

N I N C

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The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



Fan Fiction: Part Three

“With the success of Alternate Universe fan fiction and the successful leveraging of that fandom into seven-figure economic rewards, the influx of fan fiction into professional publishing is likely to begin at greater levels than previous.”

— Jane Litte, [DearAuthor.com](#), March 13, 2012

As described in my June column, I spent some time this spring reading fan fiction, to get better acquainted with the subject of this series. Well, one night, I came across a fanfic story of 100,000 words on my e-reader that I had downloaded among a few dozen works I had selected for my sample set (some sites make fanfic stories available in ePub and Mobi formats). Most of the fanfic I’d read so far was short story length, and I considered just deleting this work, given its size; but I decided to read a few pages first, just to be thorough.

Nine hours later, I finished reading that novel, having stayed up all night, unable to put down the book until I knew how it ended (in a very satisfying way). That is my favorite sort of experience as a reader, and something that doesn’t occur often enough.

As it happens, the novel was almost unrecognizable as being drawn from the popular TV show on which it was “based.” It was written as an Alternate Universe (AU) story, a style of fanfic which deviates from the

original material while still using it as a touchstone. The AU aspect may be as “minor” as changing a character’s fate (ex. if Scarlett O’Hara married Ashley Wilkes), or it may be so substantial as to bear no discernible resemblance to the original (ex. in 21st Century Atlanta, Scarlett O’Hara is a successful interior decorator being courted by brash software tycoon Rhett Butler while trying to put on a brave face as her business partner Melanie marries Scarlett’s old flame Ashley Wilkes, who broke her heart when he dumped her last year).

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Novelists, Inc.

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If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

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2015 Conference

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Complete committee member listings are available on the website:

<http://www.ninc.com>

Central Coordinator:

Novelists, Inc.
c/o Terese Ramin
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Hartland MI 48353

admin@ninc.com

Website:

<http://www.ninc.com>

Address changes may be made on the website.

Members without Internet access may 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:

Tracy Higley
tracy@tracyhigley.com

Qualified Applicants:

Christa Allan, New Orleans LA
Christy Barritt, Chesapeake VA
Laura Benedict, Carbondale IL
Shoshanna Evers, Post Falls ID
Mary Foster (Geri Foster), Bedford TX
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Leigh Moore (Leigh Talbert Moore; Tia Louise),
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Cathryn Parry, Clinton MA
Evelyn Pendlebury (Eve Langlais),
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Kathy Wernly (Kathy Clark & Bob Kat),
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Catherine Cobb (Kate Baray), Austin TX
Dani Collins, Christina Lake BC, Canada
Yasmine Galenorn, Kirkland WA
Eliza Gayle, Rolling Bay WA
Janette Kenny, Lansing KS
Marliss Melton, Williamsburg VA
Brenda Schetnan (Molly Evans, Sierra Woods),
Albuquerque NM
Heather Smith (HD Smith), Celebration FL
Susan Stoker, Tolar TX

August Contributors

JoAnn Grote is the award-winning author of 40 books, including inspirational romances, middle-grade historical novels, and children's nonfiction. Contact her at jaghi@rconnect.com.

Laura Resnick, author of the Esther Diamond urban fantasy series for DAW Books, has learned a lot from her research for this 3-part series, which has changed some of her previous views about fanfic.

Joe Wikert is director of strategy and business development at Olive Software (www.olivesoftware.com). Prior to joining Olive Software he was general manager, publisher, & chair of the Tools of Change (TOC) conference at O'Reilly Media, Inc., where he managed each of the editorial groups at O'Reilly as well as the Microsoft Press team and the retail sales organization. Before joining O'Reilly, Joe was vice president and executive publisher at John Wiley & Sons, Inc. This article first appeared on the author's website, jwikert.typepad.com, and it is reprinted with his permission.

Business Briefs

E-book Price Fixing Litigation Finally Ends, but Not Well for Apple

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Judge Denise Cote's 2013 decision that Apple had orchestrated a scheme to fix e-book prices. The final vote was 2-1. The dissent came from Judge Dennis Jacobs, who during questioning referred to Amazon as a monopolist. He asked if the government found it acceptable that Amazon had a 90 percent market share. U.S. Deputy Solicitor General Malcolm Stewart's response was the government thought the \$9.99 price was good for the consumer. Apple now has a \$400 million payment to make, but the payment may be delayed if Apple pursues its option to appeal to the Supreme Court or request an en banc hearing of the entire Second Circuit. One of the key arguments has been whether this is a per se case, which means the government only has to prove the price fixing took place without investigating pro-competitive results in the marketplace.

PW Daily

NINC Statement of Principle:

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

NINC has room to grow...

Recommend membership to your colleagues. Prospective members may apply online at <http://www.ninc.com>. Refer members at [ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com). Go to Members Only, "Member Services," and click "Refer a New Member to NINC." Take NINC brochures to conferences.

President's VOICE

Lots of NINC Business...

I know it is very tempting to skip the president's letter, especially when it's a tad lengthy, but please don't skip this one!



Julie Leto

First: Elections.

