Roundtable Discussions for Professional Development

The New England Chapter’s traditional midwinter brunch will be held on Sunday, February 23, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Burlington, Mass. This meeting will feature lively roundtable discussions led by knowledgeable AMWA members — colleagues who will share their insights, offer valuable advice, and answer your questions while we all enjoy a leisurely late breakfast.

There will be 10 tables in all – 9 on career-related topics, plus a table for informal conversation. Choose the table that interests you most, give second and third choices if you have them, and note your choices on the registration form. Don’t delay, because seating at each table is limited and will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis upon receipt of payment. As always, guests and prospective members are welcome.

R O U N D T A B L E S

#1 MONEY MATTERS IN THE FREELANCE WORLD  
Leader: Jill Shuman  
Even the best writers won’t have financial success unless they know how to get what they’re worth. Whether you are currently freelancing or just considering it, here’s a primer of essentials about setting and raising rates, assessing the benefits of hourly rates versus project rates, collecting your due, and negotiating contracts. Share your experiences and tap into those of your colleagues.

#2 HEALTH LITERACY  
Leader: Helen Osborne  
Health literacy is about communicating health information in ways that patients, caregivers, and the public can understand, accept, and act on. If you are a medical writer with limited experience in creating patient education materials for diverse audiences, this discussion will introduce you to basic concepts of health literacy and highlight some of the ways you can improve health messages.

#3 FROM BENCH SCIENCE OR CLINICAL PRACTICE TO MEDICAL WRITING  
Leader: Andrea Gwosdow  
This roundtable will help scientists and clinicians discover how to use their skills in a career as a medical writer. Join colleagues to discuss how to make the transition. Explore the nuts and bolts of applying your skills to this new arena, including how to develop contacts and resources, how to get clips, and tips for finding a job.

#4 IMPROVING YOUR NETWORKING QUOTIENT  
Leader: Laurie LaRusso  
Networking is essential to professional success. Join a discussion of networking strategies, from the tried-and-true to the continually burgeoning – and sometimes overwhelming – array of contemporary social media sites. Bring not only your questions but also your thoughts, experiences, concerns, and success stories.

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Chapter Calendar

The New England Chapter’s year begins in mid-June, when a new slate of officers takes over. The officers and other members of the chapter’s Executive Council meet during the summer, but there are no general activities during July and August.

Regular Meetings: The chapter holds six regular meetings from September through June. Four of these meetings are in the Greater Boston area, and two are in Connecticut. Typically, these meetings start with a social hour, followed by dinner (except for a Sunday brunch in midwinter), then a program with a speaker, a panel presentation, or roundtable discussions.

Special Events: In addition to the regular meetings, the chapter holds one special event each year. A writing competition, culminating in presentation of the Will Solimene Awards for Excellence in Medical Communication, is held every other year. In the alternate years, the chapter holds the New England Conference, a full day of workshops on a Saturday in the spring.

Occasional Extras: Once in a while, the chapter schedules an informal event, such as a networking lunch. Every fall, at the AMWA Annual Conference, attendees from New England get together for an informal dinner at a restaurant near the conference hotel.

Writing Competition

2014 Will Solimene Awards for Excellence in Medical Communication

The Solimene awards competition, sponsored by the New England Chapter, is held every two years to recognize outstanding medical, biomedical, and health publications by New England writers. The 2014 competition is for work published online, in print, or in audiovisual media during 2012 and 2013.

Whether you write for a professional audience, healthcare consumers, or the general public, now is the time to seek recognition for your recent work. Think about what you have written either individually or collaboratively during the past two years, and consider entering your very best publications in the 2014 competition. The submission deadline is February 28.

The “Call for Entries,” which includes the competition rules and an official entry form, will be posted on the chapter website soon. When it’s available, we will let you know via the AMWA New England E-News.


Everyone is invited to an informal networking lunch at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, at Chang Sho, 1712 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. (between Harvard Square and Porter Square). Meet colleagues, raise work-related questions, and share tips on medical writing. Take the Red Line to Harvard Square and walk to the restaurant, or park across the street in the Chang Sho lot. Cost is the price of buffet lunch, plus your drink and tip. Please RSVP by Monday, March 10, to Francesca Coltrera at coltrera@comcast.net or 781-641-9872.

Plans for the Rest of the Chapter Year

There will be a dinner meeting in the Greater Boston area in April.

The Connecticut Program Committee, headed by Jill Max, vice president/Connecticut, has already begun making plans for a dinner meeting in New Haven in May. You don’t have to live in Connecticut to attend. Everyone is welcome!

This year’s special event will be a Saturday luncheon program in June featuring the 2014 Honors Speaker and presentation of the 2014 Will Solimene Awards.

