

# N I N K

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## DECLUTTERING THE WRITER'S LIFE— Part 3: The Paper Chase

BY CIJI WARE

*This final of three articles has been adapted for NINC from excerpts originally published in AARP The Magazine. All rights reserved. The material herein may not be reproduced without permission from the author.*

If you ask most people who own and use computers—and especially if you ask writers “What is your biggest clutter challenge?”—one problem immediately stands out from the rest: *Paper*...all kinds of paper.

Discarding “important” papers is a subset of a writer’s overall all “paper angst.” Yet anti-clutter pros will tell you that the “80/20 Rule” generally works: you can safely let go of 80 percent of the papers you’ve kept over the years—college notebooks, old newspaper clippings, defunct travel brochures. If by mistake you throw out something you need, such as insurance policies or appliance instructions, in these days of the Internet you can often retrieve that information online

Writers, of course, fall into a special category of paper hoarders, but here’s the good news! We’re going to ease into tackling what I call the Three-Headed Paper Beast—**miscellaneous papers, documents, and files**. So before you skip past this article or your eyes glaze over at the enormity of the paper littering your life, take the “I Just Can’t Face It” quiz below to see if your *belief systems* are actually what’s keeping you from taming that paper tiger.

### GETTING PAST THAT FAMILIAR SINKING SENSATION...

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Let’s confront the misery that can well up whenever you think about trying to conquer both incoming paper (items delivered to your home, such as bills, coupons, junk ads, etc.), and self-generating paper (items you create yourself like the several-to-many drafts of manuscripts, research documents, to-do lists, reports, and notes).

Every wonder *why* we hold on to piles of paper we never look at or use? For answers, make a mental check mark beside anything that resonates as you read these reasons:

1. If it’s in print, it must be important.
2. If I toss that first or second draft, that’s the *one* thing I’ll need!
3. Junk mail comes into the house too fast to process it.
4. Throwing out pitches for

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## Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

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

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Address changes may be made on the  
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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:

Carrie Ryan, Charlotte NC  
Jenny Moss, Seabrook TX  
Jennifer Shashaty (Sarah Parr), Pittsford NY  
Heather Graham Pozzessere (Heather Graham,  
Shannon Drake), Coral Gables FL  
Jessica Andersen, Voluntown CT  
Marta Dana (Dana Marton), Agard, Hungary  
Vanessa Kelly, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
Andy Straka, Charlottesville VA  
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### New Members:

Karen Alarie (Karen Anders), Raleigh NC  
Jeannette Monaco (Jenna Kernan), White Plains NY  
Frances Mallary (Miranda Neville), Bradford VT

### 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](mailto: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.

# So, Are You Coming To Florida?

Yes, I know. Kasey has done a great job keeping the membership advised about the great speakers she and her crew have lined-up for us, the fantastic resort hotel, the unbelievable low cost for all the luxury and information, never mind the creative sparks always struck at NINC conferences.

Maybe you feel like we're standing here yelling at you, or beating you over the head, or whatever. Nagging you mercilessly to get registered.

But here's the thing. There is an unbelievable amount of work required to put on a conference, even more to put on a good conference, and to pull together one like this one ... Wow. Just wow. I couldn't begin to describe it to you. I'm told it can be immensely rewarding to do so; one reason we have Kasey this year when we were blessed with her last year is simply because she was "on a conference roll" and just kept going. Personally, I think it's also because she's a Scorpio with control issues but, hey, I get that. <grin>

So what, you ask, am I trying to get at here? That Kasey is a glutton for punishment? Well, there's that.

But what I really want to talk about is you. You, the NINC member. You, the professional, career writer of commercial fiction. You, who are quite likely struggling in your career in some fashion. Maybe it's getting harder and harder to get a contract, or maybe you haven't been able to get one at all. Maybe you're finding yourself forced to compromise your creativity more and more just to keep working. Maybe you're frustrated by Marketing interference, or baby editors who don't seem to know there's a world outside Manhattan, or you're just worn down by the endless grind of senseless publishing decisions that affect your sales numbers, which affects your next contract, which affects the next set of numbers ... and on and on—often in a downward spiral over which you have absolutely no control.

Hell, maybe you're just really tired and more than a little confused by the "new" publishing industry, with its increasing emphasis on e-books and audiobooks and the Internet and the fear you can practically smell all around you as print sales, for the most part, flatten or fall.

Depressed yet?

Maybe you have every reason to be. Or maybe, just maybe, finding a more solid place to stand in this mess would be all you really needed for some sense of security. And maybe you can find that solid place by talking to or listening to people who've made serious studies of the future of publishing, people who have innovative ideas and theories and flat-out facts that could help you. Maybe finding a better understanding of what's going on around you in the publishing industry would help you to make better choices and decisions—and know when to fight and when to give in.

Maybe.

Now, we do our level best to bring you that sort of industry info right here in *Nink*, and on the Ninlink. We do our best to keep you informed. But there is absolutely nothing to compare to being in a room with other pros, and some of those visionaries I mentioned before, and just talking about our industry. About what's working and isn't, what's in the publisher blueprint—assuming they have one—and what's on the horizon.

Nothing beats face-to-face. Nothing beats a room full of writers who want answers talking to industry pros who have the information we need to find those answers. Nothing.

It's called brainstorming. And the most amazing things can and usually do come out of brainstorming. We've all done it, in one way or another, at least once in our careers. Talking through a plot. Tossing around ideas with another writer or three. Starting with "What if ..." and ending up with just enough to grab the story and run with it.

That's the creative part of brainstorming.

But we, you and I, we writers in this unstable industry in these very uncertain times, need to do a different kind of brainstorming. ▶

## President's Voice

We need to Brainstorm the Future.

And I think I can safely say that you won't find the diversity of information, opinion, vision, and experience at any other conference you could name. Not this year, and probably not anytime soon.

Florida. October. Brainstorming the Future of Publishing.

If you're a working, career writer, you need to come to Florida, to this particular conference. If you want to be or continue to be successful, you need to come. If you want to support this organization, and encourage this and future conferences for NINC, you need to come.

And you need to register now. Because you know back at the beginning of all this when I talked about all the work involved in pulling together a fantastic conference? Well, the one thing you can do to help Kasey and her crew without actually volunteering, the one thing you can do to support NINC in these uncertain, troubled times, is to *register for the conference now*.

If you're on the fence, get off. Make the decision, if at all possible, and commit. We need to know whether you're going to be there, and we need to know as soon as possible. Your board is already taking a hard look at next year, and wondering if we can possibly justify a conference *then* when we're offering our members the moon and a few stars this time around, and we're *still* watching registrations just trickle in.

Kasey would probably say something funny right about here. I'm not going to. I'm just going to ask you to make the decision to do whatever you possibly can for your own future.

Join us in Florida. I can pretty much guarantee you won't regret it.

— Kay Hooper



# Decluttering—Part 3: The Paper Chase

Continued from page 1 ▶ charities makes me feel guilty.

5. I want to give to a charity, but I can't afford it right now, so I hold on to the request for money.

6. I take too many magazines, journals, and newspapers to sort and purge them after they come into the house.

7. I'm busy trying to get this book done and I don't have the time to file papers.

8. The more the paper piles up, the more I get defeated and don't do anything.

9. I'm on too many mailing lists.

10. I don't have an organized system for dealing with either incoming or self-generated paper.

If you had three or more checks, it's likely your "belief system"—not your ability to dispose of paper that no longer serves you—stands in the way of dealing with a paper problem. But just consider how *great* you're going to feel when you're not weighed down by those things that make you crazy, keep you from finding what you're looking for, or actually depress you so much that you feel paralyzed and can't write.

Surveys have show that paper clutter actually has the power to dishearten folks deeply and can even stand in the way of your spending time doing things you'd really like to do in life—like write a bestselling novel.

So here we go: some simple steps to end the eternal (and infernal) Paper Chase.

## THE PAPERLESS SOCIETY—NOT!

Remember all that talk about how computers and the digital age would usher in a "paperless society?"

As far as I can tell from my own life and from the moans I hear from other writers, the paper glut is actually worse than ever. One of my correspondents told me about the full-on blizzard of paper covering her kitchen table and the

surfaces of two desks, stuffed in bookcases and boxes piled high in her living room, crammed into the spare room—even squirreled away in a bathroom!

There are entire books (see a nice bibliography I've prepared for you at the end of this article) devoted to culling and organizing the paper piled up around so many of us, but we're going to try to **keep it simple** for now: We'll work on getting rid of the paper in just *one* area of the home—your writer's nook.

## THE PAPER-DECLUTTERING MANTRA

A savvy professional organizer friend of mine, Gayle Grace ( <http://www.allthingshome.com> ), offers this sage advice: Forget about the sum total of paper choking your life. *Instead, start by simply tackling the visible paper first.*

In other words, do *not* focus on the perceived enormity of the task facing you. Forget (for now), what's stuffed in your file cabinets, behind bookcases, or in boxes at the back of the closet. By starting small, you can allow yourself to feel good about accomplishing something doable. Then, you can proceed from there.

