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***Nink* December 2017**

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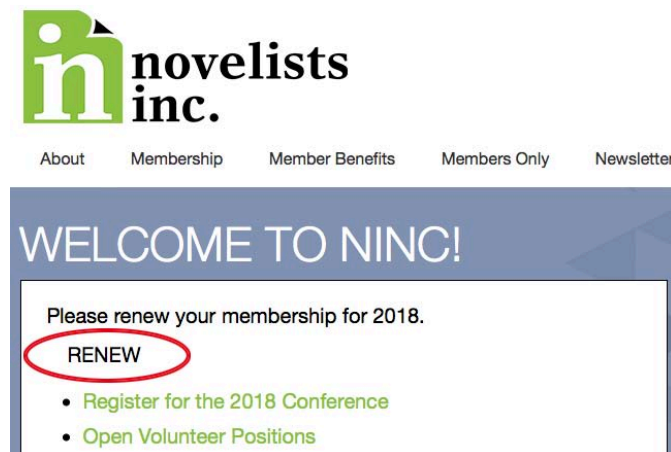
President's Voice

By Erica Ridley



Happy December!

It's that wonderful time of year again—**renewal season!** Just log into ninc.com and follow the prompts to renew your dues:



While you're on our website, [registration](#) is now open for the **2018 NINC conference!** We have several phenomenal speakers already on board, and can't wait to be able to start making official announcements.

Here's the *Craft Your Perfect Career* sign-up link:

<https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/>

Got a sec? Even if all you have time for is a quick share or retweet, NINC very much appreciates your support.

Check out our open volunteer committees here:

<https://ninc.com/members-only/open-positions/>

As I look at the calendar, I can scarcely believe that 2017 is coming to a close. Soon I will be handing the reins to Julie Ortolon, your incoming president. And I am still very much invested in

giving back to NINC.

In 2018, I'll lead the technology committee, as well as be the conference programming co-chair, along with Julie. I am delighted. The conference committee already has so many exciting things in the works.

Have a wonderful December...may next year be our best year yet. I'll see you online—and hope to see you at the Tradewinds!



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 [propose an article](#), submit a [letter to the editor](#), or volunteer to [be an assistant editor](#) and become part of the team. You can also [buy a paperback copy](#) of the 2016 *Best of Nink*!

Accessing the NINC Website

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

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.

How to Have a Long Career in Traditional Publishing

Part 3: To Indie or Not, and Some Good Advice

By Victoria Thompson



Editor's Note: The first two parts of this article explored the pros and cons of traditional publishing and how authors have overcome the challenges traditionally published authors face. Part 3 focuses on reasons traditionally published authors have or have not gone indie, and offers some final words of wisdom for anyone pursuing a long career in traditional publishing.

Traditionally published. Indie. Hybrid. For authors, there is no longer one right or wrong way. Some of the authors featured in this series have indie-pubbed their original work and/or have indie-pubbed their backlist, but many still prefer traditional publishing.

"The thought of going totally indie makes my head spin," Charlotte Hubbard said. "I do have a series of four books that's selling very nicely in digital with Amazon (Amazon bought the rights to my Dorchester books after Dorch went bankrupt), and when I'm no longer under contract for these Amish books, I would like to write the last three books of the series I'd originally envisioned for Amazon ... which isn't exactly going indie."

"I have considered it, but my experience is that while it's satisfying on many fronts—having control over the book, price, cover, etc.—I much prefer to concentrate on writing books for a traditional publisher, while still being able to self-pub a book or novella when the urge strikes me," Katie MacAlister said. "The flexibility of doing both allows me to think out of the box with self-pubbed stuff, and continue growing my readership with the traditional publisher."

Money and time were reasons some didn't want to fully leave being traditionally publishing.

"I am actually planning to self-publish a new three-book series, but I will still be writing some trad books next year," Linda Goodnight said. "I stick with mostly trad publishing because I've done well there, and I thoroughly understand the rules of the game. I like writing the book, sending it off to an editor, and (mostly) forgetting about it until it hits the stands."

"With the exception of self-publishing six of my first seven novels when their copyrights reverted to me, I haven't considered going indie. I am living the dream in traditional publishing in that I do have excellent publisher support and can't imagine giving that up," Diane Chamberlain said.

Carolyn Woolston said, "I stick with traditional publishing because of promotion benefits and

good editing and proofreading services.”

Some did try a dip into indie waters.

“I tried indie, with two novels and 12 mini collections of short stories,” Sue Lyons said. “I did it as a learning experience and to test the waters. Also, I had two novels that I loved, that didn’t fit what traditional publishers were looking for. So I didn’t follow the recommended course of action (i.e., have a series, don’t publish until you have a few ready to go, make the first a freebie, etc.). Hopefully, if I’d done so, I would have had better sales. As it is, my two books basically tanked. I used the same pen name as for my [trad-pubbed books], but got very little crossover readership. So the experience did not convince me that I was likely to make as much or more money indie publishing, for all that extra effort and stress I’d be putting into the endeavor. For this reason, I haven’t pursued getting my rights back for the books that came out 10 or so years ago. I have no confidence it would be worth the time and money in updating them, getting new covers, formatting, uploading, and promoting them.”

The business side of publishing was a reason authors gave for not wanting to go indie.

“I don’t like the business side of publishing. I am a storyteller—a writer. I did not sign up for this. I want to write the books—not publish them,” Deb Stover said.

“I did seriously consider it during the height of my frustration with my trad publisher,” Jenna Black said. “I was so tempted by the siren song of control! And I did make an attempt, both with a trunk novel (which did okay without much marketing effort from me, though still nowhere near what I make on traditional novels) and a new series, with which I did not have much success. If the series had taken off, I might feel differently now, though I’m not sure. I am passionate about the writing part of the equation, but not so much about marketing, and I don’t know if I could have sustained an effort over the course of years when I didn’t really enjoy it.”

“I love writing/storytelling. I don’t want to do the business stuff. And anyway, my income is good and is still rising. Why should I want to change?” Anna Jacobs said. “And finally, I’m getting older (76) so I don’t have as much energy and I’m not willing to waste what’s left of my life doing jobs/activities I don’t like.”

Still, indie or being hybrid does beckon like a siren in some cases.

“I might publish (will publish one) indie—and am considering continuing one series indie instead of with a publisher. I’m only considering that because I have a fan base for that series and a mailing list, FB followers, etc. I’d much rather be traditionally published,” Lea Wait said.

“I have definitely considered it,” Emilie Richards said. “But at this stage of my career, I’ve realized I like turning over some decisions to my publisher, so I’ve just signed another contract. I have control over title (a huge deal for me) and lots of input on covers. Plus I’ve had excellent editors and know I can trust their opinions.”

For many traditionally published authors, the final word was that they like the idea of being more singularly focused on writing. Whereas some authors love having complete control, others like not having to worry about certain aspects of book publishing.

“Indie publishing is a completely different game,” Goodnight said, “with all new rules and requirements, including copious amounts of self-promotion that I’m not willing to do. At least, not yet. Publishing changes rapidly, so I never say never. And I deeply admire those brave souls who have forged a career in the indie market. I’m still making a living in trad, so I’m reluctant to throw that away.”

“There’s so much to learn with indie, and while I’ve learned a lot, I’d rather write than do all the extras or find appropriate, talented assistants,” Richards said. “However, that said, I have several

projects I'm working on that will be indie. While traditional is my bread and butter, I'd like a foot in both doors."

Slightly more than half of NINC membership is trad-published. To have a successful career in traditional publishing, advice fell into several distinct categories:

1. Research. Learn. Assess. Write. Repeat.

"My advice is pretty much the same as for someone who wants to pursue indie publishing. Make sure you've done your research and are being realistic about your personality and capabilities, how much and what kind of work you'll have to put in, what frustrations you're likely to encounter and how you'll deal with them, what kind of income and expenses you're likely to have in the first year, second year, etc.," Lyons said. "Work out a rough business plan, something you can regularly review and revise. For traditional publishing, also, of course, research the publishing houses, lines, editors, authors, etc. Look for a good fit for you and your writing. And then, armed with that information, go shopping for an agent who'll be a good fit. Research contracts and what terms are desirable and not desirable. Even if you have an agent, you shouldn't rely entirely on her/him for advice on contracts."

"Print is still alive and well, regardless of what you may hear," Goodnight said. "With trad, as with indie, study the market, learn the craft, write the best book you can, email it to your target publisher, and then get busy writing the next one."

"Keep writing," Wait said. "Keep submitting. Establish an online presence (and an offline one, too, if you can) so a publisher will be convinced that there's an audience for your books—which are, of course, the best you can write. And don't give up."

"Keep your options open," Richards said. "Learn everything you can about both traditional publishing and indie, and stay open to the best possibilities for each book you write. Now that traditional publishing isn't the only game in town, you are really in charge of your own career. Be in charge."

"Breaking into trad publishing has never been easy, and with the shrinking of the trad publishing world, I suspect it would be tougher to maintain a career in trad these days—unless you're one of those writers who hits immediately with a mega-seller," Hubbard said. "I would advise a newcomer that there are no guarantees in this biz—never have been. I make good money now, but there are legions of us unheard-of authors who work from book to book, contract to contract, who might be unemployed at the drop of someone else's hat. Writers need to realize that writing is as much about business as it is about the art."

And Deb Stover's advice is always good: "Be patient."

2. Good agents are worth the money.

"Make sure you have the right agent for you," Jenna Black said. "I've had the same agent my whole career, and though we've had our difficulties at times, I wouldn't trade her for anything. I'm happy to have her contract-negotiating ability and other agenting skills, but her support over the difficult times is worth more to me than any of that. Let's just say she's helped me make a lot of lemonade! Without her, it's possible some of these setbacks might have broken me and I might not still be writing professionally."

"Get to conferences and meet editors," Laurie Alice Eakes said. "Get an agent. Definitely get an agent. And get an agent with a kick-ass (can I say that) track record."

3. Be true to yourself.

Katie MacAlister advises authors, “write a book you love, don't listen to people telling you there is only one ‘right’ way to publish, and to define what it is you want out of a publishing career. I've seen a lot of animosity between self-pubbed and traditionally pubbed folks, something I've never understood because I believe that every writer takes a publication path unique to her/him, and all paths are equally valid.”

Black said to “keep writing what you love, not what you think is going to sell. The book that will launch my new pen name is one I wrote after taking a full year off of writing because I'd completely burned myself out trying to write what I thought I ‘should’ write. I was convinced I needed to get more indie books published, and trying to push those out while still meeting my traditional deadlines killed my passion.”

“Don’t rush it,” Jacobs said. “Develop your work until it’s really top class. This takes more than one book in a new style of writing. Books that don’t make it at first can be stored and brought out later. Nothing need be wasted. At the very least, each book you write improves your skills. I find I’ve got some of my best stories/books from manuscripts that I’ve set aside and come back to, sometimes years later. It’s easier then to see how to improve things. AND ... foster your stubborn gene. It’s a very good partner in this crazy industry. When I was active in the women’s movement, a wise older woman once said, ‘if you can’t get in by the front door, try the back door, the windows, the cellar or parachuting down onto the roof.’ Ditto for never upsetting or quarreling with anyone, because people in publishing move around a lot and you could meet them again in another role.”

Chamberlain’s final advice works for all of us: “Write the best book you possibly can ... and realize that it all takes time, some thick skin, and a strong stomach.”

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 a 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.

Creativity Tidbits

Where To Find Inspiration

By Denise A. Agnew



Creativity is a fickle beast. At times maintaining enthusiasm for a project or even starting a project can seem incredibly difficult. Still, there is hope. Sometimes all that is needed to give a writer new energy is a smidgen of inspiration from somewhere. Here is a list of creativity tidbits that could propel you toward your next endeavor.

1. Consider a daily meditation practice.

Many writers find meditation difficult, which seems contrary to what one would think. After all, in order to write a good book, visualization is required. Writing a book can be purely for pleasure, for a need to make a living, or for both. Meditation, though, is seen as a “have to.” Few people think of it as pleasurable, especially if they haven’t tried it. Part of the reason why visualizing may be difficult in meditation is that people believe meditation is hard. However, it may just be a matter of discovering what method of meditation works for you rather than abandoning meditation entirely. For those who’ve found visualizing meditation impossible before, mindfulness meditation might work as an alternative. I’ve tried different types of meditation over the years and mindfulness meditation is my favorite. It doesn’t require for you to “stop thinking” or to visualize anything. I highly recommend it. The best mindfulness meditation practice I’ve encountered is at 1GiantMind.org. It’s a free app for your phone.

2. Get enough sleep.

These days we hear that what you eat influences everything in your life, and it certainly influences your health. Yet lack of sleep has an even bigger effect on creativity or lack thereof. As someone who has difficulty sleeping, I understand how problematic finding a solution can be. Rewards of solid, plentiful sleep are enormous and can benefit your creativity. Of course, the reasons why people don’t get enough sleep can prove manifold. Take some time to explore why you don’t get enough sleep, whether it is something mental, physical, or a combination of both causing problems with your sleep quality, and see if you can correct these.

3. Read different genres.

Most of us have a favorite genre to read and write. Reading in genres you haven't explored before can give a creative boost. Reading books in other genres can increase your ability to "think outside of the box." This doesn't even mean you'll write in a different genre, but there is something about venturing into virgin reading territory that can refresh your creativity.

4. Read old favorites.

Reading an old favorite book can generate enthusiasm for your own writing. By remembering why you loved that book, your inspiration can explode into new avenues. When I read a few pages from one of my favorite Dean Koontz novels, I'm often inspired to grab my laptop and write.

5. Make a list of distractions.

It's easy to become sidetracked when the demands of regular life come calling. We often use obligations as an excuse not to create. Make a list of everything you believe you have to do in a day. Where is your creative life in that mix? Have you carved out time every day (or a few times a week) to write? If not, it's time to find room for creative pursuit. Are there things you can delegate? Are there things you choose to do because they are easy and creating can sometimes be difficult? Consider dropping the easy pursuit for the more challenging and perhaps more fulfilling one.

6. Remind yourself why creating is important to you.

Have you forgotten why you started writing in the first place? Write down why it is important to you now. How has the drive and desire to create changed over the years? Understanding these questions may help you discover what is holding you back.

7. Consider participating in an additional creative pursuit.

Many people have more than one creative talent. If you've concentrated mostly on writing, maybe taking up painting, singing, dancing, acting, knitting, sewing, or anything else creative will reignite your excitement for writing.

8. Create even when you're in a bad mood.

Creative people tend to look for solutions from many different angles. As a teenager I wrote reams of angst-ridden poetry through both elated times and bad times. As adults we don't always use the bad times to create. We'd rather talk about it on Facebook. What if sitting down and pouring your heart onto the page could act as a creation focus and also produce some good self-therapy? I know it has for me. Rather than holing up with a pint of ice cream when things aren't feeling so wonderful, consider writing. Some amazing things can be created under a rainy cloud.

9. Diversify your experiences.

Many writers are introverts. The tendency for us (yes, I'm an introvert, too) to hole up with that ice cream is strong. Introverts tend to have a rich inner world that can sustain us. We don't always need a ton of contact outside of that world to make us happy and creative. There are a few big problems with extreme introversion, though. Extreme introversion (as tempting as it might be) can stifle your ability to generate new ideas. So when someone asks you to an event, it may spur your

creativity to new heights if you take them up on it. Even if no one asks you to venture out, don't wait. See that movie on your own.

10. Become solution-oriented with tough love.

Decide if creating is as important to you as you think it is to your life. Often it is easier to complain about not having the creative drive than to strive to find a solution. Be determined and give yourself some tough love. You can do this.

Denise A. Agnew is the award-winning author of over 67 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/Where's Lucy? Productions), a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, Certified Creativity Coach, and RT Academy Mentor. As a creativity coach, Denise assists anyone in the arts to maintain lifelong creativity. You can find her at www.deniseagnew.com and www.creativepencoaching.com.

NINC Advice Column

This is a monthly feature that crowdsources writer-to-writer advice. Questions are 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: How do you stay sane and balance writing and family over the holidays?

Lots of alcohol? LOL. It's imperative to delegate during the holidays, especially if you're a woman who tends to do the majority of the holiday shopping. Make lists of everything from food items to gifts and have other members of your family take care of these, reminding them that book deadlines don't take holidays. A fun thing our family does is have a craft night, where we pull together ideas and make fun items that we may or may not give as gifts. It brings us together, helps with budgets and we can avoid the mall crowds. Then when I disappear for days on deadline, they have a nice memory of togetherness. I personally try to get up before the rest of the family and write as much as possible. Then, on the flip side when they're watching TV at night, I slip away and write some more. Most everyone knows to leave Mom alone when the fingers are moving on the keyboard but having those quiet times takes the sting out of the guilt I feel being away from them.

—Cheré Coen writing as [Cherie Claire](#)

Two words: Health First. If I feel good, the rest is easier. I make a point of buying healthy, easy-to-grab food and keeping it visible. Cut veggies, my favorite tea, baked and sliced chicken breasts, bagged salad ... all front and center so I don't reach for cookies when I'm feeling snarky. I also schedule workouts in my calendar, whether that's a yoga or CrossFit class or a run. That guaranteed time away from the computer and social obligations is as good for my mind as it is for my muscles and bones.

—[Nicole Burnham](#)

I love the Christmas season, the family fun, the beautiful trees and lights along with the music. It is my favorite holiday. To meet my writing needs during the holiday season I focus on spending time doing interesting research, looking for story ideas. I make it into my new story time. There is

something about the season that makes it easy to imagine a beautiful relationship, people caring about each other, and finding love in amazing settings and exciting circumstances. Love is simply a part of everything during the holiday season. With that in mind it's easier to let my writing world unfold and keep my notebook handy for whatever idea comes along.

