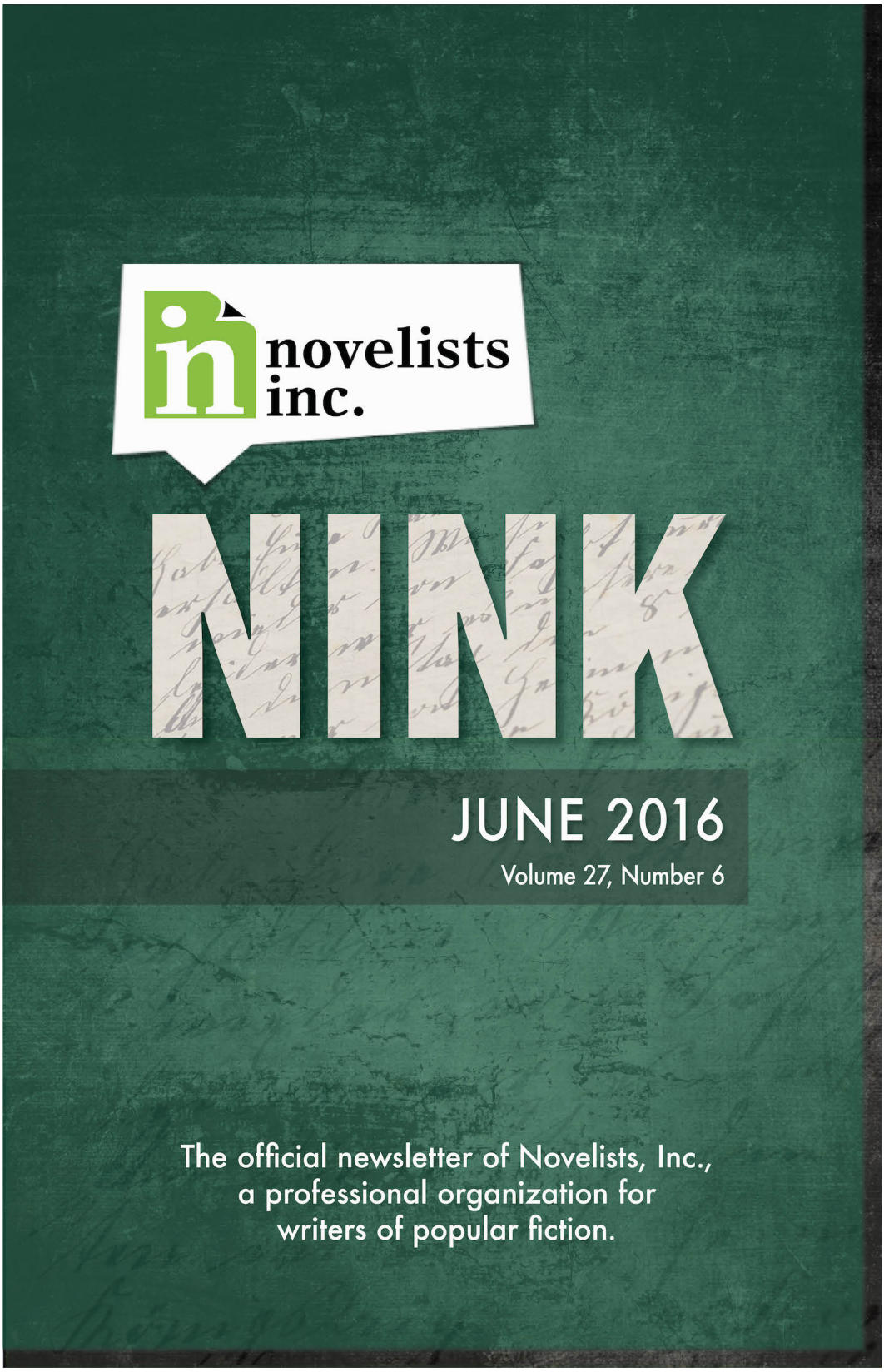
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Contents

President's Voice

By Diana Peterfreund

After much consideration, the board has decided to lower the current minimum word count requirements for the definition of a novel to 30,000 words. Our reasoning was as follows:

- This has long been considered a sufficient novel length in certain segments of the market (such as middle-grade fiction and some category romance), and will open up NINC membership to a vibrant and savvy group of new authors.
- The advent of e-publishing has allowed for a freer interpretation of "book length" unhindered by binding, shipping, or shelving concerns, and many of our members are already quite successful publishing standalone works shorter than the previously held minimum of 50,000 words.
- The prior established minimum of 50,000 words was already higher than many other writing organizations' expectations of novel lengths.

The membership requirements have thereby been updated to reflect this change, and will now read:

For the purposes of this document, a "novel" is defined as a single work of fiction consisting of at least 30,000 words. A "box set" or a collection of short stories or other short works, even if they are connected with regard to content, presented in a single volume or file, does not constitute a novel under this definition.

We hope that this clarification will bring NINC in line with what a large population of career authors are already doing and make our organization even more inviting and vibrant than it already is.

Diana

Diana Peterfreund is NINC's 2016 president. She writes YA and middle-grade novels as Diana and new adult

romance as Viv Daniels.

CHAPTER ONE

Membership Notes

In memoriam

Longtime NINC member Jo Beverley died March 23. She was the author of more than 40 romance novels and many novellas, won five RITA awards, and was a member of the RWA Hall of Fame.

Jo Beverley was one the few authors writing English-set historical romance who was English. She was born and raised in England, and earned a degree in English history from Keele University in Staffordshire. She and her husband emigrated to Canada, but later returned to England.

She was a member of Word Wenches, a group of historical authors who have run a collaborative blog for a decade. They published a remembrance of Jo.

Jo Beverley's husband Ken requests that tributes be made in the form of "posting a card" to the Word Wenches memorial page. A family and friends memorial page, in progress at the time of publication, will be linked to from the Wenches page when it is available.

NINC Master Class

The 2016 conference will accelerate your business and hone your craft

By Julie Leto

Things are gearing up for the 2016 NINC "Master Class" conference. If you haven't yet registered, now is the time. This article recaps the exciting announcements that have already made it onto the loops:

Speakers

The speaker page at the website has been updated with bios and photos of ten of our confirmed speakers. I announced seven back in February:

- Book marketing experts **Fauzia Burke** and **Mark Dawson;**
- Publishing attorneys **Bob Stein** and **David Vandagriff;**
- **Jennifer Barnes**, YA author and expert on the cognitive science of fiction and fandom psychology;
- **Ed Masessa**, children's author and product development manager for Scholastic; and
- **Richard Marek**, former president and publisher of EP Dutton and now a sought-after ghostwriter and freelance editor.

Since February, we have added:

Julian Pavia, senior editor at Crown Trade, began his editorial career at Crown ten years ago, after a brief stint in literary scouting at Maria B. Campbell Associates.

Pavia primarily acquires fiction and is most drawn to upmarket thrillers, suspense, and books with science fiction/fantasy elements. Over the years he's also published nonfiction in numerous categories including sports, science and technology, history, celebrity, and humor.

Pavia's recent books with Crown include Andy Weir's *The Martian* (a NYT and USAT bestseller), Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* (a NYT and USAT bestseller), Edgar award-winning author Robert Jackson Bennett's *City of Stairs*, Chris Beckett's Arthur C. Clarke award-winning novel *Dark Eden*, Peter Stenson's addiction-memoir-meets-zombie-novel *Fiend*, and several

techno thrillers by New York Times bestseller Scott Sigler.

Pavia has promised an interactive workshop that plays straight to the experience level of NINC's membership.

Brenda Chin is an award-winning editor who has been involved in the romance industry for more than 28 years.

During her many years with Harlequin, she worked with some of the best writers in the business, including Brenda Jackson, Jill Shalvis, Vicki Lewis Thompson and Betina Krahn.

Chin also bought 74 new authors during her time at Harlequin, many of whom have gone on to hit the New York Times and USA Today bestseller lists. She was recently appointed editorial director of the Brazen series and the new, exciting Scorched series for Entangled Publishing.

Jane Porter, a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author, holds a master's degree in writing from the University of San Francisco and has written 50 novels since getting her first sale to Harlequin Presents in 2000.

A five-time RITA finalist, and RITA winner in July 2014 for *Take Me, Cowboy*, Porter is known for her passionate, powerful stories and relatable heroines.

An advocate for writers, Porter founded Tule Publishing in 2013 to give romance and women's fiction authors support and opportunities. Porter and Tule Publishing are both based in sunny San Clemente, Calif.

Jon Fine, the former director of author and publisher relations for Amazon, is now a high-level career development and legal consultant to top-level authors and publishers.

Fine is the former attorney/general counsel for King World, NBC, and Random House. His attendance at NINC's 2014 conference was ground breaking. He returns to NINC to share his knowledge and experience as a major mover and shaker in the publishing world.

Bronwen Hruska worked as a journalist and screenwriter before she took over the helm as publisher of Soho Press, known for introducing bold new literary voices, award-winning international crime fiction, and compelling young adult mystery and thrillers to readers worldwide.

Her articles have appeared in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, More magazine, Entertainment Weekly, Cosmopolitan, Village Voice and the San Francisco Chronicle, among others. She's sold an original screenplay and original television pilots, even though, alas, none of them were produced. She published her first novel, *Accelerated*, in 2013. Her wide range of publishing experience will no doubt bring a hugely informed perspective to our conference.

