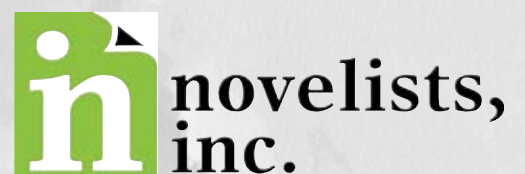




The official newsletter  
of Novelists, Inc.,  
a professional organization  
of writers of popular fiction



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**MARCH 2023**

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# *Nink* March 2023

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# President's Voice

*By Celeste Barclay*



Anyone who has been in the publishing industry for at least a year (sometimes it only takes a couple months) realizes how this business shifts constantly. At times, we ride the crest of the wave, and at others, we're so deep within the trough we fear the next wave will drown us. We often talk about how genres exist in cycles, and that when there's a downturn, we must evaluate whether to weather the storm or move to sunnier climes. For many authors right now, that's a question of whether to remain in Kindle Unlimited or even move more toward direct sales.

Many have heard about the seemingly arbitrary and capricious way in which Amazon has shut down Kindle Unlimited authors' accounts when the authors are victims of piracy. For years, the Historical Romance genre, in which I'm a writer, has contended with two particular publishing houses that methodically and routinely replicate premises, titles, and covers of books that have done well. Despite the obviousness of this, along with creative formatting to make the Kindle Unlimited books longer, authors report that Amazon has done nothing to forestall this practice, citing the books are just different enough to not constitute true plagiarism.

Most recently, enterprising pirates have targeted high-selling books and created a scheme where they essentially hold the listings hostage. They add their own listing, with their own cover, and connect it to the book's authentic product page. The "book" is a sample with only a few pages and culminates with a PayPal link to buy the entire book. This should alarm all of us, given the ease with which these pirates enacted their scheme.

This first came to my attention when this befell Beth Duke at the beginning of February. It shocked me to discover the listing for her bestselling book, *It All Comes Back to You*, had a new cover and the added words: *A Captivating Writing*. They linked the "book" to Ms. Duke's legitimate product page, with links to her paperback, hardback, and audiobook. It showed her more than 7,800 reviews she'd earned from her legitimate book. Despite repeated attempts to have the book taken down, it popped back up. Ms. Duke reported that Amazon argued this did not differ from a third-party seller.

This alarms me for multiple reasons:

1. Third-party sellers are acceptable for physical copies, but this is not acceptable when the book is in Kindle Unlimited. By the programs very nature, Amazon is supposed to be the only seller.
2. Amazon punishes authors for pirates stealing their books and putting them on other sites, like vetted retailers such as Apple and Google as well as notorious pirate sites, but they will not defend their exclusivity on their own site.
3. These scammers dupe readers into downloading a “free” book, then they’re told to pay for it via PayPal. This endangers both the reader and the author. It’s the authors’ reputation at stake, and readers are less likely to trust said authors, never mind the dubiousness of the file quality.
4. Ms. Duke spent days combatting these scammers and Amazon. She struggled to reach anyone with the authority to act. It forced her to repeat conversations and requests, causing her to reach a stalemate over and over.

Between victims being removed from Kindle Unlimited because pirates stole their books and put them on other sites, and pirates now commandeering product pages and holding books hostage, many authors question the benefits of remaining enrolled in Kindle Unlimited. A Change.org petition circulated to advocate protection for authors, but Amazon has enacted no policy change and continues to make it difficult for authors to advocate for themselves.

Consequently, many authors are turning to selling directly from their websites. With online stores and payment platforms, as well as easy delivery, this retail method understandably appeals to authors. For a multitude of reasons, but definitely as a product of these trials and tribulations, sites like Kickstarter and Patreon grow in popularity. It also begs a very specific question—one for which I don’t have the answer:

Is there any point to Kindle Unlimited remaining exclusive?

I think these punitive scenarios are making myriad authors ask this question since readers do not seem as concerned by the exclusivity so much as their ability to get “free” books through the subscription. Other retailers have subscriptions without exclusivity, and they’ve grown in popularity. For many Kindle Unlimited authors, such as myself, we’re left with our head in our hands, asking, “When the hits keep coming, what’s next?”

I don’t have an answer for that either, but I hope this provides food for thought and necessary discourse in our community.

I continue to appreciate the honor it is to lead the premiere international organization of professional authors.

~ Celeste Barclay

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*Celeste Barclay, a nom de plume, lives near the Southern California coast with her husband and sons. Before becoming a full-time author, she was a social studies and English teacher. She holds degrees in International Affairs (BA), Secondary Social Science (MAT), and Political Management (MPS). She channels that knowledge into creating rich historical romances that bring the heat.*

## 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/>

# Conference Report

March 2023

*By Tawdra Kandle*

I'm happy to report that conference planning for NINC2023:ELEVATE is moving along smoothly!

As a reminder, this year's event will take place at the TradeWinds Island Grand Resort in St. Pete Beach, Florida, September 20-24.

First, and *very* importantly, remember that you cannot register for the conference if you are not a NINC member in good standing. If you've been putting off paying your dues for 2023, I highly recommend that you do that ASAP so that your conference registration can proceed smoothly.

**Registration for member attendees and their assistants is scheduled to open on Thursday, March 9, at 10 a.m. EST.**

Information and links will be available via the **NINC email loop** and on **Facebook**, and our Central Coordinator will also send an **email** blast with all of the necessary information.

We'll be announcing our first wave of confirmed speakers and topics soon!

We're also happy to confirm that MOSHH (Meet Our Sponsors Happy Hour) will return in 2023, this time on Thursday afternoon. If you didn't MOSHH last year, then you're in for a treat in September!

Can't wait to see you on the beach!

Your NINC2023 Conference Team:

- Conference Director: Mel Jolly
- Programming Chair/Assistant Conference Director: Tawdra Kandle
- Assistant Programming Chair: Dylann Crush
- Trad Liaison: Lou Aronica
- Sponsorship Chair: Sarah Woodbury
- Assistant Sponsorship Chair: Hallee Bridgeman
- Registrar: Lisa Hughey
- Assistant Registrar: Stephanie Julian
- Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
- Assistant Hotel Liaison: Tegan Maher

- App Coordinator and Designer: Laura Hayden
- NINC After Dark Coordinator: Tamsin Ley

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*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.*





### **Deal reached in HarperCollins strike**

After being on strike for three months, the HarperCollins union has reached a tentative agreement with HarperCollins. According to a press release, HarperCollins will increase the minimum salary across levels. The union was asking for an increase from \$45,000 to \$50,000; the new minimum is unknown. A one-time \$1,500 lump sum bonus will also be paid to union employees.

Prior to the agreement being reached, Big Five publishers Macmillan and Hachette Book Group both raised their entry-level pay to \$47,500 a year (up from \$45,000 for Hachette and \$42,000 for Macmillan), although Hachette limits that amount to employees in “high-cost office locations.” As far as other Big Five publishers, Simon & Schuster pays \$50,000, and Penguin Random House pays \$45,000.

The announcement came on the heels of HarperCollins earnings results; its revenue last quarter [was down](#) 14% against last year; earnings were down 52%. Not long ago the publisher announced it will lay off 5% of its workforce before the end of the fiscal year.

