

# NINK

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## Cover Art for the Backlist: Do readers really judge a book by its cover?

BY LAURA PHILLIPS

You have your rights reversion letter in hand. The text of your backlist titles has been scanned, proofed, and converted to the proper format. It's almost an e-book, ready to be uploaded for sale on Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble, Fictionwise, OmniLit, Smashwords, Scribd and any other online bookselling site you can sweet talk into listing it. All you need now is a cover — any cover will do. Right?

Wrong.

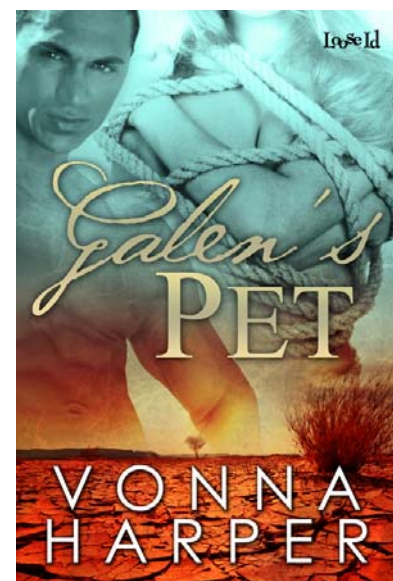
As it turns out, cover art is as important in the digital marketplace as it is in bricks-and-mortar stores.

"Book covers are artwork. Though taste does vary, anyone can tell the difference between Rembrandt and the macaroni art your six-year-old did. There are plenty of examples of poorly done covers on Kindle, and they usually have the poor sales numbers to match," says Joe Konrath, who has written extensively about his Kindle publishing experiences on his blog, *A Newbie's Guide to Publishing*. (<http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/>)

"Really, selling a book depends on more factors than just the cover, but an attractive cover will definitely be an advantage," agrees Frauke Spanuth of Croco Designs. "For a new or less-known author, a good cover is more important. And if the author loves the cover, it's more likely that s/he likes to showcase and promo with it."

### What makes a cover good or bad?

We can all point to covers we've loved and hated. The trouble is that art is so subjective. Tastes vary. The issue, though, really isn't one of esthetics.



Cover art by Croco Designs

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"There are no awful covers. There are only ineffective ones. The job of the book cover is to make you curious enough to examine it more closely," says Carl Graves, who has created covers for Konrath, Lee Goldberg, and other authors.

That's true of traditionally published books displayed in brick-and-mortar stores, and it's just as true in the digital marketplace where browsing customers are sifting through a barrage of visual information. Decisions are made in an instant, almost unconsciously as the gaze sweeps across the screen, skimming, dismissing, pausing and maybe... hopefully...lingering long enough so that the cover image imprints on the brain and the words in the book description or teaser lines are intriguing enough for a click-through and purchase.

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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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Andy Straka, Charlottesville VA  
Shannon Donnelly, North Hollywood CA

### NINC has room to grow...

Recommend membership to your colleagues.

Prospective members may apply online at

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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).

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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.

# Those Were the Days . . . Right?

So, I was sitting here today wondering what I wanted to write in this month's column, and while I was considering possibilities (which the casual observer would have no doubt described as daydreaming), it occurred to me that this would be the September column.

September. I'm writing this in early August but, still, most of summer is (hopefully, given the ungodly heat) behind us. Most of the year is behind us.

How did that happen? Just yesterday it was March. Actually, just yesterday it was, like, 2005. And just before that it was 1980. I swear.

Yes, this is the column where your President decides to obsess about age and the inexorable passage of time, and how things have changed along the way.

For me, personally, it's always a shock to remember that I've been in this business — excuse me, *activity* — for thirty years. Just doesn't seem possible. And then I look over at the shelf at my books lined up, and think, well, at least I've been productive. Still. Thirty years.

That's time to build a considerable body of work. Time to develop a strong, individual voice no matter the genre. Time to learn as much as any author can hope to learn about publishing. Time to figure out what works best for you as an individual writer. Time to learn how to pick your battles. Time to learn that you won't always win and, in fact, will probably lose fairly often.

Time. Three decades of time. And, man, how writing and publishing have changed in those thirty years.

Writers entering the game in this century as opposed to the last one (Oh, God, how long ago that *sounds!*) have something that is both a huge advantage and a huge disadvantage that we didn't have back in the Dark Ages of the 1980s: the Internet. Amazing and wonderful for research, for getting the answer to that oddball question you have halfway through a vital chapter at two o'clock in the morning.

Not so amazing and wonderful in that it provides a forum (or thousands) for anyone and everyone with an opinion about writing in general or your work in particular, and many of those opinions offer inaccurate information at best and, at worst, viciously destructive "criticism" that can cross the line and become personal attacks.

In 1980, all we had to worry about were reviews in scattered newspapers and, rarely, magazines, and most of us didn't get many of those. We got reader mail, but because it was necessary for a reader to sit down with pen and paper, and find the addresses of our publishers, and unearth an envelope and stamp and actually mail the thing — well, let's just say it was a lot more trouble than shooting off an email.

I admit, sometimes I yearn wistfully for those days. Especially when I start out my day with six reader notes in my email and one of them excoriates me for some perceived sin I committed in the most recent book, such as having characters that cuss or smoke or drink. (Horrors!) It's always the one complaining note that sticks with us, right? Even if the other five are practically incandescent with praise.

Anyway, there have been lots of other changes in thirty years. Quite a few Very Big Publishers have shifted and merged and been acquired by giant media conglomerates so that now there are only a handful of Very Big Publishers. But lots and lots of small presses and e-book publishers, and more vanity pubs than you can shake a stick at — including quite a few that pretend that's not what they are.

So while writers entering the game now have fewer Big Publishers to submit their work to, they also have almost unlimited options to get their work in print. And they can participate, if they choose or if their publishers insist, in promoting and marketing their work, especially via the Internet.



I've never been convinced that's a Good Thing and, in fact, think it's a Bad Thing when forced upon an author, but in any case it's a change.

Writing on this Dell computer of mine is a hell of a lot better than the K-Mart electric I started out on, or the IBM Selectric that followed it, and it's amazingly more advanced than my first real computer, which was the now-long-defunct Eagle brand that was one piece and resembled a Radio Shack system. Pale green letters on a dark, dark green background, and a huge dot-matrix printer that rattled like a machine gun, took forever, and printed out folded sheets you had to tear into individual pages.

Talk about a waste of trees.

And, lemme tell you, however buggy or temperamental it sometimes gets, Windows is *much* better than what we had in the Good Old Days. I like writing on what looks like a nice, crisp sheet of white paper. And I like being able to cut and paste things without actual scissors and Scotch tape. And I love being able to lift out stuff that doesn't work and stash it in another file in case I can use it somewhere else — without having to retype an entire manuscript.

I don't miss the retyping. Or that Eagle computer and dot-matrix printer. Or having to print out and box up and mail or ship a manuscript. And I certainly don't miss carbon paper.

At all.

What I do miss — and I hate admitting this, because I heard the same sort of thing from the “older generation” a few decades back — is the relative simplicity of writing and publishing then. Maybe I was just young and dumb, or uninformed, but back then publishers were mysterious, seemingly glamorous entities far away in New York City, and editors were almost godlike (well, mostly goddesslike) in their knowledge and skills ... and we had to *walk* there, uphill, *both ways* —

Oh, wait. Wrong story.

Huh. You know, now that I think about it, I don't think those were the Good Old Days. I think I like these days, even with their myriad complications and problems and changes. I even like the age I am, which is old enough to value the journey so far, while still being able to keep walking along the path.

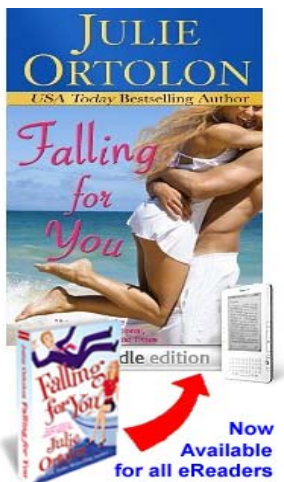
I think I like these days just fine.

— Kay Hooper

Continued from page 1 ▶

## Cover Art

“The goal of a cover is to draw attention and to tempt people who might not normally be interested in the novel,” says cover artist Amanda Kelsey. “If the design is too dark, too cluttered, unreadable, or with strange composition, the reader will walk right on by.”



In the digital marketplace, the cover has to look good even at thumbnail size, and that's an additional challenge. It must also accurately portray the genre and tone of the book, and perhaps even provide a visual connection to other books by the author.

“If an author is rebranding their previously released titles, I suggest they focus on a visual theme that would run through multiple covers,” Graves says.

“A bad cover is one that confuses potential readers instead of inviting them to check out the story!” warns cover artist Anne Cain. “If a cover isn't attractive and it doesn't effectively tell you about the story — or at least intrigue you enough to want to find out — then it fails. . . You definitely need to give them something to stir them visually or intellectually.”

