

Last-Minute **TAX HELP** for Writers

YOUR
MONTHLY
GUIDE TO
GETTING
PUBLISHED

Writer's[®] DIGEST

writing smarter @ the millennium

December 1999

25 Keys

to Doing Business Digitally

Effective E-Queries

Writers' Rights Essentials

ABCs of E-Books

\$3.49 U.S./\$4.49 Canada



Lederer on
LANGUAGE

PLUS

**WRITING CLINIC:
SET YOUR SCENE RIGHT**

www.writersdigest.com

FEATURES

Wired, Wired World

We don't just cover e-books, e-rights and e-queries—find out how you can boost your bottom line and write from anywhere.

14 Electronic Books By Mitchell G. Bard

E-book readers are a hot new toy. Web sites offering downloadable titles are generating buzz. Are there opportunities in electronic publishing? Where does your work fit into the mix? We'll answer all your questions, plus give you tips on making sure an e-publisher is right for you.

18 A Guide to Writers' Rights in the New Millennium By Howard G. Zaharoff

Now that you know all about e-publishing, turn your attention to your contracts. Our legal expert clarifies the murky e-rights situation in the light of the *Tasini* appeal and offers you some tips for dealing with aggregators.

22 Your Ticket to E-Query Success By Jack Neff

Could sending SASEs be a thing of the past? If an editor accepts e-queries, maybe. This new form of communication has new guidelines, but whether your query is in an envelope or in e-mail, you'll still need to pitch your best.

36 Writing Clinic: Every Scene Needs a Place

Critique by Caroline Crane, manuscript provided by Karen and Sherylyn Dunstall

For readers to visualize the world you've created, you must know all the details. See how this fantasy story benefits from stronger scene-setting.

40 Making Money on the Web

By Sally Richards

Using the Internet to research new markets and expand your business can boost your bottom line. Take the advice of a freelancer who used the Internet to add \$30,000 to her income.

43 Brave New Words

By Richard Lederer

The last 50 years have added hundreds of new words to American English. Take a tour of this new vocabulary with our advisory board's language maven.

46 Write Without Boundaries

By Jan Jaben-Eilon

Combine today's technology with good, old-fashioned networking, and you can become a successful expatriate writer. If you don't want to leave the country, take advantage of our tips for sending your work on the grand tour.

THE WRITER'S DIGEST ADVISORY BOARD

Terry Brooks	Richard Curtis	Mary Ann O'Roark	Don Ranly
Michael J. Bugeja	Richard Lederer	Steve Outing	

■ COLUMNS

26

FICTION

Nancy Kress rethinks a story.

29

NONFICTION

David A. Fryxell opens with a quote.

31

BUSINESS OF WRITING

Jeffery D. Zbar taxes himself.

33

SCRIPTS

Cynthia Whitcomb writes starring roles.

■ DEPARTMENTS

3

EDITOR'S LETTER

6

WRITING LIFE

Tips and tricks from the Maui Writers Conference and Retreat.

50

THE MARKETS

Association publications, plus news on the *Tasini* appeal.

59

THE 1999 ARTICLE INDEX

71

CHRONICLE

Writing to make sense of it all.

Writer's Digest (ISSN 0043-9525), is published monthly by F&W Publications, Inc., 1507 Dana Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio 45207. Postmaster: Send all address changes to *Writer's Digest*, Box 2123, Harlan, Iowa 51593. Single copies: \$4 (includes postage and handling). Subscription rates: one year, \$27; two years, \$54; three years, \$81. Foreign subscriptions add \$10 per year for surface mail and \$35 per year for air mail and remit in US funds. Available on microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691, and on microfiche, microfilm and 16mm from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Letters to the editor are considered for publication, and may be condensed for space considerations. Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 0450855. Canadian return address: 2744 Edna St., Windsor, ON N8Y 1V2. Copyright 1999 by *Writer's Digest*. *Writer's Digest*, Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Vol. 79, No. 11. Periodicals Postage Paid at Cincinnati, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. **Privacy Promise: Occasionally we make portions of our customer list available to other companies so they may contact you about products and services that may be of interest to you. If you prefer we withhold your name, simply send a note with the magazine name to: List Manager, F&W Publications, 1507 Dana Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45207.**

