Manifesto Time: Do You Need a Publishing Manifesto?

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Does your publishing organization need a manifesto? Considering attacks on research funding, challenges to research integrity, concerns with AI, and assaults on the value of truth, this seems like a good time for action and an appropriate moment to consider writing a manifesto for your organization, for yourself, or for your long-dreamed-about indie publisher or lit mag startup.

Writing a manifesto for your organization can be a great exercise for team building and planning, even if the result is not necessarily intended for a public audience. Your *mission* defines your organization's core purpose, *vision* clarifies the future as seen by your organization, and *values* define your organization's ethical framework and culture. A well-constructed *manifesto* is a statement of principles that unites all three and is employed to ignite action. You can center these as well on personal growth, goal setting, creativity, and activism.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' speech, delivered at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, established a clear and convincing purpose for American civil rights. It is arguably the most inspiring manifesto of our time. (If you haven't listened to it, or listened to it lately, take a moment to listen in its entirety—have a Kleenex nearby.) Three years prior, Rosyln Pope, then a senior at Spelman College, along with Julian Bond, future head of the NAACP, wrote,

"An Appeal for Human Rights," arguing for justice in Atlanta and Georgia, and inspiring generations of activists.

"Manifesto" derives from the Latin terms manifestus and manifestum, meaning clear, evident, obvious. The concept translates into Spanish as manifiesto; the verb form, manifestar means to declare, for example, one's faith, and to protest or march.

Manifestos are as old as or older than publishing and inexorably intertwined with the history of the book. The biblical narrative surrounding the Ten Commandments describes them as written in stone, first by God, and later by Moses, after he ill-advisedly smashed the originals. Andrew Pettegree and others argue that Martin Luther's "95 Theses" helped ensure the success of the invention of the printing press. Invectives flying from Northern to Southern Europe as pamphlets led to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and kept the first printers in the black, while huge, expensive, tomes such as the Gutenberg Bible failed to make a return on investment. Originally titled *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' ten-point program for communism, published in February 1848, inspired the Russian revolution and continues to impact the world.

Manifestos have been used to advance and excuse terrorism, murder, genocide, and other destructive action. The very idea of a manifesto has, to a certain degree, been hijacked by extremists and terrorists (and who decides who is an extremist or terrorist is often contentious and political). Adolf Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (1925/1926), as a launchpad for his political career. Political leaders and presidential candidates continue to use this strategy to launch their campaigns. Ted Kaczynski's "Unabomber Manifesto" (1995), has inspired legions of self-mythologizing mass murderers, whose ramblings seek attention and to justify their violence, but leave out details like their history of animal abuse. *The Washington Post*, controversially, and at the FBI's urging, published the "Unabomber Manifesto," which led to Kaczynski's arrest after his sister-in-law, Linda Patrik, and her husband, David Kaczynski, recognized his writing and David tipped off the FBI.

Those who read and perhaps follow the precepts of your manifesto become a *public*, as Michael Warner described in "Publics and Counterpublics," a member of an indefinite number of people with a shared identity, even if they may not know each other. David Ronfeldt developed the framework of "Tribes, Institutions, Marketings, Networks" to describe societal evolution. While a manifesto can inspire the public of any of these organizational types, the emergence of multiorganizational collaborative networks provide greater opportunities for social advocacy.

While not framed as a manifesto per se, the principles to affirm and strengthen research integrity proposed by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP), and Association of University Presses (AUPresses), are intended to inspire action. As the authors state: "Future generations depend on our actions today. That's why we must stand together to uphold trust and integrity in the research enterprise."

The collaboration developed principles of belief and support in public investment in basic science and the humanities: the need for broad access to validated, trusted information; the importance of research integrity; and protecting and advancing freedom of speech, academic freedom and nondiscrimination in the marketplace of ideas, as well as ensuring research and scholarship remain free from political interference.

It's Time for Change: Get Writing

Here are a few guidelines for creating a constructive manifesto. They are applicable to all good writing, and like all tenets of communication, the rules can be broken—are even meant to be broken—but it's best to know how and why you are breaking the rules.

Be concise and engaging. Manifestos often have ten points; five to seven action points work well; some manifestos have thirty or more. Use emotions to draw in the reader and paint pictures with words to captivate. Show the problem clearly and offer a solution, bending the arc toward justice. Alliteration and metaphor, as well as a well-chosen, unusual world, can all help, but are easily overdone. Clarity is key. Consider, most of all, your audience: whom are you trying to reach, and what do you want them to do?

