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

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Ninc Position Paper on Pseudonym Control

The Novelists, Inc. board has sent the following statement to Harlequin Enterprises, Ltd.:

On behalf of its many members who write for Harlequin and Silhouette, Novelists, Inc. urges Harlequin Enterprises to revise its contractual policy on pseudonym use. Inequities exist between Harlequin and Silhouette authors who write under their own names and those who write under pseudonyms. These inequities are unfair and should be abolished.

It makes no sense that authors who write under their own names for Harlequin and Silhouette have the freedom to write under their names for other publishers, while Harlequin and Silhouette authors who use pen names must first seek permission (not always granted) from Harlequin to use their pen names when writing for other

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A Conversation with Literary Agent Helen Breitwieser

MAVERICK TRADITIONALIST

BY RONN KAISER

Literary agents have always seemed to be odd creatures—or at least difficult to classify. They aren't lawyers or business managers or consultants or shrinks or surrogate parents or cheerleaders or critics or personal confidants or best friends. And yet, at times, they can seem like any or all of those things, depending on a writer's personal and professional needs.

Because writers tend to be lonely, introspective creatures, they suffer more than their fair share of paranoia. They easily become distrustful, disillusioned. Yes, that beloved agent, the writer's personal rock and trusted ally, can mysteriously metamorphose into an enemy at the drop of a bad deal, bad book, bad editor, or bad case of boredom or writer's block.

It's not easy to keep that literary partnership glowing cheery through the travails of the modern day writing life. These days author-agent relationships, like modern marriages, seem to be lasting dog years.

Then there's that gnawing problem of the fifteen-percent fee. You part company with someone you've

been paying ten percent for years and suddenly everybody you talk to wants fifteen percent. Where did that come from, anyway?

Thankfully, there are a few agents—including some of the best in the business—stubbornly clinging to the traditional ten-percent fee. We caught up with one of them, Helen Breitwieser, and asked her about the fee issue as well as other topics of interest to Ninc members.

Helen Breitwieser founded Cornerstone Literary Agency, Inc. in April 1998. Previously she was a literary agent at the William Morris Agency in New York. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Barnard College, class of 1990. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two dogs. Here's what she had to say:

NINK: As you know, Helen, the standard fee charged by literary agents was ten percent for many years. Then, in the eighties, some agents began charging new clients fifteen percent. The trend continued until now most agencies charge their clients fifteen percent. There are exceptions, you among them. What is your rationale for sticking

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Novelists, Inc.

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THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE.....

You're reading this in April, but I'm writing it 28 days after the February *NINC* ran my column inviting you all to send me ideas about what you'd like Ninc to do that it's not already doing. During those 28 days, I emptied my e-mail inbox so my software wouldn't buckle under the weight of the hundreds of notes I anticipated. I hooked up my answering machine to accommodate those of you who thought I might prefer a phone chat to an e-mail. (I don't! I'm definitely an e-mail kinda girl.) I cleared the area around my roadside mailbox so the postal carrier wouldn't have to climb over crusty knee-deep drifts of snow to deliver the tons of snail-mail I was expecting. I smiled stoically when friends and colleagues commended me on my bravery in exposing myself to what would surely be a deluge of complaints, kvetching, and demands.

So far, I've heard from three members.

Hey, this is *good*! Who wants to be deluged? My e-mail software needed to be cleaned up anyway, and the postal carrier is delighted by the snow-free zone around the mailbox.

Seriously, I'm pleased to think that the vast majority of our members can't think of anything they want Ninc to do for them that it isn't already doing. The resounding silence prompted by my column indicates that most of you are basically satisfied with Ninc.

(Or else it indicates that you're facing an imminent deadline and can't let your mind stray from your manuscript; that you're suffering from such extreme cabin fever that coherent thought is impossible; that you've just returned from some tropical paradise so inebriated from all the daiquiris you consumed that coherent thought is impossible; or that you've found Ninc so unsatisfactory that you've already decided to quit the organization.

(That last possibility isn't a joke. Every year Ninc loses members even as we gain new members, and each loss is like a death in the family, to me at least. I can't help wondering why members don't address their discontents with the organization before they leave, so we can figure out if their complaints have merit and can be remedied. If Ninc's membership shrinks below a certain number, we lose Authors Coalition funds, which are paid out only to writers' groups with more than 500 members. Beyond dollars and cents, of course, if we shrink we lose our strength.)

So what were the suggestions these three members sent me? One involves a promotional program for members' books. One involves a compilation of articles and essays by Ninc members. Both are good ideas, definitely worthy of exploration.

The third suggestion focused generally on the issue of advocacy. Ninc has gradually, carefully, moved toward taking a greater advocacy role on behalf of our members. Last year's board began setting up mechanisms through which Ninc can issue position papers, and we are continuing to explore areas where we can have an impact. I see increasing our advocacy work as the most important extension of Ninc's mission.

So that's where we are right now. Three good suggestions. I'll just assume the rest of you are thrilled with Ninc as it is.

(No, I won't. My e-mail box remains relatively tidy, and sooner or later the snow is going to melt, making my mailbox even more accessible. If you come up with an idea, you know how to reach me.

(But please, *not* by phone.)

— **Barbara Keiler**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letters to the Editor is the monthly forum in which we can all share our views and express our opinions. Anonymous letters will never be published in NINK. Upon the author's request, signed letters may be published as "Name Withheld." In the interest of fairness and in the belief that more can be accomplished by writers and publishers talking with one another rather than about each other, when a letter addresses the policies of a particular publisher, the house in question may be invited to respond in the same issue. Letters may be edited for length or NINK style. Letters may be sent to the NINK editor via mail or e-mail. See masthead for addresses.

Laura: Thanks. I think.

I'm not sure whether or not to thank Laura Resnick for her column, "Who are you? Who made you who you are?"

She has, unfortunately, confirmed a recent discovery of mine. For years I have searched the want-ads for the "right" job and never applied for one. I have yearned at the sight of help-wanted signs, even for checkers and baggers at the grocery store—and me with a Rice University degree! I have considered every form of writing for actual pay (as opposed to being a novelist), from commercial copywriting to freelance-article writing to textbook editing, and except for a few reluctant forays into freelance work have never made the

call. Finally in my fiftieth year, my fifteenth as a novelist, I realized that as every job presented itself, I evaluated it for how much time it would leave me for writing my stories.

I didn't want a job. I wanted a paycheck. A paycheck would still be nice, but having made the discovery, as Laura said, that I cannot *not* write, I am trying very hard "to surrender unconditionally," in the hope of achieving a sort of existential bliss (Camus notwithstanding) in this paycheck-less career to which we are all doomed.

— **Patricia Wynn**

Make Your Mark on **NINK**

NINK pays for articles (not letters to the editor). For more information or to propose an article, contact editor Pam Browning (see the masthead for contact

NINC NEEDS YOU!

It's already time for the 2001 Novelists Inc. Nominating Committee to get to work. So if you're interested in volunteering for the 2002 Board or Nominating Committee (the people who will find officers and committee members for 2003), or if you'd like to make a suggestion or recommendation of someone you think would do a faboo job, please pick up a pen or fire up your e-mail, and let a member of this year's Nominating Committee know.

They are:

Carole Nelson Douglas (cdouglas@catwriter.com), Lawrence Watt Evans (lawrence@clark.net), Barbara McMahon (BMcMahon@cdepot.net), Pamela Morsi (PamMorsi@aol.com), and Mary Jo Putney (Mehetabel@aol.com). If you'd like to be a part of Ninc's future and help decide who we are and what we can become, join in!

INTRODUCING.....