## CIJI'S SEVEN STEPS TO PAPER SANITY

### Step One: Start Small

My first advice to the woman with paper stacked high on two desks was to begin by choosing a *single* area — say, the visible paper stacked on *one* of those desks (but not inside the drawers yet). If you try to tackle too many problem areas at once, you're more likely to get frustrated.

### Step Two: Bag it

On a series of sticky notes, write in capital letters: **BILLS, RECEIPTS, TAX-RELATED, PAY STUBS, MEDICAL BILLS AND RECORDS, VITAL RECORDS, INSTRUCTION MANUALS, IMPORTANT ADDRESSES, WARRANTIES, REBATES**—and in the case of particular writing projects, name them: **GONE WITH THE WIND**, etc. Feel free to add other categories that might be important to you. Paste each sticky note on a separate empty paper grocery bag. You'll want to clear some space so you can line up these labeled bags. And don't forget to have a large plastic bag marked **RECYCLE PAPER/TRASH** on hand for all that paper you're going to toss!

### Step Three: Sort it out

Go through your first mound of paper, moving it piece by piece and depositing each piece into the bag labeled with the appropriate sticky note. Don't let yourself get stuck pondering whether a certain document should stay or go—move quickly, with the assurance that many paper records can now be recovered online.

(If your bank or credit card company doesn't electronically archive statements for longer than a few months, you'll need to keep paper statements for at least three years, in case you need them for tax purposes, discussed in Step Six.)

As you pick up each piece of paper, identify what it is; check the date; and then ask yourself this all-important question: *Will my life or work be difficult without this item?* Make a speedy decision and then swiftly file the piece of paper into the bag with the appropriate sticky note.

### Step Four: Protect Yourself

Lots of the documents you'll be tossing (bills, old checkbooks, outdated driver's licenses, and the like) will include personal information, so it's a good idea to buy or borrow a shredder and make confetti out of those cast-offs. You can also use a local, bonded shredding service that will grind up your paper while you watch; some will even come to your home to do it (Do an Internet search: paper shredding—and add the name of the county in which you live). Put your personally shredded paper into your **RECYCLE** bag.

### Step Five: Recycle

When you call it quits for each sorting session, *immediately* take the bags containing obvious junk mail and recyclables to your trash holding area so the paper cast-offs can be picked up on your trash collection day. If your recycle pick-up is still days away, on your next run to get groceries, you may want to drive the cast-offs to your local recycling facility if your county has one.

### Step Six: Taxing Issues

As you sort through your documents, again, remember that you always want to keep tax records for the ▶

previous two years on hand and easily accessible. Generally, there is a three-year statute of limitations on the IRS's auditing personal tax returns and a 10-year statute of limitations on the IRS's collecting taxes. In some states, however, there is *no* statute of limitations for collecting back taxes, and in the case of suspected tax evasion and fraud, the IRS can initiate an audit forevermore.

If you have doubts or questions, click on [http://taxes.about.com/od/backtaxes/qt/statute\\_limits.htm](http://taxes.about.com/od/backtaxes/qt/statute_limits.htm) to check it out.

For ordinary taxpayers, it's probably a good idea to store the most recent ten years of tax returns in legal cartons or plastic bins, labeled by year, in case of an audit. If you're into scanning (see info re scanning below), scan these types of documents onto a disk and store in a place you'll remember easily for future reference.

For the rest of your keepers, label desk-drawer dividers or more legal cartons and plastic bins by the categories you used on the sorting bags and store your documents accordingly. (My label-making machine has changed my life! I have a Brother P-Touch and hate how much the replacement label spools cost—but there you are).

### **Step Seven: Pace Yourself**

Limit these sorting sessions to *two hours or less* (a great diversion when you feel writer's block coming on). Once you've tackled a single paper-problem area, take a break to recoup energy for the next batch of papers that need sorting. You'll want to take a moment, as well, to notice how much better that little decluttered corner of your universe looks now. And pat yourself on the back. Area #1 is *done!*

## **WHAT TO DO WITH THE PAPER YOU KEEP**

Valid passports and birth, death, military-service, marriage, divorce, adoption, and naturalization records, and documents relating to property transactions are obviously keepers, as are living wills, powers of attorney, health-proxy documents, insurance policies, and Social Security and pension plan records. It's true that official documents can be replaced but not without a stupefying amount of trouble. I keep nearby a grab-and-go metal box containing important papers that I can easily take with me in case of emergency.

## **IS ELECTRONIC SCANNING THE WAY TO GO?**

It can help. Let's say you've purged your desktop of its detritus by at least 80 percent, and you like the idea of converting a few important paper documents into electronic files, stored on your computer (or with cyberspace storage services), burned on a disk, or backed up on a thumb/flash drive—but you've never used a scanner.

You can take your keepers to a retail copy shop and pay to have them scanned onto a disk that you can load into your computer whenever you want to access the material. Or you can spring for a scanning device and scan things yourself onto a disk or directly into your computer.

Some multipurpose printers have a scanning feature built in, so check first before you buy a dedicated scanner. Reliable stand-alone scanners that attach to your laptop or desktop computer range from \$130 to \$350—and even more—depending on the features they offer and the complexity of the software that runs them. You can check out what your choices might be at: <http://www.consumersearch.com/scanner-reviews/scanner-resolution>

Do read user reviews on consumer electronics sites to guide you to the model best suited to your needs. Most modern scanners do a good-to-excellent job transforming hard copy originals into electronic form, but getting them to “talk” to your computer usually requires a computer-savvy person to set them up. Be sure to disclose to the salesperson the specific make and model of your equipment at home, along with your level of competence—and ask how you can find help with installation if you need it.

Learning to scan documents and file them electronically will open up a new world.

## **A FEW MORE WORDS FROM A WRITER WHO FEELS YOUR PAIN**

I've offered a lot of information in the foregoing, but try to remember that simple statement from the second paragraph: *always keep in mind the 80/20 Rule*: Approximately 80 percent of the paper you have in your life can be eliminated, leaving you with only the remaining 20 percent to be organized for easy access.

Trust a writer who threw 26 cartons of radio scripts into a huge dumpster from 17 years on-air at KABC in Los Angeles. The material was dated; it existed on tape somewhere in the bowels of the corporation that was no longer my employer, and I was now a full-fledged historical novelist and didn't want to get up at 4:45a.m. every morning anymore to broadcast “live” to sleepy Angelinos from 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. five days a week.

I was done. It was over. Time to move on.



Yes, as I tossed Box 26 into the smelly receptacle in the parking lot at Nor-Cal Storage, my breath caught; my heart lurched a bit, and I wondered if I might regret it...but within minutes I realized that junking that excess and unneeded paper led to a soaring sense of *liberation!*

Pardon the awful pun, but I was literally ready for a new chapter—and so will you.

## CIJI'S RECOMMENDED LIST OF HOME, OFFICE & PERSONAL PAPERS ORGANIZING BOOKS:

If your paper “issues for tissues” are a little bit worse than the norm (mine were), you may want to dip into one of these excellent titles on serious paper decluttering:

Morgenstern, Julie. *Organizing from the Inside Out: The Foolproof System for Organizing Your Home, Your Office, and Your Life*.

New York: An Owl Book of Henry Holt, 1998.

Eisenberg, Ronni, with Kate Kelly. *Organize Your Office!* Rev. Ed. New York: Hyperion, 1998.

Campbell, Jeff. *Clutter Control: Putting Your Home on a Diet*. New York: Dell, 1992.

Koll, Randall, and Casey Ellis. *The Organized Home: Design Solutions for Clutter-Free Living*. Gloucester, MA: Quarry Books of Rockport Publishers, 2004.

Starr, Meryl. *The Home Organizing Workbook: Clearing Your Clutter, Step by Step*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004.

McClure, Rhonda. *Digitizing Your Family History: Easy Methods for Preserving Your Heirloom Documents, Photos, Home Movies*.

Family Tree Books, 2004.

Sturdevant, Katherine Scott. *Organizing and Preserving Your Heirloom Documents*, Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Publications, 2002.

*Ciji Ware is a multi-published fiction and nonfiction author, Emmy Award-winning television and radio broadcaster, professional speaker, and the first woman graduate of Harvard College to serve as President of the Harvard Alumni Association.*

For more on Ware's fiction/nonfiction career and to see the new Sourcebooks Landmark covers of her five reissued historicals as well as her new novel, go to <http://www.cijiware.com>. To read a free chapter from Ware's *Rightsizing Your Life* and learn about her instructional CD, click on <http://www.rightsizingyourlife.com>, or check out <http://www.aarp.org/decluttering> for more decluttering tips.

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### ***Business Briefs***

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

#### **70% Royalty from Kindle Digital Text**

Details of the royalty rate announced in January have finally come out:

- ▶ The author or publisher-supplied list price must be between \$2.99 and \$9.99.
- ▶ The list price must be at least 20 percent below the lowest list price for the physical book.
- ▶ The title is made available for sale in all geographies for which the author or publisher has rights.
- ▶ The title will be included in a broad set of features in the Kindle Store, such as text-to-speech. This list of features will grow over time as Amazon continues to add more functionality to Kindle and the Kindle Store.
- ▶ Under this royalty option, books must be offered at or below price parity with competition, including physical book prices.