It is time to vote! The election period will be from August 1 until September 1. That's four weeks, which should be plenty of time for people to pop over to the website, login (upper right hand corner), click the Members menu, scroll down to Elections, and vote.

If you have any trouble signing in, contact Terese Daly Ramin right away. Her email is admin@ninc.com.

Voting is simple. Per our bylaws, the Nominating Committee has put up one candidate for each available board position. This year, we select a new President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Nominating Committee also puts up a slate of no less than nine (9) candidates for the five (5) positions on next year's Nominating Committee. From the 10 names available this year, please select the FIVE (5) that you think will serve NINC best in selecting candidates for 2017's open board positions and their successors.

Before you hit SUBMIT on your ballot, you will be asked to fill out the PROXY form, which is directly underneath the ballot, on the same screen. The proxy form is how we meet our quorum for our general meeting, which will be on Sunday, October 4, 2015. **Even if you are attending the conference** and plan to be at the general meeting in person, we ask you to submit a proxy form. You can void your proxy at the meeting if we have to vote on anything and you prefer to do it in person. As of right now, there are no votes scheduled for the general meeting, but we still need quorum in order to have the meeting, and that's where the proxies come in.

Second: Membership Profiles.

While you are at the website voting, please take a minute to update your Membership Profile. You can see this option on the Main Menu, toward the right, under "My Profile." Once you go to your profile, you can upload your photo, update your personal and professional information by posting a bio or booklist ... anything you want OTHER MEMBERS to know. These profiles are only visible to other members.

When you're at your Profile, you will notice that we have a spot for two email addresses. One is the email address that other members can see in order to contact you and the other says LOOP, which is only visible to you and to website Admins. This feature was added so that our loop moderator can easily track down members who are subscribed to the loop under email addresses that may not otherwise be "listed" with NINC. In other words, once we go through membership renewal period, it will be much easier for the loop moderator to "clean up" the list so that only active members are on it.

Please, PLEASE go in and list your loop email address, even if it is the same one you use for general email. All you need to do is hover your mouse over the "Contact Info" section of your profile. A menu will appear and on that menu will be a pencil icon. Click the pencil. A pop-up box will appear that says "Personal Information." Enter your email address in the field that says "Loop" and then click SAVE.

That's it. Easy-peasy.

The same process is how you can change/update anything on your profile page. Want to add your bio to "Career Info?" Hover over Career Info, click the pencil, add the information, and hit Save.

If you have trouble, please email Terese. Put "PROFILE ISSUE" in the subject line and she will help or direct someone on our Tech Committee to help fix things up.

And we're offering incentives, too! If, by September 15, you've posted your photo, some bio information, and your Loop email address onto your profile page, you'll be eligible to win a \$50 gift card! We thought it would be a fun way to get people to go to the website, vote, and update their profiles.

Last: News.

Terese Daly Ramin has served NINC as our Administrative Assistant to the president and board for over a year. She has done a spectacular job, so much so that we have now shifted her duties officially so that her new title is Central Coordinator. Tonya Wilkerson of Varney and Associates will remain as our General Accountant. Basically, this means that Tonya will continue with her accounting duties, but will transfer duties that are not directly related to her role as a Certified Public Accountant to Terese. Pamela Johnson, our treasurer, and of course, Terese and Tonya, deserve a big thank-you for working out the details of this important transition. It will allow members to get much quicker responses to problems and free up Tonya to do the duties we need her to in terms of finances.

That's it. Vote. Update your Profile. Congrats to Terese!

And as always, if you have any questions or concerns about NINC, please let me know!



Candidates for 2016 Officers and 2016 Nominating Committee

Candidate for President-Elect



Erica Ridley

Erica Ridley is a *USA Today*-bestselling author of three romantic comedies and 10 historical romance novels, including the Dukes of War regency romance series. A graduate of the University of South Florida with a degree in Business Administration, Erica spent several years working for marketing firms and advertising agencies before starting her own successful web and marketing business in 2001. She enjoys the entrepreneurial aspect of being a hybrid author and the freedom to shape her own future. Erica brings her marketing savvy, leadership experience, and technical background to her writing career, using both her analytical nature and creative thinking to solve problems and create new paths. She loves the energy and camaraderie she has found in NINC, and is eager to give back to this wonderful community.

Secretary

Pauline Baird Jones is the award-winning author of 16 novels of science fiction romance, action-adventure, suspense, romantic suspense, and comedy-mystery. In a writing career that spans more years than she wants to think about, she's served on boards in several writing organizations, including SOLA-RWA, KOD-RWA, and Final Twist-SINC (vice president, president). She's worked as newsletter editor and took KOD-RWA online in the '90s. She was committee member for SOLA-RWA's writers conference. She's been traditionally published, but when her publisher closed its doors, Pauline opted to independently publish. Originally from Wyoming, she and her family moved from New Orleans to Texas before Katrina. ▶



Pauline Baird Jones



Rickey Mallory

Treasurer

Rickey Mallory, who writes as **Mallory Kane**, has 38 published books with Harlequin Intrigue, plus several indie books and one romantic suspense novel, so far, with Tule Publishing. She's been a member of Romance Writers of America since 1994 and has held just about every board position at the local level except treasurer. She served as president of the Magnolia State Romance Writers (MSRW) in Mississippi and served on several committees and focus groups at the national level of RWA. In her professional life prior to becoming a published author, she was Assistant Chief of Pharmacy, in charge of 73 pharmacists and over 45 pharmacy technicians, as well as several administrative staff at a major medical center in Jackson, Mississippi. Her 26-year career as a pharmacist also included two years as the resident pharmacist specialist for Medicare's Elderly and Disabled Prescription Program in Mississippi.



