

Collaborating across differences: Keep Writing Communication Simple with the 5Ps

By Kristina Quynn

In the two previous newsletter pieces in this series, we learned how non-binding co-author agreements and reflective conversations can build trust and understanding among collaborators. In this piece, we will consider how developing a shared vocabulary about a writing project can support writing partners or teams.

A campus partner and I are at the end of a three-year study of collaborative writers in which we work with faculty and graduate students who co-author manuscripts for publication or proposals for funding. One of our important, preliminary insights is that many writers share the concern about miscommunicating in ways that interfere with next steps, recommended revisions, and co-author contributions.

For faculty advisors, poor collaborator communication is often frustrating and can create project backlog. For graduate students, miscommunication about their writing project can be confusing and stressful, with implications for the development

of their field-specific expertise and impacts on timely progress to degree. For both writers, poor communication about the writing project can be time-wasting and disheartening.

Collaborating authors may find they have situational differences that play a role in how they connect—or misconnect—with one another. The faculty advisor and graduate student collaborators mentioned above are coming to their writing project from very different ranks and career positions. Many other differences may exist as well: our personal and professional identities, backgrounds, and skill-levels all help shape our approach to a new writing project, and may be a source of miscommunication.

Writing is a deceptively complex term—it represents a thing (*noun*), an action (*verb*), and an ongoing process (*gerund*). Complicating matters further, writing forces us to confront our past

continued on page 4

Building a Buzz: Creating an Online Presence to Make Your Book Findable

By Meghan Peterman

So—you've completed your latest publication. There's been a lot of sweat, and maybe some tears, but you did it.

Wouldn't it be great if your hard work was over?

Unfortunately, outside of your immediate circle of colleagues, friends, and family, no one knows about your book. You need to get the word out.

Fortunately, you don't have to be a marketing expert to create a stellar online presence. There are many simple, accessible ways to make your publication findable online.

On Spinning Your Web

The first thing to do is reframe your thinking about an online presence. Think of it like a

spiderweb...the more strands that extend from the center of your web, the more likely you are to be successful. Similarly, the more places you're located online (the more strands in your web), the greater chance you have of popping up in a Google search.

If you have a link to your book, scatter that across the web as widely as you can. Put it in your school bio. Your signature. Your social media profiles. If you have a website, it should be there too. Make it your mission to funnel all your online

continued on page 5



• IN THIS ISSUE •

- 2 Leveraging collaboration among authors and editors
- 6 Starz v. MGM case decided by Ninth Circuit
- 7 Copyright Claims Board
- 8 Call for Proposals for 2023 TAA Conference

Month of Motivation

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Leveraging Collaboration Among Authors and Editors

When I started writing anatomy and physiology textbooks in the 1980s, I never gave much thought to this last part of my adventure: my exit. And here I am, getting ready to step back and hand it all over to others in a few short years.

I'm finding out that some of my friends in TAA who have exited or are on the "offramp" are valuable counselors who freely give advice from their experience. Most recently, four colleagues presented their experiences at the 2022 TAA Conference in a panel called *Time to Slow Down: Finding an Offramp from the Authoring Freeway*. Even with all this help, my offramp has been a bit bumpy.

As I first began to navigate these bumps, I got a good tip from an unexpected source. I chatted with a guy in front of me in the deli line at a nonacademic event. It turned out that he's a consultant for company founders trying to turn things over to their successors. He pointed out that this is analogous to my situation...and that there are always bumps. Over our Reuben sandwiches, he coached me in ways to smooth those bumps.

Among the many things I learned is that communication is key. Of course it is! But the trick is how to make that work when collaborating with a team of co-authors, most of whom are new to textbook revising and likely to be geographically separated.

One of the tricks working for me right now is simple: a weekly meeting.

Every Friday morning at ten o'clock, all the authors and key editors working on our overlapping revision projects meet via Zoom. When

I proposed this, we set our Friday Meetings for a half hour, with the notion that they'd rarely go that long and often be cancelled for lack of things to discuss. We guessed that after a couple of months or so, we'd no longer need or want to meet weekly.

