

NINK

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Cyberstalking... The Personal Side of the Story

BY HOLLY JACOBS

Last month's article on cyberstalking and harassment dealt with the legal aspects of the crime, and steps to take if it happens to you. This month, it's more personal. We're talking about the emotional side of the issue. Some of the harassment online is illegal, and stalking always is, but sometimes the online issues that hurt the most are somewhere in a shade of gray—somewhere between unkind and illegal.

Richard Gere received repeated phone calls, faxes and emails from Ursula Reichert-Habbishaw, a 51-year-old mother of four. She told him she wanted to be with him. Eventually, she escalated and showed up at his office. Gere isn't a writer, but he is in a public occupation that leaves him vulnerable to mentally unstable people.

Authors are public figures as well.

While most of us aren't hounded by the paparazzi, readers can feel as connected to us through our stories as fans feel connected to their favorite movie stars. Stephen King, for instance, dealt with an out-and-out stalker who came to his home requesting a meeting with King and wouldn't leave even after he was told he could be charged with criminal trespass. The police were needed to remove him. Scary stuff and definitely illegal.

But not all online harassment escalates to the point of being illegal, even if it all is frightening and painful to the person being targeted. When I asked Ninc members about their experiences with online stalkers, one anonymous writer (I'll call her "Betty") sent me the following story:

"I was attacked online in a venue I'd never even visited, by someone I've never met, who took my words and actions completely out of context, clearly with the intent of inciting an attack on me. And it worked very well. In this venue well known for its negativity toward authors, I witnessed the most insane "angry mob" mentality I've ever seen—

if I had been in physical proximity with these women, I sincerely would have feared for my safety. To respond to an attack in a venue that promotes negativity and hate only makes one an even bigger target, so once the attack was underway, I was pretty helpless and could only wait for it to end.

"The days it took for that to happen, however, were very painful—stomach-wrenching, in fact. I couldn't work, I couldn't sleep, and I could barely eat while knowing terrible things were being spewed about me by people who know nothing about me. I felt as if I'd been brutally slandered, and the rank injustice of it was maddening. I stayed quiet, but I've seen other authors in this position be pressured into apologizing (when they'd done nothing wrong) and then raked over the coals even

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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: JoAnn Grote
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New Applicants:

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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.
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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.

Six Impossible Things

You'll have to indulge me this month, because I'm going to ramble. Okay, I'm going to ramble more than usual. Maybe because it's spring, and as I write this my yard is bursting with color and buzzing life — and I'm dopey with antihistamines. Also because it hit 93 today, and that's just too damned hot for early April in North Carolina. Seriously.

Anyway. You all know the bit of a quote referenced in the title of this month's ramblings. From *Alice in Wonderland* or *Alice Through the Looking Glass*—I can never keep those straight. "I've remembered as many as six impossible things before breakfast," one character says.

So have I.

We all, as writers, believe in impossible things, really. We believe the people walking around in our heads and talking to us are real. (Well, that's truer for some of us than others, I suppose.) We believe in our alternate realities, our worlds where happily-ever-after is the rule rather than the exception, and the good guys mostly win, and a hero can turn into a werewolf during a full moon and still be considered a hero.

Our mysteries are laid out with a neat precision seldom seen in messy real life, our treasure maps lead to real treasure, and right usually triumphs.

If we want it to, of course. Because that's the fun thing about believing in impossible things in our writerly worlds: we get to be God.

Now, before anybody jumps in with objections about characters taking over and plots twisting unexpectedly, let me say here that I write by the seat of my pants and am frequently surprised by what happens, so I get that. Still, to a large extent, we do get to play God—and create impossible things that other people believe in.

Think about that for a minute. We create worlds and people them with characters we believe are interesting, and then we take strangers by the hand and say, "Come with me. Meet these people. See this world."

And they do.

If you haven't paused today to think about just how remarkable that is, do it now. Because—and here's the point of my rambling—with all the uncertainties of publishing, with all the ups and downs, with the daily grind of writing because we have to, because there's a deadline, and never mind if we don't feel like it, with all of that, we still get to do something amazing, something very, very few people will ever get the chance to do.

We take people into the impossible worlds we create, and we make those worlds real for them.

I've received letters and emails from people sitting at the bedsides of sick relatives, thanking me for helping them forget their anxiety and sorrow for an hour or two. Letters from students thanking me for inspiring them to try telling their own stories. Letters from people in soul-deadening jobs thanking me for taking them to a different world for a while, just a little while. Notes from busy housewives with a baby on one hip and a preschooler yelling for attention, thanking me for letting them escape now and then from everyday life.

We get to do that.

I think we sometimes forget what a privilege it is, even a gift. And we really shouldn't. We should pause now and then to remember. Read those notes I hope you're keeping in what my agent calls the 'Blue Monday' file, the ones that make you smile no matter how many times you read them. Pause a moment when some starry-eyed kid comes to a signing and asks breathless questions about writing and publishing, ▶

President's Voice

and make an effort not to quash that innocent enthusiasm. Read a really good book by someone else, and pause to relish the realization that just as that author

moved you, your work has moved others.

Pause to be grateful for an ability that is really, truly, rare.

And don't just be grateful because of the effect you have on the lives of others. Be grateful selfishly. I know it sounds sappy, but the bald truth is that we grownups get to play make-believe every time we sit down at our desks. We can be trained in exotic jobs, live in exotic places, have perfect bodies in perfect clothes and perfect lovers who only want to please us.

We get to be freakin' superheroes if we want to.

Or, you know, werewolves.

And that's just flat-out fun.

Six impossible things before breakfast? I don't have to wait for breakfast, and I'm betting you don't either. Just give us five minutes and the kernel of an idea, and we can whip up an impossible world, or at least the bare bones of one. It'll take a little longer to flesh it out.

But so what? Those people are waiting for us to take them by the hand and lead them into our worlds, so we'll take the time we need to get the job done right. It's work, none of us would deny that.

