

N I N C

September 2007
Vol. 18, No. 9

Changing Times, Changing Membership Qualifications

BY LAURA RESNICK, PRESIDENT-ELECT

To be considered for membership in Novelists, Inc., an applicant must have published two works of book-length fiction, one within the past five years.

That's a direct quote from our bylaws.

Many writing organizations serve the needs of aspiring writers. Others spend lots of energy on the concerns of short story writers, or of novelists who've just made a first sale. But Ninc was founded as the *only* organization devoted entirely to serving the interests of experienced multi-published novelists in popular fiction.

When the founders of Ninc set this standard for membership, it was reasoned that by the time someone has published two novels, that person is a career writer, someone pursuing our profession seriously and for the long-haul; and that is precisely who Ninc was founded for—and who Ninc members still are today.

So the bylaw defining who a potential member is—the author of two published novels—still serves us well.

For practical reasons, our Policies and Procedures Manual (PPM) goes into more detail about

what “published” means, so the Board of Directors and the Membership Committee (which typically consists of one person, the Chair) have specific guidelines for determining whether an application meets the spirit of that bylaw. For example, our PPM clearly eliminates vanity press novels as qualifying a writer for membership. (In other words, if you paid someone to publish your two novels, you don't qualify for Ninc membership.)

However, our PPM was written some 17 years ago, when the reality of what a “published” novel was, was still pretty simple. At the time, there was vanity press at one end of the spectrum, and the major New York houses were at the other end. For the popular fiction novelist, there were very few markets between those two extremes.

Consequently, our PPM defines a published novel simply as one that is “readily available to the general public.” (As opposed to one that is, say, only available to 100 of your closest friends and relatives.) For many years, this language served Ninc well when evaluating new applications for membership.

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**Your ballot is enclosed
Vote by October 15!**

**Conference registration has begun!
See enclosed brochure.**

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Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

Advisory Council

Rebecca Brandewyne*	Linda Barlow	Pat Rice
Janice Young Brooks*	Georgia Bockoven	Anne Holmberg
Jasmine Cresswell*	Evan Maxwell	Jean Brashear
Maggie Osborne*	Victoria Thompson	Vicki Lewis Thompson
Marianne Shock*	Steven Womack	Brenda Hiatt Barber
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If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

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Address changes may be made on the website.

For members without Internet access, send changes to the Central Coordinator.

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Introducing...

The following authors have applied for membership in Ninc and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 15 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of Ninc. For further information or to recommend eligible writers, contact:

Membership Chair Holly Jacobs
P.O. Box 11102
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or email HollyJacobs1@aol.com

New Applicants:

Elizabeth Spencer, Manassas Park VA

New Members:

Nancy Finney, Urbana IL
Stephanie Tyler, New Rochelle NY
Maria Hoag, Redlands CA
Mary Stella, Marathon FL
Beth Ciotta, Brigantine NJ

Ninc has room to grow...

Recommend membership to *your* colleagues. Prospective members may apply online at ninc.com.

Refer members at ninc.com. Go to Members Only, "Member Services" and click "Refer a New Member to Ninc."

Heading to a conference? Take some Ninc brochures. Contact Holly Jacobs at Hollyjacobs1@aol.com with your mailing address and the number of brochures wanted and she'll get them out to you asap.

SURVEY NOTICE

Thank you to everyone who received a survey and returned it to us. We're looking to make it 100% participation. If you've not returned your survey, please respond ASAP.

Statement of Principle

Stick with me on this column, because it meanders a bit through backstory—Oh, I *do* love backstory—before we get to the present-day action.

Last fall, while deep into my reading-business-books streak, I came across *The Alpha Male Syndrome*. It was newly published by Harvard Business School Press and written by a Ph.D and an MD. The cover quote came from Marshall Goldsmith, who sits high on the executive coaching and training heap.

Here's what he said about it: "Whether you work with alpha males or are an alpha yourself, this book helps you change nonproductive behaviors, increase performance and improve your life."

Great, I'm thinking, it's a two-fer. Not only does it sound like a good addition to my biz book repertoire, but surely these learned folks can teach me more about such personalities and how they interact with others, and that will surely improve characterizations in my work. Surely.

Nope.