That was nearly three years ago. The half-hour meetings have turned out to last an hour nearly always—and sometimes a bit longer. We rarely miss a meeting.

Authors and editors alike have found this meeting to be very useful in so many ways. Coordinating who is doing what and when is easy. We can discuss our choices in revising as collaborative colleagues, working things out in ways that cannot be done easily by email or Slack. We sometimes invite guests such as marketing managers and digital resource specialists so that we all understand each other's roles.

When I first proposed our Friday Meetings, I thought my editors would balk. Just the opposite. I wondered if my new co-authors would hesitate. They didn't. Looking back, we all agree that we feel more connected as a team and, perhaps for that very reason, we are more productive. We solve problems more easily, we assign and reassign tasks more efficiently, and our revisions really hang together in ways that better facilitate student learning.

Although the Patton Team meetings include a lot of mentoring of the new co-authors by me and by our editors, I think this strategy can work well for any author team. Whether a team is large or small, the authors are new or experienced, or the writing involves textbooks or scholarly articles, such meetings can amplify the benefits of collaboration in ways that are hard to imagine. Until we've tried it.

Now a bit closer to my exit, I feel great about it. I'll miss the whole process of authoring, surely. But I'll especially miss hanging out with "the gang" each Friday morning. ■

—Kevin Patton

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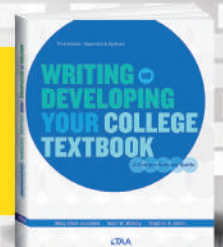
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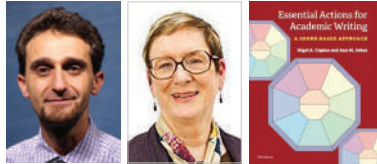
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The Essential Actions for Academic Writing

Presented by Nigel A. Caplan, PhD, Associate Professor and Manager, Graduate Programs and Online Learning, University of Delaware English Language Institute; and Ann M. Johns, PhD, Professor Emerita, Linguistics and Writing Studies, San Diego State University

Monday, September 19, 3 p.m. ET



Boldly Go: 5 Ways to Be a More Confident Academic

Presented by Mary Beth Averill, academic writing coach, editor, and author of *How to Become an Academic Coach*

Wednesday, October 5, 1 p.m. ET



Confronting the Anxiety of Academic Writing

Presented by Rachael Cayley, Associate Professor (teaching stream), Graduate Centre for Academic Communication, School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto

Wednesday, October 19, 3 p.m. ET



Textbook Authoring Inspirations, Insights, and Innovations

Presented by Jamie Pope, Co-author of *Nutrition for a Changing World (2e)*, the recipient of a 2020 TAA Textbook Excellence Award

Wednesday, November 9, 1 p.m. ET



Picture This: Using Visual Display Techniques to Engage Readers

Presented by Dr. Kim Mogilevsky, founding member and CEO, Analytic Orange

Tuesday, December 6, 2 p.m. ET



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Nomination and program details at <https://taaonline.net/awards>

Collaborating across differences

challenges alongside our current vulnerabilities, actively engage with our career-building and learning expectations, and—sometimes—share our partially formed thoughts. With all this layered complexity, we may often talk about *writing* with colleagues thinking that we have been talking about the same thing, only to learn we have different starting assumptions. To keep communication about the writing project clear and, thus, to keep the project moving forward, we recommend that co-authors articulate and clarify their meanings and expected approaches at the beginning of a project.

In your planning and reflective conversations (or if a miscommunication occurs), you may find it helpful to get grounded about which element of *writing* is providing the most challenges. We have found the following “five Ps” helpful in organizing our thinking and distinguishing different aspects of writing:

PRODUCT: the output of the collaboration, which will have a genre, be field-specific, include specialized knowledge, and have a sophisticated style

PROCESS: the putting together of a manuscript or proposal (the craft of what goes where)

PRACTICE: the customary, habitual way of doing (or not doing) tasks for individuals and teams

PROJECT: the actions that move the research forward (reading, analysis, task-based)

PERSONA: who you are in relation to others + your voice on the page

We use the 5P buckets in our workshops to render the essential elements of *writing* simply, clearly, and without a lot of jargon that may obscure communication. In addition to actively listening to your co-author to better understand their writing backgrounds and approaches as discussed in my previous newsletter pieces, you will benefit by keeping your communication about writing simple, nimble, and specific to your partnership or team.

