



# MINK

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The official newsletter of Novelists, Inc.,  
a professional organization for  
writers of popular fiction.

# *Nink* January 2016

## Contents

- ◆ President's Voice
- ◆ About NINC
- ◆ NINC Member Notes
- ◆ The Fresh Face of Nink
- ◆ NINC Keynote from Richard Nash
- ◆ The Dangers of Going Wide
- ◆ Getting Analytical
- ◆ 21st Century Cozies
- ◆ Selling and Growing Sales on iBooks
- ◆ Not Your Usual Writing Advice: Clarifying Questions
- ◆ The Mad Scribbler: Reversion
- ◆ Ask the Creativity Coach
- ◆ You Might Have Missed This

# President's Voice

*By Diana Peterfreund*

Happy 2016, my fellow writers! Notice anything different?

It's a new year, and a new look for the NINC newsletter. We figured an organization known for our forward thinking in the realm of digital publishing should have a newsletter that reflected it.

Outgoing newsletter editor Laura Phillips and incoming editor Heidi Joy Tretheway have been hard at work to transition our format, and now Nink is readable on your choice of e-reader, tablet, phone, or your computer.

This update is only the latest and most visible change that's come to NINC in the past few years. As the publishing industry has undergone a sea change in the last half decade, so too has NINC—growing into the premiere organization for novelists unafraid to sit in the drivers' seat of their own careers.

No matter what kind of books you write, no matter how you choose to bring your books to market, NINC wants to be there to help you achieve your goals.

And the best way for us to do that is to work together. Of all the resources NINC provides—from our new Pro Services Directory to the NINC Legal Fund—the most powerful is our own membership, filled with talented, savvy, and hardworking authors and entrepreneurs.

NINC is as good as we make it. Take a minute to poke around the website and see what NINC has to offer, and what's more, see what you can offer to NINC.

Add your recommendations to the Pro Services Directory, update your profile, become a JOT (Just One Thing) Volunteer and make your mark.

This year is my tenth as a professional novelist, and as I look over my own career path, I can see the way the industry has shifted. I started out writing chick lit—remember that?—for a Random House imprint that no longer exists, under a contract that was very vague about the concept of “out of print.”

In the past ten years—and largely with the support and encouragement of NINC—I've worked in a variety of markets: adult, children's, short fiction, tie-in novels, self-published backlist, Kickstarted anthologies, and entirely indie originals.

As a hybrid author myself, it's important to me that NINC remains open and welcoming to writers of all varieties, just as we were at the beginning of this decade when we helped pioneer the indie revolution.

The conference this year, NINC Master Class, will reflect the experience and professionalism of our membership. We will be filling the Tradewinds with the best and the brightest minds in the industry, eager to talk to writers about what they want to do with their stories, their readership, and their business.

Our organization has a reputation as the place to be for writers to share business information, but it's also a place for creativity and craft. I can't wait to see you all this fall in Florida!

The clock is striking in the new year, and everyone has their resolutions ready. Mine includes doing everything I can to make NINC continue on its path of support and excellence so we all achieve our writing goals. What's yours?

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*Diana Peterfreund is NINC's 2016 president. She writes YA and middle grade novels as Diana and new adult romance as Viv Daniels.*

# Novelists, Inc.

*Founded in 1989*

## **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.

## **Founders**

- Rebecca Brandewyne
- Janice Young Brooks
- Jasmine Cresswell
- Maggie Osborne
- Marianne Shock

## **Advisory Council**

- Janice Young Brooks
- Maggie Osborne
- Linda Barlow
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- Meredith Efken
- Julie Leto

## 2016 Board of Directors

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

- President: Diana Peterfreund [diana@dianapeterfreund.com](mailto:diana@dianapeterfreund.com)
- President-Elect: Erica Ridley [erica@ericaridley.com](mailto:erica@ericaridley.com)
- Secretary: Pauline Baird Jones [pauline@paulinebjones.com](mailto:pauline@paulinebjones.com)
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- Advisory Council Rep: Victoria Thompson [VESTinPA@aol.com](mailto:VESTinPA@aol.com)

## 2016 Committees

*Complete committee member listings are available on the website, [ninc.com](http://ninc.com).*

- 2016 Conference Chair: Julie Leto
- Anthology Editor: Lou Aronica
- Authors Coalition Reps: Pat Roy & Leslie Thompson
- Blog Coordinator: Patricia Rosemoor
- Member Retention Chair: Barbara Bretton
- Membership Chair: Rickey Mallory
- Nink Online Index: Denise Lynn
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  - Julie Ortolon
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## Central Coordinator

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin

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[admin@ninc.com](mailto:admin@ninc.com)

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*Address changes may be made on the website. Members without Internet access may send changes to the Central Coordinator.*

## Nink Newsletter

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# NINC Member Notes

## Conference

NINC 2016: Master Class—from business to craft to creativity to marketing and sales, we will present speakers to guide us to a higher level of knowledge and achievement.

DATE: September 21-25, 2016

PLACE: Tradewinds, St. Pete Beach, Florida

Registration is open and filling up fast! If you're interested in attending, sign up now to secure your spot and your room at our amazing destination resort hotel. Member and assistant registrations are both open, with multiple ways to pay, including our three-part EZ pay.

Sign up now at [ninc.com](http://ninc.com), and while you're there, renew your membership. The conference is just one of the benefits you won't want to miss in 2016.

## Correction

The December Nink article "The Hot Sheet—News You Can Use" was incorrectly credited to Jennifer Stevenson. Ann Christopher wrote the report for that conference session.

## Hot Sheet Discount

NINC members can use the discount code NINC20 on [The Hot Sheet](#) at checkout for 20% off the annual subscription fee, for as long as their subscription remains active. Please don't share this code with anyone.

That brings the price down to \$47.20, or \$3.93 per month. The Hot Sheet isn't about "new and breaking" publishing news ... it's about analysis of that news by industry professionals. The NINC website also has a section for NINC discounts.



# The Fresh Face of Nink

By Heidi Joy Tretheway

In this and future editions of Nink, you'll find a brand-new format inspired by more than 100 responses to our Nink Reader Survey in October and November of 2015.

We asked you how you read Nink, on what devices and in what formats, and how you would prefer to do so in the future.

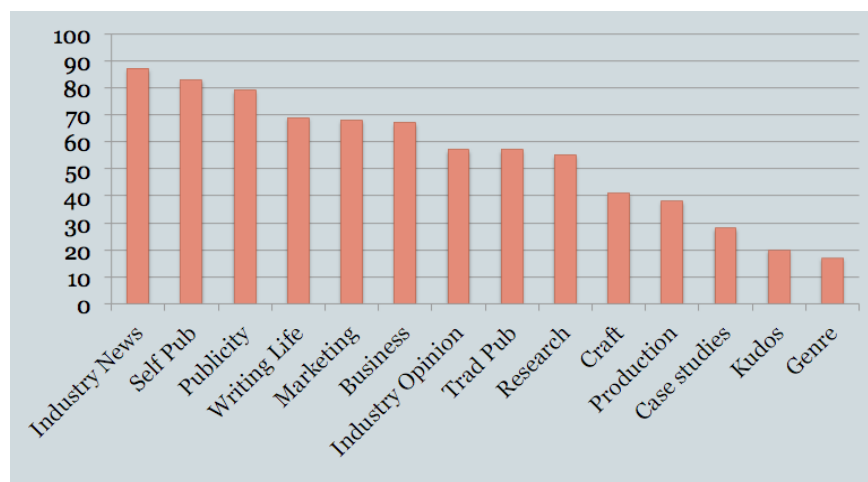
While the majority of the membership still prefers a PDF, we're also creating an e-book format (both mobi and epub versions) to make it easier on your eyes and more convenient on the go.