Anh Schluep started her career at Random House as a national account manager who handled online sales. This springboarded her to a position at Amazon, where she is currently the editorial director for Montlake. Previously, she was the senior acquisitions editor of their mystery and thriller imprint, Thomas Mercer.

Night Owl Nightclubs

Over the years, conference-goers have expressed concern that there wasn't someplace centrally located for people to get a drink and hang out in the evenings.

Yes, many of us wandered down to the tiki bar, but that's quite a haul for the members who want to participate in the Night Owl workshops in the main building.

This year, we're introducing Night Owl Nightclubs. Thanks to our sponsors, Kobo and Vellum, we will have a roped off bar area in the main lobby with munchies, bar-top tables, and cash bar.

People will now have a place on Thursday and Friday night to meet and hang out before, during, and after Night Owl sessions. Night Owl sessions will also run on Wednesday after the reception, but there won't be a night club since we just had the reception.

Industry guests

The conference committee is turning its attention to our industry guests. We have representatives from Draft 2 Digital, Kobo, Bookbub, Booktrakr, and others already signed up.

If you know of someone you think should attend as an industry professional, please feel free to send them to the website for more information. We will be making more announcements about this very soon.

First Word

The format for First Word this year is going to be the perfect kick-off to our Master Class event. We're calling it *Case Studies for a Master Class*.

The day will be split into panel discussions that focus on the four areas that are of ultimate interest to professional writers: business, marketing, craft, and creativity.

The speakers will be spread out on the panels in accordance with their expertise. They will be presented with real case studies provided by NINC members—problems, challenges, or hard decisions that the member would like expert advice on.

By exploring the issues in the case studies, we will all learn more about how to tackle hurdles when they come up and take our careers to the next level of success.

We'll be putting out a call for case studies with more information very soon. The studies can be anonymous, so think about your own career and any one situation you have or have had that you want expert advice on.

We believe this will be a fascinating way to dig deep into the issues we face as career novelists and find suggestions or solutions that perhaps we haven't thought about before.

The best part of a NINC conference, in my opinion, is being able to talk about challenges with people who really understand you and might have experiences that match your own.

Now, we're bringing that into the actual conference experience. We hope it will be a grand success!

Julie Leto is the immediate past president of NINC, current conference chair, and a Florida native. She graduated with degrees in speech communication and English (creative writing) from the University of South Florida and has published nearly fifty novels.

The Sweet 16

Making the most of the first lines of a manuscript

By Chris Mandeville

The first sixteen lines of your manuscript may be the most important in your entire book. Why sixteen? Because that's essentially the complete first page of your story.

A successful first page engages the reader, grounds the reader, and makes the reader want to turn the page.

Engaging the reader is the job of the POV character, so the first page must reveal something about that character the reader can identify with.

Grounding the reader in time and space is the realm of setting, but the goal nowadays is to sprinkle in the bare minimum necessary to set the stage.

It's typically plot and conflict that make a reader turn to page two.

I refer to these elements—character, setting, and plot/conflict—as the Trifecta, and I consider them essential to a successful first page.

More often than not, the main conflict in the story is too complex for the opening page without resorting to explainery and backstory. So to get conflict on the first page, the writer can introduce a bridging conflict.

In *Writing the Breakout Novel*, Donald Maass defines it as a temporary conflict that makes the opening material matter. Often, it relates thematically to the main conflict in the book.

The Devil Wears Prada by Lauren Weisberger opens with a bridging conflict. The protagonist, Andrea, is trying to drive an expensive, unfamiliar, stick-shift sports car through traffic in midtown Manhattan. The problem is, she's failing miserably—she nearly crashes, breaks the heel off her $700 shoe, and stalls the car in an intersection surrounded by drivers honking and swearing at her.

This scene relates thematically to the overall plot: Andrea trying to succeed in the fast-paced world of fashion journalism, where her primary obstacle is her own lack of grace under pressure. But rather than a boring set up or explanation of the plot, the writer draws us into Andrea's world via the bridging conflict.

So plot or conflict in the Trifecta can be—and often is—a bridging conflict.

In addition to the Trifecta, successful first pages often include tension, a hook, voice, genre indicators, and a great first line. A first page doesn't need all these elements to be successful, but often a great first page hits each of them.

Elements of a great first page

- Character
- Setting
- Plot/Conflict
- Tension
- Hook
- Voice
- Genre indicators
- Great first line

Let's examine each of these elements, using a real first page as an example: *My Favorite Husband*, a romantic comedy by NINC member Pam McCutcheon (used with permission). Looking at the novel in standard manuscript format, here are the first sixteen lines:

It ought to be the happiest day of my life.
It ought to be the saddest.
It was both. It was neither. It was … confusing.

Kelly Richmond Vincent, soon to be Kelly Richmond Vincent Preston, sighed as she stared out the window of the small anteroom at the chapel. She just wanted to get it over with.

"What's the sigh for?" Scott asked. "The wedding or the funeral?"

Kelly gazed at her brother who lounged against the door, looking every inch the suave, careless player he pretended to be. She hesitated, not knowing how to answer. Finally, she said, "Yes." The answer fit her mood and the situation.

Scott grinned then dropped his pose to sling an arm around her shoulders. "What d'ya say we skip out on both and fly to the beach?"

"What beach?"

"Any beach. Doesn't matter. We'll just go, far away from this cold Colorado winter and all this … stuff."

God help her, for one brief moment, she actually considered it.

Character

Our POV character, Kelly, is about to be married and attend a funeral. She's conflicted about how she's supposed to feel, and she'd like to get it over with or even run away from it all. We get a glimpse of her personality when she answers "yes" to an either/or question. Her thoughts and dialogue indicate she's got a sense of humor.

The first sixteen lines of this story do a good job making me feel connected to Kelly. I identify with having conflicting feelings, and I empathize with wanting to escape. I respect that she doesn't actually run away, even though she's tempted. I like her. I'm on board so far.

Setting

Kelly is in the small anteroom of a chapel, staring out a window. Her brother is lounging against the door. They're in Colorado. It's wintertime.

Because there's so much to accomplish in the limited real estate on the first page, writers must choose carefully what to include and what to leave out.

In our example, the author efficiently provides the broad strokes of the setting with a few specific words that have vivid connotations—most readers can construct a mental picture given "Colorado winter," "chapel," and "small anteroom." The name of the chapel, the specific locale, and the time of day aren't included because they'd add little value and aren't necessary for the reader to understand the basic setting.

When I read the passage the first time, I didn't even notice the setting being trickled in. I simply absorbed the details, and a picture formed in my mind. This is exactly the way we want setting conveyed on a first page.

Plot/Conflict

My Favorite Husband is a romance novel, so you'd be correct to assume the main plot is about the protagonist overcoming obstacles to find true love. But there's nothing on the first page that directly pertains to this—Kelly doesn't ruminate about love, nor is her love interest present.

Instead, we have a bridging conflict: Kelly is about to attend a funeral on her wedding day. Her goal is (presumably) to cope with what should be the happiest day of her life coinciding with what should be the saddest.

What's getting in the way—the conflict—is that her emotions are confusing and she doesn't know how to deal with the situation.

This scenario is not complicated. No backstory is needed to bring the reader up to speed. It's a clear-cut (if unusual) set of circumstances that presents the character with a problem. This problem makes the opening material matter without delving into the main conflict of the novel.

Tension

Tension is what the reader feels when the character faces conflict.

I felt some tension when reading our sample page because I related to Kelly. Not a great deal of tension, but this is a romantic comedy so I'm not expecting life-or-death on the first page. It's entirely appropriate that I'm not worried about Kelly being kidnapped or falling off a cliff, but rather I am concerned for her emotional well-being. It feels like the right degree of tension for this type of story.

However, this level of tension might not be enough on its own to compel me to turn the page, which brings us to…

Hook

The first page of *My Favorite Husband* has two kinds of hooks—one that raises a question, another that relates to the plot.

For the plot, I want to know how Kelly is going to deal with the situation at hand. But this alone isn't terribly compelling because there's not a lot at stake. For me, the more effective hook is the question "whose funeral is it?" and the related "why is it at the same time and place as the wedding?" To find out the answers, I must turn the page.

The efficacy of a hook depends upon how well the writer handles the Trifecta. If the reader feels connected to the character, grounded in the setting, and tension about the conflict, she is more likely to turn the page because she cares.

Voice

Voice is important on the first page because it makes a promise to the reader about the style of storytelling in the book as a whole.

In our sample, the author strikes a conversational tone that implies lightheartedness, despite the unfortunate situation. The character comes across as witty and a little playful even in the midst of an emotional crisis.

The important thing is that the voice on the first page is indeed representative of the story, which means a reader who enjoys that voice won't be disappointed as the story progresses.

Genre indicators

A good first page should convey the genre of the story via genre indicators. The tone, the language, the age and interests of the protagonist, and/or the setting should be indicative of the genre whether it's high fantasy or a cozy mystery.

Included in this are any expectations specific to the genre. For example, if a first page portrays a murder, especially from the killer's perspective, this tells me I'm likely reading suspense. If it turns out it's actually a young adult romance, I'll be disappointed because my expectations have not been met.

