

N I N C

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The Rise of the Graphic Novel

BY M.J. MCATEER

What do slackers, aliens, scientists, cancer patients, superheroes, Truman Capote, magical schoolgirls, Black Panthers, vampires, Iranian refugees, and a post-apocalyptic Santa have in common?

They are all likely to be found voicing their thoughts and feelings in word balloons in one of the hottest publishing phenomena of the past 25 years: the graphic novel.

The comic book, once the nearly exclusive preserve of boys and overgrown boys, has grown up, and savvy writers have taken notice. Those whose literary terrain already encompassed the long-standing comic interest in fantasy, sci-fi, and horror have been exploring the long-form comic, both with adaptations and original stories. In this new century, though, the graphic novel has become a much bigger tent. Writers of memoirs, historical fiction, erotica, romance, mystery, suspense, serious fiction, and nonfiction are all exploring the potential of this alternative form of storytelling.

The graphic novel “has gone from a minor concern to a major category, and it is still growing,” says James Killen, a buyer for Barnes & Noble. Its audience, he says, has broadened to include not only younger adults of both sexes but tons of preteen and adolescent girls.

According to *PW Comics Week*, graphic novels brought in \$300 million in 2006, a whopping 12 percent increase over the previous year’s sales and quadruple the sales volume of 2001. In 2006, some 2,785 graphic novels were released in the United States, compared with 2,477 in 2005.

These figures have given new respectability to the once sniffed-at format. Such a stalwart of literacy as the American Library Association has “really embraced the graphic novel,” says Paula Brehm-Heeger, president of the ALA’s Young Adult Services. “It encourages children to look at reading in a different way,” she says. “It builds a habit.”

Most major newspapers, including the *New York Times*, now see fit to review graphic novels. In an indication of the format’s growing status and sophistication, Alison Bechdel’s graphic novel *Fun Home*—about growing up gay in a small town—was nominated for a National Book Critics Award in 2006 and was named as the best book of that year by *Time* magazine. The nonfiction *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* has been applauded for making the important, but nearly 900-page, commission report accessible to the public.

In a generally flat book market, such accolades, combined with cash register receipts, are enough to bring a grateful grin to any publisher’s face. Despite its bulleting popularity in many circles, the graphic novel continues to draw a blank in others.

“The average American still thinks it is for kids or for morons,” according to Calvin Reid, senior news editor at *Publisher’s Weekly*. The uninitiated sometimes even assume that a graphic novel is porn, he says, which it definitely isn’t—or at least usually isn’t.

A Definition

Reid has a simple definition for a graphic novel: “a comic book with a spine.”

Chris Arrant, a freelance writer and graphic designer who writes about comic books and graphic novels for *Publisher’s Weekly* and other publications, calls it

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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:

Tracy Fernandez Rysavy, Orange Park FL
Cindy Dees, Colleyville TX
Sandie Bricker, Tampa FL
Lisa Hamilton, Westerville, OH
Lou Aronica, Stamford CT
Debby Mayne, Palm Harbor FL

New Members:

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

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."

Juggling Acts

We're writers, we know juggling. We know about keeping multiple projects going at various stages of incompleteness. We know about having a new idea bubble up as we thunder toward deadline on another manuscript at the precise moment—bless the ineffable timing of production schedules—that the FedEx gal arrives with galleys that must be back to our editor yesterday.

Boy, was that good training for being president of Novelists, Inc.

If you've been reading your *NINKs* carefully (and there will be a quiz at the end of the year; *NINK* editor Lorraine Heath is crafting questions at this very moment) you will have noticed a number of projects being announced. And we're not done. Not by a long shot.

Ninc Member Discounts

In this *NINK* issue, you'll read about the brand new Ninc Discount Program. Chair Brenda Jernigan has already secured a number of discounts for Ninc members with services and retailers that many of us use. And she is looking for ideas for more places where we can ask for Ninc member discounts—so send suggestions.

Sometimes details of a discount for a group like ours take some working out, but Brenda has proved adept at persuading folks that it's worth the effort in order to get more business from Ninc members.

As for the members of Ninc—use these discounts a few times and your annual membership fee will have already paid for itself!

Be sure to read Brenda's introduction to the Discount Program on Page 12 and check out the details on the Members Only section of ninc.com.

Model Royalty Statement

Among ideas generated by the brainstorming of the Advocacy Committee earlier this year was for Ninc to develop a model royalty statement. Let me introduce the Royalty Statement Committee: Melissa Benyon, Allison Brennan, Stephanie Feagan, and Marianna Jameson.

Over the next several months they will work to establish what can serve as the model of a standard minimum royalty statement that Ninc members and

other authors should be able to expect from their publishers.

Nah, we're not crazy. None of us expects the publishers to slap their foreheads, saying, "Oh, *that's* what you want. Well, sure. We'll jump right on that."

On the other hand, if we don't show them what we expect we can't very well gripe if they don't give it to us.

Plus, seeing what *should* be on a royalty statement might help some members decipher their oh-so-much-less-than-ideal royalty statements.

The advocacy committee felt, and the Board agrees, that it's important for Novelists, Inc., to take a lead in this issue. I am so grateful that these talented and busy people agreed to work on this project.

Copyright Position Paper

Speaking of talented and busy people giving generously of their time, thoughtfulness, and effort, every member of Novelists, Inc. owes the members of the Used Book Committee a huge Thank You!

Chair Joan Wolf and members Brenda Hiatt-Barber, Marianna Jameson, Tara Taylor Quinn, and Randi DuFresne worked extremely hard to produce a position paper addressing copyright law in regard to commercial sale of used books. And then they listened to (what probably seemed to them as endless) concerns, thoughts, questions, and edits of the Board.

The reaction of the Board when we read the position paper was universally Wow! We think yours will be, too.

Carefully read this well-reasoned, well-written, and well-researched document on Page 5 and on ninc.com. It states:

"This document is intended to focus attention on Ninc's position that the copyright clause of the Constitution of the United States stands for the principle that authors and publishers have the right to share in the profits that others make from the sale of their work. Currently, authors and publishers do not share in the profits made through the sale of used books, a multi-billion dollar enterprise."

(Ya'd think these folks were writers or something.)

I'd like to bring to the attention of members the section that reads: ▶

“ . . . Ninc does *not* support a ban, taxation, or any other restrictive measure applied generally to the sale of used books. Rather, Ninc recommends that commercial used-book sellers be required to pay to publishers a “Secondary Sale” fee upon the reselling of any book within two years of its original publication date.”

The Board has officially approved the position paper and has authorized the committee to contact other

writers’ groups to have them sign on with Novelists, Inc., in presenting this document to our legislators.

— **Pat McLaughlin**

NEWS FLASH: I have an address! (See the masthead.) First thing I’m doing is signing up for the conference—getting an Early Bird rate before the Nov. 15 deadline and snagging that great hotel rate. Yahoo!

Letter to the Editor

eNINK Opens New Possibilities

As my latest copy of *NINK* is printing I'm counting the ways my life has just been made easier with the electronic version.

1. I get *NINK* first—neener, neener.

2. I can read at the computer or print *NINK* out and peruse at my leisure, and if I spill something on it, which has been known to happen, I can just print it out again.

3. I now have a new folder on my computer desktop labeled “NINK Issues.” They'll all be in there, nice and handy, and not stuck in my overcrowded file cabinet, or tossed out by mistake when my husband gets “neat.” And I will never again be forced to do that maddening search through the toxic dump that is my office, muttering, “I know it's here somewhere—where the hell is it, which issue?”

4. Each page, printed out, is one-sided. Now I can make up a file for Tekno if I want to, another for Diane O'Brien Kelly's terrific “Writing Is Taxing” columns, another for the Ninc conference updates, another for writing tips, etc, etc, etc, and just slip the printed pages into each folder. My God, I could be organized—what a frightening thought—duck, everyone, The End Is Near!

