

Novelists' Ink

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

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Challenging the accepted wisdom:

Do You Really Need an Agent?

by

JUDE DEVERAUX

When I first started writing, I sent my manuscript in over the transom, having no idea that was not the way it should be done. But as soon as it was accepted for publication, every person I met, from my typist to my editor, told me I absolutely *must*

get an agent.

Well, I got one. I won't go into the gory details, but when I signed with the agent 15 years ago, I was with a major publishing house, had first printings of half-a-million and my own dump. After two years with him, he'd sold me to a packager, I had quarter-of-a-million first printings and I was in a dump with three other authors. After a few violent confrontations, I got rid of the jerk and started handling my own business—and have done so ever since.

First of all, I want to say that I would *not* recommend most authors to be their own agent. Whether or not to represent yourself is based 100 percent on the personality of the author.

To be your own agent, you have to be able to separate

your writing from the money. You cannot make the mistake of thinking that

love and money are the same thing. Writers seem to equate money with how much the publishing house "loves" them: the more money, the more love. Conversely, less money means the house doesn't really care about the author as a person or about her work.

Basically, this concept is stupid. The money a writer receives is based on how many copies have sold, not whether anyone loves you or not. If you ask a million for your magnificent book and your publishing house offers you 39 cents and you go into a rage because you've never been so insulted in your life, get an agent. But if you laugh at the 39

cents and say you might be persuaded to go down to \$999,999.99, you might consider being your own agent.

You need to know the business, need to know how the royalty system works. If two writers each sell 500,000 books, same cover price, and one writer gets an advance of a hundred grand and a seven percent royalty, but the other receives a ten-grand advance but a royalty of 12 percent, the second author is actually going to make more money.

As far as I can tell, the goal of agents is to get as much money as possible *now*. The advance money seems to be everything to agents and their authors, and if they can get an enormous advance, everyone is ecstatic. Every agent who "courts" me dangles the prospect of huge advances before my eyes and seems to expect me to go into a stupor of greed and sign with them. If you feel faint with envy when told of another author's huge advance, then you should have an agent.

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You cannot make the mistake of thinking that love and money are the same thing.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Strange Doin's in the Publishing Industry

Who would have ever guessed that the most exciting new author of 1996 would be *Anonymous*? Just in case you're living in one of those places that's been snowed-in all winter and you missed what's been happening, someone who shall remain nameless (at his/her own request!) has written the new year's hottest bestseller, a fictional/satirical account of the Clinton campaign called *Primary Colors*. And nobody knows who the author is (at this writing)!

After reading an online interview with the author by Walter Shapiro in *Time* magazine, I'm pretty sure the author is male, so I'm going to refer to *Anonymous* as "him" from now on. And if *Anonymous* happens to be a member of Novelists, Inc., I'd just

like to say a great big "Thanks!" to him for giving popular fiction such a shot in the arm. I would have thought that in order to make a name for yourself, you'd actually have to *have* a name, but I stand corrected. *Anonymous* has people flocking to bookstores, and many of them are no doubt people who would never otherwise buy popular fiction. Thanks, kiddo, you done good!

I recently read something else in *Time* that excited me: some bad reviews. Why, you are no doubt asking yourself, would I be excited by bad reviews? Reviews, I might add, which refer to popular fiction as "pop-trash" and "schlock"? Well, because the books being pop-trashed are *thrillers*. Even better, they are thrillers written by *men*! Men who—are you ready?—are being criticized because their heroines aren't quite believable. And the reason I'm happy about this is because I'm so tired of female romance writers claiming that if they were just men, they'd get some respect. Come on! As long as what we write is *popular* (i.e., it sells well), we will be universally despised whether we are male, female or other.

And to the three gentlemen who were trashed (well, the reviewer did allow that one of the books was "good trash," but still...), welcome to the club. We've been expecting you.

NINC on the Net

All of us owe my predecessor, Bill Bernhardt, a debt of gratitude for convincing us to put NINC on the World Wide Web. I am happy to report that we have discovered a whole new world of possibilities out there that exceed even Bill's original vision for what we could accomplish.

As you already know, NINC has established a webpage (<http://www.ninc.com>). If you haven't already visited it, please take a look. And leave us a message telling us what you think, especially if you have an idea for something new to put on it. We've already linked the page with the homepages of

This Month from the President:

▼ *Strange Doin's—Who is the year's hottest new author and why doesn't anybody know his name?*

▼ *NINC on the Net—Just when you thought it couldn't get any better*

▼ *1996 Conference—Our first professional job*

Audit Lottery—Picking a winner

▼ *Agent Survey—Last call!*

our authors who have them, and we're working on some ideas to help our members who aren't online yet, too. But that's not the biggest news.

What I'm really happy to report is that NINC will soon be able to offer our members their own homepage through our very own website. If you've been hesitating about getting a homepage because you didn't know much about it and didn't quite trust a stranger to set it up for you, NINC can solve your problems. As I'm writing this (in early February), everything is still in the planning stages, but by the time you are reading this, we hope to have everything in place.

I can't quote you a price yet, but our cost will be competitive with the less expensive servers, and we will have a professional who is familiar with writer's homepages available to help you design your page. You will be linked with all the other NINC members and the NINC homepage, and proceeds from this service will benefit NINC (and therefore you), not some stranger. If you're already on NINC's maillist, then you already know about this because subscribers always get the news first.

To subscribe, send e-mail to:

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Subject: maillist nincnews [your name]

If you'd like more information, contact us at our NINC address (NINC1989@aol.com).

1996 Conference

We have appointed Carla Neggers as our 1996 Conference Coordinator and we have hired Kate Dooley to be NINC's first ever professional conference planner. Carla served as the assistant coordinator on the 1994 Atlanta Conference, so she has lots of experience. Look for her first report elsewhere in this issue. Kate Dooley is the person who planned the first Sisters in Crime Conference,

which was the conference that convinced Bill Bernhardt we needed a professional planner, too. And Kate is already helping us site for the 1997 and 1998 conferences. Kate was a conference planner for a large corporation before "retiring" to raise her family, and she is no stranger to the publishing industry, either. Her mom is NINC member Marion Smith Collins.

Other Stuff

The winner of the **Audit Lottery** has been selected. Committee Chair Georgia Bockoven's report appears in this issue, too. The selection process alone proved to be an education in egregious contract terms. Read all about it.

If you haven't returned your **Agent Survey** yet, please do so immediately. And if you've misplaced your original copy, you may contact Central Coordinator Randy Russell for a replacement (his address is on the masthead).

Each editor brings a fresh perspective and ideas to the pages of *NINK*. Editor Vicki Lewis Thompson and the NINC Board hope you like our fresh, new look, as well.

So many projects to report on, so little space. Tune in next month for still more exciting news from NINC.

— Victoria Thompson

Members: 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

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. Letters may be sent to the *NINK* editor via mail, fax or e-mail. See masthead for addresses.

