

Book Packaging: Who, What, How, and Why?

BY DENISE LITTLE, TEKNO BOOKS

The publishing industry has spent the past three decades going through a slow, steady, and inexorable shake-down. This process, as uncomfortable as it is for everybody caught up in the middle of it, isn't always bad for the publishing company—in shakeups publishers can move human talent around and pick the best heads from both merging companies to oversee each division of the new entity. But there's almost always a certain amount of shrinkage in staff. When I started in the book business 30 years ago, there were more than 64 separate national publisher imprints. A lot of those old imprints are still around. But the individual houses they originally belonged to aren't.

Watching publishing through the years, at least for me, has been kind of like watching a very slow game of Pac Man. It's house-eat-house out there, and there aren't very many targets left to consume.

This consolidation of publishing is no news to writers, who have fewer distinct places to pitch new books and ideas. But a major consequence from all this consolidation, one authors don't think about because they're too busy muttering justifiably about that first problem, is that publishing no longer has anything close to the numbers of educated warm bodies to do the work that it used to.

But the number of books published annually keeps rising.

Fewer editors, more books. In years past, an editor typically had two, and occasionally three, books a month to edit and watch over. These days, that average number is closer to six books a month and rising. Admittedly, computerization has made a number of editorial tasks much easier. But books that require special formatting, continuity, specialized knowledge, difficult interior layouts, or more attention than a standard manuscript tend to put an unbearable overload on overworked editorial staffs.

And that's where all of this consolidation leads straight down the road to book packaging. As staffs have gotten leaner and lists have gotten larger, publishers have been entrusting more and more books on their lists to book packagers. As Bill Fawcett, president of Bill Fawcett and Associates, a book packager, says, "One big advantage packagers have is the ability to really concentrate on each actual book or anthology. Editors must divide their time between dozens of vital tasks and generally a larger number of titles as well. If publishers could afford lots and lots of staff there would be no need for packagers."

Book packagers aren't new to the publishing landscape. I was reading packaged books back before I had permanent teeth, even though I had no idea what they were. I wasn't alone. Kids have been targeted by book packagers since the inception of the industry. In 1906, a man named Edward Stratemeyer founded a company called Stratemeyer Syndicates, which set the pattern for book packaging for the next hundred years. Among his creations are the Bobbsey Twins, Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew. Not all his creations were long-lived publishing magic. The Rover Boys, Bomba the Jungle Boy, and the Blythe Girls aren't exactly clogging bookstore shelves these days. But his path in publishing left its mark. Today, just as in Stratemeyer's day, packagers put together books that create a splash in bookstores, but their presence is basically invisible to the average reader.

INSIDE

<i>President's Voice: Tick Tock</i>	3
<i>Novelists, Inc. Launches Logo</i>	4
<i>The Myth of the Bestseller</i>	5
<i>Foreign Rights Sales</i>	8
<i>OFF the BEATEN PATH: Great Britain, Europe</i>	9
<i>Sponsor Savvy</i>	11
<i>WRITING is TAXING: Commonly Missed Deductions</i>	14

Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

Advisory Council

Rebecca Brandewyne*
Janice Young Brooks*
Jasmine Cresswell*
Maggie Osborne*
Marianne Shock*
* Founder

Linda Barlow
Georgia Bockoven
Evan Maxwell
Victoria Thompson
Steven Womack
Barbara Keiler

Pat Rice
Anne Holmberg
Jean Brashear
Vicki Lewis Thompson
Brenda Hiatt Barber

If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

2007 Board of Directors

President: Pat McLaughlin
3506 N. Dickerson St.
Arlington VA 22207-2908
703-237-2543
pmclinn@aol.com

Treasurer: Beverly Brandt
2350 Westcreek LN #5107
Houston TX 77027
Unlisted
beverly@beverlybrandt.com

President-Elect: Laura Resnick
9250 Deercross Parkway, Apt. 2-D
Cincinnati OH 45236
513-793-2987
laresnick@aol.com

Newsletter Editor: Lorraine Heath
2305 Stacia Dr.
Plano TX 75025
972-359-7027
lorraine-heath@sbcglobal.net

Secretary: Linda Madl
4804 Rockridge Court
Manhattan KS 66503-7750
785-770-9363
linda@lindamadl.com

Advisory Council Representative:
Pat Rice
15222 Strollways Dr.
Chesterfield MO 63017-7756
636-778-0075
price100@aol.com

2007 Committees

Advocacy

Edie Clare
Katherine Garbera
Julie Leto
Patti Nagle
Sam Siciliano
Michael Sherer
Kristine Smith
David Walker

Conference

Lynn Miller,
Coordinator
Holly Jacobs, Asst.
Dianne Despain
Roz Denny Fox
Susan Gable
Melinda Haynes
Patricia Potter
Vicki Lewis Thompson

Conference Handbook

Victoria Thompson,
Chair
Laura Baker
Ken Casper

Discounts

Brenda Jernigan, Chair

Membership

Holly Jacobs, Chair

Newsletter

Annette Carney
Katherine Garbera
Pamela E. Johnson

Nominating

Brenda Hiatt Barber,
Chair
Toni Blake
Ken Casper
Dee Davis
Roz Fox
Kayla Perrin
Gina Wilkins

Outreach

Laura Phillips, Chair
Daphne Claire
Judy Gill
Anna Jacobs
Sarah McCarty

Retention

Barbara Bretton,
Chair

Survey

Valerie Taylor, Chair

Used Book

Joan Wolf, Chair
Brenda Hiatt Barber
Marianna Jameson
Tara Taylor Quinn
Randi Redufresne

Website

Elle James, Chair

Central Coordinator:

Tonya Wilkerson, Varney and Assoc.
Novelists, Inc.
P.O. Box 2037
Manhattan KS 66505
Fax: 785-537-1877
ninc@varney.com

Website: ninc.com

Address changes may be made on the website.

For members without Internet access,
send changes to the Central Coordinator.

Copyright ©2007 by Novelists, Inc.
All rights reserved.

No part of this newsletter may be used
or reproduced in any manner
without written permission.

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. For further information or to recommend eligible writers, contact:

*Membership Chair Holly Jacobs
P.O. Box 11102
Erie PA 16514-1102
or email holly@hollysbooks.com.*

New Applicants:

Patricia Ryan, Rochester NY
Diana Ball, Portland OR
Nancy Jackson, Corvallis OR

New Members:

Nancy Parra, Lake Villa IL
Tobias Buckell, Bluffton OH
Lori Devoti, Madison WI
Kathleen Baldwin, Plano TX

Ninc has room to grow...

Recommend membership
to your colleagues. Prospective members may
apply online at ninc.com.

Refer members at ninc.com. Go to Members
Only, "Member Services" and click "Refer a
New Member to Ninc."

Heading to a conference? Take some Ninc
brochures. Contact Holly Jacobs at
HollyJacobsI@aol.com with your mailing
address and the number of brochures wanted and
she'll get them out to you asap.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

We are randomly surveying 100 Ninc
members. If you receive a survey, please
answer the nine questions and return the
survey to us, as instructed. It's important
for all those surveyed to
respond. (Read "President's Voice.")

Tick-Tock

Timing is everything, that's what everyone says (and I do mean everyone—more than a million Google hits for the phrase). Lately I've come to realize that timing can trip me up in many ways.

First, there's the fairly straightforward matter of this article. Because of production time, I'm writing this a month before you see it. So, when you read this issue of *NINK*, it will be halfway through my year as president. However, because of that production time thing this is actually my seventh column, so past halfway. (A brief pause here for cheering from the audience.)

Just for the heck of it, let's say it's halfway through this presidential year. By non-profit organization standards we have been rocketing along. (One professional we've been dealing with commented that after all the dysfunctional non-profit boards she's contended with she viewed Ninc's as a very functional board. High praise! <g>) So, let me recap for you what's been happening in just the month before I wrote this.

You know about the **Legal Fund's** official launch, and now it's rolling along.

And you also started to see—in *NINK*, on the link, and at ninc.com—all the good and exciting things the **2008 Novelists, Inc. conference** committee under Lynn Miller is doing as we head toward March 28-30, 2008 at the Affinia Manhattan Hotel in New York City.

Elsewhere in this issue you will see the new Ninc logo. You'll find out from Linda Madl's report on Page 4 how this effort started during Brenda Hiatt Barber's presidency and was completed this spring. The logo will be featured on a business card and—after the old ones are used up—will be part of updated brochures to give to prospective members and others interested in Ninc. We're also making the logo available to members to use as a link back to ninc.com and to proclaim their membership in Ninc.

While the logo was being wrapped up, we were starting a brand new project, first under Holly Fuhrman and then (amid fears that our Membership Chair and Assistant Conference Coordinator had volunteered herself beyond even her energy level) with Brenda Jernigan generously agreeing to work to turn the ideas to reality, we are initiating a **Discount Program**.

Brenda has already secured discounts for Novelists, Inc. members from two vendors. The details are being worked

out as of this writing, but look for information on the website, on Ninclink, and here in *NINK* in the future. Plus, Brenda is busy tracking down more possibilities to give Novelists, Inc. members a break on career-connected purchases.

With this next project, the Board and volunteers are turning to the membership at large to assist in a venture that will help Ninc serve all of us better.

