

N I N K

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New! Rules. New! Tools: The ReCap

Promoting Your Work In 2011 And Beyond

Panelists: Joan Schulhafer, Schulhafer Publishing and Media Consulting; Rebecca Crowley, RTC Publicity; Sheila Clover English, Marketing and Multi-media Specialist; Mark Milot, President, Radiator Media; Billy Hume, CEO, Radiator Media

BY JOANNE PENCE

Ten years ago, Sheila English began making book trailers, and is now with Circle of Seven Productions (www.cosproductions.com). Despite what you hear, she said, book trailers aren't dead, and will live as long as there is YouTube. Videos are an excellent means for search engine optimization, but an author website should be every author's Number One means of promotion and should be connected to Facebook and Twitter. However, she cautions that sites such as Facebook can't be depended upon to provide promotional support forever, or to maintain contacts forever. Things can change quickly. For example, if an author mistakenly

announces a contest and Facebook takes down the page, all those valuable data and contacts will be lost.

Joan Schulhafer (www.joanschulhafer.com) emphasized that content on an author website is important. Keep it fresh, and find out what people respond to most on the site.

She keeps an Excel spreadsheet to chart which reviewers reviewed which book, and includes anything of interest that she might learn about the reviewers in order to create a personal connection to them. She pointed out that authors sending out press releases should be sure to send their publicists a copy to keep them in the loop.

Rebecca Crowley (www.rtcpublicity.com) suggested that authors seeking help with publicity should look for people who are passionate

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Novelists, Inc.

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Jasmine Cresswell

Maggie Osborne
Marianne Shock

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

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Introducing...

The following authors have applied for membership in NINC and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 15 days of this Nink issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of NINC. For further information or to recommend eligible writers, contact:

Membership Chair: James LePore
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New Applicants:

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Debra Webb, Huntsville, AL

Janis Susan May Patterson (Janis Susan May, Janis
Patterson), Dallas, TX

Mary Masters (Josie Metcalfe), Launceston, Cornwall, UK

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Kim Jacobs (Maddie James, Mia Jae, Kim Whalen),
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Jules Bennett, Minford, OH

Paula Hamilton, San Marco, TX

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James Thompson, Helsinki, Uusimaa, Finland

Melynda Andrews (Melynda Beth Skinner, Melynda Beth
Andrews), Winter Park, FL

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.

It's been an honor...

It truly has been an honor being President of NINC but... and it's a BIG but... I couldn't have accomplished anything without the Board. I was lucky to have a fantastic Board that worked together to make things happen. And believe me when I tell you that they worked hard. Endless hours of emails, discussions, and phone meetings to make certain that all the issues we tackled were done for the benefit of making NINC an even stronger and more vital organization for its members.

Lou Aronica, President-elect, was invaluable with his background in publishing, and was the best right-hand man a President could ask for. Marci Evanick, Treasurer, is simpatico with budgets and a President's dream to have as a treasurer. Denise Agnew, Secretary extraordinaire, recorded everything beautifully for posterity and for all of you to read anytime you want. Jean Brashear, Advisory Council Rep, is one gracious and patient woman. She answered all our questions and provided us with great insight to the organization. I was extra blessed to have Marianna Jameson as Newsletter Editor. She not only did a fabulous job with the newsletter all year, but her background in technical writing was priceless as the Board tackled the changes made to the By-laws and P&PM. And then there's Kasey Michaels, Conference Chair, who you all know is simply remarkable as is her band of tireless helpers. Kasey made this year's conference a "must" for professional writers, and we got many new members because of it.

I'm keeping my column short since you've already heard from me in my farewell President's Message email. As I promised in the beginning of my term, I'd let you all know how the experiment went. So if you haven't read it yet, take a look. The results were more than I hoped for.

With changes happening every day in the publishing industry, NINC is fast becoming a must-have source for professional authors. It's the place to be if you're serious about your writing career. So before I bid you all adieu, I'll issue my last official request/command: GO RENEW NOW! Don't wait! Go to the website <http://www.NINC.com/>, log in, and renew your membership. The dues are a bargain and well worth it!

Time to go. Again it has truly been an honor being your President. Thank you all for the opportunity. It's been memorable.

Donna Fletcher



The Novelists, Inc. Board members for 2012 are:

Lou Aronica, President
Laura Castoro, President-elect
Trish Jensen, Treasurer
Denise Agnew, Secretary
Marianna Jameson, Newsletter Editor
Pat McLinn, Advisory Council Representative

The Nominating Committee members for 2012 are:

Donna Fletcher, Chair
Eileen Wilks
Charlotte Hubbard
Ann Roth
Ann Josephson (Ann Jacobs)
Lynn Smith (Lynne Michaels)

Promoting Your Work in 2012 and Beyond

Continued from page 1 ▶ and organized. A written marketing plan is also a must so that a list of everything that needs to be done, and who should do it, is maintained in one place. Ideally, it will be a one-year plan with a month-by-month list of tasks.

Mark Milot (www.radiatortransmedia.com) believes the quality of the content is what really matters. Billy Hume talked about the way music, games, and books are all merging. He stated that an author's competition is not (just) other authors. Just as games have cut into music sales a lot, a book's competition comes from other media; book trailers are up against Lady Gaga videos, so it can be a challenge to get people to watch them. Ms. English agreed that the book industry is following the music industry, and that an author's competition is movies, TV, and games more so than other authors.

Mr. Hume said he was shocked to learn that traditionally published authors don't talk directly to graphic artists about their covers. He couldn't imagine a musician not being involved in jacket design.

