

Scribbles

FALL 2019 Issue

scbwi Kansas/Missouri Newsletter

Laugh Until It Hurts: Adding Humor to Your Prose

BY ERIN MOS, KS/MO CO-REGIONAL ADVISOR

I'm funny.

Sometimes, it's even intentional.

As a walking punchline, I'm often (okay, twice) asked how to be funny. I'll be honest, most of my best lines just pop out—a verbal pratfall, if you will. However, with that caveat aside, I have learned a few things about adding humor to writing.

But, wait, you say. You've been a loyal and faithful reader of my Scribbles endeavors and you know I write horror. Why the funnies? Because, horror and humor are flipsides of the same coin.

No. Really.

I'm not making this up. They both activate similar areas of your amygdala – the humor/horror/hallucination/emotional CPU of your brain.

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For example: there isn't anything funny about my mom having a stroke, or my dad, with his Parkinson's tremor, trying to help her put in an earring. It's actually rather horrifying. But if you can't laugh at their game of pin-the-stud-in-the-earlobe, your only other option is to cry. I chose to laugh.

So now that you know what kinds of things I find funny – many of you will want to stop reading –for those of you still here: welcome, my twisted friends!

Let's get the bad news out of the way first. Writing humor as its own genre, sadly, is not something I believe you can be taught. If you aren't someone who gravitates toward funny as a default, the novel as giant punchline is going to be difficult.

If that's you, don't fret. My bet is you are amazing at a lot of types of writing that allude the humor writers of the world. For instance, I'm not going to Chris Grabenstein or David Wong for insights into the depths of childhood trauma or to cope with monumental loss. If your goal is to write the next great American novel and you emulate David Foster Wallace (who would be a fabulous role model, exempting the suicidal depression) then humor probably isn't your place. For me, I'll stick with Jeff Strand and Jenny Lawson.

But adding humor is a learnable skill. Further, it SHOULD be learned! Humor allows us to keep our literary tension high without burning out the

reader. No one can spend an entire novel turned up to eleven. (Gratuitous This is Spinal Tap Reference) We need moments to decompress and take a breath. Those moments let us ramp back up and reach new levels of tension.

That's great, you say, but how do you do that? Good question. If you figure it out, my email is...just kidding. While I have by no means got all the answers, there are some specific techniques that have worked for me.

FIRST, DO NO HARM.

This is a great motto for doctors as well as those writing humor. While I am not averse to a good insult comic, I wouldn't recommend that being your default. Comedy shouldn't be bullying or hard to take. It should lighten the mood; not make you cringe. Good insult comics are rare—as are their truly appreciative audiences!

Unless...

Self-deprecation is almost universally okay AS LONG as it fits your character's voice and doesn't tread into the territory of self-loathing. This is about balance, and only works if it is genuine to your character and story. Don't try to force a character into behavior that doesn't fit just for some comic relief. Like any insincere character trait, this will only read as flat and false.

Go big or go home!

This is a two-fold bit of advice. First, no one laughs at half a story. Details

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are what make it real. Just try to use the right details—the funny or unexpected ones. When I retell the story of the time I watched an elderly man drive into a concrete ball in front of Target (and thus discovered why those balls are placed strategically in front of the entrances) I don't include the color of his car, but I do describe it as a 1980's boat of a Cadillac. No one is going to laugh more or less if the car is white or gray, but a Caddy is always funnier than a Jetta.

SECOND, EXAGGERATE.

A least a little. For instance, when I tell the story of how I discovered that my dryer had broken and that all settings had approximately the same heat as a midday in August at the Equator of Hell, I tell them that my delicacies looked like I'd gone into business manufacturing jumpers for mice. They weren't really that shrunken, nor was my dryer quite that level of inferno, but it's funnier than saying my dryer overheated and shrunk some sweaters.

Not all words are created equal.

Some words are funny. Some words—although wonderful in their own way—are not. Avocados are funnier than apples. It is always funnier to waddle than to crawl. And I prefer to cackle and croak than to laugh and moan. Remember, we are writing for kids, and they are always going to prefer to giggle about gas and to titter about toots than to smile about indigestion.

Clichés are overused, until they're not.

One of the first rules of writing is to avoid clichés. But if you are looking for a quick laugh, or at least the sporadic giggle, try turning them on their heads. It isn't hard, in fact, it's as easy as falling off a bike. Trust me, if it's not one thing, it's your mother. And as for when to try this, take a deep breath, we'll burn that bridge when we get to it.

Are you talking to me?

For those of you playing along at home (heck, if you've read this far in this article) you'll recognize the aside as my standard go-to. Particularly in my non-fiction, I like to intersperse my prose with conversational moments just between us. You can do this a variety of ways—the em-dash works well. But perhaps you aren't as in love with that particular form of punctuation as I am...I know I have a problem and I promise I'm trying to stay on the wagon... in which case I suggest a well-timed ellipse. If that still isn't for you (seriously now, are you trying to be difficult?) you can always go with the parenthetical aside.