I already revealed that *My Favorite Husband* is a romantic comedy. But if I hadn't, could you tell from the first page? The setting—a chapel on the protagonist's wedding day—is appropriate for a romantic comedy, if not unique to this genre. The character is a conflicted bride—again this works for romantic comedy as well as other genres.

Where we zero in on romantic comedy is with the plot/conflict. A bride attending a funeral and her own wedding in the same chapel on the same day is a bit absurd, which is in line with romantic comedy. Granted, this could be the start of a tragedy, but the voice tips my expectations toward comedy.

The author doesn't hit me over the head with genre indicators, but there's nothing to contraindicate the genre. This is enough to keep me turning a few more pages until it's confirmed I'm in romantic comedy territory.

Great first line

Starting a novel with a great first line isn't required. Take *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. The first line is: *When I wake up, the other side of the bed is cold*.

In my opinion, it's not a great first line, but the first page of this novel is wildly successful

judging by the number of books sold.

The first line of *My Favorite Husband* is: *It ought to be the happiest day of my life.*

This isn't a bad first line. It immediately sets up a conflict and a question: it should be the happiest day of this character's life, but it's not, and why?

By itself the first line is decent, but when paired with the next line, it improves vastly:

It ought to be the happiest day of my life.

It ought to be the saddest.

Together, those lines are great. Sure, the author could have combined these sentences to create one line, and she might have if she were hung up on the notion of creating a Great First Line. But those lines have a lot more impact separately, which ultimately is more important.

You don't need to jam-pack your first sentence or "thesaurusize" your words. It's more important that your first line be in harmony with the rest of the page. So stick with your voice, and focus your efforts on making the first sixteen lines great, not just the first one.

Chris Mandeville writes science fiction and fantasy, as well as nonfiction for writers. She's a member of SFWA, Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers, and Pikes Peak Writers, and is a regular columnist for Kobo Writing Life. Her books include Seeds: A Post-Apocalyptic Adventure *and* 52 Ways to Get Unstuck: Exercises to Break Through Writer's Block. *Learn more at chrismandeville.com.*

Cover Design Inspiration

Netflix knows which pictures you'll click on—and why

By Elizabeth Segran

The service's recent experiments with images reveal some surprising (and useful) takeaways about why people click what they do. This article, reprinted with permission from Fast Company, digs into research on what drives clicks. Authors with a hefty e-book business can learn from Netflix's research.

It's still one of the great mysteries of the Internet: with the millions of images that bombard us on the web every day, what makes us click on one instead of another? Are some pictures universally appealing, or is art always a matter of personal opinion?

Netflix has been pondering these profound questions for years. After all, images are critical to getting you to binge: A small, compelling thumbnail could mean the difference between getting you to spend the entire weekend watching *House of Cards* or losing interest and bouncing over to Hulu.

A powerful picture is an incredibly efficient tool: The human brain can process an image in just a few milliseconds, so the right picture can spark someone's interest and convince a viewer it's worth exploring a new show in a single glance. Which is why, in 2014, Netflix began gathering consumer research specifically about the images on its service.

The research indicated that looking at images not only prompted users to watch content, but accounted for a whopping 82% of their time spent browsing (as opposed to, say, reading movie titles or descriptions).

In other words, the images mattered almost four times more than the text describing the storyline. Members also spent only 1.8 seconds considering each title.

"We know that if you don't capture a member's attention within 90 seconds, he or she will likely lose interest and move on to another activity," said Nick Nelson, Netflix's global manager for creative services. "Images become the most efficient and compelling way to help them discover the perfect title as quickly as possible."

Recently, Netflix—which is famously tight-lipped about its own data—has been doing

experiments to better understand which images capture our attention and why, and shared some of its findings with Fast Company as well as in a post on its blog. The effort was both science and art: Data scientists analyzed user statistics, while creative teams considered the colors, emotions, and words that appear on pictures. The company tests several images for a single show or movie to try to discover what makes members click. Its first lesson was that images had to be high quality in order to draw viewers in. "We saw one clear thing," Nelson says. "Using better images to represent content significantly increased overall streaming hours and engagement."

Netflix's data reveals some interesting takeaways about why people watch one thing over another, but more broadly, may be applicable to anyone looking to hook readers, viewers, or buyers with compelling imagery.

Three people or fewer, please

One of Netflix's earliest findings was that interest tended to drop off when an image touting a show or movie contained more than three people. It seems that users find it hard to focus when there are too many people, and may not be able to absorb cues about the storyline.

This was a surprising insight for Netflix, given that some shows are popular precisely because they have large casts. *Orange Is the New Black* is a good example of this. "While ensemble casts are fantastic for a huge billboard on the side of a highway, they are too complex at small sizes," Nelson says. "They are ultimately not as effective at helping our members decide if the title is right for them on smaller screens."

Click to view the evolution of seasons 1-3 of Orange is the New Black *promo images from Netflix.*

Complex emotions make us pause

Scientists have known for a long time that humans are hardwired to respond to faces: Studies have found that infants process faces long before they are able to recognize other objects.

However, one interesting thing that Netflix discovered is that people tend to focus more on images of people displaying complicated expressions over stoic or benign ones. These highly emotive images are able to quickly and effectively convey subtle details about the show or movie, drawing users into the storyline and prompting them to watch it.

Take, for instance, the image for the second season of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, which drove a lot of engagement; its thumbnail ad features Ellie Kemper's face looking over at Tituss Burgess with an expression of surprise and possibly disbelief:

Click to view which promo image worked best for Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt *on Netflix.*

A focus on polarizing characters

Just like complex emotions are more likely to capture our attention, images of polarizing

characters also tend to grab our attention. Netflix found that members responded better to recognizable villainous characters over pictures of the hero. They found this to be true in the kids' genre, as well as for action shows and movies.

Click to view which promo images Netflix found most compelling for Dragons: Race to the Edge.

Different countries, different tastes

By testing across geographies, Netflix found that there are regional preferences when it comes to imagery. For instance, *Sense8*, a show with a diverse, international cast, has a wide audience across countries, but Netflix discovered that different images worked better in different places.

While the company didn't offer us a clear rubric about what kind of images work best in each country, from the images they showed us, it seemed that more artistic images worked better in Germany, while American audiences were more compelled by images that revealed the storyline clearly.

Click to see international differences in the most compelling Netflix images for Sense8.

The point is that in order to sell the same content or product across different countries, it is worth testing several images.

Nelson says Netflix's ongoing research reveals some unexpected things about human psychology. "While the results from our research were often surprising," he says, "it is clear that an image can move people in powerful ways."

Elizabeth Segran holds a Ph.D. in Indian literature and women's studies and is a staff writer at Fast Company. *She grew up in Brussels, Paris, Jakarta, and London, and now lives in Cambridge, Mass. Her work has been published in* The Atlantic, The New Republic, Foreign Policy, Foreign Affairs *and* The Nation. *She's on Twitter @LizSegran.*

Copyright Crash Course

The bare minimum every writer should know about copyright law

By Beth Orsoff

After a flurry of discussion on NINClink about copyright, with plenty of foggy memories and misconceptions, Nink asked author and entertainment lawyer Beth Orsoff to clear up some confusion. Disclaimer: this is not legal advice. For legal advice, you need to hire your own lawyer.

We've all heard the term "copyright" and that we should copyright our work, but what does that really mean? What protection does copyright offer?

And if we don't copyright our work, does that mean anyone can use it without our permission? As writers, we must know the answers to these questions.

What is copyright?

It is a form of protection provided by U.S. law (and the laws of most other countries) to the authors of "original works of authorship."

Although copyright is normally referred to in singular form, it is actually a bundle of rights. For book authors, the most commonly exploited rights in this bundle of rights are the right to publish and distribute copies of the author's book (whether via print, electronically, audio or some new-fangled media that hasn't been invented yet) and the right to create derivative works based on the author's book (e.g., motion pictures and television productions).

Who owns the copyright in my books?

You do! The one caveat here is if you write for someone else and you both agree (normally in a written contract) that your writing will be a work-made-for-hire.

In that situation, the individual or entity you contracted with would be considered the "author" of the work for purposes of copyright law. But unless you are writing a screenplay, writing for a book packager, or ghost writing a book, in all likelihood you are not writing under a work-for-hire arrangement.

How long does copyright last?

For works created on or after January 1, 1978 (yes, it was different back in the old days), copyright protection in a work lasts for the life of the author plus 70 years.

If you wrote your book in 1990 and you die in 2020, under current law your book will be protected under the copyright laws of the U.S. and most other countries until 2090.

Make sure your heirs know that!

Do I have to register my work with the U.S. Copyright Office for it to be protected?

No. Under current law (yes, it was different back in the old days) original works of authorship are protected from the moment they are created and fixed in a tangible form.

If the book is only in your head, it's not protected. But once you set it down in a fixed and tangible form, whether that's with pen and paper, a computer, or chiseled into a block of cement, it's protected. So that means all of your unpublished work is automatically protected too.

If I don't need to register my work for it to be protected, then why does everyone keep telling me to register my work with the Copyright Office?

Because there are benefits to registering, the most important being that if you are a U.S. author, you cannot file a copyright infringement suit in the U.S. unless your work is registered with the Copyright Office, and if you win that copyright infringement suit and you registered within three months of publication or prior to infringement, you will be eligible for statutory damages and attorneys' fees.

