



## Getting to Yes

By [Jody Feldman](#)

Here's the way my agent remembers it...



When she called to tell me that we'd received an offer on my first middle grade novel, *The Gollywopper Games*, I nearly swerved off the highway in the driving rain. Yes, I was on the highway. Yes, there was driving rain. Yes, I should never have answered the old flip phone. Regardless, the experience was so surreal I don't remember nearly having an accident, nor do I remember having told her about said (non)fictional accident. I also don't remember how I got to the parking lot of my haircutting guy.

I do remember sitting in the car (with him looking out the shop window waiting for me) while I tried calling my nearest and dearest. I do remember none of them were waiting by their phones for my call. I also remember getting my hair washed, cut, and dried with this goofy look on my face because no way would I let haircutter Mike be the first to know I had finally realized a dream 20 years in the making. Yes, 20 years. Under any circumstance, that's one long, slow learning curve.

It's not that I was unintelligent, unskilled, or too lazy to learn more. Wait. I might have been a little lazy. It's more that I didn't understand this: if you can move the quality of your

writing from here (imagine me holding my hand above my eyebrows) to here (imagine me moving it just over my head), it will make all the difference between *no thanks* and *yes please*. The last push of that learning curve is like losing the last three nagging pounds of a diet.

How did I navigate those final few inches? I wish I could offer step-by-step, no-fail instructions. I can tell you this: from working as a mentor to other writers and participating in critique groups over the years, I've found the process is as unique as the works we create. No help at all, right? Essentially, though, it means taking a hard look at what we've been doing—right and not so right. For me, that came through workshops, writing retreats, and also with the no-cost approach of reading like a writer. I picked up books in my preferred lane, those that had succeeded either monetarily, critically, or both. These were books I'd already read, so I wouldn't get lost in their stories. I looked at the pacing, chapter breaks, amount of detail, dialogue, and how the author developed the characters, main through tertiary. Yes, all those things.

Then I asked myself: Could readers find the same professional qualities in my books?

Sometimes the answer was positive. My pacing was there. My chapters, for the most part, ended with cliffhangers. My backstories had an abundance of colorful details. The

overall plot held. But the emotional arcs? The thematic choices? The superfluous dialogue? I had room to grow.

To do that included getting qualified critique partners on board to tell me when I'd become so comfortable with the vision inside my head, that the qualities required to propel my writing from there to here were not fully realized on the page. It's with this kind of specific feedback that you'll understand your own mendable shortcomings. Then it's up to you to get out of your own way to write the book, the poem, the story, the essay that makes someone say *YES*. Just don't swerve off the highway in the driving rain.

*Jody Feldman, award-winning author of [The Gollywopper Games](#) series and [The Seventh Level](#), is the featured speaker for our February 12 meeting. Visit her at [jodyfeldman.com](#), or follow her on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram @jodyfeldman](#)*

## Tell Us What You Want to Know!



Last month we handed out comment sheets for you to share your thoughts and ask questions. You'll have another opportunity to submit them again during our February 12 meeting. We'll feature your responses during "Your SLPA: Members Get More!" on March 11. Board members will share the benefits of annual membership, including listing books and related businesses onto the website, event archives, networking, services from vendor partners, and more. We'll use your comments as a guide to answer questions.

We want to hear from you, so tell us: what you enjoyed, topics you'd like to see covered this year, and how we can help you accomplish your goals as an author and self-publisher. Whether you've been a member for years, recently joined, or just heard about the SLPA today, don't miss this opportunity to have your questions answered. Come find out what's available to help you reach your goals!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Feb. 12, 7pm–9pm**  
**Confessions of a Kidlit Author: Mistakes, Failures, and Other Mishaps that Led to Publishing Success**  
@ THE HEIGHTS  
By [Jody Feldman](#)

**Mar. 11, 7pm–9pm**  
**Your SLPA: Members Get More!**  
@ THE HEIGHTS  
By [SLPA Board Members](#)

**Apr. 25 8am–12pm**  
**How to Publish Your Own Book: What You Need to Know**  
@ STLCC—Meramec  
With [Warren Martin](#), [Andrew Doty](#), [Peggy Nehmen](#), [Jo Lena Johnson](#), and [Bob Baker](#)

