

# N I N K

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## Cookies or Cows? Do Freebies Benefit Authors?

BY M.J. MCATEER

Can putting up free work on a website really help a novelist sell more books in the long run?

The short answer?

There isn't one.

Although writers and publishers have been experimenting with online giveaways for a number of years, evidence for the effectiveness of this practice remains both controversial and elusive. Not that the absence of hard data has in any way stopped people in the book game from choosing up sides on the subject: Call the rival camps the cookies and the cows.

### Cookies, Cows and Dough

Cookies believe in the power of the freebie. In an article she wrote about effective self-promotion, science fiction romance novelist and avowed cookie Linnea Sinclair urged authors to think about giveaways in supermarket terms.

As Sinclair's analogy goes, a grocery shopper ventures into the snack aisle, which right there indicates an

*a priori* interest in the cookie genre. Then, samples of, say, a macadamia nut dark chocolate chip number are offered, and the shopper enjoys a nibble. That sample can lead to a bag of the fat-formers being tossed into the shopper's cart and to a healthier bottom line for the cookie maker, if not the consumer.

The same theory applies to readers, says Sinclair. At her website [www.linneasinclair.com](http://www.linneasinclair.com), she has posted a half-dozen free short stories. This taste of her writing, she believes, whets readers' appetites for her more filling—and for-sale—novels.

The cows don't buy into that. They line up with the moms of yesteryear, who warned their daughters about the less-than-noble proclivities of men. "Why buy the cow if you can have the milk for free?" those mothers would warn their daughters who were headed out on dates. According to the cows, readers are no better than the average male.

Diane Whiteside is a cow (no offense). Although she posts "hefty excerpts" from her novels on her website [www.dianewhiteside.com](http://www.dianewhiteside.com), she vows never to put up a complete work. As a computer consultant as well

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### Keep the Business of Ninc In Business!

Not planning to attend the NYC Conference? We still need your proxy to conduct the business of Novelists, Inc. Please take a moment to fill out and send in your completed Proxy Form A or B that you'll find on pages 11-12 in this issue. Remember, we can't do business without a quorum. And your proxy matters.

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FOUNDED IN 1989

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

### 2007 Board of Directors

<b>President:</b> Laura Resnick 9250 Deercross Parkway, Apt. 2-D Cincinnati OH 45236 513-793-2987 LauraNincBox@aol.com	<b>Treasurer:</b> Ruth Glick 10594 Jason Ct. Columbia MD 21044-2242 301-596-5210 ruthglick@prodigy.net
<b>President-Elect:</b> Kasey Michaels 3230 Flatrock Dr. Whitehall PA 18052-3069 610-432-1370 kcmi@aol.com	<b>Newsletter Editor:</b> Cindi Myers 302 Yum Yum Tree Ln. Bailey CO 80421 303-816-6394 CMyersTex@aol.com
<b>Secretary:</b> Charlotte Hubbard 3913 Rustic Lane Jefferson City MO 65109-9148 573-634-8114 cmhubbard@earthlink.net	<b>Advisory Council Representative:</b> Pat Rice 15222 Strollways Dr. Chesterfield MO 63017-7756 636-778-0075 price100@aol.com

### 2008 Committees

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### Central Coordinator:

Tonya Wilkerson, Varney and Assoc.  
Novelists, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2037  
Manhattan KS 66505  
Fax: 785-537-1877  
ninc@varney.com

**Website: ninc.com**

Address changes may be made on the website.

For members without Internet access, send changes to the Central Coordinator.

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## 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 15 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of Ninc. For further information or to recommend eligible writers, contact:

Membership Chair Holly Jacobs  
P.O. Box 11102  
Erie PA 16514-1102  
or email HollyJacobs1@aol.com

### New Applicants:

Michael Jasper, Wake Forest NC  
Lee Goldberg, Calabasas CA  
Catherine Verge, Kingston Nova Scotia  
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### Ninc has room to grow...

Recommend membership to *your* colleagues. Prospective members may apply online at ninc.com.

Refer members at ninc.com. Go to Members Only, "Member Services" and click "Refer a New Member to Ninc."

Take Ninc brochures to conferences. Email Holly with your mailing address and requested number of brochures.

### 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."

# Membership Qualifications

In December 2007, the Board ratified new membership qualifications for applicants to Novelists, Inc.

The qualifications specified in Ninc's by-laws remain unchanged: An applicant must have published two novels, at least one of which was published within the past five years. But now the definition of "published" has been updated in our Policies & Procedures Manual for the first time since the manual was written, some eighteen years ago.

The update was necessary because of the increasing number of applications Ninc was receiving for which our existing PPM definition of "published" provided insufficient guidance. Our goal in revising the PPM language was to maintain the character of Ninc in accordance with the founders' vision for it as a professional organization for career novelists, while also taking into account changes in technology and the rapidly-evolving marketplace.

The new qualifications language is now in effect. It applies only to new members (not to current members or to annual membership renewals), and it states that an applicant's two novels must be published by a qualifying market.

To be a qualifying market, a publisher:

- Must pay an advance against royalties for the books it publishes.
- Must pay a minimum advance of at least \$1,000 for every book it publishes.
- Must have a print run and distribution of 1,000 or more copies of every title it publishes.
- Must have published books consistently for a period of one year, and must have published books by at least ten different writers.
- Cannot ask any of its authors to pay a fee for, or to have any fees deducted from their royalties or earnings, or to have any financial investment in the publishing of the books. Publishers that work with packagers can be qualifying markets so long as they meet all the standards herein.

During 2007, we discussed these proposed terms with members on Ninlink, in *NINK*, and in

correspondence. Some members disagreed with some of the specifics of these qualifications. The Board discussed each objection that was emailed to any of us, as well as any alternative suggestions we received. We also discussed the Ninlink debate. Every opinion that Ninc members expressed to us was considered and weighed in the Board's meetings and discussions about these provisions. The resulting final language that we wrote and ratified represents our best effort to act in the best interests of Novelists, Inc.

Our goal was to develop language that would serve Ninc well for a decade. Whether or not we succeeded, it will almost certainly be the task of future Boards to continue revising this language, as new developments in technology continue changing the publishing industry.

And I am going to repeat this yet again: The new language does not affect members. The old language also didn't affect members. Once you're in Ninc, you're in for life, as long as you keep renewing. That has been the case since Ninc was founded in 1989; it is still the case. Qualifying for Ninc membership is a one-time, never-repeated process as long as you keep renewing your membership. The only circumstances under which you'll ever have to "qualify" for Ninc again is if you drop out of Ninc, and then later decide to join Ninc again. At that point, you would have to file a new member application, which would involve providing proof of your membership qualifications.

**One last time:** Under the new qualifications language, do you still qualify to be a Ninc member?

**Answer:** This is a non-question. Ninc members have *already* qualified to become members. It's a one-time process. You're done.

Meanwhile, don't forget to invite professional novelists whom you know to join Ninc! We offer *NINK*; Ninlink; an annual conference with an unusually high level of professional networking and information; the Ninc Legal Fund; the Ninc-Tekno book projects; newly forming committees in areas of advocacy and information essential to the working novelist; existing committees continuing their excellent work; and, overall, the most informative, accomplished, varied, and convivial group of professional novelists ever gathered under one banner.

— *Laura Resnick*

### Phyllis Kelly Halldorson

Long-time Novelists, Inc. member Phyllis Halldorson of Sacramento passed away on December 28, 2007, after a long illness. She was a successful confessions writer when she sold her first novel to Silhouette, *Temporary Bride*, published in 1980. Thirty-six novels for Silhouette followed, primarily for the Romance, Special Edition, and Inspirational lines.

