



**ASJA** WRITERS  
CONFERENCE  
CHANGE | CHALLENGE | OPPORTUNITY  
MAY 20-21, 2016 | ROOSEVELT HOTEL

## ASJA Annual Conference Sessions

This page lists confirmed speakers so far. More are being added all the time!

### Friday, May 20 (ASJA MEMBERS - ONLY DAY)

#### WELCOME AND KEYNOTE | 8:30AM

Welcome Keynote Laura Vanderkam: When you don't have a boss looking over your shoulder, how do you structure your own time most effectively? An independent writer herself, Laura Vanderkam has made a career exploring where our hours really go and how to allocate them better. She is the author of several time-management and productivity books, including *I Know How She Does It*, *What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast*, and *168 Hours*. Vanderkam also raises four children, contributes to outlets like *Fast Company* and *Fortune*, and still finds time to blog daily. Leave her talk with tools to get more done and feel less stress about it.

#### LAURA VANDERKAM, ASJA



Laura Vanderkam is the author of several time management and productivity books, including *I Know How She Does It (Portfolio, 2015)*, *What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast (Portfolio, 2013)*, and *168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think (Portfolio, 2010)*. Her work has appeared in publications including *Fast Company*, *Fortune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, *Verily*, and *City Journal*. She lives outside Philadelphia with her husband and four children, and blogs at [LauraVanderkam.com](http://LauraVanderkam.com).

#### EARLY MORNING | 9:30AM - 11:00AM

#### SESSION F01

### SNAGGING FUNDING FROM ALTERNATIVE SOURCES

Foundation Grants. Crowdsourcing. Donations from Readers. Even as funding for freelance work from many traditional publishing outlets dries up, a host of new ways to get your stories funded are springing up. Come listen to a panel of experts share their insights on the latest trends in alternative funding – and how to boost your chances of landing the money you need to pursue your next project.



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### SESSION F02

#### **Managing Your Finances—and Your Clients**

Freelancing doesn't come with a regular paycheck, but there's a lot you can do to increase your financial stability (and maintain your sanity!) Learn how smart freelancers regulate their workload, handle unreasonable client expectations, manage their money and survive "dry spells." Financial professionals and freelancers will also discuss retirement and tax planning.

### SESSION F03

#### **THE JOURNALISM OF IDEAS: CRAFTING SMART, PROVOCATIVE STORIES FOR ELITE PUBLICATIONS**

Learn how to write, pitch and sell idea-driven stories in science, history, culture and other fields from writers and editors who specialize in intellectual journalism.

### SESSION F04

#### **50 WAYS TO TELL A STORY: HOW TO DEVELOP FRESH ANGLES**

It's prime time for storytellers! Social media, mobile devices, blogs and more have made it the ideal time to consider all the vehicles that tell your story. Whether you're writing traditional articles, producing content for private clients, or simply marketing your own work, this session will consider at least 50 different ways that you can tell your story.

**LATE MORNING | 11:15AM - 12:45PM**

### SESSION F05

#### **NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLET: TRUE CRIME AUTHORS ON HITTING THE TOP**



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True-crime narratives have captivated readers from the days of “In Cold Blood” and “Helter Skelter” to “The Devil in the White City” and beyond. How can authors find stories — and sales -- in this popular market? What about e-singles and magazines? What’s the difference between mass-market and trade true-crime? How can writers treat victims with sensitivity? We’ll hear tips and tricks from the best in the business.

### SESSION F06

#### **168 Hours in a Week: How to Maximize Your Time**

Most freelancers juggle multiple clients and even types of work – often writing, editing, teaching and consulting in a single day. In this panel, we talk with experts on maximizing productivity and time management. Nationally recognized time-management writers will share concrete tips for boosting writers' productivity. The panel will help members work smarter and more efficiently, not just more. Experts will address: wrangling email; limiting time devoted to reporting and writing to avoid poverty-level hourly rates; deciding when to hire an assistant; managing interview and research notes; why and how to plan and track your time and more.

### SESSION F07

#### **MAKE MORE MONEY WITH YOUR CONTENT MARKETING**

This master class will help journalists who are already experienced in content move to the next level. The panel consists of content experts, clients, managers and writers who will share key insights on what makes great content and how to land the best gigs. Topics will include pay rates, ethics, finding balance between content and journalism, how to get more work and more.