—[Stella MacLean](#)

I don't schedule writing days when I know I'll be busy. I have a week scheduled for no writing at Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break, and a month off in the summer. I have three books scheduled for release between now and the end of 2018. Editors, proofreaders, cover designers, formatters, and narrators are all scheduled for those books for specific weeks. I rarely deviate from my production schedule.

—[Wayne Stinnett](#)

*Want to contribute to the column? Send your answers of not more than 100 words to newsletter@ninc.com by Dec. 10 to this question: **If you make them, how do you keep your New Year's resolutions from falling by the wayside?***

The Mad Scribbler

Growth

By Laura Resnick



"Actually, in hell, you tend to know a lot of the people."
—"She," *Angel* (1999)

Way back when dinosaurs roamed the earth, writers used floppy disks to save their work, and print was king, five novelists (who perhaps had more guts than sense) decided to found a new organization for authors.

The year was 1989, and I was a brand-new novelist writing under a pseudonym for a romance imprint published by Silhouette Books. I heard about this new organization via another Silhouette author, who was a friend of one of the organizers, and she got me added to the mailing list.

The organization was so new that it didn't even have a name, and it had only published a few issues of the newsletter and had about 100 members. The steering committee consisted of the five writers who'd started the ball rolling: Rebecca Brandewyne, Janice Young Brooks, Jasmine Cresswell, Maggie Osborne, and Marianne Shock. They did the heavy lifting of writing the first draft of the bylaws, preparing the paperwork to create a nonprofit corporation, and establishing the early infrastructure. They also organized a conference, which I attended, where the founding members discussed, debated, and eventually agreed upon the foundations of what would soon become Novelists, Inc.

For several years, NINC's membership remained around 300 people. Back then, it was possible to know almost everyone in NINC—at least by reputation, if not personally. NINC grew as the years passed, but we did so slowly, and we experienced setbacks. I saw numerous members drop out as their careers encountered roadblocks that they couldn't find a way to navigate past. Looking back at those years, I saw and experienced frustration, stress, and despondency.

Silhouette Books, my first publisher, dumped me after 11 novels. So I started writing for a new house, Meteor/Kismet, which was publishing similar books; they folded shortly after I signed my second contract. Next, I signed a contract with Kensington, but after I delivered my first book, they laid off my editor, closed the imprint, and dropped me from their list. I switched genres and signed with Tor Books (a division of Macmillan) to write fantasy novels under my own name. Writing for Tor, the biggest program in my new genre, was such a nightmarish experience that I promptly

descended into hours of angry, tearful babbling whenever I talked about it. (Even today, many years later, you're taking an awful chance if you ask me about my sojourn at Tor.) Then I signed with Five Star, a small press, and wrote some romance again. They laid off my editor and canceled the release of my second book. I signed with another small press to release a collection of essays about being a working writer (*Rejection, Romance, and Royalties*, based on my early *Nink* columns); however, that house went out of business shortly after publishing the book, which remained in the market for several years without my ever receiving a penny of the royalty earnings. After that, I signed with Luna Books, a division of Harlequin, to write an urban fantasy series, and (you can see it coming, can't you?) they canceled the second and third books on my contract and dumped me.

Although not all novelists in the pre-indie landscape had experiences like mine, enough of them did that NINC lost members over the years through professional attrition—people getting shoved out of the business by traditional publishers, who were the only realistic conduit to readers in that often hellacious era. In fact, when I joined the board as president-elect back in January 2007, we worried that NINC could potentially shrink to a point where it was no longer viable, and so we focused—as previous boards have done—on outreach.

NINC's growth faced challenges not only from the tendency of traditional publishers to kill off writers (so to speak), but also because it didn't fit traditional models for writing organizations.

NINC was not genre specific, so writers who were focused on just one genre, as many of them were, often saw no reason to join. Also, our newsletter and conference were members-only venues, and they were structured specifically for education, professional development, and networking; writers who eschewed NINC often told me they did so because they were more interested in organizations where the publications and conferences provided them with opportunities to promote their work to readers. Finally, NINC had a very high membership bar (two published novels) compared to every other fiction organization, and that was a major factor in our remaining small by comparison.

However, the founding principal of NINC, one to which we have always remained loyal, is that it's for career novelists: people writing and selling book after book. The unusually high level of information routinely available in NINC—whether it's on Ninclink, in *Nink*, on Ninc.com, or at the annual conference—relies on the experience level of the members. There are other organizations where people can discuss how to write their first book; NINC is the organization that exists for writers who want to discuss how to maintain their stamina or regain their enthusiasm when writing their eighth, 20th, or 50th book. There are other organizations where you can discuss the current market trends in one specific genre; NINC is the organization where an experienced writer thinking of switching gears can pose questions about *other* genres and get answers, as well as where we can expect to find valuable insights when discussing the overall fiction market.

In addition to ongoing concerns about membership numbers, we were dealing with an additional issue the year I joined the board. The publishing world was experiencing technological advances that would eventually lead to major changes in the industry—disruptions that would also liberate writers from being inexorably shackled to the sort of experiences that had thus far shaped and defined my own career. For example, reduced costs in production, online sales, and print-on-demand technology were all contributing to substantial growth in the small press market. By 2007, it was clear that someone on the board would have to revise NINC's original 17-year-old membership qualifications.

Our organization's original description of a "published novel" had defined it as book-length

fiction that was generally available in bookstores. That phrasing had been sufficient when NINC was founded, but by 2007, that 17-year-old definition no longer covered the variations appearing in the membership applications NINC received. So I spent part of my first year on the board researching and writing new parameters that would better define “published” for applicants and the Membership Chair. (No one’s life is more fun than mine.)

I knew the new language couldn’t possibly serve the organization for *another* 17 years, but I hoped it would be useful for four or five years before someone else had to dive into revising it again.

However, in November of 2007, as NINC was about to approve the new membership qualifications I had written, Amazon released the first generation of its Kindle e-reader. In the words of melodramatic car commercials: *This changes everything*. Within a few years, the list of major new publishing stars included numerous indie writers who had never sold a book to a publisher, as well as writers whose careers had skyrocketed as a direct result of leaving traditional publishing and going indie.

Among the denizens of the traditional publishing world, NINC was visionary in embracing this new career avenue for novelists by revising membership qualifications to welcome indie writers into the organization. The growth of new models for publishing books and reaching readers has been beneficial not only to thousands of writers, but also to NINC, which has grown robustly during recent years.

When I finished my term as NINC president at the end of 2008, having discussed and thought a lot about goals for NINC’s future, I hoped we would one day have about 900 members—a figure still well beyond our grasp at the time. Today, according to our website’s directory, we’re there! Also, there were more members in attendance at the 2017 conference than the sum of our entire membership roster during NINC’s early years. We have come a long way—and we’re still growing.

I recently exchanged emails with Victoria Thompson about some NINC business. She and I met at the first-ever NINC conference back in 1989. Over the years, Victoria has served as conference chair, *Nink* editor, and (twice) as NINC president. Today she sits on the board as the Advisory Council Representative, and this issue of *Nink* contains the final installment of her three-part series on how to have a long career in traditional publishing. We discussed with pleasure how NINC has grown, as well as how good it is to see so many people at conference whom we don’t know (and who are a lot younger than we are).

It’s fantastic for founding members to see the organization whose birth we witnessed now developing so fruitfully. We benefit from all that newer members bring to the organization, and we’re excited to see how NINC will continue growing and thriving in the years to come.

Longtime NINC member Laura Resnick wishes you a joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year!



Conference Reports

Eleven Ways Every Author Can Earn More from Every Story

Presenters: Sean Platt & Johnny B. Truant

Reported by Trish Milburn

Combine two entertaining speakers with a boatload of useful information and a healthy dose of inspiration, and you have the afternoon session of NINC 2018's First Word programming. Sean Platt and Johnny B. Truant are two of the three founding entrepreneurs of the Sterling & Stone story studio and co-hosts of the Self-Publishing Podcast along with their third partner, David W. Wright. For two energetic, stage-pacing hours, they shared their views on what NINC attendees want more than anything else—ways to increase our income.

For these two NINC newcomers, collaboration is critical to their success. They said it early and echoed it frequently throughout their program, encouraging attendees to think about ways they can work with experts in other fields to give themselves more writing time and to create a better end product.

"If you are a one-person shop, you're leaving money on the table," Platt said.

They emphasized that we're writers and should focus on the writing. For a great cover, hire a great cover artist. Free up more writing time by having others do your formatting, uploading and a variety of administration duties. While being writers, we also need to think like business people and entrepreneurs to continually build our careers and our income levels. This mindset was likened to buying really cheap stock in ourselves. Every new book we write is another asset for our business. Truant added that we are probably already in more collaborative relationships than we think.

Know your why—and do more with less

Our "Why" is, quite simply, our goals and motivations for writing in the first place. Make sure you're clear about this, that it's really *your* why that's putting you in the writing seat each day.

"We meet so many people who are working toward the wrong why," Truant said. "It's somebody else's why."

If working with others, you need to make sure you're on the same page. You can't have conflicting whys if you are collaborating with others. This step is crucial to nail down before you even leap from the writing starting gate.

"Knowing my why keeps me focused," Platt said.

Think like a businessperson—selling isn't a dirty word

Truant noted that lots of writers treat writing as if it's a hobby, but we have to think about our business as, well, a business. Each book is a mini start-up. Ask yourself the question: What do business people do vs. hobbyists? What does this mean? Set normal business hours. Don't call in sick. Do your job. Don't wait for inspiration to strike. And invest in your business just like any other businessperson wanting to be successful would.

"Your cover is your number-one conversion element," Truant said. "Invest in it."

A great takeaway is to hire the person who will make you the most money, not who will cost you the least.

Take inventory—you're leaving a lot on the table

Inventory management leads to sales. In other words, backlist is money just waiting to be made but it will take effort to make the most from those older titles.

"Inventory has constant potential," Truant said. "If a reader hasn't read it, it's new to them."

He referenced his backlist *Fat Vampire* series, which makes about \$5,000-\$6,000 a month.

But this work on revitalizing your backlist can be time-consuming and take you away from current writing projects. Plus, it can be deadly dull. Platt suggested re-framing the tasks that suck to make them more fun, or simply hire someone to undertake them. But whatever you do, don't let those potentially revenue-generating titles just sit there collecting electronic dust.

Truant pointed out that 80 percent of your results typically come from 20 percent of your effort. Thus those 20-percent efforts are the important ones to generate the results you want.

During this inventory management, you need to look at reader behavior. As mentioned before, your cover is your top conversion element. Next is your product description. Ask yourself questions such as: Is the cover good? Are you marketing the book in the right genre? Did you make the right promise to the reader?

Truant said your books should be professionally edited, have calls to action in the back of them, and that you should listen to your reviews.

Platt suggested the book *The Adweek Copywriting Handbook* by Joseph Sugarman, about how to compel people with good sales copy. The only job of your first sentence is to get readers to read the second sentence, the only job of the second sentence is to get them to read the third, and so on.

Something to remember when giving your backlist an extra push, however, is to not try to tackle all the titles at once. Start with two or three and go from there. Think about what might be hot now as a starting point.

Put your reader first—craft a better experience

The name of the game is to create amazing content—not mediocre content—and an amazing reader experience. This is a long game, not a quick-cash scheme. If you create really amazing content, it doesn't matter if Google changes algorithms. People will find you.

"Ideas aren't precious," Platt said. "We don't believe you get good ideas; you make ideas good."

Kevin Kelly's 1,000 True Fans concept was recommended. You can read Kelly's updated essay on this idea here: <http://kk.org/thetechnium/1000-true-fans/>

Re-launch—so you can go higher than ever

If you're going to go through the effort and expense of re-launching a backlist title, make sure you're doing something that is worthy of a re-launch, something that is substantially different such as significant changes to the story. Then treat the re-launch as you would the launch of a new book to create excitement in your readers.

Platt said to be a storyteller in your emails to readers. Frame your messages to generate the desire to buy the re-launched book. It's okay to have a yard sale, but make sure readers think it's a boutique.

Optimize your flow (by understanding how you work)

You've probably heard it before, but it bears repeating and is a definite favorite element of Platt's and Truant's business strategy—work smarter, not harder. An important part of making sure you're working smarter and not harder is knowing your strengths and weaknesses and planning workflow accordingly.

Platt said that he divides his days into Maker Time (writing and nothing else), Me Time (eating, napping, exercise) and Manager Time (email, business tasks, podcasting). Don't let your Maker Time be interrupted by things such as answering email.

"When you go into email, you're making other people's problems your problems," Platt said.

And habits change, so reassess when necessary. See how productive you are under different circumstances. Even if you are indie published, it's important to have deadlines, timelines and productivity tracking.

"You can't manage what you can't measure," Truant said.

Write to market—sell a ton without selling out

Platt said they resisted writing to market for a long time. For instance, their Unicorn Western series makes them very happy but doesn't make them much money. So instead of being zany, they moved to a more intentional approach.

A really interesting and useful tip they offered was to name your series after keywords that readers use to search for those types of books. For instance, the Alien Invasion Series for – you guessed it – a series about an alien invasion. It's very on the nose, but also really smart. If you do a search on Amazon for those keywords, the books by Platt and Truant are the first ones that appear. The titles of the books were also intentional keywords: *Contact*, *Invasion*, *Colonization*, etc.

Another good tip was to look for sub-niches where there are more readers than books. Then write something that is intentional to that market to fill the void. Ask yourself what readers are looking for and what you want to write that fits that space.



Collaboration—the only way to exponentially grow

It was evident how much Platt and Truant believe in collaboration by the number of times they mentioned it. They are big proponents of authors finding people who are better than them at some

aspect of the business—cover design, editing, and so on—and establishing mutually beneficial relationships with those people.

“You can’t bring ego into it, but bring confidence,” Truant said. “You have to trust each other implicitly.”

Platt said you should ask how you can help your collaborator. “There is no scorekeeping in collaboration.”

Ask yourself what you can do for the other person, not what they can do for you. That is to say, the relationship isn’t a 50/50 type of a situation. It has to be 100/100.

Their belief in collaboration isn’t based solely on the fact you need to find people who are better at certain things than you are. As Truant said, you also only have so much time in a day to do way more than will fit in those hours.

They also referenced what writers already know—that there is a sort of magic that spawns inspiration and great ideas when writers get together and talk about the writing life, craft and business.

“Every time we travel, our company gets better for interacting with new people,” Truant said.

Platt added that everyone knows really intelligent people they’re not tapping.

Adapt your work into different media—one story equals infinite possibility

This is all about giving readers a variety of options of how to experience your stories, and once again collaboration is key because a single writer can’t create all this content alone. When considering your reader’s transmedia experience, think about if you could offer your stories in the following ways: paperback, audio, foreign editions, web stories, animation, graphic novels, film adaptations, comics, and video games.

“Read some screenplays, then watch the movies,” Platt said. “It will make you a better writer.”

Build or participate in a shared world—creation and marketing on autopilot

While Truant acknowledged this tactic is not right for all genres, science fiction, fantasy and romance are good candidates. It allows you to scale and benefit from exponential marketing.

They suggested using YASIV, which uses data from Amazon to give you a visualization and list of also-boughts. For instance, when I input my September book, *Her Texas Rodeo Cowboy*, it showed me 169 also-boughts so I can see which other authors and books my readers are buying. Try it out at www.yasiv.com.

The production model—the future for us (and maybe for you)

Platt made a point to mention that speed and quality are not enemies when it comes to writing, contrary to what many of us have probably heard over the years.

“You are being forgotten if you’re not publishing,” he said.

Platt and Truant have some interesting ideas that at first glance might seem counter to how we think writing and publishing should work, but they are working for them and are worth some examination.

Truant said they start with a cover and keywords for a book and write stories that fit within those fences. They also have offered what they call collaborative packages, meaning they’ve done the plotting and characterization work and a writer can buy that pre-work and simply write the story.

This, of course, isn't right for many authors, but it was interesting in that it shows them thinking outside the proverbial box. They believe the best way to predict the future is to create it.

A final few suggestions from Platt and Truant:

- The MasterClass on Writing for Television with Shonda Rhimes is awesome.
- *Romancing the Beat: Story Structure for Romance Novels* by Gwen Hayes is a fantastic structure book.
- They are proponents of just-in-time learning. It's how they work in their business now.

For more information

To learn more about Platt, Truant and their business endeavors, visit <https://sterlingandstone.net/> or listen to the Self-Publishing Podcast at <https://sterlingandstone.net/series/self-publishing-podcast/>



Trish Milburn is the author of nearly 40 romance and young adult titles for Harlequin, Razorbill/Penguin, Bell Bridge Books and via indie publishing. You can sign up for her author newsletter and find links to her various social media accounts via her website.

Of Human Bondage

Presenter: Cheryl Klein

Reported by Michele Dunaway

Book editor and author of *The Magic Words: Writing Great Books for Children and Young Adults*, Cheryl Klein is into talking about bondage. Emotional bondage that is, specifically the emotional bondage between the characters and the readers. This First Word workshop kicked off *NINC: Discovery* by asking what techniques do authors use to connect readers to a world and people that don't really exist? How does a writer create characters whom readers will deeply invest in, someone they'll follow for 300 hundred pages, someone who will compel or fascinate them? Or to phrase this another way: What techniques do authors use to involve readers in a world that isn't actually there, connect them with a protagonist who doesn't truly exist, and make them interested in events that never really happened?