Here's Laura Resnick's report on the upcoming Ninc **membership survey**:

"More than a decade ago, Ninc did a membership survey in which we learned valuable information, such as how many novels the average Ninc member had published. We used this information for a number of years in our brochures, our PR, and our Outreach efforts. With that information now way out of date, we're running another survey this year.

"This will be a 'random sample' survey, to get the most accurate picture of our membership. This means that only about 100 Ninc members will be surveyed. However, for this to work, *all* of those randomly selected 100 members need to answer the survey.

"It's a very short survey. There are only nine easy multiple-choice questions. The survey will be sent this month by email. If you receive this survey, please answer it. It will take only two minutes, and you will thereby ensure the success of this project."

Also in this past month, your Ninc Board unanimously approved issuing a succinct **statement of support** for the Authors Guild position in urging Simon & Schuster to drop from its standard contract certain language that could tie up an author's rights beyond the foreseeable future. (See Page 19.)

And this month brought the report of the **Advocacy Committee**, presenting a list of ideas that could serve Ninc well for years to come.

I want to personally thank Edie Clare, Kathy Garbera, Julie Leto, Patti Nagle, Sam Siciliano, Michael Sherer, Kristine Smith, and David Walker for contributing to the Advocacy Committee list. I'd solicited these people to brainstorm ideas, without being limited by practicality or expense. Those considerations fall to the Board, and over the next months we will be assessing the ideas and prioritizing them.

Then we'll come hunting volunteers to help bring ▶

them to fruition!

So that's a month in the life of Novelists, Inc. and your Board. And there's more to come. I can't spill the beans yet, because the time's not quite right.

For now, I'll just tell you two things: it's harder on me to wait than it is on you all and it's *really* good stuff.

Ah, yes, and there's the final way timing comes into play in this A-Month-in-the-Life-of-Ninc report.

I realized not so long ago that I'd made a major tactical

error. The trouble with having ideas and enticing other folks to come up with ideas in the first half of your term is that then you're still around to start doing the work entailed in turning the ideas into reality. I should have kept all the ideas under wraps until, oh, say, November. Then passed them all on to Laura.

If I'd been savvy enough to do that, I truly could have said Timing Is Everything!

—Pat McLaughlin

Novelists, Inc. Launches Logo

Just what does it take to develop a logo, you ask? A whole lot more than the Board had expected as it turns out. Development of the logo began more than a year ago when

The first round of concepts delivered in December helped the Board and SDBX define our direction: abstract with flying pages or concentric circle-like icons or some-



thing more literal resembling books on a shelf. After a couple more rounds during which the new Board with Pat McLaughlin took charge and conference planning moved forward, concepts were narrowed to typeface images. As the concept became refined, we continued to work in black and white. Adding color was the last element.

the Board led by Brenda Hiatt Barber began the search for a graphics firm Board members felt could come up with an image to reflect our organization.

After receiving referrals, viewing samples online, conducting phone interviews, and submission of cost estimates, SDBX Studio of California was selected. The design process began with a lengthy conference call during which the Board responded to a questionnaire about Novelists, Inc. Coming up with answers to SDBX's questions was hardly quick or easy.

What is our business objective? What is the product that we offer? What do we know about our members, about our prospective members? How are we different from the competition? Those were just a few of the questions the Board debated and answered to help SDBX design initial concepts.

Shortly after the San Diego conference in March, the Board agreed on the logo without color. We were nearing the end of the process we thought, with relief. Then the color concepts arrived based on the warm, coffeehouse tones we had thought we wanted. The labor of decision-making began anew. So followed three more rounds of selecting for balance of light versus dark, contrast and weight. At last the Board settled on the logo launched in this *NINK*. See the color image on the website.

The Board wanted a readily identifiable image that portrays Ninc as a professional organization of writers who are accomplished, artistic, and business-like. The logo will appear on stationery, business cards, *NINK*, and the website. We hope you will use it with pride on your website as a link to ninc.com and proclaim your membership in Novelists, Inc.

— Linda Madl, Secretary

The Myth of the Bestseller

BY M.J. McATEER

Most people hate being labeled, but most writers make an exception if the label happens to be “*New York Times* bestseller.” That’s an accolade they would be happy to have welded to their names. Novelists as diverse as Larry McMurtry, Janet Evanovich, Khaled Hosseini, Nora Roberts, and Dean Koontz all proudly and prominently identify themselves as *New York Times* bestsellers. Other writers wonder how they might get so lucky.

That’s because making the *New York Times* bestseller list—and to a lesser degree similar lists compiled by *Publishers Weekly*, *USA Today*, and about 40 other periodicals—is the symbol of “making it” as a writer in the United States.

What’s more, the common wisdom is that just being on bestseller lists brings a writer immense fame and fortune. As the reasoning goes, retailers promote and discount bestsellers, which makes them even better sellers. Then, in a nothing-succeeds-like-success scenario, readers respond to the hoopla by piling on the purchases.

How books actually get anointed as bestsellers, however, is not necessarily an entirely objective or accurate process, particularly in regard to the most famous list of all, that of the *New York Times*. And the belief that the lists not only reflect book sales but strongly influence them may be mainly a myth—at least for some authors.

What Makes a Bestseller?

Before looking at the ways and meaning of individual lists, consider these caveats about how the bestseller label is bestowed:

First, most bestsellers never make bestseller lists. Technical volumes, including academic texts and law tomes make up about two-thirds of the book market, yet they are not considered for inclusion. Only so-called trade books, generally defined as volumes available in a typical bookstore, are listed.

Second, a ranking on a bestseller list is not a hard number. Daisy Maryles, executive editor of *Publishers Weekly*, says that a bestseller in November (Christmas is coming!) might mean 100,000 copies sold in a week; in February, being a bestseller might take weekly sales of only 25,000 copies. Consequently, it typically is tougher to make the lists in November than in February.

Third, different publications structure their lists differently, making some rankings squishy at best. The No. 1 book on the *New York Times* hardcover fiction list may not crack the double digits on the *USA Today* top 150 list because *USA Today* puts all trade books on a single list, while the *Times* divides books into hardcover fiction, hardcover nonfiction, hardcover advice, paperback fiction, and children’s books. A novel also might make it to the top of the *Times* hardcover fiction list with a fraction of the sales that it could take to get to the top of its children’s book bestseller list if a Harry Potter book is in recent release.

Fourth, most lists depend on sales reports submitted by book wholesalers and retailers. These can be slow in coming, inaccurate, or incomplete. A company called Nielsen BookScan is trying to address this problem. According to Jim King, senior vice president and general manager, his company bases its sales figures on data from electronic scanners at cash registers in 7,000 locations. BookScan does not yet operate at major outlets such as airports, supermarkets, and Wal-Mart, however, so despite the improved accuracy of its reports, its database is incomplete.

And, finally, bestseller status is awarded solely to hares, not tortoises: It’s sales velocity that counts, not staying power. A book that sells 35,000 copies in one week probably will make the lists, even if sales free-fall to 1,000 copies the following week. On the other hand, a book that sells 1,000 copies a week for a year probably never will be ranked, even though its author eventually may outsell the one-week wonder.

Behind the Big Three

In his history *Making the List*, Michael Korda says that the first bestseller rankings surfaced in this country in 1895 in a literary magazine called, appropriately enough, *The Bookman*. *Publishers Weekly* followed suit soon after, says Maryles, who estimates her trade publication has been ranking bestsellers for nearly 100 years.

The *New York Times* was a latecomer to the game, not including a list as a regular feature until 1942. Korda playfully blames this delayed start on book reviewers’ dismay at seeing a weekly demonstration “of Americans failing to heed the advice and warnings of book reviewers.”

USA Today, which was founded in 1982, instituted its bestseller list in 1993. ▶

The *Times*, of course, has *the* list to be on. Yet commensurate with that prestige, inevitably, has come persistent, intense, and often unfavorable scrutiny.

In 2000, for instance, when the *Times* added its children's book category, critics huffed that the editors were snobs who just couldn't stand to see Harry Potter trump more "serious" literature on the hardcover fiction list. In a rare burst of candor during an interview with the *Boston Globe*, the *Times* book review editor allowed that reading of the situation was basically accurate, pointing out how Hogwarts titles had hogged four spots on the hardcover fiction list for months on end.

Normally, however, the *Times* doesn't talk about its lists.

"I have nothing to say about the issue," was the recent response of an editor at the paper's news survey department, which handles the compilations.

Could he just comment on the reason for the no-comment policy?

"No comment."

Fortunately, even the Gray Lady leaks.

According to multiple, mostly unnamed sources, the *Times* bases its lists on weekly sales surveys it sends out to what it considers a representative sample of more than 4,000 independent, chain, and online retailers and wholesalers operating in the United States. A 1999 story in Salon.com, said the paper determines the recipients of this survey through a census it conducts about every five years. That's way too seldom to be an up-to-date reflection of the rapid-action publishing world, critics snipe.

Further, because specialty shops are excluded, critics contend that the sales of niche books such as mysteries or children's literature undoubtedly are underreported—and underrepresented—on the *Times* lists.

Most significant to the naysayers, however, is the way the survey is structured.

The *Times* purportedly sends out a form that already contains the names of a number of books it assumes will sell well. Book dealers simply can checkmark those titles. Although space is provided to write in other bestsellers, this system, goes the gripe, favors established writers.

