

# N I N K

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## New! Rules. New! Tools: The ReCap

# Five Big Trends Shaping the Future of Publishing and Seven Secrets to eBook Publishing Success

BY LYNN KERSTAN

Smashwords founder Mark Coker, who has described himself as “the barbarian at the gates of the Ivory Tower,” began by examining the state of traditional publishing and the paradigm shift already underway.

Technology is colliding with Big Publishing, creating and destroying opportunity, realizing consumers’ desires, lowering costs, expanding distribution to the global economy, and making things “Faster, smaller, cheaper, more accessible.” Big Publishers, which until recently held a near monopoly, decided who got published, distributed and promoted, thereby selecting what readers could read. For authors, Big Publishers often played the role of “bouncers at the Pearly Gates,” and their expensive infrastructure and backward-looking business model remains rife with “author-unfriendly policies.” As bookselling moves to the World-Wide Web and power shifts to the providers of content, authors should ask, “What can a publisher do for me that I cannot do for myself? Can I reach more readers without a publisher?”

E-books are rapidly overtaking print, and increasing numbers of buyers are using screens of various sorts to read books. While hoping print books remain an option, Mr. Coker notes data indicate that hardback sales have dropped by 23% and mass-market paperbacks are down 30%. He predicts free e-readers in the not-distant future.

New publishing tools are empowering authors to become publishers with a free printing press in the cloud, instant access to global markets, e-books that never go out of print, and 60 to 100% of list price in the author’s pocket vs. the current 5 to 17% from most traditional publishers.

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Marianne Shock

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Address changes may be made on the  
website.

For members without Internet access,  
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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: James LePore  
leporej5@optonline.net

### New Applicants:

JoAnn Ross, Lacey, WA

James Thompson, Helsinki, Uusimaa, Finland  
Melynda Andrews (Melynda Beth Skinner, Melynda Beth Andrews), Winter Park, FL

### Karen New Members:

Karen Moser (Karen Kendall), Weston, FL  
John Dobbyn, Valley Forge, PA  
Deborah Hale, Nova Scotia, Canada  
Jackie Fridline (Jackie Braun), Flushing, MI  
Judith Stanton (Fiona Carr), Pittsboro, NC  
Margaret Anton Parkhurst (Maggie Anton),  
Los Angeles, CA

## 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.

## **NINC Needs You!**

NINC is a great organization, the only one of its kind for published authors. It thrives and grows due to the tireless efforts of volunteers. NINC cannot survive without volunteers. Opportunities abound. For instance, there's JOT: you can sign up for Just One Thing, be done with it, and not have to do anymore.

However, there is a lot more to running the organization and NINC needs people who can sign on for more than just one thing. Most of you are probably thinking that you'd like to help but you just don't have the time. Isn't that the truth ... no one has the time, but when it's necessary, we make the time.

It's necessary if you want NINC to continue as a viable organization. Each year the Nominating Committee goes hunting for candidates for President-elect and any other Board positions that need to be filled. It isn't easy finding candidates willing to fill those slots. Are they time-consuming positions? Of course they are. It takes work to run an organization. Should that scare you away? No, it should make you realize how much NINC needs your help. Think about running for the Board in the future and if you have any questions about any Board position feel free to contact the current Board members who hold those positions. Any one of us will be only too glad to talk with you.

NINC has several committees that provide services to members. Some of those committees are without chairs because we can't find anyone to commit to the positions, or a lone committee chair has no helpers because no one has volunteered to simply help.

Months ago I asked for a volunteer for The Next Page. I announced that Neff Rotter, who is the genius behind the Next Page listings on the NINC website would be leaving the position in June. No one stepped forward and Neff, bless her, continues to do the job so that NINC isn't without The Next Page. But if someone doesn't step up soon, The Next Page will disappear. That nice box with the lovely turning covers will be gone. Here's a description of the job: it includes collecting book listings, cover images, author/pseudonym, title, publisher, month of publication, ISBN and blurb, and posting them to the website. The best part is, this involves no hunting on your part! It's easily done by posting a request for the info on NinLink a few days before the end of the month. Once collected, you put the information into the Next Page format, upload it as an HTML file onto the NINC website. Lastly, you announce the current listings on NinLink. It sounds more difficult than it actually is, and Neff has graciously agreed to help the new volunteer get comfortable with the position.

This position doesn't have to be left to one person. We could easily divide it between two people, if only we could get the volunteers. If you want The Next Page to continue, we need volunteers. Please get in touch with me even if you think you can only do part of the job. [donna@donnafletcher.com](mailto:donna@donnafletcher.com)

If you want to see what other volunteer positions are available, go to the NINC website's member area. Log in, then navigate to [http://www.NINC.com/members\\_only/NINC\\_business/volunteer\\_list.asp](http://www.NINC.com/members_only/NINC_business/volunteer_list.asp)

To all those members who have volunteered this year and in the past, I want to give you a BIG THANK YOU. We couldn't do it without your generous help.

Please think about all the benefits of being a NINC member and then think again about how it's all made possible ... volunteers.

I've enjoyed being President this year. Did it take work? ... You bet it did. Was it worth it? You bet it was. Step forward, get involved, be part of a professional and knowledgeable team. You won't regret it. This has been an extremely productive year for NINC due to the endless efforts of dependable volunteers. For that to continue, NINC needs volunteers... NINC needs you!

Until next time,  
Donna Fletcher

# 5 Big Trends Shaping the Future of Publishing...

*Continued from page 1* ▶ Many professional authors lament the competition with “dreck” produced by some indie publishers, and Mr. Coker admits that Smashwords is probably the world’s largest Distributor of Dreck. But, true to his earlier point about Big Publishers, he points out, “it’s not Smashwords’ job to make that determination. The readers do it.” He believes “the good stuff does rise to the top.” The explosion of supply leads to price competition, and e-book prices are likely to decline. But readers “will still pay for content” and “your book ‘being a novel’ is unique.” Indeed, he considers this the “Golden Age: A Renaissance for Authors” and provides these Seven Secrets to E-book Publishing Success:

**1) Honor Your Reader with a Great Book.** Be fanatical about quality. Edit, revise, rinse, and repeat. Invest in quality, such as a professional copy editor and a cover image that looks good in all formats, including thumbnail and black-and-white.