With so many factors to consider, the cover art process can be overwhelming — especially if you don't have a strong background in marketing or graphic arts. NINC member Julie Ortolon, who was a professional graphic artist before starting her writing career, has this advice:

“Divorce yourself from the story and think like a marketer, not the author. Don't get so hung up on being accurate to something specific in the story that you lose the chance to have

an eye-catching cover. Remember that your goal is to grab a potential reader's attention enough to make them read the blurb."

### **Getting started**

If you love the cover on the print book, the first obvious step is to ask for permission to use it. The rights to the cover art could belong to either the original artist or the publisher. Permission sometimes is freely granted. In other instances, there are tangled rights issues and fees that are beyond the author's budget.

Author Lillian Carl Stewart successfully negotiated the use of the original cover art from several of her print books. "I'd say that my circumstances with the print covers is definitely unusual. I simply asked the publisher if I could use the covers of their trade paperback editions for the Kindle editions, and he said yes, since those covers were created in-house to begin with, in one case from a photograph I supplied.

"I have no written release from anyone at Wildside," she added. "It's a handshake/gentleman's agreement, based on a decade of successfully doing business together. There were no quirks in formatting or anything. I just used the jpeg files of the covers that I'd been using all along on my website and for other publicity purposes."

### **The publisher says no**

If you've ruled out the use of existing cover art, you can either aim for a similar design or create something entirely different. Call it an adventure or an opportunity.

"Here's a fun thing to do next time you're in a bookstore," suggests author Pati Nagle, who also designs covers and websites. "Go to the bestsellers tables, the ones up front that get the most co-op funding, and just look at the covers. Look at what types of images are being used, what styles of font and layout. Pick a book whose author you're not familiar with, try to guess what kind of book it is just from the cover, and then look at the copy to see how close you were."

The next logical step would be to take what you've learned from that exercise and start sketching general outlines with pencil and paper. If you're sufficiently confident in your skills, draft a basic design using Microsoft Paint, Photoshop, GIMP or any of the other dozen or more computer graphic software packages that are widely available.

"The most time-consuming part of the process is coming up with the concept and finding the right images," says Ortolon. "An art department at a major publishing house can have custom images made to fit their concept. For authors, our choice is to take our own photo or go with what we can find at the stock image sites online."

### **Key Points to Consider**

1. The thumbnail view of the cover is important. It has to look good, and the text should be readable. "The smallest size I usually use is 100 x 150 pixels. If you can still tell what a cover says at that size, you're in good shape," says Nagle.

2. Pick a good font and use it well. "You can give two people the same image and wind up with two totally different covers just by how the title and author's name are placed and how the text relates to the image. The right font in the right size is the difference between a cover that looks professional and one that looks amateurish," said Ortolon.

3. The cover message and genre should match. "Attract the right readership! If you want to sell a sci-fi novel, have the cover say sci-fi, and not differently. Don't put pink flowers on a cover just because you like them when your book is full of hard, kick-ass cyberspace action," said Spanuth.

4. Keep it simple. "I know some authors who love to have a lot of elements on their covers," says Valerie Tibbs of Tibbs Design. "Having really cool fonts, or a lot of colors, and other special effects. But the old adage applies here. Sometimes less is more. Keep it simple. The best covers are usually fairly simple and have few elements. Just look at the recent Nora Roberts books in her Bride series. Very clean and simple."

Hunter agrees and suggests focusing on one or two elements. "Don't try to put ten images all on the cover, cram in your name, title, some kind of tag, etc."

5. Consider the e-ink display properties. "The cover should look good in black and white as well as color because Kindle and several other e-readers display the cover in black and white," advised Nagle.

### **Should you hire a pro?**

There's no right or wrong answer to the question of whether you should hire a pro or design your own cover. Your choice depends on your budget, your personal skill set, how much time and patience you have for the process, and how much you're willing to experiment.

"I did my original covers. They were terrific, if you were near blind, mentally compromised, and on so many drugs you liked everything," Konrath confesses. "Hell is full of authors who think they can use Photoshop correctly. So I hired a friend of mine who is brilliant, and immediately saw a big uptick in sales. He now does all my covers."





Lee Goldberg, who has designed some of his covers and recently had several redesigned by a pro, offers similar advice. “You need a cover that pops in miniature, but also one that doesn’t look amateurish. If you don’t have the skills to do it yourself, hire someone. A friend of mine hired a 14-year-old kid and paid him \$200 a cover, and they look great.”

Or perhaps you just need to hire a pro for the finishing touches. “Even if you already have a perfect image, it’s probably worth paying a graphic designer to put it together for you,” says Ortolon.

### The costs

Professionally designed e-book covers can range from \$20 to around \$300, though quotes of \$1200 or more aren’t unusual. Actual costs depend on whom you hire, the extent of the package, the amount of work involved, the usage rights you purchase, and so forth.

“You could probably spend a lot. For example, you could hire an artist to make an original painting for your cover. Or hire models and a photographer. Rent costumes. That could run the bill up pretty fast,” says Nagle.

The important issues for budget-minded authors are in the details of the package. “An important factor for the price here is the cover art type and the rights management,” says Spanuth. “As you can imagine, a cover using exclusive photos (not stock images that anyone can purchase) and painted covers will always be more expensive. Same with the usage rights. You usually have to pay artists extra, for example, for the rights to produce merchandise based on the cover art (e.g. Cafe Press items). Be sure to cover all questions here prior to any work, though most good artists will educate you or/and offer you a contract.”

“Another option,” suggests Ortolon, “is to hire someone fresh out of college who’s building their portfolio. Whoever you hire, I’d go with an individual freelancer or small firm. I wouldn’t hire a big advertising agency. It’s just too expensive, and you don’t need that level of research before they even get to the actual designing.”

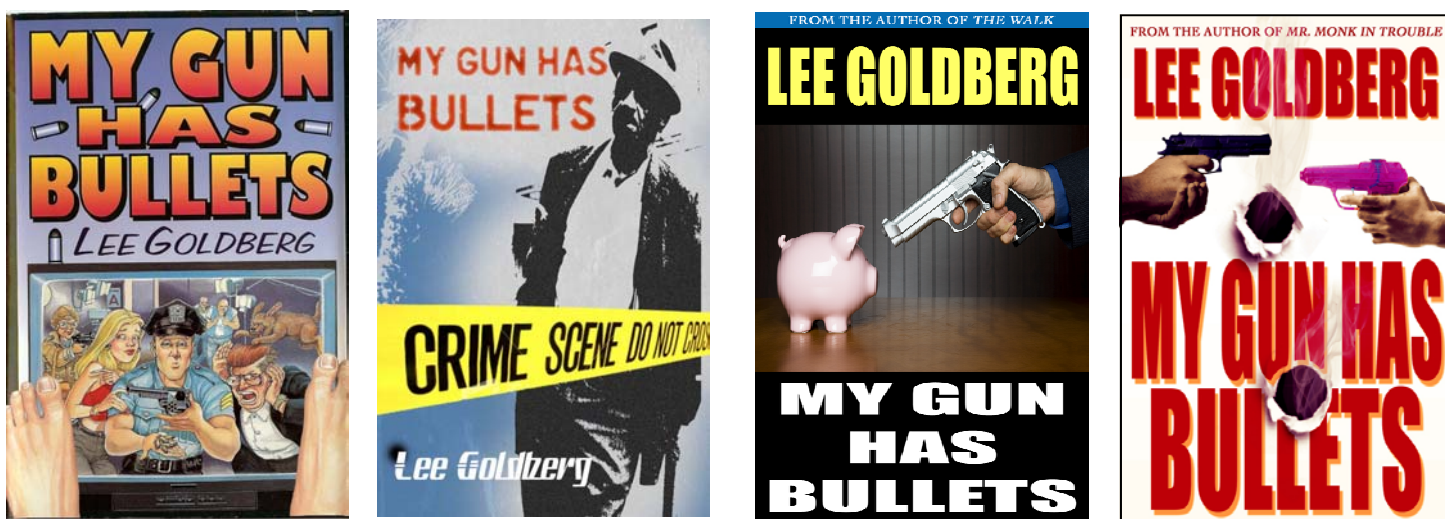
### Questions to ask before you hire

The most obvious question is whether the artist has ever designed a book cover.

“A ‘no’ to that question shouldn’t automatically rule them out, but a familiarity with book covers is helpful,” says Ortolon. “After that, ask yourself, and them, if you will be part of the design process, or will they do the whole thing on their own and deliver the finished cover. Will they show you mockups or sketches and ask for input along the way? I do because I like to have the author involved. But if the author doesn’t want to be part of the process, I’m fine with that. Also ask how many revisions and tweaks they’ll do. Is the estimate firm, or will the clock keep ticking every time you ask for changes?”

Price, a deadline, and image rights are other important issues to settle. “You should be asking how much, how long, and is the artist using royalty-free images to create the cover. Another question is does the artist have a contract to sign. This gives the author legal rights in writing,” says Kendra Egert of Creations by Kendra.

