

Sonia's Sage Advice

Sonia Linebaugh is a former Vice-President of MWA and the Chief Coach for the birthing of MWA Baltimore Chapter (MWAB). So she knows what she's talking about.

1. It takes 32 emails and 6 person visits with an MWA officer to start a chapter.
2. Plan your first meeting in a bar or a place with food.
3. A strong dedicated president gives the greatest chance for success.
4. Writers who are excited about their own potential are the best members.
5. Invite current members who live nearby as well as members of critique groups and other writers' groups.
6. Don't worry about MWA (the big enchiladas). They are making it up as they go along just like you are.
7. Don't expect MWA to create your chapter for you. Get out there and make it happen.
8. If you don't get what you want from MWA (attention, money, support, clarity), go to a Board meeting and make a speech.



MWA's big enchiladas (per no. 6 above).

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“Start a Chapter? Are You Crazy?”

You don't have to be crazy to start an MWA chapter, but it does help. But, hey, since you're reading this, you're probably crazy enough to try. In that case, there are . . .



Three Things You Really Need Right Away

- **Officers who show up.** You don't want people who, when asked, shrug their shoulders and say, “Yeah, sure, what the hell, I'll be an officer.” Bad. Very bad. There's a lot of work to be done, and you don't want to be stuck doing it all by your lonesome.
- **A bank account.** You'll be amazed at how often you need petty cash. Ask your bank if they do nonprofit accounts (you'll need to get MWA's tax-exempt number). Don't worry about taxes and all that stuff -- that's for the state treasurer to sweat. Just send in statements regularly.
- **One or two convenient, regular meeting locations.** When MWAB started out, we tried a bunch of locations around Baltimore and the county until we found two locations that the most people found the most convenient (i.e., caused the least whining). Plus, the owners are really nice to us and are glad to have us there.



One Thing You Really Don't Need Right Away

- **A whole lot of members.** Seriously.

The Steps

- Express your interested to the MWA Board. Think about the geographic area you want to serve and the kinds of things you'd like to do at meetings.
- Make sure you read the MWA Chapter Guidelines. They cover all the requirements and responsibilities for both the chapter and the Board.
- You need at least five dues-paying MWA members -- that works out to four officers and some other slacker.
- Complete the Application for Chapter Status. Get approved for charter. Celebrate getting charter.
- Have your first meeting be about electing your officers and coming up with ideas for events and programs. Speaking of which . . .



Quick & Easy Program Ideas

Your chapter can do just about anything for a monthly meeting. Think about activities that raise your profile in the community. Remember, a key function of chapters is to attract new members.

- Invite a lawyer to talk about copyright and contract negotiation.
- Have an “open mike” night at a local bookstore or café.
- Host a panel discussion with local celebrity bloggers at your library.
- Sponsor a NaNoWriMo write-in or host manuscript critique sessions.

So You Want to Start a Chapter

A Slightly Irreverent Guide to Launching

a Chapter

of the

Maryland Writers'

Association



by Paul Lagasse

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The Maryland Writers' Association

is made up of a diverse group of writers, from professional freelancers and published authors to writers aspiring to be published and those who write as a creative outlet. Members hail from all of Maryland, as well as Washington, DC, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Members produce both nonfiction and fiction, including novels, short stories, poetry, plays, scripts, speeches, feature articles, and essays. Some work in specific genres such as romance, science fiction, thriller, fantasy, children's literature, travel writing, or biography.



www.marylandwriters.org

The Baltimore Chapter

serves the greater Baltimore area, including Baltimore City, Towson, Pikesville, and Linthicum. As the first MWA Chapter to launch, the Baltimore Chapter seeks to help connect members with the wide range of writing-related resources and activities that are available in the region. In cooperation with its co-sponsors, the **CityLit Project** and the **Write Here, Write Now** workshops, the Chapter acts as a clearinghouse for information about critique groups, readings, signings, conferences, and other events. Its monthly meetings feature stimulating guest speakers and discussions on the art, business, and craft of writing.

www.mwabaltimore.org