

SPRING CONFERENCE

See the insert to this newsletter for full details on the May 31st Annual Conference in Marquette. The schedule is full of worthwhile information with an excellent keynote speaker six afternoon sessions in three tracks—Publishing, Marketing, and Writing. UPPAA will be commemorating 10 years of service to U.P. authors and publishers. UPPAA's first president, Sue Robishaw, will be joining us to help us celebrate.

And we will have cake, too!

AMAZON ON THE WARPATH!

by Walt Shiel, *UPPAA Editor*

In March, Amazon.com began requiring that print-on-demand publishers Amazon's own publisher, BookSurge—the print-on-demand company they bought a couple of years ago. Initially, Amazon contacted the only large subsidy publishers that rely on POD printing and told them to comply or their "Buy" buttons would disappear from Amazon.

To date, only two subsidies have openly refused – PublishAmerica and BookLocker. A quick Amazon search confirmed that "Buy" buttons for PublishAmerica books had disappeared. To get them back requires preparing new files to submit to BookSurge or CreateSpace (another POD printing outfit Amazon recently established).

Reactions among independent publishers ranged from "just a small blip" to "a death knell for self-publishing." The truth likely lies somewhere in the middle. Thus far, Amazon has not directly attacked the thousands of independent publishers who print via non-subsidy digital (print-on-demand) printers. But I suspect they will. It's logical first to go after the big subsidies with thousands of books on Amazon.

Many independent publishers believe Amazon has achieved its goals and will stop. I'd like to believe it, but recent history doesn't support that hope. Amazon has swung its weight around for years, much like Google with its copyright assaults (something still legally up-in-the-air).

After first denying the reports, Amazon issued a statement that included: "If the POD printing machines reside inside our own fulfillment centers, we can more quickly ship the POD book to customers—including in those cases where the POD book needs to be married together with another item."

At best, that's deceptive. Amazon's only digital printer, BookSurge, is in N. Carolina, but it has 10 distribution centers nationwide. Digital printers like Lightning Source, Inc., (LSI)

can print and drop ship a book within 24 hours of receiving an Amazon order. I doubt BookSurge can do it faster while "marrying" it to a non-book item at another distribution center.

What are our options when Amazon forces the new policy on all publishers using any kind of POD printing? You can:

1. Sell books via Amazon's Advantage program (with a 55% discount).
2. Sell books via Amazon's Marketplace as a third-party vendor (few people buy from Marketplace at any price).
3. Print your books via BookSurge or CreateSpace to guarantee Amazon access.

The major independent publishing associations (SPAN and PMA) have spoken out. SPAN went "on record as opposing Amazon.com." PMA urged Amazon to reconsider rather than turn it "into a 'members only' club to the detriment of those very publishers that have contributed to Amazon's success."

The Washington State Attorney General's office said they had notified Amazon of the large number of complaints and their "Antitrust Division is conducting an initial review."

The story found its way into trade journals *Publishers Weekly* and *American Printer* plus major newspapers (e.g., *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*).

The American Society of Journalist and Authors says they are "disgusted with Amazon's announced move," noting that Amazon had started "punishing publishers who sell their books at a discount from cover price directly on their publisher's websites." How? By using that discounted price as the Amazon retail price! BookTrade.com, UK's largest writers' website, started an Amazon boycott, suggesting Amazon "take a step back to their roots and work with writers and not against them."

The Authors Guild noted: "Once Amazon owns the supply chain, it has effective control of much of the 'long tail' of publishing—the enormous number of titles that sell in low volumes but which, in aggregate, make a lot of money for the aggregator." They added that their lawyers are reviewing the situation for possible legal action.

You can keep up with all the breaking news on this story at <http://www.writersweekly.com/amazon.php>. You can email Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos at jeff@amazon.com.

