

N I N K

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How the NY Times Bought Apple's Spin on the Feds' Antitrust Suit Allowing Amazon to Cut Prices on E-books

BY PETER SCHEER

The U.S. Justice Department announced this week that it will sue e-book publishers and Apple Computer for conspiring to raise e-book prices above the levels that Amazon, the dominant retailer for e-books, had been charging.

News reporters, responding critically to the government's charges, were quick to point out that Amazon was willing and able to lose money on its e-books in order to boost sales of its profitable Kindle devices. *The New York Times*, for example, stated as fact, and without any attribution, that:

Amazon, which already controls about 60 percent of the e-book market, can take a loss on every book it sells to gain market share for its Kindle devices. When it has enough competitive advantage, it can dictate its own terms, something publishers say is beginning to happen.

But only five months ago, following the launch of Amazon's Kindle Fire, *The New York Times* explained, as fact, and without attribution, why Amazon had priced the Kindle at just \$200 (while also making commensurate price cuts in the company's other Kindle e-readers) this way:

Amazon sees the Kindle line of devices as critical for its future as a virtual store, and is willing to lose money on the sale of each one for the sake of market share. Once dominance is achieved, it plans to make money on the movies, books and music that users download directly from Amazon.

Now, both of these statements can't be true. It's not possible for Amazon to both (1) sell e-books at a loss in order to reap big profits on Kindle devices, and (2) sell Kindles at a loss to reap big profits on e-books. It may be doing 1 or it may be doing 2, but it can't be doing both at the same time. (Or, if it is, readers of this

post will be handsomely rewarded for selling short Amazon stock IMMEDIATELY!).

I don't mean to pick on *The New York Times*. The confusion in its coverage of Amazon in both periods was matched by the reporting of many other news organizations. The law of antitrust is complicated, even to lawyers and economists. Journalists, needing to simplify the e-book story for readers, sympathize with book publishers (with whom they, as book authors and wannabe book authors, identify) and with Apple, which is not only a

Continued on page 5 ▶

INSIDE this ISSUE

President's Voice: Scenes from a Publishing Life ...	3
Profitable Partnerships: Be There or Be Square ...	6
The Sky Is Falling? Positivity	8
Bookviewcafe.com: Continuing the Assault on	
The Problems of the Midlist Writer	10
Neverly Ever After	13
The Mad Scribbler: This, Too, Shall Pass	14
Writing Is Taxing: Information Reporting	17
Not Your Usual Writing Advice: Treasure	19

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For members without Internet access,
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Website:

<http://www.Ninc.com>

Introducing...

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

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<http://www.ninc.com>. Refer members at ninc.com.
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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.

Scenes from a Publishing Life

I've spent a great deal of time away from my office recently. This has done nothing to cool my stress levels given the novel, nonfiction book, and nonfiction proposal I have due in the coming months, but it has given me a chance to take the temperature of the industry. I thought I'd pass along some observations.

I met recently with a marketing director for a Big Six publisher. She told me that her staff is growing dramatically and that she's convinced that there will be more marketing people than editorial people at that publishing house very soon. This isn't the first time I've heard this. The big houses are slowly awakening to the realization that they need to play the game differently. For so long, marketing was easy: you paid some co-op money and turned the responsibility for finding the readers over to the accounts. Given the dominance of online bookselling and the change in the way physical booksellers stock and merchandise, that approach won't fly anymore. The major houses are beginning to understand that they need to take a much more active role in courting consumers. Of course, that shouldn't come at the expense of editorial jobs, and we certainly don't want publishing to become marketing-centric.

I had lunch a few days later with an editor at a major indie house. A long-term vet of Big Six publishing, she waxed rhapsodic about how indie houses take an entirely different approach to finding their audiences. For them, it's a given that the publisher's job is to appeal directly to readers. Again, this isn't the first time I've heard this. The best indie houses—especially those that focus on a particular market or set of markets—have made it part of their charter that audience development is a fundamental component of their business model. As such, they're able to take this approach without any of the entrenched thinking that complicates things for the larger houses. My guess is that, even though many of these houses are small, they'll have much more success with this kind of marketing over the next few years than their bigger cousins while still offering a level of editorial involvement that the big houses so often lack.

I met with an audio publisher who surprised me with news about the strength of that part of the business. While the "hard goods" (physical CD) end of the audio market is flat at best, the download market is very strong. What was most interesting about this conversation was that this publisher was interested in more than bestsellers—a stark departure from what I'd been hearing about audio for decades. Variety and mix has become very important, which means that this might become an available income stream for a much wider range of writers.

I attended a conference for a large group of independent publishers. These publishers range from tiny to very substantial. Nearly every one of them expressed anxiety about the future and at the same time told me they were having great (and in several cases, record) years. This seems to be the publishing industry in a nutshell right now: fear of change at the same time as that change is improving the bottom line.

At that conference, I attended a "slice-and-dice" session looking at sales figures by account and market sector. One of the graphs at this session showed that B&N's growth in the e-book business seems to be tracking along the same path as Amazon's, only two years behind. This correlates with the relative release dates of the Kindle and the Nook and suggests that B&N's biggest leaps are still ahead of them. Given how much conversation there has been in the industry (and in our organization) about Amazon taking over the world, it was good to see this interpretation of the data.

I met with an agent I've known for decades, but hadn't seen in a couple of years. He told me that he could have retired a while ago, but that he has no interest in doing so because he loves what he does too much to stop doing it. However, to justify keeping the lights on at his agency, he's had to make fundamental changes to how he conducts his business. He now has a full-time social media person on staff whose only job is to promote his clients' titles and to work with publishers on the social media work they do for the agency's clients. He's also started doing some publishing. He got into this very reluctantly and will only do it at the strong request of a client, but he feels that several of his clients have fallen off the grid for publishers ▶

but still have viable audiences. There's been a good deal of conversation lately about the ethics of agents acting as publishers, and certainly there's quite a bit of room for abuse. However, it seems inevitable that every agent will need to offer a publishing option as part of the agency package. This is where organizations like NINC need to monitor practices and speak out on expected codes of conduct, just as we have been doing with traditional publishers for years.

I think all of this bears discussion, and we'll be doing a great deal of it at this year's conference (which I urge all of you to attend—registration is open). We should also be doing so on the loop, as these matters are constantly evolving.