Phyllis was loved by her writer friends for her kindness, gentleness, and generosity. We also respected and admired her for her talent and creativity, and for the self-discipline that resulted in such a long and distinguished career. She was devoted to her church and contributed her time to many other volunteer organizations, including Sutter Hospital and numerous scouting groups. She leaves behind her beloved husband of 65 years, Gerald ("Jiggs") Halldorson, as well as her sister and her six children and their families. Remembrances should be sent to the Pioneer Congregational Church's UCC Memorial Fund (2700 L Street, Sacramento CA 95816).

## HOW THE NINC-TEKNO RELATIONSHIP WORKS

1. For all projects, submissions will be reviewed, accepted, or rejected by Tekno Books, sometimes in conjunction with the acquiring publishers. This is because:

- It's what Tekno is good at and what they do for a living.
- The Ninc Board and Ninc Anthology Committee have enough to do already.
- It eliminates any possible risk of a Ninc Board member or Anthology Committee member using editorial power inappropriately.

2. Some books will be entirely open-submission. Other projects will be a combination of invited contributors and open-submission slots.

3. Sending a contribution or proposal to Tekno for a Ninc book isn't binding. Only signing and returning a contract to Tekno makes your contribution binding.

4. Your contribution to any project will not be published *without* your having signed and returned a Tekno contract for a particular contribution to be in a particular book or project.

5. Tekno will send contracts to contributors only after it has a publishing deal for a given book. You will not be asked to sign a contract for a book for which there is *not* a publisher yet.

6. Your contract will be with Tekno when you contribute to a Ninc book, not with Ninc or the publisher.

7. Your advance and royalties will flow through Tekno, not through Ninc. Tekno handles bookkeeping, distribution of advances and royalties, and fighting with publishers to get monies that are owed. Ninc will have no standing in financial issues between Tekno and members.

8. The Tekno contracts you receive will be short and will license only very limited rights from you for your specific contributions. The contracts will also specify payment. You will be paid your advance after signing. (You will be paid your royalties in geological time, as per the typical practices of our industry.)

9. Every contract you receive from Tekno will spell out what the authors' share of any advance and royalties will be. The authors' share of any Ninc-Tekno book project will never be less than 50% of the total advance and royalties from the publisher. The remainder of advance and royalties will be divided between Tekno and Ninc.

10. In cases where we sell a project before getting contributions, we will specify advance sums before soliciting contributions. In cases where we're soliciting contributions in order to get a deal, contributors will receive a contract once there are terms, and can choose then whether they want to commit by signing.

**If you have a piece or pieces that you'd like to see considered for inclusion in this program, please contact Lillian Stewart Carl and Denise Little at the following email address:**

nincnonfiction@aol.com

# Cookies or cows

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as the author of 10 action-adventure romances, Whiteside says, “I know a lot about the technology. If I posted a complete work, I’d be pirated.” The prevalence of steamy sex scenes in her novels probably makes them exceptionally attractive booty. *Romantic Times* called her *Bond of Blood*, the first of a trilogy about Texas vampires, “a very hot read.”

But while Whiteside swears she’ll make pirates “scan every single damn page” of her work, open-source advocates such as gadfly publisher Tim O’Reilly argue that “obscurity is a far greater threat to authors and creative artists than piracy.” Being popular enough to attract thieves, in other words, is a perverse mark of success, or as Oscar Wilde quipped, “The only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.”

Cory Doctorow—any relation to the famous E.L. is strictly unclear—wasn’t going to languish in obscurity if he could help it. In 2003, the blogger, activist, and science fiction writer, with the permission of his publisher, Tor Books, made his first novel, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*, available in its entirety for free online at [www.craphound.com](http://www.craphound.com) under what is called a Creative Commons license. This license allows readers to reproduce an electronic book for private, nonprofit use.

On the first day, Doctorow says his novel was downloaded 30,000 times, and in a 2006 article for *Forbes* magazine, he explained that he didn’t consider those thousands of downloaded books as lost revenue. In his opinion the free-(down)loaders wouldn’t have bought his book anyway.

Meanwhile, the word of mouth generated by the sheer number of takers—now at 700,000 and counting, Doctorow says—has led his books to outperform his publisher’s sales projections and indirectly has made him money through ancillary activities such as speaking engagements, seminars, and teaching gigs.

“I believe that any business-model that depends on your bits not being copied is just dumb, and that lawmakers who try to prop these up are like governments that sink fortunes into protecting people who insist on living on the sides of active volcanoes,” Doctorow declares on his website.

But what if a writer already has a big following? The cookie theory can crumble a bit then. Dilbert creator Scott Adams ([www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com)) is a best-selling cartoonist, who put his first non-Dilbert book, *God’s Debris*,

online for free after traditional sales had flagged. His hope was that his giveaway would lead people to buy the print version of *God’s Debris* or its sequel, *The Religion War*. Not quite.

In a wry article Adams wrote for the *Wall Street Journal*, he reported that “people loved the free book. I know they loved it because they emailed to ask when the sequel would also be available for free. For readers of my non-Dilbert books, I inadvertently set the market value for my work at zero. Oops.”

## Publish for Free? Perish the Thought or Not.

The cow-cookie divide doesn’t stop at authors. Publishers have chosen up sides, too. Kate Duffy, editorial director of Kensington Books ([www.kensingtonbooks.com](http://www.kensingtonbooks.com)), comes across as a tough cookie on the phone, but she is a cow all the way (no offense). Duffy runs several imprints for Kensington, which is considered the largest independent publisher in the United States and is known in the book business for being a shrewd marketer. The publishing house specializes in erotic romance, thrillers, gay fiction, and African-American literature.

“I love authors dearly,” says Duffy, who has been in publishing for 34 years, “but I sell books. [Authors’] websites are about self-promotion.”

Although Duffy says that giving more material to readers in the form of trailers, excerpts, and blogs at websites surely can’t be bad, she points out that since the actual effect this has on sales is unknown, as a pragmatic publisher, she prefers the proven to the plausible.

Hands down, the best way to sell a book, says Duffy, is to have it displayed near the retailer’s checkout counter. Radio and print ads definitely work, too, and a positive review in *Romantic Times* can be just “as good as a full-page ad.”

Duffy also believes that would-be readers do too judge a book by its cover, and when Kensington sales reps travel to Michigan, say, to call on the Borders romance fiction buyer, or to New York to court Barnes & Noble, their sales kits always include carefully designed covers even for books that are still being written.

Yet Isaac Newton knew whereof he spoke when he declared that “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” Yes, he was referring to objects in motion, but he easily could have been talking about the cows and cookies of modern publishing.

To see just how prescient Newton was, spin the dial 180 and land on the website of Baen Books ([www.baen.com](http://www.baen.com)). There abides a nest of true believers in everything that Duffy doubts.

Baen Books is a science fiction and fantasy house that has a publishing relationship with Simon & Schus- ▶



ter. One feature of its busy website is a library. This library has a catalogue of more than 100 titles, all available for free download, no strings attached.

Marla Ainstan, an associate publisher at Baen, says founding publisher Jim Baen, who died in 2006, was the guiding force behind the creation of the library around the turn of the century. At about that time, the website's chat room was hosting a "virtual brawl" about the subject of copyrighted material and piracy. Baen author Eric Flint was in the middle of the fight and was arguing vociferously against the "handcuffs and brass knuckles" school of ever increasing regulation as a means to stop online theft. So Jim Baen issued him a challenge. In his online introduction to the library, Flint writes:

"He [Jim Baen] expressed the opinion that if one of his authors—how about you, Eric?—were willing to put up a book for free online, the resulting publicity would more than offset any losses the author might suffer."