**2) Publish Another Great Book.** Each e-book offers cross-promotion potential and builds trust with readers. Make your reverted backlist available, publish a series simultaneously, if possible, and network your books with hyperlinks.

**3) Maximize Distribution.** Make your books available everywhere. Don’t be beholden to a single retailer. It’s important to maintain a healthy eco-system for book sales, and monopolies disempower authors. Consider using a distributor. Spend *your* time writing, producing, and marketing.

**4) Give (some of) Your Books Away for Free.** This eliminates financial risk for first-time readers. Earn the trust of the reader.

**5) Patience is a Virtue.** In the traditional marketplace, you have a few weeks to get attention. If you don’t, the books are stripped or remaindered. E-books are Immortal, but they can start small and grow slowly. Nourish Your Seedling. Send readers to post reviews and “Like” your books.

**6) Trust Your Readers and Partners.** DRM copy protection is counterproductive. Those who give away your books are promoting you. Those who download freebies wouldn’t pay for them anyway. Limit distribution, and you’ll limit your sales. Some publishers will go out of business, but if your books are widely distributed, you won’t lose much.

**7) Marketing Starts Yesterday.** Support your fellow authors. They are your partners, not your competitors. Use social media. Cultivate your social networks. Establish your “Brand.” Earn reader trust.

Mr. Coker followed up with some bonus tips:

- ▶ **Architect for Virality.** Word-of-mouth recommendations sell books. Write books that deserve talking about, because you don’t want “This book sucks!” as a review.
- ▶ **Profits equal sales minus expenses.** Use limited funds for essentials (covers, clean text). If possible, do the rest yourself.
- ▶ **You are your own gatekeeper.** Take risks. Experiment. These are the early days of the Revolution. Try new things and Share Your Secrets. Think globally. You and your readers determine your success.

Toward the end of his presentation, Mr. Coker asked if any writers in the packed conference room had used Smashwords. Hands shot up all over the place. At first he looked stunned and said he had never expected, or previously received, such a response. Then he told us with evident sincerity that he was honored so many authors of NINC quality were entrusting their books to his company.

It seemed to me, on reflection, that Mark Coker and NINC authors have much in common, especially the willingness, even eagerness, to share what we learn with others.

*Lynn Kerstan, former college professor, professional bridge player, travel manager, and nun, writes historical romance, copy edits, and teaches writing classes. Star of Wonder in A Regency Holiday (Bell Bridge Books) will be on shelves and online in November.*



## New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

# Making Digital Self-Retailing Work for You

BY JOANNA NOVINS

There were a number of themes repeated during the conference, among them *If you're going to e-publish, make sure your material is available on as many platforms as possible.* So it's not surprising that Liz Sheier, Editorial Director for Digital Content at Barnes & Noble, also delivered this message. According to Ms. Sheier, Barnes and Noble's PubIt! platform has a 30% share of the e-market and material published on PubIt! is available on more than 300 devices—basically anything with a screen.

What follows is a rough summary of Ms. Sheier's presentation minus her delightfully dry wit. I offer the caveat that while I type incredibly fast thanks to 12 years of piano lessons, the info was coming fast and furious. If you're looking for more detail, including photos for the step-by-step instructions on how to upload your e-book to PubIt!, get your hands on the NINC binder. (Rumor has it, it's going to be made available for download on the website in January.)

Ms. Sheier began her presentation by explaining that anything for which there is a non-traditional market and anything that's text will work in the self-retailing market. This includes novels, short stories, short story collections, non-fiction, cookbooks, anthologies, poems, and chapbooks.

The current demographic for PubIt! is women, age 25-55, interested in general fiction, romance, parenting, mystery, and sf/fantasy.

As an author, you have several methods with which to reach an audience: traditional publisher, e-publisher, e-packager, and direct to retailer.

- ▶ A traditional publisher does all the developmental work, licenses the copyright from the author, and pays a royalty of about 25% of net.
- ▶ An e-publisher, like a traditional publisher, also does all the development work, licenses the copyright from the author, and licenses the e-rights from the author, and pays a royalty of about 50%.
- ▶ In the case of an e-packager, the author retains the copyright, chooses from a range of "a la carte" services and pays a flat fee or small percentage of the royalties.
- ▶ In a direct-to-retail situation, the author does the developmental work, retains the copyright, and is paid a 65% royalty.

Not surprisingly, Ms. Sheier recommended that authors include PubIt! among their platform choices. She demonstrated how easy it is to upload content, using a series of screen shots of the PubIt! process showing how an author can go to the PubIt! home page, create an account, upload previously converted material, and view an emulator to see how the finished work will look on the screen. PubIt! royalties are based on pricing; for e-books priced between \$2.99-\$9.99, authors receive 65%, for books priced below \$2.99 or above \$9.99, authors receive 40%.

Each book uploaded to PubIt! has a product page with the cover, description, reviews, and links. Authors can keep track of what has been loaded and what's been sold. Payment for a book sale is made 60 ▶

days after the sale and payments are sent out every 30 days. (There's a page to keep track of what you've loaded, and what you've sold.)

PubIt! provides marketing opportunities for authors on the site, on devices, in a digital-stream newsletter, through its Facebook page, and through the "More In Store" program. (Ms. Sheier noted that the Facebook page is primarily for indie authors while the More In Store program is designed for books that are in both print and e-book formats to encourage consumers in stores to purchase in either format.)

Social media is an incredibly strong seller for PubIt!, which hosts a Facebook page designed to build a community around authors with discussions of genres and author recommendations. Ms. Sheier warned that community members don't like full-price content and will post negative feedback on books based on the book prices.

