



# SIGMA TAU DELTA

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

Fall 2009

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## Telling Stories in St. Louis: 2010 Sigma Tau Delta Convention

Carrie Fitzpatrick  
Convention Chair  
Alvernia University, PA



Whether you want to gaze at Monet's *Water Lilies* in the city's art museum, admire the mosaics of the Cathedral Basilica, or visit Busch Stadium, St. Louis offers great attractions . . . including the 2010 Sigma Tau Delta Convention, Storytellers, from March 17-20. Chris Cavanaugh once said, "Storytellers, by the very act of telling, communicate a radical learning that changes lives and the world: telling stories is a universally accessible means through which people make meaning." I invite you to contribute to "a radical learning" by sharing your stories and listening to our wonderful lineup of speakers.

The 2010 Convention will include presentations by Azar Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and *Things I Have Been Silent About*; Chris Abani, author of *Song for Night* and *Graceland*; Judith Ortiz Cofer, author of *The Meaning of Consuelo* and *The Latin Deli*; and Li-Young Lee, author of *The Winged Seed: A Remembrance* and *The City in Which I Love You*. They are fantastic storytellers with narratives that are skillful and compelling.

Storytellers is an apropos theme for a convention of language and literature lovers. No matter how different our backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs, a universal connection that we have with one another is story. We share stories through many mediums: blogs, essays, graphic art, lyrics, novels, plays, poems. Whether we sing, sketch, speak, or write our stories, we continually weave our lived experiences into a narrative thread that becomes the fabric of our humanity.

Call it alchemy or enchantment or magic . . . whatever you want to label it, there is no denying the power of a good story. Stories give us a connection with our lineage, a sense of place, a sense of self. Christina Baldwin stated, "In the act of telling story, we create a world we invite others into . . . . We are simultaneously



listening to another's voice and traveling our own memories." When we share our own narratives, it is difficult for us to dismiss one another because we discover just how much we have in common. In a world where hate and divisiveness have too often taken center stage, we need more sharing and more listening. We need more stories.

Over time, the people and places of St. Louis have been an inspiration for many authors and many stories, and I'm certain the city will energize many of you too. Our convention will take place in the newly-renovated Hyatt Regency St. Louis Riverfront, situated in the central part of downtown St. Louis and adjacent to the Gateway Arch that stands at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. During the last year, the hotel underwent a multi-million dollar renovation, and it now houses a Starbuck's Coffee, Red Kitchen Bar, Brewhouse Sportsbar, and Ruth's Chris Steakhouse. Within walking distance of the Gateway Arch Riverboats and the MetroLink, the hotel is a prime location for some of St. Louis's most well-known attractions including the City Garden, the Museum of Westward Expansion, the Old Cathedral, Laclede's Landing, and many other interesting sites.

When you have some free time, take the MetroLink to Union Station where you can sit on the Throne of Love, try out the Hurricane Simulator, or simply purchase a pressed penny souvenir. If you don't mind a wee stretch of the legs, check out one of the most unusual museums I've ever seen, the City Museum. Located in a restored factory, the museum is a feat of architecture that is both wondrous and strange. Patrons can marvel at the innovative designs, slide from one floor to the next, take a Ferris wheel ride, or sit on the yellow school bus precariously perched atop the museum roof.

Recently, I was asked, "Who will be the storytellers at your conference?" My response was, "Who won't be a storyteller?" Sigma Tau Delta conventions have always been a place where a collaborative story can emerge. It has been, and will continue to be, a community experience in which all participants have opportunities to share their voices in papers, panels, and—yes—even the bad poetry contest. Maya Angelou once said, "There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you." Join me in St. Louis, the Gateway City. Listen to celebrated authors, have a bit of fun, and most importantly, share your story.

**Interested in going to the Convention?  
Proposals due in November!**

See: [www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions](http://www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions)



Bob Crafton  
President  
Slippery Rock University, PA

# The President's Corner

Being of Service

As I write this article, I am just back from a week's vacation. The time away was nice, though as often seems to happen, I probably worked harder while gone than had I remained at home. We started the week with a performance of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Jacob's Pillow—Merce Cunningham, as it turned out, died that night—and ended the week with a trip to the Nakashima Studios in New Hope, Pennsylvania. In between, we kayaked, saw the new Sol Lewitt retrospective at Mass MOCA, did the American Folk Art Museum in Manhattan, saw family, ate more than was strictly necessary, slept less than we should have. Altogether, the schedule was tighter, more hectic, easily more demanding than had I stayed home and gone about my business, but a week spent with Cunningham, kayaking, and Lewitt, folk art, family, and finely-crafted furniture was worth it. Now I just need to catch up with everything else, like this newsletter article, let go in the meanwhile.

That this vacation required more work than working is something of a routine for me, especially during the school year and particularly when it comes to spring break. For five of the past six years, I have spent spring break with members of my local chapter working in San Francisco. Our groups have been as large as sixteen, as small as five. We have always spent the bulk of our time assisting with programs at 826 Valencia, a writing/tutoring center in the city's Mission District founded by novelist Dave Eggers. We help with the book-making field trips at the center, with in-school programs, with drop-in tutoring. This past spring, we spent three mornings in a fifth-grade classroom and two afternoons at a middle school working through persuasive essays the students had been assigned to write, all in preparation for the required achievement tests they would be taking later in the spring. Over the years, we have also worked at the San Francisco Food Bank, helped remove invasive plants and/or restore native ecosystems at Point Reyes and Mori Point, swept alleys in Chinatown. The living arrangements are always a bit rough, usually in a youth hostel, and the work is (or can be) physically and intellectually demanding. We stay busy, to say the least.

At one level, this week in San Francisco represents the most minor of my professional commitments, and at another, probably the most important thing I do all year. I leave town tired, always rushing to get ready in spite of having spent weeks preparing to go; I spend a week not doing all the things—like reading and marking student essays—that would otherwise fill my week; and I always come back more exhausted than I left, home on Sunday morning via a red-eye flight, back in class on Monday morning. I can ill-afford this time away, but not going just doesn't seem to be an option. As a group, we all probably learn more in that week about ourselves, about racial, ethnic, and economic diversity, about the often inequitable distribution of educational resources in this country, about hunger and homelessness, about citizenship, than years spent in a classroom can teach. We've done that work, too, reading Beat poetry, Frank Chin's *Donald Duk* or Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, Kozol's *The Shame of the Nation* or Rose's *Lives on the Boundary*, McPhee's *Assembling California* or Burdick's *Out of Eden*. For service learning to really make sense, you need to have a sense of what you're doing and why you're doing it. With that foundation in place, we're ready to work.

The work itself is almost always frustrating, work that shouldn't need doing in the first place. Our in-school activities this year, for instance, were largely required because of No Child Left Behind and its annual assessments and penalties for inadequate progress, never mind that the educational resources themselves are always inadequate. Fifth graders writing five-paragraph themes arguing for a longer school year or for school uniforms seems odd at best, an exercise in going through the motions, mostly benign if not exactly beneficial. For those students, however, for whom English is a second language in which they are not yet fluent, the time and effort these exercises require seem misspent, neither meaningful nor appropriate to them. Still, we did what we could. At the very least, having us present meant the teacher could divide the class into small groups and that these kids could have our dedicated attention for a couple of hours.

What is clear to me is that our small group of people wouldn't be spending spring breaks in San Francisco working at 826 Valencia were it not for Sigma Tau Delta. If nothing else, our local chapter, with its regular meetings and annual induction of new members, allows us to identify a group of people who do care about language and literature and education, and it provides a structure for pursuing our common interests. In our case, this collective effort has provided the basis for our annual excursion to 826 Valencia. In other cases, such collective efforts have produced highly successful fund-raising campaigns and book drives; in other chapters, it's celebrations of banned books and the pleasures of reading and the rights, protected by the First Amendment, to read. We do stay busy. Like the week spent in San Francisco, supervising our local chapter represents a small part of my professional commitments; on another level, however, it is probably one of the more important things—and easily one of the most rewarding—that I do.

