

# Novelists'



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

## ***If you build it, they will come...*** **Making the Internet Work for You**

**BY STELLA CAMERON AND CISSY HARTLEY**

Luck plays an important role in our business, but without cunning (we'll leave talent out of the equation in this instance) it is easily wasted.

In 1994 luck brought the man who was to become our son-in-law. He is a nerd, a geek, a fabulous techie, and he showed me Web pages on the Net. I'd never seen any before and thought they were great, even if they were pretty basic. Bryan said, "Know what?" and I said, "I ought to have a Web page, right?"

Off we went and boy, did I consider myself cutting edge! I was a pioneer. We had a beautiful page and we loved looking at it. This was a good thing because I doubt if anyone else found it.

Two years ago when our daughter and son-in-law were far too busy to keep up with the page, I looked around for an alternate Web guru and—*ta-da*—found Cissy Hartley (*Ta-da* is one of her favorite sayings as a new piece of magic appears). This was when I added cunning, maybe I should call it "industry savvy" to my Internet endeavors.

I tried to keep Cissy all to myself but, darn it, Jayne Ann Krentz, Elizabeth Lowell, Diana Palmer, Susan Wiggs, Jill Barnett,

Kristin Hannah—the list goes on—subsequently found her anyway. It's only fair that I should share her with all of you. What follows is the first part of a long conversation Cissy and I recently shared:

**Stella:** You keep your fingers on the Internet pulse, Cissy. Please could you give me a thumbnail sketch of the statistics you're seeing and how they impact writers?

**Cissy:** When I went looking for statistics, even I was surprised at how pervasive the Internet has become. Fully half of the US is now online and more broadband connections mean that people are staying online longer. According to a report released just this week by The Strategis Group, the average Internet user now spends over seven hours per week online. And even allowing for the sheer numbers of new bodies online every day, Internet spending is sharply increasing. According to Ernst & Young, consumers spent an average of \$230 online in 1997; \$280 in 1998. For 1999, that number quadruples to an average of \$1,205.

A lot of that money is going to buy books. 12.6 million people regularly buy books online. (Books are currently the second most popular online purchase, second only to computers). In terms of romance sales in particular, it's interesting to **Cont. on Page 4** ▶ ▶ ▶

## **Everything You Didn't Want To Know (But Definitely Need To) About What Booksellers Think About Writers**

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**BY VELLA MUNN**

*[Ed's note: this is the first of a 3-part series wherein our Ms. Munn plays mother-confessor to the bookselling world.]*

What do booksellers hate/love about their jobs?

When they look into their crystal balls and ponder the future, what do they see?

If they could get the others in this business (publishers, distributors, writers) to sit down and listen to them, what would they say?

Confession time: when I first proposed an article about the book business from the booksellers' POV, I hoped I'd learn something I could use to my advantage. Here was the thought—I'd get a consensus of what kinds of books customers are looking for but not getting; I'd be first out of the chute with a 'can't fail' promotional campaign; I'd have booksellers jumping at the chance to unload on me, thus gaining their everlasting gratitude.

Well, some of that has happened; most hasn't. But it's been an amazing experience and I've learned **Cont. on page 6** ▶ ▶ ▶

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## .....THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE

I'm writing this in early May, when Zita Christian and Kate Dooley are working hard to get the brochure for the Vancouver conference off to you in June. Watch for it in the mail! This is shaping up to be a very special conference. A gorgeous setting, an innovative program, an opportunity for authors, agents, editors and other publishing professionals to come together in a positive, constructive atmosphere to talk about writing, books, the business, how we can enhance not only our own value in a changing market, but the role of popular fiction in people's lives. For specifics, read Zita's monthly column in *NINK*, check the Web site ([www.ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com)) and watch for the brochure. Most of all, start making your plans to attend. I've seen the program—this is a conference I don't want to miss.

### On the road...

As I write this, I've just turned in a manuscript late, recovered from a very nasty sinus infection and returned from a whirlwind trip to Boston for signings and media interviews. All I want to do is clean the refrigerator. Seriously. When I was in Boston, I bought new towels for the kitchen. (I also spent \$265.10 at the Laura Mercier counter. Hey, I had a "deadline face." It needed something.)

Anyway, here I am trying to write a coherent NINC President's Column. But this is a writer's life, isn't it? Bear with me. If you're feeling sorry for me because I was sent to Boston, I understand. Boston's not known as an easy book town. But it's my city, and I wasn't intimidated—but I did have my shields up, as I'm fond of saying. Unnecessarily, as it turned out. I had a great time. I had my very first media escort, an older woman whose husband is a physician, "in academia," who lectures on immunology (they were heading to Florence in June); he's also a trustee of Amherst College. As my publicist said, only in Boston. Off we went to Barnes & Noble in downtown Boston. This is the fourth B&N, opened 20 years ago, and the manager and community relations director both kindly warned me it's not a great signing store—but I sold into double digits in an hour and had a wonderful time. People were friendly, and we all enjoyed talking books.

The next day, it was off to Cambridge. This signing was at the B. Dalton Bookseller at Cambridgeside Place, with an exceptional store manager and staff. It was the first nice weekend in May, after a dreary, miserable April—so traffic wasn't up to their standards. Lots of traffic by my standards. This is also a strong romance store. I admit it—I was surprised. I had my shields back up. Stereotypes aside, people do read romance, and popular fiction in general, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

### Enter the Harvard professor...

One guy stopped by for solidarity purposes, always appreciated. He said he had a nonfiction book out last year and well understood what it felt like to be on my side of the table. Naturally, I asked him about his book. It was in the store, and I instantly bought a copy—and not to get him to buy my book (which he generously did). The book is called *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen (Penguin Books, 1999). I've read it through once, and I'm starting on a second, more in-depth reading. Doug Stone is the one who stopped at my table. His bio says he's a partner at Triad Consulting Group, an international consulting firm specializing in negotiation, communication and conflict resolution; he taught negotiation at Harvard Law School and has taught and

mediated in South Africa, Cyprus, South Korea and at the Organization of African Unity in Ethiopia. Bruce Patton is deputy director and co-founder of the Harvard Negotiation Project, and Sheila Heen is a lecturer at Harvard Law School and a partner at Triad Consulting Group. Their superb, thoughtful book tackles just what it says it does—how to go about having necessary, important, difficult conversations.

As I read, I realized that many of the conversations we have in our business—as writers, agents and editors—are “difficult.” ‘Tis the nature of the beast, not made easier since most happen by phone, fax or e-mail. The “easy” conversations are usually fast and fleeting—strong orders, Top 50/100/150 on the *USA Today* list, don’t change a word of this wonderful manuscript, let’s do a new contract for more money. The rest aren’t so easy. Extensive revisions, rejection, unmet expectations, missed deadlines, bad reviews, lowered print runs, broken promises, disagreements over marketing decisions, dumping, getting dumped. These all can be difficult to hear and to say, even when they ultimately lead to good things.

Some of us are expert at handling difficult conversations by nature—but most of us, I believe, whether writer, agent or editor, could improve our skills with the techniques and insight offered in *Difficult Conversations*. This isn’t about

changing our personalities or following a simplistic script that doesn’t feel genuine—quite to the contrary. If we can learn skills to do better and create a more positive, constructive environment for our everyday work, why not?

As Stone & Co. say, “there is no such thing as a diplomatic hand grenade...Coated with sugar, thrown hard or soft, a hand grenade is still going to do damage. Try as you may, there’s no way to throw a hand grenade with tact or to outrun the consequences. And keeping it to yourself is no better. Choosing not to deliver a difficult message is like hanging on to a hand grenade once you’ve pulled the pin. So we feel stuck. We need advice that is more powerful than ‘Be diplomatic’ or ‘try to stay positive.’”

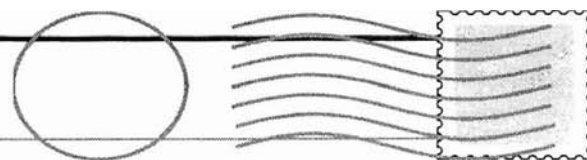
In *Difficult Conversations*, the authors provide that advice. It’s enlightening, and it’s not simple. I’m looking forward to absorbing more of what they have to say, and, I hope, learning from it. Many thanks to Doug Stone for stopping at my table and telling me about his book!

And in case you were wondering—the rest of my mini-tour was great. No glitches, except when my media escort lost me and sent security up to my room to make sure I wasn’t dead in my bed. I was in having a nice steak dinner...

— **Carla Neggers**

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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

### Crime Victim Weighs In

I’m weighing in late on the subject of plagiarism, but it’s because I got behind in my journal reading (including *Novelists’ Ink*), not from lack of passion. Ms. Roberts has my sympathy. I, too, have been the victim of some blatant plagiarism, and far from flattering me, it made me feel like throwing up—still does when I think about it. It’s worse than having a burglar in the house because these thieves steal from your mind and heart. That it’s such an incredibly stupid and mean-spirited crime adds to the insult of how much pain it causes.

— **Celeste N. DeBlasis**

### Thanks for the Support

I’d like to thank those who responded to my letter on plagiarism for their unqualified support, professionally and personally. And to add thanks and admiration to Laura Resnick for her terrific column.

