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President's Voice

By Julie Ortolon



Two years ago, when I got the phone call from the nominating committee asking if I'd serve as president-elect and then president, the timing was ironic. A couple of weeks prior, I had decided to retire from writing. Writing, as everyone in NINC knows, is hard on so many levels, and it doesn't get any easier. I had a wonderful—albeit stressful—career in traditional publishing and an exciting career with indie publishing. That second career, however, was exhausting.

The combination of the two drained me creatively—or at least drained my urge to write. Before I sold my first novel in 1999, I was a professional artist. I stepped away from the art world completely to focus on my writing career. In recent years, the urge to paint returned and gradually became greater than the urge to write. So that's what I decided I was going to do: step away from the computer and return to the easel.

Then I got that call about being president. A lot of people would say (and have said) I was crazy to say yes.

But I did—because I love NINC. I never would have achieved the success I enjoyed without the generous sharing of knowledge or the friendships I made thanks to this organization. Before I went off, to paint and to enjoy spending time with family and friends, I wanted to give back. These last two years have been a labor of love for me, and the fact this will be my final column as president is bittersweet.

I realized a funny thing happened during my board tenure. During the last two conferences, I sat through every single presentation I could on craft and creativity. I guess there was a tiny part of me that wasn't as willing to walk away as I thought. During this last conference, while soaking up every word on the actual writing side of this business, that little spark became a tiny flame. After I turn over the reins to the excellent incoming board, I'm going to dust off the rough draft I was working on a few years ago and see what happens. This time, however, I just want to lose myself in writing the story, giving no thoughts to packaging, marketing, or money. I became a writer because I love telling stories. It was the non-writing part of this business that put my muse in a coma. In the New Year, I want to see if I can recapture the

joy of telling a story.

So, as I say goodbye as your president, I also wanted to say thank you for always giving me more than I can ever give back. Thank you for being there and for inspiring me, and for your friendships and your sage advice.

Wish me luck on finding my joy,

Julie Ortolon

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](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#). And you can [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.

Unearthing Hidden Clues About Your Creativity

Part One

By Denise A. Agnew



Creativity coaching is sometimes like being a detective, and it can take a few sessions to unearth the hidden clues that reveal to the coach and the client the truth about what is causing the block. Every client presents a different set of challenges for a creativity coach because everyone is unique. In this article, I'll present questions you can use to delve more deeply into the reasons you may encounter writer's block. In upcoming articles, I will address each question and how to analyze your answers.

Writers sometimes fall back on common beliefs about why they can't write. Frequent reasons cited for not writing include the following:

- Their day job gets in the way.
- The husband or wife doesn't approve of their writing.
- Their kids occupy their spare time.

Outside influences can complicate a writer's life. Yet it's vital for a writer to ask themselves a series of questions if they wish to understand what is stopping them from writing.

Ask Yourself These Essential Questions

For this next step, grab paper and pen and settle in with your favorite drink. Answer these questions completely. Take your time and go deep. These questions provide the opportunity to understand the truth behind your blocks, so be completely honest with your feelings. No one will see these answers but you.

- What do you say to yourself about your writing? Are you frequently critical or mostly supportive? Write down what you're saying. Don't hide from anything that is negative or positive. List it all.

- Is frustration making you say bad things about your writing ability? List your frustrations even if they seem petty to you.
- Do you compare yourself to other writers? When you do compare, what do you say to yourself?
- Is there a burning topic/genre you long to write but you have fears around it? What are those fears? Again, go deep. Don't hold back. List them all, even the ones that feel/sound over the top.
- Who do you think your audience is? Does your audience have to approve in order for you to write? Does your audience control what you write? Why?
- Are you worried about bad reviews that might never happen? Do you give every bad review more credit than it deserves? What do you believe a bad review says about your writing?
- What are your writing goals?
- Are you afraid to examine your own fears and use them in your writing?
- Are you afraid to touch on and explore deeper/controversial topics?
- Do you let people (strangers or not) shame you into not writing?
- Do you think writing/creating is essential to your well-being?
- Do you use perfectionism as an excuse to never finish a book?

Keep all of these questions. Beginning with the January 2019 issue of *Nink*, each Creativity Column will analyze one or two questions on the list above and how your answers can provide rich insight into your writing world.

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.

The Mad Scribbler

The art & the artist

By Laura Resnick



"It is not a fragrant world."

—Raymond Chandler

"History is replete with tales of artists behaving badly," culture journalist Maria Puente reminded readers in a [USA Today](#) article. "Composer Richard Wagner was an anti-Semite. Novelist Charles Dickens trashed his wife and secretly shackled up with a teen actress. Painter Michelangelo Caravaggio was a murderer. And yet, Wagner's operas are still heard (even in Israel). *Great Expectations* is still read in high schools across the land. Most art museums would kill to get a Caravaggio."

Her 2014 article was about Woody Allen, whose latest film was being celebrated as a triumph, while at the same time there was renewed focus on the allegation by his estranged daughter, Dylan Farrow, that Allen molested her as a child. Allen denies the allegation.

Woody Allen's personal life has, of course, been the subject of controversy for years. Just mentioning his name tends to spark instant debate about whether one can—or should—separate the art from the artist. I know people who declare that, on principle, they have not watched a Woody Allen movie in many years and never will again. Others say that if you think they should stop watching Allen's films because of the controversies about him as a person, then they will provide you with a long list of writers, artists, actors, directors, and composers whose works you must immediately give up for similar reasons. I also know people who watch and enjoy Allen's movies, and then torment themselves for doing so.

All of this confirms that separating the art from the artist is a complex matter. There's the issue of conscience (*should* I separate the art from the artist?), and then there's the matter of subjectivity (*can* I separate them?). These two factors are not always in perfect accord, obviously.

Personal conviction, values, and experience all play a role in this dynamic. So does immediacy. Whether or not I "should" separate the Baroque Italian artist Caravaggio from his work, I find that I very easily *can* do so. By all accounts, he was an awful human being (and, as Puente notes in her article, a murderer), but he was a dreadful person more than 400 years ago,

and maybe that's why I and most other Caravaggio fans today feel so comfortable about appreciating his work. By contrast, large numbers of people (including me) will never again see an image of writer and comedian Bill Cosby, once known as "America's Dad," without feeling the anger and revulsion invoked by the recent revelations about his decades as a serial rapist. He is someone about whom I have also seen people tie themselves in knots over the question of separating the art from the artist.

It's a question that recently caught my attention anew when the board of the Mystery Writers of America (MWA) [announced](#) Nov. 27 they were reversing their recent decision to present novelist Linda Fairstein with the 2019 Grand Master Award.

"MWA's Grand Master Award," according to *Publishers Weekly*, "was established to acknowledge important contributions to this genre [mystery], as well as for a body of work that is both significant and of consistent high quality."

Previous Grand Masters include Walter Mosley, Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, Stephen King, Dick Francis, Mary Higgins Clark, Lawrence Sanders, P.D. James, Ellery Queen, Daphne du Maurier, and Agatha Christie. In other words, it's a big deal.

Fairstein, now in her seventies, is the author of a bestselling series of 20 thrillers about a New York City sex crimes prosecutor. In its press release, MWA described the author as "a sex-crimes prosecutor during a time when sex crimes were almost impossible to prosecute. In her 30-year tenure at the Manhattan DA's office [which she joined in 1972], she was a pioneer in the war against rape, fighting for historic changes to the criminal justice system and for justice on behalf of victims of the most heinous crimes."

As head of the Sex Crimes unit for most of her career as a prosecutor, Fairstein was involved in a number of high profile cases—including the case that convinced some MWA members to object to her being honored as a Grand Master.

In 1989-1990, five African American teenage boys were arrested, charged, and then convicted for the brutal rape and beating of a female jogger in Central Park. All of the "Central Park Five" went to prison for years. Then, in 2001, a rapist and murderer serving a life sentence confessed to committing the crime. His DNA matched the sample from the crime scene (he was the only match), and he provided details of the assault that matched the evidence. In 2002, at the recommendation of the district attorney, the court vacated the convictions of the Central Park Five.

Fairstein oversaw the prosecution of those five suspects. Allegations about conduct that Fairstein approved or engaged in have included coercing false confessions, mistreating minors, racial discrimination, and malicious prosecution. Fairstein, who strongly opposed vacating the convictions, denies the allegations. Just five months ago, she published an article reiterating her position that the original case was handled correctly.

Now, those specific events and allegations are intersecting with her fiction career. Shortly after MWA announced Fairstein as a 2019 Grand Master, Attica Locke (winner of 2018 MWA Edgar Award for best novel) objected in social media "begging" MWA to reconsider, because Fairstein "is almost single-handedly responsible for the wrongful incarceration of the Central Park Five."

Locke, who worked on an upcoming Netflix documentary about the case, wrote, "Just

because [Fairstein] has a flourishing publishing career does not mean we should ignore her past—or her continued unwillingness to accept responsibility for ruining five innocent men’s lives. I cannot support this decision.”

Fairstein responded on Twitter, disagreeing with Locke’s assertions, and the topic caught fire and attracted a lot of attention. *The Los Angeles Times* published an [op-ed](#) by novelist and attorney Steph Cha, who asserted that Fairstein “shouldn’t be the toast of a black-tie literary gala—she should be notorious.” Cha wrote that, “Many crime writers have already called for the revocation of Fairstein’s award.” The *New York Times* reported that novelist and TV writer Kellye Garrett said MWA should rescind the award if Fairstein did not volunteer to give it up. The Twitter discussion Locke started grew to include hundreds of people.

NYT bestseller Andrew Gross defended Fairstein: “For a person who has devoted her career to real-world situations that have advanced women’s rights to be attacked and demonized by people whose toughest real-world decisions are how to define a gerund or what book to review is a sign that the inmates are truly running the asylum.”

And so it went. Until MWA’s board, which stated it had been “unaware of Ms. Fairstein’s role” in the Central Park Five controversy, announced it was withdrawing the award.

Locke thanked the board for heeding her concerns. Fairstein wrote a dignified post on Facebook expressing disappointment in the decision, as well as pride in her work in the criminal justice system. She concluded, “I thank MWA for the initial honor and for the joy it inspired, which can never be revoked, and I am happy to enthusiastically support the new Grand Master.”

Now that MWA members are wondering about the board’s decision-making process, the board is publicly promising to review its methods, and I think I’d genuinely rather clean my oven than continue to follow the story.

It’s worth noting that no one, as far as I can see, objected to Fairstein being named Grand Master because of her work as a novelist. No one suggested that her fiction wasn’t “significant” or of “consistent high quality,” or that she hadn’t contributed enough to the genre. They objected to the artist, not the art. Perhaps they couldn’t separate the two things, or maybe they believed the two things *shouldn’t* be separated in this instance.

Very few of us become key figures in events that are as high profile and also as controversial as the tragic Central Park Five case. But, whether intentionally or accidentally, most of us have made mistakes (minor and/or major), offended others, caused harm, or behaved badly at some point in our lives, and most of us will do so again before we shuffle off this mortal coil.

For each of us, there could well come a time when someone—or, in some cases, perhaps a very large group of people—will reject our work specifically because they reject the artist.

It’s a humbling thought. And regardless of what one thinks about Fairstein as a prosecutor, anyone would do well to emulate her dignity as an artist when reacting to the Grand Master award being rescinded.

Laura Resnick is the author of the Esther Diamond urban fantasy series, the Silerian trilogy, and many short stories.



Conference Reports

Decoding Amazon

Presented by David Gaughran

Reported by Sidney Swanson

Fifteen years ago when Yahoo was bigger than Google, David Gaughran took a position at Google because he believed in their business model. While Yahoo showed ads with the highest bids to their customers, Google included relevancy as part of the auction for ad bids. They left short-term money on the table, but they were building customer trust.

Amazon, a fledgling company at the time, internalized Google's kind of thinking where relevancy was more important than profitability. Amazon's core promise is relevancy to the customer. Amazon will always show customers the books they are most likely to purchase. Gaughran quotes Passive Guy of <https://www.thepassivevoice.com> as saying that when a reader visits Amazon, it is as if their local Barnes and Noble magically rearranged the front tables to the reader's preferences. This creates an unprecedented level of user trust and leads to long-term money.

Because of this, Gaughran thinks of Amazon as a search engine with a store attached. To provide relevant products to customers, Amazon uses many algorithms to determine what books should be shown to readers—those most likely to appeal to them. There are separate algorithms determining Bestseller rank, Hot New Release rank, Movers and Shakers rank, Popular Books rank (hereafter: pop list), Author rank, the "Customers who bought this item also bought" rank (hereafter: also-boughts), as well as algorithms determining what books Amazon will send via email recommendation.

Opportunities to get your book visible

Amazon breaks its bookstore down by genre categories, sub-categories, sub-sub-categories, and so on. Reliable estimates of the number of sub-categories is about 10,000. With one hundred positions in each category, there are over 1,000,000 chart positions showing books in category top-one-hundred placements.

Beyond bestseller placements, there are millions of other store placements. Books appear in also-boughts, check-out pages, innumerable pop list chart spots (not limited to the top one hundred), and more.

If Amazon determines a customer is an ebook reader, it will recommend ebooks over paper. If Amazon determines a customer is a Kindle Unlimited (KU) reader, it will recommend titles in KU. Amazon will always show customers what is most likely to be relevant to them.

Marketing Takeaways #1

Metadata

Because there are 1,000,000 opportunities to appear on category bestseller lists, an author publishing a new title should enter category and keyword metadata with care, using all available spots.

Recommendation emails

As far as the recommendation emails sent by Amazon are concerned, appearing high on the pop list dramatically affects inclusion: selling more is better for inclusion.

Sales Rank Basics

Bestseller sales rank is determined simply by looking at sales plus time. A sale this hour is worth more than one yesterday and much more than one last week. One borrow is the equivalent of one sale, and books will get a rank benefit as soon as someone borrows them. Gaughran insists that reviews do not affect sales rank or email recommendations.

Increasing Churn

Amazon wants to keep their store “produce” fresh. They update charts hourly, giving more weight to recent purchases. Because of the disreputable (against TOS) practices of some indie booksellers several years ago, Amazon changed the way their algorithms credit book sales to the point that a one-off spike or rapid rise in sales rank, if not sustained, will be followed by a rapid plummet in rank.

Marketing Takeaways #2

Avoiding one-off spikes

Authors should always split sales announcements to their mailing list over several days. Stacking promotions (the practice of purchasing several days worth of ads) will also help spread sales. When swapping announcements with other authors through newsletters, schedule these to spread them across several days.

Gaughran showed an ideal sales spread for a title starting with 400 sales on day one. In a perfect situation, an author would increase sales by 20 or so per day for four to five days. Keeping ad spending even over several days is another way to help a book receive algorithm-based recommendations.

Sample launch plan for a Book 4

There are dozens of possible ways to run a launch with the goal of gradually increasing sales day over day, and Gaughran detailed one of these. (Additional examples are included in his book *Amazon Decoded*, which is free for newsletter subscribers by visiting his website, listed below.)

Gaughran’s example is for a Book 4 in series. He suggests placing the first book free, advertising it on three or four ad vendors, as well as placing Facebook carousel ads and static

image ads. Place Book 2 at .99 for spillover sales from the freebie, again utilizing Facebook carousel and static image ads. For Book 3, add in some BookBub Ads, with a sale price of 1.99. Place Book 4 on sale for 2.99. This is the book that will be advertised to the author's mailing list as well as across social media.

As a special note, because there is evidence that pre-order sales are suppressed on the pop list, Gaughran does not currently recommend long pre-orders on Amazon, particularly for exclusive authors, unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

The pop list

If you compare the bestseller list with the pop list, you will see entirely different books listed in the top spots. The pop list counts downloads of free books (as separate from KU borrows, which it ignores.) In addition, pop list books' sales are weighted by price. Books selling at 4.99 or 6.99 are weighted more heavily. Free downloads weigh in at 1/100th of a sale. Lastly, on the pop list, there is a rolling 30-day average along with a 4-day delay, which can result in sales- or KU reads-spikes after 4 days.

So why does the pop list matter? It drives KU recommendations, feeds books into customer emails, orders search results, and is very prominent on some Kindle devices.

Marketing Takeaways #3

Consistent sellers top one-off spikers. The pop list rewards high prices with higher placement, and free is gold again because of KU page-reads spikes after four days.

Also-boughts

Amazon uses also-boughts to show customers more of the things they like. Also-boughts are the visual representation of what customers like. They represent the connections between books, and, much like neural pathways, they can be strengthened and influenced. Also-boughts pointed at your book are good for visibility. Bad also-boughts—that is, ones unrelated to a title—can kill a book's visibility and sales. (See Gaughran's article [Please Don't Buy My Book](#) on his website.)

Also-boughts are most fragile during a book's first 50 sales. Because of this, it is a bad idea to ask your parents or readers on sites not split by genre to buy your book. Your book will have poor also-boughts, and Amazon will be confused what kind of book you are selling, making accurate recommendations impossible.

To influence also-boughts, Gaughran recommends a combination of AMS, Facebook, and BookBub Ads, email swaps, and other cross promotion, so long as it is kept relevant. Other indies writing similar books with similar levels of sales will provide optimal cross promo.

Marketing Takeaways #4

Protect your also-boughts during launch. Consider using pen names if your niches don't have crossover appeal. Tighter cross promotion is always better. Fixing also-boughts is very hard after the fact, so work hard to strengthen also-boughts and optimize your end matter and metadata to point readers in the right direction.

Finally...

David publishes a weekly newsletter full of information useful to writers, which you can sign up for at <http://davidgaughran.com>. This will give you access to a more thorough *book* version of his talk.



[Sidney Swanson](#) is a Kirkus Reviews award-winning author of young adult sci-fi and fantasy, including the Ripple series, the Saving Mars series, the Thief in Time series, and more. Sidney lives in Oregon's Willamette Valley with her husband, some cats, and entirely too much rain.

Creating Character

Presented by William Bernhardt

Reported by Michele Dunaway

In his Irresistible Premise session on Thursday, William Bernhardt said that “All fiction is character-driven. They must care about your characters. That’s the key.”

With “they” being the readers, Bernhardt expanded on this idea on Friday in Creating Character. The session, based on his Red Sneaker series, continued his goal of offering a more practical and down-to-earth approach.

Bernhardt began by saying that characters are the fundamental starting point, and that all books are character-driven, even literary and genre fiction. If you don’t have a character readers care about, nothing else matters.

Bernhardt mentioned he’s done 19 books in the Ben Kincade series, and readers return to these books over and over for the characters. People are invested in the characters.

Bernhardt then had the audience do something similar to the exercise the day before, but instead of listing favorite books, Bernhardt asked attendees to list their favorite fictional characters and why.

So do that here:

Character	Why
1.	
2.	
3.	

Mine are Jane Austen’s Elinor and Marianne Dashwood and Daniel Silva’s Gabriel Allon.

So as you look at your list, ask yourself, why are these characters enduring? What do you really like about them? Why do you remember them?

Bernhardt quoted Kurt Vonnegut: “The first step in making a story should be creating a character who wants something.”

Bernhardt boils it down to making a character sympathetic and/or empathetic. You will need to dig deeper to do this. Asking yourself, “How do I make this character sympathetic? Empathetic?” extends into motivations. Go beyond the basic *why*. So beyond the question of what motivates them, ask, “Why are they doing this?” Yes, they want to fall in love, but why? Yes, they want to solve a mystery, but why? What at the character’s core motivates them? Dig deeper.

The most fictionalized character is Sherlock Holmes, and number two is Dracula. Readers can be empathetic to a character, but we must remember that characters are not real people.

They are metaphors for real people. It's reality versus verisimilitude. For the reader, what happens to the character must seem like it could happen in real life, but it's not real.

Your goal as a writer is not to reproduce a real person, or channel your stuff, or even real people. Character is more than a stick figure. It should be more than flat. Character should symbolize something.

Example: The Statue of Liberty is a metaphor for liberty and America. She also symbolizes hope and freedom. She's a beacon.

What is the metaphor for your book? The metaphor should be for something larger. Your book may never say it, but it's there. It's understood.

Bernhardt offered a look at Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which remains on the librarian list at No. 1. The character of Atticus Finch represents something larger than a lawyer and a father. As I taught this book to ninth-graders (before I moved to 11th grade), what Bernhardt said made sense. For me, Atticus Finch symbolizes the ideal man. Atticus, in a sense, symbolizes hope for change in a time that was extremely unfair. Bernhardt talked about how Atticus sits outside the jail even though he knows he will face the mob coming to lynch Tom Robinson. Atticus becomes a metaphor for doing the right thing no matter how difficult. Characters are shown by their actions (more in a bit).

Bernhardt then showed a slide with seven pictures: all the actors who have portrayed James Bond. Characterization is found in the observable details, which should provide insight into who the characters are. He said readers can't absorb more info, that they create the person/image from their experiences, so it's better to pick one characteristic. Example, does the car the person own show something about them? Does the purse or dress? For instance, James Bond is the same character, yet it's not. Sean Connery used the vodka martini shaken not stirred, considered chic at the time. Roger Moore in *Live and Let Die* knew he had to be his own Bond, so he orders a bourbon neat, a more "serious" drink. He didn't start as a "lighter" Bond. Daniel Craig in *Casino Royale* orders a vodka martini and the bartender asks if he wants it shaken or stirred, and Daniel Craig's Bond says, "Do I look like I care?"

Bernhardt also displayed a slide with the bust of Aristotle, who once said action is character. Bernhardt describes it that as show don't tell. It's what a character does, like when Atticus stands in front of the jail. The greater the pressure, the deeper the revelation. Give the character choices under pressure—how well do they hold up?

Weaknesses make the character interesting. Don't write perfect people. Everyone must have their kryptonite. Everyone must have a weakness—Superman is hard to write for, hence kryptonite. He and Lois—he doesn't want to put her in danger, so to make things interesting, the writers always put her in danger.

Ask yourself—what is your character's weakness? While your character should have one, Bernhardt warns not to go too far. Problems/dark place is okay, but American readers don't want whiners. Your characters should know they have a problem and fight their way back.

Contradiction makes the character more interesting. Hamlet is internal with himself. Spock and Kirk/Holmes and Watson are external—the characters complete each other. They can be very opposite. Bernhardt explained that this is why my example, Jane Austen's Dashwood sisters, worked so well. The perfect partner can fill the gap in the other one.

Bernhardt then showed a slide with a picture of Arnold Schwarzenegger as the terminator from the first movie, the “plastics” in *Mean Girls*, and the shark from *Jaws*. He said “Not all characters need to be—or should be—three dimensional.”

There are many characters in a novel and they serve many functions, sort of like an opera as spirit carriers. They simply walk on. They aren’t very important. The shark in *Jaws* is not three-dimensional.

The protagonist must have a goal or desire, a chance to obtain it, and something that makes him/her/it appealing to the reader.

Empathetic? Sympathetic? What is it they want? Sympathetic means likable. Empathetic means relatable.

