

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

Volume 10

**Our
10th
Anniversary
Year**

Number 8

Novelists' Ink

August 1999

Welcome to the Clubs



**BREAKING
NEWS**

There are some good reasons to pay attention to book clubs these days: they represent a multi-million dollar business, they acquire 2,000 titles a year, they offer an alternate channel of distribution, and they are not just about mail order any more. I have been an editor at the Literary Guild, one of the Doubleday Direct (DDI) book clubs, for two years this month, and I would like to share some of what I have learned about this mysterious world and the opportunities it offers Novelists, Inc. members.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A BOOK CLUB?

Chances are that you or someone close to you is a member of a book club, probably Literary Guild (**literaryguild.com**), Doubleday Book Club (**doubledaybookclub.com**), or our friendly rival, Book of the Month Club. What book lover can ignore those ubiquitous ads and direct mail pieces that offer "Five books for a buck"? Book clubs offer a chance to buy books conveniently and at substantial discounts.

By taking advantage of the offer, you agree to order a certain number of books from the club. Once you are enrolled, you get about 17 mailings a year. We call these cycles. Every cycle's mailer comes stuffed with material, but the centerpiece is the magazine or, as we call it, the Advance An-

By SARAH GALLICK

nouncement, which features what we hope are the latest and best books available, as well as important, popular and/or timely backlist titles.

WHAT IS A SELECTION?

Many books are selected by each DDI book club, but few become Selections. That designation is reserved for the one or two books featured on the cover of that cycle's magazine. The Selection is the book that will be mailed to you automatically if you do not send in a card declining it. (By June 2000, we expect to have that capability online.) A Literary Guild or Doubleday Book Club Selection mails to millions of members, so the honor is usually reserved for authors as well known as John Grisham, Mary Higgins Clark, and Danielle Steel. Once in a while, however, we do take a chance on an unknown author. Almost four years ago, Roger Cooper, DDI's editorial director, pre-empted a short, gentle first novel by an unknown author. (A pre-empt is a substantial offer, usually requiring a quick response. Ideally, the publisher accepts it, without seeking any other offers. If the publisher declines it, and holds out for an auction, they might do better, but they might do worse. It is understood that the subsequent auction will start at a much lower figure.) **Cont. on Page 4** ▶ ▶ ▶

Foreign Editions Cluttering Your Shelves? You can send foreign editions—as well as galleys, original manuscripts, and US editions—to the Popular Culture Library at Bowling Green State University. The head librarian's name is Alison M. Scott, and the address is: Popular Culture Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403. Your work will be catalogued and kept available for researchers, and Ms Scott has been unfailingly delighted with the contributions.

On the theory that romance reading groups are something to be encouraged... Springfield, Massachusetts librarian Lori Chasel is organizing a new romance readers book group. She's made a request for free, multiple copies (10+) of writers' bookmarks. If you're interested in adding to the Ms. Chasel's stacks, er stocks, please mail bookmarks to: Lori Chasel, Adult Services, Springfield Library, 220 State Street, Springfield, MA 01103

Crown Reorganization Plan Sets Fall Date for Emerging from Chapter 11... PW's Jim Milliot reports that Crown Books has filed a reorganization plan with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court that calls for an investment firm and the book chain's creditors to become Crown's new owners. Crown's unsecured creditors will receive an equity stake in the new company in exchange for settling their claims against Crown. Unsecured creditors include **Cont. on Page 3** ▶ ▶ ▶

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Novelists, Inc.

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Send Address Changes to Central Coordinator

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

It's a cruel, cruel summer...

I was sitting here at my computer, trying to think up something sage and soothing to say about mergers in the wake of the newest HarperCollins/Avon/Morrow news, while a television promo campaign warbled in the background about it being a "cruel, cruel summer." ABC doesn't know the half of it, I thought.

But then I realized, hey, ABC is now owned by Disney, who also owns Miramax... So maybe the worker bees at ABC know exactly what I mean. After all, it's not just publishing. Merger madness is alive and well in every business going, from mass media to grocery stores, from railroads to oil. And there isn't a darn thing we can do about it except wait it out and see where the chips fall.

While I was in the midst of this depressing little mental exercise, my husband came home. During the summer, he's home by 3:00, which sounds like more fun than it is, especially since he feels as if he should accomplish something in those few extra hours of light. Today he thought we should prune. A few lilacs, a rose-of-Sharon, a couple of other things we don't know the names of... How tough could it be?

And hour and a half later, when I emerged scratched, scraped, punctured, and generally abused by the thicket of deadwood we euphemistically call lilac bushes, my husband took one look at me and said, "You'd better find something you like about being a writer, because you sure weren't cut out to be a gardener." Point taken. So here they are, my...

Top Ten Things To Like About Being a Multi-Published Author

10. You get the opportunity to reinvent yourself and your career monthly, weekly, daily...
 9. Congratulations! You're a celebrity! (Well, at family weddings and funerals, anyway.)
 8. It's permissible to kill off your enemies in fiction as many ways as you want. Or to write them with very small penises. (See "Breaking News.")
 7. It's okay to play music really loud or eat ice cream or have posters of Dylan McDermot in your office.
 6. Deadline hell is enough like finals to keep you feeling young forever.
 5. No need to wear pantyhose or ties. Ever. You can even sit in your undies (or in the nude) if you want to.
 4. You can stare into space for hours at a time and call it working.
 3. You can squeeze words like "moribund," "epistolary," "mellifluous," and "peripatetic" into your work.
 2. Hobnobbing with cool people like Ann Maxwell and Clive Cussler at the NINC conference is not only allowed but encouraged.
 1. You get to make up Top Ten lists.
- So buck up. It's not such a bad life, is it?

Random Thoughts Which Have Nothing (well, very little) to do with BDD/Random House.

My small-town newspaper reported that the local Barnes & Noble sells

This Month
from the
President:

Julie's Top Ten
List for Writers
&
Randomizing

fiction 3-to-1 over non-fiction during July and August, but the reverse starting in December.

And this quote from Eddie Murphy caught my eye in the August *US* magazine: "You get born once in this business, but you can die over and over again. Then you can make comebacks." He's talking about show biz, but it sounds like book biz to me.

Two different articles in a recent edition of the *Chicago Tribune* spoke about the benefits of finding a way out in today's fast-paced, stress-ridden world. Mary Schmich (who was really the author of that supposed commencement speech supposedly given by Kurt Vonnegut—you know the one—it starts with "Wear sunscreen") says playing hooky can be a really wonderful thing to do in the summer. She counsels not to try it all the time, however, or you could get fired. Meanwhile, self-styled "corporate curmudgeon" Dale Dauten says that getting fired—or firing yourself—may be the best thing you can do. He recommends Marti Smye's book, *Is It Too Late to Run Away and Join the Circus?*

And speaking of running away to join the circus... July 31 marks the last day the amusing, amazing Randy Russell will act as our Central Coordinator. Randy has decided it's time to redevote himself to his writing career after seven years of letting NINC and its applicants and dues renewals and deposits and mail and a million other things take over his life. I'll be honest with you—I love Randy. He's been a delight to work with, and he will be missed very, very much. So let's raise a glass to Randy Russell, and wish him well with the blockbuster he's almost ready to launch. May it be as witty, wonderful, and wise as the man himself!

