

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

Volume 10

**Our
10th
Anniversary
Year**

Number 10

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Novelists' Ink

Being a Writer in Residence

**Writer-in-
Residence**
— s o u n d s

By **SHERRY-ANNE
JACOBS**

Writer-in-Residence—sounds glamorous and challenging, doesn't it? But actually, that hasn't been the case in my two residencies—interesting and useful, yes, boring and frustrating at times, but glamorous, definitely not! Let me tell you how it really was.

I was appointed in each case by a writers' centre committee which had gained government funding to employ Writers in Residence (WIRs). I really admire those who pull together these centres from nothing—usually in "spare" time while working and raising families—so if I sometimes point out the humour in the situation I do not mean to denigrate them.

As the "Established WIR" I was paid a modest but useful sum for 20 days' attendance.

TIME SPENT

You can take up such residencies full-time or part-time. In each case, I chose the latter, doing two days per week. I could travel to the first centre daily and the second time I had a friend nearby who let me stay overnight. In theory, I was to spend 80 percent of the time on my own writing and 20 percent on their needs, e.g. running a workshop, talking to com-

munity groups, doing PR for the centre, whatever. In the first residency that time allocation was approximately correct; in the second one, the proportions were reversed—but that's partly my fault because I said I needed PR more than anything else at this stage.

MY CONCLUSION: Unless the sponsoring centre is incredibly well organised, don't go full-time unless you have to. Opportunities and requests will dribble in—some even after you've officially finished!—and you yourself will unearth further opportunities. Leave free time to fit them in.

WRITING AT A WRITERS' CENTRE

Oh, boy, that's almost impossible! You're not in your own comfortably furnished office and your body knows it. Lighting was poor in both my cases, with no desk lamps—and as older eyes need about 30 percent more light than younger ones, my elderly eyes complained a lot!

Desks in both places were inhabited by other people's belongings or by office equipment, thoughtfully pushed to the rear half. After leaving papers and books scattered around in artistic abandon, suddenly you have to get them out every day and pack them away at the end of the day—well, you're not

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Looking Back at the First Decade of NINC

Ed. Note: We've given current Novelists, Inc. President Julie Kistler the month off and coerced—or rather, encouraged—former NINC President and founding member Maggie Osborne to write an article on the organization's first 10 years.

Ten years ago there was no organization strictly for published genre writers. While there were many writers' organizations who promised networking and support, no national organization provided members with a membership list in order to facilitate those aims. No organization had audited a publisher. Many writers' groups had a long discouraging history of political infighting.

Ten years ago, writers' conferences were targeted almost entirely to the unpublished aspirant. Several organization newsletters carried a warning that letters from one member attacking another would not be printed. Rebecca Brandewyne, Janice Brooks, Jasmine Cresswell, Maggie Osborne, and Marianne Shock thought

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Send Address Changes to Central Coordinator

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LOOKING BACK....

▶ ▶ ▶ there had to be a better way.
Novelists, Inc. is the result.

Why did you think it was important to establish an organization for multi-published authors? What motivated you to invest time and energy to get NINC off the ground?

Jasmine: "The mere fact of banding together as published professionals (gives) authors the chance to exploit their collective strengths. I badly wanted us to have this same sort of collective strength on a national level."

Rebecca: "While, at the time of NINC's founding, there were numerous writers' organizations in existence, there didn't seem to be any particular one that was effectively meeting the needs of popular-fiction writers as a whole."

Janice: "We all felt that published genre novelists had more in common with each other than any had with the aspiring writers. (We felt) others would wish, as we did, to have a highly professional organization of multi-published-only working, selling novelists."

Maggie: "I wanted a news magazine where every article addressed the interests and concerns of the published writer and believed other professionals might want that, too. I also wanted a relaxed conference where every presentation was targeted to the published writer."

Marianne: "(There was) an obvious need for a group whose members had already debuted as authors and were a step or two beyond the first blush of publication, and whose members shared the common experience of writing novels, but could bring to a group their specific experiences of writing in different genres."

What was your personal vision for NINC?

Jasmine: "My personal vision for NINC was limited. The emphasis for me was on developing an association of *published* authors. And I wanted our members to be multi-published. Everything else was secondary to that goal."

Rebecca: "My vision for NINC was that it would eventually evolve into a professional, highly effective writers' organization with a strong, positive collective voice, capable of speaking for popular-fiction writers, and advocating and implementing many needed changes in the publishing industry, which would be of benefit to popular-fiction writers as a whole."

Janice: "In many ways, NINC has met my expectations. I've seen (the organization) evolve in a friendly, hard-working, and cooperative way from a small group of five founders and 89 avid founding members into an extremely admirable group of over 600 serious and sharing novelists."

Maggie: "In addition to the points already mentioned, my personal vision was that this thing would get off the ground and thrive, and the five of us wouldn't be stuck with the start-up costs. Whew."

Marianne: "My personal vision for NINC was an organization primarily devoted to authors networking via the newsletter and conference."

Do you feel NINC failed to meet your vision, met it, exceeded it, or is evolving toward it?



Now We
Are
10

Jasmine: "I'm not saying that NINC is perfect or even wonderful, but it has far exceeded my wildest dreams. I do believe that part of the wildfire success of NINC in its very early days was the fact that we all felt a sense of sisterhood (hate that word!), and that we recruited the original members simply on the basis of other women writers we knew and admired."

Rebecca: "While I believe that, over the years, NINC has done many wonderful things that have benefited writers within its own ranks, it has, as an organization, failed to meet my personal vision of it when I agreed to become one of the five founders. It has taken some steps in this regard and may someday still evolve toward this end. But its members will need to share in this vision of NINC, and I'm not certain how many of them do. My vision may represent only a minority viewpoint."

Janice: "My only disappointment is that we haven't reached out far enough and strongly enough into genres other than romance. And our membership is still heavily composed of women writers. I believe, however, that our Internet presence and a serious membership drive will change this."

Maggie: "NINC has succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. At the founders' initial meeting we tossed out some lofty ideas and goals. And many of them have come to fruition. We wanted to audit royalty statements. Insisted that a support group should have a published membership list. Wanted the best newsmagazine there is. We wanted a strong, active advocacy committee. Wanted a conference that did not exploit our members, but gave them a relaxed pace to meet and share information. We haven't hit all our initial targets, but we've achieved most of them."

Marianne: "While NINC began as a communication network, it seems to have evolved into an organization weighted more toward informing and educating authors, with fewer newsletter articles and conference sessions devoted to the opinions and experiences of our members. I don't feel any disappointment with this evolution."

In retrospect would you do anything differently?

Jasmine: "Not in any meaningful way. For the future, now that we're solidly rooted, I believe we have to tackle some of the hard issues like better industry standards for contracts and royalty statements. I think NINC needs to be in the forefront of establishing guidelines for contract clauses on electronic rights. One of those eye-glazing topics that are actually vital to our economic health as writers."

Rebecca: "I regret that NINC originally began as a women's popular-fiction network. I think it was a mistake not to reach out to our male colleagues initially, and I believe this has, in fact, hindered NINC's growth over the years, making it difficult to attract male writers en masse. Most of our few male members have proved hard-working and highly visible within the organization. We could use many more like them. I think NINC would benefit tremendously in the long term from a much more balanced membership, with both genders and all the popular-fiction

genres being represented on a more equal basis."

Janice: "I'm proud of this organization, devoted to it, and have the certain belief that it's going to get better and better. Happy tenth birthday to Novelists, Inc."

