



“
**In the chilly
heart of
winter, a
book is a
warm and
cozy friend.**

”

–Jamie E. Davis

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The Written Word

NO. 1 • VOL. XXIX • 1ST QUARTER 2026

Spring Conference 2026

We look forward to seeing you at our annual spring conference in Marquette. In addition to the free-to-members conference on Saturday, this year we will have optional activities: a few new workshops on Friday afternoon and a return of our popular networking and social mixer at The Crib Friday evening.

Registration will open on the UPPAA website in March 2026. Membership renewal is not the same as conference registration.

Friday Afternoon, May 15, 2026 (*Details on page 4.*)

Pre-Conference Workshops (NEW!)

PETER WHITE PUBLIC LIBRARY, 217 N. Front St.

- *Developing Your Poetic Voice* with Kathleen Carlton Johnson (2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.): \$45
- *Create Your Writing Mini-Trail Guide* with Julie Covert (1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.): \$45
- *Know Your Writing-Style Color and Make It Help You Write Better* with Julie Covert (4:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.): \$10

Friday Evening, May 15, 2026

Pre-Conference Networking & Social Mixer

THE CRIB, 401 N. 3rd St.

We will gather from 6:00–9:00 p.m. at The Crib, a cozy and comfortable coffeehouse with lots of seating. Light appetizers will be served, and a cash bar will be available. Cover charge is \$15 when you purchase along with your conference registration, or \$20 at the door.

An Open Mic night will be on the 2nd floor from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Open mics allow poets and storytellers—both seasoned and emerging—to share their work in a safe and welcoming space. Writers may bring something they’ve already published or something they are still working on.

Spring Conference: May 16, 2026 Sessions

Keynote Speaker – Sara Maurer



SARA MAURER's debut novel, *A Good Animal*, is forthcoming from St. Martin's Press in February 2026. Place deeply informs Sara's writing, particularly how it influences identity and choice. She attended Albion College and Eastern Michigan University and completed the Stanford Continuing Studies certificate in novel writing in 2022. In 2023, she was selected as a Suzanne M. Wilson Artist-in-Residence at the Glen Arbor Arts Center.

She lives in Michigan's Upper Peninsula with her husband, two kids, and mini Dachshund.

Morning / Post-Keynote Speakers

Nikki Mitchell:

"Authentic Voices: Crafting Neurodivergent Heroes for Middle Grade Readers"

Deborah K. Frontiera:

"Self-Publishing 101: Why You Should Self-Publish and How to Do It"

Afternoon Session #1 Speakers

Dianna Stampfer:

"Research & Records for Historical Writing"

Michael Dwyer:

"Finding the Courage to Be a Famous Writer by Building a Creative Author Platform"

Afternoon Session #2 Speakers

Sue Harrison:

"Orchestrating Your Novel's Plot"

Brandy Thomas, Marty Achatz, &

Nikki Mitchell:

"Creating and Marketing Audiobooks Panel Discussion"

Dandelion Cottage Short Story Contest Judges Needed!

You do not need to be an English professor to qualify, but you do need to be a UPPAA member. Everyone knows a good story when they read it. You can choose high school, middle school, or both. You will have two or three weeks to read the 15–20 submissions per contest. We grade similarly to Amazon. You will need to give each story one to five stars. It is likely that several stories will earn five stars. If there is a tie, you will be sent the two stories to rate with one or two stars.

If you are interested, please write to LSBuege@aol.com and indicate high school, middle school, or both.

Young Writers Storytelling Workshop: May 16, 2026

By Rehema Clarcken, Ph.D.

Planning is underway for the third annual Young Writers Storytelling Workshop, to be held alongside the UPPAA 2026 conference at the Peter White Public Library in Marquette. This special youth track runs concurrently with the main conference sessions and is fully supported by UPPAA members who generously offer their time, energy, and expertise to nurture young writers across the Upper Peninsula.

This workshop would not be possible without the continued support of Victor Volkman, Rehema Clarcken, John Hagen, Ann Dallman, and Cyndi Perkins, along with a welcomed infusion of new energy from Marty Achatz, Michael Peach, and Sue Harrison.

The 2026 workshop will include sessions on the essentials of plot and character development, as well as guidance on creating and sustaining a writing life. We are also excited to introduce several new presentation topics this year, including poetry, point of view, and publishing.

The Young Writers Storytelling Workshop is designed for students in grades six through twelve who are eager to develop their voices as authors. Each year, we host two to three dozen teenagers from across the UP, representing nearly every county, to participate in this day-long writing conference. We are deeply grateful to the parents, teachers, and librarians who support these young writers—often driving many hours to make their participation possible.

As we look ahead, we invite the UPPAA community to help ensure this youth workshop continues for years to come. Support for the Young Writers Storytelling

Workshop—through volunteering, mentoring, sharing expertise, or contributing resources—directly invests in young people who are learning to shape stories, express ideas, and imagine futures. Together, we can continue to encourage new voices and help cultivate the next generation of Upper Peninsula storytellers. If you write for young adult audiences and have novels that you can donate, we are collecting materials to award as prizes at the end of the day-long conference.

Details about the Young Writers Storytelling Workshop 2026 will be posted on storytellingworkshop.org as they become available. To learn more about the program or get involved, please write to storytelling@uppaa.org. If a young person in your life wants to be a writer, encourage them to sign up in the spring for a seat at the writing table.



Brand-new Pre-Conference Workshop Opportunities on May 15, 2026 for Writers and Poets

It has been several years since UPPAA offered a Pre-Conference Workshop on Friday, the day before our Spring Conference in Marquette. For Spring Conference 2026, UPPAA is pleased to announce three pre-conference workshops on Friday May, 15th. The workshops will be presented by Julie Covert and Kathleen Carlton Johnson in the Peter White Public Library meeting rooms on the 2nd floor.

Seats will be limited to 25 participants and offered on a first-come, first-serve basis as soon as Spring Conference registration begins in mid-March 2026. Each workshop will be an optional “add-on” item to your registration process as you complete registration in the TicketTailor app. This is the same app which confirms your Saturday attendance and the optional Friday Night Live segment of our weekend programming.

Friday May 15th, 2026 (2:00pm - 5:00pm) in the Shiras room:

Developing Your Poetic Voice, with Kathleen Carlton Johnson (cost: \$45)

Robert Lowell says of poetry, “Poetry is a profession of private truth.” Regardless of whether we live in a rural area or a city, poems are all around us. An effective poet must be skilled in: image, language (concise meaning), sound, insight, and structure.

