

# THE WRITE PLACE

A newspaper dedicated to the Greater Montreal area writing community



## Publishing an E-Book

by James Edwin Branch

E-book sales now add up to nearly twice that of paper sales, a good reason to publish digitally. Another is to cut out the middle-man and become our own publisher. Before you jump right in, however, there are some things of which you should be made aware.

With a publisher in control of your work, it's in their best interest to take care of several things on your behalf:

- Editing: no matter how good a writer you are, or how good you think you are at grammar and the English language, you're going to need someone else to review your work.
- Marketing: Publishers often assist writers in marketing their work.
- Accounting and record keeping.

The minute you become your own publisher, these duties fall to you. A qualified editor is really hard to find. Sure, you'll run across lots of people who can attest to their ability in the English language department, but it takes a special person to, line by line, word by word, go through an 80 thousand word manuscript.

As for marketing, it's really all about putting your name out there and never giving up. There are some sites to join and people who'll help you, if you help them in return. Believe it or not, Facebook is a really good marketing tool. Using it to market a product without getting on everyone's nerves is the art. Don't be a pest and don't be pushy. That won't sell books.

The last item is accounting. If you think you're going to get rich doing this, I don't want to burst your bubble but that seldom happens. The writers who do make the big paydays remember that it's their product that matters. Turn out a wonderful book and it'll take on a life of its own.

So, how do you get started? Here are three sites that will help you get your book out.

- Kindle Digital Publishing (Amazon.com)
- Pub it (Barnes & Noble®)
- Smashwords (<http://www.smashwords.com/>)

### AMAZON.COM

We'll start with Kindle Digital Publishing:

<https://kdp.amazon.com/self-publishing/signin>

To use this link, you have to sign up and give them some of your personal information. I've never had a problem with their secure server, so I wouldn't worry. It will ask you if you want a direct deposit or a check and you'll have to decide how you want it done. This link is internet wide so it is not governed by one nation. It is an international listing (I should explain that, if you list your books here, you'll see them listed on Amazon U.S. and Amazon U.K., but they won't show up on the Amazon Canada site, as E-books are not very available on that site.

As you follow the instructions, one thing you'll need to provide is a cover image. If you do this first, it should eliminate a lot of worries.

Prior to uploading anything, I personally put everything where I want it. My cover is in a JPEG format waiting in my 'pictures' file. My book is in 'my documents', along with a pre-designated blurb and a short Author biography. Here's the list one more time. Make sure you have these items ready.

- **Cover image** (JPEG format @ 750 to 2000 pixels – 8.5" by 11" for those who don't 'get' pixels.)
- **Book file** (Make sure it's arranged the way you want it. Although they will give you a chance to preview it, you won't be able to change it without reloading the file.)

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## Technology Can Be a Double-Edged Sword

by Joseph Richard Mannella, Managing Editor

As writers, we've replaced our pads of paper and Remington typewriters with the latest computers, laptops and tablets. Rewrites have become child's play. We don't have to retype full pages of work to replace a single sentence . . . 'cut and paste' has become a part of our literary language. We don't have to spend hours feeding page upon page of printed work into a photocopier when we need a copy to send to a publisher. We find everything we need in a compact file on a hard drive or portable memory stick. Click on a button and voilà! A pristine copy, ready for your needs. We have spell checkers that tell us that we've made a spelling mistake! Click on the error and you can have the computer correct it for you. Amazing!

Yet it's not that amazing when you realize that it only catches really self-evident errors. You know . . . spell "publisher" as "publisher" and it'll catch your mistake faster than a hummingbird flaps its wings. But what happens if the error isn't that noticeable? What if you say, "The bird flew threw the window." The spell checker will read six correctly spelled words and neglect to notice that the word "threw" should be the word "through". Oh, but we also have grammar checkers. Great! Now the computer will catch that error, tell

you the meaning of the two words, and have you choose which word is most appropriate for your situation.

We've become complacent. We let the computer do all the work. Should we use "it's" or "its"? Let the computer do it. Is the correct word "to", "two" or "too"? Let the computer figure it out. Are there "less" people or "fewer" people working out? Why worry? The computer will know. More and more choices that directly affect the quality of our work are being left to an inanimate object. If the simple correction of your submission becomes overwhelming, how much time do you think an editor will give to it before dismissing it to the out basket? Understanding the mechanics of writing is in your own self interest.

I believe that, while the importance of technology is undeniable, we must remember that our work represents the best of us and we can't afford to let machines get the final word on the subject. Editors will appreciate the extra effort made, marginally increasing the chances that your experience will be positive rather than negative. Write with pride and enthusiasm in your work. It will be the better for it.

### Submission Guidelines

An eight- to twelve-page B&W news magazine, dedicated to the English-language community of the Greater Montreal Area, will be published every three months. Submissions for entry into the paper will be accepted from any writer, with preference given to those resident in the Greater Montreal Area.

