

NINK

January 2011
Vol. 22, No. 01

Extreme Research

BY JENNA KERNAN

What would you do to add authenticity to your story? Would you go through fire-fighter training like *New York Times* best-selling author Deirdre Martin? How about visiting the “Zone” in Chernobyl like young-adult author Andrea White? Maybe you’d prefer gold prospecting in a remote mountain range above the Arctic Circle like yours truly?

Authentic Research

All writers do research for their books. Most investigations involve the computer, library, phone interviews, field trips to museums, and the Internet, of course. Some authors are lucky enough to have life experiences that lend themselves to their writing and allow them to “write about what they know.” But some authors go much deeper.

Crazy, you say, but these authors are believers in experiencing the real deal. Not that we don’t also use conventional methods of research, but we like to pepper in adventures of our own. Why should our characters have all the fun? Some call this extreme research, but Andrea White just calls it “doing what it takes to get the story right.” Deirdre Martin says, “I don’t know if you’d call it extreme research, I think of it more as believability research. It’s very important to me that the details in my stories are as real as possible.”

Educators call such experiences kinesthetic learning, commonly known as learning by doing. Since you are trying things out, I would prefer to describe this sort of exploration as authentic research.

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Write What You Don’t Know by Trying Something New

Martin likes to know what her characters touch, see, and hear. It has sent her on several interesting adventures. For her hockey novel *Body Check* and upcoming release *Icebreaker*, she spent time with the New York Rangers’ publicist. Research for a dog-walker protagonist led her to attempt to walk six dogs of various sizes under the direction of a professional dog walker: “Instant disaster; they were twisted around me like I was a human Maypole.”

While researching *With a Twist*, Martin tagged along with Kerry Burke, a reporter for the *Daily News*, and discovered why he is

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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:

Membership Chair: JoAnn Grote
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NINC has room to grow...

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

<http://www.ninc.com>.

Refer members at ninc.com. Go to Members Only,

"Member Services" and click

"Refer a New Member to NINC."

Take NINC brochures to conferences.

Email Pari Taichert with your mailing address and
requested number of booklets.

ptaichert@comcast.net.

NINC Statement of Principle

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

Time marches on...much too fast.

I don't know where the year has gone that I spent as President-elect, but I'm so grateful for it, and to the people who took my hand and walked me through it all. I was lucky to have served with a terrific board and my heartfelt appreciation goes out to: Kay Hooper, who makes the Presidency look easier than it is; Charlotte Hubbard, secretary extraordinaire; Jasmine Cresswell, AC rep... priceless; Jody Novins, *Nink's* remarkable newsletter editor; and Marci Evanick, treasurer, who I am thrilled will be continuing in her position. Also to Kasey Michaels, Karen Tintori Katz, and the many volunteers, mega thanks for putting together a memorable 2010 conference. While many might consider Kasey and Karen crazy for offering to do it all over again for 2011, I appreciate their craziness.

Not only do I not know where the last year has gone, I wonder where the 20-plus years of being a published author have gone, and along with them the publishing industry I once knew. I remember being a babe-in-the-wood and listening to the professionals talking about marketing: print ads, bookmarks, a P.O. box so readers could write to you and for the author to establish a readers list, book signings, getting to know the drivers at the warehouses that delivered your books, and endless networking. It was overwhelming to a new author.

Then there were the publishing houses that preferred you remained loyal to one, and heaven forbid you attempted to write in a different genre. There were rules and you didn't break them. Those rules don't exist anymore and as far as marketing... I can hear you all laughing.

Time has marched on, taking with it a publishing world many no longer know, not even the publishing professionals. It metamorphoses daily with no end in sight. The demise of brick-and-mortar stores is being predicted as well as the death of the midlist. With shelf space diminishing and the midlist threatened, where does that leave authors?

In charge of our careers! (The theme for NINC Conference 2011 is *New Rules, New Tools, Writers In Charge.*)

As frightening as all this change may be, it's also thrilling. Now more than ever, published authors have the opportunity to take charge of their careers. We can be our own CEOs. We can dictate where we want our careers to go. We no longer have to rely on print publishing alone; we can incorporate eBooks, whether out-of-print books or original work, into our sales portfolio. There are audio, foreign, and iPhone sales to name a few options, and no doubt new options are on the horizon.

Some of you, perhaps most, are thinking that I'm a babe-in-the-wood all over again, but not so. We're published authors who have been there and done that and learned a whole hell of a lot along the way. We even have the scars to prove it. We don't stifle our creative minds. We let them have their way and follow along. Open your creative mind to the possibilities of a whole new publishing paradigm...only this time you're the creator.

Many of you have already taken steps to create new sales portfolios, others are just beginning and some are not sure where to start. Wherever you are in the process, the one good step you've taken is being a ▶



NINC is exploring the possibility of publishing back issues of the newsletter on the public page of the NINC website. If you have contributed to our newsletter in the past and do not wish your material used in this way, please contact the 2011 Nink Editor.



member of NINC. And this year we hope to provide you with more information and tools that you'll need to embrace the new challenges and opportunities in publishing.

One of the many ways we'd like to do that is to present podcasts and webinars (volunteers needed) on issues of concern to the published author. Our newsletter will continue to provide you with the best articles in all areas of the business. And don't wait another minute: sign up now for the conference in October 2011. It promises to be even better than the last one and believe me when I tell you that should be impossible, but it sure is shaping up to look that way.

You may not see a President's Column from me every month but you will find a message from me in your email box keeping you updated on what's new and what's happening. If you have any suggestions, ideas, want to volunteer (don't forget JOT: Just One Thing) or have concerns or questions, just email me at donna@donnaletcher.com.

Also, if you haven't renewed your dues don't wait another minute. You don't want to miss being a member of the *only* writers' organization that addresses the issues of the multi-published novelist.

Time is marching on... and NINC is not only keeping up, but about to sprint ahead.

— Donna Fletcher

From the Editor:

Hello everyone! I want to take a column inch or two to introduce myself and let you in on a bit of information. I'm Marianna Jameson, taking over as editor from the lovely and talented Jody Novins. I thought it would be a good idea to start the new year—and, technically, a new decade?—with the first few issues of *Nink* being loosely themed around “fresh starts”—new ways of looking at work habits, work spaces, the industry in general, as well as our research tools and our interactions with readers. All of these are changing rapidly thanks to the advances in technology and new media, and I know I'm not alone in feeling simultaneously exhilarated and exhausted by those changes.

