



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



**novelists,
inc.**

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Contents

- ◆ NINC Membership Update ~ Boyd Craven & Sarah Woodbury
- ◆ Last Chance! NINC Renewal
- ◆ President's Voice ~ Julie Ortolon
- ◆ Help Make the 2018 Conference Great!
- ◆ An Introduction ~ Wayne Stinnett
- ◆ The Most Important Character: Choosing Your Pen Name ~ Patricia Burroughs
- ◆ Hook Your Reader with Your Tagline ~ Barbara Meyers
- ◆ Chatbots ~ Kerry Gardiner
- ◆ Editing an Anthology ~ Mindy Klasky
- ◆ Refilling the Well Part One: The Soundtrack of Your Life ~ Michele Dunaway
- ◆ Creativity: Eight Excuses You Use To Not Create ~ Denise Agnew
- ◆ Advice Column: Romantic Gestures
- ◆ The Mad Scribbler: It's Not All Pleasure ~ Laura Resnick
- ◆ Conference 2018: Craft Your Perfect Career
- ◆ NINC Membership Benefits
- ◆ About NINC

Love getting the newsletter?

**If you haven't renewed,
this is your last issue of *Nink*.**

We'll not only miss you, but you'll miss out on the great stuff NINC has planned for the year.

Follow this link now and log in to renew:

<https://ninc.com/members-only/membership-renewal/>

(P.S.—We know there have been some website glitches with the renewal process. If you have issues renewing, please email admin@ninc.com for help. Thanks to all of you who already renewed!)

President's Voice

By Julie Ortolon



As I begin my year as president of NINC, I'm thinking back to when I first heard about Novelists, Inc. The organization was founded in 1989 by five authors with 100 charter members. I, however, didn't hear about NINC until the late 1990s, when I was an aspiring writer, struggling to land my first contract. The idea that there was a writers' organization, strictly for multi-published, professional fiction writers, made becoming eligible my Holy Grail. I remember the day I finally qualified, compiling the paperwork and mailing it off via snail mail, then waiting eagerly for the approval process. Hearing that I had been approved was cause for celebration. As was the day I received my first copy of *Nink* in the mail. I looked forward to that every month, and always carved out time to sit in a comfy chair and pour over every issue.

That was 17 years ago, and I think it's important for me to remember just how valuable NINC has been to my career. The fact that NINC has membership qualifications allows us to focus on the challenges of being published authors rather than the challenges of becoming a published author. I've watched our members open up and share knowledge with a depth and honesty that's rare in this business. There's no better chance to experience that than at a NINC conference.

If you haven't registered yet, I urge you to join us at the beach this September for four days full of knowledge and camaraderie. And if you know an author who qualifies for NINC but hasn't joined, let them know who we are. What I've learned these past 17 years is that we all achieve more when help each other.

Julie

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/>

Julie Ortolon is a USA Today bestselling author of contemporary romance. First published by Dell Publishing in 2000, she has also written for St. Martin's Press, and Signet Eclipse. Since going indie in 2009, she has hit the Amazon Top 100 several times. One of her greatest joys is helping other authors find success. When not writing, she enjoys traveling the world with family and friends.

Help Make the 2018 NINC Conference Great!

NINC's greatest asset is our wonderful community of wise and generous members. This year's NINC conference features three full days just for NINC members (due to the discontinuation of First Word), so we're trying something new and reaching out to our member experts for help!

Friday and Saturday will be packed with the sort of high-level presentations we've come to expect at a NINC conference. On Saturday, we want to delve more deeply into various subjects with interactive sessions led by panels of NINC members. Panels can be on genre trends, marketing, branding, or anything else that you would find beneficial.

Whether you plan to attend the 2018 conference in person or experience it post-conference by reading the write-ups in the *Nink* newsletter, please share whether you—or a NINC member you know—would be a great match for one or more of the [proposed panel topics](#). To find the topics and nominate yourself or some else, please go [here](#). You must be logged into the NINC website for the link to work.

Members who speak on panels receive discounted conference registration.

We can't wait to see you on the beach in September!

From the President-Elect

An introduction

By Wayne Stinnett



Last year, when I was asked if I'd consider being nominated for NINC president-elect, I wasn't sure what to think. Unlike Julie, I'm a relative newcomer, both to NINC and to writing. I'd been a NINC member for less than a year and only published my first novel in 2013. Since being asked, I've learned all I could about the organization and am still learning. It took a week to decide, and then I agreed.

While I can make no guarantees about the future, I promise that I will approach this the same way I've done with every position I've found myself in: with an open mind and a desire to do what's right and well for everyone concerned. If you know me, you know I'm a man of my word. If you don't, just know that of all the titles I've ever carried, the one I place above all others is Marine. The self-discipline, self-motivation, and morals I developed in the Corps guides what I do in every aspect of my personal and professional life.

If anyone has a question that I might be able to help with, please don't hesitate to contact me, either through NINC, email, or Facebook. I'm a full-time author, so my time is my own; you won't be interrupting. However, my internet is off when I write, but that's only about three hours a day. So, please be patient as the dinosaur types with claws.

The people I've met through NINC have been wonderful and fun to talk with. The leadership and support are awesome, and I'm really looking forward to working with Julie and the board to make 2018 a great year for Novelists, Inc., and its membership.

Semper Fidelis,

Wayne

Wayne Stinnett is an American novelist and Marine Corps Veteran. Between those careers, he's worked as a deckhand, commercial fisherman, and dive master, among other things. He lives in Beaufort, SC, with his wife and the youngest of their four kids.

The Most Important Character You May Ever Create

Choosing your pseudonym

By Patricia Burroughs



When you create a pseudonym, you create a character that appears on book covers, bylines, convention badges, and webpages. When choosing your pen name, don't overlook the seductive and possibly subversive marketing impact of any name you choose, and give this decision the attention and research it deserves.

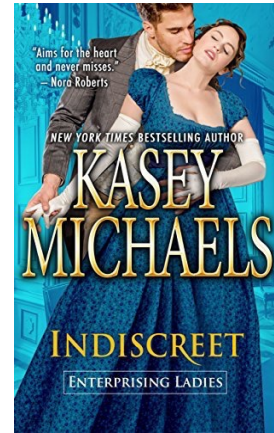
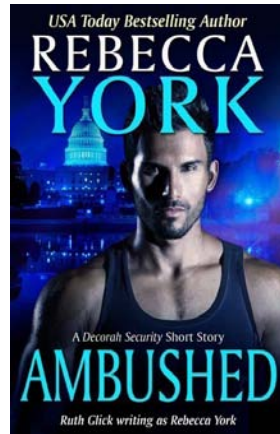
Search any considered name using Amazon, Google, Goodreads, other online tools

- Are there already writers with that name? Writers with the same or similar names have had sales figures get mixed up, RWA memberships switched, and confusion created when they attended the same conferences. Even if the other "you" is dead and her books have been out of print for decades, if her heirs issue her backlists, you could face competition and confusion from an influx of books written by someone else with your byline!
- Is the URL available (wholename.com including firstmiddlelast if that is how you're publishing)?
- Is the name available on the various social media sites and Gmail (or your preferred email provider)? Grab it even if you don't plan to pursue all the social media options. Better to lock it in than have somebody else show up using it.
- While you're doing those searches, are there any unfortunate connotations with the name, even internationally? For example, depending on where you live, the names [John Thomas](#) and [Fanny](#) could prove problematic. You also probably don't want to nab a French surname for your detective that causes [423 million potential readers](#) to burst into giggles.
- Don't get creative with the spelling or it gets difficult to find using search engines or on bookstore sites.