Actual damages for copyright infringement are notoriously hard to prove and attorneys' fees can be astronomical if your lawyer is not working on a contingency fee basis, so these are major incentives for most people.

Okay, you've convinced me I need to register my work with the Copyright Office. How do I do that?

If you are a traditionally published author this is most likely something the publisher will do for you—check your contract to be sure.

If you are self-publishing or for some reason your publisher won't register the book on your behalf, then you can register the book yourself.

Go to www.copyright.gov and click on the link that says "Register a copyright." This will bring you to the eCO online registration system. You will want to read the eCO Faqs and eCO tips sections first (links on the center of the screen) as those sections will answer most of your questions about registering.

Essentially, the process is to fill out an online form, pay the fee online, and send the Copyright Office a copy of your work.

If you are only registering an ebook, that means attaching a digital file to your application. For print published books, you are supposed to send them the "best edition," which generally means hard cover over soft cover, trade paperback over mass market paperback, etc.

If you have questions regarding which edition is the best edition, you can read the circular referenced below or contact the Copyright Office.

How much does it cost to register my work with the Copyright Office?

Currently, if you register online and you are the only author of the book, the fee is $35. Other types of online applications are $55.

I keep hearing about copyright terminations. What are they and how do I get one?

This is a very complicated area of copyright law and if you think you have a copyright transfer that is eligible for termination you really do need to contact a copyright lawyer.

The bare minimum you need to know is this: If you wrote a book on or after January 1, 1978 (yes, the law is different for pre-1978 works), and you then transferred some of your rights in that book to someone else (e.g., granted publishing rights to a publisher, granted motion picture and television rights to a movie studio, etc.), even though in all likelihood your contract says you granted those rights "for the life of the copyright" or "in perpetuity," under Section 203 of the Copyright Act you can terminate that grant during a 5-year window which begins 35 years after the date of execution of the grant, or if it was a grant of publication rights, 35 years from the date of publication of the work, or 40 years from the date of execution of the grant, whichever is sooner.

Those timelines are the reason you are suddenly hearing a lot about copyright terminations —the window for termination of grants for those 1978 works opened in 2013. Keep in mind that it is a window and if you don't exercise your rights within that window you lose the right to terminate.

Also keep in mind that the rules are quite strict about when and how you can terminate, so if you think your work is eligible for termination, please contact a copyright attorney.

I find all this legal mumbo jumbo fascinating. Where can I get more information?

The U.S. Copyright Office's website is a fantastic resource. Besides the online links, which answer the most common copyright questions, they also have several helpful circulars (which you can download in PDF format), including:

- No. 1 – Copyright Basics
- No. 4 – Copyright Office Fees
- No. 7b – Best Edition of Published Copyrighted Works for the Collections of the Library of Congress.

Beth Orsoff is an entertainment attorney living and working in Los Angeles and the author of eight novels, including the upcoming The Billionaire Who Wasn't. *Orsoff's books have been traditionally published by NAL/Penguin and Lake Union/Amazon Publishing, but she proudly (and happily) self-publishes too. Orsoff makes sure all of her books are registered with the Copyright Office. She can be reached via her website, via email, and on Facebook.*

Disclaimer: I'm a lawyer so I'm legally required to say this: All of the above is for informational purposes only and is not meant as legal advice. For legal advice, you need to hire your own lawyer.

To Reboot or Not to Reboot

New ways to capitalize on familiar words and worlds

By Carole Nelson Douglas

So your traditional publisher dumps a series? Another NY house likely won't take it.

These days, you can skedaddle to the plethora of small print and/or e-book presses, or become an indie author-publisher.

Just this spring, the shocking mass release of traditional publishers' cozy mystery authors saw many of them snapped up by established smaller mystery presses, such as Midnight Ink and Henery Press, and newcomer Crooked Lane.

But what about old books? Many career authors have horror stories of literary homicide in their publishing pasts or an intimidating number of reverted titles now free to be reissued. How should you deal with all the options?

1985 and still rebooting

I've built most of my career on rebooting a sinned-against series from 1985, before reboot was in the vocabulary.

My innovative idea of a limited series within a category romance line was bought, but then given to the line's top authors. I got: payment held up three years, publication held up four years.

When the trend had run like wildfire through all category romance lines and finally cooled, the 240,000-word Midnight Louie romance quartet was unilaterally cut 30 percent per book, stuffed into two volumes, and buried at the bottom of the list.

Midnight Louie is a twenty-pound black alley cat who thinks he's Sam Spade. He had such a bit part in the Quartet that readers didn't know those brief interjections were from a cat until the last sentence of the fourth book. But I knew Louie was an iconic cat character made to genre-hop.

So I flipped the concept from romance with light mystery to mystery with relationships, added a cast of human crime-solvers, kept some original secondary characters, and sold it to my

then-publisher.

This spring I finished the 28th Midnight Louie feline PI alphabetical mystery, and I am planning the continuing series readers want. That will be the third ML reboot, including the reverted, restored Quartet originals I published via library edition publisher, Five Star, in 2000.

(Anyone who knows writers considering joining NINC should tell them I got the rights back in the late 1990s because I talked to a major executive with that publisher at a NINC conference, not knowing she had been an editorial assistant who witnessed the Quartet slaughter. She told the other execs, "We've got to get that poor woman her books back." And they did.)

At the same time, I'm rebooting my Delilah Street 2007-2011 noir urban fantasies set in a paranormal version of Louie's Las Vegas. The series had starred reviews and bestselling sales, but was tainted by a really rank editor experience and market cooling. So I'm folding DelilahWorld characters and elements into the next ML series.

I'm not taking Delilah herself out of her world, where she had a mirror sister, in case I do write another book in the series. Her "other lost sister" Jessabelle, a new slightly less kick-ass heroine, will show up in Louie's world.

That means I'm still drawing on 37 of my 63 published novels, written from 1985 to today.

Mashing up yourself doubles the fun and the readership

The first rebooting question becomes whether to spend time and energy reclaiming the past, or moving forward.

Can we all live long enough to redeem every publishing dead end? Only if we pick the series and the elements we're most passionate about.

By mixing series and blending genres, your creations are doing double duty. Blended genres were a problem when physical bookshelves used strict single-genre categories, but not with online booksellers' virtual shelves.

Being merely sentimental about your forgotten past series is no part of this process. Authors must look for fresh commercial appeal when taking a new look at old work. Fantasy, mystery, and romance can always blend into each other and shape-change into other genres.

Adding one of those eternal elements can totally refresh an older series. You might find you've written New Adult books before it became a category, as many authors in NINC have.

Marketing can handle some of this, such as adding new covers and cover copy, and bonus material to both old and new series books as well as linking them.

To update or not to update

Some suggest calling books old enough to have dated references "retro" and establish the year with a prologue or a dateline under the first chapter title. I plan to market two eighties SciFi thrillers as Cold War Thrillers.

Or, since this was a truncated series, I might update the early books' details and finally write the planned sequels. In global politics, Russia has come around to being a threat again.

"What's old is new again" is really true. That depends on how much you really want to resume the abandoned work. So, to find out…

Try novellas and spin off minor characters

I not only wrote short pieces in anthologies, I blended my series leads. When a Louie reader on Amazon cheered his novella pairing with Delilah, I listened. I had created the double Vegases for fun, with no thought of a reboot, but it turns out that mystery readers, once supposedly against "woo-woo" and sex, love Delilah.

LouieWorld is becoming an endless interconnected chain of worlds and books. He's even had a Past Life Adventure with Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler. Dig down deep for secondary or minor characters who can star in and propel your spin-off into new territory.

Kathy Lynn Emerson is doing that for a long-dormant but favorite series. In 2002, Kathy's NY publisher cited flat sales for canceling her seven-book, Face Down Elizabethan mysteries featuring Lady Appleton. With number eight already written, enterprising Kathy got three more out with Perseverance Press.

Kathy also placed four books in a new historical series with Pemberley Press. From 2007 on, she published a cozy mystery series (still going) and a non-mystery historical series under two different names with NY houses.

She didn't like having no new books out under her own name. Enter a spin-off Face Down series with a younger, formerly minor character, Lady Appleton's husband's illegitimate daughter. That also moved the setting forward some years.

That concept didn't sell to New York, but the UK's Severn House, which publishes here and in England, "snapped up the series," she said. The third Mistress Jaffrey Mystery arrives early next year.

"I wasn't really finished with the world I had created for the Face Down series," Kathy told me. "Now I'm able to continue to use the world I built, and many of the characters, with a new twist, and so far it is working out quite well."

Whether you go traditional or indie, discuss spin-offs and revivals with a NY editor or a writing buddy, it's your world, so feel free to expand it. I've always had the rights to all prequels and sequels in my contracts. Who knows where we might boldly go next?

Carole Nelson Douglas has written bestselling contemporary and historical mystery and romance, high and urban fantasy, and science-fiction thrillers. A four-time Rita finalist in four different categories, RT Book Reviews Career Achievement holder in Mystery, Suspense, and Versatility, as well as a Pioneer of Publishing, she was the first woman to write a Sherlock Holmes spin-off series and first writer to use a woman protagonist from the canon, Irene Adler. Good Night, Mr. Holmes *was a NYT Notable Book of the Year and also won mystery and romance awards. Living dangerously, she has gone indie despite an impressive advance offer, and she collects stray cats and vintage clothing. (Feathers, silks, lace, claws…)*

Teaching Writing Workshops

Yes, you can get paid to critique

By Patricia Burroughs

If you want to teach a class that requires little prep from you, where you're getting paid to critique, have I got the class for you!