You can work to turn your core values, beliefs, strategic priorities, and maxims into a manifesto. A manifesto, however, is more than just a collection of values, beliefs, and aphorisms. A manifesto is a call to action: to persuade your team, your community, the world toward actionable change.

Look to history: what individuals and what organizations do you admire who have written a manifesto? I collect manifestos; excerpts of a few favorites and other examples are below. Look around and find some that inspire. (Once you start looking, you'll find manifestos are ubiquitous.)

Like all collectors and collections (guitars!), there are always enthusiasts who surpass. Geoff McDonald's 1000 Manifestos blog pursued a chiliad but stalled at 269. Creative director Lonnie Elliott has created a database of 175+ "brand manifestos" from Apple, Nike and the like, and compiled a

comprehensive writing guide including in-depth analyses of various emotional arcs, such as the U-shape.

Write and revise, rinse and repeat. Thomas Jefferson wrote his defense of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in about two weeks, but the Declaration of Independence had at least 86 edits and revisions between the Committee of Five and the Second Continental Congress. Try writing your manifesto first as simple bullet points before revising to make them more eloquent and poetic. (Then, you can turn it into a book, as we'll see below.)

It's time for change. It's time to inspire action. Get writing!

Look to the South

My love of the manifesto has been inspired by Latin America, where manifestos are intertwined with the continent's long history of colonialism and struggle for justice. Living in the upper Amazon of Bolivia as an American Field Service exchange student, in 1978-79, I became familiar with the Chilean songwriter, poet, and activist Victor Jara. I learned to play his song "Manifiesto," written shortly before he was murdered after Agusto Pinochet's coup of September 11, 1973. It resides in a long tradition of manifesto as protest song, led by "Strange Fruit," written and composed by Abel Meeropol (under the pseudonym Lewis Allan), and recorded by Billie Holiday in 1939. Woodie Guthrie, as you'll recall, scrawled "This machine kills fascists" on his guitar in 1943: a four-word manifesto.

Manifiesto: Víctor Jara (1973):
Yo no canto por cantar
ni por tener buena voz,
canto porque la guitarra
tiene sentido y razón.
Tiene corazón de tierra
y a las de palomita,
es como el agua bendita
santigua glorias y penas.
Aquí se encajó mi canto
como dijera Violeta
guitarra trabajadora
con olor a primavera.
Que no es guitarra de ricos
ni cosa que se parezca
mi canto es de los andamios

para alcanzar las estrellas.
Que el canto tiene sentido
cuando palpita en las venas
del que morirá cantando
las verdades verdaderas,
no las lisonjas fugaces
ni las famas extranjeras
sino el canto de una lonja
hasta el fondo de la tierra.
Ahí donde llega todo
y donde todo comienza
canto que ha sido valiente
siempre será canción nueva.

* * * * * * * * *

I don't sing just to sing
or because I have a great voice,
I sing because the guitar
has meaning and reason.
It has a heart of earth
and wings like a dove,
like holy water
it blesses glories and sorrows.
This is where my song fits,
as Violeta [Parra] would say,
a worker guitar
with the smell of Spring.
It's not a guitar for the rich
or anything similar,
my song is a scaffold
to reach the stars.
A song has meaning
when it throbs in the veins
of the one who will die singing
the truest truths
not fleeting flatteries
nor foreign fame
but the song sliced

from the very bottom of the earth.
There where everything ends
and where everything begins
a song that has been brave
will always be a new song
(Translation by John Warren)

Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire* trilogy, written between 1982-86, is a lyrical and historical manifesto of the marginalized voices who struggled for justice in the Americas, and changed the way I perceive the world.

In mid-January 1996, I headed to publishing meetings in NYC and stayed a few days early with a friend who was launching a publication akin to the literary magazine *Guernica*. Jim had an actual fax (Does anyone remember the fax?) sent directly from Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Chiapas; he had posted the entire 35-page or so manifesto on the walls of his Brooklyn loft. This is an example of a manifesto and social netwar that might be considered nefarious or destructive by some people, and positive change for others, or perhaps both, depending on whose side you're on. I can still picture those fax pages plastered all over his walls.

Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle: Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos (1996) (excerpt):

> We were born of the night. We live in the night. We will die in her. But the light will be tomorrow for others, for all those who today weep at the night, for those who have erbeen denied the day, for those for whom death is a gift, for those who are denied life. The light will be for all of them. For everyone everything. For us pain and anguish, for us the joy of rebellion, for us a future denied, for us the dignity of insurrection. For us nothing.
>
> Our fight is caused by hunger, and the gifts of the bad government are lead and paper for the stomachs of our children.
>
> Our fight is for a roof over our heads which has dignity, and the bad government destroys our homes and our history....

Internet Dawn

At the dawn of electronic publishing and the Internet, the "Cluetrain Manifesto" was published by Rick Levine, Christopher Locke, Doc Searls, and David Weinberger. First posted to the web in 1999 as a set of ninety-five theses, like Martin Luther's, it was published as a book in 2000 with the theses extended by seven essays. The work examines the impact of the Internet on marketing, claiming that conventional marketing techniques are rendered obsolete by the online "conversations" that consumers are participating in, and that companies need to join to stay relevant. It pointed to the Internet's potential for community-building and positive change. At the time, perhaps, we didn't foresee that social media monopolies, organizations, and individuals would master the use of the Web to manipulate and spread misinformation.

Cluetrain Manifesto (1999) (excerpt):

> We are not seats or eyeballs or end users or consumers. We are human beings – our reach exceeds your grasp. Deal with it.

1. Markets are conversations.
2. Markets consist of human beings, not demographics sectors.
3. Conversations among human beings sound human. They are conducted in a human voice.
4. Whether delivering information, opinions, perspectives, dissending arguments or humorous asides, the human voice is typically open, natural, uncontrived.
5. People recognize each other as such from the sound of this voice.
6. The Internet is enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media.
7. Hyperlinks subvery hierarchy.
8. In both internetworked markets and among intranetworked employees, people are speaking to each other in a powerful new way.
9. These networked conversations are enabling powerful new forums of social organization and knowledge exchnage to emerge.
10. As a result, markets are getting smarter, more informed, more organized. Participation in a networked market changes people fundamentally....

Rules for Learning

"Some Rules for Students and Teachers," often attributed to composer John Cage, was written by Sister Mary Corita Kent (~1967). It was popularized by Cage, and rule 10 quotes him directly. It was published in Steward Brand's classic *Whole Earth Catalog* in 1966, itself a kind of extended manifesto.

Some Rules for Students and Teachers: Sister Mary Corita Kent (1918-198):

RULE 1: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while.

RULE 2: General duties of a student — pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE 3: General duties of a teacher — pull everything out of your students.

RULE 4: Consider everything an experiment.

RULE 5: Be self-disciplined — this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self- disciplined is to follow in a better way.

RULE 6: Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

RULE 7: The only rule is work. If you work, it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch on to things.

RULE 8: Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

RULE 9: Be happy whenever you can manage it. Enjoy yourself. It's lighter than you think.

RULE 10: "We're breaking all the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities." (John Cage)

HINTS: Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes. Read anything you can get your hands on. Look at movies carefully, often. Save everything — it might come in handy later.

Poet, novelist, essayist, environmental activist and farmer Wendell Berry's poem, "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front" (1973), critiques modern societ, urging readers to reject consumerism and embrace nature, community, and faith.

Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front (1973) (excerpt):

"...Every day do something
that won't compute...
Be like the fox

who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection."

Crafting as Activism

Creativity and the creative act are interwoven with the manifesto. I came across the "Craftivist Manifesto" over the holidays, as a striking, ten-foot-tall lithograph in Copenhagen's beautiful Designmuseum Danmak (Danish Design Museum). The Craftivist Collective was founded by Sarah P Corbett, an award-winning activist, Ashoka Fellow, and author, who developed a 'Gentle Protest' methodology, merging aspects of crafting, neuroscience, positive psychology, and social campaigning, and focusing on "introverts a lot as well as Highly Sensitive People, those struggling with anxiety and burnt-out activists looking for a quieter, gentle way to protest." The Craftivist methodology has been used for social and political change in a wide variety of contexts, including increasing minimum wages, and was used by the World Wildlife Foundation in a campaign that led to legislation protecting migrating birds in Spain.

Craftivism encompasses many different strategies, styles and belief systems, including The Pussyhat Project, "dedicated to advancing women's rights and human rights through the arts, education and respectful dialogue."

