

Inside the Margins

A CLEVELAND LITERATURE
INDUSTRY STUDY



Research. Strategy. Connections. Advocacy.



Loganberry Books. Photo by Arts Cleveland



This summary incorporates data and findings from the full report by Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs. Download the full report, *Inside the Margins: A Cleveland Literature Industry Study*, at artscleveland.org/literature.

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About the Study

Inside the Margins: A Cleveland Literature Industry Study was commissioned by Arts Cleveland—formerly the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture—and is the result of research conducted and analyzed by the Center for Economic Development at the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University (CSU). The report on the Cleveland Literature Sector¹ is the fourth in a series of studies² that explores the various artistic disciplines in Cuyahoga County.

For the study, the CSU research team acquired the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages data for Cuyahoga County from 2005 to 2015, and used the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Standard Occupation Classification definitions. The team also gathered quantitative and qualitative data by conducting an online *Survey of Literary Artists*, one-on-one interviews and a focus group. The purpose of the data and their analysis is to provide a sense of the local sector's advantages, challenges and economic impact.

¹ For the complete study, please visit artscleveland.org/literature.

² The previous three reports in the series can be found on the Arts Cleveland website. They examined the music sector (*Remix Cleveland*, <https://artscleveland.org/Reference-Desk/Research-Library/Economy/Remix-Cleveland>), the visual arts, craft and design sector (*Forming Cleveland*, <https://artscleveland.org/Reference-Desk/Research-Library/Economy/Forming-Cleveland>) and the theater sector (*Staging Cleveland*, <https://artscleveland.org/Reference-Desk/Research-Library/Economy/Staging-Cleveland>), respectively. The fifth report will study the dance sector.

Introduction

Writing—humans documenting our knowledge in the form of written words—has been one of the largest transitive forces through the anthropological timescale. The first acts of making marks with an implement (a finger, a stick, a rock) in a malleable material (soil, damp clay, stone) to record information (perhaps the number of pots of olives one possessed or traded) was a seismic shift in our development as a species. The act of becoming an author, however—the conversion from being the mere transcriber of data or events and the tellers of oral tales, to establishing ourselves as the scripters of stories and documenters of history—was an exponential leap of imagination.

And that leap changed how we examine ourselves, our society and our very existence.

Most of us remember the first novel that drew us into its story, thus changing how we looked out at the world, contributing to our emotional acumen, enriching our overall intelligence and giving us a new perspective from which to view life. The joy of writers is to craft and tell unique narratives that readers dive into. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a Hungarian psychologist and scholar, elaborated on the delight writers take in developing their own aptitude for words and language in his book *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. “They [literary artists] know that the power of words depends on how they are used; so they enjoy playing with them, stretching their

meanings, stringing them in novel combinations and polishing them until they shine.”³

This creative energy Csikszentmihalyi describes certainly is felt in Cleveland. Of course, the city isn’t a belletristic hub on the scale of New York or Boston—but it abounds in literary vitality. Karen Long, the manager of the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards⁴ and the book editor at the *Plain Dealer* from 2005 to 2013, states unequivocally that the Cleveland literary scene “most profoundly does have a growing edge—things here are percolating.”

Ann Kowal Smith, executive director of Books@Work,⁵ agrees. “There’s definitely momentum,” she says. “There’s a burgeoning sector—it’s pretty powerful.”

³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 239.

⁴ The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards is an annual ceremony to bestow the nation’s only juried book prize focused on literary works addressing racism and diversity.

⁵ Books@Work is a nonprofit organization that advances adult learning and literacy through workplace-based reading clubs.

This study summary hopes to capture a sense of that spirit and to convey the key findings of CSU's full literature sector study, which examines how the often exhilarating, sometimes frustrating work described by Csikszentmihalyi is practiced among Cleveland wordsmiths of all types. This summary highlights the following areas of discussion from the study:

- Internet-induced industry changes, which have simultaneously paved the way for and constructed barriers to writers everywhere, including those in Cleveland;
- the local sector's advantages and challenges;
- the many ways in which numerous local organizations foster the sector; and
- industry and occupational analyses, and the overall economic impact of the sector.

pp. 11–12*

THERE ARE FIVE PRIMARY OCCUPATIONS OF THE CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA†:



TECHNICAL
WRITERS



PROOFREADERS
AND
COPY MARKERS



EDITORS



WRITERS
AND
AUTHORS



REPORTERS
AND
CORRESPONDENTS

11,840

INDIVIDUALS CATEGORIZED IN EITHER **PRIMARY** OR **SECONDARY**
LITERATURE OCCUPATIONS DURING THE STUDY PERIOD

* This information can be found in the full report.

† U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Standard Occupation Classification Definitions <https://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm>.

CASE STUDY: CLEVELAND'S UNDERGROUND SCENE IS ON AN UPSWING

Poets and writers have abundant opportunities to read or perform their work in Cleveland's robust underground scene at bars, bookstores, clubs and restaurants. The scene is open to anyone, but it offers opportunities mainly for poets and writers of color to perform their original works live.

Kisha Nicole Foster, considered one of Cleveland's pioneers of performance poetry, started when she was 19 and has been writing and reading her poetry for almost as many years. She began attending open-mic nights in 1999 at clubs such as the now-closed Humidor, Spy Bar and Kamikaze. (Note: Kamikaze Coffee House & Grill is a new version of the bar Foster's referring to; the original bar closed.)

"Open-mic poetry performance had a time in 2004, 2005 when it was still popping," says Foster, who published a collection of her poetry, *Poems 1999-2014*, in 2017. "Then in

2007, 2008, poetry started going down as a craft, and the open-mics became overcrowded with rappers and singers. I learned so much back then, but I got out of it, and now writing poetry is more of a living for me."

Foster attended Cleveland State University from 2003 to 2008 to increase her knowledge and understanding of literature and to polish her gifts and discipline for writing poetry. She cites two of her teachers, Nuala Archer and the late Sheila Schwartz, as helping her refine her technical wordsmithing skills. Smith emphasizes the importance for Cleveland writers not only of learning their craft, but also of knowing the city's literary history.

"A lot of poets don't know that [poets] D.A. Levy, Daniel Thompson and Mary Oliver were from here," she says. "If you don't know our history as a rich literary community, then you don't understand the footsteps you're walking in today."

Kisha Nicole Foster, left photo by Stephen Bivens, right photo by McKinley Wiley



Fortunately, although she now focuses on paid residencies, performances and teaching positions, Foster has seen a great resurgence in the poetry reading and slam scene during the past few years.

"Our community is getting a lot stronger, especially with programs like Twelve Literary Arts and Literary Cleveland," explains Foster, a Cleveland Public Library Ohio Center for the Book fellow. "We've also brought the slam back, and not just locally. We have poets participating nationally with Poetry Slam Inc., and our last two people that we sent came in 7th and 17th, so that put Cleveland back on the national scene."

Foster teaches for Twelve Literary Arts

(www.twelvearts.org/), a nonprofit organization founded in 2016 by Daniel Gray-Kontar, another of Cleveland's beloved underground poets and art teachers who's diligently working to educate, strengthen and promote Cleveland's literary scene. "We were designed to be an incubator," says Gray-Kontar, "because we are here specifically to support writers of color and allies of writers of color who can become writers, teachers of writing and 'artists' or writers who are also activists." He adds that Twelve Literary Arts' mission includes instructing youth writers between the ages of 14 and 19, and then supporting them through professional development workshops and activities for writers of color and their allies from age 19 through their mid-careers.

"If you're a writer of color, we help you with headshots or videos or your taxes, and if you're trying to figure out how to balance your career with your personal life, for example, we provide resources to help you think about mental health," he states. "These are the

things that Twelve Literary Arts does to ensure that we do our part in making Cleveland become a world-class city in the literary arts, but specifically for writers of color so that we can make our contribution nationally, too."

The organization employs professional and emerging minority writers to teach and perform to bring poetry to the people. One recent project involved taking students on the Greater Cleveland Rapid Transit Authority's Red Line to read poetry and honor poets such as Langston Hughes, a Cleveland native, whose work had been depicted on murals along that line. Gray-Kontar, who still performs his poetry when he can take a break from his executive director duties, believes the fact that his organization is receiving increased public support from foundations here represents a huge step forward.

"We are finally starting to recognize that the literary arts do impact economic development in Northeast Ohio, and the foundations are supporting these arts more, so it's an interesting time," he observes.

According to the literature sector study, "The overall economic impact of the literature sector in Cleveland in 2016 for employment includes a total of 8,678 employees, and an associated \$497.4 million in labor income, \$799.2 million in value added, \$1.6 billion in output, and \$163 million in taxes."

Like Smith, Ali McClain (www.alimcclain.com/), a longtime poet,

was on the underground scene, initially doing a lot of open mic and poetry readings in 2008. "I know the scene has grown a lot since I first participated," she comments. "There was usually only one night a week when poets could perform at the B Side on Coventry, and now it's a pretty lively scene, with opportunities to perform at an open-mic



Twelve Literary Arts. Photo courtesy of Daniel Gray-Kontar

almost every day of the week at places like B Side, [Chicago's Home of] Chicken and Waffles, or Medusa restaurants or at a Lit Cleveland event at the Happy Dog."

McClain says the additional opportunities for poetry readings make it easier for women poets to get a spot to perform now—the scene was more competitive when there were fewer venues to accommodate the many men who wanted to perform their poems or songs or rap.

These days she's more interested in "what's happening on the page than on the stage," says McClain. "I'm writing a book and in my third year of the poetry gateway in the NEOMFA [Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts] program at Cleveland State University, so I don't really have time for the nighttime underground poetry scene." She takes only one course per semester, because she's working full-time running an all-girl after-school program that focuses on literacy.

If she has a complaint about the Cleveland poetry scene, it's that she'd like to see more opportunities for people of color to perform their work at high-profile spaces. "I write about the black experience, and it's been very difficult for my peers to relate or respond to my work, because I'm living in a completely different reality than they are," she explains, adding that initially, she was the only woman of color in her program on the CSU campus. "But it's important for poetry to stay alive, so I'm happy there are

multiple venues happening throughout the week now, instead of just one or two."

One young up-and-comer to the underground scene, Tierra Kahli,

has quickly established a reputation for her powerful poetry performances. Kahli is a poet, a motivational speaker and an activist who uses her spoken-word presentations as a way to break down racial barriers.

"I love being on stage, because in my mind, I was supposed to be able to sing like Beyoncé," Kahli says with a laugh. "But I didn't get blessed with a voice, so [poetry readings are] the closest I can get to a mic with a room full of people who will listen to me. The performance is fun for me, but some of my pieces deal with racial issues, so afterward, audiences with mixed ethnicities and cultures come up to me and ask, 'Hey, why did you say that? What does that mean for us?' So, I like having those types of conversations."

Like Smith but rare among poets, Kahli earns her living as a full-time poet, performing at weddings, graduations, conferences, and workshops and classes for children. To give back to children, she's teaching literacy programs at the Boys & Girls Club a couple of days a week. She also teaches in the [CDF (Children Defense Fund's)] Freedom Schools®, which offer literacy programs that employ poetry, music and other disciplines to help kids fall in love with reading, Kahli explains. A primary goal of the Freedom Schools is to help children see themselves in the stories they read, so the teachers assign a lot of books penned by authors of color.

"I'm really passionate about literacy for urban youth, especially adolescents," Kahli concludes. "So I always try to find teaching opportunities in that vein."



Writing on the (Digital) Wall

Ali McClain, poetry reading. Photo by Donald Black Jr.

The Internet has dramatically changed nearly every aspect of how humans live, work and interact, including radically altering the way in which books and manuscripts are produced, as well as the geography of buying and selling books. When considering literature as any writing “that crosses lines of human experience,” as described by Amy Rosenbluth, co-founder and executive director of Lake Erie Ink,⁶ it’s difficult to underestimate the impact, both constructive and destructive, of novel technologies on the publishing business. That impact has made waves for readers, writers and the institutions in between. And its effects resonate as strongly in Cleveland as they do elsewhere. The two aspects of the industry most acutely and extensively affected by the digital revolution, here and around the country, may be self-publishing and physical bookstores.

The Advent of Self-Publishing

In the old, analog days before the Internet, the only way authors could get their books published was to sell their manuscripts to acquisition editors at one or more publishing houses. Often, this included editing the original to meet demands and suggestions from the publisher. Manuscript selection for first-time authors was (and is) especially competitive and difficult. As RA Washington, an author and the owner of Guide to Kulchur,⁷ notes, “...[U]ntil you get that first opportunity that leads to references, you won’t get that access.”

Today, the Web has made possible a core disruptor of that arduous process: self-publishing.

Self-publishing is when book authors print and distribute their books at their own cost while

maintaining complete control of the document. Thanks to companies such as Lulu, Xlibris, CreateSpace (Amazon) and a host of others, authors can now publish their own work with sole responsibility for content, design and marketing—leaving publishers, editors and publicists out of the creative decision-making process entirely. Commercial success as an author can be obtained exclusively through self-publishing, but self-publishing authors sometimes go on to have success through traditional publishing routes (e.g., Andy Weir, author of *The Martian*).

Similarly, while it’s true that literary artists have the least association between where they live and the source of their income, pre-Internet, writers stood better odds of being published if

1/3

AUTHORS GUILD
MEMBERS
WHO HAVE
SELF-PUBLISHED

34%

CUYAHOGA COUNTY
LITERARY ARTIST
RESPONDERS WHO
SELF-PUBLISH

A 2015 survey by the Authors Guild reported one-third of its members have self-published at least one book, but only 4% self-published exclusively.* According to CSU’s *Survey of Literary Artists*, about 34% of respondents indicated that self-publishing is part of their activities, and a big majority of those who self-publish also contribute to magazines or work with a publishing house in some way.†

* Rachel Deahl, “New Guild Survey Reveals Majority of Authors Earn Below Poverty Line,” *Publisher’s Weekly* (Sept. 11, 2015), <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/>.

† This information can be found in the full report.

⁶ Lake Erie Ink is a local nonprofit organization that provides space, expressive opportunities and support to Cleveland-area youth who are interested in writing.

⁷ Guide to Kulchur is a local bookstore and small press that publishes locally authored books that address social justice issues.

they lived in a literary center such as New York City. Now, the Web makes it easier for authors to reside in nontraditional literary markets with a lower cost of living, such as Cleveland, while working with traditional publishing houses and maintaining a wide distribution of their work (e.g., Paula McLain [*The Paris Wife*], Mary Doria Russell [*The Sparrow*] and Les Roberts [*the Milan Jacovich* mystery series]). This can be a competitive aid for local literary artists, to the extent that no one interviewed for the literature sector study expressed a strong need to move closer to big publishing houses to make a viable career.

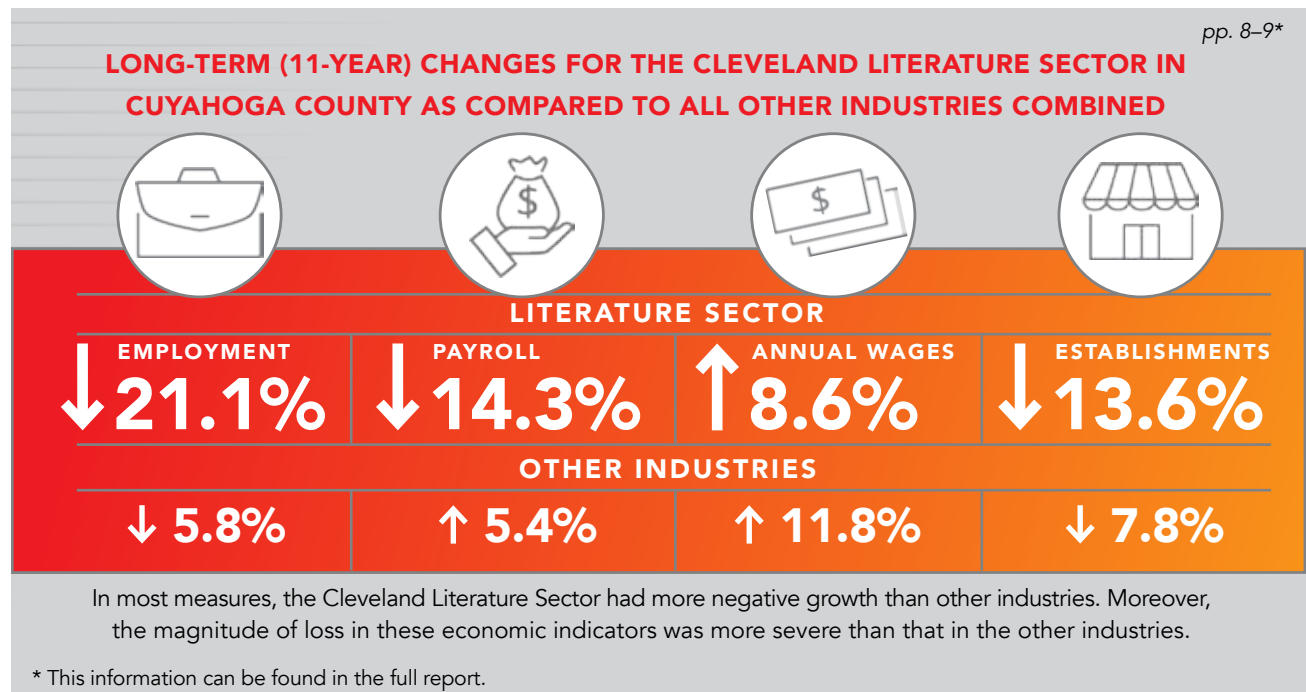
Another advantage of self-publishing, says Dave Van Horn, president of Cleveland Writers Group,⁸ is that it's caused writers to become more professionally savvy than ever before: He finds that writers, especially those who self-publish, have discovered that they now have to possess skills for tasks that previously weren't authors' responsibility, such as, he says, " 'Oh, I have to be

skilled in other things, like posting to YouTube.' " These days, such know-how is necessary if a writer wishes to develop an audience.

