

# The Write Stuff: Starting a Writers Group at Your Library

Terry Elsey and Chris Rogers

Spartanburg County Public Libraries

Friday, November 2, 2018

SCLA/SELA Joint Annual Conference



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## MIDDLE TYGER WRITERS

*Monday, August 13, 6:00PM - 7:00PM at the Middle Tyger Library*

Join the Middle Tyger Writers for a discussion of how motor vehicles (Cars, trucks, SUV's and vans) play a unique role in the development and tone of short fiction and novels. Guest presenter. All writers are welcome.



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[www.spartanburglibraries.org](http://www.spartanburglibraries.org)  
Middle Tyger Library: 864.439.4759

# Give your local writers a place to come try their hand at creativity with writing

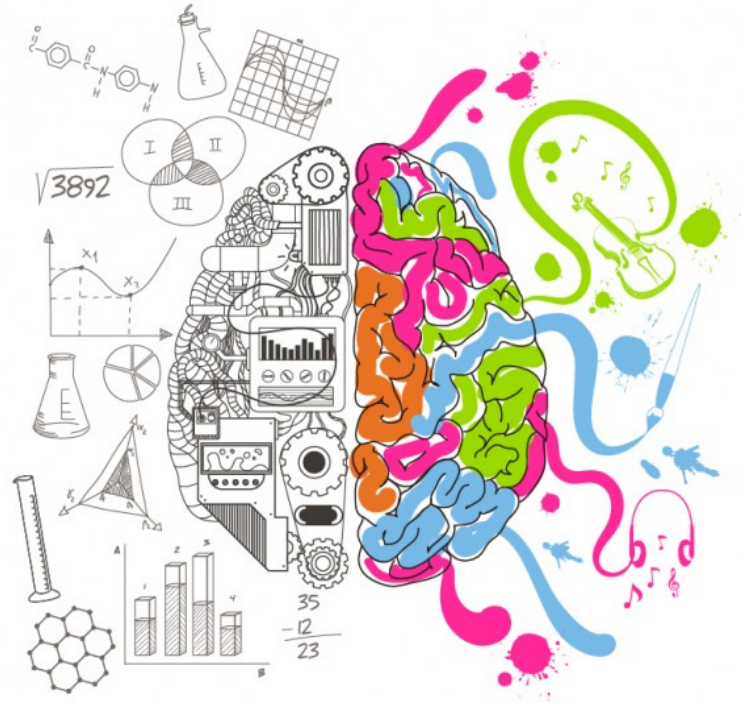
## How can we help them?

- Nurture local writing talent
  - Identify, prompt, coach
- Harness local writing talent
  - Challenge, share, critique
- Showcase local writing talent
  - Provide opportunities for exposure, publishing, awards



# Determine what kind of assistance is needed...

- Brainstorming
- Writing exercises
- Editing sessions
- Grammar lessons revisited
- Descriptions of various jobs and situations for believability



# Major benefits:

- Networking with other writers
- “Testing” out writing by sharing and receiving constructive critiques and feedback
- Opportunities to attend local and regional programs with authors as speakers
- Time to ask questions about writing process, inspiration, ideas, business questions and publishing tips

# Resources

- Reference books

- Dictionary and Thesaurus – dictionary.com or Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Visuwords <https://visuwords.com/>
- The Elements of Style by William Strunk original ebook online through Project Gutenberg
- Grammar Girl’s Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing by Mignon Fogarty  
<https://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>
- The Penguin Guide to Punctuation
- Wordcounter <https://wordcounter.com/>
  - Ranks frequently used words



# Resources continued...

- **Books**

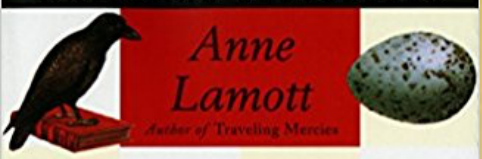
- Stephen King's "On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft"
- David Baldacci on what to write about "Wish You Well" essay  
<https://davidbaldacci.com/book/wish-you-well/>
- The Writing Life: Writers On How They Think And Work by Marie Arana
- [Plot & Structure: Techniques and Exercises for Crafting a Plot that Grips Readers from Start to Finish](#) by James Scott Bell
- [How to Write Bestselling Fiction](#) by Dean Koontz
- [Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life](#) by Ann Lamott

