

remembrance  
substantive  
would pursue  
on the way of  
the men  
said to  
new pr

and the  
so they  
there is  
to make  
points ende  
memories are u

app in  
good to  
ever be  
certain  
did they  
ing an  
are u

important  
and so on  
enjoyed in the  
part and the  
out included  
time so  
so the day

all  
So many of a  
ent and genera  
hope and dream of  
one with me  
ing. So  
enjoyed

that m  
ny of a  
l genera  
and dream of  
one with me  
ing. So  
enjoyed

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



VOLUME 31 : NUMBER 2  
FEBRUARY 2020

# *Nink* February 2020

## Contents

- ◆ President's Voice ~ Tawdra Kandle
- ◆ Dear Reader ~ Michele Dunaway
- ◆ Write for Nink (and Get Paid)!
- ◆ NINC 2020: The Future Is Now
- ◆ Featured Guest Speaker Announcement : The First Five
- ◆ Do I Stay or Do I Go? A Look at Day Jobs ~ Michele Dunaway
- ◆ Quitting Your Day Job ~ Dorothy McFalls
- ◆ Day Job Sidebar ~ Michele Dunaway
- ◆ Follow or Ignore? Weeding Through the Wealth of "Helpful" Advice for Writers, Part Two ~ Trish Milburn
- ◆ Creative Tools: Alternatives ~ Denise Agnew
- ◆ The Mad Scribbler: In Memoriam ~ Laura Resnick
- ◆ NINC Membership Benefits
- ◆ About NINC

# President's Voice

*By Tawdra Kandle*



It certainly wasn't in my plan to be the voice of the NINC president in 2020. I thought I had a year to watch someone else in that role before it was my turn to write this column. But life changes at lightning speed these days.

A few weeks ago, a member posted in the NINCLink asking why I was president now. The board didn't make a formal statement about how this happened at the time, mostly because we were more concerned with doing whatever was possible to assure everyone that NINC, as an organization, is both stable and invested in making sure that we create an environment where every qualified author is both welcomed and wanted. No one should ever look at NINC and worry that they might be unsafe or feel isolated.

But in the interest of transparency: on Wednesday, January 15, the NINC 2020 president resigned her post. She was not asked to do so; this was a decision she made. Under NINC's bylaws, upon her resignation, as president-elect, I stepped into the role of president.

All of us on the leadership team understand that the days leading to and following that change were distressing and upsetting for many of our members. While we cannot change that, we are all fully invested in moving forward as an organization, including all of our members, to be even better than we have been in the past.

One of the elements of NINC that attracted me personally was the welcoming nature of our organization. Like many authors, I tend to be a tiny bit introverted, and at my very first NINC conference, I was walking into a situation where I didn't know anyone personally. When I ventured into the UnCon that year, I was amazed by how easily I fit in and how open the other authors were to a newcomer like me.

That same sense of welcoming and acceptance flowed seamlessly into the conference itself. Whether we were in workshops, meetings with industry guests or hanging out at the Tiki Bar (if you haven't tried the Almond Joyous there, you must—it is life changing!), authors of every level of experience and history were sharing information, bouncing ideas off each other and asking for input. I learned so much.

I think that's why I'm so passionate about NINC, specifically about doing everything I can to make sure that we remain committed to be appealing to every single author who qualifies for membership. My hope would be that everyone who attends a conference leaves not only excited about the future but also with a renewed sense of place and belonging, with the knowledge that NINC is a home for all of our member novelists.

One of the topics that has been raised in recent months is membership qualification for NINC. While we recognize our members' concerns here, at this time leadership does not plan to make revisiting our criteria a priority. There are many valid reasons for this decision, but chief among them is that this standard is part of our bylaws, which means that any change would first require a petition signed by at least 25% of our membership and then a subsequent vote in which at least two-thirds of our membership would have to participate—and approve the changes—before it could be considered a valid vote. This would be a daunting task that would require many hours of work and attention, and at this point, the board feels that we can better serve our membership by focusing on other areas.

As we move through 2020, NINC is committed to two primary goals: we want to build on our foundation of diversity and be even better than we have been; and we want to design and present the best possible conference. To that end, we have established an Inclusion and Diversity Task Force, inviting members to volunteer to participate in this process. We've had a very promising response to this move, and we're excited about taking the next steps. Our goals are to be proactive and responsive, and we hope all of you will help us along the way.

And of course, the programming committee has already begun assembling a truly amazing slate of featured guest speakers. We're looking forward to announcing each one in the coming weeks. We have been intentional about inviting new-to-NINC speakers as well as looking outside our normal channels to find guests who will both inform and inspire all of our members to new professional heights. I'm very proud of the work already done and the enthusiasm for what lies ahead.

I ask that all of you be patient with me as I figure out this new position. I also hope that you will reach out to share what you'd like to see in the future of NINC to help all of us in leadership better visualize the future of our organization. (You can email me at [president@ninc.com](mailto:president@ninc.com).)

Thank you. I'm taking a deep breath and getting excited about 2020—I hope you all are too.

—Tawdra Kandle

## **NINC Member Benefits**

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

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#). You can also [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

## Accessing the NINC Website

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

---

*Tawdra Kandle is a USA Today best-selling romance author with over 80 books released. Her titles include new adult and adult contemporary romance; under the pen name Tamara Kendall, she writes paranormal romance, and under the pen name Tessa Kent, she writes erotic romance.*



**Dear Reader,**

Welcome to February. This issue marks saying goodbye to *Nink* Assistant Editor Susan Randall, who has been with me since the beginning, and hello to Nicole Evelina who steps into the role. I'd like to thank Susan for her wonderful service and friendship and welcome Nicole aboard.

And then, thank you members and readers for filling out the survey last November. We got some great feedback and solid ideas. The board will be reviewing this at its February meeting, but a few things struck me.

*Nink* is widely read, with 53% reading 6+ issues in the last year, at an average of 64% of the issue read. *Nink* was also the second most appreciated member benefit, coming behind the conference (Attend! It's awesome.) In fact, half of you read 75% of an issue.

More than half of you, when asked what could be done to improve *Nink*, said "Don't Know/Nothing." Others of you provided many topic suggestions, which will follow in our "You Can Write for *Nink*!" call for action in this newsletter, as we are always looking for experts to pen articles. If you don't see a topic there, please propose one, even if you do not want to write it.

As I wind down my tenure as your editor—this is it, my final year—my goal, when Erica Ridley, NINC president at the time, appointed me to the role, was to build the publication. At that time (for those of you not members then) the monthly newsletter had been AWOL for a few months and before that inconsistent in the number of articles and publication dates.

Since my tenure, we've had two columnists, at least three features, and a consistent publication date of the 5th of each month (minus one MailChimp hiccup when it arrived on the 6th). We've also gotten ourselves two months ahead in production, allowing for flexibility for moving articles around if life happens for an author or if some fast-breaking topic comes up, such as moving quickly to bring you articles from legal experts when "Cockygate" hit. So the goal of creating a consistent, content-driven, deadline-met, professional publication has occurred.

That doesn't mean improvements can't be made, and we thank all of you for the comments and suggestions made during the survey. (And for those with additional comments, you can always email me at [ninkeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ninkeditor@gmail.com)) We're going to work on meeting your needs, because if we aren't improving our craft and our work, we're settling.



But, as mentioned before, this is my final year. By the end of September, Tawdra will be searching for the next newsletter editor, who will enter the role with an experienced team in place (assistant, copy-editor, and production manager) to help them. It's a board position. If this is something that interests you, please reach out.

