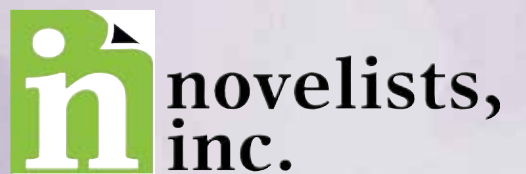




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of writers of popular fiction



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President's Voice

By Celeste Barclay



When people ask how I entered publishing, I've always been honest. I tumbled into it without a plan or any knowledge of the industry, which is completely atypical to how I do most things in life. I wrote my first book on a whim and told no one. Not family, not friends, definitely not colleagues as I'm a recovering teacher. I had an idea for a book and for a series, so I wrote the first one and then went "Now what?"

I knew a few things for sure. I wanted to write under a pen name to keep my writing life separate from my teaching life. I also knew that if I fell on my face, no one would be any the wiser if no one recognized my name. That fear of failure and fear of rejection are also why I knew I didn't want to approach traditional publishing. I'm also not well known for patience, and I want to do things on my timetable, such as rapid release 12-14 books in a year. Definitely not the recommended takeaway from this piece.

I have plenty of author friends who are traditionally published. I'm by no means fundamentally opposed to traditional publishing, and I write for a small house that gives me the best of both worlds. I wholeheartedly believe some genres remain better suited to trad than indie. I think there are advantages to trad just as there are advantages to indie. It depends on an author's goals, motivations, and conflicts.

Unfortunately, New York is currently facing a barrage of challenges, and it's a difficult time for anyone associated with traditional publishing. Houses are realigning through mergers and acquisitions, or at least attempting to as witnessed by Penguin Random House's attempt to purchase Simon & Schuster. This resulted in the Department of Justice prevailing in their antitrust suit against the publishing giant that is already the result of a merger. At the end of January 2023, Penguin Random House announced their CEO, Madeline McIntosh, was leaving.

[Harper Collins editors went on strike in November 2022 for better salaries and working conditions.](#) During that same last week of January, Harper Collins, feeling the effects of the

labor strike, announced they would lay off “5% of their North American employees by June 30th, starting immediately.” Agents are continuing to lose their connections as editors move to other houses or leave the profession entirely. In many ways, New York nearly ground to a stop last year.

Editors striking kept many books on submission from reaching anyone who might have acquired them during better days. Some that were not summarily dismissed languished in virtual piles, waiting for an editor to notice them and find the time to read them. Books that might have easily found homes and been published were rejected because reduced production means steeper competition. The scarcity of physical materials needed to publish and distribute books caused a drop in sales and a drop in acquisitions. According to *Publisher’s Weekly*:

The supply chain problems that were prevalent for much of 2021 continued into 2022, though conditions did improve. Price increases for printing, paper, and shipping eased in 2022, though, as the highest inflation in decades set in, production costs still remained well above 2019 levels, squeezing profit margins. The printing capacity crunch also eased a bit, albeit not for a good reason—printers received fewer orders as book sales declined.

These factors have a trickle-down effect on self-publishing since neither sphere rotates in isolation. Traditional publishing continues to influence genre trends strongly because “[The Big Five still control approximately 80% of the trade book market in the U.S.](#)”

So what does all of this actually mean for professional novelists? Neither traditional nor self-publishing is going away. Indie authors have mastered the art of digital disruption, or the massive shift that occurs in an industry when technology revolutionizes how said industry operates. Consequently, traditional publishers must reconsider outdated and stagnant strategies. Rebranding themselves to fit with the interests, concerns, needs, and expectations of younger generations is paramount.

Better understanding consumer behavior, along with employee behavior, will better position the Big Five to not only hire and retain well-qualified editors, it will help them meet readers’ demands. Accepting and adopting new digital platforms and mediums will expand traditional publishers’ reach and enable them to better compete with the versatility and resourcefulness that are the hallmark of the indie world.

The French have a saying, “*Après moi, le déluge.*” After me, the floods. For a long time, traditional publishers have held an attitude that nothing can exist without them, so what would matter after they’re gone? We have an answer to that: The indie world will continue to thrive. The printed word isn’t going away, but how people access it no longer relies on NYC publishing houses as the gatekeepers. It is time for the powers that be to open the gate and walk into the greener pastures of modern publishing, taking a lesson or two from indies while keeping the best lessons already learned from centuries of printing books. If they do not, they risk withering among last season’s blooms.

I pose these questions for all of us to consider: What contingencies should traditionally published authors make while New York realigns and strategizes the newest iteration of their portion of the industry? How do indie authors leverage the uncertainty and disorder that currently plagues New York? How can indies and trad authors collaborate and cooperate to use this situation to their advantage?

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~ Celeste Barclay

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/>



Registration

Member and assistant registration for NINC2023: ELEVATE (taking place at the TradeWinds Island Grand Resort in St. Pete Beach, Florida, September 20-24) is completely sold out! We're so excited that *you* are so excited to be at the beach in September!

Hotel and transportation

Just a reminder, our guest room block at the TradeWinds has been filled.

At this point, the hotel is still honoring our group rate at the RumFish.

Why aren't we simply increasing our room block at the TradeWinds? The answer to this question involves some intricacies with our contract. If you've never been involved in conference planning, you might not realize that when a previous board signed our hotel contract for 2023, we committed to filling a certain amount of guest rooms. If we don't fill those rooms, we as the organization must pay for the room nights.

Last year, due to the overwhelming response to conference registration, we increased our room block twice. Unfortunately, there were sufficient last-minute cancellations in August and early September that we failed to fill the contracted rooms, resulting in a fairly sizable charge to NINC.

Thank you for your patience as your conference team works hard to find ways that will accommodate our membership and protect our organization.

As for travel between the conference hotel and the airport: in the past, we've used a reserved shuttle through the TradeWinds to help our attendees travel from the Tampa airport to the resort.

This year, we're asking that attendees *not* reserve shuttles directly with Shirley. Instead, we'll send out an email later in the year with information that will allow us to facilitate the process for our attendees.

Don't worry—we're not taking business from Shirley; we're just making sure that she is treated fairly and can manage the trips on her end.

Programming

The programming team is pleased to announce our current list of speakers:

- Erin Wright
- Alessandra Torre
- Nicholas Erik
- Leslye Penelope
- Sarra Cannon
- Steve Pieper
- Erica Ridley
- M.K. Williams
- Margie Lawson
- Melanie Harlow

We have confirmed workshop titles and blurbs for many of these speakers which will be announced in the coming weeks. In addition, we'll be adding sponsor and other industry guest speakers to our schedule within the next few months.

Remember that the general schedule for the conference is available [here](#).

Sponsorship

Confirmed sponsors joining us this year so far are:

- Down Island Publishing
- Draft2Digital
- Kobo
- Google Play
- BookBub
- Reedsy
- Vellum
- Writer MBA
- BookFunnel
- Book Vault
- Lulu
- Plottr
- Fairy-Plot Mother
- Written Word Media
- Publish Drive
- Podium Audio

The Sponsorship Team has broken records for the amount of sponsorships sold this year. We're grateful for their hard work!

