

UPCOMING MEETING

Body Worlds at the Franklin Institute — April 4

AMWA-DVC's April 4, 2006 meeting will be held at the Franklin Institute and will include a tour of the featured exhibit, Body Worlds.

Gunther von Hagens' Body Worlds is an anatomical exhibition of real human bodies. Some of our members have already toured the exhibit, gave it rave reviews *and* plan to return on April 4. For more information on the exhibit, visit <http://sln.fi.edu/bodyworlds/index.html>.

The chapter is heavily subsidizing this event in order to keep the price (which includes admission to Body Worlds) at its usual level.

Prior to touring the exhibit, we will gather at the Bioscience Room of the Franklin Institute where there will be a networking reception with butlered hors d'oeuvres, pan-Asian noodle bar, and cash bar. The reception will be catered by Frog Commissary.

Detailed driving directions and parking information can be found at <http://www.fi.edu/tfi/info/travel.html>.

Details

- Tuesday, April 4: 5:30 - 7 p.m. Networking and Reception
At 6:00 p.m. Alicia Holmes of Body Worlds will give a brief introduction to the exhibit and from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. we will tour the exhibit.
- The Franklin Institute
222 N. 20th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 448-1200
- Cost (includes admission to the exhibit)
Members: \$40, Nonmembers: \$45, Students: \$10
At the door: \$10 more, SPACE PERMITTING

Registration

- Please mail the registration form that was sent via the broadcast e-mail and your check payable to AMWA-DVC to:
Christina Valente
Program Chair, AMWA-DVC
1900 JFK Blvd, Apt 1908
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Registration is by U.S. mail only. Checks must be received no later than March 28. No cancellations. Substitutions will be allowed.

If you have questions, please send an e-mail to Christina.M.Valente.C85@alumni.upenn.edu or call (215) 567-1288.

CALENDAR

- **Tuesday, April 4, 2006** — “Body Worlds at the Franklin Institute,” Philadelphia, Pa.
- **Saturday, June 10** — “10th Annual Princeton Conference,” Harrison Conference Center & Hotel, Plainsboro, N.J.
- **May** — N.J. meeting (Topic, speaker, date, and location to be determined)
- **June** — Dinner meeting and Election of Officers (Topic, speaker, date, and location to be determined)

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New Benefits for DVC Members

By Scott Metsger

In response to the exploratory survey completed last October by the Delaware Valley Chapter (DVC), a new benefit package available only to DVC members has been created. These benefits offer writers discounts on the following products: improved searching capabilities from a leading publisher, full-text articles from the largest commercial document delivery provider in the world, and on industry-standard software tools for publishing and managing bibliographies. Details have been e-mailed to all DVC members. New members will receive complete information by mail.

MD Consult is an Elsevier company serving over 280,000 users and is licensed by over 1,700 healthcare organizations world-wide. Users may simultaneously search journals, reference text books, and a drug database. DVC members have full access to over 50 reference books and to over 70 journals and clinics. Members who did not take advantage of the initial offer to subscribe before the end of January may now subscribe to MD Consult at the beginning of every quarter this year at a significantly reduced price. All subscriptions will expire December 31, 2006. DVC will evaluate member use of this benefit at the end of this year and determine whether to continue this benefit into 2007. A 30-day preview may be obtained at no cost, at mdconsult.com.

Infotrieve has offered DVC members discounts to all full-text articles ordered at their Web site. Infotrieve also offers a free service, ArticleFinder, that offers cross-disciplinary information covering science, technology, and medicine. There are no restrictions on publication titles or dates. There are no minimum orders.

Thomson ResearchSoft has offered DVC members steep discounts on EndNote and Reference Manager through the end of this year. Researchers, writers, and students depend on these products to locate bibliographic data and create bibliographies for manuscripts, grant proposals, and other publications. Trial downloads are available at endnote.com and refman.com.

Reduced subscription prices to MD Consult and price reductions to EndNote and Reference Manager will be extended through this calendar year. These discounts are currently available only to members of the Delaware Valley Chapter. Benefit discounts that expire at the end of this year may or may not be renewed by the chapter, depending upon continued member and provider interest. The national organization will have the opportunity to evaluate offers from these providers, and the national board will ultimately vote on each one.

