

Enhancing diversity in publishing work

By Ruth E. Thaler-Carter, Freelancer Editor (Note: This is a version of a post by the same author for the *An American Editor* blog.)

Being inclusive and diverse may seem as challenging as switching from two spaces between sentences to one, but it really isn't that hard to do for editorial professionals. In many ways, both can be done easily, even though they continue to be a matter of discussion (in the case of spaces between sentences, contention!). Since the editorial world is publicizing, if not championing, the use of new pronouns and options for colleagues to self-identify by ones they prefer, our field can also lead the way in making projects — and the people or businesses producing

them — reflect a wide range of variety in ethnic, religious, national/international and gender identities.

We can even look to TV commercials as examples of becoming far more inclusive and diverse than much of the rest of the world, and even of many of the programs they support. We editorial professionals can follow their lead in presenting or including a variety of faces and voices in the projects we handle for clients, as well as work of our own.

Those of us who are writers owe it to our readers to include, and accurately

ly represent, people of all backgrounds, or at least enough to make it clear that we understand that we live in, work in and write/edit/proofread about a diverse world with readers of a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures.

As editors (and maybe even as proofreaders, although this should be managed before that stage), we owe it to our authors and other clients to say something when we notice that they have missed an opportunity to be inclusive.

This doesn't mean every story,
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Using the Library of Congress for your editorial research

By Maggie Gigandet, maggie.gigandet@gmail.com

As an amateur Civil War researcher, I depend on online resources. This year, I began researching the online materials of the Library of Congress (LoC). Here are some ideas of what to expect before you begin your research at the LoC, along with 10 tips on resources and research strategy — a broad orientation to the Library's materials, some features of the Library's website and a head start in your research.

Before you begin researching the Library's online materials, I have some advice about what to expect. First, expect to invest some time. You will need to take your time to locate as many resources as possible, especially if your subject is obscure.

Keep in mind the context in which you are researching. The Library of Congress is the largest library in the

world. It has more than a 100 million items in more than 400 languages and adds about 10,000 items to its permanent collections each day. Its three main buildings — the James Madison Building, Thomas Jefferson Building and John Adams Building — in Washington, D.C., contain more than 20 reading rooms, each focused on a different topic. With a library this size, you will benefit from not rushing your research.

You may not get to review some of the resources you find. Many materials are only available for review if you are physically on the Library's campus; this could be because they have not yet been digitized or due to other restrictions, such as copyright. However, they are still included in your online search results. While you will have to

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The EFA turns 50 in 2020!

We will celebrate this milestone all year through the *Freelancer* newsletter, e-mail discussion list, social media outlets and more. ■

Diversity and inclusion, continued

project or event has to include everyone, but it's worth making the effort to go beyond a standard, and somewhat limited, range of people to illustrate the topics we work on. It makes sense to create stories and publications that reflect the real world, and the reality is that world is one of variety, difference and diversity.

One of the best ways to be more inclusive and diverse is to look for — and beyond — versions of the professional associations we turn to first for advice, collegiality, new hires, trends, projects, etc. In the USA, the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) might be the lead organization of and for journalists, but there's also the National Association of Black Journalists and groups for and of journalists who are Pacific Asian, Hispanic, etc.

If your clients need to include more women, look to the Association of Women in Communications, National Organization of Women, etc. There are organizations for photographers and artists of color, and probably for other communications professionals as well; if not independent entities, subgroups of “majority” associations that include people of color, various nationalities, different gender identifiers, etc.

This perspective isn't limited only to organizations in communications. We can look beyond the big, standard organizations to find people to interview who represent various voices and cultures. Associations are a great source of, well, sources — experts in or members of almost any profession or field you can imagine. You might usually contact the American Medical Association for people in that profession to feature in profiles or include in interviews, but there's a National Medical Association whose members are Black.

You might know about the Ameri-

can Bar Association; there's also the National Bar Association for and of attorneys of color, and the National Association of Women Lawyers or Women's Bar Association, just as starting points.

Most national trade or membership associations have groups or committees for members of various

It makes sense to create stories and publications that reflect the real world, and the reality is that world is one of variety, difference and diversity.

backgrounds as well.

The not-for-profit sector is also a rich source of diverse sources, situations and experiences. No matter what you or your authors/clients are writing about, there's a nonprofit for that — and a lot of them are smaller than a Red Cross, AARP, United Way, etc., but doing important, productive work that includes and/or affects people of varied ethnic, religious, economic and other backgrounds. Some of the smaller nonprofits are more diverse in their staffing and service communities than the bigger ones, and larger nonprofits often partner with smaller organizations that can add diversity to a project.

