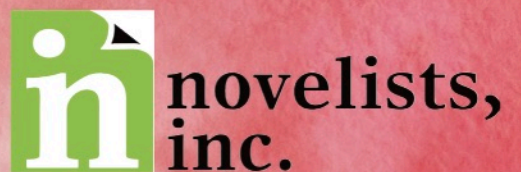




The official newsletter  
of Novelists, Inc.,  
a professional organization  
of writers of popular fiction



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# *Nink* August 2018

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## President's Voice

*By Julie Ortolon*



Finding balance can be a challenge for a working novelist. Just juggling writing with the business side of our careers can be tough. Add in two or three balls of real life, and the juggling act can get stressful. That's why I value the friendships I've made through NINC. I need my fellow author friends to remind me that it's okay to set some balls down every now and then and take a breath.

Which is why I'm writing this column early. Barely mid July, I sit in my casita in Santa Fe sipping my morning tea and listening to the birds awaken and the water fountain bubble. I have a full list of things to do for NINC that all have to get done this week because I have family arriving Friday evening. Starting Saturday, I'm on vacation. Yep. That's right. In the last few years, I've learned how to take vacations. Real vacations. No computer. No getting up before dawn to squeak in work and produce daily pages. A true step back from work so I can focus on life.

By the time you read this, I will be toward the end of a three-week road trip to Banff, Canada, that I'm taking with my big, fun family. We plan to spend three weeks of hiking and driving through the beautiful Canadian Rockies.

Then it will be back to reality and focusing on the awesome NINC Conference coming up in September. We have an amazing line-up of speakers to cover all those balls we juggle. You can check out some of the speakers by visiting the [Program Schedule](#) page at [Ninc.com](#). If you haven't registered yet, I hope you do. We know there have been some website glitches with registration, but those are all fixed. If you have questions, reach out. A trip to the beach to spend time with fellow NINCers might be just what you need to find a little more balance in your life.

*Julie*

## NINC Member Benefits

### New Discount for Members

*"If it only takes one click to illegally copy a creator's content, it should also take one click to remove that illegal copy."*

**Blasty**, which monitors books online and removes illegal copies, is offering our members a **25% discount** on the plan of their choice. To sign up use the address and code found under [Member Freebies and Discounts](#) on our website. (You must be logged in as a member to view that page.)

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), and the members-only [Facebook group](#) if you haven't already. The Pro Services Directory, member [discount page](#), and [sample letters](#) are also great resources.

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#). You can also [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#). And you can [buy a paperback copy](#) of the 2016 *Best of Nink!*

### Accessing the NINC Website

Not sure how to log in to the NINC website? Visit the login page here: <https://ninc.com/membership-overview/login-to-ninc/>

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*Julie Ortolon is a USA Today bestselling author of contemporary romance. First published by Dell Publishing in 2000, she has also written for St. Martin's Press, and Signet Eclipse. Since going indie in 2009, she has hit the Amazon Top 100 several times. One of her greatest joys is helping other authors find success. When not writing, she enjoys traveling the world with family and friends.*

# Side Hustles To Keep You Financially Afloat

Or: How many dogs do I have to walk to pay the water bill?

*By Patricia Burroughs*



After selling her first novel, a writer grabs a job checking groceries to finance the big bang publicity push she wants to launch her career.

A screenwriter works as the only night watchman in a small building so he can write all night in the security office with hourly breaks to clear his head, stretch his legs—oh, and patrol the building.

An attorney works for a bank at an hourly wage far below her potential earnings and writes in her seasonal downtime while getting benefits and far less pressure than when she was part of a firm.

Whether you need money for a special purpose, as enough steady income to help you pay bills and keep writing, or for an urgent need that overrides all other current concerns, including writing, there are opportunities available and you may be more qualified than you think.

First and foremost—answer this question:

Do you need work that will leave you time and the creative energy to keep writing, or does your financial need take priority over your writing?

While there are no wrong answers, not understanding the difference can leave you with a commitment that isn't working and may be making you miserable.

This article will look at options that are part-time, short-term, or in some other way adaptable to a writer's needs. But many of these options work for those needing full-time income, as well. Clearly, all of this is dependent on your particular skills.

## **Starting with the obvious**

Writers often turn to obvious writing-related jobs: editing, proofreading, manuscript evaluation. Less obvious, however, are things like indexing, fact checking, and writing newsletters for groups or businesses. You could also format books for digital and print with the Vellum app you already use. If you have the skills and/or programs, you can do the more detailed and customized formatting that can't be handled by software.

Have your cover design skills developed to the point where you can do them for others? If

so, some of these may be things your own friends are hiring out—or would like to. Or you may decide to hang out a shingle, set up a webpage, and advertise broadly for the work you want to do. This chart on the [Editorial Freelancers Association](#) webpage may give you ideas you hadn't considered, as well as some general ideas of what people charge.

Many authors also supplement their earnings by teaching online writing classes, teaching writing craft or special knowledge writers need, whether it be medical treatments through history or what happens to a body in the coroner's office.

Are you a comfortable public speaker? Schools often bring in authors of children's or middle-grade books to speak and answer questions, and even have books available for sale. Turn the research you did on your historical novel into a talk for local libraries where people can come to learn about the subject—but of course your books will be available to buy, as well.