New media dominated much of the discussion. Ms. English pointed out that about 30-40% of videos are being watched on mobile devices rather than computers. To underscore the point, she passed around her smart phone so that the audience could see James Rollins' easy-to-use new app, which provides a lot of additional content and interaction for readers, and includes a video and a ringtone. She said his ringtone was downloaded 597 times within nine minutes of being posted. Some authors have had games and music videos created for their books, however the prices of such activities is quite high.

Apps will be the future of books, according to Mr. Hume. The future of computers is the tablet, he said, and if e-books are easier to buy than to steal, people will use apps to access them. Mr. Milot said not to think of an app as a website. How an app functions and manipulates content is a portal into the world of the book. It should be a new experience for the reader.

In this world of new technology, paper isn't quite dead. It is still used for press kits; for ads such as in *BookPage*, *Romantic Times*, *Locus*, and *Mystery News*; and to make review copies for the 90% of reviewers who do not read on electronic devices.

Ms. Crowley suggested using street teams (fans who are willing to help with promotion, formerly known as fan clubs) to get the word out on your book. She said that authors choosing to do their own promotion need to focus on doing a few things really well instead of spreading themselves too thin. She advised e-book authors to take the time to do everything as well as possible, including editing, and to get good reviews. Authors planning to produce a new e-book might want to create a print-on-demand hard copy for reviewers as part of the promotion strategy. She suggested mimicking traditional publishing in one respect: send out review copies early, and then give the book time to gather some reviews before publishing it.

Using QR codes to tag bookmarks and other promotional material was discussed. People can learn more about them and download software to create them on www.i-nigma.com.

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.

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

New Options for Young Readers

Algonquin Books is bringing out a new fiction line for YA and middle grades that will be headed up by Elise Howard, formerly senior vice president and associate publisher for HarperCollins Children's Books. The new line will debut in the last quarter of 2012 with approximately six titles. Move Books, a new publishing house based in Connecticut, will also make its debut in the autumn of 2012. Founded by Eileen Robinson, former executive editor at Scholastic's Children's Press, the line's initial focus will be fiction for middle-grade boys. The house plans to include picture books and non-fiction at a later date.



New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

Challenges of Copyright in the Internet Age

BY JOANNA NOVINS

Describing the publishing world as “undergoing tectonic change,” Christopher Kenneally, Director for Author Relations at the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), offered NINC members advice and information on how to proceed with caution.

Founded in 1978 as a non-profit, the CCC is a global rights broker providing industry expertise to individuals and organizations seeking to use copyrighted material, and to publishers and authors seeking to protect their rights to that material. Both CCC and the Author’s Coalition of America, of which NINC is a member, belong to the International Federation of Reproduction of Rights Organization (IFRRO), which seeks to repatriate copyrights around the world.

Before addressing the challenges to protect copyrights at a time when consumers not only have greater access to content than ever before, but also a growing expectation that content is or should be free, Mr. Kenneally outlined the “what” and “hows” of copyright.

- ▶ Article I Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution grants individuals exclusive rights to their respective writings and discoveries.
- ▶ U.S. law protects the rights of authors of “original works of authorship,” which includes both published and unpublished work.
- ▶ A copyright is the property of the author, except in cases in which an employer is considered the author, for example, commissioned works or work for hire.
- ▶ Copyrights can be transferred.
- ▶ U.S. copyright protection for works published after 1978 extends from the moment the work is created to 70 years after the death of the author.
- ▶ Works that *can* be copyrighted include written material, sound recordings, software, motion films, music, sculpture, dance, and any other material that can be “fixed.” Works that *cannot* be copyrighted include titles, names, slogans, ideas, facts, data, lists of contents or ingredients, and works in the public domain.
- ▶ “Public domain” refers to work that is either no longer protected by copyright or never was. This includes works produced by the United States government when used in the United States; works created before 1923; works created between 1923 and 1963 that were never registered for copyright protection or for which the author failed to renew copyright registration; works produced prior to 1989 for which the author failed to register or renew copyright notice; and works gifted to the public domain.

While a work is technically copyrighted even if it is never registered, Mr. Kenneally stressed that writers self-publishing should register their work at www.copyright.gov. Registering the work creates a searchable public record, establishes ownership, and provides the author divisibility of rights, which enables the author to transfer, assign, or license rights in their entirety or in part, exclusively or non-exclusively. Regis-

tration is critical in cases of alleged copyright infringement, which is defined as a violation of the copyright owner's exclusive rights. An author can't sue for it unless the work is registered.

Under the terms of "Fair Use," a consumer has a valid expectation of reuse, such as for purposes of commentary, parody, news reporting, and scholarly research.

Mr. Kenneally emphasized that there are limitations to the requirement that works protected by copyright cannot be used without permission. However, he explained that these limitations are a defense, not a right, and in copyright infringement lawsuits, the courts weigh four factors in deciding whether copyright had been violated:

- ▶ What is the purpose/character of the reuse? (It cannot be for profit.)
- ▶ Is the work factual or creative? (Factual works are more open to reuse than creative works.)
- ▶ How much of the work is being reused? (Mr. Kenneally emphasized that in such cases, there is no magic number or percentage; the question is whether the material used relates to the core of the original work.)
- ▶ What impact does the reuse have on the financial welfare of the copyright holder?

The wealth of content available on the Internet and the ease with which consumers can access it has led to increasing challenges to efforts to protect copyright holders. Complicating this, perhaps, is the U.S. law known as the "First Sale doctrine," which allows for the sale and transfer of a physical copy of the work. However, ownership of the physical copy is not the same as ownership of copyright.

Some readers/content consumers either do not understand or choose to ignore the fact that physical ownership is not the same as owning copyright (hence the belief among consumers that they should be allowed to redistribute e-books as they please). There is also a widely held misperception that any material publicly available on the Internet is in the public domain.

