

The Zephyr

A newsletter for children's writers and illustrators

From your Regional Advisors

Key, Nevada SCBWI! I'm writing this from Edgerton, Wisconsin, where I just spent the day at a lovely little book festival. Imagine my surprise, sharing the stage with Denise Vega, the RA from Colorado. And there, in the gym with the authors signing books, were Pam Beres, RA from Wisconsin, plus her new ARA, Judy. One really awesome thing about SCBWI is the network of great friends you develop over the years. Here I am, in a totally unfamiliar town, and I find people I know to spend time with. It's awesome.

Two weeks ago, Suzy and I had the great pleasure of overseeing SCBWI Nevada's first novel immersion retreat. It was an amazing weekend, on many levels. Granlibakken provided beautiful accommodations, and the food was to die for. Better yet was the quality of the writing shared through critique. Both editors commented on how excellent it was and said it was above and beyond what they often see. It was gratifying to witness writers who have worked so hard at their craft acknowledged by faculty and peers. To have played some small part in that brings real satisfaction.

The editors, in fact, asked to see full manuscripts from a number of our attendees. These writers have been honing work for several years, and all that effort shows. The lesson here is patience, perseverance, and faith in themselves and their work. When we see these books in print (not guaranteed yet, of course, but certainly much closer), we can all celebrate the culmination of their dreams, and perhaps reach for even bigger dreams of our own.

—Ellen Hopkins, *Regional Co-advisor, Nevada SCBWI*

Two weeks ago, about forty of us were at the Nevada SCBWI Novel Immersion Retreat at Lake Tahoe talking about books, critiquing books, revising books, networking, laughing, and

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Inside this issue

Tips for writing material that supplements nonfiction

An interview with artist Sharon Mann

A recap of the novelist retreat at Granlibakken

Plus

Upcoming SCBWI events

Good news!



Las Vegas Update

SCBWI Las Vegas ends the year with the Ready, Set, Publish! Workshop on October 18, where we have the good fortune to host Tricycle Press project editor Abigail Samoun, fantasy-series author Linda Joy Singleton, middle-grade nonfiction author Michelle Parker-Rock, and our very own bestselling author and co-RA Ellen Hopkins. For more information, visit www.nevadascbwi.org

On February 7, 2009, we will hold a general meeting at the West Charleston Library. Our guest speaker will be local YA author Daria Snadowsky, who will speak about her path from college student to Random House author, share tips about getting an agent, and tell us how she found a publisher for her book *Anatomy of a Boyfriend*.

It's been a great year! I am grateful for our wonderful volunteers and enthusiastic members.

—*Ann Kimbrough,*
Las Vegas Coordinator,
Nevada SCBWI

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crying. Our group included two men, one dog, all of our novel mentors for 2009, and many published writers, and everyone was serious about writing better novels. The weather was great and the hill to our meeting rooms was steep. We drank a lot of wine.

Participants flew in from Ontario, Canada; Florida; New York City; Chicago; and Los Angeles. They wanted to share what we have right here in Reno/Tahoe. And I don't mean the trees. Our region is getting a reputation for putting on professional events that raise the bar of writing, illustrating, and presentation. Editors comment on the quality of the work they see here. Participants from out of the area are a little amazed at how we know and support each other.

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Then, tonight I had the thrill of trying to squeeze into Comma Coffee in Carson City to go to Nevada SCBWI member Heidi Ayarbe's book signing for her novel *Freeze Frame*. I remember reading early chapters of the book and sitting in critique group with Heidi reading our latest efforts. And there was the day we decided we'd both break into fiction as chic lit authors. Thank goodness that didn't work. But writing *Freeze Frame* did. That crowd at the coffee house was too cool.

Ellen and I love watching our members' careers unfold and seeing the connections that are made—whether personal, professional, or creative breakthroughs. Which brings me to our mentor program. It is an opportunity for you to step up your craft right here in Nevada. We encourage people from across the country to apply, but that isn't to keep our Nevada people out. It's to challenge you to compete on a national level. That's part of this business. And many of you are up to the competition.

If you have been working at your craft for a while and you feel you are nearing publication, or if you just feel you are ready for the mentor experience, go to www.nevadascbwi.org (ok, you're probably already here) and click on *Mentor Program*. Read about our mentors, the program, the application process. If it seems like a fit, apply. We'd love to see lots of Nevadans and our friends from adjoining regions on the roster this spring.