There will be no compensation to the writer for any work that we might publish. All submissions will be reviewed by our team of editors. There is no guarantee that any submission will be accepted for publication, nor that any accepted submission will be published. Submissions can be made a number of ways:

by e-mail : the.write.place@hotmail.com (Subject line: Submission)  
 by fax : (514) 383-6683 (with a cover page)  
 by snail mail : The Write Place, C/O 9770, boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montreal, Quebec H3L 2N3

Please include, with your submission, your name, an e-mail address where we can contact you, and a short bio that we might include with your story, if it is accepted. If you have a picture, please feel free to include it. If you want your snail mail submission returned, please enclose a SASE with sufficient postage. Any submission you provide should try to stay within a reasonable limit of these word count guidelines:

Short story :	500-2000 words	Postcard story :	250-500 words
Poetry :	3-50 lines	Book reviews :	500-525 words
Articles (by experts in the field) :	500-1000 words	Letters to the Editor	50-250 words
Advertisements:	increments of 1/8 page (contact us for rates)		

## THE WRITE PLACE

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Send submissions to our e-mail with "Submission" in the subject line. Snail mail will be accepted as well. Please include your name and address in all correspondence. There is no compensation to the writer for any work that may be published. All submissions will be reviewed by our team of editors and we reserve the right to edit all material received. There is no guarantee that any submission will be accepted, nor that any accepted submission will be published in the next issue.

Before publishing an Author's Work, a publishing agreement will be signed by both parties, specifying that the Author grants to the Publisher, and the Publisher accepts from the Author, Primary first serial, one-time rights and license to print and publish the Work in the English language in Canada. In no event shall the Publisher be obligated to publish or cause publication of the Work if, in the Publisher's opinion, the Work violates the common law or statutory copyright, or the rights of privacy, publicity, or any other right of any third party or contains libelous or obscene matter.

## Invisible Cities Network - A Retrospective

by Christina Manolescu, Founder of Invisible Cities Network, © 2011

(Showcasing self-publishers, musicians and artists since 2001)

This year, Invisible Cities celebrates its first decade. Quite a milestone! So how and where did we begin?



### The 'Indie' Movement

The 'big bang' that sparked our existence occurred over ten years ago on April first (April Fool's Day) 2001. Four of us got together at the (now disappeared) Café 'Porté Disparu' on Mount Royal Avenue on the Plateau. There we made plans to set up a local writers group. In fact, the intention was to reach out to emerging and actual self-publishers in Montreal. Back then, we had no idea how much our nascent venture was destined to grow.

### By Artists for Artists

We began by advertising in the free listings of the *Montreal Mirror* newspaper. Over the months and years, to my great surprise, we evolved into a grassroots 'indie' movement, attracting many independent artists of all disciplines: writing, publishing, drama, Spoken word, music, sculpture, photography, graphic arts, fine arts, and more.

In the early years, ICN staged mostly Spoken Word and cabaret-type performances. We continued to meet once a month, first at my apartment on the Plateau and, later on, in bookshops and theatre spaces, cafés and bars. Hundreds of artists and writers have attended an estimated 65 meetings, all in all.

They are a mix of students, professional artists and writers, employed and self-employed people, as well as retirees, who share an interest in, often a passion for, literature, music, art, writing, self-publishing and collaborative performing. Our numbers grew and there are now 325 or so members and friends on the ICN mailing list. A decade later, the Invisible Cities web site attracts more and more visitors every year.

### Independence

Invisible Cities has always been an independent group that receives no outside support or funding of any kind. As an informal network of artists and writers, our aim is to support our members and create a public showcase for ourselves and our work. Over time, we began to have spirited discussions about formalizing the ICN 'movement.' Some members felt that we should apply to become a registered association, perhaps a non-profit organization, allowing us to apply for funding in order to develop and grow. But others who had prior experience going down that path vehemently disagreed. They warned about the bureaucratic obligations, the irksome restrictions that this was bound to entail. Truth be told, none of us had the appetite or zeal to make it happen. In the end, it was the NO vote that prevailed. Looking back, I see this was a wise choice. I'm grateful that we remained independent and free.

### ICN Conference 2005

Apart from public performances, our most ambitious event by far was the *ICN Book & Creative Arts Conference*, held in September 2005.

125 people attended the Conference. Among the more well-known attendees was Pat Donnelly of the *Montreal Gazette*, who praised the event highly. Also Peter Wintonick, documentary film maker, winner of the 2006 Governor General's Award, and *Montreal Gazette* cartoonist, Terry Mosher, otherwise known as 'Aislin.'

It was a truly extraordinary day, and I was told that people were still talking about it months afterward. One reason it was so successful (aside from the really engaging speakers, expert panelists, Book & CD display, live entertainment, coffee on tap and marvellous food) was the fact that so many of us already knew one another through our IC network. And many more conference attendees who were newcomers were welcomed into our community on that day.

### ICN Website & Twitter

The Invisible Cities web site, launched in May 2005, offers a permanent showcase to emerging artists. Very popular, too, are the regular email announcements posted to the ICN mailing list. This is how members and friends share and receive news about their upcoming publications, stage productions and events. Our archives contain almost 1,200 messages of praise and thanks from ICN members and the community at large.

### Self-publishing Workshops

We share expertise and offer training and support in self-publishing. This was one of our early mandates and continues to be at the heart of what we are trying to achieve. With that in mind, we offer a day-long workshop along with a course-book in Self-Publishing. Details are posted on the ICN web site at:

<http://www.invisiblecitiesnetwork.org/tiki-index.php?page=support+and+training>

### Collaboration

Whenever possible, we collaborate with other groups: ELAN (English Language Arts Network), as well as the organizer of the Yellow Door Poetry Readings (Ilona Martonfi), Canadian Authors' Association (Ken Kalman), Canadian Writers' Society (Rosalie Fisher), Crime Writers of Canada (Nancy Grant), Quebec Writers' Federation (Lori Schubert), and Mediaville. Almost all of these groups were represented at the ICN Conference in 2005.