One note about that. In my most recent *President's Voice*, I wrote what I felt was an impassioned analysis of why things were looking up for novelists and how it was important for us as an organization to help members who were doing less well than others. I received exactly one response, leading me to feel like the standup comedian banging his mic and saying, "Is this thing on?" I think it's important that all of us participate in the discussion about the biggest matters affecting our lives as writers. As always, you can reach me at laronica@fictionstudio.com, and I look forward to hearing from you on the loop.

— Lou Aronica

How the *NY Times* Bought Apple's Spin

Continued from page 1 ▶

cool company, but a disruptive "David" in an industry essentially created by Amazon, as "Goliath."

Of course, what's good for book publishers, authors and Apple (the biggest company, by capitalization, in the world, don't forget) is not necessarily what's good for consumers. Amazon wanted to cap prices at \$9.99 for most new e-books, which was the prevailing price on Amazon.com until consummation of the Apple-publishers "conspiracy" alleged by government lawyers. The agreement between Apple and publishers, designed to eliminate competition between Amazon and Apple, caused e-book prices to rise gradually to \$13.99 and then \$14.99 for most new releases.

Increasing prices to consumers by as much as 50 percent is not trivial. And Amazon, the day after the government announced it had settled with three of the publishers, the Hachette Book Group, Simon & Schuster and HarperCollins (though not Apple), began to cut prices aggressively.

Question: But what about the argument, advanced by Apple and book publishers, that Amazon, if left to its devices, will grow from a near-monopoly to a total monopoly, at which point it will be free to raise e-book prices sky-high with impunity?

Answer: Apple isn't going away. Nor Google or other companies that are interested in the e-book space. They would quickly re-enter the market, happily undercutting Amazon's hypothetical sky-high rates, and driving prices back to competitive levels. If Amazon behaves like a monopolist, it will lose its monopoly.

Although Apple and the book publishers may have succeeded in their PR strategy, there is no shortage of hypocrisy on the other side of the e-book battle.

The Justice Department lawyers, in their suit, describe a conspiracy starting in 2009, as publishing house CEOs began to meet secretly in private dining rooms of upscale restaurants in New York and Europe, plotting collusive action to solve "the \$9.99 problem" and later deleting emails to cover their tracks.

Spare us the *Sopranos* screenplay. Publishing executives don't know how to have a meeting other than at expensive restaurants. In their rarefied world, this is the most public of all venues, not a place to escape the prying eyes of government investigators.

Moreover, the mechanism chosen by the publishers and Apple to effect their agreement was a "most-favored-nation" clause in retail agreements between the publishers and Apple. In effect, the clause forbade the

publishers from offering Amazon prices lower than the prices given to Apple. Remove this clause and the antitrust issue goes away.

A clause in a written contract is hardly the *modus operandi* of conspirators entering into an illicit agreement to fix-prices. This was a business deal entered into by CEOs who discussed it openly with partners and colleagues, and who thought—erroneously, it turns out—that what they were doing, though controversial, was legal.

Behind the e-book dispute, of course, is the bigger concern that unchecked competition between Amazon and Apple (among others) inevitably will push prices too low to reward authors adequately and to provide incentives for the writing of new books.

My own view is that authors, in an e-book world, will do fine, perhaps even better than under traditional arrangements, but that publishing houses will shrink, reduced to their core editorial functions of identifying promising authors, brainstorming over book ideas, and revising/editing authors' manuscripts. Amazon can do a lot of things well, but it will never write a prize-winning novel, biography, history, or book-length collection of poems or investigative journalism.

I could be wrong about the e-book industry. But if there is a problem to be fixed, it must be addressed by Congress, not an ad hoc and self-appointed cartel of publishers wedded to pre-digital technology and desperately trying to preserve the status quo.

Peter Scheer, Executive Director of the First Amendment Coalition (FAC) (<http://www.firstamendmentcoalition.org>), is a lawyer and journalist. The views expressed here are his alone, and do not necessarily reflect the views of FAC's Board of Directors. Follow Peter Scheer on Twitter: www.twitter.com/1stamendmnt. This article first appeared on the April 12, 2012 edition of The Huffington Post. It is reprinted with the permission of the author.

NINC Bulletin Board

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WWW.KITFRAZIER.COM/WORDPRESS

JOT—Just One Thing. . . We still need volunteers—

If you're interested in ensuring that we continue to have industry guests blogging every Wednesday on the NINC Blog, please contact Patricia Rosemoor at:
Patricia.Rosemoor@gmail.com

Promote NINC, Promote Yourself—on the NINC Blog

If you haven't registered, please do so at <http://www.NINC.com/blog/> Fill out the profile, then e-mail Patricia Rosemoor at: Patricia.Rosemoor@gmail.com

Upcoming Conferences/Festivals of Note

DFW Writers Conference: May 18-20, 2012, Hurst, TX <http://dfwwritersconference.org/>

SC Book Festival: May 18-20, Columbia, SC <http://www.scbookfestival.org/>

Backspace Writers Conference: May 24-26, New York, NY
<http://www.backspacewritersconference.com/>

Wyoming Writers Conference: June 1-3, Casper, WY <http://www.wyowriters.org/>

Western Writers of America Convention: June 12-16, Albuquerque, NM
<http://www.westernwriters.org/>

Writers' League of Texas Agents Conference: June 22-24, Austin, TX
<http://www.writersleague.org/38/Agents-Conference>



Profitable Partnerships: Publishing à la Carte

October 25-28, 2012

Crowne Plaza White Plains NY

Fee for NINC Members: \$375

(includes both First Word and Conference!)

Payable in one lump sum or three payments of \$125

Fee for Industry Professionals:

**\$260 for First Word and Conference,
or \$110 Conference only**

NINC-NY – Profitable Partnerships: Be There or Be Square

BY KELLY McCLYMER AND MEREDITH EFKEN, NINC-NY CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

Have you registered for the NINC-NY conference yet? Still need some persuasion?

Here's a sneak peek at one of NINC-NY's speakers, Trident Media Group's Chairman, Robert Gottlieb. Keep in mind that since we're doing things a little differently this year, we've asked our Featured Speakers to commit to making themselves available to our members for the duration of the conference. We expect Thursday's "First Word" day of panels exploring Profitable Partnerships to begin the exciting conversations that will continue for the remainder of the conference.

Mr. Gottlieb's official bio states that he was born and raised in New York City. After graduating in 1976 from Elmira College with a Bachelor of Arts degree, he began his illustrious career in the mailroom of the William Morris Agency as part of the company's Agent-in-Training Program. In 1977, Mr. Gottlieb became a department assistant in WMA's literary department and shortly thereafter began working with the head of the department, Owen Laster. Five years later he became a literary agent. He discovered Tom Clancy in the early '80s, and in 1989 was promoted to Senior Vice President, becoming one of the youngest agents to ever head the WMA Literary Department. He was then elected to the Board of Directors and became Executive Vice President in 1992.

