

N I N K

September 2009
Vol. 20, No. 9

Can You Become A Kindle Millionaire?

BY LEE GOLDBERG

Greed, envy and procrastination drove me to experiment with making my out-of-print novels available in the Amazon Kindle Store.

Part of my ritual for avoiding writing is to browse blogs by my friends in the writing biz. One late May morning, I visited fellow Ninc member Joe Konrath's blog. He's the author of the successful Jack Daniels crime novels from Hyperion and he was sharing his experiences selling his unpublished work in the Kindle Store. I was astounded to learn that he'd earned \$6000 in royalties from Kindle sales in just three months.

Six grand.

"Amazon actually allows authors to upload their own ebooks on Kindle, set a price, and earn 35% royalties," Konrath wrote. "So why the hell isn't every author with a shelf novel or out-of-print book doing this?!?"

Good question. But there had to be a catch.

If there was, I couldn't find it. Amazon doesn't charge authors anything up-front to put their books in the Kindle Store. Like an agent, Amazon doesn't make anything until you do. Amazon takes its 65% cut from your sales. You don't even have to own a Kindle to do it.

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Surely, though, Konrath's success was a fluke, right?

Wrong.

That same day I visited screenwriter John August's blog, where he was discussing his experiences with *The Variant*, an original novella that he'd recently posted in the Amazon Kindle Store. He'd sold 3100 copies and made nearly \$1500 in just fifteen days. It didn't hurt that the *New York Times* wrote a piece about his novella, but still, wow.

I had to try this out for myself, especially since I was on deadline and under incredible pressure to get my latest book done. I couldn't think of a more productive way to procrastinate.

Continued on page 5 ▶

Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

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

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Complete committee member listings
are available on the website:

<http://www.ninc.com>

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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:

Laura Hayden, Montgomery AL
Kelley Armstrong, Aylmer ON
Rosemary Edghill, Poughkeepsie NY

New Members:

Kay Stockham, Minford OH
Alesia Holliday, Jacksonville FL
Barbara Ferrer, Jacksonville FL
Joe Konrath, Schaumburg IL
Colleen Gleason-Schulte, Brighton MI
Joanna Bourne, Charlottesville VA
Trish Jensen, Reedsville PA
Angie Fox Gwinner, Valley Park MO
Karen Ranney, San Antonio TX

Ninc has room to grow...

Recommend membership to *your* colleagues.

Prospective members may apply online at

<http://www.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 Pari Taichert with your mailing address and
requested number of booklets.

ptaichert@comcast.net

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.

September Song

BY KASEY MICHAELS, 2009 PRESIDENT

(with apologies to composer Kurt Weill and lyricist Maxwell Anderson, as well as Frank Sinatra, Willie Nelson, Jimmy Durante, and the other five hundred people who have made me cry whenever I hear this song)

I give up — where did the summer go? How did it get to be September already? Okay, so I'm writing this on August 1, but after January through July zoomed past so fast, I have a pretty good clue that August will have disappeared before I've barely noticed it was even here (and if anyone wants to diagram that sentence and point out where I went wrong — hey, knock yourselves out).

But Anderson said it best (and I contend that my man Frank sang it best):

*Oh, it's a long, long while from May to December
But the days grow short when you reach September
When the autumn weather turns the leaves to flame,
One hasn't got time for the waiting game.*

Or, to put it another way, time sure flies when you're having fun.

And that's the scary part. The *I'm having fun* part. That's what I don't want to wait until December to say. Being president of an organization like Ninc shouldn't be fun. It should be hard work. And, yes, it is that; Pollyanna I ain't.

But it's more than that, much more. I love my job. I moaned and kicked and was damn near physically dragged into it, not knowing a thing — pretty sure I didn't *want* to know a thing — and I'm having the time of my life. Go figure...

I'm not going to use this time (that short days thing) to go back over the past twenty months I've been on the Board, count out a rehash of what all the 2008 and 2009 Boards have done. Hey, you're here, right? You're here because you like it here, because Ninc is important to you and you're important to Ninc. This works for me — we don't need to haul out a laundry list of Member Services that keep you here, that are bringing in new members at a very satisfying rate.

Not that they aren't all nifty Member Services, because they are.

But what's really important, what I thought I understood but didn't really, really understand until I'd been tossed into the everyday workings of Ninc, is that *our most important Member Service is our membership*.

We're a pretty neat bunch.

I have never — *never* — asked for help and not gotten it. I have never encountered a group of people, ultimate professionals all, who are so endlessly imaginative, willing to go that extra mile, share their expertise, lend a hand, offer a shoulder, speak from the heart.

When you attend *Ninc Goes Platinum* at the end of the month, please know that over sixty Ninc members have had a part in putting this huge, ambitious conference together. Not one of them flinched when I asked for help, many of them took on jobs without even being asked, all of them have their hearts in Ninc and in wanting this conference to succeed, wanting Ninc to succeed.



Ninc is twenty years old now, and we're heading into our twenty-first year once again young, revitalized, energetic; evolving, growing. Not because of the Boards, the committee chairs — although, hey, I'm not going to say we didn't contribute, I'm not that modest — but because of the membership. The quality of our fellow members, the dedication and professionalism of our fellow members, the camaraderie of writer-to-writer that becomes more than that ... it becomes friend to friend.

The title of our conference this year, in full, is: *Ninc Goes Platinum, Celebrating Twenty Years of Excellence*. Excellence. Yes indeed. That's what you are. Excellent. Every one of you. And I wouldn't have missed this experience for the world.

*Oh, the days dwindle down to a precious few
September, November
And these few precious days I'll spend with you
These precious days I'll spend with you.*

Whether you like it or not...<G>

From Ninc's Publisher:

Thank you and Novelists, Inc. so very much for the beautiful flower arrangement to cheer our household in this difficult time. And please convey my appreciation for the many cards and words of condolence I received in recent days since the death of my husband, Lincoln.

I'm once again reminded just what a dear group of people the membership of Novelists, Inc. are.

Warmest regards, Sandy Huseby

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Who's Doing What?

Stephanie MacLean moves up from assistant to literary agent at Trident Media Group and will focus on romance, women's fiction and YA.

New editor at Perigee Prentice Hall Press is Maria Gagliano, moving from associate editor.

Richard Scrivener leaves Templar Publishing to begin his own literary agency, Rjscriv@yahoo.co.uk.

Audiobooks Down

Audiobook proceeds have dropped 47% so far this year, according to 14 publishers. Nielsen Bookscan also shows a 20% downswing in direct sales of audiobooks, although downloadable audios aren't included in this sales track.

More Apps for iPhone

Barnes and Noble has added iPhone apps that provide access to B&N-only content as well as links to over 500,000 store events. The free app does the same as other online functions — purchase items, views lists and reviews (including video) and now users can take a picture of book covers, reviews and ratings.

Sony Continues to Lower Prices

The new Pocket e-reader models are being marketed at \$199 for the 5" screen and \$299 for the 6" screen. Not only is the reader price coming down, the books' prices will match or beat the competition, with the newest titles offered at \$9.99.

Kindle Millionaire?

