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Online workshop is writer's success story

By Stephen Knapp
01/11/2006



It's said that everybody has at least one novel in them, but the trick is getting it out where somebody else can read it. That's why Conifer resident Denise Cassino helped create A Long Story Short, an all-purpose Internet writer's resource for aspiring Alcotts and hopeful Hemingways.

A Realtor by profession and author by temperament, Cassino's desire to connect writers with their Muse is genuine. Armed with a degree in English, she attempted to write "the great American novel" 10 years ago but, as is often the case, lost momentum and eventually abandoned the project. In 2001, resolved to take up the cause again, she enrolled in a couple of Internet writing classes where she came in contact with Linda Barnett Johnson, a Montana resident, and Sue Scott of Washington, D.C. In the process of appraising each other's scribblings, the three became close cyber-friends and Cassino regained her passion for writing.

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Local Shopping	<p>Two years ago, Cassino, Johnson and Scott launched A Long Story Short, their own writer's workshop that now gets up to 20,000 hits a month and boasts more than 1,200 regular subscribers from around the country and the world. It's a wonder of the modern age that the women who founded and operate the busy website have never laid eyes on each other, bound together purely by electrical impulses and a shared love for the written word.</p>
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	<p>While cyberspace abounds with writing workshops and scholarly literary pages, Long Story Short is quickly gaining a reputation as a writer-friendly site, offering writers of all skill levels and accomplishments a broad range of free services and a large measure of friendly encouragement. "We don't consider ourselves a literary site," says Cassino, who runs the show from the Wambley Valley home she shares with her husband, Lon. "Our purpose is to advance the careers of writers. We help people improve their writing skills and give them a place to publish their work."</p> <p>Getting one's work before the public is essential to any writer's career, but getting it published can be a baffling, nerve-wracking and thoroughly discouraging experience. That's something Cassino — who's had more than 30 of her own stories published in magazines, print anthologies and on the Internet — understands and works hard to correct. "Getting published on the Internet is almost as hard as getting published on paper," she says, "but it's a good way to get exposure and build your portfolio for the day your novel is finally finished."</p> <p>Though only about 40 percent of submitted material makes it onto the website — which Cassino personally created and maintains — all submissions receive a careful reading and a thoughtful critique that includes advice on how it might be improved. The process can continue indefinitely, and many rejected works later appear on Long Story Short in more polished form. "We're becoming known as the 'nice' people on the Internet," she laughs. "Most of what we get is reasonable, and we're always willing to work with someone to improve their skills."</p> <p>Especially useful to Wodehouse wannabes is Long Story Short's Writer's Lodge, where writers can establish their own website. For about \$20 a year, Cassino will create a personal webpage complete with a biography, photographs and a list of published works with links, plus about a dozen other practical features that can help an author get noticed. "It gives writers a presence on the Internet," Cassino explains.</p> <p>Besides lots of fine stories, poetry and humor, Long Story Short features tips on how to get published, articles about vocabulary and language, interviews with successful writers and excerpts from works in a variety of literary genres. Subscribers are encouraged to read and comment on each other's writing and build constructive relationships apart from the website. "The friendships you make online can</p>



really help you get past the rough spots that every writer runs into."

Because serious writers are always seeking to improve their mastery of the craft, Cassino, Johnson and Scott opened the Long Story Short School of Writing last Oct. 5 and have already enrolled nearly 200 students. Finding qualified instructors for the venture was surprisingly easy. "We put a feeler in the August newsletter, just to see if anyone was interested in teaching a class," Cassino says. "We immediately got dozens of very enthusiastic responses."

The writing school's cyber-faculty, which includes college professors, published authors and other professional wordsmiths, teaches dozens of courses tailored to every taste and style. "Write like a lover" will nurture the inner Danielle Steele, while a latent Dave Barry might get a gold star in "Are you laughing at me?" Meat-and-potatoes courses address topics ranging from how to conduct research properly to promoting finished work to a publisher or the public. Classes cost anywhere between \$35 and \$200 and, depending on the curriculum, take anywhere from a few weeks to a year. "We emphasize close interaction between students and teachers," Cassino says. "So far, we're getting rave reviews from our students."

Whether you just fancy a good yarn, or dream of releasing the bestseller within, A Long Story Short and its growing cyber-campus are valuable resources for language lovers of every stripe. "We've watched novice writers bloom under our encouragement," Cassino says. "We try to promote friendship and prosperity among our writers in any way we can."

To learn more about A Long Story Short, visit www.alongstoryshort.net. To learn more about the LSS School of Writing, visit www.lsswritingschool.com.

Reader Comments

Getting an internet presence for \$20 a year is a really a gift to a budding writer! LSS is a great concept - keep it up.

posted by [Lance](#) on January 12, 2006 6:59am

Long Story Short is a wonderful source of help to writers. Getting to know Denise, Sue, and Linda has also been so rewarding. I am enjoying teaching poetry, and am proud to be a small part of this endeavor. Keep up the good work, girls -- helping people, that's what it's all about!

posted by [Floriana Hall](#) on January 12, 2006 4:05am

"(You) don't consider (your)selves a literary site?" Ugh! And all this time I've been thinking... In other news, "the 'nice' people on the Internet?" Have you ever chatted with Sue S. on a Monday morning? Ugh! Russell

posted by [Russell Bittner](#) on January 11, 2006 7:27pm

Way to go, Denise!

posted by [Betty Jo](#) on January 11, 2006 6:34pm

Naturally, this is a great article and one that will benefit everyone. Being part of the original team, we've seen our baby grow. We are proud parents. There is no limits to the success each writer can achieve. The accolades we've received have encouraged us to continue to do the best that we can. Great job, Denise. Linda

posted by [Linda Barnett-Johnson](#) on January 11, 2006 6:15pm

It's good to see writers, such as Denise, out there helping other fellow writers establish and hone their writing. I wish you continued success

posted by [Lea](#) on January 11, 2006 5:04pm

Denise, I'm so proud of you and your initiative in creating this website and school. Keep up the good work! Love, Judi

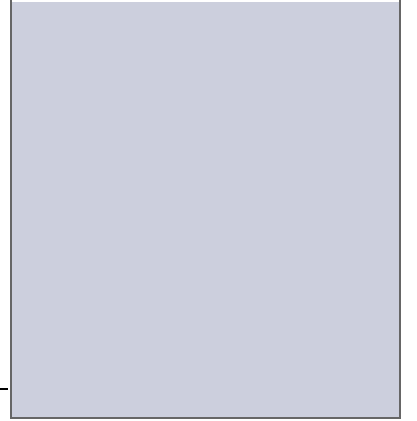
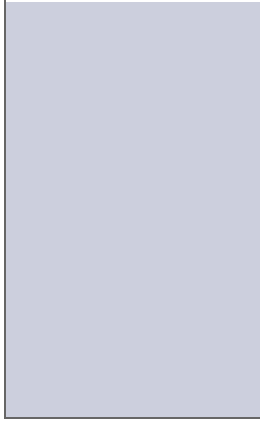
posted by [Judi Adams](#) on January 11, 2006 5:01pm

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