AMWA-DVC believes this new benefit package will have broad appeal to medical writers, and encourages members to review the details of these offers. General information about the services and products offered, can be obtained from individual providers at the following web sites:

MD Consult —
www.mdconsult.com/offers/pm_core_content.html/standard.html?

Infotrieve document delivery services —
www4.infotrieve.com/products_services/document_delivery/default.asp

Infotrieve ArticleFinder —
www4.infotrieve.com/products_services/databases/articlefinder.asp

EndNote — endnote.com

Reference Manager — refman.com

Opinions regarding this benefit package may be e-mailed to President@amwa-dvc.org.

This issue of the Delawriter features recaps from the “2006 Freelance Workshop” held on January 14.

Adapting Your Style to the Audience

From the Freelance Workshop

By Marie Zenner

One of the four presentations at the 2006 Freelance Workshop focused on a key skill every medical writer should master: writing for the reader.

Long-time AMWA member, Stephanie G. Phillips, presented “Different Hats: Adapting Your Writing Style to Your Audience.” Phillips demonstrated a wealth of knowledge garnered from having worn many hats herself during twenty-five years in medical communications, mostly in the pharmaceutical industry. After receiving her PhD. in Biology, Phillips worked as a researcher, author, and teacher, and is currently President of Project House, Inc., in Teaneck, New Jersey.

An equally experienced editor, Phillips wryly introduced herself as someone who readily sees errors in scientific or medical writing. She offered many concrete examples of how and why medical writers run into problems, and pinpointed clear methods writers can use to focus on the intended reader.

Noting the diverse backgrounds of medical writers (scientist, physician, journalist, English/communications major, or advertising professional), Phillips succinctly

See Style on 3.

Style from 2

demonstrated aspects of style specific to each of the diverse writing formats commonly used in medical writing.

Phillips noted that the trick is to find the right fit between the given format and each element of style (vocabulary, content, tone, format, the structure of sentences, paragraphs, and of the overall manuscript). Mistakes typically occur in perspective differences, choice of words, understanding of the objectives, and appreciation of the audience's knowledge level.

For example, scientific writing's tone is typically formal and distant (passive voice, rarely first person), whereas consumer style benefits from active voice and sensitivity to the reader's viewpoint and frame of reference; the audio script relies on natural dialogue telling a short-complete story.

Where scientific vocabulary requires caution ("Data indicate..."), news and consumer styles benefit from a catchy lead; and promotional style asks for attention getting language, while making promises or claims.

If you need to write in a new format, Phillips advises considering each element of style. The page layout and paragraph structure may differ from those most familiar to you. For example, bulleting helps the consumer's reading comprehension, but hinders credibility of the scientist's argument. The visual aspect of copy (solid block or easy to grasp bytes) determines not only the reader's first impression, but also their ability to digest and remember information. The art of good writing is a never ending quest.

Phillips offered guidelines for the path to successful communication in each style of writing.

Scientific Style

- Tone: passive voice or first person
- Cautious language vs. assertions
- Citations: how many and sources
- Rigid, formal format
- Use of brand names or bullets
- Audience sophistication, specialized knowledge
- Key message/news (avoid textbook chapter intros and discussions)

Lighten Up For News Style

- Invert the pyramid
- Use snappy leads, direct quotes, questions
- Keep paragraphs short
- Keep sentences short, simple, and varied
- Use active voice
- Keep it moving with active headlines
- Avoid using the following words, punctuation, and style conventions: occurs, thus, however, footnotes, semicolons, parentheses, references

Consumer Style Is Easy to Read

- Use short sentences and paragraphs
- Choose short words and avoid jargon
- Use active voice
- Match audience level
- Start with a catchy lead
- Consider viewpoint and frame of reference

Sales Training Incorporates Instructional Design Concepts

- List learning objectives
- Use more than one media (pictures, audio, text, interactive content)
- Provide reviews
- Summarize key points at the end of chapters
- Provide frequent self-tests