#### **Prices are dropping and dropping . . .**

Can it be the competition is sizing up what Apple is doing to bring iBookstore to iPhone and iPod? Barnes & Noble's wi-fi Nook is now \$149, the 3G is at \$199, and, not to be outdone, Amazon has priced the Kindle at \$189 (and it's now selling through Target, not just online). The Kobo is priced at \$149.99 with a sweetener thrown in—a \$20 gift card and double Borders Bucks that can be used for a future purchase. And who else is getting on the bandwagon after much denial? Sony has brought its prices down for the Daily Edition to \$299, Touch Edition to \$169, and Pocket Edition to \$150.



Kasey Michaels, Chair

## ***The only thing we have to fear...***

Earlier this year, Markus Dohle, Chairman and CEO of Random House, was quoted in *The New Yorker*, wisely stating: “If you want to make the right decision for the future, fear is not a very good consultant.”

Dohle went on to say that before accepting “a significant change in the [publishing] business model,” he believes it is necessary to speak with everyone who, well, we could say, everyone who has a dog in the fight to improve the state of publishing. And that, according to Dohle, includes agents, booksellers, and authors.

Including authors in the discussion? Now there’s a concept NINC can get behind!

So these are our goals for *Brainstorming: The Future of Publishing*, our special one-day program kicking off NINC’s 21st annual conference:

1. Giving a voice to career author questions, concerns, and possible solutions.
2. Taking “fear” out of the equation by assembling some of the best minds in the business, representing all areas related to book publishing, and spending the day in free-flowing, far-reaching, congenial discussion.

So what are we all going to talk about? And how are we going to structure the day?

Let’s first talk about structure.

We plan four sessions, two in the morning of Thursday, October 7, two more in the afternoon, each made up of a diverse group of publishing professionals: agents, publishers, editors, attorneys, booksellers, media consultants, industry visionaries, and NINC authors. (For a partial listing of those participating, please see <http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/speakers.asp>. Check back often as industry professionals continue to ask to join in the day—and we’re delighted to welcome them!)

Our facilitator, Peter Novins, will get things moving each session with a prepared toss-up question addressed to everyone on the panel. Because each publishing professional will be considering the same question from their own area of expertise, some of those answers are going to differ—and that’s what is going to make the sessions so interesting and productive.

After that initial question, we’re going to pretty much go with the flow, knowing as authors that some of the best conversations, and the best ideas, are generated that way. The last thing NINC wants to do is stifle conversation!

So what are we all going to talk about?

For months, NINC has been soliciting questions from members, as well as scouring the Internet for articles, podcasts, blogs, anywhere the topic of future of publishing is under discussion. As you will see from the following list, there are no worries about “dead air” during the day, as we have no lack of questions. The trick is going to be consolidating them, breaking them into categories.

Here’s a sampling of what we’re working on now:

- Are e-books merely another delivery system? Are existing publishing houses, traditional print houses, performing “rights-grabs-without-plans,” or are they structurally prepared and positioned to exploit this new delivery system more effectively than strictly e-publishing houses? And how are they doing that?
- Authors and agents are hearing that in book sales, “flat is the new growth.” As a matter of fact, they’ve been hearing that for several years. Because nothing remains stagnant forever, are sales as getting worse, or showing signs of recovery? If



the latter, in what areas of publishing is this recovery most evident? How will any “new world of publishing” differ from the old one?

- Now that Amazon and Sony and Apple and others have made it clear that there is money to be made in e-books, how can a career author eager to see his/her print backlist reissued in this new medium work with the rights-holding publisher to make this happen profitably for both of them? Does contract language stating a book is considered to be in print if it's available in any format, combined with all this new technology (e-books, POD, etc), mean that no book will be out of print, ever? Should career authors ever sign another book contract with language like “any format” in it?

- Is the day approaching when career authors will be selling some rights to one company, other rights to another? Will grant of rights be for a shorter period of time, and then renegotiated? As the publishing industry adjusts and recovers, will career author advances and royalty percentages be in on that recovery; or is an entirely new structure on how and when authors are paid looming on the horizon?

- Print publishers are making changes in their contracts with increasing frequency. What are those changes? How do they affect the career author? What's all this talk of morals clauses and increased publisher leeway to cancel signed contracts? How do literary agents and attorneys feel about these changes?

- With the author having to plan and pay for more and more promotion, the author needs more, and more timely, information from the publisher than before; no author wants to over-invest in costly promotion for a paperback print run projected for 20,000 copies. On the other hand, the publisher might push more, and get more initial orders, if the publisher knew the author was prepared to do extensive self-promotion. We all need to be on the same page, for each author, each book. That's not happening now. So how do we—authors, publishers, media consultants—make that happen?

- Conversely, what happens to the author who isn't blogging, aggressively self-promoting, but just wants to concentrate on writing books, trusting agent and publishing house to position them well? Is this approach still viable? Are publishing houses looking for more than a good book, even turning away good writers because they aren't playing the self-promotion game? Are publishing houses abdicating as advertisers of their own merchandise for sale? What new service/incentive are they offering career authors in exchange for this decreased involvement?

- Let's talk about protecting copyrights and, connected with that, prosecuting piracy, copyright infringement, and plagiarism. How aggressive are we being, and if we're not being aggressive, why not? Publishing did not react to lost sales via used book stores; will publishing also, for the most part, ignore lost sales to piracy, considering it to be simply one of the costs of doing business? And the author viewpoint: a few thousand lost sales mean nothing to the top sellers, but can mean a lost contract to the midlist career author, even a lost career.

- The number of independent booksellers has declined by more than half since 1999, representing only ten percent of store sales. Chains account for another approximately 30 percent; while Target, Wal-Mart, Costco, etc, are seeing 45 percent of sales. However, these outlets favor volume buys at discounted prices, carry fewer titles, and concentrate on established bestsellers; meaning fewer book-buyers, at times even dictating packaging, content, and titles (the tail wagging the dog?). What, if anything, are publishers doing to provide dedicated bookstores a more even playing field? Is publishing prepared for the demise of the bricks and mortar bookstore? Is anyone?

- And, concerning the author—how is the non-bestselling career author to survive in this age of the shrinking bookshelf? Is creativity being hampered by publishers trying to please these few, but large-purchase, book buyers? Are we seeing the end of cutting-edge, innovative writing and the hand-sold, word-of-mouth, next-bestselling author? Are e-books and the Internet going to be the only alternative for authors who write outside the box?

- Readers from anywhere outside North America can purchase a printed book published in the U.S. over the Internet from e-tailers based in the U.S., but in the vast majority of cases, are forbidden to purchase the same book from an e-tailer based outside the U.S. Isn't this the same mistake the music industry made, increasing the level of piracy?

- Can novelists live by book alone anymore, or is the day coming where authors will have to submit an entire “project,” provide a game plan that includes bells and whistles for e-versions: example, the vook? Should authors be finding ways to provide that additional content themselves, or will authors be seen more and more as simply one of several “content providers?”

- If career authors can create a platform and drive sales of e-books via sites like Amazon, Apple, Smashwords, B/N, etc, why should they split profits with an e-publisher? Looking forward to more career author co-ops and involvement in their own e-book marketing, will e-publishers be the first casualty of the new publishing paradigm? Would paying career authors reasonable advances as well as maintaining their higher royalty percentage keep e-publishers viable, or are they eventually destined to become a niche market, primarily for the hobbyist and/or print-rejected writer?

- Taking this question further, here's a hypothetical for a few years down the road: with publishers pushing the responsibility for promotion more and more on the shoulders of the author, with declining editorial input, with advances shrinking and royalty rates kept at decades-old levels, with contract language leaning ever more heavily in favor of the publisher, with the rapid disappearance of brick-and-mortar bookstores, all the ease of new technology and delivery systems, with the forci-

bly learned methods of self-advertising, with easy access to quality media consultants, is it possible that today's publishers are unwitting Frankensteins, creating tomorrow's monster that takes the shape of career authors saying, in effect, "What do we need these guys for that we can't band together and do for ourselves?" In other words, before publishing can sell more books to the buying public, maybe publishing has to re-package and re-sell itself to the career professionals who provide the product?

- In an era of smaller initial print runs, going back-to-press rather than printing what may be too many or even too few copies, with only current bestselling authors receiving lay-downs, in-house promotion, box-store exposure, etc, what happens to the "velocity" method of judging author success? Are bestseller lists still really relevant for any but the top-selling authors? How will an increasing ratio of e-book to print versions be counted when it comes to "making the lists?"

- What do you feel career authors most need to know about the tomorrow of publishing? What pragmatic steps do you suggest working authors take now, to ensure that they will be a part of that future? Because "write the best book you can" is no longer cutting it ...