Do you have niche knowledge? Consider writing a how-to that you can sell at speaking engagements, conventions, and craft fairs. Or consider an outside-the-box topic for those who are also aficionados. Some writers do quite well writing for others who share their interests, and sell books at conventions and other gatherings along with the usual online venues.

Speaking of craft fairs, one writer joins up with one or two more and buys a table to sell books at local fairs. Attendees are generally women over forty, so her cozy mysteries find many readers who also pick up her middle-grade books for their kids and grandkids.

## **The corporate approach**

Paychecks can be nice whether sporadic, only when you need them, or ongoing. Somebody else handles the bookkeeping, billing, and details.

[Starbucks](#) seems to appeal to creatives and there's a reason why. They offer benefits for part-time employees. As one writer explained, she can work part-time four mornings a week, secure health insurance for her and her husband, and have enough time to write, do volunteer work, and enjoy life. "Barista by Day, Novelist by Night" even got her a spread in the local Sunday newspaper.

Don't overlook temp agencies. They provide all sorts of workers doing all sorts of jobs. [Kelly Services](#) is another place where you can obtain health insurance if you work enough hours. Check for entry-level jobs that leave your brain free while you do a seminar assignment (handing out brochures, for example), do inventory, or fill in for a receptionist.

On the skilled side of the market, despite the trend for businesses to use agencies to find new employees by employing people temp-to-perm, there are still opportunities for true short-term work. You may be brought in to help out on a short-term project or fill in to cover someone's vacation, sick leave, or maternity leave. If you fit in well and can do the job, you may end up being one of the go-to people they request whenever they need a temp. Temp work is another area where, if you check out what's available, you may find jobs you never considered on your own.

Also, working from home is no longer the pipe dream it once was. Through websites like [Upwork](#), you can apply for assignments doing anything that can be done on a computer. Competition is high, but once an employer finds you, they'll often ask for you again.

One person's nightmare might be another person's best situation ever. Yes, I am talking

about substitute teaching! Check the school districts in your area and see what the educational requirements are. Many times its 60 hours of college and a background check. You often won't get the call until around five a.m. in the morning, but this is another of those situations where you can be hired for a day or extended periods of time, and you can always say no. If you find a school you like, let them know you think they're great and they may put you on their short list to request.

## Odd jobs

Some are obvious, like driving for Uber or Lyft, babysitting, housesitting, petsitting (there are even apps that keep everything simple). Others jobs could be making it known that you are willing to assemble all those IKEA shelves, do small paint jobs, and keep gardens watered for a reasonable price. You may become the neighborhood VIP.

One writer, who lives in a resort area where even PhDs work as bartenders, created a network of small jobs to help maintain her writing career. She gets paid monthly for her regular work and the total is well worth her time.

What does she do? She works for friends and yes, they pay her. She "house-watches" vacation homes when the owners aren't there, which generally means just checking in once a week to make sure all is well for months at a time. A quick walk-through is one price. Keeping plants watered costs more. She does bookkeeping for three small businesses in town, none of it demanding or time consuming. She is executive assistant for a local homeowner's association. And then there are the jobs that crop up sporadically—she elder-sits for one friend and has pitched in as paid caregiver for a child with special needs. For her, multiple small streams of income give her all the freedom and income she needs to supplement her writing. Finally, one writer works as a maid two days a week, leaving all the rest of her week free. Light housekeeping only and she doesn't take on dirty houses, so she ends up cleaning bathrooms, dusting, running a vacuum, and loading the dishwasher. Yes, there are people who don't need or want much more than that and will gladly pay to have it done.

Whether you want the ability to pull together enough funds to go to this year's [Nink Conference](#), work steadily part-time, work from home or have a reason to wear something other than T-shirts and jeans, your chances of finding what you need are better than you think.

Creative people often find creative ways to bring in more income, and hopefully these suggestions will trigger even more ideas for your own specific skills, location, and needs.

Finally a reminder, keep your most important need uppermost in your mind when considering new work: Which takes priority in your life right now—being able to write or bringing in income? It's a simple but vital way to narrow your search and improve your chances of success. Write on!

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*Pooks (a.k.a. [Patricia Burroughs](#)) is a novelist, screenwriter, short story writer, and short story anthology editor. She is also an Academy Fellow, having received the Academy Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting (awarded by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences). She loves Pratchett, Aaronovitch, Dunnett, and Heyer. She desperately needs a maid.*

# Patreon

The modern tradition of patronage has arrived

*By M.C.A. Hogarth*



## What is it?

The internet has brought many curses, like trolls and review piling, and many blessings, like next-day artisanal chocolate and crowdfunding. Many of you have heard of Kickstarter, the platform for funding specific projects, or GoFundMe, which people turn to when they need help from strangers. But Patreon has carved out a new crowdfunding niche, one dedicated not to one-time projects, but to artists. It allows creators of every stripe to say, “Here’s what I do. Why don’t you send me money every month to do it?”

And amazingly, people do. Because people are awesome. So let’s talk about why you, as a career writer, might want to add Patreon to your income streams.

## Why should I use it?

Setting up and maintaining a Patreon takes time (yours or an assistant’s). Before we talk about the how’s, let’s talk about why you might bother.

1. **You can pad your royalties.** Ours is a volatile business. Having extra income streams that aren’t coming from the same bucket is handy. Patreons tend to attract your superfans, so they’ve already read your books. Why not give them a way to buy you a cup of coffee every month?

