

# N I N K

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## Julie's Lifeboat Team

Speaker: Julie Ortolon



BY DANA MARTON

Julie Ortolon very kindly shared the secrets of her much talked about Lifeboat Team, an authors' promotional co-op, in this workshop. Her team formed partially spontaneously (they've been emailing each other with questions for a while) and intentionally (once they got together at last year's conference and decided to move ahead with an official group).

Below is her advice, organized into a checklist, about how to build a team like hers.

- ▶ Choose people who have a variety of specific skills you need, not just people you like, but people with a good head for business.
- ▶ Be careful with size. Six to ten people would work best, twelve tops. Too many people will sink the lifeboat. You want maximum impact with minimum effort, people who seriously want a big career.
- ▶ Make sure you choose people you trust as you'll be sharing financial and other confidential information.
- ▶ You need a team you feel comfortable with. You have to feel free to speak up when you need to tell the group it's getting overwhelming. Remember that you're a writer first. Be protective of your writing time. Only writing is writing. Tweeting is not writing. Your next book is your best promotion.
- ▶ Teams like this work best when the authors write in various sub-genres. It helps your audience grow even more.
- ▶ Choose enough genres so there'll be crosspollination, but they shouldn't be so close that you cannibalize each other's readers.
- ▶ You should choose teammates whose work you're comfortable promoting. When you're praising someone else's work, it needs to be authentic for readers to believe it.

▶ You have to feel comfortable with the group to pursue your goals while supporting the goals of others.

Ortolon also talked about things we can do to make our teams effective.

- ▶ Bookmark each other's Facebook pages then visit every morning. Share and comment to build links.
- ▶ Write posts that other people (readers) will share as well. Generally speaking, posts with photos get more shares than text

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Address changes may be made on the  
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send changes to the Central Coordinator.

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## Introducing...

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

Membership Chair: James LePore  
leporej5@optonline.net

### New Applicants:

Karen Duvall, Bend, OR

Dee Ernst, Mount Tabor, NJ

Julie Hyzy (N.C. Hyzy, S.F. Hyzy), Tinley Park IL

Laura Iding (Laura Scott), Wauwatosa WI

Suzanne Johnson (Susannah Sandlin), Auburn AL

Dorien Kelly, Pentwater MI

Deloris Lynders (Delilah Devlin), Arkadelphia AR

Shawntelle Madison, Maryland Heights, MO

Sharry Michels (Christine Michels, Sharice Kendyl), Red-cliff, Alberta, Canada

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Zuleika Arkadie (Z.L. Arkadie), San Diego, CA

Jill Barnett, Bainbridge Island, WA

Peg Cochran (Meg London), Grand Rapids, MI

Cathy Comfort (Cathryn Cade), East Helena, MT

Sandra McDonald (Sam Cameron), Jacksonville, FL

Donna Russo Morin, Saunderstown, RI

Julia Pomeroy, East Chatham, NY

Brad Whittington, Manchaca, TX

### NINC has room to grow...

Recommend membership to your colleagues.

Prospective members may apply online at

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

Go to Members Only, "Member Services" and click

"Refer a New Member to NINC." Take NINC

brochures to conferences. Email Pari Taichert with your

mailing address and requested number of booklets:

ptaichert@comcast.net.

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

## Launching the New Year of NINC

Welcome, 2013. The new NINC board is up and running. We look forward to serving you throughout the year to the best of our abilities. We also are looking forward with the best interests of our ever-evolving organization in mind. NINC is growing at a strong rate, and that strength will help us as we move through this year of changes, opportunities, and challenges in a publishing marketplace that has given professional writers more independence and self-sufficiency as well as more headaches and dilemmas. But, heck, life is full of challenge and opportunity. I choose the half-full point of view of the world. Why not? The challenge is the same either way, so looking for the *good* in *good grief!* makes it all easier to deal with.

First, on behalf of the membership I'd like to thank Lou Aronica for his stellar and visionary leadership this past year. Lou is uniquely situated as both an author and publisher to understand and have influence in the rapidly changing world of publishing. He's been a smart, savvy president, always willing to share his knowledge and experiences. He never hesitated to help out with an opinion, email, or phone call when called on. While he doesn't suffer fools gladly, his leadership style has been one of calm, thoughtful consideration where every person has been able to freely express an opinion. He always has an informed opinion, and if it didn't match others', he was willing to talk, debate, and ultimately compromise if needed. His passion for and willingness to help NINC grow as an organization is without doubt. The anthology "Cast of Characters" is certainly a case in point of putting your time (equals money) where your mouth is. And, Lou being Lou, he's doing it for us again this year with "I never thought I'd see you again." Lou, you're a rare combination of inclusiveness and tenacious advocate. I learned a lot from you and will personally miss your monthly leadership on the board. Thank you.

I'd also like to thank Marianna Jameson who is leaving the position of *Nink* editor. We did not know one another when I joined the board, but we have become friends. Marianna is another person whose passion and commitment to NINC was always at the forefront of her decisions and point of view about issues that show up in the pages of NINC. She did a tremendous job. That's no small feat. Handling deadlines with writers, bringing issues to fruition, seeking writers, keeping up with ideas and subjects that might or should be of interest to our membership, she did it all with grace and a steady hand. Thank you, Marianna.

Denise Agnew has done a terrific job as the unsung bard of the board. She has kept meticulous records of our meetings, compiled officers' reports, along with financial reports. She's been our information conduit to the membership through monthly reports via *Nink* and assisted wherever requested. It's not a glamorous job, but it's vital for the flow of information as well as for maintaining a record of NINC operations. Also as important, she's been an advocate's voice on the board throughout the year. Well done, Denise!

Trish Jensen has the other "thank goodness she has the position" job. Treasurer. It's not for the faint of heart. Anyone who keeps track of a checkbook will appreciate the work that goes into a monthly accounting for an organization like NINC. She's a bean counter and worrier who, bless her, keeps us on our toes, on budget, and away from any possibility of a financial cliff. Trish, you're appreciated and admired.

As for Advisory Council rep, Patricia McLaughin, what can I say? So glad to have you in our corner for another year. So glad!

If this sounds like a mash note to the board, then guilty as charged. Most of you are aware that the board steers NINC throughout the year, handling issues and making decisions in a way that allows our membership not to be burdened by the day-to-day and month-to-month concerns that affect our membership as a whole, as well as individually. The hundreds of emails that flow back and forth on a daily basis—okay, weekly basis—serve to underscore the amount of time your board spends considering and weighing every possible effect our decisions will have on the organization. In this case, you, the membership, get a lot more than you pay for. ▶

# President's Voice

Is this leading up to something? You bet. NINC involvement. We need you to volunteer to do *just one thing* at NINC.

From time to time, positions within the organization become available. If the board had a go-to list of members interested in certain positions, that would be terrific. If you think you might be interested in being involved with membership, the conference, *Nink* newsletter, NINC Blast, NINC Blog, PR, or any other aspect of our organization that appeals to you, then send me an email with a mention of your interests so that we can put your name on a list. You can always decline if approached. So think about it. You are NINC.

