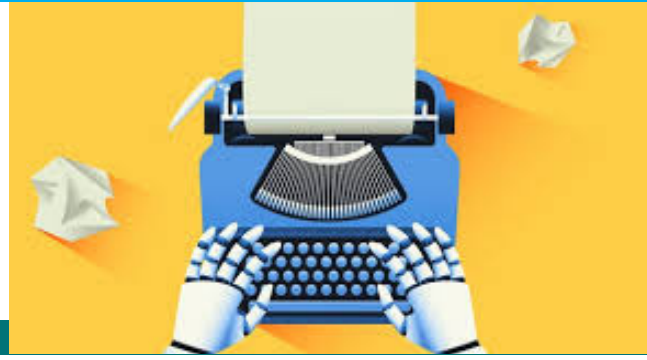




AI & BWI'S ANNUAL CONTEST

by Ben Stein, BWI President

In all parts of our lives, AI is currently inescapable. As I sat down to write this message, Microsoft Word prompted me to tell it what I was writing about so AI could write it for me. It would seem disingenuous to allow AI to write an update to our membership about the use of AI. So, although I filled out the prompt just to see what it would come up with, I can swear to the fact that every word written in this message was penned by me. If the writing is lousy, that's my fault.

It turns out that attesting to the fact that I didn't use AI to write this is extremely topical. You see, my message this month is all about AI and its place in BWI's annual contest. The contest celebrates the best work of our members over the last year. So, with AI permeating every facet of our lives, the obvious question is how should the contest handle AI?

The BWI board met recently to discuss AI and the contest. Given that we are a group composed of writers, photographers and videographers who are proud of our ability to create original content, we don't feel that AI generated content has a place in our contest. Submissions to the BWI annual contest should be written/shot by the submitter and

should be the submitter's original work. After careful consideration, the board feels it's just that simple. If you are submitting work as your own, you must have created it.

So, the contest rules are getting an update. The rules will now clearly state the AI generated content is not eligible. Here are the updated rules around AI:

- Entries must be entirely the work of the submitting author.
- Content generated in whole or in part by AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, Grok, etc.) is strictly prohibited.
- Minor use of spellcheck or grammar correction tools is permitted.
- Entrants must affirm their work is original and AI-free.

I know that my colleagues are committed to their craft and want to celebrate the best of it with the contest. I also know that from time to time, we may be called on to use AI. As a board, we understand that. But we believe the contest must recognize only the work of our writers and not the most successful AI wranglers. I hope you will all join us in ensuring the contest remains a place to celebrate our work.

As a topic, AI engenders some

strong passions. If you have thoughts you would like to share, please reach out. I can be reached at ben.stein@panbo.com and welcome your thoughts, criticisms, and dialog as we navigate a world rife with AI.

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USING AI AS A WRITER

If you're reading this newsletter, you likely make your living—or at least supplement it—by using writing and reporting skills that you've honed coming up the journalistic ranks. And if you're still here, you've survived the seismic shift from traditional print to our new world of delivering content through several channels. But now perhaps the biggest gamechanger for writers is coming at us from every direction: Artificial Intelligence.



AI is already everywhere in our daily lives, from overtaking Google searches to offering unprompted suggestions when typing a simple email. What does this mean for you as a writer? Is it over? No. But if we want to keep working as writers, we have to adapt. As one former IBM CEO recently said, “AI will not replace humans, but those who use AI will replace those who don’t.”

Speaking from my perspective as a staff editor, we're already being trained to use AI platforms, not as a replacement for our hard-earned skills but as a tool to enhance them and hopefully make our ever-evolving jobs easier. For freelancers, who don't have access to corporate AI platforms and training teams, the pressing question is likely, where to start? There are dozens to choose from. The two most well-known AI platforms are ChatGPT and Google Gemini. I've been experimenting with Gemini, as it's built into the Google platform I use through Gmail. It can be an excellent research assistant, provided you figure out how to type in the right prompts to help it deep-dive beyond a surface level answer. Research that could take hours and days to find and collate can be at your fingertips in minutes.

For instance, for writing this essay, I opened Gemini and typed in “How can AI benefit writers?” In less than maybe two seconds, Gemini provided an extensive list of bullet points on how to use it to brainstorm topics and come up with angles and ideas, generate an outline, create questions to ask potential sources, find primary and secondary sources, and a whole lot more. You can also upload your work into an AI platform to proofread, fact check, and scan for potential plagiarism. For those who need to convert traditional print pieces for the web, you can ask AI to optimize it for SEO and come up with key words, meta descriptions and link suggestions. This is all just the tip of the iceberg.

Yes, AI is scary and it's changing the way we all work. But the fear of this epic moment makes me think of this historical footnote: When train travel first emerged in the 1800s, people were genuinely concerned that speeds over 20 mph would cause insanity. The world is now moving at warp speed, but AI is not on the water experiencing things, we are. We know we can take those experiences and deliver, but are we the modern-day equivalent of a train conductor or a stage-coach driver? With AI, maybe we're already astronauts.

Pete McDonald, Executive Editor, Boating Magazine and 2nd VP BWI Board

GENERAL NEWS

SCOTT CROFT RETIRES

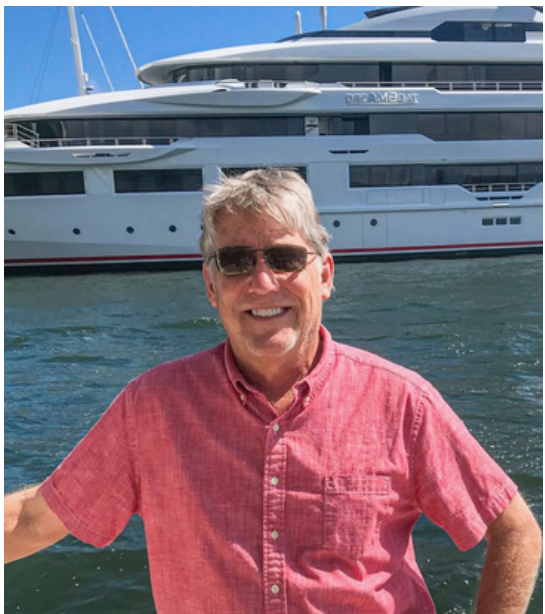
After 23 years with Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS), Scott Croft, VP of Public Relations, is retiring as of September 30. He will continue his volunteer work on Hudson River boating issues and plans to explore Adirondack lakes and ponds on a small sailboat.

After 9/30/25 he can be reached at dscroft3@gmail.com. Anyone interested in working in public relations for BoatUS, [contact the organization here](#).



STEVE DAVIS RETIRES

Steve Davis, long-time editor-in-chief of Southern Boating has retired. He will continue to freelance as a writer in the industry and to serve on the BWI Board of Directors. He can be reached at sdsails@gmail.com.



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