5. And, visionary that I am (that's a joke...), I can see so many possibilities for an electronic version that just aren't possible for a printed *NINK* (unless some member wins the lottery and decides to “gift” Ninc with a bundle of bucks): hotlinks to all sorts of interesting stuff found on the Internet; graphics, photographs, even the occasional cartoon. Not to mention that a huge chunk of the *NINK* budget could then be used to purchase more articles (member-generated, out-sourced, or just plain bought), the postage budget would not limit the size of the newsletter, and more.

The yearly conference and the newsletter. What we're here for, right? Lorraine Heath and her Newsletter Committee can't help me lose ten pounds before the conference, but they did just “lighten the load” on how to organize my valuable *NINK* issues.

—**Kasey Michaels**

Ed. Note: We are now adding color to the *NINK* edition sent out via email, a feature that is cost-prohibitive in the print version. Back issues of *NINK* are archived on the Ninc website in the Members’ Only Area. Stop by and browse a while.

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.

Novelists, Inc. Position Paper: Used Book Sales

Novelists, Inc. (Ninc) is a nonprofit organization of professional published authors dedicated to advancing the interests of working writers. Used book sales, particularly sales of used books through the Internet, have a significant negative effect on the income of publishers and, therefore, authors, as there is no remuneration to them for any sales of used books. This document is intended to focus attention on Ninc's position that the copyright clause of the Constitution of the United States stands for the principle that authors and publishers have the right to share in the profits that others make from the sale of their work. Currently, authors and publishers do not share in the profits made through the sale of used books, a multi-billion dollar enterprise.

As technology advances, the used-book industry grows, with used copies of books being made available with increasing speed after a book's initial publication. Subsequently, readers have become more willing to purchase recent releases from used-book sources rather than to purchase a book new. Evidence shows that this trend is growing rapidly. As both publishers and authors derive their income from the sale of new books only, the ultimate effect that this market trend will have on the industry will be that both authors and publishers will see—arguably are already seeing—significant declines in income, making creative endeavors difficult to pursue.

Authors are particularly harmed by this trend as sales of used books, including immediate resales of brand-new releases, are not included in publishers' calculations of sales figures. Irrespective of the enthusiasm for an author's work in the used market, diminished sales of his or her new books provide publishers with a negatively skewed perception of the popularity of that author's work. Given that new contracts are typically and heavily based on past sales performance, poor sales of new or even backlist titles lead inevitably to a reduced likelihood of future book contracts for an author. This is a trend that is already affecting not just the fiction market, but *all* market sectors of the book publishing industry. As such, this can only lead to an eventual but substantial decrease in the amount and variety of books published and available to the public. The detriment to society over time is incalculable.

In 2005, in an effort to understand the used-book industry and its scope, the Book Industry Study Group, Inc. (BISG) hired a consulting firm to conduct an in-depth study of used-book sales and the used-book industry in

the United States. The study indicated that the negative effect of used-book sales on the book publishing industry is growing rapidly and bears serious consideration.

Today, used copies of a book are frequently available simultaneously with the book's initial publication; indeed, it is not uncommon for used versions of new titles to be available for sale on the Internet *prior* to the book's initial release date. According to the BISG study, high-volume booksellers, defined as selling a minimum of 25,000 units per year, typically had used copies of a new fiction title available within two months of its release, and low-volume sellers, defined as selling fewer than 1,000 units per year, typically had them available within 17.9 months of release. The study concluded that "availability is a critical issue for the used-book market. To the extent that customers have timely access to desired titles at competitive prices, the used-book market will continue to grow." If the growth trend continues as the industry matures, even if it grows at progressively slower rates than it has shown in previous years, the resulting revenue stream from Internet used-book sales, a stream that entirely bypasses the books' creators, will be enormous.

The study described the used-book market as "exploding" and estimated that in the U.S. in 2004, "total used book revenue exceeded \$2.2 billion [emphasis added] and that 111 million used-book units were sold, up 11 percent over 2003." It went on to state that online sales of used books in the U.S. reached \$609 million in 2004, which is an increase of 33 percent from 2003.

Ninc holds a firm position in favor of Federal legislation to combat the potentially damaging effect of used book sales on the current and future health of the publishing industry. Such legislation would be grounded in the intent of the language of Article I, Section 8, Clause 8 of the Constitution of the United States, which states that:

"The Congress shall have Power . . . To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries", as well as Title 17 of the United States Code, which contains modern laws designed to further protect the rights of authors.

Ninc remains focused on the intent of this constitutional clause and its legal supports: to promote the ▶

progress of science and useful arts, which include writing and other creative and artistic endeavors. U.S. copyright laws are dynamic and have been modified over the years to reflect and balance technological advances that could have otherwise negatively affected the progress of science and useful arts.

Ninc acknowledges that the used-book industry is a powerful asset to the national as well as local economies, and is a significant enabler of the pursuit of knowledge and education by keeping in circulation myriad rare and out-of-print titles that would otherwise be unavailable to readers and scholars. Therefore, Ninc does *not* support a ban, taxation, or any other restrictive measure applied generally to the sale of used books. Rather, Ninc recommends that commercial used-book sellers be required to pay to publishers a "Secondary Sale" fee upon the reselling of any book within two years of its original publication date. A percentage of these fees would then transfer to authors in accordance with contractual agreements between authors and publishers, thereby reinforcing the Founders' intent, as stated in

Article I of the Constitution, to protect authors' exclusive right to benefit from their work.

Ninc further recommends that the fee paid to publishers and authors would be some fair percentage of the cover price of the individual book. While it has been argued in the past that such a fee would unduly burden used-book sellers by increasing administrative tasks, that argument is rapidly becoming moot. Today, the largest sellers of used books have a strong Internet presence, allow Internet-based sales transactions, and maintain records of their sales and inventories, at least in part, by using ISBN numbers, as do other booksellers. The use of ISBN numbers to track sales is the same process whether it is being used by a used-book seller or a seller of new releases, and makes the payment of a fee a simple matter when calculated and transacted electronically.

Editor's Note: For the actual proposed amendments and legislative language, please refer to the complete position paper posted at the Ninc website.

HOW THE NINC-TEKNO RELATIONSHIP WORKS

1. For all projects, submissions will be reviewed, accepted, or rejected by Tekno Books, sometimes in conjunction with the acquiring publishers. This is because:

- It's what Tekno is good at and what they do for a living.
- The Ninc Board and Ninc Anthology Committee have enough to do already.
- It eliminates any possible risk of a Ninc Board member or Anthology Committee member using editorial power inappropriately.

2. Some books will be entirely open-submission. Other projects will be a combination of invited contributors and open-submission slots.

3. Sending a contribution or proposal to Tekno for a Ninc book isn't binding. Only signing and returning a contract to Tekno makes your contribution binding.

4. Your contribution to any project will not be published *without* your having signed and returned a Tekno contract for a particular contribution to be in a particular book or project.

5. Tekno will send contracts to contributors only after it has a publishing deal for a given book. You will not be asked to sign a contract for a book for which there is *not* a publisher yet.

6. Your contract will be with Tekno when you contribute to a Ninc book, not with Ninc or the publisher.

7. Your advance and royalties will flow through Tekno, not through Ninc. Tekno handles bookkeeping, distribution of advances and royalties, and fighting with publishers to get monies that are owed. Ninc will have no standing in financial issues between Tekno and members.

8. The Tekno contracts you receive will be short and will license only very limited rights from you for your specific contributions. The contracts will also specify payment. You will be paid your advance after signing. (You will be paid your royalties in geological time, as per the typical practices of our industry.)

9. Every contract you receive from Tekno will spell out what the authors' share of any advance and royalties will be. The authors' share of any Ninc-Tekno book project will never be less than 50% of the total advance and royalties from the publisher. The remainder of advance and royalties will be divided between Tekno and Ninc.

10. In cases where we sell a project before getting contributions, we will specify advance sums before soliciting contributions. In cases where we're soliciting contributions in order to get a deal, contributors will receive a contract once there *are* terms, and can choose then whether they want to commit by signing.