—*Suzanne Morgan Williams, Regional Co-advisor, Nevada SCBWI*

Offer Supplemental Material to Sell Your Nonfiction

By Jenny MacKay

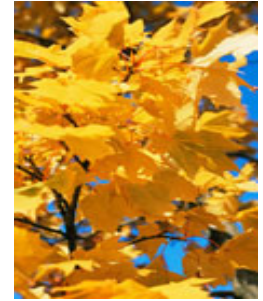
It's masterful, this manuscript you just branded with a flourish *The End*. It has everything an editor could possibly want. Brilliant narrative. Error-proof copy. A timely and provocative topic no one has covered in this decade. Research so thorough you can almost taste it on the page. You thought of everything...except back matter.

In kids' nonfiction these days, your finished manuscript may be only half of the book. To keep pace with all the great fiction out there, nonfiction needs to be jazzy—and the writing style, however outstanding, is not the first thing potential readers (and editors) will be paying attention to. Nonfiction books for any age pull heavily from the same tactics the picture book market relies on: They're succinct, colorful, and fast-paced, and there's always more to the story than the narrative alone can offer.

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Editors of nonfiction want to know what else there is to know. Once the narrative is written and the important points have been made, the book is not over. Editors want flashy facts on every page—zippy pull-quotes, “Did You Know” boxes, pithy sidebars, whatever it takes to grasp the fleeting attention of a young reader. They might want glossaries of the tough words (pronunciation guides too), lists of organizations to join, classroom activities, craft projects, science experiments, or age-appropriate books to read, all related to your topic. Readers might read more of your colorful sidebars and fact boxes than the manuscript you've spent so much time on. Editors know this, and they don't want to write the sidebars themselves. So...submit the “back” matter along with your draft, and you will vastly sweeten the deal for overworked editors sifting the slush pile for a manuscript package that is ready to go.

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Common types of back matter

- A glossary
- A list of resources where readers can find out more
- Projects for readers to try
- Interviews with experts
- Interesting anecdotes
- Historical facts
- Shocking statistics
- High-resolution photos

Tips for submission:

Write your book first. Include back matter separately at the end of your manuscript. Start a new page for each new type of back matter: glossary, works cited, etc.

Do not include back matter in the final word count of your manuscript.



Mark your calendar!

Don't miss out on these upcoming SCBWI events:

Las Vegas

Meet/Critique session
October 13
North Valleys Libr.

Ready, Set, Publish
Workshop**
October 18
College of Southern
Nevada

General Meeting
February 7, 2009
West Charleston Libr.

Reno/Sparks/ Lake Tahoe

All-Nevada SCBWI
Conference**
April 24-26, 2009
Virginia City, Nevada

Statewide

Mentor Program**
April–October 2009
Postmark deadline for
applications:
December 1, 2008

**Registration required

For details on
these events, visit

www.nevadascbwi.org

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You will not always know whether a particular publisher wants sidebars or not. If you are submitting for a particular series (say, *Ocean Carnivores*), a quick glance through its existing books will tell you exactly what to submit if you want your book to be considered seriously. Even if yours is a standalone book, publishers often follow consistent trends in their nonfiction titles. Discover what most of your target publisher's books seem to include for the age group you've chosen, and provide it as back matter with your submission.

***Sidebars are the place for amazing statistics
or a humorous story your word count did not allow.***

Initially, back matter may seem like a lot of extra work, but if you have researched your topic well, you'll have a pile of leftover details that did not make it into the manuscript. Sidebars are the place for amazing statistics you discarded because they bogged down your writing, or for a humorous case study or a point of historical significance your word count did not allow. If you find yourself wishing you could have talked about something, put it in a sidebar. A quick glance through your research notes will likely churn up all the tidbits you need to round out your back matter.

If you have no idea what back matter a particular editor will want or need, you can submit only the manuscript and your research sources—but be sure to mention in your cover letter what back matter you have prepared and that you can submit it immediately at the editor's request.

