

N I N K

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Novelists, Inc. and Tekno Books: Promoting Ninc, Making Money, and Developing New Markets

**BY LILLIAN STEWART CARL
NINC ANTHOLOGY COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Novelists, Inc. has entered into a collaborative relationship with Tekno Books to produce and market anthologies collectively written by Ninc members.

You may remember Tekno Books from the cover article of the July *NINK*, “Book Packaging: Who, What, How, and Why?” by Tekno editor Denise Little (who was also a guest speaker at our San Diego conference this year). The company has worked with more than 150 publishers on more than 1,900 books, including mystery, romance, science fiction, fantasy, mainstream, horror, historical, Western, and nonfiction projects. These books have included novels and anthologies.

Tekno is the designated packager for the Mystery Writers of America, the International Association of Crime Writers, and the Horror Writers Association. They have also done books with the Western Writers of America, Malice Domestic, and the Science Fiction Writers of America.

Tekno’s role in our new relationship is to do the paperwork, sell the projects, and coordinate the selection and editing processes. No one on the Ninc Board or the Ninc Anthology Committee will be involved in choosing which writers or contributions go into the books; such editorial decisions are made by Tekno, sometimes in cooperation with the acquiring publishers. Tekno will also handle the distribution of monies (advances and royalties) to the various parties involved in each Ninc-generated book.

We anticipate that Ninc and Tekno will ultimately work on a wide variety of books together. As our first mutual effort, we propose to create a nonfiction Ninc brand of books that will provide knowledge and inspiration for both new and experienced writers, broaden the reputation of Ninc in a number of venues (including with publishers), and provide a revenue stream both for Novelists, Inc. and for all the writers who contribute to the projects.

This process will be supervised by the Ninc Board, with Lillian Stewart Carl, the newly appointed Anthology Committee Chairperson, spearheading the process for Ninc, and Denise Little of Tekno Books working on the packaging end for Tekno. Right now they’re putting together prospective tables of contents for the first set of books we plan to do. From there, they’ll assemble a proposal to present to publishers.

The Novelists, Inc. Library of Writing Skills

Many members of this organization have a pile of “How To” articles or guidelines that they’ve written through the years. Whether the pieces were for newsletters, conferences, magazines, oral

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Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

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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
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New Applicants:

Colleen H. Admirand, West Milford NJ
Robin Albert, Monroe CT
Denise Agnew, Sierra Vista AZ
Diana Peterfreund, Silver Spring MD
Donna Andrews, Reston VA
Beth Harbison, Urbana MD
Candace Havens, Fort Worth TX
Cindy Procter-King, Coldstream British Columbia

New Members:

Elizabeth Spencer, Manassas Park VA

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."

Take Ninc brochures to conferences. Email Holly with your mailing address and requested number of brochures.

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."

House Hunting

Yup, I'm still homeless. Or at least houseless.

My sister and brother-in-law have made me totally at home. And my parents keep reminding me that as long as they have a home, I have a home. Dad said, "It didn't turn out so bad the last time you lived under our roof." It was so sweet that I didn't remind him that I was 18 at the time, we butted hard Irish heads on a daily basis, and I've spent just a few years since then on my own.

So, I'm house-hunting.

And that got me thinking about publisher-house hunting.

If you've been reading this column, you know that the phrase "that got me thinking" is a giant, flashing *Dangerous Curves Ahead* sign; my thinking rarely goes in a straight line. Maybe you'll see the corollaries to pub-hunting that I do, and maybe you won't. Maybe you'll see corollaries I never spotted. It's all good. We're on an adventure here ...

Before I started seriously house-hunting this summer, I spent a year checking area real estate sites, reading articles, and mining personal connections for info. (At least one Ninc member was an unknowing source when a mutual friend asked her for info, but kept my identity confidential because I was still exploring the idea.)

Do your market research.

Initially, I looked at everything with four walls and a roof to get a feel for what was out there. Then I started narrowing down, based on what I liked about where I'd been before, and what I hadn't liked and was determined would be different this time around. I came up with must-haves to start, must-haves quickly, nice-to-haves, and pie-in-the-skies.

For example, I want a brick house, with a basement, garage, and fireplace.

The brick and basement are must-haves to start, because retrofitting brick or a basement sounds way too complicated and expensive. A fireplace,

however, can be added, and if it's gas, it's not that complicated or outrageously expensive. Same thing with a garage, as long as there's a good site and zoning regulations allow.

Know what you want. Then look at what is, but also what can be.

In addition to the "wants," there are deal-breakers. For me, those include a septic tank and being on a busy street. (There are more; I'm sparing you.)

Those were decided on in the cool reason of knowing myself. I will not look at houses that have any of the deal-breakers or lack the must-have-to-starts. If I were swayed by falling in love with other aspects of a house that broke my rationally arrived at must-have-to-start and deal-breaker rules, I would regret that decision—to paraphrase Bogart—maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but eventually.

Know when it's a no-go and don't waffle.

Next, I needed to assess how a house would fit in with the rest of my goals.

(Okay, how this matches up with publishing-house hunting might be obscure, so I'll give you a boost: In publishing, it could translate into how a publisher's expectations of you in matters such as number of books produced a year or promotional activity and expense fit in with your priorities for your life, not just your career.)

In real estate that meant fitting the house into my budget, and balancing it with all the other things I want to do.

And this brought me an epiphany.

In real estate house-hunting, I have crunched numbers until they are ground down to dust, while I never previously gave a thought to those issues in publishing-house hunting. Hmm.

You can only determine what's a good fit for you in the context of the rest of your life.

To this point, all my house-hunting work ▶

had been done sitting alone in my little room with my computer. (Sound familiar?)

Now it was time to interact with The Market.

