Linking Arms

By Silvia Acevedo, Assistant Regional Advisor

Spring in Wisconsin is about as predictable as a reed in a storm. It’s snowing as I type. The flakes are fresh and fluffy, creating beautiful white mounds atop the green pops poking out of my flowerbed. I know this puffy powder won’t last long, though, nor will our winter hibernations. Spring is about renewal and growth, as are we.

As you look to shake off the winter doldrums, perhaps you’ll do as I do and look to conferences and get-togethers as a way to reconnect with fellow creators. There is so much value in plugging in with groups and attending events. Looking ahead to the great opportunities our chapter has planned, I thought I’d come up with a few reasons why I enjoy linking arms with creative friends.

**CULTURE**

Writers and illustrators have a special way of looking at the world that they express in wonderful ways. It’s fascinating to see how a writer gifts a picture book child with a fruit playmate or how an illustrator’s pastel palette convinces us that more than one holiday features elves. Besides the beauty of their stories, the fact that these creators are willing to share their knowledge and insights on craft makes the culture that much more welcoming.

**DIVERSITY**

Speaking of welcoming, I enjoy get-togethers for a chance to talk with creators outside my immediate circle and circumstances who nonetheless share the same creative spirit. Some of the creative types with whom I’ve swapped critiques can attest to how this city girl isn’t hip to the trappings and rhythm of country living, nor are they super savvy to city ways. Yet we’ve learned from each other. I believe we can all benefit from widening our net of friends.

And that brings me to my next point. Simply showing up is a great way to create friendships that may last a lifetime. These lifers (ha!) will help you along your way, are invested in your success, will drag you out of your journey’s lows, and will wildly celebrate the highs. We all need a team behind us, and it may come from this very group.

So I hope you’ll join me in dusting the snow off your shoulders and coming out to some of the big gatherings listed below. Information on each can be found on our [Event Calendar](#) along with details about smaller, free area get-togethers. Be sure to take a look and mark your calendars! >>
The Marvelous Midwest Conference
May 3-5, 2019, in Naperville, IL (sold out; waitlist spots available).

The Dish on Dialogue
presentation with Victoria Selvaggio,
Literary Agent/Partner of Storm Literary Agency. June 15, 2019, at the Pewaukee Public Library, Pewaukee, WI.

SCBWI LA Summer Conference
August 9-12, 2019, Los Angeles, CA. Registration opens soon.

Illustrator Workshop
September 14, 2019, at the Wauwatosa Public Library, Wauwatosa, WI.

Fall Retreat: Let’s Get Crafty
November 8-10, 2019, at the Siena Center, Racine, WI.

Hope to see you soon,

Silvia Acevedo
Assistant Regional Advisor,
SCBWI-Wisconsin

Call for Submissions

Authors & Illustrators: if you would like to be an article contributor for an upcoming issue, contact Sandra at nicholssandra5@gmail.com for more details.

Illustrators: if you would like to share your artwork in an upcoming issue, contact Leah at danzillustrator@gmail.com for more details.

Share your Events!
Send info on upcoming winter author/illustrator events taking place between December 2019 and March 2020. Contact Sandra at nicholssandra5@gmail.com.
It still does. Throughout my career, I’ve written and published eleven books and hundreds of articles and blog posts. Since 2007, I’ve worked as a writing coach and editor. Though I’ve learned a lot from each of these roles, it’s my work as an artist educator that has taught me the most.

Don’t wait until you’re ready. Start now.

In 2004, I began attending a church in Milwaukee’s inner city. During one of my first visits, I had an idea: I’d love to teach writing to the teens. I dismissed the thought with a slew of excuses: I’m too busy. It’s too hard. They wouldn’t be interested. But the vision persisted. And with it came the message: people need to hear their stories. I shared the dream with others, but the logistics seemed too challenging. A friend asked, “What can you do right now to make this happen?”

In the fall of 2006, I embarked on a writing journey with four young women from the church. We met once a week in the basement of the church. It was often chaotic and distracting, but we wrote. We named ourselves “Dream Keepers,” after a poem by Langston Hughes. Hughes believed that writers were the dream keepers of the community. We are!

