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inc.

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Contents

President's Voice

By Diana Peterfreund

A recent news story making the rounds concerned a young Canadian teen who had, apparently, discovered the secret location of a "lost Mayan city." The boy used satellite imagery to confirm his hypothesis that the Maya people built their cities based on maps of star constellations, and the green square shown in satellite images filled in a missing star.

Alas, though that plotline might fly in Hollywood science fiction movies, the truth is much more prosaic: the other cities in the supposed "constellation" were actually built centuries apart and were not part of a planned cluster, and the newly discovered "ruin" was nothing more than a overgrown weed field.

As I watched the story unfold, an archaeologist interviewed said something I have not been able to get out of my mind. He mentioned that the first time he heard the reference to a "lost Mayan city" he was suspicious, and explained that the very term "Mayan city" is something of a shibboleth for archaeologists.

"Mayan" generally refers to the language, while "Maya" (noun and adjective) is used to discuss the people, their culture, and, yes, their cities. Most archaeologists familiar with the Maya would not say "Mayan city."

It struck me that professional novelists have shibboleths of our own. We read the news stories about the overnight successes and know the years of work required to make it happen. We smile and nod at the cocktail party guests who suggest we try writing one of those vampire books, at the uncle who interrupts Thanksgiving to ask why we don't just let someone make our book into a movie. There's a lot of myth and mystery surrounding our work, and sometimes the truth gets lost in the success of a sexy story.

I was so relieved when I first discovered writing groups like NINC where I could find other career-minded authors with whom I could share information and struggles without having to first explain that no, my life wasn't actually anything like the one belonging to the dude from *Castle*.

And yet, the ground keeps shifting. Two decades ago, the very idea of discovering archaeology sites via satellite (real or imagined) was groundbreaking. In college, I actually took

an introduction to satellite imagery course with a woman, Sarah Parcak, who went on to become a pioneer in the field of "space archaeology." (I obviously chose a different career path.)

Sarah is finding lost tombs and pyramids and even whole cities. (She mapped Tanis, the ancient Egyptian city made famous in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.)

Similarly, many of our fellow writers are out there changing the game in the world of book publishing. Ten years ago, I was asked by an acquaintance how much I'd paid to have my book published, and I had to explain that one of the cardinal rules in this industry was that money flows *to* the author. But back then, self-publishing was rarely a viable option. Today, as most members of NINC have proved, it can not only be viable, it can be extremely profitable.

Now, there are new shibboleths, and even an experienced author can get caught unaware. As a hybrid author, I'm constantly learning that the skills and knowledge base that served me well in my traditional career have no place in the indie world. And many of the strategies that work well in self-publishing are useless or even nonsensical when applied to the Big Five.

With the many new paradigms opening up, it can be harder than ever to tell when you've uncovered a brilliant new discovery, or simply stumbled into a nice-looking but fallow field.

There is so much pressure on writers to stay on top of an ever-shifting landscape, to guard their theories close, to measure every bit of information they get on an immediate ROI basis. Many writers feel left out, drained dry, attacked, and given the hard sell. They keep being told that the answers are easy, slick, or calculated, like a mystical alignment of stars and lost cities.

But they aren't really, are they?

The archaeologist said one more thing in his interview that stuck with me. He stressed that despite the fact that he disagreed with the teenager's findings, he hoped it wouldn't discourage the young man from pursuing his interest in the Maya, and in space archaeology in general.

For it's a big world out there, and there are plenty more cities to find.

Diana

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

NINC Member Notes

The Best of Nink—**in print**

Want a print copy of the newsletter's best articles? Have you been meaning to read the newsletter ... but you forget about the electronic version? Are you behind on back issues and want a digest? Do you want a handy reference volume to look up favorite past articles?

We're producing a book of Nink's best original, evergreen articles from the past year to accelerate your business, marketing and craft. At $5, the full-size paperback is cheaper than printing out just one issue of Nink on your printer at home. Learn more about this special issue, coming this fall.

In memoriam

Ann LaFarge, a former editor for Dutton, Ballantine, Zebra, and Kensington, died May 27. She was 83.

She was the first editor who was allowed to join NINC, notes Terese Ramin. Read her obituary in *Publisher's Weekly*.

Nink Newsletter update

Nink is changing its distribution cycle to bring you great content faster after the conference. You'll receive the newsletters on the first day of each month as usual through September.

In October and November, look for super-sized issues arriving mid-month that pack in as much conference content as possible.

The lag time gives conference reporters an opportunity to write up their articles, and for editing, formatting, copy editing, and production—all just a few weeks after the conference.

That means we're skipping distribution Oct. 1, releasing extra-large newsletters approximately Oct. 15 and Nov. 15, and skipping a December issue. You can look forward to your regularly scheduled Nink resuming Jan. 1, 2017.

Additionally, **Nink is looking for an associate editor.** This person would train alongside the current Nink editor on editing, production, and distribution in 2017, in hopes of a seamless handoff in 2018. The Nink editor serves on NINC's board of directors and is appointed by the NINC president.

The Nink editor's duties are sourcing articles (seeking out subject matter experts for original articles and securing reprint rights from other publications), editing articles, formatting, production, and distribution via MailChimp.

You don't need to know how tools including Scrivener and MailChimp work just yet, but working as associate editor will benefit you because you'll learn tools that can be useful in your own author business.

Want to know more? Contact newsletter editor Heidi Joy Tretheway.

One more reason to attend NINC Master Class

Our conference beach is one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, notes TripAdvisor via Victoria Thompson.

More ways to promote self-published books

Steve Womack shared this list of ten ideas to promote self-published books on NINClink.

Contest opportunity

In an upcoming contest, *Library Journal* honors the best self-published ebooks in five genres: Romance, Mystery, Science Fiction, Fantasy and Young Adult.

Each genre prize winner will receive $1,000. All winners and honorable mentions will also receive a full *Library Journal* review in print and online, a promotional ad in *Library Journal*'s December "Best of Books" issue, and recognition at Library Journal Self-Published Ebook Awards reception at the 2017 American Library Association Midwinter Meeting.

The deadline for submissions is July 31, 2016. Submit your book here.

NINC Member Notes is a NINC member exclusive, and is not included in the public edition of Nink posted online.

NINC Membership Survey
How NINC members write, publish, and earn money

By Heidi Joy Tretheway

NINC is a powerful organization because of the collective publishing power of its members. But in the past decade, our organization hasn't conducted a comprehensive survey to answer some essential questions about who we are, how we publish, and how we're making money.

And my, how times have changed.

We knew anecdotally about self-publishing success and shifting incomes and book formats. Now we have stats that can help prospective members, industry professionals and potential sponsors understand how to best connect with our sophisticated and accomplished membership.

Over the three weeks that the survey was open to NINC members, we received an overwhelming response of more than 400 completed surveys. This represents more than half of NINC members, and we therefore believe it's appropriate to extrapolate on these results as representative of NINC members as a whole.

Executive summary

The key stats in NINC's survey are:

- 68% of NINC members are best-selling authors.
- 85% of NINC members are self-published.
- 72% of NINC members are traditionally published.
- Half of members are represented by an agent.
- NINC members have published more than 20,000 books—an average of 24 novels each.
- NINC members have an average of 15 years of publishing experience.
- One in five NINC members publishes books in 10 or more languages.
- NINC authors typically write in multiple genres, with romance, crime/mystery/thriller, women's fiction, fantasy, and action/suspense being most prevalent.

How long have NINC members been publishing?

We asked you for the year in which you published your first novel or significant work. The answers ranged from one year (two people indicated their first novel was published in 2015) to 47 years, with the member's first novel published in 1969.

On average, NINC members have 15 years' tenure as a published author, with the median (middle number) experience only slightly lower, at 13 years.
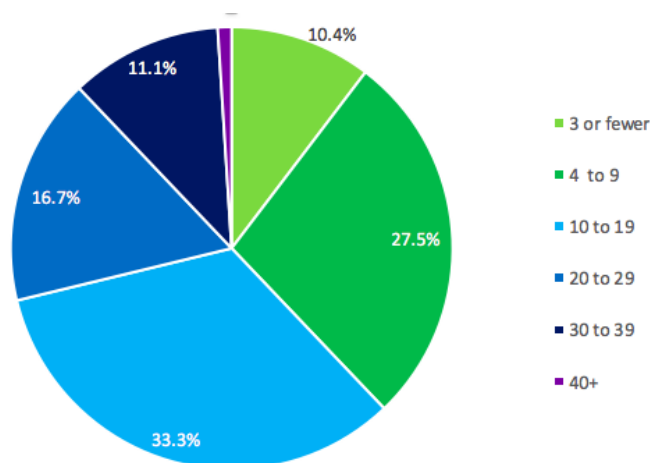
*Percentage of NINC members who have X number of years experience. N=396*

Where are NINC members in their careers?

We asked members to self-identify whether they are emerging, intermediate, or advanced in their self-publishing and traditional publishing careers.

More than 86% of respondents are currently self-publishing, but there is a wide range of experience levels. More than a third of NINC members identified themselves as "emerging" self-publishers, suggesting that NINC will serve members best by speaking to all levels of the self-pub market.

Nearly half of respondents indicated they are not currently traditionally publishing (though in a later question, you'll find that 72% have been traditionally published). Interestingly, of those who do traditionally publish, few consider themselves "emerging" authors in that market.
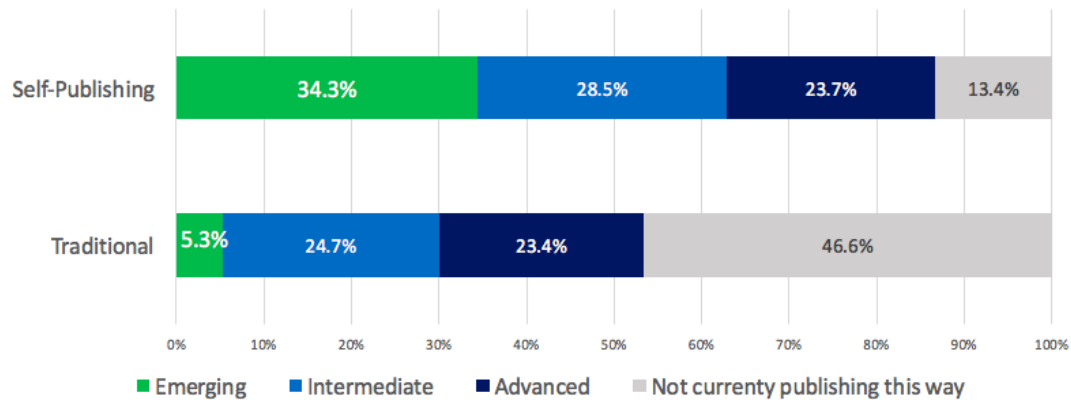
What kind of books do NINC members publish?

We asked NINC members how many works they have published in each category, including fiction of 30,000 words or more, short fiction, dramatic works, book-length nonfiction, and other works.

With more than 13,000 works reported by our representative sample of half of NINC members, we think it's safe to say that "NINC members have collectively published more than 20,000 works."

The lion's share of these—almost 9,400 novels—are fiction over 30,000 words. These books come in all genres … but we'll get to more on that later.

Short fiction was the second-most popular category, with 269 members publishing more than 2,500 works. Eighty-five members said they are publishing book-length nonfiction, 35 reported other works such as cookbooks, self-help and business books, and 15 have written dramatic works.
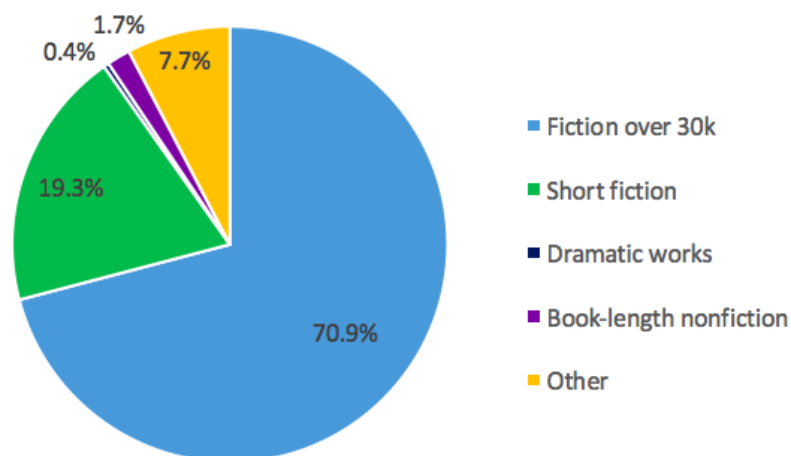

Works of NINC members, by category. Represents more than 13,000 total works.

How many novels have NINC members published?

Looking at the data on published works another way, we wanted to quantify how many novels (fiction over 30,000 words) each member has published.

