

N I N K

August 2008
Vol. 19, No. 8

Buckle Your Seatbelt on the Information Highway: Online Safety Tips

BY COLLEEN COLLINS

Remember when promoting your new book revolved around treks to the post office, picking stuff up at the printers and attending conferences? Networking with authors involved going to monthly chapter meetings, and meeting readers occurred at book signings? Then the Internet came along and a lot of that running around became time sitting at the computer as you promoted and networked on websites, blogs, and chats. Suddenly you could reach hundreds, even thousands, of readers without ever leaving home. Sweet.

Unfortunately, the magical world of the Internet can get sour when your personal information becomes accessible by others. Especially when you, the writer, were doing nothing out of the e-ordinary except launching a website, posting on a readers' blog, or answering an email. The last thing you meant to do was broadcast your private phone number, home address, or even your children's school to a total stranger! In that invisible, complex world of bits and bytes, how in the heck were you supposed to know where and how those data leaks happened?

Relax. After you read this article, you'll have learned some key tips on how to keep yourself and your personal data safe on the Internet. You'll understand:

Techniques to prevent your real-world data from going cyber.

Maintenance tips for ongoing online safety.

The signs of a cyber-stalker, and what to do should one cross your electronic path.

Helpful Internet resources.

So, buckle your virtual seatbelt as we take a "safety tour" down the Information Highway, starting with how to

safeguard your real-world data so it doesn't go global on the Internet.

Road Closed Ahead: Preventing Real-World Data from Going Cyber

All of us are candidates for our personal data to appear on the Internet. Even those diehards who refuse to buy computers and still type on their trusty Remingtons are vulnerable to having their private information blasted along the Information Highway. For example, if someone owns her own home, that address (as well as other personal information) may be available online at a county assessor's site for anyone to see.

Below is a list of safety tips to help prevent certain real-world information from also starring on the Internet:

Obtain a post office box and start using that address instead of your residential one. Even better, make that a private mailbox, not a USPS post office box. Although residential addresses of post

Continued on page 6 ▶

INSIDE

<i>President's Voice: The Wisdom of the Founders</i>	3
<i>Election Notice</i>	4
<i>Ninc Goes Platinum</i>	5
<i>Cover to Cover: How Publishers Make Money</i> ..	9
<i>The View from Here: Gateway Drugs</i>	14
<i>Bulletin Board</i>	16
eNINK Extra: Creative Recovery, Part 4:	
<i>Creative Nature Risk Factors</i>	17
eNINK Extra: Titles, Part 2:	
<i>Acquired Resonance</i>	18

Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

Advisory Council

Rebecca Brandewyne*	Linda Barlow	Pat Rice
Janice Young Brooks*	Georgia Bockoven	Anne Holmberg
Jasmine Cresswell*	Evan Maxwell	Jean Brashear
Maggie Osborne*	Victoria Thompson	Vicki Lewis Thompson
Marianne Shock*	Steven Womack	Brenda Hiatt Barber
* Founder	Barbara Keiler	Pat McLaughlin

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

2008 Board of Directors

President: Laura Resnick 9250 Deercross Parkway, Apt. 2-D Cincinnati OH 45236 513-793-2987 LauraNincBox@aol.com	Treasurer: Ruth Glick 10594 Jason Ct. Columbia MD 21044-2242 301-596-5210 ruthglick@prodigy.net
President-Elect: Kasey Michaels 3230 Flatrock Dr. Whitehall PA 18052-3069 610-432-1370 kcmia@aol.com	Newsletter Editor: Cindi Myers 302 Yum Yum Tree Ln. Bailey CO 80421 303-816-6394 CMyersTex@aol.com
Secretary: Charlotte Hubbard 3913 Rustic Lane Jefferson City MO 65109-9148 573-634-8114 cmhubbard@embarqmail.com	Advisory Council Representative: Pat Rice 15222 Strollways Dr. Chesterfield MO 63017-7756 636-778-0075 price100@aol.com

2008 Committees

Anthology Lillian Stewart Carl, Chair Phoebe Conn Garda Parker	Member Retention Barbara Bretton, Chair	Royalty Statement Allison Brennan, Chair Marianna Jameson
2009 Conference Karen Tintori Katz & Leslie LaFoy, Co-Chairs Eileen Dreyer Marcia Evanick Sally Hawkes Brenda Hiatt-Barber	Membership Holly Jacobs, Chair	Used Book Joan Wolf, Chair Brenda Hiatt Barber Marianna Jameson Tara Taylor Quinn Randi DuFresne
Digital Rights Mgmt Tricia Adams, Chair Laura Phillips Neff Rotter Kristine Smith Judy Gill	NINK Online Index Denise Lynn	Volunteer Jobs List Coordinator Mary Glazer
Discounts Brenda Jernigan, Chair	Nominating Linda Barrett Lori Handeland Julie Leto Klappa Kathy Shay Susan Wiggs	Website Pati Nagle & Ginger Chambers, Co-Chairs Robin Bayne Megan Hart Mary Kilchenstein Patricia Rosemoor Patricia Sargeant- Matthews
Elections Sylvie Kurtz, Chair	Outreach Samantha Hunter Sherry-Anne Jacobs Linda Madl Linnea Sinclair Pari Taichert Laurin Wittig	
	Renewals Coordinator Delilah Devlin	

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 ©2008 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 HollyJacobs1@aol.com

New Applicants:

Marley Gibson, Quincy MA
Kristi Goldberg, Woodway TX
Kathie DeNosky, Herrin IL

New Members:

Brenda Schetnan, Albuquerque NM
Julia Templeton, Battle Ground WA
Leah Cutter, Seattle WA
Sandra Madden, St. Johns FL
Donna MacMeans, Westerville OH

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." Take Ninc brochures to conferences. Email Holly with your mailing address and requested number of brochures.

Ninc Statement of Principle.

"Novelists, Inc., in acknowledgment of the crucial creative contributions novelists make to society, asserts the right of novelists to be treated with dignity and in good faith; to be recognized as the sole owners of their literary creations; to be fairly compensated for their creations when other entities are profiting from those creations; and to be accorded the respect and support of the society they serve."

The Wisdom of the Founders

This spring, I had the opportunity to represent Ninc at a Genre Writers Summit in New York City.

Which is a grandiose way of saying that I and current leaders from several other writing organizations talked in the lounge of a private club in Manhattan—where I was lucky to get in the door at all, because there's a dress code there and they're serious about it.

Attending the summit were the Romance Writers of America, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, the Mystery Writers of America, Sisters In Crime, and Novelists, Inc. (That's us.)

We were all in town for an in-person meeting of the Authors Coalition, which now has 20 member organizations. Groups which are focused on popular fiction have many things in common, so some of us agreed to arrive in New York a little early so we could meet and talk.

Much of the discussion centered around problems and challenges common to running writers organizations, including finding volunteers, keeping volunteers, supporting and leading volunteers, and attracting new people to volunteer work. These problems are not unique to any one organization, and we're all exploring ways to address them.

One org, for example, has created a new position in charge of coordinating volunteers. In Ninc (that's us), we've recently implemented the Volunteer Jobs List to attract volunteers (the VJL will appear quarterly in *NINK*, monthly on Ninclink, and perpetually on Ninc.com) and we've completed the Conference Handbook, which we hope will be a big help to volunteers working on conference hereafter.