It's very simple. You have to keep the class small. This probably means your class hours will be more expensive than in the larger classes, if you're going through a college. My college wanted the class to have up to ten students, but I fought for—and eventually won—a cap of four to six.

Why? Because in each session, each student brings 1,000 to 1,250 words of a scene to class to be read and critiqued. That takes time. It's time well-spent, and the students love it.

Setting up the critique class format

Each student must bring enough copies for each of us to have our own copy to read.

First, we read silently. In the history of publishing, I doubt if anyone ever sold a book by calling up the editor and reading it to them. Editors, agents, and readers will all be reading silently. Reading aloud can make work sound better or worse than it really is.

While reading, write notes on the page. I emphasize that these are just opinions, reactions, and first thoughts from your peers, and we all respond differently.

It's important to guide these reactions. The feedback, "This was really good. It was funny and sweet, but it was confusing in a couple of places," is not helpful. Having someone circle and label what is funny or sweet is helpful.

Having someone put a question mark in the margin beside a confusing section is helpful. Targeted notes, comments, smiley faces, and even a !!! or OMG! is helpful.

Once participants are through reading, go around the class and have each person say something they liked about what they read. Something they thought worked. And something they thought needed improvement. Providing the positive feedback first is vital.

Finally, after all the students have given feedback, you come in behind and give your

feedback.

Your students learn by having to figure this out. They learn by listening to each other. Give them that time.

You might have picked up on things the students didn't. You might disagree with some of the feedback and feel the need to temper or counter it—tactfully. For example: "I can see why this seemed like X to some of you, but let's look at it from a different angle…"

Do not make the mistake of being the Voice of Authority who takes over—even though you are the instructor. Believe me, there may be times when you're confronted with something so horrible you are grateful for every minute you have to formulate your response and grateful that others make some of the comments for you so you don't have to.

Summing things up in a positive way puts you in the position of encouraging and guiding rather than leaving someone devastated with a mountain of negative feedback.

Carefully consider the philosophy that students should not defend their work or respond to comments, and will learn best from listening silently to all the feedback. But there is a difference between defending and clarifying.

Defending is telling people they're wrong. *Clarifying* is acknowledging you're the one who made a mistake and gave people the wrong impression, and allows the critique to continue in a helpful way.

For example, if a student wrote something confusing that causes several people to misinterpret and give an unhelpful critique, it's helpful for a student to be able to say, "Oh, that's my fault. I see why you think that, but that isn't happening, and I need to fix it. Thanks!"

Giving students the space to clarify will prevent more comments and suggestions that are misguided.

I generally divide classes into twenty-five minutes per student, and I don't schedule bio-breaks. I let people slip in and out as necessary, without losing time.

Even then, these classes often run late because people really want to critique and be critiqued, and when they are willing to keep going longer, I am a softy and let them.

Challenges of hosting a critique class

For the students:

- Bringing material of the appropriate length. Some will be so determined to bring an entire scene, they will edit it down to a confusing mess. They will learn not to do that.
- Having their work be judged by others, in front of others. Be tactful. Don't buy into the "if you can't take criticism, you're not tough enough to write" myth.
- Learning that writing is work. It's rewriting. It's sometimes taking editorial notes to make your work better, and sometimes recognizing that the notes are wrong, but the work still needs to be rewritten to fix the problem that prompted the editorial notes.

Your own short anecdotes will reassure them that this is what pro writers go through.

There are also some challenges for the instructor:

- Time management. This can be very hard. Sometimes everyone gets involved in

a discussion you think is so educational and helpful you want to let it a critique go longer. Sometimes this is a smart move, but you also need to keep records that let you know if anybody got shortchanged on time. You can carry over to the following week instead to ensure some people aren't always getting extra time while others never do.

- Discernment. As the leader, you must sense when a student has absorbed as much as they can without being crushed, or angry, or overwhelmed, and tactfully move the class along. You must also be discerning when one or more students have set themselves up as authorities and need to be controlled.
- Being part of the process but not the entire process. I always sit with the class and have the person whose work is being critiqued sit at the front of the class. It's hard for me, but I try very hard to wait until every student has shared their feedback before I take over. I do, however, sometimes summarize, if a student is taking too long or having difficulty making a point. I might say, "So for you, it was a bit slow, and the terminology confused you, Thanks!" and move on.

Benefits of this class format

For the students:

- The writing techniques, advice, and mini-lecture are all directed at their own work.
- They end up learning more by seeing other work than their own get critiqued, because they have no emotional attachment and see it more analytically. It's not unusual for someone to say, "I never understood why people told me this didn't work in my story, until I saw it not work in yours," to much laughter.
- They might build relationships with other writers that last for years and result in the formation of critique groups or partners.

There are additional benefits for the instructor:

- Little to no home time is spent prepping, unless you want to give a handout on a technique or concept during the first ten minutes of each class.
- If critiquing on the fly is stressful for you and you prefer more time to consider your remarks, this class isn't for you.

Final thoughts on hosting a critique class

This is a class that requires you to do nothing in advance. You show up. You guide the class. You go home.

This class can result in one-on-one editorial work, if that's what you want, and gives you the benefit of hand-picking those students you want to work with.

This class can also continue indefinitely if you have a solid group of students who works well together and whom you enjoy.

Nurturing developing talent is one of the most gratifying things I've ever done. This

method allows me to do it on the terms that work for me. I hope some of you find it as helpful.

Award-winning screenwriter and novelist Patricia Burroughs loves dogs, books, movies, and football. A lifelong Anglophile, she treasures her frequent travels in the British Isles researching The Fury Triad, the epic romantic-fantasy series that has taken over her life and heart. She and her high school sweetheart husband are living happily ever after in their hometown of Dallas, Texas. If you'd like her to address specific questions in a later article on teaching writing workshops, please email her.

Marketing in an Hour (or Less) Per Day

A new spin on "wash, rinse, repeat" with Tilton's "research, action, review" formula

By Kate Tilton

The question I most frequently get from authors is, "How can I get more readers and sales?"

It's often followed by another: "Where should I invest my time and money?"

The answer depends on each author's unique message and audience. To find readers, you must develop a keen understanding of who will be most supportive of your work and adapt your strategies to suit them.

It sounds simple in theory, but the practice of narrowing down your target market to find the most passionate readers of your books can be overwhelming and frustrating.

It doesn't have to be. Marketing is your way of connecting with like-minded people and building bonds with them—your persona becomes a promise of what they can look forward to each time they choose one of your books.

When you set aside time each workday to diligently focus on marketing, you'll see a remarkable difference.

Who are you trying to reach?

Start by clarifying your target audience by describing your ideal reader.

I've said this before and I'll say it again. The most vital part of any marketing effort is having a clear picture of who you're trying to reach. It makes everything you do in marketing easier and more effective.

There is no one-method-fits-all, but there *are* steps to find the methods that will work best for you.

For example, one of my clients writes for women in their 50s who are looking to improve their health with better eating and activity. This author focuses her time on live events such as seminars and workshops, which has been much more profitable than building her Twitter following.

Another client of mine writes for young adults and so she built a strong social media

presence on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest. All of these channels have been vital in spreading the word about her book.

By knowing their audiences, both of my clients can focus their resources (time and money) to achieve the best results (sales).

To understand your ideal reader, build a basic profile of these demographics and narrow them down further as you research: age, gender, location, education, profession, income, group affiliations, hobbies, and lifestyles.

For example, instead of picking "females of any age," you can narrow that to "female baby boomers." Instead of "any education level," you could choose "college educated."

One excellent way to gather research on readers to better develop your picture of this number one reader is to look at authors who have books similar to yours, who can be identified through "also-bought" and top 100 genre rankings lists on sites such as Amazon.

Who engages with those authors? Are there any patterns that you see? On the authors' Twitter feeds and Facebook pages, you might see commonalities among the highly engaged readers.

Use these questions to make the picture of your ideal reader even sharper:

- What does a typical day look like for your reader?
- What challenges does your reader face? (Do they struggle to set aside time to read because of their job or family obligations? Do they struggle to find books they enjoy because they don't use the Internet or technology?)
- What does your reader want in life, and what things beyond books does your reader enjoy? How does your book tie into those interests?
- Where does your reader discover new books? (Library, chain bookstore, indie bookstore, online retailer, e-reader device, email list, etc.)
- What format does your reader prefer? (Hardcover, paperback, Kindle, Nook, iPad, etc.)

Go to where the readers are

Create a reader profile that reads like one of your characters. Give your ideal reader a name, gender, an age, a whole life story.

Don't be afraid to go a step deeper or make a mistake. The more involved you are in learning about your readers, the easier it will be to flesh out your target market and discover how you can reach them. And you can always adjust your profile as you learn more about your audience.

When you have a clear ideal reader profile, it is easy to know where to focus your efforts. If your ideal reader spends their free time online, you should spend your marketing time online. If your reader isn't a technology fan, look to traditional media and in-person events.