For all the assets self-publishing generates, however, it also breeds a consequential liability, albeit one that may not be immediately apparent, and one whose effect isn't yet fully known. Increasing the volume of raw input into the literary arts world—i.e., having numerous individuals of wildly varying talent and skill write and self-publish books—dilutes the quality of work in the marketplace. Susan Petrone, a local novelist and a founder and the first president of Literary Cleveland,⁹ is concerned that the self-publishing phenomenon has engendered a lot of bad books that rookie and amateur writers don't spend enough time revising and editing to polish (or, preferably, having a professional editor burnish).

One already observable outcome of this problem is faced by libraries and literary organizations, which have a responsibility to promote written works

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⁸ Cleveland Writers Group is a support organization for emerging writers.

⁹ Literary Cleveland is an organization dedicated to nurturing a strong literary arts sector in the area.

CASE STUDY: WRITERS LEVERAGE THEIR CREATIVITY AT CREATIVE AGENCIES

Despite the ongoing upheaval of writers

struggling to find a stable place in the evolving digital publishing world, there's still a substantial need for content today, according to King Hill, senior vice president and digital strategist for Marcus Thomas advertising agency in Cleveland. Advertising and other creative agencies, for example, always need good writers, who often seem in short supply.

According to the literature sector study, "Many industries not focused solely on writing employ creative writers or authors of literature." The report also notes about the literature industry in Cleveland that "The third-largest category [of employment] was individuals working for a for-profit company not associated with the literature sector."

Hill, citing the growing field of online content marketing, sees a greater need for content writers than ever before.

"Many writers in the public relations or corporate communications fields are still writing long-form pieces such as brochures or sales literature," he says. "However, they typically don't end up in print as much anymore, but online, or they're downloaded as PDFs from a website. That material is still necessary."

The good news for employers is that with newspaper and magazine staffs shrinking, and with journalists being laid off because advertising revenues have been significantly reduced by digital and online publishing, there has been an influx of experienced professional writers into the agency and content writing markets.

The writing positions at Marcus Thomas, Hill relates, range from copywriting for print,

broadcast or interactive advertisements to public relations writing, generating social media or Web content. Hill started his career as a journalism school graduate at Goodyear Tire & Rubber in Akron, but quickly switched to the corporate PR field. Today, he's recognized as a leading expert in developing expressive, robust digital content.

Writers in ad agencies need several professional capabilities, including a clear comprehension of branding and the ability to interview clients and determine the best way to tell their stories.

Writers in ad agencies need several professional capabilities, including a clear comprehension of branding and the ability to interview clients and determine the best way to tell their stories. They must also be able to meet with a group of planners to discuss an ad concept and understand what might interest the buyer, a process that requires different skills from, for instance, those necessary for writing feature stories. To create a persuasive ad, King says, a writer must develop the knack of understanding potential customers of their clients' products or services and knowing what those customers care about most.

The foundational ability, though, remains a strong understanding of using language and writing to communicate effectively. "A lot of students or young professionals want to build

fancy furniture before they know how to use a hand tool,” King explains metaphorically. “Once you’ve constructed a foundation of knowing how to use the tools you’ve been given, then creativity is a lot easier.”

Great thinkers who can’t write are in trouble, too, King continues: “If you can’t articulate your ideas to create copy, then they’re going to be stuck in your head, and that won’t do you or anyone any good.”

Mark McKenzie, associate creative director at Brokaw advertising firm in Cleveland, found himself attracted to and most engaged by the highly creative, quick-turnaround environment of agency work. After earning a degree in journalism from the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, he knew he didn’t want to be a reporter, but desired instead to do creative writing in a professional setting. He’d decided Brokaw was the only agency he wanted to work for because of their reputation for doing fun, creative campaigns with TV shoots and similar work. He landed a job there in 2001 on the business side as an account coordinator. In 2004, he convinced Brokaw’s creative director to give him a shot as a copywriter.

“Advertising just always appealed to me because of the simplicity of messaging in such a small period of time,” McKenzie says. “You really have to have one strong idea and edit it so you can get it down to a really fine, clear point.”

Good copywriters, he declares, are endowed with two key qualities: One, they must be able to absorb constructive criticism about

their ideas. “You really need a high threshold for people telling you that what you did isn’t good,” he says with a laugh. Two, they must possess the ability to generate interesting ideas that can then be developed and written as compelling advertising campaigns.

Having a demonstrated creative side is good, too, such as a theater or stand-up comedy background.

Having a demonstrated creative side is good, too, such as a theater or stand-up comedy background. McKenzie, for example, studied improvisation with Second City in Cleveland and was a member of the Last Call Cleveland comedy troupe for many years. However, extracurricular creative experience remains of secondary importance to the ability to conceive and write ads.

“You need to know what makes great advertising,” he says, “be able to discuss human truths or common things that people share, and understand how a brand can connect to someone who has used or might like to use [the brand’s] products.”

Composing copy for greeting cards as an in-house writer for American Greetings in Westlake is a creatively challenging and rewarding job for Greg Vovos. He joined the creative agency in March 2008, after submitting his resume, completing a test featuring a



Photo courtesy of Greg Vovos

series of writing situations similar to what he now handles on a daily basis, and undergoing an interview process. American Greetings employs several types of writers and editors, mostly full-time staff who craft greeting, humor and business cards or cutting-edge and trendy content for different products. The company also hires some contract and freelance writers.

One of the elements of working in a creative agency that he enjoys the most is the supportive team setting. The writers all have different talents and expertise, and they all work with the artists, illustrators and editors ...

Vovos' creative background as a playwright and director with an MFA from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, may have made him more attractive as a copywriter, but his ability to empathize with people and understand the psychology of both card senders and their recipients has helped him significantly.

"We write cards for all [kinds] of people," he explains, adding that he's fully aware of the overlap between writing greeting card copy and getting into the skin of a person to create or direct a character for a play. "So you have to think about who would send this card, what would they say, and you want it to sound the way those people speak."

One of the elements of working in a creative agency that he enjoys most is the supportive team setting. The writers all have different talents and expertise, and they all work with the artists, illustrators and editors to create the most affecting greeting cards or other gift products.

"We all have our own skills or niche," Vovos concludes. "But there's really a team feeling, with everyone helping each other because they care about each other, but ... also [because they] want you to succeed."

CASE STUDY: WRITERS EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS VIA SELF-PUBLISHING

Graphic artist Ben Small (<https://bsmall05.wixsite.com/portfolio>) says he got into self-publishing “by necessity.” An artist by trade and by passion, Small draws, colors and writes short stories all the time. He’d been crafting his own cartoons and zines for several decades when, roughly 10 years ago, the advent of the digital self-publishing platform for books provided him with an opportunity to publish a compilation of some of his wealth of drawings and stories. Happily, he worked in the perfect place to prepare and publish such a book, Live Publishing Company in Cleveland’s Little Italy neighborhood.

“I went to my boss and asked if he could finance it,” says Small. “I decided to start with an odd graphic novel that’s 11 by 17 [inches], a large format that I had based on old newspapers from the 1800s and early 1900s, so [it was] big art with a story that ran through it.”

Cavalcade of Flight: 50 Years of Malarkey about Airplanes and Aliens in a Publication That Never Existed was the first of his two “big, beautiful and weird books,” as he describes them on his website. It was followed by *My Airborne Reveries*. Both are “oversized, colorful books that contain 60 pages of airborne antics and zany aliens” in his distinctive steampunk style. Small’s third self-published collection of his artful antics, *Bushwa Unbound*, was released in 2018.

“It’s definitely a thrill to see [the books] actually in print and bound,” Small enthuses. “It’s also nice to know that they’re in the library and people are checking them out. I’m like any other writer or artist. I like to get my stuff into as many hands as possible.”



This literature study summary discusses how self-publishing has changed the literary arts dramatically: “Today, authors can publish their own work with sole responsibility for content, design and marketing—leaving publishers and editors out of the creative decision-making process.”

For Small, having sole responsibility for marketing is the rub. “Marketing is my sore point,” he admits. Still, he did a pretty good job of working with local bookstores, such as Loganberry Books and Mac’s Backs, to sell his work, as well as getting the Cleveland Public Library to add his book to its shelves. Additionally, he advertises on his website and Facebook. He also doesn’t fret much about sales, as book revenues aren’t his sole means of income.

“I just do what I love first of all,” reveals the affable Small, who never even tried the traditional routes to publishing and won’t

compromise or shape his work to supply fickle comic book fans' favorite tropes, such as superheroes and villains. "I'm hoping to do more marketing on [my titles], but I'm not much of a self-promoter. Everybody who looks at my books seems to like them, though, and then people buy them." He adds that the books have led to other paying art projects, including designing posters and T-shirts for a rock performer in New York who'd purchased one of his graphic tomes.

Long before he could dive into self-publishing, John Burroughs (crisischronicles.com) had to learn that he was an exceptional poet whose writing and performances people would enjoy. If he would just go public.

"I was scared to death to read my poetry out loud," Burroughs recalls. "But I had a couple of beers and got talked into it, got up, read and had such a great response that I felt like I'd met my long-lost family. I joke that they created a monster, because after getting that positive feedback, suddenly I wanted to attend all of the poetry events I could find."

At that point, Burroughs had been writing poetry since high school and had 20 years' worth of boxes filled with poems that he'd never read publicly or even considered publishing, because he thought no one would care or want to know that he was a poet. He ended up joining MySpace in the mid-2000s and began to garner positive public response to his blog, his open-mic performances and the poems he was finally submitting to and getting published by small presses. The supportive reaction included

audience members asking him whether he had any chapbooks of his poems they could buy.

"My poet friend Dianne Borsenik told me, 'You should make your own chapbook. You'll have something to give away or sell at readings,' so I did that," he states. He had no intention of starting his own small press, but when other poets saw his do-it-yourself chapbooks, they inquired whether he could do one for them. He created a couple for friends, and the demand continued to grow.

So in 2008, he made his own chapbook and officially launched Crisis Chronicles Press, taken from his performance name, Jesus Crisis. His self-published poetry collections include *Bloggerel*, *6/9: Improvisations in Dependence*, *Identity Crisis*, *Lens* and *Oct Tongue*, and he has since published authors from around the world. These days, Burroughs frequently hosts events around Cleveland, and he co-founded the (usually) annual poetry-reading event, Snoetry: A Winter Wordfest.



Photo by John Burroughs

"The press was intended as a labor of love," Burroughs explains. "Sometimes I still don't make money off of it, but it's more sustainable now" than when it started. He occasionally picks up other jobs for supplemental income, especially since the unfortunate, untimely death of his wife in February 2017. He also continually travels to poetry festivals throughout the country, often as far as Portland, Oregon, or Oakland, where he normally meets friends he's made on Facebook or through their own publishing efforts.

"I meet a lot of other poets and publishers, and they have become like a family, too," Burroughs concludes. "Nowadays, you don't necessarily need a publisher. It's almost as if the publishers are becoming passé and almost obsolete."

Chris Garson (chrisgarsonwrites.com) chose to take the self-publishing route

after many years of frustration. He'd started writing in 2002 and had completed manuscripts for several science fiction/fantasy novels. However, they languished in his laptop while his barrage of query letters to potential agents fell on deaf inboxes.

"I experienced a lack of success following the traditional route, so I guess I'm just really bad at writing query letters," Garson jokes. "I've probably sent out about 200 query letters for my books, and haven't gotten any nibbles requesting a manuscript. It's a terribly frustrating thing to go through."

His frustration led him to research the burgeoning world of self-publishing platforms and then to employ Smashwords.com to publish his first two e-books in 2010, volumes 1 and 2 of his *Scales Over Sangrithar* trilogy: *The Curse of Arvyl's Folly* and *Madness Ascendant*.

Photo by Chris Garson

"[Smashwords™] seemed like a good [platform] from what I had read about it, and it fed a lot of downstream bookstores," Garson says. "So that's the one I went with, and it was pretty easy to do the format."

On his website, he promotes his latest novel, *Perk Noir: A Mason Barnes Mystery*, as "a piece of contemporary fiction about jazz, coffee, football and ninja girls. It's got something for everyone—humor, mystery and romance. Give it a try. I guarantee it will surprise you." He had self-published the book, but then it was picked up by a small, independent press, Optimus Maximus Publishing. A friend in his writing group—an activity he highly recommends for all authors—had published with the press and connected him with it.

Garson also remains active on Facebook and other social media, but hasn't had much luck selling his book via those routes. Like Small, marketing isn't his favorite chore. "I became discouraged because the fairly extensive effort I had put into promoting on social media didn't yield much," he admits. "So, I haven't put any great zealotry into the marketing of the book lately." Instead, he reserves his zeal for writing and is working on several new novels.





J. Everett Prewitt. Photo courtesy of J. Everett Prewitt



With his flourishing real estate appraisal business, Everett Prewitt (<https://eprewitt.com>) had plenty to keep him busy. But he also owned a nagging desire to write. So in 1999, he attended a fiction writing workshop, led by prominent local novelist Sarah Willis, at Cleveland State University's Imagination Writers Conference. Shortly afterward, he took a creative writing course at CSU, where the Glenville High School graduate had earlier earned his master's degree in Urban Studies.

Prewitt continued to toil at writing fiction until he published his first novel, *Snake Walkers*, in 2005. Writing when he had time and the inspiration, Prewitt released *A Long Way Back* in 2015, followed two years later by *Something about Anne*. He'd tried to work with an agent to get his first novel published, but she was also an author and ended up not having time to pitch his book. Prewitt decided to use Amazon to publish the digital version of *Snake Walkers*, and then had 2,000 hardcover books printed by a printer in Michigan. He also plotted his own book signing tour and traveled throughout the U.S.

"I decided, I can do this myself," he recalls. "I continued to read about how to market books, which is the mountain you have to climb as an author, and bought some books about self-publishing. I hired the designer, the

person to do the cover [and] everyone [else] that had expertise that I needed, and it all came out really well."

To help promote the first book (and his later books), he entered a lot of contests, won a few and then publicized those awards. The Black Caucus of the American Library Association honored him, so *Snake Walkers* (and his subsequent books) went into 200 libraries, including several in Australia and a few other foreign countries. Prewitt also uses Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and his website to promote his awards and books.

"Every time something good happens, you have to—and it's the hardest part for a writer, to blow your own horn—but that's just what you have to do," the soft-spoken writer relates.

Today, he utilizes the fiverr® global online marketplace for freelance services to manage tasks he can't do himself, such as cover design or creating videos to promote his books. Additionally, the prudent Prewitt advises authors who self-publish to do as he does and enlist a talented professional editor to ensure their text is clean, correct and flows lucidly.

"It's going to cost money," reports the former Army officer and Vietnam veteran. "But it's probably the best investment you're going to make in writing."

continued from p. 12

that meet some standard of quality writing. Laurie Kincer, a specialist at Cuyahoga County Public Library's William N. Skirball Writers' Center, notes, "We all [libraries] have the same problem: Self-published authors coming to us, saying, 'Here's my book, buy it, let me have an event.' ... [A]nd we can't say yes to all those people because not all of the books meet our standards for purchasing or programming."

Despite this serious caveat, self-publishing provides

both emerging and experienced writers with more options for getting their work out to readers, and more importantly, lowers the barrier for amateur and hobbyist writers to make literary arts a career path. It also, perhaps surprisingly, doesn't appear to be siphoning work from publishing houses.¹⁰ Rather, it's increased the body of available work in the market and offers potential new methods for authors to establish writing as a full-time career. In the end, it's clear that self-publishing, with its attendant assets and flaws, is here to stay and is a practical tool for contemporary authors, including

The Loss of Brick-and-Mortar Bookstores

While the Web sensation of self-publishing arguably has had a mostly positive effect on the literary world, the Internet's effect on another facet of the sector, brick-and-mortar bookstores, has been far less salubrious. The rise of the Internet triggered the corollary decline of stores, nationwide and in Northeast Ohio. The bookselling industry, however, has suffered two successive crises, the first of which wasn't Internet-related.

The initial existential hit, which began at the end of the 20th century, was to independent and small-chain bookstores, which began to diminish with the emergence of big-box retailers, such as Barnes & Noble and Borders. During the 1990s, large chains spread across the country, threatening the viability of independent booksellers. The scale of these retailers enabled them to engage in robust marketing and provide a wider selection of inventory at lower prices. The chain stores' large square footage allowed them to provide coffee bars and comfortable seating to encourage

customers to spend more time browsing their vast selections.¹¹

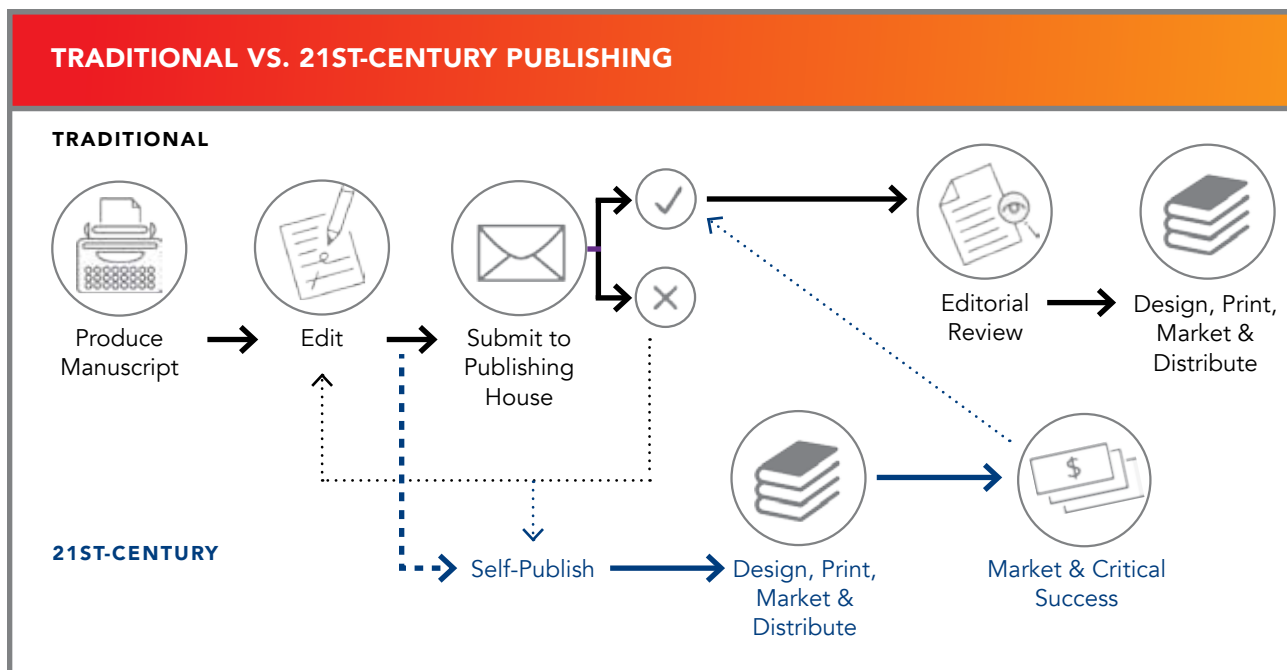
The ascendancy of that new segment of the industry was short-lived, however, because around the turn of the millennium, the Internet made its appearance in the form of a ferociously disruptive competitor: online retailer Amazon. Soon, even the large chains were trying to stay afloat amid the growing tsunami of online shopping, via Amazon's portal, for products of every sort, including books.