Maggie: "In retrospect it was an error to ask that the newsmagazine be kept confidential. We hoped to give our members a forum to speak with absolute frankness. This was naïve on our part. Otherwise, we were very fortunate in the talents the founders brought to those early days. All of us had extensive organization experience. Janice even LIKED working on by-laws. I don't think we made too many mistakes."

Marianne: "No, there is nothing I would have done differently."

Is there anything you're especially proud of?

Jasmine: "I'm especially proud of something that sounds rather dull: the incredibly efficient structure of our organization. (Have you noticed that NINC almost never votes on bylaws changes?) NINC members probably don't think very often about the politics of the organization. That's because there aren't any."

Rebecca: "I'm especially proud of the fact that as the founders of NINC, we at least made a start (toward) developing a writers' organization that, due to foresight and careful structuring, has managed over the years to avoid most of the problems that have plagued other writers' organizations, while representing writers not just from any one genre of popular fiction, but from popular-fiction genres across the board. As writers, regardless of genres, we all share certain common goals, and those should remain our collective and cohesive focus."

Janice: "The best thing we did at the onset was to start with firm ideals, good bylaws, and then stand out of the way and let others carry the ball. Another 'best' thing we did was set up a nominating committee of members who are elected and present a thoughtfully selected slate of officers. This has eliminated the vicious political battles other writers' organizations have suffered over the years. I greatly admire the way the boards of directors have taken chances, thought creatively, and tried different processes for gaining members and serving them as no other organization can or does."

Maggie: "I never read one of our newsmagazines or attend one of our conferences without feeling a swell of pride. I think: Good heavens, this started with the five of us sitting around my dining room table drinking coffee and listening to Jasmine complain about our smoking. And now look where the years have taken us. When I list my credits and accomplishments, I am most proud of having been one of the NINC founders."

Marianne: "I am especially proud of the determination of the founders and early board members for preserving the Nominating Committee and process, particularly in the early years when members unfamiliar with the process campaigned for multi-party elections. I came into the creation of NINC with a firmly held opposition to members campaigning against each other for board





BREAKING NEWS

A CORRECTION...or at least a semi-correction, courtesy of Susan Elizabeth Phillips' tech-head son: We sort of got it half-right...[weak grin]: "The item in September *NINK* regarding Y2K and resetting the date for Windows is completely bogus. I, too, received this 'warning,' and when I told my electrical engineer son about it he fell on the floor laughing. You might want to pass this along on NINCLinc and in next newsletter. There's nothing anybody needs to do. The whole thing is a hoax. He still thinks it's absolutely hysterical that all of us bought into this. In his words, "Do you really think Microsoft would let something this stupid get past them?" When I replied, weakly, that anything is possible, he just started to laugh harder. I hate techies! ~Susan Elizabeth Phillips (whose son is still laughing at his mother's gullibility)" [You can check out the Web site on this hoax at: http://www.microsoft.com/y2k/hoax/y2k_hoax.htm]

ARCs on Ebay...This in from Jill Churchill: "I saw an ARC of my November book for sale on eBay. I know I'm nuts on this subject, but if it had been selling well after release instead of four months before, I probably wouldn't have gone haywire. Besides, the cover was shown, but the bottom where it says, 'Not for Sale' was cut off and it was being sold by a mystery bookstore owner in Florida. First I e-mailed my publisher, asking that this bookseller be taken off the list of those who receive ARCs (naturally, I have no response from anyone there). I contacted eBay and got the response that they weren't familiar with



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▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 3*

positions. The division and negative climate of such an election process contradicts the primary purpose of an author-support group, and ultimately weakens the intentions of the organization."

Any comments in general you would like to make to the membership about NINC?

Jasmine: "The friendships I've formed over the past ten years with other NINC members would have to be the most valuable aspect of the organization. It's difficult to say that without sounding corny, but it happens to be true. I really enjoy the NINC conference, not because I learn something new and unexpected about the industry or the craft of writing (although I usually do), but because I get the chance to sit down and chat with a lot of people whom I really like."

Rebecca: "NINC had at its inception and still has an 'extraordinary' amount of potential. It still remains the only writers' organization of its kind, composed of a membership of multi-published, working writers from all popular-fiction genres. In a publishing industry that is basically in the process of a rapid, and even exciting, evolution whose outcome no one is able to predict accurately, it is NINC's responsibility to its membership to continue to seek out information and means by which to help to ensure that we, as popular-fiction writers, are adequately prepared to deal with this brave new future."

Janice: "The Advocacy Committee is going full speed. The newsletter is chockfull of valuable information. A previous board took on the financial and technically complex obligation of flinging us into cyberspace and set up the Ninclink and our Web page, which have turned into some of our most valuable assets. Thanks to the understanding and generosity of many members, we have a benevolence fund that tides over a few individual members every year and allows them to keep their membership when times get tough. I'm proud of this organization, devoted to it, and have the certain belief that it's going to get better and better."

Marianne: "I don't think members are aware of how differently the founders perceived NINC at the beginning. There is a misconception that the founders are so alike, we shared an identical vision. This is not true. We were not a single body with five heads. Each of us compromised. Each of us held firm on at least one issue of personal importance, arguing its merits to the other four. Perhaps part of the success of Novelists, Inc. is due to the fact that it began as a reflection of five diverse but cooperative authors."

Maggie: "Ten years ago a series of conversations began with 'I wish there was an organization that...' and ended with 'Let's create one.' It was a scary and arrogant idea developed by five opinionated women who identified a need and decided to fill it. We were passionate about the NINC concept then and we still are. But any organization is only as good as its membership. In my opinion, NINC is successful because of a membership that supports it and is willing to give their time to the many volunteer positions required to run it. All 600 plus of us deserve a pat on the back. We're here ten years later, and we're thriving." *NINK*

Coming in December *NINK*:

This year, your dues renewal notice will be inserted in the December NINK. Don't miss it!



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ publishing and didn't know if this was illegal, but they *did* know that it violated their terms of service. They e-mailed me a form to sign and fax back saying I was the copyright holder and wished that the auction item be removed. I also scanned the 'real' cover of the ARC so they could see the warning. Since publishers don't care about this abuse, I urge you all to keep an eye out for this kind of rip off and eBay will listen to you."

From SFWA: Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America has announced the creation of a new category of membership for writers under 21. Junior membership is available to anyone under 21 who has demonstrated a professional talent in writing science fiction and fantasy by a) winning honorable mention or other special placement (finalist, semi-finalist, etc.) for a science fiction or fantasy story in a writing contest organized by a professional or official group; or b) publishing a science fiction or fantasy story in a school or equivalent magazine or newspaper. (Full membership remains open to those under 21 who meet SFWA's qualifications as a professional writer. After all, Frederik Pohl was editing a science fiction magazine and had published several stories in professional media by the time he was 16—and he is not unique.) SFWA's president, Dr. Paul Levinson, said, "Kids not only read science fiction and fantasy but are on occasion moved to write it. By recognizing this talent, SFWA benefits not only young writers but everyone in our field. A SFWA Junior Member who goes on to write as an adult will have learned a bit from old ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

WRITER IN-RESIDENCE

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

going to leave your unpublished masterpiece and careful research notes lying around to be "borrowed," are you? At the second centre, on a busy campus, I couldn't lock the office door, so had to pack up my laptop and take it with me every time I went out. Call me paranoid, but y'know, these laptops don't come cheap!

I planned well in advance what I was going to write and I did write some of that particular novel—but mainly during my days at home. You need better willpower than mine to concentrate on your writing in between people turning up to chat to the WIR; phone calls which you have to answer because the answering machine is broken; meetings of the centre committee which are none of your business, but they have to use part of your space because there isn't anywhere else so you hear everything anyway; not to mention busy bee sessions to do the newsletter mail-out which in the end you join in, because you just can't stay interested in that tragic scene you were working on when they arrived (the one that has you in tears as you write) with people chatting at the other end of the room . . . well, you get the picture!