Just a year after I started Dream Keepers, we moved from the church to the public library. Then a funny thing happened: boys showed up. They asked if they could write, too. We welcomed them. Since then, Dream Keepers has been held weekly at one or more public libraries in the Milwaukee area.

It can be tempting to postpone writing or submitting until we’ve done a bit more research, taken another class, or feel a little less stressed. Had I waited for the ideal circumstances, I doubt I would have ever started Dream Keepers. Don’t wait until you’re ready. Start now.

We need to hear your story.

In my work with Dream Keepers, I’ve noticed that the children are all too willing to copy my words or take a mentor text and recreate it. I’ve learned that this comes from their need for approval. They’re afraid of failing. They don’t want to disappoint me. What they often don’t realize is this: what I’d love most is to hear their stories. I want to read their sloppy, beautiful narratives.

I understand this urge to produce something that gets approval. As we watch other writers sell their work and get showered with accolades, it’s easy to feel jealous. I’m tempted to flip the creative process—how can I create something like that?

But nearly everything I’ve sold has emerged from my own unique point of view. As a writer, I need to do what I encourage the Dream Keepers to do: listen for my voice, tell my own story, and share it.

Connect to your passion.

When a reluctant writer attends Dream Keepers, I ask: what do you love to do? What are you curious about? I encourage the writer to create something on a topic that excites them. The boy who spews facts about a crocodile-eating snake writes and illustrates a frightening poem about them. Basketball, zombies, or kittens—when the young people create from their passion, they overcome their fear and write.
In *A Writer’s Notebook*, Ralph Fletcher tells readers to pay attention to their fierce wonderings and bottomless questions. He says, “It’s important to pay attention to what haunts you, what images or memories keep running around in your mind even when you try not to think about them.”

When I feel reluctant to write, it’s usually because I’m afraid. I worry that it won’t be good enough, that the work won’t sell, that I’m wasting my time. But when I follow my passion, the fear melts away. Because I am fueled by curiosity, I am able to write. I want to know what will happen next.

**Have fun!**

I hoped that Dream Keepers would give the young people tools to make sense of life. I wanted to offer a quiet space and writing education for students who wanted to write but might not have these opportunities in their schools. But watching the young people push, pull, and stretch their words like taffy, I remember another reason to write: playing with words can be fun.

In the midst of building a writing career, it’s easy to forget why we started. I wanted to be a writer because I loved stories. When I get caught up in worrying over whether or not something will sell, I try to remember the Dream Keepers playing with words. I remind myself: have fun. Play.

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*Rochelle Melander is a certified professional coach and the author of 11 books including Write-A-Thon: Write Your Book in 26 Days (And Live to Tell About It) and the forthcoming Level Up: Quests to Master Mindset, Overcome Procrastination, and Increase Productivity. Rochelle is the founder of Dream Keepers, a writing education program that supports young people in writing about their lives. ([https://dreamkeepersblog.blogspot.com/](https://dreamkeepersblog.blogspot.com/)) As the Write Now! Coach, Rochelle helps professionals create good books, overcome blocks, and connect with readers through social media. Get your free subscription to her Write Now! Tips Ezine at [https://writenowcoach.com/](https://writenowcoach.com/) For permission to reprint this article, contact Rochelle Melander at dancingturtle15@gmail.com.*
Now I’m not a baseball fan by any means. Each time I see a game on TV, I flick past it. I often wonder how anyone could sit through nine innings. Let’s face it, baseball games are lengthy, the game is slow moving, and the play lacks that steady fast paced action sports fans love.

Yet here I was, alone in my car and listening to Brewer’s baseball. Instead of tuning to a different radio station, I found myself tuning in to find out what would happen next. That’s when it struck me.

That day in the car with the game on the radio, I came to the realization that what kept me listening to the baseball game was the same structure component that keeps me engaged in a well written book: incremental units of desire/conflict – action/consequence.

Desire and conflict not only drive the overall story – think protagonist’s goal and opposition to that goal—but need to be there on the scene level, too. Without this, the reader won’t keep reading.