At the summit, we also discussed the problems of continuity, in organizations with non-centralized leaderships that turn over every year or two. Common questions asked by writing org leaders are, for example, "Why did my predecessors make this decision? Does anyone know the original reasoning behind this policy that I'm being challenged to defend or required to implement? And, for the love of God, does *anyone* know where we keep the keys to the bathroom?"

One of the solutions enjoyed by another org is to have a longtime, capable, full-time Executive Director who can be relied on to maintain institutional memory. However, that's expensive; another organization said

that their Executive Director is the biggest line-item in their operating budget. Our own part-time Central Coordinator's duties are limited and specific, and they seldom bring the Coordinator into contact with Ninc policy. (Meanwhile, obviously, no org can count in its salaried Executive Director never retiring, dying, changing jobs, or going insane from having to deal with writers.)

However, the wise founders of Novelists, Inc. incorporated an Advisory Council (AdC) into our infrastructure. The AdC consists of Ninc's five founders and its past presidents. One of the six positions on the Ninc Board of Directors is the Advisory Council Representative, who is always a founder or past president (or both).

Therefore, at all times, the current Ninc president has an advisor on the Board who has done this job, who has been through many of these experiences, and who knows why we do a number of things the way we do them, why various policies were implemented, and where we keep the keys. The AdC rep also liaises with the Advisory Council itself, where feedback is available from people whose combined involvement in Ninc policies and procedures covers all of this org's history.

There was also discussion at the summit about the logistics, time, effort, cost, and challenges of running prestigious awards competitions, such as the Edgar, the Rita, and the Nebula. Our founders eschewed establishing awards in Ninc. I don't discount the value of awards; but after meeting with these other orgs, I believe that the workload involved in managing awards competitions would strain our own infrastructure too much while bringing too little benefit to the organization as a whole. So I praise the wisdom of Ninc's founders in keeping this item off our menu.

Something else discussed at the summit was the divisiveness within an org that sometimes results from competitive elections for officers. This problem was precisely the reason given in the early business meetings of Ninc for the founders' wise recommendation to choose officers the way we do it—by electing a Nominating Committee which then nominates one candidate per office for the general election ballot.

I, for one, considered it a tough enough decision to serve as Ninc president; I would not have

agreed to do this if I had also had to *compete* for the privilege of working this hard for free. Nor would I have felt, go figure, that the chance to do two years of volunteer work was worth enduring personal attacks from an opposing candidate's camp or facing rejection from the voters. Now, having discussed election procedures with other writing organizations, I am convinced that our existing process remains the best one for us.

(And, by the way, if you ever want to serve on the Ninc Board, contact the Nominating Committee. They would always rather hear from willing victims, though they are authorized to hunt people down and wrestle them into wailing submission.)

I also appreciate the wisdom of Ninc's founders after listening to other organizations discussing the issues involved in having different classes of membership (such as "active" and "associate") or members of widely varying focus (such as aspiring writers and professional writers). Despite our multi-genre nature, our policies, our operations, and our community life in Ninc are greatly simplified by having had, since our founding, one sole class of member: professional multi-published novelists.

Above all, much of what was discussed at the summit made me realize that when a writing organization becomes very large, it trades one set of problems for another. The problems our own Board regularly discusses (small member numbers, small conference numbers, small budget) don't seem to be the pressing, immediate concerns of the other organizations I met with, which groups are anywhere from 100% to 1500% larger than Ninc. But I realized during the

meeting that every org pres has got problems, even if they're not the same problems I've got.

Other orgs deal with Boards so large they're unwieldy, or with the administrative challenges of having chapters or regions as part of their structure, or with layers of decision-making bureaucracy. And none of these are problems that Ninc deals with. Moreover, our own problems are at least problems that we can cope with under the structure implemented by our founders—perhaps because in their wisdom, they understood that *these* would indeed be our problems.

And our structure works well for us: small, lean, mean, easy to navigate, able to respond quickly and implement change in a timely manner, low on overhead, high on accountability, and personal and intimate.

We also have the greatest density of professional achievement of any fiction writing organization in existence. Which is what the founders offered us when they formed Ninc. This is where you and I—as *professional multi-published novelists*—engage with our peers.

So, as the president of Ninc in its nineteenth year of existence, I offer my thanks and felicitations to the five founders of this remarkable organization:

Rebecca Brandewyne
Janice Young Brooks
Jasmine Cresswell
Maggie Osborne
Marianne Shock

—Laura Resnick

Election Notice

President Elect: Kay Hooper

Secretary: Charlotte Hubbard

Treasurer: Ruth Glick

Nominating Committee (listed in alphabetical order—five to be elected):

Lou Aronica	Gail Link
Fran Baker	Dan McGirt
Claudia Dain	Michael Sherer
Holly Jacobs	David Walker
Pam Johnson	

As set forth in article IX, Section 4 of the Bylaws, additional nominations may be made in writing if signed by the nominee and at least ten (10) active members who have not signed the nominations of any other person for the same position.

Such nominations must be made by August 15, 2008. Mail all written nominations to Sylvie Kurtz, P.O. Box 702, Milford, NH 03055.



So, how do the conference name and logo look to you? Pretty nifty, right? Hey, and if you're subscribing to eNINK, it's even in color!

Many thanks to our Name That Conference winner, Sally Hawkes, for her wonderful title, and the inspiration it spawned for both the look and the feel of our 2009 conference.

Because 2009 marks twenty years of Novelists, Inc. Can you believe it?

From its hopeful beginning, through boom times and bad, Novelists, Inc. has been there for every member, cheering with us, crying with us, keeping us informed, even bitching with us from time to time.

We've watched historicals "disappear," only to reappear, we've seen the rise of the thriller, the fall of the Western, the boom in science fiction and fantasy, mommy-lit, chick-lit, graphic novels. Cozy mysteries down, serial killers up, romantic suspense boom, romantic suspense bust, erotica sizzle, sagas fizzle—you name it, we've seen it; sometimes we've seen it twice!

Imprints have come, and imprints have bitten the big one. Grand New Ideas became history in less time than it takes to say, "Is it true XYZ line is folding?" Publishing houses merged, both editors and publishers got the boot. We've been orphaned and downsized and marginalized and rented in airports and sold online before our pub dates (used, no less).

We waved goodbye to bookmarks in favor of websites and book trailers. We saw the birth of the blog, and now podcasting. We're looking at e-books, the growth of online sales, the dying

throes of the independent bookseller and even some chains.

And we've survived it all. We're still standing. So not only is it time to take a bow, it's time to celebrate, and that's what we're going to do in Saint Louis. Oh yeah.

The last several years haven't been a whacking great lot of fun for many of us, and Ninc, always reactive to its members, went from business partner to hand-holder and comfortable shoulder for a while. Hey, everybody can use a nice, soft shoulder as the question is asked, over and over again: "What happened here? I used to like being a writer."

The themes for our conferences took on the tone that seemed to prevail across the publishing industry.

New York, 2002: Freedom To Write. Well, hell, we've always been free to write. It was finding a market that was getting difficult, right?