MY CONCLUSION: Don't expect to write much unless you have ferocious willpower and can work through tornadoes and earthquakes

UNEXPECTED HAZARDS

Yes, well, life is like that, isn't it? Things never go according to plan. The additional hazard at the first writers' centre was a ghost—and I don't care whether you believe in them or not, but that one was well documented—only they didn't tell me about it till after I'd started. I met the darn thing the first day (seeing ghosts runs in my family). She used to whisper past me regularly after that, not hostile, but "there"! I could not have stayed at the centre alone after dark to save my soul! I couldn't have worked in the detached

writers' room at the bottom of the garden, either. I walked in once, felt cold shivers, and walked straight out. I met a former WIR who did stay down there overnight and who didn't believe in ghosts beforehand but does now! She woke one night to see the moonlit room split into two and at one side the original owner (long dead and transparent) pottering around. Another night, the ghost woke her and she saw that the main house's chimney was on fire—because of her phone call, the centre was saved.

MY CONCLUSION: Expect the unexpected. It's all grist to a writer's mill, after all—once you've stopped trembling!

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

1. Tour of local bookshops

I suggested that a committee member take me round the local bookshops and introduce me—which impresses bookshop managers more than if you just turn up on your own. We did this a month before the residency started and several of these shops are now stocking my books and reporting excellent sales.

2. Visitors

People make appointments to see you. What they really want is for you to read their work and exclaim in delight at how wonderful it is and introduce them to your agent/publisher. I refused point-blank to sit and read work because I didn't want to hurt feelings and am a poor liar. I talked to visitors about writing, publishing, self-development, doing your market research, their recent medical operations, joining a critique group, entering competitions, how their first marriages broke up, me and my own books, dogs, last night's TV programmes—you name it! One person offered to swap two self-published books for one of my books. I felt guilty saying no, but you should have seen the books offered! Oh, and I sold a fair number of my own books to these visitors. I went fully equipped for that.

MY CONCLUSION: ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ hands about how to work with publishers, agents, editors, bookstores, and other authors. And older hands may well learn something from their juniors about inspiration."

Benefits of the Junior Membership include a subscription to *SFWA Bulletin*, SFWA's journal; a membership card and directory of junior members; access to sections of SFWA's online Web site and SFWA's online discussions on sff.net; and participation in special events, online and at science fiction and fantasy conventions, that SFWA will be organizing for junior members. There is a \$20 annual membership fee (other members pay fees ranging from \$35 to \$60). Depending on the applicant's age, the signature of a parent or guardian may be required. Applications may be obtained from Sharon Lee, Executive Director SFWA, PO Box 171, Unity, ME 04988. Contest and convention organizers and editors or faculty advisors of publications who are interested in the program are invited to contact Dr. Paul Levinson at president@sfa.org. Journalists with questions about SFWA or the Junior Membership program are invited to contact: Greg Costikyan, SFWA Publicity Committee, 212-777-1190, e-mail to: costik@costik.com

PW daily online reports that after all the wrangling that took place between Amazon and the *New York Times* over the paper's bestseller list, it is Barnes & Noble that is severing a tie with the newspaper. The bricks-and-mortar company, *PW Daily* has learned, will no longer discount *Times* bestsellers in stores. ▶ ▶ ▶

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ Be prepared to talk to visitors about anything, sometimes even writing, and sell them a book or two while you're at it!

3. Visits to Schools

The offer of my services—free!—went out to over 100 schools in advance the second time, but only two schools accepted. They were delightful children and we all enjoyed ourselves, but there should have been more. Maybe American schools are different, but the teachers here always claim they're too busy.

I offered to talk to the English teachers as well, but they "couldn't stay after school" and would have needed several months' notice to arrange that. It didn't surprise me. I once did a writer's tour of the outback, i.e. very remote country schools, and while some were wonderful, others stuffed you into a classroom with the troublemakers and left you to it. Gulp!

MY CONCLUSION: For your own self-preservation find out exactly what a school is planning/expects of you, then lay down your own basic guidelines before you set foot across the threshold.

4. Meet the Writer Sessions

These are pure unadulterated fun. Attendance is not huge, 20-40 usually, but they're enthusiasts who like books—plus they bring their friends/aunts/neighbours to bear them company, and these tell you afterwards in tones of great surprise how interesting it was—goodness knows what they'd been expecting.

MY CONCLUSION: Expect to enjoy yourself—work up a good act, make 'em laugh, make 'em cry—and take along your own friend/neighbour to sell your books for you afterwards while you sign them and chat up potential life-long readers.

5. Readings

I did two of these. I don't read solid extracts from my novels, but talk about why I wrote them, or give other

background information, then read short extracts. I enjoyed doing these.

WRITER-IN- AT THE UNIVERSITY

The second writers' centre was attached to a university. The English Professor was not a literary snob (hurrah!) and wanted me to talk to his writing classes about the real world—first, second, and third (final) year. He dropped the first topic on me with two days' notice—"What research means to me" for second years—so I had to scramble my thoughts together in a hurry. They were expecting a talk on historical research, given that I write mainly historical novels and they drifted in, not exactly reluctantly, but not lit up. I spoke about market research, researching your own style/weaknesses/needs, trawling the world around you for topics and inspiration, and only finally about research for books, of which historical research was part. That surprised 'em!

I was asked to speak to the third years about electronic publishing and to the first years about how I became a writer and where I'm at now (my favourite topic!). Afterwards, he said the talks had been so good he'd like me to speak to his other three writing classes. Wonder why he didn't mention them before? So I did it all over again. Then he said there was going to be a big conference at the university in October for University Creative Writing Co-ordinators and he'd like me to talk to them about electronic publishing. He seemed surprised that I needed a firm date for that. He's going to be even more surprised when I get back to him with my list of charges!

I chatted regularly to two other Creative Writing tutors (writers' talk!) and enjoyed that. I was ignored totally by the other English Professor except for nods *en passant*, but saw him linger in the corridor and eavesdrop when a student rushed up to me one day. He looked stunned when said student said

RESIDENCE

how wonderful my talk had been and how useful my advice was. I couldn't help feeling smug. One other Creative Writing tutor ignored me completely, and when students went to him with queries about my talk, gave them misinformation about the quality of popular fiction writing, especially in romances. Since I overheard him doing it by sheer chance, I did a "promo" before each talk thereafter, about popular fiction. And thank you, Jayne Ann Krentz. You articulate it so much better than I do and I gave you full credit in the promo!

However, the Professor I was mainly dealing with was a sweetie and he organised an office for me when the centre committee realised that I was finding it hard to write there. So I wound up spending one day at the centre, then moving the following day to another campus of the university across town. Hmm. The office was an improvement—but the travel was rush hour horrid, and the lecturer in the next office was given to warbling unrecognisable ditties at frequent intervals.

As usual, there were some unexpected benefits. One student told me she'd been to the local library to borrow my books and didn't find them so gave the librarian a lecture on supporting Australian writers. Another student turned out to have a husband who was an expert on guns, historical as well as modern, just at a time I (who have never even touched a real gun) needed some information.

MY CONCLUSION: Enjoy universities, especially the contact with students, but be prepared for some people to patronise you and don't put up with it!

TO SUM UP

Well, as you can see, it was a great experience and the committee was warm and friendly to deal with, but I'm glad I have a sense of humour. The money was useful, but the PR was

NOTICE to all MEMBERS:

Your 2000 dues renewal notice will be enclosed in the December NINK.

