

# N I N K

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## Subsidiary Rights Workshop

BY EDIE CLAIRE

**Speakers:** Lauren Abramo (Dystel & Goderich Literary Management) and Elizabeth Jennings (Author)

*The format of this workshop was that the speakers each gave a 10-minute presentation, then opened up the session to questions from the audience.*

Author and translator Elizabeth Jennings says that living in Italy and being immersed in the local writing and reading culture of Europe has made her feel like an explorer who has discovered gold—a vast and still largely untapped market for American novels. The largest romance publisher in Europe sells books by 400 authors, and 380 of these authors are American. Although we may feel as though a huge curtain separates us from our European readers, this does not have to be the case.

Lauren Abramo, who handles foreign rights for Dystel & Goderich Literary Management, says that her job is to put the best foot forward for her agency's clients by looking not just at how well a book sells in the U.S., but also whether the authors have ever lived abroad, if they speak a foreign language, or if they have relatives in a given country or visit there often. Therefore, any author working with a literary agent should be sure to let that agency's foreign rights agent know of any such information that could be helpful. Many factors go into the viability of a book in a foreign market, including genre, trends, and cultural sensitivities. Success in foreign sales depends on a good knowledge of the markets, presentation, and ability to "cut through the noise" to reach the appropriate buyers.

Elizabeth explained that Europeans in France, Germany, Spain, and Italy are used to seeing American movies and are familiar with American cities, geography, and culture, which makes sales of American novels easier. Over the past two years, a thriving community of bloggers has developed who read and review commercial fiction. The romance community is especially robust, and is attentive to American authors. Authors with a

release scheduled in one of these countries should ask their foreign publisher for a contact in their "press office," which handles reader relations. The author can then volunteer to send a guest blog or an interview, or write a letter to readers that can be translated and posted on the publisher's social media or passed along to the bloggers. They will more than likely be enthusiastic and delighted to hear from you, as their reader base is not used to having direct contact with American authors.

Lauren explained that foreign-rights agents in the U.S. generally work with Continued on page 5 ▶

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## Novelists, Inc.

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## Introducing...

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

Membership Chair: James LePore  
leporej5@optonline.net

### New Applicants:

Zuleika Arkadie (Z.L. Arkadie), San Diego, CA  
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Cathy Comfort (Cathryn Cade), East Helena, MT  
Janice Graham (Juliet Gael), Overland Park, KS  
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Jessica Scott, Harker Heights, TX  
Helene Young, Trinity Beach, Queensland, Australia

### 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.

## Transition-in-Progress

I'm not sure I could have chosen a more fascinating two-year period to serve on the NINC board. Maybe the '40s, when mass market paperbacks were changing the way and the numbers in which the world read. Maybe the early '80s, when deep discounting introduced the term "mass market hardcover" and reconditioned a huge segment of the readership that had been accustomed to waiting a year to get bestsellers. Of course, NINC wasn't around during either of those major transitory phases (and I wasn't born for the first), so being on the NINC board wasn't an available option. That leaves me with this one, and it has been both a major phase and a transitory one. It's around this latter point that I want to focus my final president's letter.

We are decidedly in the middle of—and nowhere near the end of—a transition. The enormous shifts brought on by the introduction of the first new book format to be fully embraced by the public in nearly seven decades are underway, but not complete by a long shot. These shifts are affecting our industry at two of its four most fundamental points: the vendor and the purveyor. The vendor is increasingly, and soon to be overwhelmingly, an online retailer, and the purveyor ranges, more dramatically than ever before, from traditional big publishers to midsize and small independent publishers, to a large and growing number of writers publishing themselves, often quite profitably. We've gone over this endlessly throughout the past couple of years and the last thing you need is for me to rehash it here. What we've addressed much less is how the evolution going on at the vendor level is going to affect the evolution going on at the purveyor level—and how all of that affects us as novelists.

It's abundantly clear that the bookseller landscape is shrinking. One major bookstore chain has gone out of business, most of the smaller bookstore chains are reporting flat or declining sales (Indigo reported disappointing results as I was writing this), space for books in non-bookstore retail outlets is increasingly limited, and space for books in the biggest bookstore chain is getting smaller. Online, the market share of the biggest book retailer has gone down slightly, but it is still a much bigger market share than I've ever seen one retailer have during my 33 years in the book business. And while there is a strong number two in online book sales, the rest of the competition comprises a stunningly small part of the market—even when two of these vendors are arguably the two biggest online brands in the universe.

Book sales are up, though, in some areas (including those most relevant to NINC members) impressively so, so what's the big deal?

There might be no big deal at all. However, the big deal might be that this smaller-yet-healthier bookselling landscape isn't necessarily evolving in ways that best benefit the writer, especially in the e-book world. Soon, online booksellers will be able to sell all e-books for whatever price they choose (this is a result of the Department of Justice ruling against the agency model originated by Apple and the Big Six). You know that there is going to be some very aggressive pricing done by retailers. I've already seen multiple instances of books from non-agency publishers selling for less than publishers are selling the books to their accounts; for example, The Nook edition of *The Hunger Games*, which comes from Scholastic—a non-agency publisher—sells for \$5.00 at BN.com when B&N is paying Scholastic \$6.50 for every copy it sells. We can expect to see a great deal more of this when superstars like James Patterson, John Grisham, and Patricia Cornwell are available for discounting. We already have some clue of how this might go provided by Nora Roberts. The Kindle editions of her Penguin books are priced at \$7.99 and \$9.99 (Penguin is on the agency model for now and therefore sets the price) while her Silhouette titles are priced as low as \$3.50 even though the list price is \$6.99 (Harlequin is not on the agency model).

What this means if you're a traditionally published author is that there's a good chance that your e-books will be cheaper soon, and therefore more competitive with indie-published books. However, if ▶

you're an indie-published author, it means that your books might soon be losing their price advantage over Big Six authors, including the top sellers in every genre.

Then there's The Tweak. The Tweak is what online booksellers do to keep their algorithms nimble, constantly shifting how they interpret sales and search data. Until about six months ago, The Tweak was less aggressive, and it was possible to perform a few simple tricks to get the algorithms to work to your advantage. That isn't the case any longer. While some writers do a brilliant job of staying on top of this, doing so effectively is akin to a full-time job. Since most of us already have full-time jobs, that's something of a problem.

The Tweak has made things harder for indie authors. Unless you have a remarkable mailing list (and I know that some writers have great ones), the absolute best way for you to sell books in large quantities is through bookseller promotions like Kindle's Daily Deal or B&N's Daily Find. Unfortunately, indie authors have no easily available forum for pitching their books for these promotions. Understandably, booksellers can't accommodate the pitches from hundreds of thousands of writers, so they request nominations exclusively from publishers and the handful of indies whose calls they're willing to take. The same is true of co-op. In many ways, this situation is similar to what the business was like before the advent of e-books. Those times were not particularly friendly for indie authors, though even then there were some who thrived.

