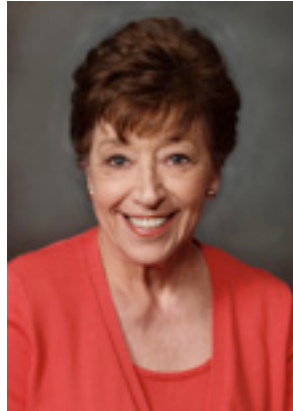


Spotlight: *We're pleased to present....*

Bobbi Linkemer



Topic: "Forget About Fame: Confessions of a Ghost Writer"

**SLWG LECTURE SERIES: Thursday, May 17, 2007
7 to 8 PM
at Barnes & Noble, 8871 Ladue Road, Ladue 63124**

Get [map and directions](#). For lecture details, visit our [Lectures](#) page.
All are welcome. This event is FREE.

Please [register in advance](#).
(not required, but it helps us prepare for you!)

BOBBI LINKEMER is a ghostwriter, editor, and the author of 12 books under her own name. She is the nonfiction editor for *Scribe & Quill*, an award-winning Internet e-zine. Her articles on all aspects of writing appear on more than 25 article sites on the Web. Bobbi has been a professional writer for 40 years, a magazine editor and journalist, and a book-writing teacher. Her clients range from *Fortune* 100 companies to entrepreneurs who want to write books in order to enhance their credibility and build their businesses.

Check out our interview with Bobbi Linkemer:

SLWG: Where are you from originally?

[BL]: New York, the first 10 years, then Chicago

SLWG: How has your environment/upbringing colored your writing?

[BL]: I began life as an artist, and my parents supported me completely in whatever I did. Neither of my parents went to college, but my mother had an amazing vocabulary and an instinctive knowledge of grammar. She corrected my English and my writing, which drove me crazy but certainly paid off. My father was a storyteller who wove fantastic, though slightly fractured, fairy tales in which all of the characters (Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel, and the rest of the crowd) visited each other's stories. I think my writing is a blend of my mother's pragmatism and my father's imagination.

SLWG: When and why did you begin writing?

[BL]: I think I've always written but didn't think of it as something I wanted to do seriously until I was 30. Then, of course, I did everything wrong and wallpapered an entire wall of my basement with multi-colored rejection slips.

SLWG: When did you first consider yourself a writer?

[BL]: I don't remember, really. When people asked me what I did, I said, "I write." I thought saying, "I'm a writer" was presumptuous. One day, I just said it out loud and gradually became more comfortable using that word to describe myself.

SLWG: Who or what inspired you to pen your first book or major work?

[BL]: I wrote feature articles for years, none of which I would consider a "major work." Sometime in the seventies, I wrote a three-article series on St. Louis writers who were also successful in the larger world outside of St. Louis. I interviewed six writers, ranging in age from 57 to 75. It was a truly inspirational experience to meet and write about them, and it turned out to be the best thing I had ever written.

SLWG: How long did it take you to complete your first publication—from idea to acceptance by a publisher?

[BL]: I was the assistant editor of *St. Louis Commerce* magazine at the time, and I wrote constantly. The articles appeared in three consecutive issues. As I was working on them, I was also working on other projects. So, at the end of each month, when the galleys showed up, that's when I saw the finished piece.

SLWG: **How long did it take for you to actually hold the published work in your hands—from acceptance by the publisher to release of the final product? Was it worth it?**

[BL]: My first book was published in 1987. It was very small (more of a booklet than a book) and part of a series. I wrote three books in three months. They were published by Amacom Books, and I have no memory of how long it took to see the finish product. The books that followed were much longer and more interesting, but those three little one were the best way I can imagine to have learned how to write a book.

SLWG: **Please describe the research process that goes into the writing of your work.**

[BL]: Most of the books I've written have started with little more than a title or a phrase — *Polish Your People Skills*, *Dealing With Difficult People*, *Going Solo*. I start by drawing the simplest of mind maps with each arm being a subject related to the title or main idea. Then, I add key points under each subject. Sometimes, I don't know enough to do even that much, so I read everything I can find on the topic. Every time I come across something that seems to fit, I plug it into the mind map, which eventually becomes a very detailed outline. If I have a publisher, I submit the outline for approval. The outline is like a skeleton. As I research, I just add meat to the bones until it grows into a book. Along the way, there is a lot of reorganizing, deleting, and editing, but essentially that is the process I follow and the one I teach.