Continued from page 1 ▶ So I headed over to <https://dtp.amazon.com>, and followed their simple, step-by-step guide to Kindle publication. All you have to do is provide some basic information about your book, pick the price you want to charge, upload a cover image, and then upload your manuscript. The site quickly converts your manuscript file into the Kindle format. You can preview on screen how your book will look on a Kindle so you can check for errors and tweak your manuscript as necessary.

I just happened to have the final, copy-edited version of my out-of-print 2004 novel *The Walk* in a Microsoft Word file in a dark corner of my hard-drive. What did I have to lose? So on May 31, I uploaded the book to Amazon and priced the Kindle edition at \$1.89.

The whole process took me less than thirty minutes.

“Anyone who can operate a computer, and I mean that literally, can put a book in the Kindle store,” says Patricia Sierra, the author of three Avon YA titles who has several self-published books available on the Kindle, including *The Absence of Color*.

It was so fast and easy that I combined three of my previously published short stories, slapped the title *Three Ways to Die* on the package, and posted it as a Kindle edition, too, pricing it at 99 cents.

Within a few hours, the two titles were live on Amazon. I promoted the books by posting about them on my blog, my Facebook page, my Twitter page, my LinkedIn page, and on a few Amazon Kindle forums.

Almost immediately, copies of *The Walk* started to sell and positive reader reviews began to appear on the site.

I showed remarkable restraint and only checked my sales and royalties a dozen times a day.

Yes, you read right – your sales and royalty information is available online and constantly updated in real time. It’s worth uploading a book to the Amazon Kindle Store just to experience that.

I wasn’t getting rich, but I was selling about 10-20 copies of *The Walk* and two or three copies of *Three Ways to Die* a day.

But then I hit a snag. I started to hear from readers about several irritating formatting errors (random italics, inconsistent paragraph indents, etc.) in the text of *The Walk*. I was mortified.

I browsed the Amazon support boards and the Internet for solutions.

Here’s what I ultimately did: I opened my file in Word and saved it as a plain text file, which stripped out all the italics, wanted and unwanted. I then went through the book and added italics where they were supposed to be, highlighted the whole text, and did a universal change of the paragraph indents. That took a few hours. I saved it all as an HTM file and uploaded it to Amazon.

It worked. The formatting errors were gone and the book looked great. So I did the same with *Three Ways to Die*.

By the end of the month, I sold 444 copies of *The Walk* at \$1.89 each, earning me \$302.67 in royalties (I raised the price of *The Walk* to \$1.99 mid month for the heck of it and sales actually went up). I sold 54 copies of *Three Ways to Die* at 99 cents, earning a royalty of \$18.90.

By mid-July, I’d sold 250 more copies of *The Walk* and 26 of *Three Ways to Die*. Encouraged by those numbers, and with nothing to lose, I put my out-of-print novels *My Gun Has Bullets* and *Beyond the Beyond* in the Kindle Store. So far, they are selling about as well as *The Walk*.

I haven’t had nearly the same success as either Joe Konrath or John August, but it’s found money on out-of-print books and previously published short stories that weren’t earning anything for me anymore.

So while you won’t get rich doing this, it won’t cost you anything either, unless you pay someone to design a new cover for you or if you have to scan a print edition of your book into a Word file.

In essence, you have absolutely nothing to lose.

“Up until this moment in history, the only way to reach readers was through print,” says Konrath, who has become the pied piper of selling in the Kindle Store by virtue of his enthusiasm and his success. “But now I can finally reach readers on my own and I think that’s pretty cool. It’s even cooler that it’s paying my mortgage.” ▶

Kindle Millionaire?

That's great if you have out-of-print or rejected manuscript on your hard-drive and you're already an author with a following. But what if you're an un-

known, unpublished, aspiring author?

There are 300,000 titles currently available for the Kindle, with more being added every day. It's not easy to stand out. I believe you can't sell much, if anything, on the Kindle without a strong platform from which to promote your work.

I'm not famous, but at least I have a little more name recognition, thanks to my TV work and my *Monk* novels, than your typical, unpublished author...and my Kindle sales so far aren't phenomenal or particularly lucrative.

My short story collection *Three Ways to Die* is essentially an original, self-published book...and it has tanked. I've sold less than 100 copies of it as of this writing, earning me a whopping \$27.00 in royalties. I don't know if that's because it's self-published, or because the stories suck, or because Kindle readers just aren't interested in short story collections.

I don't think there's any real money in "self-publishing" original novels, or manuscripts rejected by publishers, on the Kindle Store if you aren't already an established name.

"It's cheap and easy, but it all comes down to marketing," says author Mark Terry, who was convinced by Konrath's experience to try selling one of his unsold novels on the Kindle Store. "In this case, you're marketing to that relatively small number of people with Kindles or who are willing to read a manuscript on a computer screen."

So far, Terry's sales have been slow, about a book or two a day. But his expectations are low — he just hopes to make back the \$100 he spent on the cover and expand the readership that buys his traditionally published novels.

John Passarella, whose work is published by Pocket and Simon & Schuster, had a novel that no publisher seemed to be interested in and that had "no immediate prospects." So he put it in the Kindle Store.

"At this point, I just wanted to get the novel out there and see if I could generate interest on my own."

It's too soon to tell if it's working.

"[The Kindle Store] isn't a get-rich-quick scheme," says Patricia Sierra. "It's an avenue for finding readers. When you're getting pennies on a book, even brisk sales add up to a piddling amount. Compared to having my titles languishing on a flash drive, yeah, the time and effort involved in putting them in the Kindle Store is worthwhile. But if you're measuring in terms of dollars? Nah."

The one big advantage the Kindle platform has for self-publishing is that it's free (at least in terms of no cash out-of-pocket), cutting the often predatory and dishonest vanity presses, with their outrageous fees, out of the picture entirely.

But that's leading to a glut of self-published titles in the Kindle Store.

"Like the POD industry, Kindle is getting diluted with over-priced, self-pubbed crap that doesn't sell," Konrath says. "But if you're a good writer, a smart marketer, and can live with selling your book for \$1.59, you can make some cash."

Stacey Cochran might be that rare person. He's is selling two of his self-published thrillers, *Claws* and *The Colorado Sequence*, in the Kindle Store for a dollar each.

"My novels haven't found a publisher and I have a big backlog of eleven written over the past fifteen years or so. My pattern is to query agents and editors after completing each new novel. Once everyone says 'not interested,' I self-publish the work," Cochran says. "I have tried virtually every possible manner of publishing available. POD, small press, short print run, online audio books, audio CDs, iTunes, etc. The Kindle is the single biggest break-through I've seen in terms of these three factors: reader enthusiasm, low financial risk, and positive financial return."

He says he sold 3000 copies his books in June in the Kindle Store, earning \$1000 in royalties, but not without incurring some expense in time and money. He's hired graphic artists for his covers, produced a YouTube trailer to promote his work, did a 45-blog book tour, launched <http://www.onlinebookreview.org>, and hosts a local cable-access show about writing in Raleigh, North Carolina. And that just for starters. But he believes his efforts have all been worthwhile.