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The Society is moving ahead. Between July 1, 2008, and June 30, 2009 we added 8,537 new members, up from 8,279 the year before; we chartered 21 new chapters, reactivated 20 inactive chapters, and lost 33 chapters that have gone inactive, for a total of 749 active chapters. Additionally, the National English Honor Society, our fledgling high school division, continues to grow at a phenomenal rate. Our continued growth, in a year of economic downturns, is certainly impressive. In 2008-09, we added an internship at Penguin, for which we received 89 applications; we also entered into a partnership with Better World Books, a company that sponsors book drives supporting literacy programs around the world. This year we will add an internship opportunity with Better World Books to our various scholarships, awards, support for study abroad, and internships. Sigma Tau Delta is neither the largest nor the wealthiest of college honor societies, but we are one of the very few to publish two journals—both just redesigned—and to hold an annual convention, which has, by the way, set records for submissions and attendance in each of the past three years. And in addition to the convention's three featured speakers, the National English Honor Society is now sponsoring an additional speaker on Wednesday evening, an event open to the community in the convention city. We are continuing to fine tune the web site and to move submission and registration systems on-line. We are making progress.

# Executive Director's Report

## Sigma Tau Delta: the motto, the meaning

Every Sigma Tau Delta member, at one time or another, has seen the Society seal, perhaps on the membership certificate, perhaps on some correspondence, or perhaps on one of our publications (such as this Newsletter). And almost every member, I am reasonably certain, has experienced someone(s) pointing out that ΣΤΔ, when set in abbreviated English text, is STD. And that's when the jokes begin—of which, over my twenty-six years of directing this organization, I have heard plenty, both from inside and outside our ranks, with most everyone agreeing that, while we have a great honor society, we have for our name one of the world's worst acronyms.

What gets lost, literally, in the translation is the meaning our founders set behind the three Greek letters when they named our Society in 1924. This meaning is too easily lost even to us when we merely gloss through abbreviation. And in that lost meaning we also lose a great deal of what makes membership both valuable and meaningful.

### We might look briefly at each of the three letters:

The Sigma represents "sincerity." Now, as a word, that's all well and good, and we'd all probably agree that we know what the word means. But as English majors we also know that what we see on the surface, whether of a literary work or of words themselves, is only the start, and "sincerity" is a rich word with an equally rich history. It comes originally from Latin and, according to some, refers to the practice of Roman quarrymen rubbing wax on marble blocks to conceal imperfections. The Roman Senate then decreed that all marble be "without wax," or *sine cera*. The Tau in our Society seal exemplifies "truth." That's another word both simple and complex (Truth always is; my Google search of "truth etymology" yielded 963,000 results!). And the Delta: although a Greek letter, it comes originally from the Phoenician *daleth*, meaning "tent door" (or opening, as in its current meaning of a river mouth). In our organization it represents "design," both as a noun and as a verb. As experienced readers, we not only look for, but find great

As Sigma Tau Delta begins its 85th, may it be a year filled with your own sincere seeking of truth as it is found in the tents, and at the doors, of the great writings we admire and explore.

pleasure when we find how literary works are designed, how they are put together, how the pieces fit in the design of the parts and the whole. As experienced writers we also find considerable enjoyment in designing what we write, whether it's determining point of view, developing characters, or exploring how best to express what we wish to say. Thus we enter the tent door of a text in part by opening its design, just as in designing we bring readers to the door itself.

### What, then, does all this have to do with Sigma Tau Delta?

It is the significance of the combination, as words become sentences, sentences paragraphs, and paragraphs, a novel. Your Sigma Tau Delta membership affirms your sincerity about seeking truth as it is disclosed and revealed in English language and literature. We move into and through the mouths of texts, enter the flow of language where we experience the transformative effect of words used wisely, carefully, and often, beautifully, and where they reveal to us (as Shakespeare writes) something of great constancy. That's the nature of design at its richest.

We embark on this venture with sincerity—that is, honestly and free of deception. We set out on the journey seeking a truth in what we study and a truth in what lies in the design of language. We approach the tent doors, the deltas, not with preset, pre-fixed notions that force meanings and that result in our finding only what we already expect to find, but openly (*sine cera*) and purely (truth-fully), letting the poem, the novel, the play, yield its own truths and treasures as it unfolds its designs to us. I've

thought about these sigmas, taus, and deltas many times; they have given direction both for my own experience as a student and as a classroom teacher, and as a proud member of Sigma Tau Delta. As Sigma Tau Delta begins its 85th, may it be a year filled with your own sincere seeking of truth as it is found in the tents, and at the doors, of the great writings we admire and explore. And, fortified with the real meaning behind our motto, may you proudly bear your membership—and the exciting premise on which the Society is based.

William C. Johnson  
Executive Director  
Northern Illinois University



Shannin Schroeder  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Southern Arkansas University

Sound familiar? It should—it describes 2008 for most investments (including ours).

While the story of our 2008 finances begins with a "once upon a time" feel, in a land with stock markets fashioned out of gold, it ended with a loss of 28.6% of our Sigma Tau Delta investments (and 36% of our NEHS investments). It begins with a year whose financial dawn rose in all its million plus dollar glory and, after a financial

## The Treasurer's Update

### It was the best of times, it was the worst of times

tsunami, that saw the December sun set on investments totaling \$877,419.

But in the hands of Mutual Solutions, a Smith Barney group offering its advice to million dollar (and, in our case, formerly million dollar) accounts, we are already seeing our moneys bounce back. Returns on our main account this year have already exceeded 17%. We can look forward to another glorious dawn in our near future.

# 2010 Convention Speakers



## AZAR NAFISI

Azar Nafisi is best known as the author of the national bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, which electrified its readers with a compassionate and often harrowing portrait of the Islamic revolution in Iran and how it affected one university professor and her students. The book has spent over 117 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. *Reading Lolita in Tehran* has been translated in 32 languages and has won diverse literary awards, including the 2004 Non-fiction Book of the Year Award from Booksense, the Frederic W. Ness Book Award, the 2004 Latifeh Yarshater Book Award, an achievement award from the American Immigration Law Foundation, as well as being a finalist for the 2004 PEN/Martha Albrand Award for Memoir.

Nafisi has written for *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Her cover story, "The Veiled Threat: The Iranian Revolution's Woman Problem" published in *The New Republic* (February 22, 1999) has been reprinted into several languages. She is the author of *Anti-Terra: A Critical Study of Vladimir Nabokov's Novels*. She also wrote the new introduction to the Modern Library Classics edition of Tolstoy's *Hadji Murad*, as well as the introduction to Iraj Pezeshkzad's *My Uncle Napoleon*, published by Modern Library (April 2006). She has published a children's book (with illustrator Sophie Benini Pietromarchi) *BiBi and the Green Voice*. Nafisi's new book, *Things I Have Been Silent About: Memories*, a memoir about her mother, was published in January 2009. She is currently working on a book entitled *Republic of the Imagination*, which is about the power of literature to liberate minds and peoples.

Azar Nafisi is a visiting professor and the director of the Cultural Conversations at the Foreign Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, where she is a professor of aesthetics, culture, and literature, and teaches courses on the relation between culture and politics. She lives in Washington, DC. (With permission from: <http://azarnafisi.com>).

## JUDITH ORTIZ COFER



Born in Puerto Rico and raised in Paterson, New Jersey, Judith Ortiz Cofer now makes her home in Georgia. She is a poet, essayist, and novelist, whose work explores the experience of being Puerto Rican and living, writing, and teaching in the United States. She is the author of eleven books in various genres.

