

Novelists' Ink

The official newsletter of Novelists, Inc. — a professional organization for writers of popular fiction

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Still in Love after All Those Books How Prolific Novelists Keep Going

By BARBARA KEILER

Nothing in the world compares to the thrill of selling your first book. Just that one sale is enough to transform you from a wannabe into a genuine novelist. No longer is your story a double-spaced manuscript; it is now a bound rectangle, printed in a typeface you didn't choose, with justified margins and a stiff spine. You can fondle your book. You can stand it upright on a shelf. You can show it to all the friends and relatives who used to beg you to abandon your dreams and get a real job.

You celebrate. You're an Author, and damned proud of it.

Then the euphoria wears off, and you begin to wonder whether there's been some mistake. Perhaps an editor acquired your book because she felt sorry for you, and as a result of her soft-headedness she has been exiled to Devil's Island. Or perhaps the publisher had wanted for years to put out a book about a schnauzer that sings Verdi, and you just happened to come along at the right moment with your manuscript about a schnauzer that sings Verdi...

In other words, you realize, your sale was a fluke.

So you write a second book—and maybe it doesn't sell as easily as the first. Maybe making the second sale takes months, or years. But eventually you *do* make that

second sale. Now you're two-for-two in the fluke department.

I was recently offered a contract for my fifty-sixth book. I signed the document in triplicate, sent it to my agent, and shook my head in astonishment at the fact that I had somehow been the beneficiary of fifty-six flukes. When people ask me how I've managed to write and sell so many books, I'm at a loss. I don't know how to explain it—other than the fluke factor. Searching for enlightenment, I contacted a group of Novelists, Inc. members whose combined creative output could fill an entire wall of shelves in my hometown library, and asked them how they felt about their writing after so many years and so many books. While their answers varied, one universal stood out: all the authors attributed their scores and scores of book sales not to flukes but to *love*.

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Specifically, they are in love with writing. In fact, they seem to view writing as if it were a lover—or, more accurately, a life-partner, a significant other, a spouse. The authors have committed themselves to long-term, no-divorce, 'til-death-do-us-part marriages with their writing. These "writing marriages" have endured ups and downs, agonies and ecstasies—even the occasional extramarital flirtation. Over time the relationships have evolved. The sparks that first ignited in these authors a desire to write might glow a little less brightly at times—but for all the authors, the commitment to writing remains strong, flavored with respect, affection and sometimes, happily, lust.

Asked if she was as passionately in love with writing today as she was when she'd written her first book, Alison Hart replied, "Still in love...but the honeymoon is definitely over." Dixie Browning (continued on page 7)

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Joy and Ecstasy on the Superhighway

I read those op-ed pieces and *Time* magazine articles and they make me want to cry. I'm only thirty-five, but I clearly am too old to be a member of Generation X. I am not a "slacker." I do not wear grunge. I sport neither a goatee nor an earring. I haven't shaved my head. I cannot use the word "skanky" in a sentence. I never listen to R.E.M. or 10,000 Maniacs. I don't watch MTV. I've never seen Melrose Place.

I am...my parents.

But this month, I told myself, I will change all that. True, I'm still wearing suits and ties and nature is making the head-shaving utterly unnecessary. But, I thought, I can still learn to master...cyberspace.

I had at previous times subscribed to commercial online subscription services, but frankly, it all seemed to me to be a gigantic waste of time. Plus, the slow modem baud rates made accessing anything tedious beyond endurance. So this time I eschewed the easy road and set my sights on the big time—the Net.

I still remember two years ago when a high school student told me about something she found on the Internet and I had to ask what she was talking about. Times change, huh? Now chitchat about the Net—and the Web—is everywhere. *Publishers Weekly* just ran a long list of book-related Web sites. I thought this seemed like something worth investigating.

After a brief flirtation with Delphi (which mostly taught me what you can't do using an indirect commercial provider) I signed on with PSI, the number two company in the biz (I figured they'd try harder). In complete contrast to the endless configuration

hassles I'd experienced before, PSI's Window's-based software worked immediately, and they e-mailed helpful advice on what programs I should download (Netscape for the Web, etc.) to make my netsurfing more pleasant. A week later I was fully competent with e-mail, IRC chat rooms, FTP file transfers, Telnet, and the World Wide Web.

All of these features have distinctive advantages. I can download the Net edition of the *New York Times* (crossword puzzle included) for free in a matter of minutes. You haven't lived till you've played a live, real-time game of IRC Jeopardy against twenty people scattered all across the country. But my favorite is e-mail. What an amazing feature! You can contact anyone with an Internet address and relay information to them at no cost almost instantaneously.

Last week, my editor e-mailed me the jacket copy for my next book, which was a heck of a lot nicer than hearing it read over the phone and then trying to comment intelligently. By subscribing to the "dorothy" mailing list, I picked up the Net addresses of several writer friends, and we've been chatting ever since. It's an easy, cost-free means of communicating with pals you only see infrequently. It's also a great way to send information to someone who needs to know right away but with whom you don't particularly want to get trapped in an actual conversation.

I've already subscribed to several mailing lists on several different topics. Once you subscribe, all the messages posted to the list are automatically directed to your mailbox. It costs you nothing. There are mailing lists for different occupations, games, hobbies, TV shows, medical condi-

tions—even one that will send you David Letterman's Top Ten list every weekday. And best of all, if you ever get really busy and don't have time to read the e-mail—you just don't.

It was while I was reading my e-mail last week that the idea came to me—why doesn't Novelists, Inc. have its own mailing list? All we'd need is some computer-competent person with access to a mainframe computer to set it up and act as list server (volunteers?). I know many of you chat on GEnie or some of the other services, but the advantages here would be considerable. For one, everyone could participate, whether they subscribe to (and pay a fee to) a commercial service or not. For another, we could screen participants. The list server decides which subscriptions are accepted. We could limit ours to the NINC membership, and thus not have to worry about "lurkers" reading our messages and thus stifling the conversation. Information could be exchanged at lightning speed; rumors could be killed or confirmed. You wouldn't even have to wait for the next newsletter to receive important information; it could be transmitted instantaneously.

I think it's a great idea.

And after we get the mailing list up, we can start our own IRC chat room, so we can have real-time conversations on important topics. And then, perhaps, our own Web home page. And then...and then...

Sorry. As you can see, my enthusiasm is spinning out of control. Maybe I'm not too old for Generation X after all. I think I'll go listen to that R.E.M. CD I got for Christmas.

A Few Words About the Conference

I hope those of you who are still undecided about attending this year's conference will take the plunge and register. I recently had an opportunity to review the programming, and I have to tell you, it's sensational. All of it is geared toward you—the professional writer—and how to move your career upward and onward. Although there will be plenty of opportunities for exchanging information, these are not just gripe sessions, these are bona fide things-you-need-to-know. I'm a little biased, but I think this year's programming will be the best we've had yet. And with the added bonus of the Rocky Mountain Book Festival occurring simultaneously and the NINC presence there, this convention should be an outstanding professional opportunity. I hope you'll consider coming.

Also, if you have some writer-friends who have thought about joining NINC or coming to the convention but haven't, this is the time to push them. I've said it be-

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For membership information and application, send your request to the P.O. Box.

fore and it's still true—there is no other organization like NINC and no other convention like ours. Where else will they get an opportunity to mingle with other professional writers, to hear programs on serious professional topics (no how-to-write stuff), and to meet editors and agents from all across the publishing spectrum? Nowhere. Tell them Denver is the place to be this October.