- Match test questions to the learning objectives
- Cite useful references

Promotional Writing Says It Fast

- Gets attention
- Targets a specific audience
- Uses heads, subheads, and bullets
- Makes promises (claims)
- Works in tandem with visual images
- Tells the reader what to do

Web Sites

- Short bytes—easy to grasp
- Consistent wording and format
- Self-contained screens
- Explanatory titles and captions
- Easy transportation to elsewhere in the site
- Highlighting of key marketing messages

Slides, Posters

- Limit introductory remarks and references
- Acknowledge and capitalize on the visuals
- Consider space constraints
- Remember the fleeting nature of the medium
- Make sure the take-home message is obvious

Scripts

- Natural dialogue
- Coordinate text with visual image
- Use easily enunciated text
- Short scenes
- Tell a story
- Consider production costs
- Review key points

Marie Zenner, PhD, Principal, Zenner BioMed, Haverford, Pa., is a grant writer interested in the art of persuasive communication.

Financial Issues for Freelance Writers

From the Freelance Workshop

By Alan Struthers, PhD

How can a freelance medical writer earn more while working less? Brian Bass, President of Bass Advertising & Marketing, Inc., shared his ideas on this and other financial issues facing freelancers at the AMWA-DVC Fourth Annual Freelance Workshop.

Since founding his company in 1989, Bass has served as a writer and advisor for medical communications companies and manufacturers. His expertise includes strategic planning, which is important for freelancers.

Earn More, Work Less

To earn more, Bass suggests, know what you're worth, charge what you're worth, and negotiate effectively. In the 2004 AMWA survey, the mean rate for full-time freelancers was \$85 per hour. As one gets more proficient, one should be able to charge a higher hourly rate, but many clients resist paying a rate that truly reflects a writer's expertise and efficiency. Bass argues that "charging by the hour punishes the proficient." Instead of charging by the hour, he advocates charging by the project, so that as you improve and get faster, your underlying rate can go up accordingly.

To make getting your fee easier, Bass says, deliver exactly what you have promised – on target, on time, and on budget. He advocates never negotiating your fee but always negotiating the deliverable. If you cut your fee when a client challenges it, you will appear unprofessional. But you should always clarify and negotiate the deliverable: how many revisions are included in your fee, what the deadlines are, and who is responsible for each step of the process so that you define your responsibilities.

Keep the Cash Flowing

Because freelancers have an uneven stream of income, managing cash flow is a critical part of the writing business. Bass suggests providing a written estimate immediately after speaking with a potential client and using the same format for presenting the final invoice. When there are no surprises, payment can be quick.

For long projects, Bass says build a payment schedule into your agreement so that you are not waiting months before receiving money. In addition, Bass notes, most clients don't intend to cheat you. Don't be afraid to make a phone call or send a payment-overdue notice if you haven't received payment in a reasonable time. Finally, don't stop looking for work because you have a current project.

Prepare for the Unexpected

To protect yourself from the vicissitudes of being a freelance, Bass recommends putting a portion of what you earn into an account that you access only in emergencies and building a reserve sufficient to live on for 3 months if necessary.

Protect yourself and your assets by getting disability income insurance, executing a will, and obtaining life insurance.

Even if you do everything right, all contacts eventually leave, get promoted, or retire. This means, Bass says, that you must constantly market yourself so that the people with the projects know who you are. Because of circumstances beyond a freelance writer's control, projects often are postponed or cancelled. For this reason, Bass rarely says no to a project.

Achieve Your Financial Goals

To track your success, set your financial goals for 1-, 3-, 5-, and 10-year periods, says Bass. He sits with his wife annually to see if they have met their personal, financial, and professional goals and to plan changes that will help them meet these goals faster.

The essential tool for such goal-tracking is a personal financial statement. Bass recommends creating this statement at least once a year, although he finds it so useful that

See Financial on 6.

