
The Pen & Press

November – December 2012



If you did not think that Big Publishing could become any more concentrated in a few firms, think again. Here is the quick summary from Reuters: “Britain’s Pearson and Germany’s Bertelsmann plan to merge their publishers Penguin and Random House, aiming to gain the upper hand in their relationship with Amazon and Apple, the leaders in the ebook revolution.”

Wow! There is a load in that. First, of course, is that two of the biggest names in the commercial publishing industry are becoming one (“Random Penguin House”?). The other is *why*: pressure felt from giants-in-their-own-right Amazon and Apple, both working diligently to corner the ebook market (as far as regulators will allow).

Although this does not directly affect members of NCPA, largely independent publishers and self-publishers, or authors who are firmly in the camp of small independent publishing companies even if not publishing their own work, it does affect the setting in which we operate. And it suggests that the battle for shelf-space and for mind-share for independent publishers and their books will only become more challenging.

For authors and publishers who focus on local or accessible niche markets and who do quality work, the net impact will probably be small if not invisible. For those who are seeking a wider or more general audience, stay tuned.

Any aspiring book author has a whole set of choices about how to seek publishing. Opportunities range from the giant commercial publishers or large independents, to smaller (or even very small) independents, and to buying publishing services (subsidy publishing) or outright self-publishing under which the author is also a publishing entrepreneur. The choices require and reflect different choices and different emphases. That range of possibilities and what they reflect and require will be the topic of our November monthly meeting. Included, and emphasized, will be exchange of insights from members and guests about their own publishing experiences and goals, resources they have found valuable, and “beware” about some of the sharks in the publishing waters.

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*This issue features insight from Al Canton (a founder of NCPA) on choosing a Web design company, and a travelogue and sales report from author Laurie Hoirup, who took a coast-to-coast trip promoting her memoir and reconnecting with friends and family.*

— Ken Umbach, interim editor

## **November 10, 2012 Meeting Features “The Pursuit of Publishing”**

The November meeting will feature NCPA newsletter editor and communications director Ken Umbach, talking about “The Pursuit of Publishing: An Unvarnished Guide for the Perplexed.” “This will be an across-the-board overview of publishing options, from standard commercial publishing to self-publishing, subsidy publishing, and other variations,” Ken notes, “plus my rant on the uses and misuses of publishing and self-publishing terminology.” See [www.umbachconsulting.com/pursuit.pdf](http://www.umbachconsulting.com/pursuit.pdf) for background.

## **December 8, 2012, Meeting: Networking and Book Display**

Our December meeting will be the popular “Book Display” meeting, plus member networking. This is an opportunity for members to show off their published books and to talk informally about publishing, promoting, and marketing. Bring your published books to show to other members and to visitors to our meeting. Bring business cards. Bring questions, recommendations, and insights!

## **Other Future Meetings**

In January, Barnes & Noble representative Michael Troyan will discuss how to get self-published and independently published books placed in Barnes & Noble stores.

## **Laurie Hoirup Reports on Cross-Country Tour**

*By Laurie Hoirup, author of I Can Dance: My Life with a Disability, and former NCPA treasurer.*

I’m not sure how many of you knew that I was traveling cross country for three months, but “I’m back!” For anyone interested in my adventures, I want to provide a summary of where I was and how it went. I took what I initially considered a retirement vacation, and transformed it into a bucket list. Eventually, it went through a metamorphosis and became an incredible cross-country book promotion.

Our first stop was in Denver, where we sold a few books to friends and family, before continuing on to South Dakota. There we visited the Woolly Mammoth site, Mount Rushmore, Wall Drug and the Corn Palace, all the while promoting my memoir. I had a vendor’s booth in Minneapolis at the annual SMA conference (the conference that’s all about my disability). I met people from all over the country, was part of a panel presenting to the general audience and sold a good deal of books, as well as making connections all over the country.

Our next destination was Kenosha, Wisconsin where I did a presentation to their local Independent Living Center (ILC) resulting in more connections and more sales. We celebrated the Fourth of July overbooking Lake Michigan with some old friends and some new with more book sales to boot.

A few days later, we arrived in my hometown; Spring Grove, Illinois, where my friends set up an incredible book signing event and I was interviewed by the local newspaper. This led to a second hometown reunion and the sales were good. In addition, I did another presentation at the ILC in Chicago, which culminated in a trip to the Sears Tower, Museum of Science and Industry, and Navy Pier.

