

Editor's Message

Fred Gebhart



Welcome to October and to yet another chapter of that oft-quoted Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times." And the times seem genuinely interesting. I use "seem" because social and economic data tend to appear well after the fact and are subject to endless revision, reinterpretation, and reinvention. Not unlike medical findings.

But most of us live in the present. And absent definitive data, we operate on our best evaluation of what seems to be going on. And what seems to be going on is all over the board.

On one side, this issue of *The Pacemaker* is a bit later and thinner than expected. The problem: several of our erstwhile contributors were late, begged off, or disappeared entirely due to unexpected projects. As editor, it's hard to argue with their reasoning, not least because I'm one of them.

When it comes to choosing between putting groceries on the table or writing for *The Pacemaker*, I'm solidly on the side of groceries.

I can only hope that more of us are faced with the same problem of an unexpected gig or two in the coming months. Kudos to those clients who seem to remember what clients are supposed to do on a regular basis, which is to hire our services. Or maybe it's just a September surprise sprung by hiring managers who got back from end-of-summer vacations.

The real question is how long clients will remain in a buying mood. Many of us are employed by the pharmaceutical industry, directly or

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through various agencies or subcontractors. Another segment of our profession depends on the continued good health of Pharma for the advertising support that publications depend on. And that continued good health is in question.

Any number of once-active local names such as Syntex have disappeared. Others, including Genentech, have become cogs in larger corporate wheels. Fair disclosure: I wrote for Roche in the distant past through one of their European agencies, but have never worked for Genentech.

The picture is equally grim in the East. Not long ago, New Jersey was home to three Pharma giants, Merck, Wyeth, and Schering-Plough. Merck and Schering are merging and Wyeth looks set to join Pfizer. Pharma job losses are well ahead of this same period in 2008, when the industry worried that the world was coming to an end. Mergers have slowed the already slow pace of product rollouts, launches, and educational events. That means less work for medical writers.

If consolidation isn't enough, a flood of patent expirations is due to hit the industry in the next few years. New patents mean new products and new projects. Expiring patents mean less work for everyone except generic firms, not known as major employers of medical writers.

Which brings us back to "interesting times." I happened to mention it to a Hong Kong-born editor and mentor. She had never heard of "interesting times" as a curse until she moved U.S. for university several decades go.

She asked her own Chinese-born friends. They had never heard of it, either, except in English. None knew where it came from, but several offered the Wikipedia version.

"May you live in interesting times" seems to have been created sometime before 1936 by the British community in China. The earliest reference seems to be from Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, appointed British Ambassador to Beijing in 1936, who attributed the saying to an anonymous friend who had spent several years in China

Welcome to interesting times, which may, or may not, be what they seem.

Save the Date and Choose the Year

The Pacific Coast Conference is coming. But you knew that from the last issue of *The Pacemaker*.

What you didn't know from the last issue is that PCC registration is coming, and coming fast. Details will follow in an email blast, but look for online registration to open on Dec. 10. The conference runs April 18 to 21, 2010 at Asilomar.

Why does the opening date for registration matter? Two reasons: One is a brand new line up of keynote presentations, credit workshops, and noncredit workshops. The other is all about budgets and taxes.

Opening registration in early December lets attendees choose whether to take the expense in 2009 or in 2010.

Register early if you should—or must—book the cost of the 2010 PCC during 2009. Early registration is the automatic choice for anyone who has a use-it-or-lose-it education or conference budget allocation for this year. And in this era of uncertain budgets, if you've got the allocation now, use it! You might not have the same flexibility in 2010.

The same goes for anyone who is getting an unexpected payment toward the end of this year and wants to minimize taxes: Register in December! It's a classic tax strategy, shifting expenses into this year in order to reduce taxable income. And it's perfectly legal.

Not lucky enough to be getting a large payment late this year? Welcome to the club. And welcome to the majority who register the same year as the conference.

But don't put it off. Registration closes March 10, 2010. After that, you're out of luck until 2011. Whether you're better off registering in 2009 or in 2010, it's your choice. As the Swoosh says, just do it!

RECEIVE \$25 GIFT CARDS

That's right, \$25. It's not a typo!

AMWA is giving away \$25 gift cards from Amazon.com to every AMWA member who successfully recruits a new member in 2009. No drawing to enter, no waiting.