### SESSION F08

#### **PITCH SLAM: TRAVEL WRITING**

The pitfall of querying can be hearing nothing back but radio silence. The opposite happens at a pitch slam. Step up to a mic, share an idea, and get editors feedback immediately. At this session, travel editors from both established and up-and-coming publications will be panelists. Make an editor connection, learn from fellow writers, and even land an assignment on the spot.



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**LUNCH BREAK | 12:45PM - 2:00PM**

### **LUNCH ON YOUR OWN**

Lunch is on your own. Relax or have a bite with colleagues.

**EARLY AFTERNOON | 2:00PM - 3:30PM**

#### **SESSION F09**

### **GETTING PERSONAL: WRITING ESSAYS FROM THE HEART**

Learn the craft and commerce involved in going public with your deepest feelings about family, friends and life in general. Leading national experts will explore what it takes to be true to yourself on the page while finding a home for your words in the marketplace.

#### **SESSION F10**

### **FEEL THE FEAR AND WORK IT!**

Fear creates common symptoms in people who undertake creative work, including writers. Do we ping-pong? Feel paralyzed? Whatever we write, whatever our responsibilities, we can benefit from utilizing fear. We'll learn how to recognize its symptoms and how to integrate its gifts to gain more energy to create and to expand the possibilities open to us.

#### **SESSION F11**

### **LIGHT IT UP!: ENERGIZING LONG-FORM NARRATIVES**



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Whether you've been writing long-form narratives for years or are just starting to explore the possibilities, this craft session will give you insight into effective narrative nonfiction. Our panel features established pros who will discuss the best ways to identify stories worthy of a long-form account, locate and schedule compelling interview subjects, and sustain the story with suspense and an engaging progression that drives the narrative to a memorable conclusion. Panelists include acclaimed writers Steven Beschloss and Timothy Harper and editors Katia Bachko (The Atavist Magazine) and Theodore Ross (The New Republic).

**EARLY AFTERNOON | 2:30PM - 5:30PM**

**SESSION F15**

### **CLIENT CONNECTIONS**

An exclusive event for ASJA members only, Client Connections is the popular speed-dating event that brings writers together with editors, literary agents, agencies, content managers, businesses and more.

**LATE AFTERNOON | 3:45PM - 5:15PM**

**SESSION F12**

### **SO YOU WANT TO BE A BESTSELLING NOVELIST**

Writing a bestseller-worthy novel is like building a house: you need to start with a vision and a clear blueprint, then construct it from the inside out. This hands-on workshop will jumpstart writers in learning the fundamental story-crafting techniques to write a novel effortlessly, as well as to overcome the personal obstacles that may block them from completing a manuscript. Attendees will learn how to pinpoint the vision of their novel, as well as learn the step-by-step process they will need to structure a powerful story, craft compelling characters and put it all together in a book that will sell.

**SESSION F13**



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## **DISCONNECT: IMPROVING CONCENTRATION & CREATIVITY IN A HYPERCONNECTED AGE**

Interruptions in this era of uber-connectivity threaten not just your deadlines but the quality of your work. A large and active underground of creative people are pushing back. Join our pro-active discussion, led by experts and writers, on proven ways to enable a disciplined writing practice.

### **SESSION F14**

#### **PHONE IT IN: REPORTING (EVEN BETTER) WITH YOUR MOBILE**

David Ho, the Wall Street Journal's chief of digital reporting, leads this lively session showing journalists how they can use their smartphones to be more efficient and productive, both personally and professionally. You'll be amazed at what your phone can do to make you a more effective freelancer. Bring your phone, with the battery charged.

#### **AWARDS PRESENTATION AND COCKTAIL RECEPTION**

**5:30PM - 7:00PM**

#### **RECEPTION**

Join your ASJA colleagues for talk and snacks, and celebrate the exceptional achievement of those winning 2016 Outstanding Writing Awards.



