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**novelists,  
inc.**

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# *Nink* April 2018

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# President's Voice

*By Julie Ortolon*



Ah, Spring! A time of renewal. Many of us have spent the winter hibernating in our writing caves. Or with our heads down, trying to get through an epic To Do List of non-writing tasks. As we emerge, this is a good time to think about balance. Yes, it feels great to be on top of things with our careers, but when spring arrives, I like to enjoy the sunshine, spend time grilling on the patio, walk my dog, or go for a hike.

I think these are just as important to our careers as keeping our nose to the grindstone. In the past few years, I've watched the demands put on authors grow and grow. It can get overwhelming, and I've seen more than one case of total burnout: burnout so bad that authors stop writing. Sure, sometimes, after a long, successful career, it's good to step away and find other creative outlets. But to stop writing because you've worked yourself so hard that the well is dry? That's tough.

There really is something to be said about refilling the well. As we move into warmer days, I plan to take some time to plant flowers in my garden and enjoy spring. I hope you can find your own way to enjoy this season of renewal.

*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/>

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*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.*

# Refilling the Well

## Part Three: Taking Care of Yourself

*By Michele Dunaway*



*Editor's Note: Part One: The Soundtrack of Your Life can be found in the February 2018 issue and Part Two: Pushing Through the Shadow can be found in the March 2018 issue of Nink.*

Being a writer isn't easy. I only thought it was. When I was at the 2017 NINC conference last fall, I realized I wasn't alone. I wasn't the only one whose agent had told them that they'd be "better off with someone more enthusiastic." I wasn't the only one whose traditional career had died, been revived, only to die again as it waited for another resurrection. That adage of "it's easier to find a new job when you have one" is true for writers as well: it's easier to find a new publisher or agent when you aren't without one.

So after a while, all the songs in the world, and all the pushing through the shadows, can wear on us. This article doesn't pretend to have any exact answers, but hopefully you might just find a nugget of what you need.

### Surviving career glitches

"I've always been a fighter," [Laura Marie Altom](#), a hybrid author of nearly 60 books, said. "I might go into hibernation for a couple of days to lick my wounds, but I'm determined to get back up. I'm not sure if it's technically a strategy, but I'm too stubborn to quit."

That cliché of attitude being everything is true. So we must figure out the best approach to our problem—that other cliché of "when one door closes, find a window" fits here.

"Every time a publishing door closes, I don't walk through the first door I see," [Trish Milburn](#), author of over 40 romances, said. "I check to see if that door leads somewhere I'm interested in going. Because while I need to make money, I don't want to end up hating my job. Been there. Done that."

As each of us is different, we have to figure out what works best for us. Altom has had three agents, and she's had her third agent "forever." When she changed agents, it was when

she felt a need to take back the control. Milburn has had one agent since the beginning, who still handles contracts and looks for new opportunities. But for both Altom and Milburn, they are doing more and more indie publishing.

“Having this much control over every aspect of my books is amazing,” Altom said.

To control her career, [Nicole Evelina](#), a historical and romantic comedy romance author, left her agent in 2015, describing it as the hardest decision she ever had to make.

“After trying to get another one and having interest but no offers, I decided to go indie,” Evelina said. “Going indie seriously changed my life. It gave me the chance to get books that my previous agent couldn’t sell in front of readers.” These sales to readers increased her confidence, led her to winning more than 20 awards, and showed her that her books did have an audience and that people liked her writing, “despite all the rejections (she) had racked up.”

So an inference could be that the more you as an author have control over your career, the more you can survive the career glitches.

“Diversify your career,” Evelina said. “Don’t rely solely on your books/ebooks. Use your audio rights, try to get foreign translations, look into merchandising, even on a small scale. Speak at conferences and events, look into teaching, write articles for blogs and magazines. Anything you can do to get your name out there will help your career, especially if your writing is stuck or you have a book on submission and feel like you are in limbo. And the biggest thing is to never give up, and never stop writing.”

## **Taking care of your mental health**

As we work through the nuances of our careers, we have to remember to take care of ourselves. Writing can be lonely and depressing—my day job as a teacher means I see people and have face-to-face interactions. Writing can also be stressful as we rework a scene that won’t smooth out or beat our characters into submission when they go off track. Many of us are also super hard on ourselves.

“It’s important to realize you’re human and the only person who expects perfection is you,” Evelina said. “I was once advised to imagine what I would expect from my best friend if whatever I was going through happened to them. Every single time I cut them way more slack than I would myself—which is a lesson to treat myself mentally and emotionally the way I would treat others.”

Evelina has also tried meditation, which she said helped with her mind and her writing, and she takes breaks from social media.

Altom also takes breaks. “I’ve been listening a lot more to my body,” she said. “If I’m not ‘feeling’ a project or that characters aren’t ‘talking’ to me, I step away from the computer and give myself permission to craft or do dishes or listen to a podcast or play Candy Crush. In the past, I’d have sat at my desk for hours—even if the words didn’t come. Then I’d beat myself up for not making my word count. I’m finally accepting the fact that I’m not sure where the stories inside of me come from, and that’s okay. They come when they come.”

Listening to your body is also something Milburn does. “I know mindfulness is a big buzz word, but it’s become increasingly important to me, especially over the past year as I’ve struggled with some panic attacks. So I’ve become more mindful of things that contribute to

anxiety (not enough sleep, caffeine) and I find time for things I enjoy each day (going for a walk, watching TV, and reading for pleasure). And when I do feel a wave of anxiety, I pause and take slow, deep breaths and tell myself it is just anxiety and it will pass."

Also, don't be afraid to seek outside help.

"See a therapist if you can," [Simone Elkeles](#) said. "That definitely helps. I'm also trying diet so my health doesn't deteriorate. I also try to make time to be supportive with friends and laugh. Don't go see depressing movies!"

Finding a strategy that works for you is important. Check out Denise Agnew's December 2017 Creativity Column for *Nink*.

## **Paying it forward**

We all write differently—some of us have best friends who are writers and strong critique groups. Others are independent with our friends being outside of our writing lives. However, one thing I've realized over my 19-year writing career is that no matter where I am in my career, someone has been in a similar situation. We are stronger together and stronger when we help each other. I am published because Marie Ferrarella and Sandra Marton answered emails from a dumb, newbie writer who loved their books, and their responses allowed me to request an editor appointment with the brand-new Harlequin American editor, whose interest perked up when I said I was there for her. Paying it forward doesn't have to be a big undertaking.

"It can be as simple as answering a question," Milburn said. "For instance, if you see a writer post a question on social media about information she's looking for and you can help, take the time to answer. Write articles or blog posts filled with great useful information. If you are the kind of person who likes the idea of being a more hands-on mentor for a newer writer, by all means do it."

