

# NEWS

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



novelists,  
inc.

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# *Nink* January 2024

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# President's Voice

*By Caethes Faron*



Welcome to 2024! May this be a prosperous year for all of us as we continue to work on our craft and business.

With the busy holiday season behind us, we're now looking ahead to what the future will bring. Each year in this business brings new challenges and new opportunities for growth, and 2024 will be no different. As I've outlined my personal goals and plans for the year, I'm excited about all the opportunities we have as authors in today's world. I'm also grateful for this organization that is all about empowering authors to make decisions for their business and take their future in their own hands. This is truly a great time to be a writer.

January also marks the changeover of the NINC Board. We are saying goodbye to Celeste Barclay as our president. This last year she has consistently impressed me with her leadership skills and ability to get things done. She'll be missed on the board, but she won't be far as she takes her place on the advisory council. We're also saying goodbye to our treasurer, Timothy Cerepaka. He's been a great steward of NINC's finances, and we wish him well. I know he has many exciting things on the horizon! We're also bidding farewell to the *Nink* newsletter editor, Harper St. George. She has been one of the hardest working members of the team, making sure our members have this professional newsletter delivered to them on time each month. We'll miss having her on the board.

However, for every goodbye we are also welcoming new talent. David Berens will be joining us as the new president-elect. I'm looking forward to working with him to continue the progress the 2023 board made and to take on new projects. I'd also like to welcome the new treasurer, Mindy Neff. We're excited to have her join us. The final new board member is Cheré Coen, our new newsletter editor. We really lucked out in getting such a qualified applicant willing to volunteer her time. *Nink* is in great hands with her expertise.

Returning to the board in 2024 are our secretary, Sylvia McDaniel, and Steven Womack as our advisory council representative. We're also fortunate to have Laura Resnick continuing as our central coordinator. As a founding member and former president, she brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the position. I'm grateful to her and the work she does to keep the organization running smoothly.

And of course, I am returning as president. This last year on the board has made me appreciate the way that NINC operates and value the position of president-elect as a way to learn the ropes. By having a mix of returning members and new members on the board, it ensures that NINC is always in good hands while not going stale. I began my publishing journey in 2012 with my debut novel and attended my first NINC conference in 2014. It was there that I fell in love with this organization and everything we stand for. Ten years later, I'm incredibly honored to serve as the NINC president. I look forward to the work ahead of us this year and can't wait to see what the 2024 board can accomplish. Thank you for placing your trust in me.

May you all have health, wealth, and happiness in 2024!

~ Caethes Faron

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*Caethes Faron writes across the fantasy and science fiction genres. She loves characters who fall in love and then save the world... or at least their little corner of it. Her first novel was published in 2012, and she joined NINC two years later. Her work has received honorable mention in the Rainbow Awards and been nominated for All Time Favorite Series on Goodreads. Always looking for a fresh challenge, she's lived in seven states and currently resides in the Netherlands.*

## **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/>

## From the Editor

*By Harper St. George*



It's hard to believe that three years have come to an end. It seems like just a few months ago I introduced myself in this very space as your new *Nink* editor. NINC board members can only serve three-year terms, so this is my last newsletter serving as your editor.

I'm very proud of how the newsletter has expanded during my tenure. We have been able to bring in industry news and analysis with the Publishing News column, which is a condensed version of Jane Friedman's *The Hot Sheet*. In response to reader feedback, we've also incorporated a feature that specifically focuses on author marketing with the Smart Marketing for Savvy Authors column. I'm really proud of the DEI Quarterly articles that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics in publishing. We have also made a concerted effort to reach outside NINC for contributors to get an expanded view of publishing, while continuing to mine the depths of knowledge that our members bring to *Nink*.

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to let me know how much you appreciate the newsletter. It's such a great asset to our membership. I am truly only one small part of a great team. We all owe a huge thanks to the newsletter team: Trish Milburn (acquisitions editor), Laura Resnick (production manager), and Cynthia Moyer (copy editor) who work to bring you the newsletter every month. I have full confidence that the newsletter will continue brilliantly and seamlessly in their capable hands.

On that note, I'd like to thank all of our contributors over the years. They bring their wealth of knowledge to our members. From marketing, to craft, to technology, to special interest items, they are the heart of our newsletter. I'd also like to thank our conference reporters who take such diligent notes during our conference workshops that we need to devote multiple issues to their efforts. They are worth their weight in gold and ensure that members who don't attend the conference can still benefit from the information shared there.

Now to introduce your new editor for 2024. Cheré Coen brings a career of journalism experience to the position. She has served as both writer and editor for various publications over a 30-year period. She also has experience writing fiction as both a traditionally published and independently published author. We are lucky to have someone so knowledgeable offer her time and skills to NINC.

It's been a pleasure to serve as your editor. It's tough to move on, but I have a lot of writing projects planned for this year that I'm excited about. I hope to see many of you at the beach at the conference in September.

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*Harper St. George* writes historical fiction romance set in various time periods from the Viking Era to the Gilded Age. Her latest series is *The Gilded Age Heiresses* and her upcoming series is *The Doves of New York*, coming in 2024. She lives in the Atlanta area with her family.



## **Year in Review: 2023**

*The brightest sparks of the year*

### **Controversy of the year: artificial intelligence**

Even if I hadn't been [personally](#) affected by the stratospheric rise of AI tools and publishing, this would still rank as the top controversy. The copyright issues alone will take years to sort out, and intellectual property laws appear destined to transform in ways that were unimaginable when copyright was first established.

It's hard to find any business today that isn't talking about how to use—or not use—AI. Some writers embrace it, others shun it, and many more are anxious about what changes it will bring. It's easy to assume the worst because how much do we really trust the movers and shakers who are driving AI forward? And, of course, even the movers and shakers in AI don't agree on how to move forward. If you want to start a frustrating and circular conversation, bring up AI over the holidays with friends and family. (Catching up on the AI issue? Read this [Nov. 8 Hot Sheet article](#).)

### **Self-publishing trend of the year: selling direct**

As a way to increase profits and avoid dependency on Amazon, professional self-published authors have increasingly started selling books—both print and digital editions—direct to readers using tools like Shopify and Kickstarter. In February, the Authors Guild hosted an in-depth session with indie author Emily Kimelman on how she does it (view the [recording](#) on



YouTube), and it was a hot topic of conversation at this year's 20Booksto50k conference. If you'd like to learn why Shopify is used for direct sales by many indie authors, [see this episode of Joanna Penn's podcast](#). But Shopify isn't the only way to go; Russell Nohelty has [discussed at length](#) why other options may suit you better (if you're willing to pay for access to his article).

### **Best startup of the year: Ream**

[Ream](#) officially opened its doors in May 2023, which couldn't have been better timing for a self-publishing community eager to sell direct. Ream is a subscription platform built for the needs of authors who want to sell serializations direct to reader. So far, Patreon remains awkward for novelists who want to deliver serialized content, and Substack has been a dud for such purposes. Ream is the only alternative to either unless you build your own solution. Bootstrapped by two indie authors, Ream has been actively trying to help authors build their subscription businesses through myriad efforts. They have an active Facebook page, podcast, in-person summit, and awards series. Recently they published a report on the [top fiction authors in subscriptions](#), well worth a look. (It requires joining their Facebook group.)

### **Publishing trend of the year: TikTok's influence on romance**

Romance was the bestselling category in 2022 (up by more than 50%) and it will be the bestselling category again this year. A rep from Nielsen BookScan [wrote](#) in October, "Growth in fiction sales seen in six of the countries now monitored by NielsenIQ is primarily driven by romance and sagas titles appearing with BookTok hashtags." TikTok is driving demand for steamy romance (SpicyTok) as well as fantasy romance (romantasy), leading to the creation of new imprints, like Harlequin's Afterglow, Tor's Bramble, and Entangled's Red Tower. The senior director of marketing for Sarah J. Maas's brand at Bloomsbury [told Publishers Weekly](#), "Romance and fantasy fans are passionate and have built communities going back years. TikTok has offered them another platform and another space to get that message out in a supercharged way." Kensington's publisher said, "Publishers are no longer the tastemakers or driving trends in romance. It's coming entirely from the consumers."

