



**Vision: A
Resource
for
Writers**

Issue # 43

**January/
February
2008**

Including Articles by

Maria Zannini

Margaret McGaffey Fisk

Darwin Garrison

Guy Anthony De Marco

And More!

Masthead

Vision is published bi-monthly and pays .005 (one half) cent per word. I will be happy to look at any articles that will help writers. We pay one half cent per word for material.

If you have any questions, or would like to propose an article for an upcoming issue, feel free to drop a line to either of the editors below. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Vision

Volume Seven, Issue 42

November, 2007

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About This Issue

Issue # 43

January/February 2008

We have a wonderful new issue to start out the 2008 year! But before I discuss it at all, let me mention a rather troubling problem we've faced.

It's the *Interview Curse*.

During 2007, we had two different people break fingers and another badly cut one right after they agreed to an interview. We had email programs explode, businesses self-destruct, and I wouldn't really be surprised to find out that this rather horrible winter is also the fault of the *Interview Curse*. (I have someone I would like to interview who lives in the general area that has been without power for weeks.)

I am preparing to sacrifice pens, papers -- even an entire computer if necessary -- to the Muses in hopes of getting things back where they belong. Then I have to look for a very brave person to try out the idea of interviewing again.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy our first issue of the 2008 year. We have some wonderful articles for you, covering such subjects as immersing yourself in your stories to the problems with the 'emo' backlash. We also have three great reviews!

And for those waiting on the PDF versions, I hope to have them all done and uploaded by the end of this week.

On a final note, [Forward Motion](#) is celebrating its tenth year in helping new writers achieve their dreams of writing better and publication. Stop by and check the site out!

Don't forget that I'm always looking for new articles. I'd be happy to hear from you!

From the Editor:

What Do You Owe the Readers?

By Lazette Gifford

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With the start of 2008, many of us look over our previous year's work and decide what we want to do next. Are there specific areas we want to address for improvement? Are there new genres or styles we want to try? The possibilities are fun and exciting if you give yourself the chance to experiment.

There is, however, one aspect of writing that you may not think about -- what you should do for the readers.

Many of us write the stories we want to read. We write for ourselves, and we are our first readers. For some, the act of writing doesn't go any farther. Those people are not interested in showing the material to others. The creation of the story is an act of self-realization, And an exploration of what that writer feels and sees.

Most writers, however, are interested in sharing their stories with others. They may want to do this on an amateur basis, and share the stories through their blogs and websites. They may, instead, want to pursue writing professionally.

Sometimes the same person may do all three. There is no rule that says if you do one, you can't do anything else. Those who are seeking professional publication do need to take extra care, though. If you are going to put some of your material out there

(material that you are not going to send to publishers), you want to place it in the best possible light, because it will be part of how readers view you and your future work. You want to reach the greatest number of readers who might like your work. If you join in with others, you will want to make certain they are approaching this with the same level of dedication as you are. If there are too many poorly written stories, the chances are that readers won't find your wonderful work, buried in the drek.

If you are doing this as a stand-alone -- just you and your blog or website -- you need not worry about anyone else. If you are only pasting snippets of a work-in-progress, the reader also understands that this is not meant to be a finished story. However, a completed story of any length has different requirements.

And that brings us to the real question: What do you owe the readers?

If you are only writing for yourself, you obviously don't owe anything to anyone else. You can be messy in your storytelling. You can ignore grammar and spelling and write whatever you like.

If you are presenting material for other readers, then you owe it to those readers to do the very best you can to give them a good story; well-written, interesting, and as free of as many mistakes you can manage. There can rarely be perfection, of course, but that doesn't mean you should be lazy and not take the utmost care before posting the story - - or before sending it off to some potential publisher or agent.

Take your time. There is no hurry.

Doing your best is what Vision and Forward Motion are about -- helping you learn as much as you can, so that you can treat your readers to the best story you can write, in hopes they find it entertaining and come back for more. The reader may be someone who comes across your story blog, or it may be the submissions editor for a publishing company. Remember, if you do share stories through non-traditional publication (blogs, personal websites, anywhere that is not handled through a regular submission/rejection system and does not have copyeditors), this writing is going to reflect on you, and on your future works, wherever else they may be published. This is not a test to see how things might go: real people will be reading your material and judging your ability to entertain them, both now and in the future. You cannot control their personal taste. The only thing you can control is how well you present the work.

It's easy to be lazy. It's harder to care about those who are going to read your material - but caring will pay off in the long run.

So have a good, fun writing year in 2008. Experiment and enjoy the act of creation -- and sharing, if that's your goal.

Good luck!

Workshop:

Helping the Setting to Set the Mood

By Lazette Gifford

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Sometimes writers overlook a very simple tool that can be used to help ease the reader into the proper mood of the story right from the start, and without resorting to long explanations about the who, what and where of the situation. This is a simple trick, and one many of you will have either done consciously or unconsciously in your writing in the past. It's easy, and it can also help you to focus on your story opening.

It was a dark and stormy night. . . .

Those words have become such a cliché that we don't often think about what they would mean to the start of a story, and yet I don't doubt that every one of you would have a clear vision of what that opening would mean to a story. Those words not only instantly set the scene; they also create a sense of trouble and even dread.

Let's look at three views of an opening line, and see how the choice of setting descriptions affect and enhance the situation:

1. *David walked through the woods with a hand on his sheathed knife as he listened for the sounds of children.*

2. *David walked past trees stripped of leaves, gnarled limbs moving feebly in the erratic wind; he kept a hand on his sheathed knife as he listened for the sounds of children.*
3. *David hurried through the sun-dappled woods where squirrels danced across the limbs, moving with a hand always on his sheathed knife as he listened for the sounds of children.*

The first line is plain; we have no feeling for David or the place where he walks except for the vague shape of trees. The other two lines can help evoke different feelings about David, based on where he is and how he is reacting to that setting. In the second line, we might have someone out to save lost children from a dangerous place, but in the third we could easily have someone who hunts children himself. His hand on his knife is at odds with the bright cheerful place around him; we don't know if we can trust him, or if he knows something more about the dangers of the woods than we do.

With just those few words about the setting -- and none at all about the character -- you can start creating the groundwork for your story's mood. You can use the opening to put your character in sync with the surroundings (#2) or to show him at odds with the surroundings (#3). No single sentence is going to tell 'the whole story' of course, but you can use the setting right off the start to help shape expectations.

However, there is another way to create a feeling for the story, and that is by purposely using emotionally charged words to describe some aspects of the setting. These can be words that create an anthropomorphic-like relationship (that is, assigning human attributes to something not human). This is also sometimes called The Pathetic Fallacy

-- the assignment of human emotions to nature such as *cruel nature*. Ignore the negative sound of 'Pathetic Fallacy' and realize that writers -- and people in general -- use this kind of descriptive license all the time to help people understand the relationship between emotionally charged words and the way they can evoke responses in the reader when a plain, true-to-life recitation of a description might not.

Exercise 1

Make a list of at least ten words that could be used to describe either a setting or would work equally well in describing a character's mood, and then write sentences using both.

Whatever words you choose, they must clearly set the mood so that the reader would not have to guess at what you mean.

For instance:

Sullen: A sullen haze hung over the city. He stared in sullen anger as the sun rose.

This simple exercise can start focusing you on choosing words which will help you draw on the emotions of the readers.

Working through the descriptive process can be an interesting exercise, even for those who don't feel as though they need to consider something so simple. Sometimes we get too used to the way we write, and stop exploring new styles and patterns.

Experimentation is the trick to getting this type of material right. Don't be afraid to try different word combinations, different 'emotional' descriptions to find the level that works for you. Sometimes it will sound over the top -- but there are times when even a description like that might work best. Don't limit yourself to 'safe' descriptive passages, when something else might help you better create the mood.