If you've looked at the general schedule page on NINC's website, you might have noticed that in response to feedback from sponsors and attendees, we've moved MOSHH (Meet Our Sponsors Happy Hour) to Thursday, which we hope will allow our members and industry guests a chance to meet earlier in the conference weekend.

Look for more updates on sponsors, speakers, workshops, and a detailed schedule coming soon.

We'll 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
- NINC After Dark Assistant: Deann Powell



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.



Recently in the headlines

U.S. book deals fell in first quarter of 2023

According to Publishers Lunch, deal reports have dropped 4.4% versus the first quarter of 2022. This comes after record-setting years for book deals in 2021 and 2022. The decline is even stronger—8%—once you filter out digital-only deals. Michael Cader [notes](#) (subscription required) that digital deals have increased due to “a wave of enthusiastic new and smaller publishers who started listing transactions at Publishers Marketplace in some volume.” Notably, deals for HarperCollins—where workers were on strike in January and much of February—fell 25% lower; they are responsible for more than 40% of the decline in “core” (not digital-only) deals.

Has the time come for ads in audiobooks?

Audible has been testing ads in select audiobooks, podcasts, and original content specifically for non-members. Certainly one wonders if this is a calculated response to the likelihood that Spotify is working on an ad-supported model for audiobook listening as well.

So will your Audible book include ads? You or your publisher would have been notified months ago and given the choice to opt in or opt out of this experimental program. If a consumer who doesn't subscribe to Audible stumbles on your audiobook and it's been opted into the program, then the reader may have the chance to listen for free.

HarperCollins testing AI-generated content

Speaking at London Book Fair last week, HarperCollins CEO Brian Murray said the publisher is experimenting with generative AI for translated and illustrated book projects. One test case in particular is adapting Harlequin content for the Japanese manga market with AI-generated art based on photographs. HarperCollins is also using AI to generate first drafts of marketing copy, manuscript summaries, and metadata for retailers.

AI models have more than likely been trained on your website

While it's already well known that ChatGPT and similar AI have been trained on websites and books, a [recent investigation from *The Washington Post*](#) has made that fact even clearer than before. They analyzed one of the data sets used by the biggest chatbots and made that data set searchable—so you can see how your own websites have contributed. The three biggest sites in the dataset: Google's patent search, Wikipedia, and Scribd. Also on the list: [b-ok.org](#), a site that offered pirated ebooks until it was seized by the U.S. Justice Department last year.

Kindle Unlimited payout significantly dwindles in March 2023

Amazon's Kindle Unlimited pays self-publishing authors based on number of pages read, and those payouts took a recent nosedive. The March 2023 per-page payout was .00406 cents per page, nearly hitting the lowest rate ever reported. In February 2023, it was .00443 cents per page. ([See the history of rates here.](#)) Self-publishing author Lindsay Buroker recently tweeted she's planning to remove her titles from the program because exclusivity to Amazon is "starting to not be worth it." [Read her Twitter thread.](#)

Book sales update

A look at new 2022 sales figures: According to Circana BookScan, 2023 print sales are down by 2% in the U.S. versus last year—but running 15% ahead of 2019.

IMHO: New author earnings survey offers needed counterbalance to traditional doom & gloom

ALLi offers insights into the often-ignored self-publishing market

The [oldest author earnings survey](#) I've ever found was conducted in 2005 by Bournemouth University and included 25,000 British and German writers. The report's agenda was clear in the opening: to show that existing copyright laws have failed to ensure that creators receive sufficient reward for their work. All such surveys that have followed, whether conducted in the UK or U.S., have sung the same tune: We need stronger copyright protections to increase authors' earnings and/or we need publishers to pay more.

Almost never remarked upon: that writers and artists have, throughout history, led a precarious existence. That pursuing any artistic endeavor does not entitle one to or otherwise guarantee reliable earnings. That most artists will not achieve commercial success, and that

publishing has never been an equitable affair where all aspirants can expect similar rewards. John Scalzi, a successful commercial author, has written a [frank summary](#) of this reality.

Yet these earnings surveys are used again and again to essentially threaten that writers will stop writing and no one will produce art if creators are not ensured a living wage. That argument is nonsensical and has never been true. And never in my lifetime has the amount of writing *decreased*—only the opposite. Why would stronger copyright law lead to greater author earnings (remember: the book publishing industry broke sales records in 2021) when the biggest challenge is getting anything noticed in the first place?

Those who've followed me for years know how much I distrust these surveys, yet they get cited again and again in the mainstream media, and no one questions their methodology or conclusions. These surveys poll all types of writers, not just commercial authors. They rely on writers' memories instead of well-documented data to report earnings. They include people who are academics and teachers as well as full-time authors, etc.

And what's especially annoying: Once you dig into these survey results, you'll find the number of authors earning their income solely from writing is pretty stable, and it's almost always supplemented by teaching, speaking, editing, freelancing, and so on. Yet a neutral or positive takeaway is never offered. The headline always trumpets the most dour interpretation possible.

Ultimately, you can make these surveys support whatever argument you wish to make. Which is why I congratulate and applaud the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi), an organization that advocates for self-published authors, for [conducting their own author earnings survey](#). It acts as a strong counterpoint to the usual victim storyline and illustrates how much author earnings depend on where you look and who you ask.

ALLi surveyed more than 2,000 authors in 2022 and found that the median income for self-published authors was \$12,749. That's far better than traditionally published authors, if you put trust in these surveys—the average income for them is around \$8,600 in the UK and \$6,080 in the U.S. as of 2018.

I was not surprised at all by the results. When I asked Orna Ross, director of ALLi, if she expected this finding, she wrote me, "We were always surprised at surveys that said author incomes were falling, because it wasn't what we were seeing among our members. Our experience was that once an author had done the work to acquire good writing and publishing skills, they would see their income rise year on year as they improved their writing and publishing craft. We were also seeing a proportion of our members earning extraordinary amounts of money for a single-person, micro-publishing business. But we also didn't know if we were making false assumptions, because of course we also saw many who hadn't (yet) acquired the necessary skills and were earning little or nothing."

Of the authors that ALLi surveyed, more than half are writing genre fiction: romance, science fiction and fantasy, and mystery/thriller/suspense. (A full quarter: romance authors.) Over half of respondents had published more than 10 books, and 20% had published more than

30. About three-quarters of respondents described their business model as primarily selling their self-published books through retailers (rather than, say, earning money from direct-to-reader sales, crowdfunding, licensing, etc.). Sixty percent of respondents said their income had increased in the past year. While some supplement their book sales through speaking, teaching, or freelancing, the majority of surveyed authors are focused on driving book sales.

I'd still take these results with a huge grain of salt. Ross admitted to me that all statistics are a kind of lie, but they can still be helpful. And for the self-publishing community in particular, she felt it important to try to measure what's happening.

Bottom line: Every time the Authors Guild comes out with an author earnings survey, it's written about in outlets like the *New York Times*. I have so far seen no mention of the ALLi survey in a comparable outlet—only in places like [Publishers Weekly](#). In part, I believe the mainstream media just doesn't take the self-publishing market all that seriously. And by doing so, it continues to ignore one of the biggest publishing stories of the last 15 years: that this market accounts for around 20 to 30 percent of all books sold in the U.S. And that's probably a conservative estimate.

