

# **Ozarks Writers League**

## **Board Leadership Manual**

September 2021

Dear OWL Member,

Most of the leadership roles have been delineated in the bylaws. They are presented below. There are also various positions that need to be filled from time to time. Their descriptions follow those roles set out in the bylaws.

You will also find input from people who have occupied the positions telling you their experiences. This can be very enlightening to anyone who hasn't held one of these positions before. Always feel free to ask board members if you have any questions.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of OWL!

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## **From the bylaws**

### **ARTICLE III—QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS**

#### **Section 1: Board Duties**

The Board shall be the executive body of the League and shall have power to transact general League business.

#### **Section 2: Qualification and Duties of the President**

Qualifications: Must have been a member of the League and attended most League conferences for at least 2 years prior to being nominated.

The League President shall:

- preside at all business meetings of the League;
- have the powers and duties usually incumbent upon such an officer;
- determine, with approval of the Board, the time and location of membership and business meetings, and any special meetings of the Board;
- with a majority vote of the Board, the President may cancel a scheduled meeting in the event of inclement weather;
- appoint chairpersons (or functionaries) for various activities. Such persons, who must be a league member in good standing at the time of their appointment, may include: Webmaster, Newsletter Editor, Associate Editor, Grants Officer, Contest Chair, Parliamentarian, Historian, and others as needed. When deemed necessary, the President may appoint outside the Board of Directors to fill any of these positions, with the person appointed fulfilling the duties, but not serving on the Board itself;
- appoint a Webmaster and a Newsletter editor;
- by the end of July each year, the President shall appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of one (1) Board member and two (2) League Members to recruit a slate of officers; and,
- may appoint other committees as needed to conduct League events and general League business.

#### **From experience, not the bylaws**

- Obtain minutes from secretary and create an agenda, then send them to the board members prior to any business meeting.
- Have all reports sent to you in time for you to send them to board members for review prior to the meeting. Board members should be encouraged to read all reports and be ready with any questions at the meeting.
- At the meeting, follow Robert's Rules of Order.
- At the meeting, follow your agenda. An agenda can be as simple as:
  1. Read the minutes of the last meeting.
  2. Any questions or discussion of any reports.

3. Old business.
  4. New business.
  5. Next meeting time, date, and location.
  6. Adjourn.
- Take notes on your agenda of any actions or follow-ups that should be taken.

### **Section 3: Qualification and Duties of the Vice-President**

Qualifications: Must have been a member of the League and attended most League conferences for at least 2 years prior to being nominated.

The Vice-President shall:

- conduct business and Board meetings in the absence of the President; and,
- assist the President as needed.

#### **From experience, not the bylaws**

I think the best way to express the job of the Vice President is “Other Duties as Assigned.” But while the tasks are not as clear as “take notes” or “handle the money,” this is a valued role.

- Assist the President as needed, including help with event planning, correspondence, and keeping him/her as sane as possible.
- Either manage the Facebook page and group or assist the social media coordinator (if we have one) with them.

### **Section 4: Qualification and Duties of the Secretary**

Qualifications: Must personally have the appropriate tools to perform the duties of League Secretary, and must have been a member of the League and attended most League conferences for at least 2 years prior to being nominated.

The Secretary shall:

- record and maintain the official minutes for League business and Board meetings;
- handle official League correspondence and inquiries;
- maintain a list of all standing committees;
- at the completion of their term in office, shall deliver to the Secretary-elect all minutes of Board decisions and other correspondence in order to maintain a continuous documentation of the League’s correspondence and activities; and,
- maintain a permanent file of all changes to policy and procedures.

#### **From experience, not the bylaws:**

#### **Do’s and Don’ts for Meeting Minutes**

##### **Do’s**

Here are some of the most common tried-and true methods for creating effective meeting minutes:

- Create typed, electronic minutes.

- Use the same naming convention for all minutes files and, if possible, store them in a designated folder so they can be easily located.
- Include the date and time of the meeting.
- List all the meeting attendees as well as those who were invited but could not attend.
- Use the meeting agenda as the outline for the minutes.
- Record any amendments or corrections that are made from previous meetings.
- Mention any documents handed out at the meeting and store a copy with the minutes.
- Record all motions made, who made the motion, who seconded, and the result of the vote on the motion.
- If you have trouble keeping up while taking minutes, use an audio recorder so that you can go back and fill in any gaps in your notes.
- Write the final copy of the minutes as soon as possible after the actual meeting, while it is fresh in your mind.

