



The Loft WordSmith

Saturday, Nov 02

09:00 AM - 10:15 AM

Finding Your Way as a Writer

Featured Session



Richard Blanco

As an immigrant son from a working-class family, a gay man, and a professional engineer, Blanco will discuss his unconventional path toward becoming a poet and memoirist, sharing adages, anecdotes, and advice that speak to the negotiation, lessons, and practice of his life as a writer.

Saturday, Nov 02

09:00 AM - 10:15 AM

What an Agent Wants

Featured Session



Marly Rusoff

Marly Rusoff helped found the Loft and launch some of the biggest names in publishing as an agent. In this featured session, she will discuss her time as an agent and how to put your best foot forward when trying to get your work out in the world.

Saturday, Nov 02

09:00 AM - 10:15 AM

Domesticated Chance

Featured Session



Nami Mun

In this session, Nami Mun will ask you to throw away your pre-conceived notions and chart a new path forward for your writing. This featured session is intended for anyone seeking ideas to foster new creative connections and pathways for their work.

Saturday, Nov 02

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Behind the Scenes: Editor, Agent, Author

Breakout Session

Publishing



Amanda Ramirez



Anika Fajardo



Thao Le

Learn about the key players in bringing a manuscript from the author's laptop to published book. Join author Anika Fajardo (Magical Realism for Non-Believers) as she talks with her agent Thao Le (Sandra Dijkstra Literary) and editor Amanda Ramirez (Simon & Schuster) about the journey of her forthcoming middle-grade novel ...

Saturday, Nov 02

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Breaking Down Barriers When You Don't Have an In

Breakout Session

Career



Kao Kalia Yang

Despite a lot of change, connections can be very important to publishing careers. Who you know can still sometimes trump what you write, and this puts many writers—particularly writers of color—at a major disadvantage. So how do writers who don't have those insider connections compensate? Kao Kalia Yang has built ...

Saturday, Nov 02

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Scrivener Basics Overview

Breakout Session

Tech & Tools



Nicole Kronzer

Do you have the writing software Scrivener but are overwhelmed by what it can do? Never fear! In this one-hour overview, we'll dip a beginner toe in the Scrivener pool together.

Saturday, Nov 02

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Poetic Craft

Breakout Session

Craft



Heid Erdrich



Sun Yung Shin

Two master poets will discuss some of the key elements to develop in your poetry.

Saturday, Nov 02

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Lonely Arts

Breakout Session

Connection



Melissa Wray

Writing is such a lonely art form, so let's fix that! This speed networking session is designed to help you find potential critique partners or writing groups. You'll spend a few minutes meeting multiple fellow attendees—by the end of the session, you'll have heard about some of your fellow attendee's ...

Saturday, Nov 02: Memorial Hall

11:45 AM - 01:00 PM

Working Lunch

Lunch

Memorial Hall

Saturday, Nov 02:

01:15 PM - 02:15 PM

Ask the Agent

Breakout Session



Publishing



Chris Mackenzie Jones
The Loft Literary Center



Kirby Kim



Rebecca Gradinger

Are there questions you've always wanted to ask an agent about queries, craft, publishing, or just what they do all darn day? This session is designed for you. The conversation will start out between the agents and moderator Chris Jones, but we'll leave lots of time for audience Q&A. Come ...

Saturday, Nov 02:

01:15 PM - 02:15 PM

Public Speaking for Writers

Breakout Session



Career



Anitra Budd

Public appearances—whether they're classroom visits, podcasts, panel discussions or readings—are a great way for writers to share their work and knowledge and boost their profile. But how do you find these engagements, and what do you do once you've booked one? Learn tips for identifying and landing public speaking opportunities, ...

Saturday, Nov 02:

01:15 PM - 02:15 PM

Kickstart Your Book Project

Breakout Session



Tech & Tools



Brooke Dierkhising

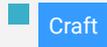
Crowdfunding benefits your book project in two ways: raising funds and spreading your news. Learn the basics of setting up a successful Kickstarter campaign, including estimating a money goal, setting gift levels, the legalities, reaching your donors, and building interest.

Saturday, Nov 02:

01:15 PM - 02:15 PM

Writing on Race: Expanding Our Approach to Craft and the Writing Workshop

Breakout Session



David Mura



Dawn Quigley

As race and identity become more central literary concerns, we find acute critiques of how individuals from marginalized groups are portrayed. We also find critiques of white identity and white based social realities. In what ways do traditional writing rules and workshop practice fail both writers of color and white ...