Be sure to watch for it and renew promptly!

even more important to me, and I met lots of people I'd not have come into contact with otherwise. I call this "making ripples" and have seen its positive effects before. The residency also looks good on my CV if I want to apply for another. There's one in the Blue Mountains near Sydney. It ought to be quiet out there in the country—wonder if they have any ghosts, though? Maybe I'll just send for the forms . . . *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

Susan Macias (*Susan Mallery*),
Redondo Beach CA

Larry Jay Martin, Clinton MT
Lorna Tedder (*Lauren Shelley*),
Niceville FL

Kathleen Givens, Laguna Beach CA
Cheryl Kushner, Melville NY

New Members

Ken Casper (K.N. Casper),
San Angelo TX

Ruth Owen, Winter Park FL



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ Instead, it will knock down the prices of books on its own list, which will be rolled out to stores over the next three weeks. B&N will continue reporting to the *Times*.

AND FINALLY...A tidbit for our romance authors from Reuters: In Cadiz, Spain, a couple's quest for safe sex turned into a condom fiasco when the man's hand got stuck in a condom vending machine for four hours. After a long night on the town with his girlfriend, the man put some coins in a condom vending machine. When nothing came out, he pounded on the machine, then stuck his hand in the opening to pull the package out. Yes, you guessed what happened next: two of his fingers got caught inside. When the young couple finally called firemen, the machine had to be detached from the wall and brought to the station—with the man's fingers still inside—before he was finally freed after dawn. I don't know, but my fertile imagination could just do sooo much with that under the heading of "let's delay gratification..."
— *TdR*

I Want a Piece of Your Pie

Tonight, I baked one of the children's favorite desserts—apple pie. I wasn't expecting great gratitude from the children just because I slaved in the kitchen several hours making it from scratch. I was hoping they would at least enjoy it and perhaps be civilized enough to say, "Thanks, mom."

All hell broke loose when my daughter discovered that her piece was smaller than her brother's. Forget that she is younger, has a smaller appetite, and really couldn't even finish the piece she was given. She was not happy with the fact that her piece of pie was not *exactly* the same portion as her brother's. Her brother retaliated by saying all those things children instinctively know will irritate their siblings, like, "She's smaller, so why does she need as big a piece as mine?"

The issue was one of fairness. Complicating the matter were the children's differing opinions on what fairness entailed. Age, size, appetite, temperament all became complications in this simple conflict.

This episode reminds me of two individuals going through a divorce. Each side claims they only want what is fair. But often fairness is in the eye of the beholder and not simply defined. According to statistics, divorce is the second most stressful event in a couple's life, right behind the death of a child. Some of that stress occurs in the struggle to define what is "fair" in dividing the couple's assets.

A divorce does not need to end in financial ruin for either husband or wife. If both are to have an equal chance to flourish after the divorce, however, the division of property must be done equitably, with an eye on both the near and distant future.

By **MEENA S. CHENG**

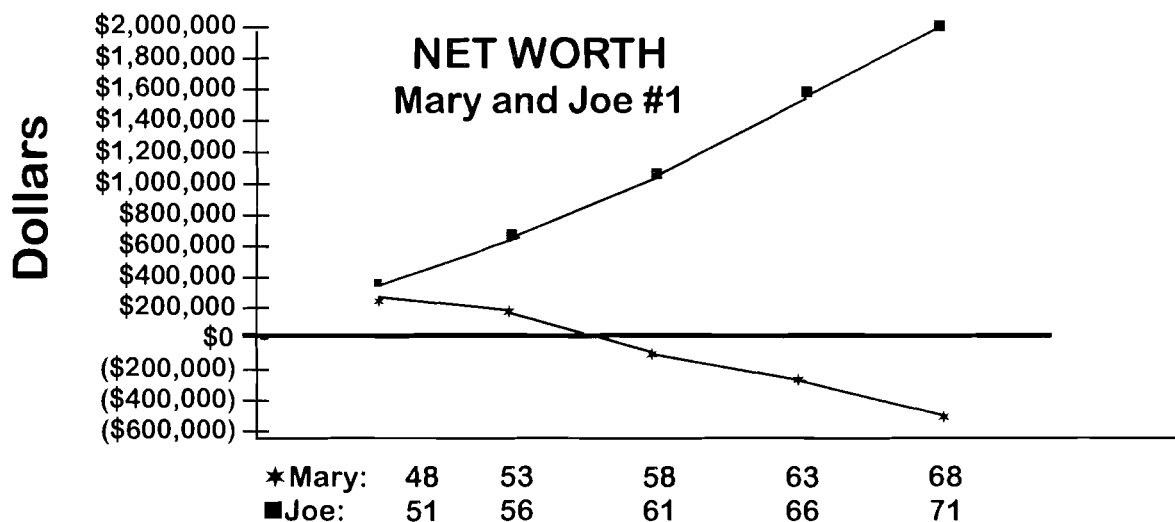
To illustrate the difficulty in reaching fairness in such a circumstance, let's create a hypothetical couple whose marriage is ending. Mary is 48, and Joe is 51. Their children are grown and away from home. For the last 20 years, Mary has stayed home to raise the children and make a comfortable household for the family. She does not have any working skills and expects to make the minimum wage after the divorce.

During their marriage, Joe has climbed the corporate ladder and become a corporate executive earning \$120,000 per year. They have a home with \$200,000 equity, an investment portfolio of \$150,000, and a 401(k) savings of \$250,000.

In their divorce negotiations, Joe offers to split their assets 50/50. This would include giving the house to Mary, which she wants. He also agrees to split his \$4,000 per month pension with Mary when he retires at 65. The table shows how their assets are to be divided:

	Value	Mary	Joe
Home	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$ -0-
Stocks and Bonds	150,000	100,000	50,000
401(k)	250,000	-0-	250,000
Total	\$600,000	\$300,000	\$300,000

Because Joe wants to help Mary through this transition, he agrees to pay her \$1,000 a month for five years. He claims that this is more than a fair settlement, as Mary is getting half of the assets plus five years of maintenance. On the surface, Joe's offer would seem equitable. But if it is, why is there a great chance that Mary, like many divorced



women who receive a 50/50 split of assets, will end up in bankruptcy, while Joe continues to flourish? It's because women often end up with the wrong kind of the assets, fail to do proper financial planning, and ignore the fact that an equal settlement now does not mean an equitable settlement in the long run.

Let's project Mary's settlement into the future to see what pitfalls she may face.

Mary's biggest asset is the house. She wants to keep it because she is sentimentally attached to it, and it is the one stable thing in her life. However, it does not generate any income, and costs her a fortune to maintain. She is making minimum wage and therefore needs additional cash flow to supplement her income. She turns to her investments and starts selling her highly appreciated stocks, ending up with a huge capital gain tax bill at the end of the year.

At the end of the third year, she has no investments left and is forced to sell her house. If the gain on the sale of the house exceeds the \$250,000 tax exemption, she will also be hit with a huge tax bill. Assuming the court approves his and her budgeted expenses, and using a historical statistic to project inflation and investment rate of return, Mary's assets would be completely depleted in nine years, forcing her to bankruptcy, while Joe's net worth would make him a millionaire about the same time.

Could Mary and other divorced women have done something different to avoid becoming financially destitute? Most financial planners would say that with proper pre-divorce planning, they could reduce the financial impact of a divorce.

Each party needs to forecast the long-term effects of a proposed divorce settlement and come up with a scenario that best addresses his/her financial needs and capabilities. Often, the ability to visualize long term financial impacts of various scenarios enables the couple to arrive at a more amicable and equitable settlement.

