



What It Takes to Go "Above & Beyond"

By Andrew Doty

Sure, any book should be designed professionally and printed with care, but the reality is that when you're printing through print-on-demand technology, any mistakes in the book can be corrected, and your files can be reuploaded to correct mistakes in a matter of days. If you're using offset printing and ordering thousands of copies at a time — you'd better not mess up!

What does a publisher need to keep in mind when designing and printing a high-quality book? What are the unique demands of typesetting, layout, binding, and shipping, and how are they different from lower-quality book publishing? What is "quality," anyway, and what can go wrong in its pursuit? How do you keep design elements consistent, use the right tools for the job, understand how ink colors will change during the translation from digital to physical media, and design with the end product in mind?

Our May panelists can tell you all about the highs and lows of their publishing journeys.

Lindy Drew, co-author of the book *Humans of St. Louis*, recalls that the three most crucial aspects of her book's production were finances, teamwork, and the flexibility to pivot. At times, these elements overlapped, such as when the original book designer couldn't see the project through, requiring the publishers to find new designers mid-project for a 544-page, full-color book packed with high-resolution photography



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The Heights

and carefully curated stories. Then, the project ran into another hurdle when the pandemic affected their intended printer's availability, causing them to search for a new printer at the last minute. This change in printers came with its own issues, including problems with color rendering that took time to sort out.

Jim Harper, publisher and designer of *Archibald's Next Big Thing* and *Tom Hück: The Devil Is in the Details*, explains that printing the Tom Hück book was thankfully simple, despite a relief-cut book cover; time constraints were the biggest problem. His production team collected hundreds of high-quality photos of the artist's work, but coordinating the writing with the photographer turned out to be a tall order, leading to unpredictability in the page layouts, which was exacerbated by issues flagged during fact-checking and editing. When the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY) organized an event with Hück and invited the publisher to release their book there, they couldn't say no, creating a deadline for publication that led to many work-filled weekends and late nights.



Delores Eddington

relates their experiences with creating hand-made books, using both print-on-demand and offset printers to create projects, explaining the pros and cons of each approach. Color and printing can be unpredictable with print-on-demand, while printing and hand-binding books requires an incredible amount of time and labor, making the product unsustainable from a sales perspective. Using a local printer offers more control over the end result, but often requires an investment and commitment to producing on the level of thousands of copies at a time.



Hear these publishers' stories — and ask your own questions — at "Above & Beyond: A High-Quality Book Design & Printing Panel," a May 8 panel discussion brought to you by the St. Louis Publishers Association.

ZOOM

Sign-up is free. Join from your smartphone, computer, or tablet. If it's your first time, follow the prompts and allow it to access your camera and microphone. Use this link for the meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/94227448734>.

Meeting ID is 942 2744 8734. Passcode is 563402.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Live-Stream the monthly meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/94227448734>

May 8, 7:00–8:30 p.m.
High-Quality Book Design & Printing
Panel Discussion
@ The Heights
8001 Dale Avenue, Richmond Heights, MO
(doors open at 6:30 p.m.)

June 12, 6:00–7:30 p.m.
Field Trip to Advertisers Printing
1229 S. Vandeventer Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63110

The Field Trip to Advertisers Printing and featuring Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Have you ever wanted to get an inside look at the book printing process? Let the SLPA take you on a tour of one of St. Louis's largest printers to see what goes into creating your book!

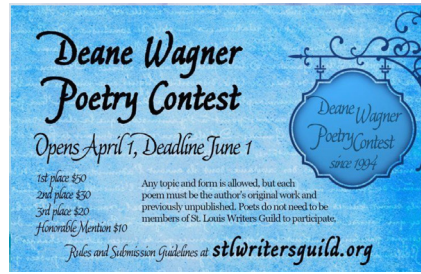
Advertisers Printing is a family-owned and -operated printing company in St. Louis that has been in business for more than 100 years. Providing both offset and digital printing, Advertisers handles solutions for books, magazines, brochures, promotional items, and direct mail.

On June 12, Alex Fechner of Advertisers Printing will offer SLPA members and attendees a free tour of their facilities at 1229 S. Vandeventer Avenue. This will be a great opportunity to learn what makes printing such a specialized job — and what makes good printing so impressive.