"Give social media shout outs," Altom said. "Help to brainstorm everything from titles to plots. Listen when a writer friend needs to vent."

Evelina says that writers should spread the word, teach and volunteer. "Share and review books you love," she said. "Take someone under your wing in a formal or informal mentorship. Offer online classes. Get involved in your genre organizations. Volunteer to serve on boards."

One way to also pay it forward is to simply share life struggles.

"I always try to encourage my writer friends and let them know I'm here for them when it comes to sharing life struggles, plot/writing struggles, and career blips" Elkeles said. "I was surprised after talking to a bunch of my writer friends to learn that we've all, at one point or another, been mentally depleted in this career and wondered if we should give up. With a little cheerleading and support, we can help others when they're down. Text your fellow writers to check in with them every once in a while. Offer to promote their releases on social media to help sales if you can. We're all in this together."

However, in paying it forward, don't forget that you need to still take care of your mental health first.

"Don't overcommit yourself so that you end up feeling resentful of the time and effort paying it forward requires," Milburn said. "I've learned that if I'm going to do anything that requires a long-term, continuing commitment I better like it and look forward to doing it and

not just feel it's something else on my scary to-do list. The key is to pay it forward, but find out the best way for you to do that effectively and that brings you happiness."

## Upbeat authors

I wanted to end this article and this series on an upbeat note, so I'm going to tell you about one of Milburn's continuing commitments that she says largely runs itself—a Facebook group she created called [Upbeat Authors](#). She got the idea after reading an article about Mindy Klasky's Book Quote Wednesday group.

"At the time, I was so overwhelmed with all the negative news and hate I saw every time I got online that I found I just felt down and awful all the time. So I thought that I needed to put something positive out there into the world to combat all the negative, to remind others that there are still good people in the world and positive messages to uplift others."

Not wanting to be the only voice, the group has grown to over 200 authors. Each Monday, the group posts on social media and blogs on a certain topic, such as a favorite positivity quote or the best way to pamper yourself.

"We use #UpbeatAuthors so we can easily find and share each other's posts," Milburn said. "The main objective is spreading positivity, but my hope is that all the participating authors have secondary benefits of being discovered by readers."

Proof we can survive these career glitches, we can take care of our mental health, and we can, when it's time, pay it forward as others have done for us.

After all, as Elkeles said, "Always cheer on your fellow authors for their success even when you're struggling. When it's your time, they'll be there cheering you on."

We can do this. Happy writing.

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*With thanks to the authors who graciously answered my questions for this article:*

[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.

[Simone Elkeles](#) is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author of 10 teen romances. Her book *Perfect Chemistry* was the RWA 2010 RITA winner in the Young Adult category and her books *Leaving Paradise* and *Rules of Attraction* were RITA finalists in 2008 and 2011, respectively.

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



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

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*Nink Editor [Michele Dunaway](#) volunteered for this job as a way to pay it forward and do something she loves. She's gotten back so much more than she's put into it, and she's thankful to all those who answer her endless questions and to her production crew for making her look good and for making the job easy. She also encourages you to spread the joy by sharing your expertise by writing an article for Nink.*

# Knife Fighting 101 For Writers

*By Jerry Spradlin*



## **History of knives**

Even before recorded history, knives have been an integral part of the human experience. They've been utilized for killing, preparing, and eating prey as well as used as a weapon and as a general-purpose tool.

Knives preceded the evolvement of spoons and forks as tableware, and were traditionally sharp and personally carried, affording spontaneous access. Use as an eating utensil frequently resulted in personal injury, especially since wine was a prime source of hydration. Needless to say, knives were also used as weapons, frequently resulting in drunken bloody violence at the dinner table.

During the Middle Ages, forks began gaining in popularity, reducing need for a pointed knife during meal times.

In the interest of public safety, in 1669, King Louis XIV of France decreed all pointed knives on the street, or used at the dinner table, must have points ground off, resulting in a blunt or rounded contour point. However, the standardized stainless steel variety dinner knives, most familiar to us, were not introduced until around the 20th century.

## **Knives are everywhere**

In many, if not most, residential kitchens there is a proud display of knives positioned in a knife block on the food prep counter for quick draw access during meal preparation. However, this also makes these knives readily accessible for crimes of passion or the convenience of burglars and/or home invaders. If food-prep knives are not so obviously available, it is a reasonable assumption that the knives reside in a kitchen drawer.

Tradespeople (carpeting/tile installers, electricians, repair technicians, carpenters) carry knives, as well as anybody who routinely opens boxes (box cutters were made famous by the 9/11 terrorist airplane hijackers).

## **Combative use of edged weapons**

Availability is one reason that knives are popular as weapons. Beyond crimes of passion, common kitchen and work knives are becoming increasingly popular as weapons of choice in loner terrorist attacks throughout the world.

A study of combative knives must encompass all edged weapons, including swords, tomahawks, axes, and now even credit cards with sharpened edges that can be used to slash arteries.

During the pioneering days of U.S. western expansion, when combat was often up close and personal, tomahawks and/or knives were weapons of preference compared to an early pistol amongst wilderness pioneers.

Recalling that—to a trained fighter—everything is a weapon, screwdrivers and ice picks are also edged weapons. YouTube remains a source of information—albeit disgusting—as accessing training videos for combative use of screwdrivers, hammers, and axes is readily available, including for children. If you have high tolerance for disgust, search "Screwdrivers as weapons YouTube videos" for weapons testing/training by adolescents. Screwdrivers, ice picks, axes, and hammers are gory sensational terrorizing tools for the writer's tool box (pun intended).

In the United States, knives are second only to gun use in recorded crimes. Separating deaths attributed to rifles, including so-called assault rifles, knife-related deaths are five times greater than all rifle-related deaths.

## **Professional knife fighting culture**

The professional knife fighting culture is alive and flourishing and has been with us since the beginning of time. I believe we must credit the Philippines and Indonesia as the homelands of multi-generational professional knife fighting skills and regimented training. I studied with the late Herman Suwanda, Grand Master of Mande Muda Pecak Silat (internet researchable), whose only formal education was fighting from a young age, training daylight to dark, until adulthood. His father supported seven separate households as a professional pirate (still a viable profession in Indonesia). The late Pendekar Paul de Thouars, Grand Master of Bukti Negara Pencak, once shared with me that the government of Indonesia had once attempted to ban the practice of the Art of Pencak, but practitioners disguised practice in their Indonesian "flower dance" (search: "Pencak Flower Dance Videos").

My first instructor told me that the the only way to defend yourself against a trained knife fighter at close range, even if caught empty handed, is to be a trained knife fighter capable of stripping your opponent's weapon.