— **Nora Roberts**

### National Writers Union Health Plan

NINC Members are eligible to join the CSS/NWU health plan at group rates by joining NWU in a non-voting, associate status. The benefit package includes:

- ▼ Traditional Dental Coverage
- ▼ Doctors Visits / Lab Work / X-rays
- ▼ Vision Coverage
- ▼ Fitness Reimbursement / Wellness Care / Maternity
- ▼ Infertility Programs

Call 1-800-258-3669 for further information.



## BREAKING NEWS

Compiled by  
Pamela Browning

### What The Blaze Is

Birgit Davis-Todd, Senior Editor and Editorial Coordinator at Harlequin Temptation and Duets, tells me that Harlequin Blaze is a brand new series launching sometime in 2001 that moves beyond the Temptation line in terms of sensuality and eroticism. They'll publish four books a month, 70-75,000 words in length. She is looking for contemporary, fun, sexy editorial that really pushes the boundaries of romance. They'd love heroines in their early 20s and up, urban settings, and subplots are welcome. Think "Ally McBeal" meets "Sex and the City" with a dose of "Friends" thrown in for good measure! They are actively seeking submissions from published writers. Send three chapters, a synopsis and SASE to Birgit Davis-Todd, Harlequin Blaze, 225 Duncan Mill Rd, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada. Guidelines should be available now—and watch for breaking news on a Blaze contest. Check eHarlequin.com for both.

### Okay, So We Have Problems

Gnutella is a computer program that anyone can get from the Internet and install in minutes. Once a Gnutella user buys a CD, DVD, or software and transfers it to a designated hard-drive folder, any other Gnutella user can copy it. It's similar to Napster, the infamous music-pirating program, except that Gnutella links individual users directly while Napster works through a central server. Jeremy Schwartz, an analyst with Forrester Research, says Gnutella hurts everyone who depends on royalties from his creations. Meanwhile, the band Metallica is suing Napster, the University of Southern California, Yale University and Indiana University, alleging that they encouraged Napster users to trade copyrighted material without the band's permission. [Ed's note: since Pam turned in this

## If You Build It

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note that women are for the first time driving the increase in Internet consumers. A study released last summer by Commerce.net and Nielsen Media Research found that the number of women who made online purchases in 1999 jumped 80%, passing the 10-million mark.

So given that there's a broad base of readers out there—the majority of whom are ready, willing and increasingly savvy about spending money online—what do you do to get them? Your number one online promotional tool, bar none, is to have a Web site that's easy to find, quick to load and easy to navigate.

### Help Them Find You

**Stella:** As I've mentioned, my first and biggest problem with my original Web page was that no one knew it was there. Thanks to you, things have changed. Would you explain your philosophy on building a site and trying to ensure there's plenty of traffic?

**Cissy:** There's no *Field of Dreams* on the Internet. If you build it, they might not come. Not unless you've made it impossible to get lost along the way. Fortunately there are several things you can do to greatly increase your site's chances of being found. The three most important:

*Get your own domain name.* If you write under more than one name, get one for each of your pseudonyms. You can map all names to point to the same site.

*Include your URL on all of your printed promotional materials:* articles, books, stationery, business cards, bookmarks, everything.

*Add your URL to your signature line on every piece of e-mail you send* and make sure it is mentioned in every instance of your electronic correspondence—chats, interviews, bulletin board posts.

The most important piece of advice I can give other writers is to get your domain name now. Sheer demand for "dot coms" and the fact that many businesses exist just to buy up domains and re-sell them at higher rates means it behooves you to spend the \$70 to reserve your domain immediately even if you don't plan to use it right away. I've worked with more than one author who is unable to use her publishing name for her domain because someone else snagged it first.

Having your own domain is

important for several pragmatic reasons. There's nothing more vital to helping readers find you online than making sure your site pops up when they type in your name. More than 60% of people say they access Web sites by keying in a known address. Only about 30% use search engines, and even then most only look at the first page of results.

As you found out, if the URL to your Web site is a long one with your name (or part of it) at the end of a long string of sub-directories, your chance of being easily remembered or getting a top listing on a search engine are both very low. And moving your position towards the head of the list will take a lot of determination and consistent work on your part. As a study last year revealed, at best only 15% of the Internet has even been indexed by search engines. Too, many search engines routinely ignore requests to index sites on the major free servers such as Geocities or Tripod because of the sheer number of requests they receive from them (and because sites on free servers are often gone as quickly as they appear).

Several important things happen when you get your own domain name. Perhaps the biggest advantage is that your readers will never forget your URL. That fact alone sharply increases their chances of coming back to your site again. Secondly, because the key search phrase (your name) is now a part of the top level of the URL, search engines will immediately bump you up near the top, but chances are that at that point it won't matter very much anyway. Newer browsers include a sort of invisible search engine that allows people to type in any name or phrase and the browser will take them straight to that domain, if it exists.

Picture this scenario—Jane's been reading Stella Cameron's books for years, or maybe she's just discovered her. While online, she gets curious enough to see if Stella has a Web site. Nine times out of 10, her first move will be to simply type "Stella Cameron" into her browser window to see if it resolves as a domain. Since Stella's URL is <http://www.stellacameron.com>, Jane will get there automatically. If, however, it was <http://www.someserver.com/scameron>, Jane would be redirected to a search engine. Stella'd better hope she's listed near the top.

### Make them Want to Stay

**Cissy:** Once you've established your site, you should keep in mind that you can't simply transplant the same marketing

ideas you've used to contact people offline into the online environment. These are not all the same buyers, and they don't have the same needs. You have to play to the strengths of the medium, and in this medium, immediacy and connection are key.

**Stella:** What does it take to make readers want to stay and poke around?

**Cissy:** Once readers have found your site, they want what every other online consumer wants—immediate gratification. They want the pages to load quickly and they want easy navigation. Remember the three-click principle—nothing you want your site visitors to see should be any farther than 3 clicks away. From your main page—but not all on one long, scrolling page—they should have easy access to information about your most current release, about your upcoming releases and about your backlist. They want to see book covers, but remember to keep the images small. Keep large graphics and sound files to a minimum too; if a page hasn't loaded within 10 seconds, most visitors have already clicked “stop,” if they haven't left your site entirely. In addition to the covers, the potential buyers want blurbs that tell them what the books are about, and once their interest is piqued they want to be able to buy the book immediately, so provide them a link.

### Make them Want to Come Back

**Stella:** Then what? How do you encourage readers to come back to your site?

**Cissy:** These days, every writer and her dog—and your cat, Stella—has her own Web site, and more and more have their own domains too. You have to do something to make *your* new release stand out in the memory of the typical ad-saturated Internet surfer, to make her want to return after her first curiosity-motivated visit. That's where community becomes important.

Community means building relationships, a connectiveness that is personal. A one-to-one connection. And that feeling of being a “friend” to an author means that more sales are generated, even on word of mouth.

Get your readers involved. The more they're interacting with you and your books online, the better chance you have that your new release will be picked up the next time they're in the store or better yet, they buy it online immediately. Once a reader starts buying online, it is an easy

habit to continue.

How do you build a community? First, forget the static model of the Web site. Your site must be active and changing or your visitors will have no need to come back more often than the seasons change. Give them something to watch for: a personal letter from you that changes monthly, new excerpts, and book covers, contest, games. Keep them involved by means of a bulletin board or a private discussion list. There are several ways of building community, including a chat room, bulletin board or regular letters to readers signing the guest book. Whatever you do, remember the unseen lurkers who are taking note.

**Stella:** I'm ready folks, prepared for bigger and better efforts!

In the continuation of this article next month, we'll go into detail about building online communities and some specific types of online promotion that work well for keeping readers interested, involved and returning to your site.

*Stella Cameron is the NYT/USAToday/Washington Post bestselling, award-winning author of more than forty-five historical and contemporary romantic suspense novels and novellas.*

*Cissy Hartley is the Webmaster for several New York Times bestselling authors and the founder of Writerspace.com, an online community for writers and readers.*

## 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

Theresa Scott, Olympia WA  
Margaret Menson (*Maggie Shayne*), Plymouth WA  
Kathy Garner (*Catherine Spencer*), Blaine WA  
Rhys Bowen, San Rafael CA  
Colleen Collins (*Cassandra Collins*), Denver CO  
Linda Anderson, Ft. Lauderdale FL

### New Members

Roby James, Tarzana CA  
Randy Lordon, Amagansett NY  
Evelyn Coleman, Atlanta GA  
Susan Wittig Albert, (*Robin Paige*) Bertram TX



## BREAKING NEWS

column, a federal judge has rejected Napster Inc.'s claim that it is protected by digital copyright law...because it does not directly provide the copyrighted music—only the means to get it. See <http://www.infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story.cgi?id=2566382026-521>.]

### Kensington Rumors

From: write2pam@aol.com

To: kduffy@kensingtonbooks.com

Subject: Please confirm or deny rumors

**Q.** Kate, can you confirm or deny that Kensington is increasing its contemporary single-title acquisitions in an effort to compete with Avon and that you are looking for light contemporaries, no romantic suspense?