Cofer's first novel, *The Line of the Sun* (1989), was named a New York Public Library Outstanding Book of the Year. The novel traces the experiences of a family that immigrates from a Puerto Rican village to a barrio in Paterson, New Jersey. Her second novel, *The Meaning of Consuelo* (2003), tells the coming-of-age story of a Puerto Rican girl living in the suburbs of San Juan in the 1950s. The novel received the Americas' Prize in 2003. She is also the author of *Woman in Front of the Sun: On Becoming a Writer* (2000), an autobiographical collection of essays.

Her most recent young adult book is a novel told in poems, letters, and prose about the Puerto Rican-American immigrant experience, *Call Me Maria* (2006). Other books include the essay collection, *Silent Dancing* (1990), a New York Public Library Outstanding Book of the Year and winner of the PEN/Martha Albrand Special Citation in nonfiction; the prose and poetry collection, *The Latin Deli* (1993), winner of the Anisfield-Wolf Award in Race Relations; the short story collection, *An Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio* (1995), winner of the American Library Association's first Pura Belpré Prize in Young Adult Literature, and a Best Book of the Year of the American Library Association, and three collections of poetry: *A Love Story Beginning in Spanish* (2005), *Reaching for the Mainland* (1987), and *Terms of Survival* (1987).

Judith Ortiz Cofer is the Regents' and Franklin Professor of English and creative writing at the University of Georgia. (With permission from: [www.english.uga.edu/~jcofer](http://www.english.uga.edu/~jcofer)).



## LI-YOUNG LEE

Li-Young Lee is the author of four critically acclaimed books of poetry, his most recent being *Behind My Eyes* (W.W. Norton, 2008). His earlier collections are *Book of My Nights* (BOA Editions, 2001); *Rose* (BOA, 1986), winner of the Delmore Schwartz Memorial Award from New York University; *The City in Which I Love You* (BOA, 1991), the 1990 Lamont Poetry Selection; and a memoir entitled *The Winged Seed: A Remembrance* (Simon and Schuster, 1995), which received an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

Lee's honors include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lannan Foundation, and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, as well as grants from the

**Want to find out more about these convention speakers?**  
Go to: [www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions](http://www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions)

Illinois Arts Council, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. In 1988 he received the Writer's Award from the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation. He is also featured in Katja Esson's documentary, *Poetry of Resilience*.

His poetry reveals a dialogue between the eternal and the temporal and accentuates the joys and sorrows of family, home, loss, exile, and love. In "The City In Which I Love You," the central long poem in his second collection, Li-Young Lee asks, "Is prayer, then, the proper attitude / for the mind that longs to be freely blown, / but which gets snagged on the barb / called world, that / tooth-ache, the actual?" Anyone who has seen him read will add that Lee is also one of the finest poetry readers alive. He lives in Chicago with his wife Donna and their two sons. (With permission from: [www.blueflowerarts.com](http://www.blueflowerarts.com)).

CHRIS ABANI



“Chris Abani may be the most courageous writer working right now,” says Dave Eggers. Imprisoned by the Nigerian government as a teenager for his writings, Abani is one of the most admired novelists in the world. He is also an evocative speaker whose keynotes—near musical in their fluidity, heartbreak, and joy—mix the personal and the political.

One of the best writers to emerge from Africa in half a century, Abani is the recipient of the PEN Freedom-to-Write Award and many other prizes. His bestselling novel, *Graceland*, about an Elvis impersonator in Lagos, won the Hemingway/PEN Prize. His other works of fiction include *The Virgin of Flames*, *Becoming Abigail*, and the award-winning *Song For Night*, about a child soldier who has lost his voice (Sigma Tau Delta’s Common Reader). All three were each named a *New York Times* Editor’s Choice. Abani is currently a professor at the University of California, Riverside. Pulitzer Prize winner Junot Diaz says, “Chris Abani is a force of nature.” (*With permission from: www.thelavinagency.com*)

## Review of Common Reader

*Song for Night* (Akashic Books, 2007) by Chris Abani  
A Review of the Sigma Tau Delta Common Reader for 2009-10

Peter Scholl  
Immediate Past President  
Luther College, IA

The young narrator of this novella could be the great-great grandson of Okwonkwo, the Igbo protagonist of Chinua Achebe’s classic *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Okwonkwo’s world was fractured by the coming of the British colonizers around the turn of the twentieth century, and in that land roughly a hundred years later, a boy of fifteen has been fighting for three years in an unnamed civil war.

As *Song for Night* (2007) opens, My Luck, as the narrator is ironically named, awakens with a concussion, apparently left for dead following the explosion of a landmine, disoriented and alone. His tale unfolds, in and out of flashbacks and nightmares, as he wanders through jungles and war-blighted villages trying to rejoin his ragged platoon of teenaged soldiers.

My Luck’s story is as much a vision as a tale, since his mental state is precarious and he grows increasingly incapable of discerning memories from dreams and from waking reality. What we read are the thoughts of this fifteen-year-old, who literally cannot speak because his vocal cords were cut—a precaution to keep the child soldiers from alarming each other with screams should a mine they are diffusing explode. With his mates, he used a silent sign language to coordinate their maneuvers and even to converse; most chapter headings are glosses for one of the signs. Thus chapter one is “Silence Is a Steady hand, Palm Flat.” He tells the reader, “if you are hearing any of this at all it’s because you have gained access to my head. You would also know that my inner-speech is not English, because there is something atavistic about war that rejects all but the primal language of the genes to comprehend it, so you are . . . hearing my thoughts in Igbo.”

My Luck’s narrative is rich in tactile description and evocation of horrific violence, punctuated by recollections of better times before the eruption of inter-ethnic violence and the death of his parents. This is an evocation of the experience of war and pogroms as witnessed by a boy who is a victim, but also a participant and perpetrator: “Who taught me the joy of killing, a singular joy that is perhaps rivaled only by an orgasm?” Though

we are not given dates or very specific locations, the setting is clearly Nigeria, and the riot that involved the death of My Luck’s Catholic mother and Muslim father resemble conflicts that have disturbed postcolonial life in Nigeria, such as the civil war that followed the secession of Biafra in the late 1960s and the conflicts between the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, exacerbated by religious, linguistic, and ethnic divisions.

Chris Abani’s own life rivals that of his novels. He wrote his first novel in Nigeria when he was sixteen, and two years after it was published, he was thrown in prison because the plot resembled a real political coup. “This initial brush with the government was not deliberate on my part,” Abani has said. “[B]ut having once been brushed by the wings of the demon, I became the demon hunter.” He was imprisoned a second time in connection with his involvement of a guerilla theater group, and a third time on account of a play he wrote. He was tortured, placed in solitary, and many of those imprisoned with him did not survive. Thus his writing is that of an artist engagé and he lives as an expatriate in the United States. Still, he insists that art should be valued not for its political salience and much less because the writer is one who writes from out of personal experience of oppression and marginalization. He told an interviewer, “Artists were essentially shamans or priests or seers in the old days and I think art is still the primary focus of looking for ways to deal with the questions of being human . . . OK, so I went to prison, I suffered, but I’m here drinking a three-dollar coffee checking my email on a fancy gadget . . . There is either good art or bad art. Art is never about its content it’s always about its scaffolding.”

His art is very good, and his life is fascinating, too. Abani will be one of our speakers at the 2010 Convention in St. Louis. We hope many Deltans will read *Song for Night*, this year’s Common Reader, and some will write essays on it or organize a panel on this and other works by this powerful and prolific voice.

Interested in Writing an Essay for the  
Common Reader Award?