Before an agreement was reached, the Authors Guild and Association of American Literary Agents met with both HarperCollins management and the HarperCollins union to “urge a swift resolution” due to the damaging effects of the strike. [Learn more.](#)



## Draft2Digital strikes deal with Digital Public Library of America

Draft2Digital, the popular ebook distributor in the U.S. for independent authors, just announced a distribution deal with DPLA. The DPLA runs an ebook marketplace for libraries known as Palace, and Draft2Digital's half million indie-published titles have now been integrated into Palace. DPLA's librarians will prepare selections of recommended titles to help librarians quickly and easily identify titles appropriate for their collections. Titles will be available with a perpetual, one-at-a-time license; Draft2Digital authors will earn 60% of their ebook list price. [Learn more.](#)

## Findaway Voices authors worry about machine learning at Apple

A machine learning clause in the Apple terms of service with Findaway Voices has been giving authors and narrators cause for concern. The [clause reads](#) in part that the rights holder grants Apple a nonexclusive right and license to use audiobooks for machine learning training and models. Victoria Strauss at Writer Beware [has written](#) a focused article about the contract language, noting it appears this language was part of the agreement as far back as 2019. New Shelves [suggests a template](#) you can use when emailing Findaway Voices to revoke authorization for machine learning at Apple, but this may ultimately mean not selling the audiobook through Apple at all.

## Simon & Schuster is officially up for sale again, as expected

Simon & Schuster's parent company, Paramount, is said to be shopping specifically for a private equity buyer to avoid further antitrust scrutiny, although that doesn't necessarily mean another Big Five publisher won't put in a bid anyway. [Learn more.](#)

## U.S. book sales update

For now, 2023 is performing comparable to 2022 (roughly 1% down), according to NPD BookScan, which tracks print book sales. Some highlights:

- Six of the top 10 books in January were also top bestsellers in 2022. Colleen Hoover continues to hold four of the top 10 spots.
- Two new releases in the top 10 in early February: *8 Rules of Love* by Jay Shetty and *Chain of Thorns* by Cassandra Clare.
- Backlist sales continue to trend upward as frontlist sales fall.
- Despite the success of *Spare* by Prince Harry, adult nonfiction sales are down about 4% against last year. The categories declining the most sharply: cooking, business, political science. Barnes & Noble CEO James Daunt [expressed](#) to *Publishers Weekly* that he is worried about continued weakness in nonfiction sales.
- One area of growth: YA fiction (up by 4%).

Regarding chain bookstore performance: In the most recent quarter, Indigo [saw](#) profits decline by more than 24%, which was blamed on inflation. (Side note: Indigo is also suffering a cybersecurity breach that will affect sales.) Meanwhile, Barnes & Noble continues to sell its happy story of sales growth, although no concrete figures are available because the company is privately owned.

## **Pandemic-Era Booksellers: Doing Well a Year Later**

*Owners of bookstores that opened during pandemic precautions can now focus on personal connections with customers and community building.*

The pandemic saw record growth in print book sales as well as solid performance for brick-and-mortar bookstores of all kinds. Some brave souls who decided to open a bookstore during the pandemic recently convened to discuss how business is going now that their doors are open without pandemic restrictions. The panel was hosted and moderated by BookNet Canada in late January. Participants included Stacy Batchelor (Fable Book Parlour), Kerri Doyle (Books & Shenanigans), Meghan Desjardins (River Bookshop), and Tim Middleton and Lauren Stewart of BookNet Canada.

All booksellers said their sales have increased against last year. Even better, they're seeing growth even though the stores are less busy and hectic. That's mainly because they don't have to manage as many pandemic-related problems, like limiting the number of people who can come into the store, fulfilling orders in myriad ways, or dealing with stock-related challenges. Also, Desjardins noted that people are better able to discover the store in person while walking by or being out and about more often. That increased foot traffic helps with sales.

The return of book fairs and in-person meetings has been helpful to business as well. During the pandemic, publishers' sales reps weren't able to visit the stores, which created a disconnect in terms of book recommendations. So the booksellers have enjoyed being able to get out to book fairs, meet reps, and build relationships to help them better stock their stores. Batchelor described it as "hugely eye opening," not just to network with other booksellers, but also "to find out what the reps can do for us"—things like advertising support and getting hand-picked selections geared to the store's location and customer base.

All of the booksellers value and emphasize their role in their communities. Doyle runs six book clubs a month, each limited to 12 people, where she chooses the books. They are so popular she has a 50-person waitlist. "The community is screaming for this kind of connection," she said. She described the book club members as her best customers and evangelists for the store. "You can buy a book anywhere, but can you come and talk about the book with this group of great people? Not so much," she said. Desjardins said one of her goals for her store is to be that "third place" for people (after work and home), and now they can finally put that into action with pandemic restrictions lifted.

The booksellers' most important marketing tool is generally the email newsletter, followed by social media. Batchelor said she will continue to be active on social media, but her focus is

really on email and making sure her website is up to date. Batchelor said she has yet to really engage on BookTok, but she has some loyal customers who use it for book recommendations. When she designs Instagram Reels and Stories, she admits some of that inspiration comes straight from BookTok.

Bottom line: The overall spirit of the panel was positive and focused on how the stores can better serve their customers and community during a period of growth. So far none of the stores have noticed a marked difference in customer behavior due to inflation or pricing.

### Links of Interest: Self-Publishing

- **TikTok has become a discovery tool for publishers to find self-published hits they want to acquire.** Keep in mind this trend is nothing new—every time a new platform becomes popular, it leads to superstars signing deals. One editor says, “The resurgence of publishing self-published authors is primarily driven by TikTok, especially seeing as romance and science fiction and fantasy make up a large percentage of TikTok-famous books. I would also say some of the resurgence comes from a wider demand for ‘non-traditional’ authors and stories—people who write around day jobs, haven’t attended well-known writing courses, and so on. I think people want a more diverse and interesting publishing ecosystem, and I think the industry itself notices that it’s missing out on great stories and writers by sticking to the same formulas.” [Read Lauren Brown in the Bookseller \(subscription required\)](#).
- **Author raises more than a half million dollars for a book about keyboards.** Interested in the history of keyboards, from early typewriters to the present? Then be sure to check out this two-volume set that includes 260,000 words and 1,300 photos. It already has 3,000+ backers and about 20 days to go in the campaign. [Visit Kickstarter](#).
- **Authors start a petition over unfair removal of KDP Select content.** Authors who enroll their ebooks in KDP Select cannot sell or make those same ebooks available elsewhere. If they do, Amazon can take their book out of Kindle Select and Kindle Unlimited, its subscription service. However, bad actors are known to pirate works and distribute them elsewhere, which leaves authors in a bind, trying to explain to Amazon that they haven’t actually breached their agreement. In response to a query on the matter, Amazon told Publishers Lunch, “We work directly with authors and provide an extended timeline to resolve the issue. After a period of time, books may be removed from KDP Select until the issue is resolved. Even while an issue is unresolved, books are still available for sale on Amazon.” [Read the petition](#).

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*Reprinted and condensed from [The Hot Sheet](#). Jane Friedman has 20 years of experience in the publishing industry, with expertise in business strategy for authors and publishers. She’s the co-founder and editor of [The Hot Sheet](#), a paid newsletter for authors, and has previously worked for [Writer’s Digest](#) and the [Virginia Quarterly Review](#).*

# Growing a Ghostwriting Business

*By Lindsay Randall*



Being a good listener. Keen curiosity. Flexibility. And checking your ego at the door. These are among the qualities that have best served the ghostwriters interviewed for this article.

