

ASSOCIATED WRITING PROGRAMS

If you are currently enrolled in a college or university creative writing degree program, you are probably also already a member of the Associated Writing Programs (AWP), “a national, nonprofit literary organization for teachers and writers. Founded in 1967, AWP is dedicated to serving writers, teachers and writing programs” (awpwriter.org/faq.htm). AWP provides members with a variety of services, including a subscription to the *Writer’s Chronicle*, a journal published six times during the academic year, a job placement service, award contests leading to book publication, a catalog of writing programs, and an annual conference.

The association represents “approximately 18,000 individual writers, teachers, students and 300 college and university creative writing programs in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom” (awpwriter.org/history.html). The best way to find out about these services is to visit the AWP Web site, but the best way to experience the community represented by AWP is to attend the annual convention, where writers join to listen to panelists, attend readings, and visit the book exhibit. Here writers expect to connect, to share their work and interests, and to meet editors of literary journals and presses (see “Schmoozing”).

AWP has long been an activist organization, taking up issues of government arts funding, censorship, human rights, quality of writing programs, support for adjunct teachers, and other issues. The association’s growth from an original fifteen members representing thirteen programs to a program representing over three hundred programs parallels the growth of academic programs in creative writing (see “MFA,” “Creative Dissertation”). The different “membership” categories in this organization also indicate this growth: individual members, affiliate members (literary colonies, literary magazines, small academic programs), institutional memberships (academic programs), writer’s conferences and centers memberships. Particularly useful are the AWP site “Links to Other Resources” (including a listing of member programs) and *The AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs*, a more thorough, book-length version of these listings.

As a nonprofit, AWP is governed by a board of directors elected from a slate of Writing Program members who serve as regional representatives for the Pacific West, West, Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast. The annual conference rotates among these regions, returning periodically to the

Washington, D.C. area, where the program offices are located at George Mason University.

An undergraduate or unaffiliated writer's first and best way to get connected with the national creative writing scene is to get acquainted with this Web site and pursue the appropriate membership strategy, since the *Writer's Chronicle* includes AWP program-related news, articles of general interest to writers, and a listing of current contests and awards available to writers. Thus, a membership assures a quick introduction to the "profession" of creative writing.