2. **You can experiment.** That novel in another genre you wanted to try writing. The series you didn’t finish because the first two didn’t sell well. Your Patreon can justify the time spent on exploring those ideas, particularly if you pitch them to your Patrons and give them a chance to participate or read in advance.

3. **You can monetize your newsletter.** Most of us have newsletters. The same types of content can be used for your Patreon, which lets you earn money on the time you spend putting it together.

4. **You can energize your superfans.** The people most likely to fund your Patreon are also your biggest fans. Patreon lets you speak to them as a group. Sharing sneak previews, calls



to action, and bonus content will help bond them as a community and give them the tools to carry their love for your work to new fans.

Are there reasons *not* to have a Patreon? Absolutely. I'll mention those shortly. Let's move on to the nuts and bolts first.

### **How does it work?**

Your Patreon has two major components, along with some marketing fluff involving introductory texts explaining who you are and what you do. Under the fluff, the important moving parts are your goals and your rewards.

**Your goals** are milestones, primarily used for exciting and motivating your fan base. Like a Kickstarter's goals, they give you and your Patrons something to shoot for. Common goals might be, "At \$100 I can pay my telephone bill," or "At \$1,000 I can produce an extra short story every year," or "At \$3,000 a month I can quit my day job." You can change these at any time, which is great if you have a short-term goal ("At \$400, I can buy a new printer.") or your circumstances change ("At \$6,000 a month, I can quit my day job, because now my partner's out of work too and I need to pay all our bills.").

It's a good idea to have a few easily hit goals on the way to whatever high-priced goal you hope to meet, so you and your Patrons can celebrate several times on the way up.

**Your rewards**, on the other hand, are promises you make to your Patrons, and should be considered carefully. Patreon allows you to set two kinds of reward, one based on monthly payments ("At \$1 a month, you get access to my exclusive Patreon feed!"), or one based on per-creation payments ("Each of the short stories I write for my Patreon costs \$5, and you can choose to pledge for one of those a month, or six, however many I end up writing.") Most authors tend toward the former set-up, but you might decide the latter works better for you, depending on your use case.

Whichever you choose, you are on the hook for delivery, so be reasonable about what you want to give people, and what it'll cost. Some authors go light on the rewards and ask for little money in return; others want to go full-bore and send printed chapbooks to people paying them \$100 a month, month after month. The writer who uses Patreon as a way to keep her superfans updated on news, and to give out sneak peeks of chapters as she writes them, might only have a couple of tiers ("\$1 a month for access, \$5 a month for deleted scenes."), while the writer who's using Patreon with the intent of maximizing revenue might be offering everything from autographed books to monthly phone calls.

Always have a plan for what you're going to share and when, and communicate that, whether it's "I'm only going to post once a month," or "You can expect these things on this day every week." Clear expectations are important to your potential patrons.

Remember your time is valuable, and like anything else involving career creativity, Patreon is work. Decide how much money you'd like to get out of Patreon, and how much time you can devote to it, and plan accordingly.

## **Am I a good fit for Patreon?**

At this point, you're either thinking, "This sounds like a great opportunity," or "This sounds like an enormous timesink," and either way you're not wrong. Here are some things to keep in mind when deciding whether you're a good fit for Patreon:

1. **If you have a small fanbase**, you aren't going to magically acquire a larger one via Patreon. Like every other crowdfunding effort, Patreon will attract the top .01% of your fans: not just superfans who want to seek you out, but those who are conversant with the internet and comfortable with new and bizarre payment models. Writers with few fans might spend more time putting content on Patreon than they get back in money from those fans.

2. **If your schedule is full up on writing novels**, and you don't have a ton of spare time or interest to generate extra material (or don't have an assistant to assemble it for you), Patreon is probably a waste of time.

3. **If you get anxious when you're on the hook for things**, then absolutely you must avoid Patreon like the plague. Even writers who use Patreon as a glorified tip jar sometimes report feeling like they're not "doing anything" for the money and start feeling stirrings of obligation.

4. **If you hate uncertainty**, Patreon generates a lot of it. Patrons come and go as their financial status changes, which means you might reach your goals one month and then fall back off them the next; even the most phlegmatic of people might find that irritating. And Patreon itself, as a platform, has no significant competition (though Kickstarter might be gearing up to try for it), so it has all the growing pains and stutters of a company new to its role and not worried about its mistakes. I encourage people to think of Patreon as an opportunity—something you take advantage of while you have it, but don't rely on solely.

On the other hand, Patreon's fantastic for you if:

1. Your work already generates a lot of extra content. Historical fiction authors who do a lot of research. Science fiction/fantasy authors who worldbuild and have no way to share all those extensive notes. Nonfiction authors who want to develop seminars, worksheets, or download packets. Authors who delete a lot of scenes, or excise steamy scenes that they have lying around on their hard drive. Why not put those things to use?

2. **You give away stuff for free anyway**. If you love blogging and would do it anyway, are always updating your website or sharing adorable pet photos, or love communicating with your fans and are eager to find new ways to do it, then Patreon will delight you. And your fans!

3. **You are actively seeking ways to supplement your income**. Maybe your novels are niche and don't earn a great deal, or you don't write them quickly. Or maybe your first love is short fiction, but it doesn't generate enough money to pay your bills. You can use Patreon to "sell" exclusive content for extra cash.

## **Final thoughts**

There are all sorts of articles about the "best way" to set up your Patreon, and what kinds of rewards you should offer, and what price points you should set them at. There are so many of those articles, it's clear there are no best practices yet. Experimentation is key if you want to find

the balance between what you're able and willing to do and what you want to make.