A Few More Words

About the Newsletter

I hope you are as pleased with the newsletter these days as I am. I have to tell you, being president of this organization is not the easiest thing I've ever done. Truth to tell, it's taken me about six months just to figure out what's going on, much less what to do about it, and that includes the newsletter. I think I'm finally zeroing in on what the content ideally should be. Fortunately, Patty Gardner Evans, our newsletter editor, knew right from the start. Last month's investigation and explanation of the "moral rights" clause is to my mind a classic example of what this organization should be doing for its members—and what we will be doing more of in the future. So please forgive me my learning curve, and sit back and enjoy the new, improved newsletter.

Thanks again for listening. Drop me an e-mail sometime soon and make my day.

— William Bernhardt
us008189@interramp.com

INTRODUCING...

The following authors have made application for membership in NINC and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 30 days of this NINC issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of NINC:

New Applicants:

Susan Andersen, Seattle WA
Mary Bracho (*Ana Seymour*), Excelsior MN
Carrie Brown (*Rena Dean*), Bellingham WA
Lynn Bullock, St. Peters MO
Debra Dixon, Memphis TN
Rhonda Harding-Pollero (*Kelsey Roberts*), Pasadena MD
Linda Winstead Jones (*Linda Winstead*), Huntsville AL
Christine T. Jorgensen, Denver CO
Germaine Kennedy, Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia
Charley W. Perlberg, Branson MO
Patricia Van Wie (*Patricia Keelyn*), Marietta GA
Margaret Watson, Naperville IL

New Members:

Olivia Rupprecht (*Mallory Rush*), Menomonee Falls WI
Michael Lee West (Ms.), Lebanon TN
Anne Holmberg (*Anne Avery*), Colorado Springs CO
Kim Hansen, Milwaukee WI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor is the most important column in our newsletter, since it is the monthly forum in which we can all share our views and express our opinions. Anonymous letters will never be published in NINK. Upon the author's request, signed letters may be published as "Name Withheld." In the interest of fairness and in the belief that more can be accomplished by writers and publishers talking with one another rather than about each other, when a letter addresses the policies of a particular publisher, the house in question may be invited to respond in the same issue. Letters may be edited for length or NINK style.

Thank You One and All

I offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone who worked so hard to bring us up to speed on the ramifications of the new Harlequin/Silhouette contracts. These new contracts are indeed a moral outrage and I truly hope that Novelists, Inc. will join with RWA and other writing organizations in their efforts to excise these onerous amendments to the H/S boilerplate.

This is an issue that affects every published writer in America—not just H/S authors. As has been commented on elsewhere, if H/S "gets away" with adding these new clauses, it will only serve as encouragement to other publishers.

Much has been said about the "moral rights" clause, but, frankly, I find others equally disturbing. No limit on the amount of royalties withheld against returns? That would mean the only money an author could see for years would be her paltry advance—and maybe not all of that.

Changing the method of advance payment to one-third on pub in the same breath they extend their time to publish? An author could write her book in good faith while the publisher has 36 months after they deem the work acceptable to publish it. It could take 40 months or more to receive all the advance.

Not be allowed to use one's own name with another publisher for 18 months? Suppose H/S rejects a manuscript or folds an imprint? That author cannot use her already established name at another publisher for the next year and a half!

The bad debts clause is simply unbelievable. Authors have no control over to whom H/S extends credit, yet are expected to carry the burden for bad debts. Isn't that what we're already doing by accepting such a low royalty rate on book club sales?

H/S has stated these new clauses have been inserted in their American boilerplates to bring our contracts in line with those being executed in other countries. I suggest the only moral and ethical solution would be to remove these clauses from their other contracts.

— Judi Lind

The More the Merrier

The following was sent to Novelists, Inc. Because one of the signatories is a NINC member, Libby Hall, and because the letter addresses a serious situation discussed in last month's NINK, members may be interested in action other writers' organizations are taking. As Libby says, "The more who get in on this the merrier."

Dear Candy Lee:

During our recent meeting in New York, you mentioned that Harlequin/Silhouette would begin using a new form contract which provided, among other things, for increased royalties for sales in English-speaking countries. We have now seen the contract to which you referred and understand why you did not explain the changes included in the "among other things" category.

We naturally approve of and encourage changes that make author/publisher contracts simpler, easier to read and more equitably balanced. However, our members find many of the changes in the new Harlequin/Silhouette contract confusing rather than clarifying. The contract also shifts a major part of the publisher's risk to the shoulders of the authors, hardly an equitable situation. The following is a list of clauses our members considered the most problematic:

1. Grant of rights

The new language of this paragraph speaks of granting an exclusive license rather than exclusive rights in the Work as in the former contract. We are concerned about the reasons for the change and the difference between the extent of rights granted under each version. If the rights being granted are the same, the old language is clear and to the point. If the rights being granted have changed, then authors are entitled to an exact explanation of these changes and their impact on the Work and the author.

Reliance on obscure legal phraseology is particularly out of place in a contract between an author and a publisher. We realize the necessity of dealing with lawyers complicates the issue, but as professionals in the publishing industry, our goals should be to understand one another, not to obfuscate and confuse.

We also note that the new contract seeks to grant rights in perpetuity. Again, this wording is unclear as to the publisher's intent. We have some doubts about the ability of an author to grant perpetual rights, and we wonder whether we are not being asked to deliver more than we own or more than ought to be sold for the consideration being offered.

Item (ac) and Paragraph 17, Item 19 require authors to sign away unknown rights. Since such rights are as yet undetermined, they cannot be fairly valued and should be left to future negotiation.

Finally, with respect to this clause, we note the omission of the traditional language indicating that all rights

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

not granted to the publisher are reserved to the author. Is the purpose of the new contract to change this well-established standard in our industry? If so, we believe a forthright explanation of the change is in order. If not, we see no reason to omit the wording.

7. *Editing of Manuscript*

It is customary for this section to include an acknowledgment that no material changes shall be made to the Work without the Author's consent. We also note that authors are not being permitted to see the copyedited version of the Work as well as the page/galley version as in the old contract. As you are well aware, authors are identified in the public mind, for better or worse, by their Work. Legal authority aside, it is inappropriate to publish under an author's name anything for which she has not consented to accept responsibility.

9. *Moral Rights.*

We note again that this is a new provision and again wonder if it is intended to expand the rights traditionally granted to the publisher. As with other terms used in this contract, we are confused by the term "moral rights." If the words are used in their ordinary sense, they describe something which is, by definition, incapable of being transferred. If there is some obscure technical or legal meaning to the term, it should be explained in plain language rather than jargon.

16. *Royalties. Paragraph 3, Item d. Net Copies Sold.*

We are astonished by this item. Do you seriously mean to shift to the authors the burden of your own bad credit decisions? With each book written, the author has already made a significant investment in time. She already has plenty at risk, i.e., her future livelihood, but she, the expert at writing fiction, accepts this risk as part of the business of writing. Your part of the bargain is to see to the business of production and distribution. You must accept the risks for that part of the process you control.

This provision is a major departure from the accepted standards of practice in our industry and constitutes a breathtaking effort to shift from the publisher to the author a major element of risk in our industry. If the increase in English-language royalties was worthy of advance mention in New York, surely a change of this magnitude should have been mentioned as well. Many members, including long-time supporters of Harlequin, have expressed outrage at this provision. And so they should.

16 *Royalties. (c) (iii).*

Although we had been led to expect an increase in English-language royalties, we note that the revised contract reduces the royalty payment for English-language digest copies sold in the United States from 3.6 to 2 percent. We are not aware of any reason which would justify such a change and find it unacceptable.

