

IN THE

*Trenches*<sup>TM</sup>

# *We Review* Contributor's Guidelines

**A Style Guide for Colleagues who  
Contribute Book Reviews**

- ◆ A guide for writers who contribute book reviews for CharityChannel
- ◆ Shows how to meet the style requirements for submission
- ◆ Discusses the elements that should be in every review
- ◆ Explains how to apply to join the Contributors Panel
- ◆ Covers how to submit reviews

***We Review Contributor's Guidelines: A Style Guide for Colleagues who Contribute Book Review (vers. 1.1)***

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## About *WE REVIEW* Book Reviews

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The CharityChannel professional community has for more than a decade provided authors and publishers with an opportunity to submit their books for review by experienced, in-the-trenches practitioners. The *We Review* feature has earned the trust of practitioners as a reliable source of informed, objective opinion about newly-published third-sector books. As a book reviewer, you play a key role in carrying on this tradition!

### About this Guide

The CharityChannel Press style guides, of which this guide for book reviewers is a part, are an important means of guiding writers and editors in style and other aspects related to writing for CharityChannel Press. If you are interested in writing other types of online articles, please see the *Article Contributor's Guidelines: A Style Guide for Colleagues who Contribute Articles to CharityChannel*. If you are interested in writing books, workbooks and/or manuals, please see the *Author's Guidelines: A Style Guide for CharityChannel Press Books, Manuals and Workbooks*. They are available for download from <http://charitychannel.com/charitychannel-press>.

Because CharityChannel was created by and for busy practitioners working at all levels of nonprofit organizations and institutions, its projects—CharityChannel Press is one—are strongly oriented toward the real-world needs of its members. Book reviews, as would be expected, are written from the perspective of practitioners who must daily confront the challenges of working for, or on behalf of, nonprofits. The *In the Trenches* series of books, articles and book reviews received its title as a salute to colleagues who work day-in and day-out in the third sector, and as a reminder to contributors and editors that books, articles and reviews must be of immediate, practical value to the busy practitioner.

observation



## The *WE REVIEW* Policies, Style and Procedures

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**W**hen you review a book for *We Review*, you are conveying to your third-sector peers something about its content, and expressing an opinion about how useful they are likely find it in their day-to-day work as professionals. Your readers are relying on you to be unbiased and fair, and will wonder about a review that is wholly laudatory or negative. Readers don't expect you to be an expert in the topic of the book—after all, you aren't the author, but rather the reviewer—but do expect you to be an experienced in-the-trenches practitioner, as are they. And if it happens that you *are* an expert in the topic of the book, so much the better.

In this guide, we'll answer your questions about the structure of your review and the writing style common to all *In the Trenches* submissions. We'll also cover how to receive a book to review from your editor, and how to submit your completed review. The first step to become eligible to contribute book reviews to the *We Review* feature is to join the *We Review* Contributor's Panel. Acceptance onto the panel is at the discretion of the editor, and will be based on your expertise and relevant experience as well as other factors such as the need for additional members of the panel.

### Who is Eligible to Submit a Review?

To be eligible to apply to join the panel, you must be a current member of CharityChannel, and maintain a full professional biography and professional headshot as part of your Profile.

To apply, log in and navigate to <http://charitychannel.com/articles/sign-up-to-be->

Your CharityChannel Profile section is your public face to the professional community, and each of your book reviews is linked to it. You'll want to update your colleagues often via your journal. Also, consider adding your Profile's URL to your email signature. By design, the URL to your Profile is very simple. Here's an example:

<http://charitychannel.com/cc/stephen-nill>

Your particular URL is provided on your Profile page (be sure to log in first).



a-charitychannel-contributor. Completing the application form will alert the editor that you've raised your hand to join. You will hear back promptly.

### **Reviews are to be Original**

Book reviews are required to be original to CharityChannel. There is one exception to the "original review" rule. If you've published your review only on your own web site or blog, you are welcome to submit it to your editor for consideration. Just be sure to let your editor know.

