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President's Voice

By Tawdra Kandle



Once upon a time, at least in such magical places as South Jersey and Pennsylvania, summer lasted throughout the entirety of August, and school buildings didn't open their doors until after Labor Day (U.S.).

Those were the days.

For me, as with many others I know, autumn is a mini new year, a time to reset and resolve after the relatively slower pace of the summer months. I tend to put into practice almost everything I've learned throughout the earlier months of the year, tweaking my schedule and routine. It's a prime writing season for me, too, as I'm usually raring to create again after the summer break.

I think that's why the NINC conference comes at the perfect time, too. Seeing friends and fellow authors whom I haven't met in person for months (or years in the pandemic age!) feels a little like coming back to school did. Add in all of those awesome learning and growing experiences, and I come home ready for my fresh and empty notebooks and sharpened pencils.

Of course, this time of year is all about endings as well. In much of the world, we're saying goodbye to longer, warmer days and vacations. In the NINC world, I can just about see in the offing the end of my year as president, which prompts me to update the membership on where we stand on a few goals I'd set back in January.

First of all, our **new website** is feeling more like a reality every day! If you haven't had the opportunity to interact with the current version of the site, you probably don't know all of the headaches both leadership and members experience. Making NINC.com over into a more user-friendly vehicle has been on the board's to-do list for several years, so watching it actually happen is very exciting. Once it's up and running (we project by mid-November), it'll make life easier for our staff and volunteers, too.

Our **DEI committee** continues to become more active. You may have noticed that *Nink* features at least one article each quarter by a DEI advocate, and I'm excited by the new ideas the

committee is presenting for our consideration. Look for some updates on those in coming months.

And of course, our **conference** is just around the corner and promises to be the most exciting and info-rich one yet! Although we are carefully monitoring COVID-19 outbreaks and spikes and doing what we can to mitigate challenges, we anticipate an event that will offer all attendees opportunities to grow and improve our authors' businesses and craft and, of course, to interact with our fellow writers. Don't forget that the **deadline to register is August 15!**

I hope that if you're in the northern hemi, you're savoring these last halcyon days of summer and getting ready to launch into the final months of this year with energy and focus. See you in September.

Tawdra Kandle

Tawdra Kandle is a USA Today bestselling romance author with over 100 books released. Her titles include new adult and adult contemporary romance; under the pen name Tamara Kendall, she writes paranormal romance, and under the pen name Tessa Kent, she writes erotic romance.

About NINC

NINC remains committed to serving all of our members, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs if any, ability, nationality or age. It is NINC's desire and goal to make sure that every author member feels welcomed and accepted and heard.

About Nink

Nink's goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members; [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

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](#).

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/>



Due to rising COVID infections across the country, the NINC Conference committee wanted to give a quick update.

If you are traveling to the conference, please be sure to take all precautions you feel necessary to protect yourself from infection.

The meeting rooms will potentially be at capacity with little social distance capability. If you are *not* vaccinated, we request that you wear a mask. However, under the guidance of the CDC, which is now recommending that even vaccinated people wear a mask indoors in high transmission areas, we suggest everyone wear a mask inside (especially if you are part of a vulnerable population).

Last year, the hotel did work with us to put our attendees at ease and we are requesting some accommodations again this year.

We will be providing masks and hand sanitizer. We are also holding events outside whenever possible. However, the workshop rooms will be indoors. Instead of paper programs, we are using an app to eliminate as many touch surfaces as possible.

We have no intention of asking our attendees about their vaccination status—that would be an invasion of their privacy.

As a reminder, the **refund policy** is 80% of the conference fee until Aug. 15. After that date, there are no refunds.

Please remember that the conference is almost two months away. And conditions can change multiple times before the conference starts.

Now for the fun stuff...we are very excited about our speaker lineup. Please check our social media accounts or Ninlink to find information about our speakers and their presentations. We worked hard to provide a diverse set of topics for both traditional and indie published authors to help everyone **Level Up**.

See you at the beach!

Lisa Hughey
NINC 2021 Conference Programming Chair

Baby Talk

How to write kids' dialogue that doesn't suck

By Marsha Zinberg



I can still remember a marketing debrief from my early days at Harlequin, when the folks on the ninth floor discovered to their surprise that a romance novel with a toddler pictured alongside the heroine and hero on the cover had outsold most of the other books offered that quarter. Babies, it turned out, helped sell books.

These days, it's a given that certain genres in popular fiction can benefit enormously from the inclusion of child characters, as they offer wonderful opportunities for creating subtext, irony and humor, and, of course, can do much to help reveal the character of the protagonists. And that's why it's so important to get these young characters to come across the page as authentically as possible—as fully realized people, rather than the cutesy, over-the-top stereotypes I've sometimes encountered.

Many authors are lucky enough to have a natural ear for dialogue, including knowing instinctively how young children speak. But even though they may be parents, some writers rely on memory that may be faulty or, worse yet, assume they can just make up how toddlers acquire and express language. But with a speech-language pathologist daughter to whom I've turned to authenticate children's dialogue many times during my editing career, I've learned that language development is not random, and in fact usually follows a very predictable pattern. Understanding that pattern can be a terrific help in generating children's dialogue that sounds accurate and natural.

Sound and vocabulary development

Let's say Jessica and Mark are taking 18-month-old Amy to the zoo. The dialogue might go something like this:

“Look, Amy! Can you see the monkey?” Mark pointed to a tree branch at the top corner of the enclosure.