The e-book format also allows you to click live links to read the articles the authors may reference, adjust to any font size or column width, and read on the go or between devices. The PDF version design modifications to enhance readability, and there's no more jumping between pages to complete an article.

While the PDF is simpler in design, that gives us an opportunity to invest more resources in content.

Our readership survey also revealed that Nink is read voraciously—more than 75 percent said they read every issue, and 90 percent read nine or more issues annually.

We asked you what you're most interested in reading, and we'll use that to build our editorial calendar in the coming year. The top-requested article categories were industry news, self-publishing, publicity, writing life, marketing, and business. Also popular were industry opinion, traditional publishing, research, craft, and production.



We look forward to developing and sourcing expert articles in each of these areas. Are you—or do you know—a subject matter expert? Please make an introduction by email to

[ninkeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ninkeditor@gmail.com). Contributors are paid for their newsletter articles.

### Future Nink article categories

Here's a taste of the brainstorming we're doing behind the scenes:

**Publishing:** Industry news; publishers and book discovery platforms; business including tax, legal and contracts; genre roundtables; and production including formatting, metadata and cover design.

**Promotion:** Author platform; marketing including advertising, PR and newsletters; publicity including social media, events and author websites; case studies; and business roundtables.

**Tools & Skills:** Technology including writing and publishing tools; writer's life, including creativity, ergonomics, time management and motivation; editing, including self-editing techniques and working with editors and beta readers.

**Craft & Content:** Research, including historical and forensic information; fiction craft that crosses genres; plotting including structure, pacing, and plotting vs. pantsing.

### We want you on the roundtable

If you're short on time, be part of our roundtable interviews. You'll receive about three short interview questions by email, and we'll present your perspective along with other members' thoughts on that topic.

**Business roundtable: Advertising**—Which advertising channels are producing the greatest return on investment for you right now? What are you doing in advertising, and what's working best?

**Promotions roundtable: Author events**—What counts as success in author events for you? What do you bring with you? How do you promote in advance and connect with readers afterward?

**Genre roundtable: Contemporary romance**—What's the next big thing—a breakout category or subgenre—in contemporary romance? How are readers' tastes changing? What feedback do you get from readers on this?

Email [ninkeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ninkeditor@gmail.com) by Jan. 8 to join our first roundtables.

# NINC World Keynote

## The Future of Publishing and Reader Engagement

*Presented by Richard Nash*

*Reported by Jenny Gardiner*

Writers have always struggled with change. We must understand where we've come from to appreciate where the future in publishing lies, publishing entrepreneur Richard Nash said in his keynote address to NINC.

Nash's brief history of writers, writing, and publishing first cited monks who wrote only God's words. Then Gutenberg's printing press revolutionized writing.

With the printing press came community: meeting up in the print shop, sharing discussions, complaining about publishers. Bookshops sprang up where people could browse before buying.

With retail came more innovation, e.g. Alexander Pope's first "Kickstarter" campaign: pay me up front, and I'll send you a translation/printed copy of *Iliad*.

Soon railroads enabled books to go further, which led to door-to-door salespeople selling books and writers reaching more people. Then the founder of Penguin Press, Alan Lane, wanted to make cheap, ubiquitous books with his Penguincubator (vending machine with books).

Throughout history, the ability to create begat more ability to create: writing creates readers which creates writers and also creates enlightenment and more enlightened people.

Nash said the digital publishing revolution really started with 1985's Aldus PageMaker—desktop publishing was a game changer, and anyone with a computer could make infinite perfect facsimiles.

By the late 1990s, we were producing culture at a faster rate than we were producing anything—in 1950, we produced 80,000 titles a year, but by 1990, that number had quadrupled, and by 1997, it had quadrupled again.

In the 21st century we have Jeff Bezos, today's version of the Penguin founder, making books even cheaper and more ubiquitous. But while the 20th century was about supply, the 21st will be about demand.

We are practically 1:1 for writers:readers, Nash said, and reading really is an act of writing. The reader is always completing the task of what the author started by assembling a series of characters that created a world that the reader interpreted (the reader is always finishing your writing inside his/her head).

### **About the demand**

For a while, publishing's solution to demand was Oprah. Publishing quadrupled the number of titles between 1990-1997, then came an explosion of book super stores such as Barnes

& Noble and Borders.

But who was going to buy all those books?

While publishing thinks Oprah saved publishing, Nash thinks Oprah saved Oprah. She had what was then an average daytime talk show (Donahue and Geraldo were much bigger), but she understood something about limits of television and the power of reading—which is that if you pick a book for an audience to read, you no longer have just one hour of their time each day.

Now Oprah has joined you in the bedroom, in the school cafeteria, in the bathroom, in your car. Oprah is in your brain all your waking hours and you talk to your friends or find friends via the books that Oprah reads with you.

So all of the topics that people talk about daily—death, infidelity, shame, grief, ecstasy, religion—we have the means to have conversations with people about the most intense topics of our lives because of her book club.

What's the book's job? Yes, it allows a level of escapism, but if we just wanted to escape we'd take drugs. Books allow us to have a relationship in some sort of shared way. They allow us not just to escape, but to escape into interesting, different, and exotic worlds that we can tell our friends about, like the slide shows people used to show when they came back from vacation.

The power of the stories we tell is the power of the stories we allow our readers to tell—the ability to put the story into everybody's lives. That to Nash's mind is culture: the conversation about what is art, and how do we want to live? This is what fiction and narrative does.

### **Where is demand going to come from now?**

Nash cited his work as a publisher rejecting submissions, and he eventually realized he was basically rejecting his best customers—those who loved the books he published and tried their hand at it.

He said that while making the world's most spectacular supply chain, we forgot that readers were writers and writers were readers. We should not think of them as entities at the opposite end of a massive supply chain but understand them as a community of people who are engaged if you let them be.

A lot of tools being used now by such large corporations as Amazon don't focus on the community aspect, which he says is the most integral aspect. Amazon is all about eliminating friction, the goal of almost any engineer—take unnecessary heat out of the system, remove the grit, remove barriers.

Yet without friction there is no story of some kid obsessed with some weird comic and driving three hours across Nebraska to that one comic store that carries that comic. Our stories of culture are not stories of convenience but stories of friction.

The problem in the 21st century is we're writing far more than we can ever read or understand. Writers dreamed of being published and thought that's all they wanted, but once their books were in a bookstore with 50,000 other books, they realized that was just the beginning.

Then they wanted to be loved by readers who chose and loved their books—in that messy,

complicated, deeply interpersonal love of readers thinking their book was great but arguing over what happened with that particular character, and you know their love goes deeper than just buying the book.

That, Nash believes, is where culture is powerful. It's not about getting the reader to come to you but for you to go to where the reader is. It's you in that act of loving them first and their love then being reflected back to you, the generosity we seek in deep, loving relationships, the reciprocity, the willingness to go out on a limb for somebody else.

This is the metaphor he wants us to understand: this is the discoverability process.

Nash cited examples of readers taking a book and extrapolating onward, such as [infiniteatlas.com](http://infiniteatlas.com), in which a reader created a Google map with every location in the novel *Infinite Jest*. This is just one example of increasing levels of fan intensity in this era.

He says humans are really good at using maps to absorb vast amounts of information, and metadata can help boil down complicated maps of books to a comprehensive level. It's a way of understanding algorithmically supplied data, but makes it a useable map to understand.

Another example, [ReadSenses.com](http://ReadSenses.com), focuses on non-fiction now, but will add fiction in a few months. They identify all keywords and concepts in a book and map those on Facebook, Twitter, and the Internet, and allow you to find all the people talking about the stuff you're talking about.