### **Don'ts**

Just as important as what you should do is what you shouldn't do. Avoid these frequent pitfalls:

- If you're unsure about a point, don't just gloss over it. Ask for clarification during the meeting so that your minutes can be accurate.
- Do not switch tenses throughout the minutes. Use one tense (past tense works well).
- Personal observations, opinions, or judgmental comments should not be included in meeting minutes. All statements should be as neutral as possible.
- Avoid writing down everything everyone said. There can be a lot of debate that happens at a meeting as people offer their opinions, research, and experience, which should not be recorded. The minutes should summarize the topic and outcome of the discussion (what was voted on), not every single point that was considered.
- Documents referred to in the meeting do not need to be summarized in the minutes. They can be attached to the minutes or the minutes can just indicate where to locate the documents.
- Meeting minutes are meant to be shared, but don't disseminate them until the meeting chair has a chance to review and approve them.

### **Section 5: Qualification and Duties of the Treasurer**

Qualifications: Must provide evidence of knowledge of basic bookkeeping principles and personally have the appropriate tools to adequately perform the duties of Treasurer; be willing to use bookkeeping spreadsheet or program technology; and must have been a member of the League and attended most League conferences for at least 2 years prior to being nominated.

The Treasurer shall:

- follow generally accepted accounting principles and follow the guidelines adopted by the Board in the *Handbook for Treasury Operations*;
- make reimbursements for all authorized expenditures;
- maintain all League financial records;
- produce a financial report for the Board at each business meeting and at the end of the fiscal year;

- shall coordinate with the Membership Director no less than once per month to pass on information about new memberships and renewals;
- maintain the checking account and shall seek approval of the President for all disbursements; and,
- when required by grants or conditions of the Not-for-Profit status continuation, the Treasurer shall file required reports with the State or IRS.

### **From experience, not the bylaws**

Receive and document all income – this includes:

- Monies paid and received in-person at OWL conferences. (Recommend using receipt book for cash/checks. This provides a written record of who paid and what was purchased – dues, T-shirts, auction items, etc.)
- Checks received via mail
- PayPal transactions – Transfer funds from the PayPal account to the OWL bank account at various times throughout the year.
- Contest Sponsorships – Make sure sponsorship money is in hand *before* contest categories are announced.
- Contest Entry Fees – Communicate frequently with Contest Chair to ensure all entrants have paid their entry fee.

### *Bills & Payments*

- Debit cards are issued to both the President and the Treasurer. Either can pay hotel and conference expenses.
- Website costs come due in January and can be paid with card.
- Small expenses can be paid from petty cash, but must be documented.
- Checks are available to pay contest prizes

### *Tax Exempt Filings*

- IRS Form 990-N must be filed each year before May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Missouri Non-Profit Filing – required every 2 years (next due between June 1 and August 31, 2021) – **Fee is \$20+tax, paid via debit/credit card**
- Missouri Tax Exempt Change Request – Form 126. We do not have to go through a renewal process, but this form is to update the state of change of officers.

### *Record Keeping & Reporting*

- The Treasurer is responsible for keeping accurate records of all transactions, including documenting sources of revenue and all purchases and expenses.
- The Treasurer's detail report must balance with the OWL bank statement.
- The Treasurer is responsible for providing financial reports at all OWL Board Meetings and providing updates to the President upon his/her request.

### *Other*

- Responsibility for OWL assets: A small wooden lectern, a projector, a PayPal chip reader, a suitcase filled with OWL financial records from previous years.
- Under Income section – Donations (other than contest sponsorships) and notification to whoever writes the thank-you letter with proof of donation for donor's tax records.
- Keeping up with paid members for a membership list which either treasurer makes or gives names to membership chairman for list.
- Responsible for bank account, balancing bank statement, signature changes, etc.
- Under assets: petty cash, checkbook, checks, credit card accounts, online passwords.
- Things to pay: in my day but things change: speakers' fees, speakers' expenses, caterers, etc.

### **Section 6: Duties of the Historian**

The Historian shall serve as custodian of all past records, adding materials to keep the records up to date. The documents shall include, at a minimum, one (1) copy of each Newsletter for the terms of service, name and awards received by all contest winners, names of speakers, and photos of current and past officers. Records should be kept in a data-based archive as well as hard copy.

#### **From experience, not the bylaws**

The Historian's job should be to keep good, accurate records of all happenings and appropriate information for the Ozark Writers League, including but not limited to: Membership, meetings, board information, press releases, newspaper articles, conferences, newsletters, tax information, and officers. The information should be scanned onto a device, such as a flash drive, and organized for easy retrieval.