After 24 years at the William Morris Agency, Mr. Gottlieb started Trident Media Group, LLC in September 2000 where he now serves as Chairman and continues to represent many best-selling authors. He also oversees Trident's foreign-rights department and attends the London Book Fair and Frankfurt Book Fair each year with his team of foreign-rights agents. He has consulted with the Vatican and the Russian Cultural Ministry in connection with intellectual property rights.

Mr. Gottlieb built his stellar reputation by being the first and the most effective literary agent to brand authors. He works across all genres, in both fiction and nonfiction. His successes over the years include international bestselling authors Tom Clancy, Dean Koontz, and Janet Evanovich. He continues to grow his list of authors, which now includes international bestselling authors Deepak Chopra, Catherine Coulter, Elizabeth George, Sherrilyn Kenyon, Kat Martin, Mary Alice Monroe, and Karen Robards.

You can get a feel for why we're so excited about having him join us if you check out his recent podcast with Christopher Kenneally in the Copyright Clearance Center's Beyond the Book (You can listen or read a full transcript of the interview at <http://beyondthebookcast.com/top-agent-calls-amazon-innovative/>.) Here are a few select quotes from the interview:

"It's no longer a cottage industry. Agents need to not only know material, help their authors with their manuscripts, but they have to understand the dynamics of the business in a way that most likely has not happened in the past."

"...those publishers who are giving the most advantageous royalties in the e-book business are going to be the ones who are the best ones to be in business for authors, I believe."

"...figuring out a strategy for an author internationally in the e-book area is part of what we do so that an author has as broad an audience in as many languages as possible."

The rest of the interview is well worth listening to, or reading, of course. But with just these few quotes, how can you resist signing up for the conference so you can be part of one of most forward-thinking conversations that will happen between authors and publishers this year?

Profitable Partnerships: Publishing a la Carte

October 25-28, 2012

Crowne Plaza Hotel

White Plains, New York

Fee for NINC Members: \$375

Payable in one lump sum or three payments of \$125

Fee for Industry Professionals: \$260 For First Word and conference, or \$110 conference only

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First Word: Exploring Publishing Partnership Opportunities

October 25, 2012

Fee: \$150; includes lunch and dinner

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

Registration Information available at www.ninc.com

Industry Professionals welcome—tell your editors, agents, and other publishing professionals

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Would you like a short story with that App?

Consortium Book Sales and Distribution, <http://cbsd.com/>, recently launched an app that's also a discovery strategy for readers. Called Bookslinger, the app comes preloaded with five short stories. A new story will be made available weekly and users can browse by title, author, and topic. The app works with iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch, and plans are underway to make it available to Android devices.

New Venture

Information about Sourcebooks' new venture—Discover a New Love—is available at:

<http://www.sourcebooks.com/next-news/2007-discover-a-new-love-launch.html>

PW Daily

The Sky Is Falling? Positivity In the New Age of Writing

BY DENISE AGNEW

*“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity;
an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”*

— Winston Churchill

Over the last few years, massive changes in the publishing industry have left many individuals reeling. Some of these changes were predicted and a few weren't. With any change comes a need for an attitude change. Some won't like the changes while others will grow and adapt.

Perception, it seems, is everything.

When our lifeblood and careers are tied up in this industry, the entire shift can seem enormous and unwieldy. Too hard to do. Too much to understand. Sometimes the obvious choice is right there in front of the author, but when there are many choices it can seem as if it is easier to make no choice at all. Yet there are ways to see your way through all the confusion and make an educated decision on which way you'll take your career in the current publishing climate. Sometimes all you need is a list of pros and cons to guide you.

“Failures are made only by those who fail to dare, not by those who dare to fail.”

— Lester B. Pearson

Writers aren't immune to the same pitfalls that occur in other industries when jobs are lost. Authors' contracts aren't picked up. Bestsellers fall off that list. Most writers never make a list or win an award. In the self-publishing arena, some are making it big time with royalties, while many, many are not. Traditional publishing is still a perfectly valid form of publishing, and yet the problems with the industry are significant. Every year it gets a little harder for writers to break into the traditional publishing arena and stay there.

There are two schools of thought in the publishing world right now with varying shades of gray in between. Each one has a kernel of truth.

School One: Oh my God—the sky is falling and it's only going to get worse.

School Two: Digital-first and self-publishing are the best things ever and “legacy” publishing is old hat.

Both of these statements are true...and false. Obviously there's more than one way to approach this reality. What's an author to do?

- ▶ You can keep trying to get that traditional publishing contract until your fingers bleed.
- ▶ You can try publishing with a small-press/digital-first house.
- ▶ You can self-publish.

Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages.

Traditional

Disadvantages: Advances are sometimes lower than in the past. Publishers are even less accepting of “out-of-the-box” concepts than they were before.

Advantages: Print books haven't disappeared into the ether. There are still many readers who prefer print over digital books. Advances are still there! Editing and cover art happen at no cost to you.

Small Press/Digital First

Disadvantages: If you publish with a small-press/digital-first publisher, be aware that many of them are following trends just like the traditional publishers are. Some of these trends you may not want to write...or you may. Advances are rare. And yes, even authors published with traditional print houses are rejected by small press sometimes. Editing and cover art happen at no cost to you.

Advantages: Many small-press publishers still accept “out-of-the-box” ideas in a novel. You can earn potentially high royalties from sales that can go on for years, surpassing any advance you may have received from a traditional publisher.

Self-publishing

Disadvantages: Self-publishing is a whole new ballgame, and you’ll pay for the editing, the covers, etc. It may take you time earn back the money you spend on covers, editing, and formatting. Because anyone with a hankering can publish this way, you are competing with many more writers for a piece of the pie. Be aware that many outlets such as Smashwords, Amazon and Barnes & Noble have their quirks and navigating them can take time to learn.

Advantages: An advantage of this publishing opportunity is that now you can publish anything that blows your skirt up when you want and how you want. Freedom like this may rejuvenate your creativity. If the chips fall right, your potential for a good income is there. You can stack the deck in your favor by hiring a top-notch cover artist, editor and formatter. If you want to save even more money, you can learn to make your own covers and do your own formatting. If you don’t have the motivation to do either of those, just be willing to hunt for someone who will give you the most professional-looking covers and who will format the books correctly. Editing is important, of course, as is copyediting. If you’re still writing great books, you’ll have the best chance of not only keeping your traditional audience but making new fans as well. Many authors are writing for multiple streams...traditional, small press, and self-publishing. The sky is the limit.

