
The Pen & Press

September – October 2010



As September arrives, with fall weather in the air, times are changing in more ways than one. Of immediate interest to NCPA members is the accelerating transition in the book

business to “e-books,” or “digital books,” paper-free alternatives to printed books.

Amazon.com reported that sales of downloads for its Kindle e-book reader recently surpassed sales of hardbound books. Although paperback books still outsell both, that is expected to change, with Kindle downloads also surpassing paperback sales.

Meanwhile, Amazon, in an ongoing competition for buyers, recently lowered its price for the Kindle to match drops in the price of Barnes & Noble’s Nook e-book reader. Barnes & Noble is revamping its “bricks and mortar” stores to highlight, up front, its Nook offerings.

Inevitably, your editor finally conceded, and ordered an e-reader device. It will be a hard transition, and a ragged one, from a life lived among thousands of old and new books. What seems most needed, and most unlikely, is a device to convert those thousands of volumes directly into e-reader format. That will not happen, but the number of books – including classics – in digital format is growing rapidly.

The September 11, 2010, NCPA meeting at Merrill Gardens will feature two prominent NCPA members discussing e-books. Between them, Stephanie Chandler and Sandra Williams will cover the topic from both the marketing side (Stephanie) and the formatting side (Sandra), to give members and visitors an edge in this emerging focus of the book world. This is key information, as e-book opportunities will help to level the playing field between self- and independent publishers on the one hand and large commercial publishers on the other.

Physical, printed books soldier on nonetheless, as shown by the recent Storybook and Literature Festival at Roseville Public Library’s Maidu site. That event featured an array of authors and independent publishers and representation from NCPA and our sister organization the California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch, as well as a fine turnout from the community. As always, the California Authors Booth at the California State Fair drew a steady line of readers.

Read on for reports on other literary events and on upcoming meetings and presentations, as well as news of members’ new and recent books.

— Ken Umbach, editor

September 11, 2010 Meeting

September's speakers will be Sandra Williams and Stephanie Chandler teaming up on e-books. This should be a valuable meeting. E-books are a hot topic. We'll get coverage by experienced folks covering both marketing side (Stephanie) and formatting side (Sandra).

On a related note, this message came from NCPA president Elva Anson just in time to tuck into this issue: *You don't want to miss our September meeting, Sept. 11th. Our speakers, Stephanie Chandler and Sandra Williams, will be talking to us about e-books. We have had a number of requests for this program. Our writer of the month for September will be Margo King Lenson from Tui Communications. She has written a four-book series titled "Pacific Voices Talk Story: Conversations of American Experience." I hope you have all had a good summer.*

October 9, 2010 Meeting

October's speaker will be Christine Giri, with a presentation on time management. She last spoke to NCPA in 2008, and comes this time with new material. See www.timetamerconsulting.com/ for information about Christine and her business.

Other Future Meetings

The **November 13, 2010** meeting's speaker or meeting topic is not yet scheduled (nor for public announcement, anyway). Keep an eye on your email and on www.norcalpa.org, as well as the November-December *Pen & Press* for information.

Our **December 11, 2010** speaker is to be Maki Morris (and probably her husband). They do a multitude of things, including book video trailers, web sites, Internet marketing, and more. The two of them are planning on doing a compilation of topics. Check them out at <http://www.tworockmedia.com/index.html> turn your sound on, and be sure to click on the sample for the book video trailers.

NCPA is also planning a special Holiday luncheon at Merrill Gardens for that date. Watch for more information and note that luncheon reservations will be required.

The **January 9, 2011** speaker is to be Jeannie Ruesch, on marketing. For background, see www.jeannieruesch.com.

Save the Date for Capitol Crimes: February 19, 2011

By Pat Canterbury

The Sacramento Chapter of Sisters in Crime, Capitol Crimes, will host a writers' workshop at the Rancho Cordova City Hall 2729 Prospect Park Drive, Ranch Cordova, CA 95870 on Saturday, February 19, 2011, from 9:30 am until 5:00 pm. One workshop speaker will be Dorothy Howell, author of 28 novels, including mysteries, and as Judith Stacey, historical romances. The other workshop will be lead by Camille Minichino, author of the periodic table mysteries and the miniature series under her pen name Margaret Grace. Box lunch will be provided by Panera Bakery. Cost is \$10.00 for Sisters in Crime

members and \$25.00 for nonmembers. Information regarding speakers and their topics will be in the November-December newsletter.