Image rights can be a particularly confusing issue. Ask questions and be sure you are purchasing the correct level of



Lee Goldberg didn’t own the rights to the art from the original dust jacket for the hardcover release (left). The first e-cover version (next) seemed more suited to a trade paperback release. Sales increased after switching to a design with a clearer thumbprint view (third cover). When sales numbers dropped, Lee opted for a new design (right) by pro cover artist Carl Graves.

rights. Often rights are priced and licensed for specific uses, and permission and fees apply for other uses or when distribution numbers increase.

Ask to see samples and consider whether the artist's style is a good match for your book.

"You should work with a cover artist who understands your vision for the book and is able to help you realize it. Someone who is willing to work with you until you get what you're looking for. Ask to see samples first. Get recommendations if possible. If you're having more than one cover made in a similar style, ask for a discount on the price." Joe Konrath says.

### **It's a team effort**

Be prepared to provide any artist you hire with as much information as possible about your book, your vision, and how you expect to use the image in marketing the book.

"If authors commission me directly, they receive a little checklist from me. Important are the technical requirements, like cover size, bleed, and so on," Spanuth says. "I need the usual info like book title, author name, genre, time/settings, and mood. Beyond that I'm thrilled if authors provide me a story synopsis/short excerpt, let me know about key symbols and what their characters look like, or if they prefer no people on the cover at all. Often images, i.e. other covers, are attached that the author likes."

Graves suggests authors provide links to any book cover art that they would like the artist to use as inspiration. "I create a rough concept image to make sure we are on the same page. I build the cover based on feedback from the author, then we tweak it from there until it's done," he said.

"Author/Designer relationships work best, in my opinion, when the author has examined their needs and has a clear understanding of their target audience. The designer is there to visually deliver your message to the market. Without a solid purpose the author and designer might over-think or second-guess the work, making it watered down and ineffective."

Kelsey pointed out that the most time-consuming parts of the design process are brainstorming the concept, stock image searching, and the pre-design discussions to develop the concept.

Budget-minded authors can sometimes streamline the process by doing some of the legwork. "Finding images can take minutes or hours, and this is where the author can save the most money when working with a designer, by helping to search," Ortolon says. "Now, the images the author finds on their own don't always work, but they can point the designer in the right direction."

### **Designing your own cover**

Whether driven by budget or creative instinct, many authors opt to create their own covers for their digital editions.

"For my Kindle editions that have nothing to do with *Wildside*, I wasn't able to use the original covers," explained Carl. "So for each one I found an appropriate photograph in my files (one I or my husband took to begin with) or a bit of public-domain art, and used my Paint program to put my name and the title on it. These covers aren't as professional-looking, but then, they were free."

Lee Goldberg initially created his own covers for his Kindle releases. "I used Microsoft Paint and purchased stock photos off the web. It was very easy . . . but I got a lot of advice from my sister Linda Woods, who is an acclaimed graphic artist."

Sam Hunter, whose husband handles her website and covers, didn't find the process difficult. "I knew what I wanted, and we paid for stock images from iStock and just manipulated them on Photoshop. You have to make sure you are keeping with the copyright/licensing rules, but that's about it. I also know we are not doing professionally produced covers, but something more home brew. For that reason, we try to keep it simple and thematic."

Alexis Harrington struggled with the technology in her initial attempts. "First I tried GIMP, which is an open source, no-frills program. The instructions weren't very helpful and like many programs offered help on the assumption that you already knew what they were talking about. I'd heard of Photoshop (who hasn't?) but the software price is breathtaking, even for older releases. Then another author suggested Adobe PhotoShop Elements, which is a stripped-down version. I think I paid about \$100 for it."

"Although I wanted to," she continues, "I didn't use people on the covers because I know I wasn't capable of something too complicated. I used royalty-free landscape paintings I bought on CD for the background. The text was kind of funky, since text in a graphics program doesn't behave the same way it does on a desktop publishing program."

"I think it's important to avoid that homemade look if at all possible, and to try to create covers that have a uniformity of text so it looks like *your* brand. Think of Nora Roberts or Lisa Jackson — their titles and name logos are familiar from book to book."

For Hunter, the greater challenge was finding the right images. "Sometimes you have to search through several hundred pages of photos to get something that's just right, and then you need basic graphics skills to manipulate them."



## Don't hesitate to experiment

"At first, I had my sister design new covers for the Kindle editions of two of my out-of-print books," Goldberg says. "Her covers looked slick and professional . . . if I was doing a trade paperback. My friend Joe Konrath, who is really the zen-master of this stuff, helped me to see that I had to change my perspective. It's not about creating a new book cover. It's about grabbing reader attention with a graphic that's not much larger than a postage stamp. So I simplified the images, made them more colorful, and made the type much, much larger and bolder. I saw an uptick in sales almost immediately.

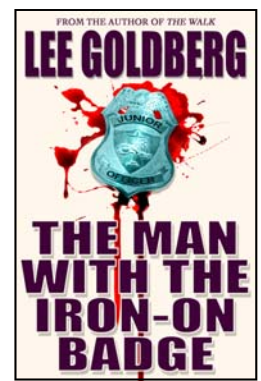
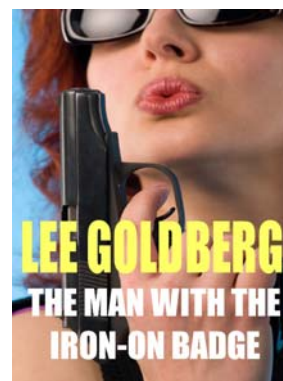
"I also experimented with changing the titles of my books, also at Joe's urging, and that made a huge difference. For instance, changing the title of *.357 Vigilante* to *Judgment* and creating a new cover more than tripled the sales . . . overnight. The key lesson here is that you need to be flexible, the title and cover of your book are not locked in stone. I may change the covers of my books again in a few months just to re-energize the sales.

Keep in mind, too, that other factors influence sales, too. "Sometimes a great review or word of mouth can overcome a turkey of a cover. One of my best titles, which has the second worst cover I created despite my best efforts, took off like a cannon shot when it got mentioned on SmartBitchesTrashyBooks.com."

"It's a fun experiment, and that's the main thing," Hunter said. "You're sharing stories with readers that you otherwise wouldn't be able to, and this should be an enjoyable process. Do what you have to do to make it fun."

*Laura Phillips' out-of-print titles will be available as e-books as soon as she finishes tinkering with her own cover art, and any income from those titles will be used to pay a cover artist to make better ones. Laura writes for and manages a niche software company in the Midwestern U.S. She's online at TheLandofMoo.com and [lauraphillips.net](http://lauraphillips.net). Contact her at [Laura@NorthernHillsMedia.com](mailto:Laura@NorthernHillsMedia.com).*

From left: the publisher's cover for the print release of *THE MAN WITH THE IRON-ON BADGE*, the second of three Kindle release covers the author has experimented with, and the third Kindle cover, which pro cover artist Carl Graves designed. The first Kindle cover (not shown) used smaller text.



## Resources:

### Cover Artists:

Pati Nagle - <http://mandala.net/ebooks-covers.html>  
Anne Cain - <http://www.annecain-art.com>  
Valerie Tibbs - <http://www.tibbsdesign.com>  
Kendra Egert - <http://creationsbykendra.com>

Julie Ortolon - <http://www.juliesjournalonline.com>  
Carl Graves - [cgdouble2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cgdouble2@sbcglobal.net)  
Frauke Spanuth - <http://www.crocodesigns.com>  
Amanda Kelsey - <http://www.razzdazzdesign.com>

**Digital Platforms:** Requirements vary, so decide where you wish to publish and check the cover art guidelines before you hire the artist. Remember, it's easy to convert a high-resolution file to a low-resolution file, but you can't convert a low-resolution thumbnail into a good quality, high-resolution image.

Amazon Digital Text Platform - <http://dtp.amazon.com>  
Scribd - <http://www.scribd.com>

Smashwords - <http://smashwords.com>  
Lulu - <http://www.lulu.com>

**Stock photos and art:** Read each site's terms carefully. Pricing, copyright, and terms of use vary among sites, and even within the site itself. Make sure you understand which rights you're purchasing and that you adhere to any credit and notification requirements.

bigphoto - <http://www.bigfoto.com>  
FreeDigitalPhotos.net - <http://www.freedigitalphotos.net>  
freepixels - <http://www.freepixels.com>  
Image\*After - <http://www.imageafter.com>  
morgueFile - <http://morguefile.com>  
stock.xchn - <http://www.sxchu/index.phtml>  
RomanceNovelCovers.com - <http://www.romancenovelcovers.com/index.htm>

Everystockphoto - <http://www.everystockphoto.com>  
FreePhotosBank - <http://www.freephotosbank.com>  
Freerange Stock - <http://freerangestock.com/index.php>  
iStockPhoto - <http://www.istockphoto.com/index.php>  
PD Photo.org - <http://pdphoto.org/index.php>





## Bureaucracy Goes On, Even at The Beach....

Candidate bios for the Election of Officers and Nominating Committee appeared in the August 2010 issue of *Nink* and also are available online. Ballots must be received by October 31, 2010

If you are unable to attend the Annual General Meeting (see over), be sure to submit a Proxy by September 15, 2010.

