



Tell Your Story Newsletter (TYSN):

Specializing in Entrepreneurial and Organizational Storytelling

Let me tell your story!

Welcome Mid-May, 2019!

Although we've had a very cool April and May, dominated by strong winds and limited heat, spring nonetheless has finally sprung in Saskatchewan! Garden centres have come to life and it's lovely to see the variety of seeds and plants available. Friends who are gardeners tell me that they have been mentally planning and replanning each row of flowers or vegetables for many weeks and even months!

This month's issue of "Tell Your Story Newsletter" shares insights on how "old-school writing tools" can enhance the output and quality of your writing.

In Storytellers' Corner, I share more jokes about writers and the trials and tribulations of writing life.

May is often a celebratory month for those shedding the shackles of a previous program or academic year. And literally everyone is trying to shed the memory of our severe winter! With the Victoria Day weekend now before us, how will you observe the unofficial start of summer?

May the delight of milder temperatures, time outdoors with family and friends and the ease of going "barefoot in sandals" bring you renewed health and joy, valued readers.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth

**Principal
Storytelling Communications**

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Article One: Want to Boost Your Creativity, Concentration and Speed as a Writer? How "Old-School Writing Tools" May Work in a Digital Age

This eNewsletter regularly reflects the tremendous variety of forms that writing can take. For instance, it's not uncommon in my monthly "Shop News" column for me to refer to business writing or copywriting (locally known as communications and marketing writing), fiction and poetry, literary criticism and academic writing, amongst others.

And despite the rapidity of our digital age (or perhaps because of it), some of these genres call for a "back to the basics" strategy. For instance, I visited Michael Katz's insights on the longevity of email and e-Newsletters for copywriters/business writers (see the February issue of "Tell Your Story Newsletter").

In a similar vein, I recently read with interest an article on the online cultural website, "Quartzzy," about how low-tech writing habits can produce great fiction (e.g. novels and short stories). Writer Ephrat Livni, although no luddite, cites the "literature of postmodernity" as showing that "sometimes the fastest route to great work involves taking the slow road."

"Old-Timey tools," like paper and pen, are the mainstay tools of renowned biographer Robert Caro, novelists/storytellers J.K. Rowling, Neil Gaiman, Joyce Carol Oates, as well as popular novelists like Stephen King and Danielle Steel.

Livni writes that celebrated novelist Don DeLillo prefers to use a typewriter when he writes, even though he must regularly get it repaired!

The problem with today's computers, Livni argues, is that they are "too efficient and make changing things too easy; and this ease can slow things down" in the creative process-- and in a bad way.

By contrast, writing by hand (or typing) enables writers to draft in a linear way, without giving in to temptation to edit their writing "before they know precisely where the story is going."

Neil Gaiman uses the metaphor of "building a brick wall without mortar" for the process of drafting a novel: " 'Find the next word. Write it down. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.' " Only after the structure is in place can the writer return to fill in the proverbial cracks with "mortar." The latter is often the easiest part.

DeLillo wrote in a 2007 article of the "New Yorker," that using an old typewriter allows him to work more thoughtfully, to see his words on a hard copy page of text: " ' Our *physical* involvement with

the typewriter . . . stands in relation to our connection with the PC as a fistfight does to a handshake.'

Explaining that, he says that a typewriter requires a writer to "stab" and clack out words, so that the writer knows s/he has achieved something. Such noise is strangely likable and encouraging, and to have to put yet another sheet of paper in the typewriter reinforces that the writer is accomplishing something valuable.

Contrast to that process the "gentle, pitter-patter sound" of typing at a computer, where the writer may have little sense of accomplishing anything, and in particular, no sense of clear division between drafting and the (potentially endless) processes of editing. Therein lies a huge problem.

Older techniques engage the writer's concentration, sustain creativity and ultimately increase speed over the newer, repetitive and cyclical processes of computer-based composition.

DeLillo shares that in this digital age, he now types only one paragraph for every page of his drafts, which gives him a greater sense of productivity and quality than before. He doesn't squint over "crowded pages." He can read a set of sentences more easily and can rewrite (edit) more easily and effectively, when he turns to that next phase of work. DeLillo says that the "white space" also helps him to "concentrate more deeply" on what he does write.

But typing or writing longhand requires more time to do, in an age where instantaneous "productivity" is seen as everything.

Livni says that research shows us that writing by hand improves our thinking: "Brain scans during the two activities--typing on a [computer] keyboard and handwriting--show that forming words by hand as opposed to on a keyboard leads to increased cognitive activity."

Psychologists have found that children and adults who use pens to take notes (rather than typing on a computer) retain information better, and increase their creativity, as they generate more new ideas, more quickly.