This event will not be at our usual day, time, or location. Join us at **6:00 p.m. on June 12 at 1229 S. Vandeventer Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63110.**

Poetry Contest Is Open for 2024

The annual Deane Wagner Poetry Contest of the St. Louis Writer's Guild (SLWG) is open for submissions. SLWG membership is not required to enter. For details of rules and guidelines, go to stlwritersguild.org. **Deadline: June 1.**



Upcoming SLPA Events

We have Member Meetings and special events mapped out for you for the year! Mark your calendar for these 2024 SLPA events — and let us know if there are colleagues you'd like to hear from and subjects you'd like to learn about, because there's room to add new presenters and topics for Member Meetings later in the year. Send your ideas to info@slpa.org.

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are in person at 7 p.m. at The Heights and available via Zoom. Member Meetings are free to SLPA members. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you.

Speakers and topics confirmed:

- **May 8**, Member Meeting — “High-Quality Book Printing,” panel discussion with Lindy Drew, Jim Harper, and Delores Eddington (see article in this issue)
- **June 12**, Member Meeting — Tour of Advertisers Printing, 1229 S. Vandeventer, St. Louis, MO 63110
- **July 13**, St. Louis Writers Guild (SLWG) Community Partner Fair, 10 a.m.–12 noon, Lodge Des Peres
- **October 26**, Annual Conference

Speakers and topics will be announced for upcoming Member Meetings in further newsletters:



LAST MONTH'S RECAP James Gibson Provides Insights about Writing and Publishing

In his April presentation, “You Should Write a Book,” James Gibson said his writing and publishing story began at Half Dome in Yosemite National Park. “I am very afraid of heights. Fear is a great motivator. It challenges you to do something.” He set a goal of hiking the Muir Trail, and his book came out of that experience. It took eight years to write and publish it. “To make it the best it could be and reach as wide an audience as possible, there were no shortcuts. I didn't want to hurry,” he said.



James Gibson

Gibson's technique was unusual: He wrote on an iPad in AppleNotes, often in a bar.

Gibson said the writing process often has its own goal and reward, because “90% of self-published books only sell fewer than 100 copies.”

For test or beta readers, Gibson said, “Never pick family. Pick people who know you and/or know your topic, and who will tell you the truth.”

For the best results, work with an editor and designer. “There's a balance between

the writer and editor,” Gibson said. “Get an editor you can trust and talk to.” Invest in a professional book cover: “The cover design is your billboard, so it's really, really important.”

So is quality in images and presentation skills. “If you're going to use photos or (do) speaking, get some training.”

With advice, “take what you like and reject what does not work. You have to write *your* book,” Gibson said.

Getting published involves business matters. “You have to worry about the IRS — is writing a hobby or a business? Set up an LLC and your own publishing company. Have a separate business bank account.” Document everything related to the book. To claim a home office, “make sure you can justify, document, and prove it” as a workspace.

If writing a memoir, liability issues can arise.

Understanding marketing is key. “It's important to figure out your target audience and where your book would fit in a bookstore,” Gibson said. “You've gotta be on Instagram. Set sales goals and budget for ads. He said most of his sales come from his website.

To hear Gibson's presentation, see the SLPA website.

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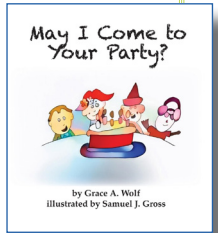
Grace A. Wolf's book *May I Come to Your Party?* has received the Literary Titan Gold Book Award. A review at the site says in part that the book is “a poignant and thoughtful exploration of the challenges faced by children on the autism spectrum, as seen through the experiences of the protagonist, Jimmy ... His journey underscores the often-overlooked emotional impact of feeling excluded due to being perceived as different ...

“The narrative strongly advocates for seeing beyond these differences, affirming that every child, including those with autism, deserves acceptance and inclusion. *“May I Come to Your Party?”* is a significant contribution to children's literature, addressing vital themes of empathy, understanding, and the value of including everyone, regardless of their differences. Wolf's narrative is a testament to the transformative power of embracing physical and intellectual diversity, fostering a sense of belonging and unity among children.”

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Wolf is a senior at Clayton High School and will be going to Stanford in the fall.



Meetings are on the second Wednesday of every month

In-person meetings have resumed at The Heights

Free to SLPA members, \$10 to nonmembers.

Zoom access is free to all.

Admission and Membership

- Monthly meetings
- [Membership is \\$60 per year.](#)

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