### **The biggest train wreck of the year: Scribe Media**

Established in 2014, hybrid publisher Scribe Media abruptly laid off its entire staff in May due to insolvency, leaving many authors in the lurch and out thousands of dollars in publishing fees. When another company, Enduring Ventures, stepped in to buy Scribe's assets, it [concluded](#) that "the situation was a lot worse" than they initially believed. Despite the disastrous situation, Enduring Ventures decided to enter into a consulting agreement with Scribe Media to work on projects. Thus, the company resumed some operations over the summer, even though there is a range of lawsuits against it (and now against Enduring Ventures too). A [statement](#) at the Scribe Media site alerts affected authors, "From what we can tell at this time it's unlikely you will receive any sort of refund."

### **The jury's still out: Spotify's effect on the audiobook market**

In October, Spotify announced its new [audiobook subscription service](#), granting paying

Spotify subscribers access to 15 hours of monthly listening time from a catalog of 200,000 titles. All Big Five publishers are participating, as are many other publishers and authors.

So how do authors get paid? According to an Authors Guild [statement](#): “Spotify is generally paying publishers on a per-book basis as though it were a sale. ... The author receives the licensing share set under their publishing contract for audiobook sales (typically 25% of the publisher’s net receipts). The payment is triggered when a user listens to about 10–20% of the book, though some publishers have negotiated different percentage levels as well as different purchase prices.” That said, there are industry reports that some smaller publishers are participating in the pooled income model, in which they receive a share of Spotify’s total revenue based on consumption, which is unlikely equivalent to a sale.

For more background on audiobook subscription services, read our [July 2021](#) item that discusses the believers versus skeptics on this model. TL;DR: it’s a complex and multi-faceted issue that extends far beyond Spotify.

### **Unfortunate loss of the year: bestseller lists**

The *Wall Street Journal* is no longer publishing its weekly bestseller lists based on Circana BookScan data, and the *USA Today* bestseller list has [disappointed](#) fans in its new era of automation. Filling in the gaps for now: Bookstat, an industry data service that tracks online book sales. It has launched its own monthly bestseller lists, [available via LinkedIn](#). There are two top-20 lists per month, one for ebooks and one for digital audio. And of course Hot Sheet has partnered with Bookstat for self-publishing bestseller lists as well as the Hidden Gems list. ([Browse here.](#))

### **News that inspired the most punditry: KKR’s purchase of Simon & Schuster**

Everyone inside and outside of publishing seemingly has an opinion on S&S’s new private equity owner, KKR. (Here’s [our summary](#) from August.) Is private equity ownership going to be an albatross of debt or a better vehicle to innovate and outperform other Big Five publishers? A new S&S board, announced this month, has inspired a fresh round of commentary that slants positive. That’s because the board includes the most recent CEO of Penguin Random House (zzzzzing!), a former TikTok executive, and a head honcho from Disney, among others. Publishing industry vet Kathleen Schmidt [has the most detailed take](#) on the board.

### **My biggest and most personal farewell: Twitter/X**

In November 2022, I wrote in this newsletter that I would be staying on Twitter/X for the foreseeable future. One development I did not foresee, naively: the disabling of Tweetdeck for everyone but paid subscribers (I refuse to pay). When you share links these days on Twitter/X, the headline is stripped out in favor of the image alone, which makes information-sharing distinctly less informational. All of these changes have made the platform challenging to use for my primary purpose: reporting for Hot Sheet. And I haven’t even mentioned the many other things I *could* mention about the dramatic decline in user experience. For now, my Twitter-like activity has moved to [Threads](#). Here is an [excellent post-mortem](#) on “the year Twitter died.”

## Links of Interest

### Libraries

- **Moving toward digital ownership for libraries:** The Digital Public Library of America is trying to help libraries that want to own, rather than license, their digital content. [Learn more.](#)

### AI

- **Meta was warned about training AI on copyrighted materials.** One of the AI lawsuits (the Sarah Silverman one) has brought forth a new bit of evidence. Meta, the parent company of Facebook, continued to train its AI model on copyrighted materials even after its legal department expressed concern. [Read Katie Paul at Reuters.](#)
- **All major retailers now sell AI-narrated audiobooks.** Here's a summary of them all, plus how to get your audiobook distributed to each retailer if you're a self-published author. [Read Monica Leonelle at the Author Analyst.](#)
- **Six strategies for getting better results from ChatGPT:** A few of the recommendations include providing a reference text, offering examples, and asking the model to adopt a persona. [Read at OpenAI.](#)

### Amazon

- **Amazon seeks to dismiss the FTC's suit.** Because of course it does. [Read Andrew Albanese at Publishers Weekly.](#)
- **Amazon rolls out "Your Books" hub.** It allows you to sort and search among every title you've ever purchased regardless of format. [Read Emma Roth at The Verge.](#) Click [here](#) to access (if you're logged into your Amazon account).

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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](#).*

# Embracing Prosperity

## How indie authors can transform their money mindset in 2024

By Carissa Andrews



Welcome to 2024, a year that whispers promises of new beginnings and unexplored horizons for authors. For a moment, I want you to imagine this year as a blank canvas, awaiting your vibrant stories and bold dreams. This isn't just another spin around the sun—it's a call to adventure, a summons to leave behind your lack mentality and step into a realm of abundance and boundless potential.

The narrative of the struggling, solitary writer is a relic of the past. Instead, it's time to shed that old skin and embrace a new paradigm—one where creativity and financial success are not just compatible, *they're intertwined*.

However, before we can embrace this paradigm shift, we need to address our current relationship with money. Yes, *money*—that ever-elusive, often misunderstood entity.

For many of us, it's been a source of constraint, tangled up in childhood narratives and societal conditioning. But what if we could rewrite this story just as we iterate our books? What if money could become a joyful companion on our creative journey?

### Understanding and reconfiguring our relationship with money

As we kick off 2024, brimming with aspirations and dreams, it's crucial to pause and reflect on our existing beliefs about money if we'd like to see something new develop in our lives. It's time to untangle the complex web of thoughts and emotions that have shaped our financial perspectives up until this point. Are you ready?

**Childhood narratives and societal conditioning:** Many of us grew up hearing phrases like “money doesn't grow on trees” or witnessing our parents stress around finances.

These early experiences often lay the foundation for a scarcity mindset, where money is seen as limited and fraught with anxiety. The stories we absorbed as children can linger subconsciously, influencing our attitudes and decisions about money as adults. It's up to us to

become conscious of them, so we can flip the script.

**Recognizing and challenging limiting beliefs:** The first step toward a healthier money mindset is identifying these ingrained beliefs. Do you find yourself thinking that financial success is unattainable for indie authors? Or that making money from your writing is somehow less noble?

These are signs of a limiting belief system at play. It's time to challenge these notions and question their validity. The idea is to recognize them for what they are: *lies*.

**Transformative techniques for releasing old beliefs:** The good news is your beliefs are not set in stone. They can be rewritten because beliefs are simply thoughts you continue to think and hold as true.

Ask yourself what limiting beliefs around money can be traced back to your family of origin. Look at them. *Define them*. And then choose a different, more aligned belief. One that makes you feel good and powerful in the thinking of it. Continue to shift into this new belief every time an old limiting one crops up. Eventually, it will become your default.

**Embracing abundance mindset:** This is about more than just positive thinking. It's about truly believing in the abundance of the universe. It involves understanding that there is enough for everyone, *including you*.

This shift in mindset opens up a world of possibilities, where financial success is not only achievable but a natural extension of your creative expression. Do you believe you can have a successful, prosperous author career? Why or why not?

Again, look at it. Define it. And if yours is a limiting belief, deliberately *choose* something different.