In this workshop, you’ll also learn how to turn off the “automatic editing” that can stifle our creative output on the page, so as to access the subconscious poet within. Other topics will include: the importance of reading a broad scope of literature beyond poetry to grow our literary boundaries, how to create a safe space of solitude for composition, being ready to strike whenever the creative impulse hits, finding a poet’s circle to read with, and resources to help you get your work published.



About Kathleen Carlton Johnson

Kathleen Carlton Johnson has been published in several small press publications: *Diner*, *Rattle*, *William and Mary Review*, *The Third Wednesday*, *U.P. Reader*, and *MacGuffin*, to mention a few. She has just published her 17th chapbook, *Roots in Water*. Kathleen is well aware of the joys and pitfalls of self-publishing. We are pleased to have her join us once again as a presenter.

About Julie Covert

Julie Covert is a book coach and editor with over 10 years experience working with writers of all levels. She helps writers who feel overwhelmed and unsure find a sure footing in the writing world. Some have called her a book midwife, mentor, task-master, and cheerleader; others have called her fun to work with. She enjoys helping writers with book coaching, editing, and indexing.



Friday May 15th, 2026 (1:00pm - 4:00pm) in the Heritage room:

Create Your Writing Mini-Trail Guide, with Julie Covert (cost: \$45)

A 3-hour workshop to help you map a trail plan for your book journey.

Would you climb a mountain without camping gear? Without food and water? Without a map?

Would you consider starting a business and applying for a business loan without creating a business plan?

No? I don't blame you; it's scary, silly, dangerous, or a financial mess.

So, give your book the trail plan it deserves.

Your book will be more successful if you create a trail plan for your writing journey.

In this workshop, we'll help you hone your message so you write exactly to where you want to go without getting lost in the forest of words.

- This workshop is excellent for those considering writing a memoir, and can be applied to fiction and non-fiction. You'll walk away with actionable steps to help you make sure your pen is going to lead you in the write direction (pun intended) on your writing journey. So, let's help you create a mini-trail guide for your book.
- This is a "worksheet workshop"; no PowerPoints will be used! Each participant will receive a printed blank mini-planner, and it can be emailed to those who have pre-registered, so they can bring their laptop and work on it during the workshop (recommended.)
- I'll begin with a brief overview of the objectives of the planner, then discuss each aspect of the planner with time for folks to work on each step as we go through the planner.
- Throughout, I'll take Q&A as we go to give participants one-on-one guidance and feedback.
- Discussion through Q&A will be the emphasis, rather than lecture, so participants can understand how to create a great plan for their book.
- At the end of the workshop, participants will have honed their ideas for their books and have actionable steps of what to do next, including how to finish their mini-planner if they didn't during the workshop.
- Each participant will work on their planner solo, rather than in a small group.

Friday May 15th, 2026 (4:15pm - 5:15pm) in the Heritage room:

Know Your Writing-Style Color and Make It Help You Write Better, with Julie Covert (cost: \$10)

A 1-hour interactive presentation about identifying your writing and communication style so you can make your time at the keyboard more productive.

- Do you get frustrated when can't write as easily as you'd like?
- Does something hold you back, that you can't put your finger on?
- Come learn what your Writing-Style Color is.
- When you can identify your style then you can learn how to make it work to your advantage, rather than hold you back.

A Practical Comparison of Book Giveaway Services

By Victor R. Volkman

In this article, we examine four solid options authors can use to run giveaways, build buzz, or collect readers. Each service differs in cost, reach, logistics, and how review driven it is. After the quick take, you'll see detailed notes on each, plus a compact comparison table. I have personally tried ReaderViews, Goodreads, and LibraryThing.

Best Overall for Low-Friction, Indie-Friendly Exposure

Reader Views book giveaway program

What it is: A monthly, curated giveaway that spotlights indie titles and is promoted on Reader Views' channels. Winners are selected monthly, and authors ship physical copies to the winners in the U.S. or Canada. Slots are limited and handled first come, first served.

Why it's a strong default pick:

- **Very simple to set up** for authors who want visibility without paying steep fees or navigating complex rules. Authors supply copies; Reader Views handles promotion and winner contact.
- **Targeted book audience** rather than generic contest entrants, since the platform is centered on indie books and readers.
- **Clear logistics and limits.** Only one title per author per month, and physical book only; the exact rules are clearly listed, which reduces guesswork.

Tradeoffs:

- **Physical only giveaway.** No ebooks through this program, authors must be prepared to ship to US or Canada

(although Canadian requests are very rare in my experience).

- **Limited monthly slots.** If a month fills up, you may need to wait for the next opening, which can matter around specific launch timing.
- **Can only give away up to two copies of a book.** This may discourage readers who only want to enter contests which are more of a "sure thing" to win.

Good pick when you want a quick, low cost pilot to reach engaged readers and potentially seed reviews or word of mouth without committing to pricey mega platform giveaways.

Best Free, Review-Focused Platform with a Committed Reader Community

LibraryThing Early Reviewers program

What it is: A long running program where authors or publishers offer copies to readers in exchange for honest reviews. Winners are chosen by LibraryThing, and reviews must be posted within a set window; accepted formats include paper, ebooks, or audiobooks under defined rules.

Why it's useful:

- **Structured push for reviews.** Winners must post reviews within 90 days of the end of a giveaway, adding discipline and clearer expectations for follow through than many ad hoc contests.
- **Flexible formats.** Works with physical copies or digital formats, with formal guidance on distributing download links or shipping.

- **Focused reviewer selection.** LibraryThing's process uses factors like reviewer activity to choose winners, aimed at encouraging actual reviews or discussion.

Real world experiences:

- Some authors reported mixed outcomes via third party posts. LibraryThing reviewers are more likely to post "low star" or negative reviews than GoodReads or Reader Views.
- Even a structured program like LibraryThing offers still depends on reader engagement.

Tradeoffs:

- **Review quality and consistency can vary.** As shown in independent reports, not every winner will post valuable or timely feedback.
- **Program rules and limits.** There are caps on copies and authors must ship within eight weeks of closing. Books can't be more than six months old!
- Best pick if your primary goal is to generate genuine, public reviews with an established book focused community, accepting that outcomes vary by batch and audience.

Best Large Audience Give-away with Premium Visibility Options

Goodreads giveaway packages

\$119 Standard (lesser visibility) or \$599 Premium•Goodreads (higher visibility, email sent to those who didn't win)

What it is: Official Goodreads giveaway packages—Standard or Premium—offered to authors for broad promotion on the platform. Premium includes added

discoverability features like featured listings and personalized emails to followers or those who added the book to Want-to-Read lists; Goodreads also reminds winners to review. Pricing shown is \$119 for Standard and \$599 for Premium (current at the linked page).