The Internet is full of sources of

images, many copyright-free, that can be used to include people of color, those who identify with different genders, people with disabilities, nontraditional family units, etc.

An easy first step from the grammar perspective is to stop using he, him and his as the default pronoun, and avoid the somewhat-clunky s/he, her/him and hers/his or switching back and forth.

The easiest way is to use plural pronouns wherever possible, especially when you don't know or need to identify the gender or preferred pronoun of someone being featured. To make this even easier, they/their has been adopted by the major style guides as a singular, although I've found that plurals usually keep the flow going more smoothly and don't make readers stop to wonder about meaning.

We can help our clients be more inclusive and diverse by suggesting ways for them to present the world realistically, as it is: full of variety in backgrounds, perspectives, opinions, experiences, identities and more.

The EFA angle

Through its Diversity Initiative and related projects, the EFA is making efforts to increase the diversity of its membership and make participation more appealing to members of diverse identities. Board of Governors members will be taking diversity training, and will let the general membership know how that process goes in case individuals would like resources for similar training.

The bottom line

Whether you're writing, editing, proofreading, illustrating, designing, publishing, hiring/subcontracting or more, take time to look beyond the easy sources to find people who represent a wider world of reality in those projects. The results — more interest, more readers, more sales, more respect — will be worth the effort. ■

EFA news

The EFA has not only several new publications, but a new bookstore that includes information about related useful resources:
https://shop.aer.io/Editorial_Freelancers_Association_Bookstore

Writing uninspired: How to write when the words aren't there

By Ben Riggs

The screen sits blank. Your head feels as empty as the page before you. The chasm between what you want to say and having said it grows wider and deeper with every blink of the cursor.

Nothing.

You stare at the clock: the minutes move more slowly than when you took standardized tests in school. You've now sat there — uninspired — for a whopping 35 minutes. Despite what all the Instagram coaches tell you, inspiration feels a universe away.

What's an uninspired writer to do? Take a break? Wait until the breeze of inspiration catches the sails of creativity? Perhaps another episode of *Game of Thrones* will send a gust your way. What hath writing to do with inspiration?

Inspiration is illusive — and dangerous. It's addicting. Once you've encountered a little, you crave more. You begin to depend on it. And when you depend on inspiration, you fall under its spell, believing it's a superior source of writing.

That's a problem. It's a problem because it replaces the true, and only dependable, source of writing: the writer. Once the would-be writer has been replaced, the only course of action is inaction.

As Stephen King puts it, "Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration. The rest of us just get up and go to work."

What can you do when you lack inspiration?

1. Show up. Time and time again, you show up.

It's important for writers, especially younger ones, to know that inspiration

is illusive and shouldn't be a surefire step in their writing process.

Taking breaks, listening to music, going for a walk — these are great ways to grease the gears and clarify a stubbornly cloudy thought. But if the first 15 trips to the fridge didn't get the creative juices flowing, the 16th one won't do it.

We all want the words to flow. We want to see the best words take to the page with the precision of a military platoon. But it's rare that the right words arrive right away, and even more rare for them to arrive in the best order.

I don't want to give the impression that inspiration isn't enjoyable. Inspiration is great. Like wind being caught in a sail, inspiration can help you get to where you want to go. But the wind doesn't always blow. In fact, it rarely does. And when it doesn't, it's time to abandon ship and begin swimming. While waiting for a breeze will always be more appealing than swimming, jumping ship and making your own waves makes you a stronger writer — and being a stronger writer is better than being an inspired writer.

As many colleagues have said, "Put in that BIC time: butt in chair."

2. Embrace the hard work of the sentence. Expect writing to be more difficult than accidentally easy. Expectations are tricky. We try to avoid making them, but we make expectations for movies, days off, people, places, food, restaurants, etc., but nothing throws a wet blanket on an experience like an unmet expectation.

The same is true for writing. Too often, writers arrive at a writing project,

expecting to feel inspired. They expect words to flow like the waters of the Niagara on a clear day — except their writing feels more like the Sahara: desolate. What follows next is the worst feeling for a writer: defeat.

Don't expect writing to feel like a trip down a lazy river. Instead, expect writing to feel more like an upstream swim. Embrace that.