Take that baseball game for example. You have two teams battling it out just like the Jedi vs The Empire. The overall goal for your team or side is to win, or some might say defeat the opposition. And just like in Star Wars, baseball has characters, the players.

The game, just like the Star War’s books, is designed as a series of chapters – or in this case innings. And like a chapter in a book, each inning has its own desire and conflict. Your team is behind and needs to score in this inning or your team is ahead and needs to shut down the opposing team’s top hitter in this inning.

And just like a fractal design, each chapter is divided into incremental scenes individually containing desire and conflict. The batter squares off against the pitcher. The desire? Hit the ball. The conflict? The pitcher’s aim is to keep him from hitting the ball.

But desire and conflict won’t move things along. You have to pair this with action and consequence. The pitcher throws a fast ball. The batter connects or not. Batter after batter, incremental units of desire/conflict – action/consequence play out until the team up to bat racks up three outs – end of chapter. Wait, I meant inning.

It was the incremental units of desire and conflict paired with action and consequence that kept me listening to that Brewer’s game on the radio.

What is meant by incremental? How would this map out? Let’s examine a baseball inning and see how the desire/conflict paired with action/consequence units work incrementally to ramp up interest. >
Our protagonist: **Ryan Braun, batter**

**Desire:** to hit the ball  
**Conflict:** Reds’ pitcher DeSclafani’s skill  
**Action:** DeSclafani’s notorious sinker ball  
**Consequence:** Braun hits the ball  

Braun’s new desire: Get to first base  
**Conflict:** First baseman and outfielder trying to catch his ball and tag him out  
**Action:** Outfielder misses the ball, throws it too fast; first baseman too late  
**Consequence:** Braun makes it to first base  

Braun’s new desire: Score by reaching home plate  
**Conflict:** New batter’s skill; pitcher, shortstop, all the basemen, and outfielders trying to stop him  
**Action:** New batter hits the ball, and opposing team doesn’t catch it  
**Consequence:** Braun makes it home and scores

The incremental desire/conflict – action/consequence units begin again with a new situation, new players involved. A well written story works the same way.


This chapter opens with Harry realizing it is his cousin Dudley Dursley’s birthday, a day each year where Harry has to endure an afternoon with a mad old lady named Mrs. Figgs while his Aunt Petunia, Uncle Vernon, and Dudley enjoy a birthday outing.

Our protagonist: **Harry**

**His desire:** to get out of going to Mrs. Figgs’s house  
**Conflict:** The Dursley’s determination to exclude Harry  
**Action:** Mrs. Figgs’s calls and states she has broken her leg  
**Consequence:** Dursley’s reluctantly take Harry along to the zoo.

Harry’s new desire: To go unnoticed by the Dursley’s while at the zoo.  
**Conflict:** Harry’s unknown ability to communicate with snakes; Harry and the Dursleys visit the reptile house.  
**Action:** Dudley catches a snake talking to Harry and rushes over.  
**Consequence:** Dudley knocks Harry down so he can pound on the glass and have a better look at the snake, drawing Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon’s attention.

Harry’s new desire: To avoid lashing out at Dudley and be punished for it.  
**Conflict:** Harry’s own unrecognized magical abilities; his own temper.  
**Action:** Harry’s anger creates magic making the glass separating the snake from Dudley “disappear.” Chaos erupts.  
**Consequence:** Uncle Vernon blames Harry for what just happened and punishes him severely.

Notice how the stakes keep ratcheting up: he wants to go along; then once along, be indiscernible; once noticed, avoid losing his temper. But it is not just his desire that intensifies – the consequences or stakes increase: Harry is first ignored, then bullied, and finally severely punished.

It’s easy to think of stories having a beginning, middle, and end. What is difficult is keeping the reader engaged in the story, to keep them reading and wondering what will happen next.

When working on your story draft, keep the baseball lesson in mind. Create incremental units of desire/conflict – action/consequence within a chapter to hold the reader’s interest. Ratchet up the stakes. Do this, and you will keep the reader tuned in to your story.