RULE OF THREE—DID YOU SEE WHAT I DID THERE?

This is probably the most written about rule of humor and one for which I can take no credit. Far more talented writers than I have spent countless paragraphs explaining

this rule so I will only do a cursory touch. This is basically the idea of misdirection. For example, if I was telling you why I am fearful for the future of our society, I might list some reasons. Things that worry me are the rising geopolitical tensions of trade wars, the increasing polarization of our political parties and the sudden increase in the popularity of high-end cafeteria food.

Not that all these things don't concern me, but maybe they aren't all of the same intensity. For those of you old enough, think of Sesame Street's "Which of these is not like the other one?" This is a good technique for descriptions as well. Let's say we've introduced a new character. We might describe him as (cliché alert) "tall, dark, and particularly gassy."

I like this technique as it not only allows for a touch of levity, but it also keeps your reader on their toes. And thus, awake. In my personal experience, consciousness is critical in our readership, so anything we can do to keep them alert is a good thing.

Okay, so now we've got some craft-type skills, but how do we know we're applying them correctly? First, did you laugh? If you didn't. Start over. If you—the writer—doesn't think it's funny, it isn't. I write to make myself laugh. If I'm not at least mildly amused, why would I think you will be?

But just because I crack myself up doesn't mean the piece is funny. I've got a pretty sideways sense of humor and I laugh at a lot of things that make other people squirm. That's why I always find a guinea pig. If I want adults to laugh, I find a fully-grown guinea pig. If it's the funny bones of kids I'm after (in the not creepy way) I find a kid-shaped guinea pig. Preferably one of my own, or one that I've been given permission to approach.

Which bring me to my last, most salient piece of advice. The owners of kids found running stray at places like libraries and shopping centers do not take kindly to unauthorized approaches of writers handing out unfinished manuscripts and demanding to know if it makes kids giggle. Unless you do it with candy. From the back of an unmarked white van.

ERIN MOS, CO-REGIONAL ADVISOR



Erin Mos wears many hats (and several names) – not the least of which is regional co-advisor for the Kansas-Missouri SCBWI. Under the name E. Lillith McDermott she writes dark fiction from her home in Kansas City where she collects apothecary bottles, spell books, and the tears of her enemies. She periodically geeks out at GeekMom.

com and her other work can be found at lillithmcdermott.com

Finding Creative Solutions in Stillness

BY JESS TOWNES, KS/MO CO-REGIONAL ADVISOR

I've been working on the ending to a picture book manuscript for almost two months. We're talking fifty short words, and I can't find the right ones. This particular manuscript came in a burst, and the words mostly flowed freely, until I hit a brick wall on the final page.

This is not for a lack of searching. I've tried at least a dozen endings. I've spent hours trying to think my way to the solution. I've turned words over in my head, changed my font, wrote the manuscript out by hand, created a dummy, all the tricks. The final words remain a mystery, and one I started to believe I'd never solve.

Until a couple of days ago, when my meditation app provided an answer. Not an ending, but a reminder that creative solutions don't always come from thinking harder. The calm, reassuring voice that narrates the Calm app shared a quote from Eckhart Tolle - "Stillness is where creativity and solutions to problems are found." - and I remembered this tiny, true thing I'd forgotten. Yes, we have to show up to the work, but sometimes, the solution we are looking for comes when we aren't actively thinking, but instead, when we are simply present. When we quiet down. And I haven't been mentally quiet lately. Maybe you can relate.

I'm giving myself permission to stop working on the end of this manuscript while I carve out some quiet moments in my mind once more. I have a few practices that help with this, and I'd love to hear from you if you have others.

MEDITATE

I'm a bit of a meditation evangelist. In an increasingly connected world, it is harder and harder to find ourselves uniquely in the present moment. Our cell phones chirp, Apple watches buzz, even our mental to-do lists threaten to crowd out any quiet we might find on our own. But when I'm active in a meditation practice, I find that I'm also more likely to grab those moments of presence throughout the day. If you've never tried meditation, I highly recommend starting with an app called HeadSpace and doing the first ten sessions which are free. The app offers a non-judgmental instruction guide that explains meditation in a clear and new way for me. Once you're done with the ten lessons, you could subscribe if you like the approach. Or, you could try another app, of which there are many. My personal favorite is Calm, which offers either a free version with a daily meditation or a paid version with sessions on a huge variety of topics. Some people prefer an unguided meditation experience, or a local class.

WALK

Sometimes moving our bodies quiets our minds, and time in nature opens our senses. I've heard of artists who take a walk after breakfast and consider it their walk to work, even though work is a home studio. I know others who use a walk as a midday break or point of reflection. A Stanford study found that walking versus sitting increased creativity and divergent thinking in participants by about 60%.