— Julie Kistler

ELECTIONS NOTICE:

Proposed Slate of Officers for 1999

President-Elect.....Barbara Keiler
Secretary.....Jane Bonander
Treasurer.....Deborah Gordon

Proposed Nominees for 1999 Nominating Committee:

(listed in alphabetical order)

Julie Tetel Andresen
Brenda Hiatt Barber
Binnie Syril Braunstein
Kathy Lynn Emerson
Angela Hunt
Pat Kay
Barbara Samuel
Amanda Scott
Bertrice Small
Chassie West

As set forth in Article IX, Section 4 of the Bylaws, additional nominations may be made in writing if signed by the nominee and at least ten (10) active members who have not signed the nominations of any other person for the same position. Such nominations must be made by August 20, 1999. Mail all written nominations to Julie Kistler, 26 Gloucester Circle, Bloomington, IL 61704.



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

publishers, nearly all of whose claims have been acquired by the New York investment group, Primus Multi-Sector Credit Master Fund Inc., which will become Crown's largest single shareholder. The value of the company at the point it emerges from bankruptcy is expected to be about \$23 million. The unsecured creditors will own 100% of the new Crown, subject to a 15% option plan for the company's senior management.

Crown hopes the settlement will be approved by October 2.

Random House Acquires Listening Library... On June 30, Random House closed its deal to buy Listening Library Inc., the Old Greenwich, Conn., publisher of award-winning unabridged audio titles for children. Listening Library will become the children's audio imprint of the Random House Audio Publishing Group, taking in titles from Random House's existing Bantam Doubleday Dell Young Listeners line.

Remember when the "small penis" rule came up (no pun intended) in the "East of the Hudson" column? Seems a prominent literary lawyer advised downsizing the, er, equipment of fictional (and presumably male) characters as a way to avoid defamation actions. The lawyer suggested that no one would step forward to file a lawsuit and thereby claim, "That's me! The one with the small penis!" Well, a new sitcom premiering on FOX in the fall turns that rule upside-down. It seems the creators of "Action" have written a studio boss character who is very well-endowed, and according to *TV Guide*, several Hollywood execs are claiming that the character was based on them personally. Chris Thompson, co-executive producer of the show, is quoted in the *TV Guide* article, saying, "The egos in this town are ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



BREAKING NEWS

so big that even if you may have insulted someone by modeling a character after them, they will still tell their friends it's them."

Entertainment Weekly refers to "intense industry speculation" on where Carole Baron, late of Dell, will resurface. *EW* notes that current odds are on Morrow, so recently in the news because of its merger deal with HarperCollins.

In the same sidebar, *EW*'s Matthew Flamm opines that it "looks like the end for Dell" in the wake of the combined Bantam/Dell editorial departments. *EW* quotes new AAR prez Vicki Bijur on the two-becomes-one development: "It's a disaster every time we lose another publisher to which we can submit an author's work," says Bijur. In the same vein, *PW* tells how the management structure of the new Bantam Dell Publishing Group is taking shape. As part of the unifying process, four prominent Dell executives will leave the company, including Leslie Schnur, who had been senior v-p, associate publisher, and editor-in-chief of Dell/Delacorte; Carisa Hays, v-p, publicity director; Ronni Stolzenberg, v-p, creative marketing director; and Libby Jordan, v-p, marketing director. Karen Mender, who had been Dell's associate publisher and executive director of marketing, has been appointed to the newly created post of v-p, strategic planning. Nita Taublib, Bantam deputy publisher, is now senior v-p and deputy publisher for Bantam Dell. Taublib will oversee the day-to-day running of the Bantam Dell publishing program and along with Applebaum will supervise the combined Bantam Dell editorial departments, which will consist of the current staffs of the ▶ ▶ ▶

WELCOME TO THE CLUBS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

LGA and DBC editors decided to make the novel a main selection for both clubs. Their faith was justified, and *The Notebook* by Nicholas Sparks went on to become a bestseller. We have since offered *Message in a Bottle*, and we just pre-empted his next, *A Walk to Remember*, which will be published this fall.

We call the majority of books we present in our mailings "Alternates." The member can choose any of these titles whether or not she opts for the Main Selection. This is the fun area for the editor, since it makes the club a virtual bookstore, one that presents a mixed bag of classics, new titles, and hard-to-find books. That is where the opportunity is for small publishers and mid-list writers in all genres.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CLUBS?

Each of the clubs represents a different community of interest. You notice the difference between LGA and DBC most clearly in their Alternates. LGA's editor-in-chief Judy Klein arrived a year ago after many years at Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Under her leadership, the club is attempting to recruit more male members and to become known for more than mass-market bestsellers. We are offering more serious nonfiction such as Scott Berg's *Lindbergh* and Ron Rosenbaum's *Explaining Hitler*. LGA is now offering a lot more new fiction from writers like Oscar Hijuelos, Alice Hoffman, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Guild is also still offering plenty of popular fiction from writers like Sandra Brown, Nora Roberts, and Richard North Patterson.

Doubleday Book Club has always specialized in popular fiction, especially romance, and true crime, what editor-in-chief Sharon Fantera calls "escape, fantasy, and entertainment." DBC has been a wonderful opportunity for genre fiction writers, not just in romance but in horror and westerns as well. In these days of shrinking shelf

space, being featured in a DBC mailing means exposure to members who are heavy buyers of genre fiction. Many DBC titles are published as paperback originals and DBC offers them as "exclusive hardcover." For many authors, this is their first opportunity to have a hardcover edition of their book.

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER CLUBS?

Two other DDI book clubs, Mystery Guild (mysteryguild.com) and Science Fiction Book Club (sfbc.com) regularly offer books by NINC members.

Under Editor-in-chief Beth Goehring, Mystery Guild is very series oriented. While it is difficult to break in a new author in any of the clubs, she is "constantly looking for that person just on the cusp of making it big." This year, all six nominees for the Agatha Award for Best Novel are available from Mystery Guild.

Science Fiction Club, under the direction of Ellen Asher and Andrew Wheeler, offers a complete selection of titles from epic fantasy and graphic novels to traditional science fiction and horror classics. All but one of the six novels that were 1998 Nebula Award finalists were available through Science Fiction Club.

But wait! There are still more clubs!

Military Book Club (militarybookclub.com) is almost entirely non-fiction and offers books on warfare from Fort Sumpter to Sarajevo. It is a great resource for anyone writing about battles, military codes of behavior, and uniforms.

Stage and Screen (stagen.screen.com) (formerly Fireside Book Club) offers not only exclusive hardcover editions of new plays like *Art* by Yasmin Reza and *Side Man* by Warren Leight, but also stacks of books on stagecraft for actors, directors, playwrights, and producers. NINC members interested in writing for the screen or television will find many helpful titles available through this club.

DDI is also constantly developing

and testing new clubs. Right now, the two most interesting for NINC members would probably be an African-American club and an erotica book club for women. Monica Harris, whom many NINC members remember as the founding editor of Arabesque books, is acting as a consultant on the African-American club. The erotica club will offer both fiction and nonfiction, and Erika Tsang, who is assistant editor at DBC, is the guiding hand behind it. Both clubs are still in development, so neither one has an official name or even a Web site yet.

HOW CAN MY BOOK BE CHOSEN?

The decision process is much the same for every club: we like to see manuscripts as early as possible. We are looking at manuscripts for some titles as far off as fall 2000. But we are also watching current sales via regional bestseller lists, announcements of awards, and, of course, Oprah's picks.

Naturally, we are looking for the best reads possible. The choice also depends on the jacket art, the publisher's marketing plans, and our needs for a particular mailing cycle.

We buy book club rights from every publisher you've heard of and many you haven't. We even buy the occasional self-published title. Each editor covers a certain number of houses, and is responsible for keeping up with the latest news there. For example, I cover hardcovers from Bantam, Farrar Straus, Harcourt, Knopf, St. Martin's, and Warner. Erika Tsang covers paperback originals from Bantam, St. Martin's, and Warner, among other houses.