Writers, too, can encounter trouble with copyright law. Some believe, erroneously, that attribution is a substitute for permission (i.e., by simply acknowledging that material is drawn from copyrighted work they are freed from the responsibility of seeking permission from the copyright holder to reuse the work). Mr. Kenneally also noted that claiming that a work is "orphaned"—that the copyright holder cannot be found—does not place it in the public domain.

At the conclusion of his talk, Mr. Kenneally encouraged members to visit the CCC website at www.copyright.com/education to find a wide array of resources, including videos and podcasts, that address copyright basics, licensing information, and other issues.

Before turning her hand to writing commercial fiction, Joanna Novins, better known as Jody, spent more than a decade working for the Central Intelligence Agency, which means the bulk of her writing isn't covered by copyright. It is, however, classified.

Business Briefs

Berkley/NAL Becomes an e-Book Distributor

Berkley/NAL's new e-book imprint, InterMix, will make its debut in January 2012 and will focus on mass market genres, initially romance. Among the first titles featured will be 11 Nora Roberts reprints that have never been offered in a digital format before. The price point will be \$6.99. February's selections will include six Signet Regency romances. After that, three Regency romances will be released each month. A list of all the titles to be released is not available as of press time, but the publisher has announced that the titles will include an additional seven titles by Nora Roberts and the Guinevere Jones series by Jayne Ann Krentz, originally published by Dell under the pseudonym Jayne Castle.



New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

Editors on the Digital Frontier

An Editor Panel with Paula Eykelhoff, executive editor, MIRA Books; Angela James, executive editor, Carina Press; and Deborah Werksman, editorial manager, Sourcebooks Inc.

BY LAURA PHILLIPS

The speakers dove right into the good stuff when the workshop began.

Print vs. Digital

While the total percentage of digital sales is rising, actual numbers vary widely among publishers and imprints. Deborah Werksman said fiction sales at Sourcebooks are about 40 percent digital with company-wide figures closer to 30 percent. Children's books, she said, are converting more slowly to digital. At Harlequin, the company-wide average is 15-20 percent digital, according to Angela James, with Carina Press sales at 100 percent due to that imprint's digital mandate.

Now Seeking . . . (a.k.a. Trends)

Ms. Werksman said paranormal seems to be holding its own at Sourcebooks, but submissions should be unique in some way. The American Revolution setting is doing well in the library market, but not selling in the numbers necessary for trade and mass market. Sub-genres that are doing well include contemporaries, emotional stories, romantic suspense, men in uniform, and dark suspense. She loves historicals and is particularly looking for Victorian and Georgian period books.

Paula Eykelhoff said romantic suspense is fading somewhat and she thinks readers are shying away from fear-based books. Vampire stories and community-focused women's fiction are doing well, and ghost stories are resurging. When reviewing submissions, she looks for an element of unpredictability, relevance, recognizable emotional truths, and a way of getting to the happily ever after that is unique.

Ms. James reminded the audience that Carina Press specializes in the unusual. They do well with contemporary romance, and have hit the *New York Times* digital list. She's particularly looking for novel-length erotic, fantasy, and science-fiction. Carina no longer acquires women's fiction.

E-book Pricing

In response to a question about efforts to establish a standard price range, Ms. Werksman noted that publishers cannot legally confer on that issue because it could be construed as price-fixing. She added that publishers are experimenting with price points and short-term promotional pricing.

Ms. James said the price of 99 cents is promotional pricing, not a sustainable price point for a publisher that wants to stay in business. She advised authors to consider the message a given price sends to readers and avoid underselling the value of intellectual property. She also doesn't think e-books should be priced the same as or higher than print.

Ms. Werksman said experiments in the late '90s proved readers were not willing to pay extra for books that included extra content, which made it difficult for publishers to recoup the cost of providing the extra content (i.e. licensing fees). Device limitations also pose challenges when enhanced content versions are being considered.



Ms. Eykelhoff said enhanced content seems to be more effective in non-fiction books. She concurred with Ms. James' assessment that readers don't consider a reader's guide, a Q&A, or research notes to be enhanced content worth paying for. Authors would do better, they both advised, to provide those features via a website. They noted that Harlequin has been this doing for many years.

Other Tips:

When seeking a new publisher, provide your digital numbers in addition to the print figures available through Bookscan. Make sure the sales figures include Walmart and any other major accounts not included in Bookscan.

According to Ms. Werksman, branding is about the experience: look to your heat levels, your known sweet spot, and what readers will come back to. Most importantly, is this the book of your reader's heart? Ms. Eykelhoff, however, said branding involves consistency in how you present yourself, your writing, and your social media self. Ms. James added that branding works best when you have a consistent book, when you don't jump among genres, and when you don't write for too many publishers. The latter two issues, jumping genres and writing for too many publishers, she said, makes it difficult for publishers to concentrate marketing dollars behind you.

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.

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.



New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

You're Terminated! The Ultimate Solution to U.S. Rights Reversion

BY SUSAN GABLE

Tick...tick...tick...

Heads up! There's a meteor hurtling towards the publishing industry and it's good news for authors.

It's called the Termination Right. (See 17 CFR 201.1 for details.)

If you're interested in getting your publishing rights reverted from your publisher and it seems it's never going to happen, literary attorney Elaine English brought good news to the NINC Conference: *never* actually only lasts 35 years.

In 1978, new U.S. copyright laws took effect. These laws supersede anything written in your contract and were written to protect creators of intellectual property from the tectonic-type changes that have come to pass in the world since then.

This option is extremely time sensitive. It provides a five-year window for action that begins 35 years from the publication of the work, or 40 years after signing the publication contract, whichever term ends earlier. If you don't take advantage of this opportunity, it is lost to you. Even if you don't want the rights actually returned to you, this gives you the chance (and leverage) to renegotiate.

