September 8: Dinner Meeting in Lexington, Mass.
From Piles to Files: Helping Medical Communicators Get Organized

The New England Chapter will open the 2005-06 year with a dinner meeting on Thursday, September 8, at the Yangtze River restaurant in Lexington, Mass. The topic—of interest to writers and editors alike—is “From Piles to Files: Helping Medical Communicators Get Organized.”

Are stacks of paper crowding you into a corner of your office? Is your old computer sitting on the floor collecting dust? Is your ability to meet deadlines slipping? This joint presentation by professional organizers Allison Schnipper and Patty Bareford will help you better organize the hours of your day and the space in your life.

Masters in the art of organizing, they will help you tackle the obstacles that stand between you and your professional goals. Using time-tested tools and techniques, they’ll provide practical guidance on managing time, space, and the inevitable avalanche of paper that medical communicators confront each day. They’ll come equipped with handouts of their presentation—paper you’ll want to keep!—and leave plenty of time for your questions.

Allison and Patty are both members of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO). Allison graduated from Dartmouth College in 1992, received her PhD in genetics from Harvard in 1997, and founded Professional Organizing Services three years later. A past president of NAPO, she now works out of her home in Sharon, Mass.

In 1998 Patty established Wide Open Spaces, a professional organizing company in Concord, Mass. that specializes in the intentional use of space, time, and life. She works to create sustainable order and increased efficiency in residential, home office, and small office environments. Patty has served as vice president of the New England chapter of NAPO and is a member of the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization.

As always, the New England Chapter welcomes guests and prospective members.

—Lonnie K. Christiansen
President-Elect/Program Director

Note: If you are working toward an AMWA Professional Development Certificate (see page 6), you can earn 5 points by attending this meeting.
Chapter Calendar

The New England Chapter schedules seven regular meetings a year, from September through June. Five of these meetings are held in the Greater Boston area, and two are held in Connecticut. Every meeting begins with a social hour, followed by dinner (except for a Sunday brunch in midwinter), then a program with a speaker, panel presentation, or roundtable discussions.

A writing competition that culminates in the Will Solimene Awards is held every other year, alternating with the New England Conference, an all-day program of workshops. Often, informal networking meetings or tours are scheduled.

AMWA Conference in Pittsburgh
September 29-October 1
If you are going to the conference, don’t forget the “Chapter Meet & Greet,” Thursday evening from 6:30 to 7:30—a great chance to meet or catch up with some of your New England colleagues.

Worcester/MetroWest Area Networking dinners
The first Worcester/MetroWest Area informal networking dinner in Shrewsbury, Mass. on July 27 featured Stephen Soreff, MD, a local freelance medical writer and educator who specializes in psychiatric topics. A lively discussion about medical and scientific writing, as well as enjoyment of Chumlee’s Chinese food, followed Dr. Soreff’s short presentation.

There seems to be enough interest to have more meetings on a semi-regular basis. The next one is tentatively scheduled for late September. Watch the e-mail messages from the chapter for details. Or contact Laura Ruth at lrsline@yahoo.com or 508-755-8490.

Western Mass./Southern Vermont Area Networking dinners
Informal, Dutch-treat networking dinners are tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 8 (possibly in a “peak foliage area”) and Wednesday, December 7 (probably at Bertucci’s in West Springfield). Everyone is welcome. For information or to be added to the Western Massachusetts/Southern Vermont list, contact Pat Boone at pat@bmtc.biz or 413-533-5711.

Connecticut Fall Meeting
The chapter will hold the Connecticut fall dinner program in October, most likely in New Haven. All Connecticut members will receive a detailed notice and registration form in September. Other members and prospective members are welcome. To be added to the mailing list, contact Lynne Dodson at ldodson@snet.net or by fax to 203-380-9226.