But I happen to believe it's the best job in the world. And I think, nowadays especially, it's a really good idea to stop now and then and appreciate just how lucky we are to be able to do it.

— **Kay Hooper**

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

More for Kids from Up North

Canadian Cormorant Books has announced Dancing Cat Books, a new imprint for middle grade and YA readers, which will include literary fiction, nonfiction and poetry. The imprint's first three titles are scheduled for the last quarter of 2010, with plans for eight books in 2011 and 10 titles in 2012. Gail Winskill will be the publisher.

Borders Avoids Bankruptcy?

The struggling Borders Group has repaid a \$42.5 million loan due this month from its largest investor, William A. Ackman's Pershing Square Capital Management and has secured a new \$700 million asset-based credit line maturing in March 2014 from banks including Bank of America (replacing an existing revolving credit line that would have matured in July 2011). Borders also closed on a new \$90 million term-loan credit line that will mature in March 2014.

No Penguin on Amazon after April 1?

Amazon.com has signed new deals with Simon & Schuster and HarperCollins, allowing them to set higher retail prices on electronic books—mirroring the terms that Apple is offering publishers for e-books on the new iPad—but has yet to reach a deal with Penguin. Amazon is currently selling Penguin e-books released prior to April 1, but has stopped selling new ones. The online retail giant has also—temporarily—removed the buy button from e-books from Lagardere SCA's Hachette Book Group.

BEA Provides DIY

New for 2010, the BEA DIY (Do It Yourself) Authors Conference & Marketplace for aspiring writers interested in publishing or self-publishing will be held May 24, before BEA opens. Sponsored by Gotham Writers' Workshop, participants include Amazon, Author Solutions, Blurb.com, FastPencil, Filedby, and SharedBook.

Cyberstalking

Continued from page 1 ▶

further for giving an “insincere apology.” Basically, once something like this begins, you really are at the mercy of your tormentors and nothing you can do or say will fix it.”

Other writer-related incidents ranged from having bad reviews flamed at them through online bookstores and venues, to being hounded by rabid “fans” for any number of reasons.

What makes someone target others online, whether they’re simply playing with their emotions, or sending out hateful comments/reviews, or actually bullying, harassing or stalking them?

Not all stalkers are out to get you...

Some people come onto social sites not to stalk or harass, but for an “emotional fix.”

Susan Gable, who has a psychology degree, points out, “Besides online stalking, there’s also potential for you to become involved with someone who ‘plays you’ with falsehoods about things happening to them—medical issues, personal traumas, etc.”

The people who perpetrate these “hoaxes” can actually have a form of mental illness called fictitious disorders (of which Munchausen and Munchausen by proxy are two forms—and there is a new term: Munchausen by Internet). However, there are also those who are just the technologically upgraded conman, or drama queen.

“It’s one thing to empathize with people,” Susan says, “It’s another to be taken for a ride by them. The emotional backlash in the ‘victims’ of these folks can be strong, ranging from anger to guilt and devastation. Unfortunately, in this day and age, it pays to be a little skeptical on the Internet.

“As authors, we are trained to be empathetic and frequently feel for these fictional people and their fictional drama. However, we can use the same skills that make us empathetic to protect ourselves from this sort of behavior—especially when such individuals attempt to ‘fan the flames’ in an online community by taking on more than one ‘personality’ (i.e., they show up in the community under two or more names). Writers can often sense a pattern in the voice of the writer being remarkably similar to another ‘character’ in the unfolding drama. One persona will often ask about or provide information about the other. (‘I heard from Jill finally. She was in a car accident and she’s in the hospital. She broke her leg, yada yada.) Also, it seems like just too many bad things happen to this person.

“While we’ve all had those parts of life where it seems like one thing after another [happens], learn to question. Writers also make excellent researchers—using the Internet to uncover the truth about some of these scammers. (In the previous example about Jill, they comb the online newspapers for mention of this car accident, etc. Or they call the hospital to find out how to send flowers to So-and-So, only to discover there’s no one there by that name.)”

Anatomy of a stalker

A *New York Times* article on stalkers, published in August 1998, identified three kinds of attachment disorders among stalkers:

“The ‘preoccupied’ stalker has a poor self-image but a positive view of others and constantly seeks their approval and validation in order to feel good about himself. When rejected by others, this person stalks to restore his sense of self.

“The ‘fearful’ stalker has a poor self-image as well, but also sees others as unreliable and unsupportive. The stalker tends to get caught in a vicious cycle of wanting someone to boost his own self-image, then rejecting the person for not being trustworthy, which prompts the person to stalk because he again needs someone to boost his sagging ego.

“The ‘dismissing’ stalker thinks of other people as jerks and usually remains distant from them to maintain an inflated self-image. The stalker with dismissing attachment disorder who does form attachments becomes angry when a breakup occurs and may stalk out of revenge, to retaliate for being mistreated.”

But as experts pointed out in a 2008 *The New York Times* article, “Whether their target is an actress, a supermodel, the First Lady or an ex-lover, stalkers share the same frightening mind-set.”

“It’s a very strong, psychological, sadistic element,” says Susan Xenarios, director of the Crime Victims Treatment Center at St. Luke’s Hospital. “The motivation is fear. The stalker says, *I want to make this person think of me every moment, to make the person wonder if I’ll be around the corner.*” ▶

The promise of anonymity.

There's a certain anonymity when you're online. No one can see you. You are invisible. (Unless of course you're an author, in which case you are probably very visible through your website, through social networks and via email.)

In a February 2008 study published in *Psychological Reports*, researchers discovered anonymous groups were more prone to taking part in antisocial behavior. Tatsuya Nogami, the study's author, said, "I definitely believe that anonymity affects the frequency of antisocial behavior among individuals to some extent, even when these individuals have a reasonable sense of morality—so-called 'ordinary people.'"