Censorship Threat

I don't know how closely NINC members have paid attention to the recent Telecommunications Bill. If you're

not into bb's and networking, the censorship issues being raised about the Internet—and the Communications Decency Act—may not have seemed immediately relevant to writers. As I see these issues, the pro-censorship pushers would have the public believe the problem they're addressing is offensive material/pornography, and I'm afraid this is such a "hot cause" that it's easy to be misled. I don't believe this is about pornography, but about power. The power of who controls what we say, what we see—and what we write.

If you haven't taken a look at the Bill of Rights in a while, I'd urge you to do so. It only takes a second to read the First Amendment. "Congress shall make no law ...abridging the freedom of speech." Repeat—"no law." Yet THIS law just passed, even though it contained language that previously had been ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and there are more bills coming up for debate. I urge NINC to 1) make a commitment to ➔

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 3)

inform members on what these censorship bills could mean to writers and 2) to take a stand as an organization for the right of free speech.

— Alison Hart

Site Discussion Continues

Just a word to say that I am relieved that a conference planner will be hired and a word about siting. Although I would be delighted if the conference were held in New York every year, I feel that it would be unfair to members in other parts of the country. (I am a New Yorker myself, but am trying to be reasonable.) However, the general idea that we should be where publishing houses and editors are is basically good. I suggest that be one of the important criteria for choosing sites. On that basis, Boston might be an alternate for New York some years (it is a little less expensive and easy to get to for New York editors and publishers) and San Francisco and Chicago, which both have publishing establishments, should be considered.

— Roberta Gellis

Variety is the Spice

A comment on Patty Gardner Evans's letter and the excellent responses by Catherine Coulter and Cheryl Zach:

While I agree on most points made, I do have some personal reservations about alternating all future conferences between Los Angeles and New York. One of the things I've always enjoyed most about going to conferences is the opportunity they present to visit places I probably wouldn't otherwise. Without NINC, what possible excuse could I have found to go to such beautiful and interesting places as San Antonio, Denver or Port Jefferson? I can't tell you how much I've been looking forward to making my first visit to Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay Area, Baltimore. (Okay, so I don't get around much.)

I'll support the Board of Directors' decision whatever it is, and of course I'll enthusiastically attend future conferences, even in Los Angeles or New York City. (Hey—L.A. I get to see my kids tax deductibly, and New York is...well, New York.) But I'd be a little bit disappointed, too, I have to admit. I'd been hoping for a chance to see...hey, how about Charleston? Maybe Miami...Portland...Vancouver?

— Kathleen Creighton

Siting is Relative

Since Coulter and Evans, and apparently a number of agents and editors, too, have complained about the Warwick Hotel in Denver, I plead guilty and admit I was on the site selection committee and heartily recommended it to the Board.

Some of you might think it was unwise of NINC to ask me to go to Denver to select a hotel so soon after I had

returned from nearly a year of living in a tent in Africa (until my tent was stolen, that is, which made the rainy season a real trial to me), but let me assure you that I kept the important things in mind while reviewing hotels in Denver.

Hey, the Warwick had running water! I hear that it sometimes even had *hot* running water! The Warwick had lights and beds! The Warwick, I hasten to point out to you ingrates, had a roof!

How many crocodiles menaced *you* while you washed out your underwear at the Warwick, huh? How often was your room destroyed by warthogs and baboons? How many hyenas bothered *you* on the way to the bathroom? How many of your meals were destroyed by red ants, and how often did you have to cope with snakes, lions or bandits in the middle of the night during NINC's 1995 conference?

Not at all?

Hah! That's what I thought.

And some people say I can't choose a good conference hotel!

— Laura Resnick

Extolling Evan

I loved the last issue of *Novelists' Ink*, especially Evan Maxwell's column. I have just one thing to say to whomever is telling Evan to stop beating up on New York and its provincialism—stop it! Those of us in the Midwest (you know, out there where people wear nothing but overalls and feed caps and read nothing but Farmers' Almanacs....) appreciate the healthy doses of cynicism and irreverence directed toward any eminences, but especially gray ones. You go, Evan!

After reading Janice Young Brooks's article on on-line services, I'd also like to put in a plug for some kind of directory of members' web sites. The whole point of the World Wide Web is for all of us to link together to form a...well, web. I'm ready for link-up any time anyone else is. Send me a note (jekistler@aol.com) or drop your own web site address off at mine (<http://www.ihsa.org/jk/homepage.html>). Thanks!

— Julie Kistler

In a business where good news is rare, the news that Evan Maxwell will continue his "East of the Hudson" column is grand. In fact, I am so pleased that I won't take Evan to task for his West Coast provincialism. Many of us who live east of the Hudson also live quite some distance from New York, and we pride ourselves on remaining immune to its pernicious influence.

— Barbara Keiler

(New York born-and-bred but currently residing East of the Hudson, South of the Charles and North of L.I. Sound)

Do You Really Need an Agent?

(Continued from page 1)

You need to know how to read a contract. For some unfathomable reason, agents like to make authors think there are devious clauses in contracts and it takes a "professional" to decipher one. If you're smart enough to write a book, I think you should be intelligent enough to read all that incredibly boring, but actually rather simple, boilerplate of a publishing contract.

If you feel faint with envy when told of another author's huge advance, then you should have an agent.

do and how to do it. Just because he or she tells you that, don't make it so, baby. Publishing houses are the elephants and agents are the mosquitoes buzzing in their ears. (And we authors are the little guys sitting on their backs flicking them with our sticks.)

To agent your own books, you cannot throw temper tantrums. I have seen a zillion writers go into rages because their print runs were lower than they thought they should be. These writers have not taken the time to find out that print runs are based on previous sales—not on how much a publishing house loves you. An editor has to fill out a long, boring form that tells of your previous sales, of the sales of comparable books. A computer can figure out an author's print runs. There is no love involved in coming up with this number.

A self-agented writer cannot be a sulker or paranoid. She cannot be the type of person who looks at the book cover for another author from her house, then gets angry because she wasn't given a cover as beautiful as that one. I'm told that agents are good hand-holders about this sort of paranoia.

Jealousy has to be stamped down. If your publishing house starts giving another writer better print runs, more money, better everything, do not—I repeat—do not go into a jealous rage or start sulking. What you must do is buy everything that writer has done, read it, study it and try to figure out why that author's selling so much better than you are. *Sales* are the reason your publishing house is giving another author more and better than they are giving you. Better print runs are based on sales, not love.

Kill your ego. If you have ever uttered the words, "Don't they know who I am?" then you should definitely

get an agent to go between you and the overburdened staff at your publishing house. Also, if you have ever thought, "When I get to be as big as so-and-so writer, *then* they'll pay attention to me," you need an agent.

An unagented writer cannot think of his or her publishing house as the enemy. The writer must not threaten them every day with leaving—the agents' favorite ploy. Loyalty means a *lot* in this business, and if you're constantly saying, "I'm going to leave if you don't give me everything I want," they will soon be glad to see you go.

