

NINCK

May 2008
Vol. 19, No. 05

A View Through the Window

Having a wonderful time in New York. Wish you were here.

Thus would read my postcard to my fellow Nincers who weren't able to make it to this year's conference in New York City. A few paragraphs can't convey the fun and energy of almost four days of conferencing and comradery in the Big Apple, but I'll do my best to give you a taste of my experiences at my first ever Ninc conference.

A Day With Industry Professionals

After a Thursday evening welcome reception, Friday's workshops featured a variety of industry professionals. Attorney David Wolf with Cowan, De Baets, Abrahams and Sheppard, LLP shared information about the **Novelists, Inc. Legal Fund**. Ninc established the Legal Fund in 2006 to assist any member with a legal problem or question related to his or her writing career. Each Ninc member is entitled to up to two hours of legal consultation per year with Mr. Wolf, an attorney with extensive litigation experience in the fields of copyright and intellectual property law. He's also a very personable man who professes to like solving problems for writers.

Keynote speaker **Theresa Rebeck** continued the morning with an entertaining presentation about her experience as a playwright and television/film writer, and a first-time novelist.

Friday morning concluded with a panel on **Going Beyond the Breakout Novel to the Breakout Career**, presented by Donald Maass of

Donald Maass Literary Agency, Joshua Bilmes of JABerwocky Literary Agency and Peter Rubie of Fine Print Literary Management. While a few authors break out with an early spectacular book and manage to stay on top for years, these agents agreed that for most authors, a breakout happens over an extended period of time, with the author building readers before breaking out with a particular book or books.

Donald Maass categorized writers as being of two types: status seekers or story tellers. While most people are a mixture of both types, those who are primarily status seekers tend to focus on what the publisher will do for them, what their next contract will be, or what they can do to get noticed. Story tellers have a passion for the stories they tell and a devotion to craft that makes them a success. They focus on the story and what they will bring to readers.

Peter Rubie, while agreeing that storytelling is

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

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Address changes may be made on the website.

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

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Introducing...

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

Membership Chair Holly Jacobs

P.O. Box 11102

Erie PA 16514-1102

or email HollyJacobs1@aol.com

New Applicants:

Candace Irvin, Conway AR
Benjamin Miller, Acton MA
Diedre Knight, Madison GA
Sharon Linnea, Warwick NY
Cynthia Keller, Richfield MN
Joseph Nassise, Phoenix AZ
Simone Elkeles, Buffalo Grove IL
Pamela Palmer, Herndon VA
Cheryl Arguile, Foothill Ranch CA
Sally Moore, Cincinnati OH
Clea Simon, Cambridge MA

Stephan Chambers, Providence RI

Patricia Sargeant-Matthews, Columbus OH

Serena Robar, Maple Valley WA

New Members:

Abby Gaines, Remuera Auckland, New Zealand

Janet Tronstad, Pasadena CA

Lisa Shearin, Cary NC

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."

Why Do I Hate New York So Much?

I had such a good time at this year's conference, I couldn't remember why I hate New York so much.

A terrific group of Nincers gathered at the Affinia Manhattan for four days of convivial networking and productive self-education. An extraordinary and varied set of professionals joined us there for panel discussions and roundtable sessions. The Affinia was a comfortable hotel with a consistently cordial and helpful staff, and the location was excellent—an easy subway ride to anywhere in the city, and a comfortable walk from Herald Square (and the fabulous Macy's Flower Show) and Times Square, where the lights of Broadway (and mass media advertising) shine so brightly, you can easily read a book on the street in the middle of the night.

When not conferencing, I ate good food with interesting people, and I saw fascinating sites, such as the medieval collection of the famous Cloisters museum and a special exhibit of Minoan artifacts at the Onassis Cultural Center.

"Gosh," I thought, "why is it that I usually think of this town with dread?"

In what many members (including me) found the most useful session of the conference, Ninc member Lou Aronica, who is a longtime publisher as well as a novelist, talked in intelligent and concrete terms about how novelists can take steps to improve their chances of succeeding long-term. During the Friday afternoon editor/agent roundtables, I got to talk with editors working in some publishing programs that I'm interested in. In the comfortable chairs of the lobby or the convenient café tables outside the main meeting room, I spent time visiting with old friends and making new ones. Getting to meet Ninc's Legal Fund attorney, David Bruce Wolf, was an enjoyable and informative experience.

So why do I usually feel so headachy at the mere thought of going to New York?

I had a great time talking with cheerful newcomers to Ninc who seemed to get something of value out of every session. Their enthusiasm countered my desire to throttle the program participants who suggested that what we writers *really* need to start doing is "write the best book you can." (Gee, and here I have always believed that slapping together mediocre drivel in a half-baked manner was the key to success in one of the most highly competitive professions in existence.)

I also had a great time discussing with seasoned and experienced old-timers the creative and fiscal strains of having a long-term career as a novelist, in an industry of narrow profit margins, bad publishing decisions, and changing parameters. Sometimes it's just soothing to be around people who know better than to ask common-sense questions about the publishing world.

So, since I was having such a terrific experience at this year's Manhattan conference, which was my first trip to the city in nearly five years... what is it about New York that makes me so reluctant to go there? I really couldn't remember.

Until the day after conference, when I was trying to leave New York, that is. My flight home was cancelled due to bad weather (I think). Every time I tried to phone the airlines, the phone line went dead. And when I got to Penn Station to catch the train to the Newark airport so I could find out in person what was going on... all trains to New Jersey were delayed or cancelled. (According to the loudspeaker, one train was "cancelled due to cancellation.") As more and more people piled into the underground transit hub, the scene resembled some futuristic horror film of a disastrously overpopulated world. Competition was vicious to get on the few trains departing Penn Station. The train I finally got on was as crowded as the station had been, and I stood all the way to the airport—where I was then mistaken for a terrorist ▶

and subjected to a pat-down search while my belongings were chemically examined for explosives residue.

Ah.

Now I remember why I hate going to New York. Something like *this* always happens to me there. I had forgotten.

Thank goodness we'll be in St. Louis in 2009! I can only take that sort of experience once every so often.

But for those of you who missed New York, it was a great time! Right up until I tried to leave the

city. And for those of you who were there, your enthusiasm and participation were what made a year of hard work on the conference worthwhile.

Many thanks to the dedicated and hardworking conference committee, the program participants (even the ones who advised me to write the best book I can), the volunteers, the industry guests, the 2007 and 2008 Ninc Boards, and the excellent staff at the Affinia, all of whom ensured that Ninc hit this one out of the ballpark!

