

*SLWG Workshop Spotlight: We're pleased to present:*

Margo Dill



**Workshop: "See My Byline: Writing for Newspapers and Websites"**

**on Saturday, March 6 2010**

**from 10 a.m. to Noon**

**at Kirkwood Community Center**

**111 S. Geyer**

**Kirkwood, MO 63122**

**Free and open to the public! Please [register to attend](#):**

**Get map and directions.**

**About the Workshop:** Margo Dill will lead a discussion on how to write for newspapers and websites. While she works on her novel for young adults and waits for her historical middle-grade novel to be published, she gets paid for writing articles! This interactive talk will give tips on how to see your own name as a byline on an article. There will also be some time to practice writing sections of nonfiction pieces.

**About the Speaker:** Margo L. Dill is a freelance writer, editor, and teacher, living in Mahomet, Illinois. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Grit*, *Pockets*, *True Love*, *Fun for Kidz*, *Missouri Life*, *ByLine* magazine, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The News-Gazette*. She is a columnist and contributing editor for WOW! Women On Writing. She is assistant editor for the Sunday Book page in *The News-Gazette*. Her first book, *Finding My Place*, a middle-grade historical novel, will be published by White Mane Kids. She writes a blog called Read These Books and Use Them ([margodill.com/blog](http://margodill.com/blog)), for parents, teachers, and librarians. She owns her own copy editing business, Editor 911 ([margodill.com/blog/editor-911-services](http://margodill.com/blog/editor-911-services)). When she's not writing, she loves spending time with her husband, stepson,

and two dogs—Chester, a boxer, and Hush Puppy, a basset hound. You can find out more about Margo by visiting her website: [margodill.com](http://margodill.com). Find out more about the online classes Margo teaches, such as Social Networking for Writers, by visiting WOW's Classroom Page ([www.wow-womenonwriting.com/WOWclasses.html](http://www.wow-womenonwriting.com/WOWclasses.html)).

## Five Questions for Margo Dill

### **How did you get started as a freelance journalist?**

I just took the plunge! No, seriously, when we moved from Missouri to Illinois in 2006, I told my husband I would like to write more and teach less, and he said okay. I had been writing and publishing (a lot of fiction/poetry/activities for kids and some articles for adults) since 2000. So, I do still substitute teach, which helps me keep in touch with kids and provides some extra money. But I just started looking around for freelancing jobs. In the past three years, I have been able to find consistent and repeating work, along with clients for my editing business Editor 911.

### **What tools does a person need to get started working for newspapers or magazines?**

Really, it's just hard work and timing that gets you in the door. You do need some experience and clips to write full time and even part time. So, don't quit your day job until you have some clips in newspapers, magazines, or on websites. Also, figure out what you want to do. I don't really like writing query letters for magazines and waiting for them to get back to me, so I found some websites that I can write for on a regular basis. I got those jobs because I had a good writing resume and experience in education. As for the newspaper gig, I saw an ad in the paper, I had writing experience, and I lived in the area where they needed a correspondent. So, I don't think you need to have a certain number of clips to start. Just build your portfolio as you are working your other job, look for opportunities through freelance job sites or your local paper, always turn in articles on time and be dependable, and find something you are passionate about and that works for you and your situation.

### **How has the freelance market changed since newspapers have decreased in popularity?**

For me, it's changed because newspapers can't pay as much per article, but then they also decreased the number of words that they want per article, too. So, I am still getting paid about the same rate. I actually think newspapers are looking for more correspondents or stringers now because those people do not require any benefits--just a payment for each article they do. I have found that to be true in Champaign, but I'm not sure about elsewhere. Also, there are opportunities to write for the newspapers' (and magazines) websites since some of the sections are only on the Internet right now, or many publications have supplemental information on their website that someone has to write!

### **When do you find time to work on your other writing projects?**

I just have to make time, and sometimes I don't. Freelancing is just like having a full time job where you go to the office every day. When you have an office job, you don't always have time to work on your novel when you come home, and there's family stuff going on, too. So, if it's been a few days and I haven't worked on my creative writing, I schedule it in like an appointment, OR I do it first before I work on anything else.

**Do you remember the first freelance article you sold? How about one you pitched that**

**you loved but weren't able to sell?**

I'm not sure if I can remember the very first one, but I do remember an early one. I sold an essay about teaching fifth graders on September 12, 2001 and discussing with them the 9/11 attacks, to *God Allows U-Turns* Vol. 4: American Moments. And I got \$50, which was THRILLING!

For the bad news side: an article I pitched was accepted on speculation, and then turned down from *Highlights for Kids*. It was a science article about the okapi, an endangered animal. They thought it had "too much conservation in it." I even rewrote for them on their direction, but then the information was outdated. So, I still have the article-- it never sold.