In 99% of publishing contracts, the publisher controls book club rights, which means the publisher is the one who makes the deal. The subsidiary rights director submits the manuscript to the appropriate clubs.

HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY CHANCES WITH THE CLUBS?

It is very helpful to keep the rights person informed about your history with the clubs. Don't assume that he or she knows that a club used one of your previous books. We would also

like to know about any bestseller lists in your past. You would be surprised how many rights people don't have this information, especially if the author is new to the house.

If we have used one of your books before, it doesn't hurt to let us know that you have delivered your latest manuscript to your publisher. We keep "futures lists" to track upcoming books we are especially interested in and we can keep asking the rights people about them.

SO DOES A PREVIOUS SALE TO A BOOK CLUB GIVE ME AN EDGE?

A small one, but an edge nevertheless. We will definitely look at the manuscript closely, but unless you have achieved some kind of name recognition, the decision will have more to do with timing, title, and the club's needs at that moment.

DO THE DOUBLEDAY DIRECT CLUBS FAVOR BOOKS PUBLISHED BY DOUBLEDAY?

Short answer: No.

Long answer: Everyone in the industry knows that last year Bertelsmann acquired all the Random House publishing divisions (Random House, Knopf, Ballantine, Fawcett, etc.) to add to the Doubleday companies they already owned (Doubleday Publishing, Bantam, Broadway, Dell, etc.) They are now all part of Random House, Inc. Bertelsmann also owns the Doubleday Direct book clubs. Not as many people are aware that Time Warner, which owns both Warner Books and Little, Brown, also owns the Book-of-the-Month Club (including Quality Paperback Club, Country Homes and Gardens Club, History Book Club, etc.) We compete vigorously for the best, most suitable books for our clubs, whether or not they are published by someone inside the Bertelsmann organization or out. Two examples:

(1) LGA recently had the opportunity to pre-empt a much-loved Warner author for a Main Selection for LGA and DBC. By pre-empting, we offered a substantial advance up front, big enough to convince the publisher to accept, rather than going to BOM and setting off an auction. ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ Bantam and Dell editorial departments. The exception to Bantam Dell's dual imprint focus will be Susan Kamill, who continues as v-p, editorial director; she will report to Applebaum.

Want to market a screenplay?...Warren Zide, co-executive producer of the summer teen gross-out hit, "American Pie," is soliciting film scripts through a new web site, **www.InZide.com**. Zide's company, Zide/Perry Films, is looking for screenplays that he and his partner can develop and/or produce. In an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, Zide says, "We try to have a fun time and create an environment where writers can hang out and feel comfortable. We love their energy." (Ed's note: Anyone frustrated with the time it takes to write three or four-hundred-page novels might be interested here. Scripts only run 90-100 pages—and that's properly formatted, which should bring it down to, oh, 60 pages or so of manuscript....)

And a tidbit from Holt Uncensored...The latest in cyberspace is **http://www.topbestsellers.com**. Each week, **topbestsellers.com** will take a composite of nine bestseller lists ranging from the *New York Times*, Amazon, *Publishers Weekly* and the *Wall Street Journal* to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*. "By averaging these different lists together, we create a democracy of bestseller lists," the site explains, "where each list gets a vote, and where the overall performance of each book can be seen at a single glance."

And from CNN...Harry Potter, the schoolboy wizard, has ousted serial killer Hannibal ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



BREAKING NEWS

Lecter from the top of the British bestseller list. Potter publisher Bloomsbury held off the sale of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* until after school hours in a move likely to cut truancy by young enthusiasts. The book is the third in the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling, a single mother from Edinburgh who dreamt up the idea while stuck on a train to Manchester nine years ago. The *Times* of London devoted an editorial to the book, declaring: "Potter is a publishing prodigy next to which Hannibal Lecter begins to look liverish." The books appeal to adults as well as children. Adult versions are printed in a different format so they can be read on the train without fear of embarrassment. (Ed's note: LOL! And y'all thought romance readers were paranoid!)

For Our Next Item, We Have a Lovely ARC...For years, Advanced Readers Copies and review galleys have been tossed into the bins at New York stores such as the Strand in a haphazard, quasi-democratic fashion. But the rise of auction sites on the Web has made all sorts of books—including ones that aren't out yet, rare copies and dog-eared ones—a lot easier to trade on the Web. And some (aliased) people are doing just that. New ARCs seem to materialize on eBay daily. The question, of course, is where these items originate. Editorial assistants and trade show scavengers can presumably augment their income with some trading, but the Web makes it so difficult to trace the identity and source that no one can be sure. (Ed's note: I found this article utterly fascinating in light of the fact that within the last couple of days prior to running this, *PW Daily* also ran

WELCOME TO THE CLUBS

►►► Sometimes, we and the publisher just know that a book belongs with us.

(2) On the other hand, I was recently in a heated auction for *Wake Up, I'm Fat!*, a comic memoir by Camryn Manheim of "The Practice." It was not a traditional Guild choice, but we, like our friends at BOM, really, really wanted it. The fact that Broadway, another Bertelsmann publishing company, will publish it did not give us any edge at all. The bidding was heated and exciting and it had a happy ending, since we won book club rights for a still reasonable price.

BUT WILL A BOOK CLUB SALE HURT MY RETAIL SALES?

Actually, we think a book club sale helps author and publisher in three ways:

First, as our editorial director Roger Cooper says, we can help "by leaping over the distribution system to get the book into the hands of real readers." The books are presented in an attractive manner on the page. Every book gets the equivalent of a face-out on the pages of our magazines.

Second, because we try to offer our members the best in every category, there is an implied "seal of approval" that goes with being chosen by one of the clubs. Most publishers value this enough to include the information on their jacket or cover copy.

Third, there appears to be a synergy between book club and retail sales. All our heavy advertising sends the impatient straight out to the bookstores—or to the Internet—to get the book immediately. Club members who are more patient or economy-minded can wait two weeks or so for their club edition at discounts of as much as 60%.

HOW DO YOU MAKE THE DECISION?

Well, it's a lot like sausage—you might get pleasure from the product, but you might not enjoy watching it made. Very roughly, this is the road a

submission travels:

First, when your new contract is still a gleam in your agent's eye, we are tracking books on our "Futures List." Big-name authors, less well-known authors who are favorites with our members, nonfiction subjects of interest, all are carried on a list which we can sort by publisher or pub dates. (FYI: the program we use is Excel.) At any given moment, I can check my computer and/or printout and tell you all St. Martin's Press titles that remotely interest us, their pub date, availability, and a few relevant details.

Second, we talk almost daily to the sub rights people at the houses we cover. They tell us if a manuscript we are interested in is finally on its way. Manuscripts destined for specialty clubs go directly to the editors of those clubs. Genre fiction and true crime go directly to DBC. That leaves about 40 manuscripts a day that I personally scan to decide whether they should be read more closely or not. Many of these will be sent to one of our team of outside readers, most of them former editors in book publishing, or experts in fields like golf, history, or psychology.

Third, every Tuesday morning, we gather for our editorial meeting where we discuss the latest reader's reports, in-house check readings, and take a look at new jackets and marketing plans. If we want the book, we start crunching numbers to see how much we can afford to spend.

Fourth, we make our offer. If we are lucky, we are the only bidder and we get the book. Most of the time, however, there is an auction in which we compete with Book of the Month or one of their specialty clubs.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE CLUB BUYS BOOK CLUB RIGHTS?