(Continued on page 11)

## The Letter

by *Ilona Martonfi*

Courtyard arranged with pots  
of red geraniums,  
jasmine and shrub rose.

A gift of pressed flowers.

“Too bulky!” the postmaster says.

“It will cost double. One dollar and tax.”

“It’s a geranium in there,” I say.

My sister Ibolya will not be reading my note:  
hand-scripted in black letters.  
Wilted scarlet blossoms.

When mother died six months ago,  
Ibolya offered me her home:

catalpa seed pods rattling in the wind.

Faded blue-washed walls.

Here in this house on Frontenac Road,  
mother’s room was closed.

Above all, death requires silence.  
The hollow hard skin of the gourd fruit,  
dried and used as a vessel for water.  
Wild iris under acacia.

Today the clerk says:  
“Do you want this beautiful stamp?  
When your friend sees it, she’ll love it.”  
“It is for my sister,” I say.  
“She won’t see it. She is blind.”

## Funeral in the Snow

by *Ilona Martonfi*

My grandmother was born in the spring,  
and died in winter last year, an old woman.

For the last ten years of her life,  
I didn’t speak to my grandmother.  
My husband cut off ties with my family.  
No one could call me.

I didn’t go to her funeral.

Paved road along the Laurentian foothills:  
rang Saint-Francois, Blainville.  
Broad, steep stone steps.  
Home-grown fennel, tomatoes, green beans.  
Raspberries poking through the fence.

Wire-rimmed glasses.  
A short, plump, white-haired woman:  
She spent her days crocheting doilies.  
Giggling to “I Love Lucy” television shows.

For the last ten years of her life,  
I didn’t speak to my grandmother.  
She died 8 February 1981 of diabetes,  
after one year in Saint-Jérôme Hospital.

I didn’t bring a bouquet of wild flowers.  
The language of my childhood: Magyar.

“You’re so pretty!” she talked to daisies.  
Named her chickens: “Pettika, Rosika, and Szusa.”  
Made the sign of the cross, before slicing  
a new loaf of bread: Then kissed it.  
I loved her cabbage rolls and apple strudel.

Grandmother in a wheelchair, in her seventies,  
flew to Los Angeles, visiting sister Erna.  
Extending her visa for another six months.

Letters she kept in a pewter biscuit tin,  
her late brother, Feri, wrote from Budapest.

## Moskva

by *Ilona Martonfi*

Lapis blue and orange-red.

Birch tree. Forest berries. Rosehip.

Along the main highway,  
connecting Moscow and Leningrad.

The Hermitage: Summer, 1974.

My first trip to the USSR,

traffic on ring road,

along Moskva River the Kremlin Walls,  
Saint Basil Cathedral.

The Red Square: Krasnaya Ploshad.

Four lanes along city borders.

A woman covered with a green sweater.  
Blood running on black asphalt.  
“An accident.”

Through the window:  
A busload of tourists.  
My husband and I.  
He says: “Russian people look sad.”  
I remember, the bruises.

Through the window:

Babushka dolls  
for our three daughters.

Bronze candle holder of a mythical horse.

Russian Orthodox Madonna icon  
in wood, tempera, hand-painted.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*Ilona is a Poet / Teacher / Editor / Founder / Producer / Host  
of The Yellow Door & Visual Arts Centre Readings*

## Hands Held High

by *Jeff Curphey*

Here we stand, chins held high, knives in our backs,

Here we run, smiles on our faces, because we know we'll make it  
through,

Here we go, searching our past, so we can get a glimpse of our  
future,

Here we laugh, we've made it this far, might as well see where it  
leads us,

Here we line, row on row, hands linked and proud eyes glare,

Here we are, realizing everything we ever were actually mattered,

Here we write, the prologue to the rest of the days, though the ink  
hasn't yet dried

Here we cheer, preparing for our own greatness, surpassing our  
visioned potential,

Here we watch, the stars are aligning, shining on us leading our  
adventure,

Here we heal, our hearts bleed no more, regain the flesh from  
stone,

Here we know, the good is yet to come, and the bad can be over-  
whelmed,

Here we wait, to grow into our dreams, and watch them come true,

Here we pray, thanking God for the days, and living them to the  
fullest,

Here we sleep, in anticipation of tomorrow, knowing it can always  
be better,

Here we sing, pouring our lungs into the air, singing to the sky  
filling it with joy,

Here we finish, knowing we finished what we started, and dying  
proudly in our sleep.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*Jeff Curphey is 24 years old and hails from Barrie, Ontario. He  
loves to write and read but, most of all, he loves playing sports:  
hockey, volleyball, even adventurist things like kayaking and rock  
climbing. He's very active, and when he sits down to write, "I try  
to be as honest, and as to the point as I can get." Thank you  
DrumsleadStudios for the help!*

## The Decision

by *Joseph Richard Mannella*

How can you reconcile being afraid of the one thing that could give your life meaning, the one thing that could make your life complete?

Each new day, I don't know what would scare me more . . . to wake up and find I was all right and hadn't changed from the day before, to wake up and find parts of me missing, my final journey started, or not to wake up at all, my destiny fulfilled.

Majestic and stately, my armor much more prepossessing than any of my comrades-in-arms, I have survived the recent local population devastation, as I have done since time immemorial, patiently watching as, day by day, all of my companions gave up their lives for the betterment of others, their corpses wrung dry as they melted away into oblivion.