Donna Andrews

Nominating Committee Candidates

Donna Andrews is the NYT-bestselling author of 23 books, including 19 in her Agatha-, Anthony-, and Lefty-winning *Meg Langslow* series from Minotaur (Macmillan). The latest, *The Lord of the Wings*, will release in August 2015. When not writing, she gardens with more optimism than skill, pursues her hobby of digital photography, and is a serial volunteer for writers' organizations, including Sisters in Crime and Mystery Writers of America.



Eve Gaddy

Eve Gaddy is the best-selling, award-winning author of more than 20 novels. Her books have won and been nominated for awards from *Romantic Times*, Golden Quill, Booksellers' Best, Holt Medallion, Texas Gold, Daphne du Maurier, and more. She was nominated for a *Romantic Times* Career Achievement Award for Innovative Series romance as well as winning the 2008 *Romantic Times* Career Achievement award for Series Storyteller of the Year. Eve's books have sold over a million copies worldwide and been published in many foreign countries. She is currently writing romance for Tule Publishing and romantic suspense for Bell Bridge Books.



JoAnn Grote

JoAnn Grote has been a member of Novelists, Inc. for most of her published career and considers the organization a lifeline for writers. She has served as Membership Chair for NINC and writes the monthly *Nink* column "Not Your Usual Writing Advice." She has written 40 traditionally published books, including inspirational contemporary and historical romance for adults, middle grade historical novels, and nonfiction for children. She has taught a number of writers' workshops and has been a technical writer and editor for three years. She worked full-time as a certified public accountant in North Carolina for seven years, then she went part-

time to pursue a writing career. She sold her first book the following year. She currently lives in a small town on the Minnesota prairie, the setting for many of her historical romances, and is on the board of the local historical society.

Sharon Hamilton is a *New York Times* and *USA Today*-bestselling author most known for her *SEAL Brotherhood* romantic suspense series. She also writes the paranormal *Golden Vampires of Tuscany* and *The Guardian Angel* series. She has been a board member of two Romance Writers of America chapters and a NINC member for two years. Prior to writing romance full time, Sharon owned and ran two successful real estate companies. She also was a sales trainer, coaching for productivity and success as well as speaking for two large real estate franchises.



Sharon Hamilton

Lori Handeland published her first novel in 1993. Since then she has published nearly 60 novels in multiple genres, winning two RITA awards and making many appearances on national bestseller lists, including *Waldenbooks*, *BookScan*, *USA Today*, and *New York Times* lists. She served two terms as a director on the national board of Romance Writers of America after spending ten years in various positions on her local Romance Writers of America board of directors. She has previously served on the Nominating Committee for NINC.



Lori Handeland

Debra Holland is the *New York Times* and *USA Today*-bestselling author of the award-winning *Montana Sky* series (sweet, historical Western romance) and *The Gods' Dream Trilogy* (fantasy romance). Debra is a three-time Romance Writers of America Golden Heart finalist and one-time winner. In 2013, Amazon selected *Starry Montana Sky* as one of the Top 50 Greatest Love Stories. When she's not writing, Dr. Debra works as a psychotherapist and corporate crisis/grief counselor. She's the author of *The Essential Guide to Grief and Grieving*, a book about helping people cope with all kinds of loss. She's also a contributing author to *The Naked Truth About Self-Publishing*. Debra lives in Southern California with her dog and two cats, who keep her company while she writes.



Debra Holland

Charlotte Hubbard has belonged to NINC since 2005. She served as NINC Secretary from 2008 to 2010, has attended every conference since she joined, and has presented Night Owls at most of those events. She has had more than 40 books published, including historical and contemporary settings, erotic, and sweet Amish romances—under three names. When asked why she's written such a broad range of novels, she replies, "I write whatever they'll pay me for."



Charlotte Hubbard

Julie Ortolon, *USA Today*-bestselling author of contemporary romance, joined the Austin Writers League and Romance Writers of America in 1996. As an RWA member, she held several board positions ▶



Julie Ortolon

including Vice President of the San Antonio chapter, President of the Austin Chapter, and Published Author Network Liaison for the Austin chapter for two years. She joined Novelists, Inc. in 2002. Drawing on a background in internet marketing, she is a frequent speaker at NINC conferences on the subject of promotion, and has worked behind the scenes with conference coordinators to help line up conference speakers.