If you co-wrote a project, a simple majority must agree to employ the Termination Right. (Which, if there are only two of you, and you can't agree, is impossible to have happen.)

The time to begin is two years before the window opens. You must provide notice in writing, signed by you or your duly authorized agent, and serve it to the publisher. If the publisher is no longer in business, you must track down who bought/inherited your rights. State the effective date of termination, which must, by law, be at least two years from the date of the notification. Send a copy of the notice to the copyright office as well. (www.Copyright.gov) The copyright does NOT have to be officially registered for the Termination Right to be invoked.

On the effective date, *all rights* that were granted, including those never used, will revert back to you. In the case of multi-authored projects, termination will impact all of the authors, not just those who agreed to it.

Expect your publisher not to be happy on receiving this notice.

A further grant of rights to a new publisher is valid *only* if made after the effective date of termination. (In other words, you can't enter into a new contract with a new publisher for the work until after that termination date in your termination notice.) If the original publisher wants to negotiate a new contract with revised terms and you agree, you're free to do so at any time. With a multi-author project, a new contract is only valid if signed by the *same number* of authors that was required for termination. (It doesn't have to be the same authors, just the same number of the authors.)

If you do not terminate, the contract stays in effect.

Termination Right does not apply to works-for-hire because the writer didn't hold the copyright in the first place, and this is tied to copyright and copyright law.

If the author is dead, Termination Right can still be applied, according to the law, in a very specific manner. (See Section 203 of the law.) The surviving spouse, children, and/or grandchildren are all given rights here that supersede anything you stipulated in your will. Siblings are not granted the

Continued on page 11 ►



New! Rules. New! Tools: The ReCap

Looking Good, Selling More: E-Books From the Inside Out

BY BARBARA MEYERS

To writers planning to get a piece of the e-book pie and increase their e-books' presence and sales, Nina Paules strongly suggested that a *professional* presentation can not be over-emphasized.

She recommended following these tips:

Covers

- ▶ Online book browsers are viewing thumbnail-sized images, so a cover should not be too busy.
- ▶ Avoid white and *never* use a black and white cover. (Amazon, B&N, and iBooks do not allow black and white covers.)
- ▶ Make the author name and title as large as possible.

Formatting and Layout

- ▶ Start chapters on a new page. (You can code a style sheet to set new chapters on a new page in your word processing program.)
- ▶ Drop chapter headings a few lines just as they are in print books. (Currently, the Smashwords program does not support this.)
- ▶ Add a flourish, if possible, with chapter headings.
- ▶ Do not put spaces between paragraphs because the space looks big on an e-reading device. Avoid blank lines even between scene breaks. Use asterisks instead.
- ▶ Make sure that any images you plan to use within the body of your book are in .png format.

Front/Back Matter

- ▶ Legalese belongs in front as it is protection for the author.
- ▶ Much of the front matter can be included at the back instead, but be aware that, while doing this will save sample space, it may make the book look less professional.
- ▶ "Previously published by" information that includes the name of the previous publisher is not strictly necessary for reprints of backlist titles. However, if there's been a title change, this information should be included. For example, a book retitled *The Queen's Treasure*, would state "Previously published as *The King's Ransom*."
- ▶ Put most of the praise list at the end, as well as your author bio. If you include a dedication at the front, it should be brief, meaningful, and relevant, and create a reader connection, such as a book dedicated to a family member or close friend.

Ms. Paules predicts we will see a trend of multi-media in e-books, such as embedding one or more videos inside. For example, authors are now inserting brief video teasers for the next book. Such a video needs to be very short or a reader may lose interest (30 seconds is the recommended maximum length); you also don't want to give away the entire premise of the book in the teaser. Besides, on certain devices, downloading a longer video can be time-consuming. Ideally, what should follow a video teaser or a really good ▶

excerpt from an upcoming book is a link to a page on the author’s website where a reader can access “buy” links to all of the author’s books.

Two of the smartest things to do when preparing an e-book are:

- ▶ Include a brief “Dear Reader” letter. If the e-book is a reprint or an updated version of an earlier book, let the reader know. Add a little bit about why you wrote the book and what it means to you. Connect with your readers.
- ▶ Do an “author’s cut” edition. It may push your book into bestsellerdom.

Ideally, the goal with e-books is to blend the traditional book format with technology. With that in mind, Ms. Paules said that the most important concept writers have to be aware of as we navigate e-book publishing ventures is that e-book readers equate *professional looking* with *not dreck*.

“Books that look good,” she said, “sell more.”

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.



New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

You're Terminated! Continued from page 9 ▶

right to terminate. The majority (again, a simple majority, and some of the “votes” are assigned in block format according to the law) of the heirs must agree to terminate the rights. If there are no heirs, the executor you appoint should be able to terminate. If your co-author is deceased, you will be dealing with his/her heirs as specified in the law.

Be wary of new contracts that contain clauses that try to force terms onto negotiations relating to termination of rights. (For example, forcing the author to provide the publisher the opportunity to match other offers.)

So, to get your rights back, get your timelines in order and be prepared to start two years in advance of the window.

Thirty-five years pass by way faster than most of us want to admit.

Tick...tick...tick...

Susan Gable loved the 2011 NINC Conference, and is excited about the new possibilities open to writers. Choices! Options! More creative freedom. And with freedom, comes work and responsibility, and she's up to the challenge. Her most recent trad-pubbed novel, As Good as His Word, from Harlequin Superromance, came out in May of 2011, but lives (probably forever?) in e-book form, along with the two other Hawkins brothers books, A Kid to the Rescue and The Family Plan.

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.