These next eight months will go by in the blink of an eye. Until then, thank you so much for the support you've shown me. For me, 2020 is the "do or die" year for my writing. I either take this career to the next level (whatever that looks like), or I let it die and move on with my world. As I'm much more of a doer than a die-r, I'm so grateful to NINC and the friends I've made here who continue to push me, offer solid feedback and even gentle chiding and strong rebuke, when necessary. I've learned so much from all of you, and your feedback sent to me in emails and in person has truly warmed my soul.

Happy writing!

—Michele

---

*Michele Dunaway is your Nink editor, 2017-2020.*

## Write for *Nink* (and Get Paid)!



Did you know that any NINC member can propose a story and write for our newsletter? *Nink's* goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them.

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

*Nink* readers suggested more than 50 possible article topics via the 2019 *Nink* Survey, including:

- Human psychology, sociology and emotions – both for character development and in understanding what readers of different genres want to get out of a book.
- Body language that is deeper than the basic scowl, grin, shrug.
- How to come up with standout concepts.
- How to stay motivated and fresh after years in the business.
- Why you need to do your own marketing no matter if you are indie or trad.
- Frank talk about income, especially by genre.
- LLCs and Corporations.
- Legal topics like royalties, legacies, rights reversion, etc.
- Compare and contrast maybe three or four successful authors who write different: speeds, pantsing vs. outlining, multi-book vs. single book launches, etc.
- Pros and cons of self-publishing.
- Pros and cons of traditional publishing.
- Cheat sheets (step-by-step guides) for indies on Amazon ads, FB ads, BookBub, etc.
- Updates on things like the legal battle to prevent Amazon from the speech-to-text feature on audiobooks.



- Genre-specific looks at current trends, most used keywords, etc.
- Alternative income streams.
- Backlist management.
- Something from agents who represent foreign and audio rights.
- How authors can grow sales on other platforms besides Amazon.
- How to maintain a high level of marketing success (not how to get there in the first place).
- How-to articles (submissions, selecting small publishers, etc.).
- How to grow readership, especially globally.
- Ways to combat piracy.
- E-book formatting and design.
- Case studies from people who have been successful in things like selling on their website, advertising, marketing their books, etc. Exactly how did you do it? How much did it cost, etc?
- Freelancing and ghost writing.
- Expert-level craft articles.
- Discoverability.
- Newest marketing trends.

And the above is by no means a comprehensive list.

Articles usually range between 800-1200 words, with 1,250 words as the sweet spot. We pay \$0.20/word (body copy only, not counting headline and author bio) up to \$250 for original articles unless additional length is previously approved before submission. If you have a previously published article (blogs count as published) to submit, we pay a flat \$100 for reprints should your reprint be accepted.

If you're interested in writing about any of these topics, or have one of your own to suggest, please contact Nicole Evelina, *Nink* Assistant Editor, at [ninkassistanteditor@gmail.com](mailto:ninkassistanteditor@gmail.com) for a complete set of guidelines.

**Please note:** We work several months ahead on the newsletter. For example, even though it is February, we are currently accepting articles for the April issue and beyond. Articles are due by the 10th of the month, one-to-two months before the issue the articles appears will appear in. Here is a sample time schedule for an issue:

**May 5, 2020 Issue**

Articles due **March 10**

Any revision requests back to author by **March 15**

Revised article due from author **March 20**

Final approval by **March 25**, at which point production begins

\* \* \*

September 23 - 27, 2020



Planning for the 2020 conference is well underway! Our team is working hard to put together the absolute best program and speaker slate possible.

We have announced our first five Featured Guest Speakers: Becca Syme, Malorie Cooper, Mark Dawson, Rachael Herron and Skye Warren. We've also narrowed down a list of topics that we know our members will find interesting and timely.

We're making some changes to the schedule content, with some intriguing new ideas from our forward-thinking committee members.

But of course, all of the best elements of the NINC conference remain in place: high-level workshops, an unparalleled variety of industry guests, and incredible networking opportunities—all set on the most beautiful beach in Florida.

See you in St. Pete Beach in September!

- **Conference information:** <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>
- **Conference Registration:** <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/>
- **Conference e-loop:** <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2020/>

# Featured Guest Speaker Announcement

## The First Five

The NINC 2020 Conference kicks off on September 23—which is less than eight months away! Your programming committee has been hard at work, putting together a lineup of Featured Guest Speakers to inspire us all to remember The Future Is Now!

We are so excited to offer you a sneak peek at that list today by announcing five of our confirmed and contracted Featured Guest Speakers. In the coming months, we'll share more specific info, including bios, photos and the topics of their presentations this fall—so stay tuned here!

Now, without any further ado ... <drum roll, please> ... the first five Featured Guest Speakers!

- **Becca Syme:** Syme was a huge hit last year, and we're beyond thrilled to have her return to present more in-depth material—in a new format. (More on *that* later!) If you haven't sampled her *Quit Cast* or read her "Dear Author" books, you should do it now—you'll be ready to be blown away by her workshop at the beach!
- **Malorie Cooper:** Cooper is a first-time Featured Guest Speaker at NINC, and we couldn't be more pleased to have her as part of our lineup. She's savvy in all things publishing, with a special emphasis on Facebook ads (and how to make yours better), book launch and marketing strategies (see her books on all of the above). Get ready to have your mind blown by her workshops this fall!
- **Rachael Herron:** Herron is another of our first-time Featured Guest Speakers. She's a true Renaissance author, with expertise in multiple income streams, in both the trad and indie publishing worlds, in author finance savviness, and in craft revision. Her Patreon page is a true source of inspiration. We can't wait to hear her workshops in September!
- **Mark Dawson:** A returning favorite, Dawson always brings something insightful, unexpected and fabulous to our conference. This year, we have a fun new idea up our sleeves. Are you intrigued? I hope so! We'll announce that later in the year—but let me promise that you don't want to miss it—or anything that Dawson shares with us in St. Pete Beach.
- **Skye Warren:** We're beyond giddy to confirm that Warren will be a first-time Featured Guest Speaker at the 2020 NINC Conference. She is simply amazing. Warren is innovative in her marketing and writing (with an emphasis on release strategies), she is always trying something new, and she is generous in sharing her wisdom and experience with other authors. We're honored that she is willing to impart some of what she's learned with us when we gather on the beach in September.

There we have it! Our first five ... and remember, this is only the beginning. (But what a way to kick things off!)

# Do I Stay or Do I Go?

A look at “day jobs” and reasons writers leave or keep them

By Michele Dunaway



There's a stereotype of writers in PJs, eating bon bons (or something frivolous) and cranking out novels on keyboards in home offices in only a few hours a day and living as a billionaire.

For most writers, nothing could be further from the truth.

According to [Chron.com](#), Amazon provides the largest avenue for ebook sales. In a discussion of 2017 corporate earnings, the company revealed “1,000 authors earned in excess of \$100,000 using the company's ebook publishing platform.” The rest, not so much.

The Authors Guild published “[Six Takeaways from the Authors Guild 2018 Author Income Survey](#),” in which it reported, “Median income for full-time authors for all writing-related activities, however, was \$20,300 in 2017, up 3 percent from 2013. Note, however, that is still considerably lower than the \$25,000 median income full-time authors earned in 2009.”

The article went on to say, “While self-published authors were the only group to experience a significant increase (up 95 percent in book-related income from 2013 to 2017), *self-published authors as a whole still earned 58 percent less than traditionally published authors in 2017.*”

With the ups and downs in publishing, writers have a choice to make. Can they be full-time writers? Or do they keep either a full or part-time “day” job to ensure a steady income stream?