Sante Fe, 2004: Revitalize The Writer. Hmm, maybe Ninc noticed that a lot of us were walking around with our self-confidence sort of dragging on the floor, huh?

New Orleans, 2006: Recapture The Magic. Yeah, where did that magic go, damn it?

What goes up must come down, any boom sooner or later goes bust and, for a long time, this business of writing, of publishing, did just that. And we went right down with it. So what did we do? We searched for the inner child and the book of our heart instead of the book of the new market. We read self-help books. And, in between lamenting a changing industry and contemplating our navels, we might have gone out into the ▶

garden to munch worms a time or two. It wasn't fun, was it?

But then, slowly, gradually, we picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves off a bit, and began to get, well, mad. And when professionals get mad, they get motivated. The industry changed since we sold our first book? Okay, we'd change with it—stop fighting the changes and embrace them. We'd take “reinvent yourself” and turn it into an art form.

The sales started coming back. We saw the announcements on Ninclink — members who hadn't made a sale in a year, in two years, five years, were selling again. And, again, Ninc was there, ready and willing to help.

New York, 2008: Open A New Window.

Those who attended the 2008 conference could feel it, sense it in the fresh breeze blowing in through that opened window—this new excitement, this throwing off of the Bad Old Days and the eagerness to reach out to a whole new world of opportunities.

Online Safety

Continued from page 1 ▶ office box holders are generally confidential, often the USPS will release a residential address associated with a post office box to any government agency or to people serving court papers. Although the USPS requires verification from an attorney that a case is pending, the bad news is this information is easily counterfeited. Private companies such as Mail Boxes Etc. are stricter in their safeguards and will require that the person making the request have an original copy of a subpoena.

If someone wants to go even deeper to hide her personal address, she can purchase a virtual mailbox or address (for example, check out U.S. Global Mail at <http://www.usglobalmail.com/>). You might live in San Bernardino, California but it appears you live in Miami, Florida. This is a more expensive, extreme approach to “address hiding” so for the rest of this article we'll refer to private mailbox addresses as the mode of choice.

Many county assessors' offices will not block your personal information from appearing online. So, place your residence (and any other real property you own) in a living trust. This trust should be not in your name but it can be something like “Collins Family Living Trust” which is far more generic and anonymous than your “public” name. Register your vehicles and utilities in this trust as well.

Use your private mailbox address for all of your correspondence. Print it on checks instead of your residential

We're still here. We're still standing. And in Saint Louis in 2009, we're not only going to explore that whole new, growing world of opportunities with the most innovative workshops and night owls and speakers, but we're also going to celebrate how pretty damn terrific we all are.

Mark your calendars: Sept 30 – Oct 4, 2009, Saint Louis. This is one party you do not want to miss!

— Kasey Michaels

Ninc Goes Platinum: 20 Years of Excellence

Drury Plaza Hotel, Saint Louis
September 30 – October 4, 2009

Co-Chairs:

Leslie LaFoy, llafoy@earthlink.net
Karen Tintori Katz, ktinti@aol.com

***Early Registration Information and Easy-Payment
Plans coming soon***

address. Instead of recording the address as Box 123 use Apartment 123.

File a Change of Address card with the USPS giving the private mailbox address. Send personal letters to friends, relatives, and businesses giving them this new private mailbox address. Give your residential address only to your most trusted friends.

Obtain an unpublished and unlisted phone number. Contact your phone company to ensure your information won't be listed with directory assistance or published in a phone book. Don't print your phone number on your checks. Give out a work number when asked.

Order complete blocking on your phone. This ensures that your phone number is not disclosed when you make calls from your home.

Avoid calling 800, 888, and 900 number services. Your phone number could be captured by a service called Automatic Number Identification. It will also appear on the called party's bill at the end of the month. If you do call 800 numbers, use a pay phone.

Have your name removed from reverse directories (such as Cole's Directory). The entries in these directories are in numerical order by phone number or by address. These books allow anyone who has one piece of your information, such as a phone number, to find where you live. Reverse directories are published by phone companies and direct marketers (you can also ask your local public library's research librarian to identify any reverse directories the library keeps on file, then contact those publishers).

Do not use your home address when you subscribe to magazines. In general, don't use your residential address for anything that is mailed or shipped to you.

Avoid using your middle initial. Middle initials are often used to differentiate people with common names.

When conducting business with a government agency, only fill in the required pieces of information. Certain government agency records are public record and anyone can access the information you disclose to the agency within that record. Ask the agency if it allows address information to be confidential in certain situations. If possible, use the private mailbox and do not provide your middle initial, phone number, or your Social Security Number (SSN).

Post your private mailbox address on your driver's license.

File for confidential voter status or register to vote using your mailbox address.

Be extremely protective of your SSN. Don't pre-print the SSN on anything, such as checks. Only give it out if required to do so, and ensure it's a requirement by asking the requester.

Next, we'll discuss safeguarding your private data while cruising the Internet.

Be Prepared to Stop: Safeguarding Your Private Data Online

A few precautionary steps while cruising the Information Highway can go a long way to keeping your private data private:

When you register for an email account, don't use your home address, private phone number, or other personal information. As discussed in the previous section, use a personal mailbox address, a work phone number, etc. Keep in mind there are online services that sell people's registration information to anyone.

It's a good idea to have a "throw-away" email address that you use for online shopping, forms that require an email address, etc. You can set up such email addresses at hotmail, yahoo, gmail, others (although you're required to register your data at these sites, you can sign up as Mickey Mouse at 1234 Big Ears Circle for all they care). Earthlink provides a feature where you can request anonymous email addresses, which you can use and toss at your leisure. Hushmail is another option (check out <http://hushmail.com>).

Choose an e-mail account that does not reveal unnecessary information about you, such as where you attend school. For example, an email address from a free Webmail service might be preferable to one with an .edu domain.

Choose unusual passwords and change them regularly. Make passwords at least 7 letters long and include numbers mixed with meta-characters when possible (for example, s*72wt#8%). Never share your passwords with anyone.

Don't open unsolicited or unknown email messages, and especially don't open any attachments from unknown users.

Consider using an anonymous web browser. This will make it impossible for your web-surfing to be logged by websites, thus preventing others from picking up any information on you. Information on one such service is located at <http://www.anonymizer.com>.

Consider using encryption to authenticate your email messages. Encryption prevents someone from impersonating you. For easy, step-by-step instructions, google "Email Encryption for the Lazy" (<http://www.dtek.chalmers.se/~d97jorn/pgp/>).

When you register for a domain (your website address), don't use your home address or other personal information. Anyone can look up the owner of a domain name by using a service such as www.checkdomain.com or simply typing "whois" and the domain name. Again, use your personal mailbox instead of your home address. Better yet, for a small fee you can select an option to make all registration information private.

Use anti-virus software, a firewall, and anti-spyware software to keep your computer safe and secure.

Set your privacy settings on social networking communities (such as MySpace) so your personal photos and data aren't viewable by the public. Set options that filter who can be added as a friend, etc., to your account.

