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JANUARY 2012

Text and Academic Authors Association • 2012:01

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WORKSHOPS



MENTORING



NETWORKING

COMMUNITY



COLLABORATING

Outstanding program planned for June conference

The call for proposals for TAA's 25th annual conference in New Orleans this June was a resounding success, resulting in a record number of session proposals.

"We are thrilled with the response to the call for proposals for this year's conference," said Mary Kay Switzer, TAA president. "It is very gratifying to see so many members and non-members willing to participate by contributing their time and expertise to the program. I want to thank everyone who submitted a proposal and encourage all of our members to join us in New Orleans for the conference."

New this year is the addition of two concurrent two-hour workshops. Rachel Toor, a former university press acquisitions editor and author of a monthly column on writing and publishing for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, will focus on the craft of writing with her workshop titled, "Thinking Well, Writing Well: How Smart Academics Write to Get Published". Best-selling geography textbook author Robert Christopherson will share a guide

to textbook authoring with his workshop titled, "Textbook Authoring Basics: A Holistic Approach".

Best-selling textbook author Joy Hakim will be a featured keynote speaker. Hakim is the author of many successful textbooks including the 11-volume series *A History of US*.

Additional conference sessions include:

- Publishing On Your Own
- Grant Proposal Writing: Do's and Don't's
- Differing Lenses on the Textbook Art
- Brainstorming Academic Publishing
- An eBook Update
- Challenges of Copyright in the Digital Age
- Interactive Contract Improvement Session
- Boost Academic Writing Strategies
- Tradebooks, Columns, and Blogs, Oh My!
- Find and Use Online Media for Your Projects
- How Authors Can Help Students with Disabilities

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Happy New Year from TAA!

3 Pitching a piece of writing



6 Making difficult concepts easy to understand

8 Resolution: Jump start your writing

Register early for the TAA Conference & receive two free books!

The first 30 registrants will receive:

Step-by-Step: Building a Research Paper
By Patricia M. Shields



Internet Surf & Turf Revealed: The Essential Guide to Copyright, Fair Use, and Finding Media
By Barbara Waxer



President's *Message*



Happy New Year to all our members! I hope that everyone had a wonderful holiday season!

This is truly a landmark year for TAA—our 25th Anniversary—a crowning achievement! As president of TAA one of my goals is to encourage our members to become more involved through participating in our audio conferences, joining in the discussions (via our social networks), forming chapters, and attending the annual conferences.

With the launch of the TAA-NCFDD Pilot Program for scholarly authors and the upcoming annual conference in New Orleans this June, 2012 promises to be an exciting year!

When I attended my first TAA conference in Chicago as a presenter, I knew from the start

that TAA was an organization that would be of value to me. That expectation was confirmed once I realized that the more I got involved, the more I got out of my membership. Becoming engaged in TAA's authoring community truly reaps benefits!

I hope that you will join me at our 25th annual conference in New Orleans, June 8–9, 2012. Here is a preview from one of our keynote speakers, Joy Hakim, the author of many successful textbooks—including the famous, award-winning 11-volume series *A History of*



Joy Hakim, Keynote Speaker, TAA 2012 Conference

US, which gave rise to the impressive PBS documentary, "Freedom: A History of US"—in her own words:

"Maybe I should warn you. My hair is cut in bangs. There is a reason: After years spent banging

my head against brick walls, I'm trying to cover the bruises. Writing books for schools isn't easy. But you know that. Right now the field is either tough or exciting, you can choose your perspective. It should be fun to try to garner some insights in New Orleans. As for me, these words are posted above my desk:

'To present a scientific subject in an attractive and stimulating manner is an artistic task, similar to that of a novelist or even a dramatic writer. The same holds for writing textbooks.'

Those words are from Max Born, who was Einstein's pal, and a Nobel prize-winner, and Olivia Newton-John's grandfather.

See you in New Orleans, June 8–9, 2012.

Mary Kay Switzer

Member-Get-a-Member Campaign



It's always a good time to give a gift membership . . .

Give a TAA \$15 gift membership and TAA will give you a

\$5 Starbucks gift card!

Every new member enriches our authoring community by expanding its breadth of knowledge and broadening its opportunities for networking and collaboration.

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For more information, or to give a gift membership, please visit www.taaonline.net/giftmembership

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Pitching a piece of writing

By Karen Hoelscher and Carmen Werder

Pitching a piece of writing requires thinking strategically about possibilities for seeing your work published, given your personal and professional goals as a scholar. We've created a series of tips for approaching editors and publishers that include preparing your materials, making the pitch, and following it up.