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

nincnonfiction@aol.com

“My time is the most precious commodity I have”

Okay, I admit it: I'm one of the Old Broads of romance. I'm not one of the Old Old Broads, but I've been around long enough to qualify for one Old. I sold my first book way back in 1980, and since then I've sold 40-something more. I honestly don't know how many. I kept count until about number 14, then I must have had better things to do because I stopped remembering. I know that number 25 was the first to hit the *New York Times*' list, but only because a writer friend recently reminded me of it. And I know I'm now in the 40-somethings because someone counted them up a few years ago and I was at 42 then. I'm not horribly prolific; I average a book about every nine months, I guess.

Back when I first sold, the industry was starved for romance. The market was exploding, every publisher was adding romance lines, and there were no rules about how to write other than having only one POV, which I ignored. It seems more difficult to sell now, although I'm not really sure why. The numbers I see indicate that more titles are being published each year, but I haven't analyzed them enough to know whether or not those numbers include e-publishing, or the ratio of fiction to nonfiction.

Other changes have been added to the mix, too. Publishing houses have combined, distribution avenues have dried up. Reading tastes have changed. Sub-genres are multiplying like bunny rabbits. I can't even pretend to know what all of this means to someone trying to break into the business, so the only advice I can give is the same advice I've been giving forever: "Write what you love. Otherwise, why bother?"

I probably pay less attention to the market than most people, mainly because life's too short to fret over things I can't change. I'm going to write the story that I'm obsessing about, regardless of what the market is, regardless of what the trends are. If my publisher doesn't like the story, then my editor can reject it—but I'm going to write it anyway, because I can't *not* write it, and because I won't be able to write anything else until that story is told.

Nowadays, people seem obsessed about “rules” and lists, numbers and placements. I'm a total pantster when it comes to writing, so the “rules” are nothing more than a vague concept to me—sort of like a synopsis is. I know some people can write a synopsis, but I'm not one of

them. If I did, then I'd never write the book, because I'd already know what was going to happen and the story would already have been told. I think now a beginning writer has to at least know the rules, if only to figure out how to nicely break them. At the same time, I'm also of the opinion that all those rules are holding some people back, because they're so focused on toeing the line, and running in the same rut, and following all of the guidelines that they're afraid to let their characters grab the story and run with it.

Boy, am I glad I'm not trying to break into publishing now.

I was asked if there was a turning point in my career, a moment when I realized I'd made it. To me, those are two different things. Every so often, I'll write a book that I *know* takes me a step up, that I *know* the writing is better than before, or that the story is better. It's a gut feeling, and so far it's been right on target. Those are the turning points, the career-builders. As for when I knew I'd made it, that was when suddenly my publisher began submitting covers to me for my approval even though that wasn't in my current contract. I was taken aback at first, but then I thought, “Huh. They must be trying to make me happy.” That was such unfamiliar territory that I was a tad bemused.

I'm out of step with most writers, always have been. I've never done any self-promotion: no bookmarks, no newsletter, no postcards, no posters, no website. Nothing. *Nada*. For one thing, I'm not convinced it does any good, or at least not enough good to offset the cost, not just in cash but in time. My time is the most precious commodity I have, and time spent on promotion would be time not spent on writing, or on simply living. I'm also an introvert, so self-promotion is alien to my mind-set. You know the telephone company ads that say *Reach out and touch someone*? My instinctive reaction is, “For God's sake, *why*?” I have enough people in my life already; I don't need more.

I know, I know: self-promotion isn't supposed to bring more people into your life, it's supposed to bring your work to the attention of more people. I've always thought that the best way I can do that is to concentrate on the story and the writing, to lay my guts out on the page, and *that* will build my reading audience. The writing is the only part of the process that I can control, so ▶

that's where I focus my energy.

I love writing. I love getting to know the characters, I love having the story unfold in front of me, I love getting lost in their lives and worlds. I love the research. Hell, I even love the re-writes. Research has led me down some unusual lanes where I've met some unusual people. About 15 years ago I was talking on the telephone to a very interesting man who had a very interesting past, when I said something about the Mossad. He paused, then said, "You just got us recorded." He explained that saying certain words and/or phrases over the telephone would trigger an automatic recording by a Federal agency. The recording would then be examined and analyzed, but he assured me that when they investigated and realized it was two writers talking nothing would come of it.

The best advice I was ever given: Don't waste a mainstream idea on a category book.

I repeated this to someone who worked in the telephone industry, who earnestly assured me that no such technology existed and this guy was pulling my leg. Well, lo and behold, turns out my guy was right. The NSA instituted this technology way back in the early days of the first Clinton admini-

stration. Probably any writer who has written suspense has come to the attention of the NSA or FBI, or both, so it's nothing unusual. My guy was also right in that nothing came of it.

I'm always very, very careful who I talk to, though. I'm not about to interview a terrorist, or a drug dealer, or a child molester. If my books lack some authenticity for my failure to do that, fine; I can live with that. I do interview cops, pilots, soldiers, bankers, judges, psychics, hunters, doctors, and experts in other professions, but no one who makes me feel as if I should boil myself afterward.

Lorraine asked me what was the wisest decision I've made in my career. I've made a lot of decisions, but for the most part I've simply followed my instinct in making them, without a lot of analysis or weighing of options. And, a lot of the time, I've been bucking conventional wisdom about career-building, but that hasn't necessarily been my primary goal. Finding the best fit, writing what I want to write—that's what is most important to me. The main thing is to write what I love, and love what I write. Life's too short, ya know? Why waste any of it trying to make myself fit into a niche where I'm not comfortable?

For instance, when my editor left Pocket, I was given the opportunity to choose my new editor. One senior editor lobbied hard to get me. I could have gone with the executive editor, too, and though I really *really* like her as both a person and an editor, and though sup-

posedly the more juice your editor has the better for your career, she was already so damn busy I'd be lucky to get a smidgen of her time. I didn't go with the senior editor, either. I chose a junior editor, Kate Collins, strictly on instinct.

It was a great decision. Kate not only had the time to devote to me, she had the desire to do so. Being my editor boosted her career, and she boosted mine by getting in there and doing everything she could to wrangle scheduling, good covers, advertising, etc. And she's a good editor, one who will say, "This isn't working," or "This needs clarification." She sees my weaknesses, and she has a great overall view of a book's pacing, of the plot, and when I go off track. Ten years down the road, Kate's still my editor, though we're both with Ballantine now.

The best advice I was ever given came from Iris Johansen. I had an idea that was consuming me, but I was waffling about which publishing house to write it for, Pocket or Silhouette. I could write a bigger book if I did it for Pocket, but Silhouette was paying me a bigger advance, and I needed every penny. Iris listened to the idea, then said, "Don't waste a mainstream idea on a category book."

She was absolutely right. If I'd written that book for Silhouette, I'd have been restricted to 85,000 words and I couldn't have fully developed either the plot or the characters. So I wrote the book for Pocket. It was *Dream Man*, my first book to hit the *New York Times* list.

Like everyone else, I've hit flat periods in my career. I've had dips, plunges, and roller-coaster rides to the top. Some books aren't as well-received as others, some I didn't enjoy as much as others, but I don't know that I would do anything in my career any differently than the way it has played out. I've made mistakes, sure, but I've learned from them.

My life, yeah—I wish we got do-overs in life, though maybe it's a good thing we don't. "*Our capacity for joy is as deep as we have been carved by sorrow.*" I don't think that's the exact quote, but the sentiment behind it struck me to the bone. Yes, I could have avoided sorrow, but at the cost of how much joy? I think I'll stick with what I have.

Words of wisdom? Not many. Enjoy yourself. Go with your gut. Don't sweat the small stuff—and 90 percent of stuff is pretty damned small—but fight for what's important. Look away from the market, and *at* the story. And never, never expect to sit back with a satisfied sigh and think that you've written the perfect book. After I finish each and every book I get this sick, sinking feeling that I've just spent months working on a piece of crap.

Oh, well. Maybe my capacity for joy just got carved a little deeper. ▲

Using MySpace as a Promotional Tool: Is It Right for You?

BY TONI BLAKE

This past spring, I kept hearing about authors setting up promotional pages at MySpace.com—and I avoided it like the plague. I had enough promo to keep track of, I'd heard it was a time drain, and besides, wasn't MySpace just an online teen hangout?