You'll see the "long tail" in this chart, as eight members have published more than 100 books, and 47 members have 50 or more books to their credit.
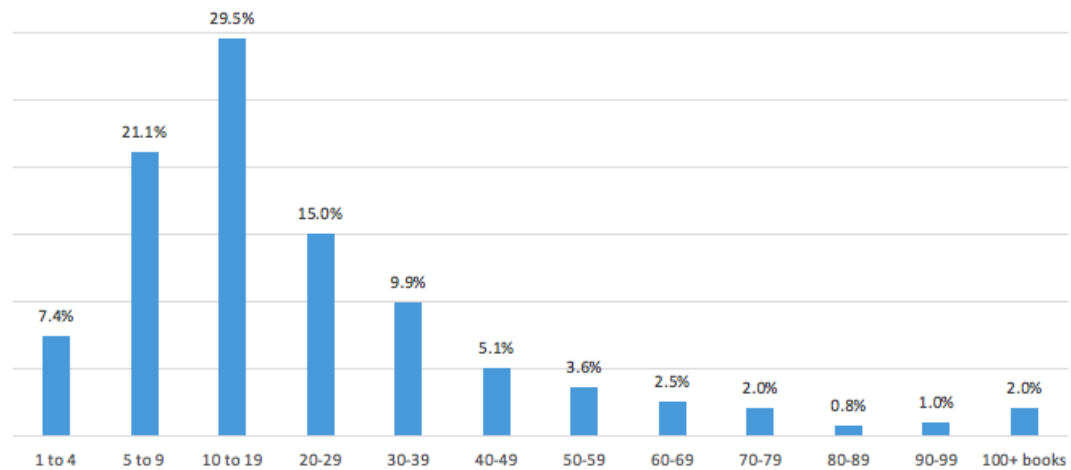
Percentage of NINC authors who have published X number of novels.

We calculated both the average number of books produced per member, as well as the median number of books, because in some cases a few authors reporting very high numbers of titles published skewed the average significantly higher.

	Total works	Members writing	Average per member	Median
Fiction over 30k	9,367	393	23.8	19
Short fiction	2,547	269	9.5	3
Dramatic works	53	15	3.5	3
Book-length nonfiction	229	85	2.7	2
Other	1,014	35	29.0	12

Collected works of NINC members, by category.

How many NINC members are best-selling authors?

We asked you to identify bestseller credits, including reaching the *New York Times* or *USA Today* lists, having a book in the Amazon Top 100 of all genres in the paid category, or another best-seller distinction.
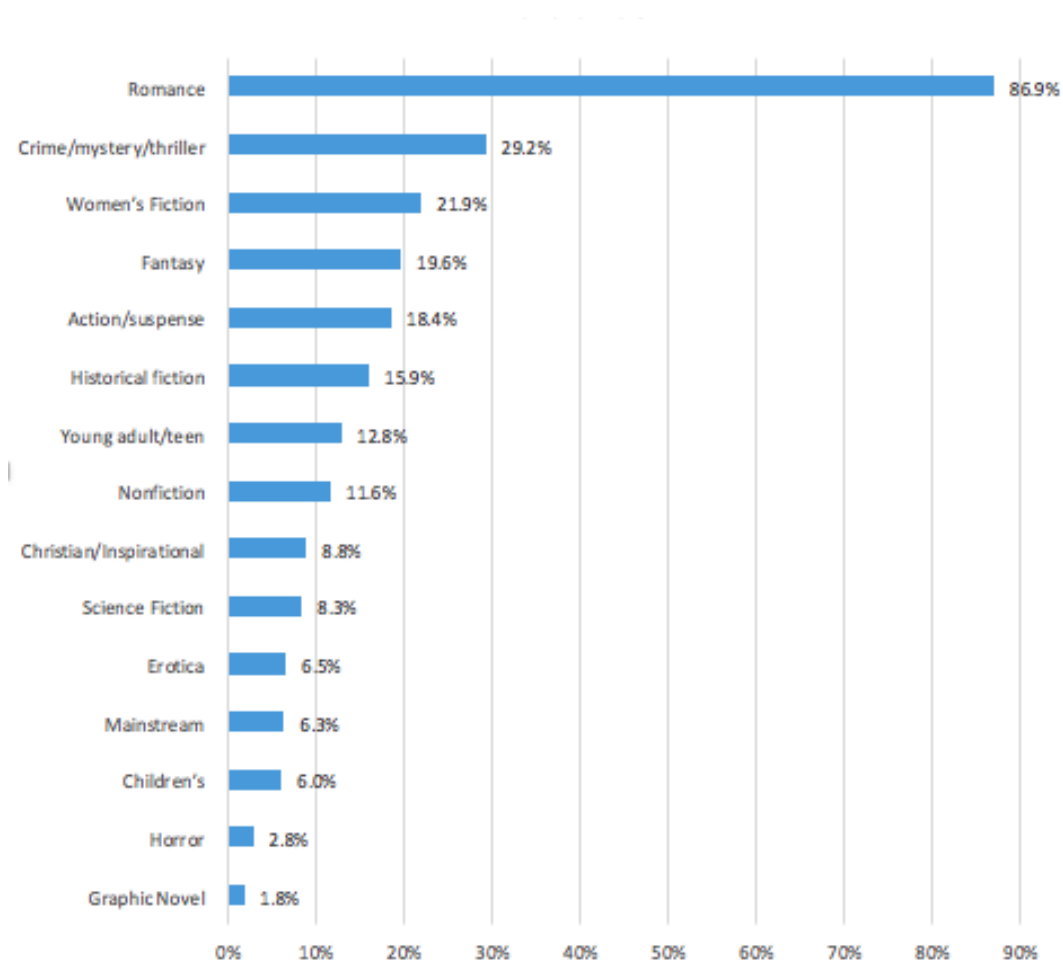
We learned that more than two-thirds of NINC members have achieved a best-selling status.

Bestseller status of NINC members.

## In what genres are NINC members writing?

NINC members' works reflect the diversity in commercial fiction. While romance was most prevalent, most members write in several genres.

Genres in which NINC members write.

Are most NINC members represented by agents?

About half of NINC members are not currently represented by an agent. Of those who work with an agent, 31% indicated that they have an agent, while almost 19% said some of their rights, such as foreign translations or certain books, are represented.
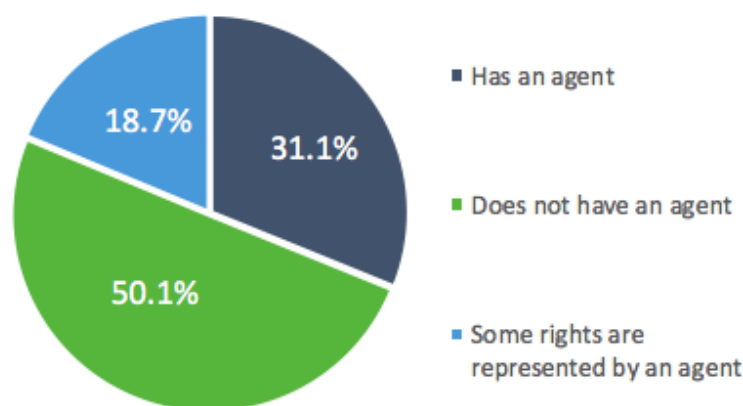
Percentage of NINC members who are represented by an agent.

How many NINC members' books are published in translation?

We asked members how many languages their books are translated into. While one-third of members sell their books in only one language, another third sell books in two to five languages, and a third sell books in six or more languages.

One in five NINC members have published books in ten or more languages.
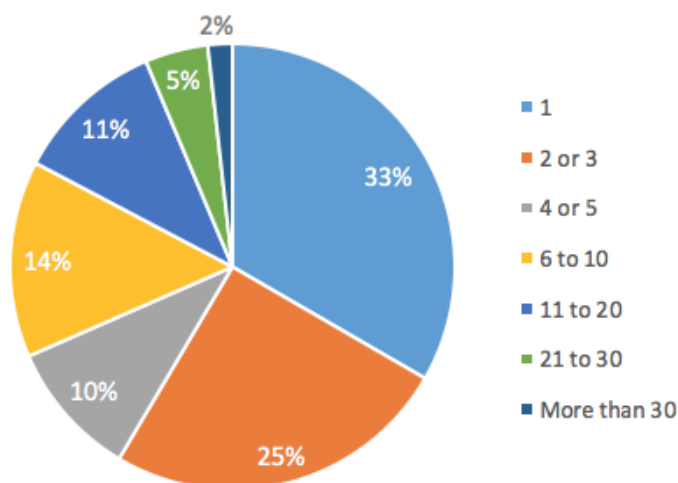
Percentage of NINC members who publish in X number of languages.

What portion of members' works are through each type of publisher?

We looked at how members' work is published in each type of publishing method. About half of members' books have been released by traditional large publishers, with another substantial portion (13.8%) released originally via a traditional publisher, but now self-

published.
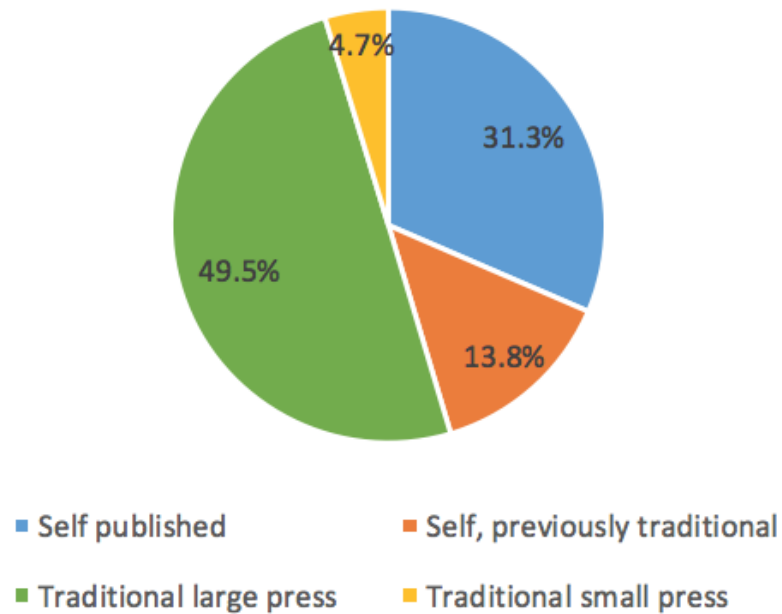
Percentage of NINC members' works released via each type of publisher.

A small portion of books fell into other categories—14 authors told us that 42 of their novels were originally self-published but are now published through a traditional press. Another five authors indicated their 36 total works were published through another method.

Below, our big-picture view of the most common types of publishing shows the number of members currently doing each publishing method in the blue bar. We then overlaid an orange line depicting the number of total works published via each method.

While 85% of NINC members indicated they have self-published books on the market, there are 20% more books released from NINC members via traditional presses.
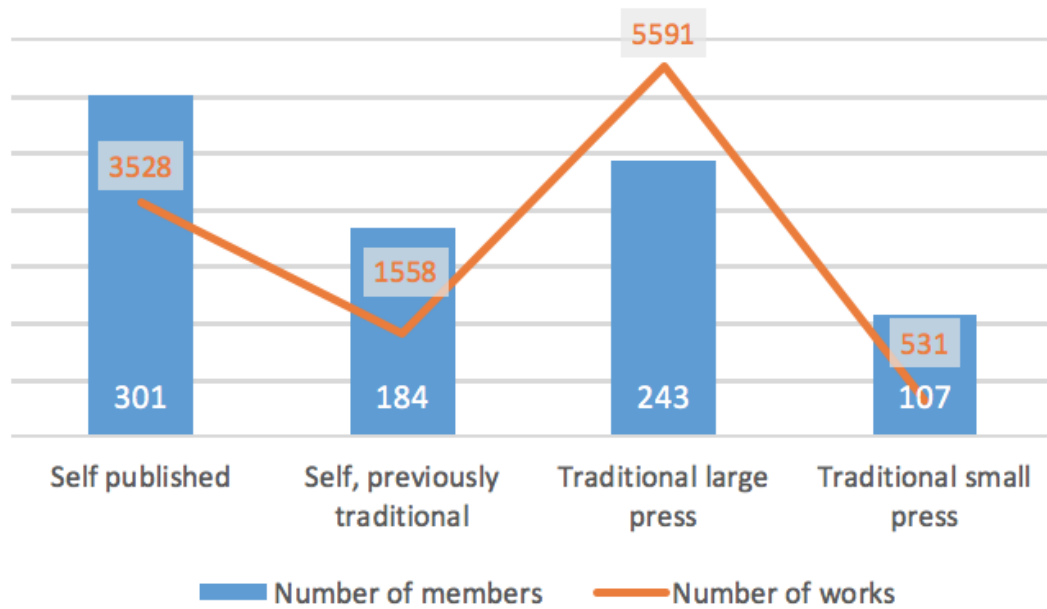
Various publishing formats used by NINC members.