And that's only a sampling! We've got a lot of distilling and combining to do as we form the four panels and divvy up the questions. And then there will be the questions that will come from the authors and publishing professionals in the audience, in addition to the new directions our panelists might travel as they bring their own knowledge and ideas to the discussion.

In other words, it's going to be a really busy, really important day, one you don't want to hear about secondhand.

Lastly, after the final session, we, the authors of NINC, are turning over the meeting room to our panelists and all of the publishing professionals who have come to Florida to so graciously share their time and expertise with us, so that they may have an hour of closed-door discussion of their own before they join us for an informal post-program reception.

And then it's over and the pressure is off (yay!) and we'll move on to the bulk of the conference, where member attendees and industry professionals will enjoy the laid-back resort atmosphere and the unique array of brainstorming and other workshops Friday morning through to Sunday at noon. Check them out at the conference center: <http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/index.asp>



## **Registration Fees for Brainstorming on The Beach—Members, Please Read:**

**Member conference fee (includes *Brainstorming: The Future of Publishing*): \$255**

**REGISTRATION FEE RISES to \$300 on AUGUST 5**

**REGISTRATIONS CLOSE SEPTEMBER 15**

**Register online today!**

## **Industry Personnel:**

**Total conference free of charge, and conference rate code for hotel provided upon registration. Register at:**

**[http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/industry\\_registration\\_form.asp](http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/industry_registration_form.asp)**

## **Non-NINC Published Authors—One Day**

### **Future of Publishing Program Only:**

**Morning sessions: \$50**

**Afternoon sessions: \$50**

**Full Day sessions: \$75**

**REGISTER AT: [http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/program\\_registration.asp](http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/program_registration.asp)**

**(Hotel conference rate available for attending non-members upon payment of registration)**

**Authors: Join Novelists, Inc. (NINC) today, the only international organization of multi-published authors. NINC, for the business of the business:**

**[http://www.ninc.com/join\\_ninc/index.asp](http://www.ninc.com/join_ninc/index.asp)**

► *Permission granted to share, re-post, blog-post, etc, this column.* ◀

# ELECTIONS for 2011

## OFFICERS:

Prez-elect: Lou Aronica  
Treasurer: Marcia Evanick  
Secretary: Denise Agnew

### President Elect:

**Lou Aronica** is the author of 14 works of fiction and nonfiction, including the *New York Times* bestseller *The Element* and the national bestseller *The Culture Code*. In addition, he has been closely involved in the publishing world for the past 30 years, including 14 years at Bantam (where he eventually became Deputy Publisher) and five years at Avon (where he was Publisher). Lou is currently Publisher of The Story Plant, a small independent fiction imprint, and runs The Fiction Studio, an editing/ghostwriting/packaging company. He lives in Southern Connecticut with his wife and four kids.

### Treasurer:

**Marcia Evanick** is a *New York Times* Bestseller of 30-some books. She is the current Treasurer of Novelists, Inc. for 2010, and was a past Conference Registrar. Marcia works part time in the accounting field, is a mother to five, grandmother to five, and is trying desperately to carve out some writing time.

### Secretary:

**Denise A. Agnew's** award-winning novels are described as suspenseful, erotic, edgy, thrilling, romantic, adventurous. *Romantic Times Book Review Magazine* has called her romantic suspense novels "top-notch" and her erotic romance *Primordial* received a Top Pick designation from the magazine. Denise has written paranormal, fantasy, time travel, romantic comedy, contemporary, historical, erotic romance, and romantic suspense. Living in Colorado, Hawaii, and the United Kingdom has given her a lifetime of ideas. Denise lives in Arizona with her real life hero, her husband and a mini schnauzer. Visit Denise's website at <http://www.deniseagnew.com>.

## Nominating Committee:

Roberta Gellis  
Sally Hawkes  
Sherry-Anne Jacobs

Annette Mahon  
Katie MacAlister  
Jody Nye

Leigh Riker  
Lea Wait  
Jeane Weston

Gina Wilkins

**Roberta Gellis** has been one of the most successful writers of historical fiction of the 20th Century, having published more than 40 meticulously researched historical novels since 1965. Most currently, Gellis has been writing historical mystery and historical fantasy. Gellis has been the recipient of many awards, including the Silver and Gold Medal Porgy for historical novels from the *West Coast Review of Books*, the Golden Certificate from *Affaire de Coeur*, The *Romantic Times* Award for Best Novel in the Medieval Period (several times) and a Lifetime Achievement Award for Historical Fantasy, and Romance Writers of America's Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Sally Hawkes** has published under her legal name, Sarah Hawkes, as well as Sarah Eagle and Sally Falcon. She's written contemporary category romances for Harlequin and Meteor Kismet, traditional Regency romances for Berkley Jove and a single title historical for Harper Monogram. For the past several years, she's contributed to the NINC newsletter with business news. Her day job is Manager of Network Services for the Arkansas State Library, working in technology and library development with public and academic libraries. She is also responsible for the state's online databases project that supplies research to all types of libraries.

Author of 47 published novels, **Anna Jacobs** is addicted to storytelling. Fortunately she is not very domesticated, so has time to produce three novels a year, writing historical fiction for one UK publisher, modern fiction for another. She is fascinated by women's history and the challenges women face today. Her books have been nominated several times for Australian Romantic Book of the Year, which she won in 2006, and she is currently the seventh most borrowed author of adult fiction in English libraries. She's still in love with her personal hero, and they live half the year in Australia, half in England.

**Annette Mahon** is an avid reader who always wanted to write. As a former librarian, she likes to say she's gone from tending the library shelves to filling them. Published since 1995, her multicultural "sweet" romances are set in her native Hawaii, while her cozy mysteries take place in Scottsdale, AZ, where she now lives. Annette is a founding member of the Desert Sleuths chapter of SinC, and also belongs to MWA, NINC, and RWA (including the Desert Rose and Valley of the Sun chapters).

For as long as she can remember, **Katie MacAlister** has loved reading. Growing up in a family where a weekly visit to the library was a given, Katie spent much of her time with her nose buried in a book. Two years after she started writing novels, Katie sold her first romance; more than 30 books later, her novels have been translated into numerous languages, been recorded as audiobooks, received several awards, and are regulars on the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Publishers Weekly* bestseller lists. Katie lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and dogs, and can often be found lurking around online.

**Jody Lynn Nye** is a writer of fantasy and science fiction. Since 1985 she has published 40 books and more than 100 short stories. She has collaborated on novels and nonfiction books with Anne McCaffrey, Robert Asprin and Piers Anthony in their most famous worlds. Jody has taught in numerous writing workshops and participated on hundreds of panels covering the subjects of writing and being published at science-fiction conventions. She has spoken in schools and libraries for groups ranging from second grade to adults. She has taught fantasy writing at Columbia College Chicago.

**Leigh Riker** is the award-winning author of 13 novels. Harlequin will soon publish her latest, *Change of Life* and *The Go-To Girl* as a two-in-one trade paperback. And her book, *Unforgettable*, has just been re-issued by [AWriters-Work.com](http://AWriters-Work.com). Riker is a former instructor in the Novel and Short Story for Writer's Digest School. She is a member of the [Authors Guild](http://Authors Guild), [Novelists, Inc.](http://Novelists, Inc.), and [RWA](http://RWA) (Romance Writers of America). At home in Tennessee with her husband and their Maine Coon cat, she is, of course, working on a new novel.

**Lea Wait** is the author of four mysteries for adults (the Shadows Antique Print Mystery Series) and four historical novels for young people. Her next book, *Shadows of a Down East Summer*, will be published next spring. A graduate of Chatham College, she did her graduate work at New York University and worked for AT&T while raising the four daughters she adopted as a single parent. She now lives on the coast of Maine with her husband, artist Bob Thomas, writes full time, and often speaks at schools. Lea can be found at <http://www.leawait.com> and on Facebook.

**Jeane Westin**. I joined NINC during its first year at the prodding of my friend Georgia Bockoven. Although I'm not a joiner, I've renewed every year. My writing began with freelance articles in the early 1970s, then went to nonfiction books and finally to novels. Although my agent swore I had "novelitis," my first two novels were optioned for movies. Then came a very long, dry period...but I finally jumped back in where many have started...historical romance. I wrote three of those for Eclipse and then moved to Tudor trade, where I'm happily settled.

Bestselling and award-winning romance author **Gina Wilkins** sold her first book to Harlequin in 1986 and has been writing full-time ever since. She has written more than 90 books for Harlequin/Silhouette. A four-time winner of the prestigious Maggie Award for Excellence sponsored by Georgia Romance Writers, she was nominated for a Lifetime Achievement Award from *Romantic Times* magazine. She is a lifelong resident of central Arkansas, married for more than 30 years, and the mother of three "extraordinary" children, all pursuing careers in science and medicine.

