

## **Burlington Writers Workshop Annual Meeting Minutes**

Date: Saturday, November 11, 2017 at 12 p.m.

Place: Fletcher Free Library, Burlington, VT

Recorded by Lauren Bender

- How was the survey distributed? a member doesn't recall seeing it.
  - Through meetup, email, Facebook
  - Because there was a lot going on at the time, it wasn't promoted as much through workshops and such
- Concern: no reliable way to get word to people about updates, weather emergencies, etc. People think they have signed up to get all notifications but may not have, may be confused about how to.
  - We would like to get a less complex platform that meets our needs and integrates website and Meetup news
  - 3 people did not hear about the survey
- Do we have email addresses for all members?
  - No, done through Meetup and whether they agree to receive emails
  - It's time to move on from Meetup
- Changing the system is not a simple fix
- Added complexity of writers submitting work, downloading forms, Meetup going through sudden transitions, etc.
- Meetup changed its format again just this morning
- What is the relationship b/t active members and total members - and why the disparity b/t the two numbers?
  - It's easy to sign up in Meetup but not ever go to events
- Comment on website vs Meetup: Wordpress has the capability to do everything but you have to customize it and it takes money
- Rave review for Partridge's workshops
- What is the difference b/t craft instruction and practical how to?
  - Practical focused on things like how to use duotrope, etc.
- What do we offer the visiting authors? how much is the grant?
  - 100 dollars a workshop
- Questions about Top Other Interests slide, how that info was gathered
- Does Mud Season accept submissions from BWW members?
  - Yes, but we discourage it; want to be international; don't want to cause bad feelings among people or hurt the reputation of the journal; makes things complicated but we won't say no; except for people who are or have been on staff
- Do we have any journals here to look at? Yes, on the back table
- What time are the MSR meetings?
- How does MSR connect with goals of BWW?
  - Bring the workshop feeling into a journal environment; give feedback to writers; interactive process valuing the author; an opportunity for BWW

members to learn the publication process; editing leads to improving one's own writing and one's feedback to BWW member work

- An important element is the art/visual aspect of MSR
- Do you have an editing background to be involved?
  - Anyone can join; for certain leadership roles we ask for more background/experience b/c it encourages people to submit and assures quality; many people are trained as readers first; hoping to increase mentoring/learning aspects
- Concern: as MSR got bigger, we started losing people in workshops for BWW
  - MSR draws people in who then move on to BWW too; one hope is that b/c of the 2 year term limits, people will be cycling through in roles; putting print issue on hold this year to help cut down on volunteer hours and drain on volunteers
- Someone else asked about the times of the meetings
  - We will post the dates/times on the website
- There should be readings for BWW members who have not been published
  - There are, and we're hoping to do more at the Lit club using grant money; also casual readings; problem is we need event coordinators; or people could set up their own informal meetings at their homes, etc.
- Suggestion: have a link on the webpage to a page where people can throw out ideas
  - Could use Facebook page more for starting discussions and suggesting readings
  - Not everyone is on Facebook but we have to use the tools available; can also put it on the website
- Will people who can't read at the next event be given first priority at the one after that?
  - Yes
- Concern about Best of - heard someone saying at an event 'don't bother getting the Best of' - need to raise acceptance standards
  - Some people have certain opinions about self-publishing ventures regardless
  - Best of creates hard feelings that can prompt negative feedback
  - Member defense of "Best of" title: there is always a level of competition in the writing world
  - Board concern: we are moving between roles
- What is the mission of Best of; is there an effort to sell copies outside of BWW? if so, need to raise standards
  - Yes but there is not a huge market
- Member comment: their Best of decline letter said the work didn't fit the editors' goals but should be submitted elsewhere - clarifying there was a certain vision; editors can have a positive role / effect on the writers they are rejecting
- Member comment: it's a learning process for the people who submit too; might be your first submission/rejection but it's a safe process because it happens among friends

- Is the board asking whether we need this publication (Best of); does it really do what we want it to do for the organization? we may be able to meet those needs in other ways
- Member comment: whatever we decide Best of's purpose is, we should share that purpose/expectations with the community
- Positive feedback on Best of - they are blown away every time they read it or hear the work being read
- Suggested action item: come up with a mission statement and elevator speech that describes how each of the publications and meetings fits into overall mission; so everyone can look at one page and see how everything fits
- When/how do you submit to Best of? it's unclear what the process is; it would be good to change the title just to make it more exciting and make it sell better
- More positive feedback on Best of and the hope it continues; it's great to showcase the BWW's work and a great culmination of the work
- Should it be the best of BWW members or best of people who participate in workshops?
  - Most people published in it are actual active members
  - Getting it confused with MSR that is open to anyone
  - Current definition of member is that you went to a workshop sometime in the past 3 to 4 years
- Some people may want more than MFA format if they've been doing it for years; tend to lose people who have more experience
- Member concern: for those of us working on large novels, this format doesn't work well; you start to pick out people and get together with them in a smaller group to commit to each other's books; this could be a good model for those who move past the MFA model
- Member appreciates the freedom the workshop gives to the Middlebury group to do their own thing; the leaders of the smaller groups/workshops should be doing more to support the members of those groups
  - People are more than welcome to set up informal meetings at the BWW space if the space is available
- Member: it behooves us to have a space and some privacy to meet; she feels a strong sense of loyalty to BWW and thinks more offerings would benefit us from a marketing/funding standpoint; only makes us look better
  - The board isn't able to accommodate all requests and if other people can get smaller groups started, the process can be quicker
- Member comment: some of the workshop leaders aren't trained and/or don't feel comfortable deviating from the standard model; we need people who have already figured out how to write
- Member was volunteering at the space but no one ever showed up to use it
- Positive feedback for BWW in general; BWW does a great job and helped his writing
- More positive feedback; wonderful institution; visiting writers are helpful because they bring in new approaches and perspectives