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President's Voice

By Lisa Hughey



Lots of great things happening at NINC right now. Our committees are hard at work, striving to make NINC an organization we can all be proud of.

The DEI Committee is in the process of drafting an Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy which will be posted on our (brand new!) website as soon as it is completed. The conference will also have a policy in place. It's unfortunate that we need to have one, but it is a necessary step in our organization's evolution. Please remember to be respectful of your fellow authors.

The new website launched (not without some difficulties) but thanks to the tireless efforts of several NINC volunteers and paid staff, we are moving toward getting the glitches taken care of.

Huge thanks to Laura Phillips for attending to our membership in the Authors Coalition over the past few years. Please thank Rebecca Zanetti for agreeing to take over this role. By following certain guidelines, we are eligible to receive funds from the ACA annually. If you want to know more, please visit: <https://authorscoalition.org>.

The conference committee has been hard at work recruiting a fabulous slate of speakers and sponsors. Please check out the conference report from Tawdra Kandle, our programming chair. If you haven't registered yet, don't wait too long. We are nearing capacity.

Finally, we had a lively discussion about sensitivity readers on NINCLink recently. This month's *Nink* has an excellent article by Nisi Shawl—who gave an informative and thought-provoking presentation on writing the Other at the NINC conference a few years ago—on both the how to and why you should use a sensitivity reader.

Happy Spring!

~ Lisa

USA Today best-selling author [Lisa Hughey](#) writes about strong heroines who are perfectly capable of rescuing themselves and the heroes who love both their strength and their vulnerability. She pens romances of all types—suspense, paranormal, and contemporary—but at their heart, her books celebrate the power of love. She lives in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, with her fabulously supportive husband, two out of three awesome mostly grown kids, and one somewhat grumpy cat.

About NINC

NINC is committed to welcoming a diverse and inclusive membership to our organization and serving all members. No author will ever be discriminated against on the basis 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.

About *Nink*

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; [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

NINC Member Benefits

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), [traditionally published 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](#).

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/>



NINC 2022 WORK SMARTER

Planning for [NINC2022: Work Smarter](#) is rolling along right on schedule!

Registration on Opening Day was a huge success, even considering a few small website glitches. Our members were patient and pleasant as the team ironed out the blips.

As of this writing, we are now at 82% capacity for members and 75% for author assistants. We are anticipating that the conference will sell out shortly, so we encourage you to [register now](#) if you plan to attend in September.

We are also pleased to announce that we have added to our speaker roster. While we are still awaiting a few more confirmations, our contracted invited speakers as of now include: Melanie Harlow, Elana Johnson, Monica Leonelle, Janet Margot, Nora Phoenix, Julia Spencer-Fleming, Carol Van Den Hende, Skye Warren, Susan May Warren, and Jasinda and Jack Wilder.

Confirmed Sponsor and Industry Guests include: Kevin Tumlinson and Dan Wood of Draft2Digital, Ricardo Fayet of Reedsy, Ryan Zee and Cameron Sutton of Plottr, and Brad Andalman and Brad West of Vellum, with more industry friends registering every day!

A reminder that the conference will take place September 21-25 at the Tradewinds Island Grand Resort in St. Pete Beach, Florida. The deadline to register is July 31.

If you are already registered, we urge you to book your hotel rooms now—our block and the hotel overall are both selling out rapidly.

See you in September at the beach!



Tawdra Kandle is the USA Today bestselling author of over 100 romances that span genres from contemporary through paranormal. Her engaging and realistic characters bring readers back again and again to devour the steamy love stories she spins. She lives in central Florida with a husband, a mischievous pup, and too many cats.

We Need to Talk About COVID

By Mindy Klasky



As we enter our third year of the pandemic, writers of contemporary fiction face a dilemma: to write about the coronavirus or not.* In the past, diseases have formed a backbone for artistic storytelling—tuberculosis in *La Bohème*, for example, or AIDS in *Angels in America*—written while the maladies they discuss continued to spread uncontrolled. But are contemporary audiences ready to face stories about COVID? And if they are, what potential pitfalls await authors of those tales?

Taking the market's temperature

As the pandemic began, books and movies about imaginary contagions flourished. Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* rose to bestseller status (and resulted in an HBO Max series.) The movie *Contagion* was one of the most-viewed films on streaming platforms. Even the nonfiction *The Hot Zone* (about ebola) enjoyed high levels of renewed interest.

Most television shows took production breaks early in the pandemic, suspending filming while health care professionals determined safe ways for actors and staff to interact on sets. When shows returned, some ignored the pandemic entirely. Others, though, incorporated our new reality, with characters wearing masks. Some shows set in medical facilities (e.g., *Grey's Anatomy*) featured COVID as a primary plot point.

Similarly, books have begun to illustrate the pandemic. Blockbuster authors such as Liane Moriarty (*Apples Never Fall*) and Sally Rooney (*Beautiful World, Where Are You*) incorporate COVID as plot points, including the need to social distance, wear masks, and otherwise modify behavior to avoid infection.

Genre fiction sometimes trails nonfiction and literary fiction in addressing serious social and cultural issues. Many readers view genre fiction as an “escape,” an opportunity to avoid the

most challenging problems of modern life. (In the alternative, though, some genre fiction provides a safe haven for exploring divisive issues such as racism, climate change, and human rights.) Genre fiction is poised to address COVID.

Where do we go from here?

A Google search for “love in the age of COVID” returns more than half a million hits. Most of those are articles, books, and films (along with reviews of same) set during the pandemic. As authors gear up to address the coronavirus, they should consider several points to keep their work responsible and make their stories attractive to readers.

As an initial matter, the pandemic—and our response thereto—is highly politicized. [Nearly a quarter](#) of Americans have refused any vaccine; one third are not fully vaccinated with two doses and a booster. (Some of these gaps in vaccination are due to medical necessity or religious objection, but most are [grounded in political disagreement](#).) Similarly, there is a broad range in masking and social distancing behaviors.

