

National Storytelling Newsletter

VOLUME 8
ISSUE 9
SEPTEMBER 2026

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A CONVERSATION, NOT A MONOLOGUE



Caleb Hubbard
President & Chair of the Board of Directors
National Storytelling Network

One of the things I value most about storytelling is that a story rarely exists in isolation. We tell stories to one another, we listen, we respond, and somewhere in that exchange, something new takes shape. I think the same should be true of NSN.

At our recent conference, we had the opportunity to sit down with members and have conversations with the board about NSN: where we are, where we want to go, and what our members hope to see from this organization. Those conversations were thoughtful, exciting, and full of ideas. But I don't want those conversations to end when the conference does. In fact, I hope they are just the beginning.

One of my goals is to help NSN grow into an even more active, connected, and engaged organization. But growth isn't simply about adding more names to a membership list. Growth means creating more opportunities for members to share their ideas, contribute their talents, build relationships, and find a place where they can make a difference.

So, we want to hear from you. Have an idea for NSN? Tell us. Want to start something new? Let's talk about it. See a way we could serve storytellers better? We want to know. Want to get more involved but aren't sure where you fit? Reach out. There is a place for you.

Not every idea needs to become a major initiative, and not everyone needs to take on a formal leadership role. Sometimes growth starts with a conversation, a suggestion, a volunteer who raises their hand, or a member who simply says, "What if we tried this?"

I'm honored to be in this position, and excited to get to shape our story together. Let's keep talking. Let's keep listening. And most importantly, let's keep building NSN together.

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DID YOU KNOW?

National Storytelling
Network Board of
Directors meetings are
open to all members!

Read minutes and learn
how to attend [here](#).

NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

2026 KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM SCHOLAR ESSAYS



Nicholas Pawlowski
2026 Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholar
President, Story Arts of Minnesota

As a first time NSN attendee and scholarship recipient, I had a great time with you all in Texas! It's an honor to have been introduced to this dynamic community, to learn from more experienced colleagues and to connect with NSN members. As a younger storyteller and entrepreneur artist, it was a delight to be surrounded by so many storytellers who have spent years practicing their craft and sharing it with others. I truly enjoyed sitting down with people from across the country (and world) and listening to their personal, artistic and professional stories. It was inspirational and motivating!

As a Minnesotan who doesn't know Texas very well, I personally loved going on the tour of Palo Duro Canyon State Park and learning a bit of the story of the place where I was. I appreciated the workshops I was able to attend; from teaching me practical skills in using AI technology to gaining a better understanding of the expansive digital universe that our youth are exposed to. (And as I learned, many want to be creators of.) I also greatly enjoyed the concerts, showcases, slam and fringe performances! I certainly had my favorites, but felt that as a whole, there was a shared commitment to professionalism and hospitality.

One of the greatest take-aways was to see the NSN board in action, both how it led the conference and how it communicated with its members. I was impressed with how much engagement was initiated from the President to SIG chairs. I observed that there was significant time allocated to discussion, questions and brainstorm sessions. ...



Mary Louise Hughes
2026 Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholar
Utah-based storyteller

Storytellers are simply good people. As I witnessed the delight with which people greeted each other, it felt like "Old Home Week" - they were so happy to see old friends from all over the country! I was pleased and amazed at how many people knew our very own Rachel Hedman of Story Crossroads in Utah and consider her a dear friend. Even though I did not know a soul when I arrived, the atmosphere of community was so strong that I felt immediately at home. In his opening remarks, NSN President Rishi Nixon (acknowledging that he was an introvert) encouraged us each to, "Give yourself permission to feel a little "ick" while networking", also to "LISTEN - try to accept and understand various stories." Rishi and all of the NSN Board members were incredibly kind, friendly, and hardworking.

Volunteering was required of me since I was a scholarship recipient, but it turned out to be a real blessing. Having a job made me feel purposeful and provided ready-made connections. Working together in the bookstore with Leslie Shelley and Jaye McLaughlin, I found kindred spirits and new friends. I was the house Manager for a couple of Fringe Stories. First, Tim Ereneta told Nart sagas (a Russian equivalent of Greek Mythology) with the tandem telling of personal stories told by Sufian about his childhood in Russia. Seeing the successful interplay of myths and personal tales gave me some great ideas on incorporating multiple genres into some of my stories. Second, Ty Fance and I became fast friends when we literally bumped into each other at registration on the first day. As Fringe house manager I helped him secure his room. By the time he started his set, "Becoming Ty", I realized I had already heard many of his stories through the course of our conversations. ...