See: [www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions](http://www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions)



# What's happening in NEHS?

Dave Wendelin  
National English Honor Society Director  
Northern Illinois University



The National English Honor Society (NEHS), the high school honor society sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta, continues to grow. Now with over 300 chapters, the society engages more than 14,000 students across the country in literacy and service projects, benefiting their schools and communities. Below are highlights of those activities from some of the chapters:

**The Lansing High School (Kansas)** "Pen 'n Paw Chapter" sponsored a cartooning workshop with a professional cartooning artist from DC Comics. They also adopted a soldier in Iraq through "Soldier's Angels" and wrote letters, sent cards, and care packages. The chapter also sponsored a poetry/short story/one act play/photography contest for their school, wrote "elf" letters for elementary students, and visited a local nursing home to address greeting cards and to write letters.

**The George Bush High School (Texas)** sponsored a slam poetry team called "Writerz Block." This year, over 52 students participated, and three will be competing in the national poetry slam contest in Chicago!

**The Marion High School (Nebraska)** "Marcella Chapter" sponsored a book drive for St. Bernard's Grade School when they discovered a major lack of autobiographies and biographies needed for a school project. They plan to continue adopting a mid-city Catholic grade school each year.

**The Oakton High School (Virginia)** "Love Our Language Chapter" visited the National Art Gallery to examine the art of historical literature. The members also tutored underclassmen in English studies.

These are but a few of the types of projects in which chapter members are participating. In addition, \$6,000 worth of scholarships were awarded. Scholarship applicants this year will be required to utilize the NEHS common reader for 2009-10, *The Book Thief*, as the basis for their essays. For more information visit [www.nehs.us](http://www.nehs.us).

## Better World Books

Sigma Tau Delta has entered into a national partnership with Better World Books, an organization that sponsors collegiate book drives to fund global literacy and green initiatives.

**Find out how your chapter can participate in this worldwide effort. The Sigma Tau Deltan's Guide to Running a Better World Books Drive: From Book Drives to Better Lives in Six Steps!**

- 1) Get familiarized with Better World Books, their nonprofit global literacy partners, and their mission by checking out [www.betterworldbooks.com](http://www.betterworldbooks.com).
- 2) If you want to find out if there is another group running a book drive on your campus and/or you want to get your chapter started with this fundraiser/book drive, email [ReUseFirst@BetterWorldBooks.com](mailto:ReUseFirst@BetterWorldBooks.com) and identify yourself as a chapter belonging to Sigma Tau Delta.
- 3) After emailing Better World Books, you will be contacted by an account representative who will act as your contact person throughout the entire book drive process and help you with all your questions.
- 4) Each chapter will have access to their own online portal to order supplies, ship books (at no cost to your chapter!), and view an environmental impact summary of your book drive on campus.
- 5) Choose one of the five global literacy partners to whom you want your book drive to impact and have a packing or planning party. You can receive up to \$50.00 for food and beverage (reimbursed with receipts).
- 6) Run your book drive and have fun—advertise, place collection bins in high traffic areas around campus, collect books, prescreen books (if you elected the fundraising option), and pack and ship the books. Now enjoy supporting literacy and Sigma Tau Delta at the same time!

# Student Advisors



**Lauren Brandenberry**  
Student Advisor  
*University of Central Oklahoma*

**Greetings from your newest Student Advisor.** Here in Oklahoma the fall weather has yet to arrive, but plans for the new school year are already underway. As a child of the information age and a woman with a million things on her plate, I enjoy helping our members find better, easier ways to stay informed and get involved. From improving the student leadership workshop at convention, to expanding the information available online, to reaching out and offering support and assistance to members around the world, the Student Leadership Committee and I are committed to improving communication and cooperation within the Sigma Tau Delta community.

But we can't do any of it without your help. We need your questions, your ideas—even your complaints—so we can learn to serve you better. Send us an email at [sigma-tau-delta-student-leaders@googlegroups.com](mailto:sigma-tau-delta-student-leaders@googlegroups.com) and let us know what you think. I look forward to hearing from you!

**Stephanie Schiefelbein**  
Student Advisor  
*University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*



**This year is a bittersweet year of lasts.** It is my last year as a Student Advisor of Sigma Tau Delta and as an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. And although I don't know yet what awaits me (especially with degrees in English and music), I look forward—anxiously, nervously, excitedly—to this new beginning after graduation.

Looking back, I remember my first year of college, the same advice ringing over and over in my head. One particular phrase or idea rather stands out in my mind: “Try something new; get out of your comfort zone; try something you never thought you'd do.” I have since realized that these words do indeed have great value. My life has thrived on taking chances—from changing my major half a dozen times to my role as Student Advisor—I am continually forced out of my comfort zone.

I know that in this coming year before graduation, I will be bombarded with opportunities to take risks, to go on adventures. As I challenge myself to take on some of these experiences in the beginning of my new life after college, I also challenge you to take a risk and step outside of your comfort zone this year, whether your motive is personal growth or the future of Sigma Tau Delta. Introduce yourself to students from different chapters at the national convention. Pursue a new activity with your local chapter even though you're unsure of how it will be received. Put yourself up for election as a regional or national student leader. Take a risk, try something new, and if you put your entire self into reaching outside that little box we all find to be so comfortable, then you—and we—will really have nothing at all to lose but everything to gain.



**Andrew Moser**  
Alumni Representative  
*Alumnus of Metropolitan  
State College of Denver*

## Alumni Representative

**Autumn:** that time of year when students head back to school, ready to attack a fresh slate of classes after a summer off. What, that doesn't sound like you? You've already graduated and entered the “real” world, but still have a burning desire to participate in all things Sigma Tau Delta? Sounds like you should become a member of the Alumni Epsilon chapter!

As the new representative for the Alumni Epsilon chapter, I'm looking forward to joining you on that journey. I valued my experience as a local chapter member and didn't want to give it up after graduating. As a national rather than local chapter, the Alumni Epsilon community is a different experience from what you might be used to, but with email, Facebook, Twitter, and more, there's something for everyone. Email me at [andrew@andrewmoser.net](mailto:andrew@andrewmoser.net) for more information or to submit your own ideas for how to connect.

# Putting $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ to Work for You: Practical Advice for Getting a Nonprofit Job



**Donna Gregory**  
Sigma Tau Delta Member  
Standards for Excellence Manager  
*Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits*

Whether you've recently graduated or are facing graduation in a few months, your thoughts are most likely turning to the job market. Real-life problems are now looming: Where am I going to find a job? How am I going to pay for my student loans?

With an unemployment rate not seen since 1983, the job market is tighter now than it's ever been for today's traditionally-aged college students. Don't panic, however. You can put your experience as a Sigma Tau Delta member to work for you as you begin looking for a career.

The nonprofit sector is a rich landscape for  $\Sigma\tau\Delta$  members. Skills relative to the discipline—researching, critical reading, effective writing—are put to good use every day in nonprofits worldwide. All you need to know is how to turn your experience into a solid résumé.

Designing your résumé for a nonprofit career begins with service. In  $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ , you serve your chapter as an officer, your region as a Student Representative (SR) or an Associate Student Representative (ASR), and all student members as a Student Advisor (SA). You can also serve the student constituency by volunteering for a Board committee. This is easier than you might think. Review the committee list online at [www.english.org/sigmatd/about/committees](http://www.english.org/sigmatd/about/committees), pick one, then e-mail  $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ 's President (currently Dr. Robert Crafton) and ask to serve. If there is an open position, you will be considered.

Another way to serve is to host a regional conference. If you do this, you can add event planning to your résumé. Hosting a regional conference involves designing the event, securing speakers, taking registrations, and ensuring the event runs smoothly. This is a huge boost to a résumé. Plus, it's a wonderful opportunity to network with other  $\Sigma\tau\Delta$  members in your region as well as prepare for the annual convention. Additionally, you gain public speaking experience by presenting your work. This also can be added to your résumé.