— Laura Resnick

Ninc Conference 2009

The Dates: September 30 - October 4, 2009

The Place: Drury Plaza Hotel, 2 South Fourth Street, Saint Louis, Missouri

The Deal: Fantastic room rates starting at \$124.99, including the Drury Quikstart™ hot breakfast including scrambled eggs, pancakes, sausage, biscuits and gravy, and lots more; one hour of free long distance telephone every night; evening beverages and snacks; high-speed Internet access in every room and wireless lobby; microwaves and refrigerators in every room; an indoor pool and whirlpool; and much more. Check it out at: <http://www.Druryhotels.com>.

The conference committee is already booking workshops and planning other goodies to thrill and delight. Updates to appear monthly in *NINK*, so stay tuned!

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Joint Agents Confirmed: Co-agent deal between Curtis Brown and ICM became official April 1. Clients will stay with their respective company but the agents will jointly handle UK and foreign rights for ICM.

HarperCollins and Profit Sharing? Robert S. Miller moves from Hyperion to HC to oversee a new unit that will not offer advances but hopefully a 50-50 share of profits—not the standard royalty after paying out an advance. The new venture hopes to decrease returns from booksellers as well as over-enthusiastic advances for untried authors. The unit, currently being called a studio, hasn't been named and will be issuing ebooks and audio editions of all titles of the initial 25 hardcover titles, which may be offered as low as \$20. More news on this as it develops.

DRM Free OverDrive: Beginning in May, OverDrive will supply a limited number of DRM-free titles to its listing and make them accessible from Borders with a limited selection available to libraries. Offerings can be downloaded to any MP3 device.

View thru a Window

Continued from page 1 ▶

important, pointed out the “schizophrenic nature of what writers do.” They must think like artists and like business people. They must please readers and editors and a host of other people at their publishing houses.

These introductory comments led to a discussion of the nitty gritty details of breaking out, such as:

- **Are there second and third chances for an author to break out?** According to Donald Maass, yes, but bitterness can get in the way of creativity and make it difficult to seize those second chances. Peter Rubie reminded authors that there is a “peculiar American ability” to fail, wallow in misery, then bounce back, and that failure can be used as an opportunity to succeed.
- **If an author has bad numbers from a previous book, should they start over with a new name?** Joshua Bilmes said this can be a good thing, but the same author with a new name will still be producing the same writing—authors have to be willing to examine their own work and see its flaws and where they can do better.
- **What’s happening with print runs these days?** While too large a print run can be problematic for authors, resulting in larger returns and poor sell-through, these days smaller initial print runs are more prevalent. Publishers will go back to press for a book that’s selling well. One problem is that they don’t always do this quickly enough.
- **Are big advances good?** They can be good or bad. Publishers can still make money even if the author doesn’t earn out her advance, but if the publisher thinks they paid too much for a book it can make it harder for the author to get a subsequent contract. Peter Rubie cautioned that in addition to the amount of the advance, authors should look at the publisher’s enthusiasm for a book.
- **What should authors do to promote**

themselves? “Most people worry about promotion too soon,” said Maass. He feels that other than a website, promotion for first and second books is “pretty worthless.” All the agents agreed that a terrific book is, in and of itself, the best promotion in the world.

After a break for lunch, the focus on industry professionals continued with a panel on **What’s New in the World of Publishing** with Daisy Maryles, Executive Editor of *Publisher’s Weekly*; Dennis Loy Johnson, one of the publishers of Melville House; and Carl Lennertz, Director of Marketing for HarperCollins.

Daisy began by laying out some facts: there are currently an estimated 86,000 publishers in the United States, publishing more than 200,000 titles each year. In 2006, these publishers had a net revenue of \$35 billion. By 2011, this is expected to rise to \$41 billion. In 2006, 560 new titles made it onto PW’s weekly hardcover, paperback, and adult best-seller lists.

In 2004, Bookscan tracked 1.2 million book titles. Of these, 950,000 sold fewer than 99 copies. Two hundred thousand sold fewer than 1000 copies. The average book tracked sold fewer than 5000 copies. On the more depressing side of the statistical ledger, American households’ spending on books is at a 20-year low. The average adult spends seven minutes a day reading vs. two hours a day watching television. But the good news is more teens are reading. And consumers do want books, though not necessarily in book form. “The digital era has transformed the nature of reading,” Maryles concluded.

Carl Lennertz shared that Target is the fastest growing bookseller in the United States. He talked about author promotion and suggested that the Internet has leveled the promotional playing field, allowing an unknown author to reach out in the same way that a big name author can, through websites, blogs, networking sites such as Facebook and My Space, and other online venues. And today, publishers expect authors to do more of their own promotion.

Despite all these technological advances, ▶

Lennertz still advocates writers reach out to independent booksellers and librarians the old-fashioned way, with personal visits. He's a champion of "the muffin tour"—calling on stores with a copy of the book and refreshments for the staff. Thank them for their work in selling your book. Offer to sign copies of your books. The point is to make contact and develop relationships.

Dennis Loy and his wife Valerie started Melville House in the wake of September 11, with a compilation of poetry about the tragedy that sold 12,000 copies—huge sales for a poetry collection. They now publish 25 to 30 books each year. Loy offered the prospective of the small, independent publisher, which offers writers a personalized approach. Countering some of the gloom prevalent whenever publishing statistics are cited, Loy said. "Statistics are glaciers. They are going to change the landscape, but how much and how soon?" While some see changes in publishing as negative, Loy sees the changes as presenting new opportunities for authors.

Next up was the dynamic duo of St. Martin's Press editor Jennifer Enderlin and author Jennifer Crusie, who spoke on **Taking Chances in Publishing**. "If you don't like risk, publishing is not for you," said Crusie, who pointed out that submitting to publishers is in itself risky. She advised authors to analyze the risks they are willing to take before they are called upon to take them. Contemplate these questions in times of calm so you'll be able to make wise decisions under pressure. Her key pieces of advice:

- Never risk anything you can't afford to lose.
- Follow your instincts always
- Always have a Plan B.

Jennifer Enderlin spoke about the life cycle of a trend, familiar to any author who's been around a while. She had 18 points in this cycle, but essentially it's the familiar story of one person writing a great book that starts a trend, publishers jumping on the bandwagon to publish similar books, creating new lines, buying more books, the quality of some of the books declining, readers retreating, and the trend dying out, only to begin anew with another wonderfully written book that starts the cycle anew. She also advised "It's easier to point to a trend as the reason you're not selling than to take a hard look at the book and your writing."

Both women agreed you need talent in order to

take a risk and succeed.

Agent Robert Gottlieb talked about the **Art of the Deal** at Trident Media Group and the day's workshops wound up with **Editor and Agent Roundtables**. Participating editors and agents held court at tables. Authors could sit at the table of their choice and ask questions and get to know the editors and agents better.