Debra Salonen

Winner of *Romantic Times* Reviewers' Career Achievement "Series Storyteller of the Year" award in 2006, **Debra Salonen's** 26 titles for Harlequin Publishing have sold more than 2.3 million copies worldwide. A six-time nominee for RT's Best Superromance of the Year award, Debra took home that honor with *Until He Met Rachel* (May 2010) and her most unlikely hero and never-say-die heroine. After not-quite rocking the older-reader market with her self-published *Ethel Mertz Meets 50 Shades* naughty comedy series, she moved her creative focus to Montana at the invitation of Tule Publishing and started channeling her inner maverick. Deb's first five titles in her *Big Sky Mavericks* series released in 2014-2015, with four more in the queue. She looks forward to returning to her NINC roots in Florida this fall.



Jennifer Stevenson

Jennifer Stevenson has been the Published Author Network liaison of the Chicago-North Romance Writers of America chapter for six years. She is a founding member of Book View Cafe and served as Secretary on the Book View Cafe Board of Directors for 18 months. For 21 years she was co-owner of Hawkeye Scenic Studios, paying bills, running payrolls, and preparing quarterly taxes for the company. She has been a member of NINC since 2008.

**Vote (and Fill in your Proxy) at the NINC website
in the Members-Only Section under Election:
Voting Deadline is September 1.**

Business Briefs

There is Still Competition from Barnes & Noble

Barnes & Noble's net income for 2015 was \$36.6 million, compared with the \$47.3 million loss the company recorded for fiscal 2014. Total revenue actually was down 4.9 percent, with sales down 4.4 percent in print. The revenue drop has been attributed in part to an extra week in FY 2014 and the closing of 13 stores. There was a .5 percent increase in "core" store sales. This figure doesn't include NOOK sales. BN.com launched a new format during the last week of June. There is an expectation of higher sales and reduced operating costs with the new design.

PW Daily



NINC WORLD

TRADEWINDS
ST. PETE, FLORIDA
SEPT 30 - OCT 4, 2015

Novelists, Inc: The Only International
Writers Organization for
Multi-Published Fiction Authors

It's Crunch Time

Conference Deadlines This Month

- ◆ Last day to register for the 2015 NINC Conference is August 28, 2015.
- ◆ If you offer writer-related services to other authors, let everyone know via an ad in the conference program. Deadline for both art and payment: August 14, 2015. Details at https://ninc.com/conferences/support_ninc/program_ads
- ◆ Companion meals can be ordered through September 20. https://ninc.com/conferences/companion_meals/

Hotel Rooms Wait List

We are sold out at both the TradeWinds Island Grand and their sister hotel on the resort, Guy Harvey Outpost. **But** we have a roommate list running on BeachNINC, so it's possible to buddy-up and split costs. Just subscribe at: beachninc2015-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Once a member of the loop, you can sign in, go to "More" on the top menu, click on "Database," and the list is there. There is an arrow at the top right, to expand the list to see all of it—as in checking off whether you have a room you want to share, or need to find someone who will take you in.

If by chance you have a room and have to cancel, please contact Registrar Pam McCutcheon, pammc@pcisys.net so she can scarf up your conference rate room and give it to somebody else who wants to attend.

And . . . Nink needs conference reporters!

Be a *Nink* reporter for one or two workshops and earn money to help defray some of your conference expenses. *Nink* reporters also get reserved front row seats in every workshop. Contact *Nink* Editor Laura Phillips for details at laura@lauraphillips.net.

Business Briefs

Adult Fiction Up, Juvenile Fiction Down

The first six months of 2015 are running similar to 2014, according to Nielsen BookScan. Juvenile fiction was down 5 percent, however. (2014 had the *Divergent* trilogy and *The Fault in Our Stars* to boost sales during this period.) Unit sales for adult fiction print were up 1 percent with sales boosts from *The Girl on the Train*, *Grey*, and *All the Light We Cannot See*. Mass market continued downward but was only down 10 percent this year in comparison to 12 percent for 2014.

PW Daily



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

Not Your Usual Writing Advice

By JoAnn Grote

Zip!

“It would be interesting to know what it is men are most afraid of. Taking a new step, uttering a new word is what they fear most.”
— **Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment***

I recently spent a Sunday afternoon zip-lining with friends. It was my first zip line experience, and it was amazing, scary, exhilarating, and unforgettable. I am so glad I went.

You might think you are not a risk taker, but I beg to differ. You’re a writer, aren’t you?

If you are unfamiliar with zip-lining, it involves wearing a harness which is attached to a thick steel cable—in my experience, by two thick straps which hooked over the cable behind me, and a metal trolley hooked to the cable in front of me. The trolley allows one to “zip” along the cable between platforms or trees.

The zip line tour was near Henderson, Minnesota, a couple hours to the east of the small prairie town where I live. The Henderson area is not prairie, but rather is covered with dense old forest, high hills, and the resulting deep valleys. If you are a Laura Ingalls Wilder fan, you may recall her family spent time in the Big Woods. The Henderson area is on the edge of the Big Woods.

The tour included 14 zip lines. The longest zip line was one-third mile. The highest tower platform from which we took off was 50 feet. The highest we zipped above the earth was 150 feet, and we looked down on the tops of trees and into deep ravines. The highest speeds we reached were approximately 30 miles an hour.

