

Quill

Spring 2003, Volume 9, Issue 2



Calendar of Events

Saturday, July 19, 2003

Lighthouse cruise,
Annapolis (details this page)

September 18-20, 2003

AMWA Annual Conference,
Miami, FL

October 21-23, 2004

AMWA Annual Conference,
St. Louis, MO



Do We Have Your Current Email Address?

To reduce mailing expenses, the chapter would like to communicate with members by email as much as

possible. If you are not currently on the chapter's email list, please contact our email list coordinator, Michael Altus, MichBALT@aol.com, and ask him to add you

to the list. Also, if your email address has changed, please avoid bounced messages by sending Michael your new address.

Thank you!



Cruisin' on a Summer Afternoon....

Save the date: Saturday, July 19

Take a refreshing break on the water on Saturday, July 19, and see Annapolis, Maryland, from a different perspective! Join members of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter aboard the *Annapolitan II* for a cruise to the Thomas Point lighthouse, a national historic landmark.

Built in 1875, the Thomas Point Shoal Light Station was the last manned lighthouse on the Chesapeake Bay. It continues to serve as an active aid to navigation. We will join a public tour for the 90-minute cruise to this historic site. From the tour guide, we will learn about Annapolis, the harbor and its environs, and the history of the lighthouse.

Don't fret about hot weather because the main deck is climate controlled! You can, of course, choose the view from the open upper deck if you like.

The tour will leave City Dock in Annapolis at 4:30 p.m. and return at 6:00 p.m. Afterward, join the group for dinner at nearby Phillips Seafood Restaurant, where we have reserved a banquet room with great views of the water.

This is an event for the entire family! Special reduced rates are available for children 11 and under. Check your email or go to the chapter Web site (www.amwa-midatlantic.org) for further details and a registration form.

All Systems Go for 2003 Conference

Three jam-packed days of learning and socializing with fellow AMWA members—that's the 2003 AMWA annual conference (taking place September 18-20 in Miami) in a nutshell.

Registration brochures will be mailed sometime in June. You can also find conference information in the June issue of the *AMWA Journal* and on AMWA's Web site, www.amwa.org. Register early to get the most from the event!

MAC members make a splash in Miami! – see p. 6



President's Message

I considered joining AMWA in 1995. I was looking for professional education and someone mentioned the organization, so I called the AMWA National Office in Rockville and asked for a membership packet. When it arrived and I learned that the annual conference would be taking place in Baltimore, I figured it was synchronicity: I was *meant* to join AMWA.

I studied the conference brochure and thought it all sounded very cool—the workshops, the networking opportunities, the tour of the shock-trauma unit. What stopped me was the time and expense involved to complete the core curriculum, given that most of the courses take place at annual conferences. I decided to think about it, and I thought for the rest of the millennium. It wasn't until September 2000 that I took the plunge.

It sounds like hyperbole, but my life hasn't been the same since. Although I've been a member of AMWA for less than 3 years, my involvement has reshaped me personally and professionally from the day I walked into the hotel in Miami where the 2000 AMWA annual conference was taking place.

I've come to see that, as a freelance and a biomedical editor, I can't afford *not* to belong to AMWA and avail myself of all its opportunities—beginning with the annual conference, which has become the paramount event on my professional calendar, and spilling over into many channels that allow me to participate in shaping the direction we take as a chapter and as an organization.

Now, as president of MAC, my modest objective is to help you make AMWA as dynamic a force for positive change in your life as it has been in mine—by listening to your suggestions and ideas, helping you find the right place to invest your energies, and putting you in touch with others who share your goals.

In this endeavor I feel fortunate to have a solid board of directors and the generous expertise of many MAC colleagues. There isn't space here to adequately express my gratitude to those who have been there for me through all the frustrations and rewards of volunteering within a national organization—people who have, above all, helped me view setbacks as valuable learning experiences right alongside the accomplishments.