“A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

Now that you have a list to think about, go forth and make the best, most positive choice that will work for you. You’re in control, and if you think about it, that’s the most wonderful thing of all.

Romantic Times Book Reviews calls Denise Agnew’s romantic suspense novels “top-notch,” and she’s received their coveted Top Pick rating. Denise has written paranormal, romantic comedy, contemporary, historical, erotic romance, and romantic suspense. Archaeology and archery have crept into her work, and travels through England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have added to a lifetime of story ideas. A newly-minted paranormal investigator, Denise looks forward to exploring the unknown. Visit Denise’s website at www.deniseagnew.com

Business Briefs

International E-book Usage

Bowker Market Research recently announced the findings of their survey on e-book usage. One thousand consumers in each of 10 countries took the survey. Australia, India, the U.S. and the U.K. topped the list while France and Japan came in at the bottom.

E-book sales are expected to increase the fastest in India, where more than 50 percent of respondents said they intend to buy an e-book in the next six months. Brazil reported a similar response. In India, Brazil, the U.K., the U.S., and France, the largest number of purchasers ranged in age from 25 to 34, while in Australia, Spain, Germany, South Korea and Japan, the largest group was the 18-24 age group. The concentration of downloads in U.S. and U.K. were adult fiction.

PW Daily

Bookviewcafe.com: Continuing the Assault on the Problems of the Midlist Author

By Jennifer Stevenson



Book View Café is a co-operative of approximately 40 published authors working together to promote and sell our work online.

When we banded together in 2008, our goal was to combat the enemies of the midlist author: shrinking numbers, lackluster publisher support, unseemly delays between contracts or releases, and the ever-present need to market ourselves, our brands, our work. Book publishing was crawling toward the Internet. Jointly, we had the resources to build skills and meet the challenges of the new world faster than conventional publishing could.

The idea was to build the Café as a brand of online fiction that delivers reasonably priced reads of reliably high quality. Since we're all published, mostly very multi-published, with familiar names for readers in our genres, we felt we had a major edge over other online self-publishing sites. We started in November 2008. We are now nearing the 18,000-registered-users mark.

What we do at Book View Café:

We release one or two reasonably-priced fiction titles every week—backlist and original novels in every fiction genre, and in memoir, comics, nonfiction, poetry, flash fiction, and boatloads of short fiction.

Our entire catalog was purchased gleefully by a group of American libraries at pretty much exactly the moment when conventional publishing houses inflated their prices to libraries so the point that many libraries rebelled and stopped doing business with them. We have also finalized a deal with a distributor to libraries in Australia and New Zealand to carry all our books.

We've released a number of fiction themed anthologies, including *Rocket Boy and the Geek Girls*, *Dragon Lords and Warrior Women*, two shared-world steampunk anthologies *The Shadow Conspiracy I* and *II*, and two "how to write" guides called *Brewing Fine Fiction* and a chapbook, *Ways to Trash Your Career*. We also collaborated with the SFNovelists group on a themed anthology called *Breaking Waves* to benefit charities after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. More anthologies are in the works, starting with *The Shadow Conspiracy III* set in the American Civil War.

We promote the Café as a whole via a blog, tweets, Facebook, and media blasts by each member of the co-op. We appear in public on behalf of Book View Café at conferences, on radio and cable TV, at book fairs, and in countless online venues.

Our blog averages 30,000 hits a month, with two or more authors posting per day.

We're about to roll out a shiny new bookstore on a Wordpress platform with streamlined purchasing and shopping convenience.

With 40 of us, all talented and experienced in different areas, we get the work done. There's always somebody to catch a project if the author handling it stumbles over life or a deadline. It seems that every day the conventional publishing industry comes up with a new wrinkle for preventing or delaying authors getting paid, recovering their rights to out-of-print work, or managing their careers. Book View Café provides the empowerment we need.

Some of our members talk about their favorite Book View Café things:

Judith Tarr, author of *Writing Horses* and *A Wind in Cairo*, writes: Our blog gets a passel o' hits every day on a wide variety of topics from politics to science to writing how-to's to knitting to modern life to the *Magna Carta* to Star Wars to worldbuilding with horses to the business of publishing to just about anything else our brilliant and talented members can come up with.

Patricia Rice, bestselling author of the *Magic* series and *The English Heiress*, writes: BVC has been a boon and a blessing. I have the rights to over 40 backlist titles that I needed help in e-pubbing, because I'm utterly hopeless at anything technical. I joined BVC about three years ago, and within months, they had my *Magic* series available for readers who could no longer find the earlier print editions. Within a few months of that (at a NINC conference, to be exact), I re-sold that series for print and added a related contract. In return, I've been doing the kind of non-techie stuff for BVC that I know how to do—copyediting, proofing, blogging, tapping into my promo network, and keeping track of ISBNs, among various other tasks.

We've grown so large lately that we're producing a number of original titles as well as the anthologies. I had a sequel to an older title sitting in my desk drawer (and basement and on ancient floppies)—*The English Heiress*—that readers have been demanding for years. The original publisher dropped the imprint and returned the book to me, but I've never had reason to pull it back together until now. With the aid of BVC, I've been able to dust off that file, hand it to experienced editors and copyeditors and formatters, and it will be an e-book original in July. The book would never have seen the light of day without BVC. The same goes for *Evil Genius*, a mystery my agent refused to sell because it fit no niche and I'm no mystery writer. It's currently selling better than my backlist.

I have a strong belief that book publishers need to return to their roots, to people who love words and books and want to release them into the universe without the need to seek huge audiences. A good book should create its own audience, instead of the audience creating the book. E-publishing is the opportunity to return to those roots.

Popular fantasy author and blogger **Sherwood Smith** (*Exordium*, *Crown Duel*, *Inda*) writes: Book View Cafe brings to my mind the exciting days of the early novel, in the mid-1700s, when people were trying all kinds of ways to get books to readers. The way we've organized—a loose confederation—permits those with talents at one or another skill to come forward and shine, which serves as encouragement for everybody. Competition is at a minimum, which was important to me. I've been part of too many groups over the years that ended up fractured because of the inevitable fallout due to in-fighting over hierarchy, and who is queen bee. There are no queen bees here, or rather, everybody is queen bee in one way or another.