If you have a wireless network at home, ensure it has security enabled. When working on your laptop in a public place that has Wi-Fi, unless you're absolutely certain the establishment is secure, don't access personal information (such as your bank account) over the Internet. Side note: The French government is so concerned about the lack of security provided by wireless technology, it has banned the use of BlackBerrys in government offices and at the presidential residence.

Discuss your safety and privacy requirements with your Internet service provider (ISP) and enlist their help and advice. You're paying them to use their service, and you have a right to assistance.

Reduced Speed Ahead: Safeguarding Yourself While Online

Just as you wouldn't purposefully dress or behave like a victim in the real world, don't do it in the cyber-world, either. Although the Information Highway offers miles and miles of great sightseeing, business opportunities, and socializing, it also has the occasional pothole, dangerous turn, and unsavory hitchhiker. This next section discusses cyber-stalking.

What is Cyber-Stalking?

Cyber-stalking is the use of Internet, email, or other electronic devices to threaten or harass an individual, group, or organization without using physical contact. Cyber-stalking is a relatively new form of electronic crime that affects victims who are mostly invisible, and its violence ▶

is primarily what is said and not what is eventually done. Even so, too often, online harassment escalates into real-life stalking, where its victims are largely female.

Cyber-stalking can take many forms. One of the most common forms of harassment is unsolicited hate mail, or obscene or threatening email. A cyber-stalker can post messages to start malicious rumors. More complex forms of harassment include sending the target a devastating virus or spamming the target with electronic junk mail.

In many states anti-stalking criminal codes provide that someone is a stalker if that person willfully and repeatedly follows, communicates, or harasses another and/or makes a “credible threat” to place the target or the target’s family in fear for their safety. Often, the behavior must be repeated—meaning it has to happen more than once either to constitute criminal harassment or behavior that the civil courts can address.

Profile of a Cyber-Stalker

General characteristics of a cyber-stalker include mental instability, paranoia, delusions, extreme jealousy, and low self-esteem. Most are anti-social control freaks who enjoy manipulating other people. Dave Pettinari, a private investigator specializing in computer forensics and safety, offers the following insights on cyber-stalking:

“The fact that cyber-stalking does not involve physical contact may create the perception that it is more benign than physical stalking. This is not necessarily true. As with physical stalking, online harassment and threats may be a prelude to more serious behavior, including physical violence.

“It can only take a matter of minutes for a stalker to find your address or where you work online. When I worked as a member of the Colorado Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, I told parents and children that even sending pictures is risky. Say a young girl gives her first name and posts it with her photo online. A cyber-stalker can go to the local library to look at the school annual and find her picture there. With a last name, he can use any number of online public search directories to find the parents and the home address. He can be at the girl’s doorstep day after tomorrow.”

An author-stalker can do the same thing. We can’t be too careful about sharing personal information over the Internet. We might think the person is a friend, a fan, or a potential love interest, but we never truly know the person until we meet in person and get to know them. By then, it might be too late.

Steps to Protect Yourself Against Cyber-Stalking

The goal of a cyber-stalker is control. A potential victim’s task is to reverse this situation by keeping control—below are some guidelines for doing just that:

When it comes to usernames—be it an email address, login ID, nickname, etc.—it’s a good idea to keep them gen-

der-neutral, even boring. I know, what’s the use of doing that when you want to market yourself to readers? We’re talking safety here. Better to be IVriteBooks@xxx.com than IVriteSexyReads@xxx.com. Although that last example is a bit extreme, you get the picture. The goal is you don’t want to attract the wrong kind of person online.

Don’t announce online, such as in a blog, that you’re clueless how to do stuff in the big, bad world of the Internet. Learn your technology. Cyber-stalkers prefer to target beginners, or those who seem techno-naïve, because those people are less likely to know how to fight back.

Considering a web monitoring program (such as TracerLock, <http://www.tracerlock.com/>) that helps you regularly track web references to your name, etc.

Don’t reveal anything personal about yourself on the Internet.

Don’t allow others to draw you into conflict. That may mean that you don’t defend yourself from personal attacks, but it’s safer to ignore them and keep yourself above the fray. Even better to simply log off or surf elsewhere.

Know what’s in your signature file.

Be cautious about what pictures of you are posted online. This is a tough one for writers because our publicity photos are part of business. Keep in mind that stalkers can become obsessed because of an image, so exercise caution not only on pictures you post of yourself, but pictures posted of you by others. For example, on Google, you can select the option “Images” to search for images of yourself—if you see anything that could attract the wrong kind of attention, contact the webmaster at that site and request the photo be removed. Below is a brief list of other photo-hosting sites you can search for images:

<http://www.photobucket.com>

<http://www.funtigo.com>

<http://www.shutterfly.com>

<http://www.snapfish.com>

<http://www.Ofoto.com>

<http://www.smugmug.com>

Ninc member Vicki Hinze (<http://www.vickihinze.com>) has a list of additional steps you can take, as public figures, to further monitor and protect yourself in her “Cyberstalking Public Personae Tips” at http://web.mac.com/vickihinze/Vicki_Hinze_Author/Tip_Sheet.html.

What To Do If You’re Being Cyber-Stalked

Below are some steps for dealing with a potential cyber-stalker

Make it clear to the person that you want him or her to not contact you again.

It’s critical to save all your communications with the alleged cyber-stalker, both in hardcopy and digital form (the latter so headers can be traced). Do not edit or alter them in any way. One reason for the lack of successful prosecution of cyber-stalkers is that there usually is a lack of sufficient evidence to determine “probable cause.”

Block messages from the harasser. If harassment continues, contact the person's ISP (identify the domain, or ISP, by the word after the "@" most of which have clear policies prohibiting the use of their services to abuse another person. If the ISP has a web site, visit it for information on how to file a complaint. Often, an ISP will try to stop the conduct by direct contact with the cyber-stalker or by closing the harasser's account.

Report the incidents to law enforcement, providing as much detail as possible. If you feel you need more personal attention, considering hiring a private investigator who has expertise in online security issues.

Keep a log of every stalking incident, including names, dates, times of your contacts with law enforcement and others.

Save phone message tapes and items sent in the mail.

Considering getting professional counseling and/or seeking help from a victims support group, which will help you deal with the fear and anxiety associated with being stalked.

Online Cyberstalking Resources

Below is a list of resources, including contact information for Dave Pettinari (the PI quoted in this article who specializes in cyber-stalking and Internet investigations), to several privacy and cyber-stalking sites. Note that WHOA (Working to Halt Online Abuse) also offers lists of professionals, from lawyers to private investigators, who offer services to those being cyber-stalked.

Dave Pettinari: TAC Forensics, 719-485-0008. Private investigator whose expertise includes Internet investigations, cyber-stalking, computer forensic examinations, email tracing.

Net Crimes & Misdemeanors:

<http://www.netcrimes.net/>

WHOA (Working to Halt Online Abuse):

<http://www.haltabuse.org/>

Stay Safe Online: <http://www.staysafeonline.info>

Privacy Rights Clearinghouse: www.privacyrights.org

FBI Cyber Investigations Page:

<http://www.fbi.gov/cyberinvest/cyberhome.htm>

Keep Right: Common Sense Goes a Long Way

We've reached the end of our tour down the Information Highway. You've learned some key techniques to safeguard your data, both "off-road" and online, so your private information doesn't pop up on a billboard for everyone to read. You're more knowledgeable about how to tune-up your vehicle and drive smarter so you can outmaneuver potential "road-ragers" and the like.

