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President's Voice

By Erica Ridley



Happy October!

As you might have guessed, I'm beyond excited for our NINC: Discovery conference. I look forward to seeing many of you over the course of the coming weekend, and for the amazing write-ups for you in the next few newsletters, covering everything from First Word to workshops by editors and industry guests, insightful discussions about diversity and craft, as well as how to navigate the myriad of new revenue streams and promotional avenues available for authors today.

In addition to the conference, NINC also has more great benefits in store for our members. You responded in record numbers to our call for volunteers (thank you *so much*) and we now have brand new committees dedicated to making NINC even more helpful and relevant for you. I can't wait to share more information as projects develop!

NINC Member Benefits

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), and the members-only [Facebook group](#) if you haven't already. The [Pro Services Directory](#), member [discount page](#), and [sample letters](#) are also great resources.

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#). You can also [buy a paperback copy](#) of the *2016 Best of Nink*!

Accessing the NINC Website

Not sure how to log in? Visit the login page here: <https://ninc.com/login-to-ninc>

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erica". The script is fluid and cursive.

Erica Ridley is a New York Times and USA Today best-selling author of historical romance novels. Her latest series, The Dukes of War, features roguish peers and dashing war heroes who return from battle only to be thrust into the splendor and madness of Regency England. When not reading or writing romances, Erica can be found riding camels in Africa, zip-lining through rain forests in Costa Rica, or getting hopelessly lost in the middle of Budapest.

Stay Calm and Practice Safe WordPress

[Or your site, too, could end up a number on the bathroom wall]

By Patricia Burroughs



The phone number on the bathroom wall?

Yep. Yours.

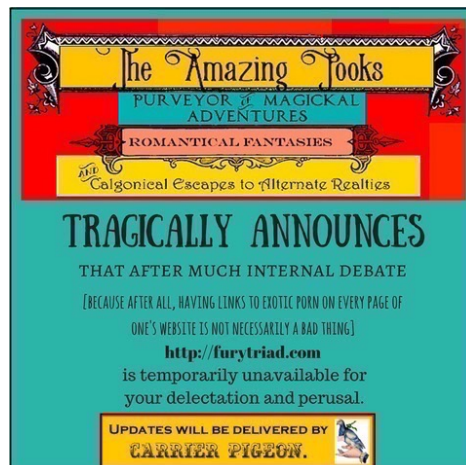
Actually, your site would BE the bathroom wall. And the “number” would be a link to the “good time.”

If you’re not getting the subtext here, the “good times” will be at a site whose URL includes words that make you flinch.

Yes, someone from Russia could hack into your site, set himself up as an administrator right alongside you, and add his own bit of code to create a handy little link to “good times” on every freaking page of your website.

And the fun doesn’t stop there!

You can be blacklisted on search engines, have your site show up with a warning to stay away, have your webhost lock your site down so that anybody who tries to get there gets rerouted to a very scary message saying your site isn’t safe.



And nothing will change until your site is cleaned of all the malware, spam-links, viruses, etc., that the lovely hackers left hidden like candy Easter eggs.

Ask me how I know.

Those links are gone from my site. Eviscerated and eradicated and combusted into micro-pixels.

But that fun little adventure cost me hundreds of dollars and six weeks of stress, frustration, hours upon hours on the telephone—and all of the lost writing time that went along with the nightmare.

Let's make sure this doesn't happen to you.

[Ashley Madison](#). [The Democratic National Committee](#). [JP Morgan Chase](#). I mean, you can see why somebody wanted to hack them, right?

But who on earth wants to hack you? Your site gets low traffic. You don't have ecommerce. [If you do have ecommerce, you have even more reason to protect yourself.]

These hackers don't care. The hackers who are looking for important information, valuable information, aren't the only ones trying to get into your site. Yeah, good times, indeed.

Hackers today have scripts—[bots](#)—fake Google crawlers that act like Google or Yahoo search engines, combing the internet faster than a speeding bullet, running through thousands of bytes a second.

But they're not indexing content.

They're looking for somebody who left the keys in the car so they can take off on a joy ride, and they aren't choosy about the vehicle.

How do you practice safe WordPress?

Before we get into safe practices, let's look at one of the two most important things you need to do:

1. [Backups](#)

Backups are your magic wand. They give you the ability to grab a copy of your site from *before* the hacking event. They are a do-over. They are vital. You must have them.

Your best practice should at the very least be daily backups and a history of at least 30 days before new backups start overwriting the old.

Find out immediately what kind of backups you have now, if any.

1. Ask your webhost exactly what kinds of backups are included with your package. How often, how long a history do they keep, and do they include your database? If you have an entry-level package, don't be surprised if the backups are inadequate or nonexistent.

2. Ask people you know who are very website savvy what company, program, or system they use.

3. Google. Read reviews. Compare.

I now use the free [UpdraftPlus](#), although the WordPress wonk who recommended it to me pays for Premium. (Side-by-side [comparison](#).) My new webhost also provides daily backups as part of my package, with a 30-day history before they start overwriting.

But how do you avoid getting hacked in the first place?

The following safe practices are the best ways available for you to plug up the most vulnerable entry points that hackers attack to get into your site.

And best of all? They are free and easy.

2. Passwords

When hackers' bots batter your login page with attempts to guess the username and password, that is called a [brute force attack](#).

By now you've probably been forced to use weird combinations of characters as passwords at many sites as they get more serious about protecting themselves from such attacks. You need to do the same on your own site.

A 30-character [random password](#) like "b-BD!>2/qCmc}`4{2<G.d=c6\$P`tK'" has the advantage of being darned near impossible to crack unless a hacker runs the script for days and days and eventually lucks into the right combo. They might do that to steal government secrets but you are most likely not going to have to worry about them sticking around more than a couple of minutes.

This kind of password combined with backups are the two most important things you can do. And both can be free.

That random password is the safest but it has one disadvantage. You probably won't remember it and will always have to copy and paste it in. This is not necessarily a bad thing as long as you don't save it by labeling it "wordpress password."

Or you can [create your own](#), one you will actually remember.

A lot of security gurus are now saying that length is more important than weird combinations. Your favorite book title plus your first boyfriend's phone number, for example. That's pretty random! **ToKillAMockingbird212-765-0000!#%*** [That was an explosion of profanity at the end because in my scenario it ended badly.]

And seriously, don't use the same password for multiple apps and sites. Particularly not those that are crucial to your financial and professional security. You're creative. Create as many passwords as it takes.

According to an [article](#) from January 2017 on the iThemes website, successful hacks break down three ways:

- 52% are from WordPress plugins
- 11% are from WordPress themes
- 37% are from Core WordPress files

The bad news is it's highly possible you have some unsafe plugins and themes on your site. The good news is this is easy to eliminate in most cases.

How often do you get emails telling you that WordPress, or your theme, or various plugins have updates? Do you update immediately? If no, uh-oh.

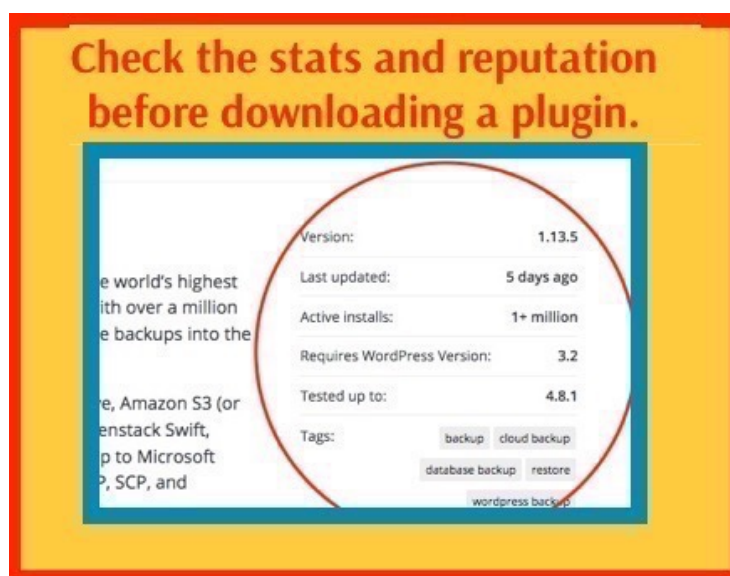
3. Check your [plugins](#):

If you have a self-hosted WordPress site you are probably familiar with plugins. They range from the almost ubiquitous [Akismet](#), [Jetpack](#) and the above-mentioned UpdraftPlus as well as the below-mentioned [Wordfence](#).