Because academic writing is a specialized process and product, it requires that we communicate as clearly as possible with our co-authors from the outset and that we listen with care when challenges arise—as they often do. If the specialized terminology of genres, grammar, or syntax work for you and your team, use those. If not, find terms that do work.

Devising terminology and language that works for you can be especially important when writing across disciplinary differences. For example, four scholars (Beollstroff, Nardi, Pearce, and Taylor) from four disciplines (anthropology, computer science, media studies, and sociology) co-authored an interdisciplinary handbook, *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds*, using multiple meeting, commenting, and communicating methods.

The team developed a commenting system for their editing process. They agreed that substantive changes would need to be approved by the composing writer, but that minor spelling and grammatical errors could be edited by any contributor. To propose



edits in text, they used the comments feature to confirm changes. For instance, they cued a writer to address a comment or to make a change by adding each writers’ initials to the word *fix* (e.g., TFIX, BFIX, CFIX, TLFIX). Simple, clear, writing-specific language that was developed by the group to work for all contributors in the group.

Yes, writing is an ancient craft and, yes, often there are agreed-upon structures, terminology, and definitions within a discipline, as well as distinct disciplinary constraints and pressures. But you in conversation with your writing partner or team can define your writing product, process, practice, project, and personas. Ultimately, how we go about co-authoring means getting clear about what we are doing in relation to and in support of our colleagues. Feel free to devise your own tailored terms and techniques to smooth your collaborative communication.

It’s time to reach out to your writing colleagues and get clear on your terms, ideas, and next steps! ■



Kristina Quynn is the founding director of CSU Writes, a professional research writing facilitation program at Colorado State University. Trained as a literary scholar, her research and publications have focused on contemporary experimental literature and performative criticism and can be found in publications ranging from the *Chronicle of Higher Ed* to *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*. She is co-editor of the essay collection *Reading and Writing Experimental Texts* (Palgrave). Her current research and publications focus on academic writing productivity and sustainable writing practices for researchers.

continued from page 1

Building a Buzz

marketing activity towards this link. While it's true you can't make the proverbial horse drink, they can't even make the decision if you never get them to the water in the first place.

On Crafting Your Message

Once you've placed your link across the web, what sort of messaging will convince readers to actually click on it (the ongoing challenge of digital marketing)? Certainly not swaths of text. The most beautiful prose is useless online if it's too long. It's a sad reality, but you've worked too hard not to be a realist.

You need an elevator speech...for some settings, more like a micro-elevator speech. 200-400 words is acceptable for an Amazon description, but for social media, slice it down to 30 (or fewer). Figure out the most important thing your publication does, and frame it with attention-grabbing, active language. "*What the Heck?* deconstructs professional communication. It calls for a radical transformation of workplace language as we know it." If you can make it flashier, do so. You're in a war for attention, and you can't afford to be subtle.

On the Attention War

In case you find all this talk about grabbing attention cringe-inducing, please remember: your book is important. It will greatly benefit the reader. However, it cannot do that if it is lost in the morass of the internet. If you don't stand out, you're invisible. Grabbing online attention isn't about being a narcissist. It's about being a lighthouse in a pea-soup fog of content.

On Social Media

If you're serious about creating an online presence, social media needs to be a central part of your strategy. Central. Again: you've worked far too hard not to be a realist. Social media is where you are going to find the highest number of eyeballs for the least investment.

Now, there's a caveat to this: intentionality is crucial. You must operate by three guiding principles: Audience, Purpose, and CTA.