That brings to me to final point of this letter. I am honored to be representing you as your president. It is a big deal. I'm very aware that I follow in big footsteps left by the many fine and dedicated NINC presidents. It's a bit intimidating. But I can promise you that I will give it my best and that I will keep the best interests of you, the membership, forefront in my thoughts as we traverse 2013.

That's why I titled our 2013 conference "*The Writer's World*." Our thrust is to make certain our membership is made aware of every possible opportunity to succeed businesswise and to continue to create wonderful work. Please put us on your calendar now. **Myrtle Beach, S.C. October 24-27.**

If you've been to a conference recently, you know how absolutely necessary the information we present is to your career. If you haven't been in a while, I urge you to make it a priority this year. It's the one time where all NINC comes together. The camaraderie, exchange of information and ideas and enthusiasm can't be measured in mere dollars and cents. It's crucial and wonderful, and necessary that you come and contribute to keep NINC vital and relevant.

We have it all now, the best and the toughest aspects of being in the driver's seat of our publishing careers. It doesn't have to be a choice, traditional or indie. Many of us are learning to straddle both publishing worlds. Writing and handling your career can seem at times as if you are one of those bareback circus riders standing with a foot on the back of one horse, and the other foot on the back of another. It's scary and exhilarating.

I know you are up to challenge. I see that reflected in such things as the blogs, NINCLINK posts, *Nink* articles and more. Join in and bring along other published authors who are missing a unique and informative experience of being part of NINC.

And, we're off!

— *Laura Parker Castoro*  
NINC President

## Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

### Step Up

Simon Schuster gave Michael Szczerban a boost from associate editor to editor in early November.

### Kindle's Bye-Bye Buy Buttons

The disappearing Buy Buttons from ebooks belonging to Hachette, Random House, Penguin, Simon & Schuster, Macmillan, and HarperCollins on Nov. 8 was explained by Amazon as a "technical issue". While these publishers were out of luck for several hours, sales were still viable for HMH, W.W. Norton, Harlequin, and Scholastic. The conspiracy theorists are going to be delighted if no further explanation is made.



# Lifeboat Team

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- posts. The cuter the picture the better. When readers share your photo, the link goes back to the person who originally uploaded the photo to Facebook. So do your own uploads as much as possible.
- ▶ Your team's book announcements should also be shared on Twitter. Tweet and retweet. Learn what good posts are and how to maximize them, then measure the effect.
  - ▶ Advertise each other's free books in your newsletters. Readers will appreciate when you introduce them to other great authors. When you send out a newsletter, ask the others if they have anything to promote. It will give you content and added value.

What other things did the Lifeboat Team do to propel themselves to success? Here are a few:

- ▶ The team published *Ten Shades of Sexy*, an anthology of love scenes from previously published novels. The book is a perma freebie on Amazon. It's been on the top 100 free list for the past four months and helped double and triple the sales of the authors' other books.
- ▶ The authors on the team created a VIP Lounge. Once a month, each author chooses a reader to be reader of the month. These fans get to download a free book (their pick from any author on the team) and are featured in the lounge. (The VIP Lounge is also the place where readers can sign up for all the authors' newsletters with a single click.)
- ▶ The team held brainstorming sessions over Skype.
- ▶ Holding a summit where they met in person and spent days on mini workshops. Prior to the summit, each member took one area of social media and became an expert in the subject as much as possible. Then, at the summit, they shared their knowledge (Facebook, HootSuite, Pinterest, etc.).
- ▶ The team maintains a shared Dropbox folder where they share files about things they learn (e.g. good web sites to promote books).
- ▶ The authors hired the services of a virtual assistant who works on joint projects as well as on individual tasks.
- ▶ The group runs a contest to gather email addresses, etc., periodically giving away a Kindle or gift cards. Promotions like this are more effective when done with a group.

Some extra advice:

- ▶ You don't have to jump on every idea right now. Balance promo with writing.
- ▶ You don't need money to start a promo group. While time investment was substantial at the beginning, financial investment was minimal (low three figures).
- ▶ Keep your social media traffic elevated and steady.
- ▶ Hire out what you can.
- ▶ When you really like each other, that warmth comes through in the posts you leave for each other online. Readers like that. You have a nice community and readers are invited in.

Following these steps and principles, all of the authors had increased their sales since founding the group. Being on the team both takes time and saves time. Information is shared. You will see possibilities you wouldn't see by yourself. It's like turning up the volume on your radio, Ortolon told us. The team members are each other's drum beaters.

*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)*





# Scrutinizing Scrivener

BY JENNIFER STEVENSON

Three quarters of the packed room at Kelly McClymer's Scrivener presentation were already using Scrivener software for writers. I was not, but I was sold by the end.

McClymer took us through the step-by-step creation of an extremely short (20-word) novel in Scrivener. The software allowed her to create an outline for each scene in a chapter. The outline transferred the chapter title into the chapter text document automatically. We could view the book chapter by chapter, out of order or sequentially, or we could view it as virtual cards pinned to a virtual corkboard.

This latter feature was what sold me. I construct a novel using real 3x5 cards on a real corkboard, where I build my outline and try to figure out whether I'm going to be able to write straight through the manuscript from beginning to end or hit a marshmallow wall of bad plotting or conflict failure in the middle somewhere.

The virtual corkboard means that I don't have to have two or three real corkboards cluttering up my office for a series or fallen thumbtacks underfoot, and I can copy the whole thing and save it while I mess around. I can move scenes by dragging them on the corkboard. Oh it's dandy. I can view the corkboard outline on half the screen and the manuscript on the other half. I can even choose whether to view these screens side-by-side or one above the other.

Another feature I like is that I can copy a project, then wipe all the text files—the actual scenes—out of it, and start a new one while retaining the first novel's support files: photos of my collages, lists of character names and descriptions, timelines, style sheets of unique words to send to my copyeditor. This means I can write a multi-book series without scrounging around for this information in old book folders. It's all there on one screen.

My favorite quote from McClymer during this presentation: "My secret weapon for Scrivener is Google." A fine tutorial comes with the program, but I can imagine becoming overwhelmed at times. That's when the world of Scrivener users is your friend. My second favorite quote was: "Warning, Scrivener is a great tool for organization. You can also idle away many hours making different colored things." Remember those 3x5 cards? You can color code the card. This is a menace. I spend way too much time with highlighters on my real corkboard.

## What about creating an e-book?

This is a composition tool, not a formatting tool, but you can compile to various e-book formats, including .epub and Kindle. When you compose a novel in Scrivener, you compose it in scenes and chapters. Then you use the corkboard to reorder them, if you wish. Then you compile the book into a single file and export it in an e-book format, or export as a rich text file to massage in your e-book formatting program. McClymer says you can set up styles in your Scrivener document, but Scrivener is supposed to be a composition tool, not a formatting tool. You're supposed to export the compiled file to Word and format it there (or in Open Office or wherever).

