

Surviving in This Business We Call Writing

Last December, out of curiosity and the usual on-going angst over the state of the publishing industry and my place in it amid mergers and the latest demise of publishing lines, I conducted a survey among the members of Novelists, Inc. who are online on the Ninclink. Many thought the results of the survey might be of interest to all the members of NINC.

Those of us who are online are aware that we get some fascinating, thought-provoking, and often brilliant discussions going. At the very least we have immediate contact with a large number of diverse and talented writers who are willing to share their time, expertise, experience, opinions, concerns, and . . . recipes (as in comfort food). But that's the subject of another article.

To all those who responded to the survey, both on the Ninclink and through private postings—there were many and you know who you are—thank you for taking time away from work, writing schedules, families, holiday obligations, and not enough sleep to respond to the survey.

There was no great scientific mind at work here. There was just some straight-to-the-heart-of-the-matter curiosity with the hope that I might receive enough responses to give me

*Or, to put it another way,
"There must be some mistake.
What do you mean
you're not going to pay me
\$50,000 for my next book?"*

By CARLA SIMPSON

(and all the other members of NINC) a better idea of what is really going on out there in the trenches—particularly among writers who put together the proposals, deal with the rejections, and then pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and try, try again.

The following questions were my attempt to find out exactly how the changes in publishing—mergers, disappearing lines, fewer titles, lower print-runs, new technologies—are affecting the members of NINC and what we're doing about it.

The responses provided interesting insight. They revealed the talent and diversity of the members of NINC. They also provided clarification and hope—yes, I said hope—in these changing and often difficult times, surviving in this business we call writing.

The survey included the following questions:

- ▼ How many publishing houses published with?
- ▼ How many are currently multihouse-published?
- ▼ How many have had to reinvent themselves because of the current changes in the publishing industry? (i.e.: pseudonyms)
- ▼ How many are currently experimenting with other writing markets/genres in an attempt to branch out? (Other than what they previously published)
- ▼ How many are attempting alternative forms of publishing? (i.e.: small press, electronic publishing, or other?)

How many are able to earn a living from writing? (Drop in sales? Increase in sales?)

There were a total of 73 respondents. Rather than giving specific numbers of responses to each question, I thought I would cut to the chase and put everything into percentages to give a clearer understanding of how those numbers correspond to the total number of those who participated in the survey.

How many publishing houses published with?

The responses ranged from four writers who have published with just one house, *Continued on Page 5* ▶▶▶

Novelists, Inc.

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Send Address Changes to Central Coordinator

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

As the Nominating Committee puts the finishing touches on its slate of officers for 2000, I thought you might appreciate getting a better idea of who your Board is this year, and hearing (in their own words) what they do. Then you can see how much fun we all have, and that may spur you to volunteer next year!

And if you should happen to run into any of these wonderful people, please tell them how much you appreciate their efforts on your behalf. Yes, we enjoy ourselves, but we're also working hard. I swear!

Carla Negggers, President-Elect: Being president-elect could be one of those non-jobs where you keep your mouth shut, listen, learn, go "aye" when everyone else does, and take a deep breath when and if you do, in fact, get voted in as president. But before I agreed to this job, I was like most other members who just want a positive, engaged organization. While I do try to listen and learn, I also know that a stronger NINC this year means a stronger NINC next year. I can't sit back and let the rest of the Board carry the load. I speak up about the conference, the newsletter, the work of the various committees (I collect committee reports once a month, my only real "job"), and whatever else comes before the Board. It's not boring, it's not scary, and it's not demanding. In fact, most of the time it's a lot of fun. I mean, a bunch of writers running things? Come on. Of course it's fun.

Debbie Gordon, Treasurer: Nobody really cares what the treasurer of an organization does, so long as she doesn't abscond with the funds. To protect your money from the larcenously inclined, NINC requires two signatures on its checks and employs a bookkeeper to double-check its records. Unhappily, I am way too cyberly clueless to circumvent these procedures by doing neat computer stuff like Sean Connery and Catherine Zeta-Jones in *Entrapment*. But I do pay NINC's bills promptly, balance the checkbook, guard our bottom line, and try to hound our bankers into giving us the best terms possible. Other than that, let me tell you we have a nice cushion of Authors Coalition funds that can be used for some sort of special project. If you have any ideas, please speak up, with the understanding that you will be asked to chair the resulting committee, or at least to serve on it.

Becky Barker, Secretary: As NINC secretary, I'm in charge of setting up our monthly conference calls, getting a copy of the agenda to board members and taking notes at the meeting. Then I send uncorrected hard copies of the minutes to board members for corrections. Once we're all satisfied with the minutes, I send corrected copies to the executive board members, the Advisory Council, and the central coordinator for our archives. I'm also the second-signer on all checks except my own reimbursements, and I'm currently helping on the committee to update the Policy and Procedure Manual. All in all, the hardest part of my position is working with an outline format in Word 7.0.

Janice Brooks, Advisory Council Representative: Janice recently broke a metatarsal bone in her foot, so we took pity on her and let her off the hook with this little assignment! As the Advisory Council representative, Janice (NINC's very first president) was elected from among the council of founding members and past presidents to keep the current Board informed

This Month
from the
President:

Board officers at
work for you...
where you can
join in....

on the history and traditions of the organization, to offer wisdom and guidance, and to save us from reinventing any wheels. This is Janice's third term as AC rep, and we simply could not do without her many amazing contributions.

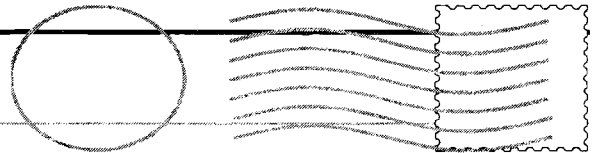
Terey daly Ramin, *NINK* Editor: Editing the newsletter is the most fun a writer can have without being in bed with the person s/he loves—or getting paid the big bucks to write the books she loves. Every month I get first look at all the articles and columns you'll be reading (and that I don't have to write. <g>) I get to decide what to put in and what to leave out—and in what direction to point each issue. (Yes, to someone who spends much of her life being edited, this is a dream job. <veg>) With the aid of my assistant editors, Susan Wiggs (the incomparable Swiggs) and Jeanne Savery Casstevens (my long-time partner in crime), I solicit articles for *NINK*, make sure we've got enough qual-

ity words coming in to fill each issue, seek out breaking news items (with the help of our energetic and intrepid Prez), and lurk online looking for the unwary who have the audacity to suggest intriguing feature ideas. Then I make sure all of this fits into 16 pages (our marvelous, beleaguered publisher, Sandy Huseby, must be nearly bald by now from trying to get me to do that) so that it can arrive in your mailbox as quickly as the printer and the US mails can deliver it.

So there you have it, ladies and gentlemen—your Board of Directors. I have to tell you that I am really proud to serve with these lovely folks. And if you'd care to help us, harrass us, or just say hello, you'll find all our pertinent info over there on page two.

— **Julie Kistler, President**

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.