You can infer concepts from clusters of keywords and then you can go out and find it.

This allows you to generate more metadata, discover more influencers in social media, and programmatically buy ads on blogs/news sites where people talk about subject that your book is about.

His company, [Small Demons](http://SmallDemons.com), produced an app that links all sorts of rabbit-hole Wikipedia-esque information where you can tap on a movie title or book and find more about it, or add your books, their description, their tone, and sprinkle the world with it like confetti.

So despite ongoing changes in technology that cause us to continually reevaluate this industry and our place in it, ultimately it also seems to be connecting readers and writers on a much more granular level than ever before.

This technology at the forefront enables authors to tap into many different types of applications to achieve discoverability and find those readers who want to connect with you in a deeper way than ever before.

Slides for Nash's presentation are available here: <http://www.slideshare.net/richardnash/building-your-audience-53529020>

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*Jenny Gardiner is an award-winning #1 Kindle bestselling author who has published 12 novels, a memoir, and a collection of essays. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com, and on National Public Radio, and she is a regular columnist for Charlottesville's Daily Progress, as well as an occasional essayist on regional NPR affiliate WVTF-FM. She has worked as a publicist for a United States senator and as a freelance photographer, photographing such notable public figures as Prince Charles, Elizabeth Taylor, and the President of Uganda. She's served as the volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival for five years. She releases book 5 of her It's Reigning Men contemporary royal romance series, Shame of Thrones, on December 16.*

Learn more at [www.jennygardiner.net](http://www.jennygardiner.net).

# The Dangers of Going Wide

*Presented by Draft2Digital*

*Reported by Thad McIlroy*

The story of self-publishing is partly about aspiring writers who throw caution to the wind and three years later are bestselling authors.

It's partly about using social networks to help build a broad fan base.

But it's also a story about nuts and some bolts: how do you take a big, fat Microsoft Word document and turn it into an e-book available to readers in 150 countries around the world?

Prior to NINC 2015, I would have told writers that they had few full-service choices: Smashwords, Lulu, maybe IngramSpark, and, um, an expensive choice from a company owned by Penguin Random House and ... if I'd looked deep in my "service options" file I might have found a company named Draft2Digital, based in Oklahoma City, OK.

Draft2Digital was just barely on my radar. In prepping for NINC 2015 I took a look at my archives and found just one old "Why Choose D2D?" clipping. It explained, very modestly, that "we're not the only company that provides this service, but our users keep telling us that we're the best."

Well, if Draft2Digital's users kept telling them that they were the best, apparently I wasn't in touch with Draft2Digital's users.

That all changed at NINC 2015.

First I heard it in the halls. Then I'd hear the Draft2Digital name making an appearance in audience questions ("I use Draft2Digital and I wonder if ..."). Finally I got the story in a session called *The Dangers of Going Wide: The Follies and Triumphs of Being Everywhere*, co-presented by Draft2Digital's CEO Kris Austin and its president, Aaron Pogue.

It's interesting to put Draft2Digital up against its competitors. Not all of them are forthright in their data. But Smashwords states proudly that it offers "a catalog of over 350,000 ... e-books from over 100,000 authors and publishers."

Author Solutions claims that it has helped 200,000 authors "bring more than 250,000 books to market."

At Draft2Digital: "We distribute 63,000 books from over 16,000 authors." Hmm. I guess that's why I hadn't heard of them. Still, 16,000 authors is no small achievement.

A side note: I can't resist looking at the number of books per author per vendor. Author Solutions publishes on average 1.25 books per client (probably because of their initial print focus). Smashwords manages 3.5 books per author. Draft2Digital averages about 4 books for each of its authors. Hmm. You can be the judge of whether this is revealing or not.

My sense from the NINC conference is that some of Draft2Digital's most successful (and most vocal) authors were already in the audience. There's a love affair going on here, but it

looks like this affair can only become more passionate. Authors were all ears in this morning session, and then in a second panel, *Next-Level Promotions: Supercharge Your Book Sales by Getting the Stores to Sell for You*, held later that day.

*The Dangers of Going Wide* was understated as a title. As the presenters made clear from the start: “We want authors to go wide.” It is, they admitted, “a big scary problem” but it’s one that they’ve “spent a lot of time solving.”

A more gung-ho supplier might have titled their presentation: *The Joy and the Wealth of Going Wide*. Draft2Digital’s understated, fact-filled presentation hinted at the company’s ever-increasing success as an author service: They don’t blow their horn too loudly; they just deliver the goods.

Not surprisingly the easiest definition of going wide is “to put your book everywhere.” The advantages are obvious: discoverability, greater sales and positioning for the future.

But it’s not as simple as pushing the publish button: As Kris Austin emphasized, “There may be bumps in the road.”

One of the bumps is timing: some online resellers are just not responsive to author requests. Some resellers work through intermediaries. These delays can have real costs. Beyond simply driving you nuts they can get you in trouble with Amazon, both in terms of pricing and in release dates.

Aaron Pogue emphasized that authors should schedule launches “like a traditional publisher,” including using preorders and soft launches.

Quality control was another major topic in the session. Using Adobe Digital Editions as a core example, they emphasized the need to evaluate the quality of the end product *everywhere* and in every format.

Considerations surrounding money matters was another valuable takeaway from the session. Store-specific limitations can fragment author revenue and lead to multiple transaction fees from each bank each month.

Solving the money problem involves “education, preparation, organization and evaluation.” Or, shameless plug justified, just sign up with Draft2Digital.

Authors who hadn’t already enrolled with Draft2Digital may well have done so after this pragmatic session. Any who were still on the fence probably jumped after the standing-room-only second session *Next-Level Promotions: Supercharge Your Book Sales by Getting the Stores to Sell for You*. It’s covered elsewhere in the newsletter, and well worth your attention.

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*Thad McIlroy is an electronic publishing analyst and author based in San Francisco and Vancouver, BC. His site, [The Future of Publishing](#), provides in-depth coverage on the publishing industry.*



# Getting Analytical

## A Guide to Better Results for the Numbers-Challenged

*Presented by Courtney Milan*

*Reported by Jenny Gardiner*

Author Courtney Milan applied her scientific and analytical background to publishing to help her maximize sales. Her advice? Don't waste money throwing it at ads in trade journals, expensive swag, or hiring publicists without concrete objectives.

Identify what is useful and give yourself permission to *not* do what people say you have to do.

Your goal for this process? Get past sympathetic magic fantasy. Determine that this is what I want, this is how I will measure this accomplishment, and I'm going to take a plan of action to do this.

### **The super quick and dirty method**

Want to figure out what works in selling books? If you spend time on social media, know why you're doing it—and if you're doing it to sell books, you need to know which social media platform or channel works best for you.

You can generalize, such as, "Does my Facebook page or group page sell more books?"

To learn more about your readers' habits, use a URL shortener (such as [bit.ly](http://bit.ly) and [smarturl.it](http://smarturl.it)) because they collect statistics on clicks. Create different shortened links for Facebook and Twitter to track their responses separately.

### **How to measure sales separately**

Use affiliate accounts. Why not get more money per book when you can?

Sign into your Amazon Associates account and look at the upper left corner for "Manage." Click on that, then it gives you the option to add tracking IDs so you can have more than one of them—Milan has about 30 set up now.

With several tracking IDs, you can have one for Facebook, one for Twitter, and one used for other things (such as back matter).

This way you can have two ads running on Facebook to see which leads to more sales, such as Facebook A and Facebook B, and see how many more you get from that.

Example: <http://amazonurl/?tag=blahblah-fb-20> or <http://amazonurl/?tag=blahblah-twit-20>

When you log in, look at upper left corner for "combined reports". Uncheck that box, and you can see which tracking IDs are selling—this gives you a ton of info about where those things are selling.