“Up, dada! Up!”

Mark obligingly hoisted the toddler onto his shoulders for a better view.

“Montey!” she shouted. “OOO! AHH!”

“Yes, it’s a monkey! He’s saying, ‘OOO-OOO AHH-AHH!’”

Amy’s dialogue is consistent with developmental milestones for her age. Here are a few to keep in mind:

- Toddlers can understand many more words than they can say. At 16 months, a toddler may understand 100-200 words but may say fewer than 50.
- The first consonant sounds to develop for English-speaking children are p, m, n, h, w, and b. These are followed by k, g, t, d, and ng. At this age, it would be unlikely for a child to use consonant clusters such as tr or sp. So at two, it’s most likely still an it’sy bitsy pider.
- The first categories of words they will use are usually content words like nouns, verbs, and adjectives. And those nouns will be concrete, like dog, rather than abstract, like joy.
- First words are usually not more than two syllables in length.
- For sentences, a good rule of thumb is: two-word sentences for two-year-olds, three-word sentences for three-year-olds, four- or more word sentences for four-year-olds.

By 18 months, toddlers begin to identify themselves by name. There is also a rapid vocabulary and sentence structure growth after this time; some precocious children (Aren’t the majority of fictional children precocious?) can have vocabularies of 500 words by their second birthday, and they will also start to use prepositions and pronouns, though not always correctly: *Me go to the zoo!* They are able to use their words for many purposes, from labeling their toys to asking where Mommy is, to wailing a protest at Grandpa.

Grammar and sentence structure

Amy is now about three and a half years old, and her dad, Mark, is totally stressed out because the babysitter didn’t show up. (Jessica is no longer on the scene, having disappeared under *very* mysterious circumstances!)

“Okay, kiddo, you’re going to stay with Grandma today,” Mark told his daughter as he bundled her awkwardly into her car seat.

“Daddy go to work?”

“Yup, Daddy’s going to work, and Daddy is late, and you’re going to Grandma’s.”

“No! I go to work too! I go with Daddy! No Grandma’s!”

Amy's grammar and sentence structure has become a lot more sophisticated in a relatively short time frame. Some of this is due to a child's ability to begin using auxiliary verbs, regular past tense forms, and some progressives and adverbs, which certainly makes writing dialogue a lot easier and more interesting.

Here are some grammar and sentence structure factors to keep in mind for a two- to three-year-old character:

- Transitioning to longer word combinations may actually have some toddlers using three- and four-word combinations by 24 months: they may combine two two-word phrases, so that "baby eat" + "eat cookie" becomes "baby eat cookie," or they will add information to shorter sentences that they already say, so they might add "big" to "eat cookie" to come up with "eat big cookie."
- They will also combine words to describe how objects or actions are located in space: "push me" at the playground or "doggie house" to describe where they stashed their baby sister's blankie.
- Because they are beginning to pretend in new ways, such as giving toys a voice, or acting out events they have heard of but never experienced (like being on a pirate ship), sentences become richer and more imaginative.
- Irregular past tenses will continue to up the cuteness factor of toddlers' speech sometimes all the way into their fifth or even sixth year: my four-year-old grandson told me proudly that he "writed with a cursor on the computer." When his same-aged cousin was corrected for saying "I standed on the ladder," he, still mixing up regular and irregular past tense, typical for children this age, altered his sentence to, "Okay. I stooded on the ladder." This little guy understood his language needed to show something that had already happened, but despite this, children in preschool or even at early school age don't have the same ability as adults to understand and describe time. Concrete markers, such as "two sleeps" or "one *Paw Patrol*" are much better understood and expressed than "three weeks ago," "in the summer," or "in half an hour." Similarly, young children express time differently than adults. "Tomorrow's tomorrow is more likely to be uttered by a child getting ready to start school than "two days from now."

Theory of mind

Mark and Amy, now four and a half, are out shopping for a birthday present for her best friend.

"Okay, Amy, what should we get Lily for her birthday?"

"Slime. When I was at her house, we played with slime, and Lily really loves it! But I thought it was gross. For my birthday, I want new paint."

I've found that one of the essential areas of child development that trips up writers relates to what psychologists term "theory of mind." This is simply defined as the ability to attribute mental states—beliefs, intents, desires, emotions, and knowledge—to ourselves and others. And the above piece of Amy's dialogue demonstrates that she can now do this.

In fact, as children move toward the age of four, they continue to develop a deeper understanding of what goes on in their and others' minds. They come to understand that people talk and act on the basis of the way they *think* the world is, even when their thoughts do not reflect reality. As a result, at this age, your child characters can now begin to lie, trick and joke with others—all of which makes them better able to communicate about individual experiences and a lot more fun to write!

When you are writing young children's dialogue, don't be tempted to jump the gun and create conversations out of step with the child's typical stage of development. Spend some time with a child the age you want to portray, or take yourself off to the playground, sit down on a bench, and just listen to how kids speak and interact. It will be a win-win for your adult characters...as well as your readers!

Handy references

- <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart/>
- <https://www.childdevelopmentprograms.ca/speech-and-language/developmental-milestones/>
- <http://theroadmap.ualberta.ca/understandings/parents/37-60>

Marsha Zinberg spent more than 30 years of her publishing career at Harlequin, where she served as executive editor of several romance lines, as well as men's adventure and Worldwide mystery. These days, she regularly edits several New York Times best-selling authors and specializes in developmental and line editing for both new and returning clients. You can check out her editorial services on her [website](#), or contact her directly at marsha@writetouch.ca to discuss your publishing goals and how she can help you achieve them.

