

WAG Digest

Volume 19—Issue 4

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Finding Unheard Voices in Public Records and Documents

Note that this program will be presented on the fourth Sunday in August.

August 23, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Millhopper Branch, Alachua County Libraries

• 3145 NW 43rd St. Gainesville, FL 32606



In this program, Finding Unheard Voices in Public Records and Documents, WAG member Coleen DeGroff will share how she published the first book on African American enslavement in Alachua County.

She will describe her approach to creating and publishing a book using public records and historical archives, and how her discovery of long-hidden documents led her to finding accounts of hundreds of enslaved people who were brought to Alachua County to labor on nearly five dozen plantations for half a century, generating a significant amount of wealth for the region.

Alachua County Black Book: Accounts of Enslaved People Discovered in Ancient

Records uses bills of sale, wills, mortgages, and more to give a glimpse into the lives of the enslaved and the people who enslaved them between 1815 and 1865.

DeGroff hopes that this compilation of long-buried accounts found in public archives will help other writers share the tales of these unheard voices so that they are not forgotten.

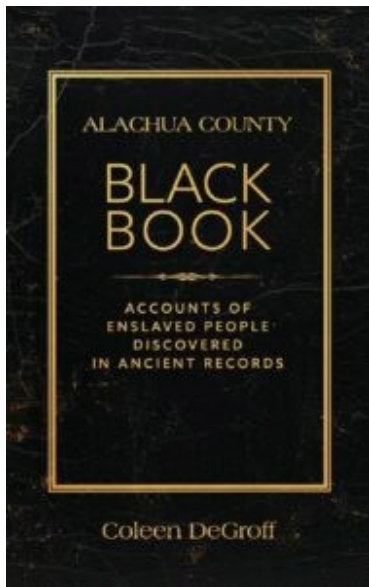
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August 23, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Finding Unheard Voices in Public Records and Documents, cont.

Millhopper Branch, Alachua County Libraries
3145 NW 43rd St.
Gainesville, FL 32606

REMINDER: FOURTH SUNDAY IN AUGUST



From the time Coleen DeGroff could pick up a pen, she has been a writer. From poetry and songs in her teen years, to writing articles for newspapers and magazines (including a stint as a humor columnist for a small Colorado magazine) to a fifteen-year career as a blogger and a real estate agent, writing has always been a part of her life. After making the decision to retire from real estate, Coleen followed her dreams back to writing about subjects close to her heart. She says she didn't set out to write *Alachua County Black Book*. Instead, she believes the book found her, and she will always be grateful that it did.

More can be found about her writing career at <https://www.coleendegroff.com/>

W*R*I*T*E

SEPTEMBER WAG MEETING

September 13, 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Create a Compelling Elevator Pitch

How do you, as an author, talk about your book(s) in a way that captures attention and sparks interest?

In this interactive session, Julia Sander will show authors how to identify the true value of their work, connect with what readers want, and confidently share their story through a compelling elevator pitch.

Using practical examples, audience participation, and a simple framework, you'll gain the skills to start meaningful conversations that lead to stronger reader engagement. Whether you're promoting your first book or your tenth, this presentation will help you turn a brief introduction into a memorable opportunity.

Create a Compelling Elevator Pitch, cont.



Julia Sander earned her Master of Business Administration from the University of Florida and is a passionate Gator fan, especially when it comes to softball, gymnastics, and football.

A dedicated Disney enthusiast, Julia loves exploring Disney park history, uncovering hidden details, and testing her knowledge with Disney trivia.

“My life is a perpetual mess,” she says, “but I wouldn’t have it any other way. Family is my greatest joy and the center of everything I do.”

Julia is married to Benjamin Coward, WAG’s Critique Pod Coordinator. They have an energetic two-year-old daughter, Annalise, who keeps life exciting and—they say—“just a little chaotic.”

W*R*I*T*E

Just a reminder, 61,000 students will be coming into Gainesville soon (<https://news.ufl.edu/for-media/uf-facts/>) . If you get a chance, let them know about the Writers Alliance—we can always use new members.

Membership

Join the Writers Alliance of Gainesville and become part of a vibrant group of local writers helping writers. Participate in events, writing contests, critique pods and more.

Annual membership dues for the Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG) are **\$40**.

Membership is limited to adults (18 years and older).

If you have any questions, please contact the WAG Membership Coordinator (membership@writersalliance.org)

Member Benefits

- Participation in one or more genre-specific critique pods, where writers critique one another’s work
- Copy of the annual literary journal *Bacopa Literary Review* (member picks up a current copy at WAG meeting after dues are paid)
- Bi-monthly e-newsletter, *WAG Digest*, which includes writing tips, information on writing conferences, and lists of journals and contests accepting submissions
- Free admission to special events sponsored by the Writers Alliance of Gainesville
- Acceptance into the **WAG Members Private Group** on Facebook for discussing all things writing with fellow writers

WAG Marketing Coalition:

Coordinator: Jolene McFadden

10:00 a.m. on the third Monday of each month

*Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81913659127?
pwd=a1hTQWl1WVphTUxBOWdVWE9oV2ljQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81913659127?pwd=a1hTQWl1WVphTUxBOWdVWE9oV2ljQT09)

Meeting ID: 819 1365 9127

Passcode: 119030



August 17, 2026

AI Tools for Author Marketing: What's Worth Your Time (and What's Hype)

Description: Honest assessment of AI tools for marketing tasks – from social media captions to email subject lines – with free/low-cost options and ethical considerations.