But after I visited the site and started investigating, I decided it was a promo opportunity worth investing in. So I waded through the vast MySpace chasms—setting up two pages (one for each of my pseudonyms), figuring out how to acquire “friends,” and finding the best ways to utilize the site for my purposes.

It's been an interesting journey.

What Exactly is MySpace?

MySpace is an enormous online community currently playing host to about 200,000,000 people. It's almost like “an Internet within the Internet.” It consists of millions of personal web pages, called “profiles.” MySpace provides a general format—places to list your interests and favorites, along with the capabilities to upload pictures and put slide shows on your page—so while creativity is a plus, anyone with a computer can create a profile. In my opinion, the reason for MySpace's popularity is because it's a place where everyone matters, where anyone can have his own “web page,” where every individual is encouraged to express himself.

MySpace customers run the gamut—you will find people there who boldly proclaim their love of everything from Jesus to porn, from Doberman pincers to *Desperate Housewives*, from junk-collecting to Johnny Depp. And, most importantly for authors, you will also find booklovers.

I must warn you, however, that becoming part of the MySpace community and using it to full advantage requires time. *Lots* of time. In my opinion, if you aren't willing to commit a great deal of time to MySpace in the early weeks and months after setting up your profile, you may as well not bother.

Getting Started

Like most online communities, MySpace requires that you set up an account. You provide an email address and a screen name. To maximize this promotional opportunity use whatever name you're trying to promote. I'm always surprised by how many authors use something else.

Unfortunately, MySpace is not easy to navigate, and it doesn't come with detailed instructions. So here are the basics of building a page:

1. After creating your account, you will arrive at your MySpace homepage where you manage your profile. Menu items that run vertically next to the spot provided for your picture are used to create and edit your profile. Menu items beneath the picture are used to view different parts of your page.

2. In the vertical menu, the main items you will use are Edit My Profile, Account Settings, Add/Edit Photos, and if desired, Manage Blog.

3. When you click on each of these, you will see a sub-menu that spans the top of the page. Fill out information on each page of the sub-menu as desired. The blog page is set up differently, but it's pretty self-explanatory.

A few tips on page set-up:

- Use your current book cover as your main default photo, because this image will identify you all over MySpace—on your page, on your friends' pages, on any page where you leave a comment, in any group you join. To promote your book, get that cover in as many places as possible.

- Page content: You can put anything you want on your page, but my advice is to make it professional yet friendly. Use it to showcase your work, but let your personality show. You're there to sell books, but MySpace is a community of “friends,” so you want your profile to make you appear approachable and likable.

- When you start visiting other pages, you will see that most have a graphic background. This is not ▶

provided by MySpace, so if you want to add a background, try Googling “MySpace backgrounds” or “MySpace layouts” and you will find a plethora of sites devoted to offering different looks for MySpace profiles. Choosing the right background/layout can add a lot of professionalism and personality to a page. Your web designer might also be able to help with this—mine has assisted me greatly in getting the right look for my profiles. Warning: some of the sites offering MySpace backgrounds and graphics are questionable in terms of computer safety, so tread carefully.

- MySpace pages can be extremely simple or very complex. I advise going for something “middle of the road.” Don’t fill your page with graphics that make it slow to load and busy to look at. Create a page that matches your writing “brand.” To see how I created two different pages containing content based on the readers I’m hoping to attract, check out my profiles at MySpace.com/ToniBlake and MySpace.com/LaceyAlexander.

Adding Friends

Once your page goes live, your goal is to add “friends.” Every person with a MySpace profile is referred to as a “friend.” To add a friend, go to that person’s page and find the “action box” beneath his picture, then click on “Add as Friend.” At this point, the person will receive a “friend request” from you. He can choose to add or deny you as a friend.

You will also start *getting* these requests. They will appear in your MySpace inbox. Before approving a friend, it’s advisable to click on his picture to check out his page. Most of the time, you will find normal people who are interested in your books, or the genre you write in, or possibly other authors who want to connect their page with yours for networking purposes. But watch for spammers (their page might say something like, “Ask me how I make money working at home”) or for people you simply might not want associated with your page. For instance, if you write Christian fiction, you don’t want to approve a request from a porn star. Frankly, some very weird and wild folks crop up on MySpace, so make sure you really want to add someone as a friend before you hit the approve button. Don’t let that scare you, though—the vast majority of people who “friend” you are folks you’ll *want* to add to your list.

Once you become someone’s friend, your picture/cover (linking to your page) will appear in his list of friends. Conversely, you will begin building your own list of friends.

Finding the Right Friends

I’ve heard some authors complain, “MySpace seems like a waste of time because I’m just networking with a

bunch of other authors.” If that’s you, then you’re not working hard enough.

Yes, you want to add all of your author pals as friends—because then you show up in *their* friends list and they show up in *yours*. And this is one way people find friends—by looking through other people’s lists. But by and large, you’re there for readers and you need to actively seek them out.

Here are some ways to find the right friends:

- Go to your author buddies’ pages and peruse their friends list.
- MySpace also offers a search feature. Search for your own name, authors whose fans you think might like your books, your genre, topics central to your writing (examples: vampires, Regency England, dragons).
- MySpace also offers a “groups” feature where people with a similar interest form a group to discuss it. Use the “groups search” to find those devoted to reading in your genre. You may want to join the group or just use the group’s membership list to look for new friends.

Selling Your Book

How do I get friends to buy my book? The answer is simple. Engage! Again, MySpace is a *community of friends*. So while getting your picture/cover in other people’s friends lists makes you visible and is one strong benefit, the average MySpace user is there because he wants to *connect* with new people. There are several ways to communicate with people on MySpace:

- Comments: Every person’s page has a comment section. Add a comment to a page if the message is something you’re happy letting the whole world see.
- Messages: This is like sending email via MySpace—a good place for conversations that feel too long for the comments section or require privacy.
- Bulletins: Bulletins are messages that go to every person on your friends list. However, Bulletins do not appear in your friends’ inboxes—instead, recent bulletins appear in a table on each user’s home page. So bulletins are a great way to contact a lot of people at once, but chances are that only a portion of your friends will see the bulletin because it’s something that has to be *noticed*.

Courtesy Pays

After I’ve added a new friend, I find it beneficial to revisit his page and add a comment thanking him for adding me. Take note that I said a comment, not a message. Why? Messages are private, but comments appear for all to see. Which means anyone who visits that page might see your book cover. He might read your comment and decide to friend you. See how it works? It’s all about networking and getting yourself out there. It’s about getting your cover and name in as many spots on MySpace as possible.

Why Join?

In my personal experience investing time and effort in MySpace *works*.

I cannot tell you how many people I've met on MySpace who are delighted to have personal contact with an author and have bought my book. Sometimes they then revisit my page and post a comment saying they *loved* the book. Which means anyone visiting my page sees not only my books but also other people saying the books are great. Again, all the benefits become intermingled.

The average MySpace user is not a fan you've already met. He hasn't visited your website. Yet. But he might after he sees your MySpace page. Because these aren't people who already know dozens of authors from hanging out with them online, they're excited to know you, excited to try your books, and excited to tell their friends.

My best MySpace success story is about a woman in Hawaii named Chris. My erotica-writing alter-ego, Lacey Alexander, "friended" her by finding her on the Ellora's Cave friends list. She bought one of my books. She loved it. She loved it so much that she then bought a dozen copies for friends, including her grandmother, who lives in a rest home. Long story short, there is now a Lacey Alexander bookclub called the Hot to Trots, consisting of both patients and nurses, in an Oahu nursing home. What better result could I have hoped for? And incidentally, I informed this friend that I also write as Toni Blake, and she's also a big Toni fan now, too. She supports me by posting huge graphics of my recent book covers on her page for all her friends to see. Again, what more could I want out of my promo efforts? And I've made a real friend here on top of it.

Other success stories? A MySpace friend who'd never read a Toni Blake book before but has now declared my recent book the best read of the year is vigorously posting this on various message boards where she hangs out. Then there's the woman who'd never read romance before who stumbled across my MySpace page and had no interest in it—until she perused my excerpt. Now she is a "true believer," she tells me, a wholehearted romance convert who suddenly understands what all the fuss is about. In short, I've never gotten such solid, indisputable feedback from any other sort of promo.