**The official ballot for 2010 officers and Nominating Committee will be in your September issue of Nink. Please watch for and promptly return your completed ballot.**

# Anatomy of A Bad Review: How To Survive

BY DENISE A. AGNEW

Everyone who has ever written a short story, a poem, or a novel and put their work out to the public has received a bad review. Almost everyone who has received a not-so-great review has received an evaluation that amounts to a crucifixion. Or it might feel like it, at the very least. After all, these words, these stories are a part of us. People say all the time, “Don’t take it personally.” Easier said than done, right?

After more than ten years of being published, I’ve learned that bad reviews are unavoidable. Why? Because, for the same reason you might love a book and someone else might hate it, not everyone is going to like your work.

Reacting badly to a review doesn’t mean you’re necessarily a whiner. Some reviews are vicious and unprofessional. Some are disappointing, but not necessarily unprofessional. Still, they can all feel rotten. Particularly if you’re a people pleaser, because, God forbid, someone shouldn’t like something you do. And approval is a sure sign of worthiness, isn’t it?

No one should tell you how to feel about a review. Only you can decide. However, you might feel a little better after considering the following:

## You can’t control what other people think.

As much as we’d like to, it isn’t possible. You can write a book that 99.9 percent of people like. But there will always be that one who doesn’t. Guaranteed.

Some readers are nitpickers. At some point, a reviewer may read a book that jumps right out at them and expresses an opinion they don’t like. They may have something against overweight people. Skinny people. Blondes. People in certain professions. A style of writing. I consider myself a feminist, but once had a review that compared my heroine to a wimp who only wanted the big, bad hero to take care of her. This was the reviewer’s opinion after only reading a portion of the book, not the whole thing. Had she read the entire book, she would have, hopefully, seen that the heroine changes and grows.

There are readers who will complain that a book is too short. Too long. Too complex. Not complex enough. I’ve had people complain there was too much sex in my erotic romance novels. Well...um...yeah. There’s a lot of sex in an erotic romance. To me that’s like reading a book about serial killers and complaining that there are serial killers in the book. Every part of your book is up for slaughter with one person out there who doesn’t feel the love.

Consider your own pet peeves. What has made you put down a book? Did you think the heroine was too-stupid-to-live? Did you think the hero was too alpha or not alpha enough? I once stopped reading a book because the author had used “she prevaricated” as a tag three times in the book and had done so in a previous book. I didn’t name names or try and crucify her on the Internet. I would never do that, but recalling my own pet peeves enables me to put things in perspective. We all like different things.

Suzanne Lazear (<http://www.suzannewrites.blogspot.com>) says about author bashing, “I have strong opinions on author bashing. It’s one thing to not like a book, after all, everyone has their own tastes. But it’s another thing (and highly unprofessional, IMHO) to attack an author or get nasty. It’s possible to disagree while being civil...I think sometimes people forget that authors are people.”

## Don’t give negativity more power.

Resist the urge to publicly get ugly with the reviewer. Whatever you think of the review, no matter how nasty, it rarely works well for the author to defend himself or herself. I once decided I wouldn’t send a review site my books anymore because the reviewer crucified the first book in a trilogy. I didn’t think it was likely the reviewer would enjoy the other books. The site owner said she understood, but she told the reviewer why I hadn’t sent more books. The reviewer came unglued on me and sent me a scathing note accusing me of being unprofessional and saying I obviously didn’t want to be critiqued. The lambasting went on quite a while.

I could have ignored the note, but in this case, I decided to fight fire with fairness. I told the reviewer that I was sorry she felt that way, but that I did have editors, I had several critique partners, and that I was very used to being critiqued. I mentioned that if she didn’t care for my first book in the series, the chances of her liking the rest of my books was very slim. Why would she want to waste her time reading books that likely wouldn’t be to her taste? I didn’t get an answer. Maybe she was relishing a chance to trash me with regularity? Hard to say. I think my response was assertive but not aggressive. For the most part, I think not sending a reviewer an email if they’ve given you a bad review is a good idea. Of course, if you get a fantastic review, do send a thank you note/email to the reviewer. It builds good will.

Author Selena Robins (<http://www.selenarobins.com>) experienced an unusual bad review. “One reviewer kept ▶



calling the Angel in my book a fairy godmother (rolling my eyes) and also the reviewer kept calling the heroine Serena (not Sabrina) and also put in plots points that never happened in the book. I have no idea if she was reading three books at once. It was an insult, because she couldn't get the characters names correct or even what they were. What did I do in that case? I emailed to thank her for taking the time to write a review, I also expressed that I realize they are inundated with books and probably have a heavy workload, however, I wanted to clarify a few things for her readers. And I clarified that Lucy was an Angel, (not a fairy godmother) and also the names and plots points that weren't part of the story."

Multi-published author Lauren Dane (<http://www.laurendane.com>) said about negative reviews, "My reaction, as it is with most things of that sort, is to shine it on. There's nothing to be gained by commenting about it. Even if you are 100% in the right, people will see you lowering yourself to that level and it leaves a bad taste, even if they're not totally aware of it. You vent to your friends in private. You eat some chocolate and you write your next book. And maybe, you might take a peek at the good reviews sometimes to remember that too."

Sometimes you realize that negative reviews aren't that important when it comes to the important things in life. New author Maggie Robinson (also writing as Margaret Rowe <http://www.maggierobinson.net> and <http://www.margaretrowe.net>) said about reviews, "I admit I was absolutely dreading reviews. But when my first book released on April 27, my husband was in the hospital with some very serious problems. Suddenly a negative review didn't seem so important. I've even gotten a kick out of a few comments on Amazon and Goodreads. Someone disliked my heroine so much she advised the hero to kill her with an elephant gun. Now that's negative."

### **Search out sources of positive reinforcement.**

Talk it out with a close friend, preferably another author, or a group of other authors you feel you can trust. Trust is the operative word here. You don't need a lecture, you need someone to listen, give support, and offer ideas on what you might do to gain strength to keep on keepin' on.

Author Michelle Pillow (<http://www.michellepillow.com>) said, "My very first review of my very first book was awful. It was a Victorian-set ghost story, romance, and the reviewer not only claimed she hated and didn't understand anything paranormal, but that she didn't get the book because of it. She then went on to give away the surprise ending after ripping the book apart for having the elements she didn't like—ghosts. This being my first review, I was stunned. However, with the support of my new author friends, I wrote the review site, nicely and calmly, and requested they take the spoiler from the review. They apologized for her unprofessionalism and took the entire review she posted down, then assigned it to someone else who loved it."

### **Don't let the bad outweigh the good.**

If you've received far more good to excellent reviews than you have lukewarm or poor reviews, take that into consideration. Obviously most people are enjoying your work, and that counts.

I hope these few tips have given you food for thought and perhaps you'll feel more confident in the review world. Take heart and enjoy your writing experience.

*Award-winning author Denise A. Agnew has written every type of romance novel with the exception of inspirational and SF, but has a particular love for suspense, historicals, and things that go bump in the night. Visit her website at <http://www.deniseagnew.com>.*

*Denise believes in adding zest to her life. Her most recent adventure? She's added paranormal investigator to her resume. Check out her latest books, Daryk Hunter and Dark, Deadly Love at <http://www.deniseagnew.com>.*

**Editor's Note:** Still not convinced? Think of your favorite book of all time—now go to Amazon. Check the reviews...see? You can't please all of the people all of the time. And if that doesn't work, you can always take David Lubar's approach...

