

## HWA CHAPTER HANDBOOK

### I. INTRODUCTION

Do you live in an area where a number of HWA members reside and you've all talked about forming a local chapter? That's great, and HWA encourages local chapters, which provide important face-to-face interaction as well as a wide range of possible local activities, everything from speaking at high schools to organizing book signings to hosting booths at book fairs.

This handbook will get you started in organizing and running a chapter, as well as provide suggestions for events...but the sky's the limit, and we urge you to be creative in your thinking!

### II. FORMING A CHAPTER

HWA is a worldwide organization with over 1,100 members around the globe. As you might imagine, this makes organizing chapters difficult and is the main reason you may not already have a chapter in your area. However, as already noted, we welcome local chapters, with a few requirements:

- You must have at least five current HWA members who will commit to being actively involved to form a local chapter.
- You must have at least one person who will volunteer to serve as the Chapter's Organizer (although this duty may be shared by two persons)
- You must have a physical space – as centrally located as possible – that can host regular meetings of the chapter (see below for recommendations on finding space)

If you can meet these basic requirements, then the Organizer should contact HWA's central chapter organizer at [chapters@horror.org](mailto:chapters@horror.org) and request to be chartered as a new chapter.

The organizer should also work with HWA's Administrator ([admin@horror.org](mailto:admin@horror.org)) to obtain as comprehensive a list as possible of all members located within two hours' drive of the chapter meeting place, contact those members, and invite them to join the new chapter.

If none of the members have a home that is large enough to accommodate meetings, the following might be available in your community:

- A large table or even a room in a restaurant
- A meeting room or hall in a library
- A classroom in a school or college
- A bookstore (stores that host book clubs may be especially open to this)

If you have a large group and can only find meeting space that will cost, please advise the central chapter organizer – HWA may consider reasonable requests to fund meeting space.

Past experience with chapters has shown that even the biggest and best-planned ones will stumble along the way, especially in the first few months of life. Members will promise to take on particular jobs and then not follow through; the number of those who show up for meetings may rise and fall and rise again. The Organizer should be prepared for ups and downs! Once a chapter finds its footing, however, the rewards and enjoyment can more than make up for any initial frustrations. Hang in there.

### III. MEETINGS

Once a chapter has been set up and a meeting space decided on, the members should discuss how often they'd like to meet, and choose a regular day/time that will accommodate as many members as possible. Although monthly meetings are ideal for many groups, your chapter may opt to meet more often or less.

Meetings should be used for both business and socializing. Below is a sample agenda:

#### HWA CHAPTER MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome
- Members introduce themselves (if necessary)
- Chapter business, including upcoming events and ideas
- Business from the parent organization
- New markets
- Members talk about their new sales and current projects
- Socializing

Meetings may also center on guest speakers, including visiting authors or experts (i.e., forensics, literary history, etc.).

Meetings may also occasionally be held in special locations – for example, a holiday meeting might be held at a club or bar, a meeting discussing a famed local author might be held at a location they frequent(ed), etc.

The Organizer should also be prepared to control discussions during meetings to keep the agenda moving at a reasonable pace.

### IV. CHAPTER MEMBERS

All current HWA members who are within a geographical area are eligible to be chapter members when a chapter is formed in that area. Although members are not required to join a local chapter, a local chapter may not deny membership to any current HWA member who is within its geographical area.

Membership in chapters must be open to all levels of HWA membership.

If a current HWA member wants to join a chapter not in their geographical area (for example, there is no chapter in their area), they may apply to join the nearest chapter, provided they agree to participate in the chapter's activities. However, a member may not apply to join a different chapter if there is already a chapter within their geographical location.

All chapter members MUST be members of the parent organization. Non-members will be allowed to audit one meeting; after that, they must join HWA to continue as chapter members.