When the enemy destroyed our power lines, my brave soldiers were there to light the way. Their tasks were second nature to them, providing comfort to all the innocent victims in the only way they knew how. They asked nothing in return except to be appreciated and cherished but, over the long term, they were forgotten. For that one special moment, while they gave of

themselves unselfishly, they were treasured and held dear. Just for that one shining moment. Once spent, however, they were discarded for a fresher face, a stronger backbone, a brighter smile.

I have seen old veterans fall by the wayside, their brilliance under fire unequalled, and I have seen youngsters crumple under the intense heat of battle, their youthful exuberance equal to the undertaking put before them. Not one of them was deserving of the fate they met, yet not one of them wished for anything less.

All along, I have surveyed the battlefield with pride in the accomplishments of my men. They unswervingly chose the path they were born for, the track that would give their lives value.

Why am I so afraid of doing the same? Is my life worth more than theirs? I cannot find it in me to answer. I have done nothing with my life, my fore-ordained task neglected in my rush to self-preservation. I have forgotten how it was supposed to be. My brothers-in-arms have reminded me what is important.

It is time. My head is held high. My wick stands primed. I am ready. A candle has only a single purpose. Light me, please.

## Occupying Montreal

by *Thad Weiser*

I moved to Montreal in the fall which, as it happened, corresponded with the Occupy Montreal sit-in. There were several hundred protesters gathered in the financial district, most living in rather nice tents in a sort of Mountain Equipment Co-op fav-ella. The Occupiers were peaceable for the most part, and had the steely determination of people accustomed to hammering tent pegs into asphalt. I spoke to John, who had moved from Ontario to an apartment in the Plateau to attend university. He said that come what may, he would be there for the duration. He was the first to sign my petition stating that he was a permanent occupier of the street.

It was an easy matter to find his apartment. I moved right in. He had a surprising number of possessions for a student. The clothes were rather nice, but didn't fit. The electronics were mostly portable and I assume they accompanied John to the Occupy site. The furnishings were studenty and not to my taste but the Contents sale earned enough to pay the first month's rent. I explained to the landlord that John had moved out and I was now subletting the apartment. He said that was all right; I paid in cash, which sealed the deal. I paid the second month in advance with John's flat-screen TV, a 42-inch model that would have impressed his proto-Proudhonian friends.

John returned later that month. He demanded that I de-camp; I refused. He called the police, who were rather slow to arrive. John was in a high temper by this point, which did not help his case. I protested that I was the true tenant: possession is nine-tenths, as they say. The landlord, wearing one of John's cashmere sweaters (a gift initially from his mother), backed me up. I showed them John's signature attesting that he was now living in Tent City.

The police were ready to remove John from the premises when he shouted, *What about my stuff?* One of the officers did a quick reconnaissance but, in truth, there was nothing left in the apartment to show that John had ever lived there. Despite this lack of evidence, John accused me of stealing all of his stuff and tried to hit me. The police were good enough to restrain him. As he was led away I told him that all property is theft, which he should have known. John was detained overnight and I expect he will have to move back to Ontario to live with his parents. Another victim of our present economic downturn.

I sympathize. John's assets are quickly diminishing and I doubt I will be able to pay the rent come April. I can only hope the Occupy movement reawakens in the spring. I'll be overdue for a move by then.

*(Publishing an E-Book, cont'd from page 1)*

- **Blurb file** (This is your chance to write a blurb that will tell your readers what the book is about. If you can't get them interested in the book from this, why would they read it?) Put your heart into it. This is the major selling post for your book.
- **Biography file** (This will come up again and again so you might as well build one you're happy with. Like the blurb, think it out and show them why you are the writer you turned out to be.)

**COVER**

Making a cover for your book doesn't have to be that complicated. You've got several choices. You can buy a cover image from a professional artist, an avenue that might cost you several hundred dollars. There is a less expensive way. You can buy some art from Staples or some other computer store (I purchased 1,000,000 clips for \$9.95.) Try to find an image that most represents your book and add it to a page in either 'Pagemaker', 'Wordperfect' or 'Microsoft Word'. I use 'Microsoft Word' to do mine. I use the 'word art' from the 'Insert' tab to make my titles and other copy. This does take practice but can also be fun. The advantage to buying clip art to begin with is that, once you've bought it from a retailer, you've purchased the right to use any of the pictures at any time.

After creating your cover art, you can move it to a 'paint' program by clicking on 'Edit' and 'selecting all', click 'copy' and then 'paste' it into the 'paint' program. As I said, this does require practice. It's not going to be as nice as a professionally designed cover but, then again, you're not paying between \$75.00 and \$300.00 for it.

**ROYALTIES**

There are two options on this site: 35 percent and 70 percent. The 35 percent option is for books priced under a dollar. I do have a few of these myself that I use for leader items. The rest are at 70 percent. I believe this is the best way to go.

*Sharing:* If you don't mind your book being shared between Kindles or other electronic devices without receiving a royalty payment, check this option. This is up to you. I don't allow it but some authors do. I only allow 10 percent of the book to be transmitted as a sample. Some offer more. These are decisions you'll have to make as you go through the registration process for your e-book.

**GENRE**

Make sure, when you begin, that you know where your book belongs. Is it a mystery or a romance? You'll be asked to include 'buzz' words. These will be invaluable to you, helping the search engine to find your product. The right buzz words will help your book find the right path to a buyer. Here are some examples:

- Exciting
- Action
- Adventure
- Romance
- Thrilling
- Comedy
- Fast-paced

If you follow the prompts, pay attention and answer every question, you should be able to post to this site fairly easily. Make sure you have a good internet connection. If you get knocked off the web, you'll have to start over.

