



**Southwest  
Chapter**

**Newsletter of AMWA Southwest Chapter**

**March 2006**

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## **Annual Membership Appreciation Event**

**Date:** March 14, 2006 (Tuesday)

**Time:** 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

**Place:** Majors Books  
7205 Fannin  
Houston, Texas

On Tuesday, March 14, Jeanie Woodruff, scientific editor for the Department of Symptom Research at the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, will speak at AMWA Southwest's Annual Membership Appreciation Event. Her talk, "Using Microsoft PowerPoint to Your Best Advantage", will include demonstrations of the use of slide and title masters, slide and presentation templates, and other features of PowerPoint that can help your presentations rise above the ordinary.

Ms. Woodruff has more than 20 years of experience in scientific editing, graphics and image processing, and web design and production. She has created numerous PowerPoint presentations for faculty members at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Come and see this informative presentation, socialize with your fellow chapter members, and enjoy some wine, cheese, fruit, and other delectables at Majors Books, located on Fannin between South Braeswood and Old Spanish Trail near the Texas Medical Center in Houston. While there, you can check out Majors' collection of more than 50,000 medical books and resource guides. The Southwest Chapter is grateful to the bookstore's management for agreeing to lend us the facility for this special event.

The member appreciation event is free to anyone wishing to attend. However, so that those planning the meeting know how much food and wine to buy, please register with Steve Palmer by e-mail ([spalmer@heart.thi.tmc.edu](mailto:spalmer@heart.thi.tmc.edu)) or phone (832.355.8902). Please include your full name and telephone number in the message. We hope to see you there!

## 2006 McGovern Award Winner Barbara Gastel Recounts Globetrotting Career in Medical Communications

On January 19, 2006, Barbara Gastel, MD, MPH, received the 2006 John P. McGovern Award at the AMWA Southwest Chapter's January banquet meeting in Houston. She was presented with the award by Pamela Paradis Tice, ELS(D), McGovern Award Committee Chair, in front of 38 guests, including her husband, Tom Vogel, PhD, and her mother, Sophie Gastel, visiting from the Buffalo, New York, area. Previous McGovern Award recipient Ruth SoRelle was also among our honored guests.

Established in 1982 by AMWA Southwest, the annual McGovern Award recognizes excellence in the field of medical communications. The award is named for John P. McGovern, MD, Founder and Director of the McGovern Allergy Clinic in Houston, and a noted educator, author, and historian. Dr. McGovern is a past member of AMWA Southwest and has been an AMWA Fellow since 1967.

Dr. Gastel followed the award presentation by detailing her long, varied, and prolific career as a medical educator and communicator in the United States and China. She first thanked the chapter for its welcoming professional embrace upon her arrival in Texas 17 years ago. She then traced her career back to its roots.

"In medical school, I was drawn to the nebulous-seeming field of medical communication," she said. "During lectures, I found myself analyzing what worked about them and what didn't, and during clinical rotations, the part I liked best was explaining things to patients and family members."

Deciding on a medical communication career during her final year of medical school, she began fleshing out her background by pursuing a master's

degree in public health. "While I did not face a defined early career path," she said, "opportunities fortunately fell into place for me—and have continued to do so."

A summer spent interning for the medical section of *Newsweek*—the summer when news of the first test-tube baby broke—was followed by positions as writer and editor at the National Institute on Aging and National Center for Health Care Technology, and then by a period of freelancing.

"Then, on a whim," Dr. Gastel remarked, "I applied for a soon-to-be-vacant position teaching science writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was offered the job. I had never envisioned an academic career and was stunned to get the offer, but took the job anyway." Her teaching at MIT led to her writing a book, *Presenting Science to the Public*, for a press headed by Robert A. Day, author of *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*.

In 1983, a surprising call arrived from a representative of one of China's leading medical schools, then known as Beijing Medical College. "It turned out that Robert Day and others," said Dr. Gastel, "had mentioned my name to the caller, who was seeking someone with a biomedical writing background to teach scientific writing to the college's faculty members in an effort to increase publication in Western journals."