Ms. Sheier also discussed the importance of creating a package that draws in readers, connecting with word-of-mouth marketers, and connecting with other authors. She stressed that cover data is the most important element in attracting readers. While print books are designed to catch the eye from across a room, e-books are generally viewed as thumbnails on a screen. Some specific tips she provided are:

- ▶ **Covers should be simple, but eye-popping.** They are an important opportunity to create an author brand. Ms. Sheier encouraged authors to keep an eye on maintaining consistency of title, layout, color, and image. She strongly suggested hiring a professional designer.
- ▶ **Titles and names should be prominent** and the cover image should "scream" genre identification. Books should also have a good description, which should be short and sweet, and accompanied by a clear and concise headline that conveys specifics about the genre and tone of the book. (In other words, no vague headlines about a sweeping struggle between good and evil.)
- ▶ **Review quotes** should also be included.
- ▶ **Awards, prizes, blurbs, or author expertise** should be contained in a bubble or a burst. (With regard to the latter, Ms. Sheier encouraged authors not to be modest.)
- ▶ **Author bios should be shorter** than the book's description and should include related accomplishments and affiliations, particularly anything that identifies the author as an expert in the field, such as writing awards and nominations, and memberships in genre-specific orgs.
- ▶ **List other titles**, especially if the book is part of a series. Identify which number the book is in the series.
- ▶ **Be sure to include metadata** in cover, descriptions, and bio.

With regard to pricing, authors should research how similar books in the same category are priced. Authors shouldn't sell themselves short. (If you wouldn't do it in print, don't do it in digital.) Don't be afraid to experiment with promotional pricing, starting with a lower price to engage readers; for example, if a book is part of series, three weeks before the next book in the series comes out, consider selling the first book in the series at a lower price. And remember, pricing can be changed anytime once a title is put up for sale.

In response to a question about bundling, Ms. Sheier reflected that while it's good because it's a one-click download, the price point quickly becomes unattractive. She suggested it might be better to bundle a book with additional content, though she warned this might create a need for a new ISBN, which is not a good thing because more than one ISBN for a book confuses buyers. (ISBNs are format-specific. Remember to get one for your e-version.) Ms. Sheier encouraged bundling with other authors, including chapters from their books as teasers.

In conclusion, Ms. Sheier encouraged authors to experiment. Don't limit yourself to either e-books or traditional publishing. If you are going to e-publish, try and get as many books up at once because consumers want the whole package. (For specific questions regarding PubIt! contact [pubit@bn.com](mailto:pubit@bn.com).)

*CIA analyst turned historical romance writer Joanna "Jody" Novins is in the process of converting her books for e-publishing (and wondering if her children can be considered a series and uploaded, too).*



## New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

# Change Surfing

BY LAURA PHILLIPS

Publishers have a lot to fear from Amazon, according to David Wilk of Creative Management Partners and *Change Surfing* workshop presenter at NINC's 2011 conference.

Mr. Wilk believes authors have more options and greater access to readers thanks to technology and companies such as Amazon, Apple, and the many others that have made it relatively easy for authors to reach readers without publisher assistance. This has not been without cost, and the losses include bookstores where a key long-term employee knew where each book was shelved, and it was a lot of trouble to determine how long every title had been on the store shelves, make a list of slow sellers, and pull them all off the shelves to return to the publisher.

"The use of computers gave us something and lost us a lot," he said. "In terms of surfing the changes, the continuum of choices is different." The choices for individual authors will vary in terms of comfort level, time available, available funds, and quality. Some companies offering services for authors are terrific, some not so much. Do your research, he advises.

Mr. Wilk expects even more tools to become available to authors, such as an authoring tool that allows creation of an .EPUB file as easily as a .DOC file. Another likely addition might be an author-friendly tool along the lines of Adobe's InDesign for page layout and design.

To stay abreast of the changes and manage well, Mr. Wilk advises authors to function like small businesses. Read books aimed at small businesses on subjects such as online marketing, accounting, and so forth, and particularly books on the business side of self-publishing. (He's personally bought about 25 books on how to self-publish your book.)

Because a "tremendous number" of people are writing about change in the book business, he notes that keeping up is a chore. He recommends following columnists and commentators and using RSS feeds to get the summaries from them. Good sources include Publisher's Lunch (the paid version), Shelf Awareness, MediaBistro (particularly GalleyCat), and tech blogs such as Gizmodo. Also keep in mind that everything that happens for other media business-wise happens in publishing, too. He also recommends joining the International Book Publishers Association, a service organization for independent publishers where you can "learn what publishers have to learn."

A backlist, he said, is a big opportunity for authors who manage it as an asset, much like a publisher would. Key questions to consider include:

- ▶ Rewrite or reissue as is?
- ▶ What if the book's content no longer stands up to scrutiny?
- ▶ If the author is currently publishing with a traditional publisher, how will the publisher react to the author "flooding the market" with backlist? (He recommends a conversation with the publisher to strategize for best results.)

Another key element, according to Mr. Wilk, is the nature of your current audience. "It doesn't matter how big your audience is. It matters how many will do what you ask," he said. Good examples of creative types who have cultivated loyal, responsive audiences include Bob Lefsetz, who writes the Lefsetz Letter, a music-centric blog, and musician Adrian Legg. ▶

He also recommends that authors accept that many of the bigger changes in publishing “are beyond the scope of our control, and we just can’t worry about them. It gets us nothing.” And while he acknowledged the competition of other entertainment forms for reader time and attention, he noted that there’s a strong history of novelists being hired to create content for those other entertainment niches.

*Laura Phillips writes and runs a niche software company from her farmhouse in rural Missouri. She’s planning the strategic release of her backlist in digital outlets prior to holiday shopping season.*

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## It’s Dues Renewal Time....

**Renew easily online at the NINC website: <http://www.ninc.com>**  
Remember to fill in the Authors’ Coalition form so that NINC can receive its fair share of the ACA funds. Think of what you get from NINC: a great conference once a year, *Nink* every month, a wealth of online features every day on the website, the blog, and the loops.

**You need NINC, and NINC needs you. Please renew now.**

Make sure it gets done in real time, without having to wait for USPS to fly your check to Kansas.

Renew today so you are in on the conversation and get up-to-the-minute information about what’s happening in the world of publishing. Publishers are closing—and opening—imprints...contract clauses are being reinterpreted and reinvented....new technologies are evolving...platforms are shifting....and you can find it all right here at NINC.

**Renew your membership today!**

With all of the shared information, interest, and encouragement, there is no better place for a multi-published author than NINC.