1 Preparing your materials.

Seek ideas from colleagues about matching your written materials with a particular journal/publisher. Sometimes colleagues can help us discern patterns of thought to guide us in approaching a particular editor/publisher.

Pay close attention to the title, the opening, and the closing. These places are crucial in any piece of writing as they receive readers' prime attention; make sure they are clear, accurate, and distinctive.

Follow the submission guidelines slavishly. Editors devote considerable energy to developing criteria that best match their needs, so follow the specific guidelines they provide.

2 Making the pitch.

Think about your piece of writing. What is its allure? Is there some emerging, timely question the piece is trying to address that attracts an editor? What feature of your piece would catch an editor's attention?

Distill the article's focus. This focusing is essential, because this emphasis is how the most successful pitches begin. Hook your

audience by stating the main thrust of your article in one or two irresistible sentences.

If it's not immediately apparent why your story belongs in the publication to which you're pitching, clarify that connection now. Seattle freelance writer Haidn Ellis Foster suggests addressing "The Three Ys": *why here* (what makes your piece interesting or useful to this publication's readers?), *why now* (why is your piece timely?), and *why you* (what makes you uniquely qualified to write this piece?). It's also persuasive to include links to other pieces you've written to demonstrate why you are the best person (or one of the very best) to write this piece

Float your idea with an editor. Even when it's still just a twinkle in your eye. Consider doing this in person if you have a chance meeting with an editor. This angling will help you decide whether to submit to a particular publication, and it may also give you a writing angle. Or some key words to include in your query letter to attract the attention of the editor.

Pitch it before you're totally done. This angling inspires completion and advances momentum, and sometimes results in learning enough from an editor to focus your idea more carefully toward an upcoming theme or issue.

Compose and edit your query letter or prospectus carefully. Editors will anticipate the quality of your manuscript based on the quality of your query or cover letter. Treat the query like any other important piece of writing that merits revision and reshaping as needed.

3 Following up your pitch.

If a reasonable amount of time has elapsed without a response, send a follow-up query. We can't assume that our submissions always arrive at their destinations, so it's fair to contact your target editor or publisher to confirm receipt.

If your initial pitch results in a request for revision, toast your good fortune! Then, get it right back out the door.

When resubmitting a piece, create a simple, friendly cover letter to acknowledge each of the reviewers' comments in writing and describe, specifically, where in the revised piece you have addressed each comment. Then, pitch it back to the editor or publisher.

In using any of these strategies, always consider your own style and preferences, as well as the protocols and preferences of the people who make decisions about what gets accepted for publication. Choose the ones that feel right. ■

Karen Hoelscher is professor of education at Western Washington University and writes about intercultural communication and faculty development. Carmen Werder is director of the Teaching-Learning Academy and of Writing Instruction Support at Western Washington University, where she is also on the faculty of the Department of Communication and part of WWU Libraries.

Reprinted by permission. Originally appeared in the December 8, 2010 issue of *Inside Higher Ed* as part of a Faculty Writing Workshop series and was titled, "Reading the Creek."



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TAA Conference Sponsors**



For information about becoming a TAA conference sponsor please visit TAAonline.net/2012TAAConference

Honing your writing craft: An interview with Dannelle Stevens, Ph.D.

Dannelle D. Stevens is a Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Portland State University. She is a co-author of several books including: *Introduction To Rubrics: An Assessment Tool To Save Grading Time, Convey Effective Feedback and Promote Student Learning*; *Journal Keeping: How to Use Reflective Writing for Learning, Teaching, Professional Insight and Positive Change*; and *Tenure in the sacred grove: Issues and strategies for women and minorities*.

Here Stevens talks to TAA about honing her writing craft.

TAA: How do you dedicate time to writing?

Dannelle Stevens: “I write every workday and most weekends for at least 30 minutes on paper or on the computer. When I write something every day, the ideas feel like they are fresh and alive. And that allows me to get ideas at other times as well; they just pop into my head. My subconscious is working on the ideas. When I don’t write regularly even for a short time, each time I go back to my writing it is an uphill battle and takes a while to figure out what I am doing and what I want to say.

