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President's Voice

By Alyssa Day



2020: The Future is Now.

And for me, that means my first column as your president. After serving as president-elect under Wayne, and as the conference committee chair for 2019, I'm looking forward to a great year.

When we first considered a theme for this year's conference, we came up with 2020: A Vision for the Future, playing on the 20/20 idea. But then we realized that, having survived and triumphed over the past decade of monumental changes in the publishing industry, what we're really looking at is a future that's already here.

And who better than NINC members to pull together to meet the challenges of today's version of publishing?

Following our amazingly successful conference in 2019, I'm delighted that we have so much continuity in the conference committee. Under excellent leadership by president-elect Tawdra Kandle, we're looking to make 2020 even better.

We have several ideas on the horizon. We're looking at making website improvements, and we're also looking at ways to improve our already excellent newsletter to make sure it continues to meet members' needs. NINC members have already participated in step one of the process, by participating in last November's survey (your individual responses were completely anonymous, even to the board of directors). Our amazing newsletter editor, Michele Dunaway, will be receiving those results soon and sharing them with the board (and you!) in February. Then we'll begin the conversation about what happens next.

We couldn't run NINC itself, or the conference, without the help of so many member volunteers, so I'd like to thank those of you who are already signed up and encourage the rest of you to do so. We're forming task forces in January to look at individual issues that face NINC today. More to come on that soon.

Finally, I was honored (if a bit intimidated) to serve as NINC president-elect, but doing so made 2019 a great year of learning and building friendships and connections that have helped me grow. The board, in that way, is a reflection of NINC as a whole. Members helping members, so we can all succeed in this tumultuous, always-changing industry. I'm looking forward to continuing the work in 2020, and I invite you all to contact me or any board member at any time with questions or suggestions.

Welcome to the new decade, and welcome to the future! It's going to be spectacular.

—Alyssa

P.S. It's membership renewal time. Please go www.ninc.com and log in to renew your membership.

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](#).

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/>

Alyssa Day is the NYT & USA Today bestselling author of books with kissing, laughter, mystery & magic.

The Future Is Now

NINC Conference

September 23 - 27, 2020

Make plans to attend NINC 2020: The Future is Now!

September 2020 < Today >

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	31	Sep 1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28 <i>(Recover)</i>	29	30	Oct 1	2	3

Watch for an email blast on Ninlink with full **registration** details, and watch this space for more information in February.

All I Need to Know About Writing Life I Learned From...

Moving into a new-to-me house

By Michele Dunaway



As writers, as with life itself, Murphy's Law says that if it can go wrong, it will go wrong. Or something like that. I'm too stressed to Google it. All I know is that within a day of actually moving in, I wanted to burn the place to the ground and simply walk away.

(Back in October, I wrote about what I learned from the whole house purchase process.)

Instead of feeling overjoyed, immediately things weren't right. The dryer wasn't working. The dishwasher wasn't level. The two-year old HVAC wasn't cooling. Worse, I was scheduled to have four movers, and only three showed up. That meant that by the time they'd loaded everything (five hours), there wasn't really enough time to unload. Three hours later and everything came off the truck and minus the big furniture, it all sat in my family room—few boxes if any went into the proper rooms. My daughter and I had no idea where anything was—and we couldn't find the pins that put the shelves together.

We moved in on a Saturday—and problem solver that I am, by Monday morning I was on the phone. By Tuesday, we had cable and internet. The gas company came out and said no gas was leaking (which meant the problem was solely inside my dryer), and my HVAC people were here (seems no one ever cleaned or maintained the new HVAC so the coils were covered in grime), the electrician came out and fixed a blown outdoor GFCI outlet (which of course couldn't have fried when the electrician was out the week before rewiring all the outlets). However, despite small progress, none of these fixed the fact the duct work wasn't installed properly or that when the cat vomited on my bed I had to leave my house to do laundry—and this lovely occasion occurred twice because when cats get stressed they tend to yack.

I know. I know. First world problems.

However, for some reason, perhaps since it's been such a horrendous process of buying a house, and I had surgery in April, and I keep getting rejected (although I know I'm a good writer—maybe?) all these events overloaded me enough that I needed to take Valium to curb the urge to burn things down or simply take boxes full of stuff (that perhaps at one point

mattered but at the moment I no longer cared about) and chuck said boxes straight into a Dumpster.

As the ultimate manager of my life, which involves keeping dozens of plates in the air at all times, I experienced the rare occurrence of all those plates crashing to the ground at once. Rage slipped through my front door and became a constant pest.

I was spiraling out of control, still didn't feel well, and I wondered what the hell I was doing. Had I fooled myself? Signing the papers was easy—even though I'd upsized my house payment (freebie lesson—never ever make this mistake).

Painting—although it sent my body into spasms—was something I could do myself. But the day we moved in, it was as if the perfect storm arrived—the excitement of buying a house, coupled with the St. Louis Blues winning their first Stanley Cup had put me on a great, natural high, yet this high slammed to a halt when faced with actual real-world logistics and life stressors. No matter how well I could do things, every time I turned around, something else came up, my budget went to hell and stayed there, and I will be the first one to admit that I cracked under the pressure.

This same thing happens in our writing life. Or life period. Bad things happen. We are cruising along, minding our own business, when something happens that throws us for a loop. We aren't waiting for the other shoe to drop but it does—and it drops hard. We're downsized. We're cut from our lines. Our agent drops us. Our sales plummet. Some online vendor we rely on changes the rules yet again. Someone forgets to pay us and we have to go into fight mode. The playing field gets leveled, and it's not in our favor.

Or, worse, we lose someone we love; whether it's a person or a pet, the loss is devastating. We enter a state of grief. Or we find that we, or someone we know, has a health crisis and this becomes our number one priority. Or we simply cannot decipher the world around us and feel helpless in trying to make sense of whatever it is, whether it be economic or political. Nothing we do seems to matter.

All I can say is the past six months have had days go from the most joyous to the most distressing all in one swoop. But I did learn some takeaways.

Lesson One: It's going to take hard work

If it were easy to be a writer, everyone would do it. But writing, like life, takes work. I'm one of those people who believe success is not something that simply happens to you. It takes hard work. Now, we're not going to debate that there are those who are lucky. They are simply born with it (whether looks, smarts, or a trust fund). Others simply are in the right place at the right time, in one of those twists of fate where they win the lottery, or after hard work, they hit it big by writing the next Harry Potter.

The rest of us put our nose to the grindstone and dig deep, even if we don't or won't ever hit any type of a list. We take on the task each day because we believe we can do this. As I said on Twitter, writing is having people tell you that you're not good enough and then having to push through that darkness and get words on the page to prove them wrong.

So like moving into a house, nothing is settled overnight and it can take years. We have to push through the shadow, the despair, and the uncertainty. We have to believe in ourselves

when no one else will. While only you can forge your own path, you aren't an island, which brings me to lesson two.

Lesson Two: Ask for help

I'm going to admit, when I'd reached my wits' end with my house, I vented on Facebook. It's something I normally don't do. I'm one of those who tries to keep Facebook light and happy.

But venting was the fastest way to get the emotional support I needed. Every sad face tagged onto my post was like a literal pat on the back that people understood my pain. People also reached out via comments and messenger. One of my former students sent me a message saying he could do the carpentry work. A high school classmate suggested questions to ask the HVAC person. Another former student owns a landscaping company—and his company is now mowing my lawn. My best friend called me—she told me her van had died in Georgia while on a trip with the Boy Scout troop she co-leads. We had a great commiseration fest and ranted on how that bitch Fate sucks, a mutual venting we both needed.

Writing is a solitary activity, but if you are reading this, you're a member of NINC, and because of this you've immediately got a support system and a network.