Just successfully recruit a new member by December 31, 2009, and the gift card is yours.

One gift card for every new member you recruit and there is no limit to the number of gift cards you can receive!

More detailed information and a form are available on our Website

Alternative Medicine Malpractice

Joel Kirschbaum, Institute for Motivated Behavior

Originally published in the *Journal of Irreproducible Results*

This essay demonstrates why all paid practitioners, providers, advisors, and advocates of "alternative" medicine need malpractice insurance to mitigate mistakes, in a manner similar to main-stream medical personnel.

The most recent and best-known example of complementary medicine liabilities are the lawsuits over deaths and injuries from ingesting the natural product ephedra. There have been other adverse interactions of ill-advised ingested herbs in individuals also administered prescription medications. Below are possible other causes for legal actions involving various branches of "alternative" medicine.

Acupuncture: The Chinese theory promulgated behind the efficacy of acupuncture is that a form of energy, called Qi, flows in people. Disrupted movement is claimed to cause allergies, anxiety, pain, fatigue, insomnia, stress or vertigo, so needles are inserted into the skin to aid Qi circulation.

It's possible the patient might think that when the needle was removed, a geyser of hemorrhaging, "uncoagulated" Qi spouts from the puncture. To such a patient, this would result in both believing that the initial symptoms worsened and the possibility of additional ailments occurring.

To avoid accusations of ineptness, the acupuncturist should show that any needed replacement Qi was transfused from a guaranteed healthy donor. Any failure here to act to alleviate anxiety opens the acupuncturist to malpractice lawsuits.

Question: In China, are precautions taken to avoid any accusations that believing athletes were "doped" with Qi before competitions?

Art Therapy: In attempts to relieve stress, the individual does drawings. Unfortunately, a poorly-pictured, unrealistically-long finger may result, in today's climate of concerns, as being a threat if it is interpreted as being a hand-held weapon. The prosecutor may need convincing it's bad art and not intimidation.

Astrology: Following is a table listing some of the common general advice given to millions, and the adverse possible consequences to some specific individuals.

Ambiguous Astrological Advice (Possible Adverse Effect

- Persevere in making a friend (Sexual harassment charges
- Demand a pay increase or promotion (Job termination
- Trust new investments to be successful (Conned into losing savings
- Express yourself strongly! (Punched and pummeled
- Money woes can be a gift (No happiness in homelessness

Aura Imagery: The theory is that there is a colored energy field surrounding each person. This “picture” is interpreted by the observer to disclose and diagnose diseases. Some viewers claim to be able to obtain a correct diagnosis even from a mailed photograph of the person. There is prima facie evidence of malpractice if the practitioner is color blind, or if the picture was in black and white.

Chiropractic: This is the favorite therapy of those in minor auto accidents, since the typical lengthy duration of treatment should result in a correspondingly inflated civil settlement. A disappointingly low legal accord can only be blamed on either poor performance or incomplete paperwork from the practitioner.

Channeling: Attempts to obtain accurate information from those who have “passed over”, if eventually found to be false, may have meant that the wrong person was contacted. Thus, proper proof of identity of the deceased is essential before interrogating the dead for data. Other possible causes of wrong information are attributable to the deceased having suffered brain damage while “in transit”; or, if the departed retained a sense of humor, and rewarded resented disturbances or “wrong number” contacts with “prank” erroneous information. All lapses are left to the lawyers to alleviate.

Colonic Irrigation: The theoretical basis of this technique is that, for example, a 40-year old is slowly being poisoned by toxins released from as much as 30 pounds of waste matter residing in the gut for as long as 20 years. Since people claiming to have been abducted by aliens also frequently describe intensive intestinal investigations, there appears to exist a common fascination regarding waste as warranting worship

and worthiness. The irrigation-interested are prone to bowel perforation and electrolyte imbalance; which should be mitigated monetarily at the expense of the irrigator.

Feng Shui: Arranging furniture to ensure prosperity, good health, love, and long life must be accompanied by photographs to prevent any future accidental re-arrangements and misalignments. Otherwise, the original arranger will be asked to allay adverse effects financially. Incidentally, if the feng shui precept that an uncovered toilet causes wealth to go down the drain is valid, then a lucrative way to help pay malpractice premiums would be scraping sewerage filters. I tested this toilet precept by leaving \$20, \$10, and \$1 bills, plus a roll of quarters, adjacent to a toilet with a raised lid for 2 months. No decrease in wealth shows no adverse lid-lifting effects. I conclude that one’s savings are secure from submersion. No growth also disproved the adage that “The rich get richer”.