- **Magazines**

- Writer's Digest



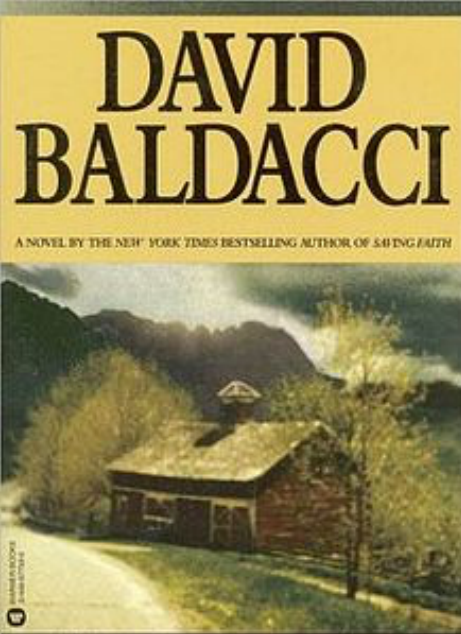
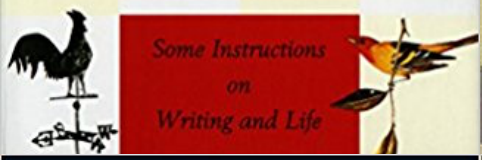
NATIONAL BESTSELLER



b i r d

b y

b i r d



WISH YOU WELL

WRITE Great FICTION



Plot & Structure

Techniques and exercises for crafting a plot that grips readers from start to finish

JAMES SCOTT BELL



THE WRITING LIFE

WRITERS ON HOW THEY THINK AND WORK

A COLLECTION FROM The Washington Post BOOK WORLD  
EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY MARIE ARANA

7 Steps to Poems That Get Published!

NO. 2 April 2003

# Writer's Digest

www.writersdigest.com



## Craft a Strong NOVEL!

- 10 Keys to Solid Final Drafts
- How to Make Your Villain BAD!

Writing Contests: Ways to Win—Even if You Lose

Plus! How to Make Your 2nd Book a SUCCESS!

CHRONICLE Is Back! Enter Our Contest, Get Published in WDI!

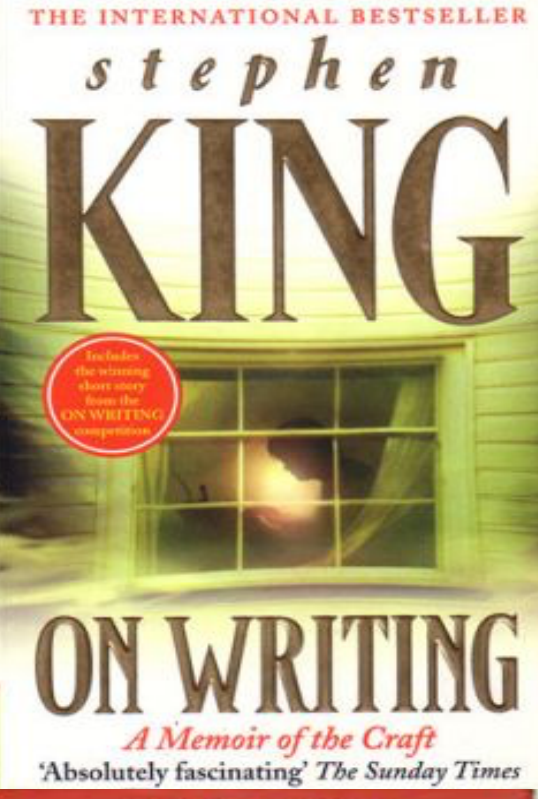
THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