The downside? In many ways, networking on MySpace equates to hand-selling books one at a time. When I first set up my pages, I intended to work on them for maybe half an hour every day. Instead, I ended up devoting two entire months to building and cultivating my friends list. Once I started my pages, I realized I would only reap the full benefits if I threw myself completely into it.

So I don't recommend MySpace for everyone. Indisputably, it's a time drain. And MySpace will work best for you if you truly like meeting new people and responding to their forms of self-expression. Yes, you can put a page out there and add friends without having much real contact with them—but many, many folks there have told me they bought my books because I took that extra step, made that extra effort to reach out to them.

In Conclusion

The above information is just the tip of the MySpace iceberg—a few basics to get you started and hopefully help you decide if MySpace is a good marketing tool for you. If it sounds confusing and jumbled, my apologies—MySpace simply *is* confusing until you're there and you get the hang of it.

It's definitely not the right promotional angle for all authors. But if you're willing to devote the time and cultivate the friendships, the rewards can be great. And an additional perk: it's free!

Toni Blake writes super-sexy contemporary romance for Avon and, as Lacey Alexander, she writes erotica for Penguin and Ellora's Cave. Toni's recent releases include Tempt Me Tonight (excerpted in Cosmo) and a mass market re-issue of Swept Away. Lacey's latest release is Voyeur. In addition to checking out her MySpace pages, feel free to visit her at ToniBlake.com and LaceyAlexander.net.

Ninc Members Befriend Each Other on MySpace

A recent MySpace discussion on Ninlink has resulted in Ninc members joining forces to expand their friends list for cross-promotional purposes. Vicki Hinze offered to keep a list of MySpace Ninc members, but decided to be creative (in the way that writers are) and she created a movie of participating Ninc members. The movie is now running at myspace.com/vickihinze. It's also available at vickihinze.net. Participating members are encouraged to copy and add it to their MySpace pages.

If you'd like to participate, please send your name, myspace.com URL, and personal website URL to Vicki at infoandrequests@aol.com. Vicki says, "When I get the others who would like to participate, then I'll amend the list, make a new movie, and then distribute it."

— Lorraine Heath, Editor

Ninc Discount Program

The Ninc Discount Program has been undertaken in an effort to save our members money on things that they use every day.

In the Members Only section of ninc.com, a page has been set up to list current discounts available to Ninc members and will be updated as more are obtained. The page also explains how to set yourself up to obtain the discount. If you have suggestions for places that we should contact to request discounts, please email me at bkj1608@juno.com.

Here are some details on the ones we have lined up so far—always be sure to mention that you're a member of Novelists, Inc.!

Office Max

Office Max can set up a web page for each member and/or issue a Retail Connect Card. To get a retail discount, present the card when you go into Office Max. On some items the discount is 10%; on others it is more. To set up a web page for online ordering or to get your card contact:

Jennifer Johnson

jenniferjohnson@officemax.com
800-741-7113 ext 2164

Office Depot

Novelists, Inc. has created a "Business Solutions Account" with Office Depot that allows each Ninc member to create an individual username and password. (Sorry, the bills won't go to Ninc!) To set up your account, e-mail:

Kerry McCarthy

Kerry.mccarthy@officedepot.com
919-380-2006

She will need your shipping address, phone number, and email address.

You can receive greater savings on your supplies purchases, as well as discounts on copies and printing, furniture, technology, and promotional items. Plus, you can receive next day delivery when your orders are placed online or over the phone by 4 P.M.

Mega Color

You can receive a 10% discount on all color printing or photography purchased from Mega Color. They do postcards and bookmarks. Their web page is MegaColor.com. Our rep is:

Stan Cohen

scohen@megacolor.com
1-888-333-8507

Romantic Times

Romantic Times is offering an introductory subscription rate of \$24.95 to Ninc members. To subscribe, call the office at 800-989-8816 or visit their website romantictimes.com. **The discount code is 478NI.** You must enter the code to get the discount.

Your Help Needed

If you can recommend any web designers who might be willing to offer a discount to Ninc members or have suggestions for any other businesses that we might approach for discounts, please email me at bkj1608@juno.com.

— **Brenda Jernigan,**
Discount Program Chair

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Cha-cha-cha-changes at Harlequin: The mass market version of NEXT will stop in Feb. 2008, while Harlequin deliberates what to do with the trade format. Everlasting Love is being absorbed into SuperRomance.

Publisher Creates Author Mini-Websites: An interesting innovation from HarperCollins provides personalized author web pages that give the authors control over their content, harpercollinsauthors.com/authorassistant/. Forty authors from the Avon imprint were on board for the September debut. Author Assistant provides bios and book information as well as blogs, links, and pictures. Readers can also contact other readers via the pages. This allows author specific information to be produced with HC's marketing know-how for more author visibility.

Promotion with a Musical Twist

BY JULIE ORTOLON

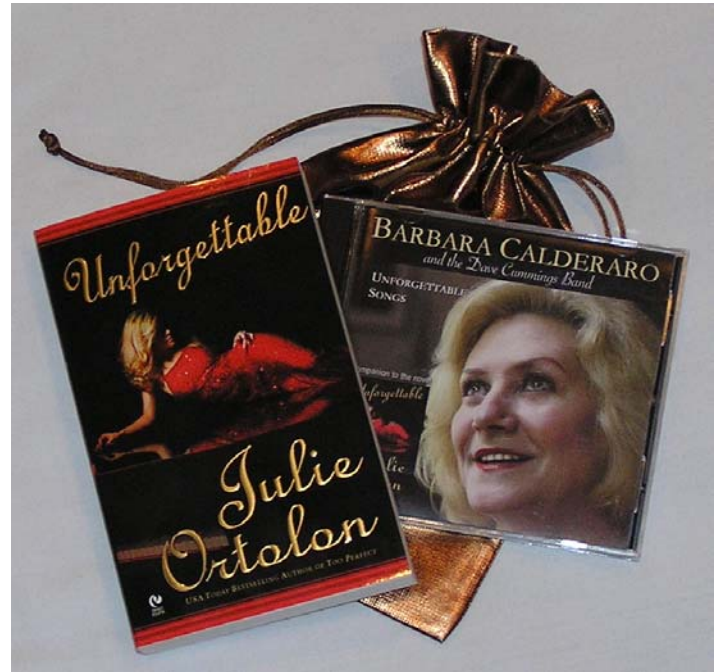
How often do we have friends offer to spend thousands of dollars of their own money and months of their time to help us promote one of our books? In a round-about way, that's exactly what I lucked into with *Unforgettable*.

In the story, my heroine is a torch singer, so as "research" I started going to hear a local jazz singer, Barbara Calderaro, perform at neighborhood venues. One of those venues is A Thirsty Mind Bookstore and Wine Bar. Yes, that's right, an indie bookseller with a wine bar right in the heart of the store. It's become the neighborhood hangout with the true feel of the show *Cheers*, a place where everyone really does know your name.

In getting to know Barb, I became a fan of her singing and she became a fan of my writing. One day while sitting at the wine bar, I off-handedly said, "Hey, why don't you record a soundtrack for my novel?" To my surprise, she said, "Why don't I?" It's been a wild ride ever since, and the best time I've ever had working on promo for an upcoming release.

Writing is such a solitary endeavor, and promoting our books can be the same way. In this case, the minute the band became involved, promoting my book became a group effort. People who normally would ask only about my next release as polite chit-chat were now genuinely interested—mostly because no one had ever heard of a novel with a CD soundtrack.

The uniqueness of the idea provided a challenge since we had no model to serve as guidance. I've heard of authors doing lists of existing songs on iTunes, but I've never heard of a band going into a studio to record a whole CD specifically for a novel. It made sense in this case, though, since going to hear Barb sing inspired many of my song choices for the book. The story is set in a small Texas town and involves a singer fighting to save a historic dance hall. With a setting like that, I could easily have gone with country music, but my back story revolves around a scandal about speakeasies and bank robbers during the Roaring 20s, so I wanted to evoke the feel of a smoke-filled jazz club. Besides, I love American



standards like *Them There Eyes*, *Sunday Kind of Love*, *Cry Me a River*, *At Last*.