Key Points:

- AI landscape: ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and specialized tools
- What AI does well: brainstorming, first drafts, reformatting content
- What AI does poorly: authentic voice, nuanced strategy, relationship building
- Free tools worth using: ChatGPT free tier, Claude.ai, Canva Magic Write
- Practical uses: newsletter subject lines, social media caption ideas, blog post outlines
- The editing requirement: why you can't just copy-paste
- Ethical disclosure: when/if to tell readers you used AI
- Avoiding generic "AI voice" – keeping your authentic tone

Worksheets/Handouts:

- "AI Prompt Library for Authors" – 20 ready-to-use prompts
- "AI Tool Comparison Chart" – free vs. paid features
- "AI Editing Checklist" – how to revise AI-generated content
- Quick reference: Best use cases for each tool

Resources:

- Free: ChatGPT (OpenAI)
- Free: Claude.ai (Anthropic)
- Free: Google Gemini
- Free: Canva Magic Write
- Tutorial: Effective prompt writing for marketing tasks

Next Meeting: September 21, 2026

BookTok, Reels & Short-Form Video: Do You Really Have To?

More info: [https://writersalliance.org/marketing-coalition/?
_id=25557&_nonce=5d3c4d4cfc&_thumbnail_id=6754&preview=true](https://writersalliance.org/marketing-coalition/?_id=25557&_nonce=5d3c4d4cfc&_thumbnail_id=6754&preview=true)

WAG BRAGS



Eighth Annual Sunshine State Book Festival Gainesville, Florida

January 23, 2027

Bringing Readers and Writers Together

FREE ADMISSION!

Come and enjoy a day of book browsing. Meet 100 local and regional authors

Outstanding authors from around Florida and the nation who write in many genres will gather at the beautiful Santa Fe College Fine Arts Hall on January 23, 2027, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to sell books and talk about their work. Festivities include guest speakers, giveaways, and storytelling.

Make sure to bring the kids for story time—from 12 to 3 p.m. on Saturday.

Want a free newsletter with details about the Festival?

Sign up here: <https://mailchi.mp/feb0a8795906/ssbf-news>

Supporting Florida Literacy

A celebration of learning and literacy for all ages! Fun and educational!

- Hourly drawings to win an autographed book!
- Informal opening-night reception Friday, January 22, 2027, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Best Western Gateway Grand Ballroom. Readers, sponsors, and interested members of the public—Come mingle with the authors!

Sunshine State Teen Lit Awards. Area middle and high school students are invited to participate in our short story contest to win one of ten scholarships. Entry details will be forthcoming. Scholarships will be awarded at the Sunshine State Book Festival on January 23 in the Santa Fe College Fine Arts Hall.



Join our Alachua County Poet Laureate E. Stanley Richardson for the always amazing Artspeaks Event. This is the 14th Annual gathering of poets and will be held at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 30 at the History Thomas Center, at 302 NE Sixth Ave., 32601. If you'd like to participate, please RSVP to info@ARTSPEAKSgnv.org. Bring your poems and join the speakers who celebrate the incredible poetic realm that exists in Gainesville. Thank you, Stanley, for bringing the local talent together for another year!

14th Annual

ARTSPEAKS:

*Bringing Poetry &
People Together*



4:00pm

Sunday, August 30, 2026



The Historic Thomas Center
302 NE 6th Ave. Gainesville FL.



To Participate:

RSVP at info@ARTSPEAKSgnv.org

This Event is

FREE & PUBLIC

**Share Your
Poetry**

Sponsored in part by the
City of Gainesville;
Parks, Recreation and
Cultural Affairs

CITY OF
GAINEVILLE
every path starts with passion

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

*Voice
Expression
Community
Liberation
Imagine
Connect*
**Poetry
&
People
Together**





An invitation from Carol Velasques-Richardson Cultural Affairs Manager, in Gainesville, Florida. (See below for contact information to confirm your participation)

A. Quinn Jones Museum & Cultural Center

Are you a local writer? (Local to Gainesville, Florida) - Showcase your work at the 3rd Thursday Meet the Author series at the A. Quinn Jones Museum & Cultural Center!

Writers of all ages are welcome—adults and youth are encouraged to participate. A small stipend is provided to selected authors.

The Meet the Author & A. Quinn Jones Lecture Series is a free public program celebrating literacy, education, and lifelong learning through talks, readings, and discussions with Florida authors, scholars, and historians.

The 2026–2027 series begins on September 17, 2026, 6:00 pm featuring award-winning New York Times bestselling author Kevin Powers, and continues throughout the year with inspiring literary events and engaging conversations.

Whether you're an established author or an emerging writer, we'd love to celebrate your work with the community.

To secure your spot, email VelasquesCI@cityofgainesville.org or call 352-393-8532.



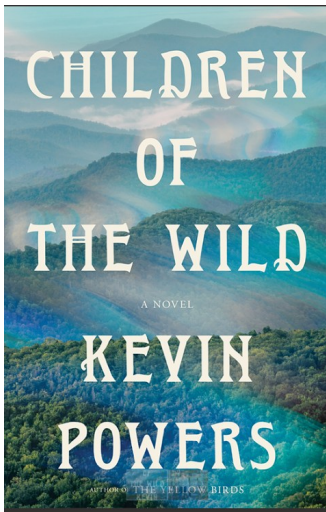
The A. Quinn Jones Museum & Cultural Center, housed in the former Jones Family home at 1013 NW Seventh Ave. in Gainesville, serves as a tribute to one of the most influential educators in the history of Alachua County.

The museum features a permanent exhibit on Prof Jones. It highlights the people and places

of the Fifth Avenue and Pleasant Street. The museum also shares oral histories. These stories focus on the African American experience in Gainesville. Other areas of the museum feature rotating exhibits.