While trying to read it I kept remembering the old "Where's the beef?" commercial, because I wasn't finding a thing new to chew on. I put it down. Forgot where it was.

Then, in late June, I came across it again and decided it deserved another shot. The fact that I was packing boxes at the time might have contributed to this decision. It certainly meant that I gave the book a darned good second shot.

Still didn't find a thing in it that caught my attention or added to my knowledge.

Even with the alternative being packing boxes, I tossed the book in the give-away pile (and we all know how extreme a measure that is).

I feel entirely confident in saying that every one of Novelists, Inc.'s members knows as much about Alpha Male Syndrome as the learned authors of the book. Whatever genre we've worked in, we have written about that character in various ways ever

since we put pen to paper (or started cursor across screen). We might have used an Alpha (male or female) as a protagonist or an antagonist or a secondary. But however the character figured into our story, we had a detailed enough understanding of both the type and the individual to make a Harvard Business School publication on the topic ho-hum old hat to us.

As I reluctantly returned to packing boxes, the experience got me thinking.

Thinking about how all of us in Ninc could teach a Ph.D and MD a thing or four, and about how Harvard Business School Press, along with the general public, would almost certainly not accept that truth. And about ways for fiction authors in general and our members in particular to step up and be recognized.

In my packing-boxes crazed mind those thoughts connected with appreciation for what our stalwart Used Book Committee has been doing in producing a position paper (look for it in a coming *NINK!*) and for what our brainstorming Advocacy Committee came up with in their report this summer. It also connected with discussion on the link about enterprises renting books—for their profit and to our detriment. And, finally, it connected with a report that Barbara Keiler did for the Ninc Board on a list of Best Practices ascribed to by some other writing organizations.

Ninc had all these good and important pieces perking along, but would a non-author civilian grasp the connection among all these efforts?

We, as toiling authors, might all sense that these stemmed from the same trunk, but to a non-author they could appear to be a collection of individual gripes. We needed something to pull them together. An umbrella under which all of our advocacy endeavors could comfortably fit.

The Fourth of July was approaching so, naturally, my thoughts turned to such documents as the ▶

American Declaration of Independence and the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution. That was when I started bugging the Board and others about the need for a statement of Over-Arching Principle, such as the Constitution's Preamble. (Not too lofty, huh?) For a while there I thought if the Board heard or read Over-Arching one more time from me they might set me to swinging *under* an arch, without any preamble other than saying principle and Pat be hanged.

Instead, they agreed that I should approach Over-Arching Principle Writer Extraordinaire Barb Keiler. Barb and I spent some time on the phone tossing around concepts and specific words. Then she excused me and went to work on her own.

And she came through. Big time.

I am proud to introduce Ninc's 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."

There it is.

What we want.

What we're fighting to achieve.

This single sentence captures the battles we are mounting and the discouragements we face as practitioners of our profession. It unites the Used Book committee's efforts and the Advocacy committee's efforts and the still-being-tweaked Best Practices concepts and all that is to come.

It even gets at the fact that novelists have long known things that Harvard Business School and its fellows think is territory they've just discovered.

And it opens wide the umbrella for future Novelists, Inc. Boards to step under as they fight on behalf of our members.

—Pat McLaughlin

Linda Kay West Memorial Fund

Dues Assistance: The Linda Kay West Memorial Fund is used to cover the cost of yearly dues for members who otherwise could not afford to renew their membership. Members may apply for assistance from the fund no more than once every four years. They may not apply for assistance from the fund for their first full year of membership. To apply for assistance, check the following line which is included on the dues statement form: "I am requesting the use of the Linda Kay West Memorial Fund. I have not used it in the past four years."

Conference Assistance: The fund may also be used for up to three conference scholarships per year. Scholarships will cover the cost of the conference fee only, and all other expenses are paid by the recipient. Conference scholarships are awarded only once in a member's lifetime. Applicants need only send a request by mail or email to the Central Coordinator. Members may also nominate fellow members. If more than three requests are received, names will be drawn at random.

Contributions to the Fund: The fund is supported by voluntary contributions from members who indicate on the yearly membership renewal form that they are paying an additional amount above their normal dues in support of the fund.