### **Section 7: Duties of the Membership Director**

The Membership Director shall maintain the general membership records, coordinate with the Treasurer no less than once per month regarding new memberships and renewals, contact and welcome new members to the League, develop ideas concerning the recruitment of new members, provide a membership report at each Board meeting, and make a membership list available as defined by the bylaws and governed by law.

#### **From experience, not the bylaws**

#### **Conference Procedures:**

- **Set-up:** Establish the sign-in space as close to the entry as possible at least thirty minutes before the meeting is scheduled to begin. Allow more time if possible. Set up the nametag box, a lined notebook with numbers in the outside margin for door prize drawings, and whatever decorations are available for the table.

Make sure the Treasurer's area and the sign-in/welcome space are together for a more fluid verification of dues paid at the meeting and to speed up the new-member registration.

- **Sign-in Procedure:**

- For New and Lapsed Members: Give the individual a new member form. Ask them to fill it out and take it to the Treasurer with their payment of dues. Ask them to return with verification of payment. Give them a blank nametag on which to print their name and a lanyard. Assure them they will have a printed nametag at the next meeting. For lapsed members, look through the current nametags for one still on file. Ask them to sign in.
- For current members: Check the Excel file to make sure their dues are paid. If not, send them to the Treasurer. Find their nametag and lanyard in the alphabetized file box. Ask them to sign in.

If possible, ask each member signing in if any of their information has changed. If so, give them a new member sheet and ask them to get it back to you before the conference ends.

A few times during the conference, numbers are usually drawn for door prizes. The name matching the numbers on the sign-in sheets will receive the prize. Keep the notebook open and available.

- Be available to assist other Board members as needed during the conference.
- Be available to attend the Board meeting following the conference and provide a membership report.

**Between Conferences:**

- Maintain an Excel spreadsheet with member information and yearly dues paid as provided by the Treasurer.
- Notify the Treasurer of any changes in membership information.
- Maintain an e-mail list of members. Communicate with members as a group or individually, as needed.
- Remind members of yearly dues.
- Notify members of changes in procedures.
- Welcome new members to OWL.
- Communicate at least once monthly with the Treasurer.
- Communicate ideas for reaching new members and members who are no longer current to the President and the OWL Board.
- Create official nametags for new members. Replace any worn or damaged nametags/lanyards.
- Purchase lanyards and other supplies as they run low.
- Other duties as requested by the President.
- Be available to assist other OWL Directors, as needed.

**Section 8: Duties of the Publicity Director**

The Publicity Director is the contact between the League and the general public, issuing approved press releases and/or publicity about the meetings, speakers, contests and special events.

## Other positions

### Duties of the Past President

Perhaps this position is best comparable to the role of mother-of-the-groom. Wear beige and stay silent. This is the bride and mother-of-the-bride's time to shine.

I believe the past president can offer advice **when asked** on what worked well and what was not well received by the members.

The past president should turn over all paperwork, passwords, banking information (with a letter to remove the old and add the new president's name to the account), and OWL supplies to the incoming president.

### Duties of the Social Media Director

The social media director runs any social accounts for OWL that exist now or that we decide to engage in down the road. This includes:

- Managing the FB page and group(s), including ensuring posters follow the rules, providing content, responding to messages, and listing events.
- Encouraging nonmembers in the open group to become paying members.
- Engaging with members.
- Be sure the President and anyone he/she appoints has admin privileges in all accounts.
- You may appoint moderators to help with the group if needed.

### Duties of the Webmaster

- The Webmaster must maintain and update the OWL website. The Webmaster will be responsible for ensuring the site is correct based on information provided by the board and other assigned data providers, easy-to-use, and appealing to users. The Webmaster will update the website, fixing any broken links and images, and creating backups.

#### *Webmaster Job Responsibilities:*

- Build functional website that is easy to use
- Collaborate with board members and other assigned data providers to upgrade and add onto the OWL website
- Create a website style for cohesive design elements across all pages
- Test websites using different devices, browsers, and operating systems
- Update content on the website to keep pages fresh and intriguing based on input from the board or any assigned individuals or communities.
- Monitor, analyze, and report on all online traffic
- Analyze site performance
- Ensure web site functionality and efficiency
- Optimize site loading speeds if necessary
- Fix broken links and images

- Meet with board and report regularly on current functionality and plans for future functionality as recommended by the board or any individual or committee empowered by the board
- Perform any necessary updates
- Minimize downtime
- Communicate with the board on ways we can improve usability
- Respond to board comments and questions