Nogami adds, "In my personal opinion, people generally try to comply with social norms in everyday life, even when such compliance with norms and rules conflicts with their personal self-interest. However, if you can get what you want without receiving any punishment or negative evaluations from others, are you still 100 percent sure that you'll always refrain from engaging in that kind of undesirable behavior?"

That anonymity possibly played a part when 'Betty' was attacked at an online site. She still bears emotional scars from the incident. She said, "This out-of-the-blue attack has left me totally paranoid. I saw it almost like terrorism, and the terrorism worked, since it's made me afraid to speak publically about ... almost anything, for fear of being attacked again when I least expect it."

On their website HaltAbuse.org, Working To Halt Online Abuse (WHOA), a volunteer organization that fights online harassment, documented 249 cases of cyberstalking in 2007. More than half of the victims were women and more than half of the stalkers first contacted them online (email, IM's, websites, message boards...). WHOA talked about the idea of anonymity: "The very nature of online crimes means that we have little information regarding the harassers, as most victims either don't know their harasser or do not know enough information about them for us to record."

No matter what psychological issues the online perpetrator suffers from, or whether their online activities are illegal or simply hurtful, the person on the receiving end suffers. Stop Abuse For Everyone (SAFE), a human rights organization that provides services, publications, and training to serve those who typically fall between the cracks of domestic violence services, listed the potential effects of stalking on a victim's mental and emotional health on their website Safe4All.org:

Denial and self-doubt, Self-blame, Insecurity, Shame and embarrassment, Frustration, Low self-esteem, Self-consciousness, Shock and confusion, Irritability, Anxiety, Fear, Guilt, Anger, Depression, Emotional numbness, Isolation/disconnection from other people, Being easily startled, A loss of interest in once enjoyable activities, Feeling suicidal, A loss of trust in others and in one's own perception.

Victims of online bullying of any degree suffer. The best course of action is not to engage people who feel "off" online. But if you do find yourself a victim, be proactive. Distance yourself from the person. Record every post/email. If the bullying has escalated to a point where you feel it constitutes stalking, report it.

Regardless of the severity of an attack, it leaves the victim feeling vulnerable. This is not the time to go it alone. Reach out to friends and family. If the psychological trauma is severe enough, consider seeking professional help. There is a growing body of research about the psychological trauma that a stalking victim endures, and mental-health professionals can help empower the victim.

Odds are good that most of us will experience some sort of online harassment, ranging from someone who habitually posts nasty reviews of our books, to someone who has crossed the legal lines. Our only options are either to curtail our online presence, or to become vigilant, proactive and to surround ourselves with friends and allies.

****A tragic note:** Fifteen-year-old Phoebe Prince committed suicide after months of bullying at school and online had become intolerable. Dr. Susan Lipkins appeared on the *Today Show* (3/30/10) and referred to today's "Vulture Culture," which is showcased in many reality shows where meanness is the norm. "We haven't taken bullying seriously until now and we see that there is an increase in the violence and the sexuality that goes on..."

I was putting the finishing touches on this piece as the show aired, and I was struck by the tragedy of Phoebe's death. No, she's not a writer, but the gist of these two articles is, bullying touches many of us. I wish she'd had someone to reach out to that could have made a difference. And maybe that's the point of these articles...if you feel you're being targeted, reach out to a friend, to family and, if you feel it's crossed the line, to law enforcement. Feeling vulnerable transcends age—remember you have friends and you have options.

Readers can visit Holly at her website, HollyJacobs.com, which will link them to her social networks. She's accessible. To date, she hasn't been stalked, or harassed, but she has dealt with a few readers who made her nervous. She promptly deleted them from her friends' lists and is hoping she never needs to call upon the information she gleaned from writing these two articles.



Fun Facts About Brainstorming On The Beach

FACT ONE: Our special day, *Brainstorming: The Future Of Publishing*, is shaping up to be not only interesting, but important. Important for Ninc members and important for all serious writers of popular fiction.

That's why we've opened the day to non-Ninc members who are published authors of novel-length popular fiction. Yes, it would be more cost-effective to join Ninc, and that way be able to attend the entire conference, but for those who are published but still don't quite qualify for membership, here's their chance to learn more about the business so that they, too, can make smarter decisions about their careers. And, funny thing about that, the more all writers know, the more that knowledge benefits us.

Tell all your non-Ninc writer contacts to head for <http://www.ninc.com/conferences/2010/index.asp> and click on One-day Program Registration to sign up. Or do it yourself — go to the page, download the PDF version, and email it to them. Granted, the day is much more accessible for Florida residents, but everyone is eligible for the group rate at the Tradewinds, so even one-day attendees can stick around and bask in the sun (and write it all off, just the way we will).

FACT TWO: *Brainstorming: The Future Of Publishing* is also open to all publishing industry guests at no charge (that's NO charge). Tell your agent, your publicist, your editor, your bookstore contact, your favorite industry blogger, etc. Industry guests are not limited to participation in only that one-day program, but may also attend all open conference events. Send them to <http://www.ninc.com/conferences/2010/index.asp> and tell them to fill out the Industry Registration form, or download it yourself and send them the PDF. And, yes, they are also eligible for the conference room rate.

FACT THREE: See that nifty logo at the top of the page? Now you, too, can have that logo on your website, your Facebook page, your Twitter page, your blog; whatever. Just go to the website, sign in, and click on the hotlink in the aqua section on the right side: Add A Conference Badge. There are two designs to choose from, and it's a fun and easy way to both show you're a Ninc member and advertise the conference.

And if you're an adventurous sort (like I am), you can even try dragging the image right from the webpage to your computer desktop, and from there into an open email, and then send it to yourself (to see if it works for you). It did for me — I could then click on the image and that click took me to the conference site (and if I can do something the least bit technical, anybody can do it!). If the same trick works for you, you can now send the image to all your friends, your editor, your agent, whomever, and they can click on the image and go straight to the Conference Center. I love technology when it's easy... ▶



FACT FOUR: Members are registering for the conference and booking rooms at the Tradewinds. My new pal at the hotel, Eric, is trying his best to get every Ninc member the best “View” rooms, but there are only so many of them, so you want to register for the conference now, and get that hotel form so that Eric can work his magic for you, too. Oh, and each room is entitled to its own beach cabana – this is so cool! You can also upgrade to even better rooms, also at ridiculously low rates — check out the information on the website Conference Center, under Hotel Info.