Ghostwriters create content for others, receiving no credit. Good ghosts are skilled writers who create memoirs, speeches, articles, corporate or family histories, blog posts, or fiction in the voice and vision of their clients. They are at times collaborators, researchers, editors, and organizers. While ghostwriters remain unseen and uncredited, the work they do is very real.

If helping others to bring their ideas to life sounds intriguing, you might want to consider ghostwriting.

## Getting started

For children's ghostwriter [Karen Cioffi](#), her busy ghostwriting career began with editing.

"After a short while it turned into rewriting, then morphed into ghostwriting," Cioffi said. "At first the clients were by word of mouth. Then I started promoting my services and clients found me online."

She has worked with more than 300 clients worldwide throughout the past 15 years.

"A lot of the clients who come to me have the desire to tell a children's story. It might be a parent, grandparent, teacher, or principal," she said. "Then there are the medical professionals who want to help children by creating a broader marketing reach with a book. I also get businesspeople who feel a children's book will help their marketing and further their goals."

Veteran business ghostwriter [Mike Wicks](#) got into ghostwriting by accident. One of his clients asked if he might be interested in writing "a book about her ex-husband's quasi-medical device." That led to a five-day visit to Budapest where he interviewed a man who was a professor of quantum physics by day and "Desiree," a cabaret singer and erotic moviemaker, by night.

"It was a weird introduction to the life of ghostwriting," he said.

Fast forward a few years and Wicks's clientele expanded to include a multi-billionaire, with whom he wrote two business books, one of which reached bestseller status on such lists as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, and Barnes and Noble.

"That stroke of luck brought me to the attention of a far larger audience," he said. Today he works on three to five books simultaneously.

Fiction author DS (who prefers to remain anonymous) has been ghostwriting in the romance genre for six years and has ghostwritten more than 70 published works and hit multiple bestseller lists—all while writing romance under their own name.

"Indie ghostwriting is mostly word of mouth," DS said. "There are a few Facebook groups that are hidden, and you have to know someone who knew someone, and jobs get posted there. But once you get a few jobs and people know you do good work, they will continue to reach out. It can be hard to get started with reputable clients. In the trad world it's a little 'easier' as agents can bring you work to audition from the publishers."

Author [Jo Ann Brown](#) was approached by an agent to be a ghostwriter. A packaging editor needed an author to complete the middle book of a trilogy the main author couldn't finish.

At the time, Brown was interested in the "experience of working with a packager on a big-name project." She submitted the requested scenes and was chosen for the project.

"I think it helped that it wasn't a genre I would have written. I didn't bring any preconceived stylistic habits to the project," Brown said. "I did ask the editor why she selected my work, and she said it was the use of deep POV, which she wanted to have in the trilogy."

## Getting paid

For Wicks, the question of how much for a ghostwritten book is a bit like asking "How long is a piece of string?" So much depends on the type of book or the length of the book, Wicks said. As a bestselling ghostwriter, he knows how to approach a project and bring it to life on the page, all of which equals a higher cost than an inexperienced ghostwriter might charge.

Wicks offers an initial free consultation with clients to discuss their needs as well as the possibilities of the writing project.

"Ghostwriting fees vary greatly and are directly proportionate to one's experience and success. I work on a per-word rate, but other writers I know charge a per-project rate or an hourly rate," he said, adding that "ghostwriting a book takes a ton of work, several hundred hours. Undercharging means you are undervaluing your work, and, in the end, this does the author-client a disservice."

Cioffi has created [a list of prices for different genres](#).

"Since story notes, outlines, and drafts are different, I'll tweak the fee depending on the condition of the content I'm given," she said. "Some clients think they have usable notes, an outline, or a draft, but it can be in terrible condition."

DS first began charging only what was needed for living expenses.

"As you gain more clients and positive feedback on your work, people will consider you and your writing more valuable," DS said. "In ghostwriting, like most things, you get what you pay for. Though it's not a creative exercise, it's natural to put more work and care into a project

when you're getting paid a living wage for it. It's a very individual decision, based on experience, reputation, and various accolades."

Brown, for her work on the second book of the trilogy, received "a flat rate in the low five figures, which I was told was the same the main author received for each book." She also continued to work with the packaging editor on two movie novelization projects and on another project with the trilogy author, "which led to contracts with publishers without the packager."

### **Choosing your ghostwriting projects**

For DS, ghostwriting isn't about creativity. It's about creating content the client wants.

"I personally only write romance. It's what I'm good at and what my experience is in," DS said. "The other thing I look for in a client is someone willing to tell me exactly what they want—the more detail the better. Again, this isn't a creative outlet, it's work-for-hire. I want to give the client what they want. I'm not looking for someone to give me a 1,000-word synopsis and set me free. I also look for clients who pay on time."

Wicks said choosing projects is mostly a gut feeling. "The subject matter has to be interesting, and I must feel I can work with the person," he said. "I have made the mistake in the past of accepting a project against my better instinct because the co-authors wanted to work with me, and I liked them. Unfortunately, I didn't fully understand the subject, and they were against dumbing it down, even though their target audience would have had difficulty comprehending the concepts."

Cioffi's most important consideration when taking on a client is whether that person is "serious about the project and respects my services."

A good ghostwriter also makes use of a contract, detailing the specifics of each project. Hiring a lawyer for guidance is advisable.

### **Keeping the momentum going**

"To be successful as a ghostwriter, you have to write in such a way that the book achieves two things: a) the author needs to think it sounds like them, or at least what they would like to sound like if they could write well, and b) their friends and family need to tell them that 'It sounds just like you,'" Wicks said. "I achieve this by researching anything they have written, interviews they have done that are available online, or any YouTube videos they might have made. I also interview them myself, record the sessions, get them transcribed, and listen, listen, listen until I can become them, or a better version of them, on the page."

Satisfied clients share the names of good ghostwriters (without admitting they have used the services).

Cioffi keeps her website active, posting content once per week, plus regularly promotes her blog posts and uses visual blurbs to promote her services on various social media platforms.

Another way to get your name out there is through speaking engagements and handing out business cards with the word *Ghostwriter* being prominent.

Learn more about the industry and its craft by joining the [Association of Ghostwriters](#), which offers a member directory. The [Authors Guild Writers Marketplace](#) is another possible directory to consider.

“Ghostwriting can be an incredible career,” DS said. “It’s a good opportunity to both learn story structure and how to take feedback in an environment of low financial risk. However, if you’re planning on it as an intermediate step between now and your own independent writing career, it’s hard. Once you’re making a living wage, it’s difficult to step back and find the time to write your own work where there’s no upfront money to support it. But if you know going in, it can be a great opportunity.”

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*Known for her “lyrical prose” and adventurous stories, [Lindsay Randall](#) is the author of both historical and contemporary romances.*



# Get Your Audiobook Fans to Keep Listening

*By Neil S. Plakcy*



In 2011, ACX decided that with the permission of the narrator, a content creator could exit the seven-year contract at any time. That triggered me to reevaluate my audio distribution plan.

To exit, you must contact your narrator and get his or her permission, then notify ACX of your intent. It can take several weeks to complete the process. That pushed me to move all my titles to Findaway Voices. I believe that if I can control pricing and promotion, I'll be able to sell more books, even if I drastically reduced the prices. One note: once your books are removed from ACX, it can take up to 30 days to get them back on Audible.

## **Revising audio descriptions**

Like many authors, I use the same description for ebook and print. And that might work for the first book in a series, when you're introducing the characters. But now I believe that because I'm reaching out to different audiences, I need to adjust my message.