The Man Behind the Curtain at William Morrow

How Senior Designer Guido Caroti brings authors into the process

By Patricia Burroughs



What goes on behind the curtains at a major publisher's art department is a mystery to most of us. There, we suspect, lie the keys to the kingdom of the perfect book cover, if only we knew how to access them.

When asked what they would ask the art director of a major traditional publisher, most NINC writers responding said, "Why don't I get to choose my own cover?"

One author has always imagined a conference meeting with a table full of representatives from the advertising and marketing, art, and editorial departments. This idea was fueled by war stories from other authors through a lot of years, as this particular author first published in 1987.

Okay, that author is me.

In 1995 Laura Resnick wrote a five-article series on book covers, describing the very process of my dreams and nightmares.

From October 1995's *Nink*:

"Who is involved in the cover conference? Too many people, really," says one art director. The art department, marketing people, sales reps, editors, and copywriters may all be present, all contributing their expertise (which sometimes is expertise, and which other times might be the subjective opinion of a 23-year-old newcomer who's heard that green books don't sell)."

One author was so fortunate as to have her first novel not just sell, but to have the editor consult her for cover ideas, too. She was able to describe her "dream cover" the way she'd always pictured it. When she got the flat she was over the moon.

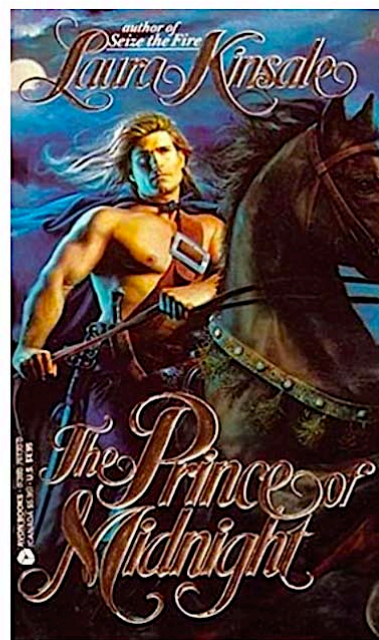
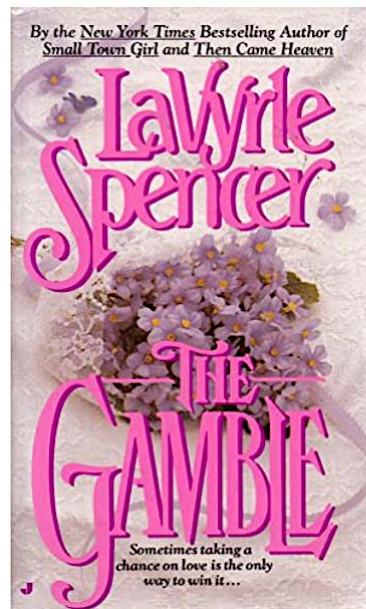
Then she got *The Phone Call*.

The sales team had shown the cover to their two largest accounts. At both places, they were told that the store wouldn't even stock the book because it wouldn't sell. They're the ones who

stripped books and sent them back unsold, and that meant they felt they had their fingers on the pulse of what covers caught a reader's attention and which ones got ignored. What was worse, they said that the cover looked like YA. Not hot-selling YA, either.

The art department kicked into gear and started over from scratch with the clock ticking. The author got to participate in the process as an observer who was sometimes asked her opinion, but this time it was the combination of sales, marketing, art, editorial, etc., that called the shots. This cover got in all the stores and sold well. Authors don't always know best.

But other authors proposed, got shot down, and kept fighting for ideas that ended up changing how covers were approached throughout the romance industry. LaVyrle Spencer's readers often complained that they were embarrassed to be seen reading books with exposed skin and clinch covers. Laura Kinsale insisted that women readers didn't care what the heroine looked like since readers want to picture themselves in that role. She wanted the hero to stand alone on her next novel. Because they won these battles, Spencer's stepback cover with a steamy clinch hidden behind an innocent bouquet and the lone hero cover were seen, loved, and bought. The authors and the readers won.



There's at least one place where the author's opinion is welcomed. Guido Caroti is senior designer at William Morrow, a division of Harper Collins, making him responsible for design and art direction of mass market paperbacks. The genres include romance, thrillers, fantasy, teen and mysteries. As well as other books, Caroti designs most if not all the covers for historical and contemporary romance titles for Avon Books.

For Caroti, the project begins when he receives a memo from the editor. This includes the book description along with any suggestions the author offered. He honors these to the extent he can as often as he can.

There are some situations where he receives information from the agent. But there is no direct contact between authors and Caroti.

Sometimes this simple beginning of "memo in hand" is a bit too "simple." Because book covers are scheduled around a year in advance, those memos might not be as detailed as a designer would want.

There are times when the book hasn't been written yet, others when the details of the book are vague or not yet determined. This is where Guido and the editor put their heads together to create a dynamite cover to represent a book that doesn't even exist in its author's mind yet.

Because there are many imprints under William Morrow's mass market paperback umbrella, Caroti must effectively direct and create covers for many genres.

And, of course, each genre has its own cover tropes and conventions.

Those subtleties are described most effectively by Nichole Perkins, a writer on pop culture and host of the podcast *This is Good for You*, in an interview with the *99% Invisible* podcast.