This last tip will never steer you wrong: trust your common sense. An online situation feels funky? Leave it. You're uncomfortable emailing back a reader—maybe their tone raised a red flag or something you read between the lines bothered you? Don't respond; delete the message.

Now, armed with the tips in this article, and your common sense, you're ready to pull out onto the Information Highway, crank up the tunes, and enjoy the ride.

Ninc member Colleen Collins writes romance and mystery, as well as being a professional PI. She and her PI business partner teach the online course "Writing PIs in Novels" (<http://www.writingprivateinvestigators.com>). To read more about Colleen's books and upcoming releases, go to <http://www.colleencollins.net>.

Business Briefs

Briefs Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Harlequin and YA

MIRA will be directing new efforts toward the YA market with a target launch date in the last quarter of 2009. Launch titles will include books by Gena Showalter and Rachel Vincent. Currently their areas of interest are listed as paranormal, fantasy/sci-fi, relationship/romance, and social issues. Only agented submissions are requested.

Bookstores Defunct in 20 Years or Not?

A recent conference in the UK, Reading the Future, sponsored by The Bookseller, presented the latest research on reading and buying habits of 1,000 adults. The research was done by Next Big Thing. The report stated that 56% in the 18-24 age group felt bookstores would still be around in 20 years. In the same group 28% had positive attitudes for e-readers and 40% favored chapters being available for downloads. The 65+ group had 9% with e-readers and 7% with downloads. Reading the Future blog <http://tinyurl.com/6bp4nt>

PW Romance Report

Figures from Simba Information in *Publishers Weekly's* annual summary of the romance market disclosed romance fiction in 2006 made up 26.4% of the total market. Romance represented \$1.37 million in revenue and 6,400 new titles, a 6% increase in titles over the previous year. The only larger category was religion/inspirational. The top sub-category in romance was vampires.

Cover To Cover

By Lou Aronica



How Publishers Make Money

I promised in my first column that I would show you the world from a publisher's perspective to allow you the opportunity to become "omnidirectional" and therefore have a huge advantage over all of your unidirectional friends. I always keep my promises (though I sometimes wonder what I was thinking after I make some of these promises. Such as the time I promised my son a Viper for graduation if he made it all the way through high school with straight A's. Do you have any idea how much those cars cost? I really should have checked that out before I opened my mouth. Thank goodness his chemistry teacher was such a hard-ass). Therefore, I thought I'd start with the perspective that every business needs to view itself from – the financial perspective. I hope this doesn't come as something of a Tooth Fairy realization for some of you, but the publisher's first objective is to make money. We can make "to bestow timeless prose upon the public" objective #1 if that makes you feel better. Though realistically, that objective probably comes after "to hang around with famous people." Oh, and "to eat often at outrageously expensive restaurants on the company's dime." That's ahead of it, also. The "bestow timeless prose" thing comes right after that, though.

If a publisher doesn't make money, it doesn't stay in business. As a result, the publisher must regard every publication as a financial transaction. This doesn't mean that the publisher needs to make scads of money on every book – there are even good reasons to publish books that you know will lose money – but it does mean that every book needs to fit into the financial model in some way. So let's look at that financial model.

Setting aside things like real estate appreciation, corporate investments, and, I don't know, naming rights (I mean, given how tight the market it, how long will it be before someone has an imprint named, Fidelity Investments Books or Tom's Dry Cleaners Press?), publishers make money by generating revenue from books (never saw that coming, did you?). This revenue comes from essentially two sources: selling books and licensing books. They derive the vast majority of their book sales through book retailers, with a tiny bit of income arriving from direct-to-consumer sales (including hard-copy internet sales and sales of electronic editions), bulk sales (large quantities to one source not in-

tended for re-sale), and special sales (large quantities to a non-traditional source intended for re-sale). They derive their licensing income from the exploitation of whatever rights they acquire from you as part of the book deal. This usually includes book club rights and serial rights – in other words, rights that don't generate much income. Sometimes, the rights package includes U.K. publication rights, translation rights, audio rights, and other rights that actually do generate income. Writers and their agents are often agreeable to including these rights early in a writer's career, or when the publisher has turned over most of its yearly profits in exchange for a bestselling author's new book.

That's it on the revenue side. And that can be plenty if everything goes according to plan, the booksellers get excited, the licensors get excited, and, most importantly, the public gets excited. Really, when everyone is excited, it's an exciting time because the publisher stands an excellent chance of meeting Objective #1. And they've probably had several great lunches in the process, including one to celebrate the achievement of Objective #1.

Then there's the expense side. Like the revenue side, there are occasional extraordinary expenses like floods in warehouses, technology upgrades, and major bookstore chains paying their bills by returning massive quantities of books that they then reorder the next month. But let's stick with the primary expenses.

First, there's the author expense. This is the part that interests you the most because that's the money that goes to you, either in the form of an advance or in the form of royalties. Since you're all familiar with this sort of transaction, I won't go into further detail.

Next, there's the manufacturing expense. Manufacturing breaks down into two categories: pre-press and on-press. Pre-press expenses include copyediting, proofreading, design, electronic file creation, and that sort of thing. On-press expenses include the actual printing and binding of the books and the shipment of those books from the printer to the publisher's warehouse. For the sake of simplicity, I'll also include the cost of shipping the books to booksellers here. Let's say that this adds up to \$3.00 a book for a hardcover, \$1.75 a book for a trade paperback, and \$.70 a book for a mass market paperback. Obviously, this varies depending on

the size of the print run, but if I don't streamline this, we'll be exploring options endlessly, none of us will meet our next deadlines, and the whole "omnidirectional" concept will be meaningless because we'll all be in breach of our contracts.

After this comes the marketing expense. Marketing in publishing rarely means what marketing means in other industries. Publishers rarely spend money on market research, strategic alliances, or extensive consumer advertising. We'll get into the reasons why in future columns (though you'll understand some of the reasons why by the end of this column). Marketing in publishing means printing catalogs, creating and mailing advance reading copies, creating and mailing press releases, making co-op deals with booksellers, and occasionally doing a bit of advertising and publicity. Publishers commonly spend about a dollar a book to market a hardcover, fifty cents a book to market a trade paperback, and ten cents a book to market a mass market paperback.

Then there's overhead. Overhead includes salaries, benefits, office expenses, travel & entertainment, supplies, and all other costs associated with running the business that are unrelated to the cost of publishing a specific book. This is where the expenses associated with that warehouse flood go. It's where they put the cost of the retirement party for Joanie from accounting along with the cost of the lame plaque they gave her at the event (which has Joanie secretly incensed because she knows how little these stupid plaques cost – having entered them into the ledger for other retirement parties – and she can't believe the company values her so little after thirty years of dutiful service). This is where all of the costs associated with sales and warehousing go, assuming the publisher has its own sales force and warehouse. Let's assume for the sake of this exercise that they do. The numbers aren't considerably different if they don't. A publisher's overhead is commonly around 30% of their annual revenues.