Four principles of why readers do not connect:

1. Some readers are simply not your readers. They want your book to do things it was not designed to do. They are in the wrong headspace for the book. They are more trolls than readers.
2. You win good readers by giving them pleasure. Think of wild beasts on the savannah, watching for any sign of movement. If they see it, they'll track it as long as it lasts. Readers want pleasurable events: They enjoy the things the characters themselves enjoy, like witty banter, adventure, victory, or sex. Readers also want growth, which often comes about through pain: a character suffering through their own faults or others' failures, and turning that into a triumph. Action, insights and growth are important as this is rooted in character, and every novel will, or should, deliver a different combination of these pleasures to the readers.
3. Know what your book is designed to do. What reality is your book designed to explore? What is your book designed to do?
4. The elements and depths of your characterizations should reinforce the novel's design. She then showed what she called Cheryl Klein's Character Depth scale, containing three steps: blank slate, watercolor sketches and full canvas.
 - a. *Blank slate*: a character that is basically a lens on the action, a vehicle through which we experience the pleasures of the setting or plot. These people are generally likeable, with maybe one or two distinctive or specific qualities.
 - b. *Watercolor sketch*: reader knows the history that's formed him, sees definite emotional reactions to present events as a result of that history. Reader witnesses and understands his flaws and mistakes.
 - c. *Full canvas*: character is a fully fleshed-out with a very specific history and personality and perhaps some prickliness or other unlikable element.

Who the reader will like may depend on how complex the reality of the character.

Reader-Character Engagement Pyramid

Klein shared her upside-down pyramid. At the top is **interest** (aspiration/animus). It's better if the character shows nothing new. Aspiration is the experience through life—people live dramatic lives through these characters. Animus is when the reader is interested in, but dislikes the character. It can be pleasurable to hate and dislike people.

The middle is **endearment**. Readers want to be the character's friend. It's the base level focused on the protagonist's emotional journey and emotional growth.

The bottom point is **identification**. Here the reader makes a deep connection. The reader feels like they have the same questions and desires. We know them deep down inside. ID characters are full canvasses.

Klein added another principle here, which is that readers buy books for their plots but love them for their characters. The characters make the plot matter. "This is why it's so frustrating when people say they didn't connect with the protagonist. Without reader investment, the plot doesn't matter. Klein said this lack of connection is code for one of these deeper truths:

1. "I didn't believe in the protagonist."
2. "I didn't like the protagonist."
3. "The protagonist was one-dimensional."
4. "The protagonist was boring."
5. "The characters didn't develop much in the course of the action."

1. I didn't believe in the protagonist

Fiction depends on faith. A character becomes unbelievable when her internal makeup lacks accuracy, consistency or depth. Or when the character's emotions or actions seem inconsistent with her nature or human nature. Authors must check their reality. Are any of the characters' actions inconsistent? Do all your characters repeat? Or sound the same? They must be unique. The setting and characters must feel real and precise without being cutesy.

Give the reader enough information to follow the protagonist's thinking or action. Often an author thinks the reader gets it, but they can't see what you had in your head. At the plot level this is backstory. At the text level this is internal narration, the psychology of the characters. Try this exercise: look at the first couple pages on which a character appears, and in a new document, make a numbered list of the first 15 things he or she says or thinks or does (including internal narration, but not incidental actions like opening a door). Consider those actions outside the context of the page and your knowledge of what happens. Make particular note of the first significant action we see her take. Whoever your protagonist is right there—that is who that character is to the reader. Internal narration and action is a balancing act.

2. I didn't like the protagonist

Your personality may rub people the wrong way. Same for your characters. Again, check your reality. Try this exercise: look at the first couple of pages and make a list of the first 15 things your character says. Give the list to an honest friend and listen to what your friend's impression is. Some characters may not be likable at the beginning. As you look objectively at the protagonist as she is,

outside the context of the opening action and setting, ask yourself, does that impression fit with her place in your design for the whole book? Or is she kind of a jerk when a reader would expect her to be endearing? If you want the character to be unlikable, as it's important for later character growth, then you've taken "reader investment in the protagonist" off the table. Klein said you'll need to be very conscious about providing another reason for the reader to keep reading: a high-stakes plot, beautiful prose, or the promise of some action the reader will find fascinating. So make the character endearing.

Give the reader an objective reason to like the character: *kindness, moral goodness or empathy*. If we see the protagonist demonstrate moral goodness, or show kindness or empathy toward someone else, we'll know she's a good person. This is known as a "save the cat" technique from screenwriting. Whatever you do, you can't lose respect for characters. The character must be good at what he does.

A second quality readers like in their protagonists is *good energy and imagination*. A third technique is *humor and wit*. A fourth is having *enthusiasm* about one topic in particular, as people who are passionate about things are interesting people.

A fifth technique to make your characters likable is to make sure they have *expertise, intelligence and skill*. Klein shared what David Chase, the creator of *The Sopranos*, said: "It doesn't matter if your hero is good or bad. He just has to be interesting, and he has to be good at what he does." Klein said to keep coming back to that idea, that we should respect our hero above all else. We appreciate and admire smart people, people who can do or achieve things that we can't. So if your character demonstrates some notable intelligence or ability, an expertise, that's a sign that s/he is someone worth following.

Another technique is *insight*. When a character makes an observation that is true or insightful, readers recognize that and want to follow them, to hear more of these truths. Being honest who the character is also important.

Another way to make your character likable is to *give them friends*. Readers like characters that are liked by other people. They are suspicious of characters that aren't liked by other people. When characters have friends it reaffirms interest and endearment. Readers echo reactions of characters they already know and like and trust, and they oppose reactions of characters they don't like or trust. It's basic character math. Readers' dislike for one character equals that the reader will like the other characters who are brought in, especially if the disliked character hates them. Putting this idea another way: Readers echo reactions of characters they already know and like and/or trust, and oppose reactions of characters they don't like or trust.

Exercise: If you're getting a lot of "I didn't like the character" responses, go back to that list of the first 15 things the character says or does, which should cover the first scene or two. Add friends, or choose your virtues here, and build in enough of them that the reader finds your character endearing, and invests in the character and the story.

3. The protagonist was boring

Boringness means that your character is failing to reach the interest level on the pyramid. And this can happen for a number of reasons that end up encompassing other complaints:

4. The protagonist was one-dimensional

Sometimes characters are flat. You need to endow your character with *vulnerabilities*, which are

anything that leaves him open to big feelings. What is the character's place of hurt? Or pride? Or a flaw? Or a fear? When a vulnerability gets pressed, the character cracks and this can bring light and change. Readers like it when relationships can be healed with another character. However, be careful here as it can be predictable. Counter predictability by imagining better and differently.

Characters also need *inconsistencies*, which are two incongruent truths that exist simultaneously within a character. Think of them as a character's "but." If you can find two opposing truths about a character and put them side-by-side, you can build a whole novel around the inner and outer conflict that might inspire, and do it with a lot of tension because the stakes are high when the character must choose one truth or another. Or the second truth will provide just the opening you need to create a turn in the action and help the character grow.

Another way to fix one-dimensional characters is to give them *secrets or mysteries*. A secret is another form of vulnerability, because the protagonist is trying to protect a piece of information from other characters or the reader. It becomes a form of movement for the character because he has to keep the secret from someone. However, be careful, because secrets can be overdone. Also, the reader needs clues to solve it, so be careful to withhold the right amount of information. secrets are a technique best used in combination with one of the likability points above, because a mystery about someone whom you don't care about is not actually that interesting.

A few other ways to fix boring, one-dimensional characters is to give your character a compelling desire. Desires should be positive goals that look forward and allow the character to drive the action, not negative statements depending on others, or about going backward or staying in the same place. Think of these as your character's "I want" statements, but they need to be positive and compelling, not negative or something the character can't control. Desires should make the protagonist do things. A desire can then serve as a plot engine in a novel like few other story elements can, because once readers have a character to invest interest in, and this character wants something, that creates stakes—will she get it?; tension—can she overcome the obstacles in her path?; and action—what will she do to make it happen? As a rule of thumb, every major character in the novel should have a desire, because people with desires are people who are engaged with the world and take action within it, and those are the kind of people most readers want to read about. Characters also often have more than one desire, which is a great way to create dimension, conflict, and action.

5. The characters didn't develop

Many times authors hear, "The characters didn't develop much in the course of the action." Or a parallel complaint, "There wasn't much substance to the book."

This means readers were denied the pleasure of character growth because there weren't many events of sufficient significance to prompt that growth. Klein suggests to work backward. Think about where you want your characters to end up emotionally and physically. What will it take to get them there from your beginning? What do they need to learn or get or discover to reach that ending? What kind of events will prompt those lessons and discoveries? (That's what your plot action needs to be.)

Also, Klein talked about emotions. Characters need space to grow. If character emotions unfold on a scale of 1-10, don't start the book when they're already at eight because that two-point growth in feeling won't feel substantive enough to matter. Characters need something like a six or seven point growth, so when the characters start the book at a three or four, feeling accumulates over the course of the action that they end at 10.

The same goes for any change in their *essential natures*. Growth in a character means the character

discovers new dimensions in the world and in their relationships to other people. Klein called this a double helix of action and character growth because this pattern looks a lot like the double helix of DNA: Our protagonist wants her desire (which comes out of her character), but she hits an obstacle she needs to overcome (creating action). This overcoming gets her in trouble, which makes her feel badly (which changes her character), and escaping that negative feeling inspires her to try a different approach to her desire (action). This succeeds in part, but the consequences make her question her desire itself (character) and then adjust her aims (action). As this cycle repeats over and over, our heroine learns more and more about herself and her world, until the novel arrives at its climax, where all the major elements of the action are brought to a crisis and then resolved.

So basically, actions lead to reactions, which lead to more reactions, which lead to desires, which lead to growth. Klein said without at least two of these cycles, the novel will feel thin. She also said the more pain you have, the more growth can follow. Come up with a character, think of the worse thing that could possibly happen to him—and then do it.

Final thoughts

Klein wrapped up by saying the most important things involved in creating a character are truthfulness and time. She said to be truthful in your writing. Use what you've observed of the world and of people's behavior in it. Readers respond to characters and feelings they recognize. You may not have experienced it, but it should be something that rings emotionally true, that falls within the realm of human possibility. You get to know your characters the same way you get to know a good friend: Multiple experiences together, multiple conversations, and multiple drafts.

Q&A

When asked about cultural differences, Klein said some readers are bad readers. Others don't have the knowledge of the culture. She suggested making sure readers understand why there is a cultural difference, and to have a conversation with the book editor to make sure everyone understands what you are trying to do. Sometimes a fix could be as simple as one line.

More

Klein can be reached at cherylklein.com or [@chavelaque](https://twitter.com/chavelaque). She is also at Lee and Low Books: [@leeandlow](https://twitter.com/leeandlow) and [@tubooks](https://twitter.com/tubooks). She referred to many exercises in her workshop; these and pictures of the pyramid, helix and character depth steps are included in her presentation, and Klein graciously [shared the PDF](#) which is available in the members only area of the NINC website. Please note, the handout is for distribution to NINC members only, and is based on material in *The Magic Words: Writing Great Books for Children and Young Adults* by Cheryl B. Klein. | Talk text © 2017 by Cheryl B. Klein.



Michele Dunaway is the author of 26+ books for major New York publishers. A self-described woman who does too much and doesn't want to stop, she's a full-time, award-winning high-school English and journalism teacher, mother of two, and your Nink editor. Her cat Toby "helped" write this report by lying on the keyboard as much as possible.

Writing the Other

Presented by Nisi Shawl

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Nisi Shawl, writer of science fiction and fantasy short stories is the co-author (with Cynthia Ward) of *Writing the Other: Bridging Cultural Differences for Successful Fiction*. Find more information at writingtheother.com, where she and Ward talk about writing the “other,” and where online and in-person classes are advertised. This two-hour session was adapted for more advanced authors and condensed from four-five hours into two.

There are a couple of key concepts in writing the “other”:

The Unmarked State

This term signifies “that which is not remarkable, or remarked upon, and which is assumed.” This is the default setting for characters.

To illustrate, she mentioned an example of a story of someone falling into a river and getting to the other side alive. The writer may tell the story without any marking. Or they may be telling the story of someone who is particularized—female, disabled, blind, or someone who differs from the dominant paradigm—someone in a marked state rather than an unmarked state.

In which way are characters marked and in which ways are they aligned with the dominant paradigm? Shawl called this ROAARS.

- R is for race
- O is sexual orientation
- A is for age
- A is for ability
- R is for religion
- S is for sex or gender

ROAARS is a way of remembering the list of which demographic traits are typically marked in culture. Shawl and Ward deliberately left out some categories, such as class. “In the United States we pretend that class can be changed or ignored,” she said.

Region and regionalism were also omitted. “We didn’t think it was quite as relevant, but does tie into another new area: citizenship. These days it’s more an issue than it was 10 years ago when we wrote the book,” she said.

Another trait that is marked is cis-ness vs. trans-ness. Cis means that your gender aligns with the one assigned at birth. Trans is someone whose true gender goes against their birth gender.

A further concept to consider is parallax. Parallax ties into what guest speaker and editor Cheryl Klein talked about: identification. This is another scientific term that has been repurposed, an astronomical term.

Parallax can be illustrated by holding up a finger in front of your nose. Shawl said, “Hold one finger up in front of your face—close your left eye and look at your finger, then close your right eye and look at the same finger. The viewpoint is moving.”

This illustrates how changing your character’s perspective changes what the character sees in your story, and therefore changes your narrative. This is very true when writing from the POV of an “other.” They will see the story quite differently.

Parallax is the character’s unmarked state. They don’t say, “I woke up today as a Negro.” They just see the world as normal from a Negro’s POV.

Some readers have difficulty identifying with characters who are of a different sexual orientation, race, or ability than they are. Shawl said, “People will glom onto these demographic traits and expect to only identify with someone of their race, sexual orientation, age, etc.”

There are ways to get around that.

Example: Shawl created a mixed-race, Victorian heiress who is in the thrall of an evil cousin who wants her inheritance. Shawl said, “I’m not writing this for a bunch of mixed-race Victorian heiresses. I must get the reader to identify with this character. So I gave her traits they could identify with. I made her a lover of big words, a reader, a finicky eater, and in love. These were traits that in her unmarked state would provide points of identification for the audience.”

If the author is talking about someone in terms of stereotypes, they may do it one of two ways:

1. By saying, “These people are very strange and different from me.” The author may exoticize the character.
2. By saying, “There’s no difference, they have a different skin color but inside they’re just like me.” The author may bland them out.

The better way is to write the character always from their position, not from the position of someone looking from the outside in.

Shawl conducted an exercise that writers can do together to develop their awareness of how they think and write about the other. She handed out two clippings of photographs from magazines to each pair of workshop attendees. In this exercise, each writer gets two pictures. They share their pictures with the writers at the same table. There is a central figure in each picture.

1. Write about how these characters are the same for three minutes.
2. Then do a second part where you talk about how they’re different.

In the first two pictures Shawl presented, this reporter wrote down descriptions of the figures’ similarities:

Biker girl and voile-shirt woman are both black, both have straightened hair, both are looking away from the camera, or at least not into it. They seem solemn. They are seated. They seem to be thinking about something serious. They are in a quiet moment, a pause in the action. Both have large lips and small chins. Both are unquestionably feminine.

Their differences according to this reporter:

One’s young, one’s old. One is dressed in sporty young-person’s clothing—black tank top, the other in a sober voile top with decorous small markings. One looks physically strong, the other past the age of athleticism. One wears sunglasses, seeming to be armored in her skin color, her muscles, her athletic attire, and by the butch motorcycle she sits astride. The other seems vulnerable, thoughtful, perhaps even grieving, fingering her chin as

if feeling in doubt about what to do; her eyes are open to us even though she doesn't meet our gaze and we see grief perhaps.

Shawl asked: "Which part was easier for you?"

Audience 1: "The similarities were harder to find than the differences. The older woman had a wedding ring."

Audience 2: "I had to make up stories about them in order to really dig deep and find stuff."

Audience 3: "The two people didn't seem very similar in what they were doing. I could write their differences more easily. I'm an action writer, so action draws me in and I pay attention to that."

Audience 4: "I had two portraits: two heavy-set middle-aged black men. I could find similarities. In differences, I was making assumptions about their motives based on the print attached to the pictures. I wrote personality profiles of each."

Shawl: "Was it easier to find differences or similarities?"

Audience 4: "Their similarities easier. I enjoyed writing their differences more because I got to imagine more."

Shawl pointed out that we're trained to find differences. Most people find it harder to find similarities. She said, "I'm supposedly an expert. I'm also learning about this stuff as we go."

Audience 5: "I expected to be able to find only visual differences and similarities; I was surprised to find nonsuperficial similarities and differences and ran out of time writing them down."

Shawl said, "Normally I start with introductions around the room, and it takes a while. One of the things we talk about is each person's differences from the dominant paradigm. I don't know if we have enough time for that, but here's mine. I'm a woman, African American, disabled, queer (that is, bisexual), obese, and I practice a West African tradition (that is, nonstandard) religion. Yet I still check myself and need to study these techniques because my favorite saying, and I'll probably have to get a T-shirt for it, is, 'Difference is not monolithic.' I hope some of you will be thinking about your own differences with the dominant paradigm."

Characteristics of the Dominant Paradigm

"A person falls into a river." What unexamined assumptions do we make when we hear a story that begins like this? Some are that the story has a modern setting and the person is male, in his 20s or 30s. But is he healthy or unhealthy—can he rescue himself? What's his ability—is he paraplegic? Does he have asthma? We also assume he is heterosexual, Christianish, and white.

Shawl said, "If you or your character are not one of these, you are different from the dominant paradigm. Knowing I am different helps me understand that there are differences. But it doesn't help me understand every other's perspective. Having fibro doesn't give me the background to understand someone with bipolar disorder, or paraplegia. I'm not disabled in the same way. I can't write exactly from that experience. I know there are ways I am different, and this gives me empathy for someone who is different."

Dialogue, Dialect, and Dialect Techniques

Shawl said, "I want to talk about how to be a social justice bard. In my science fiction community, people are called 'social justice warriors' if they are interested in inclusion."

Here are some tools for this:

Dialogue is idealized and compressed speech, edited to give the impression that it's natural. Shawl said, "I've gotten into trouble doing the *Harriet the Spy* game, writing down everything that people say. I wear earbuds so people won't think I'm writing down what they say for the police." People have verbal tics, they repeat themselves, they don't finish their sentences. You don't do this in dialogue. You do a little bit, maybe, but not as much as people who are talking really do.