For [Blythe Gifford](#), who writes historical romances for Harlequin, “quitting is not an option” as she's the sole breadwinner. She is self-employed as a consultant in a totally unrelated field for a day job, and has been for more than 20 years. This pays the bills.

“Over history, most artists have had patrons. I am my own patron!” she said. “Because I don't have to write to pay the bills, I do have the luxury of refilling the well, taking breaks, working on projects that are not immediately sellable or under contract. Because I am self-employed, I have more control over my day-to-day schedule than most.”

Even though she now makes enough through writing to replace her day job income, [Lynn Cahoon](#), *NYT* and *USA Today* author of several mystery series, also has no immediate plans to quit the day job, and one reason is benefits. Her day job provides insurance, 401K match and profit sharing, fair wage and 27 days of vacation a year. Her job gives her “money, insurance and time.”

“I’ve had some health issues in the last 10 years, so I’m hesitant to give up insurance,” Cahoon said. “I worry about affordable insurance and my book money is going into preparing my husband and me for retirement. I’ve had an end date in mind for the last few years, but I kept putting it off. At times because my husband wasn’t on the same page I was on about money and a little fear of what happens if the golden goose dies?”

Health insurance is one reason barista by day and writer by night [Barbara Meyers](#) stays at Starbucks. That and free coffee, a flexible schedule, social interaction, and stock in the company.

“In the economic downturn 10 years or so ago, a lot of things changed. My husband retired,” Meyers said. “We weren’t going to have the kind of money we thought we’d have in retirement. At the time he was old enough for Social Security benefits, but not old enough for Medicare. He was already on my insurance, so that was a reason to keep working. Now I’m in the same boat. Health insurance is a big reason to stay in this job. But the job has also allowed me to build a bit of a nest egg of my own that I wouldn’t otherwise have.”

When bestselling author [Victoria Thompson](#), who writes the *Gaslight* and *Counterfeit Lady* Mystery Series, first sold, she was a stay-at-home mom and had the “luxury of writing full time for the first 10 years” of her career. Then her publisher dropped her, and with two kids in college, she got a day job while working to rebuild her writing career.

“I immediately realized the benefits of having a day job,” Thompson said. “Just receiving a regular paycheck every two weeks, even though it wasn’t very big, really took a lot of the pressure off—pressure I didn’t even realize I’d been feeling.”

Thompson pointed out that in traditional publishing you know what your advances will be, but not when they will arrive. You know when your royalties will arrive, but not what they will be.

“Living with this constant uncertainty about money was a stressor, but I had no idea how much it had weighted on me until that pressure was gone,” she said. “Another thing I got from the day job that is intangible but also valuable was recognition. I vividly remember, early on, giving my boss a report on what my division had accomplished and she said, ‘good job.’ In 10 years of publishing, no one had ever said ‘good job’ to me. The validation was incredibly meaningful, especially after the trauma of being dropped by my publishers.”

Thompson stopped working in 2014 after gradually rebuilding her writing career.

“When my writing income reached the level of my job income and then exceeded it, I started doing the math to see if it was possible to quit the day job. I was living on both my job and writing income together, so I was concerned about replacing the job’s income. Then I realized that while my salary was large, I was socking away a lot of money in retirement, so my take-home pay wasn’t nearly as much as my total salary. If you’re retired, you don’t have to save for retirement anymore, so I wouldn’t need to replace that part of the income, only what I was actually getting every week. If I were retired, I’d be able to write two books a year and I

could start taking Social Security. Those together would just about replace my take-home job income, so I sent my publisher a proposal for a second mystery series. They bought it, so I retired."

Replacing income seemed to be a common theme for those who quit the day job. To supplement hers, [Shannon Donnelly](#), award-winning author of Regency and paranormal romance, picks up part-time work occasionally.

"That kind of work reduces stress about money, provides creative input—mindless work is great for freeing up the creative side of the brain," Donnelly said. "I've been a waitress, bartender, done retail work, and that's the kind of job that gives me enough structure to help with the day, and it's not every day. It's the career stuff I found that interfered with writing."

Donnelly is a firm believer she should support herself, and while she and her husband do joint household stuff, she's always kept her own bank account so she can do what she wants with her money, just as her husband can.

"This means we've never argued about money, and means I have a level of independence I love," she said. "It may be why I love self-publishing—I have some independence and I like not having to rely on others who may just disappoint. But I think this is also an individual choice for everyone about their own comfort level."

Comfort level can be a major reason for both keeping and leaving the day job. Food and travel writer, book columnist and author [Cheré Coen](#) (aka [Cherie Claire](#)) was a feature editor and writer for 20 years for newspapers. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, she took a pay cut when she quit the paper and got a part-time job coordinating volunteers for the Unitarian Church. In 2007, when the grant ended, she had enough contacts built up and became a full-time freelance writer; that's been her day job ever since.

"I love working for myself," Coen said. "I make less money and am on the marketplace for health insurance, but I am so much happier. It's what I wanted to do my whole life and I'm living the dream. I work mostly as a food and travel writer (I travel on press trips at least once a month), but I supplement my work with occasional teaching gigs and some writing assignments that veer from my core interests. Plus, I'm an author."

Comfort level was also the goal of author Amanda Lee, who writes cozy mysteries and paranormal fantasy under [Amanda M. Lee](#) and [Lily Harper Hart](#).

"I waited until I was making more in a month writing than I was making in a year at my day job," Lee said. "I also waited until I had no debt (other than my house payment) and had six figures stashed in the bank. There was no going back to journalism and I wanted to be really sure the money would hold up."

Lee worked as a newspaper reporter for years. She kept with the journalism and writing, working 80 hours a week writing and doing the day job for the entire 2013.

"By the end of summer 2013, I was making more than \$30,000 a month and knew that I couldn't keep up my schedule. Still, insurance was an issue and I wanted to be really, really sure," she said. "I also wanted a big cushion. I stayed through the holidays in 2013 because I didn't want to screw over anyone regarding vacations. We were cut to the bone at that point and people would've had to give up their Christmas holidays if I left. My last day was right after the first of the year in January 2014. By then I was making more than \$50,000 a month."



Lee keeps up an intense schedule, self-publishing two to three books a month. She turns 45 in February. She has a to-do list every single week and can't enjoy the weekend until it's done. Her weekly schedule is writing 45,000-51,000 words a day.

"That's generally three chapters a day, Monday through Friday, and one chapter on Saturday and Sunday," she said. She also edits 45,000 words a week Monday through Friday.

"As for safety nets, I'm in a unique position," Lee said. "I have several million dollars in the bank now. I put \$40,000 a month just into investments. I don't ever want debt again. I'm in a position where, even if I never sold another book, I would be able to survive."

Survival is also on the mind of [Wayne Stinnett](#), author of your typical murder and mayhem in paradise novels. Stinnett's initial goal was to earn enough money to buy some woodworking tools so he could build cabinets and furniture, maybe even small boats. When he had two months of book earnings that were higher than his best month as a truck driver, he set July 4, 2014, as his last day behind the wheel.

"We had no retirement set up and no real savings," he said. "We'd been living paycheck to paycheck all our lives and were no strangers to struggle. When the day came, I knew I'd have at least three months of trucking income set aside. But six weeks before that date, the boss pushed the wrong buttons and I just tossed him my keys. I don't recommend that. I recommend having at least a year of your normal job's income set aside, as well as a six-month emergency fund set aside before quitting."