Why it's useful:

- **Huge built in audience.** Goodreads' large reader base can deliver visibility well beyond smaller sites, especially if boosted by Premium features.
- **Mechanics that help discovery.** Entry actions add the book to Want to Read lists, and notifications reach followers; Premium amplifies this with featured placement and personalized emails to non winners.
- **Review reminders.** Goodreads sends reminders to winners to review, which can help produce post giveaway ratings or feedback.

Real world experiences:

- It's not a guaranteed home-run. The cost effectiveness is much less than LibraryThing. Some authors complain about a limited benefit without a pre-existing follower base in play.
- Don't expect every winner to write a review, some people request 10 times more books than they can read just so they get something to read.

Tradeoffs:

- **Higher cost than many alternatives.** Premium is a significant spend; benefit depends on current reach, genre fit, and timing.
- **High competition.** With many giveaways available, visibility can be diluted unless you pay for premium placement or already maintain a strong presence.

Choose Goodreads when a broad reach is a key priority and the budget supports a single, high visibility push around a launch or major promotion.

Best List-Building and Author Network Promotion Platform

BookSweeps promotions and tools

What it is: A platform focused on audience growth—email list building, follower growth, and promotions for authors. It offers genre specific or curated promos, author profile pages, and support for driving readers to freebies or giveaways. The platform highlights strong open or conversion experiences from participating authors.

Why it's useful:

- **Author first marketing focus.** Designed to produce lasting list growth and engagement, not just a one-off spike; useful when future releases rely on a responsive newsletter or follower base.
- **Proven author testimonials.** BookSweeps showcases author claims of high open and buy-through rates on its pages, indicating practical results from active users.
- **Multiple promo options and visibility tools.** Includes list building promos, email blasts, follower promos, and directory placements that help readers find authors' freebies or lead magnets.

Tradeoffs:

- **Pricing details vary or are not always upfront.** Exact cost can depend on the promo; authors should check current plan pricing and availability.

- **Audience fit and follow up matter.** Results depend on genre alignment, how well you follow up with new subscribers, and the quality of your freebies or offers.

Pick BookSweeps when your goal is a measurable, long term audience you can work with again and again—especially if you're willing to test different promo formats for optimal return on investment..

How to choose among these:

1. **If budget is tiny or you want a simple pilot:** start with Reader Views to test traction, then add LibraryThing for structured review gathering.
2. **If reviews are the top priority:** LibraryThing provides clear rules for posting within 90 days; Goodreads can add reach but costs more and results vary by tier.
3. **If audience size is king and budget allows:** Goodreads' broad base is hard to match, especially in Premium; use it when you want a single, high visibility push.
4. **If building a long term list or recurring promotions:** BookSweeps is built for repeatable list growth and author control, suitable when you expect multiple campaigns or future releases.
5. **If you have a big inventory of a book more than 12 months old:** Goodreads is the best way to dispose of a big surplus of bookstore returns if you have no other way to move them. For example, you've already tried selling them as "used" on Amazon or other marketplaces

Each service has real value. The best pick depends on your budget, whether reviews or list growth matter more, and how much

existing audience or promotion effort you can bring to the table.

Quick Comparison Table

Salient features that matter most for authors

Criteria	Reader Views	LibraryThing ER	Goodreads	BookSweeps
Cost to author	Free or low; shipping cost for physical books	Free program	\$ 119 Standard; \$599 Premium	Varies by promo; see listing
Format supported	Physical books only	Paper, ebook, audiobook	Print or ebook	Giveaways, list building promos; author controls
Reach / audience	Indie book community in U.S./Canada	Engaged, review oriented community	Very large reader base	Author networked readers; list growth focus
Review or follow up structure	Encouraged, not required	Required within 90 days	Reminder emails to winners	Emphasis on list growth, not strictly reviews
Setup complexity	Very simple	Moderate with rules/deadlines	Just pick a package	Moderate; choose promos and follow up

How to Put on a Book Release/Reading Event

By Thomas L Pelissero

When I had my book release for *Bring One Home*, I held it at the Bessemer City Hall Auditorium, which is the same building as the Bessemer Library. The book release was also a fundraiser for the Bessemer Public Library. We raised \$5,500 to support literacy. It was standing room only, and I received a standing ovation at the end of my book release presentation.

I'm self published and yet have sold 1,100 books in 60 days. When the story hits home and supports libraries in their effort to promote literacy, I think you have a powerful combination.

The fear is "What if I threw a party and no one came?" Then this happens . . .

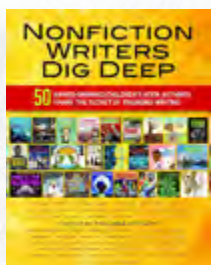


(A Few) Author-Tested Resources for Writing Nonfiction Children's Books

By Carrie A. Pearson

Books On Craft and Classifying Nonfiction

5 Kinds of Nonfiction: Enriching Reading and Writing Instruction with Children's Books (a practical framework for classifying children's nonfiction into five categories by Melissa Stewart, Marlene Correia)



Nonfiction Writers Dig Deep: 50 Award-Winning Children's Book Authors Share the Secret of Engaging Writing (anthology edited by science author Melissa Stewart and published by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE))

Structure, Standards, & Classroom Alignment

Next Generation State Standards (NGSS) and Common Core State Standards (CCSS): useful for STEM and biography when positioning books for schools and libraries

Professional Organizations & Communities

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI): conferences, critique groups, industry intel, and nonfiction-specific learning sessions.

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): insight into how nonfiction is used in classrooms.

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA): awards, white papers, book lists

American Library Association: awards, trends, and librarian perspectives that shape acquisition decisions.

Mentor Texts

Go to the library nearest you, find nonfiction published in the last five years in your age category, and digest. Backmatter is expected today. Look at how authors handle word counts, timelines, diagrams, glossaries, authors' notes, and source notes for your manuscript.



Carrie Pearson is an award-winning author and presenter from Marquette, Michigan. She lives with her husband on the sandy shore of Lake Superior and blows daily kisses to her three daughters, who live on their own now, either below the Bridge (no, they aren't trolls; it's the mighty Mackinac Bridge) or 2.24 miles away.

As a child, Carrie read voraciously. As an early childhood educator, Carrie experienced how books delighted, healed, and enlightened young people. As a mother, she used story to strengthen family bonds. Today, Carrie writes books that expand children's worlds and bring them closer to understanding it.