STC Conference

New England InterChange 2014

The New England Chapter, Society for Technical Communication, is holding its annual InterChange conference the weekend of March 29-30 at the UMass Lowell Conference Center. For details, go to http://www.stcnewengland.org/.

AMWA Annual Conference

AMWA’s 74th Annual Conference will take place in Memphis, Tenn., October 8-11. Program planning is already well under way. Keep an eye on the monthly AMWA Update for information as it becomes available.
#5 SATISFIED CUSTOMERS KEEP COMING BACK FOR MORE
Leader: Kevin Flynn
Keeping clients happy is a genuine art, whether you're managing a communications agency, working for one boss at your company, or in your own freelance practice. Hear an experienced manager from a medical communications company that has enjoyed steady growth and an influx of new clients by exceeding the expectations of numerous pharmaceutical companies.

#6 SO YOU WANT TO BE A REGULATORY WRITER?
Leader: Linda Wood
Find out all about one of the hottest fields in medical writing: helping pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms prepare new drug applications and other regulatory documents for the FDA. Good regulatory writers are always in demand. Explore opportunities as a freelance or staff writer.

#7 NONREGULATORY WRITING IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL AND BIOTECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY
Leader: Kristin Stephan
Not all medical writers in pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies work on regulatory documentation. Join this discussion to learn about nonregulatory writing jobs in the pharma/biotech industry – in medical education, medical information, scientific publications, sales training, consumer information, corporate communications, and other areas.

#8 NO PORTFOLIO? NO PROBLEM!
Leader: Cheryl Lathrop
Create an instant medical writing portfolio out of thin air! Learn how to repurpose what you already have lying around the house and office, how to create new medical writing samples instantly in an afternoon, how to get people to let you write for them and thus get a sample, and how to make all your new writing samples look polished and professional.

#9 BLOGGING FOR MEDICAL WRITERS
Leader: Nicky Parry
Whether you're new to medical writing or a seasoned writer, if you are thinking about starting a blog, join this discussion of the advantages of blogging, some of the dos and don'ts, and even how to get started if you're feeling lost. If you are already a pro-blogger, join us and share your blog address or the addresses of other writers you find interesting or useful. All questions, tips, and comments welcomed!

Choose your topic, and join a practical discussion led by a knowledgeable AMWA member.

#10 INFORMAL CONVERSATION
Leader: Judy Linn
Would you just like to get together with other medical writers? This is a chance to network and talk shop (or not), catch up with AMWA friends, and make new professional acquaintances while you enjoy brunch in a relaxed setting.

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Linn Awards for New Medical Writers
New England Chapter Will Pay AMWA Dues
The chapter’s Judy Linn Membership Awards for new medical writers cover the cost of a year’s membership in AMWA and offer free registration for regular chapter meetings during that year. As a further benefit, experienced members are available to provide guidance in their various areas of expertise. The chapter will consider applications from New England residents who are at an early stage in their medical writing career. If you want to recommend a candidate, or if you wish to apply yourself, go to www.amwa-ne.org for details.

Fellowship Opportunity
Science Journalism Program at MBL
The Logan Science Journalism Program of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass., provides fellowships for science and health journalists to study there for 10 days. This year’s program takes place from May 28 to June 6. Deadline to apply is March 1. For information, go to http://www.mbl.edu/sjp/.
Chapter Website Extra
Credentials to Enhance Your Résumé

In September, at the chapter’s first meeting of the program year, Jill Shuman talked about various certifications, certificates, university programs, and online training that can help a medical communicator stand out in the employment market. If you were unable to attend the meeting, you can still learn about these credentials by viewing Jill’s presentation slides, which she has allowed us to post on our website (www.amwa-ne.org).

December Meeting Report
The Nuts and Bolts of Self-Publishing

At the chapter’s December dinner program in Newton, Mass., David Pallai, founder and president of Mercury Learning and Information and an instructor at Boston University, explained what is involved in becoming a self-published author, including acquiring International Standard Book Number (ISBN)/International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) permissions and developing production, marketing, and distribution strategies.

First, Mr. Pallai encouraged potential authors to understand their reasons for self-publishing. It is important to clarify your goals and know who your audience is. Reasons for self-publishing may be free dissemination of information, the desire to contribute to research or literature in a certain field, or financial gain.

He then presented an overview of the publishing process, including the major functional areas: editorial, production, marketing, sales, distribution/fulfillment, and administrative. He explained that publishers are categorized by their target audiences and include trade and mass market publishing for the consumer; scientific, technical, and medical (STM) for libraries and the professional; magazine/newspaper; software developers/electronic publication and distribution; and textbooks for universities. Each category comes with standard discounts that must be given to vendors. For example, if Barnes & Noble sells a book for $19.95, $8.97 goes to the publisher, and 90¢ goes to the author at 10% royalty. A 7.5% to 10% royalty is typical for an author in the trade category.