Like Lee, Stinnett put multiple safety nets in place.

"If I quit writing and marketing today, and we had to just live off the income from the 21 books I currently have published, our kids would have a decent income for the rest of their lives. We have a net worth getting close to seven figures now, and I plan to have the mortgage and the yacht paid off by 2025 and have seven figures in investments to draw income from."

What advice did the authors interviewed have for those trying to make the decision?

"Take your time," Stinnett advised. "This isn't a sprint. It's not even a marathon. It's a series of marathons. Set goals and create a written plan for success. Include in that plan smaller, easily achieved goals and sub goals to achieve them. Celebrate each of those accomplishments. With a plan in place, you can forecast a date when you will leave the traditional workforce. But have a good nest egg set aside, just in case. By that I mean nothing more than a savings account with a year of regular income just sitting there. Don't worry about whether it earns interest, it's not an investment. It's just for emergencies. If you tap into it, replace it. Always keep a year of your current income in cash, readily available."

"I would make sure you have at least six months of bills covered before leaving your job," Lee advised. "The creative juices don't flow if you're constantly worried about money. The product doesn't sell as well if you can't pay for editing and covers. As anxious as people are to quit their day jobs, it can be soul crushing to have to go back, so it's best to make sure you're well prepared so you don't have to go back. If you're constantly in fear of losing everything, you won't be able to strive for anything. Honestly, I see a lot of people quit after a good month. That's a huge mistake. I wouldn't leave before you see six good months, and even then, keep an eye on the trends. It's exciting to write full time. It's also something that needs to be done correctly."

Most all authors agreed with having money in the bank. But beyond that, Coen added a few more items.

“Don’t do it lightly,” she said. “You must have discipline. To me that’s more important than anything. Too many people work in jobs they hate because they’re scared of taking the plunge. It’s not to be done without thought, of course, but don’t let fear keep you from following your dreams.”

---

*Michele Dunaway still has her day job, but she’s eligible to retire this year. She has no intention of doing so yet because she loves what she does too much.*

# Don't Quit Your Day Job

By Dorothy McFalls



It was a warm spring afternoon and I was grumbling about having to give up a day of work in order to attend my workplace's annual employee retreat. We'd finished wrapping each other in toilet paper (a truly odd trust-building exercise) and were sitting around picnic tables in a park pavilion. The motivational speaker who'd been brought in to inspire us stood up and asked what became a life-changing question for me. "If you won the lottery today, what would you do?"

For two years I'd been working close to 12-hour days, spending what was left of my nights, weekends, and lunch hours on my novel in progress. This drive to be a successful urban planner and a successful novelist was, quite frankly, wearing me out. So when the motivational speaker wanted to know what would I do if I had all the money I needed—the answer came only too quickly: I'd quit my job and write full-time!

Thankfully, I didn't leap up from the picnic bench and tender my resignation right then and there. Had the heat gotten to me? What was I thinking? I couldn't quit my job. My paycheck was half my family's income! The more I thought about it, the more impossible the idea seemed.

Yet, with my husband's encouragement, along with changes to how we spent our money, we were able to make a reality out of the impossible. Three years and five manuscripts later, my debut book, *The Marriage List* (Signet May 2005) was solid proof I made the right decision to chase after my dream ... without waiting for that lottery windfall! This is how it was done:

## **Facing the fear of money**

As long as my husband and I had money in our bank account at the end of each month, I figured we were doing a good job budgeting. I didn't want to know where the money was going. I was afraid of what we might discover.

But just as writers must overcome their fear of rejection in order to succeed, I realized I needed to confront my fear of money if I wanted to change my life. Before we could make any major life decisions, we had to create a clear and accurate picture of our finances and spending priorities.

- We logged where our money was going each month.
- We identified and prioritized all expenses based on individual needs:
  - Essential: Expenses that cannot be eliminated, such as food, housing, health care, retirement savings
  - Desired: Expenses that are necessary to maintain a desired quality of life, such as travel expenses, new clothes, weekly entertainment
  - Optional: Expenses that are not necessary and are often impulse buys, such as trendy new shoes, eating out, buying that cute new car
- We made a list of debts owed and interest rates.
- And didn't forget about yearly/quarterly expenses such as property taxes and insurance payments. Health care was the biggest issue. We purchased self-employed health care through Blue Cross. It was expensive and covered very little. My husband did have a health problem that created a large health bill. We managed to pay it off in time, but that experience left me shaken and questioning whether I could continue writing full-time. With the passage of the ACA, our health care plan (still through Blue Cross) is much more affordable and the coverage is better. We're lucky that this is available to us. I know affordable plans aren't available in all parts of the country. We're in South Carolina.

## **Eliminate**

Once we had a picture of how we were spending our money, it was fairly easy to identify and remove frivolous expenses from the "optional" and "desired" categories in our budget.

We got rid of anything in the budget that we didn't really need: cable TV, eating out, buying new clothes all the time, getting rid of our landline, getting cheaper cell phone services. Every line item on our budget was considered. It took some adjusting, but in time this new budget started to feel natural.

## **Reduce**

According to our budget situation, I still was not able to quit my job after simply eliminating unnecessary expenses. We had to do more. We set out to reduce the cost of our "essential" and remaining "desired" expenses by shopping around for bargain deals. To begin with, we comparison shopped for the lowest auto and home insurance premiums. We ended up combining our auto and home insurances with one company to take advantage of a volume discount and increased the deductibles in order to further lower the premiums. Switching cell phone and internet service providers also reduced our monthly expenses.

## **Consolidate**

Although eliminating certain budget items and reducing the costs of others saved us money, we still needed my monthly income in order to make ends meet. At that point, I was ready to give up on my dream of writing full-time. My husband was not. He worked out a plan for us to downsize and combine our existing expenses and debts. At the time interest rates were

rapidly falling. We refinanced our home, using our equity to wrap our other debts into the mortgage, and took advantage of not only the lower interest rate but also the fact that we were originating a new 30-year loan, which meant considerably lower monthly payments.

### **Budgeting = Freedom**

Our finances were in line, but before I handed in my resignation, my husband and I made a mock run of our new budget, using my paycheck to build an emergency savings account while refining our spending habits. We did this for six months. Not only were we seeing if we could actually live without my paycheck, we were also building up our savings and a safety net for emergencies. By the time six months was up, I felt extremely confident that we could do this. When I left my job, I was excited instead of nervous. I was able to walk away from my career confident we wouldn't starve and feeling lucky that our budget allowed me to forge this new path. But even if our finances hadn't worked to that end, understanding them opened up new possibilities, such as seeking part-time work or building our savings to allow for an early retirement.

Bottom line: be creative and don't let money keep you from realizing your dreams.

### **Do's and don'ts for budgeting success**

Control your money (instead of letting it control you).

1. **DO make budgeting a team effort.** You don't want your partner sabotaging your money-saving efforts.
2. **DON'T rule out part-time work to help cover expenses.** Time away from the keyboard can assist the creative process.
3. **DO budget for fun and travel.** Don't eliminate fun, but do look for ways to reduce money spent on entertainment, such as purchasing annual movie passes.
4. **DON'T spend on impulse or emotion.** Uncontrolled internet shopping can be a big budget buster.
5. **DO budget for writing expenses.** Costs for postage, paper, research books, and contests add up quickly.
6. **DON'T go to the grocery store hungry.**
7. **DO shop around for the lowest price and watch for sales.** Smart bulk buying can save money in the long-term.
8. **DON'T eat out as often.** An exceptional home-cooked meal can cost half as much and be twice as special.
9. **DO schedule errands wisely.** A carefully planned travel route and lumping appointments/errands for the same day can save money on gas.
10. **DON'T make your budget too rigid.** Budgeting is balancing. Create a budget that embraces your lifestyle.