Because we make most of our deals so far ahead of pub date, it might seem as if the book has entered a kind of no man's land. The action moves to our business and creative offices in Garden City, on Long Island. There

the contract is drawn up and will be sent to the publisher when the book is scheduled for its first use. At the same time, the creative team starts planning the magazine. They work closely with the club's editor-in chief, who determines how much of a page each title gets and how it will be presented. It's interesting to look at how differently the same title might be presented to Literary Guild and DBC members. In fact, will someone remind me to bring samples of mailings from both clubs to the conference in October? Two weeks after the mailing hits most households, we have a pretty good idea of how each title is selling.

HAS THE INTERNET AFFECTED BOOK CLUB SALES?

Oh, yes. I recently heard a friend from BOM say that the Internet is the worst thing that has happened to the book clubs, but I have to say that we at the DDI clubs regard it as an opportunity. Most of the clubs are now online and we are working hard to make the sites more user-friendly and inviting. By June 2000, we expect to have 100,000 members online and they will be able to accept or decline the Main Selection with a touch of the key.

We are also developing some clubs that will be Internet only.

I was also struck by a recent thread on the NINCLINK that talked about the difficulty of finding genre titles on even the most visitor-friendly bookselling sites. I hope anyone involved in that discussion will check out some of the DDI specialty clubs. There you will find a lot of fascinating titles that might be otherwise overlooked. (I'm in the business, I'm on **amazon.com** every day, and my home is a short walk from one of the finest Barnes & Noble superstores, not to mention great independents like Murder Ink and Coliseum Books. Yet when I open some of our magazines, or even a QPB, or Country Homes & Gardens mailings, I always find wonderful new books I had no idea existed.)

ARE THERE ANY PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AN AUTHOR CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF?

When I was preparing this article,

one NINC member asked me whether the clubs could use promotional material, such as bookmarks. My immediate answer was "no," but as you know, things change quickly in the book world. As the DDI book clubs become more of a presence on the Internet, it's possible that we will, somewhere down the road, want to take advantage of some of these giveaways. So, for the time being, the answer is still negative, but stay tuned. Which, come to think of it, is a good way to conclude any article about the book clubs: stay tuned, you never know what will happen next.

*Sarah Gallick has been a member of NINC since 1990. She was an editor at Kensington from 1992 to 1996, and has been an editor at the Literary Guild since 1997. She is the author of three novels and numerous works of nonfiction including the New York Times bestseller, Oprah! Her latest, The Real Ally McBeal: An Unauthorized Biography of Calista Flockhart, will be published by Carol in May, and Ronald Reagan: A Pictorial Biography, will be published by Running Press in November. She can be reached via e-mail at **sarah.gallick@doubledaydirect.com** or at home at **SGallick@aol.com**.*

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

New Applicants

Jean Brashearricia Adams,
Georgetown TX
Francis Ray, Dallas TX
Linda Zimmerhazel (Laura Bradley),
San Antonio, TX

New Members

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



BREAKING NEWS

an ad for someone who was "confidentially" looking for these ARCs, etc. Obviously PW makes no recommendations as to its advertisers, but this one did seem a bit...out of line...)

Torstar Announced Strategic Alliance with women.com... Torstar Corporation announced plans to develop a major Internet presence in electronic commerce for its Harlequin Book Publishing business. Step one was to sign an agreement to partner with Women.com Networks, a leading Internet network for women, and be integrated into the Women.com Network. **Women.com** can be found online at: **<http://www.women.com>**.

Ballantine Diet Plan Continues... The rich may get richer, and the consolidated keep getting, well, consolidated. According to PW Daily, Ballantine has added a few more names to its trimdown plan. According to sources, senior editor Elisa Wares and at least one other editor will no longer be with the company. Art director Ruth Ross was reportedly also let go.

And speaking of Ballantine... BookTalk, an author recording agency in Sherman Oaks, CA, has added new contracts with Crown, Ballantine, Doubleday Direct book club and United Feature Syndicate to the ones they already have with a variety of other publishers, including Doubleday, Little, Brown, and St. Martin's Press. BookTalk's three-minute recordings of authors previewing their books offers exposure for both authors and publishers. Dial a specified toll free number and you might wind up listening to Bret Easton Ellis reminding you his latest book is available from Knopf. Two minutes later Ellis hangs up after giving you a ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ complete preview of his new thriller. Based on BookTalk's caller response rate, book clubs and chains are hiring the company to provide previews for new publications and publicity campaigns.

Launched in 1994, BookTalk has more than doubled its profits in the last five years. Audience response has been enthusiastic and over-whelming enough to garner marketing department smiles as well—not always an easy thing to do as authors well know. A publisher, bookseller, or individual author (owner David Knight offers discounts to individual authors and small presses) can pick up BookTalk's tabs.

Hello Mother, Hello Father, Here I Am at Camp DiRomualdo... Borders talks a lot about expansion, but the latest announcement is, well, interesting, to say the least. The Ann Arbor, Mich., bookseller has declared the launch of Borders Explorer Camp. An outgrowth of Borders Explore Program, which allows kids a discount after 10 purchases, Borders Explorer Camp is, simply put, another way to bring children into the store, and, consequently, a way to increase purchases. The company bills the camp as a way to help parents reduce the cost of sending kids to camp by simply sending them to the bookstore every week for six to eight weeks. (*Ed's note:* I was recently at Borders during one of the camp sessions, and if you're not partial to high noise levels and camp counselors urging kids not to run and jump "because this isn't like regular camp," then find out which days camp is held because these wonderful little readers are naturally interested in ▶ ▶ ▶

Meena's Ten Principles of Investing (or Cooking with Money 101)

By MEENA CHENG

There is no perfect recipe out there.

Your perfect recipe for tuna may be between two pieces of bread, but my favorite tuna is one served up by a Sushi chef, alongside sake. There is no perfect investment out there. What is good for Uncle Bob may not be suitable for you.

A watched pot never boils.

Please do not watch your investments every second or even every day. Investments are long term. If you have done your homework, an occasional "stir of the pot" is all you need to fine-tune your investments.

High heat burns more food than low heat.

It's easier to lose money when you want to double your money before lunch. When it comes to investing, time is your biggest ally.

Butter is good for you as long as it is taken in moderation.

High-risk investments are good for your portfolio as long as you know what they are—high risk.

A meal is more healthy and enjoyable when you have more than one dish.

Diversify, diversify, and diversify your portfolio. You'll find your whole investing experience to be more enjoyable and rewarding when you don't have all the eggs in one basket.

A good dish is when one ingredient complements another.

A good portfolio equals a good balance of investments.

Know each ingredient and how it works before putting it into your dish.

Know what you're investing in before you plunk down your money.

A carefully planned meal serves up the fewest surprises.

A carefully planned investment strategy minimizes surprises and heartaches.

Time can soften the toughest cut of meat.

Time will even out the biggest volatility.

Cooking is a means to an end. The end is sharing food and conversation with families and friends.

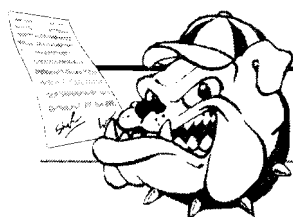
Investing is also a means to an end. The end is to have the financial freedom to do things that are important to you, and for many, it is spending time with families and friends.

U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray, a subsidiary of Minneapolis-based U.S. Bancorp, provides a full range of investment products and services to individuals, institutions and businesses. Founded in 1895, the company has grown to become the 11th largest brokerage in the nation. Approximately 1,200 investment executives provide investment guidance to clients through more than 100 offices in 17 Midwest, Mountain, Southwest, and Pacific states. The company also has a national reputation for its expertise in debt and equity financing for growth companies. U.S. Bancorp offers a comprehensive range of financial solutions through U.S. Bank, First American Asset Management, U.S. Bancorp Libra Investments and U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray. For more information, visit our Web site at www.piperjaffray.com.