More fun facts about the hotel, amenities included in the cost of the room:

- Self-parking for one car per bedroom
- Local, Credit Card, operator-assisted access calls, and toll-free calls
- Use of Fitness Center and tennis courts (tennis, anyone?)
- Domestic in/out faxes
- Daily coffee/local newspaper
- Business Center use/Internet use
- In-room safes
- Wireless Internet access in guest rooms, common areas.
- Beach cabana (worth a second mention!), miniature golf, & paddleboats

And the real biggie: The hotel will provide 20% Discount Cards for Food and Beverage to all overnight group attendees, and these cards may be used at both the Tradewinds Island Grand and its sister hotel a few steps down the beach, the Sandpiper Suites.

We’re getting glowing reports on the hotel, the restaurants, the views, and the friendly staff. Frankly, we lucked out here; the economic downturn of last year made the hotel world as eager to book conferences as we were eager to find a great hotel at, well, dirt-cheap prices. We’re not going to see prices this low again, not for the fabulous resort setting we’ve got for *Brainstorming On The Beach*. I just checked the website (really, check out this website: <http://www.tradewindsresort.com>), and rooms are now going for more than double the low \$129 rate Ninc was able to snag.

FACT ALWAYS: We’re Ninc. We’re putting on a conference. And nobody does it better!

October 7–10, 2010 Tradewinds Island Grand, St. Pete Beach, Florida

Room Rate: \$129 plus tax

<http://www.tradewindsresort.com/properties/island-grand.aspx>

Conference fee (includes *Brainstorming: The Future of Publishing*): \$255. EZ payment plan: three payments of \$85 between now and July 31. Ninc keeps its conference fees low because we know writers need a quality conference and reasonable costs.

Sign up today at <http://www.ninc.com>. Keep checking Ninlink and the website for additions to the list of invited speakers and workshop topics. Come to Florida in October, and be a part of this groundbreaking conference.



Bring your questions, your imagination, and your suntan oil!

Business Plans for Writers

BY LAURA PHILLIPS

Do you have a business plan for your writing career? Should you? Is it even possible for novelists to construct a reasonable business plan, given how volatile the industry is?

For clarity's sake, let's begin with a basic definition. A business plan is a formal statement of business goals, with a strategy for reaching those goals, usually with a lot of financial statements and projections attached.

As multi-published novelists, none of us in NINC need to be taught how to set goals. We all have them, and we all have a good idea of what it takes to get from Point A to Point B on the path toward our goals. Often, that's enough. Many would argue that novelists don't need business plans—that, in fact, it's impossible for novelists to write traditional business plans because so much is out of our control. For the most part, they'd be correct.

The standard format used by most businesses is weighted toward attracting and retaining outside funding, and such business plans are frequently required as part of a loan application. That's a scenario that works for auto repair shops, restaurants, grocery stores, caterers, and most other business types where it's possible to predict cash flow based on the experiences of similar businesses in the area.

Writers don't fit that mold. Instead, we require what author Kristine Kathryn Rusch describes as a “plan-as-you-go” approach to business planning.

“In this tight market, I think we have to keep an eye on what we can control. And we really can't control sales, no matter how much we want to,” Rusch noted in a recent email. Rusch writes mystery, romance, science fiction, and fantasy under various names, including Kristine Grayson and Kris Nelscott.

“So as I sit here, with a deep understanding of how futile planning is in a career in the arts, I also realize the importance of a business plan,” writes Rusch in a February installment of her blog-based *Freelancer's Survival Guide*. “Business planning is important, no matter what you do as a freelancer. Yet you need to be flexible and understand that your plan is simply that: a plan. And like all plans in the movies, it never quite goes the way the protagonists think it should.”

Rusch has an informal business plan for her writing career. The informal, ‘eyes only’ type of plan suits her needs more than the more traditional type of business plan she's helped write for other, more traditional businesses. She emphasized that need for flexibility when I questioned her about the differing needs of new and experienced writers.

“A few years ago, I would have said that there is a difference for experienced and inexperienced writers. Since then, I've seen too many experienced writers write to market (or what they thought the market was, or what they thought the market for their own work is) and lose control of their careers.

“I think, if we get too focused on a business plan, we'll lose control of the very thing that made us writers—the creativity and the joy in the work. I think we have to set our writing goals, whatever they are, for the year, make sure we hit our income targets—whatever that takes—and go from there.”

WHY BOTHER?

Despite the challenges, there are several good reasons for writing a formal business plan, or even an informal one that exists strictly for your own personal use. Let's start with the big one—taxes. A formal business plan can help you prove that your writing is a business, not a hobby, according to tax attorney Diane O'Brien Kelly.

The profit motive isn't an issue, of course, if you're making money, not losing money as a writer. If you've had a few rough years; however, that business plan can serve as one more piece of evidence that you're following standard business practices, have a reasonable assessment of your market, and have a strategy designed with profit in mind.

“Someone who takes time to formulate a business plan is clearly approaching their writing activity differently than a hobby writer would. The business plan could provide evidence to the IRS that a writer is operating a business, if the IRS tried to challenge whether someone's writing constitutes a business or merely a hobby,” Kelly says.

That was one concern I had when I wrote my first business plan. I'd claimed a loss for writing on my taxes for two years running and was approaching a third year with no improvement in the bottom line. I had a stack of submissions, rejections, and other correspondence as evidence of profit intent, and I'd paid a good amount of taxes in previous years on writing income. Still, I thought a business plan might work in my favor if the IRS challenged my ▶

deductions, especially if that business plan indicated a change in direction in response to changes in the market.