It's important to note that since members can select more than one category, there is overlap from bar to bar on each chart. For example, 36 authors have self-published books that were previously traditionally published, and have not self-published other works.

As we sought to establish a number to reflect how NINC members publish, we chose to focus on books published over a career, rather than current publishing interests.

In some cases, the variance was minor—86% of authors reported that they were either emerging, intermediate, or advanced self-publishers. Compare that to 85% of authors who have self-published original books, or self-published books that were previously traditionally published.

However, the variance for traditional publishing was significant. While 72% of members have traditionally published books in their careers, 53.4% of members are still *currently* traditionally publishing, a 26% decline.

Where are NINC members making money?

We asked members to tell us what percentage of their incomes come from self publishing, large or small traditional presses, or other publishing-related income.

We learned that 140 NINC members generate all (or virtually all—more than 95%) of their income from self-publishing, and another 39 members report that less than 10% of their income is from self-publishing. Overall, 82% of members earned money self-publishing last year.

On the traditional publishing side, 60% of members earned money from traditional large publishers and 21% from small presses, or a total of 70% of NINC members (when duplicates from publishing with both large and small presses are removed).

Additionally, we looked at the average and median share of income earned from each

channel as a share of an author's total income. We learned that authors who are self-publishing on average earn about two-thirds of their income via self-publishing, yet the median is 90%.

Among those traditionally publishing with large presses, authors earn an average of 58% of their income from trad press, but the median skews higher, to 75%.
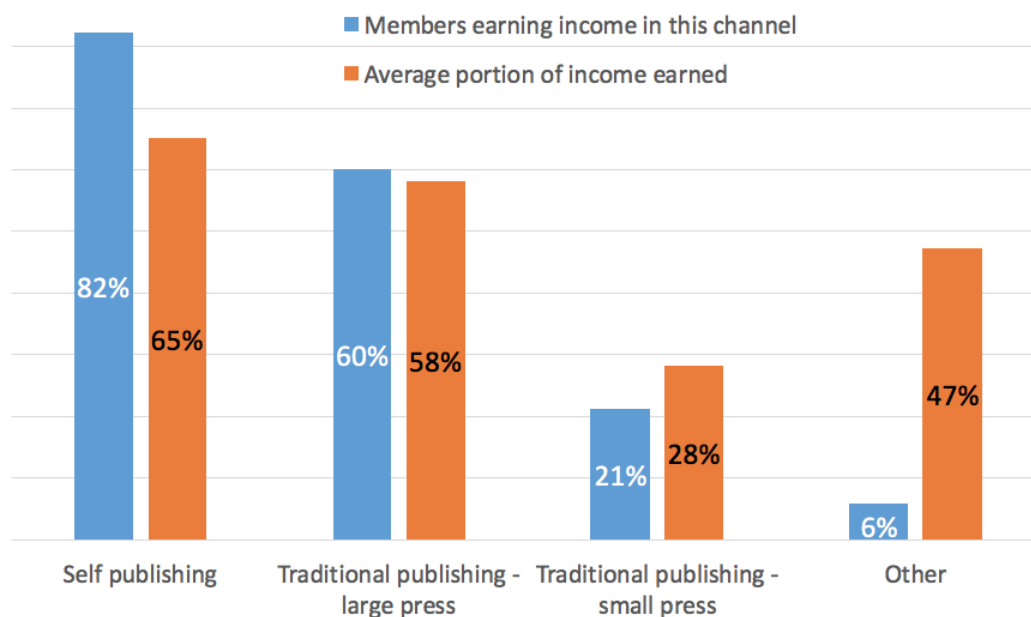
Percentage of NINC members who earn income per channel, and average portion of income earned per channel.

Finally, we looked at member income from selling books in various formats. Because not all members sell in every format, the averages total more than 100%.

The most prevalent and profitable format was ebook sales, with 379 members reporting that it generated on average three-quarters of their revenue. For nearly half of members, ebooks account for virtually all income.

Paperback sales income was reported by 326 members, who on average earn one-quarter of their income from this format. Hardcover sales were reported by 46 members, and while 173 members are producing audiobooks, on average they constitute just 5% of revenue (though for 33 members, audiobooks make up 10% or more of their revenue).
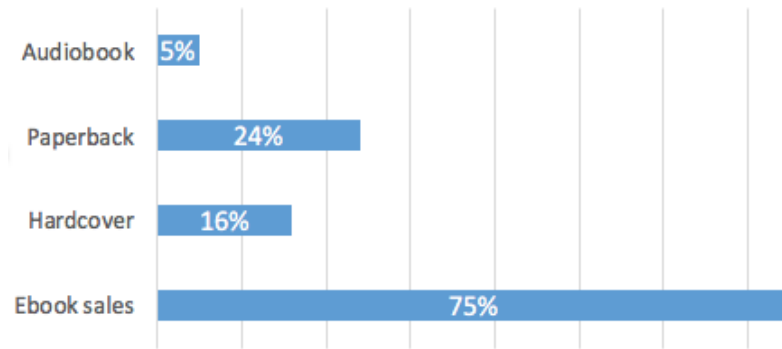
Percentage of income earned from each book format.

Heidi Joy Tretheway is the Nink newsletter editor and a member of the NINC board of directors. She lives a double life—part tech marketer, part racy romance author—and the other soccer moms aren't sure what to make of either one. A recovering journalist and frequent traveler, Tretheway is working on her ninth book from her home near Portland, Oregon.

Editor's note: Since this article references dozens of percentages, we used the symbol "%" instead of the word "percent" for brevity.

NINC Master Class

The 2016 conference will accelerate your business and hone your craft

By Julie Leto

The conference team is currently working hard on the programming for this year's conference.

Unlike other conferences, we do not accept proposals from speakers in order to determine who is coming to our conference and their speaking topic. Instead, NINC seeks out the best speakers to fit our theme and focus and then we work with them one-on-one to craft workshops and panels that are tailored to our very specific needs.

That's why we lead with information about our speakers and then follow-up later with specific topics … which are coming very soon.

This year, we need the membership to participate in shaping First Word. You can be a part of it even if you don't plan to attend the conference. This will shape up to be an intense, one-of-a-kind experience—if people heed the call.

Also, please note that **the last day to register for the conference is Aug. 15.** Information about workshops and programming will be released to the BeachNINC2016 and NINClink loops ... make sure you are signed up to get the latest.

Call for projects

We're pleased to ask the NINC membership for volunteers to participate in our First Word Master Class day on Thursday, Sept. 22. This year's program is designed to bring together a panel of outstanding specialists from the industry in each of four areas:

- Craft
- Creativity
- Business
- Marketing

Our key interest this year is interactivity: we want the depth and experience of the NINC membership on stage with industry guests in a nuanced dialogue that reflects and informs many of the issues authors encounter.

To that end, we're making a call for proposals, and we hope you're interested in submitting one. We're looking for a written description of a publishing situation you are facing where you'd like the opinions/assessments of our panel of experts. The proposal should be:

1. A written explanation of your project (no more than 750 words, initially).
2. A "live" project. Something you're working with now or preparing to tackle.
3. A challenge for you in one of our four Master Class topic areas. Whether in the very early stages or in full release, we're interested in something that has stymied you. Maybe you've cracked it—in that case, you're looking for feedback from our masters on how to enhance your solution, maybe suggest alternatives. Or maybe you're still struggling with it—in that case, our masters will respond with guidance that might show you a way forward.
4. A project that raises a question. For example, if a new mystery manuscript you're working on might have particular appeal to the millennial readership—and you know that your publisher is aiming for the older, more traditional mystery readership—what can you do to sell your publisher on the importance of taking the younger route or find new readers of your work? How do you get buy-in when you need it from the house?
5. A project that illustrates a widely usable issue. Something related only to a very rare circumstance in your own project might not translate to the wider audience. (If you're not sure, tell us about it and we'll be happy to consider it.)
6. A project you're willing to present onstage. Ideally, we'd like to have a short presentation of five to seven minutes from you about your project. If you'd like to use visuals, a PowerPoint might be very helpful for the audience in focusing on your project the challenge the masters are addressing. We can give you starter slides for your PowerPoint and help you if you need to put it together (normally, three to five slides is all you'll need). But please be aware of timing constraints—see below—because we'll be preparing a lot of presentations and will need to have your material early enough for our masters to review it and consider their responses.
7. Timing : Submit your project proposal by Aug. 1.

We will be providing our masters with details of the projects they'll work with about a month prior to First Word. This gives our industry experts the best possible chance to be ready with their most articulate responses.

To make that deadline, we need your project proposals by Aug. 1. That way, we can review, ask you questions, and work with you on presentation slides.

We will select no more than four major projects per area so that each one will be explored in-depth. We also hope to have time for some "quickies," which are dilemmas that won't take long to address.

We hope you'll want to participate. The more varied, creative, and specific your projects, the better—this is the kind of situation in which specificity actually creates universality.

Here's some background on what we mean: in Boston this year at The Muse and the Marketplace conference produced by Grub Street, Porter Anderson moderated an expert-feedback panel with just three projects presented and five expert responders. Fauzia Burke, who

joins us in First Word, was one of them.

The focus there was on discoverability for each project. (The Grub Street program is attended by more aspirational authors than NINC's membership comprises, so these were writers newer to publication and its many issues.)

In one case, the author had written a historical novel based on an ancient Roman chef who worked in the imperial palace. Her challenge was how to tap into the foodie elements of the story—recipes, party planning, etc.—in a way that might draw attention to the book for interested readers but without eclipsing the novel itself, which has many serious elements of Salieri-like career dilemmas and professional jealousy in a setting of ruthlessly politicized personalities.

This dilemma gave the team of experts a great chance to weigh marketing availabilities vs. the value of a powerful story: how can it all coexist profitably?

In another case, an author had written a work of fiction based on a horrific true story of miscarried justice and unpunished crime. Many years of painstaking research went into the piece and the challenge for this forthcoming title was to represent its *In Cold Blood*-like nature for a story that's anything but feel-good.

We've got the masters to work with your project. Let us hear what you'd like to put to them, and we'll be delighted to hear from you.

How to submit

Send an email, with an attachment that is a description of your situation/project/dilemma to our conference admin, Hannah McBride. Try to keep it to around 750 words, and we will come back with more questions, if necessary.

The project *can be anonymous*, and you do not have to be at the conference to participate. While we'd like you to present your project in person, you can present via video or, as in the anonymous situations, we can have someone else present for you.

This is a new and exciting project. If you have questions, please direct them to Hannah, who will forward them to the appropriate person.

Email Hannah McBride at Hannah.mcbride83@yahoo.com. *Please* put "FIRST WORD" in the subject line.

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.

Favorite Apps For Authors

Boost productivity, make great teasers, self-edit and more

By S.J. Pajonas

When I'm on social media helping other authors, I often field a lot of questions about apps, programs, and workflows that I use to help me be a more efficient author and self-publisher.

If there's one thing to strive for in this world, it's efficiency. Being efficient at the minutiae means making more time for the important things in life, like writing.

Here are my favorite apps for authors that will help you breeze through your days and conquer your to-do list.

9 out of 10 authors agree, Scrivener completes them … and their manuscripts
Scrivener (Mac and PC, $45)

Possibly the most powerful tool in your arsenal (and also the most polarizing piece of software for authors), Scrivener is the ultimate writing tool, even if you don't use it for writing! Yes, you *can* use it just to organize your research or write blog posts.

Whether you write fiction or non-fiction, linear or non-linear, with an outline or by the seat of your pants, it works with your preferred way of working. You can use it even if you only use five percent of its features.

Scrivener is extremely powerful, and for some, it can be overwhelming when you first open it. But rest assured, if you watch a few YouTube tutorials (Literature and Latte have many, but you can also buy the Learn Scrivener Fast course), you'll be on your way to being a more productive and efficient author.

Scrivener also saves your work automatically, backs up, and recovers when it crashes. You can also export your book when you're finished to Amazon mobi, epub, PDF, Word, and two dozen other formats.

Self-edit with these tools and never repeat repeat yourself
Grammarly (free or paid at $30/month) and/or AutoCrit ($12/month)

Using the combination of AutoCrit to massage my sentences, get rid of passive verbs, dial

down repetitive phrases, and eliminate overused words, I can self-edit a book quickly before I send it off to my editor.

When you have the paid version of AutoCrit, you can suck in your entire manuscript and see flaws and mistakes from a macro level all the way down to the sentence level.

When you're done editing your prose, you can then run it through Grammarly to check for misplaced commas, misspellings, wrong verb tenses, and many other things.