Always download your plugins from the WordPress site because that is where you will find the essential information you need to choose a plugin.

- How long ago was it updated?
- How many people use it?
- How high are its ratings?
- More info available [here](#). Plus, read [this blog post from Wordfence](#) about a recent hacked plugin.

Do not download plugins that haven't been updated in a long time, have few users, have poor ratings, or don't work with current versions of WordPress. These are all bad signs.



All of the plugins mentioned above have been updated within weeks, and will constantly be updated. Why is this important? Because hackers are constantly finding ways in. As soon as WordPress sites around the world start showing vulnerabilities [aka, getting hacked] the responsible app developers and theme developer will close those holes and send out updates.

Update your plugins every time you get a notice that there is a new update.

Repeat: Updates mean there was a way for hackers to get in that has been closed. Hackers already know to look for those holes. Updating locks them out. Plugins that haven't been updated are open doors to your site.

4. Check your [themes](#):

Did you download a number of themes to try out before you chose the one you like? Are those themes still living on your WordPress dashboard?

Delete all themes you aren't using. Get them off your site and computer. They have the exact same vulnerability as plugins. They are an access point for hackers and there is no reason to have any on your site that aren't in use. And just like with plugins:

Update your theme every time you get a notice that there is a new update!

[Core files](#) are the mother lode to a hacker. Once they get to your core files they can add malicious code, malware, viruses, even [sigh] porn links.

Everything you're doing—passwords to block brute force attacks and only using solid, updated plugins and themes—is an effort to protect your core files.

The hackers at your digital door can be anybody from your next door neighbor's kid to a worldwide crime syndicate. They know how to break through your weak passwords and usernames that include your pet or children's names, and know which plugins and themes will leave an open door into your site, if you haven't updated them.

Thus the aforementioned recommendations—strong and devious passwords, a constantly updated website—will block hackers from getting into your site with very little effort once you establish new, safer practices. Having regular backups will snatch you back from the brink of disaster.

But there's one more free weapon for your arsenal.

5. Free Wordfence.

Everything recommended so far should be pretty easy for you if you are already familiar with and using WordPress.

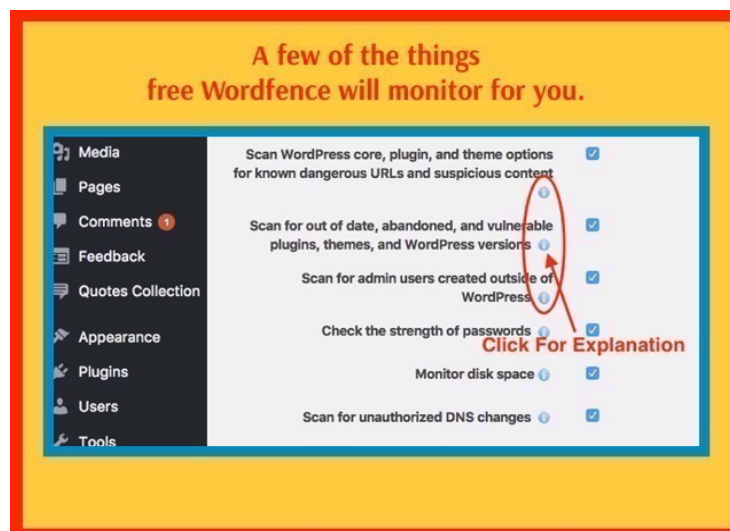
The free version of Wordfence is where we kick it up a notch. Setting it up is more complex, but it's worth it.

Wordfence Review – Is It Really The Best WordPress Security Plugin?

Wordfence addresses a vast range of known WordPress issues in an effort to protect your site. With over a million downloads and counting, it has a topnotch reputation and is the most popular WordPress security program in the world. Unlike most of the security companies, it has a free option as well as its Premium upgrade.

Securing a website with this level of security means you will have several pages of options to select and click. Don't get overwhelmed. Take it one page at a time. Go down the ticky boxes one by one. Hover your cursor over the little blue "i" and you'll get very clear information and even recommendations. You'll get through it, and each of those choices will make you feel safer—and will make you more aware of the bullets you've dodged during the time you were unaware.

Yes, this process takes time and it may seem overwhelming but it is worth your effort.



Once it's installed, free Wordfence provides a firewall. It regularly scans your entire site and gives you a list of potential security issues and detailed recommendations on how to take care of them.

Wordfence also gives you the ability to shut down those brute force attacks before they get started by not allowing a hammering of password attempts to begin with. And this is only a fraction of the functionality of this free program.

With over 25% of the world's websites on the WordPress platform, it's no surprise that hackers go after them. But by using common sense and staying on top of things, you can make your site a far less vulnerable, and thus less attractive, target.

A web search will lead you to more ways to protect your WordPress website. As might be expected, each security company offers a list of threats and the corresponding advice that meshes with the services they provide. This is not a bad thing. First of all, these are reputable companies who offer strong protection. Some of them are:

- [iThemes](#)
- [Wordfence](#)
- [Sucuri](#)
- [Sitelock](#)

Sucuri has a [free scan](#) available so you can find out if you already have any problems. Check out these various sites and you'll find many more potential security issues.

But more good news!

If you don't have the budget to hire a security company, you can still take these lists of solutions they offer and search for the free plugins that will do the same thing, even if not quite as thoroughly. Again, use due diligence by reading reviews and comparisons, asking the tech savvy people you know, and checking the stats on the WordPress plugin download site.

The five steps outlined here—

- Frequent backups that go back at least 30 days
- Long, strong passwords
- Current plugin updates
- Current theme updates
- Free Wordfence

—will establish a strong foundation of security at no cost and small effort.

By practicing safe WordPress, you hopefully will never know how close you came to getting hacked by someone who was battering at your site but couldn't get in.

But don't practice safe WordPress? You'll definitely know when your site becomes the next bathroom wall.

Ask me how I know.



Note: The plugins I've listed as ones I use are for information only. Other people may recommend others. Do your homework.

Patricia Burroughs (aka Pooks) has had at least one, and sometimes more, websites since 1999 and somehow managed to dodge bullets for all of that time. After her recent adventures, she fervently wishes she hadn't ignored so many security risks like smart password use, and been ignorant of others like not updating themes and plugins she wasn't even using. She also would like you to know how tempted she was to provide this information in terms of condoms and the morning after pill. Very tempted. You can find her at [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), her [webpage](#), and at various other social media sites.

Panel 911: Surviving Dysfunctional Panels

Making it out alive (in front of a studio audience!)

By M.C.A. Hogarth



You've put your best foot forward: you've shown up on time. You've brought a drink that will keep your throat happy for an hour or two. You have business cards and a cover flat or a copy of your latest book to prop up next to your name. You're dressed in your best: a nice professional outfit or a conversation piece sure to make you stand out.

Then it happens: you're on the panel from Hell. Something goes wrong, and before you know it, you're outside the room and the fans either don't remember your face or they know your name and revile it. If you haven't experienced the panel from Hell, you're running on borrowed time. The best defense is a good offense. Here are some scenarios and suggestions for getting out alive.

What am I doing here?

You're a military science fiction author, and they've put you on a panel about feminist fantasy tropes. You write romance, and they've decided you're an authority on creating alien languages. You're a writer, and they've put you on a panel on how to make it as an illustrator. Eventually, you will be on a panel that will make you wonder how you got there. If you're lucky, you'll know in advance when you receive your schedule in the mail or it gets posted to the con website. If you're not, you'll find out when they hand you your badge.

The first thing to remember: You're intelligent, you're thoughtful, and you don't have to be the world's leading expert. If you have the time, do some research on the topic; if you don't, give yourself at least fifteen minutes before the panel to consider different angles. Even 10 minutes thinking will prepare you better for public discourse than walking in cold.

Next, trust that you have something worthwhile to say. You do. Believe it implicitly, or you'll make the wrong impression on your audience. Be confident. When introductions start, say, "I'm So-and-so, and I'm a writer; I've never been on a panel on topic X but I'm looking forward to the discussion." Or, "I'm here to add a different perspective on this topic." Stay positive.

Most importantly: Find your angle. You're an SF writer on a panel about fantasy? Try to find the commonalities between what you do and what's being discussed. If there are none, point out the

extreme dissimilarities. You're a writer on a panel about art? Talk about cover art or book illustrations. The romance author on a panel about alien languages? Sometimes the most alien concepts are the ones we run into are when fumbling our way through understanding other people.