“A business plan is evidence you’ve given time, thought, and effort to your potential for earning income from your writing,” wrote Stephanie Feagan, author and practicing CPA, in a recent article for the *Romance Writer’s Report*.

A WRITER’S BUSINESS PLAN

So how does a writer formulate a “plan-as-you-go” business plan that serves as an effective career guide and hits the income targets without compromising the creative soul?

Rusch’s method begins with an assessment of what to write, how much time you have available, your individual pace, and so forth. Factor in mailing time, time spent rounding up new work, rewrites, and false starts. Focus on what you can control. Include how many hours you’ll work each week and which projects you’ll work on. Set a target for this year, five years from now, and ten years from now.

“At the end of your year, reassess the plan. Did you achieve your daily, weekly, and monthly goals? Be honest with yourself. Then write a new business plan, with new targets, reflecting your current realities.”

My own plan uses a more standard business-plan template, with a few adaptations. If you take this route, it helps to remember that, despite the market uncertainties that writers face, our job isn’t as different as we often believe.

“If you treat your writing career as a business—and you should—planning your career isn’t so different from planning a start-up business,” agrees Stephanie Bond, author of the *Body Movers* mystery series which was recently optioned by Sony for TV series development.

“You can’t do it alone, so you have to ‘convince’ your investors—and agent and/or an editor—that your product (you and your writing) is worth the time and trouble of a partnership. So, if you’re floundering to get your footing in the book industry, you might want to spend a few minutes developing a business plan. This exercise, by the way, can help you to become more focused, regardless of the stage of your career.”

HOW I WROTE MINE

I wrote my first business plan in 1998, in the midst of a major career slump. The idea to do so came from an unexpected source, a small-farm discussion list on YahooGroups. A bunch of us were talking about the difficulties of working from home and the particular difficulties of doing so with livestock to tend, children underfoot, and all the unexpected crises that must be dealt with while we tended to the business that paid the bills. One list member was working with an advisor from the Small Business Administration, writing a business plan for her growing handcrafted soap business.

One thing led to another, and the result was a small core group of individuals exchanging ideas and working on formal business plans. We all used the same template: a standard style similar to those provided by business consultants, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and various other business advisors.

Everyone else in the group followed the template and worked through the exercises. I tried, but soon realized that the standard procedures for projecting the financials did not apply to a writer. I also realized that nobody cared that the template didn’t work for me as a writer. It was my job to either devise a business plan that worked for me or move on.

So I adapted and used phrases like “past annual earnings have ranged from X to XX” and listed annual and five-year goals in rounded figures that would be reasonably achievable in a decent year. I released myself from the pressure of having to meet those financial goals at all costs, because sales were out of my control, and instead focused on production goals I could control.

The revised template I ended up with, and that I’m still using, has ten sections:

1. Summary introduction – The business description.
2. The staff – That’s me and the office cat. I also cover services I outsource or contract for, i.e., agent, literary attorney, part-time office help, printing services. If you use a virtual assistant, hire a web designer, or bribe the high school kid down the street to set up your Facebook page, include that here.
3. Product descriptions – Mine include books, website content, articles, photos, and freelance editorial services.
4. Market analysis – Include a summary statement, then a subhead and paragraph for each product type.
5. Marketing strategies – Again, divide it into categories. This is the section you’ll need to update most frequently, and you should set a schedule for assessing and updating—quarterly, annually, etc.
6. Unique selling advantage – Your specialty, style, or the unique reading experience you offer. If you’re into branding, work that in here.
7. Advertising and promotion

8. The financials – Feel free to be as specific or vague as suits your needs. Don't stress yourself over this section, especially your first time through. You can include a budget and projections in this section or skip the financials altogether if you have little faith in the reliability of your estimates.

9. Present situation – Include projects, contracted projects, 'on spec' projects, residuals, and available rights on older projects. Look back through the 'marketing strategies' section to make sure you've included marketing for everything you listed in this section.

10. Objectives/Goals – This quarter, this year, in five years, in ten years.

TOO MUCH WORK?

Maybe this is more than you need or want to tackle. I know writers who don't need written goals or plans. Their sense of direction is strong enough without them. Others might find the process itself distracting or disheartening.

Personally, I find that the process keeps me grounded. I don't handle uncertainty well, so the business plan is my way of controlling what I can. I have a plan, with contingencies, and a time set aside to assess and revise the plan. Somehow, that eases a lot of the distracting worries that otherwise would nag at me throughout the workday. I can maintain focus and concentrate on the right tasks at the moment, knowing that I have a plan in place for the next stage, for the next project, and even for the unforeseen opportunity or setback. I believe that, if I'd had a good business plan in place years sooner, I might have had fewer writing slumps, and I certainly would have worked more efficiently.

Author Kelly McClymer expressed a similar belief recently during a discussion about business plans for both her new game business and her existing career as a YA author.

"One thing I've noticed, being brand new at the one career and mid-stream in the other, is that so many things I would never have considered are actual business plan concerns for me (and should have been, much earlier). For example, right now I am between agents. I have movie rights that can and should be reverted to me per contract. I have foreign and audio rights that are mine outright. I have five out-of-print books that I need to Kindle and market as e-books. I have no plan for them, so I'm having to create one from scratch (while, of course, praying that my new agent—when I get one—will take most of that off my plate). If I'd had a plan, I'd already know what to do about these things, and I'd have a timeline and some contact info for getting it done, too."

A FEW CAUTIONS

A business plan can be helpful to writers with co-authors or partners. "A business plan will be helpful in guiding the parties through the issues they need to hammer out in order to have a successful working relationship," Kelly says.

However, she cautions that a business plan developed by partners can be viewed as an implicit agreement between the parties. "For example, if two authors form a partnership to co-author books, and if a goal is stated in the plan to write two novels a year together, the plan may potentially serve as evidence of an agreement between the parties to do two books, and an author may be held in breach if he or she later puts in only enough effort and time to produce one book a year."