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**SATURDAY, May 21**

**WELCOME AND KEYNOTE | 8:30AM**

Keynote Speaker Josh Levs: Josh Levs will share the story behind his highly acclaimed book *All In: How Our Work-First Culture Fails Dads, Families and Businesses -- And How We Can Fix It Together* (HarperOne 2015). The father of three took on a policy at Time Warner that prevented him from being able to care for his newborn, preemie daughter and sick wife. As a result of his legal action and the publicity it generated, the company revolutionized its policy, making it much better for dads and moms. Levs will also advise attendees on how to navigate the changing media landscape by sharing how he carved his own career path including creating on-air roles at NPR and CNN and offer a no-holds-barred look at what it's really like to write and publish a book now.

#### **JOSH LEVS, ASJA**



Josh Levs, father of three, has spent years reporting for CNN on air and online, and serving as the network's dad columnist. Prior to CNN, he was a reporter for NPR. His many prizes include six Peabody awards, two Edward R. Murrow awards, and a designation as a Journalist of the Year from the Atlanta Press Club. Levs is also a motivational and keynote speaker. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with his wife and children.

**EARLY MORNING | 9:30AM - 10:45AM**

#### **SESSION S01**

##### **WRITING FOR DIVERSE VOICES: NEW OUTLETS AND VIEWPOINTS**

As the nation becomes more diverse, readers and editors want to see more than the usual suspects in articles and books. How can journalists bring new voices into their stories? And how can ASJA itself become more diverse? We'll talk about best (and worst!) practices and brainstorm ways to help ASJA better reflect the wide world of independent writers.

#### **SESSION S02**

##### **SIX - FIGURE FREELANCING STRATEGIES**



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Would you like to make more money as a freelancer? It may sound like an ambitious goal, but plenty of full-time freelancers pull down six figures. In this panel, you'll hear from smart, seasoned, successful freelancers about the types of work they do; how they market themselves; how they work efficiently; how they harness social media; and how they juggle multiple clients and projects to produce six-figure+ annual incomes. You'll come away with solid, practical strategies you can immediately implement into your own freelance business.

### SESSION S03

#### **BLOGGING ISN'T DEAD: HOW TO ATTRACT READERS AND MEDIA WITH A RULE - BREAKING BLOG**

Many of us have blogs, but are they effective, or just a time suck? A good blog attracts readers, gets readers involved with your topic and your message, promotes your books, increases your credibility in your field, and positions you as a media resource. What should you blog? How do you reach your audience? What are some tricks for engaging readers? How do you choose evergreen topics that people will search for and that will bring them to your blog even if they've never heard of you? What are the rules and which ones should you break? Joan Price has been blogging about sex and aging since 2005. Her blog, <http://www.NakedAtOurAge.com>, has won several awards and helped her get book contracts, book sales, speaking engagements, and media interviews. She shares her strategies in this practical, interactive presentation. If you never saw the sense in blogging, or if you have a blog but it feels like a waste of time, this workshop is for you. This is not a tech-oriented workshop its about content, self-promotion, attracting and serving readers, and making your blog an integral and enjoyable --part of your promotional strategy.

### SESSION S04

#### **CONFERENCE SUCCESS STORIES: MAKING GREAT CONNECTIONS HERE**

A first-timer lands a major magazine assignment. A mentor and mentee develop a mutually rewarding, fulfilling relationship. In this discussion-based session, past attendees of ASJAs national and regional conferences divulge how they prepared, navigated, and followed up to score big professional and personal wins. You'll leave with a roadmap of how to make the most of your time in New Yorkor at any other conference.

### SESSION S05

#### **PITCH SLAM: WOMEN'S MAGAZINES**



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Get the inside scoop on the women's health stories editors at top publications are clamoring for. First, editors give brief overviews of their publications and suggestions for pitching assignment-worthy stories. Then, writers will have a chance to step up to the mic to share pitches and get immediate feedback. (There is a strict one-minute limit for pitches). No pitch? No problem, you'll still learn from the discussion.

**LATE MORNING | 11:30AM - 1:30PM**

**SESSION S06**

**ASJA AWARD WINNERS: FROM PITCH TO PUBLISH**

In giving out annual awards, ASJA honors excellence among its members. This year's winners have demonstrated their ability to tackle timely topics and craft superior prose. But how did these outstanding books and articles come to be written? What roadblocks nearly derailed each project before it triumphantly made its way into public view? What can each of us learn, as writers, from the achievements of others? A contingent of 2016 ASJA honorees will be on hand to instruct and inspire us all.

