



Prose

A Career Newsletter for Writing Students

November 2013

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Welcome to the 1st edition of Prose, a monthly career newsletter for writing students at Metropolitan State University. Careers for writers vary widely: Writers may work for magazines, newspapers, corporate marketing departments, or in various other industries; they may write fiction, non-fiction, or both; writers may specialize in technical writing, business writing, magazine and newspaper writing, and creative writing; they might work as writers, editors, or teachers; some writers are self-employed while others are employed by someone else. Every issue of Prose will present the reader with profiles of real-life professional writers and editors. Furthermore, some issues will offer industry-related information, such as the process of book publishing, how to self-publish, how to find an agent, how to successfully be self-employed and how to network effectively. The goal of Prose is to give the aspiring writer and editor information that will provide guidance and career inspiration.



Kimberly Black: Technical Writer

by Mary Sunnarborg

AmplifonUSA is a franchisor to more than 250 franchisees, who in turn have anywhere from one to 75 employees. Kimberly Black, Implementation Specialist for AmplifonUSA, is responsible for developing training and implementation materials for the front office system used in these clinics to maintain the patient databases and record sales transactions.

Born and raised in Worthington, a small town in southern Minnesota, Black moved to St. Paul in her early 20s, where she lived with her sister and brother-in-law. Soon after arriving in the city, Black began working as a Patient Care Coordinator in a hearing aid dispensing office where she quickly established herself as a dependable, hard-working staff member. However, the hearing aid office was not an ideal place for making friends. The only other employee in her office was also her boss, so Black also worked part time in a local bookstore for the sole purpose of widening her social circle. Black continued to work both jobs for the next nine years.

Black's experience translates almost perfectly into her current position at AmplifonUSA. Four years ago, the company invested in a new front office system called Sycle.net. This

“A lot of people get nervous if they have to talk in front of a lot of people...I get nervous when I have to write something I know a lot of people will read.”

system helps franchise owners better manage their businesses and helps AmplifonUSA, as the franchisor, make better decisions for the health of the franchise network as a whole. Black has been involved in this project from the beginning and has the most thorough understanding of the system from a business and operation standpoint of anyone in the company.

She is very skilled at seeing the technical side of the program and explaining these details to the office staff in a way that they can understand. Her background in the hearing aid office ensures appropriate language and terms are used, and that the procedures themselves actually meet the needs of the staff and business owners. For the past several years, Black has spent her days working with the office staff giving face-to-face trainings and webinars online to help franchise owners and their teams get up to speed on the new system.

What happens, though, when a new front office associate is hired and Black is unavailable to deliver training before they begin working? Or if an employee has a question about their Sycle.net and Black has taken the day off? To address this issue, Black's next big project is to enhance the support materials available for Sycle.net, including step-by-step procedures, and the web-based training modules that were developed hastily under pressure for accessible training.

Black does feel pressure because her background is not in writing. She has worked with and developed her presentation delivery skills, but has never received formal training in the area of writing. “A lot of people get nervous if they have to talk in front of a lot of people. I don't really. I get nervous when I have to write something I know a lot of people will read.” This project will be an opportunity for Black to find her voice and develop a new skill that she can feel confident using in her future projects.

From the outside, it seems Black has it all figured out; she is confident, meets her deadlines and has a reputation for professionalism amongst corporate and field employees alike. Black might feel some anxiety about her next big project, but her experiences and accomplishments up to this point will serve her well. Still, it is important to remember that everyone has a story, everyone grows as a professional throughout their career, and everyone can benefit from encouraging words from time to time.

If you're interested in this type of career, check out these classes at MetroState:

WRIT 301: Professional and Technical Writing Careers

WRIT 271: Technical Writing

Chris Hayes: Magazine Writer and Grant Proposal Editor

by Leland Stoe

Chris Hayes currently serves as writing and research coordinator at Dakota County Technical College (DCTC). His daily routine involves extensive research that often includes interviews. He then builds a story around what he has learned. His directive is to write, as he puts it “anything for institutional advancement.”

Hayes’ intent is to write pieces that paint DCTC in a favorable light. After all, his number one target demographic is that of prospective students. Nevertheless, Hayes stays mindful of his second target audience, DCTC’s current student body. In either case, he strives to build good will by fostering positive public relations within the campus community through his work. Hayes’ authoring of articles for DCTC’s Real magazine, along with his editing of grants and proposals, helps him accomplish his mission of capturing and retaining students on behalf of DCTC.