I’ve never been afraid of heights. Well, not much. Sure, it could be scary standing at the top of a ladder knowing that if I made a wrong move I could end up on the ground and hurt myself. But I’ve climbed mountain trails, rappelled, and jumped out of airplanes, so I was surprised that I found the zip line experience absolutely terrifying.

To be more specific, stepping off the platforms into space was terrifying, just as it can be to step into the unknown future in any new venture in life, including in the writing life. To be even more accurate, stepping off the platform wasn’t frightening when it was only six feet off the ground, but at 50 feet it was an entirely different experience.

I think the same is true in writing. I’ve never found it scary to start a new story in the same genre as others in which I’ve published, or for the same publisher or editor, which is comparable to stepping off a low platform. The first time I started a book in a new-to-me genre, I was surprised to find I procrastinated. I filled a three-ring notebook with notes and an outline, then refined the notes and worried over the outline. I wrote the first scene and then rewrote it six times before moving on to another scene, rather than write the first draft of the book to the end before rewriting, as is my usual process. Getting that book started was like stepping off a 50-foot platform to start a zip.

There are other firsts that can be scary in the writer’s life, including working with a new editor (by choice or default), approaching a different publishing house, figuring out what is required at each stage of the self-publishing world and how to implement it, approaching an expert when researching a story, and venturing into screenplays or theatre.

It didn’t help to know that before I started each zip line one of the guides checked my harness and the equipment that attached me to the steel cable. Logic said I would not fall to my death when I took that step

off a platform. Logic tells writers that taking a step into the air of a new venture won't destroy their career, but that doesn't do anything at all to prevent the anxiety caused at the thought or action of taking that step. Fear seldom has anything to do with logic.

The zip line tour guides provided the advice always handed out in situations involving height: "Don't look down." Easier said than done. In the writing life, looking down might correlate to building a dam to prevent the "what ifs" from flooding into one's mind. What if the ride, the choice, doesn't work out as hoped? What if the story needs to be submitted to more than one publisher? What if it's never accepted? What if the screenplay is rejected? What if the indie-published books don't find readers? What if I can't pay the bills because I make this choice? The "what ifs" keep a lot of people from taking that scary step.

I have a lot more admiration for the character Indiana Jones for stepping onto the invisible bridge above the canyon now that I've taken 14 steps into space! (If you don't remember that scene from the third Indiana Jones movie, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, check out the two-minute clip of it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFntFdEGgws>.)

I did eventually find a way to overcome the fear of stepping off 14 platforms into the air. The discovery did not eliminate the fear, but lessened it and made that step easier to take. After three or four zips, I realized that once I actually started to zip down the line, I completely relaxed and enjoyed the experience. From that point on, when I stood on the edge of the platform, I mentally and emotionally put myself back into the experience of zipping along, allowed myself to feel that sensation, and *then* I stepped off the platform.

The rides were incredible. I felt a sense of complete peace as I zipped above and through green trees. The fear of that first step fell away and gravity carried me along. Again, I am reminded of the writing experience. Once the mind is captive to the process of telling the story, the place commonly described as flow, awareness of the scary parts of the process seem to fall away. The writer is carried along by the momentum of discovering and sharing the characters' story.

I wanted each ride to last for hours just so I could continue to feast on the views of the old woods that cover the hills and valleys of the Minnesota River Valley. From the zip lines the riders can see the valley in a way available to few others. Novelists, too, know the exhilaration of a rare experience. Many believe they want to write novels; few complete even one, take that scary first step that leads to the ride that includes the development of an idea into a world others enter and co-create as readers.

My first zip line experience was amazing, scary, exhilarating, and unforgettable. I am so glad I did it. For every major change in my writing life, I am glad I took the step into the space of the unknown future, however terrifying. I've enjoyed every writing life ride. I might not have landed exactly where I hoped, or even where I expected, for each ride, but I am glad I took each one. I hope I will always find the courage to take that next step into space.

What is it that frightens you in your writing life? Take a deep breath; remember what it feels like to be in the flow, immersed in action; step out into the space of the future you are yet to create; and enjoy the ride.

I have no photo of my zip line trip to share, but there are photos of others zip-lining on the Henderson tour at the top of the home page for Kerfoot Canopy Tours, the company that provided the zip line experience for me and my friends, at this link: <http://www.kerfootcanopytour.com/>.

Business Briefs

Scribd Cuts Back on Romance and Erotica

Publishers received a letter at the beginning of July from Scribd, a pioneer in e-book subscriptions, warning that the company is adjusting the number of titles per genre. Apparently that means big cuts in romance and erotica. While Scribd hasn't given a figure, Smashwords reports that 80-90 percent of titles in their inventory were dropped by Scribd. Speculation is that romance readers are costing Scribd profits. The subscription company model is based on moderate use, not the volumes purchased by voracious romance readers.

PW Daily

Is There a Future for Peer-to-Peer Content Distribution?

BY JOE WIKERT

The smartwatch movement inspired me recently, which is surprising because I haven't worn a watch since I started carrying a smartphone many years ago. I'm about as far as you can get from being a fashionista, and I liken a watch to other single-use devices like the GPS. I doubt I'll buy one anytime soon, but I believe the device synchronization model used by smartwatches lends itself to content distribution as well.