For permission to reprint this article, contact Sandra Nichols at nicholssandra5@gmail.com.
I published my first children’s picture book, *Mama, How Does The Wind Start To Blow?* in 2014. Since then I have published two more, *Papa, Why Does The Sun Shine?* and *Who Will Be My Friend?* I absolutely love the illustration part of putting a book together. I’m currently working on book 4 and 5. I’m busy, but I wouldn’t have it any other way! As an illustrator I’m still learning, but here are a few tips I’ve learned along the way:

**Design Classes:**
If you want to illustrate your manuscript it’s important to take some drawing, and/or design classes. Find an art style that fits you. Take time to play and create.

**Do Research:**
Go to libraries and book stores. Read, read, read! Look to see who publishes books that look like the book(s) you want to publish. Get to know your targeted audience and the industry.

**Be Professional:**
Find other authors and illustrators to collaborate with. “Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators” is a great place to start. Read blogs, join a critique group, sign up for webinars, write every day, and illustrate every day.

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**Find Inspiration:**
I usually create a mood board of images that inspire me when I first start working on a book. My mood board make me smile and it’s compiled of pictures of my family and work from my favorite illustrators. My inspiration usually come from real life events like; gardening, friends, family, nature and vacations (the list is endless). Also, I sometimes go on Pinterest, and/or Instagram. Where do you get inspiration to create something new?

**Manuscript:**
Children’s picture books are under 1,000 words, better yet under 500 words. Better yet, under 500 words. Once your manuscript is clean, edited, and set to go, it’s time to start illustrating.

**Illustrations:**
Your pictures should always support the words on that page. Remember the illustrations are just as important as the words in a picture book. Show different perspectives, also show movement, the time of day, details on where the story takes place.
**Dummy Sketch:**
The length of most children's picture books is 32 pages. The dummy sketch is just a quick way to start playing with your manuscript and illustrations. These 2” x 2” pictures are laid out on one page so you can see the whole book at once. This is the time to have fun and create.

![Dummy Sketch](image)

**Size of Book:**
Books can be any size. Taller books are called portrait books, longer books are called landscape books or you can choose a square book.

**Page Lay-Out:**
Looking at your dummy sketch, start making illustrations the size of your book. If you have any pages that bleed (meaning the color goes off the edge of the page) you will need to add another $\frac{1}{8}$” to the top, bottom and outside edges.

**Gutter:**
The gutter is the center of your book. When looking at your page lay-out it's important to think about the gutter of the book. You shouldn’t have any words or place any important illustrations $\frac{3}{8}$” from the gutter on either side.

**Font:**
Know where the text will be placed on each page, so you can illustrate around it. Decide on font type, size, color, as well as making it bold, italic and/or underlined. Keep in mind if the background or page has color or too busy, the text might be hard to see.

**Cover:**
The cover sells the book. Most covers are read from a distance so keep it simple. Most of the time readers only see the spine of your book on the library shelf or in a book store, so it’s also important to think about the spine and how you place text and color.

**Be Persistent:**
Don’t give up! This is a long road. There is a lot to know and do. Make the time to work on your craft.

**Other decisions you will need to make:**
- **End sheets:** Do you want art work on your end sheets or a solid color?
- **Page Numbers:** Do you want page numbers in your book?
- **Front matter:** Front matter can consist of dedication page, title page, copyright, ISBN information, publisher’s information, author/illustrator website, maybe even a list of the books you have previously published and more...
- **Back matter:** Back matter usually informs the reader about some aspect of the book. Does your book require back matter? If yes, what is it and how many pages will it take?

The process of writing and illustrating can be different for everyone. Depending if you self-publish or have your book traditionally published. What I have found is there are many ways to publish a book. You will need to put together the sequence of events that work for you.

I have found that the more fun you have, the more success you will find.

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*If you want to learn more about Jeanne, contact her with questions at hello@mrsjeanne.com, and/or follow her on Instagram/Facebook.*

![Instagram](image)

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Mark Your Calendars!
Upcoming Events

Author Readings & Gatherings

May 11, 2019 | 11:00 am
Author Visit: Sheri Mabry Bestor
Boswell Books, 2559 N Downer Avenue, Milwaukee, WI
Grafton children's book author Sheri Mabry Bestor visits Boswell for a special Saturday morning storytime with her new book *Soar High, Dragonfly* that explores the fascinating life cycle of dragonflies.