Capitol City Young Writers Conference

By Susan M. Osborn

(The President and Founder of Capitol City Young Writers is literary agent Verna Dreisbach, a featured speaker at the 2010 NCPA conference.)

The first annual Capitol City Young Writers Conference convened July 17, 2010, at San Domenico School in San Anselmo California. Among the organizations that donated \$100 for student scholarships were NCPA and Willow Valley Press (Barry Schoenborn).

Keynote Speakers

James Redford, founder of The James Redford Institute for Transplant Awareness, and award-winning film producer, screenwriter and director, kicked off the morning sessions. He suggested there are two key questions writers need to ask themselves: “Is this worth my time?” and “What untold stories does the world need to know about?” A primary gauge of success is, “Am I contributing to what I really care about?”

Peter S. Beagle, the afternoon keynote speaker, is the author of fiction, nonfiction, and screenplays. He is best known for *The Last Unicorn*, one of the top fantasy novels of all time. He advised, “If you’re not taking risks, you’re holding back from living.” He recommended, “Pay no attention to critics, whether good or bad. As an artist, you’re continually struggling to get it right. Your challenge is to get as close to right as you can.”

Session Presenters

Eighteen presenters were divided into five break-out sessions. They represented fiction, nonfiction, journalism, songwriting, improv theater, radio, film, editing, publishing, and sales. (Bold letters indicate presentations that are briefly described.)

*Session 1: Michael Krasny – “Off Mike.” **Paul Kaufman** – “The Creative Spirit Meets the New Reality.” Leah Garchik – “How I Stopped Answering the Phone for My Boss: A Career in Journalism as Journalism Melts.; Jeanette Sears – “Song Writing for Social Change.”*

Paul R. Kaufman is an award-winning film and TV producer, screen writer, and co-author of *The Creative Spirit* (with Daniel Goleman). Addressing the creative spirit, Kaufman asked, “How does the creative process relate to your own inner life? The creative person is always walking two steps into the darkness of the unknown. Are you risking? Risking leads to uncovering ideas that have no name, at first.”

He suggested the new reality offers work for writers to serve as “attendant lords” who help move things along yet remain invisible. Potential clients include social service agencies in the public sector and nonprofit groups that support worthy causes. He emphasized the importance of collaborating and being open to the possibility someone will come along, unexpectedly, to support you and your project.

Session 2: Deborah Grabien – “What Happens Next?” Kay Kostopoulos – “CROW and the Neutral Scene.” David Corbett – “The Facts of (the Writing) Life.” Huntington Sharp – “The Red Room.”

David Corbett, author of four critically acclaimed crime novels, demonstrated ways to draw on your life as a foundation for writing. He said, “Your own private life will always give you things to write about. Rely on your emotions. Trust your instincts. What scenes in your life really get to you? How does what you see affect you?”

He recalled a comment by Theodore Roszak, “A necessary, but non-sufficient condition of being a writer, is having a bad relationship with your mother.” He exhorted, “Love all you hate about your life! Get your heart broken! Get your nose broken! All these experiences provide you with material to write about.”

Corbett discussed a wide range of emotionally charged events that can serve as writing prompts, such as “What is your greatest fear?” “What was your moment of greatest guilt or shame?” “What was your moment of greatest joy?” “When have you experienced forgiveness?”

He pointed out the importance of having the courage to persist. “Remember,” he said, “in spite of everything, there still is love, courage, nobility and forgiveness in the world.”

Session 3: Jane Friedman – “Writer’s Digest.” Jeromiah Zajonc – “Are You In?” Vicki Larson – “Conducting a Dynamite Interview.” Ransom Stephens – “The Miracle of The God Patent.”

Vicki Larson, editor, *Marin Independent Journal*, emphasized the element of surprise in conducting effective interviews. She said, “Find out what has already been written about a person so you can come up with a different angle and ask different questions.” She shared her experience of interviewing Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Eat, Pray, Love*.

Session 4: Nick Petrulakis – Books Inc.; Patricia V. Davis – “The Challenging Art of Satire.” Peter Beren – “What Literary Agents Do.”

Patricia Davis facilitated a highly interactive exchange about satire among 50 participants, 35 of whom were young adults. She said, “Because lectures are often ineffective at changing someone’s perception, satire can be used to illuminate a perspective and to change a perspective.”