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### ***Business Briefs***

#### **E-book Publishing Collaborative**

Perseus Books Group presents Argo Navis to handle digital distribution and marketing for authors’ self-published titles. Agencies will sign with Argo Navis, so the agents will operate normally with regard to clients and the company. Information will be supplied to authors from the Perseus digital dashboard. This will be a three-year contract with 70% revenue for the authors. New titles will be accepted, but the largest portion of titles should be rights-reverted works. This may be open to authors outside the U.S.

*Publishers Weekly*





## New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

# The Empowered Author: Publishing Math in an Age of Content Abundance

BY ELAINE ISAAK

Carolyn Pittis, Senior Vice President of Global Author Services at HarperCollins, is already a NINC Conference favorite. Her focus on transforming data into useful information for authors was again in evidence in this year's presentation—along with her trademark humor and some lovely graphs!

Her presentation began with the trailer for the new film “Moneyball.” She used it to note the influence of statistics on the baseball industry, and to look at the slow adoption of that concept through the industry. While we often grumble about how long it takes the big publishers to change their ways, her talk provided evidence that some are beginning to use the wealth of information at their disposal to make more informed decisions. So how can we, as authors, take advantage of the data and the new directions in publishing?

Ms. Pittis suggests that writers develop personal formulas for success by asking ourselves:

- ▶ How much money do I need to make a living as a novelist?
- ▶ How many books do I need to sell at what price to hit that number?

Quantifying things will enable us to compare options, especially for those of us considering indie publication. We can use the formula to examine pricing strategies.

She referred to some interesting studies on purchasing habits. Dan Lubart of [iobyte.com](http://iobyte.com) and Peter Hollick Smith broke down the book purchase process into three stages:

- ▶ Discovery: People learn that the book exists;
- ▶ Conversion: They become interested in buying it; and
- ▶ Availability: They determine whether the format, price, and timeframe suits them.

She said most of the work lately has been on Availability—making sure the book exists in formats from hardcover to Mobi, with various shipping options.

At this year's conference, however, the big buzzword was *Discoverability*—how to make our books stand out from the million or so traditional and self-published works being published every year. She suggested that writers look for the following information when considering a new avenue of book or brand marketing:

- ▶ Impressions: How many will you get? At what price: per click or per thousand?
- ▶ Placement: Where will your marketing piece appear on the page and what quality of impression will it provide?
- ▶ “Favorite” and “Familiarity” scores for your site and any site you partner with: *Favorite* scores track the enthusiasm of the audience for the content. *Familiarity* scores track the frequency of its appearance in lists, online references, etc.
- ▶ Your Klout score: This refers to [Klout.com](http://Klout.com)—another buzzword this year. This ranks the influence of an individual on the Internet. She suggests checking the Klout scores of those who influence you as a ▶

point of reference. It can give you an idea of the person's reach (size of his/her audience), amplification (the likelihood of that audience to take action), and network (how influential that audience is).

Ms. Pittis showed us the new dashboard HC created for its authors. It includes individual information about the number of impressions, estimated unit sales, web traffic, and social currency (similar to a Klout score). Other major publishers are developing author dashboards as well, catching up with the level of information available to authors who handle their own publishing and marketing.

She pointed us to the beta site [www.Booklamp.org](http://www.Booklamp.org), created by a Stanford University Linguistics professor. It analyzes books and recommends new ones to readers, in a similar vein to the Pandora radio algorithms. Such sites enable discoverability by linking readers to similar works.

She summed up her talk by reiterating that the author's job is changing, and our future is more than ever in our own hands. We need to determine our individual goals as well as the roles we would like to perform on the path to meeting those goals (as opposed to roles we will outsource or partner for). We also need to examine new processes that may align with those goals, using all the data at our disposal.

Her top recommendations for authors:

- ▶ Focus on strong development of short copy: ads, blurbs, and book descriptions that will quickly capture the attention of the online buyer.
- ▶ Pay close attention to the metadata: the peripheral information that accompanies the actual content and helps customers and online resources discover your book.

*Elaine Isaak spent the days after BeachNinc sprucing up her social networking and scheming about how to get hold of her backlist. In the meantime, she's working on a new dark historical fantasy series for DAW that will be released pseudonymously. Shhhhhh!*

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## ***Business Briefs***

### **Bloomsbury Reader is an Imprint**

As announced last May, Bloomsbury launched Bloomsbury Reader in September. The imprint will have digital and print-on-demand titles where the English language rights are owned by an author or the author's estate. The site has 500 titles and is acquiring additional titles through literary agents. POD titles were intended to be available in October at \$8.99.

*Publishers Weekly*

### **Change at Del Rey**

Del Rey editor-in-chief Betsy Mitchell has taken early retirement and will leave Random House in December. Tricia Pasternak will step in as editorial director of Del Rey Spectra and manage the traditional science fiction and fantasy. Keith Clayton will become associate publisher of Del Rey Spectra, with Anne Croell as executive editor. Frank Parisi joined the staff to oversee the licensed tie-ins, such as the *Star Wars* titles.

*Publishers Weekly*

### **InKubate—Slush Pile Online?**

Gale and PixilMeida are developing a free digital marketplace and manuscript review site for writers. Materials can include manuscripts, excerpts, out-of-print titles, and other products that can be reviewed by agents and publishers, who will join the site on a subscription basis. The system will track revisions, drafts and viewers. The beta site has 350 writers with 400 offerings online. A small payment goes to the writers when a subscriber reads work, and viewed work gets a value-rating. Subscribers can bid or claim specific time periods to negotiate or discuss work.

*Publishers Weekly*



## New! Rules. New! Tools: The ReCap

# Social Media is Your Friend: Online Marketing Essentials for Authors

BY BARBARA MEYERS

Are you gripped by total terror and complete panic at the thought of keeping up with the constant changes in social media? So are the experts, according to Thubten Comerford, CEO of WePost Media. Because the industry is popping like popcorn, the usefulness of new platforms is being tested constantly.

However, he said, social media success is simply about sharing who you are. The most important way to engage new followers is to post somewhere at least once a day on a topic that interests you. His workshop provided some basic ideas about the top social media sites; offered advice about where a writer's priorities should be (updating often with content that is engaging, relevant, informative and free); and described real "killer" content to avoid (anything that screams "Buy My Book" to your followers and fans—he suggested limiting that to every twentieth update on Twitter and every tenth update on Facebook).