Greater Boston Area
Join your colleagues for an informal, Dutch-treat networking lunch on Friday, October 21, at 12:00 noon. Meet at Changsho, 1712 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. (between Harvard Square and Porter Square). Take the Red Line to Harvard Square and walk to the restaurant, or park in the restaurant’s lot across the street.

There is no registration fee, but reservations are a must. At least a few days ahead, contact Francesca Coltrera at 781-641-9872 or coltrera@comcast.net.

2006 Writing Competition
Start thinking now about what you might like to enter in the New England Chapter’s 2006 writing competition. Members may submit books, articles, and other materials written for a professional, general, or patient audience and published in calendar year 2004 or 2005. Take advantage of this opportunity to have your very best work recognized by your peers. It only comes around every other year.

Submission guidelines and an entry form will be enclosed with the November newsletter. Deadline for submissions will be February 1, 2006. Authors of winning entries will receive the Will Solimene Award of Excellence in Medical Communication at a banquet in June.

If you have questions, contact Jill Shuman, Awards Director, at jill@jillshuman.com.
May Meeting Report
Advice on marketing one’s services and negotiating pay

At the chapter’s Sunday brunch meeting in May, in Lexington, Mass., Susan Sullivan and Brian Bass, offered a wealth of advice on positioning yourself and selling your services for the best price possible—whether as a freelancer or a job seeker.

Mr. Bass, president of Bass Advertising & Marketing Inc. in Robbinsville, N.J., set forth several guidelines for freelance writers who seek to justify their rates:

- “Cash is king.” Don’t become confused in rate negotiations by thinking too much about the “soft benefits” of a job.
- “Know what the traffic will bear.” Keep informed of prevailing rates.
- Consider how much your service is worth to the client. The most sophisticated freelance negotiations are not by the hour but by the project.
- Freelance writers who set their rates too low do a disservice to all parties, complicating trade and encouraging inefficiency. If you think you are at risk of losing a client because of the fee level, negotiate reduced services, not reduced fees.
- Separate contract/business finances from personal finances. This not only saves you endless worry if you happen to be audited, but is also wise general practice.
- When offering a “courtesy” rate to a new client, distinguish that rate from the real value so the client knows the true cost.

In discussing salary negotiations, Mr. Bass said that most writers “shoot themselves in the foot” by focusing on the wrong variables. He advised seeking your true worth by being the best you can in your role. To that end, he recommended paying attention to an employer’s particular needs and the ways in which you might solve the employer’s problems. Furthermore, he said, “Promise what you will deliver.” In practice, this requires clearly and frequently articulating your understanding of desired deliverables and raising any questions early in the process. Having settled on a “delivery contract,” you must deliver what you have promised. (One implication is that the better of two staff writers may deliver considerably less than the other, yet be viewed as superior because of better contract management. Another implication is that delivery contracts, whether in freelance or salaried relations, must be carefully considered; it is dangerous to “promise on the fly.”) Mr. Bass recommended negotiating compensation creatively, considering not simply salary but also other benefits.

Susan Sullivan, owner of Mako Associates in Worcester, Mass., echoed some of Mr. Bass’s points while placing particular emphasis on distinguishing product management from “perception management.”

According to Ms. Sullivan, the success of a market-positioning strategy depends not on what the writer (producer) thinks about the product, but on what the customer thinks about it. Successful marketing depends on managing the customer’s perceptions of the product, as distinct from—though not to the exclusion of—managing the product.

To manage the customer’s perceptions, you must understand the background and needs, what you have to offer, and what the competition is. Using these pieces of information, you must formulate your “value proposition” to the customer. Then, once you know what your value proposition is, you must have a clear marketing plan that will allow you to speak consistently about your service.

