

A Different Approach to Storytelling – *Writing for Non-Fiction Publications*

By Tricia Wagner

Chris Linden, editor and writer for *Northwest Quarterly Magazine*, joined In Printers for the July meeting and shared insights about writing for non-fiction publications. He stressed that, though a non-fiction magazine like *Northwest Quarterly* showcases true stories, writers should still tap into their creativity and provide pieces that demonstrate the universal qualities of great writing: strong characters, emotion, setting, and conflict.

In reviewing proposals, Chris looks for writers who can tell him a great story. *Northwest Quarterly Magazine* covers Northern Illinois, Southern Wisconsin, and Northwest Chicagoland, and its editors look for content that is local and inspiring, and has good visual appeal. Negative stories are easy to come by, and the staff of *Northwest Quarterly* value a positive approach to journalism. Their mission states that they strive *to be publishers of relentlessly positive, uplifting, and informative magazines*. Chris encouraged In Printers to think differently about the news and take this alternative approach when capturing non-fiction stories, highlighting the rich quality of life that can be experienced in the local area. As the magazine is released quarterly, stories often match the season. The topics he accepts are broad, and examples include nature, conservation, animals, people of interest, regional history, tourism activities, home living, and local business & industry.

Northwest Quarterly Magazine, first published in 2004, is a full color publication. Writers are welcome to submit photos along with their written pieces, and if the photos are high quality, they may be included alongside the article. If submitting photos, Chris recommends capturing images with a higher quality camera rather than a smartphone.

To submit a proposal to Chris, contact him at clinden@northwestquarterly.com. Proposals would include a description of the story and the angle. Published pieces generally range from 550 to 2,500 words. To get a taste of the kinds of articles accepted for publication, check out the website: www.NorthwestQuarterly.com.

What would be the wrong way to pitch to Chris? Sending him a story that isn't local or that lacks that hook that every writer hopes to master. To illustrate what makes a great piece, Christ quoted John Lasseter, the Chief Creative Officer of Pixar:

“You have to have a compelling story that keeps people on the edge of their seats; you have to populate the story with memorable and appealing characters; and you have to put that story and those characters in a believable world. Those three things are so vitally important.”

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