



Accessibility and Representation in Publishing

By Mary Fashik

Publishing, by far, is one of the most difficult industries to break into. If you represent a marginalized group, it is that much more difficult. Currently, only 6% of all authors identify as Black, 4% Hispanic/Latino/Latinx, 5% Asian, and 4% disabled. The lack of representation is astonishing. It is even more so regarding disabled authors when you realize that a quarter of the world's population identifies as having some sort of disability.

The question remains: What can be done to increase both access and representation within the publishing industry? The answer may not be as simple as giving someone an opportunity. Some disabled individuals may have access needs, such as extended deadlines or software to make the writing process smoother. Their talent should never be doubted or questioned due to access needs.

There is also the factor of how the general public perceives disability. While there are a number of books about disability readily

February 14, 2024
The Heights

available, a majority are either purely inspirational or written by someone who is not disabled. A disabled author may choose a different path with their storytelling. This may make the publisher hesitant. Will readers be open to such a different narrative?



Mary Fashik

It is time for the publishing industry to broaden their horizons. Readers, particularly disabled audiences, are clamoring for more representation—authentic representation. Books and authors should be just as diverse as the society they represent.

About the presenter: Mary Fashik

Presenter Mary Fashik (she/her) is a Lebanese-born queer disability rights activist, author, public speaker, and workshop facilitator. In 2019, she founded Upgrade Accessibility, a movement designed to challenge today's accessibility standards that now also includes disability rights, intersectionality, disability justice, and equity.

Fashik is a member of the National Disability Mentoring Coalition's Susan Daniels Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame, an honoree on Diversability's 2021 D-30 Disability Impact List, and Accessibility Advisor of the Year in Corporate Live Wire's 2022-2023 Global Awards. Her podcast, The Politics of Disability, was chosen as Best Interview Podcast at the 2022 and 2023 Astoria Film Festival.

She will provide SLPA colleagues with insights into how writers, designers, and publishers can enhance respect, diversity, accessibility, inclusion, and equity in what we publish and ensure that all we do represents those values.

Check the SLPA website (stlouispublishers.org) for information about upcoming events.

2024 SLPA Vendor Showcase is an Opportunity to Build Your Publishing Team



Are you an author looking for an editor, proofreader, indexer, photographer, illustrator, layout professional, or website designer? Are you a provider of such services seeking authors to work for and colleagues to partner with? The SLPA has an event for you!

Our annual SLPA Vendor Showcase, where service providers display examples of their work and explain what they do, makes it easy to connect. Authors will have the opportunity to check out the work of vendors who can help make their books read and look their

best. Service providers will meet potential clients from among SLPA authors.

This year's SLPA Vendor Showcase will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Mar. 13, at The Heights. It's a great way for authors to meet the people who can contribute to the look and content of their books, and help them reach the goal of getting published with books that attract readers. It's also a great way for vendors to meet new clients and colleagues.

The event is free for authors to attend.

Refreshments will be provided. Parking is free.

There will be space for 15 vendors to display their work and business information. The cost of a display space is \$25 for SLPA members and \$50 for non-members; tables will be provided. To apply for a display space, go to:

<https://forms.gle/Qhm1SCuSijewCny27>

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>

February 14, 7:00–8:30 p.m.
"Accessibility and Representation in Publishing"
by [Mary Fashik](#)
@ The Heights
8001 Dale Avenue, Richmond Heights, MO
(doors open at 6:30 p.m.)

March 13, 7:00–8:30 p.m.
SLPA Vendor Showcase
@ The Heights
8001 Dale Avenue, Richmond Heights, MO
(doors open at 6:30 p.m.)

SLPA Board Meets to Plan 2024 Programming



The 2024 SLPA board held a planning session on January 27 to set directions for the new year. Attending were: in person (l-r), Dixie Gillaspie, Michael DePung, Jo Lena Johnson-Anderson, Andrew Doty, Linda Austin, Kerri Holloway, Kevin Ericson; via Zoom, Sean Gold and Ruth Thaler-Carter.

KUDOS CORNER

Share Your Good News!

For the Kudos Corner of the SLPA newsletter, we would like to hear from members with good news about your successes, such as new publications and upcoming presentations or events. Send items, including images such as book covers or author photos, to newsletter editor Ruth E. Thaler-Carter at Ruth@writerruth.com. Publishing announcements may include links to your books.

I've Been Writing and Writing... Now What?



Jo Lena Johnson-Anderson

Join SLPA VP and Publishing Coach Jo Lena Johnson-Anderson in an interactive opportunity to ask, listen, learn, and achieve book-related goals.

March 7, 2024 11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Join ZOOM meeting:

zoom.us/j/99904982996?pwd=MFlaUZ5WVdDTFjdndJcGRHNkdscz09

Meeting ID: 999 0498 2996
Passcode: 854680



LAST MONTH'S RECAP Smooth Sailing to Publication

It takes more than a great idea and a strong writing voice to get published; it takes a team — but it can be a challenge for authors to find, select and work well with the professional services. At the January 2024 program, SLPA communications director/newsletter editor Ruth E. Thaler-Carter provided a helping hand with tips for “Smooth Sailing to Publication: How Authors, Editors, Proofreaders, and Designers Can Work Together.”

Acknowledge why authors need professional editors, proofreaders, designers, etc.:

- It's hard for writers to edit and proofread our own work; we see what we mean to say.
- Even the best and most-published writers can overlook misspellings, missing words, factual and grammar errors, style inconsistencies, etc.
- Aspiring new authors might not be skilled in the writing process itself.
- Errors can sneak in at any stage of the publishing process.
- Microsoft Word is not a publishing program!

Find the publishing service providers you need through:

- SLPA members
- St. Louis Writers Guild
- Missouri Professional Communicators
- National Association of Independent Writers and Editors (NAIWE)
- Editorial Freelancers Association (EFA)
- Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)

- LinkedIn and Facebook groups
- Referrals from colleagues and friends

To smooth your publishing path:

- Save money ahead of time to afford experienced, skilled professionals.
- Use providers who belong to professional organizations such as the above.
- Be leery of providers with super-low fees or without websites.
- Request and check references!
- Have an agreement or contract, even if just a checklist of who does what and when.
- Establish guidelines for how and when to contact each other (and not to!).
- Make sure everyone is familiar and comfortable with technology and software being used, especially Microsoft Word and its Track Changes function.
- Ask questions!
- Send the same sample to every provider being considered.
- Say which style guide you prefer — style guides ensure consistency; don't use editors/proofreaders who don't know what they are.
- Keep manuscripts simple: 1-inch margins, double-spaced, Times Roman 12 pt. type, no fancy colors or designs. A page = 250 words, no matter how it's formatted.
- Provide examples that you like for book cover and interior formats, page size, colors, types of images (illustrations vs. photos), etc.
- Set realistic timeframes/deadlines (add a couple hours to cover roadblocks).
- Be patient!

The SLPA Needs You!



Interested in being more involved? We need volunteers for these leadership positions. Contact President Andrew Doty at president@stlouispublishers.org for details.

- o Graphic Designer
- o A/V Manager
- o Treasurer
- o Social Media Manager



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.](#)

Visit: stlouispublishers.org/join
stlouispublishers.org/benefits

SLPA News & Views

Editor: [Ruth Thaler-Carter](#)

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