Chapters may NOT expel members. If a chapter member is believed to have demonstrated behavior that is detrimental to HWA or in some other way has acted with "good and sufficient cause" for expulsion (see the HWA bylaws - <http://www.horror.org/private/bylaws.pdf> - Section III. Membership, paragraph 24), the member and the particular incidents in question should be reported to HWA's Board of Trustees, who will investigate and determine if the member should be disciplined or expelled. In the event that the Board of Trustees determines expulsion is called for, that member will not be allowed to participate in any further chapter activity; if suspended, that member may not participate in chapter activities for the duration of the suspension. However, if the Board determines that no disciplinary action is called for, the member must be allowed to continue to participate in chapter activities.

Visiting authors from other geographic areas who are also members of HWA should always be allowed to attend chapter meetings or participate in local activities.

## V. ONLINE PRESENCE

All chapters should have someone designated to maintain their website; this may be the organizer, or it may be someone else. Once your chapter is formed, the designated webmaster/mistress has several choices: 1) set up a blog for the chapter at <http://www.wordpress.com> ; 2) set up a group at <http://www.facebook.com> ; or 3) set up a blog or HTML site elsewhere. Once your site, blog, or group page is in place, please contact [webmaster@horror.org](mailto:webmaster@horror.org) . HWA's main webmaster will add a link to for your chapter to the main chapters page at <http://www.horror.org/chapters/chapters.htm> . Please remember that HWA's webmaster will only be responsible for the link, and will NOT oversee any of the chapter's website maintenance.

Alternatively, a local chapter can ask the HWA webmaster to set up an area of HWA's main private forum just for chapter business.

A chapter may create its own graphics for use on its website/blog, and may design its own logo. This logo may be used on materials that advertise the chapter; however, the main HWA logo must also appear on materials advertising any events sponsored by the parent organization (the main logo appears on the front page of this document).

A chapter should use its website/blog mainly to promote itself and horror in general; individual members and their works should be promoted sparingly. On HWA's Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Horrorwritersassoc/> ), HWA members are allowed only one promotional posting per week (only one posting per year is allowed for works under

consideration for the Bram Stoker Award®); the one-per-week posting for self-promotion is a good rule to follow for the chapter websites/blogs as well.

Here are examples of what to post to the chapter website/blog:

- Notices of upcoming meetings and events
- Minutes from past meetings
- Recaps (with photos) of past events
- Articles and essays related to horror writing, books, movies, etc.
- Bios of members (with photos and links)

Private forums and/or e-mail lists may also be used to host critique groups (forums work especially well for this, since documents can be stored there and discussions are laid out in easy-to-follow threads). Critique groups may or may not work for your chapter, depending on both the skill levels of those involved and their willingness to participate. If you decide to host a critique group, you should make sure that those who want to have work critique (and/or those who simply want to read work and offer critique) are willing to engage in constructive criticism; nothing is more useless in a critique than, “This is terrible” or “This ROCKS!” offered without further discussion. Also, members who want to offer work for critique must agree to read other members’ works and offer comments on those works.

## VI. LOCAL BOOK FESTIVALS

Chapters represent a chance for members to share opportunities and promotion at a grass-roots level, and chapters will be most successful if they actively seek out events to participate in. It is also important to remember that, although the parent organization will not cover the cost of a meeting place for regular meetings, it *will* cover the cost of many special events and activities.

The most significant book events that any chapter can participate in are book festivals. Examples include the LA Times Festival of Books (<http://events.latimes.com/festivalofbooks/>), Word on the Street (<http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/toronto>), the Tucson Festival of Books (<http://tucsonfestivalofbooks.org/>), the University of Central Florida Book Festival (<http://education.ucf.edu/bookfest/>), and Literary Orange (<http://literaryorange.org/>). Book festivals are typically free to the public (although they may charge for special speakers or workshops), include vendors offering everything from books to accessories to book services, and may be visited by tens or even hundreds of thousands of book lovers and aspiring authors. If there is a book festival held in your area, HWA may be very interested in paying for a booth or table there. In return, we would ask the following:

- It will be up to the local chapter to decide on who will oversee the event, and that individual will be responsible for looking up information on how to present at the event and filling out an “Event Backing Request Form”. That form may be downloaded here: <http://www.horror.org/chapters/EventBackingrequestform-1.doc> and should be returned to [eventapplications@horror.org](mailto:eventapplications@horror.org). You may also fill out the form directly online at <http://horror.org/subhub/index.php?sid=95628>.