When someone looks up a later book in my series on my website, or through a search with an ebook vendor, they're probably already familiar with the characters and setting. Those descriptions usually begin with something like "Steve and Rochester face a new situation which involves...."

That works well on my website, where readers can scroll through a list of titles to see what they haven't read yet. They'd probably get bored by repetitive information.

But what about a listener who discovers a later audiobook through a promotion or a bestseller list? That prospective purchaser might need more of an introduction. So I tweak those descriptions to highlight what the book is about. Perhaps it's "A cozy mystery set at a very good small college, where the murder of an administrator unveils a legacy of deceit." Or "Recovering hacker Steve Levitan and his golden retriever, Rochester, investigate the murder of a dog agility trainer."

My goal is to get that elevator pitch down to a sentence, one that encourages the shopper to read further.

## **Selling on your website**

If your audiobooks are only available at one retailer, it's easy to include a buy link to that retailer on your website. For a long time, I've had three buttons next to each title. The first is "Buy for Kindle," which is an affiliate link to that site. The second is "Other Retailers" with a link provided by Draft2Digital to all the vendors they sell through. The third button read "Audio" and provided a link to Audible.

But now I'm selling through Findaway, which distributes to over 40 partners around the world. I can't list that many links for each book—that would make my site unwieldy.

Former NINC President Wayne Stinnett uses a technique I've copied. He has a drop-down below his audio link which lists six major sites. First is to buy direct from him. Then a list of the most popular purchase sites with links.

"The only featured books on my site are the latest releases, aside from the carousel at the top," he writes. "That features the first of each series, and the most recent, along with my one nonfiction on writing."

He also has chosen not to distribute to Audible because, in the words of Jimmy Buffett, "I don't do business that don't make me smile. And Audible's business practices didn't make me smile."

I also have a specific page for audio on my website, so that listeners can go directly there to see what's available. I begin with a blanket statement that my audiobooks are available widely, though some retailers may take longer to add them to a catalog. I list the home pages for all the retailers that carry any of my books, so if a listener wants to shop at XX, he or she can click there and then search at that site.

Then I have a list, organized by series, of book titles so that it's easy for the listener to copy a title and then paste it into the vendor's search engine. It's not the best system, but someday perhaps I'll have a database behind my site that will allow a listener to select a vendor, and then my site will automatically populate the books (and links) available there.

## **Increasing a personal connection**

When I began the process of transitioning my books from ACX, I decided to look for ways I can enhance my titles to make a personal connection to my listeners. One of the first was to record interstitial bits of audio myself. They're usually a minute long, and I don't have to worry about making the sound perfect—I want people to hear my real voice. I introduce myself and the book and provide a fun fact about it. These might include my inspiration for the book, where the title came from, or a connection to a real person or event. I bought a good quality portable microphone and use Adobe Audition for this recording.

I also record a thank you to insert after the recordings, but before the ending credits. This

might include another fun fact or personal connection to the book. I think of “dogs” as my brand, so I might include something that one of my golden retrievers has done that inspired how Rochester found a particular clue.

Once a listener has completed one of your titles, you want them to continue with your series, right? With ebooks, many authors will insert the first chapter of the next book at the end of the current volume. All it takes is a sentence of introduction: “Steve and Rochester dig into their next case, *Title*. Here’s the first chapter.”

But reading is different from listening, and I think listeners need an extra moment before they dive into the next book. So I have recorded the blurb for the next book, which I upload along with the first audio file of that book. Finally, I add a very brief “If you’d like to keep listening, *Title* is available at all audio retailers.”

### **Additional materials**

I’ve been fortunate enough to be interviewed on a couple of different podcasts, so I’ve asked the podcaster for permission to use a particular question and answer. Depending on the podcast, I can either download the file through my podcast app or have the interviewer send me the file. (Audio files are very large, so you may need a service like Google Docs or Dropbox.)

Then I open the file in a simple audio program and cut out the section I want. If you have a good relationship with your narrator, you may be able to get him or her to do this work for you.

Some time ago, a fan contacted me, and when we met while I was in his hometown, he told me that one of the reasons why he loves my Hawaiian mysteries is that he sings Hawaiian music and plays the ukulele himself. I asked him to record a brief bit of music I can use to set the tone for the audiobooks in that series. He was delighted to be a part of my work and would have done it for free, but I gave him a token payment and had him sign a contract giving me the rights to his rendition of “Aloha ‘Oe,” a classic Hawaiian song, long in the public domain.

I believe these additions will add to the listeners’ enjoyment without requiring a major investment of their time.

### **Final thoughts**

If you’re preparing an audiobook for sale, I suggest that reviewing your description, updating your website, adding additional material to the audio files, and finding ways to personalize the reader experience are good practices that can lead to increased engagement and further sales.

My audiobooks are available widely, in case you want to see how I’ve instituted these ideas in the first of my golden retriever mysteries, *In Dog We Trust*.

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*Neil Plakcy is the author of over 50 mystery, romance, and adventure novels. He lives in south Florida with his husband and two rambunctious golden retrievers.*

# Generational Cohorts

## Applying Gen Z insights to your writing

*By Carol Van Den Hende, MBA*



If your contemporary fiction features teens and young adults, and you're part of an older generation, you may benefit from insights into Gen Z.

Here, we'll define current generations (specifically in the U.S.), what makes each unique, and how that can relate to your characters.

As with all generational insights, it's important not to stereotype, or lump all people within a generation together. However, it is instructive to consider the events that shape a particular generation's world view.

First, a few definitions....

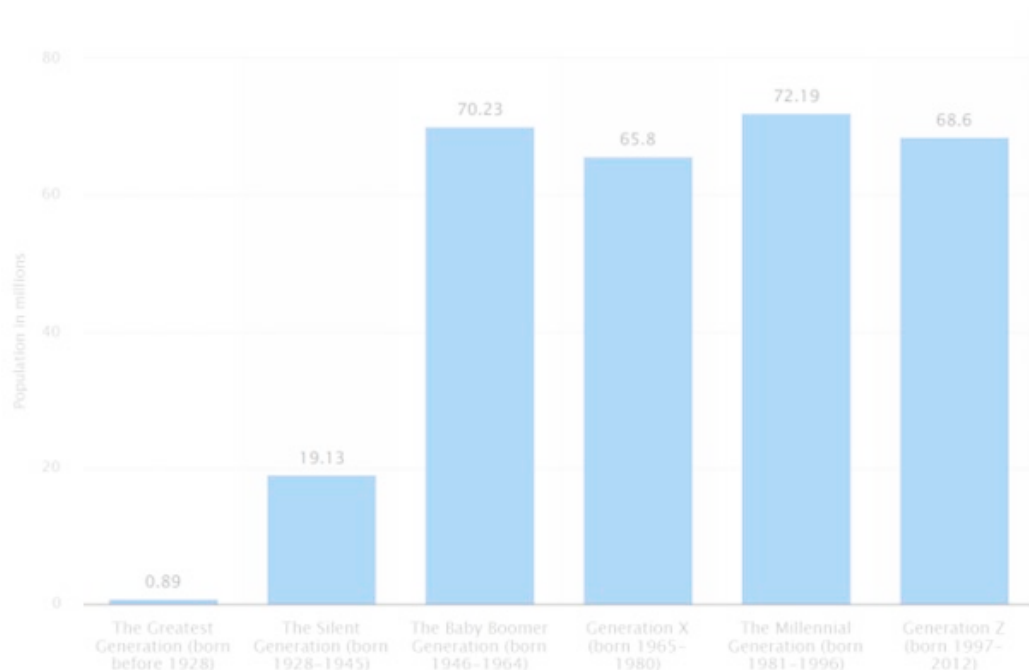
### **Generations defined**

The U.S. government defines people born between the years of 1946 and 1964 as Baby Boomers. Other generations aren't "officially" categorized. Rather, demographers tend to converge on a set of years where people's perspectives are shaped by shared experiences, especially those that occur in their formative years.