Trailblazers

Opportunities, launches, and startups

Draft2Digital now distributes to Kobo Plus

Recently, Kobo announced it is extending its Kobo Plus service into the UK and the U.S., and Draft2Digital/Smashwords have now added Kobo Plus to its standard Kobo distribution. If you do not wish to participate, you can opt out by logging on to your Draft2Digital account. However, if you are a Smashwords user, you cannot opt out of Kobo Plus without opting out of Kobo as well. Later this year, Smashwords authors will gain the ability to treat Kobo single-copy sales and Kobo Plus distribution separately if they wish. [Learn more.](#)

Free summit on subscriptions for authors

If you want to learn how to earn money selling subscriptions direct to reader, the folks at Ream are hosting a [three-day summit](#) May 5–7, free for all to attend. Sessions are recorded and available if you can't make it live. Ream is a new subscription service built for authors that's similar to Patreon; it remains in beta and isn't yet open to the public. The Hot Sheet will have coverage of Ream later this spring.

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](#).

What to do When Amazon and Facebook Turn Their Backs on You

By Barbara Meyers



Amazon

"We may also suspend your Program account at any time with or without notice to you, for any reason in our discretion."

—from Amazon Terms and Conditions

[Fenella Ashworth](#) panicked after she discovered her Amazon account had been closed, and she got only 90 minutes of sleep over the next three days. "You might think it could only happen via a staged process after lengthy discussions, but that isn't true. It felt like one tap of the button from their side, and my account was gone," she said.

Ashworth believes what might have triggered the closing of her account was wording in one of her titles being too similar to other books on the site.

Although Ashworth did get her account reinstated, the nightmarish experience continues. She posted about it on Facebook's [20BooksTo50K](#) page and has written blogs about it beginning [here](#).

As a result of the suspension, all 50 print versions of her books disappeared, forcing her to re-upload them.

When [Ruby Dixon](#) lost her Amazon account for two days, "Amazon said they were not able to tell me why it was closed, just that it was an internal error on their side and I had not done anything to cause it."

Just as in Ashworth's case, all her print versions had to be re-uploaded. Dixon didn't know if this was standard practice but said it seems to happen a lot.

Dixon has both an Amazon rep and an agent, and she reached out to the assigned Amazon rep to help resolve the issue.

Adam Wilkins of [dotcomreps](#), a consulting agency for Amazon sellers, explained: “Authors can be restricted simply because they have plagiarized works, and some don’t know it because they farmed out the content writing to a third party or a ghostwriter. They might be using a pen name already in use. They might be using a book title too close to another pre-existing book. Part of their copy could be lifted. They don’t know not to do these things. The (Amazon) system leans on trigger words that algorithms can find and sideline the book or author or brand or product or ASIN.”

Best practices

1. Reply to the termination email and continue to reply to each email from Amazon. Each email response keeps the ticket open and is considered an appeal.
2. Shut down your ad account as soon as you are aware of the suspension.
3. Have a financial backup in place. When Amazon closes an author’s account, they don’t just remove an author’s ability to sell their books on Amazon either temporarily or for the remainder of their life. They also withhold all unpaid royalties.
4. If you lose the ability to contact Amazon via email, or if they stop responding to your emails, but an appeal option appears on your dashboard, use it.
5. Think about whether being exclusive to Amazon is your best option. (Ashworth is gradually going wide with many of her books.) Although her ebooks are still exclusive to KU, Dixon said, “Being terminated made me realize not to have my eggs all in one basket, and I continue to take steps to ensure I have alternative avenues.”
6. Loyal readers may be able to help. Ashworth said many of hers went above and beyond, even phoning Amazon directly and supporting her when she subsequently created a Patreon account. Dixon was told that Amazon monitors Twitter and that noise made there can help speed things along.
7. Have copies of your book blurbs easily accessible. When your account is deleted, you lose sight of everything (both via KDP and the standard Amazon site). Make sure you can upload the blurbs and your books to alternative sites in an efficient way.
8. Keep screenshots of your reviews. All reviews are deleted along with your book titles, and they may not reappear even if your account is reinstated. Your reviews are copyrighted, but they are still your reviews so take regular copies of them for your future purposes/general well-being.
9. Stay calm. Have a plan of action and know what alternative ways exist to get your books out there if your account is terminated.

Facebook

"...we may permanently disable or delete your account..."

—from Facebook/Meta Terms of Service

Hackers took over [PJ Fiala](#)'s account at around 3 a.m. Central Time on May 11, 2022, even though she had two-factor authentication on her account. Fiala called her ads manager (who'd insisted being an "editor" and not an "admin" on Fiala's account, for this very reason).

Her manager told Fiala to call her banks and stop any charges going through on her credit cards. She also contacted FB through Messenger and told them of the hacking. She could see the email address associated with Fiala's account changing throughout the day, but she couldn't do anything to remove the hackers from the account.

"Despite knowing my account had been hacked and knowing my author page was being managed by hackers, FB refused to stop the posting. They told me it was against their policies," Fiala said.

Fiala then took a picture of her trademark certificate (for PJ Fiala) and sent it to Facebook Support by responding to the email they sent her.

"I told them my PJ Fiala name was trademarked and if they didn't stop the hackers from posting on my page, they were complicit in trademark infringement." They immediately stopped the posting but refused to take down the banner or pictures the hackers had posted.

"I started sending my newsletter out weekly while I was off Facebook and I continue to do that today," Fiala says. "I'm not working hard to build anyone else's platform only for it to be jerked away. I'm focusing on my newsletter, selling direct from my site, and writing books."

In June of 2022, [BR Kingsolver](#)'s account was hacked while she was overseas. Via email, Facebook informed her that her email address had been changed.

When she told them she had not made such a change, Facebook locked her out of her account. They did not, however, lock the hacker(s) out. Over the next three days, the imposters ran up more than \$3,000 in ads for three different products, none of which were books.

What followed was a months-long back and forth of emails and telephone calls between Kingsolver and Facebook's customer service. Kingsolver was never able to communicate directly with the fraud unit.

Eventually, and with no notice, Facebook refunded the money to Kingsolver's PayPal account. Once she paid for ads which ran before the account was hacked, her account was restored. "I just ran the first campaign on Facebook since last spring, and it went well," she said.

After [Collette Cameron](#)'s account was hacked, Facebook blocked her ads account and she received a notice that her profile had been suspended and would be disabled. She was completely blocked from the Facebook help desk for two days.

"I was finally able to appeal the suspension decision and my appeal was denied. I tried multiple methods to try to send the documentation of the hacking, but the standard appeal form wouldn't permit it. Once Facebook processed the appeal and said my account would be

disabled, I couldn't even access the help desk. My author account that I had built for over a decade was gone. Facebook knew I had been hacked, yet they still disabled my account. I tried opening a new account twice and Facebook shut me down both times before I even finished the process."