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# BALLOT

Member please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this ballot to:

BALLOT, c/o Novelists, Inc.,  
P.O. Box 2037, Manhattan, KS 66505

Ballots must be received by **October 31, 2010.**

**Save Time ... And a Stamp**

**Vote online at  
<http://ninc.com>**

**In the Members Only section**

### ITEM 1: Election of 2011 Officers

**YES**

**NO**

___	___	Lou Aronica, President-Elect
___	___	Denise Agnew, Secretary
___	___	Marcia Evanick, Treasurer

### ITEM 2: Election of 2012 Nominating Committee Members (Vote for no more than 5)

___ Roberta Gellis	___ Katie MacAlister	___ Jeane Weston
___ Sally Hawkes	___ Jody Nye	___ Gina Wilkins
___ Sherry-Anne Jacobs	___ Leigh Riker	
___ Annette Mahon	___ Lea Wait	

# 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, 2010.

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## Proxy A

To appoint current Ninc Board of Directors as your agent:

The undersigned hereby appoints Kay Hooper, Donna Fletcher, Charlotte Hubbard, Marcia Evanick, Jasmine Cresswell, and Jody Novins, 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 TradeWinds Island Resorts, 5600 Gulf Blvd., St. Pete Beach, FL 33706, on Sunday, October 10 at 9:30 a.m.

Member please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name here: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Proxy B

To appoint a fellow Ninc member as your agent, print the member's name below.

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 TradeWinds Island Resorts, 5600 Gulf Blvd., St. Pete Beach, FL 33706, on Sunday, October 10 at 9:30 a.m.

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

Member please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name here: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Proxy A or Proxy B, 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.**

**Please mail this Proxy to: PROXY, c/o Novelists, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2037, Manhattan, KS 66505.**

**Proxy must be received by September 15, 2010.**

**OR save a stamp, go green, and simply indicate your proxy preference online at <http://www.ninc.com>**

## **Digital Dilemmas - Should authors make their books available online? Carolyn Pittis of Harper Collins discusses the benefits.**

One of the perks of working on NINC conferences as your “people person” is the fun of spending phone and email time with our presenters long before we ever meet on site. Well, I cannot wait for you to meet HarperCollins’ Carolyn Pittis and Copyright Clearance Center’s Christopher Kenneally, who (I discovered while doing homework on Google search) interviewed Carolyn in 2008 for Beyond The Book.

Carolyn, Senior Vice President, Global Author Services of HarperCollins Publishers Worldwide, is responsible for building marketing and information tools and services to increase authors’ reach and revenues in the digital marketplace. One of 2009’s Top 50 Women in Publishing, she’s solidly in our corner — a savvy champion for authors who believes our publishers must put more marketing muscle behind our books. As you’ll hear in the following podcast, she’s been thinking ahead of the curve for some time.

Considering that iPad and iPhones are now common, this three-year-old interview remains relevant and is a great preview of what to expect from Carolyn and Chris in St. Pete.

Chris kindly excerpted interview highlights for us, below. To listen to the podcast, or to read the transcript in its entirety, go to: <http://beyondthebookcast.com/index.php?s=Carolyn+Pittis>

See you in St. Pete.... Karen Tintori, your 2010 conference program chair

Pittis: ... the goal really is to provide these scalable solutions so that authors feel like they have a partner, marketing partner, in their publisher, rather than hearing my publisher’s not doing enough for me. So we’re providing these tools and whether it’s widgets, content widgets, or author pages, so that authors can get their message out. And that’s — we see that as the job of the publisher, not just for publishers to say, oh, go up on MySpace, or go up on FaceBook and make your own page. We’re saying we can distribute content for you.

Q: Well, as Director of Author Relations, I hear this with interest, because I often hear, or I will tell people that if you scratch an author you’ll get a complaint about a publisher. And you’re nodding your head saying, yes, yes. And this is an interesting way to kind of become closer to the author, really.

The other part of the business, this sort of three-legged stool here, is you’re trying to come closer to the community and what’s interesting to me is you’re the global marketing strategy. So you can’t simply get the author excited about the fact his or her book is in the local book store. You have to get them excited and thinking about a global audience. How do you do that?

A: Well, I think we’re — our goal, really, is to create tools that work in all our markets. So Browse Inside, for example, is something where it’s been rolled out on the main Harpercollins.com site, but it’s — by the end of the summer, it’s going to be out on all the sites worldwide. Our Australia site, our Canadian site, our UK site, it’s one product, and it’s available. So an author can really have global reach in all our markets. And I think that that’s part of the benefit you get from working with the publisher that really thinks globally.

We also really looking [at] most traffic to websites domestically and internationally. There’s no boundaries anymore, people go everywhere. English language readers can read a site that’s in Germany as easily as they can in the United States. So, I think it’s important to really think about what is common in these markets, and then what is very different. Because there are different needs, and I think that’s where the continued to evolve rights and reach issues that are going to be about what can happen in a global marketplace, where digital moves much more easily than print.

Q: And so there’ll be plenty of work for the authors, the publishers, and the lawyers as well, I think, if we’re talking about rights. Is there one particular aspect of the rights questions that HarperCollins has had to address?

A: Well, I think it’s always fascinating to me how historically rights have been divvied up. Where one publisher may control rights in one country and another publisher in another. And maybe some publisher has audio rights and another has e-book rights. And that just — it slows down the ability for that content to travel when you have to coordinate across different organizations.

So, I think it’s vastly in an author’s best interest to think about not moving to divvy up your rights, and work — find a partner who can really exploit all your rights effectively, because I think you get a lot more integration of reach, and a publisher can do a lot more, at least I believe HarperCollins can do a lot more, when they’ve got the widest basket of rights to exploit. And maybe the rights are exploited in different order. Maybe the e-books rights are exploited first for some new authors, and then you go to print. There’s a lot of opportunities. But when there’s lots of different rights holders internationally, it — you may miss opportunities because of the pace of the market moves so fast.

Continued on page 16 ►



*Kasey Michaels, Chair*

## **TIPS FOR 2010 CONFERENCE PACKING**

As a working novelist I travel to conferences about once a year. I also live half the year in Central America on the Caribbean Coast, the other half in B.C. on the Pacific Coast, so my wardrobe is, putting it mildly, varied, though not extensive. I have boating clothes, tropical clothes, and conference clothes. Luckily, most of my boating clothes can stay aboard the boat the six months I'm away; I need only bring a few summer things north with me each spring, along with conference clothes, which can also double as wedding and funeral garb should such events occur when I'm in the North. They usually do.

Things I've learned over the years (many of them as a military wife) have come in handy again and again. Someone once said, "Take half the clothing you think you'll need, and twice the money." Because money isn't easily doubled in the bank accounts of most writers I know, mine included, I try to take one fourth of the clothing I think I'll need, and as little money as I can get by on. But here are a few tips you might find work for you as well as they do for me.

**Tip # 1 MAKE A LIST** of all the things you think you can't possibly do without, then look at it again and strike off the items you figure could be duplicates, one substituting for the other. Put that list where you won't lose it — you'll probably find yourself consulting it again and again over the years.

**Tip # 2 ROLL, DO NOT FOLD** clothing. Strange as it seems, most things come out with fewer wrinkles that way, though there will still be some.

**Tip # 3 CHOOSE SYNTHETICS OVER NATURAL FIBERS**, as much as it pains me to say this, it works. Synthetics are less crushable, dry more quickly, and usually weigh less as well as take up less room.

**Tip # 4 CHOOSE FINE KNITS** whenever you can. They pack better, look better, and stand up to travel better than woven cloth.

**Tip # 5 SEND YOUR GARMENTS OUT FOR PRESSING** (even if you utilize the above tips) as soon as you reach your hotel. They'll come back looking brand new and the cost is not great, but very worthwhile. Besides, while that's being done, you can be at the pool or in the bar enjoying your friends instead of using the iron and ironing board provided.

**Tip # 6 PACK COORDINATING COLORS** and be prepared to layer your clothing as climate/temperature demands. One pair of black/navy/gray slacks, one skirt of neutral color, couple of blouses/tops in different but complementary colors, a sweater or jacket that will do the same will give you a fair variety of outfits. If you toss in a couple of delicate scarves, you can even cover up the spaghetti sauce you dribbled on your blouse at lunch, so you can wear it

the rest of the afternoon.

**Tip # 7 DON'T PACK LIQUIDS** if you can avoid it. They're heavy and at most destinations you can buy (and abandon) what you need or use the stuff provided by your hotel. Exception: Contact lens solution, but pack just enough in a small, sterile container in case your hotel's sundries shop doesn't carry the brand you need.

**Tip # 8 ASK YOUR PHARMACY TO PACKAGE YOUR MEDS**, enough for the duration of your trip, in daily dosage bubbles. They are light and airport security won't question what you're carrying. (I learned this the hard way when I just counted out what I'd need from my prescription bottles and compiled them into one. They treated me like I was smuggling drugs!)