These tools help me cut back on editing fees and extra hours spent looking at my manuscript, only to realize I used the word "get" six times in one paragraph. Now, AutoCrit catches that for me.

Make slick teaser images, Facebook ads, and even covers
Canva (free, $1 per stock image if you choose to use them)

Whether you're a traditional author, hybrid, or independent, you still need to create images to promote your books, either online or for print. Teasers to upload to Facebook, Facebook ads, blog images, Twitter profile backgrounds, book covers, memes … the list is endless.

If you're a novice with graphic design programs, you can easily use Canva to make the majority of the images you'll need to promote your books. Canva has a simple interface with popular size templates to get you started. They also have an extensive library of stock images you can use for $1 each.

If you're a more experienced graphic designer, you probably already use Photoshop or similar programs such as Pixelmator or GIMP, and it's worth mentioning that these programs are available if you want to level up.

Don't go without this powerful tool for your website
Wordpress (Wordpress.org installation itself is free but you'll need to pay for hosting, price varies)

When I graduated from college with a degree and $20,000 in debt, I decided to become a web developer and write on the side. (It was probably one of my better ideas.)

Now, with 18 years of web development under my belt, other authors ask me what I recommend when it comes to websites and I always say Wordpress self-hosted, every single time.

There's nothing better for your web presence that a solid installation of Wordpress on a reliable hosting company, a slick and easy-to-use theme, and all the flexibility that Wordpress provides.

If you want something to happen on your website, there's a Wordpress plug-in out there to handle it. I have yet to be let down and I've been using Wordpress for 10 years.

Want to put the Facebook ad pixel on your website but don't know how to code? There's a plug-in for that (it's called Facebook Conversion Pixel, by the way). Want to add "Related Posts" or "Popular Posts" to your blog pages? There's a plug-in for that.

Want to embed Google Analytics? There's a plug-in for that. Want to add progress bars to your sidebar so people can see how you're doing writing your next book? You guessed it, there's a plug-in for that too.

Be sure to ask around and price out various hosting companies, and make sure they

provide adequate customer support if you need help. I use Pair.com for all my hosting and URL buying business.

People ask me if Wordpress.com is a good alternative, and I cannot recommend it. The dot com version doesn't have as much flexibility as the self-hosted version and you fall prey to their blogging ecosystem that allows your work to be reblogged. I'm not a fan of reblogging outside of Tumblr, so I suggest a self-hosted website.

Beauty and brains for your links—make them smart *and* pretty
Pretty Link Pro ($47 one-time fee) or SmartURL.it (free)

If you have a Wordpress site, buy and install the Pretty Link Pro plug-in. The Pro plug-in is worth the extra cash because it allows you to import and export, which is a godsend when you're managing 100+ links.

Most people know what Bitly is, a link shortener that allows you to put in a long link and gives you a pretty, short link in return. But once you make that Bitly link, you can't change it or the URL it points to. That's a problem if you've sent out a media kit or put that link in the back of your books.

Pretty Link Pro is your own version of Bitly, running on your own site, that allows you to change those back-end links whenever you want. It gives you the power to make changes to links in the back of books, track those links, and gather data on how those links are used. It's awesome. I cannot live without it now.

Once you can control your links and where they go, you won't want to be without this either. Plus, I love the fact that I own this data on my own server. It's mine, and some third-party corporation can't do anything with my data.

Now, if you don't have a Wordpress site, you can use SmartURL.it. It can do what Pretty Link Pro does and allow you to modify your links on the backend once you make them. It's free, *but* they own your data.

It's a good alternative, but not necessary if you can use Pretty Links Pro instead.

Evernote is your answer to leaving your paper notebook in a café
Evernote (Mac or PC, iOS or Android. Free, but I use the premium version for extra storage, $50 per year)

I know that authors fall into several camps on this issue, but I'm going to tell you about how Evernote has come to be my favorite app in the world.

As I said before, I've been a web developer for 18 years, which means my whole adult life has been about typing. My handwriting? Worse than a milk-drunk two-year-old. I can barely read it myself! Writing with a pen gives me hand cramps.

But my fingers are fast, my dictation is solid, and my phone is always by my side. Enter Evernote. It's the virtual version of the pile of notebooks on my desk.

Inside Evernote, I keep a notebook for every project I'm working on, ideas I have, blog posts I want to write, recipes I've saved, shopping lists, things I want to do on my trip to Japan in August, etc. Each notebook has notes in it, specific things I want to remember about each project, and they're all searchable! I can even drag other documents in like PDFs or images.

On my phone, I can take a picture of a flower on my walk, add it to a note, and set a

reminder to look up its name when I get home.

Evernote is flexible and easy to use, and it's a life-saver for someone like me who struggles with a poor memory. In fact, I'm writing this article in Evernote right now. When I'm done with it, I can send a link to it to Nink's editor and she can read it in a browser with no difficulties.

If you want to learn more about how I use Evernote as an author, check out my YouTube video on Evernote For Authors.

Distribute your books with ease and gain some newsletter subscribers along the way.
Instafreebie (Free for the basic package, but MailChimp integration comes at the Plus package, $20/month)

If you give away a lot of books, either to your mailing list subscribers or during Facebook parties, then you'll love Instafreebie, especially if you're new to being an author and want to grow your mailing list.

Instafreebie is a way for you to give away your books without having to do the heavy lifting yourself. You upload an epub version of your book, and Instafreebie will make an Amazon mobi, epub, and PDF version available for you to give away.

You can set up campaigns to run that limit the number of books distributed or end on a particular date. And when you have a giveaway, all you have to do is create that campaign, send the link to the winner, and Instafreebie will do the rest. They will even help your winner get their book onto their device if they're having problems.

At the $20 per month Plus plan, you can hook Instafreebie up to MailChimp and collect email addresses from people who download your books. You can make it optional, if you like, or mandatory. You can also set up campaigns of free books for Instafreebie to offer to its community.

This is a great way of adding mailing list subscribers who are interested in your work. If you feed these people directly into a MailChimp list that uses automation and welcomes them, you're bound to capture some good readers.

The people who own Instafreebie are also pretty great too. They often run promotions you can get in on, or you can contact them and ask to be featured in any relevant upcoming events.

I highly recommend them! I've grown my mailing list with good readers this way. It's worth the monthly expense.

Explore the Amazon store, learn its secrets, and save time
KDSpy and KDROI ($47 each)

KDSpy and KDROI are both plug-ins for either Firefox or Google Chrome that can help you both dive into the depths of the Amazon store or submit a discounted or free book to more than 20 sites that will feature it.

I like these plug-ins for a few reasons. They're developed by a nonfiction author who understands how the Amazon store works, and he takes great care to make sure that the plug-ins are updated and working properly on a routine basis.

Authors can use KDSpy to analyze top categories on Amazon, see which books and keywords are making the most revenue, and figure out where potential holes in the market exists that could be filled with new work.

Using KDROI when you have a free or 99-cent book, you can save time submitting them to all the discount sites by using the plug-in instead. With a few clicks and adding in some additional information about the book, the KDROI will take care of grunt work while you get back to writing.

Both plug-ins are time-saving tools, well worth their price, and come with lifetime updates.

Need to track your sales? This tool will put all your data in one place.
BookTrakr (sliding scale model of subscription based on how many books you want to track, anywhere from $4.99 per month to $99.99 per month)

If you're the type of person who loves to collect data on sales and revenue, you'll want to turn in your spreadsheets for BookTrakr.

Juggling the dashboards of KDP, Apple, Kobo, etc. can be quite cumbersome and time-consuming. BookTrakr, though, will keep all of your data in one spot. They provide daily emails, charts of income, and even let you know when you have new reviews on books. They can also access data from Draft2Digital and CreateSpace, if you use them.

The only drawback to BookTrakr is that you need to provide them with your account information and passwords in order for them to access your sales data. This is a major stumbling block for some, but BookTrakr staff assures their clients that all passwords and login information are encrypted.

If you can't afford to hire a staff member to update an Excel spreadsheet daily, make graphs, and alert you to issues or new reviews, BookTrakr is a good alternative.

Project management for people who prefer lists to spreadsheets
Trello (free to $9/month for multiple users)

If you love the organization, then Trello is for you. Trello is basically what happens when Pinterest, Google Docs, to-do lists, and a calendar have a baby.

Create a new project for each book you're writing, add photos to mood boards, develop a to-do list for things that need to be accomplished, and set due dates for selected tasks.

At its core, Trello is an online project management tool, and when you use it to manage your novels and your business, it can be very powerful. If you work with a virtual assistant, consider upgrading to the Team plan. You'll be able to assign your virtual assistant tasks with due dates and have Trello take care of the reminders.

The nice thing about this app is that it's available both on desktop and on smart phones, so you'll be able to access your data from anywhere.

When you use Trello at the Team level, it can also access such programs as MailChimp, Evernote, and Dropbox. But even at the free setting, there's a lot Trello can do on its own.

Zone out, tune in, and get stuff done
Brain.fm (from $4.99/month to $149 lifetime membership)

Need to get into the groove? Having trouble concentrating? Then you need the Brain.fm.

I don't know what kind of voodoo magic this site employs but something about listening to the tracks it provides makes me extremely productive. It's not exactly music. It's not exactly

noise. And I have heard that it makes some people a little nervous or anxious, but for me it works like a charm.

An hour spent writing and listening to Brain.fm is more productive than three hours combined! It not only works to help you focus, you can use it to relax or lull you off to sleep.

The Brain.fm staff use a combination of auditory science, personalized training, and music to boost performance or calm frazzled nerves. You can't use this tool all day long, but it's great for short sprints or a session or two of writing per day.

Be sure to read the FAQs and warnings before trying it out for yourself.

Professional signatures are at hand!
WiseStamp (free or $48/year for more signatures and templates)

WiseStamp is a handy little program. If you do a lot of email correspondence, then you know how important your email signature is. It should provide basic information including your name, title, email address or phone number, website URL, and all social media links.

Gathering all of that data together into one concise email signature can be a pain, especially if you struggle with putting that signature into every email program that you use.

WiseStamp cuts through all the annoying bits and gives you a clean and professional looking email signature in only a few steps.

The first signature is free and can be used in any web-based email program or exported for other email apps, as well as for emails sent from your phone, plus all the basic templates are free too.

If Excel repels you, Airtable is your friend
Airtable (free or $12/month for Plus, $24/month for Pro)

Airtable is the perfect application for people who struggle with spreadsheets or Microsoft Excel. I, personally, have a lot of issues with understanding spreadsheets, and I have a background as a computer programmer!

I just never learned Excel, so I have yet to grasp its finer points. Airtable solves a lot of these issues for me. By producing a graphical interface to interact with your spreadsheet, Airtable makes entering data simple.

In a way, it's like the front end Google Forms for Google Spreadsheets, with fields for entering in data instead of hassling with cells and rows. I like the clean user interface and the ability to designate examples as "base" sheets and then modify those bases for what I need.

Airtable is especially great for keeping track of word counts, sales or income, or even beat sheets. Import in your current spreadsheets and get to work right away.

This app can also be accessed via desktop or smartphone, making it easy to access your data from anywhere.

I hope these apps and websites will make all of the elements of your author business—from writing to marketing to project-tracking—sharper and more effective.

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Stephanie Pajonas (S.J.) is a writer, knitter, amateur astrologer, Capricorn, and Japanophile. She loves foxes, owls, sushi, yoga pants, Evernote, and black tea. When she's not writing, she's thinking about writing or spending time outside, unless it's winter. She hates winter. Someday she'll own a house in both hemispheres so she can avoid the season entirely. She's a mom to two great kids and lives with her husband and family outside NYC. They have no pets. Yet. When it comes to her work, expect the unexpected. She doesn't write anything typical. Learn more at her [website](#).

Keeping up with Kindle

What changes on Kindle Unlimited mean for authors and publishers

By Chloe Kizer

This article, recapping the evolution of KU and its payment structure, was reprinted with permission from Written Word Media.

Kindle Unlimited (KU), a subscription service through Amazon that allowed readers unlimited access to books for just $10 a month, was unveiled by Amazon in July 2014.

The reception by readers was mostly positive: *Finally, a Netflix for Books!* The reaction from authors and publishers was mixed. Kindle Unlimited was doing to independent authors what Spotify did to musicians. By offering their work for free to subscribers, they were potentially lowering the revenue that an author or publisher could make from each book.

In this article, we explore how KU has evolved over the past two years and its current impact on authors.

Kindle Unlimited & KDP Select: A history

Since the inception of KDP Select, there has always been a KDP Select Global Fund, which is a pot of money that goes to authors whose books are downloaded for free through Amazon's eBook programs.