The museum also connects visitors to the Historic Heritage Trail. The trail begins at the A. Quinn Jones Museum & Cultural Center. From there, it extends into the surrounding Fifth Avenue and Pleasant Street neighborhood.

Stories first shared inside the museum continue along the trail. Together, the museum and trail link people, places and lived experiences. They reflect the hope, determination and achievements rooted in this historic community.



WAG BRAGS

Meet the Author: Author Kevin C. Powers

Join us for a special evening with award-winning novelist **Kevin C. Powers** as he reads from his newest novel, *Children of the Wind*

Thursday, September 17, 2026

6:00–7:30 p.m.

A. Quinn Jones Museum & Cultural Center

1013 NW 7th Avenue, Gainesville, FL



Kevin C. Powers is the author of internationally acclaimed works that have been translated into more than a dozen languages. A finalist for the National Book Award and recipient of numerous literary honors, including the PEN/Hemingway Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship in Fiction, Powers is also a U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq. He now lives on Florida's First Coast with his family.

Registered guests will receive a **complimentary copy of *Children of the Wind*** while supplies last. Guests must be present at the event to receive their book. Light refreshments will be served. This program is funded by the City of Gainesville in partnership with HarperCollins.

We hope you'll join us for an inspiring evening celebrating literature, storytelling, and conversation with one of today's most distinguished American authors. For more information email VelasquesCI@cityofgainesville or 352-393-8532 .

W*R*I*T*E

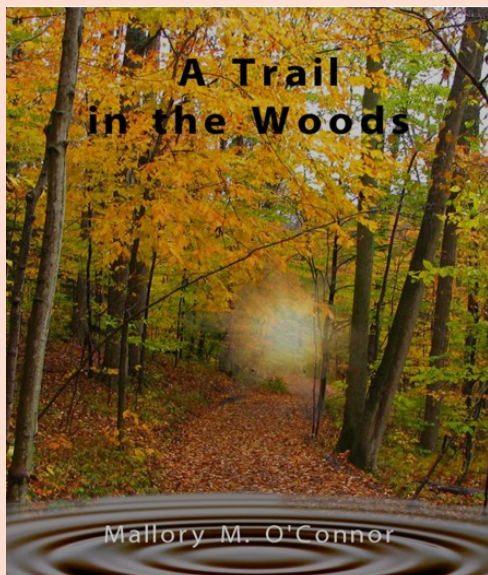
BOOK LAUNCH PARTY!

Saturday, September 19, 2026:

2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

The Haile Plantation Links Clubhouse

10000 Southwest 52 Avenue, Gainesville



The book is available on Amazon—get your copy here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Trail-Woods-Mallory-OConnor-ebook/dp/B0H3RCK996/>

WAG BRAGS

Congratulations to local author and playwright Kimberley Mullins, who sent us this information:

“Drum roll please.....

I'm so excited to announce my play, "Napkins," has been accepted into the Elgin Theatre Festival this September. See post below!”

Good afternoon,

You are receiving this email because we have reached your name on the waitlist for the 2026 Elgin Fringe Festival in Elgin, Illinois, September 23-27.. You have been selected for three performances. Congrats! We can't wait to work with you.

Thank you,

Nick Mataragas (He/Him)

Artistic Director

Elgin Fringe Festival



Congratulations, Kimberley—Well deserved!

W*R*I*T*E

The WAG Board Members are pleased to announce that we have updated our WAG Bylaws to keep up with various changes in requirements for non-profits. We are a federal and state non profit and are want to be sure everything is completely current. If you'd like to review the by-laws, check out these two sites:

Click here to read **WAG's current Bylaws.** - <https://writersalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/WAG-Bylaws-Revised-2024-2.pdf>

Click here to read the **2026 proposed revision** of the By-laws.—

<https://writersalliance.org/proposed-revision-of-wag-bylaws/>



WAG BRAGS

RSVP to fletchercrowe@gmail.com
or call 770-876-0763



You are Invited

to the
Book Signing
for the new book

**The Voynich Manuscript:
Mystery Revealed**

by

Fletcher Crowe and Mona Ashour

3:00 – 4:00 Saturday Aug. 8
In The Ballroom of Tower Club
at The Village
8000 NW 27th Blvd
Gainesville FL 32606

The Voynich Manuscript: Mystery Revealed Hardcover – January 1,



2026

by [Fletcher Crowe](#) (Author), [Mona Ashour](#) (Author)

The Voynich Manuscript has been the subject of intense interest for over 100 years. Written in strange symbols, dozens and dozens of scholars have tried to break the strange code and translate the bizarre characters into a known language – but to no avail. Finally, one of the authors of this book has cracked the strange code and found that the codex is a manifesto of the Cathar religion. The Cathars, a sect of heretics in southern France during the Middle Ages, were brutally attacked by forces of the king of France and the Pope and faced vicious genocide. The author found that the manuscript was written in bizarre characters, and in Arabic, to hide the sect's heretical faith from the Inquisition. This book features long excerpts from the fifteenth century Voynich Manuscript translated by a specialist in medieval Arabic. Up to this time there have been essentially no cotemporary documents found detailing the theology and the religious practices of the Cathars. Now for the first time we can finally read the story of the brave Cathar people and their unique religion in a near contemporary document.

Please RSVP to

fletchercrowe@gmail.com

770-876-0763

أنت مدعو

WAG BRAGS

Join Sarah Carey for a reading from her book, *Bloodstream*, at the Lynx Bookstore, Monday Aug 24th, 2026. This is a free event from 6 pm to 7 pm. The Lynx Bookstore is at 601 South Main Street, Gainesville. This free event will fill up fast. Sarah's book will be available for sale—support your local writers.