Nobody can be certain where this is all going and how it will end. In fact, nobody can guarantee that Amazon won't—or hasn't already—set its sights on offset-printed books. I, for one, intend to keep a close eye on any Amazon purchases of offset printing companies. ♦

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOOKSTORE

By Deborah K. Frontiera, UPPAA Member

A fast food chain has a marketing line, “Think outside the bun.” Some independent publishers need to “think outside the bookstore”. Why? Because bookstores are only one way to reach our audiences. Here are some less traditional venues.

Craft shows: These happen mainly in the fall and holiday marketing times and are good “people gatherers.” There is always a booth fee to pay, but most are reasonable. I usually come out “ahead” even at a slow one. Often, I’ve been the only author and, thus, a novelty. I greet people with something like, “Hi. My craft is writing. May I tell you about my books?”

I display a sign saying that sales tax is included in the price and set my price at the closest whole dollar. That keeps it simple for making change. A calculator makes it easy to calculate price and tax later. Some shows ask for a silent auction donation, usually one or two books for me, which is good advertising. The donation and the booth fee are both income tax deductions.

Church bazaars have the added bonus that people know vendors paid a booth fee that supports their church, so they spend more. Having the capability to accept credit cards is a plus, but I’ve been successful without credit card sales, too. Working my booth, I take in \$250–\$500 in sales on a weekend. After covering the booth fee and any transportation, the remainder is “clear money.” No 40% to the bookstore. However, I must keep track of my sales tax and file my report according to state policy.

Regional Festivals: These can be great markets if they draw a good crowd. I’m a regular at Chassell’s Strawberry Festival and plan to return to Pasty Fest in Calumet. One caution: if a main part of the festival is entertainment or a carnival, people will spend their money on that and not at the vendors. Food vendors are not a problem—people get hungry when shopping and stay longer when there is food available.

Grocery Stores: An authors’ group I belong to has tried having book signings in regional Kroger stores. One author in our group knew the regional Kroger manager and pitched the idea. He sets up his table just inside the store’s main entrance, greeting each person with a cheerful, “Hi, how are you today? May I tell you about my books?” Some ignored him, some said no thanks, some said yes. Of those who listened to his sales pitch, about one in four purchased a book.

I came on board several months later, a bit skeptical at first. However, as my sales pitch improved, I sold more and more books. Now I average two “Kroger weekends” a month. Typical hours are 10 am–3 pm on Saturday and 10:45 am–2:30 pm on Sundays. During my lowest month, I sold 20 books. My record high is 55. (Others in our group have done even better.) At the end of the weekend, the manager checks the com-

puter totals for sales and issues a money order for 65% of sales. That’s 5% better than a bookstore and I don’t have to wait several months to get it. I average \$330 for a weekend.

Granted, there are lots of Krogers in the major metropolitan area where I spend ten months of the year, but I plan to approach grocery store managers in the U.P. this summer. Why? More people stop at a grocery store on a weekend than at a bookstore. Many are impulse buyers. I’ve met teachers who took information for school visits to their librarians. I’ve met people who are looking for speakers for their civic group. I’ve given business cards to many people, some of whom contacted me later to buy additional copies for gifts.

Thinking outside the bookstore has greatly increased my book sales and my income. Why not give it a try? ♦

GUEST COLUMN

The Newest Barrier to Getting Published

By Rick Frishman

Over the past decade, writers have been confronted with a substantial new barrier that is now keeping countless numbers of them from getting their nonfiction books published. It is the insistence by publishers that authors have what is known in the industry as a “national platform.”

A national platform means that the author has continuing national visibility. And many publishers have extended this demand to writers who have previously been published. Now, authors need more than good book ideas; they must be perceived by publishers as being entrepreneurial, promotion minded, and willing to aggressively market their books. To make those determinations, publishers look to author’s platforms.

For business, psychology, parenting, and relationship books, a national platform is now virtually mandatory. Although exceptions do exist, publishers generally won’t buy these types of books if the authors haven’t firmly established themselves through speaking engagements, writing, media and Internet presence; a government post; a faculty position; and professional affiliations.

