

When the Novel Has to Be Done Yesterday

If you've just decided you want to attend NYCon with a complete manuscript instead of that partially done proposal, Bruce Rogers offers these timely tips for accelerating your writing, from Word Work: Surviving and Thriving as a Writer, now available from Invisible Cities Press. ED.

BY BRUCE ROGERS

As I began writing this chapter, there was a big difference between *what* I felt and *how* I felt about it. My wrists hurt. My back ached. My brain and body were fried from overwork.

And I was very, very happy.

I had just turned in a novel that I wrote in two months and revised in two weeks. I beat both deadlines. More importantly, I was happy with the result. *Ashes of the Sun* (by Hanovi Braddock) won't ever stand as one of the great works of western civilization. It is a game tie-in novel. But I am not going to slink into the shadows when someone points out that Hanovi Braddock and Bruce Holland Rogers are one and the same. I'm proud of the book.

Ordinarily, I'm a slow writer. Landing a novel contract with a tight delivery deadline meant that I had to

change how I did things. I needed to figure out how to rush a novel and stay sane, and that called for consciously managing the psychological challenges that I knew I'd face.

What follows are the steps I took, reconstructed after the fact. This is not intended as a formula, but as an illustration of some of the ideas I cover in other chapters. I should also confess that this chapter is much better organized than my behavior was.

So, in a completely artificial order, here's a list of things I did.

1. Start with the motivational Big Picture.
2. Analyze the practical Big Picture.
3. Plan work and rest.
4. Decide on procedural rules.
5. Set performance goals.
6. Energize during the work and after.
7. Reward myself without deprivation traps.

The first item on my list actually was the first thing I did when I got the assignment. I sat down with a notebook to write about the motivational Big Picture for this project. I asked myself what writing this novel was going to contribute to my career. Work written under my Hanovi Braddock pseudonym, I re-

minded myself, isn't intended to be especially deep or thoughtful. Hanovi writes adventure fiction. If I ever write pure space opera or a fat fantasy trilogy, it will be Hanovi who gets the credit, not Bruce.

Money is not usually my first concern when I write, but it's half of Hanovi's reason for being. I hope that I'll be able to make enough money by writing Hanovi's books in a hurry that I can afford to write Bruce Holland Rogers books by my usual process of slow accretion.

The other half of Hanovi's reason for being is this: under my veneer of literary sophistication beats the heart of a pulp reader. I love Edgar Rice Burroughs. Yes, I can see the machinery creaking when Tarzan's purely evil enemies do rotten things just to get me to hate them. Yet I still enjoy hissing when they come on stage. I cheer when Lord Greystoke manages an improbable rescue, and I willingly turn off my brain to get through the racism and sexism on every other page. Tarzan is fun, and Hanovi exists because I get a kick out of trying to write slam-bang action that saves the thinking for another book.

So I had agreed to take this assignment because it would be fun

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Send Address Changes to Central Coordinator

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THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE.....

For those members who would like Ninc to march forward into the future without bothering you with the details of how we will arrive there, please skip this column. For those of you who like to have everything laid out in the open so there are no surprises, keep reading.

When I agreed to tackle the office of president, I brought with me the experience of attending a dozen Ninc conferences, having served the board in official and unofficial capacities for more years than I care to count. I've been with the organization from within several months of its inception, worked with the founding members, witnessed the arguments and growing pains and concerns we've had over all those years. I've loved every minute of it because we've tackled our problems and our goals with intelligence, forethought, and concern for all involved. We've learned that because we're small, we can't do everything we'd like, but we can use our size to advantage by being more flexible than larger organizations.

Over the years, I've heard all the pros and cons of when and where and how we should hold our conferences. Each side of the argument is rational and right for part of our membership, but there is no one right answer for everyone. Surveys have failed us in the past, so we've learned to measure member preferences by where we lay our money down.

The membership has cast its money vote overwhelmingly for a New York conference in the past, and the enthusiasm for this year's conference has been gratifying. New York does not come without its downside, however. The cost of New York city conferences are high, and they skyrocket in the fall.

We have decided to experiment with moving our conference to the spring.

As a result, after careful consideration by several boards, we have decided to experiment with moving our conference to the spring. This will give us greater freedom of choice in New York accommodations and costs, plus offering other advantages if we decide to intersperse New York with more retreat-style conferences elsewhere.

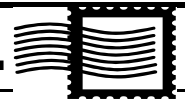
The only obstacle to this decision has been that we do not have the resources to hold both a fall conference followed by a spring one. To achieve the change to spring, we have decided to postpone Fall, 2003, to create a bigger, better conference in Spring, 2004. Another distinct advantage to this is that it will give some of us extra time to recoup from New York and save up enough for what should be a really exciting new conference!

As of the writing of this column, we haven't voted on any permanent changes, but we're close. By the time this appears in the newsletter, I hope to have presented the board with some minor bylaw alterations that will separate our annual elections from the conference so we have the freedom to move the conference back and forth whenever we like.

So when you receive this year's ballots and see the awful words "bylaw amendments" on them, be assured that you can vote for the amendments (and even read them) without quivering in fear and indecision. We'll have a few grammatical corrections included just so we can neaten things up, but the main change will simply be the section about voting at the conference.

Once that's done, we'll have the fun of deciding where we would like to hold our first spring conference. Most of our planning will fall to Anne Holmberg's board, but it's never too soon to start talking about it. Put your thinking caps on and let's get ready!

— Pat Rice



Even in this online age—with Ninlink—we still welcome your letters. Submit to the editor via e-mail, fax, or old-fashioned snailmail [see masthead on page 2]. Letters may be edited for length or NINK style.

What's in a Name

On June 14, Donna Hayes, President & Publisher, and Isabel Swift, Vice President, Editorial, of Harlequin Enterprises released a letter announcing that Harlequin is dropping the Pseudonym and Real Name clauses from all its future contracts, and it will not enforce this clause in current or past contracts. The new Harlequin pseudonym policy is a victory for authors—and for the publisher, as well.

Last year, aware that many Ninc members who wrote for Harlequin, Silhouette, and Mills & Boon were growing increasingly frustrated over Harlequin's insistence on contractual control over author pennames, the Novelists, Inc. board issued a position paper asserting that authors deserved the right to control their own pennames. (This position paper can be accessed at www.ninc.com.) The board sent the position paper to Isabel Swift, who promptly phoned me to discuss it. Our contention was that not only should authors have the right, on principle, to control their own pseudonyms, but that Harlequin would benefit if the value of those pseudonyms increased,

as it very well might if authors published under their pseudonyms with other publishers. As long as Harlequin controlled the use of an author's pseudonym, the author was limited in her/his ability to market her/himself. By removing that limitation, an author had the opportunity to increase her/his market value, which would increase the value of that author's backlist and improve sales of any new books that author might write for Harlequin under her/his pseudonym. We also pointed out that the policy as it existed was riddled with inconsistencies. Isabel Swift was receptive to Ninc's arguments.

That summer, I was invited to represent Ninc at an RWA-hosted meeting with Isabel and several editorial directors to discuss the pseudonym clause. Our arguments in favor of author control of pseudonyms were expanded and debated, and the Harlequin executives left with a clear understanding of the authors' position.

I am delighted that Harlequin has relinquished its contractual control over author pseudonyms. Donna Hayes and Isabel Swift demonstrated vision and courage in eradicating a policy that had existed for more than two decades. That Ninc played a part, however small, in this triumph for authors is a source of great pride.

— **Barbara Keller**
(Ninc President 2001)

These Nincoids Will Be Working For You in 2003

"I want to thank Barbara Keiler and her nominating committee for the outstanding job in putting together this excellent slate of candidates for 2003." — **PR**

President: Anne Holmberg
President-Elect: Jean Brashear

Secretary: Karen Harbaugh
Treasurer: Anne Josephson

We're happy to present the following list of candidates for the Nominating Committee that will be recruiting Ninc's slate of officers for 2004. Full bios and instructions on how to vote for the committee members of your choice, will be included on the ballot, to be mailed to all Nincoids shortly.

Candidates for Nominating Committee, in alphabetical order:

Fran Baker
Carol Bellacera
Judith Bowen
Ken Casper
Kathy Garbera

Sherry-Anne Jacobs
Emilie Richards McGee
Deb Stover
Val Taylor
Karen Witmer-Gow

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and because it would make money to support my other writing. It might build an audience for later adventure fiction by Hanovi Braddock, which would support later serious writing. So my career concerns were for writing quickly, but well enough that readers might look for other Hanovi Braddock books when I wrote them.

I had another important motivational concern: the project's "contribution." I want everything I write to have some positive impact on my readers—even the fiction that I'm doing mostly for money. For Hanovi's books, this is a secondary goal and can partly be expressed in the negative: I *don't* want his books to be sexist or to glorify violence (though there is likely to be violence in them). More positively, I want to discover, in the process of writing the books, some content that appeals to the reader's better nature.

After I had jotted all of this down, I made two little signs to post on my computer monitor. One was a dollar sign—the most compelling "career" motivator. The other, to represent my "contribution" motivator, said, "I am an angel in disguise writing a holy text in disguise." (At one point, my wife looked at the sign, looked at me, and say, "Good disguise.")

Why did I bother with this step? Because I knew that there'd be many days when I'd be thinking, "This is hard. Why am I doing this?" Now I'd have ready reminders.

The second step, Analyze the practical Big Picture, was a logistical step. I got out my calendar and did some more notebook scribbling. What were the steps to writing the novel? What did I have to do before I was ready to write the first chapter? (Character sketches, maps, outlines,

etc.) How many chapters would there be? How many total pages? Also, what other time commitments did I have? I needed to know what needed doing and how much time was available for doing it.