It's my honor and my privilege to serve you as chapter president, and I hope to keep in touch with you via the MAC Web site (www.amwa-midatlantic.org) throughout the coming year. Please look for me there, and help me make this communication a two-way street. I look forward to hearing from you and, I hope, meeting you in the months to come.

—Tamia Karpeles, ELS

Ambitious Chapter Web Site Plans

Building on years of volunteer effort, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter's Web site (www.amwa-midatlantic.org) is poised to move to a new level of functionality. We are negotiating with our Webmaster, John Wachter, to provide expanded services that will help us turn the site into an electronic gathering place for members, a source of shared technical expertise, and a timely pipeline for organizational and professional opportunities.

To that end, several members have formed a workgroup to coordinate the next phase of development. Jean Picarelli, Jackie Wilson, and Kirstie Saltsman have started the ball rolling; other members are encouraged to join the effort. Check the site for more information, or email Web editor Tamia Karpeles (tamiak@comcast.net).

Three Earn CC Certificates

Congratulations to the following three Mid-Atlantic Chapter members who earned their AMWA core curriculum certificates last year:

- ◆ Julie M. Longlet (American Society of Clinical Oncology, Alexandria, VA) - Editing/Writing
- ◆ Tamia Karpeles (AGV Communications, Millersville, MD) - Multidisciplinary
- ◆ John W. Herrmann (PRA International, Charlottesville, VA) - Pharmaceutical

Getting the Most Out of Medline: Tips for Using NLM's Premier Database

Some AMWA members may recall when you could still browse the stacks at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) after looking for citations in the huge Index Medicus in the reading room. Around 1980, stack browsing came to an end and you had to submit request slips (at one point limited to three at a time), and wait (for hours on some days) for the books to arrive.

Now, if you play your clicks right, you may never again need to go to a brick-and-mortar medical library. At www.nlm.nih.gov, the NLM's Web address, you can find all your Index Medicus citations online, dating back to 1966 and usually accompanied by abstracts for articles published in the last five years. Also available are links to full-text articles, complete medical reference books, and many other health information resources.

On February 1, 2003, Kent Smith, deputy director of the NLM, and Janet Zipser, coordinator of database training, filled AMWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter members in on these online biomedical resources. What follows is a brief compilation of their advice on using NLM's vast online information resources.

The core resource is Medline/PubMed (www.ncbi.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi), a bibliographic database of 11 million citations from 4,500 journals, which includes links to full-text articles from about 3,000 journals. (Some of the journals require paid subscriptions to access full-text articles.)

The simplest way to search Medline is in plain English. You can type in medical subjects, title words, article text, author names, or MeSH nomenclature (the medical terminology available by clicking the MeSH browser link). It doesn't matter what kind of term you enter—the NLM's computer is so fast and the data is so well indexed that relevant citations are retrieved in a fraction of a second.

The usual problem is that too many citations are returned. But don't despair—PubMed offers tools for reducing hits. Clicking the Limits button enables you to restrict your search by language, type of research, age range of subjects, medical subspecialty, publication date, and so on.

Other PubMed tools allow you to browse through a journal, retrieve a single citation, or research a

clinical problem. These tools are available under the PubMed Services heading. Once your search technique produces the results you need, you can store the search strategy in your own Cubby by clicking that link on the menu.

Other biomedical resources on the PubMed site include:

- ◆ National Center for Biotechnology Information (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/): Check out PubMed Central with *free* full-text articles from 100 journals. Browse the Bookshelf, a growing collection of biomedical books that can be searched by typing in a concept (look for the Books link at the top of the home page).

- ◆ MEDLINEplus (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/): Find consumer-oriented information on health topics. Peruse drug references, a medical dictionary, and a medical encyclopedia. Make use of a health provider locator.

- ◆ ClinicalTrials.gov (www.clinicaltrials.gov/): Investigate the latest in clinical research. Search for clinical trials by drug, disease, or sponsor. Entries indicate whether trials are currently recruiting patients and provide inclusion and exclusion criteria.

