

Naomi is a crackerjack organizer and about the most reliable person I've ever worked with on projects--specifically the last couple of Asilomar conferences, and even more specifically the last one. As my co-Chair focusing on the logistics, she proved wise and dependable, as well as able to put up with my occasionally cavalier approach, (even though I'm sure it cost her some tooth enamel, Do I still hear grinding?) All luck to her in the land of the northern lights.

### Laura Singer

I met Naomi at the first Asilomar Conference I attended. We started chatting about nature photography, and I knew we were simpatico when she told me she was shooting in black-and-white. About a week after the conference, I received a small box full of copies of the shots she'd taken.

Naomi was my mentor during my aberrant two-year chapter presidency. Even when she no longer served on the chapter board, she has always been generous with her time and advice, and her support of chapter activities. Although she is now a member of the North Central chapter, in my heart and mind, Naomi will always be part of the Northern California chapter.

### Catherine Magill

I met Naomi at a holiday dinner when I was just thinking about switching to medical writing from research in Biotech. She remembered me when I attended my first AMWA meeting and was very welcoming at that and subsequent AMWA chapter meetings and Pacific Coast conferences.

Naomi had done research in a Neuroscience lab that I was familiar with which made me feel more comfortable that this

was a group that I would appeal to my background in scientific research. After a couple of years of seeing her at meetings, she called, asking if I would be interested in the Vice President position. After I expressed some interest, she then mentioned that the VP position was President-elect!! But by this point, I was sold on participating in the chapter board. I took the position, cursing myself for accepting something that was likely to balloon into a huge thing that I wasn't prepared to deal with. But, boy was I wrong.

During my VP stint the programs chair resigned and I took that role on for the remainder of that year and enjoyed it tremendously. Upon taking the President's position I was pleased to find that the job is not that onerous and it allowed me to increase my visibility in the medical writing community.

Finally, I volunteered to help Naomi in the organization and running of the 2008 Pacific Coast conference, which she directed. She was remarkably well organized and ran a truly memorable conference that had great workshops, open sessions and chances to meet and network with other writers.

I am sad to see her leave the area, but know that she has permanently put her stamp on the local chapter. If we keep in mind the question of "What would Naomi do?" we'll all be the better for it.

#### **Tom Lang**

I met Naomi at Asilomar, soon after she joined AMWA. The only thing I remember from our first meeting was the description of her research for her PhD. (I won't repeat the description because I continue to tease her about it even today, and I don't want to lose my place as the only one who can hold this over her head.)

Over the years, we have become friends and co-workers. She has helped me teach my courses at Genentech for the past few years and has always been available to answer my questions on basic research procedures. Smart, capable, proactive, and dependable, she has helped keep the Northern California chapter moving since she joined it. Fortunately, our professional association will continue, despite her move to arguably the coldest spot in America: northern Minnesota. I predict that she will be SO GLAD to visit the Bay Area again for our course that I won't have to pay her as much; the increase in temperature will be payment enough. We'll see.

#### **Marla Wilson**

My first contact with Naomi was at an STC (Society for Technical Communication) meeting where she enthusiastically sold me on connecting with AMWA. After a year or so of going to meetings, I thought it was time for me to step up and help out. Remembering how welcoming she always was, I offered to help with the brochure for the 2006 conference in Berkeley.

It was so painless that I offered myself up again for 2008 and became actively involved in the conference prep as well as the conference itself. She was terrific to work with, did a great job of organizing the whole project, made great judgment calls, followed through on any task she took on, delegated whatever could be delegated to anyone willing to do their part, and took responsibility for keeping track of those volunteers.

Naomi did an amazing job of dealing with the mountain of minutiae involved in managing the conference. In short, she was an inspiration and a great role model for anyone who would even think about taking on a key role in the Asilomar Conference. Even when the details of running the conference got challenging and trying, she never failed to professionally take care of what ever had to be taken care of. And she did it with a smile. I hope to continue helping out with the conference, and I'm sure there are many other AMWA members quite capable of continuing the tradition. But I will miss working with her and all that she brought to the conference, as well as to the Northern California chapter of AMWA. I hope she'll stay in touch with the chapter no matter where she actually resides!