The *Times*'s semi-prepackaged lists also are accused of favoring chain operations over independent book dealers. The logic here is that independents have more eclectic sales and draw more heavily from publishers' backlists, so for them, the *Times* surveys can be a time-consuming and unwelcome task—and, consequently, may get short shrift.

Another quirk of the *Times* bestseller lists is that they are, well, behind the times, presenting a three-week-old picture of book sales. For example, on May 17, the *Times* had David Baldacci's *Simple Genius* at No. 1 for hardcover fiction. But *USA Today*'s more up-to-date list had the just-released *The 6th Target* by James Patterson and Maxine Paetro on top.

Despite all these concerns, to say that the *Times* cooks

the books would imply intention, and in his 2006 scholarly paper "Bestseller Lists and Product Variety," Alan T. Sorensen, an assistant professor of strategic management at Stanford University, found no evidence of that. However, he did find that the *Times* was far from infallible. In the 2001 and 2002 period he studied, 109 hardcover fiction books that never were ranked by the *Times* as bestsellers sold better than some titles that were.

The methodologies of *USA Today* and *Publishers Weekly* are much more transparent, straightforward, and probably more accurate. The information reported is also more current because it is based on sales figures from the previous week.

USA Today uses sales reports from 4,700 outlets to compile its single list. It publishes the top 50 sellers in the paper, the top 150 online.

Jacqueline Blais, who supervises the *USA Today* best-selling-book list, describes her paper's list as "democratic or populist. It's a snapshot of activity at booksellers," she says.

Maryles says *Publishers Weekly* also relies on sales figures from thousands of sellers. Her publication lists the top 15 sellers in fiction hardcover, nonfiction hardcover, mass-market paperback, and trade paperback.

Who Makes the Lists and What's It Worth?

No matter how publications slice their lists, known commodities dominate, at least in fiction. Sorensen reports that in 1994, an astounding 70 percent of all fiction sold was penned by just five authors: Tom Clancy, Michael Crichton, John Grisham, Stephen King, and Danielle Steel. Thirteen years later, that cast of bestsellers has scarcely changed—except for the addition of J.K. Rowling.

On May 17, seven years after the *Times* banished the Potter books to the children's book category, retailer Barnes & Noble had *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the seventh installment in the series, at No. 1 on its top 100 list—a neat trick for a book that wouldn't be sold at retail until July 21. The magic act of books flying off the shelves before they even are put on them comes courtesy of "pre-orders." Now that's a sales feat to frighten even Stephen King.

Yet Sorensen found little to support the common wisdom that bestseller status influences readers of these established authors. "No discernable impact" on book buying, was his verdict. Sales tended to peak within a few weeks of a book's release, regardless of any bestseller ranking.

"The sales paths," Sorensen writes, "typically resemble exponential decay patterns." At best, "making the list appears to temporarily slow the pace of decline." Sorensen admits, however, that he did not study whether bestseller status might help these authors sell subsequent books or more paperback copies of their hardcover hits.

On the other hand, Sorensen's data did show that books by unheralded authors that were "surprises" on the

lists reaped a benefit from their bestseller status in the form of a 57 percent increase in sales during the following year. That is less impressive than it may sound, though, because sales volume generally drops precipitously within about four weeks of the release of these books. Being picked as a reading selection by Oprah Winfrey, the professor points out, would dwarf the modest benefit that comes with being a bestseller.

Cracking the List

While Sorensen's dispassionate look at bestseller lists may call into question their reputation as organs of influence, mere statistics are unlikely to dent the lists' cachet. Writers still will long to join the bestseller club, even if only for bragging rights.

Making the list can be tough for unknowns, though. Maryles, rather unpromisingly, pronounces it as "not impossible" for a book by an unknown to get there, but she believes that "the bar has been raised in terms of quality in the past few years."

Many people in the business, Maryles included, believe that, ultimately, marketing is the key to bestsellerdom. Tina Jordan, vice president of the Association of American Publishers, calls "advance buzz" essential. "It's about preview," she explains. "If you plan to publicize a book as it is just released, you're already too late."

Jordan recommends that writers work on publicity strategies with their publishers and agents. Writers also must assume a "sense of ownership in getting the word out," she says. That means building grassroots support not just in their communities, but in cyberspace, which Jordan describes as a "constantly influential medium."

Eva Steinberg, who has dealt with many bestselling novelists during 13 years at Harlequin Books, agrees that self-promotion is key. The phenomenally successful Nora Roberts, she notes, has a website and a blog. Roberts also

does frequent book signings, appearances, and promotions. July 6, for instance, is Nora Roberts Night at the Hagerstown Suns' game. The first 100 fans of the Maryland minor league baseball team will receive Nora Roberts bobbleheads, those nodding novelties that people put in the back windows of their cars.

Roberts also writes a lot—five or six books a year—and being prolific can be vital in keeping an author's name in the public eye. In June, for example, thriller writer James Patterson had four books among the Barnes & Noble top 100 sellers—three of them published in 2007. He had co-authors on two of this year's outings, which somewhat mitigates that mind-boggling production rate.

As to what fiction genres are selling well these days, Jordan mentions romance, mystery, thrillers, Sci-Fi, and graphic novels, which doesn't leave out much except Westerns, and Larry McMurtry provides plenty of evidence that a good oater will sell too.

Korda, whose *Making the List* was a decade-by-decade rundown of the hardcover bestsellers of the 20th century, concluded that what sells best really hasn't changed much with the times. Fiction that makes the lists, he found, tends to be a relatively consistent mix of the enduring and high-quality and the pedestrian and forgettable. People still read and admire Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, but even a bibliophile might be forgiven for drawing a blank on *The House of a Thousand Candles* by Meredith Nicholson. Both, though, were bestsellers in 1906.

In the end, Korda concurs with the advice of his publishing colleagues. "Nothing beats a live author when it comes to selling books, and the bestseller list proves that over and over again," he says.

Besides, as Maryles wryly points out, only a tiny fraction of all the fiction readers who buy books ever subscribe to the *New York Times*.

M.J. McAteer is a freelance writer.

Business Briefs

Grocery Store Merger Decision to Stop Borders Buy Out? It seems the recent Federal Trade Commission action in opposing the merger of Whole Foods Market with Wild Oats Market caused Goldman Sachs to downgrade Borders's stock price. The FTC action makes it likely that they would also oppose the Barnes & Noble takeover of Borders. When two companies seemingly control a specific market, the two companies can't combine into a single entity, according to the FTC. So if the Whole Foods/Wild Oats combo has been nixed can a negative nod to B&N be far behind? (And they didn't worry about this when big conglomerates purchased publishing houses, newspaper, radio and TV stations, and TV and movie productions companies?)

Amazon Goes Audio and On-Demand: Amazon's purchase of Brilliance Audio is an attempt to encourage publishers to enter the audio market, according to Amazon. Brilliance will continue under the same management but expects to greatly increase its output. CustomFlix will produce spoken-word audio CDs to provide on-demand titles, including old titles and smaller market titles as well as the new titles.

— "Briefs" compiled by Sally Hawkes

Foreign Rights Sales: What the Author Can Do

BY CINDI MYERS

The sale of foreign rights can add significantly to a writer's income. In the best of all possible worlds, the author's agent or publisher diligently pursues foreign rights sales. Foreign publishers are hungry for English language works to translate into Spanish, German, French, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Russian, and dozens of other languages. Readers in other countries enjoy romance, mystery, science fiction, and fantasy works by English-speaking authors.

But too often publishers and agents only pursue foreign sales for their biggest clients—the ones likeliest to command the largest revenue. This leaves the midlist author, whose books may have sold quite well in other countries, out of the loop.

Whether the author retains these rights for herself, or they are held by the publisher, the author may often feel these rights are out of her control. But there are things authors can do to increase the likelihood of foreign sales.

The Power of Networking

When G. Miki Hayden's alternative history novel, *Pacific Empire*, was published in 1998, she thought the story of a world in which Japan had triumphed in World War II would be well received in Japan. The book was selected by the *New York Times Book Review* as one of its Summer Reading picks and received accolades from other reviewers. But the publisher, small press JONA books, didn't have the resources to pursue foreign sales.

So Miki started networking. "I met a Japanese woman at a party who was said to have good publishing contacts there," Miki said. "I gave her a couple of copies of my book and was later contacted by Writers House acting for the Japanese publisher."

Miki also sold the rights for the book to be published in English in Hong Kong and Singapore. "In this case, I paid a fee to someone going to Frankfurt [to the Frankfurt International Book Fair] so he would present my book," she said. She met a friend whose husband was a book scout for some overseas publishers and got copies of her book to him. "It's all about networking."

You Are Your Best Advocate

The German language edition of Joe Nassise's horror novel, *The Heretic (Der Ketzer)*, is currently on that country's bestseller list, but it might never have happened if Joe hadn't been pro-active about soliciting foreign rights sales.

Joe makes it a point to send his agent a list every few months of foreign publishers who have acquired books similar to his own. "I politely suggest that they submit to these individuals," he said. "At worst, all it means is a few minutes of work and another rejection. At best, another sale."

Joe researches these sales in his local library's copy of *International Literary Marketplace*, and in the members-only pages of Publishersmarketplace.com. By perusing the Deal List on the Publishers Marketplace site, he's able to learn not only the publisher who bought the foreign rights, but often the name of the editor who bought them as well.