- ◆ Online Catalog (www.locatorplus.gov/): If you *must* use the brick-and-mortar library, check out this site before you go.

If you do have occasion to visit the "hard copy" of the NLM before July 31, 2003, be sure to take a few minutes to wander through the *Dream Anatomy* exhibit.

We know how physical media have been converted to Web pages, but how would cyberspace look as a physical model? In the exhibit tent, you can flip suspended plastic sheets reminiscent of the anatomical sections of the Visible Human Project. Or you can move through a holographic representation of the same database, penetrating from the skin internally to the skeleton and organs.

An especially mind-boggling exhibit allows you to flip through the pages of Andreas Vesalius's 16th century anatomic atlas, *De humani corporis fabrica*. But the pages you turn are holograms! Your hand motion triggers the computer-generated image to change. Not to be missed!

—Richard M. Kapit, MD

Southeast Satellite Gets a Lesson in Email Etiquette

"Email Etiquette—Best Practices in Business Today" was the topic of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter southeast satellite's January 7, 2003, meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia. The guest speaker was Marilyn J. Wells, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor and Coordinator, Health Education, at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia.

Dr. Wells began with a couple of definitions of email etiquette.

- ◆ According to the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University, "email etiquette refers to a set of dos and don'ts that are recommended by business and communication experts in response to the growing concern that people are not using their email effectively or appropriately."

- ◆ According to Onlinenetiquette.com, "Netiquette" means "using technology to effectively communicate with others both personally and professionally with knowledge, understanding, and courtesy."

Proper email etiquette portrays efficiency and professionalism and can also provide protection from liability, said Dr. Wells. She stressed the importance of realizing that anything sent by email can be accessed by experts—both honest and dishonest. For this reason, it is vital to be ever mindful of the content of email messages.

Guidelines Dr. Wells finds helpful for all types of email messages include the following:

General tips for efficiency

- ◆ Count to 10 before sending a message—to make sure you really want to send it.
- ◆ Ask clients which method of communication they prefer to use (e.g., email, postal mail, telephone, fax).
- ◆ Plan the timing of messages so your client won't think you're a workaholic or disorganized because you send them messages at midnight.
- ◆ Ensure that your email server provides adequate mailbox space, so that messages do not "bounce" because your mailbox is full.
- ◆ Use up-to-date software and antivirus protection.

Basic tips for professionalism

- ◆ Font size: Not too small or intricate.
- ◆ Spell check: Use your tools.
- ◆ Grammar: Make sure it's proper.
- ◆ Punctuation: Check for accuracy. Do not overuse exclamation points!!!!!!

Content tips

- ◆ Courtesy and clarity: Identify expectations, questions, or both early in the message.
- ◆ Abbreviations: Use sparingly in professional correspondence unless readily understood by all recipients.
- ◆ Attachments: Check software versions to determine compatibility with recipients.

Email options

- ◆ Distribution lists: When creating lists, make sure they are delineated for groups needing that specific information, such as lists of recipients who need specific project data, specific manuscripts, or personal information.
- ◆ Use your options. Depending on the features available in different software packages, email messages can be tracked to confirm that the recipient received and read the message. "Reply requested" can also be selected.
- ◆ Reply and forward: Be cautious and selective about forwarding messages.
- ◆ Email addresses: Be professional. Avoid "cutesy" email "handles" like HotMama or 2cute4u.
- ◆ Subject lines: Clearly state the subject of your message so the recipient immediately knows what it is about.
- ◆ Salutations: Again, be professional. Avoid overly informal salutations like "Hey there" and "Catch ya later."