The following authors have applied for membership in Ninc and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 30 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of Ninc:

Mary Bly (Eloisa James),
Summit, NJ
Laura Parker Castoro (Laura
Parker), Coppell, TX
Darlene Gardenhire (Darlene
Graham), Norman, OK
Linda Hall, Fredericton,
NB, Canada
Debra Mullins Manning
(Debra Mullins), Waldick, NJ

New Applicants

Cheryl Wolverton,
Zachary, LA



New Members

Heidi Betts, Kylertown, PA

**Ninc has room to
grow...recommend
membership to your
colleagues. Prospective
members can
apply online at [www.
ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com).**



BREAKING NEWS

COMPILED BY
PAMELA BROWNING

Industry Sales Rose Slightly in 2000

Due to declines in both adult hardcover and trade paperback segments, sales growth for the book industry was up only 3.4 percent in 2000. Preliminary estimates from the Association of American Publishers put total industry sales at only \$25.32 billion ka-chings last year compared to \$24.48 billion in 1999, when sales increased 6.3 percent over 1998. In addition to the adult trade segment, the only other category to post a decline in the year was university presses, where sales fell 2.4 percent to \$402 million.

Adult hardcover sales careened downward 11.6 percent to \$2.68 billion in 2000, while trade paperback sales slithered precipitously down the same slope at a rate of 7.2 percent, landing at \$1.90 billion. But in the children's category, hardcover sales rose 13.2 percent to \$1.20 billion, and paperback sales increased 16.4 percent to \$753.1 million (due, no doubt, to a little magic—are you listening, Harry Potter?).

Mass market paperbacks had a 0.5 percent increase to \$1.56 billion in 2000, according to the AAP.

Before you go looking for (another) real job, keep in mind that these are only preliminary figures. The AAP revises them later. We can relate to that.

Editor Mambo

Joan Golan returned from her extended leave on March 1 to resume her role as Senior Editor at Silhouette.

Silhouette editor Karen Kosztołnyik has departed Silhouette; her last day there was Friday, March 2. She has gone to Warner, where her title is Senior Editor in charge of romance.

Mills & Boon Online

This venerable >>>

MAVERICK TRADITIONALIST

>>>> Continued from page 1

with the ten-percent fee? Do you feel that's all your services are worth? Do "fifteen-percent agents" overcharge? Or, do you feel the lower fee gives you a competitive advantage?

Helen Breitwieser: When I left William Morris to open my own literary agency, I was fortunate to have a number of very loyal clients come with me. I didn't think it would be prudent to increase my commission rate by fifty percent. I've always felt that ten percent is fair overall, if you consider the rate in the context of "dollar averaging." It may take a lot of submissions and phone calls to sell a first-time author for only \$10,000. With the cost of overhead, \$1,000 is a small profit margin and wouldn't be much incentive to stay in the business. But in that same year I will sell manuscripts of more established authors for much higher dollar amounts. And in the course of an author's career, the advances often increase exponentially and a ten-percent fee is ample compensation for my services.

However, I don't think that agents charging fifteen percent are overcharging. Authors change agents more frequently now, and it becomes more difficult to take the long-term view. With so many good agents charging fifteen percent, I don't believe charging ten percent gives me a competitive advantage.

NINK: Let's explore that. We've heard other agents making the same assertion that a lower fee schedule gives them no advantage, yet the logic of that notion is confounding. Say we're talking a three-book deal for \$100,000. That's a swing of \$5,000 net to the author, which amounts to a mouthful of braces for the kid, or several mortgage payments, take your pick. Is it your impression that authors really don't care about that, or is it a

matter of the average author being so happy to find a good agent that she/he can work with that she/he will simply pay whatever seems to be the "going rate?"

HB: I think it's a matter of personal chemistry, and that most authors expect to have to pay fifteen percent.

NINK: Which would seem to indicate the symbiosis of author and agent is the key factor, rather than economic value of services rendered, at least in many cases. Maybe we can take a closer look at the agent-author relationship. Presumably both parties are looking for a collaboration that will produce optimal results—money, enjoyment, fame, achievement, happiness. Give us an analysis, if you would, of what the agent is looking for going into the relationship.

HB: A financially profitable and intellectually rewarding business partnership. The ideal client is an author who is in equal parts talented and disciplined, and whether motivated by passion or putting food on the table, isn't distracted by bestseller lists or the careers of other writers. There is a wonderful book, now out of print, by Michael Kreyling which describes such a partnership, *Author and Agent: Eudora Welty and Diarmuid Russell*.

NINK: Elaborate, if you would, on what you mean by a "disciplined" author.

HB: An author who sets aside time on a regular basis to do the writing, without waiting for inspiration. Gore Vidal expressed it well in one of his essays in his United States anthology, that a writer has to be at once in the stream of life but removed from it. I have a dear friend whose first book was published more than fifteen years ago to glowing reviews, and its success put her on the "A" guest list in New York in addition to getting her lots of offers from magazines to write articles.

She's enjoyed the limelight and the assignments, but today is frustrated that she is still at work on her second novel. She's never home to write it! And if she is home, the phone is ringing. A disciplined author shouldn't always pick up the phone or answer the door.

NINK: Okay, say you've got a writer who's disciplined and talented (at least sufficiently talented to get published) but that break-out book seems to elude her. She seems "hopelessly" midlist in the eyes of the publishing world. You talk to her and decide she's got fire in the belly. What's your prescription? Perseverance? Keeping an eye out for that lucky twist of fate? Or, agent magic?

HB: Beyond talent and discipline, it's daring and luck that catapults a writer from midlist to bestseller list. I'd tell that writer not to look to the marketplace for ideas about what to write, but to write the book she has been dreaming about for years but has been putting aside in order to produce something more "marketable." Chances are the book will be her most original and exciting work.

My job is to find the publisher who recognizes the creative leap the author has taken and possesses the energy and enthusiasm to galvanize an entire house behind repackaging and taking the author beyond midlist: designing a new cover look, offering incentives to booksellers, touring the author. As a writer, in order to break out of the midlist, you need to roll the dice and take a chance on your talent.

NINK: Let's say we've rolled the dice and produced that special book. You've gotten a qualified publisher behind the project. Now what? Many writers contend that their job is done except to show up for interviews and book signings as directed, because it's the publishers who make bestsellers. Others maintain that in this age of low sell-through numbers and limited promotion budgets, the writer needs to get out and promote herself at every opportunity. What's your take on this issue?

HB: Terry McMillan is a terrific

example of an author who took charge of her own promotion and got booksellers and the public to take notice of *Waiting to Exhale* when her publisher didn't promote the book to her satisfaction. The best strategy is to know as many independent booksellers as possible and ask them nicely to read the book and handsell it if they love it. Support your local bookstores. A neighborhood independent may be willing to display an outstanding review with your books on a front table; it doesn't hurt to ask, and more often than not you'll find that an independent bookseller will be delighted to promote a local author.

NINK: Several of our readers have passed along questions for you. One would like to know how you determine your negotiating strategy on a given deal or with a given client. Some agents are very aggressive with publishers, others less so. What are the considerations that go into the formulation of your strategy?

HB: How much leverage I have determines the negotiating strategy. I can be a lot more aggressive when the client is a *New York Times*-bestselling author, or in some cases a first-time author, than a midlist author averaging a forty percent sell-through.

NINK: A number of readers are concerned about agent responsibilities after an agency relationship is terminated. Generally, the agent continues to receive a fee for books sold during the relationship. What are his/her obligations and responsibilities with regard to those projects after the writer has new representation? In the absence of an agency agreement that spells all this out, what is the practice of the industry? Who should represent the writer with respect to rights not sold at the time of the change of representation, or those that subsequently revert to the writer—the new agent or the old one? How are these disputes best resolved?