I'm on the lookout for great articles and great ideas for articles on these topics and any others, so please don't hesitate to contact me if there's an article you'd like to write, a topic you'd like to see covered, or a blog or website you think I should check out for future reference. And, as ever, we have great resources available to you for specific questions: “Ask A Lawyer” with Bob Stein, “Ask An Agent” with Joanna Volpe, “Forensic Files” with Dr. D.P. Lyle, and Diane Kelly is available to field tax questions. Just email me your questions at Marianna@MariannaJameson.com and I will take it from there.

I'm looking forward to a rewarding, informative year as editor, and wish the new decade brings all of us the joys of prosperity, productivity, and the pure bliss of doing what it is we love to do: write.

— Marianna Jameson

Did you “Due”?

Did you already renew your membership, fill out the Authors Coalition Survey, and pay your dues so you won't miss out on a single issue of *Nink* nor a packet of bytes from Ninc-link nor access to the website? Nor attending the best writers' conference around? What're you waiting for? Do your “Due.” And keep yourself and NINC writer-strong.

Extreme Research

Continued from page 1 ▶ one of the best reporters in New York. “He will do anything to get a story...like wait at a hospital for three hours to get a quote from someone he knows is vital to his article.” How do you learn that reporters spend a lot of time waiting around for a source unless you spend time with one?

Martin’s most frightening research took her to the Ithaca (NY) Fire Department. The department let her travel with them on calls, and suited her up and let her fight a fire at their training facility—because you can’t feel the heat on your face while scanning photos on the Internet. That first-hand knowledge helped Martin write authentically about her firefighting protagonist in *Total Rush*. But not all Martin’s authentic research is frightening or dangerous. Work on her novels *Straight Up* and *With a Twist* involved spending time in an Irish bar. Now that is the kind of authentic research most of us could get used to!

Andrea White spent three days in Chernobyl researching for her YA novel, *Radiant Girl*. “The Soviet Union was not a transparent society, and even with an independent Ukraine, information about this catastrophic event is inconsistent and murky,” says White. “I felt it was very important to go and see for myself.” So she found a guide and carried a dosimeter to check for high radiation levels as they made their way through the Zone. While there, she took the opportunity to visit a Ferris wheel that never opened due to the disaster. The Ferris wheel played a part in her story, so White wanted to see if it was possible to climb it. It is; she made it half way up the rusty ladder and called it good!

“When you write about another country, there is so much that you don’t know.” How could she have imagined the empty, abandoned schools with lessons still chalked on the blackboards and graded papers scattered on the floors if she had not walked through them herself? But this is what White encountered in Chernobyl, and these details made their way into *Radiant Girl*.

Her next release, *Upcity Chronicles*, involves a time traveler who goes back to the Twin Towers to save her great grandmother. Now that trip might be a little more difficult to emulate!

Sometimes you get unexpected inspiration or information that helps you with another story. That was the case for me. I was in the Brooks Range to mine for gold, see interior Alaska, and do some research for my upcoming release, *Partnering Lily*, which is set in the Yukon Gold Rush. But my encounters with moose, ravens, and grizzly bears during that trip were the touchstone for my Nocturne series, *The Trackers*, which is based on Native American myths. If I had not been there, I don’t know if the idea for a shape-shifting grizzly bear would have occurred to me.

But why go to such extreme measures?

Trying things out, like walking six dogs, attempting to start a fire with an iron fire-striker and a piece of flint, or touring a place that necessitates carefully monitoring radiation levels, certainly takes knowledge out of the theoretical and into the actual. Authors don’t imagine, but retell their personal experiences. It is as if the writers have inserted a slice of non-fiction into their fiction.

New York Times best-selling author Marianna Jameson puts it this way, “I think it pays off immensely when a reader picks up one of your books. It’s apparent that you, as the author, are not just talking the talk, you’ve walked the walk.”

Find Someone Else Who has Walked the Walk

Most times, while experiencing something new, you will find folks who know a lot more about this than you do. Andrea White’s guide in Chernobyl, Rimma, showed her through the ghost town of Pripjat, but she also helped with names of indigenous flora and fauna and other necessary details. Deirdre Martin may have ended up like a Maypole while walking six dogs, but the professional dog walker she was shadowing surely did not, and could provide information that only comes from literally walking the walk.

The prospector-owner of the gold claim that I visited provided much useful information because ▶

he'd lived in interior Alaska most of his life. He hunts, tracks, and mines, and his job once included locating bush pilots who went missing. He was a wealth of knowledge and full of anecdotes. I got to see things through his eyes, like the epic battle he described between a hungry grizzly bear and a mother moose defending a newborn calf and a yearling. (He read all this from the fresh tracks left behind on a sand bar by the river.)

Let's face it: it's fun to do crazy stuff and go meet people who lead interesting lives. Nearly everyone I know has a few great stories or anecdotes just waiting to be scooped up. As writers, we can play make-believe on a grand scale. People are often surprisingly open and accepting of our curiosity, and perhaps a little flattered that we find what they do interesting.

Many would agree that first-hand knowledge can be invaluable in assisting authors to get the setting, action, and descriptions right, but you can't always have those experiences first hand. That's when shadowing someone who *does* have an understanding can be invaluable. But be warned, some extreme research can be perilous or at least occasionally mortifying, as Martin learned while hanging out in a New York City fire house. She had to endure having the guys pass around her latest release and read one of the love scenes out loud. Extreme research is not for wimps!

So what are you itching to try for yourself? Where are you longing to go and who would you like to pretend to be? Just like our stories, the opportunities for authentic research are as limitless as our imaginations.

Award-winning author Jenna Kernan has over a dozen novels published, including Western historical and paranormal romance. She has received two RITA nominations and in 2010 she won the Book Buyers Best Award for her debut paranormal, Dream Stalker, from Silhouette Nocturne. Her next paranormal, Ghost Stalker, releases in May 2011. Follow Jenna on twitter or at her virtual home, www.jennakernan.com.

Business Briefs

— Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Google by yet another name . . .