**BARNES AND NOBLE®**

Preparing your book for this site is similar to that of Amazon. The link you'll need is:

[http://pubit.barnesandnoble.com/pubit\\_app/bn](http://pubit.barnesandnoble.com/pubit_app/bn)

All you have to do is click on 'create account' and then follow the prompts, just as you did on Amazon.com. You might plan this for another day if the first site takes you most of a day. I think the first time I did it, I spent two hours.

*Saving:* Once you start downloading your book, you can stop at any time and click 'save' on the bottom of the page. This will save your entry until the next time you choose to work on it. It's good to know that 'save' exists because, if you leave the page without clicking it, you will find yourself frustrated at having to start over again. Both the Barnes and Noble® site and Amazon.com take anywhere from 24 to 72 hours to display your work, so don't get disappointed if it doesn't show up the next day. (*Editor's note: This site requires a U.S. address.*)

**GETTING PAID**

If you're lucky enough to sell some books, you should know that these sites don't write the first check for about 60 days. Some sites require that you reach a certain dollar amount before they even cut you a check. As I said, don't be disappointed. It takes time.

Finally, a personal note: I hope this instruction has helped you in some way. Sometimes we forget those that help us along the way. I was lucky and someone did this for me. It seems only fair to pay it forward.

It took me a little while before I began to receive regular royalty checks from Amazon and Barnes and Noble. It takes time to build a following. I think, sometimes, people see these cookie cutter images of an author in a movie and think we're all rich and living in a cottage by the sea. I agree it would be nice. Unfortunately, the truth is that sometimes an author isn't discovered until they're gone.

I have never approached it believing that it would make me really wealthy. I've always been satisfied when my work touches someone who reads it. You are the artist. If your dreams are big, I hope you achieve them.



*James Edwin Branch was born and raised in Big Spring, Texas and is the father of three wonderful children. An avid musician and a United States Army Vietnam Veteran, he has written 19 novels and novellas, in several different genres, the favourite of which is Action/Adventure or Western. His work is marketed by VGR.*

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# *The Shriners Hospital Pages*

## **A Hospital Like No Other**

*By Alyssa McLeod*

My name is Alyssa MacLeod, I am from Cape Breton (Nova Scotia) and have been a patient at the Shriners Hospital in Montreal since I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at age 2. My journey as a Shriners Girl began in 1994 when my parents were told I would never walk or talk. They refused to believe this and went in search of other opinions. That's when Shriners came into my life. Shriners gave my parents the hope that they needed. Since that first visit, I have had four surgeries at Shriners, many Botox treatments and cast removals. I was around the 20<sup>th</sup> patient under the care of Dr. Farmer to receive the Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy surgery at the Shriners hospital. This surgery required a 2-3 month hospital stay. During this stay, the nurses were fantastic. They were kind and caring and came into my room with a smile and made sure I was comfortable. They would visit every day and we got to know each other very quickly. I would spend the days doing physio but always found time for play in Le Parc with Angie and the other Child-Life specialists, who did crafts and watched movies with us. They were always smiling and, when I was there, they did a great job of taking my mind off why I was there. I spent many mornings in the physio room with Rochelle and Joanne. I didn't want to do exercises in the afternoon with my Dad but he encouraged me and often offered me candy rewards in exchange for cooperation- it worked!

I would go on to have 3 other surgeries at Shriners, each with exceptional care from nurses, doctors and other staff members. They were always concerned with my well-being. I can honestly say I liked having surgery because everyone was so positive and happy to see me that it made me happy to be there- even if I was in a hospital bed. I knew you were going to have fun and make lots of memories.

I met life-long friends along the way, some of whom we still stay in touch with today. The hospital is very family oriented, which is great, as patients need all the support possible, both during and after surgery.

Botox treatments were another critical part of my hospital experience. I've had many. I remember that, prior to my first treatment, Angie gave me a doll and went through the procedure with me and eased my fears. The needles weren't that bad. Dr. Cantin, Angie, Christina and my Dad would always find ways to distract me while Dr. Cantin was injecting me and it would be over in no time. After each treatment, I would get casted, the worst part of Botox because the cast always had to come off! I hated that part because I was petrified of the saw. I always thought Pierre was going to cut me and every time he assured me he wouldn't, but it took me a long time to finally

believe him. Getting my cast off was always a three person affair- no easy task! Pierre and Helen were great about it though. They would laugh and make jokes when it was over to calm me down. They knew I liked them, just not the saw. I received Botox until I was 14 and getting my cast off never got any easier. I still cringe when I hear it!

Rick and his team at BBG always made getting braces fun. Choosing a pattern was such a big decision. He always had a funny story to tell. He was great under pressure, as he never had much time to make my braces because we would always go to see him in the morning before catching our flight home. He was always up to the task and liked the challenge.

I've been a patient for almost 19 years and the relationships I've made over the years are life-long. From Dr. Cantin and Dr. Farmer, who have been my primary care givers since the beginning, who said I could when everyone else said that I couldn't. It is because of their great job that all my surgeries were such a success and I am where I am today. They were both very forthcoming about the procedures they were going to be performing and always asked if I had questions. They always entered the room with a smile and were very happy with the outcome of my surgeries. Both myself and my family are very grateful for them. Then, there's Physio, they pushed me to reach my potential. I'm sure I didn't like all the hard work at the time, but it certainly paid off in the end. Joanne, Rochelle and the other physiotherapists did an awesome job at keeping me motivated. Denis videotaped my progress and he would always make me laugh while being videotaped and made it memorable. I have written articles for Orthopedik and TPA. Emmanuelle and Trudy were more than happy to receive them and I was excited to have been asked to write and share my story with other patients. I like knowing that, even though I am not always at the hospital, I am always up to date with special events.

