

NINK

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Bookviewcafe.com — another assault on the problems of the midlist author

BY JENNIFER STEVENSON

Book View Café is composed of approximately 25 published women (mostly midlist) working together to promote and sell our work online.

Our goal was to battle directly the enemies of the midlist author: shrinking numbers, lackluster publisher support, unseemly delays between contracts or releases, and the ever-present need to market ourselves, our brands, our work. We knew that book publishing is stumbling toward the Internet. We knew we had lots of resources, jointly, for taming that many-headed beast.

What we do at Book View Café:

We give away fresh fiction every single day—backlist, new stuff that the agent says will never sell, the third book in a trilogy that couldn't move enough copies to see print but has a big following who want to know the ending, poetry, comics, and boatloads of short fiction (worth .02/story on the open market).

We're doing free/fee deals, where the first three chapters are free, or you can download a book one chapter a week for free, or buy the whole thing for five bucks now. We're experimenting with various models.

We're planning a project for Kindle.

We partner with other free reads sites like TextOnPhone (an iPhone app) and Bookglutton, and with the for-pay anthology site AnthologyBuilder, at which the reader can construct his or her own custom anthology of short fiction and have it printed for \$14.95.

We promote the Café as a whole via a blog, tweets, Facebook, Myspace, and individual media blasts to our personal

dowry lists. (About the "dowry"—each of us brings to the group our personal list of yahoogroups, blogs, online and other media contacts, Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, and other social sharing platforms, where we propagate news items about the Café.)

We appear in public on behalf of Book View Café at conferences, on radio and cable TV, at book fairs, in countless online venues, and occasional rare opportunities like the Library of Congress.

With 25 of us, all talented and experienced in different areas, we get the work done, and there's always somebody to catch a project if the gal handling it stumbles over life or a deadline.

The idea is to build the Café as a brand of online

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Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

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Address changes may be made on the
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For members without Internet access,
send changes to the Central Coordinator:

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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:

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New Applicants:

Kay Stockham, Minford OH

Alesia Holliday, Jacksonville FL

Barbara Ferrer, Jacksonville FL

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Colleen Gleason-Schulte, Brighton MI

Joanna Bourne, Charlottesville VA

Trish Jensen, Reedsville PA

Angie Fox Gwinner, Valley Park MO

Karen Ranney, San Antonio TX

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Kim Ostrom, East Moline IL

Ari Marmell, Austin TX

Ninc has room to grow...

Recommend membership to *your* colleagues.

Prospective members may apply online at

<http://www.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 Pari Taichert with your mailing address and
requested number of booklets.

ptaichert@comcast.net.

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.

Professionally Speaking

By Kasey Michaels, 2009 President

Something very nice happened on Ninclink the last week of June. That something nice wasn't out of the ordinary ... for an ordinary time.

But the last week of June we decided to discuss — gasp! — e-publishing, in all its many forms.

Yes, there were ground rules: stay on-point; with no side trails, no extraneous stuff, and if possible, no emotion. No flaming, no pointing fingers, no knee-jerk reactions ... no biting, no kicking, no gouging — just kidding!

But the truth is, writers talking about e-pubbing and calm-and-reasoned don't go hand-in-hand all that often.

Except, it would seem, when those doing the discussing are Ninc members.

And, my goodness, but we learned a lot (if you don't subscribe to Ninclink, what are you waiting for?! Out of this discussion, we think we're going to get at least two, probably more, solid, substantive, in-depth articles for Nink. We're going to get information up on the <http://www.ninc.com> website. We're going to be more aware of what is going on in the world of e-pubbing, DRM in general, and keep members informed.

We're not talking about content or genre. Content and genre are the concern of each individual author. We're talking about, and are going to watch very carefully, the delivery systems either out there now or in the planning stages, and how they affect all multi-pubbed career writers.

We're going to do our best to gather e-pub contract language and print-pub contract language as it pertains to e-book sales. We're going to discuss business models, royalty rates, authors' rights, how libraries and bookstores (online and brick and mortar) are reacting to new delivery systems ... you get the picture. Real stuff. Important stuff. The business of this wild and wooly business of ours, that seems to change overnight, and then overnight again, and how it all relates to us.

Our publishers know what's going on, because they're the ones holding the football, making the rules. What writers need is a game plan, and that game plan begins with in-for-ma-tion.

After all, the only things that grow well in the dark are mushrooms (and we all know what material they're planted in, don't we!).

NINC SURVEY (NOSEY R US)

Months before our in-depth discussion on Ninclink, the Board was already actively discussing all of the above. Well, we were giving it the old college try, anyway.

What the Board found out is that, although we'd like to think we are six fairly intelligent people, what we collectively know about the makeup of our members when it comes to what we're all doing is what we all were doing when each member joined. Two years ago, five years ago, fifteen or even twenty years ago.

But, hey, what have Ninc members been up to lately? Answer: we haven't a clue.

Suitably humbled, we dug around some more, trying to educate ourselves on the different sorts of delivery systems Ninc members may be using today to publish their books. After one Board member defined POD to another (thanks, Ruth, especially for not sniggering), we all went off to search the Internet, to see if we could find out what else we didn't know (Ruth excepted, of course).

What we found was, again, that we didn't know a lot.

So now we know that we don't know a lot about any portion of the business except the ones we work in ourselves (and, with me, even that statement is a stretch), and that we didn't know what our members were writing now.

We did know, from Ninclink posts, that agent hunting is becoming a real trial for many members — multi- ▶

published authors all. We did know that some of our members are now e-pubbing in one form or another, also from reading posts on Ninlink. But that was pretty much it.

So we decided to make up an online survey.

Next joke — trying to agree on the questions. That took, oh, another month. It took another two weeks to figure out how to format the damn thing (excuse me...I was in charge of that part, and it wasn't fun!).

Many wise people say there are no coincidences. Maybe not. But the survey idea, just as the form and questions were finally completed, suddenly became very focused when the Ninlink discussion began (which it did pretty much as an offshoot of heavy discussion on the Internet).

So, like, hey, maybe we were ahead of the curve on this one. Maybe some sixth sense had kicked in, or we'd sniffed something in the air, and somehow knew the moment would soon arrive when what we think we know and what we really know should be definitely known.

Nah, we're not that good...it was a coincidence.

At any rate, by the time this issue of Nink comes out, the survey should already be up on the website, you'll have already received an email blast telling you it's up on the website, and, of course, you will have already raced hotfoot to the website to fill it out (pause for cough).