New Publishing Opportunities

Saturday's featured speaker **Jill Hurst**, a writer and producer for *The Guiding Light*, provided a glimpse into the world of the soap opera writer. Day time television shares some challenges with the world of popular fiction—competition for consumers' limited time, shrinking audiences, struggles to capture the attention of a younger audience, and balancing creativity with the demands of corporate bosses. In spite of these challenges, Jill clearly loves what she does and her talk was full of humor and optimism.

Saturday continued with a look at the fast-growing field of **manga, graphic novels, and comics**. Tricia Narwani, an editor at Random House, acquires manga for Del Rey Manga and graphic novels for Villard. Ninc member Alisa Kwitney is a former editor for DC Comics' Vertigo imprint and a comic book writer. The third member of the panel, G.B. Tran, writes and illustrates comics. These three introduced the audience to a type of storytelling where the writer and illustrator must work in close partnership, and where what isn't said in each panel can be even more important than what is said.

The morning ended with a look at the **Young Adult market** presented by Nadia Cornier, an agent with Firebrand Literary Agency and Ninc member and YA author Nicole Burnham. Young Adult is not a narrow genre, but encompasses every kind of fiction, for a younger audience. Like many markets these days, YA experienced a boom several years ago, but is tighter now. However, opportunities are still there. Teens want to read about people who are like themselves who are going through the same kind of things they're going through—whether those teens live in contemporary times, the future, or some time in the past. Authors interested in this market should read YA to see if it resonates with them.

Saturday afternoon featured agents and publicists, while on Saturday evening we turned out attention to various forms of Internet promotion in Night Owl round tables.

One of the best features of a Ninc conference is the opportunity to meet new friends and reconnect with old ones, chatting during breaks between workshops, going out for a meal or drinks or sitting up late discussing our struggles and successes, sharing tips and advice, and bonding with other working novelists. Some of the best information is shared during these times, and they alone make the conference more than worthwhile. Unlike other conferences, where the focus may be on fans and promotion, or where workshops must meet the needs of both published and unpublished authors, Ninc offers career novelists a chance to focus on their own needs surrounded by fellow writers with similar needs and goals.

Lou Aronica on Author Development

After the AGM Sunday morning, came the workshop that many people voted the high point of the conference: Ninc member Lou Aronica spoke about author development. Lou spent 20 years as a publisher and the past eight years as a writer of both fiction and nonfiction. In that time, he's seen the responsibility for author development shift from the publisher to the author. He presented four components to author development:

1. Editorial. Authors need to create their own signature. Figure out what commercially viable thing you do that you do better than anyone else. How are you different and do people care about that difference?

2. Commitment to Consistency. Authors must connect with readers and deliver a consistent experience instead of writing a lot of different things. This isn't optional, according to Lou.

3. Marketing. Your publisher will give you little

or no marketing support, or poor marketing support. Assume the responsibility for marketing is yours. According to Lou, you shouldn't waste your time with print, radio, or television advertising, personal publicists, book trailers, or other expensive efforts that don't yield results commensurate with their expense. He says, "The Internet is an amazing promotional opportunity for writers because people read on it."

He suggests writers find a way to translate their signature online. Readers buy fiction to live in the world the writer creates. If you can create a universe online to supplement the universe in your books, you can bring in readers. Examples of ways to do this would include: an online diary written by one of your characters, a downloadable cookbook featuring recipes from your books, a virtual community mimicking the one in your books. Communicate with genre groups online or online groups that reflect aspects of your books. Remember that readers hate being hyped. Present terrific content in a way that allows readers to decide whether or not it's good. Don't do what everybody else is doing. Create something unique, then get the word out about it.

4. Take a long view. It's nearly impossible to break out right away. The industry is looking for instant blockbusters, though that is rare. But writers must take the long view. Taking the long view, assuming you're going to be in the game and have regular publishing contracts, allows you to make different decisions than if you take the short view. As Lou said, "There's no downside in assuming success."

I know I came away from this conference feeling more equipped to be successful. I made new friends, learned a lot, ate wonderful food, and had a chance to explore a great city. Next year, I expect more of the same in St. Louis, and I hope to see many of you there.

— *Cindi Myers*

Business Briefs

Borders for Sale? Maybe. Borders is having JP Morgan Securities and Merrill Lynch initiate an evaluation on business strategies that may lead to the sale of all or some of its components. At the same time Pershing Capital, which already has an investment in Borders, has agreed to a tentative deal to lend additional millions and purchased the company's Australian, New Zealand, Singapore, and Paperchase subsidiaries, if a more lucrative deal isn't realized. There is speculation that Barnes & Noble could be a prospective buyer despite poor returns of its own in the last quarter.



PHOTOS (clockwise from top left):

- Action at the Editor Round Table
- Our fearless leader, and Pari Noskin Taichert
- President-elect Kasey Michaels takes one for the team
- The beautiful people mingle at the cocktail party
- Susan Gable and Charlotte Hubbard enjoy the welcome party
- Harlequin Editors Tracy Farrell and Dianne Moggy attended the workshop on Manga



2008 Annual General Meeting in NYC

BY CHARLOTTE HUBBARD, NINC SECRETARY

Okay, so the AGM isn't the most exciting thing you can do on a Sunday morning in New York, and yet for the first time in years we had a quorum! Many thanks to those who were present in body or by proxy! Here are the main topics we discussed:

2008 CONFERENCE: We introduced/thanked our 2008 Conference Committee: Lynn Miller, Dianne Despain, Holly Jacobs, Melinda Haynes, Susan Gable, Roz Denny Fox, Colleen Amirand, Vicki Lewis Thompson, and Pat Potter. The Board suggested that because the Affinia Manhattan has been such an accommodating hotel, we schedule our future NYC conferences there. (Read: if you missed this conference, you missed a wonderfully upbeat, career-enhancing experience! Many members proclaimed this the best con they've attended in years, even if our teeth chattered during the sessions in the ballroom.)

OUTREACH: We discussed the importance of increasing membership. Growing Ninc helps us professionally and generates funds so we can do more as a professional organization. We unveiled our fabulous new brochure, and pointed out that if each current member entices a colleague to join, our membership doubles!

E-NINK: Several members were astounded by the savings in postage/printing Ninc will realize as even more members subscribe to e-NINK. Not only will they receive extra perks and pages (like installments from Eric Maisel's upcoming book, plus best-of-NINK articles) delivered directly to their e-mailboxes but this will keep a substantial amount of our money available for other projects.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Digital Rights Management (DRM): addresses copyright piracy and is formalizing steps you can take to report it.

Model Royalty Statement: could use more of your statements, with personal info blacked out.

Used Book: is going into hibernation, due to lack of support from other writing orgs/lack of power to initiate copyright legislation.

Anthology: Tekno Books/Denise Little says we have enough nonfiction articles for nearly three anthologies. Consider contacting Denise soon to see what topics have not been covered, if you'd like to submit an article.