Amazon launched its bookselling operations in 1995, collecting revenue of approximately a half-million dollars that year. In 1999, it crossed the \$1 billion sales line, and the vast majority of that sum came from book sales; only a small fraction of it was generated by other materials sold on the site, such as electronics and appliances. Print books made up Amazon's largest share of revenue until 2008. Today, Amazon's market share of online book sales—both digital and physical copies—hovers around 65%.¹²

¹⁰ "U.S. Publishing Industry's Annual Survey Reveals Nearly \$28 Billion in Revenue in 2015," *Association of American Publishers* (July 11, 2016), <http://newsroom.publishers.org/us-publishing-industrys-annual-survey-reveals-nearly-28-billion-in-revenue-in-2015/>.

¹¹ Greg Johnson, "Bookstores Hit Best-Seller List: Outlets Grow in Size, Number in O.C.," *L.A. Times* (Oct. 30, 1995), http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-30/business/fi-62865_1_county-bookstores.

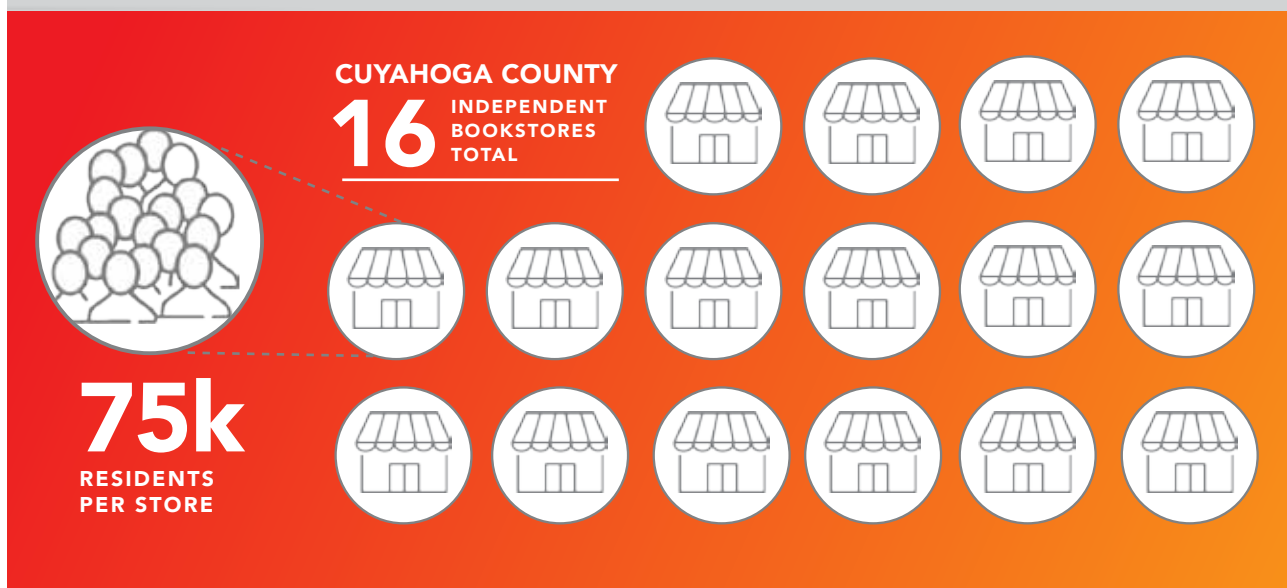
¹² Jim Milliot, "BEA 2014: Can Anyone Compete with Amazon?," *Publisher's Weekly* (May 28, 2014), <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bea/article/62520-bea-2014-can-anyone-compete-with-amazon.html>.



INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES PER # OF RESIDENTS

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There are 16 independent bookstores across Cuyahoga County—amounting to approximately one independent bookstore for every 75,000 residents. Across Ohio, there is an estimated one independent bookstore for every 52,700 residents, per a 2013 analysis by *Publishers Weekly*.[†]



* This information can be found in the full report.

† Gabe Habash, "Bookstores in America, 2013: A State-by-State Guide," *Publishers Weekly* (June 1, 2013), <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/57631-where-the-stores-are.html>.

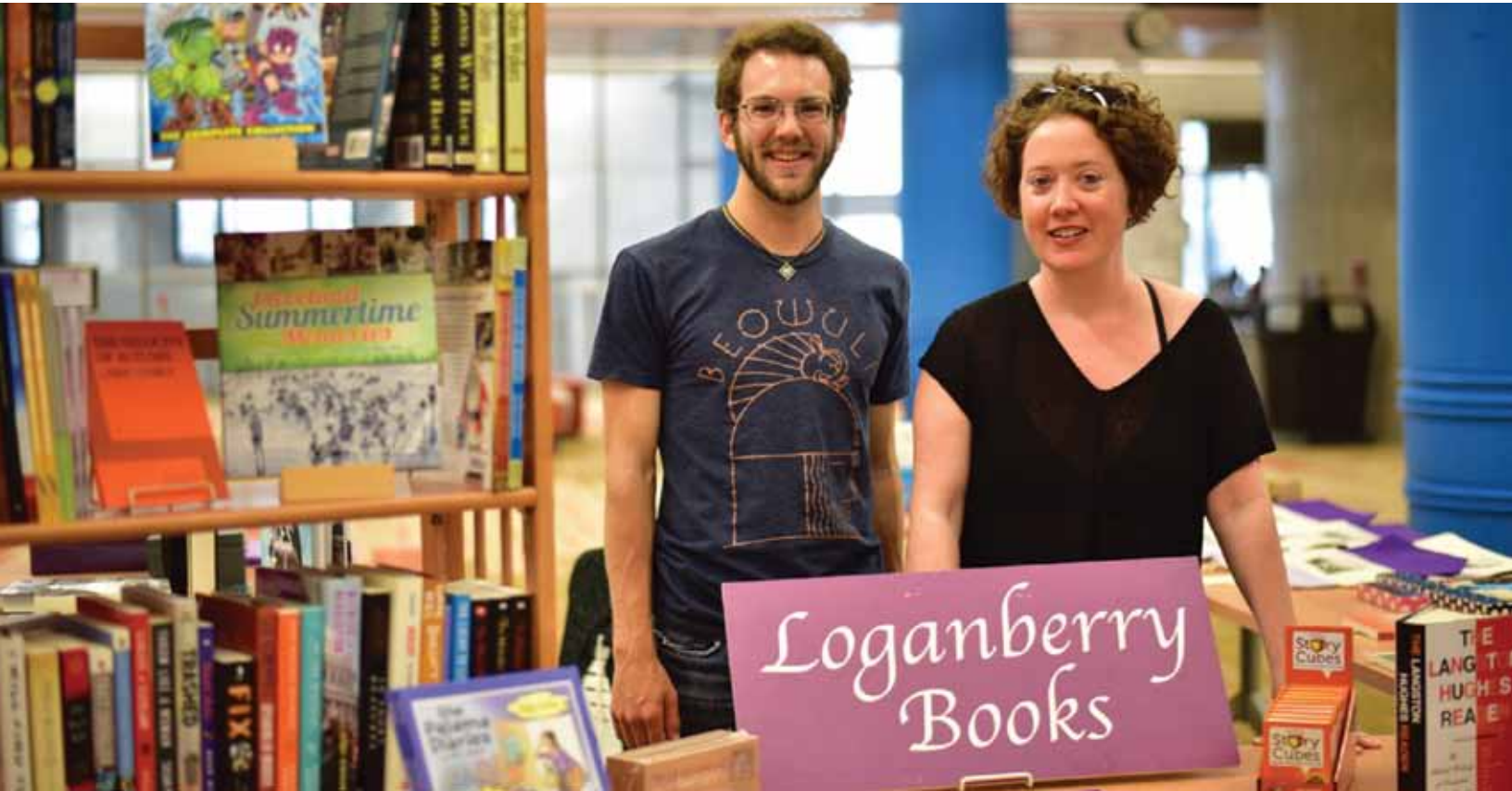


Photo courtesy of Literary Cleveland

Amazon, as an online retailer, has a cost structure vastly different from that of a brick-and-mortar store: Amazon doesn't have to pay for rent, building maintenance or sales associates at retail sites. This structure allows Amazon to sell books to consumers just above at-cost levels. In fact, selling books at a below-cost rate was the corporation's overt strategy to gain consumer loyalty and pull customers away from other retailers.¹³

Predictably, the number of bookstores has shrunk because of this competition. In 2011, Borders closed all of its 400 locations—including its seven stores in Northeast Ohio¹⁴—leaving Barnes & Noble as the nation's undisputed largest bookstore chain.

The loss of physical bookstores, whether they're large chains or small independents, acutely affects literary communities, because bookstores are historic and traditional resources for local writers and readers. According to Cleveland professionals interviewed for the literature sector study, these outlets are the best way for readers and writers to tie into the city's author scene, and for local scribes and small presses to market their work to local readers. Bookstores also provide a means for writers new to Cleveland's literary community to network with other writers and expand opportunities to write, says Gail Bellamy, a local, nationally recognized author and past-president of Cleveland's former literary organization, The LIT.¹⁵ "Most serious writers

¹³ Mike Shatzkin, "The Future of Bookstores Is the Key to Understanding the Future of Publishing," *The Idea Logical Company* (Jan. 23, 2014), <http://www.idealogs.com/blog/future-bookstores-key-understanding-future-publishing/>.

¹⁴ Janet Cho, "Borders to Close All 399 Bookstores, Sending Book-Lovers Reeling," *The Plain Dealer* (July 19, 2011), http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2011/07/borders_to_close_all_399_bookstores_sending_book-lovers_reeling.html.

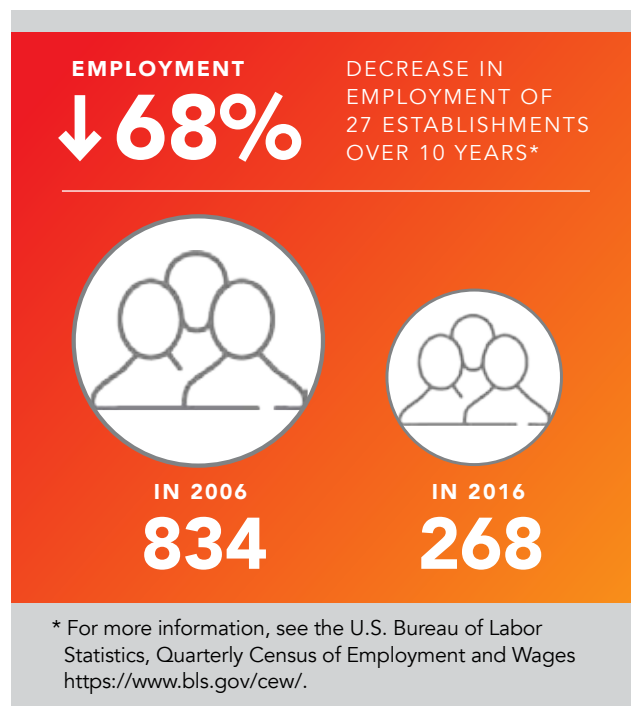
¹⁵ The LIT, originally the Poets' and Writers' League of Greater Cleveland, folded in 2011.

are also serious readers," she says, "and so they happen to be at places where readers are—places like the local independent bookstores and the library. I think they find opportunities that way."

Bookstores are still important for other reasons, as well. Research shows that book consumers choose to discover and purchase their next read at physical stores over online ones¹⁶—spending an afternoon leisurely strolling through a peaceful bookstore, stopping to pick up and peruse any title that catches your eye, is an experience that can't be replicated on a laptop or a smartphone. Accordingly, large publishers still rely on brick-and-mortar stores, to the extent that even Amazon has opened more than two dozen stores and scores of Amazon Pop-Up locations¹⁷ to fuel sales.

In the digitally redrawn landscape of the book industry, local independent bookstores play a special role. They add to the prosperity of individual authors by providing access to readings and signings that might not happen at larger bookstore chains. Moreover, these small stores are a cultural heart of literary activity for the scene as a whole. Although research indicates that independent bookstores make only a small employment contribution to the literature economy, they drive the culture of it.

Despite the onslaught of challenges that bookstores, especially independent bookstores, have faced over the last three decades, there is good news. After the area Borders stores closed in 2011, many Cleveland independents reported increased traffic as a result of the diminished competition.¹⁸ And



many local booksellers, including Visible Voice Books, Loganberry Books, Horizontal Books, Mac's Backs—Books on Coventry, Appletree Books and The Bookshop in Lakewood, continue to survive. Better still, the number of thriving bookstores nationwide is believed to be increasing, because American Booksellers Association membership increased 27% between 2009 and 2015.¹⁹ This is all heartening on the face of it, but especially so given that in the literature study, sector leaders identified appreciating the role bookstores provide in connecting writers and readers as a primary feature of maintaining and enlarging the sector.

¹⁶ Evan Hughes, "Book Publishers Scramble to Rewrite Their Future," *Wired* (March 19, 2013), <https://www.wired.com/2013/03/publishing-industry-next-chapter/>.

¹⁷ Amazon store locations (Aug. 8, 2018), https://www.amazon.com/b/ref=s9_acss_bw_cg_AMZBOOKS_1a1_w?node=1760844801&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=merchandise-search-top-3&pf_rd_r=1N7XAA49GVK3548YSZA0&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=85c007e1-c76d-4d0c-9e0c-16f41290b324&pf_rd_i=13270229011.

¹⁸ Janet Cho, "Borders Closing Opens Doors for Independent Bookstores," *The Plain Dealer* (September 14, 2011), http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2011/09/borders_closing_opens_doors_fo.html.

¹⁹ Erin Cox, "How Independent Bookstores Are Thriving in the Digital Age," *Publishing Perspectives* (Jan. 23, 2016), <http://publishingperspectives.com/2016/01/independent-bookstores-thrive-in-digital-age/>.



THE Write Stuff

THE SECTOR'S ADVANTAGES
& CHALLENGES

Margot Lee Shetterly (right) is interviewed by a panel of Cleveland students, including Natalie Parsons, Facing History New Tech High School; Kymari Williams, Bard High School Early College Cleveland–West; and Darrell Cannon (pictured left), Whitney M. Young Gifted & Talented Leadership Academy. Photo courtesy of The Cleveland Foundation

Whether Cleveland is a good place to be a literary artist depends to some extent on who you ask.

Study participants indicate that the local sector boasts some definite assets while struggling with real challenges.

Advantages

Respondents to the literature study's online *Survey of Literary Artists* reported overwhelmingly that the advantages to Cleveland's literature scene are the city's relatively low cost of living and friendly atmosphere. Writers "can live here for much less than in many other places around the country, yet avail themselves of cultural institutions that are punching above their weight," says Karen Long, Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards manager.



Challenges

Perceptions of sector access were bifurcated among study participants: Some pointed out that the sector's small scale facilitates building the local network (descriptors included "ease of entry," "making connections" and "getting involved"), while others felt that it has the opposite effect (descriptors included "fragmented," "hard to break into" and "lack of access to resources").

Many survey respondents specifically mentioned additional local barriers to access such as divided communities and a lack of literary agents, who can serve as nodes of connection in artistic sectors. It was noted by some respondents that disconnection from other writers may stop emerging writers from earning valuable opportunities, such as writing gigs, fellowships and artists' residencies.

If opinions about sector access varied among study participants, two interrelated issues garnered much stronger consensus. The first is the difficulty of defining “literature” and thus the sector, and the second is funding, including the ability to earn a living as a writer in Cleveland.

Defining literary arts in times of intense communication reinforced by digital technology isn’t an easy task. The professionals involved in this study had various opinions on which industries should be defined as “literature,” because writing and creative writing are skills used in many occupations. Could journalism be considered literature? Could blogging or some forms of technical writing?

The literary professionals interviewed for this study had no issue identifying writing as art for themselves—at least, until they had to explain their rationale. The trouble for most was verbalizing the distinction between art and not-art in a consistent and understandable way that avoided relying on “gut feeling” definitions.

The question of what makes a composition art as opposed to simply a mode of information exchange isn’t understood in the same way by all readers, authors or critics. Moreover, the boundaries of literature continue to be redefined

and interpreted. For example, the Nobel Prize in Literature was given to Bob Dylan in 2016, marking the first time the Swedish Academy had bestowed the award on a musician.

This subjectivity makes the literary status of various works and artists difficult to categorize. While many professions have discernible benchmarks to demonstrate expertise (such as passing the bar examination to become a lawyer or attaining certification as an auto mechanic), expert status is not as well defined for authors.