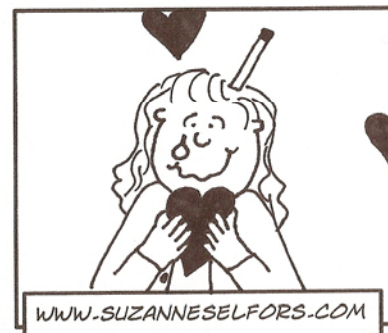
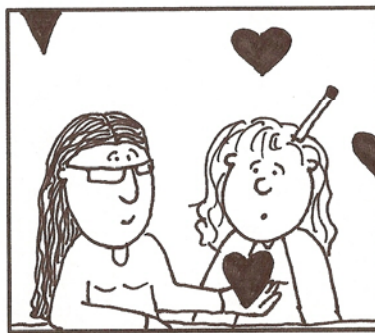
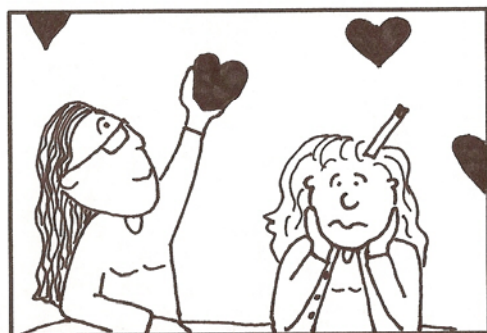
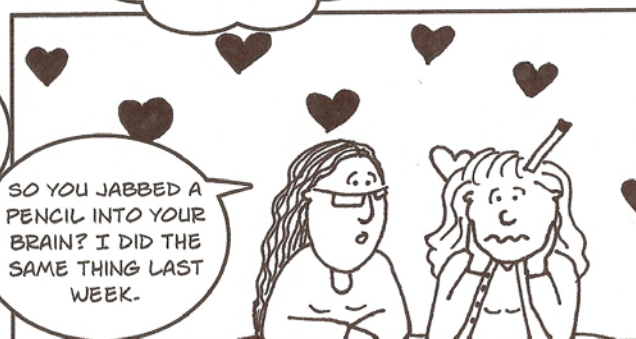
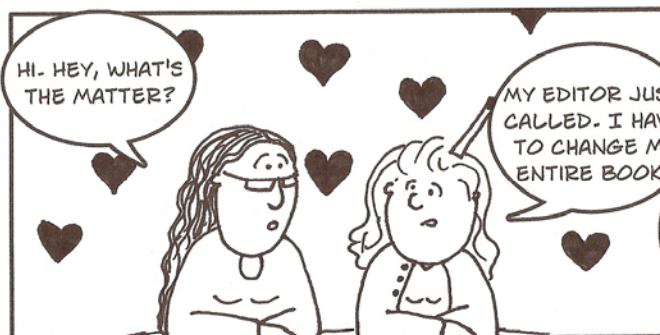
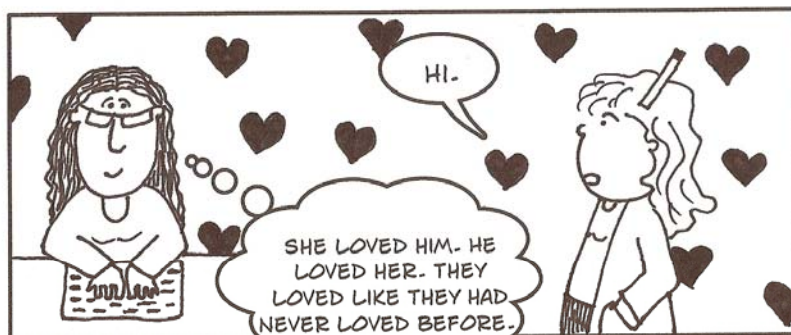
It is an anonymous survey, our webmaster has arranged it so that everyone can fill it out only once, and we know it isn't a Completely Definitive survey because a bunch of members will just yawn and say, "Survey? Like, I have to read it, and then put X's in all those little boxes, and everything? Ah, jeez..." and then not fill it out.

But here's the thing. Ninc is for the business of the business, right? So the best way to serve members, keep members informed, is to know who we all are, and what sorts of information members are looking for in Ninc; in the newsletter, on the website. Now. Today. So we can build an even better, more responsive Ninc tomorrow. ▲



The Author

THE AUTHOR VISITS HER
BEST FRIEND, THE
ROMANCE WRITER.



WWW.SUZANNESELFORS.COM

Bookviewcafe.com

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fiction that delivers free and cheap reads of reliably high quality. Since we're all published, mostly very multi-published, with familiar names for readers in our genres, we feel we have a major edge over other online self-publishing sites. We started in November and are nearing the 900-registered-users mark.

We've achieved some amazing stuff, publicity-wise. In our debut week, *The Guardian* named us Site of the Week. Library of Congress brought Café members in to talk about Internet publishing. One member gets us onto high-power blogs, and another is occasionally a guest-editor at Audible.com. We're making radio appearances at Hour of the Wolf in New York. TextOnPhone tapped us to provide fiction for the launch of the iPhone's ereader function. I interviewed three of us about our favorite BookViewCafe things.

What aspects do you find most rewarding about your participation in Book View Café?

Pati Nagle: We're building a community of readers, and a community of writers, who share this comfy virtual reading room.

Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff: What I love most about BVC is the sheer joy of collaborating with the members and watching all of us grow and adapt as we learn how to work together. It is amazing to watch something grow from a small seed ("What if...?") to an organically growing organization that's breaking new ground. It hasn't been seamless, but the speed of adaptation stuns and gratifies me. I'm proud of us, darn it. I think we've shown what can be accomplished when a group of people determine to form a community and help each other do what is, in some cases, impossible to do alone.

I am rewarded by watching each of us move into places in the loose organization that "fit" our talents and faculties and working together to make something happen that is bigger than any of us as individuals. I think we've all tackled things we weren't quite sure we could do and learned to do new things.

It's truly a "one for all and all for one" experience. Just looking at the front page every day and seeing the fiction going up on those increasingly lovely pages is rewarding. Seeing our outreach efforts grow and develop is rewarding. We twitter, we blog, we do conventions, we get the word out. And we reap approval for our work in the form of endorsements from media outlets, web attention, packed convention panels and a growing readership.

It is, to me, particularly wonderful that we are doing this as a team — a community. As Phyl [Phyllis Irene Radford, AKA Irene Radford, AKA P.R. Frost, AKA C.F. Bentley] and I were sitting on our Alternative Publishing panel at Baycon, I realized that in other cities at other cons, this weekend, teams of Café members were doing the same thing. We are awesome.

Jen: What Maya said. The worst thing about being a career author is that you're on your own. This group takes the sting out of that. More, we *do something* about the problems all authors face. Many of my author friends seem to regard their career as if it were a feral cat: no idea where it came from, no clue about its habits, astonished when it has kittens, crushed when it disappears for long periods. Maybe we're deluded over here at Book View Café. At least we're not alone. We're tackling the problems together, and if the agent says, "This is unsaleable" or the editor tosses the proposal back in our faces, we can do something immediately to show it to readers and maybe <gasp> get paid.

Talk about the work involved.

Pati: There was a big learning curve for the group in preparing our work to be uploaded on the website. Each of us does that on our own, so we've all had to learn the [website and blog] software and help each other figure out the best way. This has contributed to making the writers of BVC a strong, integrated group, so while there's a lot of work involved, there's also a lot of benefit.

Maya: "You can't just be a writer," a screenwriter told me. "You have to be able to do it all." I'm convinced that few of us, as individuals, can do all of it. But as a team, we can. The work is varied, just like the membership. We ►

Bookviewcafe.com

need business tended to, promotional goo gotten out, a newsletter done up, blogs to be written, stories to be posted, a website to be maintained, beautified, streamlined, and debugged. We need to keep in touch with partners and contacts, we need to get the word out at conventions and writers' events. We need graphics support and artwork. We need to keep in touch with our readers and maintain a membership.

Every job finds a volunteer or volunteers whose natural talents and faculties make them say, "I can do that piece."

Jen: This is work, no question. The start-up effort had some of us awake all night at times—I'm looking here at Maya, and Sarah Zettel, project manager, and Vonda McIntyre, her second, and Sue Lange, publicity maven. But for some of us, between contracts, adrift in midlist hell, it was a choice between sulk or work. Career authors don't quit working to sulk. (Much.) So we throw ourselves into this in between, oh yeah, writing the next book.

Talk about the potential you see, down the road, i.e. the possible rewards for your investment in BVC.