"When I see a bare-chested man, like maybe his face isn't even in the shot, it's just torso. I know that it's going to be a fairly steamy romance, and if it's like a blue background, the hero is some kind of law enforcement or military person. And then green background or a yellow background, then I know there is probably going to be some sort of paranormal element to it. Like maybe he's some kind of werewolf or weretiger."

Fortunately, Caroti doesn't have to understand all the subtleties and messages the cover transmits to its genre readers. The editor takes all of that into consideration before sending the memo. One current historical romance trend he mentioned is dresses that fill the bottom of the cover so there is a place for the title to go. And here I thought they filled the cover because the effect was beautiful. Win/win.

Once he receives the memo, the process may vary between books, authors and genres. But since developing the romance cover is probably the most complex and detailed process, by following it we can get a decent idea of how other covers are developed as well.

Memo and character descriptions in hand, Caroti first must find and hire a model. He sends several possible candidates to the editor and author.

Avon author Caroline Linden says, "I have usually (in the last few books or so) been offered the chance to rank my preference for models. It's always a ranking, because they don't know who will be available on the day they shoot. I send in my top three, generally. Usually get #1 or #2."

Next, Caroti schedules the photo shoot. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the art department has a wide variety of costumes on hand to use.

After the shoot, Caroti chooses 15-20 poses to send to the editor and author.

Again, Linden says she is asked to rank her preferences. "They don't always agree with me; it's just my personal ranking. Usually something from my top five is used."

Once a pose has been chosen, Caroti selects and hires an illustrator who will take Caroti's direction and transform the photographed models into digitally painted characters for the cover. The illustrator also digitally paints the background using the notes given.

Once the illustrator has nailed it, the final cover design, layout, font selection, and design details are where Caroti's experience in graphic design comes into play.

All his previous experience with publications such as Fodor's Travel Guides and projects for organizations like the United Nations, along with his expertise in graphic design, are called upon to pull all the final elements of a cover together.

But does it end there? Not quite.

The editor and author get to chime in again.

When Caroline Linden receives a mock-up for her feedback, she sends back her wish list of changes. Some they make, some they do not.

"Once I did pick and choose among poses, titling, and colors. They took pretty much all that I suggested. Sometimes that doesn't happen."

But most important to an author, she concludes, "I do believe they want me to like the cover. And with all that feedback, I love the covers Guido has done."



When asked whether he ever thinks the editorial memos are asking for a book cover that simply doesn't work, Caroti laughs and then sighs, "Ooooh, yes." When this happens, his communications with the editor will go back and forth; his concerns may or may not convince the editor or change their mind. So at that point his job is to put together the best team and design he can to give the editor what they want. If he can address some of his concerns at the same time, that's a bonus.

Perhaps surprisingly, he never knows the results—whether the cover “worked.” So many other things affect sales figures, and sales and rankings don't get reported to the art department anyway.

Authors with small presses have often found that their opinion is very much desired and they can be hands-on in the process since the small press may not have an art department or the experience to deal with cover details.

Whether you're dealing with a small or large publisher, there are ways to potentially increase your chances of having a say in your cover design.

"Way back when, I used to send written descriptions and was often less than excited about the resulting covers," Caroline Linden says. "Once I figured out to communicate in pictures (e.g., other covers I loved, images from photo sites I liked, even an ad image once), my covers grew dramatically more to my liking."

There are no guarantees that your suggestions will be taken, but speaking the language of the artist with visuals is time-proven, makes sense, and may increase the odds.

Patricia Burroughs sold her first book in 1987 and was a bit horrified to see that the cover of her western romance was pink. Not just pink, but variations from pale to fuchsia. It was many years later that she reread the opening to Chapter One and saw her own description, "Within minutes the peaks of the rugged mountains to the west appeared, bathed in pink and orange and magenta, honored by the sun's first rays." She was hoisted on her own petard of purple prose and has been fascinated by the business and the art of book covers ever since.

Guido Caroti's education in graphic design at Clark University and Rhode Island Design Institute led to his job as art director at Fodor's Guide Books, where as art director he led a team of designers as they redesigned the entire catalogue of guide books for the first full-color editions Fodor's had ever produced. Since then he's freelanced for book covers, CD and DVD covers, film posters, and other graphics, including working with the United Nations. In addition to his current position of senior designer at the William Morrow Mass Market Paperback division, he still freelances. His [portfolio is available](#), and his email is guidocaroti@gmail.com.

Author Perspective

M.L. "Matt" Buchman

By Barbara Meyers



M.L. Buchman

Thirty-plus years as a project manager specializing in crisis situations and working in seven different industries gave M. L. "Matt" Buchman an education in how to manage being a busy writer with a growing business.

He began indie publishing in 2009, but still sought publication through traditional press as well. In 2010, he directly sold the first of what were to be 13 military romantic suspense books to Sourcebooks (after an estimated 500 rejections of his short stories and 10 or so books). Buchman also studied contract law. He says, "My one involvement with a lawyer/agent actually resulted in my getting a worse contract than I had already negotiated myself."

Part of Buchman's successful negotiation strategy allowed him to retain rights to all of his world, including any works under 60,000 words. In 2012, he began a very successful series of companion short novels to the 13 traditional titles. That world ultimately totaled 35 novels and scores of short stories.