Google Editions has been rebranded Google eBooks. This is the largest holding of titles in the world, involving nearly 4000 publishers and almost three million titles available for purchase or download with title prices set by the publishers who follow the agency model, or by the sellers in the case of publishers not following the agency model. Additionally, two million public domain titles will be available free of charge. Books from the cloud base can read by any device that is equipped with a HTML5-enabled browser. Yes, that means PCs, laptops, netbooks, tablets, and smartphones (Apple and Android). Any eReader that uses open source platforms (think ePub) is compatible also. This means Sony and Nook, not Kindle.

Espresso in Europe

In late November, On Demand Books expanded its market to Europe with an "Espresso Machine" at the American Book Center in Amsterdam. Fifty-three of the machines are either in place or scheduled for installation, and a new partnership with Xerox increased speculation on a rapid expansion in placement during 2011. By early 2011, the machines should be printing in several languages.

So Long to Tricycle Press

The end of January also brings the end of Tricycle Press. Random House Children's Books has announced that it will close the Berkeley-based imprint at the end of the month. While RH has said the imprint's backlist will continue to be available, it has not announced which label will be presenting titles under contract. While Laura Mancuso (marketing and publicity) will stay with RH, Nicole Geiger and the editors working with her will leave the company.

A Two-Country Lifestyle

A look at how and why some writers migrate to different parts of the world to nurture their Muse.

BY ANNA JACOBS

While writers aren't generally thought of as migratory creatures, there are more wanderers than you'd think. The input for this article came from writers based all over the world.

Climate seems to be a big motivator for many. UK writers have been going to live in warmer EU countries for many years, and while Aussies have no need to seek the sun, they probably seek stimulation because they live so far from everywhere else. Vanessa Kelly (Canada and US) says dark snowy winters are not conducive to writing romance.

MY EXPERIENCE

The first time my husband suggested we buy a summer home in the UK, I said no way, too much extra work, I've got writing to do. We bought one anyway. And it is a lot of work, as everyone I contacted admits! But it's also wonderfully stimulating and, to my surprise, it has helped rather than hindered my writing.

We were born in the UK, emigrated to Australia about thirty years ago, and now spend five months per year in the UK—the warmest months. No way could we face cold winters!

We wanted a foothold there to keep in better touch with family, for business reasons (I'm with three UK publishers) and for the sheer stimulation. Our biggest challenge was finding somewhere to live that could be insured while we were away for months. No nipping back every few weeks from Australia, like UK/Spain migrants can.

We couldn't afford a mansion—not many novelists could—but eventually found somewhere better than we'd hoped. We bought a smallish three-bedroom terrace/row house in a leisure village of second homes attached to a golf course and within a hotel complex. (My husband loves his golf!) The built-in security system for the village resolved our insurance worries, and our neighbors are sociable, well-travelled people who world-hop like us, some going to three or four different countries each year. And one of our delightful neighbors watches over our house and checks our mail. It'd be difficult without some sort of help in that respect.

MOVING BASICS FOR WRITERS

Setting up an extra home and office in another country is no small task. I'll concentrate on the office side, because trust me, you don't want to know about the interminable minutiae necessary to set up a kitchen and home from scratch.

We moved in with two beds and two sofas, bought on line and delivered before we arrived. We'd sent ahead two survival tea chests. My UK-based sister donated kitchen bits and pieces. We had to shop daily at first to get the rest of the necessities and stock up with food. (Shudder! I don't like shopping.)

My UK office was in the smallest bedroom then, 7 foot 6 inches square, more like a glorified cupboard. My office in Australia is a spacious 21 by 15 feet. A bit different! It was hard to get used to working in such a restricted space, but that was the price I paid for living there. I now have a larger office. Thank goodness!

You can buy office and computer equipment and get on line wherever you are. You can copy writing and research files and carry them round the world on a tiny thumb drive. But the hard part for me was to sort through 15 years of computer files from 50 novels and figure out exactly which files (research, ideas, ▶

business, miscellaneous) might be needed. It took me nearly a week to sort out which files to take that first time so that I'd have a well-organised office in both countries. Now, I keep a thumb drive handy from the first day in each country and transfer new files to it regularly. I don't trust online storage.

In Australia, I have a wall of research books, two bookcases full of research material collected over the years, and boxes of systems cards with historical "titbits" on them. I couldn't afford the time to copy them all—and anyway, we had no space to store them in the UK. I had to buy a few key books, trust in the Internet's research capacities and try to write my historical novels mainly while in Australia.

I sorted out my office stationery cupboard for the first time in years, finding enough spares of basic office supplies to put into the two survival tea chests, together with spare bedding, towels, clothes. Those were sent ahead two months before we left, saving us money and time: no hunting for office supply shops at a busy time. Believe me, you have enough on your plate just filling the pantry!

I worried about my supply of leisure reading material, facing no shelves of treasured keepers to dip into and having a three-books-a-week reading habit! But I needn't have worried. Books are cheaper in the UK, with a far wider range of authors. And I found research books I'd not have found down under. Now I worry about the opposite thing: what I'll read in Australia, where supply is much more limited—and expensive.

EFFECTS ON WRITING

Business: I've been able to meet editors and my new agent *in person*. I've slipped into some great networks of UK novelists, and am able to attend the conferences and major and local chapter meetings of the Romantic Novelists' Association, of which I'm a long-time member. And I'm available for PR in the UK, my biggest market.

Creativity: I didn't expect the new way of living to have such a positive impact on my writing output. I'm not in Nora Roberts' league, but I've gone from three to four books a year. Ideas spark in greater numbers than ever before as I react to new situations, see different types of TV programmes, and read newspaper articles with different attitudes.

Settings: I'll use my own experience of moving countries in my next modern novel. I've already used our leisure village as the background for the one I turned in last month. The lake near our house was a central feature in another modern story published last year (*Saving Willowbrook*), written that first summer, and I have my eye on a few other places nearby.

Authorial viewpoint: I didn't know what to call this section. I think I'm finding so many new ideas because I now see England with an outsider's eye, yet at the same time I'm "embedded" there. An observer can see things locals might miss, and interpret them for readers both inside and outside the country, thus adding to the richness of the reading experience.

Cultural influences: Life and attitudes are different in another country, inevitably. In the UK, the differences are not enough to make me uncomfortable, but stimulate me and make me look at life, the universe, and everything differently. I really like that.