The computer certainly does have a space in the production of fiction and literature. But as Livni found, it belongs much later in the creative process--when revision and editing are involved. For the earliest, deepest thinking, plotting and drafting phases of a writer's work, pen and paper or an old fashioned typewriter, win out.

But this points to a deeper and more reflective approach to writing than many (if not most) fiction and non-fiction writers ever engage in. I'm convinced that it is the rapidly spun approach to writing (which we now associate with computer-based composition) that British critic and novelist Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (1863-1944) had in mind, decades ago, when he recommended that writers " 'Murder [their] darlings.' " He meant that writers should ruthlessly edit their manuscripts before sending them to press--deleting the words and sentences that by superficial, rapid revision have become too "precious" to the writer. Seductive expression can usurp deeper and more original thinking.

Although our minds today have been distracted by digital technology and its apparent speed, the ostensibly slower process of manual, creative writing shows that, at least for literary fiction, as psychologist Adam Grant says, "the pen is still mightier than the keyboard."

[READ MORE](#)

And now it's your turn: Are you willing to return to using a pen and paper or typewriter to plan the next document that you write? Could the insights and work of novelists apply to other forms of writing (e.g. copywriting)? Please write in; I'd be delighted to extend this conversation.

STORYTELLER's CORNER

STORYTELLER'S CORNER: Words, Stories, Riddles and Jokes on Writing and Editing . . .

(1) From A Writer's Dictionary:

"Tomorrow": A mystical land where 99% of all human productivity, motivation and achievement is stored.

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(2) One member's comment at a "Writers' Anonymous" Meeting:

" I was willing to overlook his comma abuse but when he started misplacing his apostrophes, I knew it was over."

(3) Sign posted on the door of a group therapy meeting:

PROCRASTINATION WORKSHOP:

**~~6 pm Today~~
POSTPONED**

(4) Sign posted on a writer's office door:

WARNING!

Novelist at Work!

BYSTANDERS MAY BE WRITTEN INTO THE STORY

SHOP NEWS:

Special thanks today to Lenore Swystun, Monica Kreuger and Ashleigh Mattern for sharing (with me) yesterday's episode of "Civically Speaking" (CFRC radio--a blog post on it is forthcoming!). We discussed challenges faced by local small businesses and gaps that need to be filled so that entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan can thrive.

Although disability is only one aspect of my experience as a professional writer and editor, I made it

"front and centre" in this conversation, to promote entrepreneurship for those who face major life challenges.

Check out the podcast on "Civically Speaking's" Facebook

page: http://www.buzzsprout.com/252451/1143320-civically-speaking-rebroadcast-on-saskatoon-s-community-radio-station-cfcr-90-5-fm-may-14-2019-entrepreneurship-panel-with-elisabeth-shih-ashleigh-mattern-and-monica-krueger?fbclid=IwAR1KdyVNMJh09SgaEaTS_U7P0Lm9mkzZxU8BqCLUJihCA8L94hk5h5ZLXXc

Many thanks, too, this month go out to the Saskatoon office of Colliers McClocklin (Real Estate Corporation), whose excellent management of one of the city's better mid-rise apartment complexes has enabled me to relocate my home office!

After years of enduring a badly carpeted space (ugh), some fresh paint, new flooring and plenty of natural light have turned my new home office into an oasis. Breathing well and deeply (so that I can think well and more deeply) is now possible!

In mid-April, I completed my studies in entrepreneurship through the startSMART program of the [Praxis School of Entrepreneurship](#). Special thanks to the team at Praxis, for their leadership and support!

And special thanks to Founder and CVO, Monica Kreuger, and Admissions Director, Elaine Mantyka, for allowing me to return to facilitating business communication seminars this week, with new cohorts of students.

And hearty congratulations are due to novelist and friend, [Lesley-Anne McLeod](#) whose work on her latest novel has already reached 25,000 words! Lesley-Anne's careful research into the social history of the Regency period brings to life 19th century Britain (the era of Jane Austen). To learn more about Lesley-Anne's historical fiction, please visit her website at <http://www.lesleyannemcleod.com/>

ABOUT US:

Between 2011 and December 2018, Elizabeth Shih Communications chronicled the stories of B2B marketing and communications on the Prairies and across the country.

Effective January 1, 2019, I rebranded as "Storytelling Communications." I now assist SMEs in closing more sales by communicating more effectively; I help Canadian newcomers land better jobs; and I write the legacy stories of major companies.

Interested in learning more? Please contact me through my CASL-compliant website (www.elizabethshih.com).

After I receive your message, I'll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

Please visit my website for more information (www.storytellingcommunications.ca).