Homeopathy: Since the amount of any active ingredients is infinitesimal, and homeopathy operates via the placebo effect, any adverse side-effects are entirely imaginary. Thus, in any such suit, the claimant should be incarcerated for fraud.

Since pets are unaware of and, thus, untouched by the placebo effect, homeopathic remedies unwittingly administered to animals attract abuse attention by both the ASPCA and PETA.

Iridology: This “diagnostic tool” involves examining the iris of the eye to ascertain the status of the internal organs for abnormalities (for example, the condition of the penis or vagina is said to appear at about 150 degrees). Since there are about 3,000 ailments and conditions, the examiner now must have such modern equipment as a laser goniometer to measure degrees, minutes, and seconds to accurately differentiate diseases. Merely estimating angles using the examiner’s eyeballs is malpractice. And both of the patient’s eyes must produce the identical diagnosis, as an instantaneous, mandatory, corroborating, second opinion.

Macrobiotics: A vegetarian diet cuts links off the food

chain, so that one benefit is that additional people on the planet can receive sustenance. But instead of the animals venting digestive gases to the atmosphere, a vegan may expel these unpleasant effects indoors; even at concerts, movies and operas, thus decreasing the quality of life of others. This is cause to enter tort court.

Ayurvedic is a variant of a macrobiotic diet with strong spices, which may cause heartburn, reflux and esophageal erosion.

Massage: Properly performed, a gift from the Gods. It's almost always appropriately applied to athletes, the elderly and the ache-afflicted. The danger comes from the therapist attempting to rotate, twist or pull parts and joints beyond the usual anatomical limits. Acupressure involving the added use of hot stones means that extreme care is necessary to prevent crushing and/or burning tissues.

Music Therapy: Turning to rhythmic music to increase the level of mental health can deviate to the detrimental if, for example, a soprano and a bass in a chorus leave their respective spouses for each other. Avoiding making marital disharmony is the responsibility of the conductor and the chorus master. Long, loud works, like Mahler's symphonies, should be avoided since they can tire the performers, and thus lead to fatigue-induced auto accidents. In addition, such loud music as the "Symphony of a Thousand" is a hearing health hazard.

Naturopathy: This is essentially the same as homeopathic medicine except for the addition of advocating the use of warming socks, and hot or cold compresses. Here, any adverse effects traced to the constriction of circulation are the responsibility of the therapist.

Negative Energy: Many practitioners of alternative medicine emphasize avoiding "negative" energy. But if electricity, which consists of the flow of negatively charged electrons, is to be shunned, then there are many scenarios which can lead to injury.

- Using a bicycle or rollerblades rather than a car (particularly an electrically or battery powered vehicle) exposes the rider to more hazards—especially if headlights or flashlights are not used after dark.
- Fireplaces, rather than furnaces, expose the user to asphyxiation.
- Candle light is too dim to prevent eye damage.

New Age Healing: Here, the emphasis is on the healing power of crystals. But the subject must be advised to avoid those with sharp, cutting edges; otherwise lethal lacerations might occur. Wearing home-grown ice crystals without insulation may cause chills and even induce infections. Additionally, melted ice crystals may cause electrocution as negative energy erupts from a leaky electric line, leaving a lost life.

Numerology: When the numerical values assigned to each letter of the person's name and the birth date are repeatedly summed, the results should be a number between 1 and 9. If the numerologist finds a negative number, a zero or a fraction, this is both unprofessional and proof of a failure. Another cause for legal action is refusing recalculations to attempt to obtain a more auspicious number; for example, not switching from the usual base 10 to base 5, 6 or 12.

Psychic Assistance: Charging a fee for this service is an oxymoronic situation, since a true psychic would be rich from either finding lost treasure or from capital gains from the stock market. Paid, non pro bono, psychics should be punished for impersonation, the best way our get-rich-quick society allows; i.e., in civil and criminal courts.

Reflexology: Precautions to prevent the spread of athlete's foot must be taken.