"I had almost been in a total state of despair prior to Amazon Kindle because no one in our business seemed interested in giving me a break. Thirteen years is a long time to knock on doors and be told 'no thanks.' That Amazon Kindle readers are embracing my stories is the first taste of real success that I've had."

Joe Konrath is a big cheerleader for the Kindle Store, but he still believes that "the best way to reach the most people with your novel is still the old-fashioned way: print publishing. It's where you can make the most money. Luckily, for the moment, I am able to do both."

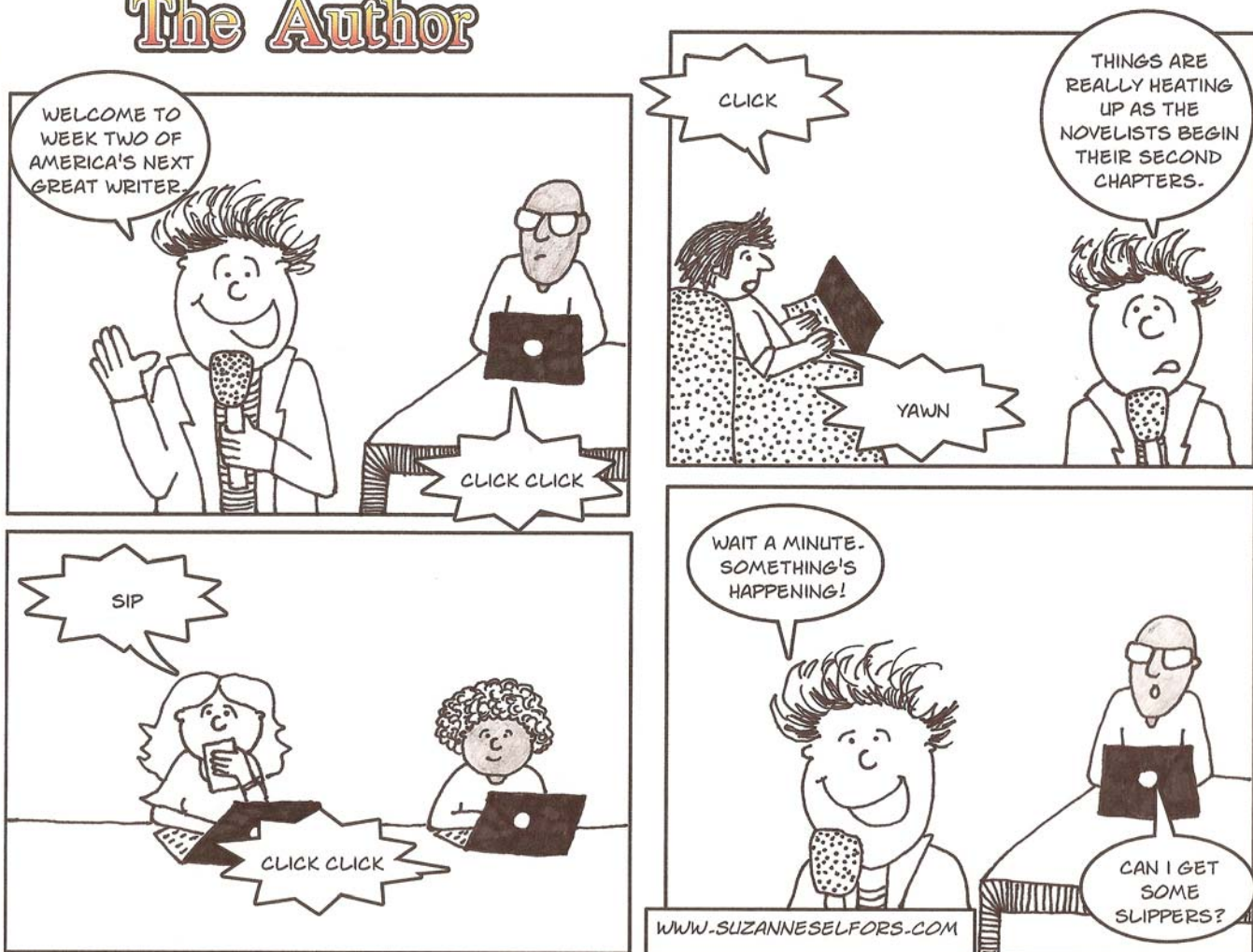
So is Kindle the future of publishing?

Patricia Sierra thinks so. "People clinging to physical books are clinging to the past. I say that as the daughter of a rare book dealer." And she believes that for authors, the opportunity to sell their books on the Kindle store at no upfront charge is a game-changer. "I don't know if I'd say it's a revolution, or just a bloodless coup that turns the publishing industry into a democracy."

Whether you think the Kindle is the future of publishing or not, selling in the Kindle Store offers Nincom members an easy, risk-free way to make some extra money, have some fun, and procrastinate when they should be writing. What more could any writer ask for?

Lee Goldberg is a two-time Edgar Award nominee whose many TV writing and/or producing credits include *Martial Law*, *SeaQuest*, *Diagnosis Murder*, *Spenser: For Hire*, *Nero Wolfe*, *Missing* and *Monk*. He's also the author of *My Gun Has Bullets*, *Successful Television Writing*, *The Man With The Iron-On Badge* and the *Diagnosis Murder* and *Monk* series of original mystery novels. He currently serves on the board of directors of Mystery Writers of America and is the co-founder of the International Association of Media Tie-in Writers.

The Author



Forensic Files

By D. P. Lyle, MD



How Would an Overdose of Codeine Be Treated?

Q: *My heroine has been given Tylenol with codeine by the bad guy, ingested unknowingly in a cup of coffee. She has an adverse reaction to codeine. Would the ER doctors give her any drugs to counteract this, and if so, which ones? Or would they simply let her sleep it off and monitor her?*

A: Codeine is an opiate narcotic, which means it is in the opium family. In fact, it and morphine are the two principle substances obtained from the opium poppy. As with all narcotics, it depresses many bodily functions in the user. The symptoms of codeine ingestion are giddiness, sleepiness, loss of balance and coordination, coma, and death. The drug depresses the respiratory center of the brain so that if too much is taken the victim lapses into a coma, stops breathing, and dies from asphyxia.

However, these effects would not be considered “adverse” reactions since they are predictable and consistent. An adverse reaction would be such things as an allergic reaction. And an allergy to codeine is not an uncommon occurrence. So, I’m not exactly sure what you mean by “adverse” reaction.”

If you mean an allergic reaction, the victim would develop hives, redness to the skin, wheezing and difficulty breathing (like an asthmatic attack), low blood pressure, and could slip into anaphylactic (allergic) shock and die. The treatment is to give an intravenous (IV) or subcutaneous (Sub-Q) injection of Epinephrine, IV steroids (such as Decadron or Solu-Medrol), and IV Benadryl. This should rapidly reverse the allergic effects. Each of these drugs might have to be given again, if the symptoms and signs of the allergic reaction reappear. The reaction should subside and after about 12 to 24 hours would be unlikely to recur.