One self-publishing option is to form your own small press. If you write multiple books, this can be a good tax write-off. Self-publishers can purchase an ISBN for about $100. Mr. Pallai suggested using Exeter Premedia Services for production issues such as copyediting, figure creation, design/layout, proofreading, indexing, and file conversion, but noted that cover design should be handled separately.

Authors can use a print distributor, electronic distributor, “vanity” press (e.g., AuthorHouse), or some combination of these options. A vanity press is as close to traditional publishing as possible, and is expensive, but generally includes ISBN and copyright information. Importantly, Mr. Pallai stated that an author should never give exclusive copyright to anyone. You can have your book in several different venues at once.

Mr. Pallai compared and contrasted some print distributors (Amazon’s Create Space, LuLu, AuthorHouse) and electronic distributors (Amazon Kindle, AuthorCloudware, Smashwords, LuLu), based on the following: copyright retention (i.e., the author versus the distributor); the distributor’s preparation fees, customer base, and ability to convert files, send electronic review copies, assign an ISBN, and provide search engine optimization (SEO) and limited digital rights management (DRM) to protect your work from piracy; and the author’s royalty percentage. He also noted that the author’s subsidiary rights are important; they include translation rights, movie rights, and audio book rights to your work.

He emphasized that promotion is essential, and authors commonly use blogs, speaking engagements, etc. to drive potential buyers to their books. He also recommended having at least $1,000 set aside to advertise, get your book into a wholesaler, optimize the cover, etc. Promotion options to consider include LinkedIn groups, email marketing, and association blogs. Goodreads will solicit reviews of your work, offer book giveaways, host author blogs and bio pages, and offer advertising packages; however, there are piracy issues. Vistaprint excels at email marketing and web design, and can help you establish brand identity. PR Newswire provides a press release service that is a must-have for a self-publisher; clients can choose which media outlets to target.

Although international and digital sales channels predominate in self-publishing, Mr. Pallai also encouraged self-publishers to get involved with wholesalers who promote bulk sales to places such as pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. Pallai provided meeting attendees with a compilation of links to further information about self-publishing. For AMWA members who were unable to attend, this resource list is available on request. If you are interested, send an email to Mr. Pallai at dpallai@gmail.com.

—Marisa Greenfield
Secretary
Personal Notes
The second edition of Richard C. Frank, MD’s award-winning book, Fighting Cancer with Knowledge and Hope: A Guide for Patients, Families, and Health Care Providers, was published by Yale University Press in 2013. Rich is director of cancer research at the Whittington Cancer Center at Norwalk Hospital and medical director of Mid-Fairfield Hospice. He is also an oncology and hematology expert for WebMD.

Cindy Wilkinson Seip, MS, MPH, is now director, medical writing at Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co. She was previously director, medical communications at Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Kimberly Cufari has joined IDEXX Laboratiries as a document specialist. She was previously a scientific associate at Norvartis Institute.

Stacey Ellender, PhD, clinical research scientist at Lahey Hospital and Medical Center, earned a certificate in clinical research conduct and management from the University of California at Berkeley Extension School in 2013.

Five chapter members recently earned AMWA certificates:
• Susan A. Chow, PhD, ELS, freelance scientific editor and writer (Essential Skills)
• Deborah A. Ferguson, PhD, independent scientific consultant (Essential Skills)

New Members
The New England Chapter cordially welcomes those from our six-state region who have recently joined AMWA, reestablished their affiliation with the association, or moved here from another chapter area:

Yael Abadi
New Haven, Connecticut

Michael Henry Alaimo, PhD
Amesbury, Massachusetts
Pfizer

Amy Boches
Biographics
Brookline, Massachusetts

Aida Cerundolo, MD
Greenland, New Hampshire

Pamela Chan, MS
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

Lois E. Commodore, BS
Norwood, Massachusetts

Jackie deBettencourt
PAREXEL
Billerica, Massachusetts

Stephen G. Diana, DVM, MS
Quaker Hill, Connecticut
Pfizer

Marsha Fisher
MFK Communications
East Sandwich, Massachusetts

Claire S. Gricks, PhD
Medfield, Massachusetts

Jennifer L. Hensel, MS
Presentus Research Communications
Sandy Hook, Connecticut

Aditi Jhaveri, MS
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts

Meghan Malone-Moses, MPH
Ipswich, Massachusetts
EBSCO Information Services

Karishma Manzur, PhD
Arlington, Massachusetts

Nicholas Christine Osborne, RAC, PhD
South Hadley, Massachusetts
Cato Research
[from Carolinas Chapter]

Randi Redmond Oster, BSEE, MBA
Well Path Press
Fairfield, Connecticut

Michal Piacentini, MD
Boston, Massachusetts

Maureen Sullivan Romagnoli, BA, MBA
Manchester, New Hampshire
HeartWare Inc.