Another special relationship I have built over the years is with Audra Smith. She is the transport coordinator in Social Services. With the help of Rose-Marie, Marie-Claire and our local Shriners (Philae Shiners in Nova Scotia) she makes sure I get to the hospital for appointments. I look forward to seeing her every visit and she always comes to me with open arms. She always has a hug for me as soon as I walk in. She always came up to visit me after surgery and always managed to make me smile. She makes all patients feel special. When you're with her, she devotes her full attention to you. She was the first person I would see when I walked into clinic and I would always see her before leaving. I would always arrive with a smile and leave in tears and Audra would hug me and tell me that it





## Shriners Hospitals for Children®

wouldn't be too long and I would be back again. She is a special person and I have, and always will have, a special bond with her, even after my visits end.

The Shrine drivers are another group of people whom I was happy to see. Walking through the airport, I would always look for the famous hat and most of them knew me by name. We always had great conversations about the hospital. After my appointment, they would take us to the mall to shop. Whenever they picked me up, they were always in a great mood and had a great sense of humor, no matter if it was a late pick-up from the airport or an early-morning drop off at the airport. It didn't matter. Seeing them meant I was at home away from home.

Being a Shriners girl has been the best! I wouldn't change a thing. The hospital staff and doctors have made my hospital experience an unforgettable one. I often say that the Shriners is my "second family", I think I speak for many patients in saying that.

When you walk in and have people call you by name, and talk to you as if you were there the day before, it's special and something you don't get anywhere else. They work hard in research to make sure the children are getting the best possible care. The doctors are one-of-a-kind. They turn an impossible situation into a possible one. When I started this journey, I was unable to walk. Now I am able to walk, run and do everything any other child does. I have a disability, but I'm not letting it hold me back. The Shriners taught me to never give up. I consider myself lucky and having C.P. an advantage because, without it, I would not have met all of the great staff who I am blessed to have in my life. I only have one more "official" visit at Shriners left, but that won't be the last they see of me! I am planning a career in the medical field and I am hoping to someday work at Shriners to complete the cycle and give back to everyone who gave so much to me. Thank you for believing in me, for the relationships and memories that I will have forever.

Love you all!

## Volunteering in the Classroom at the Shriners Hospital for Children

By Erika Donald

I've been a volunteer in the Child Life classroom at the Shriners Hospital in Montreal for about a year. I spend a half day each week working with young people of all ages in the classroom or on the ward, helping them keep up with their schoolwork or playing games, having a chat and keeping them busy during their stay in the hospital. I can never predict who I'll be working with, where they'll have come from, what language they'll speak, or what their needs will be but, whatever the situation, the teachers in the Child Life Department are prepared and can help me work with the students effectively. Each week, I look forward to my time in the Shriners classroom, since I know it will be time well spent.

In the rest of my life, I'm a doctoral student at McGill University, a musician, and a cello teacher. I moved to Montreal five years ago and, though I love the city and my work and studies, and am bilingual, it has taken a while to feel part of the wider community. Volunteering in the classroom allows me to interact with people of all ages in a really positive way. I can share my skills and help them just a little, and I also benefit from what they teach me. I've learned new card tricks, crafts, jokes, and was even schooled in my first ever game of Sudoku in a race with a young patient! I've also brushed up on some of my long unused math skills, French verb conjugation, and gained exposure to computer games developed since Tetris. In the Shriners classroom, I find myself doing activities I would not otherwise do, and with great people – it's definitely an enjoyable experience.

On one of my first days as a volunteer, I was quite amazed

that all of the students that day were from outside North America, from places as far away as Haiti, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. I've also met patients from all over Canada and the United States. The teachers are unfazed by any language challenges and find a way to communicate, no matter what the situation. One of the funniest days I've had at Shriners so far was when helping a seventeen-year-old francophone boy with his homework: interpreting French poetry. He was definitely not a fan of metaphor – we laughed a lot. Working with a young girl from Vietnam was also a great experience. She was able to learn a lot of French, English and other new languages during a stay of several months. It was fascinating to watch her improving her addition and subtraction skills in French, English and Vietnamese all at once. I was also amazed at how funny and playful she could be, even without all the words to express herself clearly.

Through volunteering, I've learned a little about some of the conditions and treatments the young patients and their families are dealing with, and it gives me the utmost respect for them and their caregivers. It is truly inspiring to meet kids who are inquisitive, determined and enthusiastic, despite being in the hospital, sometimes for long, frequent, or painful treatments. I have also enjoyed meeting their parents, who are friendly, strong, and appreciative of the care and attention the staff and volunteers provide. I've been consistently impressed with the quality of care the young patients receive, in the classroom, playroom, and on the ward. The entire hospital is staffed with friendly and hard-working people. I feel honoured to be working with all of them, students and staff, playing a small part.

## The Book of Bernie

by David Reich

The phone jangled. I struggled from my nap, turned down the volume of a diarrhea-constipation TV commercial, and clamped the receiver to my ear.

I heard a deep voice. "Hello, Bernie."

"Who the hell is this?"

"It's Me, the Lord. We spoke last week about church and synagogue funds that I gave you to invest."