#### **Sunny Bishop**

We really are going to miss you Naomi! You did a yeoman's job for our chapter. I bet if you had \$1 for every hour you spent on AMWA business, you could pay for a really wonderful cruise somewhere.

When I first met you, the chapter had been sleeping for several years and you woke it up! It was your energy, drive, will, whatever moved you, that jump-started the chapter. We started having regular member meetings again, had well-run

board meetings, and attracted volunteers. But that wasn't enough for you. You involved yourself with the regional conference and shouldered much of the work for two conferences in a row. Your logical approach and reasoned decisions firmly steered both organizations towards successful operations. It may not be possible to fill your shoes with the feet of just one of us regular folks. Warmest wishes,

**Maggie Norris**

Hardly anyone now remembers, but there was a long period when Northern California was one of AMWA's most active chapters. We met 8 or 9 times a year, not counting National or Asilomar, and had around 40 members, established and new, at every meeting.

Then, in the mid-1990s, a lot of things changed in the industry, locally and globally. There was a period of a few years during which the chapter became very nearly inactive: months went by between meetings and there was very little activity otherwise. Some of us were worried about the continued existence and relevance of the chapter, which had been a source of professional identity and warm collegial relationships.

Anne Stauffer, then chapter president, and I attended the Asilomar conference in 1998 with this as our main goal: to find members for almost an entire new board for the coming year. By the end of the conference, we had 2 volunteers: Sharon Tellyer and Naomi Ruff. Having gotten acquainted with them at the conference, we felt new confidence in the future of the chapter.

Between their own efforts and their ability to inspire others, they revived our dear AMWA N Cal and are, I think, largely responsible for its continuing to be the very special professional organization that it is.

Thank you, Naomi, for your hard work and collegiality. Good luck to you and Matt in your new / old home.

**Writing with Naked Elbows**

Anne Ahlman, MPT

Author, *Naked Elbows: A Physical Therapist's Reflections on Patient Care, Intuition, and Healing* (Gannett Healthcare Group, August 2008)

They say that the process of getting a book published is akin to climbing Mount Everest in a motorized wheelchair. From personal experience, I can tell you the wheelchair is more likely to be a manually operated one.

After being inspired by Dr. Atul Gawande's award-winning book, *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*, I thought "wouldn't it be great to write something like that about the physical therapy profession?"

Once the idea took hold, writing became a stolen pleasure. It was something I squeezed it in on nights and weekends around my clinical work and my medical writing and editing jobs.

The stories flowed as I remembered the funny, the humbling, and the intimate experiences I'd had in PT school and when treating patients in a variety of settings. To my delight, the book quickly took shape as I explored aspects of patient care from the other side of the treatment table, always honoring the connection that occurs between therapist and patient.

But when my book, *Naked Elbows: A Physical Therapist's Reflections on Patient Care, Intuition, and Healing*, was completed, the real work began—just what was the best way to get my book into print?

The task seemed insurmountable. It was doubtful the big New York publishers would want to pick up the work of an unknown first-time author. And I didn't want to have to self-publish my first book.

As with most of my important life transitions, projects, and career moves, serendipity intervened.

Although I had completed writing the book before leaving freelance medical writing to become the medical editor of a new physical therapy magazine, it didn't occur to me to ask the magazine publisher about my little book project for many months...but once we signed the contract, my journey ascending Everest began.

From editing to formatting and from layouts to cover art, I felt much like poor condemned Sisyphus eternally pushing his huge boulder up that unending hill - until now.

As I collapse panting on the top of the hill, published book firmly clutched in my sweating hands, I can reflect on my labors and watch the huge rock of the publishing process freely tumble away down the opposite side.

It wasn't really so different from working with recalcitrant patients after all.