As always, the best way to figure these things out is to study people already doing it. Here are some author Patreons for perusal:

Wait But Why (blog post authors): <https://www.patreon.com/waitbutwhy>

Seanan McGuire (fantasy author): <https://www.patreon.com/seananmcguire>

Wildbow (web serial author): <https://www.patreon.com/Wildbow>

Krista and Becca Ritchie (romance authors): <https://www.patreon.com/kbritchie>

Tefler (science fiction author): <https://www.patreon.com/user?u=3814558>

Ursula Vernon (fantasy/horror author): <https://www.patreon.com/ursulav>

And of course, mine: <https://www.patreon.com/mcahogarth>

Go have a look and see if Patreon's right for you! Just remember that "No" is a valid answer. We've all got to manage our time, and for some of you, this might not be the right investment. For those of you who are good fits, though... it's worth checking out.

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*M.C.A. Hogarth is a former vice president of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, and the author of over 40 novels in the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and romance.*

# Jumpstart Your Creativity

## Journaling

*By Denise A. Agnew*



How can journaling help you boost your creativity? Maybe in more ways than you might imagine. The inner critic that stifles so many writers absolutely hates it when you write in a journal. Why? Because a journal is somewhere you can write freely about dreams, life events, deep thoughts, and/or frivolous ideas. It's a place you can safely express something and never have to share what you've written with another soul.

If you have writer's block, it can seem like an uphill battle to form a single creative thought. Journaling excavates your hidden creativity. Many writers don't know what they want to say until they start to write. Once you write, the ideas may just start to arrive. By journaling, you can trick your mind into creating because it isn't stuck on the idea of "this is my book and it must say this."

I know this from experience.

I've written in a journal off and on since I was 15. Looking back, the teenage-riddled angst filling those journals seems a little silly in some cases. At the time, journaling was probably one of the best things I could have done to offload my angst. Writing gave me an outlet for ideas and feelings I believed I had no other way to express. My journals, which I wrote in until I was in my late twenties, held reams of details on my life, including things I wouldn't have wanted anyone to know. Those same journals held tons of poetry and some short stories. When I started writing novel-length fiction in the '90s, journal writing took a back seat. When I reached my forties, I started journaling again. These days, two journals help me with creativity. Why two? One is an intuition journal where I write down my impressions and intuitions about a situation or situations, and the other is a journal where a given daily prompt starts me writing on a topic.

Many people make the mistake of believing only one correct way to journal exists. That's not true. What feels right and best for you, the one journaling, is always the correct answer. Here are a few ideas for you and some things to keep in mind.

## **What kind of journal?**

When choosing the type and kind of journal, ask yourself the following questions. Be honest with yourself so you don't set yourself up for failure before you even begin.

**How much can you spend/want to spend on a journal?** Some people find creating in a leather journal enough of an encouragement that they want to write and fill up the pages. Other people prefer a college composition book or a beautifully designed, but not particularly expensive, hardback book. What appeals to you visually and expresses your personality? You're more likely to use the journal if you like the way it looks and feels in your hands.

**How large?** Letter size or pocket/handbag size? Do you plan on carrying it with you wherever you go?

**What type of format?** I like the idea of a refillable journal with lined paper. Some people may want unlined pages. As a kid, I used regular school spiral bound notebooks. I preferred college ruled lines, but if I couldn't get that, wide ruled paper wouldn't put me off. Other people may want to use planners that have room to journal under the specific day's date. Going through any bookstore also shows that there are journals with daily questions to prompt a writer's creativity.

## **Purpose & Techniques of Journaling**

**Thoughts/therapy** – Many therapists recommend journal writing as an excellent way to express thoughts and feelings and get them out of your mind. Along the way, this personal outlet may allow you to free the mind of worries and therefore break through writer's block. Journaling allows an opportunity to connect with parts of yourself you may not be able to access otherwise. If you start the day off by journaling, even if it is only one page, you've already traveled down the road of creating. If you journal in the evening, you might find you sleep better at night. If you're obtaining a good night's sleep, there's an excellent possibility your creativity will be healthy the next day. Also, by picking a prompt from a "prompt book" you can learn new things about yourself. Using a prompt can assist you with digging deeper into some things you may not have thought about and need to express, even if it is only in a journal.

**Dream journaling** – Some writers keep dream journals. On a personal note, I had a dream many years ago as a teenager that is now an idea for a screenplay I plan to write in 2019. I wrote this dream down in a journal when I was a teen. Not every dream works for a screenplay, short story or novel, but you never know when the gem of a creative idea will be found in that crazy dream you had last night.

**Story idea journaling** – Why not keep a journal filled entirely with story ideas? I recommend one small enough to carry in a handbag. When an idea hits you, open that journal and write down the idea. No idea is too weird. Write them all down, even something that sounds completely off the cuff. If the idea is somewhat fully formed, you can write it as a log line.

**Free writing journal** – Maybe you're the type of person who would thrive creatively if you free write in a journal for 10 minutes. This type of journaling can be excellent for perfectionists who can't seem to start on anything or want to nitpick their writing to death.

**Doodle journal/coloring journal** – Even if you don't paint or have drawing skills, using an art journal to scribble, draw or color in can be an excellent way to give your mind free reign. Coloring books and journals can be a fun way to let your creative and childlike side emerge.