**A.** Not true.

**Q.** Is it true that Wal-Mart has *not* renewed the Precious Gems contract for exclusive distribution through their stores?

**A.** Not true.

### New Prize

The Knoxville Writer's Guild and University of Tennessee have established the Peter Taylor Prize for fiction. It offers \$1,000, publication of the winning novel and a standard royalty contract. Get guidelines online at [www.knoxvillewritersguild.org](http://www.knoxvillewritersguild.org)

### Revolving Doors

Lisa Rasmussen is the new president and publisher at Leisure. Publicist Joan Shulhafer has left Avon for Kensington. Patience Smith at Silhouette is now associate editor and, though she acquires for all lines, will focus on Special Editions, working with Karen Taylor Richman.

### How to Publicize Your Book, Part I

Appear on “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.” Get Regis to mention your book. Tell publisher to stand by for call from publicist at Amazon.com. Wait for her to say they want to “do some cross marketing.” Field calls from *USA Today*, *The New York Post*, *Time*, *Entertainment Weekly* and the *Chicago Sun Times*. Be interviewed for feature stories. Be grateful ▶▶▶



## BREAKING NEWS

to Amazon publicist (he can get through to big-name reporter; you can't). Amazon has your book in stock. Amazon makes money and so do you. This is how it happened to Brad Herzog, author of *States of Mind*, whom we mentioned in last month's column. Just thought you'd want to know more.

### About Your Crazy Aunt

Pulitzer Prize-winner Carol Shields wrote an article on writing about real people and real events—or, in her case, not. Check it out at [www.nytimes.com/library/books/041000shields-writing.html](http://www.nytimes.com/library/books/041000shields-writing.html)

### Bertelsmann All Over

BOL.com, Bertelsmann's international online bookselling venture, continues to expand into Scandinavia, Italy and Asia. The new European operations are joint ventures, much like BOL's connection here with BN.com.

### Besides, The Earth Is Really Flat (Like Sales)

The *Chicago Tribune* reports the theft of seven of the world's 260 copies of Copernicus's original *De Revolutionibus Orbium...* It's the book that first tried to prove the earth is round. Copies, worth an estimated \$400,000, have been stolen from libraries from Krakow to Kiev to the University of Illinois in Urbana, where Julie Kistler has a stacks pass. (She swears she didn't do it). Julie's husband, who believes she is innocent, says finding the culprit should be easy—just wait for the books to be auctioned on e-Bay. Anyway, the *Trib* asked a bunch of mystery writers to "consider the purloined book caper and how their sleuths might approach the case." To participate, go to [www.ctc-tempo@tribune.com](mailto:www.ctc-tempo@tribune.com)

### How to Publicize Your Book, Part II

Be Bret Easton Ellis. Write a book that causes an uproar. Title it *American Psycho*. Get a movie made of it ten years later. Rank

## Everything About Bookselling

Continued from page 1

much more than I ever thought I would about the careers of those at the other end of what we writers do. Something else—their frustrations aren't all that different from writers'.

To begin at the beginning, my objective was to reach as many booksellers as possible in the most effective way. Pigeonholing those who work for the local B&N and Waldenbooks was easy enough and the owner of a nearby independent turned out to be a goldmine of information, but three respondents hardly makes for a comprehensive article—and the chain employees' responses were guarded. After a few minutes of scratching my head, the obvious solution emerged. Thanks to the comprehensive listing of ABA members, I eventually became mother-confessor for bookstore owners and managers from Alaska to Hawaii and everywhere in between.

With suggestions for questions from several NINC board members along with their lists of stores to contact and my own curiosity, I set to work. I wound up with 14 questions, which I then cut and pasted, to the unsuspecting souls who said yes in response to my request.

Thousands of bookstores belong to ABA. Consequently, I logged untold hours going through the state by state list. I, unfortunately, eliminated many because they didn't have e-mail. Others were crossed off the list because their specialty such as travel, literary or alternative lifestyles wasn't, I believed, in sync with what the majority of NINC members write. Others simply hadn't provided enough information in their bios that I could get a handle on what they were about, and then there were museum, college, used-book specialists, etc. In the end, I sent out a good 200 e-mails and heard back from the majority (some had gone out of business) all but one agreeing to be "interviewed." The result—a stack of completed questionnaires overflowing my desk. I suppose graphs and charts could be designed from the responses, but that's not what I'm after. Rather, I want to let individual voices speak out—and for us to learn from them. Although most didn't request anonymity, some did, and I decided to protect all identities.

Since there's no right or wrong way to

begin addressing the responses, I've decided to start in the middle and what I learned about the way booksellers view writers. Bottom line, (are you ready for this?) they aren't all that curious about us. To back up a step, I asked if there was anything booksellers wanted to know about how publishers, distributors, and writers went about doing their work.

"Nope."

"I think for the most part that I have a good sense of this."

"No."

Okay, that was their response regarding writers (maybe they all know we whip out those suckers in our spare time) but when it came to publishers and distributors, their curiosity went up a major notch. I'll get into that in more detail later since both entities are—no surprise—very much on the minds of booksellers. When it came to the question of what they'd like to know about those entities' functions, the responses were, I believe, indicative of both a lack of communication and frustration.

"How can publishers keep track of all their offices and addresses when they keep conglomerating? It's a pain for us, especially when our account # changes or returns address or policy changes."

"How many publishing decisions are based off the East/West Coasts? Do they ever consider the Midwest 'breadbasket' part of the country?"

"I would like to know if distributors sell to the large bookstore chains and to Amazon. If so why—what do they offer. If distributors only resell to independent booksellers, why do they not have a greater presence at book shows? They seem to lay back and let the publishers do their selling. And why don't the distributors have more author book signings?"

"I have always been struck by the overwhelming ineptitude of their (publishers') publicity departments. They seem to have an unfair amount of clueless, overworked people there. When someone capable comes along, they shine for the short while before they are promoted, leaving only the lusterless behind. As this would seem to be an important aspect of the business, I would think a little more training would be involved."

"In romance, why so much 'dumbing down' of stories lately? And they

(publishers) ignore us, so why do I want to know?"

As a writer, I wasn't satisfied with one shot at encouraging booksellers to think about our role in this business so I came back at them with a somewhat different question—what can we do to help them? Fair warning: there was no consensus.

"The writer's sole responsibility in my eyes, is to provide the best merchandise they can to us. A presence in the bookstores is always good. As far as promotional material, there are uses for everything. But sending a bookstore a load of postcards is not one of them. Sending bookmarks is. Send the postcards to your mailing list. If the author has advance reader copies, send them to stores they know have a high volume of traffic in the genre they write. The writers need to get to know their local bookstores and booksellers. If they want to be the next Danielle Steel, Stephen King or Tom Clancy, they have to start with a customer base. And a customer base is established through word of mouth, which can start wonderfully in local bookstores. *The Bridges of Madison County* was a word-of-mouth title that was on the bestseller list for several years."

"We hardly ever buy a book when contacted directly by the author. Make sure your publishing company treats you right!"

"If you want your book in the hands of readers who enjoy your work for the sake of your work and talent, don't lose sight of who is selling your books. Large scale operations tend to only look at bottom line and this practice will only increase in intensity as bookselling becomes more competitive."

"Focus on writing better books, and otherwise in our case, let us get on with our work."

"Writers must make themselves very visible in the community. They are the spark—the reason to be. They can generate publicity and traffic in the store."

"Keep the good books coming. As far as promotion goes, the more the better. One thing that I would suggest—don't drop in unannounced on stores. A phone call prior to a visit is a courtesy that goes a long way. Our store is situated in a heavily populated area of writing and for this we are grateful. However there are days, like last Monday, when five authors showed up to tell me about their books. Unfortunately, I also had sales appointments scheduled so I felt that a few of them weren't given the attention that I would have liked to provide. However, they did seem oblivious to anything else going on around them, so maybe it didn't bother them. Also regarding

book signings, the success rate changes from area to area. We are in an urban area with too much going on, on any given day. We will have a nationally known writer the same day as two other famous writers are in town at other stores. So maybe only 70 people show up and we will sell nine books compared to the 200 that showed up in a smaller town where folks may not be so jaded and where they sell 150 books. Publishers will wonder at our promotion. Meanwhile the local author, who has self-published her book and has a publication party in our store has 150 friends show up and they support her and buy 200 books. Again an event's success is not only determined by the actual night's happenings—this stone thrown in the pool will ripple for a long time."

"Come out of the big cities and visit 'real' USA. There's where many of us live."

"Push to have more publicity going to smaller stores/regions. Not everyone lives on the East Coast."

"Try to have more say-so in the cover! If a heroine has red hair make sure the cover model has red hair. Proofread and edit galley carefully. Have a friend (or enemy) catch those goofs! It's unbelievable how many readers complain about mistakes. One of the best pieces of advice I can offer sounds like a commercial for *RT Magazine* but it's true. Their national conference brings readers and writers together. Be there and meet your fans!"

"Write what you know and like. Don't jump on the bandwagon and write time travel because it's so popular or suspense or any other area that takes off. By doing this, we get a lot of 'not so good' books flooding the market and the readers get turned off. Please, keep us posted as to when your books are coming out."