16. *Royalties. (f). Direct to Consumer Sales.*

Despite publisher's protests of collections problems

with direct to consumer sales, we strongly believe the author is entitled to the same royalty rate for these sales as for retail sales. The new contract continues the reduction in royalty rates by providing for 1/2 the royalty rate of retail sales calculated on 85% of the Cover Price. In other words, 15% of direct to consumer sales is sheltered completely from any royalty burden, and a reduced royalty rate is then applied to the already reduced revenue base. We assume that the justification offered for this is, as Harlequin has claimed previously, that collections are more serious with respect to direct to consumer sales.

Even granting, for the sake of discussion, that there may be problems in collecting monies for books sold, credit decisions are entirely within the control of the publisher and, as such, are the publisher's risk. Even should we agree authors ought to accept part of that risk (which we adamantly do not), we believe Harlequin/Silhouette is trying to shift more than a fair share of the load. If there is a collections problem in direct to consumers sales, Paragraph 16 (3)(d) should take care of it. Including two remedies for the same problem turns the publisher's risk of loss into a source of profit at the author's expense. How many times should the authors be called upon to protect the publisher from its poor credit decisions?

A Direct to Consumers Sales provision at three-fourths (3/4) of the royalty percentage for retail sales applied to the whole Cover Price would be more than fair to the publishers. With this formula, the author shares an acceptable portion of the burden of the discount offered to direct to consumer sales as well as any "bad debt" risk.

16. *Royalties. (g) (i) (j). General.*

We view the publisher/author relationship as a joint enterprise in which each part must do its part, accept its part of the responsibility and share equitably in the proceeds. Under the circumstances, we wonder why these paragraphs offer the author less than half of the additional net revenue derived from such events as special sales (25% for the author), remainder sales (10%), and advertising (25%). Authors have no control over these ancillary activities, yet their income can be adversely affected, in particular by remainder sales. The publisher makes a profit from these endeavors. It is not unreasonable for authors to expect to share equally in the proceeds from their work.

17. *Other Rights. (a).*

With respect to the activities listed in this paragraph, the publisher acts as the agent for the author. An agent's typical commission is 10%-15% of the earnings. We are at a loss to understand what makes these agent services so much more valuable when provided by the publisher. A split of 75% for the author and 25% for the publisher would more than adequately compensate for the service provided.

23. *Examination of Books of Account.*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 5)

In this paragraph, we note the addition of new wording to the effect that no examination shall be made by Author's accountant upon a contingent fee basis. Again we are surprised by the publisher's demand. The financial arrangement of an author with her accountant is her and the accountant's private business. Most certainly, it doesn't fall within the purview of the company that is being audited. This further encroachment upon the author's rights is not acceptable.

28. *Bankruptcy or Business Failure.*

We note that the references to the reversion of rights to the author in the event of the publisher's bankruptcy or business failure have been omitted from the new form. We understand that some aspects of bankruptcy law supersede contract terms. However, to the extent permitted by law, the rights should be returned to the authors if the publisher has been unable to manage its business affairs successfully. If a publisher's financial problems are the result of poor work product from its authors, the loss from the reversion is minimal. If, on the other hand, good work cannot be profitably marketed because of poor management, the quality of service due to the authors under the contract has not been provided and the bankrupt publisher should not expect the authors to sacrifice further to compensate for its own failings.

Although we are dismayed and disappointed by Harlequin's new form contract, we intend this letter as constructive criticism. We hope you will accept it in the spirit in which it is offered. By addressing the issues we have discussed, we believe you can preserve and enhance Harlequin/Silhouette's image among and rapport with its authors, as well as others in our industry. Although you enjoy overwhelming bargaining strength in dealing with authors, we think it unwise to force the provisions of the new contract on them. Experience teaches that having the power to do something does not necessarily make it the wise thing to do. Our industry will work best if authors and publishers deal with one another in an atmosphere of mutual respect, having due regard for what is fair. Ultimately, that will serve the best interests of all. We're looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Janis Reams Hudson,

President, Romance Writers of America

Libby Hall

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Chairperson, Professional Relations Committee

Alison Hentges

Chairperson, Published Authors Network

CC: *Association of Authors Representatives, Authors Guild, Novelists, Inc., National Writers Union*

Have Fingernails, Will Party

When I first read Laura Resnick's "R-E-S-P-E-C-T," I laughed. Then I wondered how she found time to write

while going to all those parties and jetting around the country (on her way to another party?). Then I decided I wanted Laura's life. I already have the party-red fingernails; now I'm just waiting for the invitations.

— **JoAnn Ross**

T(w)o The Point

Two comments:

1) Am I the only one who is enjoying the testosterone surge in our recent newsletters?

2) Randy Russell is a very naughty person. Funny, but very naughty.

— **Susan Elizabeth Phillips**

Zebra Responds:

I am writing in response to Patricia Werner's concern and comments about our new type size for our mass market books. As you all probably know, paper has increased somewhere around 50% over the past year. This has caused all publishers to reconsider their packaging and cover prices.

As a result of these paper increases we have decided to reduce the size of our text type to a slightly smaller size. Actually, the size we reduced to is the size that most publishers have been using all along. Basically it comes down to the fact that we either have to increase cover prices even further or reduce the cost of manufacturing books.

Patricia suggested that she would rather cut the length of the book than see the type in a smaller size. Every editor I checked with would rather have the longer story and I'm confident that most writers would prefer the same. Although some readers might be put off by smaller type, I feel that they would prefer that option rather than spending another dollar for the same book. In further defense of a reduced type size is the fact that we previously published our To Love Again line with a larger type size and we didn't realize any increased sales because of it.

Although we would all prefer to have a larger type size, the economies of manufacturing books today will just not allow it.

— **Steven Zacharius**

President, Kensington Publishing Corp.

Honors and Laurels

Lois McMaster Bujold has received a Hugo Award nomination for *Mirror Dance* as best novel of 1995.

Irene Bennett Brown is a finalist for a Spur award from the Western Writers of America, Inc. for *The Plainswoman* as best original paperback novel.

Pamela Browning won second place in the romance books category in the National Federation of Press Women Communications Contest for *Merry Christmas, Baby*.

Connie Bennett also is a finalist for a 1995 RITA award.

Still in Love

(Continued from page 1)

said, "It's no longer the same giddy, breathless, adolescent kind of love that it was at first. My writing and I share a more mature and much more satisfying relationship now that we know each other better and know what to expect." Sandra Brown revealed, "Writing and I are as passionately in love as ever, but we fight more than we used to."

Perhaps perfect love is possible, but it's rare to nonexistent in these long-term "writing marriages." In some cases, the authors seem to be locked into obsessive, arguably dysfunctional relationships. Several authors compared their love of writing to the yearning a junkie might feel for a drug. Jayne Ann Krentz admitted her passion for writing "always was a love/hate relationship, just like any good addiction." Sandra Brown admits to getting "high" on writing. Anne McCaffrey suffers "definite keyboard withdrawal symptoms" when she goes longer than a week without writing.

Like all marriages, "writing marriages" offer fulfillment in some areas of the relationship and frustration in other areas. Anne McCaffrey bemoans her computer-dependency: "I hate the bloody keyboard and the g.d. computer" when it malfunctions. JoAnn Ross points out that "so much about the writing business is out of my control." As Ann Maxwell puts it, "Some days I'd trade it all for a dog and shoot the dog."

She adds, though, that "most days I wouldn't trade it for anything." This sentiment was echoed by all the other writers I contacted. The love of writing carries the authors through the inevitable highs and lows, and forces the authors to devise coping mechanisms so they needn't file for divorce when the going gets rough. Dixie Browning says, "I don't waste time swimming against the current. I simply float until the tide changes." "Why go through the pain and frustration if you don't love story telling?" Nora Roberts observes.