The third step was to divide the tasks so that I could have an overview of what would have to be done when. This was pretty straightforward—a matter of writing in "character sketches" on the first day, "third pass outline" on the second, and "write chapter one" on the third. What makes this step worth mentioning is that for once I took into account my bad tendency to over-book and burn myself out. If I commit to write for six hours each day for three weeks without a break, I'm likely to go on strike by the seventh day—procrastinating all day and feeling guilty the whole time. The result is that even though I don't work on that seventh day, I don't relax, either, and end up feeling burnt-out when work begins on day eight, leading to another strike on day nine or ten. This time, management agreed to labor's terms from the outset. I blocked off some days for relaxing guilt-free.

I was also realistic about how much writing I could do on the day before or the day after the writer's conferences I had scheduled each month. I gave myself a day off before and after each conference. I also had a play script under contract, and I'd have to do requested revisions for that. I blocked four days for working on the play. I was left with 41 days available for writing *Ashes*. The outline called for a novel 34 chapters long. I set aside two days for pre-writing and five for the initial revision. That meant that I'd need to produce a chapter a day.

Step four was to plan procedural rules. What behavioral approach would best support my getting a

chapter done every day? Since I'm a master procrastinator, I told myself that I would always be at my writing desk by nine in the morning. When I wrote, I would not re-read what I had done in earlier chapters. If what I said in chapter six called for a revision of chapter one, I'd make a note of that and fix it later. I would not worry about the contents of a future chapter until I came to it. I would start each day with one hour, no more, of brainstorming the chapter's contents and jotting notes. Then I'd write toward a dramatic conclusion.

All of this helped to compartmentalize the various stages of writing. I can't sit down to write a novel—that's too intimidating. But I can sit down to write the tentative first page of the first draft of a novel, especially if chapter one is the only chapter I have to think about. The rules helped to clarify what I was responsible for at each moment. Of course, rules don't help if they are applied too rigidly. If a chapter went so seriously wrong that I couldn't bear to set the next one on so shaky a foundation, I went back to revise, even though the rules forbade such revisions. Rules must support getting the work done, and if they become an obstacle, then it's all right to bend them.

Step five was also designed to reduce my performance anxiety. I set performance goals.

Performance goals come in two varieties: certainty goals, and expectation goals. The certainty goals are the ones I have complete control over. These are the goals that do the most to reduce anxiety, since anxiety springs from fear over what can't be controlled.

On the small scale, I set an expectation goal of a chapter a day. This is what I fully expected to be able to do, and it was what my calen-

dar called for. But this goal alone would have made me anxious at the start of every day, so it was supported (and ameliorated) by a certainty goal: every day, I would write on the current chapter for six hours.

I couldn't always produce a chapter every day. Some days I got hung up on some plot difficulty or another. (Thankfully, there were some days when I wrote a chapter and a half.) But every single day, I could guarantee that I'd be at my desk for those six hours.

A bit of advice: all goals are easier to reach if you atomize them. My real goal was to write for four ninety-minute stints with nature breaks in between. It was easier, that way, to stay in the saddle when my back began to ache. By the time I felt achy, I'd look at my timer and see that just twenty minutes remained before I could take a break. Similarly, beginning a chapter is hard, but writing the first sentence of a chapter is easy, so that's what I commit to do when I sit down for the first ninety-minute session. If I reach that goal, then my new goal is a second sentence. Then a third. Soon, I'm in the groove.

My certainty and expectation goals were also set on a large scale, and could be summed up in the phrase, "It doesn't have to be good, it has to be done." August 1 had to be my first concern. (It helped to remember Randall Jarrell's definition of the novel as "a prose narrative of some length that has something wrong with it." I wasn't going to get it perfect even if I had a decade to keep working.) A finished novel of any quality, that was my certainty goal. My expectation goal, though, was a good story. I couldn't guarantee that outcome, but I aimed for it.

Step six, energize during the work and after, was designed to keep me from burning out. Weekly breaks and travel breaks wouldn't have been enough to keep me going if I were working in an unsupportive environment.

Here, you need to know yourself.

Social interaction energizes me, and too much solitude saps my energy. Unfortunately, my wife was away at a think tank for all of the first month that I was writing the book. I compensated with social interaction online and by occasionally taking my work to the library, sketching the day's chapter out in the company of strangers.

I also used movie soundtrack music even more than I usually do. Just to keep putting one word after another, I played some cursorial Vangelis music from *Chariots of Fire* and *Antarctica*. I used some music for particular moods, *Krull* and *Universal Soldier* for battle scenes, *Schindler's List* for pathos, but the main function of the music was to get my blood moving—a hard thing for an extravert to do in day after day of solitude.

Finally, I rewarded myself at the end of each working day. It really didn't matter what rewards I chose. What helped to keep me feeling good (and productive) was the feeling that some small thing I was enjoying at the moment had been earned with hard work. But I also did not deny myself "unearned rewards." Negative re-enforcement works well in some contexts, but I've found that reward deprivation is counter-productive for my writing. It damps my enthusiasm for work.

Thus, on some days I might have decided that a cool shower would be my reward for finishing the day's work. If I finished my six hours and showered, I felt great for having earned the shower. But if it was a sweltering hot day and I needed a cooling shower in order to be able to concentrate, I'd take it anyway. It just wouldn't have the I-earned-this buzz attached. I'd choose something else as the reward for coming back and writing my last two hours.

That's the essence of how I got to page 441 of *Ashes of the Sun*.

What works for one writer won't work for the next. Indeed, what worked for me on this project may not keep me motivated and energized the next time around. But I've found that

thinking deliberately about motivation, energy, and anxiety issues helps me to get the work done even under pressure-cooker conditions.

Bruce Holland Rogers is a frequent speaker at writers' conferences. This article is an excerpt from his book Word Work: Surviving and Thriving as a Writer, published in May, 2002 by Invisible Cities Press.

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 15 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of Ninc:

New Applicants:

Jessica Benson, Brooklyn NY
Kathy Carmichael, Palm Harbor FL
Janelle Denison, Rialto CA
Janet Justiss (*Julia Justiss*), Dangerfield TX
Susan Kearney, Brandon FL
Kathleen O'Reilly, Cedar Park TX

New Members:

Catherine Asaro, Columbia MD
Jacqueline Carey, Douglas MI
Barbara Daly, New York NY
Winnie Griggs, Plain Dealing LA
Candace Irvin, Conway AR
Trish Jensen (*Trish Graves*), Reedsville PA
Virginia Kantra, Raleigh NC
Julie Leto Klapka (*Julie Elizabeth Leto*), Tampa FL
Laura Phillips, Kearney MO
JoAnn Ross (*JoAnn Robb*), Knoxville TN
Mica Stone (*Alison Kent*), Katy TX
Jeanne Sumerix, Wolverine MI
Sydell I Voeller, Forest Grove OR
Peggy Webb, Mooreville MS

**Ninc has room to grow...
recommend membership to
your colleagues.**

**Prospective members may
apply online
at www.ninc.com.**

Online.....by Lorraine Heath

Spam—that irritating e-mail that tries to sell you something you don’t want—is a frequent topic on NINCLINK as members seek to find ways to keep it out of their mailboxes. *Spam Cop*, <http://spamcop.net/>, offers to filter out your spam for a cost of \$30 a year while *McAfee’s Spam Killer*, <http://www.spamkiller.com>, is software that you download for \$29.95. Both setups hold deleted spam in a folder so you can review it to make certain it should have been deleted. Spam Cop cannot filter MSN, AOL, or hotmail accounts. They do offer to set up a separate e-mail for you. Spam Killer is apparently only incompatible with AOL.

I’m not advocating the purchase of either product, but am simply reporting they exist. Since you still have to view the mail to make sure nothing was deleted that shouldn’t have been, I’m not certain I understand the benefit of either the service or the program. With Microsoft Outlook®, you have the option of blocking e-mail. You can also set up rules to delete mail that contains certain subjects, text, or e-mail addresses. Using both these features, I get very little spam in my inbox. Perhaps Spam Cop and Spam Killer are designed more for those e-mail programs that don’t provide an internal filtering capability.

PROMOTION

Phase 5, <http://www.bibliora.com/Phase5/>, is interested in reviewing straight science fiction, fantasy, and paranormal romance novels. If you are interested in having your book reviewed, contact Chris Ely, editor@bibliora.com. Chris says, “We’re still very new, so nothing is set in stone as of yet. The first few issues were reviews from our own personal collections, though some reviewers already had access to ARCs from prior online reviewing.

“Now that we’re getting a bit more established, we’d like authors to send us the basic info: Title, author name, premise, and what genre (or subgenre) if the premise doesn’t make it clear. It doesn’t have to be anything long and complex—a short “back cover blurb” will be enough. I’ve had a few writers approach us for reviews for upcoming issues, and what I’m doing is posting the info to our reviewers. If they see one they’re interested in, they (or I) will contact the author directly. We’d like to have an ARC or printed manuscript if there’s enough time to review in advance, otherwise, a reader’s copy will suffice for older titles.

“I’d like to say that we’d review every title submitted, but all total there are about 15 people associated with the magazine, but not all are book reviewers nor is everyone able to contribute to each issue. Book reviews seem to be where our greatest interests lie, so we hope to add a few more regular or special contributors to our reviewers pool

in the future.” The site also offers a message board.

RESEARCH

BioTech, <http://biotech.icmb.utexas.edu>, is an extremely interesting and useful site located in the Dr. Andrew Ellington lab at University of Texas at Austin. Under Cyberbotanica, you will find several species of plants and an explanation of how they were used historically for medicinal purposes. Periwinkle has long been used to treat diabetes, bleeding, coughing, lung congestion, and many other ailments. More information on this plant can be found at <http://biotech.icmb.utexas.edu/botany/perihist.html>. Other plant references include: autumn crocus, birch, hemp, English yew, and Chinese yew.

