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lisa@liscaccco.com

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johnstonveronica@earthlink.net

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judith@judithwest.com

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rjoseph23@yahoo.com

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karinhorler@yahoo.com

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dryan7402@attglobal.net

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jmariani@himss.org

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tuxod@xsite.net

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Betty Hintch
bhintch4399@wowway.com

Clips Newsletter Team

Editor:
Heather Pierce
heather@piercingprose.com

Assistant Editor:
Katherine Williams
kayw2002@yahoo.com

Layout:
Michelle Warner
michelle-warner@sbcglobal.net

Judith West

Member Focus



If you ask Judith West what she does, be prepared for a long answer... and a delightful one. First, she'll explain that she creates audiobooks, both fiction and non-fiction, and she believes is "the only CWIP member involved in this form of publishing." Since 1999, Judith has abridged, written, voiced, and produced recordings. In fact, she dreams of making Chicago an industry center: "All the resources are here . . . narrators, producers, studios. It can happen."

Her path to audiobooks began in Texas with "two degrees in Reading Aloud"—specifically, a BA and and MA in the performance of literature. "Who'd guess degrees like that would turn out to be practical?" she laughs.

One major career stop was theater, where she's been a playwright, director, dialect coach, and college instructor. She also acts and, for fans of P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie and Jeeves, might reprise a moment or two of Aunt Dahlia, a role she created for Chicago's City Lit Theatre. A former "chick singer," she still performs on occasion in a Noël Coward cabaret.

But wait! There's more!

For twenty-plus years, Judith's "day job" was at Encyclopædia Britannica, where, she says, she edited thousands of articles, "literally from A to Z." For her recent Encyclopædia Britannica finale, she designed and developed the award-winning My First Britannica and Britannica Learning Library—altogether some 30 children's volumes. She still contributes to Encyclopædia Britannica, for whom she also wrote a software manual and went twice to India.

Judith joined CWIP in 2000 (after a brief stint in 1980), finding the members warm and collaborative and the networking helpful. "I sometimes find potential clients here, and I like meeting people with interests and experience different from mine," she says.

This year, Judith serves as CWIP's Vice President of Strategic Planning and Development, a role that she describes as being "idea lady and ways-and-means coach." She's also developing a publishing resources section for CWIP's Web site and is looking for smart, curious volunteers. "Jump in! You'll learn new things!" she promises.