I was finishing the manuscript when Barb agreed to record the CD, so our first step was to collaborate on the list of songs. I told her which ones I mentioned in the book, a few of which I changed on her suggestion, and she added some of her favorites to fill out a full CD. She arranged for a band complete with horns and strings, purchased the rights to the songs, had original arrangements for them written, and went into the studio to start cutting tracks. Several months of hard work followed. While my book was in production at NAL, Barb was having the tracks mixed and mastered. Since she produced the CD herself, there was also the cover to design. With permission from my publisher, we included the book cover as an insert right on the front of the CD with the words, "Companion to the Novel" to capitalize on the connection.

Our initial hope was that booksellers who normally wouldn't give a self-produced CD

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Rise of the Graphic Novel

Continued from page 1 ▶

“a comic book intended for the bookshelf.”

“Sequential art” is another term sometimes applied to works that use text, illustrations, and panels to advance a story, but Greg Rucka, both a traditional novelist and a graphic novelist, finds that label pretentious. According to Rucka, publishers embrace the term sequential art because they think it gives the format more legitimacy. “It’s a comic,” Rucka says. “That’s not pejorative to me.”

For ease of discussion here, however, the widely used “graphic novel” will suffice.

A graphic novel can be an original work, a work adapted from another medium, or a serialized comic that has been collected. Unlike a comic book, a graphic novel can be hundreds of pages long. It can be hardcover or soft, small enough to fit in the racks of the airport newsstand or big enough to bust a coffee table. Some are full color and printed on glossy paper, but many are black and white and printed on newsprint-quality paper.

From Marginal to Manga to Mainstream

Antecedents for the American graphic novel date at least to *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck*, a collection of comic strips published in 1837, and from the 1920s on, serial comics regularly were collected and published in book form. In the '40s, '50s, and '60s, some “picture novels” appeared, mostly devoted to pulp-fiction staples such as detectives and spies, but it wasn’t until 1972, when *DC Comics* published *The Sinister House of Secret Love* that the term “graphic novel” appeared on a book cover.

In 1969, John Updike told a literary society that he saw “no reason why a doubly talented artist might not arise and create a comic strip novel masterpiece.” Updike was prescient, but he had to wait 17 years for his prediction to come true, when Art Spiegelman’s Holocaust memoir *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* was awarded a special Pulitzer Prize. Despite the sophisticated work being done at the time by such comic book icons as Frank Miller, Will Eisner, Alan Moore, and Harvey Pekar, the graphic novel was so alien to the literary world in 1986 that the *New York Times* reported that members of the Pulitzer board found Spiegelman’s work worthy but “hard to classify”—thus the award of a special prize.

Another landmark in the comics medium was Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman* series, published serially from 1989 to 1996. The comics, when collected into 10 volumes,

logged sales of more than 1 million copies, according to Brodart, which supplies reading material to libraries. It is the only comic book ever to win a World Fantasy Award, and it became a pop culture phenomenon.

Many under-40s cut their teeth on comic books from this era and carried their love of the medium into adulthood. But it really took the arrival of manga to light the fuse for today’s boom in graphic novels.

Manga is a term applied to both a style of illustration and a format.

The style of illustration, created in Japan and copied elsewhere, features waif-like characters with huge eyes, big heads, exaggerated limbs, and cartoony expressions. Japanese “anime” or animated films are drawn predominately in manga style. However, manga also is Japanese for “comics,” and it describes works that usually are serialized weekly or monthly, then collected and published as books. Manga comes in many genres and styles; a manga romance novel, for example, might eschew big-eyed waifs in favor of hyper-realistic illustrations.

In Japan, manga has been popular among all ages and with both sexes since the '40s. Arrant says its wide appeal lies in its focus on individual experiences and feelings instead of just plot. For example, an American comic book might dispense with a storyline in 14 pages, while the manga version of the same story might run 300 pages; an emotional moment, dismissed in a panel or two in a U.S. comic, might be addressed across four or five manga pages. In 2006, manga was a \$4.4 billion business in Japan.

The American publisher Tokoyopop was seminal in importing manga to the United States. Reid says Tokoyopop defied the popular wisdom that American girls would not read comics, and in the '90s began importing “shojo,” or manga aimed specifically at preteen and adolescent females.

In another nose-thumb to the prevailing thought, Tokoyopop translated its manga imports into English, but otherwise left them “authentic”: The books were printed in black and white on cheap paper and, just like the originals, read from right-to-left, back-to-front. The publisher saved lots of bucks that way, which enabled it to sell its manga books at the disposable price of about \$10. Some purists still prefer their manga Tokoyopop style.

Furthermore, the farsighted publisher concentrated on selling through bookstores instead of comic book outlets, where girls felt like unwanted aliens.

Now, more than 60 percent of the buyers of graphic

novels are female, says Killen. Thanks to manga and a pool of male readers who grew up on comic books, an outlet in a college town that might once have had only a shelf or two of graphic novels, now may have as many as 11 bays dedicated to the phenomenon. In response, almost every American publisher has a graphic novel imprint or is otherwise aggressively pursuing graphic novel acquisitions.

The Big Guns Take Aim

The biggest trend in graphic novels, says Reid, is for publishers to invite well-known novelists to either write an original graphic novel or to allow their existing work to be adapted to the format. Despite the diversity in content now available in the graphic format, these sought-after novelists tend to be masters of the dark side.

Laurell K. Hamilton, for example, with the help of Jonathon Green, has written an original prequel to her popular vampire-hunter series starring Anita Blake, and this spring, Del Rey Manga, an imprint of Ballantine Books, announced its acquisition of an original graphic novel from Dean Koontz. Thriller writer Karin Slaughter recently joined with Oni Press to create a comics imprint called Slaughterhouse Graphic Novels. Its first release, *The Recidivists*, is slated for April 2009.

More commonly, though, writers have been allowing their already published works to be adapted, with varying levels of input into the final product.

Stephen King has been working with Marvel on an adaptation of his *Dark Tower* novels. In a 2006 interview with *USA Today*, the horror-meister explained that he had “a lot of involvement in casting the course of the narrative.... [but] beyond that, I wanted to give a lot of the control over to these other imaginations I had come to respect.”

Clive Barker has a deal with IDW Publishing for a 12-part adaptation of *The Great and Secret Show*. His publisher, Chris Ryall, says on the website “Clive Barker Revelations,” that Barker “gives the people working on his stuff a level of freedom that’s pretty well unheard of.” As Barker explains, “An adaptation must reconfigure the story so that it works as a comic book...when you move media, things change. It’s just the nature of the game.”

Christine Feehan understands that, too, as she goes graphic—but not too graphic. Feehan had final approval of the content and drawings for *Dark Hunger*, an adaptation of an installment in her bestselling *Dark* series about Carpathian vampires that was released in October. In an email, Feehan explains that she nixed the inclusion of the sex scenes for which her series is famous. “Writing about a [sex] scene in the context of a story is one thing. But I wanted teens (and my mother and father) to be able to read it without worry of the content.”

Adaptations also come from media other than books.

For example, Chris Ryall, IDW’s publisher and editor-in-chief, has a licensing deal to create original stories based on the TV series *CSI*. The new format is bringing older women fans of the TV series to the graphic novels, he says.

Going Graphic for Neophytes

“It’s a very fair business,” says Ande Parks. “Publishers care about what’s on the page.”

Parks has had two graphic novels published—the 2003 *Union Station*, about Depression-era gangsters, and the 2005 *Capote in Kansas*, a fictionalized version of the celebrated writer’s sojourn in the Midwest. (Parks began work on *Capote in Kansas* before he knew that two movies were planned on the same subject.)

Parks recommends that those trying to break into the field attend comics conventions equipped with a CD holding a cover letter, an outline, and a sample scene of their novel, preferably illustrated. “You have to get your face in front of them,” he says.