Writing Events

Book Reading & Signing with Julie Buchholtz

Author Julie Buchholtz will read from her second book, *Mama's Song*, and share the story behind its creation. Through gentle, lyrical storytelling, Mama sings to her child of mino-bimaadiziwin—living in harmony with nature—and of following the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers. As mother and child journey through life together, they walk in the footsteps of the mothers and grandmothers who came before them, honoring tradition, love, and connection across generations.

Cost: FREE

Date: February 28th, 1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m.

Location: Hessel School House

3206 Cedar St, Hessel, MI 49745

To Register: Call 906-484-1333 or register online at www.hesselschoolhouse.org/calendar

Writing North - U.P. Winter Book Fest



In the heart of winter, when the Upper Peninsula is at its quietest and most beautiful, Writing North Winter Book Fest—the first literary festival of its kind in Manistique, just off of highway 2 in the heart of the U.P.—will gather together readers and authors for a celebration of stories and storytellers shaped by northern places, with authors who hail from the northern Great Lakes region and/or craft their work around landscapes like ours. The event will lean into the season's beauty and coziness by offering warm spaces, close conversations, and fresh inspiration in an intimate, welcoming festival that's rooted in place.

Cost: \$20–\$170 (there will also be free community events) - early bird prices until January 30th

Date: February 28th–March 1st

Location: The Mill, 216 S Cedar St, Manistique, MI

To Register: Tickets, itinerary, and details at writingnorth.com

Bloodstoppers & Bearwalkers

FOLK TRADITIONS OF
MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA



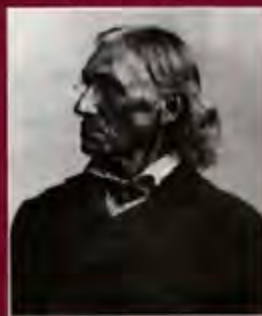
RICHARD DORSON

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JAMES H. LEARY



OJIBWA NARRATIVES

Of Charles and Charlotte Kawbawgam
and Jacques LePique, 1895-1897



Recorded with Notes by Homer H. Kidder
Edited by Arthur F. Bourgeois

The Diary of an Isle Royale School Teacher



Dorothy Simonson

A memoir of a winter on an isolated island
in Lake Superior during the Great Depression

U.P. HISTORY BOOK CLUB

MARQUETTE REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER

IN PERSON & ONLINE

YOOPER FOLKLORE

FEB. 18 | 6:30 PM

Bloodstoppers
& Bearwalkers:
Folk Traditions
of the
Upper Peninsula

Richard Dorson

INDIGENOUS ORAL HISTORIES OF THE UP

APRIL 15 | 6:30 PM

Schoolcraft's Indian Legends
edited by Mentor L. Williams
and/or

Ojibwa Narratives of Charles and Charlotte
Kawbawgam and Jacques Lepique
ed. Homer H. Kidder and Arthur Bourgeois

MEMOIR OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

JUNE 17 | 6:30 PM

Diary of an
Isle Royale
School Teacher

Dorothy Simonson

Books are available in the museum gift shop - 10% off for members



Marquette Regional
History Center

www.marquettehistory.org/UPHBC

906-226-3571 | 145 W. Spring St. Marquette, MI 49855

Book Reading & Signing: *A Good Animal* with Sara Maurer

Debut novelist Sara Maurer will read and sign copies of her acclaimed first novel, *A Good Animal*. Set against the emotional landscape of the rural Midwest, the novel explores the complicated bonds between people, place, and the choices that define us—tender, unflinching, and deeply human.

Cost: FREE

Date: March 28th, 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

Location: Hessel School House

3206 Cedar St, Hessel, MI 49745

To Register: Call 906-484-1333 or register online at www.hesselschoolhouse.org/calendar

Walloon Lake Writer's Retreat

Registration is open now for the 5th Annual Walloon Lake Writer's Retreat at Hotel Walloon featuring Karen Dionne – the #1 internationally bestselling thriller author of *The Marsh King's Daughter* and *The Wicked Sister* (both set in Michigan's Upper Peninsula).

During this immersive weekend, attendees will be introduced to the works of Ernest Hemingway and how the regional landscape around Walloon Lake inspired his storytelling. There will also be individual and group writing exercises; one-on-one guidance from published authors; group readings and critiques; insider tips on working with agents, publishers, and publicists; suggestions on marketing and promoting published works; and supportive camaraderie from fellow writers.

Cost: The weekend packages start at \$1200 per person
(based on room type/occupancy/availability)

Date: Thursday evening, April 16th–Sunday morning, April 19th

Location: Hotel Walloon

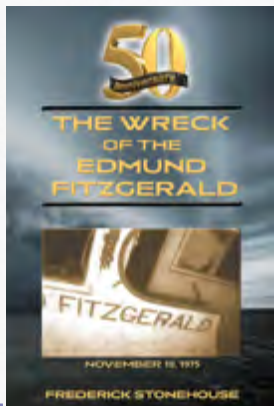
4127 M-75, Walloon Lake, MI 49796

To Register: Reservations can be made by calling Hotel Walloon at (231) 535-5000



This Year's U.P. Notable Classics

The U.P. Notable Books Committee continues its initiative called *U.P. Notable Classics* which highlights significant U.P.-themed literature that has remained essential for at least 10 years. The committee hopes that these books can bring enjoyment to a new generation of readers.



The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald - 50th Anniv. Ed.
by Frederick Stonehouse

Living On Sisu: The 1913 Union Copper Strike Tragedy
by Deborah K. Frontiera



7th Annual U.P. Notable Books List

The Upper Peninsula Publishers & Authors Association (UPPAA) announces the 7th Annual U.P. Notable Books List. The UPPAA first initiated the effort in 2019 as a response to the lack of representation of U.P. writers in other Michigan state literary circles. They developed the program because traditionally, recognition of Michigan books had been dominated by the university presses downstate. As a non-profit organization that has represented U.P. authors for more than 25 years, UPPAA was in a unique position to highlight locally themed literature. An index of all past Lists can be found on the UPNotable.com website.

Evelyn Gathu, Director of the Crystal Falls District Community Library, will continue the library's alliance with UPPAA to co-sponsor the U.P. Notable Book Club. The club is available to any interested reader and has featured monthly Zoom meetups with national bestselling U.P. Notable authors such as **Karen Dionne** (*The Wicked Sister*), **Sue Harrison** (*The Midwife's Touch*), and **Steve Lehto** (*Death's Door*). Members borrow the books from their local libraries or purchase them at local stores prior to discussions. Presentations often include author readings, a conversation on the making of the book, and a live Q&A with the audience. The next meeting will convene on January 22, 2026, and the full year-long calendar will be announced shortly.