SARAH CAREY
AND SARAH ANDERSON

AUGUST 24, 6-7PM



THELYNXBOOKS.COM

Sarah Carey was born in North Carolina and raised in Florida, where she has lived most of her life. Her professional career spans journalism and communications, including 35 years as director of communications for the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine. A graduate of the Florida State University creative writing program, Sarah is the author of two full-length poetry collections, including *Bloodstream* (Mercer University Press, 2026) and *The Grief Committee Minutes* (Saint Julian Press, 2024), an Eric Hoffer Award finalist. Winner of the 2026 Sweet Literature Poetry Contest, she has been a finalist for the Atlanta Review International Poetry Prize and the River Heron Review Poetry Prize. Sarah writes often about familial and environmental loss, relationships between human and non-human animals, ancestral inheritances, and the many facets of grief. Learn more about her and her work at her website, SarahKCarey.com.

About Sarah Anderson:

Sarah Anderson is a writer based in Gainesville, Florida. Her work has been featured in *Joyland*, *Epiphany*, and *Best American Short Stories 2025*. She holds an MFA in Fiction from the University of Michigan and her debut *Fallow*, a novel about work, fertility, bodily autonomy, and Big Tech, is forthcoming from Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in September 2026.

RSVP HERE: <https://thelynxbooks.com/events/5843220260824>



Why Interactive Fiction Is the Story Form Writers Need Right Now

The sound of a page turning used to be magic, but for many children and young adults today, that sound is fading. Traditional reading – linear, one-way, fixed – is in decline. Yet out of that silence, something electrifying is rising: interactive fiction. This

medium doesn't ask readers simply to watch a story unfold, but to step inside it, tug on its threads, make choices and, in doing so, co-create something powerful.

For writers – especially those attuned to language, character and plot – this is the moment to explore interactive fiction. Reading rates are falling. Engagement needs reinventing.

The data is sobering:

- In the UK, just 1 in 3 (32.7%) of children and young people aged 8–18 years say they enjoy reading in their free time – the lowest level since the National Literacy Trust began its annual literacy survey in 2005 (National Literacy Trust, 2025).
- In that same age group, only 20% read daily in their free time, marking another historic drop of 7.5% points from 2025 (ReadingZone, 2024).
- The decline was most pronounced among boys aged 11–16 years, whereas the figures for girls remained stable (Creamer, 2025).
- By age 11, only a quarter of children still say they 'love' reading, down from a third at age 7 (BookTrust, 2024).

This isn't a temporary blip – it's a cultural shift. Stories still matter, but they're competing with TikTok, YouTube, Netflix and games. And yet, herein lies the opening: interactive fiction meets young people exactly where they already are – on screens and in digital spaces – while rekindling the narrative pleasure of reading.

Recent research supports this. A 2025 study of 2,400 participants found that audiences aged 18–27 reported the highest enjoyment and awareness of interactive narrative techniques, with many describing interactivity as the main reason for their engagement (Errey et al., 2025). Authors need to move beyond one-size-fits-all designs. When writing for younger audiences, they should embrace bold interactivity and prioritise aesthetics (Errey, 2025).

Cont. on Next Page

Interactive Fiction, cont.

In classrooms, interactive fiction has boosted literacy, creativity, and systems thinking. One systematic review found that 68% of youth preferred interactive fiction over traditional texts, saying it motivated them to read more (Wright & Weible, 2024).

Another study by Fenici and Mosca (2024) proposed that educational activities incorporating branching narratives and gamebooks are a suitable tool to promote social change and sustainability.

In other words: reading itself isn't dying. It's rapidly shifting form.

What is interactive fiction – and why is it different?

Interactive fiction (IF) isn't just 'choose your own adventure'. It encompasses a wide spectrum:

Parser-based adventures like *Colossal Cave Adventure* (1976) or *Zork* (1980), which require players to type commands.

Choice-based narratives with branching outcomes shaped by decisions, as seen in *Twine* stories and *Choice of Games* titles.

Visual novels with strong character-driven plots and graphics, such as *Doki Doki Literature Club* or the science fiction game *Steins;Gate*.

Hybrid forms that blend text with voice, animation, virtual reality (VR) or game mechanics (*Disco Elysium*, *Detroit: Become Human*).

What unites them is non-linearity: the reader shapes the plot.

Distinctive features of IF include:

- second-person narration ('You step into the room...') – rare in traditional fiction, yet a powerful tool for immersion.
- branching paths, alternate endings and parallel arcs. Writing IF often requires 'two or three books' worth of words to give every branch weight (The Interactive Fiction Community Forum, 2025).

rewards for exploration. Readers replay, test boundaries and treat reading as play.

For writers, the challenge lies in balancing freedom with coherence. Yet tools like *Twine*, *ChoiceScript*, and *Inkle* make the tech approachable. You don't need to code like a developer; you need only the skills you already have: empathy, structure, character, plot and voice.

The canon of interactive fiction: classics and award-winners

- To understand IF's power, it helps to look at its most influential and best-selling works. These are not obscure experiments; they're cultural touchstones and commercial successes., 2013).
- **Choice of Games Series (2009–present)** – a sustainable publishing model with loyal readers and paid opportunities for emerging writers.

Cont. on Next Page

Interactive Fiction, cont.

Critically acclaimed standouts:

- ***Depression Quest* (Zoë Quinn, 2013)** – a searing portrayal of depression that reached mainstream media and was praised for its educational value.
- ***A Dark Room* (Michael Townsend, 2013)** – an offbeat, open-source text-based role-playing game (RPG) initially developed for browsers and later released on mobile.