The annual Comic Con International in San Diego used to be a must stop, but it has grown so huge that Parks recommends trying other conventions as well, such as WizardWorld Chicago Comic Convention and the new comic convention in New York City. Rucka also votes for attending the conventions “to attempt to get a gig.” His first graphic novel, *Whiteout*, a thriller set in Antarctica, was released by Oni Press, Inc., in four issues in 1998, then collected into a graphic novel. He has since published several others.

So how does the writing of a graphic novel differ from the writing of a standard novel?

First and most obviously, a graphic novel is visual. In a standard novel, says Rucka, “you can spend 3,000 words trying to conjure what it is like to stand on the highest, coldest continent on Earth. In a graphic novel, it can be conveyed in two images.” That makes the narrative much more efficient.

Although novels and graphic novels take basically the same set of skills, Rucka explains that a graphic novelist “must be a master of brevity” because he or she has only a fraction of the word count of a standard novel to tell the story. The short story, he says, with its requirement for a compressed and unified narrative, is probably the best training ground for a graphic novelist. And with almost all of the words in a graphic novel being dialogue, a good ear for how people talk is essential.

Point of view can be wonderfully malleable in graphic novels, along with time. Point of view can shift within a single panel among multiple characters, Rucka says, while 2 billion years or a second can pass between one panel and the next.

Paradoxically, the pacing requirements are quite strict. Joe Nozemack, publisher of Oni, says that ▶

each comics page must be an entity, each panel concise.

Standard novels allude to things and let readers fill in the images with their imagination, but because graphic novels show as well as tell, the writers create scriptbooks for their illustrators, which the public doesn't usually see, although Oni published Rucka's scriptbook (Vol. 1) for his spy serial *Queen and Country*. These scriptbooks, which Parks describes as "half screenplay, half letter to the artist," include precise, sometimes even minutely detailed, descriptions of the images the writer wants. Several paragraphs of directions may be devoted to a single panel.

"Some writers will describe how full a glass is on a table," says Nozemack.

What's in It for a Writer?

The graphic novel, being a relatively recent phenomena, is not surrounded by as many strictures as more traditional story-telling formats, and that's a big draw, so to speak, for writers. "It's a visual medium like film and TV," says Nozemack, "but it can be done by one person so there is less filter on the creative vision, less dilution."

"I'm not going to get rich," Parks says, "but I have an

enormous amount of freedom and that's a luxury."

Some graphic novelists are getting rich, though, or at least rich-ish. The format has become the go-to source for Hollywood. Superheroes such as Superman, Batman, and Spiderman are the stuff of blockbusters. However, filmmakers also recognize that the intense visual quality that they value is common to all graphic novels, even if the heroes don't wear masks. For example, the 2002 Tom Hanks vehicle, *The Road to Perdition*, came from a graphic novel as did David Cronenberg's 2005 *A History of Violence*. Rucka's Antarctic crime mystery, *Whiteout*, is now being made into a film starring Kate Beckinsale.

This symbiotic relationship between comics and the movies is certainly high profile, but it really is just one of the many factors driving a comics renaissance in this country. As Reid puts it, today we have "more comics, more topics, more availability, and more sophisticated offerings."

In other words, after an extended childhood, the comic, in the form of the graphic novel, finally is coming of age.

M. J. McAteer is a freelance writer.

Business Briefs

Saying No to Galley Sales by Online Marketer: The Independent Book Publishers Association (PMA) is taking a stand on the unchecked sale of galleys, uncorrected proofs, and advance reading copies by online outlets. PMA is urging members to stop working with the online outlets that encourage such sales. PMA has stopped its own benefits to members: discounts for initial fee when selling books through AbeBooks. Abe Books is estimated to have over 200,000 ARCs in various forms for sale. This is not to brand AbeBooks as the only marketer, but PMA does not want to continue the arrangement due to the resolution. The resolution was proposed by Steve Carlson of Upper Access. AbeBooks doesn't plan to change its policy, Scott Laming, a company spokesman, stated, but publishers can contact Abe to question individual book sales. AbeBook won't determine what its booksellers sell, as long as a bookseller has a legal right to sell a title. For more information, visit pma-online.org/.

English Language Cut Short: The new *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* has removed hyphenated words, which a Reuter news item attributes to the Internet. The editor of *SOED* claims the hyphen is perceived as "messy looking" and "old-fashioned." tinyurl.com/2bsohc [Thanks to Pari Noskin Taichert posting the article on Ninclink]

NYTimes Bestseller List Redefined: In September, the *New York Times Book Review* changed and enlarged its well known bestseller lists. This included separate lists for paperbacks, one for mass market, and one for trade paperbacks. There are 20 titles on each list. *NYTBR* expanded the listed for Advice, How-to, and Miscellaneous in hardcover and paperback. The move is to highlight the growth of the trade paperbacks from literary publishers and the rise in the trade format for new writers who may be kept off the list by mass market titles. Some state the move is to increase ad revenue for the newspaper.

Borders Beta Site: Borders announced a beta site for consumer tests in October, beta.BordersStores.com with feedback on the site through BordersBeta.Gather.com. Nothing will be sold from the new site before the first quarter of 2008. This news came the week after Barnes and Noble debuted their new look at barnesandnoble.com. ▲



WRITING is TAXING

BY DIANE O'BRIEN KELLY

You've reached that point in your writing career when you not only need to lighten your load, but can also afford to pay some schmuck to take on your more routine tasks. Congratulations! But whether you pay someone to update your website, respond to that overwhelming load of fan mail, perform research, or type your manuscript, you must be careful when determining whether the worker is your employee or an independent contractor.

When you hire an independent contractor, you simply pay the worker for the services as agreed. If you pay the person \$600 or more in a given tax year, you must file Form 1099 with the IRS and send a copy to the worker by the end of the following February. Easy as pie. It's an entirely different story, however, if the worker is your employee. That simple pie instead becomes a four-course meal complete with an unpronounceable French sauce and three forks in the place setting—much more time-consuming and complicated.

An employer is required to withhold federal income tax and social security tax on employees, and to remit these taxes to the IRS on a regular basis; to report the amounts paid to the employee and the associated taxes by filing Form 941 each quarter; to report the total payroll and taxes for a given tax year by filing Form W-3 each year. An employer may also be required to withhold state income tax and to pay federal or state unemployment taxes on employees. An employer must also abide by a variety of labor laws, including minimum wage laws, workers compensation, etc.

To protect the government's coffers, the IRS has cracked down on employers who wrongfully treat their employees as independent contractors. The IRS determines whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor by considering three major factors: behavioral control, financial control, and the relationship between the parties.

Behavioral Control

A primary concern for the IRS is whether the payor has the right to direct how the worker performs the

Who's the Boss?

tasks. The IRS considers whether the payor provides extensive instructions to the worker, controls when and where the work is performed, or provides the materials, equipment, and supplies needed to complete the tasks or dictates where the worker must purchase these items.

Employers normally train their employees as to acceptable methods and procedures for performing their tasks and hold regular performance reviews. An employee normally has specified hours of work or some type of routine or predictable schedule. The employer normally provides all items the employee will need to complete the tasks.

On the other hand, although loose guidelines may be established, independent contractors are not usually given specific instructions or training regarding how to perform their tasks. Instead, the independent contractor controls how the work will be done, generally decides when the work will be done, and normally provides the items needed to complete the job, at the contractor's own expense. An independent contractor may even hire other workers to assist in completing the tasks, while an employee would not.

The bottom line is that the less control the payor has over the worker's behavior, the more likely the worker is to be classified as an independent contractor.

Financial Control

Whether a worker has financial control is another consideration in the contractor versus employee debate. A worker is more likely to be an independent contractor when he has made an investment in the work, such as buying all necessary equipment, materials, or supplies. Independent contractors are not normally reimbursed for the cost of such items, while employees are generally reimbursed. Depending on the particular circumstances of any given job, an independent contractor may realize a profit or incur a loss. An employee, however, always enjoys net earnings from his work (although never as much as the employee feels himself to be worth, of course). In addition, independent contractors are frequently paid a flat fee or a percentage commission, while an employee is more likely to be paid on an hourly ▶

basis. Employees are generally paid on a regular, recurring basis, while independent contractors may be paid upon completion of the work or upon achieving certain benchmarks, depending on the terms of their particular contract.