Since earning his bachelor’s degree at the University of Minnesota in 2003, his responsibilities at DCTC have included grants & sustainability coordinator and communications coordinator. At times, he has written anonymously for the former president of DCTC, adding to the broad nature of his writing career.

His interest in writing was already percolating by second grade. Hayes remembers how his friend’s parent recognized his innate writing ability and bought a lot of paper for him. Since then, Hayes has learned much about his art and has identified several key traits of talented writers and editors.

For instance, he believes that writing is hard work, comparing it to weightlifting, where one’s ability increases with practice. In addition, he stresses the importance of writer engagement with the audience, singling out disengaged writers who “... take what’s in their heads and assume others will understand.” Furthermore, he notes that good editors recognize disengaged writing containing underdeveloped support. However, Hayes cautions that good editors must strive to maintain the voice of the writer and not over edit. He acknowledges the sometimes delicate power balance between writer and editor. Hayes considers the Internet a great research tool, and says that Wikipedia is a good jumping off point.

Hayes has found writing inspiration in many aspects of his life, including his month-long visit to India, where in 2001, he attended the Maha Kumbh Mela. This massive, spiritual event is widely recognized as the largest peaceful gathering of people on Earth. Though he has not written directly about his trip to the Maha Kumbh Mela, it has provided life perspective and characters for use in his novels.



“I just like writing,” says Hayes. “I chose to study English because I was good at it.” However, he feels that having an English degree is not necessarily practical. The problem is one of experience. He laughs and says, “Do you want Wordsworth with those fries? Even those holding Ph.D.’s may not have experience.” He highlights the importance of obtaining experience to better one’s chances of landing a meaningful job.

When asked what really makes him tick, Hayes replied, “What inspires me about writing is the mystical aspect of writing—writing for some higher perspective.”

Hayes’ hobbies fuel his writing passion. In his latest novel, for instance, the main character is a martial artist who brings his dog everywhere he goes. This is not surprising, knowing that Hayes is a black belt in taekwondo and is a dog agility handler.

Hayes clearly values different styles of writing and hopes to eventually shift gears from his current profession of writing. Hayes is not afraid to dream big. His 10-year vision for himself is that of full-time novelist in the genre of Adventure Modern Fantasy.

“What inspires me about writing is the mystical aspect of writing - writing for some higher perspective.”

If you’re interested in this type of career, check out these classes at MetroState:

WRIT 377: Writing Proposals and Grants

WRIT 342: Writing for Online and Print Magazines

Tim Harlow: News Reporter

by Emily Rasmussen

Tim Harlow has been writing for the *Star Tribune* for more than 20 years. Being with your first job right out of college isn't something too many people can say they've done. And still loving that job is even more of a rarity. But when talking with Harlow, his passion for writing and the knowledge he's obtained from it is obvious. Harlow's advice is that you need to love what you do, otherwise it's not worth it, and his love and drive for what he does is inspiring.

Harlow's journalism experience can be traced back to eighth grade when he wrote for his school paper, and he found that he really enjoyed it. After that he continued to write for his high school paper, where he was the news editor for one year and the sports editor his senior year. Harlow continued to write through college as well. According to Harlow, journalism seemed to have somewhat found him. His mother had actually wanted him to be an accountant because he was good at it. However, good at it or not, he couldn't see himself sitting at a desk cramming numbers all day.

He attended Golden Valley Lutheran College, and then he attended Concordia Moorhead where he received his degree in communications and psychology. After graduating college, he applied at the *Star Tribune*, and he was hired as a sports copy aide. He then worked his way up through the company. He simply walked into the *Star Tribune*, looked at the help-wanted board, and saw that they needed a copy aide, which he then applied for. Now-a-days, it's not quite so easy to just walk in to a large newspaper company and apply for a job.

Being in the field for so long, it can be assumed that Harlow has experienced many challenges when it comes to writing. Harlow had much to say when asked about the most challenging kind of writing.