Exercise 2

And in the light of day he saw. . . .

The dawn rising on a new day has become something of a cliché, but it is useful as an exercise. For this exercise, write no more than 200 words that link what a character sees with how he feels. Write this in two parts. The first is the dawn of a bright new day, and the second the dawn after disaster. Mirror the situation and the character -- or show them at odds with one another. You do not need to repeat the same words for both, but make it clear how they interrelate.

Exploring the possibilities for setting the mood can help with problem pieces. Sometimes getting those openings right is the hardest part of the story, where you want to both convey the situation and set the mood. Working with an emotional overlay and purposely nudging the reader toward the type of reaction the writer would like without being overt is a trick that takes practice. It will not work with every story, but there are times when it might be just the piece you need.

Exercise # 3

Put this idea to practical work. Find one of your stories where you think the opening does not do all it can to help introduce the story and the character and see if you can't manipulate the description of your background to build up a feeling for the story before the reader has gone more than paragraph into the story.

Exploring different ways to reach the reader is always something useful, even if you find that it doesn't apply to your current work. You never know when a simple idea like this might be just the little nudge your story needs to get moving in the right direction!

Motivation Triggers: Carrot or Stick

By Maria Zannini

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January is probably the single most maligned month of the year because it's the month that most of our resolutions are born... and broken.

I'll wait while you smack yourself on the forehead with despair.

This year, before your next round of resolutions, identify your motivation triggers. What encourages you more, the carrot or the stick?

I'm a stick woman myself. I work well under the constant threat that if I don't meet my goals, I'm going to get the pointy end of the stick from my boss, my critique partners, my editor, or my publisher.

You know you're a stick person if your idea of fun is seeing how long you can last before collapsing from exhaustion.

Carrot people are different. They work off a different set of triggers. They're inspired to produce more when they can see their efforts appreciated or acknowledged. For them, it's the reward at the end of a job well done that imbues them with energy.

There are also people who have both carrot and stick triggers, depending on what's at stake. The key is identifying what triggers motivate you.

Take this little test to find out if you need a carrot, a stick, or both.

1. Your siblings have elected you to host a family reunion. Do you...

- a. Wait to the last minute to get organized, knowing someone will come around and help.
- b. Do some stuff now, while leaving the heavy work for when brother Waldo shows up.
- c. Are you kidding? You've already bought the decorations, ordered the cake, and rented the hall. You were just waiting for your family to ask you to host.

2. Your boss hands you yet another assignment, in addition to all the other projects on your desk. Do you...

- a. Grumble, then add it to the top of the pile.
- b. Grumble. Look it over to see if it's easier than the project you're on now, then throw it on the pile.
- c. Grumble. Take out a voodoo doll from your desk drawer and stick a pin in it before you neatly put the assignment at the very end of all your other projects.

3. The kids are sick, the car died twice on the way home, and the dog just threw up on your new rug. Would you...

- a. Move.

- b. Move, but take the dog with you. He looks healthier than the kids.
- c. You stay and fix things, but only because you really like the dog and you've grown used to the kids.

If you had mostly 'a' answers, you're probably a carrot.

If you had mostly 'b' answers, you can swing either way. It all depends on the project.

If you had mostly 'c' answers, you're probably a stick.

There are no right or wrong answers. What's important is that you identify what will keep you productive. Here are some tips for each personality.

Carrot People

- Break down your objectives with small, easy to reach steps.
- Celebrate each benchmark with a reward.
- If the rewards stop working and you find yourself dragging your feet on your current project, switch to a parallel project.
- On a list of daily goals, do the easy stuff first.

Stick People

- Create a timeline for your projects.
- Make yourself accountable to a like-minded pal.

- If you think you're falling behind, contact your support group and brainstorm.
- Celebrate success with a well deserved break.
- On a list of daily goals, do the hard stuff first.

All Types

- Stay positive. If you fall into a funk, call your support group.
- Interact. Staying active on writing boards, loops and critique groups is good for your mental health. Even when you're not working on your story, the interaction is still feeding your brain.
- Expand your horizons. Get out of your chair every once in a while and explore beyond the four walls of your writing area.
- Are you a morning or night person? Identify when you are the most productive. Tackle the harder goals when you're freshest; the easier goals when you're not functioning on all thrusters.

Recognizing the mechanism that inspires you and using it to your advantage will serve as a springboard for a whole year of achievable goals.

May you all have a successful and productive 2008. I'll be rooting for you!

Bio:

Maria Zannini is the author of *Touch of Fire*, a romantic fantasy that debuts at Samhain Publishing this Summer 2008. For more tips, news and writing markets visit her blog at www.mariazannini.blogspot.com Stop by and say hi!

Altered Perception and the Reader's 50 Percent

By Margaret McGaffey Fisk

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You don't have to be a '60s hippy to have altered perceptions. Your perceptions are altered every day, by every interaction or experience you have. This is one of the reasons police have such a hard time with eyewitness accounts, and writers have such a hard time conveying an exact image with just words. A word picture is a combination of impressions and images, but the impressions are not necessarily the same for every reader.

An easy example is a diner. This word can bring up everything from cheap, amazingly good food in large quantities; to a dingy rat-hole that no self-respecting person would be seen in.

Imagine your story contains the following sentence: A man walks into a diner.

I see a homely place owned by Mother Williams who has dished out the same generous servings of delicious hash browns since she had Chris balanced on one hip as she took the orders. Now she's a grandmother. She still rules her kitchen and the diner, though, with a strict, but loving hand, determined to make sure the customers are well and truly fed in direct contrast to the posh, uptown restaurants where food is all for show and customers walk out with rumbling bellies.

Uh oh! Here's where the problem lies. That's a reader's fifty percent. I have a nostalgic appreciation for small diners, my favorite being those actually housed in old railroad cars. I'll choose cracked plastic benches and a neon-lit jukebox over an elegant wine menu any day.

As a writer, you have no way of knowing that.

Maybe the diner in your scene is on the bad side of town, maybe it has a layer of grease built up on every surface and a lingering cloud of old cigarette smoke. Maybe it's a truck stop, or the owner is completely cowed under the local gang. Maybe this is the most dangerous place for the undercover cop main character to go, but he has no choice if he is to earn a spot in the local crime organization. Maybe this is the place for those on the underside to see and be seen.

The best way to work around the reader's fifty percent is to avoid catch phrases. As writer shorthand, they can assist in setting a scene or creating an atmosphere without excessive word count. However, the pitfall is that you cannot control what each word calls up, or even if the image exists in the minds of your readers.

For example, the Marlboro Man. Rugged, cowboy type, accepts no guff. That's my image. I say the same to my boys and they won't ever know that means the character is a smoker, but the cigarette in his hand is an integral part of the image since it's formed based on tobacco advertising. This is a classic stereotype that has lost its meaning. Unless you can know exactly who's in your audience, using something like the Marlboro Man is likely to cause as much confusion as clarity.

Is there a way around this besides treating everyone as newborns who do not know the meaning of the word sheep? Sure. Those same catch phrases can be modified by an adjective or two, or a little ambience, to make them spring to life as you intended, whether or not the reader catches your reference.

Drag your mind back to the diner and consider the following:

The homely diner

The dingy diner

A cloud of smoke oozed from the doorway as the man stepped into the diner.

Everyone who was anyone in Big Chuck's organization came to this diner.

The music spilled out from the open door of the diner, not the country tunes he might have expected, but hard, cop-hating rap.

Take any one of those examples and I think you'll find there is less chance of confusion. They all use the word diner, sometimes with only one word to back it up, but each conveys a different image because of focus and detail. This is the writer's only defense against the reader's fifty percent: build the image with enough blocks so readers have to see your idea, and not whatever that word might mean to them.