SCHEDULE "DO NOTHING" TIME

It's one thing to say you're going to meditate, or take a walk, or simply do nothing at all, but we all know that life gets in the way. Try putting it on your schedule. Set a timer on your phone. Be as firm about this appointment as you are a visit to the dentist. It may feel counterintuitive in a culture that measures our worth by our productivity but try it anyway. You may find that increases your productivity the rest of the day, and even if it doesn't, we all need rest.

STEP BACK FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

This is the sentence where I'm supposed to enumerate the positive qualities of social media before suggesting you take a break, lest you think I'm a Luddite, but we're all grown-ups here. We all know what we like and don't like about social media on an individual level, and it's still okay to take a break from something that you can defend and enjoy. Social media is noisy. It is a party with a thousand attendees, all talking over one another incessantly. It is a cacophony of ideas and judgements and inspiration and negativity. It is all of those things at the same time, and more, it can linger in your mind long after you close the app. This is why I recommend taking an active break from time to time from social media. Log out. Take a day, or a week, or longer if you need, and allow creativity to flourish without so many additional voices, especially at the start of a new project.

I still haven't found the magic words to complete my picture book manuscript, but I think I'm at least holding a map that points to them. I'll be taking my time on this quiet journey. I hope you'll join me.

JESS TOWNES, CO-REGIONAL ADVISOR



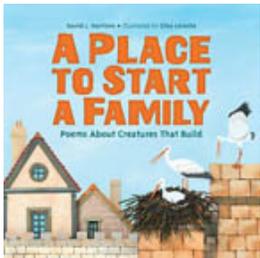
Jess Townes currently serves as regional co-advisor for the Kansas-Missouri SCBWI. She is a children's writer and a regular contributor at All the Wonders. She lives in Wentzville, Missouri with her ukulele-strumming husband, two insatiably curious boys, a shoe-stealing dog, and two cats. jesstownes.com.

MEMBER NEWS

This fall, KS/MO member **David Harrison** is celebrating a milestone. “October 1 will mark the 50th anniversary since my first book for children, *The Boy with a Drum*, was published and changed my life forever. In May this year I held my 96th book, *And the Bullfrogs Sing*, and I was happy, but there can never be another thrill like the one I had that day in 1969.”

David has plenty to celebrate. His books continue to pull in honors. Here are just a few.

A Place to Start a Family (Charlesbridge, 2018)



- One of ten books for K-2 chosen by teachers across the country for this year’s International Literacy Association (ILA) Teachers’ Choice List
- Chosen by Bank Street College for its Best Children’s Books of the Year 2019

- National Science Teachers’ Outstanding Science Trade Books

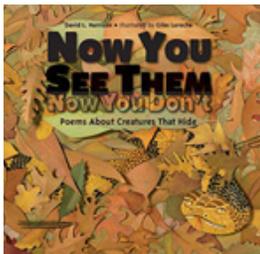
- Pennsylvania’s Young Reader’s Choice, Awards Program Master List, 2019 – 2020

Crawly School for Bugs (Boyd’s Mills Press, 2018)



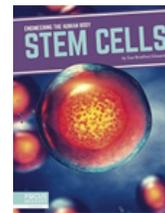
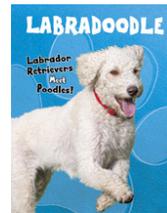
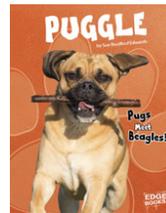
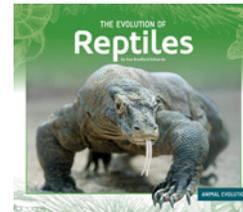
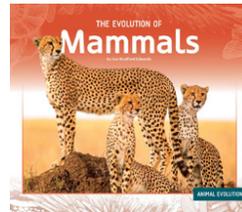
- Selected by Missouri Center for the Book to represent Missouri at the National Book Fair in Washington D.C., 2018
- Named by NCTE as a Notable Book of Children’s Poetry, 2019

Now You See Them, Now You Don’t (Charlesbridge, 2016)



- Starred Kirkus review, 12/1/15
- Chosen by Society of Midland Authors as best children’s nonfiction book published in 2016
- NCTE Notable Poetry Book
- Red Poppy Award nominee, Georgetown, Texas, 2017

Sue Bradford Edwards has several new books in 2019. Abdo published *The Evolution of Mammals*, *The Evolution of Reptiles*, and *Earning, Saving and Investing*. Capstone published *Puggles: Pugs Meet Beagles* and *Labradoodles: Lab Retrievers Meet Poodles*. North Star Editions published *Stem Cells* and *The Dark Web*.



Sharon K. Mayhew’s first MG Novel, *Keep Calm And Carry On, Children*, will be released by Black Rose Writing on September 5, 2019. It is a story about how British children, during WWII, persevered and overcame their situations.