In Mary's situation, an option for a more equitable

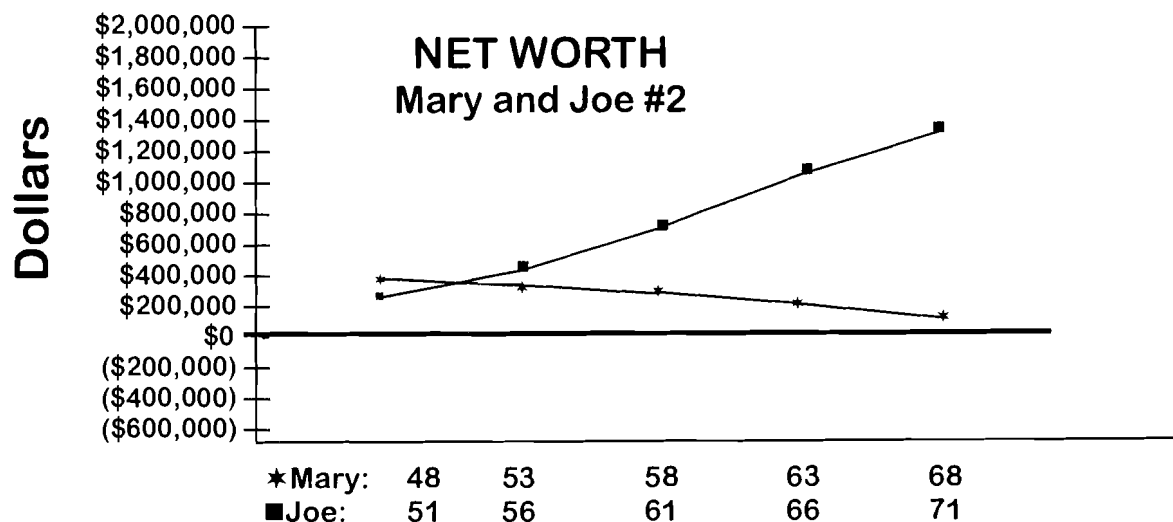
settlement may be to sell the house prior to the divorce to avoid paying any capital gain tax. Dividing the assets 60/40, where Mary gets 60 percent, would provide her additional cash flow to meet most of her expenses. Increasing the alimony payment to \$3,000 per month for the first four years and forgoing the fifth year would allow Mary to go back to school full-time to earn a degree, making her more financially independent.

With these minor changes in the proposed settlement, we can see from the graph that Joe will still be a millionaire, albeit in the 12th year instead of the ninth year. However Mary, instead of going into bankruptcy, will have enough assets to carry her into her retirement years. Even though the disparity between their long-term financial positions is still obvious, the slight change in the proposed settlement narrows the gap and makes the division of assets more "equitable."

What happened back in my house? My daughter agreed to accept her smaller portion, with a slight frothing of cool whip taken from her brother and a strawberry centerpiece given by Mom. Once again, a little compromise and a fair distribution of resources brought a satisfying ending—in this case, peace in my household.

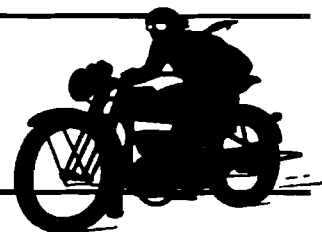
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DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT

Dispatches from the Front is a "war stories" feature. If something funny, black comedy to slapstick, happens to you, send it in. Anonymity will be preserved, of course, if you desire it.



The Masquerading Manicurist

All right, I'm a fake. I've had a face lift, two eye jobs, I bleach my hair and my fingernails are false. Besides that, I go on a crash diet before every conference, hoping to fit into the expensive clothes I bought for the conference the year before. My closest friends tell me that I sometimes have a little trouble with my self-esteem, but I've never pretended to be someone else all together. I have no energy for that kind of deception. My story is, I think, one of a kind.

Not long after my first book came out, my friend Liv asked to buy a copy from me so she could have it autographed for a friend of hers. I obliged. A few weeks later as I was dropping her off after lunch, she handed me the book and told me to look at the inscription. It read: "Enjoy the fantasy. Jane Bonander aka Valentina Fabrizini" (I've used a fictitious name, but hers was just as musical and very Italian).

I was stunned! Why in the world was my manicurist autographing my book? Typical of me, I didn't get angry, but I was hurt and puzzled. This is the story Liv told me:

She was going into a tiny neighborhood café for breakfast one morning as a woman was leaving with my book tucked under her arm. Liv said, "I know that author."

"So do I," the woman answered. "We have breakfast here almost every morning."

Liv and I often had lunch together, so she was a little surprised that I might be having breakfast with someone and not mentioning it. She investigated further, asking the waitresses about the author of the book. They enthusiastically said that "I" meet with six or eight other customers each morning, and talk about "my" stories. Liv said it sounded like "I" was holding

By JANE BONANDER

court. So not like me, I assure you.

She asked that they describe the author, and believe me when I tell you, we were in no way similar. "Valentina" was dark and voluptuous, probably outweighing me significantly. According to the description, I could have worn one of her bra cups for a hat. She also had an olive complexion. I'm a Swede. Ten minutes in the sun and I'm playing connect the dots with my freckles—or my age spots. And why on earth would anyone choose Jane Bonander as a pseudonym when they have a perfectly lilting and lovely Italian name like Valentina Fabrizini?

That's when Liv asked for one of my books. But it turned out she also knew one of the couples who was meeting with "me" each morning, so she told them that Valentina was an imposter.

"Impossible!" the man said. "Why would Val do such a thing?"

Liv explained that "Valentina" was my manicurist, and not an author at all. The only thing that would convince them was if they met me, which they did. But they were still as puzzled as I was as to why Valentina would do this.

The more I thought about it, the more upset I became. I don't talk a lot about my stories, but when I'm sitting across from someone for an hour, it's hard not to say something. "Valentina" was, after all, a hard core romance reader. She was always so interested in what I was writing, I couldn't help but talk a little about my stories. (Here I thought she was just interested, and she was collecting grist for the mill!)

And I had invited her to a local chapter meeting at which Linda Lael Miller spoke, because "Valentina" was a big fan. She also admired LaVyrle Spencer. At one conference, I chased the woman down and got "Valentina" her autograph. It was not one of my finer moments...but that's another story.

Well, I had to face "Valentina" sometime, so I Xeroxed the autograph and wrote on it, "What the hell is this all about?" and mailed it to her. Sometime later she called and asked if I would meet her somewhere so we could talk about it. At the time, my husband was out of town, and maybe I was a little paranoid, but I insisted we meet at McDonald's, just in case she was planning to do me in and take over my career for real.

My first question was "Why did you do this?"

She tearfully explained that one morning she'd had my book with her when she met her friends at the café, and was talking about it. One of them asked, "Did you write it?" She paused a moment, then thought, Why not? And that's how it all began.

"But, why?" I asked again. She broke down and cried, telling me how her life was such a failure, and she had done nothing to be proud of, and on and on...

I suppose I could have berated her for her deception, but instead I reminded her that she had two wonderful and gifted children, a fabulous son-in-law, and a faithful husband (of course I didn't know this for a fact, but I took a shot.)

She admitted all of that was true, but it had been so easy to fall into the trap of feeling like a successful novelist. No doubt her friends hung on her every word, marveling at her creative genius, applauding this, *Cont. on page 12* ▶ ▶ ▶



ONLINE...

