

The quarterly newsletter of the American Medical Writers Association—Delaware Valley Chapter

## UPCOMING MEETING

### “Ethical Dimensions of Medical Writing—Integrating Clinical Ethics and Journalism”

Emotions often come to the forefront when issues regarding right to life and medical decision making are discussed. Join us on June 16 when Mimi Mahon, PhD, FAAN, Advanced Practice Nurse, Palliative Care & Ethics Senior Fellow, University of Pennsylvania Center for Bioethics, presents “Ethical Dimensions of Medical Writing—Integrating Clinical Ethics and Journalism.” Dr. Mahon will present a framework to guide writers on how to ask pertinent questions on these matters while maintaining an objective view.

Also, the election of officers will be held at this meeting. The nominees are:

- President-Elect:  
D. Scott Metsger, PhD
- Secretary:  
Deborah Angéline Early, PhD.

Thanks to Nominating Committee members: Robert Hand, Bernice Schacter, Edie Schwager, and Maitland Young.

#### Details

- Wednesday, June 16—5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Renaissance Philadelphia Hotel Airport, 500 Stevens Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 610-521-5900
- Cost:  
Members: \$35 with advance reservations; \$40 at the door (space permitting)  
Nonmembers: \$40 with advance reservations; \$45 at the door (space permitting)  
Students: \$10 with advance reservations; \$15 at the door (space permitting)

#### Reservations

- Contact: Andrea Laborde, [alaborde@aol.com](mailto:alaborde@aol.com), 215-635-2947.

## Second Annual Freelance Workshop

This issue of *Delawriter* includes three of four articles based on the Freelance Workshop presentations on January 17, 2004:

- “The Business of Freelancing”
- “The Client-Freelance Relationship”
- “Internet Medical and Scientific Resources”

See the next issue of *Delawriter* for the final Freelance Workshop article:

- “Computer Issues for Small Business Owners.”

## CALENDAR

- **Wednesday, June 16** — “Ethical Dimensions of Medical Writing—Integrating Clinical Ethics and Journalism,” Philadelphia, Pa.
- **September** — Meeting (topic, date, and location to be determined)
- **October 21-23** — Annual Conference in St. Louis, Mo.

## News from National

- AMWA-DVC is the largest of 20 AMWA chapters, with 827 members; this is 16% of AMWA’s total membership of 5,064.
- Enhanced AMWA Web site ([www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)):
  - Improved searching and navigation: AMWA’s Web site is

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## Locating and Accessing Biomedical Information

By Lori De Milto

Attendees at AMWA-DVC's March 23 meeting learned about trends that are impacting open access to biomedical information and received insider's tips on locating and accessing biomedical information from two librarians at the University of Pennsylvania's Biomedical Library. Linda Rosenstein, associate director of Information Resources at Penn's Biomedical Libraryshare, discussed changes in the business of scientific publishing and their impact on open access. Melanie Cedrone, a librarian, reviewed recent updates and new features of PubMed. The meeting was held in St. David's, Pa.

### Open Access

Electronic publishing has created an upheaval in scientific publishing that is affecting how and where researchers publish their work and access biomedical information, according to Rosenstein. "Everyone who uses the medical literature has a stake in open access," said Rosenstein, who defined open access as free, openly accessible scholarly literature, without subscriptions, licensing, or restrictions. The demand for open access has grown for many reasons:

- Fees are out of sight. Libraries can't afford to buy the services their researchers need.
- Licenses severely limit sharing of information.
- Equity: With costs rising, access to information is shrinking.

Technology has made it possible for publishers to license content rather than sell journals. Maintenance

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now backed by database-driven technology that offers improved searching and navigation. For example, now you can search the jobs listing online (a members-only benefit) by keywords or category (e.g., pharmaceutical or public relations). You can also search the freelance directory by city and state, keywords, and categories for types of services.

- Electronic, secure forms for membership applications and renewals, annual conference registration, ordering products, etc.
- An improved bulletin board system.
- 2nd Distance Learning Course: "Punctuation for Clarity and Style" will be released at the 2004 Annual Conference (\$155 for members). The course can be taken for credit or used as a reference. The first distance learning course, "Basic Grammar," was released at the 2003 Annual Conference and has

of archives is a crucial concern. For centuries libraries maintained archives and made the archives available to anyone. If publishers maintain archives, who will be allowed to use them and at what cost? What happens to the archive if a publisher goes out of business?