You must be clear in your goals. You must have one-year, five-year and ten-year goals. You must know what is important to you and in what order. If all you want is to make as much money as possible, then get out, then get some agent who will do that for you. If you are like me and longevity is everything, then a good ultimate goal is to find a house that publishes your books very well and build your reputation with that house.

Unagented writers must consider themselves part of a team. Pocket Books and I work *together*. We are not enemies. We have enormous respect for each other.

Writers seem to think an agent can bully a publishing company into giving them more money up front. First of all, advance money has never been my priority (I like high royalty percentages *much* more), so a "powerful" agent has never been something I hankered after. Besides, what gives an agent his or her "power" is the use of an author's name. I figure I can use my own name as well as someone else, and I certainly know my sales record better than anyone else does.

Writers think that talking about money will mess up the editor-writer relationship. Poor editors do little but talk about money. Why should I pay some guy 15 percent of everything I get to ask my editor where the hell my money is when I can very well do that myself? Just recently, my editor of many years happened to mention that most authors are too embarrassed to speak to her of money. She had to explain this for ten full minutes before I understood what she meant, then I had a good, long laugh. It never entered my head to be shy about discussing money with my editor or publisher or anyone else at Pocket. If you are hesitant or timid when talking about money, then get an agent to do ➔

If you are like me and longevity is everything, then a good ultimate goal is to find a house that publishes your books very well and build your reputation with that house.

Do You Really Need an Agent?

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it for you.

Also, if you are shy about saying, "I don't know what this means," then get an agent to explain things like royalty statements to you.

People tell me they have agents because it frees them of all the business aspects so they have more time to write. I was never pestered so much in my life as those two years I had an agent. I suspect he wanted to make me believe he was earning his money, so he called me often

Publishing houses are the elephants and agents are the mosquitoes buzzing in their ears.

with long, exciting stories that constantly broke my concentration.

Actually, being my own agent doesn't take up much of my time. I negotiate a new contract every couple of years and that takes a matter of hours over a couple of days. The rest of it—covers, etc.—takes very little time.

People ask me what I do when I get angry at my publishing house. The answer is that I tell them what I don't like. Sometimes I get on a plane, go to New York and hash it out with them. I don't shout, I don't sulk in silence, I don't call my writer friends and complain about my publishing house. I am very honest and open with Pocket. If I hear that someone else is getting something that appeals to me, I call Pocket and ask if I may please, please, please

have it, too. Sometimes I get it; sometimes I don't. If I'm not given something I want, I know it is because I haven't yet earned it, so I put it on my list of goals and work toward it.

I am sure that if writers tell their agents about me, the agents will make sad little noises and tell their authors I am probably being screwed by my publishing house but am too naive to know it. But I think my career stands for itself.

In conclusion, I think a writer should do what is *easiest* for him or her. Because I am a very curious person, I was nearly driven insane when my ex-agent went to lunch with my editor, then spent all of two minutes telling me what was said. As for the business side of publishing, I learned about it because it fascinated me. I think I have the heart of an accountant. Also, I am very cheap and couldn't stand paying someone all that money just for spending a few hours talking with my editor.

Being my own agent comes naturally to me, but I don't think it does to most other writers. As a writer, old or new, you should think long and hard before trying to be your own agent and be brutally honest with yourself about your own personality.

But whatever you decide, please be aware that agents are an option, not a necessity. **N/NK**

Jude Deveraux's latest book, The Heiress, from Pocket Books, is her 21st to hit the NYT list. In September of '96, she'll have Legend coming out in hardcover from Pocket. She has approximately 30 million books in print in the U.S.

Anita Diamant

Literary agent Anita Diamant died suddenly on January 13 at her Weston, Connecticut home. She was 78. The cause was a heart attack, according to newspaper accounts.

Robin Rue, a longtime associate in the Anita Diamant Literary Agency, has indicated she and Anita Diamant's family intend to continue the agency and "maintain Anita's tradition of the highest competence and honor." Newspaper reports said the agency represents 125 writers.

Even in editor-agent relationships that would seem inherently adversarial, Ms. Diamant was known for being always gracious. To her writers, she was loyal and kind. Ms. Diamant was characterized by Ms. Rue as embodying "those rarest combinations of intelligence and kindness; of sound business sense and of abiding generosity."

Ms. Diamant worked in various magazine posts before starting the Anita Diamant Literary Agency in 1971. She maintained her interest in journalism as a longtime member of the Overseas Press Club, serving as its first woman president (1981-86).

In 1976, the arrival at the agency of a letter and manuscript from a Norfolk, Virginia, woman started a long and profitable association. The woman was V.C. Andrews. The manuscript was *Flowers in the Attic*, which Ms. Diamant liked and sold to Pocket Books.

Ms. Diamant's husband, Harold B. Berke, died in 1972. She is survived by a daughter, Allyson Forsythe; a brother, David Diamant; and two grandchildren, all of Weston, Connecticut.

A Book by Its Cover

V: A Thousand Words

By LAURA RESNICK

Cover Art Goes on the Block

The July 1995 issue of *SF Chronicle* reported the first major science fiction art auction ever to take place in the hallowed halls of Sotheby's in New York City, where well over 200 science fiction lots were offered in the two-day sale. A Virgil Finlay cover painting for the dust jacket of Andre Norton's *Space Police* (1956) sold for \$8,050 (more than \$3,000 over the catalog estimate) to a phone bidder. Also exceeding catalogue estimates were a Chris Moore painting of *Robot and Rose* and a cover painting by Alex Schomburg titled *Moon Survey*. A 1995 magazine cover painting by the Wildebrandt brothers, who were present, sold (below catalog estimate) for a respectable \$9,200. Paintings by double-digit Hugo Award-winning artist Kelly Freas also had a good day on the block in what Sotheby's publicized as the event of the season for "serious" SF art collectors. The *Chronicle* reporter, while apparently less impressed with the selection than Sotheby's promotional staff, nonetheless noted that the sale represented the largest single group of Virgil Finlay artwork ever offered to the public at one time.

music albums (including the Jacksons' *Victory* album), but also in books published specifically to honor the best

that wouldn't fit into his car, left his native California, and moved to the New York area—where, he was advised, it was important to live if he wanted a serious career working as a cover artist for the major publishing houses (back in the days before faxes and Federal Express became such a force in all our lives).

Over the next twenty years, Michael Whelan would become the most influential and honored artist in sf/f cover art—probably in all of popular fiction—winning more than a dozen Hugo Awards in the process, as well as numerous other awards. His artwork has appeared not only on book covers, magazines and

of his work: *Michael Whelan's Works of Wonder* and *The Art of Michael Whelan*.

Advertisements for hardcover and paperback novels often highlight the fact that the cover art is by Michael Whelan—because fans collect the books for this very reason. He is the cover artist most often requested by every best-selling author in the genre.