I went agent-hunting. Through friends of friends of friends of a relative, I contacted an agent who was very nice, prompt returning calls, and knew the general area. We communicated for a couple months. I visited the area and spent an afternoon looking at houses with her (none even remotely appropriate).

This was six months before I sold my house in Virginia. When that happened much faster than I expected (Why don't proposals and manuscripts ever seem to wrap up unexpectedly fast?), the agent issue became front-burner, and I developed a definite sinking feeling. The woman seemed savvy about her area, but that wasn't the precise area I wanted to be in. It was clear I would have to do the real digging myself.

An agent can be terrific, but still not be the right agent to get you in the place you want to be. Listen to your instincts.

I reached out to more friends and relatives, and connected with an agent who specializes in the area I'm interested in. She's been terrific. (A little scary to drive with as she juggles laptop, cell phone, fast food, and steering wheel, but terrific.) She has steered me away from circumstances not appropriate for me, opened my eyes to other possibilities, negotiated hard, and advised when asked. All this in support of my wants/don't wants.

But even the right agent might need more time than you would like.

And some of that might be your fault ... or at least it might be my fault.

At one point my agent said in wonder that in 19 years in the business she hadn't had another client

who would have considered such divergent houses as two I was considering. I like to think that's because I'm adaptable and have the imagination to envision myself in a variety of situations. I'm afraid, however, that in the biz—real estate and publishing—it can be viewed as lack of focus.

Imagination also lets me see what a lot of houses *could* be. It's my firm belief that these houses need me. They just don't know it. At least their sellers don't know it (or don't care). Otherwise, they'd lower the price to my range. (Translation to publishing world: They need me, but the editors don't know it. Otherwise they would *raise* the price to my range.)

Some of these houses need so much that not only can I not afford to do the work, but I don't want to spend my time and energy doing it, yet I know I would not be happy living in them as the lesser houses they would be without the full fix-up. (There is a parallel in there somewhere to self-publishing.)

Houses shape the people in them. People shape the houses they're in.

Alas, even an agent who knows the market, knows the business, and is on your side can't predict the market's future.

That's where we are right now. I've put offers in on two houses. The first would have been a great buy at my price; the sellers took another offer that was higher (go figure). The second house, the sellers and I negotiated down to within a few thousand dollars, and that's where we've hit an impasse as of today.

So, next week I broaden the search again and keep hunting.

Never give up.

— Pat McLaughlin

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Contributed from Ninlink: *One in Four Read No Books Last Year* (tinyurl.com/2e2xaz Associated Press) was reported by Sarah McCarty. *Trembling She Sat Down at Her Computer* (tinyurl.com/2yf79c Sydney Morning Herald) was shared by Marianna Jamison.

Shortlist of Man Booker Prize: This prize for the best novel of the year goes to a citizen of the Commonwealth or Republic of Ireland and will be presented at the Guildhall in London in mid October. The prize is £50,000 to the winner, although each shortlist author receives £2,500 and a bound edition of their book.

Writing a Tie-in to a Soap Opera: Pass me the chips, this is going to get juicy!

BY JULIA LONDON

Imagine this: You submitted a manuscript to your editor one month after deadline. You could have used another month, but you figure you'll catch some of the more glaring problems in revisions. One week later, you're sitting at your desk, surfing the web, and your editor calls. She doesn't say she got the manuscript you submitted last week. She doesn't say she's read it and loved it. She says, "Do you watch soap operas?"

This is what happened to me last April.

I figured my editor had read the manuscript and thought it wasn't exactly up to par, and obviously assumed I had been eating bon-bons (true) and watching soaps all day (not true) instead of working. I said, very emphatically, "No."

She said, "Have you ever seen *Guiding Light*?"

I answered truthfully: "I have never seen *Guiding Light*."

As it turns out, she'd called to discuss the opportunity to write a tie-in novel to the Emmy award-winning daytime drama. The show had lost a very popular bad-boy character, Jonathan Randall, in January. His exit was true soap opera drama—he faked his death and the death of his infant daughter by driving a car off a cliff. His mother, Reva Shayne, learned of his deceit, but no one else.

A couple of months after his departure, the *Guiding Light* writers were thinking about what might have happened to Jonathan and his baby. As part of celebrating 70 years on the air, they were planning Big Doings for the fall involving Jonathan and his daughter, and they wanted a novel detailing where he'd been the last several months. And they wanted it to be a love story.

Interested But Wary

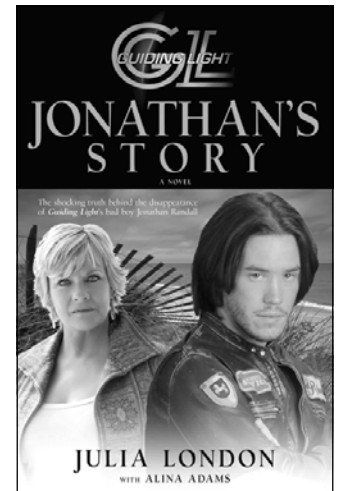
I was interested, but wary. I'd never done any work-for-hire writing before. My editor explained that the *Guiding Light* people would provide a de-

tailed, chapter-by-chapter outline. The characters would be sketched out, including some who are current stars of the show, and some new characters the writers had conceived but I would characterize. It was to be hardcover with a mass market follow-up, and I would be given credit on the cover for writing it, along with Alina Adams, who developed the outline.

My agent thought it was a really good idea, both financially and in terms of exposure. Pocket was willing to move my delivery deadlines for the books already contracted without moving my publication dates. There was only one little drawback: I had to write the book in 45 days for a September publication date.

45 days. I know some authors do it routinely, but I am not one of them. I am lucky if I can get 100 pages written in 45 days. My editor and agent reasoned it was doable, given that the plot and characters were already drawn. Still, I hemmed and hawed about the 45 days, but I knew I was going to do it. It was just too sweet an opportunity to pass up. *Guiding Light* has 2.5 million viewers every day. If only a small fraction of those viewers liked the book enough to pick up my other books, how cool was that? I figured that sort of exposure was worth it.