Conclusions

- ◆ Remember to think before you act.
 - ◆ Don't forget to use common sense.
- Dr. Wells recommended the following Web sites as additional resources on email etiquette:
- ◆ <http://www.iwillfollow.com/emailetiquette.html>
 - ◆ <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/pw/p.emailett.html>
 - ◆ <http://www.qucis.queensu.ca/FAQs/email/etiquette.html>
 - ◆ <http://www.lepak.com/emailet.html>
 - ◆ <http://www.Emailreplies.com>
 - ◆ <http://www.onlinenetiquette.com> (offers *Netiquette Matters*TM, a free monthly newsletter)
- Beth McGlooin, MSN, CPNP

Introducing New Members of the Chapter Board

President-Elect: Susan Tamborini

Susan created her consulting firm, Decision Biotech, in September 2001. She joined AMWA in 2002, attended the annual conference in San Diego, and has begun working towards a core curriculum certificate in pharmaceutical writing and freelance writing. Before becoming an independent consultant, Susan worked in business development and marketing in the biotechnology industry for about 20 years. Susan has a master's degree in biology and an MBA from George Washington University in Washington, DC. She hopes to soon begin a master's program in technical writing at Johns Hopkins University.

Secretary: Rachel E. Preston

Rachel received a PharmD from the Virginia Commonwealth University Medical College of Virginia School of Pharmacy. After completing residencies in pharmacy practice and internal medicine, Rachel served as the pharmacy clinical specialist for two community hospitals in Richmond, Virginia, and as the director of pharmacy services for one of these sites. Her wide experience in both clinical and operational pharmacy services provided the opportunity to create many types of medical communication products. She began her own freelance writing business in 2002.

Board Member: Lori L. Alexander

Lori is the senior editorial manager at the American Society of Clinical Oncology in Alexandria, Virginia, where she has worked since 1998. Her previous experience includes 10 years as a senior copyeditor for the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*. Lori has been a member of AMWA since 1999. She currently serves on the Mid-Atlantic Chapter's scholarship committee and was recently appointed editor of the *AMWA Journal*. She has a bachelor's degree in English (journalism), and a master's degree in technical and professional writing, with a concentration in medical writing.

Board Member: Elaine A. Richman

Elaine, owner of EAR Medical Communications in Baltimore, Maryland, recently celebrated her 20th year as a medical writer and editor. Her articles have appeared in *Lancet Neurology*, *National Geographic World*, *The Sciences*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and elsewhere. Elaine was founding senior managing editor of the American College of Sports Medicine's *Health & Fitness Journal* and editorial director of Johns Hopkins Women's Health Newsletter. She earned her PhD in human anatomy from the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

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MAC Members To Make Miami Memorable

Mid-Atlantic Chapter members will make a big splash at the 2003 AMWA annual conference in Miami in September. A dozen members are involved in organizing the conference program and presenting workshops, how-to sessions, and breakfast roundtables.

A hearty round of applause must go to Cindy Hamilton, PharmD, ELS, who served as 2003 conference coordinator and (as if that wasn't enough work) will be a speaker in the open session "Ethics, Empowerment, and Education: The Role of Authors' Editors." Gayle Nicholas Scott, PharmD, ELS, is coordinating one of the two series of open sessions.

Be sure to check out the following sessions being led by members of our chapter.

Workshops

- ◆ Tables and Graphs—Editorial Approach (Howard Smith)
- ◆ Writing/Designing Patient Education Materials (Edie Stern)

- ◆ Introduction to Distance Learning (Lynn Perlmutter)
- ◆ Preparing CME Materials (Eve Wilson)

How-To Sessions

- ◆ How to Edit Electronically (Janice Deal)
- ◆ Interpreting the Medical Literature: Statistical vs Clinical Significance (Lynn Limon)

Breakfast Roundtables

- ◆ Justifying the Need for a Medical Writer or Editor in a Research Organization (Lisa Dwyer)
- ◆ Certification of Editors in the Life Sciences (Norman Grossblatt)
- ◆ Writing Patient Education Materials (Edie Stern)
- ◆ The AMWA Journal: Make Your Mark (Lori Alexander)

While you're in Miami, be sure not to miss the Chapter Meet and Greet on Thursday evening, September 18, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. It's great way to catch up with your chapter colleagues!

—Beth McGloon, MSN, CPNP

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