Dialogue can both show and tell. Shawl gave the example of "As you know, Bob," dialogue, in which characters explain things they would, in real life, never bother to tell one another, because those things are deep assumptions of their lives.

Dialogue can also show things about the speaker. In terms of writing the other, that's very important. Do they ask questions all the time, do they use swear words, or non-English phrases?

Shawl illustrated with an exercise about a line of dialogue. Her example was, "I got in my car and drove to my apartment." Audience members were asked to substitute other words to show character. Sample rewordings provided by the audience:

- I fired up the old two-seater and tooled off to the flat.
- I got in my hoopty and boogied to my crib.
- I grabbed my time machine and drove to my castle.

Shawl prefers the term "nonstandard speech patterns" to "dialect." If you are talking about the speech of nondominant groups, it is exoticizing to refer to someone speaking or writing in dialect. It implies a norm. Some editors reject any kind of writing in dialect. Shawl said, "I've had stories turned down because they were written in dialect." For those editors who won't accept stories written in dialect, it's hard to know if they're having problems with exoticizing or they just refuse anything written in the nonstandard speech pattern.

It's important to depict speech that isn't in the standard speech patterns. It's worth trying. There are various problems with phoneticization, which is a common technique. Some call it "'I' dialect." It can be really rough for readers to translate when something is phoneticized.

When the text says: "Ai gaht in mai kar an droav tu mai apahtment," what does that say? How do you, the writer, translate that into something the reader can recognize?

There's a school of thought that says you do this but lightly. Shawl said, "I see problems with that as well. I recommend that if you surreptitiously write down an overheard conversation, try phoneticizing it, even if it's in 'standard' speech pattern."

Shawl recommended that writers try these other techniques:

Syntax

A combination of word omission and word order, i.e., syntax, can be very helpful, but you have to be very sure it's based on real speech patterns instead of "Buckwheatisms." In a YA novel, *When We Was Fierce*, the author did a first-person narration not based on any recognizable form of African-American English. This didn't work. You have to listen a lot. Don't mix up regions and eras.

Another way to pick up on nonstandard speech patterns is to listen to music and read lyrics. Read or listen to any kind of first-person, primary-source narratives—memoirs etc.

Word choice

Another way to signify the other is to make fanciful word choices to subtly reinforce unacknowledged power differential. Shawl said, "This was done in a novel called *Lovecraft Country* by Matt Ruff, a forty-year-old white guy, writing about 1930s black Chicagoans. He did it so well that my mom got it. Something I didn't notice at the time is that he chose to depict only white people swearing. This removed stigma associated with connecting swearing with black people. It underlined the class differences, because the whites could swear with impunity."

Rhythm

The rhythms internal to a word or a sentence or a passage are key to establishing nonstandard speech patterns. Ruff used commas to denote pauses in speech that were not standard at all. Shawl said, "I didn't notice them when I read the book. The proofreader took them all out and Matt had to go through and put them all back. 'No, I meant that. That's a style the characters are talking in. Put it back. Stet that comma.'"

A way to learn how to do this is to copy these rhythms. Copy a poem or a speech or passage from a primary source. Write it out. Then think up your own passage, mimicking the stresses and rhythms of the song lines.

Cultural references

Try referring to hairdos, food taboos, and missing or emphasized concepts. For example, there are languages, and English is one, in which inanimate objects have no gender, whereas Hungarian or French or Russian speakers will attach gender to objects. If writing from the viewpoint of someone else, you could have them be puzzled by something that doesn't puzzle the main character: "Why are they following you around the store?"

This speaks to all categories of variants from the dominant paradigm. "I'm tired of people focusing on the physical differences between black people and white people," Shawl said. "The physical differences are important but the cultural differences are also important. Hair color and features matter too, as well as color. The syntax and slang all come into play."

Code switching

Nonstandard speech patterns are dependent on time and location, but a character's usage of them can change within a day, an hour, a minute. Be aware that they may code switch for a reason. Sheree Renee Thomas edits SF fiction and poetry from Chattanooga. She came to Clarion West in Seattle. A student asked her about dialect. She explained code switching by describing dialects of Chattanooga. She could say she had gone to the supermarket in three different ways. "I went to the store" or "I went to the sto" or "Wennasto." Her choice of when she would say it, which way, had to do with her audience, what they might understand, and how she wanted them to hear it. It even mattered whether she wanted to be understood or not!

Code switching exercise: Shawl gave each participant three 3x5 cards with three different topics written on them. The exercise: to write three different monologues, one for each topic, either from the viewpoint of a character in a work in progress, or you can draw another card for prompts for a different viewpoint. After, pick the one whose voice you like the best, that was the most fun and easiest to write, and address monologues in that person's voice to three different characters. Shawl said, "Say I addressed my monologue to a Scottish playwright in Victorian times about recipes. Now

I'm going to write one addressed to my mother, my cleaning lady, and my butler. Write about the same topic, addressing different people. They're talking about the same topic but not in the same way."

How to be a Social Justice Bard

The bird of inclusive representation flies on two wings. Much of what we've covered was devoted to one wing. Now we're going to look at the other wing: representation of non-dominant ROAARS traits by those who have them. This is referred to on social media with the [#ownvoices](#) hashtag.

We want our literature to reflect the many kinds of diversity seen in a free and just world. One of the best ways to have accurate reflection is to make sure many kinds of diversity are portrayed by people who experience them firsthand, from the inside. Those of us whose ROAARS traits are marginalized are experts on what those traits mean to us, how they affect our lives, what they feel like, what they imply when it comes to other traits, and much more. Let's not let that expertise go to waste.

Here are a few ways to use this other wing and support the vital work of #ownvoices:

- Present the truths of your own marginalized traits clearly and unflinchingly. Try not to stifle your expressiveness or censor yourself.
- Share the opportunities of publication that come your way because of your non-dominant ROAARS traits with others in the same demographic categories, or in adjacent, yet relevant categories.
- Donate to fundraising campaigns for inclusive literary projects: anthologies, series, symposia, publication houses, and so on.
- Purchase #ownvoices books, comics, etc.
- Request that your library purchase #ownvoices books, comics, etc.
- Go out of your way to read #ownvoices literature. Set a goal for a certain number of works per month or year by authors of a particular marginalized demographic group.

Shawl said, "Here's a paradigm I got from Diantha Sprouse. There are three ways to interact with a culture that is marginalized that is not your own: as an invader, a tourist, or an invited guest:

- An invader comes and takes what they want, saying, 'This is mine now.'
- A tourist comes when expected, pays for what they get, and acknowledges that it's not their own.
- An invited guest belongs, and is one of the community."

"Many times, tourists try to act like they're invited guests when they are not. I would act like a tourist when you visit. One of the places you could go is a cultural festival. These are multi-sensory experiences, including food, music, film, and live-action drama. You get to see the feedback people give the performers. The experience is much more immersive than a film. I recommend my personal preference, which is talking to people. Invite someone to lunch, or ask on social media if someone will speak with you. One on one, I find out a lot more about whether I am headed in the right direction or not," Shawl said. "The thing there is, if you're getting someone's expertise, you should pay for it. You

don't have to pay Aunt May for it, but she may want you to donate to her church, or babysit her daughter's kids. There should be an exchange."



Jennifer Stevenson is the author of 17 novels and 20 short stories. Almost half her work features protagonists of marginalized groups other than her own. She's still getting it wrong sometimes.

1+1 = Infinity

Why collaboration is the future of publishing

Presented by Sean Platt and Johnny B. Truant

Reported by Delaney Diamond

Presenters Sean Platt and Johnny B. Truant suggest that collaboration is not only a hot topic, but it is the future of publishing. Using examples from their business, these partners in Sterling and Stone, an incubator for storytelling, shared how collaboration is an integral part of their work and has helped them to succeed. They've used this business structure to write over seven million words and one hundred books, including the very popular *Write. Publish. Repeat.*

Collaboration is a natural part of the entertainment industry. A team of writers hash out the details of a script to get the best story on the screen. One of the tenets of a good collaboration is trust between the parties, and Platt shared his work relationship with Truant to demonstrate how this works. Platt is the "idea guy," the one who creates a detailed outline of each book. Once he's finished, he hands it off to Truant. They talk to get clarification on details, but it's Truant who writes the entire story based on the outline. Trust is important here, as Platt has to have confidence that whatever Truant writes, and whatever changes he makes, will result in a good story.

That's how this particular duo works; but Platt also co-writes with the third member of the company, for example, and their working structure is different. It's important not to get hung up on how others are working together, but instead to find a collaboration that works well for you. Each collaboration process is different. Know your strength—which they referred to as your superpower—and build a team with people who complement you, offering skill sets you don't have.

Author-to-author collaborations are the most obvious kind, but not the only type in publishing. A productive working relationship can develop between the other players in the publishing process. Again, using the entertainment industry as an example, there are costume designers, directors, writers, and others working to put on a show. The publishing process should be viewed the same way. A synergistic relationship can take place between editors, cover artists, and marketers. Don't just pay someone as a contractor. Treat them as a team member. Explain your vision so they'll get excited and become invested in the success of the project. They'll go the extra mile for you. In the case of Platt and Truant, one of their collaborators came on board and worked for free because she believed in their project and was impressed with their progress.

Keep in mind, just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. Delegate your work to another team member, but don't simply find someone who is as good as you are at a task. Find someone better. To illustrate the point, Platt mentioned that he had worked as a copywriter, but Sterling and Stone still hired copywriters to create their book descriptions. His time is better spent using his superpower, which is coming up with ideas and creating outlines. A successful collaboration is not only about saving time. It should result in a better product than you could create on your own, and allow you the opportunity to use your superpower.

Additional information is located at www.sterlingandstone.net/exclusives. Use the password: INPERSONVIP to access the information for NINC members. Also visit [StoryShop](#). Sterling and Stone's interactive tool helps you plan and write your novel, whether you're a pantsier or a plotter.

[Delaney Diamond](#) is a USA Today Bestselling Author of contemporary romance, and is the owner of Garden Avenue Press, where she publishes romance and women's fiction that includes protagonists of color. When she's not busy reading or writing, she's in the kitchen trying out new recipes, dining at one of her favorite restaurants, or traveling to an interesting locale.

How to Write Your Best Book?

Embrace Your Weirdness

Presenter: Cheryl Klein

Reported by Christa Allan

In “Work With What Makes You Weird,” [Cheryl Klein](#), editorial director at [Lee and Low Books](#) and the author of both nonfiction and fiction titles, offered this advice for authors: “The best book, the one most true to your mind and heart, comes out of your particular weirdnesses, whatever they might be.”

She defined “weird” as those things that are “individual, singular, peculiar, unique, distinctive” about our personalities.

Pause to breathe a sigh of relief here.

“Once authors identify their weirdnesses,” she said, “they can craft a better book faster or write different and deeper books” because they’re connecting to their inner selves.

The best book you can write, according to Klein, will have:

- A theme that comes out of your emotional conundrums.
- A plot that involves your storytelling buttons, interests and expertise. “Storytelling buttons are a story dynamic that gets you going, that fascinates you with its particular elements of tension, or recurs in the things you like to write and read,” she explained.
- Been written with a process or structure that suits the way your brain works.
- Prose that reflects your natural writing voice.

She offered the following writing prompts in five categories of weirdnesses to help authors determine what makes them distinct:

Interests, Passions and Expertise

1. What are your interests and passions? What is your expertise; what comes to mind for you? How did you get into those things?
2. Write down five jobs you’ve had, beyond being a writer. What skills were involved in each of those jobs? How do you use those skills today? What did you think about on a day-to-day basis? What was your most important and consistent goal in each job? What were you fighting against—what was your greatest nemesis? (This might be a person, it might be a bureaucracy, it might be lack of funding, or it might be people not caring.)
3. If you were given \$10,000 and a week specifically to explore an interest or passion of yours, beyond reading or writing, what would you do? Where would you go? Who would you learn from? What would you know or be able to do by the end of that week?
4. If you could be a fly on the wall in any room, what rooms would you want to be in, and why? (The Oval Office? A therapist’s office? A dominatrix’s dungeon?) What people or activity

- would you most want to observe without being seen? What do you want to know from that?
5. Pick one of your interests, and write a short scene involving a character engaged with it.

Emotional Conundrums (aka “electric-fence” emotions)

1. What incidents from your childhood do you still worry over or wonder about?
2. Who was your greatest heartbreak? Why were you so in love? Why did that heartbreak come about? If you could wave a magic wand, how could that heartbreak have been avoided? (Would you want to do so?)
3. If you had a time machine, what scene or situation in your own life would you revisit? What (if anything) would you do differently? How do you think changing that incident would change your present life?
4. What is the dynamic that makes you angriest? (E.g., someone not paying attention; injustice; racism; cruelty to innocents.)
5. Pick one of the preceding situations, and write a scene where a character that is not you encounters it, as a witness or participant.

Storytelling Buttons

1. What do you read or write for fun? What do you read or write in secret? What storytelling buttons can you identify for yourself in either your reading or your writing?
2. What stories are you trying to fix? (These can be real-world situations or fictional narratives that stick in your craw.)
3. What stories would you most like to be a part of? What worlds would you write yourself into and why?
4. What was your favorite book at age five? Ten? Fifteen? Twenty? What key story, thought, or emotional lesson did you take away from each of those books?
5. Pick one of the preceding buttons or stories and write a short scene from it with you as the main character.

Klein suggested that, with these questions, it’s “worth asking why the story or situation resonates so deeply, what makes the narrative world awesome, and how can these dynamics be reinvented?”

The Way Your Brain Works/How You See the World

1. What are your strengths as a writer? What kind of scenes do you most enjoy writing? What kind of scenes or parts of your writing do you most consistently struggle with? (E.g. you love writing action but struggle with transitions.) What scene are you proudest of in any of your books and why?
2. Describe your writing process. How do you develop your ideas—do you brainstorm on paper, in your head, with friends? Are you a pantsier, a plotter, or a hybrid? How do you know when you’re ready to write? What part of the overall process do you like best? Least?
3. What is your dominant sense? (That is, do you tend to respond to sight, sound, smell, touch or taste most strongly? Or write about one more often than others?) Describe three notable experiences you’ve had with this sense (or lack of this sense) at the center.
4. If, 20 years from now, a literary scholar was writing a monograph on your work, what ideas or

themes would you want them to take from it? What experience, message or philosophy do you want your work to convey?

Klein's What-ifs

- What if you wrote a book entirely composed of the types of scenes you most enjoy writing? All action or witty banter, for example. How could you still build a plot?
- What if the book included only details from your dominant sense? If your dominant sense was smell, for example, could you write a book from a dog's point of view?

The Sound of Your Natural Writing Voice

- Choose a novel of yours that is written in third person and feels strongly representative of your work as a whole. Turn to p. 177, and find a paragraph of description or narration that feels like your natural writing voice. (Not dialogue.)
 - If there isn't a paragraph like this on p. 177, keep going forward until you find one.
 - You can also choose some other passage of writing that isn't a novel, if that's more representative of your natural voice.
- Ask:
 - How long are your sentences in this paragraph?
 - Which form of sentence structure do you use most—compound or simple?
 - How many commas do you use? What are your other favorite forms of punctuation in this passage (or generally)?
 - What is the vocabulary level like?
 - What is the overall emotional & intellectual atmosphere conveyed by these choices?

Use your responses to determine what kind of stories or writing would be best served by your style. "If your sentences are long or ornate, then you might want to craft a fantasy world where such fanciness is rewarded," she said. Tight and short sentences, on the other hand, fit a tight, tense story.

Klein said that you should honor your weirdness because no one else in the universe will have the personality, philosophy, and influences that create an authenticity in your writing.

Delaney Diamond is a USA Today Bestselling Author of contemporary romance, and is the owner of Garden Avenue Press, where she publishes romance and women's fiction that includes protagonists of color. When she's not busy reading or writing, she's in the kitchen trying out new recipes, dining at one of her favorite restaurants, or traveling to an interesting locale. Find her at www.delaneydiamond.com.

Where Do Editors Come In?

Presenters: Mary-Theresa Hussey and Marsha Zinberg

Reported by Michele Dunaway

With the changes in publishing, authors may find themselves needing freelance editors. The purpose of this workshop with former Harlequin executive editors Mary-Theresa Hussey and Marsha Zinberg was to showcase how freelance editors can help you present your best work, and that freelance editors can be hired for any place on the spectrum, whether you are selling traditional, hybrid or indie.

Freelance editors work for you and have no restrictions. They aren't tied to a line and they are not tied to length, which is different from when you have an in-house editor who is representing the publishing house. The in-house editor must follow strategies or dictates from on high and the market and art department share a vision for the book as well. However, with an independent editor, the author drives the boat. The independent editor is there to help the author develop a unified vision for the book. There should be no opposition. They can be flexible. They want to know your goals for the book, and where the author feels they need the most help or direction.

The workshop explained and demystified the types of editors and the services they offer. Both noted that there is no one set definition of the terms you will see below, and that British and Americans may call these different things. They suggested that you ask for clarification of the roles and make sure your expectations are similar to any editor you choose.

- *Concept/Consulting Editor:* This editor works on the early stages of a proposal or series to work out potential flaws in the editorial or marketing concerns. This type of edit often can involve notes in the margins or at the end. This type of editor also will sit on the phone with you and brainstorm ideas.
- *Development/Content Editor:* This editor does a deep dive into the manuscript, looking at language, plot, and characterization. It goes beyond simple flaws in the editorial. Again, an editor might make notes in the margins or discuss via a phone call.
- *Line Editor:* This editor focuses on the grammar, language, sentence structure, repetition, etc.
- *Copy Editor:* This editor does a final polish with a grammatical eye. This would be the edit before any actual book formatting.
- *Proofreading Editor:* This edit ensures your book doesn't have style errors or typos, just like an in-house copy editor would do. This edit would be done after book formatting and would be a final check of spelling/grammar/missing words and so on.
- *Beta Reader:* This editor simply works as a first reader. They can focus on one aspect or on the overall feel or reader appeal.