If you mean that the person reacts to the codeine in the more predictable manner, then the treatment is directed toward breathing for the victim and reversing the effect of the narcotic. Breathing for the victim could be done two ways. An Ambu bag attached to a facemask would be easy and immediately available in any hospital. The paramedics also carry them. An ambu bag is football-shaped, made of rubber or some synthetic material, and works like a bellows. It is attached to a facemask and each squeeze of the bag forces air through the mask, which when held tightly against the victim’s face forces air into the lungs. The second method is to place an endotracheal (ET) tube. This is a plastic tube that is passed through the victim’s mouth or nose and into the trachea (wind pipe). Either an Ambu bag or a mechanical ventilator is then attached to the ET tube and air is rhythmically forced into the lungs. This must continue until the drug wears off.

To hasten this process, Narcan is given IV. This is a drug that blocks the effect of the Codeine. It works in about a minute. Again, the drug might have to be given several times over the first hour or so if the victim begins to slide back into a coma. Once the effects of the drugs wear off the victim would be essentially normal. Unless brain damaged occurred during the time he wasn’t breathing, that is.

D. P. Lyle, MD is the Macavity Award winning and Edgar Award nominated author of the non-fiction books, Murder and Mayhem, Forensics For Dummies, and Forensics and Fiction, and Howdunnit: Forensics: A Guide For Writers as well as the thrillers, Devil’s Playground and Double Blind. His next medical thriller, Stress Fracture, will be released early 2010.

He has worked with many novelists and with the writers of popular television shows such as Law & Order, CSI: Miami, Diagnosis Murder, Monk, Judging Amy, Peacemakers, Cold Case, House, Medium, Women’s Murder Club, and I-800-Missing. Visit The Writers’ Medical and Forensics Lab at <http://www.dplylemd.com> and check out his blog at <http://www.dplylemd.com/http://writersforensicsblog.wordpress.com/>

Nominees for 2010 Novelists, Inc. Officers

President-Elect:

Donna Fletcher is a *USA Today*-bestselling author of twenty-seven romance novels, mostly historical with a smattering of paranormals. In her twenty-year career, she has written for Kensington, Berkley and presently writes Celtic historical for Avon. Donna lives on the New Jersey shore with her one-eyed, black cat named Bear and a calico named Cleo, short for Cleopatra, not by any means a misnomer since she acts and expects to be treated like a Queen. Donna is currently serving as Chair of Ninc's important Outreach Committee.

Secretary:

Charlotte Hubbard first published in the confessions market in 1983, then advanced into book-length historical romance in '90. Then she got dumped—and reinvented the two of her, who now write inspirational romance as Charlotte Hubbard and erotica as Melissa MacNeal. She's learned to never say never. She's also learned that for her, Ninc is the writers org worth attending conferences for, although she also belongs to RWA and a regional guild. She oversaw the collage room at the last two cons. She's patient, and good at seeing several sides of an issue. She works and plays well with others. Charlotte currently serves as Ninc's Secretary

Treasurer:

Marcia Evanick has been writing for 20 years, and has sold 38 books. She works part time in the accounting field, and has the honor of holding the record for the longest serving Treasurer of the Denver Elementary School PTA. She's a mother to five, a grandmother to five more, and is an avid gardener. She currently shares her home with one husband, one rebellious teenager, two arrogant cats, one old Border Collie, and one very young Australian Shepard. She is the current 2009 Ninc Conference Registrar.

Nominating Committee Bios and Ballot ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

Nominees for the 2010 Nominating Committee

Denise A. Agnew *Romantic Times* Book Review Magazine called Denise A. Agnew's romantic suspense novels "top-notch" and her erotic romance *Primordial* received a TOP PICK from *Romantic Times* Book Review Magazine. Denise has written paranormal, romantic comedy, contemporary, historical, erotic romance, and romantic suspense novels. Denise lives in Arizona with her real life hero, her husband. Visit Denise's website at www.deniseagnew.com or email her at danovelist@cox.net.

Binnie Syril Braunstein is the published author of three novels and 49 short stories. She handles promotion and publicity for a growing number of authors through her firm, Press Kit Communications, creating press kits, bookmarks and other materials, excerpts, teasers, etc. Binnie believes in providing her clients with "champagne publicity on a lemonade budget." She also exercises her creative muscles in creating themed "Baskets by Binnie," which are often destined for prizes (in her authors' contests) or as raffle drawings in local or national charitable venues, such as Brenda Novak's auction to raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. Contact: BSBGC@aol.com.

Kathy Lynn Emerson is the award-winning author of *How to Write Killer Historical Mysteries* and of thirty-nine other books written under her own name (nonfiction, historical mystery, children's, and romance) and the pseudonyms Kaitlyn Gorton (romance), Kaitlyn Dunnett (contemporary mystery), and Kate Emerson (historical). She served Ninc in the (distant) past as a co-assistant editor of *Nink* and later as membership chair and has been a member of a previous nominating committee.

Ashley McConnell has been publishing professionally since the late 1980s. She has written nonfiction, poetry, technical journal articles, and actually been paid for horror, fantasy, and media-tie in novels, including for the television series *Quantum Leap*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Highlander*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Angel*. She lives in the southern US with four cats and two Morgan horses.

Cindi Myers has been a freelance journalist, a writing teacher and speaker, a novelist and editor of *Nink*, the newsletter of Novelists, Inc. She has even done all of the above at the same time, which may account for her absent-minded air at public gatherings. After serving on the Ninc board for two years, she agreed to be a candidate for the nominating committee after she was promised it did not involve a huge time commitment or talking on the phone.

Kristine Smith was born in Buffalo, NY, grew up in Florida, and graduated from the University of South Florida with a BS in Chemistry. She's spent almost her entire working career in manufacturing/R&D of one kind or another, and has worked for the same northern Illinois pharmaceutical manufacturer for way too long. She is the author of a science fiction series featuring documents examiner Jani Kilian, along with the odd short story, and was awarded the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in 2001.

Cheryl Zach has published about 50 books, including most recently historical romance written as Nicole Byrd—some with a writing partner, some alone. She has also written contemporary romance and YA mystery, fantasy and romance, as well as juvenile fiction and nonfiction, under her own name and other pen names. She serves on the board of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and as Chairperson of SCBWI Regional Advisors, overseeing the 60 + RAs in the U.S. She has lived in Europe, southern California and the southeastern U.S., has a BA and MA in English, and taught school before stopping long ago

PAPER BALLOT (OR YOU CAN VOTE ONLINE)

Member please sign here: _____

Please print name here: _____

Please mail this ballot to:

Election Committee, c/o Novelists, Inc., P.O. Box 2037, Manhattan, KS 66505

Ballots must be *received* by **October 15, 2009**.

ITEM 1: Election of 2010 Officers

YES NO

___ ___ Donna Fletcher, President-Elect

___ ___ Charlotte Hubbard, Secretary

___ ___ Marcia Evanick, Treasurer

ITEM 2: Election of 2010 Nominating Committee Members (Vote for no more than 5)

___ Denise A. Agnew ___ Ashley McConnell ___ Kristine Smith

___ Binnie Syril Braunstein ___ Cindi Myers ___ Cheryl Zach

___ Kathy Lynn Emerson

OR VOTE ONLINE AT <http://www.ninc.com>

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Place .
Stamp .
Here .