So Flint tried it with one novel, and he got a lot of immediate, positive feedback, he says. So he put up more novels and now has had as many as 16 titles in the virtual card catalogue at one time. The Baen philosophy soon became, "Put it up"—but only if you want to. Posting free material is not mandated by the publishing house but left to the discretion of its authors.

The fiction in the Baen Free Library is drawn from the publisher's backlist and is mostly first novels or the first installments in long-running series. Military science fiction writer David Weber donated the first novel from a 10-volume series to the library and saw his backlist sales go up 100 percent. Ainstan says other Baen authors also have reported spikes in their royalty checks after contributing volumes to the library.

But was their uptick in sales really because of the free posting? Ainstan thinks so. "Usually the backlist is steady," she says. "The only thing different was being in the Baen Free Library. Most people go out and buy in paper even after reading it [a novel] online."

The science fiction publisher's website also maintains a sort of cookie bakery, where the raw dough of novels can be kneaded and where half-baked ideas can be returned to the oven to crisp up. It's called the Baen Bar.

The bar is a freewheeling and free chat room for fans, editors, and authors; Jim Baen used to enjoy interacting with readers there. It is subdivided into more than 40 forums devoted to generalized and specialized discussions and regularly logs 900 hits a day.

That in itself might not be so unusual, but what should catch a wanna-be writer's eye are the areas in the bar where chat room participants can submit unpublished manuscripts to a slush pile. These manuscripts then are read and discussed by organized groups of readers, who are not reticent about offering advice on plot, character, pacing, setting, and even the validity of the science in the

science fiction.

Manuscripts get rewritten, revised and re-discussed, with the most outstanding candidates being sent on to the professional editors at Baen for consideration.

Baen authors Dave Freer, Chris Dolley, John Ringo, Michael Z. Williamson, Julie Cochran, and Arlen Golds all first got published this way. So Baen's Bar is a sort of test kitchen where writers can get help in coming up with a recipe that possibly could lead to making dough of the green persuasion.

## So What's a Writer to Do?

So, bottom line, do freebies sell books or not?

The long answer, as outlined above:

Nobody really knows for sure.

Until someone gathers actual sales data, whether an author or publisher is a cookie or a cow really comes down to personal philosophy rather than proof. However, a middle position is possible.

Jennifer Barlow, who writes under the name of Jenna Black ([www.jennablack.com](http://www.jennablack.com)), has found a way to have one foot in the cow camp and the other in the cookie without risking amputation of either extremity.

Barlow writes paranormal romance and urban fantasies featuring strong women narrators. She has four books in print now, the most recent of which, *The Devil Inside* was issued by Bantam Dell in November.

For any writer who has ever despaired over a rejection slip, or two or even three, Barlow should be called in as a life coach. Her first book, published just last year, was actually the 18th novel she had written. All the others got a thumbs-down from editors. "I have a lot of unpublished novels sitting around," Barlow says, providing the very definition of understatement.

Make that two less now, though, because she is putting some of that uncompensated labor to work for her on her website. There, she has made one of her later unpublished novels available in its entirety to read or download for free. She is offering a second unpublished novel a chapter or two at a time to her Yahoo group of about 450 readers, with past installments then posted on her site.

Barlow thinks the free novels increase traffic to her website and build anticipation for her next published work. "I have trouble seeing online downloads as real competition," she says.

And besides, what has Barlow got to lose? She has found a no-risk way to combine the cookie's open-source ideal with the cow's natural caution. That, perhaps, requires a new label: Maybe Jennifer Barlow, cowkie?

*M.J. McAteer is a freelance writer. She also contributed the article about Manga in NINK's December issue.*

# Does This Book Jacket Make Me Look Fat?

## What you look like may affect your book's promotions

BY RON HOGAN

A few months ago, an editorial staffer at *Lucky* put the word out among New York book publicists that the magazine was looking for “an attractive female author...between the ages of 25 and 35” for a planned feature. Somebody leaked the email to the gossip website Gawker.com, and then I had some fun with it on my own blog, putting together a batch of “hottie literati.” I began posting more lists after readers started submitting their own cute nominees (of both sexes, including a gorgeous drag queen).

It was all fun and games, but it did raise some serious questions about how writers, women in particular, get treated in the publishing marketplace—questions that were reinforced when *The New York Times Book Review* published a list of the “best American fiction” since 1980, which was widely criticized for ignoring the contributions of women writers. Do women have a tough time getting noticed in the literary world and, if so, does looking good give some women an edge over their competitors?

“I remember a friend telling me that her publicist had said she was pretty enough to go on television, and I was horrified,” says Lisa Selin Davis, author of the novel *Belly*. “I assumed this was one industry where it didn’t matter what you looked like.” But now Davis believes that good looks can work to a writer’s advantage. “Most of us, as we’re reading, flip back and forth between the text and the picture, trying to imagine the person in the photo in the midst of writing,” she says. “And most of us are drawn to beauty—more interested in folks who are attractive.”

Mystery writer Laura Lippman is skeptical. “‘Pretty’ is on a par with a great cover,” she says. “It might get someone to pick up the book, but I’m not sure it can do much more than that.” Another author points out that the young-adult novels she writes as E. Lockhart have no author photo but still sell much better than other books published under her real name that have a “relatively cute” picture on the jacket. “It’s easier to get certain kinds of magazine press if your author photo is attractive,” she concedes, “but that doesn’t equate to sales,

which are much more driven by distribution.”

Still, author photos are a significant step on the path to publication, and writers can develop a lot of anxiety about the shoot. “For months, I put off having my author photo taken with the vague expectation that I’d first lose 10 pounds,” recalls Whitney Gaskell, author of *Pushing 30*. “Then two blue lines showed up on my home pregnancy test, which meant that I’d soon look like one of the tutu-wearing hippos from *Fantasia*. I called the photography studio the next day.”

Novelist Tracy Quan says she doesn’t “go to extreme measures” to maintain her appearance but admits that she lived on a pineapple-and-fish diet for a month before the publication date for her latest novel, *Diary of a Married Call Girl*. “The beauty of a fall launch date is being able to eat very little in August,” she quips. “A spring-time launch is more challenging—you have all that winter fat to get rid of.”

Even with her skeptical view toward the “pretty author” concept, Lippman visited a well-known professional for her photo. “My publishers sent me to Marion Ettlinger, because in the ongoing battle between vanity and laziness in my life, laziness wins,” she says. “I simply would not do the things that would ensure a photogenic outcome, so they sent me to Marion, who can work around such limitations.”

These pressures aren’t limited to women writers, though. When it was time to get a picture taken for the jacket of my book, *The Stewardess Is Flying the Plane!* I had plenty of worries. The photo had to be in black-and-white, because my skin’s too pasty. It had to be at just the right angle, because my chin disappears if you look from my bad side, and my cheeks look enormous. And of course I needed a haircut. It wasn’t until I saw the proof sheets that I finally relaxed.

For most writers, says literary agent Ginger Clark, looks won’t be an issue, but “the bigger the deal, the more often it matters.” She explains, “If your agent is positioning you as the next big literary fiction genius—and therefore making it clear she’s expecting people to bid high—she’s probably doing so with the added bonus of you being attractive.” But long before attractiveness enters the equation, agents and editors will be ▶

more focused on basic presentability. “A well-spoken, articulate, intelligent and witty author is always a bonus,” Clark says.