If you choose to serve as a SA, SR, or ASR, you also will be able to include producing a multi-state newsletter on your résumé in addition to committee work. As a SA or SR, you'll also be able

to add serving on an international Board of Directors. Board experience, committee work, and newsletter writing all translate extremely well to nonprofit applications.

The nonprofit industry is fast-paced and changes with any and all societal and economic demands. The hours are long, and there are never enough resources to do the job you want to do. But there are perks which make it worth it. The biggest perk is that it is the most rewarding, creative work you will ever do. At the end of each day, you can count the people you've helped instead of counting sheep. For those more practically minded, however, there's the opportunity for student loan debt forgiveness.

There are specific requirements for this. The Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program allows for forgiveness of remaining direct student loan debt after 120 consecutive, on-time payments are made. You must be employed full-time at an applicable public service organization (including 501(c)(3) nonprofits) during the 10 years you're making these 120 payments. You don't have to stay at the same job for 10 years, but you do have to work all 10 years for a qualifying employer.

It's important to note this program only applies to loans made under the William D. Ford Direct Loan Program; however, other types of student loans may be consolidated into a direct loan that does qualify for forgiveness. For more information on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, visit the Federal Student Aid website at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/PSF.jsp>. For personal specifics, consult your university's Financial Aid office.

Other practical perks found in the nonprofit industry include a work environment featuring flex schedules, telecommuting, and casual dress. The nonprofit industry is a graying industry, meaning all the Baby Boomer leaders of the sector are approaching retirement age. Nonprofits are in need of young leaders, and the sector is changing in order to attract the brightest of today's college graduates.

To prepare for a nonprofit career, visit your university's career services office and intern or volunteer at a nonprofit. To find a nonprofit in your area that fits your interests, for more information visit [www.volunteermatch.com](http://www.volunteermatch.com).

## The Brave New World of Sigma Tau Delta: Everything's Going Electronic!

Have you noticed? So far, we have Write Away!, the online chapter management system, online convention registration, and online journal submissions. Coming this fall—online convention submissions; late next year—online scholarship submissions and merchandise orders. If you're wondering why this fall newsletter is bigger than ever before, we're also going to a fall-only more in-depth newsletter. You can then round out the Sigma Tau Delta year by staying in touch through monthly e-news, regional newsletters, and our new, expanded, updated website. Welcome to a greener, more accessible Sigma Tau Delta.



# Sink Your Fangs into Great Vampires from Literature

## **Carmilla** from Sheriden Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872)

Le Fanu, a native of Dublin, Ireland, was an avid writer of mystery and horror fiction. His best-known work *Carmilla* tells the tale of a young woman falling victim to the attentions of the female vampire from which the story derives its name.

## **Dracula** from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)

Arguably the most well-known vampire in literature, Dracula has been portrayed throughout the ages as a sinister monster bent on seducing and killing his victims. Bram Stoker, inspired by the real-life story of Vlad Tepes, a ruler of Turkey, created the tale of Dracula that continues to influence vampire literature today.

## **Kurt Barlow** from Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (1975)

Master vampire Kurt Barlow and his colleague-turned-vampire Richard Straker lead double lives as antique dealers to the people of Jerusalem's Lot, Maine. After purchasing the haunted Marsten house, Barlow and Straker change their customers into vampires to form their own coven. Jerusalem's Lot gradually becomes a town dominated by these night creatures, loyal to Barlow, their supreme master. While a handful of townspeople challenge (and fall victim to) the intimidating Barlow, only Ben Mears and Mark Petrie succeed in destroying him completely.

## **Lestat and Louis** from Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976)

In this novel, the character Louis tells the story of his life, as both a man and later a vampire. He recounts both parts of his life in detail, creating empathy for an immortal being usually associated with monstrous and destructive connotations. He vividly tells of his maker, Lestat, and their encounters throughout their many years of life. Lestat's character in the novel, consequently, appears malign and heartless. His heinous treatment of the human race is appalling. His seeming soul purpose in the novel is to defeat death. He does so many times, especially when at the hands of his "children," Louis and Claudia. While evil, Lestat has become the superstar of Rice's vampire characters.

## **Bill** from Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire Mysteries* series (2001)

Harris's popular novels detail Sookie Stackhouse's encounters with supernatural creatures and her love relationship with the vampire Bill. Sookie meets Bill while waitressing one night, falls in love, and begins a relationship with him, one that becomes more complicated by the day. Harris' novels also inspired the hit HBO TV series *True Blood*.

## **Edward Cullen** from Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005)

Edward Cullen—literary super model-turned-movie-hunk. This immortal is further immortalized in the popular teen fiction series that chronicles the relationship between the vampire and Bella, his human girlfriend. Meyer forever alters the stereotypical sexual, seductive vampire by making Edward a virgin waiting for true love.



"I sprung upon her. There was a shriek, but not before I had secured a draught of life blood from her neck."

*Varney, the Vampyre; or, The Feast of Blood* (1847).

For more, see Leslie Klinger's *The New Annotated Dracula* (2008).

# 2009 Outstanding Service Award

## Reading for the Cure: An Invitation

Christopher Wike  
Rho Iota Chapter  
Clarion University, PA



For the past twelve years, Clarion University's Rho Iota chapter of Sigma Tau Delta has hosted its annual Reading for the Cure event. Held every fall in Clarion's historic Moore Hall, Reading for the Cure is a very special event where Clarion's ΣΤΔ chapter, the university, and the local community gather for a night of reading, good food, and raffles in order to raise both money and awareness for breast cancer. During the event, volunteers read aloud from original creative work, excerpts from favorite stories or poems, or stories about their personal experiences with breast cancer. Between the readings, Sigma Tau Delta members draw names for door prizes donated by members of the community. The main event of the evening and the largest source of fundraising is a beautiful quilt that is raffled off at the end of the night, made and donated by a local quilter. Throughout the evening, the Rho Iota chapter sells Reading for the Cure t-shirts and other merchandise to supplement the funds raised through the quilt raffle. All money raised at this event is donated each year to the Susan G. Komen Foundation for Breast Cancer Research.



The Rho Iota Chapter with faculty advisor, Professor Kevin Stemmler, at the reading.

This past spring, the Rho Iota chapter was honored to be awarded the Service Award for the Reading for the Cure event at the annual Sigma Tau Delta International Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This was a wonderful opportunity because not only did we receive \$200 for the award to donate to the Susan G. Komen Foundation, it also gave us the chance to talk on an international level about how important and beneficial the Reading for the Cure is. It has been the dream of the Rho Iota chapter since the very first Reading for the Cure event twelve years ago to make this a national Sigma Tau Delta event. If our small Rho Iota chapter in sleepy Clarion, Pennsylvania can make such a huge impact and manage to raise \$7,000 plus dollars in one year, just imagine the impact if chapters from all across the nation were to begin hosting their own Reading for the Cure events.

Whether you have had cancer, or a friend, a family member, or just someone you know has—everyone has been affected in some way.

We would like to encourage you to join us in fighting back against cancer. If you would like to know more about how to begin organizing your own Reading for the Cure event, please contact our chapter at [stemmler@clarion.edu](mailto:stemmler@clarion.edu), and we can provide you with a guide to help you begin the process.

## We Want You—To Serve on the Board of Sigma Tau Delta

The Nominating Committee is currently seeking nominations for a number of positions to be elected at the spring 2010 Convention. In addition to the annual election of Student Representatives, Associate Student Representatives, and the Alumni Representative, the following positions are up for election this year: Vice President/President-Elect, Historian, Eastern Regent, Midwestern Regent, Southern Regent, and High Plains Regent.