Having dreamed of working overseas but never traveled outside North America, Dr. Gastel took the position in China and stayed for two years. Although this meant giving up her position at MIT, she said, "I had come to realize that positions and freelance opportunities were many within the field of biomedical communication, so I didn't worry too much."

While visiting the United States between her two years in China, Dr. Gastel had yet another lucky encounter, this time seated at a dinner across from the Dean of the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine. “The Dean essentially proceeded to interview with me throughout the dinner,” she remembered, “and then invited me back for a series of actual interviews.”

As a result, when her Chinese adventure ended, Dr. Gastel landed on her feet in California as Assistant Dean for Teaching at the UCSF medical school, with a “mandate to help create a culture where teaching was valued by attending and providing feedback on courses, being a sounding board for faculty, teaching how to teach, and trying to improve the system of student feedback on teaching.” This led in turn to her recruitment by the national AMWA organization to develop an AMWA course on teaching. It also led to her second book, *Teaching Science: A Guide for College and Professional School Instructors*.

Not wanting to remain an administrator throughout her career, however, Dr. Gastel told how in 1989 she grabbed at the opportunity to join Texas A&M University as a faculty member in science journalism. Since then, she has taught courses in science reporting and medical reporting, science editing, magazine writing, and related fields—

courses whose graduates she proudly noted have gone on to jobs at prestigious medical and scientific journals, newspapers, universities, and professional societies.

Meanwhile, over the last decade, Dr. Gastel has fostered a program in Asia to teach English-language biomedical editing and writing, in an effort to facilitate international publication and to prepare her counterparts in Asia to teach biomedical writing at their own institutions. She also published her third book, *Health Writer's Handbook*, now in its second edition. Recently Dr. Gastel has again collaborated with Robert Day: At his invitation, she coauthored the sixth edition of *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*, scheduled for release on March 30.

Dr. Gastel regularly teaches the AMWA Advanced Curriculum course *Teaching Techniques: Theory and Practice* and two Core Curriculum courses, *Medical Journalism: From Choosing a Topic Through Polishing the Piece* and *Journal Submissions Other Than Research Articles*. Nationally, she was made an AMWA Fellow in 1991, received AMWA's Golden Apple Award in 1993 for excellence as a workshop leader, and received AMWA's Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award in 1998 for her extensive contributions to the field of medical writing.

## AuthorAID: Closing the Publishing Gap

Researchers in developing countries often face obstacles when attempting to publish their research in influential journals. To help close this gap, the AuthorAID program, led by Phyllis Freeman and Anthony Robbins, co-editors of the *Journal of Public Health Policy*, seeks to connect talented scientific authors from resource-poor regions with volunteer editors and scientific mentors who can provide valuable assistance. AuthorAID is part of the Council of Science Editors Task Force on Science Journals, Poverty, and Human Development.

Drs. Freeman and Robbins will give an overview of the AuthorAID program during a visit to M. D. Anderson Cancer Center on March 7, 2006, at 11:00 a.m. The presentation is open to the public and will be held in ACB 1.2345. For further information, please contact Carrie Cameron in the Department of Scientific Publications at 713.563.9493 or [ccameron@mdanderson.org](mailto:ccameron@mdanderson.org).