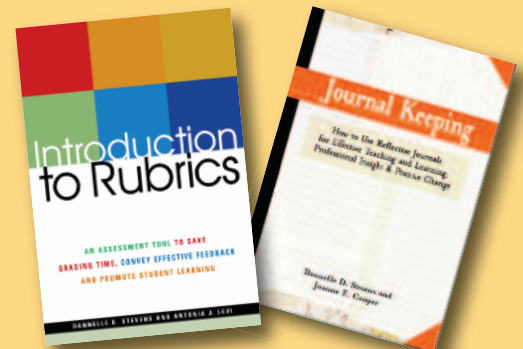
Of course, after the 30 minutes of writing, I search for references, organize my files, contact co-authors, plan length of chapters, keep charts on numbers of words written, etc. This may take a minimum of another 30 minutes.”

TAA: Is goal setting part of your writing process?

DS: “Setting goals motivates me. I have different kinds of goals. First, I list and post what I want to accomplish during that week. I see the weekly goal every time I sit down at my desk. At the end of the week I check in to see if I accomplished it. I write down on a chart what I want to do that day as a goal as well and check whether I did it or not. I also chart



Dannelle D. Stevens, Ph.D., Professor at Portland State University and a veteran author.



words written each day on a graph. I chart pages edited on a chart when I am not writing but merely editing.

I learned about the power of goals and strategies when I left Michigan State ABD (all but dissertation). I had my data and my proposal and that was all. I was starting a new tenure-track job at a small liberal arts college. I had to find a strategy that would let me succeed in my first faculty position and complete my dissertation.

During that first year in this new tenure-track job, I went to the college every morning at 6:00 a.m. and wrote and worked on the dissertation for one hour only. After that, I could pay full attention to this new job the rest of the day. To the surprise of my advisors (and me), I defended my dissertation in June at the end of my first year in this new job.”

TAA: What do you do to speed up the process from writing to publication?

DS: “Keeping a handwritten journal in my pro-fessional life has expedited my publishing process. The way I set up my journal allows me to track my activities, organize my notes and keep all my reflections on my work in one place. I create a table of contents and use a two-column entry system. When my journal is full, I create a table of contents in the front with the date, title of entry and page number. When filling in the table of contents, I review my notes from conferences, my reflections following teaching, and my

notes from meetings I have attended. The two-column method on each page allows me to reflect and keep an on-going to do list in the smaller column.

I am always asking myself: what do I need to do next? What have I accomplished in these six months? I will photocopy pages with good ideas and use them to start an article. Unlike a computer journal, the lovely thing about a handwritten journal is that I can draw, make diagrams and visuals to clarify my thinking. I can even put in sticky notes with ideas. All of these uses of my professional journal help me stay organized and give me time to do what I want to do... write.”

TAA: Can you give an example of a learning experience that helped shape your writing process or approach to publishing?

DS: “No writer would continue writing if she weren’t surprised! From the work of Peter Elbow (1978), I learned the value of surprise in writing. Many of the journal keeping techniques I teach and practice are invitations to surprise! Have a dialogue with perfectionism. Create a metaphor for a grant I am writing. It is affirming and inspiring to use these techniques to get fresh ideas flowing and to find the surprises in my thinking.

An ‘aha’ moment! Writing IS thinking, not what happens after thinking. In the past I learned that what I put down on paper had

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Q: How do you go about researching content for your textbooks?

A: “I go to a library database where I can get every single article on the topic I’m writing about in every journal in my field. If I am updating a book, I will only look for articles that were published from the time of the last edition to the present. This strategy gets me about 100 or 200 new articles for each chapter. I do a cursory look at everything, but I won’t need to read all of those articles. Instead, I look through the abstracts, and if I find an interesting one, I’ll read the discussion section of the paper. I’ll have about 900 new references for the newest edition of *Experiencing the Lifespan* just 3 years after the last edition. It seems like it would be impossible to sift through all this research, but really it’s not that difficult. The real challenge of the revision process is incorporating all the new information while keeping the book about the same length.”

—Janet Belsky, author of *Experiencing the Lifespan*, 2e (2009)

A: “My approach to physical geography (Earth systems science), uses the methods and tools of geographic science: spatial analysis and systems analysis. My research is guided by the rapidly changing condition of many Earth systems in this

real-time experiment humanity is conducting. Originally, I went to the many disciplines from which *Geosystems* draws content and built each chapter from that core material in the literature, rather than look at other physical geography texts.

For research, I use peer-reviewed journals, both printed and electronic, and oftentimes contact researchers directly for discussion and possible data for designing figures. Also, I use NASA, JPL, USGS, NRCS, NOAA, and many other public domain science sources.