New! Rules. New! Tools.: The ReCap

Have You Heard?

BY LYNN KERSTAN

Barbara Vey is a book blogger with a twist. Her blog, *Beyond Her Book*, (<http://blogs.publishersweekly.com/blogs/beyondherbook>), is published by *Publishers Weekly* on its website. And they recruited her to do it!

“I’m a reader, not a writer,” she said when Karen Holt issued the invitation to blog. “Send books.” A life-long reader, Ms. Vey claims to have read a book a day for most of her life. She’d lug home bags of books from the library. She even took a cruise with 30 authors on board, read a book by each one, and loved everything they wrote. It felt, she said, as if they were “writing to me alone.”

I wish we could clone Barbara Vey, but she’s utterly unique. When she agreed to blog at *PW*, she knew little about publishing and immediately set out to discover what other readers knew and thought. She asked people on the streets what “women’s fiction” meant. “Books set in the 1950s,” a young woman said. A guy thought it was any book with people kissing on the cover.

Advised by her son to simply write her blog as if telling a story to a friend, she was soon comfortable expressing her opinions and eliciting opinions from other readers. Now, after four years “in the biz,” she’s still a dedicated reader, but one with a huge following. She understands readers, what they want, and what they don’t want. At the NINC conference, she had a lot of suggestions for authors trying to brand themselves, promote their books, and become discovered by readers:

- ▶ Show them a human with flaws, she advises. A regular person.
- ▶ Present yourself regularly in social media. Yes, that means Facebook (start with a Fan Page) and Twitter.
- ▶ Stay true to yourself.
- ▶ Be willing to laugh at yourself. She likes to tell about the messes she gets in, the sort anyone can identify with, because that creates a personal bond.

She cautions that, if upset, an author should not put strong emotions online—political, religious, health problems, and the like. “Don’t beat me up with stuff,” she says. And that includes flogging your book incessantly. Constant “buy my book” pleas drive fans away.

Instead, cultivate friends and fellow authors who will recommend you to others (and return the service, of course). Create an informal “cooperative” in which you and other authors help readers to find new authors and books. “Be the one to help build reader loyalty.” Always reply to readers and answer their questions.

When a post or tweet goes out with your name on it, you’d better be the one who sent it. Readers don’t like to be deceived, and if they find out, you are dishwater. Should your assistant occasionally post for you, they should be *Your Words* and she must identify herself, not pretend to be you.

Readers don’t care about writing stuff like research or the “process” or the “business.” I’m sure there are exceptions, but Ms. Vey was speaking for the majority. Complaining and whining are never welcome.

Ms. Vey is a strong believer in word-of-mouth promotion. She involves herself in reader/author get-togethers and recommends that authors participate in charity walks and other activities in which people interact and have something in common. Not for promotion purposes, of course, but if

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Not Your Usual Writing Advice — Aaaah...the Alpha State

BY JOANN GROTE

***“The secret of the receptive must be bought in stillness;
within stillness there remains the potential for action.”***

– Zhou Xuanjiing



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

In my September 2011 column, I discussed how writing as soon as possible after awakening may help a writer access creativity by taking advantage of the hypnagogic period—that hazy time right after you awaken. There’s a reason the hypnagogic period is such a creative time: the mind is in the Alpha state.

During the Alpha state, our brain waves slow to eight to fourteen cycles per second from our normal waking, active Beta state of thirteen to twenty-five cycles per second. During the Alpha state, one is relaxed, but alert, aware and focused.

It’s relatively easy to be jerked out of the Alpha state. If a loud alarm clock awakens you, it can throw you into the Beta state. In that case, moving directly to the computer to work on your manuscript probably won’t be as effective as waking naturally and going directly to your writing. You may want to try auto-suggestion to awaken you. Before going to sleep, tell yourself what time you are going to wake up. I’ve practiced this for years and it’s seldom failed me. If I absolutely must awaken at a certain time, in order to be at a conference workshop on time, for instance, I will still set an alarm for backup, but normally I awake a couple of minutes before the alarm is set to go off.

You can’t awaken without an alarm loud enough to wake the dead? Are you a morning person and write at other times of the day? Then it’s lucky for you that the hypnagogic period isn’t the only way to access the creativity-enhancing Alpha state.

Thomas Edison purposely accessed the Alpha state in the middle of his working day by taking naps. He’d hold an item in his hands. When he fell asleep and his hands relaxed, the item would fall to the floor and awaken him. Often he found a solution he’d been seeking came to him after a nap. To increase the effectiveness of a nap for creativity/problem-solving purposes, focus on the problem as you fall asleep. Ask yourself a specific question, such as “How does the heroine get away after the criminal abducts her?”

Progressive relaxation is another way to access the Alpha state. Sit or recline in a relaxed position. Close your eyes. Take a few deep, rhythmic breaths. Visualize tension flowing out of your body through your fingertips or toes. Then concentrate on relaxing one part of your body at a time, beginning with your toes and working up to your face. If you haven’t done this before, you may need to practice a few times before you feel truly relaxed and fall into the Alpha state. The more you practice the method, you will likely find yourself entering the Alpha state more quickly. When you feel you’ve entered the relaxed state, direct your thoughts toward your manuscript and move to your writing space.

Mindfulness meditation has been used for centuries to access the Alpha state. According to Sue McGreevey in her article, “Turn Down the Volume” (*Harvard Science*, April 22, 2011), mindfulness meditation results in “an improved ability to regulate ... the alpha rhythm. This rhythm is thought to ‘turn down the volume’ on distracting information.” She also noted that mindfulness meditation “has been associated ▶

with improved performance on attention-based tasks,” which makes sense since meditation teaches one to allow distracting thoughts to drift away.