These conflict-filled realities can lead to compelling plotlines with strong characterizations. But the authors who write those stories must realize that a substantial portion of their reading audience is likely to be alienated by the stances their characters support. The usual tendency among readers to assume that authors “are” their characters, experiencing and supporting everything those characters do, is exacerbated by the heightened emotions related to the pandemic. More than ever, authors must be aware of the effects their narrative choices will have and be prepared to confront disagreement on social media and elsewhere.

All authors writing contemporary fiction share an obligation to present facts accurately. But those facts are even more important when writing about the highly divisive pandemic. Precise timelines are vital for authors attempting to capture the details of medical treatment, public health recommendations, and social interactions.

Similarly, daily life over the past two years has varied substantially, depending on where a person is located. The virus’s grip has ebbed and flowed, from major cities to rural outposts. While authors might successfully create imaginary locales for their characters, they need to root those sites in specific places, observing the medical realities of those locations throughout the pandemic. Doing otherwise risks completely toppling the realism of a book.

Humor introduces an added complication for authors writing about the pandemic. Some readers will feel that a light-hearted approach is never appropriate for a life-threatening topic. Others will accept a satiric or sardonic approach, but they’ll be uncomfortable with less serious tones. Still others will be grateful for traditional light storylines and the opportunity to uncover positive aspects in the darkest of times.

As authors, we know it is impossible to write the perfect book for all readers. But fiction based during and about the coronavirus pandemic brings that reality home in a stark way. Some books about COVID—factually accurate ones with carefully drawn characters balancing the difficult choices every one of us has faced—will be destined for readers’ keepsake shelves. Others, though, that are slapdash, inaccurate, unsympathetic or—worst of all—unaware of the freighted issues they contain, will likely be discarded by readers both during the pandemic and in the future.

*In the interest of full disclosure, I launched *The C Word* in 2021. A romantic comedy set during the pandemic, it was originally presented as the first of three volumes in my “Love in the Age of COVID” series. That series has now been renamed “Love in 2020.”

*USA Today bestselling author [Mindy Klasky](#)'s most recent novel is the romantic comedy *The F Word*, the second volume in her *Love in 2020 Series*. Mindy learned to read when her parents shoved a book in her hands and told her she could travel anywhere through stories. As a writer, Klasky has traveled through various genres, including romantic comedy, contemporary romance, and traditional fantasy. In her spare time, she knits, quilts, and tries to tame her to-be-read shelf.*

Steel Snowflakes

Cultural consultants and sensitivity readers

By Nisi Shawl



Writing is powerful. We writers create amazing imaginary worlds, then lure readers inside of them. Using a sensitivity reader is one way we can ensure our readers' experience is completely captivating. "Sensitivity reader" is a newish term, though. What does it mean? How does using one help?

How to define one

A sensitivity reader (sometimes called a cultural consultant) will review your work for hurtful and clueless content, then create a report outlining what's wrong, what's missing, and, often, ways to make relevant aspects of your work better. The ideal sensitivity reader has a few important qualities: they're a thorough and thoughtful reader, they have a meaningful connection with the material you want them to review, and they're familiar with the many pitfalls that beset a writer trying to portray characters and settings based on people and cultures beyond that writer's personal background. If they're also an author themselves, so much the better.

Throughout this article I'll primarily talk about sensitivity readers. Cultural consultants can be thought of as a special subset of sensitivity readers; they're specifically focused on the social and community matrices in which your characters operate, while sensitivity readers cover that kind of thing plus traits more reflective of individual experiences such as birth order and jobs held, plus the many potential intersections between all these elements.

When to use one

It's always a good idea to employ a sensitivity reader when your fictional milieu differs significantly from the one you're used to living in. And it's especially helpful to get a sensitivity

reader's input when your characters' demographic traits differ significantly from your own—when you are, as I and my workshop co-teachers say, “Writing the Other.”

While writers are great observers of human behavior, our fictional depictions of it depend on our experiences. Priorities, nuances, dramatic choices—so many aspects of our literary creations are influenced in a thousand ways by our possession or lack of privileges, and by expectations we don't realize we have. Cultural consultants and sensitivity readers are trained to note the things most of us have trained ourselves to gloss over, and to analyze events we ignore or label as normal, such as television show announcers making jokes about the pronunciation of “exotic” names.

You may want to call on sensitivity readers' services more than once per project. Those of us who work from outlines could conceivably get some benefit out of their feedback even at that early stage. If you expect to fold in critiques from beta readers before moving on to your final round of edits, that's also an opportunity for making revisions based on the reports of sensitivity readers. Once all those changes are made, a last review might well be in order so as to catch any freshly instituted infelicities, and also to look out for any elements whose impacts are changed by your revamped text.

How to find one

The best way to find a sensitivity reader is via word-of-electronic-mouth. There are websites advertising their services, though some of these sites have been known to take large commissions and engage in exploitive practices with their readers. A friend who appears on the Writing Diversely site's [directory](#) testifies she's satisfied with their fees and treatment, and there may be others operating as fairly. Still, inquiring among your acquaintances—online and in the flesh—can also yield good results. And personal requests for help that draw on wider pools of experts also come with the added punch of your reputation and the reputational weight of those you get to pass them along.

You'll be hunting for people whose backgrounds are closer matches than your own to that of “Others” you're portraying, of course. But you should also be on the watch for those whose backgrounds, though not an exact match for your material, include experience with issues of inclusion and representation in general. Often they'll be able to pick out problematic passages you wouldn't expect them to see. For instance, I was once asked to examine a character whose author suspected it of being a “Magical Negro”—a common fantasy stereotype of a magically powerful Black person who places all their gifts at the disposal of a story's white hero. I had no problems with that character, but I called out another in the script as a “Magical Gypsy.” The latter character traveled all over Europe obtaining ingredients for the white hero's potions, without any benefit to themselves. I'm not Romany, but I've seen enough racial stereotypes, and enough instances of that one in particular, to be able to spot it in action.