The artists interviewed for the study added that further complicating the matter of defining literary art and the literary sector is that literary art has difficulty distinguishing itself as an art in ways other art forms don’t. Attending a dance, theater or music performance, or visiting a museum or gallery, is an overt, and public, act of participation in what most people define as “art.” Consuming literature, however, is much more frequently an individual and private pursuit; it’s often understood to be “just” reading, not partaking of art. A number of study participants said that this perceptual disparity is a major contributor to the problem faced by the literary arts in earning equal status and representation in the arts.

This can all translate into
funding challenges for literary artists
and literary arts organizations.

**AMOUNTS AWARDED TO VARIOUS NATIONAL ARTS SECTORS
BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
FROM 1966 TO 2016**

**AMOUNT ALLOCATED
TO LITERARY ARTS AND
ARTS ORGANIZATIONS**

**\$162.6
million**

**OF THAT, \$46 MILLION
TO INDIVIDUAL WRITERS²⁰**



The sum allocated to literature is significantly smaller than that to dance and theater. Of course, this isn't a problem unique to Cleveland literary artists, but it has a local effect: According to the *Survey of Literary Artists*, members of the local sector made only 6.6% of their literature-based income from awards and grants.

This statistic is borne out by the lived reality of folks involved in the Northeast Ohio literary scene.

"The arts are so rich in Cleveland," says Ann Kowal Smith, of Books@Work, "but literature and creative writing seem like the slightly forgotten stepchild" when it comes to financial underwriting. "We've gotten ... some small grants from funders here, but ... the lion's share of our funding comes from outside of the region." She recalls that when she started Books@Work,

**AMOUNT ALLOCATED
TO DANCE**

**\$272.9
million²¹**



in 2009, she had to "make a case for literature as an art form" to a local funder when requesting fiscal assistance from them.

Individuals who are attempting to earn a living as a writer in Cleveland are even more hard-pressed. "Some writers can earn a living" here, says Daniel Gray-Kontar, of Twelve Literary Arts.²³ But, he adds, not enough of them, even if they have a degree in the field, can earn enough of a living through writing alone. "Most writers—80% to 90%—have to support their [writing] income in any number of other ways," he explains. "There are not a lot of opportunities here; writers really

**AMOUNT ALLOCATED
TO THEATER**

**\$335.5
million²²**



have to grind to piece things together."

Charlotte Morgan, an essayist, a screenwriter, a journalist and a nonfiction writer in the Cleveland area, confirms Gray-Kontar's observations. "I think [Cleveland] is a great place to write," she says. "But there are so many obstacles to being a [self-supporting] writer. ... [B]ecause of my economic status, I have to spend most of my time trying to piece together an income as an adjunct [professor] and workshop leader."

The bottom line, says Gray-Kontar, is that it's "hard for writers to feel economically safe here."



**80 Literary Artists
EARNED
\$800k**

* This information can be found in the full report.



**Average Salary
PER ARTIST
\$33.6k**

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²⁰ National Endowment for the Arts, Literature Fact Sheet (2016), https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Literature_fact_sheet_nov2016.pdf.

²¹ National Endowment for the Arts, Dance Fact Sheet (2016), https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Dance_fact_sheet_nov2016.pdf.

²² National Endowment for the Arts, Theater Fact Sheet (2016), https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Theater_fact_sheet_nov2016.pdf.

²³ Twelve Literary Arts is a nonprofit organization that instructs and supports youth writers.

The local sector also faces the perennial, systemic issue of racial inequity.

A number of study participants commented on this, including Morgan, who points out that “the people who get the funding, the fellowships, grants, etc., are the same people [receiving money year after year], and frequently, they are nonminorities.”

Ali McClain, a local poet, an NEOMFA²⁴ student and the full-time instructor for Sisterhood,²⁵ notes, “There is [sector] momentum building here, but it isn’t reaching all writers, especially writers of color.” The literary scene in Northeast Ohio “is still very white,” she adds, “which isn’t an accurate reflection of Cleveland.”

Most professionals interviewed for the literature study expressed a need for improvement in the way artists grow and serve one another, as well as in the way they market themselves together.

Some of the professionals spoken to said that compared to literary arts sectors in other cities, Cleveland is behind the curve in providing writing opportunities, encouraging connectivity among writers and implementing best practices to attract and retain them. Stakeholders stressed that Cleveland isn’t alone in these challenges, but that more can be done to catch up with literature sectors in cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, Seattle and Austin.

McClain says that despite being a native writer and being in the NEOMFA program, she “still feel[s] a huge disconnect” from the sector. “The only reason I’m aware” of the many things happening in Cleveland concerning literature, she adds, “is because I’m reaching out for information about it on my own. If I weren’t doing that, I’d have no idea what was going on” regarding the local scene.

Local groups are beginning to address these objectives or parts of them, and the fact of these organizations, and of their quantity and quality, is another sector strength. Literary arts-support organizations are the main mechanisms for developing writers and for connecting readers and authors, and Cleveland is blessed with a number of them.

They include public institutions, such as the nationally rated Cleveland Public Library (CPL) and Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL); service organizations, such as Literary Cleveland, Twelve Literary Arts and Lake Erie Ink; and the city’s small independent bookstores, such as Zubal Books, Horizontal Books and Fireside Bookshop.

The city’s “very strong library system puts us ahead of the pack,” notes Long. “We’ve had a national five-star rating from the LJIndex [*Library Journal* Index of Public Library Service] for years.” CPL, founded in 1869, is the 54th largest library system in the nation, with the 14th largest catalogue of print and digital materials.²⁶ CCPL is among the nation’s top 25 library systems in terms of volume of print and digital materials, and it ranks among the top 10 in guest visits.²⁷

Concludes Gray-Kontar, “There are [local] organizations ... that have the capacity to help writers earn a living. And we all need to come together to figure out what the real needs of writers here are.”

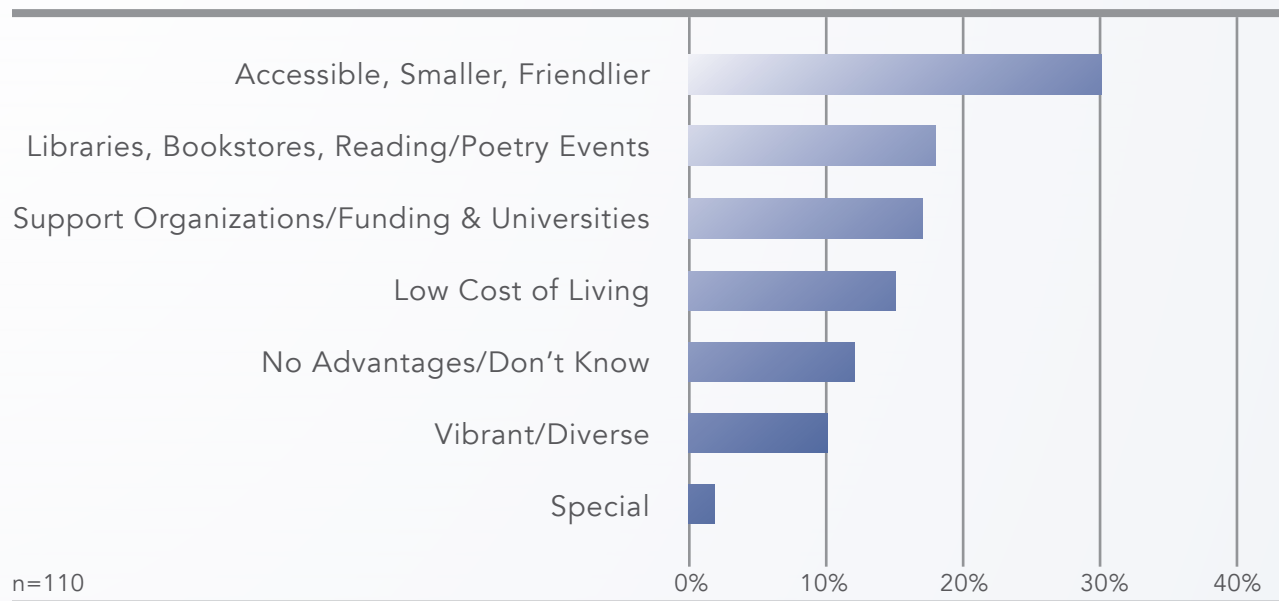
²⁴ Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts-Creative Writing.

²⁵ Sisterhood is an after-school and summer literacy and self-esteem program for girls ages 10 to 18.

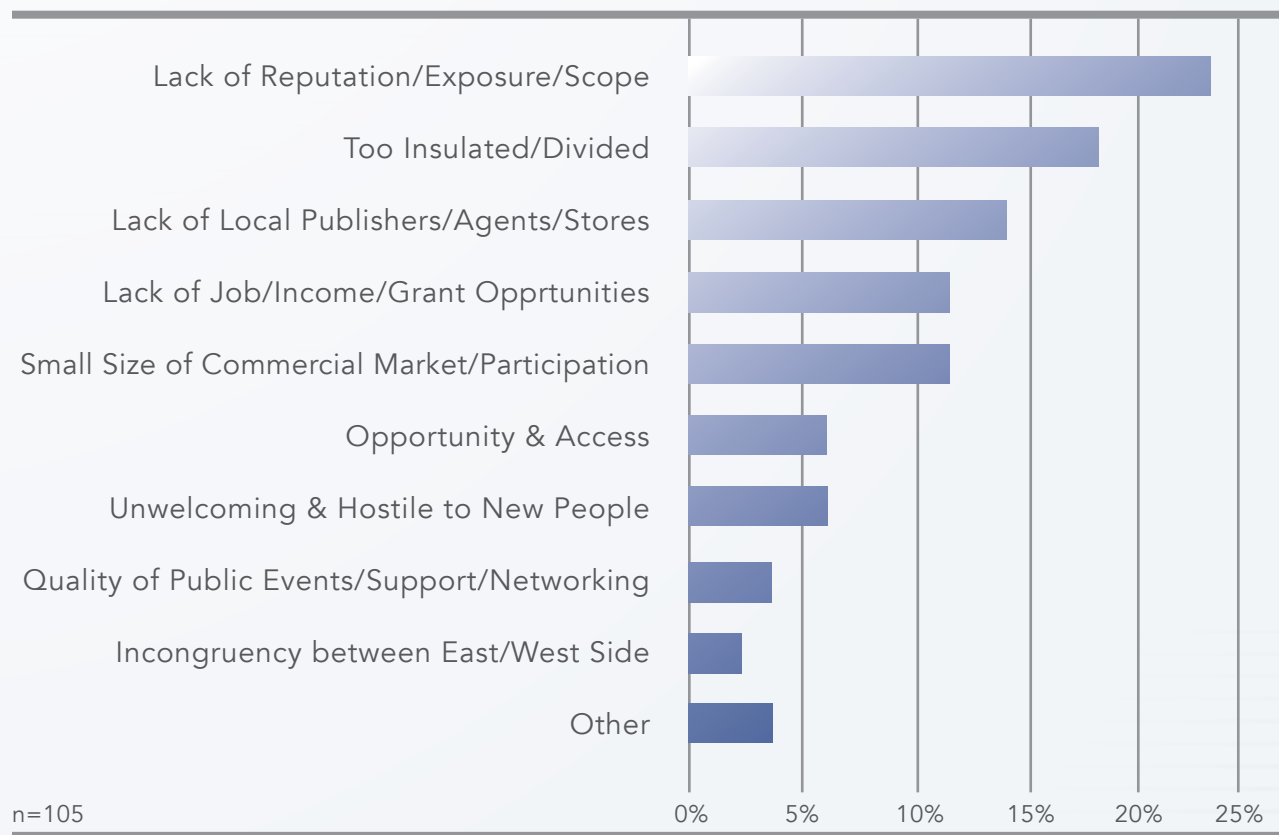
²⁶ American Library Association. *The Nation’s Largest Public Libraries* (May 22, 2017), <http://libguides.ala.org/libraryfacts/largestlibs>.

²⁷ Ibid.

ADVANTAGES OF THE CLEVELAND LITERATURE SECTOR



CHALLENGES IN THE CLEVELAND LITERATURE SECTOR



A photograph of the Cleveland Public Library's Main Library Building, a grand neoclassical structure with a series of tall columns and arched windows. The building is illuminated with warm, golden light, possibly from the setting or rising sun. A modern, curved building is visible in the background to the right. A car is parked on the street in the foreground.

Fostering the Sector in Cleveland

DEVELOPING AUDIENCES
& SKILLS

Cleveland Public Library's Main Library Building was built in 1925 and renovated in 1999; the Louis Stokes Wing to the right of the building was completed in 1997. Photo courtesy of Cleveland Public Library

The effects of the Internet on the literary community here and everywhere are both far-reaching and very much a mixed bag. For good or for ill, the industry changes it has generated, such as self-publishing, are rapidly growing, not fading, phenomena. Thus, one of the greatest issues facing these communities is navigating a future that will hold ever more digital innovation.

In light of this, Cleveland's literary artists, instructors, mentors and leaders of supportive organizations identify two critical aspects of maintaining and enlarging the sector: enlarging the audience that values, and is connected to, literary works; and providing local writers, including emerging writers, with the complementary skills needed to make them commercially viable in a landscape of self-publishing, promotion and online retailing.

Writers Need Readers & Readers Need Writing

Raising the visibility of writing and literature in the community requires developing an active literary audience. But this goal is critical for more than just artistic purposes: It also matters for economic reasons. Expanding a literary audience has artistic benefit, of course. Doing so provides tools to established and emerging authors to enhance their craft, and encourages readers and budding writers to take on literature as a pursuit.

But in a local consumer market, building a literary audience also has a two-fold financial effect. The first is obvious—cultivating a well-read public increases the buying of literary arts, which could include local work.

Equally important, if less apparent, is that the practical skills associated with literacy—the ability to communicate ideas effectively, acquire enriched vocabulary, tell stories and be self-reflective—are enhanced in the processes of reading and writing. This, in turn, “improves [people’s] thinking and writing capabilities, which ultimately makes them

more productive as workers,” says Lee Chilcote, executive director of Literary Cleveland. “We know when a community is well educated, it also becomes stronger economically.”

“I see writing as the umbrella skill,” says Laurie Kincer, a Writers’ Center Specialist at Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL). “It is such an important skill, because writing is how to make sense of the world in ways that are important to yourself.” Kincer and other literacy advocates consider writing as a tool that should spread out across the wider community and that can provide utility in various spheres of life, from tasks such as descriptive or technical writing in noncreative workplaces to self-expression and literary enrichment.

In short, developing a regional audience that consumes literature and is generally literate does more than add money to the pockets of local writers and bookstores; it also develops skilled writers and communicators, which improves any given workforce.



IN A 2016 PEW RESEARCH SURVEY

73% of adults in the U.S. indicated that they **read a book** in any format **over the last 12 months**

THIS WAS

6 percentage points less than the number reported in a comparable **2011 poll**[†]

Although the researchers don't argue this indicates a permanent trend of declining readership, the numbers fuel the narrative that people are dedicating less time to reading given new digital options for leisure. This narrative became especially prolific in 2008 when Steve Jobs, founder of Apple and an icon of the digital revolution, told the *New York Times* that the Amazon Kindle would go nowhere because "the fact is that people don't read anymore."[‡]

In response, many institutions and community literary art sectors around the country have designed programs and strategies to grow the number of readers, both casual and avid.

* This information can be found in the full report.

† Andrew Perrin, "Book Reading 2016," Pew Research Center (Sept. 1, 2016), <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/01/book-reading-2016/>.

‡ John Markoff, "The Passion of Steve Jobs," *New York Times* (Jan. 15, 2008), <https://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/15/the-passion-of-steve-jobs/>.



Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards' 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award-winner Isabel Allende signing copies of her books for the public after the ceremony, with jury chair Henry Louis Gates Jr. in the background. Photo courtesy of The Cleveland Foundation

CASE STUDY: WRITING PROGRAMS HAVE EVOLVED TO MEET THE CURRENT MARKET NEEDS

Universities throughout Northeast Ohio are modifying their writing curricula and adding courses, internships and other programs to furnish additional training for students interested in pursuing careers in writing, editing and publishing.

In 2012, for instance, John Carroll University's English Department initiated a new concentration in professional writing as a complement to its long-standing literature and creative writing concentrations. (The latter was added in the early 2000s.) Students can major or minor in any of the concentrations. The program began with two or three students and has grown to include approximately 18 students each year.

"The Professional Writing concentration is interesting because it gives a liberal arts, humanities foundation to workplace writing," reports Tom Pace, PhD, the professor who directs the new program. "It focuses on the writing students will have to do once they graduate and their careers involve a lot of different workplace genres, such as different corporate or technical writing."

Students in the professional writing track complete a number of foundational courses in literature before taking English 250, "Writing in the Professions," which Pace teaches. Students are required to take six hours in advanced professional writing courses that typically include medical writing, writing about film, technical writing, grant writing and writing in other genres for nonacademic audiences.