Our journey then brought us at Niagara Falls, followed by Boston. I was warmly welcomed by the Institute on Human Centered Design, had a wonderful audience, and sales were good. I certainly cannot discount the sites we visited, as they were pretty amazing: Paul Revere's home, CHEERS bar from the TV show, Old North Church, the USS Constitution, and the Bunker Hill Monument to name a few.

After a few days, we were off to New York City, where I met with a group of authors with disabilities and talked with them about the process of writing and getting published. The whole New York experience was very intense. The traffic, Ground Zero, the Empire State building, a play on Broadway (Chicago), Good Morning America, the Statue of Liberty and of course, Times Square! I left a book for Robin Roberts (host of GMA), as she is dealing with her own form of disability. It was all very exciting, but also exhausting, and it was really a relief moving on to Philadelphia.

Once again, I did a presentation at the local Philadelphia ILC, had a very nice group and sales were okay. Our sightseeing included the Liberty Bell, Constitution Hall, Benjamin Franklin's home, and Betsy Ross's home and gravesite. So much to see and do in such a short amount of time, but we did it and loved every minute!

Washington DC had the most places we wanted to explore: The Capitol building, the White House, the Supreme Court, the Smithsonian, which included the Archives and Natural History Museum, and the Library of Congress, where I was hoping to see my book, but I was told it would be about a year before it was on the shelves.

We also visited the many Memorials: Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, World War II Memorial, Vietnam Wall, Korean Memorial, District of Columbia Memorial, Martin Luther King Memorial, Iwo Jima Memorial, Pentagon Memorial, and the Arlington Cemetery. Too many lives gone unnecessarily and before their time.

On a lighter note, we saw the "Rocky" statue and steps used in the movie. I also visited the local ILC, had some sales and was actually offered to be part of a commercial, but we just didn't have the time. We still had many places to be and people to see!

My husband is very interested in the Civil War, so we followed the path of some of the sites including; Manassas, Appomattox Courthouse, the death place of Andrew Jackson, and Fort Sumter, which now had us staying in Charleston, South Carolina.

We headed down to Georgia, on our way to Daytona Beach and stopped in Orlando for a few days of much-needed rest, though I did visit the local ILC to promote my book. From there we headed south to the Florida Keys and stayed overnight in Marathon on the Grassy Key. Our motel was right out of the 60s; painted in many bright colors with parrots out back and a few steps from the water.

We had breakfast in Key West and did some shopping from the southernmost part of the United States, only 90 miles from Cuba, closer than the nearest Wal-Mart on the

mainland. We traveled west through Alligator Alley and eventually made it to New Orleans, which I can say was really our favorite spot. From a Mississippi cruise, through the French Quarter down Bourbon Street, into the ninth Ward (area hardest hit by Katrina), walking through graveyards, eating some of the most delectable foods and of course, the Jazz, were but a few of the local activities that we enjoyed.

I did another presentation about my memoir, but this time I was in a local library and I was talking to an SMA support group. It happened to be pouring rain, harder than I have ever seen, and I was sure we were going to be washed away, but luckily, the rain subsided just inches before flooding the area we were in. Amazingly, people actually showed up and I sold some books.

Our journey continued north to Mississippi; another presentation/book signing at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where I had a great audience made up of both medical professionals and families and I sold a whole bunch of books. Our Civil War site tour continued Vicksburg and then again, Shiloh in Tennessee. We returned to our friends in northern Illinois, visited Shedd's Aquarium and took a cruise on Lake Michigan.

Wisconsin brought us back to Green Bay, as my favorite football team is the Green Bay Packers and we had tickets to see them play in Lambeau Field. I am pleased to announce they won that game and I sold a few books! The stadium and the town are simply awesome!

We completed our journey in Minnesota to say goodbye to family and then drove long days to get home. All in all, we were gone for three months and traveled 14,000 miles. It was really the vacation of a lifetime, an incredible journey and we've barely scratched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to seeing what America has to offer. More importantly, we met so many wonderful people; hospitable, warm, friendly, kind and helpful. And last but not least, my book is all over the country.

*Editor's Note: Laurie's memoir was published in March 2012 by Umbach Consulting & Publishing, Citrus Heights, California, in trade paperback and in Kindle edition.*

## **How to Choose A Web Design Company**

*By Alan Canton*

If you did a website in 2000 you might remember that it was a lot easier to find someone to build it for you since there were only a handful of people who could! Not today. There is a web designer under every rock!