## **Final advice**

It's important to treat writing as a full-time job. There's so much that needs to be done. If you need to rent an office, do it. It's easy to get derailed when you're home with things like social media, bills, shopping, household chores. I wouldn't be doing the laundry in the middle of the day if I was still working full-time for someone else, so I shouldn't be doing laundry in the middle of the day when I'm working for myself. It takes discipline to get the writing done and not get distracted. It also takes discipline to not go overboard with snacks when you're home. Keep the fridge stocked with healthy food.

And most importantly, enjoy yourself. Don't let writing become a chore. Hold onto that sense of gratitude that you have the ability to stay at home and write full-time. It's an amazing accomplishment. Celebrate it.

---

*Dorothy McFalls lives in the Lowcountry of SC and writes romance under her own name, [Dorothy McFalls](#) and cozy mysteries as [Dorothy St. James](#).*



# Day Job Sidebar

A few more thoughts on the "day jobs"

*Compiled by Michele Dunaway*



In 2012, still deep in the recession, corporate spit me out for the second time. What happened next I call "transition by terror." Unable to break back into the job market, with a small trad contract of four books complete, a new one for five more, and one indie book that popped, we gambled on my writing. Dumped everything, moved to a very cheap apartment, and I wrote like a demon. Lost money year one, broke even year two, paid it off year three. Been full time ever since January 2013.

*–Matt (ML) Buchman*

I like to say that my day job finances my writing. It allows me not only to pay for professional editing and cover design, but also to do marketing and attend conferences and other events. I'm not yet at the point in my writing career where I make enough money to cover that, much less live on it. My day job also enables me to have insurance and other benefits; I'm not married so I don't have the option of going on someone else's insurance. Taken together, those two things provide a lot of stability for me and I'm the type of person who needs that. I work in marketing for my day job so the things I learn there are very helpful in marketing my books. I look at everything we talk about or I read about in trade publications with two viewpoints: how will this help me in my day job and how might I apply this to my job as an author? Another unexpected benefit is that sometimes I get ideas from things people say or do while at work, something that wouldn't happen if I didn't have a day job.

*–Nicole Evelina*

I decided to move into writing full time when I realized I was making more income through my writing than in my day job.

*–Melissa McPhail*

On a “normal day,” I write in the morning and do my “day job” in the afternoon. The consulting does require significant travel and when I travel, the days go breakfast through dinner. Writing goes out the window then. Balance? What is this balance of which you speak? Seriously, I have found that sticking to a routine, writing, work, exercise, reading, really helps. I once had a boss who taught me that no matter what the crisis du jour at work, there was always time for lunch. I have learned how right she was. You just have to step away from the keyboard, go outside, and breathe.

*–Blythe Gifford*

I work early (5 a.m.), but usually only for an average of five hours four to five days a week, and I don’t work weekends. I am then free to write. Still, sometimes I feel that all I do is work either at my job or at writing. But as I aged, I eased up on myself and now move at a comfortable pace. As long as I keep moving forward with my writing projects, I’m content to go at my own speed. I am a person who needs a routine. My job also allows me to interact with a wide variety of people and I work with people or are 30 to 40 years younger than I am. This particular company is known for its hiring diversity and there are a lot of creatives who seek employment there. Also, I’m not going to lie. Sometimes, when I get home from work, I take a nap.

*–Barbara Meyers*

Have fun with the end of your former career. Set a date and make it memorable. I’d planned to hire a limo to take me to the truck yard. I was going to just have the limo driver pull in and park with the engine idling. A limo in a truck yard would create curiosity, and sooner or later, the boss would come out and tap on the dark tinted window. I was going to lower the window, hand him the keys, and say, “I’m needed elsewhere.” Then roll the window up and drive away. I was even toying with the idea of hiring a black helicopter to hover above us.

*–Wayne Stinnett*

\* \* \*

# Follow or Ignore?

## Weeding through the wealth of "helpful" advice for writers, Part Two

*By Trish Milburn*



In Part One of this series last month, we first covered defining what success is to you personally as an author as well as covering identifying your strengths and weaknesses so that you know which advice to take and what to ignore. Only by doing those things first can you then choose which advice strikes a chord and which advice you believe you can effectively put into practice.

### **A personal approach**

Like every other piece of writing advice you might receive, the suggestion to ignore advice and pave your own way doesn't have to be—and probably shouldn't be—all or nothing. While you don't have to try every new product or every sure-fire marketing method, try the ones that appeal most to you and your personality. That way you're more likely to dedicate the necessary time to implementing these methods and techniques, thus giving yourself the best chance of them working.

You also need to realize that when you head in any new direction with writing, marketing or promotion, it may take time to see the results you want. I'm in that space right now. Although I've been published for more than a decade, 2019 has been a year of starting over. After my line, Harlequin Western Romance, closed in 2018, I pushed forward and did three more western romances for Tule Publishing, an opportunity for which I was grateful. I liked those stories and they were well received by readers. But one day I finally accepted a truth that had been simmering inside me for a while, which was that I was burned out writing westerns. I'm not going to say I'll never write another, but I needed a break. So what to do next?

I chose the hard road. I took the advice about being honest with myself about what I wanted. I was at a point where I really needed to again find the joy in writing, so I threw caution and perhaps common sense to the wind and started a series set in the world of K-pop

(Korean pop music), of which I've become a big fan over the past year. I took advice about quick releases I'd been holding onto from a NINC conference workshop by Roxanne St. Claire and Kristen Painter. I spent the first half of 2019 writing, editing, and prepping the first three books in my new *Idol in Love* series and released them all at once.

Alas, perhaps because of the big shift in my characters and settings, or perhaps because those books have a substantially smaller market, or perhaps because I waited too long to implement that advice, or perhaps because I should have staggered the on-sale dates instead of releasing them all on the same day, or perhaps all of the above, the sales were ... disappointing.

Still, I decided to push forward with this self-publishing venture and with this series. After all, I had three more books planned, as well as ideas for a spin-off series, and I was having the most fun I'd had writing in years. I loved the characters, I loved the setting, and I loved exploring the new challenges faced by my characters. I've also had a lot of fun building relationships with fellow K-pop fans online.

My hope is that as K-pop's popularity continues to grow in the U.S. with groups such as BTS, NCT, SuperM, Blackpink, Monsta X and others selling out shows, those fans will find my books and tell others about them. I have moments of profound joy when talking to the people who have read them—like the woman I met at a K-pop concert on a Friday night who messaged me on Sunday to tell me she'd already read the four books in the series I had out and was eagerly awaiting book five.

But during all of this rise in popularity of K-pop, there have been some very unfortunate stories coming out of the K-pop world—two male K-pop stars recently sentenced to prison terms for sexual assault and the unrelated suicides of two talented young female K-pop stars after being bullied online and/or harassed by an ex-boyfriend. Though I've not yet addressed sexual assault or South Korea's staggering suicide rate in my series, I have not shied away from tackling some of the other issues that face the industry and those who work in it. As a writer, I don't tend to gravitate toward telling light and fluffy stories. Knowing that about myself, I have included story threads that address stalker fans, online bullying, toxic fans who create fan wars between fandoms, and how something as natural as dating is considered a scandal for a K-pop idol (the term used for K-pop performers). I've also addressed the unrealistic expectations placed on K-pop idols to be perfect in every way. It's a delicate balance between including these types of topics and capturing the fun side of K-pop and a happy romance, but to me blending all these things makes the stories authentic. I also make clear to readers that while many of my characters are Korean, I am not. I do not claim this as an Own Voices story because it isn't.