Along those lines, I think novelist Sonia Singh, author of *Bollywood Confidential*, has the right idea. She stopped fussing about whether she was attractive enough to make it as a writer once she realized it was an issue only for superstar writers like J.K. Rowling, who went “from timid redhead to blond bombshell” over the course of the Harry Potter series. “As long as I’m on the right side

of clean and presentable,” Singh says, “back fat in evidence or not, the publisher is happy.” And if your publisher’s happy, you can stop driving yourself crazy staring in the mirror and get back to staring at that empty computer screen.

*This article originally appeared in Writer’s Digest Magazine. It is reprinted with the permission of Ron Hogan. Ron Hogan writes and edits the literary blog Beatrice. He is also the author of The Stewardess Is Flying the Plane.*

## Drop-in Signings

BY BARRY EISLER

As with any investment, analyzing the value of drop-ins means weighing the costs and benefits. Drop-ins can be pretty labor intensive—you have to map out the itinerary, drive to each store, spend time in each store... I know because I’ve been doing exactly that throughout Northern California for the last few days. Generally speaking, including planning, you have to figure at least an hour a store (eventually, with luck, you might be able to hire someone to do the planning, which would reduce the per-store average to maybe 45 minutes. But then your dollar outlay would be higher). Okay, we have an idea about the cost, what’s the value?

Bookstores will tell you that signed copies sell much better than unsigned. Although I have no proof, I have a feeling this is partly true. I say “partly” because if your book is spine out in the general fiction section, no one will see that it’s signed anyway, so the autograph is unlikely to help move the book. But if you’re fortunate enough to have a publisher that’s paying the bookstores for special placement (front tables, endcaps, dump boxes), then customers will definitely see the “autographed copy” sticker and there’s likely to be value in that.

A lot of this applies to formal signings, too. And formal signings have the additional benefit of more direct customer contact (this value of course depends on the size of the crowd), and more opportunity to meet the store personnel and get them pumped up with your talk (but of course you should be meeting the store personnel when you do drop-ins, too. That’s part of the potential value).

But there’s another reason, less obvious but much more important, to do drop-ins: they’re a great way to recruit your publisher. And I would argue that until you’re a huge best-selling author, probably only ten percent the benefit of any promotional activity lies in its “intended” value. The rest of its value lies in recruiting your publisher. Whatever you can do for yourself pales in comparison to what your publisher can do if they want to. So it’s worth demonstrating to them that they’ll get a return on additional promotional investments.

How to do that, of course, is a whole separate story.

*These thoughts originally appeared on MJ Rose’s Buzz, Balls & Hype blog in August 2005. Barry Eisler is the author of Requiem for an Assassin. For more about Barry, visit him at <http://www.barryeisler.com>*

### Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

**Buying and Selling:** Houghton Mifflin has purchased Harcourt Education, Harcourt Trade, and Greenwood-Heinemann, which will be known under the name Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

Competition & Consumer Commission in Australia is still delaying the decision on whether Pacific Equity partners, who own Angus & Robertson chain, can bid on Borders’ Store.





# Open A New Window

CREATING & RECOGNIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Novelists Inc.'08 in NYC

## ***Anticipation is Building***

We're getting down to the proverbial wire now, people. The conference rate hotel rooms are filling up, the speakers are gearing up, and the excitement and anticipation have ratcheted up another dozen notches.

Me? I'm figuring it doesn't matter that I already broke my annual New Year's resolutions to eat less, sleep more, and work diligently at my computer every day. I still have time to find a way to lose ten pounds, get a facelift, and assemble an entire wardrobe (translation: although the conference is casual, pj's are not usual attire in New York), before climbing into the not so famous Bieber Bus and heading for the not quite as infamous as it used to be New York Port Authority and a cab ride to the snazzy Affinia Manhattan. I am woman, I can schlep my own suitcases up escalators and onto the street!

Well, at least the Affinia Manhattan staff will hand me a "welcoming refreshment" when I stagger to the front desk. A little later, our fearless leader, Laura Resnick, is hosting a "welcome gathering" (please, Lord, let there be "refreshment" in the Ninc suite), where I will pick up my nametag and program booklet and pretend I'm not doing a boob (or chest hair) inspection as I lean in close to read other nametags. Still, I've found myopia to be a great conversation starter: "Hi, I'm not really staring at your chest ..."

Luckily, Ninc conference goers are a cheery bunch, and if you don't know anybody when you arrive, you'll know most everybody before you leave (I'll still be squinting at nametags, but that's just me...). In between that first tentative hello and a fierce hug goodbye, get ready for some fantastic workshops and the pleasure of meeting our keynote speaker, Theresa Rebeck.

While rummaging around the Internet, I found Theresa's website (<http://www.TheresaRebeck.com>), and learned that she's a playwright, has written for TV, the movies, and will soon see her first published book of comedic essays about writing and show business, *Free Fire*

*Zone*. Some of the first chapter is online at her website, and I stumbled over this gem:

"In any case, over the years I've begun to see ... how little information novice [script] writers have about how the business really works—things like how to get a play produced, what a producer does, how to spot a big fat lie, what megalomaniacs are like to work for, things like that."

Even if I never attempt a script, I sure do want to know how to spot "a big fat lie." What megalomaniacs are like to work for? Not so much ...

I emailed Jenny Crusie about the topic she'll speak on with her editor, Jennifer Enderlin: *Taking Chances In Publishing*. Although I figured we're all doing that every day, I asked her to give me a little blurb on her workshop and she wrote back, "Jennifer and Jenny talk about the risks they've taken and why they'd do it again."

Okay. Nice to know we won't need to talk either one of them down from the Brooklyn Bridge—but what are some of those "chances" writers might decide to take, and what are the benefits, the possible pitfalls? It's going to be a packed room for *Taking Chances In Publishing*. Don't miss it.

Here's some other fun topics:

*The Exploding YA Market*. Ah, good news.

*Multi-published Yet Stuck Without An Agent? Tell me why!* Hey, this one showcases a panel of three agents. Nothing like going to the source.

*Will a Publicist Help Your Career?* I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm looking for all the help I can get.

*The Art of the Deal*, with Robert Gottlieb. Deal me in (sorry, couldn't resist ...).

And let's not forget the agent and editor Roundtables, the innovative way Ninc has found to get everyone face-to-face in a casual, free-flowing setting.

I could go on (and on—because there isn't a bad workshop or Night-Owl session in the bunch), ▶

but all you have to do is go to the Ninc website for a full rundown of every high-energy thing that's happening between the Welcome Gathering March 27 through the Sunday night After-Party, where we can let down our hair and play a little writer-directed game called *Your Money or Your Life* (What is this? Don't ask me, I just write the column. But I know we can bring our own "refreshment").

Anyway, as long as you're going to the website to check out all the goodies, stop by the sign-up page and lock yourself in for the conference and your very own

mini-suite at the Affinia Manhattan.

There is no downside to this conference, none. It's New York. It's a fabulous hotel. We're all pretty nifty people we'll be glad to meet. The sessions are bursting with information all us in-the-trenches writers need to know. And Ninc still remains the biggest bang for your conference buck.

But it's also February. The time for dithering is over. Come to New York, *Open a New Window*, and let's make 2008 *The Year of Great Things* for all of us!

— **Kasey Michaels**

## Ask Annette:

# Recharging the Mojo

### Dear Annette:

Early in my career, when I was a struggling writer, working another job, I was focused, driven, turning in my manuscript two weeks before deadline. Now that I've had enough success so I could quit the day job, I find it harder to set goals. I'm turning in my manuscript two weeks late. I just can't seem to keep butt in chair and fingers on keyboard. Why have I lost my drive and how do I get it back?