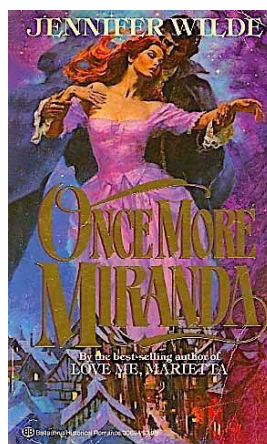
Choose a name that enhances or even establishes your brand

- Does the name lend itself to a logo that can be part of your brand? For example, how does it look in the style of font usually associated with your genre?

- How will the name look on a book? Short names fit on your book covers in a single line if that's your preference, or can be written in large type. Longer names can provide cover artists with lots of opportunity to play with font and design.



- Is it a unique name that stands out from the pack on a page of author names during a search?
- Does the name enhance the mood or style of your genre and writing? What does the name tell the reader when they see it on the cover? Consider [Tom Huff](#), who wrote under several female pseudonyms but was best known as [Jennifer Wilde](#), one of romance's most loved pioneers. Tessa Dare is the pen name of a bestselling historical romance writer. Both chose perfectly branded names for their genre—romantic, feminine first names popular in the age of their writing and surnames that promise a wild and daring read. Consider names as variations on the theme—use a feminine first name and a surname with hints of the alpha male so that even the byline has that age-old conflict and attraction in it.

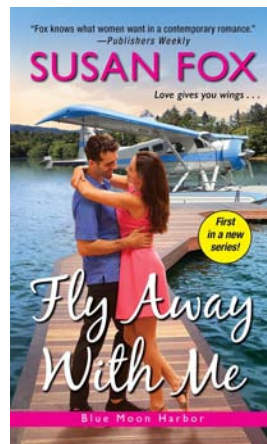


A feminine first name and a surname with hints of the alpha male give you a byline with that age-old conflict and attraction built in.

Branding with multiple pen names

Many authors choose to use multiple pen names, but maintaining several identities can be exhausting. Unless you desire total separation, you might want to keep your names under the broader umbrella of your brand and thus sharing the same primary website.

- Are your pen names similar enough to be linked in readers' minds? This makes it easier for them to find *all* your books—and also to avoid the genres they don't read. For example, [Shelley Idina](#) is also [Adina Senft](#).
- Savanna Fox and Susan Fox are both [Susan Lyons](#). Not only does the same easy surname give a brand that's easier for readers to remember, print editions will all be shelved together under Fox.
- One advantage to using different pseudonyms for different genres is that it gives you the opportunity and the power to create names that are perfect for each individual genre.



Advice for choosing a pseudonym

First, keep it easy: easy to spell, remember, pronounce. Second, make it distinctive or unique. Third, do both at the same time. [Diablo Cody](#), [Sherwood Smith](#), and [Cat Rambo](#) are great examples. Borrow from fictional characters and real people both: Combine a distinctive first name with a short, generic surname. Indiana Jones, Jessica Jones, January Jones, Rashida Jones, etc.

Because new hardcovers in one national chain are shelved by genre, one author wanted a surname that began with A, B, or C to be at the beginning and on eye-level shelves. In paperback or hardcover, the advantage also goes to being shelved near a popular author who shares your readership. Being late in the alphabet often means your books end up on bottom shelves—unless, again, you are close to a popular author.

The days of changing a name that is “too ethnic” are hopefully behind us. Today we have award-winning, best-selling authors like [Sonali Dev](#) and [Nnedi Okorafor](#) proving that ethnic names aren't a publishing detriment and, in fact, can provide successful branding. However, the common advice to keep it easy still has weight. Consider choosing a cultural name that is easy for the reader, but still remains true to you. Dev is not Sonali's surname but part of her maiden name. She kept her cultural identity, which is part of her branding for her Bollywood romances.

It's a personal choice to keep a name. After all, [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](#) didn't feel the need to change her name!

Hell hath no fury like the internet pouncing on people who have misrepresented themselves. Don't attempt to give books about LGBT characters, people of color, and other marginalized voices authenticity with an assumed pen name that makes it seem you are part of the group you are writing about. This is not to say you shouldn't write those stories. Consider [Brad Vance's](#) advice: "These are our lives you're writing about. Don't forget that you're making a profit on someone else's (sometimes very bad) experiences. Fine, good—treat them with respect. But don't masquerade as someone who's had to live through it."

Another thing to consider is a gender-neutral name. There are those who won't buy books in "their genre" that are written by the other sex. Gender-neutral names can range from Pat, Chris, Alex, Bailey, Dakota to Max. Initials are another classic gender-neutral strategy. However one bookseller said that many customers assume the author is female if initials are used, because the vast majority of current authors using initials are female. This can defeat your purpose. On the other hand, authors with initials may be a trope in some genres, like mystery.



Some writers prefer maiden names so that they can maintain an identity that feels real yet isn't easily traced. Another alternative is to use other family names instead, since in today's world of internet and public records a maiden name may not give much protection, especially with children whose internet security questions might include "mother's maiden name?" Some authors who started their careers writing under their legal names regretted it when they ended up divorced and they were forevermore locked into their ex-spouse's name as their identity.

A few final thoughts to creating your pen name:

- Try signing your pen name. Do you like the way it looks? Is it easy for you to write?
- How does your name sound when spoken? Does it have a good rhythm?
- Using your real first name eliminates confusion as you always answer to your fans and other authors because everyone is calling you the same thing.
- Make sure the initials don't spell an unfortunate acronym.
- Numerology, astrology, tarot cards, and even psychic consultations have led authors to their pseudonyms.

- Check out the legalities of using a pseudonym where you live.
- Even if your credit card is in your legal name, you can probably get one with your pseudonym. (Card issuers don't care who you give a card to. You're the one paying the bill.) That way when you're at conferences or in other public situations you never have to use your real name.
- Have your pen names added to your bank account if possible so that you never have trouble cashing checks.

Creating a pen name is a marketing opportunity. This is the time to combine business savvy with practicality and creativity to come up with that perfect name. Or, give yourself a name that ignores all of the advice. This is your character you're crafting, and potentially the most important one you'll ever create.

Award-winning screenwriter and best-selling novelist Patricia Burroughs (aka Pooks) loves reading Pratchett, Aaronovitch, Dunnett, and Heyer. A lifelong Anglophile, she travels the British Isles researching [The Fury Triad](#), the epic YA romantic fantasy that has taken over her life and heart. She and her high-school sweetheart husband are living happily-ever-after in Dallas.