Jeff VanderMeer (*Sbriek: An Afterward*) pursues short fiction markets in foreign countries as a way of getting his name known among fans in those countries. "I also aggressively follow up with fans who email from various countries," he said. "I try to get intel on publishers and editors. Sometimes there are people who do freelance editing for foreign publishers and can put a word in for you, to get your book looked at."

Networking, again.

Connecting with Foreign Rights Agents

Few authors sell foreign rights directly to a foreign publisher. It's necessary to connect with an agent, often living in the targeted country, who specializes in these sales. Your agent may already know someone, but if you're an unagented author or represented by a smaller agency, networking can help you find a foreign rights agents.

In addition to getting references from other authors or agents, and studying Publishers Marketplace and the *International Literary Marketplace*, one way to connect with foreign rights agents is to attend book fairs where foreign rights are often discussed. These include the Frankfurt International Book Fair (book-fair.com/en/portal.php)

Cont on page 10 ▶



OFF the BEATEN PATH: Great Britain and Europe

BY CINDI MYERS

North America is home to the largest number of publishers in the world and these publishers produce a significant number of the books in the world.

However, there's a huge universe of readers out there, most of them not located in North America. How can Ninc members—most of whom are based in the States or Canada and have experience only with North American publishers—reach those readers?

This column looks at places to sell your writing outside of North America. Most of the markets below are for short stories, although a few book publishers are listed. For information on selling foreign rights to your books that have already been published in English, see the accompanying article “Foreign Rights Sales—What Authors Can Do.”

Why should novelists be interested in the short story market? Some authors enjoy taking a break from writing novels to craft short stories. Some see it as another source of income. Short stories can also be a way of gaining a foothold in a foreign market, which can lead to sales of novels there as well.

Ninc member Carole Bellacera has made a number of short story sales to some of the British markets listed below. Some of the stories were reprints of work originally published in magazines in the U.S. Others were stories that had not been previously published. “Once I sold in England, I found them very receptive to my work,” she said. “They bought practically everything I sent them. The only hard thing about it was having to send IRCs with my work because even some of the post office employees didn't know what they were. Once I started selling to a particular magazine, I quit sending the IRCs. Getting paid was sometimes a challenge. Seems like I had to hunt down payment a few times. But I eventually did get everything owed to me.”

While some magazines accept email submissions, others require you to submit by mail. When submitting by mail, enclose a self-addressed envelope and two International Reply Coupons (IRCs). IRCs are available for purchase at larger post offices. For email, submit as an attachment in .rtf format.

Payment will sometimes be wired to your bank, which

will convert the funds for you (for a fee). Other times payment is made in the form of a check issued in that country's currency, which you will have to have converted at your bank (again for a fee).

Author Doug Smith maintains a list of non-English speaking markets for speculative fiction (several of which are cited below). You can find the list at geocities.com/canadian_sf/smith/foreign_market_list.htm. You'll also find a link there to sign up for his mailing list to be notified of new markets.

All the markets listed below accept stories written in English. If translation is needed, the magazine takes care of it.

Bella, a British women's magazine, publishes 1000-word short stories with surprise (twist in the tail) endings as well as general fiction stories to 2000 words. Send manuscripts to Linda O'Byrne, *Bella*, H Bauer Publishing, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT

Blitz-Verlag is a German publisher of mystery, thriller, horror, science fiction, and fantasy. They accept novel-length submissions directly from the author. Best to query first. Submit to GmbH, Geschäftsführer: Jörg Kaegelmann, HRB 7944 Amtsgericht Siegburg, UST-Id. Nr. DE 123234275

Faeries is a beautifully illustrated French publication of fantasy fiction of all types. Accepts stories of up to 10,000 words. Pays \$100 for one-time French rights. Accepts only hardcopy submissions. Send to Nicolas Cluzeau, English Submissions Editor, NESTIVEQNEN, 67 cours Mirabeau, 13100 AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Futura, a Croatian publication, accepts science fiction, fantasy, and some horror short stories and novellas. A monthly magazine, most of its stories are translations of work that originally appeared elsewhere. Payment is \$30-\$50 US per story. Email submissions to futura@zg-naklada.hr

Galaktika is a monthly Hungarian magazine devoted to science fiction. Publishes short stories and novellas. Accepts email submissions. Pays \$50-\$100 US. Email to editor Attila Németh at irodalom@galaktikamagazin.hu

My Weekly is a popular British women's magazine that publishes a variety of fiction including romance, humor, and light mystery. Surprises and un- ▶

expected twists are welcome. Stories from 500-1000 words with summer or winter settings are used in seasonal fiction pull-outs. 1000–1500 word stories are preferred for the weekly magazine, although stories up to 4000 words are accepted. No violence or gratuitous sex. Submit to: Harrison Watson, My Weekly, DC Thomson and Co. Ltd, 80 Kingsway, East Dundee DD4 8SL.

Nowa Fantastyka is a monthly Polish magazine that welcomes submissions of science fiction and fantasy manuscripts. They have guidelines in English at fantastyka.pl/index.php?go=english and the editors accept email submissions at pawelziemkiewicz@fantastyka.pl. Pawel Ziemkiewicz is the Foreign Rights Manager.

Solander is published twice-yearly by the Historical Novel Society in the UK. The editors welcome all kinds of historical fiction, including alternative history. 4000-7000 words. Payment is \$150 US. You may submit via email to editor Richard Lee. Detailed submission guidelines are available at historicalnovelsociety.org/guidelines.htm

Storie, an Italian literary magazine, is looking for high-quality fiction and poetry. Stories are published in both English and Italian. Maximum payment is \$600 US. This publication is one of the few that accepts original material only. Send the manuscript to STORIE, Via Suor Celestina, Donati 13/E, 00167 Rome ITALY

The People's Friend is another popular British

women's magazine that welcomes short story submissions. Stories should be optimistic and upbeat. Nostalgia is welcome. No violence, sex, or drugs. Short-shorts of 500-1000 words and short stories of 1000–4000 words are accepted. Send the manuscript to The Fiction Editor, *The People's Friend*, DC Thomson and Co. Ltd, 80 Kingsway East, Dundee DD4 8SL.

That's Life publishes one short story each week, maximum length 1200 words. Editor Jo Checkley likes a love interest in the story, but the focus shouldn't be on the romance. Surprise endings are very popular, as is a casual, chatty style. Jo Checkley, *That's Life*, H. Bauer Publishing, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DT

The Third Alternative is a quarterly British fantasy, science fiction, and horror magazine. No length restrictions. Send the complete manuscript to Editor Andy Cox, 5 Martins Lane, Witcham, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2LB

Women's Weekly is another popular British women's magazine that buys a lot of short fiction. Stories should be either 1000 words or 2000 words. Romance, humor, and "gentle crime" fiction are welcome. They also sometimes publish longer stories of 4000 words, as well as a bi-monthly fiction special that includes stories between 1000-6000 words. Send the complete manuscript to Gaynor Davies, *Woman's Weekly*, IPC Connect Ltd, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London, SE1 9LS ▲

Foreign Rights Sales:

Continued from page 8 ▶

and the London Book Fair (lbf-virtual.com). Romance writers might also be interested in the Booklover's Convention held in Wiesbaden, Germany each spring, an event attended by a number of German publishers of romance novels.

If you can't afford to meet foreign rights agents in person, approach them as you would any agent or publisher. Bob Erdmann, a publishing consultant and past president of PMA, The Independent Book Publishers Association, suggests compiling a Fact Sheet, with the book's cover, publisher, copyright date, information about sales, quotes from important reviewers, any awards the book might have received, author bio, and anything that might be of particular interest to publishers in other countries. Send this to foreign rights agents with a cover letter offering to provide

a copy of the book if they're interested.

All this sounds like a lot of work, but foreign sales can pay off above and beyond the financial rewards. Books and authors who are no longer on the shelves in the U.S. and Britain can have a long and fruitful life in other countries. Joe Nassise's *Templar Chronicles* books are out of print in the U.S., but thanks to foreign sales, he continues to gain new readers—and new income—from sales world-wide.

As Jeff VanderMeer says, "You could hit it big in a foreign country even if your book tanks in the U.S. Be big in Japan, so to speak."

Cindi Myers's latest release is The Man Tamer from Harlequin Blaze. Her most recent foreign release is Vrijen Op Het Werk—the Dutch version of No Regrets, also from Harlequin Blaze.

Sponsor Savvy

BY KELLEY ST. JOHN

"You'll never know unless you ask."

My mother distributed those priceless words of wisdom quite often throughout my elementary, high school, and college years. Now, twenty years after college, I finally understand the value of those words. Thanks to Mom, I have no fear of asking for what I want, and lo and behold, I often get exactly what I ask for!

Now, if you read Vicki Lewis Thompson's terrific article in the June issue of *NINK*, you learned that asking for what you want is extremely important in the publishing industry. If you want to be on the *New York Times*, say so (by the way, I want that, so I'll say that right now, just in case anyone was wondering). But, in this article, I'm talking about a different type of request to get what we want—the request for sponsors.

As all authors know, promoting our books can be very expensive. True, we can take advantage of publisher-funded promotions, but what if you want more? And what if you don't want to pay a fortune for it? That's where obtaining sponsors can help.