An audience member suggested compiling your novel into .rtf, which keeps interior code garbage out of it. She suggested sending a short file to your e-book formatting program to see if it's correct or close enough for formatting purposes.

The Scrivener working screen can look pretty busy with file organization on the left border, composition commands on the top border, navigation and production measurement tools on the bottom border, and outlining tools on the right border, all surrounding your text workspace. You can make all that border stuff go away with a keystroke—even make it fade between a white or a black background—and make your central workspace larger.

The whole navigation and outlining system is drag-and-drop. You can add character sketches and images, save whole web pages including their working links, insert scanned images, oh my!

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# ***NincThink RoundTable***

## ***Subsidiary Rights and Tie-in Products***

BY KAREN WHIDDON

**Panelists:** Larry Norton, Deb Werksman, Elizabeth Jennings, David Wilk, Bella Andre, Shirley Hailstock, Cindy Proctor-King, Denise Grover Swank, Mary Campisi.

The discussion began with the question of which subsidiary rights are important. An author announced she had just signed the first seven-figure, print-only deal with Mira. After all the applause, the discussion began in earnest.

A publisher said the digital environment presents an enormous global opportunity. English language books are big in other countries as well as the foreign language version. After all, e-books are global. We've left the information age and are in the age of change. Global connectivity is more important than "What's in it for me?"

Next question: how do you structure your relationships to maximize your opportunities? A best-selling author said she wants to maximize her returns. She feels the strongest return on investment is digital content in English being sold not only in the US, but the UK, CA, and AU. She also talked about audio books being a major market. Another author mentioned that there are two billion English readers in the world.

What is the number one language after English? A best-selling author said she felt it was German.

A publisher talked about price points and the author said she kept them between \$4.99 and \$5.99.

The question was asked if authors should try to hire translators themselves. The best-selling author mentioned she had made this mistake and that you have to hire the best of the best and you get what you pay for. It's dicey if you don't speak the language. This author finally used a foreign rights agent and was much happier with that. Another author said the translator is your ambassador to that country. The translator will actually make cuts to the manuscript, not an editor.

Another question addressed costs. An author said \$10,000 to \$15,000 per book. She said that except for Germany, the digital market is not there for other countries. She feels it will be someday, but not right now. Another author said it's eight eurocents per word. Other things authors can do are translate their facebook pages and fill out Author Central pages at other country sites. Also note that each country describes categories of books differently. Learn the proper descriptive terms for your book in the language, and use those terms to make tags on Amazon.

One author believes that companies will be created in two to three years just to handle foreign rights and translation. Many agencies now have a foreign rights department as do publishers.

One author talked about how authors are not made aware when a foreign edition comes out so they cannot do promo. She feels it would be wonderful if this could change. She said if authors know when a foreign edition is being released, they should contact the publisher who will help them do promotion. It was also noted that foreign companies only pay once per year.

A best-selling author then talked about the London Bookfair and how she went and, despite being told authors could not go and no one would meet with her, she got lots of meetings and made deals. She said it's all about making doors open for her.

A question was asked about whether agents were willing to represent foreign rights only. An author suggested other authors contact foreign rights sub agents directly. They already work with American agents. A publisher mentioned that there are scouts already in the U.S. working for foreign publishers. Often they rent space in the offices of American literary agents. Another author said it's impossible to find an agent to represent foreign rights only.

The best-selling author said you have to look at the break-even point. Another author mentioned once you earn back the money you've spent on translations, you have sales until the end of time. Yet a third author said we need a lot more education and discussion about these rights.

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# Emotional Landscape and Inner Journey

BY JENNA KERNAN

This was a craft workshop presented by Agent Donald Maass featuring exercises from his new release *Writing 21st Century Fiction: High Impact Techniques for Exceptional Storytelling*.

Maass began by prefacing his exercises with the observation that commercial fiction books of all forms are spending less and less time on the New York Times Bestsellers list. However, he further noted that a group of stories spends months and sometimes years on the trade paperback lists. He asked himself why these books are such a success, and after analysis he hypothesized that these novels endure because they merge genres, combining the engaging plotting of commercial fiction with the beautiful writing of literary fiction. These stories, dubbed "Lit. Lite," contain great writing, fabulous plots, and are doing wonderfully. Examples of these titles include such novels as *The Help* and *The Night Circus*.

How can we use this information? There is a gulf or divide between trade and commercial fiction. Literary fiction writers do not generally dwell on plot or strong story events. Commercial fiction writers don't like to talk about beautiful writing. The magic, in Maass's opinion, comes from the blending of genres. This is what readers want and they will pay for it even in a recession.

In addition to this blending, authors need to offer a story with a compelling inner journey for our hero. We need to open up our character's emotional world.

Maass then took the audience through a series of writing exercises from his current release. These drills are designed to help evoke emotions and focus on the protagonist's inner journey. What follows is an abridgement of these exercises.

Write the one thing you are afraid to say or put in your story or afraid to let happen in the story you are crafting. What do you *want* to have happen, but it feels like too much? What events or occurrence feels too wrong or too forbidden? What is the secret desire you can't say? What is wrong in the world? What do we need that we don't talk about? What do you need that you can't ask for? Now write down when this or something analogous will happen to your protagonist in your *current* story?

Maass noted a shift in body language in the audience at this point and made the following observation. If you feel resistance, use this as a gauge that will indicate where you need to do the most work.

He next asked the audience to write out why your story matters? What is it saying that we need to hear? What are the problems of your protagonists that are urgent and need to be heard?

After the audience had a chance to answer that question, Maass observed that readers remember a book's emotions, not plot twists. What readers talk about is their connection to characters. To open the character's emotions, we need to open them up within ourselves. If we do so, we have something powerful. This emotional journey is the theme or intention of your voice. Once you know why *this* story is important to you, then you can use that information to create a great story.

Maass next asked attendees to think back to the last scene they'd worked on. Jot down the character, and then think of the action that occurs. Write down the *strongest* emotion the character feels in this scene. Example: anger. Next, Maass asked the audience to write down two *additional* emotions that this character feels. Example: worried and powerless.

Then he asked us to choose the third emotion and consider if this feeling is good or bad, welcome or unwelcome, freeing or frightening. Is this emotion empowering or does it reveal something mean or dark? Does the character feel larger or smaller for feeling this? What color is this feeling? What kind of animal is this feeling? Give it qualities. How does it feel to have the feeling? Is it like surfing in Hawaii, or is it like falling under that crashing wave? Is it the balance of a tightrope walk or the imbalance of falling? What does this feeling say to the character about who they are?



Next he asked the audience to either take the notes they had made and write about when this feeling arrived without stating the feeling or to try evoking this emotion without actually naming it by using action and/or dialogue.