There's one other debit that provides a huge variable, and by variable I mean that it's rarely easy to swallow and often a profit killer. Returns. Publishers have been talking about "solving the returns problem" for decades. They haven't come close to doing so. Recently, some publishers have suggested that they're going to address this in new ways. I truly wish them the best of luck. I could spend an entire column on why publishers sell their books on consignment, why returns run so high, and why addressing this issue is so difficult. I won't, though, because it makes me sweat. A lot. To the point where it's a fire hazard if I'm around electrical equipment.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't address the expense associated with over-guaranteeing money to writers. Now, as you know, I'm on your side here. Literally. Most of the money I make comes from writing and, like you, I like getting as much of an advance on my books as possible. Un-

fortunately, I have something of a conscience about this, as I understand that every dollar of an unearned advance comes right off a publisher's often-meager bottom line. Of course, now that I'm showing this to you, you're going to have a conscience about this as well. That's not good for us. In fact, forget that I ever mentioned this.

Okay, so let's see how this all plays out in some p&l scenarios. First, we'll look at a category-level paperback original:

The assumption here is that the publisher is selling the books to accounts at a 50% discount. This isn't entirely accurate, but it's close enough for this exercise. As you can see from this, the publisher covers overhead and makes a little bit of profit. Of course, there's no room in here to spend any real money on marketing. I put the rights income at zero here because most category-level books generate no ancillary income. FYI, if the return rate rises to 60%, the publisher loses nearly \$4,000. On the other hand, if returns are 40%, publisher profit goes up to more than \$11,000.

Let's look at a scenario for a paperback author on the verge of break-out:

I might be a little ambitious on the author advance side here. Books at this level have such a wide range of advances. You'll also note that I've added a little extra to marketing here, as the publisher would tend to invest more in a book at this level. Pushing distribution can really

Author Guarantee	\$	10,000
Cover Price	\$	6.99
Copies Shipped		35,000
Return Rate		50%
Sales Revenue	\$	61,163
Rights Revenue	\$	-
Author Share	\$	-
Publisher Share	\$	-
Total Publisher Revenue	\$	61,163

Author Royalties	\$	9,786
Overguarantee	\$	214
Author Expense	\$	10,000
Manufacturing	\$	24,500
Marketing	\$	3,500
Overhead	\$	18,349
Total Expenses	\$	56,349

Publisher Profit	\$	4,814
-------------------------	-----------	--------------

Author Guarantee	\$	75,000
Cover Price	\$	7.99
Copies Shipped		200,000
Return Rate		50%

Sales Revenue	\$	399,500
Rights Revenue	\$	-
Author Share	\$	-
Publisher Share	\$	-

Total Publisher Revenue	\$	399,500
--------------------------------	-----------	----------------

Author Royalties	\$	63,920
Overguarantee	\$	11,080
Author Expense	\$	75,000
Manufacturing	\$	140,000
Marketing	\$	40,000
Overhead	\$	119,850

Total Expenses	\$	374,850
-----------------------	-----------	----------------

Publisher Profit	\$	24,650
-------------------------	-----------	---------------

hurt a publisher at this point, as a 60% return would generate a loss of more than \$30,000. At the same time, if returns drop down to 40% because the author has especially strong sales on the bookstore side, profits go up to more than \$80,000. Still no rights money here. If the book is a paperback original, it will be tough to sell book club, audio, or serial. If it's a reprint of a hardcover, the rights will show up in the hardcover p&l.

Speaking of which, here are three hardcover scenarios. Let's call the first a first novel, published cautiously:

You could, perhaps, match this p&l with the first paperback p&l to get a hard/soft publication that would generate about \$3,000 in profit (because the over-guarantees would go away). If the hardcover return went up to 50%, the hardcover loss would go up to \$23,000. If it went down to 20%, though, the hardcover edition would actually gain a profit of \$2,000.

Author Guarantee	\$	25,000
Cover Price	\$	24.00
Copies Shipped		10,000
Return Rate		35%
Sales Revenue	\$	78,000
Rights Revenue	\$	-
Author Share	\$	-
Publisher Share	\$	-
Total Publisher Revenue	\$	78,000
Author Royalties	\$	16,500
Overguarantee	\$	8,500
Author Expense	\$	25,000
Manufacturing	\$	30,000
Marketing	\$	10,000
Overhead	\$	23,400
Total Expenses	\$	88,400
Publisher Profit	\$	(10,400)

This next hardcover scenario is for an author who has established a strong presence in paperback or a good hardcover following over a handful of books:

As you see here, I added some rights income for the first time. I'm assuming these rights don't include foreign. If they did, the numbers would be considerably higher and you'd be complaining to your agent about having to give 25% of that income to your publisher. You could combine this p&l with the second mass market p&l to show a profit of around \$17,000 after you wipe out the over-guarantees.

Author Guarantee	\$	75,000
Cover Price	\$	24.00
Copies Shipped		35,000
Return Rate		35%
Sales Revenue	\$	273,000
Rights Revenue	\$	10,000
Author Share	\$	5,000
Publisher Share	\$	5,000
Total Publisher Revenue	\$	278,000
Author Royalties	\$	72,900
Overguarantee	\$	2,100
Author Expense	\$	75,000
Manufacturing	\$	105,000
Marketing	\$	35,000
Overhead	\$	83,400
Total Expenses	\$	298,400
Publisher Profit	\$	(20,400)

Finally, let's look at a bestseller. Not a mega-bestseller, but a book that hits the list, spends a few weeks there, and sells through relatively cleanly:

Here I've added some more money on the rights side. I'm still not thinking about foreign rights income because I'm assuming all of your agents are ruthless negotiators, but you can do the math yourself if you'd like. The manufacturing costs are probably a little high, but the marketing costs are probably a little low, so we'll consider that a wash.

Let's match this last p&l with this mass market p&l:

The guarantee is what's left over from the hardcover advance. Again, the manufacturing is probably a little high, but the marketing is probably a little low. Combined, this publication generates about \$110,000 in profit when you wipe out the hardcover over-guarantee. This is a profit of a little less than 5% on revenues. As the CEO of one of the houses where I worked often exclaimed (usually while the rest of us were trying to have lunch, which made even Carnegie Deli pastrami less appetizing), "I could make more money if I invested in a CD." This, of course, came at a time when one could expect a better return on CDs than you can these days, but the point still resonates.