As the author, you retain the full copyright in your review; you're just giving CharityChannel the first worldwide publication rights. So, once it is published by CharityChannel, you're welcome to publish it elsewhere.

### **Which Books are Eligible for Review?**

#### *Subject Matter*

To be considered for review, books must be focused on a third-sector topic *per se*. If a book is not specifically directed to a third-sector topic, your editor might consider a review of it provided your review puts it into a context where nonprofit practitioners would find it of immediate value to their work. For example, a book on nonprofit organizations "going green" is a fit; books on for-profit companies going green is not unless your review shows how it is applicable to nonprofits.

#### *Age of Books*

Our focus is on introducing our peers to newly published books. Books should be less than a year old unless your editor approves of an older book.

#### *Source of Books*

There are two sources of books: Your own, and those provided by your editor.

If you would like to review a book that you already have, be sure to notify your editor in advance and receive an assignment. That enables the editor to put your review into the tracking system and slot it for publication.

To receive a book from your editor, you'll want to know about which books are available. Your editor utilizes the *We Review* Group discussion system to periodically notify members of the panel of newly available books. If you see a book you'd like to receive for review, contact your editor and request the book. You may use the group discussion area, the "Send a Message" link on your editor's Profile page, or email to notify your editor.

If you are assigned the book, your editor might request that you cover the cost of mailing the book. Remember, your editor is a volunteer too.

Once you have submitted your review, the book is yours to keep. If for any reason you are unable to complete the review, please mail the book back to your editor so that another colleague may review it.

### Setting the Tone

As mentioned, *We Review* is part of the *In the Trenches* series of online, electronic and print publications. This series shares a distinctive voice: a conversational, down-to-earth tone.

The following guidelines should help you to write with the desired voice.

- ◆ As with everyday conversation, write in the first person. So, refer to yourself as “I” and to the reader in the second person, as “you.” Use “we” when referring collectively to yourself and the reader; this pulls readers into your inner circle and makes them feel special!
- ◆ When you speak across the fence with your neighbor, you do so with simple, straight-forward sentences. You might even use sentence fragments. That’s exactly how you should write your article—just as if you’re speaking conversationally with a friend or colleague. If you find that you’re writing long, complex sentences, you’re probably straying from the straight-forward, down-to-earth voice we’re looking for. Break them up into simpler sentences, and you’ll be back on track.
- ◆ Keeping things conversational and loose doesn’t mean that anything goes. The rules of good grammar still apply. Don’t write so simply that you insult the reader. Remember, the reader might be a neophyte in the subject matter, but is definitely not a dummy or a complete idiot!
- ◆ It’s okay to use contractions.
- ◆ Slang is okay if it would ordinarily come up in conversation. It’s more than okay if it’s used in the subject area about which you are writing. Careful though; slang for the sake of slang should be avoided as it just comes across as forced and phony.
- ◆ Besides a light, first-person approach, the use of humor, charm and wit can make your writing shine. As with good seasoning, though, use it sparingly and to taste; overuse can get in the way and detract from readability.
- ◆ Use subheads to indicate a change in direction of the material or to break up long blocks of text.
- ◆ If you find that you’re writing more than about six or seven paragraphs of unbroken text, before continuing you should probably insert a new subhead or an ordered or unordered list.

Use of humor is a great way to stay in the voice of *In the Trenches* articles. If it comes up naturally, use it. But don’t force it. When using humor, keep these in mind:



- ◆ Be careful of straying from desirable dry wit to undesirable forms of humor such as slapstick, or “humor” that is hurtful, condescending, insulting, critical or controversial.
- ◆ Avoid ethnic, racial, gender-related, or unduly dark humor.
- ◆ Remember, you’re writing for a large, diverse audience. Avoid sexual innuendo and coarse language.

***The Chicago Manual of Style***

In matters of style, look first to these guidelines. If they don’t cover a question, look next to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Besides the book version, there is an online version at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>. *Tip:* There is a thirty-day free trial available for the online version.

Having said that, please don’t be too hung up on formal style guidelines. As long as you are writing conversationally, you’re going to be on the right track. So, relax and enjoy the writing experience!