**Mash-up journal** – Who says you have to conform to any of the ideas above? You don't. Maybe one day you want to start your journal with a prompt and end the entry with a dream you had last night. There are no rules when you journal. Always give in to what you want to do with your journal.

## Writing instruments

What you use to journal with should reflect what you like best. I've discovered that I like a pen that feels good in my hand and helps me write gracefully, which is why I like ballpoints with a slightly larger barrel than normal and with a medium point. I'm not sure why, but my penmanship goes downhill when I use a pen with a small barrel and/or fine point. If you can also find a pen that appeals to you visually, that's a plus. If your pen appeals to you as much as your journal does, it reinforces in your mind the idea that this journaling adventure is important, but fun. But don't limit yourself to ballpoint pens if that's not for you. For instance, if you like Paper Mate® Flair® Felt Tip pens because of their multitude of colors, use those. You might prefer mechanical or even regular pencils. Find what works best for you.

Journaling should be freeing and fun. Have an excellent time with your journaling and discovering new avenues to creating for life.

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*Denise A. Agnew is the award-winning author of over 67 novels. Denise's novels Love From the Ashes and Blackout were optioned for film/TV by Where's Lucy? Productions. Denise is a writer/producer (Happy Catastrophe Productions/Bright Frontier Films/Where's Lucy? Productions), a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, Certified Creativity Coach, and RT Academy Mentor. As a creativity coach, Denise assists anyone in the arts to maintain lifelong creativity. You can find her at [www.deniseagnew.com](http://www.deniseagnew.com) and [www.creativepencoaching.com](http://www.creativepencoaching.com).*

# Working with Librarians

## Part One: Do libraries want your indie published books?

By Barbara Meyers



Readers love books, and while libraries have evolved into places where patrons can check out all sorts of media and use computers, books still matter. Librarians are great resources, and you want them to recommend your book and help you find new readers.

The best place to start with finding out if a local library wants to add your indie published book to its collection is by talking with your local librarian. Large public library systems may want multiple copies for the shelves in each branch. They might also be required to purchase books instead of accepting donated copies. Ask if your library has a written policy available.

If you approach a librarian with questions, if they can, they will open the door to the kingdom. Answering questions is in their job description. Below is what my local librarian said she looks for when accepting independent books.

### Libraries want:

- **Professional cover art.**
- **Professionally edited content.** Don't be surprised if an arrogant self-published author previously took offense when a librarian kindly suggested a more professional approach to the work might increase the chances of placing a book in the library's collection.
- **An ISBN or ISSN.** To order your book, this is a must for libraries. There is no discrimination against POD versions, such as those created through CreateSpace.
- **Professional reviews.** A *Library Journal* review is great, but if you don't have one, reviews from those who know the subject are acceptable. The reviewer must have credentials. Librarians don't have time to read all the books they select, which is why they rely on reputable reviewers.
- **Metadata.** Libraries need to know how to categorize your book. That info on your copyright page that lists the genre and keywords? Super important. Remember the old card catalogues? Author. Title. Subject(s). If you're unsure what this is, look at the copyright pages of books published by traditional publishers. Your book's metadata should be laid out in a similar manner.

- **Awards.** Known awards serve much the same function as reviews. Books chosen or nominated for awards have usually been considered by industry professionals and vetted for quality production and content.

- **Participation.** Are you willing to do a workshop or be part of a panel discussion? Talk to a writers group? Can you draw an audience made up of more than your mother and your best friend? If so, a signing afterward can give you a chance to connect with readers and build your following.

### **Some things that may not help your chances:**

- **Donating a book.** My librarian had 25 donated books stored in a cabinet. The names of the authors might have gone into her database for future contact, but the books, for one reason or another, are not on the shelves. Be sure if your library accepts donated copies that they will actually shelve them.

- **Bookmarks.** Unless your books are on the library's shelves, leaving bookmarks at the checkout desk probably won't help you.

- **Suggesting requests.** Patron requests, number of requests, popularity of title are considered. However, not every book requested is purchased. Requested books go through the same vetting/selection process as any other book.

- **Local author status.** Unless your book covers local art or history and you are an expert in the subject, you may not warrant special treatment.

### **What about ebooks?**

- If an author's work is only available in ebook format, it can be difficult or impossible to add it to a library's digital collection. It depends on which distributor handles the author's ebook and to what tier/level/package the distributor assigns the work. Libraries generally purchase specific packages or tiers of ebooks from distributors, which means the titles included are predetermined by the distributor for specific price points. Libraries generally choose packages that include popular titles or well-known authors because it's primarily what patrons ask for.

### **More...**

1. Price is generally not a consideration.

2. What you may need to know is whether the library is part of a cooperative or county system. In a library cooperative, each individual library chooses its own collection and has its own budget. The libraries within the cooperative agree to share their collections. But in this system, an author will have to approach each individual library about placing books in their collections. In a county library system, the county owns the entire collection, makes all the rules, and controls the budget. The individual libraries (branches) have no say. Essentially, all the libraries will have access to the same collection.

3. Libraries determine which books stay on their shelves by analyzing circulation statistics. The number of times a book has been checked out is a consideration for future orders. For indies, a librarian might give some leniency, such as a checkout once a month (or maybe



slightly less) over a one-year period. The fewer titles in the collection an author has makes for statistically fewer checkouts. This is why the most popular books stay on the shelves longer. But if each book is looked at separately, indie authors might get more of a chance.