Nondeposit investment products are not insured by the FDIC, are not

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Ask THE LAWYER

"Ask the Lawyer" returns next month with an article responding to your questions about the niceties and not-so-niceties of publishing contracts.

Your questions keep this column timely and pertinent. Send inquiries to the attention of the *NINK* editor or directly to Alan J. Kaufman.

Alan J. Kaufman has over 25 years of publishing legal expertise, including 19 years as senior vice president and general counsel for Penguin Books. He currently practices law with the New York-based intellectual property law firm of Frankfurt, Garbus, Klein & Selz, where he specializes in publishing and media. For private, for-hire consultations, phone 212-826-5579 or fax 212-593-9175.

Making the Switch—On-Sale Date Policies

| Publisher | Date of Switch to On-Sale Date Equalling the First Day of Release Month (or Other Policy) |
|---------------------------|---|
| Avon | April 1999 |
| Bantam | 1998 |
| Dell | 1998 |
| Doubleday | All books have individual release dates, usually around the middle of the month. |
| Harlequin/Silhouette | Books are shipped either the 7th or the 21st of the month previous to release month depending on line. They provide an author's handbook. |
| Harper | Has special laydown dates for bestsellers, but no information on others. |
| Kensington/Zebra/Pinnacle | October 1999 |
| Penguin/Putnam | October 1999 |
| Pocket | 1998 |
| Random House | Each book has its own release date throughout the month. Books begin appearing 2 weeks before. Only bestsellers have firm laydown dates. |
| St. Martin's Press | Has two release dates per month, one at the beginning and one nearer the middle. Authors should gear publicity for one week before. |
| Tor/Forge | April 1999 |



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ exploring the entire store—as well they should be!—instead of merely staying where employees intend them to stay.)

Tired of the online booksellers that he calls "consumer subsidies," merchant banker George Lovato Jr. is launching <http://www.Americanabooks.com>, his answer to the problems of American online bookselling. The cyberstore, which will open on August 1, could avoid some of the traditional pitfalls by steering away from discounts and focusing on a selective list of titles and careful marketing. Publishers will fulfill their own orders and will provide same-day shipping. When a cyberconsumer clicks to buy a book, a prepaid order will be routed to the publisher, which will ship the book directly to the consumer.

Regulatory Body: Indies Might Carry Those Hard-to-Find Books... Remember B&N.com's online slogan, "If we don't have your book, nobody does"? Well, the ABA announced that the National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus has ruled the slogan deceptive. According to the ABA, "the NAD found that the case record demonstrated that 'there were a number of titles that B&N.com did not have that could be obtained through independent booksellers.'" Because customers could take this boast literally, the NAD ruled against B&N.com. B&N.com must qualify the statement if they hope to continue using it.

More Breaking News....

Continues on page 13 ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



ONLINE...

It's hard to believe that summer is almost over. If you don't count the days, but use the school calendar, it is over here. The kids are back in school and it's too hot to pull weeds so browsing the Internet has a lot of appeal.

I want to thank Terey for making the writing of this column so much easier with her insights and her helpful Web sites. This month she offers what every writer will no doubt need at one time or another in his or her career—information on agents. The Association of Authors' Representatives, Inc. (AAR), a non-profit organization of independent literary and dramatic agents, has set up a Web site at www.bookwire.com/AAR. At this site, you can find information about the AAR, its Member List, a list of questions to ask when interviewing an agent (remember, the agent is supposed to work for you), a newsletter that is published bi-annually, membership qualifications, and frequently asked questions. It's a very useful site whether you are searching for an agent or currently wondering about some of your rights as an author.

Susan Wiggs also passed on a wonderful Web site dictionary.com/. I know you aren't surprised to discover that it has a dictionary at the site, but it also has links to *Roget's Thesaurus*, *Strunk's Elements of Style*, and *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. In addition, it offers you the opportunity to discover a new word every day, look up the foreign word for an English word or visa versa, and access the Doctor Dictionary where answers are provided to frequently asked questions about words, grammar, or language.

Susan also provided some sites to make our lives easier. When you need a Zip Code, visit www.usps.gov/ncsc. If you need a phone number but don't have the area code, go to www.555-1212. And if you have a hankering to learn, visit www.learn2.com where you can learn how to write a speech or negotiate a raise, as well as other interesting information.

If you're in need of words that rhyme, visit The Semantic Rhyming Dictionary at www.link.cs.cmu.edu/dough/rhyme-doc.html. You enter a word and receive one, two, three, and four word rhymes.

English sayings such as "Son of a Gun" and "Black Market" are explained, argued, and discussed at www.rootsweb.com/~genepool/sayings.htm. It's a fascinating site.

The Mormon Church has long been known for its comprehensive genealogy research and records. The Church has now made this information available on the Internet at www.familysearch.org. The site is easy to use and provides a fountain of information for anyone interested in genealogy or history.

If you are looking for an interesting way to promote your next book, visit The Free Gallery of Authors' Voices at fregalry.interspeed.net. Authors can submit two-minute

readings from their current works. The readings are linked to the book so it can be purchased when the recording ends. The site is also going to begin offering Virtual Book-signings. For more information, visit fregalry.interspeed.net/signingsalon.htm.

Romance authors who have related books can also promote their books at Romance Novel Sequels and Prequels. Visit members.tripod.com/~eventmaker/series.html to discover how to get your books listed.

For writers of short story romance, a new Web site is looking for submissions. For guidelines, visit *Amore Magazine* at www.amoremagazine.com. Short stories, articles, and essays may not exceed 6,000 words. Poetry is limited to 25 lines.

Karen Harper offered "these fascinating Web sites" related to England. "For research or pre-visitation education," visit www.thisislondon.co.uk. The Queen has a site at www.royal.gov.uk, which contains many links. Information on Prince Charles can be found at www.princeofwales.gov.uk. Two sites for London papers are www.telegraph.co.uk and www.mirror.co.uk.

Although the site is called The Romance Writers Guide and was created by the Desert Rose Chapter of RWA, it has many articles that address issues to which all writers can relate. The articles are written by the chapter members and can be found at www.writersplace.com/romancewriters/index.html.

If you are tired of getting spammed, you should visit the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-Mail (CAUCE) at www.cauce.org/. They are working to keep our mailboxes clean of unwanted e-mail.

Lynn Remick is the "Moderator of an interactive Writer's on-line group that features goals, motivational quotes, words of the day and writing exercises, which are posted to a list and distributed. Members then participate in the exercise and post it back to the list for critique/comments by other list members. We find these exercises to be motivational and inspirational to us as writers." Lynn is asking published writers of any genre to "sponsor" a writing exercise that might be helpful to the members of her group. If you have an exercise to share, please send it "with a blurb about yourself, your genre, and books that you have written, to: Writerslnk@eGroups.com, with a cc to LynnRemick@aol.com. It will then be distributed for viewing by all list members." This is an interesting way to help writers while introducing yourself and your work.

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

To: LISTSERV@PEACH.EASE.LSOFT.COM

Subject: Your-Ninc-Membership-Name (as it appears in the roster)

Body: SUBSCRIBE NINCLINK Your-First-Name Your-Last-Name

I want to thank those who shared their Internet discoveries with me this month.

— Lorraine Heath





EAST OF THE HUDSON

AND THEN THERE WERE....

Because the computer ate my homework I can't figure out whether I really told you all in January that this would be a year of consolidation in the publishing business. I know I meant to do so. But if I didn't, I'll tell you now....

Of course, that's not really news, is it? The book business has been falling in on itself for as long as I've been scribbling these little love notes to y'all. It's just that in the past few weeks, that pace has picked up.