Susan Tibedo
Siemens Healthcare
Norwood, Massachusetts

Susan Louise Young, PhD
Boston, Massachusetts

Christopher Zurenko, MSc
Zurenko Consulting
Lincoln, Massachusetts

‘AMWA New England E-News’
Timely Information for Chapter Members
Watch for email with “AMWA New England E-News” in the subject line. The brief messages let you know about a local job opening, freelance opportunity, upcoming chapter meeting, or some other event of potential interest to members of the New England Chapter.

LinkedIn Subgroup
Regional Networking Community Open to All
Our chapter’s LinkedIn subgroup is open to anyone in New England with an interest in medical writing—prospective members as well as AMWA members. To join the regional online conversation, go to www.linkedin.com and follow the links to subgroups.
How to Register for February 23 Meeting

You can register for this event either online or by mail, depending on how you wish to pay.

To pay by credit card, use the electronic registration form on the chapter website (www.amwa-ne.org). Fill it out and continue to the PayPal form, where you can enter your credit card information. (You don’t need a PayPal account, and you will not be charged a fee for the transaction.)

To pay by check, download the printable registration form from the chapter website (www.amwa-ne.org), print a copy, fill it out, and mail it with your check to the address on the form.

Directions to February 23 Meeting

Hilton Garden Inn
5 Wheeler Road
Burlington, Massachusetts
781-272-8800

The hotel is just off the Middlesex Turnpike, not far from Route 128/I-95. There is ample free parking.

Heading north or south on Route 128/I-95:
Take Exit 32B (Middlesex Turnpike). Turn left onto the Middlesex Turnpike. Then take a left onto Wheeler Road. The hotel is less than a third of a mile ahead on the left.

For detailed driving directions from your location, go to: http://national.citysearch.com/profile/4653368/burlington_ma/hilton_garden_inn.html.

Need a ride to the meeting?
The Burlington Hilton Garden Inn is not accessible by public transportation. If you don’t have a car, ask Judy Linn (judyhlinn@aol.com) whether there is someone from your area who might be able to give you a lift.

WINTER WEATHER ALERT!
SHOULD SEVERE WINTER WEATHER REQUIRE POSTPONEMENT OF THE MEETING, OUR CHAPTER PRESIDENT WILL NOTIFY EVERYONE BY EMAIL. IF DRIVING CONDITIONS LOOK REALLY BAD AND YOU ARE UNABLE TO ACCESS YOUR EMAIL, CALL JUDY LINN AT 508-358-7071 BEFORE YOU HEAD OUT—JUST TO BE SURE.

Executive Council Meeting, February 23

The chapter’s governing board, the Executive Council, meets twice a year, first in the early summer (the chapter year begins in mid-June) and again in the winter. These meetings give chapter leaders a chance to get together in person to talk about business matters, unexpected problems, ideas for future events, etc.

The winter council meeting will be held Sunday, February 23, at 2:00 p.m., immediately following the roundtable discussions. Any chapter member is welcome to suggest an item for the agenda. If there is a topic or issue you feel should be addressed, whether it’s an idea for a future meeting, a complaint, or a suggestion for new or improved services, our chapter president, Shanna McClennen, would be glad to hear from you (shannamccclennen@gmail.com).

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2013-14

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: Shanna McClennen
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: Derek Dore
PRESIDENT-ELECT: Theresa Singleton
VICE PRESIDENT/CONNECTICUT: Jill Max
SECRETARY: Marisa Greenfield
TREASURER: Jill Shuman

DIRECTORS / COMMITTEE MEMBERS

■ PROGRAMS: Theresa Singleton
■ CONNECTICUT PROGRAMS: Jill Max
   Margi Goldstein, Anita Kuan, Suzanne Sobel
■ MEMBERSHIP: Judy Linn
■ MEMBERSHIP AWARDS: David Olle
   Francesca Coltrera, Nancy Knoblock Hunton, Jill Shuman, Debbie von Rechenberg
■ E-NEWS: Shanna McClennen
■ NEWSLETTER: Judy Linn
■ LINKEDIN SUBGROUP: Laurie MacDougall
■ NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Theresa Singleton
■ WRITING AWARDS: Jill Shuman
   Judy Linn, Laurie MacDougall
■ WEB SITE: Aaron Federman
   Judy Linn, Jill Shuman

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Francesca Coltrera, Andrea Gwosdow, Laurie LaRusso,
Joann Merriman, Olivier Morteau, Nicola Parry, Kristin
Stephan, Debbie von Rechenberg

DELEGATES TO AMWA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shanna McClennen, Theresa Singleton
ALTERNATES: Derek Dore, Jill Max