Firefighter Central, http://www.otterlake.net/FFC/firefighting_terms.htm, was designed to give the general public an inside look at the vocabulary used by firefighters. For a history of firefighting, go to http://www.otterlake.net/FFC/firefighting_history.htm. The site is currently constructing a “Firefighter Gear” page which might also prove useful if you are writing about firefighting.

The Friendship Fire Company, <http://www.jersey.net/~dwayne/history1.htm>, is a wonderfully detailed site providing information on Friendship Fire Company No. 1 which “is one of two fire companies that make up the Woodbury Fire Department for the City of Woodbury, New Jersey.” Several articles are available including “The Evolution of the Fire Engine”—which provides century photos. Other articles include “Protective Equipment” and “Tools of the Trade.”

The site also has timelines, beginning with April 29, 1793, when “Samuel Mickle, Andrew Hunter, and Dr. Geo. W. Campbell formed a subscription list to buy fire buckets.” It’s truly a fascinating site.

Fire Rescue, <http://www.jems.com/firerescue/index.html>, provides information on fire and rescue techniques. The article I read dealt with swift water survival, but information is also provided on confined space rescues, rope rescues, ice rescues, etc. Again, another fascinating site.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga hosts *Web Sites for the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression*, <http://www.utc.edu/commdept/19thcentpapers.html>. Of interest is an article on “How to Read a 19th Century Newspaper,” <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/news/19thpaper.html>. It explains how a newspaper was laid out and what each page might contain. The site also provides the text of many articles that were written during the 19th Century.

INDUSTRY ARTICLES

Once again, I'm listing articles that were mentioned on NINCLINK so those who don't subscribe will have an opportunity to read them.

Brilliant Sri Lankan Novelists, Go Home, by John Bloom

<http://www.upi.com/print.cfm?StoryID=14052002-055042-1541r>

Click lit: Chris Middleton reports on Publishing on Demand.

<http://c.moreover.com/click/here.pl?j33863417>

Unloading His Books, but Not His Conscience, by Fred Bernstein

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/11/technology/circuits/11BOOK.html>

How to Spot A Phony Book Reviewer, by Jim Cox, *Midwest Book Review*

<http://publishingnews.com/insights/articles/article-109.html>

Readings by Michael Dirda

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A51305-2002Apr25.html>

OF INTEREST

One Hit Wonder Central, <http://www.onehitwondercentral.com/>, lists artists who only had one hit song during their career. Beginning with 1950, they list each decade's one-hit wonders and provide a short history of the artist. I was surprised by how many songs I recognized, and a bit saddened to realize how fleeting success can be in an industry that relies on creativity and everything coming together at the right moment. A little like publishing, I suppose.

Controlling Your Listserve Preferences through E-Mail

Subscribe	NINCLINK-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
Unsubscribe	NINCLINK-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com
Switch to Digest	NINCLINK-digest@yahoogroups.com
Switch to Individual Mail	NINCLINK-normal@yahoogroups.com
No-Mail	NINCLINK-nomail@yahoogroups.com

Moderators:

If You Have Questions, E-Mail:

Brenda Hiatt-Barber	BrendaHB@aol.com
Patricia de la Fuente	Patricia@hiline.net
Lorraine Heath	lorraine-heath@attbi.com

FOR FUN

Mary Kennedy shared this fun and uplifting URL with us. Be sure you at least type in your first name. <http://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~geoffo/humour/flattery.html>. Enjoy!

If you discover sites that you think would interest Novelists, Inc. members, I'd appreciate it if you'd e-mail them to me. I'm always looking for interesting and useful sites to include in the column. E-mail me at lorraine-heath@attbi.com.

Thanks!

Bits'n'Pieces

BREAKING NEWS FROM DONNA HAYES, PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER OF HARLEQUIN...

"We are pleased to tell you that effective immediately we will be dropping the Pseudonym and Real Name clauses from our contracts. We will approach the transition of any current agreements to coincide with our new approach in two ways: a) Rather than amend current contracts, we will not enforce the Pseudonym and Real Name clauses that may be in those contracts. Authors will not be required to seek permission to use either their pseudonym or their real name in another context.

b) When an author signs a new Harlequin Books S.A. agreement, there will not be any clauses in the contract that restrict the author's right to use her or his pseudonym or real name. Regarding authors who currently write under pseudonyms or who wish to write under pseudonyms, the following language will appear in the contract:

'Author grants to Publisher non-exclusive use of her pseudonym, _____. Author warrants that there are no pre-existing contracts which prevent her from granting this non-exclusive right to the Publisher.'

"This language places the ownership, control and legal obligations regarding the pseudonym with the author." This is effective immediately.

— **Compiled by Terey daly Ramin**

For more Bits'n'Pieces, turn to pages 8, 11, 17, 20.

OUTSIDE THE BIG APPLE

Once I had an idea. Not one of those “grab you by the gut” inspirations that sends writers to our computers, but a new way to make money. Wait a minute, I realized. The freeways are clogged with truckers (one was my nephew) who need something to keep their brains intact.

Holy cow, AUDIOBOOKS.

My brainstorm was to provide a lending library via truck stops. I hadn’t worked out the specifics about how to make my great idea work, but I knew there was a vast potential market for audiotapes, not just among long distance truckers but all commuters.

Unfortunately, I was a day late and a dollar short since a number of audio publishers have tapped into the market provided by people stuck behind the wheel. I’ve had five historicals produced by one such publisher and the latest is on their bestseller list. I’m not getting rich, but I’ve had a ball working with this mama/papa business.

So how goes the audiobook industry? So far my research has failed to unearth any hard and fast figures, but I did learn a lot of stuff, so hold onto your hats. The natural starting point is The Audio Publishers Association (www.audiopub.org). Not all audio publishers are members so more digging will be necessary (I’ve personally worked with two non-members). That said, the APA, which has been in existence since 1986 and has more than 190 members, is committed to getting out the word about their industry which is why June was declared National Audio Month. The timing was deliberate to coincide with the BEA and Audie Awards. In addition, the APA held their first Rights Conference and a benefit for narrator Frank Muller, hosted by none other than Stephen King.

So who, other than my trucker nephew, listens to audiobooks? The APA commissioned a national marketing information survey to collect and process data obtained from 15,000 American households. The bumper information is that only one in five households listens to an audiobook in a year, but then how many households are without books? Of the listeners, 76% were female and the average age was 45. For the males, the average age was 47. The average listener earns 25% more than non-listeners, is more educated and more likely to hold a professional or managerial position. Usage is up 1.5% in the past two years. Interestingly, the use of CDs for audiobooks now nearly equals the use of tapes. Cars are still the dominant place for listening, averaging 4.4 hours, 3.6 at home, 2 at work (don’t tell the boss), 2 while exercising, and 1.1 hours on mass transit.

Thirty-eight percent of audiobooks are borrowed from libraries, 37% are purchased, 10% were received as gifts and the rest either borrowed or rented privately. Twenty eight percent of listeners rank Mystery/Horror/Suspense

as their favorite genre.

Back to the APA homepage: I conducted a search of all member publishers who do fiction and came up with 41 names. Some, like Brilliance Audio, Time Warner AudioBooks, Bantam Doubleday Dell, HarperCollins, and Penguin are well known, but some, like Lodestone Audio Theatre, Naxos AudioBooks, and Bolinda Audio Books were new to me.

Finally, we’re down to the important question. How does a writer get her book published on audio? Well, it ain’t easy. Yeah, you knew that was coming, didn’t you? According to the APA folk, obviously you have to have the audio rights (which in my case wasn’t all that hard; I just had to ask). Since there are more book readers than audiobook listeners, a writer has to expect an uphill slog—something we’re all accustomed to. Bottom line criteria is that of potential salability, not how good the recording will sound. The publishers prefer to deal with agents, especially if the publisher has had past dealings with the agent, in part because agents help in ascertaining the salability of potential purchases.

However, not all audiobooks first saw life as print books (I can attest to that with one of those quirky books that defied genre). Because there are no sales figures going into negotiation on an unpublished manuscript, an agent can earn his or her keep promoting the property. But expect to do your own legwork to bolster your agent’s arguments—or if you decide to test the audio industry on your own.

Good luck.

P.S. Next month a closer look at a few specific audio companies.

— **Vella Munn**

Bits'n'Pieces

JOB LINE... Looking For New Outlets For Your Storytelling Talents? Check out the article and the potential job market in the article “ONLINE GAMES: Potential New Arena for Writers?” Written by Carolyn Miller you can find the piece at <http://www.wga.org> the homepage of the Writers Guild of America. They’ve got some great advice and insights for all writers, not just screenwriters.

— **TdR**

Tricks of the Trade

BY RONN KAISER

You are five years old. You are in your playroom upstairs. The sun is coming in the dormer windows illuminating your doll house with all its tiny figures and objects. You've been immersed in your pretend world for an hour with your imaginary friend Jenny at your side. Nothing could be more real and engrossing than this wonderful game. Then your mother calls from downstairs, her voice intruding into the safe and perfect world of your imagination. She tells you it is time to do your chores.

You are an adult, a novelist who spends many waking hours every day in a world of your creation, an interesting place populated by people you have fabricated from whole cloth, people doing exciting, moving things that stir your passions, stimulating the deeper reaches of your mind and soul. Your companion is your muse. The stories you create together not only delight and occupy you, but they are your legacy to the world. This is the way you play.

The phone rings. It is your agent informing you of a rejection, your editor saying she isn't happy with your revisions, your dentist's office, your spouse reminding you to pick up the dry cleaning, or your bank informing you a check has been presented for which there are insufficient funds in your account. Writing stories, you are reminded, is not only the way you play, it is also the way you earn your living.

This month's topic concerns strategies for dealing with the competing demands of play (creative expression) and survival (making ends meet in the real world). How does the writer balance two such different endeavors? How do money issues and your muse get along?

