



THE OWL'S HOOT

OFFICERS:

President – Ronda Del Boccio
Vice President – Larry Wood
Secretary – Cindy McIntyre
Treasurer – Duke Pennell

We still have openings on the board!

Official Newsletter of
The Ozarks Writers League 501(c)(3)
ozarkswritersleague.com
ozarkwriters@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor: Margarite Stever

Are you interested in serving as president or secretary next year? Contact Ronda and let her know!

Mark your Calendar for the 2024 OWL Fall Writing Conference November 1st and 2nd in Branson West

The 2024 OWL Fall Conference will be held at the Best Western Branson Inn and Conference Center, 8514 State Highway 76, Branson West, MO! Call (417) 338-2141 and press 0 for the front desk.

A note from the president:

I'm finishing my fourth year as an OWL officer, the first two years as vice president and the past two as president.

OWL Fall 2024 Conference Information

We're going back to the Best Western Inn & Conference Center, where we met in April. They have comfortable beds, a pool with salt water instead of chlorine, and a restaurant on-site. Room rate is \$99.00 per night plus tax. Be sure to tell them you're with OWL to get the special rate!

We have all come along way in the 2020s.

We've lived through the pandemic and all the uncertainty it continues to bring into our lives. We have lived through a gigantic rise in food prices, global unrest, and numerous personal crises and challenges.

I've worked hard to keep OWL running and growing. The Happy OWLer Mixers over Zoom have been great fun. Soon, the organization will have a new president and other new board members and officers to guide the organization into the future.

If you feel you have something to offer OWL, please step up and share your skills. You'll learn a lot and make some great friends along the way.

It has been my honor to serve in these leadership roles. Even though I will not be an officer, I will still be part of this fantastic organization of creative people. Stay inspired. Stay creative. Stay curious.

Warmly,

Ronda Del Boccio, OWL 2023-24 President



OWL Fall 2024 Conference Information

Dates: Friday, November 1 – Saturday, November 2

Location: Branson Room of the Best Western Branson Inn and Conference Center in Branson West, Missouri

Hotel Check-in/Checkout:

Check-in 3 PM or after

Check-out by 11 AM

Special Thanks to:

OWL Board

Sound Guy: Jan Fields

Those who donate door prizes and bring treats to share

OWL Membership: It's only \$30/year & includes both live conferences. Plus, members only are permitted to sell your books at our meetings for FREE - NO BOOTH FEE.

Conference Registration: No registration. Just come.

Conference Fee: All conferences are FREE to OWL Members.

Nonmembers may attend for \$20 or just JOIN OWL for \$30.

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED - Book Tables: If you are a dues-paying OWL member, and you would like a book table, please contact Margarite Stever: email margarite95 "at" yahoo "dot" com. margarite95@yahoo.com. You may have half a 3x6 table. Space is limited.

OWL Hashtag: Our # for this conference to use on social is #Fall24OWL. Please use this on your social media posts.

Share Your PHOTOS with us for the web! We need YOU!

Please share your photos along with names of those shown to

webmaster "at" Ozarks Writers League "dot" com. webmaster@ozarkswritersleague.com

Want to have a web/SEO pro **critique your website** & help you make it better? Sign up for a 15-min session with David Corbly of OpenDoorCreations.com on Friday night or Saturday afternoon. Email Diana West 22 "at" Hotmail "dot" com to reserve your spot. dianawest22@hotmail.com.

Slots are 15 minutes. Diana will assign you a specific time and send you a short Google Form to add your website so David can have a look at it ahead of time.

Friday Fun – November 1st

Friday night you may NOT set up your book table. You may set up Saturday morning beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Dinner on your own but please be ready for our Friday night session at 6 PM! You won't want to miss it!

Website Critiques: Author website critique sessions with David Corbly are available. Sign up in advance by writing DianaWest22 "at" Hotmail "dot" com.



6 PM Tex Thompson: *The Seven Deadly First-Page Sins*

There's no one right way to begin your story – but there are plenty of wrong ones. In this class, we'll take you on a cautionary tour through the pits of page-one hell, complete with agent pet peeves, reader turn-offs, and "thanks but no thanks" editorial deal-breakers. Don't let your manuscript suffer in form-rejection torment: let us guide you through the slush-pile inferno and lead your story toward the light!



8 PM The OWLies Writing Contest Awards

Did you win? Did your friends win? Find out here! OWL sponsors give out over \$1,000 in prize money across all categories.