Best practices

1. Create an account on Facebook with your real/legal name not a pen name. This is the base for everything on Facebook. You can then create as many pages as you want. To prove you are a real human you will have to (a) upload a copy of your driver's license; (b) have an affidavit notarized by a third party; (c) upload the notarized affidavit with a picture of yourself (possibly for comparison to your driver's license picture). If you use a pen name for your profile, you have no ID to prove who you are.
2. If you are hacked, immediately cancel whatever payment method is associated with your ad account.
3. If you can provide proof of trademark infringement, do so.
4. Even if your account is reinstated, Facebook may not be able to completely clean up the damage done to it by hackers. Opening a new account doesn't guarantee transfer of all information and followers from your old account.
5. Persistence is key. Regularly call and email and escalate the contact to a supervisor each time; keep sequential records of all activity.
6. Have at least one admin and one editor on your account. If you are locked out, they are likely to still have (limited) access.
7. If you are unable to open a new account, you may be able to use an old one.

Barbara Meyers writes a mix of contemporary romance and women's fiction as well as the comedic fantasy series, Grinding Reality.

With A Twist

Incorporating plot turns in any genre

By Elaine Isaak



A plot turn is a moment in the narrative when something changes such that the character must change their own actions or behavior in order to pursue their goal.

While some genres are famous for twisty plots, no matter your genre, using turns effectively is one of the greatest tools in the author's kit. This article will present a variety of types of plot turns along with considerations about how to employ them to help you strengthen your plot, even if you're not an outliner.

Time Bomb: a hard deadline for specific action

Introducing a ticking clock to your plot focuses the events and increases the pressure on your characters to take action. It creates a sense of urgency about the choices they face.

Any precondition with a built-in deadline qualifies as a Time Bomb. While a thriller might employ a literal time bomb, they appear in a variety of genres. For instance, if the romantic interest books a one-way flight to Bombay for tomorrow, the protagonist has to act fast to express their love and show why it's worth staying. A job opportunity or a rocket launch window are other examples.

The bomb must go off when you say it will. Perhaps the flight could be delayed, but the sense of urgency diminishes when the ticking clock gets stalled. One effective way to escalate conflict is to shorten the deadline, forcing the characters into motion.

Time Trap: two actions compete for the character's attention

Two different things need to happen in a limited window of time. Both must be important to the character, and neither can be reasonably delayed. If the character continues on their

current trajectory, something will be lost. The character should generally choose the harder action.

Ethical dilemmas like the Trolley Problem take this form. An observer standing next to a track switch sees a trolley full of people heading for a broken bridge. The observer has time to switch the trolley to another track, but there's a family walking on the second track too far away to warn. If the observer does nothing, the passengers will be killed. If the observer throws the switch to send the trolley on a different track, the family will die, but the people on board will be saved. What will they choose?

Space shuttle commander Mark Kelly faced a Time Trap when his wife had been shot and was in a coma just before the critical window to train for what might be his final shuttle mission. Would he stay at his wife's bedside and lose the chance to fulfill his professional goals?

Crucible: the unavoidable conflict

Snakes on a Plane is a great example of the Crucible. The airplane encloses the characters with the conflict, forcing them to deal with the issue. Other examples include the snowbound cabin in a romance novel or the manor house that traps characters with an unknown killer.

Crucibles also come in less tangible forms. A relationship, tradition, or faith can serve as a Crucible: the character would pay a high social or emotional cost for leaving to avoid conflict. For instance, if the character leaves their church rather than confront unethical leadership, they may be ostracized by friends and family.

A Crucible might be inherent to your premise, like an island setting that's hard to escape, or it might be introduced later to escalate conflict, like two characters being handcuffed together.

Dilemma: the character must choose between two equally poor choices

A Dilemma confronts the character's morality and often tweaks their internal conflict rather than escalating an external conflict. The Dilemma forces a character to address who they think they are, who they want to be, and what they are willing to compromise or abandon. Great dilemmas can make the reader consider their own choices, what they would do under the circumstances the character is confronting.

A worker who discovers their business acting unethically would decide whether to blow the whistle on the company, at risk to their personal reputation and professional future. The Dilemma could be even harder if the business serves a real need, and the prospective whistleblower knows that exposure could mean those needs go unmet.

Reversal: a sudden change of fortune

An action occurs that changes the power dynamics. A fight seems to be going well, until the opponent pulls out a gun or the police arrive to arrest the protagonist. The famous sword fight in *The Princess Bride* is a series of Reversals, punctuated by the Revelation, "I am not left-handed."

While we often see negative Reversals featuring the character's downfall, a positive event can also disrupt the character's life and plans. Receiving an inheritance makes the character's love interest perceive them as out of reach, or the character needs to move to take advantage of an opportunity. Unexpected good fortune can result in negative impacts.

A classic example would be the servant present when the murder victim's will is read—who discovers that they've been left a lot of money, making them suddenly a suspect.

Revelation: new information alters the course of the plot

Something discovered or revealed causes the protagonist to reevaluate their direction. A Revelation might not have immediate impact, but its repercussions change the trajectory or the character's choices in the long term. In a mystery novel, a fresh clue might serve as a Revelation causing the detective to reconsider a suspect.

In many genres or plotlines, Revelations relate to the character's internal conflicts, as when they learn their true parentage or they overhear something detrimental about a loved one. A success or failure might lead to a Revelation about their own capabilities or priorities that can result in character transformation. Reversal and Revelation often work in tandem, as in *The Princess Bride*, but often a Revelation creates internal change rather than external conflict.

Confrontation: characters in direct conflict

Two or more characters spar physically or verbally. While the obvious examples involve the antagonist, engaging Confrontations can center other kinds of relationships. A child confronts their parent about their drinking habits, a friend confronts the protagonist about the choice they made during that last Dilemma.

This escalates tension on multiple levels. We expect a boss battle in many books, and have a strong rooting interest in the outcome, but a Confrontation between allies or family members can raise the stakes on all sides.

External Element: the setting itself interferes with the character's goal

Weather, geography, or the necessities of travel can create plot turns, forcing the character onto a different path, even if that's a closure on the subway that pushes them to take a bus. Be cautious about relying on external forces for plot turns. Readers tend to prefer characters with agency, who are making choices and taking actions that drive the plot forward, even if those choices are mistakes.

However, brainstorming the possible obstacles that arise from your setting can ground the story deeper, invest characters in their environment and provide greater richness. External Elements are often add-on plot turns that exert greater pressure, as when the characters in the *Crucible* of an island setting face an escalation in the form of an incoming storm, or the aftermath of a Confrontation causes a fire the combatants must now face together.

Plot turns and pace

Deliberately examining the number of pages or words between plot turns can help you manage your pace, whether you're brainstorming the plot in advance or trying to diagnose a sagging middle. Think of them as the twisting track of your roller coaster. The closer together they occur, the more exciting the ride. Some authors set out to create a plot turn every three pages to really accelerate the pace, and Albert Zuckerman in *Writing the Blockbuster Novel* recommends having at least 12 major pivots through the course of a novel.

Make sure that your intended plot turns are actually forcing a new choice, that the protagonist can't simply ignore them and carry on as if nothing's changed. Often we allow characters to sidestep the repercussions of an event rather than engage with them.

Another way to manage pace and maintain reader engagement is to look at the type of turns in the work and see if you can vary them. Layering one plot turn on another escalates the tension. Many recent films rely on a series of Time Bombs, just stacking the pressure with new threats that move up the timeline, but even that can get dull. Present the plot turns in different ways: through dialog or action, during sequels or moments of contemplation, or even through description or narration. A romance heroine might fight with her love interest (Confrontation in dialog) after noticing an unfamiliar garment in his room (Revelation in description).

