

Julie Flanders

Online resources for writers

Advice, tips, and networking

Much like the music industry before it, the publishing industry has undergone, and continues to undergo, dramatic changes that would have been considered unthinkable little more than a decade ago. Thanks to the rise of ebooks and the powerhouse that is Amazon Kindle, as well as social media platforms such as Tumblr and Blogger, it is easier than ever before for writers to share their ideas and creations with the world. But despite of the sea change in the way we create, publish, and consume information, one thing has not changed, and that is the fact that writing well is hard work. In addition, it's always safe to say that navigating the publishing industry, whether one is an aspiring novelist or a hardened freelancer, is not for the faint of heart.

Fortunately, the Internet is filled with excellent resources to help both novice and seasoned writers alike. While most of the resources listed here are aimed at fiction writers, there are also many general sites that cater to all types of writing, as well as several created specifically to serve writers of nonfiction books and articles. In addition, because writing is a solitary and, at times, lonely pursuit, I have included the sites of several associations that provide networking opportunities and a sense of community among writing professionals.

Fiction

- **The Creative Penn.** Run by *The New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author

Joanna Penn, The Creative Penn provides resources to assist writers in every phase of the writing and publishing journey. Penn shares free articles on writing, publishing, book marketing, and making a living as a writer, as well as more than 200 freely accessible podcast interviews. As she states, she “made so many mistakes” on her writing journey that her aim now is to help other writers avoid those missteps in their own careers. *Access:* <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/>.

- **The Insecure Writers Support Group (IWSG).** Founded by best-selling science

fiction author Alex J. Cavanaugh, IWSG started as a monthly blog hop for writers to both share their own stories and encourage others who struggle with



writerly insecurity. From those humble beginnings, IWSG has evolved into one of the most helpful sites around. The monthly hop continues and is a great networking tool, but the site itself expands on the hop and includes writing tips, guides to publishers, agents, and queries; self-publishing resources; and information on marketing and promotion.

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Access: <http://insecurewriterssupportgroup.blogspot.com/>.

- **Janice Hardy's Fiction University.**

Janice Hardy is a successful writer and writing teacher who has been providing writing advice and “lessons” online since 2009 through her fiction university. Her site contains more than 1,000 articles, written both by Hardy and by visiting “professors,” offering advice and suggestions on the craft of writing. The site is updated frequently, with regularly scheduled posts featuring how-to tips and advice on writing. In addition, Hardy offers a weekly “Real Life Diagnostics” column, where she critiques writing pieces submitted by site readers. Access: <http://blog.janicehardy.com/>.



JANICE HARDY'S
FICTION UNIVERSITY
TAKE YOUR WRITING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

- **Writer's Digest.** Online home of the nearly century-old magazine of the same name, *Writer's Digest* bills itself as the “Number 1 resource for writers,” and it is difficult to dispute this claim. Free features include articles categorized according to writing goal, level, or genre; blogs written by the site's editors; webinars on topics ranging from editing to marketing to self-publishing; and a robust user community with an active forum and weekly writing prompts. Users can also sign up for a free weekly newsletter and visit the site for daily creative writing tips. *Writer's Digest* also offers paid services such as tutorials and workshops, contests, and editing and critique services. Access: <http://www.writersdigest.com/>.



WRITER'S DIGEST

- **Writers Helping Writers.** Formally known as “The Bookshelf Muse,” Writers Helping Writers is run by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi, coauthors of *The Emotion Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Character Expression*, *The Positive Trait Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Character Attributes*, and *The Negative Trait Thesaurus: A Writer's*

Guide to Character Flaws. The site includes free writing tools such as a character profile questionnaire, a list of overused “crutch words,” and a free newsletter for subscribers. Access: <http://writershelpingwriters.net/>.

- **Writer Unboxed.** Writer Unboxed has been included on the “*Writer's Digest* 101 Best Websites for Writers” list every year since 2007, and there is no question the honor is deserved. Kathleen Bolton and Therese

Walsh founded the site in 2006 as a forum to share their ideas on stories



and writing. Both aspiring novelists at the time, they are now both multi-published, and the site has grown along with their careers. Regular contributors share insights into all aspects of the writing life, and the site also has strong presence on both Facebook, where it hosts a group counting more than 5,000 members, and Twitter, where its social media team regularly shares tips on the craft of writing. Access: <http://writerunboxed.com/>.

Nonfiction and freelance

- **FreelanceWriting.com.** FreelanceWriting.com is run by writer Brian Scott, who has been a successful freelancer since 1996. He knows of what he speaks, and his site is considered the “Number 1 source for freelance writing jobs.” The site culls job listings from the Internet and updates its listings in real time. In addition, Scott features how-to and writing news articles, monthly top ten tips on various freelancing topics, sample query letters for freelancing jobs, and a “How to Start a Successful Freelance Writing Career” video tutorial series. All resources are offered free of charge, as is Scott's weekly e-newsletter. Access: <http://freelancewriting.com/>.

- **Make a Living Writing.** Between its title and its subtitle “practical help for hungry writers,” the Make a Living Writing site makes its mission immediately clear to all who visit.

As founder and successful freelance writer Carol Tice states, she is “obsessed with helping writers earn more from their work.” To achieve this goal, Tice blogs regularly on topics such as attracting high-paying freelance clients, marketing and networking, publishing nonfiction ebooks, the business side of freelancing, and, obviously, making a living as a freelance writer. In addition, Tice offers fee-based writing courses and workshops. The site has been named a “Top Ten Blog for Writers” by Write to Done and has also been listed on the “*Writer’s Digest* 101 Best Websites for Writers.” Access: <http://www.makealivingwriting.com/>.