In your inquiries for sensitivity readers mention the nature of the text you want help with (including genre and length), what sort of perspectives you lack (that of an adoptee, for example, or of a Pacific Islander), and the deadline you'll need input by. And emphasize your willingness to pay for the work.

What to pay one

When I mentioned to my critique group that I was writing this article, one member wanted me to instruct you to pay “double what you’d pay a regular consultant, because the work’s so emotionally draining.” There’s no meaningful way to compensate someone for the psychological pain of steeping yourself in another’s ill-conceived depiction of yourself and your community—even if that depiction isn’t intended to be hurtful. But along with giving a sensitivity reader the going rate, you can offer them further benefits.

That going rate, by the way, is subject to variation. There are some who charge a flat fee, and also some who invoice by the hour, by the page, by the character, by the chapter, and so on. One woman of my acquaintance who offers this service charges a fee of \$300 for a novel of up to 75,000 words, plus another \$10 for each additional thousand words. Short story fees are more typically one flat amount, though that amount can range between \$50 and \$100.

In addition to paying your sensitivity reader the money they bill you for—promptly and in full—be certain to pay attention to what they tell you. I recently was asked to vet a manuscript which I happened to know had already been reviewed by at least four other sensitivity readers. Every one of them had advised the author asking for their help to drop the novel due to its offensive and hurtful premise. And every one of them had been ignored as the author sought out the approval of yet another of their colleagues. This struck me as hilarious, but also as disrespectful. While it’s often useful to get more than one opinion of your work, angling over and over again for its validation is ridiculous.

Respect your sensitivity reader. Listen to what they have to tell you concerning the issues you asked them to address, and also concerning any others you didn’t realize needed addressing.

Opinion is divided on whether to credit your sensitivity reader when your work is published. Respect and the ability to listen come once more to the rescue: simply ask what they’d prefer. Of course you’re not obligated to name or acknowledge anyone. But in my opinion you *are* obligated *not* to mention them if that’s their wish.

How to process one’s report

Again: pay attention to the points your sensitivity reader is making. Don’t pooh-pooh their conclusions as unimportant nonsense. Don’t blame them for misunderstanding what you really meant to say. Believe them when they tell you that your Mulan analog would never willingly show the soles of her feet to her guests, and change your manuscript accordingly.

If you have multiple sensitivity readers, collate their reports for easier application. If the input you receive from them is contradictory or confusing, you can ask for clarification. But be willing to bear the ultimate responsibility for whatever appears on your pages. When readers find fault with what you’ve done, impress on them the fact that you’re ready and willing to listen and learn how to improve.

How to become one

Is this article inspiring you to reevaluate your own areas of diversity expertise? If you’re up for offering access to them to the rest of us, you can start by noting this on your author website

and mentioning it to your author friends. At first you should be prepared to accept assignments paying little or nothing; that's how you build a résumé and collect client recommendations. Review reports you've received on your own writing for tips on how to construct them. If you count a sensitivity reader among your friends, get their tips, too.

The Writing Diversely website is currently closed to listing new sensitivity readers in their directory, but that may change. Or you may find another, similar venue. Meanwhile, you can schedule yourself.

Snowflakes of steel

When a member of a marginalized community is taunted for their negative reaction to offensive or hurtful portrayals, they're called a "snowflake." The implication is that they're overly sensitive, both fragile and ephemeral. But when we use this sensitivity as a tool to better our stories it becomes a strength. Let's cut through harmful stereotypes and ignorance to get to the truths our fiction can convey.

Nisi Shawl co-authored *Writing the Other: A Practical Approach*, a standard text on inclusivity and the basis for their many classes and workshops on the subject. They also wrote the *Otherwise* Award-winning story collection *Filter House*, and edited *New Suns: Speculative Fiction by People of Color*, winner of the *World Fantasy* and *Ignyte* awards. *Everfair*, their debut novel, was a 2016 *Nebula* finalist.

Six Easy Ways To Use Goodreads That Won't Make You Look at Your Reviews

By Harper St. George



Social media isn't what it used to be. We've all felt the crunch with our posts not reaching readers on Facebook like they used to without having to pay to boost your posts. Finding followers on Instagram who actually want to read your books can be tough. Twitter can be its own minefield. Well, have you considered [Goodreads](#)? This major social media site has over 125 million members, and the best part is that they're all readers. Even better, readers who would enjoy your books are on Goodreads.

We, in the book community, have all heard the advice that authors should avoid Goodreads at all costs! This is probably true if you're going to Goodreads to look up your reviews. Negative reviews there can seem worse and more descriptive than on any bookseller website. But there are things authors can do on Goodreads that will increase interaction with readers without going down the review rabbit hole.

What follows is a list of quick and easy things authors can do from the author dashboard or homepage without delving into the reviews of their books.

1. List a print or Kindle book for giveaway.

- Perhaps the best part of a giveaway is that once someone enters the giveaway the book is added to their "Want-to-Read" shelf. If your giveaway is for a preorder, then Goodreads sends a new release alert email to everyone who has the book on their "Want-to-Read" shelf. This is why I always schedule giveaways to end before release day. This email is simply one other way to get your new book in front of readers. (Note: Giveaways need to be scheduled at least three days before they start, so take that into consideration when scheduling before a new release.)

- At one time giveaways were free, but it now costs either \$119 or \$599 depending on which level you select. Personally, I've found the \$119 level to work fine. Once your listing is live, the giveaway notice will appear in the newsfeed of all of your friends/followers. If they like or comment on the update, then their friends will also see it in their newsfeed (depending on their privacy settings).
- Once someone enters the giveaway, this action shows up in their newsfeed so that their friends see that they've entered. For example: one person enters the giveaway, and they have 100 friends; those 100 people will see your giveaway. If 100 people enter your giveaway, each with 100 friends, then 10,000 people have seen your giveaway and photo of your book cover.