As you work through your novel or that tricky revision, consider how employing plot turns can help you engage your readers and pick up the pace.

Elaine Isaak writes adventure fiction inspired by subjects like medieval surgery, ancient clockworks, and Byzantine mechanical wonders. Published works include *Drakemaster*, the *Dark Apostle Series*, and the *Bone Guard* archaeological thrillers as E. Chris Ambrose. Look for her stories in NINC member Matt Buchman's new magazine, *Thrill Ride*.

Affiliate Marketing

A starter guide to creating passive income

By Lisa Hughey



Do you like easy money? Yes! Then you need to set up your affiliate marketing links.

What is affiliate marketing?

If you read the informational pamphlets for each affiliate site, they are full of jargon—performance-based channels, leveraged partnerships, pay-for-outcome alternatives—that is confusing and hard to decipher.

But the basic answer is you get paid when you refer a reader to a vendor (i.e. Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple, Kobo, and Google) and they buy something on the website. In your case, you are referring your own books to your newsletter subscribers, website visitors, and social media followers. The first goal is to get them to buy your book. If you use affiliate marketing, you will also get a small commission (rates vary from provider to provider) from the vendor for your book sale.

Setting up your accounts

Vendors make it sound easy. Just sign up and start earning money. In actuality, the process is quite a bit more detailed and there are plenty of places to trip you up along the way. Most retailers use a third party to administer their affiliate marketing program and each one is very different with different terminology.

We'll walk through each major vendor and discuss their idiosyncrasies to get you started.

Amazon

Amazon is the most well-known of the major vendors and by far the easiest to set up. Create an [Amazon Associates account](#) (usually linked to your Amazon account). Once you set up your Associates account, you create your own tracking ID for your links. Then use Site Stripe, which should be a banner at the top of every Amazon page if you are logged into your account. You can create text tracking links or even links that display your cover. Then just put that link on your website.

If you want to get fancier, you can create different tracking IDs so you can drill down to exactly where you are getting clicks. The nice bonus with Amazon Associates is that once a user clicks your link you get paid on anything they buy at Amazon within a time window—not just your book or even if they don't buy your book.

Google and Apple both use Partnerize as their third-party administrators, which makes you think, Hooray! That will cut down on work. Nope.

Google

First you sign up for [Partnerize](#) as a publisher. Once you have an account, you have to apply to run campaigns in Google Play.

Once you are approved, go to your [profile settings](#) and choose the countries you want to advertise in individually. (Same as setting your prices in the GP dashboard.) Also remember to choose your currency.

On your account you have a user ID which is *not* the same as your affiliate code.

Now you are ready to create the link. Go to Content, drop down to Link Builder. Then you can put in the Google Play book link, and it will generate a new link with your affiliate code. You can find your affiliate code at the end of the link PAffiliate={9 character alpha numeric code} if you want to then put that code in a Universal Link Generator website (i.e. Books2Read, GeniusLink, Booklinker, Author Helper Suite) instead of creating your own links.

Apple

Even though you already have a Partnerize account with another vendor, the system won't let you sign up for Apple with that same ID. You will have to create a separate Partnerize account for your Apple affiliate links.

You access the sign-up website through the [Apple site](#). FYI—you are considered a content-partner whether you publish direct with Apple or through an aggregator such as Draft2Digital.

Once you are approved for their program, they email a link to set up your account. When you receive your “token” you can start setting up affiliate links. After your token is assigned, you are already set up within the Apple Services campaign. No need to apply again.

Then to create your book links head to [Apple Toolbox Services](#).

Kobo

To sign up for the Kobo Affiliate program, you want an [Affiliate Publisher account](#).

When you sign up, you will be given a SID. This is *not* your affiliate link code.

Log in to rakutenadvertising.com to sign up for the individual programs (called advertisers), i.e., Rakuten Kobo Canada, Rakuten Kobo U.S., Rakuten Marketing UK, Rakuten Advertising Welcome Program, etc. Each region has its own advertising program. You must request approval to join each one.

Once you are approved, you can start creating affiliate links. You want Deep Links if the region supports it. That is relatively easy. Put your Kobo link into the Deep Link generator and it will give you a link with your affiliate code.

If not, you need to find your product links. Put in the region/advertiser, then the category: books. Use the product link searcher box to search on your author name. That will bring up your books and you can create links for each one.

Embedded in the link created by the system is your affiliate ID; it is alpha numeric (mine is 11 characters). That code can be put into Universal Link Generator websites (i.e. Books2Read, Genius Links, Author Suite Help, Booklinker, etc.)

Barnes & Noble

The affiliate program is run by CJ (Commission Junction) Affiliate. Sign-up is very easy and quick. Using [this link](#) will create a CJ account and automatically apply to the B&N affiliate program for you. The sign-up is very straightforward and takes about 20 minutes.

But then you have to wait for approval from B&N to get your affiliate code. That's where it gets more problematic. A week later, I'm still waiting.

One cool thing about CJ Affiliates is they have tools so you can create a line of JavaScript on your website that automatically monetizes links to a CJ advertiser. They also have a way to add a Deep Link generator right on your browser's toolbar without logging in. To find these, you have to be logged in and then it is publisher/links/tools.

You've got links! Now what?

Now you need to take those links and put them on your website so every time someone clicks a link and buys your book you will also get affiliate income. You can use the links in your newsletter** when promoting a sale or new release to your subscribers. Links can be used in social media posts. Some links can be used in Facebook ads** (but not all, so double check the terms of service).

**Check each vendor's terms before putting links anywhere but your website. Some encourage links all over the place while others will ding you for it. Amazon, in particular, has all sorts of rules.

Universal Link Generators

This sounds like so much work ... if the idea of creating vendor links for each vendor and each book and each territory gives you the hives, there are companies out there that will generate Universal Links for you.

A Universal Link is beneficial because the system will automatically register where the reader is located and send them to the store in their country/territory. There are several options available at varying price points. Booklinker and Books2Read are free services. Genius Links charges by the number of clicks you generate. Author Helper Suite (formerly ReaderLinks) charges a flat monthly fee. (However, they have additional services included in that fee.)

Cautions

As an FYI, each step typically requires a wait time. Create account. Wait. Apply to the program. Wait. Until you can finally create your links. And again, be sure to check the terms to make sure you are in compliance with each vendor.

This article is in no way comprehensive because there are so many intricacies surrounding the individual programs, but it is a step-by-step resource to get you started.

Oh, and also...

While this is just a beginning look at how to set up your affiliate links for your books, there are many other avenues for creating passive income with affiliate links. Audio links, merchandise, stickers, classes. The possibilities are endless.

The initial setup does take time, but once you get your links you can set them and forget them and start raking in the cash—or at least be able to buy a drink at the Tiki Bar.

Resource guide

- [Amazon Associates](#)
- [Apple Partnerize Sign-up](#)
- [Apple Link Creator](#)
- [Barnes & Noble CJ Affiliates](#)
- [Barnes & Noble](#)
- [Kobo Sign-up](#)
- [Kobo Link Creator](#)
- [Google Partnerize Sign-up](#)
- [Google Link Creator](#)

Universal Link Generators

- [Booklinker](#)
- [Books2Read](#)

- [Genius Links](#)
- [Author Helper Suite](#)

Lisa Hughey has published over 30 romance novels and has been saying for years that she needed to set up affiliate links beyond Amazon. She committed to write an article for Nink so she could finally learn how to create passive income streams.