Discussion and efforts are underway to develop a new model of scholarly communication at a reasonable cost. Recently, *The New York Times* and the *Lancet* published articles about the issue and Congress discussed it. Projects include:

- Biomed Central: An independent publisher of biomedical journals with more than 90 journals that are free and openly accessible.
- Bio1: A non-profit corporation that helps libraries and the private

been a success. Many people have been buying "Basic Grammar" as a reference tool. "Basic Grammar" is sold on AMWA's Web site ([www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)).

- 2004 Annual Conference in St. Louis, Mo. (as of 3/20/04):
  - 23 open sessions
  - 67 breakfast roundtables
  - 84 workshops
  - 7 tours
 Registration information will be mailed and posted on AMWA's Web site in mid-July. NEW this year: online conference registration. For more information about St. Louis, log onto [www.explorestlouis.com](http://www.explorestlouis.com).
- 2005 Annual Conference: Pittsburgh, Pa., September 29-30
- 2006 Annual Conference: Albuquerque, N.M., October 26-28
- 2007 Annual Conference: Atlanta, Ga., October 11-13.

sector transition from paper to electronic information at a reasonable cost. Bio1 has 59 titles and 60 publishers.

- Software is under development for institutions to self archive.
- PubMed Central: A neutral public archive of the life sciences with several hundred journals.

"The challenge has been heard. Many publishers are making their journals public after an embargo period," said Rosenstein. For example, JAMA recently announced that it would provide access to one article per issue and all articles six months after publication.

## The Business of Freelancing

By Lori De Milto

Freelancers need to be business people as well as writers. Brian Bass, president of Bass Advertising & Marketing, Inc., provided useful tips about the business of freelancing: fee setting, contracts, invoicing, and liability issues.

### Fee Setting

“Every freelance should charge his/her full value. Be at the top of your game and charge for it,” said Bass, who outlined three methods of fee setting:

- Method #1: Work by the Hour
- Method #2: Earn a Living Wage
- Method #3: Charge for Value.

Bass strongly discouraged working by the hour. “The better you get, the more you have to work and the less you will make.” Since there is a cap to what the market will bear as an

hourly rate, charging by the hour punishes the proficient.

Earning a living wage is a more intelligent way to set fees. Using this method, you add your annual cost of living plus estimated annual business expenses divided by your average annual billable hours (1200) to determine what to charge.

Best of all, according to Bass, is charging for value. Charging for value means charging what the traffic will bear. The concept can be a bit difficult at first, since the formula is intangible and you need to calculate in your experience. For example, you need to know how fast you work in comparison to others, how much you know about the therapeutic area, and so forth.

“Charging for value rewards the proficient,” said Bass. “The better you are at what you do, the faster you

can work and the more money you can make.” Clients like this method too because they’ve agreed to pay a certain amount for a job.

Bass offered these tips on increasing your earning potential:

- Be the best.
- Deliver what the client asked for and deliver it on time.
- Be a master negotiator. Never negotiate your fee. Always negotiate the deliverable. For example, suggest alternatives such as the client providing the references, or you only doing one revision instead of two.

### Contracts

The contract should define the deliverable, and outline the scope and

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## The Client-Freelance Relationship

By Peggy Stansfield

What makes a client-freelance relationship successful? According to Lori Alexander, MTPW, Senior Editorial Manager, American Society of Clinical Oncology and *AMWA Journal* editor, focusing on needs and expectations will produce a successful and ongoing relationship between clients and freelancers.

### Client Expectations

What do clients look for in a freelance? Clients want high quality work delivered on time. When screening freelance candidates, clients look for the following:

- Error-free resumes/cover letters
- Project-related experience
- Writing samples

- References
  - Proof of a commitment to professional development.
- What do clients expect from their first contact with a freelance?
- Availability—can the freelance meet the deadline?
  - Reliable estimates of schedules and fees
  - Ability of the freelance to provide an explanation of schedules and fees.

What are a client’s product expectations?

- Adhere to the deadline
- Follow the *client’s* style and guideline requirements
- Provide project updates.