Given the longevity of their marriages, I was impressed that none of the authors complained about that pain and frustration. Some had survived such dismal previous "relationships" (Jayne Ann Krentz has flipped hamburgers in her past; Nora Roberts has scrubbed toilets) that they consider a "writing marriage" worth any hardship.

The "writing marriages" have wrought havoc on some of the authors physically; ergonomics can only go so far to fend off the aches and pains of daily communion with a word processor. Daily is no exaggeration. These writers work on their marriages constantly. A writer doesn't produce fifty or seventy-five novels without a full-time, full-throttle commitment to the work.

Perhaps most significantly, boredom wasn't cited as a

serious problem in these "writing marriages." Some of the authors write in more than one genre, but even those who confine themselves to one genre find nothing tedious or repetitive in the work.

The authors have conquered old challenges only to confront new ones. Breaking into a market, selling that first book, mastering the mechanics of structuring a novel...the struggles of starting out are nothing more than a nostalgic memory for these old-married folks. At this point, they are most often concerned with how to stay viable as selling novelists.

If—just maybe—there are moments of boredom in a long "writing marriage"—and indeed, what long marriage is ever completely free of boredom?—the authors get through it without whining. Part of the solution lies in the very nature of writing itself: tired of one story, a writer

has only to slog her way to the end of that story, and then she can start something new. Other potentially boring aspects of the work—the solitude, the day-in-day-out wrestling with words, images, characters, and conflicts—seem to be precisely what the authors love best. Outsiders sometimes observe a married couple and wonder, "What does he

see in her?" or, "How can she put up with him?" The authors in "writing marriages" flourish where most people would flounder. The very aspects of writing that might scare would-be suitors away—the daily-ness of it, the isolation, the mind games and uncertainties—are precisely what authors find most attractive in a life-partner.

Some couples stay together because they can't afford to separate, and a few brave authors admitted that economics kept them in a "writing marriage." Writers who produce novels on a regular basis grow dependent on the income these books produce. Yet none of the authors claimed that economics was the *only* reason they had remained writers for so many fruitful years. More than one author claimed that even if she found herself unable to sell another book, she would keep writing out of love.

How do these authors keep that love alive? How do they keep the "marriage" fresh?

While some of the authors confess to repeating themselves in their work (albeit never deliberately) they all strive to avoid doing what they've done before. Yet creating new and different stories brings its own set of difficulties. Some authors worry about losing loyal readers if they stray too far from what they've done in the past, while others claim that diversifying protects their readers as well as themselves from boredom. All the authors claimed to have a clear sense of who their readers are—and they write specifically with those readers in mind. Some of the authors who work in different genres use different pen names for each genre, so as not to confuse their readers.

None of the authors has ever run out of ideas for →

Perfect love is ... rare to nonexistent in these long-term "writing marriages."

Still in Love

(Continued from page 7)

books. Indeed, they seem remarkably skilled in the art of generating story ideas. Quite a few authors mention newspaper and magazine articles, movies, and television shows as good sources of ideas. Alison Hart tours shopping malls and houses for sale in search of ideas. One author believes there are countless stories floating

The very aspects of writing that might scare would-be suitors away are precisely what authors find most attractive in a life-partner.

around in the air, and, like a radio, she has an antenna that can locate those stories and transform them into something coherent and meaningful. Debbie Macomber finds stories the way her daughter finds

garage sales: "We can be driving down a street and all I see is the road, but she's found the dates and times of six garage sales posted along the way. It's all in what we're looking for. I see stories. She finds garage sales."

For other authors, coming up with story ideas is a mystical process. Lass Small says, "Ideas come very oddly. When I'm asleep. A chance sentence.... Odd things." Nora Roberts has "no idea where ideas come from." Ann Maxwell says she was "born with [ideas]—more of them than I'll ever live to use."

No matter how infatuated they were with writing when they first started out, these authors entered into their "writing marriages" with their eyes open. Alison Hart describes a "natural transition point"—the time a writer has to decide whether to say "I do" or end the relationship. This is the point at which "you know how lonely the life style is. You know the emotional cost of writing. These are not small issues, and writing is not a long-term healthy (or sane) career for everyone." A writer who chooses the long-term commitment must make "a tough, self-honest decision about whether this is really what you want."

That decision—to commit oneself to a "writing marriage"—must be made willingly and consciously. Successful marriages *aren't* flukes; they are the result of hard work, devotion, and passion. The love these authors have invested in their "writing marriages" has come back to them in renewed creativity, financial rewards, and the joy of reaching readers with their words.

"Would I trade any of this?" Debbie Macomber asks. "Not likely. I love my life and I love what I do." Rosalyn Alsobrook says, "I thank my Maker every day for allowing me to do what I want.... Even on bad days, I'm grateful to be a writer."

And on good days? According to Alison Hart, "When

writing is going well, it's still the most fun you can have standing up."

My thanks to the following very busy authors who took time out to answer my questions: Rosalyn Alsobrook, Sandra Brown, Dixie Browning, Alison Hart, Jayne Ann Krentz, Debbie Macomber, Ann Maxwell, Anne McCaffrey, Nora Roberts, JoAnn Ross, and Lass Small. By my estimate, these authors have together produced more than 600 novels.

Barbara Keiler writes as Judith Arnold. Her upcoming titles include *The Lady in the Mirror* (11/95) and *Timeless Love* (12/95), both *Harlequin Temptations*.

POINT/COUNTERPOINT

Each month features a new *POINT*. Agreements and disagreements—the *Counterpoint*—will be published two months later to allow everyone time to respond. *POINTS* are always published anonymously to allow members to bring up controversial issues related to the writing industry without concern. Send the *POINT* you want to bring up for discussion and your response to this month's *POINT* to the editor.

Due to severe space limitations in this issue, the new *POINT* will be published in next month's issue.

In response to June's *POINT* about not taking advances, this COUNTERPOINT:

In response to Michael Chabon's comment in *Publishers Weekly* concerning taking no advance money, I say let him build a house for someone else with no money down.

Publishers hold enough whips over our head without giving them total control. Once we have that money in our grubby little fists they have to sit up and take notice when we speak. Otherwise, they can sit back and yawn and say "What, another book? Oh, dear. But I really think the front door belongs a little more to the right, and if you can't fix it, well, you can always sell it to someone else." This is a business, World, let's get with the program and to heck with your anxieties.

(Upfront money for promotion? Like, whose? You going to get that nailed down in your next contract?)

— Pat Rice

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Compiled by Victoria Thompson

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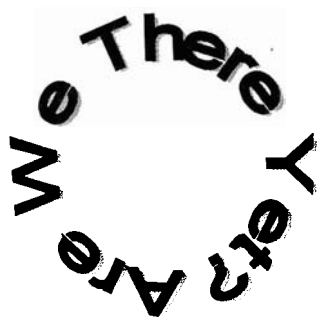
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Write for free catalogue, you'll get on their mailing list.

This guide was compiled from contributions by Nadine
Crenshaw, Deborah Martin Gonzales, Melissa Lynn Jones,
Marj Krueger, Linda Varner Palmer, Barbara Dawson Smith,
Victoria Thompson and Patricia Werner.



Are We There Yet? features whatever in the publishing/bookselling business affects our income, working conditions, blood pressure and/or mental health. Whenever you come across something that applies, send it in.

I Bet You Thought You Were In Books in Print

By AMANDA SCOTT

So you've written another book. Naturally, *Books in Print* will list it, or so you think. But, as I discovered recently, chances are that some of your old titles are missing and the new one might not be there either. What happens then? Does it matter?