2. Add book updates as you are writing.

Back in the first year of the pandemic, I took a short Goodreads webinar given by [Alessandra Torre](#). One of the things she mentions is to add the book you are currently writing to Goodreads. She believes this is one of the most important things you can do before your book is available for sale. This way you can add updates about the book as you write. These teasers are a few sentences long, or up to 420 characters. She suggests doing them at short intervals as you finish the book, such as at 15%, 25%, 40%, and so on. These teasers show up in your followers' newsfeeds and help ramp up anticipation for the book. You can also post ARC signup information in the updates when the book is close to being finished. (Her webinar is free and filled with a lot of great tips.)

3. Use the blog post feature.

This one is quick and easy because you don't need to actually write a new post to use this feature. You can repurpose things you have already written and simply paste them in. Have you written a great Facebook post about one of your characters? Copy and paste it into your Goodreads blog. Did you share an interesting piece of background information about your current book or series in your recent newsletter? Copy and paste it into your Goodreads blog. Be sure to add buy links and photos to your blog posts. You can even use a blog post to tease a reader freebie and post a newsletter signup link. It is also a great spot to post ARC signups. Each blog post will display in your friends/followers' newsfeeds.

[Chéré Coen](#), who also writes and blogs as [Cherie Claire](#), shares that she has the blog on her website automatically feed into her Goodreads blog. The process is fully automated and isn't something that she has to think about. Her Goodreads followers get a notice every time she has a new blog post.

4. Create a Featured Author Group.

This one comes recommended by [Dave Chesson](#) of [Kindlepreneur](#). Goodreads suggests that you create the group and name it something such as "Ask [author] anything" and set the date you'll answer questions for a specified time period. Goodreads recommends that you set the time limit for at least a day. A quick look through these groups shows a time range from five

days to two weeks is common. You can set the discussion thread to email reader questions to you as they come in or set it to digest mode and receive daily alerts. This way the author gets to decide when they want to set aside time in their day or week to answer questions. The author can also assign someone to be a moderator for the group. There is also an area to set rules for the group.

Goodreads features all groups in the Groups and the Authors sections of the website. They also select several of them to feature in their monthly newsletter. They encourage authors to contact them to ask to be featured. This might be something to try around a new release. Learn more about Featured Author Groups from Goodreads [here](#).

5. Review your own book.

While it's generally frowned upon to write a glowing review about your own book and give yourself five stars, reviews from the author are another way to communicate with readers. Don't give yourself a star rating, but you can use this space to talk about your experience writing the book, give a little snippet, or any other information you want to share with readers. It's also another place you can include links to your books, newsletter signup, and website. You can also include teaser graphics. Reviews from the author show up at the top of the reviews section on the book's page, so it will be the first review readers see.

6. Use the Quote feature.

There are two ways to add quotes from your books to Goodreads. If you have your Goodreads account linked to your Kindle, you can go through and highlight quotes and those quotes get uploaded to the book's page on Goodreads. Another way to do this is to go to the Quotes page on Goodreads, which is under the Community tab. The top right has a link labeled "Add a quote." Click on this and start adding quotes from your books. Just like all the other actions members can do on Goodreads, this will show up in the newsfeeds of your friends and followers. This is a feature you can encourage your readers to use, which will then show quotes from your books to their friends in their newsfeeds. They will also display on the book's page and hopefully convert some cold readers to your books.

Just like with all social media platforms, your mileage may vary. You have to decide what you are comfortable doing online and what takes up too much of your time. Coen says that she gets good interaction from her readers by recommending books that she is reading on the platform, particularly books that are similar to the books she writes.

[Armand Rosamilia](#) adds, "I use Goodreads as a reader first and foremost with their yearly reading challenge. It is so important to review books that I read and add them to Goodreads (as well as Amazon and BookBub) with the hope karma comes back to me and readers review my own books!"

Alternately, [Tara Wyatt](#) shares that she scaled back all her social media activity, including Goodreads, in an effort to work less and focus on the marketing that has the biggest impact for her. She says, "I think it's easy to feel like you have to do all the things and be on all the platforms, especially if you're indie, but that's a recipe for madness."

It's important to remember that social media isn't a magic bullet to the top, but a long game that keeps your books in front of readers. If you think you can manage an extra hour or two a month to devote to Goodreads, it's something worth considering. Every little bit helps as long as you're not overextending yourself. Those little bits can add up.

Harper St. George writes historical fiction romance set in various time periods from the Viking Era to the Gilded Age. Her latest series is *The Gilded Age Heiresses*. She lives in the Atlanta area with her family.

Estate Planning

Making it easy

By M. L. "Matt" Buchman



Every time I've given a talk on the topic of estate planning, I see fear and panic abound. Even mentioning it gives authors hives. Here is a low-stress strategy.

The legal stuff

Yes, you need a will (or your estate can disappear into contention for years). You probably need a living trust to move all of that IP neatly forward to your heir(s). But those are both matters for a lawyer. Find a lawyer and do it. Do it now! But this article isn't about that. It's about the other "stuff" that is completely in your control.

Premises

1. If you make it hard on your heir(s), your IP will probably be left to dwindle into oblivion. Just a quick reminder, copyright (with few exceptions these days) can keep earning for 70 years after the time of your death. That's your great-grandkids at least (or your favorite charity or whoever). You don't want it to go to waste.
2. This isn't about your legacy because, to be blunt about it, you're dead. This is about the *earnings* that your IP can continue to produce for others.
3. Do *not* assume that your heir(s) speaks "publishing." All communications need to be in everyday English.