**SESSION S07**

**YOU'VE GOT IT! BUILDING UP YOUR WRITER'S CONFIDENCE**

There are many issues surrounding art—including isolation, fear of rejection, procrastination, the need to have the work be 'perfect'—that can trigger childhood issues that drove you to sublimate through writing in the first place! Every person on this panel—bestselling authors, screenwriters, journalists, ghostwriters, editors and therapists—has suffered blocks that laid him or her low and is eager to share what has worked to dispel the beast. Much of this session will be interactive, giving the audience sufficient time to get personalized feedback. There will be handouts, take-home exercises and concrete suggestions on where to go from here.

**SESSION S08**

**FREELANCE FOREVER: KEEPING SECURE AND PROSPEROUS LATER IN YOUR CAREER**



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Our panelists--who have all successfully reinvented themselves after 30 or more years--offer valuable tools, insights, and inspiration to help freelancers aged 50 and over thrive in their independent writing careers. Topics include developing or streamlining a business model; finding markets through networking and social media; and getting paid what your experience, professionalism and talent are worth.

### SESSION S09

#### **BOOST YOUR SUCCESS WITH COACHES, CLASSES AND CRITIQUE GROUPS**

In the past writing was limited to professionals but the internet has made everyone aware of the power of words, the need to artfully link concepts, and to write in a simple, impactful way. The ambitious know that managing social media effectively and devising compelling presentations aids success. The boomer generation has also seen an explosion in memoirs for commercial publication or simply leaving a history for family members. They all need professional writers to help them - you can either do it for them, collaborate or teach them how. The biggest growth areas - and often the most personally rewarding - are in the latter two options. This panel will provide guidelines of how to begin and build this new form of income.

### SESSION S10

#### **OUTPERFORM AND BUY: BUSINESS WRITING PITCH SLAM**

From the people who collect bottles and cans for the deposit to the execs leading the startups and multinationals reshaping our lives, money pervades every aspect of our society. At this pitch slam, sell top business editors your ideas on investing, personal finance, financial technology, the economy, leadership, entrepreneurship and any other winning story ideas you have involving money -- whether or not they include unicorns, real or imagined.

**LUNCH BREAK | 1:30PM - 2:00PM**

**LUNCH ON YOUR OWN**



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**EARLY AFTERNOON | 2:00PM - 3:30PM**

**SESSION S11**

**THE ART OF THE (NEW) BOOK PROPOSAL**

Book proposals have changed. Or rather, proposals that get accepted by publishers to become books, have changed. It's not enough to have a good idea, a good platform and a good track record as a writer. Now, more than ever before, you need to have a better book proposal to get that book deal. This panel will feature an agent, an editor/coach, a publisher/editor and a writer who recently sold her biggest proposal yet (doing it this new way, on the advice of her agent).

**SESSION S12**

**Balancing Act: How to Pursue Passion Projects and Big Payouts**

As independent writers, we choose with whom we want to work, and how often. Some jobs offer more financial benefits than others. Sometimes they help us reach bucket-list goals. But it doesn't have to be choosing between what you love to do or making money. This panel will discuss how to do both, successfully.

- \* How to strike the right balance by treating your freelance writing career as a business while making time for writing that you truly enjoy
- \* How to source different revenue streams including journalism, content marketing and public relations to have a successful career
- \* How to evaluate projects and strike a balance from week to week
- \* How to decide when to commit to a project and when to decline
- \* What passion projects to take on and why
- \* How to be a better negotiator
- \* How to develop high pay and in-demand niches

**SESSION S13**



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### **Indemnity Clauses and Who Really Owns Your Notes: Legalities That May Shock You**

ASJA Contracts Committee Chairwoman Kim Kavin and members Joan Burda and Milt Toby will discuss the recent ASJA survey regarding the proliferation of worrisome indemnity clauses in contracts, as well as recent legal decisions that may affect who owns your interview notes, video and audio recordings, and more. Learn not only what dangers lurk in every contract you sign, but also some options for protecting yourself during contract negotiations.