Five tenants to making them empathetic and sympathetic:

1. Make your characters very good at what they do. This could be their job, such as Hugh Laurie’s House and any version of Sherlock Holmes. Even though they can be abrasive, the fact they are so good at their job makes them characters readers like.
2. Give your character a sense of humor.
3. Show your character treating others well, such as with small children or the elderly or with pets.
4. Make the character some kind of underdog. Readers like scrappy people who work their way up.
5. Show the character showing affection or gratitude and make sure that someone returns it. Examples could be parent/child or best friend. If a best friend likes you, you’re relatable, so your character is then likable to the reader.

Books are about transportation for the reader. The reader, through the book, goes through emotional engagement, empathy, and an experience with resonance. Basically, the reader goes on a journey with the character. There is growth for the character and the reader accompanies the character from innocence to maturity, for example, or sin to redemption, or awkward to sophistication. Ultimately, the reader wants something that resonates. The reader wants to stay in the fictional world.

Even in a digital age, word of mouth is still the best way to sell books. Readers are more empathetic because of getting into characters’ heads.



Michele Dunaway is your Nink editor. She already misses the beach.

Now Hear This! Innovating with Audiobooks

Presented by Hannah Wall

Reported by Elle Christensen

Hannah Wall started her career with CreateSpace, working with indie authors on the publishing process for print and digital formats. In 2013, she joined ACX.

Wall started her session by informing the attendees she would spend some time on making an audiobook with ACX. However, the focus would be on what she finds more interesting, audiobook marketing, “Because it’s kind of a different animal than print and ebook marketing. The audiobook listener is very different than the print or ebook readers.”

Statics show that audio (all spoken-word content) has reached a cultural tipping point. As Wall put it, “It’s out of control how many people are listening.” Last year alone, in the U.S., 55 million people listened to an audiobook and 100 million listened to a podcast.

Around 60 percent of readers listen to an audiobook while multitasking. Around 30 percent will actually sit down and simply listen, which is great, but it also means that two-thirds of the market are giving you their ears while they are doing something else.

Audible customers download around two billion hours of content per year. Membership has grown by double digits every year since 2013 and their content catalogue has grown 30 percent every year since 2015. On average, Audible customers listen two hours a day, and members download an average of 17 books a year. Keep in mind that the audible membership typically offers one book a month, so most readers are going beyond that threshold. Audible works to create quality content and 83 percent of members are very or extremely satisfied with their experience.

Audible has also dedicated itself to creating original content: titles that are audio-only, books written specifically for audio and do not have a print or ebook version, and also audio-dramas such as *The X-Files*.

Another creative tool to boost audiobooks is the Whispersync feature, which allows you to jump between an audiobook and its ebook without losing your place. This is made even easier with Alexa/Echo devices.

ACX has produced around 120,000 audiobooks in the last seven years and has over 80,000 samples that were produced on-site. ACX also has access to thousands of voices to create your audiobook including award-winning talent. If you choose ACX as your publisher, you become part of the audiobook ecosystem. Audible runs advertisements on multiple platforms, creates awareness for audiobooks in general, and drives new customers to audiobooks. It offers some of the highest audiobook royalties available, 25 percent for non-exclusive and up to 40 percent for exclusive distribution. It has a Bounty Referral Program giving you the opportunity to earn even more. You can also leverage exclusive marketing tools through the Promo Code Program (you can find more information about this program on the ACX blog). There are also several marketing tools in the works.

To get started, you'll need a published book available for sale on Amazon. You need to own the audio rights or the completed audio recording. Indie authors will hold those rights, but if you are traditionally published, you'll need to check your contract. You'll also need cover art and a final, polished manuscript. This manuscript should be as perfect as possible, highly recordable, because once a book has been created, edits and changes are a lot more difficult.

The next step is to visit the ACX homepage and search for your name. It will pull up your Amazon catalogue and you'll be able to search for your title. Once you've chosen a title, you create what Wall called "a quick dating profile." You'll give a little information about the title, the attributes you are looking for, like male/female, etc., as well as character descriptions and things that will dictate how the character sounds, such as where they are from regionally, what does their dialect sound like, etc. After completing this profile, the artists will start auditioning for your project. You'll select three to five pages from your manuscript so that the auditions aren't generic samples (though these are also available), they will be using your words, so you can get a better idea of what the finished product will sound like.

ACX is a 1:1 marketplace, totally negotiable. You decide who you work with and have the ability to choose from almost 50,000 voices from across a wide range of accents and vocal styles. You also set your own schedule and budget. You can pay your producer through a share of your earnings or pay a flat fee and keep full royalties. You will be paid monthly.

ACX is a one-stop recording shop. You work with one person (the cost includes the narrator) and ACX will provide you with retail-ready audio files that must pass Audible's high standards. ACX has approximately 500 approved producers. You can give creative direction, such as providing feedback to your producer at the audition stage, and additional direction throughout recording. When completed, ACX will distribute globally through Audible, Amazon and Apple Books.

Some of the most recent ACX changes include availability to Canadian and Irish stories and voices, streaming inclusion through the Audible Romance Package, enhanced visibility and control through the Bounty Referral Program, a plethora of Audible-branded marketing tools, and the ability to sort projects based on Amazon sales.

The Bounty Referral Program is a way to earn more through referral links that gain new Audible members. Wall said the program used to be a "black hole" but ACX has made many improvements. One change is raising the bounty amount you earn each time you bring a new member to Audible from \$50 to \$75. This is in addition to any royalties earned from your audiobook sales and, there is no cap on the number of bounties. In order to earn the referral fee, they must sign up through your link and stay a member for at least three billing cycles.

Referral links can be found on your dashboard as soon as your book is published. However, these links are customizable to refer traffic from your marketing campaigns to Audible.com or, if you are doing some geo-targeting, Audible.co.uk, Audible.fr, and Audible.de. Plus, you can track usage (clicks) of your referral links through an enhanced Bounty Dashboard to see which promotions work best.

The Audible Romance Package is a product that Audible developed for the romance community, creating a streaming product allowing readers to download up to 10 books and then return them and check out more, all for a flat monthly fee. This product is similar to

Amazon's Kindle Unlimited. Only in the first year, Audible Romance had grown with double-digit increases in listenership every quarter. Adding your audiobooks to the Audible Romance Package introduces your books to new fans and listeners. You start earning from the first minute Audible Romance Subscribers select and listen to your audiobook. You'll be paid for the total minutes listened to your audiobook based on your share of total minutes listened. Authors have seen success by including both their new and backlist audiobooks into the program.

ACX supports English, Spanish, German, French, and Italian. However, Hannah encouraged authors to contact ACX with other languages that you'd like to see them support. Also, Audible has great DRM, but if you are experiencing piracy, contact her or Audible to see what they can do.

When planning audiobook marketing, there are tenets to live by, things that will set you up for success:

Deliver a high-quality product

Your product should match your brand uniformly and consistently. First, produce a high-quality audiobook! Choose a voice that reflects your brand, not necessarily whoever is popular in your category, but the ones who will represent your brand and performs really well. Next, consider your schedule; get organized and create a marketing calendar that allows you a holistic view of your marketing efforts across channels and over time. Does this audiobook relate to other print or ebook releases that you are doing? Does it relate to a specific promotion or holiday? These things will impact your production schedule. Last, be authentic. Being simply, "Buy! Buy! Buy!" all the time won't sell your product. Find aspects of the audiobook publishing and production that light you up and highlight them to your fans. Your genuine enthusiasm should be something that attracts listeners. Share your excitement of the process and do it early and often. Some suggestions are clips, outtakes, and sharing your experience along the way.

Identify your target audience early and often

Typically, target audiences fall into two categories; people who love audiobooks but don't know you, or people who love you but don't know about audiobooks. Try asking questions through surveys to drive awareness, learn more about your listeners, etc. Use those opinions to inform everything you do. Collaborate to succeed. Networking with fellow authors. Find an author or actor in your genre—or even a related genre—and form an alliance to cross promote each other's audiobooks. Trade links, swap newsletters, etc. Paid media can be a smart investment, especially when trying to find a target audience. When you're trying to expand your following, investing a small budget in ads on search engines or social media can be a good way to recruit new fans.

Make your audiobook easily accessible and actively ask for sales

First, distribute wide to Amazon, Audible, and iTunes. Leverage your Audible Author Page. They will pull in your Author Central data (including audiobook bibliography). This can be used as a home base for your audiobooks. Tell fans about the 30-day free Audible trial. This is a win-win because fans get your book for free, but you still get paid for it. Everybody should

be talking about this free trial! Talk about your audiobook's high-star ratings. Use other voices and praise to promote your book. Make sure to match them with your cover art. Boost your backlist by updating your backmatter in ebooks and audiobooks with current links to your audiobooks (use your Bounty Referral links!). You can use audio clips for the teaser in an audiobook.

A new beta program you can take advantage of is Audible branded graphic ads. They are created automatically through an algorithm. They match your cover art, have Audible branding, and provide your links (another great time to use Bounty Referral links). They are optimized for social media—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Find cost-effective communication channels to reach your target audience

Include teasers for another title within the closing credits. This is especially effective for a series. Another low-cost tool is to spread the news via your email newsletter. Be active on social media and highlight the magic of audio everywhere. Use interactions with the narrator such as an interview or release a sneak peek. Audiobook fans love getting a peek at the audiobook creation process. A great resource is [SoundCloud](#). This is specifically for clips and samples for your website. You will upload the clip and pair it with artwork and do some more customization. Then, SoundCloud will spit out a piece of html code and/or widget that you embed directly on your website. Fans can play it right there on your site without going to Audible, but if they like it, they can click the link and be taken to the Audible page where they can purchase the audiobook.

Communicate well and often

Create an audio connection with audio listeners through tools such as live chats. Also, combine and conquer. Think of all these tips as ongoing efforts that you can combine for maximum efficiency.

Test and repeat and repeat and repeat

Data is a powerful marketing tool. Use your Sales Dashboard and Bounty Dashboard to analyze your tactics.

Audience Q&A

Q: Is possible to add teasers/clips to existing audiobooks?

A: Absolutely, the audiobook will have to be reuploaded, but the support team can help you with the process. Gather the original audio files, and they'll add the chapter or clip with links and reupload the audiobook.

Q: Can we re-launch our branding (not re-recording)?

A: Contact support to change things like the cover, category, etc. Rerecording is much more complicated. Changing the title or other edits will require the narrator to rerecord that part.

Q: How does royalty share work?

A: Royalty share is 50/50. You get 20%, narrator 20%

Q: How can we get featured on Audible's home page?

A: Wall didn't know the specific process but had some suggestions for boosting your chances. They look for higher ratings, books performing well, reviews, etc. [Audiobook Boom](#) is a great resource to help drive reviewers to your audiobook.

Q: Is there a commitment for the Audible Romance Package?

A: At this time, it goes to the end of your contract. This is one tool in your arsenal, wait until you're ready. It's a great option if you have a title that isn't performing well.

[Elle Christensen](#) lives in New York City where she wakes up every day awed and inspired by her surroundings. She writes romance in a variety of sub-genres including PNR/fantasy, contemporary, new adult, romantic suspense, and more. After appending the majority of her life as a professional singer, these days she enjoys shining the spotlight on her characters instead.

Reach New Readers with Kobo

Presented by Christine Munroe

Reported by Janis Susan May/Janis Patterson

A former literary agent, Christine Munroe heads an all-woman global crew dedicated to putting authors first and making Kobo Writing Life the best platform in the industry. Kobo focuses on digital reading only and is growing a global network of content and e-commerce companies such as OverDrive, Ebates, Viki, Viber, and Slice. Kobo partners with leading retailers to achieve unparalleled global reach, currently having 14+ stores and 150+ countries worldwide. Kobo prides itself on being writer-friendly, providing a free, fast and easy platform for self-publishing.

Kobo offers 70 percent royalty for titles \$2.99 plus without a cap; on titles below \$2.99 royalties are 45 percent. Writers can price free at any time and schedule promos and preorders ahead of time in 14 unique currencies. Kobo has a promotions tool for which you can apply to get prime marketing to Kobo shoppers. Kobo has no requests for exclusivity and offers dedicated support from their team of experts. Uploads are quite simple and Kobo offers a price scheduling tool with which you can schedule promotions ahead of time.

The newest addition to the Kobo world is Walmart. If your ebooks and audiobooks are available to Kobo U.S., they're automatically available to Walmart U.S. shoppers. In-store displays feature digital book cards, gift cards and Kobo devices. There is also a co-branded site and free app for phones, computers, etc. for digital shopping. Kobo strongly suggests that you maximize this opportunity in the U.S. market by spreading the word and by adding Walmart links for U.S. readers. Offer gift cards for giveaways and experiment with ads. Readers will have to set up a Walmart U.S. ebooks account to buy from there. All monies for Walmart U.S. sales come through Kobo—writers will not have to set up a separate author account. If the author comes to Kobo through an aggregator, their books will still be available on Walmart U.S.

Kobo books are live onsite to readers globally within three hours. Kobo has hit the six-million-book mark, which is a massive amount of content, but Munroe said that we must always remember that in the fight for readers' attention, your competition isn't other books, it's other forms of entertainment.

Kobo audiobooks launched in Fall 2017 and is looking for authors who have produced audio that they want to upload directly. Best-selling audio genres are non-fiction, fiction, thriller, romance and fantasy. Munroe said that it is time for indies to challenge audio. Kobo will be partnering with Findaway Voices for distribution. Those with more questions about audio should email writinglife@kobo.com.

Kobo does offer a revenue-share \$9.99 per month subscription program, but without requiring exclusivity. They do, however, ask for a 90-day commitment.

Ten things top Kobo authors have in common:

1. Online presence with a cohesive brand.
2. They hire professionals to create a consistently professional product.
3. Have a marketing plan, and measure results.
4. Create a distribution plan and stick with it.
5. Think globally.
6. Share links to each retailer everywhere you share.
7. Engage with the author community.
8. Attend conferences.
9. Stay business savvy—what's working for you and for the market, and do you need to adjust anything?
10. Keep writing. Top authors have 3+ books (many have lots and lots of books—if you're not there yet, work toward it at your own pace.)

Above all else, stay true to what works best for you, and avoid the trap of comparing yourself to others.

What is working well on Kobo right now:

1. Box sets.
2. Free.
3. Series, especially those with faster turnaround between release dates.
4. Cliffhangers.
5. Translations.

Many Kobo best-selling titles are non-English. Consider translation if you are willing and able to market translated editions specifically to each country by cover, pricing and fan engagement, among other things. Target global ebook retailers such as Bol, FNAC and Mondadori. Also, don't hesitate to consider markets you might have thought of as niche.

Don't just set a U.S. price and leave it—manually adjust your international pricing to end in a .99 or .49 in localized territories. Also, be especially mindful of Canada. It's a huge market.

Kobo offers a promotions tool that, if it doesn't already appear on your dashboard, you can request. You'll find updated sales activity details for all your Kobo ebooks each time you visit the dashboard, so experiment and measure results. Try different pricing, create big box sets, and keep your backlist evergreen with price drops, and new covers if needed.

Kobo offers access to [NetGalley](#) for Kobo Writing Life authors. NetGalley is a reading service that allows readers access to free ebooks for a review. It also gives authors a chance to get upcoming and backlist books in front of readers. NetGalley uses all major reading devices/tablets and users have access to detailed reporting on activity for their book. There is a charge for this—\$39.99 USD per title through KWL; the regular cost is \$450 USD for a six-month listing. Genres popular on NetGalley are romance, mystery and thriller, and fiction. To qualify, the title must be uploaded to KWL.

Affiliate links are another way KWL works with its authors. Once you set up your account, email Kobo—KWL authors get 6 percent commission, one of the industry's highest-paying programs. To join, go to <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/p/affiliate>. If you have any questions, email writinglife@kobo.com. Then just share your unique referral links anywhere you want, including on social sites, and you will earn revenue on any purchases made through your links within 14 days.

Ms. Munroe said your distribution model is an investment portfolio. You would never invest all of your savings into one single stock. The publishing industry—and retail in general—is constantly in flux. To get the best return you should distribute widely, use every format, and think globally. Create a diverse income portfolio with your content and always try to reach new readers wherever they are and however they want to read. Be sure to drive sales to each retailer and remember, every retailer has its own customers and opportunities. It is short-sighted to depend on one retailer or one format for your income.

Create a 3-, 5-, and 10-year plan for yourself. Write it down, post it where you can see it, and take measurable steps to get there. Practice + Patience + Plan = Success. And don't forget to celebrate the wins along the way!

Kobo's Writing Life blog and biweekly podcast showcase tips, interviews with authors, platform news, and more, and KOBO is always interested in featuring their authors.

Contacts

[@kobowritinglife](#)

Platform: www.kobo.com/writinglife

Blog: www.kobowritinglife.com

Email: writinglife@kobo.com



Janis Susan May/Janis Patterson is a 7th-generation Texan and a 3rd-generation wordsmith who writes in mystery, romance, and horror. Once an actress and a singer, Janis has also been editor-in-chief of two multi-magazine publishing groups as well as many other things, including an enthusiastic amateur Egyptologist. Janis's husband even proposed in a moonlit garden near the Pyramids of Giza. Janis and her husband live in Texas with an assortment of rescued furbabies.

Introduction to Amazon Ads

Presented by Mark Dawson

Reported by Jenny Gardiner

Mark Dawson helped to make Facebook ads a household term amongst indie authors. But at the conference, he shared 20 strategies that are working in the Amazon Marketing Service (AMS) right now. AMS, now Amazon Advertising, is a large ad placement system that operates in the whole Amazon website. The ads appear along with the wording “sponsored ad” on Amazon pages, and Dawson warned that soon authors will likely start having to pay to get their own books noticed on their own pages. These pages are essentially Amazon real estate and are becoming more and more filled with sponsored ads and directional buttons urging shoppers elsewhere to buy a variety of competing items. He said Amazon is constantly adding where you can advertise on their site.

Here are his tips:

1. Know your readthrough

This is really important. If a reader reads your book, they’ll keep on reading the series. Know how the percentage of readers who go from book to book in a series plays out to assess how ads will deliver. This allows you to estimate the true value per sale of each book.

Examples of how to calculate the readthrough:

Book 1: 100 sales

Book 2: 50 sales

RT (readthrough) from Book 1 to Book 2: 50%

Book 1: 100 sales

Book 3: 40 sales

RT from Book 1 to Book 3: 40%

Book 1: \$0.99 – Revenue: \$0.35

Book 2: \$2.99 – Revenue: \$3.09

Book 3: \$3.99 – Revenue: \$2.79

Book 1: \$0.99 > Revenue: \$0.35 > 100% = \$0.35

Book 2: \$2.99 > Revenue: \$2.09 > 50% = \$1.04

Book 3: \$3.99 > Revenue: \$2.79 > 40% = \$1.11

Value of sale of Book 1: \$2.50

Dawson's asked vendors for input. Kobo gave him data in which the actual RT value was around \$4 for the sale of Book 1—Dawson thinks that is a conservative number, and he's confident he will not lose his shirt, but he said it's okay to sometimes lose money on Book 1. He said to spend \$2 to make sales of a 99-cent book, without RT it looks like it's a -82.5% ROI, but with RT, it's 100 percent ROI. Consider this before switching off ads before you know if it is profitable. Amazon does not calculate read-throughs. But if the Amazon ACOS (Average Cost of Sales) is 20 percent, is that based on one book? Dawson says yes and no—there's a little bit of reach, and he thinks there's an attrition window, and if they click on an ad one day but buy much later, he thinks it's included.

2. Seven touches

This is the ad theory that a consumer must be exposed to a product seven times before buying:

1. Amazon also-bought,
2. Facebook ad,
3. Facebook messenger,
4. BookBub ad,
5. Mailing list,
6. Amazon email marketing, and
7. Amazon ad.

3. Target traffic

Targeting books with heavy traffic:

- Where are your readers looking? Where are those readers who would like your books?
- Get your PD (product display) ads on those pages. Search ads are harder to sell because you need people to display those specific terms, but with PD ads, it's easier to scale up.

4. Target big authors

Famous authors will have higher traffic on their Amazon pages. If you can get into those "also-boughts" (for him, Lee Childs would be a desirable "also-bought"), it's great. If you can get onto the first page of also-boughts, your book will do very well. Dawson watches his comparable "big" authors like James Patterson and Daniel Silva, and he'll try to get his PD ads on their pages as soon as their new releases drop, and he runs the ad at the top of their pages because he knows their publishers will be dropping tons of money to promote them to get product placement. Another good idea is look for a comp with a new release that has a television series coming out—get ahead of the curve and get ads on those pages in advance. Similarly look for news stories that could somehow tie in and help you place your ads on a relevant page.

5. Target Amazon

Dawson suggested targeting Amazon publishing books—now called First Reads, in which anyone in Prime gets a chance to download for free. Those books dominate the top of the charts

for the first three to four days of the month—these books have massive amounts of traffic because readers can **now** get free books, so everyone in Prime is going to those pages. It's a good place to put an ad for one of your free books—it will be expensive but it's a reliable source of traffic because Kindle First Read titles have enormous traffic. Amazon Publishing promotes regularly—get on those pages. He'll have an Amazon promo for one of his books that are with an Amazon imprint, and other thriller writers would be smart to advertise on his page because Amazon will be pushing his book hard.

6. Target BookBub

You have to move quickly on these—assuming books appearing as Featured Deals on BookBub will get tons of traffic, move quickly, be sure to subscribe to the BookBub books in your genre so you can immediately check for what books have come out that day and try to get your ads on those pages as well. BookBub ads come out and the spikes happen fast so you need to act immediately. Amazon is reasonably quick approving your ad. These are Product Display ads because you know what the books are, so it's more sensible to get your ads on there immediately.

7. Target movies

Targeting film adaptations is a good idea—placing ads on pages for these books will get a lot of eyeballs. He placed ads on the novel *Red Sparrow*'s page when the film version was released.

8. Advertise books you don't own

With multi-author box sets, each author can advertise the box set even though they don't necessarily have it in their own KDP account. He suggested doing so with traditionally published books as well.

9. Automatic keywords

Run an automatic keywords campaign—this is a sponsored keyword campaign letting Amazon choose the keywords. Some of his best ads are automatic. He's running 850 ads across the U.S. and the U.K. right now. He spent £1000 and it made him £2000. He said you should harvest the strong-performing keywords, then run those again in another campaign—do this through [Advantage](#) login, strip out restricted keywords that may have been included in the auto target (such as the word “Kindle” which you can't use) and put the “star” keywords in a new campaign. You can repeat this again and again. This way you can get impressions, sales, cost, quick throughways, none of which is available through normal KDP ads.

10. Target yourself

This is defensive advertising—fixing the leaks on your page instead of allowing someone else to advertise on your author page. These will be your most profitable ads—you want people to buy your books rather than someone else's. There are 200+/- options to click away from your page so you need to limit that, because Amazon is favoring paid ads over organic placement.