Hook Your Reader with Your Tagline

By Barbara Meyers



You've written your brilliant back cover blurb/book description, but you need something to entice a potential buyer to read it—just a few words above that blurb that will convey the emotional feel or tone of the story. Something to hook those readers before you reel them in. You need a tagline.

A tagline (or hook) uses many of the same guidelines as the back cover blurb: it doesn't give the story away; it's just a few words, less than ten, if at all possible, that will grab a reader's attention for the split second it takes to get them to read further.

Don't confuse taglines with loglines, such as those used in movie descriptions. A tagline is shorter and doesn't give away much about the story, the conflict or the characters. Think high concept "catch phrase" and go from there. Use clever wording or even puns, but make every word count.

Writing a draft of a tagline before you write your book is a good idea. If you can't make a tagline (or even the slightly longer logline) work, you may need to revisit your story idea/plot.

If you are a *New York Times* best-selling author, you may not need a tagline at all. You may use your status in lieu of a line about your book. For example:

Number one *New York Times* best-selling author Lee Child returns with a gripping new powerhouse thriller featuring Jack Reacher, "One of this century's most original, tantalizing pop-fiction heroes." (*The Washington Post*).

Or you may combine your best-selling status with a tagline, such as is done here for a book by author Dean Koontz:

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • A dazzling new series, a pure adrenaline rush, debuts with Jane Hawk, a remarkable heroine certain to become an icon of suspense.

But maybe you're not a best-selling author yet. You still need a compelling tagline.

"I very much need to be dead." *The Silent Corner: A Novel of Suspense* (Jane Hawk) Kindle Edition

If you saw the tagline "I very much need to be dead," would you be intrigued enough to read further into the book description regardless of whether the author carried name recognition or best-seller status?

Another way to go is to offer comparisons to fans of other books, movies or television shows as was done for NINC's own Diana Peterfreund:

Perfect for fans of *The Goonies* and Rick Riordan, *The Forbidden Fortress* is the thrilling sequel to *Omega City*, from acclaimed author Diana Peterfreund. *Omega City: The Forbidden Fortress* Kindle Edition

This 29-word tagline for *What Remains True* by author Janis Thomas reads more like a logline:

"In this mesmerizing drama, one life-altering event catapults a family into turmoil, revealing secrets that may leave them fractured forever ... or bind them together tighter than ever before."

Are you seeing the movie trailer? Hearing that voice-over guy as the scenes flash by on the screen?

What if it said, "One life-altering event fractures a family forever." Or "Once uncovered, secrets can fracture a family forever." Would you be more inclined to read further?

"She gave me her innocence. I gave her a baby."

This tagline for *Accidental Daddy: A Billionaire's Baby Romance* by R.R. Banks certainly meets the 10-word guideline. It also tells the reader exactly what the story is about. But so does the title. This is something else to think about when creating your tagline: *genre*.

Readers of romance novels, especially category romance, are seeking specific kinds of reads and they like to know what they're getting and whether or not it meets their expectations *before they buy*. Which is not to say you can't still be clever with your tagline. Just don't be, perhaps, *too* clever.

A thriller, a mystery, a science fiction novel, will have a very different kind of tagline.

The biggest lie ever told in human history is that prosperity awaits in the stars...
Synthesis Kindle Edition by sci-fi author Kyle Harris.

Although rare, in *Borne: A Novel* by sci-fi author Jeff VanderMeer, a piece of dialogue is used for the tagline:

“Am I a person?” Borne asked me.

“Yes, you are a person,” I told him. “But like a person, you can be a weapon, too.”

Not only is this bit of dialogue longer than the recommended 10-word maximum at 25 words, it may not be especially compelling to readers. A section of dialogue may be a source of inspiration for an excellent tagline, so don't rule it out. Consider if that second line of dialogue were left out. Would less intrigue more?

Also, prior to the tagline for *Borne*, bookish credits appeared (named a most anticipated book by no less than six well-known entities). Consider how important this kind of information is to the readers. In some cases, it might distract from the message you want to send about the book itself, so consider limiting such histories, or placing them more discreetly.

If you're in a position to do something like the following, consider whether there is too much (or redundant) information preceding your tagline:

Curses and Cupcakes: A Cozy Paranormal Mystery (The Happily Everlasting Series Book 6)
Kindle Edition

by Michelle M. Pillow (Author)

NY Times & USA Today Bestselling Author

A Cozy Mystery Paranormal Romantic Comedy

Welcome to Everlasting, Maine, where there's no such thing as normal.

Remember, 10 words or less is ideal to convey the feel or tone of the book such as done here by NINC author Diane Chamberlain for *The Stolen Marriage*:

One mistake, one fateful night, and Tess DeMello's life is changed forever.

Something else to keep in mind is how you might use your book's hook in other social media or create an entirely different hook for that purpose. Romantic suspense author Abbie Roads caught my attention on Facebook for *Saving Mercy* with this:

When the son of a serial killer falls for his father's only surviving victim...

Once she snagged her reader's attention, she followed it up with a gripping excerpt and, of course, an Amazon buy link at the end, where I discovered something else a bit different. Two hooks are used: **He's found her at last** is the phrase above the opening paragraph of the blurb which tells about the hero; **Only to lose her to a nightmare** appears above the second paragraph which touches on those intriguing bits of story that lead to a hit on the buy button. Although these two phrases could have been combined as a one-line hook, breaking them up

and having them appear in bold font above each paragraph may give the reader added incentive to peruse further.

As with creating your book description/back cover blurb, it is helpful to look at what other authors, especially those in your genre have done. You may find a format you like that fits well for your book. Research is one of the best ways to get a clearer idea of how to create your own compelling tagline.

Now go out there and hook those readers!

*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, cross the line between contemporary romance and women's fiction, and often feature a displaced child. Her latest novel is *White Roses in Winter*.*

Chatbots

Must-have marketing tool or gimmick?

By Kerry Gardiner

You've heard of them. You've probably used them. But what exactly are they, and should you have one?

In simple terms, a chatbot is something that automates responses on a live-chat platform (Facebook Messenger for the purposes of this article).

But how do Chatbots work?

Facebook opened its Messenger platform to developers in late 2016, allowing them to customize the platform and create the first "bots." Unless you had coding skills, however, this customization was out of reach for most users, until those same developers designed easy-to-use bot creation platforms for those who wanted the functionality, but lacked the skills. There are many such platforms in existence today such as www.manychat.com or www.chatfuel.com.

Now, through the use of one of these platforms, you can connect a Messenger bot to your author page with just a few clicks. Once connected, you are then able to automate responses to anyone who contacts your page through Messenger. When someone contacts you in this way, they become a subscriber, much in the same way a reader becomes a subscriber to your email list.

Why would you want to use a Chatbot?

The first and most obvious reason is that it frees up your time. Common questions such as "what is the next book in the series?" or "when is your next release available for sale?" or "how do I join your ARC team?" can all be answered by your bot in real time. Great for you, and great for your readers who get an immediate response to their questions. Readers are consumers, and in the age of the internet, consumers expect that businesses respond in minutes, not hours.

