



SCBWI Montana



Winter Newsletter • February 2021

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Updates and Regional Events

Precious McKenzie, Regional Advisor

SCBWI Montana has a couple of great events planned for this spring!



*Miriam Altshuler ~
DeFiore & Company Agency*

On March 10, 2021, join literary agent Miriam Altshuler and your regional team for a conversation about what agents do for writers and how to go about finding an agent.

Miriam is part of the DeFiore & Company Agency. To learn more about

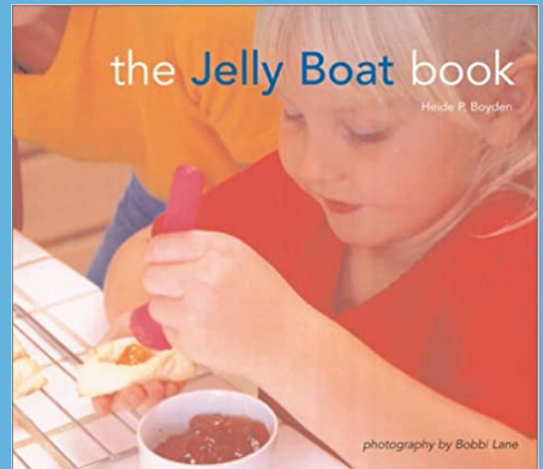
Miriam, visit <https://www.defliterary.com/agent/miriam-altshuler/>.

Please note that this is a free event, open only to current SCBWI Montana members. If you would like to register for this Zoom event, email montana-ra@scbwi.org to sign up.

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Read our interview with Heide Boyden author of the Jelly Boat book pg 5





Updates and Regional Events continued from page 2

On April 17th and 18th 2021, SCBWI Montana is hosting a virtual conference. Our theme this year is “Bloom” in hopes that your creative ideas will sprout and bloom.

We have a terrific line-up planned for the weekend, to include:

- keynote addresses given by SCBWI Montana’s very own Constance Van Hoven and Dorothy Patent.
- sessions on writing nonfiction with Sarah Albee.
- writing rollicking read-alouds with picture book author Tammi Sauer.
- building digital portfolios from Candlewick art director Maria Middleton.
- panel discussion on young adult literature with writers Beth Ann Bauman, Steven Dos Santos, and Stacie Ramey.

All attendees will have access to the recorded sessions for thirty days after the conference. SCBWI Member Price \$45.

To register, visit our webpage <https://montana.scbwi.org/events/bloom-scbwi-montanas-virtual-spring-writing-conference/>

As part of this conference, we have a *small* number of written critiques available. The cost is \$40 and you will need to have your manuscript ready for critique by April 30. Minju Chang, an agent with Bookstop Literary and Tammi Sauer are performing the critiques. To reserve a spot, email montana-ra@scbwi.org.

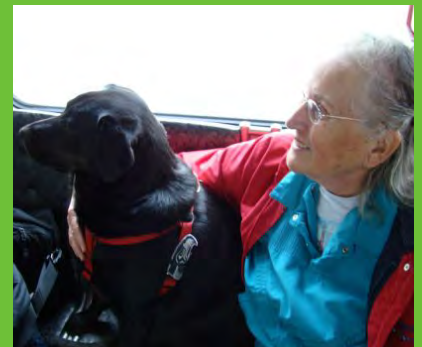
I hope you all can join us virtually for this spring conference!

Don’t you love the beautiful conference banner designed by SCBWI Montana member Jeanne Bowman?!?!

More details on page 10



*Constance Van Hoven
Bloom Keynote Speaker*



*Dorothy Patent
Bloom Keynote Speaker*



*Jeanne Bowman ~
Bloom Promo Graphic Artist*

A Year From Now

By Tiffany Spire, Newsletter Coordinator

Since the start of the new year, I've heard many people in the kid lit world say their goal is to complete more book projects. If you have a similar goal, you may want to try some of the techniques suggested by Chris Fox in his book [5000 Words Per Hour: Write Faster, Write Smarter](#). Many of his suggestions could apply to illustrators as well.

Fox's book is a quick read with a lot of humor and no fluff. The author gets straight to the point sharing his methods for producing more work. His suggestions are realistic and take into account our natural tendencies. While some of his suggestions are not new, he ties them together in a cohesive manner. He provides succinct exercises that are simple enough to complete immediately.