Because Amazon doesn't always give you great info on how people click on a link, use URL shorteners. This way you know who is buying once they see your landing page.

Keep in mind that some URL shorteners strip out affiliate links. Bit.ly and Smart URL both keep affiliate tags intact. The Google link shortener strips affiliate links.

Measuring is especially easy with iBooks affiliates: Sign up with: <http://www.apple.com/itunes/affiliates/resources/>

Then check out <https://appleurl&at=yourcode&ct=whateveryouwant> (no need to preregister). Once you have this in place, it will show up in your main dashboard. At the top of Milan's dashboard are:

- Redirect (comes from the back of her books)
- Website

The dashboard figures show clicks and conversion rates—she has approximately the same number of clicks from her website and back of books. Usually, five percent of people who click through from her website buy her book, but the buy rate from the back of the book is closer to 60 percent.

Milan also puts up preorders on iBooks first, so people might click to iBooks for more info. People who click from the back of book are already iBooks purchasers and are much more likely to buy from there. This gives you info on their purchasing habits, what they're doing, and what you can use.

### **Slower, dirtier methods & tips**

When putting your book on promo sites (ENT ads, for instance), you give them an affiliate tag so you can see how it is performing. If you're spending \$1500 for ads, half of which is going to BookBub and the rest to scattered ads, you want to see how it's working for you. Get them to use your [bit.ly](http://bit.ly) link. If you paid \$50 for an ad and got 10 clicks, then you know never to use them again.

Blog tours—use shortened links and affiliate codes to measure results. (This way you can see if you've gotten return on your time investment). Perhaps your time is better spent writing books for 25 hours versus writing blog posts for that much time. If you're paying for a blog tour and not getting click-throughs, then you know not to do that again.

Consider this workshop as example. If Milan presented it multiple times, what does she want to accomplish? How can she quantify whether she's achieved her goals? Say the goal is to increase workshop attendance. How would she achieve this? Advertising?

No, be lazier.

Great title?

Yes, but not enough.

Great description?

Same thing.

Step one is to identify your goal: I want to increase attendance!

Next, ask, How will I measure this goal? Count the people who come to the workshop. This is conversion: how many people did what you wanted them to do?

Finally, consider using two versions to draw attendees, such as:

- Title A: Numbers Numbers Numbers!
- Title B: Getting Analytical!

How would we figure out which title worked better? Through a tool we use called A/B testing: title A and title B.

To do this, divide the audience in two. Have half the programs printed with one title and half with other one, and distribute them to the audience. See if there's a difference in attendance rates based on which program they received.

Most of us do A/B testing on a rudimentary level. If we have two potential titles for a book, we'll ask our friends which they prefer, but that doesn't provide statistical significance. You need statistical significance to know how well you're doing when doing A/B testing.

For more tips on achieving statistical significance, check out the Kissmetrics blog at <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/your-ab-tests-are-illusory/>. Note: [pickfu.com](http://pickfu.com) also offers A/B testing tools.

There are some confounding factors to A/B testing. During testing, be sure that both test branches are the same as your target audience. And are there other differences between your test audiences, and will these have an effect? Don't run tests on a day your BookBub ad runs because that will have a confounding factor—something that will skew your results.

## Optimize your website

The reader lands on your website. Identify a goal: what do you want that person to do? Buy a book? Sign up for your newsletter?

Ask yourself what might possibly affect newsletter signups. Think about each of those things:

- Placement of links;
- How do you draw attention to it (color, white space, etc.)? Bolder colors work well for buy buttons and for sign-ups;
- Language used to describe your newsletter. (Don't say, "Sign up to be spammed!" Maybe try, "Sign up to learn first about my next release!")

It works differently for each person, and it's all testable by doing this:

- Separate your list into two groups. Keep track of how many people are in the group, and note the results for each group;
- You can search for Wordpress plugins that do A/B testing, but there are many people who do this so it's there for optimization. Google also has some analytical tools you can use;
- Make sure you don't have separate audiences on days with confounding factors, such as a release date.

## Optimize email

Milan uses Vertical Response as her newsletter host, and they allow her to use various entry points. When she sets up a green sign-up link versus the blue sign-up link, she'd want to be sure to use the right links and labels on her campaign so she can note people who come from green or blue sign-up links.

How to measure results? Your newsletter host likely gives you ways to track who signs up. Vertical Response lets you set up different campaigns, so you can track A/B effectively by entry points.

If you don't know how this works, Google for tips and tutorials. Search the "help" option for various tools. Ask questions.

### **Optimize your front and back matter**

More important than website optimization is optimizing back/front matter in your books.

Once again, you must first know what you want to accomplish. Do you want to increase newsletter signups? See whether different kinds of front matter make people more likely to read your book? Encourage readers to preorder your next book? Test different back cover copy?

In front matter, consider whether you want a description of the book there. Maybe a reader will decide not to read if they see it, and you'd rather they just start reading it.

But how do you know which is best? You segment book downloads. This isn't easy. You must be able to segment readers to Group A or Group B. You must be able to track how many downloads of Group A there are versus Group B.

This is easiest with iBooks because once your book is approved for first time, they send changes through quickly, within the hour, and you can look online and see when changes happen.

You need a reasonable number in Group A versus Group B (ideally thousands per branch, less ideally at least hundreds per branch).

Once a book is approved, time those changes to 12 a.m. PDT to get sales data. Do week-versus-week comparisons using separate links. Avoid confounding factors as best you can.

### **Good items to test and measure**

- What best drives newsletter signups?
- What best drives preorders for your next book?
- Which front matter drives more readership? You can deduce this by assuming some percentage of those who read your book will click on a link at the end. Use different link shorteners to evaluate.
- Which back matter gets the most clicks/preorders?

Additionally, iBooks can let you generate campaigns off the top of your head. You can label a campaign "Book Title End Link A" and track it over time. You can see how long it takes people to read books and whether you have better long-tail performance with some front matter than others.

If you want to test preorders, use different affiliate IDs. To test back cover copy on preorders for a book that is going up in two months, do a week with one back cover copy and one with another, then see which generates more clicks.

### **Q&A**

*Q: How would you work in a Facebook ad with a giveaway or newsletter sign-up?*

*A: Imagine you have two Facebook ads and you are trying to figure out how to best drive*

downloads of your free book in a series. Have two ads, and ask which will perform better: The ad that has a picture of cover? Or something sort of related to the subject matter of the book, but including some other things?

Put the Facebook ad and link you'd use through Bit.ly and use your Amazon affiliate ID.

This steers traffic through your affiliate ID, plus Facebook gives you information on how many people clicked on your ad but doesn't tell how many are purchasing. Downloads for free books are even harder to track.

If you're testing which tagline performs better, keep all other things equal, run the ads at same time, and use the same targeting. Commit a small dollar amount to see what performs better, then stop spending money on one ad and dump the money into the other one.

*Q) Are your ads showing up too much and bothering people?*

A) If you're spending a small amount, then not likely.

*Q) What have you tested that most surprised you?*

A) Back matter: should you have two or one excerpts? The answer was one, because giving people too many choices is too much, and two is too many choices. If both sound good, then they have to think about it and won't buy either one.

Find NINC presentation slides on Milan's website: <http://www.courtneymilan.com>, scroll down to October 2, "If you're looking for my slides from NINC, here they are."

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## 21st Century Cozies

*Reported by Phoebe Conn*

Elizabeth Spann Craig's website, [elizabethspanncraig.com](http://elizabethspanncraig.com), has been honored by Writer's Digest Magazine as one of the 101 best for writers. She provided a wealth of information in her presentation and is proud of her author-centric website.