***Disco Elysium* (ZA/UM, 2019)** – a revolutionary RPG that won the BAFTA awards for Best Debut Game, Best Narrative and Best Music in 2020 (Stuart, 2020).

Contemporary award-winners (2020–2025)

- ***Detroit: Become Human* (Quantic Dream, 2018; ongoing acclaim)** – a deeply branching sci-fi drama that has sold over 11 million copies worldwide.
- ***Life Is Strange* (Dontnod Entertainment, 2015; remastered 2021)** – a time-bending coming-of-age saga with a passionate global fanbase.
- ***The Walking Dead* (Telltale Games, 2012–2019)** – this well-known series has won more than 90 Game of the Year awards.
- ***The Wolf Among Us* (Telltale Games, 2013; sequel incoming)** – a noir fairy-tale thriller beloved by both critics and fans.
- ***Firewatch* (Campo Santo, 2016)** – the winner of the 2017 BAFTA awards for both Best Performer and Best Debut Game (Webber & Simoens, 2017).
- ***Oxenfree* (Night School Studio, 2016)** – an acclaimed indie hit blending supernatural mystery, puzzle-solving and a unique dialogue system.

***Until Dawn* (Supermassive Games, 2015)** – a cinematic survival-horror game that features a branching narrative with significant consequences.

These works prove that IF is not niche. It wins awards, generates revenue, inspires fandoms and shapes mainstream game design.

Why writers should care

Interactive fiction merges the emotional depth of literature with the participatory thrill of gaming. For writers, this means:

- **Greater intimacy** – the reader isn't just a spectator; they inhabit the protagonist.
- **Replayability** – readers can explore different branches, deepening engagement.
- **Agency and consequence** – every choice is a promise or a threat that makes stories unforgettable.

New markets – while traditional publishing feels overcrowded, IF publishers are actively scouting for fresh voices.

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Interactive Fiction, cont.

The market for interactive fiction

The IF market is diverse, spanning multiple niches and industries. Writers can find opportunities in:

- **Commercial publishing:** *Choice of Games*, *Hosted Games* and *Heart's Choice* pay royalties and have dedicated readerships.
- **Mobile platforms:** apps such as *Episode* and *Chapters* generate revenue through in-app purchases; successful stories can earn significant income.
- **Indie publishing:** platforms such as itch.io, Steam and even personal websites allow full creative control and higher revenue cuts.
- **Literary recognition:** competitions like IFCOMP and Spring Thing build reputations and communities.

Emerging formats: interactive audiobooks, Alexa skills and VR storyworlds.

Although most writers can't quit their day jobs on IF earnings alone just yet, the field offers visibility, supplementary income, and invaluable craft skills that transfer to screenwriting, gaming and publishing.

Traditional books have evolved from clay tablets – dating as early as 2144 BCE, 4,200 years ago (Tucker, 2021) – to immersive, interactive digital experiences. In that light, interactive fiction is still in its infancy. This gives today's writers a rare chance to get in early, shape the future of storytelling, and capture a youth market hungry for new ways to engage.

Getting started: tools, communities and first steps

Good news: you don't need to reinvent the wheel. Tools and communities already exist to support you.

Beginner-friendly tools

- **Twine** – free, visual, drag-and-drop functions. Ideal for branching choice stories.
- **Ink/Ink Studio** – the scripting language behind Inkle's award-winning games such as *80 Days*.
- **ChoiceScript** – the engine used by *Choice of Games*, comes with a publishing ecosystem.
- **Inklewriter** – browser-based and perfect for dipping your toes in.

For advanced experimenters

- **Inform 7** – natural-language coding for parser-based games.
- **TADS 3** – supports complex, richly detailed parser worlds.
- **Ren'Py** – designed for visual novels, with strong community support.

Interactive Fiction, cont.

Communities and showcases

IFDB – the definitive interactive fiction database.

- **Choice of Games Forum** – peer review, game jams, and feedback.
- **Spring Thing and IFComp** – annual competitions spotlighting new works.

Twitch and YouTube – streamer communities that have helped games like *Until Dawn* go viral.

The future: where IF is headed

Looking ahead, IF is poised for explosive growth:

1. **AI-assisted storytelling** – not replacing creativity, but supporting it: generating branches, testing coherence and suggesting variations.
2. **VR and AR immersion** – walking through story worlds and making physical choices.
3. **Hybrid forms** – text blending with video, podcasts and augmented print books.
4. **Education and therapy** – IF already boosts literacy; its potential in empathy training, mental health and language learning is enormous.

Personalised narratives – analytics can shape experiences to readers' preferences in real time.

Why now is the time

Interactive fiction bridges what many young people are already doing: making choices during gaming, exploring on screens, and participating in narratives on TikTok or YouTube. It fuses the artistry of literature with the interactivity of gaming.

For writers, this is both a challenge and a liberation. Instead of worrying about sales charts in saturated markets, you can pioneer in a growing, less crowded space.

Let your story unfold in many directions

If you are creative, care about stories, and want your readers not just transported but *activated* – interactive fiction is calling you.

Don't wait until you 'learn to code'. Start with the story. Sketch branches. Imagine outcomes. Ask yourself: 'What options does my protagonist have here? What consequences may ripple out in unexpected ways?'

Storytelling and literature are not dying – they are evolving. Writers who embrace interactive fiction will not just survive that evolution; they will lead it.

Feedback and references available here:

<https://www.thewriterscollege.com/why-interactive-fiction-is-the-story-form-writers-need-right-now/>

Classes and Conferences



Trying to get your work published can feel like wandering in a maze. If you're running into one dead end after another, not sure which way to turn, this workshop can demystify the process and help you reach your destination—publication.