Election Committee
c/o Novelists Inc.
P.O. Box 2037



Kritters and Books and Questions, Oh, My!

We're just days away from the Novelists Inc 2009 conference and... excuse me? How many days, you ask? Honestly... I'm not counting 'em because I'd probably hyperventilate. So much to do, so much to check and double check. I haven't hauled out the suitcases yet, but I have begun the pre-packing. Oh, all right... I've gotten as far as making semi-sorted stacks on the bed in the guest room.

But I have lists! Lots and lots of lists! Printed lists and charts. I have tables and columns and arrows and circles. And lots of scribbling, too. With dramatic underlines and extra exclamation points. I even bought myself a pack of five different colored highlighters, and I've gone wild with them.

I also have a couple of scraps of paper taped to the edge of my computer monitor—memos from me to me—about a couple of things that are really important, things I need to remember to do before I head out to St. Louis to immerse myself in all things of the serious writer's world. They're memos to remind me that life isn't just about me, just about the conference, or about all things writerly and professional.

Some things are about the soul, about the joy in giving to others in need. The memos are about the two special "from the heart" projects we're doing in conjunction with our 2009 conference.

The first is the Kritters For The Kids Project, being so wonderfully handled by JOT volunteer Kristine Smith.

We're asking that each of the conference attendees bring with them a new, still-in-the-packaging toy for a child undergoing treatment at the St. Louis Children's Hospital. These kids don't want a trip to the moon or a day spent with Hannah Montana. All they want is something soft to hold, something to comfort them, some game to play or a little doll to dress or a car to push, anything to make them smile and forget where they are and what they're facing... even if it's just for a little while.

If you need help deciding what to get, you can go to the hospital website and choose a toy from their extensive needs list: <http://www.stlouischildrens.org/content/ourwishlistgiftsinkind.htm> And then click on "List of Items," which will take you to a PDF of suggested toys and other items.

A quick word or two about all the "how to" and "particulars" of this effort... The toys have to be new and in their original packaging because some of the children have seriously compromised immune systems and they don't need a plane, train, or car load of germs delivered to their bedside and tucked in beside them.

We'd prefer that you not wrap the presents as a gift unless you clearly label it as to what's inside. We're ▶

having beautiful gift tags printed up—complete with the Novelists Inc logo—and we'll see that they're attached appropriately before delivery to the hospital Sunday afternoon. (Kristine and Kasey will lead the contingent, of course. The hospital is handling all the promo for the day. Which isn't the point of the Kritters For The Kids Project, but it is very nice of them).

When you arrive at the Drury, all you have to do is hand over your toy to the helpful, smiling fellow Ninc member manning the registration desk. We'll gratefully handle it from there (Kristine is so organized, it's almost scary).

Now, for the folks who are flying and may not want to lug a packaged toy along with all their other gear.... Here's the plan. You can mail me your toy to one of our JOT volunteers (listed below), and we'll see that it gets there safely.

Jackie Kramer
1821 E. 75th Street North
Tulsa OK 74130

Charlotte Hubbard
3913 Rustic Lane
Jefferson City MO 65109

Leslie LaFoy
101 South Walnut
Peabody KS 66866

Kristine Smith
803 18th Street
Zion IL 60099

The second “from the heart” project we’re asking members to support is through the donation of a new and autographed book—yours, of course.

Kids aren't the only ones who appreciate the comfort of an escape... So do their parents, so do the nurses and the staff who care for them. And since transporting others to another time and place happens to be our occupational specialty ... Perfect, huh?

Needless to say, you don't have to be attending Ninc Goes Platinum in order to join in the giving. The kids and the nursing staff and the parents won't care if you're in St. Louis or not (We do, but you know what we mean). Long-distance smiles are every bit as warm and the hugs just as powerful. Simply pack up your purchased toy, your wonderful books, and mail them along. I can lug a whole carload of toys to the hospital. Just send them to me ... and please drop an email to Kristine at kris@kristine-smith.com, because she's keeping a spreadsheet of all the donations (told you she was organized!).

A toy. A book. Or both. It doesn't matter what you can give. All gifts will be deeply appreciated.

We thank you. And we look forward to seeing you in St. Louis!

All the Best, Leslie LaFoy
Conference Co-Chair

We're also collecting books by our *USA Today* and *NYT*-bestselling members, to display prominently during the conference, and then donate. Please bring one with you, or send those books to: Patricia Rice, 15222 Strollways Dr, Chesterfield, MO 63017-7756. Pat is also the dropping-off point for Goody Bag donations, by the way. We hear she's contemplating putting an addition on the house, thanks to Jennifer Stevenson's hardworking crew of JOT volunteers who have been out scrounging for goodies for those Goody Bags.

There's still time, brother (and sister). Ninc Does Forensics Thursday, October 1, and Ninc Goes Platinum October 2-4. Go to <http://www.ninc.com>, and register today!



WRITING is TAXING

By Diane O'Brien Kelly

The Circle of Life — Part One

Each phase of life brings unique experiences and a distinct set of tax issues. It's important to know which tax rules may apply at each phase to ensure you take advantage of tax savings opportunities. This article is the first in a two-part series providing an overview of tax issues you might face on life's crazy journey.

Swinging Singles. At the early phase of single life, many taxpayers earn small, entry-level salaries and have few itemized deductions. Setting up a Roth IRA can be especially beneficial to these taxpayers since earnings in the Roth are tax-free if distributed after retirement age. Thus, younger taxpayers can enjoy years of accumulated earnings tax free in their golden years if they start saving now. Contributions to an IRA or other retirement plan may also allow taxpayers with modest incomes to claim a Retirement Savings Contribution Credit.

Taxpayers in this phase of life may benefit from the first-time homebuyers credit or by taking penalty-free distributions of up to \$10,000 from an IRA to purchase their first home.

Taxpayers attending college may benefit from tax rules allowing for penalty-free withdrawals from an IRA and/or deductions or credits for higher education expenses.

Single taxpayers with good incomes often pay high taxes because singles tend to have fewer deductions. Besides saving for retirement, buying a house is one of the best tax-savings moves a single person can make.

See IRS Publication 530 "Tax Information for Homeowners," Pub. 590 "Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs)," and Pub. 970 "Tax Benefits for Education" at www.irs.gov.

Gettin' Hitched. People who change their name due to marriage must notify the Social Security Administration and provide documentation to have their names updated in the government's records. The failure to promptly update this info can cause problems with the IRS. For instance, if the name on a tax return does not match the name assigned to the reported social security number, a tax refund could be delayed.

A big issue married couples face is whether to file jointly. My earlier article entitled "Separate But Not Equal" covered this issue in detail. Most couples are better off filing joint returns, but it's a good idea to compare the tax due under both joint and separate returns to ensure you pay the lowest tax. Special rules apply to couples living in community property states (Arizona, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.) When filing separate returns, married people in these states generally must report their income in accordance with how their state legally assigns the income, regardless of which spouse earned the income. See Pub. 555 "Community Property."