These are a couple of enormous issues. They're not insurmountable by any means, and I would never bet against the creativity and ingenuity of motivated novelists, especially the ones in this organization. But it's clear to me that there's a strong trend within NINC toward indie publishing, and I think that's going to be a tougher road to success for writers entering that arena now than it has been for those already there. Maybe more to the point, if you haven't begun to break out as an indie author already, there's a good chance that it's going to be tougher for you to do so now.

What remains largely unchanged in the face of this transitory phase are the two other fundamental points of our industry: the writer and the reader. Yes, writers need to do more now to stay competitive and, yes, readers expect more engagement from writers than they once did, but—and this is especially true for novelists—the writer's job is still to delight and persuade readers. If the job ever becomes something other than that, I think we might be in serious trouble.

This brings me to the final point I want to make here. I want to implore you to remember to dedicate at least as much effort, if not more, to craft than you did before you started taking on so many of the business functions in the industry. Some of the advice I heard at the conference and see on the loop frightens me. "Get as many books out as you can." "Publishing frequency is key." I'm not saying that this is bad business advice; it's just not particularly sustainable. Again, I realize there are exceptions. I know that many of you can deliver two or three terrific books a year. I know some of you do even more than that. Simply never lose sight of the fact that readers expect you to bring your A-game consistently, and they have more incentive than ever to walk away if you disappoint them.

To look at this from another, more inspiring perspective, this is possibly the best time in decades for you to attempt to expand your creative reach. Readers have never been as concerned about categories as booksellers have, and they're proving that now with their buying decisions. I can speak to this personally: *Blue*, my father-daughter/midlife crisis/fantasy novel is the most successful fiction work I've published and yet it almost certainly would have been rejected by publishers as being too difficult to categorize.

If that's the case, if you're truly free from the conventions that have bound so many of us for years, why not try to be more ambitious with your work? Why not take a shot at writing a book for the ages rather than another book for your publishing program? Why aren't we talking about this at NINC? I've heard the rap that most of you have other outlets for this type of conversation and that you turn to NINC for strong business advice. I'm just not sure I'm buying it. I think instead, most of us have become so consumed by the business that we're not giving anywhere near enough thought to craft. Don't go down that road. It would be a terrible waste of the opportunities possible in the best book market in years.

I'm going to stop pontificating now. It has been an honor and a pleasure being NINC's president the past year and I'm so glad it happened when it did.

— Lou Aronica



# Subsidiary Rights

Continued from page 1 ▶

English-speaking sub-agents on the ground abroad who are familiar with the publishers in a given country or region. These sub-agents are the conduit between U.S. publishers and the various foreign publishers, and they often craft the contracts. These sub-agents process a huge volume of pitches, and reaching them as an indie would be very difficult. In her view, indie authors would be better advised to devote their business acumen (and limited time) to creative promotion. For an individual to pay for a translation is not currently cost effective, because the European e-book market has not yet reached the critical level. However, because licenses for foreign translations tend to be short term (five to 10 years), the author may be able to utilize sold rights again when the market is better. Indie authors who are approached directly by foreign sub-agents should be cautious; these agents may not be legitimate or may push exclusive contracts that are detrimental to the author. Always ask questions and request examples of other authors with whom they have worked. But do not ignore a foreign offer, as some may indeed be legitimate and deserving of further follow-up!

Having good representation for foreign rights sales is important not only in terms of market knowledge but also in the supervision of contract negotiations and collection of payments. Non-payment is a common problem with foreign publishers, and authors may need significant leverage on their side in order to solve it. According to Lauren, foreign rights contracts should always (1) be written in English, (2) have an advance attached, (3) clearly specify royalties, which are not as standard in foreign markets as they are in the U.S., and (4) designate specific territories covered, not just language.

Elizabeth would like to see viable business models develop whereby authors work directly with translators to produce high-quality foreign language editions that would remain under the author's control. Publishing houses that perform translations often hire inexperienced and underpaid translators who do a poor job, and the author has no way of ensuring quality. She has seen foreign publishers reduce the length of a manuscript by 20 percent, with the decision of what to cut being made by the translator with no editorial input.

In regard to dealing with foreign publishing contracts, Elizabeth's wish list for the future would include (1) at least twice-yearly royalty payments, (2) contractual obligation to inform the author of the release date, (3) some mechanism for evaluation of the quality of the translation, (4) opportunities for author promotion including ability to engage in social media in the local language and publisher assistance with applying market-relevant keywords, and (5) editorial direction for any needed cuts to the manuscript.

Lauren recommended against an author hiring an amateur translator; ability to speak a language does not equate with writing ability and a good translator must have both skills. When asked what kind of sales record an author should have to attract an agent for subsidiary rights only, Lauren responded that sales record is only part of the picture. The foreign market revolves less around e-book sales than does the U.S., and other elements are necessary to make a given book or author a good fit with a foreign publisher. Foreign sub-rights in general are about the big picture, because an agent's commission on each deal is small and only in the aggregate is such business profitable.

Elizabeth closed the workshop on a positive note by stating that over half of U.S. film profits now come from abroad, and as e-book technology continues to develop and physical distribution of books ceases to be an issue, authors will see a significant increase in the percentage of their income coming from abroad.

*Edie Claire was traditionally published with cozy mysteries and contemporary romance in the late 90s and early 2000s. After many years of feeling like a failure, she relaunched her career as an indie in 2010, reviving her mystery series and adding new YA romance and women's fiction releases to the fold. She is now earning way more than she ever did before—and she owes it all to information gleaned at NINC conferences! Visit her website at [www.edieclaire.com](http://www.edieclaire.com)*



# ***NINCThink Round Table: Going Indie or Traditional?***

BY LORI DEVOTI

**Industry Guests:** Jennifer Brehl (William Morrow/Avon), Leah Hultenschmidt (Sourcebooks), Wendy McCurdy (Berkley), Jen Talty (Cool Gus Publishing), Dan Slater (Amazon)

**NINC Authors:** Barbara Freethy, Vella Munn, Denise Grover Swank, Cindy Procter-King, Karen King, Ruth Glick

**Moderator:** Edie Claire

*This panel discussion addressed the pros and cons of going indie, staying with a traditional print publisher, or doing a mix of both.*

Moderator Edie Claire kicked off the discussion with a question on what traditionally published authors should consider when contemplating doing both indie and traditional publishing.

The NINC authors at the table agreed that time is a major factor. One mentioned that she didn't have a backlist so she had to write new content, which took her a year. In addition to writing the book, she had to learn the ropes of this new business model. Another had a huge backlist, but isn't having the kind of success she thought she would have. She went with Samhain Publishing for some titles, renegotiated e-book rights with the original print publisher for others, and is indie publishing four other titles. This mix seemed to work for her.

An industry guest wanted to know what things traditional publishers had done for authors in the past that authors must now do for themselves. This guest listed line edits and a critical eye on authors' work as something s/he saw authors having to do on their own now. It was also mentioned that publishers pay attention to the brand of an author's books and provide outreach, marketing, and publicity. This person stated that traditional publishers have a greater potential network that can be used.