Vortex Power: To amplify the power of a vortex to heal requires relocating rocks in the form of a circle, possibly resulting in a rupture.

It's too bad that the precepts of alternative medicine aren't perfect. We would all like guarantees to grow richer, younger, healthier, and happier, even while asleep. It would be great to find true love with a presently-uncaring object of affection, and to be able predict the future, ranging from foreknowledge of an avoidable accident to picking the perfect pizzeria.

Of greater concern, claims of cancer cures, for cash, are contracts that can be carried to tort court.

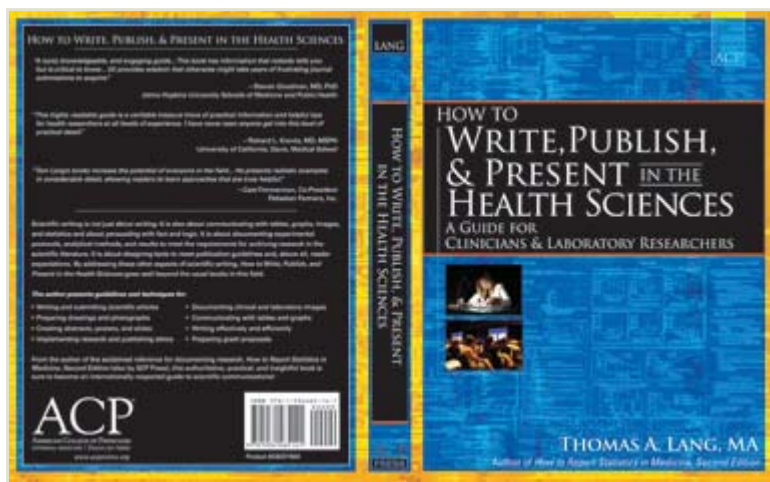
The same high level of performance that is presently provided by physicians to patients should be expected from providers of alternative medicine. Sub-par suppliers of succor

should surely expect subpoenas and, subsequently, time- and wealth-consuming suits.

Copyright *Journal of Irreproducible Results* and Norman Sperling. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission. For more medical madness and pseudoscientific serendipity, go to <http://jir.com>, where \$26 will prove all theories with a single graph.

What Our Members Are Publishing

Tom Lang. *How to Write, Publish, and Present in the Health Sciences: Guidelines for Clinicians and Laboratory Researchers*. Philadelphia: American College of Physicians, 2009. 389 pages.



A profound, if unacknowledged, truth is that science could not exist without writing.

The characteristics that make science science—that it is public, objective, reproducible, predictive, cumulative, and systematic—all depend on written communication. Further, publication is the final stage of research. If the research is not published, it never happened. Scientific writing and publishing drive the advancement of both science and scientists.

Another truth, likewise unacknowledged, is that scientific writing is not just about writing. It is about communicating with graphs, tables, statistics, and images, as well as with words.

It is about persuading readers with reason, fact, and logic to accept the research as credible. It is about documenting experimental protocols, analytical methods, and results so that the research can be evaluated,

interpreted, and replicated. It is about archiving the research in the scientific literature so that others can find it, learn it, and build on it.

By addressing these other functions of scientific writing, *How to Write, Publish, and Present in the Health Sciences* goes well beyond the usual books in this field to create a uniquely valuable resource. It provides advice and techniques for preparing formal scientific communications: abstracts, posters, slides, grant proposals, and scientific articles. It also addresses the related topics of writing effectively and efficiently; preparing tables, graphs, drawings, and photographs for publication; creating posters and slides; and documenting clinical and laboratory images for publication.

Tom Lang, MA, began his career in scientific publications in 1973, at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He has been a medical writer at Loma Linda University Medical Center; a senior grant writer at California State University, Chico; Manager of Medical Editing Services for the Cleveland Clinic; and a senior scientific writer at the Evidence-based Practice Center at Tufts University/New England Medical Center. He is now an international consultant and educator in medical writing and editing, scientific publications, and written communication.

Tom is a Past President of the Council of Science Editors, Treasurer of the World Association of Medical Editors, and the recipient of the American Medical Writers Association's 2002 Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to medical communications.