Davis distributed a satirical piece she wrote and had a dialogue with the audience about the elements of satire, using that example. Pointing out how satire is based on ridiculous situations, Davis asked the audience to identify situations that would lend themselves to satire. The response and resulting discussion were lively. A number of young people gave examples of satirical articles they have written. Davis cautioned, “Don’t rely on Wiki as your primary source of information about your topic. Get solid, primary source data.”

Session 5: Verna Dreisbach – “Cross Genre Writing.” Seth Harwood – “Free Serialized Audiobooks: How I Built My Audience.” Gil Mansergh – “Hitchcock’s 13 Writing Secrets.”

Verna Dreisbach, literary agent and writer, presented a very strong case for not limiting yourself to writing in only one genre. She asserted, “To strengthen your writing skills,

take a subject and write it as travel, fiction, memoir, poetry, a screenplay, and a song. Try all genres even if, later, you narrow down to one. Your writing will improve as a result.”

A question-and-answer exchange enabled Dreisbach to provide valuable data regarding writing tips, journalism careers, funds for writers, and the role of literary agents. “Write what you love,” Dreisbach counseled. “Otherwise, you won’t connect with readers.”

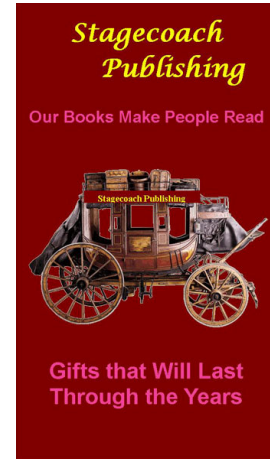
Alton Pryor to Try Boxed Sets for the Holiday Season

Alton Pryor reports that he has decided to market two sets of boxed books over the holiday season. One set is to include four books on California and its Gold Rush History, and the other is to include four books on Wild West history.

Alton has a long and growing list of books published under his Stagecoach Publishing imprint. His specialty is Western lore, ranging from *Little-Known Tales in California History* to books focusing on such topics as *The Lawmen, Outlaws and Gunslingers*, *Those Wild and Lusty Gold Camps*, *The Bawdy House Girls*, and more.

Alton’s topics have also included tales of Nevada history, Hawaii history, and women of California history, as well as a collection of the sayings of President Ronald Reagan and Alton’s own self-publishing guide, *Publish It Yourself: Five Easy Steps to Getting Your Book in Print*.

See www.stagecoachpublishing.com for more information on Alton’s books.



Pricing & Profitability

By Sandra K. Williams

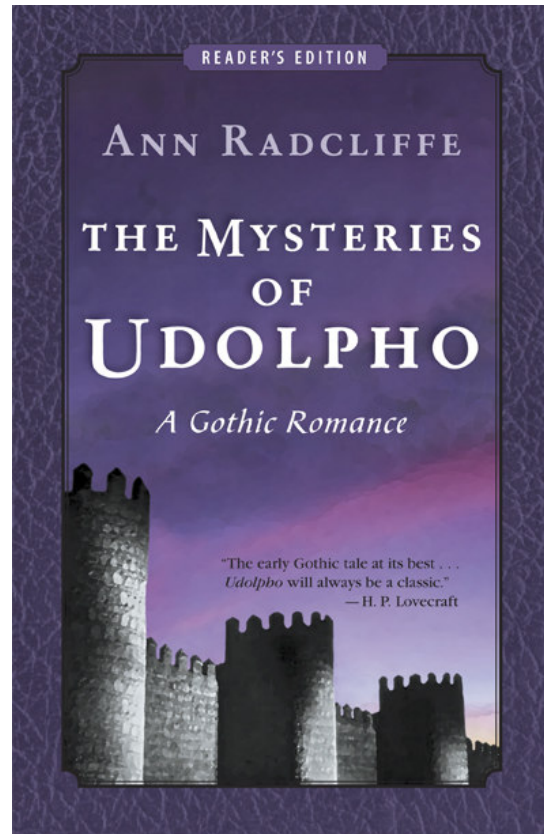
I had long wanted to read Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic classic, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, so when I found it at Project Gutenberg, the online library of free e-books, I immediately downloaded it. A few days later I curled up with my laptop and *Udolpho*, prepared for a relaxing evening of terror and suspense.

Horrors! The book was unreadable! When Mrs. Radcliffe published *Udolpho* in 1794, punctuation conventions were somewhat different. An author might scatter commas and colons and semicolons however she wished. But the fashion today is for minimal punctuation, and a comma between subject and predicate is never permitted. I could not read without my fingers quivering toward the delete key. Ultimately, my copyediting side won; as I read I copyedited, and reread to correct the corrections, and read a third and fourth time as I typeset and proofed the Idle Spider Books Reader’s Edition of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

That copyediting was a labor of obsession, provided at no cost, and the design also incurred no fees. Since the author has been dead nearly 200 years and her work is in the public domain, no royalties need be paid. All the profits from book sales will be mine—mine!