Saturday, November 2nd

Website Critiques: Author website critique sessions with David Corbly begin after lunch. Sign up in advance by writing DianaWest22 “at” Hotmail “dot” com.

CHECKOUT: Hotel check-out is 11 AM.

NO Coffee service – get coffee in your hotel room, at breakfast, or from the Keurig in the hallway, please.

Water: OWL will provide bottled water for a free-will offering.

Treats: There is a table for shareables. Attendees are welcome to bring snacks to share.

2025 Dues: You may pay dues or make donations Saturday. Many of us pay our dues for the coming year at conference, just so it’s done.

Agenda



8:30 AM Registration (not earlier)

9 AM Welcome, announcements, first door prize

9:15 Keynote Speaker Tex Thompson: Editing Like a Boss

10:15 AM Door prize, then BREAK. Check out of your hotel room if needed

10:30 AM Your Recipe for Website Success By David Corbly of Open Door Creations

11:25 AM Door prize, announcements

11:30 AM Lunch on your own. There are numerous options in the area.

1:15 PM Door Prize, then officer elections

1:30 PM Artificial Intelligence for Authors: By J. C. Fields.

2:30 PM BREAK, then door prize

2:40 PM Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Self-Publishing! By Duke Pennell.

3:30ish PM Closing Remarks and a Fond Farewell



9:15 Keynote Speaker Tex Thompson: *Editing Like a Boss*

At last! After all those hundreds of hours spent slaving away at the keyboard, your first draft is finally done. Now you can bask in the glory of your beautiful shiny...unpublishable mess. Never fear! This fast-and-furious revisionary rumble will fire you up to pummel your plot, pulverize your prose, and kill your darlings with bloodthirsty, red penthusiasm. No fear—no shame==no surrender!

10:15 AM Door prize, then BREAK. Check out of your hotel room if you have not already done so.

10:30 AM *Your Recipe for Website Success*

By David Corbly of Open Door Creations



There are dozens of things you need to do to create an author website that's pleasant for humans to navigate, but that also has the main ingredients search engines look for to decide how high to rank you in the zero sum game of search engine rankings. Spoiler alert: most author websites are never going to rank on the first screenful of search engine results unless people are looking specifically for you or the title of your work. But that doesn't mean you should just give up! We'll focus on the things that you can easily do yourself—both on your website and offsite—without having to hire a high-priced website professional.

Want to have a web/SEO pro critique your website & help you make it better? Sign up for a 15-min session with David Corbly of OpenDoorCreations.com on Friday night or Saturday afternoon. Email Diana West 22 “at” Hotmail “dot” com to reserve your spot. Slots are 15 minutes. Diana will assign you a specific time and send you a short Google Form to add your website so David can have a look at it ahead of time.



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OWL 2025 Officer Elections

Each year at the fall conference, OWL members elect new officers for the coming year. We are still building a list of candidates. We will send out a formal slate of officers recommended by our board (this year’s nominating committee) before the conference. Anyone who is a current 2024-dues-paid-member is allowed to nominate someone from the floor of the conference. If you would like to be part of this organization’s leadership please contact Ronda at OWLPres “at” OzarksWritersLeague “dot” com.

Currently we need a new president and secretary. We are also seeking people to serve the non-officer roles of: Adult Writing Contest Chair, Social media Chair, and Board Member at Large.



1:30 PM *Artificial Intelligence for Authors: Tools, Tactics, and Ethical Considerations* By J. C. Fields.

What IS Artificial Intelligence—really? JC Fields takes us on a deep dive into Artificial Intelligence, including hype VS reality, types of AI, useful tools for authors, and the challenges of ethically using these powerful tools.

2:30 PM BREAK, then door prize

2:40 PM *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Self-Publishing!* By Duke Pennell, author, editor, publisher, etc.

What does it take to self-publish your book? We'll go through all the steps from having an idea about a book to write and holding the finished product in your hands.



3:30ish PM Closing Remarks and a Fond Farewell

Emerge Magazine Submissions are OPEN



Emerge Magazine and OWL have teamed up to share each other's news so that more authors may know about both organizations. Emerge founder Charles Templeton is an OWL member, too! They run a few contests during the year and periodically have open submissions. Some of our members have had work featured in the magazine, and some have placed in Emerge contests.

Here is the latest news from Charles:

It's that time of year again! We are thrilled to announce that the submission period for eMerge is officially open, and we're eager to see your exceptional work. Submit at EMerge-Magazine.com.