My parents were beside themselves. I've written countless novels now, but this is the one that got them to gasp with shock and awe. My dad said my grandparents listened to it on radio, and didn't I remember that? Dad has forgotten that television had actually been invented by the time I was born. My mother said they were all watching *Guiding Light* when Kennedy was shot, and didn't I remember ▶



that? Ah...no. I was still in diapers when Kennedy was shot. A friend told me his uncle, a dairy farmer, broadcast *Guiding Light* to his cows and the milk was better. I found that...well, interesting, at the very least.

Getting Up to Speed

Needless to say, the first task was getting up to speed on 70 years of a classic soap opera. The *Guiding Light* crew sent me hours of DVDs with Jonathan and Tammy, the couple behind the book. They sent me detailed character outlines for all the characters.

I began to review the materials while waiting for the book outline to be finalized. It was then I experienced my first twinge of fear. When I got the outline, I had a second, bigger twinge of fear. What followed were 45 of the toughest days of my life. And now, for your enjoyment, here are the top 10 reasons why writing a tie-in novel is one of the toughest writing assignments on the planet:

1. I had to pick up the book where Jonathan Randall sends his car off the cliff and manages to save himself and his baby. I watched that scene a dozen times, and I was totally absorbed in the action. But the suspension of disbelief on the screen is a lot easier to achieve than on the page. In writing it, I ran into some logistical problems, such as how Jonathan got his baby, Sarah, out of the car from the time he hit the gas and sent the car flying off the cliff. Was she in a car seat? Didn't the fall hurt her? Did she cry? Two characters were right behind them and saw the car burst into flames. Surely they heard a crying baby, right? What looked somewhat believable on the screen looked ridiculous on paper. It took several drafts.

2. In many ways, Jonathan Randall was the opposite of a romance novel hero. Yes, he was an incredibly sexy bad boy, and really handsome, too. But he had a whopper of a criminal history, conveniently listed in the character background. The list was 39 items long, including these gems: Sold a party drug to Lizzie; sent harassing email messages to Sandy Foster; disconnected and threw out a hospitalized Sandy's call button so he could not call for help; arranged for his mother, Reva, to be slipped drugs; maliciously seduced his cousin, Tammy Winslow, in order to exact revenge on his family for giving him up; attempted to strangle his mother; drugged his Aunt Cassie and then

made it appear as if they'd slept together; kidnapped Lizzie to force Alan to return Sarah to him; drugged Alan and then set fire to his mansion while he was asleep...and of course, faked his death and took his daughter from her grieving mother, leaving her to believe her daughter had died.

This was the guy I was supposed to turn into a romantic hero. I have written some rogues in my day, but overcoming his background was a tough one. It was so interesting to me because Jonathan was a major heartthrob on screen—I certainly got it. But making him appear to be that heartthrob on paper with his history and without benefit of the actor to help me make him charming was difficult. It had to come out in the dialogue and by capturing the little characteristics the actor had lent to the role.

3. The characters were not my creation, and harder still, they are on TV every day. Viewers have a lot of expectations about how those characters will behave. I watched the DVDs several times to make sure I got them right, and I have renewed respect for how much an actor brings to a character. Anyone can try to strangle his mother, but it takes a really good actor to make that seem like a sympathetic thing to do. My hat is off to the actor, Tom Pelphrey.

Moreover, the new characters were not my creation, and were a little over the top—sassy, irreverent, and just plain mean works great on the screen, but a little can go a very long way on the page. I turned them down a notch.

4. The plot was not mine. I should qualify that I'm horrible at outlining plots, so a really great one could jump up and slap me silly, and I wouldn't know it. The first outline I received did not seem to be enough for a full novel. It seemed like it would make a great storyline on the show, told in little vignettes. I didn't find enough characterization built into the outline. The love story was implied, but not implicit. Working with my editor and the *Guiding Light* writers, we added a few things to make the characters gel with the plot.

5. The pacing of the outline was fast and furious. Each chapter was a dramatic scene, told mostly through dialogue. I could almost see the long, angsty gazes that usually end scenes in soaps—but in some cases, that was the only bridge between the scenes. I slowed the pace down a beat or two and built in some segues so it didn't seem

the characters were mad as hatters, jumping from one drama to the next. It was also necessary to make the characters a little more sympathetic. Soap operas thrive on conflict. So do love stories—but a few tender moments are needed, or it's impossible to believe the characters can be redeemed or would ever get together. Interestingly, a bit of a snafu occurred when I suggested the characters have sex earlier in the book. The *Guiding Light* people had to “meet about it.” They were a little wary of explicit sex scenes—they prefer the fade-to-black route (well, maybe gray). Personally, I thought the fear of sex was kind of funny. It seemed like after all Jonathan had done, sex was the least of his problems. In the end they agreed to the sex scenes where I suggested them, and I think they liked the result. The book is as explicit as any romance novel you can pick up.

6. I had a couple of little wrinkles reaching my etched-in-concrete page count during my 45 days when I discovered I was writing things that had not yet been written into the show. For example, at one point in the story, a medical crisis was scripted. I asked questions about how the crisis could have realistically developed. They told me the scenes weren't written yet. I tried to smooth it over and leave some wiggle room, but I failed. I finally told them again it wasn't going to work. They put me in touch with the medical experts the show keeps on retainer, and the experts told me how I could finesse it. I thought that was extremely cool. The next time you see your favorite soap character lying in a hospital bed, know people exist to advise soaps about all the mysterious diseases and illnesses.