The Writing

Life

I'm the kind of writer that people think
other people are reading.
—V.S. Naipaul

WRITING LIST

Save the Day

As you turn the last page on your 1999 calendar, consider marking time in 2000 with one of these:

- *Bartlett's Quote-A-Day 2000*, by John Bartlett, daily, (Little, Brown) \$10.95
- *The 2000 Book Lovers Calendar*, by Thomas J. Craughwell, daily, (Workman) \$9.95
- *Forgotten English: A 366-Day Calendar of Vanishing Vocabulary*, by Jeffrey Kacirk, daily, (Pomegranate) \$10.95
- *The Magnetic Poetry Magnetic Calendar*, by Dave Kapell and Sally Steenland, wall, (Workman) \$11.95
- *New York Public Library Desk Reference Facts at Your Fingertips 2000 Calendar*, daily, (Cedco) \$9.95

THE WRITING LIFE

The (e)Mail Call Blues

My nerves are shot to hell, and it's the Internet's fault.

There used to be just one time of day when writers everywhere—poets, essayists and novelists alike—suffered from racing pulses and bubbling blood. No, not when outsiders read our precious words for the first time.

It's when the mail was delivered.

Here's the routine: We slice open our heart or other vital organ and write something, and we think it's pretty good. We compose a cover letter, attach our hopes and ego, and drop it in the mailbox (with the requisite SASE, of course). It's not enough that we open ourselves to public humiliation: We pay for this honor—in the form of return postage).

Immediately we check our mailbox for a reply. It's empty, so we wait. And wait. We beat ourselves on the head, imagining hideous ends for that cute little double-spaced bundle of joy. Maybe the post office was robbed. Maybe we misaddressed it. Maybe we forgot the stamp. . . .

We temporarily quell these voices, sometimes using alcohol, sometimes coffee. But as the daily mail hour nears and we hear the familiar tread outside our door, our ears perk, we salivate and our tails wag.

Who knows what evil lurks in the wad of envelopes so cavalierly thrust into our box? Is it good news or bad? Or worst of all to the writer's tremulous ego, nothing at all?

No matter how tumultuous the daily trek to the mailbox, though, it was one of the few times this worn-around-the-edges mommy-writer got the adrenaline pumping. It brought me back to those teenage



times I'd wait for "him" to call, quivering in my Keds each time the phone rang. Now I'm married to "him," and there's just not that much excitement anymore.

All that changed with the dawn of e-queries, e-zines, and, of course, e-mail. Since editors can contact me at any hour, I log on four, five, six or more times a day—just to check in. I long for those three little words: "You've got mail!"

I hold my breath as I point and click. Each time, there's the accompanying head rush and heart palpitations. E-mail has taken years off my life. But I'm handling it okay—for now. I still manage to get away from my desk to walk the dog, spend time with the family, and, occasionally, actually write.

The problem is, my husband recently bought me one of those cool personal digital assistants that go everywhere with you—to the mall, to the gym, to bed—allowing me easy access to my schedule, address book and e-mail. Now there's just one question:

Will I ever sleep again?

—Lain Chroust Ehmann

Illustration by Jim Benton

Season's Greedings

Never mind about what's on your gift list this holiday season. Give us the wish list for a well-known person, real or fictional. Then tell us what he or she received—and why. Don't make these folks too materialistic—entries must be 75 words or less.