stephen KING

ON WRITING

*A Memoir of the Craft*

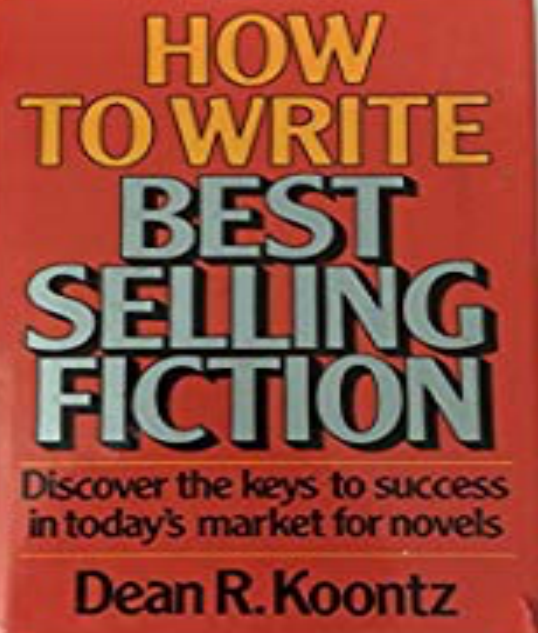
'Absolutely fascinating' *The Sunday Times*



HOW TO WRITE BEST SELLING FICTION

Discover the keys to success in today's market for novels

Dean R. Koontz



# About writing online

- The Write Life <https://thewritelife.com/>
- Advanced Fiction Writing <https://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/>
- Pro Writing Aid <https://prowritingaid.com/art/387/Six-Tried-and-Tested-Methods-for-Writing-a-Novel.aspx>
- Apps
  - Evernote - Creative Writing <https://evernote.com/templates>
  - Online self-publishers
    - Scrivener <https://www.literatureandlatte.com/>
    - Createspace <https://www.createspace.com/>
    - Biblioboard/Press Books/Self-e <https://biblioboard.com/>
    - Smashwords <https://www.smashwords.com/>
    - Format and distribute ebooks. Buy and sell ebooks.
    - Draft2digital <https://www.draft2digital.com>
    - Kindle Direct Publishing Program [https://kdp.amazon.com/en\\_US/](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/)
  - Publishers
    - <https://www.janefriedman.com/key-book-publishing-path/>