Lessons learned the hard way are seldom forgotten, and I learned a few this month. I always thought that a computer virus could only exist within the confines of an executable file. I learned that they can thrive inside documents. I thought if the file came from a reliable source, I didn't need to run a virus scan. I learned even reliable sources don't always know when their files contain a virus. I thought if I bought the latest version of a virus scan software and loaded it on my computer that I would have the most updated information. I learned that I needed to go out to the Web site and pick up the latest signature files.

Having my computer infected with its first virus was a frustrating experience. Fortunately for me, the virus was relatively harmless. It came on a document file and whenever I opened another file (even if the first was closed), it jumped into that file. As long as the file was open, it created *.tmp files so when I tried to save my work, I was told my drive had no more space. Closing the file caused the *.tmp files to go away—but I lost my changes in the process.

I didn't understand why this was happening until I received e-mail from the reliable source telling me one of the files sent had a virus. I ran a virus scan and detected no viruses. I asked my husband to run a scan against the files at his office because his employer is adamant about keeping virus scan software updated. He did and discovered all the files were infected.

My virus scan was so outdated that I had to purchase new virus scan software. I uninstalled the old, installed the new, and ran it, figuring since it was the latest version on the shelf, it was all I needed. No viruses were detected. I went to the company's Web site, downloaded the latest signature files. The viruses were detected and destroyed.

So I share with you what I learned the hard way: get yourself reliable virus scan software. (I purchased McAfee.) Keep it updated by going to the company's Web site often and downloading the latest signature files. Run a virus scan against *all* incoming files before you open them. Viruses can thrive in the most unexpected places. I cringe to think that someone right now is working to create one that will live inside an e-mail message.

Now, on to sites of interest. Anne McCaffrey shared with us that "discovering new online research tools is also invaluable. I do a lot of research online. Is the membership aware of all the dictionaries available at www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/r.beard/diction/html? Great specialist (such as Nasa lingo) and language dictionaries in which I can get completely lost."

Bevlyn Kaukas "discovered a good set of simple yoga exercises to do at the computer—Keyboard Yoga at iVillage.com. Very refreshing. Especially the breathing and eye exercises."

Time management is vital to us as writers. I hope you'll find the following helpful.

TOP FIVE TIME MANAGEMENT MISTAKES

By Dr. Donald E. Wetmore

In my 30 years as a Time Management speaker and consultant, I have observed a lot of what we can and should not do to increase our daily result. Time management is not necessarily working "harder," but rather, "smarter."

And to accomplish significantly more in our days, we need not increase our efforts. As an example, in a horse race, the first horse may earn a \$50,000 purse and the second horse may earn a \$25,000 purse. The first horse gets twice as much money as the second horse, not because it ran twice as far or twice as fast. It was only a "nose ahead" of the competition. So it is with our daily results. We need not run twice as fast or put in twice the effort to significantly increase our daily success. We only need to be a "nose ahead" of where we already are. We are all productive in our days. We would not survive the demands of this world if we were not. The real challenge is how much more productive can we become?

And, a lot of our time management has to do with more of what we are not doing rather than what we are doing. Sometimes our mistakes and omissions will keep us from running at a full pace.

Here are the Top Five Time Management Mistakes we should all avoid to help us increase our daily success both on and off the job, in less time and with less stress.

MISTAKE NUMBER 1: Start your day without a plan of action. You will begin your day by responding to the loudest voice (the squeaky wheel gets the grease) and spend it in a defensive mode, responding to other peoples' and events' demands. The tail will wag the dog. If there is a void of leadership in your time management life, someone will fill that void. It's not that others are bad people, but they will take all of your time if you let them. You will have worked hard but may not have done enough of the right things. Time Management is not doing the wrong things quicker. That just gets us nowhere faster. Time Management is doing the right things.

MISTAKE NUMBER 2: Get out of balance in your life. Our lives are made up of Seven Vital Areas: Health, Family, Financial, Intellectual, Social, Professional, and Spiritual. We will not necessarily spend time every day in each area or equal amounts of time in each area. But if, in the long run, we spend a sufficient quantity and quality of time in each area, our lives will be in balance. If we neglect any one area, never mind two or three, we will eventually sabotage our success. If one leg of a table is longer than the rest, it will make the entire table wobbly. If we don't take time for our health, our family life and social life are hurt. If our financial area is out of balance, we will not be able to focus adequately on our professional goals, etc.

MISTAKE NUMBER 3: Work with a messy desk or work area. Studies have





▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ shown that the person who works with a messy desk spends, on average, one and a half hours per day looking for things or being distracted by things. That's seven and a half hours per week. ("Out of sight, out of mind." The reverse of that is true too, "In sight, in mind.") You may not lose a solid block of an hour and a half at a time, but a minute here and a minute there acts like a leaky hot water faucet: drip, drip, drip. It doesn't seem like a major loss, but at the end of the day, we've dumped gallons of hot water down the drain that we are paying to heat. If you have ever visited the office of a top manager, typically, that person is working with a clean desk environment. Many would attribute this practice to that person's access to other staff members. While there may be some truth in that conclusion, in most cases, if we went back some years in that person's career, they probably were working with a clean desk, which gave them the focus they needed to become promoted to where they are today.

MISTAKE NUMBER 4: Don't get enough sleep. Studies show that nearly 75 percent of us complain on a regular basis, all throughout our days, that we are flat-out tired. For most people, they get the quantity of sleep, but they lack the quality of sleep. Their days are filled with so much stress they are out of control; they work harder but maybe not smarter, so that it's difficult to get a full night's sleep. (For some, they simply do not allow for a sufficient quantity of sleep.) If you plan your day, then work your plan, you will get more done, feel a higher sense of accomplishment, and experience less stress and enjoy a more restful night's sleep.

MISTAKE NUMBER 5: Don't take a lunch break. Many people do not take a lunch break, instead working through in the hope that no break will give them more time to produce results. Studies have shown it may work just the opposite. After doing what we do for several hours, we start to "dull out." Sure, we can work through lunch and be productive, but that is not the issue. The

issue is "how much more" productive we can be? A lunch break, even a short 15-minute break, gives us a chance to get our batteries charged up again, which will allow us to more effectively handle the afternoon's challenges. We are then less likely to procrastinate a few of those difficult tasks that, in the long run, will make a positive difference in our personal productivity.

If these ideas were helpful, we have prepared an additional checklist entitled, "Top Five Best Time Management Practices." It's free. If you would like a copy, e-mail your request for "top five" to: ctsem@msn.com

Would you like to receive free *Timely Time Management Tips* on a regular basis to increase your personal productivity and get more out of every day? Sign up now for our free TIME MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION LIST. Go to: www.topica.com/lists/timemanagement and select "subscribe."

Dr. Donald E. Wetmore, Professional Speaker, Productivity Institute, Time Management Seminars; E-mail: ctsem@msn.com; or go to <http://www.balancetime.com>

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I want to thank the authors who generously share their unique finds with me.

— Lorraine Heath



DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT



▶ ▶ ▶ *Cont from page 10*

her very first novel, for the brilliance of it. (All right, maybe they didn't say that, but that's the very least I should have gotten out of her charade!)

All I could think of was how clever she must have felt for taking kudos for all the work I had done. After all, don't we anguish over the writing and feel elated at having written? She had simply avoided the hard part.

I asked her why she hadn't picked an author she didn't know, someone

who lived thousands of miles away. Apparently she hadn't thought that far ahead.

We parted amicably enough, but obviously I found a new nail lady. I often wonder how she explained my quick departure, because I would often see cohorts of hers, and they were no longer friendly.

We all respond differently to odd situations. Some people who heard the story said, "Gee. Look at the free publicity you got. You might never have reached those people otherwise." I suppose they're right,

but that certainly wasn't my first reaction. I was hurt that someone I had trusted for so many years had betrayed me.

