



PACEMAKER

Fall 2017

Highlights

- Letter From the President
- New 2017-2018 Board of Directors
- Effective Search Techniques
- Fall Social
- Chapter Member Profile
- Welcome New Members

Table of Contents

Letter From Our Chapter President.....	1
Chapter Board of Directors 2017-2018	3
Letter From the Editors.....	3
AMWA Events and Education	4
Effective Strategies, Practical Tips, and Advice From a Research Librarian	5
Word Witch Tutorial	7
Fall Social.....	7
Chapter Member Profile: Toniann Derion, PhD, ELS.....	9
Welcome New Members.....	10

Letter From Our Chapter President

Welcome 2017-2018 Northern California Board of Directors!! Three of us who served on our chapter's BOD in 2016-17 will continue to do so: Barbara Arnoldussen, Catherine Magill, and me, as Secretary, Treasurer, and President, respectively. We extend a warm welcome to Sandra Ruhl, RN, our new VP/President-Elect for the upcoming year.

Exciting events are on the horizon: First, the AMWA Annual Medical Writing & Communication Conference, to be held in Orlando, Fla., is almost upon us. About 15 Northern California chapter members are planning to attend. In addition to attending the keynote session, workshops, and open sessions, we will meet for a chapter dinner on Thursday, November 2. Everyone who is attending should have received an email about this; if you haven't, please contact me at nrkatz@illyriaconsulting.com. If you have received an email, be on the lookout for a follow-up with details very soon.

Second, we are actively planning the Pacific Coast Conference (PCC). It most probably will be held at a facility on the Monterey Peninsula in late April 2018 (no name allowed at this point, but maybe you can guess). Caren Rickhoff, Immediate Past President, headed up this committee for the last 12 months (as well as wearing numerous other hats). Viviana Davila has just taken over the role of PCC committee chair. She and the committee are reviewing the results of a survey performed a few weeks ago soliciting ideas for conference content. If you did not get a chance to take the survey but have ideas about what you would like to see at the conference, please contact Viviana at vivianadavilabhatia@gmail.com.

Third, we are starting to develop programs for the 2017-2018 year. Usually we have four get-togethers a year—some very casual ("meet-ups," where we simply get together to share experiences and network) and some more formal (with scheduled speakers from either within or outside of our chapter). Sandra (Sandy) Ruhl is heading up the Program committee, so please contact her at sruhl@earthlink.net if you are willing to help with programs, have ideas for programs, or both.

We also put a lot of governance policies in place this year. Special thanks are due to many individuals who worked tirelessly to implement new policies and/or silently but critically kept our chapter going:

- Catherine Magill, our past and current treasurer, whose enormous efforts resulted in getting our chapter incorporated and up to date on all required paperwork.
- Toni Derion, who stepped in as Acting VP this year and chaired the Nominating committee.

- 
- Caren Rickhoff, Barbara Arnoldussen, and Myrna Faulds, who displayed their diplomatic and strategic skills, allowing our chapter to be in compliance with policies now required by the National organization.
 - Barbara Arnoldussen, who will be our BOD's representative to the Chapter Advisory Council (CAC). This is a newly formed council. Its goal is to keep the various AMWA chapters in close touch with the AMWA national executive committee.
 - Suzanne Canada and Mimi Wessling, who provided ongoing communication and connection via our updated website.
 - Michele Anderson and Nicola Gillespie, who have and will continue to create beautiful editions of Pacemaker, our chapter newsletter.
 - And of course, there are all the other members who are just there and do the work—too numerous to name—by serving on committees, you keep our chapter connected and vital. Thank you.

We lack a Membership committee chairperson—someone who will reach out to new members and also identify potential members. Right now, we have around 215 chapter members. We know there are more medical writers in our area, and we would like them to be part of our MW community. This is a great volunteer opportunity and a great way to meet people. Please let me know if you're interested.

Wishing everyone a wonderful autumn season, filled with medical writing successes and personal happiness.

Nancy R. Katz, PhD, MWC
President, AMWA Northern California Chapter

Chapter Board of Directors 2017-2018

Elected Officers

President	Nancy Katz, PhD, MWC
Immediate Past President	Caren Rickoff, BA, MWC
Vice President	Sandra Ruhl, RN
Secretary	Barbara Arnoldussen, RN, MBA
Treasurer	Catherine Magill, PhD
Chapter Leaders	
Programs Chair	Sandra Ruhl, RN
Pacific Coast Conference Chair	Viviana Davila, PhD
Communications Committee	Suzanne Canada, PhD (Chair); Mimi Wessling, PhD; Myrna Faulds, PhD; Nicola Gillespie, DVM; Michele Anderson, BA, JD
Pacemaker Editors	Nicola Gillespie, DVM and Michele Anderson, BA, JD
Membership Chair	Open

Letter From the Editors

Happy fall! This issue of Pacemaker is chock-full of great information, including our President's letter, tips on improving library searches, the 411 on the Northern California chapter's fall social and a word from our traveling Word Witch.