Audience:

Where are other readers in your discipline going to be located? Unless you've done a lot of personal networking, probably not on your general Facebook feed. Look for some specialized groups. Make connections on LinkedIn. Have you found a community on Twitter? Look for applicable organizations and follow them. Interact with members to build relationships. Tag them in your posts. Fostering that community and posting where your audience dwells is step one.

Purpose:

Each post must accomplish a goal (hint: 80% of the time, that goal should not be "buy my book." Don't worry, we'll get there). Most of the time, that goal should be to drive conversation and share helpful information. Does your book offer a unique insight you can share? Any industry tips? Share your writing process (selfies WORK). Post your students' successes. Then, the other 20% of the time, you can directly draw attention to your book. But mainly, your Purpose is to be a thought leader in your field spreading insight and positivity.



CTA (Call-to-Action):

Remember that book link? Drop it in every post. That's right: even the philosophical ones. But the book is a resource to provide your community with more information about the knowledge you've been spreading, not something to "buy now." Rule of thumb: If you feel like a used car salesman on social media, that's a good clue that your focus is out of balance.

And guess what? You'll progress over time. Embrace the learning process, Google when you have a question, laugh at your imperfection, and be proud of yourself for learning a new (extremely valuable, relevant, and worthwhile) skill.

Also Important: as you (and everyone) are in an online war for attention, it would behoove you to check out free online tools like Canva to help you easily make social media graphics that will leap off the feed.

Summary

Be everywhere you can. Be succinct. Grab attention. Provide value and cultivate conversation. These principles are certainly not exhaustive, but they're a vital part of your journey to creating an online presence. It's not easy, but you're no stranger to challenge. Have fun with it. What you've written is worthwhile and important. By helping people find it, you maximize your chances of really making a difference. Godspeed. ■



Meghan Peterman manages social media for the Higher Education division of Kendall Hunt Publishing as Marketing Communications Specialist. She loves crafting language and is passionate about the rhetoric of communication. In her spare time, she consumes written material on theology and philosophy. Frequently, this pursuit includes cupcakes. Soli Deo Gloria.

Starz v. MGM case decided by Ninth Circuit; outcome sets up Circuit split that may go to the Supreme Court

By Michael Spinella

In October of last year, TAA joined with The Authors Guild and other authors' organizations to file an *amicus curiae* brief in a case that was being appealed to the Ninth Circuit. The case was decided in mid-July, with the side supported by the *amici* prevailing.

The *amici* sided with the plaintiff in seeking to have the Circuit Court affirm a lower court decision. The case, known as Starz vs MGM, involved an attempt by MGM to limit its liability for a copyright infringement based on a limitation on what is known as the discovery rule. The specific legal question involved the interpretation of 17 USC § 507(b) of the Copyright Act, which states that "No civil action shall be maintained ... unless it is commenced within three years after the claim accrued." The discovery rule enables authors and other copyright owners to claim damages for copyright infringements that occurred before the infringement was discovered, and it delays the 'accrual date' of infringements until the date they were discovered (or should reasonably have been discovered), so that the time limit for claims is not shortened merely by not having been discovered.

MGM sought to have damages limited to three years from the date of the infringement, rather than from the date the author discovers the infringement. This would have meant, for example, that if an infringement occurred in 2018, but was not discovered until 2022, the author would have no recourse to collect damages, since the infringement itself was more than 3 years before discovery.

The *amicus* brief that TAA signed onto argues that allowing MGM's argument would not only harm large, well-resourced corporations like Starz, the plaintiff in this case, but that it would also harm individual artists and authors. The brief explains that

"By sharply limiting the ability of blameless artists to recover their damages, MGM's proposed rule would devalue copyrighted works and further discourage the private enforcement of infringements on which the Copyright Act depends."

The brief makes the case that authors face declining income as a result of the erosion of copyright enforcement, while simultaneously new technologies and internet dissemination have made it easier for infringers to make copies and hide the source of the infringement. This downward spiral in income and enforcement capability bodes ill for the ability of artists to pursue copyright infringements when they discover them, thus eventually resulting in damage to society, as artists may stop producing new works if they cannot expect to protect their economic interests.