## **Knife fighting as a writing technique**

For a writer wishing to exploit violence for plot terror, knives or edged weapons are much more terrifying than firearms. And juries are historically more repulsed by knives and the accompanying graphic horror of butchered flesh oozing a large quantity of blood.

Knife fighting brings high drama, fear, and terror to a story. Although filmed in 1972, virtually all that have seen the first Godfather film can recall the scene where Luca Brasi's hand was pinned to the bar as he was garroted to death. As demonstrated in this scene, combative

use of a knife is graphic and memorable.

Knives have a psychological advantage in demonstrating power in lethal or non-lethal persuasion crimes, such as information extraction or rape. The sight of one's own blood, even in a small quantity, is intimidating.

Knives are increasingly used as the weapon of choice in seemingly spontaneous terror attacks because they are terrifying, readily available, and ideally suited for effective close quarters attacks and ideally suited to multiple targets/opponents.

Virtually anybody can pull a trigger. Pulling a trigger does not require physical strength, and arguably considerably less skill than trained knife combat. Knife fighting is close range and personal.

Knife fighting description can be prolonged and detailed, sucking the reader into your story with their faces and minds contorted in terror. Knife fighting plots can be in the context of any time period, any location, and any genre—be it fantasy, crime, war, romantic crimes of passion, adventure such as Jason Bourne, James Bond, *La Femme Nikita*, or the role played by Jennifer Garner in the TV series *Alias*.

### **So, why would a professional combatant choose a knife as a weapon?**

Knives are quiet, readily available, cost less and lack serial number complications, rendering them disposable. However, to be effective, knives require more training than guns, and the use of knives requires confidence, zero fear of intimacy with opponent, and no fear of blood or gore.

Knives can be used against holstered firearms, which is why "Surviving Edged Weapons" is a component of police training. Dan Inosanto, student of Bruce Lee, and premier martial arts master of multiple Asian knife fighting arts disciplines, produced multiple training videos for law enforcement. Google Dan Inosanto's YouTube video series titled *Surviving Edged Weapons*. The main message is that at a distance of 21 feet or less, a trained knife fighter enjoys an offensive advantage over an opponent with a holstered firearm.

### **Types of knives**

We could write a set of encyclopedias discussing the different types of knives such as folding, fixed blade, switch blade, OTF (Out The Front) switch blade, ballistic knives (that shoot detached blade as a spring actuated projectile), Bali-Song (butterfly) knives—and the list goes on with blade patterns and styles as varied as their makers and countries of origin.

For the purpose of this article, let us focus on four special types of knives that may help your reading audience get the point of your story:

#### **1. Improvised**

Knives can be fashioned out of eyeglass frames, especially as a quick-draw knife that virtually always survives security scrutiny. Eyeglass knives will be made by sharpening the edges of the portion resting on ears, and these weapons can be drawn in a forward stroke to slash the opponent's face, and/or can be sharpened on the end of the curvature behind the ear to be used as a puncture weapon to the opponent's eye or temple.



## 2. Delta Darts

U.S. Delta Special Forces developed these weapons. Made of Zytel plastic and a triangular-shaped blade (to assure structural strength), these come to a point designed for strong penetration ability and provide a textured round, positive grip even if blood soaked. These weapons are similar in appearance to an ink pen, but longer. They are not electro-magnetically detectable, can be easily concealed in lapels, or taped to forearms or calves for concealment and easy access, and ideally suited to penetrate the temporal lobe, kidneys—especially soft tissue such as the perineum (because it is filled with blood vessels and cannot be tied off to prevent rapid blood loss). Delta Darts are also strong enough to penetrate any part of the body, including chest penetration to the heart. Your character could also wear an inverted sheath for his Delta Darts, which would be worn from a neck chain to facilitate a quick draw; your character would reach under an untucked shirt and pull directly down to draw.



Delta Dart

## 3. Tactical Pens

Another type of knife with ready purchase access is the "Tactical Ink Pen," (aka Self Defense Pen or Survival Pen). In addition to functioning as a refillable ink pen, like the Delta Dart, this weapon is capable of penetrating the temporal lobe from the ink pen end of the cylinder, and the reverse end of the cylinder is frequently shaped for striking the skull or being used as a glass breaker, possibly for emergency exit if trapped in a vehicle. These weapons may also include an LED flashlight function. This weapon is socially acceptable to carry in a shirt pocket, purpose concealed in plain sight, ideally positioned for quick draw accessibility, or in many situations your character may be posed writing with weapon in hand.



Tactical Ink Pen

#### 4. Machetes

Said to be the weapon of choice for the MS13 transnational gang boasting over 20,000 U.S. members (and 170,000 globally), a number in contention with Chinese Triad organizations, MS13 is known to recruit members as young as the fifth grade, and many/most murders are committed by minors. MS13 is notorious for death by torture/mutilation as acts of retribution that bolster the feared reputation as “the gang that gangs fear.” Search: “MS13 Weapons of Choice”

Knives are the weapons a writer can take anywhere—from prehistoric fight for food, to international spies, to contemporary urban gang warfare, to space fantasy.

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*By day, [Jerry Spradlin](#) is a consultant and writer for the imported auto parts distribution trade. By night, he is a lifelong student of combative arts, both hand to hand and with weapons. (Photos by: Emily Blomer. Hand model: Lauren Blomer.)*

# Concrete Steps to Creativity

## Discover your negative belief points

*By Denise A. Agnew*



Remember what it feels like when your creative juices are flowing. You're rolling along and the sensation is so fantastic it's better than a slice of cake. When creativity is working well, you feel like you're on top of the world. Yet, when you're not writing consistently, or when you're not rolling along, negative feelings can start, initiating a downward spiral that makes it that much harder to create.

Few people take time to notice how their current thoughts influence their creative ability. While it is impossible to stay positive every minute of the day, the amount of negativity you introduce into your thoughts will directly impact your mood.

Maybe you start to get anxious. Angry. Depressed. The variety of reactions can be far and wide. What if I told you that many times it isn't the outside world that is making your creative journey difficult? Often what you're thinking about and how you're reacting to it, or how you feel about your writing can mean the difference between writing one day or not, or having success or frustrations.

What are some of the most frequent negative statements and/or excuses I've heard writers parrot?

- I'm not writing quickly enough.
- Maybe I've just lost my creativity.
- That author doesn't deserve all those great reviews. Their writing is awful.
- That writer didn't deserve such a huge advance.
- XYZ author's method of writing is better than mine.
- I'm never going to be as good a writer as XYZ or I'm not as good as XYZ writer.
- I should outline before I write.
- I should not outline before I write.
- If I was smart I could figure this out by myself.
- I'm not smart enough to do this writing thing.