"The most challenging is doing investigative pieces that include requesting data from agencies by using the FOIA. Then putting it all together in a compelling piece that tells a story and people learn something." But that challenge doesn't seem to have affected Harlow's love for writing, "I enjoy writing about things that make a difference in people's

lives. It is satisfying when it gets results or people to work for change."

His writing career isn't the only thing that Harlow is passionate about. When asked via an email interview what other activities and/or hobbies he liked to do, Harlow's response was, "I am passionate about volleyball." Not only does he play the sport, but he also travels all over refereeing it.

With his years of journalism experience, it appears that Harlow has lots of knowledge to share with young students who are thinking of possibly pursuing a career in the journalism or editing fields, "Read a lot, write as much as you can and know you won't make a lot of money doing it. Jobs are tough, so be well versed and ready to do a lot of different things."

Indeed, doing a lot of different things is something that Harlow has experience in doing, from sports to news breaking murder cases, he has covered it all. A little while into his career, he took a public affairs reporting class at the University of Minnesota, simply to absorb the knowledge, not towards a degree or anything, and he says that he still refers to notes from that class. From this class, he learned how to get information that is available to the media and the general public, but many people don't know how to obtain it or that it's even available.

Harlow is a very interesting & inspirational journalist and man. His drive for his work and hobbies show why he has succeeded and why he continues to love what he does. This is something that most strive for in life.

"Read a lot, write as much as you can and know you won't make a lot of money doing it. Jobs are tough, so be well versed and ready to do a lot of different things."

If you're interested in this type of career, check out these classes at MetroState:

WRIT 341: Writing the News in a Digital World

Ron Gabrielson: Technical Trainer

by Tony Kline

Despite the title of this profile, Ron Gabrielson's resume does not suggest an individual who has made a living absorbing punishment. Graduating with a journalism degree from the University of Minnesota in 1997, Ron's first post-college career was performing proofreading services as a temporary hire. It wasn't long before his proofing skills caught the eye of a Minneapolis design firm, landing him his first longtime job, in a copy editing position. Ron's ability to relate to people on their terms lies at the core of what makes him such a successful communicator and educator, regardless of the medium used.

Ron's next long-term employment was with the company he is still working for today: Geek Squad. After 12 years of repairing computers, opening and managing Geek Squad locations (Precincts), Ron currently works on the technical training team of Geek Squad, known as "Services Academy." With Best Buy having acquired Geek Squad in 2004, Ron found himself in a unique position to continue a core passion of his, which is to train people how to do their jobs as a technical trainer at Best Buy's corporate headquarters.

Ron recalls his first major temporary assignment with a Minneapolis design firm. "I ended up...getting brought on staff...until about (three years later)." Later, Ron had progressed from copyediting and proofing duties to a research position. Ron had kept his journalism and public relations (PR) skills honed through public access cable television production and other related work, which heightened his awareness of what the then-new Twin Cities-grown Geek Squad was doing. In the early 2000s, Ron applied for, and received a position at Geek Squad's then-only location on Washington Avenue in downtown Minneapolis.

As Ron rose through the ranks of Geek Squad as an Agent, and later a Precinct Chief, he never lost focus on the importance of sharing knowledge. Whether it was teaching customers how to use technology or training new employees, the importance of teaching was always a top priority for Ron. Ron's background in journalism and in PR gave him an advantage many trainers and teachers lack; an awareness

of how his messages were coming across. This self-awareness serves him well today in a company where a retail sales giant coexists with a tech-savvy services provider.

In his current role, Ron is constantly in situations where he needs to convey a message that may not be well received. Ron's role as a trainer is not just to share information; it's to share information in such a manner that ensures the audience's understanding, if not acceptance. Where a more traditional training style would have been to "press on" and just struggle through the day's content, Ron took it upon himself by setting aside the agenda for the first hour to encourage the group's frustrations and fears out into the open. This resulted in multiple attendees approaching him after the event and thanking him for his presentation.

While his formal education and past work experience would easily prepare Ron for a career in reporting, editing, people development, and a number of other managerial and communication-based positions, Ron uses these skills as an educator. Whether he is using his abilities to capture and edit video; create and deliver in-person trainings; or communicate ideas online; Ron's aptitude in absorbing a message and modulating the delivery to suit a specific audience makes him an especially skilled trainer and communicator. It's easy to see why after 12 years with Geek Squad, he still retains a passion and a gift for this vital function of the corporate world.