# 2018 KEY BOOK PUBLISHING PATHS • BY JANE FRIEDMAN • JANEFRIEDMAN.COM

## TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

## ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

BIG FIVE	MID-SIZE & LARGE	SMALL PRESSES	SELF-PUBLISHING AND ASSISTED PUBLISHING	SOCIAL	
<p><b>WHO THEY ARE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Hachette, Stmon &amp; Schuster, Macmillan (each has dozens of imprints).</li> </ul> <p><b>WHO THEY WORK WITH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authors who write works with mainstream appeal, deserving of nationwide print retail distribution in bookstores and other outlets.</li> <li>Celebrity-status or brand-name authors.</li> <li>Writers of commercial fiction or genre fiction, such as romance, mystery/crime, thriller/suspense, science fiction and fantasy, young adult, children's.</li> <li>Nonfiction authors with a significant platform (visibility to a readership).</li> </ul> <p><b>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publisher shoulders financial risk.</li> <li>Publisher will pursue all possible subsidiary rights and licensing deals worldwide.</li> <li>Physical bookstore distribution nearly assured, in addition to other physical retail opportunities (big-box, specialty).</li> <li>Best chance of mainstream media coverage and reviews.</li> </ul> <p><b>HOW TO APPROACH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Almost always requires an agent. Novelists should have a finished manuscript. Nonfiction authors should have a book proposal.</li> </ul> <p><b>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You receive an advance against royalties, but most advances do not earn out.</li> <li>Publisher holds onto all publishing rights for all formats for at least 5-10 years.</li> <li>Many decisions are out of your control, such as cover design and title.</li> <li>You may be unhappy with marketing support, and find that your title "disappears" from store shelves within 3-6 months. However, the same is true for most publishers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHO THEY ARE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not part of the Big Five, but significant in size, usually with the same capabilities.</li> <li>Examples: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Scholastic, Workman, Sourcebooks, John Wiley &amp; Sons, W.W. Norton, Kensington, Chronicle, Tyndale, many university presses (Cambridge, Oxford).</li> </ul> <p><b>WHO THEY WORK WITH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authors who write mainstream works, as well as those that have a more niche or special-interest appeal.</li> <li>Celebrity-status or brand-name authors.</li> <li>Writers of commercial fiction or genre fiction, such as romance, mystery/crime, thriller/suspense, science fiction and fantasy, young adult, children's.</li> <li>Nonfiction authors of all types.</li> </ul> <p><b>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identical to Big Five advantages.</li> </ul> <p><b>HOW TO APPROACH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doesn't always require an agent; see submission guidelines for each publisher. Novelists should have a finished manuscript. Nonfiction authors should have a book proposal.</li> </ul> <p><b>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same as Big Five, but advances and royalties from mid-size publishers may be lower than Big Five.</li> <li>Some mid-size publishers may be more open to innovative or flexible agreements that feel more like a collaboration or partnership (with more author input or control).</li> <li>University or scholarly presses typically pay a low advance and have small print runs, typically with a focus on libraries, classrooms, and academic markets.</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHO THEY ARE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This category is the hardest to summarize because "small press" is a catch-all term for very well-known traditional publishers (e.g., Graywolf) as well as mom-and-pop operations that may not have any formal experience in publishing.</li> <li>Given how easy it is in the digital age for anyone to start a press, you must carefully evaluate a small press's abilities before signing with one. Legitimate small presses do not ask authors to pay for publication.</li> </ul> <p><b>WHO THEY WORK WITH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerging, first-time authors, as well as established ones.</li> <li>Often more friendly to experimental, literary, and less commercial types of work.</li> </ul> <p><b>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possibly a more personalized and collaborative relationship with the publisher.</li> <li>With well-established small presses: editorial, design, and marketing support that equals that of a larger house.</li> </ul> <p><b>HOW TO APPROACH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rarely requires an agent. See the submission guidelines of each press.</li> </ul> <p><b>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may not receive an advance or you'll receive a nominal one. Your royalty rate may be higher to make up for it. Diversity of players and changing landscape means contracts vary widely.</li> <li>There may be no physical bookstore distribution and/or the press may rely on print-on-demand to fulfill orders. Potential for media or review coverage declines when there is no print run.