Additionally, the Board will select a Student Advisor to serve a two-year, non-renewable term.

For position descriptions and application procedures, go to About Sigma Tau Delta, Leadership Opportunities at [www.english.org](http://www.english.org). Those interested in the Officer and Regent positions may contact Carrie Fitzpatrick, chair of the Nominating Committee, at [carrie.fitzpatrick@alvernia.edu](mailto:carrie.fitzpatrick@alvernia.edu).

Edgar Allan Poe says:



# 2009 Best Chapter Project Award



**Judith Petterson Clark**  
Faculty Sponsor, Alpha Epsilon Eta  
Stephens College, MO

By 2007, the members of the Alpha Epsilon Eta chapter were becoming nervous about the word international when we spoke of belonging to the Sigma Tau Delta *International English Honor Society*. We'd been recognized on our Stephens College campus in Columbia, Missouri, with Student Government Association (SGA) awards for over a decade of excellence. We'd won individual writing awards at regional and national Sigma Tau Delta conventions. We'd won the 2006 Outstanding Chapter Award and the 2007 Outstanding Midwest Advisor Award. But what had we done that was *International*?

Nothing. Enter Renee Reed-Miller, a 2002 graduate of our department and one of the most active of our chapter members. Renee called in the fall of 2007 asking to make a "visionary" presentation at our next chapter meeting. That old Sigma Tau Serendipity was at work. After returning from a trip to India in June 2007, Renee had founded a non-profit charitable organization, Vessels International, right in Columbia. She eagerly shared her vision of a collaborative partnership between our chapter and Vessels International, to begin at once with helping to meet the pressing needs of Home of Love, an orphanage for 30-35 children in Minjur, a village in Tamil Nadu. This partnership was perfect for our chapter. Stephens is a thriving women's college; the name of Vessels International itself openly announces a commitment to helping at-risk women and children across the world. Renee's own compassion, enthusiasm, and, above all, her practical knowledge of how to effect change were contagious. Her pictures of the women and children at Home of Love so moved us that we immediately pledged to accomplish at least one project a year.

Our first project in 2007-2008, "Soul to Sole," was stimulated by pictures of Home of Love residents modeling clothing that Renee distributed on her first visit. She was sad that she had



**Women and children at the Home of Love, Minjur, India, in 2007, modeling new clothes provided by Vessels International, later given shoes by Alpha Epsilon Eta members.**

only enough for one garment, not a complete outfit, for each. And she didn't have any shoes. The next day, we set out to collect shoes from nursery to adult sizes for this intergenerational orphanage. In addition to older girls who are not yet employed outside, some of the older women are widows and therefore orphaned by their

## Sigma Tau Serendipity: An International Project

particular society. Our drive culminated in an all campus literary event, an Open Mic Shoe Showcase where we solicited donations to pay for boxes and postage to send the shoes to India.

Our second project, "Finding a Common Language with Home of Love," begun in 2008-2009, will continue well into the future. Beyond such basics as clothes, shoes, and eyeglass frames (which we are also starting to collect), the fundamental need at Home of Love is, of course, education and literacy that will give the children a competitive edge in a technological and global society. The Home of Love administrator helped Vessels identify what would enhance the learning environment: 1) an updated computer; 2) interactive educational and ESL software; 3) connection with the outside world; and 4) practice in English language and keyboard skills. We brainstormed how we could contribute to each of these.



**Alumna Renee Reed-Miller, founder of Vessels International (left); Dr. Clark (second from right); Tiffany Turner and Katherine Thomas, chapter members, at the Soul to Sole Shoe-Drive Showcase 2008.**

In response to the first two needs, we applied for a \$300 Sigma Tau Delta Project Grant to purchase a good used computer (estimated cost \$200) and educational software. In response to the latter two needs, we proposed an "e-pal" program with the Stephens College Children's School. By pairing an Indian child with an American child, we hoped to increase the multi-cultural understanding, the English, and the computer skills of the students in both countries.

We were excited to receive the Project Grant in the spring! But by then, the rising costs in India meant that our \$300 covered the cost only of a good used computer. We have much left to do in the coming year. We need to purchase or arrange gifts of software. We need to work with the teachers in both countries to establish a protocol and a follow-up plan for an educational e-pal exchange. And we need to remember that children outgrow, wear out, and lose their shoes.

What we no longer need to do is worry about the word International. The Alpha Epsilon Eta Chapter does indeed belong to the Sigma Tau Delta *International English Honor Society*.



Traci Thomas-Card  
Faculty Sponsor  
Theta Zeta Chapter  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Working with the wonderful students of the Theta Zeta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is by far the greatest benefit of being a faculty sponsor. Our students work

diligently throughout the year on various service projects, and their dedication and willingness to serve the greater Eau Claire community continues to grow. The primary service project our students focus on is the annual Children's and Young Adult Writing Contests.

The Children's Writing Contest has been a service project for the Theta Zeta Chapter since 1998; for the first several years, the contest was open to K-8th grade students in the Eau Claire area school district. The students' enthusiasm for this project grew, and it has since progressed and expanded to a statewide audience. The Young Adult Writing Contest began four years ago, when the Theta Zeta students decided to separate grades K-6th and grades 7-12th.

Each year, our students begin work on this project in the beginning of spring semester. They create an updated contact list of public, private, and home school teachers. Once the list is complete, the Theta Zeta students send letters and emails to inform them of the contests. The notices include submission forms and guidelines, along with contest deadlines. Once the submissions are received (last year we had over 700 submissions from around the state of Wisconsin!), the students begin the process of judging the poetry and prose of young writers.

Though sometimes a difficult choice, the students pick two winners from each grade level and create a book of winning prose and poetry. They hold an Awards Ceremony and present these books to the contest winners at the annual English Festival held on the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire campus each April. Each winner receives a copy of the winners' booklet with her or his submission included, an age-appropriate book of prose or

# Running a Children's Literary Contest

poetry picked by Theta Zeta members, and a writing journal. In addition, each school represented receives a copy of the book in which work of students from that school is displayed. At this ceremony the winners receive their prizes and read their entries for the attendees. The joy our students get from this project is evident by the enthusiasm on both the students' and young writers' faces at the ceremony.

The contests not only provide the Theta Zeta students opportunities for leadership, but also provide them the opportunities to work closely with area schools. In addition, working on the writing contests gives our students (many of whom are English education majors) the chance to practice assessment of poetry and prose submissions at various grade levels. Their hard work on the writing contests was recognized several years ago by members of the greater Eau Claire community, and they were asked to help judge the annual Chippewa Valley Book Festival writing contest submissions. This has become an annual community service project for fall semester and eases them into the work they do in the spring for their own writing contests. The students have also turned the writing contests into a mini-fundraiser by offering the opportunity for family and teachers of the winners to purchase extra copies; the money raised goes directly into funding future writing contests.

The students of the Theta Zeta chapter continue to impress and amaze me with their generous spirit and willingness to provide an outlet for young writers to showcase their creative talents. Year after year, they report that the Children's and Young Adult Writing Contests are one of the greatest experiences they have as members of Sigma Tau Delta, and I would encourage any interested chapters to create a writing contest of their own—it is an incredibly worthwhile project for the students and their sponsors!

