



Suburban Scribe

Newsletter of the Sacramento Suburban Writers' Club

Relationships: For Craft, For Plot, For Marketing

How do you develop a good relationship with the many aspects of your writing?



Come to the February 12th meeting and find out. Ted Witt will give us all a needed boost as he speaks of the important relationships we need to develop as we pursue our writing.

Ted Witt is the publisher behind Pretty Road Press, an independent publishing company in Folsom, California, where he specializes in content syndication and trade books. He is the current vice president of CWC's Sacramento Writers, where he emphasizes that marketing skills are as important for today's authors as writing skills.

He is a former newspaper reporter from San Diego County and California's Central Coast. He later transitioned to public relations and lobbying in the education arena in Sacramento before taking jobs as the executive director of the California Association of School Business Officials and then as the vice president of a private Bay Area firm specializing in software and consulting for schools.

He is the author of the business book, *No One Ever Told Me That*. His bylines top scores of newspaper, magazine, and website articles.

All of the meetings of the Sacramento Suburban Writers' Club are held on the 2nd Monday of each month. 7 - 9 p.m. at the Crossroads Community Fellowship Church's meeting hall, 5501 Dewey Drive, Carmichael (just north of the Madison/Dewey intersection)

All writers are encouraged to attend. Membership is not mandatory but brings privileges.

How to Write a Great Author Bio That Will Connect with Readers

Chris Robley

Does your author bio induce snoring?

Your book is riveting, but your author bio is a snooze.

If you're afraid the above sentence may describe you, well — don't be too hard on yourself; plenty of brilliant authors freeze up when it comes to writing about themselves in sound-bites. They're more comfortable creating lush fictions, not highlighting their own career achievements and personal anecdotes in (as Morpheus from *The Matrix* says) “the desert of the real.”

But comfy or no, you need to create a brief and compelling author bio for use on your website, book jacket, press releases, and more. In this article we'll take a closer look at the key elements of an interesting bio, and also figure out which details should be omitted.

How to write an author bio: 101

1. Keep your bio short

Your author bio isn't the place to tell your whole life story. 250 words is a good starting place. Once you've got that version firmed up, you can create a slightly longer version for PR purposes, or cut it down to 50 or 100 words for other uses such as contributor pages in print publications, social media profiles, etc. Many poetry journals have asked me to send them a bio as short as 25 words, which is the same length as this very sentence.

2. Write in the 3rd person

Telling your story in the 3rd person may seem a little pretentious at first, but it does make it easier to talk confidently about your achievements. Give it a try.

3. A little history goes a long way

Ask yourself, “does anyone care where I'm from?”

If you're writing a series of detective stories set in San Francisco and you were born and raised in the Bay Area, sure — that detail could be crucial to your bio. But if your book is a paranormal romance set in Russia, do we really need to know you were born in Iowa and now live in Maryland? (I'm guilty of this myself; just look at my author bio below!)

Mentioning your birthplace, your year of birth, your parents' occupation, they're just some of the default things we put in bios: Mary was born in Dayton, Ohio in 1953.

We begin at the beginning by habit. Boring! Cut to the good stuff that really matters to your audience. Maybe your parents' occupations are crucial to your own story. Just be sure of that before taking up any extra words in what should be a succinct bio.

(cont. p 3)

A Helpful Hint

by Mort Rumberg



When was the last time you cleaned your Desktop PC?

Whoa! THAT long ago? Do you really need to clean the inside of a PC? The answer is YES. Check this site out for the easy instructions on doing so.

<https://www.howtogeek.com/72716/how-to-thoroughly-clean-your-dirty-desktop-computer/>

AND

So, you think you're off the hook because you have a laptop? Uh, uh. You've got to clean that too.

<https://www.howtogeek.com/194479/how-to-clean-the-dust-out-of-your-laptop/>



Great Author Bio (cont.)

4. Your older books may not matter

Again, this isn't a dictum, merely a consideration — but mentioning the books you've already published MIGHT BE a waste of words.

Think about it: if you're Stephen King, everyone already knows what you've written; if you're a relatively unknown author, no one cares what you've written.

If you're in the later camp, the only thing that matters is that the details of your life which you choose to include in your bio make the reader want to crack open your book.

5. List SOME of your literary achievements

It's usually wise to mention any big literary prizes or awards you've won, plus the most impressive moments from your publication history. This sort of stuff establishes credibility.

If you're a highly celebrated writer, no need to be exhaustive (and probably no need to read this article further, since I'm assuming your author bio is already a killer).

One thing that is common in the poetry world is to mention where you currently teach, since many poets are also academics. While this does establish credibility, that detail is so ubiquitous in bios that it's rendered somewhat meaningless. Plus, the way things are going in higher education, you might be adjuncting at a new school in a new city every 12 months anyway

6. Mention the most relevant professional, educational, travel, or personal experiences

Once again, it's about pulling in the details which will resonate with your readers and which fit snugly with the topics you're writing about. If you're a crime novelist, your background as a NYC arson detective is going to interest people. If you're a cancer survivor writing about healthy attitudes towards aging, mentioning your personal medical history is crucial. Writing a Mediterranean cookbook? Talk about how you

spent a year going back and forth between Spain, France, Italy, and Greece.

7. Get some outside perspective

It's tough to see your own life and career objectively. So ask your friends, family, and fans what they consider to be the most important or interesting aspects of your life story. Get the advice of your editor, agent, or writing group. And be sure to take good notes on what they suggest!

8. Write multiple bio versions

I always recommend writing a few different versions of your bio. Pass them around and ask for feedback. Then combine the most compelling sections from each version to create an unbeatable Voltron of an author bio!

9. Don't forget the human touch

Whether you write fiction, essays, self-help, or instruction manuals, you're hoping to make a connection with your reader. Your bio is also a chance to make a connection, so be sure the thing doesn't read like a Wikipedia entry. Give it some quirk and character. Make the vibe match your aesthetic. Light and chatty. Dark and brooding. Urbane, but with a weak spot for Wendy's hamburgers. Remind us that you're human.

Chris Robley is an award-winning poet, songwriter, performer, and music producer who now lives in Portland, Maine after more than a decade in Portland, Oregon. His music has been praised by NPR, the LA Times, the Boston Globe, and others. Skyscraper Magazine said he is "one of the best short-story musicians to come along in quite some time." Robley's poetry has been published or is forthcoming in POETRY, Prairie Schooner, Poetry Northwest, Beloit Poetry Journal, RHINO, Magma Poetry, and more. He is the 2013 winner of Boulevard's Poetry Prize for Emerging Writers and the 2014 recipient of a Maine Literary Award in the category of "Short Works Poetry."

<https://www.chrisrobley.com/>

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\$3 a month (3-month minimum) for members
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Send your request to newsletter@sactowriters.org

COPY AND DEADLINES

Please submit original written material such as: poems, letters, book excerpts, articles, book reviews, humor, web sites to visit, general information, fun stuff to share—almost anything ***by the 20th of each month***. Also, share info about other meetings, contests, books, book signings, classes, etc.

Please keep the submission relatively short and submit electronically. There is no pay but byline credit is given—and that looks good to agents and publishers.

This is one of the many benefits of being a member of SSWC.

Send your submissions to
newsletter@sactowriters.org

MEMBERSHIP is paid on a yearly basis. If joining after March, dues are prorated by quarter.

Individual \$40.00/year

Couple \$55.00/year

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Membership is not required for attending meetings but it does provide benefits including

1) Publication in newsletter

3) Participation in critique groups

2) Participation in club author events

4) Grants for conferences ... & more

More information is on our website: sactowriters.org.

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