Relationship Between the Parties

A final factor the IRS looks at is the relationship between the parties. A written contract can be evidence of the parties' intentions, although the terms of the contract may not be binding on the IRS if the contract was written to circumvent the tax laws and other factors indicate the worker is actually an employee. The IRS will consider whether the payor gave the worker benefits—such as insurance, retirement, or vacation or sick pay—which indicate an employer-employee relationship. Independent contractors normally receive no benefits. If the relationship between the parties is somewhat permanent and expected to continue indefinitely—rather than temporary or sporadic—it is more likely to be classified as an employer-employee relationship. An employee generally works for one or a very limited number of employers, while an independent contractor offers his or her services to the general public at large and may perform work for multiple parties simultaneously. Finally, the more integral the work is to the payor's regular key business, the more likely the worker is to be an employee. For instance, if an accounting firm hired a CPA to work on an audit, the CPA is much more likely to be consid-

ered an employee than, say, a computer tech who is paid to upgrade the firm's software.

Protecting Yourself

What can you do to increase the odds that your hired hand will be classified as an independent contractor? Enter into a written "Independent Contractor" agreement with the person under which the worker is permitted to choose the hours of work, is required to pay any taxes on the income, and is required to provide at his or her expense any tools or supplies needed. Allow the worker to set the work schedule. Give the worker as much latitude as possible in determining how he will complete the work and provide little or no supervision. Pay the worker a flat fee for completing the task, and pay upon completion rather than making weekly payments to the worker. Don't offer the worker any benefits and don't pay for time off.

For more details, see IRS Publications 1779 "Independent Contractor or Employee" and 15-A "Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide," available on the IRS website, IRS.gov. Better yet, have an independent contractor look them up for you!

Got a tax question? E-mail Diane 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.

Musical Twist

Continued from page 13 ▶ the time of day would order copies to shelve next to the book in the romance section. But we discovered that chain stores like Barnes & Noble have a "high theft" problem with CDs, which is the reason they put the music section in the back of the store with an extra set of security sensors. Plus, CDs, unlike books, are ordered more on a store by store basis, rather than one national buyer deciding what will go in all the Barnes & Nobles across the country. The upside to the second part is that the individual music managers seem very open to stocking CDs by local bands.

In spite of the disappointment over national distribution (which was a long shot to begin with), we have both benefited tremendously from the collaboration. NAL let me plug the CD in the back of the book, so as soon as someone finishes reading a story filled with all these great old blues and jazz standards, there's a website URL where she can go to hear song snippets and order the CD online. Likewise, Barb has my book cover on the front of her CD, so every time she sells CDs at a gig, I get a plug for my book. And of course, we link our websites.

Even better, the local bookstore/wine bar where the idea all started offered the book and CD in a special promotion on their website at a discounted price packaged in a beautiful gift bag. As word has spread locally, Barb and I have received invitations to speak to various groups with the bookstore owner on hand to sell the products. Talk about a big win for everyone!

So, rather than lonely ol' me being the only one trying to drum up interest in my latest release, I have a whole community helping me spread the word. I think that's been the best part about the project, having so many people involved. Whether or not it pays off in sales—which I definitely think it will—it's already paid off big time in friendship and fun.

Julie Ortolon is the USA Today bestselling author of nine single-title contemporaries praised for their sparkling humor and genuine warmth. Unforgettable is her latest release from Signet Eclipse. You can hear sound snippets from the CD at the Music Lounge at ortolon.com or at Barbara Calderaro's site, barbcmusic.com.



Open A New Window

CREATING & RECOGNIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Novelists Inc.'08 in NYC

Open A New Window.

I like that. So much better than jumping out of the old one, right?

This exercise we all indulge in, as Kay Hooper terms the “business” of publishing, has never been easy, and it doesn’t seem to be getting easier. It’s becoming more complex as we not only have to write the books, but we have to promote them. Hell, we have to learn a whole new language about trailers and e-pubbing and blogs and my space, your space, all God’s chillen got a space, etc.

We need help, folks!

And that’s where Novelists, Inc. comes in! Ninclink is a wonder, *NINK* and the Ninc website are constant sources of necessary information. But nothing—nothing!—beats a Novelists, Inc. conference.

Now, as you have one leg up and over the ledge of that *old* window, you’re pausing to ask *why*. Okay, some of you may be slyly smiling and saying, “Oh, yeah—prove it!”

Happily.

Publishing is in Manhattan

Let’s start with the obvious: for the most part, publishing is exercised in Manhattan. The ’08 conference is also in Manhattan, where publishing lives, where the editors are, where the agents congregate. It doesn’t take the intellect of a brain surgeon to figure out that it might do us some good to occasionally show our shining faces there too!

Two: The conference program. Genius, pure genius. We’ll cover lots in the next months, here, on Ninclink, and at the website, but let’s begin with the afternoon of Roundtables, all right?

Editors from 10 Houses

Editors from 10 houses, running the gamut of genres, will sit down informally with small groups of Ninc members to talk about the needs of their particular houses and to answer questions from the table. We’re

not talking unhelpful suggestions like “write the book of your heart,” or “I can’t say what I want, but I’ll know it when I see it,” or “historicals, up; contemporaries, down; mysteries, stable.” No way!

Roundtables

Consider The Roundtables a form of speed dating—after about 20 minutes of frank conversation and questions, bam, a move to another table if you wish, another editor, another intimate perspective—and another chance to make a connection, plan a later one-on-one meeting. An entire afternoon of invaluable opportunities!

Novelists Inc. is setting the table, you do the rest.

Night Owl Sessions

Everybody loves the Night Owl sessions, so in ’08 they’re expanded. Doubled, actually. Sunday the conference becomes all ours again; the editors and agents go home and we get to talk amongst ourselves, share what we’ve learned, gripe if we must, but end the conference on that so necessary “Up” that will send us all home eager to get back to the computer.

More Opportunities

In between, we’ll have informative speakers, great food, endless local attractions (my God, people, it’s New York!), new friends, old friends, new ideas, old ideas reworked and made new again. *Energy!* That’s what we get from a terrific conference, and that’s what Ninc has built for us in Manhattan.

None of us knows it all. None of us is too advanced in her/his career to not need what’s waiting for us in Manhattan. None of us is too overworked or undersold to be able to ignore the need to see and be seen in the home of publishing; to network, to feel the spark of a new idea thanks to something said in a workshop or overheard in the bar.

This exercise we all participate in is not for the faint of heart. Two books in print or more than a ▶



Open A New Window

CREATING & RECOGNIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

▶ hundred; it never gets easier. We can never say, "I've learned enough," because none of us has learned enough, there's always more to learn, some new mountain to climb, some new twist on promotion or editorial guidelines to digest.

We're writers. Visionaries, if you will. We don't jump out of windows (too messy, for one thing). We open *new* windows, and that's what Ninc is doing for all of us March 27-30, 2008 in Manhattan.

Next month, among other subjects, we'll talk a bit about the fantastic Affinia Manhattan hotel, but in the meantime, go to ninc.com where you'll find a link to the Affinia website, with photographs and descriptions of the suites, because every room at the Affinia is a suite. The prices aren't too shabby, either, but it's first come, first booked at the great conference rate!

Still here, perched on the windowsill? You're not at the website, signing up? Early-bird registration ends November 15, you know, and the price for opening that new window goes up.

Think about it, and open that new window... we all still need some *exercise*.

— **Kasey Michaels**
2008 President-Elect

Conference at a Glance:

- **March 27-30, 2008**
- **Affinia Manhattan**
- **Hotel room: \$219/night**
- **Early bird registration of \$325 ends Nov. 15.**
- **To register (and for details): Refer to the conference brochure in your September *NINK* or the Conference Center at ninc.com.**

One-Time Offer

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!

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rate of \$325!**