Contest #115 Winners

"Executive Derision" gave you a chance to belittle the trend of publishers using historical figures, from Jesus to W.C. Fields, as examples of visionary business leaders. Our top picks:

The Honorable Mentions:

Queen Victoria's
Empires Made Easy

Discover HRH Victoria's secrets of successfully transforming a small, foggy island into a sun-drenched empire despite figurehead leader limitations. Boldly written, learn groundbreaking resource-acquisition techniques through chapters such as "Conquest & Correspondence" and "One Potato, None Potato," while "We" reveals how to leverage the 'imperial we' for both fun and intimidation. The definitive on synergistic management! Includes bonus etiquette CD: Dining with Pagans

without Losing a Page.

Patti Weisgerber
Cincinnati

Henry VIII's *Guide to No-Nonsense Downsizing*

The ins and outs of guilt-free termination. Chop excess resources with minimum effect on operations, maximum impressions on colleagues and stakeholders. Lessen the head count so you can make room for better-qualified applicants who are waiting for positions to open up. Top heavy? Hundreds of tips on executing resource management. A foreword by Thomas Cromwell tells how to dissolve contracts and still know where you'll be headed.

Dianne Baxter
Nepean, Ont.

Jacques Cousteau's *Swim with Sharks without Getting the Bends* takes business science to new depths. Its calm and practical tone is better than Dramamine for those navigating treacherous seas of global competition. Morale boosters like Wet-suit Fridays and noontime Calypso lessons are suggested to distress employees under pressure, while the practical primer on Internet marketing will help even small companies float their advantages without going overboard. Rating: Four Starfish

Sharon V. Parker
Portland, Ore.

And the winner:

The Magic of Money, by Harry Houdini

In his new blockbuster, Houdini illustrates the financial wizardry he employed in building his empire and lessons learned when it vanished in a puff of smoke. Included are details on pulling gold out of ears, playing the markets from beyond the grave and escaping bad E-trade decisions with a wave of the wand. Houdini pulls a rabbit out of his hat to make this the most helpful business guide since his *Sawing People for Money*.

Helen Feder
Pittsburgh

THE RULES

Each month *Writer's Digest* presents a creative challenge for fun and prizes. Should you choose to accept our assignment, submit your entry, typed on one side of a standard-size postcard, to the address below. The winner will receive a selection of *Writer's Digest* Books worth approximately \$100, chosen by the editors of *Writer's Digest* magazine.

Honorable mentions will each receive a copy of *Writer's Yearbook '00*.

- Judging criteria are inventiveness, creativity, and—where appropriate—humor.
- One entry per person, 75 words maximum.
- Mailed entries must be typed on a standard postcard; send entry to: **Your Assignment #119** *Writer's Digest* 1507 Dana Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45207. Include your name and address.
- E-mail entries are also accepted; send to writersdig@fwpubs.com. Send your entry in the body of the message, put "Your Assignment" in the subject line and don't forget your real world address.
- We cannot acknowledge receipt of entries.
- Entries become the property of WD, and the decisions of its editors are final.
- **Deadline for contest #119 is Dec. 10; winners will be published in the April issue.**

TIP SHEET

12 Tips From Maui

A lineup of high-profile speakers and agents, plenty of networking time and hands-on help combined to make the 1999 Maui Writers Conference and Maui Writers Retreat (Aug. 28-Sept. 6) big successes.

Close to 1,100 people attended the conference, the first co-sponsored by *Writer's Digest*. When attendees weren't listening to speakers such as John Saul, Robin Cook, Tony Hillerman, Elizabeth George and James McBride; meeting with editors and agents; and writing, they were busy networking or listening to the Rock Bottom Reminders literary garage band. The 200

people who attended the retreat found their days filled with general sessions, smaller breakout groups and even one-on-one consultations in fiction, nonfiction and screenwriting.

"*Writer's Digest* is pleased to be part of the Maui Writers Conference family," says Jeff Lapin, the magazine's publisher. "Maui attracts some of the top people writing today as speakers, and provides inspiration to some of tomorrow's best writers."