Have you ever wondered how your colleagues entered the field of medical writing? We are proud to present Pacemaker's newest feature: Chapter Member Profile. In each profile, we will highlight the career of one of our members. If you would you like to share your story of how you became a medical writer or editor or if you know a fellow member who has an interesting story, please contact us at pacemaker@amwancal.org.

Kind regards,
Nicola and Michele

AMWA Events and Education

Northern California Chapter Events

Chapter Dinner at the AMWA Annual Medical Writing and Communication Conference

Date: Thursday, November 2, 2017

. Time: 6:30 PM

. Place: [Big River Grille and Brewing Works](#)

There are vegetarian/vegan options. Prices are moderate.

We will meet in the lobby of the hotel around 6:00 pm and walk to the restaurant.

Pacific Coast Conference (PCC)—SAVE THE DATE April 2018

Please contact Viviana Davila (PCC Chair) at vivianadavilabhatia@gmail.com if you have any ideas for the upcoming conference!

Other AMWA Events



AMWA Live Webinars

Creating a Highly Effective Road Map for Clinical Research: Authoring the Clinical Study Protocol

Online Webinar 12/7/2017 10:00 AM EST – 11:00 AM PST

More information available at www.amwa.org



Effective Strategies, Practical Tips, and Advice From a Research Librarian

Presenter: Richard Le, Reference Librarian

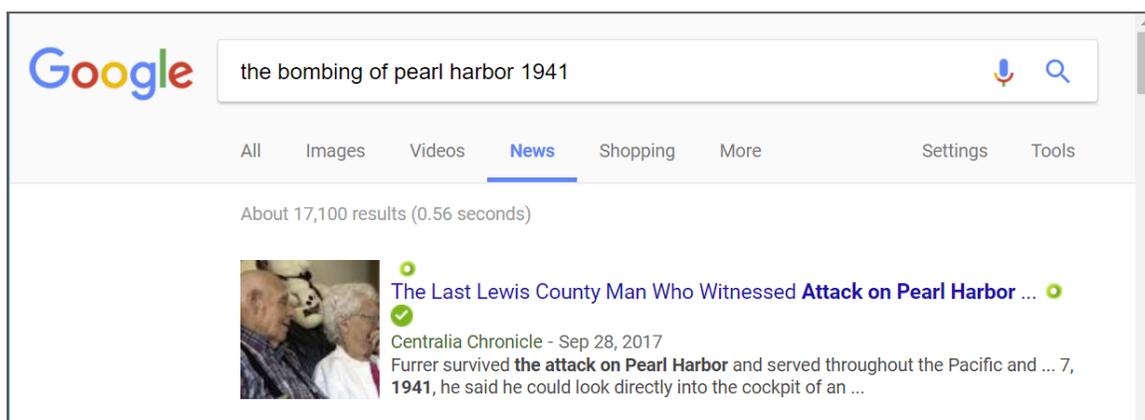
Presented: May 6, 2017, at the North Beach Branch of the San Francisco Public Library

Richard Le presented a wealth of options for finding information online, ranging from searches on your home computer to those using the well-funded, well-equipped online San Francisco Public Library system. Its system is one of the best outside the university's, which not all of us have access to. Below is a sampling of techniques that Le reviewed, some well known, some not. Many more are provided in the attached list; keep it handy!

Using Google — here are tips for more effective searches:

- Use quote marks to search for an exact phrase: Searching a phrase in quotes will yield only pages with the same words in the same order as what's in the quote.
- Use an asterisk within quotes to specify unknown or variable words: Searching a phrase in quotes with an asterisk replacing a word will search all variations of that phrase.
- Use the minus sign (aka the hyphen) to exclude results containing certain words and to eliminate results that are not of interest but may lead to an overwhelming number of hits. For example, use "medical history" -patients to focus on the history of medicine and not on how to take a patient's medical history.
- Use a colon to search specific sites, as in "checkpoint inhibitors:NIH". Only items related to the NIH will be retrieved. See the attached list for many more useful operators in combination with the colon. For example, you can search by file type, by location, or by source.
- Use "define:" to look up words faster. Streamline the dictionary process by using, for example, "DEFINE: hematoma."

- Don't forget: Search images. You can even search images using images. Have you ever come across a photo that looks strangely familiar? Or do you want to know where it came from? If you save the image and then search it on Google Images (with the camera button), you'll be able to see similar images on the Web.
- Search news archives going back to the mid-1880s. You can access these archives by searching in Google News and then clicking on "Search Tools" and then "Recent." Then select the "Archive" option from the dropdown menu.