OTHER NOVELISTS' EXPERIENCES

Leighton Gage lives in Brazil and a variety of elsewhere, including Paris recently for a few months. "By being abroad, by exposing myself to people unfamiliar with Brazil, I learn better how to 'interpret' the country to non-Brazilians." This teaches him "over and over, that I can't take their knowledge of how Brazilians think, or what motivates Brazilians, for granted." Julie Cohen (UK and USA) likes "the experience of being an outsider" and believes it's helped her as a writer. "The themes of my novels are often about not belonging, about finding your identity, about observing mainstream communities from the outside; my experience of being an ex-pat feeds into those themes."

Margaret Boski, as yet unpublished, but an amazing international entrepreneur in other fields, said quite simply that she looks "at life and my surrounds with a fresh eye." She's currently living in Australia, Uruguay, and Seattle. Phew! Not sure I could cope with three or more countries—and run three offices. Freda Lightfoot (UK and Spain) considers the biggest advantage of "living in Spain is an improvement in my health.

Since I suffered badly from arthritis in the UK, I am now in much less pain and therefore able to pursue my writing, and my life, with fresh vigour.” She’s “found peace and tranquillity here, of mind as well as body—all essentials for a writer.” Marina Oliver (UK and Madeira) finds that she does “most of my 'creative' writing here in Madeira, partly because it can be rather hot in the middle of the day to sit outside.”

VARIOUS CONCERNS

Inevitably, there are downsides to living in two countries; nowhere is perfect. The main downside for us is being away from our daughters and grandson. Emails and webcams help. Leighton Gage on the other hand has children and grandchildren all over the world, which encourages him to travel. Vanessa Kelly goes “out of my way to make new friends in Florida, and I joined the local writer's group.” That’s harder where the languages are different, though. Wendy Soliman finds the social side of life in Andorra “lonely. I’m not in English-speaking countries and so there’s little or no support from my peers. No writing groups, no like-minded people to get together with and chew the writing fat.”

Freda Lightfoot considers “the major disadvantage [of living in Spain] is in marketing and promotion.” But for me, living in two countries gives me a slight PR advantage. I can do a few months in each country, moreso than I could when I was published mainly in England but living in Australia.

Organising the to-ing and fro-ing takes time—and money. It isn’t cheap going from Australia to the UK, even with relevant tax deductions for work-related activities. Thank heavens for my husband! He’s brilliant at managing that aspect.

Marina Oliver feels similarly; her husband “does all the boring stuff like sorting out bills and dealing with phone companies.” However, computer-related purchases “can be a problem when everything (operating systems, sometimes instruction books) is in Portuguese. And keyboards can be slightly different, having keys for accented letters.” Vanessa Kelly adds “one disadvantage of living in two different places is that I need to be really organized and a good packer.”

Preparing for each transfer takes several days’ of hard work. You can’t just walk away from a house and garden. And we face intermittent “Oh, I must do this before I forget!” moments throughout the year. From my first week at either end, I start putting paperwork into a folder for taking to the other country. And jet lag is a nuisance that I’ve found no way to circumvent. Luckily, the week of fuzzy brain after each 24-hour trip coincides with that other pain—shopping to restock the groceries.

TO SUM UP

We love living in two countries and intend to do so for as long as possible. If you’re teetering on the verge, I’d say go for it—but plan carefully. We tested the water by doing house swapping for a few years, which helped, but really, unless you go to an uncivilised country, people are people, the Internet is everywhere and (sadly) shopping is everywhere too.

Are you tempted? Beware, it’s addictive.

Anna Jacobs has published 51 novels and is currently with three UK publishers, writing alternate historical and modern stories set in both the UK and Australia. She’s utterly addicted to story telling.

Did you “Due”?

Did you already renew your membership, fill out the Authors Coalition Survey, and pay your dues so you won’t miss out on a single issue of *Nink* nor a packet of bytes from Ninc-link nor access to the website? Nor attending the best writers’ conference around? What’re you waiting for? Do your “Due.” And keep yourself and NINC writer-strong.

NINC Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY SUSAN LYONS

Do you have info
for the Bulletin Board?
Send it to Susan at
susan@susanlyons.ca

Adventures at the NINC Website

What's there to YELP about?

Want to find groceries or a post office near your conference or holiday hotel? At Yelp (<http://www.yelp.com>) type in an address and search for nearby stores, parks, museums, restaurants, and so on. It's one of the many resources you'll find in the Members Only Reference section of the NINC website.

NINC Conference 2011: Special Workshop on Business Need-to-Knows

Tonya Wilkerson, CPA, and NINC's Central Coordinator for many years, will be joining us for a workshop in Florida during *New Rules, New Tools: Writers In Charge*. Tonya will be showing us how to get all our accounting and tax requirements ducks in a row as we set ourselves up not only as writers but as business owners selling directly to consumers via e-books, etc.

To make sure your individual questions are answered and your concerns addressed, please submit any questions you have to NINC member Laura Phillips, who is compiling a list for Tonya so that the workshop is full of "This is how you do that," rather than "Let me get back to you on that." Lots of new rules—and NINC makes sure you have the tools! Email your questions to Laura at: laura@napdog.com

Kasey Michaels

NINC Blog

NINC's blog is a large part of our online presence and a great way to promote your work. Please sign up to blog by going to the YahooGroups NINC Calendar. We also feature industry professionals, so pass along suggestions – e.g., your own agent, editor, publicist, website designer, cover artist, etc.

Patricia Rosemoor

Top Ten Reasons why visiting NINC's Facebook page while drinking your morning cup of joe is the best way to start the day:

- 10) We're talking the best Facebook page on the web here.
- 9) We're talking coffee.
- 8) We're talking about morning.
- 7) We're talking about mixing all of those together to make the start of your day pure bliss.
- 6-2) Read, drink and repeat.
- 1) Because the mix will put you in a much happier, more positive, ready-to-start-your-day mood. In fact, don't worry about the coffee and head straight to the NINC Facebook page.

Trish Jensen

NightOwls in Charge of After-hours Fun at NINCon 2011

The groundbreaking programming at NINCon10 inspired the realization in many NINCers that this may be the best time in the history of publishing for writers who have stories to tell and sell directly to the readers. NINCon2011 workshops and panels will continue to give writers the information they need to succeed in today's rapidly changing publishing business.