... And from what I could tell, it seemed as if there was genuine good will and that people felt included.

Finally, I was happy to physically engage in the closing ceremony. I feel that in this tech age, where an abundance of information and resources are readily available 24/7, it's increasingly important that when people gather (especially in large groups) they are offered a meaningful way to participate. There are many different ways of achieving this, but ultimately, I think people need to feel useful, needed and listened to.... otherwise they'll find an easier way of finding the info they want on their home computer.... and wash dishes at the same time! I thought that dancing and singing in a circle was a brilliant, non-verbal way of connecting us not only to those who have passed, but also to each other. The blending of collective song AND improvisation, made it a unique and memorable experience because we did it together!

Thank you again, and I look forward to the next NSN conference in Minnesota!



Dada Maheshvarananda
2026 Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholar
President, Asheville Storytelling Circle

My first ever NSN conference was fantastic. The three nights of storytelling performances were unforgettable. I was inspired watching and listening to Rishi Nixon tell how he has worked as president to build bridges with other storytelling organizations.

Other highlights for me were walking the halls with Kevin Cordi while listening to him practice his Oracle Award story. Listening to Loren Niemi share a lifetime of community organizing strategies mixed with storytelling techniques to empower marginalized communities.

... I felt like a proud mama, "That's my boy!"

The opening meeting featured an on-stage Rock/Paper/Scissors competition among the first timers to the Conference. It came down to an "All Utah Final", as Vincent Bates and I faced off in the championship round. Vincent won – and went home with the coveted plush buffalo stuffie. But I was honored to play and happy that the only other Conference attendee from Utah was the big winner.

The concerts featuring Regional and National tellers, as well as the Oracle Award recipients, were wonderful! But the air was thick with other, non-featured storytelling options: Fringe story spots applied for before the Conference and selected via a random drawing, Story Swap at the Conference, and tales swapped at mealtimes, around the evening "campfire" gatherings, integrated into workshops, or just walking to and from conference sessions. Many of my favorite stories were shared by my new friend Lou Novak, who has lived, worked, and told stories all over the world.

A Mixer game got people sharing stories from the get-go. I told Viveca my favorite childhood story of how I wanted a miniature baby elephant so much I actually believed it was possible. She told me her favorite childhood story of how her uncle, "Daddy", would bring home stranded baby animals from the woods which they kept in an outdoor menagerie. Daddy caught her poking at the opossum one day. Rather than scold her, which her aunties would have done, he simply said, "I wouldn't do that if I were you." She wanted to poke that opossum but knew she wouldn't because she looked up to Daddy and would follow him anywhere.

Fran Stallings, my Texan suite mate, shared a true "Prairie Voice" in her remastered telling of an old favorite, With the help of his "Prairie God Father", Chipper climbs out of mucking the horse stall to win the heart and the hand of the rodeo princess. Such joyful telling!



Learning about Native American innovator Zitkala Sa from her cousin Lona Bartlett. I was sad that I could only attend a fraction of the workshops and fringe events.

I felt the benevolent ghost of Oracle Award recipient Steve Tate of North Carolina among my weekly Monday night zoom storytelling colleagues and beloved friends: Andy Russel, Naomi Faw, Lona Bartlett, Nancy Reeder, Linda Yemoto, and Robin Kitson. His storytelling evaluation instructions are a mantra we all carry: "First tell what you liked about the story." Only when that ends does Steve ask, "Would you like to hear suggestions from the group how you might improve the story?"

I'm planning now my drive next summer up to Minneapolis!

On the bus to the Palo Duro Canyon, Benny Tahmahkera shared the story of the Comanche people who lived in the canyon. When we stopped and walked around the ancient rocks, Lona Bartlett pulled out her wooden flute and played hauntingly beautiful tunes that punctuated Bennie's stories.

Workshops – I wish I could have gone to them all! There were several on the importance of our history and being true to multiple perspectives. Megan Wells taught me about Making History Relevant. Becoming more aware of historical stories, by embracing both the hopeful and the despairing parts, can help us eliminate the blind spots that would lead us to mistake our personal view as "the truth". As we do so our stories can resonate with a broader audience.