**Signed: Complacent**

### Dear Complacent:

I'm thinking two things have happened. Let's look at the easier piece first.

#### **Procrastinators Unite**

I have a hunch you've been struck by Annette's First Law of Procrastination: work expands to fill the time available. In working two jobs—and trying to squeeze in time to nurture the family, pet the dog, and wash the socks—I'm guessing you had to make your writing time count. A lot.

But now, with all these extra hours in the day, I can imagine that it could be hard to keep up that tight, focused pace...especially if you don't have to. This might

sound strange after all the years of sacrifice, but maybe you need to be busier. If you had to whip out that scene in the next two hours, you could do it. You've done it a zillion times before. But now you have time. Time to wash up the breakfast dishes instead of write. Time to yank dandelions out of the lawn, or watch that *Oprah* re-run...again. Time to, well, *not* write.

I'd suggest creating more structure in your days again. Plan things to do so that you have to get your pages done more quickly. Some of us do better under pressure. Structuring your writing time—squeezing yourself for time by making more commitments—may make you more productive.

On the other hand, the answer may not be quite that simple. Sorry. Writing well enough (and hard enough) to quit the day job is a huge, huge success. Face it, you summited Mount Everest, bagging a gigantic life goal that most people will never, ever attain.

#### **...So now what?**

It's time to find a new mountain to climb. You think it was easy for Edmund Hillary to move on to the next venture after Everest? Doubtful. And I think it's especially hard in our amorphous business. What exactly is the next goal for a full time writer? Do you go for the second-highest mountain, or change directions entirely and train to backstroke across the English Channel?

And what the hell does any of **Cont on page 16** ▶

# Annual Business Meeting

Our Bylaws require an annual business meeting be conducted at the conference. No vote is anticipated at this time, but your presence—in the form of a proxy or physical appearance—is required to ensure a quorum and a legal meeting. If you will not be attending the meeting, please make sure your proxy arrives by **March 1, 2008**.

## Proxy A

*Use to appoint current NINC Board of Directors as your agent.*

Proxy solicited on behalf of the Board of Directors of Novelists, Inc. for the annual business meeting of members to be held on March 30, 2008.

The undersigned hereby appoints Laura Resnick, Kasey Michaels, Charlotte Hubbard, Ruth Glick, Patricia Rice, and Cindi Myers, each of them as his/her true and lawful agents and proxies full power of substitution to represent the undersigned on all matters coming before the meeting at the annual business meeting of members to be held at Affinia Manhattan, 371 Seventh Avenue, New York NY 10001 on Sunday, March 30 at 9 a.m.

This proxy when properly executed will be voted in the manner you directed. If no direction is given with respect to any particular item, this proxy will be voted in favor of the proposals put forth by the Board of Directors.

Member please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name here: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail this Ballot/Proxy to:**

Roz Fox, 9770 E. Quail Place, Tucson AZ 85748

**Proxy must be received by March 1, 2008**

# Annual Business Meeting

Our Bylaws require an annual business meeting be conducted at the conference. No vote is anticipated at this time, but your presence—in the form of a proxy or physical appearance—is required to ensure a quorum and a legal meeting. If you will not be attending the meeting, please make sure your proxy arrives by **March 1, 2008**.

## Proxy B

*Use to appoint a fellow Novelists, Inc. member as your agent.*

Print the member's name in the appropriate space below.

Proxy for the annual business meeting of Novelists, Inc. to be held March 30, 2008.

The undersigned hereby appoints \_\_\_\_\_  
as his/her true and lawful agent and proxy with full power of substitution to represent the undersigned on all matters coming before the meeting at the annual business meeting of members to be held at Affinia Manhattan, 371 Seventh Avenue, New York NY 10001 on Sunday, March 30 at 9 a.m.

This proxy when properly executed will be voted in the manner you directed. If no direction is given with respect to any particular item, this proxy will be voted in favor of the proposals put forth by the Board of Directors.

Member please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this Ballot/Proxy to:

Election Committee, c/o Roz Fox, 9770 E. Quail Place, Tucson AZ 85748

Proxy must be received by March 1, 2008.

Your proxy will be distributed at the annual business meeting to the Ninc member you have designated.



# Book Envy as Motivation

BY SUSAN GABLE

I'd lost my confidence, my focus, and most damaging of all, I'd lost my desire to write. Three years and nine months without a contract can do that to you.

I honestly believed I'd said goodbye to writing. Made peace with no longer being a writer. After all, I certainly wasn't writing anymore. And as the saying from the movie "Throw Momma from the Train" goes, a writer writes. Always.

So, I didn't think I was a writer anymore. I was dreading the idea of another Ninc conference without a contract. How could I hang with multi-published writers when I wasn't a writer anymore? Even worse, I was starting to experience book envy. Some of my very good friends, whose success has always thrilled me, had books. New books. More books. Booksignings. And dammit, I wanted a book, too. I don't like envy. It's a bad emotion. But it meant that my desire wasn't as dead as I thought it was.

Funny, the things that can motivate you.

Let me tell you how I got into the pit. At first, it seemed innocent enough. My proposals were being rejected by the new senior editor. I'm not the first writer to fall into that particular pit. Okay. I wrote some more. Got rejected more.

Tried my hand at single title. Looked for an agent. More rejections. (As an aside, I have to say, the whole agent thing gives me hives. I've heard way too many stories, and so I was only half-hearted about finding an agent. Maybe they could tell.) Played around with more proposals. Kept saying, well, try one more time, one more time. Got more rejections.

By then I was doubting myself. My self-confidence had reached an all-time low. I'd had more faith in my ability to write well and be a good storyteller before I sold my first book than I did in the midst of "the pit."

Not even external validation could help my crisis of faith. During the pit, my last book won a National Readers' Choice Award. I loved that award. The readers liked me. They really liked me! Now if only I could find an editor who felt the same and would buy another book.

I couldn't even muster up the enthusiasm to engage in masturbatory writing—you know, for my own pleasure? There was no pleasure. Fanfiction, where I'd gotten my start, didn't appeal.

Angsty poetry, no dice. Graphic, violent flash fiction in which publishing professionals met with gory deaths? Yawn.

For a while, I didn't even have a damn idea. That was it. I was finished.

Thank God for other writers. For groups like Ninc, and the Superloop. For best friends who are also writers. Because all of those kept me going. Let me keep my toe in the pool without insisting I jump into the deep end. They pointed out and recommended me for new opportunities. They cheerleaded. They cajoled. When that didn't work, some threatened. When I scoffed at their less-than-scary threats, they patiently waited with me.

My husband, who's always been very supportive of my writing, wasn't quite as patient. It wasn't the lack of contracts that bothered him as much as the fact that I was becoming unbearable to be around. Each new round of rejection brought more hand-wringing. Greeter at Wal-Mart was looking better and better, and my husband actually suggested I go out and get a "real job" if I wasn't going to at least write something. Anything. He didn't care what I wrote. Just write, and stop grumbling.

I went to Ninc conferences. After each conference, I returned home and created another proposal. In my "handicapped" state, that was a major accomplishment. I went to RWA Nationals. I met with editors and agents, pitched, and got fired up again and again.

Only to sink rapidly, deeper, after the rejections that followed.

In certain writing circles, no one wants to hear about this. Those who haven't sold that first book yet don't want to hear about the struggles you're having to sell your fifth book. Or your tenth. Or whatever. If you've ever sold, keep your bitching to yourself, seems to be the "rule." Be a happy camper. Put on a smile and don't let them see you down. No one likes reality. (Of course we don't, we write fiction for a reason!)