That ringing phone, like your mother's voice lo those many years ago, tends to cause disappointment, annoyance, anxiety, pain, perhaps even anger. And yet there is no escaping from the demands of the real world. To write and play we must eat. Alas, we must abandon play and do our chores. Let's call it the tension between the *playroom* and the *kitchen*. So, how does a writer cope?

Each of us reacts somewhat differently to the problem, depending upon our situation, the stage of our career, our personalities, our psychological makeup, our values and philosophy, and the coping strategies and techniques we've developed. In looking over the various responses, it occurred to me Nincoids fall somewhere along two different spectrums. One is the *relative emphasis* we place on the playroom and the kitchen and the other is *coping styles*, ranging from helplessness/ resignation and the neurotic on one hand, to the constructive/rational and contented on the other.

This has nothing to do with the quality of the work produced as everybody seems to find a way to get the job done. We're all published novelists. When it comes to the frustrations of our craft (art) and getting paid for it, we seem to have different ways of getting from point A to point B. Let's look at some examples.

First there is a group of writers, some relatively new at the business or who only write part-time, who tend to spend their time in the kitchen, but enjoy pleasant forays into the playroom. **Annette Carney** confesses she was terrified at the thought of writing full-time and the lifestyle and financial changes that would require. Says Annette, "I know that at this point in my writing career, the thought of eventually having to make some \$\$\$ makes me freeze at the keyboard. For me, having a day job makes writing fun—and the extra income is just that...icing on the cake."

Similarly **Sylvie Kurtz**, who finds the long waits between finishing a project and getting paid for it to be daunting says, "There's no way I can support my family with my writing. Right now it just pays for the extras." **Mary Kennedy** has always had a "day job" while writing her novels. She says, "whenever I've tried to focus on one thing exclusively, I've felt edgy and restless. It seems that it's easier (for me) to face inevitable conflicts and disappointments in one job, if I have another one going at the same time."

And then there are those writers who simply say the situation is impossible. Ask **Mary Kilchenstein** how money issues and her muse get along and her response is succinct and to the point: "They don't. Period." For Mary, creative activity and money simply don't go together, whether it's writing, sewing, cooking, or music. "I've learned the hard way with each and every one of them that I have to do them for love," Mary says. "The minute I start trying to make money off of my creativity—or in some cases even *thinking* about doing so—the well goes dry." She wonders if perhaps her creativity *requires* that she place no limits on it or set goals for it beyond her personal satisfaction, not allowing herself to become distracted by outside expectations. Mary thinks the solution may be to adopt the philosophy from the film *Field of Dreams*—Build it and they will come. Or, for purposes of the writer, "Write it and it will sell. Never mind that the car needs expensive repairs and kid's college tuition bill is due and there's no money being saved for retirement (a time that's creeping ever closer.) Just write the story I feel compelled to tell because doing it is more fun than anything else in the world."

Similarly **Melanie Jackson** says, "Thinking about business sends my muse out on to the ledge where she starts threatening to jump. Not liking tragedy, I try hard not to deal with business any more than I have to." ▶ ▶ ▶

Tricks of the Trade

▶▶▶ Melanie adds, “My muse is vaporish and inclined to tantrums so I let her take frequent vacations to weird places—and if it amuses her to play pedestrian pick-off on the way...well, it’s only fiction.” When it comes to balancing the job and the creative, **Anne Holmberg** has to laugh. She says, “If I were to drive my car the same way I’ve run my career, I’d be pulled over for drunken, reckless driving in a flash.” This coming from a woman who once had a successful, upwardly mobile career until she took up writing.

According to Nincoïd **Pat Roy**, money issues and her muse “are barely on speaking terms.” Her greatest challenge is to wrest “enough money away from a publisher to make it worthwhile even sending a manuscript in.” Pat’s solution? She stopped agreeing to write to deadlines. “Now I just write. One of these days I’ll have to attend to the business end of things again. But for now, I just write.” In the same vein, **Deni Dietz** says, “My muse looks money issues in the face. And laughs,” adding “I’ve always written the books I want to write, and I have 17 years of waiting tables to prove it.” Putting it in a nutshell, **Cheryl Wolverton** says simply, “I write for love inspired.”

Some writers have been forced to take practical steps in dealing with the inevitable conflicts between the kitchen and the playroom. For **Laura Resnick** the “egregious practices of publishers” that result in financial stress are the biggest challenge to maintaining creative energy. Laura’s solution has been to take on “a variety of extra writing work in addition to my full-time novel writing—articles, short stories, columns, even ghostwriting and pseudonymic work-for-hire on occasion. “It’s tiring,” says Laura, “but not nearly as tiring as staying up nights searching the couch cushions for spare change so I can buy milk and pay the electric bill while waiting seven months for a signing or a delivery check.” **Cheryl Zach** also tries to be pragmatic about the financial hardships of a writing career by keeping “monthly expenses as low as possible, and pay cash for big purchases.” She believes a safety net/saving account is a good idea. “Other than that, cultivate a taste for beans and rice.”

And then there are the Nincoïds who take a systemic approach to the conflicts between the demands of the kitchen and the joy of the playroom. These are the folks who see a lemon and decide to make lemonade. To **Sherry-Anne Jacobs**, it’s all about being multi-skilled and learning to switch from one side of the brain to the other. Key for Sherry-Anne is “finding the *uninterrupted* time to write and sink into the story, so that my own life blurs.” But she recognizes that there’s no perfect solution. “...life goes on,”

she avers, “you have to eat and wash the clothes, etc.”

A sub-group of the positive attitude school consists of writers who regard what they do as a business pure and simple. Says Nincoïd **Nancy Warren**, “I’m an entrepreneur. I love having my own business—which is how I treat my writing career—and I write to make money.” Nancy adds, “My muse and my business manager live in different sides of my brain. They peek over the fence and wave occasionally, but they speak different languages so never get too involved with one another.” Although Nancy sometimes gets distracted by business concerns, she says, “I really try to put the writing first, and trust that the rest will follow. I think I have a fairly level-headed muse. So long as she’s fed and gets enough sleep and a bit of outside activity now and then, she’s fairly good about coming through every day.” Nancy marvels that she actually gets paid for writing. And in a classic piece of positive thinking adds: “I must have a money-grubbing muse. She seems to like that part of it too.”

Another Nincoïd who considers herself an entrepreneur is **Jean Brashear**. Though she recognizes that the conflict between the business person and the artist can be “painful,” and often wishes “someone else would do all that nasty detail stuff and leave me to play with my imaginary friends,” Jean disciplines herself to write during the productive part of the day (mornings in her case), then takes care of business in the late afternoons and evenings “when all hope of creativity has fled.” Jean is a person “who has a hard time playing until all my work is done...” finding it “difficult to placate my Protestant work ethic when I know there are tasks aplenty waiting, both businesswise and life-wise.” Jean’s favorite technique: “unplug the phone and train everyone who knows me not to expect to reach me until noon at the earliest.”

Perhaps the best example of the lemons/lemonade approach to the money-creativity conundrum is the mindset of **Barbara Keiler**. BK puts it this way: “I like making money and my family depends on my income, so writing for money keeps me nicely focused.” Nor does she think money corrupts the creative process. Rather, “what it does,” according to BK “is remind me of my mission: to enlighten, move, and entertain others with my writing. I don’t write just for myself. I write for others....Getting paid for my writing is simply a monetary measure of the fact that I’m reaching others.” In what surely will become a classic line, BK sums up her thinking thus: “As for ‘money issues’ getting along with my muse, those ‘money issues’ are my

muse. I keep the mortgage coupon book next to my computer. It's very inspiring."

A couple of Nincoids weren't so much concerned with the question of money getting in the way of the creative process, as its influence on *what* they wrote. **Pat Rice's** only issue at the beginning of her career was "how to make more." She adds, "But as I became aware of the market, what was hot what was not, I eventually realized that writing my own story was more important to me than writing the stories that sold or in a manner that would sell better. I liked skipping all over the place rather than finding a comfortable niche, and I was willing to sacrifice Big Bucks for doing what came naturally." But Pat, recognizing the need for compromise, would search for a subject palatable to her editor, *provided* she liked it just as well because, as she puts it, "I like eating as well as the next person."

For **Mary Jo Putney** the key is "to find the 'sweet spot' where what we want to write intersects with the marketplace." Her approach is to "make conscious choices that make the book more likely to be accepted in the marketplace. If I was required to change the essential core of a story, the aspects that really compelled me, I would instead find another story to write. Which means there may be some stories in the back of my mind that will never get written, but hopefully I will continue to be able to pay my mortgage."

There's no right or wrong in the matter of money vs. creativity. Whatever works is what you need to do. According to the "starving artist" theory, financial pressure may be a blessing to some. Others eschew angst, choosing instead to find a comfortable way to reduce tension or to turn it to advantage. For those who suffer and are searching for coping techniques, here's my short list of principles you might consider:

1) *Try to compartmentalize.* Recognize that when you're in

the playroom, you should play with passion and enthusiasm, embracing your muse. When you're in the kitchen, do your business and get your house in order.

2) *Learn the art of benevolent self deception.* As in everything in life, it's all about attitude. Relish your joys, understand your fears, and do whatever necessary to be in the appropriate mindset at the right time, even if it means kidding yourself. If you can't make money issues your muse, develop a system of small personal challenges and reward yourself for each success. When you're feeling low, invite Jenny over to play.

As Kenneth Atchity (*A Writer's Time*) wrote: "The challenge of surviving as a writer lies in learning not to avoid anxiety but to cope with it and make its energy positive." and "Before anything reaches paper, the business of being a writer is the business of developing self-awareness and honest introspection. Keats called the profession of writing 'soul-making,' and the first step toward success is recognizing the psychological discipline that writing requires."