It’s no longer enough to be an expert, even a published expert. Today, nonfiction authors must be experts who also have national platforms. Publishers want authors to be celebrities who are well-known, admired, and have fans and followers in their fields.

“It’s a crowded marketplace,” agent John Willig, president and founder of Literary Services, Inc., points out. “So publishers are looking for writers who write books that are aligned with the author’s everyday work and practice. That alignment today is critical, plus the author must be involved in activities that can support the sales of the book’s message, like speeches, workshops, and e-mail communities.”

Willig says a great idea for a book isn't enough. Being a great writer with a great idea isn't enough either. "Today, you also have to have a platform, which is a word taken from the IT world," Willig explains. "A platform translates to publishers as energy behind the book; it tells them that the author, the author's company, the author's e-mail community, and the author's following will help move the book in an extremely crowded marketplace."

Publishers tell us that authors must have platforms because it's hard to break out books—for them to become top sellers—when the authors don't have platforms. So they sign writers who have followings that will buy their books and who have proven that they have the ability and experience to vigorously promote their books. It's a way for publishers to hedge their bets.

According to publishing guru Michael Larsen, of San Francisco's Larsen-Pomada Literary Agents and the author of *How to Write a Book Proposal* (Writer's Digest Books, 3rd edition, 2004), "A platform is vital if an author (a) wants to be published by a big house and (b) the book is the type that requires author promotion. If an author has enough promotional ammunition, they or their agent can approach big houses right away."

A number of agents and editors informed us that the need for a platform has filtered through the publishing chain. Second- and third-tier publishers and even small, specialty houses are now demanding platforms.

"Now, bright young people who write well, but don't have wide and clever ways to promote themselves, often get passed over," laments agent and book packager John Monteleone, of Mountain Lion, Inc. "They don't have the promotional end down. Publishers don't just want to stock the book in the warehouse; they want to get it sold. They will always publish someone who can get books sold ahead of someone who can write a good book."

Some smaller publishers are not as platform-focused, but an author's platform still carries weight. "We do very well with first-time authors and like to help them build track records," Acquisitions Editor Danielle Chiotti of Adams Media discloses. "At Adams, if we love a concept and what the author brings to the table, we would not turn him or her away because he or she doesn't have a platform; we would find a way to make it work. But if an author already has a strong platform, it's tremendously helpful and can sway a decision. It makes the job of the publicity and marketing people easier when I bring them an author who has a good platform."

For those in UPPAA who publish independently, the old cliché is true: *A book in your hand means your work has just begun!* ♦

Reprinted with permission from Rick Frishman's Author 101 Newsletter. Subscribe at <http://www.author101.com> and receive Rick's "Million Dollar Rolodex" as a bonus. (Ed. Note: It's free.)

By Lisa A. Shiel, UPPAA President

In the last newsletter, I advised would-be self-editors on the top pitfall into which they may trip—relying on automated spell-checkers. This time around, I'd like to focus on another error which has become all too common: dangling participles. I've read newspaper articles in which the author left so many participles dangling that the poor things seemed like lemmings diving off a cliff.

Read the following sentence carefully: *While digging for clams, lightning struck nearby and I ran inside.*

Notice anything amiss with this sentence? Maybe you've seen bolts of electricity arc down to scoop up clams. If not, then we have a problem with the above sentence. The participle—here "digging"—has lost its way. Though the lightning was not digging for clams, the sentence structure suggests that the lightning was indeed clam hunting. The sentence should read like this: *While digging for clams, I saw lightning strike nearby and ran inside.*

Now I have both snatched a participle back from the precipice and given myself proper credit for fetching those clams. If only I liked clams... ♦

BOOK REVIEW

The Voice of the Muse: Answering the Call to Write
by Mark David Gerson
(LightLines Media, 2008, ISBN: 978-0-9795475-5-3)
<http://lightlinesmedia.com>

Review by Tyler Tichelaar, UPPAA Vice-President

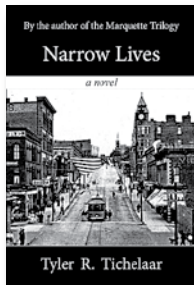
Gerson, author of the award-winning novel, *The Moon Quest*, shares his secrets as a creative writer in this phenomenal guide to overcoming writer's block and unleashing your creativity.