*Pretty Is As Pretty Dies* in 2010 was Craig's first cozy mystery featuring octogenarian sleuth Myrtle Clover. Craig's editor wanted Myrtle be a woman in her sixties or seventies, and she canceled the series after that first book. Since 2011, the now eight-book series has been indie published.

Craig said mystery readers tend to be older, and 70 percent are women. To gain a new, younger readership, Craig turned to Wattpad, where 45 percent of users are 13 to 18 years old, 40 percent are 18 to 30, and 13 percent are over 30.

The serial format appeals to younger readers who often read on their cell phones and tablets.

With little competition in the cozy mystery category, Ms. Craig began releasing a Myrtle Clover mystery a chapter at a time. Ten-page chapters work well. She added the link to buy the complete book at the end of each chapter.

The strategy was successful, and the popular series now has 1,500 four- and five-star reviews.

There is no need to pay for reviews when readers post so many positive comments on Amazon and with the other book retailers, she said. It's best to diversify and offer not only e-books, but print and audio editions as well.

Craig has made her own three-book boxed sets of the Myrtle Clover Cozies. The charming covers are by artist Kendal Flaum and immediately identify the books as a cozy series.

The Author Central Page offers an opportunity to post videos that can be made on a smart phone. Craig posted one to promote her three series. In addition to the Myrtle Clover Cozies, she also writes a Southern Quilting series with Penguin/NAL as Elizabeth Craig. The Memphis Barbecue Mysteries with Penguin/Berkley is written under the pseudonym Riley Adam.

All of Craig's cozy series have continuing characters and take place in small Southern towns to take full advantage of her own background.

In addition to her cozy mysteries, *Race To Rescue* by Liz Craig is her first YA novel. There are zombies, but the book is about people seeking shelter and a future with hope.

Mail Chimp works well for Craig's newsletters. Readers can sign up for a newsletter at the end of each of her books. A free copy of a Myrtle Clover book works well as an enticement for signups. Newsletters have interesting tidbits about the series' characters and how they were created. Readers are encouraged to contact Craig and to write reviews. She gives a personal

response to all comments on her website.

It's important to have a hook, Craig said. Make certain to have key words that will drive readers to your books. "Women sleuths with cats" is more effective than simply "women sleuths". "Quilting stories" will appeal to women who enjoy crafts, and the Memphis Barbecue series will interest anyone who is into cuisine.

Specific key words like *quilting* and *cuisine* help to attract new readers who might not have been searching for cozy mysteries, but who would love them. Target what makes your books stand out. It's also a good idea to check your key words often and add something new if possible. Different descriptions can be written for different retailers.

Place your bio and copyright information in the back of your book, so when a reader tries a sample of your work, they'll be able to really get into the story. Links to your website, other books, and newsletter signups work well in the back, and might simply be skipped over if placed in the front.

Ms. Craig has made all the information in her session available on her website: [www.Elizabethspanncraig.com/cozy](http://www.Elizabethspanncraig.com/cozy) The password is NINC.

On [www.Elizabethspanncraig.com/writing-the-cozy-mystery-whodunit](http://www.Elizabethspanncraig.com/writing-the-cozy-mystery-whodunit), she provides clear directions on what readers expect from a cozy and helpful advice on how to write one.

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*Phoebe Conn's latest release is a futuristic trilogy: Outlaw Rising, Starfire Rising, and Cyborg Rising.*

# Selling and Growing Sales on iBooks

*Reported by Jenny Gardiner*

Bestselling authors Julie Ortolon, Debra Holland, and Cristin Harber discuss the importance of iBooks and going wide, with a substantial audience-driven Q&A session.

**Julie Ortolon:** The future is going to be your phone. This lets producers go directly to consumer. It is very device-driven and carried with you everywhere.

**Debra Holland:** iBooks has broad international reach—51 countries—that other retailers do not. They're No. 2 in the e-book market and growing every day. It's preloaded on all Apple devices so increasingly readers are introduced to e-books through iBooks.

**Cristin Harber:** iTunes is a household name and people trust them.

## Using preorders

**DH:** iBooks is user-friendly for authors. You can do 12-month preorders, plus you can change the date without penalty. You can upload samples of one to two chapters. There's double discoverability on launch day—it counts both as preorder and launch day—floats backlist.

**JO:** It's essential to do a preorder on iBooks because it helps build momentum—there are those automatic bots that notice what customers are responding to, what is popular, what is attracting customer attention. Your preorder can be “asset-less”—you don't have to have final files, you can change the title, and you don't even need a cover.

**CH:** When creating momentum, there's a setup with “coming soon”. The more people clicking on a title to see what's going on, the more you'll be put on their front page and people are noticing that your book is out there now.

**JO:** Data doesn't have to be static so you can add little teasers at some point, add a short blurb, then add samples. Each time you do that or send a newsletter, Facebook, or Tweet, you're driving people back to that product page, and the more momentum you're building.

**DH:** Apple looks at popularity and not just sales to get momentum and generate algorithms.

**CH:** When books at “coming soon” status are released, they become “hot new releases.” These get a lot of attention.

## Ramping up reviews

*Question: Do you make readers mad if you only do preorders on iBooks?*

**CH:** I only did exclusive twice with iBooks, and no readers were mad. But people get information about it in a newsletter. You can also use codes from iBooks to give away 250 free copies of the book.



**JO:** This helps to build prelaunch momentum: you get 250 promo codes with every iBooks prelaunch—once you’ve uploaded the final file with enough advance time, you can send out those promo codes to get reviews before it actually comes out. iBooks is platform-agnostic—you can go through Draft2Digital or Smashwords; their focus is their users.

**DH:** To use iBooks codes, for example, look at reviews, if a book has only 3 stars, Holland downloads 20 of the promo codes, goes on Facebook and says she wants new readers to read it. Here’s a promo code, or if you’ve already read the book, please take this code and copy the review you’ve left elsewhere to iBooks. Her sales tripled there with good reviews. To get the codes, go to iTunes Connect. Look for the orange button associated with the book you want the codes for, and then look in the upper right hand corner for a button that says “code” or “generate codes”. Click it, and they’ll send you the codes and legal language you have to include with the codes when you send them.

**JO:** Get familiar with the iTunes Connect dashboard. It has lots of tools you can use. In her newsletter, Ortolon’s offered free copies of new releases in exchange for reviews for the first five or 10 people who email her privately.

### **Building series momentum**

*Question: If you have the third or fourth book in a series coming out and the series is doing so-so, how can you build momentum for fourth book when you need other three to sell, and they need to read the first book?*

The panel agreed: push the first book free.

**CH:** She does targeted paid ads on social media. Twitter ads are more successful for her. Target your social media ads to the device—if you’re posting on Twitter or Facebook, do retail-specific links. For iBooks, do something clever: Navy Seal Saves the World (instead of “buy my book”), and they might retweet it on the iBooks Twitter account.

On Facebook, she targets toward authors and genre, but on Twitter she targets people who are listening to music. On Facebook you type author names and it populates (or not, if the author doesn’t have a substantial following).

On Twitter if there’s an @ handle or hashtag, you can use it. You can use “and/if/or” and a lot more targeting opportunities such as TV shows. Do low dollar ads, find what works, and double down. Keeps promos rolling all the time. *A Sweet Girl* is a new adult cliffhanger that feeds into military romance, so she targets young women who listen to country music.

When people ask, “Who are your readers?” don’t just say, “Romance readers 34-45.” Know more about them: What do they do? Do they have kids? What do they like? What is their education?

You can go to down to zip code to find them. Pizza Hut hounds her every Friday at 5 p.m. because they know she’s a mom with little kids and writing books and orders pizza, so they Tweet her then to target her with ads.