Conference Handbook: has compiled past conference experiences and made a template for future planners to use.

Nominating: contact Pat McLinn if you'd like to be 2009 President-Elect (ie, Prez in 2010) or would like to suggest someone.

A VOLUNTEER JOB LIST of ongoing or one-shot tasks will be posted monthly in *NINK*, starting in June. You can help in large ways, or small!

BY-LAWS REVISIONS must be considered if we hold a conference every 18 months rather than annually. Because 2/3 of the total membership must vote for such changes to be enacted, we'll send proposed by-laws changes with the renewal forms near year-end. And yes, we've considered making this an electronic function on the Ninc website...which also requires a change in by-laws.

WEBSITE: Updates and redesigning will begin soon! We're looking for committee members to oversee a page or two of the revamped site to keep ninc.com more current and useful.

2009 CONFERENCE: We'll meet you in St. Louis, Sept. 30 – October 4 on the colorful, historic riverfront! Karen Tintori-Katz and Lesley LaFoy have agreed to co-chair this event, and a pre-con day-long forensics workshop is already on the agenda. We're considering a two-track program with staggered starting times, and possibly recording the non-industry sessions. Have a topic or speaker to suggest? Contact Karen, Leslie, or Prez-Elect Kasey Michaels.

BOOKSCAN DISCOUNTS: Pat McLinn has negotiated a discounted opportunity to track your books' sales histories, which will soon be posted on ninc.com on the Members Only discount page. You'll need to know the categories you want information for, and then you can customize your request/pricing for this service. Questions? Contact Pat McLinn. Nice part about this new opp? It costs Ninc nothing! See page 20 of this newsletter for more info.

That about wraps it up! Thanks to all who asked good questions and took an interest in what Ninc's doing for you now and in the years to come. ▲

Dreaming for the Writing Life – Part II

BY PAULA CHAFFEE SCARDAMALIA

Dreams have been an important writer's tool from Dante to Poe to Stephen King. And best of all, they are a tool that is free and accessible to everyone.

Last month's article on dreams identified three types—hypnagogic, conscious or lucid, and spontaneous—and provided tips on how to recall your dreams, record them, and then work with them by giving them a title (a good practice for titling your books), doing a waking reality check, and identifying what you most want to know from your dream. I also pointed out that keeping a dream journal helps you to identify themes not only in your dreams but also in your life and creates for you the best dream dictionary you will ever have.

In this article, I share with you additional ways to use your dream journal for your writing, and offer several dream techniques that can inspire story, help with plot and character development, and break through creative blocks.

Dream Journal as Creative Resource

In addition to providing information on your life and serving as your dream dictionary, your dream journal also provides you with an unending source of material to work from.

Narrative Idea – A writer's most common use of dreams is as the initial creative impulse for story, plot or character. Naomi Epel in her book, *Writers Dreaming*, writes about William Styron's dream of "a woman he had known in his early 20s. He could see her standing in a hallway, her arms full of books, the blue numbers of a tattoo visible beneath her sleeve." From the dream, Styron decides to abandon his current project and, going directly to his studio, writes the opening paragraphs of *Sophie's Choice*.

We all have dreams that seem more like some-

one else's story rather than our own. If we are recording our dreams, especially the more story-like dreams, then we always have ideas at hand for future work.

Mood and Metaphor – If you want to use a particular dream for metaphor or mood, go back through the dream and underline any words or phrases that you respond to strongly or any images that strike your fancy. For instance, I had a dream of a tree silhouetted against a night sky and in the tree were eight screech owls. I might use that image as a particularly potent setting for a scene in a fantasy or murder mystery, or even as a dream image within a character's dream, making use of the symbolism of *eight* and *owls* to convey a feeling of warning or foreboding.

V. I. D. P.s (Very Important Dream People) – Just as the people sitting next to us on the bus are grist for our creative mills, so too are our dream characters. And they will fade into the ether never to return if we don't capture them in our dream journal.

When dream characters demand your attention or make you curious, first record their name. If you have no name, then give the character a name according to her role in the dream, for example, "mother," "scary old man," "benevolent guide." Write a description of the character, including her clothing. Does the person remind you of someone from waking reality? Is there something about this person's character that plays into your current project? Or, like Styron's *Sophie*, give you an idea for a new work?

Even more intriguing, does the character act as a messenger rather than a performer, bringing you information about your writing? What does he or she have to say to you if you dialogue with that character?

Dreamscapes – How many times have you had

a dream where the setting looks like no place you've ever been before? How many of those dreamscapes would make a wonderful setting for story?

If you want to make the most of a dreamscape, record the setting, describing it in as much detail as possible. Does this place have a name? A time period? Is this place to be found in waking reality, for example, Pittsburgh? Or is it in another realm such as Sleeping Beauty's castle covered with nettles? Are there people in this dreamscape and, if so, what are they doing? What emotion does this place evoke? Why?

Character's Dreams – Your recorded dreams can serve as dreams for your own characters when they may be experiencing similar challenges or opportunities such as relationships, changes in career, or illness. Using your own dreams or modifying them to suit the story will give the character's dream sequence a ring of truth—and originality.

Three Dream Techniques for Breaking Through Blocks

Dream Incubation is an ancient technique used to access guidance and healing. As a writer, you can use this technique to get the name of an agent, to find a publishing house, or to discover what is holding you back in your story. Or you can ask for a dream to open the door to your own creative power.

To incubate a dream it is important to first clarify your intention in the form of a question or request. You want it to be as specific as possible, for example—What is the best title for my book? Or—what do I need to change to make my heroine stronger? I have one writing friend who frequently asks, "What did I miss in this scene?" just to make sure that she has written the scene as strongly as possible, catching the nuances that add texture and dimension to the story.

It is also important not to ask more than one question at a time. I once made the mistake of asking about two different people and had a dream that was both powerful but confusing in that I didn't know to whom the dream information applied.

Once you are clear about your intent, think about it during the day, and before going to bed, write down your question on a piece of paper and put it under your pillow. Yes, I know this seems a little out there but, for whatever reason, it helps.

As you fall asleep, keep asking the question in your mind—What is the best title for my book? You may find the answer floating to the surface of your hypnagogic (that time just before sleep) dreams, or it may come to you in a spontaneous dream. Then record your dream and explore how it might be an answer to your question.

Three important things to keep in mind with incubating a dream. First of all, don't discount anything that comes to you in your dreams even if it seems too far out in left field to be applicable. Second, remember to stay aware of puns and other verbal riddles within the dream. And finally, be patient. The dream answer to your questions may not show up the first night, or the second. Sometimes it takes a week or more. You don't have to ask every night, but at least do it several times a week, trust in the process, and stay patient.