You're probably aware of how most smartwatches get paired with your smartphone. Although they don't have all the capabilities of a smartphone, things like text messages and phone calls can be redirected from your phone to your watch, thanks in large part to Bluetooth technology. Your phone communicates with your watch the same way your phone connects with a wireless headset or desktop Bluetooth speaker, for example.

Let's fast-forward to the day when we've all become peer-to-peer content distributors. Rather than relying on centrally managed and hosted sites and services that handle everything from reviews to downloads, this peer-to-peer model means we're doing all that for each other using Bluetooth or some other simple networking protocols. For example, your phone or computer can easily be turned into a wi-fi server, allowing you to connect multiple devices to it; that's a capability that exists today, and I'm suggesting it could be extended for new uses in the future.

The Kindle introduced a whole new level of reading privacy. Once upon a time on a crowded bus you could see the cover of the book being read by the person across the aisle. Now we're all masking our reading habits with tablets and phones. No, I'm not suggesting we embrace an overly intrusive model that has privacy advocates screaming in the streets. Rather, I believe a peer-to-peer model could be used to improve discovery and consumption at the hyperlocal level.

Think of the hundreds of riders on a commuter train each morning. Maybe they're traveling from the northern suburbs into Manhattan. Some of them are neighbors. Many of them are business people. All of them probably follow and read some type of news. Instead of just knowing the top global trends on Google, wouldn't it be interesting to know what news stories your fellow commuters are reading?

The same concept can be applied to passengers on a plane or even homeowners in a neighborhood. Just as NextDoor.com has disrupted Angie's List and brought communication and recommendations to the local level, I suggest a peer-to-peer model could do the same for content.

The peer-to-peer aspect really shines when you consider how the content gets from my device to yours. That news story I just read on TheGuardian.com still lives in my browser's cache. If enough of my fellow commuters read the same article, it floats to the top of the popular news list for our little commuter community. You click the link to it in our peer-to-peer content app and the article is pulled from my cache to your device.

In short, we're distributing content to each other, without having to go up and down, to and from a central server. Wouldn't this be terrific on a four-hour flight with no Wi-Fi? Each of our devices acts as a mini-server, hosting content for everyone else.

Publishers would freak out over this model, at least initially. They'll no longer control distribution and it will create holes in their analytics. I'm sure most, if not all, publishers have something buried in their terms and conditions preventing this sort of thing, but those who want to *Continued on page 14* ▶

Writing for Grownups—A Career Killer?

BY JUDY GILL

The June edition of *Nink*, among other things, got me thinking. Deeply. And, I'm told, a deeply furrowed brain is a sign of knowledge gleaned through experience. It's good to know that while my facial wrinkles and creases deepen, so do those in my gray matter. I like to think this is true because mine must have ruts as deep as the Grand Canyon and as convoluted as the tunnels in a termite nest. I've had a lot of years in which to create these tracks in my brain.

Aging is often seen as a bad thing, especially by those of us who are well into the process. Last week, I spent a couple of hours on the phone mentoring a young writer whose thoughts tend to scatter, to flit from here to there and back again. One minute she's talking about a screenplay she wrote 15 years ago as a class project, the next, a nonfiction magazine article for which she has a deadline but can't bring the whole thing together, then she switches to a follow-up novel for her one (digitally) published book, which is now nearly a decade old—and was the real reason for her call.

I had to keep bringing her back to the latter because I'm her *novel-writing* coach. I finally got her to focus, and we discussed her new book for 45 minutes. She's struggling hard with it. We went over plot points, red herrings, cliff hangers, and then zeroed in on the characters she feels she *must* bring in from her original book because she sees this new one as a sequel. I pointed out, considering the timespan between the two books, a sequel might not be the best idea. She finally agreed that a similar book, one not necessarily harkening back to the first one, would likely serve her creative needs as well and have a greater chance of success.

Then the darned screenplay came up again. How about if she incorporated that into the new book? Expanded on its theme and used it as a basis for the new plot? It was an idea she couldn't let go of, or one that wouldn't let go of her, but she didn't have the time or energy to home in on it or on anything. She felt pulled in too many directions—things she has to write, things she wants to write, and things she thinks she should write, as well as earning a living.

She asked how I had written as many novels as I have and not allowed myself to be jerked this way and that by outside forces and random thoughts. The thing is, I had allowed that much too often. I have a family. I wrote while raising kids. I wrote through several international and across-the-country moves. I quit writing for eight years way back between book seven and book eight, largely because of those outside elements which included a full-time job to help support said family. Then, with a mostly empty nest on my hands, I realized that while I had a whole lot of stories still in me itching, even demanding release, I did *not* have unlimited time left in which to write them.