Topic for September: *What clever tips about the "mechanics" or "environment" of writing have you discovered that might save others time or trouble? Computers? Research? Business records? Promotion gimmicks? Naming characters or remembering their attributes? Clearing your mind or saving your back? Ensuring your privacy? Organizing your office? Neat products? The best advice you've ever gotten in one pithy phrase?*

Please submit your September tips and topic suggestions for October in the medium of your choice, by July 25 as follows:

E-mail: ronn.kaiser@prodigy.net

Fax: (916) 681-7155

Snail mail: 8133 Ibanez Court
Sacramento, CA 95829

Bits'n'Pieces

PUBS TO PAY TO MANAGE BORDERS' CATEGORIES...

Borders' new category management program, implemented this year and outlined in a recent PW Daily profile of Borders chairman and CEO Greg Josefowicz, goes like this: Borders has divided its book inventory into 250 categories and invited publishers to "captain"—er *influence* the category buying decisions, including which titles, the num-

ber to be bought, and how the books get displayed, though Borders retains right of final decision.

Cost for the privilege? \$110,000 annually and \$5,000 per employee to be trained by Borders in how the system works. So far, HarperCollins will captain Borders' cookbook and romance sections, and Random House will co-manage the early readers category.

By this observer's record of the many Borders in the Detroit-Ann Arbor area, so far grocery store management of the bookseller seems to be running like, well, a grocery store: mediocre stocking of merchandise I want to buy, everything moved where I can't find it, and nothing stocked where it actually makes sense to stock it.

— **TdR**

Freedom to Write



Sunday thru
Tuesday
Sept. 22-24, 2002

New York
Marriott Marquis
Times Square,
New York City

This article is the second installment of, "In Their Own Words," answers from our esteemed conference speakers to questions posed by your intrepid conference coordinator.

The Respondents

Jenny Bent, Harvey Klinger Agency

**Mary K. Chelton, Ph.D - Associate Professor, Grad
School of Library & Information Services**

**Geoff Colquitt - Dir. of Marketing, Avon & Harper
Torch Books**

Carrie Feron - Executive Editor, Avon Books

**Patricia Rouse - Public Relations, Reader's Clubs,
Romantic Times Romantic Times columnist**

Eleanor Wood - Spectrum Literary Agency

Kathie Fong Yoneda - Script Development

Consultant, Paramount Pictures Television

Al Zuckerman - President, Writer's House

Once again, I have the pleasure of introducing you to some of the speakers confirmed for our annual conference. (A note: Also included are a couple of quotes from two of last month's respondents.)

As was the case for last month's article, these men and women offer distinct perspectives on the business and they're not shy in voicing their opinions. Also, like last month's group, they were in agreement on only one of the questions...of course, it's a different question that evoked the consensus.

Last month no one could agree on whether the lines are blurring or sharpening. This month, one answer rang out.

Eleanor Wood speaks for the whole group when she says, "The short answer is [I see lines] blurring between genres."

Geoff Colquitt says, "With categories like romantic suspense growing rapidly, the lines defining categories are blurring. This, I think, is good."

And **Carrie Feron**: "Genres are always evolving." Feron mentioned that Avon "is buying more books about single life in the 20's and 30's for our trade lines."

Authors broadening the scope of their stories may be a natural growth, but how do readers feel about it?

Pat Rouse has to "hunt in several review sections of "Romantic Times"...since I never know if an author's novels will be reviewed in the mainstream or in the mystery/suspense section. Linda Howard is still reviewed with the mainstream romances. However, I recently found Elizabeth Lowell's novels reviewed in the suspense section when I'll always consider her a romance author. Also, romantic mysteries are no longer just in contemporary romance but are also crafted by fine historical romance authors."

As we read in last month's article, these "blended" books are hard to categorize, hard to shelve, and even harder to define. None of this, however, seems to deter readers. In addition, the "blurring of lines," has taken on two meanings: the one being between genres. The second the line of demarcation created by a reader's gender: girls read this, boys read that. But... "There are a growing number of men," **Colquitt** says, "that are reading what not so long ago would have been considered romance writers and also a growing number of women who seem to be gravitating to authors that before now would have been 'guys' only." He has his eye on "romantic suspense" as a possible favorite in the market. (He adds "There also seems to be a significant return to publishing in the category of Westerns.")

Authors may have started the evolution—blending, splicing, even creating new genres—but, in the words of **Al Zuckerman**, "Editors and readers now look for romance in mysteries and for suspenseful elements in romances."

In fact, the words used most often in this round of answers for all the questions were: mystery, suspense, romance, and adventure (in that order).

The adventure novel used to be a card-carrying member of the boys' club. **Rouse** says, "My current favorite type of romance is romantic adventure which I feel is a separate subgenre from romantic comedy and romantic suspense. Romantic adventure is usually not funny and although it puts the main couple in jeopardy with a fast-paced adventure, there is usually no mystery involved."

Kathie Fong Yoneda says that "For films, romantic comedies, thrillers, mysteries, family fare, and general comedies are the usual staples, while horror, period pieces, heavy drama, and science fiction seem to go in and out of favor

depending on the whim of the audience.”

Wood shares that “An editorial director at a major sf line noted that there has been a lot of successful crossovers recently of mystery/science fiction or romance/science fiction.” Her own sales are “predominantly science fiction, fantasy, mystery (both historical and contemporary), and suspense fiction.” She has also represented straight historical fiction. “For novels I represent, I’m generally looking for fast pacing, dramatic tension, fresh ideas, and characters whose fates the reader cares about.”

Zuckerman echoes that opinion. “The modern reader overall in my view seeks character complexity in almost every genre. The book I enjoyed most in the last two years was *A Man in Full*, (Tom Wolfe). It was built around several strong situations, but within these it was clearly character and the author’s brilliant use of language that made this book tower above the others.

“The market,” he says, “is looking for stories written in a distinctive and even in an exotic voice. Ethnic viewpoints and idioms of all kinds are hot, especially if the writers who use these bring craft to their work.”

Feron concurs, saying, “For me, it’s always voice. Writers should work on developing their own voice.”

Mary K. Chelton’s last favorite read was *Midnight Confessions*, by Candice Proctor. “I found her intertwining of mood and setting in 1862 New Orleans very distinctive. I think whoever can produce a book with the same feel to it as *Tuesdays with Morrie* will have an odds-on favorite. It was a book about hope and goodness and transformation without being glib.” And maybe someone in the ranks here can help Mary in her “eternal quest for another Miles Vorkosigan.”

For **Colquitt**, “The key is a strong sense of place. By that, I mean the setting is made so familiar that you feel you’ve either been there, are there, and if it’s really good, you know people there. I find that developing place to that level is fairly rare. I read perhaps one or two books each year that are developed to this level. I should mention that the sense of place aspect that I’m talking about is *in addition* to equally strong other aspects to the book.”

Rouse points out, however, “The competition is so fierce that authors can’t just write a great book and expect to make the bestseller lists but must also self-promote themselves as well. New authors should expect to invest a portion of each book’s earnings into shameless self-promotion through attending conferences and booksignings, magazine articles and ads, mailings and e-mail to readers and readers groups, establishing a website that’s easy to find under their own name, and also networking on various multi-author websites and publishers’ sites.” She also says, “It is an excellent idea to write in several romance subgenres and for several publishers to garner a broader readership who will follow the author no matter what they decide to write.”

Colquitt and Wood also mentioned self-promotion. “Be willing to get out and promote,” **Colquitt** says, “and realize that, at least at the start, it takes the author *and* the

publisher working together to build a career.”

Wood says that promotion “often does make a difference.” But she adds more: “Behaving in a professional manner with your agent and editor, talking with other writers about their professional experiences, and trying to keep up with what is selling well in your field of writing are all tried-and-true bits of advice. And, with regards to your own manuscript, be ruthless in cutting or editing passages that do not move the story forward. An excellent writer can make just about any type of story interesting.”

The journey to “excellence,” in **Zuckerman’s** opinion, begins before writing. His advice for success is to “labor over several drafts of an outline before actually beginning his or her novel.”

A different and very specific bit of advice comes from **Jenny Bent**. “Think high concept. [Create] unusual plots or unusual characters or an unusual setting. Remember that to be high concept you have to think creatively within certain boundaries. It’s always helpful if you can compare the book to something else that has worked well in the past.”

My heartfelt thanks to these speakers for taking the time to share their insights with all of us. Next month, more speakers, more quotes, and more insights—including the answers to who our esteemed speakers consider mentors.

Speaker Update

Added just after the NYCon brochure went to press:

Jill Conner Browne, author, *Sweet Potato Queen’s Book of Love*

Tom Doherty, President and Publisher, Tor and Forge

Dianne Moggy, Editorial Director, MIRA Books

Stay tuned.

Conference News

By now, you have received the conference brochure with the schedule, registration, hotel and travel information, a full description of the panels, and the roster of speakers. Lots of information (did you see what to do for a roommate and make note of the deadlines?), heaps of enthusiasm (have you read the quotes?), and a dose of suspense (did you notice the surprise?).

Information, enthusiasm, and suspense. That pretty much sums up the conference: Three days packed with energy, enthusiasm, fun with your friends, insider’s information, great networking opportunities, and a little something unexpected sure to bring big smiles. Come join us for the conference of the year!

**— Laura Baker
NYCon Coordinator**

The Buzz in the Biz.....by Olivia Rupprecht

The original plan was to examine ethnic lines in general. That plan got scrapped after BET Books sent me several ARCs. While Arabesque is putting out some top-notch romance titles, the up-and-coming Sepia and New Spirit imprints are anything but mediocre in substance and style. They not only stand out in quality as ethnic lines, but offer an exceptional reading experience for anyone in search of a great book.

If there is a misconception anywhere, it is that these books are specifically written for an African-American audience. That simply is not true. Although BET gears most of its marketing to African-Americans—hence, the special A/A section where the books are slotted in many stores—a great story is a great story is a great story. And have they got some heavy hitters landing in the stands.