This exercise, he said, allows authors to bypass both the obvious emotion and the obvious descriptors. After completing this drill, a show of hands indicated that much of the audience had something new that they felt they could easily include in their work in progress because it was real, authentic, and less expected and would be well received by the reader for all those reasons.

It was Maass' opinion that obvious emotions are dull to readers, and he suggested that authors do a word search of their manuscripts for words like anger, desire, fury, worry, guts, twisted, and clenched. This effort shows authors the overused, obvious descriptions of emotional journeys. He further stated that by using strong secondary emotions writers can wake up their readers emotionally by creating characters that connect with them.

He then encouraged writers to pick eight other places in their work in progress and do this same exercise to create characters that come alive in a fresh, gripping way because their emotions and the way these emotions are described are deeper, more dimensional, new and unexpected. As time was running short, Maass mentioned that there are 380 prompts in his new release that can help authors grow and that will help writers bring beautiful writing and strong story events to their work.

Maass left us with the following sentiment. "I think we are moving to a place where there are no genre or sections in a store to define us but where we define ourselves."

*Award-winning author, Jenna Kernan, has been nominated for two RITA® awards for her Western romances and received the Book Buyers Best Award for paranormal romance in 2010. Upcoming releases are The Texas Ranger's Daughter, February 2012 and Beauty's Beast, April 2013. Connect with Jenna at [www.jennakernan.com](http://www.jennakernan.com).*



## Subsidiary Rights

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In the discussion that followed, one author suggested we look at Amazon's best-seller lists for Germany, France, etc. She said Americans occupy almost all of the slots. She said German publishers put out 400 titles a year and 380 of these are Americans.

A marketing company executive asked what authors are leaving on the table. An author said a friend is making \$15,000 to \$16,000 a year on six titles in Germany. She said the markets are bad everywhere except for Germany. She stated the technology is behind in Europe and it will take a few years to catch up.

The moderator asked what authors should do. Several authors stated we need to work with someone used to dealing with foreign rights—a foreign rights agent. There are many cultural differences that we as authors may not know. There are even laws in many countries such as Japan about price, for example, where e-books cannot be priced less than print books.

The discussion ended with a lively talk on indie authors and audio books. It was generally agreed that this is profitable, and authors will earn their investment back. But the narrator is everything. If you pick a narrator that readers don't like, your book will sink. Don't wait for narrators to come to you, go out and get samples. Listen to them read a scene from every major character's point of view. ACX and Audible were mentioned, and it was generally agreed authors should pay the flat fee rather than do a split on royalties. It generally costs between \$2,000 and \$2,500 to make an audio book. One author said she earns that back in a week. A second author said it takes her a month. The return on investment is amazing, and this market should definitely be explored.

*Karen Whiddon is the author of close to 35 books. Currently she writes for Harlequin Romantic Suspense and Harlequin Nocturne. She has regained the rights to ten of her backlist books from both Kensington and Dorchester and has put nine of those up on Amazon. Recently she sold the audio rights to five of these to Audible, Inc.*



# Amazon General Session

BY JENNA KERNAN

**Speaker:** Dan Slater, Amazon

Dan Slater divided his workshop into three major topics: Kindle Today, Kindle Promotional Programs, and Tools to Help Authors Reach Readers.

Beginning with the **Kindle Today** overview, Mr. Slater mentioned Amazon's desire to have consumers read on their Kindle, smart phones, other readers, and the free reading app. Customers who purchase a Kindle also purchase 4.62 times more books after that purchase, and they are not all digital. Twenty-seven of the top 100 titles for 2012 were in the Kindle Direct Program (KDP).

Amazon has a new Kindle Singles program which sold 2.5 million units. These include fiction and non-fiction, essays and work that is shorter than novella length. Amazon is experimenting with Kindle Serials. They have a new Kindle Free-Time program which is a kid-friendly, child safe location so young readers can explore digital reading products. The X-Ray Textbook gives readers the ability to see a cross-section of an entire book on one page. For example a reader could search a specific location in a travel book, see an abridgement of all the pages containing that word and quickly move to any page where they might want to read further. Whispersynch for Voice allows consumers of audio books to save their place from reading device and then move to another device and resume listening at the same place. The Immersion Reading is Amazon's new international presence in Japan, Italy, France and Spain. These countries are reading English language stories in English, and this market has grown 130% and is still growing. Writers will want to take advantage of this global marketplace when independently publishing.

Slater next spoke about the **Kindle Promotional Program (KPP)**, specifically focusing on the *Kindle Daily Deal* and the *Kindle Owners Lending Library (KOLL)*. The Kindle Daily Deals are Tweeted, emailed to members, and show up on the Amazon homepage. Daily Deal Books sell about 3000 times better than before the Daily Deal listing and then 110 times more the next day. At 30 days out the title still sells more than four times the rate before entry in the Daily Deal. It's a nice "Halo Effect." It is units and sales rank. It also boosts the author's back list.

What are the criteria for getting in? The decision is editorially driven by their sales team. The team looks at the topic and sales while trying to create a mix of genres. Publishers can nominate titles for the Daily Deal, but it is selected by the Amazon sales team. "It is a broad mix," Slater said. Part of the publishers co-op arrangements goes into this program. Some come from KDP, some from Amazon's publishing imprints. It is not currently possible for Indie published books to be in Daily Deal.

Slater next spoke about the **Kindle Owners Lending Library (KOLL)**. To take advantage of the KOLL, readers must own a Kindle *and* have a Prime Account at a cost of \$79 per year. The KOLL allows readers to borrow one title a month and one title at a time. KDP Members also get free shipping on purchases and access to Amazon's video library. Mr. Slater's statistics indicated that Prime Members who borrow a book are more likely to buy other books by that author. Prime Members purchase 30% more books after they try KOLL. Authors are paid a prorated amount for each borrow from a monthly pool. KOLL just launched in November 2011 in the US and October in the UK.

Slater finally spoke on **Tools to Help Authors Reach Readers** which include their digital publishing programs: Encore (re-release), Crossing (foreign language titles translated to English), Montlake (romance), Thomas & Mercer (mystery), 4 North (science fiction), and Amazon Publishing New York (commercial fiction). Amazon's CreateSpace provides free tools and professional services to help authors independently publish their digital books. The ACX program allows authors who own their audio rights to convert their print books into audio versions by either paying a flat fee or by entering into a 50-50 split with the recording artist.

Amazon also offers free author pages on Author Central which boosts discoverability and helps customers find authors. Authors can upload tour schedules, videos, customer discussions, bibliographies, photos and more to their author page. Additionally, sales data from Bookscan is available on your author page with geographical “heat maps” by title that show where sales occur and indicates sales volume. Bestseller ratings also appear on Author Central along with historical sales data for each title.

Search Inside The Book (SITB) allows readers to browse limited amounts of material and this helps discoverability and sales.

Shelfari is Amazon’s social network and online community. Here authors can write character descriptions and plot descriptions and these efforts do eventually aggregate onto the author’s book information page. *Amazon Associates* allows authors to sell books on their website with links and widgets to help them earn money.