Newlyweds may discover their spouse has an outstanding tax liability or child support obligation incurred before the marriage. A tax refund claimed on a joint return can be seized in its entirety to satisfy an obligation owed by one spouse only. However, the non-obligated spouse can receive his or her share of a joint refund by filing Form 8379 "Injured Spouse Claim and Allocation."

Along Comes Baby . . . Children pose many tax issues. Parents should make sure to claim a personal exemption for their child, the child tax credit/additional child tax credit, and the dependent care credit. Having kids can also qualify taxpayers for the earned income tax credit at higher levels of income than childless taxpayers. See Pub. 501 "Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information," Pub. 503 "Child and Dependent Care Expenses," Pub. 972 "Child Tax Credit," and Pub. 596 "Earned Income Credit."

Parents must file returns for children whose income exceeds an annual threshold amount, and a minor's unearned income may be taxed at the parents' rate if the income exceeds a specified figure. See Pub. 929 "Tax Rules for Children and Dependents."

WRITING is TAXING

Adopting a child may provide a tax credit. See Form 8839 “Qualified Adoption Expenses.” In addition, medical costs for fertility treatments, such as in vitro fertilization, may be deductible, subject to certain limits. See Pub. 502 “Medical and Dental Expenses.”

Taxpayers who hire nannies or housekeepers to work in their home may be considered an employer and could be required to withhold and pay social security taxes. Unemployment tax may also be due to both the federal and state government. Withholding of federal income tax is optional. See Publication 926 “Household Employers

Tax Guide.”

Parents can reduce taxes by paying for their child’s private elementary or secondary school expenses through a Coverdell Education Savings Account. Parents can also reduce taxes when they save for their children’s college expenses by buying U.S. savings bonds, or by contributing to a Section 529 Plan or Coverdell Education Savings Account. Parents may also be entitled to tax credits and deductions for higher education expenses. See Pub. 970 “Tax Benefits for Education.”

Got a working teen? Even if your teen earns less than the annual amount required for filing a return, compute a Form 1040EZ anyway. The taxes withheld from paychecks may exceed any tax owed, thus entitling your teen to a refund. If teens don’t file a return, they may unintentionally forfeit a refund.

Many taxpayers with kids sell their starter home and move to a larger house. Such taxpayers may qualify to exclude gain on the sale of their home. Single taxpayers can exclude up to \$250,000 of gain and married joint filers can exclude up to \$500,000 if the home was owned for at least two years prior to the sale and the home was used as a main home for periods adding up to two years during the last five years. There are some exceptions to the use rule in cases of disability. A common misconception is that gain on the sale of a home must be reinvested in another home to escape taxation. While this rule was in effect years ago, reinvestment is no longer required. See Pub. 523 “Selling Your Home.”

As with any change in life, it’s smart to take a look at your withholding or estimated taxes when you have a new child. Given the tax benefits of the additional exemption and childcare credit, you may be able to reduce your withholding or estimated payments.

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

Business Briefs

No U.S. Sequel for Holden Caulfield – Round One

A preliminary injunction was granted to J.D. Salinger in the case of Fredrick Colting’s sequel to *Catcher in the Rye*. The federal judge’s decision cited harm to Salinger’s market for any derivative works. Colting’s lawyers argued under the exception of parody for fair use, but the court ruled the limited use of parody wasn’t enough. Salinger did not participate in the hearing, but could be deposed if Colting wins an appeal. If Salinger refuses to come forward, the case — if continued — could be dismissed. *60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye* is on sale in Europe.

OpenAccess from Hachette

Hachette’s newest web site feature is OpenAccess, created to allow readers to read full content from select titles — backlist, current and forthcoming titles for 30 days. Authors must give permission for titles to be included. Purchase of the books will not be direct, although the publisher is working on an e-sales option.

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



Clueless

“Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment. Cleverness is mere opinion. Bewilderment brings intuitive knowledge.”

—Jalaluddin Rumi, 13th century poet and mystic

It occurred to me recently that whenever another writer says, “I’ve got a book coming out this week, so I’ve been spending a lot of time on promotion lately,” I don’t really know what that means.

This is because I live in a fog of bewilderment and seldom have any idea what’s going on. (Until the day I finally watched an episode of the show, about halfway through its third season, I thought the *X-Files* was a kind of breakfast cereal. Yes, really).

I’m guessing that “promoting my book” probably means doing things like enduring book signings, sending out a newsletter, mailing postcards or bookmarks, blogging about the book, holding up the book cover in front of convention audiences and oh-so-casually dropping its title into your panel discussion every thirty seconds, creating a book trailer and posting it somewhere online, telling your 587,659 friends on Facebook that the book is available, and so on.

So when you (I’m using the generic “you” here, though some of “you” know who “you” are because “you” actually talk to me) tell me you’re promoting your new book, these are the sort of things I vaguely assume you mean; but I’m really just guessing and, in truth, when I nod knowingly and assume an intelligent facial expression, I’m faking it.

This isn’t because I’m Too Good To Promote Books or have a negative opinion about promotion; it’s because I have no idea what’s going on.

Similarly, I was listening to a talk recently by a successful commercial novelist discussing what we call “onion” characters and “mushroom” characters and a third kind of character whose name I’ve forgotten, so I don’t know what we call it, as well as “patchwork” writers and other kinds of writers whose sobriquets I’ve also already forgotten. And I sat there thinking, “We call them that? Really? Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

I’m always the last to know.

Writers talk shrewdly about their “numbers,” but whenever I’ve asked an agent or editor for my “numbers,” I get mysterious answers along the lines of, “That cannot be known,” and “There’s no way of knowing that,” and “There is so such information.”

You probably think I’m kidding.

When one of my (now former) agents quoted one of my (now former) editors describing the

The Mad Scribbler

sales of my previous book as “disappointing,” I pointed out that the book had earned out 50% above its advance, which struck me as the opposite of “disappointing.” The agent asked what made me think it had sold that well; I cited the figures on my royalty statement. The agent said I must be reading the statement wrong. I pointed out that I was being paid royalties for those sales, which suggested there was some validity to the figures; the agent said I didn’t know what I was talking about.

On another occasion, a different (former) agent relayed to me the complaint of a different (former) editor at a different (former) house that they had overpaid me in royalties. I pointed out that, er, I had never received a royalty payment from that house, and my royalty statements clearly indicated the book had never earned out. The agent assured me I didn’t know what I was talking about.

Clearly, *someone* here doesn’t understand numbers; and it pleases various industry professionals with whom I’ve worked to assume that it’s me.

So I’m dead impressed and somewhat mystified by all the writers I meet who know what their “numbers” are and can make sense of them. “Numbers” are a great unwashed mystery in my foggy little world.

However, it’s not just the business that bewilders me. So does writing. When other writers tell me they’re going to go back over their manuscripts to “layer in the metaphors,” or “increase the sexual tension,” or “tighten the pace,” I make inarticulate noises of assent that I hope will be interpreted as, “Oh, yes, I know exactly what you mean, because I do that all the time to *my* manuscripts.” But, actually, all I really know how to do is rewrite and rewrite and rewrite and rewrite until I stop seeing stuff that looks wrong, and then I’m done.

