

SAN FRANCISCO WRITERS CONFERENCE

Saturday, February 17, 2018

2:00 – 2:45

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A SOLID FOUNDATION: Finding or Forming a Community of Writers

Handout and session by Richard Loranger

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BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR YOUR WORK

What can you get from a writing community?

- Feedback on your work
- Inspiration from others
- A sounding board for ideas about and beyond writing
- A expanding network of writing connections
- A way to get your work out to the public
- Gain a better understanding of how everything about the writing culture works
 - writing process
 - critique (both how-to and how valuable it can be)
 - how publications actually work
- Keep your creative energy bubbling.

FINDING A COMMUNITY

Larger and Non-Local Organizations

You can start with communities that are already out there, including some large to nationwide organizations – some are listed on the extra handout

Pros & cons of larger orgs

- Pro: lots of info, possible connections, already have a broad network
- Neutral: each often has its own focus/slant/agenda
- Cons: often online connects and interactions only, not as personal, not as local

Readings / Open Mics / Salons – any genre possible to find in a larger city

- Find them through
 - internet search – include your town name plus: poetry reading, fiction reading, non-fiction reading, storytelling, spoken word, open mic, etc
 - weekly newspaper calendars (print and online)
 - online listings (Flavorpill, SpinGo, look for local ones)
 - word of mouth
- Set a calendar to check them out, one a week or more
- Enjoy and make friends
- Try the open mic – be sure to ask the time limit
- Go to other creative events around and make friends there also – music, art openings, do not fear performance art (you never know) – be part of the greater creative communities

Writing Workshops – any genre possible to find in a larger city

Note they have different focuses and prices, usually not free (\$10-20/hr reasonable)

- Find them through
 - Same as readings, PLUS
 - Education listings and catalogs
 - Community Colleges
 - Cultural Centers

Writing Groups – an ideal place to get feedback and to get to know others well

- Might be harder to find than the events above, but look in similar ways – ask around!
- Some are open groups, some closed, some start with groups of friends and admit new folks carefully, keep their numbers low, etc.

FORMING A COMMUNITY

If you don't find much going on around where you live, or you just want to add to the voices/venues/community (this is how it grows), you can always make your own:

Readings / Open Mics / Salons

- You might start with a salon at home with writer friends, depending on your level of contacts
- Invite personally or get the word out through announcements + flyers at events
- Or put together a reading or reading series
 - Meet with the venue
 - Be clear about times, how much space you'll need clear, size of the event, whether you'll need/use a mic and amp, turning music down, etc.
 - Most readings are no charge – some charge or pass a hat for readers
 - Urge attendees to support the venue, purchase and thank
 - Get the word out with announcements, flyers, online listings, PR

Writing Groups

- I suggest starting with private invites at first, so you'll be comfortable with the participants
- Good way to practice constructive critique, and learn how to accept it
- Lots of feedback!
- Could be done in a home or cafe, etc. Try a potluck!

Writing groups can sometimes lead to or offer workshops by an individual writers – ask an experienced writer if they'll come and give one!

Publish Yourself and Your Community

- Simple zines, journals, and chapbooks are a great way to get your work out there
- You can charge for them of course, or give them away just to spread the word
- It's totally okay to start with photocopies and staples or simple binding
- Printing shops can let you know your options
- Look at other little publications to compare formats
- You can even make up a press name as the publisher!

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For more information on Richard Loranger, including books, readings, art, and esoterica, please check out www.richardloranger.com.