

# *Making the Internet Work for You*

by **Stephanie Bond**

Sure, you logon to the Internet every day to retrieve your email, and occasionally to order a book from an on-line bookstore. But are you aware of how many sites are jam-packed with valuable information for us writer-types?

**Publisher sites.** Many publishers have writing guidelines on their sites. While you're there, browse their current and upcoming release to see what kinds of books they're buying. Also browse pages directed at different audiences, such as "distributors," or "booksellers." And don't overlook the press release pages—you'll pick up all kinds of tidbits about the company's pet projects, staff changes, et cetera.

**Periodical sites.** Can't afford the subscriptions to the trade magazines? Many have websites with abridged content.

**Bestseller lists.** Scour the bestseller list pages, not just to check out the competition, but to find out how the lists are compiled.

**How-to sites.** If you're in need of some inspiration, or are looking for a refresher course on the basics, check out the how-to articles on English, grammar, and word usage. And many authors feature writing articles on their sites.

**Reader/review sites.** Many reader and review sites include interesting bits from authors, conferences, even editors and agents.

**Research sites.** Writers everywhere celebrate the Internet when it comes to doing research. Just make sure the information is current and can be corroborated by another source.

**Organization sites.** Most national writing organizations have websites for their members and potential members. If you live in a remote area, you might be able to join an outreach chapter that meets online.

**Search engines.** The Internet is so vast, it's impossible to provide exhaustive lists of sites for each category above. The quickest way to find a site geared to your current need is to utilize a search engine. The key, you will learn, is entering the correct search string to return the results you're looking for. Putting quotes around two or more words, for example, will look for those two words together. Know, too, that you can search among text, images, and video.

So instead of simply killing time on the 'Net, take advantage of the sites that can propel your career forward. Browse several sites for a month or two, then winnow down the sites to a handful that are the most helpful, and bookmark them for instant support at your fingertips! ~SBond