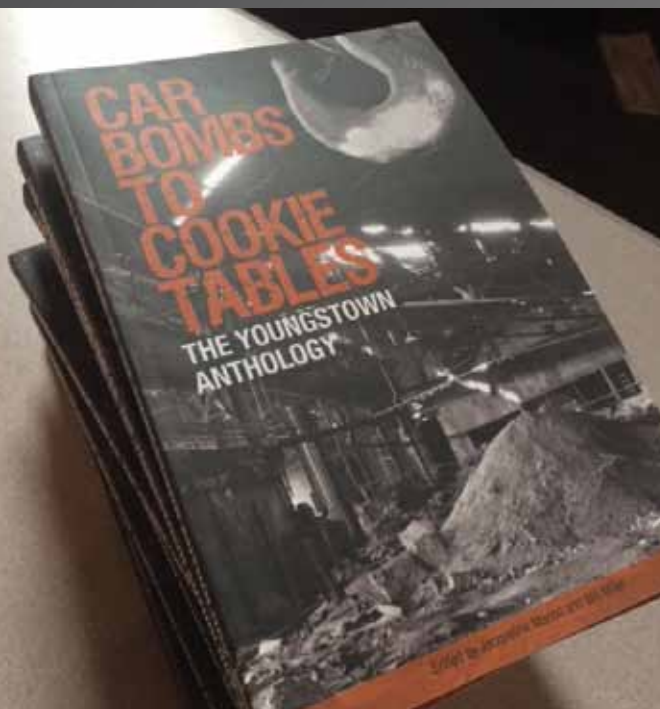
Students in the program are also required to complete a three-hour internship. Pace has

developed numerous business partnerships to enable students to work on group projects, from generating media packages, composing budget reports and writing a children's book (about pediatric health concerns for the Cleveland Clinic's Office of Civic Education) to writing training manuals for Hyland Software. Internships have also allowed students to do corporate writing projects for Rockwell Automation and Parker Hannifin, as well as feature writing for *Cleveland* and *Scene* magazines.

"Hyland is interesting for us because it's a place where a lot of JCU graduates from the business school have gone," Pace says. "Now, we're working to get businesses like that to realize that humanities-based graduates have a lot to offer, as well."

In 2017, Kent State University's School of Journalism and Mass Communication, which offers degrees in journalism and creative writing, debuted a new program in which students produce original public news reporting for statewide distribution. The program is possible thanks to a partnership with Ohio News Connection and Public News Service, funded in part by Media in the Public Interest and the George Gund Foundation.

"Students in any of our majors can work for Kent State Student Media, which includes five independent student magazines and television and radio stations," explains Jacqueline Marino (jacquelinemarino.com), associate professor, who joined the journalism faculty in 2006 after more than a decade of writing nonfiction stories and essays for magazines, newspapers and alternative newswEEKlies.



Left: Jacqueline Marino. Right: One of the books edited by her. Photos courtesy of Jacqueline Marino

"We also help students find freelance writing opportunities and internships around the country, many in the Cleveland-Akron area."

With an eye toward eventual professional employment, many of the students, Marino continues, end up interning and then later working in Cleveland and surrounding areas. Students complete for-credit internships at various local publication companies, including Alternative Press, GIE Media, Crain's and Great Lakes Publishing. KSU also launched a magazine networking group in 2016, ED2010, and the students who run it arrange for editors to speak with the students via Skype. They also took a tour of GLP's production offices in downtown Cleveland. To further foster professional writing skills, Cleveland editors and writers often visit KSU to speak to the students, and students, in turn, pitch article ideas to *Scene* and *Belt* magazines and other publications.

"I would love to arrange for more Cleveland-KSU partnerships and opportunities for writers," Marino says. "It's something other professors and I are always working toward."

To meet the current demands of many journalism jobs, KSU's program ensures that students learn a broad range of solid reporting, writing, editing and multimedia skills. "When our students graduate," Marino says, "they know how to write news, feature and enterprise stories, [as well as] shoot and edit photographs and videos, and many of them have experience in data research, radio, television, magazines, Web design and production, so they are fully prepared to pursue media careers."

For students interested in finding positions in the editing and publishing fields, the Cleveland State University Poetry Center could be the right place to start. For the

past few decades, the 56-year-old center has served as a national press, publishing three to five books of contemporary poetry, prose and translation every year. The center also runs the Lighthouse Reading Series, and all of the center's activities are structured around educational components.

"We take students through the process of editing, book production, publishing, promotion, marketing, reading manuscripts and acquisition," says Caryl Pagel. An assistant professor in the English Department, Pagel earned an MFA in Poetry from the Iowa Writers Workshop and an MFA in Creative Writing at The School of the Art Institute in Chicago, and she now serves as director of the CSU Poetry Center. "They learn the entire life cycle of a book, [a process that] is pretty unique nationally. There may be one or two other MFA programs that include this sort of publishing and editing experience."

In fall 2018, the center, in conjunction with the English Department, implemented a small-press publishing and editing class to increase the range of skills studied. NEOMFA students at CSU also have opportunities to run the *Whiskey Island* literary journal, as well as work on other publications, such as *The Wick* at KSU, or work with the University of Akron Press or the Lit Youngstown organization at Youngstown State University (not associated with the now-defunct The LIT).

According to the literature sector study, "Universities were another strong point, including the ... NEOMFA creative writing program, which is offered by a four-university consortium among Cleveland State, Kent State University, The University of Akron and Youngstown State University."

Along with being considered vibrant and diverse for the city's size, the report continues, "Cleveland [is] a laboratory for exploring new types of writing and developing one's craft."

**"Cleveland [is] a laboratory for
exploring new types of writing
and developing one's craft."**

At CSU, the Poetry Center press serves as an ideal pedagogical lab that prepares students for serious career opportunities. "Students obtain publishing experiences and real, transferable work skills," says Pagel, who is also the author of two collections of poetry. "Some of them have gone on to work at the big presses in New York or have entered a teaching or publishing career based on their work here."

For the past seven years, Cleveland has been fortunate to have Lake Erie Ink: A writing space for youth, a nonprofit organization that provides students in grades 3 through 12 with foundational writing skills and opportunities to do creative writing in a variety of genres, from comics to fiction, haikus to zines.

"Our mission is to provide creative expression opportunity and academic support," says Amy Rosenbluth, Lake Erie Ink's co-founder and executive director. "Providing opportunities is the key, though, because those are fewer and fewer for the kids in the schools and just in the way their lives are going today."

Rosenbluth adds that the program has several other key objectives, starting with providing a low-stakes setting, where kids feel free to experiment and write without being criticized. "We publish the kids' work and help with revision," she explains. "But it's not based on artistic merit, so being able to provide kids opportunities to write for the sake of writing does many things, including increasing their own capacity to come up with ideas and experiment with different forms or genres without fear of failing."

A couple of other benefits for the students participating in the after-school, summer camp and occasional community outreach programs into different areas of Northeast Ohio include exposure to a diverse range of writing opportunities, for example, the annual National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) event.

"They all surpassed their goals," Rosenbluth boasts. "The beautiful part is, it's a goal that

they set, and they're writing for themselves, which is what we are encouraging." One 14-year-old Lake Erie Ink student has already self-published on Amazon and regularly shares his experience with the students at LEI.

Rosenbluth explains that another advantage the kids experience is community building. This occurs on two levels: First, among themselves, as they're exposed to children of different ages and diverse walks of life who they probably wouldn't normally get to know. And second, with the professional, published or produced writers Lake Erie Ink brings in to teach and who provide the kids with role models of how to live and work full-time as writers.

"We try to engage them with different experiences and teach that writers are also readers and audiences for live readings," Rosenbluth says. "I don't know if they will want to become writers as adults, but the fact that they are being exposed to professional writers makes an impact."

Photos courtesy of Lake Erie Ink: A writing space for youth



CASE STUDY: A WEALTH OF RESOURCES SUPPORT CLEVELAND WRITERS AND READERS

Writers in Cleveland seeking a clean, well-lighted place to work know they can always visit the William N. Skirball Writers' Center at the South Euclid–Lyndhurst branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL, www.cuyahogalibrary.org/writerscenter).

A dedicated space for writers, the center features many writer-specific assets and activities, according to Robert Rua, director of marketing and communications for CCPL. These resources include quiet, comfortably furnished rooms and a fireplace in the center's main room, high-speed Internet access, writing reference materials, books about good writing, research materials for those interested in honing their craft and a diverse range of free writing workshops, some of which take place at other branches.

"A lot of our programming is about creative writing," Rua says. "But you could argue that a creative writing workshop might benefit someone in other ways for professional writing, as well, and the fundamentals of writing would be covered."

The center also sponsors the increasingly popular William N. Skirball Writers Center Stage Series, now held at the Maltz Performing Arts Center, which brings many of the best authors in the world to Cleveland each year. The 2017–2018 season, for example, included Margaret Atwood, David Grann, John Irving, Maria Semple, Patti Smith and Colson Whitehead.

Of course, the Cleveland Public Library's (CPL) main facility and 27 branches sparkle as another of the crown jewels in the North Coast literary realm. Also known as "the

People's University" because of its abundant resources for research and learning, as well as its professional staff, which is always available to assist in information searches, CPL was awarded a five-star rating in the 2017 *Library Journal* Index of Public Library Service (*LJ Index*).

In addition to its extensive book, music, movie and other collections; online language learning lessons; free tax preparation assistance; and free tutoring and workshops, CPL is an ideal resource for writers doing historical research or who want to read the latest available books or articles, or who want to enjoy hearing a variety of local and national authors read and discuss their works.

During the past five or six years, several new initiatives have refreshed and deeply enriched Cleveland's literary landscape. Each of these newer programs provides an ideal complement to the long-standing foundational elements of the city's literary community such as the library systems and educational institutions.

In June of 2013, RA Washington opened Guide to Kulchur (GTK, <https://guidetokulchur.com/>). To call his bookstore anything less than a community arts center would be an understatement. Yes, it features an exceptional and ever-expanding selection of small-press books, many by local authors, but it's also the scene of community meetings, author readings, live music and performance events. Washington is himself an amazingly productive polymath who has written and published more than 27 books, writes and plays music, operates a program that sends books to prisoners throughout Ohio and the U.S.,



Brews + Prose. Photo by Carissa Russell

and operated a small press of his own for several years.

People in Cleveland who want to carve out a career as a writer, he believes, have to take the responsibility of supporting their own books. "A publisher doesn't owe a writer anything other than an opportunity to present the work as they are meant to see it," Washington believes. "If you publish a book in a small press format, then the best thing you can do is get in touch with libraries and get on their schedule to read there. That guarantees the libraries will stock copies of your book, and you'll get a reading there to get some books sales. And if you do a good job, they'll probably ask you back...."

Guide to Kulchur relocated from its original location on Detroit Avenue near West 65th and reopened on Lorain Avenue at West 52nd Street in 2017. This year, Washington

and his board oversaw the organization's transition from a limited liability corporation (LLC) to a nonprofit incorporated organization. Despite these changes writers can continue to just hang out in the bookstore, peruse the shelves, get into deep discussions on a diverse range of topics with the gregarious proprietor and purchase the latest small-press offerings.

In 2012, the year before Guide to Kulchur opened, two enterprising young writers helped co-found what has grown into one of the most popular reading series in the region: Brews + Prose at Market Garden Brewery. Dave Lucas, PhD, a poet and SAGES Fellow in the English Department at Case Western Reserve University, and Mike Croley, MFA, a fiction and nonfiction author and visiting assistant professor of English at Denison University, had a plan to launch something

new and different in the literary scene, built on the fundamental assumption that “literature is better with beer.”

“We wanted to start a series where audiences could hear both emerging and established writers without the staid, formal atmosphere [found at] too many library and university readings,” says Lucas, who was recently named Poet Laureate of Ohio. “We wanted our audiences to feel welcome and relaxed, that they could have a drink with our authors before or after a reading, which has indeed happened.”

Lucas and Croley’s friend Matt Stipe (then at Market Garden Brewery, now co-owner of Banter Beer and Wine) was inspired by the “Write to Assemble” panel discussions at the Happy Dog by writer/editor Frank Lewis and Happy Dog co-owner Sean Watterson. So Stipe approached Croley, who looped Lucas in. Stipe explained that he wanted to host a literary event in the then-new beer garden, brewery and restaurant. He subsequently brought in Jeff Draeger, a manager at Market Garden, and the four of them created Brews + Prose.

“We just wanted to do something that seemed very ‘Cleveland’ to us, which is to give the lie to that false distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture,” Lucas says of the once-monthly event, which always features at least two authors so that audiences members who attend to hear one author might also meet a new author. The 2018 series includes graduate student writers from the NEOMFA program again, as well as writers from Twelve Literary Arts.

Croley and Lucas wanted to do more than de-lionize cultural assumptions, however: “Once we were able to maintain a budget, it

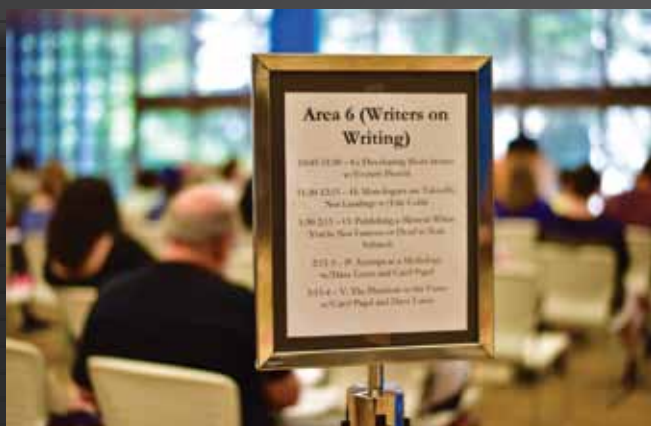
became important to us to keep the events free and be able to pay our authors,” Lucas adds.

Lee Chilcote says he was a writer who wanted a stronger writing community to plug into when he took steps to co-found Literary Cleveland. “I saw a need for interactive, community-based workshops that would help writers develop and provide opportunities for them to share their work publicly,” he explains.

Chilcote wanted to replicate the opportunities he’d enjoyed as a young writer thanks to The Poets and Writers League of Greater Cleveland, which was founded in 1974, evolved over the years and changed its name to The LIT in 2007. The nonprofit organization continued to thrive for several more years, but then ran into some financial challenges and folded in the fall of 2011, after 37 years. Chilcote had twice served on the organization’s board and had seen The LIT’s ups and downs firsthand, which was a highly productive experience.

“Frankly, it was a very strong organization that had mentored me as a writer growing up in Cleveland,” he states. “I wanted to help create those opportunities” for other writers.

So Chilcote assembled a group of writers and folks he knew who were involved in community arts programs and kicked off a series of grassroots brainstorming sessions at Loganberry Books and Lake Erie Ink. That led to a project to test the market, the Inkubator event, a free conference held at the CPL main library in August 2015 that offered a full day of workshops, panels and speakers. The intent was to get the word out about the new organization for writers and establish Lit Cleveland as a public organization open to everyone, regardless



Cleveland Inkubator. Photo courtesy of Literary Cleveland

of whether they were a novice writer or had just finished their fifth novel.

"Literary Cleveland definitely stresses the education and networking sides of writing in a really interesting way," says Brad Ricca, a SAGES Fellow at Case Western Reserve University and author of *Super Boys* and *Mrs. Sherlock Holmes*. "Their annual conference is terrific, too, because anyone can come in, listen, take a class. When I've taught there, I'm always overwhelmed by the amount of participants who are really into it and looking for guidance and tips, so [Literary Cleveland does] a great job with that event."

Today, Lit Cleveland furnishes a full range of writing workshops and readings year-round in just about every genre of literature possible, along with seasonal social events that allow members to network and share their experiences in a relaxed setting. In 2017, the organization

launched the *Gordon Square Review* to mentor and publish emerging writers, award top area writers through a literary contest and broadcast Cleveland's robust and burgeoning literary scene to a regional and national audience.

"Cleveland is a good town for writers and has a really vibrant, diverse literary arts scene with ample events for writers and readers," Chilcote concludes. "To me, that's just Cleveland, a blue-collar town with great culture that's easily accessible but high-quality at the same time."

Recognizing that Cleveland possesses a national reputation as a literary town with a lot of good readers, Karen Long, manager of the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards at the Cleveland Foundation, and her colleagues realized they could leverage the popularity of the one-night awards program to initiate a larger event, Cleveland Book Week. "Without even really trying, we had created Cleveland as a literary destination around the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards," she says. The September 2017 event brought 1,400 people to Playhouse Square, doubling the attendance of 700 from five years before.

So, in 2016, Long oversaw the launch of Book Week, which provides a variety of free literary and literacy-themed events throughout



the community sponsored by the foundation and its partners in the project, including The City Club, CCPL, Brews + Prose, Twelve Literary Arts, Great Lakes Science Center and Karamu House.

"The awards event is fun, but it's a party, and it's ephemeral, so the long game is to drive Anisfield-Wolf into the groundwater here," Long explains. The award is the only American juried prize given each year for the best books to confront racism and contribute to our understanding of the rich variety of human culture. "We want that canon of incredible books to influence us first as a region, and then nationally. The way to do that is through integrating [the books] into places where people gather to read, so adding them to the curriculum in classrooms, both high school and college; or in book groups; work places—especially through innovative programs such as Books@Work—churches or synagogues, etc."

Always happy to speak to any group or organization that wants to learn more about the Anisfield-Wolf Awards, Long says a lot has been happening recently to engage and

energize readers of these important works in areas that were previously underrepresented. She cites the project led by Daniel Gray-Kontar in conjunction with the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, when Gray-Kontar took a group of young scribes along the Red Line to read from the great authors as well as their own poetry.

"Over the 83 years of the awards, there have been a couple of turkeys," Long acknowledges. "But for the most part, we've honored some of the world's greatest literature and writers, including five winners who went on to win Nobel Prizes; acclaimed authors such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston [and] Wole Soyinka; and even an obscure preacher from Georgia named Martin Luther King Jr., who won in 1957 for his first book."

All of these organizations and endeavors, from *Writers Center Stage* to the Anisfield-Wolf Awards, have a positive economic and employment impact on Cleveland by positioning it as a thriving literary city.

From left to right is Ronn Richard, CEO and President of the Cleveland Foundation; poet and Anisfield-Wolf jurist Rita Dove; A-W winner and poet Tyehimba Jess (who also won a Pulitzer for the same book, Olio); A-W winner Peter Ho Davies for his novel The Fortunes; A-W winner Karan Mahajan for his novel The Association of Small Bombs; nonfiction winner Margot Lee Shetterly for Hidden Figures; Lifetime Achievement Award-winner Isabel Allende; A-W Jury Chair Henry Louis Gates Jr.; and, at the lectern, A-W Manager Karen Long.