**Tip # 9 GOOGLE THE WEATHER** for wherever you're going, but not just once. Try to get a composite picture of what to expect over a month or two, even if you're only going for a few days. That way you'll have a better idea of what to expect.

**Tip # 10 PACK A LIGHTWEIGHT RAIN JACKET, COAT OR PONCHO.** Even if you're going to Death Valley, be prepared for the unexpected. (Also learned the hard way, when I went to Phoenix the first time and it rained the entire three days I was there.) One of those little, 5x5 plastic rain ponchos in a pouch takes up very little space, weighs nearly nothing, and can be abandoned if you want when you leave, especially if you've unfolded it. You'll never get it back exactly the way it was originally folded.

**Tip # 11 PACK A VERY SMALL BOTTLE OF NAIL GLUE.** This can be used to repair broken eye glasses, broken dentures, broken jewelry, and even broken nails! Add to this a small roll of Scotch or masking tape, and you can even fix fallen hems in a jiffy.

**Tip # 12 DON'T PACK A CORKSCREW IN YOUR CARRY ON BAGGAGE!** I've lost I don't know how many of those in various airports. I've often wondered if the security people think my intention is to scre... er, scratch that... I should say "stab" people to death while in flight. Alas, I am not a member of the mile-high club.

**MY LIST FOR ST. PETE BEACH** (This list is greatly curtailed considering our destination and the casual nature of our conference. It varies for other travels.)

Properly packaged meds, 1 pr. navy slacks, 2 wraparound skirts (sarongs), 3 Tees, 1 blouse, 1 light sweater, 2 prs. sandals, 2 swim suits, underwear <sigh!>, 1 nightshirt, my little rain poncho, sunglasses, sun visor, spare glasses, eye drops, nail glue, emery board, couple prs. earrings, personal toiletries (as few as possible in quantities as small as possible), camera with 2 fully charged batteries. This will all fit nicely in my computer case, while my Netbook and PDA with books for reading will travel in my purse. Unfortunately, I will have to take a larger suitcase that will travel as checked luggage because I'll be on my autumn migration back to Costa Rica.

Judy Griffith Gill's latest romantic comedy, *The Princess & The Popper*, never before published, is now available at <http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/17239> along with a number of her other novels.

## **Kasey, your conference chair here, chiming in...**

Judy has such great ideas – and a life that sounds so very appealing. I summer in the same place I winter, and it is not an exotic location!

Anyway, Judy really helped us all, but now I'm going to add a few things for the paranoid among us ... and we know who we are.

First, Judy's right; this is a relaxed conference. Even the Saturday night buffet is casual (and hopefully outdoors, weather permitting), so you don't need to e-mail Judy and ask her if you can safely roll long gowns and sequin jackets. Yes, the men might want to stick a sports coat in their suitcase, and the women a slightly less casual outfit than shorts. But for the most part, sandals for walking the beach, slacks, shorts, skirts – easy, casual resort wear.

Now for the really paranoid part: airline travel.

What can I take on the airplane? What are the new security measures? Can I travel with food or gifts? How do we get through security lines faster? What's all this business about liquids and clear plastic bags and limits? ►



Talk to me about proper ID. What about my Special Needs? How the heck do I print a Boarding Pass?

There's even a printable Help List for summer travelers (really good to click on that one!).

The answers to all these questions and more can be found right here:

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.sht>

What size carry-on is okay for overhead bins or stowing beneath your seat?

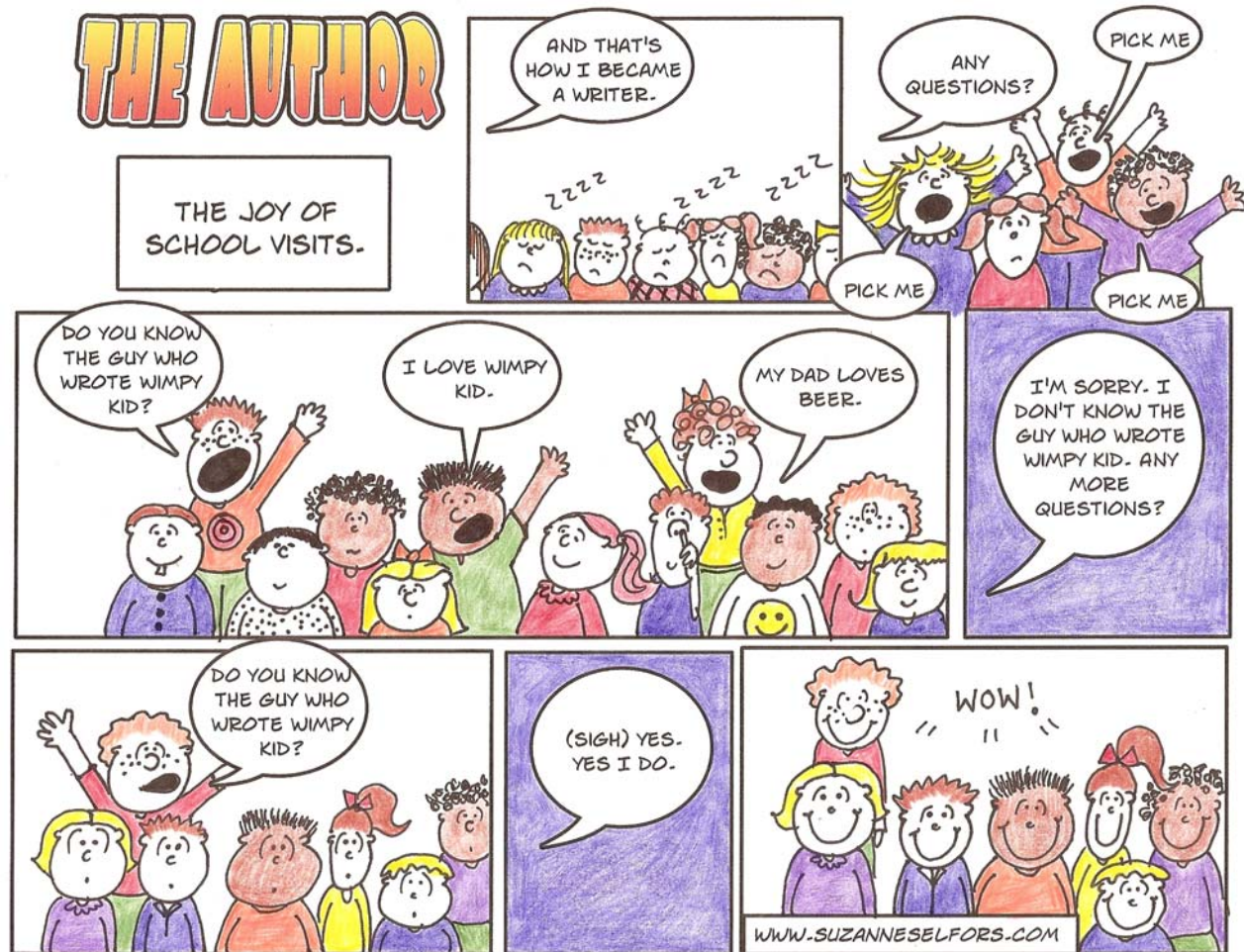
[http://www.faa.gov/passengers/prepare\\_fly/baggage/](http://www.faa.gov/passengers/prepare_fly/baggage/)

What do TSA-approved locks look like, so if the security folk want to look inside my checked baggage they won't just break off my locks (I've got some of these locks – they're great)?

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/locks.shtm>

## Beachninc and Homework:

Coordinating shared transpo from the airport, talking about group meals, hunting for a roommate — anything you want to know about the conference — sign up for the beachninc Yahoo loop by emailing me, [kcmi@aol.com](mailto:kcmi@aol.com). And don't forget our two assignments: For Dr. Doug Lyle's *Autopsy of a Thriller*, rent *The Terminator* and watch it again, and for Al Zuckerman's *Writing The Blockbuster Scene*, pick up a copy of *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* and give it a read. ▲



# Not Your Usual Writing Advice — Career Planning

BY JOANN GROTE

*“Great things are not something accidental, but must certainly be willed.”*

— Vincent van Gogh



Writer Dennis Hensley once autographed a book for me. He wrote, “Make this the year you sell your first book.”

The words startled me. I’d never considered that I had the power to make a sale happen in a specified time period. Because he believed I could, I decided to make it my goal. Setting that goal caused me to make different choices than I might otherwise have. When I received an invitation to submit a complete manuscript to a publisher during the slow season at my day job at an accounting firm, I decided to take a month off to finish that manuscript — using all my vacation time for the year and taking some additional time off without pay. As a result, I received an offer for a six-book deal. Then the publisher downsized and the contract went *kaput*.

Still, the experience was encouraging. I was on the right track, but the goal of one year I’d set was closing in. I realized that, if I wanted to reach my goal, I would need still more writing time. I told the accounting firm’s head partner I wanted to go part-time. The firm had no other professionals working part-time, and I had no reason to think he would accept my offer. And yet he did. The arrangement worked out great for both of us.