All of this math suggests that the answer to the question, "How do publishers make money?" is, "They don't." Sometimes this is true, especially if you combine these earnings figures with any of the emergency scenarios I men-

Author Guarantee	\$	250,000
Cover Price	\$	24.00
Copies Shipped		100,000
Return Rate		35%
Sales Revenue	\$	780,000
Rights Revenue	\$	50,000
Author Share	\$	25,000
Publisher Share	\$	25,000
Total Publisher Revenue	\$	805,000
Author Royalties	\$	225,000
Overguarantee	\$	25,000
Author Expense	\$	250,000
Manufacturing	\$	300,000
Marketing	\$	100,000
Overhead	\$	241,500
Total Expenses	\$	891,500
Publisher Profit	\$	(86,500)

Author Guarantee	\$	25,000
Cover Price	\$	7.99
Copies Shipped		750,000
Return Rate		50%
Sales Revenue	\$	1,498,125
Rights Revenue	\$	-
Author Share	\$	-
Publisher Share	\$	-
Total Publisher Revenue	\$	1,498,125
Author Royalties	\$	351,030
Overguarantee	\$	-
Author Expense	\$	351,030
Manufacturing	\$	450,000
Marketing	\$	75,000
Overhead	\$	449,438
Total Expenses	\$	1,325,468
Publisher Profit	\$	172,658

tioned earlier.	Author Guarantee	\$	1,000,000
However, we	Cover Price	\$	25.00
need to look at	Copies Shipped		1,000,000
two more p&ls	Return Rate		20%
before we draw			
conclusions.	Sales Revenue	\$	10,000,000
Here's one:	Rights Revenue	\$	100,000
	Author Share	\$	50,000
	Publisher Share	\$	50,000

This is your	Total Publisher Revenue	\$	10,050,000
garden-variety	Author Royalties	\$	2,990,625
runaway bestsel-	Overguarantee	\$	-
ler. Manufactur-	Author Expense	\$	2,990,625
ing is much	Manufacturing	\$	2,250,000
lower per book	Marketing	\$	300,000
because your	Overhead	\$	3,015,000
first printing is	Total Expenses	\$	8,555,625
big and so are	Publisher Profit	\$	1,494,375
your reprints.			
Marketing per			
book is also			
considerably			

lower because once you get the big co-op positions and do your announcement advertising and promotion, the book sells itself. In reality, this book is actually much more profitable than the publisher profit I've listed here. That's because the overhead figure is so high. In practice, unless the publisher needed a runaway bestseller of this sort just to cover its staffing costs, a book that performs this well has the effect of lowering the overhead percentage for the entire company. A book like this might actually cause a publisher's overhead to be closer to 25% of overall sales as opposed to 30%.

Then there's this p&l:

This would be a year's worth of sales of your basic backlist perennial. The return on earnings here is a tech-stock-in-the-good-days 30% plus. I did this one in trade paperback for no reason other than that I hadn't done a trade paperback p&l yet and I was

Author Guarantee	\$	-
Cover Price	\$	14.00
Copies Shipped		25,000
Return Rate		10%
Sales Revenue	\$	157,500
Rights Revenue	\$	-
Author Share	\$	-
Publisher Share	\$	-
Total Publisher Revenue	\$	157,500
Author Royalties	\$	23,625
Overguarantee	\$	-
Author Expense	\$	23,625
Manufacturing	\$	37,500
Marketing	\$	-
Overhead	\$	47,250
Total Expenses	\$	108,375
Publisher Profit	\$	49,125

feeling the urge to range around. Mass market backlist p&ls can look equally great.

So the real answer to the question, "How do publishers make money?" is, "With backlist and runaway bestsellers." Yes, I'm oversimplifying. Every book that breaks even makes a contribution. And only idiots think you could have a business plan that involves only publishing runaway bestsellers and backlist. The funny thing is that I actually know some of those idiots. Call me about them if you want a good chuckle followed by a little shudder at the thought that some of these idiots are very highly placed. ▲

Business Briefs

Copyright Alliance & Social Networking

Copyright Alliance announced a networking arena for those who are creators of intellectual property. A member's area, \$35 annually, will provide a place for discussion on copyright issues -

"one voi@e: join a network of like-minded, creative individuals who speak with a collective voice in upholding creator rights". <http://www.copyrightalliance.org/>

Print on Demand Begins to Rise

Traditional book production vs. on-demand is being track by R.R. Bowker for the first time. While traditional books (including biography, fiction and juvenile titles) only increased 1% in 2007, what Bowker lists as short run and unclassified titles increased 39%. The new print on demand element includes p-o-d methods by mainstream publishers, self publishers and small, independent presses as well public domain titles through p-o-d. No one is ready to state if this leap in numbers is abnormal or the beginning of a change. Over a five year spread, 2002 to 2007, traditional titles rose 29% while print on demand had a 66% increase.

The View from Here

By Susan Wiggs



Gateway Drugs

Remember the feeling of discovering a new-to-you author? Remember the heady sensation of realizing you've found a writer who is so entertaining that you suddenly want to read everything she's written? And remember the thrill of realizing that she has an entire body of work out there—her backlist—just waiting for you to devour?

I love that feeling. Every reader I know loves that feeling. It's like packing for a trip you've been wanting to take forever. Your new favorite author is going to take you places you never dreamed of, and it's going to be a great ride.

For us writers, it's not just a heady feeling. It's also how a bestselling author's career happens.

One editor I worked with called this "reaching critical mass." [Malcolm Gladwell](#) refers to it as the "tipping point." It's that moment in time when a burgeoning readership blossoms into true bestsellerdom. You won't be surprised to learn the term "tipping point" has its origins in epidemiology. It's used to describe the less-than-happy moment when an infectious disease spreads beyond anyone's ability to control it.

In publishing, this happens via word-of-mouth, aka the most powerful marketing money can't buy.

In almost any survey on book-buying habits, the most commonly cited reason a person buys a book is that someone recommended it.

What first hooked you into reading your favorite author? What was the first book you read that made you scurry to the bookstore or library or second-hand bookstore (more about that later) in a desperate quest to find all her other books?

Readers even coined their own term for this voraciousness—glomming. Once they fall in love with a book by a certain author, they "glom" onto everything else he's written. They'll say, "You're one of my 'most-gloomed' authors."

Certain books are "gateway drugs" to the rest of your body of work. Some books—much more rare—are gateway drugs to an entire genre. *Shanna* by Kathleen Woodiwiss (and I know for some of you it was *The Wolf and the Dove* but this is the view from here, not there) captured an entire generation of readers for the romance genre. And some— even more rare—are a gateway to reading itself. The best letters a writer can receive are from those readers who say,

"I never read books until someone gave me *The Charm School*. I read it in one sitting and now I can't get enough."

Here's the key: Someone gave her the book.

You almost never hear, "I'm not a reader and never have been. But I went ahead and bought your book..."

Doesn't happen. What happens is, someone gave her the book. Perhaps she found it left behind in a vacation cabin or waiting room. Or, she got it for a dime at a rummage sale. Or (and I know this will horrify some Ninc-ers) she picked it up at a second-hand bookstore or UBS online. Some way, somehow, she got her hands on a book in a way that did not earn the author a single red cent. What's more, she probably passed it along to another reader, who also did not earn the author anything.

Does this bother me? Are you kidding? I love it. For long periods of my career, the UBS was the only thing that kept my backlist alive. Do I care that I didn't get my eighty cents for each of those sales? Not at all. I consider it a form of promotion. If I've done my job, if the story captivated her, she'll pay money for a future book.

For the record, I didn't buy *Shanna*. A coworker gave it to me. But after I read it, I bought every book Kathleen Woodiwiss ever wrote—new.

With a new hardcover coming out, I've been thinking a lot about book promotion. In my perfect world, this takes care of itself. People read a book I've written and they love it so much they cannot wait to buy the next one. Unfortunately, it's not the reader's job to figure out when the new one comes out. It's not her job to bustle into the store and snap one up as soon as it hits the shelves. The fact is, there are so many new books out that it's easy to get lost in the shuffle.