If you absolutely can't think of a single thing to add to the discussion, become a back-up moderator. Ask the people who seem to have interesting opinions for more information. Jog the discussion: "In science fiction, I'd have to figure out biological implications for all the alien creatures I come up with. Do you ever think about that when you make up your fantasy animals?"

My most frantic experience on a 'What Am I Doing Here?' panel involved sitting at a table with Orson Scott Card to discuss the use of Native American mythology in SF/F. I don't use Native American lore in my fiction; in fact, given that my parents are immigrants, I'm not even familiar with much of it! But I had time to hit the library before the convention and when I arrived, only Card was qualified for the topic; no one else had done any research. I managed to get by. So can you. Which brings us to the next scenario:

Eek! I'm sitting next to a bestseller!

There is always that person whose presence on the panel will make us stammer and fall silent, whether it's because of their success or because we're a tremendous fan. Some things to remember if you end up sitting next to a star:

You're both professionals or you wouldn't be sitting together. Maybe you've only sold a few stories but aren't a household name. Maybe you've sold several dozen, but you're next to an award-winner everyone knows. Part of the audience's pleasure is being exposed to both new and existing names; they want to be entertained by stories from both ends of the spectrum, people newer to the game, people clawing their way through the middle, and people who are on top of it.

This panel is an opportunity to learn. You're sitting next to someone who has reached a place you aspire to be. This is a chance to ask your own questions or turn the topic of conversation to places that might help you. Listen carefully. Even if you decide the person next to you is a jerk, they still have something to teach you. If it's a Guest of Honor at your side, and not merely a Very Important Person to You, don't hog the spotlight. Don't become meek and silent, but since more people in the audience have come to see the person you're sitting next to, don't be an ego. Even if the person next to you is.

Which brings us to a very difficult scenario...

If they say another word I'm going to strangle them!

Being on a panel with someone you can't stand can make an hour seem like 40 days in the desert. There is the panelist who clutches the spotlight. The one who won't let others talk, or talks over them. The one who knows it all. The one who has it out for you. The colleague you had a fight with six years ago.

The only rule when doing a panel with a person you can't stand is to be bigger than them. People are quick to key in on simmering resentment, anger, envy or plain rudeness. You don't want to be the one they remember as the jerk.

Be courteous to your fellow panelists, whether they're rude or not. Be relaxed. Make jokes. Keep things casual. If they want to run away with the conversation, don't make snide remarks. Usually the moderator will step in when things get too unruly, but if he doesn't, don't become obnoxious.

You'll have to decide which is more important: making it out of a panel having said your piece,

or making it out of a panel without leaving a poor impression. People will remember you for having kept your cool.

Religion, taxes and politics, oh my!

A subset of the “Topic You Know Nothing About” and the “Panelists You Can’t Stand” is the “Topic You Hate With a Passion.” How’d you end up on a panel about something you dislike intensely, or feel no affinity for? Perhaps the staff knew and wanted you to stir up controversy; or possibly you happened to be the only guest they could get. Whichever reason, this type of panel doesn’t have to be a disaster. In some cases it can be the most fun.

The first and best rule is Don’t Froth. Be passionate and eloquent, have your reasons for your dislike handy—or be willing to work them out thoughtfully in the presence of strangers—but never attack your fellows or be obnoxious. Rudeness is never remembered well. People do leave panels saying, “That person was so nice, I want to go read her stuff.” It’s rare they leave saying, “That person annoyed the heck out of me ... I want to read her books!”

If you are reasonable about why you dislike something, polite to the people on the panel who do like it, and keep the conversation going by bringing up points for discussion without malice or anger, not only will you entertain your audience, but you’ll also make a good impression. You never know when a director from another con will be in the audience, wondering whether you’ll be worth inviting.

Hey, aren’t we supposed to have name cards?

Conventions and conferences are staffed by enthusiastic people who are not superhuman. Eventually you’re going to run into a panel where the moderator’s gone missing. He normally places the name cards, introduces you, and guides the discussion, so the lack of a moderator can result in an aimless or silent panel. This is particularly true of panels with strange topics no panelist can make heads or tails of (“The Art and Music Connection? What do you think this is supposed to be about?” “No clue. You?” “Ummm...”).

If your moderator’s gone missing and your audience is already in place, there’s nothing wrong with saying to your fellow panelists, “It looks like we’ve lost our moderator ... anyone want to step in?”

If your topic is really bizarre and you’re not sure what to make of it, ask the audience. “What did you come here expecting?” If they don’t know either, it’s time for improvisation.

Make sure someone’s keeping track of the time, by either doing it yourself or recruiting a friend or a fellow panelist. Stay alert, because it’s not impossible for the panel to fall into uncomfortable silence.

Yeah. Hear the crickets?

Umm... is anybody out there?

Believe it or not, without prompting, there are panels that will lapse into complete silence, and sometimes the moderators are as lost as the panelists. If the moderator doesn’t step in and you have a few ideas for questions, there’s no reason you can’t ask your fellow panelists for answers. See if you can’t seed a new discussion.

Avoid personal small talk with your fellow panelists. Any conversation that sounds like a private

one will alienate your audience. They came to see you and your peers be witty, entertaining, and interesting, not hear you talk about things they have no context for.

Instead, ask the audience for questions. Get them to participate. If the questions go off topic, it's still better than silence.

Run away, run away!

You're on a panel about a topic you passionately dislike, with people you despise, and a moderator who didn't prepare. Your mug is empty, it's 10 p.m., and you're a morning person, and your hair has dried into an unintentional Mohawk.

Don't panic ... laugh. Really. Invite everyone to laugh along with you... "This obviously isn't my day, is it?" (Say it like you think it's funny, not as if you're angry, even if you are!) Or "I'm not sure of the exact timing, but somewhere around three in the afternoon my hair declared independence."

Remember this is only an hour or two of your life. You can get through it. Reward yourself when you're done getting through the wringer.

Always, always, relax. The worst circumstances are sometimes the easiest ones in which to shine. If you sail into the room, laugh away your hair, make jokes about your lack of coffee and lack of sleep, politely maintain the conversation and even manage a few witty comments, you will be remembered as the pro who can be a good guest, even if her hair's on fire. A pro no one has to babysit is a pro people will invite back again and again, and is a pro people will remember when they're in the bookstore, or browsing the magazine racks.

Final Thoughts

In the end, remember that while you're there to have fun, you're also there to do business, marketing yourself as someone worth looking up. Beyond that, remember that you're not just at the con to market yourself, but to relax, meet new people and laugh and be yourself. Take your responsibilities as a Guest seriously, not yourself.

The absolute best advice I can possibly give you: Practice, practice, practice. Contact your regional cons and ask to get on the programming. The more panels you sit on, the more experience you'll have with panels that go terribly, terribly wrong—and the more likely you'll be to ace the disasters when you're on a bigger stage.

Remember to smile!

M.C.A. Hogarth is a former vice president of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, and the author of over 40 novels in the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and romance. She is also a professional visual artist, and doodles cartoon jaguars for fun. See samples at her website, mcahogarth.org.

The Basic Elements of Author Branding

By Nicole Evelina



When authors hear the term “branding,” they usually think of logo, or maybe tagline. Those are the most obvious external aspects of branding, but branding is also about all the ways an author presents him or herself to the world—the “total package.” An author needs to be aware of both internal and external branding, and be consistent, whether it be a color or a voice. If an author doesn’t shape that image, the readers will form one, and an author risks fragmenting his or her image. Each element of branding should work together to provide a cohesive view of who you are as an author, much like facets in a gem.

Internal Branding

1. **Mission/Vision/Values** – A good way to start thinking about branding is to develop personal mission/vision/values statements. Your mission/vision statements should include what you hope to achieve with your writing and how you will do it. Think about why you write what you write. Your core values are those things you won’t compromise for anything that are reflected in your writing. (For example, mine are feminism, faith, strength, education, and love for/respect of history.) If you’re having trouble, look at authors you admire and think about how you’re similar and different. This information may or may not be something you share publicly (I have my mission statement and values on my website), but outlining this information for yourself will help you do all of the things below.
2. **Voice** – This is both your authorial voice in your books and the voice with which you write on your blog, in social media, etc. It is internal because it is part of you. Do you use contractions or not? Do you prefer large words or common slang? Are you one for short, clean sentences or are you verbose and flowery? Think about it this way: a YA author is likely to have a much more relaxed voice than a literary fiction author because literary fiction is concerned with the art of wordcraft first and foremost, whereas a YA author takes on a fun, hip voice in order to relate to their audience.
3. **Attitude** – How do you talk to those whom you communicate with? Are you positive and cheery or are you serious? Are you helpful or do you give off a sales-y vibe? Anyone who comes in contact with you will be able to tell.
4. **Actions** – Are you quick to reply to emails/messages/tweets? Are you open to answering questions? Do you pose for pictures with fans at events and engage them in conversation? Or are you

more standoffish? Some authors will sign books for hours, while others refuse to ever give an autograph. Think of your best and worst famous author experience and you'll immediately see why this part of internal branding is important.