We may write alone, but we are not alone.

But besides asking for help on the listserve or NINC's Facebook page, I want to also encourage you to reach out and ask for help from friends and family, and if necessary, medical professionals. When I realized I'd "snapped," I reached out to my older daughter and she and I made plans to meet in Chicago for my birthday. The house wasn't going anywhere, and the unpacking could wait. I needed to be out of St. Louis because I needed a change of scenery—the feeling that I'd done something for a vacation, for a mental health break.

And my best friend came home from Europe, took me to breakfast, and then took all my bedding to the laundromat and washed all of it (because the cat had vomited yet again).

Lesson Three: Be nice

This sounds so stupid, but when we get overwhelmed, it's easy to take our frustrations out on someone else. Or it's very easy to take what we have for granted. I'm upset over a house while there are people who are going through far worse crises. However, life isn't a contest of who has it worse. Our feelings of upset and sadness are genuine, and we must respect that. While your problems may seem minor compared to someone else, they are legitimate and owning those negative feelings allows us to heal.

Writing, like other artistic endeavors, can cause emotional turmoil. You can be on top of the world one day and persona non grata the next because trends and tastes change. (And often your non-writer friends don't "get it.")

Your integrity should be one thing that stays the same. No one is saying be a doormat by being nice. Everyone who's met me knows I'm not going to take injustice or bad service sitting down. My archetype is the boss. But you get the option each day to choose how you act. When I realized I'd snapped, I owned it. For those around me, I told them, "I'm going through things. I need some TLC and a bit of a wide berth." People do understand. They want to help. They've been there themselves in some form, and by you being open, you also model healthy behaviors,

for no one should suffer in silence. Mental distress and illness should not be social stigmas to be swept under the rug.

It's said that you get more flies with honey. Being nice was as simple as providing my roofers with pizza and a cooler full of iced soda. The cooler sat out there on my porch each day for all the repair people who came by. They were grateful. A little kindness can go a long way.

I once had an editor who told me, "If you weren't writing you'd lose a piece of yourself." It was a defining moment, especially as she cut me from the line a month later. But what I learned was that I didn't want my tombstone to say, "She was a good writer." A good mother, friend, and teacher, yes. Writer? Nope.

Every day I'm reminded that what I say to someone has an emotional impact. I can build them up or tear them down. You can balance tough and tender and still be nice.

Lesson Four: Pay well and on time

There's that other old adage that says you get what you pay for. Just as we want to be paid well for our writing, those who work for us deserve the same consideration.

Again, no one is saying you should overpay for a service, but just as we hate being asked to write for free, you should be willing to pay in some form for service others give you. Paying fair wages for work done matters.

I tipped my movers and fed them. Yes, I wasn't 100 percent satisfied, but the no-show of the fourth guy wasn't the fault of the three who showed up at 8:30 a.m. for what turned out to be a 98-degree day complete with miserable humidity. Believe me, I tipped the latecomer a lot less than the others. Those three worked for eight hours straight doing a job I never would do—no matter how much someone paid me. I didn't walk as much as they did and my feet still rebelled by the end of the day.

PS—for those people who help you for free, the least you can do is feed them or offer a cold beverage. For example, if they come and volunteer to help you paint? That next dinner you all go to together should all be on you. Paying for it won't be expected, but it will be appreciated.

Lesson Five: Make it yours

It's hard to have vision—to take a raw space and make it into something that's a reflection of your personality. My younger daughter is an artist—she can see potential where I can't. But those decorators on TV make it look so easy on those home improvement shows, but in reality, it's not. Making it yours is an exercise in frustration and patience. But you must claim your space.

The way this translates to writing is that your vision involves putting words on a blank page and that somehow those words are going to reflect your voice.

That doesn't mean that others aren't going to offer suggestions to help you make improvements. Designers are akin to editors and those doing the labor (painters, etc.) are similar to all those who work on the production of your book.

But ultimately, the final say is yours.

Lesson Six: Be patient

In my article about buying a house, my lesson six was “It’s not going to happen overnight.” Success takes time.

But there’s a difference between inertia and patience. Inertia is that paralyzing force—there are too many boxes. Where do I start? Where do the pictures go? Does that furniture look right there? And unable to make a decision as to where to begin, I wrote this article instead.

Patience is understanding that you can’t simply snap your fingers and make life happen on your timetable. Patience comes into play when you recognize that you feel overwhelmed. Sometimes you need a break, and it’s okay to take one. Sometimes you allow yourself a bit of inertia before kicking yourself in the rear end. There’s a difference between procrastination and decompressing the stress.

When I judge yearbooks, many of the advisers I deal with want to know how to build an award-winning yearbook. I was in their shoes once, and the advice I received was to focus on one or two things each year. That once those focus areas became rote, then you focused on the next area. Trying to do too much at once is simply an exercise in frustration. True quality takes time.

For example, my beloved St. Louis Blues were last in the league. Then the general manager fired the coach and moved the assistant coach up. The first thing he started with was addressing the team’s dynamic. Google any story about the Blues after Craig Berube took over and it will tell you that the team lacked confidence. But slowly the Blues found their footing, began to gel, took a chance on a rookie goalie, and the rest is history: worst to first. St. Louisans had been waiting 52 years for Lord Stanley’s Cup, and in Game 7 against the Boston Bruins, the team brought it home in a decisive win that proved the team wasn’t a fluke.

We want everything done and done right now. As frustrating as it may be, sometimes it’s worth the wait.

Lesson Seven: It’s okay to cry

Speaking of Boston, someone sometimes loses. As I tell my students, men cry. Just watch who loses the Super Bowl.

Fergie had the number one song in 2007 (and #4 in the U.S. for the year) with a hit called “[Big Girls Don’t Cry](#).” I’m a big girl, and I’m here to tell you they do, indeed cry, and that it’s okay to do so.

No matter your gender, it’s okay to cry.

When they diagnosed my mom with a brain tumor, the doctor told me first. My mom was sitting up in the emergency room bed (we’d thought she’d had a stroke), and the CT scan had just come back with the true culprit. While my mom had Stage 5 Parkinson’s, the CT told us that what was going on was a fast-acting tumor which had grown to the size of a fist on the left side of her head. Because of the Parkinson’s and the size, we were at the end.

We were in the ER on Sunday, Jan. 13, and she’d told us on Christmas Eve—her 75th birthday—that she was tired of living with Parkinson’s. She could no longer feed herself, and

her food all had to be ground up. For her, Parkinson's was like taking a slow train to her destination, one in which she daily found herself trapped in a body that didn't work and with a mind that did. That day in the ER, God put let her change to the express.

Thursday, Jan. 17, 2013, she died peacefully in her sleep around five a.m. But that Sunday night, while we were in the hospital, as a nurse was getting her ready to move upstairs so her doctor could come in the next morning to do the hospice orders, I admit, I couldn't hold it together. My mom calmly looked at the nurse and said, "It must be bad. Michele never cries. She's been a great daughter and I love her."

That she loved me—those were her final words before the tumor robbed her of speech.

I don't cry. It's rare. Sure, I'm a waterworks during Hallmark commercials, but when push comes to shove, I'm a rock. Which is why when I started crying over this house and feeling like I hated it, I knew my mental state was bad and that I'd reached a point where all the year's stressors had simply reached critical mass.

Sometimes all the patience in the world isn't going to make you feel better. When life knocks you down, sometimes you can barely lift your head up or crawl to your knees.

It's okay to cry. Your feelings are valid. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

While worrying won't necessarily help, crying is natural. As Dr. Nick Knight writes, "Tears are a positive representation of who we are. It demonstrates not only our deep emotional connections with our world—past, present, and future—but allows us to visibly celebrate that fact. They are also scientifically proven to make you feel better. So go on and wear your tears with pride."