The authors suggested that indie books could be used to fill gaps in a traditional publishing timeline, but acknowledged that going indie can involve a lot of time and effort. However, authors can hire out for formatting, etc. and slowly learn to do some of these things themselves as they are comfortable.

Another author responded to the industry guest's suggestion that line edits and a critical eye are value-added that traditional publishers provide by saying that an author would be crazy to put out a book without an editor and that you do have to find someone you trust. She noted that she works with an editor with whom she worked at a major publisher and who has gone freelance, and her husband does her proofreading.

The talk at this point turned to covers, with an author mentioning that with indie books you can change covers of backlist titles to better fit the brand of new traditionally published works, enabling authors to get more value from both. Another author said covers were her biggest frustration with traditional publishers because of the lack of author input. Her comment that someone had once told her "If you complain about the covers, you get something worse" made the audience laugh, but she made the point that as an indie author, she has control over her covers.

Industry guests responded to this by saying they solicit the opinion of the sales group who want to sell the book after they ask the author for ideas for cover images. Another said her company also asks authors for input.

At this point, an author acknowledged that since going indie her idea of what a good cover is has changed, and that she thinks more about what will sell the book to readers and less about if the man on the cover matches the description of her hero.

Industry guests emphasized that with a traditional publisher a book's cover is being considered by a team. They said it's important that everyone be on the same page, and that sometimes it's better to have ideas from a group of people. Authors pointed out that they didn't seek only to please themselves and that many work with professional cover artists to design covers that appeal to readers.

The next question to the publishers was whether they foresaw "any changes that will increase the attractiveness of staying with traditional publishing?"

The overall feeling about this from the industry guests seemed to be that things are evolving but they didn't know how things would change. One house represented was actively pursuing backlists and another guest mentioned that the ability to get a book into readers' hands faster has increased, using Sylvia Day as an example. This was tempered, though, with the comment that speed depends on the project: if there is an opportunity and if the book is ready. Publishers still need time to sell into accounts like Walmart, Target, and Barnes & Noble.

The guests also pointed out that speed isn't just dependent on the publishing houses; time has to be allowed for the author to write the book—in the case of a subsequent book.

Another reason offered for the slower pace for publishing houses than an individual indie author was the number of passes a book goes through even after the editing process, described by one guest as being pretty intense: "I see it every pass. Is it overkill? I don't know."

Eddie then asked if indie publishing had become the new slush pile and if publishers would consider letting authors keep their e-rights or buy only print rights.

Every industry guest said no. (Although we learned in other sessions that Bella Andre had successfully negotiated a seven-figure print-only contract.) The industry guests acknowledged that while they haven't been discussing print-only rights, it is getting more and more challenging. However, if they just take print, they get all the risks without the profit that comes with e-book rights. One guest admitted that while her house won't do print-only, it will consider negotiating things like print first, digital later, or digital first, print later.

The next question took us back to an author focus: "Does indie publishing feed the muse in a way traditional publishing doesn't?"

The authors had mixed responses. They acknowledged that, as an indie author, you are running a business. One author said she could spend eight hours writing and eight hours on everything else (formatting, covers, promotion, social media) each day, which is an overload of creative and business. However, others mentioned perks like being able to write a book of any length that fits the story rather than a publishing line's mandates. Another said it was liberating to know that she can write what she wants and indie publish it if traditional publishers won't buy it. An author who's gone strictly indie said it was freeing to be done with being rejected. She no longer has to think about what the publishing world wants, only about what her readers want.

This was met with a lot of agreement. Many of the authors said that they've put up books they knew traditional publishing didn't want, but a certain readership did, and mentioned that they listen to readers more now and take their feedback on what to write. "We are not as narrowly defined."

An author new to indie publishing said she feeds her muse and has hope that the books will find readers. Another said if she really wants to write a book, she will, but she is in the business of selling books; the balance is writing what she thinks will sell and keeping her muse happy.

Industry guests replied that they also get reader feedback from looking at reviews.

Another author responded that going indie gave her the chance to sell her cozy mysteries in the U.K. Her agent had said there was no market for them there, but Amazon U.K. now accounts for 40 percent of her income.

Using a traditional print contract to help provide a push and a platform for indie books was also discussed. For the most part, the authors seemed to agree that this worked. Industry guests emphasized that authors should want to get their books out in every way that they can. One author, however, disagreed with using print books as a promotional opportunity for indie books. She sees the print market as very different from the e-market, with different readers. Another responded to the industry guests' comments ▶



about utilizing all formats by saying that she indie publishes both in POD and audio formats, in addition to e-books.

When industry guests were asked how their relationships with authors have changed since the growth of indie publishing, they responded that authors are more knowledgeable now and many are aware of things like meta data; however the essential author/editor relationship is the same. They also acknowledged that now they know if a book doesn't work for them, the author will probably do something else with that work, such as indie publish it, and this affects negotiations. It puts a different kind of pressure on the publisher and has to be taken into consideration. They have learned that things like preorder buttons and price experimentation are important to authors. They also talk with authors about what's working for the author's indie books and are, therefore, more open to new pricing strategies.

Authors were asked what they missed about traditional publishing. Most cited editorial support, but more than one also said they hadn't had a lot of editing while traditionally publishing and can now hire someone to do that. One said she didn't miss much except maybe being taken to lunch at conferences. Traditional publishing had reduced her to jelly and now her indie income is 17 times what it was when she was only published traditionally.

The roundtable ended with the industry guests saying that, as time goes on, they think authors will become more like them and the industry guests will become more like the indie-published authors. They think things will come together a bit and that publishers are already working with indie authors to make things more seamless. They believe the entire pie has gotten much bigger and the publishing world is trying to find ways to take advantage of those opportunities. "Sea changes have happened. This is disruptive, but forces change. Hopefully, that makes for a healthy book market."

*Lori Devoti has written for major publishers and not-so-major publishers. Now with the new options open to authors, she has gone indie, teaches writing, runs The How to Write Shop, and does e-book formatting for other authors on the side. Find out more about her at [www.loridevoti.com](http://www.loridevoti.com) or [www.howtowriteshop.com](http://www.howtowriteshop.com).*

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## Passing the Torch

After two entertaining, interesting, and busy years as the editor of *Nink*, I'm passing the torch to the wonderful Laura Phillips, who has been an insightful contributor to many issues of the newsletter in the past and will rock as editor.

I've enjoyed getting to know so many of you through working with you on contributed articles and meeting you at conferences. I'm going to miss the energy buzz that I get when pulling the issues together and that "in the loop" feeling from being on the board. Thank you for a great two years. It's been great fun!

— Marianna Jameson

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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.





# Advanced Marketing Techniques

BY DANA MARTON

**Speaker:** Julie Ortolon

The workshop covered building reach through social media. The keyword seems to be “discoverability.” Until now, an author’s success depended on bookstore placement, which was controlled by the publisher who could buy prime placement for the books they were heavily promoting. Currently, 50 percent of fiction is bought online. With e-publishing, the control has passed to the author.