5. **Book content** – What you write impacts your voice, what you blog about, and how you see the world. Let me give you an example: I write historical fiction about women whose stories are in danger of being lost to history, as well as romantic comedies about strong modern women. This means—not surprisingly—I am a feminist. You will see a lot of social media activity from me on women's issues, as well as historical articles about women on my blog. It also means I will give a very different interview than a woman who has more traditional views on women's roles in society. It also means you will not see me at a conservative rally, but I would consider attending something sponsored by the League of Women Voters.

6. **Motivations** – The “why” you write about what you do is almost more important than the “what” because it gets to your core motivations as a writer. Do you write mystery because you love solving puzzles and are insatiably curious? Do you write YA because you want to be a positive influence for the next generation? If so, you'd have a different brand from someone who writes in that genre because it's what's hot or because it was the best time of their life. Like the “what,” the “why” informs what other marketing activities you may do, groups you may be part of, even locations for your author events, all of which are part of your brand.

External Branding

1. **Logo** – Not every author has a logo, but having one can help people readily identify who you are and what you are about. You should put it on your website, business cards, swag items, posters, etc. Everywhere. You don't have to have something fancy or spend a ton of money having one designed. As long as it is distinctive and says what you want it to, you're fine. For example, Nora Roberts uses a logo of her initials in a particular font with a circle around it to indicate that the book is new and not a reissue or reprint. While being easy enough for a non-designer to create, Nora's logo conveys class and authority, two things she is well known for.

2. **Color choice** – This may seem odd, but consider that corporate brands go so far as to trademark their exact shade of a color. Think Tiffany blue or Coca-Cola red and you'll begin to see the impact color can have. Color works the same way for authors. Have you noticed that a lot of romance authors choose pink or red? Or that crime writers tend to go with dark blue, black or another dark color that conveys seriousness and the dark side of life? Cookbooks abound with green. You will want to have one or two consistent colors that you use in your logo, on your website and all of your collateral materials. It will tie everything together and begin to build a vision of who you are.

3. **Font** – Font conveys a feeling, whether you want it to or not. Think of a deadly serious message written in Curlz font or a love note written in Chiller. Doesn't work, does it? That's why you'll see romance writers leaning toward cursive, curly, curving fonts and thriller writers using thick block caps. Like your colors, you will want to keep this consistent.

4. **Tagline** – Both books and authors can have taglines. Either way, a tagline is a short, one-sentence hook that says what you/your book is about and draws the reader in. The more creative and emotionally evocative you can be, the better. If you write in multiple genres, try to think of an element that bridges them and build your author tagline around that.

5. **Brand graphics** – You want to have a consistent image that says “you,” regardless of where people encounter you. That means you should use it on your website, social media, event

posters, business cards, etc. You want people to know it is you before they even see your name. When you have a new or recent release, this will obviously tie into your book cover, but you need something for the in-between times. Check out the websites of your favorite authors and you'll begin to see elements like this, even if they aren't specifically in the masthead of the site.

6. **Book covers** – Whether or not you have full control over your book covers, you should at least advocate for consistency in font and, if you are writing a series, some element that ties your titles together. The key here is making books in a series look like they belong together. This can be done through images, title, font family, font size and overall design composition.

7. **Author photo** – Please have a professional photo taken. Most of us will have a generic headshot, but you can spice those up by using bright colors, to which the eye is naturally drawn. If you write in a specific time period or genre, you may want to reflect that in your author photo. For example, some authors choose to be in full costume, others are more subtle with a period-appropriate element like a hat, while some romance authors choose to include an element of romance/sex. It's really up to you.

8. **Website design** – This is your online presence in the world, so you want it to represent who you are. Try to tie in the colors you've chosen, your fonts, brand graphics, logo, etc. This is where it all comes together. And make sure your pages are written in your brand's voice.

9. **Email signature** – If nothing else, you should have your tagline below your name in your email signature, along with your website. You may also want to link to your books, include social media information, or a newsletter sign up link. I also include awards my books have won and writer organizations I'm a member of. Think of your email signature as a concise way to sell yourself and your books.

10. **Business cards** – Your business card should include your name, tagline, genres and contact information at the very least. You may also want to include your book covers, brand image, or even your author photo.

11. **Social media** – This was covered somewhat above, but you should always use your author photo in your social media avatars, not your book cover, because people connect better with faces. Again, tie in all of the other elements of your brand here and keep your voice in mind when posting.

Don't let the idea of branding overwhelm you. It's really just a formal way of showing the world who you already are. If you look at it that way, it can even be fun!

Nicole Evelina is a historical fiction and romantic comedy writer whose four novels have won nearly 20 awards, including two Book of the Year designations. Her first non-fiction book, The Once and Future Queen, about how the character of Guinevere in Arthurian Legend changes according to social views of women, releases this month.

The Second Time Around: Reissuing Backlist

Part 1: Editing and updating

By Jacqueline Diamond



The good news: your publisher just reverted rights to one or more of your books.

The bad news: your publisher just reverted rights to older books and now you have to decide whether to revise them. Update the technology? Refine the voice and style because you've grown as a writer over the years?

Or, for backlist romances, adjust the heat level?

Lowering the temperature

"Every one of the books has required revision, to clean up the excessive locker room language Ellora's Cave required," said Ann Jacobs, author of *Roped, Hitched and Lassoed*. "When I first began the Herculean task of reissuing nearly 100 novels and novellas, my intent had been to alter content enough to leave the stories steamy, yet firmly in the mainstream of current romance-genre offerings. While I was able to accomplish this with some titles, others had themes (BDSM, ménage) that placed them firmly and irrevocably into the erotic romance column."

Her concerns were shared, with variations, by authors who wrote for other publishers.

"My rights reverted from Harlequin on a number of books that were always meant to be a series, but were never released that way," noted Shelley Adina, author of *Call For Me*, Book One of the Moonshell Bay series. "They had been published in the Blaze line of sexy romances, but since my brand no longer supports red covers, I stripped out the love scenes and added some emotional lead-ups to a closed door instead."

"I actually did tone down the heat levels in a few of my historical romances when I reissued them, for two reasons," said Brenda Hiatt, author of *The Girl From Mars* in the Starstruck series. "I'd felt pressured by my editor(s) to make those books steamier than I was really comfortable with when they were first published. And by the time I was reissuing the historicals, I was also writing YA (and reissuing my even older traditional Regencies) and thought toning down the heat would make my brand more consistent."

Tinkering with technology

What about those books that were written in a time only slightly different—say, by a couple of decades—from the present?

“I wouldn’t bother updating technology in a backlist book, unless it was to make it more generic (e.g., deleting a reference to a cell phone the size of a shoebox),” horror novelist Ashley McConnell said. “Technology is going to keep changing, and unless you want to spend your career trying to update old books, there’s no point.”

Shirley Hailstock, author of *More Than Gold* in the Capitol Chronicles series, addressed several areas in revising.

“I updated for errors (mainly typos) and content that needed redoing. In some cases, I saw phrasing or explanations that I thought needed revision,” she said. “I also had the issue of technology that would jar a reader. It was hard to redo/rewrite the books. However, I couldn’t let them go as they were. I felt that I could produce a better product for the readers.”

Deborah Cooke, who also writes historicals as Claire Delacroix, faced a difficult choice with a not-quite-contemporary series. “The Coxwells series I published as it stood, even though technology had changed since their original publication. The heroine of *Double Trouble* is a web mistress, which was exotic in 2000 but not now. Updating that book would have meant completely gutting it and there’s a lot I like about it as it stands. I put a comment in the reader letter that these books haven’t been revised but are snapshots in time.”

Improving the craft

Even with historical novels, in which there’s no need to update technology, changes in the author’s style and voice may motivate a revision. Several authors cited point of view shifts (head-hopping) as an example.