Building the Boomer Market

The May edition of *Novelists' Ink* may as well have begun "Dear Cheryl" for all the directly personal relevance it contained for me. First of all, Evan Maxwell's recounting of his daughter's ordeal hit home. Only the weekend before the newsletter arrived, I left a booksigning to report directly to an emergency room with that dreaded sudden, hard pain in my side that his daughter developed. Like her, I suffered through hours of indignities and tests and poking and prodding, only to be told to go home, we don't know what's wrong with you. My diagnosis? Either a kidney stone or an "early appendix." So, I'll either be fine or I'll suddenly go KA-POW. Who knows? So far, as evidenced by this letter, I haven't gone ka-pow, for which I'm eternally grateful. But should this letter end at some suspiciously rag-tag moment, well then, the worst has happened.

So then, after reading Evan's "East of the Hudson" column, I read the "Letters to the Editor." And may I just say thank you, Jaye W. Manus. Only a week before I read that letter, I had come to the same conclusions about growing the Boomer market. This is exactly what we have to do—and now. Several recent experiences and observations led my publicist and me to the same conclusions reached by

Jaye. At booksignings, to amuse myself during those all too often dead moments, I question managers and, on my own, try to notice what readers are buying. The managers roll their eyes and say...Nonfiction self-help. This was again verified for me by a Community Coordinator for a large bookstore chain who had arranged for me to speak at the Women's Expo here in Tampa and to sign books afterwards. She said, point-blank, that we fiction writers have missed the boat by not jumping on board with identifying to readers that there are more life lessons and self-help contained in fiction than there are in all the latest flash-in-the-pan, of-the-moment guru books out there.

Now, here's a plus, a call to action: Another store's Community Coordinator asked me, at yet another book-signing, if I would like to speak to one of her Readers Club meetings. She said she would assign them to buy and to read my latest book and then have me appear at the discussion of it to answer their questions. I was, of course, ecstatic—especially when she told me it would be a paid appearance. They'll pay us to talk about our books? Sign me up! Since then, and all within the past two weeks, I've had two other bookstores also ask me if I would like to read from my book and to answer questions afterward. Of course, I said yes.

So it all seems to be happening all over and at once, as Jaye picked up on. Someone flashes onto a great, right-on-target idea and it makes the global rounds. The smart ones grab up that standard and carry it forward. Call it serendipity or circularity, whatever. Just call me.

See, I firmly believe that the message and the appeal of fiction is timeless. We—you and I, my colleagues—know that because it is our job to produce a masterpiece every time we sit down to write. No one hopes to turn out a mediocre book, [one] that doesn't have moral or thematic value; or a subliminal if not blatant instruction on how to live life; on how to succeed; on how to mend





BREAKING NEWS

FOR "BABYLON FIVE" FANS...

"Babylon 5's" J. Michael Straczynski received SFWA's Ray Bradbury Award for Dramatic Screenwriting on May 1, 1999 in Pittsburgh. The award—given at the SFWA President's discretion—was last presented in 1992 by then-SFWA President Ben Bova to James Cameron, for his writing of *Terminator 2*. Bova was the originator of the award, and Cameron was its sole recipient until now.

Widely acknowledged as one of the most imaginative and influential science fiction television shows in years, "Babylon 5" concluded its five-year first run in 1998. Straczynski conceived the series, and wrote 91 of its 110 episodes—a tour de force in television writing. The entire series can now be seen again on the TNT Cable Channel.

Studio Rewrite Policy Irks WGA

The Writers Guild of America has launched an investigation into alleged practices at 20th Century Fox, Paramount, and Warner Bros., where the studios are guaranteeing writers payment for only a single draft but expect them to deliver rewrites and polishes at no extra charge.

Top screenwriters' agents and lawyers have been lodging complaints with the WGA during the past two months, claiming that their attempts to make deals with Fox, Paramount, and Warner Bros. have been complicated by the provision that writers receive only one fee for all drafts of a single screenplay. This is a violation of the WGA's basic agreement. (Ed. Note: So, does this mean novelists should rebel, too?) ▶ ▶ ▶

LETTERS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 3*

broken relationships; on how to understand our place in this world; on how to be a hero or heroine; or how to make a real difference as one person against the world. *No one* does. No team ever took to a field or began a season chanting, "We're Number Four!" No, they want to win, to be number one. So do I. So do you.

I don't have to tell you that the function of fiction is to instruct and to entertain. I don't have to tell you that "the only subject worthy of fiction is a changing condition of the human heart" (credit Faulkner with that). Faulkner also said, "There is no such thing as a simple story. Because there is only one story...sin and redemption." No matter how we couch your stories, that is indeed what we write. Like I said, I don't need to tell you all that, colleagues. You know that, as well as I do. But our readers don't. And we need to tell them. Now. Or languish for sitting placidly or pompously by.

Now, I hardly believe I'm the voice with the clout that Jaye calls upon to develop as our own expert, but I will tell you this...we have to do that. Find our expert and support the heck out of that person. I know what I'm going to do—promote myself, you, and our masterpieces as the healing documents that they are. And as a teacher of fiction writing, as someone who's been featured in more newspapers across the country than I can count, as someone who makes regular appearances on television as a local "expert" on fiction, as someone who speaks constantly to every school, civic, and writer's organization that I can, as someone who firmly believes in the messages espoused in fiction, and as someone who believes in the messages I'm called upon to write, I'll be out there and I'll be talking.

By the way, I believe this topic absolutely must be discussed at the Author Discussion Group and/or at

the Professional Discussion Group in Savannah. This is the hot-button topic—I believe that fervently. It's a way out of the quagmire: telling readers about the enduring life lessons contained in fiction, the making of it a social activity, one at which the writer herself/himself will appear. People love it. They want to rub elbows with a celebrity—turn on the TV or pick up any magazine to confirm that for yourself. You don't think you're a celebrity? Could that be part of the problem? But besides that (bottom-line time), people have money they're willing to spend on worthwhile reading. And that's the definition of fiction. Therefore, I want them to have our books. And I'll educate the heck out of them until they do. Will you?

See you in Savannah, my hometown.

— Cheryl Anne Porter

Thanks, Laura!

I just got to my *Novelists' Ink* and sat down for some serious reading. After a morning spent with a doctor who recommends surgery or a lifetime of drugs and an editor who rejected me (or it could have been the other way around), I was blue, to say the least. Hence the reason I wasn't at my desk working. Then I read Laura's article, "Amidst the Wastes of Time, Part II." After this very crappy morning, I started reading and started laughing. Not at you, Laura, but at how *true* everything you wrote was, and the classy, humorous way you presented it.

My dh made the mistake of trying to uninstall IE4, crashed his hard drive, and had to start over. He still can't get WP to load, after four weeks. I just bought a new computer for myself and anticipated the worst—I was sure I'd go through everything he and Laura did, combined—though everyone assured me that buying a Dell was the right move. For anyone who's interested, it was. <knock on wood>

— Ginny Schweiss

SURVIVING THIS BUSINESS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

whether it's one book or a dozen, to one author who has published with nine different publishing houses throughout her career, both fiction and nonfiction and including magazine publications.

Those who fell in the range between these numbers (two to eight publishing houses) was incredible, with the majority of writers who responded to the survey falling in the mid-range of two to five publishing houses to date in their writing careers.

How many authors are currently multihouse-published?

An amazing 65% of respondents are currently writing for more than one publishing house. The reasons are varied. At least half of those who write for more than one publisher do so because they write faster than the publisher is willing to publish them. Others do so out of the need to avoid boredom, while at least 25% have done so because of the current market with lower print-runs, fewer shelf slots, and in some cases decreased sales.