I did tell you last month that Dell has just been folded into Bantam by the Bertelsmann bean-counters. Carole Baron, publisher, is out on her ear just at the time you'd think she would be popping corks over the long-awaited publication of *Hannibal*. (Actually, there is a rumor that Ms. Baron, a highly-regarded book person, will soon land at another house, so don't worry too much about her next meal.)

As for the usual corporate statements about how the consolidation won't hurt, I can say "Balderdash." Within four weeks, the editorial director, the art director, and the sales manager of the old Dell had their Rolodexes confiscated and were frog-marched out onto the sidewalk in front of BDD's building.

(Actually, that may be an overstatement. They were politely but firmly let go. I was just imagining things again.)

But while the Dell matter was being played out, at least two other tectonic shifts took place east of the Hudson. First, after a very short courtship, Hearst Book Group (read Avon and Morrow) plighted its troth to News Corp (read Rupert Murdoch.)

The deal was almost predictable, given the BDD/Random House and Penguin/Putnam deals of last year. Both Hearst and Murdoch were too small—that's right, too small—to compete. As one Hearst executive said, "We've known for some time that the Hearst Book Group had to expand by acquisition, seek a merger partner, or divest as we have done here."

The comment is a little ambiguous, perhaps deliberately so. Avon and Morrow were on the block almost five years ago, but several potential buyers, including Disney and Putnam, refused to pay the reported \$220 million asking price. As things turned out, they may have been smart. Several sources, including the *New York Times*, reported that Murdoch paid only \$180 million. True, it is dicey to compare appraisal values separated by five years. True, also, that Avon has enhanced its value by firing up an extensive and expensive hardcover operation. But, if the purchase price is any indication (well, duh) the two Hearst operations haven't accrued much value since 1994. In fact, the reverse seems to be true.

News Corp.'s HarperCollins publishing operation had

righted itself in 1996 and 1997 after a rough several years, and, as a result, Murdoch and his minions decided they wanted to stay in the book business, after all. Additionally, the Avon mass market operation and the successful Morrow children's book program fit nicely with HarperCollins, which is a strong children's publisher but which has been more successful in literary fiction than in the mass-market arena.

The new combination will form the second largest publishing operation in the U.S., with worldwide revenues of about \$900 million. That size will give HarperCollins extra muscle in dealing with the retailing giants that are coming to dominate our business, namely the book superstore chains and the big online retailers.

Fine. Good. Publishers obviously have to have vigor if they are to compete in today's marketplace. They can effect economies of scale by combining some of the traditional back-office functions of two companies; they can use their muscle to extract better terms from Barnes & Noble and Borders.

But there's another angle the new publishing giants hope to cover. As Doreen Carvajal of the *New York Times* pointed out when the story first broke, superstores aren't the publishers' only target. The Big Four or Five Survivors of this consolidation are interested in flexing their muscle against somebody besides Len Riggio.

Who might that be?

Writers, that's who. Us...uns or unser, if I remember my German grammar. The controlling potentates of publishing have been complaining about the power of superstar authors for years. Now, they are finally able to do something more than complain.

The dynamic is fairly simple, although seldom stated. Competition makes businessmen do strange things, like spending money to tie up the services of popular and prolific authors. The solution: reduce the competition. Combine all those economically irrational imprints and publishing houses into a few. Give us ink-stained wretches fewer places to sell our wares. Make us just a little happier about still being invited to the dance, when others prettier and less vivacious than we are going back to day jobs.

The result isn't always going to be dire. Avon authors, for instance, may benefit from the new, deep pockets in Mr. Murdoch's \$2,500 suit. Three or four or five healthy, profit-driven publishers may indeed be better for the business than 10 or 20 anorexic corporate entities with all the intellectual vigor and aesthetic taste in the universe. Commercially successful authors may reap even bigger rewards, at least for a while.

But the field of play will be narrowed, particularly for risky writers, men and women who may not yet be established. As superagent Robert Gottlieb told the *NYT*:

"There are fewer places now to grow new ► ► ► ►



writers. Whenever these companies make new acquisitions, the first thing they say is that it's going to be business as usual. But the reality is that they try to create a greater level of production and greater margins by cutting down on their business."

So, the news from east of the Hudson wasn't particularly heartening last month. Chances of breaking into the business were diminished, and diversity took it in the chops.

The frosting on the cake was the announcement as the HarperCollins-Hearst dust was starting to settle that two more of the little bigs were talking some sort of merger. Time-Warner and Simon & Shuster, both of whom were courted and then jilted by Murdoch, got together to explore ways they could combine administrative and sales forces. Any such deal would probably not have as much editorial impact as, say, the merging of Bantam and Dell, but the potential is always there, somewhere down the road.

If the latest alignment were to shape up, New York would be left with, by my count, six or maybe seven possible markets for the writers of commercial fiction. (No, I'm not going to name them. This is a pop quiz. Don't want to offend anyone, either.)

That's a lot fewer markets than there were when I started out putting words on paper.

But then, you knew that, didn't you?

KEEPING HOUSE

Just to close the book on a couple of other deals we've discussed, I need to note that the Barnes & Noble deal to acquire Ingram Book Group, the nation's biggest distributor, has fallen through, apparently a victim of politics.

The \$600 million proposed purchase ran into lots of flak from both independent booksellers and the on-line giant, Amazon.com, both of whom rely on Ingram for supplies. Barnes & Noble had promised that the deal wouldn't be used like a club against its two principal competitors. But the Federal Trade Commission, after getting lots of input from legislators and from the American Booksellers Association and the Authors Guild, expressed concerns that were strong enough for Len Riggio to back down.

Interestingly, Ingram may be the big loser here. Company execs have been quoted as saying the distributing giant will have to cut back service if it is to survive. That's not going to help the independent booksellers who deserted their traditional source of supply as a means of protesting the proposed deal.

I understand why the ABA organized its letter-writing drive and submitted something like 125,000 customer signatures protesting the deal. I even agree that concentrations of corporate power invite abuse. If the independent sector of the book business is going to survive, though, there will have to be some changes.

The second saga that I need to conclude involves Amazon.com and Wal-Mart. If you recall, the Arkansas merchandising giant sued the Seattle online retailer over the latter's hiring of some computer talent. Said talent had created the computerized stocking and merchandising databases that are key to Sam Walton's success.

After jousting around the courtroom and trading nasty looks, the two companies agreed to a settlement. Amazon returned some confidential documents taken by departing Wal-Mart employees and agreed not to blab any of Sam's secrets. In addition, some former Wal-Mart workers will be restricted in their activities at Amazon and the company agreed not to do any more raiding in Arkansas.

It wasn't the outcome of the action that interested me. It was the obvious reliance both of the firms place on computerized information systems. The new corporate secrets aren't chemical formulae or manufacturing recipes. The real goodie is in the black box that tracks your purchases and mine.

Makes me think I should go back to school and learn programming. Can't be any less frustrating to write computer code than it is to write stale old private eye books that don't sell.

WHY DO WE WRITE?

I'll play your silly little game. Why do we write?

Ran across a formal answer to that the other day that was interesting. It came from George Orwell, who provided four reasons:

"1. Sheer egoism. Desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death. 2. Esthetic enthusiasm. Perception of beauty in words and their right arrangement. 3. Historical impulse. Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity. 4. Political purpose. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society they should strive for."

A little grandiose, maybe, but he did cover a great deal of the ground.

Ran across another phrase that charmed me. In a short essay on summer reading and genre fiction, Adam Goodheart provided an alternative name for the kind of books that many NINC members write. Instead of calling man-woman books "romances," that word which intellectuals love to hawk into the gutter like consumptives clearing their pipes, Goodheart made elegant reference to "courtship novels."