I analyzed my craft and gave workshops. I ▶



reread my older stuff. Each time, I had a burst of, “Okay, I CAN do this. I HAVE done this. I can do it again.”

I toyed with other possible subgenres. Paranormal. Erotica. I couldn’t muster the enthusiasm to actually write the damn books!

One friend asked, “What will it take to get you writing again?” and I responded, “Another contract.” But there’s this funny thing in publishing—if you don’t submit, you can’t sell. Odd, I know.

But suddenly, I was at least finding ideas. That was an interesting start. But as we all know, ideas do not a book make. Ideas are easy. Writing is hard.

I sold my fourth book to Harlequin Superromance in March of 2004.

In the fall of 2007, there was, as is common in publishing, another editorial shuffle. My writing friends cautiously suggested that this could be a good thing. I was going to submit another proposal, right?

Book envy warred with self-preservation instincts. I was starting to accept my no-longer-a-writer status. I was helping my husband start a new business—one that hopefully will pay a lot better than writing. (While in the pit I’d watched my fellow authors’ sales figures slide and head into the pit with me.) There were no revisions that actually meant “rewrite two-thirds of the book and have it on my desk in two weeks.” No line edits that made me want to rip my hair out. No deadlines where I was locked in my office, ignoring my family, and not venturing into the outside world.

But...I wanted another book, dammit. So I compromised. I asked permission to resubmit a proposal that had already been rejected. I figured, there was no new work here. No new emotional investment in a story or characters that would be tossed in the garbage. They’d already said no to this one. A second no couldn’t hurt nearly as much as the initial no. Couldn’t dig the pit much deeper than it already was.

And if they said no, that was it. I was done.

But I still had book envy, dammit.

The holidays approached. I had a proposal out at Super, and I had a proposal that had been out at a NYC

house for a total of 16 months. (Still out as of this writing.) I told my critique partner that all I wanted for Christmas was to know, one way or the other, on these proposals. Okay, so a contract would have been way cooler than a rejection. But at that point, I just wanted to KNOW. And yet, showing just how fickle and insane and conflicted writers are, I was also singing, “Santa, baby, slip a contract under the tree, for me...”

And you know what? The fat man came through. Or rather, the editors did. On Dec. 20, 2007, three years and nine months after my last contract, Superromance bought book five from me.

I’m going to have another book, dammit!

I hadn’t told my husband about the submission. I figured, if I got another rejection, I’d just mope and snap without letting him know why I was eating a whole bag of Milano cookies or why anyone who got too close risked death. On the other hand, I figured, if they bought it, that would be good news, and hey, who doesn’t like good news?

He was thrilled for me. As were all my writing buddies, the ones who offered helping hands to get me out of the pit, as well as provided comfort and sympathy while I was down there.

Only other writers get it: the joy, the angst, the hair-tearing potential, the love/hate relationship we have with publishing, and sometimes even with writing itself.

I was ready to quit. I had quit. But I was persuaded to give it “one more try.”

Apparently, this time was the charm.

So if you’re in a pit, I hope this will serve as a beacon of hope to you. It’s true that patience and persistence are critical in this business. If you wait long enough, things will change.

And it could be that the change will work for you. It did for me.

I’m going to have another book. If that gives you book envy, then good! Maybe that will motivate you to give it “one more try.”

I’ll be here, rooting for you. Now I have to go see if I remember how to finish a book. ▲

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## ***Business Briefs***

**Sony, Borders, T-Mobile and eBooks:** Sony Reader and Borders are in the process of introducing a joint online store for eBooks. When readers purchase a Reader Digital Book at Borders (superstores) they are given a promotion code and a customized copy of eBook Library software to access the new site of 25,000 titles. It is also linked to the T-Mobile Hotspot page within Borders.

**Canadian publisher on the rocks:** Raincoast Books will stop publishing Canadian-written titles in the third quarter of 2008. The final 15 titles will receive full promotion and marketing. Relationships with some client publishers will be severed as well with the closing of the Mississauga, Ontario warehouse and layoffs of close to 15% of the staff. Specific publishers have not been named. The company will focus on distribution of 50 Canadian and foreign-owned publishers.

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## **WRITING is TAXING**

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times—when it comes to house values, that is. The good news for homebuyers is that, due to the crisis in the mortgage industry, housing prices have declined significantly. The bad news for homeowners is that, due to the crisis in the mortgage industry, home values have declined significantly.

But don't despair, homeowners! There is a silver lining in that dark cloud hanging over your houses. If the value of your property has decreased, you should be in for a reduction in your property taxes. Yippee! Although a reduction in property taxes will cause a decrease in your home office deductions if you claim them, the savings in property taxes should more than offset the increased income taxes and self-employment taxes you'll have to pay. Be aware, too, that if you claim itemized deductions on Schedule A, a reduction in property taxes will reduce the amount of your deductions, thereby causing an increase in income taxes. Again, however, any increase in income taxes would be more than offset by the savings in property taxes. If your property taxes constitute a significant portion of your itemized deductions and will thereby have a substantial effect on your tax liability, be sure to increase your income tax withholding or estimated tax payments to cover the increase in taxes so that you don't end up facing an underpayment penalty come tax time.

Although the government is theoretically responsible for adjusting your property valuation, don't count on your tax authority to make the reduction in property value for you. Many don't reduce the values or don't reduce them enough, probably hoping taxpayers will simply accept the assessed taxes rather than putting up a fight. But not you! You're not a wimp! If you were, you certainly wouldn't be in the tough, competitive writing biz.

When you receive your notice of proposed value, take a serious look at it to make sure it appears correct and fair. While most jurisdictions simply impose tax on the estimated market value of the property, the tax value may be affected by special rules designed to freeze values or minimize the effect of taxes for those in volatile real

# **It Is The Best Of Times, It Is The Worst Of Times**

estate markets. Some jurisdictions allow a reduction in value if the subject property constitutes the taxpayer's primary residence or "homestead." Some also allow reductions for veterans, the disabled, or taxpayers over the age of 65. Learn the specific rules that apply to you and your property. Check out your tax jurisdiction's website to see if the rules are detailed there, or call the office for a full rundown. Make sure you are taking advantage of any rules that could benefit you.

What do you do if the proposed market value on your tax statement exceeds the actual market value? Protest! You don't have to carry signs with clever slogans and walk in circles chanting in front of the tax office. But you do have to let the tax office know that you don't accept their proposed valuation and why you disagree, and you have to file your written protest by the applicable deadline. Some jurisdictions have specific forms you must use to protest, while others are less formal and will accept a letter stating your intent to protest.

Some jurisdictions will require you to attend a formal hearing and present evidence to show the proposed valuation is incorrect. Others will accept documentation with your written notice of protest and may agree to change your valuation without a formal hearing.

What kind of documentation will prove your case? Information showing the list price of homes for sale in your area can be helpful. Pick up flyers for houses on the market in your neighborhood or check the listings on [realtor.com](http://realtor.com). Ask a realtor to run "comps" (comparative listings) for you, with actual sales prices. The actual sales price is an even better indicator of home values than list price, which is often higher, and the more recent the actual sale the better. Each piece of real estate is unique, however, so when you put together your list of comps, be sure to pinpoint those properties that are truly the most like yours in square footage, quality of upgrades, lot size and type, etc. For instance, homes with a pool or a golf course lot generally sell for a premium, and the price may have to be adjusted downward to compare with a home in the same neighborhood that is not on the course or does not have a pool. A house that backs to a shopping center or sits next ▶

to a busy road would be worth less than the same model house situated in the center of a neighborhood where it is surrounded by other homes. Houses in nearby subdivisions may not make good comps if the character of that subdivision is markedly different from yours. The condition of a house is a factor also. If your house suffers from some unfortunate issue—such as a structural defect, cracked foundation, or mold infestation—it should be valued at less than other comparable houses that do not suffer the defect. Photos or documentation corroborating the damage will be useful evidence.