HB: An agent once said to me, "Hey, actors get residuals years after playing a television role." The essential difference is that books are updated and can actually have ▶ ▶ ▶



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ British publisher of romance is now so *now* that it's gone online. Purchasing from the site wasn't possible at press time, but you can take a gander to see what they're publishing. Our agents in the field report that the M&B site is a mini-version of eHarlequin.com (oh, horrors!) but not as "clunky." Check it out at <http://www.millsandboon.co.uk>

B&N.com Gets the Fluff Out

Well, they didn't say "fluff." But neither did they term it "crap," like that articulate Bezos guy did over at Amazon.

B&N.com is phasing out features on its web store and eliminating product categories, according to unconfirmed reports.

So you, as an author, thought you might drop into a B&N chat room? Well, supposedly you won't, since they're doing away with author chat rooms. Online interviews? BNTV? Blowing away like so much fluff. In addition, mysterious "sources" told *PW Daily* that the company plans to get out of e-cards, computer software, and gift retailing.

A spokesperson for B&N.com would not confirm or deny reports. The potential changes began to be rumored after B&N's layoff of 350 employees.

Your Copyrights—or Maybe Not

You may think that your publisher is registering your copyrights with the Library of Congress. However, certain publishers don't. Never mind what it says in your contract—or what you think it says.

Romance Writers of America did a spot check of current titles from various publishers, including Harlequin, Avon, Harper, Pocket, Signet, Jove, Dorchester, Ballantine, and Kensington. They found only one publisher, Ballantine (Ivy), that registers *some* of their authors' paperback works. ▶ ▶ ▶



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ To check whether your publisher has registered your copyright on any of your works, go to: <http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=hbSearch> and select a NAME SEARCH, by inputting your name as LASTNAME, FIRSTNAME. You can also search by ISBN with this link: http://lcweb.loc.gov/cgi-bin/zgstart?ACTION=INIT&FORM_HOST_PORT=/prod/www/data/z3950/locils1.html,z3950.loc.gov,7090

RWA's legal advisor issued this statement:

"In general, copyright registration is a legal formality intended to make a public record of the basic facts of a particular copyright. Registration is not, however, a condition of copyright protection. Although registration is not a requirement for protection, the copyright law provides several inducements or advantages to encourage copyright owners to make registration. Among these advantages are the following:

- ▼ Registration establishes a public record of the copyright claim.
- ▼ Before an infringement suit may be filed in court, registration is necessary for works of U.S. origin.
- ▼ If made before or within five years of publication, registration will establish prima facie evidence in court of the validity of the copyright and of the facts stated in the certificate.
- ▼ If registration is made within three months after publication of the work or before an infringement of the work, then statutory damages (pre-defined by law), attorneys' fees, and court costs will be available to the copyright owner in court actions. Otherwise, only an award of actual damages and lost profits is available to the copyright owner (which often can be very difficult to prove).
- ▼ Registration allows the owner of the copyright to record the registration with the U.S. Customs Service for protection against the importation of infringing copies."

You can register your work at any time within the life of the ▶ ▶ ▶

MAVERICK TRADITIONALIST

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ more protean lives than actors. I think an agent should continue to be proactive, responsible and receive commissions for any book that he or she sold while representing an author. If an author and agent sever a relationship, the agent should have an additional four to six months to handle offers that are received from foreign sub-agents due to the considerable time and expense in making these submissions. Rights that revert to the author should be handled by the author's current agent. Ask for an agency agreement that addresses all these issues.

NINK: After many years in New York, you've opened your agency in Los Angeles. With New York being the capital of the industry, how are you able to represent your clients effectively from the West Coast?

HB: When I worked in New York, I lunched with most editors once or twice a year and communicated by phone and fax. Working in Los Angeles and traveling to New York frequently, I lunch with most editors once or twice a year and communicate by phone, fax, and e-mail. The only thing I can't do is messenger a manuscript to an editor a few hours after pitching it on the phone. So I FedEx it, and it's there by eleven the next morning. I also attend writers' conferences and book conventions throughout the year.

There is a strong publishing community in Los Angeles. In fact, there is a group called LAPIP, L.A. People in Publishing, that is quite active and has made me aware of what a vital region this is for books. The annual *Los Angeles Times* Book Fair at UCLA in April is probably twice the size of the New York Book Country Fair on Fifth Avenue in September, and there are more inde-

pendent booksellers in Los Angeles than in New York. One industry fuels this city—entertainment. I've never been to a dinner or a party where a producer or studio executive didn't ask me about the books I'm handling. This was a big motivating factor in my decision to relocate to Los Angeles. I've been able to build my West Coast contacts and take a more active role in selling my clients' books to film and TV.

NINK: Perhaps we can finish with a couple of open-ended questions. Given current conditions in the market, what do you consider the agent's greatest challenge to be? And, as you gaze into your crystal ball, what is the future of publishing, popular commercial fiction in particular?

HB: The agent's greatest challenge will always be to convince publishers to read a new voice that doesn't fit a pre-established marketing paradigm. Sometimes even with a paradigm to relate to, publishers are terrified of taking a chance. So they'll pay eight million dollars to Hillary Clinton or Whoopi Goldberg for filtered memoirs rather than \$50,000 to an exciting new author with a clear voice.

It's wonderfully heartening to read in Kreyling's book an excerpt from a letter that Diarmuid Russell wrote to Eudora Welty after representing her for thirty years: "...what a long happy time it has been for me and I look with amazement at the old cards and how many people and places turned your work down... always writing 'This is almost it, but not quite.' They don't talk like this now."

Perhaps in a decade more of us will be reading books off of our PalmPilots, but we'll still be seeking

entertaining stories that appeal to our intelligence, imagination and curiosity. These stories endure, and the art is sustained not because of marketing muscle but due to a more fundamental power; they help to bridge the divides of race, gender, economics, and generations.

Intuitively, we understand the value of storytelling and will always be willing to pay for it. Consider that a friend of

mine took a bike trip to Dordogne and took e-books because it was more efficient than carrying a suitcase of paperbacks. She, along with eight other adults, organized a trip of ten days' duration, flew five thousand miles, and spent thousands of dollars for the privilege of reading, one afternoon, writings on a cave wall. **NINK**



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ copyright. You'll need to complete an application, provide a non-refundable filing fee of \$30 (effective through June 30, 2002) for each application, and submit a non-returnable copy of the work being registered.

To learn more about how to register, go to: <http://www.loc.gov/copyright/faq.html> and view the Library of Congress' FAQ about copyrights. Also look at <http://www.loc.gov/copyright/circs/circ1.html#rp> to see the actual procedure for registration.

However, some online searchers report that when requesting more about LOC records, they have been told that the LOC's online engine does *not* access all LOC registration records. Therefore a search of LOC registration records may not provide enough information to ascertain whether a certain title has been registered or not. The LOC search page/engine does not inform the user that it provides a search of partial records, which explains some confusion about authors who have searched for their names, found nothing, but had completed registration paperwork in their possession.

Despite this hitch, RWA points out that their concerns and legal advice still stand. They urge all authors to ask for verification of registration of copyright from a publisher if the contract stipulates that it will be registered.

Getting The Ink Out

Xlibris.com, the online vanity press, has gone on a cost-cutting spree and rubbed out its online portal for writers, www.inkspot.com, as well as discontinued its e-mail newsletter. The staff of four has been laid off.

Managing editor Moira Allen told *PW Daily*, "...It is clear that Xlibris had no concept of what Inkspot was, or what it meant to the online writing community. The *Inkings* newsletter reached approximately 45,000 to 47,000 **Cont. on p. 11** ▶ ▶ ▶

Ninc Position Paper:

Pseudonym Control

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

publishers. Some of the authors who write for Harlequin and Silhouette under pen names feel that they were coerced by Harlequin into taking pseudonyms. Others may have chosen to write under pen names but resent their inability to shape their careers and build name recognition by using their pen names at other publishing houses. That Harlequin sometimes does allow authors to use their pen names at other publishing houses is beside the point. Novelists, Inc. believes that Harlequin should not in any way control authors' use of their pseudonyms, just as the company doesn't control the names of authors who don't use pseudonyms.