- So how do we creatives get more accomplished?
- How do we write enough words to complete that novel this year?
- How do we find more time to add to our body of work?

It's less about finding more time and more about being efficient with the time we have.

Fox addresses this in his very first chapter. He claims that micro-sprints are one of the most vital tools you can have in your creative toolbox for significantly adding to your body of work. Surely, anyone can find five to ten minutes each day to write (or illustrate).

In order for a micro-sprint to be productive, you have to already know something about that scene you want to work on. Fox addresses this in his plea for "pansters" (including himself)* to do at least a little bit of plotting. He provides a very basic exercise to help.

*panster: someone who writes by the seat of their pants - the opposite of a plotter

The author also presents some motivating math for writers. I'll paraphrase. If you can type 50 words per minute, then after a ten minute sprint you've theoretically produced 500 words. Two such sprints in one day give you a thousand new words for your manuscript. One thousand new words each day for thirty days gives you 30,000 additional words by the end of the month. (If you can't type that fast, you might like his section about using voice dictation.) Imagine the amount of work you could accomplish with a full sprint.

But how do you stick with these creative sprints for 30 days (and longer)? The author's answer is to track your work. He points out how most of us are motivated when we see progress. You can't see progress if you don't track it. He provides a spreadsheet you can download. Or you can make your own with the targets he suggests.

I can't speak from experience, but I'm guessing there are ways illustrators could track their creative output as well.

Fox ends his book with a chapter on mindset. Among other things, he suggests you visualize what you want your life to look like at the end of this year.

What do you want to have achieved?

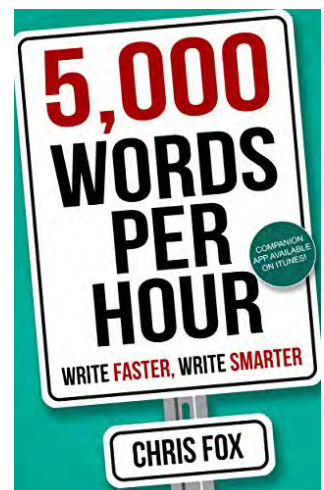
What realistic steps can you take toward that end?

It got me digging deep and making lists.

What about you?

Where do you see yourself in a year?

[5,000 WORDS PER HOUR: WRITE FASTER, WRITE SMARTER](#)





AUTHOR INTERVIEW: Heide Boyden
by Joann Howeth, Assistant Regional Advisor

For this newsletter, I had the opportunity to visit with Heide Boyden, author of the picture book *The Jelly Boat Book*.

Tell us a little about your book.

I am what they call in the music business, a one-hit wonder. My picture book *The Jelly Boat Book* was published in 2001 by All About Kids Publishing, a boutique publishing house in the San Francisco Bay area. It was written by me and photographed by a photographer friend. The models were my son and niece. It's about baking on a rainy day, a special treat called Jelly Boats, a family recipe that has been passed down three generations. It's all about "roll, roll, roll the dough!"

After that publication, life intervened. Raising teenagers, financial concerns, and caring for aging parents left me little time to submit and promote my work, BUT...I kept on writing. I still "keep on writing."

Let's talk about your varied and very interesting writing career:

I have almost always been a writer in one form or another. I was first published in *Insight Magazine* when I was just out of college. I received a Bachelor of Arts degree from UW-Milwaukee in Mass Communications. Following an internship with Viacom Cable, I went on to write ad copy which led me to try a career in film making in Los Angeles.

I didn't exactly make any movies, but I did co-own a production company where I wrote, produced, and directed commercials, corporate training and marketing videos, news promotions, travelogues, and educational films. I even won an Emmy.

When my children were young, I focused on freelance writing that I could do from home, and no one would know I was under-slept and working in my pajamas—it's a lot like today.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: Heide Boyden **continued from page 5**

I have also written and published essays, articles, poetry, and short stories for both the children's and adult markets. I have worked as a ghostwriter and editor, completing several manuscripts (picture books, middle grade and adult) for clients. Currently, I [blog](#) reflecting on my life (including my childhood) and insights gained. It's called "[writer.wonderer.wanderer.](#)"

You've won a number of awards including a Promising Young Journalist award from *Insight Magazine* and an honorable mention for a picture book from the SCBWI. What can you tell us about these?

I won the journalistic award right out of college. It's a story about my high school English teacher, who literally shaped my life. I came from a very dysfunctional family and this teacher taught me the beauty of an escape into words. I became a voracious reader and a writer with her mentorship.