## Austin—The Writer's Side of Life

The 2006 AMWA Southwest Medical Communications Conference will be held on Friday, May 19, in Austin, Texas. Before or after the conference, take time to explore some of Austin's literary places of note:

- Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/about/visitor>)
  - ☞ Now running, the exhibit “Technologies of Writing,” which examines the history and style of writing with reference to technological advances.
  - ☞ Home to 36 million literary manuscripts, one million rare books, five million photographs, and over 100,000 works of art.
  - ☞ Highlights include the Gutenberg Bible (c. 1455), the First Photograph (c. 1826), important paintings by Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, and major manuscript collections of James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Tennessee Williams.
- O. Henry Museum (<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/ohenry.htm>)
  - ☞ From 1893 to 1895, home to William Sidney Porter, better known as O. Henry, “master of the short story”
  - ☞ Now home to artifacts and memorabilia from Porter's time in Austin
  - ☞ A National Register Property and a National Literary Landmark of the City of Austin
- BookPeople (<http://www.bookpeople.com>)
  - ☞ Since 1970, “...a refuge for the contemplative, a place where it's still possible to find a good book and someone irreverent with whom to discuss it”
  - ☞ Public readings held almost daily

- Philosopher's Rock at Barton Springs (<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/bartonsprings.htm>)
  - ☞ In the 1950s, the regular meeting place of three “philosophers”—naturalist Roy Bedichek, humorist-folklorist J. Frank Dobie, and historian Walter Prescott Webb
  - ☞ These gatherings now memorialized in a bronze statue depicting three relaxed, potbellied old men in bathing trunks caught mid-colloquy on a warm summer's day beneath the pecan trees lining Barton Springs Pool
  - ☞ Bring a book, swimsuit, and towel and take a break on the banks of the pool.

### Plenary Session on “Writing and Health”

**James Pennebaker, PhD**  
Chair, Department of Psychology  
The University of Texas at Austin

**Friday, May 19, 2006**  
**Noon – 1:00 p.m.**

**Registration Deadline:**  
**April 28, 2006**

**For more information on the  
conference, please visit**  
**<http://www.amwasouthwest.org/Events/2006-austin/2006-austin.htm>**

### Great Offer for Students, Postdoctoral or Clinical Fellows to Attend the Austin Conference

Students, postdoctoral and clinical fellows are offered a special \$30 registration fee for the AMWA Southwest Medical Communications Conference in Austin, Texas, on Friday, May 19, 2006. In addition to conference registration (including plenary session and lunch), the \$30 will also get you enrolled in the interactive *Giving Effective Presentations* workshop. This great offer will end soon due to limited seats, so please fill out and mail your registration form today.

## AMWA Meeting in Dallas/Fort Worth

**Date:** March 25, 2006 (Saturday)

**Time:** 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Place:** La Madeleine's Restaurant  
5290 Belt Line Road  
Addison, Texas 75240

The first meeting of 2006 for AMWA Southwest members in the Dallas/Fort Worth area will be held on March 25 at La Madeleine's Restaurant, 5290 Belt Line Road, Addison. Our topic of discussion will be "Medical Writing and Editing in 2006: Resources, Organization, and Quality." We will focus on utilizing all resources available to medical writers and editors (old and new), proper organization of data for current and future reference

### SCIREX Offers Student Scholarships for Attending the Austin Conference

The AMWA Southwest Chapter gratefully acknowledges SCIREX Corporation for the generous offer of five student scholarships at \$60 each. Each student scholarship will cover conference registration (including the plenary session and lunch), enrollment in the noncredit *Giving Effective Presentations* workshop, and a small travel stipend. The scholarships will be awarded, on a first-come, first-served basis, to students who register for the AMWA Southwest Medical Communications Conference in Austin by May 5, 2006, and are enrolled in health sciences, writing, or journalism programs at institutions outside the greater Austin area in the AMWA Southwest region. Non-members are also welcome to apply for these scholarships.

SCIREX Corporation (<http://www.scirex.com>) is a global, full-service drug development company with offices and clinical research centers at many locations in Europe and the United States, including one locally in Austin.

(and tools), and tips for the production of high quality deliverables. There will also be a question/answer session for people interested in getting into medical writing at the end of the meeting and details on how to join AMWA and utilize all of AMWA's educational and professional resources. For further information, please contact Kersten Hammond at [kersten71@comcast.net](mailto:kersten71@comcast.net) or 469.667.1956.

### AMWA Southwest Chapter Newsletter

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