It happened to me. It happened to Georgia Bockoven—twice. It may have happened to you, and it does matter, but you can do something about it.

Highland Fling hit the street in mid-January. By the first of February, I'd been told it was not listed correctly "in Bowker,"—i.e., the electronic *Books in Print*, published by R.R. Bowker. Not long after that, I discovered *Highland Fling* wasn't listed in Bowker at all. And since nearly all distributors' computer systems—not to mention the inventory systems of most bookstores and chains—are linked to the electronic *Books in Print*, that meant headaches for me, for booksellers who wanted the book, and for readers trying to find it.

If a customer went into a bookstore and asked for *Highland Fling* by title, or for Amanda Scott's latest book, that customer was informed that I hadn't written anything since June 1994. In one case, I was told by a clerk (after introducing myself, mind you, and asking her to look up my book) that *Highland Fling* was not written by Amanda Scott but by Amanda (sic) Stuart! If a customer could produce an ISBN, or if the clerk knew to search the "keyword" index (and did so correctly), the customer got all the right information, because when Ingram buys a title, they put the ISBN and other pertinent data in their own database. Until May 1995, ISBN and Keyword were two of only four ways by which the *Books in Print* software was cross-indexed with Ingram, but not many customers carry our ISBNs in their pockets, and it's a rare bookseller who uses Keywords to search for titles or authors.

Now, before anyone panics, let me reassure you that what happened to my book won't happen to yours—at least, not exactly. As of the May issue of the electronic *Books in Print*, its search software will cross-index by title and author with other title/author information accessible by the user. In other words, if Ingram purchased your book, the information (title, author, ISBN, price, etc.) is in

the Ingram database, even if it is not yet in *Books in Print*, and the *Books in Print* search software will search the Ingram database as well as its own. It has never done that before except by ISBN, Keyword, Ingram Title Code and Publication Year.

One reason for missing titles is that for over a year, Bowker has been making big changes, speeding up their whole process and making it more powerful than ever; and, in the course of upgrading their data format, some data was lost. Publishers were sent checklists and asked to update them, but many did not comply soon enough to get titles that had been lost back into the database before the books reached the shelves.

From February well into May, I was in frequent contact with some wonderful people at Ingram who worked diligently with Bowker to get the problem fixed, not just for me but for all authors whose books somehow had missed (or might later miss) being listed in *Books in Print*. It rapidly became clear, however, that it is extremely important for our titles to be listed there.

In order to get more information about how Bowker works, I talked with Martin Brooks, Senior Vice President of Electronic Publishing, who told me that *Books in Print* has been offered in CD-ROM form since 1986. With the latest system, BowkerPower (launched 1995), *Books in Print* became the first database to be converted to an information network that not only communicates directly with other databases, but also scans, scrutinizes and corrects its own records. (For example, it can tell from the last digit of your ISBN if the number is wrong and will spit it out of the database.)

The CD-ROMs are shipped to bookstores and other customers all over the country. Originally, the data was updated only quarterly, but that soon changed to bi-monthly, then monthly. Bookstores (and other customers) now receive a new CD-ROM every month, along with weekly updates on disk from Ingram. All the information on the CD-ROMs and disks is accessed through the new BowkerPower system, which now connects 19 indexes, coupling the latest *Books in Print* database with the latest Ingram inventory. That's the part that's fixed.

What isn't fixed is getting your missing titles back into ➔

Bet You Thought...

(Continued from page 9)

Books in Print (or new ones listed when they should be), and this is where you come into the picture. When I asked Mr. Brooks how a title can altogether miss getting onto the CD-ROM, he said, "If the book isn't on the CD-ROM—in our database—that usually means the publisher has not sent us the Advance Book Information Form." That's a printed form, commonly called the ABI, and it's the traditional way publishers notify Bowker of new titles.

Nowadays, according to Mr. Brooks, publishers can also notify Bowker electronically, and Bowker will work with each one to determine the best way for that publisher. For those curious about the cost of all this, publishers pay a one-time service fee to receive an ISBN prefix, which they have to have to sell the books. Listing in *Books in Print*—electronic, print, or otherwise—of title, ISBN, author, number of pages, and price is free. Extra goodies can be had for a price—a blurb telling about the story or author, for example.

Bowker is working right now on a publisher education program, to get publishers to update their lists, to show them how to take full advantage of BowkerPower, and to enlist their aid in making the system work to its full potential. And every house can do more than it is doing now. For example, Bowker has worked with the Book Industry Standards Advisory Committee (BISAC) to create standardized abbreviations, because everyone in the industry uses abbreviations for titles and other information. Negotiations took three years, but fully approved standardized abbreviations now exist. The trouble is that none of our publishers use them.

Abbreviations aren't the only problem, either. The whole industry is in the midst of switching from the old BISAC format for sending data to a new one (X12). A major problem with receiving electronic data from various sources (as all of you who have ever downloaded information from someone else's database to your own know) is that if the formats are not the same, the process ranges from cumbersome to impossible. So Bowker is strongly encouraging all our publishers to change to the new format.

In order to utilize these new standards, most publishers will have to upgrade systems that were built to control inventory, not to deliver bibliographic data. Meanwhile Bowker is still working from the Advanced Book Information forms, publishers' catalogues, and other traditional sources—wherever they can get data—in order to produce the CD-ROMs and get them to the booksellers. Their eventual objective is a 48-hour turnaround of information from the publisher to the *Books in Print* database, even if the information from the publisher comes to them in printed form. That hasn't happened yet, but Mr. Brooks says they will be there soon, and when it does happen, not only will

all the information move faster but they also will be able to correct omissions much more quickly than they can now.

Many of the larger publishers already do everything electronically. BowkerPower allows them to download directly into the *Books in Print* database via Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) with a modem or dedicated line. For publishers lacking electronic transmission resources, Bowker offers a special software program devised to interface with the *Books in Print* database. At the moment, they are in the process of revising that interface, but once the revision is complete, Bowker will send those electronically challenged publishers a floppy disk, onto which they can key new titles directly, either by using Bowker's interface, or by downloading the titles from the publisher's own internal database.

Despite all this, according to Mr. Brooks, "Not all publishers recognize the importance of getting the titles into *Books in Print*. And we know it's important. It's proven all the time." Bowker has even shown that sales are made directly from *Books in Print* listings with no other promotion. They seeded the database with a few phony records, and they get orders for those titles. Not many, but enough to prove their point.

The *Books in Print* database is available in many forms—the big printed book (updated with a mid-cycle supplement in March), the *Paperbound Books in Print* (issued twice a year), microfiche, on-line, CD-ROM, and magnetic tape. It's not just in bookstores, but in libraries and on college campus networks. At the University of Pittsburgh, for example, the campus library and campus bookstore got together to mount the *Books in Print* database; and, according to Mr. Brooks, next to the card catalog, *Books in Print* is the most used database on their system, totaling 34% of all searches. *Books in Print* is also mounted on Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACS), in libraries nationwide.

In fact, *Books in Print* is showing up everywhere, and by September 1995, will even be available on user-friendly Muze-for-Books, an interactive, touch-screen kiosk, in bookstores across the country (See *Publishers Weekly's* ABA issue, p. 200). Muze, the company that provides similar customer kiosks for record and video stores, has obtained the rights to do the same with *Books in Print*, giving patrons direct access to favorite titles and authors' names. Readers will thus be much more likely to look up backlists and new titles. And as soon as Bowker can figure out a way to secure and charge for the information, *Books in Print* will be on the Internet as well.