Some things to keep in mind:

Methods to achieve discoverability are different on B&N.com than on Amazon.

Web presence used to be an extension of your bio. Today, this is how readers discover your fiction. They will discover you via social media, and you have to keep them circling through your sites (Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) until they hit your website where your ‘buy’ buttons are for your books. *Attract*, then *impact*.

Don’t post family photos. They don’t get shares. Keep it fun and professional. Post cute pictures that people will share. Pure text posts have a lower impact than if you post an image.

Shares are the gold mine. “Like” is good, “comment” is better, “share” is gold. A share exposes you to all the friends that reader has, and then they can share, too.

It’s important to directly upload your images, so the share links all point back to you. (Cute cats, puppies, food porn, cute cartoons, inspirational messages.)

Use Facebook Insights to monitor total reach, total number of people who saw the post, the number of posts you’ve posted, and many other metrics.

Use Pinterest to hook all your social media together.

Make sure there is Added Value Content (AVD) on your website to draw readers there: excerpts, contests, deleted scenes, character bios and photos, etc. This is a good place to give away free books periodically.

Don’t make your book list page a long list of covers. Focus on certain books. Make it interesting.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) keywords should be everywhere, even in your book descriptions. This way, people who aren’t even looking for you will end up on your site.

Include SEO keywords in the titles of your images.

Each book series should have its own landing page that immerses readers in the book’s world. It should not be about you, but the fictional world you created.

Have social media buttons on every page. (Buttons that will allow people to follow you on Twitter or like you on Facebook.)

For analytics, Google Analytics is the most powerful free software. Enter all your websites. The goal is to even out all your peaks and valleys and have sustained high levels of traffic.

Other than your websites, you can also add your social media sites to Google Analytics.

Build visitor flow—keep visitors moving through all your social media sites, clicking from one to the next.

Ask readers to bookmark your page.

You can track conversion to sale if you have an Amazon Affiliate account.

You can track how many people click on a certain link on your page if you use bit.ly and have an account with them.

You can set up your Facebook account so that everything you post will automatically go to Twitter, and vice versa.

And now... The famous Julie Ortolon trifecta!!—the quick and easy way to update all your social media sites within a few minutes:



Upload original content to your website.

Highlight the image you'd like to share, then click on the 'Pin it' button on your tool bar. (You must have a Pinterest account for this.)

Once in Pinterest, you can share to Facebook and Twitter just by checking the appropriate boxes. Done!

*Dana Marton is the author of over 30 romantic suspense novels that have been published all over the world. She's a Rita Award finalist and the recipient of the Daphne du Maurier Award of Excellence. Visit her website at [www.danamarton.com](http://www.danamarton.com)*



## Partnering For Quality

BY DENISE AGNEW

**Panelists:** Lou Aronica (FictionStudio), Sue Grimshaw (Random House), Barbara Freethy (Author), Nita Taublib (G. P. Putnam's Sons), and David Wilk (Creative Management Partners).

During the first session of the 2012 Novelists Inc. Conference, several panelists discussed their ideas, outlooks, and beliefs about what quality means in this rapid and ever-changing publishing landscape. The main thrust of the panel was to address how authors can maintain quality despite changes relating to discoverability in an e-book world.

Right off the top, panelists agreed that in just one year the industry has altered dramatically. Not all of the changes proved positive for authors, or at least not as many affirmative changes as in the previous year. It is more difficult for authors to be discovered because of the number of e-books being offered at online retailers. On the plus side, authors have a tremendous array of opportunities to direct the flow of their own careers in a way they never have before. Genres are no longer as delineated in scope as they had been and there are opportunities to blend genres in a bigger way. Without the restriction of shelf space, an author can plan on many more years of sales than previously. Indie-published authors can build a significant and close relationship with their readers based on the length of time the books are available.

Publishing representatives on the panel maintained that a great story and making characters stand out is a sign of quality. When it's obvious an author has checked facts and done research that also shows integrity in the work.

Emotional engagement in a read is perhaps more important than a skillfully designed plot. It's evident if an author is faking a true interest in the story, plot, and characters. An author who can create a memorable reading experience already has a one-up. Unless readers remember a writer's work, that author is starting from scratch with the next book release.

Typos and grammar issues may not bother every reader, but it screams 'unprofessional.' Utilizing critiques, beta readers, editors, and proofreaders is highly important to maintain excellence.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for most authors to do all the steps required for self-publishing effectively. When hiring an editor, remember they wear their editorial heart on their sleeve. Be sure to consider the following: Does the editor get you and your work? Does the editor understand what you're trying to do? Interview them to make certain you'll be a good fit and they understand what you're trying to do.

Work with professional formatters, and always examine each work in each format to make certain they are done correctly and look good. One industry guest suggested that it's better to hire a typist to rekey older books rather than scan them because of the significant formatting issues with scans. Don't be in such a

hurry to publish indie books that you rush the process. Pay attention to detail. For example, printing a manuscript and editing by hand can often work better than attempting to edit on the computer screen.

More than 50 percent of books are now sold online, which means that a cover must say, "This is a real book." If the cover doesn't look professional, that's a genuine problem that can't be ignored. If a cover isn't working, evaluate why and change it out with a new cover design. Quotes on covers aren't necessary, although having them inside the book is a plus. The author's name needs to be large on the cover.

One industry guest suggested an author should have a "street team" of readers as well as doing blog hops and tours to increase traffic to an author's website and social media outlets.

As for what industry agents and publishers are looking for in a read, one industry guest said for contemporary romance a voice that is current, hip, and young is well received. Another said original voices are always important. Publishers in the past were more about quantity but now quality is more significant than ever.

The bottom line is that while an indie writing career isn't easy, it also gives an author many new opportunities and possibilities for a long and satisfying career.

Romantic Times Book Reviews calls Denise Agnew's romantic suspense novels "top-notch," and she's received their coveted Top Pick rating. She's 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



## **NINCThink Roundtable: Penny Wise, Pound Foolish**

BY CINDI MYERS

**Industry Guests:** Jen Talty (Cool Gus Publishing), Dan Slater (Amazon), Rachel Chou (Open Road), David Wilk (Creative Management Partners), Larry Norton, (InScribe Digital)

**NINC Authors:** Julianne MacLean, Pat Ryan, Edie Claire, Mary Campisi, Annette Blair

A team of authors and industry guests addressed the topic of sales strategies for digital authors. The discussion opened with an acknowledgment that digital marketing requires a different strategy than traditional print marketing. Digital books have a different sales cycle. Whereas an author would spend 12-18 months planning to promote a print book, the lead time on a digital book will be much shorter. Authors have more flexibility with a digital book to experiment and try new things.

The sales life of a digital book is also much longer than that of a print book. The first three weeks after a digital release or even the first three months are not as critical as the early days after a print release. You can continue to promote the book for years, and periodically do new things to bring the book back to the reader's attention. While this can mean the possibility of continuous sales; it also means your job of marketing the book is never done.

