



ASJA Pacific Northwest Chapter

April 2026

**For ASJA members in
Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon and Washington**

<https://asjapnw.org>



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Our Next Meeting

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

Time: Wednesday, April 15, 2025
11:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87898612924>

Meeting ID: 878 9861 2924

Coming up in April

April 15, 11am

Social media expert Liz Smith has presented to us in the past, and she's kindly agreed to give us an update on what's going on with social media, including what's relevant to writers, and how we can use it for our reader audiences, B2B, or connecting with our colleagues.

Come hang out and learn the latest.

From the President

M. Carolyn Miller



The Long View

On the day I am writing this, “No Kings” demonstrations are happening across the U.S. and the world. People are mad about the current U.S. administration and they want to show it, scream it, protest it with others. “It feels good,” my neighbor told me yesterday. Rebecca Solnit, an author, activist and journalist, would agree.

In a recent *Guardian* interview, Solnit [noted](#) that what we’re experiencing is merely backlash to the “seismic changes” that began in the 1950s related to gender, race, sexuality, science and environmentalism. Once unleashed, they cannot be extinguished. What comes after that is inferred in the title of her new book, [The Beginning Comes After the End](#).

Historians and authors William Strauss (now deceased) and Neil Howe, would agree. They write about the cycles of history in [The Fourth Turning](#). Such cycles last for 80-100 years and include four stages. As you might guess, we’re in the fourth stage of such a cycle now, “Crisis.” After this stage, as Solnit predicts, we will enter an era when the old regime decays and a new one is born.

What these authors offer is the long view of social change, a perspective I became aware of more recently when I pulled out a six foot visual timeline, now creased and faded, that I created 20 years ago. At the time, I wanted to understand my history and prehistory. (The timeline goes from 6,000 years before Christ to present day.)

As I review that timeline now, as part of a book project, I see what I didn't see before: the ever-evolving story of a society, created and recreated again and again by its storytellers—writers, activists and intellectuals. They remind me not to get caught up in the backlash but to focus on the new story that is emerging.

And to keep writing.

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



For the last few years, I often (usually) heard at PNW-ASJA monthly meetings, and in emails in between, earnest entreaties from newsletter editor Maxine Cass for more articles and other materials – please!

I grasped the point and the need but I didn't fully understand, internalize, the call for material the way I do now, having taken over production of this publication.

So here I'll reiterate the call for submissions, on most anything that connects in some way to our mission of writing. And since between us we write about so many things, that can cover a wide range of territory.

And bear in mind that we're not asking for long pieces; something around 200 to 400 words would be great, though longer and shorter would be welcome too. We're not too formal around here.

With the notion of generating some thoughts, a few concepts you might consider ...

- What's the process you go through in writing or preparing your current work?
- How do you handle editing of the material? Do you have an editor on your side of the fence, or is that handled just by the eventual publisher?
- If you're doing copy-editing work (at whatever level), how do you approach it? Do you edit different projects in different ways?
- Is information gathering changing? The old days of "working the phones" seems to be gone – or are they in your case?
- In researching or editing something you've worked on recently, what did you learn – not necessarily about editing or writing, about the subject or audience you were dealing with?
- What tools are you finding – digital or online or otherwise – that help you get things done and how would you review them? (And thank you, Bruce, for your steady stream of these helpful ideas.)
- Some of our members interact with ASJA at meetings and otherwise more than others do. Tell us about some of those experiences, which might include what the rest of us missed ... or not, as the case may be.

Ideas for writing, as they say, are are all around. Please send some my way. And thanks in advance!

Randy Stapilus is editor of the ASJA Pacific Northwest Chapter newsletter. He is a writer and publisher based in Carlton, Oregon, and contributes a weekly column to the [Oregon Capital Chronicle](#). He can be reached at stapilus@ridenbaugh.com.

Market Research with NotebookLM



Bruce Miller

I want to get serious about writing for and selling to a large national organization's publication.

In the distant past I would spend several hours at a library browsing through issues to get a sense of style, length, etc.

Now I could spend several hours online looking at issues. But with AI now available, why not see if AI can be an

assistive tool?

Because I have a Pro account with Google's NotebookLM, I wanted to upload entire issues into a notebook so I could ask questions.

Great idea, but there were problems.

Problem #1: All the available past issues were in a members-only section.

Fortunately, I was already a member so I had access.

Problem #2: Twenty-two back issues for each publication through the last four years were available, but they could not be downloaded as a PDF file, which is one of the few file formats NotebookLM requires. Furthermore, even with a tablet app you can only read the issues while connected to the Internet. Getting the back issues downloaded so I could upload to NotebookLM became a challenge – that I overcame.