Many authors I encounter mess up at this step. They go out on social media channels that *they* feel comfortable on and post about topics *they* enjoy. As a result, they miss an entire market segment of potential readers.

Start a profile on the top social media network your ideal reader uses. Pick five core topics (or less) that your ideal reader enjoys (and that you also enjoy or know about). Post on the

topics selected and avoid going off topic.

In practice, this might mean starting a blog with five or fewer core categories. For example, my site focuses on social media tips, marketing tips, writing tips, and publishing tips for authors.

You might start a Twitter account where you post about cool space facts, scientific discoveries, animals, nerdy jokes and comic books. Or an Instagram account focusing on travel hotspots, celebrity gossip, high fashion, makeup tips and craft cocktails.

The topics you choose should be clear to you based on what you see readers of similar books to yours posting about. Keep a tally when you see the same thing mentioned by readers of a particular author whose readership is similar to your target market. The more tally marks, the more popular the topic is for your audience.

Here are a few quick tips to get started on some platforms:

- On Twitter, look at the accounts of authors who write books similar to yours. Click on the number under "Followers" to browse the accounts of those who follow these authors. See any readers? Follow them.
- For Twitter, use ManageFlitter to search for accounts with keywords relevant to your target audience (i.e., "reader").
- Browse for book bloggers who review books in your genre by searching book blogger directories. Use this list of book blogger directories to get started on your search.
- For Instagram, follow these book bloggers to get started. You might also want to list yourself on this list of authors on Instagram.

Choosing the right channel

Once you have a clear grasp of who you are trying to reach with your books and have developed a few marketing channels (such as an active Twitter account or a regular speaking schedule), it's time to test what's working and decide if you'd like to invest more resources into your current channels or expand into new ones.

Goals are key for this step. Just like no two books are the same, you'll find no one has the same definition of success. Write down your definition with as much detail as possible.

Instead of "I want to sell more books," try "I want to sell 5,000 more books than last year." Have measurable and specific goals so you can see which marketing efforts are working to bring you to your success and which are not.

I personally suggest setting a few goals each year and taking a day each month to look at how you have progressed towards your goals and what steps have brought you there.

Using our example above, if your goal this year is to sell 5,000 more books than last year, you might try a Facebook ad. Upon completion of the ad ask yourself:

- How many books were sold during my ad?
- How many books do I sell on average?
- Is the number of books I sold during my ad significantly more than what I sell on average?
- Is the cost of the ad worth the sales/new readers I gained in addition to my normal sales?

If you answer yes to the final question, more Facebook ads could be right for you. If not, consider other promotional avenues such as events, advertising on a different social media platform, print ads, or PR.

By working your way through the marketing process (research, action, review), an hour a day is all you need to achieve great things.

Kate Tilton has been serving authors since 2010. Founder of Kate Tilton's Author Services, LLC, Kate works as an author assistant and speaker with the mission of connecting authors and readers. Kate is the creator and host of #K8chat (Thursdays at 9 p.m. Eastern on Twitter) and has appeared on popular media such as Publishers Weekly and Library Journal. You can find Kate on katetilton.com.

The Chunky Method

Using your Chunky Method plan to cope—or improve

By Allie Pleiter

Award-winning author Allie Pleiter has been teaching her Chunky Method of time management to writers across the country for several years. In this third-in-a-series of articles (see also Nink February and April issues), she shares her popular method with NINC.

If you've been following our series of articles, you now can reasonably and accurately calculate how many weeks it currently takes you to write your manuscript.

As a working writer, that might not have been news to you—you might be able to "guestimate" that finish line in the past.

Having numerical data, however, is always a good resource in an emotional crunch. When something chaotic happens in your life such as a medical crisis, a dramatically shifted deadline, or an unexpected and fast move to a new state, you'll be glad to have unemotional data and calculations to help you make rational decisions on how to adapt.

Have I used my Chunky Calculator to get myself out of a jam with a quickly devised, solidly grounded plan? You betcha. More than I like to admit.

The best news is that a Chunky Method Writing Plan isn't just a coping mechanism, it's a productivity improvement tool. I'll walk you through some examples.

By the way, if you joined The Chunky Nation by texting CHUNKY to 22828 or signed up through alliepleiter.com, you can also open up the free Chunky Calculator you downloaded and work these with me for detailed demonstrations.

How to set up a realistic timeline

Let's create an example author named Andy. Andy has done his Chunky homework from the last article and discovered he has a chunk of 600 words. Andy works part time, so he currently can manage four chunks a week. This means he can think in terms of weekly word count as well as chunks.

A simple calculation tells us that having four chunks of 600 words will net Andy 2,400 weekly words. If he's using our 110 percent target tactic for a 100,000-word novel, this means Andy can finish his 110,000 target word count in 46 weeks.

The math:

- 100,000 manuscript x 110% planned overwriting = 110,000 word target
- 600 word chunk x 4 chunks per week = 2,400 words per week
- 110,000 word target ÷ 2,400 words per week = 45.833, or about 46 weeks to finish the manuscript.

Andy Author is a fictional guy, but he can teach us a real-world lesson. We write in the real world, where real obstacles happen. So while this first deadline is empowering and useful, it isn't realistic.

Smart Chunky writers know that there will always be weeks where they cannot write at full speed. Vacations, family events, holidays—all of these have an impact on our productivity. Workers in more traditional jobs plan for these things, and so should you.

Before Andy declares his deadline will be met in Week 46, he needs to insert some padding into the weeks where other things will command his time. Of course, not every obstacle gives us advance notice. Life can blindside you without warning. All the more reason to plan for the things you do know in advance.

So, for our example, we'll plan on no work being done in weeks 6, 17, and 36, adding three weeks to his goal to set him finishing at week 49 instead.

What if your chunk needs to change?

Perhaps you took one look at Andy's data and thought, "That won't work for me. I need to write faster than Andy. I can't afford to wait a year before I type The End."

What do you do then?

Using the Chunky Method, I've increased my writing productivity 300% over the course of my career—not all at once, but in smart increments driven by the mathematical power of the Chunky Method. The same is possible for you, because you now have solid, individualized data to help you improve.

Let me use Andy's example to show you how.

The goal here is a universal one: write faster. But a command like that isn't enough to get results. Exactly how can Andy write faster? The key is in the chunk. Andy can make small adaptations to his chunk and discover big results.

If Andy increases his chunk by only 50 words—fewer words than the previous paragraph—he'll be done in Week 46. That small adjustment shaved three weeks off his deadline!

Now, if you simply commanded any writer to write his or her book a month faster, that would be likely to induce hysteria. But add 50 words to a chunk? That's a goal most writers can embrace with very little stress.

By the same math, increasing his chunk by 100 words could have Andy meeting his deadline in week 43. But what if he really needs to step things up? The single most effective

tactic he can take is to add another chunk to his week.

Going back to Andy's original 600-word chunks, increasing from four to five chunks per week gets him done in week 40, even with his planned three weeks off.

Remember, here we've not expanded his existing chunk of 600 words at all, only added a fifth writing session. That single act shaved nine weeks—more than two months—off his original deadline.

Faced with such a demand to write a book two months faster, many of us would default to trying to write more every time we sat down to write. The mathematical truth of the Chunky Method shows us, however, that the most effective tactic is to increase the number of times we sit down to write.

That's a specific, actionable step rather than a generalized goal, and it makes such a huge difference. There's power in that math, not just in our words.

I have found it's difficult to adjust any writer's chunk by more than 100 words at a time. A writer's chunk is a consistent thing, limited in its elasticity.

You might have one of those magic writing days where the words gush out and you look up to discover fifteen pages have appeared—that happens sometimes. But it doesn't happen consistently, so it's unwise to count on such a streak saving you from your looming deadline.

Working within your chunk ensures your best work in consistent production. Creating a Chunky Method Writing Plan ensures you reach the deadlines you want in a way that suits your style and the challenges in your life—on and off the page.

In our final article, coming in the August issue of Nink, we'll learn how to tackle the day-to-day challenge of fitting writing into a life stuffed with competing demands.

Allie Pleiter spends her days writing four books at a time and buying yarn to knit. Both a RITA and Carol Award finalist as well as a RT Reviewer's Choice and RomCon Reader's Crown Award winner, Allie recently celebrated her millionth book sold. She speaks nationally on writing, faith, women's issues, and time management. To obtain a free copy of the Chunky Calculator, visit www.alliepleiter.com or text the word CHUNKY to 22828.

Forensic Files

Can my chronic arsenic eater die from arsenic poisoning?

By D. P. Lyle, MD

Question: I am currently doing research for a historical novel, one of my main characters, a prosperous middle-aged male, was an arsenic eater who used this drug regularly for some time, at least two years or probably longer. He became addicted to it and took increasingly large doses.

He eventually died from an overdose of arsenic, possibly intentionally (as in suicide). Could you give me some information about what type of physical as well as psychological symptoms he may have had both as a habitual user as well as dying from an overdose of this drug?

Answer: Arsenic (AS) can cause both chronic and acute poisoning and it was indeed used in the past by many people as a folk remedy for almost anything. So was strychnine.

Though chronic users can tolerate increasing doses, there is still a tipping point because AS builds in the system over time until it becomes lethal, even if repeated small doses are taken.