So, what can you do to be sure your titles are listed? First, ask your publisher if back titles and new ones have been recently checked and updated with Bowker. You can also ask a bookseller to check your new title when it comes out (or before, for that matter) to see if it's listed in the electronic *Books in Print*. However, since BowkerPower

now searches much more thoroughly for information, and many clerks do not know exactly what they are searching (Bowker, Ingram, or an in-store system), our best approach is to persuade any publishers who still need persuading that *Books in Print* is a major partner in our business and encourage them to update regularly if they are not already doing so.

If you still need motivation to look into this on your own behalf, let me just add that, although I did not by any means check every publisher (not even all four of my own), of the two houses for which I do have information, one had no titles with publication dates after February 1995 listed on Bowker's May CD-ROM, and the other had no March or April titles on the April CD (don't know about May). I also know an editor who checked five books at random from various publishers several weeks ago, and not one of the five was listed on the April CD-ROM, although all five were available by then.

Lest you (or they) get the impression that I am casting aspersions on my own or (even worse) every publisher out there, let me hasten to add that most are generally efficient about listing titles. Much of the missing data is missing only because of the format change and the difficulty in getting updated information in a timely manner. In fact, Mr. Brooks said they already have 11,585 titles for 1996 and later (many listed as "date not set").

And, please remember, if your title is not listed in *Books in Print*, it no longer (as of the third week of May) means that customers won't find your books. Nearly every bookstore in the country uses the Ingram system (*Books in Print Plus*) one way or another, so if Ingram bought the title, there is no longer a problem with cross-indexing, thanks to the new BowkerPower format. But, as you can see from the many other areas Bowker impacts (especially with the upcoming Muze-for-Books kiosks), it is very important for your titles to be listed, and you are the best person to check.

Now, for those of you who won't sleep if you don't attend to the details yourself, there is one more thing you can do to make sure your next title is in *Books in Print*. You can fill out your own ABI (copy sample on page 12, thanks to Leigh Yuster-Freeman, vice president, Bibliographies-Production, who also provided information for this article) and send it directly to Bowker. In the midst of all my research, I discovered that *The Bawdy Bride*, which will hit the street in mid-August, was also not listed. It is now.

In NINK's September issue, Georgia Bockoven recounts her own Books in Print "war story."

To obtain a copy of the full minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting, send \$2 plus SASE to the P.O. Box. For an updated copy of the Bylaws, send \$2 plus SASE. For a copy of the Treasurer's Report, Send \$1 plus SASE to the P.O. Box.

NINC Notes

Nominees for 1996 Board of Directors

PRESIDENT: Victoria Thompson

VICE PRESIDENT: Patricia Gardner Evans

SECRETARY: Sandra Kitt

TREASURER: Phyllis DiFrancesco

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Vicki Lewis Thompson

Candidate biographies and the list of candidates for the 1996 Nominating Committee will be published next month.

. . .

Royalty Audit, Etc.

During the July meeting, the Board of Directors decided to investigate the possibility of a royalty audit; members who wish to participate will be chosen by lottery to have the book of his/her choice audited. A literary attorney will be retained to advise a NINC investigation of member complaints about certain clauses in agent contracts. NINC will also be working with the Association of Authors' Representatives to design an ideal royalty statement.

. . .

E-mail NINC/NINK

The Board has established an electronic mailbox to allow members to e-mail letters to the newsletter editor or Board of Directors. NINC's e-mail address is NINC1989@aol.com

. . .

NINK Needs:

Publicity photo horror stories

Booksigning horror stories

"First sale" stories, horror and otherwise

"Who Blinked?" stories—during negotiation stand-offs, who blinked first—you or your publisher, what was (were) the deal-breaker(s), what was the outcome? Anonymity guaranteed.

Industry News

Holtzbrinck, a German media conglomerate, has bought 70% of Macmillan Publishing Ltd., one of the oldest publishing companies in the world. One of Macmillan's holdings is St. Martin's Press, giving Holtzbrinck access to the U.S. mass market paperback market as well as the textbook market. Holtzbrinck is Germany's second-largest publishing group after Bertelsmann, who owns Bantam Doubleday Dell.

PLEASE FILL IN AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE OR APPLICABLE *RETURN ENTIRE FORM*

ADVANCE BOOK INFORMATION

R.R. BOWKER DATA COLLECTION CENTER
P.O. BOX 2068, OLDSMAR, FL 34677-0103

TITLE: _____

SUBTITLE: _____

Title Volume Number: _____

PUBLISHER (Not Printer): _____

ADDRESS: _____

Is this a set? Yes ☐ No ☐ Number of Volumes: _____

PHONE: _____ TOLL FREE: _____

FAX: _____ TELEX: _____

Is Title Orig. Paperbk? ☐ YES ☐ NO

E-mail, Internet, etc.: _____

Pub. Date: (MM/YY) _____/____

IMPRINT (if other than company name): _____

Copyright Date: (year) _____

DISTRIBUTOR (if other than publisher): _____
(If you distribute foreign books, please send us a copy of your documentation and indicate whether distribution is exclusive or non-exclusive. Currently, only exclusive distributors are included in the US portion of the BIP database.)

Pages: _____ Illustrated?: ☐ YES ☐ NO

CONTRIBUTOR NAME (A=Author, E=Editor, I=Illustrator, P=Photographer, T=Translator):

Contributor _____ ☐ A ☐ E ☐ I ☐ P ☐ T ☐ Other _____

(check all that apply)

Contributor _____ ☐ A ☐ E ☐ I ☐ P ☐ T ☐ Other _____

(check all that apply)

Contributor _____ ☐ A ☐ E ☐ I ☐ P ☐ T ☐ Other _____

(check all that apply)

Contributor _____ ☐ A ☐ E ☐ I ☐ P ☐ T ☐ Other _____

(check all that apply)

Series Title: _____

Series Subtitle: _____ Series Volume Number: _____

Edition Info.: ☐ Reprint ☐ Revised ☐ Abridged ☐ Large Type ☐ Unabridged ☐ Other(specify) _____

Edition No.: ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd ☐ 4th ☐ 5th ☐ 6th ☐ Other(specify) _____

Audience: (children's books require grade levels) GRADES: _____ AGES: _____

☐ Juvenile ☐ Young Adult ☐ E/Hi—Reading Levels _____

☐ College ☐ Adult(General) ☐ Other (specify) _____

Original Title: (if previously published & changed) _____

Translated Title: _____

Current Language (if other than English): _____ Original Language (if translated): _____

Publisher Order No.: _____ LCCard No(LCCN): _____

Point Size (Large Type Bks.): _____ Book Size: _____ Book Weight: _____

For ISBN Applicants: Fill out this form for each of your titles and return with your application. When the top copy is returned to you with your ISBN log book, assign an ISBN to each title, enter it below, and return the form(s) to the R.R. Bowker Data Collection Center, Florida. This will allow us to list your title(s) with all information in our database.

ISBN Note: Write full 10-digit number in space below. The BIP system requires a separate ISBN for each edition and binding.

BINDING	ISBN	PRICE	*TYPE:	**CURRENCY	DISCOUNT
Hardcover: <input type="checkbox"/> Trade <input type="checkbox"/> Textbk	_____	\$ _____	_____	_____	Short _____ % Max _____
Paperback: <input type="checkbox"/> Trade <input type="checkbox"/> Textbk	_____	\$ _____	_____	_____	Short _____ % Max _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Library Binding	_____	\$ _____	_____	_____	Short _____ % Max _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Mass Market	_____	\$ _____	_____	_____	Short _____ % Max _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	_____	\$ _____	_____	_____	Short _____ % Max _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	_____	\$ _____	_____	_____	Short _____ % Max _____

(OTHER refers to Tchr's. ed., Wikbk., Lab Manual, Looseleaf, etc.)