- I'm not smart enough to write outside of the genre I've been writing for years, even if I am dying to write in a different genre.
- I'm too afraid to write a historical (or another genre).
- I'm not writing because it's too hard.
- My family, job, health is keeping me from creating.
- Other people's opinions are keeping me from writing.
- I don't have any time to write.
- I'm a failure, or I will fail.
- The first draft must be perfect.
- Someday I'll write.

See yourself in any of those statements? Creative people can spend as much time thinking of ways not to create as they can actually creating. While not everyone's life is the same, and the issue is complex, you can take concrete steps to identify the thoughts and beliefs in your life that are impacting and sabotaging your creative journey.

### Countering the negative

One of the first steps to countering the negative is journaling. Grab a journal or start one dedicated to this particular journey. Designate a good time to write in it a little each day. Evening could be a good time because you've had all day to percolate in your own thoughts. Make a note if you have experienced negative thoughts about your creativity during the day and what those thoughts were. Your negative thoughts don't have to be specifically about writing. They could be about the barking dog next door. Really reflect and write down the negative thoughts or beliefs you had that day.

Once you've discovered the negative thoughts/beliefs, you can work on countering them with a more constructive outlook. Using the examples I gave of negative thoughts above, here are some positive statements you could use.

- I'm not writing quickly enough.

*Counter: I'm writing at the perfect speed for this project.*

- Maybe I've just lost my creativity.

*Counter: I can discover my creativity again.*

- That author doesn't deserve all those great reviews. Their writing is awful.

*Counter: Other authors' careers are none of my business. My writing career is the only one I need to be concerned about.*

- That author didn't deserve such a huge advance.

*Counter: See the last counter. Lather, rinse, and repeat.*



•XYZ author's method of writing is better than mine.

*Counter: My writing methods are unique to me.*

•I'm never going to be as good a writer as XYZ or I'm not as good as XYZ writer.

*Counter: My writing improves with every project.*

•I should outline before I write.

*Counter: I will outline if it keeps me creative.*

•I should not outline before I write.

*Counter: I won't outline if it stifles my creativity.*

•If I was smart I could figure this out by myself.

*Counter: I'm intelligent and will find the best solution for this project.*

•I'm not smart enough to do this writing thing at all.

*Counter: If writing makes me happy, it's beneficial to me, therefore I will do it.*

•I'm not smart enough to write outside of the genre I've been writing for years, even if I am dying to write in a different genre.

*Counter: I will try something new and see if it feels exciting and fuels my creativity.*

•I'm too afraid to write a historical (or another genre).

*Counter: I'm brave enough to try something new.*

•I'm not writing because it's too hard.

*Counter: Writing comes easier when I think of it as play and not just work.*

•My family, job, health is keeping me from creating.

*Counter: My creativity is important to my overall well-being, so I will find ways to create.*

•Other people's opinions are keeping me from writing.

*Counter: Other people's opinions have no influence over my ability to create.*

•I don't have time to write.

*Counter: Creating is beneficial to my well-being and makes me happy; therefore, I will make time to create.*

•I'm a failure, or I will fail.

*Counter: Creating makes me happy, so I will do it regardless of outcome.*

- The first draft must be perfect.

*Counter: First drafts are for play and experimentation, so there is no need for perfection.*

- Someday I'll write.

*Counter: Because creating is beneficial to me and makes me happy, I'll create now.*

Spend some time tonight with your negative thoughts and find positive thoughts that will increase your creativity. More than likely, if you keep up the effort to dump the negativity that keeps you from creating, you will see benefits in short order.

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*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](http://www.deniseagnew.com) and [www.creativepencoaching.com](http://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.*



**Question: Now that we're in April, how do you get back on track to reach your goal when you find you've slipped from the plan?**

This is what I do when I get off track with writing, exercise, eating healthy, or anything else: I give myself a pass. Life is messy. Stuff happens. It's time to start again. Which could mean revising the plan if it isn't working. I don't waste time and energy on guilt or regret, because those emotions lead to an endless spiral of negativity, and who needs that? Every day is a new day and a new opportunity to move forward. It took me years of classes, seminars, and hard work to let go of the negativity and understand that I can start again, and what a gift to myself.

—[Ann Roth](#)

I just take a deep breath and hit "reset." I don't beat myself up about it (too much) and focus on what actions I can take to move forward.

—[Dara Girard](#)

I set a new goal.

—Barbara Keiler (w/a [Judith Arnold](#))

Sign on our fridge: "Violet is level six. Start where you stand." Translation: "The past is meaningless. It's what you do next that counts."

—M.L. "[Matt](#)" [Buchman](#)

Have to remember that not everyone is built for daily writing. So I don't feel guilty about it anymore. Accept the fact that I can only do what I can do, and start today instead of putting it off until tomorrow. Don't let people who aren't wired like me tell me what's best for my brain, no matter how sure they are it will work for me.

—Becca Syme (w/a [R.L. Syme](#))

When I find I'm slipping away from meeting goals and deadlines, I go back to the basics. Word count over email. Daily goal setting and evaluation. And sometimes, it's because of the mental clutter. Too many things on my mind and my to-do list. To fix this, I focus on getting one thing off my list, then another. Completing even small tasks can give me momentum. I have a question on my white board at the day job, DOES IT GET ME CLOSER TO MY MOUNTAIN? If the answer is no, I don't do it.

—[Lynn Cahoon](#)

When I've fallen badly off the writing wagon, I get back on by setting a REALLY low bar: 100 words/day for it to count as a writing day. (Stars on a calendar work nicely for me as rewards. It's quite satisfying to see them accumulating in neat rows!) The main goal is to get to the page every single day. Then the words start mounting up again, partly because it's hard to STOP at 100 words.

—[Brenda Hiatt](#)

I like to call it a Write-cation. I take a weekend and hole up in a hotel. Since I'm paying to be there, and I need to justify the cost, I find myself writing like crazy! I set a goal of 50 pages. I've done this alone and with an author friend who had the same motivation and goals!

—[Heather Burch](#)

This might not sound like writing advice but it works brilliantly for me. I do the 5:2 semi-fasting diet for a day here and there. After one day of 500 calories, my brain and body are much happier and able to cope with whatever is needed. My body gets sluggish sitting at a computer. I go for all veggies and berries, with a little very low fat cheese for my 500 calories. The day after my brain is always clear as a bell. Worth a try if all else fails, perhaps.

—[Anna Jacobs](#)

I immediately break open my Wunderlist and Bullet Journal and mind dump everything that's distracting me, tackling the few easy, non-time consuming projects, then get back to it.

—[J.T. Ellison](#)

I go back to my to-do list and pick one thing, usually whatever's next and make myself focus and stick with it until I finish it.