“My first couple of traditional Regencies had POV all over the place,” Hiatt said. “I was able to fix some of that, but other spots would have required massive rewriting, so I just tried for better transitions there.”

“My historical romances don’t have the issue of changing technology, but they do show changes in my own craft and style,” said Cooke/Delacroix. “The older they are, the more heavily I revise them. For example, the Jewels of Kinfairlie trilogy, which were mass market originals in 2005, were republished in new editions in 2012 with the cover being the main change. My very first published book, *Romance of the Rose*, which was a mass market original in 1992, is being so heavily revised that I’m changing the title to *For His Lady’s Kiss*.”

Patricia Rice, author of *Magic in the Stars* in her Unexpected Magic series, had a similar experience.

“I have 30-plus years of backlist,” she said. “The older the book, the more editing it needs. Mine are mostly—fortunately—historical, so no cell phones are involved. But overuse of adverbs and wandering POV has taken out 20,000 words on the really old books. I couldn’t possibly reissue them until the craft was updated.”

She works to strike a balance between what to change and what to preserve.

“I do not change the story lines or characters in any way,” Rice said. “Readers remember those stories with fondness, and they want the same experience in an e-book. I simply warn new readers

that these were written in a different time and place, and they are what they are.”

Informing the public

As Rice indicated, author’s notes within a reissued book are helpful for explaining about changes or about the choice to *not* make a change. In addition, Amazon’s Author Central allows writers to post “From the Author” comments directly onto a book’s product page. This can alert the reader in advance of purchase and perhaps avert some negative reviews.

Not only can writers employ the From the Author feature for books they are reissuing, but also for their traditionally published books. After revising more than 40 of my backlist books, I’ve noted on product pages for some out-of-print copies that a much improved version is now available in a Kindle edition.

Saying goodbye

Also, in dealing with my early books, I’ve made the painful decision to retire half a dozen. Why risk alienating a reader who assumes this moldy oldie represents me as a novelist? These are books with outdated premises and writing that isn’t up to my current standards, and that can’t be fixed without a major effort that would be better invested in new material.

I’ve listed these retirees on my website, and mentioned my decision in From the Author postings on the Amazon product pages as well. So far, I haven’t received any negative responses, although some used-book sellers may be gnashing their teeth.

With most books, however, the time spent revising and re-issuing can be worthwhile. Kit Frazier, author of *Dead Copy*, said, “I’ve made more with the updates to my regained rights than I ever did through traditional pubs.”

Next up: Part 2 Rebranding and Marketing

USA Today bestselling author Jacqueline Diamond is known for her mysteries, romantic comedies, medical romances and Regency romances—102 titles as of 2017. A former Associated Press reporter and recipient of a Romantic Times Career Achievement Award, Jackie currently writes and self-publishes the Safe Harbor Medical Mysteries. These stories share a setting and secondary characters with her 17-book Safe Harbor Medical romance series, originally published by Harlequin. Jackie (www.jacquelinediamond.com) has reissued more than 40 reverted backlist titles.

Maintaining Your Creative Life:

What is a Meaning Crisis?

By Denise A. Agnew



"Do or do not. There is no try."

—Yoda

Every writer begins their creative journey with a sense of excitement and enthusiasm. That first time you were thrilled with the idea of writing a book? Your drive was so strong you couldn't wait to get started. There was sheer ecstasy and a sense of wonder in the experience.

Of course, this didn't mean fear wasn't boiling somewhere down deep, and that you didn't hesitate to start. However a force greater than fear motivated you to create. The sheer excitement it gave you just to think about creating was a rush and kept your fingers flying over the keyboard. You might have kept that enthusiasm for creation for many years.

Until one day you didn't. Maybe you stumbled through a rough patch and felt like Luke Skywalker before he discovered Yoda's wise council. Many writers deep-six a writing project or stop writing forever after this first sign of trouble.

Perhaps you encountered what is called a Meaning Crisis, and even though you didn't mean to fall into it, you did.

A creative life must be nurtured. Other situations and other people are not responsible for a lack of success (whatever the writer's personal definition of success may be), but it's easy to fall into this trap. Writers, often working in isolation, can feel like no "real" writer or "successful" writer ever has difficulty. There's this fantasy in their heads about what other writers experience on a daily basis. Despite that initial heady rush of creativity, there is always a time and a place when creative drive stumbles, many aren't ready for it.

Worse, writers are shocked by the theory that the individual is solely responsible for maintaining their creative drive. This means that if you want to create for a lifetime, there are no excuses. You must find a reason to create within yourself.

Psychotherapist, creativity coach, and instructor Eric Maisel has spent many years studying

creativity and training creativity coaches to assist others. Eric talks a lot about making meaning. But what does that mean? (No pun intended.)

Why do people create? A partial list might include: recognition, self-expression, desire to instruct, desire to entertain themselves, to entertain others, money, or fame. All of these are legitimate reasons. Unfortunately, some of the more popular reasons such as fame and money are poor maintainers of lifetime creativity. Many writers begin their careers with the belief that money and fame will keep them creating and discover this is rarely the case.

In Maisel's book *The Van Gogh Blues: The Creative Person's Path Through Depression*, he states that creative people often have difficulty maintaining a reason to keep doing their creative work and finding satisfaction in it because they are relying heavily, if not solely, on external validation.

The idea that you have to generate your own meaning, that material and outside influences aren't going to make you happy, isn't a new concept. Maisel believes that if an individual hasn't striven to identify what gives them meaning in both their overall life and the creative process, their chances of experiencing writer's block and depression increases tenfold. You have to be your own taskmaster, friend, and advocate.

For example, if you decide your writing only matters if your family approves, or if you make a certain income doing the writing, your chances of succeeding long term at a writing career or hobby is reduced significantly. If you are creating with the idea of pleasing others as a long-term goal, you may find this is not a lasting or truly self-fulfilling experience.

What does a creative person do to assure that meaning stays for the long term?

Self-reflection and spending time assessing what you are really trying to get from a writer's life is absolutely necessary. Sit down with paper and pen and ask yourself these significant questions:

1. When did I first start to write and what was the biggest motivating factor?
2. Is that motivation still applicable to my current life and does it continue to make me happy?
3. If those original motivation(s) aren't making me happy, what new motivation might?
4. Am I willing to believe my efforts matter? If not, why not?
5. Am I regularly filling the creative well by taking vacations, visiting museums, taking on another artistic endeavor to switch things up, relaxing, getting enough sleep, staying healthy, walking, making new friends, and staying in touch with those friends I already have? (Special note for extreme introverts: You aren't off the hook. Yes, you have a rich internal world, but total isolation from the outside world isn't healthy. Venture out a little and discover new things.)
6. Am I writing to trend/market and hating it?
7. Do I harbor so many resentments about perceived past failures I'm not willing to forgive myself and move forward with new ideas and projects?
8. Am I creating work that I deem satisfying to me or am I creating to please an outside audience that may choose not to be pleased at some point in time?
9. What can I do every day to engage in meaningful creation, even if only for a few minutes?
10. How can I define personal success so that I feel I'm having that success most days?
11. Am I asking trusted creative friends for tips, ideas, and support?

Finally, there is one thing every creative person must recognize if they want to create for a lifetime. Each writing project is fresh and with it comes unique challenges. Every writing day is new.

A temporary hitch or defeat is not a reason to give up and give in. Strive to discover your own meaning for creating and increase your chances of creating happily for many years to come.

Denise A. Agnew is the award-winning author of over 65 novels. Denise's novels Love From The Ashes and Blackout were optioned for film/TV by Where's Lucy? Productions. Denise is a writer/producer (Happy Catastrophe Productions/Bright Frontier Films), a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, Certified Creativity Coach, and RT Academy Mentor. As a creativity coach, Denise assists anyone in the creative arts to maintain lifelong creativity. You can find her at www.deniseagnew.com and www.creativepencoaching.com.

NINC Advice Column

This is a new monthly feature that crowdsources writer-to-writer advice. Questions will be posted on NINCLink by the end of each month. Answers of 100-words-or-less are due to the editor by the 10th of the following month.



QUESTION: If you could give your younger self just one piece of advice about how best to approach and live life as a professional writer, what would you say?

Write what you want to read. Too many new writers (ahem...myself included, back in the day) try to write the hottest new trend or to a formula they think readers want, and then give up halfway through. If you write what you'd want to read—you'll be more interested in finishing the book. And finishing a book is the biggest step in starting your career.