Liv was so angry with "Valentina" she wanted me to drag a lawyer to her shop by the necktie and sue her. But my author friend JB's response was the best: She hooted with laughter and said, "I can't believe there's someone out there who has less self-esteem than you have!"

Imagine. Someone actually wanted to be me. Ah, the glory of it all. *NINK*



EAST OF THE HUDSON

THE GOOD NEWS

I pay more attention to hunches than I once did. Maybe it's because I have found them to be instructive. Maybe it's just the power of suggestion. Or maybe, just maybe, it's easier to listen to hunches than to do hard-core research.

Whatever the explanation, I have heard a couple of people in the book business say, "I think things are looking up."

It's been a while since I've heard that from writers, editors, or publishers. We have all been on a doom-and-gloom spiral for the past few years. However, there seems to have been a perceptible brightening off in the distance. Maybe it's the light at the end of the tunnel and maybe it's just an onrushing locomotive.

And now, thanks to the Book Industry Study Group, we have some numbers that suggest stabilization, if not an actual upturn. BISG reports that 1998 sales of trade books rose six percent. That's not huge, but it's certainly better than the industry group's projected increase, which was only 1.6 percent.

Rack-size mass market titles showed a 5.6 percent increase, well above the projected 3.3 percent, but the big bounce seemed to be in trade-size paperbacks where sales increased 10.3 percent.

The report indicates that the independent distribution market, hammered by consolidation and cutback for the past several years, seems to have found its balance, thanks in part to the increasing popularity of some nonfiction titles, particularly the adventure tales like *Into Thin Air* and *The Perfect Storm*.

Mail-order business has been hit hard, but online book selling is growing exponentially, with one estimate putting the annual increase at 300 percent. Publishers are selling more and more books directly, and there is a suggestion that chain-store sales are flattening.

As for the structural changes among publishers, *Publishers Weekly*, which reported the BISG numbers, also said that there were 15 large acquisitions last year worth more than \$15 billion.

The *New York Times* took a look at the same numbers, by the way, and found much less reason for celebration. The paper's publishing writer, Doreen Carvajal, called the increases "modest" and the projections for the future "cautious." She quoted one of the authors of the study as saying, "We don't see the total market expanding in any dramatic shape for five years."

But having lived the last five, I'll take modest increases over precipitous declines anytime.

GOOD NEWS II

Pollyanna was a boring twit, but once in a while she had

an interesting point. Like when she said that the publishing consolidations of the past few years were all for the good because they would allow the industry as a whole to survive. Dead wood needs to be cut out, stacked up, and burned and that's what has been happening in the book world....

....or so the survivors were fond of saying.

But maybe Miss Polly had a point. Peter Olson, who runs Random House for the Bertelsmann folk, says that the first year of business activity since the amalgamation of Random with the Bantam Doubleday Dell holdings was a strong and surprising success. All publishing programs finished ahead of projection, and even ahead of historical performance. Sales were up in all categories, though a little soft in mass-market paperbacks, and traditional book channels kept pace with nontraditional outlets.

In other words, Olson seems to be saying that the tumult paid off, and with Bertelsmann sales worldwide estimated to be \$1.6 billion, that's a pretty healthy sign.

Olson also told *PW* that the company's various arms have not suffered from a threatened boycott by writers and agents upset over the acquisition. Bertelsmann imprints continue to see as many submissions as they ever did.

He claimed that these imprints continue to compete forcefully despite fears that the consolidation would mean fewer literary auctions. Under a publicly announced policy, Bertelsmann imprints may continue to bid, even against one another, as long as other publishers are in the competition.

And, according to Olson, Bertelsmann has significantly raised that amount to the table limits for individual editors, the price levels at which editors must get approval from The Boss. Decentralization is the name of the Bertelsmann game, Olson says. New York editors are encouraged, he says, to regard their German parents as "rich and remote."

And in another encouraging long-term plan, Bertelsmann is said to be beefing up the entry-level pay scales for many publishing job categories. Once, publishing was a kind of genteel refuge from the real world. Snotty kids from blue-blood backgrounds would win status points by going into the book business. It didn't pay well, but it was ever so highbrow.

Nowadays, those children of wealth are heading for IT (information technology) and investment banking. For that matter, so are the smart, scuffling kids bubbling up from the underclasses. If publishers want to attract and hold potential talent, they're going to have to pay better.

For better or worse, there will probably always be enough compulsive scribblers like you and me to produce the manuscripts, but if the business as a whole is going to expand and grow, intelligence and imagination will have to be found, cultivated, and rewarded.

(With that little sermon, I expect to recover much of the ground I have lost with the people who buy, ► ► ► ►



EAST OF THE HUDSON

edit, and publish books. I've beaten them up for five years; I may as well pat them on the head once in a while, too.

(Besides, all this good news has gone to my head. I've got a new novel about half-finished. Guess I'd better start mending some fences.)

CAST YOUR NETS

My son, the lover of esoterica, who prides himself on being able to find anything in unknown used-book stores, had a birthday coming up. He asked for two books on fin-de-siecle art and design that he had given up hope of finding. Both are out of print, and have been for years.

His mother found them after about five minutes of shopping.

One was in Massachusetts, one in Toronto; both were outrageously expensive, and buying them took a leap of faith, since we could only rely on the book dealers' word that they were in good shape. But nothing's too good for the kid, right?

And guess what? The books were just fine, mom and dad were heroes all over again, and the credit-card bill won't arrive until next month.

How did this magical event happen? The Internet, that's how. The Net is revolutionizing the used- and rare-book business even more quickly than it is shattering the smug illusions of independent booksellers. But in the used- and rare- business, the smart booksellers are using the new technology, not fighting it or whining.

Sue Guntrum of our Fort Wayne affiliate forwarded a clipping out of *USA Today* that describes how an Internet clearing house named Alibris is working with book dealers to make entire inventories available online. Alibris, headquartered in Sparks, Nevada, maintains a Web site listing its entire inventory—150,000 books, soon to become 300,000—and can computer-search its catalog for requested titles at cyberspeed.

The fascinating part of the clearing-house operation is that it allows some of the dealers involved to do away with their own brick-and-board shops, freeing them to do the one thing they really enjoy, hunting down used books. I have mixed feelings about the used-book traffic, but the image of these dealers roaring around the country in their battered motorhomes, hitting estate sales and used-book barns, is just too delicious. If they can make a living that way, good for them.

CHANGING THE RULES

One of the ways writers may be able to milk continuing profits from older works is on-demand printing. The Authors Guild recently added that capability to its existing **Backinprint.com** program, thereby enabling writers to secure freshly custom-printed copies of their works that can then be offered for sale through the Guild's Web site and

through the databases of several of the large book distributors like amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, and Ingram Book Group.

The on-demand mechanism is an outfit called toExcel, which will scan existing works and deliver laser-printed copies for free through the year 2000. After that time, the on-demand printer will begin charging authors for the service, but at least the works will remain available....

....presuming, of course, that the author has obtained publication rights from the original publisher of the work by the normal reversion process or by special agreement.

And that, my friends, may become a problem. Publishers are becoming increasingly reluctant to revert rights or to admit that the books are, indeed out of print. That's because many of these publishers are establishing their own on-demand operations.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported last month that several of the big publishing wheels are taking the position that "as long as the book is available in any format, even if only by database," it is technically in print. That means publishers will not have to revert inactive titles, as they have in the past.

The *Journal* reported that authors are starting to demand contract clauses that account for this technological change in the business. Instead of the previous "out-of-print" standard, copyright control might properly revert to the author when sales fall below a certain predetermined level, for instance, a thousand copies a year.