Transition by terror

He made the jump to being a full-time writer in January 2013. By then he had nine books under contract (four written and delivered) and a single, surprisingly successful short novel. "We bet a third of our life's savings that if I did nothing else but bust my behind for three years, I could make the transition permanent," Buchman recalls. "We called it 'The Transition By Terror.' It was, but it worked."

As an indie, he branched into contemporary romance, and now he's about to release the eighth title in his political action-adventure/techno-thriller series.

“In retrospect, making the leap to being a full-time writer was actually less of a transition than it seemed at the time,” he says “My level of effort and commitment didn’t change, just what I was doing with the hours in my day. But over the last year or two, I have made a transition from ‘Please let this keep working’ to believing it will continue to work as long as I want it to. And in that shift, the world is night and day. It requires a belief in my skills as both a writer and a businessman, and also a degree of trust in my fans and the market. It is a confidence without cockiness, ego, or assumptions. It’s simply doing something that I love.”

This change allowed Buchman to proceed with less fear and paranoia. “I can now think of the wider scope of what will challenge me as a writer, what will draw my passion that I can share with my readers before I must ask ‘will it sell?’ It also allows me to plan on a multi-year span. For example, launching my political techno-thriller series in 2020 was a major stretch into a new genre for both myself and my fans. I planned it as a minimum three-year arc of three quartets with some confidence.” Buchman says there is minimal romance in the new series, and he admits it was a huge audience-estrangement risk. But fans embraced the series wholeheartedly and made it his highest review-rated series.

Facing the blank page

Buchman gets over facing the blank page by writing proposals to himself. “Every time I have an idea, it gets three hours,” he says. In that time, he writes character sketches, a précis, or even a scene. When he’s looking for his next project, he goes to the file, finds an idea he liked, and discovers the beginning of a new book.

A day in the life

Buchman’s typical writing day looks something like this seven days a week:

- 7-9 a.m. – Deal with overnight e-mail and catch up on the news (“A lot of my writing is ‘near current’ events.”)
- 9 a.m.-5 p.m. – “If I can hollow out three hours for writing, that’s a triumph. For every three hours of writing, I also do one hour of research. The rest of the time is business, marketing, recording audio, developing a game based on the novels, and all the other madness of running a small but successful business. I break this up with walks or dates with my wife, chatting during lunch, etc.”
- 5:30 p.m. – “I’m done and it’s time for the wife.”
- 8:30 p.m. – bedtime
- 10 p.m. – lights out after reading or watching a movie

Tools of the trade

After 30 years spent as a computer geek and project manager, Buchman's writing tools have evolved over time and now consist of:

- MS Word for composition
- MS OneNote for brainstorming and factoid tracking
- MS Excel: character sheets, timelines, calculators, marketing, sales, scheduling
- Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Acrobat for cover work
- Adobe Audition for creating his own audiobooks
- Vellum for layout
- WordPress website with MyBookTable (and about 15 other plug-ins); (He does it all.)
- Google Chrome browser
- Thunderbird e-mail

"I am the anti-marketing God!"

Buchman's list of unsuccessful marketing attempts:

- Ten or so years ago when it seemed anyone could make a killing by simply putting a book on Amazon, it didn't work for his books.
- He refused to join the \$0.99 revolution, believing his work had more value and held his prices up.
- Out of a half dozen BookBubs over five years, only one did well. The others were all break even (including sell-through in the series).
- When he built ads, he consistently maintained negative return on investment.
- Hiring a virtual assistant cost him \$1,100 and earned him \$183.

"My Facebook group is one of the most lax and unexciting things you can imagine," he says.

What works

Buchman is, however, shocked that the advertising firm he recently hired, Aurora Publicity, appears to be off to a good start in making his advertising for one techno-thriller series work better. This includes refreshing the covers; updating keywords, categories, and back cover blurbs; and focusing on Amazon and Facebook advertising. After only three months, the increased revenue is paying for the firm's fees as well as the advertising costs.

He built most of his newsletter list organically (with an occasional Ryan Zee/Booksweeps or Bookfunnel promotion). He includes a sign-up teaser to receive a 10-story anthology at the front and back of every book. That anthology is a tour of 10 of his series along with intros and a suggested reading list.

His “very simple” newsletter is typically issued twice per month: on the 14th to announce that month’s free short story and on the last Tuesday if there is a novel release or something else of interest. He keeps it short, pointed, and includes excerpts.

His newsletters follow this outline:

1. Here’s what’s new.
2. Check out this sale/promo/group anthology.
3. Did you miss this cool thing that came out last month?
4. Here’s a fun excerpt.
5. Here’s what’s coming.

Every now and then there’s a “For subscribers only” promotion. His drip campaign automation is designed to weed out those who don’t want to be there, and unsubscribe buttons are always prominent. He has about 7,000 subscribers, but his open rates often run well over 30 percent and sometimes over 50 percent.

Since July 2014, he has posted a new story for seven days for free on his website, at the same time it goes live for sale. Buchman adds, “These stories sometimes support my novel series, sometimes they don’t, but they are a huge gift to fans that keeps them coming back and reading/buying my novels. I make a third of my living selling stories that you can read for free on my website every month.”

On average, his “Ides of Matt” stories range from 4,000-13,000 words. One story is posted for seven days on the 14th of the month on his blog. For Christmas, he writes two stories, but only one is on the website for free. The other is for sale only. Generally a short story is written in one day, but longer stories may take two. To build a cover, create the audio, and get it all loaded may take another half or full day.