One panelist suggested a soft launch for digital titles vs. a hard launch. During the first month of release, experiment to see what will drive sales—if you don't get the sales you want, change the title or the cover or the blurb. Self-publishing allows you this flexibility.

### **Importance of Price**

All the panelists agreed that the number one thing authors can do to drive sales is to set the right price. Pricing is a form of marketing for digital books. With print books, you have one price that stays the same for the life of the book, but with digital books you can manipulate the price to attract attention and drive sales.

Panelists suggested having a pricing strategy before you launch the book. You can start with a higher price, then cut it when you reach certain goals or milestones. Drive demand with limited-time sales. Think about if you want to offer the book for free, and when. Do you want to sign up for KDP Select (which allows you to offer the book for free for five days during the 90-day period when the book is exclusive to Amazon.com) or not?

While the e-book market is very price sensitive, other factors within the author's control can impact sales. Your title and cover influence sales. The more frequently you publish, the better your sales are likely to be. Authors reported the best sales results with series, especially if you drop the price on the first book in the series, or make that first book free.

Offering a book for free has been a popular strategy for promoting e-books, but the impact of this varies. While the panelists agreed offering the first book in a series for free is good, going free with a single title can be iffier.

This led to a discussion of when to offer the book for free in order to have the most impact. Weekends and holidays, when people are home and looking for something to read, generate more downloads. One author gave the example of offering a book for free on a Monday holiday and giving away 11,000 copies, with strong follow-up sales.

One author said she'd had more success with a longer free campaign—one month vs. one day.

### **Getting Attention**

The discussion turned to what authors can do to attract more attention from book retailers such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Many of the special promotions that garner attention and increase sales are editorial-driven. Amazon or Barnes & Noble chooses which books to include for daily deals or to highlight on the home page.

Industry representatives advised adding as much information as possible to your author page on the retailer's website and adding book extras on Shelfari. On Amazon in particular, participating in the *Search Inside This Book* feature and KDP Select can attract more attention to your book.

When it comes to getting picked up for special attention, Amazon uses a complex and ever-changing algorithm. Factors that influence the algorithm include demand for a particular title, sales volume, browsing history, the number of titles you have out and comparison to other books in your category. The number of reviews also helps—and they don't have to be good reviews. Amazon's algorithm places greater weight on the volume of reviews. More reviews get people to spend more time on your page.

### **Other Strategies**

The panelists briefly discussed packaging multiple books together and selling them for one price as boxed sets. Some authors reported very good results doing this, while others had less success. One author packaged the first book in each of two different series together, in hopes of creating interest in both series, but most authors packaged volumes in a series together. If the set is priced for more than \$9.99, you get a lower royalty rate on Amazon, so some authors wouldn't sell the sets on Amazon.

As far as other marketing techniques that worked well, most people cited using social media to connect with readers and build interest in books. One author spoke about her success in building anticipation for a book's release by posting about her writing process, research, choosing a cover, etc, so that by the time the book came out, people felt invested in the book and were eagerly waiting for it.

One industry guest noted that her company had had good results with making targeted social media posts at key times during the day: 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., lunch time on the east and west coasts, and late at night. Doing this provoked a spike in sales.

All the panelists agreed that while much of what you can do to promote your books is free, all of it takes time. You have to budget your time as well as your money.

When it comes to marketing, what works for one book may not work for the next. If something isn't working for you, take advantage of the flexibility the digital market offers and change your approach.

*Cindi Myers is the author of more than 50 women's fiction and romance novels. Her most recent release is The View From Here. Find out more about her at <http://www.CindiMyers.com>*



# Why Great Content is More Important than Ever

BY DANA MARTON

**Speaker:** Jennifer Brehl (William Morrow/HarperCollins)

Ms. Brehl began by stating that she believes what some people call the e-book ‘revolution,’ is more of an evolution. The way we receive our stories is continuously evolving. There is always something new. Storytelling started as an oral tradition, then books came, and now we have audio books and e-books. But print, audio, and e-books are just different means of delivering a story. The universal factor is **content**: *readers’ expectations haven’t changed. No matter what format and delivery, they want a good story from the book.*

Content is always going to be important. This was emphasized many times by the speaker. “Good enough” is not okay with her when she’s looking at writing. You want people to come back to your work. You want word-of-mouth suggestions. You want people to recommend your books to others.

She mentioned that it seems these days social media efforts nearly overshadow the original *raison d’être* of books. A book’s purpose is to tell a story. Her advice was to cut through the noise and bring books to readers without going crazy over all the other stuff.

A lively Q&A session followed her brief introductory words. Someone asked how *Fifty Shades of Grey* could sell millions of copies unedited. The answer was: great content. The story is put together remarkably well. The author knew how to tell a story and that aspect is extremely important. “If a book engages me, that’s great content,” Ms. Brehl stated.

Another industry professional present remarked that a book has to have high integrity and be true to itself, and not necessarily be sublimely crafted. Of course, now publishers want other books just like *Fifty Shades of Grey*, jumping on the bandwagon, which could be a mistake. Its success likely wasn’t due to the theme. It came from the power of the book.

Ms. Brehl’s advice was to do whatever you’re doing and do it well. Don’t imitate trends, or your story will come through as a fake. She doesn’t want to follow trends. She wants to find the book that will make the next trend.

Both *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *The Hunger Games* involve you on an emotional level, the presenter said, as the discussion turned to another example. “You were just so afraid while reading the story,” added a commenter, talking about *The Hunger Games*. And the book flowed quickly, with short chapters. While discussing *The Hunger Games*, the speaker mentioned that we have a new category now that goes beyond Young Adult. New Adult fiction is for the college-age audience, readers on the brink of adulthood and independence, a stage with its own dramas and challenges.

However, it was also mentioned that *categories are going away—the idea that books must fit in a slot, on a certain shelf at the bookstore*. What editors are finding is that readers have varied tastes. They read a lot more widely than previously thought. But the content still has to be great.

When the presenter was asked whether she was looking for story or writing skill (i.e. beauty of writing), she said storytelling, and mentioned the Civil War novel *Enemy Women* by Paulette Jiles as an example. Since the author is a poet, the book is beautifully written, but it was the story that grabbed the editor. It’s always the story.

*When you take your readers on a journey, give them an emotional payoff at the end.* The ending of *Enemy Women* was changed during the editing process to leave the possibility of a happy ending open. Authors must give their readers the emotional payoff they’ve been waiting for, in whatever form that’s appropriate for your story. If you have a tense story that revolves around a heroine getting a gun, she must shoot the gun at the end! She doesn’t have to kill the other person, but she must shoot the gun.

Continued on page 15 ▶



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

## Not Your Usual Writing Advice

By JoAnn Grote

# Number One

*“The moment we indulge our affections, the earth is metamorphosed; there is no winter and no night; all tragedies, all ennui, vanish—all duties even.”*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Writers write.”