And in case you think this only applies to places, I recall a confusing conversation with a friend of mine. She told me her son was interested in learning to play the guitar and

that he'd found a special one designed just for picking, one which had a wider neck and space between the strings.

I was stumped. I'd never heard of such a special guitar. I tried to come up with anything which could match that description but failed. Then, remembering my friend's interest in the Society for Creative Anachronism, I realized the answer. She must have been talking about a lute, right? It has a very wide neck and lots of space between the strings.

Each of us brought our own fifty percent to the conversation and ended up in two different centuries.

When I finally got the chance to see the guitar, I was stunned. A wider neck, extra space between the strings? It all depends on your perspective, I guess.

My friend grew up around steel-string folk or country guitars. I use a nylon-string classical as my primary. To me, the folk guitar has a skinny neck, up to about one inch thinner than the classical style I prefer. I would never have thought to start with the folk guitar as my standard to judge the classical. But she had. Her description was of none other than a standard nylon classical.

The key element here is both of us were using words we had in common. And most of the time, the distinctions wouldn't have affected the meaning. But where her background differed from mine created a mile-wide comprehension gap in this context and prevented successful communication of the concept.

It's easy to think that shared words have the same meaning, and a lot of the time they do. But in writing, when you're trying to evoke an emotion or paint a scene frugally, it's crucial to provide enough of a framework around the words to ensure your meaning is the dominant one in reader's mind.

Oh, and in case you missed it, or thought I did, my very first line is another catch phrase that might not have the same meaning to all readers. Though the stereotype is of hippies existing in a drug-altered state, a stereotype is rarely true for all individuals in a group. The sentence could just as easily have called up images of political activists fighting for what they believe in...and that interpretation would've been just as much of an altered perception, with the main political views being the government line.

There is no way to avoid the reader's fifty percent entirely, but awareness is the first step to making it work for, not against you. Marshall those adjectives, train up your descriptive phrases, and make sure when your hard-boiled gangster swings open the restaurant door, he isn't greeting by a sweet smile and a "be with you in a moment, sugar"...unless that was your plan all along.

Total Immersion

By Christina M. Stachura

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Credibility is crucial for a writer, and I learned that the hard way when I Googled my way into a Native American chatroom on a mission to learn more about their culture for a young adult novel I was writing about a Native American teen-aged girl who falls in love with an African-American boy. Maybe because I had not built up a rapport with the people in the chatroom and just came in with questions in hand, I was met with stony silence, until the facilitator of the room returned my questions with two of his own: "Are you Native American?" and "How can you write something of which you have no experience?"

I had read several books on the Taos Pueblo, but wanted the personal perspective of Native Americans for my novel. Though the question stung a bit, the speaker was entirely within his rights. I did not have any experience.

So I went to the Taos Pueblo itself for the San Geronimo Day Festival in September. I stayed with my brother and his family who live just outside of Taos. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. At the festival, I *was* Carson Hernandez, the heroine of my young adult novel. I saw the festival through her eyes. I tasted genuine Native American food, including fry bread (which for Carson's family is like a staple), and it was scrumptious.

I saw the sacred clowns (Koshares) perform; they even came into the crowd. They got into lots of mischief, which included throwing disagreeable people into the river! I almost clapped my hands like a teenager when a particularly recalcitrant boy was tossed into the river.

Later, after the Koshares had been through the crowd and performed their tricks and jokes, they gathered around a pole in the center of the pueblo. They pretended to be looking for something around the circle, and this went on for about ten minutes. Then, someone pointed up at the top of the pole and they found the sacrificial goat at the top. Much was made of how to get it down.

The sacred clowns had miniature bows and arrows, to the crowd's delight. They tried to shoot the goat down, and most of the arrows made it a quarter or a half way up before turning down, to cheers, claps and laughter from the crowd. Then they found a rope attached to the pole and a few of them tried to climb it. One only got a few feet up and had to come down, but also received good natured applause from the crowd. The second got farther up and the third finally figured out if he climbed up on the shoulders of another Koshare he could maybe make it to the top. He did! He cut the goat down to many gleeful cheers and much applause from the onlookers.

Research, and as much immersion into your characters as possible, builds your credibility when writing a novel. I'm not nearly finished with the research I plan for my young adult novel. It may take me three years to write, but it will be fully researched and I will be satisfied by then. I bought a few more books in Taos while I was there and ordered a few more books recently from Amazon.com. Also, I have learned there are

several tribes in my own state of Michigan and many more in Canada for me to investigate. While they are not the Taos Pueblo, they will still give me insight on the Native American ways of life.

Credibility is important in writing anything, whether it's an article, a short story, or a novel. If the reader doesn't believe you, he'll stop reading. Whether you are writing about a surgeon, a teacher, an astronaut, a line cook, or a postal worker, try to learn as much as you possibly can about that person's duties before you write because the reader might sense you don't know what you're talking about. Make room for the savvy reader.

A Room with a View

By Betty Chen

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Like the question of what pen to use for writing, a place to sit down and write is a choice that only the writers themselves can make.

Some are content with a corner of the kitchen table, while others need a whole room to house their creativity. Still others find that their best writing location is away from home - a tree house, a library, or a cafe.

Every writer knows the pleasure of working in the "right" spot. The soft tapping of the laptop keys, or the whispering of pen gliding over paper as you drift off to far-off places, brings a satisfying peace, even in the noisiest environments.

Every writer knows too the annoyance of having notes and important information messed up by those inconsiderate non-writers who share their writing space. For some writers, a missing pen can be torture.

If you're one of those writers making do with a corner that other members of your household may invade after (or perhaps during) your working time, consider purchasing a file folder or large box to keep your various papers in one place, where people can't get at them or accidentally throw them away. Store the box/folder somewhere easy to access, but out of reach for younger children or pets.

If you're a writer with a writing room or study that's yours and yours alone, you're extremely lucky, since you can do anything you like with that space: put up pasteboards, scatter your papers across the floor, or decorate with muse-simulating posters and paintings. If you have special guidelines you'd like other people to follow, you can paste a list to the door ("Don't disturb before four-thirty," "Knock before entering") and when you're done for the day, you can close, and perhaps lock, the door and ignore the mess.

If your desk or computer happens to be placed in a much accessed area, such as a living room, it might be a good idea to buy something in the nature of a tablecloth to throw over your work when you're not using it. This efficiently hides all signs of clutter, and also acts as a warning to potential snoopers: Don't touch!

Is your tale being typed out on a computer others use frequently? If so, back up! Having once lost an important piece to a crash, I now back up obsessively: emailing every day's work to myself, burning finished CDs, as well as saving them to my personal USB drive. Be prepared for computer crashes, unless you think retyping thousands of words from memory is fun.

If you work away from home, at cafes or other such places, consider getting a briefcase, with separate compartments for your drafts and writing tools. Carry postcards and printouts of images (photos, famous paintings, and so forth) that inspire you.

Many writers have an ideal dream writing area. Some wish for a house with a view of the sea, or overlooking a waterfall... if only they had the money. Often, you can fulfill

your dream by renting, say, a small cabin in the woods for a couple weeks a year. Other, bigger, fantasies may have to remain just fantasies!

My own dream writing location would be an apartment, somewhere on the outskirts of a big city. I picture myself seated at a desk placed by a window. The lamp is on, (since I prefer to write at night) and my room is dark except for the small circle of light surrounding the desk. All is quiet, save for the scribbling of my pencil, and the pop music I occasionally like to play.

Yes, I tell myself, that -- that is the place where I'm writing for.

The Emo Trap

By Darwin Garrison

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I first became aware of the term "emo" while browsing the discussions groups at [MegaTokyo](#). Since I'm obviously not in synq with the younger generation anymore, I was only able to figure out the alliteration after doing some Wiki-work.