While the current financial reality has me working to build the editing and virtual assistant parts of my business to support my writing, for now I've decided to stay on this creative path because I don't dread going to the computer to write because of burnout. And because of readers who contact me saying things like, "I would consider your take on the K-pop genre to be one of the best. I couldn't put the book down." A little reader love goes a long way.

In addition to writing stories I love with the long-term goal of having the series be financially successful, I have an additional goal with these books—systemic and social change. And if the realization of the second goal precludes the realization of the first, then I've made the decision that I'm okay with that. But art often helps along societal changes, and I hope that the

stories I tell in my books will help in some small way to make the industry more fair and safe for these performers who leave their homes, sometimes as children, to train at the Korean entertainment companies in order to make their dreams come true.

## **Finding balance**

I discovered I wasn't alone this year in taking a step back to really look at where I was and where I wanted to go with my writing. Jenny Ruhl, who writes as [Jenny Brown](#), also reassessed where she was in her career and what advice she should take going forward.

"I fully understand that authors must understand the business," Ruhl said. "I pioneered selling books online starting in 1987. But the balance between mastering craft and marketing seems to have swung way too far away from the craft. I know people are making money and selling a lot of books manipulating the system and the readers, but that isn't why I write.

"The relentless focus on everything but the quality of the books in the online writers' communities is why this year I had to step away from all the business stuff and get back in touch with what made me want to write in the first place. I also feel that if the only writing that can succeed nowadays is stuff written strictly to market following the screenwriters' tricks for engaging the barely literate and sold through very expensive ad campaigns, I'll just go back to writing what I love and putting it under the bed until conditions change," Ruhl said.

Balance also means that sometimes soaking up lots of writerly advice becomes valuable precisely because you don't take it all and run with it, as has been the case for [Kristine Smith](#), author of the Jani Kilian science fiction series.

"I find the marketing side more and more overwhelming," Smith said. "I've attended several of the Tradewinds NINC conferences and find them extremely valuable. Thing is, one reason I find them so valuable is because they show me what my limits are and what choices I need to make. Right now, I'm trying to rediscover my love of writing and experiment with other genres just to see if I can write stories that work. That's not really a business-focused approach."

[Lynn Cahoon](#), who writes cozy mysteries, is all for soaking up all the advice, even if you don't end up using everything.

"I think the more you learn and know, even if you can't replicate the process, the better author and marketer you'll be," Cahoon said.

## **Some final advice about advice**

Being human, a good piece of advice is to concentrate on one thing at a time. This is the advice of [Jacqueline Diamond](#) about the barrage of "you need to do this" advice that comes her way.

"Don't try to leap onto Facebook, Goodreads and Twitter and launch a website and a newsletter all at once," said Diamond, the author of the Safe Harbor medical mysteries. "I've built up my repertoire over the past decade and tweak it a bit at a time. I spend maybe an hour a day on promo."

Becca Syme, who writes cozy mysteries as R.L. Syme and is a respected [author coach](#) with a [helpful podcast series on YouTube](#), cautions about letting yourself feel overwhelmed, especially if you're the type of person who constantly thinks you can get more done than you do. You may

never mark everything off your overly long to-do lists, and those unfinished tasks get added to the next list, making that one even longer and adding to your stress. Instead of feeling overwhelmed, realize that this is just how you're wired, to be responsive to incoming data, and don't feel guilty when you can't mark every single item off that list.

In [Nicole Evelina's](#) conference coverage of Syme's "The Standout Writer" workshop in the November issue of *Nink*, Evelina wrote: "Whether you realize it or not, there are reasons behind everything you do and they play into your writing. This is especially true if what you're trying to do matches the way your mind works, your capacity, etc. Not everything works for everybody. All the things we learn from 'experts' who write books and speak at conferences work for them because of who they are, not who you are. That's why it is important to understand how your mind works and what your strengths are."

To help identify those strengths, you may want to take the [Gallup CliftonStrengths assessment test](#) that Syme uses in her coaching work and talks about in her podcast series. Again, see Evelina's coverage of Syme's workshop for more details on this system and a link to Syme's workshop slides. *[Editor's Note—past issues of Nink are available on the NINC website under the member section.]*

How much advice to take and implement really requires you to first have an honest conversation with yourself. Be honest about not only your strengths but also your limitations or writing-related tasks you dislike. Once you have those things straight in your mind, focus on the advice that you think you can most effectively implement and that builds on your strengths. If a piece of advice makes you break out in hives or feel increased anxiety, perhaps it's not for you, at least not at this point in your career. And if you decide to just toss it all out the window and find your own way, at least for a while, it might also mean you're choosing the harder row to hoe, but it may be the most freeing.

---

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



# Creative Tools

## Alternatives

By Denise A. Agnew



Writers who are blocked creatively look for tools to restart their flow. Even if you aren't blocked, your writing might feel stale and uninspired. Here are some tools you might not have considered that can give you a boost.

### Timed mind dump

Julia Cameron's *Artist's Way* philosophy is to dedicate several minutes each morning to writing down everything in your thoughts, which can include good or bad things. The idea is to dump all of that on the page before you attempt to create. This process can be healthy not only for general life stress, but also for feeling fresh and inspired. Writing in a paper journal uses a different way of expressing yourself than an electronic one, so if you usually create on computer, give that a break and use paper. You may find it helpful to give yourself a specific amount of time to write these morning pages. If you're feeling extremely blocked, try for just 10 minutes. Put a timer on and stick to it. Build that up and see if you can stretch it to 20 minutes and write away! Even if you are not experiencing writer's block, you may find a 10-minute journaling session is helpful before starting your real writing work.

### Oracle cards

There is a difference between oracle cards and tarot cards, which you can read about [here](#). Whether or not you believe that oracle cards can enlighten you about everyday personal matters, the cards can help you tap into intuition and your right brain.

I own three oracle decks. If a project is giving me fits, my process is this:

1. I gather all three and write down whatever questions or concerns I'm wrestling with.
2. After closing my eyes, I consider which deck calls to me, open my eyes, and select the deck with my questions in mind.

3. I shuffle the cards and select three cards from various spots.
4. I turn over each card and note the symbolism. Does anything jump out to me? If it does, I write it down. I do this with each card.
5. Afterward, I consult the book that comes with the deck and look up the listed meaning for each card. If there is other wisdom contained within the book for the meaning behind each card, I also write this down.

Often I find a new kernel of inspiration each time I use the cards. There's no requirement that you have more than one deck. Although you could use tarot cards in a similar way, I find oracle cards better for this experience because of the flexible meaning of each card.

How do you choose an oracle deck right for you? It can be a little confusing, because there are so many oracle decks available. Select a deck that appeals to you visually. Explore photos of decks on Amazon and Pinterest. New Age stores almost always have some.

### **Writing prompt books**

Maybe you don't have a single idea for a novel, short story or screenplay. You're completely stumped. You may need a writing idea prompt book. There are dozens out there, including ones geared for certain genres.

As an example, I took a horror writing prompt book and went through the entire book, writing down each prompt that sounded fun. Then I selected the one that called to me to try first.

### **Silence or noise?**

Many people write in silence, afraid music will disturb their flow. Try making a special soundtrack of music for a book. Songs with lyrics might be distracting, but often writing with soothing classical or "themed" music can inspire a writer.