Harlequin's contractual right to limit an author's freedom to publish broadly under his or her pen name confers no benefit to the company. Quite the contrary: authors who publish with another house under their Harlequin or Silhouette pen names will likely attract new readers to their Harlequin or Silhouette titles, thereby increasing Harlequin's bottom line. Of course, a talented author with a pen name controlled by Harlequin has the choice of writing for other publishers under a different name. This choice benefits neither the author nor Harlequin. The

author loses her readership, and Harlequin loses the possibility of increased demand for the author's backlist.

We understand that authors at different stages in their careers receive different contract terms. However, the pseudonym clause affects authors at every level of experience, from beginners selling their first Silhouette Romance to veterans with long backlists and huge sales figures. This contract clause is not negotiable based on an author's performance at the company. And again, those authors who don't use pseudonyms don't have to deal with the pseudonym clause at all.

Novelists, Inc. joins its members in the fight for complete control of their pen names. We feel such control will enable authors to chart their own careers and will profit all the publishers for whom these authors write.

The Novelists, Inc.

Board of Directors

**Barbara Keiler (w/a Judith Arnold),
President**

Patricia Rice, President-Elect

Kathy Chwedyk, Secretary

Linda Kay West, Treasurer

Georgia Bockoven, Advisory

Council Representative

Pamela Browning, Newsletter

Editor

Online.....by Lorraine Heath

Greg Spence is launching a new website. He and Painted Rock have given me permission to reprint his helpful article below.

Where to Promote Your Books, E-Books and Articles For Free

(Copyright © 2001 Greg Spence)

For writers, the Internet provides a huge opportunity. Now for the first time you can get your books, e-books, and articles in front of millions of people across the world.

This opportunity also poses a huge challenge: How to get your work in front of the right people at the right time. There are millions of websites, thousands of newsgroups and mailing lists, bulletin boards, and hundreds of classified ads, sites all of which are potential places you can get exposure.

Everyday, websites appear on the world wide web purporting to be able to help you sell more books and articles than anyone else. They all offer different payment terms, make promises that sound fantastic, but may not turn out to be as good as they first appear.

As a writer you may be bewildered by the vastness of the Internet. You may believe that the Internet is a good thing in that it can help you sell more if only you knew how to use it effectively.

If you do not know where to start and would like to know the places successful writers are using to sell their work then read on.

Resources To Start With

To begin your book or article sales campaign, you need to determine *how* you are going to reach your audience.

Will you be sending your potential purchasers to your own website where your work is offered for sale?

Will you sell your work from other websites and not have your own site?

Will you only sell via e-mail?

My advice to you would be to do all three. If you are starting out afresh, then do not try to do all of them at the same time. You will get bogged down in the technical aspects which will detract from your writing time (you will need to continue writing!).

The best approach is to start by getting your books listed on the best websites that will sell them effectively. The obvious sites to start with are these:

Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com> (US), <http://www.amazon.co.uk> (UK), <http://www.amazon.de> (Germany). This is the number-one site on the Internet that people turn to to buy books. Amazon may be losing money, but they are selling a lot of books. Visit <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/partners/publishers/publishers.html> for details on how to submit your books.

Barnes and Noble: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com>. Second cousin to Amazon but still a high-traffic site. They will even help you to publish your book. Go to <http://publishyourbook.iuniverse.com/> for more details.

Fatbrain: <http://www.fatbrain.com>. This is a good site if you write technical books or articles. They no longer accept digitally published books, so make sure your book is available in a printed version. For more details go to http://www1.fatbrain.com/helpdesk/get_listed.asp?vm=c

Book Reviews Next

Another way of getting your books noticed is to get a book

review published. Here are some sites that allow you to put your own reviews on their site, or who will review your book for you.

Writers Write: <http://www.writerswrite.com>. Writers Write publishes a much-respected magazine that includes book reviews. You need to send them a review copy of your book by post. Details can be found at <http://www.writerswrite.com/journal/guide.htm>

BookWire: <http://www.bookwire.com>. BookWire also publishes reviews. Again you will need to send a review copy to them. Further details at http://www.bookwire.com/bbr/bbr_reviewpolicy.html

Web-Net Book Reviews: <http://web-net.org/bookrev/> You can add your own reviews to this website. Add yours by going to <http://web-net.org/bookrev/addbook.html>

Next, Produce an E-Book and Get It Listed and Reviewed

E-books are becoming more and more popular. I would suggest that you create an e-book that covers the subject of your printed book but only covers one aspect of it. Within the e-book, refer to your printed book and provide details on how to order it. This might be a simple link to one of the sites listed above where your book can be bought.

If you are an article writer, group some of your articles together and put them into an e-book. Again, refer your readers to a place where more of your articles can be bought or downloaded.

Here are some places where you can get your eBook listed and/or reviewed:

BookLocker: <http://www.booklocker.com>. A highly respected site to sell your eBooks from.

Ebook Connections: <http://www.ebookconnections.com> Another good site. Submit your eBook review here - http://www.ebookconnections.com/reviews/r_home.htm

Ebooks N'bytes: <http://www.ebooksnbytes.com/> This site will list your eBook and you can also get it reviewed. Visit <http://www.ebooksnbytes.com/reviews/>

Summary

Hopefully this article has shown you where to begin your book or article sales campaign. Naturally I do not have the space here to cover absolutely every aspect of successful selling on the Internet. But at least you can now get started. ~

Greg Spence will soon launch a website dedicated to book promotion and sales.

If you want to know as soon as this website is launched (which will be in the next few months), please send a blank e-mail to pspr@getpub.com to receive an e-mail notification as soon as it goes online.

Copyright

A visit to Copyright Bay, www.nmjc.cc.nm.us/copyrightbay/, is an interesting, well-designed site that explains aspects of copyright. You can visit Fair Use Harbor and you might even want to risk the "Murky Waters" and "Infringement Reef." *Caution:* The site has not been developed by a lawyer, and its purpose is to provide an explanation of copyright, fair use, and infringement—not to provide legal counsel. But it does have helpful information.

Agents

From Fran Baker: Agent Research and Evaluation, www.agentresearch.com. "I know two people who have used it—one successfully and one unsuccessfully. As I recall it costs something like \$90 to get information on five agents."

Mystery Writers

From Evelyn Coleman: "For writers interested in the 'mystery genre,' here's an invitation to join the Mystery Writers of America from the Southeast Chapter President. Once you join the National MWA you are automatically a member of our chapter, which includes SC, NC, TN, AL, AR, MS, or GA. Want to know more? Visit <http://www.mysterywriters.org> or <http://hometown.aol.com/EvelynC547/myhomepage/business.html/>

Virus Awareness

From Sally Hawkes: "Here are the websites for both of the top security utilities. Both have free trials, Norton's is on the right at the bottom of the opening screen, and McAfee's is listed under downloads. <http://www.norton.com/> and <http://www.mcafee.com/>. I was doing a little virus awareness today and came across something I'd missed before—a virus warning calendar: <http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/calendar/>. This lists the trigger dates of known viruses. Just another little preventative measure."

Promotion

From Marilyn Meredith: Crescent Blues, http://www.crescentblues.com/4_lissue/homepage.shtml, posts book reviews and provides an e-zine. This site is all genres. They also interview authors. Check out the site for all they offer."

Affaire de Coeur is now online at <http://www.affairedecocoeur.com>. They have a new section, "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," where you can share your "good news." They are also paying \$35 for articles. Guidelines are found at the site.