*Price type refers to invoice, retail, tentative, etc.

(Short Discount is 20% or less)

**Currency refers to US, Canadian, etc.

Type of Work: ☐ Non-Fiction ☐ Fiction ☐ Poetry ☐ Drama ☐ Essay ☐ Other _____

Subject Area: ☐ Children's (CB) ☐ Law(LB) ☐ Med(MB) ☐ Relig(RB) ☐ Sci-Tech(ST) ☐ Other _____

Description of Content: _____



EAST OF THE HUDSON

Agents of Change

Unless you've been under a nasty deadline, you've probably heard talk about the most recent breakdowns in the author-agent relationship. Whoever ultimately prevails, the authors' earnings will be in limbo for the foreseeable future. The whole mess makes every writer, and probably every agent, look over his or her shoulder.

This is not the appropriate space to sort out the claims and counterclaims. That's a matter for the courts, and I am sure they will render some semblance of justice in due time, after much money is spent on both sides, and after enormous amounts of creative energy is wasted.

I know some of the parties in one matter and as a writer, I can only say that I feel deeply for any author or agent caught in such a nasty tangle. We all work hard and none of us can afford to throw money down legal black holes any more than we can afford to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars in income because we listened to bad advice.

An agent I know says that this case will remake the author/agent relationship in the entire industry. He may be right. Almost all of us have worked with our agents on the basis of honor and mutual trust. That trust may not survive. Writers may well begin to ask the publisher, rather than the agent, to split income. Such an arrangement here might have saved a whole lot of grief.

Such splitting is an issue I will discuss with my agent, even though he is the most decent and honorable human being I know, and one of the wisest. It wouldn't even surprise me if publishers began such splitting on their own, since they may acquire legal liability in handing author checks to a third party.

My agent knows more about my life than my editor, my accountant, and my lawyer combined. I have trusted him with every nickel my wife and I have made in the last seven years and, more importantly, trust him with our futures. Yet the bond between us is a pledge of honor and a handshake, nothing more and nothing less. The relationship has worked very well up to now, but suddenly I have to ask myself some questions. (If I hadn't asked the questions, my attorney would have gone ballistic.)

For instance, what happens if my agent should get clipped by a New York bus, or bonked on the head by some demented mugger, while a six-figure signing or royalty check for me was sitting in his trust account?

Or what happens if the agent decides to sell the agency? Or take on a partner?

Or suddenly develops a fondness for hookers and self-prescribed pharmaceuticals?

What are my obligations to my agent and what are his to me? I know some of the answers, but the recent incidents have made me leery and my attorney downright queasy.

I'm not suggesting we all give control over to attorneys. As a class, I trust agents more. But I do wonder whether future royalty and advance checks ought to be split in the publisher's financial office rather than in the agent's trust account. And it seems to me that we as members of Novelists, Inc. ought to explore the whole issue, both with our individual agents and with the organizations which represent literary agents.

Nobody ever really wins legal fights, so maybe we should attempt to cut them off before they get filed.

We all operate on trust. I don't want to destroy that trust. But at the same time, we writers have had to adjust our relationships with editors in the past few years. Editors used to be our comrades in arms but now they are corporate minions and we have had to deal with them as such.

Agents are still our most important allies, but I'd hate for any of us to be burned to the tune of \$200,000 because we didn't ask the right questions before it all went from sugar to shoe polish.

Agents, Three

Sometimes it's harder to find an agent than it is to find a publisher, but in recent weeks, three former editors have jumped the fence, joining the forces of right in our never-ending battle against corporate greed.

In other words, these three editors have become agents. Anybody needing representation should be heartened. All three are experienced and sophisticated in the ways of publishing.

- Jane Chelius, formerly a senior editor with a mystery list at Pocket, has an office at 548 Second St., Brooklyn NY 11215.

- Damaris Rowland, who edited women's fiction at Dell, has joined the Steven Axelrod Agency and can be reached at R1-Box 513A, Wallingford VT 05773.

- Karen Solem, formerly a vice president at Harper-Collins and head of the HarperPaperbacks women's fiction program, is an independent agent working through Writers House, 21 West 26th St., New York NY 10010.

All three were top-flight editors and good friends to their authors. Now they can all learn to pitch fits at publishers and hold hands with authors instead of vice versa.

And now they'll get a piece of those six- and seven-figure deals they could only negotiate for their bosses in the past.



EAST OF THE HUDSON

(Continued from page 13)

Is a Harlequin Really a Clown?

Honest, that's how my *New American Dictionary* defines the name.

But the clown seems to be laughing nowadays. Torstar, the Canadian parent firm of the category publishing giant, announced that its book division netted \$473.5 million in sales in 1994 and \$70.7 million in operating profits.

The Torstar annual report said that 51% of sales came in the U.S., a surprising figure since the Harlequin keeps telling its American authors that the firm's U.S. business is less important than the rest of the globe.

For several years, Harlequin has said it will put its emphasis on the international market, yet it always seems to stock that international market with large numbers of American titles. Now, the company is going global with its Mira imprint, a mass-market line that relies heavily on the backlist works of former Harlequin/Silhouette writers, mostly American, who have achieved big success in single-title markets.

The Torstar annual report also said that the company is investigating more movie deals for its backlist titles. The report says the four films made this year didn't generate much revenue but they were valuable as promotional tools for books sales.

My suspicious streak rears its ugly head. I somehow doubt that Torstar would be making movies unless those movies generated direct and tangible corporate benefit. Profit, in a word. There are cheaper, more effective ways to sell books than to spend millions making a few movies.

But then, that's just me. Suspicious.

Recently, Harlequin Enterprises named Candy Lee as publisher and vice president. Candy is a regular at NINC conventions and she has contributed to this group's understanding of how the business works. A straight-shooter and a smart woman.

The Author As Punching Bag

Where would the world have been these last few months without Robert James Waller to kick around? You can't open a paper or a magazine without finding some disparaging remark about Waller and his principal work. Things got so heavy that writers began talking code, never referring to the book, simply calling it *BOMC*.

Some of the nastiness was quite splendid. I think my favorite passage came from a *Chicago Tribune* columnist who made reference to Waller's book "befouling" the best-seller lists for 145 weeks.

I also enjoyed the way the mavens of high culture twisted and darted when the book they hated so viciously became a movie starring Meryl Streep, an actress they love. Suddenly they needed to justify Streep's participation in this tawdry little tale of adulterous love in the fly-over states.

I wasn't surprised that Meryl took the role. Frankly, I thought she had sold out some time ago. Did anybody see *The River Wild*? It was full of false notes and desperate bids for attention. "Look at me, look at me, I can be young and hip and with-it and relevant. Really I can." The performance left me feeling Ms. Streep had finally realized nobody has been watching her for years.

Mid-life angst led, I think, to Meryl's decision to take the role of Francesca. But the decision seemed to catch critics flat-footed. Many of them scrambled to conclude that maybe they had been mistaken. Maybe *BOMC* did have something to say. If Meryl took the role, it must be a meaty one, full of complexity.

That thought then led to the corollary discovery. The movie was better than the book. It had to be. Everybody from the *New York Times* down agreed. Then all of them had to rush around explaining why.

NINC member Carla Neggers sent me the most jumbled explanation, a strange little meandering analysis by Knight Ridder critic Carrie Rickey. Under the headline "Bad Books Make Good Movies," Rickey of the Knight-Ridder newspaper group suggested that bad books often make good movies.

Particularly, Rickey said, "pop novels have certain qualities that more easily lend themselves to film." Quoting one screenwriter, she said, "A bad novel doesn't clutter you up with ideas so you can make the points visually."