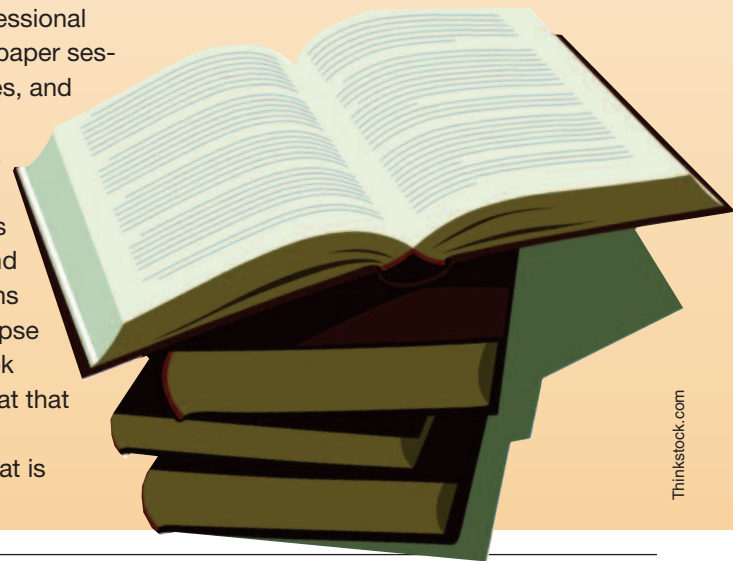
For each revision, I set up a ‘clippings file,’ in folders for each chapter where new leads are gathered. On my computer desktop I maintain a source file of new satellite images and electronic source material. At my professional meetings I attend as many paper sessions as possible, take notes, and talk to information leads.

Consider: other textbooks are a look back in time, recent published research is closer to what is current, and research paper presentations at meetings give you a glimpse ahead in your field. Textbook authors should strive to be at that leading edge.

I maintain a master file that is

broken down into all the H1 and H2 headings in the main book—clipping files are edited and merged into this file when a revision is done. I do not use Wikipedia, or other ‘public’ outlets, although sometimes the list of footnote links provides some leads on primary source material. I am aware of my competitors and the direction of my market but I do not use any textbooks for reference or content. I use broadsheets 53 cm x 40 cm (21 in. x 16 in.), to record possible revision material, organize material, and keyboard from these sheets for composition of text.” ■

—Robert Christopherson, author of *Geosystems: An Introduction to Physical Geography*, 8e (2012)



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better be pretty good the first time I wrote it. That was a terrible constraint, squashed my creativity and led to tortured text. Now I start with what I know and don’t know and wish I knew and do not worry about whether it even makes sense. Then, I go back and cull out the good ideas and begin to see the shape it can take.”

TAA: What are your favorite TAA benefits?

DS: “TAA is the first organization I have

belonged to that recognizes that textbook and academic writing is more than just producing text. Writing a textbook is also about book contracts. It is also about finding good mentors. It is also about being organized and planning. Writing is even about finding and selecting clip art, a topic at the recent TAA conference.

In the world of academic conferences, TAA’s was a breath of fresh air. It was not about competition. It was not about strutting our stuff. There is a time and place for that elsewhere. It was about mentoring and sharing and learning from one another.” ■

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- Digital Pedagogy: Make the Most of Multimedia

Attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in small-group moderated roundtable discussions and meet one-on-one with a veteran textbook author or authoring attorney.

In honor of TAA’s 25th anniversary, conference registration this year has been reduced to \$125 for members and \$155 for non-members. Registration is now open. For more information about the 2012 TAA Conference, please visit TAAonline.net/2012TAAConference. ■

How to make difficult concepts easier to understand

By Dionne Soares Palmer

One of the most valuable attributes of a successful textbook author is their ability to present complex concepts in an effective and efficient format. Following, two veteran textbook authors share their strategies for achieving this goal.

Mariëlle Hoefnagels, author of *Biology: Concepts and Investigations*, recommends textbook authors make listening to students a top priority when trying to explain a difficult concept. “Either listen in as students discuss difficult concepts with one another, or ask a student to explain the subject to you,” she said. “Pay close attention to the parts that confuse the students, then make sure the narrative and illustrations in your book confront those potential points of confusion.”

Michael Levitzky, author of *Pulmonary Physiology*, shares some additional strategies for better explaining difficult concepts:

- **Build the explanation.** Break it into

easier-to-understand steps and present the ideas in logical order.

- **Avoid intuitive jumps.** Don't avoid any steps in a process because they are obvious to you; students may not have the intuition to jump from point to point, so be sure to explain every step.