He showed an Amazon search for Mark Dawson and at the top there are ads for someone else trying to piggyback, so he ran campaigns to claim that real estate at the top of his page. He then went to that author's page and took the top of his page. Dawson's made over \$6,000 from doing that (he'll advertise a three-box set and he has three different box sets like that).

11. Target negative keywords

Fine-tune your targeting. Dawson prefers to craft his target so others don't take them. Exclude those unlikely to buy (example: if someone uses the word "free" in a search—you don't want those ads to show because someone won't want to spend \$6.99 for a box set if they're looking for a free thriller). Exclude those unlikely to enjoy your book. Say you don't want your ads to show to anyone looking for vampire books—remove those. Excluding those unlikely to enjoy your book is useful for reviews as well—you don't want to spend a lot of money advertising broadly and readers download it because they saw your ad on a page for a different genre and didn't get the reading experience they wanted and then give you a bad review.

12. Use bid+

Only available through Advantage, this allows Amazon to increase the bid to move ads to the top of a search or the first carousel of sponsored ads. Dawson thinks it is 50 percent more on a bid. The maximum daily budget is still in effect so you won't lose your shirt (example: bid 40 cents and ads are doing well; he's good going to 60 cents as long as he doesn't exceed the \$10 cap he put on it).

13. Advertise paperbacks

Dawson suggests using PDAs (Product Display Ads) to target paperbacks—some readers won't read digitally, so send them to your paperback page. This might be a big opportunity.

14. Advertise audiobooks

This is an underserved area of advertising. He takes his audio books and advertises them on big-selling audiobook pages. Because not many people are doing this right now, clicks are likely to be quite cheap.

15. Advertise perma-free

Dawson suggested considering running ads for your first free in series. There's a definite immediate negative ROI—you're not getting royalty so there's ad cost with no immediate revenue, but consider the other benefits—the ad at the end of the book has a CTA (Call to Action) that encourages the reader to click to the next in series. But there are other benefits:

Goal 1: RT (readthrough) into rest of series

- Book 1 is free.
- Optimize end matter for RT (include author's note at end telling about the writing process of the book and when the next book is coming, and what it's about, make it easy

to go on and buy it, then take the link from the second book and have it in text at end of last book).

- Profit from onward sales.

Goal 2: Mailing list sign-ups

- Optimize end matter for sign-ups.
- Offer lead magnet.
- Upsell to new subscribers (and might want subsequent books also).

Goal 3: Reviews

- Optimize end matter for reviews.
- Make it simple (don't link to product page or link to the page where you write reviews—go straight to where they post it so they don't have to search where to post review on that page).

16. Focus on backlist

Don't just advertise book one (one of the other covers might sell better), and do include all titles in the ads. Or run separate ads per book.

17. BookBub

It's good to ad stack for BookBub deals—it will increase your rank prior to the BookBub deal and might make the rank stickier, and then ads after the BookBub deal will ensure a slower decay of book sales. If you have a BookBub deal on a Friday, then on Tuesday through Thursday, run ads on less effective platforms to move your book higher, and AMS is a good way to do this.

18. Pre-orders

These ads can start the pre-order ball rolling, get books into rival also-boughts (remember those seven touches), and you can advertise to your fans.

19. Upsell

It's smart to target your own titles, and to advertise higher-ticket items as well. He'll advertise his own box sets of his series on his single page book pages.

20. AMG (Amazon Media Group)

AMG works with big publishers and runs *huge* campaigns that cost a fortune and get massive impressions. This is across the site, including first page and Kindle lockscreens. It's very expensive. It's high-ticket display advertising. You can target people who put your book in a basket but never checked out, people who bought a book six months ago but never bought another. The downside is it is quite expensive. He was able to get his book on the front page of Amazon.co.uk. The results of that ad spend for him: He spent £10,000, got 6.6 million impressions, 70,000 clicks, and 3,021 purchases. This also introduced many new people to his

books, which is hard to track, but he's confident that this upticks his sales. It is a minimum \$10,000 spend for AMG. Dawson said he's still running some existing ads through KDP, but he prefers to use Advantage because it is excellent.

Slides of Dawson's speech can be found [here](#).



[Jenny Gardiner](#) is an award-winning novelist and #1 Kindle bestselling author. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com, Paste Magazine, and on National Public Radio. She's also the food columnist for Cville Weekly in Charlottesville, Va. and the volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival.

Next Level Book Cover Production: The Creative Process

Presented by Jenn LeBlanc and Jess Michaels

Reported by Michele Dunaway

This workshop discussed how to work with a studio to create a custom image for your book cover. Because of internet glitches, Jenn LeBlanc and Jess Michaels started with a Q & A from the audience.

Q: As an author, should you go to the photo shoot?

A: Many authors do, but you don't have to be there. Authors can get pictures of the slides. You want to focus on the feeling you want, not the exact pose. You can see the model chemistry, which is what you want.

If you do the covers first, before you write the book, it can give you the feeling for your book. That's a benefit for the author. Some clients text, email, and Skype during the photo shoot. It's whatever is needed to get the author in to see what is going on, especially in a visual medium if they can't be there.

Q: What is the difference in price between stock footage and a live, custom shoot?

A: About \$1,000 a cover in photography alone for a live custom shoot. For a live shoot that is exclusively yours, you will get the image and the backups/extra images (often used for website and social media toppers) and no one else gets these. A shoot runs around \$1,000, the cover design is extra. The experience of having your people there is worth the cost.

Q: What makes shooting your own cover image so expensive?

A: Budgeting is very specific for a project. You are paying the producer, the makeup artist, the models, and for any costume rental. If you need a specific weapon, you pay for that. Studio Smexy uses Western Costume Company in Hollywood.

Q: How do we follow you?

#studiosmexy

@jennleblanc

@studiosmexy

After the internet was fixed, the presentation began. The majority of the presentation discussed the work that goes into hiring a studio to shoot a custom image for your cover, questions you should ask, and things you should think about, in order to take your book covers to the next level.

During the hour, Jenn showed many of her cover shoots and the cover images she's photographed. You can find those here: <https://jennleblanc.photoshelter.com/gallery-list>.

Jenn also shoots Jess Michaels's covers, and Jess discussed many of her shoots during the session. For Jess's covers, visit: <http://www.authorjessmichaels.com/>.

What you need to know about covers

Your cover is your promise to the reader. You must say something specific. When working to design your cover, don't be afraid to be inspired by specific movie studio images. We know that when we see a boy/girl leaning together on a cover it's going to be a romance. A big eye will be something scary. Yellow often means comedies. Do a Google search and see how many red dress movie posters there are, it's a keystone of the industry. So use these for inspiration and to talk to the photographer who will be shooting your cover.

Be sure to think outside the box: look at the following for positioning:

- Advertising
- Movies
- TV
- Statues

What the cover/image gives you is the feeling you are looking for and tells the reader instantly what the core of the story is.

There are three types of cover images you can use:

Stock—most affordable and widely used. You purchase the right to use this image, but anyone else can also purchase the image.

Exclusive—single title license. You purchase one image. No one else can use this image. However, you need to ask that if you buy the image, will all the others in the series that are similar be retired? This can cost \$300-\$1,000 to get an exclusive image, but the rest will never be seen again.

Custom—exclusive, complete control, you can't find it anywhere else, and you see what you want, and get it shot just for you. You can watch the shoots via Skype or in person and all the images are yours.

So you want to do a custom shoot?

What do you need to do or know to work with the photographer and photography studio?

1. Who is the book about (characters)? What is your book about (plot)? What are you looking for (tone/emotion)? The studio needs to know these things so that they can find the models and begin planning your shoot.
2. Do you have a basic concept? If so, send in your concept and any image ideas.
3. During the shoot, someone will move the models into the positions you want.

4. What type of images will you get? Will you get multiple images to use for promo? You can use [Canva](#) (or other programs) to make promo materials from the images you have purchased.
5. Does the studio understand what your designer will need to create your book cover?

Design notes

Make sure you get a great designer. Your designer should understand that print books sell spine out, so your designer should know that you will need images that wrap around the cover. You will want to put the series number of your book on the spine (#1, #2, etc.) so that it's easier to be seen by the reader. Your brand consistency is very important, so as you do your photography and design the covers, think of covers in terms of fonts and styles, such as books having a tight clench.

Ebooks are fronts only. The spine is never seen on Amazon. But you do want to be aware of what your book would be in print. Do your cover for print first—then it's easy for the designer to pull the ebook from it. The print cover must be a full piece of art and then you can create the design from that. Once shot, designers can change hair color, shirt color, etc. Even change ethnicity or add thicker eyebrows, a beard, etc.

Branding is also in imagery

Try to match tone and shape. Examples include the following:

- Color
- Design
- Matched design
- Matching crop
- Hero having a prop
- Black and white with color splash
- Personality

Have others look at your cover and give feedback. Covers often have keystone pieces. Examples include the following:

- Solo shirtless man
- Big dress for historical
- Lace/ruffles can be sweet historical
- Closed western shirt for sweet cowboy western

So think about what you want your keystone pieces to be, as this is part of your branding and what you will want to communicate to the studio.

Take a look at advertisements and other covers to see what the market is selling. Concentrate on the emotion, not the visual image itself as you are looking for inspiration. The emotion is what grabs the reader's attention.

When working with professional models, a good studio makes it simple and easy and fun. You can write books based on a cover, see the chemistry, see the scenes as you are shooting the

photos. You are in control, and a producer will oversee everything for you, including the casting call.

Licensing

When working with a studio, make sure you ask about licensing: Where can the images be used? A single title license means the image can't be cut up and used on multiple titles; it can be used only on one book. Find out if you can use your image on a T-shirt or in a meme.

Also check what happens with the budget and what happens if the images don't work. A good studio will also have model releases you can see, and clear contracts.



Michele Dunaway is your Nink editor. She highly recommends you plan on attending NINC's next conference in September 2019.

Game of Desire

Presented by Damon Suede

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Editor's Note: Please be aware this conference report contains graphic language and sexual descriptors/situations.

Damon Suede, the author of *Verbalize*, grew up out-n-proud deep in the anus of right-wing America, and escaped as soon as it was legal. Though new to romance fiction, Suede has been writing for print, stage, and screen for two decades. In the houseful of radical political lesbians where he grew up, Suede's mother used to say, "Friction makes fucking feel good and fights feel bad." She gave him a Hustler magazine so he would learn to masturbate early.

Suede said, where there is contrast, you don't have to belabor your points. The worst thing is to have someone stop and explain. If you reify contrast (Freud's term) by explaining it, you break it down and therefore break it.

What we authors say to readers is, "I am dreaming for you. I am going to be your imagination for the next few hours. I am an Olympian dreamer and can do that for you better than you can. Trust me."

- Desire and arousal are not the same.
- Action and activity are not the same.
- Action is not intention.
- Specificity is essential; it has to be meaningful specificity.

If the sex in a scene isn't intentional, cut it. With the emotional component, sex can serve a purpose, but without emotion it should be treated as suspense. When Suede arrives at the moment to write a sex scene but doesn't have an emotional change planned, he uses it to increase the sense of danger. This means not necessarily a physical danger, but a threat to the characters' sense of self, their status, their boundaries.

This is the difference between rape and sex. In the first spanking scene in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Grey tells the heroine, "Your body wants this, because it's set." But that's wrong. It's not a desired mind, it's an aroused body. The author gave the mistaken impression that one's sexuality can be hijacked by a mere physical sensation.

Arousal plus obstacles equals desire: There is conflict in that. Suede calls conflict "friction." Without the friction you don't get that runny goodness of emotional change inside.

Lots of genre fiction lets us process dangerous situations at a remove, so that we're protected, not terrified. The words we use telegraph to the reader the experience they will have. Modifiers express opinions. They break the fourth wall (in theatrical terms). You, the author, are

intruding between the reader and the characters with your opinions. Nouns convey assumptions, but verbs reveal dynamics. Suede ranks the power of different words in descending order of power:

verbs > nouns > adjectives > adverbs

Energy cannot exist in stasis. Even static energy seeks release. Energy colliding with other energy is what sex is.

Suede gave an example illustrated in *Les Liasons Dangereuses*. French *Ancien Régime* libertines named four stages of their sport: selection, seduction, subjugation, and separation. Innocent people think that selection is the sexiest part. Then you grow into realizing it's the seduction, the stalking process, pursuit. Hedonists say, no, it's subjugation that's best. But to true libertines, the greatest pleasure in the game of desire is separation, when you've ruined each other, and you walk away, because you have no heart. For them, that's the sweetest pleasure. These are *different moments of contact*.

What is *this* scene about, then? What phase of this process are we at?

Heat level is a dance of reader expectations. They want just enough heat to be titillated, but not enough to be nauseated. This is artifice: not realism but the illusion of realistic intimacy.

There are four ways to change the flavor: power, pace, risk, and surprise.

- Power: the power exchange, boundaries and limits, agreement and conflict; power exchange heats the space.
- Pace: the rhythm of movement and conversation, activity and environment. It can be about delay, or rushing.
- Risk: comes with shifts in stakes, danger, and a subjective sense of vulnerability in any way.
- Surprise: where you challenge the character's habits, assumptions, and expectations.

Privacy does things to intimacy, and exchange can create a private space in a public space, or a public space in a private space.

The arc of the scene is about amplification: how worked up are the characters? Use the characters as sculptures who carve each other. They are knives. Use them as knives. Caring creates character. Flirtation can last forever.

In fiction, you often see characters climax multiple times. This is a mistake. Readers can handle only one money shot. It isn't necessarily about the physical squirt; rather, it's the emotional spurt, their heart ejaculation. If you choose to do it more than once in a scene, you have to build it up a second time—or else the reader says, "I didn't feel anything that time." Personalize that climax so that every character's peak experience is different.

As Suede said, "A slow burn leads to a big bonfire. I love the yearn." Ask who is controlling the intimacy in this scene, and how can they pass the ball back and forth in this scene? You are finding out how the characters are dancing together. We are in a cage and the dancing happens

in the space between us. I can eyefuck someone from across the bar. Your reader does not distinguish between read experience and felt experience.

Enter the scene late and leave it early. You don't have to do all the steps—selection, seduction, subjugation and separation—in every scene. What do *your* readers prefer? What's their crack? Arousal and desire follow a flow, and there must be causality: you must not break the connections between cause and effect, cause and effect. The sequence of emotional, mental, and physical events must have their dots connected. In film, when you're writing down a scene, the fastest thing comes first. Your eye goes to the fastest object in the frame. Show the fastest moving object first, then the slower things. This gives the reader's eyes power in the scene.

Pace is music: you must know the voices, rhythm, melody, high note, and plan your beats accordingly. Dilate time if you need to. Compress time. Distort time. The reader doesn't care about the tab-A-slot-B scene blocking. They care more about the emotions. The best intimacy weaves between subject and object in an oscillating sine curve.

In romance, you dive deep inside; the emotion is known. In erotica, the concealed part is the emotion. Know the effect you are trying to produce. Our society says sex is either sanitized because sex is good, or it says sex is disgusting, traumatic, an illness. They're both wrong and right. Sex is how we get bruised and how we heal. The poison is the cure.

Sometimes sex is sophistication and sometimes it's about animality. Contact is when characters collide. Action bumps into action. Prepositions are propositions. The use of a preposition tells the reader where the reader is going to be taken. Do you thrust into, against, away from, onto? You always know what the character is doing by tracking the prepositions. The preposition contextualizes things, and establishes their position and their position of authority in the physical and emotional space.

He provided an indecent prepositions exercise where, using the following lists, attendees drafted a playful scene using one of the following preposition lists. Hit your subject/object curves! Cross the prepositions out as you use them. Bonus points for using one of the chosen lists *in order*.

- with, after, against, from, alongside
- below, toward, for, rather than, until
- around, under, along, next to, beside
- through, above, into, between, without
- during, inside, as well as, near, before
- astride, except, prior to, across, beneath

Intimacy requires that characters maintain an optimal distance. If I'm too close to the character, the spark won't happen. If I'm too far, the spark can't make the jump.

There is also ambivalence and trespass, and the most common boosts for peak intimacy are pre-contact longing and ambivalence. The ambivalence amplifies the situation. Post-contact trespass and control do the same thing. How can I trespass or shift control now that contact has occurred?

Also consider the reader gaze: why are they looking?

Virginity isn't about physical virginity. It is the rupture of any unique boundary that changes the character forever. In any drama, you create a boundary that will be violated ... and then you violate the boundary. Every intimate scene is a first time. This creates the continual escalation of erotica novels. How is *this* scene a point of no return? A vampire bite makes you a vampire irrevocably. The first time you do any particular kinky thing is a violation of the virginity boundary. You can always find different cherries to be popped. Virginity is always about irrevocability. Every moment of intimacy is a point of no return. You have to get the candy out of the piñata.

Know your characters' limits, revulsions, and hangups, not just their individual limits but their cultural hangups. The secret sauce of legendary sex is the surprise. The kinks of your characters build the world of the character. Trespass if you want to shock.

According to Sigmund Freud, "Cathexis is the focus of mental or emotional energy upon a person, object, or idea." Also Suede mentioned the word *Besetzung* (German), which means to fill (like a stocking) or to occupy (as in occupy militarily), or to charge with energy. In sex, one is *Besetzung*: filled, occupied, charged. The intensity resides in the received attention. It's about subtext, the unexpressed truth. Intensity creates danger, creates vulnerability. Obsession is dangerous.

The secret of dirty talk is that, the greater the sensation, the less articulate the character is.

You can find the handout for this workshop at <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/> (members must be logged in to access). It is strongly suggested that you download the handout, as portions of the handout elaborate and enhance the workshop as presented and as described below.



Jennifer Stevenson has published five series, 17 novels, and more than 20 short stories.

Indies in Print: Using Ingram Spark to Get Your Books into Bookstores

Presented by David Wind and Justine Bylo

Reported by Janis Susan May/Janis Patterson

The world of independent publishing includes paper books as well as ebooks and audio and gives the author full control, from inception to advertising. [Ingram Spark](#) (IS) gives the independent author direct access to 39,000+ libraries, retailers, schools and universities. IS has direct shipping and global delivery, distributes to Canada from the U.S., and maintains print facilities in the U.S. and Australia.

IS's Global Connect Program works with hardcover, paperback and trade paperback, and can make your book available widely. Bookstores order your book directly from Ingram, which does not sell directly to the public. It will distribute your print book to most online bookstores.

One benefit is that physical sales outlets that will not buy from Amazon do buy from IS. You can offer strong wholesale discounts and returnability, but you must always be prepared for returns. You can choose whether you want those returns destroyed or returned to you at approximately \$2 per book.

For an indie author or publisher, the range of discounts available is between 30-55 percent and you choose what discount you want to offer. By contrast, KDP offers only a 40 percent discount to its Expanded Distribution, which is not attractive to most bookstores. Generally 53-55 percent is the sweet spot to most bookstores. David Wind said he set a 53-percent discount and does not allow returns worldwide, though he does in the U.S. and sometimes Canada.

Libraries order from Baker & Taylor and Ingram; Amazon will not guarantee librarians have access to your books.

There are some cons to using IS. There is a one-time setup fee of \$49 per book for print (and the ebook option, if you choose to use it), but that fee is waived if you are a member of ALLi ([Alliance of Independent Authors](#)). There is also a \$25 fee to upload a revised manuscript.

David Wind said that the ease of use at CreateSpace was great, but with KDP print he has not found that to be the case. At CS there was human support, but at KDP you must go through the email help section first and wait for them to get back to you. At IS there is human help available 7 days a week. IS used to be more complicated in creating a cover, but you still need their cover template for exact specifics; the same is now true for KDP.

There is a charge of \$85 per book to get into the Ingram advance catalogue, and ALLi does not cover this fee.

Both speakers recommended you keep your book out of Amazon expanded list and use KDP for print distribution to Amazon only. Justine Bylo said that if you wanted to keep Amazon distribution but move all other distribution to IS, they can move books from KDP and CS

archives to IS and you can use the same ISBN (IF it is your own ISBN, not one of CS's "free" ones) for both Amazon and IS. Both speakers urged all writers to have their own ISBNs, available from Bowker's in the U.S. It was also suggested to buy 100 at a time if you are prolific, as you need a discrete number for print, large print, ebook and audio.

You can order proof copies from IS; they do not say "proof" or "not for sale" like those from KDP. KDP also limits your proofs to five copies.

Then Justine Bylo spoke, saying IS is the largest and most trusted global wholesaler/distributor of books for the self-publishing industry, working with publishers, authors, retailers and libraries. It offers an easy-to-use DIY publishing platform, free account setup, print and ebooks services and distribution in one stop, is POD enabled, has the ability to set "bookstore-friendly" terms, and has both global print and ebook distribution. The author/publisher can do just print books without activating the ebook option.

What you need to get started, besides a finished book:

- Your own ISBN.
- Print-ready files (PDF for print. Justine Bylo believed you can use a Draft2Digital PDF for the print interior, but you can definitely use Vellum.) Be sure that your print file is correct for your chosen trim size—IS offers over 30 different trim sizes.
- Your own IS account (see under Resources on the IS website).
- Metadata (the information about your book).

There are specific BISAC codes available on IS's website; you need three codes. These are what make the book discoverable. Always put the most important first, and it's better to put the most specific code first, not a general one.

Keywords are important; she suggested using at least seven to 10, but up to 100, but that's not really recommended.

Author location is also important. Local author appreciation is a big thing now; lots of bookstores are doing local author signings, and the author information is fed into all retailers, including libraries.

A short description of your book is necessary, and you can use other authors' names and book titles. This helps stores and librarians help customers. You should always update your metadata, hopefully every six months or so. Spend time on your description and keywords; repetition of words/phrases from metadata to description helps your discoverability.

In setting up your pricing and returns globally, make your prices in each country so you can offer each distributor in each country a wholesale discount.

Pre-sales are available up to a year in advance. Set a future pub date and a future on-sale date. The pub date lets retailers know when a book will be entering into the market, while the on-sale date tells retailers when they can actually sell that book to their customers. IS will start printing and shipping books 10 days before the on-sale date. They should be the same date!

Start marketing your book to stores and readers. Be clear when the book will be available for purchase—the on-sale date. Always be retailer-agnostic; no favoritism. Send ARCs to readers and retailers.

Distribution of print books does take some time and you will still have to market your book. Tell retailers and libraries that the book is available through Ingram, as physical retailers and libraries prefer to buy through Ingram. Remember that Ingram is *not* selling your book directly to stores. Also remember that changes to metadata such as pricing and cover changes get sent to retail partners but the time they are implemented is up to them.

When working with indie bookstores, always be respectful; it is good if you are a patron of the store—visit every couple of weeks, be friendly, buy a book occasionally. Tell them your numbers—if they are low, talk about your ebooks, but don't embellish—they can look this data up. Know their niche, be ready to talk sales numbers, and ask their advice. Give added value, i.e., what can you do to help their bookstore by doing signings, etc. It's a partnership.