#### **SESSION S14**

### **The Latest Social Media Tricks: What Works, What's a Turnoff**

This session will provide top marketing tips to help you stand out online. Our panel of editors and social media experts will review the top 5 social media websites and teach you what works and what doesn't in each forum. There's never enough time to get everything done and it can be overwhelming unless you know how to be fast and efficient. Many writers waste an enormous amount of time. They don't know what works. Savvy panelists will cover what to do and not do in order to maximize your efforts. You'll learn how to maximize titles, tags, topics, keywords, images and SEO (search engine optimization) and how Google rankings work. Attendees will learn to capture a larger audience.

#### **SESSION S15**

### **HOW TO CRACK CONTENT MARKETING**

What is content marketing and how can you enter this field? This panel will cover the type of writing content marketers do, how to find gigs, working with brands, agencies and content marketing platforms, and other basics you need to know to break into this market.

**LATE AFTERNOON | 3:45PM - 5:15PM**

#### **SESSION S16**

### **SELF-PUBLISH (AND MARKET) YOUR BOOK THE SMART WAY**



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Up until a few years ago, there was only one way to get published: through an established publishing company. Digital technology has enabled all writers to bypass the traditional gatekeepers and self-publish. This panel will cover some of the “how-to” aspects of self-publishing: How to format and upload your book (on Amazon’s KDP or CreateSpace, Smashwords, Kobo, or another platform), how to set the right purchase price, how to secure reviews and market your book independently.

### SESSION S17

#### **BUILD YOUR NETWORKS: TEACH WRITING OR EDITING**

Writing can be a solitary experience. However, those who also teach writing Or editing find that new worlds open for them. Teaching itself doesn't pay much, but developing courses and teaching dramatically improves your own skills, ensures you keep up to date with the latest developments in an ever changing literary and journalistic world, and opens you to a new world of other teachers and writers. It can bring in surprising new assignments and help you better focus your own projects. This panel chaired by award-winning writer and Nelson Mandela authorized biographer, Charlene Smith includes panelists from some of the finest writing schools in the United States, including Phil Sexton, a publisher at Writer's Digest.

### SESSION S18

#### **SREE'S TECH TIPS: SNEAKY NEW HIGH - TECH REPORTING TOOLS**

Sree is back. This session marks the return of one of the most popular repeat speakers in ASJA conference history. Sree Sreenivasan is a longtime journalist, professor and media personality who is now the first Chief Digital Officer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This session on technology tips and tricks is tailored specifically for freelance journalists, offering quick clicks to save us time and money and help us produce better stories and sell them for more money to better markets—all in what might be the most fun 90-minute interactive lecture you'll ever attend.

### SESSION S19

#### **FREELANCING FOR THE NEW GENERATION: HOW TO GO SOLO YOUNGER**

Many writers now head into freelancing earlier in their careers rather than after years or decades on staff, but how do they do it? This panel will feature a mix of top editors who value fresh, original voices and can offer their tips for success, in addition to successful young freelancers who have figured out how to thrive as independent writers. We will discuss how to establish one's credibility as a young freelancer, how to score assignments, and how to create long-lasting relationships with editors.



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**SESSION S20**

**HEALTH & MEDICAL WRITING, NO SCIENCE DEGREE REQUIRED**

Did you know that Carl Zimmer, award-winning health and science writer and columnist at The New York Times, has a BA in English from Yale University?

Many people ask us how we can write about high-level health and medical topics and be successful when we do not have advanced science degrees.

How do we do it? We tap into our transferrable skills, our desire to learn and have each developed tips and tricks to bridge the knowledge gap. We know our way around the different types of clinical studies, where to find reputable story sources and write health content that deals with technically heavy subject matter, like genomics, life-threatening diseases, treatment alternatives, and palliative care.

Want to get the inside scoop on what it takes to be successful in lucrative health and medical writing markets, without an advanced life sciences, biology or chemistry degree?

This panel is aimed at intermediate writers who want to expand their businesses to write engaging content for publications, hospitals, companies and organizations. Learn how these panelists bridge the knowledge gap with tips, tricks and resources you can put into action.

**RECEPTION | 5:30PM - 7:00PM**