Romance Reader On The Run, <http://home.swbell.net/monica01>, is a new romantic-fiction website that is seeking authors who may be interested in having their book(s) reviewed. Pam Tullos, reviewer and webmaster, has several reviewers eagerly awaiting material. If you think you might be interested in sending

Controlling Your Listserve Preferences through E-Mail

Subscribe	NINCLINK-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
Unsubscribe	NINCLINK-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com
Switch to Digest	NINCLINK-digest@yahoogroups.com
Switch to Individual Mail	NINCLINK-normal@yahoogroups.com
No-Mail	NINCLINK-nomail@yahoogroups.com
Moderators:	If You Have Questions, E-Mail:
Brenda Hiatt-Barber	BrendaHB@aol.com
Patricia de la Fuente	Patricia@hilinc.net
Lorraine Heath	LorraineHe@aol.com

something their way, drop Pam an e-mail at monica01@swbell.net.

Another site offering reviews is The Romance Readers Connection, www.theromancereadersconnection.com. It also has bulletin boards and monthly author and book features.

Writing Tip

From Holly Newman: "It's interesting the tricks we've developed for ourselves to keep our characters and places straight. I used to keep my characters in a spreadsheet, but last fall when I was sick and not feeling like doing anything really useful, I played with some genealogy software (GENERATIONS) and put my book characters and all their information in there. It was fast to put in, once I knew the types of information I might have, and it really helped keeping families straight, but it was good for non-related people too. After I put everything in, I ran one of the family results and I loved the results. I think this is one of the slickest ways to keep information straight for my historicals."

Novelists, Inc. Listserve

At www.yahoo.com/group/NINCLINK, you can learn more about Ninclink, subscribe, or set your preferences (digest, individual posts, etc.).

If you discover sites that you think would be of interest to Novelists, Inc. members, please e-mail me.

— **Lorraine Heath** (LorraineHe@aol.com)

Fast Track.....Compiled by Marilyn Pappano

The Fast Track is a monthly report on Novelists, Inc. members on the USA Today top 150 bestseller list. Members should send Marilyn Pappano a postcard alerting her to upcoming books, especially those in multi-author anthologies, which are often listed by last names only. Marilyn's phone number is (918) 227-1608, fax (918) 227-1601, or online: pappano@ionet.net. Internet surfers can find the list at: <http://www.usatoday.com>

Members who write under pseudonyms should notify Marilyn at any of the above addresses to assure their listing in Fast Track.

USA Today Bestseller list—Feb. 2001

Rexanne Becnel, *The Matchmaker*, St.Martin's Press

Patti Berg, *Born to be Wild*, Avon

Catherine Coulter, *The Scottish Bride*, Jove

Dorothy Garlock, *More than Memory*, Warner

Kristin Hannah, *Angel Falls*, Ballantine

Lorraine Heath, *Never Marry a Cowboy*, Avon

Sandra Hill, *The Blue Viking*, Leisure

Jayne Ann Krentz, *Lost & Found*, Putnam

Stephanie Laurens, *All About Love*, Avon

Cathy Maxwell, *The Marriage Contract*, Avon

Kasey Michaels, *Too Good to be True*, Zebra

Carla Neggers, *The Carriage House*, Mira

Susan Elizabeth Phillips, *This Heart of Mine*, Wm Morrow

Nora Roberts, *The Stanislaski Sisters—Natalie & Rachel*,

Silhouette

Nora Roberts, *Considering Kate*, Silhouette

Nora Roberts, *The Stanislaski Brothers*, Silhouette

Nora Roberts, *Heart of the Sea*, Jove

Mariah Stewart, *Voices Carry*, Pocket

Elizabeth Thornton, *Princess Charming*, Bantam



These reports were filed by Olivia Rupprecht, who writes as Mallory Rush.

Seeing Your Way Clear: Using Images to Expand the Creative Imagination

This special presentation by Jan Phillips had to be a highlight of the conference. I heard a couple of condescending remarks later about the creative exercises, but again and again came praises most high from the vast majority of attendees—and it seemed that just about everyone was there.

We meditated. We explored the need for solitude as a form of prayer, and how to get the body/mind/spirit equation in balance by centering, so we might better focus and summon the muse. Several writing exercises were aimed at getting past the censor and then getting into the skin of another being. Two videos, filmed by Ms. Phillips, mated images with words in a moving and profound way. The videos offered more notable quotes and philosophies on the writing life than chocolates from Godiva; the following is just a sample of the riches proffered:

Writing is a vocation, a call from God.

Your own self-realization is the greatest service you can render the world.

You must know yourself to love yourself.

Making time for creative work is like making time for prayer.

As writers we collect experiences and shape them into forms others can use.

I wish everyone in need of creative nourishment could have attended this session. I wish I could have a second helping myself. It was that good.

Screenwriting: Once Upon a Time a Novel Became a Movie

A Presentation by Tara Twigg, producer, Savi-Media

VANCOUVER 2000 CONFERENCE REPORTS

This was a fairly informative session, particularly for the Canadians among us since Savi-Media is specifically geared toward Canadian writers with Canadian locales as a backdrop. While Canada has a more eclectic approach to film-making since they don't have big conglomerates like Hollywood, certain truisms apply across the board. For those interested, here ya go:

Just because there's a big offer doesn't mean a film will be made, or made well. Sometimes it's more important to go with a smaller, more visionary film company. They can't afford to bury books after buying them, as big studios can and often do.

Novelists have to be willing to give up control of their material. It's the screenwriter's job to stay true to the essence of the story, but the author must accept that film is a totally different medium and producers tend to feel that they can't adapt their own material.

Screenplays and spec scripts are easier than book adaptations. An amazing novel doesn't necessarily translate easily into film.

The marketplace drives what producers are looking for, so generally they're trying to find a specific kind of story. Woman in

jeopardy is getting passé; coming-of-age and interesting true stories are hot.

Networks look to the stars they have deals with. Stars get things made.

Just For Fun: Finding Your Hidden Creativity

Yolanda Spears, who gave this special workshop, has credentials out the kazoo when it comes to working with reading-challenged kids. Confronted with independent-minded authors, she turned their raucous laughter at a team-building exercise into a game of who could top whom in building something from nothing as a team. About thirty participants were divided into three tables, each table allowed to select from a menagerie of pipe cleaners, Chinese take-out boxes, glitter, spools of yarn, glue, crafty stuff like that.

Once the tables made their selections, they had to decide on a float (think Mardi Gras in miniature, only a lot more wholesome) of their collective construction. Each table put their heads together and came up with a theme that best described what they held most dear in life: family, art, nature, etc. Amidst much laughter and good-humored competition, the masterpieces were



unveiled to the tune of castanets. *Tadah!* See what we did? *Goodie, goodie! Yippee! Yahoo!* The room was small and filled to the brim with float-construction enthusiasts (quite a challenge to stay put for those with claustrophobic tendencies); en masse they proceeded to display their, um, works of art in the lower lobby and

place exorbitant price tags upon them. One potential customer was overheard whispering to a friend, "Can you believe the prices they want for this local artwork?!"

Ah well, her loss for not recognizing a bargain when she saw one. **NINK**



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ Continued from page 7

subscribers, and the website received more than 100,000 visits per month. (I believe that, when combined with the hits to the forums and chats, this number goes to 500,000.)

"Xlibris is trying to market a product to writers. Because their product relies on electronic technology (print-on-demand publishing), a huge percentage of their potential audience is found on the Internet. Yet in this single move, Xlibris has managed to alienate perhaps 100,000 writers or more—writers who would otherwise have been their most likely customers...I can't think of a faster way to commit corporate suicide!"