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Amazon Encourages Customers' Reviews—Will Reading Voices Be A Good Thing? Amazon Vine will match books, music, and movies with the site's customer/reviewers to help with pre-publication reviews. The company will invite Voices (the customers) to contribute by email, using those that they have recognized as writing accurate and insightful reviews for Amazon.

Ask the Writing Coach

BY JANELLE CLARE SCHNEIDER

In the May 2006 issue of *NINK*, I interviewed Judy Duenow, who is both an author and a writing coach. In response to that article, various *Ninc* members emailed me with questions they wanted to ask Judy, particularly relative to the “struggling and surviving” phase of a career. Here are the questions (with thanks to the brave people who voiced their struggles in writing) and Judy’s answers.

Q *I once heard an experienced author mention she was most comfortable with other writers who started writing about the same time she did. In other words, those early hard times built a bond and these writers are still friends today. I have a group of friends like that. In 1995 we were starry-eyed unpubs with our first contract with a publisher who never published our books. Most of us went on to make other sales. We had a time in the late '90s when we sold a few books, but never made much money or a career out of it. I haven't sold anything for six years, and I have a string of rejections to my name. All this leads to my question: how do you keep yourself motivated when all your writing buddies are quitting or depressed because of rejections?*

A This is difficult, no doubt. In order to keep going you have to love writing enough to tolerate disappointment and rejection—sometimes again and again. When your friends, your former support group, become discouraged and downbeat, it's important that you don't adopt their negativity as your own. Be conscious of your own internal dialogue. Telling yourself you can't do something can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, ask yourself what will encourage you most and follow that path. Perhaps you will have to find a new cheerleader, look for successes in other areas of writing, or take a class that will help you refine your craft and meet others still enthusiastic about pursuing this dream. Instead of turning outward and joining the negativity,

turn inward, answer the question as only you can and take action in that direction.

Do what's right for you. Don't accept the pack mentality.

Q *One of my buddies had her former editor tell her that the books she sold in the late '90s would not make it in today's market. In other words, the books have to be better and “fresh.” I can't tell you how many times I've been rejected by not being “fresh.” How, without an editor or an agent, are we to know what “they” want?*

A One may never figure out what “they” want. Part of being coached is exploring what you are most passionate about. In coaching, we talk about gremlins—negative tapes running in your head that stall, frighten, or intimidate you. What are you telling yourself? Take note and consciously change the conversation in your head. Free yourself to do serious research about trends, read successful books on the market, have more faith in yourself, and do whatever you need to discover a “fresh” idea for yourself. Fear of failure is a creativity blocker. If you don't start something for fear of failing at it, then, ironically, you fail anyway because you didn't even try to pursue the dream. We may be ultimately in control of little else, but we are always in charge of our own attitudes.

Q *What if we can't write hot and sexy or don't feel comfortable doing it? Should we just pack it in?*

A I'd say that's another one of those gremlins speaking.

As a coach, I'd explore your answers to this question: “What are other perspectives on ‘hot and sexy’ writing you could have?” Right now your perspective is that unless you write hot and sexy you will fail.

Here are a few other perspectives to try out:

- 1) I do cool and sophisticated instead.
- 2) There is a huge audience that doesn't ▶

want hot and sexy in the books they read.

3) A good book is a good book no matter what the “temperature.”

4) A compelling story isn’t ruined by a lack of lusty sensuality.

6) How much of all the writing in the world is considered “hot and sexy?” Fifty percent? Twenty percent? Ten percent? I’m no longer going to believe these things until I have the facts.

Choose to view your situation from a different perspective and it will help you free yourself from free-floating doubt. You still won’t be writing hot and sexy, but you will have a much more useful and realistic viewpoint about it.

Q *How do we balance the need to otherwise make a living with the desire to write? Do you have specific suggestions for ways to get our focus back into writing when the real world/money are banging at the door?*

A Ah, balance, my favorite subject. Try, for a moment, standing on one foot (the stork pose for those who do yoga). Do you stand unmoving; perfectly still while still remaining upright? No. You wobble from side to side, adjusting here and there. Balance is like that. It’s not a static or achievable state that, once you master it, you can keep forever. It’s more like standing on one foot, adjusting and readjusting your weight and body position in order to remain upright. When you tip too far in one direction (too much work and not enough play, for example) then add a little more play to your life. Maybe you are tilting too far into that “I need to earn money thing” and it’s very real.