He even tells us there are [different types of tears](#), and they all have different jobs.

Which brings me to the final lesson.

Lesson Eight: This too shall pass

This is my favorite saying. Back in 1983, my AP English teacher said it, and it stuck with me. I thought it was Shakespeare. [Wikipedia has all sorts of sources](#), including Jane Austen. A friend posted it as being said by Rose Kennedy, but I couldn't find that either.

It's simply become part of our cultural fabric. But the fact is, whatever crisis we are in does pass, in one form or another. That's what all the lessons have led me to realize, that this moment of feeling down isn't forever. I can reach out, get square, and there's no shame in it.

It's six months now, and what was to be a turnkey property is still hemorrhaging money. We're a little more settled and I don't hate it as much (unless I'm paying the bills). I'm holding out hope that by July I'll once again have my head above water and the stress will be distant memory. If not, I can always sell. I have options.

So, like when the words won't flow onto the page, or when my writing career seems to be a non-career, remember you always have home. It's simply a moment. This too shall pass.

Michele Dunaway is starting her final year as newsletter editor. She hopes you have a great New Year and that you reach all your goals.

Using the Creative Arts to Trick Your Procrastinating/Blocked/Bull-headed Brain

Or: Let's get messy with it

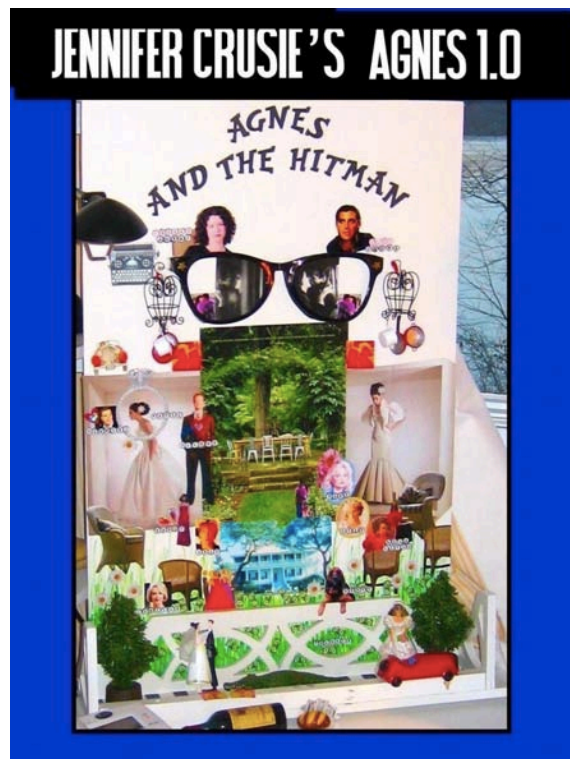
By Patricia Burroughs



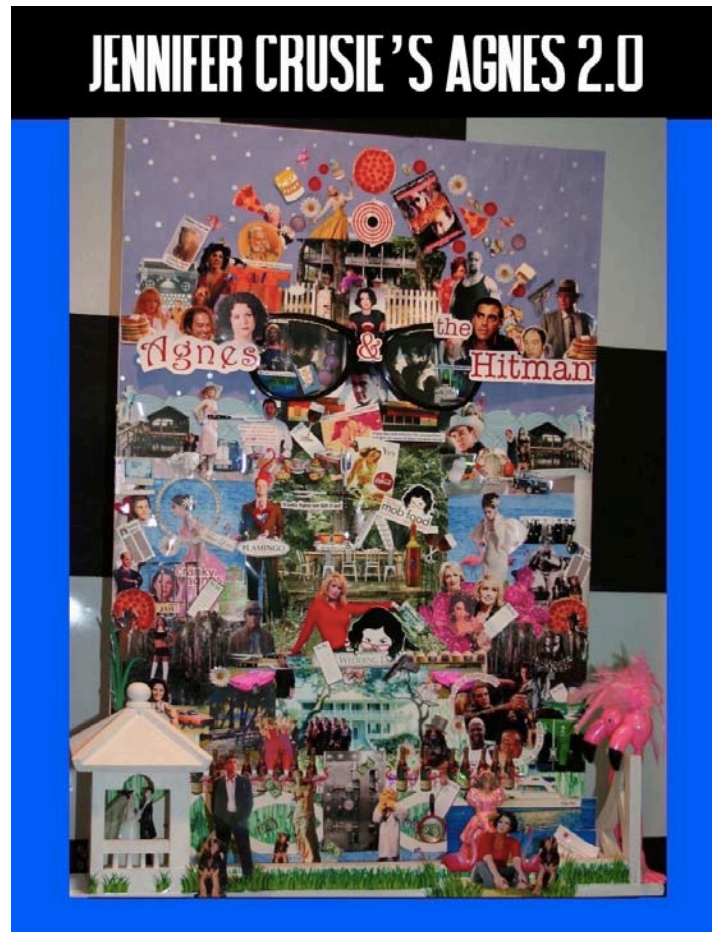
Trigger warnings: mixed metaphors, woowoo, sticky messes, chaos, all the feels. Images shared here with permission of the authors.

Once upon a time I read a fascinating blog entry that I could identify with all too easily. Jennifer Crusie explained that she had hit a wall with her current book—the one with a scary-fast-approaching deadline. Been there, barely survived that. Haven't most of us?

What I couldn't identify with is that as part of her pre-writing prep; she had created a collage of images and doodads and such that represented the world and characters of her book.



Back to her crisis. She finally—in an act of desperation—tossed out everything she'd written. Everything. And started over from scratch by also ditching her collage and creating a new one that ended up having three or four times as many fun details of world-building, character and plot.

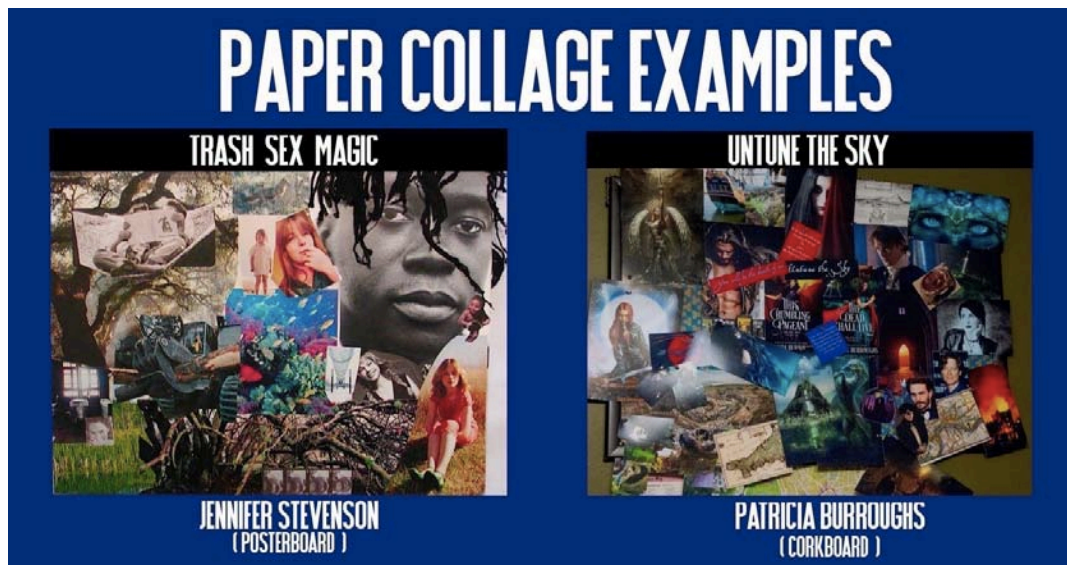


Doesn't that look more inspired and inspiring with more detail and just plain fun? Even starting over at page one, she got that book written *and* made her deadline. (Read more about her collage-work [here](#).)