During the Q & A that followed the presentation the following questions were fielded by Mr. Slater:

*Can authors record their own book?* Yes. The information is on ACX.com

*What are examples of Virtual Hand Selling?* Amazon helps readers with tools like Sample Chapters, Movers & Shakers, Daily Deals and “Customers who bought...”

*Can Amazon email to let customers know about an author’s new release?* No, that is handled by publishers using co-op merchandising or a decision by Amazon. Authors can get the word out by putting release dates on Shelfari, especially by listing all titles in a series. But there is no way to access co-op merchandising opportunities directly.

*Amazon recently bought Dorchester titles. What are the plans for these works?* Amazon will put them out in Digital and then stage the print release.

*Award-winning author, Jenna Kernan, has been nominated for two RITA® awards for her Western romances and received the Book Buyers Best Award for paranormal romance in 2010. Upcoming releases are THE TEXAS RANGER’S DAUGHTER, February 2012 and BEAUTY’S BEAST, April 2013. Connect with Jenna at [www.jennakernan.com](http://www.jennakernan.com).*

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## ***Business Briefs***

### **End of an Era Move as Cokesbury Closing Stores**

United Methodist Publishing House is closing 38 full-line stores and 19 seminary bookstores. They will be selling exclusively from Cokesbury.com and at conferences, meetings, etc. Recent stats showed 15% of purchasing came from brick and mortar stores. Closings begin in St. Louis Jan. 2013 and are scheduled to be completed by the end of April.

### **Pegasus Classics**

Pegasus Books continues its partnership with Open Road with a new ebook imprint, Pegasus Classics. There will be print on demand in addition to the digital-only format. They are proposing 12 titles in 2013 in literary fiction, narrative nonfiction, sports and mystery/thriller. This will be a combination of new and older titles.

### **Harlequin and Cosmopolitan**

Cosmo Red Hot Reads from Harlequin will have a 30,000 word count in e-originals. The shorter length is supposed to catch the interest of those downloading romances to a variety of devices. Two books will be released monthly at \$3.99 with a launch in May 2013. Harlequin says for “modern young women living the free-spirited and outgoing lifestyle espoused by the international magazine”.



# NINCThink Roundtable: What Does Quality Fiction Mean?

BY SYLVIE KURTZ

**Industry Guests:** Jen Talty (Cool Gus Publishing), Lisa Stone Hardt (LSH Editorial Services), Kim Killion (Hot Damn Designs), Carrie Feron (Avon), Pam Headrick (A Thirsty Mind E-Book Design)

**NINC Authors:** Vanessa Kelly, Shirley Hailstock, Karen Tintori

*Q: Is quality the storytelling or the way you tell the story?*

A: This seemed to be a difficult question for the roundtable to tackle, because quality, they agreed, is subjective. For some it's about a splash, for others it's about the reading experience.

The roundtable explored a detour about word crafting and voice and decided that neither of those defined quality. What works in terms of voice and turns of phrases for some readers won't work for others. "That's just taste. Some things aren't going to speak to everyone."

"Is there a dichotomy of storytelling and word crafting?" one panelist wondered. She gave the example of one book in which the writing was not professional, but the storytelling resonated, so it got picked up in print. Another panelist mentioned that some viral e-books have been picked up and polished for print.

"I have different ideas of what quality is depending on what I'm reading or what I want from the experience," said one panelist. Another said, "Overwriting sometimes looks like quality fiction."

Another panelist said, "Overwriting isn't the same thing as beautiful writing. A beautiful phrase should stay there. I still underline things that are beautiful."

Other thoughts:

"A beautiful story sticks in your memory, but in the moment, it should be part of the overall story."

"Voice is different than quality. Voice comes through experience. Voice has demonstrable qualities. It takes effort to make it look effortless."

"It's harder work to tell a good story beautifully."

*Q: What is the importance of the reader as gatekeeper?*

"Readers are the new gatekeepers," said one panelist. "If they don't like something, they're not going to buy that author's next book."

Books have always risen and gained momentum over time. Readers talk to readers. They make recommendations. It takes 8,000 readers reading a book to create a buzz. Readers have always been gatekeepers as to what they like; not as to what was published. Word of mouth has always been important and will keep being important.

One panelist said that her role as gatekeeper is different now—more subtle. She works for the author rather than a house. "I owe you something for what you're paying me." She can suggest that a client isn't ready to throw something out there, but she no longer has the power to say that it can't go out there.

"If sales are digital," said another panelist, "you don't have to take a certain account's tastes into consideration. You have more freedom digitally, because you're not catering to one account. You can keep the reader in mind."

Now a writer can tell her original story rather than change it to fit house requirements or conventional "rules." The great part of indie publishing is that a writer can keep the story's original energy. Authors feel empowered to write the story they want to write rather than story they felt their editors wanted. One panelist thought this meant quality would rise.

Publishers once were the gatekeepers and authors had little say. Now writers get a chance to give the readers something new. Writers are grateful for getting a following through publishers, but are now empowered by taking the course of their careers in their own hands through the power of the Internet.

“Gatekeepers are needed or else it’s going to kill the business,” said one panelist. “The notion that we should put all the crap out there and see what happens is ridiculous.”

The significant thing that’s happened is that the wave of indie publishing has minimized the number of gatekeepers. Traditionally, a bad book usually had too many hands involved in it. Now a writer can go straight to the consumer, but that writer still needs the editing/gatekeeping to put out a quality product.

Bad books burn out readers. “We might be doing that for the whole fiction field right now.”

Quality fiction is writing the best book you can write. It’s not just about providing the reader with a good story; it’s more. It’s about creating a connection with the reader. It’s about providing an experience—phone, iPad, print, audio, talking on Facebook about story, audio—offering a package of things as opposed to just writing a book. Readers want to be part of your world. Facebook makes that more immediate. But it’s a mistake to take ideas from fans. Readers don’t actually know what they want until you’ve written it. Traditionally, if you wrote a bestseller, you could pretty much guarantee you would remain a bestseller. You had the kind of visibility that drove the sales because of momentum. But now content is king.

“The capability of launching a polished piece of fiction by yourself may not be easy,” said one panelist. “To have the best quality, you need support.”

Five percent of the books have 95 percent of ISBNs due to self-publishing. A lot of authors aren’t catching on and haven’t demonstrated reader appeal. That goes back to quality—having a great cover and getting great editing.

A tremendous amount of success in indie publishing has come through marketing. The tactics that once worked are no longer as viable, because everyone’s doing them. “These authors won’t have a life unless they deliver something significantly more meaningful.”

One writer felt she was too slow for digital world.

“It’s not about pumping out books. One of the biggest problem in the indie world is that many don’t understand or don’t want to deal with the difference between good content and copy editing help.”

“Research the editors and artists for cover designs you are hiring,” suggested one panelist. When you package your book, you need to trust the people you hire, because that’s their expertise.