CASE STUDY: WRITERS LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE THEIR WORK

Ken Schneck, PhD (kenschneck.com), has had an unusually busy year. An Associate Professor and Director of the Leadership in Higher Education (LHE) Program at Baldwin Wallace University, Schneck published his first book, *Seriously... What Am I Doing Here? The Adventures of a Wondering and Wandering Gay Jew*, in May 2017. His second book, *LGBTQ Cleveland: Images of Modern America*, was published in May of 2018. A regular contributor to the "College," "Queer Voices," and "Impact" sections of the *Huffington Post*, he's been picking up many additional freelance assignments recently.

Somehow, he still finds time to promote his writing through social media, primarily as the host and producer of *This Show Is So Gay*, a nationally syndicated radio show. When he started it, he'd hoped to do 10 or 15 shows, but has recorded well over 400. He's now planning to branch out with a YouTube Web series.

"I've had that radio show podcast for [more than] 10 years now, and it's a big piece of the promotions puzzle," says Schneck, who characterizes himself as "pretty relentless" on social media. "The show is on all over the country, so I use that to talk about the book and other people's work, as well, and I appear on a lot of other people's podcasts and reference my book."

His marketing strategy includes taking advantage of opportunities specific to him. Because he's Jewish, for example, he promotes his work through Jewish media and venues and recently appeared at the Cleveland Jewish Book Festival. To sell his first book, he scheduled a tour of the East Coast, staying at homes of family and friends



Photos courtesy of Ken Schneck

along the way to minimize his travel costs while doing readings and signings at bookstores.

As a North Coast resident, he maximizes Cleveland-specific media such as Cleveland storytelling shows on ideastream® or articles in CoolCleveland®, *Scene* or *Cleveland Magazine*. He even hosts burlesque shows in Cleveland, including one at the Beachland Ballroom in the Waterloo Arts District, which provides him with opportunities to be seen and heard, sell his books at intermission and have awesome conversations with patrons.

"The main thing is, I say yes to everything," states Schneck. "There is no opportunity that I say no to!"

As more people continue to venture into blogging, Kate Bigam Kaput is a true veteran, having launched her website, *Greatest Escapist* (a blog about life in Cleveland, at greatestescapist.com), in 2007, shortly after graduating from Kent State University and

moving to Washington, DC. "I started blogging as a means of storytelling at a time when social media wasn't really prominent yet," says Kaput. "I found that I was retelling my stories over and over, so blogging enabled me to share my stories with family and friends all in one place."

Originally on track to be a journalist, Kaput ended up taking a job with the Union for Reform Judaism, a nonprofit based in New York City, doing writing, editing, social media, content marketing and digital marketing. As different social media platforms began to emerge, she became active on Xanga, Myspace, Facebook and then Twitter. "At first, when [these platforms] were more about anonymity, I didn't use them to promote my blog," Kaput recalls. "But as the Internet moved more toward connectivity, it just made

sense to use one to promote the other, and I started to build a pretty good social media following."

Living in DC, she realized a lot of people on the East Coast didn't understand Cleveland or its many attractions and assets, so she always tried to use her blog as a way to support and promote the city. "I came into all of it at just the right time," Kaput observes. "Social media have become a great way to promote my writing to an audience of people who already have a proven interest in what I have to say and Cleveland, so the two complement one another nicely."

Over the years, she's branched out into freelance writing, as well, publishing her articles in Hearst Magazines such as *Woman's Day* and in *Cleveland Magazine*, as well as in

Kate Bigam Kaput. Photo by Stephanie DeLacy



the *Washington Post*. She enjoys the freedom of working from home or coffee shops for her full-time job, as well as freelancing and blogging.

Her advice to fledgling bloggers is to be authentic in what they put out into the world, because a blogger's brand is only as genuine as she is. "You can have a blog without social media, and you can have social media without a blog," Kaput tells inquisitive people. "But if you have both, you might as well put them together because they are so much more powerful when you're using them to support one another."

Annie Zaleski (anniez.com) has certainly optimized partnering digital platforms whenever she can. She's always taken advantage of opportunities to appear on radio or video programs, she says, when her appearance is requested based on an article she's written. In December 2017, she was invited to appear on an NPR program after penning an article for *Salon* titled "In Defense of Paul McCartney's 'Wonderful Christmase'" to discuss why she liked the sometimes ridiculed song.

"I try to do that stuff as much as possible," she says.

A Lakewood-based freelance writer who began her career primarily doing music journalism, Zaleski's been published by the *A.V. Club*, NPR Music, *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, *Thrillist* and *Vulture*. Locally, she's written for *Cleveland Magazine* and other Great Lakes Publishing publications and for *Crain's Cleveland Business*. She's gradually expanded her repertoire to include business, culture, food and personality profiles.

In lieu of a blog, she works diligently to keep her Facebook page updated with all of her most recently published articles, radio and video appearances, and any other news, and she's currently redesigning her website to ensure that it also is chock-full of her latest work. She's filed video interviews with musicians such as Nelly and, when asked, has served as a commentator on the Cheddar online TV channel.

"I am extremely active on social media, Twitter especially," says Zaleski, who has more than 5,000 followers. "Basically, anything I write I will put on Twitter, and if something is happening, I comment about it on Twitter. I've also gotten assignments from editors who've seen my writing on Twitter, so I consider that a valuable tool for career development."

Not digital but still quite social, are the workshops Zaleski teaches for Literary Cleveland. "That's one of the other things I do to get my name out there," she confirms.

Despite their somewhat varying navigations of the digital/social landscape, these three writers agree that when you're a writer, an editor or a literary artist in Cleveland—or anywhere, these days—you have to do whatever it takes to get your work and your name out to the public to enhance your employment and book sales opportunities.

CASE STUDY: WRITERS MUST BE WILLING TO ADAPT IN A FLUID GIG ECONOMY

After a fruitful, three-decade career

as a reporter at *The Plain Dealer*, Margaret Bernstein decided to move on to other career pursuits. In 2013, she recognized the newsprint on the wall, so to speak, as Ohio's largest newspaper tried to address volatile upheaval in the industry caused by "the advance of the Internet and not being able to monetize it," she says. So she volunteered to take a buy-out settlement during one of the company's several rounds of layoffs to accommodate significant loss of advertising revenue.

"I felt like I had only one talent, so it was a little scary, because I wasn't sure how I would land," Bernstein recalls. "But I had been very involved in the community while I was a reporter, so I felt that I could make a living as a consultant."

Much of her reporting was related to the abject poverty so many Clevelanders suffer in a metropolitan area perennially ranked high as one of the poorest big cities in the nation. As an award-winning journalist and as a person,

Bernstein had become obsessed with raising the literacy rate because she felt it was one of the most effective means of lifting people out of poverty.

"I wanted to try my hand at improving literacy in Cleveland, and that's what gave me the bravery to leave the paper," relates the Los Angeles native who earned her journalism degree at the University of Southern California. "It all worked out."

As a direct outgrowth of her involvement in the community solutions field during her career and after about a year of self-employment, WKYC-TV3 hired Bernstein as the station's Director of Advocacy and Community Initiatives. She was flexible and open enough to accept the challenges of her new job. Since then, she's made literacy the focus of her position at the station, which has a reputation for being parent-friendly and "seeing the possible" in children.

"Literacy is just one part of the station's priorities that support learning, education and

Slavic Village Reads. Photos courtesy of WKYC



workforce development, giving people the tools to help them find their place,” she explains.

Bernstein is especially proud of one of her key initiatives, which she launched in January 2017: Slavic Village Reads. The program organizes and sponsors at least one activity each month in the neighborhood. These events foster literacy via broadcast—people get excited about and participate in them because there’s a TV camera recording the event. “We’ve had commercials of just people reading to their kids, and that’s the kind of behavior” Bernstein says she hopes the program encourages. There need “to be books in the homes,” she says.

She actually wrote and self-published a book that she hopes will find a place in many urban homes—*All In a Dad’s Day*, an easy-to-read storybook that depicts a father of color spending time with his child. It’s her hope that the book inspires fathers and children to develop a daily ritual of reading together. Bernstein admits she never intended to earn much money from the book: “I gave away about 90 percent of [the copies],” she says, driven by her desire to increase healthy learning environments that help children become literate. “I have a mission.”

Throughout her professional career, Patricia Fernberg has worked in a variety of jobs that provided her opportunities to be a writer and/or an editor. After earning a BA in Communications from Bethany College, she planned to teach English at the university level, but then chose to pursue journalism positions. While searching for a job, she ended up working for Larry Robinson of Robinson Jewelers fame, where

she acquired strong management and customer-focus skills.

She then landed a job writing advertising copy for the Halle Brothers department store, starting with the budget children’s clothing section and then progressing through other departments, including housewares, gourmet foods and upscale clothing. Next, she worked in marketing and business development at an architectural firm. Deciding that she wanted to do more writing, she transitioned into the magazine field, working for a series of trade publications, produced by Penton Media, that focused on a diverse range of fields, from facility management, ergonomics, occupational health and safety, and HVAC to journals about the urology and OB-GYN professions.

During that time, Fernberg had also become a proficient editor. She was working at Advanstar Communications, Inc. (now UBM [United Business Media]) publishing company, but lost her job in 2012 during a major layoff. After that, she returned to business-to-business (B2B) publishing. Fortunately, since 2010, she had been working part-time as a cashier in the Cleveland Orchestra gift shop. In 2015, she left the B2B work to become Associate House Manager for the orchestra. Throughout her career, however, she has accepted freelance writing and editing assignments. For example, she continues to do proofreading and copy-editing of manuscripts for Gray & Company Publishers, where she has freelanced since the early ‘90s.

“Whether you’re writing ad copy or being a medical editor, every skill you learn can teach you something that enriches what you do and adds value, makes you more marketable as a publisher, editor or writer,” Fernberg declares.

Fernberg represents a wide range of people in Cleveland whose passion for writing or working in related literary arts is so powerful that they're willing to identify ways to earn a living in full-time positions or as freelancers or in unrelated part-time jobs that enable them to continue to write or edit. A survey completed for the literature sector study revealed that, "Those who pursued literary arts part-time or as a hobby/passion had a wide range of daily occupations, including working as security guards, motorcycle salespeople, retail associates and retirees."

As a freelance journalist and author, Robert Sberna (robertsberna.com/) has grown comfortable adapting to evolving writing opportunities. After graduating from Ohio University's E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, he started his career covering police beats for daily newspapers in the Midwest. Sberna has also worked as an editor/writer at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and freelanced extensively, contributing articles to the *Washington Examiner*, *The Plain Dealer*, *Neoeconomist*, *Crain's Cleveland Business* and *Ohio Magazine*. The author of *House of Horrors: The Shocking True Story of Anthony Sowell* (2012) and *Badge 387: The Story of Jim Simone, American's Most Decorated Cop* (2016) has always had to work around shifting marketing conditions in the publishing field.

"Because I've written for the same publications for the past 10 to 15 years, I haven't seen much change in my work during that period

of time," Sberna relates about the realities of freelance writing in 2018. "However, even though I am producing essentially the same types of print stories, the migration of advertising from print to online has stagnated the fees I am earning."

To compensate for flat earnings, Sberna has had to be willing to accept assignments he probably wouldn't have taken a decade ago and has become more aggressive in pitching article ideas to his corporate and print clients. He also utilizes social media to drive traffic to his website and publicize news events or book signings, and he appears on various podcasts whenever an opportunity presents itself.

"Gigging has been a career reality and choice for me since I left a full-time staff position in 2000," Sberna concludes. "The relative instability of freelancing is not for everyone. But for others the prospect of losing clients at a moment's notice tends to sharpen their customer service skills and help ensure that they meet deadlines and produce the best work they're capable of, which also ensures that they'll continue receiving assignments."

Writers & Readers Need Support

Engendering a literate and literary community requires developing, in tandem, the writer and the reader. A resource boon to the Cleveland sector is the organizations whose missions are to enhance and invigorate the community by doing just that. These organizations offer programs and other support mechanisms for free or a minimal charge to encourage reading and writing.

Cleveland's literature sector is unusual in that it's home to two large and renowned library systems. Libraries are natural settings for literacy and literary arts programs, and the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) and the Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL), between them, provide a plethora of such programming, starting with dozens of book clubs covering various genres and topics.

CPL's The Ohio Center for the Book (OCB) hosts a wide range of events. Just a sampling includes *Writers & Readers*, which, in conjunction with Literary Cleveland, hosts readings by nationally known authors; *The Art of the Book*, a three-part workshop series on papermaking and book binding; the Cleveland Inkubator, a free writing conference presented by Literary Cleveland; and a summer robotics program and the Summer Lit League for kids. In addition, OCB is expanding its collection of fiction and nonfiction by Ohio-based authors.

CPL has made significant strides in engaging graphic novel readers and promoting the city's legacy in this genre—Cleveland being the birthplace of Superman and his first comic appearances, and the home of Harvey Pekar, the creator of *American Splendor*. In addition to comic book programs that directly relate to Cleveland, the library system hosts speaker series

and panel discussion exploring various topics regarding comics.

CCPL, too, is a tremendous asset, and has implemented a number of notable initiatives. Sari Feldman has been executive director since 2003, during which time several programs have been instituted to assist local authors. This library network was, in 2014, the first in the state to adopt SELF-eTM.²⁸ The digital self-publishing portal enables members of the public to publish their e-books for free, be discovered by readers and have an opportunity to expand their readership.²⁹ The portal is managed by the New York City-based *Library Journal*, which reviews submissions and chooses the very best to be promoted on their national platform.³⁰

In 2015, the county libraries launched the William N. Skirball Writers' Center, housed in its then-newly completed South Euclid-Lyndhurst Library, which serves emerging authors in the county. The center hosts author events, including the renowned *Writers Center Stage Series*; writer workshops; and a writer-in-residence program. It too implemented SELF-e. Together, the center and the self-publishing portal allow patrons to find and discover local authors and their work. (Also see the *Resources Support Cleveland Writers* case study.)

"We have excellent libraries, some of the best in the country," says Gail Bellamy, past-president of the now-defunct The LIT. "They make a huge difference and spend money" on literary and writing programs. And these organizations' ongoing work to build up their collections gives area residents free and easy access to books of all types, clearing a straightforward path to developing audiences.

²⁸ SELF-e (2017), <http://self-e.libraryjournal.com/>.

²⁹ Jean Bonchak, "Cuyahoga County Public Library Introduces Self-Publishing Platform," *News Herald* (Oct. 24, 2014), <http://www.news-herald.com/article/hr/20141024/NEWS/141029743>.

³⁰ SELF-e (2017), <http://self-e.libraryjournal.com/>.



THE **LJINDEX (LIBRARY JOURNAL INDEX)** OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE RATING SYSTEM RANKS PUBLIC LIBRARIES NATIONWIDE, AWARDING BETWEEN 1 AND 5 STARS TO LIBRARIES THAT MEET ITS HIGH STANDARDS.

LJIndex has consistently awarded the Cleveland Public Library four- or five-star ratings between 2009 and 2017,* bestowing five stars for six of those years, including the last three.

★★★★★

* <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=all-time-all-stars-2017>.

In addition to top-drawer libraries, numerous smaller nonprofit organizations work to advance literacy and literature in Cleveland.

Literary Cleveland has a mission to nurture a strong literary arts sector in the area. Founded in 2015, its formation was preceded by four years with no organization of its kind in Cleveland, following the folding of The LIT in 2011.³¹ Although CCPL took over many of The LIT's programs for developing writers, a demand persisted to have a private, nonprofit organization to enhance and market the literary arts community, similar to such organizations in cities comparable in scale to Cleveland.

Lit Cleveland provides classes designed for a variety of genres and mediums, including essay writing, memoir writing, blogging and social media use. Although many of these programs explicitly serve writers, the organization also produces programs with readers and audiences in mind. Its marquee event, Cleveland Inkubator, is a weeklong series of open-mic nights, book swaps, speakers and workshops that together earn the program the title of Northeast Ohio's largest annual festival for

writers and readers.³² (For more information about Lit Cleveland, see the *Resources Support Cleveland Writers* case study.)

Lake Erie Ink (LEI) is developing a young reader audience, through after-school and weekend programs to provide students with creative writing opportunities. One of its hallmark projects—for which LEI partnered with a local small press, Belt Publishing—was producing an anthology of poems, art and short stories. The effort was led, edited and contributed to by LEI's teenage students. The collection, titled *Home Away From Home*, was released in 2017.³³ (For more information about LEI, see the *Writing Programs Have Evolved* case study.)

Twelve Literary Arts (TLA), founded in 2016, focuses on young people as well as adults. Its stated mission is to bring "...performance poetry to public spaces, with youth programming, adult professional development, and brave spaces to dream, write, and teach into reality a world of social justice and equity." This laudatory goal translates into instructing youth writers of color between the ages of 14 and

³¹ Karen R. Long, "The LIT, Cleveland's Organization for Writers, Folds after 37 Years, *The Plain Dealer* (Aug. 3, 2011), http://www.cleveland.com/books/index.ssf/2011/08/the_lit_clevelands_organizatio.html.

³² Literary Cleveland, Cleveland Inkubator (2017), <http://www.litcleveland.org/cleveland-inkubator.html>.

³³ Nikki Delamotte, "New Lake Erie Ink Book Lets Cleveland Teens Tell Their Stories of 'Home,'" *The Plain Dealer* (June 2, 2017), http://www.cleveland.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2017/06/new_book_lets_cleveland_teens.html.

19, and providing professional development activities from age 19 through their mid-careers. TLA also hires minority writers to teach. As for enlightening public space with poetry, TLA's best-known project is taking students on the Greater Cleveland Rapid Transit Authority's Red Line to read poetry for the riders on that line. (For more information about Twelve Literary Arts, see the *Underground Scene* case study.)