Pati: One of the biggest benefits, and one I look forward to, is making my out-of-print work available to the public again. Some is free, some will be for sale. This is very exciting!

Another benefit is the group projects BVC is doing, like Twitterfic contests, group appearances at conventions, and some other fun stuff coming up that I can't talk about yet. We're becoming a force of nature!

Maya: I'd like to see a day when the mainstream publishers care deeply about what this organization thinks and knows and produces. I'd like them to see our membership and our readership as a valued resource as opposed, say, to using the old "if it made money it must be what people want" criteria and the time-honored shotgun approach to marketing research. ("I fired straight up and hit a flock of ducks, ergo, if I keep firing straight up, I will be certain to hit ducks again." This method is also certain to make you miss the ducks that are standing all around you on the ground or the ones swimming on the nearby pond, but hey, it's all about repeatable results, right?)

The rewards I'd like to see for us as a community of writers are increased value and respect for us and for the model we're using—a cooperative rather than competitive model aimed at furthering the welfare of a community rather than making tons of money for a handful of individuals.

As individuals I think all of us want to come out of this with increased readership. If that translates into us being able to make our living writing, then we've achieved the best of all possible outcomes. I mean, that's the point of it all, isn't it—to be read. And to be read in such numbers as makes it practical to keep writing.

Jen: Of course I'm thrilled to get such excellent press and show my fiction to readers in such good company. But, call me crazy, I'd like to make money. In every wild-west, pre-regulation era of technological expansion, there is a period where everyone is throwing stuff at the wall to see what sticks. Someone tries something and it fails. Someone else tries exactly the same thing and it goes critical. Someone's little side-venture grows until it takes over their original business plan and they're left crying all the way to the bank. We are well-positioned and exceptionally well-staffed to take advantage of this unpredictable and opportunity-rich business environment. As Pati said, we're becoming a force of nature; at this rate, by next year you won't be able to get away from Book View Café. Bwahahahahah!

Visit Bookview Café at <http://www.bookviewcafe.com/>

Nine members Pati Nagle and Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff are also members of Bookview Café and contributed to this article.

Jennifer Stevenson lives in the Chicago area, swims, rides horses, and skates as Flash Hottie for the farm team of the Windy City Rollers. She wrote Trash Sex Magic (Small Beer Press, 2004), The Brass Bed, The Velvet Chair, and The Bearskin Rug (Ballantine, summer 2008).



Classic Rock and the Organized Novelist

by Cyndy Salzmann

Many people think I'm a bit of a dichotomy as a novelist who also happens to be a professional organizer. This combo seems to be in opposition to the whole theory of right brain/left brain dominance. How can a woman who considers nirvana to be an uninterrupted afternoon at "The Container Store" have the creativity to compose something other than labels for file folders?

Okay... so it's time for a little confession. Or maybe a big one.

For more years than I care to remember, I was what you'd call a "hot mess" of disorganization. Piles of paper. Stacks of books. And loads of ideas. Unfortunately, with my mind as cluttered as my desk, many of these ideas never had a chance of making it to the page. Never mind the toll on my sanity — and family — as I stumbled toward deadlines.

Before you begin wondering how lax the standards are for professional organizers — or contemplating how many cocktails the *Ninc Goes Platinum* committee sipped before asking me to present at the upcoming conference on various topics related to organization and productivity — let me explain how I found balance in the "hot mess" of a writer's life.

It began with Grand Funk Railroad.

An American Band

The most practical advice I've received about organizing came from a '70s band best known for the song "We're an American Band." This may be perplexing to many, as Grand Funk never aspired or pretended to be organizational gurus. Second, the group has all male members — a gender that rarely frets about "doing it all." But they did produce a hit called "Some Kinda Wonderful" that changed my life. Or at least my disorganized life.

At one time, I was an avid "collector" of books on time management and organization. I use the term "collector" because I would read the first few chapters, try out a few ideas and then add the book to my pile in frustration. It seemed I began each day by berating myself with thoughts like... ▶



“I should be...”
“Why don’t I...”
“If I would just...”
“How come I can’t be like...”

During a particularly laid back evening listening to Grand Funk, I had a revelation: My “hot mess” of disorganization was because I was not appreciating or employing my unique organizational style. My “some kinda wonderful.”

You are “some kinda wonderful” too. You can use all of this “wonderfulness” to accomplish your writing goals and dreams – but first, you have to discover your unique organizational style. And EMBRACE it.

Lions, Otters and Winnie the Pooh

Most experts believe there are four basic personality types or temperaments. This line of thinking began with Hippocrates in 400 BC. Hippocrates theorized that temperament was based on a person’s blood type:

- Choleric
- Sanguine
- Phlegmatic
- Melancholy

Psychologist Gary Smalley uses animals to define these four personality types:

- Lion
- Otter
- Golden Retriever
- Beaver

My personal favorite is the “100 Acre Wood” personality types based on characters in Winnie the Pooh:

- Rabbit
- Tigger
- Pooh
- Eeyore

You can Google all of the above theories and read about them if you choose. But — if you don’t choose — I don’t think you’ll be missing much. It’s pretty much the same dish — with a little different twist.

Novelists are GEMS

My husband’s family comes from a long line of gemologists. I know that each natural gem is unique due to color, cut and clarity. A gemologist takes great care to cut the stone in just the right way to fit and glisten in its setting.

While developing the material for my latest nonfiction book on organizing, I decided to use GEMS as the acronym for defining the four personality types/temperaments. Here’s an overview:

G - Goal-oriented
Takes charge
Problem solver
Competitive
Enjoys change
Confrontational

Time Is Running Out to Sign Up For Ninc Goes Platinum

More than three dozen workshops. Night Owl Sessions. Forensics Day. Industry Insiders. Networking with Your Peers. A great hotel with breakfast included. A bargain price. This is one conference you don’t want to miss. Go to <http://www.Ninc.com> to sign up today. Before it’s too late.

E- Easy-going

Relaxed
Warm and relational
Loyal
Enjoys routine
Peacemaker

M – Methodical

Orderly
Accurate and precise
Likes facts and charts
Discerning
Analytical

S - Spirited

Optimistic
Enthusiastic
Energetic
Inspiring
Fun-loving
VERY verbal

We're getting close!

Time to more than think about Kritters For The Kids -- and autographed books for their parents — all being donated by Ninc to the Saint Louis Children's Hospital during the conference. Team mascots from your home city or state, Tonka trucks, Weebles that wobble but don't fall down — have fun, go shopping!

Toys must be new, packaged. For help on deciding what to bring, go to:

<http://www.stlouischildrens.org/content/OurWishListGiftsInKind.htm>

and click on "list of items" for a PDF download of suggestions.

We'll provide the Ninc logo gift tags, and transport everything to the hospital.

We're also collecting *NYT* and *USAToday* autographed bestsellers from our members, to proudly display at the conference, then take along to the hospital — this time for the nurses and medical staff.

If you can't bring your gifts and books, please send them to the following address — she says she's got lots of storage space. Let's fill it!

Patricia Rice, 15222 Strollways Dr, Chesterfield, MO 63017-7756

Oh — and anyone with a car at their disposal in Saint Louis can volunteer to help transport from Pat's house to the hotel, then to the hospital on Sunday. Thanks!

At *Ninc Goes Platinum*, I'll be giving participants in my "Organized by Design" breakout session an opportunity to take a personality inventory designed especially for writers to determine organizational style - but even more importantly offer strategies that work with you to maximize your productivity. Or at least, keep your sanity.