Authors who enrolled their ebooks in KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) Select prior to the launch of KU could have their books downloaded for free by Kindle owners who were allotted one free eBook per month through the Kindle Owners Lending Library.

In the days prior to KU, the Global Fund totaled around $1 million, and was divided proportionally amongst the authors who had their books downloaded.

In July 2014, with the introduction of KU, the Global Fund increased to $2.4 million. As more readers signed up for KU and more authors enrolled in KDP Select, that Global Fund increased to $11.5 million by July 2015, and today sits just shy of $15 million.
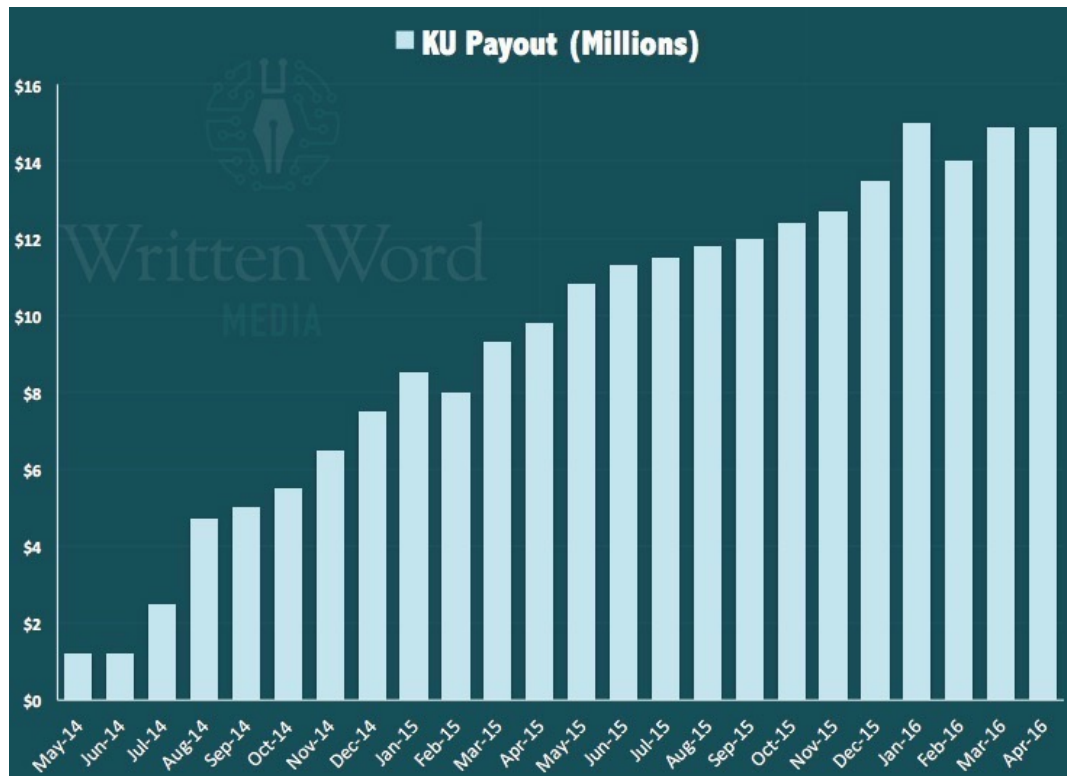
A whopping $131.6 million was paid out to authors through the KDP Select Global Fund in 2015. If the pot stays at its current size ($14.9 million per month) for the rest of 2016, Amazon will pay out $228.6 M to authors this year.

It is possible that the Global Fund will continue to grow in the remaining months of 2016, which would make the total Global Fund payout for 2016 north of $228.6 million.

For the first year of KU, the payouts were simple: Each author was paid every time someone downloaded and read at least 10 percent of their book.

When KU was a year old, in June 2015, Amazon announced that they would begin paying participating authors by pages read, instead of by number of books downloaded.

At the same time, Amazon introduced KENPC (Kindle Edition Normalized Page Count), which accounted for type size and line spacing to prevent anyone from cheating the system and artificially making their books longer.

Amazon calculated the payout per page by beginning with their monthly KDP Select Global Fund and dividing it by the total number of (KENP) pages read. That first month it was decreed that each page was worth $0.005779.

[Nink editor's note: that makes a 300-page novel, read through to completion, worth $1.73, while a book priced at $2.99 with an Amazon royalty of 70 percent would earn $2.09.]

As more readers and more authors entered into the KU system, the Global Fund size did not compensate for the increasing number of pages read every month, so the payout per page read dropped steadily in 2015.
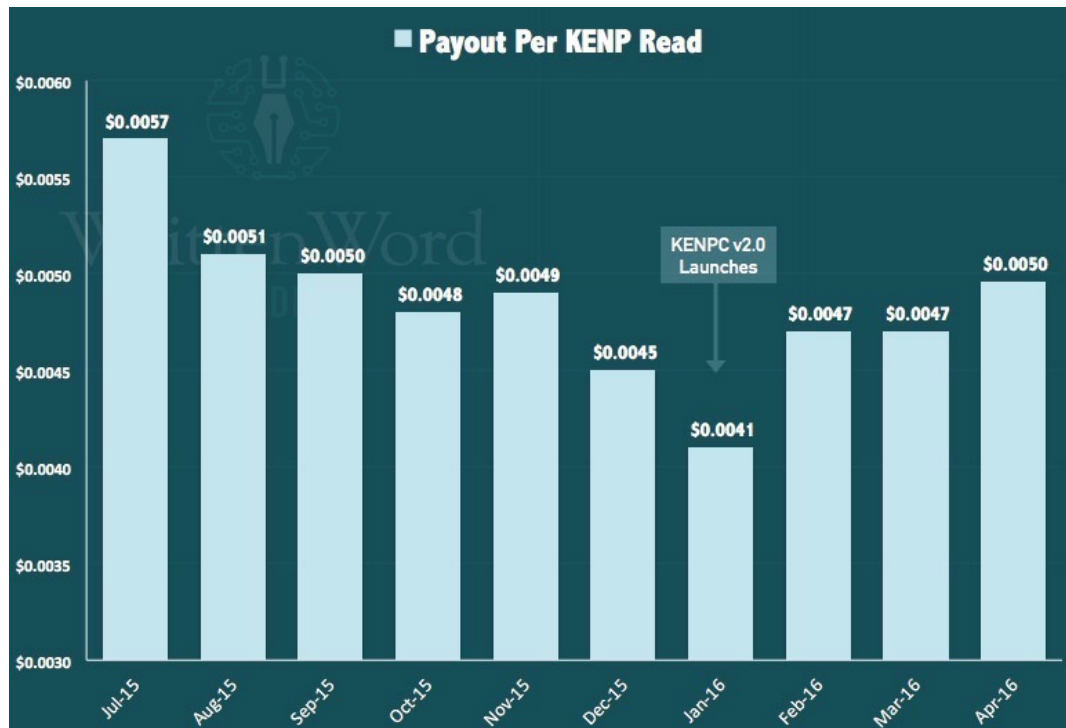
In January of 2016, Amazon announced yet another change in how they were going to pay authors with the introduction of KENPC v2 (Kindle Edition Normalized Page Count). This was supposed to standardize for additional spacing and text features.

Some authors saw their page counts, and thus their total potential payout per book, drop, while others saw them rise. Amazon claimed that the average change across all KDP titles would be under 5 percent, but individual authors saw up to 10 percent changes in page length.

An additional change implemented in v2 was the capping of payouts at 3,000 pages. This affected mostly dictionaries and large reference books, but did have some implications for larger boxed sets as well. Since these changes, the payout per page has increased back up toward $0.005 per page.

Calculating payout by book

Under KU, using April 2016's payout numbers, these are the maximum payouts per book based on total pages read:

KENP Pages Read	Payout Per Page*	Max Payout
150	$0.00496	$0.75
300	$0.00496	$1.50
450	$0.00496	$2.25
700	$0.00496	$3.50
1,000	$0.00496	$5.00
3,000	$0.00496	$15.00
6,000	$0.00496	$15.00

based on payout numbers from April 2016

Looking at these numbers, it is easy to see why many authors were upset by the change to pay per page. Before KU, if you wrote a 150-page ebook and priced it at $2.99, you would make $2.09 (based on a 70 percent author royalty) off of a sale of that book and you would realize that revenue in the payment cycle corresponding to that download (typically 60 days after the sale).

Under KU, that same book nets you $0.75, and that is only once a reader completes the entire book, which might happen 24 hours or six months after the reader borrows the book.

Additionally, authors don't know what the payout per page will be until the following month, so it's hard to determine what the maximum value of a book in KU is in any given month.

Authors do have a choice of whether their book is included in KU. An author can simply opt out of KU altogether by not enrolling their book in KDP Select. This decision proves agonizing for many, and there are authors who make good arguments for both sides.

Hugh Howey, a successful indie author, offers some perspective in his blog post Why KU Short Fiction Still Makes Sense. He argues that the KENP system is leveling the playing field among indie authors. The amount of work that goes into writing 60,000 words is the same, regardless of whether you publish those 60,000 words as one novel or six, 10,000 word short stories.

Under the KENP system, both scenarios are compensated equally, instead of being skewed in favor of short stories, which were often priced the same as full length novels.

Howey is supportive of Amazon, and sung their praises in a recent interview with Digital Book World. "Kindle Unlimited is just one example of the enormous sums of money an author misses out on by going with a major publisher. We're talking $150 million a year going directly to authors, and if you sign with a major publisher, you are taking yourself out of that pool," Howey said.

However, some authors argue that through inclusion in KDP Select (and by extension, KU) authors are losing out on other revenue streams and becoming increasingly more reliant on Amazon.

Controversies

Kindle Unlimited has sparked its fair share of complaints and controversies.

From a promotion and payment perspective, the biggest downside to KU from the beginning has been that authors no longer get paid for books that readers borrow and never read.

We all have that stack of books we want to read, but never seem to get to. In the early days of indie ebook authorship, if your cover and blurb were good enough to prompt a sale, then you got paid.

Now the game has changed and is rewarding increasingly higher quality, engaging content. As competition increases, covers and blurbs become more important to make ebooks stand out from the crowd, with the crux of success coming from the the content of a book and the quality of its storytelling.

The most notable and recent controversy concerned the placement of the table of contents in books enrolled in KU. Some authors were placing a link at the beginning of their eBooks which directed the reader to a table of contents that lived at the back of the book.

Since the number of pages read by a reader (which is what the payout is based off of) is measured by noting the furthest page in a book that a reader views, some believed that authors were cheating the system by preemptively pushing readers to the end of their books.

It turns out that this was not as impactful as many believed.

How do authors drive KU borrows?
The same marketing tactics that work for selling books also work for driving KU borrows:
- Promote your title to readers (through your email list, Facebook or Google ads, and features on deal sites).
- Drive enough sales or download volume to rise in the bestseller charts.
- Activity on the title spurs Amazon's algorithm to recommend your book to other readers with similar tastes.
- Halo sales continue after your promotion has run; KU borrows turn into KENP read.
- Run another promotion 90 days later once momentum declines.

KU has two fundamental perks for indie authors who are actively marketing their titles.

First, it is thought that Amazon gives preferential treatment to KU titles, although there is no definitive proof. A glance through the Kindle Top Charts shows a large portion of the best performing books as eligible through KU.

Perhaps this is simply because a KU borrow counts the same as a normal sale or download, so it is easier for these titles to climb the charts. The effect of this is discussed in the most recent Author Earnings report.

Second, the major publishing houses don't publish their books through the KU program, so the competition within the KU program (which includes the books listed in the Kindle Countdown Deal charts, and elsewhere) are other indies or small presses. The major traditional publishers are not currently competing.

The primary difference when marketing a title enrolled in KU is how quickly you can measure the results of your efforts. For a title not enrolled in KU measurements is simple: authors watch their sales graph spike, and then watch halo sales come through in the following days. Authors tally up the total earnings from the promotion and compare it to the time and money spent actively marketing the title.

Evaluating return on investment
In a typical book marketing plan, the return on investment equals total sales minus the marketing cost and the percentage Amazon takes.

For a title enrolled in KU, there is an additional component to measure: KENP read.

The challenge here is twofold. First, readers who borrow a title during the promotion might not read that book until six months later. So there is an extensive time lag between the

promotion and the results of the promotion.

Second, authors don't know what the payout per page will be until the following month. So it is difficult to ascribe a value to pages read that do come through in the days following the promotion.

Many authors make a best guess by using the prior month's payout per page to get to an approximate value of the KENP read in the weeks following a promotion. Sophisticated authors will look back at promotions over a three- to six-month window to aggregate the full effect, and corresponding full cost of their promotional activity, to account for the lag.

What's next for Amazon KDP Select and Kindle Unlimited?