Using Electronic Databases

Numerous databases are available for medical research and health-related topics (for example, see the list with links at <http://flinders.libguides.com/az.php?a=all>. Fortunately, if you have a San Francisco Public Library card, which is available to any California resident and is easy to get, you can access the many databases that the library subscribes to. For information on how to get a card, visit <https://sfpl.org/>. Remember to use MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) terms, a National Library of Medicine-controlled vocabulary thesaurus for indexing articles in PubMed, to focus and narrow your search. You can easily access the MeSH database from the PubMed homepage under the right-hand heading "More Resources."

Le also noted: Call your librarian. He indicated that at many libraries, helplines are available and listed on their websites.

Word Witch Tutorial

The Word Witch decided to spend Halloween season whirling around the world on her broomstick, stopping here and there to give lessons on cool keyboard shortcuts to warlocks, werewolves, and other aspiring computer wizards. She'll return to give our members more tips in the next Pacemaker.

Fall Social

Of course, everyone who showed up at Caren Rickoff's Sunnyvale home for the September potluck had a great time. The festivities lived up to the invitation's billing — fellow travelers in the world of medical writing shared experiences, insights, and laughs. The food and drinks were great — salads, homemade pastries, a main course, and Olio Umberto, a superb olive oil made by member Mimi Wessling's son (the rich, slightly peppery oil has a fine flavor and is sold at the Ferry Building market in San Francisco). Introductions revealed the varied backgrounds of our members: a machine translator, tons of PhDs, editors, writers, you name it. There was, of course, some chapter business that cropped up: President Nancy Katz gave an impassioned plea for someone to step up to the plate and volunteer to be the chapter vice president.

As for the next potluck, be there or be square.





Chapter Member Profile: Toniann Derion, PhD, ELS



What type of medical writing or editing do you do? I work for a pharmaceutical company and do almost exclusively regulatory writing, which consists mainly of clinical study protocols, reports, investigator's brochures, annual safety updates, and other documents (eg, clinical sections of NDAs) that get submitted to FDA. I also write and edit manuscripts for publication in medical journals, but this isn't my primary job responsibility.

What career path led you to your career in medical writing or editing? My career path was circuitous, and as a result, I landed as a medical writer somewhat late. I have a PhD and started my professional career as a civilian researcher for the US Air Force and then US Navy. While I was working for the Navy, I attended a conference where a pharmaceutical company researcher gave a talk about new experimental treatments for certain lung diseases. I was fascinated and spoke to him after his talk. He ended up hiring me, and that was my entry into the pharmaceutical industry. After a time, I realized I was less interested in managing clinical trials and more interested in writing up the results, and so I eventually transitioned to medical writing.

What advice would you give someone who is just entering the medical writing and editing profession? I believe it's imperative to have a degree (preferably an advanced degree) in a life science such as physiology or biochemistry. And it wouldn't hurt to have formal background in English as well. The goal of scientific/medical writing is clarity above all else, so a good understanding of grammar and sentence structure is paramount – a misplaced comma can change the meaning of a sentence, and a medical writer needs to understand this. I also believe self-knowledge is important: if you're somewhat of an introvert, enjoy working alone, and of course enjoy writing, it could be an auspicious career path.

What do you value most about your AMWA membership? I enjoy the opportunities for career development as well as networking and socializing with other medical writers.

What do you like to do for fun when you aren't at work? I'm into fitness and outdoor activities, so I run, bike, swim, and ski. I was running half marathons and doing some ski racing until a knee injury sidelined me last year, so I'm currently in rehab mode.



What is your favorite thing about Northern California? This part of the world offers a plethora of places to explore, recreational activities, and culture. Where else can you ski in the morning and play golf in the afternoon – on the same day?

What is your favorite book or movie? I read almost exclusively nonfiction. My favorite book by far is *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer, which is his personal account of the 1996 Mt. Everest disaster. He is a superb writer, and the book was almost impossible to put down. I've read it 3 times. As for movies, my taste runs more to dark comedies, such as *Sideways* and *Fargo*.

Welcome New Members

Mark Hagerty	Chris Palomino
Patricia Gibbs	William Rasmussen
Rose Tomey	Rahat Glass-Hussain
Nika Sajed	Chantal Olayo
Heather Alvin	Catherine Woods
Xiaobing Tan	Stephanie Kareht
Tripat Oberoi	Natalie Ochs
Kariena Dill	Viviana Davila
Karen Shibata	Charles Haitjema
Smita Shankar	Mary Drew
Becki Robins	Jane Lee
Iwona Bucior	Mizuho Iwamoto
Kimberly Matlack	Suzanne Sky
Osmat Ben-Shahar	Liz Highleyman
Amarpal Sahai	James Nickas
Mayya Shveygert	Paul Butler