The other two workshops will focus on specific issues:

TAMING THE PAPER TIGER: A Simple Approach to Maintaining both Paper and Electronic Files

"I know it's here somewhere..." Don't waste precious writing time sorting through piles to find needed information. This workshop provides practical strategies for finding what you need – when you need it.

EDITING YOUR SPACE: A Step-by-Step Plan for Putting the Clamp on Clutter

Too much stuff not only clutters your environment — it clutters your mind. Learn to employ your editing skills to clean up your space and keep creativity flowing.

I am looking forward to helping you find your "some kinda wonderful" in St. Louis. Come on... sing it with me...

*Well my baby, she's alright,
Well my baby, she's clean out-of-sight.
Don't you know that she's ... she's some kind of wonderful.
She's some kind of wonderful ... yes she is... she's...*

Cyndy Salzmman is a multi-published author of both fiction and nonfiction – and a professional organizer. Her novel, Crime & Clutter, is the second installment in a lighthearted mystery series published by Simon & Schuster.

**Oh, and did we mention the 20th Year
Anniversary Pin for all attendees?
Available only in St. Louis 2009**



Forensic Files

By D. P. Lyle, MD



Autopsy, Historically....

In 1863, Could An Autopsy Accurately Determine the Cause of Death?

Q: I am a writer trying to figure out what, if anything, a 19th century physician (actually the book is set in 1863) in a provincial Canadian backwater might conclude about a dead body found in salt water, which had a caved-in skull and no water in the lungs. Would they indicate possible foul play? Would they even examine the lungs at autopsy?

A: In 1863, there was essentially no forensic science available. Fingerprints hadn't been discovered to be a form of identification, blood typing was nearly a half century away, and DNA was a full century down the road. Ballistic examinations were not done. But, uncovering arsenic in the tissues of a corpse had been known since Jean Servais Stas, a Belgian chemist, discovered the technique in 1851. So, there wasn't much around.

But, there was the autopsy. The examination of corpses and the determination if any diseases and injuries were present dates back many, many centuries. Ancient Egyptians performed something like autopsies but the first true autopsies to gain medical knowledge were likely performed by Erasistratus around 250 BC or earlier. Galen, the great first century Greek physician, was the physician to the gladiators and had extensive experience in anatomy and wounds. He wrote extensively on these and many other subjects and his shadow fell over medical knowledge well into the 19th century. Not always for the good, since he was wrong about almost everything. In 1350, autopsies were done on victims of the Black Death in the hopes of finding a cause for the pandemic. Then over the next seven centuries the autopsy became more common and more sophisticated.

So, by 1863, the autopsy was well ingrained into the practice of medicine. This means that your physician could easily have the knowledge to perform them. Or not. Since he is in an isolated area, he could be out of the loop on that so you can have it either way. If he had any experience at all, he could determine whether the blow to the head was enough to kill the victim or not. He would see a skull fracture or bleeding into and around the brain. If he saw these, he might conclude that this was the cause of death. If he saw none of this, but merely a scalp bruise, he might conclude that drowning was the cause of death. He might not look at the lungs but simply know that the victim was found in water and assume that a drowning occurred. Or if he did examine the lungs and found them to be dry, he might say that drowning had nothing to do with it and the victim must have been dead at the time he entered the water. With dry lungs and no significant head injury he might not be able to say what caused the death. This gives you several options for how you construct your plot.

I should point out that dry lung drownings can occur and that any corpse—drowned or not—that has been in the water longer than 12 or so hours will have lungs filled with water. This is simply due to water seeping in and forcing the air out. Like a sponge dropped into water. But this was not known in 1863 so dry lungs would have meant no drowning to your physician.

D. P. Lyle, MD is the Macavity Award winning and Edgar Award nominated author of the non-fiction books, Murder and Mayhem, Forensics For Dummies, and Forensics and Fiction, and Howdunnit: Forensics: A Guide For Writers as well as the thrillers, Devil's Playground and Double Blind. His next medical thriller, Stress Fracture, will be released in early 2010. He has worked with many novelists and with the writers of popular television shows such as Law & Order, CSI: Miami, Diagnosis Murder, Monk, Judging Amy, Peacemakers, Cold Case, House, Medium, Women's Murder Club, and I-800-Missing. Visit The Writers' Medical and Forensics Lab (<http://www.dplylemd.com>).

Website: <http://www.dplylemd.com/> // BLOG: <http://writersforensicsblog.wordpress.com/>

And don't miss Dr. Lyle's fantastic workshops during Ninc Goes Platinum and Ninc Does Forensics!

Annual Business Meeting

Our Bylaws require an annual business meeting be conducted at the conference. No vote is anticipated at this time, but your presence—in the form of a proxy or physical appearance—is required to ensure a quorum and a legal meeting. If you will not be attending the meeting, please make sure your proxy arrives by **September 15, 2009**.

Proxy A

Use to appoint current Ninc Board of Directors as your agent.

Proxy solicited on behalf of the Board of Directors of Novelists, Inc. for the annual business meeting of members to be held on October 4, 2009.

The undersigned hereby appoints Kasey Michaels, Kay Hooper, Charlotte Hubbard, Ruth Glick, Jasmine Cresswell, and Cindi Myers, each of them as his/her true and lawful agents and proxies full power of substitution to represent the undersigned on all matters coming before the meeting at the annual business meeting of members to be held at Drury Plaza Hotel, 2 South 4th Street, St. Louis MO, on Sunday, October 4 at 9:00 a.m.

This proxy when properly executed will be voted in the manner you directed. If no direction is given with respect to any particular item, this proxy will be voted in favor of the proposals put forth by the Board of Directors.

Member please sign here: _____

Please print name here: _____

Please mail this Ballot/Proxy to:

Kasey Michaels, 3230 Flatrock Drive, Whitehall, PA 18052

Proxy must be received by September 15, 2009.

OR indicate your proxy preference online at <http://www.ninc.com>

Annual Business Meeting

Our Bylaws require an annual business meeting be conducted at the conference. No vote is anticipated at this time, but your presence—in the form of a proxy or physical appearance—is required to ensure a quorum and a legal meeting. If you will not be attending the meeting, please make sure your proxy arrives by **September 15, 2009**.

Proxy B

Use to appoint a fellow Novelists, Inc. member as your agent.

Print the member's name in the appropriate space below.

Proxy for the annual business meeting of Novelists, Inc. to be held October 4, 2009.

The undersigned hereby appoints _____
as his/her true and lawful agent and proxy with full power of substitution to represent the undersigned on all matters coming before the meeting at the annual business meeting of members to be held at Drury Plaza Hotel, 2 South 4th Street, St. Louis MO, on Sunday, October 4 at 9:00 a.m.

This proxy when properly executed will be voted in the manner you directed. If no direction is given with respect to any particular item, this proxy will be voted in favor of the proposals put forth by the Board of Directors.

Member please sign here: _____

Please print name here: _____

Please mail this Ballot/Proxy to:

Kasey Michaels, 3230 Flatrock Drive, Whitehall, PA 18052

Proxy must be received by September 15, 2009.

Your proxy will be distributed at the annual business meeting to the Ninc member you have designated.

OR indicate your proxy preference online at <http://www.ninc.com>

The Basement of Awesome: Storing Your Books

BY ELAINE ISAAK

“Don’t underestimate the entertainment possibilities of having a lot of your books around either. Remember, nothing screams ‘I am the king of awesome’ like having an entire bookcase filled with your own book.”