**JO:** Use @iBooks when you’re tweeting—not @iBooksStore. Don’t do tweets and posts that list buy links for every retailer. On Tuesday push Amazon, on Wednesday push iBooks, etc.

### **Tracking ad value and establishing book value**

*Question: How do you track effectiveness of Twitter ads?*

**CH:** iBooks has an amazing affiliate program. It's extraordinarily easy to make links. Log into their program and voila, you have their link—you get 24 hours of whatever you buy in the store, in any country around the world, and you get the live analytics.

But you track your Bit.ly links, you go to your business interface for the ads where they have the reports, you track what Twitter is telling your click-through and you go to affiliate link to see where they're buying.

**CH:** iTunes.com/affiliate and linkmaker.iTunes.apple.com, and for marketing tools Google "iBooks marketing tools" for banners, badges, and useful tools to make things with their logo on it.

**JO:** When you upload to iBooks, there's an option to click "explicit". Unless it is super, super raunchy, do *not* click that. It'll be a huge problem to uncheck it via tech support. (You'll never show up in searches on their store if you click on that.)

**JO:** Remember that outside of the United States things are drastically different—reading devices are common in the U.S. but not in overseas markets. If you're going after only the U.S. market, you're leaving out 50 other territories. iBooks has merchandisers who curates specifically for each territory, so the iBooks store looks different for each one.

If you're on an Apple product and go to iBooks, scroll to bottom, and you'll see a flag symbol (a U.S. flag if you're in the U.S.). Click on that, and it takes you to all the other territories. You can see what the store looks like elsewhere, search for different categories, and get feel for what packaging sells in another territory.

The U.S. consumer is price sensitive in a way that is totally opposite to price sensitivity in other countries. Europeans are turned off by low prices as if it's lesser quality. They want quality, and high price equals quality.

**DH:** See how successful authors organize their websites. Be sure you have iBooks links on your site.

**CH:** In 2014 she saw her first big six-figure month. Sales with other vendors hadn't changed, but she'd been working on non-U.S. iBooks sites, and her numbers started changing. You can target your country and change your income. She hadn't grasped this until she saw the figures.

She did perma-free and asked iBooks for merchandising. When iBooks readers get your perma-free, they don't hoard. They're readers, not just downloading it and letting it sit in their device.

## **Getting visibility with the vendor**

*Question: How do you get on iBooks's radar?*

**CH:** She'd met a rep at RWA and said she wanted to do perma-free. She put together the plan and told them she was going wide, pushing individual ads to different retailers. "If you can find something for me I'd love it."

**JO:** Come to conferences, especially NINC. If you can start momentum within the store, (tweeting with @iBooks, doing pre-orders,) at first it's automated. They'll start pushing you up the ranks, and then it gets humanized. They start noticing, and then they put you into

merchandising—one merchandise for each territory, so someone is looking.

**CH:** Cross-promo with authors, and if you see an opportunity to do an iBooks party or iBooks Twitter hop with other authors, just participate, or put one together yourself.

**JO:** One author did a promo, gave away an iPad, and gained 20,000 followers.

**JO:** Why is your device the future for e-book readers? You don't always have an e-reader with you but your email dings, and you see you got a newsletter from your favorite author. You open it up, and you can download your e-book immediately and don't have to wait till you get home. Plus, younger readers are reading off phones.

**CH:** Consumers want a direct path purchase. Social influence and marketing has changed from two to three years ago with Goodreads.

**JO:** As an author community we share a lot of info. We have difficult decisions about what to do. Share info with your friends about why they need to seriously think about going wide. Going wide is the wave of the future if you want to have a long-term career.

**DH:** People are reporting higher percentages on iBooks more and more. It's changing for some of the top authors.

**DH:** Prices on iBooks—you can price higher and still have success which is good with promos. It looks like a better deal. Play around with raising prices and see what happens.

**JO:** If your books are all 99 cents, you have nothing to offer the merchandisers. Your full price needs to be high enough so that if they choose you for promotion it's going to attract attention.

**DH:** iTunes gift cards are very effective for reader events.

**CH:** One big takeaway: pay attention to preorders and give them as much love as you possibly can.

**JO:** Pay attention to the top 100 bestsellers. What works in one environment may not work as well in another. See what has broadest appeal. Play with packaging. Play with product descriptions. They don't need to stay stagnant. You can refresh them.

Even for fans who've already bought your books, if you can give them any excuse to check out your link to see what is going on with your books, it helps wake up algorithms and reader awareness.

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# Not Your Usual Writing Advice: Clarifying Questions

By JoAnn Grote

*“Clarity of mind means clarity of passion too.”*

— Blaise Pascal, 17th century mathematician, physicist, inventor, and writer

When I was an unpublished novelist and writing my second manuscript, I discovered Brian Tracy’s teachings. Brian Tracy is an author and speaker who is an expert in business and personal development.

I had heard Debbie Macomber say in a speech that his teachings had changed her life, so I decided to check them out.

They changed my life too.

For me, one of his most powerful suggestions was the 30-second question: Allow yourself only thirty seconds, no pre-thinking, and answer the question, “What are your top three most important goals right now?”

Amazing how limiting the time to 30 seconds clarifies the goals; no “but” or “if only” or “how will I do that?” filler.

I don’t remember what three of the items on my list were, but one was to become a published author in the next 12 months. I wasn’t published in 12 months, but I did have a contract offer by then, and the manuscript I was working on at the time I’d set my 12-month goal was published within 18 months of answering the 30-second question.

The realization that I wanted to be published within a specific time frame caused me to focus my energy on my goal in a way I hadn’t in the past. I kept a spiral notebook, small enough to fit in my purse, and every morning before I began my full-time job as a certified public accountant, I wrote down those goals, with the book publication as number one.

Then I wrote down my priorities for the day, including my CPA work.

That simple exercise kept my goal constantly before me. I made different choices in how I spent my energy and the things I said yes to because I knew I had to do so to meet that deadline.

At the time I answered the 30-second question, I thought that if my book was published, I would never need anything else to make me happy. Of course, that isn’t the way life works.

Instead, I’d moved past the 30-second question to another of Tracy’s questions: “What one great thing would you dare to dream if you knew you could not fail?”

By the time that book was published, I had signed contracts for two more, and had every intention of continuing to write and publish novels for the rest of my life. So far, that plan is

working well.

Most novelists have a number of books they want to write, stories they want to tell. Sometimes it's easy to know which to write next. Other times it's a struggle to choose, especially if one is for a different market than that which an author is already published in.

A question that's helped me at times like that is, "If I knew I was going to die in one year, but would be healthy and strong enough during that year to complete one book, what book would I write?"

I believe in the power of clarity. I believe in the power of focus.

So when I heard about Greg McKeown's popular and much-praised book *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less* (Crown Business, 2014), my first thought was, "I think I'd agree with his premise." And for the most part, I do believe that clarifying our strongest desires, focusing on them and saying no to lesser desires and also to other people's desires for us, is a powerful way to use the Law of Attraction to pour energy into and manifest the things about which we are passionate.

McKeown does not try to tell his readers what should be essential to them; that is something each individual must decide for themselves. To help them figure that out, he asks the question, "If you could only do one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?"

I was surprised to find I didn't have an answer on the tip of my tongue. I couldn't see myself in a life that doesn't include telling stories, but the term "for the rest of your life" gave me pause. It's not that I want to retire; but I thought that if I truly had to limit myself to doing one thing for the rest of my life it would depress the @\$#@ out of me.

I did come to the conclusion that my answer to his question was that I want to write novels for the rest of my life. But as every NINC member knows, writing novels involves more than putting words on paper or screens.