Billie Holladay Skelley has a new book, *Hugh Armstrong Robinson: The Story of Flying Lucky 13*. This text details the life, accomplishments, and contributions of a remarkable aviation pioneer. Illustrated by Rachel Bowman, the book is published by Goldminds Publishing/Amphora Publishing.

Research On the Road

BY NICKI JACOBSMEYER, KS/MO ASSISTANT REGIONAL ADVISOR

I recently took a research trip for a middle grade historical fiction novel I'm writing. Since research is one of my favorite parts of writing, I have a tendency to spend too much time in the process and have to nudge myself to actually draft the story.

Each time I do research, I learn more about what works for me and what doesn't. When you need to travel to do research not only are you thinking about time but there is a financial element that needs to be considered. Since we are all in this together, I thought I would share some tips that helped make my trip a success.

Write the crappy first draft first. In the past, I've done a majority of my research before I write a full first draft. On this project, I vomited the first draft on the page and although it reeked, I had more of a direction. I knew the things that were working and weren't. Also, I kept a list of specific questions I needed to answer which I may not have had if I hadn't drafted first.

Take a peek at their Event Calendar. See what festivals, programs, and events are happening in your location. You may come across some that would be fruitful for your research. Keep in mind bigger events will mean more tourists which could result in higher lodging and other travel costs.

Pick up the phone and call ahead. Not all events and closings are listed on websites so call ahead. You don't want to make the trip only to come against a barrier which could leave a hole in your research. You've spent the time and money so you want to make the most of the trip.

Ask for help. Explain to people you're researching for a book and ask what resources would they recommend. I've found people are more than happy to share what they know and are eager to be part of a book project. Also, locals know hidden treasures in their towns that could add to the authenticity of your work.

Make appointments. If you have the opportunity to meet with experts and pick their brain, take advantage! Historical Societies, Chambers of Commerce, Librarians, etc. are all wonderful resources. Tours of the town or landmark can provide vital and interesting information.

Take a stroll and smell the coffee. Give yourself downtime to relax and let the information marinate. Walking around and taking in the sites helps you get a feel of the area through your own eyes. Not to mention local coffeehouses are a wonderful place to refuel and feel the local vibe. I'm a huge fan of the *Image of America* books published by Arcadia which showcase towns through vintage images and usually bring one along. I can imagine what the town looked like during the time period I'm writing about in my story and reflect on the changes.

Your brain can only remember so much. On this trip I purchased a reasonably priced recorder for my interviews, tours, and

talks. This way I was able to be in the moment and listen to the information without feeling pressured to write down and/or remember every little detail. Although I did take notes in case my recorder decided to take the day off, they were broad and allowed me to concentrate on the speaker. Remember to ask permission before you record anyone or anything. Don't forget your camera either, especially if you're visual. Trust me, you'll be happy you did both.

Bring a research buddy. If you know someone who wants to join you not only will it help reduce travel costs but you'll also have an extra set of eyes and ears. There are things they will remember, see, or think to ask that you wouldn't.

Keep the door open. Make sure you get contact names and info from everyone you meet. Ask if they would mind if you contact them in the future with any further questions. Without fail, there will be something that comes up in the process that will need clarification. Having them on board will make life easier. Send thank you cards when you return home. Also, you may want to add them to your acknowledgement section once your book is published ;)

Think outside the box. Although you'll want to hit up the obvious spots, don't forget about the others. Local libraries have a wealth of information, especially on resources specific to their county and state. Go to popular or intriguing restaurants, shops, etc. You might find a local place you want to add to your work or it may inspire another idea. These can be wonderful marketing ideas down the road.

Take a breath. When you get home you will have tons of research to go through and organize – DON'T PANIC, BREATHE! Take a few days off so your mind can rest but make sure you don't wait too long. I've found when I return from my research playground to "real life", if I wait too long other things get in the way and my excitement dwindles.

Go celebrate! Remember to have fun and enjoy the process. Not many people get to experience what you do. Planning, preparing, and partaking in a research trip requires mountains of work but is worth it in the end. Go celebrate your accomplishment!

NICKI JACOBSMEYER, ASSISTANT RA



Nicki Jacobsmeyer writes fiction and non-fiction for children and adults. She has a middle grade book, *Surviving the Iditarod, You Choose: Surviving Extreme Sports* (Capstone Press, 2017) and a historical non-fiction book, *Images Of America, Chesterfield* (Arcadia Publishing, 2016).

Her short stories and poetry are published in several anthologies. Besides reading and writing she loves to travel, knit, sunsets, family barbecues and watching a storm come in from her front porch. Visit her at nickijacobsmeyer.com.

Reading Picture Books for Study

BY PEGGY ARCHER, KS/MO PAL COORDINATOR

“Read what you write!” We all hear that. But how does reading other picture books translate into making *me* a better picture book writer?