When you submit your protest, be sure to state a specific valuation that you feel is appropriate. If you ask for a reduction but don't propose an actual value, you may not receive the full reduction you hope for.

Got a tax question for Diane? E-mail her at [Diane@dianeobrienkelly.com](mailto:Diane@dianeobrienkelly.com). Your question might be addressed in an upcoming issue. For further tax tips, check out the "Tax Tidbits" page on Diane's website, [www.dianeobrienkelly.com](http://www.dianeobrienkelly.com).

## Ask Annette:

Continued from page 10 ▶

that have to do with writing exactly?

That's the crux of the matter. How do you fashion a goal that excites you as much as being able to quit the day job did? I'll admit it, as a writer who still has a day job, the question stumps me.

### **What's next after Everest?**

I think what you need here is information. Advice from a trusted agent, from multi-published authors you admire, or from friends or acquaintances who've already made the leap to the next mountain could be invaluable here.

While I don't have any writing-specific goals to offer, I do know that successful goals have the same qualities your original wish had.

To work, goals need to be:

**Specific.** Hitting the *New York Times* bestseller list, good. Getting a contract for an ongoing series, good. Writing better books, too vague.

**Time-sensitive.** You can vow to climb Mount Everest someday... and never get there, or you can put your money down on a guided tour next season.

**In line with your core values.** Does the thought

of fame excite you? Money? A sterling reputation? Are comfort, and the way you spend your day to day time more (or less) important than high sales numbers? Reams of research only serve to buttress common sense: if your goal doesn't fit your values, you probably won't complete it. Why strive for international fame if you hate the thought of jetting all over hell and gone to make personal appearances?

Whatever goal you settle on, perhaps the first thing to do is simply acknowledge that you've already arrived at one destination. It's going to take some time to figure out which fork in the road to explore next.

And that's okay.

It seems to me that the mountain called, "Unpub-to-pub-to-fulltimer" is a monstrous, gleaming peak even those without a writerly bone in their bodies can visualize. Coming up with your next adventure in writing is just going to take a little more creativity.

Luckily, that's what you're good at.

*Annette is a full time Marriage and Family Therapist who is currently fighting the urge to read every single writer's blog before delving into the WIP.*

## Business Briefs

**Newspaper Book Coverage—To be or not to be:** The new year brought some changes to book coverage in the newspaper. The *Chicago Sun Times* reduced its book coverage to only the Sunday Show Section, (see Book Editor Teresa Budasi's *How the Grinch Stole the Books* section <http://tinyurl.com/33ytf>), but the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* has decided to expand coverage of the *Reading Life* in their Friday Leisure section.

## The View from Here



## “I Want an Intern”

I want an intern. Just a little, easy-to-work-with helper who will support my writing enterprise. I want an intern to take care of all the business-y stuff so I can focus on the book. It makes perfect sense for a busy writer to have an intern, because so much of publishing has little to do with the actual writing—the putting down of stories on paper.

Other professionals have interns to see to their needs—doctors, executives, literary agents, even the Authors Guild. So why can't a writer have an intern, too? Aren't I a professional? Don't I have needs? Lawyers have paralegals. I hereby declare that writers deserve to have parawriters.

I want an intern to type up my handwritten manuscripts, never stumbling over an ambiguous squiggle in my penmanship. I want an intern with a double PhD in English Composition and Computer Science, who is a software engineer, a computer technician and a strict grammarian.

Who wears a loin cloth. Who actually looks good in that loin cloth.

It wouldn't break my heart if this intern just happened to be mute from birth.

Another qualification my intern needs is the ability to

organize my workspace according to the principles of feng shui. He will be on intimate terms with productivity websites like [www.todoist.com](http://www.todoist.com) and [www.unclutterer.com](http://www.unclutterer.com).

I want him (of course it's a him; this is *my* fantasy after all) to make all the airline reservations for all the trips on my schedule. I want him to use my miles to get upgrades and to schedule the flights so I don't have to catch the 4:45 a.m. ferry. He will also search the Internet to find the most exciting, luxurious boutique hotels in the world, at the best possible rates. He will have [www.farecast.com](http://www.farecast.com) and [www.yapta.com](http://www.yapta.com) bookmarked in his browser. He'll win double air miles for me with every single transaction he makes on my behalf.

My intern will catalogue my research library, clean my gutters and file my tax return. He will schedule my social luncheons, my teeth-cleaning appointments and my weekly massage. He will find Jay's flannel shirt and trim Barkis's toenails. My office supplies will be ordered with regularity and stocked neatly and in abundance, even the stupid inkjet cartridges that cost the same as truffle oil. My intern will get all my mailing done, even if it means standing in line at the post office for 45 minutes. He will actually know how to print postage online. (<http://www.usps.com/onlinepostage/welcome.htm>)

He is going to be a master of databases, my intern, and a god of the laser printer. If I need a set of labels for a mailing to readers in Portland or Terre Haute or Maple Grove, Minnesota, he will produce them in seconds. With a click of the mouse, he can format a beautiful letter, flyer, or postcard. He will create flawless PowerPoint presentations highlighting me at my best. He'll write gracious thank-you notes on cream stock and send them out in a timely manner. He'll order imprinted tchotchkes to give out at the BEA; he'll create a lovely gift mailing for my publisher's sales reps over the holidays.

I want him to answer my email, explaining to Holier-ThanThou47@aol.com that yes, even though I realize God Himself gave me my writing talent, my characters are still going to use swear words, so she can just put her fucking Sharpie marker away because I'll never ▶



change. He might put in the subject line, "Greetings from Hell."

I want an intern who will answer the phone, politely declining offers of aluminum siding, copy machines, and magazine subscriptions. He'll know which friends, family members, and colleagues I'll drop everything to talk to, and which ones to take messages from.

In every bookstore he enters, he will re-shelve the books so that "W" is now in the middle of the alphabet, at eye level instead of toe level.

Prior to any author appearance, he'll call ahead to make sure all the details are taken care of, so I don't schlep myself all the way to Puyallup Mall only to find they haven't ordered enough books. I will no longer worry about book signings because he will work hand-in-glove with my publisher's PR firm. He'll post each event on [www.booktour.com](http://www.booktour.com) and send out invitations to everyone on my mailing list within a 50-mile radius. He'll negotiate my speaking fees and take care of the paperwork. He'll use Irfanview (free download at <http://www.irfanview.com/>) to convert my photos to the requested 300dpi format. He'll update my bio and send in any and all requested speaker forms. He will also format and email my workshop handouts for upcoming conferences. He will keep my profiles and posts up to date on Facebook, Shelfari, MySpace, and Amazon blog, vetting the "friend" requests so I will be a dynamic presence in cyberspace. Conversely, he'll make certain my personal information has been removed from [www.zabasearch.com](http://www.zabasearch.com) by following the procedure given here: <http://www.surfingtheapocalypse.net/cgi-bin/archive.cgi?noframes;read=73180>.

He'll take flattering digital photos of my events and send them in to *Publishers Weekly* for "Picture of the Day." (<http://www.publishersweekly.com/info/CA404134.html?channel=aboutUs&display=wildcard&nid=2286>) He'll also post them with witty captions on my website. Regarding that website, he'll keep it scrupulously up to date. And speaking of photos, my intern will pick out the most flattering clothes for the photo shoot, and he'll hire a stylist who will transform my author photo into a great work of fiction.