7. The quick turnaround on the book quickly became a nightmare. The outline was not what I had envisioned (something like 200 pages already written, was what I was envisioning, I think). In addition, I had revisions on one of my novels to do while I was writing this one. And, naturally, I had a book that was published right in the middle of my 45 days. I worked from sunup to sundown. The book was contracted for 80,000 words. When finished, it was 100,000 words. I had to produce so quickly I was forced to re-invent my process. But there was an upside: the crash of this book helped me renew my writing discipline, which, admittedly, had gotten a little lax over the years.

8. The revision process. What can I say?

Writers, you have not done revisions until you have been through a joint revision process. In addition to my editor, at least three people from *Guiding Light* had revisions, including the head writer. That was disconcerting enough, but the *Guiding Light* people wanted to ensure their characters came across as the same characters that lit up the television screen every day. I understood that. But when they began to question their own outline, I thought I was going to lose my mind. My editor, Maggie Crawford, deserves a lot of credit on this one—she took on the role of middle man so I wasn't bombarded with changes from too many fronts. In the end, however, I think the different perspectives really enhanced the book. It's solid.

9. New types of media exposure! I finally received some real, national media exposure! Not exactly as I expected, however. *Guiding Light* asked me to take down a blog about my experience so I wouldn't “scoop” some of their media channels. The book received magazine attention and TV ads ran, which was huge for me. However, some media exposure I didn't get. Booksignings were set up in New York—to feature the stars signing the book I wrote. My friends were aghast. “You should be there!” they cried. But I was completely happy with that arrangement. I have suffered through enough booksignings and I figured the stars would sell more copies of my book than I could on my best day. Although I did ask my editor to get me an autographed copy.

10. Media exposure is great...unless you are writing something people feel very passionate about. People feel very passionate about Jonathan and Tammy—or Jammy, as I discovered they call the super couple that is no more. I came home one day to a mailbox full of heated emails. The fans had seen something in a magazine or on the web and had written to voice their displeasure. The thrust of the emails was that the head writer and I had ruined *Guiding Light* forever by even suggesting Jonathan might find a new love after Tammy's death. Putting aside, for the sake of argument, that Jonathan would have had at least three loves and committed 10 more crimes if he'd been on the show these last few months, these fans vowed they would *never* read any of my books, and certainly not *Jonathan's Story*. I hadn't even seen page proofs and already the critics were on me. Sigh. ▶

As I am writing this, the book is sitting on my desk. We made all the production deadlines. It was a great experience and a new writing challenge, and one I am so glad I had the opportunity to do.

Would I do it again? I'm not sure. In the last few years, I have adopted a kinder, gentler schedule. I was reminded of how hard it is to actually work for a living and was really ready to go back to my cushy, don't-start-until-noon-if-I-don't-want way of writing.

Plus, I think I prefer writing my own plots and characters. Trying to write what is in someone else's head is more difficult than I imagined it could be. But then again, if my editor called me tomorrow and asked if I had ever watched *Days of Our Lives*, who knows?

As for *Guiding Light*, the show won Emmys for writing and best drama this year, and I can see why. It's a completely different art of writing than what is needed to write a novel, and when you factor in the

deadline pressure they must have to keep that show on the air five days a week—wow. Just wow. I like my distant, sometimes nebulous deadlines. Please don't tell my editor I said my deadlines were nebulous. She is of a different opinion, I am certain.

I did get one other thing out of this experience: Now, when my editor asks if I watch *Guiding Light*, I have to say yes. I am totally hooked. And really, I should wrap this up now—*Guiding Light* is coming on and I have to know if Olivia is going to get Jeffrey back or if Reva is going to snag him.

Julia London is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of the popular Lockhart Family Trilogy and Desperate Debutante historical romance series, as well as several contemporary romances, including American Diva. To keep up with all the Julia London news, please visit julialondon.com.

Tekno

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presentations, writing workshops, or whatever, unless an individual writer has enough of them (and the energy) to collate them together into a book, they are collecting dust. By gathering these pieces into themed volumes, Novelists, Inc. can turn the articles into useful tools for writers, whether they're beginners or skilled craftspeople looking to improve their work.

Volumes in the series could include:

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Plotting

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Creating Characters

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Getting Published

The Novelist's Inc. Guide to Pacing

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Police Procedurals

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Romance

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Paranormals

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Mystery

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Suspense

The Novelists, Inc. Words of Wisdom (quotes on writing by members, and also collected by members)

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to Grammar

The Novelists, Inc. Guide to the Business of Publishing

Denise and Lillian have already looked through the *NINK* files and chosen a few articles for reprint. Denise will be contacting the authors soon.

If you have a piece or pieces that you'd like to see considered for inclusion in this program, please contact Lillian and Denise at the following email address:

nincnonfiction@aol.com

We won't know what we can pay for these articles until we get offers from publishers, but we anticipate that at least half of the advance and royalties for each volume contracted will be distributed to the individual Ninc members who contribute to the books. The organization will acquire very limited rights from the authors to use the articles, and the members will retain ownership and control of the copyrights for their material.

Here's anticipating a long and productive relationship between Novelists, Inc. and Tekno Books! ▲



BY CINDI MYERS

OFF the BEATEN PATH: Novels on the Installment Plan

Some of the most famous novels of our time were first released as serials, including works by Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and William Thackeray. Serialized fiction seems to be undergoing a revival, both online and in print. Last fall, Slate.com published *The Unbinding*, a dark comic novel by Walter Kim, in serial form. Also last year, *Harper's* published its first serialized fiction in 50 years—*Happyland*, by J. Robert Lennon.

Harlequin launched a pilot program this month to send novels in segments or “chunks” via cellphone to subscribers in Japan. Reading novels via cellphone is increasingly popular in Japan, where about half the readers are young women. Cellphone novels are also popular in Germany, China, and South Korea. One popular cellphone-novel author, Yoshi, began by posting a story he wrote at an obscure cellphone site and asking for voluntary payment. Word of mouth about the story spread and it has since been made into a movie, a television show, and manga.