We keep developing strategies not only to get the books out there, but to improve what we offer. I love watching us build a reader base—it's happening, I can see it, and I've only been a member for two years.

Phyllis Irene Radford, author of the *Merlin's Descendents* series, writes: I became a founding member of the Book View Café as a way to improve my web presence. Since I had no technical skills, I took on small, low commitment jobs, like scheduling blogs and keeping a spreadsheet of early sales. These were tasks that had to be done, but felt insignificant as I watched in awe as others took on the “important” jobs of maintaining the web site and helping the rest of us upload free fiction every day to the front page.

Then we decided as a group to put together an anthology of reprint SF stories to raise some operating funds for the site. I volunteered to edit the collection, more because I wanted the editing credit on my resume than much in the way of experience. I had nearly 20 novels under my belt by then; surely I'd learned something about editing over the years. These were reprints, needing organization into a cohesive volume more than actual editing. *Rocket Boy and the Geek Girls* led to *Dragon Lords and Warrior Women*. Then we took on the enormous task of an original fiction anthology in a shared world: *The Shadow Conspiracy, Tales from the Age of Steam, Volume I*. Fortunately, the formidable Laura Anne Gillman came on board as co-editor. I learned a lot from her, not only in how to edit, but how to really organize a chain of linked stories. It's a lot of work, but I find it fascinating and challenging.

Five anthologies for BVC has led to three more and a handful of novels for a different small press. I've taken on proofreading and copy editing for a major publisher and hung out my shingle as a freelance edi- ▶

tor. When the budget gets tight, as it does more frequently now, and traditional publishing is becoming less reliable, the Book View Café has helped me find my feet in this changing world and forge new pathways through the maze of taking control of my career.

Brenda Clough, award-nominated author of *Revise the World*, writes: What I find fun about Book View Café is that I can volunteer to do quite different things. I'm worthless at computers and programming, but I have a good eye and a powerful visual imagination. As a result I've created the raw images for a number of our book covers, including *Rocket Boy*, *Shadow Conspiracy I* and *Brewing Fine Fiction*. Between e-books and the book there is a constant demand for images that capture a work. At the moment I am contemplating embroidering a nice cover for our samplers, and it has occurred to me that if I bake a pie that has our logo on it, it would be used every year on March 14th.

Katharine Eliska Kimbriel, author of *Night Calls*, *Kindred Rites*, and *The Chronicles of Nuala*, writes: BVC was born out of a small group of women on a private writing list. Sarah Zettel had the vision to see that our backlists were going to disappear if we didn't come up with a solution quickly. We had people who could cover bases, and pooled enough money to pay for the data-handling software that could manipulate hundreds of pages of text.

Our path has changed over the last three years. We don't offer free fiction every day anymore, nor do we serialize works—fans prefer samples and buying books. The store is streamlining, and thanks to the talents of such people as Linda Nagata, Dave Trowbridge, Vonda N. McIntyre and Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff, we have a punchy new blog and a great new e-store coming online soon.

One of the things I value most about BVC is that we discuss potential members, bringing our knowledge of them to the group to help us choose quality writers. No matter what genre a writer works in, I know that I can promote and recommend his or her works with pride and assurance. We chose the slow and steady challenge of a high bar of quality, and we work to maintain that. A writer's work may not be your cup of tea, but it will be worth your time and money.

It's who we are. I'm proud to be a member, and working hard to be as useful as I can!

Jennifer Stevenson, award-nominated author of *Trash Sex Magic* and *The Brass Bed*, writes: BVC came along just at the moment when everything I knew about publishing was changing. Instead of the industry quicksand where most authors foundered, I had constructive work to do, lots of help learning new skills like e-book publishing and publicity, a home for my books that was entirely under my own control, and a growing team of big-brained, energetic, optimistic colleagues with a major can-do attitude. It just doesn't get any better. Oh, wait, it does. It seems like every month or so, another business opportunity walks in the door. We rock.

Visit Book View Café at <http://www.bookviewcafe.com/>

Jennifer Stevenson lives in the Chicago area, swims, bikes, rides horses, and roller-skates with the Fleetwood Speed Team. Her Book View Café titles include stagehand romantic comedies King of Hearts and Fools Paradise, and A Taste of You, a roller-derby vampire romance. You can find her at <http://www.facebook.com/JenniferStevensonAuthor>

NINC Bulletin Board

NINC News on Google Settlement Information

Check out Kristine Smith's in-depth information on the Google Settlement and what it means to you, including information on in-print and out-of-print works, opting out and the four revenue-generating licenses every author should know about.

http://ninc.com/members_only/member_services/google.asp

Neverly Ever After (or How to Work During Divorce)

BY SOPHIA NASH

I never thought I would be a living, barely breathing oxymoron: a (soon-to-be) divorced romance author. When the marriage debacle began, I had recently agreed to write two books in two years for HarperCollins. Scratch that, actually three books, but that last one seemed very far off. How time flies when you're not having fun.

In the wee dark hours many months later—after writing 48 hours straight—I made a promise to a higher power that if I could be delivered from deadline hell, that I would write a tell-all to help others navigate the tsunami divorce creates in your professional life. After all, I had done my research.

The first three months, the former reporter in me latched onto every romwriter divorcee who could not escape my crosshairs. I was desperate to glean the best way to write a best-selling love story (or anything resembling a story) during the crisis. The answers prove that anyone who thinks all romance novelists look at the world with rose-colored glasses is just plain wrong. A few quotes:

“Hold your nose and write.”

“Do not get out of the chair until you’ve written 3,000 words a day, even if all the sentences are, ‘All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,’ just like in ‘The Shining.’”

“Refuse to believe in anything but happily ever after.” (This author married, very happily, within a year of divorce. I am not sure I like this person.)

“Stay strong—and believe the words will come. Eventually. After a very long time. Maybe.”

“Sophia, stop asking these asinine questions and take Nora Roberts’ advice: Just shut up and write the damn book.”

Five months before the book was due, I stopped interviewing and started sitting at Starbucks. I think I stared at the “Debra’s Special: Sextuplet Macchiato Caramel McFlurry” chalkboard sign for six hours without pecking out one word. Often, I’d hide in the restroom to cry until the rush-hour crowd pounded at the door.

Two months and three chapters later, I contemplated asking my great agent if she would calmly approach my editor to see if I could write a lovely little murder mystery instead. Because really, I was envisioning thousands of romance readers plotting my demise after I killed the hero. But before I could gather my nerve, the nerve in an upper right molar had another idea.