How many authors have had to re-invent themselves because of current changes in the market? (i.e.: the use of pseudonym)

It was not surprising to discover that a full 50% of respondents have re-invented themselves either through the use of a pseudonym to establish a new identity, by changing genres, or both. The surprise was that less than half of these were because of the current market and more the result of what the respondents felt was a natural progression in their writing and the desire to move into new areas.

A small percentage of respondents (less than 10% of those who had re-invented themselves) indicated that the change was due to a previous market change such as the previous cycles in popularity of gothic romances.

How many authors are currently experimenting with other writing markets/genres in an attempt to branch out? (Other than what they previously published)

Initially the responses to this question might be seen as a clear indication of the sad state of the publishing industry. Yes, and no. Here again the numbers were high. More than 67% of those who responded to the survey are currently experimenting with other genres and markets in an attempt to branch out. And here again of those attempting to move into other genres and markets there was an almost equal split between those doing so as a result of the current market and those choosing to do so as a natural progression in their writing.

How many authors are attempting alternative forms of publishing? i.e.: small press, electronic publishing, or other?

This question focused on the issue of alternative types of publishing outside the circle of big New York publishing houses as a result of fewer lines, mergers, exorbitant advances for celeb bios that often don't earn out, and overall diminished publishing opportunities for writers.

The result was that 53% of those who responded are currently pursuing alternative publishing along with the traditional. These include small presses, self-publishing, and—to no one's surprise—electronic publishing. Of the 47% who are not currently pursuing those alternatives, almost all said that they would in the future.

How many are able to earn a living from writing? (Or have seen a drop in sales? Increase in sales?)

This last question addressed the issue of income. How many, if they had to, would be able to earn a living from their writing?

A full 23% have either part-time or full-time employment in addition to income received from writing. Twenty-



BREAKING NEWS

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Violence, the Media...and Us: REACTION, RESPONSIBILITY and RUNNING SCARED at the CORPORATE LEVEL

It's been a heckuva spring on the "let's find a scapegoat" front.

Since April 20 we've seen episodes of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" pulled by the WB at the last minute in the US—after showing the night before in Canada. Outraged American fans begged their Canadian compatriots for help—which led to the episodes being offered in tape trades, or bootlegged over the Internet in downloadable digital format, an action that prompted "Buffy" creator Joss Whedon to smile and tell *USA Today*, "OK, I'm having a Grateful Dead moment here, but I'm saying, 'Bootleg the puppy.'"—much to the delight of "Buffy" fans.

We've also seen the "Jenny Jones Show" lose its multi-million-dollar court battle over who is legally responsible for the murder of one of the show's guests by another, and lawsuits are proceeding against video and movie producers, not to mention the CNN report wherein the television distributor of "The Jerry Springer Show" says they are "aiming for tamer programs." Springer syndicate Studios USA—owned by Barry Diller's USA Networks—is now forbidding fights on the show, promising "no violence, physical confrontation, or profanity."

Ninlink and other writers lists have spoken long and hard about the issue of responsibility, and how much of it belongs to writers of books and movies, and where we

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BREAKING NEWS

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might eventually find ourselves liable for "influencing the actions" of others. Opinions are many, hot, and varied.

So who might potentially be liable when someone riffs on popular media and commits murder? a) Tabloid TV producers? b) Video game developers who offer murder and mayhem at the local arcade? c) Film producers who put out violent slash-and-smash serial killer movies? d) Publishers who offer instruction manuals for murderers and terrorists?

All of the above. Now Peder Lund, the brains behind Paladin Press, which published *Hit Man: A Technical Manual for the Independent Contractor*, has reportedly reached an out-of-court settlement in the \$5-million range and pulled the *Hit Man* book from its catalog. After a man who followed the book's "hit man" instructions to the letter killed their sister, three New York women sued Lund and Paladin Press. Appellate courts upheld their right to sue, and Lund and his press settled, apparently fearing an even larger award if the case went before a jury.

Some legal scholars think this may open the floodgates for suits against various media, blasting a hole in free speech and free press protections. But a lawyer for the plaintiff who appeared on "Sixty Minutes" countered with the argument that "the First Amendment is there to protect ideas, not to protect people who would assist would-be terrorists and murderers."

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SURVIVING THIS BUSINESS

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one percent responded that they could support themselves if they had to. But a much larger percentage, 56%, admitted that they are fortunate enough not to have to rely on their income since a spouse or significant other supports them.

An additional part of this last question was the issue of sales numbers. Twenty-one percent had experienced a drop in their sales figures, while 23% had experienced an increase, with the balance of those who responded remaining approximately the same.

So, what does all of this mean?

Back in December, I put this survey online with the hope of a few responses that might give me an idea what other writers were going through in their careers. Sort of a base of comparison for where I'm at with my writing and what I'm struggling with in this current publishing atmosphere.

Admittedly, this was not a scientific survey. The numbers are not absolutes. But they're accurate among those who responded, whom I suspect are fairly representative of the NINC membership and possibly the writing profession as a whole.

What it means is that we're out there, still writing and still publishing. Some of us are not doing as well as we once did in some instances, but neither are we throwing in the towel and quitting. The numbers prove that more people are seeing increased sales than decreased sales, if only by two small percentage points.

The responses to the survey affirmed many things I already knew about the state of the industry. But there were also a great many responses that surprised me. The results weren't all gloom and doom.

The survey revealed that our business is changing and we're changing with it, whether out of desire or necessity. As opportunities have disappeared, we've regrouped, reorganized,

and reinvented. The numbers prove that we're being smart about this business called writing. We're diversifying and experimenting, and we're still telling stories.

Is publishing tougher now than it was ten years ago? Yes, no doubt about it. The industry is changing. Part of that change is driven by new technology and many writers are on the leading edge of that new technology, with many more determined to be part of it in the very near future.

As writers we're also changing. We're regrouping, reinventing ourselves, writing in other genres, and inventing new genres. We're doing it under pseudonyms, through multi-house-publishing, and alternative publishing.

The bottom line after all the numbers are in is that while we're not doing as well as we'd like, neither are we doing as bad as many of us believed.

We're experimenting, learning, and pushing new horizons. We are surviving in this business we call writing.

We're doing better than merely surviving in this business called publishing. **NINK**

INTRODUCING...

The following authors have applied 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

Tricia Adams (*Patricia Camden, Julia Howard*), Aptos CA
Maggie Price, Oklahoma City OK

New Members

Christine K. Benson, Rowlett TX
Judy McAnerin (*Judy Jackson*),
Richmond BC, Canada
Dawn E. Reno (*Diana Lord*),
Deltona FL

Tips on Presenting Effective Workshops

COMPILED BY LORRAINE HEATH

(Ed. Note: it's that time of year and there have been a lot of questions posed regarding how to get comfortable in front of an audience. Here are some solutions—with the notable absence of the One That Worked For Me: flying through a hurricane and surviving. Perspective is a wonderful thing...;-) tdr)

Most of us are writers, not speakers. Our preference is to sit in front of a computer and create characters, not stand before a group of people and explain the secrets to getting published. But inevitably, after that first sale, you will be asked to give a presentation somewhere along the line. And you'll say, "Yes."

And when the day for the presentation arrives, you'll wish you'd said, "No."