The brief was written *pro bono* by three members of the law firm Wiggin and Dana LLP, Partners Benjamin Diessel and Nathan Denning, and Associate Michael Rondon. Mr. Denning commented "The decision is an important development for authors and content creators of all formats because, consistent with Supreme Court precedent, it protects their rights against infringing works in a time when they face both increasing infringement and increasing challenges to enforcement."

The Circuit Court's decision to uphold the earlier District Court ruling is a positive step toward shoring up the rights of authors/artists and their ability to earn income from their creative efforts. However, it is only a first step. This decision sets up a split in Circuit Court rulings on the discovery issue—specifically, with the Second Circuit's acceptance of a strict three-year limitation on damages—and so eventually is likely to require resolution at the Supreme Court level. ■

Two book suggestions from our own summer reading

By Kevin Patton and Michael Spinella

TAA President Kevin Patton, and Executive Director Mike Spinella share brief reviews of books from our summer reading lists that may be of interest to academics and the authoring community. Let us know what you've been reading!

Sins Against Science: How Misinformation Affects Our Lives and Laws by Judi Nath
McFarland (November 8, 2021), 240 pages, ISBN 1476686394

Published last fall, I'm rereading Judi Nath's book *Sins Against Science: How Misinformation Affects Our Lives and Laws* for a book club with the author.

Dr. Nath is a textbook author in human anatomy and physiology and a longtime member of TAA. She's also an astute observer of contemporary American culture and has some unique perspectives about how scientific misinformation can influence our laws

and our legal system. Her close friend, Jim Obergefell, was the plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which recognized same-sex marriage as a universal right in this country. Obergefell also wrote the *Foreword* to this book.

Starting each chapter with a brief synopsis of a pivotal court decision, Judi turns to the scientific perspective that informs the facts of that case, as well as related legal, political, and cultural aspects.

The *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision is Nath's starting point for a discussion of the biological aspects of human sex and sexuality. Many people think that humans are, without variation, decidedly male or female and each have sexual attractions that are likewise binary. But in biology, we see clearly that is not the case. There is a spectrum of sex and sexuality in nature—among humans and many other animals. That tension between unsupported belief and scientific evidence provides the spark that Dr. Nath ignites in each chapter.

continued on page 8

Copyright Claims Board: A New Option for Authors to Protect Their Copyright

By Brenda Ulrich

What is the Copyright Claims Board (CCB)?

The CCB is a small claims forum housed within the Copyright Office (at the Library of Congress) for a limited number of common copyright claims. The CCB was established through an act of Congress in 2020 (the CASE Act) and began to hear cases in June 2022.

The purpose of the CCB is to make it easier for individuals and organizations to pursue small dollar copyright infringement claims that otherwise are too expensive for those with limited resources. For individual authors, the CCB forum could be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it provides authors with an opportunity to protect and enforce their copyrights in a much simpler and less expensive process than the courts. On the other hand, the low barriers to entry could invite nuisance claims or meritless complaints against educational, scholarly, critical, or creative uses that are well-protected as fair use.

What does CCB mean for me/my company/ institution? What are key action steps?

- All individuals and institutions are potentially subject to CCB claims. CCB claims must be filed with the CCB and service of process must be properly made on a respondent for a CCB claim to move forward.
- Both parties must agree to participate in a CCB proceeding for it to move forward. If they do, the claim cannot be brought again in the courts.
- Respondents have 60 days from the date of service to choose to opt in or out of the CCB proceeding. If the respondent opts in, they have the right to file counterclaims, including a claim for a “declaration of noninfringement.” If the respondent opts out, the CCB claim does not move forward, and the claimant has the right to file a lawsuit on the same issues.
- The CCB is made up of a three-member tribunal, with “extensive expertise in copyright matters.” You can learn more about the CCB process and read their bios here: <https://ccb.gov/about/>.
- CCB procedures are conducted entirely online, with limited discovery. Its “determinations” cannot be appealed to the courts except in very limited circumstances.
- Monetary damages are capped at \$30,000 for all claims. These can be based on statutory or actual damages calculations.