I met several storyteller "celebrities", people I have heard and admired from afar at Festivals in Utah. Pippa White, Adam Booth, Sheila Arnold, Paul Strickland to name a few. Speaking to and rubbing shoulders with these and other "greats" showed me how kind, genuine, and real they are. I was surrounded by giants and welcomed into the circle. Katie Knutson, who shared an Uber ride with me from the airport, turned out to be an Oracle award winner. Each storyteller used their voices for good in such a variety of ways. While there was the feeling of all of us being "just folks", I learned more and more about the creative teaching, organizing, and promoting of good through storytelling that is happening all around the country and the world. It was all summed up by my friend Ty's mantra, "Think Big" and believe in the positive power of storytelling.

Thank you for the incredible gift of your stories and this NSN Conference. I look forward to seeing you all in Utah in 2028!

In the coming months, watch for an announcement for the 2027 scholarships for the Minneapolis conference on storynet.org and in this newsletter.

NATIONAL STORYTELLING AWARDS PROGRAM

ANNOUNCING THE INAUGURAL NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK BOOK & MEDIA AWARDS CYCLE



Margaret Read MacDonald & Kevin Cordi
Co-Chairs, National Storytelling Awards
National Storytelling Network

For 30 years, Dr. Flora Joy of East Tennessee State University created and guided the Storytelling World Awards, helping storytellers, teachers, librarians, scholars, and story seekers discover outstanding books, recordings, and resources. Hundreds of works were recognized through this remarkable program, creating a lasting legacy for the storytelling community.

The National Storytelling Network (NSN) is proud to continue Dr. Joy's work with the 2026 National Storytelling Network Book & Media Awards.

We invite publishers, authors, professional storytellers, academic presses, independent creators, educators, librarians, and storytelling organizations to submit outstanding works for consideration.

FIVE AWARD CATEGORIES

Book Awards & Honors — Books of adult interest

Media Awards & Honors — Outstanding storytelling-related media

Resource Awards & Honors — Books about the art and craft of storytelling and resources useful to storytellers

Youth Book Awards & Honors — Outstanding books for young readers

Picture Book Awards & Honors — Exceptional picture books

WHAT ARE YOU PUBLISHING THAT DESERVES TO BE DISCOVERED?

Every year, wonderful books, recordings, picture books, folktale collections, fairy tales, ghost stories, storytelling resources, professional guides, and scholarly works enter the world. But if a work isn't submitted, it can't be considered.

This award program helps storytellers and story seekers find the resources they may otherwise miss. If you have published something wonderful, bring it forward.

Works published September 30, 2023 through September 30, 2026 are eligible.

[SUBMIT NOW — click here to visit the National Storytelling Network Book & Media Awards page](#)

Visit the National Storytelling Network Book & Media Awards page, select "Awards" → "NSN Book & Media Awards," and complete the submission form. We will then provide the list of panelists to whom you should send your materials.

SUBMISSIONS DUE: SEP 30, 2026

WINNERS & HONORS ANNOUNCED: DEC 1, 2026

NSN MEMBERS NOMINATE YOUR OWN FAVORITE MATERIALS

Items need not be submitted by creators or publishers to be considered. If you are aware of an especially useful item that you think should be examined, email the info to Co-Chairs Margaret Read MacDonald mrmm@margaretreadmacdonald.com (adult material) or Kevin Cordi kctells@gmail.com (youth material).

BYLAWS CHANGES

In accordance with our by-laws, NSN here notes recent changes in our by-laws.

Motion: That 9.2m) Conference Committee be changed to replace “The Conference Committee shall be directed by the Vice-Chair and a local representative of the hosting site. The committee will include one representative from each SIG, the NSN Finance Chair, and at least two representatives of the local group hosting the event.” With “The Conference Committee shall be led by a chair or co-chairs from the host site and shall be overseen by the Vice-Chair of the Board. The committee shall include the NSN Finance Chair. The committee will work closely with the SIGs to make sure their needs are met in program planning.”

Rationale: SIGs need not be involved in local planning of the conference, but do need to be involved in program planning.

Motion: That we delete 9.2 Executive Committee (vii) “A member of NSN not on the board of Directors.” And add “(vii)The Executive Director in a non-voting, advisory role.” **Rationale:** It is unusual for an Executive Committee to include someone not on the board of directors and difficult to execute as the executive board meets directly after board meetings, often on short notice. It is important that our Executive Director be present (though not voting) at all Executive Committee meetings.