When the sun goes down in St. Petersburg, NINC NightOwls—popular Thursday and Friday night Members-Only gatherings—will feature inspiring workshops that explore the collaborative relationship between the Physical Writer and the Cerebral Writer. NightOwl facilitators will share personal experiences and successful practices that writers can make their own to find balance and solutions regardless of career stage or life circumstances. Jennifer Stevenson, Brenda Hiatt Barber, and Pati Nagle will demonstrate how finding exercise you love is the best prevention for “writing’s terrible physical cost.” Laura Phillips’ workshop focuses on mind/body solutions with her top ten techniques for living well despite chronic pain and other health challenges.

NightOwls are planning workshops on creative play or movement, meditation and creative visualization techniques, achieving balance in life and work through fitness, art, or hobbies, overcoming age fright, Netflix and wine pairing, and chocolate therapy inside out. We’re teasing a bit with those last three topics, but we’d welcome workshop proposals on those or similar topics because it would be interesting and fun . . . and NINC NightOwls are all about that. Contact Melinda Haynes, NINC NightOwl Chair, with workshop suggestions and to volunteer.

What's Going On with Other Writers' Organizations

Note: The following is provided for member information and does not constitute an endorsement by NINC of the organizations or activities.

SFWA's 2010 Nebula Award Nomination period is open (to February 15). For info: <http://www.sfw.org/2010/11/sfwas-2010-nebula-award-nomination-period-is-open/>.

Tennessee Williams / New Orleans Literary Festival – March 23-27: panel discussions, theatrical performances, a one-act play competition, lectures, literary walking tours, musical performances. For info: <http://www.tennesseewilliams.net/>.

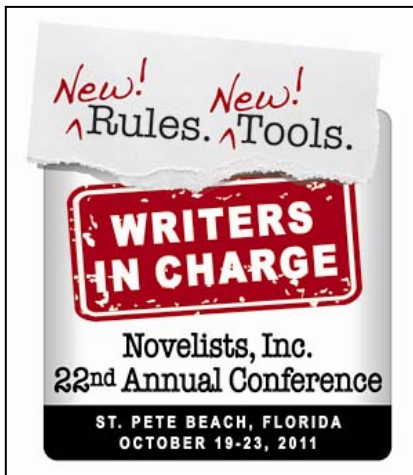
Mystery Writers of America presents The Edgar Awards (with Grand Master Sara Paretsky) – April 28; NYC. For info: <http://www.theedgars.com/>

Renewed your dues yet?

Start the New Year by investing in your most important asset—you.

Dues renewal deadline is January 15, and you won't want to miss a single piece of information or opportunity to grow yourself as a writer.

Take a moment now to renew online at the website and to fill out the Author's Coalition Survey. Keep yourself writer-strong by keeping NINC strong. We'll grow together.



New Rules, New Tools: Writers In Charge

October 19-23, 2011

Tradewinds Island Resort

St. Pete Beach, Florida

Fee: \$285

Payable in one lump sum or three payments of \$95

Special One-day program open to all writers and industry professionals:

The New Publishing: Welcome To Tomorrow!

October 20, 2011

Fee: \$150; includes lunch and dinner buffets

(NINC members: this cost is included in your conference fee)

Registration Opens January 1, 2011 at www.ninc.com

Industry Registration open now —

tell your editors, agents, and other industry pros



And when you're not in a workshop, look what's just outside the workshop door! (photo courtesy of NINC member Nancy Cohen)

Taking Care of January Business...

Have you renewed your membership yet? Deadline is January 15. Use the snail mail renewal form sent you in November, or go online and do it the easy way at the NINC website: <http://www.ninc.com>

Please remember to fill out your Authors Coalition form while you're at it, and read it carefully, as you may be able to check off more boxes this year than you were eligible to do last year.

Renewal, Re-Surveyed, Registered for NINCon 2011, Recruiting your professional team of agent, editors, and allied professionals. Getting it done in January sets you up to build a writer-strong year.

Not Your Usual Writing Advice — Using Feng Shui for Career Success – Part I

BY JOANN GROTE

“An interior is a natural projection of the soul.”
— Coco Chanel



The Chinese have been practicing Feng Shui (pronounced *fung shway*) for thousands of years, yet people in the western hemisphere became aware of it relatively recently. Feng Shui’s underlying principle is that everything is made up of *Ch’i* (pronounced *chee*), or energy, and that energy effects everything around it. The practice of Feng Shui seeks to direct energy to create harmony and balance in one’s home, office, and life. In times past, this might have sounded mystical to Westerners, but it doesn’t seem so strange in the age of quantum physics.

Kay Hooper, NINC’s recent past president and a *New York Times* best-selling author, says, “To me, it’s all about intent. Energy follows intent. Focus positive energy and positive results follow.”

Kay began practicing Feng Shui about twelve years ago. She hadn’t made the *Times* list yet, but her career was going well. Bantam requested she write an “X-Files”-type story. No matter what she tried with the story, it wasn’t quite what the Bantam people wanted. Feeling blocked, she began reading non-fiction and stumbled across Feng Shui, which explained how we unconsciously build barriers to the things we want in life, and how our environment reflects those barriers.

Looking around her office, she realized books, papers and other items cluttered her desk; only a small space remained clear for work. In addition, the office lighting was poor. Was it possible these things symbolized walls she’d built against success, and an unwillingness to allow in the light of creativity and inspiration? She gave herself a week to make changes. She cleared her desk, de-cluttered her office, filed things away, set a lamp on her desk, replaced burned-out bulbs in her track lights, and cleared out corners and brightened them with lights.

When the week was over, she sat down to write. A story idea was tugging at her, something new—a suspense with paranormal elements. Three chapters into the story, she called her agent, told her about the story and that it felt like a break-out book. Her agent read the first 100 pages and agreed. She sent the proposal to Bantam. They were definitely interested, and wanted a sequel.

While finishing the book, Kay applied the principles of Feng Shui to more areas; she lit up more dark corners, opened up windows, surrounded herself with things that inspired her. She even used Feng Shui in the layout of her desk top.