Rickey and other apologists spent weeks flying around in circles, nattering about "characters with inner lives" and other wondrously intellectual shibboleths. None of the maundering made much sense to me, but it did separate lots of newspaper and television ads.

In the end, the critics had their usual lack of impact on popular culture. *BOMC the Film* did what was at best modest box-office business and the critically despised *BOMC the Book* roared right back to the top of the best-seller list.

All of us have our private opinions of Waller, but what I like is the way he has become a symbol to the literati. No canard is too vile, no attack too petty if Waller is the target. It makes me think the culture mavens feel they have lost their grip on literate life in America.

Maybe they have.

It's about time.

One or both, take your pick.

— Evan Maxwell



Conference Update

Novelists Inc. is not providing any group tours this year, largely because there are so many points of interest within a mile or two of the Warwick Hotel that can be reached on foot, by trolley, or by a short cab ride. We will have a hospitality table at the conference where you can pick up additional brochures and maps prepared by our own committee.

Colorado State Capitol—Broadway and Colfax, located three blocks from the Warwick Hotel. Climb the west steps to exactly one mile above sea level. Free tours weekdays 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; **The Colorado History Museum**—13th and Broadway. Just down the hill from the capitol building and across the street from the new Denver Public Library. Photographs, Colorado dioramas, mining equipment, Native American artifacts. Extensive bookstore with good research sources; **The “unsinkable” Molly Brown House**—1340 Pennsylvania. Mementos from her life preserved in her beautiful home on Capitol Hill. Tours by costumed guides. Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun. noon-4 p.m.; **Byers-Evans House**—1310 Bannock St. Elaborate Victorian mansion restored to 1912-1924 period. Open Tues.-Sun. 11 a.m.-3 p.m.; **The Museum of Western Art**—1727 Tremont Pl. (Walking distance downhill from the hotel) Third largest collection of western art in the world housed in a restored Victorian building that was once Denver’s classiest bordello and gambling hall. Includes Frederic Remington and Charles Russell paintings; **Denver Firefighters Museum**—1326 Tremont Pl. Not far from Museum of Western Art and near the Denver Mint. Memorabilia and artifacts of early Denver firefighting history. Tours Mon-Fri 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; **The U.S. Mint**—West Colfax at Cherokee (about 3/4 mile from the hotel). Five billion coins made each year. Free 20-minute tours on weekdays. Small museum on history of money. Gift shop has unique coins for sale; **The Denver Art Museum**—100 West 14th Ave. Behind the library. Tues-Sat, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun noon-5 p.m. Free admission on Saturdays; **The Denver Museum of Natural History**—2001 Colorado Boulevard, located in City Park. Fourth largest natural history museum in the nation. World class dioramas, Hall of Life studying the human body, outstanding gem and mineral collection, planetarium. But note the new *Prehistoric Journey* dinosaur exhibit is NOT open until Oct 21, 1995, *after* Novelists, Inc.’s conference. So don’t go during the conference if you want to see dinosaurs. Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon-Thurs, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Fri; **Lower Downtown Walking Tour**—Pick up a brochure at our hospitality table and go on your own. See the 25 square block historic warehouse district. Forty art galleries, 60 restaurants, renovated lofts, the old Oxford Hotel. Tattered Cover’s Lo-Do store is on the route; **Forney Transportation Museum**—*If you write historical fiction, don’t miss this.* 1416 Platte St. (I-25 Exit 211, then 5 blocks east). A huge collection of 300 cars, carriages, cycles, steam engines, trolleys, and rail coaches. However, there is little identification of the vehicles, just the collection itself to view. Mon-Sat 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Located across the overpass from Elitch Amusement Park (about a mile and a half from the hotel)

Farther Away But Worth The Trip is Shopping! at Cherry Creek. A shuttle will take you from the hotel. This is also the location of the famous four-story Tattered Cover Bookstore. Genre fiction is on the third floor. Bargain books, good for research, on second floor; **The Coors Brewery**—Visitor parking at 13th and Ford Streets in Golden, which is 20 minutes west of Denver. Free tours 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and samples at the end; **Arabian Horse Center**—12000 Zuni St., Westminster (a suburb north of Denver). Art gallery, museum, library dedicated to heritage, education and research of Arabian horses. Mon-Fri 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; **Colorado Railroad Museum**—17155 West 44th, Golden. (The museum is about 30 minutes west of the hotel) Fifty historic locomotives and railroad cars, including narrow-gauge mountain trains. If you write historical fiction about railroads, don’t miss this, but call first for directions. Daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; **Gambling at Black Hawk**—Tour of the casinos (6 hrs) Call for reservations as the bus fills up fast on weekends. 303-277-1057.

And—two blocks from the hotel, you can board the Cultural Trolley or light rail, which will take you to many more sights, including the Denver Zoo and Black American West Museum. — Patricia Werner

The Thursday night cocktail buffet is for booksellers and sales reps only. Editors will be invited to a Friday night cocktail party as always. If you know that someone from the sales/marketing/publicity department of your house will be in from New York for the Rocky Mountain Book Festival, send the name and other →



(Continued from page 15)

pertinent information to Patty Gardner Evans. Also, if you want to send promo materials to the Media Play where we are doing the Thursday booksigning—whether you are able to attend the signing or not—contact Cathy Roland, Promotions

Manager, Media Play, 702 16th Street, Denver CO 80202, Ph 303-893-1977/Fax 803-893-1991. You can go by and sign stock if you can't make the signing, by the way. By next issue, we should know if you can send promo materials to the Book Festival and to whom.

A Writer's Nightmare

Pieced together from Index No. 115106/95, the Supreme Court of New York, County of New York, is a writer's nightmare. The next time you think a seven-figure literary contract would be the end of all your troubles, remember this story. The next time you take your agent for granted, remember this story.

In January 1993, a best-selling author and member of NINC entered into a contract for four books. The contract, negotiated by her then-agent, Jay Acton, called for advances totaling \$1.7 million.

In August 1994, before delivery of the first book in the contract, the relationship between Dell and the author had fallen apart to the extent that she wished to terminate it and sign with a new publisher. She alleges Acton agreed with that course of action. Acton's position on that issue is not as clear.

Acton made some efforts to place the proposed books with other publishers. The author claims that Acton failed to keep her informed about offers from other publishers and that he became increasingly difficult to reach.

During this time, she completed what would have been the first book in the Dell contract, told Acton to offer it to other publishers and then later told him to send it to Dell as well, wishing to avoid being in breach of the original contract on which she had already col-

lected almost \$400,000 in advances. The work appears never to have been sent to Dell. In March 1995, Dell notified Acton that the author was in breach of contract for nondelivery of manuscript. According to papers filed by her attorney, Acton allegedly never notified his client of Dell's notification. In April 1995, finally out of patience, the author notified Acton that she no longer wished him to represent her. Acton continued to receive royalty payments from her earlier work and even advances on new work. According to the author's attorney, Acton didn't deduct his 15% commission and forward the remainder of the money to his former client. Instead, he is alleged to have kept all payments. By the time the author notified her publishers to split future payments, sending the commission to Acton and the balance to her, he had allegedly collected \$200,000 due her.

On June 15, Acton filed a court complaint in New York against the author and her new agents Steven Axelrod and Damaris Rowland. Acton's complaint alleges that he is entitled to his full commission from the Dell deal, despite the fact that their contract has apparently sion from a new deal he did not negotiate.

The author and her new agents have filed a counterclaim, seeking the money Acton has collected in her behalf since April and damages.

Publishing Services by Sandy Huseby

Novelists' Ink

Novelists, Inc.

An organization for writers of popular fiction

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