Also, there is some risk that the plan could serve as evidence of an oral contract between an author and a partner, employee, or independent contractor who helped formulate the business plan. "For instance, if the author is considering hiring an employee/contractor to handle some of the administrative tasks, and that party helps formulate a business plan that includes a budget of, say, \$5,000 a year for an employee/contractor, the plan could serve as evidence of an alleged oral agreement for the author to hire the other person for \$5,000 a year, even if the author later decides not to do so."

RESOURCES ►►►

Laura Phillips writes and manages a niche software company from a corner office with a window on a Midwestern farm. She's online at TheLandofMoo.com and lauraphillips.net. Contact her at Laura@NorthernHillsMedia.com.

Business Plan Resources

U.S. Small Business Administration webpage – Elements of a Business Plan:

http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/writeabusinessplan/SERV_WRRITINGBUSPLAN.html

Guide to writing a basic business plan:

<http://articles.bplans.com/writing-a-business-plan/A-Standard-Business-Plan-Outline>

Sample plan for a nonfiction writer:

http://www.bplans.com/magazine_journalist_business_plan/executive_summary_fc.cfm?affiliate=sba

PDF sample business plan from Palo Alto Software, who'd really like you to buy their software but provide this to get you started

http://www.bplans.com/business_plan_template/business_plan_template.pdf

Freelancer's Survival Guide: Business Plan

<http://kriswrites.com/2010/02/11/freelancers-survival-guide-business-plan/>

Ask the Lawyer...

Editor's note: *The following discussion recently popped up on the Ninc loop about who owns the copyright of a translated work (sparked by a post on a Google Tool called Google Translation).*

Question

Author #1: A German publisher licensed one of my books through my publisher, and the German translation is copyrighted in the publisher's name. I asked my publisher about it, and they said that it's correct that the translation copyright is in the publisher's name, but—who knows?

Author #2: I'm not a lawyer, but I don't think this is entirely correct. My understanding is that the translation of a work currently protected by copyright is derivative, but the translation itself is also protected to the extent that even when the original copyright has expired, the copyright for the translation of a work may still be in effect, and it is the translator who owns that. So for example, if I were to translate something in German to English which is in the public domain, I would own the copyright to that translation.

Answer:

A translation is a derivative work.

Section 103 of the US Copyright Act states: "The copyright in a ... derivative work extends only to the material contributed by the author of such work, as distinguished from the preexisting material employed in the work, and does not imply any exclusive right in the preexisting material. The copyright in such work is independent of, and does not affect or enlarge the scope, duration, ownership, or subsistence of, any copyright protection in the preexisting material."

The original work thus continues to be protected and owned by the original copyright owner or his or her assignee, unless it is already in the public domain, in which case it remains public domain; the original copyright (or lack thereof) is unaffected by the translation.

Conversely, if the translation is allowed to enter the public domain, that does not affect the copyright in the underlying work.

Creation and publication of derivative works are two of the exclusive rights belonging to the copyright owner of the underlying work. So anyone who creates and/or publishes a translation of a copyrighted work without the consent of the owner of the underlying copyright (other than in the minute quantities and special circumstances as may qualify as “fair use”), infringes that copyright, and thus is subject to damages (including the copyright owner’s legal fees) as a copyright infringer.

Under Section 101 of the US Copyright Act, if a translation is “specially ordered or commissioned” by a written agreement which specifically states that the resulting translation will be a “work made for hire,” it then qualifies as such, with the copyright belonging not to the translator but to the entity which commissioned the translation. So if a publisher and a translator enter into such a written agreement, then the copyright in the translation will belong to the publisher (unless the written agreement states that the publisher is acting on behalf of a third party, such as the original author, who would then become the employer for hire, and would then own the copyright).

Similarly, if the translation is created by an employee in the ordinary course of his or her employment, the copyright in the translation will be owned by the employer rather than the individual translator.

Finally, even if a contract between translator and whoever is paying for the translation does not specify “work made for hire,” the contract may instead state that the translator “assigns all rights” to the commissioning party. The result is essentially the same as a work made for hire, except that the assignor/translator may recover the copyright many years later under the termination provisions of the Copyright Act, whereas those provisions do not apply at all to works made for hire.

Keep in mind that translations commissioned by foreign publishers under license from a US publisher are not likely to be governed by United States law. I have no idea whether any foreign countries have anything in their copyright laws equivalent to our statutory “work made for hire” provision. So it is quite possible that a translator in Europe or Asia might herself own her translation of an American work.

I do not authoritatively know whether Google can claim any ownership of the copyright in a translation created by Google’s Translator Toolkit. I have never researched whether machine-created (or, for that matter, animal-created) literary or graphic works possess sufficient “originality” to qualify for copyright protection. (If 100 monkeys... or cpu’s... working for 10 years accidentally create marvelous literary works, do they qualify for copyright?)

On the other hand, I note that Google’s “Google Translator Toolkit Additional Terms” allow the user to prohibit Google from sharing the resulting translations with third parties. Those terms do not reserve any right to Google to prevent the user from using or publishing the resulting translations. While this is not necessarily dispositive, it certainly suggests that Google does not claim any copyright in such translations.

— Bob Stein

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Business Briefs

2009 Returns from AAP -- Ups and Down

Plus +	Minus -
Book over all 1.8% (\$23.9 billion)	Over Trade market .1% (\$8.1 million)
Adult hardcover 6.9%	Trade paperbacks 5.2%
Children’s paperbacks 2.2%	Children’s Hardcover 5.9%
Ebooks 176.6% (\$313.2 million)	Mass market paperback 4.0% \$1.0 billion
	Book club and mail order 2.0%
	Spokenwork audio 12.9%

The statistics are drawn from 86 participating publishers and Bureau of the Census data. The total book sales growth from 2002 to 2009 is 1.1%.

Ask the Agent...

JoAnna Stamfel-Volpe



When is it Time to Let Go?