[See page 2 for details.](#)

**Saturday, Apr. 25**  
**8am - 12pm**

Presented by the **St. Louis**  
**SLPA Publishers Association**

## HOW TO PUBLISH YOUR OWN BOOK: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

Thinking about writing a book and want to know how to publish it yourself? Maybe you've already written one and need direction for the next steps. The St. Louis Publishers Association presents its bi-annual workshop covering the realities of independent publishing—how editing and design can make your book look great, options for getting your book into print, sales channels, e-book production, marketing tips, and more.

Register through  
St. Louis Community College

<https://www.stlcc.edu/ce>

**314-984-7777**

Course number: WRIT-704 Section: P06 Fee: \$45

Location: **Meramec – Social Science Bldg.,  
MC-SO 108**

## KUDOS CORNER

SLPA Member: *Mike Bizelli*



Veteran photojournalist Mike Bizelli witnessed his first animal rescue in 1999. Since then he's documented over 100 animal rescues across the country, including the largest fight dog rescue in U.S. history, the Missouri 500. Working with the Humane Society of Missouri and the ASPCA led him to record those experiences with arresting imagery and revealing stories. Featured on [KSDK Channel 5](#), [St. Louis Magazine's](#) September e-edition, [American Photography's ProPhotoDaily](#), and encouraged by a successful Kickstarter campaign, his newly released book *Last Day on a Chain: Stories of Compassion, Salvation and Misperceptions* captures the dramatic rescue of pit bulls from illegal fighting operations, and shares the journey of their rehabilitation and adoption.

Visit: [lastdayonachain.com](http://lastdayonachain.com)



## LAST MONTH'S RECAP: Your Book is Published! Now What? (How to Promote Your Work as an Author)

Special thanks to Fred Miller of *NO SWEAT! Public Speaking!* for his excellent presentation. It was definitely a popular topic as the room quickly filled to capacity, even after we set out extra chairs. He showed how to maximize speaking, writing, and promotion through his Three-Legged EXPERT Stool, and also reviewed proven methods of engagement when telling others about your book. Visit Fred at [nosweatpublicspeaking.com](http://nosweatpublicspeaking.com).



### First Things First

Begin with your platform. Use your book as the foundation. Your Amazon author's page is a valuable resource, take full advantage (update posts, seek reviews, share video clips). Don't have a completed book yet? Use your blog posts, website, social media and email lists to get the word out and make connections.

## Fred's Three-Legged EXPERT Stool



### Writing

Content is King.

Build from what you already have or start with one thing and continually expand from there.

### Speaking

Reach out to local news outlets on topics related to your book and offer to give a brief interview. Attend local trade associations, chambers of commerce and toastmaster's groups. It's a great way to gain exposure, plus you can practice honing the "elevator pitch" for your book.

### Marketing

Social media is an effective way to spread the word about your book and upcoming events, while connecting to fans and future supporters. You don't need to be active on every service available. Start with one or two and maintain a regular presence. Whichever ones you choose, be sure to publicize each of your events across all your platforms, before *and* after the event (and post plenty of pictures).



NOTICE: Starting this month, all member payments submitted on our website (annual dues, special events, etc.) will process through Affinipay instead of PayPal. You will incur no additional fees because of this switch. The change is required by our hosting service, Wild Apricot. We appreciate your support.



## Meetings on the second Wednesday of the month

### Monthly Meeting Admission

- FREE for Members
- Guests – \$10 at the door
- Annual Membership – \$60 per year  
(*guest fee applied to membership if you join that evening*)

Doors open for networking at 6:30pm  
Program begins at 7pm

The meeting concludes around 8:30pm  
Networking until 9pm

THE HEIGHTS: Richmond Heights  
Community Center

The Argus Room • 8001 Dale Ave.  
Richmond Heights, MO 63117  
(Child care available at THE HEIGHTS)

### SLPA NEWS & VIEWS

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