If you're interested in this type of career, check out these classes at MetroState:

MDST 583: Online Education and Training

Cindy Laun: Book Publisher

by Angie Holbrook

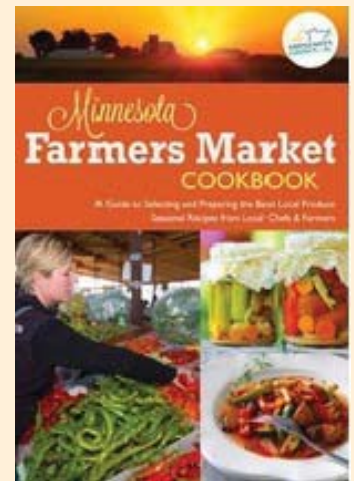
Cindy Laun has been a design manager at Quayside Publishing Group for two years. In the early stages of her career, Laun spent most of her time working in corporate marketing departments, but did not find the fulfillment in these positions that she was looking for from her career. While taking time away from work to stay home with her children, Laun connected with an acquaintance who was working at Quayside Publishing and who introduced her to one of the design managers. This led to six years of freelance work with the company, eventually leading to the position she now holds. She loves her job now and wishes she started 25 years ago. She has a natural love of books, and it delights her that there's some permanence to her work; books tend to last longer than corporate marketing pieces.

Laun is one of three local design managers for Quayside Publishing Group who are each responsible for overseeing the design layouts for books being published by each of their assigned imprints. Quayside Publishing Group publishes books that are image-heavy with visual elements like photographs and illustrations that include books about art, cooking, interior decorating, gardening, famous people, pop culture, travel, history, and how-to books. About 150 books are published each year out of the Minneapolis office, and the average book takes about two years from acquisition to distribution.



Laun explained that a book begins with the acquisitions editor who comes up with an idea then develops financial projections for the project and finds an author. The acquisitions editor then presents the project to the publisher for approval. Once a project is approved, it is passed on to a managing editor who manages the project through completion. Every book is reviewed three times

before the final printing, and a hard copy is printed for each review. An in-house editor performs the first full review of the printed draft; all edits are written directly on the document. The second printed draft is sent to a freelance proofreader to review. During the second review, a freelance indexer is hired to index the book. An in-house proofreader completes the third and final review.



An example of one of Quayside Publishing Group's recently completed projects is "The Minnesota Farmers Market Cookbook." The acquisitions editor first developed the idea for the book, and then he or she found a local food editor/blogger to develop the recipes and author the book. One of Laun's favorite work activities is to participate in photo shoots, and this project allowed her to visit several farmers markets throughout Minnesota with one of her freelance photographers. In addition, she and the photographer spent a day at the author's home where the author prepared every recipe in the book. The three of them designed displays for each dish to be photographed. Laun said their budget was slim, so they had to search their own kitchens for any attractive serve ware and table linens for their displays.

Although Laun loves the publishing business and her job, she acknowledges that she does experience some frustrations in her work. For example, some of the publishers she works with want to approve every detail of each book before it's published rather than provide the editors and designers the power to make final decisions based on their expertise. In these types of instances, the final book cover or design elements within a book may reflect the publisher's personal tastes rather than the tastes of the target market. Laun finds this most frustrating; nevertheless, she absolutely loves her job.

If you're interested in this type of career, check out these classes at MetroState:
INFS 338: The Craft and Commerce of Book Publishing

Brielle Zywicki: MetroState Newspaper Editor

by Legato Gabriel

After two years of working on the Metropolitan State University school newspaper, *The Metropolitan*, Brielle Zywicki became chief editor. This opportunity arose when the previous editor, Zywicki's mentor Shelagh Connolly, graduated from the university. Though the job demands much of Zywicki in terms of time and energy, she credits Connolly for being a great guide and her family and friends for supporting her sacrifices. She sees this position as a fundamental stepping stone to achieving her overall career goals.

Zywicki shared one of the biggest challenges she faces as the Editor of *The Metropolitan*. She explained, "Time is always a challenge working at the newspaper. Things have to be completed by a certain date due to time constraints, with little exceptions." The deadline for article submissions for the paper is always the 15th of each month. Articles are sent first to Zywicki, who decides whether they are appropriate for the newspaper given their timeliness, relevance, and other factors.