—[Barbara Meyers](#)

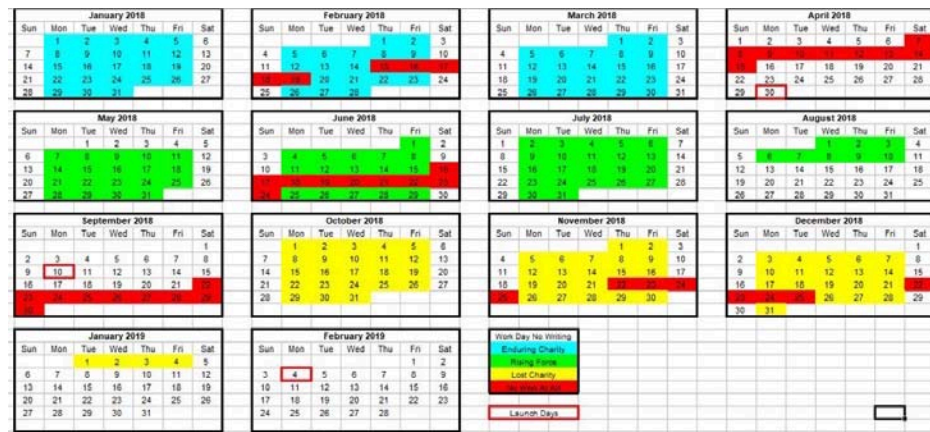


If my plan has slipped, which by the way happens way more often than it should, I re-purpose my goal by shifting deadlines around in order to get back on track. Keep moving forward. I read somewhere that, "The most successful people in the world slip up on their goals too. What separates them isn't their willpower or motivation, it's their ability to get back on track quickly."

—Lois Lavrisa

I rarely slip from my plan, because I keep my writing schedule very conservative. I only write on weekdays, and take time off between books, during summer, and on holidays. With only 188 writing days on my 2018 schedule, if I fall behind, it's simply a matter of picking up the slack on the weekends, until caught up. If there are days that you know you won't be writing, your schedule can't include those days. The key is a realistic conservative schedule.

—Wayne Stinnett



**May 2018 question:** What is your number one go-to promotion and what advice would you give to someone wanting to use it? Email answers with your name and website to [newsletter@ninc.com](mailto:newsletter@ninc.com) by April 15th.

# The Art of the Cover

## Commissioning Your Own Original Cover Art

### Part two: Contract terms

By M.C.A. Hogarth



Congratulations! You've found yourself a cover artist! Now that you've followed the steps outlined in Part One of this topic (see March 2018 issue of *Nink*), it's time to close the deal and manage the process. Let's start with the meat of the matter: the contract. I've duplicated for you the contract I use. I pieced it together based on samples and on contracts I've received both as an artist and an author. You are welcome to use it as-is, or hodgepodge it together with other things you've found. But let's take it clause by clause.

#### *Independent Contractor Agreement — Book Cover Design*

*Purpose of Contract: The Artist agrees to create one (1) Custom Book Cover Design suitable for the Client, satisfactory to contracted party, and to deliver finished cover designs in digital image files of high enough quality to be used as a digital and print cover (defined as at least 300 dpi at a size of 6"x9"), printed on related print goods, and for web page display after being paid in full for the cover.*

This first clause gives exact specifics, including size. If you want a wraparound, a 6"x9" piece isn't going to serve you. If you're working with a designer, get the specifications from them.

*Time Schedule: The Artist shall commence work upon the effective date of this Contract and shall complete the WORK including all phases under this Contract by \_\_\_\_\_. The effective date of the Contract is determined to be the date that both the Artist and Client have signed this Contract. Such time for completion may be extended by the joint agreement of the parties to the extent the Artist actually incurs delays in the design, fabrication, delivery and/or installation of the Work due to circumstances unforeseen by the Artist at the time of the signing of this Contract. A 5% penalty to the remaining payment will be assessed for each month the work remains undelivered.*

This clause provides deadlines, so complete it with a date both you and the artist agree is reasonable. Once you sign the contract, they have until that date to finish the piece (unless some act of God prevents them), because for the author's protection there's a penalty clause for being late: that last sentence.

*Payment Schedule: The Client will deliver the full payment of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Artist in three installments: 1/3rd after contract signing, 1/3rd after approval of the sketch, and 1/3rd on delivery. Payment for finished work is due within thirty (30) days of delivery. The Client's right to use the work is conditioned upon receipt of payment, and upon Client's compliance with the terms of this agreement. A two percent (2%) monthly service charge will be billed against late payment.*

The payment schedule clause is protection for both author and artist. If one of you vanishes, at least some of the payment will have crossed the transom. Plus, it helps with cash flow issues, by spacing out the payments. I prefer thirds: once on signing, to positively engage the artist; once after the sketch, to give the artist a reason to work toward that touchpoint aggressively; and the final third after receipt of the finished piece. As you can see, there's a nod there for the artist: if they can get dinged for not delivering on time, so can we. Fair's fair!

*Billing Procedures: The Artist shall submit invoices to Client via electronic mail. Such invoices shall be deemed received within one (1) hour of transmission, and shall be sent to Client at: \_\_\_\_\_.*

Fill in your email address here (or if you prefer snail mail, you can re-write this clause). I like requesting invoices in the contract because too many artists don't invoice, and that makes it tedious to do expense tracking.

*Cancellation and Kill Fees: Cancellation fees are due based on the amount of work completed. Fifty percent (50%) of the final fee is due within 30 days of notification that for any reason the job is canceled or postponed before the final stage. One hundred percent (100%) of the total fee is due despite cancellation or postponement of the job if the art has been completed. Upon cancellation or kill, all rights to the art revert to the Artist and all original art must be returned, including sketches, comps, or other preliminary materials.*

This is an artist protection clause. Cancellation and kill fees are standard in good contracting relationships and ensure that the contractor is paid for the work they do even if the client (that's us) flakes on them. (As an aside, this also gives you a graceful out if you're hating how the relationship is going, or how the sketches are turning out.) You can mess with the percentages in this one if you want, but I like promising generously.

*Sketch Approval: The Artist will deliver a sketch (including color) based on the Client's requirements for approval. Client may either accept the sketch as is, request changes to the design, or reject the design completely and ask for a new version. Client may request up to a total of 3*

*sketches. Additional sketches will incur a charge of \$50 each. Once a Client approves the sketch, only minor revisions will be allowed and no refunds will be granted.*

If you're going to have problems with a cover, catching them at the sketch stage is imperative. Make sure you get the color rough, not just the line sketch, so you can get a real feel for where the artist's going to go with the thing. This clause gives you the right to ask for three such designs before it starts charging, because asking the artist to do a thousand versions is bad for you both. If you need more than three, this artist probably isn't going to work and you're wasting time. (Besides, if you want more than three, the artist won't want you as a client again—so give them leeway to make choices based on their visual expertise.)