Do a search. Google returns more than 900 million results. So how do you choose one? Perhaps the one at the top of the Google page? Sure, a good ranking could help you make your decision, but there are more important qualifications that you need to consider.

**First, go to their site and see if you like it.** Your first impressions do matter. Why would you want to hire a web design firm that had a junky-looking site? You are looking for a shop to assist you with you making a first impression on a viewer, so you need to be on board with the impression they make on you.

**You need to look at their work.** Actual book-industry experience is not all that important. Even if they haven't done a lot — or even any — authors or publishers, don't

make a snap judgment. You may not be able to describe what you like, but you know it when you see it, so look at their portfolio and see if they have the same kind of design philosophy as you do.

For example, our design shop likes an uncluttered, elegant, “less is more” look. Some people believe filling up every pixel of the screen and overloading the reader’s view with info. Obviously we are not the shop for them.

**Call or write them.** Can you deal directly with the actual developer or *an* actual developer? Or will you just get a sales person? Obviously a developer is better but many salespeople are very knowledgeable about graphics and good design. They don’t know “the tech” but they have other skills to help you with your new site. The person you speak with should be able to understand your problems and be able to articulate how their service can address those problems.

**Will the shop give you references?** I don’t mean a quote like “They were great!” with the tag of “Jane in Akron, OH.” You want to be able to speak to a real person who hired the company and if you can’t get real refs, walk away.

**Find out who will be doing the work.** Many firms are basically body-shops. They get the work and put it out to bid, a process you never see and never know about. (There are print brokers who also do this. What has been your experience with that paradigm?) Find a design shop who will do the work in-house.

**Where is the house?** Deal with an on-shore designer. It is just easier that way. Your actual developer may be a contractor to the shop and live in a different city, but as long as you can deal with the owners or management, it will be a lot easier than dealing with Ali in Qatar or Jose in Columbia. It’s hard enough dealing with the East Coast time zone if you are on the West Coast. What will it be like dealing with India?

Many (probably most) design shops are “virtual” in that they don’t have a brick and mortar store or office. Neither do most publishers. It will not be a concern. Honesty, integrity, and good work are all more important than a fancy office in a nice part of town.

**Will you own the site’s code?** You #@!% well better! What you want is “work for hire.” It is your money, it should be your site, your code. There is no compromise here. If they won’t agree, find someone else.

**What will it cost?** Rates for doing sites are all over the board. You can get very nice sites for big dollars and you can get really horrible sites for those same big dollars. The same works for shops that charge very little. You can’t choose based on price. You just can’t. It will not work, so don’t try.

**Are you being low-balled?** Some shops have a very low price (like \$99) but they have many extra charges, say \$100 for a contact page or \$100 for using a homepage “slider.” Again, ASK. As the old saying goes, “Once you learn that the truth will set you free, find out how much it will set you back!”

There are a zillion shops out there. With a little digging and asking around to others, you will find one that “works” for you and your books.

And here is one suggestion. Consider creating a separate site for each book, or perhaps each new book going forward. Or put this on the author, perhaps give them the names of

some design shops to contact. Many studies have been done and the conclusion is that while you need a site for your company, having sites for individual books or products will result in many more sales.

*Alan Canton is one of the founders of Northern California Publishers & Authors (NCPA). He is the owner of Adams-Blake Publishing, which also owns the well-known Jaya123.com service for small businesses. This past year he teamed with Bookwrights.com to create the web design firm of 499WordPressDesign.com, where they do compete sites for authors and publishers and small businesses at a price point of \$499 (hence the name!) Al lives in Fair Oaks, with his very expensive wife Jane, two unruly cats Karma and Ziva, along with Mr. Dog a rescued, obstreperous Australian Shepherd. He can be reached at 916-962-9296 or info@499WordPressDesign.com.*

## **California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch Activities**

CWC-Sacramento has overlapping membership and some shared interests with NCPA. The Sacramento Branch is one of 18 throughout California. Monthly luncheon meetings are at Tokyo Buffet, 7217 Greenback Lane (between San Juan Avenue and Fountain Square Drive), Citrus Heights, CA 95610. Meeting fee is \$12 for members and \$14 for non-members, and includes a buffet lunch.

See [www.cwcsacramentowriters.org](http://www.cwcsacramentowriters.org) for more information.