Step 1: Basic heir education (the tour)

This is literally what it sounds like. The next time your heir is visiting, take 10 minutes and walk them through your office. Here are a few points to cover:

- My will is here. Here's the lawyer's contact information.
- All of my accounting is in this drawer. Here's the accountant's contact information (or just knowing you don't use one and your prior tax filings are in that cabinet).
- All of my IP is stored on this computer (we'll get to that in a moment).
- My backups are stored here and here. (You do have a daily onsite and a weekly offsite backup, don't you?)

Step 2: More heir education (key contacts)

Are these on your phone, in your address book, in your email addresses, with your friend...? If you're like me, it was yes to all of the above, often without overlap. Pull all of this information into one place; it will be a list you send to your heir. Include:

- Attorney
- CPA
- Publisher, agent, and/or virtual assistant
- Publicity firm
- Accounts at bank(s)
- And, I think this may be the most important: three close publishing friends willing to give your heir advice
- As a bonus: retirement accounts
- As a second bonus: write out a short list of where everything physically is in your office [see *No. 1 (the tour)*, above].

Step 3: Organize – Level one (in the physical world)

Think about the tour. How messy was it? Are all your past taxes on the same shelf?

Some of us have old IP that only exists in paper form. Fine! Put it all on a shelf marked "no electronic copy" so that it is findable. Better yet, get it scanned.

Fixing most of this is actually a very short project. It would probably take you longer to clean the house. Take an hour to gather, organize, and label. The real surprise will be how much time it saves you as well when you can go to one place and know that all of your physical IP is on that shelf there.

Step 4: Organize – Level two (on the computer)

But most of your IP in this day and age is electronic: the final Word document you sent to your publisher, your Scrivener or Vellum file, your cover designer's work, your blurbs, your reviews... You get the idea. How well organized is it? How well labeled is it?

Is it even all on one "master" machine or are your files spread around on the desktop, the laptop, but the Vellum files are on the Mac, and...? My wife's computer has all of the money (Quicken and QuickBooks), mine has all the IP, so we have two main machines. But I dutifully copy every Vellum file I create on my Mac (third machine) to my PC so that all of the IP masters are always in one place.

On my computer, I then created a few master folders and spent a few hours just dragging files into the proper places.

- Master folders: Books, Audio, Business, Marketing, Other Writing (like this article, my PowerPoint talks, and notes from conferences), Personal
- And within the Books folder? I have: Series Name, Book Title inside that, and maybe a further subfolder for covers and translations.

This project won't take much longer than Step 1 above. Magic, now you can find everything quickly! (Totally worth it!)

Step 5: Organize – Level three (the tracker)

If you want your heir to have any real chance of managing all that you've created, they need two pieces of information about every book or story you've ever written:

- A list of titles and where they are
- The detailed metadata of those titles

This may sound easy, but these two steps are far and away the most laborious tasks: simple, not stressful, but not fast.

I do this in two parts: a spreadsheet for the first and a series of Word documents for the second. However, you can do this in any form that works for you; pages in a notebook is another common method. First in importance:

List of titles (if you want a spreadsheet, download a free Excel template from my site at <https://mlbuchman.com/mybooks>)

- Title
- Publication date
- ISBN(s)
- Number of pages if in print
- Date of rights reversion, including 35-year reversion date if traditionally published. Here's an excellent post on that: [Reclaiming Your Copyright After Thirty-Five Years \(dearauthor.com\)](#).
- Markets/distributors published into. For an indie published wide, this might be: Amazon, Apple, B&N, D2D, Google Play, IngramSpark (print), Kobo, PublishDrive... I have a column for each one.
- Also I list if I've done the audio or translations, just for easy reference.

Step 6: Organize – Level four (the metadata)

I recommend a single document (Word or on paper) for every single title. I prominently place META in the file title along with the IP's title (My Cool Title–META.docx). This content may be simpler for a traditionally published title, but you'll still want most of it.

- Title and subtitle
- Series name and number

- Elevator pitch (the one-line hook)
- Blurb (now being called Description by most retailers)
- Categories (The choices are different for different distributors, e.g. Amazon vs. Kobo.)
- Keywords (I have three versions: B&N [100 characters maximum], IngramSpark [delineated with semi-colons], everyone else.)
- Important reviews (both full and pull quotes)

As I said, these last two tasks look daunting. However, it lets the heir or the heir's designate (like a VA or an estate manager), understand what you have created. It can also save you time by having it organized. I keep my master spreadsheet in the Books folder on my computer, and the META file in each IP title's individual folder.

Step 7: The letter

I would argue that this step is of equal importance to any of the work above. But I think it is best composed *after* you've done the organization. This is a letter, in your words, to your heir(s). Again, this *must* not be instructions, but rather guidance.

Think of my third premise above: "Do *not* assume that your heir speaks publishing." How many would even know what phrases like IP and D2D above refer to?

Write your letter in conversational English. You'll never guess what it has for sections:

- Introduction
- Who do I contact?
- Where can I find the key stuff: will, trust, bank books, passwords?
- Vocabulary and basic publishing education
- Where is the money?
- Where can I find all the publishing crap?
- Master file explanations

Then sit down with your heir(s), and read through the letter together. Their questions create new paragraphs.

Step 8: The last step (keep it updated)

Now when I write a new title, it is logged in my master spreadsheet and I create the META file in the title's folder. My cover goes in the same folder (Books > Series > Title).

When I moved states recently, I had to change my lawyer and CPA. I updated the contact list and sent a copy to my heir(s).

I've also included an IP management path. "Here's the VA to send everything to." Or, "Here's the charity that is willing to manage it and give you a percentage as a completely hands-off income."

I've worked with several people who are trying to create IP estate management firms, but this is still an unformed industry. I have heard too many horror stories of share-based operations where the agent or firm gets a percentage for life no matter whether or not they pay attention to the estate. My suggestion is that there are two ways to pay for these types of

services: fee-based (pay by the task they do) or commission-based (they get a share of profits if they grow the estate).