Create a sell sheet, which is one to two pages with all the info about your book: title, pub date, price, ISBN, format, page count, BISAC codes, sales handle, description, author bio information, sales track, competitive titles, review quotes, etc. Get the owner's name first and take him a copy as a gift (signed to him before you get there). Always build a few copies of your book into your marketing budget.

[Indie Bound](#) is an ABA website that links readers to indie bookstores and allows readers to purchase books online to support independents.

[DartFrog](#) vets independently pubbed titles and distributes to partner bookstores. If your book is accepted into the program the DartFrog network places your book face out on specially branded shelf space in 20 indie bookstores. Writers must apply to the program; there is an \$89 fee to apply and, if accepted, an additional \$386 charge that will cover the initial investment for copies.

Miscellaneous

- www.ingramspark.com/self-publishing-courses
- Use promo code SPARK18 for FREE title setup for your print book, ebook or both. This offer is valid through Dec. 31, 2018, for new books only. It is not needed for CreateSpace transfers.

Justine Bylo can be reached at justine.bylo@ingramcontent.com



Janis Susan May/Janis Patterson is a 7th-generation Texan and a 3rd-generation wordsmith who writes in mystery, romance, and horror. Once an actress and a singer, Janis has also been editor-in-chief of two multi-magazine publishing groups as well as many other things, including an enthusiastic amateur Egyptologist. Janis's husband even proposed in a moonlit garden near the Pyramids of Giza. Janis and her husband live in Texas with an assortment of rescued furbabies.

The BookFunnel Guide to Finding Reader Happiness

Presented by Damon Courtney

Reported by Jenny Gardiner

Damon Courtney, fantasy writer and creator of the popular [BookFunnel](#) ebook delivery service, said the thing that makes readers happiest is content. The problem is the world is overrun with content; it's hard to keep a reader focused on yours and you really want readers to stick around. The way to do this is to make them feel special and to include them in your world.

"They feel they're committed to you and feel they're part of your author journey," Courtney said. "You don't have to write fast or in long-running series or detail your personal life—you don't have to be BFFs with your readers. They want content."

He recommended David Gaughran's book *Strangers to Superfans*, which he considers the bible on how to tap into your superfans that will buy all of your books and talk you up everywhere.

He said everyone is a superfan of something. The show *Firefly* had a small audience, but its rabid fan base perpetuated online long after the show was cancelled. He said when it was made, it cost about \$2 million per episode, and if you could get 2 million people willing to pay \$2/episode, then you'd spend \$2 million to make one and make \$4 million back. J.K. Rowling could announce a new Harry Potter book sold only from her website starting tomorrow for \$30 and fans would buy it in droves.

The most important thing you need is a mailing list. "If you're not getting them onto your platform, you're doing your career a disservice. Facebook owns the relationship with your reader. Amazon—you have to buy your own name as a keyword if you want to show up as a result to advertise for your own books. With algorithms deciding what people see, they see less and less of you. So build your own platform and no one can take it away from you," Courtney said.

HBO used to run second-run shows, but because content became too pricey, HBO started to create its own content. The Disney vault, once dripped out content slowly over years, but then content became available through other outlets like iTunes. Since they bought up ABC and Pixar and Marvel and Star Wars and 20th Century Fox, they've taken all that content back—you won't find it on a streaming service—instead you'll have to subscribe to Disney's. Content is king, so they can take their ball and go home, then start their own ballgame.

"The authors we see who are killing it are doing it with exclusive content—where readers can't get it anywhere else," he said. "The point is, you are creators, you have power to create your content. For the first time in history, the creator has power to decide where your content will go. Build your platform. Once you get readers in your orbit, you want to keep them there."

This means you need to create content—which means you have to engage with your readers—however you can. It doesn't have to be with newsletters or blog posts. All of your

readers want more stories. But he said every author should read Tammi LaBrecque's book *Newsletter Ninja*, which is an excellent book on how to talk to your readers.

He suggested short stories and novellas, which are quick to write, and are a good investment in time. They don't have to be free—real fans will pay for it. It can be in your world or with existing characters you've already written, or a minor character from a standalone book (one author who writes cat cozies wrote a short story from the POV of the cat). This helps keep fans happy between longer releases.

You could use the content as one more bit for your backlist. Or bundle with other books and sell a set you don't sell anywhere else. Put it in an anthology and find other authors who write in your genre (like Christmas or Halloween short stories released seasonally, then sold as part of a backlist after the season is passed). If you hate writing email newsletters, just write a story instead.

Serials work well—they can be used to lead into a series. Some authors are writing and sending to their mailing list. It can be two thousand words, or take something larger and break it down to smaller bits and feed it to fans to keep them happy. You could eventually box it and sell it. But your superfans will love it because they got it early, and maybe even for free. Courtney likened it to having your own personal Wattpad (which is mostly fan fiction). This gives you regular engagement with your fans.

Bonus epilogues create very high engagement because readers are still invested in the story. Extended scenes are popular—think about how you pay more for the Harry Potter movies with five extra minutes of extended footage. He called it a DVD extra of your book. It might just be deleted scenes that didn't make your book, or maybe some extra steamy scenes.

Courtney said authors can sell exclusive deals through BookFunnel, which makes nothing from the sale. You set the price/terms/etc. and get 95 percent of the profit. A lot of authors are using direct sales through BookFunnel. Reward fans with discounts—especially with backlist books that aren't moving many units, or with readers unfamiliar with the backlist. You can send a discount direct to your list via email saying, "Today you can get the first book of my series for 99 cents direct from my website." You can convert a freebie seeker into a buyer, because maybe while looking for your freebie, they'll see something else they then decide to buy. Through BookFunnel you can glean data about who is willing to download what books for what price, so you can segment the readers who actually buy books from those who only buy bargains. He said readers love discounted box sets—six to 10 books in a series that aren't available anywhere else but BookFunnel, direct from the author at a greatly discounted rate. The author can afford to do this because it's still more profit than on Amazon since the author gets 95% back on each sale.

Many KU authors offer deals before the book becomes exclusive on Amazon—this will placate readers who don't purchase their books from Amazon. Make it clear it'll be exclusive from Amazon, but you can buy it right now before it goes exclusive. A pre-exclusive exclusive. This is akin to bands offering fan clubs early access to tickets, often with better seats.

"If people want to throw their money at you, let them," Courtney said. "It's not going to affect your rank enough to change things on Amazon, for instance, and you make more money this way."

He said they integrate with five different shopping systems. Those in the U.K. don't have to collect taxes in the U.S., though they do have to worry about VAT (though Payhip, for instance, handles all the VAT for authors—taking 5 percent of transaction—and remits to E.U.). With Payhip licensing structure, they are the seller of record and since they're a U.K. company, they don't collect U.S. sales taxes, which makes it easier for American authors.

On [Patreon](#), you can set up a subscription service. He cited an author who sets up reward levels. The \$5 reward level gets you the \$4.99 book two weeks early, then the books go into KU exclusively. The \$25 reward level says, "Please don't pay this much, my books aren't worth it, but people keep wanting this." She has five superfans who will pay \$25 for anything she publishes. Courtney said those on Patreon with exclusive content are selling extremely well—they do character sketches, character background, novellas, series, and content you can't get anywhere else but for their "patrons" on Patreon.

"You are content creators," he said. "You should have an idea of what your readers want from you, so they want the content and you know what it is. You should be making readers happy and making money, and you have the power to do both of these things. Remember, not everyone will be a superfan, but a superfan will buy everything you put out, and if they can't get the content anywhere else, they will come to you to get it."

Some of the sites he suggested for building a store for yourself include [Payhip](#), [Paypal](#), [Woocommerce](#), and [Shopify](#) (where you can do e-commerce, swag, etc).

Another great idea is a birthday club for your readers—allow them to select a free book from your catalogue for their birthday. Courtney also recommends printing a batch of cards with information about a book you're giving away, with print codes to hand out as promotions—they last for 18 months and that doesn't start until the day you generate the codes.



[Jenny Gardiner](#) is an award-winning novelist and #1 Kindle bestselling author. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com, Paste Magazine, and on National Public Radio. She's also the food columnist for Cville Weekly in Charlottesville, VA and the volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival.

Book Covers: Critical Technical and Legal Considerations

Presented by Jenn LeBlanc and Jess Michaels

Reported by Michele Dunaway

Following their workshop “Next Level Book Cover Production: The Creative Process,” Jenn LeBlanc and Jess Michaels zeroed in on legal and technical considerations.

One key takeaway from this workshop was that, no matter where you buy your images, you need to read your license. Another was that you simply can’t download, share, or post things on the internet, even if made by a member of your street team without proper licensing.

A license will cover things like credit, territories, usage (count), format, and output.

For instance, for LeBlanc, you buy an image from her and it’s for one title/cover. You can’t break the image up in parts and put it on four different book covers, for example. Licenses are per book.

So make sure that your license covers what you want to do with it, and if not, either move on or ask for modifications to the license.

This is important for stock sites—be sure to check what you can do with the image you are purchasing.

Even your portrait photo/headshot that you would use with your bio/about the author has a license. It’s written for how many times you can use it and whether the image has to be credited to the photographer.

All images are copyrighted. Copyrighted images belong to the photographer. If you take the picture, you own the image. You can do whatever you want with it. When you own the image, you can do what you want with it, as long as you have all the necessary releases (like model releases).

A license gives someone permission to use your work. You do not own the image, but you can purchase a license to use that image. You cannot do whatever you want to do with it, but must work within the terms of the license. You need to know your limits.

The use of your image on a book cover is not fair use. Fair use covers commentary, search engines, criticism, parody, news reporting (editorial), research, teaching, library archiving, and scholarship.

(Reporter’s Note: It is usually considered fair use when a reviewer posts an image of your book cover to accompany a review/criticism of your book. It’s also fair use when a library uses an image of your book in its catalog. Someone can show your book cover as an example during a lesson and this may be fair use. But you can’t simply take someone’s image and use it how you want. For more on fair use, here’s an article: <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/>.)

Editorial imagery is for non-commercial and non-promotional use only. Editorial images may or may not have the necessary releases for commercial usage. Commercial use is income generating of any kind, whether direct or indirect. Direct is sales pages. Indirect is blog, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

Your online presence should be thought of as commercial. There are two basic rules of social media: 1. If you're sharing from a page (not reposting) you should be okay, 2. If you're uploading directly, you better have a license.

LeBlanc went through the various social media sites next.

- *Instagram* is primarily original content, re-sharing is credited, and screenshots are of lower quality. Essentially, she said that content creators are better protected on this site.
- *Facebook* is often a questionable provenance, re-sharing is advised, and there is the capability to do a full resolution download, but the metadata showing ownership will be stripped. Basically, content creators are not protected.
- *Pinterest* is LeBlanc's least favorite site. Again, content creators are not protected, and like Facebook, it's always questionable provenance. She said re-sharing is the norm, but provides no protection. There is full resolution download capability, and the metadata is stripped completely. According to LeBlanc, Pinterest is creating massive numbers of orphan works. She said Pinterest creates and fosters this community of re-sharing and comfort that makes people believe everything on the site is free from copyright, and emphasized that's a big old lie.

As creators, she suggests you make certain you watermark your images, and as creators, we know it's going to be stolen.

She also warned that people will make money by suing you for copyright violations, so be careful what your street team does and be careful about what you share from your street team.

She gave a personal example of how one author's street team took one of LeBlanc's images and created something with it, and then the author shared it. That's a copyright violation. LeBlanc didn't sue, but she did want to educate and spent a great deal of time with the author, who worked to get it all taken down.

Authors need to understand it's more than an image on Pinterest. If all images are registered, it's a clear violation, so she suggested registering your images. Pinterest will say it's not liable, which is one reason it strips the metadata on upload. Be sure to read the fine print on social media sites before use.

LeBlanc then went on to cover other legal considerations. One of these involved model releases. She said you cannot use an image of a person in a commercial manner without their explicit permission (including your family). This includes sharing on social media. Make sure the model is paid or the release is void. Ask photographers for copies of the model releases. If they say no, it's a red flag.

Another thing you need to be concerned about is property releases. You need to get permission if the place in the photo is clearly identifiable. You can't use an image of a place in a commercial manner without the explicit permission of the property owner. This includes

pictures of places like national parks, as well as the Las Vegas strip (minus the Welcome to Vegas sign—that you can use) and Disney parks. She warned that Disney goes after everything.

As for your own work, it's protected by copyright, but you have more rights when you file the copyright. (Reporter Note: Google [Copyright.gov](https://copyright.gov) and you'll go right to it.)

Audience input was always register the first version, because then it's good as soon as it's filed. Keep the number filed. Someone else can muddle your number and publish with that number; an example of the movie *Gravity* was given. So file and send your manuscript when it's final, and you can also pre-register it.

The presentation then turned to censorship, and that Amazon has rules. There have been cover issues with BDSM with people, erotica covers, how low the pants can be, nipple gate, side boob, and what Amazon feels is inappropriate touching. LeBlanc put up a slide with some of the Amazon rules in regards to pornography, offensive content, and standard rules, such as no female nipples, no genitals and no crack. You can find a complete list by going to [Amazon advertising creative policies](#). There is one specifically for [book ads](#).

(Reporter Note: Here's an old article I found on this topic: <https://www.rtbookreviews.com/rt-daily-blog/amazons-banned-book-covers>)

As the session wound down, the audience and presenter discussed a podcast, run by entertainment lawyers. (Reporter Note: not sure if this is it, but this is what I found via Google — <https://entertainmentlawupdate.com/>)

In addition, the following apps were suggested for making memes:

- [Word Swag](#)
- [Retype](#)
- [Fontmania](#)
- [Werble](#) (which adds animation)
- [Canva](#)

Last, LeBlanc said to keep trying if something gets rejected. If you get a no, for example from Facebook, which often does a lot of blanket no's to content and memes, then visit the places Facebook says to visit to work through the issue. Keep working through it until it's acceptable.



Michele Dunaway is a high school English and journalism teacher, and she still found tons to learn in this session. She's also your Nink editor.

Emerging Innovations That are Empowering Indie Authors

Presented by Kevin Tumlinson

Reported by Rochelle Paige

As Kevin Tumlinson put it during his workshop, “Author empowerment is on the rise. They have better marketing, better distribution, and better discoverability.” Tumlinson’s presentation focused on tools and resources that authors can use to craft their perfect careers, including new innovations from **Draft2Digital** (D2D).

D2D feels like audio is the new ebook, a newer and more open territory—or the Wild West of authorship. Sixty-seven million Americans listened to an audio book in 2017, and it’s only trending upward. Audio is the fastest-growing format, with 28.8 percent year-over-year growth from 2016 to 2017 and 146.2 percent five-year growth from 2013-2017.

In 2016, D2D helped with the launch of **Findaway Voices**, a way for indie authors to produce and distribute their books as audiobooks. There’s no exclusivity; authors own and control all rights. Distribution is up to 190 markets worldwide. They offer custom casting and pro production. Authors keep 80 percent of Findaway’s royalties. Plus, if the project is uploaded through D2D, the process is easier and the \$49 casting fee is waived.

D2D thinks libraries are also a big opportunity. Libraries can be your key to discoverability, revenue, and good karma. From an access standpoint, they’re even bigger than movies and Americans visit libraries three times more often than they go to the movies. To illustrate the point further, Tumlinson pointed out that there are 17,000 public libraries but only 13,000 Starbucks locations. The reach of libraries is huge—in 2016, 41 percent of Americans visited a library website, there were 1.5 billion in-person visits, and library patrons checked out 391 million ebooks. Offering your ebooks through libraries can help improve word of mouth since happy readers are your best marketing tool.

Tumlinson drove home the point that “exclusivity hurts libraries” since decreased availability of titles could mean fewer visits to this vital resource. To make it easier for authors to distribute to libraries, D2D offers two options—**Bibliotheca** and **Overdrive**. Combined, they allow for distribution to about 40,000 libraries in more than 70 countries. They also offer different ways to get paid when you distribute to libraries through them.

The traditional method is when a library licenses one copy at a time. It’s called One Copy, One User (OCOU) and the library can only lend their copy to one patron at a time. From a royalty perspective, it’s a “one and done” scenario because the author gets a royalty from just one sale. The library pays full price, which is usually higher than retail. But since there is only one library patron able to read that copy at a time, there’s a risk of losing momentum. There’s

also a potential issue of libraries being unwilling to pay the higher purchase price for new-to-them authors or books.

That's where the new method comes into play. It's called cost per checkout (CPC) and offers the library unlimited checkouts. It allows libraries to meet however much demand there is for the book, and nobody has to wait to check it out. There's a lower buy-in: libraries pay only one-tenth of the full purchase price. But there's higher discoverability because libraries and patrons are more willing to try untested authors and books. There's also greater revenue potential since there's no loss of momentum due to the book being unavailable. The library can have more copies out at once, and the author earns revenue per checkout.

Although audiobook and library distribution are important, the most asked question and the number one thing on authors' minds is, "How do I market my books?" D2D has an answer—they're working on it. D2D is developing resources that should help to improve discoverability and build stronger connections with their readers. The aim for their Books2Read service is to help with the discoverability dilemma.

Books2Read is best known for the ability to create **Universal Book Links** (UBLs), which is a single link that will send your readers to everywhere your book is online. Not only is a UBL geographically specific, it can also be retailer specific. The first time a reader clicks on one, they pick their favored storefront and then they'll go directly there from then on. UBLs are customizable and evergreen, free to use, and they track the number of clicks a link gets. The reporting includes overall clicks to the page, as well as how many readers click through to the top three stores for the title. Books2Read also allows authors to include affiliate code information for Amazon, Apple Books, B&N, Kobo, Google, and Smashwords. Authors can create as many UBLs for the same book as they want, which allows for better tracking of clicks on ad campaigns. It can be used for any book, with any vendor—including titles offered by other authors when you're sharing them with your readers.

If you've created UBLs for your titles, then you can click on your author name on your list of links to get to your D2D **Author Page**, which can include an author bio and photo, links to your social media links, author website, and your newsletter signup, a title featured at top, and carousels of your books, by series. If you don't plan to use your D2D author page, there's an option at the top to deactivate the page. But if you do plan to make use of it, then you can add more details and edit it until you're ready to share the page—possibly to stand in for your author website or to link in from your site to your page. Even the "hero" book that is highlighted on the page is customizable. Everything is all auto generated, which means no coding. And it's free. You don't even have to distribute through them to use it.

Another feature available to authors who have created Books2Read UBLs are D2D **Book Tabs**—a landing page specific to the title. They feature customizable promotional elements such as a book description, cover thumbnail, carousel of other books in the same series, author bio and photo, and social media links. They're built around the UBLs you've already created, so there's no coding involved on the author's end.

Tumlinson also shared news about two capabilities they have coming soon for authors. The first was **Shared Universes**, inspired by the closure of Amazon's Kindle Worlds. You can open up your series, characters, and settings to outside contributors. D2D will handle the payment

splitting for you, and there are lots of payment options including international. They offer wide distribution to Amazon, Apple Books, Kobo, B&N, and more.

But what excited the attendees even more was news of the upcoming launch of **D2D Print**, which is currently in beta. There won't be any upgrade or recurring fees, and low-cost author copies. You can supply your own cover artwork, or use one they'll generate for you from your ebook cover. They can also generate your interior file for you, or you can upload your own print-ready PDF. D2D Print will offer matte or glossy covers, cream or white paper, and the option for a D2D-provided ISBN if you don't want to purchase them yourself.



Rochelle Paige is the NINC Conference Sponsorship Chair and writes romance in a variety of sub-genres: contemporary, new adult, paranormal and romantic suspense. Although she holds a BA in economics, her career was mainly spent as a marketing professional. She lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, with her two sons.

Get Your Act Together: Organization for Authors and Assistants

Presented by Mel Jolly

Reported by Lori Christensen

Mel Jolly is a project manager and assistant for multiple *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling authors and has been “Keeping Authors Out of the Loony Bin” since 2009.

First, there is no one right way to do things. Jolly stressed she is imparting things she has learned, but they may not work for everyone, and that’s okay. It all starts with the math: Free up time + free up brain space = write more books.

What are your goals?

- Less forgetting to do the things
- Less stress
- More time
- More brain space

We need to clear up brain space and make room for more creative thinking. Jolly recommended a book called, *Deep Work* by Cal Newport, which talks about how, with the way our lifestyle is right now with all the interruptions, it’s difficult to get into a deep, creative thought process. Along this vein, she also referenced a statistic she read in a book called *Manage Your Day to Day* by Jocelyn K. Glei. In an experiment where college students read a passage, those who paused to instant message took 25 percent longer to read the passage, and that didn’t include the time that they were messaging.

The lesson is, multi-tasking doesn’t really work—it’s spitting your attention and disrupting focus.

To get organized, look at where your time is going. This is one of the most important things. We have to have data so we can make good choices. One simple solution is to keep track of the hours you spend doing different activities. How much time are you spending on writing, email, newsletter, research, etc.?

In general—we believe we are working a lot more than we actually are.

You can download Jolly’s spreadsheet [here](#), which can help you decide what is a good investment of your time. You can use your cell phone, but Jolly suggests not using your cell phone to track your time, calling it “the tiny box of distractions.”

Some suggested time-tracking tools:

- [My Time](#) (Mac only). A timer that you can set multiple things on.
- [RescueTime](#). This is for people who don't want to deal with any of this, they just want an app that tells them what they did that day. It will tell you that you spent this much time with X, Y, and Z open.
- Stopwatch app. Jolly's preferred method.
- Kitchen timer.

If you are feeling totally resistant to timers, explore why. Maybe it's not for you, but don't write it off simply because you're scared of what you will find out. If you are trying to accurately and actively track time, you'll stop some of that multitasking. If you don't really want to write down that you were on Facebook for five minutes, perhaps the accountability will keep you off Facebook.

Other data-collection tips:

- Say no to perfection. Don't let this stress you out. If you don't want to use a timer, look at the clock. Estimate your time.
- Start by tracking a few things; writing, social media, and email because social media and email are two things that really want to steal your time.
- It will become a habit once you start doing it. Don't like a spreadsheet? Use a notebook. Use a Post-it. Do something that makes you aware of what you are doing with your time.

As you track time, you'll need to evaluate what is work time vs. playtime. For example, draw the line between messing around on social media and actual networking, engaging with readers, or working on a client's social media. There's also YouTube time—is it true research or are you watching a cat ride a Roomba and calling it research?

Once you have data, you can evaluate and hone in on important things in your workday. You can figure out when you are most productive. Jolly suggested the book *2k to 10k* by Rachel Aaron for more information on when you are most productive. If you start tracking when you're writing or how much you're writing, you can figure out when it comes the easiest, or when is the best time to do other things besides writing. You figure out whether you are a morning person or a night owl. *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing* by Daniel H. Pink is another good resource about finding your own rhythm and when you'll be most creative. Figure out when is your brain off-time.