That is, after all, precisely what these books are. They are a retelling of the methods by which men and women get together for the purpose of getting together. Courtship is sometimes sweet, sometimes fierce, endlessly fascinating and marvelously inventive. So stories about the activity deserve a name that doesn't seem an easy sneer.

I admit, I don't think Harlequin will soon begin

merchandising "courtship novels" in numbered series. It doesn't have quite the necessary marketing pop.

But it's preferable to "women's fiction," so far as I'm concerned. There's a narrowness to that term that I find inhibiting.

WHY I AM NOT A BOOKSELLER

It seemed like a great idea. Really! I mean, Internet marketing! Audience targeting! A high technology solution to an everyday problem!! I felt like a bloomin' genius, I did, in the middle of the night. I sat straight up in bed.

"Dear," I said, "I just had the greatest idea!"

There was this long, skeptical silence.

"No, not that," I said. "This is something else. It's a way to clear off all those hundreds of feet of bookshelves downstairs. You know, the ones with all the old Fiddler and Fiora back copies, all the Ann Maxwell reprints and the extra Elizabeth Lowells and maybe even some of the 150 copies of *All The Winters* that HarperCollins sent to me rather than remaindering them."

Still silence.

"We'll sell them on your Web site."

Snore.

Don't you hate it when that happens?

Anyway, I persevered. The idea was just too logical to be put aside. We had literally hundreds of back copies of past indiscretions in the basement. They were too precious to throw away, those 50 copies each of the middle Fiddler and Fiora mysteries, the ones that Doubleday and then Villard liked but didn't really know how to sell. We even had a few of the early books; the Robert Ludlum knockoff that Richard Marek edited, back before he became a freelance book doctor; the first Fiddler, with the cover that won the American Graphics Assn. Award but that didn't look enough like a mystery to ignite the marketplace; the historical we did under another name.

I mean our basement was a regular damn shrine to our youth,

and even to our middle age. Those books were part of us so we couldn't put them in the trashcan. Instead, we spent several thousand dollars on custom shelves in the corners, out of the sun, so they would remain perfect forever. Or at least until our entire house was overwhelmed.

They lurked down there for months, until one day when I realized that many of the paperbacks were already starting to yellow, despite our best efforts. I also realized that more books were piling up, new novels, foreign editions, books on tape, things that we really did have some reason to archive. So we had to make a decision.

Like, what the hell do you do with 50 copies of a novel that's been out of print for a decade?

Then a bunch of threads wove themselves together in my head in the middle of that long night. I knew, in fact I had been writing in this column, about the extraordinary power of targeted marketing and about the revolutionary force in our business, the Internet. My wife had, at the urging of other authors, invested in a modest but effective Web site, which drew hits from fans, old and new, every day. The site even drew interest from fans of our joint incarnations, the Fiddler and Fiora books and the other projects that had kept us busy for the past 15 years.

So why not use the site to sell some of the books that are filling our shelves? We could arrange for a list of the books, an electronic ordering form and e-mail addresses, just like **Amazon.com** and **barnes&noble.com**. We could put our belief in technology to the test.

Shazaam!!!

It really wasn't hard. The webmaster who maintains the site did most of the work. She's a smart person and a creative one. She and our assistant (the Ph.D. in Finnish literature who is working for us until somebody discovers Arvo Paart) collaborated on a system to handle the bookkeeping. It only took them a week of phone calls and e-mails. It was going to be soooo coooool!

And guess what?



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 9*

To E or Not to E...In the world of ebooks, very little is forever. Or even for a few months. At the same time the distributor BookWorld, Sarasota, Fla., announced that it would make available electronic editions on its site, electronic publisher Franklin stated that it could soon cease selling the device. BookWorld's decision marks the first time a major distributor will sell downloadable electronic editions that can be read on hand-held devices. Those seeking a reader for these editions, however, may have to look somewhere other than Franklin. The electronic publisher only began selling Rocket eBooks this past spring, but, may soon stop. Franklin's indecision comes as the price of Rocket eBook continues to drop by more than \$100 at online merchandisers like **Buy.com** and bricks-and-mortar stores such as J&R Music World. Across the country, other ebook manufacturers have been stockpiling publishers the way Amazon hoards e-mail addresses. NuvoMedia announced that it has signed up 39 new houses, in addition to its initial acquisition of titles from such publishers as Random House, Penguin Putnam, and FSG. Among the new houses are traditional ones like Harcourt, Walker, and Wiley; hybrid companies like PGW Inc.; distributors like Consortium; and digital-only presses like Hard Shell Word Factory and eReads. It will also make available a "Rocket edition of Bloomberg News" at **Bloomberg.com**.

And from the Left Coast... Legislation sponsored by the Writers Guild of America West to protect creative artists from city permit and tax regulations passed out of the California State Assembly



BREAKING NEWS

on a 53-to-7 bipartisan vote. AB 83, sponsored by Assemblyman Tony Cardenas (D-Northeast San Fernando Valley), would prohibit cities in Los Angeles county from requiring permits, licenses or business taxes of writers and other creative artists who work from or at their residences. "An increasing number of cities, including LA, are attempting to expand their tax base by categorizing numerous individuals as businesses," said Daniel Petrie, Jr., President of WGAW. "It is both unconstitutional and unfair to extend these business taxes to writers and other artists because they do not operate businesses. AB 83 resolves both concerns. It keeps the enforcement agents of local government out of our homes. And it conforms local tax and permit policy with employment practices that have evolved in the entertainment industry. AB 83 does this by barring cities from using the receipt of income reported under an IRS Form 1099 MISC from being used arbitrarily to charge business taxes or require licenses," said Petrie. "This will assure that tax treatment of writers, performers, and other creative artists is fair and equitable across the industry." The State Senate will next consider AB 83. Creative artists interested in supporting AB 83 should send letters to: Senator Richard Rainey, Chair, Senate Local Government Committee, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814.

eFax.com and FaxWave...

Normally I'd ship this to Jan for the Online Column, but after seeing mention of eFax.com in several online newspapers, your NINK editor decided to give eFax.com a whirl. If you don't have a fax machine, or only have one line that shares your phone, modem, and fax, ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



EAST OF THE HUDSON

It was... sort of. The first week the new page was open, we logged more than a hundred orders. Most of them were for multiple copies. A few of them were from collectors, particularly mystery collectors, who snapped up the few relatively rare copies of F&F that we had. But most of the action was from readers, bless 'em. We had repeated orders for the entire mystery backlist. The early and legendary Ann Maxwell Fire Dancer series was another little profit center. We sold them little suckers at cover price, for the most part, and they just flew.

(Of course, it might have helped that the cover price on them was a little out of date. I mean, you don't see many mint-condition paperbacks for under five bucks.)

There was a real rush in the first week, and it picked up in the second. Since we had agreed to sign all copies as an added attraction, we both aggravated our carpal-tunnel syndrome with marathon autographing sessions. A big table in the basement became a mailing center. Anita, our e-commerce honcho, became such a regular at the Anacortes post office that they gave her her own cart.

And we got bookshelves back by the linear yard. It was amazing. I suddenly had a spot to put all those research volumes we used for *Redwood Empire* and then never touched again. My personal compact disc collection could be gathered in one place to begin attracting dust like the books had. I was smug as hell; I had the instincts of a Yankee trader, the economic acumen of a Jeff Bezos.

Then the bills started rolling in and I took another look.

The Web site upgrade cost me a grand or more. I'm not complaining. The webmaster is a fan; she was giving us a good rate. It's just that webmasters are skilled professionals

who charge just about what you'd expect. The Internet is great, but ain't nothing free about it.