You can also use bots to educate your readers about your books and help them decide which one they might enjoy. A great example of this is found on Mark Dawson's page. Mark wanted a bot that would not only guide readers through his catalogue, but by simply stating which book they are currently reading, the Messenger bot provides them with information on the next in the series. You can take a look at the one I created for him here: <https://www.facebook.com/markdawsonauthor>.

You can also give your bot a personality, one that suits your books, or it could embody one of your main characters. I created such a bot for Katie MacAlister. You can try it here: <https://www.facebook.com/katie.mac.minions>.

As you can see, Messenger bots are endlessly customizable to fit your brand.

It doesn't end there though. Chatbots are not just a fancy FAQ answering service, but they are also an incredible marketing tool.

Once a reader is subscribed to your Messenger bot, you are then able to contact them. You send emails to readers on your email list; you send broadcasts to people on your Messenger list. Unlike email lists though, message open rates with Messenger subscribers are consistently above 85 percent. To put that in perspective, if you have an email list of 10,000 subscribers, and an open rate of 40 percent (being generous), you will reach 4000 of those subscribers. In Messenger, a broadcast to the same number of subscribers will reach 8500 of them. The click-through rates are much higher too.

Why are open rates so high compared to email?

There are a couple of reasons. First is the "too much of a good thing" scenario. Whether you are for or against it, the "free book" model is widely used and never more so than over the past 12 months. Platforms have emerged that allow readers to get free books in exchange for their email address. A popular way of generating a huge number of email sign-ups has been to put together a box set, put the set on one of these platforms, and generate hundreds or thousands of sign-ups. Unfortunately, that means that the reader is bombarded with emails from hundreds of authors.

The result has been that readers are increasingly reluctant to give out their email addresses and, when they do, they either use a throwaway email address, or they then just don't see yours among the flood of other author emails. They've gone "inbox blind."

Which brings me to the second reason. There are over one billion active monthly users on Facebook Messenger. Chances are you are too. So, ask yourself, when was the last time you ignored a chat message that popped up in your notifications? The simple answer is you don't.

A reader might ignore their inbox for days—but they'll get your Messenger message immediately, either on their desktop or on their mobile device. And they'll open it.

Is it better than email then?

No. For one simple reason. No one can take an email address away from you (unless they unsubscribe). Subscribers to your Messenger bot are there because Facebook allows it. If at any time in the future Facebook decides to move the goalposts, that could change. It is unlikely, though, as Facebook is investing in developing its Messenger platform. All the major platforms are, so whether we like it or not, Messenger bots are here to stay. It's up to us to make sure that we don't get left behind.

Isn't it "spammy?"

This question raises its head every time the word "bot" is mentioned. As authors, we all have negative associations with the term. Thankfully, Facebook has some strict guidelines in place to ensure that their users can't be spammed—they don't want them driven off the platform. Contact with your Messenger chatbot is initiated by the reader, not the other way around, and they must expressly subscribe to receive any future messages.

I run a book marketing company, www.bookbotbob.com (as featured by Jane Friedman, Bryan Cohen, and RWA). It is a fully chatbot-based platform where readers can subscribe to receive daily free or bargain books via Facebook Messenger. Readers love it because they don't have to give out their email address to get their books. Not only that, but they enjoy the interaction. It feels more personal. If at any point the messages become annoying, they can simply pause them for a while, or unsubscribe with one easy word: stop.

Conclusion

Messenger bots are not gimmicks. Facebook, Apple and Google are investing staggering amounts of money in development, and that demonstrates clearly that bots are here to stay. Whether you want to use them just to provide a service to your readers or to actively market your books, every author should have one or face not having a presence on a platform that is growing at an incredible rate.

Kerry Gardiner is an author of crime fiction, the owner of www.bookbotbob.com and a provider of chatbot training for authors. Bookbotbob has been featured by Jane Friedman, Bryan Cohen, and RWA. She has created chatbots for many authors, including Mark Dawson and Katie MacAlister. Her Messenger bot training is included in Mark Dawson's Ads for Authors course, and is also available separately at www.messengermarketingforauthors.com. Kerry is contactable at support@bookbotbob.com.

Donning A New Hat

Editing an anthology

By Mindy Klasky



Authors have a variety of ways to collaborate with other authors: writing stories for inclusion in an anthology, creating a single volume in a shared world venture, participating in a boxed set, joining a promotional bundle, etc. By failing to make the leap to editing anthologies, though, many authors miss out on a classic form of collaboration.

I edited my first anthology, *Nevertheless, She Persisted*, last summer. The lessons I learned should help all authors add anthology editing to their plans for career advancement.

The creative spark

Every good anthology begins with a single, high-concept idea. The best topics are broad enough for individual authors to create interesting perspectives but narrow enough for readers to recognize the theme. Ideally, the concept can be expressed in a pithy title. At the very least, the theme should be clear from an explicit subtitle.

After identifying an appropriate theme, the editor should determine the universe of potential authors. Some anthologies are open to members of a single organization, such as Novelists, Inc. Others are publicized widely and open to all authors. Some editors reach out to a small group of familiar authors with proven track records. Others dedicate a specific number of story slots to previously unpublished authors.

At this early stage, the editor must set hard deadlines. If the anthology consists entirely or partially of previously unpublished stories, authors need time to write. Therefore, editors should set a submission deadline at least one month (and possibly longer) in the future. At the same time, the editor should determine how long it will take to read the stories, along with reasonable timeframes for drafting revisions, incorporating edits, formatting stories, and publishing the finished work. (If the anthology is designed to commemorate a specific

anniversary, the editor should work backwards from that date, ensuring that all deadlines are workable.)

Early communication is an opportunity for the editor to broadcast a management style. Some editors treat authors as team members, focusing on the most collaborative aspects of the anthology, using “we” language, encouraging input, etc. Other editors work in a more “top-down” style, maintaining a greater distance from contributors and declining to open discussions for communal consideration.

Cold, hard organization

Editors face their first organizational hurdle immediately after announcing their intended anthology. Some authors will submit stories within 24 hours (even if published guidelines request authors to wait.) Therefore, a tracking spreadsheet becomes the editor’s best friend. An appropriately robust spreadsheet includes the following columns:

- Author First Name
- Author Last Name
- Short Story Name
- Short Story Length
- Short Story Genre (or sub-genre, or other thematic organizing structure)
- Date Story Received
- Date Acceptance or Rejection Sent
- Date Edit Letter Sent
- Date Edited Story Received
- Date Story Determined Final
- Date Contract (and other legal documents, such as W-9 Forms) Sent
- Date Signed Contract (and other legal documents) Received
- Date Request Sent for Authors’ Back Matter
- Date Back Matter Received

The editor must also keep story files in some organized fashion. Files may be kept in a word processing program (such as Word), in a manuscript organizer (such as Scrivener), or in a text-formatting program (such as Vellum.) Many editors find it convenient to work in stages—for example, using Word’s Track Changes features to provide editorial notes, then using Scrivener’s manuscript organizing features to order stories in the anthology, and Vellum’s functionality to create uploadable files.

Choosing and editing the stories

Editors will read each submitted story once, determining whether it fits into the anthology. Editors then read accepted stories additional times, including passes for major structural changes, minor changes to sentence structure and grammar, and final changes for polishing.