For those of you who may be as clueless as I recently was, what I learned is that apparently the term devolved from the alternative or punk rock scene on the East Coast at some point to describe groups that affected great emotional distress during their performances. From the usage I have seen on discussion boards, it appears to me that "emo" has become an "inside" or "l33t" negative-connotation term that implies an over-the-top or obvious attempt to evoke sympathetic sentimentality, whether by an individual or within media (such as in a recent comic at [Krakow Studios](#)).

Now, why bring this up? Because lately I've come under the impression that some folks have begun to brand anything with emotional content as "emo" on reflex, as if having anything but appetite and violence in your media is wrong. When I see examples of this in comments on various things, I have to scratch my head and wonder when the heart went out of these people.

The fact of the matter is that a work with monolithic emotional content is shallow and unsatisfying to read. However, the opposite of that is any obvious attempt by the author to invoke an emotional response in readers through the use of cliché or overt

exposition. My suspicion is that the knee-jerk reaction of the apparently "younger" folks who tend to pull the "emo" term out for use happens because they're tired of seeing things that are so obvious in their attempts to manipulate them.

I could sit and worry if my prose is too "emo", but there's no use in that. Some people may well brand my work "emo" while others won't see it that way at all. The point is, attempting to write with an eye to a group like the anti-emo radicals I sometimes perceive would be an injustice to the work. If you wash all the emotions away except emotionless sex and aggression, there's little left but cardboard cutouts more at home in video games than within a real plot line. Good writers realize and convey a spectrum of emotion within each character, well aware that the human animal is not monochrome in its feelings, but rather a rainbow where intensity varies with mood and situation.

No, the "emo" trap is not for me to worry on except to avoid pandering to those who see emotions as bad.

Darwin A. Garrison lives and writes from the wilds of Indiana, leveraging all the events of his not-so-glamorous life to create fanciful stories of other people in far away places suffering a great many troubles (also known as "adventures"). Darwin has been published in three separate DAW/Tekno anthologies (*Under Cover of Darkness*, *Fate Fantastic*, and *Something Magic This Way Comes*) as well as the Dragon's Tooth Fantasy anthology *Illuminated Manuscripts*. He is also currently preparing to launch a new SF&F webzine called Darwin's Evolutions (all hail the SPACE MONKEY!) Find out more about Darwin at <http://www.sff.net/people/dagarrison> and <http://alphastk.livejournal.com>.

Common Terms New Writers Should Know, Part 1

By Lazette Gifford

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New writers stepping into the field are faced with several problems, and some they may not even realize. Terminology for the writing field can be confusing and misinformation abounds on the Internet. People often tell others what they 'know' when, in fact, they sometimes don't understand the fundamentals of what they are talking about -- and this is, unfortunately, a growing trend. The writing world, despite have a huge professional presence on the Internet, has more than its share of this problem.

Understanding the terminology of the writing community can help you better comprehend what others are discussing. It will also help you when you deal with professionals when you begin your own submissions and begin the discussion of contract terms.

For the next few Issues, I'm going to define a few very common writing terms. These are phrases many of us already know and do not need to be told. However, there are a lot of new authors stepping into the writing ring, and it helps if they understand what we're saying. That way, the next time someone begins talking about galleys, when they really mean submissions, or copyright when they really mean print rights, even new writers will be able to tell the difference.

1. Advances and Royalties

When an author accepts the contract from a publisher, it often comes with an agreement that the publisher pay the author a set amount of money. This is an 'advance' which is an advance against royalties. Royalties are the amount of money the author gets per sale of each book.

The amount of the advance varies depending on several things, including if the writer is already a known name or not. A writer might also accept a lower advance so that it is paid off more quickly and he starts getting royalty checks earlier.

If the book does not 'earn out' -- that is, does not make back enough to cover the amount already paid to the author -- the author does not pay the money back to the publisher. The publisher is gambling with the company money, and betting that this book will gain them more than they spend to produce it.

2. Copyeditor:

This is the person who looks over the manuscript after the author has made it the best that he or she possibly can. Sometimes writers miss things -- and sometimes copyeditors do as well. They are just an extra set of eyes to try and make a book as near perfect as possible.

They may also suggest some changes in things like pacing, etc. These are suggestions. Generally, the publisher will side with the author in those cases -- after all,

the publisher already decided he liked the book. This does not always happen, and in fact, there are times when a book is pulled from the publication lineup because the three involved (author, copyeditor, publisher) cannot come to an agreement. The author has the say about the book.

There are good and bad copyeditors, and it's certainly not a perfect system. It's just a step that helps to make the book better.

3. Copyright:

Copyright, at the bottom line, is the right of the author to say who can publish the book. The copyright remains with the author, even when a publisher prints a book. Look on the copyright notice of books and you'll see that most of them are in the name of the author, not the publisher or anyone else. Occasionally, the author may work in a closed universe system -- Star Wars, Star Trek, the various game systems, etc. -- in which case the copyright will be in the name of whoever owns the rights to the overall universe.

Copyright is automatic the moment the material is created in a tangible form -- paper, computer files, a recording, etc. This means that anything published on the Internet is fully protected by copyright. There is a second level of copyright that requires the material be registered, in the U.S., with the copyright office. This is generally what publishers do for you, and it essentially changes the level from creative to professional. With a registered copyright, a person can sue any infringement for loss of income.

Too many people believe that if something is up on the Internet, it is free for the taking. This isn't true. There are several sites that also list in their Terms of Service that the author retains copyright to anything posted there. They are not giving the person anything he does not already own. However, there are sites that, while saying the person retains copyright, also retain the right to use any material that is placed on their boards. In those cases, they are grabbing the print rights and posting on those boards is an agreement that they can use your material as they see fit.

The Creative Commons copyright gives more freedom for distribution of material and less control to the author. Some people have seen this as a way of allowing their work to reach a larger audience.

4. Ebook

An ebook is a book that is supplied in a format that can be read on computers or hand-held devices. Some are distributed to the readers as a file; others are read on a website. Ebooks can be found on sites that follow the traditional publishing pattern of submission/rejection and copyediting (for instance) or they can be self-published. The quality of the material is not based on how it is published.

5. POD (Definition 1)

Print on Demand is a technology and has nothing to do with who provides the book. The technology allows a person to print as few as one copy of a book at a time, so that there is no need to keep a stock on hand. The technology uses computer files, rather than offset printing which uses an inked plate as the starting point.

POD books are more expensive per book. However, for many small press companies, they are more cost-effective than having to buy several hundred copies of a single title through the offset method. It is a very popular option for self-published writers, as well.

6. POD (Definition 2)

Publish on Demand is considered to be a vanity press term, referring to way the company presents the idea of book publication to the author.

7. First Draft

The first draft is the first, full telling of the story. There may be pre-work in outlines, character sketches, worldbuilding, and various notes, but the story itself has not been fully told until this point.

For many writers, this is the most fun of writing. It is where you get to fly and experiment, and see what you can do with your story, without worrying about the reader, because no one has to see it but you.

The first draft has sometimes been referred to as the exploration draft, because it allows the writer to find the right path through the story. Some people write very tight first drafts and others allow themselves to wander all over the story line, and correct the material in rewrites and edits.

8. First Publication Rights

These are the rights that most publishers are interested in buying from the author. It is the right to be the first to show the book to the public. Because of this, many are growing increasingly less interested in anything that has been on open sites on the Internet because it has already been shown to the public. There is also a concern with being able to prove who really wrote the material after it has been available on the Internet.