He urged us to be creative with social media opportunities, and to keep it fun. One suggestion was to create Twitter and/or Facebook profiles for characters (with complete disclosure, of course).

The micro-blogging site **Twitter** works best for his clients, but he pointed out that building an audience via Twitter may require updating one to twenty times per day. Services such as HootSuite, TweetDeck, and Tumblr make it possible to schedule tweets ahead of time.

While replies count as part of your daily updates, at least one of your tweets should be new content to help you connect to readers and communicate with fans. It's important to catch readers' eyes and get them to retweet, and to encourage them to go your Twitter page and view your previous tweets.

Mr. Comerford's advice on following other Twitterers is to follow only those who interest you and never to follow anyone automatically; to unfollow those you are no longer interested in or who no longer engage with you; and not to thank people for following you—it's just "noise."

He considers **Facebook**, a (relatively) more private site where members can engage in almost unlimited interaction, useful but not essential. He said it's a good idea to have a personal profile and then create a book page for your fans. Updating your page one to five times per day is best. Use longer posts to inform fans about your work, share pictures and videos, and converse with and engage your "friends."

If you have a blog on **Wordpress** or another platform, use it as a way to communicate with your community by updating weekly and replying to comments. Even without comments, posting is useful and will help raise your ranking on search engines such as Google, which like interaction and seek fresh content.

**YouTube** is an under-utilized avenue to connect with fans. If you are fun, quirky, have a lot of personality, and are good with videos, his advice is to go for it because it's one more place for

**Do:**  
update often  
with content  
that is engaging,  
relevant,  
informative  
and free.

**Don't Do:**  
anything that  
screams "Buy  
My Book" to  
your followers  
and fans.

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## New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

# The Multi-Published Author and Today's Tight Marketplace

BY SASHA WHITE

When it comes to the digital side of publishing, few are as well informed and experienced as Angela James, Executive Editor for Carina Press. After nearly a decade in the industry, all of it in the digital arena, she's the most well known advocate of e-books and has a reputation for dragging readers to the digital dark side.

Her conference workshop was supposed to be about *The Multi-Published Author and Today's Tight Marketplace: Is an E-Pub House a Step Down or a Step Forward?*, but when Ms. James stepped to the podium, she changed things a little. She told us she just wanted to discuss and compare e-publishing and print publishing, and give an overview. I got the impression she really wanted to just talk to us and allow us form our own opinions whether e-publishing is a step down or a step forward, but she was determined to make them informed opinions. One of the biggest takeaways from her talk was that it does not have to be either/or: You can have it all.

She made it clear we were talking about fiction, not non-fiction, and there was plenty of audience participation. Her lists of pros and cons for each option looked something like what follows.

### The Pros of Self-Publishing are:

- ▶ A higher royalty rate.
- ▶ Control, specifically of release dates, time frames, storylines, cover art, and word count.
- ▶ A new market for some; in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2011, sales through e-tailers went up 10% while print dropped 20%.
- ▶ Last year's huge leap in sales after the holidays when everyone received digital devices as gifts. Expectations include a repeat performance; Angela's prediction is 25%.

### The Cons of Self-Publishing are:

- ▶ Low discoverability; it's difficult to separate yours books from the deluge of self-published stories on large e-tailers.
- ▶ You have to handle all the work yourself.
- ▶ You have to front the money for everything yourself.
- ▶ The publishing side of things takes time away from being creative and it can be difficult to switch your brain from business mode to creative mode.
- ▶ You are not signing a contract, you are agreeing to terms of service, and terms of service can change at any time. You are not locked into getting a specific %, it might go up, but it might also go down.

### The Pros of Traditional Publishing are:

- ▶ Wide Distribution.
- ▶ Advances.
- ▶ More time to devote to the creative side of things because everything else is done for you.

### **The Cons of Traditional Publishing are:**

- ▶ Little to no control over the process or the product.
- ▶ A longer wait to see your book in print.
- ▶ Longer time periods between payments.
- ▶ Lower royalty rates.

### **The Pros of Digital-First Publishing are:**

- ▶ Greater flexibility with cover art than you'd have with traditional publishers.
- ▶ Monthly royalty checks.
- ▶ Freedom to experiment and explore different genres, or blend genres, or push your own envelope with your writing.
- ▶ More time to write and be creative, yet still have faster release dates and flexibility with storylines.

### **The Cons of Digital-First Publishing are:**

- ▶ External deadlines and commitments.
- ▶ Releases are not completely on your own timeline.
- ▶ Submission requirements (specific lengths).
- ▶ Not every story makes it into print; time lags for those that do.

Ms. James stated that one advantage digital publishers offer is allowing books that are doing really, really well to carry those that aren't while the publisher builds an audience for that category. This is one reason e-publishers can take more risks in terms of non-traditional storylines than print publishers can.

She also stated that Carina will work to build an author, not just a genre or category of fiction. The house looks for authors who are looking for a home, and a place to settle in with multiple books so that they can create marketing plans toward building their names and brands. If the author succeeds, the publisher succeeds. Breakout authors are those who bring readers to a publisher; to really build a breakout, it takes a minimum of three books. The first book is used to promote the second and third.

There was some open discussion about an author who was reputed to have been dropped by one of the Big Six because she self-published some stories, and how easy it is to make big, traditional publishers the bad guys because we never hear them tell their side of situations. When authors have a gripe, they blog, and rant, and say "This is what happened," and we can neener-neener them, but publishers never respond or say, "Here's what the big bad author did, and this is why we dropped him/her." This is, in part, because publishers are aware of their roles and reputations, but also because of the realities of the situation: Did the environment change after the author self-published? Is the self-published material going to enhance the author's brand? In the situation discussed, the details were less important than the realization that, *from the publisher's point of view*, by self-publishing, the author fundamentally changed the environment in which the company had planned/wanted to publish her.