Do these simple steps and your IP could well live on to benefit several generations to come. If you have questions, contact me through [my website](#).

More detail on all of these topics and a sample letter are included in Estate Planning for Authors by M. L. Buchman.

USA Today and Amazon No. 1 bestseller M. L. "Matt" Buchman is the author of 70-plus action-adventure thriller and military romance novels, 100 short stories, and lots of audiobooks. PW says: "Tom Clancy fans open to a strong female lead will clamor for more." Booklist declared: "3X Top 10 of the Year." A project manager with a geophysics degree, he's designed and built houses, flown and jumped out of planes, solo-sailed a 50-foot sailboat, and bicycled solo around the world...and he quilts.

Smart Marketing For Savvy Authors

By Tawdra Kandle



This quarter of Smart Marketing is all about author collaboration. We'll discuss writing together, working together, and winning together.

One of my favorite parts of gathering with other authors at conferences, book signings, or retreats is trading knowledge we've gained and sharing experiences we've had. A room full of published writers is a rich resource of advice, and if you ask about things like participating in anthologies, shared worlds, or box sets, you're going to get some real talk—maybe more than you expected!

Writing and publishing collaboratively isn't a new idea. Traditional publishers have been using the idea of releasing sets of shorts or novellas with a common theme or trope for decades. The most obvious example of this book would be the much-beloved holiday anthology, long a staple of romance, historical, and mystery writers, but other themes and tropes have flourished in the past as well.

Still, early in the years of the indie revolution, indie authors took that idea and ran with it, expanding the notion of anthologies into huge, multi-volume, multi-author box sets. (When you're dealing almost exclusively with ebooks, size doesn't matter. Much.) Participating in group projects like those early ventures opened the doors to achieving goals such as hitting bestseller lists and expanding readership. Writing—and publishing—together can be a huge and lucrative marketing tool.

There are several avenues through which to write and publish with other authors. Anthologies, made up of short stories or novellas, generally revolve around one trope or season. Box sets are full books that all have a common theme—or at least a common setting, trope or subgenre. (These can be previously released books or new stories.) Shared world releases can

take any one of a variety of formats: either each author writes and publishes her own book that is set within the parameters of the world established by the consensus of the participating authors, or each author writes a book that is subsequently published by the owner of that established world.

Why are these types of joint releases so appealing to authors? [Cynthia D'Alba](#), *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of cowboy and military romance, shares a couple of answers. First, she says, there's the deadline. In the age of indie publishing, we often have less urgency and accountability when it comes to getting a book finished and out. Knowing that others are counting on us to hit all of the deadlines can be helpful.

Motivation and camaraderie are two other positives of multi-author projects, reveals D'Alba. "There's nothing like talking writing, plots, and general business with other authors. I've made a lot of new author contacts and friends (through author group projects)."

As with everything, though, there are more than a few variables to take under consideration before joining or launching any multi-author project. The first and most important decision is the goal you're seeking. While almost all collaborative publishing ventures can increase brand visibility for the participating authors, it's essential to determine if those authors also expect to make money, to expand readership, to raise funds for a charity, or to sell enough product to hit a bestseller list.

That goal can influence the type of project you undertake. A money-maker, charity fundraiser, or list-seeking book is more likely to be successful as an anthology or boxset that's released for a limited time, while readership expansion and author cross-promo might be better accomplished through a shared world or trope project. A single release such as a boxset or anthology will also usually come with attendant costs (including cover design, formatting, and outside promotion) that are generally split between participants or that are covered by the upfront buy-in.

When it's time to invite authors to join the venture, there is an entirely new list of cautions. First of all, most of those experienced in being part of a shared venture advise vetting the participants carefully. If you don't know someone yourself or haven't worked with them before, ask some trusted friends for input. The publishing community is a small world, and if an author has previously misbehaved, someone's heard of it. Very little can cripple a group project more than authors who aren't holding up their end of the bargain—think of the nightmares of late submissions, poorly edited work, and ghosting the group when it comes to marketing.

I don't know about you, but even though it's been several decades since I graduated, I remember group projects from school. I recall the anxiety that swelled when some members of the group were slow to respond or commit, and the stress caused by differing opinions and visions for the final product. The idea of replicating that sort of scenario as an adult never sounded like fun to me until I began taking seriously the process of establishing or joining groups that included authors who were as committed as I was to fulfilling the promised roles and tasks. Stick to your intuition and internal guidelines, even if you feel guilty for not including someone you don't know. You'll thank yourself later.

All of the participating authors should have a similar brand, including, for example, genre and heat level for romances, style for mysteries (cozy versus gritty), and violence/gore/heat

level for sci-fi and fantasy. It's also a good idea for all of the authors to sell on either Kindle Unlimited or wide; I can attest from personal experience that it's not easy to market an anthology written by mostly wide authors to KU readers or the reverse. An additional item of interest is that those of us who are accustomed to marketing our books wide or solely on KU tend to have radically different methods and styles when it comes to promotion, and those differences can lead to frustration for all involved.

For example, wide authors can take advantage of BookBub Featured Deals more readily than KU authors, as books that are available beyond Amazon are preferred by BookBub. Also, most of the non-Amazon vendors offer special promotion and merchandising opportunities (Kobo and BN Press have promotion dashboards while Apple announces its occasional merchandising to a list of authors) that can supplement and enhance other marketing plans.

KU authors, on the other hand, know that they are marketing to a captive audience in effect since most of their readers are used to choosing their reads from the KU catalog. Targeting that audience with Amazon ads and even Facebook ads with graphics that include the phrase *Free on KU*, as well as with newsletter content that states the same, can produce lucrative results.

When joining an anthology, boxset, or shared world project, make sure you are aware of the duration of the contract—how long is your book or novella committed to exclusivity? If you're the one setting up the group, a contract is certainly advisable. It should define the terms of the project, including but not limited to the length of time the work will be part of the project and expectations in regard to marketing and financial commitment, editing, and overall quality.