Motion: That we alter the description of 7.19 Volunteer Coordinator to change “The Board of Directors shall annually elect a Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator will work with NSN volunteers to manage organizational initiatives.” With “The Volunteer Coordinator is appointed by the chair of the Board of Directors and coordinates the work of all NSN volunteers, with the exception of conference volunteers.”

Rationale: Conference volunteers need to be overseen by a local conference committee.

CORRECTION

Angela Lloyd Sunbrella Award recipient Andrea Lovett’s name was misspelled in our August 2026 issue.

Tell GHOST Stories Better



Paul Strickland explores techniques for building suspense, atmosphere, anticipation, surprise, and describing difficult-to-imagine but unforgettable images in all kinds of spooky storytelling.



YES Member FREE
Non-Member \$20

[CLICK TO REGISTER](#)

STORY LAB

9/23
WEDNESDAY
5 PT 6 MT
7 CT 8 ET



NATIONAL STORYTELLING CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2026 STORYTELLING EVENTS

**True Tales Live
Storytelling Workshop
VIRTUAL**

Upcoming Dates:

September 1, 2026 | 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm CDT

October 6, 2026 | 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm CDT

November 10, 2026 | 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm CDT

Preregister:

us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/p2w-6wFgTX-tJC_Ag1b83w

Contact: truetaleslivenh.org or
info@truetaleslivenh.org

RISK! Live Show and Story Slam in New York

September 8, 2026 | 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm EDT

Caveat | 21A Clinton St, Manhattan, New York

caveat.nyc/events/risk-live-show-and-story-slam-in-new-york-9-8-2026

**Women's Voices, Women's Stories: An online
storytelling class with Laura Packer
VIRTUAL**

Upcoming Dates:

September 8, 2026 | 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm

September 15, 2026 | 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm

September 22, 2026 | 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm

laurapackerthinkstory.simpletix.com

**Roots and Routes – Call for Tellers and Workshop
Proposals**

September 11 – 12, 2026

Southwest Arts Center | 915 New Hope Rd,
South Fulton, Georgia

[cityofsouthfultonga.gov/Calendar.aspx?
EID=6249&month=9&year=2026&day=23&calType=
0](https://cityofsouthfultonga.gov/Calendar.aspx?EID=6249&month=9&year=2026&day=23&calType=0)

Get QR code to submit your proposal at:

[storynet.org/events/event/roots-and-routes-call-for-
tellers-and-workshop-proposals](https://storynet.org/events/event/roots-and-routes-call-for-tellers-and-workshop-proposals)

**The Japanese American Experience of WWII
featuring Alton Chung**

September 12, 2026 | 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm CDT

Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center
450 W Ohio St, Indianapolis, Indiana

[storytellingarts.org/events-1/the-japanese-
american-experience-of-wwii-featuring-alton-chung](https://storytellingarts.org/events-1/the-japanese-american-experience-of-wwii-featuring-alton-chung)

Storytelling.org

Traditions and Truth: A Virtual Open Mic

September 12, 2026 | 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm CDT

storytelling.org/events/traditions-and-truth

Email jdelnegro@dom.edu for the Zoom Link and/or if
you want to tell in the open mic (7-10 minutes).

Voices in the Glen Story Swap

September 19, 2026 | 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm EDT

[voicesintheglen.org/event/vitg-monthly-story-swap-
in-person-13](https://voicesintheglen.org/event/vitg-monthly-story-swap-in-person-13)

RSVP by emailing ebnineteen@hotmail.com

True Tales Live

Storytelling Show “Expect the Unexpected”

VIRTUAL

September 29, 2026 | 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm

[us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/xfPDnoEkR6awf
wqrIWxcDQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/xfPDnoEkR6awfwqrIWxcDQ)