Editors might apply a single style manual, such as *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Alternatively, an editor might create a specific set of rules, taking into consideration American

and Commonwealth differences in spelling and punctuation as well as the editor's personal preference on usage and grammar. Ideally, style sheets can be distributed to authors prior to their submission deadline.

Copy editors and proofreaders should receive a master style sheet prior to their work on the anthology. As edits are finalized, anthology editors working in a collaborative mode must function as a bridge between copy editors and proofreaders on one side and authors on the other side.

Organizing the stories

Anthologies containing a relatively large number of stories might benefit from being broken into parts, grouping stories by themes, tropes, time periods, or other similarities.

Conventional wisdom states that the strongest story is placed first in the volume. The second-strongest story is last. Weaker stories are "buried" in the middle.

Editors should strive for variation in story length, first-, second- and third-person point of view, tone, and mood. Nevertheless, variety may be challenging. An anthology's theme might cry out for stories to be ordered chronologically. Diplomacy might require a "Big Name Author's" story to take precedence at the front of the volume. Certain stories might "speak to" each other, providing valuable comparisons or contrasts, even if their points of view or length are similar.

Having determined the story order, an editor turns to the front matter. Most editors will write a short introduction to the anthology, explaining their inspiration for the work and pointing out how they selected some or all of the stories. Some editors also include notes before each story, explaining how those works fit the theme. (Some editors ask their authors to write such notes.)

Back matter is important as well. The editor may include authors' biographies and (possibly) lists of their related works. Some anthologies cry out for a "call to action"—a closing essay that directs readers to take some specific action or provides guidance about other sources for information about the topic.

Guiding publicity and promotion

Anthology editors should provide clear signals to their authors about publicity and promotion of the finished work. Publication dates should be set far in advance and communicated clearly. Launch parties and other group promotions should be scheduled. Required marketing efforts should be defined early, and voluntary efforts should be encouraged, with clear examples wherever possible.

Finally, there are multiple arrangements for editors to be paid. Sometimes, they negotiate a deal with a publisher for an advance-plus-royalty or a royalty-only deal. Some editors self-publish, taking payment as a portion of the proceeds as the anthology sells to readers. Editors might expect publishers to pay authors directly, or they might pay authors out of their own proceeds, either on an advance-plus-royalty model or a royalties-only plan. (Some anthologies donate all proceeds to charity, in part to avoid bookkeeping issues.)

While anthologies have long been popular in some genres (science fiction and fantasy, for

example), they are less common in other genres (such as romance and mystery.) With the organizational tools outlined above, every author can consider editing a meaningful, successful anthology.

USA Today bestselling author Mindy Klasky learned to read when her parents shoved a book in her hands and told her she could travel anywhere through stories. As a writer, Mindy has traveled through various genres, including cozy paranormal, hot contemporary romance, and traditional fantasy. Her Intellectual Property Bootcamp for Writers online course provides simple, straightforward legal explanations for authors.

Refilling the Well

Part one: the soundtrack of your life

By Michele Dunaway



As the New Year begins, and with it the annual highs and lows, I lasted all of five days before experiencing one of those things that suck the wind from your sails. I advise one of the nation's best high school yearbooks, a consistent award-winner in the scholastic journalism arena. In December, we learned we hadn't placed in a competition that, for the first time since 2011, we really felt we had a chance. But, no.

Then, Jan. 5, I found a returned package in my teacher mailbox—one I'd mailed in July 2017—containing the yearbook we'd sent to New York City. Our entry never made it, and somehow it took six months for USPS to return our book. Who knows why, but the fact is, because our book never got there, we never were a contender. We simply thought others were better, when the fact was, we weren't in the race at all, and through no fault of our own, as when we'd mailed that yearbook, we'd mailed another one for a different contest—to the same place—and all was well. Received with no issues and won the award we expected it to win.

Sometimes life is like that. For one reason or another, life hands us lemons and it's far too late to make lemonade. We simply have a sour taste left in our mouth, and our brain begins repeating the negative messages we hear, such as our not being good enough. We have books that don't sell the way we want. Worse, in this day and age, no one returns emails. No answer simply means no one wants us. Or maybe it simply didn't get there. Or got lost. We won't ever know.

In times like this, I turn to music to remind myself to change the soundtrack in my head. It's more than repeating Daniel Powter's one-hit-wonder, [Bad Day](#). It's believing in ourselves even in the darkest times. So as most resolutions seem to falter by the second week of February, here are some songs to pick you up when you need them. And like the words in our books matter, the words in these songs matter too. The links mostly go to the official videos, but concentrate on the words, not the videos.

Eye of the Tiger, Survivor, 1982

Yes, this one's a cliché. Used in *Rocky III*, the rock song "Eye of the Tiger" has one of the

most recognizable openings. When you hear it, you immediately know the song. As for the words, the song uses words like “Rising up, straight to the top/Had the guts, got the glory/Went the distance, now I'm not gonna stop/Just a man and his will to survive” to indicate that life is about perseverance. If you want an instrumental version by the renowned violinist David Garrett, you can find his 2014 performance here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kj2QU1YCYfE>

Roar, Katy Perry, 2013

Katy Perry pays homage to the Survivor song in an ultimate pop pick-up for a bad day; this song says whatever person or forces are going to hold you down will never be permanent: “You held me down, but I got up/Already brushing off the dust/You hear my voice, you hear that sound/Like thunder, gonna shake the ground... I got the eye of the tiger, a fighter/Dancing through the fire/‘Cause I am a champion/ And you’re gonna hear me roar.”

Speaking of being a champion, check out Fall Out Boy’s [Centuries](#) (2014) and The Script’s [Hall of Fame](#) (2012).

Superheroes, The Script, 2014

The Script is an Irish band that’s about 17 years old. I listen to this alternative rock song whenever life seems to beat me down. It came on the radio, for instance, Jan. 5, on the drive home right after I’d discovered our yearbook wasn’t entered. Lyrics like “When you’ve been fighting for it all your life/You’ve been working every day and night/That’s how a superhero learns to fly/(Every day, every hour, turn that pain into power)” make you feel like you can get through it. Who doesn’t want to be a superhero?

If you like being a superhero, you’ll also like being bulletproof, so check out David Guetta’s [Titanium](#) (2011), featuring Sia.

And since superheroes fight no matter how many times they get knocked down, check out Rachel Platten’s [Fight Song](#) (2015).

Stand, Rascal Flatts, 2010

This song is a stalwart in my students’ song project presentations, and if one of them doesn’t show it, I’ll present it at the end of the unit. Not only do I love the simile “Life’s like a novel with the end ripped out,” but I love the message of “You get mad, you get strong/Wipe your hands, shake it off/Then you stand,” which reminds us that no matter what, we get stronger and stand every time we get knocked down.

If You’re Going Through Hell, Rodney Atkins, 2011

This country song tells you to keep going when things get bad, including so bad you want to drown your sorrows “in a bottle of Jim Beam.” This song is fast-paced, full of twang and fun, and tells you that “If you’re going through Hell/Keep on going, don’t slow down/If you’re scared, don’t show it/You might get out/Before the devil even knows you’re there.”