As the market for his fine art—his non-commissioned gallery art—grew, he told *Locus* in a 1993 interview: "I don't view myself as ever giving up illustration, because it's my first love..." His goal, he said, was to divide his time between his illustrating work and his gallery art.

Yet as publishers' sales and marketing people gradually acquired more and more influence over the cover process (remember Vincent Di Fate's *Chronicle* article, quoted in the previous article in this series, "Steal This Cover!"), some of them apparently decided they knew more about art than Whelan or their own companies' art directors. They began interfering with his work so much that, in frustration,

Michael Whelan—cited in *A Biographical Dictionary of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists* as "the most dominant force in modern science fiction illustration"—recently decided to quit illustration for at least two years, perhaps longer, because, he states, "too many covers are now being dictated by marketing directors with no interest or knowledge...."

— Michael Whelan, cover artist

An artist emigrated to the U.S. from Italy in 1979, where, as a frustrated classicist in the era when expressionism and post-modernism were all the rage in Milan, he had begun his career by illustrating history textbooks for schools in the early 1960s. His talent and drive were rewarded in the U.S., particularly after he became—probably thanks to his dedicated study of anatomy in night school during his early days in Milan—the most recognized and prolific illustrator in the romance genre. The artist, who is known simply as Pino in the publishing world, is still clearly grateful →

A Book by Its Cover

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for his opportunities and enthusiastic about his career, even after more than 1,500 cover paintings. He has found, however, that there is a price to success: publishers now tend to want the same type of art from him, the proven product, over and over; they are reluctant to see him experiment or diversify. And an artist finds that as unstimulating as most writers do.

Writers and artists are like the two slices of bread in a sandwich; we are very much alike, and we are usually separated by all the stuff in the middle.

As a result, Pino chose to add to his already long hours in the studio and recently returned, after many years, to producing original works of fine art in his spare time, to satisfy the creativity which is not often encouraged in the publishing world these days.

A science fiction/fantasy writer realized early on that none of the cover art she saw in her chosen genre really suited her writing. With only a little professional training (one semester in art college), she began teaching herself how to draw and paint. When her work got good enough, she sought cover art assignments for other writers' books, working to establish herself as a professional cover artist.

Now an award-winning cover artist who has illustrated books for over half a dozen major publishing houses, best-selling novelist Janny Wurts gets the covers she want for her own books by painting them herself.

Like professional writers, cover artists are creative people who found a way to get paid for the work they love. Like authors, illustrators are always freelancers, independent of the internal structure of the publishing house. In a way (if I may appropriate some imagery from Zebra editor Denise Little), writers and artists are like the two slices of bread in a sandwich; we are very much alike, and we are usually separated by all the stuff in the middle—in our case, by editors, art directors, sales people, marketing experts and all the other publishing professionals who have some influence over our work and its packaging.

As you will have already gathered, cover artists must have the same determination and commitment that professional writers do; and they not only face the same fierce professional competition, but also many of the same frus-

trations that writers do. So this final article in our series on cover art deals with the people who are, so to speak, the other slice of bread in an increasingly fat sandwich.

Irene Gallo, the Art Director at Tor Books, describes a great cover artist as someone who is technically strong and also smart; someone who comes up with ideas beyond what has been suggested or asked for; someone who is a good, imaginative fine artist who just happens to be illustrating books.

Although a cover artist must at first actively seek work from publishers (the way writers do), once they've gotten a few assignments and have proven their worth, publishers thereafter contact them to commission cover paintings. Art directors speak over and over about the task of finding "the right artist" for any given book. Not surprisingly, artists tend to specialize, just as writers do. And not only by genre; remember Vincent Di Fate's dilemma: once he had learned how to paint "hardware," he was seldom commissioned to paint anything else. Having been instrumental in the success of the "clinch" cover which identified the romance genre in the '80s, Pino finds he is now seldom asked to paint anything else (during our interview, upon learning that neither my romance nor my fantasy books get clinches, he urged me to request him as my cover artist so he could do something different; whether it's his art or his natural charm, I'm not sure, but I made the request).

Like writers, cover artists—at least the good ones—tend to gravitate to a specific genre out of love. Michael Whelan has been fascinated by the imagery of science fiction and fantasy since childhood. Janny Wurts's earliest interests were astronomy, science and art; and she eventually became an sf/f writer. Pino has loved history since his early youth and has concentrated fiercely on the study of anatomy; the perfect résumé for someone illustrating historical romances.

Time and budget are two more factors which art directors are forced to consider when commissioning a painting. As discussed in "Green Books Don't Sell," the money spent on your cover is usually in line with the overall positioning of your novel in the publisher's list. As for scheduling, artists vary as much as writers in terms of speed and availability; the time needed for each of them to complete a cover painting depends on a variety of factors.

When Pino gets a commission, he usually reads the synopsis, then visits the publisher's offices to discuss the author's, editor's and art director's ideas, and to learn what they need and want for the cover. Reviewing this information, he then books a photographer, a studio and the appropriate models, and also rents costumes and props. The photo shoot usually lasts about an hour, and the prints from this session must be ready before he begins work on

his preliminary sketches. At this point, he also consults his vast reference library for background material—views of landscapes, scenery, architecture, flora and fauna appropriate to the scene. The sketches must at this point go back to the publisher, where the art director and editor (at the very least) must approve them; at this time they suggest whatever revisions they think are necessary.

It takes Pino five to seven days to do a cover painting, working at his peak for six to seven hours per day. He paints in oil on board; the finished piece is usually 30"x22".

Artists vary as much as writers in terms of their pace. Janny Wurts says a cover takes her about one month from conception to completion. Michael Whelan says his pace varies tremendously, depending upon the book. He may take up to a month doing preliminary sketches in pencil, oil, charcoal and/or acrylics, exploring all the ideas and possibilities which interest him for the cover. Once he and the art director have agreed on a final concept, it can take him anywhere from three days to five months to complete it. This, again, depends very much on the nature of the work and the medium he chooses to work in. The illustration could be relatively simple and almost as small as an actual book cover, or it could be an immense and extremely complex painting for a wrap-around cover.

The original painting is the sole property of the artist, the publisher having merely bought the right to use the work for a specific and limited purpose. If authors are interested in buying the original painting, they have merely to tell their publisher, who will usually manage to put them in touch with the artist via the art director. (One author's experience, by the way, suggests that the price may be considerably steeper if the artist has an agent.) Many cover artists seem to work without an agent, since publishers' contracts with

Having been instrumental in the success of the "clinch" cover... Pino finds he is now seldom asked to paint anything else.

artists (in an astonishing about-face from their contracts with writers) are apparently simple and straightforward.

Pino, the most successful and prolific cover artist in romance, the artist who is always mentioned first by art directors when asked to name some particularly good romance illustrators, still owns most of his 1,500+ cover paintings, and he's never had an exhibition of this work. "Occasionally the author buys the original," he says. "There's a gallery in Soho that dabbles a little in this field,

and one or two people have started private collections." For the most part, however, "there just isn't a market yet" for romance cover art.