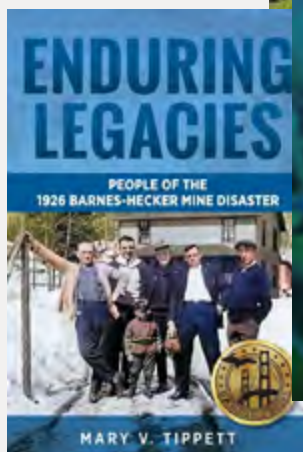
Ms. Gathu went on to add: "What I found most surprising this year was the almost 50 wonderful submissions to U.P. Notable. We had more books to choose from than ever before, and the competition was steep! This year's list reflects a diverse grouping of ever-popular U.P. authors, such as Tyler Tichelaar and Sue Harrison, along with some refreshing new writers, including Helen Raica-Klotz and Ellen Lord.

You will also find Jon C. Stott and Mikel B. Classen, who really do a nice job representing the nostalgic U.P. in their works. And what a treat it is to have Deborah Fronteria and Frederick Stonehouse both awarded as recipients of U.P. Notable Classic distinctions. Debbie wrote *Living on Sisu*, a wonderful young adult tale told in journal entries about the 1913 Copper Union Strike and its heartbreaking Christmas Eve Italian Hall disaster. Frederick wrote *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, and he has dedicated much of his life to learning about and sharing his research with the world about this well-known U.P. historical tragedy. This year's winning authors can be found in Marquette as well as in smaller towns from Pickford to Calumet. I am proud to say that this year's list truly has something for every reader."

To build this seventh annual list, UPPAA created a unique panel of jurists of Upper Michigan booksellers, book reviewers, librarians, academics, authors, and publishers to winnow down the list to just the ten best books. You can find reviews of many of these books on the UP Book Review. The award committee emphasizes that the list is unranked, each title deserves equal merit as a U.P. Notable Book. These ten books have been deemed essential reading for every lover of U.P. literature, and we highly recommend you ask your local librarian or booksellers for them today!



- » *Straw Horse: A Kat Wilde U.P. Mystery* by Terri Martin
- » *Superior Stories* by Helen Raica-Klotz
- » *The Mysteries of Marquette* by Tyler R. Tichelaar
- » *Enduring Legacies: People of the 1926 Barnes-Hecker Mine Disaster* by Mary V. Tippet
- » *Wild Blueberry Summer: More Upper Michigan Moments and Memories* by Jon C. Stott
- » *Piracy on the Great Lakes: True Tales of Freshwater Pirates* by Mikel B. Classen
- » *The Caving Grounds: Poems* by Kathleen Heideman
- » *Vigil: Poems* by Ellen Lord
- » *Garden Sleeping, Garden Growing: In and Around All Year Long* by Diana Magnuson
- » *Rescuing Crash, the Good Dog* by Sue Harrison



Authors Who Will be Featured in the 2026 U.P. Reader

By Deborah K. Frontiera

It was a record year for submissions to the *U.P. Reader* and the jury members had to be tough, along with your editor, to keep the volume at the number of words we can afford to put out. Blind judging made it better, too, because jury members didn't have to think about who wrote the piece. Judging was very fair and produced some surprises. Please, don't take it personally if your submission didn't make it. Just try again next year.

FICTION

Sharon Dilworth, "Marquette"
Adam Dompierre: "Cohasset" and
"Desperation Row"
Lawrence Ely: "A Grandfather's Path"
J.L. Hagen: "Cemetery Blues"
Richard Hill: "Fields of Gold"
A.L. Padden: "An Unnatural Dye"
Lisa Reitz: "Wellness Check"
Tyler Tichelaar: "Mackinac Honeymoon"

NONFICTION

Nancy Besonen: "The Merriest Marathon Ever"
Linda Bimel: "What Really Happened at Knight's Farm" and
"That House"
Bob Calverley: "Hiroshima"
Thomas Ford Conlin: "Traveling the Historic Inland Waterway"
Deborah K Frontiera: "Blueberry Ecology"
Richard Hill: "Toledo Bus Station"
Robert (Buzz) Johnson: "Sauna Night Memories"
R.H. Miller: "It Begins with a River"
Leigh Mills: "A Journey in Plaid"
Bill Sproule: "Hod Stewart and the Palestra" and

"How Two Calumet Hockey Players Got the Green Bay Packers Kicked Out of the First Professional Football League"

POETRY

John Adamcik: "Main Street Looking West"
Laura Antoneli: "Loss,"
"Drifting," and
"The Puzzle"
Elizabeth Fust: "Partnering"
Mack Hassler: Trio of Sonnets, "On Our Land, On Ancestral War, On Tossing a Bone"
Kathleen Carlton Johnson: "A Walmart Visit,"
"A Room Made to Hold a Hospital Bed," and
"Oscar"
Eleni Kristisine (Robertson): "When I Die" and
"Anticipation"
Tamara Lauder: "Does Our Life Come Full Circle?"
Ellen Lord: "Span of My Heart" and
"Poetry"
Raymond Luczak: "Frosty Was All White with Pointed Ears and a Shrubby Tail"
Gretchen Preston: "Lone Wolf"
Carolyn Olson: "Library of the Lost"
t. kilgore splake: "Return to the Cliff"
Ninie Gaspariani Syarikin: "The Black Squirrel" and
"Three Muslim Girls Playing Sandcastles on Lake Michigan"
Brandy Thomas: "What We Inherit" and
"Ephemera"
Edd Tury: "Tangled up in Deer"

Inspiration to Write: Creating Time, Space, and Community for the Writing Life

By Rehema Clarken, Ph.D.

Creating time and space to write—especially with friends—has been essential to meeting my writing goals in 2025.

After the publication of my first young adult fantasy novel, *Pyrrha's Journey* (June 2024), I found myself mired in a writer's block I couldn't escape. I needed something that would help me write again—not eventually, but immediately. So in October of 2024, I scheduled a Friday morning writing appointment and invited a few writing friends to join me.

Long ago, I learned an important truth about myself: sometimes it is easier to do things for others than it is to do them for myself. In college, study groups helped me memorize archaic lexicon faster than reading the textbook alone. As a young teacher, grading parties worked better than overnight solo sessions. Again and again, I discovered that work parties are more motivating than working in isolation.

So I decided to design a writing corner that would actually work for me.

I asked myself what I wanted from a writing group—and what other writing groups lacked. The answer surprised me: time to meditate at the beginning. Prayerful meditation has long been part of my personal writing rituals, grounding me before I begin. It helps me disengage from my ego and quiet the inner critic long enough to let the good stuff rise to the surface. Beginning a writing session with a brief musical meditation gets me out of my head and into the work.