We’ve all heard it. We’ve probably all quoted it, to ourselves if not to others. We’ve practiced it, and lived it.

Sometimes we know we aren’t living it any longer. Sometimes we fool ourselves into thinking we are living it when we aren’t. Sometimes living it falls by the wayside without our intention, and we wake up one day and say, “How did that happen?” And sometimes when that happens, we find we are in the middle of such a chaotic, overwhelming period of life that we can’t figure out how to get back to living according to our basic premise—writers write.

As discussed in previous columns, I believe there are times in our lives during which priorities shift, and writing might properly be left on the shelf for a time. At other times, we need a reminder to reset our priorities.

A professional writer’s life has always been made up of more demands than “just” writing the current manuscript. There are the future books (and continuing income) to consider, therefore proposals that must be kept before editors. Keeping up with the market is important. Continuing to learn and grow in our craft, negotiating contracts, proofing galleys, keeping up a presence with readers—answering reader mail, blogging, establishing a website and keeping it current—sometimes learning new software: are all important aspects of a writing career. Today we have the challenge and opportunity to learn the many aspects of the new world of indie publishing.

Sometimes we get so caught up in the aspects of the career other than writing, we forget or slip away from the most important element—writers write. Writing more stories is the way we keep the career moving ahead, the way we will continue to generate money, the way we build time and more readers so we can continue writing our stories in the future.

I once heard Debbie Macomber speak on time management. She said she chose to concentrate her time on what she could do that no one else could do—write her stories. If galleys arrived to be proofed and she was behind on a current manuscript, getting caught up on the current manuscript received priority. “After all,” she said, “I’m not paid to proof galleys.” I agree. As authors, it’s important to us that the published version of our books is “right”, but we get paid to create the stories.

My father raised me with a similar view. He owned a plumbing and heating firm. He taught me by example to spend my time doing what I do best and hire others to do what they do best. “I can make more money doing what I do well than I can save using that time to do something I don’t do well,” he told me repeatedly. In other words, he paid mechanics to work on the vehicles, paid house painters to paint the house, and so forth, and didn’t complain about the cost. It was cheaper than doing it himself, whatever the expense.

I sometimes forget those lessons: the need to concentrate my time on what I can do that no one else can do for me, and on what keeps the career and its income flow growing. Lately I’ve been busy looking at houses, preparing for a move, helping my elderly mother who recently hurt herself in a fall, performing technical writing (yes, writing for money, but not writing stories), talking with a publisher about new fiction contract offers, learning what I need to know to catch up with those of you who are already indie publishing, deciding which books will be best to indie publish first, what aspects of the indie books to do myself and what aspects to hire another to perform, considering writing novellas to indie publish to benefit from books which are be-

ing reissued in print and e-book form, and discussing a possible mutual website and mutual promotion with a fellow writer. Every day I would put my fiction writing on my daily to do list—and then let everything else on the list take priority.

Writing my fiction somehow slipped away. I'm not under contract at the moment, so there's no editor or deadline to remind me the fiction writing is a priority. What does remind me is the very nature of life itself.

If I want to write fiction, want to publish fiction through traditional avenues or as indie books, I need to write proposals and books—especially the books in today's new publishing world.

In my May 2011 column, *Creating from Chaos*, I wrote that I'd discovered the joy of morning writing. Starting the day working on my work-in-progress left me feeling exhilarated, that I was in control of my life and schedule, that the world wasn't so chaotic. Somehow during the last few months I let that practice slip away.

I decided to put that back into practice recently. At first, I actually felt guilty taking the time from other responsibilities. When I see that in black and white, I am amazed that as a writer I felt guilty doing what writers do—writing! In the beginning, I felt frustrated at the little time I had available. I started by just jotting down some notes about a new series that recently came to mind. Even that little bit of work on my stories set a different tone to my day, and left me looking forward to the next morning when I had my tiny amount of novel writing time set aside. Each day I added to the notes. My series began to grow in mind, slipping in with ideas in the midst of my other duties, writing and otherwise. Where I'd become discontent with my writing and lost focus, I found enthusiasm and new vision growing. I'm still swamped with all the same responsibilities I listed above, but I'm also making progress on a novella I plan to indie publish and on a series proposal.

Because I finally remembered the number one thing a writer has to do—a writer writes.

*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.*



## Great Content

*Continued from page 13* ▶ Another industry professional pre-

sent brought up the suggestion that there might be too much attention on social media. What came first, the chicken or the egg? Do authors have successful releases because they have a huge following, or they have a huge following because people always loved their books? Getting “likes” with contests might not translate to sales.

Questions were really varied, ranging from does having a series help sales—yes—to what is voice? The speaker defined voice as, when you read a book and know who wrote it without having to look at the cover. Voice is distinctive. Voice enhances content.

Another question focused on how Ms. Brehl conveys content to her organization without asking the people in the room at the editorial meetings to read the work. You have to have a good sound bite, she said. It's something she works hard at. A good story can be distilled down.

A handful of current bestsellers were discussed and why different readers like different stories. “Destination readers” want to know how a story ends. They read for the final payoff. “Journey readers” like to savor a beautifully crafted story. They are in no rush to get to the end. Yet another group of readers read for the love of language and wonderful sentences.

If a literary novel can fulfill all those desires, that's the book that will climb the bestseller lists. (e.g. *Kite Runner*)

But, again, everything comes back to content. **Content = voice + plot + emotional pull.** Make the content the best it can be.

*Dana Marton writes fast-paced action-adventure romances that take her readers all over the globe. She is a Rita Award finalist and the winner of the Daphne du Maurier Award of Excellence. She loves writing stories of intrigue, filled with dangerous plots that try her tough-as-nails heroes and the special women they fall in love with.*



## WRITING is TAXING

By Diane Kelly

# The Butterfly Effect

As you know, taxes are paid in throughout the year via withholding and/or estimated taxes. It's generally best to pay an amount as close to your actual tax liability as possible in order to avoid incurring penalties or giving an interest-free loan to Uncle Sam.

Given that a writer's income can fluctuate greatly, it can be difficult to figure out how much to pay in during the year. If you're lucky, your earnings are fairly stable over the years and you can get close without having to run through a complicated and time-consuming computation. But just when you think you've got your taxes under control, an event might take place that can affect your tax liability. Some of these events are financial transactions that will have obvious tax consequences. Other events, however, can affect your taxes even though you might not think of them as a financial event.

What are some of these events and how can they affect your taxes?

1) Marriage. After vowing to love, honor, and cherish, be sure to check your withholding and estimated tax payments. Beginning with the year of marriage, a taxpayer's filing status will change from single to married filing jointly or married filing separate. It is critical for taxpayers who marry in a given tax year to check their withholding and estimated taxes to ensure enough is being withheld or paid in to cover the tax liability under the new filing status. A change can be made to payroll income tax withholding via IRS Form W-4, available at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or through this link: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf>.

It's a good idea to make the changes in withholding or estimated taxes starting at the beginning of the year in which the marriage is to take place. The change in filing status will apply to all of the income earned during the year, not just the income earned after the wedding taxes place.