4. A library will be most interested in an author's most recent release and the one with the closest release date prior.

One thing my local librarian told me about librarians is, *"They want the little guy to win."* A public librarian will tell you how to get your books into the library and will be helpful with referrals or names of others who can assist you. Librarians talk to other librarians, locally, nationally, and globally. They are social media savvy and they *read* everything, from tweets, blogs, Facebook posts, and of course, books. Finding a librarian who loves your work may grow your presence and sales in ways you never imagined.

**For even more information, here are some helpful links about marketing to public libraries:**

- [Your Copyright Page: What All Indie Authors Need To Know](#) by Randy Stapilus [An explanation of copyright page.]
- [Getting Your Self-Published Book Into Libraries](#) by Erica Verrillo [Includes info about SELF-e.]
- [Publishing U: Getting Your Self-Published Book into Libraries](#) by Keir Graff [Pay attention to "Make it hard for them to say no." and "Remember, it's all about distribution, distribution, distribution."]
- [Getting Indie Authors Into Libraries: An Interview with Mitchell Davis of BiblioBoard](#)
- [Guest Post: Darcy Pattison—4 Tips For Self \(or Indie\) Publishing Children's Picture Books or Novels](#) [Pay attention to "Use CIP data."]
- [What New Authors Need to Know About Library Systems](#) by Karen McCoy [Good discussion about library book/material selection.]
- Jane Friedman's book [The Business of Being a Writer](#). Here's an article from her about the library market: [The Library Market: What Indie Authors Need to Know](#).
- <https://self-e.libraryjournal.com/> self-E runs a contest judged by librarians
- <https://biblioboard.com/>

Thanks to Brenda J. Patterson, Fine Arts/Adult Programming Librarian at the Lakeland Public Library, Lakeland, Florida, for her help and for answering all my library-related questions.

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When not writing, *Barbara Meyers* disguises herself behind a green apron and works part-time for a world-wide coffee company. Her novels mix comedy, suspense and spice, cross the line between contemporary romance and women's fiction, and often feature a displaced child. Her latest novel is *White Roses in Winter*.

# The Ins & Outs of Critique Groups

## Part One: Examining long-term group success

*By Michele Dunaway*



Over on the NINC Critique Group, we've been talking about critiquing and how to make the process more effective. Based on this, I put out a call to both the main and critique loop asking for feedback, and NINC members rose to the challenge of sharing what works for them. First, deciding to form a critique group or choosing to work with a critique partner or group is a personal decision. Being part of a critique group can be a great experience, but just about everyone has also heard the nightmare stories.

"I'm the odd woman out when it comes to critique groups," Janis Patterson (who writes as both Janis Patterson and Janis Susan May) said. "I hate them. To me they represent the worst possible form of writing by committee. To make it worse, so many of them seem to be toxic and cliquish. I know there are good ones out there, and I know there are writers who swear by them, but not me. I have had two good friends quit writing because of savage treatment they received in two different critique groups—and if I remember correctly in two different decades."

Critique groups can be minefields, and we're not even going to address beta readers in this article. So, for authors who come together, how do we make these groups work?

For authors Lisa Verge Higgins and Nancy Herkness, their critique group has been around for over 10 years, although it has changed composition a few times as writers have moved on and new ones are invited. "We keep it capped at four writers," Verge Higgins said, "intimate enough to get considerable work done but not so large that we're overwhelmed with material."

Author Marsha Nuccio (writing as Emelle Gamble) joined an existing group 25 years ago, called the Lifesavers Critique Group. Located in Maryland, two of the original members are still part of the group of five. The last member joined eight years ago. Members invited people to join. Member author Elaine Fox said, "We have been very choosy about who joins the group. Respectful, kind, smart writers who are really trying to improve and who enjoy reading others' work. Who are actively pursuing writing opportunities."

Both groups are local, meaning they meet in person, as does author Jacqueline Diamond's

group. She has been in the same critique group for 45 years. Her group actually has an application process, dues and regular meetings. Her group keeps the membership to under 25, with in-person attendance usually under 15. “We always advise that this is not a group for beginners and that many of the members are published and/or teach writing, although being published is not a requirement,” Diamond said.

### **How it all works**

For Diamond’s group, three readers sign up at the previous meeting, with one or two backups. “We read our work aloud,” Diamond said, “about 10 pages, and go around the group with each person commenting. We set a timer, usually about two minutes, shorter if attendance is large. Then the person reading has a few minutes to respond. No cross talk allowed except during break. The readers bring refreshments.”

Diamond admits her group is unusual, especially at a half-century-old and very lively. The group began when writers who had taken a class together formed it; Diamond joined at the group’s five-year mark. “It’s fun to participate,” she said. “Writing genres range from literary to thriller, romance to mystery, as well as fantasy and humor. We have a Facebook page: Orange County Fictionaires.”

For Verge Higgins and Herkness, their group’s furthest member lives 40 minutes away. “We meet at each other’s homes once a month, socialize at dinner, and then get down to work,” Verge Higgins said. “We send material at least a week ahead of time so everyone has a chance to look it over. The host gets to be in the hot seat first, and we go around, one by one, giving our overall impressions as well as page-by-page comments. In this way, we offer both developmental editorial guidance as well as copy editing.”