His book, *How To Report Statistics in Medicine: Annotated Guidelines for Authors, Editors, and Reviewers*, now in its second edition, has become a standard reference. He teaches medical writing at the University of Chicago and the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia and has received teaching awards from the University of Chicago, the American Statistical Association, and the American Medical Writers Association. His master's degree is in Communications Management from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California.

Price from the publisher with credit cards or invoices: \$60 plus shipping and handling. Call 800-523-1546; ask for the book department (ext 2600) or order on-line at www.acponline.org.

Price from the author: \$55, shipping and handling included. Order online with PayPal at www.tomlangcommunications.com or by check to:

Tom Lang
1925 Donner Ave., #3
Davis, CA 95618
530-758-871

We Need Your Publications!

Free publicity is sometimes worth what it costs. And sometimes free publicity is invaluable, like those times when it goes directly to other AMWA members.

We want to add a regular feature in *The Pacemaker* to highlight chapter member publications. But we can only highlight member publications if we know what our members are publishing! Send press releases, jacket copy, even a quick note, to *Pacemaker* editor Fred Gebhart.

It doesn't have to be a book and it doesn't have to be medical writing.. Many of our members produce magazine articles, websites, and other materials that may, or may not, have anything to do with with biomedicine. Think Oliver Sachs, whose engaging travelogues are only peripherally linked to healthcare, or member Mary Roach, who has written about sex, death, and other popular topics. If you publish it, we can help publicize it.

Pacific Coast Conference Schedule Filling Fast

Workshops for the 2010 Pacific Coast Conference at Asilomar are filling fast. A few open slots remained at deadline, but here's the current line up. Events kick off on Sunday, April 18 and wrap with lunch on Wednesday, April 21.

Keynote Presentations

We have two keynoters this year, ethnobotanist and best-selling author Mark Plotkin, Ph.D. (cofounder and current President of the Amazon Conservation Team, ACT) and Robert Urban, Ph.D (Executive Director, Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

Dr. Plotkin will discuss Conservation, Indigenous Plants, and Medicine. The presentation will explore his work to preserve indigenous cultures of

the Amazon basin and their knowledge of healing plants and to promote ecological awareness and preservation of the rapidly dwindling forests. Part of this effort has been to foster a collaborative, mutually beneficial relationship between pharmaceutical companies and the often poor and under-served regions that are the source for many modern medications.

Dr. Urban will discuss Building the Future of Cancer Research at MIT. The presentation focuses on the creation and work of the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. While the Institute does not provide clinical care, research has a direct impact on clinical oncology with a range of new solutions, including nanotherapeutics, detection & monitoring, metastasis, personalized medicine, and tumor immunology.

Credit Workshops

We have four credit workshops scheduled, three in the core curriculum and one advanced course. Core workshops include Tables and Graphs (G; EW), taught by Howard Smith; Author-Editor Relationship (EW), taught by Dan Liberthson and Susan Eastwood; and Basic Immunology for Medical Writers and Editors (S), taught by Michael Petrarca.

The advanced course for 2010 will be Understanding Risks and Ratios, taught by Tom Lang,

Noncredit Workshops

We currently have five noncredit courses in the schedule:

- Biostatistics for Medical Writers, by Robert Hoop
- Effective Module 2 Summaries, by Nancy Katz
- Nanotechnology, by Tejal Desai
- Autoimmune Disorders, by Matthew Frankel
- Global Product Development, by Suzette Dowling

Other Activities

The BELS exam will be offered on Sunday, April 18, with a separate registration and fee. Details will be available online when registration opens on Dec. 10.

We also have a full slate of social events, including a freelance discussion forum and a general avocations forum. And no Pacific Coast Conference would be complete without our very own Beach Stomp in Search of Bioluminescence following the annual Banquet.

The Word Witch: Subduing Feral Fields

Maggie Norris

This item demonstrates the procedure for eliminating the annoying pop-ups and other erratic behavior in Word files containing hidden hyperlinked fields.

Definition of "field" From Webopedia.com:

A space allocated for a particular item of information. A tax form, for example, contains a number of fields: one for your name, one for your Social Security number, one for your income, and so on. In database systems, fields are the smallest units of information you can access. In spreadsheets, fields are called cells.

