

["Let's Put on a Play!"](#) [1]

April 11, 2014 [Writer's Life](#) [2]

Essay by Elizabeth Langosy

TW's Cofounder Recalls Her Time at the Magazine



In 2009, I accepted an early retirement offer from Harvard University, where I'd worked for nearly two decades—the last stop in a forty-year career as a writer, editor, and communications manager, mostly in a nonprofit environment.

Retiring would allow me to be more available for my artist husband Donald, who has secondary progressive multiple sclerosis. And I could finally focus on my fiction writing, which had tugged at me throughout the years I'd spent working full time while raising a family. I'd miss the comradeship of an office, though, and the satisfaction of helping people in need through the nonprofit work I did each day.

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Published on Talking Writing (<https://mail.talkingwriting.com>)

When I told my friend and writing colleague Martha Nichols that I was retiring, she asked me out to lunch. She outlined her vision for an online literary venue for writers called *Talking Writing*—a project that would begin as a blog and, if enough interest was aroused, transition to a magazine. Would I be part of it?

I felt a giddy burst of excitement, the “Let’s put on a play!” sensation I’d savored decades earlier when Donald and I and our friend Matthew had a small puppet theater at the Blacksmith House in Harvard Square. We performed on weekend afternoons, using an eccentric array of puppets and sets handmade by Donald and scripts the three of us hammered out and rehearsed in high-spirited sessions after the kids went to bed.

Martha offered me time to think about her proposal, but I immediately said yes. We envisioned that, even as a magazine, the venture would take perhaps ten hours a week. We’d both have time for the loved ones in our lives and for our own writing. And I’d have the community that I’d valued at Harvard. We wondered how long it would take us to reach a thousand annual views. A year? Two years?

Talking Writing launched as a monthly online magazine in September 2010, and almost immediately, our neighborhood production was on its way to Broadway. It was thrilling to see it grow. Martha and I spent hours together—on the phone, hunched over computers, sipping espresso and tea at cafe tables—as we reviewed submissions, tweaked our website design, and planned every detail of future issues.

In those days, we did everything ourselves, from formatting every piece to looking for the perfect images for each one. We shared a commitment to creating a unique, open forum for discussion of writing issues and to publishing high-quality work that we edited to traditional print magazine standards. We established the protocol for *Talking Writing* that remains to this day.

By December 2010, we were garnering 6,000 monthly views, along with hundreds of submissions. That was when we decided to formalize our efforts and our partnership by forming a nonprofit organization whose primary activity would be *Talking Writing* magazine.

And so we began the long, exhilarating, and sometimes frustrating ride to the present. As anyone who’s formed a nonprofit knows, it’s not an easy journey. On top of the editing and strategizing work for each issue, we now had financial, administrative, and nonprofit compliance activities, most of which I took over. It made sense: I’d had similar responsibilities in my role as a communications and development manager at Harvard. But by the time we received federal nonprofit status in January 2013—a thrilling moment, despite the extended wait—I’d spent two years doing little beyond working on *Talking Writing*.

Over 2013, my family responsibilities further increased. At the end of the year, I realized something had to give. Since TW was still occupying the lion’s share of my waking hours, I knew it was time to step down. I had full confidence that the wonderful publication Martha and I had created together would continue to grow and prosper under her sole leadership.

It has been painful to let TW go, somewhat like seeing a child leave home. I’ve loved interacting with our readers and editors and with the writers who granted me the privilege of working with them on their poems, stories, and essays. I know the friendships I’ve made in the TW community will stay with me as I shift to an editor at large position on the masthead and begin to focus on my own fiction.

I will always count *Talking Writing* among my most satisfying achievements. Over the past four years, I was sustained by the work I did and the writers I worked with: the shared ebb and flow of words, the adrenaline rush of getting it just right, the conviction that something of value was going out into the world, something that contributed to the greater good. Through their efforts, writers encapsulate meaning for all of us.

Art Information

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[3]TW cofounder Elizabeth Langosy officially retired as executive editor on March 15, although she remains an editor at large at *Talking Writing*. Her family and the characters in her short stories are very happy to be garnering more of her attention.

The hand-and-rod denizens of the long-ago puppet troupe were reborn in the [Bertie Puddlepoop cartoon series](#) [4], some of which have been featured in TW.

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