Once you've established the ground rules for everyone—or are familiar with them if you're not the one in charge—how can you maximize the marketing opportunities of an author group project?

The first step is to be prepared. An author I know who is hugely successful writing and publishing niche thrillers once told me that hitting it big in this business can be a matter of luck—but you have to be ready for the lucky moment. Laying the groundwork for your opportunity is key, and that's an important step here. Even before your anthology, boxset, or shared world project is published, have a plan in place for welcoming the new readers who will be encountering your work for the first time.

One of the best ways to use group projects to increase your visibility (and your readership) is to be intentional about the book, short story or novella you contribute. If it's from one of your existing, ongoing series that shares a setting and/or characters with other books, you've already created a hook to lead readers into the rest of the series. Be sure to include one or two lines at the end of your story to remind people how to find the next books in the series—and maybe some hooky teasers to make them eager to read them!

Offer bonus epilogues or “deleted” chapters to entice readers to subscribe to your newsletter. Be prepared with posts, newsletter and website content that will take these folks on a journey of discovery through the world your books spin.

Definitely don't neglect to create or participate in an official marketing plan for the set, anthology, or shared world. It's your chance not only to help out the team but also to raise visibility for your own unique brand. Be sure that while you're chatting up the project as a whole, you take the opportunity to mention why *your* contribution is especially awesome.

Consider setting up some joint promotion with other members of the project. This can be anything from participating in release parties online to organizing newsletter swaps or asking everyone to share one post with a common graphic and wording.

Familiarize yourself with the other authors in the project and determine which ones share common tropes, styles, or settings with you. Reach out and brainstorm promotion opportunities that work for everyone in this sub-group—think of special graphics that highlight what you have in common.

Multi-author projects might seem as though they're a great deal of work for an unpredictable result, but with some forethought and out-of-the-box creative thinking—along with thoughtful, intentional action—these books can offer a path to finding new readers who will be eager to read through your backlist.

Considering that most joint projects are aiming for list-hitting, money-making, or charity-funding, an enduring swell of visibility is certainly not a bad side benefit to enjoy.

Thanks to the authors who contributed thoughts and insight to this month's column including but not limited to Eva Pohler, Aime Austin, Pamela Du Monde, Terri Brisbin, Linda Rae Sande, Patti Fiala, Glynnis Campbell, Pamela Gibson, and as noted above, Cynthia D'Alba.

Tawdra Kandle is the USA Today bestselling author of over 100 romances that span genres from contemporary through paranormal. Her engaging and realistic characters bring readers back again and again to devour the steamy love stories she spins. She lives in central Florida with a husband, a mischievous pup, and too many cats.

The Mad Scribbler

The Gargantuan Resignation

By Laura Resnick



“Corporate Publishing is a small industry. And if my back-of-the-napkin math is correct, we lost roughly 1% of our acquiring editorial work force today.”

—Dana Murphy, literary agent, March 11, 2022

The so-called Great Resignation has been much discussed in the media. Within the past year, millions of Americans have left their jobs by choice in order to do something else. Because there’s nothing like a years-long global pandemic to make you reevaluate what you want to get out of your life before it’s taken away from you.

In the traditional publishing world—where things always seem to be worse than ever, even when they’re not—this phenomenon should probably be retitled the Gargantuan Resignation.

On March 11 alone, four editors publicly announced their resignations from Big Five publishers in New York. Junior Editor Erin Siu posted on Twitter she was leaving her position at a children’s imprint owned by Macmillan and turning to freelance editing. That same day, two other junior editors both tweeted they were resigning from their jobs at Orbit, a science fiction/fantasy imprint at Hachette; both of them said they were leaving the publishing business entirely.

Also that day, yet another junior employee, Molly McGhee, announced in social media that she was resigning from Tor Books, a science fiction and fantasy imprint owned by Macmillan. Her request for promotion had just been denied even as her first acquisition for Tor, *The Atlas Six* by Olivie Blake, was making its hardcover debut at #3 on the *New York Times* bestseller list. “This should be a ‘great beginning,’” she [wrote](#) “not a heartbreaking end.”

McGhee’s employer told her that she needed “more training” before she could be promoted beyond her mostly administrative position, and that she should expect to continue working as an assistant to other editors for at least five more years.

McGhee had already worked in publishing for eight years and felt ready for promotion. And it wasn’t as if she sought a promotion to CEO, Executive VP, or high priestess. She just wanted to be an editor, rather than spend still *more* years as an assistant focused mostly on

doing admin tasks for other editors. Yet despite her having acquired and edited “the runaway TikTok must-read fantasy novel of the year,” the publisher insisted she wasn’t ready—and wouldn’t be ready for *years*.

McGhee specified in her statement that the reasons she was leaving aren’t specific to Tor or Macmillan, but to a systemwide problem for junior publishing employees.

“Many executives in the publishing industry are technologically illiterate,” she wrote. “They cannot use their own databases, pull their own manuscripts, organize their own inboxes, or navigate the constant influx of new technology. As such, this often falls on junior employees, who are expected to perform full-time admin work in addition to their full-time jobs. Each time a junior employee is told they do not have enough experience to pursue their career, I hear a common refrain used by employers who do not understand their own systems or the workload of their own employees.”

McGhee’s comments sparked a wide-ranging discussion about conditions in traditional publishing that have led not only to a high rate of turnover, but also to a high rate of employees leaving the industry entirely.

“McGhee joined a group of junior and midlevel employees who exited the publishing industry, blaming low pay, unrealistic workloads, and burnout,” Elisabeth Egan reported in an article titled “[When Will Publishing Stop Starving Its Young?](#)” that appeared in the *New York Times* the following week. “For context: It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to live in or near New York City (epicenter of bookmaking) on an entry-level publishing salary.”