The benefits of meditation have been reported to last throughout the day, but writers may benefit most for creative purposes by moving from meditation directly to their manuscripts.

Can gardening, knitting, or cleaning house help you access the Alpha state? “Any type of repetitive motor activity can calm the brain,” according to Harvard neurologist Marie Pasinski, author of *Beautiful Brain, Beautiful You*. Perhaps that’s why NINC member Anna Jacobs finds “playing cards on the computer, mindlessly, for up to half-an-hour sometimes, restarts my imagination and gets me moving on a story that’s slowed down.”

When a deadline looms, we often become more wired and feel we need to spend every waking moment moving the manuscript forward. Stress grows as each day rolls past with what appears to be increasing speed. Maybe an easier, more efficient way to meet our deadlines is to take time to calm and focus our minds with the Alpha state.

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



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the chance pops up, let them know you’re an author, which often leads to questions. Keep the answers light and brief, and turn the conversation back to them. Whenever you leave the house, remember that you want people to *like* you, and maybe tell others about meeting a famous author who was “so nice.” Word spreads. People Google you.

“You never know who your next reader will be,” she said. “Don’t be negative online. Do not engage with anyone who criticizes or insults you. Do not feed the fire.”

Barbara Vey is a force of nature—funny, charming, laid-back, practical, and very wise. When asked what causes her to be loyal to an author, she replied, “People who pull you in. Characters that you want to spend time with.”

Check out her website to see what she wrote about the conference, the pictures of NINC-ers, and the video interview with Mark Coker of Smashwords. She’s still a voracious reader, so drop by her Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/barbaravey>) and maybe ask if she’d like you to send her a book. No hard sell, though!

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) came out in print and online in November.

Coming in January Nink:

New! Rules, New! Tools Recaps will wrap up in the January issue of Nink.



WRITING is TAXING

By Diane Kelly

Filing or Paying Late Can Cost You

As writers, we're used to working with deadlines. Like our publishers, the IRS imposes deadlines. We are given a deadline of April 15 for paying all remaining taxes due for the preceding tax year. We're also given a deadline of April 15 to file our tax return, though the IRS will grant us an additional six months of time if we file Form 4868 by April 15 to request the extension.

Unfortunately, deadlines can sometimes be difficult to meet. Also unfortunately, if you file and/or pay your taxes late, it may cost you.

Interest

If you do not pay in full by the payment due date of April 15, you will be charged interest on the unpaid balance at the federal short-term rate plus three percent. Interest is compounded daily. Sheesh!

I'm often asked whether interest is negotiable. The answer is generally no. The only way to settle the interest for less than the full amount is through a formal Offer in Compromise settlement offer, and the settlement offer will be accepted only if you are in extremely severe financial straits.

Late Payment Penalty

In addition to interest, the IRS will assess a late-payment penalty of one-half of one percent (.5%) of the net balance due for each month or partial month that the taxes remain outstanding. If you are sent a demand for immediate payment or notice of levy and still fail to pay, the penalty will be increased to one percent (1%). However, if you enter into an installment agreement to pay the taxes due, the penalty will be reduced to one-quarter of one percent (.25%).

Filing an extension gives you additional time in which to file your return, but it does not give you additional time in which to pay the taxes due. *The taxes are due on April 15 whether or not you file an extension.* However, while interest will apply to the unpaid balance, the IRS will not impose the late-payment penalty if the full remaining amount of tax due is paid with a return filed during the extension period and the amount is not more than ten percent (10%) of the total tax liability.

Late Filing Penalty

A late-filing penalty of five percent (5%) per month applies to each month or partial month until the return is filed. The minimum late-filing penalty is \$135 or 100% of the amount of tax shown on the return. Interesting that the late-filing penalty is greater than the late-payment penalty, isn't it? This shows that the IRS wants us to report our tax liability, even if we can't immediately pay the taxes owed.

If both penalties apply, the late-filing penalty will be reduced by the amount of the late-payment penalty so that the total combined rate will be five percent (5%) for the applicable time period. In essence, this eliminates the late-payment penalty for the period in which both penalties apply.

Now for Some Good News

The good news is that the late-payment and late-filing penalties are discretionary, meaning they can be negotiated. If reasonable cause exists for your late filing or late payment, the IRS can waive these penalties. You do not have to file a formal Offer in Compromise to negotiate these penalties.

The IRS says that "[r]easonable cause relief is generally granted when the taxpayer exercises ordinary business care and prudence in determining their tax obligations, but is then unable to comply with those

same obligations." In my experience, the IRS is fairly lenient in this respect and is often willing to waive the penalties.

If you find yourself owing a late-payment or late-filing penalty, write a letter to the IRS in which you clearly and specifically state the facts that led to your late filing or payment. For instance, if a computer crash forced you to recreate your data, let them know. Substantiate your argument by attaching a copy of the repair receipt or the receipt for the new computer you bought. If you or a family member suffered an illness that disabled you from handling your financial matters, attach copies of medical bills or doctor's reports.

Although some of the information in the IRS literature claims that reasonable cause does not include situations in which a professional tax preparer fails to file a timely return, it has been my experience that the IRS does, in fact, show mercy to those who have not been well served by their paid tax preparer.

The IRS will also likely take pity on you if you failed to pay on time because you had an unusual year. If you were unable to pay all of your taxes timely because you received an unexpectedly large royalty and spent more of it than you should have on accumulated bills or because you didn't do a good job of estimating the taxes due, or if you received a royalty much later than anticipated and were therefore unable to pay on time, the IRS may waive the penalties.

Your payment and filing history is critical. If you make a habit of paying and/or filing late, the IRS may refuse to waive the penalties. But if you normally file and pay on time, they may give you the benefit of the doubt even if your arguments for reasonable cause are weak.