That's why generations include varying lengths of time. Gen X (those born 1965-1980), Boomers' younger cousin, contains a shorter number of years (just 15 vs. Boomers' 18), one of the factors leading it to being a smaller cohort. (Of course, Boomers are a large cohort primarily because of the plethora of babies born after a strong postwar economy.)

Millennials (also known as Gen Y) have now grown to be the largest cohort, eclipsing Boomers in 2020; they were born from 1981 to 1996.

This chart summarizes the generations and their population size as of 2021.



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/797321/us-population-by-generation/>

You'll see that Gen Z (also previously known as igen), are defined as being 11–26 years old, although the insights about this cohort can apply to people a bit younger or older than this range too. This is a dynamic, savvy generation who've grown up immersed in technology and facing enormous societal challenges.

Those younger than Gen Z are tentatively known as Gen Alpha (not shown on the chart). Those who are older than Boomers (aged 78 and up) are known as the Silent Generation or Greatest Generation.

## Writing characters from different generations

You've likely heard the axiom "write what you know." Some writers ask whether they can simply write their younger characters by pulling from their own experiences at that same age. The answer: not necessarily.

This can certainly apply to universal truths like emotional responses. However, to craft the most authentic characters it's important to consider how they'd speak, their cultural references, use of technology, and their vantage point on the world.

## Formative years

What accounts for the difference between generations? Some experiences are universal—for instance, the natural assertion of independence that teens traverse into young adulthood. However, what largely shapes generations are the shared and significant events that occur during the formative years when they're growing up.

That's why, the younger the generation, the less clear it becomes what exactly will shape them. The youngest portion of Gen Z (pre-teens) may yet face cataclysmic events that could even overshadow what's been a cornerstone for the older part of their cohort.

From what we know currently, Gen Z has been largely shaped by significant factors: a global pandemic; climate crises; political/ethical polarization; the evolution of technology into Web3; recognition of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and resulting cries for social justice; and emerging areas like gender fluidity, weighing individual vs. societal good, and questioning traditional economic models against other ways to measure success and happiness.

We won't dive into all the nuances and ramifications of these multi-faceted issues. However, consider the weight of young people facing this amount of complexity in less than a quarter-century.

You may be thinking that all generations have experienced these same shifts and you'd be right. The difference is that as adults, we have a longer horizon of experience to put these events into context. For younger people, who psychologists have stated feel experiences more deeply, these are tectonic changes in what they'd grown up believing was the "norm."

Compare this amount of change to earlier generations that may have been shaped by:

- The Great Depression: Silent gen/Greatest gen
- Industrialization/economic boom: Boomers
- Computers becoming the norm: Gen X
- 9-11, economic recession, the weight of college debt: Millennials

Now, of course, this summarized view is greatly simplified and we could dive into any of the generations to gain deeper insight. For this article, we'll use other generations for contrast, and focus on what's shaped Gen Z.

In this short article format, we won't be able to cover everything about Gen Z, but rather will zoom into a few key aspects that should be useful for contemporary fiction authors.

## **Technology**

Technology is sometimes the first trait that pops into people's minds regarding what differentiates Gen Zs. They're truly "tech natives," having never known a world without ubiquitous mobile technology. Even more so than Millennials, they've grown up taking for granted the ability to converse with technology ("Alexa, order Tide Pods").

So it's important for you to consider how your Gen Z characters will interact with tech. Are they savvy users who are inventing new business models using OpenAI's ChatGPT and creating designs with DALL-E's imaging tool? Or do they purposefully turn their backs on tech, preferring old school flip phones and record players?

Be careful not to accidentally have them using tech that's not believable. For instance, if they're on Facebook, it might be to post pics for their grandparents but not to find dates. Rather,

they're more likely to connect with friends via Snapchat, entertain themselves on TikTok, and learn from YouTube. See [Pew Research group's study on teen social media habits](#) for more details.

## **Diversity**

Technology, and travel, connect Gen Z to more people around the world. As a result, they are exposed to diverse cultures and can be more open to diverse ethnicities and experiences. This is similar to Millennials, who expect diversity and only notice it when it's missing. However, it's even more organic among Gen Z and can extend to areas like LGBTQ+ and gender fluidity.

So consider whether the diversity of your Gen Z characters' backgrounds, ethnicities, and experiences are reflective of the world they live in. Do so in a balanced and natural way. Diversity is a part of many teen and young adult lives, so they wouldn't necessarily pay a lot of attention to it or go out of their way to point it out.

## **Snowflakes or pragmatists?**

Millennials bemoaned being labeled the "Me, Me, Me" generation, whose slacker image wasn't completely deserved. Likewise, Gen Z can sometimes unfairly be characterized as delicate snowflakes who expect ultimate convenience and can't cook a meal or drive. To be fair, they've grown up in a time when commerce has accelerated ultra-convenience, creating expectations for 15-minute delivery (think GrubHub or UberEats) and a ride anywhere (Lyft or Uber).

This same push for immediacy and materialism has resulted in climate crises and political polarization that increasing numbers of Gen Z realize will be some of their generation's greatest existential threats. Rather than simply ceding hope, swaths of Gen Z are turning to activism, entrepreneurial ways to solve the environmental and social crises, and facing into the issues with great pragmatism. Read more from Stanford researchers who studied thousands of teens' attitudes and behaviors [here](#).

So consider your Gen Z characters' points of view on social and sustainability issues. Will they shirk from disposable plastic cups at their local coffee shop? Is their nature to take responsibility for their carbon footprint? Are they marching for women's rights? Remember that fiction has a role to not just mirror what we see in society but to shape what the future can hold.

## **Language**

This week while traveling, I proposed a restaurant for dinner. My teenaged son took a few minutes to locate the place on his phone. He let me know that he finally found it by texting: "nm maps trolled me."

Then he checked out the menu and messaged: "ngl looks kinda pricey."

When I told him that I was writing an article about Gen Z, he concluded, "That's cringe."



If you're crafting teenage characters, are you familiar with the shorthand for "never mind" (nm), "not gonna lie" (ngl), and the terms "sketch," "cold," "troll," and "cringe" among others?

Consider whether your contemporary Gen Z characters are using language consistent with their age? Socioeconomic class? Upbringing?

### **It's still your choice.**

At the beginning of this piece, we started by saying that none of the generational research is intended to stereotype generations. As with all people, our characters are individuals, formed by the experiences in their quite personal backgrounds. How you craft them is still your choice.

However, if you're writing contemporary fiction with characters from a different generation than yourself, it can be instructive to keep in mind the events that have shaped their perceptions.

Consider your protagonists' interaction with technology, the level of diversity in your cast of characters, their viewpoint on social and environmental matters, and how their peers and upbringing might affect the way they speak.

These can be powerful decisions in our effort to create authentic characters that feel believable to our readers!

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# Getting Self-published Books into Libraries

*By Cheré Coen*



Nick Rizzo, a market and consumer interest researcher, studied the state of 17,500 libraries across the country for 1992–2019. He found record numbers of registered borrowers, larger collection sizes, and more digital holdings than ever.