Physical therapists are known to be part Florence Nightingale and part Attila the Hun, with each therapist deciding on the proper proportions according to the needs of the patient.

There are times for tact and encouragement, and there are times to display single-minded determination as we bring our patients toward functional independence...these qualities came in handy during the process of pushing my book up the publishing mountain.

Thankfully, this PT was able to survive the journey, and the wheelchair is safely back in the barn.

### **Are you looking for a contract or staff job?**

Susan Caldwell, PhD

If you answered yes, you need the *Biotech Ink Insider*!

The *Insider* is a weekly job newsletter listing current open positions for medical writers, editors, proofreaders, and related specialists in biomedical fields.

Each free issue has contract and staff jobs for medical writers and similar positions, and the job descriptions come from writers, recruiters, and hiring managers. The newsletter is free to subscribers and free to those who list jobs.

If you'd like to subscribe, please send your request for a subscription and a sample issue to: [caldwell@biotechink.com](mailto:caldwell@biotechink.com).

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### **Pacific Coast Conference Bylaw Amendments**

Catherine Magill, PhD

Now that the 2008 Pacific Coast (Asilomar) conference has been successfully completed, there are some related items that I need to share with the chapter membership.

In past years, we have kept the conference finances and the chapter finances completely separate so that there is neither any intermingling of funds, nor the opportunity for wayward chapter members to access the conference till.

That separation has helped the chapter to avoid any conference-related financial mishaps over the years. At the same time, there is now a bit too much distance between the two organizations, conference and chapter.

We need to codify our existing guidelines to ensure that the chapter takes full ownership of hosting the conference every other year. Even years are hosted by the Northern California chapter, odd years by the Pacific Southwest chapter. Our next conference will be held in 2010.

In order to strengthen the bond between chapter and conference, we feel that adding a new position to the chapter board, Conference Director, is warranted.

This would be a two year position as the conference takes about 18 months from start to finish. Our intent is to ensure that having the Conference Director on the board will ensure that lines of communication remain strong and open.

And while we have kept chapter and conference funds separate in practice, we need to add language to the Bylaws to codify that safeguard.

In the upcoming fall election you will see two amendments on the ballot. Both amendments must be approved by the chapter membership before they are added to the Bylaws.

They are,

- 1) adding the Conference Director as a Board Member,
- and 2) ensuring that the funds are kept separate.

These two amendments will significantly increase the strength of our connection to the conference and ensure that future conferences are as successful as they have been in the past.

## Chapter Events

Catherine Magill, PhD

We had a good turnout for the most recent live installment of the ever-popular “Word Tips and Tricks”, offered by our own Word Witch, Maggie Norris.

Maggie’s presentation was titled Word Templates: Normal-dot-dot, and how it can work for you. This workshop was held at the Pyramid Alehouse in Berkeley and touched on many issues we deal with daily using styles and formatting in Microsoft Word.

We are also preparing other fall/winter events.

Possibilities include the Public Library of Science (PLoS) to talk about the open access movement, local author Mary Roach , a freelance panel on issues of publishing books and managing work/life balance, and Adobe to talk about their software for scientific illustrations.

Please let us know if you have suggestions or ideas for events that you think would be of interest to other members of the chapter. We would love to get good ideas put into action.

Also, please let us know about events that are being hosted by other organizations that would be of interest to our membership. We can always circulate announcements of RELATED events to our chapter membership.

## The Word Witch: How to To View the Template

Maggie Norris

Recently, a number of us met on a Saturday afternoon at the Pyramid Alehouse in Berkeley to discuss Normal-dot-dot and customized Word templates.

One of the challenges we encountered early on is that *there is no direct way to view the template*.

Here are some of the indirect ways we used to visualize the Word template.

### Generate the TOC

By default, the table of contents (TOC) generated through the Index and Tables dialog box reflects the heading structure embodied in the template.

It displays the text of every paragraph to which any of the top 3 built-in Heading styles have been applied.

If these heading styles have been applied consistently, the TOC will also reflect the information hierarchy in your content outline.