— Pat Rothfuss, author of *The Name of the Wind*

When, like Pat, we had just received the author copies of our first novels, most of us were inclined to celebrate by displaying them prominently whenever and wherever possible. I have pictures of my daughter surrounded by my book, and we had a great time stacking them up, then tiling them out, just to see how high and how far they would go. But once you have a few, a dozen, a hundred books in print, shelf space gets pretty tight, and you’ve got to look for other storage solutions, if only so that visitors don’t think you print your own wallpaper with a funky, ego-boosting book spine design. What’s a multi-published author to do?

There are two basic issues, the fun and the tricky. The fun part is finding a spot to display your current titles. If you’re lucky and successful enough, you can follow George R. R. Martin’s plan and purchase your neighbor’s home to use as your library, handily solving both problems. Barring that, offices and living rooms are the popular choices, with nifty bookends to draw the eye, although decorative boxes and spare bathtubs have also been pressed into duty. Pat McLinn reports that the narrow shelves designed for video tape or other media storage can fit nicely into the space behind the doors in older houses—a compact, easy access solution.

The tricky part is all of those duplicates. Raise your hand if you have hundreds of books in your basement or attic. Don’t be shy—the conservators can’t see you. According to the American Antiquarian Booksellers, the worst enemies of books are humidity, temperature extremes, and direct sunlight. So the attic and basement harbor two out of three (or all three, if you have windows up there). The ideal storage situation would be free of moisture, dark, and chilly: under 75 degrees. Greer Gilman, author of *Cloud and Ashes* and a preservation librarian at Harvard University, says, “The Harvard stacks are currently at 58 degrees—which is hard on the people, but the books love it!”

To find some real-world solutions, I consulted Greer’s colleague, Joan Hedberg of Harvard’s conservation department. What she said surprised me. The best way to store your books if you must box them? Spine down. This position minimizes stress on the spine. For hardcovers, especially those that are leaning, the spine is prone to burst, cracking into two pieces where the signatures are stitched. For paperbacks, the greatest limit on the book’s lifespan is the quality of the glue. Spine-down storage allows the pressure of the book block to assist so that gravity doesn’t pull the pages out of the cover.

If you have the space, Hedberg recommends simply shelving the books snugly together (no leaning) straight up on open bookshelves that allow air circulation. For boxes, either cardboard or plastic will do in a pinch, but don’t store them against walls where moisture might creep in. Instead, get them up off the ground and allow an air space. Hedberg says, “Moderate air circulation around and under the boxes can avoid a lot of environment problems, especially mold.” Most sources recommend at least three inches of space between the books and the walls or floors, even if the books are shelved. While glass-fronted cases can prevent the accumulation of dust or the invasion of insects, they can also trap moisture near the books, so they should be checked for signs of mold, or, depending on your local climate, left open to allow circulation. ►

While most authors I spoke to simply boxed and stacked their copies, Judy Gill also shared her solution: plastic bags designed for storing clothing by removing the air after the items are bagged. After years of using them onboard her boat, she has noticed no deterioration.

The life expectancy of a book varies based on its paper and binding style. Library bindings are made to last through generations of users—many university presses produce exclusively this style, using high-quality acid-free papers and sewn or flexible glue spines. Such a book may last hundreds of years. Alas, the mass-market paperback is designed for one or two readings, then to sit on a shelf. Even unread, as our author copies likely are, they won't last more than a few decades before acquiring that distinctive yellow, brittle appearance. The acidity results from the interaction of sizing in the manufactured paper with moisture in the air. And the presence of oxygen alone is enough to cause a reaction and discolor the pages. Even at the venerable Library of Congress, 77,000 books per year are downgraded from "acidic" to "brittle": prone to fall apart at the next use. As for the spines, Hedberg tells me, "Trade paper and mass market paperbacks depend on the glue that holds the pages together (hot melt glue fails regularly—as any owner of a Penguin paperback knows)." Ouch!

For more details about the basics of book storage and shelving, read the first part of this conservation pamphlet on-line at: http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets/4Storage_and_Handling/01StorageMethods.php

You'll find lots more details. . . like how to properly remove a book from the shelf (by gently pushing in the books to either side, then taking out the desired volume "by grasping it on both sides with the thumb and fingers.")

Storage

Shortcuts:

If you can afford it for books not on display, archival storage materials can help. Special books may be wrapped in acid-free tissue (starting at about \$75 for 100 sheets, or a roll), and/or placed inside archival storage boxes, available in many sizes. The height of doting book storage is the individually constructed clamshell box of acid-free board with linen binding and metal corners. You'll see descriptions including the terms "buffered" and "unbuffered." Buffering is a process of including calcium carbonate to create an alkaline Ph content, reducing acidification later. Buffered paper is not suitable for photos, silk or wool, but is the best choice for most books.

Spine Down

Hollinger (<http://www.genealogicalstorageproducts.com/recstorbox1.html>) offers buffered acid-free record storage boxes starting at \$10, with price breaks for larger quantities if you'd like to box your whole collection. You can find a list of these and other suppliers at the Smithsonian Institution's website, http://www.si.edu/mci/english/learn_more/taking_care/acidfree.html

Air All

Round...

Finally, if you're looking for a light-hearted manual for tending your books, Laura Resnick recommends *The Care and Feeding of Books Old and New: A Simple Manual for Book Lovers* by Margot Rosenberg and Bern Macrowitz, the owners of Manhattan's Dog Lovers' Bookstore, available from St. Martin's Press. This book covers many of the threats to the lives of books and offers some simple repair techniques for book owners, though not all would pass muster with the preservationists quoted above. A cautionary note: if

you're not a dog person, you may find their enthusiasm for canines a bit wearying. There are many other books on caring for books, but most are geared toward the rare book collector or librarian.

For myself, I have a modest shelf in my office with one copy of each edition, held between bookends shaped like—what else?—books. The additional author copies are evenly split between the basement and the garage. I'd like to say they are at least stored spine-down, but alas, they are piled in boxes willy-nilly, just as I received them. Don't tell the conservationists!

Fantasy author Elaine Isaak lives in New Hampshire where she never finds enough time to write. Her next book is The Bastard Queen, forthcoming in January 2010, and you do not want to be her hero.



WRITING is TAXING

By Diane O'Brien Kelly

Desperate Times, Desperate Measures

With the economy in the slumps, many are finding themselves unemployed or underemployed these days. When unemployment benefits and savings run out, people are sometimes forced to consider desperate measures. Selling off their rare bobble-head doll collection. Blood donation. One-ply toilet paper.

Hopefully you've just sold a bestselling novel, landed a multi-million dollar motion picture contract, and sold Mattel the rights to make action figures of your characters. But if you find yourself a victim of the economic doldrums, you may start eyeing your IRAs or retirement plans. Before taking funds out of your retirement accounts, though, it's important to know the tax consequences of early liquidation of your retirement accounts. Tax consequences vary depending on what type of account is liquidated.

Roth IRAs.

Because contributions to a Roth IRA yield no tax deduction, amounts contributed to a Roth are "after-tax dollars," meaning income tax has already been paid on the funds contributed. Thus, contributions to a Roth IRA can be withdrawn at any time with no current income tax consequences. Yippee! Income tax will only apply to the extent the withdrawal includes earnings on your contributions.