*Ownership: Upon receipt of full payment in the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (for custom designs), copyrights for the one (1) completed cover(s) will transfer to the Client. The Artist grants the Client the right to use the new cover design in all media useful for his/her business and waives the right to any future royalties associated with the Client's books, which are the intellectual property of the Client. The Artist, however, retains the right to display the new Cover Image and Client's name, the name(s) of his/her book(s), and his/her website address for testimonial and promotional purposes on the Artist's website(s) and in any printed marketing endeavors.*

This clause transfers the copyrights over to you so you can use them for your purposes, while also granting the artist the right to show off the cover for portfolio/advertising their services. Importantly, this clause makes it plain that the artist has no right to royalties—some artists think this is a thing. It is not and never should be a thing, and saying so expressly is good.

*Originality: The Artist affirms that the Cover Design is original and that the Artist owns the rights granted under this agreement, and that the rights granted do not conflict with any other agreement. The Client agrees that any material provided the Artist to be used in the design does not violate the copyright/trademark of any other entity.*

Covering our tails, we require the artist to warrant they're not stealing or appropriating this image and claiming it's new.

*Attribution: If the new cover(s) are displayed on the Client's website(s) or in other media, the Artist requests a text link posted somewhere on the Client's website, or associated media outlets, directing viewers to the Artist's website denoting the Artist as the Cover Artist. The Artist may post a testimonial(s) from the Client on the Artist's website, or other media outlets, preferably with a link back to the Client's website. The Artist will also have his/her name and associated media link(s) appear on the copyright page of all books, paper or electronic, for which the Artist's Cover Art appears.*

This clause requires us to do proper attribution, and it's good to have it in writing so the artist knows we're serious.

At this point in the contract, I boilerplate clauses about warranties, arbitration, and jurisdiction, but since those clauses aren't specific to the artist/author relationship I've left them out. You can find them by looking in a good publishing law book, or online. After that, you just have the signatures:

*The undersigned hereby agree to the above terms and conditions of service provision:*

*Artist:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Designer's Signature* *Date*

*Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Email:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Phone:* \_\_\_\_\_

*CLIENT:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Client's Signature* *Date*

*Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Email:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Phone:* \_\_\_\_\_

And that's a wrap! If you don't love this contract, you can find others online. Just make sure your contract is clear about copyright transfer, payment, deadlines, etc. You can also have your favorite lawyer look at it and tighten it up, as well.

## **Final steps**

So you've got a signed contract ... now all that's left is follow-up! If you used this template, or one like it, you've got dates for your deliverables. Drop those dates in your calendar and make sure you follow up. If the artist owes you sketches within two weeks, ping them a week and a half from signing and see where they are. Don't let things fester; part of the purpose of having the contract is to make everyone's responsibilities clear. Real professionals will not be disturbed when you ask them for updates based on agreed deadlines ... and if they're *good* professionals, they want your project wrapped up and off their plate as soon as possible so they can move on to the next.

If things go well, you'll get a few sketches, pick one, and end up with a cover at the end of the deadline date. If they don't, you can cancel the contract, chalk things up to lessons learned, and move on to the next artist on your list. Remember to make notes: not just which artists were bad bets and which were good, but details, like whether an artist was good at communicating or bad at drawing machinery. And once you've got a great artist: hang on to them! They'll be

grateful for steady work, and you'll be spared the research to find a new, trustworthy contractor. In fact, I highly recommend holiday bonuses. A quick note with a PayPal is often enough: "Good contractors are hard to find. Thanks for being part of my team. Buy a pie on me this holiday season, and I look forward to working with you in the new year!"

I hope this two-part article has helped you get a sense for how to dive into the practicalities of acquiring your own cover art! As both an artist and a writer, I love seeing what amazing things happen when the visual and literal arts come together.

Your next fantastic art experience is waiting for you ... so go get it!

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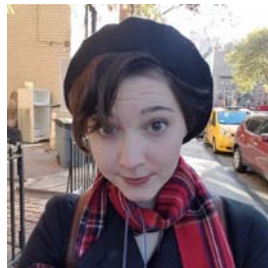
*M.C.A. Hogarth is a former vice president of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, and the author of over 40 novels in the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and romance. She is also a professional visual artist, and doodles cartoon jaguars for fun. See samples at her website, [mcahogarth.org](http://mcahogarth.org).*



# How Artists Work

## An artist's perspective

*By Elizabeth Person*



As creative professionals, we have all dealt with the dreaded nightmare client. They are vague about what they want from you, yet endlessly dissatisfied with everything you send their way. They request endless lists of bizarre or unclear changes, then seem dumbfounded at the novel idea of paying you for your time. They are the bane of writers and artists alike.

Yet, when writers and artists join forces—whether for a book cover, a comic, or an illustration—it isn't uncommon for us to unintentionally be each others' nightmare clients. No one understands more than we do the importance of treating artists and writers well, but still we manage to push each other's buttons.

Fortunately, after some very interesting discussions with other creative professionals, I've found some of the grievances writers and artists tend to have toward one another to be consistent—and very fixable!

### **Don't ask for high heels at the grocery store**

When you visit a grocery store, what are you going to find when you enter the building?

Food!

There are many different kinds of food, and they're neatly organized into aisles labeled vegetables, fruits, frozen foods, etc. The grocery can provide you with a great variety of products, but it can't provide everything.

If you overheard someone asking a grocery employee to direct them to the shoe aisle, you would be distinctly confused.

Asking an artist to emulate a visual style entirely different than the style(s) in their portfolio is like insisting that the cashier at a grocery store present you with their finest high-heeled shoes. It's not that grocery stores can't sell shoes, but it's highly unlikely, and any shoes you buy at a grocery store probably won't be high quality. If you're looking for nice shoes, you should probably visit a shoe store.

Just like shopping for anything else, when you're shopping for art, make sure the artist

you're considering is selling the kind of product you need. "You want to find artists whose work you love, that you can trust will create more of that work. That way, there's less disconnect when trying to get the artist to portray your story. You already know that they'll be able to reflect the feeling you want," said [Daniel Von der Ahe](#), illustrator and author of *The Fantastic Strange*.

Asking an artist whose website displays colorful graphic work suited for young adult fiction to paint the cover of a dark, brooding urban fantasy novel probably isn't going to work out.

There are, of course, exceptions to every rule. Some artists market themselves as versatile—their style is a lack of style, and they can create various different aesthetics. In that situation, make sure you still cite some of their past work when proposing your commission.

The work an artist displays on their portfolio website is the kind of work you can trust them to create consistently when you hire them. And if you can comfortably let an artist do what they do well, both you and the artist can focus on the fun part of collaboration—capturing your story as effectively as possible.