When I find a book that I really like, I re-read it and try to figure out what about the book made a connection with me. Then I try to remember those things when I do my own writing. Below are just some of the many suggestions or questions that may help you figure out that connection.

If you are a novelist or chapter book writer, don't rule out reading picture books for study! Picture books may be shorter, but like books for older readers, they have the same elements of craft.

1 – READ FOR PLEASURE

Read a picture book out loud as if you were reading it to a child. No analyzing! No critiquing! Just read for fun. Did you like it? Love it!? Did you want to quit reading and go on to the next one?

2 – ASK YOURSELF –

- What parts of this book did I like the most? What was it about those parts that I liked?
- Were there any parts of the book that slowed me down? Made me disinterested? Why?

Now you can analyze! Why did you like, or dislike, this book?

3 – LOOK AT THE MAIN CHARACTER

- Was he likeable? Was he ‘real’? Did you root for him?
- What made the main character stand out? What made him different?
- What does he care about?
- What made *you* care about him? Or did you?
- Why would a *child* care about him? Is he relatable?
- What were his strengths and weaknesses? Were his actions consistent with these?

4 – LOOK AT THE STORY OR ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

- Was the story new or different, or presented in a unique way?
- Did the main character solve his own problem? Did he change at the end of the story?

- Did the story unfold with action and dialogue, or did the narrator ‘tell’ you what was happening and how the main character felt? (Show vs Tell)
- Did each word or scene move the story forward? Did the illustrations add or tell part of the story?
- Did the story feel rhythmic? Did the author use any poetic tools in telling the story—repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia, etc.?
- If the story was told in rhyme, was the rhyme perfect? Did it read smoothly, or did you stumble on the rhythm at any place, or have to go back and re-read it to ‘get’ it?
- Was the story relatable to a child?
- Was the story problem solved in a simple but satisfying way?

5 – IN THE CASE OF NON-FICTION, POETRY COLLECTIONS, OR OTHER TYPES OF BOOKS –

- Was it organized in a way that connected the ‘beginning’ to the ‘end’?
- Was it different, creative?
- Was it relatable to the age of the reader?

“Read what you write!” and become a better writer because of it. Find that connection and hold on to it as you sit down and write your own story!

Be sure to check out our featured PAL Author of the Month on the Kansas/Missouri website at ksmo.scbwi.org/featured-author

PEGGY ARCHER, PAL COORDINATOR

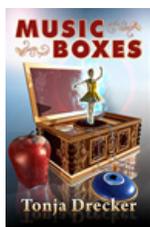


Peggy Archer's newest picture book, *A Hippy-Hoppy Toad* (Schwartz & Wade/Random House 2018), just won the SCBWI Mid South Division Crystal Kite Award, and is a Junior Library Guild Selection. Her other recent picture books include *Name That Dog!* (Dial) and *From Dawn to Dreams* (Candlewick Press). Originally from northwest Indiana, Peggy and her husband now live in O'Fallon, MO. peggyarcher.com

The Path of Small Publishing

BY TONJA DRECKER

Even before putting the last polish on a manuscript, the big question pops up – try to land an agent with sights on the large publishers or be independent and free with self-publishing? Each path has its benefits and challenges, but maybe you're like me and would rather have a little from both worlds. That's where the third possibility pokes up, and it's one which often seems to be overlooked. Small publishers offer the support and know-how found in traditional publishing, while still giving a breath of freedom and fresh air to those wanting to take an active role in getting the books out there.



When my middle grade manuscript, *Music Boxes*, was ready to find a home, I'd already dipped my toes into the world of smaller and mid-sized presses thanks to several shorts published in anthologies and a novella. Due to the dark shadow vanity presses and unserious publishers have cast in

the small publishing realm, I wasn't about to skimp on the research before sending out that query letter. But then, research isn't something writers should ever ignore when submitting their work to anyone.

One thing a writer needs to keep in mind when submitting to small publishers is that these presses tend to concentrate on specific genres and audiences. They have their niche in the book world and know how to cater to it. It's exactly this which makes them so valuable too. Manuscripts, which might be discarded by larger publishers because they don't fit into a perfect box, can still find a home with smaller presses. My publisher, Dancing Lemur Press, publishes (among other genres) science fiction, chilling tales and middle grade fiction. The mix made it a perfect fit for my fairy tale/mystery/spooky/odd invention-based tale, *Music Boxes*. Isn't that a mouthful?

My small publisher is my partner and as engaged in getting my book out there as I am. They bring the experience, know-how and support, and never leave me sitting on the sidelines. When I worked with a mid-sized publisher, they made all decisions. I may have been asked for my opinion every now and then, but there was no guarantee my thoughts would be taken into consideration. A wall stood between me and the editor. With my small publisher, everything is tight knit. Communication is quick and open. Professional? Yes. Polite? Always. The publisher wants the book to be the best it can be while maintaining the author's (my) vision. And that's what I want too.