Or if you've always had music or a noisy coffee shop in the background while you work, try using silence. That could mean noise-cancelling headphones or closing the door to the room. Change things up and disrupt the status quo so your creativity has a chance to come through.

In the category of "not music but a little noise" is something I discovered on YouTube called ASMR. These videos are visual but also include sound. I discovered these clever things watching a favorite YouTuber who likes to read with ASMR on their television. I tried one called [Leaky Cauldron, a Harry Potter Ambience](#). Another great one is [Ancient Library Room](#) with relaxing thunder and rain sounds along with a crackling fireplace.

### **Read or watch a favorite**

Writers are often told, especially at the beginning of their writing journey, to read in the genre they want to write. That alone might not stimulate you to pick up a pen or grab your laptop.

You could find it more creatively stimulating to reread a favorite novel or short story whenever you're hitting a rough patch and regardless of the genre you're currently writing. Or

watching a favorite movie could do the same thing. You don't have to experience full blown writer's block to need that zing of inspiration. My personal favorite to boost my creativity is to read *The Taking* by Dean Koontz. I read the first chapter and I'm often inspired to write immediately.

### **Play like a child**

Many writers want to create the perfect story the first time out. That means they might outline like crazy and pick away at it. The problem isn't whether you are an outliner or a by-the-seat-of-the-pants creator. It's the idea that your story isn't perfect that terrifies you into fiddling with the story right out of the gate and sucking the excitement out of creation.

Give yourself permission to play like a child on the first draft and write with freedom and the singular idea it is all for you. Forget about typos, grammar, spaces ... all of that. If the idea of writing that way throughout the whole story is too terrifying, set a timer. Tell yourself that the first hour is for pure play. Let it rip. Chances are you might enjoy it so much you'll continue playing past that first hour.

When you reach the end of your manuscript, you'll have the satisfaction of completion. If this is something you've never done before and it terrifies you, try it on a short story project and see if it doesn't provide you with a jolt of creativity.

### **Be open minded**

Creative people are often considered open minded, but sometimes they aren't when it comes to stepping outside of the box to bolster their own chances of creating. Consider the methods above, even the ones that don't immediately appeal to you.

---

*Denise A. Agnew is the award-winning author of over 69 novels and screenplays. Denise's novels Love from The Ashes and Blackout were optioned for film/TV by Where's Lucy? Productions, Bright Frontier Films and MDR Entertainment. Denise is a Writer/Producer (Where's Lucy? Productions, Happy Catastrophe Productions, Bright Frontier Films), a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, and Certified Creativity Coach. As a creativity coach, Denise assists anyone in the creative 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).*

# The Mad Scribbler

## In Memoriam

By Laura Resnick



*“They say his father was a comet and his mother a cosmic wind, that he juggles planets as if they were feathers and wrestles with black holes just to work up an appetite.”*

—Mike Resnick, *Santiago*

My father, science fiction writer Mike Resnick, died a few weeks ago.

He passed away quietly in his sleep—which was the one sole thing he *ever* did quietly, as far as I can recall—somewhere around midnight in the garden of good and evil. In terms of physical location, he died at a hospice center; but he died so close to midnight, one side or the other, that I’m not sure of the real date of his exit, though the death certificate says January 9, 2020.

Pop was very ill for a year, repeatedly in and out of the hospital for months with one life-threatening illness after another. At one point this past summer, while he was feverish and barely conscious, nurses asked his name and were startled when he replied, “Lord of Nightmares.” We explained it was the title of the book he was working on when he’d collapsed at home, the third book of an urban fantasy trilogy. And, of course, when the prospect of imminent death was raised, he said, no, he couldn’t die, he had a book to finish writing.

He was eager to get better and get back to work full-throttle. But in November, once again back in the hospital, he was diagnosed with a very aggressive type of lymphoma. In early January, doctors informed us they were ceasing treatment and recommended hospice care. He died within days.

My father chose to keep his illnesses a secret for the most part, particularly the diagnosis of terminal cancer. Partly to protect his privacy, partly because he didn’t want to lose work if people in the business found out he was ill, and partly because he was sure, right up until he took the Big Sleep, that he’d beat this thing and live for years. And you know what? Good for

him—I was glad not to see him go through Anger, Bargaining, and Depression (the traditional stages of grief between Denial and Acceptance).

But I knew this meant that a lot of people who would have liked to say goodbye, if they had known about his condition, would be shocked when I announced his death.

After returning from the hospice center in the middle of the night, I sat down at my dad's keyboard, with my grieving mother—his partner for almost 60 years—sitting near me, and started writing the news of his death on his Facebook page. I remember thinking if ever there was a time when I needed to get something exactly right on my first draft, this was it.

The emergencies and challenges and anxiety of my dad's final days ensured I was so sleep-deprived by then, in the wee hours of Jan. 9, that I wrote he had died on Jan. 10. This immediately led to confusion for the next few hours, with science fiction fans—who are always eager to argue the minutiae of any topic, no matter how absurd—immediately wondering where on planet Earth it was already Jan. 10? Or was Mike Resnick time traveling? Why had I written Jan. 10? And so on, until someone pointed out, "Her dad just died."

Anyhow, within minutes of posting, I saw reactions and announcements swirling around Facebook in multiple languages. In the hours, days, and weeks that followed, there was a deluge of very moving public tributes to my father, as well as dozens of heartwarming private emails, cards, and phone calls. As I write this, I'm aware of two publications preparing tributes to him in their next editions.

My father was a major science fiction writer, one of the most outstanding of his generation. He was nominated 11 times for a Nebula Award (given out by the Science Fiction/Fantasy Writers of America), and he famously holds the record for the most Hugo Award nominations of any writer in science fiction history. (The Hugos are awarded by the World Science Fiction Society and are the genre's most coveted award.) He was nominated for 37 Hugo Awards, and he won five times: three times for Best Short Story ("Kirinyaga," "The 43 Antarean Dynasties," and "Travels With My Cats"); once for Best Novelette ("The Manamouki"); once for Best Novella (*Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge*—which also won a Nebula Award). He was also the first person to be nominated for four Hugo Awards in a single year (1995). He additionally won or was nominated for awards in Japan, Australia, Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, and Poland. Indeed, his list of honors is so extensive, I had to refer to an [online list](#) to get these numbers right.

He was a prolific writer, releasing about 70 novels and hundreds of works of short fiction during his career, as well as hundreds of articles and essays. He was also a prolific editor, editing more than 40 short fiction anthologies over the years. Additionally, he was the founding editor of *Galaxy's Edge*, a short fiction magazine he continued working on until his death. Announcing his passing, the magazine's publisher, Shahid Mahmud, wrote, "I have lost my mentor, my partner and a very good friend."

One of Pop's proudest achievements in his later years was cultivating new talent in the genre. Reflecting on his passing on Jan. 9, bestseller John Scalzi accurately [predicted](#), "What I think you will see most in the tributes that will be coming out in the next few days is the fact he was a teacher and mentor to a great number of writers in the science fiction community, sharing advice about writing and the writing life over decades. There are working writers today who unironically think of themselves as 'Mike's children,' which is a testament to his influence."

And many of the tributes have indeed focused on that aspect of his life—helping new writers and encouraging new talent to thrive in the genre.

When accepting the Writers of the Future Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018, my dad said, “It’s a given that when you’ve had a successful career, you pay back. But in this field, it’s almost impossible because, by the time you’ve been a remarkable success, everybody who helped you is either rich, or dead, or both. So you pay forward.”