The articles then go through the editing process: first by an associate editor and then a copy editor. After they are checked for grammar and punctuation and are fact checked, the articles are sent to the layout/photo designer. There is also a monthly production meeting to decide the placement of articles and pictures for the paper. The layout designer then finalizes the latest issue and sends it off to print. The printer delivers the issue to the campuses, and the newspaper staff is responsible to put the paper on the racks on each campus.

When asked what the most surprising thing about becoming editor for *The Metropolitan* has been, Zywicki responded, "The amount of emails I receive on a day-to-day basis always amazes me. I get emails about people inquiring about the paper quite frequently, which is great. I like to see people interested in writing." She also talked about how the paper is evolving. "Each member of the staff puts their own trademark in the paper. When new staff joins and old staff graduate, a new group of perspectives come in." In response to being asked how being an editor has changed the way she

writes articles, Zywicki explained, "I used to write strictly objective articles, but now I am more comfortable writing something more along the lines of an editorial. I am also way more paranoid that I am making mistakes."

Zywicki discussed the difficulty of balancing work, school, editing, and her personal life. "Working full time, going to school full time, and editing the paper takes a lot out of my personal time. But then I think of graduation in December and I think it will all be worth it." She utilizes the calendar program on her new tablet to help her know what she needs to do on a day-to-day basis. Bells and alarms can be set to remind her about the day's tasks. Knowing how to utilize things like little flags on her email saves a lot of time and helps her to stay organized.

Zywicki had some advice for Metro State students looking to strike a balance in their lives. "Write things that you need to remember down, then put them on a calendar. Seeing it all written out in front of you will balance and visualize realistic timeframes you need to complete things." For students who are seriously interested in journalism or non-fiction writing, she recommended getting involved with *The Metropolitan* because it is a great opportunity to gain experience. She ended by stating, "I am confident that the skills I obtained while working at *The Metropolitan* will help me on my career path."

"Each member of the staff puts their own trademark in the paper. When new staff joins and old staff graduate, a new group of perspectives come in."

If you're interested in this type of career, check out these classes at MetroState:

WRIT 371: Editing

Rachel Koenig: Public Relations and Marketing Writer

by Ryan Carlson

Rachel Koenigs works for Phoenix Residence Inc. (PRI) as a public relations and development coordinator. PRI is a non-profit organization committed to developing person-centered quality living experiences for individuals with disabilities. The charitable mission of PRI allows Koenigs' true voice to come out in her writing. She is a creative, passionate writer and prefers writing for non-profits. In a recent interview, when asked what motivates her writing the most, Koenigs responded, "Anything that is helping somebody else. There is more of a meaning behind it than writing to attract customers." She enjoys writing annual reports, newsletters, grants & proposals, social media updates, and website content for PRI. She is able to let her real voice show through her writing.

Much of Koenigs' professional writing experience was gained during her 12 years at Anderson Performance Improvement Company. She worked as a marketing coordinator, and the job entailed a lot of challenging writing. She still writes for their business blog on a freelance basis. In addition to the freelance writing she does for Anderson Performance, she does freelance writing for interior decorating companies.

Koenigs enjoys the creative side of writing, and she has written a variety of documents:

- promotional pieces
- white papers
- business blogs
- PowerPoint presentations
- corporate speeches
- business social media pages
- annual reports
- newsletters
- corporate websites
- online advertisements

Koenigs enjoys writing shorter pieces, so she adapts her writing strategy when constructing a larger document (for example: white papers). In order to adapt, she breaks up her writing into smaller pieces and takes her time. Lengthy and unbiased writing are the most challenging for her; however, she believes that writing longer, unbiased pieces enhances her overall writing skills. Another strategy she has employed during her career to enhance her writing skills has been to study competitors' websites and business blogs.



Koenigs began her writing career writing for her high school newspaper. She demonstrated a knack for writing, and her Advanced Composition teacher often used her writing as samples in class. Although the spark to write was there in high school, she never intended to enter a career in writing. After high school, Koenigs attended the University of Minnesota where she studied marketing with an emphasis in agribusiness. The agribusiness emphasis came from her enjoyment of growing up on a farm.