One area that continues to challenge authors, though, is the use of masculine and feminine pronouns. We discuss that in the sidebar on page 8.

**Length**

Reviews should be no shorter than 750 words (including the table of contents) and no longer than 2,000 words. In our experience, reviews that are shorter than 750 words probably do not adequately evaluate the book, while reviews longer than 2,000 words risk losing the reader’s interest.

**Elements of Your Review**

Your review should include the following elements:

1. Title and subtitle of the book.
2. The following publishing information: Author, date of publication, title, publisher. Here are examples of how this information should be formatted:

For a single author:

Eisenstein, Amy. 2010. *50 Asks in 50 Weeks: A Guide to Better Fundraising for Your Small Development Shop*. Rancho Santa Margarita: CharityChannel Press.

For multiple authors:

Hancks, Meredith, and Cara Rosson. 2012. *Prospect Research is a Verb: Learning How to find Information effectively*. Rancho Santa Margarita: CharityChannel Press.

For an editor:

Temkin, Terrie, ed. 2012. *YOU and Your Nonprofit Board: Practical Advice and Tips from the CharityChannel Professional Community*. Rancho Santa Margarita: CharityChannel Press.

(For two or more editors, use “eds.” Rather than “ed.”)

3. Summary of your review of 50 to 70 words. *Tip:* If you wrote a great first paragraph, it can often be used as your summary.
4. The body of your review.
5. The table of contents, without page numbers. We know that it will take time to add the table of contents to your review, but doing so gives the reader a more complete and objective understanding of what is covered in the book.

### **Formatting**

Most reviewers submit their reviews to the editor as a Word file attachment. (See Submitting Your Review, below.) If that is the case, please follow these formatting guidelines:

- ◆ Use 1” margins all around the page (left, right, top, bottom)
- ◆ Use Courier 12-point font.
- ◆ Single-space your manuscript paragraphs.
- ◆ Insert only one hard return between paragraphs, so that there is one blank line between paragraphs. Do not indent paragraphs.
- ◆ Format your article flush left. Do not right-justify any text.
- ◆ The subheads are bold face. Do not use bold anywhere else unless absolutely necessary.
- ◆ Do not use all capital letters, or underlining, for emphasis. Italics are acceptable for emphasis, but don't overuse italics even then.
- ◆ Do not center anything. Keep subheads flush left.
- ◆ Avoid all extra fancy touches or unusual formatting styles.
- ◆ Bulleted and numbered lists are useful tools for breaking up information into points or steps that are easy to remember or follow. Introduce all lists with a sentence or two, and include concluding text after. Use bulleted and numbered lists to break the text down into specific steps or distinctive points. Use a numbered list when describing steps done in sequence, or in a “Top 10” context. Use bullets when the number or sequence isn't important.

### **Submitting Your Review**

You may email your review to the editor at [editor-wereview@charitychannel.com](mailto:editor-wereview@charitychannel.com).

Alternatively, you may submit it online at <http://charitychannel.com/charitychannel-press/we-review-book-reviews> by clicking the Submit Article link, visible when you are logged in. If your review is ready to submit, click the “Publish” link; if not, you may save it as a draft. When you click “Publish,” it is sent to your editor for review and approval. Once approved, it will be published as pursuant to the editor’s publishing schedule.

### **Linking to Your Review**

Book reviews are open to the public. You are welcome to link to your review from your own website. Also, your reviews are listed on your Profile page under the *We Review* tab.





- How do you do it when things are already complex and difficult enough. Wouldn't it shift focus away from mission, and drain resources from its pursuit?
- Isn't such a transformation expensive? Resources are, after all, are in limited supply. How does one approach funders to help with the costs?
- Who should lead such a transformation—you? If not you, who?

Of course, *The Green Museum*, authored by veteran CharityChannel colleague Sarah Brophy and her writing partner Elizabeth Wylie, is about the greening of *museums*. As the authors admit at the outset, "we are unabashed museum people." Yet, this primer could easily inform the greening of just about any kind of organization or institution that is housed on planet earth, because even the smallest, just-getting-started nonprofit, much less the established, successful larger institution, is impacting the planet.