That's good news for libraries, authors, and readers, but how many of these holdings are books by self-published authors? And how can independent authors get into library collections?

Most libraries serve as independent entities within a larger system. In Louisiana, for instance, parish (county) libraries may create their own policy and acquire self-published books if they deem them important to their collection. The state library does not regulate the process.

"Rapides Parish Library has one policy that covers our 10 libraries in the system," said Director Celise A. Reech-Harper.

Reech-Harper stated that factors include customer interest, literary merit, an author's reputation or knowledge of the subject, importance of subject matter to the collection, timeliness or permanence of the title, appearance in bibliographies or indexes, relevance to existing or absence of subject matter in the collection, the item's cost, available library shelf space, and community standards.

"There are a lot of considerations," Reech-Harper emphasized, but added that the main consideration is the book's relevance to the community.

"One of the main parts of being a librarian is knowing your community and where the interests lie," she said. "It's about knowing your audience."

On the flip side, Jefferson Parish Library in New Orleans accepts pretty much everything, said Chris Smith, manager of adult programs. Smith hosts approximately one author event a week, many self-published, so he's open to independently produced books. Most come across his desk and he then passes them on to the appropriate department.

“We let in everything, including self-published books,” Smith said, adding that he recommends donations of books. “It’s the author’s responsibility to get books into our hands.”

The New York Public Library, one of the country’s largest, allows authors and publishers to submit review copies for consideration, but they must meet the Library’s Material Selection Policy which is “to select materials that support its diverse community needs and its mission.”

Factors for selection into the New York Public Library’s collection include artistic quality, local interest, mass media publicity, popular demand and accuracy, among others. Reviews in national publications such as *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Booklist* carry weight in the decision-making process. And books must be available through traditional channels.

“NYPL prefers to acquire material through established library vendors (e.g. Baker & Taylor, Ingram, Midwest Tape),” their policy states. “It is not the library’s current practice to order from Amazon.com or other online vendors.”

Nancy J. Cohen, author of the *Bad Hair Day Mysteries*, uses trade magazines and a traditional vendor to solicit her books to libraries.

“I’ve found the best way as an indie author to get libraries interested in my work is to offer my ebooks wide via Draft2Digital,” Cohen said. “Librarians can order there via Overdrive and Hoopla. For print books, I have my books distributed via IngramSpark (40% discount; no returns). And I participate in a NetGalley co-op run by Anne Victory at Victory Editing. This helps to attract librarians for advance reviews or just to expose them to my books.”

## **Approaching libraries**

Reech-Harper recommends starting with the author’s local library and approaching by email or phone the library administrator or person in charge of library acquisitions. Keep the conversation positive and explain that you’re local or have a book with local elements.

“Librarians want to support the local community,” she insisted.

In some cases, getting a book accepted may come down to its subject matter. For instance, if a book details a famous person, the author may wish to contact that person’s hometown library. If a novel takes place in Des Moines, Iowa, the author may wish to reach out to the Des Moines library system.

State libraries are another resource, Reech-Harper said.

“The biggest thing is to be familiar with the local policy,” she said. “Have a good conversation with the director or whomever is in charge.”

“If you go into a library personally and are local, they will probably buy a book or two,” said Carla Hostetter, a former librarian who writes romances under the pen name of Lynn Shur.

Hostetter advises that many libraries only order books from traditional distributors and not self-publishers like Amazon.

“Librarians order from review sources and get their books from the big wholesalers like Ingram,” she said. “If you aren’t listed with them, your chances aren’t good because it is too difficult to invoice individual books and indies can’t give deep discounts.”

Author [Holly Bush](#) routinely brings a few copies of her books to the local library when she has a new release.

“My library is part of a library system with 14 member libraries so once they’ve cataloged my new book, it can be shared with any other library in the system,” she said. “There are two of the 14 that I make a trip to myself because they are large and influential libraries in my county, and actually in the state of Pennsylvania, too.”

## Going wide

[Eric Otis Simmons](#) cut his teeth on corporate sales so when he wrote his memoir, *Not Far From the Tree*, he was determined to get the self-published book into libraries. He did an internet search for libraries and began contacting those in high positions.

“My strategy was to use a top-down approach,” Simmons explained.

He started with his home county in Georgia, then branched out, using a one-page “sale sheet” containing the book’s metadata. It included a description, photo of the cover, ISBN and Ingram ISBN, and quantitative data.

“Currently, 249 copies of my self-published books are in 199 libraries worldwide, including nine of the 25 largest public libraries in the U.S.,” he said.

Because of his success, Simmons wrote an article, “How to Get Your Books Into Libraries,” posted by Joanna Penn from TheCreativePenn.com. The article was such an online hit that Simmons self-published a book of the same name.

“I had no idea of the pent-up demand of self-published authors getting their books into libraries,” he said.

He encourages authors to show libraries how their book aligns with the library’s “Collection Development Policy,” which are the guidelines libraries use when purchasing books. But his personal philosophy mirrors his books’ distribution—go wide.

“I did a random study of 10 libraries and looked up each collection development policy,” he said. “I looked at the similarities and found the commonality to be ‘must be of interest.’ So I showed the libraries how my book would be of interest.”

Simmons now sells his master library list of 6,000 libraries as well as offers library marketing services.

## Author events

Offering programming to libraries may assist authors in having that library carry their book. Events may also allow authors to sell copies of their books within the library.

“I’ve gotten to know some of the librarians over the years because I’ve done several classes for them on self-publishing,” said Bush. “I don’t know if this is the most efficient way to accomplish this, but I enjoy it and I’m certain I’ve gained followers because of it.”

Reech-Harper agrees that being involved with library events such as book fairs, author events, and seminars both helps authors get their books into the library and acts as publicity.

“It all helps to bring attention to your books,” she said.

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## Smart Marketing for Savvy Authors

By Tawdra Kandle



*This year of Smart Marketing  
is all about reinventing our businesses.  
For the first quarter, we'll deep dive into:  
Why and when we might start over:  
A new way of looking at publishing goals;  
The crucial element of mindset!*

Last month, I told you that the March Smart Marketing For Savvy Authors column might be a little woo-woo for some of you.

Remember, you have been warned! Proceed at your own risk!

I have an important question to ask: How's your mindset?

If you'd asked me that not too long ago, I would've laughed and rolled my eyes. *Mindset?* Who had time to worry about that? I was far too busy doing all the things that I believed—and had been assured—were going to bring me massive publishing success.

But my friends, let me tell you this: I should have paid attention because *how* I was thinking was a huge part of what held me back and kept me from experiencing the career of my dreams.

To understand why, we have to go back a little bit. I was raised by two loving parents who only wanted the best for me, but who also wanted me to be realistic. My talents were praised and appreciated, but if I ever idly mused about other interests—ones where I perhaps did not have a ready supply of raw talent—my mom and dad quickly advised me to stick to my strengths. And while optimism was never discouraged, my father in particular often reminded me, "Expect the worst, and you'll never be disappointed."

What does this have to do with publishing and marketing? Quite a bit, actually. This way of thinking developed into a block for me, one that made me anxious and unhappy and that also kept me from making decisions that would propel my career forward.

I've also already noted here in a previous column that one of the contributing factors to my publishing-earning slump was my propensity to genre/trope hop. While sometimes I hopped because I had a specific idea I wanted to write, often I forced myself to jump onto what was billed as the next big thing: new adult romance? Medical romance? Write short, write long, publish frequently and fast?