The challenge is how can we refine choice so readers know where to find quality? “How do I become that quality author readers want?”

Writers, whether traditionally published or indie published, need gatekeepers. Readers don’t want to wade through thousands of choices to find their next read.

One danger of indie publishing is that the business side is so overwhelming that it can affect the quality of the work.

The best promotion is to write a good book, then write an even better book.

“We should all maintain a ridiculously high level of quality,” said one panelist. “If we’re not worried about this, nobody else will be.”

*Sylvie Kurtz writes adventures that explore the complexity of the human mind and the thrill of suspense. She likes dark chocolate, soft wool, and movies that require tissues.*

## ***Business Briefs***

### **Mass Market and Adult Trade Up in August**

AAP’s StatShot for August 2012 says not only are adult trade sales are up 11%, BUT, mass market went up 17.2%. This is attributed to 31.6% decrease in returns. The news remains solid for adult trade with an overall increase for Jan. through August of 10.4%. Figures are the results of 1,186 publishers reporting. Ebooks sales were up 34.2% with an overall Jan. to August increase of 36.9%. There was no division by book type in the current report.





# Partnering to Expand Your Reach

BY EDIE CLAIRE

**Panelists:** Robert Gottlieb (Chairman, Trident Media Group), Larry Norton (Inscribe Digital), Jane Dystel (Dystel & Goderich Literary Management), Jen Talty (Cool Gus Publishing), Paige Wheeler (Folio Literary Management), and Rachel Chou (Open Road Media).

When the agents on the panel were asked whether they sought to keep foreign rights for their clients, Jane Dystel answered that although it depends on the advance, her agency attempts to keep any subsidiary rights they believe they can sell better than the publisher because when a publisher holds those rights, the author has less control. Robert Gottlieb stated that one third of the Trident Media Group's income comes from foreign rights. They retain the majority of their authors' foreign rights and do not use subagents. Paige Wheeler replied that at the Folio Agency, they want to keep rights regardless of advance, because their foreign rights team is able to secure deals that most publishers would not pursue, and they are aggressive in collecting payments, which can be more difficult when working through a publisher. All agreed that with any book contract, one cannot predict what may happen down the road and how valuable those foreign rights might someday become.

The agents' opinions differed on the effectiveness of using subagents, but all agreed that the foreign market was complex and required special expertise to navigate, particularly with regard to judging the stability of foreign publishers in a struggling global economy. According to Rachel Chou of Open Road Media, print and e-book publishing differ in that a digital publisher with world rights can do international sales effectively by coordinating with e-retailer outlets across the world. Larry Norton of Inscribe Media agreed that with vendors like Amazon, Apple, and Kobo opening up divisions overseas, translation rights will become more important.

Jen Talty of Cool Gus Publishing pointed out that while independent authors can upload foreign language e-books themselves, good translations can be costly, and an understanding of the culture is important to create an appropriate cover and marketing plan. Robert Gottlieb agreed that knowledge of a given culture is critical. For example, people in Japan read on phones rather than e-readers, while in France print and e-editions of a given book must be sold at the same price. A savvy agency can create better access for its authors by maintaining relationships with high-level publishing personnel in the designated country, he said.

*Can an author exploit foreign rights on his or her own?* The panel agreed that given the complexity of the market, doing so would not only be difficult but would consume time and energy better spent writing, making foreign rights an ideal area for partnership.

Larry Norton suggested that authors without agents might be able to attract the attention of foreign markets by increasing their international e-book sales in the English language. Authors should make an attempt to understand foreign pricing, taking tax differences into account.

*Is paying for a foreign translation worth the price?* According to Jen Talty, probably not—unless a book has well-established sales and the author has a partner “on the ground” in another country to help with promotion. Robert Gottlieb agreed that the risk of investing in a translation must be carefully weighed and warned that a poor translation can cost sales.

*Is it worthwhile for an author to produce his or her own audio books?* Jen Talty explained that ACX allows authors to select a narrator for their work, then either pay a flat fee or enter into a 50:50 royalty-sharing agreement to have the audiobook produced. Algorithms then connect the work with Amazon and CreateSpace for free promotion. Rachel Chou suggested that rather than investing money in translations and recordings, authors with limited funds might be better served to spend that money and energy promoting existing books to increase sales. Once an author accrues some “extra pocket money” she would advise considering audio first because the technology of syncing e-books and audio will likely cause a boom in that market,

giving an edge to authors selling in all formats. Jane Dystel added that for her own clients, ACX might be an option but would not be her first choice.

*How can an indie author attract an agent to handle subsidiary rights?* Larry Norton suggested building a pitch based on hard sales data—analyzing trends and prospects for a particular foreign market. Robert Gottlieb agreed that success in e-book sales can generate interest and is a new path toward acquiring representation. Jane Dystel stressed the importance of networking and cooperation among self-published authors in advancing their respective careers.

*What about film rights?* A twitter of laughter showed what most panel participants—and audience members—thought of spending time and energy on this prospect! Jane Dystel explained that the economy had negatively affected the movie business, and that although possibilities did still exist, it would be unwise for an author to go direct into the field, given that industry's well-known reputation for less than upright practices. Robert Gottlieb agreed, stating that only one in ten films are profitable, and an agent must have significant expertise in the area to be productive.

Paige Wheeler added that both film and television are changing dramatically, but that because producers do still look to books for material, authors are well served by having an agent with expertise in the field. Larry Norton warned that self-publishing companies who claim to offer representation to filmmakers for a fee should be avoided.

Rachel Chou pointed out that new markets for video are opening up in the web world, and Paige Wheeler agreed, saying that 15-second spots can be effective as “pre-rolls” that run in the ad space before other videos. But good production values are key, and an author must find the right partner to make compelling content.

When asked for last words, Robert Gottlieb re-emphasized the importance of authors retaining as many subsidiary rights as they can because increasingly publishers will make a grab for these rights only to “warehouse” them. It is better for the publisher to be forced to approach the author when and if specific opportunities arise. Some film studios, for example, will not buy film rights if other subsidiary rights are not also available. Other panelists concluded by agreeing that this is a good time to be an author. Many options now exist besides traditional publishing, and even more are on the horizon.

*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! [www.edieclaire.com](http://www.edieclaire.com)*

## ***Business Briefs***

### **First Sale Rights Hit the Supreme Court**

Oral arguments in *Kirtsaeng vs. Wiley* started on Oct. 29. Why is this important? The court is hearing an appeal on an August 2011 Second Circuit case, *John Wiley & Sons Inc. v. Supap Kirtsaeng*. Kirtsaeng is a Thai-born U.S. student who Wiley successfully sued when he imported Wiley textbooks editions printed for foreign sales and resold them in the U.S. Wiley won, but libraries, eBay, used book services and online purveyors such as Amazon were not happy. These groups have formed a coalition, Owner's Rights Initiative, <http://ownersrightsinitiative.org/> in concern over the first sale right outlined in the Copyright Act. Interestingly publishers haven't been bothered. There is no indication of the higher court's leanings.