9. Galleys:

Galleys are usually the bound editions that are the last step before publication. They don't have the cover art and they don't have some of the other extras. An author usually gets a galley copy to go over one last time before the book goes fully to print. Galley copies also sometimes go out to reviewers so that the publisher can have early reviews of the book. (There is one notorious story about a reviewer in Sweden, I believe, who wrote a scathing review of a book by an author the reviewer really disliked, and the review went into print. Imagine the surprise when his boss got a call by the publisher to explain that the author, because of real life matters, had never been able to write that book. Even though it had been on the old lists to be released on that day, it was still unwritten, let alone sent out in galley copies to reviewers.)

10. Guidelines

Guidelines are the link between the publisher and the writer who wants to submit to them. Guidelines tell you what the publisher specifically wants. Not following the guidelines is a sign of one of two things -- that the person either never bothered to read

them or that they think they're too good to follow them. Either way, it is a bad impression to give the person you want to buy the rights to your book. Do you think a publisher should be interested in someone who can't even take the time to follow a few lines of instructions? Do you think the publisher wants a working relationship with someone who is so pretentious that they think they don't have to follow those guidelines?

Your submission is a reflection of who you are as a writer and will help them determine if you are someone they will want to work with for the next several years. Act professionally and make a good impression, and it will help you take that next step in your career.

Those are our first few words. They're all common words and ideas in the writing community, and knowing them will help you. Even if you are not looking at a traditional or professional writing career, knowing what the others are saying will still help you better define what you want from your own choices.

Market Report:

Mar's Market Report #25

By Margaret McGaffey Fisk

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Publication announcements from members of online writing communities are valuable resources for writers at the beginning of their careers. Though the communities may contain members at many levels of publication, overall, markets listed in these announcements tend to be open to new writers.

All the markets presented in this column came from a publication announcement. I receive announcements from various sources including Vision; The Critter's Workshop; and Online Writing Workshop for Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror. These announcements are all available online. They list markets at varying levels of payment or reputation, so if you use these resources, be careful to research the market yourself before submitting. Even the list below should be used as a signpost rather than a definitive answer about any market because situations do change. Reputable sites such as [Ralan's SpecFic & Humor Webstravaganza](#) and [Duotrope](#) are good places to get the latest news. They have been known to have information not yet listed on the publisher website. However, always check the publisher's guidelines as well.

While not all the markets that appear in this column offer "pro" rates, they all provide some compensation. In my opinion, offering payment is an indication of the editor/publisher's commitment. In many cases, markets with some compensation are

more likely to stay around because they have considered the economics of running a publication.

Genre	Literary Fiction
Title	The Kenyon Review
Editor	Editor David H. Lynn Associate Editor Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky Managing Editor Tyler Meier Fiction Editor Geeta Kothari Poetry Editor David Baker Drama Editor Daniel Elihu Kramer International Editor John Kinsella Editor at Large G. C. Waldrep
Address	None
Sub Email	http://www.kenyon-review.org/submissions/
Specifics	Literary magazine seeking short fiction, essays, poetry, translations, excerpts, and plays.
Requirement	Short stories and essays up to 7,500 words, plays and excerpts up to 35 pages.
Payment	\$30-\$40 per page
URL for site	http://www.kenyonreview.org/index.php
URL for guidelines	http://www.kenyonreview.org/writers/guidelines.php

Genre	Speculative Fiction
Title	Serpentarius Magazine
Editor	N. E. Dix
Address	None
Sub Email	Formula in guidelines
Specifics	Looking for fiction with some speculative angle. Specific dislikes are listed in the guidelines, along with the formula for creating the submission email. Also check guidelines for submission periods.
Requirement	Between 1,500 and 5,000 for stories, poetry up to 36 lines.
Payment	\$0.05 (5 cents) per word calculated based on character count for stories, \$5 per poem.
URL for site	http://serpentari.us
URL for guidelines	http://serpentari.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=26

Genre	Contemporary Science Fiction
Title	Futuristic
Editor	Christopher East, Fiction Editor Jeremy Lyon, Publisher
Address	None
Sub Email	chris.east@futurismic.com
Specifics	Looking for compelling science fiction that explores the impact of contemporary issues or what is coming in the near future such as cultural, technological, social, and scientific changes.
Requirement	Up to 15,000 words. Storise of 2,000 or less are hard sells.
Payment	\$200 per story
URL for site	http://www.futurismic.com
URL for guidelines	http://futurismic.com/guidelines/

Genre	Dark Fiction
Title	Nossa Morte
Editor	Melissa De Kler
Address	None
Sub Email	submissions@nossamorte.com
Specifics	Looking for stories that touch the darker side of human nature.
Requirement	Between 500 and 5,000 words (query for longer)
Payment	Scale based on length from \$20 to \$40, which works out to between \$0.01 (1 cent) and \$0.03 (3 cents) per word.
URL for site	http://nossamorte.com/
URL for guidelines	http://nossamorte.com/static%20pages/guidelines.html

Genre	All Genres
Title	TQR
Editor	Theodore Q. Rorschalk
Address	none
Sub Email	tqrstories@gmail.com
Specifics	Looking for any fiction that is good and solid enough to stand the test of time. This means anything from romance to obscure speculative future tense stories.
Requirement	Between 4,000 and 12,000 words
Payment	\$50 per story
URL for site	http://www.tqrstories.com
URL for guidelines	http://www.tqrstories.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=67

Product Review:

Sonar2: Tracking Those Subs

By Guy Anthony De Marco
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After spending hours laboring over your literary children, tweaking and polishing until they shine from their own light, you bundle them up in a manila envelope, lovingly paste the postage *just so*, and drop them in the outgoing mailbox with a prayer.

If this is the first manuscript you've sent out into the harsh world of editors and slushpiles, you've probably memorized the exact date and time it left your hand. However, if you have a large portfolio of manuscripts, remembering which one you sent to which editor can be confusing.

Enter Sonar2, a submissions tracking program from Spacejock Software. Written by Simon Haynes, the author of the Hal Spacejock science-fiction series and numerous short stories, Sonar2 provides a system for untangling which story was sent to which market.

Sonar2 can track a large volume of manuscripts. Some of the most useful features include the ability to add details, such as how much a manuscript earned, how many days since you've submitted a manuscript, and which stories are lounging around.

The user interface is intuitive and familiar; it reminded me of Microsoft Excel. The menu is straight-forward, with each major function logically grouped. The *Stories/Articles*

section allows the addition, deletion, or editing of your manuscript details. The *Markets* section allows easy recording of editors and publishers, with quick links to their web pages, guidelines, and addresses. The *Submissions* section matches your story to the market you sent it to. Each section allows you to view all entries in each group, and the ability to print or copy-and-paste the data to the clipboard. Useful utilities include a backup/restore function built into the software.

The program takes up little disk space and works with many different operating systems, including the troublesome Microsoft Vista.

The best part is the cost. The program is free, and unlike many pieces of shareware or freeware, Sonar2 does not install advertising generators or spyware. The software is well-supported, and the software author is very responsive to questions and suggestions.

When I started using Sonar2, I noticed the tab order was wrong. Normally, a touch-typist would hit the tab key to proceed to the next box on the form. I emailed Mr. Haynes with the suggestion that he re-align the tab order, and within a day I received a reply that he would be working on it.

The program is stable, and I have it running on several computers. At the time I write this article, I have 22 stories and articles submitted to science fiction, fantasy, and horror markets. I can see at a glance how long they've been on the editor's desk, how many words each story has, and how much income each manuscript has generated.

Once a manuscript has sold, many authors assume they're done with that story or article. With Sonar2, you can easily track which stories can be sent to reprint-friendly markets, including the oft-overlooked audio sites.

Sonar2 is available for download from the Spacejock Software website:
<http://www.spacejock.com/Sonar.html>

Spacejock Software has several additional programs for authors, including yWriter, a free novel writer's word processor. Mr. Haynes has graciously posted useful articles for writers, and he provides a link to his Hal Spacejock series for interested readers.