By not trusting myself to write what I wanted, I created a cycle wherein success was nearly impossible, and worse, I began to believe some fairly ugly "truths" about myself and my ability to earn money as an author:

- I missed my window to succeed.
- I'm not business-savvy enough to know how to market my books.
- I don't understand ads and I never will, so I can't sell my books.
- Everyone else has figured out the secret to success, and I haven't.
- Readers don't really care about my books.

Maybe it is possible for some people to find success even with a faulty mindset, but that certainly wasn't me. Not only was I watching my monthly royalties dwindle even as I released more books, I was also miserable, defeated, and more than a little lost.

If that was the end of the story, I'd lose my credibility as a card-carrying romance author for failing to provide a happily-ever-after or even a happy-for-now!

But it isn't. I'm thrilled to report that even at the ripe old age of—ahem, somewhere in my early to mid-fifties—I was able to turn around my way of looking at everything in my business.

The first step toward mindset recovery and reset was being part of a healthy and supportive mastermind group. I'm very lucky to have found mine through NINC! Though we are only three, the feedback and real-talk I've received from my fellow masterminds has been life-changing. They might empathize when I want to wallow, but they don't leave me in the mud. I'm grateful to them for that!

For me, the next step was hearing some insight from people whose view is slightly broader and bigger-picture than mine. I remember having a conversation with Joe Solari, telling him nearly through tears how bad things had gotten for me in terms of sales, and then listening to him explain the probable whys and a subsequent path forward. Suddenly, I didn't feel so alone in the dark. Someone else was shining a light and giving me ideas on how to change what I was doing.

Through my conversations with Joe and, subsequently, with others, I realized that maybe I wasn't crazy when I'd begun to wonder if certain book retailers were actively working against



me. No, it wasn't anything personal: it was simply that through a series of missteps, I'd accidentally trained the search engines not to show my books. Maybe that wasn't the greatest news, but it was a relief for me to know how and why this had occurred because now I could do something to change the situation.

Still, I struggled with a sense of regret and far too many self-recriminations, wondering if my early mistakes had dug me too into a hole to ever emerge again.

Happily, not very long after this, I found a group on Facebook that was completely devoted to helping authors clear mindset blocks and find a better way of seeing the world, especially the publishing world. I experienced some revelations: first, that the number of readers in the world who could potentially read and love my books is staggering. I'd been unwittingly operating under the principle that there weren't enough readers or success to go around.

Later, I also recognized how often I've subconsciously sabotaged my own success, probably out of a lack of confidence in my ability to handle money and run my business. More recently, I've discovered that my father's old advice about expecting the worst has robbed me of some measure of joy in what I do and how I celebrate my victories.

Joy and fun are two words that describe the mindset I'm moving toward these days. Recently, I was facing a BIG week in my professional world: a much anticipated and often delayed book release, my first major one in a few years, a Kickstarter launch (more about that in a future column!), and my first post-pandemic in-person reader event were all happening within days of each other.

During the week prior, I found that I was tense and worried. *Had I put enough work, time, energy, and money into the book release and the Kickstarter launch? Was I prepared for the live event? Would any readers even want to see me?*

Past Tawdra would have leaned heavily into those capital F Feelings. She might have tried to expect the worst instead of anticipating the best. But recalling all that I've learned, I made intentional moves to avoid those pitfalls. I meditated daily, sometimes more than once. I envisioned wonderful outcomes to the BIG week. I let go of expectations that made me anxious, holding on loosely to my intentions for each effort. I shared my worries with my mastermind and listened to their insights. I made sure to be present on a call with fellow mindset-aware authors as we worked together to clear blocks standing in the way of our best lives.

But my biggest insight—dare I say, epiphany?—was that I needed to reclaim my joy in my craft. I needed to find the fun. After all, how many people in this world have ever released one book, and here I was preparing to launch my 142nd one! And Kickstarter—this is something new and shiny. Playing with it is so much fun. Oh, and the in-person event? Bring on the giddy squeals as authors and readers reconnect in person again after over three years.

This publishing business is work. We all know that. But have we gotten so serious about that work that we've convinced ourselves to stop having fun with it?

Let's find our joy again. We create worlds and people and places with our minds. If that isn't an opportunity—a mandate—for fun, I don't know what is.

Next month, we'll talk about the mechanics of how I began to recreate and resurrect my sinking business. It's going to be more technical than woo-woo, but it's still going to be fun.

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*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

## A Lesson Learned

By Laura Resnick



*"The best advice comes from the one who has made more mistakes—they have learned great lessons!"*

—Chinonye J. Chidolue, actress

Years ago, a writer I've known for a long time once again proved herself a true friend when she told me an awkward truth: I had become so repetitious, tiresome, and sometimes abrasive on the subject of literary agents that a number of our mutual friends were tuning me out. (I'm summarizing. My friend put it more gently than that.)

My initial thought was, "I don't care! I *should* continue talking about this. This is an important topic for writers, a lot of writers give and get all the exact same advice about agents, and I'm one of the very few people conveying an opposing perspective! Above all, I'm *right*!"

I felt a genuine sense of mission for years on the subject of literary agents. Prior to the rise of indie publishing a dozen years ago, traditional publishing was the only realistic career path for a novelist. And the widespread, oft-repeated, deeply entrenched conventional wisdom of our profession was that a novelist's only realistic path to a traditional publisher was through a literary agent.

Well, by the year 2007, I had run through four literary agents over the course of my career. In each case, they were agents whom I had researched thoroughly before querying them. Prior to hiring them, we'd had discussions in which I made my career interests and my expectations of their role very clear. And in each case, within weeks of my becoming a client, they were steamrolling over everything we had discussed and agreed on.

They refused to send out my work at all, or they would give up on it completely after one or two rejections. They'd urge me to write something else instead, something that they were

more interested in representing than the sort of stories I actually wrote. When I wanted them to negotiate clauses in a new contract or to address a problem with a publisher, they would refuse or be non-responsive. Worst of all, they engaged in tantrums, sulking, and verbal abuse. (The lack of professional behavior that I encountered in multiple literary agents over the years still amazes me.)

Each time I fired an agent, editors would say things to me like “thank goodness you got rid of them,” or “congratulations,” or “now that you’re no longer with that agent, I’d like to talk about getting you under contract here.” Overall, I sold more books without my four agents than with them (including books that my agents had declared unmarketable).

So you can probably understand why I wound up deciding I didn’t need or want a *fifth* agent. And also why I decided the conventional wisdom about agents—that anyone seriously pursuing a writing career *must* have one—was wrong.

But 15 years ago, that was a *very* singular opinion. The indie revolution wasn’t even on the horizon yet. We had no idea that within a few years many novelists would be making a living without traditional publishers *or* agents.

The position I started advocating back then was that having an agent should be regarded as a *choice* rather than a *necessity*; being agented was just *one* option for managing a writing career, not the *only* option. And my vehemence about this grew in response to frequent and widespread arguments that I found blinkered and incomplete. A few examples:

1. *Major publishers/imprints won’t accept unagented submissions.*

Actually, some of them did, and they said so on their websites. True, they had enormous submission piles and long waiting periods; but so did agents. Moreover, I knew too many agented writers who were waiting on responses from those houses for just as long as *unagented* writers waited. Meanwhile, other publishers that said they didn’t accept unagented submissions... actually *did* if you used various “back door” procedures. (Ex. If an editor you contacted or met asked to see a manuscript, then you could put “Requested Material” on the submission, and that would get around the “agented writers only” obstacle.)