It only took a bill from an endodontist for a root canal to change my perspective. It was very simple: I could afford to keep my tooth if I wrote the book. Right then and there, I decided there was going to be a happily-ever-after come hell-or-high-water.

I suddenly remembered the plethora of heroines I had tortured and forced to walk the walk through mind-boggling rough scenes. Now, it was my own turn to do more than talk the talk. And for the story to be authentic, there could be no holding back, no internal editor and, most importantly, absolutely no flowery prose that would make me wretch. The hero and heroine had to be real, warts and all. This would be no Cinderella story.

It was no coincidence that the first book began with the heroine hanging on the edge of a cliff and realizing that her husband, who went in search of help, was not coming back to save her. The scenario is over the top gothic, yes, but when the very reluctant hero appears, the dialogue has the sort of pragmatic, jaded wit of an old Hepburn/Bogart movie. The heroine never ever does what the hero tells her to do, and the hero’s actions, not his words, do the talking. Once I turned in the book, I had four months to write the second. This was when procrastination settled in like the July fog in San Francisco.

During one agonizing period right before deadline (which included transatlantic flights with three children), I alternated between answering questions from attorneys and writing the last 75 *Continued on page 16* ▶

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



This, Too, Shall Pass

“And on the pedestal these words appear:
‘My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!’
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias*

My entire writing life, whenever I browse through old paperbacks at garage sales, or in charity shops, or in book dealers’ boxes of items priced at \$0.25 apiece, I often find dog-eared old novels that have phrases on the cover that go something like this: *The incredible international bestseller! 34 weeks on the New York Times list! Now also a major motion picture!*

And much of the time, it’s not only a novel I’ve never heard of...it’s a *writer* I’ve never heard of. I also often find that if I look up this bestselling writer at an online bookstore, the name brings up no hits at all, or only obscure listings (long out-of-print books with “No Image Available,” no book description, and no reviews).

On such occasions, I realize once again that for every Ramses II—someone dead for over 3,000 years whose name and story are well-known today, whose monuments are visited by millions in our era, and whose corpse is preserved at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo—there are thousands of Ozymandiases whose deeds have been eroded by the sands of time.

Fame is fleeting, but obscurity is forever.

Today’s headline is tomorrow’s bird-cage liner.

Time marches on.

(I have an endless supply of platitudes and aphorisms. But let’s save some room for dessert.)

Additionally, although we know who Ramses II was and what he did, and although Egypt still exists...the last pharaoh’s dynasty fell some 2,000 years ago—and by then, the pharaohs had been Greek rather than Egyptian for nearly three centuries, anyhow.

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Empires rise and fall.

Nothing lasts forever.

(Okay, I’ll stop now.)

As any fan of art, architecture, or archaeology knows, time has the manners of a thief. And as any student of history knows, the fate of business empires is even less enduring than the fate of kingdoms and dynasties. For example, the British East India Company was so powerful that it exercised military might and essentially ruled much of India for a century. What happened to this seemingly invincible company, whose reach extended around the globe? It was elbowed aside by the exasperated British government after the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (well, “mutiny” if you’re British; “first war of independence” if you’re Indian) and then dissolved in 1873.

Or, to cite an example closer to home, another interesting thing I notice when browsing old books is how many of the *publishers* of those “incredible international bestseller!”s no longer exist. Unless you’re a zygote, you can probably also remember bookselling empires that have disappeared. Can you say “Border’s” or “Brentano’s”? Do we all remember when B. Dalton’s and Waldenbooks used to dominate retail bookselling in the U.S.?

This is why I don’t get too agitated about the dominance that Amazon currently has in the bookselling world. Nor do I think we need to “be afraid, be very afraid” of Amazon’s publishing programs, which will further extend the sweeping grasp of its business empire.

Do I think that Amazon is a good guy? No, of course not. But there’s very little possibility that I would suspect *any* business empire of harboring good intentions and admirable ethics, since the cycle of history ensures that my beliefs about capitalism are wearily cynical.

Do I think it’s a good thing for the publishing industry if one particular business emerges as vastly more powerful than any other? No, of course not. Then again, I also don’t think the dominance of one entity is good for geopolitics, religion, art, or a dinner party, either. So I am, by nature, very disinclined to view an Amazonian hegemony as a *good* thing.

However, I also don’t view Amazon’s growing dominance with undue alarm, since these things are cyclical, and competition perpetually changes the playing field—and the positions of the players.

To give an obvious example: Back when I was entering the profession in the late 1980s as a romance writer, the romance genre consisted almost entirely of historical romance published by multiple houses, and contemporary category/series romance—a subgenre over which Harlequin achieved notable dominance. But then around 1990, other houses started competing for the contemporary romance genre market by publishing single-title contemporaries, a market which essentially hadn’t existed until then. (Yes, some single-title contemporary romances were published in the 1980s; but those were isolated examples rather than a market segment.)

The success of single-title romance in the 1990s created a much bigger and more varied market than had previously existed in genre romance, thus also creating *competition* for category/series romance—which is now merely one segment of the contemporary romance market. That’s a very different set of circumstances than existed when I started writing in the late 1980s. Being dominant over category/series romance (as it still is today) used to mean that Harlequin completely dominated the contemporary romance genre market; but that’s no longer what it means at all. Competition changed the playing field—and the positions of the players.

One reason Amazon thrives to such an extent these days, certainly, is the relative absence of competition. Amazon was an early innovator in online bookselling, e-reading devices, and e-book sales; but it has also benefited from the widespread lethargy and incompetence that have long characterized publishing and bookselling.

The major houses still haven’t developed their own competitive online retailing for their e-releases. (Have you tried to shop at these publishers’ online stores? The IRS has a more engaging website.) Instead, they’ve focused on battling over their cut of the proceeds with e-book retailers who *are* innovating in this area. Additionally, the websites of virtually all Amazon’s competitors (i.e. other booksellers) are just...*sad* compared to Amazon’s. Like many Nook owners, I browse on Amazon’s website to decide what to buy, then I download it from BN.com, whose website is dull and clunky (and yet nonetheless *better* than Kobo.com, Sony.com, Diesel, iBooks, etc.).

