

Writers SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSOCIATION



South Carolina Writers Association

Board of Directors

2022 Annual Report

Come write with us!

*The South Carolina Writers Association provides a supportive environment
to help people become better writers.*

February 14, 2023

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President's Message

2022 was a year of growth and diversity in everything. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic lingered, civil unrest and polarity simmered, and our organization sought stability in continuity and optimism in opportunity. The board focused on core competencies and serving our membership.

Our strategic plan for 2022 focused on three areas of service delivery: Education, Association and Publication. We held workshops and events, created connection opportunities, recruited new partners and friends, and published our online journal, *The Petigru Review*, under new leadership with a spectrum of new voices. Above all, our focus was professionalism and we continued to fortify our processes and governance with documentation.

SCWA reaffirmed our commitment to partner organizations such as the Pat Conroy Literary Center, the South Carolina Humanities, One Columbia and the Southeastern Writers Association through a variety of collaborative efforts.

Our membership responded with outstanding participation and a demonstration to further strengthen SCWA by volunteering to serve and lead.

We look forward to continuing this trajectory of growth and supporting all the writers of South Carolina.

Kasie Whitener
President

SCWA Operations:

Membership and Chapter Liaison

In the next-step-forward of our organizational efforts, Membership formed a membership committee and met consistently in 2022 to review and address goals. Committee governance was a strategic goal for SCWA in 2022 and Membership exhibited what is possible when we collaborate via committee. Some accomplishments include:

- Increased membership by 24%:
 - An additional 87 additional members from May 1, 2022 (the end of the grace period), to December 4, 2022.
 - Recruited for new members at 15 or more events in 2022.
- Monitored and reported on the 2022 renewal period.
 - Offered two membership fee giveaways. Membership fees for the two winners were refunded.
 - Offered a hardship enrollment/renewal discount of \$25 for members who were unable to pay full amount.
- Updated student enrollment guidelines:
 - Include verification via a copy of their student ID.
 - Increased student fees to \$35 for 2023 (a percentage of increase that aligns with the 2022 individual enrollment fee increase).
- Improved communication efforts:
 - Conducted website reviews throughout the year to ensure clear messaging for members. Made recommendations to the board for several updates/changes and implemented those changes.
 - Created a temporary marketing flyer for recruiting purposes.
 - Published an article in each issue of *The Quill* and invited members to contact Membership with any questions or concerns.
- Improved Chapters:
 - Worked with Laura Corbin to create and implement an online application for new chapter proposals.
 - Worked with the chapter liaison, chapter leaders and Laura Corbin to reconcile the Wild Apricot “Groups” database with their individual chapter member lists.
 - Worked with the Technology Committee to survey chapter leaders on platforms used for virtual meetings and to assess their technology needs.
 - Developed an interim technology policy that recommended chapter leaders use Skype if no Zoom was available.
 - Recorded “how to use Skype” session that was made available to chapter leaders on the SCWA YouTube channel.
 - Co-facilitated with Barbara Evers a recorded session on “how to lead a virtual chapter.” This session was made available to chapter leaders via the SCWA YouTube channel.
 - Created a small group of reviewers, led by the Chapter Liaison, a member of this committee, for reviewing potentially offensive material if a chapter could not provide sufficient critiques. This action was the result of SCWA’s Offensive Materials Policy, implemented in 2022.
- Surveyed members:
 - Revised the membership survey.
 - 2022 survey conducted late October and results made available for review.

The Membership Survey was an incredibly valuable tool for our 2023 planning. Among some of the insights were:

- 60% of respondents had been members for fewer than three (3) years.
- 72% are age 55 or older.
- 53% are members of other writing organizations.
- 41% have been writing for more than 20 years.
- 81% report fiction as their primary genre, with 32% identifying poetry and 28% memoir secondary.
- 61% of respondents didn't attend either the virtual or onsite conference, citing scheduling, topics, and cost as factors in the decision.
- 61% of respondents have never submitted to our online journal, *The Petigru Review*.

Given the amount of time and resources dedicated to the conference(s) and the publication, these revelations were eye-opening for the board and prompted some important discussion around the strategic priorities in 2023.

Publications/Contests

The 2022 TPR was led by a contracted managing editor/fiction editor, Maria Picone, and a contracted poetry editor/nonfiction editor, Yvette Murray. The results were fantastic:

207 submissions total:

- 196 written submissions
 - 88 fiction
 - 78 poetry
 - 30 nonfiction
 - 10 book excerpts (fiction and nonfiction)
- 11 visual art submissions
- 140 nonmember submissions
- 58 member submissions

The team implemented several strategies to encourage a spectrum of submissions including some fee waivers, some advertising in other publications, and some direct outreach to publications representing marginalized and diverse writers. Overall, the submissions earned just under \$980, meaning the publication operated at a loss for the organization. Even so, at our annual in-person membership meeting at the Pawley's Island conference, many writers espoused the value of the publication for our organization's overall credibility and professionalism.