There is a considerable market for Pino's fine art, however. He's had several exhibitions and, in two years, has sold about 40 of the 60 original paintings he has done in his "spare" time, thus fulfilling the need to create—a need which is not so easily fulfilled as a romance illustrator.

The real ripping fun is the challenge of making something nobody has ever seen look real and alive.

**— Janny Wurts,
sf/f cover artist**

Setting aside the books which appear to have had a generic spaceship or unicorn slapped on them, there is generally more room for creativity in science fiction and fantasy art. According to Janny Wurts, "You can paint from your imagination; you can paint *anything*. Just doing a realistic rendering of something is too simple—boring, if you will. The real ripping fun is the challenge of making something nobody has ever seen look real and alive. Putting a window into the imagination, through paint, as it were."

Moreover, there is an actual art world in the sf/f genre. It was only in researching this article that I realized how little recognition there is for cover artists in most areas of popular fiction. The Romance Writers of America's recently established Artemis Award to honor excellent cover art in the romance genre is the only award currently existing in the field (unless there's another one so minor that no artist, art director or article I've read mentions it), and it's too newly established to have yet had much impact on the field (indeed, several art directors had clearly never heard of it). Jamie Warren-Youll, the Art Director in charge of mysteries at Bantam Books, says there are no awards (to her knowledge) for mystery covers or artists.

Meanwhile, sf/f artist Michael Whelan has won 11 Hugo Awards as Best Professional Artist, two Hugo Awards for Best Original Cover Art (he is nominated again in 1995 for both of these awards), three Howard (World Fantasy Convention) Awards for Best Artist and an unspecified number of Chesley Awards. Janny Wurts's cover for her novel *Master of Whitestorm* was awarded Best In Show at the World Fantasy Convention for two consecutive years. Her painting *Wizard of the Owls* won a Chesley in 1992, and her cover painting for her novel *Curse of the Mist-wraith* won a 1995 Chesley for Best Hardcover Jacket. (Her husband, cover artist Don Maitz, by the way



A Book by Its Cover

(Continued from page 9)

is nominated for a 1995 Hugo as Best Professional Artist).

Interestingly enough, Michael Whelan dropped out of the Hugo Award race one year after seven consecutive wins. "I feel people outside the field would regard (the Hugo) as not having any value if the same person wins it so many times in a row. I want people outside the field to respect the Hugos, for the awards to be important to people in general, as well as to the fans," he told *American Fantasy*. "I'm really tired of the provincialism of Hugos which are the World Science Fiction Convention Awards.

They're so often awarded to Americans simply because the people doing the voting are ignorant of the work done in other countries." Worldcon's English site that year was also instrumental in his decision to step out of the race.

Pay scales for cover artists, according to Irene Gallo, range from \$2,000 to \$8,000; flat fee, no royalties.

"There are some excellent artists in England and Japan especially, and they deserve some recognition, even if they just get nominated because there is an empty space in the nomination category because I've refused to accept the Hugo. Then, at least, (my refusal) has accomplished something."

While an award certainly boosts an artist's reputation and name recognition in the field, Michael Whelan says that a Hugo makes no difference at all to the artist's economic life. "I think it's far more important to have a notice in *Publishers Weekly*, an interview with the book owner who says your covers sell better than anyone else's," he told *Locus* in 1993. "That has tremendous impact on what you can charge for a painting. I don't think a Hugo makes any difference." However, Janny Wurts points out that "if a cover painting wins an award, my publisher will use that to help promote the book.... Having an acclaimed piece of artwork just helps to draw notice to that title." As does having an acclaimed cover artist.

As discussed in a previous article in this series, science fiction and fantasy trade publications feature interviews with (and articles by) artists as well as writers, and the conventions feature artist panels alongside author panels. In addition, every major sf/f convention features an art show and art auction. Amateur as well as professional artists exhibit and sell at these shows. Having done some paste-up work for a printer, as well as some freelance graphics and calligraphy, Janny Wurts explains, "I then went on to sell inept attempts [at sf/f art] at conventions, which enabled me to learn to draw and paint and still get some bucks as compensation. When the work began to

look professional level, I sold to the wargames market, and finally, paperbacks in New York City." The convention culture (as Tor's Irene Gallo calls it) provided Wurts, then an amateur, with a lot of the experience, exposure and contacts she needed to turn professional.

And, as she mentioned, a little extra income from this source was not unwelcome. Pay scales for cover artists, according to Irene Gallo, range from \$2,000 (at the low end) to \$8,000 (at the high end); flat fee, no royalties. Regardless of how many assignments an artist gets, or how high his fee is, the extra income from these art auctions is a perk for sf/f illustrators which not enough cover artists in other genres enjoy.

The market for original artwork also means there's a large market for reprints; Whelan began his own company, producing limited graphics of some of his most popular works.

In addition, sf/f artists enjoy considerable exposure for their work outside of the convention culture. Wurts's artwork has been exhibited at the Orlando Science Center, the Delaware Art Museum (one of her paintings is now in the permanent collection there), the New Jersey State Museum, the Worcester Science Center, the Jesse Besser Museum and the Canton Art Institute—to name just a few. Whelan's works—illustrative and original—have been exhibited and sold at the New Britain Museum of Art, the Society of Illustrators (New York City), the Greenwich Workshop Gallery, the Butler Institute of American Art and the Brandywine Fantasy Gallery in Chicago (among many others).

Of course, the frequently imaginative nature of sf/f art provides for an emphasis on the artist which doesn't exist in more earth-bound fields. However, in talking to artists and art directors about sf/f, romance and mystery, one feature emerged which some readers of this article may find startling. Except for certain generic covers, mystery and sf/f cover artists *always read the novel*—a process which seems virtually unheard of when it comes to romance cover art. Bantam's Jamie Warren-Youll, who not

Except for certain generic covers, mystery and sf/f cover artists always read the novel.

only works with mystery and sf/f artists but is even married to an sf/f artist (Stephan Youll), confirms this without hesitation. Indeed, Whelan and Wurts

consider reading the book an absolutely essential part of the process, and both of them *telephone* the author to discuss the book if the author is running late on deadline and they can't get enough of the manuscript to satisfy them. Indeed, even with the manuscript, they both cite instances of phoning the writer ("going to the source," Whelan calls

it) to talk over ideas and key elements of the book. Not only do they welcome author input, but Whelan even mentions author C.J. Cherryh providing him with sketches. And why not? He hopes that when the cover is ready, the author will say to him, "That's exactly what was in my mind!" (This might be a good moment to mention that my

Obviously there is no going back to the publishing world of the '50s.

all-time favorite sf cover is Whelan's illustration of *Paradise* by Mike Resnick—my father; I can't imagine a

more evocative,

accurate or complete one-painting portrayal of that novel.)