Mapping the Maze is an online workshop for emerging writers who are ready to make a plan for getting their work published. Over two days, writers will receive guidance from trusted professionals to help them navigate the literary marketplace and take their next steps with confidence. This edition of Mapping the Maze is designed for fiction writers.

In this workshop, writers will:

- Learn to identify the right publications for their work
- Discover tools to research literary magazines, contests, and agents
- Receive guidance on preparing and submitting work
- Learn what agents do and what they're looking for in a query letter
- Interact with industry professionals during Q&A
- Gain exposure to diverse publishing paths and experiences
- Leave with a clearer understanding of the publishing industry to support their personal goals

This class is for writers who are:

- Ready to begin submitting work for publication
- Seeking foundational knowledge of the publishing process
- Curious about building and sustaining a literary life
- Interested in learning from industry professionals

Looking to grow their literary networkBelow is an overview of the workshop, which will span two days:

Monday, September 28, 2026

6:00-7:00 p.m. EDT | **Welcome & Publishing 101 Q&A w/Kevin Larimer** (editor in chief, Poets & Writers)

7:00-8:00 p.m. EDT | **Submitting to Literary Magazines & Journals w/Julia Brown** (fiction editor, AGNI)

Wednesday, September 30, 2026 6:00-7:00 p.m. EDT

Working with an Agent w/Mina Hamed (agent, Janklow & Nesbit Associates)

7:00-8:00 p.m. EDT | **The Writer's Journey w/Jimin Han** (author, *Dreamt I Found You*)

Each session will include a Q&A period with the featured presenters. Writers will also be given worksheets with resources, reflective questions, and activities to aid progress well beyond the workshop.

More information and registration here: <https://www.pw.org/content/>

Classes and Conferences

Improve Your Author Website

FROM HOMEPAGES TO CONTACT PAGE

— with Jane Friedman —

\$99.99

September 24, 2026
1:00 - 3:00 PM ET

Each registration comes with access to the archived version of the program and the materials for one year. You do not have to attend the live event to get a recording of the presentation. Attendees have the ability to chat with the instructor during the live event and ask questions. This webinar is 2 hours.

A copy of the webinar presentation recording will be added to your Writer's Digest University account as soon as possible after the live webinar. It may take 24-48 hours to process and post in your Writer's Digest University account.

Enroll here: <https://writersdigestuniversity.mykajabi.com/offers/2tFsnPTh/checkout>

About the webinar

Every professional author needs a website, but too often bad design choices and lack of focus prevent it from doing its job. Some have conflicting messages about who they are or what they write. A shocking number of published authors don't include book covers anywhere on the homepage. And unpublished writers sometimes don't know what to say about themselves except, "I'm looking for an agent." Is there something more you should be doing?

Whether your website is one day old or ten years old, you want to make sure the time and energy that you've put into your website will pay off with more opportunities for you and your writing. This 2-hour live webinar will address best practices for any author website—whether you're published or unpublished—with simple tips and tricks you can put to work immediately.

Instructor Jane Friedman has been building and improving her own websites (janefriedman.com and hot-sheetpub.com) since 2009, and was the web editor for the Virginia Quarterly Review, where she oversaw a major relaunch of the publication's website. She's also consulted with a diversity of organizations and creative people on how to improve their website for the last decade.

Calls for Submissions



Orange Blossom Publishing

Submitting to Orange Blossom Publishing

At Orange Blossom Publishing, our mission is to create unique books with a focus on quality with our stories and the physical look of our books. **We welcome authors of all genders, ethnicities, and backgrounds** and appreciate the opportunity to specifically share more female, LGBTQ, and neurodivergent voices. Our press caters to a mostly female audience, focusing on love, humor, and children's books. Please see below for which genres we are currently accepting. We use Submittable for all submissions. Do not email any submissions. **Do not submit anything created by AI.** Address query letters to Arielle (she/her). Response time 2 - 3 months. After three months, you can email Arielle at info@orangeblossombooks.com to check the status of your submission.

Note: We are not a vanity or hybrid press. We are a traditional press. Authors will not pay money to be published.

Book Submissions:

- Currently accepting: **middle grade fiction** and **adult romance** from any author. All subgenres welcome. Any spice level for romance.
- New! We are also looking to publish one **Central Florida author** in any genre except picture books, poetry, horror, graphic novels, or nonfiction. Author must reside in Orange, Seminole, Osceola, or Lake county.
- Please no graphic rape, child abuse, or abortion scenes.
- We are very selective about which projects we decide to take on.

Click here to submit:

<https://www.orangeblossombooks.com/submissions.html>

Calls for Submissions

CROOKED LANE



<https://crookedlanebooks.com/submissions/>

Crooked Lane Books was founded in 2014 to publish the highest quality crime fiction titles in both print and electronic editions. We accept both agented and unagented submissions. Please familiarize yourself with our line of

[books](#) and our [editorial team](#) before submitting your query letter. (<https://crookedlanebooks.com/>)

Guidelines:

- We publish novels and an occasional short story collection.
- We do not publish individual short stories, novellas, or essay collections. We do not consider previously published novels. Additionally, we aren't likely to consider books in a series where earlier books in the series were self-published without significant sales.
- Word count should be between 60,000 and 100,000 words.

Please send your submission to us through [QueryTracker](#).

(SUBMIT HERE: https://querytracker.net/query/CLB_Submissions)

- Due to the volume of submissions received, we are unfortunately unable to respond to all queries. We will contact you within two weeks if we are interested in reading further.