J. Henry Warren, an Xlibris author, wrote to *PW Daily* in response: "Inkspot removed! Good idea! Xlibris Corporation is in the business of printing books for authors; not educating them on prose...It is not in the business of educating Internet writers on writing; it is in the business of printing books where others have failed."

Allen will maintain all her old Inkspot articles and Freelancing 101 columns at <http://www.writing-world.com>. Other information about the closing is at <http://www.inkspot.com/admin/faqxlibrisclosing.html>

Libraries Support Tasini

The Chronicle of Higher Education Online reports that the American Library Association and the Association of Research Libraries filed a brief in support of Jonathan Tasini, the freelance writer who sued The New York Times Company for publishing his work electronically without his permission and is taking the case all the way to the Supreme Court.

The case precipitated this warning from the electronic publishing industry: If the Supremes find in favor of Tasini, which by extension would be in favor of all

Cont. on p. 15 ▶ ▶ ▶

MEMBER NEWS...Compiled by Kathy Chwedyk

Jacobs hits UK bestsellers list

Sherry-Anne Jacobs has had a double helping of good news this month. Her new hardcover novel, *Our Polly* w/a Anna Jacobs, hit Number 8 on the UK hardback bestsellers list in the UK; her paperback novel, *Lancashire Lass*, was listed at Number 14 on *The Bookseller* list, which is a prestigious industry journal in the UK.

Both novels were published by Hodder & Stoughton UK. *Our Polly* is set in 1920 and is a linked story to Jacobs' other hardcover bestseller, *Our Lizzie*.

Jacobs recently signed a contract for six books in three years, alternating Australian and English settings.

Roberts' *Sanctuary* Airs

CBS featured Nora Roberts' *Sanctuary* as the Wednesday night movie of the week on Feb 28.

"It was a huge kick for me to see my story come to life on screen, to hear my dialogue spoken," Roberts said after the film was aired. "I was really happy with the script based on *Sanctuary* and felt the screen writer did an excellent job of translating the book to the visual media. She kept the tone, much of my dialogue, and understood the characters. She didn't forget the romance in romantic suspense."

Roberts also was pleased to be asked for her input on the script and to be invited to go to Toronto for a couple of days to watch some of the

shoot. "It was fascinating, and it was fun. I watched them create a hurricane, met Melissa Gilbert and Costas Mandylor—who were both just delightful."

She also gained real respect for actors' fortitude and professionalism.

"Since they were shooting this in a park near Toronto, outdoors, in the fall, it was cold. I mean serious see your breath and hear your teeth chatter cold," Roberts said. "I hit Eddie Bauer hard the second day there, and wrapped in layers of long underwear and fleece, watching the actors run around in shirtsleeves, roll around in freezing mud, get drenched by the rain machines, decided I was really happy to be a writer."

Roberts' *The Reef* is under option by CBS. A first draft of a script has been written.

West's *Killing Kin* picked up by Japan

Chassie West has announced that a Japanese publisher has picked up her July, 2000, novel *Killing Kin*, which was published by Avon.

"Can't wait to see African American southernisms in Japanese characters—as if I'd know them when I saw them," she said. "Anyway, it's an interesting development. Add that to the news of the Edgar nomination earlier this month and I, a summer person to the core, will have to change my attitude about February."

West's current book, *Killer Riches*, was published Cont. on p. 16 ▶ ▶ ▶

Liberty, Futurity



Equity, in Philly

**September 6-9, 2001
(the weekend after
Labor Day)**

**Adam's Mark Hotel
Philadelphia, PA
City Ave. & Monument Rd.**

(Almost) Everything You Needed to Know to Start Planning for Philly 2001

The photo on page 12 was taken by moi at the Vancouver Conference. It is of, um—er—"artwork" created by participants in Yolanda Spear's creativity workshop. The price on the card reads "Crafted by local artisans \$2,695.00 plus GST." A horrified hotel guest who passed the "exhibit" was overheard to remark "My God, the prices they want for this stuff." We thank Susan Wiggs for pricing the work so, er, outrageously. [very big grin]

Anyway, here's the reminder you've been waiting for. Tear out this page and POST IT SOMEWHERE you'll be sure to see it. ;-)

- ▼ Conference Dates: September 6-9, 2001 (the weekend *after* Labor Day)
Conference City: PHILADELPHIA
Conference Hotel: Adam's Mark Hotel, City Avenue and Monument Road,
Philadelphia, PA 19131; phone (215) 581-5000
- ▼ Conference Rates: Hotel: \$132/single; \$137/double; \$142/triple; \$147/quad
- ▼ Conference Fee: \$250 early registration *before* July 1, 2001, \$275 *after* July 1, 2001
- ▼ Editor/Agent Fee: \$75.00 (includes three continental breakfasts and group functions)
- ▼ Optional Editor/Agent Meal Package: \$95 (includes all conference meals and group functions)
- ▼ Spouse/Guest Meal Package: \$160 (includes all meal and group functions)

Remember WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS.

A trip to New York via club coach is in the planning stages for early arrivals. What I need at this point is a head count in order to know how many coaches to reserve (each seats 18 and is very comfy.) The trip will take place on Thursday, September 6. Cost will be approximately \$40-\$50. Travelers will leave the hotel at approximately 9 a.m. to be dropped off at their publishers around 11 a.m. for lunch, then ferried back to the Adam's Mark in time for the snack supper and night owl sessions. PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN THIS SO I CAN FURTHER THE PLANS!!! (E-mail: terey@ismi.net; phone (517) 545-8946; fax (810) 821-7070; or phone Kate Dooley at the Mountain State Travel 800 number listed below.)

Also, for those of you who will be in Philly on Wednesday evening, the board is planning a preconference/preboard meeting pay-your-own-way meal at The Old Original Bookbinder's. The menu is fabulous! Consider this an invitation to join us there!

Editors, agents and publishing professionals already planning to attend are: our own *NINK* publisher Sandy Huseby; Cecilia Oh, New American Library; Damaris Rowland, the Damaris Rowland Agency; Claudia Cross, Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.; Steven Zacharius, Kensington/Zebra; Sarah Gallick; Christine Zika, Berkley; Malle Vallik, Harlequin Web; Jennifer McCord, Northwest Bookfest; and stand-up comic Brian Kiley from the Conan O'Brien show.

THE REGISTRATION FORM IS UP ON THE WEBSITE.

We have special rental car rates available through AVIS for anyone wanting to rent cars to drive to or around Philadelphia (this includes editors and agents and all conference attendees.) Please contact Kate Dooley our conference planner at Mountain State Travel, 112 S. 3rd St., Clarksburg, WV 26301; phone (800) 344-6602; fax (304) 624-6234.

For up-to-the-minute information, watch the website, www.ninc.com, or contact: Terey daly Ramin <terey@ismi.net> or Kate Dooley <ninc2001conf@yahoo.com>



Laura Resnick is

THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

“Labelismization”

My friend Karen, the one who defined the literary fiction formula to me (see *NINK*, 10/00), travels a lot on business. She says business travel used to be a lot more interesting, because different towns and cities had different shops and restaurants. She enjoyed the unfamiliar, relished experimenting with the unknown, and had fun discovering unique local businesses wherever she went.

All of that, Karen says mournfully, has changed. It seems to her that wherever she goes these days, she sees exactly the same restaurants and exactly the same stores—all the national chains which have spread across the face of our nation like wildfire in recent years. You can go to fifty cities in America and eat exactly the same meal in exactly the same restaurant in every city. You can buy the same pair of pants at exactly the same store in every city. Life in America, Karen tells me, is becoming generic.

Then why can't I get a decent corned beef sandwich anywhere except Chicago, I ask? Karen ignores me and continues with her thesis, which includes one complaint which I hear a lot from readers: Too many novels that are being released are like too many other novels that are being released.