And there was the matter of Anita's time. There wasn't enough of it. All the other tasks she handles began to fall through the cracks because she was filling orders, matching them with payment checks, boxing, posting, and shipping.

And did I mention our postage bill? Even at Fourth-Class Book Rate, those little stamps add up. I mean, a quarter here, a half-dollar there, pretty soon you're talking real money.

One of the surprises was that a substantial number of orders came from overseas fans. That's the joy of the Internet. It ignores boundaries.

But have you ever tried to cash an Icelandic Postal Money Order?

We learned a bunch of things from this experience. For instance, we learned we had to track any sales made in the state of Washington and make super-sure that we collected state sales tax and remitted it to the Department of Revenue in Olympia. So we spent a bit of money to come up with a tracking system that turned out to be useless because we never made an in-state sale.

We also learned that the bookselling business is no way to get rich. You'd be surprised how slowly those five dollar sales add up. And even with shipping charges and handling fees, start-up costs are high and continuing costs continue to mount. Even with a pre-sold audience and the kind of sharp targeting that a personal Web site gives you, the market is not limitless. I have reached a new visceral realization that as a commodity, books are quite like cobs of corn. You gotta sell them in volume to make money, and they are not by nature volume products.

(Get it? Volume? Books? It was a joke. Did you get it?)

Did we make money? Yeah, but not nearly as much as you might think, considering the fact that the inventory we sold had been paid for and written off a long time ago.

Did I manage to turn all of our lives upside down for a few weeks? You bet.

Would I recommend other writers try it? Only if you're really bored with putting words on paper, because the grief and disruption are considerable.

Does my experience make me rethink my belief in the Internet? Not at all. It really is a wonderful way to connect to people who want to read what you have written. I am delighted to have put a few hundred more Fiddler and Flora stories into circulation, and apparently, there are a few hundred folks who have gotten to enjoy books that were written to entertain people. I am delighted that old books have new life.

But do I think the Net is the path to future riches for all writers? No, at least not yet. There was a great deal of rigmarole involved in distribution, and we didn't even have the printing to worry about. These books already existed. Their existence was the problem in the first place. If we had been required to manufacture them, as

well as distribute them, we'd still be setting type.

The orders have slowed down in the past couple of weeks. We're averaging one or two a day now. They may be because the really prime stuff is gone, the few copies we had that might have been collectible and the large numbers of out-of-print paperback mysteries. So we all have gotten the book business down to a routine, the kind of routine that should yield enough profit to buy us a good bottle of Chardonnay a week.

And we did get back about a hundred linear feet of shelving, so the exercise wasn't a total waste. But guess what? We still have up to 50 copies each of the expensive hardbacks that Doubleday and Villard weren't able to peddle. We haven't been able to get rid of them either. Maybe we could use them as premiums. You know, buy one, get one free.

Hey, it's worth a try.

Oh, Ann, I've got this great idea....

Ouch!

— *Evan Maxwell*



BREAKING NEWS

▶▶▶▶ **eFax.com** might be the thing for you. The basic service is free, and gives you your own personal—free—fax and pin number. My new **eFax.com** number is (810) 821-7070. **eFax.com** converts faxes to an e-mail attachment and you receive them via your e-mail account. It's handy for road travel as well as at home. Naturally there's the "but." But it costs \$2.95 a month for eFaxPlus download, which will allow you to edit text within the faxes. Otherwise, you can view them on your computer screen and print them out the same as any fax machine allows. Also at \$2.95/month you can get a toll-free number. Cost is \$4.95/month for both upgrades.

Another e-mail fax program that might intrigue you is FaxWave. I read about this one at WGA online. Although I haven't tested this one myself, it sounds pretty similar to **eFax.com**, including the free basic service. At the moment, however, only fax numbers in the San Jose, Calif., are available, which means anyone faxing you would have to send it long distance (unless, of course, they live in San Jose). Since most faxes are relatively short, the cost should be small and many faxes are sent long distance anyway. CallWave does have plans to expand and offer local numbers in the near future. <http://www.callwave.com/> Check out the Web site for more details.

Penguin Picks Up Thames and Hudson Titles in Canada... Effective July 1, Penguin Books Canada began handling distribution of all Thames and Hudson titles in Canada. Previously, Douglas & McIntyre had handled the titles in Canada. Norton continues to distribute Thames and Hudson titles in the U.S.

NINK



Watch This Space

This is the most difficult conference column to write, because I've just sent the brochure off to the printer. By the time you read this, you'll already have it, and I don't know anything new yet to tell you! So all I can say is, Watch This Space. We're still adding interesting things to the program, and we'll report them right here. Did someone say Voodoo? We're working on it. Did someone ask for Dangerous Men? We're working on that, too. Probably by the time you read this, we'll have lined them up, but you won't hear about it until next month.

You're writers, though, so you're used to delayed gratification.

But don't delay! Go ahead and make your airline reservations for the conference anyway. August is traditionally the best month for low airline fares. And there's lots to see and do in Savannah, so plan to stay a day or two extra. Who knows when you'll be back again!

There's just a little over two months to go until we meet in the Sunny South. Practice your accent and don't pack away those summer clothes yet. You'll need them in Savannah. See you there!

— *Victoria Thompson,
Conference Chair*



NINC Members on the USA Today List

Compiled by **MARILYN PAPPANO**

"n" after the position 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>.

The Fast Track is a monthly report on Novelists, Inc. members on the *USA Today* top 150 bestseller list. (A letter

| Member | Title | June 3 | June 10 | June 17 | June 24 |
|---|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Catherine Coulter | <i>The Aristocrat</i> , Mira | 60 | 76 | | |
| Jude Deveraux | <i>The Blessing</i> , Pocket Star | 87n | 28 | 9 | 20 |
| Christina Dodd, Stephanie Laurens, Julia Quinn, et al * | <i>Scottish Brides</i> , Avon | | | 157 | 111 |
| Janet Evanovich | <i>Four to Score</i> , St. Martin's Press | | 126n | 107 | |
| Heather Graham | <i>Tall, Dark and Deadly</i> , Onyx | | | | 52n |
| Norah Hess | <i>Lark</i> , Leisure | 132 | 80 | 146 | |
| Sandra Hill | <i>The Bewitched Viking</i> , Love Spell | 187 | 136 | | |
| Linda Howard | <i>Now You See Her</i> , Pocket | 45 | 52 | 80 | |
| Iris Johansen | <i>The Face of Deception</i> , Bantam | | 41n | 37 | 33 |
| Betina Krahn | <i>The Soft Touch</i> , Bantam | | 123n | 76 | |
| Jill Marie Landis | <i>Blue Moon</i> , Jove | | | 148n | 123 |
| Elizabeth Lowell | <i>Pearl Cove</i> , Avon | | | 69n | 99 |
| Anne McCaffrey, et al * | <i>Acorna's Quest</i> , Harper Prism | | 247 | 119 | 127 |
| Debbie Macomber, et al * | <i>Love By Degree</i> , Harlequin | 94 | 140 | | |
| Debbie Macomber | <i>Orchard Valley</i> , Mira | | | 166 | 54 |
| Pamela Morsi | <i>Sweetwood Bride</i> , Harper | | 208 | 135 | |
| Nora Roberts | <i>Genuine Lies</i> , Bantam | 6 | 11 | 20 | 46 |
| Nora Roberts | <i>Homeport</i> , Jove | 35 | 34 | 49 | 73 |
| Nora Roberts | <i>Rebellion</i> , Harlequin | | | 46n | 12 |

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

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Novelists, Inc.

An organization for writers of popular fiction

P.O. Box 1166

Mission KS 66222-0166

Publishing Services by Huseby Agency, Ltd.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
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