Traci Thomas-Card, Interim Coordinator—University Writing Center, Theta Zeta Chapter, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, [thomastl@uwec.edu](mailto:thomastl@uwec.edu)



*Gulliver's Travels* (1726)

Author: **Jonathon Swift**

Illustrator: **Paul Gavarni** (1850s)

Since its release in 1726, *Gulliver's Travels* has been a classic of children's literature. Countless illustrators have taken the enchantment of Jonathon Swift's novel and created works of art. But it was Paul Gavarni's illustrations that captured the travels of Lemuel Gulliver, producing some of the most recognizable images of the famous sailor. Paul Gavarni's career spanned French and British magazines and literature, but it was his shared love of satire with Swift that made *Gulliver's Travels* into an icon during the nineteenth century. The range of human experience and nature has become exemplified within Gavarni's illustrations of Lemuel Gulliver and his acquaintances, allowing *Gulliver's Travels* to endure as a treasured traveler's tale.

## Great Illustrations from Literature

# Celebrating Seuss Style: Sponsoring a Read Across America Event



**Rachel Pietka**  
Co-President  
Alpha Zeta Iota Chapter  
Chapman University, CA



**Shannon Bartlett**  
Vice President/Webmaster  
Alpha Zeta Iota Chapter  
Chapman University, CA

The Alpha Zeta Iota chapter at Chapman University, located in Orange, California, fostered literacy by partnering with a local school, Cambridge Elementary, on March 2nd to celebrate Read Across America. Read Across America is an annual event created by the National Education Association in 1997 to promote literacy awareness as well as the enjoyment of reading. As described by the National English Association (NEA) website, Read Across America “calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2nd, the birthday of beloved children’s author Dr. Seuss.”

Alpha Zeta Iota invited community members, including the City of Orange Mayor and Police Chief, as well as professors from the university, to be guest readers for each of the 22 classes at Cambridge. The chapter worked as a team to make over 550 cupcakes so each student could have some “birthday” cake to commemorate the special day. Sigma Tau Delta members escorted readers, assisted with classroom management, and handed out cupcakes to the students during the Q&A sessions with the guest readers.

All guest readers were encouraged to speak to students about the importance of reading both in their jobs and in general. Medieval literature professor Eileen Jankowski dressed in a Gryffindor robe, time-turner, scarf, and carried a wand while reading a section from *Harry Potter*. Professor Richard Ruppel, Alpha Zeta Iota’s faculty sponsor, read Rudyard Kipling’s “Rikki Tikki Tavi,” a story of particular importance to him. Before commencing his reading, Ruppel, who wrote his dissertation on Kipling and Joseph Conrad, explained that the story is one of the reasons he is teaching English today. Professor James Blaylock, who has published seventeen novels and numerous other works, read to students as well.

The celebration was a great success, and the chapter members who organized the event were invited to an afternoon tea hosted by Cambridge to honor the school’s volunteers. The chapter looks forward to sharing a love for reading with the Cambridge students and Orange community next year.



**Professor Eileen Jankowski reads**  
*Harry Potter*

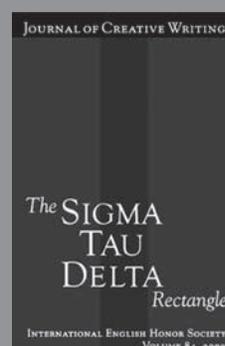
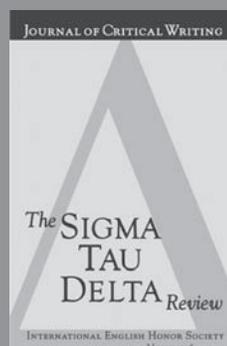
## Interested in Submitting to the 2011 Sigma Tau Delta Journals?

Look for the call for submissions in March 2010  
<http://www.english.org/sigmatd/publications/>

**Who can submit?:** All currently-enrolled undergraduate and graduate members of active Sigma Tau Delta chapters are invited to submit their work to *The Sigma Tau Delta Review* and *The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*. Chapter sponsors, faculty members, alumni (including members of the Alumni Epsilon chapter), and honorary members, are not eligible to submit. Contributors who win overall awards will also receive a monetary prize as well as publication.

- *The Sigma Tau Delta Review* is an annual journal of critical writing that publishes critical essays on literature, essays on rhetoric and composition, and essays devoted to pedagogical issues.
- *The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle* is an annual journal of creative writing that publishes poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction.

View complete guidelines for online journal submissions. Note: Journal submissions must be submitted online. Email/postal mail submissions are no longer accepted.



# Using History, Memory, and Imagination: Writing the Play *Four Spirits*



Elaine W. Hughes  
Past President, Sigma Tau Delta  
University of Montevallo, AL

September 15, 1963 is a moment in history etched in the minds of Americans. On that Sunday morning, a bomb exploded at Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church.

Four little girls were killed: Addie Mae Collins, Carol Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Dianne Wesley. Their deaths awakened the white consciousness to a movement underway in Alabama and other parts of the South, a movement that sought equality and justice for those blacks who had suffered long under the laws and attitudes of "separate but equal."

Such momentous events in history compel many of us to seek resolution of these conflicts within ourselves and our society through literature. Forty years after the 16th Street church bombing, Sena Jeter Naslund, an individual who had lived through those tumultuous times in Birmingham in the late 1950s and early 1960s, had become a successful author, and she vowed to tell the story of this turbulent time and of the people who lived it. Her novel *Four Spirits* was published in 2003. In it, she successfully weaves the historical events of those years into the fabric of her fictional characters' lives, producing a powerful narrative that resonates with voices of black and white, young and old, liberal and conservative, native Southerner and Northern outsider, educated and ignorant, saint and sinner. Throughout all pervade the spirits of those four young innocents. Naslund draws upon memories of her experiences as a high school and college student struggling to understand the attitudes, the hatred, the violence of those events and the mindsets of the people involved.

*Four Spirits* struck a chord in many people—people who were not there in 1963 and knew of the event only through historical accounts, and especially people who lived the story, those who were there, those who heard but did not answer the call to become involved. With the success of the novel, Naslund was asked by Kent Thompson, Producing Artistic Director of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery, to adapt her novel for the stage. She came to me with her request: She would agree to do it if I would co-author the play with her. Sena and I had been friends in high school; we had shared the same experiences during the civil rights unrest in Birmingham; our careers had taken us both on journeys into academe, and we came back together during this period of reflection upon and resolution of some of the conflicts of that time. I, too, had

battled with haunting memories of witnessing the attack on Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth as he made the first attempt at integration of public schools in Alabama at Phillips High School, September 9, 1957; as a 16-year-old senior, I could not comprehend the hatred from that mob of angry white men gathered in front of my school, as they beat Rev. Shuttlesworth with brass knuckles and bicycle chains and stabbed his wife, for trying to enroll their daughter. On that fateful Sunday in 1963, I was overwhelmed with fear as my husband and I drove through the angry mobs in the streets during our attempt to return home; that image is indelibly etched in my memory as I understood for the first time the plight of the blacks who had lived with that kind of fear throughout their lives.

Sena and I brought these kinds of memories to the task of adapting her novel of 500-plus pages and more than 100 characters to a stage production of one to two hours. As we prepared the script to be workshopped at the Shakespeare Festival in spring, 2005, we wrestled with narrowing the scope of our dramatic account; the first draft that we took to Montgomery had a cast of 33 characters and a time span of 40 years! We soon, ultimately, honed that script to a cast of 11 characters (nine actors) and a period of less than one year. As we wrote, and re-wrote, the play, we came to appreciate the complexity of the lives of these ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances and the struggles they had trying to survive in a hostile world. *Four Spirits* (the play) was workshopped twice at the Shakespeare Festival and once at Hartford Stage, in Connecticut. After thirteen drafts, the world premiere production of *Four Spirits* was presented by the University of Alabama in Huntsville Theatre, February 7-9, 2008, to sold-out, record audiences.

With the fruition of this project, Sena and I hope that the play will inspire conversation among us and a renewed commitment to diversity and equality for all people. These characters in *Four Spirits* provide us, the audience, an opportunity to reflect upon our own values, our prejudices and our fears, our hopes and our dreams for a better world for all of us. With the art of imagination, the power of memory, the record of history, we have attempted to share this significant—though painful—period of our American society.