### Freelance Expectations

In order to maintain a pool of talent to meet project goals and deadlines, Alexander also stressed the need for clients to meet the expectations of the freelancers they hire.

What do freelancers expect?

- To be paid
- Clearly defined project parameters
- Firm deadlines
- Good communication.

### Maintaining the Relationship

- Be honest about deadlines, progress, and evaluating work
- Maintain good communication
- Provide constructive feedback
  - Clients should explain any

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## Internet Medical and Scientific Resources

By Dorit Shapiro, MS

The Internet allows researchers to access a variety of resources from around the world. Bradley Long, MLS, Senior Information Services Librarian at Scott Memorial Library, Thomas Jefferson University and Chairperson of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Medical Library Association provided a list of health and medical information available on the Internet. In addition, Long presented several medical Web site evaluation tools and document delivery methods.

### Local Resources

The Delaware Valley region is home to 10 medical libraries, each of which has a Web site with resources on a variety of topics, including their collections, hours, and external links. Some of the information is free; other services are offered for a fee or only to members, alumni, or employees.

### Databases

One of the most useful medical databases available on the Internet is PubMed, the free version of Medline offered by the National Library of

Medicine (<http://www.pubmed.gov>). There are many ways to search for information in PubMed—including incomplete citation matchers when portions of a citation are missing. Tutorials for PubMed are available online.

### Full-text Information Resources

MedlinePlus (<http://www.pubmedplus.gov>) offers numerous resources, such as current health news from national and international media, medical dictionary, medical encyclopedia, and drug information. A new pilot program will add a directory of information to local health services available in different states (e.g., N.C., Mo., Pa., and Del.).

### Web Pathfinders

Many medical organizations have created pathfinders (portals), or a list of links to other health and medical Web sites. Most of these organizations have evaluated the quality and reliability of the information on the Web sites.

### Medical Web Site Evaluation Tools

Before including information from the Internet, Long suggests asking the following questions created by the Medical Library Association to determine if the Web site is reliable and trustworthy (<http://www.mlanet.org/resources/medspeak/meddiag.html>):

1. Who sponsors the Web site?  
Are their qualifications clearly identified? Credible sources include medical associations, hospitals, medical centers, and medical schools.
2. Is the Web site current?
3. Is the information factual or opinionated?
4. Is the Web site intended for the public or for medical professionals?

Thomas Jefferson University provides a brochure on evaluating

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- problems or errors to the freelance; this will lead to improved work quality.
- Clients need feedback too: freelances should explain how clients can help them meet project goals in the future.
- Show respect
  - Focus on positive feedback
  - Take time to understand each other's expectations
  - Don't make assumptions
  - Be flexible.

Both clients and freelances need to keep in mind the goal of their relationship—producing a quality product and developing an ongoing relationship.

### Lori Alexander's Tips to Freelances

1. When submitting samples, include: published version and your original manuscript. Editors should submit samples showing the original document and their editorial changes.
2. If you can't give a good estimate on the spot, tell the client you will call back with this information.
3. Review your client's guidelines and style guide **before** starting the project—not just when a question comes up.
4. Meeting a client's needs on the first project will lead to future assignments.
5. Ask clients for the information you need to fulfill project requirements.
6. Provide a feedback mechanism.

*Peggy Stansfield is a freelance writer based in Cranbury, N.J.*

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### PubMed

Cedrone demonstrated advanced searching on PubMed, including some new features:

- **Details:** Details show how PubMed did the search. Looking at the details enables you to see if PubMed is searching for what you are interested in. PubMed searches by MESH (medical subject headings) terms and text words.
- **MESH terms:** This provides terms you can use to expand or narrow your search. To narrow your search, choose sub-headings, restrict the search to major topics, or “do not explode this term” (which pulls articles that fall under the MESH term being searched).
- **Single citation matcher:** Use this when you have a bad citation and can’t find the article you need.
- **Finding full text articles:** Add “AND free full text (SB)” to your search.
- **Cubby:** Use this to store and update searches. As of April 2004, registered users will receive e-mail notification when their search is updated. Cubby makes it very easy to find out what’s new on your search topic without pulling up information you’ve already seen.
- **Preview/index:** Use this to specify search components (e.g., an author name or journal title). The index lets you pick a search field and select index items. Use this along with preview to build and combine search statements before viewing search results.
- **Limits:** Use this to narrow your search. Fields include publication type, language, subsets, and publication date.