### **New Christian Fiction Imprint**

U.K. Lion Hudson is launching Lion Fiction in spring 2013 with thriller, fantasy, mystery and women's fiction titles. Eventually this will produce 24 books annually for a broad audience. Initial offerings will be from crime writers Donna Fletcher Crow, Mel Starr, Fay Sampson, and C.F. Dunn as well as Pam Rhodes new series the Dunbridge Chronicles (women's fiction). The U.S. distribution is through Kregel Publications.



## WRITING is TAXING

By Diane Kelly

# Resolve to Retire Rich!

With a new year starting, many of us are making resolutions to do things right. We may vow to exercise, eat healthier, or spend more time with our families. Maybe we've pledged to take control of our finances and set more aside for retirement.

If you are in this latter group, this article is for you! Self-employed writers can easily set up a retirement account. Saving for retirement isn't only a way to ensure that your golden years are comfortable, it can also save you some money in taxes since you can deduct contributions now and defer the income tax until you withdraw the funds during retirement. Chances are you'll be in a lower tax bracket at retirement than you are now.

### SEP-IRA

The most common retirement plan for self-employed taxpayers is what's known as a SEP-IRA. The term SEP stands for Simplified Employee Pension. A self-employed taxpayer may make contributions each year up to the lesser of:

- a) 25% of the net earnings from self-employment, or
- b) the annual maximum dollar amount (\$50,000 for 2012 and \$51,000 for 2013).

As you will note, the annual maximum is subject to adjustment for inflation.

If you base your contributions on net earnings, be aware that "net earnings" is defined as your gross income less allowable business expenses, your SEP-IRA contributions, and the deductible employer portion of your self-employment taxes (as computed on Schedule SE and deducted on Line 27 of the Form 1040). As you may have realized, this computation contains a circular reference and can be tricky to compute. Fortunately, IRS Publication 560 "Retirement Plans for Small Business" contains a worksheet for computing the annual contribution limits.

As noted above, contributions are deductible in the year the contributions are made, which reduces taxable income and therefore cuts current taxes. Income tax is deferred until distributions are taken.

Do you participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan, such as a 401(k), at a "day job?" No problem! Even if you contribute to another plan, you are still eligible to make tax-deductible contributions to a SEP-IRA. In fact, contributing to both plans can maximize your retirement savings and significantly decrease your current taxes.

Flexibility is another reason why SEP-IRAs are popular. With a SEP-IRA, you decide how much you want to contribute each year (within the contribution limits noted above). You do not have to contribute every year. This flexibility is wonderful, as it allows writers to make contributions in years when finances are good, but allows them to skip a year or make smaller contributions when finances are tight. Moreover, unlike a traditional IRA wherein contributions must cease once participants turns 70 ½, self-employed persons who continues to earn net income from their business can continue to save for retirement via a SEP-IRA even after they turn 70 ½. With people living much longer these days, the additional years of contributions can be a big benefit.

### Setting Up a SEP-IRA

It's easy to set up a SEP-IRA. The instructions for Form 5305-SEP and the information in Publication 560 will tell you how. You can access the forms and publications at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). In addition, many financial institutions will help you set up a SEP-IRA.

## Deadlines

Contributions for a given tax year can be made through that year's filing deadline, excluding extensions. The contribution deadline for a tax year will normally be April 15th of the following year, though occasionally we are given an extra day or two if April 15th falls on a Sunday or holiday.

You have until April 15, 2013 to make contributions for the 2012 tax year.

If you make a contribution for a tax year after the year end, however, be sure to make it clear to your financial institution that the contribution applies to the preceding tax year. If the contribution is accidentally applied to the current year and you later make additional contributions for the current year, you could end up with an excess contribution penalty if the total contributions exceed the annual limit. The penalty for excess contributions is an additional 10% "excise tax" on the excess contributions. This additional tax is reported on Form 5330.

## The Savers Credit

Taxpayers with low or moderate incomes could also be eligible for a credit for retirement savings in addition to deferral of income tax. Woo hoo! The credit, formerly known as the Retirement Savings Contribution Credit, applies to taxpayers earning:

- a) \$57,500 or less who file their return under married joint status;
- b) \$43,125 or less who file under head of household status; or
- c) \$28,750 or less who file under single or married filing separate status.

These limits are for 2012 and are subject to an annual adjustment.

The Savers Credit is non-refundable, meaning the credit can eliminate taxes but won't generate a refund. The maximum credit is \$1,000 and varies by income and filing status. To determine if you qualify, see Form 8880 and instructions.

I hope each of you has a wonderful 2013 and that your tax season is hassle free!

*Diane Kelly is the author of the humorous Death and Taxes romantic mystery series.*

## ***Business Briefs***

### **Authors Guild on Penguin/Random House**

<http://www.authorsguild.org/advocacy/scott-turow-on-penguin-random-house/>

### **S&S and Hachette E-book Agreement (DOJ Approved)**

S&S and Hachette Book Group publishers are allowing agencies to discount individual titles. Amazon checked a few titles for comparison:

Hachette

*Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers and Evelyn Waugh's new e-book pricing — \$9.99

*Merry Christmas, Alex Cross* — \$11.04

*The Casual Vacancy* — \$12.74 (originally priced at \$19.99)

Simon & Schuster

*The Last Man* by Vince Flynn — \$11.99

*The Perks of Being a Wallflower* at \$6.99

*Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin — \$9.99

*Proof of Heaven*, was \$7.99 (Amazon); (\$8.43) B&N

# The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



## Learning Curve

**"Education is learning what you didn't even know you didn't know."**

**— Daniel J. Boorstin**

So I guess the whole "Mayan" 2012 apocalypse thing was no more reliable than the Y2K scare of my halcyon youth. Unless I have completely misunderstood the situation, the world hasn't ended—or even slowed down and started making a funny grinding noise—and here we are, safe and sound (in a manner of speaking) in 2013.

Which means it's time for me to review my annual New Year's resolution to start making my deadlines.

"How's that going?" I hear you ask with bated breath, barely able to contain your burning curiosity about my ongoing quest.

Well... I'll cut to the chase, avoid prevarication, and admit that it's going badly. I was disastrously late on delivering my last book, only making my release date by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin, and I am already running well behind schedule on my current manuscript.

Nonetheless, I'm optimistic about 2013 being a better year for my long-held goal of achieving timely delivery of my work. In part, of course, this optimism represents the triumph of hope over experience (as Samuel Johnson famously described second marriages), as well as the widespread human tendency to see ourselves as we wish to be rather than as we actually are. However, in addition to being an eventful year for me, 2012 was also a very educational one, and so my learning curve on this matter has not been entirely flat.

For one thing, when expressing my apologetic guilt to several editors over the past year or two, as well as to people outside the profession who also had cause to be vexed with my unreliability, I was surprised to learn how often the reason I am forgiven is because of other factors which are reassuringly within my control, rather than being lucky accidents.