Much of the development in this burgeoning market is owed to Linda Gill, VP and Publisher of BET Books. Prior to being appointed as Publisher in 1999, Linda graduated from Dartmouth College then spent nearly twenty years in the media industry. She has held management positions with Conde Nast, Lotus, and BET: Black Entertainment Television. At Condé Nast, she worked on *Mademoiselle* and *Vanity Fair* magazines. BET's founder, Robert Johnson, and Debra Lee, President, recruited Linda for their own magazines—which reach over two million African-American households—before putting her in charge of BET Books.

Wasting no time, Linda has successfully launched two new lines (Sepia and New Spirit), plus she oversees Arabesque and an organization that includes over 60 authors, a fast growing book club, and publishes nearly 100 titles a year.

NINK: *You have several lines under the BET umbrella. What can you tell us about them, and who are some of the authors to watch for?*

Linda Gill: Arabesque is the largest line of African-American romances from a major publisher, and publishes over 60 African-American authors. Arabesque delivers five romances a month to the mar-

ketplace, and this summer has a special program “The Family Reunion Series.” Three stand-alone titles that interconnect with first cousins as the heroines, written by Geri Guillaume, Shirley Hailstock and Eboni Snøe.

Sepia is a new imprint delivering compelling fiction by some of the freshest literary talent entering the marketplace, along with works by best-selling authors such as Sheila Copeland (*A Chocolate Affair*) and Linda Dominique Grosvenor (*Like Boogie On Tuesday*).

New Spirit is also a new imprint for inspirational fiction. The first title to launch the line is *Prodigal Husband* by best-selling author Jacquelin Thomas, along with works by Patricia Haley, Angela Benson, and others. We look for compelling fiction in all of our books, but the New Spirit line focuses on realistic stories that convey universal messages with a spiritual element.

NINK: *Do you think the events of 9/11 have contributed to an increased interest, or need, for spiritual-based books?*

LG: African-Americans have long-embraced their spirituality and made it a central part of their lives, and the events of Sept. 11 have only heightened the awareness about the fragility and uncertainty of life, and the need for greater purpose. Research shows that 94% of black adults have a very deep spiritual life, (Barna Research Group) and therefore fiction that explores these themes is welcomed now more than ever before.

NINK: *Would you say there's less rivalry and more camaraderie between competing publishers of ethnic titles, or is it pretty much the same as the rest of Publishers' Row?*

LG: The expanding marketplace for African-American literature keeps everyone on his or her toes, and it is certainly a competitive environment. That said, the camaraderie is very real and everyone heralds each other's successes, and shares information and expertise when possible.

NINK: *In what ways do ethnic books differ significantly from non-ethnic books? And what about relationships, are they really any different?*

LG: The obvious is that the characters are African-American, and the environments explored in the novels reflect their unique styles, and relationships to family, work, education, and general life in a way that the reader can instantly identify. Colleges mentioned may be Spelman or Howard University; vacation locales may be Atlanta or Martha's Vineyard. The close relationship with women friends, challenges with relationships and parenthood are explored and triumphed in a way that is unique to our community. While many of these themes may be universal, the style and substance of how they are dealt with include a layer of reality that is appreciated by the African-American community. Especially since many of these stories are not explored in other mainstream media such as television and movies.

NINK: *Is there a crossover audience to the ethnic lines?*

LG: A crossover audience does exist, and we hope that it continues to grow. A good book is a good book. Period! This can be encouraged by including these excellent works of fiction in all areas of bookstores, and reviewed by all areas of media. And most importantly, distribution is key.

NINK: *What major differences, if any, are there in marketing ethnic titles?*

LG: A comprehensive marketing program that is strategic and flawlessly implemented is universal. The elements are all the same. That said, word of mouth, book clubs, and now the Internet, are key marketing elements for spreading the word about new and outstanding works by African-American authors.

In the Book Industry Study Group (BISG) **African-American Book Buyers Survey** (BET Books was a sponsor along with Warner, Scholastic, Simon & Schuster, and others), 73% said they have bought titles recommended by friends or family. This

study showed that generating a “buzz” about a book is a critical marketing element to tap into this strong book-buying audience. The study showed how voracious the readers are with an astounding 92% purchasing one to ten books in the past three months, and 82% reading one to five books in the same time frame.

NINK: *You do have a focus on marketing to the African-American population. What do readers of other races have to gain by sampling your books?*

LG: I read all types of fiction from Hemingway, Toni Morrison, Robert Ludlum, Gwynne Forster, Pearl Buck, Jacqueline Thomas to Janet Evanovich. I learn something from all of them—about culture, life, hopes, and dreams. But most of all I am transported by their written words into another world that is exciting, and sometimes just plain fun. So, there are only positives gained from reading all types of fiction, no matter who you are. *That is the gift of a good novel.*

NINK: *What about other genres? Do you think there could be a demand for, say, ethnic sf/f or Westerns?*

LG: Yes, I do. The demand is there and it is beginning to be served and I can’t wait.

NINK: *Do you have any racial restrictions on authors who wish to submit material, or is the work judged solely on its own merit and quality?*

LG: BET Books is committed to developing the careers of African-American authors based upon merit and the outstanding quality of their work. It remains important to provide an opportunity to African-American authors to have their novels brought to the marketplace and presented to this very receptive audience.

NINK: *If you had a crystal ball, what would you like to see for the future of ethnic books in five years, ten?*

LG: BET Books is committed to developing extraordinary works by and for African-Americans in this growing marketplace. At an estimated \$2.7 billion (ABA/Gallup Study), the market of African-American consumers buying black books represents a vital and one of the fastest growing segments of this \$21 billion industry. With such tremendous

growth comes a wonderful opportunity for new genres, young authors to become published and launch their literary careers, and for more established authors to expand their audiences, like never before. The future is certainly bright. Spread the word...the best is yet to come!

Thank you, Linda!

Linda was forthright, and often eloquent, with her responses. But she did dodge the issue regarding submission policies when it came to the author’s racial heritage—if they would consider material from authors who were not African-American, as long as the work was culturally authentic and up to their exacting standards.

For working writers, it seemed an important question, particularly given BET’s growing sales, aggressive marketing, and impressive distribution. I have to admit to wimping out, however, and not pressing the question, after she sent those ARCs that kept me up till two a.m. Sorry, I just enjoyed the books too much to dig in my heels and get the answer, dammit!

Now there was a rumor running about that Harlequin/Silhouette had plans to start a few ethnic lines of their own. When approached for confirmation, Isabel Swift had this to say: “I’m aware of the rumor, but that’s all it really is—certainly for now. We’re always exploring new directions and shopping around for ideas and ways to expand, but we’re not at a point that we’re announcing anything in terms of separate ethnic lines. We’re already doing ethnic romances in our existing lines, and actively seek them out. Our doors are wide open for all kinds of good stories, so additional compartmentalization of what we’re already publishing may not be a strong enough goal.”

Ninc member Shirley Hailstock can attest to that. Having sold a romance with African-American characters to Silhouette Special Edition last year—in addition to being an award-winning Arabesque author—Shirley has a good grasp on the upside and the downside of it all, and some refreshingly candid observations about both:

NINK: *You’re considered an ethnic author, Shirley. Do you ever feel labeled by the term?*

Shirley Hailstock: You know, we’re all ethnic—whether we’re Irish or French or African-American. Maybe that’s one reason I really don’t like the term “ethnic romances” because it seems to say there is

something of greater emphasis in these books than the romance. Just because a black person wrote it and the characters are black shouldn’t carry any more or less weight than a book written by and about white characters. As for our books being put in special sections, I do believe the marketing staffs wanted people of color to know the books existed when they were first released, because prior to that there were very few romances with black characters. But as a result the term “ethnic romance” was coined and there is no getting around it.

NINK: *After 13 published novels, how strong is your cross-over audience?*

SH: While I’m thrilled that there is a place for my stories when this was not always the case, I am disappointed that so few white Americans willingly pick up a romance novel with African-American characters on the cover. I’ve won quite a few contests and so often the judges have written that they loved the book but probably would never have picked it up if it hadn’t been assigned to them. So, yes, there is a cross-over audience, but unfortunately, it hasn’t been quick or easy to build.

NINK: *Why do you think such hesitation exists?*

SH: At book signings, I’ve had people say they were buying my book for “a friend,” which translates, “for my black friend.” I have asked why they wouldn’t read my book themselves and it appears they feel there is something in the books they will not understand. Like, “it’s a black thing,” or “it’s only for black readers.” But you know what? It’s a romance novel and at the core is a love story. And love stories are universal, no matter the color of the character’s skin or that of the author who penned it.

NINK: *You mentioned that not so long ago, it wasn’t easy to find romances with an African-American hero and heroine. Besides yourself, who are some of the pioneers who’ve changed all that? And was there a publisher open to such romances prior to Arabesque?*

SH: Actually, Harlequin/Silhouette has had quite a few African-American authors over the years. Sandra Kitt wrote about 20 novels for Harlequin American, featuring white characters, but she also wrote the first book with African-

The Buzz in the Biz.....

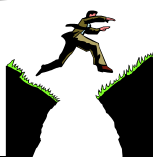
▶▶▶▶ American characters, *Adam and Eva*, back in the 1980s. There weren't any follow-up books until 1992, when a couple of Special Editions came out, written by Chassie West. Eva Rutland, sold about 50 novels to Harlequin Romance over a very long career; though all of those characters were white, Eva did write an autobiography for MIRA entitled, *No Crystal Stair*. Angela Benson and Robyn Amos

have also written for Harlequin, and Brenda Jackson and Rochelle Alers have sold to Silhouette Desire, and Felicia Mason has sold to Love Inspired. So, books with African-American characters are getting into Harlequin in their existing lines. We'll have to see how the sales do, but I'm hoping it will go a long way toward expanding the readership of black authors and tearing down the wall of "geared to-

ward black readers."