The inspiration to write for a living came to Koenigs during a sales and marketing internship at Land O' Lakes. She remembers envying the writers "... everyone looked up to the writing employees." She expressed her interest in writing to the writers and slowly began to display her capabilities. The writers allowed her to write marketing pieces and editorial calendars. Suddenly, she realized her passion for writing and that she wanted to incorporate that into her career.

When asked how important writing is to society, Koenigs responded, "Writing may be the only form of contact to somebody. I remember to always represent the face of [Phoenix Residence Inc.] when writing. This could be your only chance to get across to the public. When a reader is flooded with information, it is very crucial to grab their attention."

Although she didn't begin with writing as a career aspiration, Koenigs is very glad that writing made its way into her career. She has written and continues to write in a variety of ways. If she is writing a piece with a positive agenda, the reader will truly be able to view the passionate and genuine voice of Koenigs.

If you're interested in this type of career, check out these classes at MetroState:

Comm 380: Public Relations Writing

Technical Communications and Professional Writing Required Curriculum, BA

Total Credits: 46-48

Core Curriculum (27-28 credits including prerequisites)

Prerequisites (4 cr)

- WRIT 301 Professional and Technical Writing Careers (2 cr)
- WRIT 280 Digital Tools for Writing and Communication (2 cr)

Requirements (23-24 cr)

- INFS 315 Searching for Information (4 cr)
- WRIT 371 Editing (4 cr)
- WRIT 372 Document and Information Design I (4 cr)
- WRIT 373 Writing and Designing for the Web I (4 cr)
- WRIT 350I Writing Internship (3-4 cr)
- WRIT 461 Writing and Technical Communication Capstone (4 cr)

Technical Communication Track (19 credits)

Requirements (15 cr)

- WRIT 271 Technical Writing (3 cr)
- WRIT 573 Writing and Designing for the Web II (4 cr)
- WRIT 574 Usability for Technical Communication **or** MDST 580 Issues in Communication Technology (4 cr)
- MDST 583 Online Education and Training (4 cr)

Electives (4 cr) One class from the following:

- WRIT 377 Writing Proposals and Grants
- MDST 485 Communicating with New Media
- MDST 580 Issues in Communication Technology
- WRIT 531 Advanced Writing

- WRIT 571 Advanced Editing
- WRIT 574 Usability for Technical Communication
- WRIT 575 Environmental Communication
- WRIT 599 Advanced Topics

Professional Writing Track (20 credits)

Requirements (8 cr)

- WRIT 341 Writing the News in a Digital World **or** WRIT 342 Writing for Online and Print Magazines
- MDST 485 Communicating with New Media

Electives (12 cr)

Three classes from the following:

- WRIT 341 Writing the News in a Digital World
- WRIT 342 Writing for Online and Print Magazines
- WRIT 377 Writing Proposals and Grants
- WRIT 531 Advanced Writing
- WRIT 532 Writing about Place
- WRIT 541 Writing for Publication and Profit
- WRIT 571 Advanced Editing
- WRIT 575 Environmental Communication
- WRIT 583 Writing Major Projects
- WRIT 599 Advanced Topics
- INFS 338 The Craft and Commerce of Book Publishing
- COMM 380 Public Relations Writing
- MKTG 348 Advertising Design, Production and Copywriting
- One 4-credit creative writing or screenwriting class

Meet the Editors

Emily Rasmussen

From insurance agent to makeup artist; from waxing specialist to full time student. This Jane-of-all-trades wears many hats. Emily is completing her bachelor's degree in professional communications-public relations at MetroState and hopes to someday combine her degree with her passion for helping others.

Mary Sunnarborg

A full-time training development specialist focused on online training and education. She hopes to complete her undergraduate degree in Technical Communications in December 2014 and intends to continue on in the Master's program at Metropolitan State.

Angie Holbrook

Full-time property manager by day, part-time writing student by night. Angie is majoring in professional writing at Metropolitan State University and hopes to one day trade in her property manager's cap for a writer's cap.

Ryan Carlson

Ryan is majoring in Technical Communication and Professional Writing (on the technical track). He currently works in a group home setting full-time, and is completing his technical writing internship through the central location of his job. He will graduate in spring 2014.

Contact Us!

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