Sisterhood, unlike Twelve Literary Arts and Lake Erie Ink, is a program rather than an organization. Like those two entities, it's youth-centered, focusing specifically on girls ages 10 to 18. Founded in 2009 at the West Side Community House, Sisterhood offers after-school and summer literacy-based programs that explore themes such as "Social Skills & Self Esteem" and "Social Justice" through literature, such as Roxanne Gay's *Hunger* and Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*. The girls journal, blog, and write and read their own poetry—this past summer, they even wrote and recorded poems and songs for a music CD, a project that culminated in a performance at Cleveland State University. Sisterhood's mission may be best summed up by the sentiment behind the blog title, "So Nobody Else": "We write so no one else will tell our stories."

Books@Work is one of the most unusual literacy organizations in Cleveland. Founded in 2009, this innovative group is based here, but has spread across the country (and the globe). Its mission is to improve adult learning and bridge the nation's growing educational divide by providing workplace-based book discussion groups. The programs take place at sites as varied as healthcare, manufacturing, distribution and technology companies, and in nonprofits such as the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center. The discussions are facilitated by a university professor, feature weekly one-hour sessions and

typically run for three months. They also, quite deliberately, include employees at all levels within a company, to allow workers at every level to better know and understand each other, so as "to develop trust and respect, and break down barriers across hierarchies."³⁴

Just a sampling of additional groups in Cleveland's constellation of literary organizations includes

- Guide to Kulchur, a local bookstore/small press/de facto community arts center;
- Brews + Prose, a popular monthly live reading series at Market Garden Brewery, whose tagline is "literature is better with beer";
- The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, a beloved, premier event founded 83 years ago by Edith Anisfield Wolf, a poet and activist ahead of her time, to honor her father's passion for social justice; and
- Cleveland Book Week, the organic expansion of the Anisfield-Wolf Awards, which offers book fairs, live podcasts, social happenings, forums and reader events at various locales in downtown and around the city.

(For more information about the organizations described above, see the *Resources Support Cleveland Writers* case study on page 37.)

³⁴ <https://www.booksatwork.org/what-we-do/#how-might-i-deploy-books-work-in-my-company>.

CASE STUDY: FICTION WRITERS FIND CLEVELAND A NURTURING PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

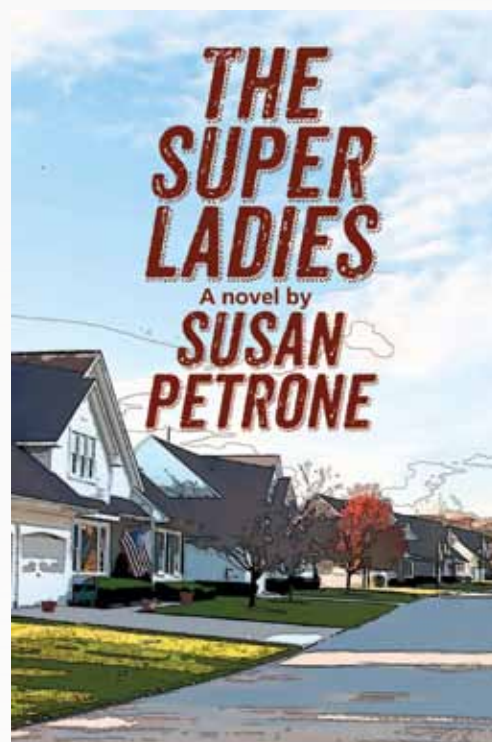
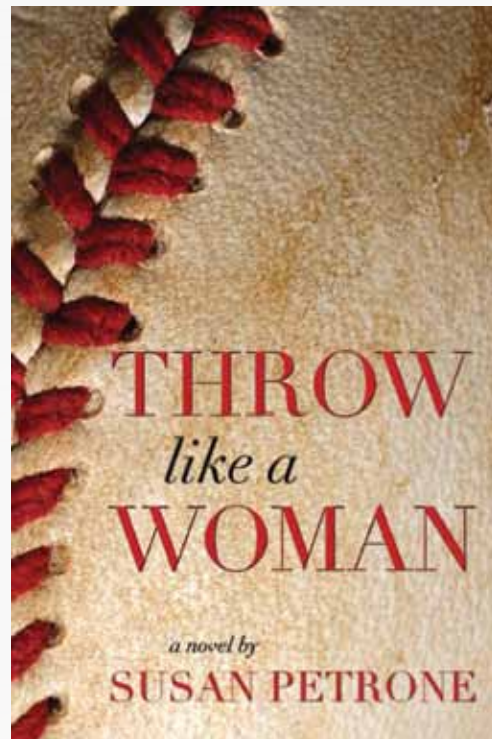
As one of the founders of Literary Cleveland and its first president, novelist

Susan Petrone (susanpetrone.com) says, "I love that we're developing a culture of writing here, but quite frankly, I want more readers. I wish people bought more books. Everybody feels that way."

Never one to mince words, Petrone is concerned that the recent self-publishing phenomenon has engendered a lot of bad books that amateur and rookie writers don't spend enough time revising and editing—or, preferably, working with a professional editor—to polish. "Self-publishing gets a bad name because too many people are content just getting the first draft down" and releasing it as is, observes the author of several novels, including *A Body at Rest*, *Throw Like a Woman* and her newest book, *The Super Ladies*, about three friends who develop superpowers during menopause. "Give your book a little time to percolate," she advises. "Don't just say, 'Okay, it's done!'"

Despite her concerns about the Northeast Ohio book market, Petrone finds the Cleveland area to be an extremely fertile habitat for writers. For instance, the city's independent bookstores are quite supportive of local authors and schedule them for book readings and signings.

Also, Literary Cleveland, created in 2015 to serve area writers and readers, offers a wealth of workshops, readings and events. In addition, Petrone characterizes the Cuyahoga County Public Library system as "fantastic," especially the William N. Skirball Writer's Center.



Photos by Gretchen Wiesenbergh Bercaw

"I take advantage [of all these resources] as much as possible," Petrone enthuses. "I even splurged this year and bought season tickets to the [Writers Center Stage] series."

Her publisher, The Story Plant, is small, but nimble, she says. It's run like a larger press because its founder, Lou Aronica, had worked as a senior editor for Avon and Bantam and is well-respected in the publishing industry. Aronica asked her to participate in a women fiction writers group on Facebook, and though Petrone doesn't necessarily identify herself as a writer of women's fiction, she agreed.

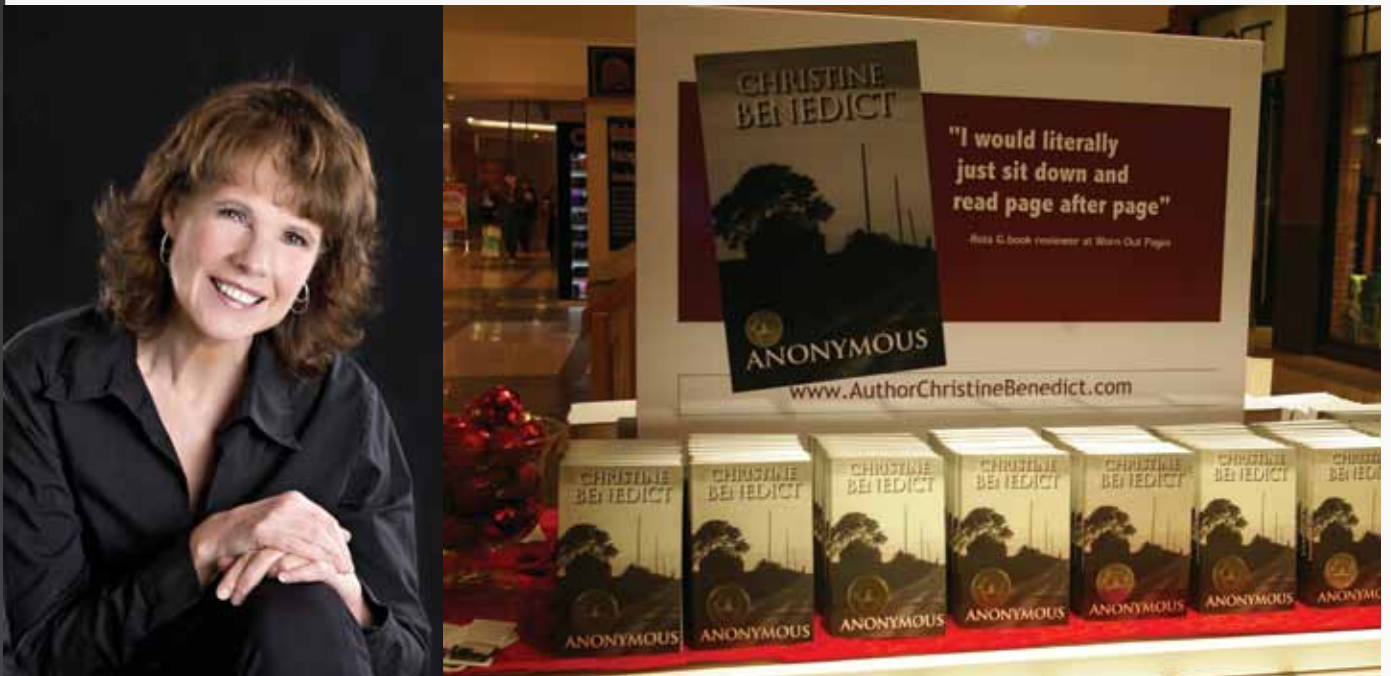
"We take turns hosting discussions once a month," she explains. "So The Story Plant writers have banded together to promote the publisher, and then hopefully that helps us promote our work, and in the long run we're using the social media technology to build relationships with our readers."

Award-winning author Christine Benedict

(<https://www.authorchristinebenedict.com>) took advantage of the region's excellent educational programs and other resources to refine her skills and launch her writing career. She started her first novel in 2001—and made it to page 50 before stalling out. She'd taken a furlough from her job at USAir and was running her husband's roofing business when she decided to take courses in creative writing and nonfiction at Baldwin-Wallace University. There, she also attended Neal Chandler's writer's conference and fiction workshops at Cleveland State University. Chandler, a PhD and then a professor in the CSU English Department (he's since retired), became Benedict's writing mentor. As Benedict gained confidence, she returned to her novel, reworking and finishing it.

When she completed her award-winning mystery thriller *Anonymous*, she tried the traditional literary agent route, but after

Christine Benedict. Photo by Kristy Steeves. Book cover photo by Jennifer Orr



about 10 years of frustration, decided to self-publish. Then a local small press agreed to publish the manuscript in 2014. Next, she assiduously leveraged several grassroots ways to reach her readers.

"I went out and basically sold 3,000 hardcover copies from my [car] trunk," Benedict recalls. "Then I had numerous book clubs that took it, some of which had up to 40 members. I would Skype for book clubs in other states, or for the ones close to me, I'd attend their meetings to discuss the book with them." She also set up a table at craft fairs, where she would typically sell up to 80 copies. As a way to drum up a targeted e-mail list, she held a contest: Anyone who put her or his e-mail address on the list was eligible to win a Kindle Cloud Reader. Benedict now has more than 700 people on her e-mail blast list, as well as more book club members inquiring about her upcoming work.

"Ultimately, I was just driven by the passion for writing, the passion to learn more and study more, and you do learn a lot from reading," says Benedict. "I still read a lot, because the writing is always quite inspiring." She plans to complete her next novel, *The Girl in the Willows*, by the end of 2018. Several chapters of it have already gained advance honors from the Fish Short Story Prize and Glimmer Train Press.

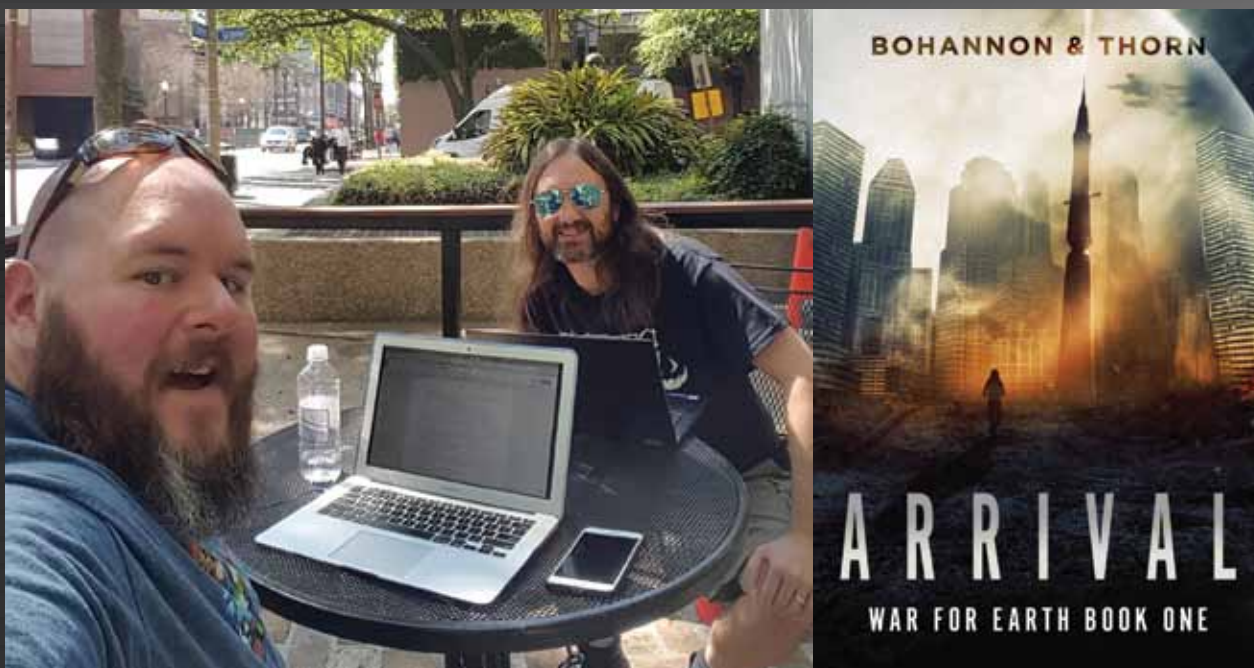
James Thorn (<http://jthorn.ne>), author of *Barren, Book 1—War in the Ruins* and co-author of the *Dustfall* and *Arrival* series and other books, also changed careers to break into writing. He was a teacher. Like Benedict, he read books about writing, including Stephen King's classic primer *On Writing*, and studied

the fundamentals of fiction writing and publishing. He too is enjoying significant success. But it didn't come without a few bumps along the way.

"I thought I was going to write this epic fantasy, because of course, that's what you start with when you've never written a novel before," Thorn remembers with a laugh. "It was a complete disaster. It took me nine to twelve months just to write the first draft."

Fortunately for Thorn, his timing was good. In November 2007 Amazon was rolling out its Kindle Direct Publishing platform. "I had purchased my first Kindle in 2007 or 2008," Thorn recalls, "and I wasn't quite ready to be there, but I could see where Amazon was headed," he continues. "Fast forward, I ended up publishing and unpublishing a number of things during what became known as the Kindle gold rush in 2011, 2012, where people, even from the traditional publishing world, were uploading quality fiction when Kindle was new. They were getting a lot of exposure, so that's how I got started."

Thorn shudders when he thinks about the almost 250,000 words of fiction he unpublished because "It [was] so bad!" Today, however, his writing is going extremely well. With his friend Zach Bohannon, he started the Molten Universe Media publishing firm to release their dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction under a rigorous production schedule. In 2017, Thorn published nine titles, seven of which were novels. He hopes to double that output in 2018. Once the pair gets more established, they plan to take on other authors. Currently they offer author services such as coaching, developmental editing, conferences and retreats.



Zach Bohannon (left) and James Thorn (right) in New Orleans for "Authors on a Train" event

He and Bohannon employ a direct-to-market approach, Thorn says, leveraging Amazon's algorithms to get a small percentage of hard-core readers in the post-apocalyptic genre to buy their books in the first few weeks. At that point, Amazon's algorithm takes over and shows their titles to other people who purchase in that genre. Thorn, a native of Pittsburgh, is quite happy writing in the Rust Belt cohort city of Cleveland, promoting his work through podcasts and other social media marketing and advertising, as necessary.

"I'm kind of an outlier," he admits. "The way I work, almost entirely remotely, makes it irrelevant to me where I am geographically."

Author Claire McMillan (<https://clairemcmillan.com>) thoroughly appreciates the benefits of being able to control her writing career from her husband's family home outside of Cleveland. A native of Pasadena, California, McMillan was working as a litigator in San

Francisco when she chose to pursue her dream of writing fiction. Taking a creative leap, she enrolled in the low-residency MFA in Creative Writing program at Bennington College in Vermont. She and her husband then made another big decision, to support her writing and to plan to start their family.

"My husband is originally from Cleveland, so we decided to move to Cleveland in 2003 because the Bay Area is so expensive," McMillan explains. "The good thing about writing literature is you can do it from anywhere, especially if you have a New York agent."

After relocating from the Bay Area, McMillan became enchanted with Cleveland's history and the remnants of the city's Blue Blood society from the turn of the 20th century, when it was one of the largest and richest cities in the U.S. The ghosts of past industrial glory that haunt modern-day citizens via the city's cultural assets and worn, but venerable architecture inspired her to create a new world for her fiction.

"Cleveland has this hangover of a boomtown through the 1920s, when it had so much wealth, and you still feel that, but you can also definitely sense the lack of it" now, she says. "What's left of Cleveland society is very small and insular in the same way that New York society was in 1905, so I was inspired to update the novel *House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton and set it in Cleveland."

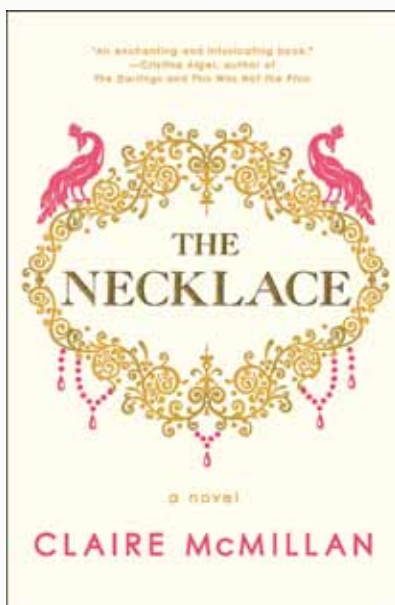
Titled *Gilded Age*, the story was McMillan's first published novel and appeared in 2012. She published her follow-up novel, *The Necklace*, whose story alternates between 1920s Cleveland and contemporary Cleveland, in July 2017. She served as the 2017–18 Cuyahoga County Writer-in-Residence at the Skirball Writers' Center and is a member of the board of trustees of The Mount, Wharton's home in Lenox, Massachusetts.