### **Communicate, communicate, communicate (and expect them to do the same!)**

So you've contacted an artist, clearly proposed your project, and they have officially accepted the commission. Hooray!

Having provided them with a deadline, the artist has started their work. And for the duration of that deadline you hear ... nothing. You contact them to see how things are going, and they respond with something short and vague. And when the deadline rolls around, they send you the finished work, and you have some serious issues with it. Maybe the character looks nothing like the description in the book, or despite the artist usually having the tone you want, they've chosen this moment to experiment with something entirely different from anything in their portfolio.

Of course artists deserve to be paid for their time, but after not hearing anything for weeks and having this work thrust upon you, you might feel like they gave you short shrift.

You should!

An artist should be sending you updates throughout the process so that you have an idea of where the project is headed—and thus, what you will ultimately be paying for. What kind of updates you get may vary between artists. Personally, I send a few rough sketches with compositions that I think might work best to get the writer's preference. Then later, when I'm adding color, I'll send the one or two most successful rough color sketches as a second update. Other artists may send polished drawings, or combine their sketch and color stages into one update.

Whatever your artist's preference, the point of updates is to make sure the two of you are on the same page and the final product is not an unpleasant surprise.

You deserve clarity of communication.

### **When to request changes (spoiler: it's EARLY)**

Your artist also deserves clarity of communication!

When you are sent an update with a sketch, or a number of sketches, respond efficiently with which ones you prefer and why. That way, if the artist later finds something is wrong—the composition doesn't work on a larger scale, or a pose isn't physically possible and looks odd, or some other issue—they can try to keep the essence of what you liked when you chose that initial sketch. And they can also explain why they changed something you initially liked.

The later in the process you ask for changes, the more difficult it is to implement those changes, and the more time those changes will probably take (and the more you will have to pay to cover that time). This is true no matter what medium the artist is working in.

Traditional artists need big decisions to be made especially early. Once paint is on a canvas, you can't really take it off, so big changes often require an entire repaint.

However, digital art is not magic. While it is true that some changes are easier to make digitally than traditionally, it is not universally the case. Digital art is as time consuming and requires as much skill as traditional art—the challenges may be different, but fixes require time and energy like anything else.

As writers and artists, we are all storytellers in our chosen mediums. When the right story is paired with the right images, the experience as a reader is nothing short of magical. Hopefully, this has provided some insight into how we can collaborate more, get frustrated with each other less, and add more of that magic to the shelves.

(Note that in the March issue of *Nink*, M.C.A. Hogarth wrote “The Art of the Cover”, part one of a two-part series about commissioning cover artists. She discusses in depth the process of researching the style for your cover, analyzing the scope of a project, where to find artists online, and how to contact them. I highly recommend her article, and I have done my best not to reiterate her points.)

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*Elizabeth Person is a freelance illustrator and animation visual development artist. She graduated from Allegheny College in 2017 in Fine Arts & Computer Science. She has had the privilege to work with and befriend many artists and writers, which means she is rarely bored. You can find Elizabeth's work at her website [elizabethperson.squarespace.com](http://elizabethperson.squarespace.com). She'd like to thank the artists and writers who took the time to advise her on this article.*

# The Mad Scribbler

## Cover Me

By Laura Resnick



*“Writers need to understand that the cover is not a visual representation of their book. It’s a marketing tool.”*

—Gene Mydlowski, art director

Last month, I discussed the [controversy](#) bestselling fantasy author Terry Goodkind created when he announced that the cover of his new novel, *Shroud of Eternity*, was so “laughably bad” that he was inviting readers to “have some fun with it.” By participating in an online poll about it, winners would get free copies of the novel, which Goodkind described as a “great book with a very bad cover.” Upon experiencing backlash, Goodkind asserted that he was trying to “encourage” his publisher to put more appropriate artwork on his books and to show more respect for his work and his readers.

I assume that NINC members don’t need me to tell them that there are better ways to work with a traditional publisher on packaging your novels.

The indie era has turned many novelists into their own art directors. Packaging self-published books had become a thriving new industry for designers, photographers, image licensors, and illustrators. In fact, this issue of *Nink* includes the second article in a two-part series about the logistics of commissioning your own original cover art, as well as an article on how to work with your cover illustrator. Although we see plenty of covers in the indie world that make us wince, we also see a lot of excellent work. Indeed, I can think of many writers whose self-published backlist packaging is superior to the covers their traditional publishers originally put on those books.

However, despite these developments, publishers still take the position that writers don’t know anything about illustration or packaging and shouldn’t be involved in the cover process. But considering how important your book’s cover is to sales and to attracting new readers, I

recommend brushing aside such condescending dismissal. A writer should try to participate in the process productively—at the very least, so you have some chance of avoiding the sort of cover that kills sales and makes a strong writer lock herself in a closet and weep.

So how can you have a constructive role in the cover process in traditional publishing? Something a bit more effective and professional, for example, than drumming your heels in public after your book is published with a cover you don't like?

There are contractual clauses for the author like “cover approval” (powerful—and *very* hard to get) and “cover consultation” (so vague it can be meaningless); however, while those state or imply a right to be involved in the cover process, they don't convey how to be involved *productively*. Also, you shouldn't consider yourself helpless or accept exclusion from the process if you *don't* get those clauses in your contract. My contracts haven't had cover clauses, yet I have developed a system for working on my covers that I employ in every publishing relationship. Sometimes I am completely ignored, even emphatically excluded from the process (and wound up weeping over the result). But other times some of my input was accepted, and sometimes I've been very involved—and have gotten some great covers.

Returning to Terry Goodkind's saga for a moment, he wrote in a [public statement](#), “For *Shroud of Eternity*, I was sent the cover art shortly before publication. We all expressed our dissatisfaction with the character representation of the artwork and we protested the printing. We were overruled and the book went to print as-is.”

This leads me to the first principle of engaging productively in the cover process, which is *get in there early*.

By the time you see the finished cover illustration, it's too late to change anything. Yes, there are occasional anecdotes of a prominent writer or dedicated editor who hated a cover illustration so much, they got it canceled and replaced with a new one, but such incidents are rare (and expensive). Mostly, if you complain about the final draft the publisher shows you, you'll be ignored or brushed off with excuses and platitudes.

So how “early” should you get in? I would say, start discussing packaging with the publisher in your very first conversation after making the book deal. Do you and the publisher envision the book(s) being packaged with original artwork, with photo images, or only with graphic design (ex. Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series)? These are foundational decisions, and if you have a strong preference, this is the time to say so, and to find out whether you and the publisher are on the same page about it. If you're not, then discuss what their vision is and *why* that's their plan for the packaging. It's possible they've thought this through and have a persuasive argument—if they haven't and don't, then *you* certainly should.