The question is “How can I design my life so that I don’t quit writing and still keep the creditors from the door?” That’s different for everyone. Someone might start writing magazine articles, another may work part time, still another decides to eat less and just get the book done. There is no right answer. It’s all about figuring out what is best for you, individually, and then acting on it. That is why coaching is so personal. Cookie-cutter solutions just don’t work.

Once writing can be balanced while addressing the other aspects of life it becomes more feasible. Also, when I do activities not related to writing, something fresh comes to me that never would have arrived on my mental doorstep if I’d been home staring at the wall of my office. Having relationships, career, recreation, home, and family as

well as satisfying spiritual and intellectual pursuits in your life keep you on an even keel.

Q *How do I find motivation when there’s no deadline to spur me on?*

A Lots of books are written about finding motivation. Sometimes, however, we must simply choose to write whether we feel like it or not. We consciously decide to stay in bed late or drive to Starbucks for coffee rather than walk into the office. We choose to watch *Days of Our Lives* and *Dancing With the Stars* (don’t get me wrong, I choose *Dancing With the Stars*) rather than edit or do research, just like we select the food we put into our mouths. No one sits on me and forces chocolate down my throat. It’s my decision whether or not to buy it or bring it home (hard, I know, but this isn’t easy stuff). We can designate certain hours of the day to work or let the answering machine pick up. Or not. Making these conscious choices and acting on them is taking your life back one decision at a time. How much do you want to write? That’s the question, really. Then you get to choose the way you’ll do it—and whether or not you’ll actually follow through. Sorry I couldn’t give you an easy answer.

Q *How do I regain faith in my own judgments on my work when I’ve been bent, folded, and mutilated for years by a parade of editors of wildly varying ability?*

A I would ask you to remember the last time you felt confident about your work. What about that project made you feel so sure of what you were doing? Chances are that you were passionate about something in the story and you could actually see it unfolding in your head. In order to reach readers, you have to care about your story—and care a lot. That leaves you vulnerable when editors want you to change your work, and yet it also keeps you going when you hit opposition.

Much of our response to life has to do with the stories we tell ourselves. What stories are you telling yourself about these editors? *So many editors have criticized and tried to change my work that I obviously have no clue what I’m about.* Or you can tell yourself, *Because I’ve been told so many different things by so many different editors, it’s obvious there’s no one right way to do things.* From there, it’s a short step to *I’m a valid judge of what my work should be.*

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Writing Coach

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Being your own best judge sometimes means accepting input. Other times, it means standing up for your own instincts about what your story should be.

Q *Two years ago, after getting dropped by my agent and a few months later by my publisher then not being able to find another agent, I lost all confidence in myself as a writer. Unable to resolve that problem, I now have completely lost all desire to write. Frankly, I don't think I'll ever get back to writing, but I thought I'd mention what I've been going through to see if the writing coach has suggestions on how to overcome what seems like an insurmountable situation.*

A Answering a question like this is tricky because the answers will vary from person to person. I asked Janelle to do some role playing with me to illustrate how a life coach might help you answer your own question.

Coach: When was the last time your confidence was this shaky?

JCS: I can't remember a time when it was this bad. Nothing has ever meant as much to me as my writing.

Coach: Play with me here. What would happen if you still enjoyed the writing, but it didn't mean this much to you?

JCS: I would feel less personally attacked by the rejections. I'd be able to pick myself up and keep going. I'd be able to step back and look at all the parts of the puzzle and see what parts need to change.

Coach: So you would become more objective. That's helpful. You also mentioned wanting to quit writing. Any time we say "yes" to something, we're saying "no" to something else. The reverse is also true. If you say "no" to the writing, what are you saying "yes" to?

JCS: Giving up a dream.

Coach: You say that like it's a negative thing.

Perhaps you just need to take a break from the writing and give yourself permission to not write for a month, six months, a year—whatever time frame feels right to you. At the end of that time, you can re-evaluate and decide if you want to continue writing or not. What would your life look like

if you didn't write? How would it feel? Would you regret it forever if you quit now?