2) Birth of a child. The bad news is that it costs about \$200,000 to raise a child from birth to age 18. The good news is that the birth of a child gives rise to a dependency exemption for the child, as well as potential child tax credits and dependent care credits, which vary by income level. If your income is very modest, you may even be entitled to the Earned Income Credit, which ranges depending on a taxpayer's income and the number of children a taxpayer has. Be sure to take these tax benefits into account when computing your withholding or estimated taxes. For the nitty gritty details on these various benefits, see IRS Publication 503 *Child and Dependent Care Credit* at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p503.pdf> and Publication 596 *Earned Income Credit* at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p596.pdf>.

3) Child growing up. Generally, once a child turns 13, a taxpayer can no longer claim a dependent care credit for the child. The child tax credit can no longer be claimed beginning the year your child turns 17. Lastly, a child must be under 19, or under 24 if a full-time student, in order to qualify as your dependent child for tax purposes. Losing the dependent exemption will negatively affect your taxes. Be sure to plan accordingly.

Details about the child tax credit can be found in IRS Publication 972 *Child Tax Credit* at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p972.pdf>. Details about dependent exemptions can be found in IRS Publication 501 *Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information*, available at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p501.pdf>.

4) Caring for a family member. If you find yourself providing a home or support for a family member who earns very little, including your adult child, you may be able to claim a dependent exemption for the family member regardless of the person's age. The rules are fairly technical and beyond the scope of this article, but you can find them in IRS Publication 501, referenced above.

5) Sale or purchase of a house. Tax law allows for the exclusion of gains on the sale of a home if certain qualifications are met. However, even if you do not have a reportable gain, the sale of a home can still cause tax consequences, as can the purchase of a home. If you are buying your first home, you may find yourself switching from claiming the standard deduction to now claiming itemized deductions for the mortgage inter-



est and real estate taxes and thus saving some tax. Woo hoo! Unfortunately, downsizing can have the opposite effect. Moving into a smaller, less expensive house can reduce itemized deductions. Be sure to take these items into account when determining how much to pay in.

For details on tax benefit of home ownership, see IRS Publication 530 *Tax Information for Homeowners* at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p530.pdf>. For details on the tax consequences of selling your home, see IRS Publication 523 *Selling Your Home* at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p523.pdf>.

6) Losing a job. While you may suffer financial setbacks if you or your spouse loses your job or if you have an unexpectedly bad year for royalties, the good news is that you may end up owing far less in taxes with the reduced income. If you expect your income to be significantly less during the year, you may want to check your withholding and estimated tax amounts to make sure you are not overpaying.

*Diane Kelly is an attorney and the author of the humorous Death and Taxes romantic mystery series from St. Martin's Press.*



## **NINCThink Roundtable: How to Work with Support Teams**

BY PAT ROY

**Industry Guests:** Thubten Comerford (WePost Media), Nina Paules (eBook Prep, eBook Discovery), Lisa Stone Hardt (LSH Editorial Services), Kim Killian (Hot Damn Designs), Jen Talty (Cool Gus Publishing)

**NINC Authors:** Patricia McLinn, Vanessa Kelly

*Q: As publishing teams expand beyond agents, editors, and publicists to include graphic designers, virtual assistants, social media consultants, freelance editors, formatters, etc., how do we avoid misunderstandings and mismatched expectations and promote effective working relationships?*

Clear communication is the key. Professionals need to be upfront about what they can deliver and what it will cost. Authors need to convey what they want and need. This may take time to clarify as what a client wants is often not the same as what they say they want. Exit strategy discussed at the front end opens up creativity.

Authors seek support in areas in which they lack expertise, but may not share the vocabulary with the professional they hire. Communication can be eased by checking to see that key terms (such as copy editing and line editing) mean the same to both of you. It's a process.

Review and reevaluate your goals and your relationship regularly. Know what you need at each step and evaluate what needs to change as you go along.

What works in the beginning may not work out over the long haul. You may need to readjust or may need to move on. The choice goes both ways. Don't be afraid to come back and try again later from a position of more knowledge and experience.

It is essential to discuss money upfront, specifically what you can afford and what you can expect. Some prefer working with a contract, others like a more organic relationship in which the financial arrangements, timelines, deadlines, goals, and expectations are agreed on but not signed and sealed. Emails can be a legal trail. Hopefully, it won't get to that. Some prefer pricing by project rather than billing by the hour to avoid unexpectedly high bills.

When hiring freelance professionals, always ask for references you can contact. Then do so. Ask about the relationships as well as the end results. What was it like working with them? What was their communication style? Ask about the negatives. What was a deal breaker for one author may be no big deal to another.

With freelance editors, find out what they read as well as what they've worked on before. Will they appreciate what you bring to the table or will they be trying to impose a different style because they don't read what you write?

*Continued on page 20 ▶*

# The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



## Confessions of a Bibliophile

**"Where is human nature so weak as in the bookstore?"**  
— Henry Ward Beecher

As recounted in last month's column, I have just bought my first home, a newly-rehabbed Victorian townhouse. Although I spent my first week here being poisoned by a sewer-gas leak (problem solved now), home ownership is otherwise going fairly well so far.

This two-bedroom house is modest in size, but it's nonetheless at least 40 percent bigger than any place I've ever rented. This increase in my living space offered me a golden opportunity that I'm sure is immediately apparent to my fellow writers: For the first time in my adult life, I contemplated the prospect of unpacking and shelving all my books!

In the weeks after moving into this house, I spent a small fortune on buying additional bookcases. One of them, a gorgeously hand-carved bookcase imported from Southeast Asia, is so massive and heavy that I and two strong young men barely survived getting it from the truck to my living room with the help of a moving dolly and a ramp. Another is big enough that the lads had trouble getting it up my stairs to my office. Several of the new cases are so tall that I have to stand on a step ladder to reach the higher shelves. (Actually, this is true of many things here, since the ceilings are over 10 feet high, and the builders evidently assumed that the new owner would be a basketball player.)

Anyhow, I estimate that I at least tripled the amount of shelf space I was used to having; and I depleted both my bank account and my physical energy in doing so.

So you can imagine my dismay when I discovered that I *still* didn't have enough shelf space to unpack all my books.

In fact, when packing up my apartment as I prepared to move, the boxes of books substantially outnumbered the boxes of all my other possessions combined. I had to hire an extra mover, just because there were so many boxes of books to carry. I had to rent a bigger moving truck, just because of the books. I had to rent a larger storage unit because of all the books (as per my November column, my move inadvertently involved 5-6 weeks of couch-surfing while one closing date after another fell through). And now, having spent a sultan's ransom on bookcases, I still don't have enough shelf space to unpack all my books.

Enough already! This is the last straw. Obviously, I own too many books.

Yet I am not a hoarder, collector, or pack rat. I have always lived in rather small spaces, and I eschew clutter. I've also moved often over the years; and as they say, three moves is as good as a fire. I've always been good about paring down my possessions, and I mostly stick to household rules such as, "If you haven't used it in two years, get rid of it."