Question: *I've got a well-known agent, but the relationship doesn't seem to be working out. I'm worried about leaving because I don't know whether I'll be able to get another agent, and I'm afraid that the search will set my career back even further—all that time spent submitting to agents and then to editors. Got any advice?*

Answer: In some ways, it's difficult to know when to let go of your agent. You worry that you won't be able to find another one. You have fears that the agent will talk badly about you to other agents in the industry, or that you'll be black-balled, or even considered 'damaged goods.' And in some instances, you have a hard time letting go because, although you're unhappy or uncomfortable with the job that's being done, you like the agent a lot as a person. And it's always hard to let someone you like know that "it's not working."

But in reality, it is very cut and dried when it's time to let go.

You let go of your agent when you're very unhappy/upset/uncomfortable with something important, you've talked to them about it, and it's still happening to the same degree.

So what defines something important? Well, that depends on you. Each writer has different qualities and needs, so what are the important qualities in your agent relationship to *you*? Some want an editorial agent. Some want frequent communication. And some want a lot of hand-holding. These things are okay to expect from your agent, however, writers have to understand that every agent is different, too. That is why it's so important to ask a lot of these questions *before* you sign with the agent. Because when it comes down to it, not every agent is willing to edit your manuscript (and they don't have to!). And I know a number of good, reputable agents whose motto is "I'll call you/email you when there is something to talk about." Does it mean that they won't do a good job for you? No. But also think: is every agent right for you? Absolutely not.

And of course, there are scammers out there, as well, and in those instances, you let go of the agent as soon as you realize that they are scamming you.

But even on this side of the desk, I know that a writer's biggest fear when letting go of their agent is whether or not they'll be able to sign with another. So you stick with the agent—even when you're very, very unhappy—for just that reason. And you shouldn't. Because you're staying in the relationship for the wrong reasons. It will eventually translate into the output of work (whether on the writing side or the submission side). If you and your agent aren't getting on well, or the agent isn't appropriately enthusiastic about your work, it's going to be difficult to do anything, let alone sell your book.

In the end, to you, writing isn't just about making money (I hope!). It's about doing something that you love, learning, and honing your craft. And you want someone enthusiastic and professional by your side. So you shouldn't stay with an agent because you're afraid that you won't find another one. That is not what this whole process is about. And staying with someone for the wrong reasons will only make the process a bad one for you (and for the agent). But I've said it before and I'll say it again: communicate how you're feeling with your agent first. We're just people, too, and sometimes we make mistakes. Give your agent a fair shot at fixing the problem, just as you would hope for the same. After all is said and done, if you really don't feel good about your working relationship, you've communicated this to the agent and haven't seen a reasonable change (in a fair amount of time—can't fix something overnight), it's time to let go. And that's okay. Keep writing...there are plenty of other agents out there, and if you're good at what you do, you will find one.

*Read more about being previously represented and querying in the April issue.

Not Your Usual Writing Advice— Trust Your Instincts

BY JOANN GROTE

“Just trust yourself, and then you will know how to live.”

— Johann Wolfgang van Goethe



One of the most frightening challenges for any author is stepping away from a familiar writing path. An author might feel strongly she's heard from the 'still, small voice' to take a different road, but grabbing hold of the courage to do so can be terrifying.

As writers who live on the proceeds of our book sales, we're often afraid the time spent writing for a new market will be 'wasted' on a book that doesn't bring income needed to pay the mortgage. Yet acting on the 'still, small voice' appears to create opportunities, and also presents solutions to the problems that arise along the way.

Nine author Robin Lee Hatcher discovered this first hand after dreaming the opening scene of what became her book *The Forgiving Hour*. She knew only a Christian publisher would be likely to publish the story. As a bestselling author of historicals for the general romance market, Robin had no plans to change her career path. But the draw of that dream was strong. At the next RWA conference, she spoke with an editor for a Christian publisher. Later, in a phone conversation, Robin told the editor about her dream. Within days, she'd signed a contract for *The Forgiving Hour*, based only on the dream, with no synopsis for the editor and no plot in mind.

It seems that living by the 'still, small voice' follows a rather predictable pattern: listen/hear (Robin's dream), fears arise (an unfamiliar market), act on what you hear in spite of the fears (approaching editors), opportunities/solutions are created (contract in a new market), new fears arise, listen again, act in spite of fears, opportunities/solutions are created.

True to the pattern, only a day after signing the new contract, panic set in for Robin. "This idea was for a contemporary novel, and one that required God to be a central character in the book. It was way out of my comfort zone." Reading the Bible is one way Robin listens for 'the still, small voice.' A Bible verse, Isaiah 42:16, encouraged her. "I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them."

"There wasn't anybody more blind right then than I was, and I decided to simply trust God for the story. I wrote that story faster than any novel before or since," said Robin.

The next 15 months "were some scary times, both financially and creatively." Literally following her dream led her to leave the American Booksellers Association (ABA) market behind, and presented the means to do so. She was offered three contracts for Special Editions, contemporary romances for the general marketplace. "Those three Special Editions helped fill in the financial holes while I moved from the ABA to the Christian Booksellers Association market." They were the last books she wrote for the ABA.

Robin's experience shows that acting on your instincts can result in wonderful payoffs. Not only is Robin a best-selling author in the Christian market, but she's more content in her career than ever before. "I have had the freedom to write the stories that burn in my soul, a freedom I hadn't enjoyed before."

Sometimes we feel shoved out of our old path, instead of invited out of it by God or the Universe. I've come to believe that shove can be a form of the 'still, small voice.' Whether by shove or invitation, the cycle created by following that voice is much the same: listen/hear, fears arise, act anyway, opportunities/solutions are created.

The first couple of years after I was published, I went merrily along, writing historical inspirational romances. Then, one day, I received a shove. A contract arrived with major changes from past contracts, changes not in my favor. The editor said this was the new boilerplate for the line, and nothing was negotiable. I knew right away what I would do. I told the editor that I loved writing for the line, and loved working with her, but did not feel I was in a place in my career where I could sign that contract.

