

Infotainment or Humour as a Hook

(small sample of columns/works for clients – see also Sandy's many [e-zines/articles](#) online)

by Sandy Ross (.ca) ❖ wordsmith@SandyRoss.ca ❖ 519.472.5322

500 words max.

columnist on home business, formerly in 'The Londoner'

'Home Alone – Not Lonely'

Remember Macaulay in Home Alone movies, slapping cherubic cheeks as he screams blue murder by the bathroom mirror? Sure, being home alone is traumatic at 12, but freeing, even fantasy-come-true, at 40 something. Then, the honeymoon's over, and the whole idea of doing business from the bedroom (not what you're thinking) has gone from inspiration to isolation. Take my own home invasion. It's the early 90s, the fallout of the first firings (sorry, 'restructuring'), and I'm one of 100 leaving my employer. It's Monday morning, apres downsizing, and I am – like that Culkin kid – home alone.

OK. This is good. I have time to think, to hear myself think. Minutes pass, as do three cups of tea through my bladder. Slippers feel good? Yup. Sweats not too tight? Nope. I think this will work. No chatty peers peering over my cubicle to visit. No office gossip or politics. No suck-up competition to be the last to leave. Then, delusions of grandeur dissolve into micro biz reality and, there you sit, a home-based entrepreneur.

Corporate phones once despised for flashing, lines lit like airport runways, are now begged to ring. You send envelopes to yourself so a courier will come and you'll see another human. As for you daily postal carriers – be afraid. We wait with warm muffins or cold lemonade, hoping you'll linger. Of course, this is about the time the in-laws start dropping by... with the dogs... in crocheted outfits (the pets, not the relatives). Should have wished for clients, not company.

But, all at home is not hopeless. Homepreneurs have many ways to handle the solitude of soloing. Investment rep, David Beach, reflects on inspirational prose for renewal. Dani Howarth, in secretarial services, finds her guinea pigs and dogs to be "the best listeners, agreeing with everything". Life coach, Anouschka Gentner, tries a change of scenery, from keyboard to backyard. "I watch birds and squirrels, and my cat and I decide we live a good life." What's with all these animals? Are they the answer? H.R. specialist, Sandra Safran, suggests "meeting a colleague for lunch or coffee at least twice a month. If you discuss business, you can expense part". Interior decorator, Tracey White, relies on networking

groups plus emails to "share ideas and time with like-minded people", while software trainer, Glenda Palmer, has a TV nearby when doing routine work. And what of music? Promotions supplier, Carroll Sturgeon, enjoys the company of Barry White (Manilow for me, please). Ending on a philosophical look at this loneliness thing, Carroll reminds us of the perks. She accomplishes far more now, even with fridge trips and cat naps. Besides, she muses, "I'm not alone – simply with myself". ❖

150 words max.

reviews of websites, for IABC's member communicators

Bodleian Library – www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk

For a library theme, let's venture virtually to one of the world's oldest – to England's Oxford, to Bodleian Library. As Canada's National Library marks 50 years, Bodleian just turned 400. My last trip over 'ome, it didn't even look 250. Its website posts its history, snaps of commanding architecture, lists of souvenirs with Bodleian logos or Oxford blues, and impressive Library stats. Boasting seven million volumes, five million are referenced online, and about a million sit on 120 miles of shelves. Thirty reading rooms seat 2,663 and, thanks to 382 staff, the average time to fulfil a book order's just three hours. It took longer to get complimentary nuts on the flight over (which, coincidentally, were also 400 years old).

Bartleby – www.bartleby.com

A marriage of online and story-time, this archives invaluable literary treasures. Tuck into Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, or the Theory of Relativity, by Einstein, or The Bible, by... you know. In a convergence of digital meets Dewey decimal, full content's keyed-in for classic Verse, Reference, Fiction, and Nonfiction – from grammatical stylings of Strunk, to encyclopaedias that would fascinate Funk (and Wagnall). When I saw that Gray's Anatomy was online, I felt a twinge of what it must be like to be a 12-year old boy with a Playboy magazine under his mattress (or Hugh Hefner, who keeps it under his mistress). With a titillating Table of Contents laid out like a naked-body buffet, I couldn't resist sneaking a peek at Primitive Segments. Surprisingly, the lateral aspect occipital isn't nearly as sexy as it sounds. But, for education, information, and inspiration, Bartleby is a bookworm's dream... a good read. ❖