Newspapers, too, are returning to serialized fiction. Last fall the *Edmonton Journal* published a serialized novel, “The Book of Stanley” by Todd Babiak, the second such novel of Babiak’s it has published in serial form. Earlier this year, *The New York Times* published a 16-part serial of an original story by Michael Chabon, “Gentlemen of the Road.” Likewise, the *Seattle Times* is currently running “Double Strike” a serialized mystery commissioned from author Robert Ferrigno to commemorate Pike Place Market’s centennial. Other papers that have run serialized novels by authors both famous and less well-known include *The Nashville Tennessean*, *New York Newsday*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The*

Baltimore Sun, *The Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, *Wisconsin State Journal*, and the *Stuart/Port St. Lucie News*.

What does this mean for you and your unsold novel? First of all, it’s more important than ever to pay attention to sub-rights clauses in contracts. Also, since so many of these projects are seen as new and cutting edge, enterprising authors or their agents should consider approaching a particular site or publication to propose syndication. One place to start is your city’s paper. The most successful syndicated stories are those with strong local ties to draw in the newspaper’s readership—a local setting, characters, local events. According to Chip Scanlan, the author of several serials, including “The Holly Wreath Man” which ran in twelve papers, including the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, each installment should be short—800-1,000 words—so that it can be read in about the time it takes to drink a cup of coffee at the breakfast table. There should be a compelling question to drive the story forward—a mystery or unanswered question to keep the reader coming back every day. And each day’s installment should have a strong hook at the end.

One way to sell serialized fiction to newspapers is by getting picked up by one of the major syndicates. They market the work to their subscribers and any income is split (usually 50/50) between the writer and the syndicate.

Universal Press Syndicate (amuniversal.com/ups/submissions.htm#_text) handled syndication of Scanlan’s “The Holly Wreath Man.” Better known for syndicating comics and columnists, UPS has syndicated a limited number of fiction stories. Directions for preparing a proposal for them are included on the site. You’ll need to submit six to ten sample installments and explain why your story would appeal to newspaper readers and your targeted market. Ties to a holiday, anniversary, or regional ▶

market should be emphasized, along with your own credentials/publishing history.

Other newspaper syndicates:

United Features (unitedfeatures.com/ufsapp/nea.do)

-Search under FAQ for their submission guidelines.

Creators.com (creators.com/submissions.html)

Featurewell (featurewell.com)

Syndicate West (syndicatewest.com) - The focus at Syndicate West is on smaller newspapers in the western U.S.

It's also possible to self-syndicate. Submit several installments of your story with a cover letter explaining why they should buy it to newspapers in your target market. Addresses and other information are available online at newspapers.com

Finally, I found several print and online publications that are looking for serial fiction:

Virtual Tales (virtualtales.com) offers a service that emails 1,500 to 2,000 word installments of longer stories twice a week to subscribers. The editors are interested in mystery, romance, action-adventure, westerns, general fiction, fantasy, horror, and science fiction, 20,000 words and up. They will also consider short story collections with a unifying theme, and previously published works as long as the author owns the electronic rights to the story and North American print rights. The stories are released first as e-serials, then as ebooks. "Accepted works are broken down into installments of about 1,500 to 2,500 words, with two installments emailed to readers per week. The first four are sent to readers as a free trial, with readers

being able to purchase all additional installments. As such, we require 14 installments completed and edited before we can offer a new serialized work for sale." Payment to authors is 60% of all sales, paid quarterly through Paypal. Virtual Tales purchases exclusive worldwide electronic rights, but these rights revert to the author once the story is no longer for sale at the Virtual Tales website.

Cappers (cappers.com) is a bi-weekly tabloid distributed primarily in rural midwestern U.S. The editors here purchase four to five novellas or novels per year to serialize in the paper. Length may be up to 50,000 words, although works of 12,000 to 25,000 are preferred. The emphasis here is on wholesome family entertainment: no profanity, no drug use, no drinking, no violence or sex. Their readers enjoy humor, Westerns, romance, mystery, and adventure. Query first with a brief description of the plot and characters. Payment is \$100 to \$400.

Thrilling Tales (thrillingtales.net) is a quarterly print publication devoted to Pulp Fiction. They're interested in stories set in the "golden age of pulp fiction"—the '30s and '40s—with up to 60,000 words for serialization. Payment is \$.03 a word, negotiable for longer works. This is a new venture, without a track record, so proceed with caution.

Cindi Myers's latest release is Marriage on Her Mind from Harlequin American, October 2007. She also produces a free weekly market newsletter. Subscription information is available at CindiMyers.com.

Business Briefs

Audiobook Publishing on the Rise: Tantor Media has moved to larger offices in Old Saybrook, CT, next to the production warehouse. Named in *PW's* list of fast growing small publishers last year, the company has gone from 4 employees to 50. Anticipating over 600 titles in stock by the end of 2007, the company plans a UK office for international sales. The sales for all audiobook publishers are reported up 6% in 2006 from Audio Publishers Associations latest survey. Cassettes are out while CD and download formats are in. Sales in 2006 were 77% CDs, 14% downloads, and 7% cassettes. The library market is the largest sales area with 32% in 2006. Retail sales were 30%. The main consumers (at 87%) are adults and fiction titles were 69% of all sales.

Farewell: Madeleine L'Engle died on September 6, 2007 at the age of 89, almost 45 years after the publication of *A Wrinkle in Time*. She wrote more than 60 books, fiction and nonfiction.

A new website, booktour.com, allows you to list your upcoming signings and speaking engagements. ▲



WRITING is TAXING

BY DIANE O'BRIEN KELLY

Getting noticed can be a great thing when you've caught the eye of a book reviewer or the press. But getting an audit notice from the IRS ain't so great.

How can you avoid getting noticed by the IRS?

