



ASJA Pacific Northwest Chapter

February 2026

**For ASJA members in
Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon and Washington
February 2026
<https://asjapnw.org>**



In This Issue

| | |
|---|----------------|
| From the President: Revisiting the Past to Remember | Carolyn Miller |
| An Editor's Note | Randy Stapilus |
| AI Tips for Writers | Darlene West |
| Changes in Journalism | Jim Carberry |
| Leveraging Data | Bruce Miller |
| Did You Know? Isaac Asimov | Bruce Miller |
| Tech Tip: Gmail and Google sheets | Bruce Miller |
| Member News and Announcements | |

Our Next Meeting

M. Carolyn Miller is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Time: Wednesday, February 18, 2025
11:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87898612924>

Meeting ID: 878 9861 2924

From the President

Carolyn Miller



Revisiting the Past to Remember the Future

Archaeologist [Marija Gimbutas](#) was famous for her work and books related to the Neolithic Period, a time when the female body was revered and society was egalitarian. Gimbutas believed that the findings from archeological digs—of the rounded [Venus of Willendorf](#) and the bare-breasted [Snake Goddess](#)—were not sexual objects as her male colleagues believed, but rather objects of worship, objects of the Goddess. Gimbutas went on to publish numerous books related to her research.

I was reminded of this ancient time when retracing my steps for a book I'm writing. Over 30 years ago, when I was doing my own form of independent research to understand my history as a woman, I learned about Gimbutas when reading Riane Eisler's [The Chalice and the Blade](#).

At the time, I had married the prince and moved to the castle, but I wasn't living happily ever after and I wanted to know why. The work of writers such as these gave me back something I didn't know I had lost—my history as a woman—and with it, validation for my creative, intuitive ways. They were, in fact, the ways of the Goddess.

As my agent prepares to pitch my book proposal to major publishers, I sit on the precipice of fear and possibility. Returning to these women's work reminds me that regardless of the outcome, my creativity—and yours—has value.

M. Carolyn Miller, MA, spent her career designing narrative- and game-based learning. Today, she consults and writes about narrative in our lives and world, the inextricable link between the two, and the critical role of self-awareness in transforming both. www.mcarolynmiller.com

An Editor's Note

Randy Stapilus



You may have notice a few changes with this issue.

Let me explain.

The [ASJA Pacific Northwest website](#) is where it always is, and this newsletter still is on it. But the newsletter now is in a different format, PDF, instead of being posted as a web page.

I see several advantages to doing it this way. Apart from being easier to edit and probably read, it's divided into specific pages (such as the page 4 where this article is located), so a table of contents with page numbers is possible. It can easily be printed, if anyone wants to print on paper all or part of it. You either can read it online through your browser at the website, or download it to read offline on your computer.

And it allows for everything the web page did, including live hyperlinks.

What hasn't changed is the important stuff: The contributions from our members, which I eagerly seek out from you. (Let me know what you'd like to contribute for next month.) And thanks first off to all those who contributed to this edition.

Remember: This is just the first try in this format. Let me know if you have suggestions on how to make it better next time. It probably will undergo some alterations as we go.

Randy Stapilus is editor of the ASJA Pacific Northwest Chapter newsletter. He is a writer and publisher based in Carlton, Oregon.

AI Tips for Writers

Darlene West



Trying to free up more time to write? AI can help.

Publishing industry pro [Jane Friedman](#), in a webinar presented by [Craft Talks](#) in December, outlined dozens of ways she uses AI to streamline her workflow, thus allowing more hours for creative work.

Jane Friedman is the author of *The Business of Being a Writer, Second Edition*, and has worked with writers and publishers for nearly three decades. Her weekly newsletter reports on publishing industry news and trends, including AI.

Jane recommended three major AI tools to consider: Gemini, Claude, or ChatGPT. (The paid versions of the tools offer more features than the free ones, she noted, along with better privacy and security.)

AI can often quickly handle tasks such as:

- summarizing complex documents
- getting up to speed on topics you want to write about
- researching markets for your work
- brainstorming ideas for titles
- highlighting key points from a series of interviews
- solving technology and software problems.

Jane emphasized that AI isn't an "answer machine," and AI generated material needs to be verified before it's shared or published. Incorporating these tools into your workflow also involves lots of trial and error.

To follow news on AI in the writing and publishing industry, and to learn more about using AI in your own work:

- Jane Friedman’s newsletter, *The Bottom Line*, is published weekly.
- She also maintains a continually updated [online AI resource page for writers](#).

Darlene West lives in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, where she writes about place, landscape, and memory.