</li> <li>Be very protective of your rights if you're shouldering most of the risk and effort.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ENTREPRENEURIAL OR DIY SELF-PUB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You manage the publishing process and hire the right people/services to edit, design, publish, and distribute.</li> <li>You decide which distributors/retailers to deal with. You are in complete control of all artistic and business decisions.</li> <li>You keep all profits and rights.</li> </ul> <p><b>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may not invest enough money or time to produce a quality book or market it.</li> <li>You may not have the knowledge or experience to know what quality help looks like or what it takes to produce a quality book.</li> <li>It is difficult to get mainstream reviews, media attention or sales through conventional channels (bookstores, libraries).</li> </ul> <p><b>KEY RETAILERS AND SERVICES TO USE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary ebook retailers that offer direct access to authors: Amazon KDP, Nook Press, Apple iBookstore, Kobo. Primary ebook distributors: Smashwords, Draft2Digital, PublishDrive, StreetLib.</li> <li>Print-on-demand (POD) makes it affordable to sell and distribute print books via online retail. Most often used: CreateSpace, IngramSpark. With printer-ready PDF files, it costs little or nothing to start.</li> <li>The above retailers and distributors operate primarily on a nonexclusive basis and take a cut of sales; you can leave at will. There is no contract, just terms of service.</li> <li>If you're confident about sales, you may hire a printer, invest in a print run, manage inventory, fulfillment, shipping, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>WHEN TO PREFER DIY OVER ASSISTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You intend to publish many books and make money via sales over a long period.</li> <li>You are invested in marketing, promotion, platform building, and developing an audience for your books over many years.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ASSISTED AND HYBRID PUBLISHING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You fund book publication in exchange for assistance; cost varies.</li> <li>Hybrid publishers pay royalties; other services may pay royalties or 100 percent of net sales. You'll receive a better cut than a traditional publishing contract, but usually make less than DIY.</li> <li>Regardless of promises made, books will rarely be stocked in physical retail outlets.</li> <li>Each service has its own distinctive costs and business model; always secure a clear contract with all fees explained. Such services typically stay in business because of author-paid fees, not book sales.</li> </ul> <p><b>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get a published book without having to figure out the service landscape or find professionals to help. Ideal if you have more money than time, but rarely a sustainable business model if you are frequently publishing.</li> <li>Some companies are run by former traditional publishing professionals and offer high-quality results (with the potential for bookstore placement, but this is rare).</li> </ul> <p><b>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some services have started calling themselves "hybrid publishers" because it sounds more fashionable and savvy, yet offer low-quality results and service.</li> <li>Most marketing and publicity service packages, while well-meaning, are not worth your investment.</li> <li>Avoid companies that take advantage of author inexperience and use high-pressure sales tactics, such as AuthorSolutions Imprints (AuthorHouse, iUniverse, WestBow, Archway, and others).</li> <li>To check the reputation of a service, search for Mick Rooney's Independent Publishing Magazine website.</li> </ul>	<p><b>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You write, publish, and distribute your work in a public or semi-public forum, directly for readers.</li> <li>Publication is self-directed and continues on an at-will and almost always nonexclusive basis.</li> <li>Emphasis is on feedback and growth; sales or income can be rare.</li> </ul> <p><b>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows you to develop an audience for your work early on, even while you're learning how to write.</li> <li>Popular writers at community sites may go on to traditional book deals.</li> </ul> <p><b>MOST DISTINCTIVE CATEGORIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serialization: Readers consume content in chunks or installments; you receive feedback that may help you to revise. Establishes a fan base, or a direct connection to readers. Serialization may be used as a marketing tool for completed works. Examples: Wattpad, Tapas, LeanPub.</li> <li>Fan fiction: Similar to serialization, only the work is based on other authors' books and characters. For this reason, it can be difficult to monetize fan fiction since it may constitute copyright infringement. Examples: Fanfiction.net, Archive Of Our Own, Wattpad.</li> <li>Social media and blogs: Both new and established authors alike use their blog and/or social media accounts to share their work and establish a readership. Examples: Instagram (Instapoets), Tumblr, Facebook (groups especially), YouTube.</li> <li>Patreon/patronage: Similar to a serialization model, except your patrons pay a recurring amount to have access to your content.</li> </ul>