Any romance writer who has spent years writing out "tip sheets" for cover artists who don't read her books can probably immediately appreciate the ramifications of the previous paragraph. While imaginary, futuristic and alien worlds may provide more scope for the visual artist than contemporary and historical romance, it does seem that there's probably a huge, deep well of creativity going untapped by virtue of the fact that the majority of romance cover artists do not read the novels they illustrate; publishers tend to send romance cover artists fact sheets, perhaps with a few photocopied pages of particularly relevant text (a state of affairs which perhaps also suggests something about publishers' attitudes toward the genre).

Perhaps, in the fierce quest for better and better romance covers, someone in publishing may eventually consider this novel approach (you should pardon the expression) and start encouraging (nay, expecting!) romance cover artists to read the books as the basis of their sketches and illustrations. It seems ironic that this kind of care and attention is routinely applied in genres with lower print runs.

Meanwhile, writers who have deplored the ubiquitous clinch covers may now find some sympathy for artists who are getting rather tired of painting them. Indeed, art directors, too, express interest in finding that which is new, different, fresh and exciting. And Whelan admits that input from art directors has improved his work just as often as it's made it more problematic; and he's subject to this input since even at his level of success, he admits wryly, he's not in a position to develop a *prima donna* attitude.

Several years ago Whelan decided to limit his illustration schedule to 12 covers per year; he told publishers that whoever offered the best money and most interesting projects would get his time. And now, of course, he's leaving the field for an estimated two to three years. In addition to wanting more time to work on his gallery art, a career which is now lucrative enough to continue supporting his family, he has found that the growing "meddling" of sales and marketing people—meddling which is not concerned

with quality and "which is often to the detriment of the art"—has made illustrating the books he loves less rewarding than it used to be.

Sound vaguely familiar? Indeed, romance writers (who still make up the majority of NINC's membership) are probably more aware of the growing pressures created by marketing figures, reports and estimates than writers in any other genre—precisely because romance is still worth more money to publishers. Obviously, there is no going back to the publishing world of the '50s, a world described in Di Fate's *Chronicle* article as "too young and unsophisticated to appreciate the value of demographic studies or to be obsessed with a bottom-line marketing mentality." Besides, they undoubtedly had their problems, too.

Whether publishing will continue headlong down the Corporate America path of religiously reckless reliance on marketing guesstimates and sales figures still remains to be seen. Certainly there's a happy middle road, already being explored by some publishers, wherein the business people remember that writers and artists are the reason people actually go to the bookstore to spend those dollars for which everyone is now competing so fiercely. Having perhaps alarmed some of you about the influence covers have over your career and the lack of influence you have over your covers, these articles have also tried to suggest various ways in which you can become a productive part of this process.

Open communications with your editor and your art director. Provide them with feedback on your last cover, and any visual materials you can on your next

Open communication with your editor and your art director.

cover. If necessary, train them to accept your input as a normal and significant part of the cover process. And remember that the cover artist is, like you, a slice of bread in this gloppy sandwich. A good illustrator, just like a good writer, sincerely cares about that book and about doing what's best for it. So if you need to, shove your way past the ham and mayo; you might find a soulmate on the other side of all that artery-hardening stuff. **NINK**

Laura Resnick's thirteenth romance novel, *Fever Dreams*, will be published by DLP/Zebra in 1996. In addition, Alexander Books will publish her first nonfiction book in 1996, *A Blonde in Africa*, which is about her eight-month camping trip across Africa in 1993. She says the title was not one of her choices, but admits it goes well with the cover: a photo of her and some Mbuti pygmies "sitting around in darkest Zaire." She is currently at work on a fantasy trilogy which will be released in hardcover by Tor Books.

The Luck o'the Irish Writer: **No Income Tax**

by
ANNE McCAFFREY

As you celebrate the Wearing of the Green on March 17 and contemplate the Surrender of the Green on April 15 (April 30 in Canada), consider this: Since 1969, Irish writers and artists have paid no income tax. The following excerpted information is provided by the Consulate General of Ireland in San Francisco:

The exemption of writers and artists from income tax is given legislative effect in the Finance Act, 1969. This legislation applies to an artist of any nationality who is solely resident in Ireland. Presenting the legislation in Dail Eireann, the then-Minister for Finance, said: "The purpose of this relief is, as I announced in the budget statement, to help create a sympathetic environment here in which the arts can flourish by encouraging artists and writers to live and work in this country."

NINK asked member ANNE McCAFFREY, who has resided in Ireland since 1970, to explain how the tax system works. Her reply, which follows, includes some factors to consider if you're thinking of moving.

In answer to your query—one needs an Irish-born grandparent only to apply for citizenship (or a five-year residency), but not to avail yourself of the artist's exemption. That still operates although there are only about 500 or so folks operating under that scheme. But it is true that artists' income (and writers qualify) is free of Irish income tax, though, being an American, you still have to file and pay your IRS. However, living abroad gives you a \$70,000 overseas residency deduction. (I'd check that figure with the local tax experts, but that's what the deduction has been...the rules for IRS change so frequently that one does need to check.) What with deductions for managing an overseas office, and travel, and stuff, you do decrease your taxation income considerably. You would get taxed on the Irish rate (which is high) for interest on savings kept in this country, etc. which would be considered non-artistic income.

However, on the down side, the cost of living in Ireland is high. Mind you, if you move out into the country from the main and more expensive population centers, rent and/or house purchase is cheaper. Food is a tad more expensive but comes from all over the world and TASTES good. Right now, tangerines from Africa are \$1.59 for a basket that holds 18. Local veg is good, fresh and inexpensive. To give other examples, gasoline runs at about \$3.75

an imperial gallon; cigarettes are over \$4.00 a pack, even the pint of Guinness is now \$3.50. On the other hand, I pay \$850 for

the top rank health insurance; I drive a 1991 Toyota Camry which cost me \$30,000 new, runs about \$800 a year to insure and \$543 to road tax. My older son is now renting a nice three-bedroom house on one acre, secluded (we're in County Wicklow—27 miles from Dublin) for \$795 a month. Average apartments go at about \$500 a month. So, as they say here, what you lose in the swings, you can gain in the roundabouts.

The school system is excellent, both the national which is free up to seventh grade, and private which is modestly priced. The country is not priest-ridden and no one has yet asked me what my religious affiliation is. Of course, I am in the Dublin area. One would find considerably more parochialism in the Midlands, say, or the West Coast. The drug problem is now in Ireland what it was on Long Island in 1970 but parents can teach their children to say NO!

The weather is not quite as bad as people say, but then, weather is an innocuous topic and can be discussed with anyone. It's fairly temperate: not going much below freezing most winters (rarely snows though we've had snow fall in July) and certainly rarely above the '80s in the summer, with little or no humidity—and no mosquitoes.

The Irish attitude—which is generally laid-back and friendly—takes some getting used to as the Irish have no sense of time...and generally are late for appointments, or fail to turn up. But they *are* friendly and helpful even if they tell you what they think you need to know rather than answer the question you just asked. Still, they mean well.

I've lived here now 26 years and wouldn't live anywhere else in the world. I got my citizenship the hard way, by living here long enough to get it.