While writing the sequel, she realized the first book hadn’t been scheduled for release. A call to her editor revealed that Bantam had something special in mind for the book, but couldn’t share it with Kay yet. The second book was almost complete before she learned that Bantam wanted to publish her books toward the *New York Times* list, and planned to put out three books in her series in mass market in three consecutive months.

The first book in the Bishop Special Crimes Unit Series released in the fall of 2000 and hit the *NYT* list at 14 the first week out. The second book hit the list two steps up, and the third hit the list two steps above that. It was the beginning of consistent *NYT* list placement.

Kay has expanded her use of Feng Shui over the years. Although she studies books on the topic, she doesn't always look to an outside source for guidance. "I instinctively did some things, especially in the study where I work. You really need to feel good in your workspace. I ask, 'What can I put there that will uplift me, make me happy?'"

What are some items Kay has placed in her workspace? A painting of her first book cover is "uplifting on a rough day." An eagle statue with a crystal ball "represents soaring creativity." She placed a money frog, a popular Feng Shui symbol for increasing and protecting wealth, in the prosperity corner of her study, behind some curtains where its presence is unobtrusive. (The prosperity area of a room is the left corner of the room as you enter.)

"Feng Shui can help writers more than others," Kay believes, "because of the way we use our minds. One of the biggest things Feng Shui can offer is to make you feel good about your environment in a time of flux in the industry."

Kay likes the results of Feng Shui so well that she used the principles when building her new house. Crystal chandeliers along the hallway to her study welcome inspiration and symbolically keep energy from racing uncontrollably down the narrow area. Rounded corners soften the edges of bookshelves, reflecting the idea that smooth edges deflect unhealthy or unsafe energy and promote harmonious energy. The study is spacious with comfortable seating, good lighting, large windows offering a beautiful view, and a fireplace. Fire is an important Feng Shui symbol for adding power to one's life, and for promoting leadership qualities and healthy interactions in relationships.

If Kay's story has inspired you to try Feng Shui, don't wait to become an expert. You can begin today by organizing your desk and study, as Kay did, with the intention of improving clarity and productivity toward your career goals. Place something that inspires you where you will see it from your writing chair. Place a candle on your desktop and an encouraging quote on your monitor. Then pick up a book on Feng Shui (Kay especially likes books by Lillian Too) or Google *How to Feng Shui*.

How does Kay believe Feng Shui most benefits her personally? "I live in a house filled with things that make me happy, that make me smile." Living like that would inspire anyone. ▲

JoAnn Grote is the award winning author of 38 books, including inspirational romances, middle grade historical novels and children's non-fiction. Contact her at jaghi@rconnect.com.

Business Briefs

Dorchester, the continuing saga

In mid-November, John Prebich left as CEO of Dorchester to be succeeded by Robert Anthony (formerly CFO & DCEO at Backe Marketing). This news followed reports that Dorchester was going strictly digital, rumors of issues regarding payments to authors, and a series of confusing and occasionally contradictory announcements.

As of mid-November 2010, the new plans include:

- Unavailable titles to be available on www.dorchesterpub.com
- Releasing eBook winter list in late November
- A full trade paperback program in January
- Reissues of major authors in trade format
- Release five or six paperbacks January to April
- Publishing five to 10 new titles in trade format or digital formats in May
- Titles will come out under Dorchester Trade Publishing, with no specific information about Leisure Arts or Love Spell

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



Checkpoint

“Long is the road from conception to completion.”
— Molière

I began 2010 by confessing in this column that I had not made a book deadline in many years, and that I was going public about this problem in dogged pursuit of fulfilling my perpetual New Year’s resolution to overcome it—for the sake of my career, my nerves, and my finances.

So I now begin 2011 by renewing that resolution, reporting on my progress so far, and stating my goals for the year.

In 2010, I delivered one novel of 110,000 words; and I wrote most of a second novel, which book is nearing completion in early 2011 and which will also be a little over 100,000 words. This is an improvement over my pace in 2009, and I’m pleased about that. However, both of these already-overdue books have been late even in terms of the adjusted ETAs. So I am still struggling with deadlines. The first book was disastrously late; the second book is late enough to cause my publisher some anxiety, but is nonetheless on track to be delivered in a more timely and less melodramatic fashion.

So pursuing the goal of meeting my deadlines is thus far an ongoing process for me, rather than a triumphant result.

The first book of the year was so late because I was stuck on it for months due to a combination of factors. Creatively, it was just a tough book for me, one with a lot of challenges and problems I hadn’t foreseen. Another key factor was that I was increasingly experiencing psychological and behavioral malfunctions in my writing process. This had been going on for a while, and I was by now working v-e-r-y slowly, making very little progress, and falling farther and farther behind on what, as a result of this pace, became a nightmarishly tight writing and production schedule.

Meanwhile, a friend of mine, an experienced pro who was typically steady and reliable in her output, had recently committed to a publishing schedule that required her to increase her usual writing pace. After struggling with this challenge for a while, my friend consulted a “life coach” for published authors; the result was that she soon experienced an improvement in her writing pace and delivered her next book in a timely manner. So she suggested I consult the same coach.

I declined. Over the years, I had twice previously engaged with coaches, and it hadn’t been helpful. (On both occasions, I eventually found my own solutions to those bouts of burn-out or paralysis.) I thought that their techniques seemed well-suited to encouraging newcomers, but not to helping a seasoned pro get her head back in the game while managing deadline commitments and career pressures.

So initially I wasn’t interested. However, my situation kept spiraling and getting more desperate. And one day it finally occurred to me (because *nothing* slips past *me!*) that my friend was a very experienced pro, and *she* had benefited from working with this coach. So maybe, after all, I should give this one a try.

The coach in question was April Kihlstrom, someone whom I knew slightly from a longtime online group of writ-

ers. What my friend had emphasized when recommending April to me, and what I soon realized made a substantial difference in her ability to coach me effectively, is that April is an experienced professional novelist with over 30 books published. So here was a coach who knew exactly what it was like to work on your 20th or 30th contracted novel and who fully understood the ramifications of wrestling with productivity problems while under deadline in a very competitive market.

Here's how the coaching process worked: April sent me a set of questions to answer by email. A few days later, we had a one-hour consultation over the phone in which we identified my problems and discussed strategies and techniques for overcoming them, so I could achieve my goal (which was to become steadily productive). If I continued having problems, I could schedule another appointment; if not, then there was no need.