The SCBWI-Los Angeles award was for another picture book manuscript called *Ma's Busy Bath*. I've blown the dust off this one, revised it to make the child not the mother the lead character, and am actively submitting it.

How long have you been a member of SCBWI?

I have been a member of SCBWI since 1998. It has been an invaluable resource and a source of connection. I love this organization.

Do you think your affiliation helped you in any particular way with your writing career – especially getting published, finding an agent?

SCBWI was essential in learning genre, how to format manuscripts for the children's/middle grade/young adult markets, and how to approach publishers and agents. When I started writing *The Jelly Boat Book*, I didn't even know there was such a thing as a picture book. SCBWI literature, newsletters, contests, and conferences turned me into an author.

SCBWI provided (and still does) a like-minded community in which to grow, lament, and share. I also found, through SCBWI, one of the best writing critique groups ever. I was a member of the same six-person writing group for over ten years, until I moved to Montana.

What is the most rewarding aspect of writing children's lit for you?

Writing for children fuels me. It's what I do. Although I have not been published in a long while, I write. I have written over ten picture book manuscripts, two middle grade novels, two young adult novels and one crossover novel based on growing up in a dysfunctional, alcoholic home. My job now, is to get active in submitting my work, finding an agent, and developing my platform. It's not what I like to do. I like creating characters, tension, and drama! But the marketing of myself as a writer is just as crucial.

Do you have a current Work-In-Progress?

Yes! I am polishing a young adult novel where a small-town girl has to confront the ultimate evil that is taking over—the devil. It's rich in symbolism, metaphor, and lore. I love creating this kind of world.

Are we going to see another children's book from you sometime soon?

I hope so. I just need to do that marketing bit!

Do you have a typical writing day?

I never have any kind of typical day, and I like it that way. However, I do like to write first thing in the morning, before chores intervene. I am also very goal-oriented, so I do set weekly targets:

- This week I am going to revise all chapters from Character X's point-of-view.
- This week I will query two agents.
- This week I will write chapter five.

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AUTHOR INTERVIEW: Heide Boyden **continued from page 6**

What is your favorite part of a new project?

I love discovering the hook, the high concept, the idea you can pitch in one sentence.

- My book is about a small-town girl who has to fight the devil.
- My book is about a boy in foster care who unearths three dilapidated garden statues, that all come to life and help him find his mother.

You call yourself a storyteller and after reading your blogs (which are fun and completely charming) I agree. You have a magical way with words, counterbalancing playfulness with eloquence and insight.

It seems that you write across the board, do you have a favorite genre?

I wish I could say I write picture books, or I write memoir, or I'm a children's book author, but I cannot. I write what moves me. I write what my heart wants to say. It's messy. It doesn't fit in a pigeonhole, but it makes me happy.

Are you currently freelancing?

I stopped freelancing 2 years ago. Since then, I have been lucky to work primarily on my own writing, with a few tiny gigs here and there.

You mention in one of your blogs that you grew up in the midwest. Where was that? Tell us a little bit about your childhood.

I grew up in northern Wisconsin, in a small resort town. It was full of natural beauty, like Montana, and nature was my refuge. I was the oldest of five and our parents were both alcoholics. This made much of my childhood dysfunctional...but, my mother was kind and creative, albeit unstable, and she taught me to be resourceful. She had only a second-grade education, but she wrote poetry, painted, and made the most beautiful wildflower arrangements ever.

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My childhood informed me that life is not perfect. That for many of us, life has both a dark and a light side. That has influenced almost all of my writing.

I know you're married and have grown children and that you're fairly new to Montana. Where were you living before moving here?

I grew up, went to college, and started my professional writing life in Wisconsin. But then... the wanderlust hit, and I moved, in my early twenties, to California with \$500 in savings, my clothing, memorabilia, a car payment, and student loans. It was sink or swim. I lived in Hollywood and eventually ended up, after marriage, in another resort town called Ojai. It's beautiful, creative, and warm there.

What prompted your move to Montana?

We'd had a cabin in Emigrant since the children were tiny. We came to Montana nearly every summer. When the kids were grown and our big Mediterranean house in California felt empty, we decided to give living in Montana a test run for one year. We've been here for four now. I will admit, I'm still not a fan of cold winters, but I am 100% onboard for all the other seasons. It's beautiful and the people are so forthright and friendly. We love it.