### Style Area

The Style Area is a pane at the left edge of the screen display that is visible in Normal and Outline views.

Don't worry, the Style Area is not visible in Page Layout view and does not print. With Style Area view options set correctly, the name of the paragraph style displays beside each paragraph.

To set up viewing of the Style Area, call up the Options dialog box.

Windows: choose Tools | Options.

Mac: choose Word | Preferences.

In the View tab, almost at the bottom, enter 1.0” in the Style area width field. View your document in Normal view (View | Normal).

### Reveal Formatting Task Pane

In Windows, Reveal Formatting is one of several powerful features available through the Task Pane. To display the Task Pane, from within the file, press F1. Choose Reveal Formatting from the drop-down list at the top right of the Task Pane.

The Reveal Formatting pane displays the style sheet (the specifications of the paragraph style) of the paragraph with the insertion point. Move the insertion point to a different paragraph to see the style sheet for that style. Click on any of the hyperlinks to change the associated spec. You can also view 2 styles simultaneously and compare them.

At certain points in the work flow, I find that displaying both the Style Area and the Reveal Formatting pane enables me to apply the template formatting consistently and efficiently.

### Membership Update

The Northrn California chapter is on the move. We have added 42 new members since July!

New members include: Lorelei Bosserman, Danya Bueneman, Melissa Burns, Denise K Chun, PhD, Carol Cohen, Gorazd Drozina, MD, PhD, Isabel Gaston, PhD, Elia Gonzales, Johanna J Grossman, PhD, Bryan Hains, PhD, M.A., Bradley Hayden, PhD, Hilary Heuer, PhD, Nyssa Hoch, Jihwon Im, PharmD, Cindy Joy Key, Jennifer S Klein, Ingrid C Koo, PhD, Robin D LeWinter, PhD, Martyn Lewis, MS, PhD, Tamsin M Lindstrom, PhD, Gina L Magliocco, BS, Angelica F Maurer, BSN, MBA, Gerardine McLean, RN, BA, Alia L Merla, PhD, Valerie D Mulcaire, Melissa Newt, Vivian Nguyen, PhD, Penrose S ODonnell, MD, MBA, Caren A Rickhoff, BS, Robert John Romanelli, PhD, Janessa E Ruckle, Dipali Samel, MS, Sara L Selis, MS, Arushi Sinha, Lisa B Stockwell, BA, Lili Shiau, MD, Julie R Snider, BA, Thais McAbeer Turner, Kim Wagner, MA, RAC, Erin Williams, RN, BSN, Yomi S Wrong, Cindy Yun, PharmD

Please welcome them in person when you see a new face at the next chapter event!

## UC Davis Craft Workshops

### Advanced Fiction: Writer's Craft Workshop

2.5 quarter units academic credit, X410.8

You've learned basic tools for fiction writing and are ready to tackle more advanced writing techniques.

Hone and finesse your writing skills by exploring point of view and sense of place, crafting a scene, using narration techniques and creating compelling dialogue. Discuss effective ways to infuse manuscripts with your personal style. Enhance your weekly writing assignments through guided exercises and workshop discussions of published work.

Learn to critically read the writing of others and how to respond with thoughtful feedback.

Suggestions and encouragement are emphasized to help you build confidence and push your writing to the next level.

Required textbooks: *Tools of the Writer's Craft*, by Sands Hall, ISBN 0972722572. *Best American Short Stories 1999*, by ed. Amy Tan, ISBN 039592684X.

Prerequisite: Tools of the Writer's Craft or equivalent. Basic writing skills, some writing experience and a good command of the English language.

- 8 meetings
- Jan. 15-March 5: Thurs., 6-9 p.m

- Sacramento: Sutter Square Galleria, 2901 K St.
- \$325 (\$345 if postmarked after 01/01/2009). Enroll in section 083WRT142
- Special discounts for groups.

### Nonfiction Writing Workshop

2 quarter units academic credit, X410.4

Make the leap from classroom writer to successful author in this results-oriented workshop where you prepare two pieces for publication.