Bestor, author of *Good Trick, Walking Stick*, returns to the insect world to follow the life cycle of a green darner dragonfly, told simultaneously as a narrative and a collection of scientific facts, from a mother dragonfly laying eggs, to fertilizing its own eggs before leaving to “find warmer days” elsewhere.

Dragonflies are some the world's most beautiful and interesting insects, which children can find right in their backyards. With a simple story and colorful illustrations, Bestor's scientific look at the dragonfly will captivate little entomologists.

May 13, 2019 | 6:30 pm
Author Visit: Daniel Jose Older
Boswell Books, 2559 N Downer Avenue, Milwaukee, WI
A YA Boswell! event with Daniel José Older, author of *Freedom Fire*, the second book in the *Dactyl Hill Squad* (for ages 9 and up), as well as *The Shadowshaper Cypher* series (ages 12 and up).

May 14, 2019 | 4:00 pm
Author Visit: Pseudonymous Bosch
Boswell Books, 2559 N Downer Avenue, Milwaukee, WI
Boswell hosts an afternoon event with the infamously anonymous author of *The Name of This Book is Secret* and *The Unbelievable Oliver and the Four Jokers*, Pseudonymous Bosch. His ridiculously mischievous writing is described by LA Weekly as, “like Lemony Snicket with a little Monty Python,” whose latest is a funny chapter-book mystery about a third-grade magician and the wisecracking rabbit who is the secret brains behind his act. Perfect for adults and kids 7 and up.

Oliver dreams of being a magician, even though he has terrible stage fright. And now, his friends have gotten him invited to a classmate’s birthday party as the paid entertainment! Desperate for help, he visits The Great Zoocheeni’s Magic Emporium, but comes away with nothing more than a moth-eaten top hat.

Oliver is in for a lucky surprise. Inside that top hat hides a wisecracking rabbit who agrees to help. But at the party, Oliver is accused of robbery! He must solve the mystery of the missing robo-cat to clear his name before he can amaze the crowd with a grand finale.

Pseudonymous Bosch is author of the New York Times bestselling Secret series and the Bad books such as Bad Magic. He is definitely not the alter ego of Raphael Simon, a totally unrelated author.

Workshops & Retreats

May 18, 2019 | 1:00 – 3:00 pm
Essentials of World Building
Neighborhood House Community Center
29 S. Mills Street, Madison, WI
Authors can get pretty excited about the invented worlds of their stories. But that excitement sometimes translates to excessive description and digression. In this workshop led by instructor Timothy Storm, we’ll examine how to create the world and history without stalling the story. Leave with practical tips on incorporating back-story, setting, and exposition.

More info: https://continuingstudies.wisc.edu/classes/essentials-of-writing-world-building/

May 19-25
Novel-in-Progress BookCamp & Writing Retreat
Cedar Valley Retreat Center and Spa near West Bend, WI
Held at the beautiful Cedar Valley Retreat Center (West Bend, Wisconsin). The week-long intensive program is sponsored in part by the Chicago Writers Association and the Off Campus Writers’ Workshop (OCWW) serving the greater metropolitan Chicago area.

More info: https://www.novelbookcamp.com/

May 19, 2019 | 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
SCBWI-WI NE Area, Munch & Mingle
330 Main Avenue Luna Cafe, DePere WI
Join us on Sunday, May 19 from 3-5 at Luna Cafe in DePere to “Munch and Mingle”. Enjoy spending time with other SCWBI-WI NE members to check in after the conference and spend some time brainstorming new ideas.

More info: https://wisconsin.scbwi.org/events/scbwi-wi-ne-area-munch-and-mingle/

May 20, 2019 | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
SCBWI-WI SE Area Event: Endings
Muskego Public Library, S73 W16663 W. Janesville Road
Muskego WI
Endings. It seems we’re always talking about the beginnings. But there’s more to your stories. Join us as Jane Kelly discusses: Last Lines; Cliff Hangers; Page Turns (for both novels and Picture Books); Chapter Endings. See you at the Muskego Library!