### **Upcoming California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch, Luncheon Meetings**

- **November 17, 2012.** Karl Palachuk, author and speaker, will present “Publishing Your Own Book: What’s New, What’s Important, and What’s Essential.” See [www.SMBBooks.com](http://www.SMBBooks.com) for more information.
- **December, no luncheon meeting.** See “Holiday Social,” below.
- **January 19, 2013.** Ted Witt, publisher and current president of NCPA, will discuss marketing, specifically point of sale displays (banners, placards, etc.). See [www.prettyroadpress.com](http://www.prettyroadpress.com) for more information about Ted’s publishing company.

### **The CWC Sacramento Branch Writers Network**

The CWC Sacramento Branch Writers Network, meets the first Friday morning of every month, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., at IHOP, 2216 Sunrise Blvd., Rancho Cordova, CA (west side of Sunrise, north of Zinfandel). Participants include book, newspaper, magazine, and trade journal writers.

### **Upcoming Writers Network Meetings**

- **November 2, 2012.** Networking Meeting. C.J. Larsen will facilitate a networking meeting (no formal speaker), an opportunity to talk with the group about writing, publishing, and marketing, and current projects.
- **December 7, 2012.** Frank Luna, author of *Red Storm*, will discuss the importance of a good writers group and how he uses social and mass media in his marketing. Frank is Emmy award-winning senior TV news director at CBS 13 in Sacramento. See [www.redstormnovel.com](http://www.redstormnovel.com).

- **January 4, 2012.** To be announced.

### **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. Upcoming dates: November 9, 2012; December 14, 2012; January 11, 2013. Sign-up begins at 6:45 p.m. Listeners are also welcome. Barnes & Noble, Birdcage, 6111 Sunrise Blvd., Citrus Heights (Sunrise just south of Greenback). Contact: Julie Bauer, joolieb@aol.com.

### **Holiday Social**

California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch presents its Fifth Annual Holiday Social at Romano’s Macaroni Grill, Sunday, December 9, 2012, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., with informal social networking starting at noon.

Reservation required (salad, entrée, and dessert, \$24 per person, alcoholic beverages not included). Contact Margie Yee Webb at Margie@CatMulan.com for more information or to make a reservation and specify menu selections. Please bring nonperishable food donations or cash/check contribution to the luncheon to support the St. Vincent de Paul food closet in care of prominent CWC member Nancy Ware.

## **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.

✓ Deadline for submissions for NCPA’s own anthology is Saturday, November 10, 2012. Contact Ted Witt for more information, or see the September-October 2012 issue of *The Pen & Press*.

✓ Laurie Hoirup and A. K. Buckroth will be autographing their respective memoirs at The Marketplace’s new location in Folsom on Saturday, November 3, 2012. Call 916-984-4220 for details. The Marketplace, very friendly to local authors, relocated from its previous Folsom Blvd. site to 1325 Riley St. Folsom, California 95630, in the Commonwealth Shopping Center near Raley’s, across from Lembi Park. Grand opening and ribbon cutting is at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, November 1.

✓ Searching for a special used book, or looking for bargains on reading? Check out 2010 NCPA Conference sponsor Time-Tested Books, 1114 21st Street, Sacramento, CA 95811. See <http://timetestedbooks.net/> for more information.

✓ Know someone who is looking for quality assisted living? Be sure to ask for a tour of our monthly meeting host, Merrill Gardens, Citrus Heights.

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



### A Note from the Editor

Send your articles and announcements for the November/December 2012 issue to Ken Umbach, ken@umbachconsulting.com.

Use “NCPA NEWSLETTER” as the email subject heading!

Please provide submissions in Microsoft Word (or compatible) format or in plain text (preferably *not* in pdf and definitely not in jpeg or other image format for text). 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 resources 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 December 27, 2012.** 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.** Send to **ken@umbachconsulting.com.**

— Ken Umbach, interim editor

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## Board of Directors of NCPA

*The following list is updated for 2012-13*

### **President**

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916-934-8434

### **Vice President**

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### **Secretary**

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### **Treasurer**

Vacant

### **Communications Director**

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

### **Publicity and Programs**

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### **Website**

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### **Membership**

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### **Newsletter (interim)**

Ken Umbach  
ken@umbachconsulting.com  
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### **Past President**

Barry Schoenborn  
barry@wvswrite.com  
530-265-4705

### **Awards**

Position is open!

### **Speakers Bureau**

Position is open!

### **Conference Chair**

Position is open!

*No conference for 2013.*

Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. 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.