This can take weeks or months depending on dose. And if the dose is very small, one that matches the elimination of the AS from the body, then this can go on for decades. But if the intake is above the elimination rate, it will accumulate and eventually kill the taker.

For your story, you don't have to worry about the math, just have your character use it for however long you want and the readers will assume the dose was too small to kill. And then when it accumulates to the point of death—or until someone either tampers with his dose or gives him an excess—have him become acutely ill and die, and readers will buy that also.

You used the word addiction here but that is not correct. AS is not addicting as would be a narcotic. It is not even habituating as are some sedatives and sleeping pills. If he stopped using it, he would have no withdrawal symptoms, and in fact would feel better as the effects of the AS faded.

The symptoms of AS toxicity are predominantly gastrointestinal and neurological. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, weight loss, diarrhea, abdominal pain, headaches,

irritability, insomnia, poor balance, numbness and tingling of the extremities, and a few other symptoms.

Your victim could have these in any combination and in any severity. His symptoms could be mostly gastrointestinal, mostly neurological, or any combination of the two. They can be constant, progressive, or wax and wane. And if he used very small amounts, he might have no symptoms at all.

With acute poisoning, these symptoms can be very severe and appear quickly and violently. His vomiting and diarrhea would be bloody and his abdominal pain severe. With an acute poisoning, death can take many hours and is not pleasant.

He could take the AS for many months or years and feel fine, and then begin to develop the above symptoms, mild at first, but they would progress in severity until he died. This progression could be over a few days, weeks, or months.

Anything is possible. And, if someone gave him a large dose on top of this progression in toxicity, he could die within hours.

Follow-up Question: Thank you very much, that does help but I am confused about something. Is a psychological addiction or dependency possible? In his diaries, this man writes about taking larger doses and feeling stronger. He also reports that when something prevents him from having his regular doses, he is in terrible pain, with headaches, vomiting, and coldness or numbness in his hands and feet. That's why I used the word addiction, I assumed this was withdrawal, but I didn't realize this was not a part of arsenic use.

Follow-up Answer: Yes that's possible. It's called the placebo effect—meaning that if someone believes that something helps them, then it will.

Health food stores have made a living off this for years. If this man felt that the AS made him stronger, and when he couldn't get it he would be weaker, then he could easily feel that way.

The truth is the exact opposite, since AS toxicity actually makes one weaker, not stronger. But reality is perception.

This would be a form of "psychological addiction," for lack of a more accurate term. So go with it since whatever he believes is true is true to him and that's really all that counts in his world.

D. P. Lyle is the Macavity and Benjamin Franklin Silver Award-winning and Edgar, Agatha, Anthony, Scribe, Silver Falchion, and USA Best Book Award-nominated author of many nonfiction books, including Murder & Mayhem, Forensics for Dummies, Forensics & Fiction, More Forensics & Fiction, Howdunnit: Forensics, *and* ABA Fundamentals: Understanding Forensic Science. *He is also author of numerous works of fiction, including the Samantha Cody thriller series; the Dub Walker thriller series; the Jake Longly thriller series; and the* Royal Pains *media tie-in novels. His essay on Jules Verne's* The Mysterious Island *appears in* Thrillers: 100 Must-Reads *and his short story "Even Steven" in ITW's anthology* Thriller 3: Love is Murder.

Along with Jan Burke, he is the co-host of Crime and Science Radio. He has worked with many novelists and with the writers of popular television shows such as Law & Order, CSI: Miami, Diagnosis Murder, Monk, Judging Amy, Peacemakers, Cold Case, House, Medium, Women's Murder Club, 1-800-Missing, The Glades, *and* Pretty Little Liars. *Learn more about his work at www.dplylemd.com and see his blog at http://writersforensicsblog.wordpress.com.*

The Mad Scribbler

Writing organizations

By Laura Resnick

"There are things you can accomplish with a writers' organization that you can't accomplish through casual social networking."
—Barbara Keiler

A NINC member recently posed the following questions for discussion on NINClink (repeated here with her permission):

- Are writers' organizations still relevant in the Internet age, when we can all network independently now?
- What advantages do you see in belonging to a writers' group?

This gave me food for thought, since I have joined and quit several writers' organizations during my career. I left Sisters In Crime (SinC) many years ago because I was by then writing romance and science fiction/fantasy, so I wasn't likely to start writing mystery in the foreseeable future.

I later left the Romance Writers of America (RWA) because I had ceased writing romance. I still write science fiction/fantasy, which is my main career focus, but I eventually dropped out of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) because I was never a good fit with the organization's internal culture.

Then I joined Broad Universe (for women science fiction/fantasy/horror writers), with a vague notion that I "should" belong to an organization in my genre. But I never engaged in any way whatsoever as a member. It occurred to me that maybe I was just tired of writers' organizations by then and should cease joining them, and so I dropped out of that one, too.

In fact, NINC is the only writers' organization I belong to anymore, and I have been a member since 1989—since before NINC even had a name or bylaws. I was at the first-ever conference where we hashed out, in our business meetings, what this organization would be called, who could join, how it would function, and what purpose it would serve.

However, I don't have a poor opinion of the organizations I quit. In fact, I list them all on the Writers' Resources page of my website, precisely because I think each of them has something to offer. And I regularly suggest to aspiring or new-and-confused writers that they consider joining an organization relevant to their focus.

When I belonged to other organizations, I made friends, developed professional networks, attended events, read the publications, wrote for those publications, used the market information that was available there, and occasionally used member services. Membership in those organizations enhanced my professional life in multiple ways and provided me with education, resources, and opportunities.

Which is one answer to the question posed above. I think writing organizations have relevance even in the digital era, because a good writing organization can sift through the endless existing sea of information to help its members focus on what information is accurate, current, relevant, and reliable.

Plenty of "information" and advice on the Internet is terrible, after all, and many online writer chatboards are comprised of the ignorant leading the inexperienced. Organizations can also help a writer connect to others in her field, for friendship and business. So I think good orgs can still serve all the same functions for people now that they have served for many years.

That said, I am no longer a member of any other writing organizations because, in each case, there came a time for me to leave. When I ceased getting satisfaction from my membership, when I stalled longer each year on the renewal form wondering if I really wanted to bother … it was time to go.

And since leaving, I don't miss those organizations or think about rejoining.

Not every writer prioritizes the same things from a writing organization, obviously, and that has a lot to do with the choices we make. For example, the fact that the NINC conference and Nink newsletter are aimed at members, rather than being vehicles for members to promote their work to fans, was regularly cited to us for years as a key reason that writers didn't join or that they left NINC; those writers wanted an org that provided promotional opportunities.

To give another example, I've known many writers over the years who've said that they belong to this-or-that writing org primarily for social reasons—they've got a lot of friends there. And for writers focused on a particular genre, a genre-specific organization can be very attractive.

By contrast, one of the reasons I don't miss my membership in RWA and SFWA is that I don't care about genre. I recognize that it's essential to understand genre if you're going to write it (which I do), and I like genre as a structure, both for storytelling and for marketing, but I'm not a devotee.

When I couldn't keep selling romance, I switched to writing science fiction/fantasy. If a day comes when I can't sell SF/F, I'll switch to writing mystery or YA or something else. I am a storyteller, not a genre aficionado.

Therefore, NINC's multi-genre nature is one of its big attractions for me; we discuss a broad range of commercial fiction and fiction markets in NINC, rather than being narrowly focused on one specific genre.

Yet I know from years of doing NINC outreach (i.e. trying to get writers to join) that many writers have no interest in an org that does not focus on their particular genre, and little or no interest in networking with authors who don't write in their genre.

Another key reason I'm still a member is that I still learn so much in NINC—certainly every year, and usually every week. The high bar to membership in NINC, as well as the organizational culture of focusing on career novelists, ensures a very advanced level of discussion and networking.

That, in turn, ensures that a writer like me, who started out in the late Cretaceous era and has seen it all, still finds the newsletter, the conference, and NINClink educational and challenging. In my experience, the collective level of experience and information in NINC isn't available in other writing organizations—let alone on the Internet—and so I stick with the org where it is available.

Apart from NINC, I do belong to a a few private networking groups, as many writers do these days. These are not organizations with bylaws, they're e-list groups with guidelines. I find them very informative, and they add to my education.

But there are things that a writing organization offers that a networking group doesn't, such as publications, conferences, awards (I am very glad that NINC does not offer awards—but prestigious awards are part of the identity of SFWA, RWA, MWA, and others), member services (e.g. SFWA's Emergency Medical Fund, RWA University), and advocacy.

In terms of advocacy, SFWA sponsors Writer Beware, which investigates and reports on publishing scams, questionable policies, and dishonest agents. The Mystery Writers of America, the Horror Writers of America, and the American Society of Journalists and Authors also contribute support to Writer Beware, whose work incurs costs, including legal fees.

And NINC, of course, has a Legal Fund, established by then-president Patricia McLaughlin in 2007, to assist members with legal problems incurred via their writing careers. I am one beneficiary of that service.

I discovered in 2009 that Harlequin e-published a book of mine after all rights had reverted to me. I contacted them immediately, but Harlequin spent months ignoring my communications—and continued selling the e-book to which they did not hold rights. Finally, only by involving an attorney retained via the NINC Legal Fund, was I able to pursue a resolution to that matter.