2. *You need an agent to sell subrights (foreign, film/TV, audio, etc.).*

I signed management of those rights over to my publisher, with a specific term limit (two years after publication) for reversion if we got no offers. For me, the result was similar to having my former agents handle subrights, i.e. I made some sales.

3. *Only a really successful writer can get work without an agent.*

On the contrary, every time I parted company with an agent (one dumped me, I fired the other three), it was always at an *awful* point in my career, one way or another. But on each occasion, the agent had openly decided to just let things spiral, whereas I was willing to put in the effort to rescue my career.

4. *You need an agent to negotiate a good deal.*

After giving up on agents, I retained a lawyer (since retired) who was far better at negotiating contractual clauses than any agent I'd ever had. Also, I was comfortable deciding how much money I wanted for a deal and asking for it—and the advances I got on my own were similar to or better than what my various agents negotiated. I recognized that naming a price and negotiating for money was a genuine problem for many writers in the traditional publishing model. However, it was not a problem for which there was no possible solution *other than* hiring an agent, and I was frustrated that other writers consistently framed it that way.

And so on and so forth. I felt it was important to speak up consistently about the subject. I also felt compelled by my own frustration, due to seeing the same old widespread assertions about agents over and over.

Anyhow, back to the friend who eventually told me, after a few years of this, that people we knew had started tuning me out. After my initial resistance to her message, I gave it some serious consideration.

If people—including people who otherwise liked me or who listened to me on other subjects—were tuning me out, then was continuing to talk about the same subject in the same ways at all productive or persuasive? Had I sailed past informing and run aground on the shoals of belaboring—or even, perhaps, harping?

In fact, if I was honest, I could think of occasions when I'd gone even further than that and had been rude or obnoxious in my determination to get my point across to people once and for all.

And thanks to my friend telling me something awkward that I needed to hear, I realized that I had indeed dwelled too long, too frequently, and often too dogmatically on that subject. It was past time to recalibrate and adjust my behavior.

Not long after that, the indie world really took off, and so many things changed so much. Yes, writers do still hire agents, but that is now widely viewed among informed fiction writers as *a* choice for a serious career rather than the *only* choice.

So it could seem like I'm telling an irrelevant story about ancient history. But this isn't a story about agents.

This is a story about my mistakes. Looking back, I still think my arguments were valid, and I think my frustration was natural. But our message can be overshadowed by our manner if we're dismissive, dogmatic, arrogant, or judgmental, and especially if we're rude—and I was all of those things at various times when sharing my convictions about literary agents, even if I was also (I hope) factual, informative, and rational.

These days, I think those past mistakes are important to keep in mind with regard to the tensions that sometimes exist between indie and trad writers.

Almost a decade ago, writers who turned to indie publishing sometimes felt judged, disrespected, even unwelcome in NINC. These days, the intense indie focus among NINC members makes some writers on a tradpub career path feel (wait for it!) judged, disrespected, and even unwelcome.

Writers these days can argue just as fiercely about going wide or going all-in on an exclusive program as we argued 15 years ago about whether a serious writer *must* have an agent or might be better off without one.

I understand why people get so intense about their position that they make someone else feel dissed or excluded, because *I* did it. But I regret it—and if you do it, you could wind up regretting it too.

Also, let's keep in mind that things change. I have been on a path for years where I don't need or want an agent; but the business has changed so much over the past decade that if I were to seek a new traditional publisher—something I have not done in over a decade—my old business solutions might no longer be viable, for all I know, and I might have to hire an agent. How's that for humbling irony?

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*Laura Resnick is the author of fiction, nonfiction, and short fiction.*

## NINC Member Discounts

*By Abigail Drake*



No one can buy a book if they haven't heard of it, and that's where [AuthorBuzz](#) and [KidsBuzz](#) come in. They put authors directly in touch with readers, reading groups, booksellers, librarians, reviewers, and bloggers. They offer exclusive marketing packages with successful online publications including Goodreads.com, BookMovement.com, Shelf-Awareness.com, DearReader.com, BookTrib.com, Bookbrowse.com, BookBub.com, and many more.

AuthorBuzz has unlimited packages with different pricing to choose from, and they are offering NINC members a discount. For more information, check out the [Member Freebies and Discounts Page](#) on the NINC website.



*[Abigail Drake](#), who writes contemporary romance and women's fiction, is the award-winning author of 19 novels. She majored in Japanese and economics in college and spent years living abroad, collecting stories wherever she visited. She and her husband, whom she met in Istanbul, have three adult sons.*



# 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 NINC members: <https://groups.io/g/ninlink>
- NINC Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>
- Follow NINC on Twitter: [https://twitter.com/Novelists\\_Inc](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/>

## **Conference:**

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

## **Website (You must be logged in to access these services.)**

- Legal Fund: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/legal-fund/>
- Sample Letters: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/sample-letters/>
- Articles & Links: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/>

## **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.

## **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

### **2023 Board of Directors**

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

- President: Celeste Barclay
- President-Elect: Caethes Faron
- Secretary: Sylvia McDaniel
- Treasurer: Timothy Cerepaka
- Newsletter Editor: Harper St. George
- Advisory Council Representative: Steven Womack

### **Advisory Council**

- Lou Aronica
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- Linda Barlow
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- Janice Young Brooks

- Laura Parker Castoro
- Meredith Efken
- Donna Fletcher
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- Kasey Michaels
- Diana Peterfreund
- Pat Rice
- Erica Ridley
- Marianne Shock
- Wayne Stinnett
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

## 2023 Committees

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

- Central Coordinator: Laura Resnick
- 2023 Conference Committee
  - Conference Director: Mel Jolly
  - Assistant Conf. Director & Programming Chair: Tawdra Kandle
  - Assistant Programming Chair: Dylann Crush
  - Trad Liaison: Lou Aronica
  - Sponsorship Chair: Sarah Woodbury
  - Assistant Sponsorship Chair: Hallee Bridgeman
  - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
  - Assistant Hotel Liaison: Tegan Maher
  - Registrar: Lisa Hughey
  - Assistant Registrar: Stephanie Julian
  - App Coordinator & Graphic Designer: Laura Hayden
  - NINC After Dark Coordinator: Tamsin Ley
- Authors Coalition Representatives: Rebecca Zanetti & Hallee Bridgeman
- Bookkeeper: Christy Wilson
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee
  - Chair: Celeste Barclay
  - Misti Boehm
  - Pooks Burroughs
  - Malorie Cooper
  - Lynn Emery
  - Lisa Hughey

- Tawdra Kandle
- Ellis Leigh
- Alison Perry
- Harper St. George
- Social Media Committee
  - Chair: Violet Howe
  - Genevieve Jack
- Membership Committee
  - Boyd Craven
  - Sarah Woodbury
- *Nink* Newsletter
  - Editor: Harper St. George
  - Acquisitions Editor: Trish Milburn
  - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
  - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee
  - Chair: Lisa Hughey
  - Tanya Anne Crosby
  - Michele Dunaway
  - Katherine Garbera
  - Cindy Kirk
  - Nancy Robards Thompson
- Discounts Program: Abigail Drake

### **Central Coordinator**

Novelists, Inc. c/o Laura Resnick  
 P.O. Box 331, Covington KY 41012  
[admin@ninc.com](mailto:admin@ninc.com)

*Address changes may be made on the website.*

### ***Nink* Newsletter**

*March 2023 edition – Vol. 34, No. 3*

*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 and epub formats. Public issues redact NINC members-only information.

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

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