## SPECIAL CASES

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### AGENT-RUN EFFORTS

Some agents have created publishing arms, either as part of their agency or as a separate business. The most significant example is Diverston Books from agent Scott Waxman. Usually these efforts are limited to print-on-demand or ebook only distribution.

### AMAZON PUBLISHING

With more than a dozen imprints, Amazon has a straddle publishing operation that is mainly approachable only by agents. Amazon titles are sold primarily on Amazon, since most bookstores are unwilling to carry their titles.

### DIGITAL-ONLY OR DIGITAL-FIRST

All publishers, regardless of size, sometimes operate digital-only or digital-first imprints that offer no advance and little or no print retail distribution. Sometimes such efforts are indistinguishable from self-publishing.

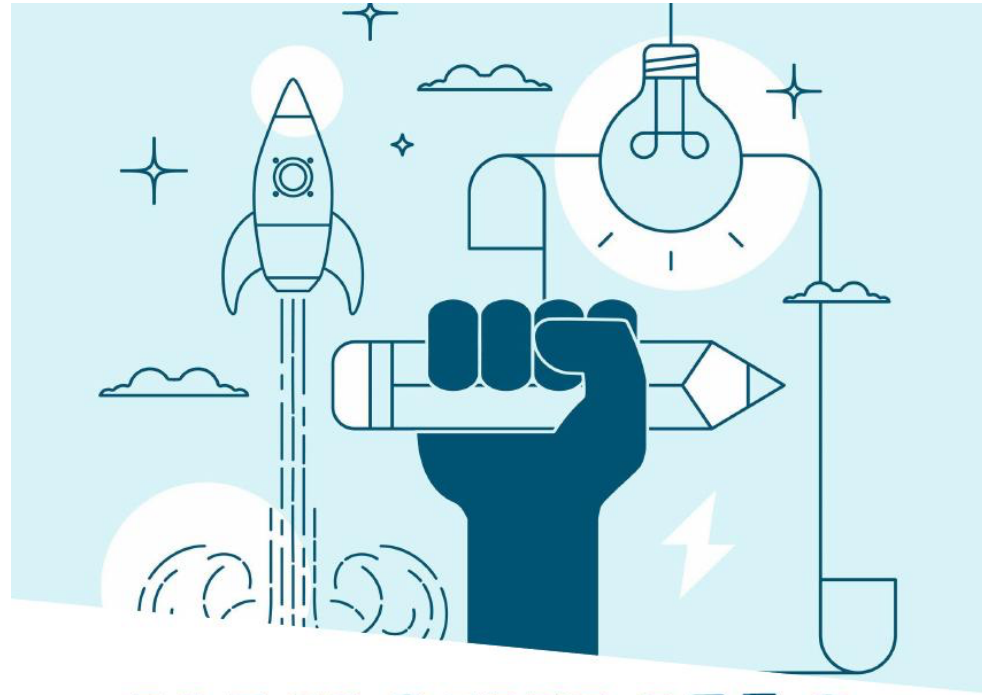
- How to Get Published: <https://janefriedman.com/start-here-how-to-get-your-book-published/>
- How to Self-Publish: <https://janefriedman.com/self-publish-your-book/>
- How to Evaluate Small Presses: <https://janefriedman.com/evaluate-small-publisher/>
- A Definition of Hybrid Publishing: <https://janefriedman.com/what-is-a-hybrid-publisher/>
- Should You Traditionally Publish or Self-Publish? <https://janefriedman.com/should-you-self-publish-traditional/>

### WHO CREATED THIS?

Jane Friedman has more than 20 years of experience in the publishing industry. She is the former publisher of *Writer's Digest* and co-founder of the industry newsletter for authors, *The Hot Sheet*. Find out more at [hotsheetpub.com](http://hotsheetpub.com).

# About writing online

- Blogs/Newsletters <https://hotsheetpub.com/>
  - Daily Writing Tips by Mark Nichol <https://www.dailywritingtips.com/tools-for-authors/>
  - National Novel Writing Month: NANOWRIMO <https://nanowrimo.org/>
- Marketing
  - Website creation through free 'Wordpress'
    - Mail Chimp Marketing automation platform
  - For maintaining email list of fans, clients
- Canva <https://www.canva.com/>
  - For creating flyers and promotional materials



# NANOWRIMO

## *Write-In*

**Saturday, November 3, 10:00AM - 3:30PM at the Inman Library**

If you're trying to write 50,000 words for Nanowrimo (National Novel Writing Month), we will have the meeting room reserved for you to write most of the day on Saturday. We will have some snacks for you and lots of encouragement. Adults 18+.



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Inman Library: 864.472.8363

# Who is thinking about starting a group but has no clue?

## How do you start a writing group?

- Other aspects of running a writing group to consider?
- Do you have the time to devote to creating a unique writing program once per week or once per month?
- It's a good idea to plan 3-6 months in advance in order to publicize, schedule potential author speakers and other speakers who can provide related information
- Are you a good facilitator of meetings, especially when some participants may be difficult to manage regarding the amount of talking and attention they require
- Determine if you have interested patrons
- Determine the best date and time
- Advertise with social media, flyers, website event calendars, newspapers, radio and word of mouth
- Plan programs ahead

# Possible program topics

Writing genres

Flash Fiction

Short Stories

Prompt writing from words or pictures

Writer sample readings & critiques

Writing blogs

Songwriting

Writing Poetry

Writing Non-Fiction

Writing children's stories

Book cover art

Writing and illustrating graphic novels

Character development in writing

Setting and time in writing

Plotting and outline

Traditional publishing vs self-publishing

Do you need an agent?