And speaking of Harlequin, NINC member Barbara Keiler says of Keiler v. Harlequin Enterprises, the class action lawsuit in which a settlement was recently proposed: "I can tell you that without one particular writers' organization—NINC—we would never have been able to bring a lawsuit against Harlequin Enterprises. NINC provided the conditions in which Harlequin authors could connect and question what the publisher was doing with our digital rights and royalties. NINC provided a few hours of free consultation with a literary attorney. [The attorney] uncovered Harlequin's underhanded manipulation of the rights and urged us to hire an attorney experienced in intellectual property litigation. And the rest is history." (Quoted from NINClink with Keiler's permission.)

So, yeah, I'd say we're still relevant.

Laura Resnick, author of the Esther Diamond urban fantasy series, is a past president of Novelists, Inc.

Not Your Usual Writing Advice: Changing it up

By JoAnn Grote

"This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."
—William Shakespeare, Hamlet, *act I, scene 3*

April 23, 2016 was the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death. I don't claim to be an expert on Shakespeare or his work, but I've enjoyed his plays since I read Romeo and Juliet in the seventh grade because I wanted to experience writing that is so acclaimed.

In April this year, I decided to refresh my knowledge of Shakespeare, the writer.

One of the things that struck me was the variety of Shakespeare's writing. I'd always thought of him as simply a playwright, but he wrote sonnets too. Also, within the world of plays there are different genres, as there are within the world of novels, and Shakespeare did not stick with one genre.

Comedies and histories made up most of Shakespeare's first plays; then he moved to tragedies; after which he primarily wrote tragicomedies.

Shakespeare published poems in 1593 and 1594, when the theaters were closed because of the plague, according to his Wikipedia profile. Maybe he had to adjust to the realities of the world in his career, just like we do.

I hope he enjoyed the opportunity to publish something outside the realm of playwriting, where he knew his work was accepted. Did he worry over whether readers would like his poetry?

Shakespeare's Sonnets were published in 1609, though there are references to unpublished sonnets written throughout much of his life and shared with friends.

In the latter period of Shakespeare's life he collaborated with other writers.

It's not uncommon for the siren call of a different story within our genre to lure us away from a manuscript in process. We may take time away from the WIP to make notes or write a scene for the new idea to pacify the siren, but then we get back to the WIP.

When the siren's call is to a different type or style or form of story, do we ignore it? Maybe we mentally beat the siren to a pile of mush, believing that as a responsible career author we must always go from one story in our genre to the next without reprieve.

I hope we feel we have at least a little freedom along the writing road—time to write a short story, article, or poem; maybe a story in another genre, even if under a pseudonym.

Sometimes these ventures are simple vacations that leave us refreshed and eager to get back to our normal type of story, and so improve our writing through a fresh, more creative mind.

Or the nudge may be toward a new path. The nudge might be calling us to where our greatest success, as the world defines it, lies. We will never know unless we follow that path at least a little way.

I expect most artists—writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, and dancers among them—feel the urge to try something different within their area of art at some point.

I think the members of Instant Classic, the 2015 Barbershop Quartet International Champions, would agree, based on the song "You Gotta Change Parts," written by one of their members. You can listen to it on YouTube.

I became interested in barbershop quartet music when my older cousin's quartet, The Dealer's Choice, became international champions many years ago. You can hear them from when they were inducted into the International Hall of Fame.

Shakespeare's path encourages me when I look at my own writing path. I began in inspirational historical romance, and have since written inspirational contemporary romance, inspirational romantic suspense, historical fiction for children ages 8 through 12, and secular fiction.

I'm working on a paranormal novel, and I've written poetry I plan to intersperse throughout the novel. I've written short stories of 800 to 1000 words, and have two in draft form and one itching to be put on paper as I write this column.

I believe most NINC members became novelists because we thought writing novels would bring us joy, and in most cases it probably did. Many of us started out in a genre we love … and then a desire to write something different, or to tell our stories in different ways, began to niggle at us.

If we don't follow our creative nudges, do we run the risk of burnout, losing the joy of telling stories? Do we also risk disappointing readers if we provide the type of stories they've grown to love, but which we write without the heart that drew the readers to our stories in the first place? Do we risk disappointing ourselves?

Some NINK members would respond with a loud "Yes!" Others are happy on the path upon which they started their careers.

"This above all: to thine own self be true." Thank you for the advice, Mr. Shakespeare.

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.

You Might Have Missed This

Great links for enlightenment or procrastination

By Ashley McConnell

Because there is no such thing as too much information, mapwise, this justifies Tumblr's existence all by itself. (Don't miss out on the stereotype maps. Be careful about drinking, though: serious chance of a keyboard drench.)

Does your villain smirk because he has diplomatic immunity? Would you like to wipe that smirk off his face? Check out what the US Department of State has to say about it.

A possibly clearer (for some value of "clearer" which includes tax law) explanation of how to reclaim copyright from your publisher for work copyrighted before 1978 can be found here. The article also has a section on Terminating Post-1977 Author Grants & Assignments, i.e. reclaiming on work copyrighted after 1977.

And if you're really desperate to do something instead of that copyedit, may I introduce you to the siren song of the History Cooperative? (Blame this one on JoAnn Grote!)

Do you do a lot of driving to the airport to catch a plane, to Staples to buy paper (they *do* deliver!), or otherwise need to track your mileage? There's an app for that! Check out MileIQ.

Do you have the right cover for your book? Jellybooks does reader analytics on book covers to see not only what sells, but whether readers finish the book once they buy it. It's called A/B testing, and maybe we should be doing more of it.

John Scalzi is a proponent of traditional publishing. You might have to really study this to figure out what he thinks of these contract terms.

Writing about the CIA? Take a photo tour of their headquarters.

In my entire writing career, it never once occurred to me to write my own contract and present it to a publisher. I think that makes me what Kristine Kathryn Rusch would classify as "stupid," and you know what? She's right. (Particularly since I dealt specifically with contracts every day for three years outside of the publishing world.) This entire series is invaluable to those who are still traditionally publishing. Go and educate yourselves.

If you're Abby on NCIS, you can trace an IP address to a particular location, every time. If

you're in the real world, it's not so easy. If you live in Kansas, it's even worse.

We all know that lost socks wind up in alternate universes, but in the spirit of "GPS Routing Not Advised" (my favorite local sign), your lost phone is probably not actually in Atlanta—no matter what it tells you.

The Passive Voice invited comments from writers who have or are planning to quit their day job. He says it's received more responses than any of his other posts. So now he's doing it again.

An all-romance bookstore has opened up in California—and is reaching out to indie authors as well as traditional publishers.

It's not just books that receive reviews—newspaper articles do too. The British newspaper The Guardian decided to use the 70,000,000 comments on its articles as a data set to find out who gets piled on and whose opinions are respected. Spoiler alert: I am so not surprised by their findings. (And I can't help but think that someone missed out on a terrific doctoral dissertation by not doing this first.)

When we write about people, when we create characters, we write about their memories. Memories shape us. What if you can't remember yourself? It turns out that this is a real thing, and I am trying to figure out how one could write a person like that. Now there's a writing challenge.

Locard's Exchange Principle is a cornerstone of modern forensic investigation: in essence, it says that everywhere you go, you leave something of yourself, and you pick up something from that place. It turns out that Locard's Exchange Principle also applies to where your computer goes in cyberspace, as well! Not surprisingly, there is now a website and online magazine devoted specifically to digital forensics. Sherlock Holmes never had it so good. (Until the BBC got hold of him.)

DNA testing: You might have heard about "the CSI effect," which drives prosecutors crazy; it's when juries who have been watching too many crime shows expect real-life police labs to magically come up with perfectly accurate answers all the time. You might also have heard about the egregious backlog of cases in DNA labs. So how long does it actually take to process a DNA sample? What size does the sample need to be? What kind of material can DNA be recovered from? How much does it cost? A lab in Maricopa, Arizona has answers.

Kristine Kathryn Rusch is inspirational; one of her columns on contracts inspired me to offer an anthology an entirely new contract instead of the one they offered initially. Further your education about negotiation and dealbreakers with her able assistance.

Wrestling with whether to install Windows 10? Are you cowering in front of your monitor because you accidentally made a reservation for a free upgrade you've decided you don't really want? This site shows you how to cancel that reservation.

Know your audience: Another study by The Guardian says that most consumers of e-books are older women. (And as a member of that class, I can give you two good reasons why: failing eyesight and arthritic hands.) The popularity of hunky heroes and young, competent, adventurous heroines is, of course, entirely coincidental.

Ashley McConnell has been selling fiction since 1990 and publishing nonfiction since 1976. She has written security plans for places You Just Don't Want To Know About, justifications for contracts for hybrid vehicle batteries and for paying rocket scientists a lot of money, delicately rendered filletings of managers, studies of the culture of national laboratories, and how to level a laser-sighted data-acquisition Thingy, which is, again, something You Just Don't Want To Know About. Along the way she has acquired dogs, horses, an itty-bitty farmette, and has in turn been acquired by a succession of cats. She likes acquiring information and sending it on to people who can make use of it. There is an uncomplimentary word for this, but she prefers "analyst."

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

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Complete committee member listings are available on the website.

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Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin
P.O. Box 54, Hartland MI 48353
admin@ninc.com
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