—Elizabeth Schuyler Coons
Acting Secretary, 2004-05

June Meeting Report

Between the social hour and the roundtable dinner at the chapter’s last meeting of the 2004-05 year in June, at Rebecca’s Café in Burlington, Mass., outgoing president Diane Bell held a short business meeting. Diane thanked the officers, directors, and other council members who had supported the chapter through the year. She then introduced the new officers: Andrea Gwosdow, president; Lonnie Christiansen, president-elect and program director; Adriane Bishko, secretary; and Jill Shuman, treasurer. (Lynne Dodson, unable to attend the meeting, is serving another term as vice president for Connecticut.)

Diane also remembered our colleague, Patricia Busacker, who died of cancer last December, by reading aloud the obituary that Nancy Knoblock Hunton wrote for the January 2005 New England Chapter News.

The roundtables, always a popular format, drew about 55 registrants, eager to discuss career-related topics. From the buzzing conversations throughout the room, it appeared that a lot of good information was exchanged.

Thanks go to the table leaders, who guided lively, practical discussions: Jill Shuman (“Transitioning into Medical Writing”), Lonnie Christiansen, who kindly filled in at the last minute (“Life as a Freelance Medical Writer”), Nancy Knoblock Hunton (“Writing for Consumers and Patient Education”), Andrea Gwosdow (“Writing for Scientists and Clinicians”), Lynn Lederman (“Writing for Industry”), Laurie LaRusso “Writing for the Web”), Kevin Flynn (“Writing for Medical Education and Medical Communications Companies”), and Kathryn Delude (“Writing for Magazines, Newsletters, and Newspapers”). At the “social table,” conversation ranged widely, covering among other subjects Patricia Carroll’s experiences last year in writing and promoting her first book, What Nurses Know and Doctors Don’t Have Time to Tell You
Personal Notes

Helen Osborne, MEd, OTR/L is host of “Health Literacy Out Loud,” a series of interviews with health literacy advocates who are working to improve communication of health information. For more information or to order the CDs, go to www.healthliteracy.com.

Laurie LaRusso, MS, ELS has left her position as senior medical writer at Boston Scientific Corporation to pursue a freelance medical writing career. Under the business name Chestnut Medical Communications, she will provide writing and editing services for manuscripts, abstracts, scientific slide presentations, continuing medical education, medical research news, and consumer/patient articles. Laurie is a past-president of the New England Chapter and continues to serve on the Executive Council as a member-at-large.

Maria W. Adams, MPH, RD, has joined Ebsco Publishing in Ipswich, Mass. as a health writer/editor. She was formerly with HealthGate Data Corp.

Victoria Alexander has joined the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston as senior scientific writer/editor. Tori was formerly director of manuscript editing at the New England Journal of Medicine.

Maria C. Domenici, MA, formerly with the American Red Cross, is now a writer at the University of Massachusetts.

Chapter Changes

Phillip S. Leventhal, PhD has moved to Arlington Heights, Illinois, and he is now a member of the Greater Chicago Area Chapter. Lori A. Martell, PhD has moved to Beaconsfield, Quebec, and she is now a member of the Canada Chapter.

Theresa Rogstad, MPH, who received one of the chapter’s 2004 Judy Linn Membership Awards, has transferred to the Ohio Valley Chapter. Terry writes:

My relocation to Louisville is rather unusual. My husband has left his career as an IT executive and is pursuing a seminary degree—something he has wanted to do since he was a young man. The seminary is here in Louisville. We sold our big house in Connecticut, are using the profit to finish paying for our two boys’ college educations, and are sort of starting over. My job with Hayes Inc. is a work-at-home position, so I was able to bring that with me. Louisville is a pretty significant healthcare center, but I will miss being part of an AMWA chapter as active as the New England group.

I will be going to my first AMWA annual meeting this year, so if [any New England member] wants to look me up and take me under their wing, that would be nice.

Chapter members contribute to 2005 AMWA conference; student chapter member receives conference scholarship

Four New England AMWA members will be sharing their knowledge and experience at AMWA’s Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, September 29-October 30.