Kindle Unlimited has changed the way that many people read books. By giving independent authors an arena in which they can sell their books without the competition of mainstream publishers, KU has empowered them to find audiences in new ways.

But all the while, Amazon reminds authors that they hold the keys to the coffers, and can always change the rules. It's impossible to predict what new perks and programs Amazon will release in the coming years, but being at the top of the ebook and book markets appears to be a top priority.

Authors still have control over many things: whether to enroll in KDP Select, the packaging of each book, and the quality of the content inside. Successful authors focus on these elements and experiment with programs such as KDP Select to determine the best path to success for each of their titles.

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Chloe Kizer is a professional book nerd. She loves big words, big books, big dogs, and big adventures.

This article was reprinted with permission from Written Word Media. Written Word Media's mission is to empower authors and publishers to reach their audience and help readers find their next great book. The Written Word Media family currently includes four websites (NewInbooks, Freebooksy, Bargain Booksy, and Red Feather Romance) that all cater to different types of reader audiences.

Written Word Media works with more than 24,000 authors, many of whom are self-published, and works with three of the five major publishers as well as a long list of smaller publishers and publicists on book promotions. Written Word Media has a combined audience of over 700,000 readers, of which over 500,000 receive email book recommendations based on their genre and device preferences.

The Dirty Dozen

12 ways not to write a mystery novel

By Jacqueline Diamond

Not again. Please, not again.

Struggling to conquer my fear, I reach out and click on the screen. No! I draw back in horror, the air suddenly heavy in my lungs.

Damn. Not another mystery novel that starts with the villain slashing up an innocent young woman.

For my 101st published novel, I returned to a genre in which I hadn't written for more than a decade: the murder mystery. In preparation, I read or at least scanned the initial pages of numerous mysteries. Dozens were bypassed based on a few pages. Even those that made the cut to Buy Now sometimes proved disappointing.

We can't always create unforgettable classics. But we can avoid mistakes that undermine our hard work and discourage readers.

I won't dwell on problems common to all forms of fiction, such as head-hopping and multiple grammatical errors. Today's subject is writing mysteries (not thrillers or romantic suspense, although some of the same cautions apply).

Let's demystify it with a dozen ways not to write a mystery.

The blonde-dies-at-midnight opening

A nasty villain stalks and murders an innocent woman in the prologue. Maybe this still sells, but I've heard from a lot of readers that they're sick of it. Of course, it's fine to start with a crime. Just make it unusual in some way.

The Hi-I'm-Sally-and-here's-all-about-my-messed-up-life opening

Cozy mystery readers do want to meet your engaging heroine as she ventures into a new town or career, but remember the old advice: show, don't tell.

Put the reader into a scene. Or, if you must start by addressing the reader directly, move into action within a page or so rather than dumping all the back story and introducing us to a

long list of characters.

Now for clichés and other problems that can weaken the rest of the book…

Incompetent police

How many times have you read a mystery in which the detectives fixate on the wrong suspect and ignore clues that amateurs spot almost immediately?

Today's police are well trained in investigative techniques. Do thorough research—and don't rely on TV shows. I recommend starting with Forensics for Dummies (2nd Edition) by D.P. Lyle, MD. It's thorough yet readable.

A main character with no special talents who stumbles into clues

Don't have your sleuth *accidentally* solve mysteries—unless you're very, very funny (as with Jana Deleon's delightful Miss Fortune series).

One of my pet peeves is when the heroine's friends insist that only she can catch the killer, yet the author hasn't established that she has any detective skills.

For my Safe Harbor Medical mystery series, I considered how my obstetrician hero, Dr. Eric Darcy, could legitimately help solve murders affecting his patients.

I came up with two reasons: patients and their families trust doctors and share concerns that they might not disclose to the police. Also, doctors have access to privileged medical information. Although under certain circumstances it must be shared with law enforcement, much of the time it's confidential. That doesn't prevent the doctor from using it to help him figure out who the killer is.

Slapdash plotting

A classic puzzle mystery is not the place for seat-of-the-pants writing, unless you're willing to revise extensively. The reader expects genuine clues among the red herrings and a solution that plays fair.

What's unfair? Setting up a half-dozen suspects and arbitrarily picking one at the end.

I'm delighted when readers tell me they couldn't figure out who the killer was in *The Case of the Questionable Quadruplet*. I made sure to plant clues, but used sleight-of-hand to keep the reader's attention focused elsewhere.

Giving the villain nothing to do throughout most of the book

While the main storyline involves your hero or heroine following a trail of clues, behind the scenes the villain should be pursuing his or her initial goal and scheming to avoid getting caught.

The result will be a better-developed plot with less need for arbitrary twists.

Ignoring the police after the initial crime scene investigation

I'm referring to cozy mysteries, of course, since this wouldn't happen in a police procedural. Even though they can't discuss an ongoing investigation, the police shouldn't be

just sitting around waiting for an amateur to solve the case.

Dr. Darcy's best friend, Keith, is a homicide detective. We hear about his activities both from witnesses he's interviewed and when he occasionally lets information slip by accident. Also, my widowed hero's sister-in-law, Tory, is a PI who fills Eric in about what steps the police would be taking.

Focusing too hard on the plot

When the characters remain little more than placeholders, like avatars in a videogame, we get bored.

Give them issues and conflicts that enliven the novel. For instance, Tory and Keith recently broke up after he cheated on her. They clash frequently, and put Eric in the middle.

He has his own personal issues to resolve. These interweave with the storyline and figure into his responses.

Creating a main character too dislikable or foolish

The reader needs to care what happens to him or her. Your main character should be flawed, but if she consistently lets herself be manipulated or he often drinks himself into a stupor, readers will lose patience. Even in a humorous mystery, don't mistake irritating for funny.

Whatever the main character's occupation, he or she should act the part. Example: a doctor wouldn't assume that a head injury is minor. A police officer stays aware of his or her surroundings. An estate attorney is very precise about the terms of a will.

Forgetting that murders are shocking and deaths are tragic

While the author and reader know the book is a murder mystery and that corpses are to be expected, the characters should react believably.

Showing too much

While putting the reader into the picture is important, be judicious. Write only those scenes that pack an emotional punch or in which something changes.

Don't be afraid to summarize the boring stuff, such as that the heroine talked to three people who had no idea who might have killed the victim.

Anne R. Allen expands on this point in her blog post, Why Show Don't Tell Can be Terrible Advice.

Neglecting to find your own voice

Even if you're writing in a familiar tradition such as noir or light cozy mystery, do it your way.

For me, it was a challenge see the world through the eyes of a thirty-five-year-old male M.D. I did a lot of research and considered each scene and development carefully. I was also glad to hear from readers that, despite the suspenseful tone, Eric's wry observations sometimes

made them laugh, since humor is part of my natural voice.

One more suggestion: as a reader, I appreciate when the author finds an unobtrusive way to recap from time to time what we've learned and who might be a suspect. When I set a book down for day or so, I don't always remember who's who and what the clues were.

I hope I've helped you write a mystery that readers will love, enjoy and recommend. Now, go slay 'em!

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For her 101st novel, USA Today bestselling author Jacqueline Diamond launches the Safe Harbor Medical mystery series with The Case of the Questionable Quadruplet. *A former Associated Press reporter and TV columnist, Diamond has sold mysteries, medical romances, Regency romances, and romantic comedies to a range of publishers. More information about Diamond can be found on her website. This column was reprinted with permission.*

How to Take a Better Headshot

Get a great author photo that does *not* resemble your crazed passport mug

By Adrian R. Hale

Cheeks twitching uncomfortably, your mouth stretches into a manic smile that doesn't reach your eyes. You tilt your head in a manner you hope is welcoming, while also saying you know what you're doing … but it probably just looks psychotic.

Your hands grip the material of your pants in a desperate attempt to find something to do that feels remotely natural, because at the moment, *nothing* feels natural. You think of Ricky Bobby in Talladega Nights, wanting to say "I don't know what to do with my hands" as you wave them like dead fish in front of your face.

You feel so out of your element because you are taking your author headshot and you have big plans for this photo. This photo or photos might be on your marketing collateral, your books, your social media presence, even your event banners—anywhere you plan to present yourself.

An author headshot is the first building block of identity. It's your chance to present yourself the way you want to be seen by your target audience. This investment is worth taking the time to do correctly.

Typically, you'll find an author in comfy clothes ensconced in their writing nook, interacting solely with their characters. Bringing that author to life in a manner that will entice readers to trust them to provide an excellent story requires more than yoga pants and flannel, and yes, you must wash your hair.

So, what should you think about when preparing for that perfect photo?

Choosing the right style

First, you need to find a photographer who can provide the style of photo you are looking for, and in order to do that, you need to know what your target audience prefers.

Science fiction will be different from mystery or romance. Check out the photos of authors within your genre to see what the trends are (tip: check out Amazon author rankings, then drill down by genre).

1. Dot Hutchison   4. Bella Forrest   7. K. Eason

2. J. K. Rowling   5. Rick Riordan   8. Hendrik Falkenberg

3. Matthew Norman   6. Jojo Moyes   9. Robert Dugoni

Example author photos, via Amazon.

Do authors who appeal to your target market have dark photos or light? Are they stiffly posed studio shots, or candid images snapped in laughter and movement?

Pick a style that feels natural for you and fits the genre you write in. Some people are gifted enough with their selfie game that a quick snapshot is all it takes, but for most, seeking the help of a professional is best.

Choosing the photographer

Finding a photographer that can deliver your preferred style can be a challenge. Check with your writer friends or your social network to see if they have recommendations. You can also search Model Mayhem or other freelancer networking sites to find talent.

Check out their portfolios and send them messages explaining what you are looking for. Ask for rates and what a session would cover (time in studio, number of shots, post-production editing, studio or travel fees). Photographers are typically image-oriented people, so choosing a

few portraits similar to the style you're aiming for can help communicate your vision.

Remember, you get what you pay for, so a low-budget shoot should come with lower expectations for the outcome. You can curtail expenses by going to the photographer's studio, rather than having them come to you, planning less studio time, and requiring less editing of the final photos.

Most professional photographers will give you a specific time allotment and an expected number of photos that they will retouch and provide for your use. They might give you fifty photos to choose from, but you will end up choosing one to five that will be edited for your needs.

If hiring a professional isn't an option, ask a talented friend. Not everyone has a family member or acquaintance with great photography skills, but you might get lucky when you take a chance on someone who is an amateur or a new professional who wants to practice their headshot game.

Your photographer might have a studio space to work in or your can collaborate on locations that would work for your shoot.

Choosing a background

Simple backgrounds that allow you to be the focus of the photo work best. You don't want a reader trying to figure out what the rest of your photo is, but you can choose a location such as a bookstore that would identify you as a writer.

A background can be blurred out with the focus on you, but texture or simple colors are great to provide contrast and interest.

Ask your photographer to capture a variety of expressions. You might want to study author photos to find poses that you can practice in the mirror beforehand, or ask your photographer to give you direction. You want to look comfortable, confident, and like someone your reader can relate to.

That can be as simple as a warm smile looking directly at the camera for a romance author, or head tilted with an enigmatic smile for someone writing mystery. Know your genre, your audience, and your own persona.

Choosing clothing and/or props

Your clothing and accessories should also stay simple. Solid colors and classic styles that won't date you are best. Understated beats over-the-top every time.

If you plan to wear glasses, make sure they have an anti-reflective coating or pop out the lenses for the photos so there is no glare that obscures your eyes.

Hair and makeup can be as simple or elaborate as your author persona warrants. If you ever plan to attend an author signing or reader event, how will you present yourself there? Don't change your hairstyle or makeup for the photos to a look you will never be able to recreate or wear again.

You want a look that is easily identifiable and recognizable—in short, make sure readers can recognize you at an event from your author photo.

You might want to hire a makeup artist if you feel you are unable to create a photo-ready

look on your own. Your photographer might have a referral, or you can reach out to family or friends who may know someone that can help.

A good photographer should be looking for any flyaway hair or shiny skin that would cause a less-than-stellar shot. To correct these, don't be afraid of a touch of translucent powder or a spritz of hairspray, even if it's not part of your normal routine.

Wrapping it up

Ask your photographer to provide both color and black and white options for you when you receive your photos. Most authors choose to use color photos, but occasionally you might need a black and white option.

You might need to crop the photo in a variety of ways—horizontal, square, vertical, tight to your face, or a wider head-and-shoulders shot. Ask for a wider-cropped original image so when you send it to a conference as a speaker bio, for example, it leaves enough wiggle room for event organizers to crop it uniformly with the others.

While there are no hard and fast rules for how long you can use the same author photo, consider updating your photo every few years to keep up with your current look, hairstyle, or fashion. If you make a genre change, a new photo might offer a better representation of you.

Last but not least, enjoy your time in front of the camera by knowing you are creating an identifiable persona your readers will imagine each time they reach for your books!