But . . . *Udolpho* was originally published in four volumes, and the combined word count is about 290,000 words. Editing reduced the word count to about 285,000 words. (For comparison, a novel of around 300 pages might be about 100,000 words.) Because I had no intention of filling orders and packing boxes myself, the book would have to be printed on demand. I used a condensed book typeface and designed the chapters to run in. (Run-in chapters start on the same page instead of the next page.) Lightning Source was the only logical option, and even their prices were high: \$9.09 for a 630-page book.

Another factor affects profitability: competitors. There are several currently available print editions. Many of these were thrown together from the Gutenberg e-book without any design or proofreading, but the Penguin and Oxford classic editions are lovely books. They share a flaw that provides an opening for the Idle Spider edition: they are based on the original print editions and only obvious typos are corrected. Readers like me who find excessive commas as annoying as speed bumps on an expressway might buy my book instead if it's competitively priced. The Penguin list price is \$15, Oxford \$13.95. I set my list price at \$13.95.



At 630 pages with a 20% discount (the lowest allowed by Lightning Source), my profit would be \$2.07 per book. But the cost of printing might go up in the future. So I changed the type specifications and reduced the page count to 582. Although I could have increased the trim from 5.5x8.5 to 6x9, I think fiction works better at a smaller size. And if I publish a book with only 100,000 words, it can be the same size without looking too thin for its trim.

The final numbers: 582 pages, \$8.47 cost per copy to print, \$2.79 for the 20% discount, \$2.69 profit per book sold. (Note that the publisher gets the smallest cut.) My setup fees were \$135 (\$75 file prep and two \$30 proof copies). Ooh yeah! Only 50 books to sell and I'll be raking in the big bucks.

New Book, *Savvy, Sassy and Bold After 50* Launched

By Vicki Ward

[Editor's note: Vicki Ward, a former NCPA board member, is editor and publisher of the 2005 anthology Life's Spices from Seasoned Sistahs, Nubian Images Publishing Company.]

I am pleased to announce the release of my new book, *Sassy and Bold after 50, a Midlife Rebirth*, tailored for evolving women who are developing exciting new lifestyles. Sub-

jects discussed include women's health and nutrition, using "mind body medicine" to achieve life balance and renewing deferred dreams, financial strategies for budgeting, and seeking information for effective retirement planning.

Long-held traditions of generational connections are demonstrated by the statements of maturing women who raise their voices in support of, and education for, this next phase of life. They speak candidly of their finances, a new sexuality, plans for retirement, thoughts on aging, achieving goals, and new pursuits they're seeking. *Savvy, Sassy and Bold After 50* inspires and empowers women to explore new options and to embrace their changing lives

The *Savvy, Sassy and Bold After 50 Empowerment Journal* was created as the ideal companion to *Savvy, Sassy and Bold After 50*, enabling readers to note ideas on new pursuits, finding new life passions, dietary changes, notes to get more exercise, for making affirmative financial and medical decisions, and more.

- Discover five Steps to becoming Savvy, Sassy and Bold After 50!
- Financial strategies and retirement planning options
- Your returning libido after 50; the sexually mature you
- Tools for managing your changing health
- Techniques to renew forgotten dreams

Learn how other women have transitioned into their 50s, renewed their lives, and are living victoriously

Insights from the Book, from the "Sistahood"

- "We aren't granted infinite time on this earth . . . your fulfillment is in your hands. Your financial future and your health can be secured by actions you take today."
- "You are the architect who will design your future. To make sound financial decisions about retirement you must be well informed, and gather critical information to make sound decisions."
- "Don't give up your dreams. I gave up dreams of going to art school, and followed my boyfriend. My dreams soon faded into everyone else."

Savvy, Sassy and Bold After 50 was launched in June to an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. If the reception I have received thus far is any indication of future buzz, I am off to a great start headed for a great future.

Los Angeles Black Book Expo (LABBX)

By Vicki Ward

The Los Angeles Black Book Expo (LABBX) was held at the Sheraton Gateway in Los Angeles on Saturday August 21, 2010. The Expo opened to an anxious and waiting group of avid readers. The authors and publishers were a bit surprised, yet grateful to see this first burst of buyers at 10:00 in the morning. The Los Angeles Black Book Expo is a non-

profit community-based organization founded in 2004 to advance African world community literary and spoken word.