There apparently is even some effort to renegotiate existing contracts to address the change.

Not that I expect such efforts to go very far. With Bertelsmann and Simon & Schuster, for instance, both taking the public position that rights aren't going to revert, individual writers are going to have big trouble obtaining the permissions needed to take advantage of the Guild's scheme. We ought to support their fight, though. Somebody has to take the lead in these kinds of issues.

FIDGETING DIGITS

The guy who learned how to turn information into ones and zeroes has caused more consternation in the world than anybody since the inventor of the Whoopie Cushion. I ran across a couple of articles in the last month which suggest that digitization may be coming under some sort of hardware and software control, but I'll have to tell you, I'm still skeptical.

The first piece was a thumb-sucker (that's what we used to call think pieces, back in my days as a reporter) about the hardware and software that industry is developing to prevent illegal copying of digitized material, whether it be Windows 98 software or the latest release from the Squirrel Nut Zippers.

This computer gear is called digital-rights-management systems, and the name should tell you just about all you



need to know. There apparently are millions of corporate *apparatchniks* who have spent hundreds of millions of person hours developing machines, chips, and computer programs which consumers are supposed to install themselves, or allow to be installed on their personal computers.

These devices and schemes might wipe your computer's memory if you tried to download an unapproved Wave file containing your favorite Beach Boys cut. Or they might quietly dial up Bill Gates on your modem and report to him your efforts to gyp him out of his next billion.

I normally put great stock in what the *Economist* says, but I have to say I was underwhelmed by this piece. The reporter made clunky allusions to copyrighted wine in digital bottles and the capacity of music and book publishers to "slice and dice" their various and sundry rights.

Maybe that will happen, but not for many years, if at all. All the king's horses and all the king's men are going to be very busy for a long time, trying to stuff the digital Humpty back in his shattered shell.

But it's important for we who live in little offices scattered across the landscape to pay more attention than we have to what's happening. And that means learning terms like digit-rights-management.

There's another term I encountered in this debate. It's called "disintermediation." It's sort of a techno-hip word for the process of cutting out the middleman.

Steven Zeitchik, writing in *Publishers Weekly*, tossed the word off in his *PW* thumb-sucker about the efforts of the entertainment business to create standards by which digital music and, eventually, films, can be circulated on the Internet without turning them into the biggest free lunch since Delmonico's.

The new rage (I suppose it is a digital-rights-management tool) in this field is something called Liquid Audio, which is a "secure version" of the technology used to send downloadable songs over the Net. "Secure" means not readily copyable. If Liquid Audio becomes an industry standard, record companies will be able to move material directly to customers over the Net, but they will still control reproduction and distribution. No more free music Web sites, no more Diamond Rio playing machines, which our kids are now using to create their own free CDs and PC music files.

There's reason to wonder whether Liquid Audio will catch on. Circuit City, the appliance store, lost at least \$100 million earlier this year in supporting a digitized movie technology that allowed users to view a movie a couple of times before the disc wiped itself clean. Gen-Xers howled with outrage, boycotted the retailer, and mounted guerrilla attacks against the technology on the World Wide Web and in print. Ultimately, they won and the system was scrapped.

Zeitchik is not as sanguine as the *Economist* about the future of control. But he does make the point that while the music and entertainment businesses are paying attention, trying to cope, the book business doesn't seem to be. And that may spell near-term trouble.

"Whether because of a growing need for piracy protections, shifting retail channels, authors tempted by self-publishing or the possible elimination of wholesalers, the era for those who don't adapt might be more gilded than golden," he said.

We aren't talking about the future here. The war is now. Digital-rights-management and disintermediation are clumsy terms. It's easy to poke fun at them. But they are the names of future battlefields and we'd better learn them or we'll never know why we were taken prisoner.

Zeitchik quotes futurist James Gleick about the accelerating pace of daily life: "What we're heading toward is a world where there are content providers (artists or authors), end-users, and some kind of middle man. But they (traditional publishers, wholesalers, and booksellers) aren't necessarily the middlemen."

Interestingly, and maybe hopefully, Zeitchik got that quote not from a Web site but from a book.

SCORCHING COMMENTARY

New York is in a different universe. Or maybe it's me that's in the different universe. Whatever...

But if you doubt there's some distance between where most of us live and Manhattan, consider this: It is illegal to barbecue on that island. Against the law. *Verboten!*

Actually, I overstate. It is technically legal to barbecue with charcoal, so long as the burning coals are kept at least ten feet from any combustible material. But the preferred method of barbecuing in America today—on propane-fired grills—is directly prohibited.

Why? Because it's illegal to transport propane onto the island through tunnels or over the lower levels of bridges. In addition, no more than one pound of the gas can be carried through a house or apartment.

The *New York Times*, which reported this anomaly, suggested that chronic gas grillers would have to rely on helicopter delivery of fuel for their rooftop cookouts. Now I love to barbecue; I figure that any form of cooking that relies on open flame is okay for a guy to do. But I think I'd have to give grilling a pass if I had to rely on airdrops.

But I do now understand why my editors and my agent eat deli sandwiches rather than burned backyard burgers and incinerated tube steaks.

I feel so sad for 'em. They ain't even hardly American. (And for those of you who are wondering, yes, the irony light is on.)

— Evan Maxwell



The Fast Track

Compiled by **MARILYN PAPPANO**

NINC Members on the USA Today List

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

Member	Title	Aug 5	Aug 12	Aug 19	Aug 26
Madeline Baker	<i>Apache Flame</i> , Signet				101n
Mary Lynn Baxter	<i>One Summer Evening</i> , Mira	148			
Patti Berg	<i>Wife for a Day</i> , Avon		127n	123	137
Sandra Brown	<i>Unspeakable</i> , Warner	190	20	5	6
Catherine Coulter	<i>The Target</i> , Jove	12	19	34	51
Catherine Coulter	<i>The Edge</i> , Putnam		25n	58	88
Jude Deveraux	<i>The Blessing</i> , Pocket Star	88	132		
Christina Dodd	<i>Someday My Prince</i> , Avon	69	128		
Tess Gerritsen	<i>Bloodstream</i> , Pocket		134n	54	48
Heather Graham	<i>Tall, Dark and Deadly</i> , Onyx	125			
Jill Gregory	<i>Cold Night, Warm Stranger</i> , Dell			108n	87
Tami Hoag	<i>Still Waters</i> , Bantam		58n	9	7
Linda Howard	<i>All the Queen's Men</i> , Pocket	135n	48	106	104
Linda Howard, GERALYN DAWSON, JILLIAN HUNTER, MARIAH STEWART and MIRANDA JARRETT	<i>Under the Boardwalk</i> , Sonnet	113			
Iris Johansen	<i>The Face of Deception</i> , Bantam	81	120	133	143
Andrea Kane	<i>The Gold Coin</i> , Sonnet		125n	119	
Jayne Ann Krentz	<i>The Family Way</i> , Mira	68	91		
Jayne Ann Krentz and Lori Foster	<i>The Private Eye/Beguiled</i> , Harlequin			215	141
Kat Martin	<i>The Silent Rose</i> , Zebra	103	143		
Cathy Maxwell	<i>Married in Haste</i> , Avon		130n	111	110
Judith McNaught	<i>Night Whispers</i> , Pocket	8	14	25	30
Nora Roberts	<i>Rebellion</i> , Harlequin	70	126		
Nora Roberts	<i>Carnal Innocence</i> , Bantam	120			
Bertrice Small, Susan Johnson, Thea Devine, et al *	<i>Captivated</i> , Kensington	129n			

* et al: indicates that the book was written with other authors who are not members of NINC

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