For authors in the Lifesavers Critique Group, which besides Nuccio and Fox includes author Mary Blayney, Lavinia Klein (writing as Lavinia Kent) and a fifth person who chose not to participate in answering these questions, the camaraderie of meeting face-to-face is important. The furthest distance between members is 75 miles.

“We like getting together every two weeks and are as close as sisters (Yes, we argue),” Blayney said.

“I don’t know if we got lucky or what,” Fox said. “We want the best for each other and do all we can to help. Writing is solitary, and that’s why getting together with people who understand that is such a huge help. We can talk about the ups and downs of trying to be productive, trying to fit work in around a full-time job, trying to overcome rejection, trying to find what we should be writing—all of it. Because we can relate even if we’re in different circumstances.”

“I think it is the close friendship that makes the writing part of the group successful. Good critiquing takes a lot of trust and understanding,” Klein said. “I often hear my partners’ voices in my head as I write. We understand each other’s points of view and know how to suggest changes—which doesn’t mean it’s always easy. Critiquing is hard, even among friends.”

## What to critique

Each group sets its own guidelines for what to critique. Verge Higgins and Herkness's group reads the entries multiple times before the meetings and prioritizes the critiques. "Fixing the big issues means the smaller ones usually take care of themselves," Verge Higgins said. "Every writer has unique strengths and weaknesses, so we approach each entry according to its needs. Sometimes the 20-odd pages need content editing because there are issues of character or plot development, point of view, motivation, goal, and conflict. Other times the issues concern scene or character arcs, or improvements on opening hooks, descriptions, and endings. Sometimes all that is needed are copy edits."

Herkness was quick to point out, though, that "We are not a plotting group, so you don't reveal to the group what happens next in the story before it happens, the story has to speak for itself. The point of our group is to come to the work with the eyes of the reader: fresh and with no extra knowledge of the plot. Otherwise the critique group is less effective at making sure all the information/foreshadowing is there in each scene/chapter."

For the Lifesavers, what is critiqued also varies.

"Oftentimes someone will send a few chapters and say something along the lines of, 'I just want your take on the plot, how it's progressing.' Or 'Is this scene in keeping with the characters?' So we can ask specifically for what we need and only get that. Or we can throw it out there and see what the group says in general," Fox said.

"It definitely varies, even for the same person. Sometimes I just want a quick 'does this work?' Other times, the more input the better," Klein said.

*Editor's Note: Part II will focus on how to maintain a critique group.*

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*Michele Dunaway* currently serves as Nink's editor and writes contemporary romance.

# The Mad Scribbler

## Writers behaving badly

By Laura Resnick



*“The problem is that you fundamentally cannot shame someone who is proud of what they are doing.”*

—Zoe Quinn, *Crash Override*

On July 24, author Faleena Hopkins released a [YouTube video](#) in which she announced, “I’m giving up my two ‘Cocky’ trademarks. This is my official statement.”

Within a few days, the Authors Guild, which has opposed Hopkins in the legal battle over this matter, announced, “The Cockygate case is close to resolution: the parties have entered into a settlement agreement and author Faleena Hopkins has filed a request with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) to withdraw her ‘cocky’ trademark.”

Unless you are just now waking up from a long and peaceful cryogenic slumber, you’re probably at least vaguely aware of the Cockygate controversy. (And high on the list of reasons I feel critical of Ms. Hopkins is that her antics have put me in the ignominious position of using a phrase like “Cockygate.” Some things can never be forgiven.)

Hopkins is an indie author whose works include a series titled “Cocker Brothers, The Cocky Series,” in which all the individual book titles use the word “cocky” (ex. *Cocky Cowboy*, *Cocky Heart Surgeon*, *Cocky Senator’s Daughter*, *Cocky Quarterback*, etc.). There appear to be roughly 20 books in the Cocky series so far, and based on the sales ranks and the number of reviews associated with these novels on Amazon, the author’s branding strategy seems to be working well for her.

And, oh, would that she had left it at that. But she did not.

According to Hopkins in her July 24 statement, “When I started writing the series, I wanted to protect it because it’s become like my family... And in my world, you protect family. That’s what you do.”

Of course, Hopkins is not at all unusual in her emotional attachment to her own stories, nor in wanting to protect her intellectual property. Indeed, the widespread belief that such protection is valid is why we have copyright law. Moreover, her concern that her work might need protection cannot be regarded as unrealistic.

After all, many of us (probably all of us) know someone whose copyright has been unscrupulously violated, from the high-profile copyright infringement lawsuit that Nora Roberts brought against Janet Dailey in the 1990s, to recent examples of plagiarists digitally copying whole novels and repackaging them with their own ebook covers and pen names.

The digital age also makes copycatting a common problem—though not a new one; publishers have a well-established habit of jumping on bandwagons, whether the latest trend is a particular type of novel or a popular cover “look.”

Moreover, there are copycat writers who produce bald-faced rip-offs. Last year, for example, when Tor Books released a science fiction novel called *The Collapsing Empire* by bestselling Hugo Award winner John Scalzi, a blogger who has long been obsessed with Scalzi (and not in a nice way) simultaneously released, through a small company he owns, an ebook called *The Corroding Empire* by Johan Kalsi, with a cover that was nearly identical to that of Scalzi’s novel. The online magazine *io9* wrote, in an article that [showed the covers side by side](#), “It doesn’t take a genius to figure out the covers are basically the same damn thing... The title, the artwork, even the author’s name.”

So, yeah, crap like this goes on all the time, sad to say.