One reason cited, for example, is that when I finally do pull myself together and get something done, it's actually *done*. In terms of my job, this means that I typically deliver writing that's complete, clean, and essentially finished, rather than delivering half-baked, sloppy stuff that I know still has a lot of problems, thus ensuring that my editor will have to labor for long hours doing a lot of the work that I should have done before turning in the manuscript. Some editors really appreciate it, go figure, if you don't make their jobs harder.

Another factor cited in response to my confessionals—and this one really surprised me (it will no doubt also surprise most of my friends and all of my enemies)—is that I am often forgiven because I am polite and mature.

Yeah—who knew?

I've been surprised by how often the chaos, anxiety, and frantic shuffling that my lateness has caused is dismissed, after the fact, because I did *not*: avoid phone calls; delete emails without answering them; disappear and cut off contact; giggle inanely when confronted and answer only with a shrug; respond to requests for an update (or for delivery) by diving into defensive rants and angry whines; commence verbal attacks against the person(s) I'm inconveniencing; insist that expecting me to do my job in a timely manner is unreasonable and unfair; blame others for my lateness; and so on.

According to my various sources (and, come to think of it, according to my own experience of working with others), there are people who pull crap like that, and it just makes a bad situation worse for anyone who deals with them.



So it turns out that when you have my perpetual problem—late delivery—if you just *do your work well* and *behave like a responsible adult* toward your anxious or exasperated business associates, you can often be forgiven quite a bit in the end.

I'm taking that lesson with me into 2013. I continue pursuing my goal of making my deadlines... but I must meanwhile never forget to keep a firm grasp of the professional virtues which my associates appreciate, such as delivering work that is as finished and polished as I can make it, and maintaining businesslike behavior. And in doing so, perhaps I can keep people on board my train while I continue chugging laboriously toward that so-far elusive destination of timely delivery.

New discoveries about *process* have also formed part of my education during the past year.

As per last January's column, I sustained an eye injury in 2011 which was so excruciatingly painful that I spent nearly three months gobbling prescription painkillers—during which time I was often very confused and sometimes incoherent. And it took about four months after I stopped using those pills for their mental side-effects to wear off completely.

During that four-month period, there were a number of things I normally do well that I could barely do at all, such as read maps, figure out the tip on a restaurant bill, follow instructions... or write humor. The latter was particularly problematic, since I was already getting a very late start on writing a comedic novel, and the early chapters which I now wrote for it were about as funny as watching paint dry. It took me several more months and at least two new versions before I was able to write something that worked. The published novel contains version 3.5 of the opening chapters.

So now I know that recreational drug use will never find a place on my bucket list. I also know that I could face serious challenges if I ever develop a chronic pain condition, since I've yet to find medication which manages my pain *without* making my mind sluggish and dull.

Anyhow, this unfamiliar problem led me to an anxious experiment that worked much better than I anticipated. By the time I got version 3.0 of the early chapters working okay (but not quite *there* yet), I got stuck and simply froze for a while. The diagnosis was easy and unmysterious: I was sick to death of working on the opening of that book and very, very bored with it by now.

With overdue-book pressure heavy on my shoulders (and I didn't want publication to be delayed, since I have bills to pay), I decided that writing almost *anything* was better than writing *nothing*, so I leapt way ahead and wrote the final chapters of the book. Writing out of order was something I had tried a few times in the past, mostly in response to other writers insisting it would help my creativity, and it had always resulted in a useless mess: clumps of scenes that I could never figure out how to start shaping into a book. On this occasion, though—probably because I already had a solid story outline—it worked well for me. So then I leapt backward and tried writing some scenes in the middle of the book, too. That also worked. Eventually, I had about 50,000 words and a fairly good idea of what else I needed to write to make the whole thing string together as a coherent tale. At that point, I went back to the beginning, wrote version 3.5 of the early chapters, and kept going from there.

This unfamiliar process made continuity and plot coherence really nerve-wracking for me, especially given the time constraints I was under by then, and I was still finding little continuity gaffs when proofreading the galleys (luckily, the necessary changes were modest by this point, so I was able to make them). So leaping around isn't a process I'm keen to use on every project hereafter. But it was a great discovery for me in terms of a new way for me to solve a problem that might otherwise stall me for long enough to slip the production schedule and leave a big blank hole on the bookstands where my novel should be.

Finally, I've recently bought my first house. It includes a large, sunny room for my office, one with plenty of storage. I also bought all-new furniture for this office after two decades of furnishing my working spaces with hand-me-downs and dumpster-diving finds (due to budget constraints, not self-denial). The happy result is that—for the very first time in my full-time, self-supporting writing career—I have a spacious, comfortable, attractive, and quiet office to work in.

Settling happily into this excellent new space is making me realize how much of my energy and focus for years has been drained away by working full-time in cramped, ramshackle, sometimes uncomfortable work spaces in very noisy buildings and neighborhoods. It's made me realize how much environment matters—and what difficult writing environments I've worked in for years. So I enter 2013 with high hopes that my ▶

new space, like my new discoveries about professionalism and process, will carry me at least a little closer this year to my elusive goal of making my deadlines.

*Laura Resnick's latest release is Poltergeist, which she delivered late. Her next book, The Misfortune Cookie, is scheduled for November 2013 release and isn't finished yet. She also delivered this column just under the wire.*



## Scrutizing Scrivener

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### Customizing the system itself

The synopsis area (the 3x5 card emulator) allows you to assign a status to each “card”—each scene—like TO DO, DONE, FIRST DRAFT—and you can re-title these statuses. In fact you can re-title the navigation and organization areas too, and more, I suspect. This is absolutely essential in any creative tool, and one of the weaknesses of most word processing programs. Maybe you remember that WordPerfect for DOS called bundles of files “directories” while MS Word calls them “folders.” I used to pull my hair out over the lack of this kind of flexibility in accounting, spreadsheet, and database programs.

### Productivity tools

There’s a subroutine that counts how many words you wrote in a given day or session. It can tell you how close you are to your goal and to your deadline, too, and how many working days you have left before your deadline.

What I suspect might become my favorite feature if I get proficient in this program: many, many functions and navigation moves can be accomplished with keyboard commands. I cut my word processing teeth on WordStar and WordPerfect. On a nice keyboard, using these programs I could hit 120 words on the flat, bolding, searching and replacing, indexing, everything, without having to take my hand off the keyboard to manipulate the mouse. Since MS Word came into my life, that convenience is no more.

In the short time we had for this workshop I was sold on the program. I’m hoping to get to know Scrivener very, very well.

*Jennifer Stevenson writes sexy paranormal romantic comedy. Find book three in her Slacker Demons series, Dancing with Cupid, just out! She is a founding member of Book View Cafe, a speed skater, and was once known as Flash Hottie of the Haymarket Rioters roller derby farm team.*