So how the *hell* did I wind up with far more books than it's practical or convenient for me to own?

Well, if I'm honest, I'm the sort of person who goes to a bookstore whenever I'm bored, or depressed, or lonesome, or angry, or happy, or broke, or in the money, or avoiding my keyboard, or want to reward myself, or have never been to this particular bookstore before, or consider this particular bookstore a favorite, or... You get the picture. And since my will is weak and my ability to justify a book purchase is extremely well developed, there's little chance that I'll leave a bookstore empty-handed once I've entered it.

I love the shiny superstores where you can spend hours browsing. I am also a lifelong supporter of good independent bookstores. But I love best of all those dusty old second-hand stores where book-buying is a treasure hunt through the ages, where you can find an occult manual from the 1970s, a 19th century memoir

printed privately by a local family, a guidebook to China published in 1922, and hardcover editions of old novels by Georgette Heyer, Mary Stewart, and Agatha Christie.

As a child, by choice, I spent my birthdays haunting the second-hand bookstores of downtown Chicago with my birthday cash in hand. The annual Brandeis book sale was one of my favorite events of the year back then—an enormous second-hand book sale held under massive canvas tents at which I'd spend my pennies on musty old volumes published decades before my birth.

The Internet has expanded my world, first and foremost, by expanding my access to books. Using Bookfinder.com, I can easily purchase obscure out-of-print books released years ago by regional presses in far away countries. On eBay.com, I have more than once found a complete set of old volumes being sold together, which individual installments it would have taken me years to locate on foot. Online book-buying has made research so much easier than it used to be.

And *speaking* of research... that's the chief villain in my surfeit of books.

My steadily growing collection of research and background reading for my Esther Diamond urban fantasy series, for example, already takes up a whole bookcase. As I found myself guiltily explaining to my exhausted, sweat-drenched movers last month, who carried dozens of very heavy book boxes up the steep and long Victorian stairs of this extremely tall house, I research such unusual subjects for this series (ex. doppelgangers; solstice demons; supernatural vanishings; voodoo rituals; Serbian folklore; Chinese mythology; etc.) that I need my own reference library. For similar reasons, I have a substantial number of books on traditional weapons and combat, since I've written some sword-and-sorcery novels and hope to write some more. I'm also researching a historical fantasy I want to write, and the reference books for that so far take up more than half of one of my new bookcases.

Books are also a notable exception to my "if you haven't used it in two years, get rid of it" rule. Even in instances where I am completely done with a subject after I finish writing a novel about it, I am loathe to give up those reference books. It takes time and effort to collect a good set of informative books on an obscure subject, so what if I later discover I need them again for another project? (Moreover, who else would want to own these books, now that they're covered in my highlights and margin notes?)

I'm also a voracious reader of nonfiction for pleasure, so my shelves (and my still-packed boxes) are overflowing with nonfiction books I loved and expect to read again, as well as with (in even greater number) books on topics that interest me and which I bought so that I can read them later.

Then there are the novels. In addition to the novels I re-read too often to give them up, there are the novels I bought so I can read them later, novels that are inscribed to me, and novels in which I'm mentioned in the Acknowledgments or the Dedication.

Additionally, my father is a prolific science fiction writer and anthology editor. His books were scattered among numerous other boxes of books for years, so it wasn't until I started unpacking recently in this house that I realized I've got three full boxes of books by the old man. I sat him down recently to explain that, filial loyalty notwithstanding, I am *not* buying a whole bookcase just for his works; some of these books will have to remain in boxes. Fortunately, he took the news well.

I've also discovered during my unpacking that I have a shocking number of author's copies of most of my own titles. This, at least, is an easy overflow problem to solve; I will be donating signed books to every charity auction and fundraiser that I hear about for the next few years.

I have just arrived here, so my departure is not imminent; but I will leave this house someday. And I've already decided that I never again want to pack, move, and unpack this many books. Realistically, I'm not very likely to give up (or even minimize) my lifelong book-buying addiction. So I'm going to have to start embracing e-books.

I've got an e-reader, but I don't particularly like it. I prefer print books, partly because I find paperbacks much more comfortable to hold than an e-reader; and partly because I love making highlights and margin notes in a book, and I find the e-reader ways of doing this clunky and limiting. I am also appalled at how sloppily publishers are formatting many backlist books, and I find most publisher e-books overpriced. But I have nonetheless decided that I must gradually start the process of switching over more heavily to e-books, both in terms of the new books I buy, and also in terms of replacing my beloved print editions with e-book editions. ▶

I see shoals ahead, though, since e-books and e-book shopping can never replace one of my great loves—browsing among the mysterious shelves of a dusty second-hand bookstore in search of buried treasure.

*Laura Resnick's current release is Polterheist, the fifth Esther Diamond novel. When not writing, she can be found unpacking boxes in her very vertical new house.*



## Support Teams

*Continued from page 17* ▶ You need to be able to trust the expertise of the professional you've hired and be open to creative possibilities. For example, consider whether it makes sense to go with a designer's advice to have a branded look to your covers so you target an audience with one perspective that conveys a series and then carry that brand/look over to your web page, Facebook profile, etc.

In his blog *Write it Forward*, Bob Mayer says that if you know where you want to be in three to five years, then everything you do needs to be aligned with that. Sometimes the one thing you are not willing to do is exactly what you need to do.

Authors can make better use of their time and energy by hiring a Virtual Assistant for tasks such as managing websites, uploading books to sites, POD formatting, etc. But don't be too hands-off. E-publishing moves at a phenomenal rate and you need to stay on top of it. Flexibility and adaptability are essential.

Assistants, virtual and otherwise, can be found via networking. Some people hire college interns, neighbors, and family members. It is helpful if they have expertise in what you're doing. You need to make sure your VA can handle tasks independently. Not much of a time or energy saver if you have to continually train and supervise.

Updating social media is different for a novelist than a chocolatier. Both need to be adding relevant, engaging content, but novelists are marketing the people who live in our heads and thus our updates need to be in our voice, conveying our personality. Not that authors need to be putting their personal life on the Internet, but rather their unique perspective on life. Audiences connect with that.

With today's 24-hour access, there are horrific expectations of response time. It is essential to be attentive and respectful of workloads and life demands of others. Email about upcoming projects and priorities to ensure this fits in with the schedules of your support team. Just because we live in the land of instant, doesn't mean we should expect that. Formatting, editing, and cover creation are a lot harder than they might seem. Give people time to do their best work.

Keep your support team in the loop. Let them know how things are going. They become personally invested in projects and are disappointed when they don't hear how things work out. Check out rumors with the source.

The first step is finding professionals who are the right fit. After that, keep the lines of communication open and reevaluate progress and goals along the way.

*Pat Roy is back in the publishing game after a hiatus to raise kids. Lucky Stars and The Wedding Knot are out now. Among the Lunatics is coming soon.*