For another country song about when things are long and hard, listen to Miley Cyrus’s power ballad, [The Climb](#) (2009) from *Hannah Montana: The Movie*. This song, back when Miley

was still with Disney, tells us “There’s always going to be another mountain” so it’s about keeping your faith on the climb.

For pop songs with similar themes, check out Sara Bareillis’s [Brave](#) (2013) about believing in yourself and being brave; Natasha Bedingfield’s [Unwritten](#) (2009), saying you need to “Live your life with arms wide open/Today is where your book begins”; and Kelly Clarkson’s [Breakaway](#) (2009), which you may recognize from *The Princess Diaries II*, with its lyrics of “I’ll spread my wings and I’ll learn how to fly/I’ll do what it takes ‘til I touch the sky/ And I’ll make a wish/ Take a chance/Make a change/ And breakaway.”

[Stuck in a Moment, U2, 2000](#)

Written about the suicide of INXS frontman Michael Hutchence, and the conversation Bono wishes he could have had with him, this alternative rock song is the ultimate reminder that whatever bad moment in which you find yourself will pass. As I tell my students when I show them this video, it’s about finding and being happy with the person you are when you are alone, especially after the glory of fame passes, and that you need to reach out to people when the darkness comes. My favorite lines are at the end: “And if the night runs over/ And if the day won’t last/ And if your way should falter/ Along the stony pass it’s just a moment/ This time will pass.” Full of imagery and deeper meanings, it’s one of my top five songs.

[Satisfied, Richard Marx, 1989](#)

This song is my mantra. It debuted when I was 24, teaching in my first job, and writing romance novels in notebooks and dreaming of being published. Everyone seemed “tolerant” of my hobby, and this song reminded me that if I put in enough hard work, I’d make it.

[Whatever it Takes, Imagine Dragons, 2017](#)

Currently my favorite song, this ditty reminds me that I’m going to keep having to do “whatever it takes” to continue to succeed, especially as the publishing world changes and I’m going to have to navigate it. I also like that frontman Dan Reynolds isn’t afraid to take on issues that are important to him, such as how his church feels about the LGBT community, the subject of his hit [Believer](#).

Full disclosure, I love the entirety of the *Evolve* CD. It’s in my car as I type this, bought also for the song [Thunder](#), with its futuristic sounds that make you either love or hate it because you can’t get it out of your head. The song is about being a success: “Now I’m smiling from the stage while/ You were clapping in the nose bleeds.” Also check out [On Top of the World](#) as well, which is from a previous CD.

And for a country version of sweet satisfaction over everyone who never believed in you, listen to Toby Keith’s 1999 [How Do You Like Me Now](#), his breakout hit. When his label, Mercury, kept rejecting his earlier songs, Keith bought back his album, took it elsewhere and released this song, about the one no one expected to achieve his dreams.

[The Walker, Fitz and the Tantrums, 2013](#)

This alternative hit is all about being your own person. Henry David Thoreau wrote in

Walden's conclusion the following: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." Fitz and the Tantrums, inspired by a man they saw walking in LA, wrote this upbeat alternative rock song alluding to this idea that when they sing, "I walk to the sound of my own drum." Despite the criticism of "They say I'm a walking dreamer, baby/If I stop they would make the show," the band says they're going to do it their way.

I'll include 1969's [My Way](#) by Frank Sinatra here too, although recent [criticism](#) has called this a terrible song that reinforces white patriarchy. Despite this, because of the idea of sticking to your guns from an artistic standpoint and its 2016 [cover](#) in the movie *Sing*, we'll leave it in the queue.

[Bigger than My Body, John Mayer, 2009](#)

This pop/rock song is one of my favorites as it reminds me that "Someday I'll fly/Someday I'll soar/Someday I'll be/So damn much more/'Cause I'm bigger than my body/Gives me credit for." The imagery is phenomenal in the song about being grounded because your wings have been clipped, but that you don't give up.

I'm also partial to [Learning to Fly](#) (1987) by Pink Floyd, which uses David Gilmour's passion for flying airplanes as a metaphor for taking on challenges; and Switchfoot's 2003 [Meant to Live](#), the band's first major label debut, which asks if mice and men have second tries.

[Good to Be Alive, Andy Grammer, 2015](#)

I love this pop song not only for its upbeat bubblyness, but also for its message: "I kept throwing on coal trynta make that fire burn/sometimes you gotta get scars to get what you deserve." It reminds me to keep going.

And finally, we'll toss in Green Day's 2009 [Good Riddance](#), where Billie Joe Armstrong sings, "I hope you had the time of your life." The "punk" song that is more of an acoustic ballad, which was played in the series finale of *Seinfeld*, can be [interpreted many different ways](#), but despite this, it reminds me that this is my life, and no matter what gets thrown at me, in the end, I choose how I react to it.

PS—I left out Smash Mouth's [All Star](#) and Katy Perry's [Firework](#) simply because as an English teacher the literal words of something that's awesome for a moment before fizzling out is imagery I find awkward. But metaphorically both are pretty cool songs telling you to be yourself, to go for the gold and show them what you're worth, and Smash Mouth's video has Ben Stiller in it.

In addition to writing over 26+ romance novels for traditional New York houses, Nink Editor [Michele Dunaway](#) credits her 28 years of teaching as one way she stays up to date with the younger generation, and loves how her students bring a variety of music her way and how they make the day seem better when the writing life isn't going the way she wants it.

Creativity

Eight excuses you use to not create

By Denise A. Agnew



"You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say."

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

We've all heard writers make excuses for not writing, and we've all given excuses for why we don't write. While the excuses we make for not creating may be vastly different than someone else's, many of the motivations may be the same. Let's look at some of these motivations and the possible beliefs and truths behind them.

Excuse One: I don't have the time.

This excuse is common. It sometimes means:

- I'm not feeling creative right at this moment.
- I'm not investing in myself.
- I won't make the time for what's truly important to me and what I want.
- Everyone else comes first.

If you look at this list and see that even one of the items resonates with you, it may be time to take a serious assessment of why you believe these thoughts are true. Have you overscheduled yourself so significantly you have no time to think? Are you denying yourself enjoyment? Do you believe you aren't worthy enough to invest in yourself?

Excuse Two: Writing is frivolous.

This excuse may really mean:

- I'm afraid of what other people are going to say or think about my writing.
- I'm waiting until other people approve of my writing.
- I'm not contributing anything meaningful to society.

Very few writers can go through life without encountering disapproval. Most people don't understand the process or challenges of being a writer. Frequently they have ideas about the writing life and career that are completely false. Many times the comments they make have more to do with their own fears and self-esteem than your writing. Creators must learn to create regardless of what anyone else thinks. Recognize that art is a tremendous value to society, and you are a part of that effort.

Excuse Three: I'll consider it for later.

This excuse sometimes means:

- I'll wait for a magical time when everything has lined up right.
- The kids are taking all my time.
- The husband is taking all my time.
- Social media demands all my time.
- My friends need all my time.

Working through this list and assessing if any of these things are true in your life is worth it. Your creativity is worth it.