As it happens, I feel like this wherever I go and whatever I do, not just when I talk to writers, agents, and editors.

Someone in the real world can talk to me for twenty minutes, clearly familiar with me and my friends or my family... and I would swear on my grandma’s grave that I’ve never seen this person before in my life. I have shown up for dinner parties at the right house on the wrong night; and I have shown up on the right night at the wrong place. I have tried to get into the wrong car, the wrong apartment, and the wrong mailbox. On many occasions, I’ve thrown away my dinner plate and put my napkin in the sink.

My excuse for all this, of course, is that I live most of my life inside my intensely vivid imagination, so at any given moment, I am being marauded by sorcery-wielding bandits or plotting an escape from a maximum security prison. And it’s understandable, under such circumstances, that I can’t tell the difference between the kitchen sink and the garbage can.

So, for me, feeling like a clueless outsider in the writing/publishing world, after twenty-one years of working professionally in it, seems perfectly normal. After all, I *always* feel clueless and uninformed. (I still haven’t the faintest idea what an Xbox is, though I believe it’s unrelated to the *X-Files*). I almost *never* understand what’s going on around me. So why should my professional life be any different than my personal one, in that respect?

It has, however, come to my attention that there are some writers among us who feel clueless and confused, and who think it’s just *them*.

So, as a social service to my profession, I am hereby going public with my own cluelessness. You are not alone! Take heart. There’s also *me*.

And I bet you’d feel all better now, if you had any idea what was going on.

Laura Resnick’s current release is *The Purifying Fire*. Her next book is *Doppelgangster*. You can find her on the web at www.LauraResnick.com.

Ninc Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY JACKIE KRAMER

At Forensic Day in October, we have the rare privilege of welcoming six experts in forensics to answer specific questions about manuscripts. "So, I Have This Guy I Want to Kill" will be the last panel of the day. To facilitate the flow of information, we're asking that questions be submitted in writing ahead of time.

If you need to ask something from the forensic pathologist, forensic anthropologist, homicide detective, trauma PA, or Dr. Lyle, who is an expert in lots of stuff, please submit to me by September 30. My email is diva-d@swbell.net.

Due to time constraints I cannot guarantee that all questions will be asked. I'd also appreciate it if you'd let me know if one of the earlier talks already answered the question so we don't waste time. But may I remind you that so far we have had every speaker accept our invitation to the reception? I can't think of anything that loosens a cop's tongue up faster than free food and drink. Sure works for me.

Remember. The important date is:

SEPTEMBER 30: deadline for questions for all the forensic participants except the FBI. The deadline for her is September 15.

Eileen Dreyer

Got any news or information for the Bulletin Board?

Send it to Jackie at jackiekramer7@netscape.com

If you have anything at all you're interested in around St. Louis... history, architecture, B&Bs, wine country, biking, traveling the Mississippi (the Great River Road on the east side of the river is magnificent) etc, just email Shirl Henke at shhenke@att.net or Pat Rice at price100@charter.net or Eileen Dryer at Eileendreyer@eileendreyer.com .

Did you remember that the deadline for presenting questions to the FBI for the Forensic Day in October is September 15? If you didn't, it's because you weren't on the Ninclink loop when Eileen sent the reminder. To stay in the loop, subscribe to Ninklink, send a blank email to:

NINCLINK-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

At <http://www.ninc.com>, you can find archives of old *Nink* issues, and list articles by subject. Go there, sign in, then go to the Member Services menu, then the 'Nink Index' to find all the articles compiled by JOT volunteer Denise Lynn.

Filedby Goes Pre-Pub

Authors can now include a pre-pub portion to their subscription to Filedby, a website service for authors, for advanced promotion. This new feature is included in the Premium (\$99 annually) and Premium Plus (\$399 annually) memberships. With Filedby, authors can create bios, upload photos, provide all necessary book information, purchase links and have links to social networking sites. Readers can have “access” to authors through a message wall.

Casablanca has DRM free eBooks

Sourcebooks is partnering with Smashwords to produce DRM-free ebooks for 14 romance titles from Casablanca for sale at \$6.99. The titles will be available in nine formats at the company web site <http://www.smashwords.com>.

Ditto Book Hits eReader Market

The latest eReader entry is Ditto (Digital Interface Total Text Organizer) and retails at \$249. It has a 6" black and white e-ink screen, a 2GB storage memory and reads both text and pdf and plays MP3 sound files. Ditto supports epub format titles, which Kindle does not. This model is not a wireless device and does need a computer and USB connection to load titles downloaded from a PC or laptop. This may be the first shot fired in serious competition to Kindle since several other companies — Plastic Logic, iRex Technologies and CrunchPad — are also looking to enter the market.

Competition for Amazon from “Across the Pond”

The U.K. bookseller has expanded to the U.S. with <http://bookdepository.com>. With 2.4 million titles, the company has more titles than Amazon and is offering lowered pricing on a percentage of their inventory. The stock is in England for now but this may change as the new venture continues.

New Agency

Michael Stearns (HarperCollins Children’s Book and more recently Firebrand Literary) is partnering with Chris Richman and Danielle Choitti to form Upstart Crow Literary <http://www.upstartcrowliterary.com>. They are taking submissions. Stearns and Richman will work with children’s authors while Chiotti will take fiction and non-fiction, targeting women’s fiction, non-fiction for women and YA. Their client list includes Deb Lund and Kurt Cyrus, and new acquisitions from Jacqueline West and Matt Myklusch.

THE RESNICK/MALZBERG DIALOGUES

Writing Myths: Part I

BY MIKE RESNICK AND BARRY MALZBERG

Mike: I suppose it's not surprising in a field that spends so much time creating and transmogrifying myths that a number of myths still exist about the nature of the business itself. Some of them exist because of a simple misunderstanding of the rules of the game, some exist due to willful ignorance on the part of people who don't want to know better, some exist because nobody's taken the time to puncture them.

That's where we come in, needles at the ready.

And since I'm writing the opening section here, I suppose I might as well address the first myth, which is that everyone who signs a book contract fully intends to honor it to the letter, and that indeed there are dire punishments in store for those who don't.

Let's take the writer's end first. He promises to deliver his novel by a certain date. No novel has ever been rejected for being a week late. Or a month. Or a year. Some have been delivered as much as a eight years late, in this field, during the tenure of 80% of the current SFWA membership, and have been accepted and published. It's just not a very meaningful clause, though everyone negotiates it as if it was. (I'll allow this caveat: it's probably meaningful on media tie-ins, since the life of a movie or television show is limited, and the interest of a fan of said movie or show even more so.)

The writer promises to deliver a minimum number of words. Meaningless. Some old-time writers like myself figure 10 words a line, 25 lines to a page, 1,000 words every 4 pages—the rule of thumb for those of us who learned on typewriters. Nowadays your computer can do a word count . . . but even here not all computers count the same: some count non-trivial spaces, some count all the characters and divide by 5, some do the same but divide by 6. Makes no difference. If you promise 100,000 words, no one's going to reject your manuscript for coming in at 91,500 words. Or 125,000 words, for that matter. And everyone knows that going in.