Your nerves are on edge. You are certain the microphone will throw the echo of your pounding heart over the audience, but you are determined to give a spellbinding presentation.

You shuffle your papers and forge ahead, reading from your carefully prepared notes. Somewhere around page five, you hear something that resembles a freight train speeding through a tunnel. You glance up. Someone on the first row is asleep, snoring. The remainder of your audience sits in a daze.

You've lost what you most needed, the audience's attention. Would it have gone differently if you had approached your workshop presentation as you would writing a novel?

1. Give your audience achievable goals.

In a novel, the main characters have goals. A workshop has goals as well. In a formal workshop, those goals are known as objectives and are stated at the beginning of the

workshop. In an informal workshop, it is not necessary to state the objectives, but it is necessary that you, the presenter, know what the objectives are. What will each member of your audience be able to do when your workshop is over?

The objectives should be simple statements. I once gave a workshop on time management. It seems logical what my objective would be: at the end of this workshop, you will be able to manage your time.

Logical perhaps, but not accurate and certainly too broad a concept for anyone to achieve by attending one workshop. The objectives were much simpler. One objective was to list tasks and eliminate those not more important than writing.

Set goals for your audience and give them the information they need to achieve them, just as you give your characters what they need to accomplish their goals.

2. Grab the audience's attention.

In a novel, it's referred to as a hook, an opening that grabs the reader's attention. When giving a workshop, you want to use the same principle.

Rachelle Morgan suggests using a common interest hook to begin a workshop. If the topic is rejections, the presenter might begin by asking how many in the audience have received a rejection or anticipate receiving a rejection. This gives the audience something to relate to as she delivers her talk.

Peggy Moreland has had success with a joke hook. Peggy explains, "Before using this 'joke' hook, you need to decide whether or not you are any good at telling a joke and delivering the punch line

effectively. You should also make sure that the joke ties in with the topic of your workshop and that its delivery is a natural opening to your presentation—in other words, don't say, 'Hey, I've got a joke for you!' Let your audience realize that the 'story' you are telling them is a joke *only* after they've been slapped with the punch line. Follow the joke with a transition that flows naturally into your prepared presentation."

Here is an example from one of Peggy Moreland's workshops on characterization:

"One of the most difficult tasks I've faced as a published author is coming up with an answer when someone asks me how I do it. How I handle a particular writing technique, whether it be characterization, description, pacing, or whatever. This point was driven home to me in July on my flight home from the RWA national convention in Boston. The man in the seat next to mine...etc., etc."

This is where the "joke/story" began. After sharing the story and delivering the punch line, I used a transition to move into the real topic of the workshop. I told the audience, "Now this guy was a character, and that's what I'm here to discuss with you today: characters, and how we as writers bring them to life on the printed page."

"I discovered (quite by accident I assure you) that by telling this joke I immediately set up a sense of camaraderie between my listening audience and me. They were relaxed, in a good mood, and animated. As an added 'kick' during the presentation of my material on characterization and especially when the audience's attention seemed to waver, I would occasionally again refer to the 'character' in the joke. They immediately snapped back to attention."





BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 7*

MARKETS

UK publisher Hodder & Stoughton UK has been purchased by WH Smith, the big book chain.

Olivia Goldsmith, author of *The First Wives Club*, has inked a seven-figure deal for two books with Dutton/NAL. Both books acquired movie deals before print interest, with rights to the first one, *The Bad Boy School*, going to Paramount for \$1.7 million, according to PW, and the second selling to Dreamworks.

In case you're trying to place it, *The Bad Boy School's* title and reverse-Pygmalion plot sound a bit like Sarah Bird's *The Boyfriend School*, which was written after Bird attended the Dallas RWA conference a number of years ago. Bird's book was also made into an HBO movie called *Don't Tell Her It's Me*, (1990) starring Shelley Long, Steve Guttenberg and Jami Gertz.

The wave of the future?

Michael Crichton's next book, *Timeline* from Knopf, will bridge the world of publishing and computer games. Crichton has formed Timeline Studios to market games based on his own and other people's books and movies. Crichton and Timeline follow Tom Clancy and his Red Storm Entertainment into the interactive book/gaming world.

Timeline and Red Storm are both co-owned by Virtus Corporation.

Musical Chairs, the Saga Continues...

Bailantine announces that

Effective Workshops

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3. Keep the audience's attention.

As a writer, you know it is essential to draw the reader into the story, to make her feel as though she is actually "there." The same is true when giving a workshop. You want to draw the reader in and hold her attention using sight, sound, and interaction.

VISUAL: We are a visual society, our sights constantly bombarded with television, movies, and billboards. We like to see things. Use visual techniques to hold your audience's attention.

Use an overhead projector if one is available and conducive to your subject. Lorna Michaels effectively used an overhead projector when she gave a workshop on body language. She showed the audience pictures of three men talking on the telephone and asked the audience to identify the man talking to his boss, his wife, and his lover. The audience was intrigued as they discussed the body language associated with each man's stance. She "showed" the audience what they needed to do with their writing.

A flip chart comes in handy for listing your key points. You can design the pages ahead of time or you can solicit responses from your audience to a particular question and write their answers for easy reference. In either situation, the visibility makes the information easier to remember. Portable flip charts can be obtained from office supply stores for around ten dollars.

Dry erase boards and chalkboards can be effective tools if you need to demonstrate something during your presentation. It is much easier for someone to remember something that she has heard *and* seen than it is for her to remem-

ber something that she has only heard.

EXERCISES: Give your audience a task. I once attended a workshop given by Christina Dodd on writing a synopsis. She spent approximately ten minutes explaining the one-line synopsis. About the time heads might have started to nod, she smiled and said, "Write a one-line synopsis."

People snapped to attention and began to work on the assignment. Christina then called on people to share their one-line synopses, and the audience discussed the merits of each synopsis. When Christina began explaining the one-paragraph synopsis, no one's attention dared to waver because everyone anticipated that another assignment was on the horizon. She didn't disappoint them.

INVOLVEMENT: Involve your audience in the workshop. In my workshop on time management, I asked the audience to share the tasks they did throughout the day. We wrote ten tasks on a flip chart. Then we discussed ways to eliminate the task, combine it with others, or shorten the time that it required.

Rachelle Morgan involves the audience in her workshop. "If I am trying to convey a point, I usually include an example, then to be sure the audience understands, I have three people offer an example of their own. Such as: Describe a romantic sound you would hear on a beach (then choose three people). One will invariably give a straightforward answer that has no 'romantic tone' to it."

Audience participation is an excellent way to keep the audience interested, but you do need to take care that you don't wander off-topic. Debra Cowan suggests, "If someone asks a question not related to the topic, the speaker can always say 'talk to me afterward.'"

Remember that writers came to learn about a certain topic, and they will leave disappointed if the topic shifts.

HANDOUTS: Provide handouts when possible.

Leanna Wilson, a frequent workshop presenter, suggests that if the handouts pertain to specific information covered in the workshop, you might pass them out beforehand. As she explains, "When folks are writing, generally they're listening. I'm a very sight and tactile learner. Nothing much going in auditorially sticks. So I like handouts. To me, if a speaker gives the handout before she begins, she accomplishes two things:

1. The audience can follow along, know when the speaker is in the middle or toward the end. It can help with their attention span. Also, if you give ten points, for example, then it's easy for the audience to follow along.