- **Writing-World.com.** By Internet standards, Writing-World.com is an elderly statesperson, as it has existed since 2000. The site was founded and continues to be run by Moira Allen, an author who has written and published hundreds of articles and numerous books. Writing-World’s stated mission is “equipping writers for success,” and it provides a seemingly endless array of articles and resources designed to do just that. Visitors can find articles on writing career essentials, the writing life and the business of writing, marketing and social media, and all aspects of publishing both books and articles. Allen also sends out a free newsletter twice a month with information on writing-related news, job opportunities, and lists of notable free resources designed to help writers. Access: <http://writing-world.com/>.



General

- **Daily Writing Tips.** A site that does exactly what its title suggests. The Daily Writing Tips team of writers and teachers publishes an article a day on the craft of writing. Article categories include grammar, spelling, style, misused words, and expressions, among others. Access: <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/>.

- **Funds for Writers.** Funds for Writers is run by C. Hope Clark, a novelist and freelance writer with a background in financial

work. Clark combines her writing and finance experience to assist writers with “finding money to make writing a realistic career.” Clark provides tips on the website in addition to publishing a free weekly newsletter with listings of paying markets, grants, contests, and publishers. Her listings cover both fiction and nonfiction opportunities, and she also accepts submissions from freelancers herself. Funds for Writers has been featured on the “*Writer’s Digest* 101 Best Websites for Writers” list for 15 years in a row. Access: <http://www.fundsforwriters.com/>.

- **Grammar Girl: Quick and Dirty Tips.** Grammar Girl, also known as Mignon Fogarty, is an experienced writer and editor who presents a fun and user-friendly approach to grammar tips and instruction. Fogarty includes charming photos and infographics with her articles and makes grammar and punctuation easy to understand. Access: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>.

- **Publishers Weekly (PW).** Known as the “bible of the book business,” PW has been in existence since 1872 and is a go-to source for news and information on all aspects of the book publishing industry. PW’s free newsletters include a daily report on general publishing news and topic-specific subscriptions focused on cookbooks, children’s books, self-published books, religion and spirituality books, and comics and graphic novels. The site also includes podcasts related to the business and a job board billed as the “leading job listing site of the publishing industry.” Access: <http://publishersweekly.com/>.

Associations

- **American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA).** ASJA was founded in 1948 and now numbers more than 1,000 independent nonfiction writers. It is the only professional organization focused entirely on writers of this kind and prides itself on providing a sense of community and connection among its members. The society provides a

job board and allows employers looking for writers to post listings on the site. *Access:* <http://www.asja.org/>.

• **Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP).** AWP is an advocacy organization whose mission is to “foster literary achievement and advance the art of writing.” The organization offers individual memberships and organizational memberships for creative writing programs on both the university and high school level. The site features a free searchable database of more than 300 writing conferences, retreats, and centers. *Access:* <https://www.awpwriter.org/>.

• **Horror Writers Association (HWA).** HWA was founded in 1985 and is now the oldest professional organization dedicated to writers of horror and dark literature. HWA has members around the world, and its website has been included on the “*Writer’s Digest* 101 Best Websites for Writers” for the past two years. In addition to providing support and advocacy for its members, HWA also facilitates readings and other events for the public and maintains an active presence online in order to increase public interest in horror and dark fantasy literature. *Access:* <http://horror.org/>.

• **International Thriller Writers Association (ITW).** ITW is an honorary organization and thus does not charge dues for membership. Membership is open to both fiction and nonfiction writers, and the organization prides itself on being a community of writers who have banded together to provide support and encouragement. To that end, ITW’s programs include a Debut Author Program and an online Thriller School, which focuses on the craft of thriller writing. The organization also publishes the monthly journal *The Big Thrill*, which includes author interviews, new release listings, and news related to the genre. *Access:* <http://thrillerwriters.org/>.

• **Mystery Writers of America (MWA).** MWA, the premier association for crime and mystery writers in the United States, works to provide recognition and promote respect for authors in the crime fiction genre. MWA

offers educational seminars and conferences to its members and works with literacy programs across the country to get more books in the hands of readers. *Access:* <https://mysterywriters.org/>.

• **Romance Writers of America (RWA).** Called the “voice of romance writers,” RWA is a nonprofit trade association with more than 10,200 members and 145 chapters, several of which are online. It works to promote the professional interests of its members through advocacy and a fostering of community. The RWA blog is regularly updated with news related to the romance writing industry and members receive the monthly *Romance Writers Report*, with news and articles on romance writing. *Access:* <https://www.rwa.org/>.

• **The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA).** The premiere association for authors of science fiction, fantasy, and related genres, SFWA is “a source of information, education, support, and fellowship for its authors” and counts more than 1,800 professionals as its members. The SFWA site includes an Information Center divided into the categories of Advice for New Authors, Contracts and Copyrights, The Craft of Writing, and The Business of Writing. The organization also sponsors *Writer Beware*, a resource to expose and shed light on fraudulent practices and agencies within the publishing industry. *Access:* <https://www.sfwaworld.com/>.

• **Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators: SCBWI.** SCBWI is one of the largest writer organizations in the world, and the largest for children’s writers, with more than 22,000 members and over 70 chapters across the globe. Its mission is “to support the creation and availability of quality children’s books around the world.” The organization publishes *The Book: The Essential Guide to Publishing for Children*, which is updated regularly for its members. *Access:* <http://www.scbwi.org/>. 