Ms. James emphasized that authors who choose to self publish should not skip any of the steps that a publisher takes; They are there for a reason. There is no faster way to destroy your brand than putting out sub-par work. It is not true that publishers do not want you to self-publish, but it's important to note that there is a difference between whether an author *can* self-publish and whether he or she *should* self-publish.

*National bestselling author of erotic fiction Sasha White's distinctive voice and salacious imagination has made her a reader favorite. This Canadian author likes to keep things hot no matter if she's writing a full-length novel or a short story for pure fun—like her latest release, Mavericks Of Space.*



## New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

# Marketing Is Not Your Enemy

BY JOANNE PENCE

David Wilk provides book promotion consulting, marketing, and content creation. He maintains a number of different websites: [www.booktrix.com](http://www.booktrix.com), which is his primary site; [www.writerscast.com](http://www.writerscast.com), which offers weekly podcasts with writers, booksellers, librarians, and other publishing industry professionals; and [www.livewriters.com](http://www.livewriters.com), which offers book videos.

He emphasized that the new way of marketing is aimed at building relationships, rather than what he calls “megaphone” marketing—old-style marketing in which “buy my book” is the mantra. The aim, he said, is to connect with people first. He recommends that authors:

- ▶ Create a blog to provide a stream of information that will help boost Google rankings.
- ▶ Visit other people’s blogs, read and watch the comments for a while, and, after spending some time there, leave a few comments. After leaving several comments, throw in a statement such as “BTW, my new book comes out next week.” Mr. Wilk believes an author must begin working with bloggers about six months before a book is released, not one week before. At the same time, he does not consider blog sites a particularly good use of an author’s time. The site [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com) can provide information about a blog’s popularity.
- ▶ Focus on book-related websites. These can be much more beneficial than blogs.
- ▶ Make use of Author Central on Amazon and the author pages on B&N. The author’s name is “clickable” and authors should provide content for readers.
- ▶ Maximize a Facebook profile. He suggests that authors start by building a good page, then learning to use the “Notes” function on Facebook, which can be one of the most powerful tools out there. Using Notes to link your blog to Facebook allows the entire blog to be posted on Facebook where, usually, more people will see it.
- ▶ Create a newsletter as a means of gathering fan email addresses. The newsletter content should be about more than your latest book. [www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com) enables newsletter creation and is free to use up to 2,000 addresses.
- ▶ Interview a popular author and post the interview on your author blog. People searching for the interviewed author will find both of you.
- ▶ Post all reviews on your author website. Volume will impress readers. Get friends to write reviews on Amazon.
- ▶ Establish a profile on LinkedIn. The site has over 80 million members and is searched by Google, so it provides another way to create author-specific content.
- ▶ Get ISBNs for your books. Google searches on ISBNs, not ASINs, so having an ISBN enables discoverability.
- ▶ Make a plan. Identify daily tasks (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Goodreads), weekly tasks (blogging, updating website content, leaving comments on other people’s sites, checking comments you’ve left on other blogs, answer/comment on remarks addressed to you), monthly tasks (blog if you don’t blog weekly, do a newsletter, run a Google search to determine your rank), and yearly tasks (updating your LinkedIn profile).

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## **WRITING is TAXING**

*By Diane Kelly*

# **Who's on the Hook?**

Self-publishing is on the rise, with many authors choosing to publish their backlist or original works in electronic format on Amazon, Smashwords, PubIt!, and other bookseller sites. Some savvy authors even sell their works directly themselves via their own website. Of course, any new business model raises tax questions. Many authors are wondering about sales taxes on e-book transactions and whether they might have an obligation to collect and remit sales taxes.

### **E-Book Sales are Generally Subject to Tax**

In states where sales tax is collected, most impose a sales tax on e-book sales just as they do on sales of physical books. The electronic format does not generally relieve the sales from taxation, though a few states do exempt e-books from sales tax.

It's important to note that a state can impose sales tax only on transactions that take place entirely within its borders. Thus, for a sale to be subject to sales tax, both the seller and the buyer must have a physical presence in that particular state. This is why you are not charged sales tax when you make an online purchase from a company that does not have a physical presence in your state. (But don't forget that if you order e-books from an out-of-state source in an untaxed transaction, you will likely owe "use" tax to your state.)

### **Who's the Seller?**

The critical fact to know is that sales tax responsibilities are imposed only on sellers. So, who's the seller in e-book transactions?

If you are selling e-books yourself directly to readers rather than through an independent retailer, then you are the seller. When you make a sale to a buyer who resides in your state, you must collect sales tax on the transaction, file a sales tax return, and pay the sales tax over to your state. What a pain, huh?

The good news, though, is that for those of you who contracted for your books to be offered through an independent retailer such as PubIt!, Amazon, or Smashwords, things are much simpler. In these situations, you are not considered the seller of your e-books. Therefore, you have no sales tax responsibilities. The retailer is considered the seller and has the responsibility for collecting, reporting, and paying any applicable sales tax on sales of your books.

It makes sense that the retailers should bear responsibility for sales tax collection, reporting, and payment. After all, they are the ones who deal directly with the customers and receive payment for the items purchased. The retailers have the necessary information about the purchasers, such as their home addresses, to know whether sales tax applies. You are not privy to this critical information.

### **Terms of Contracts with Self-Publishing Companies**

As part of my research for this article, I reviewed the PubIt! "Ebook Publication and Distribution Agreement," the "CreateSpace Services Agreement," and Smashwords "Terms of Service."

The PubIt! contract is the most clear with regard to sales taxes. It specifically states: "In the event that the sale or delivery of any eBook to any end user is subject to any sales, use, good and services, value ▶

added or similar tax under applicable law, Barnes & Noble will collect such tax and remit it to the taxing authorities.” Thank you, B&N, for making things crystal clear for its authors!

As many of you may know, Amazon has had a somewhat shaky tax record, failing to make sales tax payments to states that asserted taxes were owed, and ending associate agreements with those in certain states to avoid sales tax responsibilities. Although the CreateSpace Services Agreement addresses “transaction taxes,” which include sales taxes, the contract does so only in a vague way. Fortunately, you can ignore the vague reference to sales taxes. The critical part of the contract is Section 4.2, which states: “We or our affiliate will be the seller of record . . .” As the seller, they bear responsibility for sales tax collection, reporting, and payment.