Writing isn't always an upstream swim. Some days it's easier than others. When it is easier, lean into it.

3. Work from a plan. Juxtaposed against inspiration, organization will always be more valuable. In other words, grow familiar with writing outlines. You think outlines aren't creative, right? What professional writers do outlines anymore? Shouldn't we leave outlines with those colorful writing-process posters of our middle-school English classes?

Yes and no.

Countless young writers, hooked on inspiration, want writing to feel like a safari expedition with Hemingway, but even Hemingway's safaris had an itinerary.

As Jon Franklin, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning nonfiction writer, says, "And, you say ... outlines are optional, aren't they? Did Hemingway outline? you ask. Did Steinbeck outline? Did Shakespeare outline? Yeah. Sure they did. Of course. Obviously. I don't care what you've heard, or what your literature teacher said, or even what the writers themselves said. Every writer of any merit at all during the last 500 years of English history outlined virtually everything [they] wrote."

Yes, you should outline, and there's good news: You don't need those Roman-numeral-infused outlines from school.

Those helped our fourth-grade selves learn that writing is a process, but a survey of professional writers would reveal that writing outlines and

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Are Gremlins running amok in your website?



Let Nate Hoffelder worry
about your website while
you focus on your next
gig!

Making the most of a discussion list

By Victorine Courtois

Whether it's for the EFA or another professional organization, or even one for your neighborhood, friends or other group, an e-mail discussion list is a great way to both share your insights and learn from colleagues. There are a number of ways to create great discussions. These tips should help.

*** Make the discussion title or question as descriptive as possible.** A good discussion title is a short preview of your post and is what gets people to click and read. A well-written title is also going to help search engines better index your post, which will bring more people into the discussion. For example, instead of “Won't Connect,” try “Help, I'm having problems getting my Acme modem into bridge mode.”

*** Proofread.** Spelling mistakes, typos and bad grammar will distract readers from the point you're trying to make. If you're writing a long post, save it as a draft and come back to it after a few minutes, or as long as it

takes your brain to forget what you had written.

*** Use minimal formatting.**

Overly formatted posts can distract from the message and encourage others to do likewise, so you end up with a hard-to-read thread.

*** Put your post in the right category.** The right category can be the one that has a relevant category name or it can be a category where this kind of post is often made.

*** Use tags.** Tags are required for the EFAlist and for many other discussion lists as well. They are helpful for others by making it easy to find keyword-related posts and organize messages. It also helps the site admins get a sense for what topics are popular.

*** If you want responses, ask for them.** In marketing this is a “call to action.” If you want others to comment, you can encourage them by asking them to do so. If your post is just an FYI, then don't.

*** Go easy on insider jargon.** In-

side jokes and inside references can be fun and make the community unique, but too much of it can turn off new members.

*** Add an image.** Images add visual interest and make your post look great when shared on social networks. You can embed an image using the button bar or you can upload one from your desktop or phone. (*Editor's note:* Many e-mail discussion lists block attachments, including images, as protection against spam.)

*** Mention others.** Credit other members if you are building off their previous comments or if you want to draw them into the discussion. Put the @ symbol before a username to mention someone.

*** Take ownership.** Most important of all, take ownership of the discussions that you create. Respond to comments promptly and thoughtfully. Thank others for commenting on your discussion and help with moderation if things get heated. ■

LoC, continued

take time to sift through them, this can benefit you as well. Finding resources allows you to see what exists on your subject, and you may be able to find some of these resources at your local library.

If you decide to plan a trip to research onsite at the LoC, this system also allows you to plan your research. Spend time researching online first. You need to see what the Library offers, prioritize what you will review onsite and request those materials in advance to ensure they are available.

Third, the Library's website and online materials may change. Along with its 2019–2023 Strategic Plan, the

Library has a digital strategy that details its goals of adding to its digital content, exploring methods to make this content available to everyone, making its website more user-friendly and increasing opportunities for the public to add to the resources the Library holds. Read more about the digital strategy at loc.gov/digital-strategy/.

Resources and research strategy

1. “Free to Use and Reuse” photo sets (loc.gov/free-to-use/). The Library regularly features images from its digital collections that anyone can use. To be featured in this group, the owner of the image must have agreed to its use or the image must be in the

public domain or not have a copyright. Each set of images focuses on a different theme. This is a great resource for anyone who needs to enliven a presentation.