Give the IRS adequate detail on your tax return so that it raises as few questions as possible. For instance, when filling out your Schedule C, rather than lumping small expenses such as magazine subscriptions, books, and Internet charges into a catch-all category identified as "miscellaneous," detail each of these expenses individually. Attach a written explanation of anything unusual or confusing on your return. You'll spend a little extra time filling out your return, but providing the extra information up front could save you from an audit later.

Be careful when hiring a tax pro. You want a preparer who is aggressive yet honest. If any of the numbers on your return don't make sense to you, question the preparer and make sure you are satisfied with the explanation. An abusive preparer can increase your risk of audit.

Don't blindly trust tax preparation software to get the numbers right. If you use a tax program, carefully review your return to make sure the numbers appear accurate and reasonable. Tax prep software is less expensive than hiring a pro and can be a great tool, but the programs may spit out an inaccurate return if information is not input appropriately. Rumor has it that the IRS is taking a harder look at returns prepared with tax preparation software as they allegedly contain more errors than those prepared by a tax professional.

As much as we writers like to share our thoughts and ideas, it's best not to make any written statements on your return that express displeasure with

Getting Noticed

the IRS or our system of taxation. Such statements may be innocent, but they'll likely get you noticed. If you find out you owe an unexpected ten grand to Uncle Sam, blow off steam by running a few miles on the treadmill rather than writing an anti-tax manifesto in the margin of your 1040.

If you prepare your return by hand, make sure your writing is legible. If your return is hard to read, there is a greater chance that the data-entry clerk at the IRS may input an incorrect number, thus leading to erroneous information in the IRS system and a potential audit.

File on time. Late returns cause you to lose credibility with the IRS and can trigger an audit. You are entitled to an automatic six-month extension if you can't file by April 15th, but you must file Form 4868 to notify the IRS that you are exercising your right to the extension. (The extension gives you only additional time to file your return, not additional time to pay any tax due. You will be charged interest and possibly a penalty if you owe additional tax when your return is filed.)

Finally, though debated among tax pros, some believe you may decrease your chance of audit by filing on or just prior to the April 15 deadline, when the IRS is inundated with returns and allegedly less likely to select your return for audit.

How does the IRS decide which returns to audit?

Several ways. First, the IRS may audit your return on the basis of its computer scoring system, known in the biz as the "DIF System." "DIF" stands for "Discriminant Inventory Function System," which is just a fancy way of saying that the IRS computers will review the numbers on your return to determine if they fall within the typical range. Numbers falling outside the expected range may indicate that either an error was made on the return or that the num- ▶

bers were fudged. For instance, if your mileage is unusually high relative to your income, your return may generate a high DIF score and, in turn, an audit. The IRS may also decide to audit your return if the amounts reported on your return do not match the information provided to it by third parties. For example, the IRS will demand an explanation if the amount of revenue reported on your Schedule C is less than that reported to the IRS via 1099 forms filed by those who paid you for services. You may also be selected for audit based on information provided by other sources, such as news reports, public records, or a snitch. Finally, just to keep us on our toes, a small number of returns are randomly selected for audit.

What's the Audit Process Like?

The audit process can range from a simple letter audit to a field audit. With a letter audit, you may never meet face-to-face with an IRS agent, but may simply exchange correspondence and documentation to support the items reported on your return. Most audits are letter audits and will focus solely on one or two specific items, such as car expenses or meals and entertainment expenses. At the other end of the spectrum is the full-blown field audit, during which an IRS agent will come to your place of business or home, interview you, extensively review all of your documentation and financial records, and maybe even peek under your mattress. With a field audit, the auditor may also contact third parties to verify financial information. An audit may also fall somewhere between a simple letter audit and a field audit, with the auditor requesting several rounds of documentation and perhaps a telephone interview or an in-person interview at the IRS office. Although it's generally not necessary to hire a tax pro to handle a letter audit, it's wise to hire one if the IRS requests a field audit because the process will be much more extensive and the taxpayer generally has more risk.

What should you do if you receive an audit notice?

Don't panic. Although IRS auditors have lots of power, they are primarily interested in collecting what's owed and you're unlikely to end up wearing an orange jumpsuit. Generally, the IRS pursues criminal tax evasion only if a person knowingly and flagrantly violated the tax laws and the violations resulted in a significant underreporting of taxes due.

Once you've recovered from the shock of receiving the audit notice, you should determine whether

you can handle the audit yourself or should consult a professional. If you receive a simple letter audit notice and you know the questioned item was accurately reported and that you can provide evidence to prove it, hiring a pro may be a waste of money. That said, some preparers offer audit defense benefits as part of the fee you already paid. Check the terms of your contract or with the pro to determine if you are entitled to audit benefits. If you believe professional help is needed, consider whether you should hire the pro who prepared the return or a different person. If it appears that your preparer may have made an error on your return, you may wish to hire a new tax pro to defend you in the audit, to ensure objectivity. You may also have a legal claim against the tax preparer for negligence if the return was improperly prepared.

Cooperate with your auditor. Although you may be irritated you've been chosen for audit, failure to cooperate will serve to only frustrate and annoy the auditor and discourage him from giving you any benefit of doubt. Cooperation will bolster your credibility. Give the IRS everything it asks for and provide the information and documentation in a timely and courteous manner. *Do not, however, provide documentation or information relating to items that were not questioned.* Doing so may cause confusion or raise additional issues that were not previously identified. If you need more time to gather information or documentation, ask in writing for an extension. If you don't have the specific documentation requested, ask if alternative evidence can be provided and offer other support for the questioned items. For example, if you've misplaced the restaurant receipts the agent asks for, provide copies of your credit card bills to show the meal charges.

What are Some Common Audit Items?

Common audit items relevant to a writing business include mileage, travel expenses, and meals and entertainment. Home office deductions are still a common audit item, though with more people working from home they are not the red flag they used to be.

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.