He will bring me Lady Grey tea in the "Perky" mug, with one level teaspoon of lavender honey stirred in.

He knows when and how to use the subjunctive voice. He understands the usage of aphetic forms and apostrophe placement. He has the ability to retrieve lost emails; he can uncorrupt files that have been corrupted, clean out my cache, defrag my disk, leap tall buildings, and rectify past wrongs. He spits contemptuously upon spyware and removes it with ease. When a dreaded "cannot open the file" message creeps up, he will open it with TextMaker Viewer (free download here: <http://www.softmaker.net/down/TMViewerSetup.exe>) and save it as a Word document and I'll be home free. If someone

dares to send me something with the hated .docx suffix, he will convert it without complaint, probably using a tool like this: <http://www.docx2doc.com/>.

He will respect and honor my insistence on working in WordPerfect, come hell or high water. His research will be impeccable, his fact-checking skills without peer. He'll create playlists for my iPod, and he'll organize and label my digital photos so anyone can easily locate the shot of Barkis chasing the coyote on my beach.

My intern will read my page proofs with a ruler under every line, determined to ferret out everything from an apostrophe turned the wrong way to the exact location of the Pax River Naval Station. When he discovers a clueless query from a copy-editor, he will hide the page from me so I don't waste two hours steaming about it, and when there is any question, he will email Bill at [www.theslot.com](http://www.theslot.com) to settle all disputes. If he spots a snarky review online, he'll bury it under five stars of praise from at least a half-dozen fake online personas. Just because it seems like a good thing to do, he will track my books' appearances on bestseller lists, big and small, occasionally presenting me with the information displayed on meaningful graphs and charts.

My intern is happy to deal with the PR firm that asks me to take "just a few minutes" to brainstorm a PR campaign for my next book, including a search for the perfect lakeside resort with easy airport access. (My intern knows I would happily spend days in this pursuit, so he doesn't even tell me about it.)

With unruffled efficiency, he will write that blurb a book club requested, along with reading-group questions. He'll make sure I'm prepared to do the Amazon podcast, and a mini-interview for a book chain's newsletter. He'll create flashcards with "glaikit" and "blimbing" so I'll dominate at the next charity spelling bee. He's always on hand to brainstorm cover art, flap copy, or ways to intensify the conflict in my novel. He'll renew my subscriptions at the proper time, at the discounted group rate. He'll take care of expense reports, contest entries, and membership dues. He'll find my late mother-in-law's recipe for tamale pie.

My intern will crunch my numbers, reconcile my modifiers, stroke my ego, and rub my neck. He'll make sure all my pronouns agree with their antecedents. He will boost my creativity, flatter my vanity, and pick up my drycleaning.

Wait. If the intern's doing all that, then I'm stuck writing my novel. What a concept.

*Although she has a lovely, amazing assistant hidden in a remote location in the Pacific Northwest wilderness, Susan Wiggs still does most of the heavy lifting herself. Via some mysterious process, she actually has a new book on the shelves this month. Contact Susan at [susan-wiggs@pobox.com](mailto:susan-wiggs@pobox.com).*



# Ninc Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY NANCY J. PARRA

**Does your committee need volunteers?**

**Do you have an announcement?**

**Are you swamped and looking for help?**

**Do you just want everyone to know what's available to them?**

**Please post your information here!**

**Contact: Nancy at**

**nancyjparra@yahoo.com**

**Let this bulletin board work for you.**

**Have you joined NINCLINK?**

**NINCLINK** is the email list-serve for **Novelists, Inc.**, a place of lively discussion and a great way to get to know your fellow **Nincers**. For instance, recent threads have looked at **Google Books** and **Bookcrossing**, the merits of website contests, and what spouses can do to occupy themselves while the rest of us are enjoying the **Ninc** conference in **New York**. To sign up and join in the discussion, send a blank email to:

**NINCLINK-subscribe@yahoogroups.com**

Want to get more involved in **Ninc**? Then volunteer for a committee or special project! Keep an eye on this bulletin board for opportunities. Or just go ahead and contact a committee chair or Board Member today! (See the listings, page 2)

**IMPORTANT: Please fill out and mail your proxy form (in this issue, page 11-12), so that Ninc will have a quorum at the Annual General Meeting in NYC!**

**FEB 20 IS THE ABSOLUTE FINAL DATE TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO Ninc. ANYONE WHO DOESN'T RENEW BY THEN WILL BE PURGED AUTOMATICALLY FROM THE DATABASE, AND WILL NO LONGER RECEIVE NINK OR HAVE ACCESS TO Ninclink.**

We're being preserved for posterity! The official **Novelists, Inc.** Archive can be found in the Department of Special Collections at Hale Library, Kansas State University.

Have you recently changed your email address, literary agency, mailing address, phone number, or pen name? Don't forget to update your **Member Profile** at **Ninc.com**

Did you know **Ninc** offers a critique group? <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NINKcritique>  
For writers willing to critique and discuss the critiquing process, contact [price100@aol.com](mailto:price100@aol.com)

## Committee

**Thanks to Victoria Thompson and the Conference Handbook Committee.** This **Ninc** committee is comprised of four former conference coordinators, who revised and updated an earlier version of the **Conference Handbook** so that future conference chairs will have an easier time planning future conferences.

## Information

**Debbie Gordon** volunteers as a **Ninc** Representative to the **Authors Coalition** (the group that receives and distributes money from European copywriting fees on behalf of US writer groups.) Thanks, Deb, for helping **Ninc** get the money we deserve.

## Business Briefs

**People on the Move:** Pocket's Maggie Crawford moves from Vice President, editorial director to acquiring and editing for Pocket, Threshold Editions, and Downtown Press. New editor positions — Christina Duffy at Ballantine; Jane Fleming at Penguin Press; Benjamin Dreyer (senior managing editor and copy chief) at Random House.

Ira Silverberg has moved to Sterling Lord Literistic from Donadio & Olsen. Dawn Michelle Frederick is opening Red Sofa Literary Agency after leaving Sebastian Literary Agency.

**Tor & Seven Seas Join for New Manga Imprint:** The new imprint will bring together the assets of Tor and Seven Seas to launch manga series & light novels in mid-2008. Seven Seas' mix of science fiction, fantasy, humor, and romance is expected to complement Tor's genre fiction selections. Tor/Seven Seas's first offering will be the manga *Afro Samurai*, written and illustrated by Takashi Okazaki (familiar to the US from Spike TV's anime series).

**New Children's Imprint at Henry Holt:** Henry Holt Books for Young Readers executive editor Christy Ottaviano will launch Christy Ottaviano Books in late 2008. Titles will be from teen down to preschool ages with 20 titles annually. Lead titles will include *The Scrambled States of America Talent Show* by Laurie Keller; *Masterpiece* by Elise Broach; *Larry and the Meaning of Life* by Janet Tashjian; *Piper Reed*, *The Great Gypsy* by Kimberly Willis Holt.

### Novelists, Inc. 2008 Conference at a Glance:

- March 27-30, 2008
- Affinia Manhattan, New York City
- Hotel room: \$219/night
- Registration Fee: \$360
- Registration closes March 21, 2008
- Register online at [ninc.com](http://ninc.com) or use the form in the September 2007 *NINK*.

See conference column on page 9.

### Before You Set This Issue of *NINK* aside...

Did you take a moment to read the latest information on the upcoming conference—page 9?

Did you send in the Proxy Form if you're unable to attend—page 11-12?

Did you send in your renewal for 2008...and update your member information at the website so you won't miss any future issues of *Ninc* and *NINK*?

**Then we thank you!**

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