- If HWA's officers approve an expenditure for the event, the person overseeing for the local chapter will coordinate payment with HWA's treasurer ([treasurer@horror.org](mailto:treasurer@horror.org)).
- It will be up to you, the local chapter, to make sure the booth is staffed at all times by volunteers.
- HWA will provide you with display and promotional materials, which may include banners, posters, brochures and bookmarks. If you incur any costs on printing additional materials that relate directly to HWA (i.e., sign-up sheets or posters of HWA anthology book covers), save your receipts and HWA's treasurer will reimburse for those costs.
- If possible, contact the festival's organizers and find out if they might be interested in including any horror-related programming, i.e. panels or workshops.
- Although HWA will endeavor to promote the event in its own blogs and mailings, the local chapter should also promote the event via its website/blog, Facebook group, etc. Also, encourage all members to promote the event as well.
- Volunteers working the event are encouraged to promote themselves and their books (see information on selling books), but remember that the booth's primary purpose is to promote horror and HWA. If you would like to put up a poster or banner for your own work at the booth, you may do so, provided there is space left over after HWA's material has been placed, and also provided that the remaining display space is shared equally among all members.
- Try to interact with other organizations who may also be exhibiting at the festival, especially librarian and teacher organizations. If you obtain good contact information on a library or library association, please share it with HWA's main library liaison at [libraries@horror.org](mailto:libraries@horror.org)
- Because you are representing the entire HWA, members from outside your chapter will have the right to either be present in the booth as well, or send materials for distribution from the booth.
- You can download materials and templates – including table signs, sign-up sheets, flyers, etc. – from <http://www.horror.org/chapters/chapters.htm>.

After the event, you may be asked to ship official HWA materials on; if so, please remember to keep receipts and request reimbursement from the HWA treasurer. Also, please try to take good care of any permanent display items like retractable banners.

**IMPORTANT:** When you work behind a table that HWA has paid for, you are there as a representative of HWA. You are, in other words, the face of a global organization with a long history and a solid reputation. We ask that you take this into consideration and act appropriately – please don't engage in rude or raucous behavior, disparage horror or HWA, or attempt to promote yourself over either HWA or other volunteers in the booth.

And a second reminder: Although we encourage you to promote and sell your own works at the festival (as long as you follow the guidelines), please remember that your primary purpose is to promote horror and HWA. Using HWA's table or booth to promote any non-horror related product, service or activity is prohibited; for example, don't put out flyers for your pet-sitting business.

## VII. OTHER EVENTS

Chapters may also participate in genre-specific conventions, book trade fairs (like BookExpo - <http://www.bookexpoamerica.com/> - however, please be advised that HWA already exhibits at BookExpo and several other trade shows), bookstore signings, holiday-specific events (especially those related to Halloween), and other events. For most of these events, please follow the guidelines provided above for running festival booths, and see below for selling members' books at events.

Members may also use chapter meetings and forums/e-mail lists to discuss events not directly related to writing or promotion – for example, if members want to form a car-pool to an event or room-share at a convention.

## VIII. WORKING WITH LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS

Reaching out to local libraries and schools is a fantastic way for HWA chapters to promote horror, perform a valuable public service, and expose members' works to eager new readers.