Here's a quick overview of the new process:

On the first page, you'll be asked if you've submitted before. If you have, simply enter your name when prompted, and your profile (bio and photo) will appear. If you need to make changes, check the box to update your profile.

After that, you'll move through the submission formatting and guidelines pages—just follow the prompts.

Important: Please submit one entry at a time. If you upload multiple poems or stories in one file, we will only accept the first one, so be sure to submit each piece individually.

If you encounter any issues along the way, don't hesitate to reach out to us.

We can't wait to read your always-intriguing creations!

Warmest regards,

Charles Templeton, Executive Editor eMerge Literary Magazine

Writing Contest

Grades 7–12

ATTENTION YOUTH!

2024 Ozarks Writers League Youth Writing Contest

Walmart gift card prizes for top three in each category:

1st Place \$25 – 2nd Place \$15 – 3rd Place \$10

No entry fee!

1. **Fiction short story:** Any genre, any topic. Limit 2,000 words. Sponsor: Donna Pfannenstiel
2. **Non-fiction short story:** For example, a favorite holiday story. Sponsor: Margarite Stever
3. **Poetry:** Any form. 26-line limit. Sponsor: Cindy McIntyre

– Contest Rules –

You must be in grades 7–12 at the time you submit your entry.

Mail TWO copies of EACH entry in a large flat envelope postmarked by **December 1, 2024** to

Cindy McIntyre, Contest Chair

PO Box 356

Richland, MO 65556

- Only one entry per category. All entries must be UNPUBLISHED and the original work of the writer. (If your entry has appeared in a blog, website, or other electronic outlet, it IS considered published and cannot be entered.)
- Entries may be typed or hand-written. Use double-space for short stories and single-space for poetry. Use black ink on 8 ½" x 11" white paper.
 - DO NOT put your name on any part of the entry. Staple multiple pages together.
- Attach a 3"x5" index card with a paperclip to the top copy of each category entry with the number and name of the category, the title of your entry, and your name, address, phone, email, current grade, and school attending or home-schooled.

Winners will be announced by February 15, 2025

Good luck to all who enter!

For rules, writing contests, conferences, and membership information: OzarksWritersLeague.com





The Case of the Missing S

By Ronda Del Boccio

As an author who submits your work and/or enters contests, cultivating the power of paying attention is crucial. If you can't follow instructions or read a simple line of text, chances are that the guys at the other end will decide they'd rather deal with someone who's more on the ball.

I like to take the opportunity to help our members cultivate the skills you will need out in the big, bad world of submissions, because nobody's going to coddle you.

I'm mostly blind, and the funny thing is that I notice WAY more things than my sighted peers, leading me to be called The Blind Seer. Perhaps it's because I have to pay such close attention to my environment to function properly. And perhaps it's because I know the importance of detail when submitting work to a publication or contest.

I was the OWL adult writing contest chair for a few years, and plenty of people wrote in whining that they'd made a mistake and wanted to resubmit. I would refer them to the guidelines, wherein instructions were clearly stated. I'd get questions about entry formatting and again refer back to the published instructions. I'd say, "Whatever you need to know, it's in the rules. Please read and follow."

We've had people cry or get mad when their work was disqualified because they didn't follow formatting guidelines, as if this were somehow unfair.

Well...nothing is Times New Roman 12-pt except TNR 12-pt, right? If it doesn't match the criteria, don't expect a trophy.

And although I know this may have infuriated some of you, the fact is that if you send your work to a major contest or publication, they won't even bother replying if you ask a question about something you would know if you'd read the information on their site. They will EXPECT you to pay attention and follow instructions.

Submitting your work is not for the faint of heart!

I can't tell you how many times—except to say a lot—I've had someone say they couldn't get their entries or some other email into OWL. They protest that they sent it to the right place but it didn't go through.

Well, guess what? The root cause is always the same. Even without asking WHERE they sent the message, I know why it went rogue. When that happens, the sender didn't pay attention. When you have an email address right, your message goes through.

OWL has been around for 41 years, and the name of our organization is Ozarks Writers League. Ozarks, with an "s" at the end. Not Ozark like the town. If you can't remember, think of it this way. The Ozarks is our region. Ozark is a town in Missouri.

Part of your success as a published and/or contest-winning author is, of course, your skill. And part of it is paying attention to the important details that show you to be a reliable, observant contributor.

Best of success to you in all your creative endeavors!