Also, document what slowed you down or what distracted you. Write down dumb stuff like when your cat threw up and it took time to clean it up. Did music distract you? Did your kid distract you? Think about those things. Depending on the answers you derive from your data evaluation, the goal is to carve out time from your peak productivity.

One of the best productivity tips Jolly's read was the Pomodoro Method, which centers around 20-minute sprints. Work for 20 minutes, take a break, and repeat. Another one of the best tips she's read is to take one thing you do—something you know takes you approximately

X amount of time. Now try to do the task in 1/3 amount of the time because tasks expand to the time you allow for them. You may find out you've been wasting time you could have been spending on other things.

The biggest time thieves are email, social media, an unorganized to-do list, and the feeling of being overwhelmed. Sometimes there are so many things to do, and despite knowing all of them, you find yourself forgetting some of the things you need to do, or you can't possibly decide which is the most important. You want to set up a system where you don't get to a level where you are paralyzed with indecision. Logically, if you're not overwhelmed, the best thing to do would be to get something, anything, done.

Jolly described email as a to-do list for you created by someone else. She suggested creating multiple accounts to separate your email so that you aren't distracted by emails that don't apply to your current tasks. Emails can be set for the following:

- Professional
- Personal
- Fan mail
- Newsletter

Other strategies include forwarding or setting loop traffic to digest. Email filters are also a good way to separate and manage your inbox. However, it's important to make sure that you aren't an "out of sight, out of mind" kind of person. If you are prone to forgetting to check the filtered emails, you have to be careful what you filter. Either make sure it's not important or set a reminder to check that filter.

Find a time to schedule emails. Don't reply right away. This stops you from being in an instant message conversation through email. Make sure professional emails only send during your working hours. You may be reading and answering emails, but the replies will be scheduled.

A couple of email tools for cleaning up your inbox and scheduling emails are [SaneBox](#) and [Boomerang](#) for Gmail.

Also, remember not to keep your email inbox open because it's too tempting to check it. Turn off the push notifications on your phone, including VIP contacts. Train people that you are not that fast at email (this applies to the scheduling strategy).

Jolly also had tips for social media. #1 tip: Care less! Others included the following:

- Set a "not before ____" time of day limit, which helps to avoid using social media to procrastinate.
- Use Facebook time as a reward.
- Use bookmarks on your browser and bookmark the link directly to your client's page and bookmark Facebook links to avoid your home feed.
- Schedule! You can schedule directly on your Facebook page or use [TweetDeck](#), [Hootsuite](#), [Buffer](#), or [Crowdfire](#), all third-party options if you'd rather go that direction.

If it seems overwhelming, Jolly said try it just for a day. Scheduling separates your brain from work posts and life posts.

- For Twitter, use lists to make the flow of information more manageable. Follow other people's lists rather than making your own.

A to-do list is there to remind future you. Forgetting to do a thing or remembering to do a thing but turning it in late are major causes of stress. Spread out your to-do items; plan ahead. Make decisions about your to-do list before you need to be working on it, and make them when your willpower is strongest. The night before, pick at least one thing you'll do and when you're going to start it.

Create routines for yourself, make habits, no matter how small. Give yourself goals that you can meet so you don't train yourself that you never succeed. Remember that it's easier to keep up rather than catch up. You can't always keep up but try to prioritize what you want to put the most effort into keeping up. Another book recommendation from Mel: *Mini Habits* by Stephen Guise.

Project management tools and apps include [Basecamp 2](#) (significantly cheaper than 3), which is a to-do list calendar. It segments so your brain doesn't get overwhelmed. You can also use a digital or paper calendar. The rule is: If it needs to get done, it goes on the calendar. If it's on the calendar, it gets done.

Jolly finished up with a few time-saving tools and productivity tips.

- Organize your digital life: Mel gave a list of links for tools to help with this.
- Designate a work space for yourself and keep it organized.
- Get more sleep!
- Three things list. Make a list of three things you'll get done that day—no matter how long they take you.

Jolly has a weekly newsletter with one tip at a time: <http://www.AuthorRx.com>. You can find links to her recommended tools [here](#).

Elle Christensen lives in New York City where she wakes up every day awed and inspired by her surroundings. She writes romance in a variety of sub-genres including PNR/fantasy, contemporary, new adult, romantic suspense, and more. After appending the majority of her life as a professional singer, these days she enjoys shining the spotlight on her characters instead.

Seven Ways to Grow Your Book Sales Internationally

Presented by Joanna Penn

Reported by: Jenny Gardiner

New York Times bestselling author and award-winning entrepreneur Joanna Penn told her audience authors should concentrate on a 50-year asset growth plan rather than the short-term 90-day cliff they tend to focus on, and one overlooked way to grow those assets is through international markets. Penn said because of the broad perspective afforded her through her own international, multi-cultural family, she pays particular attention to global markets, and works to ensure she is maximizing her sales overseas in often-ignored parts of the world.

“You are creating an intellectual property asset with every book that can build you a long-term sustainable business for your lifetime and for 50-70 years after you die,” she said. “If you want to get into the rest of the world, you have to have a long-term view of (your books) being an intellectual property asset and think ‘How can I explode it into all these places?’ This is the mission.”

This growth she refers to isn’t even with foreign-language translations, but simply English language global sales. She pointed out that there are tens of millions of educated English-speakers in emerging mobile-first markets such as Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Egypt, India, Thailand, and China. In these countries, use of mobile devices is rapidly increasing, and with it will come untapped audiences of readers—and listeners.

According to [Singularity Hub](#), in the next six years, four billion “new minds” will be connected to the worldwide web via mobile phones—these are all viable consumers as readers.

“This is great for audio-first, because this is how many people learn English,” she said. “This will double the size of the world market. Amazon is being aggressive for the Indian market because growth is huge there.”

While Americans tend to view the world a bit myopically, there’s a vast untapped market if authors look beyond the obvious first-world English-speaking universe. For instance, the [world’s biggest book fair](#) will be 50 years old and it’s held in Egypt. Kuala Lumpur will be the [Unesco World Book Capital in 2020](#). Four in 10 books sold in Sweden are already through subscription services. Storytel—looking for audio-first future—is going where Amazon is not prevalent, in places like Mexico, Brazil, Latin American and Asia. Penn suggested going onto [New Publishing Standard](#) to find out where the publishing market is headed.

Penn listed seven points to back up her experience that global markets can improve an author’s overall bottom line:

Online marketing is already global

Penn showed that her hits page and her top visits are not just to the U.S., U.K., Canada and Australia, but also, surprisingly, Nigeria. A lot of her direct sales are to Africans, because they

can't usually buy on platforms such as Amazon. People from 211 countries have downloaded her podcasts. All content marketing is global—if you're on a local radio station, it might not start out as global content, but then you put it somewhere—your blog, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, or Instagram—where it can be downloaded by others globally, and it becomes international then.

Release in all markets at the same time

Authors need to release books everywhere at the same time. Is your whole backlist available in 190 countries worldwide? If not, you'll very likely be pirated, because if someone can't get your book through a legitimate download site in a useful format, they'll get it from a pirated site. If you license rights in one territory, you should independently publish at the same time so you can benefit from marketing to all. If you've already licensed rights, check your contract and then check the country sites.

Publish wide and use country links or redirection

Penn has sold books in 86 countries via Kobo, but they're on sale in 190 countries. She's not marketing in all of them, but they're available, therefore discoverable. Apple Books has stores in 52 countries. [Tolino](#)—in Germany they have a strong position and she said, you're missing out on 50 percent of the ebook market there if you're not with them. [IngramSpark](#) is another important outlet. She said her print sales have doubled from 10 to 21 percent since she went online with IngramSpark. Her audiobooks have gone from four to eight percent because of global distribution.

"Think how else might I exploit my intellectual property rights around the world?" she said, adding she signed a deal in South Korea through IngramSpark—money she'd not have, had she not pursued this foreign market. In Britain, she signed up for the ALCS—[Authors Licensing Collection Service](#)—where she gets paid each time her books are borrowed. She said it's important to use redirection links such as Onelink, Books2Read, ReaderLinks, and BookLinker, to appeal to more than just American readers.

Update multi-currency prices

Penn said it's smart to check appropriate local prices when you can. Some will be lower than auto-calculated and others higher, and adjusting them may result in more sales. When looking at multi-cultural pricing, do some research—you can see how normal prices are with comparable books, and see how they match up to yours. If five similar books to yours are listed on Amazon India at 49 Rupees, then you want to be sure yours isn't priced at 180 rupees.

Run paid ads to multiple countries and stores

You can do international BookBub ads—even if BookBub turns you down for the main countries (U.S./U.K./Canada) it's worthwhile to get your name into those smaller international markets. She suggested applying for promotions with [Kobo Writing Life](#). Consider doing a promotion for Australia/New Zealand Mother's Day, for instance. Or there is an Australia/

New Zealand Thanksgiving and Columbus Day three-for-two sale, in which your Double Daily Deal will run in Canada, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand.

She added that it could be much cheaper to run Facebook paid ads for a country or city in order to target other countries rather than the U.S. Another idea would be to do a Facebook ad targeted at, say, the U.K. in order to get newsletter growth from that region.

Schedule social media in multiple time zones

As someone who lives overseas, Penn schedules Twitter to target the American market—and this same principle can be applied to American's targeting other countries: target tweets that are content-related that attract people interested in those things. She said look at your own culture with new eyes as something that might appeal in another part of the world. Anything you tweet about that might interest people in another part of the world can lead to people discovering your books.

Be inclusive with your marketing

Show people you care about people in other countries by using international links on your website. Know how many of your readers are international; if you talk to them, you might find out you have an international audience. Post a picture out your window and ask others to send a picture of where they are at that very moment. Show that you care.

"Remember that this is a long-term investment," Penn said. "What are the demographic shifts that are going to happen in the next 20 years? Definitely there will be mobile (phone) shifts. People will have phones, not NOOKs or Kindles (for reading). Global growth and change will shift—how will you protect your author career for the next 10-20 years?" She showed a heat map of where her buyers were earlier in her career and where they are now after increasing her efforts toward global sales, and she can track enormous growth since she undertook this effort.

She added it is important to track your revenue by country so you know how you're faring in these emerging markets—in five years she's gone from Amazon sales in six countries to 13 countries.

Penn emphasizes these many small steps can add up to important increased sales over the long-term, building a readership in foreign markets, and cementing your professional legacy in a larger way.

Slides of Penn's speech can be found at <http://www.thecreativepenn.com/ninc2>, password NINC.



Jenny Gardiner is an award-winning novelist and #1 Kindle bestselling author. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com, Paste Magazine, and on National Public Radio. She's also the food columnist for Cville Weekly in Charlottesville, VA and the volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival.

Dead Right: Forensics for Fiction

Presented by Geoff Symon

Reported by Sidney Swanson

Federal Forensic Investigator Geoff Symon acknowledges writers may choose to bend reality when describing death and its aftermath, but his goal was to provide a better picture of what happens in real life, including correct word choice and usage. (For handouts and a list of his nonfiction forensics for genre fiction writers titles, see the bottom of this article.)

Coroner vs. medical examiner

Symon began with an extended discussion of the history of the positions of coroner in the UK and U.S. and medical examiner in the U.S. The word coroner derives from “crown,” an elected position beginning in 1194 England. A coroner had to be a gentleman. He worked on behalf of the crown, preventing county sheriffs from seizing assets the crown wished to seize, following certain kinds of deaths. In cases of death by murder or suicide, the crown was entitled to collect the assets of the murderer or suicide victim. A coroner’s job was to determine if a questionable death was murder or suicide.

The U.S. started with a coroner system inherited from England. As in Great Britain, U.S. coroners are elected by county and have the job of determining cause and manner of death. Being a coroner in the U.S. does not require medical qualifications or experience.

So where did the office of medical examiner originate? In 1918, fed up with corruption in the coroner’s office, New York City developed the first medical examiner office to replace the coroner’s office. Medical examiners were hired rather than elected. Further, they were required to have an MD and to be forensically board certified. A coroner *can* meet these requirements, but they are not required to meet either.

Other states and counties adopted the NYC system, resulting in the current dual system. Some states have one office, some have the other, and some have both. Because of this, it is important for authors to do their research in order to see which system is in place in the state and county in which their story is set.

While it is possible for an inexperienced or otherwise unqualified person to be elected to the office of coroner, this would not be common. Further, in the hypothetical case where an elected coroner lacks training or experience, that coroner can hire a deputy who has training. State by state, positions are filled as the state sees fit. Additionally, deputy coroners may be installed where counties are too large for a coroner to travel to the far reaches of a county in a timely manner. In some counties, a justice of the peace may function as a deputy coroner. Again, an author who wants to get it right will need to research the county and state policies.

Autopsies

Symon explained the difference between English usage of two related words, *autopsy* and *necropsy*. Both mean the dissection of a corpse; however, autopsy is for humans while necropsy can be used for animals. Symon then detailed the types of autopsies that might be needed in different situations, as well as protocols surrounding each.

In the case of a death that is part of a crime scene, the body “belongs” to the medical coroner in the sense that law enforcement and other individuals are not allowed to interact with the body at all. It is possible that the handling of a body believed to be dead (but not dead) might accidentally result in actual death. A coroner or medical examiner must make the determination of whether or not a body is dead.

Having made the determination the body is dead, the coroner’s or medical examiner’s office will bring the body to a morgue. A law enforcement official can request to view the autopsy if one is ordered, and the request will typically be granted.

Purposes of an autopsy: forensic or clinical

There are two types of autopsies: forensic and clinical, and they are significantly different. A clinical autopsy will be performed in a hospital by a medical professional for a non-suspicious death. Typical reasons for a clinical autopsy are either furthering medical knowledge about disease or providing information that will prevent the hospital from being sued. In a clinical autopsy, the next of kin have a say in what is done or not done.

In forensic autopsy, the coroner makes the determination whether or not an autopsy will be performed. Next-of-kin have no say. The first goal is to determine, in a suspicious death, why a person died. A suspicious death is defined as one that is unexpected, unattended, or unnatural. If the cause of death is known, as in the case of the Sept. 11 attacks, the goal of a forensic autopsy is to identify a body or body parts so that as much of the remains as possible may be returned to loved ones. In either case, a forensic autopsy provides a final, thorough medical examination of the body, making it possible to pass on genetic or other information to family members.

In a forensic autopsy, officials are looking for several things:

Manner of death: An autopsy will determine one of five manners of death: homicide, suicide, natural, accidental, or undetermined.

Cause of death: The action that resulted in death.

Mechanism of death: The specific biological reason for death. Within the coroner’s or medical examiner’s office, specialties include photography, radiology (X-ray), odontology (teeth), anthropology (bones), histology (microscopic examination of sections of the body), toxicology (poisons), and pathology (autopsy). In a forensic autopsy, all of the above should be done. However, a victim of a gunshot wound doesn’t necessarily need an anthropologist’s report, so there are situations in which one or more of the specialist reports would not be ordered.

Identification of a body: Fingerprints, teeth, and DNA are the only things used to ID a body. Visual identification is no longer allowed. An author bent on realism will not have a family member in the U.S. invited to view the remains in order to identify the body. Both visual ID and tattoos can be used as supportive, but they are not used to ID.

Forensic autopsy procedure

Because there are so many individuals involved on a specialist level, an autopsy typically takes 2-3 hours on average. In addition, some reporting such as toxicology and DNA takes months. Symon pointed out that a body is always referred to as a body and not “the victim.”

When a body comes in, it is photographed and X-rayed, and then goes immediately into a refrigerated room (38 degrees) until morning, which is when autopsies are performed. Pathologists devote afternoons to paperwork, lab reviews, etc.

Removal of personal effects comes first, with the surrendering of any evidence to law enforcement personnel. Next, an external examination is performed during which time a law enforcement person has the opportunity to request samples of hair, blood, etc. The body is photographed completely. External examination is from scalp to toe, looking for identifying marks or injury. The pathologist takes notes using a body chart, which represents either male or female, front and back.

When asked about individuals with altered or gender-non-conforming bodies, Symon explained the male/female charts are tools to assist the pathologist, and gender is not the focus. The injury is the focus, and coroners are able to change the declaration of gender based on family's wishes and information when provided.

Using the chart, the pathologist will mark all the places where there are marks or wounds. To prevent confusion, left and right refer to the body itself, irrelevant of observer's position. Likewise, superior is top of body, and inferior is bottom of body. Distal is used to indicate distances toward the limb's or torso's end, while proximal indicates toward the limb's or torso's beginning.

Internal examination

During internal examination, the cutting is from right and left shoulder to sternum in a “V” shape, continuing straight down to groin in a “Y” shape. This cut is made to allow skin to be peeled back. Next, ribs are removed using garden shears. Then organs are taken out one by one to be examined.

In accessing the brain, the skull is in the way. Pathologists make a skin incision from back of ear to back of ear around back of head and pull the scalp over to the front of the face in order to expose back of skull. Next, they take a bone saw and cut into the skull following the same ear-to-ear path as with the skin. In addition, another cut is made from ear-to-ear over the top of the skull. At this point, the skull can be removed enough so that the brain can be removed. After all organs have been examined and samples taken, the skull is reaffixed, the skin pulled back over the skull, and the skin sewed back together along the back of the neck incision. The goal in all of this is to leave the body in a condition that permits an open casket. The pathologist puts all the organs inside a sealed bag and fills the chest cavity with the bag prior to sewing the front-of-body “Y” incision closed. Within a casket, the clothing covers the front “Y” incision, and the pillow covers the back-of-head incision.

During these procedures, a minimum of three samples of every organ are taken and sent to different places. One remains under the pathologist's care. Others may go to toxicology or DNA.

After this, the body is transported to the selected funeral director and/or mortician for embalming.

The autopsy report is not published until all the evidence is in. DNA results can take a year because DNA labs are oversaturated with cases. In toxicology, some substances are always tested—such as street drug/narcotics and common toxins found in the home. There will be a presumptive test and a confirmatory test. Law enforcement individuals can tell toxicology what to screen for. Possibly of interest to writers, arsenic is no longer routinely tested for.

During this long time before the report's publication, the pathologist is supposed to take everything into consideration before declaring manner of death, which is not documented lightly. If later evidence comes to light, a second autopsy will be performed to redo the analysis on the remains, and the new pathologist might be able to change the declaration of manner of death.

Determining time of death

Symon's pet peeve in storytelling is determination of time of death.

In every instance, the estimation of time of death is not very accurate. Estimates are never made accurately to the minute, and rarely to the hour. Rather, a time window is often estimated in terms of days or even weeks. There are three decomposition standards used to assist estimations of time of death: livor mortis, rigor mortis, and algor mortis.

Livor mortis

When discussing livor mortis, writers can use *lividity* as an alternate term. When the body dies, the heart stops, and the blood pressure goes away, and the blood does not move. There is no pressure left for blood to spurt, and the blood is fairly stationery. However, over time, blood seeps out of blood vessels, veins, and arteries, and it pools wherever gravity is pulling it. As blood sits and starts to dry, it stains the skin darker. This will look like sunburn or even bruising, no matter the color of skin. If you push on your (living) skin, it will blanch as blood is pushed away. You can't blanch the skin of a deceased body once lividity is fully set.

If two lividity patterns are present, someone has moved the body. Staining tends to be reddish and distinct from bruising. Bruising goes towards yellow as it ages, so only recent bruises that are red might be mistaken for lividity, but an experienced person will not generally mistake one for the other. Tight fitting clothing such as bra straps will cause whitened areas where blood is pushed away. If lividity patterns appear to be defying gravity, this indicates your crime scene has been disturbed. It takes eight to 12 hours for lividity to set. Lividity begins immediately upon heart stopping, but in the first two hours, there won't be much staining.

Rigor mortis

The substances that lubricate our bodies to allow movement is a process that ends with death. Rigor is hard to break, once rigor has set. Muscles are frozen in place because of chemical

process. Much like lividity, bodies don't defy gravity when rigor sets, so if a body is positioned in a way defying gravity, someone messed with the crime scene.

Rigor takes approximately 8-12 hours to set, another 8-12 hours to be set (i.e. frozen in position), and another 8-12 to release. This means if you are past rigor mortis, the body has been dead for up to 36 hours and possibly much more. A body *in* rigor mortis has only been dead 12ish hours, but variations are possible.

A depletion of ATP will cause a much quicker rigor. Drowning victims go into rigor mortis much more quickly because as they struggle, they deplete ATP. Also, if the temperature is cooler, rigor mortis sets more slowly. If you put a body where rigor has set into the morgue cooler, you will need to break rigor mortis by extreme pushing until muscles release. This doesn't create additional injury. If a body has rigor in part, and rigor has been broken in another part, then something external to rigor mortis has happened which could mean crime scene was disturbed.

Algor mortis

This is notoriously unreliable, so it is not used to determine time of death. Once upon a time, people put a thermometer into the rectum or into the liver. This is no longer done because it causes injury to the body and it isn't accurate. However, for point of interest, the body loses 1-1.5 degrees per hour. But if the body is the same temperature as outdoor air, you know nothing. Also, what if the body wasn't at 98.6 degrees to begin with?

Forensic entomology

There is another method for estimating how long a body has been dead, thanks to the very specific life cycles of certain kinds of bugs. Entomologists estimate the time of death by the stage of the insects found on the body. Blowflies will lay eggs in any open orifice or wound, and larvae have three stages, which are predictable and reliably repeatable. The beetles and wasps, which feed on larvae, arrive to feed in predictable intervals, so this information can also be useful.

Vitreous humor

Eye juice is called vitreous humor. Cells release potassium as part of decomposition. By repeatedly testing for potassium, a pathologist can establish the rate of potassium release and can make an estimate of time of death, but this process is lengthy and tedious and tends not to be used much.

Stomach contents

If the stomach contents haven't moved to the intestines, you can know an outside marker for the last time the body was alive. As bodies decompose, gas pressure eventually pushes everything out if the body is allowed to sit undisturbed. However, there are many, many variables in decomposition that make it not very useful to establish timelines.

Time of death is only specific with witnesses

In the end, the only completely reliable way to estimate time of death is with an eyewitness to the death.

(Handouts here: <http://bit.ly/Ninc18Autops>. Visit Geoff Symon online here: <http://geoffsymon.com>.)



***Sidney Swanson** is a Kirkus Reviews award-winning author of young adult sci-fi and fantasy, including the Ripple series, the Saving Mars series, the Thief in Time series, and more. Sidney lives in Oregon's Willamette Valley with her husband, some cats, and entirely too much rain.*

Finding Your Audience on Amazon (KDP)

Presented by Dan Slater

Reported by Pam McCutcheon

Dan Slater, from Author/Vendor Relations at Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) provided KDP business updates, talked about where they're headed, and provided some tools and tips. First, the updates:

- Prime Reading is now in France, Italy, Spain, and China.
- FreeTime Unlimited is now available in Spanish to help turn kids' screen time into read time.
- Amazon started a Prime Book Box subscription program for kids to deliver quality children's books on a one-, two-, or three-month schedule.
- It's the 10-year anniversary of the launch of the Kindle; they have sold tens of millions of Kindles, and recently launched the new Kindle Oasis, Fire HD 8 with Alexa, and a Fire HD 10 kids' edition.
- They sell to 14 localized marketplaces in over 190 countries, over half of the world's population (as of June 2018, they now support Arabic).
- Over 1,000 indie authors made over \$100,000 in royalties in 2017 through KDP, and Amazon paid out over \$223 million in Kindle Unlimited (this year, they've paid out \$174 million through August 2018).
- They have millions of books in stock and available through print on demand that are printed and shipped by Amazon fulfillment; you can buy author copies at cost, and they provide free expanded distribution to other retailers.