Inspiration?

Buchman chuckles when asked where he gets his inspiration. “Writing begets writing,” he explains. “The more I write, the more ideas I have. I write to entertain two people, and two people only: myself first and my wife second. If I entertain my fans in the process, that’s a pure bonus. But if I can make my wife laugh or sigh over a scene, I know I’ve done a good day’s work.”

Lessons learned:

Even with all of his success, Buchman says there are three things he would change about his writing journey:

1. I wouldn't have spent seven years, nine drafts, and 1.5 million words trying to perfect my third novel. I'd have learned far more by writing the next novel(s).
2. I wouldn't have tried to sustain 11 simultaneous novel series at once. Not only is it crazy making, but it fractures the fans' expectations.
3. I never would have allowed a traditional publisher to have so many of my titles. Yes, they served me well in launching an audience. But by the end, they were 85% of my writing time and 15% of my income.



Barbara Meyers writes contemporary romance, mainstream fiction, oddball shape-shifter fantasy, and more.

Front Matter and Back Matter

Dress your novel for success

By Mindy Klasky



As authors, we pour energy into creating our novels, drafting, and revising and polishing until every word sings. But all too often, we send those creations into the world dressed in the equivalent of a burlap sack, setting the story between hastily thrown together front matter and back matter. (Front matter is simply the material that appears at the front of a book, before the story itself—think title page, “Also By” page, etc. Back matter is the material that appears at the back of the book—think “About the Author” page, etc. Front matter and back matter, taken together, are a book’s supplemental matter.)

The primary goal of supplemental matter is to sell the specific book in which it appears. That sale is made more likely by front matter and back matter that convey professionalism, reassuring the prospective buyer that an author understands basic publishing conventions such as title pages and copyright pages. “Also by” pages increase a potential purchaser’s confidence by demonstrating the author’s experience. Dedications, author’s notes, forewords, introductions, and prefaces all provide glimpses into an author’s thoughts, building rapport with would-be readers and making them more likely to want to continue the relationship by buying the book.

The secondary goal—which is almost as important as the primary one—is to sell *additional* books. But just as a Brooks Brothers suit stands out in a Silicon Valley office or a graphic T-shirt is frowned upon by Wall Street, appropriateness of specific front matter and back matter varies depending on setting. Ebooks and print books require dramatically different fashion statements.

A complete wardrobe

Grab a book off the nearest bookshelf. Take a peek at what's in there, concentrating on all the things that aren't actually the main text. Chances are, you'll see some or all of the following, possibly accompanied by one or more blank pages:

- Table of contents (originally included only in nonfiction works, but now often included in ebook versions of fiction and nominally required by Amazon for all ebooks)
- Half-title page (usually including just the title, with no other information)
- Title page (usually including the publisher's name and logo and sometimes including the publisher's location)
- Also By page (listing some or all of the author's works)
- Copyright page (including a copyright notice, other legal notices, and contact information for the publisher)
- Blurbs (excerpts of reviews or other promotional material specifically for this book)
- Dedication
- Epigraph
- Author's note
- Foreword, introduction, or preface
- Prologue
- (The actual text—the one thing on this list that is not supplemental matter)
- Epilogue
- Afterword
- Endnotes
- Index
- Acknowledgments
- Interview with the author
- Book group or classroom materials related to the book
- Promotional material for other books by the author, including teasers (typically in the same series, but not always)
- Promotional material for books by other authors
- Invitation to join the author's newsletter or other social media
- Request to review the book
- About the Author page
- About the Publisher page

A slim silhouette: ebooks

The selection of specific supplemental matter varies by format because readers experience electronic books and print books in very different ways. (Some traditional publishers have not

recognized this different experience; many ebooks published by traditional publishers retain the identical supplemental matter as their print books. This arrangement is not optimal.)

Front matter is often dramatically curtailed in ebooks, supporting authors' primary goal of selling the current book. This abridgment is a natural consequence of many vendors providing a free sample to potential ebook buyers, allowing them to read a percentage of the book for free. (The specific percentage varies from vendor to vendor.) Authors benefit by providing as striking a sample as possible, allowing the prospective purchaser to experience the author's writing style, ideally hooking them to the extent that they buy the book.

Extensive front matter cuts into the "meat" of the sample available to possible buyers. Extensive blurbs, long lists of other works by the author, and promotional material for the publisher all build a barrier between the reader and the actual text of the novel.

Technically, *no* front matter is necessary; however, most authors retain a few basics: a title page, a dedication (if they're including one in the book), and a prologue (again, if the story calls for one.)

All other supporting material—even the table of contents and copyright page—is shifted to the back. Once there is no longer a danger of alienating a reader who is considering a sample, possibilities open up. For example, an "Also By" list might include every book written by the author instead of a select few. A teaser might include entire chapters, rather than a few pages.

The whole nine yards: print books

Print books, on the other hand, tend to retain more front matter. Even though many potential purchasers of print books will use a vendor's preview function (e.g., Amazon's Look Inside feature), most print books retain the traditional front matter structure set out in the bullet list above. This structure is likely a holdover from traditional publishing, the source of the vast majority of print books sold.

Print books generally do not include as much supplemental matter intended to sell additional books. These choices are based, at least in part, on the nature of the medium, as well as the cost of paper and shipping. Most print books do not include a request for the reader to review the book or to sign up for the author's newsletter, in part because the immediacy of that request is diluted by the reader's need to set aside the book, to pick up an electronic device, and to follow through on the request. Teasers for other books tend to be relatively short—a few pages rather than complete or multiple chapters—because the cost of materials, manufacture, and shipping is relatively high.