Being with a small publisher keeps me on my toes. I couldn't even guess how many emails we've exchanged since that initial query letter. Although not quite as speedy as self-publishing, *Music Boxes* celebrated its release less than a year from the contract signing. Edits began right away and only paused as the ARCs hit the world before another round or two came for release. Marketing preparations began right away. Together, with my publisher, the list of potential reviewers and bloggers grew even before the ARCs appeared. Ideas for social media promotions, blog tours, and other marketing possibilities became a weekly, if not daily, duty. Even now several months after release day, we exchange emails several times a week to keep the promotion ball rolling. Let's just say that my publisher is called 'Spunk on a Stick' for a reason.

While the experience with my small publisher has been positive in almost every single way, there is one small shoot-off which does grow tiresome. It's the smirk some writers give when they hear the word 'small publisher'. Unfortunately, some believe small publishing means vanity publishing, and this is simply not true.

Due to their size, small publishers work on a tight budget basis. They often can't offer advanced payments – the seven-digit dream is dead – and work at industry standards in the way of royalties. They never, ever expect the author to pay them anything during the publishing process. As to the marketing end, they work within their budget. The author is expected to promote their books as much as they can. Today, this is true even with larger publishers.

I'm thrilled to have my small publisher on my side and believe it was the right path for my book. While small publishing isn't for everyone, it's not a possibility to be ignored. For those wanting traditional publishing support but still hoping to jump in on their own too, small publishing might be exactly the right choice.

TONJA DRECKER



When not repairing fence line or chasing cows and chickens on her small farm in Southern Missouri, Tonja Drecker is a writer, blogger, children's book reviewer and freelance translator. Her debut middle grade novel, *Music Boxes*, was released on March 5th, 2019 through the very engaged and energetic, Dancing Lemur Press.

The Market Place

BY RITA RUSSELL

“Anything real you do that’s important will be scary. Having kids. Getting married. Donating a kidney. Writing a book. Do it anyway.”

Neil Gaiman – Bestselling Author

BOOK MARKETS

AMICUS INK, the retail imprint of Amicus Publishing, is open to submissions of nonfiction picture books, fiction picture books, and board books with a “child’s-eye view.” Publisher is known for books that encourage young children to explore facts, examine ideas, and imagine new ways of understanding the world. Materials must connect with toddlers, preschoolers, or early readers, as well as adults who read with them. Submissions details at <https://www.amicuspublishing.us/news/jobs-amicus> Responds in 3 to 6 months, if interested. (*AmicusPublishing.com*)

FLASHLIGHT PRESS, a publisher of humorous picture books, is currently accepting submissions for ages 4–8. Stories must be fewer than 1000 words, have a universal theme, and deal with family or social situations in an original, engaging way. Check the pub’s backlist before submitting to make sure your work fits the company’s overall tone, and could be easily recognized as a “Flashlight Press” book. Guidelines on website. (*Children’s Book Insider 6/2019 and FlashlightPress.com*)

Maryland-based **MB PUBLISHING**, founded by Margie Blumberg in 2003, “. . . offers engaging, educational, and beautifully illustrated books for children of all ages, from picture books to middle grade novels.” For a list of titles and submission guidelines, visit website. (*Institute of Children’s Literature eNews 5/9/19 and MBPublishing.com*)

REYCRAFT BOOKS is open to submissions from authors and illustrators from underrepresented communities that mirror their lives and experiences. Publisher **Sera Reycraft** is primarily seeking “stories about refugee children, children from low-socioeconomic or inner-city communities, children who have an incarcerated parent, and so many other children whose voices have yet to be heard.” Target readers ages 5–12. Accepting picture books, early readers, and chapter books. No YA submissions at this time. Submission details on website. (*ICL eNews 5/23/19 and ReycraftBooks.com*)

Graphic memoir and illustrated nonfiction for young adults is welcome at **STREET NOISE BOOKS**, a new independent publishing house headed by former art director and book designer **Liz Frances**. The list will debut in January 2020, with six books that reflect “a radical, feminist, queer, and inclusive social vision.” Frances was motivated to start the pub in response to the 2016 presidential election and the growth of the graphic novel category. Street Noise Books is self-financed in order “to maintain our independence and integrity and not have to justify the books to a committee.” Freelance editors and designers are in great demand. See titles and submission guidelines on website. (*StreetNoiseBooks.com and Publishers Weekly 5/15/19*)

“The thing that makes a story connect with readers is when there is truth on the page. Truth lies in specificity. . . . Kids see and acknowledge race. It exists. Books are a way to counter and embrace our differences.”