The flip side is that you can say "yes" and give this writing thing your best shot. Decide that for one year, you'll work like a fiend on the areas of writing that you can control—honing your craft, studying the market, spending as much time as you can actually writing, and inviting feedback from people you trust. Perhaps you'll choose to go somewhere for an intensive writing seminar, or sign up for classes locally on various aspects of writing. Some people even go so far as to hire a professional editor to work with them before they submit a manuscript. Again, when that period of time has elapsed, re-evaluate. Ask yourself if it's worth it to continue or to invest your passion elsewhere instead.

If you do decide to stop writing, it's important to be aware of the story you tell yourself about your decision. Will you tell yourself, "I'm a failure, and trying to get published is hopeless?" Or would you rather say, "The market is really tough right now and I'm not willing to give it the time and effort it's demanding?"

We are not our work. It's especially hard to remember that as writers because our work is so personal.

Q *How do I learn to not care about all the business crud (because it interferes with the writing) after years of trying to build a career by making smart decisions?*

A Maybe I should have your definition of "crud" but I'll take a guess. Gossip? Publishing ups and downs? Tempests in teapots? Other people's successes (especially when you think they don't write any better than you do)? That, too, is about the choices you make.

Every time crud comes your way, you must choose whether to take it in, dwell on it, hash it over with friends and family, or let it go. Chalk it up to what it is—crud. It is out of your control. Hanging onto it and chewing it like a cow with her ▶

Surround yourself with those who will support you, whether they're writers or not, and establish an atmosphere of creativity. . . learn what you can from your past but don't stay there.

could is not going to help. When I have a client whose thoughts lean toward pessimistic attitudes, I ask him to begin practicing noticing how much time he spends in negative swirl. Then, when he sees it coming, start saying “no” to it. You can’t change anything until you are aware of it. Once you notice that you are letting this stuff in, you are in a position of power because you can decide what you do with it. Make a list of what’s bothering you and burn it, flush it, or set it aside for later and give yourself some “official” worrying time. I often ask my clients to vent to me and give them a specific amount of time (never more than four to five minutes) to do so. That gets it out of the way so the real work can begin.

Q *How to get past the sense of futility when you’ve written hard, worked hard, made good decisions toward building a career, and had “the numbers” disintegrate through no fault of yours.*

A Attitude again. Look inward. Sometimes people know it’s time to quit but just aren’t ready to let go. Other times they realize that they aren’t willing to give up writing no matter what. You need to be convinced that it is worth it, that the story you have to tell merits the persistence. Then fake it till you make it—start typing.

In the meantime, surround yourself with those who will support you, whether they’re writers or not, and establish an atmosphere of creativity. Finally, learn what you can from your past but don’t stay there. Look to the future and remind yourself of the opportunities that still lie ahead.

Q *How do I establish that atmosphere of creativity?*

A I suggest to my clients that they give themselves permission to do creative things that aren’t related to writing. Quilting, gardening, painting, baking, home decorating, scrapbooking—anything that sparks your passion is creative. Give yourself permission to play. Clean your office. Sit in the library or Barnes & Noble and just breathe the air. Does being in nature make you feel inspired? Does a long shower or a soak in the tub get your ideas flowing? Do you get energy and ideas in your local coffee shop? Whenever I get stuck, I go somewhere new to work—have laptop, will travel. Whatever makes you feel invigorated and excited about life (or perhaps serene and calm is what you are seeking) is your creative atmosphere.

Q *How do you assess if a writer should accept that s/he is going to be a boutique writer with a niche audience, rather than a blockbuster?*

A Don’t assess one as bad and the other as good. Both have merit.

My philosophy of coaching is that every client is creative, resourceful, and whole. This means that the client already knows what she’s best at and what she enjoys. It’s up to me as coach to move with the writer through the discovery process, not to make the decision for the writer. I link arms with the client, so to speak, and we walk the journey together. My job is to hold the flashlight so the client can look within and acknowledge what she already knows. Focus on who you are and how you choose to exist in the world rather than who (or what) you are not. That’s the arena of coaching.

Often clients hire me to coach writing but we end up coaching their lives instead. We find the 500-pound canary sitting in front of their office door that has kept them from actually getting anything done and move it out of the way. An individual needs to be held accountable and challenged when his or her excuses for not writing are just that, excuses. Often the only person a client is lying to is him/herself. It’s such a big dream—to write a book—that people may actually need to give themselves permission to start or permission to fail. They are so overwhelmed by the idea of starting the book that they never begin the process. I work with people to take the baby steps necessary before one can run the full race. When they stumble during the process, I can help them find their footing again. I don’t give answers. Rather, I help clients discover the answers within themselves.