I like that the authors don't assume that the reader is yet convinced that the outcome—a greener organization—is worth the effort. In Chapter 1, "The Idea," the authors make the case that green is good for all museums. "We want you to be green because it supports your mission (every institution's—not just science museums), saves money (more than the myths will lead you to believe), and can make a positive impact on the environment while encouraging staff, board, volunteers, and visitors to do the same in their lives."

The authors admit, of course, that "[n]ot everyone is there yet," and that [t]he default position, for some, has been 'sorry, green is not our mission.'" The authors counter that "green can save you money that you can spend on carrying out core responsibilities, and green keeps the environment clean and safe for your objects, buildings, and visitors. Isn't that mission support?"

Perhaps the toughest chapter to read, yet one that is essential if an organization or institution is to seriously undertake to become truly green, is Chapter 2, "The Metrics." (Hint: If you don't know what LEED stands for before, you will. I didn't. I do now.) But it's much more than measuring. It's about coordinating different systems and processes to produce the most efficient and environmentally sensitive result. In other words, it's about integration, according to the authors. "To be successful we need to integrate green action with the culture and systems of the museum, or we risk wasting money, time, and enthusiasm. Certainly that is no one's intended outcome," they advise.

The book becomes particularly pragmatic in Chapter 3, "The Options," where the authors walk us through many options and examples of museums becoming green (or more green, in some cases).

They open the chapter with the question, "Where Does It Start?" They write, "[s]ometimes staff instigates green; sometimes the board does. It can be one person on a recycling mission, or a team charged with finding ways to reduce waste, save energy, and change behaviors. Maybe a manager or board member says, 'We have to find a way to reduce these energy bills!'"

They introduce the concepts of "journey" and "champion" when they write that "[h]owever it starts, there are two terms you will hear repeatedly from those who have gone green: journey and champion. Going green is a journey, not a destination; and you need a green champion to

lead the charge.” I like the idea, advanced by the authors, of creating a “green team,” which involves a variety of staff and board members to “work, learn, and engage the rest of the institution.”

The chapter helpfully iterates through a number of specifics for museums to become green, such as waste management, green products and sourcing, food services and systems, cleaning and maintenance, exhibitions and materials, energy conservation and management, water conservation and management, landscape, transportation, and so on.

One of the biggest questions is how integrating green strategies will impact financial support. In Chapter 4, “The Money,” the authors hit this head on. “By integrating strategies for operational cost savings with mission objectives, museums are finding a powerful voice in green, one that is being heard and supported.” They point out that going green actually increases the opportunities for support, and increases the opportunities to engage the funder.

The authors show how to make the case for support, and give examples of well-known funders adapting to the green movement by inviting applicants to describe their environmentally sustainable behaviors in the applications. They give funding examples that I found helpful, and encouraging.

For the uninitiated (I’m in that camp) this going green stuff can be overwhelming. The authors offer this bit of advice: “[G]ive yourself a break: no one knows it all. The field of environmental sustainability is expanding so rapidly, and new research is coming out so frequently, that no one person or institution is going to know it all. If we all share our knowledge and experience, we can all make progress. We have to; this may be one of the most important to-do lists in the museum field.” I would expand that to all organizations and institutions, and I suspect the authors would agree with me.

As well done and pragmatic as this book is—I like that it is written in first person—in some parts it can be tough slogging. Though the authors do break it up with some real-world examples that are clarifying, I would have liked to see more of those, because I think that examples are especially helpful in bringing together a number of principles and techniques. It is sometimes assumed that terms of art are familiar to the reader. Although a helpful glossary and abbreviations translation table are provided, I like to see the more important terms of art defined along the way, perhaps in sidebars. I enjoyed some of the quotes from practitioners in the field, though some were worthy to be highlighted in sidebars. But these are just style things, and probably influenced by my own preferences as a book editor myself.

I commend this nicely-written book to anyone in the sector who works for, or with, any nonprofit, large or small, museum or otherwise.

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