I found the entire concept of collages as an aid to writing nonsensical and gave it the resentful side eye. But inside I didn't want to admit that I was jealous. It seemed fun and fabulous but beyond my abilities and patience. Little did I know that years later I would be a believer. Little did I know that it wasn't nonsense, but was a secret weapon based on neuroscience.

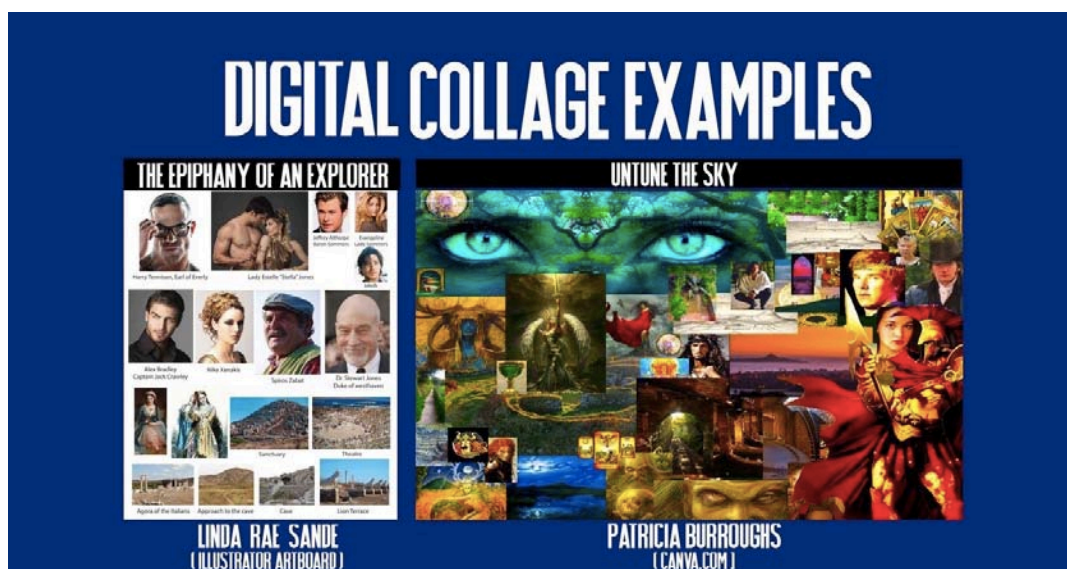
Several NINC members volunteered their own collage processes complete with examples.

[Jennifer Stevenson](#) does a collage for an entire series, and later may come back and do a collage for each book. "Sometimes I'll do a collage part-way through if a book is giving me trouble. Usually Book 4 of a series. Why Book 4? Because I did all the easy ones first," she said.



Lest you think this is a single-use exercise, [Linda Rae Sande](#) uses Google to find images that can represent her characters, then uses Illustrator artboards to put character sheets together. Then they become part of her story and series bibles, and even go to her audiobook narrators who say the images help them create voices for the characters.

Other sources for images and characters include [Unsplash](#), [Pixabay](#), [DeviantArt](#), and Wikipedia/Wikimedia.



But here's where it gets interesting and powerful. The reason why so many people swear by this and similar activities is pure neuroscience. In studies to see how surfing the internet affected a person's output on the job, it was determined that such breaks boost creativity along with productivity and even problem-solving.

What's more, all of this thought processing is going on in the background while you pull back on the throttle and give your brain a rest. Surfing for pretty, inspiring, emotionally gripping, evocative or humorous images to represent your book can lead to epiphanies. At the very least, you emerge feeling refreshed and with expanded or more visual knowledge of the world you're creating.

While you're gluing and copy/pasting, your subconscious is not only urging you to use that rainbow and the other red brick and oh yes, that kewpie doll, your brain is also madly concocting without your awareness. Discoveries are made during the process, discoveries that can keep you writing on the book that had you stumped.

Whether you're stuck with a plot that's not working, frozen in place with a brain that keeps bouncing away from your manuscript every time you attempt to write, or something else, the following techniques can help you get your brain back in gear and your executive function functioning executively. So to speak.

Grab the glue, scissors, print out all that lovely stuff you've been collecting as inspiration on Pinterest and let's get started. Call it a collage, a vision board, a mood board, a character sheet, a diorama, or make it your new wallpaper if you get particularly carried away. Just start something.

Step One: Set the stage

Create the foundation. Grab an old shadow box, a poster board or foam core board, even a filing folder that once completed, can stand opened on your desk, go with you to the coffee house, or be tucked away in a drawer until you need it next. Go digital and find a template on canva.com or just lots of images that you can layer onto a Photoshop inspiration board.

But don't stop there. Does your background inspire you or is that expanse of white as intimidating as a blank page can often be? Print out background images and cover your board or digital space with them just to get rid of the white. Or grab a couple of tubes of acrylic paint in shades that enhance your world. Ice blue. Sunset orange. Sea greens and blues. Violent reds and blacks or gentle pastels. Squirt them onto your backdrop in wild squiggles, then use a paintbrush or a baby wipe or your fingers to spread it around until you've covered your backdrop with swirls of color.

Or just grab a can of spray paint and go to town. Two cans. Three.

And yeah, it will have to dry, but that's okay. It can dry while we're working on step two.

Step Two: Feel all the feels

A lot of people have followed Jenny Crusie's lead and started creating collages, but many seem to have missed one of her most powerful directives. I missed it myself until I started researching this article but now it's so important I want to make sure you get it, too.

Crusie doesn't try to find characters or scenes that look like hers, but instead tries to find images that evoke the *feel* and *mood* and *personality* of it all. Character images don't look like the characters she imagines, but they make her feel like those characters should. She will even use several totally different guy-images to represent a single character in his various roles or moods.

The most powerful ingredient in our arsenal is the power to evoke the emotion we want to feel, whether the overall tone of the book is melancholy, sinister, or slapstick. Keep that in the forefront of your mind and look for images that hit you in the solar plexus with just that reaction.

I have a cluster of images on my board that aren't meant to represent my secondary character in appearance, but instead, exude her energy—tough, violent, and dangerously unhinged. The first image I found looked like a weird comic book character in silhouette, streaking across a red moon.

Rue doesn't fly. Rue isn't anything like a comic book character. But as soon as I saw that image, it was Rue flying across that red moon on a path of vengeance. The energy seized me and—perhaps the most important aspect of this—up to that point I'd let Rue slip off my radar. But that one fierce comic book image brought everything into dazzling clarity and now the scene is vibrating in the back of my mind, Rue is going to wreak havoc in ways I haven't even imagined yet, and I'm chomping at the bit to write it.

Consider a trip to a hobby shop where there are hundreds of tiny knick-knacks and fake gems and such. If something insists it is meant for your collage, yours is not to question why. Yours is to satisfy that muse.

Don't limit yourself.

Don't be precise and exact.

If a Texas bluebonnet demands to be added to your collage for a book that is set in 17th century France, don't question it and by all means don't ignore that instinct. Give in to it, play with it, figure out where that flower wants to be, and add it.

It may never be anything more than a splash of blue where your subconscious wanted to see a splash of blue, but that is justification enough, is it not?

Or eight weeks from now, that spike of blossoms may bug you and you may take it off.

Or you may have an epiphany that is sparked by that bluebonnet that has nothing to do with Texas, with bluebonnets, maybe even with blue. But your muse has been trying to tell you this secret the entire time and it's finally time for it.