Here are several suggestions for ways that chapters might work with libraries and schools:

- Approach your local library and offer to stage readings for either kids or adults. This is especially popular around October, when libraries are looking for Halloween-themed events. Remember, if you're presenting to an audience of young readers, choose your material appropriately.
- Offer to donate members' books to local libraries. Most libraries have recently suffered from severe budget cuts, and they'll probably be thrilled to get new books for their shelves.
- If the library is big enough to have a small theater (many are), find out if they'd like to host any horror-themed panel discussions or workshops.
- High schools have also had their budgets hacked, and most would be happy to find knowledgeable speakers who have expertise in some area and are willing to speak for free. Try contacting the English Department chair at a local high school and offering expert members up for speaking engagements.
- You might also set up a page on your horror.org website called "Speakers' Bureau", which would outline particular areas of expertise that chapter members possess (for example – do you have a member who knows local ghost legends, or has perhaps written a non-fiction book, or is simply knowledgeable in managing a writing career?), and include contact information for those members. Librarians and teachers can then be directed to that page.

## IX. SELLING MEMBERS' BOOKS

Probably the most frequently asked question in regard to any HWA function is, "Can I sell my books there?" Well...yes and no.

First, please remember that HWA is classified by the IRS as a non-profit writers service organization with a tax designation of 501(c)(3). While this means that donations to HWA are

tax deductible, it also means that we run into potential trouble if an event that HWA has paid to be at is used by members for their own profit.

There are several ways to deal with this, though. Also, please remember that these rules ONLY apply in situations where HWA has paid for a booth, table or other presence; if no payment was involved at the event – for example, a local library or bookstore has asked to host a signing of local chapter members – members are free to sell their books.

If HWA has paid for the venue, then:

- The easiest method is to find a local bookseller who is also attending the event and who is willing to stock the members' books. This is usually not a problem if the books are carried by major wholesalers; if the books are published by small presses or self-published, find out if the bookseller will take the books on consignment. This has the additional benefit of establishing good relations between members and a local bookseller.
- If no local bookseller is available, members may sell their books from an HWA booth or table (that HWA has paid for) if they donate 20% of the proceeds back to HWA. If this option is chosen, please be aware that ALL book sales made through the booth/table must be recorded and accounted for, with final sales figures reported to HWA's treasurer. Donations to HWA can be made via either check mailed to the treasurer, or via Paypal (use [treasurer@horror.org](mailto:treasurer@horror.org) as the Paypal ID). And remember, these donations are tax deductible. We have a sample spreadsheet that may be used to record sales at <http://www.horror.org/chapters/chapters.htm>.

If a local bookseller is chosen you should also suggest that the bookseller carry HWA's own publications, including the *Blood Lite* anthologies and *On Writing Horror*, especially if any of the local members are contributors to these volumes and can sign them.

## X. WHAT CHAPTERS CANNOT DO

Many chapters decide to put together their own anthologies, utilizing members' stories. Please be aware that such projects cannot use HWA's name or logo in any way, and HWA will not pay to cover any costs for such projects. HWA has its own anthologies, with stories that are carefully chosen and edited by major publishers and editors, and it would be both confusing to readers and potentially damaging to HWA's brand to have a variety of anthologies floating around in the market that may not be up to the high standards of the parent organization's anthologies. If chapters choose to present any fiction publications, the members must accept all financial responsibility, and again – no reference to either HWA or the local chapter may be made, other than mentions in contributors' bios or the inclusion of an ad for the parent organization.

At this point in time, chapters may not maintain official separate treasuries. While we know that other organizations (MWA, for example) have chapters that act as largely independent entities with their own officers, publications, and treasuries, HWA is not set up to accommodate that...yet. Perhaps this will change in the future,

## XI. COMMUNICATING WITH THE PARENT ORGANIZATION

We encourage all chapters to regularly report on their activities, by posting about them to our forum and/or Facebook group, and contributing articles to the monthly newsletter (contact editor Kathy Ptacek at [GilaQueen@att.net](mailto:GilaQueen@att.net) to submit articles, and remember – Kathy loves to include photos!).

We also encourage chapters to communicate with other chapters; an exchange of ideas, of what works and what doesn't, can only be beneficial to all involved.

Lastly, remember: HWA wants to see its local chapters grow, and is behind you 100%. If you have any problems or ideas, feel free to contact any of the officers to share your thoughts and concerns.