After a short time, I found I couldn't do without Sonar2 running in the background. Knowing my manuscripts are out in the marketplace helps to inspire additional stories. I highly recommend Sonar2, especially to those who use Microsoft Excel or a sheet of paper to track their literary children in the tough publishing world.

Website Review:

Good Reading Starts Here: NewPages.com

By Bonnie Randall Schutzman

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"Good reading starts here," claims the tag line of the NewPages.com portal to the independents (<http://newpages.com/default.htm>), and they do their best to make good on that promise. Interpreting "independent" generously, NewPages covers alternative newsweeklies, independent record labels, independent bookstores, contests, and creative writing programs in addition to their main territory of independent publishers and literary magazines (online and print). You'll find summaries and reviews as well as filtered listings of quality journals. The main audience is readers, but writers will find many resources here too.

Most of the entries are for English-language publishers and bookstores in the United States and Canada, but a few are from Ireland, Australia, and Latin America. A small number are bilingual, usually English/Spanish. Unfortunately the listings do not allow for sorting by any criteria other than alphabetical by title, so finding a particular kind of journal or bookstore can be a challenge. The search facility can help narrow the field if you know what you're looking for.

For writers looking to sell short fiction, essays, interviews, and poetry, the most useful sections are the listings of online and print literary magazines. The listings include two

kinds of entries: a complete alphabetical list of publications in that category, and longer, sponsored entries that contain extra information about the publication. The simple entries point to the publication's website. The sponsored entries, which are paid for by the publication, include a summary of subscription and possibly submission information along with an indication of the kind of material published. These summaries, provided by the publisher, often describe the intended reader and the magazine's goal, useful information for determining whether the magazine represents a potential market for a particular story.

In addition to the listings, NewPages includes independent reviews of many current publications. Here you can find valuable clues to the journal's audience and tastes, helping you decide whether it's worth investigating as a potential market. Not everything is reviewed, and the reviews aren't linked to the main entries, so it can require a fair amount of digging to find the ones you're interested in.

The book publishers section is currently being revamped to use new criteria, such as national distribution and membership in professional organizations, to determine which presses are listed. Meanwhile, it is laid out in a similar fashion to the literary magazines section, with filtered pointers for most entries and a summary description for the sponsored entries. But the sponsored links are shorter, and there are fewer of them. The list includes university presses as well as small independent and nonprofit presses. The related book reviews section is on hiatus until January 2008, but the magazine reviews are up to date and useful. There's also a list of books received,

which includes every title sent to them, without comment. The Literary Magazine Stand describes new issues of the listed magazines.

Other sections list independent bookstores, independent record labels, and blogs related to writing and the writing business. The alternative magazines section especially suffers from the lack of criteria for sorting and searching; the AIDS journal *A&U* shares listing space with the *Aikido Journal*, the anti-authoritarian *Eat the State!*, the *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, *Living Nutrition*, *Performing Songwriter*, the Canadian general-interest ezine *Walrus*, and lifestyle journals for Buddhists in the U.S., pro-choice Catholics, American Hindus, et cetera. Nearly all accept freelance queries for articles, interviews, essays, and reviews. Many publish fiction and poetry.

If you're marketing a book or literary magazine, you can submit copies to NewPages for listing and possible review. For a fee, you can also get mailing lists for independent bookstores and libraries.

Services for writers include listings of writers conferences, workshops, and retreats, contests for both magazines and books, and graduate and undergraduate creative writing programs. The contest listings are sorted by deadline date, with poetry, fiction, and essay contests mixed together. The conferences and creative writing programs are sorted alphabetically by state with no information about dates or subjects. The summaries are taken from the program website and often lack key information. Hopefully the quality will improve as the section is fleshed out.

NewPages.com is not a market listing and does not contain enough information to allow you to make submission decisions directly. It is, however, a valuable aid to locating and researching your target publications.

Book Review:

The Complete Guide to Writing Science Fiction: Volume One - First Contact Edited by Dave A. Law and Darin Park

Reviewed by Carole Ann Moleti

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The Complete Guide to Writing Science Fiction: Volume One-First Contact edited by Dave A. Law and Darin Park, Calgary Alberta, Canada, Dragon Moon Press, 2007.

http://www.dragoonmoonpress.com/guide_sf.htm

The title implies that this book is designed for the neophyte science fiction writer, and indeed, I recommend it as an excellent first place to start. Broken into short chapters, written in simple (but not simplistic) language, the book follows a logical progression. Three sections organize the material into five parts, plus appendices. Part I focuses on defining the history and parameters of the genre. Part II delves deep into basic scientific principles, word building, and aerospace technology. Part III covers crafting and revision and Part IV specialty sub-genres. Part V addresses publishing, marketing, and the writing life.

The aspiring science fiction writer who starts at the beginning of this book will build understanding and a strong foundation of knowledge. While this by no means ensures success in a very tough business, it can offer a distinct advantage.

I have read, heard, studied, and practiced all of these techniques for years. But I still found new truths and a wealth of new insights in the words. Particularly welcome was the repetitive theme that is a watchword for adult learning materials: You wouldn't be reading this if you couldn't do it, so don't give up.

Darin Park opens the book with an overview of the history of science fiction. Using a timeline, Park takes us back to the *Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh* (circa 2750 BCE) and *Homer's Odyssey*, (800 BCE). He then moves forward in time to discuss the international evolution of science fiction, whose Golden Age was considered to have begun with the work of John W. Campbell, Jr. in 1930 and continued into the 1950s with Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and Arthur C. Clarke.

Jeanne Allen follows, examining the definition of science fiction and the differences between science fiction and fantasy. She discusses the muddy term "speculative fiction," which could be stories that speculate on the future as well as the all encompassing term for the genres of science fiction, fantasy, horror, paranormal, and alternative history. That is a critical definition for the reader because this book focuses on science fiction, and writers in the other speculative genres best look elsewhere.

Numerous authors are quoted but Frederick Pohl says it best:

"Does the story tell me something worth knowing, that I had not known before, about the relationship between man and technology? Does it enlighten me on some area of science where I had been in the dark...Does it illuminate events and trends of today by showing me where they may lead tomorrow?"

Bob Nailor follows in Chapter Three, defining basic scientific principles, and techniques the writer can use to communicate them to readers. His advice is to focus on science first, fiction second.

Kim Richards discusses sub-genres. She provides a brief overview of the characteristics of a long list: hard and soft science fiction, slipstream, space opera, military science fiction, cyberpunk/splatterpunk, first contact, near future, time travel, parallel/alternate universe, steampunk, lost and other worlds, frontier, apocalyptic, dystopia/utopia, science fantasy, dark, new weird/bizarro, erotic, humorous, flash, media/gaming tie-ins, and children's/young adult science fiction.

It's important for the writer to understand the multiple sub-genres, and techniques used in each, to create good stories, as well as to target marketing efforts.

Wil McCarthy discusses technology in science fiction because most agree that if you take the technology out of the story, it probably isn't going to be science fiction. He discusses the process of discovery the writer must go through to take ideas and research them so that they can be turned into a story that makes sense in terms of generally accepted scientific principles.

Chapter Six, "World Building" by Kim Richards, follows as an excellent primer, quoting numerous experts and providing an easy to understand approach to creating a fictional world. It describes the pitfalls of over research as well as of the "dive in and write approach" that can land the writer in a situation where they have created a scenario that is not plausible given scientific principles as we know them. But Richards affirms that

every writer develops their own style and method. By way of encouragement, consider this quote from Orson Scott Card:

"...when it comes to storytelling...and making up maps of imaginary lands in a kind of storytelling...mistakes are often the beginning of the best ideas."