"Oh, yes. I remember. But it's almost midnight here. Can't it wait?"

"Sorry, Bernie - we're on Eastern Celestial Time. It's important."

Well, after all God is God. "Yes, of course. Listen, Almighty, I'm flattered that you deposited Your money with me. True, today Your funds are worth less."

"Is that one word or two?"

The Almighty isn't known for His sense of humour and I ignored the jibe.

"I've been crunching the numbers. The market is fluctuating. Even Zen followers and Hairy Krishnicks are down. I'm preparing a report...."

"Bernie, I can't wait for reports. The Board is losing confidence in Me and the boys are asking questions. Moses didn't show for lunch, Jesus didn't return my calls. Imagine! My only son! After all I did for him: medical attention after the crucifixion, miracle cures to impress his followers, catering the last supper - I stinted nothing. Christ, talk about gratitude! Well, I took care of the situation myself."

"Without consulting me? God knows You haven't any experience, You know nothing about investments...."

"Bernie, I know I want My money back - Noah's ark needs repair, Sol underestimated the cost of his new Temple, and I haven't seen a penny of the 25 percent return you promised. Only a few thousand years ago everybody was on their knees before Me: My Patriarchs, Prophets, Disciples - all adoring Me, praising Me, writing Psalms - competing with each other to show off their devotion and piety. And the animals they sacrificed! They were nobodies until I made them. And what are

they today? Legends!

"I gave My people Commandments. Nobody read them. I threatened them. They didn't listen. I performed miracles. But do they remember how Moe struck a rock with a rod and produced water? And how he parted the sea to let the Hebes escape? How Dave killed Goliath with a slingshot? That shot wasn't a fluke! And how My son multiplied enough bread and wine to feed thousands? And what about my cures and resurrections? Forgotten! Now humans produce their own miracles. They invented machines beyond anything I can do: they Google everything, deafen the world with cheap, loud music, and circle Earth photographing the roofs. I've been overtaken by their technology. I'm becoming irrelevant; a Cherub suggested that I join Facebook! The more that humans invent, the more they sin - and get away with it. Everyone breaks My Commandments with impunity - not only politicians, lawyers and accountants. !"

The Almighty was making me nervous. "Well, Lord, a couple of transgressions aren't serious ...."

"Aren't serious? Stealing, killing, fornicating, eating pork - aren't serious? I need respect, show them who's in control here. Pay up. I want my money back."

"God, read our contract. I need 365 days notice...."

"Listen, Bernie: it says it can be cancelled due to an Act of God - well, I'm acting."

I shot back: "Just because You're God, you think You can break a contract? Sue me! Who'll ever believe You again?"

He had the last word before slamming down the receiver: "Bernie, I hope you carry comprehensive medical insurance...."

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"Doctor, how is Bernie?"

"Madam, you've asked me that every day for the six months your husband has been in intensive care. His skin is still covered with boils that resist diagnosis and treatment; there's a lot of that going around now. Bernie is conscious, but in great pain; he hallucinates, babbles prayers and begs for mercy; it sounds like a bible reading from the Book of Job. Now please go home and don't worry. Bernard Madoff is in God's hands."

The Write Place would like to thank the following people who have been of considerable help in bringing this issue to life:

- **Mr Leo Sculnik**, Ambassador of the Shrine
- **Maria Caruso**, Special Education teacher, Department of Adolescent and Child Life Development, Shriners Hospital
- **Bernie Gurberg**, Decarie Cinema
- **Mark Oraye**, Maxie's Bakery, Cavendish Mall

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- **The Gryphon d'Or Coffee Shop** (5968 Monkland)
- **Café 92** (6703 Sherbrooke street West)
- **The Cote St-Luc Library**
- **The Bibliophile Bookstore** (5519 Queen Mary Road)
- **Java U Coffee Shop** (5511 Monkland)

(Continued from page 3)

### Making the Invisible visible

As a fledgling group with an experimental mandate, we began under the veil of invisibility.

Our original co-founder, Cristina Perissinotto, now a professor of Italian language and literature at the University of Ottawa, was the first to coin our name and identity. The name Invisible Cities was inspired by the title of a book by Italian author, Italo Calvino, wherein he describes imaginary cities, symbolic of deeper realities or states of mind.

We, in fact, interpret the term differently. To us, 'Invisible Cities' expresses the notion of artists of all disciplines toiling in obscurity, often in isolation, who nonetheless exist and are real. A decade later, we are certainly more visible than before. Our intention, and this, too, is a work in progress, is to become more visible, individually and collectively, with the passage of time.

## Writing for Children – Research is Key

by Anne J. Fotheringham

So you want to write for children. That's great. But just because the picture books are short and the material is communicated in simpler language doesn't mean it will be an easy task. Remember, you are an adult, seeing the story from an adult's point of view. What you need to do is get into the children's point of view. You need to understand what interests them and how to communicate with them on the right language level.

The first step is research. You may know what age group you want to write for, but do you know what that age group is reading? Go to bookstores or browse the children's sections of online bookstore sites. Read about the current bestsellers for your target age group.

Take it one step further. Go to the library and borrow some of these books. Read them with a critical eye to see how they are structured, how they tell the story and how they appeal to the reader's imagination. Speak with the librarian and ask about current trends in children's literature.

