



Southwest
Chapter

AMWA Southwest Chapter Newsletter

July 2007

July Meeting: “So What's Not New? Reflections on 350 Years of Change in English Medical Writing Style”

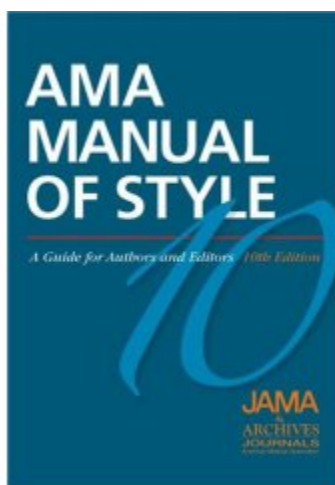
Speaker: Irving N. Rothman, PhD
Professor of English, University of Houston

Date: July 7, 2007 (Saturday)

Time: Noon – 2:00 pm

Place: Villa Capri on Clear Lake restaurant
Seabrook, Texas

Please join your fellow AMWA Southwest members and guests to hear Dr Irving Rothman, University of Houston professor of English. Dr Rothman, who specializes in not only the work of Daniel Defoe but also bibliography and methods of research, will bring his unique perspective to bear on the principles and context of the latest edition of *AMA Manual of Style*.



Dr Rothman is editor for the Institute for Space Systems Operations at the University of Houston, which brings together university engineers and scientists with researchers at NASA-Johnson Space Center. He has designed a course in "Literature and Technology" for the Cullen College of Engineering at the University of Houston and is currently teaching a summer course in Business and Professional Writing.

He is also chief textual editor for the Stoke Newington Daniel Defoe Edition published by the AMS Press of New York. The latest of his publications is Daniel Defoe's *Political History of the Devil*, a satire on human conduct. Dr Rothman has taught technical writing for ARCO, Gulf States Utilities, the South Texas Nuclear Project, and Brown and Root/Halliburton.

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To register for this event, RSVP by Tuesday, July 3, 2007 to Ruth SoRelle at rsorelle@amwasouthwest.org. Please include your first and last names, address, email address, and phone number. Also, indicate whether or not you are a member of AMWA. Please be prepared to pay \$25 (for members) or \$28 (for nonmembers) by cash or check (payable to AMWA Southwest) at the door on the day of the event, or mail your check to Ruth SoRelle at 5814 Warm Springs Road, Houston, TX 77035. Payment will be required for each email received.

This meeting returns AMWA Southwest to Villa Capri on Clear Lake at 3713 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586. (281.326.2373; www.villacapriunclearlake.com).

The Menu

Great Beginnings:

Garden Fresh Salad
w/Choice of Italian & Ranch dressings

Entrees: (Choice of One)

1. Chicken Piccata w/Pasta of the Day
2. Grilled Fish w/Roasted Potatoes al Forno
3. Spaghetti w/Meatballs
4. Rigatoni Primavera (Vegetarian)
5. Fried Jumbo Shrimp w/Fries

Included:

Bread & Butter
Iced tea & Coffee
Dessert of the Day

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The Eighth Annual Career Roundtables Meeting: Elections, Food, and Professional Development

Twenty-six AMWA Southwest members and guests gathered at Baba Yega Restaurant in downtown Houston on May 12, 2007, for the Eighth Annual Career Roundtables Meeting.

Before the roundtable discussions began, the 2007-2008 chapter officers were elected (see the officer list on page 2 of this newsletter). Highlights of the discussions are

What's New in the 10th Edition of the AMA Manual of Style?

Leader: Chris Wogan, MS, ELS, Department of Scientific Publications, The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

After noting the manual's similarity in overall structure to the 9th edition and its easier-to-navigate and -read subheading style, Ms Wogan highlighted the new elements. Section 1

(*Preparing an Article for Presentation*) now includes separate subsections on manuscript preparation, references, and visual display of data (ie, figures and tables), a greatly expanded chapter on ethical and legal considerations, and new information in the chapter on editorial assessment and processing. Section 2 (*Style*) retains a useful, clear discussion of grammar but includes a new subsection on diction (eg, homonyms, idioms, colloquialisms).

Section 3 (*Terminology*) fattens an already substantial nomenclature section with 4 new subsections (*Ophthalmology*, *Molecular Medicine*, *Psychiatry*, and *Radiology*) and lists of URLs for frequently updated nomenclature databases. Section 4 (*Measurement and Quantification*) describes different kinds of clinical trials and studies, including cost-effectiveness analyses and survey studies, and it

contains an expanded glossary of statistical terms. Section 5 (*Technical Information*) now includes a more emphatic chapter on typography aimed at improving readability on the screen and the printed page, as well as an expanded glossary of publishing terms.