"Alien Creation" by Michael McRae was the most difficult chapter to read since he spends a great deal of time reviewing biochemistry and physics to provide a groundwork for defining life, understanding how it can develop and thrive in its particular environment, and the probability that it exists in other, as yet undiscovered, places. As with all the other chapters in the book, it is simply written, but the concepts are far from simple.

Like a good textbook used to understand basic concepts and study from just before the exam, this chapter is best read when you are sitting down to create your alien species and writing that part of the story where the reader is being transported, literally and figuratively, into your world. Having a single source for very detailed biochemistry, genetics and evolutionary biology, the Drake Equation, The Fermi Paradox, and Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) is much easier than unearthing it from other places. Anyone creating alien life forms that do not conform to anything we have ever seen here on Earth will benefit from this chapter.

Jeanne Allen returns in Chapter Eight to help the writer navigate through outer space by providing an overview of known facts about space and space travel, current capabilities, the limits we now face, and some ways they might be overcome. Allen does

yeowoman's work here in a long, technical chapter that is a must read review for anyone writing about space travel.

Milena Benini follows with an amusing look at the "crooks" or cliches and writing mistakes that steal life from stories and conduct them into a black hole. I would have expected this chapter to fit into the next section on craft, but placed here it serves as bridge to Chapter Ten by Tina Morgan that discusses how to bring characters to life.

Benini's second contribution, Chapter Eleven, serves as a mid-book review of major concepts from the previous chapters on world building, basic science concepts, plotting, and scene setting. She weaves the individual components together, showing writers how to do the same with their stories. And Benini adds a humorous tone which is fun to read.

Orson Scott Card, who has his own book on writing science fiction, took the time to contribute his views on using science fiction as a way to advance knowledge, promulgate debate about ethics and values, and make political statements without beating the reader over the head with them. "If you tell your story as plainly as possible, concentrating on making the story believable and interesting and clear to your readers, your fiction will end up being more effective at persuading readers to come to see the world the way you do."

The last part of the book guides the reader/writer into the most difficult part of the process. After the glorious feeling of writing The End, one realizes it is never finished. Morgan jumps in again to show us the how to "slash and burn" and "when to make your

manuscript bleed." That doesn't need much explanation but suffice it to say that this is a review of techniques for writers useful in ferreting out problems with point of view, passive voice, redundancy, and other craft issues.

The part of the book dedicated to specialty sub-genres begins with Bud Sparhawk's primer on writing humorous science fiction. Carol Hightshoe discusses the pleasures, perils, and pitfalls of writing fan fiction and visiting someone else's universe.

Chapter Sixteen, by Dave Law, is for writers of graphic novels. In addition to a history of the genre, born of comic books in 1933, Law gives a very detailed outline of the process of creating a graphic novel and the collaboration required between the author(s), artist(s), and publishers. The special considerations for formatting reminded me of a cross between screenwriting and animation in this fascinating and popular new form.

Simon Rose completes this section with an overview of how to write science fiction for younger readers, aged eight to twelve.

Chapters Eighteen, Nineteen and Twenty are fitting chapters to end this book. By the time you have put all this into practice, and completed, revised, and polished your work, you have to get it published. Michelle Acker takes the writer through the how to of the submission process, beginning with workshops and conferences, market research, queries, and formatting. In an interview with literary agents Donald Maass and Nadia Cornier, and editor Liz Schieber, the writer learns what needs to be done in the query and submission process to get the attention of the slush gods.

The end of this chock-full chapter discusses the various publishing venues including traditional publishing houses, small independent presses, electronic publishers, vanity, self, and POD publishing. There is a big dose of reality here, and there is emphasis on difficulty of the process and the need for networking, professional conduct and approach, persistence, and dedication to creating the best work you can.

Riding on the publishing dragon's tail is Ian Irvine's chapter discussing the art and science of book promotion in detail that I dearly hope to need someday soon: The chapter goes from basic facts about how the publishing industry works to how to look good and prepare for your television and radio interviews. Oh yes, and how to land them as well. Very advanced and very daunting. I will go back and re-read this one when I sign the contract for my first book. But a lot of the suggestions can be implemented by any writer, such as setting up a website, networking, and thinking of innovative ways to publicize your work.

Irvine's lead sentences say it all:

"Writing fiction is hard and the world couldn't care less whether you succeed or fail. No one, not even your publisher, editor, or agent cares about your books the way you do... But for you, the success of your books is everything, and an early failure may doom your career."

Piers Anthony closes the book with a rambling but delightful look at the life of a writer, using himself as a mirror. This chapter made me feel like I was sitting next to Mr.

Anthony, hearing his oral history and sage advice, both cautionary and reassuring in the way only someone who has lived a long and productive life can be.

I am undecided about the benefits of the electronic version (which I read) versus the print one. I am partial to having a book on my desk to pull out and thumb through when I need to find something. Then again, having this in an electronic format would enable easy access to the information. There is a detailed table of contents, extensive index, and pages of references and resources.

The Complete Guide to Writing Science Fiction: Volume One-First Contact follows the basic premise of academic writing: Tell them what you're going to say, say it, and then review what you told them. Then end it all with an inspiring keynote speech at graduation.

I recommend this as the first book for new science fiction writers to buy. I see it as the last one those of us slogging through the process will need.

Title: *The Complete Guide to Writing Science Fiction: Volume One-First Contact*

Edited by: Dave A. Law and Darin Park

With contributions by:

Michelle Acker

Wil McCarthy

Jeanne Allen

Michael McRae

Piers Anthony

Tina Morgan

Milena Benini	Bob Nailor
Orson Scott Card	Darin Park
Carol Hightshoe	Kim Richards
Ian Irvine	Simon Rose
Dave A. Law	Bud Sparhawk

ISBN 10: 1-896944-39-6 (paperback)

ISBN 13: 978-1-896944-39-5

320 pages

ISBN 10: 1-896944-53-1 (electronic)

ISBN 13: 978-T-896944-53-1

311 pages

Language: English

Publisher: Dragon Moon Press (August 1, 2007)

http://www.dragonmoonpress.com/guide_sf.htm

New on the Shelves

[Forward Motion for Writers](#) has many published authors as members. Here are just a few of the currently available materials that they have had published!

Lazette Gifford

Farstep Station

Farstep Station sits on the distant edge of human expansion into space. Although meant to be the stepping stone to further exploration, the station remained understaffed and nearly abandoned for the duration of a long war between the rebels and the fledgling Inner Worlds Council.

From [Yard Dog Press!](#)

Lazette has also had three titles accepted by OneMoreWord -- A reprint of Silky, Lord of the Land (sequel of Silky), and News from the Front.

Holly Lisle

Talyn In a world where technology is magic, and war is the only way of life, Talyn is a soldier, one of thousands trained from childhood to protect her country from the monarchist Eastil. Soon, Talyn's honor will be challenged.

Worldbuilding Course, Book II

Non-technical and easy to use, Holly's method will give you a usable beginning culture in about five hours, which you can expand as you work on the book, building only what you need and when you need it.

[Buy it here](#)

Tamara Siler Jones

Valley of the Soul

Detective Dubric Byerly returns in the third and final installment of this medieval fantasy-meets-thrilling mystery, genre-bending series from the author of **Ghosts in the Snow** and **Threads of Malice**.

C.E. Murphy

Thunderbird Falls

In this follow-up to **Urban Shaman**, Joanne Walker hasn't learned much about her shamanic abilities. But when she accidentally unleashes demons on Seattle, Joanne realizes she should have learned more about controlling her powers.

Wen Spencer

Wolf Who Rules

The popular novel "Tinker" introduced the inventor-heroine of the same name, who lives in a near-future Pittsburgh, which shares an interdimensional border with the land of the elves. In this sequel, the elven noble whose destiny is intertwined with Tinker finds himself besieged from all sides.