W*R*I*T*E

The New Verse News Seeks Current Events Poetry

Deadline: Year-round

Since 2005, [The New Verse News](#) has covered the news of the day with poems on issues, large and small, international and local. It relies on the submission of poems (especially those of a politically progressive bent) by writers from all over the world. The editors update the website every day with a poetic take on a current and specific headline. See the website for guidelines and examples. Then paste your non-simultaneous submission and a brief bio in the text of an email (no attachments, please) to [nvneditor\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:nvneditor(at)gmail.com). Write "Verse News Submission" in the subject line of your email.

Calls for Submissions



Black Lawrence Press

The St. Lawrence Book Award: July 1 - August 31

First book competition, poetry and prose

The Fall Black River Chapbook Competition: September 1 – October 31

Open competition, poetry and prose chaps

Open Reading Period 2: November 1 – November 30

For More Information: <https://blacklawrencepress.com/submissions-and-contests/>

W*R*I*T*E*

cherrytree

A National Literary Journal @ Washington College

We're excited to share that *Cherry Tree: A National Literary Journal at Washington College* will open for submissions (poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction) on August 1st!

Issue 13 will feature cover art by Philly-based Cynthia Zhou. All accepted pieces will be considered for our Literary Shade section, which features work that pushes back against systems of

oppression. We need these voices now more than ever.

Cherry Tree champions image-rich, sonically dextrous pieces that have something urgent to say. Recent contributors include Carl Phillips, Diane Seuss, K-Ming Chang, Denise Duhamel, Alvin Lu, and Jenny Johnson, among many others.

Our reading period closes October 1. You can view our [guidelines here](https://cherrytree.submittable.com/submit): (<https://cherrytree.submittable.com/submit>)

Our \$3 reading fee helps us to pay contributors and defray publication costs. Contributors receive \$20 and 2 copies of the journal in which their work appears.

Calls for Submissions



Inspiring readers to do the things they love better. About 125 original titles a year — cooking, crafts, lifestyle, young adult fiction, and adult horror.

Page Street Publishing: Now Accepting Book Submissions

<https://pagestreetpublishing.com/submissions>

Page Street Publishing is a publisher of full color, mostly hardcover, gift books, cookbooks, and craft-books. Most of them have an important visual component. To get a good feel for what they have published in the past you can [go here](#). They are distributed through Macmillan in every

country but Canada (where they have a different distributor). They publish around sixty titles a year.

Page Street Publishing has also started to focus on publishing children's and young adult books

They have a strong marketing plan, both online and off, and they have received a lot of attention for the work, by a number of news organizations, including NPR.

All submissions should be made through emails. They only respond to submissions they are interested in seeing more of. It takes them no more than three months to respond. More detailed information on submitting to them is below.

Young Adult Fiction

Please include a query (1 page) with the first three chapters of your manuscript in the body of your email. Your query must contain: 1) a book synopsis that includes your novel's pitch, word count, and classification (literary, historical, fantasy, mystery, etc); and 2) an author bio that describes your occupation, publishing history, social media presence, and any other relevant information that pertains to your manuscript (including any endorsements, if applicable). If you are represented by an agent or plan to be, please note this in your author bio. All submissions must be edited and proofread. Ideally, your manuscript's length is 60-90K words and your protagonist is 15-18 years old.

Nonfiction

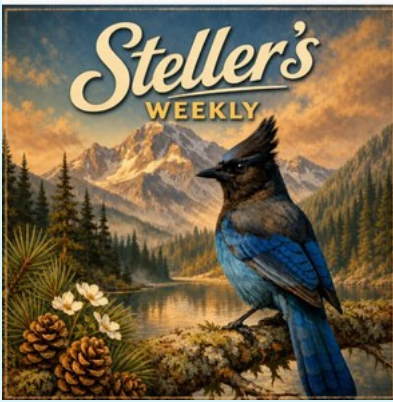
Potential authors interested in submitting their work for consideration should include an author bio, a short synopsis (no more than a page) of their book concept and approach, samples of their work (recipes/projects/writing sample) if applicable, and any notable media hits or press features. If you are represented by an agent or plan to be, please note that they need to be part of the conversation from the start.

Horror Fiction (Adult)

This is a new genre for them. They ask that you submit three chapters and a query including a book synopsis and an author bio.

<https://pagestreetpublishing.com/>

Calls for Submissions



Mountain Jay Books: Call for Submissions for Online Journal

Deadline: Year-round

Steller's Weekly is the online literary journal of Mountain Jay Books—a Colorado-based publishing and bookbinding company. Our mission is simple: to **elevate literature** by championing new voices and hand-binding works of literary art. If you are an emerging fiction writer, we'd love to help build your writing resume! Please submit your short story (between 1,000 and 6,000 words) via mountainjaybooks.com/submit. At the end of each year, twelve stories will have the opportunity to be published in our annual paperback anthology, so send your best work!



W*R*I*T*E*

Seeking Submissions on Recovery

Deadline: Year-round

Please read our full guidelines at www.awakeningsproject.org before submitting.

The Awakenings Review publishes poetry, short stories, and nonfiction by writers with lived experience of mental illness, their own, a family member's, or a close friend's. Based in the Chicago area but international in scope, we're one of the nation's leading literary journals in this genre. Now in its 26th year, *AR* has built a reputation for pairing serious literary craft with an unflinching honesty about what it means to live with, and alongside, mental illness.

We recognize that mental illness is painful and often frightening, but we're drawn to work that finds hope, renewal, and healing on the other side of that suffering. We do not publish work that is angry, alarming, vulgar, or demoralizing; we're looking for pieces that carry the reader somewhere, even if the road there is difficult.