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the timing of the project. Defining the deliverable covers writing style/format, the outline, length, and the number and extent of revisions.

The scope covers how you get to the deliverable. For example, who does the research or provides the input? How many, if any, interviews, teleconferences, or meetings are necessary? It’s important to stipulate the scope in detail so that you have the right to re-estimate a job if the client changes the scope along the way.

Consider the timing of the job from start to finish—make sure the timeline starts when the client sends you the materials, so that you don’t have to work faster to meet the deadline if the client is late getting things to you.

For smaller projects, contract for one invoice. For larger projects, contract several payments, for example, at the middle and end of the project period or after submitting the first and second deliverables.

Beware of contract nightmares in contracts that clients provide—including hidden clauses, preset rates, boiler plate descriptions, and copyright issues.

### Invoicing

“Invoicing is the most wonderful time of the week, the month, the year,” said Bass. “The only thing better than invoicing is going to the mailbox and getting the checks.”

Bass advised keeping a daily timesheet, tracking all direct expenses, getting invoices out promptly, and being serious about collecting payment for your work. Clients who pay bills late are a fact of freelance life; sometimes they simply forget to submit an invoice for payment. Follow up.

### Liability Issues

Liability is a frequent concern of freelancers. Freelancers don’t need a law degree, a lawyer on speed dial, or an expensive insurance policy, according to Bass. What you do need is common sense (including doing the job well and delivering what you promise to deliver) and a bit of luck. Multiple layers of review and multiple degrees of separation provide freelancers with some insulation from liability.

*Lori De Milto is a freelance medical writer specializing in marketing communications.*

## Delawriter

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Delaware Valley Chapter. [www.amwa-dvc.org](http://www.amwa-dvc.org)

*Executive Editor:* Kate Casano

*Editor:* Peggy Stansfield, [mcstansfield@comcast.net](mailto:mcstansfield@comcast.net), 609-860-1752

*Editorial Assistant:* Jennifer Long

**Changes of address/information:**

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

**Phone:** (301) 294-5303

**E-mail:** [cahni@amwa.org](mailto:cahni@amwa.org)



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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information resources at: [http://jeffline.tju.edu/SML/helpaids/handouts/Eval\\_Info\\_Res.pdf](http://jeffline.tju.edu/SML/helpaids/handouts/Eval_Info_Res.pdf).

#### Document Delivery

To obtain medical journal articles, Long suggested the following:

1. Copy articles at a medical library.
2. Order articles through the National Library of Medicine's Loansome Doc ([http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/loansome\\_doc.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/loansome_doc.html)).
3. Purchase reprints or pay-per-view rights.
4. Commercial document delivery companies—costly, but good for hard-to-find resources.

*Dorit Opher Shapiro, MS, is a freelance medical writer with more than 10 years of government, non-profit, and private sector research experience.*

#### AMWA-DVC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

**Kate Casano**  
[kate@casano.com](mailto:kate@casano.com)

Immediate Past President

**Terry Ann Glauser**  
[taglauser@dca.net](mailto:taglauser@dca.net)

President-Elect

**Lori De Milto**  
[loriwriter@comcast.net](mailto:loriwriter@comcast.net)

Secretary

**Charles A. Sutherland**  
[skimmer@mail2.enter.net](mailto:skimmer@mail2.enter.net)

Treasurer

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[maitland@mailbug.com](mailto:maitland@mailbug.com)

Membership Chair

**Debbie Early**  
[deborah.early@i3research.com](mailto:deborah.early@i3research.com)

Program Chair

**Andrea Laborde**  
[atlaborde@aol.com](mailto:atlaborde@aol.com)

Publicity Chair

**Robert Hand**  
[RPHand@cs.com](mailto:RPHand@cs.com)

Web site Chair

**Christine Sokoloski Yanicek**  
[Christine@tcc-communications.com](mailto:Christine@tcc-communications.com)

Princeton Conference Chair

**Brian Bass**  
[bam509@optonline.net](mailto:bam509@optonline.net)

Newsletter Chair

**Peggy Stansfield**  
[mcstansfield@comcast.net](mailto:mcstansfield@comcast.net)

Chapter Delegates:

**Kate Casano**  
**Lori De Milto**