## **Cultivating a money mentality for indie authors**

Now that we've started to unravel and reconstruct our foundational beliefs about money, it's time to cultivate a mindset that aligns with our creative aspirations. This isn't just about changing thoughts. It's about transforming our entire approach to money and success.

\*Cues Taylor Swift\*

*Are you ready for it?*

**Understanding money as energy:** Let's get a little "woo" for a moment. If you shift your perspective to see money as a form of energy rather than a static resource, money becomes something that flows, circulates, and can be attracted through positive actions and intentions.

This energetic perspective encourages us to engage with our finances in a more dynamic and proactive way. When we understand the Law of Attraction (like energies are attracted to like energies) is always at play, it becomes easier to choose thoughts and actions that align with our desires, rather than go in opposition to them.

Worry and anxiety become a warning signal that our thoughts are out of alignment and we're focusing more on what we *don't want*, rather than the abundance we seek.

**Practical steps for indie authors:** As indie authors, how can we apply this mentality? Start by setting clear financial goals. Whether it's a sales target for your next book launch or a revenue goal for the whole year, having concrete objectives helps focus your own magnetic energy.

Ask yourself what you want. *Why* do you want it? And can you get your energy behind it? Often, we need something that really pushes our buttons or excites us in a way that makes any obstacle or resistance that might come up irrelevant.

**Value your work:** Loving what you do and how you write is also key. Everything flows from this place. When you love your books, you price your books in a way that reflects the artistic value you provide to your readers. It's not just about covering costs, but also about honoring the worth of your creativity and effort.

**Invest in your growth:** Consider how you can reinvest in your author career. This could mean upgrading your writing software, attending a writer's conference or retreat, or taking a course to understand or improve in some aspect of your career. View these not as expenses, but as investments in your future success.

Do you hold the belief that every dollar you spend comes back to you? Perhaps try it on for size this year.

**Cultivating a prosperity mindset:** Beyond practical steps, embrace a mindset of prosperity. Believe in your potential for financial success as an indie author.

Visualize your success regularly, as if it has already come to pass—as if it's already yours. When you imagine the impact of your work and the financial rewards it brings, you're activating the Law of Attraction to bring those things to you.

In cultivating this new money mentality, patience and persistence are key. It's a process of growth and evolution, where each step forward enriches not only your financial well-being but also your creative journey.

## **Stepping into a future of abundance and creativity**

The path to financial prosperity and creative fulfillment is not a straight line. It's a journey full of learning, growing, and evolving. As you move forward, remember to value and love your books and invest in your growth. These are not just steps toward financial success but affirmations to yourself of your worth and dedication to your craft. Your subconscious mind is taking notes.

Visualize your success regularly, not just as a distant dream, but as an imminent reality. When you align your thoughts and actions with your goals, you invite the universe to work in your favor. Embrace this year as your opportunity to shine, to share your stories, and to thrive financially.

Let's make 2024 a year where the term "starving artist" becomes obsolete in our collective author vocabulary. Instead, let's speak of indie authors as thriving creators, as architects of their own fortunes, and as beacons of inspiration and prosperity.

Remember, your creativity is not just a gift to the world. It's a viable, valuable, and vibrant pathway to abundance.

Here's to a year of breaking barriers, rewriting narratives, and celebrating the wealth that comes from our pens.

Welcome to your year of abundance.

Welcome to a new era of indie authorship.

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*Carissa Andrews, CEO of Author Revolution® and the [Millionaire Author Coach™](#), is an award-winning and international bestselling indie author of over 25 books. Renowned for her expertise in financial empowerment for indie authors, she offers transformative digital courses, 1:1 coaching, and the Author Revolution Podcast to help authors create fulfilling careers. Carissa has been a speaker at events like ALLi's Self-Publish Con and Inkers Con. In 2022, she was declared one of the Top 30 Entrepreneurs Disrupting Their Industries by Disruptors Magazine. Her unique approach combines a rich publishing background with a focus on manifestation and future-casting to propel authors to unprecedented success.*

# Switching Perspectives

## Blending multiple points of view into a cohesive narrative

By Carol Van Den Hende



As novelists, we have the power to deepen reader empathy through storytelling. Neurologists studying readers' and writers' brains have found an eerie similarity in where brains light up when reading or writing the same passage of text. Storytelling is nearly a brain-to-brain connection!

As authors, we know how to connect with readers through flawed, empathetic characters, impossible situations, epic motivations, inventive places or conflicts, sensorial details, and more.

Have you considered experimenting with point of view (POV)?

### Four points of view

There are several approaches to point of view, and most novels stay consistent within one of these:

1. **First-person point of view** is written in "I" language, rooting readers inside one protagonist's mind. The benefit is connecting deeply with one character's motivations, fears, and flaws.
2. **Second-person point of view** is rarer, written with "you" language. This can create a connection between the writer and reader, as if the writer is speaking directly to the reader.
3. **Third-person POV** is written in he/she/they language. In "close third person," the reader is deeply inside that character's point of view. Of course, we want to avoid accidentally slipping into another person's point of view, or "head hopping."
4. An offshoot of third-person is **omniscient POV**, where an "all-knowing" narrator sees everyone's perspectives in a story, so nothing is hidden from the reader. This POV hovers above all the characters and describes the action from a holistic vantage point.



## How to pick a point of view

How do you pick which point of view to use? This will depend on several considerations:

- *Whose story is this?* If you have one main character, and it's important to see the story through their eyes, you may want to consider first-person point of view.
- *How many characters do you have?* If there's important information that needs to come from multiple characters, you're likely going to want third-person point of view.
- *How does it feel for you to write in each point of view?* Just like verb tense, you may want to experiment and see what feels natural for you, or you may want to branch out and challenge yourself by trying a different point of view. For instance, if you normally write in third-person, switching to first-person can lend a fresh perspective or new depth to your writing.
- *What's expected in your genre and do you want to adhere to that?* Some writing skews toward certain points of view:
  - Young adult fiction is often penned in first-person present tense, which gives an intimacy and immediacy that's an apt antidote to fleeting teenaged attention spans.
  - Science fiction and fantasy lend themselves to omniscient narrators, which can provide faster world-building.
  - Nonfiction and advertising copy commonly use second-person POV.

### Exception to the rule: omniscient

There are always exceptions to any rule. Some authors intentionally choose to try something unexpected. That experimentation can be part of an author's "voice," or what makes their style unique.

Lauren Groff, for instance, sprinkles an omniscient narrator into her novel *Fates and Furies*. This, intermingled with third-person point of view, creates the effect of having an intimate guide to her storytelling.

The drizzle thickened to drops. They hurried across the last stretch of beach.

[Suspend them there, in the mind's eye: skinny, young, coming through dark toward warmth, flying over cold sand and stone. We will return to them. For now, he's the one we can't look away from. He's the shining one.]

She sets the omniscient voice apart with the use of brackets. As a reader, this almost feels like a wink, a window into an insider's perspective.

### Exception to the rule: second-person POV

Erin Morgenstern creates a feeling of strangeness in *The Night Circus* by employing the less often used second-person point of view. Read this passage from the beginning of her novel and see if the unusual choice makes you feel off-kilter.

“What kind of circus is only open at night?” people ask. No one has a proper answer, yet as dusk approaches there is a substantial crowd of spectators gathering outside the gates.

You are amongst them, of course. Your curiosity got the better of you, as curiosity is wont to do. You stand in the fading light, the scarf around your neck pulled up against the chilly evening breeze, waiting to see for yourself exactly.

It’s almost as if the narrator has stripped away the unspoken veil that normally lies between a writer and reader. It can feel intrusive, unsettling, yet intimate.

### **Exception to the rule: multiple first-person narrators**

The novel *Mad Honey* provides a compelling example of multiple first-person points of view. Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan write alternate chapters in Lily and Olivia’s first-person voices. (They each took a turn writing a chapter in the other character’s POV too!)