In addition, the editors can do what they call concept of development editor light: a manuscript critique or editorial assessment. This is a lighter edit.

Independent editors also can help you with things like creating a series bible. They can help you

brainstorm and create the world. For Zinberg, this was something she did quite often at Harlequin, and as a freelancer, she's worked with creating pre and post bibles.

"Even if you are collaborating with other authors, it can be good to have an outside source to keep track of it all," she said. "What's the overarching story line? What is in the author's mind may not be coming through."

Other things freelance editors can do include looking at covers, titles, and book cover copy. They can assist with release dates and scheduling. They can offer career advice as to whether you should take a contract or not. They can conduct branding reviews via key words—are you sending a unified message? They can help you find out what makes your book stand out because they will ask questions.

However, don't expect them to sugarcoat anything. An editor's job is to tell you what you don't want to hear; however, the goal is never to hurt the writer but to help the writer answer the question, "How can it be the best book possible?" However, with a freelance editor, the author is free to say no to any revisions.

"We want to know what's your goal," Hussey said. "What's the inner theme? Did the characters achieve their goal? Did you meet yours? Editors will learn to work with you and your process. Our job is to help you. Is the reader understanding your vision? For it's your vision, not the in-house editor, not the marketing, senior editors, etc. We can really focus on your vision as a freelancer as we are not torn between the house and the author."

One of the most important things for an author to do is talk with the editor to iron out expectations from the beginning of what you want the editor to do for you.

Finding an editor

Both editors suggested that an author do their homework before hiring an editor, and that you want to find one that will work well with your goals and style. They suggested you check experience, references, and that most editors would do a 1-2 page critique so you can see their style, so ask for a sample edit of a couple of pages.

In addition, most editors will use a contract, so be sure to ask for this to outline costs. Don't wait to find an editor either, as they are usually booked up. If you need a book by a certain time, they need to know this. They also need to know if things get out of whack on your end, because they are holding time for you.

They also suggested that you build in an extra three weeks on your side and three weeks on the editor's, so three-to-six weeks for an edit. They also said many authors need to budget time to let the edit sit to fully understand it, so building in four weeks for revisions.

"We want to assure you that working with an editor will not slow you down," Zinberg said. "If you are plotting out your work on a calendar, it may actually speed you up."

The actual edit

To have a successful edit, be sure you indicate where you want editors to focus and provide specific feedback. Ensure you are agreed on the end result. Some editors will question, some will fix—so make sure you know what you're getting, especially as this can shift according to the stage of the edit. You and the editor should also agree on the process: will you get the marked-up manuscript? A revision letter? Memo notes? A short conversation? A long conversation? Or a combination of these?

“The range can be from \$100 to \$1,500 depending on word count and the depth of the edit,” Hussey said. “You’re hiring freelance editors because they bring experience and knowledge. They’ve been trained. They can see the big picture and the more they have the better. Be open. They are part of your team.”

Finding the right editor

Those who have worked in the business have had training. They know the craft. They’ll give you craft info and links to help push authors to their best work.

Both Hussey and Zinberg obtain work by being contracted directly through their websites (Hussey’s is [Good Stories Well Told](#) and Zinberg’s is [The Write Touch](#)), but they also do projects through Reedsy as well.

“Use word of mouth to find editors,” Hussey said. “Or check out dedications and acknowledgments, or Amazon info in books by some of your favorite authors.”

Editors can also be found via social media, conferences and websites. Hussey and Zinberg also provided a list to the following resources as places to search: [Editorial Freelancers Association](#); [Publishers Marketplace](#), [Independent Editors Group](#); [Association of Freelance Editors, Proofreaders and Indexers](#); [Bibliocrunch](#); [Society for Editors and Proofreaders](#); [New York Book Editors](#) and [Reedsy](#).



[Michele Dunaway](#) is the author of 26+ books for major New York publishers. A self-described woman who does too much and doesn’t want to stop, she’s a full time, award-winning high school English and journalism teacher, mother of two, and your Nink editor. Her cat Toby “helped” write this report by lying on the keyboard as much as possible.

Working Together

Authors and Author Assistants

Presenters: Mel Jolly of AuthorRx.com and Author Leslie Langtry

Reported by Sidney Swanson

Mel Jolly, who describes her job as “keeping authors out of the loony bin,” began working with author Leslie Langtry when Langtry wanted help organizing a book advocacy street team. From there, the pair moved to working on newsletters and giveaways. Prior to a NINC conference several years ago, Jolly and Langtry had worked remotely for years, without ever meeting in person, something Jolly says is typical in an author/author assistant relationship. Neither felt this presented any material disadvantages.

As Jolly’s client list is full, she advises all authors and assistants to start the way she and Langtry did: pick a small project to find out if the two of you are compatible. Working well together is essential, and not all assistants are right for all authors. (And vice-versa.)

Jolly suggests an author start by giving their assistant newsletter-related tasks. Individuals with prior assistant experience should already know how to run a newsletter, including things like an automation sequence to welcome new subscribers and segmentation of existing readers. However, if an assistant is brand new to providing support, a newsletter is a great place to start. Newsletters give both the author and the assistant the chance to learn how well they function together while working on something important.

Speaking from the assistant’s side of things, Jolly believes that a good assistant can often tell an author where they should focus when it’s something other than writing. In Jolly’s experience, authors tend to be micro-focused on writing, and an assistant can provide balance by keeping track of looming deadlines that affect an author’s big picture. Jolly suggests all authors should make a “big picture goals” spreadsheet and provides her authors with a template, which she is kindly sharing. See a sample here: <http://bit.ly/nincwork>

Both Jolly and Langtry advocate for writing things down if you want them to happen, and then making changes as needed when life gets in the way. A filled-out big picture goal sheet gives an assistant the chance to examine what the author considers important. An assistant can then offer to do specific tasks ahead of time rather than having tasks surprise an author when it’s too late.

Beyond the goals template, Jolly and Langtry also created an author promo calendar that allows Langtry to input big picture goals onto a calendar with deadlines. Jolly color-codes each item to keep groups of tasks, such as author events, social media tasks, or giveaways, making them easy to identify at a glance.

Both agree that an assistant’s biggest gift (and biggest job) is to take things out of the author’s hands in order to make the author more productive. For this, Jolly and Langtry recommend delegating. But before tasks can be delegated, it is essential to know what tasks in which the author engages.

Jolly has created another spreadsheet for authors to determine how they typically use their time

over the course of a month (also available using the link above). An author will want to track an entire month's worth of activities, filling in times spent on each activity in which they engage during the workday.

While tracking activities, Jolly suggests using an app called mytime, which allows you to click a button any time you take breaks. At the end of the day, the app totals up how much time was spent working and how much time was spent on break.

Most tasks not directly related to "writing a book" can be delegated to someone besides the author, especially in cases where an author dislikes certain tasks. Jolly provides this list of things she does for various authors, noting that no author has her do *all* of these:

1. Newsletter
2. Formatting and uploading
3. Giveaways and contests
4. Bookmarks and other graphics
5. Launch planning
6. Shipping of prizes for giveaways and contests
7. Website updates and/or checking to make sure the right book covers, prices, and links are showing on the author's website. Even if the assistant isn't the one who will make changes to the website, they can list what needs to be fixed.
8. Getting ads and promo set up, including ad-stacking
9. Creation of 3D covers, or finding someone to do this
10. ARC team management
11. Accounting
12. Being the Bad Guy in situations where a bad guy is called for (i.e., telling FB commenters to stop trolling one another)
13. Setting up author school visits, including details about meals, bathroom breaks, etc.
14. Declining interviews and other time-intensive requests. "Leslie Langtry is on deadline and is declining most interviews." This allows people to be mad at gatekeeper (assistant), not at the author. By using "most" as a qualifier, Jolly is able to later say yes to opportunities Langtry is actually interested in.

Several of the tasks above are related to managing an author's online presence. To keep on top of this, Jolly recommends assistants try the following apps and websites to improve productivity:

1. For scheduling social media posts:
 - Tweetdeck
 - Hootsuite
2. For finding content to post to an author's social media:
 - www.playbuzz.com
 - www.buzzfeed.com
 - www.pinterest.com

Jolly notes that if the author assistant schedules the posts, the author is less likely to be distracted by wondering if people clicked to like their latest cat meme or the adorable picture of their dog. An

assistant should run content past the author first in case it doesn't feel appropriate to the author (i.e., puppy pictures from a cat-loving author). And of course, if an author really enjoys posting to one platform, the author should continue to do so. The assistant can then pull posts from that preferred platform and repopulate the posts to sites the author doesn't like using.

Jolly also has a list of her favorite apps for team management and sharing information, which includes:

1. Dropbox (great for sharing content, especially large jpg files)
2. Google Drive (great for working on documents together)
3. LastPass (provides password management software providing hidden, revocable passwords)
4. Basecamp (project management—costs \$20 month)
5. Google/Apple Calendar (utilize a shared calendar both author and assistant are comfortable with)
6. Evernote (a database where an author's answers to the same repeated questions can be stored. Assistants should shoot the answer past the author to make sure it works or if it needs rewording)

Noting that certain behaviors are typical to authors while others are more typical to assistants, Jolly says that together they make a great team—one that makes it possible for the author to focus on writing the next book.

In concluding their talk, Jolly and Langtry agreed that the most important thing for an author/assistant relationship is for authors to allow their assistants to do important tasks, thereby establishing the trust that is invaluable in the relationship.

For a booklet that helps an author decide if they are ready for an assistant, visit <http://authorrx.com/hire-assistant/>. Jolly also invited author assistants to join her Facebook page by emailing her a request, since the group is private and secret (email: Melissa@authorrx.com). The Facebook page is a place assistants can pop in to request help making a 3D cover, getting ideas for contests, and so on.



Cidney Swanson is an award-winning author of young adult sci-fi and fantasy, including the Ripple series, the Saving Mars series, the Thief in Time series, and more. Cidney lives in Oregon's Willamette Valley with her family and entirely too much rain.

Data and Story

Presenter: Deb Werksman, Sourcebooks

Reported by Barbara Meyers

"Storytelling connects us to humanity. It is a link to the past and a glimpse of the future." Deb Werksman, editorial director at Sourcebooks for the past 19 years, wants you to know that she and her company are looking for career authors. Sourcebooks is the largest female-owned publishing company and the number 10 publisher in the United States. The company publishes approximately 450 books per year.

She also believes that books change lives. Pacing yourself is important, but keep in mind that the average career author on the USA Today bestseller list has been writing for 21 years. She admires authors like Nora Roberts who consider writing a nine-to-five job, but Werksman doesn't believe writing faster is necessarily better. "Writing better is better," she said.

Werksman's spent time showing authors how publishers look at data. She mentioned that although there are more options for creators, there are also more books being published. 3,500 books are published annually in the United States, and Amazon is number one in the digital market and offers 62,235,275 titles on its site, so an author's willingness to experiment with ways to connect with readers is important. She suggests asking yourself, "What ways are you good at?" One of the key factors of success is figuring out how to make one's passion public.

Barnes & Noble is still dominant in the brick-and-mortar bookstore market while Follett and Baker & Taylor lead in library and wholesale. "Indies and Amazon are doing great, but the middle of the market is struggling and at risk," Werksman said.

Because "online growth has slowed for everyone, it's important to create a book-centric great experience and go where readers are." For example, Western romance occupies two-thirds of Walmart's bookshelves while Target's is mostly made up of women's fiction and young adult. And Werksman said 60 percent of romance novels are impulse purchases. Libraries are also important sources of sales and their budgets are up.

Having a long publishing career is about endurance. It is not a sprint. Authors should remember working with Sourcebooks is about teamwork and receiving a lot of support in exchange for relinquishing the total control one has as an indie author. And Sourcebooks is happy to work with hybrid authors.

Because "strategic thinking helps create the future," Werksman suggested not clinging to the way things were. Sourcebooks is focused on building authors' careers, building close relations with retailers and creating opportunities. To that end they have just signed with a film agent. "It's also important to experiment with price and promos. Experiments may fail, but we learn from them," she said.

Research indicates the top four reasons a reader buys a book: message, author, series, and recommendation. A special price accounts for only eight percent of a buyer's decision.

Books need strong messaging to succeed. Positioning refers to the place the brand occupies in the mind of the customer. Following that, the important components are title, content, cover/packaging.

What does positioning do? It creates a connection to the reader. It requires consideration as to what the book is about and whom it's for. And it poses a question to the reader. Positioning shifts focus from the book to the reader.

Positioning also influences title choice. When choosing a title, don't stand inside the story. Instead, stand in the reader's shoes and ask, "What messaging/feeling does my book convey?"

The title and cover should create a question, longing or feeling in the reader. Keep in mind that a reader needs to see a product four to seven times before they make a purchase.

To maximize impact, if positioning factors are right, a strong hook communicates quickly what the book is about and grabs reader interest. Beyond that, broad distribution and marketing/PR that breaks through the clouds will send a book soaring. "You can't market your way out of bad positioning," Werksman said. In other words, if your book failed to connect with readers, it's likely not the result of your marketing efforts or promotional campaigns. Incorrect or poor positioning is the problem.

Werksman believes authors and publishers should think outside the box and look for fun ways to engage readers. For example, for a dog-themed book, one aspect of an engaging campaign consisted of donating chew bones to local shelters. Photographs of the homeless hounds enjoying the treats were shared on social media, along with the book's cover, as part of the book's marketing campaign. (And who knows? Maybe it helped some of those pups find forever homes.)

What kinds of stories is Werksman looking for? Contemporary romance/women's fiction; sexy regencies 85-95K; beautifully and brilliantly written paranormal and fantasy romance; hot, sexy and steamy shape-shifter stories. Remember: Nothing but your best work has a chance.



*Barista by day, romance novelist by night: When not writing, [Barbara Meyers](#) disguises herself behind a green apron and works part-time for a world-wide coffee company. Her novels mix comedy, suspense and spice and often feature a displaced child. Her new adult novel is *White Roses in Winter*.*

Digital Tools for Authors

Presenter: Fauzia Burke

Reported by Jenny Gardiner

Fauzia Burke, founder of FSB Associates, long known as an innovator in the field of online book marketing, had three goals for her presentation to NINC members attending her Digital Tools for Authors workshop: to validate choices authors had already made, to suggest one tool the authors might be curious about, and to provide tools that would change an author's life.

Burke segmented her list of favorite online tools into five categories: create, share, organize, research, and website.

Create: Apps and websites to help design images, convey your message

Burke said that these sites and apps were instrumental in helping to facilitate ease of promo by enabling authors to easily generate and share graphics, and even make simple videos.

- **Canva**—is a fast, easy website for creating graphics. There are options for paid or free versions, and is self-explanatory to use.
- **Depositphoto**—This site has videos, cartoons and photos for use in book promotions, and Burke said you can get amazing deals for 100 Depositphoto graphics through [AppSumo](#).
- **Animoto**—enables you to make videos easily. She said you simply upload the photo, find the music, put text around it and you're done.
- **Adobe Spark**—Adobe is better known for its Photoshop app. Right now Adobe Spark is free, and you can design photos, graphics, videos. "It's more robust than Canva but not as overkill as Photoshop," Burke said.
- **Lumen5**—"This app will change your life," according to Burke. Lumen 5 enables you to make social videos easily and turn blog posts into engaging videos. You can create videos—it works off of Artificial Intelligence, takes a link to your URL, and then comes up with what the video should look like. You can paste your copy for your book and AI creates a dummy storyboard that you can edit, approve and then add music to.

Share: Apps can help spread the word

Burke said there are a number of apps and websites that are essential for busy authors to help get their word out there.

- **Medium**—"Medium is a blogging platform created by the folks at Twitter," Burke said. "You have all the social sharing options of Twitter but nothing exclusive about it." Burke suggested posting your blog entry on your own site first to maximize the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) benefit, and then copy into Medium, where you're able to hashtag, where people follow each other, and where you're able to increase your visibility without any extra work. Burke cited an example of how a huge news story broke about the work environment at Amazon after someone had posted it on Medium. The platform is free, easy to use, and has no word count limit.

- **MailChimp**—Burke said this is the newsletter delivery system she prefers for ease of use, innovation, and metrics. She added that she only sends out newsletters on behalf of her authors when there is something new to tell the reading audience, so that readers don't get sick of the author.
- **MailMunch**—This site lets you control when and where popups show on your site. It also integrates with MailChimp when you register with MailMunch.
- **Dropbox**—Dropbox allows you to easily share large documents and files with your team. While Google Docs provides this as well, Burke said that Dropbox is the gold standard.

Organize: Technology helps authors get their act together

Burke pointed out that with many authors essentially running their own publishing houses nowadays, tools to help keep you organized have become more vital than ever.

- **Hootsuite**—While this can be used for sites such as LinkedIn, Burke said she uses Hootsuite to organize tweets on Twitter, warning though that some people don't use Hootsuite because Facebook filters it. "The ideal number of tweets to grow your community is between 7-9 tweets per day," she said. "If you're managing a number of accounts, it's easy to schedule tweets in advance and have an overall strategy, which saves a lot of time." A few other similar programs include Buffer, MeetEdgar and SocialPilot, which also allow scheduling for Instagram.
- **Calendly**—This program enables you to schedule meetings without the back-and-forth of emails. Burke said this is especially helpful for someone who spends a lot of time on phone calls—you can create your calendar availability, send the link, and the recipients can schedule it themselves. "For me, this is life-changing," Burke said.
- **Scannable**—Burke pointed out when you collect lots of business cards at conferences, as happens with authors frequently, this phone app is invaluable, because you can immediately scan and share the cards. It links to LinkedIn, so it's easy to find the person. You can also scan the documents into Evernote.
- **Doodle**—Doodle can schedule meetings, lunches, calls, any sort of gathering in order to gain a consensus.
- **UberConference**—This allows you to schedule group calls. "You can start a conference right off the bat and send emails that say 'can you join me right now?'" Burke said. "You can also record the call, and can send that recording to those who missed the call." She said she prefers this to FreeConferenceCall.com and likes that it shows you who is on the call and who is talking.
- **Google Drive**—Burke said that if you are collaborating with a team of people using a spreadsheet, Google Drive makes it easier because you can make real-time changes. You can work with slides, forms, documents and spreadsheets, but you must have a Gmail account in order to edit them.