Additionally, publishers—instead of making attractive offers to writers for their e-rights—have so far approached the digital age by getting into lawsuits, issuing threats, exerting extortionate pressure, making outrageous claims and demands, and alienating authors. It’s behavior that ensures that many writers are turning with interest not only to self-publishing, but also to Amazon’s newly launched publishing programs. Because, while publishing conglomerates with thousands of e-books available are failing to adapt their online retail capabilities to the digital age, Amazon has seen and exploited an opportunity to get into publishing in this new era.

There’s no mystery about how Amazon got to be the 800-pound gorilla we currently see before us. Nor will it be surprising if, as predicted by many, Amazon’s dominance continues to grow—including destroying or gobbling up many of its competitors. And, yes, history very consistently teaches us that the more ▶

power and influence Amazon consolidates, the worse off writers will probably be. (Publishers, too.) I don't say that as a judgment on Amazon, in particular; it's just the oft-repeated pattern of business empires—and nothing about Amazon strikes me as evidence that it will be a soulfully singular exception to the usual pattern.

But I don't believe for a moment that Amazon can count on a long-term (let alone permanent) absence of serious competition. Sooner or later, someone will revamp an existing business or launch a new one that gives Amazon genuine competition in the retail market. And doing so in the digital age will not be as daunting a goal as it was back in the days when bookselling necessarily meant establishing a massive infrastructure of brick-and-mortar stores, foot traffic, and physical stock. Yet, even back then, the dominance of various bookseller chains rose and fell over the years, as they entered the market aggressively and then were later eclipsed by new challengers with updated business models.

Additionally, Amazon's front-running success in the e-book market is significantly fueled by widespread use of the Kindle—an e-reading device created exclusively for Amazon e-books. But just as consumer demand eventually created a market wherein we can keep our own cell phones and cell numbers when changing services, I suspect the e-reading market will gravitate to devices that don't lock us into *one* particular retailer. (At any rate, my Nook is the last retailer-specific e-reader I will ever purchase.) And losing its dominance in the e-device market would presumably have an effect on Amazon's dominance in e-book retailing.

The various conditions that have enhanced Amazon's market position have been fortuitous for the company. But circumstances that favor one particular entity don't last forever—and often, they don't even last for *long*. I don't think we'll be looking up Amazon under Ozymandias.com any time soon, but I wouldn't bet on its business empire dominating the market without a viable challenge for the rest of my career—or necessarily even for the next decade.

Change is the only constant.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

This, too, shall pass.

Laura Resnick writes the Esther Diamond urban fantasy series for DAW Books, and she is about halfway through electronically self-publishing her backlist.

Neverly Ever After

Continued from page 13 ▶ pages. There was little romance; instead the language was spare and raw and the emotions all-powerful. The hugely independent main characters had to choose between holding fast to their beloved freedom or taking a chance on a different kind of love without boundaries. It was a close call.

Right now I am writing the third book in the series as I enter the third year of divorce court. Is the creative process any easier? No. But it is starting to feel like the new normal. And I can live with that. Mostly, I've learned that if you can force yourself to just show up for work, do the job, bleed a little, cry a lot, then sometimes, just sometimes, something beautiful happens.

RITA Award-winning author Sophia Nash's most recent releases are Between the Duke and the Deep Blue Sea and The Art of Duke Hunting. Though born in Switzerland and raised in France and the United States, Sophia's heart resides in Regency England. It's no wonder, considering her ancestors: a French admiral and English Royal Navy commander who traded epic cannon fire at sea. Before becoming an author, Sophia was an award-winning television producer for CBS, a congressional speechwriter, and a nonprofit CEO. Visit her Web site: www.sophianash.com. This article first appeared on The Huffington Post on April 13, 2012. It is reprinted with the permission of the author.



WRITING is TAXING

By Diane Kelly

Information Reporting

You might have noticed that the Schedule C form contained a couple of extra lines this year. Line I asks whether you made any payments that would require you to file a Form 1099, and Line H asks whether you filed the 1099s if you made such payments. Why did the IRS add these questions? Because small business owners often fail to report payments made to third parties. The failure to report is often unintentional and simply due to the fact that the business owner was not aware of the filing requirements. Because there are penalties for failure to file these information reports, it is important for you to know when you are required to file a 1099 and what type of 1099 should be filed.

There are nearly as many 1099 forms as there are letters in the alphabet. 1099-A, 1099-B, 1099-C, etc. As a writer, however, you're likely only to have a filing responsibility for a 1099-MISC. The 1099-MISC form is used to report "non-employee compensation," such as payments to an accountant, publicist, or a web designer. You are only required to file the 1099-MISC if you pay \$600 or more for services to the recipient in a single tax year. You would report the total of all payments made during the year on Line 7 of the 1099-MISC. Did you incur legal fees? Payments of \$600 or more to an attorney for legal services would be reported on the Form 1099-MISC in box 14 "gross proceeds paid to an attorney."

I was recently asked whether a Form 1099-MISC must be issued by an author to the author's agent if the agent received commissions during the year of more than \$600. If the author paid these commissions directly to the agent, there's no doubt the author should report the commissions on a 1099. Unfortunately, there's no definitive authority whether such reporting is required by an author when the agent is paid by the publisher, though in my opinion no reporting by the author is required.

The instructions for the 1099 Form specifically state that when a publisher issues payment to an author's agent, the publisher should report the full amount of the payment on a 1099 issued to the agent. The agent, in turn, should report the entire amount received on behalf of the author on a 1099 issued to the author. The amount reported by the agent to the author on the 1099 is not reduced by the amount of agent's commission, even if the agent withheld a commission and sent only the net earnings to the author. Therefore, the author must report the full amount of the royalties as gross earnings on the author's Schedule C and would take a deduction for the amount of the commission withheld, even though the author did not directly pay the commission to the agent.

On one hand, because the author takes a deduction for the commissions, it would seem logical that the author is treated as the payor of the commission and should therefore issue a 1099 to the agent. On the other hand, because the agent has already had the full amount of the royalties reported to him or her by the publisher, and the agent has presumably reported that amount as gross revenue with a corresponding expense to deduct the amount remitted to the author, a second 1099 from the author could result in an over-reporting of the agent's gross revenues. In such situations, however, the agent could simply make a correcting adjustment on the agent's tax return so that the net profits figure is correct.

You'll note that the 1099 form requires tax identification numbers (Social Security number or Employer Identification Number) for both you and the recipient. To obtain a tax ID number from someone, supply the payee a Form W-9, "Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification." It's important to request the tax ID number before issuing payment, because if the recipient refuses to provide a taxpayer ▶

identification number you will be required to withhold a portion of the payment as “backup withholding” and remit it to the IRS. Instructions for the W-9 form can be found here: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/iw9.pdf> . You are also required to do backup withholding if you are notified by the IRS that the taxpayer identification number supplied by a payee is incorrect. The backup withholding rate is currently 28 percent.