Here’s middle-aged Olivia’s immersive opening:

From the moment I knew I was having a baby, I wanted it to be a girl... I imagined the day her fairy hair was long enough to capture in pigtails, her nose pressed to the glass of a school bus window; I saw her first crush, prom dress, heartbreak. Each vision was a bead on a rosary of future memories.

Contrast that with Lily’s straight-talking teen voice:

From the moment my parents knew they were having a baby, my father wanted me to be a boy. Instead, he got a daughter: boyish in some ways, I guess, but not in the ways that would have mattered to him. Every day he took time to remind me of all the ways I’d disappointed him, not because of anything I’d done, but simply because of who I was.

An individual author can also create multiple first-person POVs. If you choose this route, just be sure to have each character sound distinctive (which is important in third-person POV as well).

### **But wait, which character?**

Okay, so now we’ve considered the various possibilities, experimented with a few, and selected a point of view for our story.

But wait, whose point of view should we tell the story from?

*The overarching rule of thumb is to select the character who has the most at stake.* If you’re writing first person, then ask yourself, who has the most to lose or gain in the book? If you’re writing in third-person POV, you will make that selection chapter by chapter, or even scene by scene.

Each character enters a chapter (or scene) wanting something. Through that chapter (or scene), something will change, someone will succeed or fail, or learn something new. To choose which person's third-person point of view to write in, ask yourself:

- Who will experience the biggest emotions through that transformation?
- For whom will the actions in the chapter (or scene) trigger the deepest emotional wounds?
- Are the stakes linked closest to one character's misbelief and what they need to learn?

The answers to these questions will help determine whose point of view is most powerful for a scene or chapter.

### **Switch it up**

Experiment! Write it one way. If you don't feel satisfied, switch to another character's point of view.

The knowledge that different characters possess different information can be used to build tension and suspense. Readers can be privy to some characters secrets while being kept in the dark about others. This creates a tantalizing sense of anticipation and intrigue.

### **Make each character unique**

So far so good, but how does the reader know whose viewpoint we're in? One straightforward way is to put the POV character's name in the chapter heading or in the opening paragraph of the chapter.

Even better, we can craft memorable characters by giving them unique characteristics. How does your character express themselves? What details do they notice when they enter a room? Do they have certain catchphrases or physical gestures that are a "tell" to their emotional state? Write those into your character's dialogue and inner monologues so that each character feels like a unique, whole human being.

For instance, a confident character might think in short, declarative sentences, be decisive and constantly moving forward in action.

### **Weaving it all together**

While perspective switching is a potent tool, consider when each POV is introduced and the novel's structure as a whole. Readers should not feel lost or overwhelmed by a barrage of changing viewpoints. Balance the different perspectives to aim for a cohesive narrative. Seek an overarching structure that guides the reader through the transitions and ensures that each shift contributes to the story's progression.

### **Conclusion**

Switching perspectives is a potent tool in the novelist's arsenal, a technique that breathes life into characters, enriches plots, and deepens themes. Through the seamless blend of multiple

points of view, we unveil a world filled with complexity, empathy, and a multitude of human experiences.

As writers, we're empowered to explore POV in storytelling and experiment with the power of perspective. Remember, the payoff is connecting brain to brain with readers in this boundless tapestry of human stories.

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*Carol Van Den Hende* is the award-winning author of the *Goodbye, Orchid* series. She's also a speaker, strategist, and board trustee. One secret to her good fortune? Her humorous husband and twins, who prove that love really does conquer all.

# Pro Conferences

## Deep-dive research

By M. L. "Matt" Buchman



I have to open with a story.

There I am, working on the 14th novel in my Miranda Chase air-crash-investigation thriller series. I wanted the U.S.-based characters to be near the opening action in Sweden, but not in the fray yet.

Training? Vacation? Hmm... do they ever go to conferences?

Google led me to the International Society of Air Safety Investigators (ISASI). They meet globally once a year and for 2023 they were in Nashville. So, on three weeks' notice, I became an associate member and paid for the corporate-level conference.

I spent four days with 340 air-safety investigators from 45 countries. Utterly amazing!

### Go/no go

First, I'm going to tell you that you should absolutely attend professional-level conferences as a part of your research.

Second, I'm going to tell you that you should *never* go to one—at least not without serious preparation.

I spent a year researching plane crashes before I began writing the Miranda Chase series. I'd watched dozens of episodes of *National Geographic Air Crash Investigation* television series, far too many hours of YouTube *The Flight Channel's* detailed crash simulations, and I've read over a hundred NTSB technical reports, often delving into the supporting materials. I was deeply conversant with the material before I attended the conference.

Do I wish I'd found out about and attended the conference earlier in the series? Absolutely. However, because of my deep research, I was able to connect with the relatively small and highly specialized forum. I had meaningful conversations with crash investigators from: the NTSB, the U.S. and UK militaries, and numerous countries, as well as with the air-safety teams at JetBlue, Gulfstream, and Delta, among others.

Jennifer Stevenson and Elaine Isaak have both attended the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo.

“I research which speakers are attending whose books I’ve read. Then I aim to share a lunch table with each one,” Stevenson said.

Isaak likes to know what she’s going to attend before arriving. “With hundreds of sessions spread across multiple buildings, I pre-plan using the schedule to target my interests carefully.”

Ashley McConnell thought she was ready for the Death Investigation Conference, sponsored by the International Forensic Medicine Association, with a degree in anthropology. The level of detail, “videos of blood splatter, knife and gunshot wounds, fire, drowning, strangulation...hit closer to home than I was ready for.”

Jessica James got a little more hands-on in preparation for the A Girl & A Gun National Conference. She did range work with a sidearm and borrowed a military-grade rifle because there are practical as well as lecture sessions. For the International SOF (Special Operations Forces) Week, she pulled out her journalist’s background and mindset to glean all she could.

## Classes

By the way, there are classes on everything out there as well. (Sitting on my desk at this moment is the 68-page course catalog for USC Veterbi, *Aviation Safety & Security Program*.) Like the professional conferences, these classes don’t come cheap. But, if you live near a school, try playing the writer’s card. They may let you audit a course(s) for research purposes.

## Specialized information

There’s a magazine for everything, and I mean everything. And the conference(s) to match: tire manufacturing, industrial paint, ambulance design, ICE (the Imaging Conference & Expo)...

If you want to get your tech right—and by tech I mean everything from race cars to the differences between the knitting of Iceland, Norway, and the Faroe Islands—you need to step up your game and delve beyond Wikipedia. (Antarctica? Try New Zealand’s *Antarctic* magazine, the *Australian Antarctic Magazine*, or follow *The Antarctic Sun* blog.)

## Primary source

That’s a phrase in research that’s much more complex than its deceptively simple name. Visit [this page](#).

Notice all of those charming little [footnote markers](#)? Those are the sources used to build the Wiki article. They very nicely provide (insist on, actually) source documentation. Drilling into those may lead you to the primary source. If not, chase *that* bibliography toward the primary source.

Consider a technical or professional society blog. That’s primary-source material. It’s not a Wiki summary, a Quora opinion blog, a biased Facebook post, nor a Reddit r/brawl. This is information directly from the metaphorical horse’s mouth.

Be very cautious about secondary-sourced material. I use Wikipedia as a general education and a starting point for reading wider by hitting the reference section, the manufacturer’s website, etc. (Into SF? [Planetary Exploration Newsletter](#) or Ars Technica’s weekly [Rocket Report](#).)

Nancy J. Cohen, author of the Bad Hair Mysteries, attended the Premiere Orlando Beauty Show Conference. She chose to share a booth's cost on the trade show floor with a book seller, allowing her the freedom to explore and learn but also have an anchor point for herself during the event (and sell some books).

## Effects on writing

Because the ISASI conference came years into my series, it was largely a confirmation of my prior research. In attending, I also discovered that my fictional scenarios are not as farfetched as I'd supposed. And I received an amazing education in crash investigators' personalities, voices, and methodologies—especially how much they care about finding the most detailed answers to improve air safety, like it's built into their very psyche.