Six months later, I signed my first book contract. While it took me a few months longer than my goal, it was close. Intention is a powerful force. I’ve seen this again and again in my career.

More than once, when without a signed contract, I’ve told myself, “No editor is going to just call and offer you a contract. Better get to work on a proposal.” And as soon as I’d gotten down to work, an editor would call and ask me to submit a proposal.

When I say this to writing students, they always grab their pens or pencils and start scribbling madly. I explain to them, “It isn’t the words. The words have no magic. It’s the intention behind them.”

An intention is more than a wish, and it’s more than setting a goal. *You must also make a plan and act on it.* Sometimes in this age of metaphysics we forget that last element. We read or listen to *The Secret* and similar programs and think if our belief is only strong enough, we can make it happen.

If you’ve been following this column, you know I am a strong believer in positive thinking. It’s at minimum a huge ally, keeping us going when we’re attempting something such as continuing to sell in a tight market or when the line we’ve sold to for years just closed. But you need more.

I recently listened to *Effortless Success*, a course by Paul Scheele and Jack Canfield of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* fame. Jack was featured in *The Secret*. In *Effortless Success*, he expanded on his success story, explaining a number of the tools he used in addition to the positive thinking and visualization that are the basis of *The Secret* formula. His success wasn’t so “effortless,” at least not in terms of action. He and his partner, Mark Victor Hansen, grounded their intention by setting a goal to find a publisher for the first *Chicken Soup* book and make it a bestseller. They made a plan, then followed it by taking action on that plan daily.

It’s common knowledge the manuscript was turned down by 100 publishers. A lot of energy went into studying the market, submitting the manuscript, talking with editors, and so forth. Once published, Jack and Mark did five things daily to increase sales. They included some methods most NINC members might not consider viable, but the point is, their success *began* with a wish, followed by positive thinking, visualization, setting a goal, and making a plan. Success was *reached* with daily, concrete actions, the physical element of intention. The *effortless* part comes from doing work you love.

Acting on our intentions seems a key in allowing God or the Universe to assist us. Action can take a variety of forms.

NINC member Jody Novins worked for a publishing company. Part of her job included reading submissions. “While it was incredibly educational, I also saw all the reasons a book can fail to sell. And of course, I saw firsthand how the industry is struggling. I’d taken the job to improve my writing, but it was having a demoralizing effect on my

work. So I decided to quit, suck it up, and focus on a new project.

“Here’s where things get a little strange. The same week I quit, I got an offer from an agent to rep a manuscript I’d totally given up on. I went back to the agents, who still had the book, and received several more offers — including one from my dream agent.”

In this case, Jody acted on her intention to continue as a selling writer by quitting the day job that drained her writing energy and her faith in the viability of a writing career. “I don’t know about the Universe,” Jody says. “All I know is that somehow you have to keep putting yourself out there.”

What is your intention? Put yourself out there. Set a goal, think positive, visualize, make a plan, and act.



Continued from page 11 ►

## Digital Dilemma

Q: And the further complicating factor is the devices that are out there that the content is traveling to. It’s not simply that people can read these materials online. They can now read them on their cell phone, they’re writing novels on cell phones in Japan right now. So, you’ve got wheels within wheels. It’s a very complicated situation.

A: Yeah. And I think the need for speed is driving certainly our investment in technology and our investment in experimentation. And I think with it you need to be willing to fail, you need to be willing to put something out there that people are going to criticize and not have thin skin and say, “Okay, I guess we got that wrong, and now let’s listen to the consumer feedback.” So, interacting with consumers is not the first. Most publishing houses have had retailers and wholesalers to do that job. So, I think it’s very important for us to create and maintain those consumer connections. To read the marketplace, and how do consumers want to read books today? And how does that vary by how old you are? Or what you’re used to.

Q: Well, I want to thank you for connecting with me today. Carolyn Pittis is the Senior Vice President of Global Marketing Strategy and Operations for HarperCollins. My name’s Chris Kenneally, and thank you for joining us for Beyond the Book. And we look forward to having you back very soon. Thank you, Carolyn.



## NINC Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY JACKIE KRAMER

Got any news or information  
for the Bulletin Board?

Send it to Jackie at  
[jackiekramer7@netscape.com](mailto:jackiekramer7@netscape.com)

### Adventures at the NINC Website: What’s a Fribee Full?

When’s the last time you explored the NINC website? If the answer is “never” or “a long time ago,” then slap your wrist because you’re missing out on some terrific resources for members. The URL is easy: <http://www.ninc.com>. Once you’re there, if you log in as a member, you’ll find a wealth of links with information ranging from baby names to legal statutes. (If you’ve forgotten your password, there’s a password help feature.)

This month’s tip? Having trouble converting litres to gallons, miles to kilometres, or Fahrenheit to Celsius? Check out Calculate Me.

<http://www.calculateme.com/> Want more? It’s got recipe conversions between UK and US, area (e.g., acres to square miles), length (e.g., centimetres to feet), butter! (e.g., sticks to cups), and beer!! Ounces to – I kid you not – bombers, forties, and *fribees full*.

No it’s not a typo. No it’s not a Frisbee. A fribee full is 4.25 beers. A bomber is 1.8333 beers. A forty is not 40 beers, it’s 3.33. So now you know....

Want to help make the NINC Reference section even more fabulous? Send your favorite online resources to [susan@susanlyons.ca](mailto:susan@susanlyons.ca).

### Your Blog Needs . . .

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 & email addys. And if you can ask your editor, agent, publicist, website designer, whoever if they would blog for us, even better.

Patricia Rosemoor



# The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



# It's Just Business

*"Don't panic."*

— Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

I have worked unagented for several years now, and it's been going so well that my only regret is that I didn't do it sooner. Indeed, the longer I work without an agent, the harder it becomes to imagine what circumstances would convince me to seek representation again.

By contrast, however, there are an increasing number of professional writers these days who are currently unagented by circumstances rather than by choice, and that's an uncomfortable position to be in. And my message to them is:

*Don't panic.*

I've been hearing more and more often from professional writers who've lost or left their agents and can't get another. I also hear from writers who aren't that happy with their current agents, but who are nonetheless reluctant to move on, concerned that in this tight market, they might not be able to get another agent. And I'd say that's a valid concern, because — to my surprise — I'm increasingly hearing from steadily published, currently contracted writers with books on the stands and careers which I would describe as healthy ... who can't get an agent.

What began as a small trickle of such anecdotes several years ago is by now a steady flow. And I assume there are many others in that position who have *not* contacted me, because it seems unlikely that the very first thing that any writer in an agent-based career crisis thinks is, "Oh, I simply *must* write to Laura Resnick."

So, given what a common and growing phenomenon the Involuntarily Unagented Professional Novelist is becoming, I think it's well worth emphasizing an important point:

Working without an agent is *just business*.

It's not sorcery or magic, it's not warfare or brain surgery, it's not parenthood or underwater cave diving. More to the point, it's not *writing a novel* — a task which is a lot more complex than doing business, and which far fewer people can do well.

When I decided to quit the agent-author business model several years ago, I had the advantage of already knowing this. I had worked with four agents over the years, but only seven of my (to date) 29 advance-paying US book sales have been made by agents. In the other 22 instances, either I made the sale and negotiated the deal myself; or I got an offer on the table and then asked an agent to negotiate the deal; or an agent sent an option proposal to a house where I had already made many sales on my own (and the agent didn't improve the terms or the money I was already getting).

So my previous experience, and my corresponding awareness that this is *just business* (it's not leaping tall buildings in a single bound; it's not discovering the Elixir of Life), has been my biggest advantage in switching to self-representation. I have seen writers cite factors *erroneously* as being relevant in my self-representation, such as my "having more contacts" than other writers or "being in a better career position" than others; but those comments have been inaccurate.

For example, at the time I made the decision to work without an agent, I'd had only one new title published in nearly three years, and it was a fiscal flop. That book's bad numbers led to the publisher canceling the rest of my

contract; it also catalyzed the demise of my fourth agent relationship and was presumably a factor in the next few agents whom I queried all rejecting me. Moreover, I had been mostly out of touch with the industry for about three years, due to attending graduate school and then going to Jerusalem on an internship.

In other words, I chose self-representation at a point when my career was facedown in a muddy ditch, and when publishing professionals who had formerly known me thought I had died or left the business.

The thing that made self-representation most feasible for me is that I had already been doing it for most of my career; I just hadn't really seen it that way. Most of my tasks and responsibilities in handling my own business now are familiar from my previous experiences. What's new in recent years is my *mindset*. Previously, on occasions when I was marketing books myself and/or making my own deals, it was because I couldn't get an agent, or because I was between agents, or because I was working with agents who declined to handle various projects. Now, by contrast, I work unagented by *choice*. I like it, and it's the conscious decision I've made about what's best for my individual career. But I was actually handling my business myself on-and-off for years before I actively chose self-representation as a career model.

And, as it happens, *many* professional writers started their careers without an agent and made their first sales without an agent, or later found a market for an oddball book that their agent didn't want to handle, or got an offer on the table when they were between agents. If you've done any of these things, then you've already got experience at handling your own business, so doing it again is not a big deal. You essentially know how to do this.