My advice to folks considering a move to Ireland is to come here for a summer or a winter and see how they like it. There's quite a colony of Americans in Ireland and we're always *trying* to get more to join us. One does NOT have all the amenities available in medium to large population centers, but there are fast-food places, even in small towns now, and fine restaurants everywhere. Even Lau-dromats and rental TVs. So you do have to live here long enough to realize what might be unexpectedly important to you personally that Ireland might not have in the way of amenities, ambience, etc.

To the mechanics of immigrating. I announced my intention to remain in Ireland on my arrival at Shannon

airport in August 1970, citing the Artists' Exemption Act of 1969. I was required to submit myself and my bona fides (i.e. copies of published books and contracts and/or letters from agents and editors) three months later at the Department Immigration. I shortly after received a residency permit and that was that. **NINK**

Bestselling author **Anne McCaffrey**, winner of numerous science-fiction awards, currently has *Freedom's Landing* out from Berkley and *The Dolphins of Pern* from Del Rey. This spring an historical/young adult novel titled *Black Horses*

for the King will be published by Harcourt Brace, and the 14th book in her *Pern* series, *Second Chronicles of Pern*, will be published in the fall by Del Rey.

Ed note: At least one CPA says the \$70,000 overseas residency exemption still applies, but members are advised to consult their own accountants or the IRS. Anyone wishing more information on residing in Ireland may contact the Consulate General of Ireland, 44 Montgomery Street, Suite 3830, San Francisco CA 94104. Telephone (415) 392-4214 and Fax (415) 392-0885.

Audit Lottery Winner Chosen

The Audit Lottery Committee met on January 17, 1996, to review the 28 entries submitted for the audit lottery. To determine eligibility, we devised a checklist made up from the rules on the submission form and the article in the December newsletter. Admitted neophytes at contract review, we faxed any clauses that we felt needed clarification to the accountant for his opinion. As a result of his expertise, several of the entries were disqualified.

The primary reason for disqualification was the inability to audit an account more than one year old. Other reasons included the absence of an auditing clause, the book had not been in release long enough to have received two royalty statements and a "gag" clause that would have prevented the publication of the results in the newsletter.

When the entries were received, each was assigned a number that stayed with it throughout the entire review process. After eliminating the ineligible entries, the remaining numbers were written on separate pieces of paper, put into a bowl and the winner and one runner-up were drawn. This year, of the eight publishing houses

represented, an author who submitted a Harlequin contract was the winner.

Normally, all materials pertaining to official NINC business are kept in the archives, but in this case, in order to maintain the promised anonymity of the entrants, all submissions will be held until the audit is final, and then they will be destroyed.

I'd like to thank my committee members, Deborah Gordon and Judy Myers, and to pass on their thanks, as well as my own, to the members who entered this, our first, audit lottery. Our work was an education, and we were grateful for the opportunity to be involved.

We have made recommendations to the Board to clarify some of the qualifications for future lotteries and to put in place a rule that would eliminate any publishing house from being audited twice in succession. Look for more about this when preparations for the second lottery are completed.

The committee was left with a strong feeling that we all have a lot to learn about this business, and a lot to share. And, as Francis Bacon said, *knowledge is power*.

— **Georgia Bockoven**

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 NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of NINC:

New Applicants

Eugenia Riley Essenmacher (*Eugenia Riley*), Houston TX
Colleen Faulkner, Seaford DE
Kathleen Garner (*Catherine Spencer*), White Rock BC, Canada

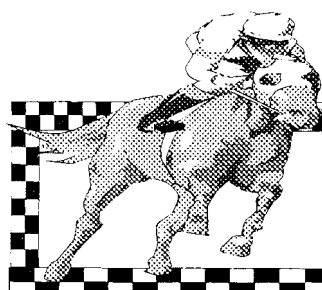
Metsy Hingle, Covington LA
Rainy Kirkland, Marlton NJ
Mary L. Lechleidner (*Delia Parr*), Pennsauken NJ
Pamela Macaluso, Lompoc CA
Jean Raynes (*Diane Austell*), Palos Verdes Estates CA

New Members

Judith E. French, Marydel DE
Loree Lough (*Cara McCormack*), Ellicott City MD
Myrna Topol (*Myrna Mackenzie*), LaGrange IL
Linda Kay West (*Linda Lewis*), New Orleans LA

NINK Facelift

Our newsletter turned six this year. Using the formula of one newsletter year equaling eight human years (You've never heard of that? Where have you been?) the Board of Directors decided *NINK* was ready for a little cosmetic surgery. But don't be disconcerted by the beauty of the new look. *NINK* is not now, nor will it ever be, just another pretty face. — **Vicki Lewis Thompson**



NINC Members on the USA Today List

The Fast Track

The Fast Track is a monthly report on Novelists, Inc. members on the *USA Today* top 150 bestseller list. (A letter "n" after the position indicates that the title is new on the list that week.)

Members should send Carole Nelson

Douglas a postcard alerting her to upcoming books, especially those in multi-author anthologies, which are often listed by last names only. Alternately, Carole's phone/fax number is 817-292-6208. Internet surfers can read and retrieve the list with this magic formula: 1. Enter the World Wide Web via this address: <http://www.usatoday.com> 2. At *USA Today's* homepage, click on the purple "Life" button in the *USA Today* masthead. Once in the Life section, click on the purple "Books" button in that masthead to go to the bookpage. Click, in turn, on two blue entry lines to see the top 1-50 list and the next 51-150 titles. You can also access year-to-date bestsellers by category. Save or print out the file. Look for your name or those of your friends, and track the stars!

Member	Title	10 Jan	17 Jan	24 Jan	31 Jan
Mary Balogh	<i>The Famous Heroine</i>			147n	
Annette Broadrick	<i>Megan's Marriage</i>				97n
Sandra Brown	<i>Breakfast in Bed</i>	134			
Jude Deveraux	<i>The Heiress</i>	79			
Suzanne Forster	<i>Blush</i>		154n	99	
Julie Garwood	<i>For the Roses</i>		8n	7	19
Tami Hoag	<i>Night Sins</i>	31	45	62	65
Linda Howard	<i>Mackenzie's Pleasure</i>			94n	61
Kelly Jamison	<i>The Wedding Contract</i>		103n		
Iris Johansen	<i>Lion's Bride</i>	18n	10	26	46
Jayne Ann Krentz	<i>Absolutely, Positively</i>		41n	48	45
Susan Elizabeth Phillips	<i>Kiss An Angel</i>		235n	58	78
Mary Jo Putney	<i>Shattered Rainbows</i>			46n	49
Christine Rimmer	<i>The Man, The Moon and the Marriage Vow</i>		119n		
Karen Robards	<i>Hunter's Moon</i>	113n	149		
Nora Roberts	<i>Born in Shame</i>	34	47	65	92
Nora Roberts	<i>Without a Trace</i>		90n	70	102
Nan Ryan	<i>You Belong to my Heart</i>			198n	146
Bertrice Small	<i>Hellion</i>				79n
Sherryl Woods	<i>The Cowboy and His Baby</i>		72n		

Debbie Macomber's *Touched by Angels* made the list for five weeks, rather than three as in the January 1996 table. From Oct. 18-Nov. 16 it was 94, 44, 44, 55, 101. ▼ Anyone who made the list but missed getting the hard copy of *USA Today* please send an SASE within 30 days to the NINC editor, who will attempt to provide a copy.