At the Congress on Medieval Studies, Stevenson discovered that typical fantasy and science fiction plots pale in comparison to actual history and that her stories could go far more over the top, making them livelier and fresher. A discussion of the Byzantine mechanical "Solomon's Throne" directly inspired Isaak's *The Assassin's Throne*.

Cohen and James both pointed to "richer and deeper" settings and conference stories that also directly inspired new titles. "You don't know what you don't know," James comments. "Attending a conference WAY outside what you're accustomed to can teach you a lot."

McConnell once attended a horse ownership course taught by a veterinarian. "It altered how I write about horses in all my books. Care, aging, hooves, all of it."

## Success tips

Back to ISASI. They were very cautious about "the novelist" suddenly in their midst. By the end of it, I was a welcome addition to any conversation cluster.

Why? Here are my main takeaways:

- I absolutely respected that this was their conference and that I was merely an observer.
- I made it clear at every opportunity that I would not be quoting them directly (or using any exact details from any crashes).
- But mostly I was accepted because I've spent four years living and breathing this world through my characters and stories. I educated myself *before* I went to the conference. I wasn't *curious* about them and what they did; I was *passionate* about understanding and portraying their world.

At one point a long-term NTSB investigator looked at me and said, "I think you may have read more NTSB reports than anyone in this room." *That* was high praise indeed. Forty years as a crash investigator and yet I impressed him with my efforts to get it right.

If you aren't ready to participate at that level, I wouldn't go to any smaller professional conference out of simple respect.

Isaak went in knowing exactly what she wanted to get from the conference and which knowledge she wished to target. "And be prepared to take lots of notes!"

"Set your goals ahead of time and prepare," is Cohen's formula.

James reminds people that, "You're there to learn *about* them, not *from* them like a writer's

conference.”

Stevenson avoids anything familiar. “Do not go to any sessions about books.”

“It’s not your conference,” McConnell cautions. “Don’t be that writer usurping the sessions.” She recounts one writer who had to be dragged aside and asked to tone it down or leave; the conference was for the pros attending.

McConnell also reminds us, “Don’t skip the trade show floor. The knowledge to be had there is amazing.”

### **Your next conference?**

Here were a few suggestions folks made for themselves:

- Attend the Rare Book School at UV in Charlottesville, Va.
- Sail in the Clipper Round the World ocean sailing race (if time, money, and age isn’t an object)
- Women in Aviation International
- Chef to Chef Conference
- A mycology convention (about mushrooms and fungi and their friends)
- A wealth management conference (for the stinking rich who want to get richer)
- A conference about cephalopods (squids, octopi, cuttlefish, etc)
- Black Hat cybersecurity conference
- A folklore conference (been to two and they were *amazing*)
- The Mongolia Society
- You get the idea...

### **Summary**

First, go through and do your background research, ask for some one-on-one interviews, read blogs and magazines, and other such techniques.

But once you’ve done all of that background? OMG! It was so much fun and so educational to sit and geek out with the people who actually live in the world of your fiction.

Go forth! Find your tribe. You’ll learn a freaking ton that will deeply inform your future writing.

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M. L. “Matt” Buchman, has written over 75 thriller and romance novels as well as 100+ short stories. He’s also the founder/editor of [Thrill Ride – the Magazine](#). PW declares of his Miranda Chase action-adventure thrillers that: “Tom Clancy fans open to a strong female lead will clamor for more.”



# Post-colonial Attitudes in Literature

## A contextualized view of writing in the postcolonial era

By Celeste Barclay



“Post-colonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries that takes colonies or their peoples as its subject matter. The theory is based around concepts of otherness and resistance,” according to [Courtney Ruffner](#) of the University of Washington School of Art, Art History, and Design. The idea that post-colonial mindsets still affect our everyday thoughts and speech made such an impression that it’s stuck with me and prompted this article through the lens of our industry.

Even though it takes only one word for my accent to label me American, I’ve always equally identified as American, English, and Moroccan. As a child, I didn’t realize the dichotomy was a result of colonialism. America was just America; England was just England; and Morocco was just Morocco. I could feel the differences, but it just seemed normal. As an adult, I can understand the concepts of “First World” vs. “Third World” (even “Second World”) and “Developed” vs. “Developing.” I can recognize the “otherness” that implicitly goes along with terms that have been used to categorize and describe global regions based upon politics, economics, and sociological parameters.

According to the [UCLA Diversity & Faculty Development](#), microaggressions are defined as “the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”

To understand the derivation of such terms and mindsets, one must recall these are the consequence of history. In the United States, Manifest Destiny was the 19th century belief that white American settlers were called to settle the breadth of the continent. Just now, as I sit here writing this, I thought about why I’ve always preferred British and French literature, even Russian literature, to American. My initial thought was that European history is so much longer.

It doesn't matter whether you count the history of the United States as starting at 1492 and Columbus sailing the ocean blue or the Pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock or 1776 as the birth of a nation, there is so much more. I realized I'd completely disregarded the oral storytelling histories of Native American nations.

When I think American, I think United States, not an entire hemisphere. Lest we forget what America truly means — the countries of North and South America. I can recognize my ingrained colonist bias. But I am not alone in this. [Jennifer Cole](#), at the University of Northern Iowa, asserted that:

Too often in young adult literature Latino characters are stereotyped. Examples of stereotypes include Latino males who fail, drink, abandon their family, use drugs and gang bang. Other examples include Latinos in general who are poor, slow, lazy, the laborers of society with low-end jobs.

While this is a 10-year-old article, these claims are still easily witnessed.

In 1899, Rudyard Kipling wrote his poem, "White Man's Burden" about the Philippine-American war, the theory that white colonialism was justified because the lesser developed non-white people needed their colonizers to manage their affairs existed well before that. The spread of religion into the New World (even that title screams colonialism) to "civilize the heathens" is an example of the myopic and now antiquated concept of White Man's Burden. We see it manifest in many other ways. During the Scramble for Africa (1884-1912), Europe dissected the continent into colonies, disregarding previous cultural, ethnic, and political boundaries.

In Morocco, civil unrest in 1912 led the sultan to turn to France for assistance. The result was the Treaty of Fez and a protectorate—not a colony, but in many cases, same difference—that lasted until 1956. To put that in perspective to today, my Moroccan father was 13 when the French protectorate ended. Today, Morocco is emerging as an international trade partner. The [Center for Collective Learning](#) notes that in 2021, it became the world's leading exporter of phosphoric acid, calcium phosphate, and legumes. Morocco's arrival as a new international economic force pushes the country closer to "First World" or "Developed" status. Relations between Morocco and France are strained at best as the former no longer needs nor wants the paternalistic relationship. But ask people who know where Morocco is (the number is unshockingly low in my experience), and most would still define it as a developing country. I offer this example to contextualize that colonialism is not an event in bygone history.

As recently as 1992, the Disney movie *Aladdin* opens with a scene with the song "Arabian Nights." In the original theatrical version, the song included these lines:

Oh, I come from a land  
From a faraway place  
Where the caravan camels roam.  
Where they cut off your ear  
If they don't like your face  
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.

Needless to say, it met with some resistance. The compromise was to change the lines about cutting off ears to:

Where it's flat and immense  
And the heat is intense  
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.

According to the *Variety* article, "["Aladdin' lyrics altered,"](#) the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee "leveled objections to the generic American elocution used by such favorable characters as Aladdin, Princess Jasmine and the benign Sultan." Disney countered that with "the really bad guy in 'Aladdin,' Jafar, speaks with an English accent, while his conniving parrot, Iago, has a Brooklyn accent."