Diane Kelly is the author of the humorous "Death & Taxes" mystery series. Visit Diane at www.dianekelly.com.

Business Briefs

Visit the Amazon ... Subscription Library?

Amazon has launched its Kindle Owners Lending Library, available only to Amazon Prime members. The Amazon Prime membership costs \$79 per year in return for certain privileges, such as free shipping. The new program will allow Prime members to download one e-book to their Kindles at no cost each month. At this point in time, it will likely be a book from a mid-sized or smaller house because the "Big Six" publishers have elected not to participate, and it probably won't be a bestseller (prior to its inclusion in the program, anyway...). The free books will be limited to one per month per Prime member. There is no "return date," although members may only "borrow" one book at a time. It was rumored in March 2011 that Prime members would receive a free Kindle, however nothing has come of that.

Dueling Readers

The Kindle Fire was released to great fanfare in mid-November, with the Nook Tablet appearing a few days later. Ah, let the madness begin. First, let's consider the price variations: the Fire is \$199 and the Tablet is \$250. The weight difference, however, is negligible: the Tablet weighs in at 14.1 ounces and the Fire at 14.6. But ... storage? The Nook Tablet offers a whopping 16 Gigabytes to the Kindle Fire's eight Gigs, and the Tablet provides one Gig of RAM compared to the Fire's 512 Megabytes. The Tablet's battery will provide 11.5 hours of reading time or nine hours of video; the Fire offers eight hours of reading time and seven-and-a-half hours of video with Wi-Fi off. We note that Barnes & Noble dropped its prices on other models of their e-readers; the Nook Simple Touch, now \$99, is competitive with the Kindle Touch, which also sells for \$99. For comic lovers, DC Comics will be an Amazon exclusive, while Marvel Comics will be a B&N exclusive. Finally, we predict that holiday gift buying will be very interesting this year.

The U.S. Copyright Office Announces its Two-Year Plan

While it isn't light reading, the Priorities and Special Projects of the United States Copyright Office provides a solid and informative overview of what issues and actions the government will be addressing over the next two years. The document is available at <http://www.copyright.gov/docs/priorities.pdf>

NINC Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY KIT FRAZIER

NEW!

Got news or information for the Bulletin Board? Send it to Kit Frazier at kitfrazier@yahoo.com

Time to renew your NINC membership!

You can do this the easy way at the Ninc website: <http://www.ninc.com>. You can fill out the online form and pay online, or print out the form and send it in with a check. Please don't forget to fill out your Authors Coalition form while you're at it. Read it carefully, as you may be able to check off more boxes this year than you were eligible to do last year.

JOT (Just One Thing)

The Ninc Blog folks are still looking for a volunteer willing to get one industry guest for the blog each month. You will receive a small stipend (\$25/month) and your photo and bio will appear on the blog to promote yourself. Contact Patricia Rosemoor Patricia.Rosemoor@gmail.com or Dianne Despain DianneDespain@earthlink.net

Adventures on the NINC Website

When's the last time you explored the NINC website? If the answer is "never" or "a long time ago," then slap your wrist because you're missing out on some terrific resources for members. The URL is easy: <http://www.ninc.com>. Once you're there, log in as a member to find a wealth of links with information ranging from baby names and surnames to the Art of Manliness.

This month's tip? Spiff up your podcast with free software. Click on the **Reference** tab at the top, go to **Software**, and download **Sonnyboo Music**. It's free! Not just royalty free, but completely free. Download audio clips for your website, PowerPoint presentations, and other promotional materials.

NINC Online

Want to help make the NINC Reference section even more fabulous? Send your favorite online resources to: kitfrazier@yahoo.com

Put the NINC Blog to Work for You

- ▶ if you haven't signed up to blog this month or next, do so;
- ▶ if you Tweet or have Facebook, please tell your followers when YOU blog;
- ▶ help promote industry guests—check the NinLink calendar to see who is blogging next;
- ▶ Put a link to the blog (<http://ninc.com/blog/index.php>) on your website with a note that every Wednesday we feature an industry guest.

Questions? Suggestions? Contact Patricia.Rosemoor@gmail.com

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



No Size “Fits All”

“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?’”

— Lynn Kerstan, *Nink*, November 2011

E-book sales have grown so rapidly over the course of 2011 that the subject of electronic publishing and, in particular, the advantages of *self-publishing* in the digital age have dominated the zeitgeist of the writing world all year—to such an extent that it has become common to see aspiring writers *and* professional writers ask, “Is it even worth licensing a book to a traditional publisher anymore?”

Moreover, there is no shortage of self-publishing writers who respond, “No! It isn’t! And anyone still writing for a publishing house is just dancing on the deck of the *Titanic*!” Or words to that effect.

The oft-asked question these days—“Would I be better off self-publishing, rather than selling my book to a publisher?”—would have seemed odd only two years ago, and absurdly bizarre five years ago. But as we approach 2012, it is an intelligent business question that merits consideration for every project in a writer’s body of work whether new, old, projected, or resurrected.

What’s *not* intelligent, though, are the various assertions circulating around the writing world that assume there is a one-size-fits-all answer to that question.

Throughout my 23-year, full-time, self-supporting writing career, I have ceaselessly encountered people who want to find one reliable, unwavering, universally applicable answer to their questions and concerns: How do I write a marketable book? How do I sell a book and get published? How do I choose the right agent? How do I get moved up to lead title? How do I break out and become a bestseller?

These are not questions with handy answers. These are *all* complex and challenging goals, and the only realistic “answers” to them are individualistic decisions and sustained, committed effort—which may or may not work out—in pursuit of the goal in question.