NINK: *If you had a single message you could get out to the public at large, what would it be?*

SH: The principals of good storytelling apply to all good books, and "ethnic" novels are certainly no exception. They really are for everyone, everywhere. **NINK**



Sticky Notes from the Edge

I Am Lion, Hear Me Roar....

This month, Lynn Miller aka Meg Lacey— writer/producer and President of Parke Media (a television and interactive media company), and who currently writes for Silhouette and Harlequin—is apparently feeling a little bit too close to the edge, y'all. Well, it's not like we can't relate, right? So sit back (way back) and listen to Sister Lynn on the soapbox. You tell 'em, honey! And Lynn says:

Think about it. Until that damn wizard stepped in, the cowardly lion had it made. Whenever threatened, his mighty roar had everyone running away. The result? Old fur-face never had to face the truth; he never had to grow. All he had to do was rely on sound and fury. But then, one day, he had to face the wiz and himself. Bummer.

I can relate to the cowardly lion. A voice in my head says: "Get out there, try, do, succeed." Sometimes I want to blast out a big roar of my own: "Butt out! Leave me alone. I'm afraid, okay?"

Well, no. It's not okay. In our world, we're encouraged to achieve and make our mark on the world—and do it now. Well, I don't know about you, but I get tired of constantly putting my chin up and dealing with it all.

Still, we writers daily encounter our lack of courage and must face it alone. We have to put ourselves and our work out there. And we're terrified to do it. Maybe we've been burned by a professional life of frequent rejection, enlivened only by infrequent acceptance. Or maybe we don't want to face truths like:

I screwed up that last project...didn't come out as they thought it would.

Can I make it bigger, smaller, make it stand out, fit the market, make it sexier, sweeter, add some mystery, humor, remove the dog, add a raccoon, etc.

This market really sucks...is there a place for me?

My numbers aren't great...now what? A new profession?

My agent forgot who I was. Thought I was trying to sell her/him a magazine subscription.

My editor quit to become a short-order cook.

I just don't get it.

I got it, but they didn't.

I got it but lost it.

Writers must fight the desire to slink back into the forest. Hiding out is not an option if you want to keep selling. However, if the cowardly lion has taught us anything, he's taught us that sometimes you have to roar really loud—and mean it. Sometimes you have to yank up your knickers and:

Tempt fate.

Explore new worlds

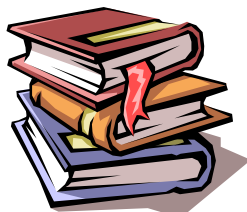
And, most of all, trust yourself.

Only then can you say to the wizard: 'Give me the damn medal. Fill me with courage, tell me I'm swell, and then give me a new challenge. I can handle it!'

Courage. That's what writing is all about, isn't it?"

I believe, Lynn! Say what hasn't been said before. Forget that measly meow. ROAR!

— **Cheryl Anne Porter**



RE-VIEWING....

SWAIN'S SELLING WRITER

Nincoïd Sally Hawkes provides a commentary on the classic Tricks and Techniques of the Selling Writer (or Techniques of the Selling Writer 1982 ed.) by Dwight Swain as this month's contribution to our BOOK REVIEW column. ED.

This is *that* book—the one that's had South Central and Southwestern writers continually talking about “Scene and Sequel” for some twenty-odd years. Swain has helped quite a few beginning genre writers in Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma find a means of organizing their prose. I first heard about him in the '80s while attending the Golden Triangle Writers Guild Conferences in Beaumont, TX. In fact, the interest of these writers caused the book to be reprinted by University of Oklahoma Press.

Although it was written almost 40 years ago, Swain's book still stands up. I don't read how-to books very often, mostly because they are so abstract or too touchy-feely for my taste. I'd rather spend my time writing or reading fiction. I gave in on this one after several workshops and taking note of the writers who were, and are, his disciples. Oh, I still got a few more rejection letters after reading *Techniques*, but the comments from editors improved. I did sell my first book about a year later.

With Swain's Scene and Sequel explanation and the synergy of Motivation and Reaction, I found a means to writing a well-paced story with clarity. He provides a road map to get over the sagging middle and most of all, how to keep characters motivated.

Scene and Sequel are simple tools for organization. Goal, Conflict, Disaster set up the action with Reaction, Dilemma, and Decision at the reaction. The Decision then takes the character to the next Goal. As Swain explains, these elements are units that linked together to present the action. “A scene is a unit of conflict lived through by the characters and reader.” This is followed (of course) by sequel, “a unit of transition that links two scenes.”

Some writers are apprehensive about continually setting up Conflict and Disas-

ter. The setups can mean any thing from a punch in the jaw to your character being told, “No.” Both of these keep the character from reaching a set goal. Sometimes the sequel is all introspection, but it can also be carried out in dialog and action. Swain doesn't limit the creative process to plotting; he also helps writers work on creating characters.

His style of presentation is very elemental. He sets up the five or six how-to type questions at the beginning of chapter. Once he's presented the questions, he works on problem-solving each question with concise explanations and examples. The book can be read from cover to cover, or a writer can focus on a single trouble area. When I went to check Barnes & Noble's online selection I found that there is a now a juvenile version called *Creating Characters* and two audio versions *How to Build Fictional Characters* and *Structuring Your Novel*. Below are other editions of his work.

1. *Creating Characters: How to Build Story People*. paper ed. F & W Publications,

1994

2. *Film Scriptwriting: A Practical Manual*. Paperback / Butterworth-Heinemann, 1990

3. *How to Build Fictional Characters*. Audio Writer's AudioShop, 1999

4. *Structuring Your Novel*. Audio Writer's AudioShop, 1992.

5. *Techniques of the Selling Writer*. paper ed. University of Oklahoma Press, 1990

I think the final sentence of an online review from *School Library Journal* from the YA version summed up Swain's books very well: “This is a book for those already committed to writing fiction and who want to think about the craft of writing.”

Sally Hawkes has written contemporary romance, traditional Regencies, and historical romance under the names Sarah Hawkes, Sally Falcon, and Sarah Eagle. Her current WIP is an historical adventure. During the day she works as Coordinator of Network Services at the Arkansas State Library.

Bits'n'Pieces

NINTH CIRCUIT RULING COULD MAKE PUBLISHERS MORE AGGRESSIVE...

This one could have a real impact on our future contracts, people. A lawyer versed in publishing contracts says the Ninth Circuit ruling against West Publishing might lead houses to build more exemptions into their contracts.

“I wouldn't be surprised if you see NY publishers try to have supervening clauses that allow for changing market conditions,” says Lloyd Jassin. In *West v.*, the author successfully argued that nothing in his contract specified that the publisher could reject the book on

market grounds. Worth noting, hmm?

NEW NAME FOR LOWENSTEIN...

Lowenstein Associates has become Lowenstein-Yost Associates, reflecting the contributions of longtime agent Nancy Yost, who has been with agency for over ten years.

DORCHESTER TO HIRE SALES FORCE...

Dorchester Publishing, parent of Leisure Books and publisher of mass market lines or romance, horror, and Westerns, will hire its own sales force and use HarperCollins for customer service, billing, and credit functions starting in September. The company has used Hearst's COMAG for sales and distribution.

— TdR



Laura Resnick is

THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

“Enlarge Your Penis”

I wake up. I tumble out of bed. I throw cold water on my face. I make coffee. (And, no, I do not intend to give up the vice of caffeine, not ever, so don't you even start with me.) I search for my slippers. I can't find them. I search for my glasses so I'll have a better chance of finding my slippers. I wander into my office. I look at my work. My work looks at me. I sit down at the computer and check my e-mail. It says:

ENLARGE YOUR PENIS!

I ask you, is this the sort of thing anyone—I mean, even someone who *has* a penis—really wants to read first thing in the morning?

INCEST! SEE DAUGHTER AND DAD GO AT IT!

I feel queasy. I delete the penis and incest e-mails without opening them. I scroll further down the list of messages in my e-mailbox.

KEEP HER HAPPY WITH VIAGRA!

Once and for all, I do not have a penis! Get a clue! Get a life! Get out of my mailbox!

GIRLS HAVING SEX WITH DOGS AND HORSES!

Thanks for *that* mental image which I will now spend the rest of the morning trying to shed.

In fact, since I was raised in a kennel, I actually know quite a bit about how dogs have sex. It's physiologically so different from how people have sex that, involuntarily, I start wondering about the technical aspects of how a girl and a... No! No! I do not want to be thinking about this! Stop it! Stop it *now*.

Ah, the information age. How the internet has changed our drab little lives.

EARN \$80,000 AT HOME IN YOUR SPARE TIME!

Thanks for the offer, but I've got a deadline to meet just now.

DEBT-RIDDEN? DESPERATE? LET ME HELP!

I suppose it's a sign of the times that financial spam is now just as ubiquitous as porn spam. Every day, when I open my e-mailbox, I am promised the chance to make a fortune at home in my spare time with no skills, I am offered investment advice and opportunities, and I am presented with solutions to debt. Wow. What an exciting life of low-risk substantial-return opportunities I lead while waiting for the coffee to finish brewing each morning.

As a novelist, I applaud creativity. So I was rather impressed upon receiving an e-mail from Nigerian Brigadier-General Bibiola Waritimi proposing a scheme for our mutual profit. (Hey, it beats getting yet another e-mail inviting me to SEE CHEERLEADERS GOING AT IT!) He

informs me that he confiscated fifty million dollars from a Liberian warlord during an international peacekeeping operation in West Africa. He explains that he now needs an honest partner in the United States—someone just like me, in fact!—to help him transfer the money to an American bank. My reward for assisting him in this entirely legal and foolproof process will be about fifteen million dollars. Gosh, is this guy the answer to an exhausted novelist's prayers or *what*?

(By the way, this Nigerian Letter Scam is so classic that it's described in detail in private investigator Fay Faron's *Rip-Off: A Writer's Guide to Crimes of Deception*, published in 1998 by Writer's Digest Books.)