Do not underestimate the importance of back matter for nonfiction books. I recently finished a middle-grade nonfiction manuscript that was 96 total pages; 40 pages of that were back matter. Don't sell yourself half a book short—be prepared to offer supplemental material if (when!) editors ask for it.

Jenny MacKay is the editor of The Zephyr and the author of Fingerprints and Impression Evidence (Lucent Books, 2008) and five additional nonfiction books for teens that are due for release late this year and in 2009.

Las Vegas Members Take a Writing Field Trip

by Ann Kimbrough

SCBWI Las Vegas recently ventured across the valley for an in-town field trip. The outing took us to the Las Vegas Day School library, where we visited with creative designer, author, and artist Sharon Mann.

“My goal was to make money,” Mann admitted when asked how she got started in the business, but after years of trying to break into the children’s market, she says she felt frustrated. She got creative and turned to her “true love” for help—her artwork.

“My true love is working with fiber, needle and thread,” said Mann. “And illustrating.”

***“If you can’t get your work out there, do it for free.
Get those credits that show you are professional.”***

Mann decided to use her artwork to build a professional portfolio and resume. She turned to the craft industry, which appeared wide open to her skill set. What started as a way to make a little money and build her portfolio turned into a publishing career path.

“I wanted publishing credits. No one had to know what I got paid, if anything,” she said. Even if you have to work for nothing, Mann believes it’s worth the exposure. “If you feel like you’re stuck and can’t get your work out there, do it for free. Get those credits that show you are professional.”

Mann pointed to art shows sponsored by state, city, and county parks and recreation. “Search city Web sites for where they list coming art activities,” she advised. If art shows are not available in your town, she recommended teaming up with another artist and having a show. Then, take the show to local libraries, coffee shops, restaurants, senior centers, and nonprofit functions. “All are good places to get your start.”

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*You must lurk
in libraries
and climb the
stacks like
ladders to
sniff books
like perfumes
and wear
books like
hats upon
your crazy
heads.*

~Ray Bradbury





Spooky stories to read this month

The Old Willis Place,
by Mary Downing Hahn
Two kids discover a horrible truth about their past.

The Dark Pond,
by Joseph Bruchac
A deadly pond lures a Native American teen into the woods.

All Hallows' Eve,
by Vivian Van de Velde
Thirteen chilling short stories.

Voices after Midnight,
by Richard Peck
A teenager stumbles on a century-old mystery that began in his townhouse.

The Other Side of Dark
and *The Name of the Game Was Murder,*
by Joan Lowery Nixon
Two of this classic suspense writer's novels, combined in one volume.

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You don't have to be an artist, either. Mann suggested an art show of writing: "The whole idea is that your words are read." One idea is to write short stories, 100 words or less, frame them, and show them like artwork. "If you're having trouble getting published," Mann said, "Think of a new way to get your work out there."

***Rely on what you love
and it will lead the way.***

Mann is living proof that a unique approach works. She achieved her goal of making money. She created a publishing career that encompasses books for crochet, embroidery, doll making, and 3-D fabric art. She also co-created, with the talented Phyllis Mignard, a dazzling fabric fairytale mural that hangs in the Las Vegas Day School library. Their work was so well received that they are working on a second mural, this time adding the artistry of Shirley Burns.

"Don't be afraid to branch off to get published," said Mann, although she stressed that every artwork-inspired publishing job requires strong writing skills. Patterns for projects need clearly written instructions, for example, and dolls need clever stories about their origins.

The specifics for Mann's success are simple: rely on what you love and it will lead the way.

Visit Sharon Mann at www.sharonmandesigns.com. The pictures of her artwork are worth a trip!

Ann Kimbrough is the Las Vegas coordinator for Southern Nevada SCBWI.

Praise for September's Granlibakken Novelist Retreat

By Tracy Clark

I recently attended the Novel Immersion Retreat held September 19 to 21 at the Granlibakken Resort in Tahoe City. Our Regional Advisors pulled together an amazing faculty of editors and published authors whose job it was to teach, inform, inspire, motivate, and entertain all those in attendance. They did that and more.