If you are over the age of 59 ½, you are not subject to the 10% early withdrawal penalty on the earnings. If you are under the age of 59 ½, a 10% early withdrawal penalty also applies to the earnings distributed to you unless:

- 1) You have unreimbursed medical expenses that are more than 7.5% of your adjusted gross income.
- 2) You lost your job and the distributions are not more than the cost of your medical insurance.
- 3) You are totally and permanently disabled.
- 4) You are the beneficiary of a deceased IRA owner.
- 5) You are receiving distributions in the form of an annuity.
- 6) The distributions are not more than your qualified higher education expenses.
- 7) You use the distributions to buy, build, or rebuild a first home.
- 8) The distribution is due to an IRS levy of the qualified plan.
- 9) The distribution is a qualified reservist distribution.

Note that this is only a general list of exceptions and more detailed rules and limitations may apply to each of the exceptions. Read IRS Publication 590 "Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs)" for more details.

The penalty is reported on Form 5329 "Additional Taxes on Qualified Plans (Including IRAs) and Other Tax-Favored Accounts." Form 5329 is filed with your federal income tax return.

Be aware, too, that you may be able to claim a deductible loss on your Roth IRA if all of the amounts in your Roth IRA accounts have been distributed and the total distributions are less than the amount of your contributions. The loss is deductible on Schedule A as a miscellaneous itemized deduction (subject to a 2% adjusted gross income floor).



Traditional IRAs.

Because the tax scheme is different with traditional IRAs, the taxation of distributions from a traditional IRA are different. Unless you've made non-deductible contributions to a traditional IRA, the full amount of the distributions from a traditional IRA will be subject to income tax. The distributions are also subject to a 10% early withdrawal penalty if you have not yet reached 59 ½. Note, however, that the exceptions noted earlier in the discussion regarding Roth IRAs also apply to traditional IRAs.

If you withdraw contributions made in a given year before the due date of the return for that year, you do not have to pay income tax or the 10% penalty on the contributed amounts returned to you so long as you do not take a deduction for the contribution and you also withdraw any income earned on the contribution. Note that if there is a loss on the funds, the "earnings" may be negative so that you actually withdraw less than you contribute. Although you will not have to pay tax on the amount of contributions returned to you, you must report and pay income tax on the earnings, if any, distributed to you and, unless you meet one of the exceptions to the 10% early withdrawal penalty, the penalty will also apply to the distributed earnings.

As with Roth IRAs, if you have emptied all of your traditional IRA accounts and the amount of your distributions are less than the amounts you contributed, you may be able to claim a loss on your return.

401(k)'s and Other Qualified Plans.

Distributions from a 401(k) are subject to income tax. Also, as with IRA distributions, you may face a 10% early withdrawal penalty if you take distributions before reaching age 59 ½. However, a different list of exceptions apply. Even if you are not yet 59 ½, you will not owe the 10% penalty if:

- 1) You have "separated from service" (quit your job, been terminated, or retired) and you reached age 55 before being separated from service.
- 2) You become totally and permanently disabled.
- 3) You receive distributions in the form of an annuity.
- 4) The distribution is due to an IRS levy of the qualified plan.
- 5) You have unreimbursed medical expenses that are more than 7.5% of your adjusted gross income.

Borrowing Your Way Out

Rather than taking an outright distribution, you may be able to borrow from a 401(k) or other qualified plan if the terms of the plan allow it. There is no requirement that retirement plans allow loans and, if the employer chooses to allow loans, the employer is allowed to impose restrictions on the loans and/or loan amounts.

Note that borrowing is not permitted from IRAs. Bummer.

Borrowing from a retirement plan can be a convenient, low-cost way to get some quick cash. However, there may be significant fees involved. Many financial advisors warn against such borrowing except as a last resort. Before considering this option, research the pros and cons of borrowing from a 401(k). Also, be aware that if you default on a loan repayment, you will be treated as having received a distribution from the 401(k) and will be subject to tax and possibly penalties on the deemed distributions.

Paying Tax on the Distributions. To avoid a large tax liability as well as a potential underpayment penalty come tax filing time, be sure to ask the custodian of your retirement plan to withhold taxes from your distributions or pay the taxes yourself through estimated tax payments.

Got a tax question for Diane? Email her at Diane@dianeobrienkelly.com. Your question might be addressed in an upcoming issue. For further tax tips, check out the "Tax Tidbits" page on Diane's website, <http://www.dianeobrienkelly.com>.

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



The Good, the Bad, and the Mediocre

“Some editors will ‘get’ what you write; others won’t. The key is to have patience to learn from the criticisms of the former, the strength to ignore the indifference of the latter, and the wisdom (and great luck) to know the difference between the two.”

—Bruce Feirstein, author of *Real Men Don’t Eat Quiche*

Not long after I delivered my first-ever novel, my acquiring editor resigned and left. So I was reassigned to another editor—one who told me I was nothing but unwanted work that had been shoveled onto her desk without her consent, and I shouldn’t expect to sell any more books to that house. For the next five months, she refused to read my option material or return my calls. Finally, I contacted her supervisor and requested reassignment to a different editor, which was the only way out of the problem.

This was all, of course, a very realistic introduction to the publishing business, where writers—the only reason the industry actually exists—are regularly treated like the diseased offspring of mutant sewer rats.

Fortunately, my next editor was the sort every writer hopes to get, particularly at the start of a career: someone who liked my writing, recognized my strengths, and could help me work on my weaknesses. This editor’s extensive revision letters on my next few books (and also my next few rejected proposals) gave me detailed and consistently constructive criticism from which I learned a great deal. Thus I became grounded in the crucial foundations of my long-term craft development thanks to the engaged input of a talented and knowledgeable editor who understood my writing.

On the flip side, a few years later I worked with an editor at another house whom I found so demoralizing, so crazy-making and stressful, so unprofessional and unreliable, so infuriating and needlessly exhausting, that I eventually decided that I’d rather never sell another book than work with that editor anymore. In retrospect, my only regret is that I didn’t make that decision sooner.

However, refusing to work with a particular editor never means you have to give up your career. It seldom even means you have to leave a house. But there are exceptions.

A friend of mine, for example, had an impossible relationship with a destructive editor who rejected most of her material, tore apart the rest, and regularly gave her conflicting notes and inconsistent information. My friend finally convinced her reluctant then-agent to request reassignment for her... and the publisher refused to cooperate. They found it impossible to believe that the editor wasn’t ideally suited to every writer assigned to her; not even when a professional, talented, and consistent writer (who has gone on to sell many books at other houses, and for steadily escalating advances) specifically told them she wasn’t.



The Mad Scribbler

Editing is highly individual. Writing is even more individual. If an editor doesn't like and understand my writing, then she can't edit it well. And if the editor can't accept that, then it's up to the writer to recognize it—and to do something about it. The writer's agent should support her in making whatever changes are necessary. Unfortunately, though, many agents I hear about, as well as one whom I worked with while I was trapped in a nightmarish relationship with an editor whom the agent liked, do not support the writer in this matter.

Meanwhile, editors are a mixed bag. Keep in mind, editing is a high-turnover field of entry-level jobs offered to people with no particular training or talent; and throughout the profession, salaries are low, benefits are modest, and recognition is minimal. (How many people can even name the editor of *The Da Vinci Code*? Or *Twilight*? Or the *Harry Potter* novels?)

Some editors wanted to do this professionally, and they're passionate about publishing. Some wanted to do something else entirely with their lives, but they somehow wound up in editing and turned out to be very good at it. On the other hand, some editors want (or wanted) to be writers, and they may or may not be good editors. Others are in publishing because they happened to find a Want-Ad for a job in our industry right after college, and they've never had the energy or ambition to move on. And some are just editing until they find what they really want to do with their lives.

In this mixed bag of possibilities, what the writer is looking for, ideally, is a good editor who's also good for her. But what the writer frequently has to settle for is a mediocre editor who's not actively bad for her. And what the writer sometimes get stuck with is an editor who's disastrous.