## **WHY KIRKUS REVIEWS TRASHED HIDDEN TALENTS**

**BY DAVID LUBAR**

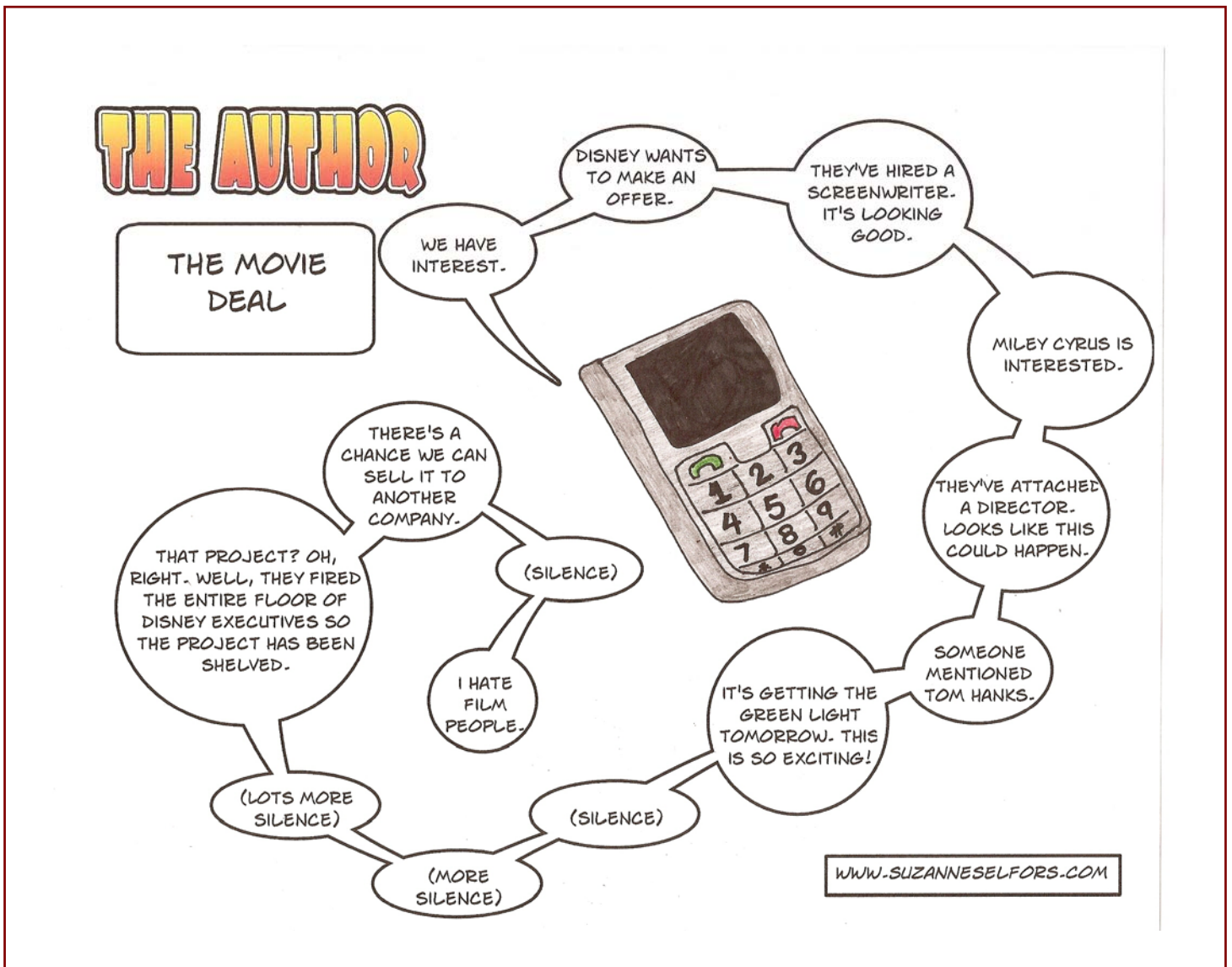
Okay, a bad review is no big deal. Especially when balanced by some wonderful reviews, eight state award nominations, and inclusion on three ALA lists (Best Books, Quick Picks, and Popular Paperbacks). But this review was just so mean and nasty, so downright hostile, that there had to be an explanation. Here are my best guesses:

1. They don't like novels that devote an entire chapter to setting up a scene involving the world's largest lit fart.
2. They prefer a third-person limited viewpoint to that of a first-person, snotty-nosed, wise-mouthed, adolescent viewpoint.

3. There's no reason to assume they actually didn't like it. When you're cranking out tons of reviews, you can't always take time out for reading.
4. They know for a fact that kids don't like funny books, and even if they did, they should be reading something grim and impenetrable instead because it builds character.
5. Just to be different.
6. They actually loved it and, thus, in the grandest tradition of the Olympics, could think of no higher words of praise than "amateurish effort."
7. They operate on the principle that anything enjoyable can't possibly be good for you.
8. Because it was there.
9. They flipped a coin and it came up tails.
10. They are actually an unwitting tool of God, who knows in His infinite wisdom that this is a wonderful way to remind me to maintain my humility.

If you've also been trashed by a nasty and ignorant review, take heart. I'm still here and doing just fine. Sure, it hurts, it's unfair, and it shouldn't happen. But they're playing a mean-spirited game, and nobody takes them seriously. If you really need to lift your spirits, call every library in your area and ask if they subscribe to *Kirkus Reviews*. You'll be pleased to see how few have even heard of it. Hang in there, keep writing, and take pleasure from the fact that your book has been published.

*Eleven years after his first trashing by Kirkus, David Lubar is happy to report that both he and Hidden Talents (along with a dozen or so other books) have survived and thrived.*



# NINC Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY JACKIE KRAMER

Got any news or information  
for the Bulletin Board?

Send it to Jackie at  
jackiekramer7@netscape.com

**Here is a short listing of all that will be happening in Florida this October during Brainstorming On The Beach.**

The website will be brought up to speed shortly, but you also are being kept abreast of what's going on in monthly columns in *Nink* and on Ninlink. Still, here are the basics once again:

Thursday, October 7, is a day devoted to **Brainstorming: The Future of Publishing**. No speeches, no canned, we've-heard-all-of-this-before presentations. Just invited industry professionals sitting down with us to answer our prepared questions, and then let the discussions flow from those jump-off points to wherever they may lead.

Here's just part of the lineup:

- ▶ Christopher Kenneally, Copyright Clearance Center and beyondthebook.com
- ▶ Donna Hayes, publisher and CEO, Harlequin Enterprises, Ltd.
- ▶ Alan Kaufman, literary attorney
- ▶ Writers House represented by Al Zuckerman, Simon Lipskar, or Jodi Reamer, Esq.
- ▶ Eileen Fallon, literary agent
- ▶ Brian O'Leary, founder, Magellan Media Partners
- ▶ J. A. Konrath, author, blogger
- ▶ Lou Aronica, publisher, The Story Plant
- ▶ Joan Schulhafer, publishing and media consulting
- ▶ Angela James, editor/publisher, Carina Press
- ▶ and many more!

After we wrap up our "brain intensive" first day, we downshift into a more relaxed conference, including our famous members-only Night Owls and the more structured morning sessions geared to de-stressing, networking, how to negotiate, the character arc explained, book piracy, brainstorming multiple book and multiple author projects, how to convert our backlist to e-format and start reaping the benefits of new sales, and much more, leaving afternoons relatively free to mingle and brainstorm with fellow members and enjoy the fact that there is a beautiful resort and a gorgeous beach waiting for us.

You can make your reservations at the Tradewinds Resort Hotel at:

<http://www.tradewindsresort.com/properties/island-grand.aspx>

Hotel rooms begin at \$129, plus tax (and include your own beach cabana!).

Check out what all else you get for that ridiculous low price: <http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/hotel.asp>

How do you register? Easy: <http://ninc.com/conferences/2010/index.asp>

How do you join the Yahoo loop dedicated to discussion about the conference even before you sign up? How do you submit (anonymous) questions for our *Brainstorming: The Future of Publishing* day? How do non-Ninc published authors register for our special day? How do you find your password if you don't remember it, so that you can register? Who do you ask any question you can think up? To quote Val Kilmer in *Tombstone* (a favorite movie of mine), "I'm your Huckleberry."  
[kcmi@aol.com](mailto:kcmi@aol.com)

— Kasey Michaels

Judy Shore is the Roommate Coordinator for this year's conference, and she has opened a list for attendees to sign up for roomies. Please let her know if you're a smoker so you won't be connected with someone with allergies. Judy can be contacted at: [judyashore@gmail.com](mailto:judyashore@gmail.com) and put "Roommate Wanted" in subject line.

As usual, your blog needs you. If you haven't signed up lately, do so. We always need industry guests and count on you to speak up with suggestions and email addys. And if you can ask your editor, agent, publicist, website designer, whoever if they would blog for us, even better.

— Patricia Rosemoor

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# The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



# Imposter Syndrome

“The artist’s two-headed bogey: the hope of being discovered and the fear of being found out.”

— Dawn Powell (1896-1965), novelist

I have been exposed as a fraud. A shallow hack. A no-talent waste of shelf space. An imposter.

I have been *found out*.

It happened when I broke a sacred rule and... (I'm so embarrassed, I can scarcely bear to write this)... Googled my own name.

Yes, I know better. Of course I know better!

The first rule of survival in a gothic novel is: *Don't go into the attic alone*. And the first law of sanity for a novelist is: *Don't Google yourself*.

I had a new book out, *Doppelgangster*, and I was particularly anxious about this one because it was such a rollercoaster ride to get it published. It's the second book in a comedic urban fantasy series about a struggling actress named Esther Diamond and her supernatural adventures in New York City.

My third agent had retired the original series proposal after three rejections, declaring it unsaleable. After finally leaving that agent, I sent the series out myself and got a good three-book offer for it, which deal I hired my fourth agent to negotiate. However, although well-intentioned, the publisher had no idea how to market the series and, moreover, put a disastrous cover on the first book, *Disappearing Nightly*. (How disastrous? During the show-and-tell presentation at a recent *sfff* convention panel on packaging, the audience was stunned to learn this was an urban fantasy cover; their guesses had ranged from "a 1970s show biz memoir" to "a financial thriller involving a hooker.")

Having ensured the first book in the Esther Diamond series was a commercial failure, the publisher then canceled the rest my contract. Behaving in an equally stereotypical manner, my fourth agent started treating me like a leper with halitosis—as did the agents whom I queried after leaving that one. Agentless and dragging around bad sales figures from the first book, I entered some dark days. But all's well that ends well, and a few months later I sold the second (and third, and fourth) books in the series—and, by the way, for better money than I had gotten in my previous, agent-negotiated deal for the same material.