Excuse Four: I'm not sure I want to write.

This excuse might mean:

- I'd rather pursue another creative avenue than isn't writing.
- Perfectionism is strong within me. I have to get it right on the first draft.
- I'm temporarily confused and need to think.

It is a legitimate choice not to write. Perhaps you'd rather paint, draw, dance, act, or any other number of things to express creativity. However, if it's that you're worried that your first draft isn't perfect, consider working toward removing the idea that a perfect first draft should be your goal. The freedom of "making a mess" with a first draft can boost your creativity tenfold and reduce stress.

Excuse Five: My writing isn't going anywhere.

The belief behind this might be:

- I'll never be as big a success as some other writers.

What makes people believe they aren't a success or won't ever be a success is multipronged. Success must be defined in individual terms rather than accepting success based on societal expectations.

Excuse Six: What I say/create doesn't matter.

The belief behind this may be:

- I don't trust myself.
- I have no talent.

As a creator, your ideas are as legitimate as any other. In order to create, you must trust yourself to start writing and take that leap of faith. Worrying about so-called talent won't get you anywhere. A legitimate willingness and openness to learning your craft is good, but beating yourself up about what qualifies as talent and what doesn't won't help.

Excuse Seven: I'm afraid to dig too deeply into my creativity. I get obsessed. I'm too vulnerable.

The belief behind this may be:

- I'm afraid of the wildness/messiness/uncertainty that creativity requires.
- I'm afraid of the feelings creativity engenders in me.
- I want to say scary things and those things worry me.
- I want to say things that aren't politically correct, or things that are.
- I want to deny what I'm really feeling and don't want to look too deeply.

Some writers push themselves to write so many hours it harms their health and/or relationships. Most people do not go to this length. However, there are other things that could be driving you to feel out of control. Allowing the truth to come out in writing, even in fiction, can feel scary. Yet it can also prove to be some of the greatest fiction you've ever done.

Excuse Eight: Wow, this sounds like too much work.

The belief or truth behind this may be:

- I'm exhausted.
- I don't want to put in the work.

If you are exhausted, then you must address your physical needs and health. What do you physically need to remain healthy? What stressors need to be removed or reduced? Do you need to address these problems with a medical professional? Creating is hard work with no guarantee of return. If you think creating is too much work, you'll need to consider the core reason you wanted to write in the first place.

As you can see many of these points are intricately entwined. Your lifelong creativity is worth the effort to delve into all of these areas and examine if any of them are holding you back in your writing career.

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 15th of the following month.



Happy Valentine's Day! In keeping with the spirit of the month of love and romance, we asked a few authors to share what either they or their characters have done (or someone in their life has done for them) that was romantic. Feel free to usurp the ideas for the Fourteenth or any day!

One sweet thing that comes to mind from real life is one time I was headed to work when I still worked at a magazine in Nashville. I opened the door to my car to find a little plush puppy sitting there in the driver's seat holding a Three Musketeers bar. My husband had put it there after I'd gone to bed so I'd find it the next morning.

—[Trish Milburn](#)

In my novel *Enshrine*, the heroine is undergoing chemotherapy and she's at the point where her hair is falling out and she's struggling with shaving her head. The hero in the book, Bruno, finds her in the bathroom, holding the clippers, unable to do it herself. He takes the clippers from her hands and gently cuts away her locks. Before he finishes, he shaves his head so she doesn't feel alone. The entire time he reminds her of how beautiful she is no matter what and that she has the power and strength to face whatever comes her way, including cancer.

—[Chelle Bliss](#)

In my novel *White Roses in Winter*, Jason, who has little money, gives Kerrie six white roses and out-of-season strawberries as a Christmas gift. Since her purchase of these items caused their first fight, it has great significance to her, and although he thinks it isn't much, it's proof to her how much he cares.

—[Barbara Meyers](#)

In general, though Hubby and I have been married 30 years, I find the most romance in small moments. Sharing laughs while cooking together. Inside jokes. Reminiscing. He did recently wow me with a surprise trip to Mexico for my 50th! Swoon! I surprised him with a big-screen gaming TV for his birthday. Is it wrong that I secretly bought that for myself? Think about it... The more time he spends gaming, the more writing, reading, and Bravo TV time for me! LOL!

—[Laura Marie Altom](#)

Going to an orchard or farm, picking some peaches, apples, oranges, strawberries, and raspberries, and treating one's sweetheart to the best. I feel like a hero when I give my dh a bowl of sliced fresh peaches.

—[Vella Munn](#)

In *Been Searching for You*, Alex does all kinds of uber romantic grand gestures, but my favorite is when he takes a temporary guest lecturer job in Oxford, he leaves her a box of envelopes for any situation stored inside an expensive white-and-red striped decorative box. On a single sheet in Alex's handwriting he tells the heroine that he wants her to consider each one of these envelopes a work of love, and underneath in neat rows, are two-dozen multicolored envelopes with the words "Open me when..." for times such as when "you need a laugh" and other moods and situations.

—[Nicole Evelina](#)

March question: In keeping with the "Soundtrack of Your Life" article, what is your #1 or favorite current song that gets you going, or gets you through a bad time, or makes you happy? Provide the artist and song title (so it can be hyperlinked) with your reason using less than 100 words. Email answers with your name and website to newsletter@ninc.com by **March 15th**.

The Mad Scribbler

It's not all pleasure

By Laura Resnick



"It is not all pleasure, this exploration."

—David Livingstone, shortly before succumbing to malaria and dysentery, 1873

A few years ago, I was surprised to stumble across numerous nasty comments made about me—highly personal in nature—on a total stranger's blog:

"Resnick is large, awkward and now 50 years old. She is done, and has probably had virtually zero SMV for the past two decades," stated one anonymous poster. (SMV is shorthand for Sexual Market Value.)

Other visitors to the blog suggested that I needed "a good hard screw by a man." It was agreed I was not a "slut," because I was so old and "ugly" that I had "zero ability to excite sexual desire in a man." And the blogger hosting these comments accused me of threatening to kill him. (In fact, I had never heard of him and was unaware of his existence until months after he first began making this claim.)

As it happens, I wasn't even the main subject of the discussion. The blogger and his visitors were primarily enraged at best-selling science fiction author John Scalzi, whom this blogger has been trolling for years.

I often read Scalzi's popular blog, [Whatever](#). So do many other people; in fact, Scalzi has sold several books that are compilations of his articulate blog essays. Well, one day, months earlier, Scalzi had written (instead of an articulate essay) a brief, dismissive post about men obsessed with self-defining as alpha males. Among a few dozen replies there, I left one indicating that I'd wind up killing an alpha male if I had to live with one. (I was thinking of fictional archetypes; not everyone we enjoy reading about is someone we could live with.) It was not a deep or serious discussion, and I didn't think about it again.

Now I was discovering that, a few days after that, online trolls read that blog post on *Whatever*, saw my comment, and started posting angry replies. The discussion, which had halted days earlier, bloated to more than 400 posts. Many comments were aimed at me, trying to goad

me into an argument—without success, since I had no idea at the time that this was going on.