I'm a fairly new author. My first book came out in 2005, and I recently sold my tenth novel. For new authors, paying for promotion, or even knowing what type of promotion to try, can be extremely daunting. I started out knowing that I wanted to do some type of promotion that would make my book (and me) stand out, but I didn't have a clue what to do. Being a list kind of person, I created a file listing the dream promotional campaign, and I included everything from full page ads in *People* to lavish contest giveaways to exotic locales. Okay, this was my first book, my first advance, and my first eye-opener to the expensive world of advertising.

With my list in hand, I started checking off the things that were doable on my budget (and by budget, I mean the amount I was willing to spend on promotion). I won't lie; I'm in this business because I love to write, but I'm also in



**Kelley St. John and
Craig, Innkeeper at
Savannah Beach Inn**

this business to make money, so I sure didn't want to spend every dime trying to sell the product. After going through the list, I decided there were a few things I would tackle—bookmarks, a bit of web banner advertising, and perhaps a book trailer/teaser.

But I wanted more.

First things first. Before you start making purchases for advertising, find out what your publisher will do for your campaign. You don't want to duplicate their efforts, and you certainly don't want to use your advertising dollars for something they will provide. Therefore, I gave my wish list to my in-house publicist at Warner (now Grand Central Publishing) and learned what they could do for me regarding advertising. As I said before, you never know unless you ask, and because I asked, I learned that they would help me out even more than I anticipated. Good to know. So now I had a few things covered by Warner.

But I wanted more. (Are you sensing a pattern here?)

I decided that in addition to the bookmarks, web advertising, and book trailer/teaser, I wanted two main things—a full page ad in *Romantic Times* magazine, preferably in a premium position, if not the front cover, and a lavish contest giveaway that would focus on the book's setting of Tybee Island, Georgia.

Goal #1 — Full page ad in *Romantic Times*

My publisher provided a half page ad in *RT* for the month of my release, so I decided to follow that up with a full page the following month to try to boost sales. I also knew that paying for the type of ad I wanted would use more advertising dollars than I had budgeted for promotion. So I decided to try to find a sponsor to purchase the ad on my behalf. Did I have any experience with finding sponsors? No. Was I willing to figure it out...and ask? Oh yeah.

I jotted down the most unique aspects of my book. The book, *Good Girls Don't*, is about a woman who works for an alibi agency, in other words, she is employed to generate alibis for cheaters (and yes, these companies actually exist). Alibi agencies use cell phones to conduct business, so the caller identification displays the name of the fictitious business (convention, hotel, etc.) and the correct area code for wherever the cheater is supposed to be. Because cell phones are used so frequently throughout the book, I contacted several large cell phone companies as potential sponsors.

How did I contact them? Through a website called ▶

SponsorWise (SponsorWise.com). I learned about SponsorWise when I followed my “You’ll never know unless you ask” philosophy, called Verizon’s National Headquarters, and asked to whom I should address a sponsorship proposal. They informed me that all of their sponsorships are received through SponsorWise and that I could submit a proposal through the company’s website. This information was a goldmine. Not only could I submit a proposal for Verizon through SponsorWise, but also Cingular Wireless, Motorola, and several other cellular phone companies. Naturally, I sent a proposal to each of them. And while I was at it, since my hero in *Good Girls Don’t* drives a Camry, I sent one to Toyota, too.

The SponsorWise website offers a multitude of sponsorship options via a simple, painless process where you generate a project proposal, then submit that proposal for sponsorship to one or more corporations that are actively looking to sponsor business ventures. Corporations affiliated with SponsorWise.com are listed on the website and include a wide range of products and services. At the website, you can also find a detailed explanation regarding how the submission and review process works.

Now, while I’d love to tell you that I had all of my advertising paid for by Verizon, Motorola, Cingular, or some other cellular service provider (or Toyota), it didn’t happen. I submitted the proposals, but none of the companies on SponsorWise chose to sponsor that proposal. Was I disheartened? Yes. Did I give up? No. And will I try SponsorWise again for future sponsorship requests? Definitely.

Goal #2 — A lavish contest giveaway that focused on the book’s setting of Tybee Island.

If at first you don’t succeed...move on to Goal # 2.

A portion of *Good Girls Don’t* is set in Tybee Island. I adore Tybee Island and knew that a Tybee Island vacation giveaway would be a very nice draw to readers, generating their curiosity about the island and the book. However, once again, I didn’t have a huge vacation giveaway in my advertising budget and wanted a sponsor to help me out.

To decide what kind of trip I wanted to provide, I googled “Tybee Island” and obtained a list of all hotels, bed and breakfasts, and restaurants on the island. I’d been to Tybee Island before, but wanted to make sure I took advantage of all available options. Then I prioritized my list according to my top picks and started cold calls.

I called my first choice, Savannah Beach Inn (SavannahBeachInn.com), an exceptional bed and breakfast on the beach, and asked if they would be interested in providing a weekend vacation at their inn in exchange for advertising on my website (via my Contest link). The manager wanted to know more about me and my book, chatted with me for about half an hour, and then said he’d get back to me soon. I hung up and debated making more calls, but I could tell that he was intrigued by the idea, and I seriously thought I’d hear back from him quickly.

Within an hour, he called me back. He’d checked out my website, my bio, and my excerpt...and was interested in providing my contest winner with a trip to his bed and breakfast. On top of that, because he and the inn’s owners wanted me to see just how incredible their inn was, they invited my family to spend a week at the inn prior to the contest, so I could truly depict the beauty of the inn in my contest description. We went for a weekend and had a marvelous time!

An example of how this type of sponsorship is beneficial to all parties—on the day my contest started, the Savannah Beach Inn website received hits from 3500 unique visitors! The owner was thrilled, and I was, too. Before the contest ended, I had over 13,000 people register for the trip, and many of those clicked through to the inn’s site. A definite win-win situation.

Now, I didn’t stop there. When we went to Tybee Island, we asked the inn owners which restaurant they would recommend for a fun family outing and great seafood. They recommended The Crab Shack (TheCrabShack.com) and informed us that it had been voted the “Best Seafood and Best Outdoor Dining” by the readers of *Savannah* magazine. Trust me, it was a wonderful experience and terrific seafood. And since I was still feeling fairly confident in my ability to obtain sponsors, I decided to try my “never hurts to ask” theory again and asked to speak to the manager. I told her that the meal was wonderful, the atmosphere incredible (it really is amazing) and then I asked if she’d be interested in donating a dinner to the winner of my Tybee Island contest.

Like the owner at the Savannah Beach Inn, she wanted to know more about me and my book, and I gave her a mini press kit to review. Press kits are a valuable tool in promotions, as I’m sure you know. Mine proved extremely beneficial here. While we ate dessert, she reviewed the kit, and then came back to our table. Not only did she donate a \$50 dinner, but she provided a box full of Crab Shack novelties for my contest winner (including baseball caps, seasonings, T-shirts, and coffee mugs), offered to let me have a book signing at the restaurant, and said she’d love to advertise the event!

Back to Goal #1—Full page ad in RT

Remember how I wanted that full page ad in *Romantic Times* for Goal #1? Well, after obtaining the sponsorship from Savannah Beach Inn and The Crab Shack, I decided that perhaps my Tybee Island Contest Giveaway would be something that *RT* would want to advertise in its Book-lovers’ Giveaways & Contests section. After obtaining the editorial email address from the magazine, I sent my contest information, along with photographs of the inn, to the editor for that section. She responded within a day and said she was interested in advertising the contest. I was absolutely thrilled. The contest section is composed by *RT*, so it isn’t a paid advertisement. In other words, my contest, paid

by a sponsorship, was going to be featured in *RT*. Granted, it wasn't the full page ad that I'd hoped for, but it was a nice-sized ad, featured the contest and my book, and even had accompanying photos. Not bad.

And the beat goes on...

After my success with sponsorships for my first book, I decided to continue the process, particularly regarding trip giveaways, for my succeeding books. Oddly enough, I was quickly "known" for my extravagant contest giveaways, and I didn't want to let my site visitors and/or my readers down by not providing what they expected to find on my site. So, by following the same basic techniques (submitting to SponsorWise and placing cold calls to potential sponsors), I have been able to:

Give away three seven-day trips to Colonial Court Inn in Indian Rocks Beach, Florida (the setting for *Real Women Don't Wear Size 2*).

Give away a weekend trip to Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie, Louisiana (the setting for my Harlequin Blaze series, *The Sixth Sense*). This contest is currently in progress.

Have another contest ad featured in *Romantic Times'* *Booklovers' Giveaways & Contests* section (advertising the Indian Rocks Beach trip).

Give away a \$500 Spa Getaway to a Cheatee (to promote *To Catch a Cheat*). This contest runs August 15, 2007 through February 14, 2008 at TheGuyCheats.com and The-GirlLies.com.

The Time Factor

I've had numerous writers look at my promotional plans (not only obtaining sponsorships, but also other forms of promotion) and wonder how I find the time to obtain the sponsors, promote my book...and meet my deadlines. Truthfully, it isn't easy. However, it can be done. I typically devote seven days after completing a book to promotion for my upcoming releases. During those seven days, I am constantly researching promotional opportunities, having ads/bookmarks/etc. designed, producing press kits, and submitting proposals to potential sponsors. Can I always get this done in seven days? No. Right now, I'm on day ten of a promotion plan for my November release, but

I'm nearly done. Sure, I'll have to do follow-up emails and telephone calls later, but the majority of my planning will be done before the day ends. Then I'll move on to writing the next book.