### **Duties of the Adult Writing Contest Coordinator**

The contest coordinator manages the entire contest process from beginning to end. This includes:

- Use the [OWL.Contests@gmail.com](mailto:OWL.Contests@gmail.com) account for all contest communications. Password shall be obtained from the previous coordinator.
- While you may do it your way, we highly recommend that you utilize the extensive “how we do it” resources that Ronda Del Boccio left for you for all the specific steps. She has templates and processes to make it as seamless as possible for you.
- Recruit contest sponsors, help them develop their category guidelines as needed, help them get a judge if they’re not judging their category, and be sure they pay.
- Create a comprehensive list of contest rules and categories, and then be sure the Webmaster has them by the first of the month of the Spring Conference.
- Encourage members and non-members to get excited about and enter the contests.
- Send messages using email and social media to encourage involvement.
- You may use the logging system Ronda created to catalog everything.
- Send entries to the judges, and get the results back from them by the first of the month of the Fall conference so that awards and checks can be created.
- Send thank you messages to sponsors and judges.
- Host the OWLies Awards Gala.

### **Duties of the Youth Writing Contest Coordinator**

I conducted four OWL Youth Writing Contests over three years. Here’s what I learned.

- First, decide when the contest will be held. I tried several dates during the year but found that the fall contest worked best. That way, teachers can be engaged from the beginning of the school year. I accepted entries from Sept. 1 – Dec. 15. Entries were judged in January and awards made in February.
- Decide what categories to offer. I found that two categories of Short story and Poetry worked well. I tried adding Fan Fiction but only received 1 entry. Another year I tried adding Non-fiction but didn’t receive any entries.
- Decide what groups would be eligible to enter the contest. The first year, there was an age group, 12 –18-years-old, but I received entries from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders, whom most were probably not 12 years old. The information requested on the entry form did not ask age. The other years, I changed it to grades 7 – 12, which worked better because that was requested on the entry form.

- Devise a system for logging entries.
- Recruit sponsors and get their money up front.
- Have the rules posted to the OWL website and possibly other sites.
- Recruit judges. These may be the same as the sponsors but some sponsors don't want to judge.
- Enlist other OWL members to help advertise the contest in their communities. This may be through distributing flyers to schools, libraries, newspapers, and online sources. I sent news releases to 30 newspapers in southern Missouri, northwest Arkansas, northeast Oklahoma, and southwest Kansas and received entries from as far north as Fayette and Jefferson City, Missouri, and as far south as Fayetteville and Harrison, Arkansas. No entries received from Oklahoma and Kansas. Some entries received from home-schooled students who later were winners.
- Send entries to judges with a cover letter of how to judge and a deadline for returning results. There were 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> places and honorable mentions.
- Notify winners, send their awards, and give winners a one-year membership in OWL. A couple of times there were problems with students not cashing checks for months. We went to gift cards and that worked well. I hand-delivered some winnings at schools. I scheduled my visit during an all-school meeting. When we had a February OWL meeting, I invited parents, teachers, and winners and we gave out awards then, which was exciting.
- Notify all entrants of winners via email.
- Notify news media of local winners. This resulted in one newspaper requesting a winning poem to publish. I provided a photo and write-up to newspapers of those winners whose awards were given in person.
- Have the winners' names posted on the OWL website.

## **Duties of the Art Contest Coordinator**

### **In-Person Conference:**

- Make sure contest rules are posted in the Newsletter.
- Procure qualified judge/judges.
- Obtain awards, i.e. ribbons, trophies or certificates

#### *Day of the conference:*

- Set up display area(s)
- Collect entries, number them for the judges and display in the designated area.
- Announce winners and present awards.

### **Virtual Conference:**

- Make sure contest rules are posted in the Newsletter.
- Procure qualified judge/judges.
- Obtain awards, i.e. ribbons, trophies or certificates
- Collect jpegs of the art pieces.
- Announce winners at Zoom conference.
- Mail awards to the winners.

## **Duties of the Fundraising Coordinator**

The fundraising director is responsible for conceiving of fundraising ideas and implementing those ideas. He or she is responsible for obtaining donations, working the sales table, collecting donations for such things as raffle tickets, T-shirts, and tote bags during in-person conferences, recruiting other members to assist in fundraising efforts when necessary, ensuring all funds collected are provided to the treasurer, and assisting the board of directors in assuring smooth conferences.

*Thanks for giving your time to the advancement of authors and artists  
through the Ozarks Writers League!*