Meanwhile, if you've never sold a single word on your own — if an agent has found every market you've ever written for — then the good news is: You've still got relevant experience, and you can still do this.

For one thing, you figured out how to find an agent, which is something I didn't manage to do until after I'd sold eight books. Moreover, having done business as a writer quite a lot over the years, I'm here to tell you that anyone who has ever competently planned a wedding, or a bar mitzvah, or some other big, formal celebration; or who has competently run a small business; or who has professionally managed a project or a department; or who has chaired a big event, or headed a volunteer organization, or led a volunteer committee, or overseen the building or remodeling of a home, or planned a two-week family vacation... can run her own writing career. If you've ever done any of those things competently, you simply take what you learned there and apply it to doing business as a novelist. Yes, *really*.

More to the point, if you've researched and written a novel well, you can manage your own career. I speak from extensive experience in both areas when I tell you that writing a good book is a lot harder than marketing, selling, and negotiating a deal for one.

No, I am not being facetious or over-simplifying. I have, I reiterate, been managing my career for several years now, during which time I have been making my self-supporting full-time living this way; moreover, since becoming an unagented writer, I've actually experienced improvements in my response times, my advance levels, my contractual clauses, and my subrights business. So my assertions are based on experience, not on assumption, theory, misinformation, or wishful thinking. No, you may not be at all suited to manage the careers of 40 *other* writers (*I'm* certainly not); but, yes, you can manage your own.

If you would rather hit yourself repeatedly in the head with a brick than handle your own career, that's fine. Because I would rather hit myself repeatedly in the head with a brick than turn my business over to a literary agent again, who am I to dispute your choice? Each to his own, and every writer needs to find what works best for herself.

But if you don't currently have the *choice* of working with an agent, even though it's what you'd rather be doing, then this month's column is aimed at you.

Don't panic. You can do this. This is *just business*. It's not Tantric sex; it's not swimming the English Channel; and it's not passing through security at El Al Airlines — a subject on which I also speak from extensive experience.

Laura Resnick's October column will discuss marketing and selling your work without an agent.

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## ***Business Briefs***

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

### **People Parade, Part 1 — Agents**

Edward Orloff has moved from The Wylie Agency to McCormick & Williams. ▲ Former editor at St. Martin's Press, Random House and Warner Books (now Grand Central Publishing) Jason Pinter has joined Waxman Literary Agency. Pinter is seeking commercial fiction (mysteries, thrillers, and suspense), pop culture, sports, and YA/Middle Grade fiction. ▲ Weronika Janczuk has been promoted to agent at D4EO Literary Agency. She will be focusing on single-title romances in addition to commercial and literary fiction.

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## **WRITING is TAXING**

By Diane O'Brien Kelly

# **Coming Soon — Big Changes in Medicare Tax**

As part of the health care reform legislation, Congress enacted some big changes in Medicare taxes.

Currently, the Medicare tax is 2.9% of earned income, which includes wages and net self-employment income. The employer and employee each pay one half, or 1.45%, of the Medicare tax. The same rate of tax applies to all taxpayers regardless of their income.

Starting in 2013, however, new rules will apply. The rules will expand the Medicare tax to some “unearned” investment income and raise the rate of tax on earned amounts that exceed certain annual thresholds. Some higher-income taxpayers could be hit with both tax increases. *Ka-pow!*

### **Additional .9% Assessment on Salaries and Net Self-Employment Income**

Beginning in 2013, an extra .9% Medicare tax will apply to high-earning taxpayers, raising the rate to 3.8% on earnings over the annual threshold amounts. The additional tax will be charged on salary and/or self-employment income above \$200,000 for single filers, \$250,000 for married joint filers, and \$125,000 for those filing married separate. These thresholds were not “indexed” in the legislation, which means they will not be automatically adjusted for inflation and will remain the same until Congress sees fit to change them. Moreover, the entire .9% will be borne by the employee, raising the employee’s share of the Medicare tax to 2.35% on the amounts over the annual threshold.

Self-employed writers, who are considered to be both their own employer and employee, will pay the whole shebang out of their pockets, so the distinction between employer and employee may seem moot at first glance. But the distinction is important. The additional tax will not qualify for the 50% self-employment tax deduction on page 1 of the tax return (see Line 27 on the 2009 1040 Form). Why not? Because the additional tax will be paid by a self-employed writer as an employee, while the deduction is only for the portion of self-employment taxes paid as an employer.

This additional tax must be taken into account for estimated tax purposes starting in 2013. If your salary from any day job plus your net income from your writing business will exceed the annual threshold amounts, don’t forget to include the additional tax in your computations when making estimated payments. Otherwise, you may find yourself owing a significant amount of tax and facing an underpayment penalty at year end.

### **Medicare Tax on Net Investment Income**

While the Medicare tax currently applies only to wages and self-employment income, Congress has expanded the types of income that will be subject to the Medicare tax. For higher income taxpayers, a 3.8% Medicare tax will apply to the lesser of: a) net investment income or b) the amount of modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) above the annual threshold.

For purposes of this tax increase, “investment income” includes long-term capital gains, dividends, interest, royalties, rents, and annuities. Tax-exempt income, such as interest on municipal bonds, will not be included in net investment income and will not be subject to the tax (possibly making municipal bonds an attractive investment). Also, payments from retirement plans and IRAs will not be considered investment income and will not be subject to this tax.

MAGI is defined for purposes of this tax as adjusted gross income with any excluded foreign earned income added back in.

Only individuals with MAGI above the thresholds will be subject to this tax. The threshold income amounts are \$200,000 for single filers, \$250,000 for joint filers, and \$125,000 for married separate filers. Again, these thresh- ▶

olds were not indexed in the legislation, so until the law is changed these specific figures will be in effect.

## What's This Gonna Cost Me?

I had a feeling you'd ask that. Let's look at some scenarios.

Example #1: Assume Betty Bestseller, a single taxpayer, earns \$199,000 in a combination of wages and net income from her writing business in 2013. Betty will not be subject to either of the additional Medicare taxes because her earnings are below the \$200,000 threshold amount. Woo hoo!

Example #2: Assume Betty earned \$199,000 in a combination of wages and net income from her writing business in 2013. She also had a great year on her investments and has \$25,000 in net investment income. Because her total MAGI is over \$200,000, she is subject to the 3.8% Medicare tax on the lesser of her net investment income (\$25,000) or the amount by which her MAGI exceeds the threshold (\$224,000 MAGI - \$200,000 threshold = \$24,000). Thus, Betty would owe additional tax of 3.8% of \$24,000, or \$912.

Example #3: Assume Betty earned \$225,000 in net earnings from her writing business in 2013. Betty would owe 2.9% in Medicare tax on her first \$200,000 of income and the 2.9% plus an additional .9% (for a total of 3.8%) on the amount of net profit above \$200,000. Thus, Betty would be subject to additional taxes of \$225 over the amount she would pay under current law (\$25,000 x .009 = \$225).

Example #4: Assume Betty has a slump and earned only \$5,000 from her writing business in 2013, but had great luck in the stock market and earned \$190,000 in net investment income. Betty would be subject to neither tax increase. Both her salary plus net self-employment income and her MAGI are under the \$200,000 threshold which triggers the additional taxes.

Example #5: Assume Betty earned net income of \$225,000 from her writing business and \$10,000 in net investment income in 2013. Betty will have the privilege of paying both new taxes. She'll have to ante up the additional .9% tax on her earned income from her writing over the \$200,000 threshold as well as the 3.8% tax on her net investment income of \$10,000. Her total increase in tax over current levels would be \$605 (\$225 additional tax on her net earnings over \$200,000 plus \$380 in tax on her \$10,000 net investment income).

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.

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## Business Briefs

### People Parade, Part 2 — Editors and Publicist

Internal Promotions: Kevin Doughten, Viking, editor; Mark Tavani, Ballantine Bantam Dell, editorial director for fiction; Connie Hsu and Kate Sullivan, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, associate editor; Jhanteigh Kupihea, NAL, assistant editor.

After six years as HarperCollins' Director of Publicity, Gretchen Crary is opening "February Partners." The firm will focus on book publicity and online marketing. [gretchen@februarypartners.com](mailto:gretchen@februarypartners.com)

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# ENGLISH TITLES IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

**BY JO BEVERLEY**

This brief run-down of English titles is for use by fiction writers. It is by no means comprehensive, but covers the more common situations arising in novels set in the above periods.

The English peerage basically runs according to primogeniture, i.e., the eldest son gets everything. If a peer has no eldest son, the title and possessions that belong to it go to the next male heir, probably a brother or nephew.

There are a very few titles that can pass to a female if there is no direct heir, but they will revert to the male line when the lady bears a son. (Such as the monarchy.) Some titles can automatically pass through a female heir (when there is no male heir) and most can be revived by subsequent generations by petitioning to the Crown. (This is an area about which I am not at all confident, so that's all I can say here.)