Writer: Beware

BY VICTORIA STRAUSS

Things get dicier when fee-charging publishers masquerade as legitimate independent houses, or when reputable-looking small presses impose exploitive contracts.

While it's often hard for aspiring writers to recognize the many questionable publishers that infest the writing world (often because aspiring writers don't take the time to research how publishing works before starting to submit their manuscripts), professional writers know the warning signs, and can easily avoid the obvious scammers.

Things get dicier when fee-charging publishers masquerade as legitimate independent houses, or when reputable-looking small presses impose exploitive contracts. It's often impossible to tell from the shiny exteriors of these publishers that they aren't what they appear to be. You have to go deep into the submission process to discover it.

To save you, or perhaps a student or a protégé, some time and effort, here are several publishers that hide their questionable practices behind a convincing mask of respectability. (All the information below is supported by documentation in *Writer Beware's* possession.)

Archebooks Publishing • archebooks.com

Archebooks' list includes genre fiction, general fiction, YA fiction, and nonfiction. It publishes in hardcover only and doesn't accept unagented submissions. According to its website, advances are "per negotiated contract."

In fact, according to complaints *Writers Beware* has received, Archebooks doesn't routinely pay advances. Instead, we've documented that authors are offered a "bonus" in the form of 2,500 warrants of

Publishers in Sheep's Clothing

common stock with (quoting the contract) "a minimum guaranteed net exercise value of \$1.00 per share, thus a minimum guaranteed bonus value of \$2,500."

What's wrong with this picture? A stock warrant isn't the same as a share of stock. Rather, it's the right to purchase stock at a guaranteed price. In other words, Archebooks is offering its authors the chance to hand over a large chunk of cash—a bonus for the publisher, not the author. Never mind the fact that there's no evidence that Archebooks has filed the necessary registrations with the SEC to enable it to offer stock—this hasn't stopped it from instructing authors on how to exercise their warrants and where to send their checks.

Archebooks has distribution only through Ingram and Baker & Taylor, and is specific about its policy of not sending out ARCs for review. *Writer Beware* has heard from Archebooks authors who've sold fewer than 50 books in their first year of release. We've also documented that Archebooks works with disreputable agents.

Durban House Publishing • durbanhouse.com

Durban House publishes nonfiction, genre fiction, and general fiction in hardcover and softcover. It accepts both agented and unagented queries, and has distribution through the National Book Network.

Looking at Durban House's website, you'd never suspect it's a vanity publisher. And indeed, authors don't have to pay for publication. Instead, they must pay for marketing. *Writer Beware* has documented fees ranging from \$15,000 to \$25,000; for this money, Durban House agrees to provide services that "may" consist of "one or more" of a list of possible promotional activities. (The lack of any recent industry reviews for Durban House books suggests that wherever authors' money is going, it's not for ARCs.) ▶

Durban House's Service Agreement includes this disclaimer: "It is mutually understood that the services being provided hereunder may not generate any sales and, therefore, the parties mutually agree that no guaranty or warranty is being provided."

Harbor House • harborhousebooks.com

Harbor House "seeks to publish the best in original adult fiction and non-fiction," according to its website. Its list includes contemporary nonfiction, thrillers, Civil War fiction, and horror. It publishes in both hardcover and softcover, and accepts submissions from authors as well as agents.

Unfortunately, beneath this attractive façade beats the heart of a vanity publisher. Harbor House requires authors to buy 1,000 copies of their own books at a 20% discount. Depending on format, this can work out to more than \$19,000—far more than many straightforward vanity publishers charge.

Harbor House's pre-purchase requirement is not mentioned anywhere on its website, and isn't revealed to authors until well after they submit. As with Durban House, Writer Beware has heard from many writers who approached Harbor House in the belief that it was a reputable independent publisher.

Hilliard and Harris • hilliardandharris.com

Hilliard and Harris specializes in mysteries. Although it doesn't pay advances and has distribution only through Ingram and Baker & Taylor, it has succeeded in getting some attention for its titles. It has even sold mass market rights for several of its books to an imprint of Harlequin.

The problem is H&H's contract, which pays royalties on net. It isn't unusual for smaller publishers to pay on net, defined as the publisher's actual cash receipts. But H&H defines net as the publisher's cash receipts less the expense of printing, shipping, sales transactions and taxes, insurance, commissions, discounts, and the costs of promoting and marketing the book.

In the movie biz, this is known as reverse accounting, and allows companies to reduce payment amounts to pennies, or even to zero. Complaints received by Writer Beware indicate similar results at Hilliard and Harris.

Seven Locks Press • sevenlockspublishing.com

Claims Seven Locks Press's website: "Seven Locks Press has been publishing unique books on

contemporary topics, public affairs, and the critical issues of our times for over twenty-seven years. We are proud of our heritage with past authors including Bill Moyers, Hedrick Smith, Congressman Cecil Heftel, and Sir Eldon Griffiths."

Sound impressive? Here's the truth, which is nowhere revealed on Seven Locks' website: authors must pay thousands of dollars to publish. Also not revealed: Seven Locks' owner, James Riordan, is the subject of a number of liens for nonpayment of taxes (he's now on a payment plan with the IRS) and is currently being sued by one of his authors for nonperformance. According to the judge in the case, Riordan is judgment-proof because he has no assets.

Writer Beware has also gotten complaints of long publication delays, shoddy production values, and nonpayment of royalties.

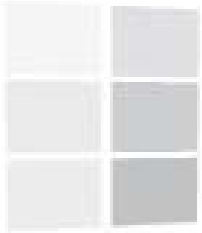
Sterling & Ross • sterlingandross.com

Sterling & Ross, which focuses on popular non-fiction, is an advance-paying publisher that accepts submissions from authors and agents, and publishes in both hardcover and softcover. Distribution is through PGW/Perseus.