Diane Bell, ScD, medical writer at Clinical Therapeutics Inc., Lexington, Mass. and the New England Chapter’s immediate past president, is giving a poster presentation on “Document Tracking Tools Using Microsoft Office.”

Kevin Flynn, senior vice president at Fusion Medical Education LLC, Salem, Mass. and a past president of the New England Chapter, is leading the Core workshop on “Educating Sales Representatives About Science and Medicine.”

Janet Timpano, MS, a manager at Pfizer Inc., Groton, Conn., is leading an open session on “How to Establish Strong Partnerships With Freelance Writers to Prepare Clinical Study Reports.”

Mary Zoll, PhD, lecturer in the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies at MIT, Cambridge, is leading an open session on “How to Measure Writing Skills.”

Also, AMWA has announced that Lisa Lines is one of two recipients of a Conference Student Scholarship this year. She will be honored at the Pittsburgh conference. Lisa is pursuing a bachelor’s in technical communications at Northeastern University, with a focus on health services and literacy.


Chapter Membership Awards

Since 2001, the New England Chapter’s Judy Linn Membership Awards have provided professional development and networking support to medical and health communicators who are fairly new to the field.

The chapter will accept applications from candidates who live and work in New England. There is no application fee. As many as three awards may be given in any period.

The award, a one-year membership in AMWA (which includes chapter membership), will be presented at a chapter dinner meeting.

Candidates may apply on their own, or they may be nominated by a chapter member. Applications may be submitted at any time.

For more information or to request an application form, contact David Olle, Membership Awards Director, at 802-254-3899 or eastshire@direcway.com.
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:

Vicki E. Altroggen, BA
Arlington, Massachusetts
*Biogen Idec*

Hugh J. Bartlett
Alden Image Network
Bristol, Connecticut

Dawn M. Blitz, PhD
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Susanna J. Bohme, AM
Never Again Consulting
Attleboro, Massachusetts

Pamela M. Bush, BA, MA
Creative Communications
Harvard, Massachusetts

Kenneth H. Cohn, MD, MBA
Natick, Massachusetts
*Cambidge Management Group*

Matt Craver
Bloomfield, Connecticut

Shannon Davis
MedKnowledge Group
Chester, Connecticut

Erling Thor Donnelly, PhD
Coley Pharmaceutical Group Inc.
Wellesley, Massachusetts

Catherine Duffek
Quincy, Massachusetts
*Emerson College/Tufts University School of Medicine*

Stephanie M. English
Stoughton, Massachusetts
*Health Ink Communications*

Debra Estrellita
DEL Editorial Services
Cranston, Rhode Island

Joanne Faber, APRN/BC, JD
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
*Boston Healthcare System*

Kirstie C. Fiora
Lexington, Massachusetts

Kathryn A. Goodfellow
Brigham and Women’s Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Noah Gourlie
MedKnowledge Group
Chester, Connecticut

Betsey Henkels
Somerville, Massachusetts

Dan Hennessy, PhD, MBA
Medfield, Massachusetts

Joanna Hicks
Winthrop, Massachusetts
*Perceptive Informatics*

Kristin Hood
Littleton, Massachusetts

Todd A. Kawecki, DC
Old Saybrook, Connecticut

Maureen A. McDonough, MS
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Jan McGonagle, MD
Keene, New Hampshire

Erin Meyers
MedKnowledge Group
Chester, Connecticut

Alicia M. Muck
Tewksbury, Massachusetts
*Wyeth*

Michael L. O’Brien
M. L. O’Brien Communications LLC
North Easton, Massachusetts

Virginia J. Owen, PhD
Millenium Pharmaceuticals
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Christine C. Peters
Attleboro, Massachusetts
*Massachusetts General Hospital*

Elizabeth L. Pham, PharmD
Genzyme Corporation
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Susan K. Pillsbury
Westborough, Massachusetts