One Year Down

Thoughts from a full-time author

By Lynn Cahoon



When I started writing in 2010, I had one overarching dream—to make this part-time adventure a career.

Most people said it was impossible. Writing is an act of love. Work years building skills and you'll still be making less than a minimum wage job. Even if I doubled that, I couldn't live on it.

Except I knew people who *were* writing full-time. So how could I?

The beginning

Let's start with me. I've been published since 2012. Back then, I had a few e-first contracts from small presses. I made little to no money. The next year, I signed an e-first traditional contract (no advance). I've been with them for 10 years and now have both advance and e-first contracts. I've earned close to six figures and over (gross) for several years now. I'm also self-publishing. I wrote several books a year even with the day job.

Even with several ongoing series, I couldn't see stepping away from my day job with benefits. I kept making promises. I'd quit when I could replace my salary with the writing. (I didn't.) I'd quit in 2020. (Thank God I didn't.) Finally, I convinced my husband that I needed to at least try and we developed a plan.

Now, a year later from my quit date (3/4/22), we've moved from Illinois to Tennessee. I'm a full-time author. My husband retired early. We pulled the U-Haul to Tennessee on June 15. Internet was set up the next day. I didn't have a desk, but I could work.

As I developed this article, I reached out to other full-time authors and asked about their journeys. Here are our lessons.

Plan your escape

Writing is a creative process. So is making money as a writer. Self-doubt can cripple your ability to write and allow you to set up your own roadblocks to making the change. Reasonable planning makes the leap feel more like a job change and less like stepping off a cliff. I've done both. I quit a long-term (safe) job based on an untried and unfinanced business idea. After six months, I had to find a new, full-time job in order to eat.

Learning from that experience made me a little skittish when leaving the corporate world. It's easier to trust the money will come when you have a bridge account to live on in case things go sideways. To prepare, we decreased our debt and set up an emergency fund with a year of bare bones expenses.

[ML Banner](#) had this to say: "If you have to borrow (to make this dream a reality), you're not ready to make the leap."

Set a flexible start date

Did I jump too soon? I knew we could live off the writing, if we didn't have so many payments. Our first step was to pay off the bills and sell off some of the toys. But I needed my spouse's commitment to the plan. It took a while to find common ground. Once we were in agreement, the preparation process took a couple of years.

[Mel Todd](#) based her start date on having enough of an emergency fund to be able to survive for three years. I only planned for one year.

Others have tied their leap to a specific date. [Neil Plakcy](#) made the change from full-time professor when he qualified for Medicare. He said, "... I was spoiled by not commuting during the pandemic, it was easier for me to make the jump."

Plan to make money

Manifestation. It's a big word for expecting good things to happen. Use a vision board to declare your annual money goal. I kept a figure on my white board with a "Why Not Me?" affirmation for two years. I met it the second year.

You can't go into this journey expecting not to make money. Yet I read so much about writers not being able to go full-time. Since most of my income is traditional royalties, it's tough when you see a check come in lower than planned. It can make your confidence spiral downward. But that's the past. What are you doing today to change your annual income? Self-publish a book? Do a bundle? Use social media ads? Look for work for hire? There's a lot of opportunities.

Of the survey responders, only one of them had other writer income (like editing or writing services). Some had retirement income or working spouses to help bridge the gap when the

writing income decreased. All of the respondents said that you have to be prepared for the income ups and downs.

Set up a (business) plan

Coming from the corporate world and state government, I thought having a business plan was crucial. I always got stuck when I thought about five or 10 years out. What was my vision besides writing all the books? From the survey, most people had no business plan, but they did have a writing (or release) plan. I think that's an easier process. I have an annual author plan that includes all my releases and deadlines. It also lists out my travel and marketing commitments. I make daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly plans. I'm Lynn and I'm a plan-a-holic.

So were most of the survey respondents. They talked about planning their books. Some used the SMART goal process they learned at old jobs. Knowing where you're going is crucial. The document or process you use is more flexible.

Treat it like a job

At a pizza gathering last week, a neighbor asked me about my latest signing. As I listed off what I was doing the next month, he shook his head. "I thought writing was like one step away from retirement. That sounds like a job."

Yes, it's a job and more. It's your business.

ML Banner said, "Scheduling and managing my time is the hardest part of the transition."

I totally agree. Except for my editors, I don't have anyone telling me what to do. Should I work weekends? Should I have a 40-hour work week? Which project is most important? I've always used backward planning to figure out what I needed to write and by what dates. Now, I had a full day to write or market or read or take classes or do accounting. Or fall down rabbit holes.

Other responders talked about the need to schedule your time before someone else schedules it for you. Having the flexibility to run your kids to activities or a doctor's appointment in the middle of a week is great—if you also make sure you schedule time for writing, editing, business stuff, and taking classes for craft knowledge, marketing, and keeping up on what's selling today.

Even a bad job has lunch breaks, weekends, and vacations

Don't be a bad boss.

In order to keep writing (or doing anything) for the long term, you also need to schedule in exercise and self-care. Including vacations and days off. I've had more than one friend suffer burnout because she had to do all the things. I used to be jealous of her production. Now I know it comes at a cost.

Before I quit the day job, I didn't think I had time to visit my sister across the country. Now, I'm worried that I won't really have enough time as our lives are short. I take at least one day totally off each week—even if it's just a trip into town for the groomers and shopping. Or maybe a lunch out.

Years ago, I listened to interviews with Nora Roberts. Her day seemed so perfect. She wrote, then took lunch, then dealt with business stuff, then worked out and got ready for her evening. Putting that into practice sounds easier than it is without working more than forty hours a week or driving yourself crazy.

"Frustration and depression are sneaky," said Mel Todd. You have to make sure your employee (you) is in the best position to produce the product (book). You can't do that if you're not taking care of yourself.

What have I learned this first year? Writing full-time is obtainable. You've got to want it more than anything else. One more thing: you need to take care of yourself in order to not only just sustain your lifestyle but thrive. Here's to year two.

Thanks to everyone who took my survey on being a full-time author.

After wanting to write for most of her life, [Lynn Cahoon](#) got a scare from the universe that pushed her into actually doing it in 2007. She sold her first romance a short five years later and then three cozy mysteries in 2013, one which hit the New York Times list in 2014. Since that time, she's written books in six different cozy mystery series focusing on relatable amateur sleuths who get to have the careers Cahoon always wanted to have including bookseller, chef, and author/writing retreat owner.

Smart Marketing for Savvy Authors

By Tawdra Kandle



*This year of Smart Marketing
is all about reinventing our businesses.
For the second quarter, we'll talk details:
What starting over looks like;
Why business structure matters;
But what about the readers?*

When I finished writing my first full book in 2008, I was so excited. I'd been working on stories here and there for decades, creating characters, crafting dialogue, and plot twists in my mind ... but this time, the whole thing was real, on paper—well, on my computer, but still.