Social media for writers

Managing your writing business

Online resources for writers

# Possible speakers

- Local university professors in English or Creative Writing
- Local journalists who can discuss descriptive writing
- Local law enforcement who can talk about police procedure
- Professionals who can give details about procedures or descriptions in their professions to add to believability
- Local authors





# Wandering Writers

Group Meetup

## Tuesday, June 14th



At this meetup, each writer will read a short piece they have written about their family History, whether fiction or non-fiction. Join us to hear the results of this fun exercise. Be ready to provide constructive critiques. No experience necessary and everyone is welcome.

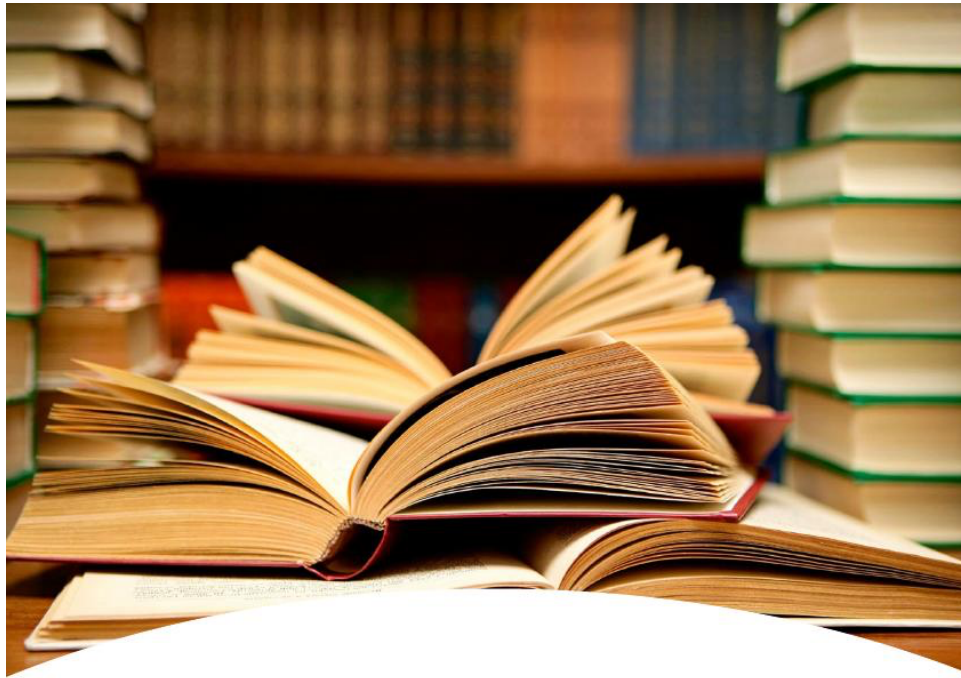
6:00pm – 7:00pm  
Inman Library

## Tuesday, July 12th



To honor our freedom and great country, writers should bring a poem, song or short vignette they write about this subject to share with the group for comments and constructive critique. Everyone is welcome including new and wannabe writers.

6:00pm – 7:00pm  
Inman Library



## WANDERING WRITERS:

*Brain & Evolutionary Connections to Literature*

**Thursday, November 29, 6:00PM at the Inman Library**

Ever wondered how the brain and evolution of man connect to literature? There is one thing that all of the world's cultures have in common: a desire to tell and to listen to stories. What is it about our species that drives us to storytelling? In this presentation, writer and teacher Brock Adams examines the evolutionary roots of creative writing. Supported by research from evolutionary biologists and neuroscientists, Adams suggests that all storytelling is mankind's way of practicing at being human. Local author and University Instructor Brock Adams will be here to explore this topic. **Adults 18+ welcome.**



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