I've had all of the above. More than once.

In my experience, trying to stick it out with a disastrous editor has always turned out to be a mistake; and getting rid of such an editor, regardless of the possible consequences, has always turned out to be a good decision which I invariably wish I had made sooner. This knowledge will guide my decisions in future.

The conclusion I've come to about mediocre editors (which type is the most common) is that I should continue working with a mediocre editor while I keep actively looking around for a better opportunity. While the mediocre editor won't actively damage your career, she's also ill-equipped to do anything really worthwhile for it. When in the hands of a mediocre editor, a writer's in-house career reflects the editor's limitations rather than the writer's potential. This isn't a relationship to be canceled regardless of consequences; but the writer must seek the opportunity to trade up, so to speak. This may come in the form of dumb luck (your mediocre editor resigns, and you're reassigned to a very good editor), or it may be a deliberate choice (you move to another house with a strong new proposal sold to an editor whom you believe will be very good for you).

As for good editors, if you're working with someone who loves and understands your work, can help you enhance it, and actively builds your career at that house, then you have the opportunity to realize your potential. This is why I by now believe that only a good editor who's also good for me is worth settling for; the others are just the many rocks and potholes we typically encounter on the path of our profession.

Laura Resnick has worked with more editors than she can count. She admires and appreciates some of them; can scarcely remember some of them; and will have to be physically restrained if she ever again encounters some of them.

Ninc Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY JACKIE KRAMER

Volunteer Jobs List

Job Title: Discounts committee member

Job Description: Dianne Despain and J.C. Wilder have answered the call to save Ninc members money. Thank you both! Contact : Pat McLaughlin at PmcLinn@aol.com

Job Title: Digital Rights Committee Members

Job Description: The goal of the Digital Rights Management Committee is to help educate as well as come to a consensus about DRM for our members. Experience in the field would be valued, but isn't necessary. Contact: Kristine Smith at ksmith@sff.net

Job Title: Assistant to Website Chair:

Job Description: Work directly with the chairs to help the website committee coordinate its various projects. HTML not required (no programming involved in the job) though a basic understanding of how websites work is helpful. Contact: Pati Nagle at naglel@pgnagle.com

Job Title: Review Sites Information Volunteers

Job Description: Gather information on review sites and include names of reviewers, their snail and email addresses, and what genres they prefer to review. Contact: Judy Gill at judyashore@gmail.com

Got any news or information
for the Bulletin Board?
Send it to Jackie at
jackiekramer7@netscape.com

It's never too early to set up travel plans
for the conference!

Carpooling — for those who wish to drive together to the conference (seven states are within driving distance of Saint Louis), and for those who wish to possibly travel together by plane and/or hook up for rides to and from the airport. Moderator: Kristine Smith. Sign up at:
NINC09Carpool-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Roommates — find your roommate here. Moderator: Janelle Clare Schneider Sign up at:
NINC09Roommates-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Discussion Loop — Here is where we're talking about All Things Conference from meeting up with old friends, making new ones before getting together in Saint Louis, and everything else under the sun. Moderator: Michele Young. Sign up at:
NINC09ConfDisc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Do you subscribe to eNink? If not, what are you waiting for? Don't miss special eNink only features like the Best of Nink, including this month's reprise of a 1998 article on Career Planning that's as relevant today as it was 11 years ago. To start receiving Nink electronically, log onto <http://www.ninc.com> Go to your profile and click the box to subscribe to eNink. It's easy and it saves Ninc printing and postage costs for each issue, leaving more money for other author benefits.

Election Notice

President-Elect: Donna Fletcher

Secretary: Charlotte Hubbard

Treasurer: Marcia Evanick

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

Denise A. Agnew
Binnie Syril Braunstein
Kathy Lynn Emerson
Ashley McConnell
Cindi Myers
Kristine Smith
Cheryl Zach

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, 2009. Mail all written nominations to Sylvie Kurtz, P.O. Box 702, Milford, NH 03055.



The Proxy Form for this year's Annual General Meeting is published in this issue on pages 11 and 12. Please complete and submit if you're unable to attend in St. Louis.

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Career Planning: Checklists for Writers—Part 2

By MARGARET BROWNLEY

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the August 1998 issue of Nink. The cogent advice offered by author Margaret Brownley is just as applicable today as it was 11 years ago, for writers at all stages of their careers. Part One appeared in the July issue of Nink.

MIDLIST: IS IT A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

Many agents seem to feel that if an author has not gained lead status or has not shown significant gains in advances or other perks by the sixth or seventh book, the author could be stuck in neutral. However, in this tight market, it could take longer to reach your goals.

Many successful authors started in midlist. Some worked their way up to lead status; others changed houses before they could negotiate a lead position. When do you stay; when do you change? Here are some things to think about:

▼ How many books have you written for this publisher?

▼ Does your advance increase with each book?

▼ If you write category romance, you might not get an advance increase with each book. (If this is the case, what other indications do you have that you are moving up?)

▼ Does your publisher view you as a "midlist" author? (If so, this might be hard to change.)

▼ Is there "room at the top" with your particular house?

▼ Does your publisher groom "in-house" authors, or are outside authors brought in for special projects; for example, anthologies?

▼ Is your publisher excited about you and your work? (Editors can and do leave, so it's important to know that the house is behind you.)

▼ If you know in your heart you're going to have to make the BIG move, are you willing to take the risk?

▼ Are you preparing the way for the eventuality of a future move by keeping your name out there in front

of other publishers? Doing appropriate networking? Keeping informed about changes at other houses?

Reality Check:

▼ The advance on my last contract was:

- ☐ higher than I expected.
- ☐ lower than I expected.
- ☐ just about right.

(Some authors choose to accept a lower advance in exchange for other perks, such as more publicity).

▼ Did you negotiate royalty increases after so many books sold?

▼ What royalty percentages are you getting? (Anything less than 6% royalty rates will make it almost impossible for a book to earn-out, especially if you get a generous advance)

If either your royalties or advances are on the low side, check *all* the choices that might explain why:

- ☐ First time author.
- ☐ First time with this publisher.
- ☐ Agent failed to negotiate for more.
- ☐ Took less money to gain important perks that will help my career.
- ☐ Write in a genre that has a smaller readership. Ex: Regency.
- ☐ Book needed a lot of editing.
- ☐ Book was different than my usual style
- ☐ Wrote the book under a different name.
- ☐ Book was set in an era or location that's not considered "commercial enough."
- ☐ Previous book(s) had poor sell-through.
- ☐ Numbers dropping. (This calls for some major changes; publishers say an author's numbers seldom go up once they begin to drop.)
- ☐ Marketing trends. (Some midlist authors say their advances are dropping.)
- ☐ Publisher does not pay more.
- ☐ Reason unknown.

List three reasons why staying with your present publisher is good for your career.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List three reasons why changing publishers at this time would be beneficial to your career (keeping in mind the risks involved).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Another Option:

Since it's not easy to switch publishers, especially in this tight market, perhaps your best option is to stay with your present publisher for now. You can prepare for the future by writing and marketing other books in your spare time. Just make sure you're not trying to market a book optioned by your present publisher.

WHAT'S REALLY STANDING IN YOUR WAY?