Dreaming a Dream—or a Story—Forward

Waking from a half-finished dream is not unusual but it can be frustrating, like getting half the novel written and then sadly not knowing what to write next to be able to finish it. Fortunately, this technique for moving both the dream and your story forward can solve this challenge. You can do this in a conscious dream with the aid of a recording of drumming or you can do this as you fall asleep.

The key is to focus on a primary or emotionally strong scene in either the dream or the story. Also, focus on your desire to see what happens next.

Get yourself comfortable on bed or chair, lay your head back and close your eyes. Then imagine that place in the dream or the scene in your story where you want to find out, "What happens next?" See the print of the paper on the walls, the texture of the carpet. If you are outside, note the weather, the season, and the geography. Imagine it as clearly as possible. Then see yourself stepping into the dream or scene.

See where the dream takes you. Is there a forward motion to the dream, a sense of plotline developing? Or does the environment around you change, suggesting a change in setting or possibly in the emotional environment? Take the opportunity to dialogue with someone in the dream.

Allow the scene, the action, the dream to unfold. Then record your experience, again using the techniques for recording a dream. ▶

Visiting Your Dream Library

This is a technique I learned from Robert Moss, who frequently visits his own dream library to do research, talk with guides and mentors, and to discover his own yet unpublished work, and I've taught it to many writers who always enjoy the journey.

Most of us love libraries and many of us have an image of our ideal library. Taking a conscious dream journey to this library can, at the minimum, be fun and even relaxing. At its best, though, a journey to our dream libraries can provide answers to questions, and give us a strong affirmation of our work. And I know this technique works from personal experience and the experience of students.

As with the dream reentry, get yourself in a relaxed state, using either relaxing soft music or drumming, and see in your mind that special library. It could be a library in waking reality such as one from your childhood, like the Bookmobile, or it could be totally imagined, such as one in a large room with high ceilings and leaded glass windows—and one of those ladders that moves on wheels among the walls of books.

Define your intention. Do you want to find some specific information on food in the 18th century? Or do you want to meet a mentor such as Ernest Hemingway or Kate Chopin? Do you want to see your own yet-to-be-born book so that you can see its title or discover who has published it?

As you enter the library, see it clearly—its furnishings, the art on the walls, the scenes outside the windows, other people. Follow your instincts as you search for information, or talk to people there. If you are looking for your own book, where would it be shelved? Go there. When you find it, take it out, examine the cover, open it and look at the Table of Contents, read some of the text or the acknowledg-

ments (you might find the name of your agent and editor there!). Spend as much time as you like.

When you are ready, return from your journey and record everything you have seen and experienced. Then follow through by checking out any information you were given and researching names.

Be Willing to Use Your Imagination

These techniques of dream incubation, reentry, and visiting your dream library are effective tools for writing whether you are creating a 400-page novel or a poem. And there are other techniques to explore in addition to these. As stated before, the only limitation is your imagination and your willingness to play. If you tell yourself it won't work, it won't.

But if you dive into the dream world with the same enthusiasm you have when you dive into your writing, you will discover a place of infinite inspiration, information and support.

I wish you bright and creative dreams.

Some resources for creative dreaming:

Mellick, Jill. *The Art of Dreaming: Tools for Creative Dreamwork*. Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 1996

Moss, Robert. *Conscious Dreaming*. New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1996

Moss, Robert. *Dreamgates*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998

Scardamalia, Paula Chaffee. *The Tower in the Woods: Dreaming Your Creativity Awake (CD)*. Rensselaerville, NY: NGT Press, 2004

Business Briefs

How sexually explicit is your material? <http://tinyurl.com/2pde27> A new Indiana law that goes into effect July 1, 2008 may be too far-reaching. The lawmakers targeted new or relocating businesses that carry sexually explicit materials to help rural towns with no zoning laws keep adult bookstores from opening in their area. The law, however, which talks about materials that are harmful to minors and of prurient interest, may be too broad and include any books on health or sexuality. One independent bookstore owner asked just what is prurient to a teenager and what is normal? Media Coalition has been asked to look into a First Amendment case against the legislation by a group of bookstore owners.

Stop Spam on Your Website

BY KIM KOMANDO

Q. I keep receiving unwanted messages from a form on my Website. They include porn Websites. I have received about 200 of these messages a day for six months. There is no way to reply to these people, whoever they are. My Internet service provider says it is unable to help me. And my Webmaster does not know what to do. I feel totally helpless and I continue to get these emails every few minutes 24/7. HELP!

A. In a nutshell, you're receiving spam from your own Website. Obviously, you're not sending messages to yourself. So what's going on?

It's unwise to post an email address on the Web. Spammers' programs constantly search Web pages for email addresses. [Kim's tip about ways to avoid revealing your email address on Web pages is included below].

One way to hide your address is by using a Web form. That's what you have on your site. People can send you a message without knowing your email address.

Unfortunately, Web forms don't stop all spammers. They use programs that find and fill out Web forms. Bloggers are all too familiar with this problem. Spammers' programs fill out comment forms to leave advertisements. The same happens to message boards.

One way to stop form spam is by requiring registration. That's what I do with the message board on Komando.com. Anyone can view my message board, but only members of Kim's Club can post messages.

Another way to protect your Web form is by including a CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart). It's not as complex as a registration system. The most common type of CAPTCHA is a picture including some distorted text. People must enter the text as seen in the picture to make the Web form work.

A CAPTCHA can be any task that humans per-

form easily, but computers do not. You could present a simple reading comprehension question. For example, "How many letters are in the word 'security'?"

Your site designer can include a CAPTCHA with your Web form. Your Internet hosting service may already offer CAPTCHA options.

There also are numerous CAPTCHA scripts (similar to program code) available on the Internet. These scripts can be copied, pasted, and customized on your Web server. However, there are several scripting languages, only a few of which may work with your site. Consult a Web designer who is familiar with scripting and Web forms.

Protect your email address from spammers on the Web

Spammers are constantly searching the Web for email addresses. They use programs called harvesters or bots that can grab addresses from Web pages. Then, they use their swelling email address lists or pass them along for a profit.

That's why I always recommend you not use your primary email address when posting messages to guest books, newsgroups, or message boards. In general, if your email address is on a Web page, it can be harvested. And if you have your own Website or blog, you may be giving spammers even more opportunities.

But you can take precautions to stay off spam lists. Generally, the key is to make your email address unreadable to harvester programs. At the same time, it should remain readable to humans. The good news is that people are a lot more sophisticated and flexible readers than programs.

Your best first step is to avoid the standard email address format of "MyName@Website.com." If that address makes it onto a Web page, you're almost guaranteed a new influx of spam. So what are the alternatives? Here are four suggestions:

I. Spell it out

An easy and effective trick is to simply



spell out the address. For example, MyName@Website.com becomes “My Name at Website dot com.” However, this technique has been around a while. No doubt, spammers tweak their programs to search for it.