Deciding where to put the images often ends up accessing that part of your brain that is holding your plot hostage, whether you whisper, "Eureka!" over some pesky details that suddenly snap into place, or fall to your knees singing hosannas because the big-ass problem that was stopping you from finishing your book is suddenly resolved.

Stephen Spielberg is said to ask a single question of those around him when they are tangled in the middle of a script or production problem.

"What does the audience *feel* right *now*?"

He never wants anybody to forget that his movies are visceral and make people feel, and that everything comes back to that foundation—

What do I want my reader to feel?

What does my character feel?

What does my muse need to feel?

Step 3: Remember that your collage or board or shadow box is a living, breathing thing

It is not carved in stone. It can change, or evolve, or keep growing until it has satellite boards all around it. A photo of your inspiration board can be laminated and made into a divider for your planner. It may serve the single purpose of getting you back on track. Or it may be the treasure map that cracks open your story again, and again, and again.

Step 4: Do it again, only different

Is a scene giving you fits? Whether you print out images to glue onto a piece of cardstock or create a piece of digital art, play with your scene. It's a collage but more focused and less sweeping.

These kinds of projects can be done very specifically with a focus on plot or a particular location, or time period. They can collect the bits of set decoration you want to assemble like a stage manager assembling the necessary props for a performance—the amber ring, the purple inkwell, the iron locket—possibly represented on your board by a plastic ring with a red plastic gem you painted yellow, a hand-drawn line-drawing of that inkwell so you won't forget it, a locket that is very heavy-looking even though it's not iron.

Your goal for your collage can be whatever you need it to be and serve whatever purpose you want it to serve.

Words have power. You've probably heard of vision boards, mood boards, aesthetic boards, storyboards, brainstorming boards and more. But none of those terms worked for me. None of them represented my concept of what I needed my board to be. None of those terms excited or inspired me.

That's when I realized that what I make are conjuring boards, with all the magic and woowoo that I believe writers use to create worlds from nothing.

Step 5: How do *you* feel?

If the process is stressing you out and you're muttering and frustrated, you're not playing. You're forcing your muse to goose step instead of flit and soar. Back away and get back into playful mode. Because it's when you're playing that your brain will suddenly pop with ideas.

Don't forget the science, okay?

Or the magic.

It doesn't make any difference how you create them or what you call them, if the actions result in something that makes you joyous and eager to take the next step, so you can write the next chapter, scene, word.

"How does the reader feel?"

"How does the character feel?"

"How do you want to feel?" may be the most vital question of all. Empowered or buoyant or at peace?... the magic, the science, is at your fingertips.

Why not give it whirl?

Jennifer Crusie did not invent collaging as a part of writing but she has written extensively about it. Here are a few places to start if you want to learn more:

- [Picture This: Collage as Prewriting and Inspiration](#)
- [Collages](#): Several of her collages and the process she used to create them.
- [Other articles and blog entries](#)

Patricia Burroughs, aka Pooks, is a fifth generation, dyscalculaic, sometimes depressed and always ADHD-blessed Texan, a writer based in Dallas, Texas. One of her proudest professional achievements was being named a Nicholl Fellow in 2001 by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences. She is living her happily-ever-after with her high school sweetheart, the Resident Storm Chaser, Sam.

Follow or Ignore?

Weeding through the wealth of "helpful" advice for writers

By Trish Milburn



It doesn't take long once you enter the world of professional writers to realize there is a tremendous amount of advice available that promises to help you write smarter, advertise smarter, promote smarter, and do every other author-y thing smarter. While having so much potentially useful information at your fingertips ready to help you build your writing career is great, that wealth of information can also be overwhelming and sometimes stifling. It tempts you to just ignore all the advice and simply do what you want, because given the rate at which things now change in the publishing world, you feel everything will change tomorrow anyway.

So are there instances in which authors actually ignored all of the latest advice and conventional wisdom, of a time when they let go of the pressure of trying to follow some plan that has made Author A wildly successful, and by ignoring everything found their own success? Or are there lessons to be learned for one's career from Author A's approach? Is there a way to find a balance between ignoring all advice and trying to implement every piece of that same advice? Where you fall between those two poles of action depends on a number of factors.

What is success anyway?

A lot of finding success in one's writing career boils down to how you, as an individual author, define success. You need to decide what it means.

- Does it mean a steady six-figure income from your writing and the ability to support your family by yourself?
- Or does it mean the freedom to write what you want without the external pressures of the various voices at a publishing company molding your stories into something that doesn't resemble your original vision?
- Perhaps success for you is some combination of financial and creative elements.

Whatever your definition of success is, it's up to you to decide and no one else. While we often focus on the financial side of success, since we are, after all, running our own businesses,

it's important not to compare our financial return—real or perceived—to that of other authors. Down that road can lie a lot of ugly roadblocks by the names of self-pity, envy, depression and writer's block. No two writers' paths will ever be the same.

Know thyself

If you've ever been to a NINC conference or any other professional writing conference where you encountered a boatload of great information, you probably wanted to go home and immediately try all the new things you learned. Who wouldn't want to try all the shiny new programs and methods that have brought other authors great success? In fact, immediately following the first conference issue of *Nink*, people discussed the great, but overwhelming, amount of content.

Whether it's a planning/productivity system or a new piece of helpful technology, really knowing yourself and how you do your best work will help you filter out the things that look awesome but won't actually work for you. Know how you're wired and work with that, not against it. And don't let others pressure you into working against your wiring.

In her [Quitcast podcast series on YouTube](#), mystery author and author coach Becca Syme says that we shouldn't assume that any system from productivity gurus are magic because if you try them and they don't work for you, you'll end up feeling like a failure. There is no fool-proof system. What we should be seeking instead is alignment between who you are and what you do. It's more efficient to work on improving your strengths than your weaknesses.

Syme challenges writers to question the premise of conventional wisdom, such as writers should write every day. For some writers, this may be true. Even during trying or chaotic times, these writers actually need to be able to sit down and write, tuning out the external issues in order to navigate through them. For others, the pressure of having to write every day, even during stressful times such as illness, death and substantial life events like cross-country moves, can be damaging—if these writers don't write despite these upheavals, they can feel like failures. For the latter, it may actually be more productive to give oneself permission to not write at all while getting through the external drains, then come back afterward with a freer, more efficient mindset.

"Honor your process; not all writers are the same," Syme said in her podcast.

Knowing how you're wired can also be applied to the latest marketing and promotional advice. For every person who is making bank utilizing Amazon ads, you can find someone else for whom these ads haven't worked at all, at least not yet. The truth is that being a successful author boils down to a lot of trial and error, whether that is on the creative or business side of things.

This was true for [Jacqueline Diamond](#), author of *The Case of the Long-Lost Lover*. She finds the "promo advice was sometimes overwhelming for someone on a modest budget and with modest spare time and no personal assistant," she said. "I don't waste time and money on things I hate (in my case, anything having to do with spreadsheets or pay-per-click)."

Diamond also points out that plenty of people are losing money with promotional efforts, but we typically don't hear from them. We hear from the ones who are thrilled with their results.

While Diamond knows what types of promotional efforts don't appeal to her personality and strengths—or her budget—that doesn't mean she doesn't take steps to promote her work. In fact, she does a variety of things from joining low-cost group promotions and putting a different backlist title on sale each month to not doing anything that annoys her readers, which to her means not having any pop-up ads on her website despite the fact some authors swear by them.

"I take advantage of opportunities as they arise," Diamond said. "Am I getting rich? No, but I have steady sales and a useful secondary income stream."

For [Lynn Cahoon](#), who also writes as Lynn Collins, her moment toward accepting that she had to forge her own path and ignore a lot of advice actually came during an all-day workshop she was attending with a nationally known presenter.