So, all things considered, I was very anxious when *Doppelgangster* was released, because perseverant though I am, I felt certain that if this didn't go well, I wouldn't get yet *another* shot with Esther Diamond—and, frankly, I love this series and feel it's exactly what I should be writing.

This anxiety, I assert, is why I compulsively broke the first law of sanity for a novelist and Googled my own name.

And I got what I deserved—exactly what people usually get when they behave so recklessly: I immediately stumbled across an Internet chat board where readers were discussing *Doppelgangster*... and *no one* there liked the book.

The worst thing about the discussion was that this was *not* the disturbingly common “raving pajama people” sort of Internet ranting, which one can (with some injured *amour propre* and a soothing beverage) mentally write off as mindless venom that deserves to be ignored. To my sorrow, these people were *not* screechy monkeys. No, *these* people were reasoned and civil in their comments, damn them!

Some of them found the book shallow or tedious. Others thought it was disjointed and poorly structured. ▶



Two people in the discussion thought it just didn't measure up to the first book in the series (proving, much to my surprise, that at least two people had *bought* the first book). A couple of people said there were so many urban fantasy novels out there that were better than *Doppelgangster*, they weren't going to spend their time on my work again.

And so on.

I was *freaking out*. I was almost in tears. I saw my future flash before my eyes: This publisher, too, would cancel my contract, or at least not pick up my option. My other current publisher would also drop me. No other house would touch me. I'd never sell a book again. And I'd die impoverished, pathetic, and unloved.

I'm a mediocre hack not worth reading, and I have been **FOUND OUT**.

It took me more than five minutes of this self-flagellation to remember that, just a few days earlier, I've been pleased as punch because this exact same novel got a \*starred\* review in *Library Journal*. And although not starred, it got a glowing review in *Publishers Weekly*. My editor, the copy editor, the managing editor, and the cover artist all loved the book. I'd seen an enthusiastic email to my publisher from a key sales account that loved the advanced reading copy. On the same day I read the damning comments on this chat board, the book had an average of 5 stars from readers on BN.com and 4.5 stars from readers on Amazon.com. (Yes, I was pathetic enough to check.) Numerous bloggers had given it positive reviews, and some had given it enthusiastic rave reviews. And I'd been receiving a steady stream of very nice emails about this book since its release.

Yet I *completely forgot* all of that and was reduced to convulsive panic and near-tears by reading one chat board where the readers, who all came across as reasonable, civil people—drat them!—disliked the book.

It didn't balance out in my mind. I didn't say to myself, "Well, by and large, the book has been very favorably received, and there are always going to be some people who just don't like a novel." I didn't keep my perspective or consider the discussion in context. No, indeed. This spate of negative comments *obliterated* from my mind all the positive comments I'd previously heard, read, and received.

This is because I am subject to Imposter Syndrome, a not-uncommon phenomenon among professional writers, wherein we fear that, sooner or later (probably sooner), someone is going to figure out that we're not talented or skilled enough to be professionally published and paid for our writing.

Or, in the words of a multi-published friend of mine, after she'd gotten a couple of rejections, "I think I was just an 18-book fluke, Laura."

My Imposter Syndrome is particularly schizophrenic, because I'm a fairly arrogant writer. Much of the time, I think I'm pretty good at this. And when I'm getting rejections, I think the problem is that editors and agents are making bad decisions, rather than that my work is inferior. (I also arrogantly assert that I've got evidence to back up my view: book sales, rave reviews, and awards for multiple projects that multiple editors rejected and multiple agents declared unsalable.)

And yet, despite my long experience (22 years) of selling my work (approximately 25 book sales; 60 short fiction sales; and many columns, articles, and essays), every time I read a reasoned, civil, *negative* commentary about my completed, polished, published work—the best work of which I am capable—I think, "They've found OUT. They *know*." And I become convinced I'll never work again.

I don't have this reaction to agenda-driven, venom-filled diatribes by dung-flinging Internet baboons. But whenever I see unfavorable criticism of my work by someone who's coming across as a reasonable adult... I realize that I've been *exposed* as an imposter!

Which is a good example of why, with the next Esther Diamond novel coming out in a few days, *Unsympathetic Magic*, I firmly vow *not* to Google my own name.

Laura Resnick's 2010 releases are *Unsympathetic Magic* (on sale August 3), *Doppelgangster* (which was released in January), and *The Purifying Fire* (a May reissue). And she will never work again, obviously.

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## ***Business Briefs***

### **.Prices are dropping and dropping . . .**

Can it be the competition is sizing up what Apple is doing to bring iBookstore to iPhone and iPod? Barnes & Noble's wi-fi Nook is now \$149, the 3G is at \$199, and, not to be outdone, Amazon has priced the Kindle at \$189 (and it's now selling through Target, not just online). The Kobo is priced at \$149.99 with a sweetener thrown in—a \$20 gift card and double Borders Bucks that can be used for a future purchase. And who else is getting on the bandwagon after much denial? Sony has brought its prices down for the Daily Edition to \$299, Touch Edition to \$169, and Pocket Edition to \$150.





**WRITING is  
TAXING**  
By Diane O'Brien Kelly

# Tax Myths— Separating Fact from Fiction

In my practice, clients often ask questions involving tax myths. I feel like a party pooper when I have to dispel the myths, but part of my job as a tax advisor is separating fact from fiction. Here are some common tax myths, along with the ugly truth:

**Myth #1:** If I don't receive a 1099, or if the payor isn't required to file a 1099, that means the payment isn't taxable to me.

**The Truth:** Sorry, folks. There is no "*de minimus* exception" to taxation of income. It is the character of the income, rather than the amount, that determines its taxability. Whether or not a payor is required by tax law to report a payment on a 1099, W-2, or some other form has no bearing on whether that income is taxable to you. Moreover, you are required to accurately report your income regardless of whether a payor complies with its reporting requirements.

For instance, payments by a publisher of less than \$600 per payee per year are not required to be reported to the writer. However, the income is still taxable to the writer and must be reported. Thus, if you are paid a \$500 advance on a novel, that payment is not required to be reported by the publisher on a Form 1099. That \$500 is still taxable income to you, however, and must be reported on your return. Similarly, if a publisher fails to fulfill its legal obligation to file a 1099 for a \$1,000 payment to you, you must nonetheless report that income on your return.

**Myth #2:** Personal expenses such as clothing, haircuts, or manicures are deductible if they relate to my business.

**The Truth:** Nope. Clothing, even if purchased solely to be worn to a business-related event, is not deductible if it could be appropriately worn elsewhere. Thus, that suit you purchased to wear for that important meeting with your agent and editor is not deductible, even if you know you'll never wear the suit again. Same goes with haircuts or manicures. Getting your hair or nails done is an "inherently personal" expense according to the IRS, and not deductible. No rulings have been made on chest or bikini waxing yet, but by extrapolation, those, too, would be non-deductible. Ouch.

**Myth #3:** If I place some type of advertising on my car, all of my mileage is deductible.

**The Truth:** Not a chance. Mileage is deductible only to the extent that the primary purpose of a particular trip in the car is for business. Even if you've attached a sign to your car that advertises your books, the sign alone doesn't turn your trip to the store to buy personal groceries into a business trip.

**Myth #4:** I can deduct the cost of my double-shot extra-whip latte when I'm writing alone at a coffee shop near my home.

**The Truth:** I hate to put the chill on your coffee here, but the answer is no. Again, the IRS considers the coffee to be a personal expense. The cost of meals or food consumed by a business owner is deductible only if:

the business owner is traveling away from his tax home (meaning the taxpayer has traveled so far from his home area for business reasons that it is necessary for the taxpayer to stop and rest) or

the meal constitutes a business meal or entertainment (which would require that you be enjoying your coffee with another person with whom you engage in business before, after, or while enjoying the coffee).

**Myth #5:** Incorporating or forming an LLC will allow me to deduct expenses I cannot otherwise deduct.

**The Truth:** Some believe they are required to form a separate entity in order to benefit from business expense deductions. Not true. A valid business expense is deductible whether the business owner operates as a sole proprietorship or has formed a corporation or limited liability company. That said, there are some differences between individuals and corporations in reporting of capital losses and in the carryback and carryovers of net operating losses, but it is unlikely a writer would encounter these issues in his or her writing business. ▶

In addition, it is not true that forming a corporation, LLC, or partnership will allow the deduction of personal expenses. I've talked to many clients who'd heard—wrongfully!—that they could transfer their house to their business and thus deduct all the costs of keeping up their home as business expenses. Not so. The IRS will look at the true substance of an expense, not its form, and will either disallow the deduction of personal expenses or treat the payment of such expenses by the corporation, LLC, or partnership as income to the individual taxpayer.

**Myth #6:** Filing an extension allows a taxpayer more time to pay.

**The Truth:** Nah. The paying of taxes and reporting of taxes are separate and distinct obligations. While the IRS will allow additional time in which to file a return, all taxes are due from individuals by April 15 even if the taxpayer files an extension. The failure to pay all taxes due by April 15 will result in interest and, possibly, penalties.