The Smashwords contract addresses only income taxes, specifically situations in which the company may be required to withhold a specified percentage of each payment for income taxes if the author fails to provide Smashwords with a correct Tax Identification Number. Although the contract does not address sales taxes, Smashwords would nonetheless be responsible for sales taxes as it, too, would be considered the seller of the ebooks.

### You Aren’t Selling Books, You’re Only Granting a License

As further assurance that you are not liable for sales tax, consider what you are giving to the retailers. The contracts for all three of these companies acknowledge that you are providing a license to them in return for royalties. These terms are fundamentally no different than the grant of rights that authors give to traditional publishers. Authors with traditional publishing contracts are not considered the sellers of their books and neither are those whose books are sold through e-book distributors.

*Diane Kelly is the author of the humorous “Death & Taxes” mystery series. Visit Diane at [www.dianekelly.com](http://www.dianekelly.com).*



## New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

**Social Media** Continued from page 11 ▶

fans to find you. Consider embedding videos on your blog and adding them to your Facebook page.

**LinkedIn**, which showcases members’ professional credentials, is useful but non-essential. If you have a LinkedIn profile as part of a day job, consider adding your publishing credentials. The information can help connect you with readers’ groups and publishing industry professionals. Always include a current photo.

Another useful but non-essential site to consider is **Klout.com**, which is a free service that measures your online engagement.

*When not writing fiction, Dr. Seuss-like poetry, or song lyrics, Barbara Meyers can be found at the local Starbucks eavesdropping on customers for possible story ideas while masquerading as a shift supervisor. Her hobbies include tormenting her long-suffering husband, interfering in the lives of her grown children, and sneaking into gated communities to walk her almost perfect dog, Pepper. Her latest Samhain Publishing e-Book release is the contemporary romance, A Forever Kind of Guy.*



# The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



# The Best Revenge

**“Revenge is sweet and not fattening.”**

— Alfred Hitchcock

In my most-recent release, *Vamparazzi*, I exorcised a demon of my own by basing a fictional character on a real person. Although I have occasionally culled one or two traits from people I know to use in characterization, this was the first time I’ve ever based a character on a real-life acquaintance. And in doing so, I discovered that writing someone you really loathe into a novel is amazingly satisfying and cleansing. I should do this more often!

*Vamparazzi* is the fourth novel in my Esther Diamond urban fantasy series, published by DAW Books. Esther is a struggling actress in contemporary New York who gets involved in various supernatural misadventures. In this novel, she has a supporting role in *The Vampyre*, an off-Broadway show that is a (wholly fictional) stage adaptation of the (real) 19th Century story by Dr. John Polidori.

The eponymous lead character in the show, i.e. the vampire (or vampyre), is played by an attention-seeking D-list celebrity who attracts throngs of vampire groupies and paparazzi. During Halloween weekend, when vamparazzi hysteria around the theater reaches its height, there is a mysterious murder by exsanguination. Esther Diamond’s efforts to keep the curtain from coming down on her show bring her into contact with crazed vampire fans, anti-vampire activists, real vampires, and an ancient cult of ruthless vampire hunters. Meanwhile, a skeptical cop who is Esther’s ex-almost-boyfriend is convinced that she may be the killer’s next target.

I had a lot of fun with this story in multiple ways. One of the *best* ways involved taking much-needed revenge on a former neighbor of mine.

*The Vampyre* has two female characters, both of whom get eaten by the vampire, a seductively destructive aristocrat who uses and abuses people without conscience or compassion. (Dr. John Polidori exercised vengeance himself, as it happens, by basing the character identifiably on his former employer, Lord Byron.) Esther Diamond plays one of the female vampire victims. The other is played by an actress whom Esther and the other characters in the novel refer to as Mad Rachel. This is derived from the nickname I privately used for the real-life person on whom I based Rachel.

Around the time I was starting to plot *Vamparazzi*, a longed-for event was occurring in my life; a very troublesome neighbor was finally moving out of the building I live in. Over the course of the previous year, I had filed multiple formal complaints against her with the management of this complex. I knew that my ▶

complaints were being followed up and acted on; yet my neighbor's behavior never changed or improved. Around the time I was reluctantly considering moving, solely because I couldn't stand living near her any longer ... I found out that she was preparing to move. *Thank God.*

Crazy Girl was the single noisiest person I've ever been exposed to. Moreover, because she kept unconventional hours, her shrieking hysterics, tearful rages, and foul-mouthed fits regularly woke up me at 2:00 AM and continued well past 4:00 AM. Virtually all of Crazy Girl's screaming tantrums and profanity-laced hysteria occurred when quarreling with her visiting boyfriend. They had a relationship that made mob wars look peaceful by comparison, and the fights were as frequent as they were noisy and melodramatic.

Even after being notified by management that her venomous rages and tearful tantrums were waking up neighbors in the middle of the night, Crazy Girl continued carrying on having shouting fights and shrieking hysterics regularly in the public areas of this building (the lobby, the hallways, the front stoop, the lawn directly outside her neighbors' windows and balconies) at 3:00 AM. Even after being made aware of multiple complaints, she continued noisily exposing her personal problems in public.

Thus I know that she found her boyfriend unreliable and untrustworthy, that she believed he lied to her and let her down on many occasions, and that she often doubted whether he really cared about her. I know the squalid details of her many grievances against him precisely because she constantly screeched them at full-volume *right* outside my doors and windows. And this went on regularly whether or not the boyfriend was *here*, since Crazy Girl frequently enacted her half of these noisy late-night quarrels on her cell phone.

Indeed, even when not shrieking at the boyfriend, Crazy Girl lived with her cell phone glued to her ear, yammering about her petty complaints and gripes in a voice like a foghorn—also *right* outside my doors and windows. Her voice, yakking non-stop on her cell, regularly penetrated every room of my home except my bathroom.

Nor did the intrusive volume reduce when she was inside her own abode. She often screamed so loudly at her boyfriend, either in person or on the phone, that the noise came straight through the wall separating our places. (Whereas, for example, during the past year that a family of four has been living there, I've never heard a thing.) Moreover, Crazy Girl was prone to fits of physical violence in which she'd throw things around her home so ferociously that it would make *my* place shake. (This is why my mother urged me never to confront her directly, lest her violence escalate to stabbing or shooting a hapless neighbor—i.e. *me*.)