A big help with my time management (and something that would be worth your while to inquire about) is an agent who is willing to not only participate in promotional planning but also go the extra mile in helping me achieve my promotional goals. For example, my agent has hired two interns for the summer who, among other things, assist with obtaining advertising rates and contact information. Today, in fact, my agent and her interns are submitting proposals on my behalf to three large corporations who may be able to donate additional products for my Spa Getaway contest. She's also contacting local restaurants in Atlanta and New Orleans to see about obtaining dining gift cards for the winners of my Louisiana plantation vacation contest and for my Cheatee contest.

And if you're wondering whether your agent would be willing to obtain interns on your behalf, or whether he/she would be willing to contact potential sponsors on your behalf, all you need to do is...ask. It never hurts, right?

Oh, and one more huge plus about finding sponsors—your publisher will love you for it. And what's not to like about that?

So go for it. Make a list of unique aspects of your book. Identify potential sponsors. Submit a proposal to SponsorWise. Make a few cold calls. Find out whether your agent can help with your efforts. Will you always receive positive results? Probably not. But will you know who might say yes if you don't try? Definitely not.

Like I said at the beginning of this article, you'll never know unless you ask.

Kelley St. John's previous experience as a senior writer at NASA fueled her interest in writing action-packed suspense, although she also enjoys penning steamy romances and quirky women's fiction. Since 2000, St. John has received more than 50 writing awards, including the National Readers' Choice Award, and was elected to the Board of Directors for Romance Writers of America. She currently writes for Grand Central Publishing (formerly Warner Forever) and Harlequin Blaze.

Business Briefs

LOC Selective about Blogs: Library of Congress manages approximately 295 terabits of data in digital formats, so the national library is being careful about what is being taken from the Internet. Blogs provide a daily-life picture of the average person, but what can be archived is limited. Rather than harvesting everything from the Internet, samplings from blogs, podcasts, and resources from social networking sites are being used to create a representative collection.

Harlequin Tries Nonfiction: A new line of nonfiction books will be coming from Harlequin in 2008. The target audience is women over 35, with subjects that include relationships, health, self-help, diet, fitness, inspirational, memoir, and biography.



WRITING is TAXING

BY DIANE O'BRIEN KELLY

The only thing worse than paying taxes is paying more tax than you have to. Yet every year taxpayers fail to claim deductions to which they are entitled. Once three years have passed since the original tax return was filed, it's too late to amend that return and the taxpayer loses the unclaimed deductions for those years.

Don't be a loser!

Some commonly missed deductions include:

Non-cash contributions to charity. A taxpayer is generally entitled to deduct both cash and non-cash contributions to qualified charitable organizations, up to a limit of 50% of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income. Some writing organizations qualify as tax-exempt charities because they serve educational and literary purposes. Authors often donate their books or other items to writing organizations for giveaways at conferences, in raffle baskets, or other fundraising events. You can deduct the fair market value of such non-cash items contributed to qualified organizations, regardless of how much you actually paid for the items. Thus, even if you purchased your books at a discount, you can still claim a deduction for the full market value of donated books. It sounds too good to be true, but it's the law.

To determine if a writing organization is qualified to receive tax deductible contributions, check with the organization's leadership or search Publication 78 on the IRS website. Be advised, however, that the listings are not all-inclusive and may not include qualified local chapters of umbrella organizations.

Health insurance premiums. Another commonly missed deduction for self-employed taxpayers is the deduction for health insurance premiums. Self-employed persons can deduct 100% of the cost of health insurance premiums for coverage for themselves, their spouses, and their dependents if they have a net profit and if they establish the insurance plan under their business.

Unfortunately, however, if you are covered under a health plan offered by your or your spouse's employer, you

Don't Lose Out! Commonly Missed Tax Deductions

can't deduct any part of the premiums you pay for that coverage. Sickening, huh?

Higher education expenses. Pursuing that MFA or simply going back to school to attend a few writing courses? A variety of tax benefits are available to taxpayers who incur higher education expenses on behalf of themselves or a dependent. Tax credits may be available for tuition and other fees, as well as deductions for interest paid on student loans. To see if you qualify, check out IRS Publication 970 "Tax Benefits for Education," available at IRS.gov.

Retirement contributions. Even if you participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan, you may also be able to open a SEP-IRA and contribute net earnings from your writing business. What's more, you have until the tax filing deadline (generally April 15 of the following year) to contribute to your SEP-IRA. For the nitty gritty, see IRS Publication 560 "Retirement Plans for Small Business."

Professional fees. Fees paid to a publicist, editor, agent, lawyer, accountant, or other professional are generally deductible as a business expense. If the fee relates partially to your business and partially to personal matters, such as tax return preparation fees, the amount of the fee should be pro-rated so that only the business portion is deducted on your Schedule C. Depending on the nature of the fee, the remainder may be deductible as an itemized deduction.

Losses in a no-income year. The rumor that you can only deduct your expenses if you have income in a given tax year is flat-out wrong. The truth is that if you are operating a writing business, you can deduct your expenses regardless of whether or not you received income during that particular tax year. It's perfectly legal to claim a net loss. Moreover, given the way in which advances and royalties are paid, it's not unusual for a writer to receive a nice chunk of change in one year and nothing the next.

Educator expenses. A significant number of writers

are also teachers. For several years now, educators have been entitled to deduct up to \$250.00 of the amount they spend during the tax year on materials used in their classroom or on the job. An educator is defined as a person working in a public or private elementary or secondary school who serves 900 hours or more during the year as a teacher, instructor, counselor, principal, or aide. The deduction has been available whether or not the taxpayer itemizes his deductions.

Be aware, though, that this deduction was originally set to expire in 2005 and was only at the last minute extended by Congress through the 2006 tax year. The eleventh-hour extension caused much confusion since the tax forms had already been printed without a designated line on which to report the deduction. It's a toss-up whether this deduction will continue to be allowed but, if you're an educator, it can't hurt to save your receipts just in case.

Telephone excise tax refund. For the 2006 tax year

only, taxpayers were entitled to claim up to \$60.00 as a credit for a federal telephone excise tax that was repealed. However, per communications from the IRS, many taxpayers who appeared to be entitled to the tax refund did not claim it on their returns.

Oops! I missed a deduction. What can I do? If you missed these or any other deductions in the past three years, it's not too late to file an amended return. Returns for the 2004 through 2006 tax years can be amended by filing Form 1040X, also available on the IRS website. The IRS will even pay interest on the amount refunded to you. But don't get too excited. That interest will be taxable.

**Got a tax question? Email
Diane@dianeobrienkelly.com**

Diane O'Brien Kelly is a Certified Public Accountant, tax attorney, and humor writer from Texas. Visit her at BlarneyBabe.com.

Note-worthy

Ninc Members Befriend Each Other on MySpace

A recent MySpace discussion on Ninclink has resulted in Ninc members joining forces to expand their friends list for cross-promotional purposes. Vicki Hinze offered to keep a list of MySpace Ninc members, but decided to be creative (in the way that writers are) and she created a movie of participating Ninc members. The movie is now running at myspace.com/vickihinze. It's also available at vickihinze.net. Participating members are encouraged to copy and add it to their MySpace pages.

If you'd like to participate, please send your name, myspace.com URL, and personal website URL to Vicki at: infoandrequests@aol.com. Vicki says, "When I get the

others who would like to participate, then I'll amend the list, make a new movie, and then distribute it."

NINK Delivery Changes

Recent changes in the postal rate and mailing regulations have caused the mailing of a 16-page *NINK* to jump from \$0.63 to \$0.97, an increase not anticipated in our budget. In comparison, a 12-page folded *NINK* would cost \$0.58 to mail. On the bright side, a 20-page *NINK* also costs \$0.97 to mail.

In an attempt to stay within our mailing budget for 2007, the Board has approved, when it's feasible to do so, providing a 20-page issue, followed by a 12-page issue the next month. Members will receive the same amount of content, but our postage costs will be significantly lower.

—Lorraine Heath, Editor

Business Briefs

2006 Book Sales Down: The Association of American Publishers' 2006 reports indicate overall sales in 2006 were down by 0.3%. Hardcover sales for adults were up 4.1% but the children's group was down 2.0% in hardcover and 0.6% in paperback. Trade paperbacks were reported at increasing by 8.5%. AAP does not include Harry Potter sales in these figures to keep the children's market level.

Copyrighted Material Added to MS Live Book: Live Book Search has added copyrighted material to its collection of public domain and out-of-print stock. The number of titles is unknown but a partial list of contributed books indicates non-fiction publications. The program is still being tested but may be available by the end of the year.

Book Packaging

Continued from page 1 ▶

The Book Packager Difference

A book packager is someone who interfaces with all parts of the publishing industry and occasionally some parts that have nothing to do with publishing—publishers, agents, authors, photographers, illustrators, paper artists, actors, toy makers, scriptwriters, Hollywood studios, submarine drivers, jugglers, clowns, even food companies when necessary, and just about everything else imaginable—to pull together a book.