(Okay, so now that we're all clear on that—)

Before getting deeper into booksellers' frustrations, first a few facts. The overwhelming majority of respondents listed books as their prime product with a few other items such as magazines, music, games, customers' craft items and cards thrown in. The booksellers had been in the business anywhere from three to 40 years. One of the 'newcomers' admitted, "I had worked in government personnel for 18 years and was burned out. Loved books and could afford salary drop due to a kind husband."

Top honors for longevity went to the owner of Bestsellers Hawaii who at one

point had had over 150 stores in Canada and the U.S. When Classic Bookshops merged with W.H. Smith, he became deputy chairman with almost 400 stores. He "retired" to Hawaii where he now has two stores. As for why respondents wound up in bookselling—

"I've been a voracious reader all my life. Finally found the perfect job for my combination of talents—business, reading, recommending books."

"Always loved to read. Thought about being a librarian. Too many restrictions. So bookselling was next step. I started this job as Xmas part-time help; now I'm manager. Go figure."

"At first it was just another job, but books are addicting and you can't help but want to know everything there is to know about the new books and the authors and everything about books. At least I do."

"A friend asked me to help out on a store opening. The staff were so impressed that I knew that Shakespeare would be shelved in Drama, that I was offered a job immediately. It was a fun, intense, constantly interesting, unfortunately low-paying job that seemed to fit me well."

"I opened the store from zero background other than from librarianship and law and a boost from my husband who likes starting up businesses. It was intended to be a retirement present to myself, from which it has grown from \$0 to \$1,000,00 in ten years proving that I am an idiot."

On that note, I'll quickly add that I found no idiots among my respondents. The business they're in is simply too demanding for anyone not constantly on their toes to survive. As an example, among the answers to my question about the direction they see the industry going:

"Mass marketing and distribution brought about by mass consolidation of publishers and channels of distribution. This will also dictate much of what is brought to the market as well. Unknown authors will be forced to find alternative ways of publishing. ...survival of the fittest will continue to rule, but that is not a new concept in any industry."

"Towards new technology opportunities like POD, bigger and bigger in NY, and flatter, more gripped by celebrity publishing, opening doors for creative smaller publishers to work in the margins. Writers need to give up on advances and go for good royalties and realize very few will make the big bucks. Focus on what you want and what you know, not what will sell, as someone has to keep redesigning bestsellers, i.e., be first in the



# Everything About Bookselling

▶▶▶▶ new niche. I predict modern fiction with plots and romantic suspense and the historical novel will all be strong this coming decade. I'd like to see a movement toward simultaneous publications and world rights, but that's not yet on the cards."

"More independent booksellers will quit because of the lack of support from publishers."

"I do wonder about the glut of books being published. We used to have two seasons, now, in some cases, it's up to four. I just don't see how all these books can get the attention or breathing room that they need. Is everything moving faster or am I just getting older?"

"E-books, plain and simple. The Internet is the next frontier. No paper costs, no distributor costs, no shipping costs. I can see it now. People walking up to an ATM-like machine, inserting their PDA into an e-book outlet and downloading bestsellers. Maybe interactive electronic books. Technology has a chain and on every link there is a new direction."

"A few years ago, I'd say downhill rapidly, but now I think it is leveling off and even slowly regaining its uphill climb. Smaller bookstores are now getting attention thanks to BookSense and the publishers are starting to notice us little guys."

"The industry will change very slowly. More new bookstores are getting into the used book or collectible book business because the profit margin is greater. This may squeeze the distributor somewhat--but this can be overcome by books on demand. Hopefully the publishers will be able to promote the electronic books and e-publishing. The chain stores with buying power will get stronger, but hopefully the independent bookstores can hang on by keeping overhead low."

"I'm afraid more and more good writers are going to never be discovered as publishers get bigger and their lists go top heavy with mega-sellers and bottom heavy with celebrity garbage. And I'm afraid of publishers forgetting how important real booksellers are to their business, and there will be more and more efforts to eliminate us in the rush to direct sell to the reader via the Internet."

"People like known, successful, and high profile writers. Thanks to Oprah, lots

of authors are doing well. Much less emphasis on 'off the beaten path books'. People love series. If an author has them, people buy them all. There seems to be an exception in romance. Publishers seem to dump many older, multi-published authors (midlist) and publish new authors. Are they (new authors) cheaper? Any celebrity can get a book published today. Look at "Mankind," and "The Rock."

"Reading, education, a place to relax, a place to be informed--the pendulum will swing back. The industry will continue to thrive. The book will always be the vehicle of choice."

On that upbeat note, more questions and responses next issue.

## Before Vancouver—The Pre-Conference Package

Several people have already registered for the conference. The lure of Vancouver is strong. For those of you considering an early arrival, here's an update on the Seattle-to-Vancouver pre-conference trip put together by Kate Dooley of Mountain State Travel.

### The Package:

For those of you who don't have last month's newsletter handy, here's the itinerary.

**October 23:** Victoria Clipper transportation from Seattle to Victoria • Champagne continental breakfast basket on board • Luggage transfer to hotel • City tour of Victoria and admission to Butchart Garden • Tour and transportation aboard an authentic English double-decker bus • Group dinner at Pescatore's Restaurant and Piano Bar • Two nights' accommodation at The Empress

**October 24:** Buffet breakfast at the Empress • Private tour of Craigdarroch Castle • High Tea at the Empress

**October 25:** Transfer with British Columbia Ferries from Victoria to Vancouver • Buffet breakfast aboard ferry • Transfer to Waterfront Centre Hotel in Vancouver • All portage charges, meal gratuities, and taxes

*Note: Passengers will arrive in Vancouver on Wednesday morning, October 25, the day before the conference starts. The hotel conference rate is available.*

### Price:

Per person, double occupancy: \$392.75

Single: \$510.75

Youth with parent: \$274.75

(Mountain State Travel

Tel: 304-623-6511 / Fax: 304-624-6234)



## BREAKING NEWS

▶▶▶ movie No. 7 in its debut week with a box-office gross of \$4.9 million. Do some unusual e-mail and Web site marketing. Make sure publisher has 80,000 movie tie-in copies ready to ship. Make lots of \$\$\$.

### Favorite Alternatives

Zap over to thecomicstore.com and vote for your favorite alternative books this year.

### Agent Newsletter

Bill Miller has tracked agents in court records and the press since 1980. He publishes a newsletter and sells reports from his database. According to him, there are many literary agents, but relatively few are significant players. The trick is to track down the agents whose clients write like you do, same genre, similar voice, etc. His newsletter articles focus on who has sold what. Addresses and phone numbers of agents mentioned are at the end of each article. The newsletter costs \$35 a year, and you can check him out at [www.agentresearch.com](http://www.agentresearch.com)

### Loved You, Paper Boy, But You're Toast

netLibrary recently announced that it will soon offer a paid subscription package to *The Wall Street Journal*. NuvoMedia and Softbook already make available a number of newspapers via their own devices. With this announcement, one of the country's largest content providers for existing devices implicitly makes the statement that it's about more than just e-books.

### In Case You're Wondering

Book wholesaler Ingram has aggressively pursued marketing of on-demand and hard-to-find books, and we've been waiting for a clue that the company is equally interested in e-books. In a recent press release, Ingram states that its acquisition of JNMedia "will substantially strengthen Ingram's 'on-demand' printing Cont. on Page 10 ▶▶▶





# VANCOUVER CALLS

I'm an optimist. Which means that if everything goes as planned, this is going to be one fabulous conference.

## Reheating the Cold Case

If you've watched "Cold Case Files" on "Investigative Reports" (A&E, Tuesdays, 9 p.m. EST), you know that the idea of reopening unsolved murder cases is popular with viewers. Word from the Zen Den is that books on such cold cases, whether fiction or true crime, will grow in popularity too. A quick perusal of the supermarket tabloids will confirm my prediction.

I've invited Dr. Henry Lee, noted forensic investigator (think O.J. Simpson case) and fellow Connecticut resident, to speak on the subject. A few months ago, he announced his plans to retire this summer in order to devote his time to cold cases. He has not yet accepted my invitation, but neither has he declined. I've got my optimism under control, but just barely.

From what I've been told, the Canadian Mounted Police have a special unit devoted to solving cold cases. I've also been told that the unit operates out of—are you ready?—Vancouver. So, even if Dr. Lee can't participate, I'm confident we'll have an expert or two on the subject. Optimism in high gear now.

## Selling Books Online

In last month's newsletter, I wrote that this subject would be discussed in one of the 90-minute forums. What I didn't tell you was who some of the panelists would be. Unfortunately, I still can't confirm the names, but I've extended an invitation to two people at amazon.com: Stefanie Hargreaves, romance editor, and David Risher, senior vice president and general manager. Stefanie e-mailed me to say that she is very interested in participating, but has not officially accepted. If you read the article "Eleven for the Millennium" in the January 3 issue of *Publishers Weekly*, you'll recognize David Risher's name. In referring to the book business in the '90s, *PW* said of Risher, "You name the innovation, Risher was behind it: Amazon Advantage, the Amazon Bestseller list, customer-comment sections."