Daniel U. Rabin, PhD
Branford, Connecticut

Debra M. Regan
South Attleboro, Massachusetts
*Applied Biosystems*

Raquel A. Schott
Harvard Health Publications
Boston, Massachusetts

Susan Robles
Framingham, Massachusetts

John Rynak
SciGenium
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Rochelle Sharpe
Brookline, Massachusetts

Suzanne G. Sobel, PhD
New Haven, Connecticut

Megan M. Stephan, PhD
Cheshire, Connecticut

Manee Tang
Eagon Systems
Wayland, Massachusetts

Ronald I. Trust, PhD
Pfizer Global R & D
New London, Connecticut

Heidi Wang, PhD
Bristol-Myers Squibb
Wallingford, Connecticut

Tracy Webb, PhD, ELS
Boston, Massachusetts

Maureen O. Weeks, MEd
Longmeadow, Massachusetts

Katherine S. Woodworth
Arlington, Massachusetts
[from Rocky Mountain Chapter]
Directions to September 8 Meeting

Yangtze River Restaurant
21 Depot Square (off Massachusetts Avenue)
Lexington, Massachusetts
781-861-6030

Depot Square is a small, three-sided block directly off Massachusetts Avenue, which is the main street in Lexington Center. The Depot Square roadway begins and ends on Mass. Ave. There is some on-street parking as well as parking in municipal lots in back of Depot Square.

From Route 128/I-95
Take Exit 31A East to Routes 4/225, which is Bedford Street. Follow the signs into Lexington Center past the Minute Man statue, where Bedford Street joins Mass. Ave. Depot Square is just ahead on the left.

From Route 2
Take the exit for Waltham Street, Lexington. Follow signs for Lexington Center to the traffic lights at the end of Waltham Street. Turn left onto Mass. Ave. Depot Square is ahead on the right.

From Cambridge/Arlington
Follow Mass. Ave. north to Lexington Center. Depot Square is on the right.

Need a ride to the meeting?
If you don't have a car, contact Judy Linn (508-358-7071 or judyhlinn@aol.com) to find out if anyone from your area is driving to the meeting. Or call Joann Merriman (781-891-0028) to see if she can pick you up at a T station or another, mutually convenient location.

E-Mail Messages from the Chapter

The New England Chapter now has a mechanism for reminding you of an upcoming meeting or letting you know quickly when we hear of a job opening or freelance assignment, an event, or anything else that may be of interest to chapter members.

Messages will be brief, giving only as much information as is necessary for you to follow up if you want to.

No one except the chapter president can post information. If you have something to share, send it to President Andrea Gwosdow at editor@gwosdow.com for consideration. (Please, however, do not submit queries. This is not a bulletin board.)

If you don’t want to receive occasional messages, you may unsubscribe. You can do this online when you receive a message, or you can ask Judy Linn, chapter membership director, to do it for you. If you unsubscribe, then change your mind, Judy can also resubscribe you; you can’t do it yourself. Contact her at judyhlinn@aol.com.

Please note that messages will be sent only to current New England Chapter members.

Professional Development Certificate

AMWA’s new Professional Development Certificate allows you to validate your service to the association and “your continued commitment to professional development beyond the scope of your regular job.” Note that the PDC is entirely different from the certificate earned by taking Core or Advanced Curriculum workshops.

For details, go to the AMWA Web site (www.amwa.org), click on Education/Development, then click on Professional Development Certificate.

Because attendance at a regular chapter meeting earns points toward a PDC, we will have vouchers available at the meetings, whether in the Greater Boston area or in Connecticut.

If you need verification of your participation in one of the noncredit workshops at the 2005 New England Conference in Framingham, Mass. or your attendance at any of the regular chapter meetings that took place between January 2004 and June 2005, contact Judy Linn at judyhlinn@aol.com or 508-358-7071.
[Note: The PDC was the brain child of Jill Shuman, our chapter treasurer and a past chapter president, who proposed the concept when she was AMWA’s Administrator of Education in 2003.]

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2005-06

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