To avoid a pattern, you should be creative with your sentences and phrases. One idea is to use a foreign character for the “@” in the address. I’ve seen people who get creative and perhaps use: RemoveThisBeforeSendingMeEmailBecauseIHateSpam MyEmailAddressTheAtSignWebSiteDotCom.

As long as your email address is still recognizable, you’ve succeeded. I’ve seen sites that devote a whole paragraph to revealing an address bit-by-bit. I’ve even visited Web pages that use word games for the contact email. But that might be going too far.

2. Put it into a picture

Another way to conceal your address from harvester programs is with a picture. In general, a program can’t decipher images, but you and I can. You can use an image editor or paint program and spell your email address the old-fashioned way. Then save the picture and use it on your Website or blog.

For the most part, your address becomes unreadable because it’s not really text. It’s a picture of text. Only a program equipped with optical character recognition technology has a chance of reading your address from a picture. But the technology requires extra processing muscle which can slow down a spammer’s operation. It’s not very practical for spammers who need to collect mammoth ad-

dress lists in the shortest possible time.

3. Encrypt it

You can use an email obfuscator to display your address in the standard “MyName@Website.com” format. The typical obfuscator translates your address letter-by-letter into Unicode or ISO standard character codes. It’s one of the oldest and most basic encryption techniques, but it’s good enough to fool many harvester programs. A few of the many obfuscators on the Web include CodeHouse, Alicorna, and Duke IT. However, you need some basic skill with HTML to put the codes in your Web pages.

4. Use a form

The best way to protect your email address is to never display it at all. You can use a comment or feedback form to offer a point of contact without revealing your address. All you need is an HTML form for your page and a script to process the form on the Web server. But many Website owners don’t know one from the other. That’s why Website hosting services usually offer pre-made tools like forms along with scripts that are compatible with their Web servers.

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Business Briefs

What Makes a Subsidy Publisher? Tsaba House’s quarrel with RWA classification as a subsidy publisher continues. It was triggered when a Tsaba author wanted to enter an RWA chapter contest, but couldn’t. Although entry in the RITA at national level was not involved, it has become an issue now.

Tsaba is a subsidy by RWA definition due to author chargebacks in the company’s contract. The publisher claims the organization is trying to keep small presses out of their contest and controlling the outcome of who wins. While RWA will reconsider Tsaba House if they make changes to their boilerplate, the publisher contends that a writers’ group doesn’t have a right to interfere with author contracts or define what is or isn’t a subsidy publisher. The next chapter will be done after Tsaba consults an attorney on the matter.

AudibleKids.com Yet another Amazon company launches a new destination for digital children’s audio books. The site promises over 4,000 titles from 75 publishers, including over 500 new titles in digital format of stories by authors such as R.L. Stine. All selections are compatible with iPods and hundreds of audio and mobile devices.



WRITING is TAXING

Get Smart, Get a Tax Credit

BY DIANE O'BRIEN KELLY

Despite being fantastic writers already, novelists understand the importance of constantly improving our craft. To that end, we read writing magazines, network with other writers, and attend conferences. We might even take a course at a local college or university. Although the cost of attending a writing-related course can be deducted as a business expense, there could be a better option.

You may be able to claim the Lifetime Learning Credit or Hope Credit for all or some of the amount you pay to take a class at an accredited institute of higher education. A tax credit generally provides more benefit than a deduction. A credit offsets the tax liability dollar for dollar, while a deduction only reduces the tax liability in an amount equal to the deduction multiplied by the taxpayer's tax rate. For example, let's assume a writer pays \$100 in education expenses that can be claimed as either a deduction or credit. The writer is in the 25% tax bracket. A \$100 tax credit would reduce the writer's tax liability by the full \$100. A \$100 deduction, on the other hand, would merely reduce taxable income by \$100 and result in tax savings of only \$25 ($\$100 \times .25$ tax rate).

Let's talk first about the rules that apply to both credits.

You may be able to claim a credit for qualified higher education expenses paid for yourself, your spouse, or a person you claim as a dependent on your tax return. You cannot claim the credit if you file a married separate return or if you or your spouse were a nonresident alien for any part of the tax year (unless the nonresident alien elected to be treated as a resident alien for tax purposes).

Qualified education expenses include tuition and fees required to enroll in or attend courses at an eligible educational institution. Fees are qualified only if they must be paid to the institution as a condition of enrollment or attendance. For example, if a school charges a mandatory student activity fee, the fee would be a qualified expense. However, costs for room and board, transporta-

tion, insurance, medical expenses such as student health fees, and living expenses are not considered qualified expenses even if they are required to be paid to the institution. Qualified institutions include colleges, universities, vocational schools, or any other postsecondary educational institution eligible to participate in the student aid program run by the U.S. Department of Education. Virtually all accredited public, private, and non-profit postsecondary institutions qualify. To confirm whether a school qualifies, contact the school's financial aid office.

You can still claim the credit if the student withdraws from the class, though you must reduce the amount of the credit by any refund. It's okay, too, if you paid the costs with borrowed funds, such as student loan proceeds. However, you cannot claim a credit for expenses paid with tax-free funds, such as funds from a tax-free scholarship, fellowship, or employer assistance program.

If your modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) for 2008 exceeds \$58,000 for a single filer or \$106,000 for a taxpayer filing a married joint return, you cannot claim the credits. You can obtain a partial credit if your 2008 MAGI is between \$48,000 and \$58,000 for a single filer or \$96,000 and \$106,000 for married joint filers. Your MAGI is the number reported on line 38 of your Form 1040, plus certain foreign earned income. The Form 8863 instructions provide more details. Be aware that the annual MAGI figure is routinely adjusted, so the limit may be different in later years.

No double dipping! If you claim a credit you cannot also take other tax benefits for the same expenses, such as a business expense deduction or tuition and fees deduction, or exclusion of distributions from a Coverdell Education Savings Account or qualified tuition program used to pay the expenses.

Both credits are claimed on Form 8863 "Education Credits." Both are "nonrefundable credits," which means they can reduce your tax liability to zero but will not entitle you to a refund if the amount of the credit exceeds your tax liability.

Now that we know what the credits have in common, let's explore how they differ. ▶

Lifetime Learning Credit

The Lifetime Learning Credit is the less restrictive credit and provides for a credit up to \$2,000 per tax return for qualified expenses. Note that the limit is per return, not per student—an important distinction from the Hope Credit. The Lifetime Learning Credit is available for all years of postsecondary education and for courses that enable the taxpayer to acquire or improve job skills. The courses do not have to be for credit and the student does not have to be pursuing a degree or credential. This credit is available regardless of the number of courses the student takes. Unlike the Hope Credit, the Lifetime Learning Credit is available for an unlimited number of years (hence its name). This credit can be claimed for a student who has a felony drug conviction.