Furthermore, Disney asserted that the villains were caricatures of real-life producers, directors, and animators. To them, how this was perceived carried little weight. They defended their stance when an executive reasoned, "The irony in all of this is that this is the first movie in years where both the hero and heroine are Arabic, and both are obviously terrific role models, not just for Arabs but for everybody." This quote is problematic on more than one level. For starters, Arabic as a noun is a language and as an adjective describes the language or literature of Arabs. Arabic is not an ethnicity or people. Secondly, there's a paternalistic tone of generosity. One could argue that we've made strides in the 31 years since this movie's release, but one could also argue that it's *only* been 31 years since its release.

Ruffner states:

It [Post-colonial Theory] focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people on literature by colonized peoples which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness. It can also deal with the way in which literature in colonizing countries appropriates the language, images, scenes, traditions and so forth of colonized countries.

There is a reason why creating space for marginalized communities to access more opportunities to publish has such vital importance. Purposeful inclusion now creates an expectation moving forward that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) authors' voices and stories not only have merit but should be included as a norm in publishing rather than an outlier with quotas.

In "Death by a thousand cuts: can literature help us recognize microaggressions?" [Ali Roff Farrar](#) notes:

Reading about other people's experiences, be it fictional or real life, can provide a reflective mirror for seeing ourselves within manipulative relationships. Or a tonic of realisation once we've freed ourselves from their toxic grip that the behaviour was not normal, and that we weren't in the wrong, no matter how many times we were told that the confrontations, upsets and arguments were our fault.

In publishing, the demand for, rise in, and acceptance of literature by marginalized communities is the recognition that post-colonialism has suppressed the contributions to the arts by BIPOC authors. We can witness this with a subset of our industry. According to the [Cooperative Children's Book Center](#):

After a long period of relative stagnancy, the number of children's books the CCBC received by BIPOC authors and illustrators and about BIPOC characters began to increase starting around 2015. By 2020—only five years later—the number of books the CCBC received that were by or about a person of color had tripled.

However, this change in publishing trends doesn't change the ingrained mindsets and resulting microaggressions present in modern-day writing.

Changing standards of acceptable language now make it passé and culturally insensitive to use words such as exotic and Oriental in our writing. European explorers traveled west to travel east because the Ottoman Empire controlled the land routes to Asia, and the Portuguese controlled the water routes. But Asia, unlike the Americas, was not a new discovery for Europeans during the Age of Exploration. To many in Europe at the time and until recent history, Asia was considered mystical, intriguing, wealthy, and dangerous.

In a Hope College blog post entitled "[Colonialism and Asian Americans](#)," historian Erika Lee is quoted as saying, "Asia was consistently viewed as the West's Other, an array of exotic lands and peoples that both fascinated and terrified Europeans." The Hope College blog post goes on to note, "These pan-Asian stereotypes continue to make it difficult for many non-Asian Americans to see Asian people for who they are, and to recognize the many differences among Asians in culture, language, religion, etc." The movie *Crazy Rich Asians* found widespread success for reasons beyond the diverse cast. It gives a deeper insight into humanity that has been largely missing from Western film and literature about Asia. It highlights the desire for love and belonging, as well as hope and tradition. It shows Asian Americans as being far more "mainstream" than "other."

Expressive writing can allow authors to heal past traumas while enabling others to understand and empathize with those who have a different lived experience than their own. It's a movement in literature and publishing I hope to see continue to grow and become more of the norm. We cannot eradicate post-colonial mindsets in one fell swoop, but as authors, we have the power to help shape our world and how we accept authors and readers globally.

As we move toward greater awareness and inclusivity, as authors, we bear a responsibility to preserve the integrity of our work. There are several steps we can take to ensure we are more cognizant of the implications of our words. As you write, consider through what lens you view the topic. Self-reflect upon how your unintentional bias might come through. When writing about characters, locales, or cultures other than your own, research is an asset rather than relying on memories we might have of something taught to us years ago in school or college. We know more now than we did even a year ago, let alone a decade or five. Reach out to scholarly experts who might answer your questions or point you in the direction of other

resources. Sensitivity readers are available to us, but one should be mindful that no one is a monolith of the group about which you write. Consult more than one if you feel uncertain. Collaborate with fellow authors who may be more knowledgeable about or experienced with the topic about which you're writing. While there will always be room to err, even with the best intentions not to, we have unprecedented opportunities to be mindful of others' perceptions and experiences and to craft our stories to include the breadth and depth of our readerships' diversity.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "If by reading... we are enabled to step, for one moment, into another person's shoes, to get right under their skin, then that is already a great achievement. Through empathy we overcome prejudice, develop tolerance and ultimately understand love. Stories can bring understanding, healing, reconciliation and unity."

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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.*

## Smart Marketing for Savvy Authors

By Tawdra Kandle



*This year of Smart Marketing  
is all about finding balance and joy in marketing our work.  
For the first quarter, we're talking about craft:  
How we lost our balance (and how to find it again);  
Why craft matters in marketing;  
How rediscovering craft may save us all!*

At the NINC conference last fall, I spent a great deal of time listening. At the UnCon, I listened to a surprising number of participants share that they either hadn't written in a long time, or they were finding writing a sloggish process, or they felt stuck in a rut that didn't inspire them to even think about writing.

At several workshops and roundtables throughout the main conference, that sentiment was echoed by a wide variety of authors. The word *burnout* was murmured more than once.

None of this is shocking if you've been paying attention. For almost 10 years—maybe longer—we've been advocating a type of publishing that pushes us to produce faster and more often at the same time that the demands of marketing, promotion, and running an efficient business have increased exponentially. No matter your particular niche in the author world—trad or indie, wide or KU, experienced or newcomer—there is no escape from the relentless pressure to release and to sell.

Maybe this doesn't apply to you. Perhaps you have been successful at doing publishing your way, working at your own speed, ignoring the insistent voices that say *you must do more*. If you have, you're among the quiet minority. Good for you.

Those of us who have reached the end of our ropes and are tossing around words like *quit publishing* and *give up writing* are looking for another way. A better way.

I don't think it's any coincidence that there's been an undeniable rise in the number of author groups devoted to mindset and mental health at the same time that this burnout crisis is hitting our industry. We know we're in trouble. But we're not ready to give up on what we've been told is required of us.

If I sound as though I know what I'm talking about... I do. I've been the poster child for *doing all the things* and jumping on all of the bandwagons since the beginning of my career a little over 12 years ago. I did blog tours and social media hops and shares and newsletter swaps and Facebook group parties and ads of every stripe. I took all of the classes. I embraced rapid releasing so completely that at one point, I wrote and released over 20 books in a year (which was a *lot* for me).

I even created a new pen name with a completely different set of requirements and needs and invested a similar level of energy in her success. For the last few years, I've been doing all the things as two different people.

Am I experiencing burnout? I don't think so, but I do know that I have recently realized I'm done.

Not done with publishing, but done with trying to do it all, with trying to be the author that popular wisdom and all the smart people seem to say I should be. Instead of seeking some elusive threshold of success, I'm looking for a way to continue doing what I love and what is my chosen profession while also finding a measure of joy.

I'm not alone in this quest, and I'm excited to share with you over the coming months insights and inspiration from other authors who are also determined to hold onto or rediscover their joy in publishing.

For the first quarter of this year—and perhaps even beyond—I'm going to lean into the idea of the value and importance of craft, or the art of creating a story with nuanced characters, a sense of place, and a compelling storyline. If you're wondering what in the world the topic of craft has to do with marketing... well, be sure to read my column in February.

About two years ago, someone asked me what I would write if I didn't have to consider anything outside the story itself. What if I didn't have to worry about how I was going to sell a book before I wrote it? What if I simply wrote a story for the pure joy of watching it unfold?

It took me longer than I expected to be able to answer the question. I realized that for far too long, what I wrote had been dictated by the need to make the book profitable. I'd added onto an existing series, or tried out a new subgenre that was hot, or I'd joined a joint project that seemed promising.

Let me tell you, the freedom of writing the story of my heart—or at least one of them, because it turns out there are more—was a giddy, heady experience. It felt wild and exciting. And yes, I'd have to say that it brought me more than a glimpse of that joy I'd been seeking.