2. A good way to do handouts is not to list the information but give key phrases with blanks beside them. That way the audience can take notes and follow along. I've seen Susan Macias do this a lot and it works well."

Alexis Harrington gave a workshop which was a "how I was rejected and then finally sold" presentation. "On a landscape 8.5x11 handout, I compared the problems *Homeward Hearts* originally had and showed how I fixed them. The page was divided in two vertically, and on one side I showed a direct excerpt from my original manuscript, then on the other side, I showed how it eventually read in the book. It gave the audience real, hands-on examples of writing no-no's and writing yes-yes's—not just hypothetical ones, and I discussed each one."

If the handouts give additional information, but are not needed as a visual aid during the workshop, such as references or articles on your topic, make them available after your presentation. If you pass them out at the beginning, the audience is likely to become absorbed in reading the handouts and they might not listen.

4. Solicit questions beforehand.

When writing a novel, you know exactly what your audience, the reader, is expecting. It makes it easier to fulfill their expectations.

If you are speaking to a local

chapter whose membership remains constant, it might be possible to ask the workshop coordinator to have members send questions on your topic before you arrive for the workshop. This method gives you an idea of what they are expecting, as well as an opportunity to prepare well-thought-out answers.

I recently spoke to several high school English classes. A week before I was to speak, the teacher asked the students to list the questions they wanted answered. She then sent the list to me. It not only gave me the opportunity to prepare the answers, but it allowed me to identify visuals that would reinforce my answers. I brought a rejection letter, *The Writers Market*, a copy-edited manuscript, and a coverflat. During my visit, the students asked their questions in random order, thus they felt involved. I was comfortable with the format because I had the answers and didn't have to think off the top of my head, except in one instance when a student grew bold and asked a question not on the list: How much money do you make?

It is a little more difficult to solicit questions beforehand at conferences when you are not certain who will attend the workshops.

I have attended a workshop where those attending wrote questions on index cards before the workshop began. The moderator then arranged the questions in logical order for the speaker so the question and answer session moved very quickly. Then additional questions were taken from the audience.

5. Give the audience what they need . . . and stop!

In a romance novel, once the hero and heroine resolve the conflict, the story is over. Give your audience what they need to accomplish the goals you set for them, but don't bombard them with additional information. If you spoke faster than you had planned, enjoy a longer question and answer session than you'd anticipated.

6. Practice.

You would not submit a rough



Greg Tobin, former VP and editor-in-chief at Book-of-the-Month Club, will assume the positions of senior VP and editor-in-chief for the Ballantine group in June, replacing Judith Curr, who departed for Pocket Books last April.

HarperCollins has announced the departure of Joelle Delbourgo, editor-in-chief and associate publisher of the HC adult trade division.

And You Thought Publishers Couldn't Juggle...

Random House has announced plans for a "realignment" of its adult publishing divisions, forming new publishing groups by uniting Doubleday and Broadway, and also Bantam and Dell.

Anchor Books will join Vintage to form a new trade paperback group under Knopf, with each imprint to retain its editorial identity. Doubleday and Broadway will similarly maintain separate editorial departments, according to early information.

Consolidated into one mass market giant, the Bantam Dell group will publish Bantam and Delacorte hardcovers; Bantam, Delta and DTP trade paperbacks; and Island mass market titles. No word on editorial inter- or independence yet.

Under this new arrangement, Carole Baron, senior VP, president and publisher, will leave Dell. Doubleday president Stephen Rubin will become president and publisher of the Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, while Irwyn Applebaum has been named



BREAKING NEWS

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president and publisher of the new Bantam Dell group.

Sequels and prequels and dolls, oh my!

Thomas Harris's *Hannibal*, the long-delayed surprise package of a sequel to *Silence of the Lambs*, is the big story of the summer publishing season, but it's not alone.

You can't blink without seeing one of the numerous book tie-ins to *The Phantom Menace*, the *Star Wars* prequel. Meanwhile, Terry Brooks, who penned the tie-ins for *TPM*, contributes *Angel Fire East*, which takes off on what he started in *Running with the Demon*, to help fuel the sequel frenzy.

On the bandwagon, Susan Isaacs is reportedly planning a sequel for her *Compromising Positions* as well.

And then there are the different-author sequels in the works:

- ▼ a second life for Scarlett, et. al, as Pat Conroy supposedly works on a sequel for Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*;
- ▼ new, updated adventures for the pill-popping Dolls from Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*;
- ▼ a Phantom of the Opera sequel from Frederick Forsyth that sends the masked man to Manhattan;
- ▼ and a new *Dune* from original author Frank Herbert's son Brian. *Dune: House of Atreides*, by Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson, is scheduled for fall release

More, page 12 ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

Effective Workshops

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draft of your manuscript to an editor. You don't want your presentation to be rough either.

It will probably require revisions. Practice giving your presentation by standing in front of a mirror or by asking friends to watch you. The more often you give the presentation—even with an imaginary audience—the more natural it will seem and the less nervous you will become.

7. Relax.

This step is probably the most difficult to achieve, but Adrienne deWolfe, a popular speaker at writers conferences around the country, offers some excellent tips and advice:

"If nervousness is a problem for you, especially when delivering a workshop topic or speech for the first time, be sure you get to your room at least a half hour in advance. This allows you to size up your equipment (Is the podium too high? Is the microphone cord too short? Is the lighting going to interfere with your visuals? Is there room to walk around or through the audience if necessary?) Also: if you need water, be sure you have plenty on hand but out of the way, to avoid the possibility of spillage on your notes.

"You can also use this half hour to help you eliminate your attack of nerves. Start by doing gentle 'warm-up' exercises, including neck and shoulder rolls. Shake out your legs and arms—bend them or swing them a couple of times to get the energy moving through your body. Vocalize by humming or making 'me-me-me' sounds. Loosen up your jaw by 'chewing' or gently moving it from side to side.

"Finally, practice breathing. Rather than gulping shallow 'nervous' breaths, fill your lungs from the bottom upward. Feel them expand outward like balloons until the air

finally fills your chest. Then expel the breath through your mouth in a rush. I've found deep breathing to be the single best way to help me slow my racing pulse, particularly when my nervousness creeps back in as the audience is getting settled and I'm being introduced.

"Another way to eliminate nerves: start moving around the front of the room after you begin your talk. Get your body involved as you speak. By becoming physical and moving away from the podium, you loosen the tension in your muscles and start to relax. This allows your voice to sound more natural. Soon you *feel* more natural. An audience will sense your tenseness and will feel 'tense' for you, so to help your audience be more receptive to you and your ideas, work on conveying a sense of relaxation.

You can demonstrate your confidence in yourself and establish a more 'cozy' or informal atmosphere if you move into the front row or start strolling through the aisles of your audience. This tactic gives you the psychological advantage of being 'one of them' rather than some intellectual guru who wants to be admired from afar. It also makes you more approachable afterward, particularly if someone is too shy to ask you a question in a group format, or if someone wants to approach you privately for some reason, like setting up a book-signing."

8. Breathe a sigh of relief.

You did it! *MNK*

When award-winning author Lorraine Heath isn't writing novels, she works as a training systems specialist. Her current release is A Rogue in Texas from Avon Books.

"Writing is the commitment to move forward, not to stew in our own juices, to become whatever it is we are becoming. Writing is both the boat and the wind in the sails."