My personal favorite, though, is an e-mail which does not offer me either money or sex with barnyard animals, but which instead begins: “If you are a time traveler or alien, and in possession of alien or government technology, I need your help!”

Come on, could you really resist reading the rest of a spam letter that begins like that?

The correspondent explains that he is cursed, dying, in danger, and suffering. (In other words, a *very* bad hair day.) He needs to travel back in time to solve his problems, and he's looking for sophisticated technical help. (So, of course, he came to me—someone who has yet to master operating a digital alarm clock.) He wants advice on creating a vortex generator, and he also wants to know where to get some glowing blue moon crystals.

Well, don't we all, buddy?

Which is not to say that the Internet has brought *only* crazies and whackos into my humble home. In fact, in most ways, my modem is such a great convenience that I'm baffled by people who refuse to get one. I keep in touch with friends and relatives all over the world (yes, even friends in Nigeria) on a regular basis now without racking up huge phone bills or spending a fortune on postage. I can ask people questions in the middle of the night when insomnia attacks, and get a detailed reply at their convenience. I can inform a dozen people at once of something they need to know, and personal news can reach me quickly from the source rather than traveling through a series of people before I get the garbled third-hand account.

And I can research almost anything without leaving my office. This is key, since leaving home requires me to swap my slippers for a pair of shoes, and finding my shoes can be an involved process. Especially if I've yet to find my glasses.

You can research *anything* on the Web, no matter how specific, specialized, or obscure it is. Did you know, for example,

there's a Congolese rebel group with their own website? A tribe of pygmies with their own website? An e-list for people who are fans of both *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and Dorothy Dunnett? Whether I want articles about the Nazi plunder of European art sixty years ago, a weather prediction for tomorrow in Vladivostok, the date and day of Easter in 1527, or a current rate for converting U.S. dollars into Zambian *kwacha*, I can find it while sitting right here at my keyboard.

When I wanted to know how a private investigator in my novel might legally transport a gun on an international flight, I found the answer on an electronic Bulletin Board (BB) for airline professionals. Recently, I was asked to write a last-minute sf/f short story about the Vietnam Memorial Wall, a subject about which I know nothing. I found all the information I needed on the Web in the middle of the night. When I was researching male prostitutes (don't ask), I not only found websites detailing their services and prices, but also BBs on which some of them chat with prospective clients. For research into a vaguely remembered and truly bizarre incident in my hometown upon which I may eventually base a story, all I had to do was tap into the Internet to find newspaper articles twenty years old via my public library's online services.

So—Nigerian swindles and incestuous bestiality notwithstanding—I love the internet.

VOLUPTUOUS TEENS—RAW!

Well, okay, it's a love-hate relationship.

And, of course, I waste time on the Internet. Way, way too much time.

I chat on e-lists. For example, I belong to an e-list comprised solely of people who were once members of the theatre club at my university. I used to belong to an e-list for fans of the South African rock band Savuka, but I couldn't keep up with the lengthy political debates there. I've even founded an e-list, now 120-people strong, of professional women sf/f writers (where we bitch about—wait for it!—publishers, agents, reviewers, and the IRS).

RESNICK AS PREDICTABLE AS EVER!

I also browse newsgroups. Until the TV show *La Femme Nikita* was canceled, there was a great Usenet newsgroup of *LFN* fans who were articulate and interesting people. (Proof of this description: some of them read my work.) I legitimized this time expenditure by occasionally asking them research questions, some of which they could actually answer. I also sometimes browse a screenwriters newsgroup, where they mostly give advice-born-out-of-bitter-experience about driving and parking in L.A.

Additionally, I read a lot of obscure online articles which I cannot always truthfully classify as “research.” Including articles about Nigeria, where a man has been living in a tree for years. His wife—mother of his nine children—says she doesn't mind bringing him his meals there, but she laments that they haven't had sex in years. This winter, I followed a whole series of online articles and editorials about the escaped cow hiding right outside my apartment. (She staged a daring escape from a slaughterhouse, and the cops spent more than ten days tracking her in my urban neighborhood with no success. At one point, they donned guerilla warfare garb and hid out in the local park for days, where they stationed hollow decoy cows in the hope of attracting her. By the time she was finally caught, she was such a pop-culture heroine that celebrities were bidding on her. A New York artist has acquired her as a pet and

intends to retire her to a bucolic farm—which, if I understood correctly, is a haven specifically for cows who've made daring escapes from slaughterhouses. But I digress.)

Sadly, I even waste time online arguing with people I don't know about things that probably don't matter. I also bitch with people I trust about things I probably can't change—which may be useless, but at least it's cathartic.

One of my favorite hobbies since entering the information age is following one hyperlink to another to another to another, just out of curiosity, until what begins as a search for a Russian cookbook leads me to browsing the website of a Congolese rebel group. Or perhaps what begins as a search for a website featuring discount airfares winds up with me browsing an online bookstore for an out-of-print tome about nineteenth century French art.

JUST CLICK HERE TO BUY NOW!

Yes, I waste time shopping online. Often for things I have no intention whatsoever of buying. Such as a cafe in Nova Scotia (I was just curious about what it would cost), or a weekend at a private villa with a male “escort” (I was even *more* curious about what it would cost), or a cello (maybe I'll take lessons some day), or all the books I keep adding to my wishlist.

I also lurk on BBs. And, yes, okay, sometimes I post messages there. On one recent occasion, even though I know better (I know better! I do!), I got absorbed in a passionate, nonsensical, and extremely lengthy debate on one of the BBs of the Science Fiction Writers of America. Inexplicably, I had forgotten Resnick's First Rule of Survival: *Never* get involved in a SFWA debate.

SEE INTERNET MADNESS SEIZE NOVELIST!

I like to cook, and my hard drive must now contain six hundred recipes I've downloaded on the off-chance that I'll suddenly feel compelled to make Boeuf Wellington and Baked Alaska for twenty. I love to travel, and I've bookmarked nearly forty alternative travel sites, so that I'll be ready to act the moment it's time to book an Amazon jungle trek or run off to teach English in Mongolia. Because one should always have such choices at one's fingertips, in case six months and several thousand dollars should suddenly make themselves available without advance notice.

But to return to enlarged penises...

After I established a website, I was pleased to discover that, contrary to the emphatic claims of every publisher I've ever written for, I actually do have readers. Not only do they log onto my website, they even leave nice messages in my guestbook. Unfortunately, so do giddy purveyors of enlarged penises, i.e. porn merchants. Since I am too cheap to pay my webmaster to do it, about once a month I have to log into my guestbook and use my password to delete messages left there inviting my readers to see naked two-headed gymnasts boffing donkeys, or whatever.

Still, it could be worse. Some porn merchant managed to hack into Ninc member Edith Layton's website and give it new programming, so that every time a reader clicked her guestbook link, they were instantly transported to a German porn site. As Edith says, “The thought of my romance readers finding themselves eyeing naked frolicking Frauleins instead of my circumspect heroines still appalls me.”

One of the coolest things about all Internet activity is that it's great camouflage. You're sitting at your keyboard staring intently at your computer screen, moving your mouse, and often typing. What could look more like *work*?

▶ ▶ ▶



THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

▶ ▶ ▶ Of course, the actual amount of work I'm getting done is not increasing along with the amount of time I spend in this chair ever since getting a modem. And *looking* like I'm working doesn't ac-

tually get the work done—nor even fool the boss, since I don't have a boss.

Still, as Paul Simon sings, these are the days of miracles and wonders. Thanks to the Internet, I can now finish work later than I used to and still make my deadline, since an attached file gets to my editor a lot faster than real mail ever did. (Hi, Jasmine!)

Despite a lamentable fascination with eBay, Laura Resnick nonetheless manages to write a quarterly column for the SFWA Bulletin, a slew of short stories, and is currently at work on her next fantasy novel for Tor Books. You can find her on the Web at www.sff.net/people/laresnick.

Bits'n'Pieces

U.S. PUBLISHERS WAKE UP TO GROWING SPANISH MARKET...

Now that Kensington has ditched Encanto despite the fact that it seemed to have been doing well in its target markets, here's an article from Reuters about Ruben Ramirez, who moved to New York from Colombia in 1990 and opened a tiny bookstall that catered to Hispanic readers. A few years later, Ramirez more than quadrupled his space when he moved to a storefront one block away, nudged along by a simple fact: "Hispanic people like to read," he said. So, with Kensington and other romance publishers dumping the Spanish language market, other U.S. publishers are apparently slowly waking up to this readership base. Well, duh! As a gal who picked cherries and worked the migrant farm scene from way back in my kid-dom, I mean to say. Random House and HarperCollins are two U.S. publishing giants that have launched imprints recently. That's helped move Spanish-language books into airport bookstores in

major American cities, and into mainstream bookstores such as Barnes & Noble Inc. and Borders Group Inc. It's also putting books into libraries, which really drives the market.

THIS MONTH'S BEST LINE ABOUT PUBLISHING

comes from Jonathan Karp, who, in a *Salon* article about Inside Sessions, compares paying the course fee (to Penguin Putnam) so you can get your book read by an editor to tipping the maitre d' at busy restaurant. "In all likelihood, you won't get better service, but at least you'll have the psychological comfort of knowing you tried," he says. The article reveals that about 400 people have signed up for the course, and that freelance editors have quietly been called in to help out. FYI, they're not the only company doing this. NY colleges and junior colleges have put out a call for editors to teach writing classes and Harlequin/Silhouette has responded by turning the wants over to their junior editors. The courses have nothing to do with their day jobs, the editors are moonlighting, but yes, they do read course work for a fee. DAW encourages something similar with an online writers group—but there are no fees involved as far as I know. At least with this, you appear to be paying for ...something...and we know darn well we're not gonna do it. Now what I want to know is...does Penguin Putnam expect this fee to accompany every over the transom manuscript? Hmmm...

— TdR

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