A Craftivist's Manifesto, Craftivist Collective (undated):

> Connecting our hands, hearts and heads we can truly make a difference.

1. **Be the tortoise**: Breathe; take it slow. Craftivism is about taking a thoughtful approach to mindful activism.
2. **Craft is our tool**: It can bring about effective long-term change, but it should always fit seamlessly with what we're saying, never used for the sake of it.
3. **Solidarity not sympathy**: Preserve the dignity of others by showing solidarity with them in your craft. Understand their struggles and you'll understand their solutions. Activism is not about charity.
4. **Find comfort in contemplation**: Use the slow, stitch-by-stitch, nature of craft to help you consider the complexities of injustices. It will lead to a deeper understanding of them and their solutions.
5. **Empathy never points fingers**: Try to see everyone's perspective. Everyone faces different challenges, so aim to make critical friends, not aggressive enemies.

6. **Small & beautiful**: However small, pieces inspired by beauty and love can be powerful reminders of just how gorgeous the world can be. Don't worry about imperfections either: they're endearing.
7. **Humility holds the key**: The world often needs us to change before it can. Consider your role within the bigger picture. Work with people, never against them and always keep an open mind.
8. **Provoke don't preach**: Never shout, always encourage. Inform through your craft and it will provoke thought and action, Intriguing activism inspires never intimidates.
9. **Embrace positivity**: It's the most encouraging tone we can take. Being cynical is easy, but a positive, compassionate world vision has the power to fuel dreams and build movements.
10. **Make the change you wish to see**: If we want our world to be more beautiful, kind & just, then let's make our activism beautiful, kind & just. So, pick up your needle and thread and join us in crafting! Together we'll change our world one stitch at time...

Publishing Empires

Publishing loves manifestos and vice versa: you can take your ten or thirty or 95-point manifesto and turn it into a book. Examples abound of impactful manifestos published as books. Stephen Covey's manifesto, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, became a bestselling book and launched a publishing empire, with myriad spin-offs: books, speaking engagements, in person and online courses, merchandise, and more. While this involved substantial marketing, no amount of marketing expense and effort alone can make your manifesto resonate and create an impact.

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Steven R. Covey (1989) (summary):

Independence/Self-Mastery
Be Proactive
Begin with the End in Mind
Put First Things First
Interdependence/Working with Others
Think Win-Win
Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood
Synergie
Continual Improvement
Sharpen the Saw

If you're into checklists, you'll want to read Atul Gawande's book, *The Checklist Manifesto*. The author uses checklists for surgical safety procedures; he claims the use of checklists to make the reliable management of complexity routine, has saved lives. It's a simple manifesto that could be a long article, all about building checklists.

The Checklist Manifesto: Atul Gawande (2009) (summary):
A checklist for checklists

Development
Have clear, concise objectives
Be concise, practical, to the point
Use simple structure and language
Design to be read aloud as a verbal check

Drafting
Fewer than 10 items (per pause point)
One page max
San serif font, upper and lower case, large enough to read easily
Validation
Test with those who will be using checklist; modify in response to trials
Ensure checklist can be completed in a reasonable amount of time
A checklist is not a how to guide or instruction manual

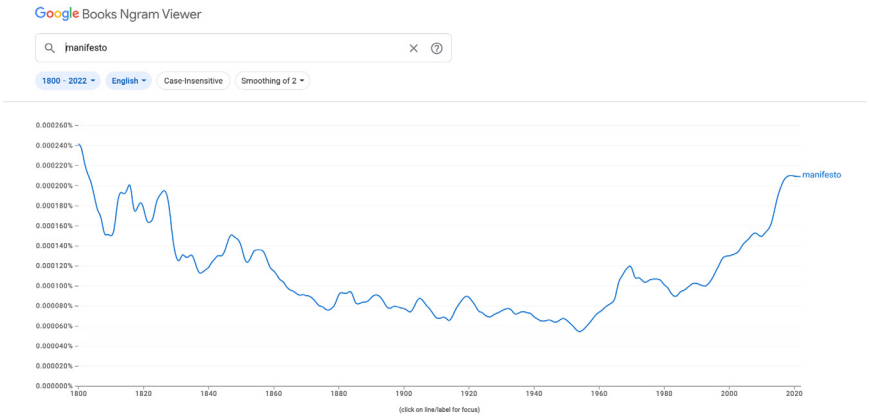


Image: Google Books Ngram Viewer: Appearance of word "manifesto" or "Manifesto" in books published in English included in Google Ngram corpus, from 1800 to 2022.