Lynn Viehl

Dark Need

Homicide detective Samantha Brown is a tough, highly decorated cop. But twelve lonely years after she nearly died of a gunshot wound, she aches with a deep inner longing. In pursuit of a deranged killer, her only clue is a medieval cross inscribed "Lucan"-the name of the owner of a new nightclub near the murder scene. Drawn into a seamy underworld, Samantha falls for Lucan-who believes he's a vampire and Samantha is his reincarnated first love.

Paula Offutt

(Site Member HollyRoller)

Butch Girls Can Fix Anything

This lesbian romance novel was released in January 2007 by Regal Crest Enterprises, Inc. (ISBN: 978-1-932300-74-1). It is available in lesbian romance venues and online on Amazon and [Star Crossed Productions](#). About the author: [Paula Offutt](#).

Sandra Barret

(Site Member sbarret)

Lavender Secrets

Sandra's debut novel (originally completed for the National Novel Writing Month) was released in January 2007 by Regal Crest Enterprises, Inc. (ISBN: 978-1-932300-73-4). It is available in lesbian romance venues and online on Amazon and [Star Crossed Productions](#).

Face of the Enemy

This lesbian science fiction novel has also been accepted by Regal Crest Enterprises, Inc. and is due to be released in November 2007.

Details of her works are here: [Sandra Barret](#).

Jack Scoltock (Site Member Jakers)'s new e-book, **Golden Weddin' and the B.V.M.**, is available from Virtual Tales [here](#).

An excerpt from one of his historical writings also appears in **Literature Reading with Purpose Course 2**, a learning resource for New York students published by McGraw/Hill.

Chris Ward (Site Member headofwords) has published a short story, **The Book of Dreams**, at [Niteblade: Horror and Fantasy Magazine](#). You can read the story [here](#).

Kristen Howe (Site Member angelscribe)

Articles:

The Final End Results: An Overview of the "Upfronts"--An In-depth Overlook View of How the Networks Did at the "Upfronts" is available from *Associated Content* [here](#).

Poetry:

Golden Orb will appear in the spring or summer issue of *Illogical Muse*.

Eventide Inferno and **Cold Case** appear in the [November](#) issue of *Long Story Short*.

Christmas (an acrostic poem) has been accepted by *Long Story Short* for the Christmas poetry page.

The Reward for Being Published and Accepted has been accepted by *Long Story Short*.

Safe Return will appear on the *Real Eight Poetry Ezine* in January.

Elizabeth Morey (Site Member NightPoet00)'s poem, **lady bug**, is available [here](#) from *Haruah: Breath of Heaven*.

Submission Guidelines

Here are the things to consider when you're writing an article for Vision:

- Read the guidelines (below) and follow them. If you have a question about the guidelines, email me at zette@longlines.com and ask.
- Don't write an article and send it off without proofing. In fact, read it more than once. Let it sit for a day or two, even if you are running late. I would rather have a well-edited late article than a messy one sent on time.
- I want anything that has to do with writing, from how you think up a story to finding a proper pen. If you love writing and have anything at all that you can offer to other writers, consider writing 500-2000 words for one of the upcoming issues. I am interested in all facets of writing, from first-person experience articles to genre-specific how-to's and informational articles about your area of specialization – whether that be history or science or nursing or long-distance running – and how and where your specialty can be used correctly by writers. Write something that will help other writers, and I'll be interested in taking a look.
- Do you have favorite writing-related books or web sites that you think could help fellow authors? Consider writing a short review of them.
- Did I mention reading the guidelines?

Writing for Vision is a lot easier than most people assume, and a few of our writers have gone on to sell material they first published in **Vision**, or to use the 'sale' as part of a resume to get a job at some other publication.

So, let's work together and get the next issues done.

Oh, and do go read the guidelines...

Starting in 2004. Vision began paying half a cent per word for articles. That's not much money, and I'm going to be asking a lot for that half cent -- both ezine rights as well as the right to publish anything we choose in a POD 'Best of' Anthology at the end of the year. By printing the anthology, we hope to make back the funds that I will be putting into Vision to buy the articles and perhaps even make enough to fund the following year's article acquisitions.

I will be limiting the number of articles bought, and 2000 words (\$10) will be the cut off point for payment. All the other guidelines remain the same. I will be looking for articles on theme-related, general writing and genre topics. If you have some suggestion that you think might help another writer, consider writing it into an article and submitting it to Vision.

We strive to maintain professional standards. Manuscripts must be professionally formatted, as free from spelling and grammatical errors as you can make them, and in what you perceive to be final draft form. We will not welcome massive rewrites of a piece after we have accepted it – when we accept it, we consider it pretty close to

finished, and will only edit it to our standards. If we feel that it need massive rewrites, we won't accept it.

If you have any questions, or wish to query about an article, email Vision@lazette.net

Please note that [Margaret Fisk](#) is now the Features' Editor and will handle all the review articles.

Guidelines:

Articles must be at least 500 words with 2000 words as the 'soft' top. I'm willing to go over that count if the article needs it, but payment stops at 2000 words.

Check your spelling and grammar! Also, if you are from a country that does not use US spelling conventions, let me know in the email. That will stop me from making several 'corrections' before I realize they aren't mistakes.

PLACE YOUR TITLE AND YOUR NAME AT THE TOP OF THE DOCUMENT. I

hate having to go search through emails, checking attachments, to figure whose article I'm actually reading.

Title

By

Your Name

Use one of these fonts: Courier, Courier New, Times New Roman, Verdana or Arial, 12pt.

Double space your manuscript.

Do **not** indent .

I would like submissions to be made in either Word Doc files, or .rtf files, and as attachments to the email. (I believe that WordPerfect allows .rtf saves, doesn't it?) If you use Works, a regular file will do, although (at least in the 4.5 version I have), this program also allows for an .rtf file save.

A plain text copy (.txt) can be sent, but be certain to mark any italics like this: **before and after the section in italics**, and bold likes this: **_before and after anything in bold._** If you cannot do attachments, use the body of the letter as the last resort.

Indicate book titles with italics. And yes, that means if you are doing a Word doc or rtf that you can use actual italics and not an underline to indicate italics. (This is not common submission procedure, but it's far easier for me since I can cut and paste to my wysiwyg web page editor.)

Do not use an underline for emphasis. Underline on websites indicates a link, and people often send emails to say the link is not working. Use italics or bold.

NO HTML code except for links, and those written in this fashion:

<http://www.whatever.com/this.htm>

Provide the ISBN #s and publishers for all books mentioned or reviewed. Do this by adding the title, author, publisher and ISBN# at the bottom of the file. The same is true for articles -- be certain to cite them.

An additional note to Word users: Turn off the 'smart quotes' option in Word, which can be found under Tools-AutoCorrect and then the tabs AutoFormat while you type AND Autoformat. Also uncheck the symbol replacement for --. While Smart Quotes look really neat on the screen, they sometimes translate to funny little squares that cannot be taken out with the 'find-replace' feature, but have to be hunted down by hand. If you are submitting anything electronically, you will very likely hear back from the editor on these. And remember -- a lot of print publishers are now asking for electronic copy for their end as well.

We've been receiving very good articles, and I hope that all of you look at the list of upcoming issues at the bottom of this page and choose something you feel comfortable with writing about.

We are also still looking for general genre-related articles. If you would like to write an article on how to research romantic settings, the proper use of codes in spy thrillers, etc., let us know. The genres we like to cover in each issue are:



Fantasy

Historical Fiction

Horror



Poetry

Romance

Science Fiction

Suspense & Mystery

Young Adult & Children

Young Writer's Scene

I'm always interested in any writing-related articles!

Thank you!

Lazette Gifford

Managing Editor

Questions? Queries? Submissions? [Email me!](#)