A creative writing instructor for over 15 years, Gerson shares the writing techniques he teaches in his popular seminars. He includes visualizations (also available on a CD) to encourage people to unlock their creative potential. He tells us not to worry about what we are writing but simply to keep writing even if all we can write is "I don't know what to write" over and over.

While some techniques are common in creative writing courses, Gerson excels at encouraging the writer to believe their book can be written. In fact, he believes that book already exists, and the writer simply needs to learn how to relax and stop the resistance. He analyzes in depth the real reason for writer's block, how to overcome it, and how to channel that resistance into energy that leads to words on paper. Read *The Voice of the Muse*, and you, too, will be ready to answer the call to write! ♦

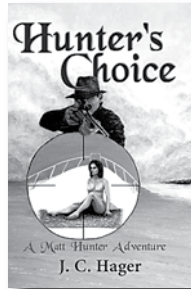
NEW MEMBER BOOKS

A spin-off of Tichelaar's *Marquette Trilogy*. Focusing on villainous banker Lysander Blackmore, *Narrow Lives* depicts one person's influence, even in death, on others and explores their self-created prisons of grief, loneliness, and fear.



Narrow Lives
A Novel
by Tyler R. Tichelaar
Publisher: Marquette Fiction
Pages: 191
Paperback—6"x9"—\$17⁹⁵
ISBN: 978-0-9791790-3-7
Available at MarquetteFiction.com

An airplane crash on a frozen U.P. lake turns a peaceful deer hunt into a rescue mission. Matt Hunter's choices quickly become life-and-death decisions as a barrage of life-changing events thrust him into a fast-paced, page-turning adventure.



Hunter's Choice
A Matt Hunter Adventure
by J. C. Hager
Publisher: Greenstone Publishing LLC
Pages: 304
Paperback—6"x9"—\$15⁹⁵
ISBN: 978-0-9797546-5-4
Available at JCHager.com

DON'T FORGET YOUR 2008 DUES!

All 2008 member dues are payable to the Treasurer, Cheryl Corey, this month (April). You must pay your dues to ensure continued delivery of this newsletter and to register for the UPPAA 10th Annual Conference. Renew online at <http://UPPAA.org> or send \$20 (individual membership) or \$30 (family membership) to Cheryl Corey, 9001 N. Pheasant Ridge, Saline, MI 49176.

HELP WANTED: NEWSLETTER EDITOR POSITION OPEN

Due to pressing business concerns, Walt Shiel has notified the Board of Directors that he must relinquish his position as Newsletter Editor no later than July. If you are interested in taking on this job, please contact President Lisa Shiel at President@UPPAA.org. If you have questions about what the job entails, contact Walt at Editor@UPPAA.org.

The Written Word is a publication of the Upper Peninsula Publishers and Authors Association | www.UPPAA.org

President, Lisa Shiel | lisa@upbigfoot.com • Vice President, Tyler Tichelaar | tyler.tich@charter.net

Membership Secretary, Cheryl Corey | cherylc@mcaughton-gunn.com • Treasurer, Paula Buermele | pbuermele@comcast.net

Recording Secretary, Brian Helminen | brian@designotype.com • Webmaster/Editor, Walt Shiel | editor@uppaa.org

Newsletter contribution may also be sent to Walt Shiel, 28151 Quarry Lake Rd, Lake Linden, MI 49945 (phone: 906-523-6101)



Upper Peninsula Publishers
and Authors Association
28151 Quarry Lake Rd
Lake Linden, MI 49945