Am I optimistic that we'll get both Stefanie Hargreaves and David Risher? Absolutely!

## The Blended Novel: Blurring the Distinction Between Literary and Popular Fiction

Suspense and romance, mystery and futuristic, historic and time travel. These are just a few examples of the pairings in today's market. Perhaps the newest is the marriage between literary fiction, known for its language, and popular fiction,

known for its story. *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier is an example of a successful blending of the two.

Who is the audience for the blended lit-pop novel? What makes these novels so successful? How much of a role does the cover, and packaging in general, play in the books' commercial success?

We'll explore this subject in a 90-minute forum. Sarah Gallick, Editor at the Literary Guild, has confirmed her intention to attend the conference; she has also expressed her willingness to participate in a program. I received a call from the office of Nita Taublib, deputy publisher at Bantam Doubleday. Nita may attend. I've also invited Elizabeth Schmitz, the editor who "discovered" *Cold Mountain*. Haven't heard from her yet. Optimism at full throttle.

## Just for Fun: Finding Your Hidden Creativity

I told you about this eye-opening workshop in the April newsletter. Now, I'm happy to tell you that Yolande Spears, head of the education department at the Bushnell performing arts center in Hartford, and head of the nationally recognized program PARTNERS (Partners in Arts and Education), will recreate that magic in a special two-hour workshop.

No optimism needed; a good time is guaranteed.

## Extra-Curricular Activity: Massage, Anyone?

We've all felt the tension and stiffness in our shoulders, arms, and wrists after spending long hours at the computer. Those of us who have discovered relief through regular massage, myself included, tout its benefits. So, I've written to Dr. Garbock, Dean of Massage Therapy at the West Coast School of Massage Therapy in Vancouver. I've invited several of the school's senior students to come to the conference on Friday and Saturday mornings and set up massage chairs in The Oasis. (More about that another time.)

Ah, can't you just feel your shoulders dropping?

So join this optimist and power up your own positive thoughts. Register for the conference. Use your credit card. Fill in and mail the registration form that was included in the May *NINK*. Or, if your May *NINK* is buried in the piles on your desk, find a new one at [www.ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com). It's not too early to register—and you'll save \$25 off the conference fee if you register by July 1. Come one, come all. We optimists enjoy company

— Zita Christian  
**Vancouver 2000 Coordinator**



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ Continued from page 8

capabilities and pave the way for other e-book digital fulfillment services slated for commercial availability later this year." Jonathan Nathan, JNMedia chief and new Ingram veep, says his mission is to sell a system to publishers that make content in all sorts of e-forms: PDF, Rocket eBook, palmtop formats, yada yada. "We're trying to make it a much more automated process," Nathan told PW Daily. "Instead of being segmented the way publishers do it now, with an interior department and a typesetter and the separate cover design, publishers submit a file once. It would then be converted into any file, printed or electronic."

### Love's Labours Found

Stephan Shakespeare, Jeffrey Archer's spokesbard, says that Archer is working on a short story to be published on the Web. It will have four endings, presumably so one can choose. "The Internet opens up all kinds of narrative possibilities," said Shakespeare.

### Mango/Rhapsody

No, it's not a new sherbet flavor. Mango and Rhapsody are two book clubs launched by Bookspan, the new joint-venture partnership between Doubleday Direct and Book-of-the-Month Club Holdings. The companies joined forces to create an entity designed to make the book club experience more satisfying to members.

"A main reason we created Bookspan and our Booksonline Internet subsidiary was to make our book clubs more competitive in the Internet space, which is one of the primary ways we intend to grow our clubs and the new joint venture," said Markus Wilhelm, CEO. Anyway, the Mango Book Club targets the modern woman who strives to balance her lifestyle with a successful career, meaningful relationships and a sense of independence and self-confidence. The club appeals to young single women in their 20s and early 30s who are up on popular culture and look to books for entertainment and enrichment.

"Rhapsody is a cross-genre club created for the woman who is passionate about romance novels and who dreams of being swept off her feet to another time and place. The Rhapsody woman is a voracious reader facing many demands but requiring time for

herself. Ninclinker Elizabeth Grayson notes, "So—what they're saying is that Mango is for Bridget Jones and Rhapsody is for Betty Crocker. Right?"

### Loved You, P-Books, But You're Toast, Too

Microsoft's new operating system, Pockets PC Windows, will work with the smallest palm-sized computers, suitable for e-books, games, music, etc. They're looking for sharp, reader-friendly text, full-color screens, sophisticated applications and very small size. They've formed alliances with companies such as Barnes&Noble.com to get e-books, and Hewlett-Packard and Compaq, vendors of the tiny computers themselves.

### How To Be a Publishing Phenomenon

Be British. Have a name like Zadie Smith. Write a first novel. Call it *White Teeth*. Be twentysomething. Sign a contract for a BBC Special. Have Michiko Kakutani, reviewer for *The New York Times*, write a feature including you in a class with David Foster Wallace, Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie, followed by an ecstatic review on the front page of the arts section where she throws in comparisons to Dickens, Hanif Kureishi and the kitchen sink. Then get a *Time* review as well as other hoopla engendered by your publisher. Joyously leap to #60 on the Amazon list. Gee, and you thought it would be difficult.

### Other Brit Publishing Phenoms

Harry Potter. Bridget Jones's Diary. Is there a trend here? Should Americans be submitting to British markets? Worth discussing?

### Calling Would-Be Screenwriters

Atchity Editorial/Entertainment International, Inc. offers a free, new unique feedback service. "Treatment for Treatment" allows you to ask brief specific questions that will be posted on their Web site once a week. For more information and to submit a question, point your browser to [www.screenwalk.org/treatment.htm](http://www.screenwalk.org/treatment.htm) You'll also want to check out the AEI website at [www.aionline.com](http://www.aionline.com) Note: NINK editor Terey daly Ramin gives it a thumbs-up.

### Token News

TokenBooks.com allows authors to charge a membership fee to sell their online literature. Authors can sell

memberships to their Online Books, E-Books, MP3 Sites, Rocket Books, Glass Books and much more. Check it out at [TokenBooks.com](http://TokenBooks.com) and sign up for the webmaster's newsletter.

### Harlequin Honors

Our president Carla Neggers attended the Levy Trade Show in Chicago recently and reports that Harlequin received the Levy Home Entertainment Award for best mass-market publisher of 1999.

### Epstein and Riggio Must Lunch Together

In a *New York Review of Books* essay, editor and publisher Jason Epstein discussed publishers of the future. They'll consist only of "editors and publicists attached to a central funding source. Everyone else," he said, "will probably disappear." Speaking on a panel, part of a series sponsored by the Industry Standard and *New York Magazine*, Epstein echoed Len Riggio in criticizing publishers for pricing books too high (see *Breaking News*, May).

### More Brits & Books

*Publishers Weekly* reports that WH Smith, a British chain, has added airport bookstores in 17 major markets to its holdings, including Boston, Dallas, New York, San Francisco and Seattle. While you're waiting for a flight, you can pop up to WH Smith computers to order books, reserve hotel rooms and even check your e-mail.

### Edgar Winners 2000

The winners of the Edgar Allan Poe Awards, sponsored by the Mystery Writers of America:

Best Novel: *Bones* by Jan Burke (Simon & Schuster)

Best First Novel by an American Author: *The Skull Mantra* by Eliot Pattison (St. Martin's Minotaur)

Best Paperback Original: *Fulton County Blues* by Ruth Birmingham (Berkley Prime Crime)

Best Juvenile: *The Night Flyers* by Elizabeth McDavid Jones (Pleasant Co.)

Best Young Adult: *Never Trust a Dead Man* by Vivian Vande Velde (Harcourt)

Grand Master: Mary Higgins Clark  
Raven: The Mercantile Library;  
director: Harold Augenbraum

Ellery Queen Award: Susanne Kirk,  
Simon & Schuster

**Breaking News continues  
on page 12** ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

# Online.....

At the time that I'm writing this column—which is April—I've had a very interesting month as a guest in the Compuserve Romance Forum, even though I don't subscribe to Compuserve. Ellen Fucellaro at [E\\_Fucellaro@compuserve.com](mailto:E_Fucellaro@compuserve.com) invites one romance author to be a guest each month. Ellen is always looking for guests so if you're interested in appearing in the Romance Forum, send an e-mail to Ellen to be added to her list of future guests. She can either provide you with temporary Compuserve software or if you have Internet access, you can download a "Virtual Key" program which will allow you to gain access with the special ID and password that Ellen provides. While a guest, you can explore all of Compuserve. On the Message Boards, you have a special folder designated for you where readers and writers will post questions. And you will, of course, answer them. It's really a fun experience.

## MESSAGE BOARDS

This month, I wanted to focus on Message Boards. As most of you know, a message board is an area on a server that allows you to post notes publicly to a group of people. Some areas of Message Boards can be private—such as the RWA chapter on Compuserve. But as a general rule, Message Boards allow you to communicate with a great many people with a single post. They provide a wonderful opportunity to touch base with readers and to discuss writing. They can also take up a great deal of time and become addictive. But with the advent of free Message board services (refer to April 2000 and May 2000 columns), Message Boards are popping up all over the Internet and if you're looking for ways to promote your work, they can provide it. As long as you have an Internet browser, you should be able to access the Message Boards listed at the end of this article.