This, I recognized, is one of my friend's problems: she believes she has all the time in the world to write the books, plays, and articles she has zinging around in her mind. She believes she can half-write something, leave it, flit off to something else, and then come back to it as if no time has passed. After all, she has forever yet to live, just as I did at 30-something. I published my first book at 29, wrote six more in quick succession, then came the eight-year hiatus. It didn't take me long to discover that, even in so relatively short a time, a lot had changed, not only the requirements of the publishing houses I aimed at, but the caliber of editors I soon encountered. (I got really lucky and happened upon an experienced editor quite early on in the process of reintegrating myself into the realm of professional novelists.) The major difference, though, was in me. I was, unless I expected to live a lot longer than actuaries suggest I might, very much middle-aged. My outlook on life had matured right along with me, and my writing reflected it. My protagonists were older, their needs more complex, their lives more convoluted, and their aims completely different. I was a product of aging and growing and seeing the world in a different light, and many of the editors and agents I then approached were younger. It has become, as I ▶

explained to my writer friend—a mentee, as someone recently called such a person—a completely different world, so the book she wrote and published a decade ago was not truly prequel material for the book she’s writing today. Nor is the 15-year-old screenplay idea worth much.

Which brings me back to the age thing, and the June 2015 edition of *Nink*. Lou Aronica, whom I’ve long admired for his perceptive views of this industry, asked about other people’s take on the characteristics of an “ideal” editor. I’d like to suggest the “perfect publisher” would keep what many of us romance writers refer to as “12-year-old” editors way, way down the totem pole until they’ve had a few genuine life experiences. I’d like them to be educated in far more than good grammar. A comprehensive knowledge of world geography—or at least a willingness to learn and research before saying “but that can’t be!” would be of great benefit. I’d like them to understand that authors (and readers) are often far more worldly wise than they are, even though they work and/or live in New York, the Hub of The Universe. I’d like them to recognize that human mores and attitudes include many variations they may never have encountered, and that they change from time to time and differ from region to region.

These young editors of contemporary fiction are very often well educated, but have little experience outside their own home towns and college lives. This, I believe, may be contributory to the rise in the “New Adult Books” phenomenon that’s come in on the heels of “Young Adult.” It is good that younger readers are being catered to, and wonderful that they are actually buying books and reading them, even if they’re doing it on their smartphones. Reading’s reading.

I’ve noticed many of the books I’ve downloaded to read and/or review recently are written in present tense. Is this a result of the younger authors and editors who see life as an ongoing event like a television show? I’m not knocking it, but it’s not my preferred style of reading. If this is the new way to write and communicate, as if everything is happening at this very moment, it certainly makes it easier for the writer. He doesn’t need to know about writing in the past tense, and, even more difficult it appears, to recognize there is such a thing as past pluperfect—and neither does the editor.

Like many Novelists, Inc. members, I’ve updated and republished a fair number of older books, which are selling quite well. I’ve also independently published, or published through Kindle, Smashwords, and Draft2Digital, a few newer works. Those sales are not making me rich. Is this because my writing no longer reflects the preferences of today’s readers, or because I’m failing to promote wisely? I suspect it could be a combination of the two factors with probably many others clumped in. I’m hoping in his upcoming articles in the series he’s promised us, Lou will address these questions and give some concrete answers.

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By the way, the model isn’t limited to web pages. Think about the benefits this offers the book publishing sector. What if you could see a list of the popular e-books in your neighborhood or among your fellow commuters? And what if you could pull a sample of one of those popular titles from someone else’s device, again, a particularly useful solution when you’re outside Wi-Fi and cellular range? If you decide you like that sample and you end up buying the e-book, your peer-to-peer commuter friend gets credit for the sale with an affiliate cut of the resulting transaction.

We place way too much emphasis on the ability to measure global trends. You see it every day on Google, Twitter, etc. While we all care about these global trends, we’re also keenly interested in local and hyperlocal trends. This peer-to-peer model addresses that point while also providing some relief for data plan limits and spotty Wi-Fi coverage. ▲

The Mad Scribbler

Continued from page 1 ▶ As in that latter *Gone with the Wind* example, the AU fanfic novel I read that night was set in such a completely different time and place than the TV series on which it was based, all it would take is changing the characters' names (and a few other similarly minor revisions) to make the story an original-fiction novel. Which is why, since I loved the book, I tried to contact the writer to encourage him/her to do

the minor revisions that would be needed to submit it to publishers or to self-publish it. (Unfortunately, the only contact information I could find for the pseudonymic author was a social media page that hadn't been updated in about a year, and I've never received a reply to my message.)

That experience clarified something that had always puzzled me about the international bestseller, *Fifty Shades of Grey*. As has been recounted many times, E.L. James' staggeringly successful trilogy began life as *Twilight* fan fiction. Yet Stephenie Meyer's bestselling *Twilight* is a YA paranormal novel about a small-town teenager who gets romantically involved with a century-old vampire who attends her high school, whereas *Fifty Shades of Grey* is a non-paranormal erotic romance for adult readers about a young woman in Seattle who has a steamy affair with a 20something business magnate who's into BDSM. I couldn't see the connection.

But now that I've read a number of AU fanfic stories, I finally get it! If AU fanfic departs substantially enough from the original material, as *Fifty Shades* did, then it takes only some very light revision to turn it into a viable original novel. (And now, by the way, there is a big fanfic community based on *Fifty Shades of Grey*.)