That insight became the foundation of *Inspiration to Write*.

For the past year, I've been writing every Friday morning with a small but dedicated group of writers. Typically, five to ten people join each week from across North America—San Francisco to Toronto, Alaska to Florida.

Occasionally, a friend in Europe pops in to write alongside us as well.

The method is simple. We log on to Zoom around 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time. The first five minutes feature a musical meditation from my *Rehema.the.Writer: Inspiration to Write* YouTube playlist. Then we write—quietly, together—for 25 minutes. Socializing happens organically in the five minutes beforehand, when early birds arrive and check in with one another.

That's it. No pressure. No critique. Just presence, intention, and shared time.

The results have been powerful. What began as a personal workaround has become a sustaining creative practice—and a reminder that writing doesn't have to be lonely to be serious.

If this kind of writing group sounds right for you, I warmly invite you to join our Friday morning sessions. You can reach out to me directly by email for details. You're also welcome to use the *Inspiration to Write* musical meditation selections on YouTube to create your own writing group in your community at a time that works for you.

Meeting our writing goals takes creativity. Designing systems that truly support us—not just in theory, but in practice—is one of the most important ways we sustain our writing lives long-term.



Rehema Clarken is the owner of *StorySpringWriting.com* (formerly called *Keweenaw Learning Center*)

A New Call for Submissions for the Yooper Poetry Series

If you're a Yooper poet or a poet with a strong connection to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, this CFS may be just for you.

What is the Yooper Poetry Series?

Inspired by the overwhelmingly positive reaction to his recent anthology *Yooper Poetry*, Raymond Luczak thought it'd be even better if he could help publish full-length single-author collections by poets with a strong U.P. connection.



When should you submit your manuscript?

Anytime in the month of May 2026 at this email address ONLY: yooperpoetry@gmail.com. Raymond will take a month or two to read everyone's submissions before he narrows down to two titles for publication (one in the fall of 2026 and the other in the spring of 2027).

Just what is Raymond looking for?

He is wide open in terms of subject, style, and structure, but he does not particularly like religious or sing-song poems. (Yes, spiritual poems and lyrical poetry are great.) Ableism, homophobia, racism, antisemitism, transphobia, and misogyny are total turn-offs. A manuscript that is somehow unified in theme and/or subject matter from beginning to end always stands a better chance of getting accepted. It may help to read such amazing YPS titles published so far: Martin Achatz's *A Bigfoot Bestiary*, Kathleen M. Heideman's *The Caving Grounds*, and Suzanne Sunshower's *Still Wild*. They couldn't be more different in approach and subject matter, but they're all Yooper in spirit! (And yes, Modern History Press will always appreciate your business if you buy directly from them.)

What will happen if your book gets accepted?

You will be offered a standard publishing contract through MHP. The more quickly you work with Raymond in making your book stronger, the sooner your publication date can be determined. At that point, you will work directly with the publisher to get the word out about your new book.

What if you have more questions about YPS?

You can email Raymond directly at yooperpoetry@gmail.com. Yes, you may share this email address with others you think who might be interested.

Member News

The following books are New Releases since our last installment of “The Written Word.” If you’d like to see your newly released book (within the last 12 months and hasn’t been featured in a previous newsletter) added to Member News, please send a Sell Sheet or Press Release to editor@uppaa.org

Merciless Savages: A How-to Guide to Help You Write and Talk Respectfully by **Dr. Phil Bellfy**:

Synopsis: This guide by Dr. Phil Bellfy provides an accessible, often humorous yet sharply critical reference for understanding how to speak and write respectfully about Indigenous Peoples of North America. The title reclaims and critiques the phrase “merciless savages” from the U.S. Declaration of Independence, exposing centuries of derogatory language and stereotypes.

The book offers a comprehensive glossary of commonly misused, outdated, or offensive terms—such as “Indian,” “Eskimo,” “Chief,” “Squaw,” and “Papoose”—explaining their origins, harmful implications, and preferred alternatives. It also addresses modern missteps like the use of acronyms like BIPOC, military equipment named after tribes, and idioms such as “off the reservation” or “circle the wagons.”

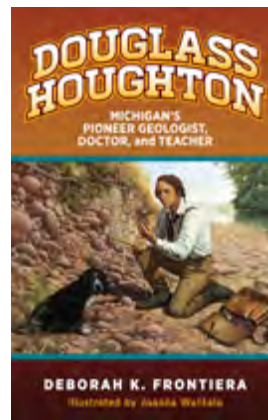
Thomas Ford Conlan is now writing a weekly column for the *Charlevoix County News* entitled “Reader’s Corner.” He is always looking for new hard copy material to read and review. “My taste goes toward Literary Fiction, Poetry, and Creative Nonfiction. No children’s books, no monsters, living dead, or end-of-civilization tales.” Email for information:

tfconlan@gmail.com



Julie Covert hosted “Ask a Book Coach” Q&A on January 15th. She is also currently offering a 15% discount to UPPAA members on her book coach and editing services (offer available through February 2026). She can be reached at:

words@hjwords.com



Douglass Houghton: Michigan's Pioneer Geologist, Doctor, and Teacher by **Deborah K. Frontiera**:

Synopsis: Meet a man who was a medical doctor, a geologist, and a surveyor who also knew botany, zoology, and chemistry. Douglass Houghton was all of these, even though he stood barely five feet, four inches tall. Follow his trail as Michigan’s first state geologist, as he explores the unknown wilderness of both peninsulas, in the 1830s and 1840s to discover the potential resources of a brand new state.

Mack Hassler had two critical essays about science fiction published in a collection edited by Gary Westfahl, *Reimagining Science Fiction: Essays on 21st Century Ideas and Authors* (McFarland, 2025):

“Generations of Genre Ideas” pp. 91–96

“Dark Fear and Predators: New Politics and John Sanford” pp 269–275

Stacey Lantagne, a new UPPAA member, is the author of *The Coping Crew* children's book series, which focuses on fears, phobias, and anxiety. Each story features an animal main character who struggles with a specific challenge and learns to work through it using various coping skills. "As someone who has personally struggled with anxiety my entire life, I wanted to create meaningful stories that connect with young readers and remind them that they are never alone."



She currently has 13 books published, including *A Giraffe Afraid of Heights*, *An Owl Afraid to Make Mistakes*, and *A Bee Afraid of Needles*, and she owns an art studio called Crafters on Central. Readers are welcome to follow her author journey on Facebook at Stacey Lantagne, Author, or on TikTok through Crafters on Central.