This is, of course, a familiar problem to working novelists, many of whom feel that individualistic work is often neglected and ignored by the publishing industry, if it's even published at all. It's common knowledge among us that in order to be saleable, a novel has to be marketable; and in order to be marketable, it has to fit a publisher's extant notions of what they can market. I don't know about you, but I've received more than one rejection letter over the years saying, in effect, “We like this book, but we don't know how to market it, so we're not buying it.”

My friend Julie (who grew up with Karen and me) is vice-president of an advertising firm, and she is always aghast when I tell her that marketing people in publishing rarely seem to deal with (or, at least, to invest effort in) a product they don't already know how to market. But the purpose of a marketing department, Julie tells me, is to figure out how to sell the product, not to limit the company to producing what the marketing department already knows how to sell.

Let's review: The purpose of a marketing department is to figure out how to sell the product.

Wow! Is that a neat concept, or what? Why did no one tell us about this before now?

Curmudgeon Fairness

However, in fairness to publishers (yes, even I can be fair on occasion), I must acknowledge that they do some-

times try something new. Remember when Harper and Bantam first experimented with replacing the romance genre's traditional clinch covers with something readers wouldn't be embarrassed to be seen reading? Wasn't that cool?

Remember when Delacorte decided to get behind a first-person-p.o.v. gazillion-word romance novel, *Outlander*, which they gave away at RWA National to help create word-of-mouth for it? Didn't it give you warm fuzzies that a publisher would do that for someone who wasn't a sex-addict-politician or a movie star?

Remember when Avon signed cover model Fabio to be a romance “novelist?” Well, okay, yes; some new ideas suck canal water.

Indeed, it's that whole nasty canal water possibility that accounts for something Ninc member and former marketing analyst Valerie Taylor once said to me, which is that publishers all want to be the second one to discover a new trend, a new subgenre, a new commercial wave; they want to be second, because being first involves risk, and publishers hate risk. (In other words, “If it's never been tried before...then, my God, man, let's not try it HERE!”)

While I'm feeling fair, though, I should also quote Tom Doherty, CEO of Tor Books, who has said more than once that every single book is a new-product launch; and, as anyone in business knows, new-product launches are always risky. If the last bottle of Ivory dishwashing liquid you bought satisfied you, it's almost certain that the next bottle of Ivory dishwashing liquid you buy will satisfy you, too. Whereas if the last Laura Resnick novel you bought satisfied you, it's still a complete toss-up whether or not you'll like the next one, or read three chapters and then give it to your dog as a chew toy.

This is one of the reasons that publishing is a business of many failures and narrow profit-margins. Of course, any reasonable writer can understand a publisher's desire to make profits and stay in business. Unfortunately, though, this too often translates into a publisher doing more of what has already been done-to-death, conveying an impression that publishers think books are like dishwashing liquid and that writers are mass-assembly workers.

Truth—and Consequences

As a natural consequence of this, writers (and also reviewers) often make unhappy (even sneering) comments about “brand-name authors.” I must say, actually, I think most brand-name authors are remarkably polite about the way they're regularly eviscerated in the press (and even by other writers) as examples of America's descent ▶ ▶ ▶



THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ into generic art forced on a helpless public by vast corporate entities.

In fact, brand-name writers are often highly original. In most cases, they invented the trends they created. Take a look at Crichton, Steel, King, and Grisham, to name just a few (and to consciously name a few who are not Ninc members, since there's no reason to bring family into this sticky subject). There was relatively little like their books in the marketplace when they each came along; it's only in the wake of their enormous success that a truly astonishing proliferation of eerily similar books emerged, too often in a rampage which neglected quality and originality in favor of marketability ("A Novel In The Tradition Of..." yadayadayada). Because now that someone had demonstrated how to drive a specific type of novel to blockbuster success, many others jumped on the bandwagon, milked the cash cow, and thereby produced the sea of coattail-riding books of stultifying similarity which make brand-name writers seem generic.

This is the modern American way. This is the era of mass marketing, of a vast consumer economy driven by pursuing someone else's success. This pattern is the same from dinner appetizers, to movies, to tampons. The success of a thing compels mavens in virtually every industry to contemplate how to benefit from that new-product success with their own version of the exact same thing. Consequently, you could lose your mind trying to figure out which brand of breath-freshening-tartar-control toothpaste to buy, which TV show about a group of twenty-something friends to watch, and which movie about a disaster in outer space to go see.

As each success is perceived more and more narrowly, whole new incredibly specific categories spring up overnight. And this trend grows and multiplies until, if you're like me, you're utterly bewildered by the categorization, sub-categorization, and sub-sub-categorization of fiction in the modern publishing industry in which you work.

For example, I have seen a novel of mine, *In Legend Born*, described as: epic fantasy; romantic fantasy; heroic fantasy; traditional fantasy; historical fantasy; high fantasy. It's just one book, and—though I daresay it's a good one—it is not all things to all readers. Nor did I try to write a book which could be described as six different kinds of fiction, though at least some of those descriptions are apt. (Just to clarify, I call what I write epic fantasy.)

Confusion Intrusion

The really confusing thing, though, is that these are all extant sub-categorizations of the fantasy market—and there are others, too. Moreover, that's just half the genre, the genre being sf/f; so there's also science fiction and all of its fruitfully multiplying sub-categorizations, from hard sf, to cyber-

punk, to literary sf, to space opera (which, like bodice rippers, no one admits to writing).

These days, you can't just write a mystery novel; you're supposed to know what kind of mystery novel you're writing: Cozy? Medical thriller? Police procedural? Legal thriller? You can't just tell your agent you're preparing a romance proposal, you've got to specify: Historical paranormal? Romantic suspense? Sweet contemporary? Traditional Regency? Is it a time-travel paranormal or a supernatural paranormal? Is it a Regency-era historical romance, or a Western historical romance? Or is it, oops!, a romantic historical mainstream?

This gets even more confusing for a writer who is versatile—not to mention for the fans of a versatile writer. For example, a publisher decided that a bestselling historical romance writer was unmarketable as a contemporary romance writer and wouldn't accept the book she turned in (which she then sold elsewhere, fortunately). Another example: A successful fantasy writer's mainstream historical novel didn't get marketed to fantasy readers, because a publisher's marketing department believed that the author's audience would not be interested in a novel which was not in exactly the same sub-sub-category. Or how about this one: A publisher withdrew a six-figure offer for a mystery novel when they discovered that the multi-genre writer was neither the gender nor the race they had assumed she was when they stipulated that the offer relied upon the novel's author being available for promotional appearances.

Nowhere is the pressure to fit into an extant marketing niche more keenly felt by writers than in romance, possibly the most market-driven of the genres (being the most popular and therefore the most lucrative). This has created some confusion within the genre as various writers attempt to write outside of the extant market definitions of romance, generating discussion about what is romance, what is romantic women's fiction, what is mainstream women's fiction, and so on.

I think the discussion is healthy for the marketplace, as long as it doesn't get unhealthy for writers—i.e. people mistakenly assuming that fitting within extant market definitions identifies themselves, or others, as "lesser" writers. Good grief. If this is your secret shoulder chip, get over it.

Dealing In Fantasy

As a fantasy novelist, I write completely within the current market definitions of the fantasy genre. I don't struggle to stay within those boundaries, and I don't long to "push the envelope" (a clichéd and self-congratulatory phrase which I frankly despise).

As someone whose ideas and sensibilities didn't fit so comfortably and easily into the romance genre, I recognize my current situation in fantasy as a blessing, as a fortuitous tailored fit which I intend to enjoy as long as it lasts. And you know what? My fantasy novels are good books. I'll toss them into the ring any day against "envelope pushing" fantasy novels, or mainstream novels, or your novels.

Read my lips: The marketing parameters of a book are not an indicator of its quality. They're simply part of the

overall societal trend to define something as specifically (or narrowly) as possible in order to sell it.