Research: Invaluable online tools to help get the job done

- **Google Alerts**—This tool is essential for knowing what people are saying about your book. Burke suggested submitting the book title, your name, or whatever you are searching, in quotes, and you'll receive email notification when your book or name gets mentioned, although it is not always completely dependable. She said you might want to consider Google Alerting your competition as well.
- **Warble Twitter Alerts**—Warble allows you to look for your mentions on Twitter. When

you sign up for your name or book title, or you're tracking a conversation or a conference, you'll get a Twitter alert when it shows up.

- **Google Analytics**—"This is a wonderful tool on your website," Burke said. "It lets you see what people are looking at, which is important." She said she looks at 10 things in analyzing website traffic every three months so she can notice a trend. Most important to look for is referral traffic, so you know if your marketing is working. She said when you check out the referral traffic, you can see how much time people are spending from each site. For instance, you might be getting a lot of traffic from Twitter, but they only stay for three seconds, so perhaps Twitter is a waste of your time. Whereas, perhaps you get a referral from your university, or some place that you volunteer, and they spend three minutes there, so then you have a clearer sense of what is worthwhile.
- **Bitly**—Burke said there are a number of link-shorteners, including TinyUrl and SmartURL (which is a bit different). Bitly allows you to create vanity URLs. She said that when they're thinking about where they wanted to advertise, or which activity is creating engagement, she'll do a quick Bitly link to announce a book, use it on Facebook, Twitter, the author's LinkedIn page and newsletter, then Bitly will track where clicks come from, so you can determine where engagement is highest, which helps you narrow down what sites are working best for generating links and then focus on marketing there more.
- **SurveyMonkey**—Burke said this is a great site to use to build engagement with your readers. You can do surveys or polls, such things as "vote for my cover" or "vote for my title" and readers feel more connected to you.

Website: A variety of options for building a home base

Burke said she presumed most authors were already familiar with WordPress, so instead chose to feature a few other sites for building websites.

- **Wix**—Burke loves this user-friendly site to create websites for particular businesses such as event planners, or people who have a lot of beautiful photos to share. However if you have a large number of books, Wix becomes too sluggish, and you'd need a separate page for each book. However, she said if you only have a few books, it's easy to change around, requiring very little time and effort.
- **SquareSpace**—This site again is not necessarily best-suited to authors because the graphic sizes don't often match book jackets, but the site does allow an easy drag and drop option. It's designed for large graphics, she said, which authors don't always have.
- **PubSite**—Burke's husband designed this site just for authors. "It's built for authors with professional themes and zero start-up cost," Burke said. "It's mobile-friendly, allows for mailing list, social media and blog integration and e-commerce as well." She said it's great because there is no need to know HTML to build a website with PubSite; you do all the designs through checkboxes, managing the site in a database. In creating a website with this program, you do all the work in the back end and designs can be changed at no cost to you at the flip of a button. For instance, you could change the color scheme on your website to match the new release without every having to redesign the site; they also provide monthly hosting.

Burke urged the audience to check out her [website](#) for additional tips and conference handouts, and also welcomes questions at fauzi@fauziaburke.com or 760-585-2252.



Jenny Gardiner is an award-winning novelist and #1 Kindle bestselling author who has published 25 books. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com and on National Public Radio. She's a former columnist for Charlottesville's Daily Progress and is volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival. When not writing, she's probably cooking, playing with her grandpuppies or traveling to exotic locales.

An Introduction to Vellum

Presented by Brad Andalman

Reported by Jenny Gardiner

Vellum Makes e-Book Publishing Intuitive and Painless

Vellum co-creator Brad Andalman presented a solid case for publishing books with his company's Mac-compatible formatting software Vellum, which enables users to create ebook and print interiors with documents in Microsoft Word, Scrivener or Pages. He said Vellum allows authors to retain control of their books and make changes at will. Vellum works only with Docx files on Mac computers running on El Capitan or newer operating systems.

During the presentation, Andalman showed how to generate a book in under five minutes. He detailed how to make changes in front and back matter, and then regenerate the book; how to proof the newly created book; and tips and tricks for subsequent books to go even faster. He finished with a demonstration on how to create box sets from existing files.

Quick, Easy, Beautiful Styles

During the demo, Andalman created a manuscript using H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man*. He dragged the Docx file onto the Vellum "flower" icon. Immediately Vellum imported and tried to develop the characters it found. "It looks like a book before you've even formatted it," he said.

With the navigator bar on the left, users can go into the body of the document in the center panel and make changes. The preview screen on the right panel shows what the book will look like as an ebook. There, users can set it to view for a variety of e-readers.

"The nice thing is, you can create quick, easy, beautiful styles," Andalman said, showing how to go into the navigator and switch from content to styles, revealing a style carousel in the center panel that provides many options from flowery, modern or popular, to techie-looking or traditional. When he clicked back to "content" on the navigator panel, the book immediately formatted to his choice, Oxford, updating instantly. Andalman mentioned it was important to keep saving changes in the program as you work.

He clicked the top left panel on *The Invisible Man* title, and then in the center panel, under "title info," if it hasn't populated already, he said, you click the cover, and pull that up.

When running Vellum for the first time, the software asks users to choose trim size, where to save the file, the platforms, and print interior (he recommended 5x8, adding that you can change the trim size later). When users click "generate," all three files show up in the selected save folder, ready to upload to various platforms. He reiterated it was important to save the files at this point.

Matter Matters

On the bottom of the menu on the left panel, there's a gear menu where users add copyright, which adds default text, or users can modify in the text editor in the center panel and put in a personalized copyright. Users can also go to the chapter drop-screen and add multiple elements,

which launches the navigator, switching to the left panel, where users can include blurbs, praise, dedication, epigraph, foreword, intro, preface, prologue, afterword, acknowledgments, about the author, and also by, making the entire process easily customizable.

He said while the Amazon table of contents populates automatically, users can control it. In “About the Author” there is standard default text, but users can replace it and add a Facebook handle, Twitter name, webpage, and email address. Vellum automatically adds the icons for Facebook and Twitter and allows you to test it.

To add an author image, users click on the image prompt and get a pop-up screen, which allows for changes in style, justification and size. Vellum will tell you if the image meets the size requirements (the “!” doesn’t indicate a problem but is a prompt for text-to-speech for visually impaired).

The “also by” is pre-populated by store links—users can set title for store link, add URLs for various store platforms, click the arrow to test that the ASIN works. There are shortened or evergreened links for tracking. To add affiliate codes, go to preferences→store links→add affiliate codes.

Choose Your Style

To personalize the style, go to Heading and choose heading style—users can also change first paragraph style, with things like one-line drop cap, two-line drop cap, or first phrase small caps. All of these sub-styles can be configured (heading, first paragraph, block quotation, paragraph after break, portrait caption, heading and footer, body—though he said usually the body of the book doesn’t need any manipulation. View on the right panel to see how the final book format appears on various devices, including font styles, sepia, black, or e-reader ink, to be sure the cover added to Vellum looks good in black and white. View the table of contents for each reader with the ToC button on right panel. Change pages by going to the arrows on preview, change chapters by using icons at top right.

On the top left panel, users can see the print view, including page numbers with headers—this is a great way to see what the book will look like in print. This is still in draft mode, but users can view in Proof Mode, which performs automatic layouts, widow and runt prevention, and mirror margins.

Andalman said it’s important to save after reviewing how it appears in various e-readers, then click “generate” and the book automatically generates, ready to upload directly to all vendor platforms. But he suggested proofing before sending it on by clicking on the Vellum icon at the bottom of the screen, which takes the user to the book folder, where users can double-click and view each format. He added, “You should delete books once you’ve proofed and found problems, otherwise you’re in danger of opening up an older version when you go to proof next time.” To proof the Kindle book in Kindle Previewer, drag the icon from the Vellum folder into the Kindle Previewer.

“Sometimes when importing a manuscript, you get untidy glitches that need to be fixed,” Andalman said. To demonstrate he opened a Word document of another book by H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*, which showed a lot of return marks on the screen. He imported it to Vellum and set up the metadata (title, author, publisher, pub link). On the left side there were untitled elements, and Vellum will assume new chapters are being started. Users can delete those extra untitled chapters. An “untitled” item also appeared at the bottom—this was the epilogue, which he hadn’t titled. Users can go to the gear icon at top of middle panel and go to “convert to” for the epilogue and it converts it. Additionally, sometimes Vellum will interpret bold text in the middle of content as if it’s a new

chapter, but correct this by merging it with the previous chapter, then save changes.

One of the nice things about Vellum, Andalman said, was being able to re-use elements book-to-book, such as the “also by” and “about the author.” Andalman opened *The Invisible Man* file, at bottom left panel where it showed “about the author” and “also by” and selected both of them to drag to *The Time Machine* before he hit save.

To make a boxed set, click on the Vellum flower icon at bottom of screen and then go to “file new” at the top. He saved the files on his desktop for *The Invisible Man* to be book one, then dragged *The Time Machine* in, and Vellum automatically created the volumes. It will say “chapter one” with a box set, so delete that, and in each volume there’s a copyright, so drag and drop at the top of book one, and then it’s not needed for book two, so delete that. He said you can add an intro at the top if you want. In the table of contents on the right panel, the user would need title chapters for *The Time Machine*, so he went to the chapter drop-screen from the top center panel to view the table of contents—by default Vellum always creates a ToC—and gave it a title, cover, generated, and it was ready. (By the way, users can turn this off and it will default to not do a Table of Contents for print book.)

Vellum has eight custom styles. Users can add graphics at the beginning or end of a chapter and customize a publisher logo on the title page (he inserted a silhouette of a man). Users can add the same heading for multiple chapter headings, or with different chapters with different POVs, users can change the heading at top of chapter. And while users currently can’t import art for the title page since Vellum creates title pages that match the chapter headers, Andalman said there are workarounds for this and eventually they will enable this function.

Andalman said that after opening Vellum to format a book, it has already defaulted to whatever the last book’s style was, which simplifies formatting books in a series. He also reminded users to be sure to update the Vellum software regularly.

Contact information:

<https://help.vellum.pub/>

<http://vellum.pub/>



Jenny Gardiner is an award-winning novelist and #1 Kindle bestselling author who has published 25 books. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com and on National Public Radio. She’s a former columnist for Charlottesville’s Daily Progress and is volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival. When not writing, she’s probably cooking, playing with her grandpuppies or traveling to exotic locales.

Vellum For Print

Presenter: Brad Andalman

Reported by Jenna Kernan

Brad Andalman, founder and developer of the Vellum software, which allows authors to produce ebooks, introduced the attendees to Vellum 2.0. This software, also called Vellum Press, is designed with new functions and capabilities specifically for print and for use with services like CreateSpace and IngramSpark. This workshop showcased the functions that have been added for print and assumed that attendees were familiar with the basic use of Vellum software. The workshop included demonstrations throughout.

One of the really remarkable capabilities of formatting with Vellum is that authors can use one file to create both ebooks and print versions. Vellum will add the appropriate content for each edition and change the formatting for digital versus print.

The live demonstration of the creation of a print book PDF began by dragging the document file of an example manuscript in to the Vellum program. Authors can then choose the final trim size and pick from a list of generation options. Vellum automatically puts in the gutters and margins needed for print versions. Vellum also adds a header on each page with the title on the left and the author's name on the right and the page numbers in the footer of each page. When you are finished adding all the front and back matter the final PDF can be uploaded to the distributor of choice.

Some things will need to be customized by the author. Mr. Andalman used newsletter sign-ups as an example. This type of back matter would work better in a digital book and does not function well in print. But in the print version, the author might wish to add an invitation to readers to sign up at their website. In this case, this page in the back matter will differ in the digital and print editions. So, the author would create two versions of this page by going up to the gear menu and selecting "ebooks only." The content menu will show this page in italics—for example, *Newsletter*—and it will show an icon of an e-reader to easily indicate in which version of the book this content item will appear. Likewise, the page that will be included with the invitation and website in the print version will also show in italics but will have an icon of an open book to indicate that this page will appear only in the print version.

The print version has 10 font families from which to choose, each of which has to be licensed by Vellum. These have been preselected for the best reading experience. Mr. Andalman suggested that for authors who want a particular font in the front matter—for example, the font used on the book cover—they could use a graphic in the paperback version. Now that page, specific to the paperback version, will also show a book icon and be in italics. Copyright pages can be identical in each version with two ISBN numbers listed with indication for which is the print and which is digital or authors may choose unique pages for each version. Such decisions are completely up to the user. The table of contents is visible only in digital by default but you can add it in the print version, if you wish. The font size and line spacing is presented as a sliding scale with the center being the suggested setting.

By sliding the scale right or left, authors may adjust these functions. There is not a large print function yet, but that is under consideration. Some Vellum users use the larger print function to reach an older audience. None of these adjustments affect the e-reader version because all of the spacing and font choices are controlled by the reader on their device.

Preview is accomplished in two places. There is a Draft and Proof mode. Mr. Andalman suggests previewing in the **Draft** mode, which allows authors to easily and quickly scan through the book and fix mistakes or problems. The **Proof** mode is a clunky way to edit because Vellum has to apply the functionality after each change. When you are ready to see *exactly* how the print book will look, after Vellum has applied all its functionality, switch to Proof mode. There are many customizable options to make your book look as you wish, including the trim, inside margin size, images to be black and white or color, and whether your first chapter will begin on the right or if you would like every chapter to begin on the right. The **View** mode allows a two-page spread, recommended for looking at your preview. This mode puts the copyright on the bottom of the page and adds blank pages so your title page begins on the right side of the spread.

So what is going on during the automatic layout? Automatic *widow* prevention stops the last line of a paragraph, no matter how long, from appearing alone at the top of the page because Vellum pulls the line from the previous sentence or line with it. Vellum prevents *runts*, which are one-word paragraph lines. It does so via a complicated algorithm to decide what to do. This assessment is based on how long the previous word may be and how long the last word is. Vellum decides which runts to change or leave. It also calculates the spread layout of the final page of each chapter so that the ending is not one line or two lines and a long white space. Vellum does this by pulling lines from the previous five pages. But Vellum also never wants to leave an unbalanced spread, which means that the length of the line on the right and left page would be different. Vellum prevents that. The program hyphenation word function for print is different than digital, so there are few hyphenations on each page. You can turn this function off.

All of that formatting functionality is happening in proof mode, which is why it is not recommended for editing but should be used after that stage of creation.

During the question and answer period, Mr. Andalman addressed many queries including one on pricing. Vellum software costs \$199 for digital or \$299 for both print and digital. If you already purchased the software for digital, the upgrade is an additional \$99. It costs authors nothing to explore and practice creating a book but you must purchase the program in order to download the formatted version. For more information visit www.vellum.pub.



Publishers Weekly bestselling author, Jenna Kernan, writes romantic suspense that RT BookClub called "Flat-out good." Nominated for two RITA® awards for her Western romances, Jenna has penned more than thirty stories and received the Book Buyers Best award for her debut paranormal romance. Find Jenna@jennakernan.com, on [facebook/AuthorJennaKernan](#) or her [website](#).

Reedsy's Tools for the Indie Publishing Journey

Presenter: Ricardo Fayet

Reported by Rochelle Paige

Ricardo Fayet, the founder of [Reedsy](#), opened the “How to Discover Your Best Publishing Team” workshop by explaining that their data comes from more than 4,000 quotes exchanged on Reedsy. Reedsy maintains a highly curated community where it only accepts a low percentage of applicants, many with a traditional publishing background. As such, their professionals tend to be on the high-end pricing wise.

There are many steps in the indie publishing journey, with marketing interwoven throughout them all. The first stages focus on editing. The three main types of editing currently are developmental, copyediting, and proofreading. A developmental editor can help the author develop the book from a bare concept or first draft with major restructuring, improved characterization, and plot assessment. It's a focus on craft. The average pricing Reedsy is seeing on a developmental edit is 2.1 cents per word.

A copy edit will bring a completed manuscript to a more professional level with only minor restructuring and rewrites, fact-checking, and attention paid to style and consistency. In comparison, proofreading will help to ensure the project is error free with particular attention paid to grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The average pricing Reedsy is seeing on a copy edit is 1.7 cents per word while proofreading runs about 0.9 cents. Often, it may be the same editor doing both of these steps and the author will pay less for them combined at an average of 1.8 cents per word for both the copy edit and proofreading. The cost is less because the editor can proofread only the edits from the copy editing stage or perform a lighter full pass through the second time around.

Reedsy offers a pricing calculator on their website, by genre and word count, for estimated editing costs. Fayet also pointed out an interesting fact: a developmental edit for historical fiction will be more expensive because of the extra research and expertise required.

Another vital step in the publishing journey is the cover design. The cover is the author's primary sales tool. The average cost Reedsy is seeing is \$600, with 66 percent of quotes between \$200 and \$800. To demonstrate the importance of the cover, Reedsy recently ran some A/B testing for three fiction authors. They provided the author with a free cover redesign and ran targeted CPM ads on Facebook. Both ads were identical in every way, except for the cover image. The goal was to discover how much the re-designed cover impacted the click-rate of the advertisement. One of the titles used was *Once a Bridesmaid* by Courtney Hunt.