It could be that your publisher is not the one holding you back. It could be you. Experts tell us that the "place" we are at any given time is the "place" we choose to be. If your dream and your reality are in conflict, perhaps it's time to look inward. Check any (and all) author hold-ups that might apply:

- ☐ Low self-esteem.
- ☐ Fear of failure.
- ☐ Fear of success.
- ☐ Failure to turn bad things into good. (A bad cover can work to your advantage; for example, if the publisher tries to make it up to you on the next cover. It's happened!)
- ☐ Books not special enough.
- ☐ Have not taken the time to develop a unique voice.
- ☐ Afraid to make waves. (The good kid syndrome.)
- ☐ Afraid to change publisher, agent.
- ☐ Afraid to try something new.

- ☐ Feel trapped or forced into writing books that do not correlate with goals.
- ☐ Difficult to work with.
- ☐ Too nice; not willing to assert myself.
- ☐ Write too slow.
- ☐ Failure to prioritize career.
- ☐ Lack of writing time.
- ☐ Lack of family support. (Lack of husband's support was cited as the number one reason women give up career goals, according to a recent study.)
- ☐ Lack of a writer support system.
- ☐ Confused loyalties.
- ☐ Afraid to beat own drum.
- ☐ Burnout.
- ☐ Lack of market or business knowledge.
- ☐ Afraid to take chances.
- ☐ Procrastination.
- ☐ Lack of passion for what I'm doing.
- ☐ Failure on my part to make editor/agent aware of my strengths.
- ☐ Indecision. (Not sure what I want or expect from my career.)
- ☐ Lack needed information about the market, myself or the business to make wise choices.
- ☐ Have not learned to work with my editor or agent.
- ☐ Have not learned how to fully utilize the services/information that are available through professional organizations such as Novelists, Inc.
- ☐ Do not understand the importance of networking.
- ☐ Go to conferences without a plan and only talk to those people I know.
- ☐ Have not taken the time to figure out the next step.

MARKETING YOUR STRENGTHS AND TALENTS

A publisher takes a chance on every book and author. A writer's job is to minimize the risks in the publisher's eyes. List your strengths (you might want to ask your agent and/or editor for input):

- ☐ A style of writing that is uniquely my own.
- ☐ Exceptionally good reviews.
- ☐ Reviews in publications other than fanzines. (PW is great).
- ☐ Savvy self-promotion where it counts.
- ☐ Editor excited about work.
- ☐ Agent excited about work.
- ☐ A unique job or background that a publisher could use to "sell" me.
- ☐ A book that is a "hot" topic.

- ☐ Special honors or awards.
- ☐ Passionate about what I'm doing.
- ☐ Have a knack for seeing new trends or coming up with high concept ideas.
- ☐ Have a keen sense of what readers want to read.
- ☐ Have a presence that attracts attention.
- ☐ Other _____

WRITING ACHIEVEMENTS THAT CAN HELP MINIMIZE A PUBLISHER'S RISKS

Part of every writer's career plan should be to create a paper trail of success. Make sure to keep your agent and editor informed of every good thing that happens to you. Send copies of newspaper articles, reviews – everything that suggests that you are an up-and-coming writer.

Reality Check:

Judging from my reviews, agent/editor input, fan mail, and my own assessment, my greatest strengths as a writer are _____

THINGS YOU WISH WEREN'T TRUE

The best way to alleviate problems in your career is to face them head on and to arm yourself with as much information as possible. Every successful author has had one or more of the following problems and has successfully overcome them:

- ☐ Low sell-throughs or pre-sales on last book(s).
- ☐ Books without wide enough marketing appeal.
- ☐ Poor reviews on prior books.
- ☐ A less than enthusiastic editor/agent.
- ☐ Books require more editing than publisher willing to do.
- ☐ Deadlines not met.
- ☐ Orphaned books.
- ☐ Slow writer.
- ☐ Major rewrites.
- ☐ Writing not top priority.
- ☐ Bad packaging or cover on last book.
- ☐ Health or family problems that interfere with writing.

- ☐ Divorce or death in the family.
- ☐ Change of editors.
- ☐ Style not in synch with publisher.
- ☐ Profit/loss statement on previous books cite a low profit margin.
- ☐ Print-run unrealistically high.
- ☐ Poor distribution or lay-down.

National or world events can interfere with book sales. For example, Princess Di's death, along with the UPS strike, made September 1997 a disastrous month for book sales, even for category books.

Remember, weaknesses are strengths carried to extremes.

MARK THE TANGIBLE WAYS YOUR CAREER HAS SHOWN GAINS IN THE LAST YEAR:

- ☐ Last royalty statement showed increased sales.
- ☐ Negotiated a better contract.
- ☐ Received a higher advance.
- ☐ Won a significant writing award.
- ☐ Increased requests for speaking engagements suggests more name recognition.
- ☐ Landed an interview on TV or in a national magazine.
- ☐ Book made bestseller lists.
- ☐ Book picked up by major bookclub.
- ☐ Published in hardback.
- ☐ Established important contacts.
- ☐ Went from midlist to lead.
- ☐ Asked to participate in special project.
- ☐ Agent receives inquiries from other publishing houses.

INDICATIONS THAT PRESENT PUBLISHER DOES NOT VALUE WORK.

- ☐ Written more than six books for this publisher without increase in advances or position or print-run.
- ☐ Books are being scheduled further apart.
- ☐ Poor artwork.
- ☐ No publicity.
- ☐ Publisher takes forever to make decision on option books (a sign your numbers are iffy).
- ☐ Telephone calls are not returned in a timely manner.
- ☐ Rejection.



- ☐ Editor shows lack of excitement about new projects.
- ☐ Editor breaks promises.
- ☐ Editor shows no special attention to me during conferences.

AGENTS

When things go wrong, it's great to have an agent who believes in you enough to work with you during both good and bad times. Mark the sentence that best describes your present relationship with your agent:

- ☐ My agent believes in me and we have a wonderful working relationship.
- ☐ My agent intimidates me.
- ☐ My agent and I do not have the same vision for my career.
- ☐ I do not have an agent, but I'm looking.
- ☐ I don't see the value of having an agent.
- ☐ I plan to change agents.
- ☐ My agent isn't the greatest, but gets the job done.
- ☐ My agent and I discuss my career goals and strategies at regular intervals of:
 - ☐ Six months.
 - ☐ Yearly.
 - ☐ On occasion.
 - ☐ Never.

If you have not recently discussed your career goals with agent, mark all the possible reasons:

- ☐ I have not made it to clear my agent that I wish to discuss goals.
- ☐ My agent has resisted all attempts on my part discuss to career goals.
- ☐ My agent is not adequately familiar with my writing abilities.
- ☐ I do not have a clear enough picture in my mind of where I want my career to go.
- ☐ I take full responsibility for charting my own career with no help from my agent.

TAKING THE BULL BY THE HORNS

Starting Monday, I will do the following to improve my career:

- ☐ I will call my agent and request the following changes in how we do business: _____

- ☐ If the situation warrants it, I will call my editor and discuss the following concerns: _____

- ☐ In my next contract (and after I have armed myself with all information available), I will ask for the following items (always ask for more than you expect to gain): _____

To further achieve my goals, I will make the following commitments (based on what I now know is holding me back) : _____

ENJOY THE JOURNEY!

Celebrate who you are.

Although it's necessary to continuously evaluate goals and to steer your career in the right direction, an author who is too focused and too goal-oriented sometimes loses sight of the joy and fun of writing.

Celebrate every success no matter how small. Don't get caught in the "never enough" syndrome. If you are having fun, your readers will have fun – this is what creates the magic.

Take a moment and list all the things that are good about your career today. This is the foundation on which you will build. _____

This is how I'm going to celebrate my many successes this week: _____

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