I was both impressed with and relieved by how quickly and cogently April was able to pinpoint problematic patterns that I was engaging in and to make specific recommendations for changing certain habits. One of my central problems (which sounds so simple now, but which mystified me at the time) was that habits I had relied on for years as a writer had lately stopped working for me . . . and by persisting in trying to *make* them work, I'd been digging a deeper and deeper hole for myself.

The various new techniques April recommended to me were completely different from her recommendations to my friend; which made sense, since our problems were completely different, even though our goals—increased pace and productivity—were very similar. Moreover, they were very simple, practical, pragmatic tools. My new habits didn't involve lighting candles, chanting to a statue of Ganesha the Remover of Obstacles, or embracing my inner bunny.

For example, now when I'm done working each day, I take 10-15 minutes to make notes (I choose to do it by hand) about what to do the following day—what happens next in the book. Nothing elaborate, just bare-bones notes to myself, while my head is still in the game, which I use to help me get *back* into the game the next day. (I used to get back into the book each day by re-reading the previous day's work; but this was one of the longtime habits which had stopped working for me.)

This new habit works well for *me* because I'm a forgetful person who typically relies on notes and lists to get through daily life, anyhow. If, by contrast, you hate notes and lists (or if they wouldn't help with your particular problem), this would presumably *not* be part of your prescription. But it's an example of what I mean when I say that all of the tools April recommended to me were simple, practical, and concrete.

This coaching process helped me get back in the saddle and become, in fact, *very* productive—and at a time when I was under tremendous pressure, too. Then, four days after I delivered that book, my editor told me how soon she wanted my *next* already-overdue book. After a few days of (I confess) panic and sulking, it occurred to me that what had worked before might well work again. So I scheduled another consultation with April to discuss what new concerns and challenges I was facing in my next book. I have found this useful enough, when writing this next book, that I will probably consult her again in 2011.

In pursuit of additional new approaches to overcome my longstanding problem with deadlines, I also signed up for an online Book In A Week (BIAW) group. This is not, as I had for years assumed, a group of caffeine addicts each trying to write a good novel in seven days (during which span of time I can't even *plot* a good novel—though I did once write almost half of a really generic, clichéd, *short* book in that space of time). It's a support group wherein, once a month, members are encouraged to set aside a full week to prioritize their writing and achieve a publicly stated production goal (such as: 80 pages for the week).

So far, alas, this has been a comedy of errors for me. I had trouble figuring out how to sign up for BIAW one month; the next month, I was so busy writing lots of pages that I forgot that I had signed up; two other times, I was out of town during BIAW; and so on. However, I have remained enrolled in the group, in case 2011 turns out to be a more propitious year for this.

Finally, my essential goal is to write and deliver two full books this coming year. And my *ideal* goal is to increase my productivity enough to make headway on a third book in 2011. Not because I'm a masochistic overachiever, but because I'm trying to catch up to my commitments in a very competitive market where a tight release schedule is increasingly important.

So 2011, here I come. Onward! Excelsior! *Charge!*

Laura Resnick still owes overdue books, but vows to meet her new book deadlines hereafter. April Kihlstrom can be found on the Web at: <http://www.sff.net/people/april.kihlstrom/>



WRITING is TAXING

By Diane Kelly

Tax Payment Options

When you get hit with a huge tax bill, it can feel like you're paying through the nose or perhaps another orifice, such as the wazoo. But regardless of whether you are making a large or small payment to the IRS, you have several options for payment.

CHECKS AND MONEY ORDERS:

The IRS is happy to accept good old-fashioned personal checks. Be sure to write in the memo section of your check which tax year the payment applies to. If you send a payment in and have an outstanding balance from previous years, the IRS will apply the payment to the earliest tax year for which taxes are still owed unless you instruct them otherwise. It's also a good idea to write your social security number on the check. If you're concerned about putting your social security number on your check, you can list the last 4 digits as XXXX. A phone number can't hurt either. The IRS is an enormous agency handling a huge amount of paperwork and occasionally a payment becomes separated from the associated forms.

Money orders are another acceptable form of payment. Again, be sure to write your name, phone number, the tax year to which the payment applies, and your social security number on the money order.

CREDIT AND DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS:

You can make payments to the IRS via credit card or debit card, but the payments must be made through specific providers who will submit the payment to the IRS via phone or the Internet. A list of providers can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=101316,00.html>. Cards accepted include American Express, Visa, MasterCard, and Discover. The providers are permitted to charge a convenience fee, which in some cases is a flat fee and in others is a percentage of the payment sent. If you are sending a large payment, be careful since you may end up with an unexpectedly large fee if the provider charges a percentage-based fee.

Although the service providers will assess a fee for paying by debit or credit card, the IRS itself does not charge any fees for debit or credit card payments.

Part of the service fee would be deductible as a business expense. You can deduct a percentage of the fee based on the relative amounts of taxes on your business income versus other income. For example if your total tax bill is \$10,000 and \$5,000 of that amount represents income tax and self-employment tax on your writing business, one half of the fee would be deductible as a business expense.

Payments by credit or debit card can be made for amounts due per a currently filed return, extension, amended return, late-filed return, deficiency notice, installment agreement, and penalty on early withdrawals from retirement plans.

If you earn significant rewards for using your card, payment by credit card may benefit you. Be aware, however, that the interest rates charged by the IRS are likely lower than that charged by your credit card company, so if you owe a large amount of tax and won't be able to pay off the credit card soon, you may be better off entering into an installment payment plan with the IRS instead of running up your credit card balance. ▶

ELECTRONIC PAYMENT FROM BANK ACCOUNT:

There are two electronic payment options by which payments can be made from a bank account. The electronic payment options are the “Electronic Funds Withdrawal” option and the “Electronic Federal Tax Payment System.” Different procedures apply to the two options.

Payment made via Electronic Funds Withdrawal (“EFW”) can be made only when the taxpayer simultaneously files a current year Form 1040, Form 1040-ES (estimated tax payment voucher), Form 4868 (regular extension form), or Form 2350 (extension form for certain non-residents). Because EFW is intended to integrate an e-payment with the simultaneous e-filing of a current return or form, EFW cannot be used to make a payment with an amended return, a late-filed return from a previous tax year, or a payment pursuant to an installment agreement or notice. However, you can schedule your remaining estimated tax payments in advance through EFW. A scheduled payment can be cancelled with two days prior notice before the scheduled withdrawal date.