Judy Duenow has published more than 75 books for 10 different publishers and has been a life coach for seven years. Many of her answers in this article are drawn directly from her masters’ thesis, and thus she requests that no quotes or excerpts from this be used without her express permission. For more information about her work as a coach, visit her at coachingthewriter.com

Editor’s Note: My sincerest thanks to Janelle who stepped up to write this article on such short notice after two other articles scheduled for September were unable to be completed on time.

—Lorraine



WRITING is TAXING

BY DIANE O'BRIEN KELLY

Fortunately, most expenses a writer incurs relating to his or her writing business are deductible for tax purposes, typically in the year the expense is actually paid. But to make our taxes more interesting, the IRS has thrown a few curveballs at us.

What's not deductible:

(1) The first phone line into your residence. No matter how much you use your home phone for business, even if the business use is 100%, you cannot deduct any of the cost of the first phone line into your home. If you obtain a second phone line for use in your business or for a fax machine or Internet, you can deduct a pro-rata portion of your cost of this second phone line based on your proportionate business use.

Changes in the law may be in the works, however. As the popularity of mobile phones continues to rise and residential landlines become less common, the IRS could decide to allow a proportionate deduction.

(2) Fines or penalties. Civil or criminal fines or penalties paid to a governmental body are not deductible for tax purposes. Did you receive a speeding ticket on your way to a conference? It's not deductible. Did your library stick you with a stiff fine when you were late to return those books you checked out as research for your latest novel? The fine's not deductible.

(3) Club dues. Do you take your writing buddies, editor, or agent to the country club for a nice round of golf or a fancy meal on occasion? Although the cost of the golf game or meal may be partially deductible as business-related meals and entertainment, you are not permitted to deduct any of the cost of the dues required to be a member of the club. This non-deductibility rule applies

Non-Deductible Expenses

to clubs organized for pleasure, recreation, or social purposes. You're permitted to deduct dues paid to professional organizations, trade associations, chambers of commerce, and civic or public service organizations.

(4) Prepaid rent or lease. Cash-basis taxpayers generally include items in their taxable income in the year payment is received and deduct expenses in the year the expense is paid. However, the IRS does not allow any taxpayers to deduct rents paid in advance. You can only deduct payments that apply to rent for the tax year being reported. Therefore, even if you pre-pay the following year's January rent or lease payment in December, you have to wait until the succeeding tax year to deduct the payment on your return. This rule applies to rental of both personal property such as copiers or computers and real property such as office space or your home office if you lease your home.

(5) Clothing. A question I've been asked several times is whether items of clothing purchased solely to wear to a specific writing-related event are deductible. This question always makes me unpopular, as I'm forced to tell the writers that the \$500 ball gown they purchased for their writing organization's awards ceremony is not the least bit deductible, even if the writer will never wear the dress again. The IRS is a stickler on this rule. If the item of clothing is a type that *could* be worn on another occasion, no deduction is allowed even if the item is, in actuality, never worn again. Sorry, Cinderella!

(6) Unpaid earnings. Did your publisher go bankrupt, owing you thousands in royalties? Did your agent flee to a tropical island with your advance? Although these losses certainly feel like expenses, the IRS does not allow a taxpayer to deduct unpaid earnings. ▶

(7) Business Gifts valued at over \$25. The IRS allows a taxpayer to deduct only \$25 per recipient of the cost of business gifts given in a tax year. If you give gifts in excess of \$25 to any particular recipient, you lose the deduction for the amount in excess of \$25. If your gift would qualify as business-related meals and entertainment—for example, you take your critique partners to the theater, a sporting event, or out for a meal and have a substantial business discussion before, during, or after the event—you should treat the cost as a meals and entertainment expense instead of a gift.

The good news is that the definition of “gift” for purposes of this rule does not include any item that costs less than \$4, has your name clearly and permanently imprinted on the gift, and is one of a number of identical items you distribute widely, such as pens, magnets, coasters, or bookmarks. These items

are treated as promotional or advertising expenses and are fully deductible.