Namrata Tripathi – Publisher of Kokila Books (Penguin)

PUBLISHING PERSONNEL NEWS

ALBERT WHITMAN & COMPANY: **Rick DeMonico** has joined as Art Director, moving from Scholastic where he was senior art director, licensed publishing. (*Publishers Weekly Children’s Bookshelf 7/2/19*)

Promotions at **CANDLEWICK PRESS** include **Kaylan Adair** to Executive Editor, from senior editor; **Ann Stott** to the newly created role of Executive Creative Director, from executive art director; and **Maryellen Hanley** from assistant art director to Associate Art Director. (*PWCB 6/6/19*)

Foyinsi Adegbonmire has joined **FEIWEL AND FRIENDS** as Editorial Assistant, after interning at Farrar Straus Giroux Books for Young Readers. (*PWCB 6/25/19*)

AT HMH BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS, **Sharismar Rodriguez** has been promoted to Art Director from associate art director. (*PWCB 5/15/19*)

Moving up at **HIGHLIGHTS PRESS:** **Michelle Budzilowicz** and **Marlo Scrimizzi**, both promoted to Senior Editor from editor; and **Christy Thomas**, promoted to Assistant Editor from editorial assistant. (*PWCB 6/13/19*)

Molly Cusick has joined **SOURCEBOOKS** as Editor for **Jabberwocky, Young Readers, and Fire**. She was formerly

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senior literary scout at Mary Anne Thompson Associates. (PWCB 6/4/19)

RANDOM HOUSE BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS: At **Delecor Press**, **Kelsey Horton** has been promoted to Editor, from associate editor; **Monica Jean** has been promoted to Associate Editor, from assistant editor; and both **Audrey Ingerson** and **Alexandra Hightower** have been promoted to Assistant Editor, from editorial assistant. (PWCB 6/25/19)

SCHOLASTIC TRADE: **Katie Heit** has joined as Editor of picture books, coming from Greenwillow where she was assistant editor. **Megan Peace** has been promoted to Editor, **Pilkey Publishing** and **Graphix**, from assistant editor. **Brian Larossa** has joined as Art Director for **Acorn, Branches**, and nonfiction picture books, moving from Scholastic Education. (PWCB 7/2/19)

Kate Prosswimmer exited Sourcebooks to join **SIMON & SCHUSTER McElderry Books** as Editor. (PWCB 5/9/19)

At **ST. MARTIN'S PRESS**, **Eileen Rothschild** was promoted to Executive Editor at **Wednesday Books**, from senior editor; and **Vicki Lame** was promoted to Senior Editor from editor. (PWCB 5/9/19 and 6/25/19)

“A good agent can identify which projects are right for which editors, and they work to get the best terms for their writers.”

Robert Lee Brewer – Poet, Writer, and Editor

AGENT NEWS

AEVITAS CREATIVE MANAGEMENT: Agent **Penny Moore** represents all kid lit – picture books, middle grade, and young adult. Wishing for “inventive works featuring breakout voices and compelling plot lines that will make young readers feel seen and heard for the first time.” Current client list includes Morris Award Finalist **Akemi Dawn Bowman**, author of *Starfish* and *Summer Bird Blue*; **Beth Evans**, author/illustrator of *I Really Didn't Think This Through*; and **Nicki Pau Preto**, author of *Crown of Feathers*. Submit using query manager on website. (AevitasCreative.com and Children's Book Insider 6/2019)

Brenda Bowen joined **THE BOOK GROUP** as Senior Agent on July 1. Previously, she spent 10 years agenting at Sanford J. Greenburger Associates. She was also a children's book publisher for many years, and she's an award-winning author of dozens of books for children. Bowen's mission at The Book Group is to grow its

children's business. Her clients include bestselling creators **Emily Winfield Martin**, **Chris Raschka**, **Rosemary Wells**, **Hilary Knight**, **Mike Curato**, and **Karen Hesse** (*TheBookGroup.com* and *Publishers Weekly Children's Bookshelf* 5/15/19)

Peter Rubie, CEO of **FINE PRINT LITERARY**, is currently open to submissions of MG and boy-oriented YA fiction. Submission guidelines on website. (*FinePrintLit.com* and *WritersDigest.com* “Agent Alert” 7/2/19)

Erin Casey has been promoted to Associate Agent at **GALLT & ZACKER LITERARY AGENCY**, from junior agent. “She is open to all kid lit age groups, from picture books through YA, and is particularly drawn to work that shows the author's world- and character-building ability.” Submission details on website. (*GalltZacker.com* and PWCB 6/13/19)

JENNIFER DE CHIARA LITERARY AGENCY: Associate Agent **Marlo Berliner** is building her list with middle grade and young adult clients. “I am interested in all genres of MG and YA fiction, with particular emphasis on adventure, psychological thriller, suspense, mystery, paranormal, urban fantasy, horror, speculative, and romance.” Berliner is an award-winning YA author, freelance editor, and bookseller. She joined JD Lit in 2018 as an editorial intern after having interned at The Bent Agency. She is a member of SCBWI, RWA, and YA-RWA. Follow her on Twitter @MarloBerliner and see her wish list and submission guidelines on agency website. (*JDLit.com* and *WritersDigest.com* “Agent Alert” 4/23/19)