I figured out a way to save each web-presented page of an issue as a pdf and then figured out a way to automatically step through each page and save into a pdf with a Windows macro recording software.

Even though there was some initial manual implementation to start the automatic download process for each issue, the software would then step through each page –

sometimes as many as 52 – and save each web page as a pdf file. While the program worked through all the pages I went off and did other tasks.

Each issue had its own folder to ensure the resulting pdf files were not mixed with other issues. This made the next step easy. I used a pdf software program to merge all the individual pdf files into one file that represented a single issue.

Once I had each issue merged into a single pdf file I was able to upload all 22 issues into NotebookLM.

Then, I could start asking questions. For example:

My prompt:

In the source files i want to know if there is any discussion of virtual private networks or VPNs

Response:

Yes, the sources mention virtual private networks (VPNs) as a security measure to help protect yourself against scams. Specifically, as part of a strategy to defend against sophisticated criminal enterprises, the text advises that you should install a virtual private network (VPN) if you use public Wi-Fi.

NotebookLM does provide a small superscript to indicate which files (issues) the answer is based on. In this case there were two issues and the amount of discussion seems to be very small and basic. This in turn suggests I could pitch one or more articles about VPNs with different angles, none of which are mentioned in the two issues.

A side benefit of getting all the pages onto my local hard drive is that now I have the ability to easily browse and examine each issue. This is particularly useful because the parent organization of the publications does not have any index of articles available to the public or even the members.

Seattle resident Bruce Miller sees automation and AI as a helpful tools that can help with focus.

AI Toolmaking

Bruce Miller

In March 2026 I finished my Google AI Certification course. I decided to take the course because I had already been a Gemini Pro (AI) subscriber, primarily for the expanded NotebookLM service and wanted to learn more about what I was paying for. I was not disappointed.

The course provided a good overview of Google AI features and capabilities. It was a mixture of short videos, reading, and lab work. A couple aspects were notable.

Gemini can be instructed to run a recurring prompt. In my lab I asked Gemini to do the following:

I started with this basic prompt:

"What are some current industry trends around [my subject matter]."

I was satisfied with the results, so I then instructed Gemini thus:

"Once a week run this analysis on industry trends for [my subject matter] so I can stay up to date on these trends."

Because I set this up on a Wednesday, every Wednesday I get a short report. The reports have included ideas I may not have thought about along with some rationale.

One of the course segments was vibe coding, which is basically telling AI what to create. This segment took me into Google AI Studio to create my own program. I had already been vibe coding for at least a year and a half, having created a couple interactive websites. Google's AI studio is a bit more integrated with some abilities, including web searches.

I told AI studio to create a program that would search the web and compile a list of publications and media outlets that would buy an article on a specific topic. I told the

program to put the results into table format so I could copy and paste into a spreadsheet. AI studio took a couple minutes to create the program, complete with a "run" button (which I forget to specify.) I told it to run and within a couple minutes I had results.

AI is a tool that can help you make custom tools. Your imagination is really the limit.

Seattle resident Bruce Miller did the entire Google Ai Certification course at a standing work station, which he has found quite useful for for quickly checking emails and doing quick searches.

Tech tip: Tracking emails

Bruce Miller

Little, quick, emails are often necessary for communication. However, these little emails don't always need to be saved and often get in the way when looking for important emails.

An easy way to delete them in bulk every so often is to add a simple mark in the subject line. I use three periods. Example: "subject line here ..." All emails with three periods without spaces can be easily found in a search, then mass selected and bulk deleted.

Bruce Miller, with 20+ years of emails in one account.

ASJA: Did You Know

Bruce Miller

Alex Haley was an active and generous member of the Society of Magazine Writers (SMW, which became ASJA). He recommended fellow writer Bern Keating interview Ku Klux Klan leader Robert Shelton for Playboy, because, as Haley noted, he could not do it himself for "obvious reasons". The interview appeared in the August 1965 issue.

Member News and Announcements

This isn't an ASJA event, but it may be of interest to people who live in or near Portland ...

The Independent Book Publishers Association, a national organization, has scheduled a national education event May 14-16 at Portland. It said on its website, "IBPA Publishing University 2026 will be held at the Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center starting with Think Tank for Established Publishers, afternoon workshops, and an evening cocktail reception on Thursday, May 14, 2026 and concluding Saturday, May 16, 2026."

More information is [available on the IBPA website](#).

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