EAST OF THE HUDSON

It's Not All Greek to Me

Last time I checked, my wife and I have been published in at least 19 languages. Most of those publishing experiences came courtesy of the international octopus, Harlequin, but we've managed to peddle foreign editions of other works, as well. I was even published in Urdu, but I never could figure out which book it was since I don't personally read Urdu.

But the arrival of boxes and boxes of these foreign editions has always posed a problem: Even if we save one copy for the archives, what on earth do we do with the rest of them?

Today I can tell you that Novelists, Inc. and Bertrice Small solved our problem.

In Chicago, there is a very conscientious librarian named Merle Jacob. Merle understands that Chicago has become a polyglot city, and she takes her responsibility to her customers seriously. That's why she recently asked authors to send her unused copies of foreign editions of anything, ANYTHING her Spanish- and Polish- and Urdu-speaking customers might enjoy reading.

We had a stack of such books—Intimate Moments in Spanish with remarkably frank covers and carefully censored sex scenes; Novosti Press Russian editions of Ann's westerns with what appear to be cashiered Cuban intelligence officers cast as Moscow's version of Fabio; Chinese tomes which pay pitifully small advances but which are a breakthrough since the Chinese publishers used to simply steal them straight-away—so we bundled them up and sent them off to Ms. Jacob.

What we got back was a genuine and heart-felt "thank you." Ms. Jacob said that such foreign editions of popular novels are almost impossible to obtain in the United States, since their publishers seldom export such books here.

"This leaves many of our patrons who read in languages other than English without their favorite books," she wrote. "Your books will find a happy home at the Chicago Public Library."

Anybody who has ever lived in a place where they don't speak the common language knows how welcome the Mother Tongue can be, spoken or written. I once wept with joy at finding a battered copy of an early Dick Francis mystery one night after I had been marooned in Mexico City for a week.

So if you have unwanted foreign editions, why not pack them up and ship them off to the Windy City. Merle Jacob knows what to do with them.

To repeat from an earlier newsletter notice submitted by Bertrice Small: the mailing address is Merle Jacob, Adult Materials Selection Specialist, Chicago Public Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago IL 60605.

Clean out those closets. There are people out there who hunger for your books:

[Ed. note: Bertrice listed two other sources, as well. 1) Cicero Public Library, Jan Mather, 5225 W. Cermak, Cicero IL 60650, looking for Polish or Spanish editions, and 2) Johnson County library, P.O. Box 2901, Shawnee Mission KS 66201, Attn.: Mary Anne Hile, Collection Coordinator, looking for Spanish editions.]

Books and Sellers

Did I mention that Britain's Net Book Agreement is formally dead?

The NBA, as it was called, was a blatant price-fixing scheme. Sponsored by the British publishing industry, it prevented retailers from discounting books below their full cover price. The formal agreement fell apart when British publishers realized their sales had stagnated while those in the United States had undergone what *The Economist*, an international economic journal, called "explosive growth" over the past five years.

According to *The Economist*, the agreement had the effect of subsidizing independent booksellers and keeping British book prices very high, by U.S. standards.

My own perusal of British bookshops confirms both elements of the analysis. There are lots of non-chain stores throughout England and Scotland. They stock a wide variety of titles, some esoteric and most merely idiosyncratic. And all those titles are expensive, hugely so. I paid the equivalent of \$40 for front-list fiction in hard-back and a good deal more for specialized books.

(Interestingly, British bookstores have lots of variety but virtually no romance titles. I'm not sure why that is, but methinks there's a correlation here between esoteric and what is sometimes dismissed as "female erotica.")

With the scrapping of the NBA, British book selling is going to change, as U.S. book selling already has. The national network of independents will be supplanted by chains, perhaps even by international chains. Books will be available, at deep discounts, in supermarkets, drug-stores and other non-traditional outlets. In other words, books will probably be quite a bit cheaper. At least some books will be cheaper.

The Economist reports that superstores and discounting has been extremely beneficial to the publishing business in the U.S., raising book sales per person to more than \$90 a year over the past five years. At the same time, British book sales fell and then flattened out at about \$70 per person, per year.

The magazine also reports that Americans spend more on books (\$90 a year per person) than on any other form of media, including subscription television (\$80), home video (\$60), recorded music (\$58) or movies (\$22).

Like it or not, books and literature have always →



EAST OF THE HUDSON

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been snobbish. Cheap books—called paperbacks—were excoriated for years because they were marketed to the masses, not to the elite. The same kind of process is playing itself out in book selling today, here and in Britain. Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh, Colin Powell and those NINC members who sell more than, say, 200,000 copies of any particular novel, are dismissed by the literary establishment as celebrities or common sentimentalists, but

they are the backbone of the industry.

In the future, the masses, whose reading tastes are suspect by the intellectual establishment, will exert greater influence on publishing. So, too, will superstores and non-traditional book outlets, like the warehouse clubs and discount merchandisers who now account for an estimated 18% of adult book sales.

Whether that's good or bad is up to you to decide, but the folks who write popular fiction as opposed to literary esoteric will probably benefit.

— Evan Maxwell



Edgar Allan Poe's Stomping Grounds

The temperature's plummeting here in Vermont as I write this, but I'm already thinking about October in Baltimore. As you can see from the preliminary brochure inserted into this newsletter, this year's Novelists, Inc., conference will be held at the newly renovated Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore Hotel on October 17-20. We're already hard at work. In the few weeks since I accepted the job of conference coordinator, I've gotten excited about Baltimore.

Having never been there myself, I've been talking to NINC members who live in and around the city, reading brochures, guidebooks and articles, and listening to a non-writer friend who's lived and traveled lots of other places but just adores Baltimore. Here's what they tell me makes this city special to them:

The world-famous crabcakes...the friendly crowds...the views of Chesapeake Bay...the Inner Harbor with its dozens of shops, restaurants, sidewalk cafes and

promenade around the water's edge (within walking distance of our hotel)...the world-class Walters Art Gallery...Antique Row...the Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum...Fort McHenry...the Eubie Blake Museum...the tree-lined streets of early 19th-century rowhouses...200-year-old Lexington Market...

History, culture and charm. Those, I'm told, are Baltimore's hallmarks, what the city offers at its best. And everyone's assured me that October is one of the prettiest times to be there.

You can help me make this year's conference a success by planning to attend. And if you have any ideas for discussion groups, jot them down and send them to me. Or call me. Or E-mail me. This is *your* conference. Let me know what's on your mind. Thanks!

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