SLWG: **What advice can you offer writers who have finished a first book-length manuscript and now seek to market it to a publisher?**

[BL] First, I would say *don't write a book length manuscript* and then go in search of a publisher. Write a proposal that forces you to think through every aspect of your book, and decide how you might want to publish it. If it's with a conventional publisher, send the proposal. Since, these days, most publishers don't accept unsolicited proposals, you will probably have to find an agent. On the other hand, there are several other publishing options worth considering, one of which may be better suited to your book.

[SLWG Note: This advice is "spot on" for nonfiction books. Many fiction publishers require an entire book-length manuscript of first time authors though.]

SLWG: **What advice can you offer an author who has sold a first book—with respect to working with an editor or negotiating the terms of the contract?**

[BL]: Those are really two different things. Working with an editor is *collaborative*. It's like finding a partner who really wants your book to succeed. Negotiating a contract is more *adversarial*: the editor is looking out for the publisher; you are looking out for yourself. When an editor sends you a contract, read it, mark the things that don't seem right to you, but *do not sign it* without having an attorney or a literary agent look at it first. If that person suggests changes, ask that they be made. If the editor says, "Sorry, it's our way or the highway," take the highway. Compromise is fine; caving in is something you'll regret later.

SLWG: Who or what has most influenced your writing style, and in what way?

[BL]: My editor at *St. Louis Commerce*, Bob Hannon was an old newspaperman who didn't like adverbs or adjectives. I worked for him for six years and, by the end of that time, I was a fairly decent feature writer. I had begun to find my "voice," and I've adhered to his writing rules ever since.

SLWG: Which genre are you most comfortable writing?

[BL]: Nonfiction, which gives me a lot of flexibility. It is all I've ever wanted to do, and it is what I teach. Nonfiction is a vast genre with many areas I haven't begun to explore.

SLWG: Have you written, or do you ever plan to write in other genres? Which ones?

[BL]: I wrote poetry in college and started a novel once, but had no idea what I was doing. I never tried it again and don't think I ever will. I love nonfiction and have spent so many years trying to get better and better at it and feel I am finally hitting my stride.

SLWG: What are your current writing projects?

[BL]: I'm writing a website for a new online business, a series of pieces on people with developmental disabilities.

SLWG: What books or authors have most influenced your life? Did they also influence your writing style or goals?

[BL]: My role models are Judith Viorst, Gail Sheehy, Gloria Steinem, Caroline Bird, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Joan Borysenko, and Ann Morrow Lindbergh (all strong women and nonfiction writers).

SLWG: What are you reading now?

[BL]: I just finished *Eat Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gordon, which is a best-selling memoir by a globetrotting journalist. I had mixed feelings about it, mostly wondering why it was a best seller. I've been on a fiction kick for a while, reading what everyone's reading but mostly devouring mysteries, police procedurals, and espionage. I read everything there is by a particular author and then move on to another one. I read them so fast, I can't even remember what I've read if I don't keep a list. Mysteries are my great escape.

SLWG: What new author has captured your interest?

[BL]: Audrey Neffenegger, author of *The Time Traveler's Wife* (fiction) and Asne Seierstad, author of *The Bookseller of Kabul* (nonfiction). The first is a grownup's fairy tale (this seems to be the only book by this author) and, the second, one of the finest examples of empathetic journalism I've ever read.

SLWG: Name one person that you feel supported your writing goals outside of your family members. Explain.

[BL]: Carol Rehg was a *Globe-Democrat* reporter who taught the one and only writing class I ever took. She took me aside at the end of the semester and said, "Listen to me. I know talent when I see it, and I see it in you. Keep writing!" I believed her. I never forgot it. And I have never stopped writing. Those words changed my life, and I sincerely hope my words have had the same effect on other aspiring writers.

SLWG: How do your family and/or friends feel about your writing pursuits in general?

[BL]: I think they see writing as who I am. My daughters don't remember a time when I wasn't doing it; my sister and many of my friends are writers, so we share a special bond; and those who aren't have always considered it a romantic and mysterious career (I try not to discourage that impression).

SLWG: Do you regard your writing as a lifelong career?

[BL]: Absolutely. It sounds corny, but it has been an enduring love affair for 40 years and will probably continue for the rest of my life. I hope to be racing a deadline when I take my last breath.

SLWG: What is the one piece of advice you would give to someone who seeks to be a successful writer?

[BL] The usual one, I guess, which is *read, read, read*, to which I would add *write, write, write*. The best line I've ever read is this: "If the desire to