I love the research involved in creating accurate settings and background. I love weaving history and story together. I love the excuse of research to travel to places I want visit. I'm presently learning new-to-me things for a contemporary paranormal novel. I'm even taking a class to better understand my heroine's skills, and loving it.

The excitement of learning new things to incorporate into my plots, to develop true-to-life characters, to live vicariously through my characters for a time—all that feeds my enthusiasm and creativity. And all that makes "writing novels" feel too broad an answer for "one thing" I want to do for the rest of my life.

In considering McKeown's question, I realized that writing has opened up my life. It's a life filled with exploration and change. I don't know what stories I'll be writing five years from now, but I know they will be different from those I'm writing—and loving—at the moment, because I'll be a different person then.

Writing is an adaptable career. As we grow, as our interests change, as our beliefs change, as our experiences change us, as we pass through different stages of life, the stories we tell change too.

Sometimes those changes lead us to write a completely different type of novel, and perhaps to change genres. Other times we face the challenge of how we can explore the things we've learned within a genre we've published in for many years.

I've revisited the 30-second question, the "what would you dare to dream" question, and the "if I could only write one more book" question a number of times during my writing career; because the answers change as I change, of course.

Perhaps I'll revisit McKeown's question too. Clarity gets cloudy sometimes, like a window that needs washing and polishing. The right question can provide the sparkle of clarity again, shine light on the writing path, and reignite one's passion in telling stories.

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# The Mad Scribbler: R-E-V-E-R-S-I-O-N

By Laura Resnick

*“A publishing contract should not be forever: The [Author’s] Guild recommends that ‘contracts should provide clear language stating that if a specific royalty minimum is not paid within a certain period of time, then the book is defined as out-of-print.’”*

*—Thad McIlroy, reporting on the Authors Guild’s presentation at the 2015 NINC conference*

I recently got an email from someone who has written and self-published a number of novels and was negotiating a first-time publishing contract. The author and the publisher had agreed upon terms on all matters in the contract—except one...

(Cue sinister music.)

Reversion.

The letter was very heartening in one sense: The author understood what a reversion clause was and what the ramifications of this reversion clause were, and was professional and confident enough to propose to the publisher multiple ways the clause could be amended.

I’ve met too many writers over the years who signed a first (or tenth) contract without negotiating it and, indeed, without even understanding it, and I found this author’s informed and businesslike approach very encouraging. I hope the writer is part of a trend among newer authors, rather than an outlier.

Unfortunately, though, this proactive professionalism had very little effect on the publisher when it came to the reversion clause.

The author proposed term-limited reversion; the publisher declined. Such a clause is, of course, something that writers have been talking about for a while now. It’s the clearest, most rational way to resolve the question of when a publisher’s license expires.

For example, if you sign a publishing contract for a book released on March 3, 2017, then with a 7-year term limit, all rights to that book would revert to you on March 3, 2024.

How simple is that?

Such a reversion is so sane and fair that if a publisher would agree to a reasonable term limit (repeat: reasonable), I would cheerfully agree to a corresponding option clause in which, for example, that publisher had first right, within a defined timeframe (e.g. 30-60 days after the date the license expires) to offer an extension or renewal of the existing licensing agreement, or to offer a new agreement. (Obviously, much like an option clause, I could decline the offer, if I chose.)

And that is a negotiation: “You agree to this, and I’ll agree to that.” Say it with me: N-E-G-

O-T-I-A-T-I-O-N.

If only this concept could be taught to publishers!

Anyhow, after the term-limit clause was deemed unacceptable, the author in question proposed other possible solutions, such as an author-earnings floor.

That's what the Authors Guild advocated when speaking at NINC this year. Such a clause would make a book eligible for reversion when the author's earnings for a given reporting period drop below a certain point. This proposal, too, was declined.

The publisher wanted the parameters to be based on the number of copies of a title (across all formats) sold within a year, and they wanted a ludicrously low number to be the threshold below which a title had to drop to be eligible for reversion.

The author was able to negotiate this number higher, but it was still very low, and the writer has legitimate concerns that an e-book edition might be priced at \$0.99, for example, and generate *just* enough sales to prevent reversion for 30 years while the author's royalty earnings for the title hover around \$25 annually.

The author considered various strategies, such as trying to fine-tune the "number of copies sold" so that a respectable number of print copies had to sell through retail outlets in a given year for a book to remain "in print."

When asked for feedback, I said I thought this was completely reasonable and should be proposed, but I would be surprised if the publisher agreed to it.

Refusal to negotiate reasonable reversion terms in the digital era is a common problem—and not just among the corporate publishers in New York. This author was negotiating with an independent press, not one of the Big Five. When it comes to being obdurate about reversion, I've heard multiple anecdotes about small and mid-size presses being every bit as intransigent as New York's big houses.

The standards and customs for reversion of rights are absurd and unreasonable in publishing.

Several years ago, for example, I was trying to get rights reverted to a book I'd signed for a decade earlier. Realistically, the out-of-print, nine-year-old, third novel in a midlist trilogy has no value whatsoever to a publisher which doesn't even hold the rights to the first two books (those novels had already reverted to me).

Yet I didn't get the book reverted until months after I got the previous two reverted; the publisher claimed for a while to be thinking about e-publishing it (yes, without books one and two); the six-month reversion process specified in the contract actually took closer to eight months; my only "evidence" that the book was out of print was that I hadn't received a royalty statement in several years; and I had to pay a lawyer to explain the sub-sub-sub clauses of the reversion clause to me, the whole thing was so convoluted and incomprehensible.

(One of those subclauses stipulated that I had to repay any overpaid royalties before the book could revert. So I wrote the publisher a check for \$76; they never deposited it.)

And if I had not diligently pursued this, that book would still be under contract with that house, out of print, and earning nothing for them or me.

Most writers I know have stories just like this. Many other writers are still struggling to get old titles reverted, dealing with legal departments that don't respond to their letters and



publishers that refuse to revert books for a host of flimsy and very questionable reasons.

And some writers have even recounted publishers making veiled threats, such as hinting they'll cease to acquire new books from authors who pursue reversion of old titles.

How does any of this make any sense?

As we have seen throughout our careers, most books are neglected by their publishers after the first year. It is the unusual exception, rather than the rule, that a book published five, seven, or 10 years earlier gets renewed attention and enthusiasm from its publisher, including updated new packaging and a fresh marketing plan.

Books that enjoy that sort of treatment are usually written by bestselling authors, or by authors who've become bestsellers since those books were first acquired as neglected midlist titles.

Indeed, as we have seen, most publishers aren't even bothering to repackage the new e-book edition of their print titles whose covers are 10-20 years old, let alone working on reinvigorating the sales of old books.

As far as I can see, the entire point of publishers refusing to agree to term-limited reversion (and most are still refusing), or even author-earnings reversion terms, is that a tiny percentage of the titles they acquire this year will be worth a lot of money to them five, 10 or 20 years down the road.

And since they don't know exactly which titles will one day turn into golden-egg-laying geese, they're determined to hang onto the rights to all titles for as long as possible.

After all, we often share frustrated anecdotes in NINC about publishers refusing to revert our rights because they're claiming that 50 existing copies of a book in one warehouse, or a small number of print-on-demand sales each year, or one translated version of the book still being available in one distant country means that, under the terms of their contracts, those titles aren't eligible for reversion.

Come on. They're not making money off those books. And if they could be forced at the point of a fountain pen to speak rationally and truthfully (lotsa luck with that), they might even acknowledge that they don't anticipate ever making money off those books.

But they're functioning on the basis that they must retain all rights to all titles as long as they possibly can ... because a few of the titles they acquire will be cash cows in years to come ... and they don't know which ones!