Special Note re Libraries and Archives

- Public libraries, including all libraries at public colleges and universities, are automatically opted out of CCB claims.
- Libraries at private institutions can opt out of CCB claims. Many are choosing to do so to avoid dealing with a large volume of claims. Here is the opt out form: <https://ccb.gov/libraries-archives-opt-out/>.
- Note that, for higher education institutions, opting out only exempts the library and archives, not the rest of the institution or its faculty, staff, and students.

For additional guidance, we recommend the following articles from the Association of College & Research Libraries: <https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/25453/33363> and from the Authors Guild: <https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/copyright-claims-board-opens-on-june-16/>. ■



Brenda Ulrich is an intellectual property attorney focusing on publishing, higher education, copyright and trademark law. Brenda represents authors negotiating and interpreting publishing agreements, agency agreements, and joint author agreements. She also advises colleges and universities on the development and implementation of intellectual property policies, navigating copyright questions related to teaching and scholarship, as well as managing and defending college and university trademark portfolios. She is a partner in the law firm of Archstone Law Group PC.

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continued from page 6

Two book suggestions

Each chapter explores the scientific aspects of other currently important topics, such as vaccines, abortion, pharmaceuticals, complementary and alternative medicine, plus death and dying—each with a starting point embedded in a court decision. Judi’s teaching experience and textbook-writing skill come to the fore in every chapter, each of which breaks down a massive body of complex scientific data and interpretations into some key ideas that she weaves into a story that helps any curious citizen understand them more clearly and apply them more accurately.

As I reread this book, I can see even more clearly than in my first reading that readers on all sides of the important issues discussed will benefit by starting from a position that is well versed in the scientific aspects.

If you want a quick, fascinating read that can quickly bring you up to speed with the essential science aspects of important issues of contemporary American life, I highly recommend this book.

—Kevin Patton

Listen to Kevin’s conversation with author Judi Nath about her book *Sins Against Science: How Misinformation Affects Our Lives and Laws* in The A&P Professor podcast episode 110 *Sins Against Science* — *A Chat with Judi Nath*. (TAA does come up in our conversation!)

The Twittering Machine

by Richard Seymour

The Indigo Press (August 29, 2019), 226 pages

The Twittering Machine, by Richard Seymour, takes a dark look at the impacts of social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, on our culture, social interactions, and political life. Seymour uses a 1922 painting by surrealist Paul Klee as a metaphor for our current predicament with social media. Describing the painting, he writes “Somehow, the holy music of birdsong has been mechanized, deployed as a lure, for the purpose of human damnation...” and goes on to spell out how the ‘techno-utopianism’ underlying our ‘attention economy’ has lured us heedlessly into a dangerous social media addiction. His descriptions of the many ways our addiction has brought us disruption, division, and despair are harrowing.

The book is a sobering reminder that social media are businesses first, competing for and manipulating our attention for profit, without concern for our well-being. The good news, if there is any, is that we can always direct our attention to more healthy pursuits...if we can muster the will power. Not exactly a beach read, but maybe worth your while—put down the twitter machine in your hand for a while and give this a little of your attention.

—Mike Spinella ■

Call for Session Proposals for the 35th Annual TAA Authoring Conference

Proposal deadline: October 21, 2022

The 2023 TAA Conference will be held in person, and it is time to submit your session proposals for the consideration of the Conference Committee.

We are still working on settling our venue and date. We will announce it as soon as possible, but for planning purposes, you can expect that it will take place between mid-May and June 10. We are hoping to meet on a University Campus in or near an attractive US city.

This coming year, we expect the Conference to have some ‘hybrid’ elements—that is, it will take place in person, but there will be access to some live sessions online as well, and attendees will be able to choose whether to join the meeting in person or online. Please bear that in mind as you develop your proposals. You can submit your proposal(s) directly on the TAA website:

<https://taaa.memberclicks.net/2023-taa-conference-session-proposal-form>