If the cover will include original artwork, give them a short list of artists you think would be right for the book and discuss it with them. If they reject or ignore your recommendations, ask who they're thinking of, go look at the websites of those artists immediately, and return to the publisher with your feedback.

If they want a graphic design-only cover, put together a sample package of graphic-image covers that convey the sort of tone or palette or creativity you'd like to see for your cover, and ask for this to be shared with the designer. These days, you can put all your images on a [Pinterest](#) page, for example, and just keep emailing the link until someone in-house assures you

it's being looked at.

Similarly, if there will be an illustration, provide a lot of images for the artist and art director. I got this recommendation many years ago from art director Gene Mydlowski when he was at HarperCollins, and it's still some of the most useful advice I've ever received.

"Don't lock into a specific idea," Mydlowski said. "Don't demand that the cover must be *this*. That's not useful or helpful." He suggested, rather, that the author provide the art director and artist with a variety of visual materials to point them in the right direction: photos and illustrations that convey the look of the characters and the world inside your head; other book covers that you feel express the right mood or style for your book, or which would attract your audience; photos of people who resemble your characters—or specific verbal suggestions such as, "the character looks like so-and-so in this particular movie"; and images that illustrate the right sort of costumes, fabrics, furniture, weapons, tools, setting, flora and fauna, background details, and visual orientation. Give the art department visual brainstorming, support, inspiration, and suggestions—as opposed to demanding a specific cover.

My regular working habit for years, ever since getting that advice, is that I gather images related to each book while I'm researching and writing it, so that by the time I deliver the manuscript, I am also ready to supply a file of images.

Also, ask the publisher if you can communicate directly with the artist; this is how you can make *sure* the artist gets to see your images. It also ensures that, if the artist has any questions about the novel, he can ask the person who knows the material best—you. (Ex. [Dan Dos Santos](#), the fabulous cover artist who illustrates my [Esther Diamond](#) novels, sometimes asks me to suggest visually interesting props, weapons, or symbols that he can include in the cover illustration.)

Next, ask (and keep asking) to see the initial cover sketches. This is the phase at which the artist usually presents several ideas for the art director to choose from. It's the most fluid point in the process, where suggestions can be accommodated. If the sketches are disastrously off-key, this is when there's a chance someone *might* listen to you saying, "This is all totally wrong for the book." More typically, this is where you can say, "I like the urgency in sketch one, the pose in sketch five, the costume in sketch three, and the background in sketch two—can you combine all those elements?" This is a collaborative process, and if you can give this sort of input—and if it's taken into account—it can take you a long way toward getting a good cover.

Once the near-final color draft is presented, only minor changes are possible. On a couple of color drafts, for example, I've said the protagonist needs to look more like she's in motion, being proactive, not so passive; the artist can add a couple of details then which achieve that effect. But it's much too late at that point to change the scene, the models, the pose, the costumes, the artist—the overall set of choices that have been made throughout the steps taken toward creating this almost-final draft of the art.

Similarly, after the final art is approved, ask to see the cover design before it's final—and keep asking. Doing so is how, for example, I prevented one publisher from printing the book's title in white against a white background. In another instance, my making a couple of design suggestions changed the cover from looking like a bleak litfic novel to, much more appropriately, looking romantic.



Finally, whenever giving your input or making suggestions, keep in mind that the cover is an advertisement for your book. It should make someone who hasn't read the novel want to pick it up. As [Lou Anders](#), who has edited and art directed more than 200 books, recently wrote, "The purpose of a cover is to sell the book, not accurately represent its contents. It shouldn't misrepresent those contents, but its job is to make someone read the book, not provide a picture for someone who already has."

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*[Laura Resnick](#), author of nearly 30 books, has had some fantastic covers, as well as some that made her lock herself in a closet and weep.*

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

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

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

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

Yahoo e-loop: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BeachNINC2018/info>

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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](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.

PW Select, the most recent discount NINC offers, is a marketing program offered by *Publishers Weekly* for authors to reach PW's audience of booksellers, librarians, publishers, agents, film scouts, and industry insiders. Currently offered to NINC members at a reduced price, PW Select includes:

- A listing (cover art, synopsis, on-sale info) in the print and digital editions of *Publishers Weekly*
- Feature placement on front page of PublishersWeekly.com and BookLife.com.
- Feature placement in BookLife's weekly e-newsletter which reaches over 19,000 people.
- An announcement of the book to BookLife's Facebook and Twitter channels.
- A six-month subscription to *Publishers Weekly*'s digital edition.

For details about this, as well as other discounts and freebies available to NINC members, visit this members-only page of our website: <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
- Anything!



*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.*

- President: [Julie Ortolon](#)
- President-Elect: [Wayne Stinnett](#)
- Secretary: [Gillian Doyle](#)
- Treasurer: [Mindy Neff](#)
- Newsletter Editor: [Michele Dunaway](#)
- Advisory Council Representative: [Victoria Thompson](#)

### **Advisory Council**

- Lou Aronica
- Brenda Hiatt Barber
- Linda Barlow
- Jean Brashear
- Janice Young Brooks
- Laura Parker Castoro
- Meredith Efken
- Donna Fletcher
- Kay Hooper
- Barbara Keiler

- Julie Leto
- Pat McLaughlin
- Kasey Michaels
- Diana Peterfreund
- Pat Rice
- Erica Ridley
- Marianne Shock
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

## 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 Director: Julie Ortolon
  - Sponsorship Chair: Rochelle Paige
  - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
  - Registrar: Pam McCutcheon
  - Onsite Coordinator: Hannah McBride
- Authors Coalition Reps: Laura Resnick & Laura Phillips
- Social Media Coordinator:
  - Dianne Drake
  - Sue Phillips
  - Laura Hayden (conference communications)
- Membership Committee
  - Chair: Sarah Woodbury
  - Boyd Craven
- *Nink* Newsletter
  - Editor: Michele Dunaway
  - Assistant Editor: Susan Anderson
  - Assistant Editor: Heather C. Leigh
  - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
  - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee:
  - CJ Carmichael
  - Steena Holmes
  - Tawdra Kandle
  - Pam McCutcheon
  - Laura Phillips
- Technology Committee
  - Nick Thacker
  - Elizabeth Ann West
  - Jamie McFarlane
  - Erica Ridley



- Discount Program Chair: Emilie Richards
- Volunteer Jobs (Just One Thing) Coordinator: Lois Lavrisa

### **Central Coordinator**

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin

P.O. Box 54, Hartland MI 48353

[admin@ninc.com](mailto:admin@ninc.com)

*Address changes may be made on the website.*

### **Nink Newsletter**

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To request reprint rights or to submit an article proposal, please contact [the editor](#).

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