To promote her writing, she maintains her website with current information about her

books, and is active on Twitter and Instagram, "mostly at the behest of my publisher, Simon & Schuster," McMillan allows. She's also taken advantage of the region's robust reading scene, from library and bookstore events to the Brews + Prose reading series.

"There's a great literary community here that has been incredibly supportive," McMillan says of her adopted hometown, where she taught a series of writing classes in 2017–2018 through the Skirball Writers' Center. "There are many great writers who live outside of New York or L.A., which gives you a chance to live a different life and have a different perspective."

Claire McMillan. Photo by Molly Nook. Cover images by Simon and Schuster



Having an Impact



Dave Lucas launches his book Weather at a reading at John Carroll University. Photo by Carissa Russell

The vitality felt throughout the Cleveland Literature Sector is apparent in all of the ways discussed so far, but that energy manifests in another form, one that's concrete and measurable: The sector is good for the local economy, making significant employment and financial contributions to the area.

TWO WAYS TO EXAMINE EMPLOYMENT

First, we look at all workers inside the literature industry. For example, a publishing company would hire professionals in accounting, IT and maintenance in addition to editorial and writing staff. All of these employees are included in the industry analysis. A second way to measure employment is to isolate and pull out literature workers from all Cleveland MSA industries. This occupational analysis, for example, would capture a copywriter who's employed by a bank or developer. *Inside the Margins* examines the sector using both approaches.



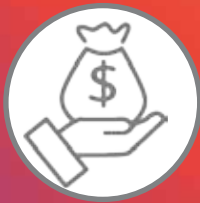
Industry Analysis

LITERATURE SUBSECTORS' EMPLOYMENT, PAYROLL, AVERAGE WAGE, ESTABLISHMENTS

CATEGORY	EMPLOYMENT		PAYROLL		AVERAGE WAGE (\$)		NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS	
	2015 Total	2014-2015 % Change	2015 Total	2014-2015 % Change	2015 Total	2014-2015 % Change	2015 Total	2014-2015 % Change
Literary Artists*	80*	N/A	\$801,000*	N/A	\$33,652*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Broadcasting & Telecom	199	-0.6%	\$13,387,000	-11.5%	\$67,397	-11.0%	5	-0.4%
Education	1,313	-2.1%	\$64,705,000	0.2%	\$49,286	2.3%	16	0.2%
Management & Promotion	664	4.1%	\$57,806,000	7.4%	\$87,072	3.2%	51	-3.2%
Publishing, Printing, & Design	1,762	-1.7%	\$90,853,000	-4.5%	\$51,557	-2.9%	60	-0.4%
Other Services**	570	0.5%	\$35,924,000	1.8%	\$63,017	1.3%	46	1.4%
Total in Cuyahoga County, Ohio	4,508	-0.7%	\$262,675,000	-0.5%	\$58,273	-1.6%	177	-0.7%
Total in Ohio	29,634	-1.3%	\$1,549,924,000	-0.1%	\$52,302	0.7%	1,229	0.2%
Total in U.S.	827,536	1.0%	\$55,732,128,000	3.7%	\$67,347	2.3%	50,204	2.7%

* These data were taken from the 2017 Survey of Literary Artists. The payroll of literary artists includes income received only from literary arts.

** Please see Table 2, on p. 6 of the full report, for the complete footnote content.



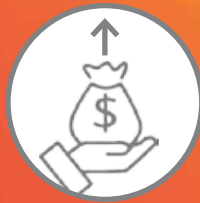
p. 7* (see Appendix Table C3, page 60 for further details)

THE AVERAGE WAGE IN THE LITERATURE SECTOR IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY WAS

\$58,273 IN 2015

which was **11.4%** higher than the state of Ohio at **\$52,302**, but still below the national average wage of **\$67,347**.

* This information can be found in the full report.



p. 8* (see Appendix Table D3, page 66 for further details)

FROM 2005 TO 2015, THE TOTAL SECTOR AVERAGE WAGE IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY INCREASED FROM

\$53,647 to \$58,273, an 8.6% increase

OHIO SAW A

10.7% increase in sector average wages from **\$47,247 to \$52,302**

THE U.S. SAW A

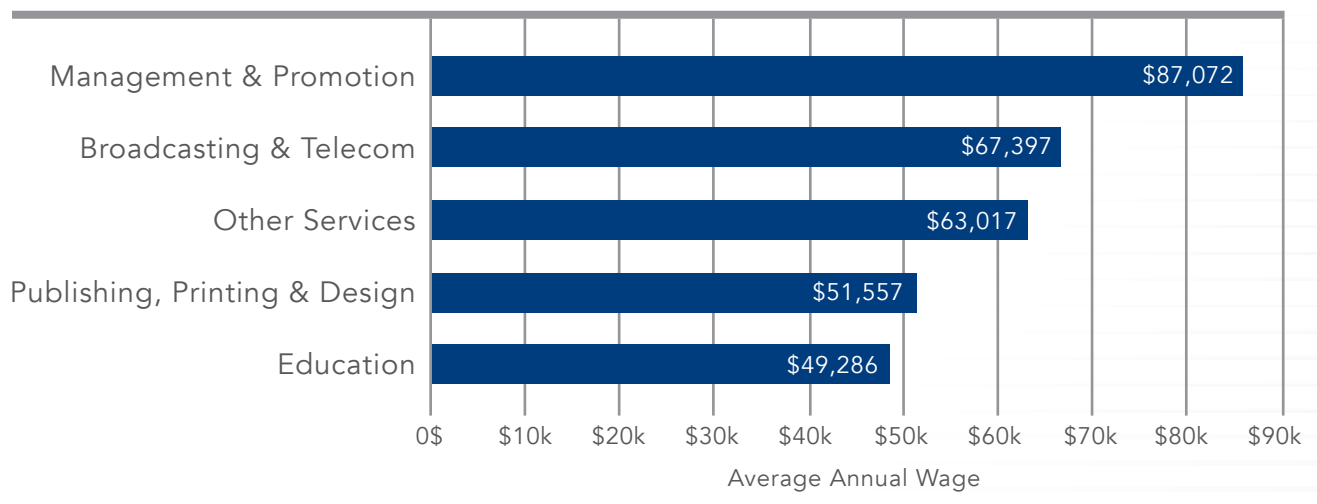
21.6% increase in sector average wages from **\$55,394 to \$67,347**

All subsectors had gradual rises of average wages across the 11-year period, which was interrupted by the recession.



"Sell More Books Show Summit" in Chicago with James Thorn

LITERATURE AVERAGE WAGES BY SUBSECTOR IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY,





A LOCATION QUOTIENT (LQ) IS A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL CONCENTRATION OF AN INDUSTRY AS COMPARED TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

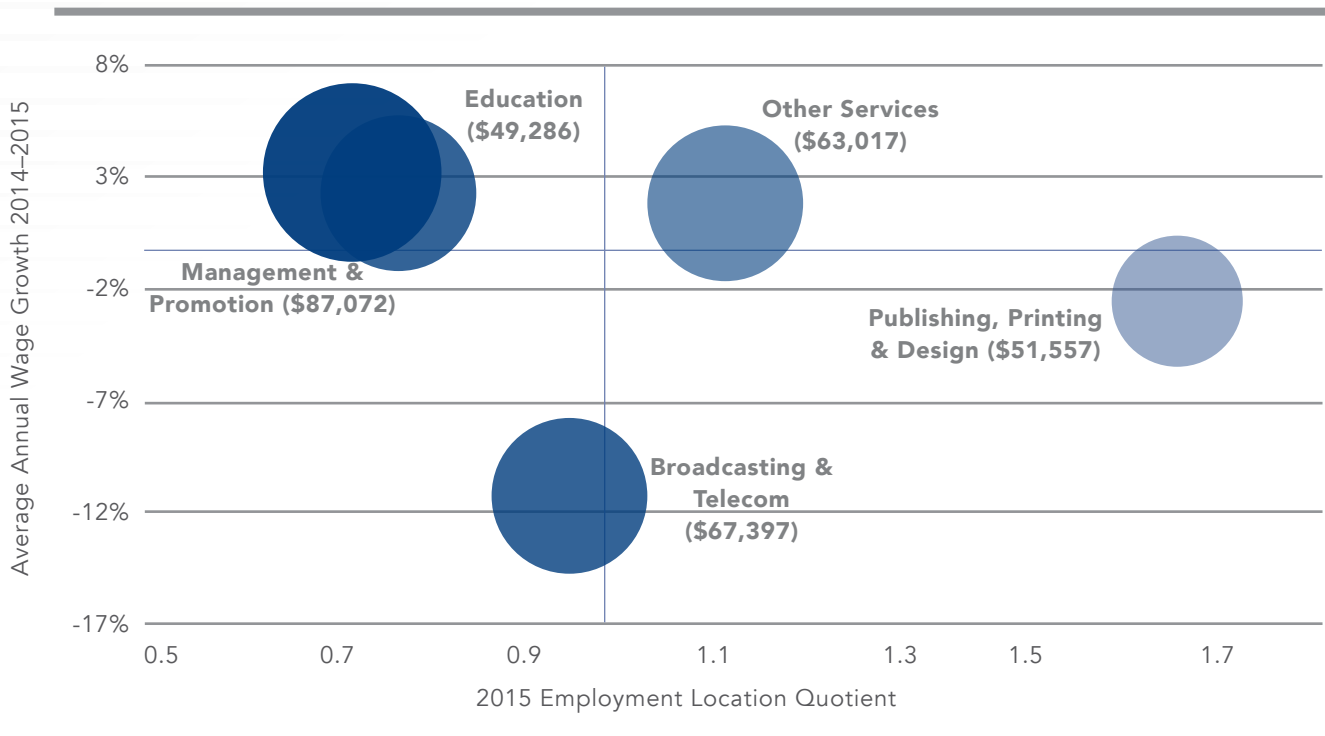
If an LQ is greater than 1, then the subsector in Cuyahoga County has a proportionally higher level of employment than the subsector in the U.S., indicating regional specialization. Examining industries in this format shows which industries have growing wages, a specialization and high wages.

Two out of five subsectors in the Cuyahoga County literature sector have LQs above 1

(Publishing, Printing & Design: 1.68; Other Services: 1.10).

* This information can be found in the full report.

EMPLOYMENT LOCATION QUOTIENT AND AVERAGE WAGE GROWTH OF THE CLEVELAND LITERATURE SECTOR



Occupational Analysis

p. 15* (see Appendix Table D2 for further details)

14 occupations experienced positive median wage growth from 2011 to 2016, and **13** occupations' median wages grew faster than median wages across all occupations (5%)³⁵

p. 17*

Investigating data about literature occupations in the Cleveland Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)—both over time and across the primary/secondary boundaries—shows patterns that seem correlated to narratives about the evolution of the medium. Overall, literature employment has hovered around

12,000 jobs between 2011 and 2015; compared to all other occupations, Cleveland literature's share of all employment has slightly declined (by about 0.2% over the last six years) but remains steady in its 1% to 1.3% range. But the figures are not as static when one looks within the sector; its composition has experienced noticeable occupational changes.

p. 18*

Cleveland didn't experience the post-recession recoveries that the Indianapolis, Columbus and Cincinnati MSAs experienced.



(Top) Cleveland Inkubator 2017. Photo courtesy of Literary Cleveland. (Bottom) Brews + Prose. Photo by Carissa Russell



* This information can be found in the full report.

³⁵ It's important to note that median wages don't distinguish between full- and part-time employment, and this may under-count the hourly wage for some artists due to the nature of their trade as they move from project to project. For more information, see the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics at http://www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm.

The Economic Impact of the Cleveland Literature Sector

pp. 35–36*

THE OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE LITERATURE SECTOR
IN CLEVELAND IN 2016 FOR EMPLOYMENT INCLUDES†

4,588
direct-effect
employees

\$261.8
million in
labor income

\$955.3
million in
output

An additional 2,273 indirect-effect jobs represent the supply chain and are comprised of industries that sell their products and services to the literature sector. Lastly, 1,817 induced-effect jobs are a result of household spending by those working in literary arts and its supply chain. This adds up to a total employment effect of 8,678.

* This information can be found in the full report.

† The monetary amounts refer to the impact for direct-effect employees.

p. 38*

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS IN CHAPTER 4 OF THE LITERATURE STUDY SHOWS
THAT THE CLEVELAND LITERATURE SECTOR CARRIES FISCAL WEIGHT, INCLUDING†

8,678
jobs

\$497.4
million in
labor income

\$799.2
million in
value added

\$1.6
billion in
output

\$163
million in
taxes

* This information can be found in the full report.

† The monetary amounts refer to the impact for direct-effect, indirect-effect and induced-effect employees combined.

p. 36*

IN TERMS OF TAXES, THE TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT WAS

\$163.0 million



DIRECT EFFECT
\$83.9
million

INDIRECT EFFECT
\$45.4
million

INDUCED EFFECT
\$33.7
million

STATE AND LOCAL
\$56.6
million

FEDERAL
\$106.4
million

* This information can be found in the full report.

Conclusion

TURNING THE PAGE

The Cleveland Literature Sector isn't insulated from culture- and industry-wide trends affecting consumption, business models and digital distribution. In fact, like its fellow sectors around the country, it's even more affected by these trends than are other art forms, such as theater, dance, visual arts and music.

Despite this, many of the study participants agreed that Cleveland's reputation as a literary center is underrated, especially given the size of the writing community here. "We'll never be as big as New York, San Francisco or maybe even Minneapolis," says Lit Cleveland's Chilcote, "but we're catching up." He adds that not only is the sector "larger than people think it is," but that it's expanding, especially in terms of the growth of literary arts service organizations and of events such as the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards and Cleveland Book Week.

"The literature sector in Cleveland has the potential to become regionally and nationally known in the same way the theater, visual arts and music sectors here are," Chilcote believes, "and to become an economic and cultural driver in the region." Stakeholders here are empowered to improve the lives of literary artists and of Cleveland's status as a city that cultivates high-quality literature.

Ultimately, the way in which Cleveland fosters its citizens' ability to create and absorb the written and spoken word can and will determine how it fits into the evolving landscape of literature.

As the Cleveland Literature Sector continues to grow and to revise itself in the coming years, in this moment, we're left to pose the question at the age-old heart of every story: "What happens next?"

A BRIEF GUIDE TO CLEVELAND LITERARY ORGANIZATIONS

Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards

www.anisfield-wolf.org/, www.ClevelandFoundation.org; 216.861.3810; Hello@Anisfield-Wolf.org

The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards recognize books that have made important contributions to our understanding of racism and human diversity.

Books@Work

www.booksatwork.org; 216.800.1292; info@thatcanbeme.org

This organization advances adult learning and literacy through workplace-based reading clubs.

Brews + Prose

www.brewsandprose.com/; 1947 W. 25th St.; 216.621.4000 (Market Garden Brewery); brewsandprose@gmail.com

This live reading series takes place the first Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. in the Ohio City Room at the Market Garden Brewery. The event tagline is "literature is better with beer."

Cleveland Book Week

www.clevelandfoundation.org/news/book-week/; 216.861.3810; Hello@Anisfield-Wolf.org

This organic expansion of the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards features various events, including appearances by some of the Anisfield-Wolf Award-winners and by other nationally or internationally recognized authors, and, this year, the Great Lakes Black Authors Expo & Writers Conference.

Cleveland Public Library

cpl.org; main library, 325 Superior Ave.; 216.623.2800; information@cpl.org

Cuyahoga County Public Library/William N. Skirball Writers' Center

www.cuyahogalibrary.org/; administrative offices, 2111 Snow Rd., Parma; 216.398.1800

Cleveland Writers Group

www.clevelandwritergroup.com, www.facebook.com/ClevelandWriterGroup/; 440.725.7587; dave@clevelandwritergroup.com

This group is a support organization for emerging writers.

Lake Erie Ink

lakeerieink.org; 2843 Washington Blvd., Cleveland Heights; 216.320.4757; info@lakeerieink.org

This organization provides space, expressive opportunities and support to Cleveland-area youth who are interested in writing.

Literary Cleveland

www.litcleveland.org/; 7405 Detroit Ave., Ste. 1 NW; 216.532.3875; info@litcleveland.org

This organization is dedicated to nurturing a strong literary arts sector in the area by elevating and serving the community of local writers and readers.

NEOMFA/Cleveland State University

www.csuohio.edu/class/english/neomfa; 1860 E. 22nd St., Rhodes Tower, Rm. 1815; 216.687.3951; English@csuohio.edu

The Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program at Cleveland State University is a four-university consortium incorporating the faculty and resources of CSU, Kent State University, Youngstown State University and the University of Akron. The program offers five concentrations, in fiction, creative nonfiction, playwriting, poetry and literary translation.

Sisterhood

www.wschouse.org/index.php/youth/west_side_sisterhood; 9300 Lorain Ave.; 216.771.7297, ext. 315; amcclain@wschouse.org

Sisterhood is a West Side Community House program that offers after-school and summer literacy-based classes and events for girls ages 10 to 18.

Twelve Literary Arts

www.twelvearts.org; 325 E. 156th St. (1484 E. 105th St., Feb. 2019); 216.350.6333; info@twelvearts.org

Twelve Literary Arts supports and develops writers and performers who desire to create literary works with an emphasis on social transformation. Twelve is a gathering house for writers, thinkers and performers of color and of all genders, welcoming allies in the struggle to make a better world one word at a time.

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