— Julia Cameron, *The Right to Write*



ONLINE...

A few years ago when online servers began branching onto the Internet and providing easier access to their subscribers, authors asked each other, "Are you going to get a Web site? Do you think it's worth the expense? What do you put on a Web site?" Today, it seems rare to find an author who does not have a Web site. Many authors have learned html programming or purchased software so they can design their own Web sites.

Just as our books have to stand out on the shelves in stores, so now it seems our Web sites must stand out on the Internet. We have to discover various approaches to draw new readers to our Web sites so they'll discover not only what we look like and who we are, but catch a glimpse of our latest book title and read an excerpt. Most authors or their Web site providers work in conjunction with Amazon.com or other booksellers so a reader can click on the cover of a book and order that book online. An incredibly quick and easy transaction—the trick is getting the people to your Web site.

Many authors are devising different methods to bring potential readers to their Web sites. Novelists, Inc. members are no exception. Much of the information is geared toward beginning writers, but I found it interesting to discover how the authors presented the information and to study the manner in which they increased the flow of traffic to their sites, and hence the number of potential readers.

Allison Lane has an article defining the Regency period, with another one scheduled to be added shortly at www.eclectics.com/allisonlane.

Jennifer Blake has "recently posted a page called Advice for the Beginning Romance Writer. I also have a page titled 'Romantic Secrets, Ten Tips for Writing More Effective Romance Novels.'" Her Web site is www.jenniferblake.com.

Stephanie Mittman reveals that "the perfect romance novel has seven vital ingredients and an innumerable number of optional additions." She explains them "one at a time, hoping to stress the importance of each." She also has a section that provides "Exercises to Strengthen and Tighten Your Writing." Her Web site is found at www.stephaniemittman.com.

Nancy McArthur writes children's books that are often used in schools. At her Web site junior.apk.net/~mcarthur/ she has included ideas for teachers and librarians for making use of her books (most gathered from schools she has visited or heard from while others she thought of herself) to encourage reading. I also found

on her Web site a "color me" bookplate that can be printed, colored, and placed inside a book. A very novel idea, I thought.

Jo Beverley provides wonderful links to English history at her Web site www.sff.net/people/jobeverley. I was tempted to spend most of the afternoon browsing all the links she has provided. She also has three interesting articles: "What Makes Writing Sell?," "In Praise of Younger Men," and "Trial By Ordeal."

I found an engaging site provided by Rebecca Brandewyne. At www.brandewyne.com, she provides a tour of her virtual home, Ravenscroft Castle. History, photos, and a pond with the breeze rippling the water are only a few of the sites that caught my fancy. If you haven't visited her site, I think you'll enjoy it.

To help readers more than writers, Mary Jo Putney adopted the suggestion of one of her site visitors and created a printable book list at www.maryjoputney.com, which is easy to take to the bookstore. She's received a number of comments and thank yous from people.

Denise Dietz Wiley not only publicizes her books, but her editing service *Stray Cat Productions* on her Web site at www.eclectics.com/denise.

Mystery writer Joanne Pence provides links for food and mystery at members.aol.com/jopence. One addictive link is to *Chocoholics*.

At my Web site, www.paintedrock.com/authors/heath.htm, I have provided a link to all the articles geared toward writers that I've written for the e-magazine *The Rock* and included a form so people needing articles for their newsletters can easily obtain reprint permission. For my readers, I have a Readers' Group Guide that hopefully provides helpful questions for discussion of my latest book.

New sites continue to develop on the Internet. For women's fiction, *Subversion* at www.booksquare.com/subversion/index.cfm provides reviews, discusses romance novels, features novels, interviews authors, and has a soapbox forum. Another site of interest is *BookSpot* at www.bookspot.com. It contains book-related resources on the Web, unifying a collection of top book-related sites with insightful editorial in one convenient, user-friendly spot. "BookSpot simplifies the search for the best online texts, book reviews, reading lists, author and publisher information, book stores, book news, events, and much more."

Writers of Non-Traditional Romance (WNTR #179) is a new online RWA chapter that embraces the concept of taking readers beyond the usual. "Whether it is a paranormal, historical, or contemporary novel,





ONLINE...

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WNTR authors have decided to try new and different things. We may choose to tackle issues that stretch both the mind and spirit of our characters, as well as our readers. If you are the kind of writer who chooses to bend—or even break—the rules without breaking the spirit of Romance, consider joining WNTR.” You can gain more information by visiting the chapter Web site at members.aol.com/RWAWNTR/index.html.

If you are beginning to make your travel plans for the Novelists, Inc. conference in Savannah, I discovered three sites that will search and give you the lowest air fares available: <http://farefinder.previewtravel.com/Farefinder2/frontpage/> and <http://expedia.msn.com/daily/home/default.htm> and <http://www.travelocity.com/>. I found the first two easiest to use and was pleased with the results of the searches. Although you can purchase the tickets directly from the site, I haven't. But when I call the air-



lines, I can give them the exact flights I want, knowing ahead of time which flights give me the prices I want to pay. The sites allow you to determine if fare is more important than convenience and several options are available to you.

If you are not subscribed to NINCLINK and wish to be, send e-mail:

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Your-First-Name Your-Last-Name

Not always vocal on the list-serve, but always there, I want to thank the authors who shared their unique Web sites with me. I had a delightful afternoon surfing the Net.

— *Lorraine Heath*

**Got questions?
Need information about specific projects and activities in the works or in the planning?**

**Got ideas?
Read more about all NINC activities online at www.ninc.com
You'll find some fun Savannah links at our Web site, too.**

But remember, 100% of NINC receives our newsletter, so don't miss the opportunities to write letters, ask questions, pose ideas here, too!



BREAKING NEWS

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'ON DEMAND' PUBLISHING:

Publishers Weekly reports that On Demand Machine Corporation of St. Louis, MO has developed a “complete book-production system designed to fit in any store.” This prototype for on-demand printing is scheduled for its first live-and-in-person demo at the Tattered Cover in Denver sometime in 1999.

Also in the on-demand department... the June 2, 1999 *Wall Street Journal* reports that Borders has “taken a minority stake in an Atlanta start-up company called Sprout, Inc. that will eventually let the chain's stores print high quality paperbacks in the store in about 15 minutes.... The pact will allow Borders, the nation's second-largest book chain to have access to older or obscure titles it wouldn't otherwise carry.”

Sony Music Entertainment is also readying itself for the on-demand market and will make more than 4,000 albums from its catalogs available in a variety of formats on CD, DVD, and MiniDisc. Customers will also be able to have the albums installed directly onto a digital music player. The service will begin testing September 1 at select Transworld and Virgin Megastores in Los Angeles and New York City. (*The future is now, folks! Ain't it a gas? Classical Gas, that is...;-) tdr*)

Cautionary Tales

Novelists, Inc. member Timothy Taylor has reported difficulty extracting royalties or

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EAST OF THE HUDSON

THE REST OF THE STORY

I did tell you, didn't I, about Phil Pfeffer? He's the former Random House and Ingram's executive who joined the Borders Book Group at the beginning of the year. Chief executive officer, no less, the top of the pyramid...

...except that he left the company four months later, apparently because he couldn't get along with the real chief at Borders, Robert DiRomualdo.