A standard non-packaged book starts with an author dreaming up an idea, writing it into book format, and selling it to a publisher. A packaged book works in almost the opposite way. Someone, either within or outside of a publishing house, gets an idea for a book. Then, rather than writing the book himself, he sells the idea to the publisher. Once the book is sold, the person packaging the book hunts around for a suitable writer and any other necessary professionals, gets the book written, and turns the manuscript in to the publisher, usually in something close to a publication-ready state. In packaging, the writing process goes from the standard “writer-idea-write book-sell book-publish book” to “idea-sell book-find writer-write book-publish book.”

This can be quite exciting. In my ten years of working at Tekno Books for the legendary packager Dr. Martin H. Greenberg, I've dealt with everyone from Hollywood stars to the Vatican to auto mechanics to gunsmiths to museums to zoos, all in service of making a packaged book happen. Tekno Books, has done more than 2,000 books over a couple of decades, and few have been straightforward and simple. Packagers thrive when they can routinely deliver books that no sane author would attempt on his or her own. And that's something all packagers take pride in. As Marty puts it, “If it was easy, somebody else would be doing it.” Bill Fawcett says, “The real reward in being a packager is that you get to hold books that without you would not exist. There is great satisfaction in helping to add to the sum total of the knowledge or entertainment in the world.”

Book packaging can occur within a publisher, or it can be done out of house by an independent packager like Tekno Books. But the kinds of projects that packagers work on, wherever they're sited, have a number of basic similarities.

Specialized knowledge books are often packaged. The *Idiot's Guide to* and the *Dummies* books are packaged. The experts in the fields that those particular series concentrate on aren't always prose stylists, so it's frequently necessary to team up an expert with someone who can write.

Cookbooks are often packaged. They require special

notation; fact-checking and cooking up the recipes multiple times to be sure that the manuscript doesn't have terrible flaws not evident in mere words on a page; food styling and top-end photography or illustration or both to make the interior of the cookbook attractive; food group, diabetic exchange, and nutrition listings for finished recipes; and a thousand other little things that most in-house editors aren't set up for.

Books with lots of interior illustration or books that are bound with additional items like toys, exercise equipment, CDs, and craft kits are frequently packaged. Every form of weirdness attached to a project that adds a layer of difficulty to the finished piece increases the likelihood that it will be assigned to a packager.

In addition to the in-house packaging divisions, there are over 300 independent book packagers in the United States. Each packager provides publishers with manuscripts tailored exactly to the publishers' needs. There are packagers who work across the whole spectrum of publishing, and others who specialize in a tiny fraction of the market. But all make it possible for publishers to save time and energy. Packagers try to provide books in the last stages of readiness for publication: edited, copy-edited, and often completely designed and camera-ready. Some packagers even deal with printing and binding, and ship their creations to publishers ready to send to bookstores.

“A lot of packagers preferred to be called book producers,” says Bill McCay, former editor-in-chief for Mega-Books, a packager that specialized in the children's market before the company went out of business. “I thought it was an interesting distinction, because the work of these companies is similar to what independent producers do in the movie business. The major studios pretty well dominate film distribution, but when it comes to production, things are very different from the old in-house studio system of Hollywood's heyday. On any major movie offering, the major studio's logo comes first in the credits, but then there may be one, two or three credits for other production entities. It's not exactly the same in publishing—for one thing, the packager's credit is usually tucked inconspicuously away, across from the title page. But in both fields, independent producers provide the bigger players with a large, diverse pool of available technical know-how, talent, and ideas.”

Several other trends have contributed to book packaging becoming a more prominent part of the publishing industry.

Celebrity Books

With each passing year, there's a greater reliance on celebrity projects among publishers. A buzzword that turns up a lot these days is “platform.” “What's the writer's platform?” a publisher will ask. What that means is: what kind of easily accessible tools do authors have at their fingertips to make selling the book simple, and what kinds of special interests featured in the book make it easy to market? A

book with a strong knitting subplot, or a main character who breeds poodles, for example, gives the publisher an easily identifiable audience that they can use tightly targeted advertising to reach. It's a lot cheaper and easier placing an ad and/or an article in *Dog Fancy* or *Creative Knitting* than it is to get equivalent coverage in the *New York Times*. Not only that, people who buy specialty magazines generally read them from cover to cover, including the ads. Nobody makes that kind of claim for the *Times*. Easily accessible publicity isn't the only kind of platform by a long shot, either. An author who has a 60,000-name updated fan list she can contact easily by email has a strong platform.

But the strongest platform of all is celebrity. If 36 million people know your name and follow your exploits, you've got a real platform—just ask the folks who appear on *American Idol*. A celebrity with a huge following probably doesn't have a lot of down time, much less sufficient time to write a book to capitalize upon that celebrity. In addition, all the celebrity in the world doesn't make a star a good writer. Generally, for celebrity books, a packager will bring at least one professional writer in on day one of the project, and sometimes several, even before the project is sold. And the packager will negotiate whatever permissions are necessary to use things like photos from that Oprah appearance, shots from the red carpet of that movie premiere, pictures featuring corporately owned logos, and so on. All of that is tricky work. But it's worth it for the payoff.

When a publisher puts an immediately identifiable face on the cover of a book, consumers will buy that volume. A caveat to this is that publishers have done so many celebrity books and paid so much for some of them that the celebrity craze seems to be slowing down a little. Publishers have learned the hard way that a celebrity book will often make the *New York Times* list, but it may not pay back a multi-million dollar advance. Since most celebrities won't take a \$3,000 advance, the middle ground of offers where celebrity books can be profitable enough to tempt a star and yet not so costly as to drown in red ink is still being worked out.

Licensed Characters

Real people aren't the only ones who get famous. Fictional characters do, too. Taking a famous character operating under license from its creator and making a book featuring that character is frequently a way to guarantee respectable book sales. Books featuring licensed characters from Winnie the Pooh to Sherlock Holmes are more likely to sell than those written by writers without a solid track record or a reliable legion of fans. As a consequence, packagers clear the permissions needed to use the characters, and assign writers.

Media Tie-ins

From *Star Wars* to *Star Trek* to *X-Files* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the problems with getting approvals from the

property creators on wide-ranging work done by a myriad of writers can be crazy-making. Rather than spreading the insanity around the publishing house, most publishers try to corral it.

If they don't do the work out of house, they create small enclaves within their larger organizations who do this type of work and sometimes nothing else. That small division becomes the in-house packager. Typically, the division of the publishing house set up for working on media projects parcels out the work to various writers, comes up with the schedule, solicits the books, and tries desperately to keep the chaos down to an unavoidable minimum.

From *Spiderman* to *HALO* to *Star Wars* to *Monk*, media tie-ins can jumpstart fiction in an amazing way. By combining the built-in audience of a particular media property with the punch of a well-written book, packagers can make best-selling fiction and nonfiction happen on a regular basis. Just as an example, the recent *HALO* books have sold many millions of copies at a time when standard techno thrillers are struggling to keep their audience.

Niche Publishing

It's a truism among publishers that books which appeal to a limited but devoted following can have superb sales records, so they've published books about everything from NASCAR to knitting, and from Dalmatians to dogma. Because the books have to be steeped accurately in the details of whatever arcane niche the publisher is after, a publisher will often approach a packager when they want to do a niche book.

Series Publishing

This is where most packagers make their bread and butter. Among the books most likely to be packaged are children's book series—past examples include the previously mentioned *Nancy Drew*, *The Hardy Boys*, *Sweet Valley High*, *Goosebumps*, and so on. These books have serious continuity issues, a vast cast of recurring characters, tight deadlines because of frequent publication schedules, and other special needs that make it tough both for a single writer to write all the books, and for a single editor to keep track of all the headaches.

Book packaging solves that problem by bringing multiple writers into the series who generally all write under a single house name for easy recognition by readers. The packager writes an overall bible for the series, writes and maintains character logs, plans out the series well in advance, and assigns contracts to the writers so that the volumes in the series flow in regularly in an organized manner (when everything is going right—things can go very wrong very fast). In general, a packager tries to see that the publisher gets a steady stream of solid manuscripts in the correct order without having to work too hard or think too much about the project. ►

Specialization in Educational Publishing

Many textbooks and educational-use books are packaged. These books have to meet strict standards in reading levels, subject matter, federal and state regulations, and so on. Rather than trying to keep up with all the hoops, publishers often rely on packagers to keep up with the minutia of the work.

Packaging Pros and Cons

So now that you know what kinds of books can be packaged, how can you get in on some of this writing action for yourself? And, more importantly, do you want to? What are the pros and cons of writing for a book packager?

There are a number of important advantages in working for a book packager. The main advantage for skilled writers like the members of Novelists, Inc. is that there's not nearly as much competition for well-paid work at a packager as there is at a publishing house. Packagers don't accept unsolicited manuscripts, especially from first-time writers. They prefer not to work with writers who have thin resumes. They need writers who are professional, used to meeting deadlines, and accustomed to pleasing whatever readers they're aiming at. That cuts out the vast majority of the competition.

Another advantage of working with a packager is that packagers can be a regular source of new projects. Once you work for a packager, they remember you and the kind of work you do, and they call when the next suitable project for your talents lands on their desks. If you do a good job, you're quite likely to get repeat business. Publishing is so chancy that it's always good to have a regular source of paying work.