After Scalzi tired of their trolling and closed the comments, these commenters took their discussion to this other blog where—months later—I saw them asserting that Laura Resnick “is the classic cock-blocker, channeling her frustrations into preventing more nubile, fitter women from outbreeding her.”

As you may imagine, coming across these comments disturbed me. I have grown more and more accustomed to seeing total strangers trash talk me; but I still recall how appalled I was that first time. However, it was *just* talk, and it never went any farther than that. None of those creeps tried to contact me via email, no one wrote to my home address or phoned me, and they never threatened me.

Nor has anyone else, as it happens.

Which means that I have been very fortunate. Online bad behavior, after all, gets much worse than just some random strangers making creepy comments.

For example, while working on this column, I took a break and logged on to Twitter—where I immediately saw an author I know asking for help or advice, because a known troll had just Tweeted to the Secret Service that the author is a danger to the US president.

Another writer on Twitter pointed out that this troll “is a serial harasser and cyberstalker I’ve reported to @TwitterSupport multiple times. He’s only going to keep escalating. They always do.”

The author promptly received specific advice from Twitter users who have been SWATted (someone intentionally makes a false police report that gets a SWAT team sent to your location; [innocent people have been shot this way](#)); doxxed (someone makes your private information public, such as home address, personal phone number, Social Security number, etc.); cyberstalked (using the internet and other electronic means to stalk and harass someone); or trolled (persistent online behavior intended to upset and provoke angry response).

So, yeah, a lot of people are dealing with this type of problem, up close and personal. Including plenty of writers.

The additional issue for women, of course, is that bad behavior online is often sexualized and predatory. As award-winning sf/f author Cathrynne M. Valente has written, “The fact is, to be a woman online is to eventually be threatened with rape and death. On a long enough timeline, the chances of this not occurring drop to zero.”

There are many examples of this. The one that still haunts me was when, due to a national vendor’s distribution error, the print edition of *Discount Armageddon*, a new novel by popular sf/f author Seanan McGuire, was released a couple of weeks early; the ebook edition stayed on schedule and was not available until its official release date. A segment of the readership (and/or non-reading trolls who just wanted a piece of the action) reacted with hysterical aggression, declaring that the author and publisher (neither of whom had any control over the error) were deliberately trying to force readers to buy the print edition. Based on this rationale (so to speak), angry “fans” wrote public posts in which they described McGuire as a “whore” and “slut;” people expressed a wish that she would be raped and murdered; and some people contacted her directly to threaten her with that fate.

Seanan McGuire and I write in the same genre and have the same publisher. So that’s an

example that underlines for me how easily I (or you) could become the target of similar behavior enacted for similarly ludicrous reasons.

Which is indeed what game designer Zoe Quinn discovered several years ago: people online will threaten you for the dumbest imaginable—or *imagined*—reasons.

Quinn is one of several people targeted by Gamergate, a fringe movement in the video gaming world that emerged several years ago. Harassment of Quinn commenced after a bad break-up with an abusive man; he subsequently made false accusations against her, and his claims convinced an online community of like-minded trolls in the gaming community that Quinn deserved to be attacked.

Other Gamergate victims include (but are certainly not limited to) game designer Brianna Wu, founder of the independent video game studio Giant Spacekat, and media critic Anita Sarkeesian, founder of Feminist Frequency (a website that analyzes portrayals of women in popular culture).

All three of these women, at various points, had to vacate their homes and deal extensively with law enforcement due to the escalating personal threats to their safety as Gamergaters cyberstalked, doxxed, and harassed them. People around them were threatened, too. For example, Sarkeesian's public appearances were dogged by warnings from terrorists who vowed to kill audiences with bombs and bullets. Companies interviewing Quinn's boyfriend as a prospective employee were flooded with threatening messages. Wu received anonymous messages describing explicit plans to mutilate her husband.

Quinn detailed her experiences in her 2017 book, which I recently read and recommend, *Crash Override: How Gamergate (Nearly) Destroyed My Life, and How We Can Win the Fight Against Online Hate*. In 2015, she and Sarkeesian spoke at the United Nations about online harassment and how to combat it. Brianna Wu is currently running for Congress, having learned through her experiences as a Gamergate target how much we need lawmakers who understand technology.

NINC members also learned a few months ago from novelist Patricia Burroughs how easily our websites can be hacked. In her October *Nink* article "Stay Calm and Practice Safe WordPress" (Vol. 28. No. 10), Burroughs recounted spending six weeks, hundreds of dollars, and many hours on the phone to regain control of her own website by getting it scrubbed free of "all the malware, spam-links, viruses, etc., that the lovely hackers left hidden like candy Easter eggs." Burroughs' article offered tips and tools for protecting your website, and they're worth pursuing.

After reading *Crash Override*, I've also decided to take steps to protect myself better, in general, in my online activities. Even having followed the Gamergate controversy when it was happening, I was still astounded when reading Quinn's book how thoroughly online harassers invaded her life. She offers a number of safety recommendations: some of them as simple as using a different password for every site and account.

Zoe Quinn's experiences as a cyberstalkers' target led her to set up [Crash Override](#), a non-profit network that serves as "a crisis helpline, advocacy group and resource center for people who are experiencing online abuse." The website includes a free [Resource Center](#) of tools, recommendations, and further reading for online safety and security. Anita Sarkeesian's

Feminist Frequency also has an excellent [Online Safety Guide](#) full of specific information, tips, and resources.

It's not a given that everyone who talks trash about you online will leave it at that. There may be people who decide to take it farther than some random chatter. As a writer, your name and your work are out there in the online world; if you're active in social media, then *you* are out there, too. So it's worth taking some sensible precautions, because this online world is not all pleasure.

[Laura Resnick](#) is the author of novels, short stories, articles, and essays.

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.

As the publishing world continues to evolve, so must the careers of successful novelists. Whether your business model is being hands-on with all aspects of your career or partnering with a team to allow you to focus on writing, authors have more options than ever.

In September 2018, come discover the latest tools, maximize your publishing relationships, hone effective strategies, exploit opportunities, and rocket your career to the next level!

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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/>

Ninlink, our private discussion group: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/NINCLINK/info>

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/>

Registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/2018-member-registration/>

Conference Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Ninc2018/>

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Newsletter

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

Submit a letter to the editor: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/submit-letter-to-editor/>

Newsletter archives: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/news-archive/>

Best of Nink in paperback: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/best-of-nink/>

Website (you must be logged in to access these services)

Legal Fund: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/legal-fund/>

Pro Services Directory: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/pro-services-directory/>

Sample Letters: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/sample-letters/>

Articles & Links: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/>

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

2018 Board of Directors

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

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2018 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 Directors: Julie Ortolon & Erica Ridley
 - Sponsorship Chair: Rochelle Paige
 - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
 - Registrar: Pam McCutcheon
 - Onsite Coordinator: Hannah McBride
- Authors Coalition Reps: Laura Resnick & Laura Phillips
- Social Media Committee:
 - Dianne Drake
 - Sue Phillips
 - Laura Hayden (conference communications)
- Membership Committee
 - Chair: Sarah Woodbury
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Central Coordinator

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin
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Address changes may be made on the website.

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