So this month, as we stand just inside the threshold of a bright and shiny new year, I'm going to ask you the same question: if you had no limitations or pressures or preconceived notions, what book would you write this year? What story would lead you back toward the joy of being an author?

Think about that, and next month, we'll dive into why both craft and your enjoyment of it matters deeply in every aspect of publishing—including marketing.

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*Tawdra Kandle* is the USA Today bestselling author of over 130 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.



## ACA Liaison Update

By Rebecca Zanetti



*The Authors Coalition of America LLC (ACA) comprises 23 American organizations, representing over 85,000 authors, artists and photographers, united to receive foreign reprographic royalties and direct them to benefit every American creator.*

Hi, all. Just a friendly update from your main Authors Coalition of America (ACA) rep.

I thought we'd first look at the Authors Guild five-year income study with specific NINC statistics. There's a link at the bottom of this column if you would like to see the entire report, complete with graphs. For now, there are 10 main takeaways:

1. The survey had 5,699 participating authors, and NINC had 256 total participants.
2. 83% of the NINC members who participated are 45 years of age or older.
3. While the Authors Guild statistics show that 42% of NINC member participants are currently unemployed, I think this might encompass those of us who don't work outside of being an author.
4. 21% of NINC author participants identify as diverse authors (race, ethnicity, LGBTQIA+, disability) compared to 34% in the total survey.
5. 81% of NINC authors are self-published, 17% are traditionally published, and 6% of the people who took the survey are with the Big Five publishers. There wasn't a category for hybrid authors.
6. 90% of NINC participants have published more than 10 books compared to 31% in the total survey.
7. Most NINC authors who participated write romance, romantic suspense, mysteries, and thrillers.
8. One of the most important aspects noted from this survey is that NINC authors make more money on average than the other participants. The average NINC total author-

related income is \$70,000 a year versus the \$5,000 a year for all participating authors. Unfortunately, this survey doesn't break down different levels of income to better understand how the average was reached.

9. NINC authors increased their earnings from \$39,431 to \$75,000 in a comparison between 2018 and 2022. There are more detailed graphs of this if you want to take a look at them with the link below.
10. In terms of book marketing programs used in 2022, the most popular were author websites, Facebook author pages, email newsletters, and advertising on Facebook.

[Here is a link](#) to the NINC-specific survey results.

Other than the survey, obviously, the book world is consumed with AI issues with multiple cases winding their way through the court system(s) right now. Some of you might know, the Biden administration recently issued an executive order regarding AI that unfortunately didn't include copyright issues. So as of now, at least, it looks like the decisions will be left up to the courts.

Thus far, a federal court in D.C. has held that AI created works can't be copyrighted. Read the case [here](#).

Many of the current cases most applicable to authors are ones in which the plaintiffs allege that pirated works were used to train the AI platforms. An interesting question is one of damages. It's too late to go back and untrain the AI platforms, so what's a fair payment? Even if an author chooses to opt-out (take their books out of the database), the AI has already been trained by using our books. So what is fair compensation? Or are authors due compensation at all?

So, there are more questions than answers right now, as you probably know. We'll keep an eye on the current cases and report back if any decisions are made.

There's a possibility of U.S. legislation coming down the pipeline, yet we're about to be in an election cycle, if we're not already, so we'll see.

Until next time, Happy 2024! May it be a wonderful, safe, peaceful, and prosperous year for you.

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*New York Times* bestselling author [Rebecca Zanetti](#) has published more than 60 books, which have been translated into several languages, with millions of copies sold worldwide. *One Cursed Rose*, a dark retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*, releases June 25. Rebecca has ridden in a locked Chevy trunk and has discovered the best silver mine shafts in which to bury a body... all in the name of research. Honest.

## The Mad Scribbler

### Your NINC Membership

By Laura Resnick



*“Tradition is a guide and not a jailer.”*

—W. Somerset Maugham

Considering how many new members have joined NINC over the past few years, I thought it would be a good idea to start 2024 by discussing some things about membership that aren't self-evident to newcomers—and which even some of our longtime members may have forgotten or perhaps never knew.

### **Read the “Membership Application Review” column!**

After an application for membership has been “verified,” which means their publishing qualifications have been investigated and confirmed by NINC’s hardworking Membership Committee, the next step is “approval.”

This means that each verified applicant’s name is published here in the pages of *Nink* under the title “Membership Application Review.” It’s usually the second item in the table of contents.

*All NINC members should read the names in that column every month.*

If no member objects to a verified applicant’s name within a couple of weeks, that means the applicant is formally “approved” for NINC membership, and they can pay their annual dues and join. (Surprisingly, after going through our somewhat rigorous application process, there are some approved applicants who never join—but most do.)

The approval process is part of the high bar of NINC membership and an example of why, in some 35 years of existence, we’ve never yet had to expel a member.

The reason those names are listed in “Membership Application Review” is so that if you are aware that one of those people is a bad apple, you can file an objection by sending a private

email to the NINC president ([president@ninc.com](mailto:president@ninc.com)), the central coordinator (that's currently me, at [admin@ninc.com](mailto:admin@ninc.com)), or to any member of the board whom you feel comfortable contacting. Your email will be treated confidentially, and the applicant will never know you filed an objection.

Obviously, such an objection should be based on something substantive, *not* on something like: you don't like the applicant; you have suspicions about them but no facts to support your feelings; you "heard something bad" about them once; etc.

There isn't a definitive list of what the board will consider a substantive cause for objection, but some possible examples include: the applicant was expelled with good reason from another writing organization; you have witnessed the applicant engaging in harassment; they've committed plagiarism or copyright infringement; they've professionally damaged another writer with deliberate malice; they engaged in such appalling behavior at a conference that the event's reputation was harmed; they embezzled from their writing group's treasury; and so on.

If the allegation is one that would justify rejecting a membership application, the board will need some form of verification. Is there any evidence of your allegation, such as an email, a blog post, a link to online evidence, a screenshot of posts in social media, or another person who is aware of the issue and can verify it? Alternately, the issue may be one that a board member can research without contacting you. Or if more than one NINC member objects to a particular name, the separate letters might inadvertently corroborate each other.

If, having investigated and discussed the objection, the board decides a verified applicant should not be admitted to NINC, the person will be told their application was not approved. Nothing else. Just that.

It's rare for an objection to be filed, but when it happens, the board reviews it seriously and discretely. The approval process is a crucial threshold for ensuring the professionalism and smooth functioning of Novelists, Inc.

So if you ever see someone's name in the "Membership Application Review" column whose entry into NINC you believe would damage the organization, then you have the right and the opportunity to contact a board member with your objection. So please read that column every month!

## **Lapsing**

A lapsed member is someone who hasn't paid their annual dues by Jan. 31 of the year in question. (For example, if you don't pay your 2024 dues by the 31st of this month, then on Feb. 1, you'll be lapsed.) At that point, NINC can remove you from the *Nink* distribution list, the NINC email list, Ninclink and other members-only email groups, NINC's private Facebook group, and NINC's members-only pages on the website.

As a lapsed member, you're not eligible to use our Member Freebies and Discounts or the NINC Legal Fund. And you can't register for the NINC conference until/unless you renew your membership.

Additionally, once you're lapsed, there's a \$10 late fee for renewing your membership.

It used to be that after one year, a lapsed member became an ex-member and had to reapply to NINC if they later wanted to rejoin the organization. However, since the initial application

process is so thorough, NINC changed that policy some years ago, and now a lapsed member can rejoin at any time by logging into their membership account and paying their annual dues (including a late fee).

However, a lapsed member can be banned if they engage in activities that would get a new applicant rejected or a current member expelled. For example, a lapsed member who attends the NINC conference without being an authorized attendee (ex. a speaker or industry guest) is violating NINC policy—we do not allow gate-crashers at our conference—and gets permanently banned from rejoining the organization.

## **Conference**

The NINC conference is for members only. More specifically, it's for members who are registered attendees.