I remember being almost drunk with the glory of it and giddy when I realized that having accomplished this incredible feat, I could do it again. And again.

And I did.

But in those early days, I never thought beyond the actual storytelling process. Oh, sure, not long after I'd finished the first book, I began querying agents, launching the slow and arduous chore that trad publishing was, but at no point did I think to myself, *hmmm, this book is going to make me money—with any luck, a lot of it—and I should think about how I'm going to handle that—how I'm going to be smart about it.*

True story: even after I'd turned away from traditional publishing to take the indie route, I didn't think about money. I hit publish on my first book in December 2011, and honestly, I didn't once worry about what kind of money the book was earning or how it was coming to me. In June 2012, I received a check from Amazon in the mail and nearly fell over. That check wasn't

really huge by anyone's standards, even though it represented nearly six months of royalties, but it was more money than I'd ever made in my entire life.

The day after I received the check (and took my family out to dinner to celebrate!), I ventured onto the KDP dashboard for the first time. Yes, I'm serious. Up until then, I'd left the uploading and changes to my husband, who was far more tech-savvy than me, but he'd never thought about linking our bank account so that I could have my royalties direct-deposited. I took care of that and began to understand that there was far more to this writing-books deal than I'd considered. It was my first step toward establishing business practices.

I wish I could say that from then on, I was a reformed business-savvy author, but I wasn't. Not by a long shot. But it was a beginning. I began to educate myself on how the publishing process worked and what I could do to improve the packaging and presentation of my books. I learned a lot about promotion and marketing. But I didn't keep records or examine data or even invest in a simple bookkeeping program.

I heard authors I respected talking about putting money back into their business, and I understood that idea. But, by that point, I was supporting my family solely on my book income, which meant that money I earned wasn't going back into my business—it was paying rent and utilities and buying food and gas. I didn't bother looking at numbers because it was always a fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants proposition. I didn't do anything to help my book business that wasn't cheap or free.

But what this meant was that I made decisions while wearing the equivalent of a blindfold and tying one hand behind my back. I didn't know except in the vaguest, most anecdotal way which of my books were selling best in which markets and via which vendors. I regularly scored BookBub Featured Deals, but I couldn't tell anyone which ones performed best—so I couldn't make informed decisions about what to do in the future, either.

In short, I wasn't so much running a business as I was indulging in a hobby, one that sometimes made me five figures in one month and other times barely broke three figures a month. I had some hunches about why these things happened, but I couldn't be positive and most often, even if I knew, I couldn't act on that knowledge because of my budget constraints.

Something had to change if this book writing and publishing idea was going to be a sustainable, long-term plan for me. The trouble was I didn't know where to begin.

The initial answers came when I attended my very first NINC conference. That was my first legitimate exposure to authors who were business-savvy and who most definitely took their careers seriously. I began to understand that treating my writing and publishing as a business was not undercutting my art; on the contrary, it was a way in which to elevate and celebrate the books into which I poured my heart and soul.

Still, it was a slow process. Habits and mindset are often fairly entrenched, and I wasn't sure where to begin. In many ways, it was the pandemic that turned things around for me.

First of all, I had access to small business loans that were both forgivable and attainable. I also had the privilege of long conversations with Joe Solari at what will ever be known as the

Pandemic NINC Conference; there were only 40 of us present, so long conversations were the norm rather than the exception! Joe's advice on how to establish a solid business base from which I could re-launch a long-term publishing career was a game changer for me.

Acting on his recommendations, I established an LLC. Since my plan was to republish my books under a name and a business entity that was totally unrelated to me, I chose a name that meant something to me but couldn't be easily traced to Tawdra Kandle Romance. I used that LLC to open a new KDP account (and this is within the Kindle Direct Press Terms of Service) which I used to publish my first books as Author X. (As a child of the *Speed Racer* era, I really wish I could have made my new author persona Author X!!)

The next thing I did was to fill out an IRS form and request that my LLC be treated as an S Corp. Now, full disclosure here: I'm writing this about a week after finishing and filing my taxes for the first time as this LLC. In retrospect, I probably should have waited to request S Corp status until I was certain my LLC would earn over \$50,000 a year. It did not earn that much in 2022. While I wasn't penalized, I had to do a lot more work than I would have if I'd waited.

I felt very official with my own EIN and business title! I'll use this LLC to re-publish all of the books that are meant to be wholly separate from my own name. The first author has already launched and completed her initial series and is in the midst of the second series. Ultimately, these two series will funnel into one new world that includes both when I'm ready to write new books under that name (in mid-summer of 2024).

Recently, I was reading a nonfiction book by a well-known romance author who shared her own reluctance to establish a business bank account. I related all too well to that feeling! Since my own bank doesn't offer business accounts, I took a baby step by opening a separate account at that bank and using it as the LLC account. But I know that it's important to have a bank account that is really only for business, so that's on my to-do list for May. I'm also buying QuickBooks so that I can begin to keep records instead of (ducks head in shame) a box with receipts stuffed in willy-nilly.

It's a process.

But you know what? It's a good process. I've noticed that the more I organize my writing career, the more seriously I take my business. And while I might not hit that \$50K goal for the new LLC in 2023, I expect that I will in 2024—and this time, I'll be prepared for handling the income and the accompanying taxes.

One more note that I found interesting: while having to learn how to file taxes for an LLC that has elected to be treated as an S Corp only a few days before the filing deadline was daunting (who knew that corporations had to file by March 15? Not this author!), there were some interesting takeaways. Among them was that although my new LLC definitely outspent its earnings in year one, the amount that Author X made on six books in KU during her first year of publishing was only about \$400 less than Tawdra Kandle Romance earned in wide royalties on 130 books in the same year. This data tells me that I'm on the right track.

See that? I took data and extrapolated information from it. Watch out, world. This author is taking all of her business seriously from now on.

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

How NINC Works

By Laura Resnick



“I always want to know how things work. Had I been Aladdin, I am certain that just after one wish or two, I’d have taken that old lamp apart to see if I could make another, better lamp.”

—Walter P. Chrysler (1875-1940), founder of the Chrysler Corporation

NINC has been growing rapidly in recent years, which means we have new members who may not yet know how NINC works. We also have many longtime members who may be unaware of the various things in NINC that have changed since they first joined the organization.

In 1989, the founding mothers—five women writers—established a steering committee to launch an organization aimed specifically at professional writers of book-length fiction. The organization would not focus on any particular genre (other organizations already did that), and it would not address the needs of new or aspiring writers (ditto). It would uniquely focus on career novelists.

The first conference had about 100 attendees, all new members, all multi-published. Much of the program that year consisted of business meetings where, led by the steering committee, we focused on establishing the structure and rules of the organization.

This was where we determined, for example: the organization would be called Novelists, Inc. (and NINC for short); our monthly publication would be called *Nink*; an applicant must have sold two novels in order to be considered for membership; our annual conference would be only for members; NINC would not give out writing awards; candidates for the Board of Directors would be chosen by a nominating committee; members would not use NINC or *Nink* as a venue for promoting their novels to other members. These are all foundational rules governing NINC that have remained in place to this day, and which still serve us well.