Adrian R. Hale is an enthusiastic lover of life who embraces big dreams. She's a natural optimist and loves a good romance in any form—as long as there's a happy ending! Hale is a freelance hair and makeup artist by day and a self-published author by night. Her two novels, A Taste of Bliss *and* Drift Heat, *explore themes of finding passionate love while following your dreams. As a ten-year veteran styling hair and makeup for photo shoots, films, music videos, and weddings, she knows exactly what to look for when taking a good headshot. You can connect with her on social media as @adrianrhale and on* Facebook.com/adrianrhaleauthor.

NINC Headshot Opportunity

Following up on the article about taking a better headshot, a photographer will attend the NINC Master Class conference to offer author portraits.

Joel Danto is a wedding and portrait photographer based in Los Angeles, Calif. His portfolio can be viewed on his website, and he won two "Best of the Knot" awards for wedding photography in the past two years.

"I pride myself on having a keen eye for good composition and sharp lighting," Danto said.

Danto will be setting up times throughout the conference for author portraits. He offers two options:

- 15-minute headshot session against a backdrop, with two final edited photos – $50
- 30-minute outdoor session, with five to 10 final edited photos – $100
- Longer outdoor sessions with multiple locations and/or wardrobe changes can be accommodated for an additional $50 and five more photos, per half hour additional time.

Sign up using this form to indicate your interest. Nearer to the conference date, Danto will follow up with people who expressed interest to select timeslots for their shoots.

Listing Your Books in Libraries

SELF-e library discovery platform is making indie titles available for purchase

By Porter Anderson

The team at BiblioBoard added buy buttons to the SELF-e library discovery platform listings last month, allowing library patrons the chance not only to check out an author's work but also buy it for themselves and others.

If you haven't seen it yet, watch for an email from SELF-e announcing the buy buttons. And read it carefully, just in case you're one of the folks the team needs to hear from about the proper link to use for your sales.

While SELF-e has always allowed library patrons to read indie authors' books for free, patrons will now be able to buy the book they're reading by simply clicking on a button that has been added next to the book. The button will direct the reader to a place where the book is sold, which could include author websites, Amazon, etc.

Example of the buy link in a viewer.
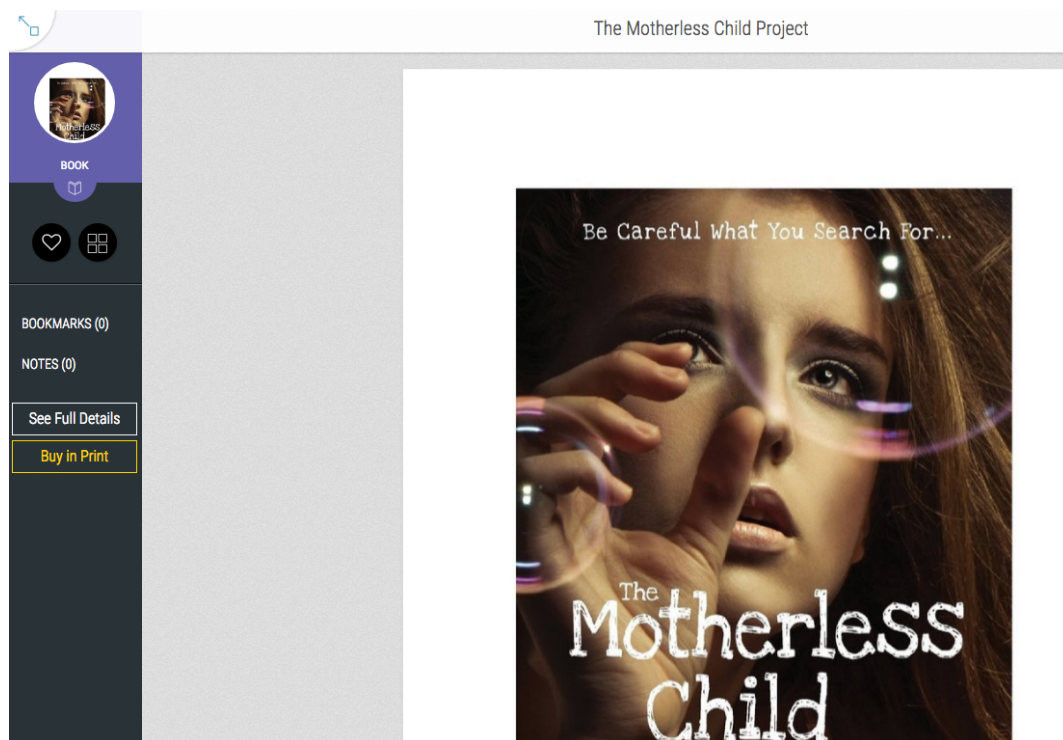
Example of a buy link in book details.

The buy-button feature of SELF-e listings is a cool extension of the kinds of events some libraries are holding in which authors sign and sell books. Librarians can also turn the buy links off for their subset of patrons.

The arrival of buy buttons in the SELF-e system brings to mind the question of how writers are using permafree. Titles offered free on a permanent basis are often a lead-in to other titles.

The effectiveness of offering free titles has often been questioned. Industry observers tend to agree that the problem is the one I've termed the "Wall of Content"—digital publishing has simply enabled so much publishing, both in the trade and by independents, that readers are overwhelmed with the available inventory.

Once a consumer has 20, 50, or 70 ebooks on his or her devices, "free!" starts to mean less. Tablets, e-readers, and smartphones are packed with unread books, so the uptake on free offers might be slower than it once was.

Nevertheless, as you'll see in our survey of authors here, permafree is a standard tactic in series work for many writers.

In the wider marketplace today, author advisor Jane Friedman, my colleague in producing the bi-weekly Hot Sheet subscription industry newsletter for authors, says that one new wrinkle in the concept of permafree is to think of ebooks offered through Amazon's huge Kindle Unlimited (KU) subscription program as free—in hopes, of course, of getting some payment for pages read when a KU customer reads part or all of their book(s).

This tactic, then, means placing perhaps the first book in a series into KU to lead readers to the rest of the series. If a KU subscriber then picks up that first book in the series and reads it, the subscriber may think of it as "free" because it's on the KU all-you-can-read format. But in reality, the author is getting paid per page. *[Nink editor's note: See an associated article in this issue about KU payouts.]*

Our SELF-e author panel

Against this background, we wanted to find out what some leading SELF-e authors might be doing in terms of permafree and what their views are on effective strategies.

We asked (from left) Jules Barnard, James Thorn (who publishes as J. Thorn), and April White to give us their input.

Jules Barnard is a RITA-nominated author who began publishing in 2014 with *Deep Blue*, the first book in the contemporary Blue series, making it onto romance bestseller lists. In 2015, she launched *Fates Divided*, the first book in a romantic fantasy series that SELF-e partner Library Journal calls "…an exciting new fantasy adventure." She's based in Santa Cruz and has one title with SELF-e, *Deep Blue*.

J. Thorn, is a Top 100 Most Popular Author in horror, science fiction, action & adventure, and fantasy, according to Amazon author rankings. He has sold more than 150,000 books worldwide, and in March 2014 held the No. 5 position in horror alongside his childhood idols Dean Koontz and Stephen King (at Nos. 4 and 2, respectively). He's an active member of the

Horror Writers Association and a member of the Great Lakes Association of Horror Writers. J. is a contributor to disinformation.com and a staff writer for HeavyPlanet.net as well as a founding board member of the Author Marketing Institute. He's based in Cleveland and he has one title, *Reversion: The Invisible Horror* (The Portal Arcane Series, Book 1) with SELF-e. Thorn also notes that he has many of his titles in bundled collections that are part of BiblioBoard's "Indie Rock Star" package.

April White has been a film producer, private investigator, bouncer, teacher, and screenwriter. She has climbed in the Himalayas, survived a shipwreck, and lived on a gold mine in the Yukon. All four books in her Immortal Descendants series are on the Amazon Top 100 lists in time travel romance and historical fantasy. White is based in Los Angeles, and she has one title, *Marking Time* (The Immortal Descendants series, Book 1) with SELF-e.

Here are some of the questions we put to our trio of successful indies, and their responses.

SELF-e: Based on your experience, would you recommend that authors use permafree in sales settings in general?

Barnard: Yes, using permafree for the first title in a series can help an author build readership. A free book is a no-harm way for a reader to take a chance on an author who is new to them. The more books in a series, the better, but I recommend at least two other titles be out in a series before making the first book permafree.

Running promotions on the first book, versus later books in the series, seems to work the best. This was also the advice I received from BookBub when I ran my last advertisement with them.

Thorn: I was using KDP Select free days as early as 2011, although I had no clue what I was doing then. I tend to use the first book in a series as a reader magnet for mailing list signups and for overall visibility on sales platforms. The reach of permafree isn't as far as it used to be. There are more free books available today than any one person could ever hope to read in a lifetime.

White: In my experience, it's very difficult to make money on just one book. I made *Marking Time* free when I published book two in the series, and instantly my daily sales of book two were three or four times what *Marking Time* alone had sold.

I've also had great success with big promotions (BookBub) for the free book, with 20,000 downloads in a single day. That always drives sales up for the other books for the rest of the month, with a big boost in reviews for the free book.

SELF-e: Are you going the route that some authors are going of submitting just one title to SELF-e? Or are you submitting more?

Barnard: I'm staying with one title in SELF-e at the moment. If I drop another book to permafree, I would definitely submit it to SELF-e for consideration.

Thorn: I only have one title in SELF-e at the moment. As my back catalog grows (I hope to publish at least four novels in 2016), I will have more flexibility with my titles. I think it's hard for authors with just a handful of published books to justify the permafree strategy.

White: I'm happy to put my whole series in libraries, so I'll likely be submitting more than just book one.

SELF-e: What is your feeling about libraries and sales?

Barnard: Any exposure is good exposure, even if a reader doesn't want or have the means to go on to buy other titles in the series. Brand recognition and word of mouth are both extremely important for driving an author's career.

Thorn: Libraries have existed for thousands of years and people who read tend to visit them. Therefore, I don't see a downside to having my books in a library, whether they be in paperback or digital format. Name recognition would be most important to me as an author, with subsequent sales as a secondary motivation.

White: I find that library readers tend to stay within the library system if they can find all the books they want there, and for my purposes, discoverability and building a strong readership is my main motivation for placing my books in libraries. I have purchased books from authors I've found in libraries, but it's usually out of frustration that the rest of the books aren't carried there.

This article was provided by BiblioBoard, which partners with Library Journal for the SELF-e program. It was printed at BiblioBoard's request as a service to NINC members. Porter Anderson is a SELF-e blog contributor and regular at NINC conferences. BB notes that in the next version of SELF-e, links to related books or other books in a series will appear next to the buy link for the particular book that a library patron is reading. More information is available here.

Forensic Files

Can antibody profiling help my investigator distinguish between two suspects?

By D.P. Lyle, MD

Question: My suspect had a bone marrow transplant a few years ago. DNA from blood at several crime scenes shows a mixture that is eventually resolved, with both the bone marrow donor and recipient being represented.

The CSI investigating the case wishes to use the new antibody profiling assay on the samples to distinguish this suspect from the original bone marrow donor (who is also a suspect). Would the antibodies that are tested for in this assay differ between two people who share the same bone marrow and thus the same DNA?

Answer: Antibody profiling is new, unproven, and has never been used in a court case. So it is not yet an admissible piece of evidence, but that will probably happen before too long if it indeed pans out to be as good as it appears.

The science behind it is that when any foreign material enters the body—things such as bacteria and viruses—the body immediately constructs antibodies against this foreign intruder. Remnants of these antibodies remain in the blood system forever.

These types of antibodies give us immunity to measles and other infectious diseases once we've had them. They also make us immune to many of these diseases after a vaccination.

Since each of us comes into contact with different bacteria and viruses and other foreign materials, we each have an individual pattern of antibodies in our system. No two people have exactly the same antibody profile—or so it seems—and this is the basis for using this profile to identify an individual.

If this turns out to be as good as promised, it could be as good as DNA and fingerprints.

So an antibody profile could be created from the blood left at the crime scene as well as from the two suspects, and one would be exonerated while the other would be implicated.

The DNA profile and the fact that one of the people had a bone marrow transplant would

have nothing to do with this. Antibodies are not part of the DNA profile and they are not created by the blood but rather by immune cells throughout the body.

The bottom line is that even though your two suspects would have the same DNA profile in their blood—but different in every other tissue—they would each have their own individual antibody profile.

And even if it has never been used it court, this could easily cause your detectives to focus their attention on one suspect and exclude the other.

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 on his* website *and* blog.