To be a teller email: info@truetaleslivenh.org

Storytelling Arts of Indiana Spooky Stories

HYBRID IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL

October 9, 2026 | 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm CDT

Phoenix Theatre & Cultural Campus | 705 N
Illinois St., Indianapolis IN 46204

phoenixtheatre.org

**Myths retold: The drowned city of Ys with Laura
Packer**

VIRTUAL

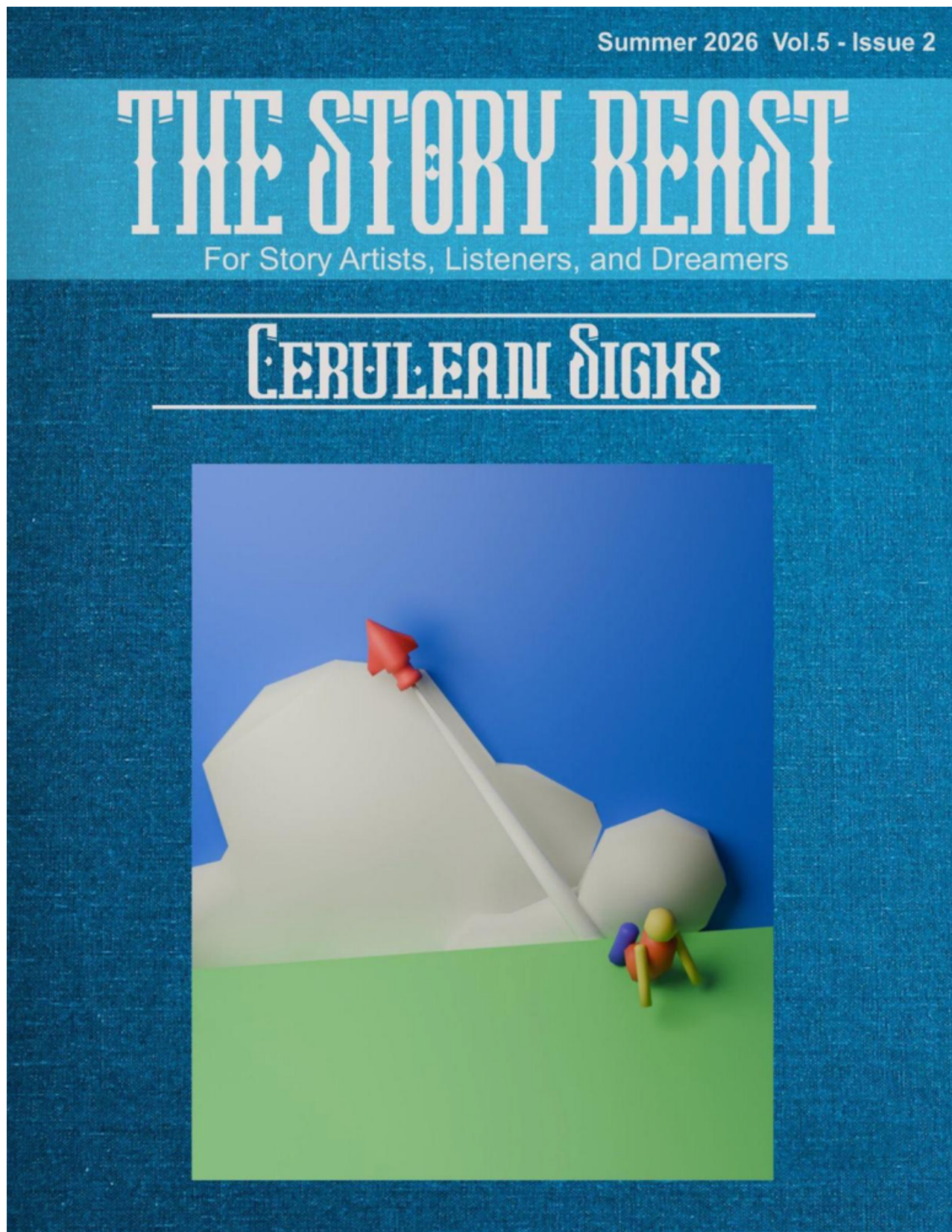
October 17, 2026 | 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm CDT

laurapackerthinkstory.simpletix.com

THE STORY BEAST

Click the cover below to access the Summer 2026 Story Beast issue: *Cerulean Sighs*.

Visit storybeast.org for submission information.





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HOW TO CONTRIBUTE CONTENT:

Send us your events, articles, opportunities, storytelling, or storyteller news, and more in an email to newsletter@storynet.org to go out to the national storytelling community!

1. Contributions due on the 25th of the month.
2. Membership in the National Storytelling Network *not* required.
3. Content subject to editing and inclusion in final issue not guaranteed.
4. If you are the author of your contribution, please also attach a headshot photo of yourself to go next to your byline.