"I noticed my inability to take in things that overwhelmed me during a presentation," Cahoon said. "I was about 30 minutes in and **had to leave**. My brain was full, and what the presenter was saying was making me stressed and question my ability to make this a career. Since that time, I've realized I'm less of a detailed person and more of a big picture. I'll take risks with books, with marketing, but don't ask me to do an A/B experiment. It makes my brain itch."

Cahoon said she's learned not to beat herself up for the lack of monetary rewards for the work she's doing under the Collins name because she's taking a long-term approach.

"I am learning a lot and moving these lessons to help run my Cahoon career," she said. "Recently, I suggested a marketing path to my publisher to reboot a popular series and they took me up on the idea."

For [Patricia Rice](#), who has been published since 1984, she's ignored conventional advice during her entire career. When told she should stick to writing in one genre, she decided to write in several. Every time she was informed that one of those genres was on the way out, she continued to write in them anyway. As an indie author, she was told she had to run Facebook and Amazon ads but has only done that once.

"I do what is comfortable for me," Rice said. "I'll never be a millionaire, but I make a nice living and I don't spend 24/7 doing it. Quality of life counts more than selling books. Career-wise, I probably shot myself in the foot. It would be much easier and more profitable to sell multi-book series in one genre than to sell short series in half a dozen genres. And I'm sure if I'd had time as a hybrid author to develop a newsletter list and establish that audience, I'd be much farther ahead as an indie author now. But as I said, quality of life matters more to me. I don't handle stress well, and my contrariness keeps stress at bay."

Sometimes ignoring advice proves to be a wise decision both monetarily and time-wise because that advice changes so quickly.

"I remember hearing lots of folks talking at one NINC about all the swag they gave their street teams and what all they did with the street team and the benefits that accrued by having an inner circle," said [Patricia McLinn](#), author of *Death on Beguiling Way*. "It didn't appeal to me. At all. I decided to put off contemplation of a street team for a year, and procrastination worked! By the next year, street teams were passé. I'm still working on procrastinating ARC and review teams."

Once you've come to honest conclusions about what success means for you personally, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and what you are and aren't willing to do to further your career, it's time to move forward and put those decisions to the test. See next month's issue of Nink for the second half of this exploration of writer advice.

Trish Milburn is the author of more than 50 novels and novellas, including her current *Idol in Love* series set in the world of K-pop.

How to Grow Voices

The subtle art of facilitating workshops

By Cat Rambo



Teaching is an art. A good teacher can help their students infinitely more than a bad one—and one expression of that is the ability to lead discussion groups and workshops, leading the students to come to realizations that will help them understand the concepts in ways they cannot learn through one-sided lecture.

Like any art, innate talent helps, but discussion and workshop facilitation definitely can be learned. Part of that learning is aided by thinking about it beforehand, during, and after. How do you, as a teacher, create a space in which as many students as possible will flourish, one in which no one is unable to participate? How do you build a process that encourages creativity while making sure everyone has their turn?

I have taught workshops of varying sizes over the past three decades and my process continues to evolve and change. Here are some of the more important things I've learned through experience or observation.

Every group is different, and every group comes with its own idiosyncrasies and voices. Enjoy the mix for the happy ephemeral phenomenon that it is, while drawing conclusions from its generalities in order to apply these in future iterations of the material. Many of your attendees will be very anxious. At least a handful will surprise and delight you with their talent, and sometimes staggeringly so.

I've always done introductions, having the students tell me their names and a little bit about themselves, but in recent years one thing I make sure to add is their preferred pronouns. Asking for those both allows me to accommodate their needs and acknowledge who they are as much as pronouncing their name correctly does.

If it's a workshop where students are expected to critique each others' work, attendees should have received both manuscripts and clear guidelines about how to structure their critique well in advance. Students can feel anxious about what's going to happen in a workshop

if they don't know what the structure will be like, so I try to include an overview that lets them know what to expect: *the class will go for two hours, with a 5-10 minute break in the middle; the writer doesn't have to reply to comments if they don't want to; we'll have overall questions at the end.* New writers in particular can be uncertain; there's no shame in giving them a little handholding to encourage them into the water to swim.

Facilitating discussion means making sure people understand what the guidelines for participation are and how to take turns in conversation. Don't let people interrupt each other but don't be nasty about it, just be polite but firm. Don't be afraid to pause in order to let people think of questions, even though it may feel like an uncomfortably long silence, and if you need to, ask leading questions like: *Can you think about examples of what we've been talking about in your own life/your writing/media/literature? Or: How do you think you might apply this in your own writing?*

When answering questions that someone has asked, repeat the question first. That helps people who didn't hear it the first time, as well as allowing you to clarify things that may not be immediately apparent. I prefer to have the students asking questions and myself answering them, but there is a give and take to such things that will vary with the students and the circumstances.

Overprepare. You get better at judging how long things will take as you gain experience, but there will always be that class where things go awry and no one has turned in the work. Have a couple of writing exercises up your sleeve and while the students are working on it, use that 5-10 minutes to assemble discussion questions or other points to cover in order to get yourself through the class time.

You never stop learning from other teachers. Sometimes it's a new technique or a good metaphor. Be good about crediting your fellows for the clever sayings. It's also handy to listen to the students and find out what worked for them or not—one of the things I'm working on is following up better in 2020, such as asking students what parts of workshops they liked/disliked, as well as what was particularly effective. Learning from other teachers also keeps you from ossifying and just spitting out the same theories and observations over and over again.

Teaching writing is, I think, one of the ways you can become a better writer yourself. Often I do the writing exercises along with the students in my classes, to the point where I think somewhere between a third to half of my published flash fiction pieces were the result of such writings. It's also something that makes you articulate and challenges your own practice of fiction and the rules by which you write. It's never bad to look at those with an interrogatory eye in order to move beyond them.

When leading a discussion, don't be afraid to go with the flow. Sometimes the oddest questions may be the most fruitful, or those questions may lead to additions for the future, sometimes even inspiring entirely new classes. The question of how to maintain a fruitful writing practice in the face of increasingly grey times, for example, led to a class on hopepunk that has become one of my favorites to teach and one which was even referenced in a *Wall Street Journal* article on the subgenre.

Post class, encourage your students to let you know about their publications and victories as they go forward. One of the nicest things about teaching is a chance to see the coming wave,

and to know some of the voices that are rising in fiction and creating new stories. Watching a student succeed is one of the most satisfying feelings I know.

Novelist and short story writer [Cat Rambo](#) is the founder of online writing school [The Rambo Academy](#) for [Wayward Writers](#). Her 200+ fiction publications include works in [The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction](#), [Asimov's](#), and [Clarksword Magazine](#). Her space opera [You Sexy Thing](#) appears in January 2021 from [Tor Macmillan](#). She is a former two-term president of the [Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America](#).

Working With A Creativity Coach

The Process

By Denise A. Agnew



If you've been a creator for any length of time, you may have experienced writer's block or other difficulties related to an artistic endeavor you love. The pain of those experiences is different for everyone but, for many, hiring a creativity coach is their last resort when perhaps it should be the first.

Selecting a creativity coach can be confusing because creativity coaching isn't a widely known or understood occupation. While the career field is more than a few years old, there aren't too many creativity coaches out there. Life coaching is a much broader field, and there are a few life coaches who have also become certified in creativity coaching. However, no one creativity coaching school teaches exactly the same methods.

What is creativity?

Creativity is one of those nebulous concepts few people understand. The first definition of creative, as defined by [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#) is: "marked by the ability to create." Doesn't tell us much, right? [Wikipedia](#) says creativity is a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is formed. This definition makes more sense. Whether you take a story idea and outline it or you pants it, you're using creativity.