Contests



CURRENT OPEN SUBMISSIONS

REDHENPRESS.SUBMITTABLE.COM

BENJAMIN SALTMAN POETRY AWARD

October 31, 2026

QUILL PROSE AWARD

November 30, 2026

CAI EMMONS FICTION AWARD

January 15, 2027

Red Hen Press

★ Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award: October 31, 2026

Award is \$3,000 + publication by Red Hen Press.

★ Quill Queer Prose Award: November 30, 2026

Award is \$1,000 + publication by Red Hen Press.

★ Cai Emmons Fiction Award: January 15, 2027

Award is \$5,000 + publication by Red Hen Press.

Visit the Submission Guidelines here:

<https://redhen.org/awards/quill-prose-award/>

Contests

Boudin Novelette Chapbook Contest – Final Judge Robert Olen Butler

Deadline: September 15, 2026

2026 Boudin Novelette Chapbook Contest – Final judge: Robert Olen Butler **Submit:** 25-40 manuscript pages of a single story in a readable font like 12-point Times New Roman. Unpublished and original work only. Include only a title page. **Prizes:** The winner will receive \$1,000, 25 author copies, an author-signing at AWP 2027, promotion in *Boudin* (“the spicy online cousin of *The McNeese Review*”), and a three-year subscription to *The McNeese Review*. The winning manuscript will be published as a special issue of *The McNeese Review* and distributed by TRP: The University Press of SHSU. boudin.submittable.com/submit



W*R*I*T*E*

StoryBottle Fiction Chapbook Contest

Deadline: August 15, 2026

Send us your fiction object: www.storybottleco.org/contests

StoryBottle Co.'s Fiction Chapbook Contest is now open! We're looking for the same great, weird fiction we love publishing—just with a little more room to breathe. Submit up to 60 pages of fiction, including flash fiction, short stories, linked stories, story cycles, novelettes, or manuscripts that don't quite fit anywhere else.

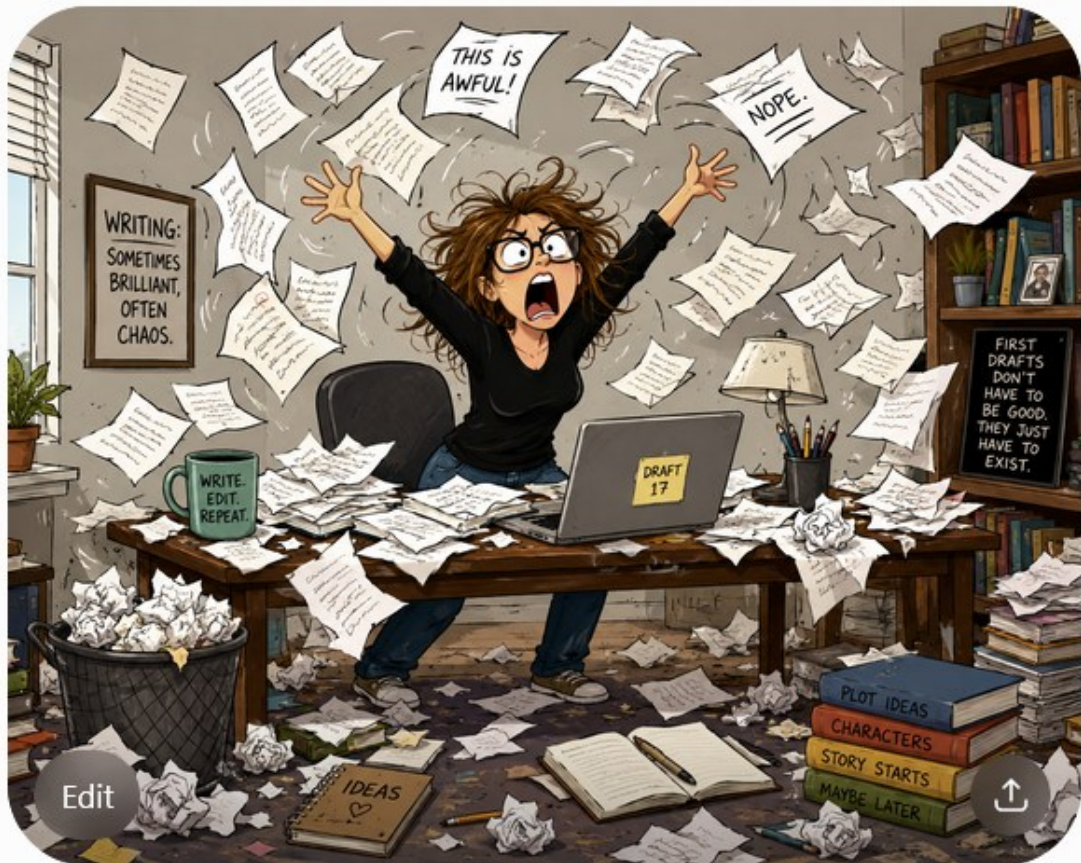
The winner receives \$1,000, publication as a perfect-bound chapbook, and 25 author copies. All entries will also be considered for publication in *StoryBottle*. Entry fee: \$17. Deadline: August 15, 2026.





Writer's Alliance of Gainesville
A not-for-profit Florida corporation
P.O. Box 358396
Gainesville/Florida/32635-8396
<https://writersalliance.org/>

The **Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG)** promotes, encourages and supports aspiring and experienced regional writers. This goal is accomplished via WAG monthly meetings, public readings, ongoing small critique groups, a literary journal, writers' contests, and collaborations with schools and civic organizations to foster creative expression through the written word.



Join a writers' pod—let your fellow writers help you. Or, you can practice to see who throws their work the farthest...