In 2005 the LABBX initiated its first book awards with the goal of providing increased attention to the literary achievements of African- and African-American-centered publishers, writers, authors, poets, and editors. The 2005 awards were juried by the “Rawsistaz” (www.rawsistaz.com) book club, on the basis of editorial excellence, professional production, originality of the narrative, and value to a particular literary genre.

The Grand Ballroom was the setting where over 60 authors had booths featuring their books. The outside lobby area held another 25 to 30 vendors who sold jewelry, hats, accessories, women’s handbags, clothing, and more. The music and chat from the live radio broadcast by Urban Soul Radio’s “Sunset and Gumbo” show, a local radio station added a festive element to the event. Throughout the day authors and publishers were invited to be interviewed to showcase their books, and their companies.

The presentations, panels, and spoken word artists encompassed literature, writing, financial literacy, media saviness, book publishing and marketing, social networking, and more;

The LABBX moved this annual event from the Exposition Center, an outdoor location, to the Sheraton Gateway, providing more vendor access. The new location provided a more pleasant selling environment by bypassing the often sweltering L.A. heat.

True to the L.A. venue, the event included script writers and independent film artists hungry for material that would lend itself to the screen, chatting up authors about the prospects of their books being produced as movies, YouTube videos, book trailers, and more. With every genre represented in the event, book buyers left smiling, with bundles under their arms. Authors left at the end of the day bushed, but glad they came.

[Editor’s note: Sacramento’s Underground Books (35th and Broadway, Oak Park) features a wide selection of African-American-oriented books and other merchandise.]

California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch Activities

CWC-Sacramento, a Silver Sponsor of the 2010 NCPA conference, has overlapping membership and some shared interests with NCPA. Margie Yee Webb, an NCPA member who is president of the Sacramento Branch of CWC, provided the following information for the newsletter.

The Sacramento Branch of the California Writers Club is one of 18 branches throughout California. The Sacramento Branch has monthly luncheon meetings at 11:00 am on the 3rd Saturday of every month except July, August, and December. Luncheon meetings are held at Luau Garden Chinese Buffet, 1890 Arden Way, Sacramento 95815. Meeting fee is \$12 for members and \$14 for non-members, and includes a buffet lunch.

Upcoming California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch, Luncheon Meetings September 18, 2010

Ted Robinson will speak about how he publicizes and sells his book through speaking engagements. He is the author of *Water in My Veins: The Pauper Who Helped Save a*

President, and has 109 speeches scheduled for 2010. For more information, see www.sacbee.com/2010/04/22/2696980/sacramento-man-donates-john-f.html.

October 16, 2010

Becky Levine will speak on “The Power of a Strong Critique: Digging Deep for Constructive, Respectful Feedback.” She is the author of *The Writing & Critique Group Survival Guide*. Visit www.beckylevine.com.

November 20, 2010

Stephanie Chandler will speak about Internet marketing. Look for her book, *The Author's Guide to Building an Online Platform: Leveraging the Internet to Sell More Books*. For more information, visit www.stephaniechandler.com.

Sunday, December 12, 2010, Holiday Social

Join CWC-Sacramento at its annual festive gathering! The Holiday Social will be held at Romano's Macaroni Grill in Folsom at 1:00 pm. Menu details to be announced. For reservations, contact Margie Yee Webb at mywebb@sbcglobal.net.

An Evening With Writers

The California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch presents “An Evening With Writers,” Tuesday evening, September 21, 2010, 6 pm to 8 pm, Luna's Café & Juice Bar, 1414 16th Street, Sacramento.

Author and poet Frances Kakugawa and authors Bob Quinlan, Kiyu Sato, and Susan M. Osborn (all of whom are also active members of NCPA) will read from their works and be available to autograph books and share their experiences, writings, and writing advice.

The purpose of the event is to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the CWC, Sacramento Branch. The public is invited to this FREE event. Food and beverages will be available for sale. For more information, contact Steve Liddick, stevelliddick@gmail.com.

The CWC-Sacramento Writers' Network

This CWC-Sacramento offshoot, formerly called the Nonfiction Network, meets the first Friday morning of every month 9:00 to 11:00, at IHOP, 2216 Sunrise Blvd., Rancho Cordova (west side of Sunrise, north of Zinfandel). Participants include book, newspaper, magazine, and trade journal writers. Contact: Bob Quinlan, bobquinlan1@comcast.net.