"Our goal has always been to create a community of writers, to bring the writing world together, and this year's conference,

Continued on page 8

the writing life

DIRECT QUOTES

"How much do I want to reveal about myself to a bunch of anonymous readers? Fairness demands that I tell you where I'm coming from; letting you think I was a straight man who'd never seen the inside of a porn theater would color—or, rather, discolor—everything I've written here. But at what point does critical responsibility cross the line into narcissism? Am I doing this because I'm obliged to or because I want to? And anyway, how much can I tell you about myself without becoming a bore?"

—Craig Seligman, in a Salon (www.salonmag.com) review of Samuel Delany's *Times Square Red Times Square Blue* (New York University Press).

Continued from page 7

retreat and Manuscript Marketplace did just that," says John Tullius, conference director. "The conference was never more productive because of a number of factors, not the least the number of top-notch editors at the event. There were more than 25 of the real movers and shakers in the industry. Deals were being struck all over the place, and relationships cemented that could just not be done in the sterile business environment of New York. The retreat reached our goal to give bestselling authors the opportunity to teach and give back to other writers."

The 2000 conference is set for Sept. 1-4, preceded by the retreat Aug. 26-31. The Maui Writers Conference also sponsors the Manuscript Marketplace, through which writers may have a synopsis of their work reviewed by agents and editors. The most recent Manuscript Marketplace included more than 1,000 manuscripts that were read by some 90 agents and editors. More than 60% received at least one positive response from an agent or editor. For more information, contact the conference at 808/879-0061 or see www.mauiwriters.com/mwc_manuscript.html.

Here are tips shared by some of the conference speakers:

Bryce Courtenay (*The Power of One*) on writing essentials: "Bum glue. That's what you need. Writing five hours per week is not enough. You must commit to ten hours per week minimum."

James McBride (*The Color of Water*), who has worked as both a reporter and a professional musician: "Rejection is part of life whether you're a writer or a musician. You have to move on."

Richard Paul Evans (*The Christmas Box*) on what's important: "I wrote a story for two little girls. If no one else would have read it, that would have been enough."

Tony Hillerman (*The First Eagle*) on outlining: He finds the characters and the story often go in different directions than he planned. "If anyone's looking for a great [unused] first chapter, I've got a folder full of them."

Jennifer Enderlin, executive editor at St. Martin's Press, on what she looks for in a manuscript: "In fiction, I look for charac-

ters, concept, escalating concept and voice. With nonfiction, I ask myself, 'Do I need it?'"

Jeff Arch (screenwriter, *Sleepless in Seattle*) on the essentials of a successful script: Who is the hero? What does the hero want or desire? Why does the hero want it? How badly does the hero want it—what is the hero willing to do to get it and what is the hero willing to no longer do to get it? How will we know when or if the hero reaches the goal? Why should we care?

Suspense novelist **Ridley Pearson** (*Undercurrents*, *The First Victim*): Make sure you've developed the story as well as you can and done as much research as you can before setting up interviews with law enforcement officials and other experts. People love to see their contribution in print as part of the storyline. If you don't waste their time asking about things that don't end up in the book, they'll be much better ongoing resources.

Selected secrets from **Jack Canfield** (co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series): Surround yourself with nurturing people; surround yourself with people who are better than you are at what you're doing; come up with a great title; think series potential rather than a single book; think about potential markets beyond the book store; realize that for six months to a year after your book is published, 90% of your time should be spent on marketing your book and self-promotion.

David Baldacci (*Absolute Power*) and talking about writing before you're published: Only his wife and his parents knew he was writing; at the time *The Wall Street Journal* ran an article about him, he was working at a large law firm. A friend told him: "The office has shut down . . . everyone's trying to figure out who you are."

Debra Goldstein, co-owner of The Creative Culture literary agency on getting an agent's attention: She once received a box so large one person couldn't bring it in from the mailroom. Inside, she found a cast leg with the note, "I hope this gives me a leg up." It didn't.

Dave Barry (Pulitzer Prize-winning humor columnist) on writing his first novel, *Big Trouble*: "Here's the thing about plot. It turns out you do need one."