Now, at the publisher's end, he promises to pay you a signature advance, which is to say, a certain amount of money, usually half the entire advance, the day he receives your signed contract. Anyone you know ever get it that fast? Or within a week? Or within two weeks? Ditto for the acceptance fee, which is usually the other half of the advance. The day the editor says, "I accept this manuscript for publication," that check is supposed to be cut and in the mail to you. Know anyone who ever got it three days later? A week? Three weeks?

(About three years ago I got the delivery check five weeks after handing in a manuscript. This was so incredibly fast and unexpected that when I ran into the publisher at Worldcon I thanked him for the prompt payment. When I told him I'd only waited a little over a month for my payment, he was clearly distressed and mentioned, quite seriously, that he was going to give his accounting department hell for paying me that quickly.)

Then there's the royalty statement. Most contracts call for two statements a year—February 1 (for the second half of the prior year) and August 1 (for the first half of the current year). I don't think any writer seriously expects to see that statement, and any check that accompanies it, before early May and ▶

early November, frequently later. A few editors, years ago, explained to me that publishers knew that you couldn't get a suit into court for four to five months, so it became an industry standard for mass market houses. If they hang onto your money for 14 weeks or so, and both sides know up front that they're going to do it, you won't waste the

money on a lawyer since the cause of your legal complaint will evaporate before you get to court—and in the meantime, the publisher gets an average of seven months' float on the writers' overdue royalties every year.

I know it, you know it, every writer who's been around the block knows it, yet we continue to negotiate contracts as if both sides intend to honor the letter of the law.

Have you got a particular myth you'd like to hold up to the light?

Barry: Oh, there are so many myths sustaining (and in other cases destroying) writers. Like Willie Loman we live on a smile and a shoeshine, most of us. Let me synoptically and only partially count the ways:

1) Deliver before the due date on the contract, in fact deliver way early. The editor will be awed by your professionalism, your speed, your virtuosity and will take you ever more seriously.

No she won't. Deliver early and you must be some kind of contemptuous hack, deliver very early and you must be some magnified kind of contemptuous hack. Also, the material—because of the speed of delivery—must be inferior. Delivering exactly on time represents a kind of professionalism admired in the 1950's and 1960's, tolerated now, delivering late means that the work has been carefully tuned and agonizingly perfected, deliver very late and the work must be of the highest quality.

2) Your book publisher and you are on the same side; you both want to sell as many copies as possible.

Although the absolute opposite may not be true, the interests of the publisher and writer of a genre science fiction or fantasy novel are certainly not confluent. The author wants to sell as many copies as possible, the publisher is more interested in controlling losses and eliminating risk. That means for most genre novels a ceiling on the number of copies printed, and of course a ceiling on the expenditure for advertising (which for most books is regarded as a waste of money). The writer wants to win, the publisher wants not to risk and sometimes—in the case of a book which comes in far below editorial expectation—wants to publish, if at all, as minimally as possible.

3) A contract with a guaranteed advertising budget is a wonderful document to which every writer should aspire and for which every writer and agent should fight.

"Advertising guarantees" are unenforceable and in most cases are never met, sometimes completely ignored. What is the writer going to do, sue the publisher who holds the writer's work hostage? Something like matrimonial law; maybe you *do* want to go to court to prove your ex-spouse-to-be is a monster or an idiot or both, but what precisely will this gain for you? The lawyers win.

4) Option clauses are meaningful.

No, option clauses are not meaningful. Publishers—in the case of writers whose work has failed or whom they wish to send away—pay them no heed. And writers—well, as Hunter Thompson pointed out almost 40 years ago in a letter to Scott Meredith explaining how much he hated the publisher of his *Hell's Angels* and how badly he wanted to get away, "Any writer with any brains at all can figure out a way to break an option clause." (Hint: submit 100 blank or obscenity-laden pages and announce that this is your next novel.)

I could go on. And on and on. But let us talk of myths—wasn't it Vonnegut who called them Foma?—in a more embracing sense. How lush did you imagine, at 14, the sex life of your favorite writers to be or have been?

Mike: I've noticed over the past third of a century a certain fascination on your part with the sex lives of

science fiction writers. I personally think watching grass grow and listening to plaster dry both have more to recommend them, and there's probably a lot more frenetic activity in snail races.

Before I take on the next myth, I do want to address the last one—option clauses—for a moment.

In most cases they're totally meaningless, but a bad one can be a real pain in the ass. Give the publisher an option on your next book, to be exercised 60 days after publication of your current one . . . and suddenly you've just given away your right to sell anything, even a serious scientific study of the sex lives of writers, until two months after the book you are working on comes out, which with slog times for writers and lag times for publishers, may effectively keep you out of the marketplace for three years or more.

(What you want to do, of course, is give the publisher an option on your next science fiction book, or limiting it still farther, on your next science fiction book in that particular series, to be exercised within 30 or 60 days not of publication but of delivery of your current manuscript. A publisher will want the broadest option he can get; a writer will want to sign the narrowest one he can get away with.)

OK, another myth. I am a new writer. I am having a difficult time breaking in (or breaking in again). I try to figure out what will make me more acceptable to all those newcomer-hating publishers, and I say: Aha! I have it! I will sell my book for *less* than the publisher regularly offers to new writers, but in exchange I will demand a higher royalty rate. This will make me more affordable than all the other future Willises and Silverbergs trying to sell to the same house, and they will be so happy to get me for that price that they'll take the savings and use it to promote me, and in the long run my greater sales and higher royalty rate will make me more money than I'd have gotten with a standard contract.

Now, believe it or not, that's not a straw dog I set up just to knock down. I can't tell you how many times I've heard that very same strategy voiced by newcomers, each of whom is convinced that it can't fail.

So much for the myth. Out here in the real world, just the opposite is true. You let a publisher get you for a tiny advance and the one thing he knows up front is that he can't lose money unless he buys you a Frank Frazetta cover, promotes you with full-page ads in all the prozines, and prints 300,000 copies of your book. So, being a reasonable corporate entity, he does none of those things: he pays you the \$1,750 or whatever you asked for, gives you cheap generic cover art, prints 8,300 paperbacks, and is happy to offer you a 12% royalty rate with the comforting knowledge that he'll never have to shell out a single cent in royalties.

The trick, contrary to the myth, is not to make yourself so cheap that a publisher will jump at the chance to publish you, but to make yourself and/or your package expensive enough that your publisher stands to take a loss if he *doesn't* get out there and promote the hell out of the book.

As for selling yourself cheap, I have to point out that you're not unique. Writing has this much in common with acting and prostitution: there are always talented amateurs willing to give away for free the very same commodity that you're trying to sell.

Mike Resnick is the all-time leading award winner, living or dead, of short fiction (according to Locus). He has won five Hugos, a Nebula, and other major awards in the USA, France, Japan, Poland, Croatia and Spain. He is the author of more than 50 novels, 200 short stories, and two screenplays, and the editor of more than 50 anthologies. He is currently the executive editor of Jim Baen's Universe. His work has been translated into 22 languages.

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