- **Keep your writing simple.** Use short sentences, avoid using confusing subordinate clauses, and keep the language simple when possible. If you must use jargon and abbreviations, recapitulate definitions for these terms periodically.

- **Highlight and define key terms.** Use bold-face or italics to alert students to the use of a new term, and be sure to define these new key terms precisely.

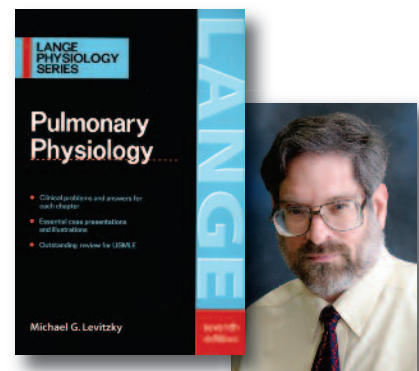
- **Keep figures and diagrams simple.**

- **Use analogies carefully and sparingly.**

Analogies can be confusing rather than helpful if they are not carefully selected. ■



Mariëlle Hoefnagels



Michael Levitzky

Leveraging a book award

By Dionne Soares Palmer

Receiving a book award is not only a great honor, it can also be used to increase book sales and advance your writing career.

Judy Rasminsky, coauthor of *Challenging Behavior in Young Children* and *Challenging Behavior in Elementary and Middle School*, both of which have received TAA Textbook Excellence (Texty) Awards, said she and her coauthor Barbara Kaiser have leveraged the award in several ways, including:

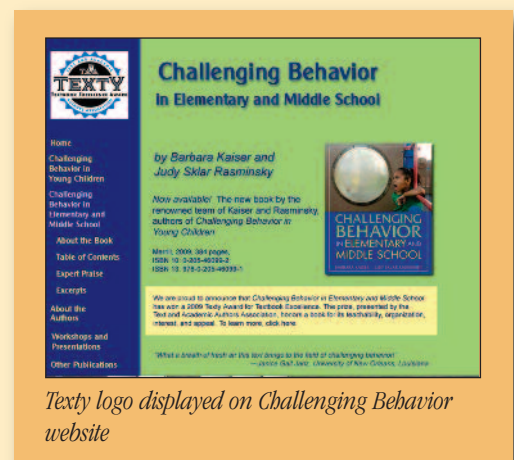
- **Posting the Texty logo in several places on their Challenging Behavior websites.**
- **Asking their editors to notify sales reps about the award.**
- **Sending a press release announcing the award to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).** The NAEYC included information about the award in its catalog, newsletter, and journal, and also

purchased Texty seals to put on the books they sell.

Chuck Corbin, whose physical fitness textbooks have won both TAA Textbook Excellence Awards and a McGuffey Longevity Award, added the awards to his curriculum vitae. He also included the award in his website bio and plans to mention it in the prefaces of future editions of each book. Corbin also notified his university and local newspapers in order to publicize the award to students, faculty, and the community.

Both Rasminsky and Corbin also recommend including information about the award on conference presentation slides and handouts.

Eric Schulz, coauthor of *Calculus*, which won a 2011 TAA Textbook Excellence Award, encouraged his publisher to promote the award as much as possible. Pearson posted



Texty logo displayed on Challenging Behavior website

an announcement about the award on Facebook and included information about it in their literature. Schulz also let Wolfram, the technology company that makes the unique software used to create the e-book version of *Calculus*, know about the award. Wolfram published a press release on their blog. Like Corbin, Schulz also worked with his college to spread the word to his local academic community. ■

New workshop sponsored by TAA

"Publish! Don't Perish!"

TAA is happy to announce its sponsorship of a new workshop for academic authors. Presented by Drs. Sonja Foss and William Waters, the "Publish! Don't Perish!" workshop offers hands-on practice of the major skills involved in moving research insights from your head to the page and then from the page to the publisher. It is accessible to scholars working on the tenure process, from the first publication to the tenure "clincher."

Specific skills will include finding and scheduling writing time, strategies for staying on schedule, the principles and practice of fast writing, how to efficiently use serial revisions to increase professional presentation, and how to use personal style sheets to identify and repair individual issues while sustaining joy and excitement.

Topics may include:

- Developing a research program
- Writing and revising
- Crafting the research question
- Targeting a journal
- Strengthening the literature review
- Enacting the scholar role
- Coding qualitative data
- Writing regularly

TAA's workshop sponsorship covers the presenters' travel and lodging expenses, reducing the overall presenter fees for host institutions by up to \$1,000 per workshop.