He did. As an experienced author, he gave advice and counsel to almost any serious new writer who sought it, and he helped many of them network and make connections in the sf/f genre. He also co-authored dozens of works with new authors, helping them hone their craft and gain publishing credits. In his role as a Hugo-nominated editor, he actively sought and worked with new talent, making a point of including new authors in nearly every anthology he edited and in every edition of *Galaxy’s Edge*.

Writer, folk rock singer, and Grammy Award winner Janis Ian wrote, “His ability to make young writers feel respected, and the time he spent mentoring them, is unparalleled... His passing leaves a hole in my world that will never be filled.”

Film director Patrick Read Johnson said on Twitter, “A wonderful man, and a fantastic voice. We collaborated, years ago, on an early attempt at getting Santiago to the silver screen. Universal didn't get it. But the experience of working with him was unforgettable.”

*Game of Thrones* author George R.R. Martin [wrote](#), “Science fiction has lost a fine writer, a unique voice, a magnificent mentor... and a profoundly good and decent man.”

Frankly, my dad would have loved all this. It’s a shame he’s not here to experience it.

And, obviously, it’s very gratifying for me (and certainly for my mom) to see how appreciated my father was. He loved writing, science fiction, and sf/f fandom passionately, and he lived his dream by becoming an integral part of that world and experiencing such recognition for his work.

But to me, he was, well, just my dad. In fact, I wound up posting a link on my Facebook page to the [Locus obituary](#) recounting his career so my personal friends would better understand what all the hoopla was about; because to them, he was just “Laura’s dad.”

My dad thought the Andrews Sisters performed the last good pop music ever recorded. He loved dogs, hated vegetables, and was ambivalent about cats. He was severely color-blind, but well-attuned to spatial relations. So I had him hang all the art in my house, which he laid out well, but I had to supervise because he couldn’t see what colors he was working with. My dad was completely devoted to my mom, and he wanted his cremated ashes to be mingled with hers someday (which I will do). He was obsessed with horse racing (but never placed bets), as well as African history, culture, and wildlife. He was so incompetent in the kitchen he could barely make a peanut butter sandwich (his favorite food). For decades, Pop wrote all night and slept past noon every day. Most of my high school friends remember him as “the scary dad,” because he was gruff and scowly; but when a close friend of mine from those days was going through a painful divorce while I was out of the country for months, he spoke with her on the phone at length several times.

And I knew in mid-December that my dad wasn’t going to make it, because that’s when he asked me to finish writing *Lord of Nightmares* for him.



He had always wanted to collaborate with me. Although we otherwise didn't talk that much about writing or publishing (we mostly talked about family stuff), this was a perpetual refrain for years. He co-authored many stories and books with other writers, and he kept asking me to collaborate with him. I always refused, because co-writing anything with my dad would be bad for family harmony and my treasured sanity.

Years ago, I did agree to write the introduction to a collection of his co-authored short stories, *With A Little Help From My Friends*. As soon as I said yes, he started telling me exactly what he wanted me to write.

"This is why I will never collaborate with you," I told him. "THIS."

But in response to my father's dying request, I agreed to finish writing *Lord of Nightmares*. He left the book about half done, and for the remainder of the novel, there's a set of notes which, of *course*, tell me exactly what to write.

Cheers, old man—you got your way, after all. So go in peace.



Mike Resnick, 1942-2020

---

Nink columnist [Laura Resnick](#) began her career by writing more than a dozen romance novels, then switched to writing fantasy—including writing short stories for about a dozen of her father's self anthologies.

# Membership Benefits

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

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

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

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

## Networking

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

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

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

Follow NINC on Twitter: [https://twitter.com/Novelists\\_Inc](https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc)

## Conference 2020:

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

Conference registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/>

Conference e-loop: <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2020/>

## Newsletter

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Welcome Packet: [http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017\\_New\\_Member\\_Welcome\\_Packet-public.pdf](http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017_New_Member_Welcome_Packet-public.pdf)

## Member discounts

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

We've been reapproved for the **IngramSpark discount** for NINC, which includes: Free title setup for P, E, and P&E. IngramSpark pays attention to how much we use this before we are approved each year, so **please continue to enjoy the discount to keep it live**. All the information, including how to access the discount, is on our Members Freebies and Discounts page at our website and for members only.

## Volunteer

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

Open positions include:

- Inclusion and Diversity Task Force
- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- Anything!



*Founded in 1989*

### **NINC Statement of Principle**

Novelists, Inc., in acknowledgment of the crucial creative contributions novelists make to society, asserts the right of novelists to be treated with dignity and in good faith; to be recognized as the sole owners of their literary creations; to be fairly compensated for their creations when other entities are profiting from those creations; and to be accorded the respect and support of the society they serve.

### **Founders**

- Rebecca Brandewyne
- Janice Young Brooks
- Jasmine Cresswell
- Maggie Osborne
- Marianne Shock

### **2020 Board of Directors**

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

- President: Tawdra Kandle
- President-Elect:
- Secretary: Hallee Bridgeman
- Treasurer: Pam McCutcheon
- Newsletter Editor: Michele Dunaway
- Advisory Council Representative: Lou Aronica

### **Advisory Council**

- Lou Aronica
- Brenda Hiatt Barber
- Linda Barlow
- Jean Brashear
- Janice Young Brooks
- Laura Parker Castoro
- Meredith Efken
- Donna Fletcher
- Kay Hooper

- Barbara Keiler
- Julie Leto
- Pat McLaughlin
- Kasey Michaels
- Julie Ortolon
- Diana Peterfreund
- Pat Rice
- Erica Ridley
- Marianne Shock
- Wayne Stinnett
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

## **2020 Committees**

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

- 2020 Conference Committee:
  - Conference Coordinator: Mel Jolly
  - Programming Chair: Tawdra Kandle
  - Asst. Prog. Chair & Trade Show: Lisa Hughey
  - Sponsorship & Trade Show: Rochelle Paige
  - Traditional Publishing Liaison: Victoria Thompson
  - Annabel Chase
- Authors Coalition Rep: Laura Phillips & Sue Phillips
- Social Media Committee:
  - Chair: Jenna Kernan
  - Rick Gualteieri
  - Lisa Hughey
  - Christine Breen
- Membership Committee
  - Sarah Woodbury
  - Boyd Craven
- *Nink* Newsletter
  - Editor: Michele Dunaway
  - Assistant Editor: Nicole Evelina
  - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
  - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee:
  - Tanya Anne Crosby
  - Kathy Carmichael
  - Kristine Smith
  - Jenny Gardiner
  - Rick Gualtieri

- Technology Committee
  - Nick Thacker
  - Elizabeth Ann West
  - Jamie McFarlane
  - Erica Ridley
- Discount Program Chair: Emilie Richards
- Volunteer Jobs (Just One Thing) Coordinator: Lois Lavrisa

### **Central Coordinator**

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin

P.O. Box 54, Hartland MI 48353

[admin@ninc.com](mailto:admin@ninc.com)

*Address changes may be made on the website.*

### **Nink Newsletter**

*February 2020 edition – Vol. 31, No. 2*

NINC remains committed to serving all of our members, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs if any, ability, nationality or age. It is NINC's desire and goal to make sure that every author member feels welcomed and accepted and heard. To this end, *Nink's* goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members.

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

Publication: 12 issues annually. Available in PDF, mobi and epub formats. Public issues redact NINC members-only information.

To change subscription preferences, please contact [admin@ninc.com](mailto:admin@ninc.com).

---

*Copyright ©2020 by Novelists, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission.*