—[Leslie Langtry](#)

If you are a married woman, use a pseudonym or your maiden name. Otherwise, if your marriage ends, you could end up having become famous with the name of a man you no longer want to associate with.

—[Judy Griffith Gill](#)

My advice to my younger writer self: Be prepared for a career in constant flux. Learn to adapt to changes. Never stop learning and experimenting. Expect to write what you love and love what you write because you'll get enough reviews telling you otherwise.

—[Nicola Marsh](#)

Never hang around with people who get jealous. If everybody in your writer's group gets a round of applause and lots of congrats when they announce a new contract and you get crickets, run to the nearest door. If people on a loop, in a writer's group, or even just a circle of friends, criticize your success instead of celebrating it, they aren't friends. There are many wonderful writers out there who are supportive. Find them.

—[Susan Meier](#)

Write what you want and stockpile the projects until you find someone to buy them. Don't let others steer you too far from your own course, not even agents and editors. This is advice to my *much* younger self, in the long years before publication. If I were talking to myself when I first published, I'd add "—or stockpile your completed projects until you have enough to publish indie with a big splash." (God forbid I would have had to wait until the indie publishing era to get published!)

—Jennifer Stevenson

I would tell my younger self: Don't let anyone or anything stop you from writing at least a 1,000 words every day. Head down, keep working.

—Sylvia McDaniel

I'd tell my younger self the same thing I tell other self-doubting writers: Don't give the nay-sayers, the toxic "experts," the envious and insecure others even a cell's worth of space in your thoughts. Probably should tell my older self the same thing!

—Kate Freiman

Write and release! You will learn more and improve your craft *far more*, writing the next book rather than editing the last one. Would have saved me seven years on one title alone. SIGH!

—M.L. "Matt" Buchman

Plan for the long haul; it's a marathon, not a sprint. Releasing as many books as possible in a short period of time in several genres will do little to advance your career. Don't believe the promises an editor makes, because while she may have the best intentions initially, your editor might lose enthusiasm for the project over time. Or she might leave before your book is published. The in-house team might not share the editor's enthusiasm. You might find that not a single one of the promises is fulfilled. Be ready for all the ups and downs. Celebrate the successes and allow yourself to mourn the losses and then move on.

—Eve Silver

I would tell my younger writer self not to be afraid of promotion. Done right (or write), it's not bragging, it's good business, and introverts can do it, too. Don't be afraid of taking risks. Also, appreciate not needing reading glasses and being able to consume caffeine late in the day.

—Anna DePalo

Want to contribute to the column? Send your answers of not more than 100 words to newsletter@ninc.com by Nov. 10 to this question: **What is the best advice for handling critics or criticism of your work, besides simply ignoring it?**

How to Have a Long Career in Traditional Publishing

Part 1: The pros and cons of traditional publishing

By Victoria Thompson



With several publishing options now open to writers, including indie publishing, a little over half of NINC members have chosen to continue the traditional publishing route. With indie publishing offering new avenues and revenue streams, this article will provide a look into why authors choose to stay traditionally published, how they have managed to remain this way for 10 years or more, and offer advice on how others can do it, too.

To create the data, I surveyed a dozen traditionally published authors (plus me!). Together we have a combined 266 years of publishing experiences and 388 novels. On average, we've each been published for 20 years and have published 30 novels of 50,000+ words.

What do you consider to be the advantages of being traditionally published?

A few years ago, I went to New York to visit my new editor. She introduced me to at least a dozen people who all played an important part in taking my books from my computer to readers' hands. I realized it takes a village to publish a book well. Some authors enjoy not having to populate that village themselves.

"If there is publisher support," Diane Chamberlain said, "there's no substitute for it. The publisher has enormous power to get the word out there, to provide a gazillion ARCs to readers and reviewers, to make deals with booksellers to prominently feature your books, to put an ad in the NYT, to provide the author with her own publicist who will beat the bushes to set up signings and events, etc. If there isn't publisher support, though, the advantages shrink."

Traditionally published authors like not having to do things like covers themselves.

"Having a publisher do the cover art and formatting, along with marketing to large retail outlets, along with subrights like book clubs, along with promotions on Goodreads and BookBub, along with social media campaigns, leaves me time to do what I do best—which is write," Charlotte Hubbard said. "If I had to do all that other stuff, along with the formatting and juggling the online promotion required to indie publish, I'd go nuts and stop writing! Working with a publisher gives my books more clout in the bigger print retail markets (and other markets I would be hard-pressed to sell to as an indie writer)."

A distribution system to brick-and-mortar bookstores is one plus authors suggested for being traditionally published.

"Some of the advantages are books in major stores, sales reps who do try to get books in small independents all over the country. Mystery and other conferences and some book festivals still give panel slots, etc., only to traditionally published authors, and reviewers (newspapers, magazines, blogs) often review only traditionally published books," Lea Wait said.

Even with the number of bookstores shrinking, print sales remain, and this remains a strong advantage to publishing this way.

"Each of my books has had print distribution as well as digital. A significant percentage of my sales are in print and I don't know that I'd be reaching those readers if my books weren't available in print at bookstores, Walmart, grocery stores, etc.," Susan Lyons said. "I value the sales and marketing process at a traditional publisher (such as contacts with bookstores), and my publisher also does additional promotion. There have been print ads (usually multi-book) for most of my books, and my most recent releases are typically featured in at least three print ads. There's also publisher social media and sometimes online promotion. Although contracts with traditional publishers aren't ideal, and of course I wish ebook royalties were higher, I prefer traditional publishing contracts to the one-sided ones with Amazon KDP, etc. My agent and I can negotiate some terms, and the publisher cannot unilaterally change contract terms as Amazon can."

"I don't like the marketing end of the business, so I'm thrilled that my publisher handles the bulk of that," Linda Goodnight said. "The same with distribution. I like getting that nice advance so that no matter how the book does, I still make money. Another thing is the publication of an actual print book, rather than just an ebook. Though I read ebooks now and then, I still prefer print as do many of my readers."

This publisher support, having someone there with a vested interest in the book succeeding, remains a strong force for staying published traditionally.

"The publisher support in areas that I can't reach—i.e., marketing to the buying accounts, setting up deals and specials, getting books in bookstores and other venues—is important," Katie MacAlister said. "Also, money flows to me, not away into editing, covers, formatting, marketing, etc. I like the fact that even though my percentage is less on each book sold, the volume sold and visibility of each book is much higher with my publishers than on my own. I don't have the time or desire to be a marketing guru on top of writing books, so it's nice to dump that on the publisher."

Deb Stover agrees. She said, "I am a storyteller—not a businesswoman. I love writing stories, but I truly detest the business side of indie publishing. Even though I have made some decent dollars through reissuing my older novels in digital format—those rights were not even addressed in those early contracts!—I still do not enjoy dealing with the nitty gritty business deals. I do, however, like having control over cover art. Even so, I prefer to sacrifice some income for my trusted agent I've had for almost 20 years, and an editor/publisher willing to treat me with respect so I can simply focus on writing. In other words, I don't wanna do that other crap. It's not my job."

What are the disadvantages, if any?

While authors preferred being traditionally published, they recognize that there are disadvantages, too.

"Books that don't fit into editorial slots aren't purchased for publication," Emilie Richards said. "Covers, PR, marketing, and distribution are usually out of an author's control. Authors aren't as free

to follow their own best instincts and creative voices.”

Another disadvantage was lack of control over the content, or over the cover art.

“Traditionally published means a bit less control over content,” Laurie Alice Eakes said. “No matter how I’ve fought sometimes, some changes are made that I do not want. I don’t have much control over release dates. I’ve been lucky with covers on about half my books. The other half...”

“Though I mostly write what I choose, I’ve run into some situations where I had to change things about the story that I thought should have stayed,” Goodnight said. “I have very little, if any, say in the cover art. It’s also periodically frustrating dealing with the wait times from proposal to contract.”

While the publishing reaches bookstores, the schedule can be an issue.

“Most of all, the fact that the publisher owns my book rights way too long and fights to hang onto them even after the book is no longer profitable for them or for me. Lower royalty rates than I’d like,” Goodnight said.

“The main reason I made an attempt to go indie—or at least hybrid—was my frustration with how little control I have over the publishing process. Especially the schedule. With most of my books, I have no idea when I’m going to receive edits, which makes scheduling anything extremely challenging. ... I’ve also had frustration with release schedules and pricing, none of which I had any control over,” Jenna Black said.

The publisher also controls how a book is sold, and for what price, or if the book will be published at all.