I don't actually know how the deal turned out between the mid-size publisher and the author who wrote to me for feedback, but I do know that any one author has very limited negotiating weight when standing alone against a publisher clinging to contractual parameters that are "industry standard" (but there's no collusion here!).

Which has lately led me to wonder if there would be any shift at all in publishing's stance on this (perhaps not) if every writer who negotiated a deal asked for term-limited reversion, and asked for it every time she negotiated.

What if hundreds or thousands of published writers signed public letters urging publishers to adopt better reversion clauses? What if we circulated these concerns in social media, and raised them regularly with every publishing professional who participates in social media or appears at conferences?

Yes, reversion is an issue on our radar, but is it on the radar of every publishing professional?

And will it make a difference if we put it there and don't let them lose sight of it?

Maybe not ... but lately I've been wondering about this.

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*Fantasy novelist Laura Resnick considers herself very fortunate in that her only unreverted titles are books in her current, in-print series.*

# Ask The Creativity Coach

By Denise A. Agnew

Last year Novelists, Inc. members asked me questions about creativity issues, and I'm back in the saddle answering more queries. Some questions came from outside Novelists, Inc., and since they are relevant to writers and other creative individuals everywhere, I have included them in this article

The following questions can be answered in more than one way depending on the individual. My hope is that my answers can assist a writer in analyzing their situation more clearly.

*Q. I have a few projects going and can't seem to finish any of them. I have the time, but the inclination is escaping me. How do I revive interest enough to finish?*

A. Many people have more than one creative venture in mind at one time. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. While there's more than one way to handle this situation, one "creative" outlook is to ask yourself which of these projects is the most fun?

Do you come back to a specific project more often than you do any other? If so ... bingo. You have your answer.

If you can identify one project that speaks the loudest, consider concentrating on that one. You might be the type of author who can juggle more than one project at a time, and can bounce from one to other without a problem.

If that's the case, then there is nothing to fix. If you find nothing is getting done because of the bouncing, then it's a good idea to single out one project for completion.

By "feeling out" the project that resonates with you and gives you the most excitement, you enhance the chances of completing that one project.

*Q. I have no discipline. I keep saying I'll dedicate a certain amount of time every day to a project, and yet, I can't seem to make myself stick with it.*

A. This is a common refrain. I'm reminded of Luke Skywalker's famous conversations with Yoda in Star Wars. More on that in a minute.

Sometimes creators get bogged down in the belief that everything else in their life is far more important than creating. Laundry, dinner, watching the news, watching reality television, doing the dishes—you name it. It all happens before the creating.

Perhaps the writer believes writing isn't important because they don't have many supportive people in their lives. Maybe the writer feels guilty for pursuing any endeavor no matter how much it fulfills them.

Questions to ask:

- What do I feel when I am creating?
- How do I feel?
- What do I feel when I'm not creating?
- How do I feel when I don't create?
- Have I ever experienced a "high" and happiness creating?

Most of the time, the author feels bad when they don't get their daily dose of creating, and the guilt, despair, and emptiness caused by not creating grows larger and can manifest itself in a lot of unpleasant ways.

Not creating is often just a bad habit. In some cases, it is an excuse, and those other obligations we talked about above (laundry, dishes) are excuses. Most chores don't have to be done before creating.

To design a new, better habit, decide to carve out a specific amount of time for creation. Stick to it and damn the torpedoes. *This is your recess.* You get to play and have a fantastic experience for the designated creative minutes. Then you do it, adding tough love on yourself.

As you rediscover that delicious satisfaction of creating, you'll want to continue it. You'll want the fix!

Yoda's quote for when you want to use anything and everything as an excuse not to write: "No. Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try."

*Q. I frequently work on more than one creative project/book at a time. Is this strange?*

Note the previous question. No, it isn't strange. If you can write more than one project at a time, more power to you.

In other words, don't borrow trouble. Enjoy yourself. Remind yourself how great it is to have so many creative ideas.

*Q. What are the best ways to rekindle creativity when it wanes?*

A. This is an extremely broad question that has to be addressed individually for each person. The following are some quick things you can try:

- Talk a walk;
- Take a long soak in the tub;
- Work out;
- Reread one of your favorite books and recall everything you loved about it;
- If you write in one room, move to another;
- Write in a café, library, or outdoor setting;
- Visit a museum or art gallery;
- See a movie;
- Take a vacation;
- Color. Yes, I said color like you're five years old. Go for it;
- Indulge another creative habit you may love such as painting or drawing;
- Try writing in longhand.

Many of these "change ups" can go a long way to refreshing your perspective. If not, contact me. You might need a coach!

Send your questions to Creativity Coach Denise A. Agnew at [danovelist@cox.net](mailto:danovelist@cox.net) for inclusion in the next Ask The Creativity Coach article.

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*Denise A. Agnew is the author of over 65 novels. Denise has written paranormal, romantic comedy, contemporary, fantasy, historical, erotic romance, and romantic suspense. Archaeology and archery have crept into her work, and travels through England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have added to a lifetime of story ideas. Denise is also a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, and Certified Creativity Coach. Visit Denise's websites at [www.deniseagnew.com](http://www.deniseagnew.com) and [www.creativepencoaching.com](http://www.creativepencoaching.com).*

# You Might Have Missed This

Compiled by Ashley McConnell

If you're ever interested in diplomatic immunity, its scope and limitations, this should help: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/150546.pdf>

Writing about the FBI? Check this out: <https://writersforensicsblog.wordpress.com/2015/10/26/working-with-the-fbi-a-brief-guide-for-writers/>

ISBNs: What, where, and how: <https://www.myidentifiers.com/get-your-isbn-now> and <https://www.myidentifiers.com/help/isbn>

A history link, or, *The Irish Take Copyright Seriously, Dammit*: <https://opensource.com/law/11/6/story-st-columba-modern-copyright-battle-sixth-century-ireland>

*The New York Times* started publishing September 18, 1851. They have now digitized their entire morgue. The first issue is here: <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1851/09/18/issue.html>

BookBub seems to be one of the premiere ways to promote indie publication. Their Insights blog looks particularly interesting: <http://insights.bookbub.com/>

The National Archives of the United Kingdom, or, *How to Use Up An Entire Day When You Should Be Writing*: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Royalty and Nobility research: Almanach de Saxe Gotha, or, *Everything You Wanted to Know about the Upper Crust but were Afraid to Ask* (prepare to get lost in this site): <http://www.almanachdegotha.org/index.html>

13th-15th Century Britain: If this is your period, you might want to check out this journal article on peasant homes. "Huts" turns out to be a misnomer: [http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-769-1/dissemination/pdf/vol30/30\\_019\\_045.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-769-1/dissemination/pdf/vol30/30_019_045.pdf)

I saw a reference to this site on another list, went to explore, and found myself spending (as usual) way too much time. The home page is [worksofchivalry.com](http://worksofchivalry.com), and the particular page I was looking at was <http://worksofchivalry.com/en/tag/classical-horsemanship/>. I want to know how they got some of that stuff into the poor horses' mouths! I know mine would never put up with it.

Windows PC repair online: <http://pcwebdoc.com/> (I have used these folks for years and wholeheartedly, unreservedly recommend them.)

If you've ever wondered whether Abby at NCIS is making up all those forensic databases for paint chips and ink out of whole cloth, check out this list: <http://www.nij.gov/journals/258/pages/forensic-databases.aspx>

*Ashley McConnell has published 17 novels and several short stories, including one in the first NINC anthology, Cast of Characters. In addition to her fiction work, Ashley has written nonfiction about writing, science, and the culture of large companies. Her first novel was nominated for the Bram Stoker Award. She was the Registrar for the 2011 NINC conference and served as Treasurer in 2013 and 2014.*