Saturday, Nov 02:

01:15 PM - 02:15 PM

Building Your Author Platform

Breakout Session



Dara Beevas



Roseanne Cheng

Join the founder of Wise Ink Creative Publishing, Dara Beevas, and book marketing expert Roseanne Cheng as they discuss the three essential elements to creating an author platform. In this session, attendees will learn how to establish themselves as an expert in their field, how to determine the best platforms ...

Saturday, Nov 02:

02:30 PM - 03:30 PM

Ask the Author

Breakout Session



Hanif Abdurraqib



Lynne Jonell



Sally Franson



Steph Opitz

Are there questions you've always wanted to ask a working author about craft, connection, publishing, process, and practice? This session is designed for you. The conversation will start out between the authors and moderator Steph Opitz, but we'll leave lots of time for audience Q&A. Come prepared with questions!

Saturday, Nov 02:

02:30 PM - 03:30 PM

Pitching Your Work

Breakout Session



Dawn Frederick



Margaux Weisman



Saba Sulaiman

The pitch—whether in writing or in-person—is an art form in and of itself. You can have the greatest manuscript in the world, but if you don't know how to boil it down, it can easily go overlooked. So what are the elements of this art form and what goes into ...

Saturday, Nov 02:

02:30 PM - 03:30 PM

Finding Your Digital Community

Breakout Session



Maya Beck



Roy Guzman

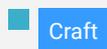
How do you use social media authentically enough to find your people? How do you build that dreaded "platform" that agents want, before you've published any books? How do we maximize reach and connection for our writing despite the constant threat of harassment, especially as a marginalized person? If you're ...

Saturday, Nov 02:

02:30 PM - 03:30 PM

Simple Editing Tricks to Enhance Your Voice

Breakout Session



Laura Zats

Editors, agents, and publishers talk often about how they love "voiciness" books. The problem is, very few people actually know what this means, including the people who say it! This session will go into exactly what a voice is and explore why some books grab you while others leave you ...

Saturday, Nov 02:

02:30 PM - 03:30 PM

Yoga, Meditation, and Self Care for Writers

Breakout Session



Tech & Tools



Aamera Siddiqui



Melissa Wray

Writing while seated for long periods of time can cause stiffness and tightness throughout our bodies. In this practice, we'll incorporate gentle movement specific to writers, focusing on shoulders, wrists, and hips. We'll guide you through a meditation to clear the mind in order to make room for creative thought. ...

Saturday, Nov 02: Memorial Hall

03:45 PM - 05:15 PM

Networking Happy Hour

Happy Hour

Memorial Hall

An informal networking happy hour with most of the conference participants. Take this time to meet fellow attendees and connect with visiting professionals. This is an informal gathering to talk about writing, publishing, and next steps. It is not intended for attendees to pitch their work.

Sunday, Nov 03: Memorial Hall

09:00 AM - 09:45 AM

Writing Prompts and Coffee

Creative Session

Memorial Hall



Stephanie Watson

Join us for coffee, pastries and writing prompts with children's book author Stephanie Watson as we kick off day 2 of Wordsmith. A fun interactive session for all genres to get your juices flowing.

Sunday, Nov 03: Memorial Hall

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Keynote with Madeline Miller

Keynote

Memorial Hall



Madeline Miller

Madeline Miller's *The Song for Achilles* and *Circe* have both won major awards and have spent weeks on bestseller lists. Hear from this master of craft as she discusses her work, the importance of storytelling, and why we write in the first place.

Sunday, Nov 03:

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Ask the Editor

Breakout Session



Publishing



Hannah O'Grady



Kathryn Savage



Laura Mazer



Matt Rasmussen

What is the role of the editor? What kinds of things do they look for and what is the best way to approach the editor/author relationship? In this session, moderated by Kathryn Savage, three editors will share their perspectives. There will be lots of time for audience Q&A, so come ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Building a Strong Platform for Your Nonfiction Work

Breakout Session



Career



Jonathan Wolf

Without an author platform, it is much harder to get the attention of a nonfiction publisher. And yet, constructing a platform to promote your writing requires a totally different skillset and mindset than the writing itself. This session will start with the basics and will offer step-by-step instructions for building ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Spin, Style, Soar: A Digital Brand Cheat Sheet

Breakout Session



Tech & Tools



Rachel Werner

Trying to clarify your profile and increase your visibility as a writer? If you're not a digital influencer, it's time to become one! Learn how to connect with different media outlets (print and digital); the pros and cons of trending online channels; and insightful tools for how to start building ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

In Medias Res: Hook a Reader, Tell a Story

Breakout Session



Allison Wyss



Erin Kate Ryan

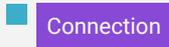
A common piece of writing advice—so ubiquitous it has become cliché—is to begin at the very last moment before resolution, when characters are dealing with an extreme, though obscured, crisis (death, fire, gunshot) and then move back in time to tell the story that leads to that moment. How can ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