This all appears solid—and in this case, appearances are not (too) deceiving. Unlike the publishers discussed above, Sterling & Ross is not a closet vanity. And while many writers might want to negotiate its contract, the terms are basically standard.

Trouble is, Sterling & Ross is part of a complex of businesses controlled by a man named Drew Nederpelt, involving questionable business practices and multiple conflicts of interest. There's Cambridge House Press, a vanity publisher that charges more than \$12,000 but doesn't reveal its fees on its website or in its submission guidelines. There's Metropol Literary Agency, which refers writers to both Sterling & Ross and Cambridge House, and offers its own paid editing services to clients (both are conflicts of interest). And there's Muse Media, a publicity firm that Metropol clients have been encouraged—and Cambridge House authors may be required—to hire.

Victoria Strauss is the author of seven fantasy novels. She's also Vice-Chair of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America's Writing Scams Committee, and maintains the Writer Beware literary scams warning website at WriterBeware.org. She welcomes visitors to her own website: VictoriaStrauss.com.



Open A New Window

CREATING & RECOGNIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Novelists Inc.'08 in NYC

A friend who hadn't sold a book in eight years attended a Ninc conference in New York City. During one of the social gatherings, she and an agent met, hit it off, and soon decided to work together. **Before long, she was under contract** at two major houses.

By the time she had sold nine books and a novella with her new agent, this novelist—who once despaired of ever selling another book—was *complaining* about her deadlines, her writing schedule, and her desire for a vacation. (Ah, how quickly they forget...)

That's one example of **what can happen** when a writer attends the Novelists, Inc. conference in New York City. (Another example is that I wound up in the middle of a police bust on 10th Avenue while conducting official Ninc business.)

This year's Ninc conference offers **an exciting mix of innovative programming, fresh faces, and longtime favorites**. Among the opportunities and events Conference Chair Lynn Miller and her hard-working committee are offering in New York:

✓ **An afternoon of Roundtables** with editors from 10 publishing programs talking with members in small discussion groups. Take this opportunity to get a feel for several editors; or spend in-depth time with one or two editors who particularly interest you.

✓ **Panel discussions** with major literary agents, publicists, editors, marketing mavens, and other publishing business experts.

✓ **Sessions with industry professionals** in growing markets, including YA fiction and graphic novels.

✓ **A fresh look at markets** outside our industry. Keynote speaker Theresa Rebeck is a prize-winning TV scriptwriter, screenplay writer, playwright, and producer. Featured speaker Jill Hurst is a writer and producer of soap operas. And thanks to Ms. Hurst,

members are eligible for a backstage tour of famed television show *Guiding Light*.

✓ **Keeping to Ninc tradition**, the schedule includes relaxed networking among members. Sunday is members-only, with group discussions focused on craft and business issues of the career novelist.

✓ **Intimate Nite Owl sessions** are always a favorite at Ninc conferences. So we're offering double this year: the Nite Owl Wired Coffeehouse on Saturday, *and* the Nite Owl Ninc After-Party on Sunday.

✓ **A conference hotel rate of \$219** in the heart of New York City. Unbelievable. But there are only a limited number of rooms available. When they're gone, you'll be left to the mercies of regular rates.

✓ **We'd like to take credit** for offering the Big Apple in all its glory, too... but it was already there.

And *you* can be there, too! **Sign up for the Ninc '08 conference in New York City**—the hub of our industry, a town so full of editors and agents that you'd better make sure your shots are up to date before coming!

—Laura Resnick
President-Elect 2007

What You Need to Know:

- **March 27-30, 2008**
- **Affinia Manhattan**
- **Early bird registration of \$325 ends Nov. 15.**
- **To register (and for details): See the conference brochure included with your September NINK or visit the Conference Center at ninc.com.**

Ninc Online

Find links to *Book Business Blogs* in the Members' Only area at ninc.com.

For never-ending e-conversation—for members only—join **Ninlink**. FMI: email moderator Brenda Hiatt Barber at BrendaHB@aol.com

For critique and brainstorming, join **Ninkcritique**. For discussion regarding health insurance questions for the self-employed, join **NincHealth**. FMI on either one: email moderator Pat Rice at price100@aol.com.

For discussion regarding the mystery genre, join **NINCmystery**. FMI: email moderator Kathy Lynn Emerson at emerson@megalink.net. Please put "Ninc Mystery" in the subject line.

Note-Worthy

Books Wanted for Contest

Allison Kent reports, "Access Romance (accessromance.com) runs a quarterly contest (based on the ITW's 150 Thrillers project) where we give away a box of autographed books to one winner. If you'd like to be involved, you'll find more details at: accessromance.com/forms/romancegalore.html; the entry form is at accessromance.com/forms/galore.html. Anyone who wishes to contribute a book will have a link to his/her website on that page and will hopefully get visitors who may not have seen the site before since the contest is advertised broadly. It's no cost, no obligation, you don't have to be a member of the site. Just an FYI!"

ONE-TIME OFFER

From October 15, 2007 until January 15, 2008, Ninc is offering to anyone whose membership lapsed in the past three years the opportunity to rejoin Ninc without requalifying, reapplying, or paying the standard new/lapsed member processing fee. If you know anyone who dropped out of Ninc in the past three years, be sure to tell him/her about this!

OPT-IN FOR ELECTRONIC NINK

A recent discussion on Ninlink indicated that some members prefer to receive *NINK* in electronic rather than print format. To make it easier to identify those members, we have added an "opt-in" feature to the membership profile.

To notify us that you want electronic rather than print format, log onto ninc.com and click "Update Your Membership Profile." Scroll down until you see "**I prefer to receive the Ninc Newsletter electronically.**" Simply check the corresponding box and you'll no longer receive a print version of the newsletter. An electronic version will be emailed to you.

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Did you vote yet?
Deadline: October 15
Ballot is in your September
NINK