The eldest son is called the heir apparent, since he is clearly the heir. If there is no such son, the heir is called the heir presumptive since, no matter how unlikely (the duke is actually an ancient Benedictine Monk on his death bed) the possibility of a closer heir being created is still there. Thus an heir presumptive does not hold an heir's title, if any. (See below about heir's titles.)

If a peer dies leaving a wife but no son, time must be allowed to be sure she is not pregnant before the heir presumptive assumes the title, etc.

An heir must be legitimate at birth. A peer may legitimize bastards and/or marry the mother later, but the child cannot be his legal heir.

Peers automatically have seats in the House of Lords. Note, however, that courtesy titles (those held by heirs) do not give seats.

Most peers do not use their surnames as their title. Thus, the usual pattern would be something like Arthur Bingham, Earl of Middleborough. He is Lord Middleborough, never Lord Bingham. (Or, for that matter, Lord Arthur.)

## THE RANKS OF THE PEERAGE

A) Leaving aside royalty, the highest rank is DUKE.

His wife is the DUCHESS. They will be duke and duchess of something, e.g., Duke and Duchess of Manchester. Address is “your grace”, though familiars may address them as Duke and Duchess, e.g., “Fine weather for shooting, eh, Duke?” or may address the duke by title. “Care for more port, Manchester?”

NOTE that the duke will also have a family name, i.e., surname (such as Cavendish) but will not use it in the normal course of events. The duchess does not use the surname at all. If Anne Pitt marries the Duke of Stone (whose family name is Cherry), she will be Duchess of Stone and will informally sign herself

Anne Stone, not Anne Cherry.

The duke's eldest son is his heir and will have his father's second-best title as his courtesy title. Nearly all peers have a number of titles marking their climb up the ranks. The heir to a duke is often the next lowest ranking peer, a marquess (or marquis — spelling is optional, but both are pronounced markwess.) The title could, however, be an earldom, or even a viscountcy.

N.B., a courtesy title does not give the holder a seat in the House of Lords or other privileges of the peerage.

If the heir has a son before the heir becomes duke, that son will take the next lowest title as a courtesy title. If the heir dies before his father, his eldest son becomes the heir apparent and takes his father's title.

Apart from the heir, a duke's sons are given the courtesy title Lord with their Christian name, e.g., Lord Richard Somerset. Lord Peter Wimsey. They are never Lord Somerset or Lord Wimsey.

All a duke's daughters are given the courtesy title Lady, first name, surname, e.g., Lady Mary Clarendon. (Never Lady Clarendon.) If they marry a commoner, they retain the title. If Lady Mary marries Mr. Sticklethwait, she becomes Lady Mary Sticklethwait. If she marries a peer, she adopts his title. If Lady Mary marries the Earl of Herrick, she becomes Countess of Herrick, i.e., Lady Herrick. If she marries the holder of a courtesy title, then she may use his title or her birth title as she wishes.

PLEASE NOTE that in all cases, the titles Lord or Lady "first name" "surname" (e.g., Lady Anne Middleton) and Lord or Lady "last name" or "title" (Lady Middleton) are exclusive. No one can be both at the same time. Moreover, Lord or Lady "first name" is a title conferred at birth. It cannot be gained later in life except when the father accedes to a title and thus raises his family.

So, Lady Mary Smith is not Lady Smith and vice versa.

Lord John Brown is not Lord Brown and vice versa.

If Mary Smith marries Lord Brown she is Lady Brown, not Lady Mary.

(If she marries Lord John Brown, she becomes Lady John Brown.)

B) Next in rank is a MARQUESS (See above about spelling and pronunciation.)

He will be Marquess of something, e.g., Marquess of Queensbury. His wife is the MARCHIONESS. (Pronounced "marshuness".) He is the Marquess of Queensbury, or Lord Queensbury, or Queensbury to his familiars, and his wife is the Marchioness of Queensbury or Lady Queensbury. She will sign herself "firstname" "title," e.g., Marylou Queensbury.

His heir apparent takes his next highest title as a courtesy title. All other sons have the title Lord "firstname" "surname." All daughters have the title Lady "firstname" "surname." Details are as for duke.

C) Below marquess is EARL.

He will nearly always be earl of something. His wife is the COUNTESS. He is referred to as "the Earl of Cranthorpe" or "Lord Cranthorpe", or "Cranthorpe" to his familiars. Some earls do not use "of" as with Earl Spencer, but this is sufficiently unusual that I think it should be avoided unless it's a crucial plot point.

His wife is the Countess of Cranthorpe or Lady Cranthorpe, and she will sign herself Desdemona Cranthorpe.

As with a duke, the earl's heir will take the next lowest title as a courtesy title, and the heir's son, the next again.

All daughters of an earl are given the courtesy title Lady “firstname”; — see dukes. All details are the same. Younger sons of an earl, however, are merely “the honorable” which is not used in casual speech.

D) Next is a **VISCOUNT** (pronounced vycount.)

His wife is a **VISCOUNTESS**. He is not “of”. He will be, for example, Viscount Brummidge, usually known as Lord Brummidge, or just Brummidge. His wife will be known as Lady Brummidge and will sign herself Anne Brummidge.

His heir has no special title. All children are known as the honorable.

E) The lowest rank in the peerage is **BARON**.

His wife is a **BARONESS**. NOTE that the terms baron and baroness are only used in England in the most formal documents. General usage is simply to call them Lord and Lady. She will sign herself “firstname” “title.” Children as for viscount.

F) Next in rank — and not of the peerage — is **BARONET**.

A baronet is called Sir, first name, surname; e.g., Sir Richard Wellesley. His wife is called Lady “surname”; e.g., Lady Wellesley. NOT Lady Mary Wellesley unless she is the daughter of a duke, marquess, or earl. She will sign herself “firstname” “surname” such as Mary Wellesley.

His children have no special distinction. The title, however, is inheritable which distinguishes it from....

G) A **KNIGHT**,

who is the same as a baronet in usage, but is a title for life only. His wife will be Lady “surname.”

## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **DOWAGERS**

When a titled lady is widowed she becomes a dowager, but the practice has generally been not to use that title until the heir takes a wife and there could be confusion as to who is the real Lady Middlethorpe.

Even if she has a daughter-in-law, in general usage she would still be referred to by the simple title unless there was likely to be confusion. So, if the Dowager Duchess of Teale was at a house party while her daughter-in-law was in London, people would not be constantly referring to her as the dowager duchess.

## **PEERESSES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT**

There are a few, very few, titles that can pass to a daughter if there is no son — the Royal Family, for example. In this case, the usage is the same as if they were the wife of a peer of that rank, but their husband gains no title from the marriage, just as the Duke of Edinburgh is not king.

A Peeress in her Own Right retains her title after marriage, and if her husband’s rank is the superior one, she is designated by the two titles jointly, the inferior one last. Her hereditary claim to her title holds good in spite of any marriage, and will be passed on.



Because the husband gains no title from such a marriage, it's possible to have the Countess of Arbuthnot married to Mr. Smith.

Her eldest son will be her heir and take her next lowest title. If she has no son, her eldest daughter will be her heir, but until she becomes the peer she will hold only the title that comes from her birth — e.g., Lady Anne — if any, because an eldest daughter is always an heir presumptive. There might still be a boy.

### **COMMON PROBLEMS SEEN IN NOVELS**

Interchanging courtesy titles like Lady Mary Smith and Lady Smith.

Interchanging peerage titles, as when Michael Downs, Earl of Rosebury is variously known as Lord Rosebury, Lord Downs, and Lord Michael Downs.

Applying titles that don't belong, as when Jane Potts marries Viscount Twistleton and erroneously becomes Lady Jane.

Having the widow of just about anyone, but especially a peer, remarry before time has elapsed to be sure she is not bearing a child. Or rather, whose child it is that she bears!

Having the heir presumptive assume the complete power over the title and property before it has been made clear that the widow is not going to produce an heir. (I'm sure this was a legal matter taken care of in probate, etc. but I don't know the details.)

Having an adopted son inherit a title. Legal adoption was not possible in England until the 20th century, and even now an adopted son cannot inherit a title. Even if the son is the father's offspring, if he wasn't born after a legal marriage, he cannot inherit the father's title. However, because they didn't have DNA testing, a child was assumed to be legitimate unless the father denied it from the first. Even if the son turns out to look suspiciously like the vicar, the father cannot deny him later. This, I assume, was to avoid the chaos of peers coming up with all sorts of excuses to switch around their heirs on a whim.

Having a title left in a will, which follows from the above. A title cannot be willed to whomever the peer in question chooses. It goes according to the original letters patent, which almost always say that it will go to the oldest legitimate male in direct descent. The property can be left elsewhere unless it is entailed, but the title goes by legitimate blood.

Having an heiress (i.e., a daughter without brothers) inherit a title and convey it to her husband. It could be done — anything could — by special decree of the Crown, but it was not normal.

I hope this helps, and though I'm pretty sure it's right, it is open to debate and amendment.

**[Go to a list of Jo Beverley's recent and upcoming work.](http://www.jobev.com/Recent.html)**

(<http://www.jobev.com/Recent.html>)