Eric Smith at **P.S. LITERARY** is seeking diverse and inclusive young adult fiction across all genres. Especially interested in YA nonfiction. Most recently repped **Tom Ryan's** latest YA novel *Keep This To Yourself*. Submission guidelines on agency website. (*PSLiterary.com* and *WritersDigest.com* “Agent Alert” 6/11/19)

“. . . just because your book or you or anything you do is rejected by some, doesn't mean it's no good trash for everybody. Stick with it.”

Shannon Hale – Bestselling YA Author

MAGAZINE MARKET

ASK MAGAZINE, a nonfiction publication for children 7-10 interested in science, is open to **QUERIES ONLY** for themes for 2020 issues: *Catching Comets*, *I Scream for Ice Cream*, *Goodbye Germs*, *Alchemy*, and *Sneaky Art*

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Tricks. Queries should give an overview of the proposed article, including scope and treatment, resources, and a sample opening paragraph. **MUSE MAGAZINE**, a STEAM magazine for kids 9–14 years old who are curious about how things work, is open to **QUERIES ONLY**. Themes for its 2020 issues include End of an Era, Feet!, and The Future of Cars. Detailed query guidelines for both **ASK** and **MUSE** are at <https://cricketmag.submittable.com/submit> (*CricketMag.Submittable.com and Institute of Children's Literature eNews 6/27/19*)

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL anthologies offer great break-in opportunities for writers seeking publication. Pieces must be true stories, written in first-person, 1200 words max. Topics for upcoming books include: 1) Stories about Christmas, and other December holidays; 2) Stories about Self-Care and Me Time; 3) The Golden Years or Second Wind; 4) The Magic of Dogs; and 5) The Magic of Cats. Detailed story and submission guidelines on website. (*ChickenSoup.com and ICL eNews 5/2/19*)

FUNDS FOR WRITERS NEWSLETTER is seeking articles from writers about earning a living as a writer. While the piece should be personal, make sure its message is helpful to other writers, as well. Humor is a plus. Word count 500-to-600 max. Each weekly newsletter lists only one article – short and sweet and to the point – so make each word count. “Watch the passive voice. Give it a beginning, middle, and ending. A list of links is not an article.” Submission suggestions here: <https://fundsforwriters.com/submissions> (*FundsForWriters.com and Institute of Children's Literature eNews 5/30/19*)

“Listening to what someone else has to say can be tricky. Sometimes their ideas take your story in a direction you hadn't planned. Take a moment and hear what they have to say. It may not be your original story but it could be even better, one that now explores Truth with a capital T.”

Sue Bradford Edwards, Children's Books Author & Editor

WORK-FOR-HIRE & EDUCATIONAL MARKET

AMICUS publishes books for children grades K-3 that “educate, engage, inspire, and dig deeper.” For their school library imprints, all work is assigned on a per-project, work-for-hire basis. Writers should browse the catalog

to see if their skills are a good match for Amicus books. For submission guidelines, visit <https://www.amicuspublishing.us/news/jobs-amicus> (*AmicusPublishing.US and EvelynChristensen.com*)

ROURKE EDUCATIONAL MEDIA publishes fiction and nonfiction for grades K-8. All work is on assignment. To apply, send a pdf that includes a resume, subject and grade level interests, and an unedited writing sample via email to customerservice@rourkeeducationalmedia.com Editor is Keli Sipperley. Save files as PDFs using your first initial and last name in the file name. Due to the volume of submissions, responds only when a project is available. (*RourkeEducationalMedia.com and Institute of Children's Literature eNews 5/2/19*)

DRAMA NOTEBOOK is accepting submissions from playwrights, teachers, and actors who have written scripts or scenes for children and teens. Drama Notebook's mission is to amass a huge library of royalty-free, high-quality scripts for use in educational settings. Willing to license script for a small fee, or purchase the copyright for a slightly larger amount. “This is not life-changing \$ to be sure, but you will experience the joy of knowing that your work is being performed by students all over the world.” Publication of script includes your bio, a link to your website, and contact info for teachers whose students perform your play. See website for submission details: <https://www.dramanotebook.com/play-submissions/> (*DramaNotebook.com and EvelynChristensen.com*)

RITA D. RUSSELL



Rita D. Russell joined SCBWI in 2009, after hearing Anna Dewdney sing its praises. When not writing picture books and chapter books, the former journalist and television script writer teaches screenwriting at St. Louis Community College.

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SCBWI, scbwi.org • Kansas/Missouri, ksmo.scbwi.org