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Executive Editor: D. Scott Metsger

Editor: Peggy Stansfield, Delawriter@amwa-dvc.org

Editorial Consultant: Elisha Darville

Changes of address/information:

E-mail: ronnie@amwa.org

Mail: American Medical Writers Association
40 West Gude Drive #101
Rockville, MD 20850-1192

Phone: 301-294-5303

What Employers Are Looking for in Freelance Writers: The Freelance-Employer Relationship

From the Freelance Workshop

By Kathleen Ohleth, PhD

Susan Stein, Chief Executive Officer of CONNEXION Healthcare, presented information from the employer's perspective on the freelance-employer relationship. Among the topics she discussed were key elements to success, including the freelance's talent, experience, and professionalism. Freelance writers can provide added value to an employer with their expertise in different therapeutic areas and with different types of media. A freelance's writing ability is essential to the employer. Depending on the project, you must be creative—have the ability to make a story sing, and/or technical—be able to take complex data and science and make it simple for the end user. Having the right science degree (PharmD, PhD, MD, DDS, RN, PA), knowing your target audience, and understanding the adult learning process so that medical education can advance patient care are also helpful assets. As a freelance, you can provide value by reading relevant medical articles, knowing the pharmaceutical vs. biotech vs. device industries, and being familiar with CME, PhRMA and OIG guidelines.

Susan could not stress enough professionalism as one of the most important keys to freelance success. Professionalism means treating your writing as a business—not just as a side hobby or job, and having a professional e-mail address, mobile phone, business phone free of interruptions, and updated technology. In addition, calling clients back in a timely manner when answering calls for new jobs and with day-to-day communications is essential. You must also be prepared to meet with clients of the agency and

conduct yourself appropriately with those clients.

Although Susan recommended that you treat all employers as if they are your only project, you need to be honest about your available time. You should also be flexible and always have a positive attitude. A professional freelance learns to match their style to the employer's style—does the employer prefer correspondence via e-mail, voice mail, or in person? A reliable freelance is also clear with timelines—it's important to know how long it will take you to complete the job.

Knowledge of project timing led into discussion of knowing when to refer someone else for the job. If you don't have the time for the project or the assignment is not within your area of expertise, you should refer someone else for it. However, in doing so, remember, the person you refer represents you. Finally, a professional freelance needs to understand correct fees and pricing, treat confidentiality very seriously, and always keep solid and updated references.

Building your business through networking is one of the most important keys to success for freelance writers. Ways to network include going to relevant association meetings and making contacts within an organization. Once you've worked with an agency, stay top of mind. Let them know when you have available time and if you've successfully completed a new project. Always keep your CV updated and send it out when you revise it with major changes. It's also a good idea to send e-mails with relevant and interesting

industry news, and to try to develop advocates (be a “connector” and find connectors). Finally, remember that word of mouth is your best advertisement and that everyone you come in contact with is a potential business referral.

So what can you expect from this freelance-employer relationship? Susan stressed that you should be treated with respect first and foremost, but to expect nothing else emotionally. It's also good to get involved with projects as early as possible, to receive clear direction and objectives, to have the agency's current templates and style guides, and have an expected timeline for deliverables. Importantly, obtain a clear contract, statement of work, and outline of fees and pay schedule.

Susan's last topic answered, “What happens if you crash and burn?” She recommended being open and honest with your client and always apologizing. Follow the insight of Epictetus, “It is not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.” With her final closing quote by Hegel, Susan emphasized working with passion. “Nothing great in this world has ever been accomplished without passion.”

Kathleen Ohleth, PhD, medical writer and owner of Precise Publications, LLC, specializes in the development of manuscripts, abstracts, posters, and slides, as well as publication management.



AMWA-DVC
c/o Peggy Stansfield
131 Broadway Road
Cranbury, NJ 08512

News and notes from the American Medical Writers Association— Delaware Valley Chapter

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Financial from 6

he does it quarterly. The financial statement boils your situation down to numbers, showing assets, liabilities, and particular items you monitor, such as marketing costs. By creating statements regularly, you begin to see how the adjustments you make in your lifestyle or your business affect the bottom line.

Finally, since freelancers don't have corporate pensions, Bass says to build assets that will keep working when you stop working.

A licensed financial planner, Alan Struthers has been a professional writer for over 20 years, and now heads Struthers & Associates, specializing in medical writing.

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