A/B Test #1: *Once a Bridesmaid*



+48%

- Women
- Aged 25-64
- Interests: Cecelia Ahern, Jude Deveraux, Julie Garwood

reedsy SEPTEMBER 2017 @REEDSYHQ

The cover designer made the new cover brighter, utilized a simple sans serif font, and made the tag line more visible. The newly designed cover received 48 percent more clicks. The increase in clicks emphasized that brighter images and simple fonts can help your cover pop in thumbnail form. You can read more about the experiment, and see the other redesigns and results, [here](#).

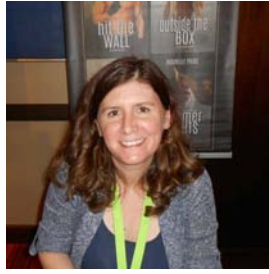
After sharing the results of their experiment, Fayet raised a question: Why don't more authors try A/B tests on Facebook on cover concepts? Then the author can see which ones get more clicks and use that one for the final. Another bit of advice he provided was that if you're working with a new designer, make sure to specify the number of design iterations in the contract. Having these numbers clearly stated early on will prevent surprise charges later.

Once the manuscript is ready for formatting, there are many options for the author—and Reedsy is one of them. They don't have an import function from Word, though. You can either write directly in it or cut and paste into it. They offer three templates with options including drop caps and hide chapter numbers. In print, they work a lot with Ingram Spark to make sure their files work well with them.

Throughout all these stages, the author should be working on marketing. Fayet said a big trend right now is using a simpler email format. Utilizing more pictures and gifs seem more like marketing to the subscriber. You can make it feel more personal by going with no HTML. Hiring someone from outside the book world but who has the right marketing tool set, can be a good idea, and Reedsy has email marketing specialists.

They also have three other marketing-related items they released that are kind of exciting. For authors looking for reviewers, Reedsy has a curated list of book review blogs [here](#). You can search by genre or average traffic to the site. For authors looking for BookBub alternatives on price promotions, Reedsy has a curated list of [free and paid book promotion services](#). They went through 300 companies and ended up with only 55 after researching reviews by authors. Those remaining have been sorted into tiers. Tier 1 includes BookBub and five others. Authors may see great results by getting the other five when they can't get a BookBub. Tier 2 has sites with some mixed reviews. They may work in your genre but not others. Tier 3 sites are ones authors may be less familiar with. For authors who have used them before, they mostly didn't make a huge difference but for some people it worked so it might be worth a shot. Lastly, Tier 4 includes sites that are free to use so the only cost is the author's time.

Ricardo wrapped up the workshop by introducing the attendees to [Reedsy Learning](#), where they currently have 28 free courses. The format is a little different, with one email a day in the morning that's supposed to be a five-minute read so students can learn something new every day. The aim is to drop feed the information instead of providing all of the information at once. They already have marketing courses: How to Set up and Grow Your Mailing List (which includes a comparison of providers), Amazon Ads, Amazon Algorithms, Facebook ads, and several more.



[Rochelle Paige](#) writes romance in a variety of sub-genres: contemporary, new adult, paranormal and romantic suspense. Although she holds a BA in economics, her career was mainly spent as a marketing professional. She lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, with her two sons. Contact her at e@rochellepaige.com.

Increasing Discoverability with Kobo

Presenter: Mark Lefebvre, Director of Self-Publishing and Author Relations

Reported by Laura Marie Altom

Kobo is an online bookseller founded in 2009, based on the philosophy that “anyone should be able to read any ebook on any device at any time.” Though Japanese parent company, Rakuten, acquired Kobo in January 2012, Kobo is not a Japanese name, but an anagram of *book*.

Global partnerships allow Kobo to collaborate with bookstores rather than compete. Local bookstores get a cut of sales. What makes this company stand out amongst a sea of online book retailers is the fact that these “relationships” allow books to not just be featured on Kobo.com, but also retail partner websites such as:

- Chapters/Indigo (CA)
- Walmart, Best Buy, Future Shop (CA, US)
- WHSmith & Waterstones & Sainsbury’s (UK)
- American Booksellers Association (indie bookstores) (US)
- Rakuten (JP)
- FNAC (FR)
- Mondadori and La Feltrinelli (IT)
- BOL (NL)
- Independent Bookstores (NZ)
- Angus & Robertson (AU)
- Kobo also owns Tolino (DE–GERMANY) (Although Lefebvre recommends the best way to publish books to Tolino is through Draft2Digital.)

Kobo hired an author to oversee Kobo’s self-publishing arm. Additional writers and former literary agents and scouts serve on the Kobo Writing Life (KWL) team. Members of the KWL team have published on all existing platforms, which gives them a greater working understanding of what’s available on their platform, what works, and what features they’d like to have. The KWL team not only “hang out” with writers, they listen, ask questions, and engage one on one.

Their publishing terms are slightly higher than competitors with 70 percent royalties on books priced \$2.99 and above, 45 percent on titles priced \$2.98 or less. Authors are electronically paid in the currency of their choice and maintain all rights.

A bragging right for Kobo is having, “The World’s Sexiest Dashboard!!!!” This fully customizable feature allows authors to track real-time book purchases via region, and even includes a fun global sales map that they encourage authors to share via social media.

Prices for all territories are easy to set—including FREE. The site tracks sales as well as free downloads by volume, region, and title. Lefebvre apologized for the site’s tracking numbers being “a little” behind. They have been short a specialized computer programmer. Lefebvre was pleased to announce that a programmer has been hired, meaning all glitches will soon be fixed. In the meantime,

Lefebvre welcomes authors to contact the site for real-time numbers. He went on to assure attendees that all data is being saved, it's just not appearing on author dashboards in real time.

Another author-friendly feature is the ability to set future low-price promotions. In regard to ranking, preorder sales count twice as much as a conventional book sale. This makes for greater book visibility within Kobo and affiliated sites.

On the issue of whether to post your books directly on retailer sites or use a third party, Lefebvre stressed that while it's a personal choice to do what's best for your business model, there are pros and cons to both methods. Kobo enjoys working with third-party aggregators such as Draft2Digital, Smashwords, and others. But some authors prefer direct access/updates, while others prefer loading books once, then leaving them alone. One hazard of that is the fact that some all-in-one sites only allow for US pricing, which may be detrimental to global sales and discoverability.

Lefebvre believes the most critical issue regarding independent publishing is the choice for authors to “go wide”—meaning rejecting all exclusivity requests in favor of selling on many vendor sites. He states that while KDP Select (KU) works for some authors, it ostracizes readers on other platforms, which limits an author's growth, especially globally. Amazon may dominate the US, but Kobo leads the world.

KWL Global sales volume breaks down in the following percentages:

- 50.68% CA
- 11.07% GB
- 10.71% AU
- 9.06% US
- 4.04 % FR
- 3.00% NZ
- 2.99% RoW — still seeing strong growth in “Rest of World” Merch in USD
- 2.19% IT
- 1.31% NL
- 1.23% DE
- 0.99% ZA

With foreign pricing, Lefebvre suggests rounding all foreign prices to .99 to not leave potential money on the table. He advises that USA, CAN, AUS, and NZD like their .99 price points. EUR and GBP are okay with .49 or .99. These prices are all adjustable on author dashboards.

Examples:

US: Lower prices are most effective. (e.g.: \$4.99 USD)

CA/AU/NZ: Based on currency exchange, round up to .99 in Canada, Australia, New Zealand (e.g.: \$4.99 USD = \$6.59 CAD/\$6.58 AUS/\$6.79 NZD). Manually adjust/round these figures to \$6.99 (cleaner looking—more pennies in your pocket).

UK: Most effective to round DOWN in UK where there is aggressive competition from big publishers. (e.g.: \$4.99 USD = 3.82 GBP, but round down to 3.49 or 2.99)

EUR: It's about 50/50. (e.g.: \$4.99 USD = 4.46 EUR, but round to 4,49 or 3,99.)

Lefebvre wants authors to know that the “FREE” price point still works well on Kobo. They offer a system that allows books to not be set at a free price, but rather, 100% off. This allows for the

potential to still make lists. They also offer custom vanity discount codes (e.g. FEELTHEFEAR). Individual coupon codes are also available (4RTF3E9, 9KU03BN, FU2BOY1, etc.). These codes are sent to authors by emailing the site. Some international retailers will not post free books.

Kobo is actively looking at entering the translation market, meaning authors would have an easily accessible source for translating titles. If an author already has translated titles, they should directly contact foreign team members via email to get special promotions.

Overdrive is a sister site to Kobo that sells to libraries. Authors opt into the program via KWL with simple click and accept terms on the dashboard's "Rights and Distribution" tab. They accept books on a title-by-title basis. The license agreement is a simple: 1:1 program with authors receiving 50 percent of profits. Lefebvre advises setting a unique Library Price. Publishers usually charge 3X regular USD price for libraries. Indie authors are advised to gently walk their price up so that it's still a good value for libraries without ripping them off (e.g. \$4.99 USD Retail, \$6.99 USD Library to \$8.99 USD Library). KWL is suggested for loading over D2D, but having it in either platform is essential. It is not necessary to load a book twice.

Kobo Audiobooks launched in Sept. 2017. They now offer a free Kobo Audio app for iOS and Android. Indie authors will be able to load audiobooks thru KWL in the "near" future. In the meantime, indie authors using ListenUp, Findaway Voices or Authors Republic can have their audiobooks loaded to Kobo's catalog. KWL Team is already working hard on various promotions for both KWL-loaded content, as well as content loaded via third party auto-channels (mentioned above).

Use Kobo coupon code to get \$100 off/recorded hour. (Typically \$350.00.) It's encouraged to add bonus material to audio books such as free excerpts of upcoming releases.

The entire Kobo staff enjoys interacting with authors and encourage visits via social media sites:

Facebook: [Facebook.com/KoboWritingLife](https://www.facebook.com/KoboWritingLife)

Instagram: @Kobo.Writing.Life

Website: <http://kobowritinglife.com>

Twitter: @kobowritinglife



[Laura Marie Altom](#) is a hybrid author of nearly 60 books in three different genres. She's been happily married to her college sweetheart (Go Hogs!) for 29 years and believes their boy/girl twins actively plot to drive her crazy! She is active on all major social media sites.

Driving Discovery on Goodreads

Presented by Cynthia Shannon

Reported by Jenny Gardiner

According to Goodreads Book Marketing Specialist Cynthia Shannon, authors might be missing out on the single most accessible marketing tool available to them if they're not taking advantage of what Goodreads has to offer. During her presentation, Shannon explained how Goodreads can drive discovery for authors, how readers discover books and authors via Goodreads, and several ways in which authors can drive discovery and engage with readers.

Goodreads is a site rich in what authors are looking for: passionate readers

With over 65 million avid readers, Goodreads is a gold mine of the type of readers who are looking for new authors to discover, Shannon said. Every month, 17 million books get shelved on Goodreads, and 6.5 books every second get marked as **"want to read."** This, Shannon said, is a critical action that shows there is a desire to want this book, a purchase attempt. When a book is marked as "want to read," she said, it means there is an opportunity to reach these readers down the road.

Goodreads works as a site where people share what they're reading. "It's the power of amplification," Shannon said. "Even though you might be reading by yourself, you want to tell people about it and ask the author questions to learn more about the book. On Goodreads, what gets amplified is about your book, what people are marking and talking about. So when you create content around your book, you're helping to drive awareness."

That content you create enables your book to show up in the Goodreads newsfeed, which essentially creates a "mini ad" that shows up in the newsfeed of all readers who are friends and followers of yours. This, she said, helps break down the wall between reader and writer.

Shannon cited the "power of **want to read**" as driving discoverability for authors; Goodreads contacts readers with ads and email notifications when an author has a new book out. "Coupling these 65 million people plus the power of social amplification is what makes Goodreads valuable," Shannon said.

How readers discover books on Goodreads

The vast majority of readers find books on Goodreads by *genre-browsing*, adding that readers often give Goodreads the best information on categorization of new books. Authors have the opportunity to set the genre of their books in their author profile page—you can choose three genres and these are always changeable. If you do an author giveaway on Goodreads, you can set primary and secondary genres for the giveaway, which means your book gets more exposure.

Shannon said many readers discover books via four newsletters (a general one, a new release newsletter that goes out to 30-40 million subscribers, one for YA, and a romance one that each go out to about 10 million subscribers) that Goodreads sends to its members. Shannon urged authors to submit their book for consideration for upcoming releases by emailing pitches@goodreads.com,

including a link to the Goodreads book page and author page link.

But there are easier ways for readers to find your books. Every time a reader posts an activity on the site it shows up on the *newsfeed*, which is the main thing that readers see and browse through, so the more content you create, the more chance you have to be discovered. This includes such things as polls, quotes, and giveaways. Shannon recommended doing these a few times a week.

Readers also select *Goodreads Choice Awards*. The Goodreads team analyzes data points from millions of books to see what readers are saying about them, nominating 15 books in 20 different categories, and then readers get to choose an additional five categories. On publication date these books got a lot of “want to read” shelvings, and once nominated, get large volumes of “want to reads” as a result. “If you get picked then you have to shamelessly self-promote to get votes via your newsletter and social media,” Shannon said. “If you’re not nominated, make it a goal for your next book. Double down to promote it on Goodreads because you will find a lot of new readers this way.”

Giveaways are one of the most popular site features, with a dedicated audience looking for specific types of books. Offering giveaways provides social amplification because whenever readers enter a contest, it generates a “want to read” shelving, which allows Goodreads to subsequently alert the reader to other books by the same author, or it notifies them of a new contest. Shannon said it’s a good idea to offer frequent book giveaways, which are currently only available for print books. Goodreads plans to roll out ebook giveaways with traditional publishing houses soon, and indie authors will be able to do digital giveaways in the near future.

Goodreads asked their readers what they pay attention to when deciding to shelve a book. She said 79 percent said it was a detailed book description, 48 percent said average rating influenced them, reviews swayed 32 percent, and 30 percent said an appealing cover image.

Goodreads tools to help authors improve discoverability

The Follow Author button greatly helps to drive up followers on Goodreads. Whereas the Want to Read button gives a signal of purchase intent, the Follow Author button tells Goodreads the readers want to know more about the author. Goodreads automatically emails your followers about your new book releases. It also sends digest emails and you can show up in this by encouraging readers to follow you.

The best way to engage readers is “Delight your readers.” Readers want to see what you’re reading, what the author has read, what inspired them to become a writer, and what the background information is on the book they’ve written.

Shannon said authors need to have at least 50 books on their shelves and mark others as “want to read,” which gives readers a better sense of who you are as a reader so you can better connect with them. In addition, she said it’s important for authors to rate their own books—with of course a 5-star rating. “You can use that space to talk about what part of the book you really enjoyed writing, or give ways for readers to learn more about you and your books. The book reviews show up based on the relationship the person has to the book.”

If you don’t have time to write a lot of book reviews, she suggested creating custom shelves, such as “books that inspired me to write,” or “my favorite books from childhood,” and list 15 books on those shelves. Or if you write non-fiction, create a recommended reading list and list your all-time favorite books.

“Find books you love to talk about that give you the authentic voice that enables you to connect with readers about books that aren’t your own—it’s the 80/20 balance of how much you promote

yourself versus talking about other things,” Shannon said.

She said reviewing 2-3 books a week is ideal because those reviews can get likes long after you post them, therefore there are long-range dividends for your efforts. And again, don’t forget to give your books away.

The most effective way to offer giveaways

Use the first page of your giveaway to hook the reader. Don’t repeat info that is already available on your giveaway page, like saying how many books you’re giving away. This first page shows up in the newsfeed as free, so pull them in. She also suggested promoting the giveaway on other platforms to get as many entries during the giveaway as possible—you can promote it to your website landing page or your book page on Facebook, for instance.

It’s important to send books to winners immediately—Goodreads promotes your giveaway by emailing anyone who’s marked it as “want to read.” They also send emails 4-6 weeks later to remind the winners to let them know to post reviews.

Other helpful suggestions include not starting or ending the giveaway on your release day because those folks won’t get the notification—start it a week earlier or end it a week before publication day, then wait during pub week, then run your next giveaway the week afterward. Run as many giveaways as possible before publication week because Goodreads sends more emails to the “want to reads” for your book during the contest.

“Other ways to delight your readers is by creating *Kindle Notes and Highlights*, which keeps the conversation going, bringing the power of reading and being social. Since you’re going inside your book and talking about it, adding notes to it, it gives readers background information on the book,” Shannon said. “You can add scenes, for instance. This is helpful for book clubs—Kindle will show you the most highlighted passages so you can discuss this with book clubs.”

You can also interact with your readers with *Ask the Author*. Shannon said you should check on Goodreads to see if readers have asked you anything. Those questions are only visible to you, so readers don’t know that they’re waiting for you. You can answer one to two questions a day, or do it leading up to publication, or only related to a certain topic. If you don’t have questions waiting for you, you can generate them—use sample Q&As from your publicity kit, or ask another author a question, which then generates to both of your newsfeeds. Don’t do more than one or two questions a day as it just clogs up the newsfeed. This is useful to do pre- or post-publication to generate more interest.

Know your readers/fine-tune your marketing

“If you’re writing historical but there is a contemporary aspect to it, which you can see by the number of shelvings the book receives, then maybe do a giveaway under contemporary to find more readers,” Shannon said. It’s important to consider the shelves. Look at comparable titles, she said, and target readers this way.

Additionally, find out what readers are saying about your books by reading reviews and gaining constructive feedback. If you don’t want to read the one-star reviews, filter the selection to books with four or five stars.

Goodreads recently released a tech search option to find keywords to see how readers are describing your characters so that you can use those words in your giveaway descriptions. You can

find this on your book page.