Scattered throughout the revised manual are numerous mentions and discussions of issues related to electronic publishing including the citation of web references, presentation of URLs, online submission and peer review, and online-only publications. Ms Wogan revealed that an online version of the manual has been proposed but no release date has yet been set.

The Importance of Instructions for Authors: a Journal Editor's View

Leader: Beth Notzon, Scientific Publications Manager, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

Among other things, Ms Notzon discussed the benefits of following a journal's instructions for authors: it shows your competence (ie, your ability to follow instructions) and it highlights your interest in that particular journal. In contrast, submitting a manuscript that is obviously formatted for a different journal makes it obvious to the editors that your manuscript was previously rejected by another journal—this is clearly a message you do not want to send. Also, proper formatting makes your manuscript more navigable to reviewers, which may incline them to view your work favorably.

Ms Notzon then talked about dealing with gaps in a journal's instructions. She advised that, when important information is missing or when the instructions to authors do not coincide with the style of the articles that appear in the journal, it never hurts to clarify with the journal's editors. It can also be helpful to consult the International Committee of Medical

Journal Editors' *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals*.

How to Capture Website Visitors' Attention in Eight Seconds or Less: the First Law of Writing for the Web?

Leader: Lori Buffum, Website Writer and Editor, Texas Heart Institute

Lori Buffum led a lively discussion about effective website design. The first and most important rule is to capture attention or to answer a question quickly. The front page is a valuable piece of real estate; the information on it should be inviting, vibrant, and uncluttered. Those who visit the website are your customers, and most of them would like to get where they want to go in 3 or fewer clicks. With a good road map of the website, your customers should always know where they are and never run into dead ends.

Content should be current; if you are too busy to keep up with frequent updates, take the information down. Remember that people usually scan for information on the Web and do not really read webpages in detail. Instead of writing long paragraphs of unbroken text, try using lists, pictures, callout boxes, and visual enhancements judiciously to liven things up. What prose you do supply should be carefully and repeatedly edited. A well-crafted website will save your customers' time and establish your credibility of maintaining a website with impeccable content.

As a good reference for every web writer's library, Lori recommended Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, 2nd edition*.

The Business of Being a Freelance

Leader: Charles Bankhead, MA, Freelance Writer

Mr Bankhead, an experienced freelance writer, shared his thoughts and tips about running a successful freelance business. According to him, even if you are working from home, you should set a work-like schedule—that means no hanging around the house all day in your pajamas. Besides the self-discipline medical writers require for finishing their assignments, freelance writers need planning to manage their income and taxes (which, as self-employed individuals, they must report 4 times a year). For this, Mr Bankhead recommends using home book-keeping software to keep track of your income and expenses.

One common worry for freelance writers is health insurance. Mr Bankhead, who is covered by his working spouse's insurance, said that although private policies are expensive, you can write them off in your tax forms as a business expense.

Other topics covered during the discussion were whether to charge clients by the hour or by project, how to store clients work (digital versus printed copies), retirement plans, and liability insurance.

AMWA Southwest Member and Benefactor Dr McGovern Dies

On May 31, 2007, Houston physician and philanthropist John P. McGovern, MD, died at the age of 85. Dr McGovern was not only AMWA Southwest's member but also its greatest benefactor: his foundation provided the funds for the John P. McGovern Award Lectureship, our chapter's flagship award, which is granted annually to outstanding medical communicators from across the nation.

An allergist, Dr McGovern published dozens of books and articles on allergies and asthma. In Houston, he started the McGovern Allergy Clinic, one of the nation's first specialized allergy centers, in the 1950s and then went on to establish the Texas Allergy Research Foundation in the 1960s.

Dr McGovern's commitment to education in the sciences and medicine is apparent from his copious charitable efforts. In Houston areas, buildings and wings he financed include the John P. McGovern Building housing the Museum of Health and Medical Science, the John P. McGovern Historical Collections and Research Center at the Texas Medical Center Library, the John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, and the John P. McGovern Children's Zoo.

Dr McGovern was also one of the principal founders of the American Osler Society, named for turn-of-the-century Canadian physician William Osler, which honors important historical figures in medicine and supports research and education in medical history and humanism.

The Southwest Chapter is proud to have had Dr McGovern as a member, and we are grateful for his many years of support.

AMWA Southwest Chapter Newsletter

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