#OwnVoices and Writing Outside Your Experience

Breakout Session



Molly Beth Griffin



Shannon Gibney

The #OwnVoices movement is an exciting development in publishing—one in which more writers from marginalized identity groups are starting to get the opportunity to tell their own stories. And as they do, more readers are finding books that provide mirrors of their own experiences, and books that open windows into ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

12:30 PM - 01:30 PM

Lunch

Lunch



Sunday, Nov 03:

01:45 PM - 02:45 PM

Navigating Publishing as a Marginalized Writer

Breakout Session



Publishing



Diane Wilson



Shannon Gibney

How does one get published? How do you find an agent? What do agents do? What's it like to work with an editor? How does the production process progress, and what should you expect from a publisher? What about book tours, talks, workshops, and school visits? And if you come ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

01:45 PM - 02:45 PM

Overcoming Application Anxiety

Breakout Session



Career



Erin Kate Ryan

You're ready for the grant/residency/conference/MFA program of your dreams. The only thing standing between you and your personal Valhalla is the application! This session will cover selecting a writing sample, crafting an artist's statement/project proposal, selecting references, and researching residencies/conferences as well as giving behavior of foundations.

Sunday, Nov 03:

01:45 PM - 02:45 PM

Digital Storytelling

Breakout Session



Tech & Tools



Brandi Brown

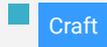
Digital storytelling—the single or combined use of text, images, video, audio, social media (like tweets), or interactive elements (like maps)—is a growing and powerful way to tell stories. This session will focus on podcasting, but will discuss other aspects of digital narrative to help you explore whether these tools are ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

01:45 PM - 02:45 PM

Beginnings: First Lines, Chapters, Pages

Breakout Session



Amelia Appel



Hannah O'Grady



Peter Geye

In prose, there is common advice that your first words, pages, and chapters need to grab a reader's attention and never let go. Agents and editors look at first chapters when evaluating a potential fit. Readers open to first pages to sample an unknown author. But how do you create ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

01:45 PM - 02:45 PM

All Conference Read: Téa Obreht's Inland

Breakout Session



Allison Wyss



Téa Obreht

All conference attendees are encouraged to read Téa Obreht's new novel *Inland*—and then come to this session to hear the author discuss the book! With Allison Wyss as moderator, we'll explore some of the key craft decisions, revisions, processes, and challenges that went into writing *Inland*. Come prepared with your ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

03:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Best Practices for Submitting to Journals

Breakout Session



Chris Fink



Crystal Spring Gibbins



Kathryn Savage

Journals are an crucial part of the literary ecosystem, but the volume of publications can be daunting when trying to decide where and how to submit your work. What are some of the best ways to approach this world? In this session, Crystal Spring Gibbins (Split Rock Review) and Chris ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

03:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Next Steps: Should I MFA?

Breakout Session



Douglas Kearney



Su Hwang

Acclaimed poet/professor/librettist Douglas Kearney, who arrived at the University of Minnesota's MFA Program last year, discusses his journey from the perspective of a student then professor at CalArts with poet/U MFA '16 graduate Su Hwang. They will talk candidly about the pros and cons of different types of MFA programs ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

03:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Building an Author Website

Breakout Session



Luke Finsaas

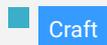
Every author needs a website—it is the centerpiece of promoting and selling your work. But how can the technically challenged start to take on this task? It's actually fairly simple these days and Luke Finsaas will help show you the way, both from a content and tech perspective.

Sunday, Nov 03:

03:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Writing About Family in Memoir

Breakout Session



Christie Tate



Jill Swenson



Laura Jean Baker



Laurie Hertzel

Writing memoir is different from writing fiction in that if a reader doesn't like your main character, you don't take it personally. When you write memoir, you are a character in the story for the reader. And they judge you. And your life. When the other main characters in your ...

Sunday, Nov 03:

03:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Self-Promotion for Wallflowers

Breakout Session

Connection



Veronica Park

A writer needs to be able to wear two hats: the creative hat and the business hat. This session will focus on helping writers build networking and self-promotional skills. This session is ideal for anyone who struggles with the idea of "putting themselves out there" (i.e. promoting their creative work).

Sunday, Nov 03: Memorial Hall

04:15 PM - 05:15 PM

You are a Writer and You Need to Keep Writing

End Note

Memorial Hall



Courtney Maum

Author of three novels and the forthcoming handbook *Before and After the Book Deal*, Courtney Maum, will close out the weekend by sharing the four most important things she has learned along her publication journey. From finishing a manuscript to finding—or not finding—the right agent for your work to dealing ...



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