Contrary to popular belief, creativity isn't only the purview of writers, poets, actors, dancers, inventors, artists, etc. All humans are creative to one degree or another. Someone can be a very left-brained individual working as an accountant and still be a highly creative person creating an amazing, brand-new filing system.

As writers we know that we're in an occupation that is generally considered "creative." We make things up and sometimes get paid for it! How cool is that? When it is all lining up and working for us things are wonderful. What if it isn't? It can be one of the most painful feelings in the world when the joy we experienced writing is no longer there.

How do you know you need a coach?

1. You've been unable to write for enough time that you're feeling stressed and unhappy about the situation.
2. You've missed more than one deadline because your creativity isn't flowing.
3. Sitting butt in chair and just writing isn't working.
4. Your productivity has slowed considerably, even if you are writing consistently.
5. You can't stand the idea of writing anymore, but at the same time the idea of not writing is painful.
6. The creative path you've followed for years has become meaningless and stale.
7. You're putting everything and everyone ahead of your desire to create.
8. You procrastinate and find any excuse not to create.

How coaches work with clients

Creativity coaches assist clients in identifying specific belief systems, situations, and problems that are causing creativity blocks. Whatever coach you hire should support their clients in rediscovering that creative well they've always had within them and still do. This means being a sounding board with a lot of ideas on how a client can return to creating and how they can hopefully find the tools that will keep them creating into the future.

This approach is very right-brained. Here is a general list of things coaches do and some questions to ask any coach you are considering hiring.

1. People are totally unique. How a coach works with one client isn't always how they work with another. If the coach takes a tab A into slot B approach, they would be doing a huge disservice to the client. Ask the coach, "How do you approach each individual client?"
2. When a coach first talks with a client, they should first listen to the client's assessment of what they believe the problem is. Not everyone is good at identifying what is holding them back in their creative process, especially if they've struggled with burnout for a significant time. Sometimes the client isn't clear what the problem is or what they believe is the problem really isn't. It's detective work. What is the real problem? How can we get to the bottom of it? Ask the coach, "How do you help clients identify what is holding them back?"
3. If there's a significant psychological problem, that needs to be taken care of first. Most creativity coaches are not qualified mental health professionals, although there are some that are. If they detect that a client's depression (as one example) is affecting their creativity, the coach should tell the client to seek a qualified mental health professional before they work with the client's creativity. Ask the coach what their other credentials are.

4. Personalities sometimes change. Some coaches use the Meyers-Briggs test, which gives them a little more insight into a client's personality. If the client has taken the test before but it was a long time ago, the coach might ask them to take it again. There can be variations in how a client scores on this test across the years. Ask the coach what type of testing they offer or are certified to use.
5. What might have worked for a client's creativity at one time doesn't always work forever. Sometimes a writer gets stuck trying one approach to generating ideas and creativity. When that doesn't work anymore, all they might need is someone to help them assess if there is a different approach to brainstorming for story ideas, or maybe even changing up when and where they write. When a writer is being afflicted by writer's block, it can be difficult to see the forest for the trees or vice versa. Someone on the outside looking in can switch on the light bulb. Ask the coach if they are available to help with brainstorming.
6. We think everything has to be perfect to create. Even if a client's method of creating is still working (writing in the mornings for example) they may have other outside influences that have come into their lives that have altered their creativity. A client may think they can't create through grief, job loss, a new job, a divorce ... you name it. Yet in some cases the greatest creativity can be achieved through adversity. This is very individual to the person, though, and many people cannot create while encountering this type of life change until some time has passed. Ask the coach if they will take on clients who are going through a significant life change if that is your current situation.
7. Trying something new can release the log jam. If a client is a pantsier, the coach might help them try outlining a little more. Or, if they are a total outline type of writer, they might need to loosen up a bit and just let it rip. Clients often get the joy back into their writing once they try something different in their approach. Ask the coach what they believe about outlining or by-the-seat-of-the-pants writing.
8. Often clients say "they can't" and many times don't even realize how often they talk themselves out of doing what they yearn to do. Often it is what we tell ourselves that keeps us from creating. This goes for even seasoned creativity coaches! It's so easy to get in a rut and form beliefs about our own limitations. As an example, contemporary writers sometimes say, "I want to write a historical but I'm afraid of the research. I don't think I'd be any good at it." All they may need is for a coach to hold their hand a bit through the fear and the process of trying it. Check the coach's website for details on how much time they will devote to strategizing with you. Do they offer unlimited emails during the time you'll be working with them? If it is not clear on their website what their assistance includes, be sure to ask before you hire them.
9. Accountability is a good thing. Fear stifles creativity and writers are often full of uncertainty. Bouncing ideas off of a coach and discussing fears in general can be enough to push a client in the direction they need to start writing.

A Happier Ending To The Story

Hiring a creativity coach can help a writer discover the basic problem(s), assess the next steps to take, and learn how to create for life. Once they have those tools in their pocket, the chances of them experiencing writer's block down the line decreases significantly. Who doesn't want a happy ending to the story?

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The Mad Scribbler

Public Domain

By Laura Resnick



“There comes a point when a creative work belongs to history as much as to its author and her heirs.”

—Mary Rasenberger, executive director of the Authors Guild

As of January 1, 2020, thousands of works copyrighted in 1924—fiction & nonfiction, sheet music, film, various visual arts, other creative works—entered the public domain.

Once a creative work is in public domain, anyone can use, copy, or adapt it any way they please. You can legally reproduce it, share it, translate it, perform it, or transform it without permission. (If you pretend that material you’ve copied from a public domain work is your own original writing, that’s plagiarism, and it’s unethical; however, it’s not copyright infringement, because copyright is no longer in effect.)

The law governing copyright and public domain is why, for example, anyone can legally publish Jane Austen’s novels in print and ebook format, and why so many riffs and spin-offs of her novels can be published today (ex. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, a 2009 *New York Times* bestselling novel “by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith,” which was made into a film in 2016).

Some of the more famous books and authors that entered public domain a few days ago include *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster, *The Man in the Brown Suit* by Agatha Christie, *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann, *Billy Budd* by Herman Melville, *The Land That Time Forgot* by Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair* by Pablo Neruda, and *When We Were Very Young* by A.A. Milne. Plays that entered public domain include two by Noël Coward, one by Bertolt Brecht, and one by Eugene O’Neill.

The films include performances by Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Clark Gable, Laurel & Hardy, and Douglas Fairbanks. George Gershwin’s magnificent “Rhapsody in Blue” is among the music compositions newly entered into public domain, along with Giacomo Puccini’s opera *Turandot* (which includes one of my all-time favorite arias, “[Nessun’ Dorma](#)”), and popular songs like “Fascinating Rhythm,” “It Had To Be You,” and “Everybody Loves My Baby.”

There was a similar flow of famous works into public domain one year ago by authors like Robert Frost, e.e. cummings, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, P.G. Wodehouse, Aldous Huxley, Edith Wharton, and Winston Churchill. But prior to that, there had been a 20 year drought—in the United States, that is.

“In 1998,” journalist Nick Douglas wrote in a [recent article](#), “the Copyright Term Extension Act (aka the Sonny Bono Act, aka the Mickey Mouse Protection Act) lengthened copyright protection for existing works by 20 years, freezing the growth of the public domain. That extension is finally over [it ended on January 1, 2019], and now new works will enter the public domain every year.”

Under the copyright Law in effect before the 1998 Act, *Smithsonian Magazine* [explained](#), “all works published before January 1, 1978, were entitled to copyright protection for 75 years; all author’s works published on or after that date were under copyright for the lifetime of the creator, plus 50 years.”