“A con is special sales, i.e., selling my books in mass numbers at pitiful prices,” Anna Jacobs said. “I think that stinks and the publishers all do it. Talk about cutting off your own nose! Also, you’re very dependent on your editor’s clout in the organization, especially earlier in your career.”

“Some of my books haven’t been published because they’re “out of style” right now with traditional publishers. I’m going to indie publish one later this year, but don’t expect fantastic sales,” Wait said.

“If one ‘loses’ one’s publisher (a manuscript is rejected or the publisher goes belly-up) then a writer has to find a new publisher,” Carolyn Woolston said.

Where indie publishing was once almost taboo, now it’s mainstream and respected. It’s come into its own.

“I guess another disadvantage is that the industry now seems so geared to indie. Workshops and information-sharing tend to focus on indie,” Lyons said. “Some other writers seem to think I’m crazy for choosing traditional publishing rather than wanting to hear my reasons for that choice. Many of those writers are working 10+ hour days on their indie careers, and I’m happy for them if they’re enjoying it and doing well, but that’s not my chosen path.”

Next month, in Part 2, the authors will tell us about the setbacks they’ve faced during their long careers and how they dealt with them so they could continue in traditional publishing.

Victoria Thompson is the bestselling author of the Edgar ® and Agatha Award-nominated Gaslight Mystery Series and the new Counterfeit Lady Series. Her latest books are *Murder in the Bowery* and *City of Lies*. She has published 21 mysteries and 20 historical romances and contributed to the award-winning textbook *Many Genres, One Craft*. She currently teaches in the master’s degree program for writing popular fiction at Seton Hill University. Victoria is a founding member and past president of Novelists, Inc., Pennwriters, and New Jersey Romance Writers. She lives in Illinois with her husband and a very spoiled little dog.

Jenna Black graduated from Duke University with a degree in physical anthropology and French. Once upon a time, she dreamed she would be the next Jane Goodall, camping in the bush making fascinating discoveries about primate behavior. Then, during her senior year at Duke, she did some actual research in the field, and her fascinating discovery was this: primates spend most of their time doing such exciting things as sleeping and eating. Concluding that this discovery was her life's work in the field of primatology, she then moved on to such varied pastimes as grooming dogs and writing technical documentation. She now is a full-time writer of fantasy, romance, and young adult fiction.

Diane Chamberlain is a *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of 25 novels. Her latest, *The Stolen Marriage*, will be released October 3, 2017. Her 2018 novel will involve time travel, assuming she ever finishes it. She lives in North Carolina with her significant other, John, and a pup, Cole.

Laurie Alice Eakes is the bestselling author of more than two dozen books. Accolades for her work include winning the National Readers Choice Award and Rita finalist status. She has recently relocated to a cold climate because she is weird enough to like snow and icy lake water. When she isn't basking in the glory of being cold, she likes to read, visit museums, and take long walks, preferably with her husband, though the cats make her feel guilty every time she leaves the house.

Linda Goodnight, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller, has authored fifty sweet and Christian romance novels. Among her numerous awards are the RITA and the CAROL. Like many of the characters in her books, Linda is a small town girl with a penchant for home cooking, local festivals, family, kids, and lovable mutts. She loves playing matchmaker between her honorable (if badly broken) heroes and the strong, smart women who help them heal. You can contact Linda at www.lindagoodnight.com, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Her latest release is *The Innkeeper's Sister* from HQN.

Charlotte Hubbard is the acclaimed author of Amish romance and fiction that evokes simpler times and draws upon her experiences in Jamesport, the largest Old Order Amish community west of the Mississippi. Faith and family, farming, and food preservation are hallmarks of her lifestyle—and the foundation of all her novels. A deacon, dedicated church musician and choir member, she loves to travel, read, try new recipes, and crochet. A longtime Missourian, Charlotte now lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, with her husband Neal and their border collie, Vera.

Anna Jacobs has had eighty novels published and is addicted to storytelling. She was born in England and emigrated to Perth, Western Australia in the 1970s. She is currently the fourth most borrowed author of adult fiction in the UK and similarly popular in Australia, but is less well known in the USA. She writes both historical and modern novels for two UK publishers, complex tales of families and relationships set in both countries. Her website contains a lot of information, including list of books and which series each belongs to, plus first chapters to read: www.annajacobs.com.

International bestselling author **Susan Fox**, who also writes as Susan Lyons and Savanna Fox, “knows what women want in contemporary romance” (*Publishers Weekly*). Her books have won numerous awards and *Love Somebody Like You: A Caribou Crossing Romance* was a RITA® finalist. Her latest series is Blue Moon Harbor, from Kensington Zebra. A resident of both Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia, Susan has degrees in law and psychology, but would far rather be writing fiction than living in the real world. Visit her at susanlyons.ca (where you can subscribe to her newsletter) and on Facebook.com/SusanLyonsFox.

Katie MacAlister is the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Publishers Weekly* bestselling author of a whole lot of books. Like, more than sixty, which makes her feel incredibly old. Her books have won awards, been translated into umpteen languages, and have been optioned (although she's still waiting for someone in Hollywood to notice that fact). She spends way too much time playing video games and watching black & white British mystery movies, and lives with three furry kids in the Pacific Northwest.

Emilie Richards began her publishing career in 1985 and all these years and 70 something books later, she's delighted she did. She's been published in romance, mystery and single title women's fiction, which she concentrates on today with the same publisher with whom she began her career. In addition she's planning to pursue original indie fiction, but for now she's busily trying to republish her backlist and enjoy her family.

After declaring her candidacy for president at age four, **Deb Stover** veered off course to play Lois Lane. Later, when she refused to blow Clark Kent's cover, she turned her attention to her own real American hero and married him. Considering her experience with heroes, redirecting her passion for writing to romance novels seemed natural. Since publication of *Shades of Rose* in 1995, Stover has received dozens of awards for her work, which includes over twenty titles in a variety of languages and formats. For more information visit www.debstover.com.

USA Today bestselling author **Lea Wait** (www.leawait.com) lives on the coast of Maine and writes two mystery series (and a third beginning in 2018) and historical novels for ages eight and up. She has recently indie-published her first fiction, *Pizza To Die For*, a mystery with a 14-year-old protagonist, but she prefers traditional publishing.

Carolyn Woolston, w/a Lynna Banning, combines a lifelong love of history and literature into a satisfying career as a writer. Born in Oregon, she graduated from Scripps College and embarked on a career as an editor and technical writer and later as a high school English teacher. She is also a musician, performing on harp, psaltery, dulcimer, and recorders in a medieval music ensemble; in addition she plays harpsichord and classical music on the piano.

Obituary of Georgia Bockoven



Georgia G. Bockoven, former NINC president and advisory council member, passed Aug. 14, 2017, after a battle with liver disease. Beloved and cherished wife of John, her husband of 48 years, their love and devotion to each other was an inspiration to all who knew them. Georgia was a native of San Francisco, CA, and resident of Rocklin, CA.

Georgia began her professional life as a photojournalist and later became a highly successful and award-winning author of 26 novels. A guiding member of Romance Writers of America and Novelists, Inc., she helped aspiring writers through her enthusiasm, knowledge, and encouragement. She loved to travel, and her quest for the perfect photo often took Georgia and her husband to far-off places to photograph animals in their natural habitat. A crusader for the health of the planet and the welfare of its inhabitants, Georgia's unique gift for observation and empathy allowed her to not only write memorable characters and touching stories, but also to capture the essence of her animal subjects.

Georgia was the loving mother of two sons and grandmother of five. She had a great and compassionate heart, and it was not unusual for Georgia to stop the car to offer aid, whether by providing a warm coat or a warm meal. For many years she volunteered with the Firefighters Burn Institute Sacramento, which provides support to burn survivors and their families.

Georgia was a founding board member of the Raise Your Hand Foundation, and the Foundation's Georgia G. Bockoven Memorial Scholarship advances critical care nursing in war-Affected West African communities. For information on scholarship donations, email GGBScholarship@ryhf.org or donate online at www.ryhf.org.

Georgia will remain forever in our hearts.

The Mad Scribbler

A Place In the World

By Laura Resnick



"I knew what it was like never to be asked out on a date... And I sure as heck knew what it was to feel clumsy and ugly. I could write this song. I was sure of it."

—Janis Ian, *Society's Child: My Autobiography*

My kitten died on a Sunday morning, and I cried brokenheartedly over her sudden passing.