More info: https://wisconsin.scbwi.org/events/endings/
June 15, 2019 | 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
The Dish On Dialogue with Victoria Selvaggio
210 Main Street, Pewaukee Public Library, Pewaukee WI
As an important element within your story, dialogue shows characters in vulnerable ways; it expands on and reveals your plot, always moving it forward; and it adds the authenticity needed for readers to feel that compelling urge to join the journey. But, to be effective, dialogue doesn’t work alone. Rather, dialogue, teamed with the narrative voice and other story essentials, creates balance, resulting in much more than s/he said. This presentation, with writing exercises, will cover the essentials for crafting realistic dialogue.

More info: https://wisconsin.scbwi.org/events/the-dish-on-dialogue-with-victoria-selvaggio/

June 17-21, 2019 | 9:30 am – 12:30 pm each day
The 21st Write by the Lake
Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St, Madison, WI
Overlooking Lake Mendota, enjoy 5 or 3 days of professional instruction for writers of all levels. Taught by leading educators and writers from UW-Madison and across the country.
2 sections at 2:00-5:00 pm.

More info: https://continuingstudies.wisc.edu/write-by-the-lake/

June 17 - 21, 2019
Fantasy Art Workshop’s Illustration Intensive
Alverno College, 3400 South 43rd Street Milwaukee, WI
Aspiring and professional illustrators will dive deep in this five-day, hands-on workshop led by award-winning faculty in the fields of fantasy gaming, video games, editorial, conceptual art, and children’s books. Hurry! Deadline for signup is May 13.


July 16, 2019 | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
SCBWI-WI SE Area Event: Creating Compelling Characters
MuskegO Public Library, 573 W16663 W. Janesville Road, Muskego WI
Join us at the Muskego Library to hear Silvia Acevedo’s presentation on Creating Compelling Characters. Silvia is the author of the GOD AWFUL series of Young Adult books. Her latest book, GOD AWFUL REBEL will be out by the time of this event. July 16th is World Snake Day, but Silvia has graciously agreed to NOT bring any with her.

More info: https://wisconsin.scbwi.org/events/creating-compelling-characters/

September 10, 2019 | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
SCBWI-WI SE Area Event: Critiques: How to Give and Get One
Muskego Public Library, 573 W16663 W. Janesville Road, Muskego WI
Rochelle Y. Melander, author & writing coach, and Jane Kelley, author, will present a workshop on How to Give a Critique, as well as How to Receive One.
Role play could be involved, as well as attendees presenting their own work for critique from the group. Come join us as we learn together.

More info: https://wisconsin.scbwi.org/events/critiques-how-to-give-and-get-one/

September 14, 2019 | 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Illustrator Workshop
Wauwatosa Public Library, 7635 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa WI
This workshop will take place at the Wauwatosa Library Saturday, September 14th from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. More details to come—stay tuned!

More info: https://wisconsin.scbwi.org/events/illustrator-workshop/

October 11-13, 2019
Sheboygan Children’s Book Festival
Sheboygan, WI
The 2019 Festival Theme is “Out of this World.” 2019 is the 10th anniversary of SCTBF. Come celebrate with us.

CALL FOR PRESENTERS
Authors/illustrators or their publishers may submit proposals to be part of School Visit Friday on October 11, and/or to be part of the public Festival on Saturday, October 12 and/or Sunday, October 13, 2019.
Presenters may apply for the children’s book festival, the teen book festival, or both.

More info: https://www.sheboyganchildrensbookfestival.org/

November 8-10, 2019
3:00 pm arrival / 1:00 pm wrap-up
SCBWI-WI Fall Retreat: Let’s Get Crafty!
Siena Center, 1900, 5635 Erie Street, Racine WI
Save the Date! This workshop retreat will have 60 slots available and feature two editors and two authors on faculty. We’ll have two tracks—Picture Books and Mid Grade/Young Adult. Registration will open in September.

More info: https://wisconsin.scbwi.org/events/scbwi-wi-fall-retreat-lets-get-crafty/