Why are they moving from CreateSpace to KDP Print?

Dan said the benefits are faster innovation, consolidated account management and reporting, streamlined publication and ordering, the title stays available, and author and proof copies will be available in more marketplaces with customer support available in multiple languages. The books will still be printed using the same manufacturing facilities and have the same quality, but now you will only go to one place to publish your books. The migration from CreateSpace to KDP Print is supposed to be seamless. You can do it manually, or wait for them to do it for you. When asked when they plan to move books over for those who don't do it themselves, he said they're not announcing that date yet.

Where is KDP headed?

They have newsletters geared toward your favorite genres with a lot of opt-in engagement which they plan to continue to grow with push notifications, etc. In addition, they are

improving the reading experience with adjustable type size, notes and highlighting, sharing, page flip, word wise, and x-ray. They also plan to improve discoverability by allowing us to refine keywords, etc. by what customers search for.

What hasn't changed?

Interest in growing authors' readership and profitability. Their mission is to make every book ever written in any language available to the reader in sixty seconds or less. One of their goals is to increase author earnings and the number of authors who make their living selling books. They plan to do this by:

- Creating new revenue channels.
- Adding broader self-service advertising options.
- Providing better discoverability through Goodreads, Author Central, and Amazon charts (bestseller lists, most purchased, most read, etc.).
- Removing friction points.
- Adding more free tools like Cover Creator, Kindle Create, and Kindle Previewer.
- Fostering community and education around writing and sharing best practices like KDP Jumpstart.

Finding your audience on Amazon

In this area, he focused primarily on advertising, which you can do by using the advertising console (formerly Amazon Marketing Services) to create sponsored ads for products, or product display ads.

Genre has a huge impact on advertising. When targeting, ask yourself who your audience is and how you can attract them. If Amazon didn't exist, what would your readers search for? Focus on narrowing the targets to the subgenres. In mystery and thrillers, plot summaries will draw the reader in through ad copy. How is the plot anchored? What are the stakes? What's creating the tension? Romance readers, however, are loyal to imprints, authors, and tropes.

In targeting ads, try using comparable characters like Jack Ryan, Harry Potter, etc. or consider using seasonality (not just Christmas and Valentine's Day, but light reads for the summer, etc.). Try "Gift ideas for the 'X' who loves 'Y'" or fill the gap between popular author releases.

They set a high bar for ads to create a better customer experience, so he highly recommended we all read the [Creative Acceptance Policy](#) to understand their guidelines for book ads. For example, you can't use repeated punctuation (use a single dash instead of a double one), and you shouldn't use unsubstantiated claims (*New York Times* bestseller) or time-sensitive call-outs (Prime Day, Black Friday) that go beyond those dates.

Kindle Select and Kindle Unlimited

You must be exclusive to Amazon for 90 days, but you can earn the same full-price royalties during a Kindle Countdown (limited-time discount promotions) to reach a new audience.

Amazon Discovery Tools:

- [X-Ray](#) shows the bare bones of the book so you can get additional information about what you're reading (he said authors can add to this, but didn't say how).
- Giveaways—ask readers to follow you on Amazon in order to enter the giveaway.
- Use MatchBook to allow readers who have purchased your print book to buy the ebook version at a reduced price.
- Author Central—ensure you're using its capabilities (you can add videos, blog feed, etc.).
- Kindle Instant Previews—show on your website and link through Amazon Associates.

Question and answer session

Question: Why doesn't Amazon take faster action against the scammers?

Dan's response was that they are always monitoring for fraud and abuse of the system, but they might move slower than we would like because they don't want to penalize well-meaning authors.

Question: When will Amazon allow authors to know how many followers they have?

Answer: Not yet.

Question: If you use a giveaway, will that affect people who leave reviews?

Dan said no, that it should help.

Question: When will they allow non-U.S. authors to use Kindle Countdown?

Dan replied that Amazon always releases new programs right away to the U.S. market, but their intent is to roll everything out globally eventually.

Though Dan didn't provide a link to his slides, you can find a lot of the programs and tools mentioned in this article by doing a simple Google search.



[Pam McCutcheon](#) writes romantic comedy, paranormal romance, and how-to books for authors under her own name, and YA urban fantasy as Parker Blue. Someday, she hopes to find a little focus.

Aversion to Conversion: Why You Should Actively Manage Foreign Currency Pricing

Presented by Amy Atwell

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Amy Atwell, author of two romance novels and founder of Author E.M.S., recommends you do everything to maximize your relationships with retail sites. Each has pricing and conversion considerations you should be aware of. You should also understand the differences between list price, converted price, actual selling price (ASP), and VAT (value added tax).

It's way too easy to convert automatically. The terms of service are different at each retailer, and all have their own rules about updating: Kobo bases its prices on Bank of Canada exchange rates; Amazon bases prices on an exchange rate that it determines (and they'll update it); and GooglePlay allows you to manually update prices on the paying center.

VAT applies in most of Europe, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and India. If you don't account for VAT and set your price at .99 GBP for a BookBub, then some retailers will add VAT and suddenly the price is above .99 and BookBub won't run your ad in Britain, if they run it at all. VAT is sometimes rolled into the price as advertised as The Price, not added at checkout, as in the U.S. In Canada, there is no VAT. In Australia, booksellers deduct the VAT from your stated price and then pay royalty on the result. All retailers want you to pricematch the other retailers, but only Amazon actively pricematches.

Some countries have fixed pricing laws, such as Germany. Every retailer in that country must sell books at the same price, so "autoconversion" doesn't work. The German government won't come after you, but be aware of their laws.

Be aware there are tons of rules across different retailers, and foreign retailers don't like to feature a book whose price doesn't end in .99. Amazon, Apple, and GooglePlay allow different prices, but Kobo only allows one price per currency, i.e., you can only set one Euro price all across the European Union, even though the VAT is different. It's smart to have just Euro price at Kobo. Amazon, Apple, and Kobo will include VAT in their ASP. GooglePlay allows you to choose to include or exclude VAT for each price. You do want to end your price in .99.

Atwell puts her store dashboards on her browser's "quick open" bar and opens them all at the same time. She then opens the pricing page in each tab for the same book. She checks the pricing on each book for at least the major currencies. Sometimes you have to open the foreign currencies tab at the down arrow.

Amazon pricing

At Amazon, when you look at the foreign converted prices, you want to make sure the price in the box in the leftmost column is at the ASP point that you want showing when

BookBub and the customer looks at it. Euros are not all the same because they converted the base USD (U.S. dollar) price to Euros, and then added the VAT, which is different across different countries.

In a country where the VAT is high, Amazon will bump your German ASP (for example) in order to get the book to 70 percent royalty. If you want to check your prices on foreign stores, log out of Amazon/KDP first.

Apple pricing

Atwell suggests setting one price per currency (per Euro). To change a single country, double-click the country name, and change it manually. Remember don't change the Physical List Price. change the Price Tier. If you change the Physical List Price you'll be unable to change it later for a sale.

To change multiple territory prices, set your base currency, pick your sale dates, then select your territories (you can select them all at once) and adjust the prices as needed. Then Apple shows you the whole price array again. You don't have to accept how they show it. You can change one country price. Single click on the Tier box and change the price for that one country.

If you see two prices, that's because you've scheduled a sale. It'll show you today's price, then below that the scheduled price, and then, if you've set the price to go back up, that'll appear below. You can actually layer in 12 months' worth of price changes, layer after layer after layer. But it'll only allow you to schedule so many.

Kobo pricing

Some customers will customize the primary currencies that Amazon likes to pricematch, usually Euros and GBP (Great Britain Pound) for the British Commonwealth. For the rest of the countries, they'll leave those at converted prices, rather than customizing every one.

At Kobo you can set a new permanent price or a temporary price change. It takes Kobo about 24 hours to load the new prices. It's best to allow three days. You can have a promo price set up for individual currencies, or all currencies. If you have primary currencies you care more about, such as Euros and Commonwealth, set just those. Kobo shows a green dollar flag on each book with a promotion on the book page.

Draft2Digital pricing

Click the orange button to change foreign currencies, not the price itself. It shows you the familiar country grid. D2D suggests "pretty good looking" pricing. Atwell will click a green arrow to "lock and load" that price. If you only distribute to Barnes & Noble Press, it no longer lists foreign pricing. If you're distributing to Tolino, check the Euro pricing to match it. All D2D prices are without tax. But you must understand all retailers and their individual rules about pricing.

All retailers

You can preset your promo prices at every dashboard these days except at D2D, Amazon, and Smashwords. Amazon may drag its heels on resetting the price to go up after a sale is over.

Atwell will send an email to Amazon KDP, showing links to the book at other stores. Thus the author goes on record as saying "you're not pricematching, and we've reset the price, so please raise it."

GooglePlay pricing

The reason GooglePlay ASP prices should be set higher is because it only pays 52 percent royalties. It discounts all your prices about 23 percent. If you inflate the price on your dashboard, you'll get the proper take-home royalty. GooglePlay may decide to discount your book whenever it wants. Your royalty will be the same as your selected price even if the company undercuts itself...but Amazon will pricematch GooglePlay, and *it* will not pay you as if you were charging full price, so you will lose income at Amazon if GooglePlay arbitrarily decides to drop your price.

Price changes at GooglePlay are instant. If you find Amazon and GooglePlay are in a price war over your book, driving the price down to nothing, you may have to take the GooglePlay book off sale, get the Amazon price to settle down, then a few days later restart the GooglePlay edition. At GooglePlay, remember that you must use a checkbox to include tax, or not to include tax.

If you're using a single USD price for World Pricing at GooglePlay, those conversions will take six to 12 hours to show up on the summary page. Wait and go look at the summary page and you'll see them. Sometimes there's an error reading in the price tab. To set a foreign price, you have to type in the currency code, then the base price, then the country code. Their codes can be odd. They only set one Euro price for all of Europe. It includes tax, as do the Great Britain and Australia prices. Make sure it's converting.

Bear in mind you will have to inflate prices at GooglePlay on foreign countries as well. If you put in a USD price for World Pricing, and you only see U.S. on the dashboard, go to the Payment Center and make sure your Currency Conversion is turned on. Once it's turned on, the dashboard will show the current exchange rates. Then you have to push the Refresh Exchange Rate button.

You can get them to email you when there's a problem. Go to the Payment Center and put in an email for them to contact you.

Google knows you are you and where you live, so they won't show you any country stores anywhere else. Atwell has software that protects her internet search location. It lets her log in as if from another country. Before she had this software, she had to log out of all Google locations and apps on her every device. Then she could see what her foreign pages looked like for one book. Then she could develop a list of price points that would be correct for each country.

The GooglePlay Promotions tab is great if you have some familiarity with Excel and you like puzzles. You should set up your promotions a week in advance. Make sure you know when you want it to start and when to end. If you use the promotions tab to reduce your prices, you won't have so many goofy random deep discounting events. Also, the marketing team will see that you are using their promotions tab and may actually feature your book. They won't do that if you just change your base price when discounting for a promotion.

To use the GooglePlay Promotions tab, download the .csv template first. Open it. This is a blank spreadsheet showing just the top row. The prices you put onto that spreadsheet are not discounted by GooglePlay. However, the .csv template doesn't mention including tax or not including tax. So if you're setting up for BB, you have to go to that country and make sure that your taxes are included in your ASP. Then you can set your promotion price on the Promotions .csv template at the BookBub price. Under Identifier, put ISBN:NNNNNNNNNNNN. Include either ISBN: or GGKEY: before you type in the actual ISBN, or the field won't behave.

Once the .csv is saved, Click on Add New Promotion, put in the name of your promotion, the dates, and book title, then upload the .csv in the popup window. The window will show you on a screen where the promotion shows.

Once the promotion is set at GooglePlay, you cannot edit it. You have to remove it and do it over. That's why Atwell advises that you set up your promotion at least 3 days to a week in advance.

Atwell keeps all her old GooglePlay Promotions .csv spreadsheets because she may need to use the data again.

Tips for setting BookBub pricing

Set your prices in advance at Apple, Kobo, B&N Press, and GooglePlay. Amazon KDP and D2D need to be done a day in advance. Also, if you're setting BookBub pricing in advance and have start and end dates (such as Sept. 30), at every site, the end date will be Sept. 30 at 11:59, except Apple. Apple thinks it all happens at the exact same instant. So set the new price to begin on the day after the sale ends, on Apple only.

For handouts and pricing grids, go to <http://www.authorems.com/author-services/downloads/>



Jennifer Stevenson has published five series, 17 novels, and more than 20 short stories.

The Psychology of Titles

Presented by Dr. Jennifer Barnes

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Author Jennifer Barnes, who has a Ph.D. in psychology from Yale, and currently works at the University of Oklahoma where she is one of the world's foremost experts on the cognitive science of fiction and the psychology of fandom, shared what makes a good title.

People say that it's memorable; attention-grabbing; conveys genre or tone; it's Google-able; makes readers want to know more; and it's unique. That says what a title has to do, but not how to make it do those things.

What makes a title memorable? What gets our attention? What's the difference between good unique and bad unique? What things make people want to know more? If you can answer these questions, you are better at generating new things that also work.

Barnes' approach is to address the connection between, "Why do we like fiction" and "Why *that* book?" She examines that connection via the scientific method.

The scientific method begins with the observation that some book takes off huge. The scientist develops a theory, makes a prediction or hypothesis, conducts an experiment and testing of the hypothesis, acquires data and new observations, and is now in a position to accept or reject her hypothesis. Then she can apply her findings to her theory.

You can test titles, concepts, covers, and blurbs. You may already be using this method. The predictive power of the scientific method explains what's good now and what's going to be big in the future. If you know your own subgenre, you can get specific.

So the question is aimed at determining what makes a psychologically compelling book title and use scientific theories about why we are attracted to fictional stories to generate predictions about what generates a good book title.

Fiction has been presented by theorists as a pleasure technology, as gossip, as social surrogacy, as social simulation, as a moral simulation laboratory, as a mechanism for learning, as preparation, and as an invitation to imagine. Barnes discussed each theory and made predictions about its probable efficacy in developing successful book titles.

Fiction as pleasure technology

Steven Pinker theorizes in his book *How The Mind Works* that fiction is like cheesecake. We like fiction because it feels good, because we are hard-wired to like sugar and fat. Cheesecake, and fiction, are a pleasure technology. Effective titles will advertise the pleasures the book contains. The most common pleasures are beauty, wealth and resources, power and status, competition, danger, and touch. Here they are with examples of buzzwords and titles using those words.

- **Beauty** buzzwords: Beauty, beautiful, lovely, pretty, lots more. These hit the "beauty" pleasure buttons. Examples: *Pretty Little Liars*, *American Beauty*, *The Lovely Bones*.
- **Wealth and resources** buzzwords: Wealth, heir, heiress, inherit, inheritance, money, rich, gold or golden. Examples: *Crazy Rich Asians*, *The Billionaire's anything*, *One for the Money*.
- **Power and status** buzzwords: Throne, crown, royal, king, goddess, president, boss. Examples: *American Gods*, *Game of Thrones*, *The Duke Buys a Bride*.
- **Competition** buzzwords: Game, versus, rival, win, winner, clash, war. This is one female authors are most likely to miss. "Game" is a huge title buzzword. Examples: *Game of Thrones*, *The Hunger Games*, *War of the Worlds*, *Rival*, *War and Peace*.
- **Danger** buzzwords: Danger, lethal, fatal, deadly, hunter, predator, threat, blood, knife, blade, gun, weapon, poison, killer, murder. This pleasure button is the pleasure of safe danger—safe because danger in fiction is not dangerous to the reader. Examples: *Knife of Never Letting Go*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Poisonwood Bible*, *Fatal Attraction*.
- **Touch** buzzwords: Touch, contact, warmth, body, embrace, hands, anything invoking touch. Examples: *Cold Body Warm Heart*, *Emergency Contact*, *Touch a Dark Wolf*, *Touch the Dark*.

Idiosyncratic pleasures

These are pleasure buttons specific to the author and also to their fans. Often pleasure buttons overlap, making it probable the author who indulges her own idiosyncratic pleasure buttons will also pleasure her readers. Barnes suggested authors compile their own lists of their specific, idiosyncratic fictional pleasure buttons and those of their fans. She offered a sampling from her own list: identical twins, clones, robots who look like people, robots who don't know they're robots, waterfalls, spies, thieves, assassins, secret passageways, overprotective siblings, cousins the same age, secret societies, and females who use gender expectations to crush their enemies. Examples: *Grumpy Fake Boyfriend*, *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies* (an actual title)

Fiction as gossip

Some buzzwords have less idiosyncratic appeal but may be more likely to get "auto-buys" based on the title alone. An example is Paul Bloom's *Fiction as Gossip* (Bloom, Nettle, Pinker 2010): that we like certain kinds of real world stories that are gossip. We get lots of real world benefits from gossip. The best fiction under this theory is fiction that appeals to a liking for gossip about fictional, not real people. To find gossip buzzwords, crib from tabloid covers such as "True Blood—inside their secret wedding." Another excellent example is Jo Beverly's *The Secret Wedding*. Titles that emphasize reputation appeal to readers. The function of gossip is to keep track of other people's reputations. Reputation buzzwords include reputation, famous, known as, legend. Examples: *Almost Famous*, *Also Known As*, *His Wicked Reputation*, *Legend*.

You might also use a title that is a reputation, such as: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Good Daughter*, *A Few Good Men*. You might refer to people by first and last names. When you write a gossipy book, refer to someone's reputation by their first and last name. Examples: *Harry*

Potter and the Anything, Sherlock Holmes, The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks.

Other gossip buzzwords are gossip, scandal, rumors, secrets. Examples: *Scandal, Gossip Girl, Small Town Rumors.*

What do people gossip about? More gossip buzzwords: Sex, infidelity, betrayal, death, relationships, fall from grace, taboos, hierarchies, paternity, money, family, cheating, transgressions, tragedy, revenge, comeuppance, *schadenfreude*. It pays to pay attention to the things we gossip about. Take the tabloid litmus test: Does my title have these qualities? Can you imagine it being the title on the front of a tabloid? More examples: *A Bollywood Affair, Behind Closed Doors, Naked In Death, The Secret Wife.*

These are titles that make the story sound true and juicy: *Confessions of a Shopaholic, Diary of a Wimpy Kid.* Don't forget the power of the word "true." *Super Sad True Love Story, The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair*—that's a great double one, using "true" and "affair."

Fiction as social surrogacy

Psychologists Gabriel, Valenti, Young, and Derrick postulate that fiction fulfills social needs and gets you through a hard time, because your characters feel like reader's friends. Fiction fills needs: for relationships, for group membership, to belong, for a tribe. Readers will be attracted to titles that offer them a group to belong to. Belongingness buzzwords: we, us. Examples: *We Were Liars, One of Us is Lying, This Is Us.* Group buzzwords: sisterhood, brotherhood, family, society, club. Examples: *Secret Society Girl, Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, Band of Brothers, Women's Murder Club, The Joy Luck Club.*

Fiction as social simulation

Raymond Mar and Keith Oatley suggest fiction serves as social simulation, or a way to practice our real world, explore social cognition, and find understanding. This is the skill of visualizing other people's minds separate from your own and understanding them, encompassing others' thoughts, beliefs, emotions, goals, and desires. In fiction you *do* get access to another person's head. These titles promise a story rich in mental states and mental complexity, and buzzwords include mind, think, know, want, intention, desire, believe, secrets, lies, knowledge, access and who has it, deception, memory, remember, forget. Examples: *A Beautiful Mind, Criminal Minds, Mind Game* (which uses double buzzwords), *I Know What You Did Last Summer, Cruel Intentions, Do You Want to Start a Scandal* (two pleasure buttons), *Pretty Little Liars* (double).

Under the social simulation theory, titles feature complex emotions or meta-emotion, or what you feel about what you feel. If you feel sad, how do you feel about feeling sad? If you're the last single person in your group and you feel sad over that, should you? Examples: *Hurts to Love You, The Obsession, The Hate U Give, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.*

This theory also offers titles that center on perception. Buzzwords: seen, hearing, healing. Examples: *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Then there are metaphorical titles, so you need theory of mind to decipher them. Examples of metaphorical titles: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, An Ember in the Ashes, The Silence of the Lambs, The Fault in Our Stars.* For titles using jokes or puns, the reader has to read the writer's mind to get the title.

Examples: *I'd Tell You I Love You But Then I'd Have to Kill You*, *Heist Society*.

This theory includes first person titles. Examples: *Not If I Save You First*, *I Capture the Castle*, *I Am Not a Serial Killer*.

Fiction as moral simulation laboratory

Put forward by Frank Hakemulder in 2000, this theory claims fiction is not just about people's minds and mental states, but is a moral simulation and explores moral pleasures. In *Comeuppance*, William Flesch suggests that fiction satisfies our desire to see good vindicated and wicked get their comeuppance. With this, titles signal morality or immorality or related concepts. Immorality buzzwords include wicked, guilty, dark, criminal, sin, disputable, bad, evil bastard, betrayal. Examples: *Truly Madly Guilty*, *Beautiful Bastard*, *Wicked Lovely*, *Criminal Minds*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Morality buzzwords are innocent, innocence, pure, purity, good, hero, sacrifice, loyalty, justice, just, fair. Examples: *Forever Innocent*, *Loyalty in Death*, *Purity in Death*, *The Good Girl*. Moral rules buzzwords include rules, taboo, forbidden, punish. Examples: *Breaking the Rules*, *Nine Rules to Break When Romancing a Rake*, *Code of Honor*. Redemption buzzwords: forgiven, redemption, mercy (which works well across a lot of genres). Examples: *A Merciful Silence*; *Forgive Me*, *Leonard Peacock* (double); *Beautiful Redemption* (double). Examples conveying actual rules: *Do No Harm*. You can also use descriptors like thief, assassin, killer, psychopath, etc.

Fiction as a mechanism for learning

Michelle Sugiyama says, "We tell stories to teach and consume stories to learn." She thinks fiction is just for learning, citing its use in hunter-gatherer tribes, who tell stories that teach which plants are poisonous and where the watering hole is. In this theory, we like stories because we learn from them. Titles promising to teach the reader will be successful. Buzzwords include guide to, rule for, academy, school, how to. Examples: *Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue*, *Girl's Guide to Hunting and Fishing*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *How to Get Away With Murder*, *How to Catch a Prince* (double duty), *Vampire Academy*, *School for Good and Evil* (double).