Microsoft Word has a slightly different definition. In Word, a field is a type of electronic formatting related to hyperlinking. Those of us who work with complex documents are familiar with fields: automatic page numbers are fields; headers and footers are a kind of field. Autonumbering uses fields, too. Most kinds of automatic updating are accomplished with fields. Well controlled, fields and automatic updates can save a lot of drudgery and reduce errors. Running loose, they can degenerate to nuisances.

Feral Fields case study

A colleague was having some problems a couple of weeks ago with a file that had annoying little popup notes all through it. All the text looked the same, but when her pointer touched certain words in a sentence, a note window would pop open over the text on the screen.

This was distracting and annoying, but even worse, if she happened to click on one of these hidden spots, it launched her web browser and took her, eventually, to some web site. About half the time, the web site was PubMed. The rest of the time, the website seemed random. She just wanted the web links to go away!

It turned out that (a) some passages of text in the file had been pasted in from a Wikipedia article, and (b) some text had been pasted in from a Word file that contained citations linked to a references database stored, it appeared, on the PubMed site itself.

When the text was pasted, the hyperlink coding attached to some words came along. These tag-along hyperlinks are what I'm calling "feral fields." They are really "feral hyperlinks," but Word calls them "fields," so we will, too.

This kind of thing can happen with any text pasted in from the Web or, for that matter, from other Word files with hyperlinks (citations, external cross-references) in them.

Procedure:

Here's how to save the text but remove the hyperlink coding:

Make a back-up copy of your file.

In your working file, select the text containing the feral fields. (Press **Ctrl + A** to select the whole document only if you're sure there are no fields you want to keep active.) Then press **Ctrl + Shift + F9**. The text in all the fields is reformatted as "normal" text, taking on the attributes of the paragraph style (usually Body Text or Normal). The actual content of the text remains the same.

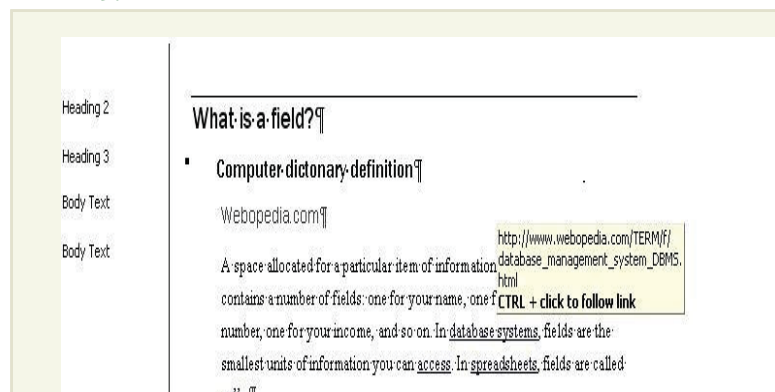
In Word 2004, you might have to activate a preference before you can get the right results. In the **Apple menu**, choose **System Preferences** and choose **Keyboard and Mouse**. Activate (check) Use **F1, F2**.



Screenshot 1. Feral field (text pasted into a Word doc from Wikipedia)

All text has been reformatted as Body Text, including text containing hyperlink coding. When the pointer touches the

hyperlinked text, a note pops up. To eliminate the hyperlinking code but leave the text itself unchanged, **select the text** and press **Ctrl + Shift + F9**.



Screenshot 2. Feral field (text pasted into a Word doc from a web site).

This is the definition of “field” from the Webopedia online dictionary, quoted above. This is how the paragraph appeared when I first pasted it in from the Webopedia site. If I were to apply the Body Text paragraph style sheet, the underscored (hyperlinked) text would be reformatted to the Body Text font; but the hyperlinking code would remain. The hyperlinks would be invisible, though still active. To eliminate the hyperlinking code but leave the text itself unchanged, select the text and press **Ctrl + Shift + F9**.

Like What You See?

Want to Make it Better?

The Pacemaker, our Northern California chapter newsletter, needs your help and your contributions.

Please send your likes, your dislikes, your suggestions, and your submissions to *Pacemaker* editor Fred Gebhart, pacemaker@amwancal.org. There's no pay, just lots of gratitude from the Board and other members. And as some of our contributors have discovered, an article in *The Pacemaker* can make a useful contribution to your portfolio. Nothing in the newsletter is proprietary, which gives you free reign to use articles as samples.

The deadline for submissions to the next bimonthly issue, due out in early December, is November 22, 2009.

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