NINC is managed by the Board of Directors, which has six members, including the president. The president-elect, secretary, and treasurer are all elected positions. The *Nink* editor is appointed by the president. The Advisory Council Representative is chosen by the Advisory Council, which consists of most of NINC's past presidents.

Members of the Advisory Council provide institutional memory and are available to provide advice or feedback to the board. The Advisory Council Representative is their voice on the board and the board's conduit to the council.

The treasurer, secretary, *Nink* editor, and Advisory Council rep each serve a term of one year, and those positions each have a term limit of three consecutive years.

The president-elect position evolved a few years into NINC's existence, due to the realization that entering the role of president "cold" as a member meant each new president needed time to learn the ropes. Spending a year on the board as president-elect means that someone is well-prepared to hit the ground running when they become president. So, in NINC, we now elect a president-elect every year, who will subsequently serve as president. In case you're as bad at math as I am, that means that agreeing to serve as president-elect means committing to two years on the board—and, afterward, to an indefinite number of years on the Advisory Council, unless they decline to join it (which is an option).

In appreciation of their service, NINC covers the cost of each board member's attendance at conference: hotel, travel, and conference fee.

Competitive elections for board officers in a volunteer organization can be divisive and lead to factionalism and infighting—basically, it's too much like politics. Instead of competitive officer elections, NINC elects a Nominating Committee each year whose members research and select one candidate for each board position. The committee then presents that slate to the members on the general election ballot.

NINC's rules also require the Nominating Committee to choose a slate of nine candidates for the following year's committee. They appear on the same ballot as the board candidates. Five Nominating Committee members are chosen via this vote; the sixth member, who chairs the committee, is a member of the Advisory Council who is appointed by NINC's president.

The 2023 Nominating Committee is currently seeking candidates for 2024—board officers and NomComm members. If you're interested in serving in any capacity, please contact me at admin@ninc.com and I will connect you to the committee chair.

NINC is a member of the Authors Coalition of America (ACA), which repatriates and distributes foreign non-title-specific reprographic royalties for American works photocopied abroad. (See their [website](#) for further explanation.) NINC receives a distribution of money from ACA several times each year. Apart from a specific sum allocated for operating expenses, the money goes into a restricted fund which NINC can only use for projects and activities which adhere to ACA's mission. For NINC, that specifically means we have an obligation to use the money in ways that benefit all novelists or all fiction writers, not just NINC members. (Later this year, the board will announce a new project that will use this fund.)

NINC has two volunteer members at any given time, either of whom serves as our representative at ACA meetings. In addition to discussing that organization's core mission of repatriating funds, many broader topics of concern to American creators and copyright holders

are discussed within ACA. Our reps alert NINC to any topics under discussion that NINC might want to be aware of, research, or act on.

Besides our ACA reps, NINC has various other committees, of course (ex. Conference, DEI, Membership, Social Media, Member Discounts, etc.). If you're interested in getting more involved in NINC, contact a committee chair, the NINC president (president@ninc.com), or me (admin@ninc.com). Or contact the president to propose a new project or committee that you'd like to lead!

NINC's monthly publication, *Nink*, began as a printed eight-page newsletter that got snailmailed to members. In the years before e-lists or social media, the Letters column was usually long and lively. Contributors used to write *Nink* articles for free; initially, we didn't have enough money in the treasury to pay for content. That changed in the early 1990s; and over the years, we increased the pay rate. Currently, *Nink* pays \$0.20/word. If you're interested in writing an article for *Nink*, contact the editor at newsletter@ninc.com.

These days, of course, every issue of *Nink*, which is published and distributed electronically, contains a dozen articles and columns, and the two annual conference editions are massive, each containing 20-25 conference reports. We also distribute a separate edition every month—one that omits member-specific information—to about 75 friends of NINC (ex. conference speakers, non-member contributors to *Nink*, etc.). Running *Nink* is a *much* bigger job than it used to be, so these days the editor has paid staff to help keep it on track: the acquisitions editor, the copy editor, and the production manager.

Speaking of staff, NINC now also has a professional bookkeeper who handles the organization's accounting and budgeting tasks—another job that has become much bigger now that NINC has nearly 1,200 members.

Planning and execution of our world-class conference is no longer managed by an exhausted volunteer chairperson, but rather by a hired conference director and assistant conference director.

NINC's central coordinator position has been a staff position for decades, but the role has changed substantially. For many years, NINC's central coordinator checked the post office box in Kansas (the state where NINC was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation), forwarded mail as needed, and deposited checks in NINC's bank account (also in Kansas).

These days, though, the central coordinator is an aide de camp, major domo, virtual assistant, foreman, administrator, timekeeper, taskmaster, dogsbody, and customer service rep all rolled into one. I'm the current central coordinator, and after a year on the job, I'm still learning it.

NINC also maintains funds to assist members. The Linda Kay West Memorial Fund is available to cover the annual dues fee of any member who's going through difficult times and needs that assistance. (You can use the fund once every four years, if needed.) The fund also provides up to three conference scholarships per year; the scholarship covers the conference fee and includes a \$500 stipend to help with other expenses. (The conference scholarship can be used once in a lifetime.)

NINC's Legal Fund exists to cover the cost of initial consultation with an attorney when a member has a legal problem arising from their writing career. The Legal Fund cannot be used

for ordinary legal business (ex. contract negotiations, setting up an LLC, etc.) or for legal problems that arise outside of a member's career. Multiple members involved in the same legal action (ex. if three NINC members are all unable to collect monies owed to them by the same publisher) can pool together their Legal Fund grants.

One of the biggest changes in NINC over the years, of course, is the one that reflects the seismic changes in our profession: NINC accepts applications from self-published writers—and, years ago, was in the vanguard of recognizing indie publishing as an important game changer for professional novelists.

These days, one of our challenges as an organization is balancing our resources to ensure that NINC serves all its members equally well, whether traditionally published, indie published, or hybrid. Consider this your invitation to get more involved in that effort.

A founding member of NINC, [Laura Resnick](#) is now older than she ever expected to be.

NINC Member Discounts

Freedom and ScribeCount

By Abigail Drake

We have **two** amazing discounts to feature for May.

The first one comes from [Freedom](#), a software that gives millions of users worldwide control over digital distractions. When you schedule a Freedom session, you block the websites and apps that you find most distracting. Freedom syncs across all your computers, phones, and tablets. Get Freedom and focus on what really matters most to you: writing.

The second is [ScribeCount](#)—an indie author’s best friend. Whether you are publishing on all platforms or through Amazon’s Select program, ScribeCount allows each author to customize their reports to fit their individual needs. Additional features include ad tracking, KU status and price monitoring, daily email summaries, indie news consolidation, related income and expense tracking, keyword generation, pre-orders, chart comparison, and many more. And ScribeCount does this all without needing the author’s passwords, cookies, or personal information.

To find out more about the NINC discounts being offered by these two fabulous companies, 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, who 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
- 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
- Brenda Hiatt Barber
- Linda Barlow
- Jean Brashear
- Janice Young Brooks

- Laura Parker Castoro
- Meredith Efken
- Donna Fletcher
- Kay Hooper
- Lisa Hughey
- Tawdra Kandle
- Barbara Keiler
- Julie Leto
- Pat McLaughlin
- 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

Address changes may be made on the website.

***Nink* Newsletter**

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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.

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.

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