2. Online exhibitions (loc.gov/exhibits/). The Library hosts exhibitions on its campus featuring materials from its collections, and makes its current and past exhibits available on its site. Check to see if your subject is featured — these exhibits provide not only a good review of a topic, but can point you to relevant Library materials.

3. Blogs (blogs.loc.gov). The Library has 17 blogs on a variety of topics. You can search any of these blogs to see if they contain relevant informa-

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LoC, continued

tion for your subject. These blogs are another tool to stay informed on the Library's activities concerning your subject and add to your knowledge of the topic itself.

4. Subscribe (loc.gov/subscribe/). Rather than having to search these blogs regularly, you can subscribe to e-mail newsletters and get updates sent to your inbox. You can subscribe to any blogs that interest you, as well as sign up for news and Library event updates.

5. Research guides (guides.loc.gov). When you are ready to delve further into the Library's online offerings, start with the research guides. Staff create these guides to help researchers find resources quickly; depending on your goal and subject, you might find all you want here. You can search for a particular guide by keyword or search by subject or Library division.

Not all subjects have guides, and some are more complete than others. For instance, if you search for "John Adams," you will be rewarded with a wealth of information. This guide includes links to resources from the Library's digital collections, exhibitions and external websites; a bibliography of works by and about Adams; and even bibliographies created by others. It is a goldmine, but not all materials may be available to review online.

However, if you search for "American Civil War," you will find a guide on regimental histories and another one featuring short biographies and pictures of individuals. While still fascinating and useful, they aren't as comprehensive as the guide on John Adams.

This doesn't mean that there are no guides about the American Civil War; instead, you need to look for guides in another place. If you go to loc.gov/rr/program/bib/index.html, which contains older guides, you will find "Civil War: Selected Resources,"

where you can peruse maps, recordings, photographs, other resource guides, webcasts of past events at the Library, external websites and bibliographies organized by subject. While older, this guide connects you to many more resources, so you should check both locations to help you find as much information as possible.

6. Digital collections (loc.gov/collections/). Next, go to the digital collections themselves. These house primary sources that researchers can explore online. You can search by keyword at the top of this page. If you prefer to browse collections by subject; format (such as map, film, audio recording or manuscript); or LoC divisions, you can use the links on the left side of the page. After you select a collection, you may also find a "Rights and Access" link on the left; this provides information about any restrictions on the use of this material.

Some collections also have finding aids, which can provide information about a collection and help researchers navigate its contents. After you open a collection, look for a link to a finding aid on the left side of the screen under "Expert Resources."

A finding aid can take different forms, such as a PDF or a separate webpage kept at findingaids.loc.gov. The aids at this address have several tabs. The "Overview" tab provides information on when the aid was created and revised, and may provide general information about the materials in the collection. The "Contents List" tab specifies the actual materials found in the collection's containers and reels. Once you determine that you want to review a particular reel or container, you can either click the "Digital content available" link if it is listed in this tab or return to the collection's introduction page and choose "Collection Items" at the top to scroll through the materials.

Once you select a reel or container

to review, it can be easier to review the items in slideshow mode. After you open a reel or container to review the individual documents, look for a dropdown menu next to the word “view” in the top right corner. Select “slideshow” from the menu, and then click “go.” You can now scroll through the reel without clicking on each document and waiting for it to load.

You can subscribe to receive updates when a new finding aid is available or an aid has been considerably revised. These update e-mails not only keep you informed about collections you may have already reviewed, but can do some of the work for you in finding new resources.

7. LOC Collections mobile app.

To commemorate its 220th anniversary on April 24, 2020, the Library released an app, LOC Collections, that lets users search the digital collections from their phones. The app is currently available for iPhone and iPad users; search “Library of Congress” in the App Store. The Library will release the app for Android users later this year.

The app is easy to use. You can search the digital collections by format such as audio recording, map, manuscript, film or photo. You can also browse the collections by scrolling through the full list. When you find a particular item in a collection that you would like to keep, you can save it to a list of favorites in the app. You can also text or e-mail the sources you have saved to yourself or others, just as you would with any image, video or sound clip. Because the app is so convenient, you might learn about topics you wouldn’t usually explore.