Guest speakers and industry guests are included at the conference for the benefit of member attendees, and they participate in all events.

For members who'd like friends, partners, or family members to join them at the conference hotel, NINC offers tickets for companion meals. Your personal guests are welcome at any meals for which they are registered. Those are the only events they are authorized to attend.

The conference has become increasingly popular and prone to selling out quickly. This has led to a recent policy change. The 2023 Board of Directors voted to eliminate the previous policy that allowed verified applicants to register for conference. The board recognized that for the past couple of years, current NINC members were losing out on attending conference due to slots being occupied by applicants who weren't actually members when they registered. This seemed self-evidently unfair and has been changed; as of this year, only members in good standing (not verified or approved applicants) can register for the conference.

The now-abolished policy of allowing verified applicants to register for conference also created additional busywork for the Membership Committee (anxious applicants pushing for verification in time to register for the conference), the conference committee (who had to follow up whether each applicant who'd registered for the conference had become a member since then), and the central coordinator (tasked with finding answers to all questions that others in NINC can't answer). So all parties involved were in favor of the policy change.

## **Self-promotion**

NINC offers networking, education, and advocacy for professional novelists. One of the founding principles of NINC's internal culture is that we don't self-promote within the organization, and we don't use NINC as a vehicle for self-promotion.

Everyone in NINC is a multi-published novelist. We don't market our fiction to each other, ask fellow members to nominate or vote for our work in awards contests, or treat any NINC member as a fan rather than as a colleague.

If you publish an article in *Nink*, it should focus on professional views, experiences, or information aimed at your peers; it should not be an attempt to persuade members to read your novels. (If you have an idea for an article, by the way, please contact the editor at [newsletter@ninc.com](mailto:newsletter@ninc.com). *Nink* pays \$0.20/word, and you can find guidelines [here](#).)

It's against NINC's rules to use the conference as a venue for promoting your name or hosting an event for your readers. If you want to contact a bookstore or other venue in the same city as the conference and set up an event for yourself, you need to handle that as something wholly separate from the conference.

Obviously, this is where that rarest of qualities—common sense—comes into play. If members on Ninlink are discussing wills and literary estates, the intricacies of British aristocratic titles, or whether to switch to writing cozy mysteries, it's perfectly appropriate to share that you've written a nonfiction book on the subject. If someone declares that no one has ever written a good romance novel about football players or a good horror novel about nuns, it's reasonable to mention that *you* have done so (if you have).

But if you don't understand the difference between discussion and promotion, it's best to err on the side of discretion.

## Privacy

Ever since its founding in 1989, NINC has been serious about protecting the privacy of members. With that in mind, here are some of our longtime guidelines.

What's discussed in NINC's members-only online groups (ex. Ninlink, other NINC e-lists, NINC's private Facebook group) stays there. Outside of NINC, we don't share who said what, we don't reveal individual views, and we never forward, share, repost, or quote directly from anything in a NINC discussion group.

We never share any contact information for another writer that we only possess because of mutual membership in NINC.

The edition of *Nink* that's distributed to members each month is specific to members; we don't share it with anyone outside of NINC. It contains names and (general) locations of verified applicants, names of new members, and other information specific to members (such as our list of election candidates every year). The edition of *Nink* that's distributed to friends of NINC (ex. conference guests and speakers, non-member contributors to *Nink*, NINC's bookkeeper, etc.) does *not* contain any of that information; nor does the edition of *Nink* that's uploaded each month to the [ninc.com archives](https://ninc.com/archives).

As a member, by the way, you're welcome to download and read any of the hundreds of back issues of *Nink* that are stored in the archives.

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*Nink* columnist and NINC Central Coordinator Laura Resnick was one of the roughly 100 original members of *Novelists, Inc.*

## NINC Member Discounts

By Abigail Drake



[Author, Author!](#) began operating as a bookstore in 1999, and they focus primarily on online sales, special events, and books for authors. It's a great resource, and they are pleased to offer NINC members their best possible discount.

If you purchase your own books from Author, Author!, they will give you between **30-55% off** (depending on the publisher, source, and quantity). They have accounts with all the major publishers (PRH, HC, HBG, MPS, Brilliance, etc.) and over 50 mid-sized publishers as well. Plus, they report weekly to the *New York Times* for list consideration.

Owned by NINC member Laura Hayden, Author, Author! believes that authors should never pay retail for their own books. They can ship to you, a conference location, a school, a signing event, or a contest—wherever you need them. Plus, they support several writer/reader events as a pop-up bookstore. (Superstars Writing Seminars, Readers Take Denver, Readers and Authors Get Together, and more.) They also have handled several major pre-release promotion offers by NYT and/or *USA Today* bestselling authors as well as bulk orders by schools, museums, libraries, all-city read events, and more.

Right now, they provide books only for domestic U.S. delivery, but they're happy to work with international authors needing deliveries in the U.S. You'll get personalized service from someone who understands how publishing works from all three sides—the publisher, the bookstore, and the author—but whose allegiance is always to the author.

To find out more about the Author, Author! discount for NINC members, check out the [Freebies and Discounts](#) section on the NINC website.

Meanwhile, **Ingram Spark** is also offering our members new monthly discounts. Check out the website for more info on this and all our other discounts and freebies for 2024!



*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):

- [Ninlink, email list for all NINC members](#)
- [NINC Facebook group](#)
- [Follow NINC on Twitter](#)
- NINC on [Clubhouse](#): Novelists, Inc. Virtual Tiki Bar
- [NINK Critique](#)/brainstorming group
- [Traditionally published authors](#)
- [Swords & Ray Guns](#): SF/F & speculative fiction writers
- [Authors of thriller/crime/suspense](#)
- [Cover Creators](#): Discuss creating book covers

## Conference:

[Conference information](#)

## Newsletter

- [Propose an article](#)
- [Submit a letter to the editor](#)
- [Newsletter archives](#)

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

- [Legal Fund](#)
- [Sample Letters](#)
- [Articles & Links](#)

## Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts. A complete listing of these can be found at [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: [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

### **2024 Board of Directors**

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

- President: Caethes Faron
- President-Elect: David Berens
- Secretary: Sylvia McDaniel
- Treasurer: Mindy Neff
- Newsletter Editor: Cheré Coen
- Advisory Council Representative: Steven Womack

### **Advisory Council**

- Lou Aronica
- Brenda Hiatt Barber
- Celeste Barclay
- Linda Barlow
- Jean Brashear

- Meredith Efken
- Donna Fletcher
- Lisa Hughey
- Tawdra Kandle
- Barbara Keiler
- Julie Leto
- Pat McLaughlin
- Pat Rice
- Erica Ridley
- Wayne Stinnett
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

## 2024 Committees

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

- Central Coordinator: Laura Resnick
- 2024 Conference Committee
  - Conference Director: Mel Jolly
  - Assistant Conf. Director: Tawdra Kandle
  - Program Lead: Violet Howe
  - Programming Assistant: Cidney Swanson
  - Trad Liaison: Lou Aronica
  - Sponsorship Lead: Sarah Woodbury
  - Sponsorship Assistsant: Hallee Bridgeman
  - Sponsorship Onsite Assistant & Onsite Social Media: Dylann Crush
  - Registrar: Harper St. George
  - Registration Assistant: Stephanie Julian
  - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
  - Assistant Hotel Liaison/ App Coordinator: Laura Hayden
  - NINC After Dark Coordinator: Tamsin Ley
  - NINC After Dark Assistant: Deann Powell
- Authors Coalition Representatives
  - Chair: Rebecca Zanetti
  - Lynn Morrison
- 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: Cheré Coen
  - Acquisitions Editor: Trish Milburn
  - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
  - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee
  - Chair: Celeste Barclay
  - Nancy J. Cohen
  - Eileen Dreyer
  - Troy Lambert
  - Roxanne Rustand
  - Michelle Mills
- 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**

*January 2024 edition – Vol. 35, No. 1*

*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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