(8) Raffle tickets or bingo cards. The IRS does not allow a taxpayer to deduct the cost of raffle tickets, bingo cards, and the like, even if purchased from a charitable organization to which monetary donations would otherwise be deductible. In theory, the value of the chance of winning equals or exceeds the amount you paid for the raffle ticket or bingo card, although we all know that once those winning numbers are called, certain tickets or cards are absolutely worthless.

Got a tax question for Diane? Email her at Diane@dianeobrienkelly.com. Your question might be addressed in an upcoming issue. For further tax tips, check out the “Tax Tidbits” page on Diane’s website, dianeobrienkelly.com.

Business Briefs

Penguin's Profits Lower Due to U.S. \$: Penguin group operating profits were down 5% in the first six months of 2007, blaming a weak dollar for the decline. Not all is gloomy, however. Revenue was up 1% and profits reached 11%. Even emerging markets sales were up 30%, which allowed Penguin’s chairman to be optimistic in light of the publishing issue in the U.S. and U.K. There have been real competitive issues for bookstore chains in the U.K. U.S. backlist sales were up 15% overall in 2006, but flat in the recent report. Online stores reported a 23% increase, and the Premium format continued to be the leader in mass market sales. Penguin plans to add backlist titles of brand-name authors to this format in early 2008.

More Bad Money News—Meredith Books: Meredith Corp. is restructuring by downsizing its book publishing. The company is cutting 15 jobs and will be concentrating on nonfiction books focusing on home and gardening areas. The failing profits of Meredith Books are cited as what hurt the publishing group over all.

Fewer Travel North to BookExpo: Attendance for BookExpo Canada in early July was down 10% from last year. While the number of booksellers (up 21%) and librarians (up 63%) rose, the publishers were not there.

Looking for Promotion Opportunities? What About Book Festivals? *Publisher’s Weekly* put together a list of over 40 festivals from coast to coast that take place from September to November. Check out the July 30 issue for contact information, web sites, etc.

Good News from Harlequin and New E-book Production: The second quarter of 2007 has revenue up 1.2%, not much for some, but a change for Harlequin. Operating income rose to 22% with the credit going to the 2006 restructuring at Torstar. Of course, with the good news comes the cautionary figures. North American retail division was flat, with declines in single title sales affecting series numbers. The paranormal series had a strong report as did the new Kimani line. Sales through retailers remain strong and online reports are increasing. Encouraged by e-book sales, the new Spice Briefs—original erotic titles, 5,000 to 15,000 words at \$2.99—began in August with two e-book titles per month. Also in August, Harlequin began producing an e-book edition with every new title—1,300 a year.

Audible.com on the Rise: Revenue increased 36% due to AudibleListeners growing over 100,000 subscribers in the past year. Over 96% of the new members were in the Gold and Platinum class. That means they are willing to put down more cash per month on the services. This gain helped defer the net loss of the overall company sales.

Changing Times

Continued from page 1 ▶

But as you know (unless you've been chained to the floor of a subterranean cave for the past couple of years), changing technology is changing the publishing marketplace. Popular fiction novels are now published on the Internet, in print-on-demand format, in electronic downloads, by small presses, by publishers with new and innovative fiscal structures, by publishers with new and disastrous fiscal structures... And, in an increasing number of cases, our PPM language doesn't give us any guidance, in either direction, about whether or not a new applicant's books qualify the writer for Ninc membership.

In order to be fair and consistent in accepting or rejecting applications from prospective new members (and also in order to avoid a lawsuit from a writer with a wounded ego and too much time to kill), your beleaguered Ninc Board—and the even more-beleaguered Membership Chair—have realized that we must update the PPM language so that we have guidelines that we can impartially and reliably apply to every membership application.

(The alternative is that, when in doubt, we can admit or reject applications on the basis of whether or not I like the applicant. I argued passionately in favor of this, but the Board voted it down.)

Although there is little realistic hope of writing such brilliant new PPM language about membership qualifications that no future Ninc Board will ever have to change it again, we do hope to implement terms that will serve Ninc well for the next decade. To this end, we've consulted other organizations that have confronted this issue lately, and we've learned from their wisdom. We've also consulted the Advisory Council (which, for those of you who haven't been paying any attention all these years, consists of Ninc's five founders and all our past presidents) for input about the nature of Ninc membership and the spirit of the bylaws.