8. E-resource catalog (eresources.loc.gov). The Library’s e-resources online catalog has tabs allowing you to search databases, e-journals, e-books and websites; you can also choose the “all resources” tab to search all of these electronic resources at once. When you use it to search these re-

Scam update

By Ruth E. Thaler-Carter, Newsletter Editor

A new iteration of the phony job offer scam is making the rounds. This one pretends to be from Grifols Pharmaceuticals and asks to set up an interview with something called Telegram. Previous versions used business names such as Penguin and Bayer Pharmaceutical, and Google Hangouts for interviews (<https://www.the-efa.org/keeping-your-business-safe-from-scammers/>).

If you receive one of these messages, delete it. If you responded, delete anything further.

By the way, one of the best resources for tracking scams is the AARP. You don’t have to be over age 50 to benefit from its ongoing coverage of scams.

Stay safe! ■

sources, the catalog actually searches the descriptions of the resources and not the contents of the resources themselves. This provides you with a list of resources you may want to explore (for most of these, you will have to be on the Library’s campus to review them).

Even though most resources are not available for online review and are designated “on-site only,” it is still worth your time to check this catalog. Some can be reviewed online and are designated “free access.” This catalog also can help prepare you for a research trip to the Library. You can read the descriptions of the on-site only databases and determine whether you want to include them in your research plan when you arrive at the Library.

9. Chronicling America: 1789–1963 (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov). The LoC and the National Endowment for the Humanities run the National Digital Newspaper Program, which created Chronicling America, a site that allows users to read online certain American

newspapers published from 1789 to 1963 and to learn about newspapers that have been published in America since 1690.

The site currently has more than 16 million pages available to browse. You can search these pages by keyword, but you can also search by state, a range of years or a combination of these. This is a great tool if you are only interested in a certain area’s reactions to a person or event or if you want to compare opinions by time period.

To find information about newspapers instead of reading their content, you can browse or search the “U.S. Newspaper Directory, 1690–Present” on the site. This directory currently lists more than 150,000 newspapers. If, for example, you have already searched the digitized pages and become interested in a particular publication’s stance on your subject, this is a useful tool to discover more about the publication itself and help you place the content you found in the environment in which it was written.

The subscription service is available for e-mail updates for Chronicling America.

10. Reference librarians (loc.gov/rr/askalib/). The LoC’s reference librarians are an invaluable resource and are available to answer questions. You can send a message through an online form and receive a response within five business days. If your question concerns the digital collections or newspapers and periodicals, you can start an online chat with a librarian to get an answer right away. The librarians in digital collections are available to chat Monday through Friday from noon to 4:00 p.m. Eastern time (except federal holidays).

The chat method not only provides immediate answers; it also lets you ask clarifying questions until you understand your solution.

I hope you find the same inspiration at www.loc.gov that I have. ■



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Writing, continued

plans are as varied as writers themselves. Nearly every writer goes about a writing plan differently.

Some writers write an ending first and reverse-engineer everything else. Others organize their notes to make a functional draft, leaving some gaps to fill with their creativity later. Others write a brief mission or summary statement above their empty drafts to give them a target; everything after that is a happy mess.

Writers don't see their outlines and plans as playing second fiddle to inspiration. Instead, their outlines prepare them for the upstream swimming that is writing.

4. Clear your throat. Part of working from a plan is to “clear your throat” before you draft what you con-

sider to be your true attempts — that is, draft a few throwaway paragraphs.

Deal with the difficulty of getting started by ... *getting started*. Punch a few keys. Jot down some words. Create potential sentences. And then prepare to delete them. Why? Because you probably won't keep a lot of those first paragraphs. They are throat-clearings.

The problem isn't that writers spend words doing this; it's that they didn't remove them after finding the terra firma of their true introductions.

Plan to jot down a few throwaway paragraphs. Get started for the sake of getting started; get the throat clearing out of the way, find a few ideas or words you can get behind, then delete the rest.

5. Hoist the sail. If the winds of inspiration blow, hoist your sail! How do you cash in on feeling inspired?

- *Write down all those ideas you thought were stupid.* Take advantage of the confidence. Not every crazy idea is a good one, but nearly every good idea was a crazy one.

- *Capture the moment.* You can't bottle feeling inspired, but you can remind a future-uninspired you what this moment feels like. Grab your journal — or a sticky note — and jot down some thoughts. Record a quick video on your phone. Dig some neural pathways back to this moment. You don't know the next time you're going to feel this way. Have some word count to show for it.

- *Get to work.* Writers journey through the writing process with bare feet. Feeling inspired is like being handed a pair of high-end training shoes. Put them on. Get running.

Happy writing. ■