Maybe the biggest advantage to working with packagers is that you get a crack at showing your writing to their contacts. Packagers generally work with a wide variety of publishers and editors. If they hire you for a project, quite often your resume and a finished book will end up in a polished form on the desk of an editor that you've never met, and sometimes never even considered pitching. Many of the writers that I've brought into packaging projects have gone on to sell original projects to editors and publishers I put them in contact with. Bill Fawcett commented on the same thing. He said "This is one of the few jobs you can have where, done right, every part of the process involves win-win arrangements."

Time can be both a plus and a downside to working with packagers. Writing a packaged project is often faster than working on an original project. By the time a writer is brought in to a project with a packager, the project is either sold or the packager has a pretty good idea that it will sell. That's a big plus, time-wise. Also you don't have to push the book to the editor or publishing sales force. It's already been done. In addition, the project is generally in a rela-

tively late stage of development, so the project is often plotted out in a general way, ready for you as the writer to take off with it. For fiction, the packager will usually have an outline, and perhaps approved character sketches and a synopsis, and maybe even the first chapter or two ready to go, especially if the book is the first in a series. If the book involves things like licensed characters or media tie-in characters, that's often a plus time-wise, too. You don't have to spend time inventing the major characters that will populate the fiction—though the minor characters are usually fair game for the writer to add a personal touch to the piece. Some writers find having this initial groundwork all done makes book writing for packagers immensely easier, while others chafe at having to color within the lines, so to speak, so that aspect of packaging can cut both ways, depending on the writer.

Speaking of which, can you take on a project in mid-stream and make it come to life even as you take direction on the way it should go? That should be the first thing on the list for you to consider when you think about working with a packager. If you *hate* having somebody tell you how to write a book, and can't stand it when somebody challenges a plot point, book packaging probably isn't for you. In some ways, working with a packager is a lot like working with Hollywood. If you can't take the money, do the work, then smile and let go, packaging can be heartbreaking.

Another advantage of working with packagers, at least with most of them, is cash flow. Most packagers pay reasonable money for the work they contract out, and they pay it fast. Contracted packager projects usually pay in excess of what writers could earn working on their own similar books. There's a good reason for that. There's no money to be made in packaging books that can't earn well, so packagers don't tend to take on low-end books. It's likely that a packaged project is pretty high up on the list. Consequently, a packager wants a reliable, professional writer turning in polished work. Having a big book go overboard doesn't make a publisher happy. Packagers have to keep publishers happy to survive. Professionalism costs. Packagers are aware of that and are usually willing to pay for it.

There are downsides to working with packagers. The biggest one is that many of these projects will be done as work-for-hire for a flat fee. The packager or creator of the project will own the copyright, and you will not participate in royalties, foreign sales, and so on if the project is unexpectedly successful.

Some packagers are exceptions to that rule—Tekno Books frequently grants writers a percentage of whatever income-stream the project produces for Tekno during its commercial life. We call this a participation share, because the writer participates along with the packager in the book's commercial success. We find we get a writer's best writing when the writer has a stake in the book's success. But sometimes we work on projects where the originators won't allow writer participation, so we also do straight work-for-hire contracts.

Another downside of working for packagers is that you might not see your name on the finished work. Some packaged books are done under a house name for the sake of continuity. Other times a celebrity creator doesn't want it known that the book was packaged and that the real writer wasn't the celebrity. But for a number of reasons, in particular a recent lawsuit involving a posthumous Laurence Sanders book, that problem doesn't crop up as often as it used to. In general, cover credit is something you should discuss with the packager carefully before you sign any contracts. Packagers often don't have much control over what will happen, but they *do* generally know what the likelihood will be of giving an author cover credit before the project is started.

Finally, time spent working on a packaged project, however lucrative, is time spent not writing original work. If you're a fast writer, that's unlikely to be a problem. If it's all you can do to get out one book a year, you probably should concentrate on your original material.

Writing for a Packager

If you've read this far, you're probably serious about getting a piece of the packaged pie for yourself. Some of the best ways to grab a piece of the action are:

- ◆ Tell your agent to look for packaging work. Good agents keep up with the work that's being packaged at any given time because it's a way to get their clients in the early stages of their careers a chance to write a book that will reach a much wider audience than anything that client could do on their own—barring, of course, that miraculous Oprah appearance. Agents also rely on packaged work to tide their more experienced clients over in those awkward gaps that can occasionally occur be-

tween ordinary contracts.

- ◆ You can send a business-like resume listing your publishing credits along with a cover letter talking about your areas of expertise to the major packagers. If you want to write for a particular series that the packager works on, be up front about it and explain what you want and what your qualifications are.
- ◆ Packagers tend to specialize. Some do cookbooks, some do fiction, some do juvenile series, some prefer speculative fiction. Make sure your areas of expertise line up with the packager you're pitching.

As for finding out who is who and what is what in the packaging world, an organization has recently formed for writers of media tie-ins, the *International Association of Media Tie-in Writers*, which can be found at iamtw.org. They've got a lot of useful information for writers thinking of working in packaging.

An updated list of packagers can be found at literary-marketplace.com under the category of "Book Producers," as well as at abpaonline.org—though not all packagers submit their input.

Be sure and do a little research before you sign on the dotted line—like publishers, packagers vary in how fast they pay, how well they treat their authors, and so on. If you can, talk to another writer who has worked for a given packager before you take on a big project with the company.

I'm biased of course, but I've seen a lot of writers flourish working on packaged books. If the prospect interests you, I wish you great success with it.

Denise Little has been in the books business for more than thirty years, as a writer, bookstore manager, the national buyer of genre fiction for Barnes & Noble, and as a book packager working for Tekno Books. She can be reached at deniselitt@aol.com.

May 28, 2007

Novelists, Inc. Statement

Novelists, Inc. supports Authors Guild in alerting authors to the ramifications of language Simon & Schuster has included in its standard contract. The language, as Authors Guild says, "would allow Simon & Schuster to consider a book in print, and under its exclusive control, so long as it's available in any form."

Novelists, Inc., the only organization of multi-published popular fiction authors, urges its members to carefully weigh the issue before considering accepting such language in any contract. And we call on Simon & Schuster to rescind the language from its standard contract.

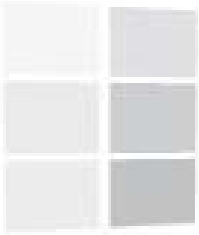
2007 Board of Directors, Novelists, Inc.
Pat McLaughlin, President

June 1

Update from Authors Guild:

Simon & Schuster executives yesterday apologized for "any early miscommunication" regarding reversion of rights, according to the Association of Authors' Representatives (the literary agents' organization). S&S is willing to negotiate a "revenue-based threshold" to determine whether a book is in-print, says the AAR.

Editor's Note: This is a fluid situation. Keep up to date by checking ninc.com, the Ninclink, and authors-guild.org.



Open A New Window

CREATING & RECOGNIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Novelists Inc.'08 in NYC

March 28-30, 2008 • Affinia Manhattan Early Registration Begins August 15

Ninc has scored a terrific coup with our keynote speaker, Theresa Rebeck. Not only can she talk about writing from many perspectives, from stage to screen to print, but she can also share what it was like to work as one of the first women writing gritty drama for *NYPD Blue* and others. Her latest On-Broadway show will open Fall, 2007.

She's funny, witty, lively, and from Cincinnati, Ohio like Laura Resnick and me. What more can we ask for?

Take a look at her bio. I think it says it all.

— Lynn Miller

Theresa Rebeck

Past New York productions include *The Water's Edge*, *Spike Heels*, *Loose Knit*, and *The Family of Mann* at Second Stage; *Bad Dates* and *The Butterfly Collection* at Playwrights Horizons; and *View of the Dome* at New York Theatre Workshop. *Omnium Gatherum* (co-written with Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros, and finalist for the Pulitzer Prize) was featured at the Humana Festival 2003 and had a commercial run at the Variety Arts.

The Scene, produced at the Humana Festival in March of 2006 (finalist, the Steinberg award), was recently produced at Second Stage Theatre in New York, where it received rave



reviews. *Mauritius* was recently produced at Boston's Huntington Theatre, where it received the 2007 IRNE Award for Best New Play, and will be produced at Manhattan Theatre Club in September 2007. Her work has been widely produced both regionally and internationally.

Publications include her *Collected Plays* (volumes II and III) and *Free Fire Zone*, a book of comedic essays about writing and show business, all to be published in Fall 2007 by Smith and Kraus. Her plays have been published in acting editions by Samuel French, and the *Harvard Review* has twice published her work.

In television, Ms. Rebeck has written for *Dream On*, *Brooklyn Bridge*, *L.A. Law*, *Maximum Bob*, *First Wave*, *Third Watch*, and *NYPD Blue*, where she also worked as a producer. Produced features include *Harriet the Spy*, *Gossip*, and the independent feature *Sunday on the Rocks*.

Awards include the Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Award, the Writers Guild of America award for Episodic Drama, the Hispanic Images Imagen Award, and the Peabody (all for her work on *NYPD Blue*). She has been a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn prize twice and was awarded the National Theatre Conference Award (for *The Family of Mann*), and the William Inge New Voices Playwriting Award.

Ms. Rebeck holds a PhD. from Brandeis University in Victorian Melodrama. ▲

NINK a publication of Novelists, Inc.
An Organization for Writers of Popular Fiction
P.O. Box 2037
Manhattan KS 66505

Publishing Services by Huseby Agency, Ltd.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FARGO ND
PERMIT #281