**Myth #7:** Social Security Isn't Taxable.

**The Truth:** Wrong. Social Security is not sacred and may be subject to income tax. Up to 85% of Social Security benefits, including disability benefits, could be taxable. The actual portion that will be taxed is based on a formula that takes into account the amount of the taxpayer's other income. The higher the taxpayer's other income, the greater the percentage of Social Security benefits that will be taxed.

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

## Business Briefs

### Who's Doing What?

**Isabel Swift**, formerly of Harlequin Enterprises has new contact information: [isabel@swiftglobalmedia.com](mailto:isabel@swiftglobalmedia.com).

**Krista Stroever** moves from Silhouette Desire to Mira as senior editor.

**Liz Van Hoose** has moved up to editor at Viking Penguin.

HarperCollins Children's division has named **Farrin Jacobs** as editorial director. Jacobs led the teen series team that produced Lauren Conrad's *L.A. Candy* series, *The Vampire Diaries* and *Pretty Little Liars*. Also at HarperCollins Children's, **Erica Sussman** has been promoted to senior editor.

**Martha Kanya-Forstner** has resigned as editor-in-chief of Doubleday Canada after 12 years with the imprint. She will continue to be associated with the company "in a new, independent, freelance editorial arrangement."

**Lauren L. Wohl** is stepping down from her position as associate publisher for Roaring Brook Press, Farrar, Straus & Giroux Books for Young Readers, and First Second Books. However, Wohl won't be leaving the publisher entirely; she will immediately begin consulting for Macmillan Children's Book Group's institutional marketing division as well as for an organization founded by author James Patterson to help adults find good books for children and teens, and for other projects as they arise.

**Reka Simonsen** is moving from Henry Holt Children's to become executive editor at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Children's Books.

**Lisa Sandell** has been named executive editor at Scholastic Press. She had been senior editor there. ▲

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(see above about vague punditry—it's not what people want). In fact, analysis, context, synthesis are the future of information, and I worry that journalists have lost this talent. I will spare you more thoughts on this except to say: your children should all be library science majors!

So print—cheap, disposable, ephemeral print—will become marginalized, probably faster than we realize. But also slower than the doom-and-gloom types believe. “Print” is not a small idea. We print all sorts of things for all sorts of reasons, and that isn't going to come to a full stop. Until our robot overlords decree otherwise, we will be creating all sorts of printed materials.

Most will not survive the day they're created. This goes for books as much as newspapers and other time-limited information.

Setting aside the cheap, throwaway print products, the future of print is valuable, beautiful, useful...quality. As I sit here, surrounded by print publications of all types, I see what I value. I read. A lot. I haven't been precious about format in well over a decade. Or decades. I was the kid who read cereal boxes—sometimes the same box of Life over and over—if there were not other words available. I want to read. What I find now is that I gravitate toward the format that best suits the type of reading I want or need to do at that moment.

For fiction and narrative nonfiction, I am 100% digital. It kills me that I get so many ARCs in print—if it's something I want to read, I'll buy the digital version of a book a publisher sends me for free, just because I want to read in my preferred manner. I do a lot of reading at the gym, on planes, during the interstitial moments. Digital works for me on so many levels, particularly because I am aligned with the Evil Empire. They created a seamless purchasing and reading experience for me. That's another post.

(Aside: on my last trip to Europe, I impulsively tossed a hardcover in my suitcase because I loved the author and—funny—the last print book I'd bought was hers. Never let me loose in Waterstones! I was flying business, and my suitcase, packed for three weeks, two divergent climates, was just a smidge overweight. Yep, the book. So I pulled out the book and shoved it into my already heavy backpack—two laptops, a Kindle, my phone, various chargers, and a hardcover book. Yeah, that was me, bent over double. Sadly, the book was one of the author's weaker efforts, a shame as her previous book was really compelling.)

So, print. I buy magazines in print. I haven't warmed to the digital versions. I think magazine publishers are going out of their way to make the experience as unlikeable as possible. It's not a feat to replicate the print edition in digital format, full page fidelity and all. What I—and it seems so many others—want is a magazine that takes advantage of the technology. Magazine publishers don't seem to get that, or maybe they think we are happy with okay, good enough, sloppy.

We're not.

Much of what I read in magazines is available for free on the web, but I find my relationships with the print content and the web content are different. I like to revisit them, to touch them, to buy the special issues (did you know there was a *Dwell* “100 Houses We Love” special issue? I am too messy to be modern, yet I drool over *Dwell*). I like to cut out pages, to save pieces, to enjoy the rhythm of reading magazines. It's different, you know.

I want my digital magazines to give me that sort of joy—it is obvious that magazine publishers/app developers haven't really thought much about the user experience of digital magazines, or, heck, the user experience of print magazines. Reading the articles is just part of what happens.

I've stopped subscribing to print magazines. I buy individual copies when I remember because I've been burned by magazine publishers. They've shuttered the titles I love and, to fulfill their own terms, substitute stuff I have no interest in reading. I don't trust the publishers to do right by me. I'd probably consider iPad subscriptions if the product and prices were better, but so far, no dice.

Then the books. I am a bit of a cookbook addict. While I love the [How To Cook Everything app](#) (shopping lists, timers!), I also love flipping through glossy pages and seeing the finished dishes—knowing mine will never look that good—and lists of ingredients. I will buy the print version of this book. I love the books published by [Ammo](#). I still get giddy over my art of [Samurai Shampoo](#) book (what? you haven't watched the series? We need to talk!). I went to two



independent bookstores to find an [art book](#) the husband didn't know he wanted. I saw it at last year's Comic Book Day, knew it was perfect, noted the title, and, sigh, Vroman's didn't have it—I started at Vroman's because they have awesome greeting cards, and that is really important to me, because it was a holiday gift and all.

So yeah, I was that slightly older woman in the comic book store buying their last copy of the book. The box was a little messed up, but that is fine. The pages are filled with the artwork he digs.

I also have this crazy weird book from the 1970s of houses from a home decor magazine (can't recall title—think *Architectural Digest*) that I adore even though not a single thing is something I would ever consider for my home. Also, we have a precious copy of Arlene Dahl's *Always Ask a Man. It is the basis of my household's "always let him think it's his idea" philosophy.*

These are books I want in print, want to flip through, want to touch as I remember lines or images. There are many more of these in my collection. The print books we—that collective we—want to keep are a blip compared to the books produced every year. For me, they are a blip compared to the number of books I read in a year. Most of those have very little value to me. I read, I discard.

There's no telling what book might find a place in a permanent collection, but five seconds in a used bookstore (physical or digital) is enough to prove that much of what is printed isn't valuable enough to remain a permanent part of most libraries. These are the type of books I believe we'll see dying in print first.

My theory is that readers will grow more and more intolerant of those books that have no real value, books that are worn out before they are unembargoed. And no point in pretending you can keep the best parts from leaking out. The future of print is not day-late print versions of last year's news. Let's be honest here: most of these print books are bought at deep discounts by consumers. The "value" assigned by purchasers is far less than the value assigned by the publisher.

This is why, when the bookcase fairy finally delivers my dream bookshelves, I will not be dragging out every book I have stored in the garage. In fact, the longer the books remain out of sight, the less important displaying them becomes. Just as friends are comfortable browsing the house's iTunes library, they happily page through my Kindle, sampling and discussing. What I will keep when I finally open those boxes—ah, the love and care with which they were packed!—will be those books on the endangered species list. Books that cannot be bought in any other way.

Most, but not all, of these are candidates for digital repurchase. Yes, you read that right: I will rebuy books I love in the format I prefer. As long as publishers don't engage in stupid pricing tricks (see: [book originally published in 2006](#)). I'll be honest, these book are not must-haves for me. They are want-to-haves. It's the job of the publisher to make it an attractive purchase for me.

I cannot predict when the shift from mostly print to mostly digital will happen. I suspect it will be like a patchwork quilt. Print becomes more valuable when it becomes less disposable. We will happily invest in quality because what we buy is something we want to preserve—and display—for a long time. I think we interact with different media in different ways. I'm not a smell of books person, but I am a tactile person. Different types of content (the wrong word here, but nicely umbrella) demand different types of interaction.

Print and digital are different experiences. It's not good or bad, or right or wrong. It's what the book, the story within (be it fiction or nonfiction), requires. Some stories can be told in every format possible. Some must be purely digital. Some demand the pace of print.

To me, the future of print is irrevocably tied to the consumer's ability to acquire those books they deem valuable to them. This might mean buying a gorgeous book from Ammo Books from the get-go. It might mean buying a beautiful edition of a long-loved book. It might mean acquiring a physical copy of a digital book (or, vice versa: the digital companion of the print book).

What is important is that these print version be quality—good covers, excellent paper, binding that doesn't fall apart. Handmade, one-of-a-kind, original, limited edition, personal. The shift to digital reading is taking place rapidly, and there will be a point in the not-too-distant future where we stop thinking either/or and embrace either/and.

Is this the future you are preparing for? ▲