Fiction as preparation

Some scientists think fiction serves the same function as daydreaming. Sometimes we daydream about negative things. We can call that worrying too, but it's imaginative worrying. This theory predicts success for titles that promise exposure to extreme, unusual, or negative experiences. Buzzwords about the negative are terrible, terrific, sad, brutal. Examples: *A Great and Terrible Beauty* (double duty), *Super Sad True Love Story*, *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender* (triple duty).

Buzzwords about the unusual include strange, unusual, curious, uncanny. Examples: *The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter*, *School for Unusual Girls*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (lots of doubles). Some fiction-as-preparation titles promise preparation for a specific event or time: *Apocalypse Now*, *Armageddon*, *Tomorrow When the World Began*.

Fiction as an invitation to imagine

Kendall Walton proposes that a book is a prop in a game of make-believe. Instead of acting the story out in the real world with a toy or a doll, we use the book to mentally act it out. Fandom, fan fiction, and things fans can do after your book is over are invoked. With this, the readers contribute to the work, so titles will leave readers something to do and require them to do something. Titles can ask questions (*What Happened to Cass McBride?* [double], *What If It's Us?*), or titles can make you want to argue (*This is Where it Ends*), or titles can be commands to reader (*Don't Believe It, Look For Me*), or titles can be incompletes the reader has to fill in to finish (*Two Can Keep a Secret...*).

Observations

Barnes said, not all theories are created equal as good predictors for titles. She asks herself—What is that title doing? What theory is at work?

Three of the first four theories described above are doing the most work: pleasure, gossip, theory of mind, and morality. Later theories, like preparation, how to, and school, might not work as well. Some are more powerfully predictive of a good title. Gossip and theory of mind lend themselves to an infinite number of titles in a way that some other theories may not.

The most effective titles often combine theories or buzzwords *within a theory*. Barnes now titles her book with no fewer than two of the buzzwords. She uses this information as a check on her existing titles and to generate new titles.

Q&A

Q: Can you talk about buzzwords in series titles?

A: It helps in romance, because you get buzzwords for belonging: The Bridgerton series, the so-and-so brotherhood, the so-and-so family. You are promising different protagonists within a series where the series titles names the group. The title needs to Google straight to your series.

Q: Can you give examples of titles for whodunits, puzzle mysteries? What do they do?

A: *Uncivil Defense* (a morality word), *Dames Fight Harder* (fight is danger word), *Murder on the Orient Express*. Use buzzwords from danger and theory of mind, combined.

Q: What about title using dream?

A: Dream is a theory of mind word, also a wish-fulfillment word.

Q: Is it beneficial to flow these words together, such as Obsession River, a title that kind of tells a story?

A: Yes. Example: Rachel Kane's *Kill Man Lake*. Even if it looks like something else, there's a buzzword cue.

Q: Do you think there's any benefit to uniqueness in titles? There's a lot of sameness in these titles.

A: Yes. In my lab we're testing a lot of things: length, for example. We want to know if

longer titles stick with people more. Is there a benefit to hitting more buzzwords? It's easy to use buzzwords and get something generic: Wicked Hunter, or Deadly Beautiful. You can say, I'm not going to use any of those most common words; I'm going to use an uncommon word in an unusual way.

Dr. Barnes' analysis of these theories of fiction as methods for generating book titles will appear in her forthcoming book, *The Science of Story: A Writer's Guide to the Psychology of Fiction*. Book recommendation: *How the Mind Works* by Steven Pinker.



[Jennifer Stevenson](#) has published five series, 17 novels, and more than 20 short stories.

Demystifying the Movie Rights Process

Presented by Erin Hennicke

Reported by Jenny Gardiner

Serendipity can play a key role in a book finding its way onto the big screen, according to Erin Hennicke, director of film and television at Franklin & Siegal & Associates, the largest literary scouting agency in New York, where she scouts books and material for Universal Studios as well as Paramount TV.

Hennicke, whose projects have included E.L. James' Fifty Shades series, Ridley Scott's *American Gangster*, *The Girl Before* by J.P. Delaney and the YA series *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard, said the one that got away still lingers.

It occurred to her, back when she was overseeing development for Barbra Streisand's production company Barwood Films, that she'd read the pilot script for *The Sopranos* and hated it, so she said she happily focused on books instead, when she read and fell in love with Jean Ray's *Julie and Romeo*, a charming modern-day take on the Shakespeare tragedy, minus the tragedy.

"It's about this contemporary Romeo and Juliet featuring a divorced woman and widowed man who own rival florist shops and they're in fierce competition and they begin this romance," she said. "I pitched it to Barbra who loved it, and she got on board, and we optioned it, but they just never did anything with it." She said she thought Barbra had gotten busy with her nuptials to James Brolin, and that was that.

She moved onto Franklin & Siegel and throughout the course of her career has kept her eye on this novel, which has been optioned repeatedly, but in the 18 years since she first encountered it, it's never been made into a film. "It's all about timing," she said.

She said Robert Evans's book, *The Kid Stays in the Picture*, is a great memoir to read if you want to try to get a film from a book. Evans, who eventually became president of Paramount Pictures and the man behind *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Godfather*, among other films, was married to Ali McGraw, and came to Hollywood with no acting chops and no producing experience, but he observed the industry for a while.

"He came to realize that whoever holds the property is king," Hennicke said. "If you hold the book or screenplay, you're in control." She said she always kept this advice in mind as her career built.

A recent book she helped usher into a film is from a woman who was the White House stenographer under President Barack Obama, who was hired from Craig's List—she'd worked at Sidwell Friends School where the president's daughters were enrolled, so the White House figured if she passed the security check there, she would be okay to hire. Hennicke said it's an

interesting bird's-eye view from someone who was recording history as it happened, but was supposed to be "not there," instead, simply quiet, just sitting there as it all unfolded. Universal is adapting that for a feature film, she said. Other books she's helped to acquire include Margaret Atwood's sci-fi trilogy and the thriller, *Defending Jacob*.

She recounted how she wasn't keen on the Fifty Shades books when first presented to her.

"*Fifty Shades* was a submission I got from a U.K. agent, but I didn't love it," she said. "But then it took off, and then everyone who had passed on it were all trying to pre-empt it. Author E.L. James, who was the wife of TV clients of the agency, came to L.A. and set up shop in the SoHo House in West Hollywood and all the studios, financiers, production companies came to her to grovel for the film rights. Rumor was that one studio set up a pop-up S&M 'red room' in the hotel to persuade her to sign with them.

"Universal won the day because she wanted a female director and Mike DeLuca of DeLuca Film and Focus Features (the art house arm of Universal) and Universal optioned it for an obscene \$4 million. No one ever pays that much! But they made it up on budget, shot it cheaper, and didn't cast huge names because they didn't want anyone carrying baggage with it anyhow. The budget was \$40 million, they made \$160 million in foreign sales and \$120 million domestic." She added that all four movies grossed \$1.3 billion worldwide, and all this for a book that initially no one wanted to turn into a film.

As a scout, Hennicke is the eyes and the ears of the business in search of literary gold. Sometimes she finds it in a book, sometimes in a script, and sometimes in article.

She said she remembered reading an article called "White Boy Rick" in *Atavist* about a guy in Detroit who infiltrated gangs and the drug trade and it just struck her.

"This story is important," she said. "People want to tell it and people want to see it! As a scout you can cheerlead for your client, but at some point it's passed and it's out of your hands. Although, when something flops, it's gratifying to say 'I told you so!'" Her company acquired the rights to the film, which was recently released.

She said keeping control is sometimes in the property owner's best interest. "The author of *Crazy Rich Asians* turned down millions because he didn't want the lead actress to be white. He wanted to maintain creative control so he turned down big offers and optioned it for one dollar in exchange that he could keep creative control and casting and director approval."

She said authors should take heart because there are many books coming out in film and television this season.

The list includes: *The Miniaturist*, *Bel Canto*, *The Children's Act*, *The Land of Steady Habits*, *The House with the Clock in Its Walls*, a biopic of Colette, *The Sisters Brothers*, *King Lear*, *The Happy Prince*, *The Haunting of Hill House*, *First Man*, *Beautiful Boy*, *The Hate You Give*, *Can you Ever Forgive Me?*, *The Girl in the Spider's Web*, *Galveston*, *Outlander* (season four), *My Beautiful Friend*, *Mary Queen of Scots*, and *Holmes and Watson*.

When asked if someone approached an author about film rights, how should the author handle it, she suggested checking out the person on IMDB, see if they have credits and also to Google them. "Ask them for details, what is their vision, what plans they have for the book."

She said it's fine to have a screenplay ready to go—either way it works. She said she's just looking for interesting, compelling content that she could see making it onto the screen.

She added that it's an exciting time to be a scout because writers like those at NINC have great creative ideas and are enthusiastic about writing. "Without writers like you, I wouldn't have a job."



Jenny Gardiner is an award-winning novelist and #1 Kindle bestselling author. Her work has been found in Ladies Home Journal, the Washington Post, Marie-Claire.com, Paste Magazine, and on National Public Radio. She's also the food columnist for Cville Weekly in Charlottesville, VA and the volunteer coordinator for the Virginia Film Festival.

Promo Graphics & Teaser Images: So Easy a Seven-Year-Old Can Do It

Presented by Josh Wiley and Corey Alderin

Reported by Michele Dunaway

When working on promo, authors often have the best of intentions, but it doesn't always work out the way they want, or the numbers/clicks aren't there. According to Josh Wiley and Corey Alderin, co-founders of the website and image creation platform [Covers Sell Books](#), it's an information overload out there.

According to the presentation, in the last two years alone, 90 percent of all the data in the world was generated. However, people are likely to remember only 10 percent of the information three days later. So, it's key that you have a relevant message, as when a relevant message is paired with that same information, people retained 65 percent.

Images, then, are essential to helping you cut through the noise, and you need eye-catching and fresh images.

In fact, Facebook posts with images get 2.3 times more engagement. Tweets with images received 150 percent more retweets.

Alderin said there are definitely some dos and don'ts for making teasers and graphics:

1. The image background is important. Don't make the background busy, because often this makes the text unreadable. You lose sight of the book image if the background overwhelms it. Do have the book, some text, and a button sitting on top of the background.
2. Do use the book cover as a background if the cover will work for this purpose. Do highlight your *New York Times*/ *USA Today* bestselling author designations, etc.
3. Do keep the text you write short. When you create an ad, you can't say everything. Small print makes the reader work too hard, so pick the core things you want to convey.
4. Do use a call-to-action button of some sort so the buyer/reader knows what they are to do. Make sure you have a button that links to a place where the reader can get the book. Some examples of buttons are "Read it Now," "Free Today," "Get for \$0.99," and "Book 3 Now Available."
5. Do use 3D. It's better than 2D and drives more clicks.
6. Don't be too busy. A busy ad is a bad ad. Do keep your ad simple. Know the one or two main things you want the ad to convey and use these to drive the focus of the ad.
7. Test. Test. Test. Do make sure you test your ad. If the feedback isn't good, or you aren't getting the clicks, you can always change something that doesn't work.

The above rules are your starting point. You will want to have ads created for various print, sales, and social media sites.

At this point the session turned to a demonstration of the software the two have developed, which is available for a subscription at [Covers Sell Books](#).

The software the two developed was described as something comparable to Photoshop or Canva. They stressed you can create a free account to make sure you like their program before you commit to subscribing.

The steps to creating an ad on the site using their Custom Creator Tool were simple:

1. Pick the size you want (as determined by where it will be used such as a Facebook header, on Instagram, BookBub or Amazon).
2. Upload the image of your book.
3. Add a background by either using your image or their available backgrounds, which are free and licensed for your commercial use. You can search through a variety of backgrounds that are royalty free, and you can follow a link to where the image comes from so you can see the license. (Reporter Note: Backgrounds are not exclusive. Anyone subscribing to the service can use them.) Also under the background you can add a border. However, check the rules of the platform where you will upload as some sites do not allow your ad/meme to have a border.
4. Add an overlay. This allows you to make the ad seem softer, or have other special effects. All of their overlays have transparency in a range of zero to 100 percent, adding to the creator's flexibility.
5. Next, you add a book template, which is automatically a 3D image. You can resize this as well. You can rotate it. These options occur automatically. You can add multiple 3D images on top of the background. A 2D option is available.
6. Add text. You can choose the font you'd like. You can also add a button at this step.
7. Add other stamps (like NYT or USA or RITA) and if you want, you can make those stamps into buttons as well.

While you can create these ads yourself, the book cover is key. They suggested that when you are working with a designer on your book cover, be sure to ask your designer to provide an image of your cover with words and one without words. The image without words can then be used as a background image.

At this point, several authors in the audience pointed out that for them, the program is a time saver. The service at Covers Sell Books automatically makes the 3D image (and there are multiple versions), which means you do not need a separate app or program for this. In addition, under the 3D option section, the last one is a flat 2D that can be layered on if you want (see step five above).

In addition to the predefined sizes, their program also has personal size options that you can customize for your website. You can also save these as a template. Yet for the various social media sites, when you click on the button for that specific social media, underneath will be the types of ads the social media sells and the predefined sizes.

A few things to note after making your ad:

- The art will come out as a Portable Network Graphics (PNG) file format, with a .png extension.
- You can modify the angle of the 3D with a click and drag.
- You can use multiple book covers. If making a Facebook header, you can save what you created as a template. This will allow you to go back and change the header when the next book in a series comes out.

For each social media site, the same steps as above occur. [Grum.co](#) will allow you to run Instagram from your desktop so you can upload your images from your desktop.

You do have to download what you create at Covers Sell Books and then upload the PNG file wherever you need it. The images you create will not feed directly from their website to your social media site.

They stressed that what makes their site different is that it saves time as the 3D book cover is already built into the program. One author said it took her 30 minutes to use Canva, but this took seven minutes. (Reporter Note: They did demonstrate, and it was seven minutes. They even had an audience volunteer make an ad.) Saving time like this allows you to test various images because if one doesn't work, you can create another image quickly.

This is a subscription service, but you can try it for free. One level is \$96 a year (or was as of conference-time) and if you use the code NINC20, they will give you a 20 percent discount for the PLUS plan.

(Reporter Disclaimer: Please check the website or email them for exact pricing. Also, search Facebook for their closed Facebook group. Many authors post their ads here and ask for feedback. Authors in the conference session talked about how fast Covers Sell Books admin got back to them with any questions they had and how they listened to their feedback.)



[Michele Dunaway](#) is your Nink editor. She already misses the beach.

Formatting Your Book with Vellum

Presented by Brad West

Reported by Karen Fox

Brad West is one of the developers of Vellum, a small company that has produced software for the Macintosh (OS 10.11 El Capitan and above), used to format ebooks and print books. His presentation was aimed at displaying how easy this tool is to use. It's merely a matter of downloading the software, installing it, and selecting a .docx document to open for formatting. Quick, easy, and the user retains control.

Vellum requires a .docx file for formatting, which can come from Microsoft Word, Ulysses (a Mac text editor: <https://ulysses.app/>) or Scrivener (word processing software for the Mac or PC: <https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener/overview>). In fact, Vellum has worked closely with Scrivener so that Scrivener v3.03 has an export feature designed to go into Vellum.

Upon opening Vellum, the opening screen provides a simple tutorial, or the user can go right into importing a file and formatting. If a document has sections/chapters, these are automatically separated upon import and show up in the left-hand column (the navigator). A full-text editor that works like most word processing programs displays the current content in the middle screen. Any change made in this screen ripples through to the preview screen. The right-hand section previews the document as it will appear on a reader or in print. The user can choose from a wide selection of devices for the preview, from a mobile phone to a Kindle Fire and more.

The user can select from several styles to format the look of the book. Each style changes the font, the chapter heading, the section divider (ornamental break) and some offer formatting for the first letter or sentence of a section. An ornamental break fills in automatically when the user adds an extra blank line to the document or uses one of the standard dividers (***). If a user wants to use a different image for an ornamental break, Vellum allows for one to be imported and used instead of the style-provided one. Custom images can be provided for the title page as well. These changes instantly filter through the entire document.

This software offers a lot of flexibility by allowing fields and pages to be added as needed. The navigator provides a way to add front and back matter. Some of the pages come in with boilerplate text (such as for copyright or about the author) that can then be edited. The back matter is designed so that all the buy links are populated for each outlet, but it only generates the correct link for that format when producing the final file. Vellum also allows the user to add affiliate codes that will then be pulled in on future books.

A user can also add social icons (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Amazon, BookBub, Pinterest, SnapChat, YouTube) to the pages and provide the appropriate links. The links for purchasing books and social icons can be toggled to appear in a print version or not.

Additionally, Vellum makes it exceedingly easy to create book bundles by simply dragging in already created, Vellum-formatted files.

Vellum allows the user to select which type of the files it should generate. These include Kindle, Kobo, iBooks, Nook, Google Play or Print. In fact, new features designed to come out in January/February 2019 will offer a way to format for mass market size books or large print books. However, note that these new formats will probably cost more to print than the regular print sizes since each book will contain more pages.

In October/November 2018, Vellum will release the addition of endnotes for non-fiction books. While users have asked for a way to set internal links inside of books, that feature is not available yet.

Once a format has been saved, it can be opened again to allow for further updates as needed. This provides easy editing for typos or changing book links.

Users can keep up with new changes and pending additions by subscribing to the Vellum newsletter at <https://vellum.pub/#email-signup>. Help documentation is provided at <https://help.vellum.pub/>.

The main website can be found at <http://vellum.pub>. Currently, the latest version of the software (v2.2.3) to produce only ebooks runs \$199.99 while software to produce both ebooks and print costs \$249.99.



Karen Fox sold her first book in 1996. Since then she's sold several more, with her second book, Somewhere My Love, selected as a Rita Finalist. She has served on the Romance Writers of America board and the Pikes Peak Writers board, working on the Pikes Peak Writers Conference for over 20 years and the NINC conference for four years.

Taking the Next Step with Facebook Advertising

Presented by Ricardo Fayet

Reported by Rochelle Paige

Have you ever given up on Facebook ads because you've heard that they've become too competitive? Fayet kicked off the workshop by explaining that even though the competitive space has tightened, the possibilities for authors on Facebook are richer now than ever before. As Fayet explained, "Everyone has been targeting the same audiences." And we're not just bidding against indies.

The issue with Facebook advertising is that the audiences are getting more expensive, not the actual ads. If you can differentiate your audience, then you can bring the cost back down. Fayet explained this by using the blue ocean marketing concept. Instead of fishing where everybody else already is, you need to fish where nobody else is. Since so many other authors are targeting by interests and using big-name authors in the genre, that's the red water you want to avoid. Audiences of your own—or derivatives of them, like lookalike audiences—are the bluest water, which is where you want to be.

How do you get out of the red water? One method is to narrow your interests so you're picking less-used ones. Two readily available tools can help with this. The first is the "Customers Also-Bought Items By" list on your Amazon Author Page. Copy the first author listed into your Facebook Audience Insights (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/audience-insights>) into the "Interests" box on the left-hand side. If they're listed as an interest, then you can use them. If not, move onto the next one and try again. And again. And again. Then, if you don't find enough, you can do it all over again with the comp authors of your big-name comp authors. Although it takes a bit of time, it gives you a solid list of authors you can target on Facebook. Just be sure to check titles of any authors with whom you aren't familiar.

Another way of finding a better audience is to play with the narrowing features of Facebook. When you start putting in an audience, you can further narrow it by saying they need to be fans of Author A *and* also Author B *and* also have interests C or D. If you're running a price promotion, you might want to consider additional interests such as [Ereader News Today](#), [Pixel of Ink](#), [Free Ebooks](#), etc. To narrow it down further if you want to target specific retailers, you can target individual retailers like Barnes & Noble Press, iBooks, Kobo, etc.

But what if you want to create your own blue oceans? As Fayet said, "A pixel is worth a thousand interests." The method he detailed involved combining Facebook pixels and a [BookFunnel](#) magnet. From your BookFunnel Giveaway Page, you can add the Pixel ID in the Advanced Settings. But since using just one pixel on your giveaway page would cause you to target readers who visit the page without downloading, Fayet recommended using a batch of sequenced pixels instead. First, you would place your base pixel across your website. Then you'd use a "ViewContent" pixel on your giveaway page. The thank you page the reader gets

after they've entered their email to claim the ebook would get a "Lead" event pixel. From there, you would fetch the pixel ID from Events Manager on BookFunnel and add it to your BookFunnel Giveaway page with the "Signup" event. In addition to giving you a Facebook pixel audience, these final steps would also allow you to see if people added their email but didn't claim the book on BookFunnel.

Or you could turn to the power of video to create a custom audience since you can retarget anyone who watches a video on your Facebook page. For a new release, a two-tier advertising method would yield a solid audience for release week ads. During the pre-order period, you would run the book trailer ad targeting a wide audience. This generates video views, and possibly even some sales. Then during launch week, you can retarget everyone who viewed 10 percent or 25 percent, depending on your preferences, of the video.

You can also take this a step further by making a free book promo video with a magnet. The magnet will add subscribers to your mailing list, which is a re-targetable audience. The page views on your BookFunnel magnet is also a re-targetable audience. And the video views on your ad gives you yet another re-targetable audience.

Pixels have taken you into your own blue ocean territory, but lookalike audiences are the big, big blue ocean. The re-targetable audiences are small and will be exhausted quickly, and lookalike audiences let you go bigger. Unfortunately, many lookalikes don't work. What does a winning one look like?

- The lookalike is built off an already successful custom audience.
- The custom audience has at least 5,000 people, although Facebook recommends ideally 10,000 people.
- A good portion of the audience is in the same country as the lookalike audience you're building. For example, don't try to create a lookalike from a 90 percent UK audience in the U.S.

Another way to differentiate your ads is through creatives. Facebook has a feature where you can split-test your audience and creatives. Many authors run different creatives in the same ad set, but then Facebook quickly chooses which one they think is the best. But a split test lets you really see for sure. When you're done with the split test, Facebook will tell you who the winner is and what your chances are that the results will be the same if you ran the same test again.

You can also spy on your competitors to see what kind of creatives they're using on their advertisements. Pull up their author page on Facebook and scroll down a little. On the left tab, there's a section called "Info and ads" which will show you all of the active ads for the page.

If you're tired of static-image ads, then you can give Carousel or Canvas ads a try. Carousel ads are better suited to series, where the first carousel features book one, the second book two, and so on. In most cases, you'll at first only get sales on book one because you're targeting that kind of audience, but you'll also get readers who are specifically interested in series.

Canvas ads are an all-in-one creative which is served to users on mobile devices. Facebook recommended that you put a video in the middle and then you can choose to put four products

under as a carousel or nothing at all in that section. With the way Canvas ads are displayed within Facebook, they create an intermediary step in the buying process. However, there are still advantages to Canvas ads. Facebook is pushing it, the format is beautiful, it will surprise the readers, and it will qualify them before they hit Amazon. Plus, using a video creates video views which are re-targetable, they lend themselves well to reader magnet promotions which are re-targetable, they drive sales, and they stand out since they aren't being used by many authors.