And since art is subjective, bookstores can't organize their stock under user-friendly banners like "Excellent Books," "Mediocre Generic Books," and "Really Bad Books That We Can't Believe Anyone Published." It would be convenient in theory, but it would never work in practice, since one reader's favorite novel is the same book which another reader gives to her dog as a chew toy. Consequently, instead, we get the sub-sub-categorization ("a Regency-era paranormal time-travel historical romance"), and the "a novel in the tradition of" marketing schemes, and the "why can't you write a book like so-and-so?" editorial comments (which, yes, I and several of my acquaintances have all had, word for word). This is how publishers, like almost all other businesses marketing products to the modern American consumer, attempt to stake out their audiences and claim the Yankee dollar.

So if your work doesn't fit into an extant marketing category, what can you do? Actually, there are many options: Wait for the market to change; it often does. (Remember way back when Regency-era historical romances were impossible to sell?) Sell to a small press

that believes in the work. Self-publish (can you say "*The Celestine Prophecy*"?). Work toward name-recognition with more commercial material, then present your "unmarketable" book when a publisher will buy something just because you're the author; it's a long-range plan which has worked for some writers. Attempt to revise the work so that it retains the essential features which matter most to you, but within a more marketable framework.

Or, best of all, find a good agent who believes in the work and can find a major publisher who believes in it, too. Become that blockbuster success story who invents a new commercial trend and is imitated by other writers and publishers. As *The New York Times* bestselling Ninc member Jayne Ann Krentz has said any number of times, the new trends in commercial fiction come from authors, not publishers, editors, or agents.

So go forth and conquer. Hell, someone has to do it—why not you?

— **Laura Resnick**

Seeking material for a future column! The Comely Curmudgeon invites Ninc members to share their stories with her (names to be withheld, if they prefer), about support and/or lack of support for their writing and their writing careers from their spouses and significant others.

Elizabeth Daniels Squire

Elizabeth Daniels Squire, 74, of Weaverville, NC, died unexpectedly in Santa Rosa, Cal., where she had stopped to visit her son on her return from the Left Coast Crime convention in Anchorage, Al. She was a member of Novelists, Inc.

Squire was the author of eight mysteries and was at work on a ninth at the time of her death. While she was in Alaska, she conducted workshops in Skagway with creative writing groups in the junior and senior high schools there.

She spent most of her life writing for newspapers, and although she

came from a long line of newspaper publishers herself, a newspaper publisher was the victim in her first mystery, *Kill the Messenger*, published in 1990.

Since then, Mrs. Squire published seven mysteries in the Peaches Dann series, all of which are in print, and several of which have been published in large-print editions. She also authored a number of short stories, one of which won the coveted Agatha award. Squire was a member of the North Caroliniana Society, Sisters in Crime, and was a past chairman of the Southeastern chapter of the Mystery Writers of America. The chapter has renamed a scholarship fund for its writers in Mrs. Squire's honor.



BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ Continued from page 11

freelance writers, i-publishers may have no choice but to restrict public access to certain articles. An example cited was that libraries with articles archived on CD-ROM may have to remove those disks from the shelf.

However, the two library groups argue that publishers are overstating the threat. Both said their decision to side with Tasini was difficult, since both the freelance writers and the electronic publishers have taken strong positions.

Some historians and librarians support the publishers, arguing that paying freelancers for electronic reprints of their work could greatly increase the cost of maintaining a database, which could lead to some works being removed from libraries.

Gee, I'm feeling really schizoid here. As a reader, I deplore removing stuff from libraries. As a writer, it seems like a good thing, since maybe then people would actually *buy* the works.

Maybe the libraries could just get the fluff out?

Amazon Watch

The Washington Post reported waaaaaay toward the end of a loooooong article about Amazon that Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com has been selling off "small" bits of his holdings, which he says is a fraction of one percent of his total. Only \$20 million or so per bit, though, so don't worry that he's going to be scraping the bottom of the barrel anytime soon.

Hey, this guy has so much money that he probably never goes bargain hunting on his own site using that nasty little blue button. He probably pays full price, don't you think?

Thanks to all who contributed to this month's column. Please send any interesting news tidbits to write2pam@aol.com. We don't pay contributors to Breaking News, but we appreciate you a lot.

MEMBER NEWS.....

▶ ▶ ▶ Cont. from p. 11

this month by Avon.

Maggie Price nominated

Maggie Price's books, *Dangerous Liaisons* and *Special Report*—an anthology co-authored by Debra Cowan and Merline Lovelace—received nominations for a *Romantic Times* Reviewers' Choice Award for "Best Silhouette Intimate Moments."

Price will participate in Silhouette's upcoming continuity series, Lone Star Country Club. *Lone Star Lady* is the third of three books in the Intimate Moments line that will serve as a "pre-launch" for the continuity series.

Library Journal Recognizes 6

Novelists, Inc. members made a clean sweep on the list of five best romances of 2000 released by the *Library Journal*.

The winning romance books and authors are: *The Last Good Man*, Avon, Kathleen Eagle; *First Lady*, Avon, Susan Elizabeth Phillips; *The Burning Point*, Berkley, Mary Jo Putney; *No Crystal Stair*, Mira, Eva Rutland; and *In The Midnight Rain*, Harper, Ruth Wind (Barbara Samuel).

Library Journal also recognized Karen Harper's *The Tidal Poole* as one of the top five mysteries of 2000.

Hailstock finalist for Venus, Holt

Shirley Hailstock's *More Than*

Gold is a finalist for both The Venus Award as the Romantic Suspense of the Year and the Holt Medallion.

The Venus Award, a readers' choice award, is presented by Heart Rate Reviews. The winners will be announced on March 20. Read more about The Venus Award at http://members.tripod.com/heartratereviews/venus_award.html.

Holt Medallion winners will be announced at the Virginia Romance Writers Conference on March 24.

Bellacera nominated

Carole Bellacera's first novel, *Border Crossings*, was recently nominated for a 2000 *Romantic Times* Reviewer's Choice award in the category of Best Contemporary Novel. *Border Crossings*, which was published by Forge Books, was also a two-time 1999 RITA nominee for Best First Book and Best Romantic Suspense, and the first place winner of the 2000 Laurel Wreath Award for Best Long Contemporary.

Bellacera's July, 2000, novel, *Spotlight*, also published by Forge Books, has been nominated by Reviewers International Organization for Best Romantic Suspense in the Dorothy Parker Award of Excellence. *Spotlight* has also been nominated for a Holt Medallion. Holt winners will be announced at the Virginia Romance Writers Conference on March 24.

Her upcoming book, *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*, is an August, 2001, hardcover release from Forge Press.

Australian Author Makes NYT Paperback Debut

Theonne de Kretser, who writes as Stephanie Laurens, made her *The New York Times* Paperback Fiction Bestseller list debut on March 4 with *All About Love*, her seventh historical romance from Avon/HarperCollins. This books was the sixth in the continuing Cynster series.

"As I live literally on the other side of the globe from New York," she said, "the phone call telling me the good news had to be left on my answering machine, so I now have a recording of my editor and publisher 'breaking the news,'—just as well—I had to play it back several times before I could believe it."

The next book in the long-running series, *All About Passion*, will be released in September, followed in October by a Christmas special hardcover release of another original Cynster romance, tentatively titled *The Promise Of A Kiss*.

"I found it interesting that in the same week of receiving the NYT phone call, three independent sources related to me the rumor that historical romance is dead," she said. "In light of my experiences, it seems to me that reports of the demise of historical romance have been greatly exaggerated."

Please send news for this column to Kathy Chwedyk at KChwed@aol.com or 1215 Fairmont Court, Algonquin, IL 60102.

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