For several years, I've been fostering cats and kittens for a local animal rescue group. In the current litter of kittens, there was one, Chili, who'd been under the weather for a week or two. Not seriously ill, but clearly not quite right. So I finally called the vet and scheduled an appointment for her. That night, however, Chili had some sort of crisis; she suddenly couldn't walk or stand, and she apparently couldn't see. I rushed her to the local animal ER. By the time we arrived, she was disoriented, drooling heavily, and struggling to breathe.

While waiting in the lobby in the wee hours for the doctor to examine Chili and then summon me to discuss the diagnosis, I stared at a television where national news was showing live footage of Hurricane Irma making landfall in Florida. The news anchors and reporters talked about the destruction this storm had already wreaked in the Caribbean, including dead and displaced people, and they pondered the terrible toll it would now take in the US.

While I recognized how massive Irma was, and how many people would be affected, all I could think while I sat there waiting at the animal hospital was, "Please tell me Chili only needs a couple of injections and will be fine. Please tell me she's going to be okay."

She wasn't fine. Chili was suffering from some sort of neurological collapse or brain damage. The doctor couldn't find a cause and postulated it was either congenital or caused by an infection. If it was the latter, it might be treatable. Chili would be hospitalized overnight to undergo further testing and to start a course of sophisticated antibiotics.

The vet allowed me to visit her briefly. Chili was very weak and wrapped in a heated blanket. Recognizing my voice or my smell, she visibly relaxed when I held her for a few minutes before I left.

That was the last time I saw her. In the morning, when I called for an update, there was no change. A half hour later, she died.

By then, Irma's epic destruction dominated the news, replacing headlines about the Hurricane

Harvey disaster in Texas. Was this the wrong time to talk about Chili? To tell my online friends? My feline fosters are popular on Facebook, and everyone who follows their adventures on social media knew Chili had gone to the ER. So I wrote a post about her death.

I waited for at least one person to comment that I was too focused on one dead kitten when tens of thousands of people were suffering in Florida, Texas, and beyond. But no one did. In fact, many people posted particularly thoughtful comments and expressed their condolences in sensitive ways. At the conclusion of all this, I wrote:

“A brief glimpse of today's news headlines is horrifying—it's like End Days elsewhere in my country today, and in the world—but I appreciate how many people have showed that they feel, as I do, that this one little life mattered, too, and her early death is sad, regardless of context.”

The lesson I took from that, as a person, is the same one I take as a writer: What matters is what people can relate to, what we can empathize with, and what comforts us. The fact that my household lost one tiny life a while natural disaster was rampaging across multiple regions of the South doesn't mean Chili's death or my sorrow is irrelevant. They have a place in the world too. Life isn't about only epic events that affect thousands or millions.

Which brings to mind a passage in the autobiography of composer, musician, and author Janis Ian. In a long and distinguished career, her most commercially successful song remains the Grammy Award-winning, “At Seventeen,” released in 1975. In her book, Ian recounts writing that song, which was so personal that before she was done composing it, “I'd decided I'd never sing it in public. It was just too humiliating.” Fortunately, she changed her mind.

“At Seventeen” is a haunting, rhythmic reflection on being a lonely, socially awkward, and homely teenage girl. My friends and I—and almost any woman I know of my generation—we wore out our stereo needles playing that song over and over and *over* in the late 1970s. Sure, bigger things were going on in the world, as there are now. But Ian's song spoke directly to me and to countless other girls. It was indeed personal. In our experience, as well as hers; it was something we understood, felt, and cared about. It was, above all, reassurance that we weren't alone, that someone shared and understood our anguish. In establishing that empathy, the song also became an antidote to our pain.

Like the loss of something you love, such as a pet, the youthful loneliness expressed in “At Seventeen” is something many people experienced and therefore understand. And that makes it, in a sense, enormous—as big as anything out there.

As I write this, Puerto Rico is suffering a major humanitarian crisis in the wake of Hurricane Maria, and a shooter in Las Vegas has just killed dozens of people and wounded hundreds more. Meanwhile, much of the news from Houston, Florida, and the Caribbean remains tragic—as is the news from Syria, Somalia, and Mexico.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by world events, as well as by the events in our private lives. In all these circumstances, the same question sometimes comes to me: “What does writing novels matter, when *this* is going on? Who cares what happens next in my book, or whether I even finish writing it?”

Because I was so distraught with combined grief over national news and my kitten's death, I turned to one of my favorite comfort reads: a charming, amusing mystery by the late Sarah Caudwell. Reading the book gave me a sense of relief and helped me get through the next few days with a semblance of sanity and competence. So, as a reader, *I* care whether you finish your next book.

As a writer, it has been my privilege to provide that same sort of relief to readers, and it has

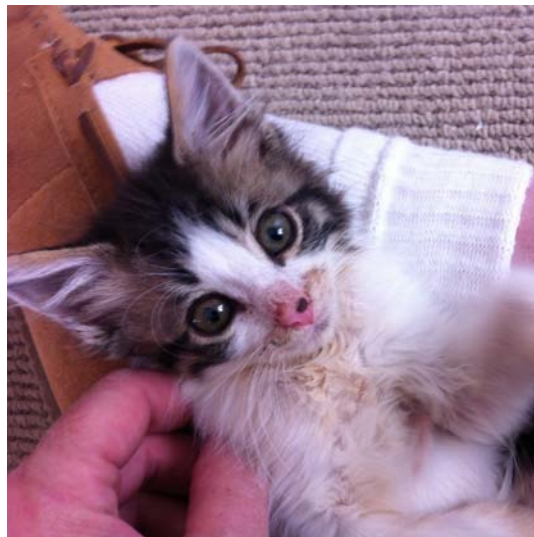
probably been yours too.

I once received a letter from a woman who said that reading one of my books was what helped her cope with her father's death and funeral. (When I read that, I remembered the grief of my grandfather's funeral and how I turned to a favorite writer's work in my emotional exhaustion, looking for the sustenance to keep going.) Another reader wrote that she went to the ER for a medical emergency so daunting that she made her husband leave her side to go buy her one of my novels, because reading it was the only way she'd keep her sanity while undergoing scary procedures and awaiting test results. (Happily, she was back home and in good health when she contacted me.) A young man wrote a shy message saying he'd be too embarrassed to tell me how many times he's read a trilogy I wrote, but he wanted me to know those books helped him get through some tough years of his life.

Many of my fellow novelists have received similarly rewarding letters. For those who haven't, it's because your readers are like me—not organized enough to survive another day *and* write the novelist who helped.

I'm still sad over Chili's short life. Although it remains unclear why she died, the doctors don't think any of her littermates are in danger—and, so far, they are still well. Chili was sweet, affectionate, loved attention, and played well with others. She was a messy, enthusiastic eater belly flopped into her breakfast and dinner and stayed there for the whole meal, so that her siblings had to eat around her. I despaired of ever getting the food stains out of her white fur. Chili isn't the first one I've lost, and I'll never get used to it. I wish she could have stayed much longer. But her death, sad as it was, reminded me of our place in the world as writers, and it's a valuable and worthwhile one—even on days when it's hard to feel that way.

RIP, little one.



Chili, June 2017—September 2017

Membership Benefits

Need industry intel, software, or legal help? We've got you covered.

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

As a NINC member, your benefits include industry discounts, newsletter and website articles, professional services directory, networking opportunities, and more.

We've compiled all of these—which you can also find on our website—into this list as a helpful reminder.

Networking

Join our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>

We offer a critique/brainstorming group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NINKcritique>

Conference

Conference loop: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BeachNINC2017/info>

Newsletter

Propose an article: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/propose-an-article/>

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The Hot Sheet: Porter Anderson and Jane Friedman, editors of The Hot Sheet, an industry newsletter delivered every other Wednesday, are offering NINC members a discount of 20% on subscriptions. Add NINC2017 at checkout to receive the discount.

House of Design: Shaila Abdullah has over a decade of experience designing websites for authors. Being an award-winning author herself, she understands the industry, and will provide you with a content management website that reflects your unique style, genre, and personality. NINC members get 10% off.

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Volunteer

One of the greatest benefits of NINC is the opportunity to volunteer your talents to benefit other members—which pays incredible and unexpected dividends in networking and knowledge. Learn more about volunteer opportunities here: <https://ninc.com/members-only/open-positions/>



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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2017 Committees

- [Complete committee member listings](#) are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.
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 - Sponsorship: Rochelle Paige
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 - Registration: Pam McCutcheon
 - Communications: Laura Hayden
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Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin

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admin@ninc.com

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

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