Individual fashion statements

Within the general framework of ebooks (sparse front matter, more elaborate back matter) and print books (more elaborate front matter, relatively sparse back matter), authors still must make choices when they select and order their supplemental material, based on their specific publishing goals and their understanding of the publishing business.

The most important element of back matter is the one that immediately follows the actual text. Readers are far more likely to see that element as they tap to read the next page or turn an actual print page. (Their attention will likely wane with each additional element after the conclusion of a satisfying story.)

Some authors prioritize long-term connections with readers. For them, getting newsletter subscribers is the most important way to make additional sales. By definition, readers following a link to a newsletter sign-up will not be making an immediate purchase; however, they may be more likely to buy books in the future, based on the newsletters they receive.

Other authors prioritize the certainty of making an immediate new sale. Those authors will likely include a blurb, teaser, or sample chapter(s) for a specific book or books.

Still other authors prioritize building a community with their readers. They believe that their readers will be more likely to buy additional books if they “know” the author through websites, including social media. Those authors will conclude their main text with immediate invitations for the reader to visit Facebook groups, Instagram feeds, or other social media.

The nitty and the gritty

Once an author determines specific elements for front matter and back matter, those elements should be presented in a unified fashion across all the author’s books. Templates simplify this structure.

New authors and authors who value their time more than their royalties might rely on the templates created by Draft2Digital. This consolidator allows authors to distribute their work to multiple vendors with the flick of a few keys. Authors can designate supplemental matter, allowing Draft2Digital to compile electronic files incorporating that content across an entire catalog. (Of course, Draft2Digital charges for its services—15% of all books sold through their platform.)

More experienced formatters or authors who don’t want to pay Draft2Digital’s royalty share can create a template. In Vellum, for example, authors can create a file that contains each supplemental matter file, formatted according to the author’s preference. Then, it’s a simple matter to save that file under a new name for each new book, importing the specific narrative chapters to finish the book. (My Vellum format file also includes a page where I document each change I’ve made to my supplemental matter, stating the date and the change.) Similar templates can be created in other systems such as Scrivener or Word.

Front matter and back matter remain valuable tools for authors working to sell one book or an entire catalog of books.

Sample copyright page

Traditionally, the copyright page is printed on the back of the title page, with the text starting at the *bottom* of the page. A complete copyright page includes:

※

Copyright © [Year] by [Author]

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real locales are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

[If a reprint: This book was originally published under the title [Title].]

[If you have licensed copyrighted work, such as a song:

[Title of song]

Words and music by [Author of song]

Copyright © [Year] by [Copyright holder of song]

[Rights notices required by license, such as Used by permission of [Rights holder]]]

Cover design by [Designer name]

Published by [Publisher name]

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ISBN: [ISBN]

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[Optional date code, indicating the date this book was last updated: DDMMYY]

※

*USA Today bestselling author [Mindy Klasky](#)'s most recent novel is the romantic comedy *The C Word*, the first volume in her *Love in the Age of COVID Series*. Klasky learned to read when her parents shoved a book in her hands and told her she could travel anywhere through stories. As a writer, Klasky has traveled through various genres, including romantic comedy, contemporary romance, and traditional fantasy. In her spare time, she knits, quilts, and tries to tame her to-be-read shelf.*

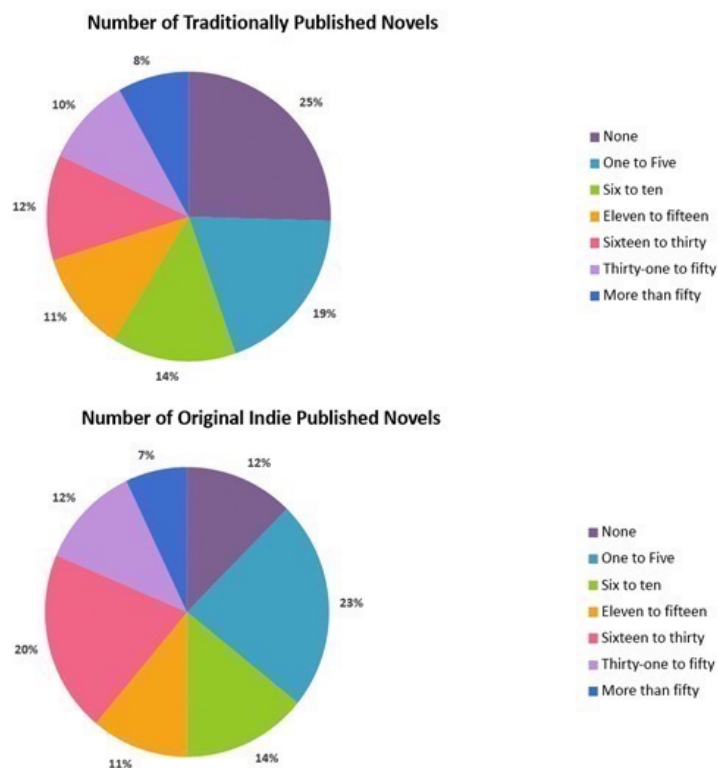
The Mad Scribbler

Some questions about editors

By Laura Resnick



The 2019 survey of NINC, administered by [WTH Analytics](#), included questions about how our members publish their new books. According to the responses, 75% of you have published new novels traditionally, and 88% of you have self-published new books. Obviously, this also means that a significant percentage of you have experience with both of these paths.