Well, the first appearance of Walt Disney’s iconic rodent, Mickey Mouse, was in a 1928 film called *Steamboat Willie*—which was due, under that law, to enter public domain in 2004. So the Disney empire, along with various other corporations which also had copyrighted works they wanted to keep in their possession longer than the law allowed, decided to lobby for a copyright extension; and Congress (brace yourself for a shock) did the bidding of big corporations and extended copyright by another 20 years.

As writer Glenn Fleishman noted in *The Atlantic*, “The Sonny Bono Act was widely seen as a way to keep Disney’s *Steamboat Willie* from slipping into the public domain... By tweaking the law, Mickey got another 20-year reprieve. When that expires, *Steamboat Willie* can be given away, sold, remixed, turned pornographic, or anything else.”

(Porno Mickey? Now *there’s* a mental image we’ll all spend the rest of the day trying to shake off.)

In the U.S., that copyright extension froze all passage into public domain, creating a peculiar 20-year gap which finally ended on Jan. 1, 2019, when works from 1923 entered the public domain 95 years after they were copyrighted.

Some of you, I suspect, are thinking, “Hey, I’m not in favor of copyrighted works *ever* entering public domain. So, I think the additional 20 years is a *good* thing.”

Speaking as the prospective heir to a body of copyrighted works (my father is a prolific science fiction writer), as well as the author of my own copyrighted works, I can see your point.

If my father’s intellectual property were instead some other type of property—real estate, for example—he could leave it to me, and I could leave it to my heirs, and if no one sold it, then a century or two from now, it would still be in the family. We’d be like one of those British TV shows where the same family has lived in the same house for 400 years.

So, yes, it seems unfair that one family’s claim to inherited property legally expires after set years because the property is intellectual/creative, whereas another family can maintain possession of their property for centuries because it’s physical.

It certainly appears to have been the view of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s heirs, for example, that this situation was outrageously unfair. They repeatedly fought expiration of their illustrious ancestor’s extremely valuable copyrights on his most famous creation, Sherlock

Holmes. They resisted even to the extent, a judge eventually ruled, of running an extortion racket and violating the law.

Conan Doyle published his first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, in 1887, meaning it was clearly in the public domain by the 21st century—even by Disney standards. Yet his heirs continued demanding licensing fees well into this century, claiming that Sherlock's copyright as a *character* was necessarily based on the date of Conan Doyle's final copyrighted Holmes story, published in the 1920s.

In 2013, a Holmes scholar named Leslie Klinger (a lawyer who recognized that there was no basis in copyright law for this claim) rejected the estate's assertion that he must pay them a licensing fee for an original Holmes anthology he was editing.

According to an [article](#) in the *L.A. Times*, representatives of the estate wrote to him, "If you proceed... to bring out [the book] unlicensed, do not expect to see it offered for sale by Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and similar retailers. We work with these compan[ies] routinely to weed out unlicensed uses of Sherlock Holmes from their offerings, and will not hesitate to do so with your book as well."

So Klinger sued them. He won, the Conan Doyle estate appealed, and Klinger won again on appeal—where the judge also ordered the estate to pay all of Klinger's legal fees.

The judge called the estate's practices "disreputable" and wrote in his opinion: "The Doyle estate's business strategy is plain: charge a modest license fee for which there is no legal basis, in the hope that the 'rational' writer or publisher asked for the fee will pay it rather than incur a greater cost, in legal expenses, in challenging the legality of the demand. The strategy had worked... only Klinger (so far as we know) resisted." Additionally, "the estate was playing with fire in asking Amazon and other booksellers to cooperate with it in enforcing its nonexistent copyright claims against Klinger. For it was enlisting those sellers in a boycott of a competitor of the estate, and boycotts of competitors violate the antitrust laws."

I'd say the key phrase there is *nonexistent copyright claims*. You may not like it when the lucrative copyright of a long-dead forebear expires, but you've got no grounds to keep trying to enforce it. (The final few Sherlock Holmes stories that Conan Doyle wrote remain under copyright protection for a couple more years, but all the rest are now firmly in public domain.)

Conan Doyle's creation illustrates both ends of the public domain argument. On the one hand, yes, if his heirs could retain possession of his copyrights, they'd still own a very lucrative inherited property. On the other hand, as Authors Alliance co-founder Molly Van Houweling [wrote](#), when commenting on that case, "Lengthy copyrights can be costly to authors because they delay the entry of works into the public domain where they can be adapted into new works of authorship... Perhaps counter-intuitively, the limits of copyright—both time limits and limits on what copyright protects—are crucial for enabling authorship that builds upon a rich heritage of shared culture and knowledge."

As Klinger, Van Houweling, and numerous others have asserted, the Sherlock Holmes we know now has grown well beyond Conan Doyle's creation, all because of the contributions and interpretations of other authors (as well as actors, directors, producers, artists, composers, and satirists) over the past century or so. Many familiar facets and evolving portrayals of Sherlock Holmes first appeared well after Conan Doyle's final story—and, indeed, after the author died.

Sherlock Holmes is as much a part of our shared cultural heritage as King Arthur, Robin Hood, and Elizabeth Bennett. In the view of public domain advocates, there comes a time when such a creation should cease to be strictly private property. At some point after the creator has shuffled off this mortal coil, they believe, the creation should belong to everyone, rather than be controlled by an estate that limits usage and further exploration—and even limits reader access to the original work.

As pointed out by the Center for the Study of Public Domain at Duke University, a frequent and substantial drawback of a very long copyright period is that so many works become lost and inaccessible. While the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dame Agatha Christie have been so consistently popular since their creation that the copyrights have been managed with care for generations, there are tens of thousands of copyrighted works that are “orphaned.” They disappear and disintegrate because even someone who’s very interested in republishing, or producing, or filming, or preserving the work can’t find out who owns the copyright decades after the material was created. In many cases, an heir may not even be aware they own a copyright, especially after a few generations have passed. Additionally, people die without heirs, and as long as copyright remains in effect, no one can revive, rescue, or save that work without permission of a copyright holder they may never find (and might quickly give up even looking for).

The center at Duke has an excellent [FAQs](#) page that discusses in detail how and why the existence of public domain benefits all of us, including copyright holders and current-day creators. Or if you’d like a little more flair, they also offer a comic book (there’s a [free digital version](#)) called *Bound By Law*, which is an action-packed adventure in which the heroine learns about public domain, copyright law, and fair use.

Life-of-the-author plus 70 years is the current term of copyright for my works (and also for most of my father’s works). If I live an “average” lifespan, my copyrights will expire in the 22nd century. While I don’t want to exclude my heirs from whatever income they might derive from these works, it’s easy to believe my copyrights will be orphaned by the time I’ve been gone for 50 or 60 years. On that basis, I appreciate the argument in favor of public domain. I’d like people who might appreciate my writing to be able to engage with it then. Certainly, I’d like that more than I’d like to have heirs like Conan Doyle’s...

Laura Resnick is the author of novels, short stories, and nonfiction.

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 2020:

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

Conference Registration: Hotlink coming in February.

Newsletter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Welcome Packet: <http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/>

[2017/01/2017_New_Member_Welcome_Packet-public.pdf](http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017_New_Member_Welcome_Packet-public.pdf)

Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts. 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

2020 Board of Directors

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

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2020 Committees

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

- 2020 Conference Committee:
 - Conference Coordinator: Mel Jolly
 - Programming Chair: Tawdra Kandle
 - Asst. Prog. Chair & Trade Show: Lisa Hughey
 - Sponsorship & Trade Show: Rochelle Paige
 - Traditional Publishing Liaison: Victoria Thompson
 - Annabel Chase
- Authors Coalition Rep: Laura Phillips & Sue Phillips
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- Volunteer Jobs (Just One Thing) Coordinator: Lois Lavrisa

Central Coordinator

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin

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Address changes may be made on the website.

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