Changes in Journalism



Jim Carberry

In the 1960s I got my first newspaper job: I was hired as a reporter for the Berkeley (California) Gazette. Only recently have I come to realize that while I wrote *about* the Berkeley community, I wasn't *part* of the community. I wrote my stories and went home. I didn't live in Berkeley, but in neighboring Oakland.

At the Gazette, I was assigned to write feature stories. I never gave much thought – nor did my editor – to whether people *wanted* to read these stories. Sure, maybe they were informative or entertaining to some extent. But were they meeting the information needs of the community – whatever those needs were?

We didn't know, because we didn't think to ask. Or how to ask. Now I wonder, were there important stories that went untold?

Today, journalists and others planning the startup or expansion of a local news publication spend weeks or months talking with people in their community about what matters to them. Publishers are doing community surveys, meeting with people in the community, and hosting community events to learn how to better inform, educate and help citizens. What's on your mind?, they're asking.

In the process, they're learning how to improve a publication's coverage, better inform readers, and help citizens become more engaged with their communities and more active in community affairs.

Recently I had occasion to visit Berkeley, and one Saturday morning I stopped by an open air market on Center Street, near Berkeley's city hall. On the other side of the street was where the Berkeley Gazette used to be. As I recall, the newsroom was on the second floor, and the printing press on the ground floor. If I happened to be working late one night, I could hear the rumble of the presses printing the next morning's paper.

The Gazette is long gone, and with it the old ways of practicing journalism.

James Carberry is a former Wall Street Journal reporter, now retired and living in Barcelona, Spain. At the invitation of his son and daughter-in-law, who are long-time Barcelona residents, he and his wife Gail, a retired nurse, moved to Barcelona from Portland in 2020. James is the cofounder and a director of Pro News Coaches, a team of former WSJ reporters and editors that provides pro bono mentoring, editing, workshop and other services to local news organizations around the U.S. When he's not engaged in volunteer work, he's attempting to learn Spanish.

Leveraging Data



Bruce Miller

Set politics aside to understand the recent explosion of media coverage of alleged fraud in Minnesota. It's a lesson in data and social media leverage.

This explosion started about seven years ago with David Hoch, a Minnesota resident who got curious, in part because he said he never saw footprints in the snow around day care centers.

In an interview that Joe Pags, David Hoch explains how he got curious about day care centers and how he started gathering data and information for years. With strategic thinking, he deliberately avoided local media, which he thought would never give the information the attention he thought it should get. Instead, he sought a social media influencer and ended up with Nick Shirley, about 40 years younger.

The full interview can be seen on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GikW6funu0Q>

Hoch explained that getting data from authorities has been challenging and frustrating.

Some data, however, is easily accessible and I've done something similar as Hoch. I got curious about the most frequent destinations for Seattle Fire Department. Fortunately, all destinations are available for years from a Seattle data repository. I downloaded the data and designed and ran database queries to get the top 20 destinations. Nearly half of the destinations in 2024 were to low-income housing and shelter facilities. I posted on X and major Seattle-area influencers picked up the results.

Seattle writer Bruce Miller also works as a database administrator.

Did You Know: Isaac Asimov

Bruce Miller

The prolific science writer Isaac Asimov was never a member of the Society of Magazine Writers (SMW) or its successor American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA). However, he donated time to SMW and ASJA as a speaker at various Society events.

By the time he spoke at a 1976 ASJA dinner meeting in New York City he had written 178 books. He joked at the meeting that if two months passed without a book publication, he was "in big trouble" and people might assume he was dead.

Tech Tip: Gmail and Google Sheets

Bruce Miller

I recently needed to compile into a spreadsheet a list of specific incoming emails in my Gmail account into a spreadsheet. Rather than copy and paste date, subject, and from address – a tedious task I wanted to avoid – I turned to Gemini AI (gemini.google.com). I asked Gemini how I could do this. Gemini said there was no direct way within Gmail to do this, but with a script in a Google Sheet I could get what I wanted.

Gemini provided me with step-by-step instructions. I had to a) apply a unique label to the target emails (which was easily done with a search), b) set up the Google Sheet (headers of Date, Sender, Subject) and c) paste a Gemini-created script through the Google Sheet. I ran the script and in less than a minute I had my list.

Time saved: 30-40 minutes. Keep an open mind about anything that requires a lot of repetition.

Seattle writer Bruce Miller really likes short scripts that save a lot of time.

Member News and Announcements

Bruce Miller has added to the asjapnw.org website including a list of articles written for the chapter newsletter since it began in November, 2018. (<https://asjapnw.org/newsindex/>). Also included are articles on PNW chapter history, national awards, several books and a list of conferences. Find the history through the History option in the menu.

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