I recently read Tricia Hersey's *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* (2022). I stay busy, involved in numerous self-motivated initiatives and activities, but am also a firm proponent of a good nap, through learning the value of a good siesta while living in the upper Amazon. Hersey, founder of The Nap Ministry, holds that "Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy." Hersey's manifesto can be summarized by the book's epigraph:

> Your body is a site of liberation.
> It doesn't belong to capitalism.
> Love your body.
> Rest your body.
> Move your body.
> Hold your body.

Her book has manifestos nesting into manifestos like Matryoshka dolls. Like Covey, she has taken the concept into coaching, immersive workshops and courses, lectures and key notes, social media, and flagship collective napping experiences, and the Resurrect Rest School.

Tenets of the Nap Ministry: Tricia Hersey:

1. Rest is a form of resistance because it pushes back and disrupts white supremacy and capitalism.
2. Our bodies are a site of liberation.
3. Naps provide a portal to imagine, invent and heal.
4. Our dream space has been stolen, and we want it back. We will reclaim it via rest.

Manifestos and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship also often spawns manifestos, and vice versa. Bernadette Jiwa, a "storytelling advisor, story skills trainer, and author non-fiction and fiction, presents her manifesto for entrepreneurs as a question, an unusual but effective technique for a manifesto:

> If: A Love Note to Entrepreneurs, Bernadette Jiwa (2011):
> If you're doing your best work.
> If you touched one person.
> If it makes a difference to a handful.
> If you're building a legacy, not just an empire.

If your values are front and centre.
If you're launching ideas from the heart.
If you understand why you're doing this.
If it doesn't have to matter to everyone.
If you care.
If you can see the world as it isn't.
If passion is your master.
If possibility feeds your soul.
If meaning is your currency.
If you embrace failure alongside success.
If permission doesn't get in your way.
If understanding the problem to solve matters.
If people are your inspiration.
If you could change one thing.
If you know the questions to ask and aren't afraid of the answers.
If you could ask for anything today, would 'this' be it?
If not this, then what?

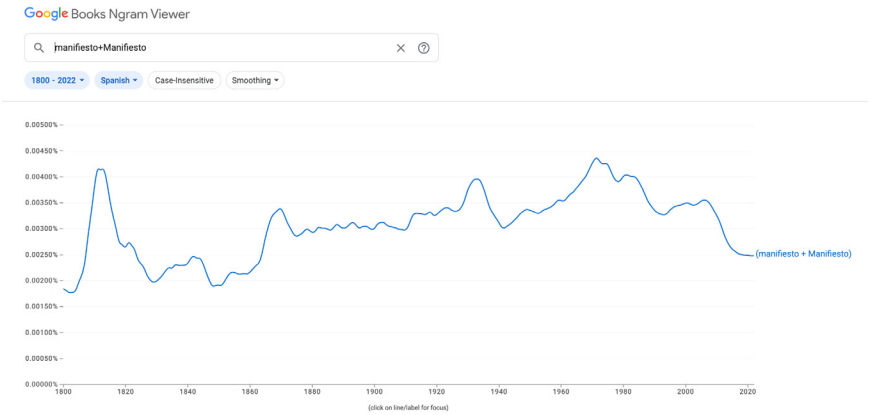


Image: Google Books Ngram Viewer: Appearance of word "manifiesto" or "Manifiesto" in books published in Spanish included in Google Ngram corpus, from 1800 to 2022. The prevalence of the word in Spanish is about one thousand times more than in English, in books of the respective language, in the Ngram corpus.

Get Creative

Not surprisingly, artists and creatives often embrace constructive and avant-garde manifestos. Michalis Pichler, in *Publishing Manifestos: An International Anthology from Artists and Writers*, (MIT Press, 2022), compiled a wide range of manifestos from creators of artist books and zines, including Tauba Auerbach's Diagonal Press, and Erik van der Weijde's 4478ZINE's publishing manifesto, which ends with "All books that are not made, are, at least, just as important."

The creative act itself is ripe for manifestos, such as cartoonist Hugh McLeod's "How to be creative" (2004) ("Ignore everybody... The idea doesn't have to be big. It just has to change the world... Put the hours in... Sing in your own voice...").