Is there one thing in particular that you like about Montana?

The natural beauty. Nature has always been one of my muses.

Tell us about some of your favorite hobbies:

Well, I was going to automatically answer "writing," but that is my vocation. I love crocheting, reading, hiking, gardening, traveling, cooking, learning, yoga, and, believe it or not, housekeeping. I find household chores relaxing and therapeutic ... except for the bathroom. Cleaning the bathroom is not therapeutic.

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AUTHOR INTERVIEW: Heide Boyden
continued from page 8

Just a couple more *favorites*:

Season?

Summer. I love all the sensory pleasures of summer: warm, golden sun, freshly cut grass, petunias in a riot of color, bird song, watermelon, light beach reads, the hammock, cold rushing river water ... I could gush on and on.

Movie?

This is a hard one, especially after all the years I spent working in and around Hollywood. If I had to pick one to watch over and over again—*Under the Tuscan Sun* because it has writing, travel, home refurbishing, gardening, and beauty all in one film. Oh, and I am a romantic at heart.

Beverage?

Champagne! Why not?

Harry Potter character?

Hermione, I mean her parents were dentists and she still became one of the most accomplished, ethical witches in England.

Thanks so much, Heide, for visiting with me. It's been so much fun!

Without a doubt, you must check out Heide's website. It's utterly delightful and leaves you with a smile.

<https://heideboyden.com>



**SCBWI Montana
has an Instagram page!**



**Follow us
@scbwimontana**

Illustrators Corner

By Erika Wilson, Illustrator Coordinator

Hello, My Fellow Creatives!

I hope everyone's 2021 is off to a fantastic start! I am looking forward to our "Bloom" Virtual Convention in March where we will get the opportunity to learn from Maria T. Middleton, Art Director from Candlewick Press. She will be speaking to us about building digital portfolios, and also diving into the concept of "style." I can't wait to learn with all of you!

Also, it is with a heavy heart that I share with you that I will not be renewing my term as Montana's Illustrator Coordinator in April, due to some unforeseen circumstances and some health struggles I have been dealing with in my family.

I have really loved helping all of you with your artwork and your illustration journeys over the past few years. It has been so much fun watching you all progress and "Bloom!" We have such wonderful talent in our state, and it has been a huge honor to get to work with you all!

I am starting to look for my replacement, so if you have any interest in applying for this fun volunteer position, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions! It is a great opportunity to advance your illustration career and meet some exceptional peers in our kid lit community.



Please email me at montana-ic@scbwi.org with any questions, or if you are interested in being the new MT IC!

Happy Creating!





Bloom Conference Schedule

April 17th and 18th 2021



Saturday, April 17, 2021

9am-10:15am MST Welcome and Opening Keynote Address with Constance Van Hoven on **“Writing for Children and the Power of Perseverance & Community.”**

You can find Constance online at www.constancevanhoven.com.

11am-12:30 MST Illustrator Session with Maria Middleton of Candlewick Press on **“Digital Portfolio Building.”** You can find her at mariamiddleton.com and follow her on Instagram and Twitter @mariatmiddleton

1:00pm-2:30pm MST Session: **“Ten Tips to Creating an Informational Book Editors Can’t Resist”** with Sarah Albee.

4:00-5:30pm MST Session: **“Pitch Perfect: How to Craft a Spectacular NF Book Proposal”** with Sarah Albee.

Learn more about Sarah at <https://www.sarahalbeebooks.com/>.

Sunday, April 18, 2021

8:00am-9:15am MST Session with Tammi Sauer and **“Writing the Rollicking Read Aloud”** For additional information, please visit www.tammisauer.com.

10:00am-11:30am MST Panel Discussion on **“Writing YA: The Joys and Challenges”** with young adult authors Beth Ann Bauman, Stacie Ramey, and Steven Dos Santos

To learn more about Beth’s books, visit <https://bethannbauman.com/>

Visit Stacie Ramey at <https://stacierameybooks.com/>

To learn more about Steven’s paranormal and dystopian books, visit <http://stevendossantos.com/>.

1:30-2:30 MST SCBWI Montana Closing Keynote Address with Dorothy Hinshaw Patent Follow Dorothy on Twitter at #dogwriterdoro Visit her website <https://dorothyhinshawpatent.com>.



Thanks for being part of
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