## E-ZINES

!Get Published! is delivered bi-weekly. The editor is Greg Spence. This free "newsletter is for authors, ezine editors and independent publishers looking for help and advice on how to promote and publish their books and articles online." To subscribe, send a blank message to [getpub-subscribe@onelist.com](mailto:getpub-subscribe@onelist.com).

## ONLINE BOOKSTORES

1Bookstreet.com at [www.1Bookstreet.com](http://www.1Bookstreet.com) offers free shipping with orders over \$15. It offers a variety of discounted books, some amazingly priced. I saw books discounted by 80%. There is nothing to indicate that these books are used so I'm assuming these offers are for new books. However, most of the newest releases are only discounted 10%.

## RESEARCH

When using Yahoo at [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) for searching, you may have noticed that when you type in a phrase that you end up with results that seem to have nothing to do with the phrase. That's because Yahoo searches for any pages that include any of those words. American Revolution might result in pages on the French Revolution—because Yahoo was searching for "American" and "Revolution" not "American Revolution." To narrow your search and ensure you get what you're looking for, put quotation marks around the phrase and it'll search for the entire phrase as it appears. "American Revolution" will eliminate French Revolution from your results but it would also eliminate Colonial Revolution. Therefore, you need to determine how exact you want the search. For a broad search, you can use an asterisk in a word to represent a wildcard. Yahoo will then search for words that have any letter where the asterisk is. For example, Texa\* would allow Yahoo to search for Texas and Texan.

In some search engines, however, every word is assumed to end with a wildcard. Searching for court might result in pages that have: court, courtesan, courtier, courtly, courtship, etc. If you only want the search engine to bring up references with a specific word, put quotes around the word: "court." This action will eliminate a search that includes wildcards.

Back to Yahoo. If you want the search to only include Web site titles, you can restrict the search by putting t: before the word. Did you forget the URL for the Novelists' Inc. Web site? Go to [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) and search for t: novelists. When I did it, I only got one site—Novelists Inc. at [www.ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com). If you want to limit the search to URL's,

then put u: before the word. To find the URL for the Novelists' Inc. if you don't want to search for the title, search for u: ninc. I got six results. One was [www.ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com) for Novelists Inc. A handy little tip to remember when you are searching for a specific site and have forgotten the URL but know the name of the site or remember a term that was in the URL.

Hereditary Titles at [www.hereditarytitles.com/Page1.html](http://www.hereditarytitles.com/Page1.html) is a wonderful Web site dedicated to explaining the hereditary titles of the British Empire. The "Arms" of various dukes, earls, etc. are displayed along with explanations.

Gavvin's Keep at [www.app-link.net/wolfpack/gavvin.html](http://www.app-link.net/wolfpack/gavvin.html) is designed as a castle to offer you an interesting tour and provide you with information on medieval and renaissance history. Maps, weapons and almost every other aspect of the era can be found here. And if you still need more information, you can visit The Raven's Eye Tavern and post a message on the message board.

APBnews.com at [www.apbnews.com](http://www.apbnews.com) provides interesting articles related to crime. For example, I read an article on immigration fraud in which a French hair salon interested in establishing itself in the United States sent stylists to America illegally. I see a plot in there somewhere. The latest on Jesse James's DNA testing and a modern day Bonnie and Clyde were also topics discussed in articles.

World Wide Words at [www.quinion.com/words](http://www.quinion.com/words) explores the English language, word usage, and origins. It also provides a weekly newsletter.

I discovered the neatest free conversion software that you can download at [www.joshmadison.com/software/](http://www.joshmadison.com/software/). At the site, click SOFTWARE, click CONVERT, click DOWNLOAD. The software converts units of measurement: time, weight, energy, volume, etc. A very handy little program to have around.

## RELAXATION

In closing, here is a humorous and fun site provided by Anne Holmberg. Mike the Headless Chicken provides the history of Mike and an opportunity to order "Mike Wear" at [www.miketheheadlesschicken.org](http://www.miketheheadlesschicken.org). Anne wrote, "Now *that's* a domain name I bet *nobody* thought to sit on!" ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



# Online.....

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH LINKS \_\_\_\_\_ URL:

Russian Translations \_\_\_\_\_ [www.russian-dictionary.org/](http://www.russian-dictionary.org/)  
 The Tome: Table of Contents (Medieval links) \_\_\_\_\_ [www.execpc.com/~clisto/table.html](http://www.execpc.com/~clisto/table.html)  
 eNature.com (online Audubon Guides) \_\_\_\_\_ [www.audubonguide.com/](http://www.audubonguide.com/)  
 Falconry \_\_\_\_\_ [www.arab.net/falconry/welcome.html](http://www.arab.net/falconry/welcome.html)  
 Anglo-Saxon, Viking, Norman & British History \_\_\_\_\_ [www.regia.org](http://www.regia.org)  
 Info on canals and rivers of England & Wales \_\_\_\_\_ [www.btinternet.com/~Jim.Shead](http://www.btinternet.com/~Jim.Shead)  
 Medieval Links \_\_\_\_\_ [www.paintedrock.com/library/subjects/medieval/medieval.htm](http://www.paintedrock.com/library/subjects/medieval/medieval.htm)  
 Gaelic Dictionary \_\_\_\_\_ [www.romfort.org/rs/ceilidhcontents.htm](http://www.romfort.org/rs/ceilidhcontents.htm)  
 History of Western Biomedicine \_\_\_\_\_ [www.mic.ki.se/West.html](http://www.mic.ki.se/West.html)  
 How Stuff Works \_\_\_\_\_ [www.howstuffworks.com](http://www.howstuffworks.com)  
 Military History \_\_\_\_\_ [www.militaryhistory.com](http://www.militaryhistory.com)  
 States and Capitals \_\_\_\_\_ [www.50states.com](http://www.50states.com)

## MESSAGE BOARDS \_\_\_\_\_ URL:

Literary Times \_\_\_\_\_ [www.tlt.com/wwwboard/wwwboard.htm](http://www.tlt.com/wwwboard/wwwboard.htm)  
 Bookbug \_\_\_\_\_ [members.boardhost.com/bookbug/](http://members.boardhost.com/bookbug/)  
 Addicted 2Romancebooks \_\_\_\_\_ [members.boardhost.com/romancereaders](http://members.boardhost.com/romancereaders)  
 All About Romance \_\_\_\_\_ [www.likesbooks.com/boards.html](http://www.likesbooks.com/boards.html)  
 Painted Rock \_\_\_\_\_ [www.coolboard.com/boardshow.cfm/mb%3D363077806426180](http://www.coolboard.com/boardshow.cfm/mb%3D363077806426180)  
 Romance and Friends \_\_\_\_\_ [www.INSIDETheWeb.com/mbs.cgi/mb360890](http://www.INSIDETheWeb.com/mbs.cgi/mb360890)  
 Romance Journal \_\_\_\_\_ [www.romancejournal.com](http://www.romancejournal.com)

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If you have sites to share that you think would be of interest to Novelists, Inc. members, please e-mail me.

— **Lorraine Heath** ([LorraineHe@aol.com](mailto:LorraineHe@aol.com))

## MEMBER NEWS.....

**Congratulations** to a new first-time NYT author in our midst—**Kristin Hannah's** *On Mystic Lake* popped on at #11 this week on the paperback list, after being #16 and #17 on the extended list. You go, Kristin! (Thanks to Teresa Medeiros for alerting us!)

**Gina Wilkins**, bestselling and award-winning author of more than 50 titles for Harlequin and Silhouette Books, has reached an out-of-court settlement with BET Publications regarding the publication of Wilkins's 1991 Harlequin Temptation *Hotline* and BET Publications' 1999 Arabesque Book *When Love Calls*.

BET Publications has agreed to cease publication of *When Love Calls* and has recalled existing copies of the book from booksellers.

BET Publications admits no liability with respect to this matter.

A big WhooHoo! and Congratulations to NINC prez, **Carla Neggers**, who found out on Mom's Day that her new release *The Waterfall* hit the extended NYT paperback bestseller list at #35—and it's about bloody time, too. We're thrilled for you, Carla!



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶

### Harlequin/ Silhouette News

In a full-page, four-color ad in a recent *Publishers Weekly*, Harlequin/Silhouette announced three new imprints in a "2000 Reader's Choice Program." They're showing reprints of what appear to be Mills & Boon Regencies given first North American printing under a "Harlequin Regency Romances" imprint; hot and steamy titles from the Temptation and Presents lines reprinted as "Harlequin Intimacies," with monotone covers and a look that brings to mind airport erotica rather than romance; and doctor-nurse books culled from Romances and Superromance and now called "Prescription Romance." Speculation is that these will be sold retail as opposed to direct mail (mostly because Harlequin bothered to place an ad in *PW*—why try to reach retailers if you're only selling direct?). Other interesting nuggets from ad copy: The Regency era is the #1 setting sales-wise among Harlequin Historicals; books within the steamier subseries (specifically Temptation's "Blaze" and Presents' "Passion" brands) average 5-6% better sales than the other titles in those lines for the month; doctor/nurse romance veteran Betty Neels is the top-selling author within the Romance line.