I mentioned above creating a personal manifesto. WePresent, WeTransfer's arts platform, has commissioned and compiled an ongoing series of manifestos by creatives who work in music, art, photography, film and literature (and sometimes all of the above). Each offers "10 rules to live by," including musician Willy Nelson ("Stop Looking for Happiness"..."Don't Be An Asshole"...); artist Ai Weiwei ("Take a lot of interest in history and past experience, but also seek out new knowledge. Be imaginative, and desire things that have not happened yet."); Malian musicians Amadou and Mariam ("Be passionate about something"... "Success does not come in a day, so get ready to work hard and be patient"...); psychedelic Timbuktu band Songhoy Blues ("Learn to tune out and tune in every day"... "Seek art outside your comfort zone"), and dozens of others. (Definitely a fun way to spend an hour or two.)

Be As Courageous As You Can

The best manifestos consider what's at stake, and provide a solution, or at least some hope. *On Tyranny* (2017), by former Yale professor Timothy Snyder, has been on the *New York Times Best Seller* list for 129 weeks, drifting in and out of the top spot, and has been published as a graphic edition and expanded audio edition. We had the pleasure of collaborating with Snyder through his biographical essay for Georgetown University Press' *Story of a Secret State*, by Jan Karski. (If you haven't read Synder's *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010) you should do so now.)

Timothy Snyder (from *On Tyranny*, 2017): Don't Be A Bystander: Lessons From The Twentieth Century:

1. Do not obey in advance
2. Defend institutions
3. Beware the one-party state
4. Take responsibility for the face of the world
5. Remember professional ethics
6. Be wary of paramilitaries
7. Be reflective if you must be armed
8. Stand out
9. Be kind to our language
10. Believe in truth
11. Investigate
12. Make eye contact and small talk
13. Practice corporeal politics
14. Establish a private life
15. Contribute to good causes
16. Learn from peers in other countries
17. Listen for dangerous words
18. Be calm when the unthinkable arrives
19. Be a patriot
20. Be as courageous as you can

These seem to be perilous times. We're witnessing alterations to the historical record, research funding frozen or eliminated on ideological factors, federal and state legislatures exerting increased control over higher education, and inclusion branded as illegal activity. Political violence, never dormant in the United States, may be on the rise. It's important not to give up hope that, as Martin Luther King Jr., reminded us, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Many of us are mission-based organizations, seeking to improve and change the world, one book (or journal) at a time. Perhaps take the idea of a manifesto as inspiration for a teambuilding exercise or department retreat activity; if the word manifesto itself raises issues, focus on stating or reaffirming foundational principles. These principles can be a continual work in progress, and do not necessarily need to be made public, although you may choose to do so. Reaffirming a commitment to elements of ethical publishing, as an organization, and as an individual, can be a step toward positive, nonviolent action and change. My own principles center on building and engaging community, being relentlessly creative (and analytical), being a leader in a micro-niche (and developing a unique style), practicing ethical thinking and continuous improvement, and connecting in collaboration.

I asked Randy Townsend, M.P.S., professor of GW's Ethics in Publishing capstone course, for his thoughts, and he suggested prompts for an organizational retreat or planning session, such as:

- What are the biggest threats to our (scientific) community?
- What does our community need to hear from us?
- How can our press/organization make an impact? How do we know if we are making an impact?
- What do our voices need to affirm?
- What are your personal values and how can you apply them to your daily work?

You can also refocus these questions to create a personal set of principles, defining your goals for personal growth, creativity, impact, and activism. Spend some time defining your personal mission, vision, and values, and come up with a personal manifesto, "rules to live by." Or create one for your long-dreamed-about independent publishing imprint, lit mag startup, or indie bookstore.

It's time to get writing!

John W. Warren is Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in Publishing, College of Professional Studies, George Washington University; founder and publisher of the GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing; organizer of the GW Ethics in Publishing Conference; and founder and co-organizer of the Student Journal Symposium for Literary and Research Publications. He has authored several articles about publishing, including "Innovation and the Future of E-Books" (2009), for which he was the winner of the International Award for Excellence in the development of the book, "Zen and the Art of Metadata Maintenance," and an open textbook on Impact in Publishing for the Library Publishing Curriculum. He is a classical guitarist and composer who performs regularly in concert, and a contributor to *Classical Guitar and Acoustic Guitar* magazines.