Well, Shelly Thacker of our Detroit affiliate reports that none of us need feel sorry for poor Phil. It seems he got a nice little gift on leaving, a golden handshake worth about four million smackeroos.

That's where execs have it all over us independent subcontractors. They can chew up a lot of green stuff, win or lose. That's also why I refuse to listen to publishing and bookselling execs complain about the size of advances they have to pay for brand-name authors. Sure, a few writers strike it rich, often after 10 or 20 years of work, but no writer I know of has managed to construct a gold or platinum parachute like Pfeffer's.

The deal was a complicated one: the newly unemployed Nashville native got \$2.4 million in cash as a severance package and another \$1.5 million bucks for promising not to compete with his former employers. (If he was such a miserable incompetent that they fired him, one would wonder why the superstore group didn't offer to pay him big bucks to go out and get hired by Barnes & Noble, for goodness sake.)

But the cash doesn't all go into Pfeffer's pocket. Much of it will be used to repay part of the \$6.3 million loan Borders gave him to buy more than 400,000 shares of stock when he came aboard in January.

By the way, since that time, Borders stock has fallen about 30 per cent in value.

What a racket! I knew I should have gone back for my MBA.

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENTS

The American Booksellers Assn. continues to lash out at a world gone wonky on them. At the group's annual meeting, held in Los Angeles in conjunction with the Book-Expo America trade show, some of the more radical independent booksellers tried to push through a resolution asking that Frank McCourt, author of *Angela's Ashes*, return the award the group presented to him at the last convention.

McCourt's sin? He appeared in a barnesandnoble.com television ad.

Yep, he's a regular quisling, Frank is. Fraternizing with the enemy like that, after all the indies have done for him

and his book.

Susan Wiggs, who brought the whole little contretemps to my attention, commented: "How stupid do they want to look?????" That was my immediate reaction, too, and I was pleased to note that the more balanced booksellers voted the resolution of censure down.

I have taunted the independent booksellers in the past, just as I have taunted almost everyone in this screwball business of ours. Hell, I even taunt myself from time to time. Writing, publishing, and selling books will do that to you.

But then something happened that made me rethink my position. I got a note from our agent, who suggested that any of his authors with personal Web sites might want to remove all direct and overt references to online booksellers, out of deference to independents.

The reason? It seems that independent booksellers are so threatened by Internet operations that they may refuse to stock the titles of writers who have "hot links" or automatic connections to amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com.

My agent is a very wise man. I value his advice greatly, even when it does not please me to do so. (One of the reasons I have always refused to send him a copy of "East of the Hudson" is that if he knew what I had been saying about editors, publishers, and booksellers for the past five years, I know full well he would tell me to shut the hell up.) So I have to believe he has a sound basis for his belief that authors should go out of their way to avoid offending the indies.

But I have to say I was a little disturbed at the suggestion that a writer may be jeopardizing his or her career by admitting a fondness for online book buying. Around this writing shop, we have had some previous experience with a little business practice called "blacklisting." I'd hate to think booksellers were as shortsighted as some publishers have been.

BOOK PEOPLE

And now that I've shot myself in the foot yet once again with indies, let me tell you a little story of my local bookstore, just to indicate that I do understand the value of people who know books.

I was recently reminded of a man named Herbert O. Yardley, who made his fame breaking diplomatic and military codes during the first half of this century. Yardley was the genuine article, so suave and debonair he could only have been played by William Powell in the movie about his exploits.

He was also a brilliant, lifelong poker player. I knew he had written a book about the game, but I didn't





BREAKING NEWS

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answers from Blue Moon Books, publisher of Taylor's novel, *Amanda*. When NINC contacted Blue Moon publisher Barney Rosset for comment, Rosset referred to a Blue Moon bankruptcy and subsequent sale to Publishers Group West as the reasons for the lack of royalty payments, and Rosset promised a letter to Taylor, copied to the NINC president, to explain the situation. Although that promise was made in March, 1999, Taylor and NINC president Julie Kistler report that they have received no communication from Rosset as of June 10, 1999. If other NINC members are experiencing similar difficulties with Blue Moon, they may wish to contact Taylor.

The cost of reading just went up.

A June 10 CNN report states that a Clearwater, FL woman was handcuffed and jailed after failing to return seven overdue books to the library.

She'd borrowed them to read to her two-year-old son, then didn't return them because she couldn't afford the late fees. Charges were dropped when her boyfriend returned the books and the woman agreed to pay \$220 in court costs by December 6. She originally faced an \$82 fine on each book and \$791 in bail...



EAST OF THE HUDSON

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know the title. So I walked into Watermark Books in downtown Anacortes. Norman Sturdevant, proprietor, not only knew the title but he gave me a precis and publishing history as he called up a special order form on his little computer.

"Ah, yes, *Education of a Poker Player*," he said. "Fine book. I haven't read it in years. And oh, my, there's a new edition of it, too. I'll have to order a copy for you and a couple more for the shelves."

So yes, I do understand the value of a well-versed bookseller, even one who does not always share my tastes. Norman is a scholar, a reader, and a font of information. I wish that the marketplace would make him as rich economically as he is in other ways.

On the other hand, I don't expect that to happen, any more than I expect my next work, should I ever finish it, to become an automatic bestseller. There's fiction and then there is nonfiction; the former is entertaining and the latter is a hard two-by-four over the head, and I guess there has to be room in our personal bookstores for both kinds.

THE BIG PICTURE

The BookExpo America trade meeting did produce some other news: book sales are down, for the first time in seven years. Sales showed a drop of almost three percent in 1998, according to the annual study released by the Book Industry Study Group.

Even worse news, from our point of view in NINC, is the sharp drop in mass-market paperbacks, which contributed most of the sales decrease. According to the study, mass-market sales declined in 1998 from 495 million units to 469 million units.

The industry-wide sales figures are a mishmash, which I won't try to recapitulate here, but the changes all seem to be a direct outgrowth of the trends we have tried to track in "EOH" over the past few years. The collapse of

the independent distributor system and the rise of deeply discounted hardbacks and trade paperbacks is really beginning to gnaw at mass-market sales.

The *New York Times* analysis of the annual study said that the market shares continue to shift, with online booksellers accounting for two percent of total sales, while sales at independent stores declined by something less than one percent, to 16.6 percent of the total. Superstore sales were constant, at 25.3 percent with the rest of the market being carved up among mail order, warehouse chains, and food and drug chains.

Interestingly, one of the sharpest declines in mass-market sales was recorded at drugstores, where total sales were down by a fifth. In the big picture, that is staggering and it may well be a harbinger of further declines, since merchandisers usually cut back on display space when a product's sales decline.

I don't make the news, friends, I just report it. So save your brickbats.

THE ELEPHANT GRAVEYARD

Did you ever wonder where all those old or displaced editors go? You know, the ones whose last public notice appears in a *Publishers Weekly* item about the latest corporate downsizing, the ones who are reported to be "leaving the rigors of daily publishing to pursue his (or her) lifelong dream of writing the Great American Novel" or who are "seeking their next opportunity and can be reached" at some soon-to-be vacated apartment on the Upper West Side.

Well, *PW* offered a lead on some of those folks in a recent piece headlined, "The Book Doctor Is In." Seems that many of the best editors in the business are busy trying to reinvent themselves as independent editors, hired guns who will whip your manuscript into publishable shape...for a fee.