If you are interested in arranging with your faculty development office to bring a TAA sponsored workshop to your institution, please visit TAAonline.net/workshops ■



Dr. Sonja K. Foss is a professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado Denver. Dr. William Waters is an assistant professor of English at the University of Houston-Downtown.



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Williams awarded \$1,000 TAA Publication Grant

Gregory Williams, an assistant professor

of contemporary art and critical theory, and director of graduate studies in the department of History of Art and Architecture at Boston University, has been awarded a \$1,000 TAA Publication Grant.

The grant will help cover costs incurred in the publication of his book, *Permission to Laugh: Humor and Politics in Contemporary German Art*, which will be published by the University of Chicago Press in spring 2012.

"I am truly grateful for the support of TAA," said Williams. "This grant makes an enormous difference in financing a book that required significant out-of-pocket contributions."

William's book explores the work of three generations of German artists who, beginning in the 1960s, turned to jokes and wit in an effort to confront complex questions regarding German politics and history.

Williams has written catalogue essays for major exhibitions of the work of Martin Kippenberger and Rosemarie Trockel, as well as numerous articles and reviews for art periodicals.

Learn how you can apply for a TAA Publication Grant by visiting TAAonline.net/publication_grants ■



Gregory Williams

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Reinforce your New Year's writing resolutions

If one of your New Year's resolutions includes completing a

scholarly journal article or writing a textbook, TAA can help. We have a growing archive of podcasts on various topics intended to help you reach your writing and publishing goals.

These podcasts encompass advice and strategies shared by a wide variety of veteran textbook and journal article authors as well as industry experts specializing in time management, contracts, indexing, copyright, marketing, and more.

Download select podcasts from the TAA website and listen to them on your mp3 player while you exercise, cook dinner, or on your commute to and from work. You can also listen to them right from your computer to boost your motivation prior to working on a project.

The following is a sampling of the more than 60 podcasts in TAA's growing archive of recorded audio conferences and webinars. To view a full list or to download a podcast, visit TAAonline.net/TAATeleconference

- *Five Key Strategies to Boost Writing Power & Productivity*
- *How to Develop a Daily Writing Practice*
- *First-Time Authors: An Inside Look at Journal Publishing*
- *Kicking It Out the Door: How to (Finally) Submit Your First Journal Article*
- *Motivational Techniques: 'Professional Nag' Uses Creative and Innovative Tricks, Tools & Techniques to Motivate Authors*
- *Publish & Flourish: Become a Prolific Author*
- *Writing & Editing Effectively Using 'Fast Writing' and 'Slow Editing'*
- *Generating & Refining Research Ideas*
- *How to Craft a Winning Textbook Proposal*
- *Scholarly Writing: Strengthening Your Literature Review*
- *Scholarly Publishing: Finding Support Through Peer Mentoring*
- *A Coach's Perspective on Finishing a Dissertation*
- *Time Management: Why You Don't Need It, Can't Do it Anyway & What To Do Instead*
- *You Want to Write a Textbook? Here's How to Do It!*
- *The 10 Worst Legal Mistakes a Textbook or Academic Author Can Make*
- *Don't Settle for a Publisher's Standard Contract: Terms You Can & Should Negotiate*

TAA will be offering more audio conferences and webinars in the coming months. If you have an idea for a topic or would like to present an audio conference or webinar, please contact Kim Pawlak at kim.pawlak@taaonline.net or (608) 687-3106.

Here's what members have to say about this valuable resource:

"This teleconference was just the boost I needed to regain my writing mojo. Shortly after hanging up, I got the intro, chapter 1 and chapter 3 of my dissertation outlined."

—FIVE KEY STRATEGIES TO BOOST WRITING POWER & PRODUCTIVITY

"Very helpful. I appreciated the practical, easy to implement strategies."

—HOW TO DEVELOP A DAILY WRITING PRACTICE

"Thank you for this 'just in time' training that I needed for my next project."

—WRITING & EDITING EFFECTIVELY USING 'FAST WRITING' AND 'SLOW EDITING'

"Excellent presentation. The speaker was very knowledgeable."

—DON'T SETTLE FOR A PUBLISHER'S STANDARD CONTRACT: TERMS YOU CAN & SHOULD NEGOTIATE

"This was extremely helpful to me. I learned so many things I did not know before and was reminded of things I knew and had done sometimes in the past, but was not doing now. I will change some things and start some new ways of doing my writing."

—YOU WANT TO WRITE A TEXTBOOK? HERE'S HOW TO DO IT!