My niece’s partner was very interested in a publishing career and tried editing for a while. He enjoyed it, but the opportunities and pay scale available in that field ensured he soon decided to go to law school instead (which he also enjoys, fortunately).

Marguerite Weisman, who recently quit her NYC publishing job after 10 years, agreed with McGhee’s assessment that technological illiteracy among senior employees is one of the problems in the industry—though certainly not the only one. “We’ve built a publishing machine that demands an unsustainable commitment from editors,” she [tweeted](#). “It requires a level of investment normally reserved for very high paying roles. We are accounts, creative, strategy, project management, and the scope of the job keeps growing.”

In an article for *Publishers Lunch*, Erin Somers [reported](#), “Former editor at Avon Books [HarperCollins] Elle Keck posted, ‘As one of the editors who left publishing this year, every editor you know, you’ve seen on Twitter, you’ve heard of: they are miserable and struggling. They’re tired of working all day, working at night, and feeling guilty if they take a weekend off.’ Julie Rosenberg, formerly of Razorbill [Penguin Random House], also noted the ‘crushing guilt and anxiety’ caused by the workload.”

Somers added, “Those feelings are intensified as big publishers report record sales and earnings, even as multiple people report on Twitter they believe their employers are not sufficiently reinvesting those proceeds in additional staff, systems and raises.”

Writers also notice that publishers are not reinvesting those proceeds in higher advances or in better royalty rates than the identical percentages they offer as the non-negotiable and *totally non-collusive* “industry standard.”

Andrea deWerd, a marketing director at HarperCollins, [pointed out](#), “It’s not only editors leaving. Attrition is also extremely high in publicity and marketing right now.”

A high attrition rate typically makes any department—whether it’s publicity, marketing, editorial, or something else—less productive and efficient, as well as more stressed and volatile.

Writers who deal with traditional publishing houses are negatively affected by all of this, of course, but authors—and also their agents—feel it first and foremost in editorial departments.

“What’s happening here is that people are leaving jobs where they are overworked and underpaid and not treated very well,” said Erik Hane in a recent episode of [Print Run](#), a podcast he co-hosts with Laura Zats. (Those same issues account for much of what’s happening throughout the work force, of course, not just in traditional publishing.)

Hane and Zats, both literary agents who used to be editors, discussed in this episode (“Publishing’s Great Resignation”) the negative effects this high rate of departure has on writers and agents—and also on publishing companies. Much of this will be familiar to anyone who has published traditionally for many years (or sometimes even for just a few weeks.)

When an editor quits, that inflicts an immediate dead-end on all the manuscripts sitting in her submissions queue, including books she had intended to acquire. The door slams shut on all the time an agent has invested in building a relationship with her, learning her tastes, and establishing her as his in-house contact at that company. All the writers she had under contract are funneled to other editors, who mostly don’t want them and often resent the additional work (and too often decide just not to do it, effectively ending those authors’ relationships with that publisher). Additionally, a low retention rate over time affects in-house continuity, consistency, memory, and experience, and so the publishing program devolves in terms of operational efficacy, as well as editorial coherence.

As McGhee reflected upon resigning from Tor Books, “When the great masters of editing die, or retire, what will happen to all their apprentices? Like me, they will have left before they became masters themselves.”

However, speaking as someone who has been around for a long time, it should be noted that editors have been leaving publishing in droves for decades. My first editor quit and left publishing before my first book even went into production. My second editor quit and left publishing before that same book was published. My third editor is still around (she’s an Executive VP at HarperCollins now), but my fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh editors all quit and left publishing, too. All of this occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.

I don’t know whether the rate of departures is accelerated these days or whether it just seems so because of social media. After all, 20-30 years ago, you only knew an editor had left the business if you actually knew the editor. These days, every departure is widely-shared internet news. But even if the turnover and departure rate is faster these days, traditional publishing has always been a rocky business with a lot of people fleeing out the door.

Which is yet another reason for us to rejoice in the rise of the indie market that provides a viable path for writers, one that isn’t dependent on traditional publishing companies.

Laura Resnick writes fiction, nonfiction, and short fiction.

NINC Member Discounts

By Emilie Richards

THE HOT SHEET

For some time NINC members have been lucky to receive a discount to [The Hot Sheet](#). Editor and founder Jane Friedman, along with her talented team, bring readers publishing headlines, in-depth articles, important takeaways, trends spotted and new opportunities for writers. Each issue brings links to explore for more information as well as statistics about the market.

Not sure you want to commit? You can read two issues for free before you make a decision. And when you do, NINC members receive a **20% discount**. Visit our [Members Freebies and Discounts page](#) under Member Benefits to find out how to subscribe.



Emilie Richards is the author of over 80 novels, which have been published in more than 21 countries and 16 languages. She is both traditionally and indie published.

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 (these groups are for NINC members only):

- Email list for all Novelists, Inc. Members: <https://groups.io/g/NINCLINK>
- NINC Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>
- Follow NINC on Twitter: https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc
- NINC on **Clubhouse**: Novelists Inc Virtual Tiki Bar
- Critique/brainstorming group: <https://groups.io/g/NINKcritique>
- Traditionally published authors: <https://groups.io/g/NINCTradPubbedAuthors>
- SF/F & speculative fiction writers: <https://groups.io/g/NINCswordsandrayguns>
- Authors of thriller/crime/suspense: <https://groups.io/g/NINC suspense-thriller-crime/>
- Discuss creating book covers: <https://groups.io/g/NINCcovercreators/>

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

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/>
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Website (You must be logged in to access these services.)

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

Volunteer

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

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- Anything!



Founded in 1989

NINC Statement of Principle

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

NINC is committed to welcoming a diverse and inclusive membership to our organization and serving all members. No author will ever be discriminated against on the basis 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.

Founders

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

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

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

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Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin
 P.O. Box 54, Hartland MI 48353
admin@ninc.com

Address changes may be made on the website.

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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.

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