As a result of our research and discussions, these are the parameters we're working on for the new PPM language for assessing new member applications.

1. The new PPM language will only apply to new applications.

Anyone who is already in Ninc will not be affected. Existing members of Ninc can remain members for life, as long as they keep renewing their membership.

2. We propose using a market-based model for defining what “published” means in terms of Ninc membership.

This means that if a publisher meets the parameters defined in the new PPM language, then any book published by that house meets the PPM definition of a “published” novel, until and unless that market ceases to qualify anymore. (The alternative method, a sales-based model, would be much more complicated for Ninc volunteers and individually intrusive to applicants, and the Board is unanimously against using it.) Many publishers will obviously be qualifying markets. In cases where qualification is not obvious, however, the applicant will be required to submit verification; Ninc will not ask its few and overworked volunteers to be responsible for proving whether a non-member's publisher is a qualifying market.

3. To be a qualifying market, the market must pay an advance against royalties.

As a professional organization that advocates in the interests of career novelists, Ninc should encourage and support fair treatment of working writers. The practice we see in some new publishing venues of *not* paying advances represents a de-professionalization of the market and a step backward for writers everywhere. Ninc should not encourage and support such detrimental practices by recognizing publishers as qualifying markets if they don't pay advances for the books they publish.

Refusing to recognize such venues as qualifying markets is a statement about the practice of not paying advances; it is *not* a statement about writers who sell to those markets (I, for example, have sold two books to such markets over the years) or the books themselves (needless to say, those two books of mine were brilliant).

Note: The Board is currently debating what the minimum qualifying advance level should be. Our research indicates that we need to determine a figure, so that publishers don't become qualifying markets by offering advances of, say, \$10 for a novel.

We're currently discussing minimum advances figures of \$1,000, \$2,000, or \$3,000 as ▶

possibilities. We invite your input on this.

4. The new PPM language will only apply to new applications.

If you're in Ninc already, you're in for life. The only way you can get out of Ninc is by failing to renew your membership. And then also ignoring the gazillion nagging renewal letters and emails Ninc will send you. (However, if you drop your membership and then decide to join Ninc again two years later, the new membership qualifications will apply to you.)

5. To be a qualifying market, a publisher must have a print run and distribution of 1,000 or more copies of every title it publishes.

For various complicated logistical reasons that I guarantee you don't want me to recite in detail, our research indicates that this parameter reliably separates professional publishing venues from not-clearly professional ones. For the time being, this guideline also eliminates books that are only published electronically and print-on-demand books, until and unless a given electronic or print-on-demand publisher meets this standard.

6. To be a qualifying market, a publisher must have published consistently for a period of one year, and must have published works by at least ten different writers.

This ensures the publisher is not self-evidently a fly-by-night operation, nor just a little shop set up expressly for the purpose of printing books written

by the publisher's girlfriend, sister-in-law, and cousin.

7. A market can only qualify if none of its authors are asked to pay a fee, nor have any fees deducted from their royalties or earnings, nor have any financial investment in the publishing of the books.

This is a necessary elaboration on some language that already exists in the PPM.

8. Did I mention that the new PPM language will only apply to new applications?

Rather than changing the nature of Ninc membership, the new PPM language that the Board proposes is an attempt to maintain the professional character of Ninc as an organization of multi-published career novelists. To reiterate, we're trying to develop a PPM definition of what a "published" novel is that serves the spirit of our by-laws and gives us reliable, consistent guidelines for every application we receive.

While we're engaged in this process, we invite your comments, input, and suggestions. Contact us by personal email or express your views on Ninc-link. If you come armed with margaritas, I even invite you to visit my home.

Meanwhile...did I cover the bit about how the new language only applies to new applications and not to existing Ninc members?

Laura Resnick
President-elect
2007 Novelists, Inc. Board of Directors

Publishing Services by Huseby Agency, Ltd.

NINK a publication of Novelists, Inc.
An Organization for Writers of Popular Fiction
P.O. Box 2037
Manhattan KS 66505

FIRST CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FARGO ND
PERMIT #281

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