Well, apparently tired of regular calls from management asking her to stop being a shocking nuisance to her neighbors, Crazy Girl finally decided to move out. In fact, when she left here, she moved *in* with the boyfriend with whom she spent most of her time having those shrieking, wailing, foul-mouthed fights. On the one hand, the two of them are no doubt enduring the fate they deserve; on the other, *boy*, do I pity whoever their neighbors are now. Her final departure from here was so noisy that, until I realized what was going on, I actually thought there was a riot occurring outside my office window.

Needless to say, there was much joy and rapture *chez moi* when Crazy Girl's moving truck disappeared around the corner and I realized I would never hear her dulcet tones again. And yet ... because the stress she inflicted had by then become so habitual around here, I found that even though she was gone, I couldn't shake her off. *Every* time I heard the lobby door open (it's right next to my office) I flinched in expectation of a screaming fit penetrating my walls. Each time I heard someone passing by my windows, I braced myself for wailing hysterics. When new neighbors moved in to her place, I kept waiting for a tantrum of building-shaking violence.

Until finally, to exorcise this demon that lingered in Crazy Girl's wake ... I wrote her into *Vamparazzi* as Mad Rachel, a shrieking, wailing, foul-mouthed, self-obsessed actress who shares a dressing room with my exasperated protagonist, Esther Diamond. Mad Rachel lives with a cell phone glued to her ear, engages in constant screaming matches with her boyfriend, ignores repeated reprimands for disrupting performances of *The Vampire* with this behavior, and has such noisy hysterics in any crisis that even hardened New York cops and bloodthirsty vampires can't cope with being around her.

And you know what? It felt *great* to write this. It was some of the most fun I ever had at the keyboard!

It also banished the ghost of Crazy Girl from my home at long last. Having my protagonist convey to readers what it's like for her to share a dressing room with Mad Rachel, eight shows per week, relieved the burden of stress that I was still carrying from having unwillingly shared my living space with Crazy Girl. It also gave me psychological closure (and *great* satisfaction) to inflict on Mad Rachel the well-merited indignities that, alas, I could not inflict on Crazy Girl in real life (well, not without incurring a lot of complications and possibly a police record).

Needless to say, even though I doubt Crazy Girl will ever know about the book (I doubt she knew my name or that I was a writer, and I *really* doubt that she reads books), I have protected myself from a nuisance lawsuit. Mad Rachel lives in a different city, has a different name, and works in a different profession than Crazy Girl, and whatever details about Crazy Girl's personal life I had the misfortune of knowing are *not* in the novel (apart from the fact that she fought constantly with her boyfriend). Only the *behavior* of the character is identical to the neighbor who made my life hell for over a year.

There is, however, one drawback to this very satisfying conclusion to that noisily tawdry chapter in my home life. I suspect that when people read the book, they'll find Mad Rachel too extreme, too unbelievable, too "over the top" to be credible. And they will think this, ironically, of the only character whose behavior I have ever based entirely on that of a real person.

*Vamparazzi* is currently available wherever books are sold. Laura is hard at work on the next Esther Diamond novel, *Polterheist*, but has yet to decide what real-life person to take vengeance on in this book.

## Coming in December *Nink*:

*New! Rules, New! Tools Recaps* will continue in the December issue of *Nink*.

## ***Business Briefs***

### **Highlights of the Aptara Third Annual eBook Survey**

94% of trade publishers are developing or plan to develop e-books.

Out of 1,350 publishers who responded overall, 20% of trade publishers said 10% of their revenue is from e-books.

13% reported no e-book sales.

Amazon is responsible for 38% of e-book sales for all publishers and 56% for trade publishers.

Apple's iBookstore and iTunes sales were 2% and 1% respectively.

The full survey can be viewed at <http://www.aptaracorp.com/home/survey/>.

### **Harper Backlist OnDemand**

HarperCollins will offer 5,000 trade paperback (children's and adult) titles for On Demand Books' Espresso Book Machine. The titles will be available in November; titles from Zondervan and HC Canada will be added during the first quarter of 2012

*Publishers Weekly*



## New! Rules. New! Tools: The ReCap

### Marketing Is Not Your Enemy *Continued from page 14* ▶

- ▶ Make a video and post it on YouTube. Authors underestimate the value of this venue.
- ▶ Make sure your e-books include a list with links to your other books, an excerpt from at least one of the books, and a subscription to your newsletter.

Additional useful community-building sites include:

- ▶ [www.books.gather.com](http://www.books.gather.com), an NPR offshoot with lots of readers;
- ▶ [www.eons.com](http://www.eons.com), a site for baby boomers;
- ▶ [www.redroom.com](http://www.redroom.com), a site for readers and writers;
- ▶ [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com), a young, graphic-based site that isn't very useful for text content at this time.
- ▶ [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)
- ▶ [www.shelfari.com](http://www.shelfari.com).

Mr. Wilks recommends authors read David Meerman Scott's book, *The New Rules Of Marketing & PR*, which he described as an excellent book on social media relationship building, and *The Zen Of Social Media Marketing* by Shama Kabani (2010), which he described as the best book on the subject. Older books, he said, are already obsolete in this fast-changing area. He added that M.J. Rose is coming out with a book that explains her successful PR techniques.

More information about providing good content for promotional activities, such as blog sites, is available on [www.chrisbrogan.com](http://www.chrisbrogan.com) and [www.wegrowmedia.com](http://www.wegrowmedia.com). Contact Mr. Wilk at @dwilk on Twitter, or friend him on Facebook.

*Joanne Pence is author of the Angie Amalfi mystery series published by Harper and Avon, and is currently working on a paranormal thriller. She lives in Boise, Idaho.*

### It's Dues Renewal Time....

Renew easily online at the NINC website: <http://www.ninc.com>

Remember to fill in the Authors' Coalition form so that NINC can receive its fair share of the ACA funds.

You need NINC, and NINC needs you. Please renew now.

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