### Pirates, Avast!

Our own Laura Resnick, a member of Science Fiction Writers of America, reports that several SFWA members noticed that pirated science fiction/fantasy works were being posted wholesale on two Usenet groups: [alt.binaries.ebook](mailto:alt.binaries.ebook) and [alt.binaries.ebooks](mailto:alt.binaries.ebooks). When SFWA members protested, some pirates suggested targeting the works of all SFWA members for scanning and upload to various questionable newsgroups and at other points on the Web. SFWA then published an online alert to warn SFWA members how to protect their computer systems from viruses

**Cont. on page 15** ▶ ▶ ▶





# ***THE COMELY CURMUDGEON***

## ***“It Was On Fire When I Ran Outside and Hid From It”***

When Terey daly Ramin invited me to do this job, I hesitated, worried that I wouldn't be able to fill a 2,500-word opinion column every month.

Every time I say that, people are consumed with ribald laughter. I seem to be the only person who thought there was even a faint chance that I'd run out of verbose diatribes or have trouble expressing myself at bad-tempered length every month. Go figure.

Of course, I should have had more faith in the world's ability to help me with this assignment. In fact, were I a malicious individual, I could already get a whole new column out of the United States Post Office's infamy just since I wrote "Going Postal" for the May issue of *NINK*. Since then, my postal carrier has taken to entirely skipping our building (and throwing our mail in a landfill, I suppose) with such frequency that I have recently wasted a considerable portion of my time asking individuals and businesses to re-send mail which they've already sent to me but which has never arrived. Multiple phone calls to the post office have produced no results other than an increasingly brusque series of responses indicating that my carrier's superiors don't know and don't care what he is doing with his time or with our mail. The whole building is, by now, up in arms about how much of our mail isn't being delivered to us.

Unable to catch my carrier in person or to get him on the phone, I wrote him a very carefully worded letter, inquiring about the missing mail without actually accusing him of anything; it was the most subtle, tactful and masterful prose I've ever composed. He opened it, presumably read it, then tossed it back in my box and disappeared without explanation or reply (even though I had thoughtfully provided a pen for his response).

I also filed a formal complaint. The postal investigator who handled my case seemed to think everything was wrapped up satisfactorily when my carrier said to him, "Gosh, I always deliver all the mail, without fail."

"What," I cried when the investigator reported this to me, "you mean he didn't immediately break down and confess? *Incredible*, man! How wrong I've been about all this!"

No, I jest. What I actually said—between clenched teeth—was, "Keep investigating. We're not getting our mail."

Of course, the alternative explanation to a criminal postal carrier is an obvious premise for a suspense novel: He really *is* delivering our mail, but our entire building is being stalked by someone who occasionally steals and reads all our mail, someone who therefore knows almost everything about us, someone who watches us day and night—and who has therefore (*omigod!*) seen me creep furtively outside, on occasion, in the snugglesack robe I wear in winter, the one which makes me look like a fuzzy blue penguin. The key question in this premise, of course, is: Am I the first murder victim, or am I the heroine who survives the crazed stalker's evil wrath and brings him to justice?

Call me stubborn, but I'm sticking with my "the postal carrier is throwing out our mail and knocking off work early" premise. So I've recently resorted to renting a p.o. box in another postal district, which now seems to be my only hope of receiving my mail.

But I digress.

Where was I? Oh, yes. This column.

In one of my brighter moments, I figured Ninclink would be a good way to monitor what NINC members are concerned about, interested in or arguing about as time goes by; so I started reading the list regularly when Terey asked me to write this column. By the way, Terey's the one who proposed calling it *The Comely Curmudgeon*, such a good idea that I didn't even bother to come up with any suggestions of my own. I was touched, nonetheless, when sf/f writer Stephen Leigh, upon hearing about this, said, "But I never think of you as a curmudgeon!" (Among sf/f writers, my own surliness is a pale and puny thing.)

Anyhow, one of the subjects that recently came up (again) on Ninclink is electronic publishing. Understandably. Who in publishing *isn't* talking about it, at least sometimes? I imagine everyone was talking lots, and with anxiety, after Gutenberg invented the printing press; and I suppose the advent of paperbacks caused comment and concern for a few years, too.

I'm sure it won't surprise you when I say that I have some opinions on the subject of e-publishing. Of course, since I am a notorious technophobe, you may think you already know my opinions on this score. Longtime readers of *NINK* may still remember the time my computer suddenly burst into flames (it *did*, I tell you!), filling the whole house with thick black smoke, and I ran outside and hid in a ditch until it was all over. Remember the fax machine that fantasy writer Jennifer Roberson gave me the year I was chairing the NINC conference? I never did figure out how to work it, and I wound up giving it away two years later. (I still remember Robyn Carr's uncontrollable mirth when she said to Jennifer, "You gave *Laura* a technological device?") Then there were those three months I spent shopping for and learning to use a new computer, a horrific nightmare which I recounted exhaustively in the pages of *NINK*.

And we won't even go into my sorrows with caller I.D., the cable remote-control device, or the talking elevator at the health club.

Anyhow, you may think that because of my unfortunate experiences with all things technological, I am opposed to electronic publishing and will be the last holdout, the sole remaining writer manning the barricades of print fiction and crying, "Never surrender! Never give up!"

Hah! Gotcha! Fooled you! You're *wrong*.

In fact, I believe that electronic publishing will eventually overtake traditional print publishing, and I think it may well happen in my lifetime. Print books will never disappear, in my opinion, but I believe they may eventually become an expensive specialty item. (In fact, some would say they're *already* an expensive specialty item.)

However, I also think this process is going to take time even in the developed world, and I believe e-publishing is unlikely to be a *worldwide* victor in my lifetime. Electronic publishing presupposes routine access to technology, which presupposes a level of wealth which simply doesn't exist in much of the world, and which probably won't exist there any time soon. (Indeed, the gap ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



## THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

▶▶▶ between the rich and the poor of planet Earth is widening, not closing.) Being a practical woman, I also don't really foresee e-books overtaking print books even here until you can read them in the tub.

I don't quarrel with anyone who says there'll come a day when my new titles are released first and foremost in electronic format; I think that's entirely possible. However, the *current* situation I see is still a long way from that day, and I'm cheerfully sticking with traditional publishing until conditions change.

Currently, no major bookseller, even if they're selling e-books, is clearing away whole sections of traditional backlist, never mind traditional new releases, to make room for e-books. No major book publisher, even if they're expanding into electronic publishing, is currently eliminating their traditional publishing programs, or even announcing plans to do so.

Although I have many book-buying civilian friends (i.e. people outside of the publishing industry), none of them is currently interested in e-books; indeed, it's hard to think of a friend who's even mentioned the subject to me, apart from saying they're not interested. In fact, I believe there's a segment of the book-buying public that will be genuinely resistant to electronic publishing, even preferring to pay higher prices for paper books rather than acquire and/or learn new technology to enjoy a novel.

In addition, apart from the recent highly publicized electronic release of one new Stephen King novel, I can't think of a successful writer who has chosen to release a new novel in electronic form rather than traditional print form. I can't even think of a successful writer who has released a new title electronically *alongside* the traditional print format. (I define "successful" as "currently making a good living as a novelist." I define a "good living" as more money than I'm currently making, though I support myself and all my vices with my fiction. This is my column and I can define things any way I want to.)

Except for King (who has successfully tried other gimmicks that didn't become a market standard, after all), electronic publishing seems currently limited to books that no traditional publisher chooses to print or to reprint. Which makes electronic publishing, in my opinion, a niche market, rather than a viable competitor (let alone actual threat) to traditional publishing—particularly given that a reader also needs equipment, of one kind or another, to access an electronically published book.

I genuinely don't believe electronic publishing will always be a niche market. However, I also think there are issues which must be successfully addressed before electronic publishing is likely to move beyond its niche position in the publishing world. And the most important issue may well be that of electronic piracy. The computer age has already created many new problems in the area of copyright violation. In March, SFWA launched hostilities against someone e-publishing, in full, dozens of copyrighted traditionally published novels on his internet site without permission—someone who knew computers well enough to hide his identity and his whereabouts while SFWA and their allies pursued him. ("Whereabouts" as in, last time I asked, SFWA wasn't even sure what *continent* he was on.) As this individual's written comments indicated, he knew this was piracy; he just didn't care.

And this is just one case of many! Remember cover artists at the 1997 NINC conference talking about Internet piracy of their images? Have you read any of the news stories on musicians'

concerns about electronic piracy of their music? Have you heard that hackers quickly overcame the safeguards built into the Stephen King electronic release and pirated it?

Now I've never minded seeing my books in second-hand stores, since I've always optimistically hoped that someone who reads my writing for the first time in a second-hand book will then feel compelled to go out and get my new releases as soon as they're available. The second-hand market doesn't bother me, despite all the objections to it that I have read and don't necessarily disagree with. But piracy? That bothers me a *lot*—and it worries me a lot, since we already hear too many examples of electronic piracy without electronic publishing even occupying an important position in commercial publishing yet.