SCWA co-sponsored awards in partnership with the South Carolina Academy of Authors in 2022 for awards in the *Carrie McCray Nickens Fellowship in Poetry* and the *Elizabeth Boatwright Coker Fellowship in Short Fiction*. These awards are made annually to residents of South Carolina.

The Quill maintained continuity in 2022 as SCWA's monthly newsletter and primary form of communication. Features include: perspectives from the president, articles and essays from board members on the Membership and Events & Education committees, events announcements for both our organization and our partners. In 2023, we plan to resurrect the organization's blog to provide additional publication opportunities for members.

Events and Education

Workshops

SCWA remained aggressive and innovative in the online workshops and events category with five types of learning experiences:

- Monthly Open Mic events in partnership with Pat Conroy Literary Center (12).
- Deep-dive programs:
 - 1 Novel intensive 4-week series.
 - 1 Path to Publishing 4-week series.
 - 1 Short Story 4-week series.
- Author spotlight sessions (4).
- Writing conversations and shared writing time (12).
- Inside/Out onsite all-day event for readings and fellowship (1).

In all, 34 opportunities to grow our members' professionalism, craft and networks with 681 event registrations. In 2023, we expect to continue innovation in this space with more interactive sessions, onsite programming, and a conference in Columbia that we hope will be a regional draw.

Conference

SCWA held two conferences in the same month in 2022. The virtual conference on October 7-9 had 50 registrants, included six incredibly diverse faculty members, and received 100% positive reviews in the post-session survey and the membership survey. Value was the primary compliment: the virtual conference delivered above expected value.

We returned to Pawley's Island for the Annual Conference at Litchfield by the Sea October 21-23 and had 95 registrations with another extraordinarily diverse faculty of eight accomplished writers including the Poet Laureate of Alabama Ashley M. Jones. Attendees were overwhelmingly positive about the experience including the faculty, location and opportunities to network with fellow members. We earned a few new members and learned in our Sunday open meeting about some of the challenges new members face finding a chapter fit, learning to navigate the website, and getting the full value for their membership. All feedback resulted in new goals for our 2023 strategic plan.

Financials

SCWA finished the year with a net operating gain of \$20,784.17. Operations (\$23,985.10) and nonconference events (\$6,970.00) made up the bulk of our revenue with publications (-\$2,928.47) and the conference (-\$7,242.46) experiencing losses. Cash reserves at year-end were \$53,943.

A total of \$8,719 of grant funding was received in 2022, as well as a generous anonymous donation of \$10,000 in honor of our former President Mike Lee.

Board Membership and Staff 2022

SCWA's success is due to the participation of its members and the dedication of its volunteer board of directors and advisors:

Directors

Kasie Whitener, President

Abby Morales, 1st VP

Lynn Volkenant, Treasurer

Sharon Thomas, Secretary
Paul Davis, VP Events & Education
Raegan Teller, VP Membership
Dan Mooney, Membership Committee
Yvette Murray
Mike Lee, immediate past president

Advisors

Jayne Bowers, Publications
Peter Coan, Publications
Sue Cryer, Publications
Dorree Lynn, Publications
Sean Scapelatto, Legal
Art Turfa, Conference, Publications
Anica Williams, Publications
Ralph Jarrells, Marketing
Mary Sturgill, Marketing, Conference
Brad Land, Publications
Amber Wheeler Bacon, Conference
Susan Zurenda, Publications

Staff/Contractors

Laura Corbin, Administrator
Yvette Murray, Publications
Maria Picone, Publications
Amber Wheeler Bacon, Conference Coordinator

Other

Ella Shawn, Chapter Liaison

The board sends a special thank you to past president *Mike Lee*, who served as an advisor on every committee, attended just about every event, and volunteered selflessly again and again to ensure execution of SCWA's mission.

We enter 2023 with the departures of *Amber Wheeler Bacon*, *Abby Morales*, *Mary Sturgill*, *Ralph Jarrells* and *Anica Williams*. The board's success can be measured in large part by their contributions and leadership.

The horizon for 2023 is very bright with the additions of new board directors *Charles Hall*, *Ash Smith*, *Robin Condon*, and the move of *Paul Davis* into the 1st VP position. Focusing on the conference, *Brad Land* returns in an advisor capacity.

Kasie Whitener
2/14/2023