Of course, no Facebook marketing workshop would be complete without a discussion of the return on investment (ROI). Fayet shared some results during his presentation, but he wanted to be sure we remembered to include series read-through in our calculations because it significantly adds to the ROI. His presentation included formulas for how to guesstimate your series read-through, as well as the lifetime value (LTV) of a reader—which is the profit they give you as they make their way through your books. He provided a link to a spreadsheet to help with the LTV, and it's available on his slides here: [Bit.ly/sjninc2](https://bit.ly/sjninc2).



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

Brainstorming “The Future”: for Authors and Vendors

Presented by Matt Buchman and Mark Leslie LeFebvre

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Reporter Note: Matt (M.L.) Buchman is the author of over 50 novels and 70 short stories and Mark Leslie LeFebvre is a former director of self publishing and author relations for Rakuten Kobothis. Questions/remarks are attributed for every paragraph, even if one of them speaks for several paragraphs. Questions/remarks from the audience are not attributed to the speaker; each speaker gets their own paragraph.

Matt: “Last year, we had many people asking what's next. We can produce faster. We know how to make books happen. How do we get off the treadmill of having to produce fast, how to sell more books, how to get past the 90-day cliff? In the bar last year we brainstormed with vendors and authors, asking—what would you like for the next few years? What would you as a vendor ask if you were on the track of these authors? We decided to bring that to this group and ask what do we need now, what do we wish we had as a tool, what does our career need for a three-year or a five-year plan? Large print from Vellum? To sell into South Africa? Some specific metrics tool? Vendors want to hear this stuff from authors. So now we're going to throw that out to you.”

Audience: “I'd like a cover creator tool that gives me a PDF copy, within the lines, the resolution I need, that Ingram won't throw back to me because it's at 3.85 when it should be 2.92. That way I won't have to pay somebody to produce a cover when I already have my images and font, but I can't meet that particular requirement because I don't have Photoshop. I want it optimized for KDP and IngramSpark—for all vendors.”

Audience: “And can we try to streamline it so that all vendors require the same thing?”

Mark: “Like a book industry standard.”

Audience: “How about a book industry standard for metadata like Bowker? But we don't pay attention to that.”

Audience: “The vendors all adapt it.”

Audience: “I'd like discoverability not based on the clumsy metadata now available. It might take AI and quantum computing. It should ask the reader, 'Based on your experience of the book, what was your experience of the book? How did it make you feel?' You can have a feel [from this data] from a book that crosses genre. Say, a historical and a contemporary romance. Many of us read across genres. What book might have the same feel? I don't want the AI to create content, but to come up with the feeling evoked from the text or context so you (the reader or author) can find like experiences that are not privy or subject to the category/classification.”

Audience: “Get a deep machine to spit out a color or flavor of the book. If your writing were a color what color would it be?”

Matt: “Look at the book for the metadata please?”

Mark: “Draw it from the content? Draw it from a word cloud?”

Audience: “It has to be AI. When I read the book, it senses that, or I tell it how I feel, and it says what other books give that feeling.”

Audience: “Wasn't Trajectory about that?”

Audience: “Even Trajectory and BookLamp, which Apple bought and buried in a back room, exist in other places, but they are more looking at the text.”

Audience: “You want to take it to the next level. Look at the reaction to the text. Adapt it to discoverability. This could only be done by machines.”

Mark: “It's critical, having worked at Kobo and retail places, wanting to find solutions for authors. The information—as pie in the sky as it may sound, as basic or simple as it sounds, like creating industry standards, they actually listen to those things. We want to make sure that the vendors who will listen can hear it from these amazing people. NINC people are amazing by definition. It's not just someone who is a wannabe wanting it. But people who are doing things and want next-level stuff. It's great to ask. You may not realize that someone else wants it, but couldn't conceptualize it or say it.”

Matt: “Let's break down discoverability. Which meanings? What aspects? Do we want better quantification of the book? The object of the book, such as getting new readers, getting them to find my book over another book? Or do we want them finding my book over every other form of entertainment in the world?”

Audience: “I wish these companies would connect us with game developers who want intellectual property because they need storytellers.”

Mark: “There's One More Story Games, a Canadian start-up, a husband-wife team. It's a free tool that takes your IP and creates an interactive game. A 12-year-old girl wrote Dante's Inferno, about a cat named Dante, a 15-minute game—you choose your own adventure. They're working with Charlaine Harris on one of her mystery series. This program doesn't just sell your IP to a company, it works within your IP. How do you connect with that other media competing with us? Is there a Reedsy that allows us to compete?”

Mark: “I talked with some people in NY who do some of this. They write it in an Excel spreadsheet because everything is an if-then proposition. Is John going to invite Jane on a date, and will she say yes or walk away? You can do infinite possibilities.”

Mark: “You get to write the version you threw away and the version that happens. It's a programming tool. They can code it on the Excel sheet.”

Audience: “How can we compete with multimedia? How about cross-marketing with other media?”

Damon Courtney: “We're very interested in it. TV & film are more cutthroat than we are. Video is much cheaper now, but there are lots of horror stories about people who sold book rights to studios who do whatever they want with it. With all the need for constant television at all outlets, your books should be made into movies.”

Matt: “We have a gap between current IP and the gaming world.”

Matt: “What's another aspect of discoverability? Is it to reach new readers who are reading now, or new readers who don't read ebooks, or new readers who aren't currently active readers? Get them to put up numbers on the number of active people, the educated middle class with disposable income—getting bigger every day. What would those tools look like? How do you get to the person who won't read anything longer than a magazine? Audiobooks? CerealBox or Radish or other deliveries of short pieces? Is the reader willing to read short, or does she just like the glossy pictures? I want her to play the video game based on my IP and then tell someone, so her friend will read my book.”

Audience: “I have many male friends who listen to audio because they can do something else while they are also listening to the music or audiobook or a podcast. Doesn't matter. It fills time.”

Audience: “I'm trying to figure it out. I did the demographics on my audience. I know I'm dealing with age 35+ women, but I know I have male readers. I get their emails. I want younger readers and male readers. How do I get them?”

Matt: “We're looking for tools. We're looking for demographic analysis and we want demographic marketing.”

Mark: “You know what you have and you know where you want to go too.”

Audience: “I would suggest—and this is a privacy issue maybe—that we can estimate who's our audience based on our newsletter stats.”

Audience: “Retailers know who is buying our books. Can they give us any distilled data?”

Mark: “One of the things Wattpad does really well is give you demographic information on who's reading your stuff—where, age, sex.”

Audience: “I would suspect my readership coming through Apple is different from my other etailer readerships. I could target ads.”

Mark: “Having multiple points of contact on your demographic will help. Let's say I'm getting this big data from BN, Wattpad, and Kobo. What do I do with it? Is it useful? Can you help me slice and dice it? Who do I advertise to?”

Audience: “I need help with ad design and ad targeting.”

Audience: “Since we have D2D in the room, I would love to ask BN and Kobo to make these demographics available, so we could cut and slice it.”

Damon Courtney: “Right now none of the etailers are offering that data. Nothing yet. We'd love it.”

Audience: “It would be great if we could get BookBub and FreeBooksy to pinpoint those ads. If we could ask BookBub to take \$500 and send to 40+ women who like this and this, to get that curated list. Advertisers become more sophisticated and ask us for more money. They need to know what we need and offer that. I'm not getting my money's worth. I don't want to reach 400K scattershot, I want 4K targeted.”

Audience: “I want to have a mechanism to meet foreign readers. I have my books translated. I can't tell you how hard it is to reach my French readers and get reviews. Would Booksprout or NetGalley help us?”

Audience: “What about a foreign rights agent to talk to our demographics?”

Audience: "When I did translations, you have to communicate in the other language. That's why I work in English."

Audience: "How about a tool that would get that information from various e-tailers and blend it? Then that tool company does not accumulate that information."

Mark: "And not resell it to Random House."

Matt: "Let's leave discoverability. I wish the technology of uploading and pricing and making ads was similar, standardized. We're getting nibbled to death by ducks."

Audience: "Would you be interested in a single source advertising platform where you could build something to submit to every advertising outlet, that would then gather all the data back and analyze it?"

<general murmurs yes>

Audience: "I worry about promo graphics and teasers. This new company, Covers Sell Books, maybe they would expand that a little bit. Coverssellbooks.com—Josh Wylie and Corey Alderin."

Audience: "KDROI distributes for free and 99c books. They create KDROI."

Audience: "Please distribute and submit ads, with automation and centralized distribution."

Audience: "Make an ad that's easily adaptable and uploadable and approvable at all outlets. Also a scheduler. Create all these ads and run them here and here and here."

Audience: "You want an automated media publicist."

Audience: "BookBaby does this. They started with CDs when musicians were trying to format their songs. They would format the song and send it out for listen tapes. They might go for that for books. You do it once. They send it out everywhere."

Audience: "Short of that, could we just have a couple of particular advertising outlets be sane? Responsive, consistent criteria, good communication?"

Audience: "I'm sick of the arbitrary nature of advertising platforms. Creatives can be difficult. I wish we could automate sizes and the content, please."

Audience: "I feel like a lot of tools out there are optimized for people who have one to 15 books. But once you have 40 or 50 books, managing the dashboard is hard. The code is too slow, and the dashboard is too spread out to handle it gracefully. I wish there were better interfaces."

Mark: "We've been asking distributors. They weren't expecting us to get so successful so fast. KDP grew so fast. Kobo grew so fast. They thought the average author would have 3.5 books. That's true. But the successful accounts have hundreds. They are working on it, but if you don't email and ask and nag them, they won't go to their bosses and say, 'Wow, we had 50 authors ask us for this in the last month.' If you let them know, they will fix it."

Audience: "They won't do it by series. You can do it by date but not by series."

Mark: "I never had enough proof that enough authors needed it. You can get that. It's not a faraway dream."

Matt: "Let's talk about collaboration tools. What do you wish those tools would do that they don't do?"

Audience: "Split my royalties for all retailers."

Audience: "If you go through an aggregator like D2D they can do that now."

Audience: "I want transparency for all collaborators so they can all see the stats."

Audience: "I have an account at a distributor and I have three friends collaborating with me. Can they have access to just this one property (at D2D)?"

Damon Courtney: "Yes, that would do it."

Audience: "Or, you can specify what data they can see. Itunes will let you do that already."

Audience: "BundleRabbit will do that AND feed the retailers."

Audience: "What collaboration tools are you using for collaboration?"

Mark: "I'm mailing hard copy."

Audience: "Google Docs."

Matt: "Let's talk about subscriptions. What does that word mean for you? I put out a short story every month. I want someone to sign up, you pay full price, you've given your credit card already, and you get it delivered."

Audience: "Why don't you use Patreon?"

Matt: "If you do the purchase on day of release, they bill at the end of the month."

Audience: "You can change the billing cycle now."

Audience: "Yes, if you started early at Patreon. But if you start now, you can hook up to BookFunnel and deliver that way."

Matt: "What else do you want it to do?"

Audience: "Collect the data, aggregate it, analyze it."

Audience: "I want my own app that has all my catalogs, all my books, all my audiobooks, where the reader subscribes only to me, and only get the really good stuff on my store. It shows them links to retailers for wide stuff."

Matt: "I need super-incentive products. I make beautiful box sets. I want print box sets with a lovely case. I want an embossed cover with foil that's not \$50 a sheet that I can give away to fans. I want a hardcover with a dustjacket and printed box sets. I would like to not pay too much for it, or have to go to China for it. The paper and binding is relatively easy, But the conduit to put it in is not good, as that technology hasn't been invented."

Audience: "I want comprehensive print distribution to all the places that sell print books online and all stores and libraries."

Audience: "I want a curating source, like BookBub, for physical stores. It would distribute the books to foreign companies too. 'This is our mystery line, our romance line.' They go into stores and sell the foreign rights."

Audience: "Every single retailer has their own curation program. They get authors to help them do that. There needs to be a conduit that would represent them to all retailers. No competition among them. A third-party independent, not someone curating on behalf of a publisher."

Audience: "I'd like someone like a NINC employee to go to bookstores and to Frankfort, without charging an arm and a leg. Not like Author Solutions. You want them on the street."

Mark: "Who's top of the list for this customer? A smart entity knows the territory. That's what a great sales rep always did for Kobo--they knew the bookstore, knew the list."

Audience: "You have to compete to fill one of those 200 slots on thriller—that might not be for everyone. But how about a BookBub that's nice to everyone in this room?"

Audience: "That would work for bookstores, especially indies. That kind of a rep—there must be a lot of them unemployed now. That rep could say, 'Look what I've got for you now from independent authors. And you don't have to buy a thousand.'"

Audience: "Or is that still old thinking--the trad rep wearing out his shoes? The new one would be online."

Audience: "About opening up markets, I would love to have an indie road into children's and middle-grade. It's so hard to get into schools and libraries. You know the reading grading level that they farm out to a separate place? I paid to have my book evaluated by them so I could get a rating."

Audience: "The reading level is not that individual per state. You need to go through ALA. They are pure pay-to-play. They decide what gets into stores, schools, libraries. They don't tell you it's the award winner for the year. It goes out there and publishers pull it."

Audience: "Indies still don't have anything there."

Audience: "That's because they have to be vetted, because children's books are filtered. We want an independent vetting service or organization that would give indies a chance to get their books to kids."

Matt: "What about direct sales? We want to sell to anyone, anywhere, at anytime, in any currency."

Audience: "You can now put a store on your website. You use Shopify and BookFunnel to build it, collect the money, deliver books and handle customers."

Audience: "Aer.io does POD one-off ordering based on your store and delivers books to the customer."

Audience: "I need a store-building nerd."

Audience: "We need it integrated all in one place, so that you won't need a nerd. Then we need to have a just-as-good competitor who is just as good so we're not tied to the one service."

Audience: "What about Wix? I set up a beautiful website by myself. They have a store built into their site that I haven't used because I'm not a nerd."

Audience: "They were on the Self-Publishing podcast, talking about it. A guy walks you through it. Google SPF and Wix and you can see screenshots and all. It's easier than WordPress."

Matt: "What's your five-year's-out dream?"

Mark: "When Kobo Plus expands into other markets, Amazon may pay attention. Amazon only went to 70 percent because Apple did."

Audience: "How are we going to sell our books widely?"

Audience: "They're testing a bunch of nonfiction authors who don't have to be in KU. They get a lower percentage."

Audience: "I'd take five percent or 10 percent less to stay in KU but go wide also."

Audience: "Amazon is still great but it's not the best. I'd like to see more reader tagging again. They just don't read the book the same way. Reader tags let people identify what they really like about the book. Otherwise it's hard to guess."

Audience: "It feels like we're at Smashwords right now as far as retail. It hasn't changed in a decade. We need something that the reader will love that will tear the book business wide open."

Audience: “Look up High Fidelity, the actual walk-in to show people an immersive experience, you can have your own curated store. That revolutionizes it. Because people will be in there.”



Jennifer Stevenson has published five series, 17 novels, and more than 20 short stories.

Assistants and Freelancers

Presented by Amy Atwell, Mel Jolly, Maria Connor and Bethany Barber

Reported by Nicole Evelina

Editor's Note: This session was a panel discussion. For a newsletter from Mel Jolly, go to authorRX.com.

Q. Assistants handling social media. How do you trust a stranger with passwords, fighting with readers, etc. How do you trust someone that you hire?

Maria: Starts when you are looking at candidates. Look at their social media for professionalism, typos, are they the kind who get drunk at karaoke and post it on their page? Ask for work samples. Start with one low-risk task to delegate to see how they do. You can post them yourself. If you are comfortable, you can move up. Have them get social media approved before posting. Tell them what style, etc., is appropriate. Think about memes, likes, and dislikes that will reinforce your branding, content, and audience.

Mel: You can ask for references, but they may not reveal the name of current clients.

Amy: On the freelancer's side, we need feedback and deadlines to approve the work. Not getting approval makes the freelancer nervous because they are human and can make mistakes. You have to set parameters on what you feel secure enough to hand off, and what is so inherent to your brand you (as the author) need to keep it close.

Mel: For many accounts you can give administrative rights where they can create, but not send (Wordpress, Mailchimp, etc.). There are plug-ins like LastPass in which you can share passwords, but they never see what it is. View only for bank accounts for accounting, taxes, etc.

Q. What is the most valuable thing you do for your client that we could think about handing off?

Bethany: I have picked things up as I have needed to learn how to do it. I consistently do developmental editing, proofing, formatting and uploading to vendors.

Amy: Mostly formatting and uploading. I have a philosophy about handing work off. With every aspect you need to measure:

How much time does it take?

How much money does it cost?

How much control do you want?

It's different for everyone. You need to look at the tasks. You are the only one who can write the book. What takes your time? What do you not like to do? What will make you a happier writer? You may need several freelancers to do them.

Mel: What you like and don't like and have talent at is very important.

Q. I hired an assistant last year. Doesn't have all the skills. How do I know if I need to look for a new one?

Maria: Good idea to have more than one assistant. What happens if there's a crisis? Someone else can pick up the slack. It's not competitive. Many are flexible to working on a team.

Q. How do you find a good assistant? Many authors don't want to share.

Mel: Please don't not share the names of your freelancers. Look at their previous work. At AuthorEMS.com there is a menu for freelancers, click and then there are pages for VAs, editors, formatters, cover artists. These are names authors have vouched for. Mel has a similar list on her site. The Freelancer FB group posts jobs.

Maria: I never want to say I'm not taking new clients. I want to find out what an author is looking for. I have an assistant who sometimes helps. Email me. I can help you strategize how best to balance workflow. Ask your author friends.

Q. If I have an assistant, can I delegate hiring to that person?

Mel: Yes. You can always hire outsiders and have the assistant vet the freelancers, but the author makes the final decision.

Q. Suggest beginning jobs for someone who is branching out into being an assistant/freelancer?

Bethany: Formatting with Vellum.

Mel: Newsletter (images, links, even if you write the content).

Audience: Two tiers of payment: Pay less when learning how to do something.

Q. Standard payment?

Maria: Teenage daughter 10-15 an hour. Just starting out may charge another rate. High skill level you will pay for their expertise and ability to do it well and fast.

There are different levels of assistant. Distinctions of how much oversight you need: project manage—higher skill level, run with it; less supervision or author assistant—do they need more supervision?

Mel: We aren't supposed to talk amongst ourselves. \$25-50 an hour. We have a lot of overhead, continuing education, software, benefits, etc.

Q. Are most 1099s?

Mel: Yes. Ask your freelancer. PayPal you do not have to 1099. Ask a tax professional. You should pay your freelancer money. A recent article advised paying them with gift cards.

Amy: 1099s are informational. They are not employees. This work for hire.

Q. Are there assistants who do ads?

Bethany: Yes. Bookads.com \$50/month for 10 AMS ads. You get to keep the ads and keywords.

Maria: I do BB ads for my clients and assist with FB ads, but clients need to identify parameters. I do not strategize or design campaigns.

Mel: I have a friend who does that for most of her jobs for indies.

Audience: specialists who monitor ads, keywords, like \$1200/month.

Q. Confidentiality Agreements?

Group: Standard.

Maria: Even NDAs are fine. All client information is confidential. It is most of my contract.

Mel: If they don't have a contract, explore setting one up.

Amy: I have an author services terms of service on my website.

Q. How do you manage the flow of information/communication? What works well?

Amy: 95 percent of communications via email. I archive everything. Clients contact me three years later and ask questions, or their computer crashes. Freedom to reply when I can, if I need to do research, and a paper trail to remember conversation/promises.

Mel: Some clients, semi-regular Skype sessions. I have running Google doc notes. I'm a fan of the "as we discussed" email right after we talk.

Bethany: There are pros and cons to assistants being family members, especially with communication because you have a relationship with baggage and a tendency to talk too much about business, losing that family relationship. Setting up boundaries is key.

Audience: My wife has a full-time job so that affects timelines and demands; it's not always fair.

Maria: People who are working part-time as an assistant have the same issues. Be clear on when you will get them what they need. Organization is key. Put things on the calendar to plan workflow. Work 7-10, with office hours 9-5, but if online after 5, you may get a response, text me if there's an emergency. Make sure client has all the information you need. Best tip: when you send an email if time sensitive, put the deadline in the subject line w/specific time.

Mel: Dropbox for file sharing, share of PM tool: like Trello or Basecamp, or use Google docs, Spreadsheet, but please ask me to do things before assigning them to me. The more you can share the big plan for this month, this year, five years, the more you can loop that person in, the better. If traditionally published, share emails from the PR team, and I can tell you what I can do, remind you about, etc.

Maria: Routine phone or Skype calls with clients, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, trust level and satisfaction with performance went up. Encourage that. One client spends four hours a week on the phone. Can make changes in real time that way. Another client, just a 15-minute strategy call once a month.

Q. What should the author have to make an assistant interview successful?

Mel: You may be able to hire someone for way less time/money than you think.

You have to know what you want to outsource. Time track and write down what you're doing. Look at what you love/hate, what you are good at?

Maria: What do you want to outsource? What do you want me to do for you? How available? What skills/level? Have some idea of what a task entails so that you know what you're asking them to do. Helps you have realistic expectations. Budget is important. Prioritize your wish list.

A good solid partnership contains an element of chemistry. We work intimately, and share goals, learn about readers, know critical stuff about them. Must have a high trust level. It's okay for things not to work out.

Mel: The way they organize things may not work with your brand. It's not that there is anything wrong with that assistant, I tailor my working style to my client. It's a lot about personality and how your brain works.

Q. Does genre factor in?

Maria: Yes, for me. I work mostly with romance. I know that industry, environment, community, social norms, gatekeepers, and norms. I have the expertise there.

Audience: Paying a higher price; pay for connections.

Maria: I try to be an advocate for my authors, and if I hear of an opportunity, I will tell my client. I also alert a client to things they need to be concerned about. Advocate, cheerleader, hand-holding.



Nicole Evelina is a historical fiction, non-fiction, and women's fiction author whose books have won more than 30 awards, including three Book of the Year designations. Her fiction tells the stories of strong women from history, and today, with a focus on biographical historical fiction, while her non-fiction focuses on women's history, especially sharing the stories of unknown or little-known figures. Nicole's writing has appeared in The Huffington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Independent Journal, Curve Magazine and numerous historical publications.

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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.

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Member discounts

IngramSpark will give NINC members free title setup for print and eBooks until the end of the year, when the discount will be reevaluated and possibly extended. Details on the [Member Freebies and Discount page](#), along with other member discounts.

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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
- 2019 Conference Promoter
- 2019 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: [Sue Phillips](#)
- 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
 - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
 - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- 2019 Nominating Committee:
 - Emilie Richards
 - Barbara Dunlop
 - Tawdra Kandle
 - Karen King
 - Pat Van Wie
- 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

Address changes may be made on the website.

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