## Scholarships

Tens of thousands of members. Thousands of dollars. Hundreds of applications. Several minutes of your time. A handful of winners. One organization. It's the kind of math that even an English major can do. More details at [www.english.org/sigmatd/awards](http://www.english.org/sigmatd/awards)

# Literary Blogs that Matter

Jody Kolter  
Alpha Tau Chapter  
St. Norbert College, WI



The cyber world is chalk full of readers, writers, and bloggers who provide insights on literature. The creators and writers of literary blogs that matter not only discuss literature, but also use ideas inspired by literature to make claims about politics, culture, art, and philosophy. These writers appeal to an educated audience, hoping they will engage in a discussion that transcends a “book club” agenda.

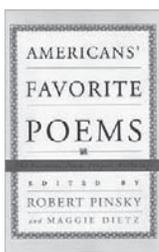
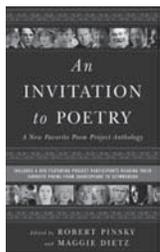
1. **3quarksdaily:** A good blog not only engages other voices and critics, but also synthesizes ideas from science, art, politics, philosophy, and literature. The name “3quarksdaily” intrigued a pseudo-scientist, such as myself. Drawing on articles from *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker* to *Scientific American* and *Cosmic Variance*, 3quarksdaily aims to challenge its audience with articles and commentary on myriad topics that inform how we analyze literature and the types of novels emerging today.  
<http://3quarksdaily.com/>
2. **Blog of a Bookslut:** Rated Best of the Web by Forbes, Blog of a Bookslut gives quick, sometimes crude comments on writers, film, and political issues in the literary sphere. The title itself offers a glimpse of the provocative albeit sincere blogging of Jessa Crispin and friend Michael Schaub. Crispin’s rant-like, unfiltered book reviews are at best honest, and at worst entertaining for self-proclaimed and in-the-closet book sluts.  
<http://www.bookslut.com/blog/>
3. **Bookdwarf:** Love those people who can spew out a synopsis of any book? Well, frontlist buyer at the Harvard Book Store, Megan Sullivan is the Larry Darrell of the blogging domain. With access to so many books, she reads at least one book per week, reviews numerous books, and comments on things such as the value of blogs and Kindles.  
<http://www.bookdwarf.com/>
4. **Elegant Variation:** Also named Forbes’ Best of the Web pick, Elegant Variation provides commentary on book reviews, offers advice on writing and engages readers by asking insightful questions about books. Blogger, screenwriter, and novelist Mark Sarvas is known for his David Foster Wallace-esque notes to the topics discussed or briefly mentioned. In addition to reviews, he offers in-depth interviews with writers such as Joseph O’Neill.  
<http://marksarvas.blogs.com/elegvar/>
5. **Emerging Writers Network:** A community of emerging writers, established writers, and readers interested in literary dialogue provide book reviews and discussions on literature topics. The blog aims to promote upcoming authors—some more established than others—and also provides links to some of the top literary blogs. Emerging Writers Network stays abreast of the writing scene with its array of links to sources for those interested in writing, publishing, and bookselling.  
<http://emergingwriters.typepad.com/>
6. **GalleyCat:** Voted a Forbes Favorite, GalleyCat gives readers the chance to explore events and issues in the publishing sphere through numerous resources and links. GalleyCat maintains a clever balance between satire, news on authors and upcoming books, and information that is just plain interesting for avid readers who want to know about new releases. GalleyCat’s satirical commentary on the disingenuous motives of publicists and publishers in the bookselling industry keeps followers entertained and informed.  
<http://www.mediabistro.com/galleycat/>
7. **Literary Kicks:** Literary Kicks focuses on the significance of literature in modern life and encourages its readers to send poems, opinions, and observations. With a range of categories and tags to choose from such as religion, publishing, postmodernism, being a writer, beat generation, internet culture, and def poetry, followers can explore topics that spark their interest or learn about new literary topics. Literary Kicks is an ideal blog for the English major who wants to become more culturally literate and literary savvy.  
<http://www.litkicks.com/>
8. **Maud Newton:** Maud Newton’s creative design and professional yet informative commentary coupled with quotes and excerpts offers readers a one stop place for political, literary, and critical information. Her blog has been praised and criticized in *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and more. Maud Newton is best known for her compilations of myriad astute quotes on literature from outside sources, random literary information, and occasional under-publicized literary events.  
<http://maudnewton.com/blog/>
9. **The Millions:** Since 2003 The Millions has been drawing in readers with commentary on books, arts, and culture. The Millions allows readers to ask questions about books, provides a list of highly recommended underground books, and shows book industry trends. Readers will learn about the most anticipated books of the year and the happenings of established and upcoming authors  
<http://www.themillions.com/>
10. **Re:Print:** PopMatters’ own books blog, Re:Print, gives attention to forgotten books and offers reviews of books from large and small publishers and interviews with authors. Since PopMatters is an international magazine of all things pop—including cultural criticism—Re:Print provides intelligent and informed commentary on critiques of certain books. PopMatters’ staff and audience are high-caliber writers, savvy critics, and curious intellectuals who desire thought-provoking articles and insightful criticism.  
<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/blogs/reprint/>



Maggie Dietz  
Poet  
Boston University

Maggie Dietz is author of *Perennial Fall* (University of Chicago, 2006), and co-editor of three anthologies

related to her work as director of Favorite Poem Project ([www.favoritepoem.org](http://www.favoritepoem.org)), most recently *An Invitation to Poetry* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2004). She teaches in the creative writing program at Boston University and is assistant poetry editor for the online magazine *Slate*. Dietz is the judge for the 2010 Sigma Tau Delta journals and has generously allowed us to publish this new poem.



## TWENTY

Remember that winter of clumped lashes, of bones clicking

like gears? At your world's periphery a lake too vast and undulant

to freeze. The largest surface you had ever seen. None of it

would matter later: the frost-blasted earlobes, the furious love.

The spray froze on the rocks, salt and spit at the corners

of your lips. Not even a bird dove into the impossible horizon.

What can I say? I'm grateful the punishing wind was enough?

What did you know. You didn't think of me as you resisted,

cupping your numbed hope like the robin you'd find stunned

that spring and keep in a banana box for weeks. What happened to it

later doesn't matter. It lived a little while. That was long enough.

## 2009-2010 Writing Awards for The Sigma Tau Delta Review and The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle

Judson Q. Owen Award for Best Piece Overall  
Jesse Snavlin,  
"Grave-digger"

Frederic Fadner Critical Essay Award  
Kathleen Hynes,  
"Mad Dog: An Emergent Language of Equality in  
Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*"

Eleanor B. North Poetry Award  
Kathryn Andersen,  
"Helicopter Seeds: Sonnet 1933"

Herbert Hughes Short Fiction Award  
Jesse Snavlin,  
"Grave-digger"

Elizabeth Holtze Creative Nonfiction Award  
Meg Kelly,  
"One of Three: The Only Me"



### The International English Honor Society

Sincerity • Truth • Design

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The Sigma Tau Delta Newsletter is published during the academic year by Sigma Tau Delta International. News items and queries should be addressed to: Editor of Publications, English Department, St. Norbert College, De Pere, WI 54115, or [karlyn.crowley@snc.edu](mailto:karlyn.crowley@snc.edu).

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Sigma Tau Delta is grateful for the continuing generous assistance of Christopher McCord, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, (Northern Illinois University); and Michael Marsden, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, (St. Norbert College). Third-class postage paid at DeKalb, IL, and elsewhere.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Sigma Tau Delta, English Department, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115.