In June, E.L. James released *Grey* ("Fifty Shades of Grey as Told by Christian"), the fourth mega-selling novel to arise from her former fanfic hobby. That same month, Simon & Schuster published *A Pound of Flesh* by Sophie Jackson, the first book of another trilogy that (wait for it!) also began life as *Twilight* fanfic. Jackson, a British schoolteacher whose students initially convinced her to read Meyer's novel, wrote *Twilight* fanfic so popular that it got 4.5 million online reads (according to a blurb on the published novel's book cover). The fanfic story was acquired by a UK publisher, as well as by multiple foreign publishers, and S&S paid a six-figure advance for US rights. According to an interview in the *Irish News*, in Jackson's story on FanFiction.net, "'Isabella Swan' starts a new job as a tutor in a Brooklyn prison [where she] falls for mysterious troublemaker inmate 'Edward Cullen,' who has a past connection with her. The characters have been renamed for the novel version to avoid rights problems."

Twilight has proven to be an unusually fruitful source of fanfic that "goes pro." For example, the bestselling *Beautiful Bastard* series by Christina Lauren (published by Simon & Schuster) and the bestselling *Gabriel* series by Sylvain Reynard (published by Berkley) both began life as *Twilight* fan fiction.

This practice of changing character names and other identifying details in fanfic "to avoid rights problems" when the material is traditionally published is a long-established practice known as "filing off the serial numbers," according to an article last year on *Wired.com* ("Publishers Are Warming to Fan Fiction, But Can It Go Mainstream?"). The article notes, "Legend has it that Lois McMaster Bujold's *Shards of Honor*, the first book of her *New York Times*-bestselling *Vorkosigan Saga*, started as *Star Trek* fan fiction."

Of course, as the *Daily Beast* points out in a 2015 article titled "Why Fan Fiction Is the Future of Publishing," if an original work is in public domain, then there is no need to file off the serial numbers. This is one reason there is so much Jane Austen fanfic in traditional publishing, such as *Death Comes To Pemberley* by mystery legend P.D. James, the acclaimed *Longbourn* by Jo Baker, and dozens of other recently published Regency-era novels inhabited by the Bennett sisters and Mr. Darcy.

There is also no need to rename characters and eliminate identifying features of a work that's still under copyright if you've got *permission* to use them—or, indeed, if you're actually invited to do so.

A particularly interesting example of such an arrangement is *NYT* bestseller Eric Flint's commercially successful *1632* *sf/f* series, published by Baen Books, a set of novels which Flint writes solo or co-writes with other *sf/f* novelists. Fans of *1632* are encouraged to contribute ideas and content to the series through their participation in Baen's Bar, the publisher's online discussion site. In addition to the novels, there is a set of *1632* short story anthologies, as well as a bi-monthly magazine based on the series, called *The Grantville Gazette*. All of the *Grantville Gazette's* contents and many stories in the short fiction anthologies are written by the *fans*, who are paid for their stories. These works, edited by Flint, engage closely with the series' ▶

novels, using material from them and inspiring material for them. And the *Grantville Gazette* is listed by the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) as a “qualifying market” for membership purposes, due to its professional-level pay scale—which it can offer because it turns a profit.

Indeed, the notion of *making money* from fan writing is the idea behind Amazon’s Kindle Worlds program, which allows fans to write in the worlds that authors have created. Amazon licenses rights for this program from the original creator; and the fan who wants to write in that author’s world, using her characters and settings, can do so, as long as he abides by the terms of the program. Amazon sets a price for the completed work, takes its share of the revenue, and splits the monthly royalty payments equally between the fanfic writer and the licensor.

Participating licensors include Barbara Freethy, Bella Andre, Kurt Vonnegut, J.A. Konrath, Barry Eisler, Jana DeLeon, J.R. Rain, Stephanie Bond, Hugh Howey, and H.M. Ward. Well-known series participating in Kindle Worlds include *Gossip Girl*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Pretty Little Liars*, and *G.I. Joe*.

However, despite an impressive set of licensors, Kindle Worlds has not been a prolific forum for fanfic. In December, *The Guardian* reported still-low participation, noting, “Amazon assumed that fanfic writers wanted a marketplace, when what they love most is a no-rules playground.” The rules in question include a requirement, for example, that the fanfic writer abide by content guidelines provided by the licensor.

A Gigaom.com article compared the numbers of stories posted on Kindle Worlds to quantities posted on fanfic sites for the exact same intellectual properties in the exact same timeframe, and Kindle Worlds had less than 2 percent of the other sites’ participation rates—despite the attraction of monetizing the material for the fan writers. The article concluded, “The sanctioned space, it turns out, is just not as much fun as the unofficial ones.”

As we saw in Part Two of this series, after all, above all else, people write fanfic for *fun* and for *love*. And as we’ve seen in this final installment, if they want to monetize it, they file off the serial numbers.

Nonetheless, Amazon continues operating Kindle Worlds, just as publishers continue acquiring AU fanfic. And that’s perfectly understandable. There’s gold to be found in the mines of fanfic, a field of endeavor which continues evolving alongside the perpetually changing world of books, publishing, distribution methods, and copyright issues. ▲