Vigil: Poems by **Ellen Lord**:

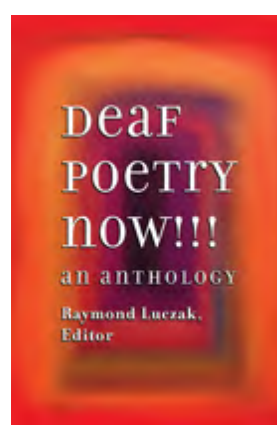
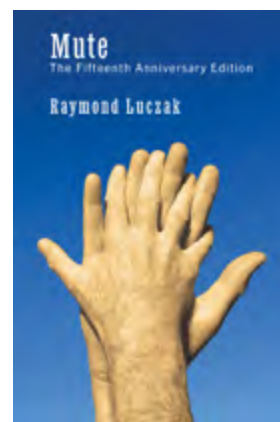
Synopsis: Ellen Lord's passionate poems often hang out in the liminal space just before dawn. They tell us of a mad mother, a brother dying of his brief, wild life, a husband dying of cancer, and so many other hungry ghosts. But night—the night of sadnesses and deaths, contains "a secret maw of delights." These poems travel between life and death



almost seamlessly: "I've let my garden go since my husband died. Strange—how his hand feels so warm in mine." I'm glad to have these generous poems where "Everything is all right even when it isn't." —Fleda Brown, poet & essayist

Ellen also led a poetry workshop at Hessel Schoolhouse on January 17th.

Raymond Luczak has been busy last fall with two (!!!) book releases. *Mute*, his third poetry collection which was first published in 2010, has been reprinted in a sparkling new 15th anniversary edition with a new introduction and some 14 new poems. Jerry L. Wheeler in his Out in Print blog, has this to say: ". . . the additional thirteen poems flesh



out Luczak's experiences as a Deaf man in a hearing world . . . Even if you have the first edition, this crucial revamping is as entertaining as it is enlightening." Luczak has also brought out *Deaf Poetry Now!!!* An anthology which showcases the work of 24 Deaf

and hard of hearing poets who offer a different worldview. Both books can be ordered via Handtype Press (Handtype.com) and elsewhere.

Garden Sleeping, Garden Growing: In and Around All Year Long by **Diana Magnuson**:

Synopsis: Through snow, sun, wind, and rain, a garden never truly sleeps. On the shores of Lake Superior, Aunt Noriko and



her niece Dehlia nurture their garden through every season—planting seeds, fending off hungry visitors, harvesting vegetables, and giving thanks for nature’s abundance. Told in lyrical verse and filled with vivid illustrations, *Garden Sleeping, Garden Growing* celebrates the cycle of the year with science facts, folklore, and hands-on wisdom. A perfect book for curious kids, young gardeners, and families who love the natural world.

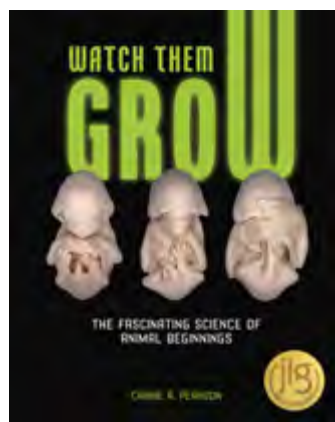
The Women’s National Book Association (WNBA) has chosen **Cris Mazza’s** *The Decade of Letting Things Go: A Postmenopause Memoir* as one of their Great Group Reads 2025 Selections.



M. Kelly Peach has had “a few” publications recently: a review called “Evolution for the Hell of It by Gerald Yelle: A New Artifact for the Evolution of Literature” in *Alien Buddha Press* 11/6/25; a poem “Young Ozymandias” in *JOURN-E: The Journal of Imaginative Literature* Vol. 4, No. 2; “Errors of Isochronism” (poem) in *Alien Buddha Best of 2025*; two poems for Lunar Sea Literary: “First Time (Ever I Fucked)” (online) and “A Reminiscence of Dreams” (print); and “Ontology for a Wayward Bureaucrat” (short story) in *Otherwise Engaged Literature and Arts Journal* 16th edition. In addition, he signed a contract with Anxiety Press to publish his horror novel *The Whore: Or of Bureaucracy*.

Carrie A. Pearson’s latest authored book, *Watch Them Grow: The Fascinating Science of Animal Beginnings*, was published by

Lerner Publishing Group/Millbrook Press in September. “This is my debut middle-grade, which is surprising since it began as a picture



book. When Millbrook Press’ editorial director Carol Hinz asked if I’d consider expanding the manuscript to middle grade, I immediately said yes because working with Carol had been a goal of mine for some time.

(Neither Carol nor her team disappointed!) The idea for this book—an exploration of animal gestation—came to me while watching the stage play *Hamilton*. When Leslie Odom Jr. sang “The Room Where It Happens,” I imagined a book called *The Womb Where It Happens* about how animals get their start. While the title changed (as well as the intended audience), the concept held up, and a book was born.”

Thomas L. Pelissero’s

debut memoir, *Bring One Home: A Memoir of Boyhood, Basketball, and Hometown Spirit*, has been awarded a bronze medal in the autobiography/memoir category in the 2025 North American Book Awards.



His book has been added to the lesson plan in the English and Social Studies classes at Bessemer High School, and he’s been invited to speak and kick off the lesson. *Bring One Home* will also be read into the Congressional Record on the floor of the House of Representatives in Washington DC on January 20th. Congressman Jack Bergman will salute the book and the town of Bessemer. To date, Thomas has been able to donate \$5,500 to local UP libraries and hopes to donate a few thousand more in 2026.

Richard P Smith's ninth book in his popular series of nonfiction deer hunting books will be published this year. The series, titled *Great Michigan Deer Tales*, highlights the stories behind many of the biggest bucks bagged by hunters in the state. The books are so popular because they are entertaining as well as educational.

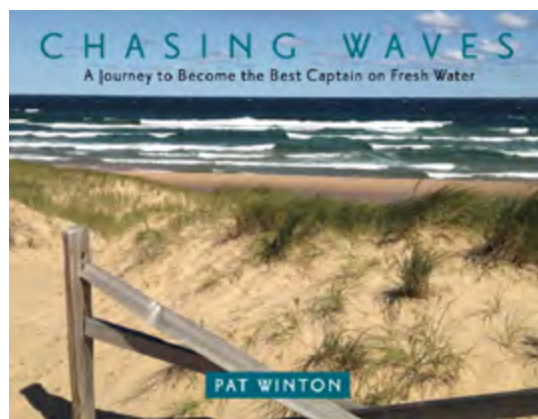
Each chapter is carefully selected to make sure there's at least one lesson within the story that any hunter can apply to their hunting. Some chapters have multiple lessons. Most hunters are interested in shooting a big buck of their own. There's no better way to find out how it's done than by reading about those who have done it.