Well, Hopkins’s notion of protecting her work was to register a trademark for the word “cocky.” Now, trademarking is certainly not unknown in publishing. In fact, having been raised by an Edgar Rice Burroughs fan, I have known for many years that the ERB estate trademarked Tarzan. However, Hopkins trademarked a general vocabulary word that has long been in common usage. Moreover, she didn’t just try to trademark it for her own exclusive use in the title of a romance *series*; she also tried to block other romance writers from using the word in their *individual book titles*.

Describing subsequent events with a single sentence in her YouTube statement, Hopkins says, “But unfortunately, when I got the trademarks, I came under attack.”

Frankly, to call this statement “cherry picking” would be an insult to cherry pickers everywhere.

After Hopkins registered her trademark, the co-authors of a novel called *Cocky Fiancé* received notices from Audible and Amazon that there was a claim of trademark infringement against their book. Authors Tara Crescent (*Her Cocky Doctors* and *Her Cocky Firefighters*) and Jamila Jasper (*The Cocky Cowboy*) both received notices from Amazon that sales of their books were suspended due to trademark infringement.

Actions like these are why Hopkins was attacked. Go figure.

Her [explanation](#) on Twitter for her behavior was, “I receive letters from readers who lost money thinking they bought my series. I’m protecting them and that’s what trademarks are meant for.”

Okay, look, I once lost \$10 by purchasing the wrong travel guide to Arizona (I actually wanted the other one), and BN.com refused me when I requested a refund or exchange *within*

*minutes* of making my purchase, the bastards. But personally experiencing such a loss still doesn't mean I would go along with a travel writer trademarking the words "Arizona," "travel," or "guide."

Besides, in the example I cited earlier of an obsessed blogger copycatting *The Collapsing Empire*, a trademark would not protect John Scalzi's work. (Oh, excuse me, I mean to say it would not protect his *readers*.) Although Amazon advised the obsessed blogger that his book seemed "misleading," it is nonetheless available on Amazon. So it's easy to imagine ways a writer behaving badly could copycat Hopkins—ways left completely unprotected by her trademark (or by copyright law).

Anyhow, Kevin Kneupper, the author and attorney who wrote "Trademark Trolls Come For Authors" in the July *Nink*, launched a petition to challenge the "cocky" trademark and get it invalidated.

Hopkins reacted by suing Kneupper. She also sued author Tara Crescent. And, for reasons which still elude me, she sued a publicist, too.

By doing so, Hopkins turned herself into a target of widespread anger among her peers, she became the subject of negative media coverage, and she got herself embroiled in expensive and time-consuming lawsuits wherein a district judge described her position as "[weak](#)."

With career strategy like that, who needs natural disasters?

Surely the self-evident lesson here is: Behaving badly is never the solution to a career problem, whether the problem is real, potential, imagined, or unconvincingly fabricated.

Happily for well-behaved writers everywhere, the Authors Guild and the Romance Writers of America got involved in the legal battle, and they prevailed.

Two articles by attorneys (one of them Kneupper) in last month's *Nink* explain the legal issues involved in trademarks, misuse of trademarks, and trademark trolls. So I will just sum up the legal end by quoting Mark McKenna, a law professor at Notre Dame who specializes in intellectual property law. He told [Vox](#), "It's quite clear that you can't enforce your trademark rights against somebody else who's using the term just in the title of the book or in the content of the book. It's a doctrine that exists to keep trademark law from treading on First Amendment territory. It's a pretty well-established doctrine with a whole bunch of cases."

The Authors Guild, when announcing resolution of Cockygate, also specified, "The Trademark Office clarified that the owner of a trademark in a book series title cannot use that trademark against single book titles. Since single titles cannot serve as trademarks, they also cannot infringe series title trademarks. So, if another author or a publisher ever tries to stop you from using a single book title because of their series trademark, you can tell them to take a hike. Only series titles can infringe another series title."

Hopkins wanly summed up her view of the resolution in her video statement: "So now everybody and anybody can write a Cocky book if they want to be found when people are searching for my love stories."

Yeah, right, whatever.

However, while Cockygate seems to be disappearing in the rearview mirror—to everyone's relief—the problem isn't going away. As of this writing, many *other* writers are now behaving badly.

An attorney retained by the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of American (SFWA) is filing opposition to a writer attempting to trademark the word “quantum” as a series title. Another writer has filed for a trademark for the phrase “Dragon Slayer.” That author also attempted to trademark (then abandoned the attempt) book covers depicting “one or more human or partially human figures underneath, at least one of the figures holding a weapon; and an author’s name underneath the figures; wherein the title/series and author’s name are depicted in the same or similar coloring.” Yet another writer attempted to register “Big” as a series trademark word. And so on.

Writing organizations are monitoring the situation, and the issue is also being discussed by the Authors Coalition of America (ACA), a group of 20+ organizations (including NINC) representing tens of thousands of creators. These attempts by a few people to set aside common words for their own exclusive use will continue to be opposed.

But wouldn’t it be much better if these writers would just stop behaving badly?

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*Laura Resnick, author of about 30 books and 70 short stories, much prefers writing angrily about publishers, big corporate book vendors, literary agents, and computers. But she writes angrily about writers, too, if need be.*



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Join us for *NINC 2018: Craft Your Perfect Career* to discover the latest strategies and insights, from marketing innovations to high-level craft to running your business as smoothly and effectively as possible.

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

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

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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.

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