Shannon summarized that the best way to improve your discoverability and engage with readers is to delight them, interact with them, and know them, and Goodreads provides all the tools to achieve those goals. For information, go to support@goodreads.com or goodreads.com/cincindypat or goodreads.com/authors-advertisers

Editor's note: Apparently Goodreads is now charging authors who want to do giveaways. Our members are discussing this. Here's a link to the Goodreads announcement:

<https://www.goodreads.com/blog/show/1108-goodreads-introduces-new-u-s-giveaways-program-a-more-powerful-book-mar>



Jenny Gardiner is an award-winning novelist and #1 Kindle bestselling author who has published 25 books. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com and on National Public Radio. She's a former columnist for Charlottesville's Daily Progress and is volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival. When not writing, she's probably cooking, playing with her grandpuppies or traveling to exotic locales.

Author Websites The Easy Way

Presented by Fauzia Burke

Reported by Barbara Meyers

Is your website the bane of your existence? Have you had it with Wordpress, Wix and GoDaddy? Do you dread updating your site, rearranging your pages or adding a new header?

If you answered yes to any or all of the above questions, apparently you are not alone. Fauzia Burke and her company FSB Associates saw a need for a website platform specifically designed for authors and created one.

Yes, you read that right. It's called Pub Site and you can check it out here: <https://pubsitepro.com/>

Need some more incentive to take a look? Author Sue Grafton was Pub Site's first website client back in 1996.

The workshop demonstration was amazing, and that's not the wine she served talking. There are standard color schemes already available, but you can also create a custom color for your background and pages. The built-in menu makes it easy to create and rearrange pages and page layouts. It's a simple matter to drag and drop, update, refresh and voila! Your changes are done and you can get back to writing the next book.

There are standard headers available but if you want something more custom, for example if you create a header using Canva, uploading is easy.

You can connect to Google analytics. Pull in blog feeds from another site. Easily connect to PayPal. Have a trailer you want your visitors to see? No problem.

Need to set up your site for e-commerce? That's already built in. Need to add links? Do changes once and it's done. And yes, your site will be mobile friendly. The Pub Site platform can also be used for multiple authors/blogs.

When Pub Site creates new and even better things to add to their platform, those updates will be done automatically.

Imagine creating a fully functional, professional-looking website in about an hour. It can be done with Pub Site. If you're still not sure it's possible, there are videos available to train you.

Burke's husband John demonstrated how easy and intuitive the site is, even for those who consider themselves non-techie. There are zero start-up costs and you can try the site free for 14 days. The basic package costs \$19.99/month.

Reporter's Note: In the interest of full disclosure, Fauzia and John offered the attendees free wine and popcorn because this workshop was at the end of the day on the last day of the conference. However, two glasses of Chardonnay in no way influenced this reporter's coverage. *Hiccup.*



*Barista by day, romance novelist by night: When not writing, [Barbara Meyers](#) disguises herself behind a green apron and works part-time for a world-wide coffee company. Her novels mix comedy, suspense and spice and often feature a displaced child. Her new adult novel is *White Roses in Winter*.*

You Gotta Hear This:

Digital Audiobook Production with Audible and ACX

Presenters: Michael Stover (ACX), Roxanne St. Claire (Author/Audible user) and Bethany Claire (Author/Audible user)

Reported by Laura Marie Altom

Why audiobooks?

In 2016, listening hours topped two billion, up 40 percent from 2015. New devices like Fire TV, Alexa, and Echo make this immersive experience more popular than ever for not just commuting, but home entertainment. Celebrity narrations further increase reader engagement with this rapidly growing format.

APA (Audio Publishers Association) estimates worldwide audiobook sales in 2016 totaled more than \$2.1 billion, up 18.2 percent over 2015. Plus, audible.ca just opened in Canada, making this medium even more accessible to global consumers.

Audible books are sharable on certain devices. One of its most popular features is Whispersync for voice on Amazon, which allows readers to follow along in text while the narrator reads.

Audible is now a Top 100 app for both Apple and Android mobile devices.

Why have your audiobook created by ACX (Audiobook Creation Exchange)?

Because ACX works hard to make their format easy for authors. "All you need to get started is a published book on Amazon and cover art!" Stover presented a five-step process:

1. **Negotiate 1:1 with potential narrators.** ACX has almost 50,000 professional voice-over actors to audition. With their growing Canadian market, they have also added talent that has Canadian and French-Canadian accents. Be sure to check the production company's previous work. Just because a company charges the most doesn't necessarily mean they perform the best work.
2. **Set budget and schedule.** Pay your producer/narrator through a share of your earnings or pay a flat fee and keep all your royalties.
3. **One-stop recording shop.** Your producer/narrator will provide retail-ready audio files that must pass Audible's high standards.
4. **Give creative direction.** Provide feedback to your producer/narrator at the audition stage. Then give additional direction throughout recording process.
5. **Distribute globally and get paid monthly.** Your audiobook will be available through Audible, Amazon, iTunes, and their global stores.

Roxanne St. Claire (Author/Audible user) and Bethany Claire (Author/Audible user) shared their experiences in working with ACX/Audible. St. Claire's first audiobook was made through her publisher back in the days when they were distributed on cassette tapes. At a recent RWA (Romance Writers of America) conference, she attended an ACX presentation and was inspired by the ease of the

entire process. She went back to her hotel room, filled out the required information, and within an hour had received her first audition from a professional narrator. Since then, she's been hooked.

Claire attended the same ACX workshop. She started creating audiobooks in June of 2015 and she now releases all books on audio.

What was the experience like, working with the artists?

ST. CLAIRE: The first time was strange, listening to audition tapes. Be tough and take the one who reads your voice the way you want it to sound. Choosing is important. They have to "get" your book and insure they "get" your tone.

CLAIRE: Be extra selective about your audition script. Do female and male POVs. Add a love scene, because if read awkwardly, it can ruin the book.

ST. CLAIRE: Check they make each character distinct.

CLAIRE: Make sure your personality meshes with the narrator's. Find someone you easily work with. You can enlist the narrator to do extras like character interviews, reading character voices, etc.

Claire writes Scottish romance, so her narrator is doing a pronunciation guide to give as a reader bonus. If you get along well with your narrator, that's a great way to get a lot of fun reader extras for use on social media.

Stover made the point that authors should remember that if you hear the initial 15-minute sample and hate it, that you can and should cancel the contract.

ST. CLAIRE: Don't switch narrators within the same series. I did because of time restraints and it was tough. Readers grow comfortable hearing the same voice throughout a series.

CLAIRE: I have used the same narrator for all my audiobooks. I auditioned several people, but fell in love with the one I now use.

ST. CLAIRE: Be sure to thank the people who audition for your jobs, and tell them they didn't get it. It's easy in the ACX dash. As a former actress, I appreciated knowing, and feel it's important to give the narrators that same respect.

Stover reminded the audience that authors set the deadlines and terms. Consider how much you want to pay with backlist.

ST. CLAIRE: Once recordings are complete, I listen to EVERY word of my books, comparing the narration to my hard copy. Use noise-cancelling headphones so you hear everything.

Stover said that once projects are approved, they are sent to ACX to check for technical issues. Teams do quick checks of the scripts.

With your audiobook finished, what happens next?

Claire said she spends as much time "pushing" her audiobooks as she does standard books. She has samples on her site and she pushes it in the backmatter with ebook and Audible links. She sells the book cheaper if they sign up for an Audible subscription trial or readers buy the Whispersync version. Stover added that there's \$50 "bounty" for every new Audible customer if they stay with

Audible for three months. Claire puts out specially targeted Facebook ads designed to draw new customers to Audible's subscription program.

St. Claire treats every audio exactly like the standard book release, such as using free audio codes to get your review crew involved. Her crew loves listening. If polling newsletter subscribers, learn who listens to audiobooks, then give them special treatments/announcements when new audiobooks are released.

Claire pushes audiobook sales hard on social media. She used ACX's ad copy for an audio boxed set and got a bunch of bounties on FB and Twitter. She said that since you get 25 free audiobook codes, use them to get reviews.

Stover suggested using your audio sample to give your readers immediate satisfaction and immersion into content. For a series, in opening credits, you can have narrator say, "Stay tuned to the end for an exclusive excerpt from the next release."

St. Claire said that audio is growing to be a huge audience. Only 20 percent of her readers are current audiobook listeners. Most said they didn't understand the technology, but she tries explaining they can listen while they walk. They are prime new buyers. She suggests that if you have only a few audiobooks, remember that longer books are more credit worthy (Audible subscribers purchase via credits), so make a box set to make longer listening experiences. Producer does a small intro about box set.

If readers listen for 24 straight hours, they will typically buy again.

Audience Questions

How long is too long? Depends on customer. Some love long reads. Others enjoy short.

How short is too short? Claire reported her novellas sell great. ACX sets the prices.

Can authors post preorders? Yes—as long as the book is on preorder for Amazon print.

With royalty share, at the end of seven years, what happens? If you can't renegotiate, what then? You have the option to cancel and remake the recording. If an author cancels earlier, both parties need to agree. This is why it's important to be sure you're happy with who you're hiring.

If you do a preorder, is there a "drop dead" deadline? Not necessarily, but if books aren't 100 percent ready for the narrator, they will have a tough time, which may result in poor overall results.

How long should authors give narrators to finish the work? The consensus was three-four weeks. For a 100K-word book, prepare for six weeks. The author sets the calendar. If you don't want to give six months, then don't. If the narrator can't comply with your schedule, then pull your project. Narrators are often actors in real life, but if they get a big acting job, they may have to extend a week. They are also professionals. Try working within their schedules when necessary.

Hiring a male narrator versus a woman for romance? St. Claire reports that she prefers a male narrator. She especially enjoys the way her male narrator handles the female voice and tone of the book. Claire, however, prefers her female narrator. It's highly subjective. The most important thing to

remember is find a narrator who resonates with your characters and story.

Is there a special format size for audio covers? Yes. Covers must be 2100 x 2100 custom design. You can then use the icon for FB ads.

How do you get an audio sample onto a website? Soundcloud.com will create a 5-minute retail sample. Create the link, and use it wherever. You don't have to use a first chapter. There's a simple button that allows you to download as needed.

For a 50K-word book, what's the turnaround time for the entire project? Differs by each narrator/producer from a month to two months. When a book is done, it typically takes five days to get into stores.

Is there a special process or program that allows authors to set prices? Price is always a point of contention. Audible sets the book prices.



[Laura Marie Altom](#) is a hybrid author of nearly 60 books in three different genres. She's been happily married to her college sweetheart (Go Hogs!) for 29 years and believes their boy/girl twins actively plot to drive her crazy! She is active on all major social media sites.

Discover More About Amazon Independent Publishing

Presenters: David Symonds, General Manager Create Space; Daniel Slater, Principal, Independent Publishing

Reported by Sandra McDonald

The first version of Amazon Kindle went on sale in 2007 and sold out in five and a half hours. Since then, there have been 10 successive iterations bringing better resolution, battery life, storage, size, and other features that deliver not just the advantages of paper but also build on them. As Kindle has grown, so too have options for independent publishing at Amazon. The company's goal, according to David Symonds and Daniel Slater, is to help both authors and readers by making "every book ever written, in any language, in print or out of print, available in 60 seconds and able to fit in the back of your jeans."

Symonds is general manager of CreateSpace, the print publishing program. Slater heads the Independent Publishing division. They anticipate great growth in Amazon publishing for years to come, especially in Kindle, Kindle Unlimited, Prime Reading, and CreateSpace.

Kindle

Currently Kindle serves 190 countries with 14 localized marketplaces, and reaches over half of the world's population. Books are available in 37 languages, with recent expansion into Indic languages that added nearly half a billion potential readers. (Although U.S. authors aren't likely to translate work into Indic languages, Symonds says, those readers often also read English.) Sales data shows that ebook readers read approximately 24 books per year, vs. non-ebook readers at 15 books a year. Women continue to read more than men, with 77 percent vs. 67 percent reading a book in the last year.

The X-ray content enhancement feature introduced in 2011 continues to grow. It augments the reader experience by letting them find people and terms more easily. It can also be used to look up words in the dictionary and translate text; navigate graphics, novels and comics; and listen to music. For example, in an epic fantasy novel, X-ray enables the reader to see and navigate through passages that only contain their favorite characters or places. X-ray also supplements the content with information from sites such as Wikipedia and Shelfari (no internet connection necessary, as the data is downloaded within the digital book). Authors and publishers who wish to utilize X-ray must turn on the feature through their bookshelf and the "Request X-ray" option.

Devices related to Kindle continue to be developed. The Fire tablet provides not just books but also games, video, music, and other media. Amazon Echo and Dot allow for audiobook streaming.

Kindle Unlimited

Since its launch in 2014, Kindle Unlimited has offered unlimited reading and audiobooks with a subscription model that opens up discoverability by lowering financial risk for readers. The subscription model is a familiar one for those customers who already use services such as Spotify,

Netflix, etc. KU is worldwide and offers content in several languages. The average customer spends 30 percent more time reading in the six months after subscribing, and also spends 30 percent more on books (including KU and content outside KU).

In the last year, KU paid over \$221 million to authors based on the number of pages read. Not every book is a good fit for the program, and not every author wants to enter the 90-day Select period. Certain books perform well:

- Books in a series, with Book 1 or 2 in KU,
- Deeper backlist title by an author with a new release, and
- Highly rated but slowly selling titles (perhaps at end of lifecycle or more than one year old).

Symonds and Slater said that other books can also benefit from KU, such as with developing authors, titles where Amazon brings the majority of sales, new titles that need customer reviews, and anytime an author wants to increase discoverability.

Fraud and abuse is a concern at Amazon, especially when it comes to KU and inflated ranks. Authors approaching it in the right way should be rewarded, but those doing it the wrong way should be discovered and stopped. Many systems and teams are tasked with rooting out fraud, both in reactive and proactive ways, and some are manual while others automatic. They are confident that (a) they have the right tools and systems and (b) are the correct degree of paranoid.

In regards to the innovate Page Flip feature, which lets readers riffle through to find any given page, they are aware of the rumor that it reduces KU income. They don't believe that's happening and haven't seen any impact out of the KU fund.

Prime Reading

Launched in October 2016, this program allows Prime subscribers to read free from over 1,000 books, magazines, comic books, singles, and audiobooks on any device. The goal was to open up discovery of books to Amazon's best customers, who might be spending heavily on the platform but not necessarily consuming books. Prime content is curated and frequently refreshed. The title list is currently much smaller than KU, which has more than 1.4 million titles, but the program has pulled in many new readers who haven't been reading books on Amazon.

Print

Amazon continues to see growth of global print sales. Print is still one of the most elegant and efficient way of delivering content, and is highly popular with readers. Although in the past authors had to use CreateSpace to create print books, they are now an option for KDP. Eventually the two programs might merge into one house. Currently they do differ in important ways:

- CreateSpace offers expanded distribution, but KDP does not.
- CreateSpace offers wholesale author and physical proof copies, but that feature is limited to a very few people on KDP right now.
- CreateSpace offers Professional Publishing Services, but KDP does not.

Although authors are keenly interested in a pre-order option for print through KDP, that feature is not available yet.

Additional updates

Authors spoke and Amazon listened. Reporting has been updated, and now available are lifetime reports, real time sales metrics, promotions data, and royalties earned by currency. Authors can also access custom sales and royalty views by marketplace, title, and data range. Authors can also download a single report with worldwide sales.

Meanwhile, KDP authors are also taking advantage of **Amazon Marketing Service** ads. Authors can put in ad bids (for example, \$0.05 per click) and set budget limits (say, \$100) to drive traffic to their titles. These ads are highly targeted, offer budget flexibility, and show up both on the web and on mobile devices.

Also new are **Amazon Charts**, which are reimagined lists of most sold and most read books of the week across all formats. Authors and readers can see what's really being read, what's really being bought or borrowed, and rank by copies sold / pre-ordered. The charts include preview, reviews, share, and buy links.

Author support

KDP University is a YouTube channel featuring dozens of short videos on topics such as keywords, categories, advertising, and more. The **Amazon Author Insights** website takes a deep dive into topics such as author pages, promotional giveaways, Kindle Countdown deals, and more.

Amazon understands that it can be frustrating for authors who must contact separate support desks in different programs. It can be painful to be transferred from a CreateSpace agent to a KDP agent. Currently the representatives are in totally separate groups, but they are committed to enhancing the range of questions they can answer.

In conclusion, both Symonds and Slater hope to implement more and more program improvements for authors across divisions. They bring a deep background in publishing and customer service to their jobs, and are eager for NINC member ideas, such as “verified borrower” for reviews. Some suggestions might not be implemented, but it's good to gather ideas and feedback. Amazon wants authors to continue to gain readers, increase sales and revenue, and tell powerful stories across all platforms.



*Sandra McDonald writes popular award-winning stories about ghosts, spaceships, Navy SEALs, LBGTQA heroes, and romantic adventures. Her first collection, *Diana Comet and Other Improbable Stories*, won a Lambda Literary Award and was a Booklist Editor's Choice. Her Florida Keys novel *Mystery of the Tempest* won a Silver Moonbeam award for children's literature. She served eight years in the US Navy and currently lives in Florida.*

September 26 - September 30, 2018



Join us for *NINC 2018: Craft Your Perfect Career* to discover the latest strategies and insights, from marketing innovations to high-level craft to running your business as smoothly and effectively as possible.

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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 2018: Craft Your Perfect Career

Conference information: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>

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Welcome Packet: http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017_New_Member_Welcome_Packet-public.pdf

Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts.

Find them in the members section of our website, and check often for updates: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/member-freebies-discounts/>

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/>

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- 2018 Conference Promoter
- 2018 Conference Reporter



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

2017 Board of Directors

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

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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.
- 2018 Conference Committee:
 - Conference Director: Laura Hayden
 - Program Director: Julie Ortolon
 - Sponsorship Chair: Rochelle Paige
 - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
 - Registrar: Pam McCutcheon
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- Authors Coalition Reps: Pat Roy & Laura Phillips
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 - Dianne Drake
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Address changes may be made on the website.

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