One writer’s path to success is rarely another’s. One writer’s business decision or career problem seldom applies to another writer; and a writer’s way *out* of a career problem rarely applies to anyone else, either.

For example, I have found that working without a literary agent is the best business model for my career; but I only came to this conclusion after having four failed agency relationships and an overall pattern of experiencing better career health *without* agents than *with* them. Furthermore, permanently shedding literary agents from my business model is a decision I probably never would have made if a literary agent had ever worked out well for me, precisely because I wouldn’t have had (and thus would not have had to solve) the repetitious business problems that led me to this solution.

The variables of individual experiences, problems, and needs are precisely why I have never said that *no* writer should work with a literary agent. What I keep saying (over and over, until I'm blue in the face) is that the oft-repeated conventional view that every writer should work with a literary agent is completely erroneous. The agent-author business model is *one* possible choice for running a writing career well. For some writers it's the best choice; for others, it's not. *That* is my position; NOT that there is a one-size-fits-all answer for how to run a writing career, and it's MY answer, *mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha-HA!*

Moreover, writers don't all want exactly the same things from our careers any more than we all want to *write* exactly the same things. One writer I know has said a number of times that her career goal is to drop dead over her 100th contracted manuscript at a ripe old age. Another writer has told me that she would rather write one classic novel that is widely read for generations than have a long career of dozens of published midlist books. Some writers cite bestsellerdom as a key goal in their careers; others say they neither expect nor want to become bestsellers, and their goals are something else entirely.

Thus the digital-age question of whether to license a book to a publisher or self-publish it needs to be approached the way every deal, opportunity, or problem in a well-run writing career is approached—by the writer asking herself, “What’s best for me, my work, my career, my current needs, and my long-term goals?” Writing careers have always been very individualistic and idiosyncratic, and that hasn't changed just because technology and distribution are changing.

Declaring there is *one* right way that's best for everyone—such as completely shedding traditional publishing from one's business model—makes no more sense than it would make for me to declare that all writers everywhere should shed literary agents from their business model. (*Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!!!*) However, advocating a complex, flexible, and individualistic approach to writing careers isn't nearly as attention-getting (and probably also not as much fun) as declaring that there *is* a one-size-fits-all answer and anyone not adhering to it is defending the Alamo, fighting beside Custer at Little Big Horn, and fortifying the Maginot Line (though the metaphors employed are often more abrasive and incendiary than these).

When I look past the lemmings shrieking at everyone to leap off the one-size-fits-all cliff (and implying that anyone who doesn't is the sort of writer who just lies back, closes her eyes, and thinks of England), what I see in the rapidly-changing publishing world as we approach 2012 are many new opportunities to tailor my business model to suit my own individual preferences. Which leads us back to the intelligent question posed in Lynn Kerstan's cover story in last month's *Nink*: “What can a publisher do for me that I cannot do for myself?”

This dovetails well with something said to me recently by writer and publisher Debra Dixon, the President and CEO of BelleBooks, when talking about how the market is changing for writers: “Publishers have to elevate the work in a way the author can't, whether that is with marketing, editorial, opportunity, management, or all of the above.”

That's how I'm looking at 2012 (and beyond): For the first time in my career, publishers need to offer me, a mere midlister, “valued-added” as incentive for dealing with them, because it's now perfectly possible for me to have a viable writing career without them. So that's the standard I'm setting for all future deals; and I see no reason *not* to consider (and to make) deals where that incentive is on the table.

Obviously, like many writers, I've had plenty of experiences in which the publishing companies I've dealt with have failed to “elevate” my work in exchange for their very large cut of the book's earnings. In my experiences with small companies, this has most often been due to a lack of resources: They couldn't afford good artists and designers, they had almost non-existent distribution capabilities, they had no marketing budget or sales force, and so on. With major houses, my disappointing experiences have arisen from a variety of less predictable factors, such as a lack of will, an absence of interest, poor business practices, incompetence, and bad luck.

I certainly think it makes good business sense these days to choose other options, such as self-publishing, rather than repeat experiences like those. But I also think it makes good business sense to continue exploring what a major corporation with massive resources can do for me that I can't do for myself—or what I would *prefer* to have them do for me, rather than doing it myself, in exchange for splitting a book's earn- ▶

ings (including exploring how the publisher's greater resources might increase a book's sales and expand my audience).

Among the valued-added features I currently experience from a major publishing company are good up-front advances (and I prefer a bird in hand to one in the bush); a strong editorial relationship; high production standards; a team of people I like working with; a top cover artist whom I don't have the resources to pay, and whose illustrations do indeed elevate my work (I hear often from readers who tried a book of mine for the first time because they loved his cover art); excellent print distribution (and until the print market vanishes, I want my books widely available in it); excellent digital distribution (so far, my publisher's digital distribution is still more extensive than my own); sales and marketing (in the past two years, my books have benefited from a number of promotional efforts that I couldn't pay for myself, don't know how to organize, and wouldn't have thought of doing).

Those are all features that I really value in my business relationship with a major publishing corporation. Therefore, I will submit a new proposal there in 2012 upon finishing my current contract with them. Meanwhile, with regard to my various projects, for which there is *not* a similar valued-added publishing relationship available, a DIY self-publishing process is still my favorite choice for 2012, as it was in 2011. I am also interested in exploring other new and arising options for my work, and I will certainly be interested in self-publishing fiction frontlist if/when that strikes me as the right choice for a project. Because there also isn't a one-size-fits-all answer that suits every single project within one writer's career.

Now all of you go... *fire your agents!* **MWA-HA-HA-HA-HAAAAAA!**

Laura Resnick, who (as you can plainly see) is in dire need of a vacation that she's not going to get, wishes you all a fun and fruitful 2012!

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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