Ask the Creativity Coach

Breaking out of a rut and trusting your gut to defend your ideas

By Denise A. Agnew

Question: I'm on my fourteenth book and if I'm totally honest, things are starting to blend together. I feel like I'm using the same emotions and descriptions for each love scene, and I even found myself using pretty much the same dialogue in different books. How can I break out of my rut and find fresh metaphors and ideas?

Answer: This situation is a systemic problem in the writing world, especially in genres where the pressure (real and imaginary) is to write within certain parameters.

First, start with analyzing from where the problem stems. Ask yourself these questions to get a clearer picture:

When was the last time you had a vacation and took sufficient time away from writing?

Someone who loves to write can still drain the creative well.

By a break, I don't mean a day. The break needs to be long enough so the writer feels a genuine eagerness to begin or continue a new story. The length of that break depends on individual circumstances.

Have you murdered all your new ideas?

Have you persistently ignored an urge to write outside the bounds of a series that has gone on forever? Authors run into roadblocks created by encasing themselves in the same world with the same characters, or in the same world with only slightly different characters.

Are there stories you yearn to tell, but have continually ignored in favor of creating a series that drags on for a long time?

Take the time to dream. Write a list of stories you want to tell but haven't, then ask yourself why you haven't written them or why you're telling yourself you can't write them.

Are you playing it safe?

What intriguing things could happen in your story … but you've outlined yourself into a corner? Have a brainstorming session with yourself or with a trusted writer friend. Allow yourself to explore avenues you've previously closed off.

Have you ignored telling the truth?

Are there things you wanted your characters to say, but you told them repeatedly to shut up because you're afraid of the reader who might not approve?

At times, writers allow other's opinions to affect what they really want to write. Your judgment might be clouded by what you've heard or read about what readers prefer.

Question: I have a creative idea for a new series, but I'm worried my agent is going to hate it, and I'm not sure it's going to be marketable because my subgenre is lately out of favor with traditional publishing. How can I best present and defend my creativity when I'm worried they'll ask me to change so many things that it won't feel like my original idea anymore?

Answer: I've seen this situation many times in the writing world, so you're definitely not alone. If an author has been writing for a long time (or sometimes not long at all), he or she might succumb to the "shoulds."

A major problem for writers is doing what everyone else wants them to do until their creativity is destroyed under the pressure of conformity.

As writers, we sometimes forget that creativity doesn't come from a purely intellectual, mathematical approach. Creativity is play. Creativity can be shut down by over-thinking and intellectualizing until play never comes into the creative process.

Here are some tough love things to consider:

1. Has your agent persistently steered you in directions you don't wish to go?

Trust your gut a little more.

2. You'll never know if your agent or anyone else will like a series idea until you broach the subject.

If you find yourself experiencing anxiety about things you can't control such as whether agents, editors, or readers will like what you're offering, it may be time to explore assistance with anxiety issues as a whole (especially if it's something that complicates your life in other areas.) Anxiety can be crippling to authors in so many ways.

3. If your subgenre is out of favor with traditional publishing, have you considered self-publishing?

Your stories are worthy. Don't sell a story short by chucking it in the bin if traditional publishing doesn't respond to what you want to write. Keeping your options open is always a good thing.

4. What is your creativity worth to you?

Make a list of all the reasons why you love to write. Make another list of all the things you hate about writing.

This might sound strange, but most of us encounter things we don't like about the business side of writing. If you're consistently finding the hate list longer than the love list, it might be time to do a deeper analysis on what you need to get back to the love list more frequently.

If your creativity is being mangled by the "shoulds," the only way out of that is to honor your own wishes and desires more often than conforming to everyone else's ideas of what you should do.

Denise A. Agnew is the author of over 65 novels. She has written paranormal, romantic comedy, contemporary, fantasy, historical, erotic romance, and romantic suspense. Denise is also a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, and Certified Creativity Coach. Visit Denise's websites, www.deniseagnew.com and www.creativepencoaching.com.

The Mad Scribbler
Semantically Yours

By Laura Resnick

"When you know what you do best, what you love, and what the market wants, you're going to find out what readers want from you."
—*Cathy Yardley, RockYourWriting.com*

One of the more useful pieces of writing advice that has stuck with me over the years came from fantasy and historical novelist Jennifer Roberson, who recommended coming up with a logline for each book I write, the way they do with Hollywood movies—just as if you were writing an advertisement for your novel.

As an example, her logline to describe her (so far) seven-book Sword Dancer fantasy series is: "Conan the Barbarian meets Gloria Steinem."

Such a pithy, memorable description is a good way to summarize a book in cover letters to acquiring editors, or to characterize a novel for the marketing department. It's useful for headlining the book description or for setting the tone of the cover copy.

And it's a handy response for all those people who ask you at parties, in line at the airport, or while you're waiting for your turn in the emergency room, "So what's your book about?"

But I have found that the loglines I come up with for my books help my writing, too, by reminding me what the story core is, what's the thing I promise the reader (and the editor, the marketing department, and strangers in odd places) they will definitely find in that book, in terms of both content and tone.

Is the line sultry, grim, funny, ironic, sardonic, menacing, or tender? Does it suggest the story core is a romantic relationship? A quest for justice? A struggle against supernatural evil? Stopping Hitler's counter-offensive in the Ardennes Forest?

Over the long journey of writing 400 to 500 pages, I find that a logline can serve as a lodestar to keep me on course when I'm in danger of drifting. Nonetheless, having found this particular tool that makes sense to me and works for me doesn't mean I understand marketing semantics or techniques.

For example, around the time that publishers started heavily shifting the work of marketing books onto writers, without shifting more of the earnings for those same books onto writers, people in our industry began making frequent use of the term "branding."

Indeed, they often waved around the word "brand" in the reckless manner of heavily intoxicated musketeers flailing with swords due to a disagreement over a lady. Or so it seemed to me, a writer who had no idea what my brand was, in an era when I kept encountering people who insisted with evangelical fervor that I really needed to know.

The idea of a brand, of course, was essentially "how to market your work to the public" when your publisher seemed less and less inclined to do so.

I, for one, went through years of delivering manuscripts that got favorable reactions from my various editors, if they bothered to read them (not all of them did), while nonetheless being repeatedly dumped by publishers due to my unsatisfactory sales and losing publishers that folded under me.

Given that even my own mother usually couldn't find my books when they were published, I was aware there could conceivably be a correlation between my ever-struggling career and my publishers' apparent reluctance to market my books to readers.

However, recognizing that there was a problem didn't turn me into a marketing maven who understood branding. Additionally, my body of work was all over the map—in large part because getting dumped so often ensured I'd had to change my career path more than once.

(I assert, for example, that there isn't a "brand" that can unite the cute, vanilla 50,000-word category romances I wrote for Silhouette with the 225,000-word blood-and-guts epic fantasies I later wrote for Tor Books.)

So I just felt depressed or cranky or vaguely apologetic whenever articles and lecturers would advise coming up with a short phrase (ex. "steamy Southern romantic suspense") or three adjectives (ex. "sassy, smart, sexy") or an element (ex. every novel involves time travel) to brand myself, my career, and/or my body of work.

Then I attended a session at a NINC conference (I know we were in New York City, but I don't remember which year) where Lou Aronica said something that really resonated with me. He talked about identifying your signature as a writer.

When *what you write well* (Lou said "better than anyone else," but I find that label intimidating, so I'll stick with "well") intersects with *what you love to do* and with *what you can sell* (whether to publishers or, these days, directly to readers), you have found your signature.

The place where those three things meet is where Lou advised focusing your efforts. He expanded on this by talking about consistency—which he did not define as writing the same book over and over, but rather as delivering the same sort of reading experience, book after book.

In contrast to exhortations to find my brand, these were concepts I could get my head around. Ever since attending that session, I've thought about my signature, the signature of other writers, and what kind of reading experience I'm trying to deliver.

As it happens, I recently had occasion to apply these ideas when considering the (very successful) writing career of a friend. Although she has not written the same book over and over, and has even veered into other genres or subgenres over the years, what I realized in

looking over her large body of work is that there was always a current of tone, voice, themes, emotional content, sensibility, and types of subject of matter that ran consistently through almost all her books, even as she experimented with different market niches.

No, not every self-declared fan of this author has loved every one of her books or experiments. Of course not. But her body of work has overall delivered a consistent *type* of experience. And I believe that is a key element in her success, and in the careers of most successful novelists.

Yet another concept I came across a few years ago that resonates with me, in a way that "an author's brand" does not, is the notion of the Right Reader. I think I first saw the phrase introduced in a NINC discussion, and I followed up by reading various blogs and essays about it, such as Cathy Yardley's articles a few years ago on the Rock Your Writing website.

Essentially, the Right Reader is the person who likes (or absolutely loves) your signature and who seeks the kind of reading experience you deliver.

It's a concept that exemplifies the relationship some readers have with your work. These are the readers who buy everything you write, look forward to the release of your next title, re-read your books, recommend (or loan, or give) them to friends, and complain you're turning their name to mud at work because they stayed up all night to finish your latest book—again.

But people can also be the Right Reader for just some of your work (this series or that subgenre), or perhaps even for just one of your books. There are some people who read almost everything I write; there are many people who read only some of my fiction; and there are also some people who love a nonfiction book I wrote twenty years ago, but aren't interested in my fiction.

And that's all okay. Because the concept of the Right Reader removes much of my anxiety about readers who don't like my work: it's okay, because they're not my Right Readers.

There are, after all, writers for whom I am not the Right Reader, either. That doesn't mean their work isn't good (in fact, very often it's bestselling or award-winning); it just means we're not a good pairing.

For all I know, your signature, the reading experience you deliver, and the Right Reader may all just be other ways of defining "your brand," and it's just a matter of semantics. But I always encountered the concept of branding as a closed and locked door, whereas these other concepts are examples of paths I can see, understand, and follow.

They're paths that lead toward the same goal as branding, after all: creating an audience who search for your name when they're looking for something to read.

Laura Resnick is the author of about 30 books, a founding member of Novelists, Inc., and a past president of the organization.

Not Your Usual Writing Advice
Community and courage

By JoAnn Grote

"We are called upon to do something new, to confront a no man's land, to push into a forest where there are no well-worn paths and from which no one has returned to guide us."
—*Rollo May,* The Courage to Create

I'm re-reading Rollo May's wonderful book *The Courage to Create* (George J. McLeod Limited). The book was published in 1975, but feels contemporary. May speaks of changes in society affecting every part of life, including many professions.

He opines, "The need for creative courage is in direct proportion to the degree of change the profession is undergoing." We can allow the changes to paralyze us, or we can, as May encourages, be participants in the formation of the new world—for us, the new world of publishing.

Novelists, Inc., has become known as the organization that provides writers with the knowledge they need to move forward in this new world, and in doing so the organization has secured a place in the forefront of those influencing the changes we will see in the future.

The organization is, of course, actually the people who make up the organization. I am blown away by the courage shown by so many of our members: by the handful of writers who saw a need and began NINC years before any of us knew of the massive changes we'd see in the profession during our careers; by the guidance of our officers through the years, taking sometimes unpopular steps to ensure the organization did not become a respected relic; and by the conference coordinators who reached beyond the blueprint for traditional writers' conferences to provide formats and presenters that meet writers' needs in new ways.

But also by the individual members who have graciously shared their experiences, hard-earned knowledge, successes and failures as they've journeyed into the publishing wildernesses, forging a path for those of us who follow.

We are so fortunate that NINC has members in their twenties to their seventies and

probably beyond. So much experience is represented, and so many types of experience!

Remember the old adage to "respect your elders?" Many of us joined NINC in awe of fellow members who are legend in their genres. These members shared their experiences on the traditional publishing path, and taught by example the importance of perseverance and how to stay strong through a lifelong career with its challenges, changes, and ups and downs.

Yet we've learned to also respect our younger colleagues. Many of our younger members are the ones who had the courage to jump into self-publishing before or instead of traditional publishing. They often have more technological and social media knowledge than many of the writers who have been deeply entrenched in the traditional publishing path. And they are just as willing to share that knowledge with members who need it as are the older members.

I love the courage of those in the middle of their careers who have changed it up, taken time from writing their stories to grapple with the intricacies of a new publishing path, and dived into self publishing and/or new areas of social media. And, of course, they also shared their experiences and knowledge gained in the trenches with other members.

Not that many years ago it seemed to me many NINC members feared for their writing futures. Is it only my perception that those fears no longer seem as pervasive? I wonder how many of us would have known how to move forward or had the courage to do so in this time of radical change if it weren't for the NINC community.

There are many ways to journey as a writer today—traditionally published, indie published, hybrid—but whatever way we journey, it's a new world. I'm grateful that I'm traveling through it with the wonderful community that is NINC. Thank you all.

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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.

novelists inc.

Founded in 1989

NINC Statement of Principle

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

Founders

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

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