I'm no business maven, but I would think the financial implications of electronic piracy are staggering for a major commercial publisher, given how easily and quickly pirates might reproduce electronic publications. What if, for example, Nora Roberts' first e-book doesn't rise to #1 nationwide and then go into multiple printings (or whatever the corresponding e-term is) because, oops!, 30% of all copies being read in its third week were, in fact, pirated in its first week? What if Catherine Coulter's enormous backlist (you should see how much shelf space it takes up at my local B&N!) suddenly stops selling because the publisher released it in electronic form and, oops!, millions of pirated copies are available three months later.

If you know electronically published writers who have never been pirated and you think I'm just being alarmist, then let me ask you this: Are those electronically published novels worth a million—or even a quarter of a million—dollars in advance money to those authors? Millions of dollars in revenue to their publishers? Thousands of dollars, perhaps, to e-pirates who reproduce those books?

No, my books aren't worth that much, either. But until the new novels of writers whose books *are* worth that much are being released electronically, with commercial success and without piracy, can we view electronic publishing as a competitive format?

In my opinion, no.

Electronic publishing *will* be commercially viable someday. After all, the world keeps turning, and the 21st century is obviously going to be unkind to technophobes like me. But today? Today, electronic publishing is a niche market that has significant problems to overcome on the bumpy road toward eventual domination of our industry. And I won't even go into all the reasons why I agree with writers organizations which don't currently accept e-published novels as a qualification for membership, since going into all those reasons is what the officers of these organizations don't get paid to do, and they've all done it already. (They also don't get paid to take whatever flack they may have gotten for these explanations.)

Incidentally, I e-published for the first time in 1999. *Nerve*, an online magazine which describes itself as a publisher of "literary smut" (yes, really) asked me to write a smutty short story which spoofed the romance genre while simultaneously educating their readers about it. (No, they didn't automatically think of me for this bizarre task. Mary Jo Putney gave them my name. Julie Tetel gave them Mary Jo's name. I'll leave it to Julie to explain how they got *her* name....)

They paid well (which is why I came up with the first and only "literary smut" of my career), but my story, already the very shortest I had ever written, had to be cut; apparently online readers can't focus on a story for long, or reading is harder online, or scrolling takes its toll. Or something like that. Anyhow, until this problem is solved, I don't foresee my 250,000-word novels finding a home online.... However, I suppose people with back trouble

might be more apt to read my books if they're someday produced as CDs rather than as enormous printed tomes which each weigh more than a small dog.

— **Laura Resnick**

## .....DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT

### *Love On the (NINC)Links*

#### GORDON SAYS:

Deni and I are writing this book. It has a title, it has romance, some intrigue, some humor, and for me—never before having collaborated, much less from half the world away—it has provided interesting lessons.

Consider: We needed the “other woman” and I just happened to have exactly that person. Real...walking around, alive. So I put her into “our” book holus-bolus and even warned Deni that I was doing it.

By the time the book was half done [which it is, by the way...175 pages in less than a calendar month he said, in total astonishment—not gloating] I get this e-mail from Deni, my love, my life—and my bloody editor! “I’d think about killing off Ida,” she wrote. “It would be a great plot element, eliciting an emotional response from the hero.”

Now honestly...I had already realised this. I swear it. But the fact that Deni also saw it was most interesting.

So, finally, to the point of this dispatch. Which is that if you’re going to use a “real” person as a character in your book, be aware of the dangers, which are many. Especially if the real woman is the *other* woman, and your fiancée is your editor.

Gordon...so in love, so lucky, and writing again “properly” for the first time in bloody years. Nice to be back, too.

#### DENI SAYS:

Gordon and I are writing this book. It has a title, it has romance, some intrigue, some humor, and for me—never before having collaborated from half the world away—it has provided interesting lessons.

I met Gordon on NincLink. We decided to co-author a book, and soon our friendship ripened into love. What’s interesting—to me—is how much you can learn about a person through e-mails. However, Gordon and I had one advantage over the majority of meet-on-line couples. Having read each other’s NincLink posts [prior to our personal relationship], we felt we knew each other from the git-go. And, as authors, we were even able to read between the lines.

While collaborating on our book, we found that our “voices” were too different. Then I discovered that—although he has a distinct style of his own—Gordon could very well fit into the “category” of bestselling authors, i.e. Robert James Waller and Sidney Sheldon. I asked Gordon if I could edit our book rather than write it. He said yes, and I’m so glad. Every day is a new adventure, every day I’m awed by Gordon’s incredible talent.

On NincLink we’ve been talking about the Big Commercial Novel, specifically what makes it a BCN? In my (admittedly biased) opinion, Gordon makes our book a BCN.

Hugs, Deni, in love for the last time.



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ and violations, and also which members are most likely to be targeted (i.e., those whose names are listed on SFWA’s public Web site).

### **Tattered Privacy**

After a drug raid turned up books on how to make methamphetamines along with a coinciding invoice from Denver’s Tattered Cover bookstore, prosecutors got warrants to seize store records that they hoped would make their case against the suspected drug dealer. The bookstore is fighting the warrants and asking that police be enjoined from seizing their records. Owner Joyce Meskis cites First Amendment grounds, saying that this is an unreasonable intrusion into customers’ privacy and interferes with the right to read constitutionally protected materials.

### **Mixed Mystery Messages**

*PW*’s special “category closeup” on mystery offers mixed messages on the market. Jennifer Fisher at Avon/Morrow refers to lists “becoming leaner and leaner.” The fallout may mean small presses take up the slack, according to Scribner editor Susanne Kirk, bookstore owner Carolyn Lane, and Barbara Peters, bookseller and publisher. John Cunningham of St. Martin’s relates that fewer titles elsewhere gave St. Martin’s the impetus to fill the vacuum by opening the new Minotaur imprint last fall. Other developments noted in the *PW* article include more literary writers and readers coming to the genre (oh joy, oh rapture), technology making life easier for self-pubs and for promotional opportunities on the web, the need for authors with a special hook (either based on real-life expertise or the tie-ins the books can offer), the rise of trade-size paperbacks, and continued strength of female sleuths, especially in historical settings.

### **How Scentillating**

According to *Escape From the CIA* by Ronald Kessler, the CIA once developed a chemical spray that simulates the scent of a bitch in heat. They never used it, but the idea was to squirt it around the homes of KGB officials so that they’d be besieged all night by howling male dogs looking for a hot date. Oh my, I hope you don’t get the bright idea of spraying this stuff around the home of the editor who rejected your last proposal—and don’t you go touching that tar baby neither.

Thanks to sources for their valuable contributions to this month’s column. I would tell you who they are, but that would blow my cover.

*Pamela Browning, editor of the quarterly US-China Review, has written books for Harlequin, Silhouette, Mills & Boon, and Berkeley. E-mail weird or noteworthy tidbits to her at write2pam@aol.com*

# .....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>.

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

NINC Member	Book Title/Publisher	April 6	April 13	April 20	April 27
Jo Beverley	<i>Devilish</i> , Signet		207	41	68
Sandra Brown	<i>Send No Flowers</i> , Bantam	77	131		
Catherine Coulter	<i>False Pretenses</i> , Signet	14	24	44	71
Diane Mott Davidson	<i>Prime Cut</i> , Bantam	38	83	122	
Diane Mot Davidson	<i>ToughCookie</i> , Bantam	116			
Christina Dodd	<i>Rules of Surrender</i> , Avon	66	133		
Suzanne Forster	<i>The Morning After</i> , Jove	67n	47	61	91
Dorothy Garlock	<i>After the Parade</i> , Warner		32n	35	77
Kristin Hannah	<i>On Mystic Lake</i> , Ballantine		25n	25	36
Norah Hess	<i>Snow Fire</i> , Leisure	81			
Linda Howard, Paula Detmer Riggs, et al*	<i>A Bouquet of Babies</i> , Silhouette	93	56	117	
Katherine Kingsley	<i>In the Presence of Angels</i> , Dell	132			
Debbie Macomber	<i>Mail-Order Marriages</i> , Harlequin	53	109		
Debbie Macomber	<i>Dakota Born</i> , Mira	54	20	30	73
Kar Martin	<i>The Dream</i> , Zebra	138n	44	67	149
Connie Mason	<i>The Outlaws: Rafe</i> , Leisure				76n
Linda Needham	<i>The Maiden Bride</i> , Avon		152	121	
Susan Elizabeth Phillips	<i>First Lady</i> , Avon	128			
Amanda Quick	<i>Wicked Widow</i> , Bantam	155	33	64	94
Patricia Rice	<i>Impossible Dreams</i> , Ivy		181	118	
J.D. Robb	<i>Witness in Death</i> , Berkley	31	62	89	109
Nora Roberts	<i>Carolina Moon</i> , Putnam	19	37	53	65
Nora Roberts	<i>Jewels of the Sun</i> , Jove	91			
Nora Roberts,	<i>Carnal Innocence</i> , Bantam			6n	8
Amanda Scott	<i>Border Fire</i> , Zebra	154	96		
Susan Wiggs	<i>The Hostage</i> , Mira	158	77	140	

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

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