Hope Credit

The Hope Credit is more limited. A Hope credit of up to \$1,800 per eligible student can be claimed for tuition and fees relating to courses taken for credit. The tuition and fees do not qualify if they relate to non-credit courses or courses involving sports, games, or hobbies unless the course is part of the student's degree program. An eligible student is one who is pursuing an undergraduate degree or a recognized credential. The credit is available only for the first two years of the student's postsecondary education. The student must be enrolled during the year at last half-time for at least one academic period (e.g. semester or quarter). The student

cannot have a felony drug conviction. Deal dope? No Hope!

The Hope Credit is the sum of 100% of the first \$1,200 in qualified expenses per eligible student, and 50% of the next \$1,200 in expenses. Thus, the total Hope Credit that can be claimed per student is \$1,800.

WARNINGS!

These credits can reduce taxes, but be aware there are other tax benefits for higher education, including deductions for tuition and fees and/or student loan interest, Coverdell Education Savings Accounts, and Qualified Tuition programs, beyond the scope of this article. To learn more, read IRS Publication 970 "Tax Benefits for Higher Education," available at <http://www.irs.gov>.

In some cases, such as cases in which your available credit exceeds your tax liability, you might achieve a greater tax benefit by claiming a deduction rather than a credit. If in doubt, prepare your return both ways to determine which option results in less tax. You may wish to purchase tax software or consult a tax pro to ensure you get the most tax benefit for your educational dollars.

Got a tax question for Diane? E-mail 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, <http://www.dianeobrienkelly.com>.

Business Briefs

Can Amazon Control Small Press POD? Rumor has it that Amazon is telling POD houses they have to use BookSurge for their titles to have Amazon buy buttons or titles can't be accessed. This demand is supposed to be going to traditional publishers as well. Since this will directly cut into Ingram-owned Lightning Source's clientele, it seems to be more a lawsuit waiting to happen than an early strike to corner an emerging market.

The demand to use only BookSurge seems very close to the monopoly case against Gates that alleged Microsoft didn't allow for user choices. Companies that don't wish to use BookSurge are supposed to be able to sell their POD books through Amazon's Advantage program, which costs \$29.95 annually plus 55% of the book's list price, or other third-party marketplace programs. In the meantime, Lightning Source has partnered with On Demand Books, the owner of the Espresso Book Machine.

Sandra Brown Excellence in Fiction Writing Scholarship. Instead of a night with Van Cliburn, Sandra Brown was awarded an honorary Doctorate in Human Letters at Texas Christian University and a gift from her husband Michael in the form of an annual \$50,000 scholarship for young writers at TCU. The gift of the scholarship is to honor her writing career, a significant birthday, their 40th wedding anniversary and "assuage personal guilt" for her husband that she gave up her own scholarship at TCU after two years to get married. No date for the beginning of the scholarship has been announced.

The View from Here

By Susan Wiggs



Patron of the Arts

Here's my good deed for the day. I'm here to remind you that Sunday, May 11 is Mothers Day. I'll even give you a list of some things Mom wants: a camellia bush (planted; don't make her do the work), a pair of Camper Twins flats, a Kashwere bathrobe, a pair of onion goggles, a lighted wall fountain, a pedicure, a delivery of Wolferman's English muffins, a cashmere lap blanket, a tiny container of Creme de la Mer lotion, a book called *Leave Me Alone, I'm Reading* by Maureen Corrigan.

If the IRS has given you that "not-so-flush" feeling, then do this. Take out a piece of paper and a good pen and write her a note. Tell her thank you for being your patron of the arts. By definition, a patron of the arts offers support, encouragement, and financial aid to an artist of promise (aka you). Some of the best writers in history had patrons—Chretien de Troyes, Shakespeare, Jane Austen. Check out the acknowledgments page of many modern literary novels, and you're likely to see thanks to foundations and funds. Because let's face it, making art is not always synonymous with making money. From the moment inspiration strikes, a writer needs to find someone who believes in her utterly, someone who will support her not just materially but morally.

My mom was my first patron of the arts. She was a girl of the early '60s, in pedal pushers and Keds and a middy blouse. She wore red lipstick and a kerchief, and she smoked Parliament cigarettes. In college, she dreamed of becoming a meteorologist, although her very traditional parents didn't love the idea. Did this make her determined to nurture her own children's dreams?

She was my first writing teacher. As a toddler, I used to scribble drawings on church collection envelopes and bank deposit slips, and Mom would write the words I dictated. These stories all seemed to be about a child up a tree, with scary things coming after her. To this day, that's pretty much what all my books are about.

When I was six years old, I came down with pneumonia in the dead of winter. We lived in western New York State, repository of the worst lake-effect snows in the country, and due to the pneumonia, I was not allowed to go outside. My mother no doubt tired of end-

less readings of *The Poky Little Puppy*, *Go Dog. Go!*, *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, and *Yertle the Turtle*. She showed me how to knit and taught me to play selections from *The Cat in the Hat Songbook* on piano. Finally, she taught me to type.

We had an old manual typewriter with ribbon that smelled of musty ink, and an inspiring complement of round glass keys. It was an antique even then—the mid-'60s—and had a curious, irresistible charm. The typeface was an odd sans serif lettering I later learned was called "Futura." From the moment I sat down in front of this typewriter, feet dangling from my chair, eyes wide with wonder, I was overcome by the feeling that magic was about to happen.

Mom and I sat side-by-side at the Formica kitchen table. It was yellow, with a pattern of overlapping boomerangs, and I had to sit on a stack of Grolier encyclopedias so I could reach the keyboard with the proper posture. My mother was very methodical in showing me her method of touch-typing. She started with the four fingers of the left hand: ASDF. Again and again I typed those letters in various combinations: FADS. SAD. AS. AD. FA, until I could type them with my eyes closed. We moved on to the right hand. We added one letter at a time until



I'd memorized the location of every letter on the keyboard. She showed me the shift key and how it could transform a keystroke into something entirely different. She gave me a tour of the exotic symbols above the numerals, taught me the meaning of the mystical ampersand.

I recovered from the pneumonia before I learned to touch-type the top row of numbers and symbols, and to this day, I'm not able to use them without looking. But the lessons of those dark winter days became part of my blood and bone. Something in me awakened—a realization that publishing is the way a story finds its voice. Magic did happen. My stories were transformed into printed pages. To an emerging writer, this is the moment the world shifts.

It's doubtful that when my mother sat down with a bored, restless, slightly feverish child she meant to foster a future writer. She was probably just trying to minimize the whining and earn some peace and quiet.