A couple of impressions from the piece: there are some very well-known editors on the loose out there. I found



that my wife and I have worked with at least three of them in our careers and none had a title less august than "executive editor." One was even proprietor of his own imprint, a profitable operation that turned south when his principal author took a hike, leaving him with, among other writers, a struggling couple named "A. E. Maxwell."

The interesting thing about these folks is that many of them seem to be making a tolerable living by freelance editing. None has starved to death and as a matter of fact, several seem to have flourished personally with the newfound freedom of the freelance. They admitted to missing "the buzz" of day-to-day office politics and corporate publishing gossip, but not much else, except, perhaps, the regular paycheck.

For-hire editors have not always had the best of reputations. I wrote a year or two ago about one that was shut down by New York State authorities for issuing kickbacks of fees to editors and agents. The field is so new that its practitioners are having to formulate a code of ethics as they go, but the editors are finding work, sometimes with writers they handled while employed at publishing houses and sometimes with aspiring authors who merely seek help in organizing nonfiction proposals or manuscripts.

The work may involve simple wordsmithing assistance on raw manuscripts, but some of these freelancers even act as quasi-agents, slipping material they think has promise to decision-makers like the ones they used to be.

I was interested in the piece because, two months ago, an aspiring novelist asked me what I thought of book doctors. Shooting from the lip as I am wont to do, I counseled him to avoid anyone who asks a fee for services that have traditionally been free, like editing or, for that matter, agenting.

I thought I was on firm

professional ground in making that recommendation, but after reading the *PW* piece, I am no longer so sure. These are legitimate professionals with talent and, more importantly, huge reservoirs of experience. They can provide the one thing that fledgling writers so often lack, insight into how the publishing system really works. They may even be able to save a few projects that might otherwise remain unpublishable.

So the world changes. New niches open up, both for editor and for writers. New methods of doing things evolve. We have all seen enough mindless movement in the book business in the past several years to last us all our remaining days. But at least these two dozen or so book doctors have the guts and optimism to step into the box and take another turn at bat.

BULLETIN, BULLETIN, BULLETIN

As I go to press with this, my agent has just called to tell me that a rumor circulating for the last week in New York is true. The implosion continues within publishing, with Bertelsmann announcing that Dell will become part of Bantam, and Broadway Books, a relatively new imprint within the stable, will be collapsed into Doubleday.

In other words, the new alignment is Bantam Doubleday, minus Dell and Broadway. Carole Baron, long-time publisher at Dell, is reported to be on the streets, following William Shinker, who quit at Broadway when he saw the new shape of the corporate juggernaut.

A couple of observations: The move probably makes organizational sense. It cleans up some tangled lines of command and may even whittle away at redundancy. After all, how many editors do you really need, competing for the same limited number of commercially attractive manuscripts?

The loss will be in diversity. Bill Shinker and I didn't think alike; our literary tastes were quite different, as a matter of fact. But he is a genuine bookman, in the same way that

Norman Sturdevant, my local independent bookseller, is a genuine bookman. Removing Shinker from a position of power in publishing does, to some extent, diminish publishing.

But then again, maybe the world just acquired an unusually talented book doctor.

My second observation: I said a while ago that Thomas Harris's *Hannibal* probably appeared just in time to save Carole Baron's job.

I was wrong.

These days I find myself thinking more and more about the ancient Chinese curse: *May you live in interesting times.*

— *Evan Maxwell*



It's official:

Rupert Murdoch is serious about book publishing. As of June 17 *pwdaily* reports that the rumored HarperCollins deal for Avon/Morrow is official. Avon/Morrow will be absorbed into HarperCollins to form the nation's second largest trade publisher. The deal had been rumored for a week before this announcement. The deal must still be approved by the government, but is nonetheless expected to close in July.

Strange Bedfellows...

Amazon.com has announced that it will form a partnership with Sotheby's, reportedly paying \$45 million for a stake in the auctioneer. The arrangement will allow for separate sites as well as a co-brand one to sell high-end items. *MINK*



Conference Update

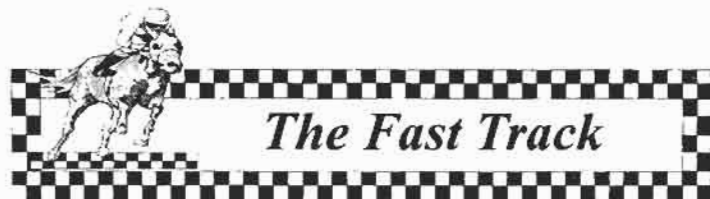
Cussler to Speak in Savannah

The conference committee is pleased to announce that bestselling author Clive Cussler will be our special guest speaker on Saturday night at dinner at our Savannah conference. Mr. Cussler promises to share some interesting insights into this crazy business of ours. Watch for your conference brochure, coming in a few weeks, for more details!

Savannah: City of Squares

When you're scheduling your trip to Savannah, be sure to allow some extra time to see the city itself. There are numerous opportunities for research, both historical and contemporary, in this beautiful area. Many of the tours are within walking distance of the hotel, and there's even a walking tour of the downtown area that starts just outside our hotel. Your conference brochure will contain detailed information on things to see and do in this sunny, Southern city.

- Victoria Thompson
Conference Coordinator



The Fast Track

NINC Members

on the USA Today List

indicates that the title is new on the list that week.) Members should send **Marilyn Pappano** a postcard alerting her to upcoming books, especially those in multi-author anthologies, which are often listed by last names only. Marilyn's phone number is 918-227-1608, fax 918-227-1601 or online: pappano@ionet.net. Internet surfers can find the list at: <http://www.usatoday.com>.

Members who write under pseudonyms should notify Marilyn at any of the above "addresses" to assure their listing in "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

Member	Title	May 6	May 13	May 20	May 27
Stella Cameron	<i>French Quarter</i> , Zebra	159	111	129	
Catherine Coulter	<i>The Aristocrat</i> , Mira			165	55
Dorothy Garlock	<i>With Song</i> , Warner	90			
Norah Hess	<i>Lark</i> , Leisure			286	121
Linda Howard	<i>Now You See Her</i> , Pocket	23n	22	37	40
Linda Howard	<i>An Independent Wife</i> , Mira	75			
Katherine Kingsley	<i>The Sound of Snow</i> , Dell	73			
Jayne Ann Krentz	<i>Eye of the Beholder</i> , Pocket	59n	86		
Johanna Lindsey	<i>Joining</i> , Avon		40n	33	86
Elizabeth Lowell	<i>Jade Island</i> , Avon	63			
Debbie Macomber, et al *	<i>Love by Degree</i> , Harlequin			171	99
Debbie Macomber	<i>Moon Over Water</i> , Mira	47			
Kat Martin	<i>Night Secrets</i> , SMP	209	78	77	117
Teresa Medeiros	<i>Charming the Prince</i> , Bantam	54	127		
Amanda Quick	<i>I Thee Wed</i> , Bantam	147			
Nora Roberts	<i>Homeport</i> , Jove	6	17	25	31
Nora Roberts	<i>Genuine Lies</i> , Bantam		29n	6	8
Susan Wiggs	<i>The Charm School</i> , Mira	119			

* Et al: includes other authors not members of Novelists, Inc.

Novelists' Ink

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