Get to know your target age group in person. What are your own children reading? What are your friends' children reading? What do they like or dislike about books? Arrange to read the draft of your story to a children's group and ask for feedback. Children can be very candid about how the story appeals to

INVISIBLE CITIES NETWORK Founders:

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Christina Manolescu is the founder of *Prince Chameleon Press*: [www.princechameleon.com](http://www.princechameleon.com). She has written, designed, and published children's fantasy fiction and two novels, *Baglady* and *Waldensong Saturnalia*. Excerpts from both these novels were short-listed for the *Eastside Stories Competition* in London, U.K. She has also undertaken translation, ghostwriting, editorial revision, book design and print management for various clients, one of whose self-published books won a silver *Ippy Award* in 2009. She founded *Invisible Cities Network* in 2001 to support and showcase the work of independent artists and self-publishers: [www.InvisibleCitiesNetwork.org](http://www.InvisibleCitiesNetwork.org)

them. They can often give you good ideas for improving your manuscript before submitting it for publication.

For more information on writing for children, visit the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators – Canada East chapter at [www.scbwcanada.org/east/](http://www.scbwcanada.org/east/) where you will find all kinds of information on writing for children as well as writing resources, information on events (annual conferences and local meetings) and useful links to other sites.

Another interesting website is [KidLitosphere Central](http://KidLitosphereCentral.com) which is run by The Society of Bloggers in Children's and Young Adult Literature. This group includes reviewers, librarians, teachers, authors, illustrators, publishers, parents, and other book enthusiasts who blog about children's and young adult literature. The site offers links to members' blogs which provide timely information on the children's literature market.

Anne J. Fotheringham, a professional writer/editor living in Montreal, is a graduate of McGill University and has an M.A. in Writing from Seton Hill University in Pennsylvania. Her latest publication – *This Jagged Winter*, a volume of poetry – has just been published by Shoreline Press.

Copies are available at [jaggedwinter@hotmail.ca](mailto:jaggedwinter@hotmail.ca).

Oops! It seems we missed Halloween and all the dressing up this year. Our mascot had a lot of fun, dressing up as a bat, a pumpkin, and even as a Christmas present (in anticipation of the coming festivities.)

All of us have been so busy with all the new costumes that we totally ignored the **Mascot Naming Contest**, so we're extending the deadline until next issue. Come up with something original... let your imagination run wild.

We also look forward to receiving your **SUBMISSIONS** . . . short stories, poems, articles. Let's get your name, and your work, in one of our forthcoming issues!

Happy Holidays and a really prosperous and fortuitous New Year for one and all!



# The Write People

By Rosalie Avigdor, publisher

Bernie Gurberg was born and raised in Montreal. After being in the clothing business for many years, he realized that the manufacturing industry in Montreal sadly was going downhill. To that end, a series of events happened in his life and, with some guidance, one thing led to another and he felt the inspiration to start a new career. That career was in the theatre business.

There was a space available in Decarie Square where the original theatre had been for 30 years. Deciding that this was where he wanted to be, with the encouragement and support of friends and associates, he moved in and has remained there, 365 days a year, for the last 8 years. The Decarie Dollar Cinema was born.

I asked him how he came up with the idea of a dollar cinema. "People were getting tired of spending so much money going to the movies and I wanted this done, especially for families".

Competing with big box office theatres was not his goal. His goal was, and still is, to keep the cinema affordable for everyone. He is still upset over the fact that he recently had to raise the ticket price from \$2.00 to \$2.50. As always, refreshments are \$1.00, in spite of rising costs. "It is a struggle to keep up and make ends meet for families. This way they can come to the theatre, see a movie, get refreshments without breaking the bank."

One thousand new seats recently replaced the old ones and a "living room" was added to the front of the theatre for birthday parties and more.

Asked what drives him, what keeps him coming back, day after day, he replied, "I communicate with everyone because I like people and enjoy the interaction. I like humour and I am always here for the customers. Friends come by and want to take me out and I tell them that this is where I want to be. I feel that this is a better life for me than where they want to bring me to. I do not want to be cornered into a seat in a restaurant against the wall. I would not enjoy that. I want to give back to the community, that is what I enjoy.

"On rare occasions, a good customer will come in short of money. I will never turn them away and, if they have their children with them, I will offer a treat. It is my treat to see the expressions on their faces.

"I know it is always very important to be able to pay the rent, but there are other things in life that make me happy.

"I did a fund-raiser with Syd Stevens and Sol Buxbaum and we raised one hundred and ten thousand dollars for Sun Youth.

"Being here gives me the opportunity to give back to the community. Schools come in with children and many times send in students for a "stage" from schools for special needs, etc ..."

Bernie has a presence in the theatre and people miss him if he takes a break for the gym or just goes out for a short walk around Decarie Square. Not only is his theatre important to the community at large, but his personality and straight-faced humour and kindness to everyone have made Bernie a good friend, a humanitarian and, above all, a most charitable human being.

Whatever you need and whichever organization needs his help, just visit him and he will work it out with you.

Now, he needs to work out something for himself. He will soon be at the crossroads with his love , his theatre, because of digital conversion and that puts him in the position of having to replace his projectors in order to keep up with the times. He is busy looking for a solution to this problem and, although I know he does not ever ask for help, I am sure he would be open to any suggestions that might help him to resolve this issue.

In between popcorn sales, ticket sales and numerous interruptions from his cell phone and many friends and fans, I managed to pull together this interview, both at the theatre and by phone.

I have known Bernie for the last few years. He has helped our Canadian Writers Society to host a few events at his theatre. Many people call Bernie a "friend." I am proud to say I am one of them.

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