Refine the skills learned in the prerequisite courses through in-depth, hands-on experience and ongoing discussions.

Gain invaluable knowledge of the publishing industry, learn useful tools for preparing nonfiction work and develop a lasting network of peer writers. This course may be repeated for credit.

Required textbooks: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Getting Published*, 4th ed., by Sander & Bykofsky, ISBN 1592575188. *Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors and Literary Agents 2009*, by Herman, ISBN 0977268341.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of Enhancing Writing Skills for Publication is preferred.

- 8 meetings
- Jan. 5-March 9: Mon., 6:30-9 p.m. (No meeting Jan. 19 or Feb. 16)
- Sacramento: Sutter Square Galleria, 2901 K St.
- \$305 (\$325 if postmarked after 12/22/2008). Enroll in section

For more information, please check the UCD Extension website, <http://extension.ucdavis.edu/>, arts and humanities, writing.

### Make Tax Planning a Year-Round Job

Julian Block

Quick: What is the biggest single item in your monthly budget? If you're like most people, your spontaneous answer is probably

housing costs. But the truth is that the actual culprit is far more likely to be taxes. So says the Tax Foundation a Washington-based outfit that keeps tabs on how much of your income is siphoned off by federal, state, and local governments. The latest available figures reveal that the average American spends more than twice as much for government as for food.

That disheartening statistic underscores just how costly a mistake it is to think of federal income taxes a once-a-year affliction caused by the need to grapple with Form 1040. What you ought to do is crank taxes into your financial planning throughout the year. You might be pleasantly surprised to discover the scores of tax-saving opportunities that most individuals overlook each year. The savings can add up to thousands of dollars.

The first step for effective tax planning is to organize that ever-growing accumulation of records in your desk drawers, closet, and other storage spaces. Also, if you have been remiss, resolve now to reconstruct missing or incomplete records before they become hazy in your mind.

Haphazard records can cause you to needlessly lose money to taxes. The better the records you keep, the easier it is to search for opportunities, which is what tax planning is all about.

When it comes to sorting through financial papers, my advice to writers and other clients is to err on the side of caution in deciding which ones to save and which ones to toss out. To make the chore more manageable and to reduce the likelihood of mistakes-limit yourself to a single category of records at each sitting. For example, tackle all records dealing with your writing business one evening, investments another, insurance another, and so on. Incidentally, this do-it-yourself undertaking provides valuable side benefits: less-cluttered storage spaces and a clearer picture of your financial affairs.

As part of the organizing task, treat yourself to a nice notebook or computer program. That will make it easier to stick to your resolution and continue to keep careful and complete records throughout the year. Good recordkeeping is the key to mapping out strategies that you can employ year after year to sidestep, decrease, or postpone the federal indenture-for example, timing to your best advantage, where possible, what you receive as income and your payments of business-related expenses and other kinds of deductible expenditures.

Each month, set aside the time to bring our records up to date. A good time to do that is when you are reconciling your checkbooks and

bank statements. Go through that accumulation of checks, receipts, and whatever else might help you to uncover all your deductions and to determine the correct amounts of income items such as advances, royalties and other payments from clients, and gains or losses on investments.

Your recordkeeping system should be well organized, but need not be elaborate. You might well be able to make do with those lined sheets that accountants use on which you enter column headings that reflect your particular tax-deductible spending and income sources. Under the appropriate worksheet column heading, enter the details for each item. They could include the check number, date, payee, and other information that might be helpful later.

Julian Block, an attorney in Larchmont, NY, has been cited as "an accomplished writer on taxes (Wall Street Journal). His books include Tax Tips for Writers, Photographers, Artists, available at [www.julianblocktaxexpert.com](http://www.julianblocktaxexpert.com). Copyright 2008 Julian Block. All rights reserved. This article previously appeared in The Science Writer, National Association of Science Writers. Reprinted with permission

### 2008 Northern California Board of Directors

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