Still Wild: Poems from the Bear Shack by **Suzanne Sunshower**:

Synopsis: At the age of sixty, Suzanne Sunshower moved into an ancient hunt camp trailer, which she named Bear Shack, in a remote area of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This is her story.

"In her new collection, Sunshower loses herself in the remote wilderness of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Many poets/writers have made this journey. In Sunshower's hands, however, the path is studded with 'the last afros of red and orange' autumn and 'the pale, the pan' of the moon. Each yearling and chickadee become revelations as she struggles through blizzards, griefs, ice storms, and invaders (two-footed and four-footed). The way isn't easy. Yet, Sunshower's poetic GPS never falters. Here's my advice: When you see two roads diverge in a yellow wood, hold out your hand and let Suzanne Sunshower be your guide."—Martin Achatz, two-time U.P. Poet Laureate and author of *A Bigfoot Bestiary and Other Wonders*



Chasing Waves by **Pat Winton** is a new version of a coming-of-age tale, chronicling one man's post-retirement quest to become the best captain on the Great Lakes. As Pat Winton develops his skills with increasingly larger boats, revolutionary marine technology, flooded rivers, ferocious winds, and wild waves, he and his first mate—his wife Elaine—explore North America's most beautiful, challenging, and dangerous fresh and salt waters. At a time when many men slow their lives down, Pat Winton earned his U.S. Coast Guard Captain's License for ships as large as 100 tons as he charted another course for excellence: mastering the challenges of winds, waves, and weather on the perilous Great Lakes, as well as up and down America's rivers and coastlines.

"Profusely illustrated with full color photography throughout, this large format . . . paperback edition of *Chasing Waves: A Journey to Become the Best Captain on Fresh Water* is an extraordinary introduction to the life and times of 'Fresh Water' sailing as experienced through the life and marine adventures of Captain Pat Winton. Part memoir, part travelog, *Chasing Waves* will hold a very special appeal to readers with an interest in true life boating themed adventures on the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River."

—Michael Dunford

How Authors Can Undersell Amazon on Independent Sales Sites

By Victor R. Volkman

Case Study: U.P. Reader #9

For regional anthologies, small press titles, or self-published works like *U.P. Reader #9*, competing with Amazon can feel overwhelming. One simple but effective strategy is to list your book on **independent sales sites** such as **Biblio.com** and **AbeBooks.com** for just **\$1 less** than Amazon's price. This attracts cost-conscious readers while supporting platforms that value independent publishing.

In this article, we'll use *U.P. Reader #9* as an example because each and every contributor (more than 40 people) can purchase the product for 50% off List Price from www.UPReader.org.

Why \$1 Less Works

Amazon dominates book sales, but many readers check multiple sources before purchasing. Pricing your book at **just \$1 below Amazon's "Buy New" price**:

- ◆ Catches the attention of bargain-conscious buyers.
- ◆ Appeals to readers who prefer to support independent marketplaces.
- ◆ Keeps your profits healthy while staying competitive.

Example: If Amazon lists *U.P. Reader #9* at **\$25.95**, you'd list it at **\$24.95** on Biblio and AbeBooks.

Step 1: Monitor Amazon's Price

Before listing elsewhere, check Amazon for the current "Buy New" price. This ensures your independent listings are competitively priced.

Example for *U.P. Reader #9*:

- ◆ Amazon: \$25.95
- ◆ Independent listing: \$24.95

Step 2: Register as a Seller

◆ AbeBooks (Basic Plan):

Perfect for authors with a limited catalog. No monthly fee; only a **15% commission** plus \$1.00 per sale.

◆ Biblio.com:

Works similarly, charging ~15% commission with no subscription required.

Both platforms allow professional listings using the imprint (e.g., **Modern History Press**) and full ISBN information for accurate cataloging.

Step 3: List *U.P. Reader #9* for \$1 Less

1. Enter ISBN **9781615997255**
2. Condition: "New."
3. Set price: **\$24.95**.
4. Configure shipping: e.g., \$3.50 flat rate.

Example Listing Comparison:

- ◆ Amazon: \$25.95 + Free Shipping (Prime)
- ◆ AbeBooks: \$24.95 + \$3.50 shipping
- ◆ Biblio: \$24.95 + \$3.50 shipping

Step 4: Promote Your Listings

Drive readers to your independent listings through:

- ◆ **Website:** "Save \$1 on *U.P. Reader #9* at Biblio.com or AbeBooks."
- ◆ **Social Media:** Highlight indie-friendly purchasing during promotions.
- ◆ **Newsletters:** Emphasize cost savings and supporting independent booksellers.

This ensures that buyers actively see the \$1 difference and the benefit of supporting non-Amazon platforms.

Step 5: Track & Adjust

- ♦ Adjust pricing if Amazon changes its price.
- ♦ Track which platform generates more sales.
- ♦ Consider additional incentives: signed copies or bundles (e.g., *U.P. Reader #8* + *#9*).

Key Takeaways:

- ♦ Amazon SellerCentral nets only \$2.57 per copy after \$13 purchase cost.
- ♦ AbeBooks/Biblio nets \$8.71 per copy at \$24.95 (including buyer-paid shipping).
- ♦ That's **over three times the profit per copy** versus Amazon.

Why This Strategy Works

By listing *U.P. Reader #9* **\$1 less than Amazon** on independent sites, you:

- ♦ Compete on price without drastic discounts.
- ♦ Maximize net profit despite higher print costs.
- ♦ Attract readers who prefer ethical, indie-friendly purchasing options.

Even a small \$1 difference can meaningfully increase sales on platforms that value independent sellers, while significantly improving your profit margins.

Profit Comparison: “\$1-Less” Strategy

Platform	Retail Price	Fees / Commission	Net to Author (before purchase)	Net Profit (after \$13 author discount)
Amazon SellerCentral	\$25.95	40% wholesale discount (\$10.38)	\$15.57	\$2.57
AbeBooks (Basic)	\$24.95	15% commission (\$3.74) plus \$1.00/item	\$20.21 + \$3.50 shipping credit	\$7.71
Biblio	\$24.95	~15% commission (\$3.74)	\$21.21 + \$3.50 shipping credit	\$8.71

I recently joined UPPAA after attending a book signing event, where another author spoke very highly of the organization and the value she has found through her membership. Hearing about her positive experience encouraged me to join, and I'm excited to be part of the UPPAA community.

—Stacey Lantagne



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