Upcoming Writers' Network meetings: September 3, 2010, Don Chaddock, “The Role of Community Papers in an Electronic World”; October 1, 2010, Carmel Mooney, “Money the Write Way”; November 5, 2010, Zoe Keithley, “Write to Your Passion”; December 3, 2010, Judith Horstman, “Writing About Science.”

Open Mic for Writers (“10 Minutes of Fame”)

Join the Sacramento branch of the California Writers Club on the second Friday of each month for opportunities to read your written work. Sign-up begins at 6:45 p.m. Listeners are also welcome. Location: Barnes & Noble, Birdcage, Citrus Heights (Sunrise just south of Greenback). Remaining 2010 dates: September 10, October 8, November 12, and December 10.

Other News, Announcements, and Comments

Your editor invites submissions for this section of *The Pen & Press*. Short items about NCPA members or otherwise of interest to writers, editors, and publishers (and allied folks) are welcome here.

✓ Long-time NCPA member Terry Prince will be presenting her popular workshop, “Overcoming Chronic Disorganization,” on Tuesday, September 14th (7 to 9 pm) at The Learning Exchange in Sacramento, California. Visit The Learning Exchange website at www.learningexchange.com, or www.terryprince.com, for more information.

✓ Kate Cordell, MPH (MyPromise Kids, www.mypromisekids.com) has advised *The Pen & Press* of some recent accomplishments.

- Mom Talk Radio Interview about her Facebook microblog, “MyPromise Kids,” July 25.
- *Sacramento Parent Magazine* article, August, 2010, “Got Picky Eaters?”
- *Sacramento Parent Magazine* article, May, 2010, “What Color Was Your Day?”
- Good Day Sacramento Interview, June 9, 2010, about her Facebook microblog, “MyPromise Kids,” June 9.

✓ Carolyn Singer has two articles about gardening in deer country in the current issue of *Fine Gardening* magazine, one as the regional expert for California. Carolyn will also be teaching a class on identifying deer-resistant plants for the California landscape, at Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply Sept. 4th in Grass Valley. For more information, see www.carolynsingergardens.com. (Carolyn Singer is the author of two books on deer-resistant plants, *Deer in My Garden* Volumes 1 and 2. She is also a regular garden columnist for the *Union* newspaper in Grass Valley. Articles are archived on her website.)

✓ Kimberly Edwards' article “Ratcheting Up for Radio” appeared in the February 2010 issue of the *IBPA Independent* newsletter. The article featured interviews with NCPA members Michele Avanti, Susan M. Osborn, and John Takacs. You can read it online at: www.ibpa-online.org/articles/shownews.aspx?id=2893 .

✓ **Your notice or announcement could go here!**

A Note from the Editor

Send your articles and announcements to ken@umbachconsulting.com.

Use **NCPA NEWSLETTER** (exactly and only that) as the email subject heading. That helps me to find newsletter submissions in the avalanche of incoming email.

Please provide submissions in Microsoft Word (or compatible) format or in plain text (preferably *not* in pdf). If you would like to discuss an article idea or have any other questions or comments about the newsletter, feel free to email or phone.

What fits best into *The Pen & Press* is news of members' books, activities, marketing, speaking engagements, and accomplishments. Also of value: members' insights into the challenges and opportunities of writing and publishing and information on regional re-

sources for authors and publishers. Cover illustrations and other photos are welcome in jpeg or other standard format. Please keep file sizes and illustration dimensions reasonable. When in doubt, call or email me in advance.

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is 5 pm Saturday, October 30, 2010. That issue will appear a bit later than usual on account of the editor's October schedule. If you do not want your article or announcement to be lost in hundreds of accumulated email messages, use **NCPA NEWSLETTER** (*exactly and only that*) as your email subject heading.

— Ken Umbach, editor



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Readers are of course free to print copies for noncommercial personal use, and NCPA members are welcome to print copies of the newsletter to share with friends, colleagues, and prospective members.

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Note: NCPA's executive committee includes president, VP, secretary, treasurer, and communications director.

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Awards

Position is open!

Annual Conference

Position is open!

Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm (new time, half hour later than previously), at Merrill Gardens Retirement Community, 7418 Stock Ranch Road (just west of Sylvan Road about a quarter mile north of Greenback Lane), Citrus Heights
Visitors are welcome.