To be surrounded by such genuinely supportive people is so uplifting when you toil and struggle each day, never knowing what it will amount to. I had the pleasure of interacting with various members of the faculty over the weekend. Each one demonstrated a generous willingness to help. Terry Trueman (Printz Honor winner for *Stuck In Neutral*) kept an open-door policy to come and share our work with him. Nancy Conescu (editor, Little, Brown and Company) gave me a detailed and thoughtful critique of my submission. And Susan Hart Lindquist (author, *Summer Soldiers*, *Wander*, and *Walking the Rim*) conducted nightly critique sessions that challenged me to view my writing in ways I never considered before.

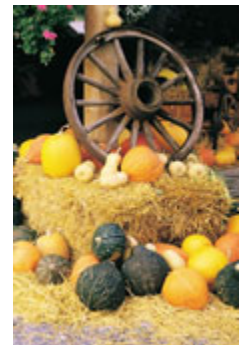
After a conference, I find that I always come away with a new insight or nugget of wisdom about the craft of writing or the business of publication. What I learned at the Granlibakken retreat was this: When someone offers a hand up, take it. When someone opens a door, be brave enough to walk through it. When others give you feedback, really listen. And when I'm published and it's my turn to face a room full of hopeful and talented people, I will remember the help I was offered, and give back.

These experiences truly are what you make of them. When an event is as well run and delightful as this was, you can't help but come away with renewed excitement to push forward. It proves, once again, that we Nevada writers are a lucky bunch, and we are quickly becoming known for our outstanding programs like this retreat as well as the Mentor Program (applications are now being accepted, hint-hint). I'm grateful to be a part of this group, and I certainly look forward to the second annual Novel Immersion Retreat!

Tracy Clark is an aspiring YA novelist who lives in Gardnerville, Nevada, with her husband and two kids.

*Your reader is
at least as
bright as you
are.*

~William Maxwell



*You can be a
little ungram-
matical if you
come from the
right part of the
country.*

~Robert Frost



Signs That You're a Writer

- You have to buy manila envelopes more often than toilet paper.
- You spend dinners out recording interesting sensory details on restaurant napkins.
- It took more time to pick a name for the main character in your latest novel than to name your actual kids.
- You have drafted detailed character sketches of your plumber, the garbage man, and your primary care physician.
- You rake leaves just so you can daydream while still appearing productive to others.
- You have pulled your car over in heavy traffic to jot down a spontaneous plot twist.
- You swell with pride when your tax return provides hard proof that you actually made a profit the previous year.

Good news

Nanette Cooper-McGuinness' translation (from Italian into English) of Vittorio Giardino's graphic novel *Sin Ilusion* (the third and final volume of his series on the Spanish Civil War, *No Pasaran*) was published by NBM in June. Congratulations, Nanette!

Janet Ann Collins of Grass Valley, California, has signed a picture-book contract for her Christmas story *Secret Service*, which should be in print by next September. Terrific news!

Linda Kay Hardie was invited to present a paper about children's literature at the academic conference of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association, held in Reno October 9–11. Linda was chosen to sit on the panel called "Depictions of 'Otherness' in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Children's Literature" and to read her paper "Which Witch? Wiccan Children Confront the Prejudices against Their Religion in Grim Fairy Tales Depictions." This is a very prestigious professional accomplishment!

Alan Jordan's picture book *Monster on Top of the Bed and Other Stories and Poems* is now available for sale at <http://www.LetsBeCreative.org>. It was illustrated by Manuela Pentangelo, an SCBWI member in Italy, and is available in two versions of English (one read by SCBWI member Virginia Castleman), one version of Italian (read by Manuela), and two versions of Spanish. Alan also received a \$983 Jackpot Grant from the Nevada Arts Council to attend the SCBWI Summer Conference, and he had the opportunity to meet Manuela in Bologna, Italy, when he was there for his daughter's wedding. Congratulations, Alan, and keep up the multinational work!

SCBWI Las Vegas Coordinator **Ann Kimbrough** won a Nevada Arts Council BETA Grant to present *Attack of the Pizza Monster* to 700 elementary students in November. Ann's program involves a Reader's Theater and a drawing exercise based on word clues from her story. Good going, Ann!

Heidi Ayarbe's first YA novel, *Freeze Frame*, was just released by HarperCollins. Congratulations, Heidi!

Ellen Hopkins' new novel, *Identical*, is enjoying several weeks on the *NY Times* bestseller list—just as we have come to expect from all of Ellen's novels. ☺