But it was also her instinct, and her mothering style, to nurture creativity in a variety of fashions. When we were very small, my sister and I used to lie awake in the bedroom we shared and shout downstairs to our mother to play the piano for us. Invariably—and, I now realize, with remarkable good humor—she would oblige, playing and singing us to sleep on our old upright piano, the strains of “Brahm's Lullaby” and “Here We Go Looby Loo” winding up the stairs and into the darkening bedroom with its gabled windows and angled shadows lying across the wooden floor.

My mother believes in art in all its forms, but music was the thing that came most naturally to her. She believes in singing several times a day, with gusto and confidence. She gives the same value to “Little Brown Jug” as she does to an aria from “Cosi fan Tutte.”

She taught all her kids that the most important thing a mother can do for her child is to be her soft place to

fall, the place where her creativity can bloom and her spirit can soar. So much of the advice she gave me growing up is directly applicable to a writing career. To wit:

- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- This too shall pass.
- You know more than you think you know.
- Don't let the world tell you no.
- Keep things that matter, and fix them when they need repairs. This applies to old family heirlooms, your grade point average, and your relationships with other people, especially your marriage.
- When someone says an unkind word to you, treat it like a fart in church—hold your breath for 30 seconds, until the smell goes away. Then carry on.
- Be with people who make you happy.
- Use common sense.
- Don't ever finance something that will lose value with time. If you don't have enough money to buy a car without financing, then take the bus.
- Least said soonest mended.
- To thine own self be true.

These days, Mom is my number one fan. She unapologetically (and deservedly) trots me out to meet her garden club, her bridge club, the library committee, and the people at the dog park. And I always oblige with a smile on my face. Thanks, Mom.

This year for Mother's Day, Susan Wiggs is treating her mom to a spa day and a copy of I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence, by Amy Sedaris.

Business Briefs

What are Americans Reading and Where are They Buying? PubTrack Consumer, a new Bowker service, reports genre purchases over January to September 2007:

Fiction is 49% overall, with Mystery Detective 17%, Romance 11%, Espionage/Thrillers 4%, Science Fiction 3%, Fantasy 3%, and Horror/Occult 2%. As for where the survey participants are buying their books? Chain bookstores 33%, Internet 20%, Book clubs 12%, Mass merchandisers 9%, Wholesale Clubs 5%, Other Retail 5%, Independent bookstores 3%, Grocery Stores 3%, Discount stores 1%, Drugstores 1%

Pubtrack runs a weekly online survey from 10,000 consumers, asking American adult readers, 18 years or over, 60 to 75 questions. The genre survey does not include used book sales.

Sony In-house with Publishers. Random House is the latest publisher to issue Sony Readers to staff for reading galleys and other materials for employees. RH plans to reduce paper distribution by using the e-readers and joins Hachette, Simon & Schuster, and St. Martins in the effort.

Ninc Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY NANCY J. PARRA

Is your favorite novelist a Ninc member?

If not, then be sure to invite that writer to join Ninc! Applications accepted online at <http://www.Ninc.com>.

Want to find a bargain?

Check out our **Discounts Program** at [Ninc.com](http://www.Ninc.com).

There's still time to send in your entry for the contest to **Name the 2009 Conference**. First prize is \$50. Send your entry to Kasey Michaels: KCMI@aol.com

Do you want to choose Ninc's 2010 Board officers?

If you're interested in serving on next year's Nominating Committee, or would like to know more about it, please contact Pat McLaughlin at: PMcLinn@aol.com.

Don't forget NINC offers a critique group.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NINKcritique>

For writers willing to critique and discuss the critiquing process contact price100@aol.com



Insurance issues?

NINC has a group to discuss insurance issues for writers.

Contact price100@aol.com to join in on the discussion.

New membership dues policy going into effect for 2009! Non-US residents who get e-NINK will pay the same dues as US members. Only non-US members getting NINK in hardcopy will pay a surcharge for foreign shipping expenses. Due to postal rate hikes in 2007 and again in 2008, the foreign postal fee will be raised for 2009.

Would you rather switch than fight it?

If you're ready to switch over to electronic delivery of NINK, affectionately known as e-NINK, it's easy! Go to [Ninc.com](http://www.Ninc.com) and log in. On the Members Only page, click on "Update Your Membership Profile" under Member Services, in the right-hand column. Then scroll down your member profile page until you see, "I prefer to receive the Ninc newsletter electronically," and put a check mark in that box. Finally, scroll down to click on "Submit Changes," and you're done!

Committee News

A special **THANK YOU** to all the wonderful volunteers that helped make the 2008 NINC NY Conference a complete success!

Especially noteworthy: Lynn Miller, conference chair; Holly Jacobs, assistant conference coordinator; Dianne Despain, program director; Susan Gable, Registrar; Pat Potter, agent liaison; Vicki Lewis Thompson, editor liaison; Melinda Haynes, night owl coordinator; Colleen Admirand, hospitality coordinator; and our President Laura Resnick. Not to forget all the help from our various committee heads, webmaster and NINK Editors for 2007 and 2008.

Thank you, such a great event could not have happened without you.

Bookscan Offers Data Mining Resource for Ninc Members

Ninc has made arrangements with Nielsen Bookscan to make customized reports available to members at discounted prices. This is part of Ninc's ongoing discount program—check out other offerings on the Members Only page of www.Ninc.com.

Nielsen Bookscan is a point-of-sale reporting system that tracks sales of more than 300,000 unique ISBNs each week from a variety of retailers in the United States (not including Wal-Mart.) Their data on book sales is used by publishers, agents and media alike.

A few sample options for Ninc members will be listed at <http://www.ninc.com/> once the program goes live later this spring. But perhaps the greatest benefit of this program is that each member will have the additional option of contacting our Bookscan liaison to discuss what individual and specific information you are seeking, how Bookscan might crunch its data to provide that information and what it will cost.

Sure, you can get standard bestseller lists. Yes, at a discounted price, but no, that discount is not as

steep as for much larger groups that benefit from economies of scale. BUT what if you want a bestseller list that focuses on a specific sub-genre? For instance, you wouldn't have to take the generic "mystery" bestseller list; instead, you could specify the BISAC code (see the list of Fiction BISAC codes here:

http://www.bisg.org/standards/bisac_subject/fiction.html) for, say "Mystery & Detective: Historical" and purchase the bestseller list that is specifically targeted to your needs.

And there's so much more.

For example, an author can order a report for a single ISBN that tracks that book's sales for an entire quarter, by region, and even by specific book market! Wondering where you have your strongest sales? Did your sales go up the week after a publicity push in a particular part of the country? Want to know where to target your next book tour? A report like this can tell you, and for \$85 per ISBN.

Watch for more information at <http://www.Ninc.com> soon. ▲

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