Most tax prep software includes a function to allow for an EFW and many tax preparers offer this payment option. You must know your bank’s routing number and your account number to make an EFW payment.

The IRS has also set up an Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (“EFTPS”), which has broader applications. EFTPS can be used to make any federal tax payments, regardless of whether a return or form is concurrently filed.

An individual can schedule future payments up to 365 days in advance. Thus, if you so choose, you can schedule your estimated taxes to be automatically withdrawn from your account on the applicable due dates. Easy peasy. And, if you change your mind, you can cancel a payment by the Internet or phone so long as you do so two days or more prior to the scheduled electronic payment date. The EFTPS system also allows you to check your payment history. No more digging through your banking records.

You can enroll in EFTPS online at www.eftps.gov or you can mail in Form 9783 to the IRS. You will be provided a PIN number that will be needed to utilize the electronic payment system. Although the IRS does not charge a fee for using the electronic system, your bank might. Be sure to check with your bank before making an electronic payment. Once you receive your PIN, you may make payments by phone or via the Internet. For details, see IRS Publication 4132 at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4132.pdf> and IRS Publication 966 at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p966.pdf>.

Diane Kelly’s debut novel—Death, Taxes, and a French Manicure—will be released by St. Martin’s Press in September 2011.

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

E-Nink brings you NINC news faster

When you renew your membership this year, select e-Nink instead of print if you haven’t already.

You’ll get the latest news and information about the publishing industry and NINC membership services days faster! And NINC will save on the costs of printing and postage.

If you’ve already renewed your membership, it’s still not too late, just go to the website and change your option. (Pssst...have we mentioned it’s in color?)

We Need to Talk About Your Book

BY MELANIE BENJAMIN

A novelist friend recently had an argument with a reader concerning a certain passage in his book. This reader quoted actual sentences, adamant that they were on the page—to the great surprise of the author. Who didn't remember having written them and who, when he went back to check, discovered that he hadn't.

But that didn't sway the reader. This person knew what he had read, and—all evidence to the contrary—couldn't be convinced otherwise.

This is something to which I can relate.

In the year since *Alice I Have Been* was published, I have learned many things, insightful things, about people and books and relationships and perceptions. But perhaps the most important thing I've learned is that when you write about certain subjects—such as the relationship between a man and a little girl—many people will bring their own perceptions to the subject, and see things on the page that you simply didn't write. And you'll never be able to convince them otherwise.

Despite what a few readers have claimed, I did not write a book about a predator and a victim. I wrote about the complex relationship between an artist and a muse, and the mystery surrounding the end of this relationship, and its aftermath. I wrote a tragic love story—tragic in that this relationship occurred at the wrong time in the lives of both Lewis Carroll and Alice Liddell, and haunted them forever after. But there was beauty in it, too, because it gave the world Wonderland.

I did not write about any physical or sexual relationship between the two. Not at all. Nothing on the page reflects that. Did I choose language, perhaps, meant to provoke discussion? Yes. Did I choose to write opaquely about intent, leaving the reader to imagine what was going on in the minds of all involved? Yes. I wanted to write a story that provoked discussion and boy, has that proven to be the case!

But I have encountered readers who insist I wrote physical details that simply are not on the page. Who have insisted that the confused yearnings I gave Alice Liddell are inappropriate for a child of seven. Yes, they would be—but in my novel, when she experiences them, she's a pre-adolescent eleven-year-old, at a time when a girl could be legally wed at twelve.

Yet people still insist otherwise.

Over time, instead of taking offense or expending energy going through the book, line-by-line, to refute those who insist, I've learned to let it go. And I have a better understanding that when it comes to fiction, you can't predict how people will react, especially to certain subjects.

We all know that taste is subjective; intent is, as well. And that's the wonderful thing, really, about literature. It's a conversation between author and reader; a conversation during which the author can only speak through the words on the page, while the reader can parse and argue and rail, or laugh and cry and embrace. Rarely does—or should—the author have a chance to steer that conversation directly.

Still, it's a conversation, it's an engagement consisting of emotion and passion, good and bad—but really, mostly good.

This is what I've come to understand. Just as they say bad publicity is better than no publicity, I'll add that a contentious conversation is better than no conversation. As an author, I want people to react passionately to what I've written, not shrug or forget about it or worse, ignore it all together.

If they react in ways I didn't absolutely intend, or see things I didn't absolutely write, well—in a way, that means I've done my job.

Once we write, once we send our words out into the world, we cannot direct their journey. They will be embraced, loved, cared for; they will be rejected, disparaged, misunderstood. Just like people, actually, and if we've

done our job well, that's what our characters become. Living, breathing people whose actions, whose behaviors are complex, confusing, and not easily categorized.

Words on the page are given life not only by those who write them, but by those who read them. As authors, we need to understand that—and embrace it. The conversation between us and our readers cannot—should not—be one-sided.

So even though I still sometimes sigh when a reader insists I've written something that I know, in my heart, I absolutely did not, I don't argue. Instead, I remind myself how very, very lucky I am that people are reading my book and talking about it.

For, to quote Lewis Carroll himself, “ ‘What is the point of a book,’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversations?’ ”

Melanie Benjamin is the author of Alice I have Been, a novel about the real Alice in Wonderland that is now out in paperback. It is her first work of historical fiction and the first under this name. Her second historical novel, The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb, will be published by Delacorte Press in July 2011. This article first appeared in the December 20, 2010 edition of The Huffington Post and is reprinted with the permission of the author.

Business Briefs

BookScan available through Amazon

In late December, Amazon offered authors enrolled in their "Author Central" program access to a small segment of Nielsen BookScan sales data for their own books. While it is certainly partly an inducement for authors not already enrolled in the Author Central program to sign up for it, the benefits are real. The data available will include, on a week-by-week basis, the most recent four weeks of sales as tracked by Nielsen, and geographical statistics presented visually on a map rather than as simply a set of figures. It does not, however, provide other information available from Nielsen, such as historical, YTD, or lifetimes sales figures, and results are posted according to a time-delay rather than being available in real time.

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