This also means that our members have a lot of experience working with **editors** who are employees of publishing houses, as well as with freelance editors who are paid by the client—the writer.

In a future column, I want to explore what you've learned about choosing, working with, and resolving problems with editors on these different paths of publishing. So, NINC members, whether you're indie or trad or hybrid, I have some **questions for you**:

Indie publishing

- What sort of editor(s) do you work with? A concept or content editor? A copy editor? Something else? Why or why not?
- Do you choose different editors for different genres of work? Or do you stick with one editor who you feel "gets" your writing?
- How do you choose an editor? How do you decide if this is the right fit? What things do you recommend a writer think about when choosing an editor?
- Please describe your working process with your editor(s).
- What are some tips or habits that you've found make the relationship or working process function more smoothly or effectively?
- What are the main differences you've found with how this type of editor/author process works, compared to your experiences in traditional publishing?
- Have you been dissatisfied with an editor you've hired? Why? How did you resolve it?
- Has working in the indie world influenced how you work with an editor in traditional publishing?

Traditional publishing

- When submitting books, do you target a particular editor (or, with your agent, choose a particular editor to target)? What influences those choices? How has that worked out for you?
- What are some of the habits you employ to make the editor-author relationship function well in traditional publishing? This question applies to copy editors as well as to acquiring/content editors.
- Have you been dissatisfied or unhappy with your editor (or copy editor) in traditional publishing? Why? Were you able to address or resolve the problem(s)?
- Has your indie publishing experience (*or*: has the knowledge that indie publishing is a viable alternative) influenced how you engage with editors in traditional publishing?

Finally, do not limit yourself to these questions! If I've left something out, or if these questions have sparked thoughts about additional editor-related advice, I want to hear from you.

Please **send your replies and comments to me** at: LLR1962@yahoo.com.

If you do **not** want your **name** mentioned in the column, **please specify** that in your email to me, and your name will not be shared with anyone.

Laura Resnick is taking a break from writing her column this month but will be back in September.

NINC Member Discounts

Nate Hoffelder, Web Designer

Nate Hoffelder, the most recent entrepreneur to offer us a generous discount, has been helping people fix broken tech since 2010. He designs and repairs WordPress sites and acts as a virtual IT department for authors. Nate strives to be certain that the websites he builds look great, run smoothly, and turn readers into superfans.

In the words of his client Joanna Penn: “It’s fantastic to have someone working with me who understands authors and self-publishing, as well as how important my website is to my business. He works quickly and has made recommendations and changes that have benefited the site and I trust him to do a great job.”

You can view samples of Nate’s work [here](#). Be sure to scroll down to see the wide variety of websites he has created.

If you hire Nate to build your website, he will include one year of free software updates, daily backups, and security checks.

As always, you can only access the discount through NINC’s [website](#). Sign in, then go to **Member Benefits: Discounts and Freebies** to learn how.

Please remember not to share our codes or our links. Keeping our discounts may depend on it.

Membership Benefits

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

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

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

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

Networking

The email list for Novelists, Inc. Members: <https://groups.io/g/NINCLINK>

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

We offer a critique/brainstorming group: <https://groups.io/g/NINKcritique>

Follow NINC on Twitter: https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc

Conference:

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

Newsletter

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

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

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

Website (You must be logged in to access these services.)

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

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

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

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

Welcome Packet: *A link to the new member packet will be included as soon as it's been updated.*

Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts. A complete listing of these can be found at <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/member-freebies-discounts/> along with other member discounts.

Volunteer

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

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- 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

2021 Board of Directors

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

- President: Tawdra Kandle
- President-Elect: Lisa Hughey
- Secretary: Hallee Bridgeman
- Treasurer: Timothy Cerepaka
- Newsletter Editor: Harper St. George
- Advisory Council Representative: Lou Aronica

Advisory Council

- Lou Aronica
- Brenda Hiatt Barber
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- Jean Brashear
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- Julie Ortolon
- Diana Peterfreund
- Pat Rice
- Erica Ridley
- Marianne Shock
- Wayne Stinnett
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

2021 Committees

Complete committee member listings are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.

- 2021 Conference Committee
 - Conference Director: Mel Jolly
 - Programming Chair: Lisa Hughey
 - Assistant Prog. Chair: Tawdra Kandle
 - Traditional Publishing Liaison: Victoria Thompson
 - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
- Authors Coalition Representative: Laura Phillips
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee
 - Hildie McQueen
 - Gwen Hernandez
 - Lynn Emery
 - Pamela Kelley
 - Pook Burroughs
 - Samantha Silver
 - Alison Perry
 - Misti Boehm
 - Harper St. George
 - Ellis Leigh
 - Malorie Cooper
- Social Media Committee: Violet Howe
- Membership Committee
 - Sarah Woodbury
 - Boyd Craven
- *Nink* Newsletter
 - Editor: Harper St. George
 - Acquisitions Editor: Trish Milburn
 - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
 - Production Manager: Laura Resnick

- Nominating Committee:
 - Malorie Cooper
 - Tanya Anne Crosby
 - Kristine Smith
 - Jenny Gardiner
 - Judi Fennell
- Discounts Program: Emilie Richards

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.

Nink Newsletter

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Nink's goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members.

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

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