When the publisher pays an agent, there would be no way for the author to withhold part of the payment if the agent refuses to provide a tax ID number to the author. To me, this lack of control over payment and withholding is another indicator that the author would not be required to issue a 1099 to his or her agent for commissions when the publisher issues payment directly to the agent.

If you file 1099 Forms, be sure to also include a Form 1096 “Annual Summary and Transmittal of U.S. Information Returns.” This form is used to total the amounts reported on all of the 1099s you file for a given tax year.

WARNING! The 1099 and 1096 Forms must be ordered from the IRS in order to be in the proper format for scanning. Although you can view these forms on the IRS website, do not print them out from the site as they will not be in the proper format for filing purposes. You can order forms by calling 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676) or through this link: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/page/0,,id=23108,00.html>

Diane Kelly is a CPA/tax attorney and the author of the humorous Death and Taxes romantic mystery series from St. Martin's Press.

Business Briefs

Instant Bits

Daisy Hutton has stepped up to fiction publisher at Thomas Nelson, succeeding Allen Arnold.

PW Daily

From fan-fic to über hot international acclaim to parody in just a short time. Da Capo will be publishing Andrew Shaffer's *Fifty Shames of Earl Grey* for spring of 2012.

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Not Your Usual Writing Advice

By JoAnn Grote



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

Treasure

***Experience is not what happens to a man.
It is what a man does with what happens to him.***

— Aldous Huxley

Recently a fire attacked a farm near my home town. The house and the lives of the young couple who own the farm were spared, but the fire destroyed several outbuildings. According to the husband, the greatest loss was his wife's artwork, which was stored in one of the outbuildings. All she has left of her artwork is what is in the house or on display in a gallery.

My heart goes out to the artist. The thought of losing a lifetime of creation is numbing.

I'm writing this during a thunderstorm. A tornado watch covers our part of the state. I'm grateful that, as writers, we are in some ways more fortunate than artists who work in other mediums. For an artist who works in oil or watercolor, for example, there is only one original. Copies are never the same as the original piece of work. Writers, on the other hand, can save an original manuscript on a CD or flash drive or to an external hard drive or to the cloud and the story will be the same. Storage is easy and cheap. Before the days of cheap external storage, I kept disks and CDs with copies of my completed manuscripts in a safety deposit box. (I also kept, and still keep, my original contracts in a safety deposit box and copies at home where I can access them easily if there's a need.) We can keep copies of our first editions in more than one place, also, and one copy of a first edition is the same as another.

Lillian Too, the Feng Shui expert I've mentioned in previous columns, speaks of Chinese keeping things they treasure in gold boxes. Protecting copies of our manuscripts and first editions seems like symbolically keeping our treasure—our stories—in gold boxes.

Many religions and cultures consider tragedy transformative. In the Jewish and Christian traditions, the Great Flood wiped out people who did not honor God and thereby transformed the world, giving humans a new start. Lillian Too, in *168 Feng Shui Ways to Declutter Your House*, writes, "The Chinese believe that, in the wake of such natural disasters [as floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes], the land becomes cleansed, as all negative things are swept away in the most powerful manner of purification."

Too later states, "Out of every loss comes a clearing of old energy patterns, re-evaluation, new energy." I have never lost a huge portion of my writing creations. Yet other difficult places in my life have taught me the truth in Too's statement.

I wonder how the fire and loss will affect the artist's future work. It's difficult to appreciate the new life that comes from tragedy while still in the midst of shock and loss, yet often tragedy results in personal transformation. A tragedy such as the young artist is experiencing now can cause an artist to re-examine the direction his/her art has taken, and where he/she wants it to go. It can transform the artist, and his/her art.

The artist's loss in the fire led to a discussion with two of my friends regarding what we would attempt to or wish to save if faced with a disaster. Lindsay, a store manager, said, "I'd save my daughter first, then my cat." Tiffany, a pharmacist and not a mother, said, "Yes, the cats. Then my photo albums." I was glad that the many ways to save manuscripts means I don't need to worry about losing much of my creative work. ▶

Like Lindsay and Tiffany, I'd focus first on saving living things. For Lindsay and Tiffany, saving items they've created with their work didn't even come to mind. As artists, our creations create additional concerns in the face of natural disasters.

Fortunately, we do not need to experience a tragedy in order to transform our lives. "What do I treasure?" The question can bring clarity about our lives and about our writing. It's so easy to get caught up in the demands of daily life, and in keeping our career going that we forget what we treasure, what we want from our lives and our careers. But we can rediscover what we treasure if we take time to get quiet, reflect, perhaps journal, look at our lives and listen to our hearts. Then we begin to know where to focus our energy, and where to stop feeling guilty for not focusing our energy.

Years ago I read an article in *RWR: Romance Writers Report*, the monthly magazine put out by Romance Writers of America, that has stuck in my mind ever since. The article was written by an aspiring author not yet published in book format. She wrote that even if none of her stories became published books, when she died, her then-young children would know how much she loved them and what she believed love between a man and a woman looked like because of her family-centered romance manuscripts. This woman wrote about what she treasured—love between a man and a woman, and love of family.

Our values, ideals and ideas are treasures. When we write about what we love and value, we experience joy and contentment. Everything we write doesn't need to be about the things we hold most dear, but we can make time—even if just a little—to write about our treasure, whether it's cherishing family, love in any of its forms, spiritual growth, the triumph of good over evil or any of the myriad other possibilities.

We can honor the young artist's loss by treasuring our own art, our writing. Don't wait for tragedy for your own transformation. What do you treasure? Write about it. It will nourish your soul and touch readers' hearts.



Three days after I turned in the draft of this column, I dropped off some autographed books at the local library for a library fundraiser. The librarian, Diane, commented that readers love autographed books, and then told me the following story. (She didn't know about the column I'd recently written.)

Diane's home was in the path of a huge tornado that caused massive destruction in the area 13 years ago. She told me, "I had about 30 seconds to get out of the house. I grabbed my wedding album, my husband's wedding ring, my uncashed paycheck, and two books. One of the books is my favorite book by my favorite author. I'd written to tell him how much I loved the book. He sent me a first edition with a personalized autograph. I couldn't leave that book behind."

I think we should treasure our written creations as much as our readers treasure them.

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