Hence, marketing and PR.

This is not my favorite thing. It's probably one of my least favorite aspects of this business. It's time-consuming. And for me, it's a distraction. When I want to be thinking about my book-in-progress, I find my mind wandering to promotion. Instead of pondering metaphors for my story, I end up weighing the merits of transit ads and the holy grail of book placement, the ladders in B&N. There are long email chains about a pass on returns and gross shipping al-

lowance, print ads and digital press kits. I have no idea whether or not I'm alone in this, but marketing and promotion seem to occupy the same brain cells as composing a novel. I have a hard time doing both.

I can plot a book while walking the dog, weeding the garden, riding a chairlift, driving a car, or flying in an airplane (Commercial, not private. [Private is a whole different ride.](#)). But I cannot plot a book when I'm supposed to be pulling together an author bio, photo, interviews, packing for a trip, preparing for an event (and if you read my March column, you know how my events turn out) or otherwise gathering up all the myriad loose threads of the Great Promo Push.

I'm always very flattered when told I'm good at self-promotion. It's surprising to hear this, because I always feel I'm not doing much at all. I know it's important. I honor every reader who spends her hard-earned cash to buy one of my books. Even more, I honor her for spending her precious time reading that book.

But self-promotion?

I used to think this meant cranking out bookmarks and going to reader conventions. A long time ago, maybe it did.

To me, self-promotion means believing in yourself and honoring your readers.

I believe I've written a good book, and I can't wait for people to read it. And I love my readers so much. In that sense, I am well motivated to promote my books.

The trouble is, you can't do everything. You have pick the promotion that reaches the most likely readers, doesn't suck up all your time and land you in the poorhouse. Here is my handy-dandy Self Promotion List for the Promo-Challenged Writer:

- ◆ A vibrant, up-to-date web site. For low-cost hosting and design, I like [Winslow Web Design](#). You can go from simple to elaborate, but the important thing is to appeal to the kind of readers who like your books, and to make the site simple to use and up-to-date. So if your site has a "Dear Reader" letter from 2006, do yourself a favor and update it. Or—this is the lazy writer's remedy—don't date anything.

- ◆ A mailing list. From the beginning of time, I've kept a database of everyone who has ever given me a business card. At booksignings and speaking engagements, I put out a sign-up sheet labeled "Add me to your mailing list." Every time I receive a letter from a reader, her name goes on the list. Mine is huge now, and it's maintained and managed by my assistant. When I have a new book in the stores, she sends this list to my publisher for a postcard mailing.

- ◆ An email newsletter. Put a sign-up box on your web site, inviting people to subscribe. This and the paper mailing list are important. Much as we like to think all our loyal readers are waiting with bated breath for our next book, they probably need a reminder. In terms of content, think about the kind of thing you like to see in your in-box.

Be brief, pleasant, and informative. Give them something they'll want to click.

- ◆ A blog. Come on, it's not that bad. It's not even that time-consuming now that the sites are so user-friendly. I had my blog up and running in less than an hour. Fresh, frequent entries aren't a problem. Just think of it as an e-mail to your mom, or your best friend, or your yahooogroup. My personal preference is for [Wordpress](#). There's always a debate among writers about whether or not a blog can drive sales. Judging by the click-throughs from my blog, I'm guessing it does.

- ◆ Networking and review web sites. We all have our favorites. Here are a few of mine:

- ◆ <http://www.writersarereaders.com> – the brainchild of novelists Katherine Stone and Jack Chase, this is a site that publishes book reviews written by the world's most avid readers: working writers. If you haven't checked it out, go there immediately. Even better, review a book for them. Details on their site.

- ◆ <http://www.redroom.com> – The *San Francisco Chronicle* calls it a "literary MySpace" but it's better—no flashing ads or creepy invitations. In order to qualify as a Red Room author, you have to submit credentials. I like this quality control, not because it's elitist but because it doesn't waste browsers' time with vanity books. Plus the literati are there. Where else can I share web space with Salman Rushdie and Amy Tan?

- ◆ [Amazon blog](#) – You write one entry, and they post it with every one of your books.

- ◆ <http://www.gather.com> – The demographic is a good one for readers.

- ◆ <http://www.shelfari.com>—another place for readers

- ◆ <http://www.goodreads.com> – reviews and recommendations

- ◆ <http://www.myspace.com> – I know, it gives you hives. Put on your big girl panties and deal with it. Better yet, get a thirteen-year-old to set it up for you.

- ◆ <http://www.facebook.com> – ditto, although the demographic is slightly older.

- ◆ + six gazillion others with names like Twitter, Flickr, Xanga...

So now your head's ready to explode, right? How can one writer cover all these bases and still have a life?

Two words: [Virtual Assistant](#). Hire someone (remember my Intern column?) to do the online work. It's mostly copy-and-paste, anyway. You don't have to go to any of the networking sites at all if you have a trustworthy assistant who can put up posts and pictures, and reply to all the requests and messages for you

I'd love to see a discussion on NinLink about this topic. How do you promote your books?

Susan Wiggs's current book is *Summer by the Sea*. You can find out more on about six gazillion places on the Web.

Ninc Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY NANCY J. PARRA

Coming soon: Cover art with Next Page — As part of the website redesign, we are looking at adding cover art to the Next Page listings. If you have a new release coming up in the next few months, think about preparing your cover art to go along with your Next Page information. Don't send it yet! We're not ready for it. We will announce specs for size and file format as we get closer to implementing this. -

– **Pati Nagle, website committee co-chair**

You asked for it, you got it! The new super-duper log-in on Ninc.com.

You can Log In with your email address and change your password any time you want.

To Log In to the website, use either your Ninc Membership Number or your e-mail address. Remember, the only email address we have for you is the last one you gave us.

To Change Your Password, click on the “Change Your Password” link found on the Members Only main page, under “Member Services.” It will take you to the pertinent spot to make the change.

To Change Your Email Address, simply correct the information in the appropriate area of “Update Your Membership Profile,” which is also linked under “Member Services.”

If you've forgotten your Ninc Membership Number or your Password, Request an ID/Password reminder and an email will be sent INSTANTLY to your email address with the needed information.

Attention Harlequin/Mills & Boon/Silhouette Authors (at one time or another)!

In preparation for the 2009 Conference, I'm researching what members either sold their very first book to Harlequin/Mills & Boon/Silhouette, or have written for Harlequin/Mills & Boon/Silhouette at some time in their career. I've been through the members' web pages listed on the Ninc web page and compiled a list of almost 200 authors. It is fascinating and frustrating research. Not all members have their entire publishing history on their web pages. There is also the glitch of the Harlequin/Silhouette merger in 1984. Yes, at least one member sold her first book to Silhouette, but had it publishing by Harlequin. Timing is everything.

So, if you did not have a web page listed on the NINC web site as of June 1, 2008, please contact me, shawkes@asl.lib.ar.us.

I want to know the following:

- a) if you sold your very first book to Harlequin (title & imprint) as well as additional imprints at Harlequin/M&B/Silhouette;
- b) Although they didn't purchase your first book, what imprint(s) at Harlequin/M&B/Silhouette published your books?

NOTE: Don't forget to include pseudonyms if they change with various imprints

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