I'd grown accustomed to a steady stream of contracts and income. Now I was without both. But acting on the guidance brought opportunity. Almost immediately I received an unexpected offer to write historical children's novels. I accepted, and enjoyed the chance to use my knowledge of history in a new manner. About six months later, an unsolicited, revised contract for the romance arrived with a sticky note attached: "Will this do?" The non-negotiable items had been changed to the terms in my last romance contract. We negotiated a couple of other items, and I signed.

"Just trust yourself."

Great advice for all of us following the 'still, small voice' in this time of publishing flux.

(For a more complete version of Robin's story, click on Fact and Fiction at <http://robinlee.typepad.com>.)



WRITING is TAXING

By Diane O'Brien Kelly

Website Woes

One of a writer's most significant expenses is often his or her website. The problem is, the IRS hasn't seen fit to issue specific guidance on the deduction of website development expenses. What's more, tax professionals can't seem to agree on the proper treatment for these expenses. Some argue that the expenses are immediately deductible. Others argue that the costs are subject to amortization.

Amortization? What the heck is that?

Virtually all writers report for tax purposes on the cash basis of accounting, meaning that, for a given tax year, we report all income actually received during that particular year and deduct all expenses actually paid in that year (including payments made by check or credit card). However, there are exceptions to the cash basis of accounting. For instance, the depreciation rules may require a writer to deduct a portion of the expense for a durable tangible item such as furniture or computer equipment over a period of years, even if the entire cost of the item is paid in the year of purchase. Similarly, amortization is the spreading of the cost of an intangible item over a specified number of years, even if the entire cost is paid in one particular year.

Here's what the tax pros say about website development expenses:

The more aggressive tax professionals argue that the costs for a website created by a third party constitute an immediately deductible professional expense, no different than other professional expenses such as legal or accounting fees. Sounds plausible, huh? Others deduct website costs immediately as an advertising expense. An immediate deduction is normally the most advantageous to the taxpayer, so it's tempting to accept this approach.

On the other hand, the more conservative tax preparers look to Section 197 of the Internal Revenue Code. Section 197 requires that the cost of certain intangibles, such as trademarks, patents, and government licenses, be deducted over a 15-year period. These tax pros argue that website development expenses should likewise be amortized over a 15-year period. However, other tax professionals argue that a 15-year period is out of line, given that websites are constantly revised and updated, and are not normally maintained in original form for a full 15 years. Hmm . . .

Some argue that website costs relating to the startup of a business should be amortized over a 60-month period, along with the other startup costs.

Maybe.

Then again, maybe not.

A large number of tax professionals take a middle-of-the-road approach and treat website development costs like off-the-shelf software. Off-the-shelf, standardized software is generally amortized over a three-year period beginning the month the software is purchased. Those taking this approach argue that the "software" includes the portions of the website design produced from sophisticated programming language and that relate to the site's overall structure, functionality, and appearance. In addition, to constitute software, a third party must bear an economic risk should the software not perform.

In other words, if someone else must give you a refund or fix problems with the standardized software should problems occur, the expenses would be deductible over a three-year period. Whether website development should be considered software is up for debate. Moreover, those who write their own code for their own site would be forced to choose another method for deducting their expenses, since such costs would not be considered off-the-shelf software costs.

I'd love to tell you exactly what to do here, but the problem is, I can't. Without solid authority on the subject, it's impossible to know for certain how to treat website expenses. That said, without solid authority to back them up, the IRS may choose not to make an issue of these expenses, should you be audited.

Whatever method you decide to go with, be sure not to cheat yourself out of expenses such as hosting fees or maintenance/update fees that are routine and do not provide a long-term benefit. These expenses are immediately deductible in the year incurred.

If you are charged a lump sum, it may be difficult to know how much you've paid for hosting and maintenance/updates versus website development. If you've paid one total for these expenses, ask your provider to break the expenses down for you. If the provider is unable to provide this detail, do your best to determine what the relative costs are, based on reasonable market rates, and make a note in your tax file as to how you divided the costs.

Keep an eye on this issue. Given that website development costs are a hot topic, the IRS may decide to issue guidance soon. Or, if the IRS doesn't clear things up, the courts just might. I've got my fingers crossed for guidance allowing an immediate deduction.

What about domain names?

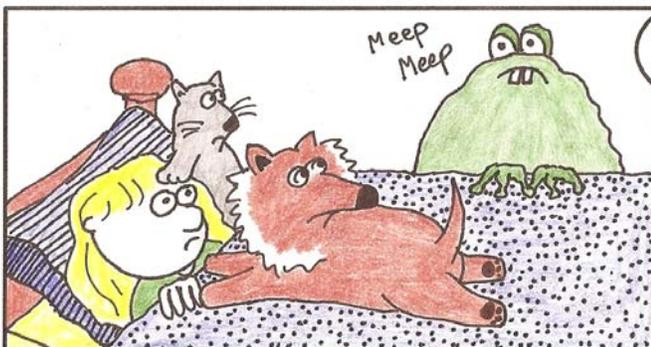
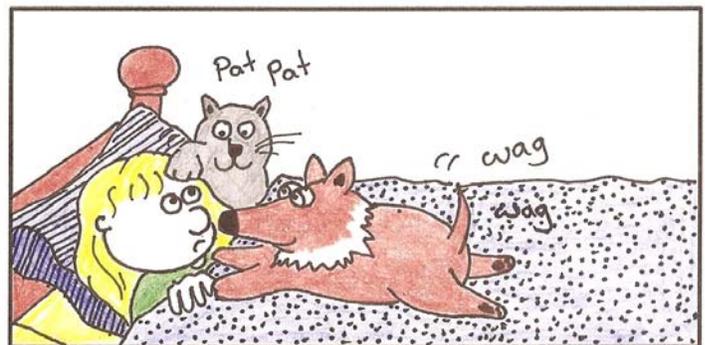
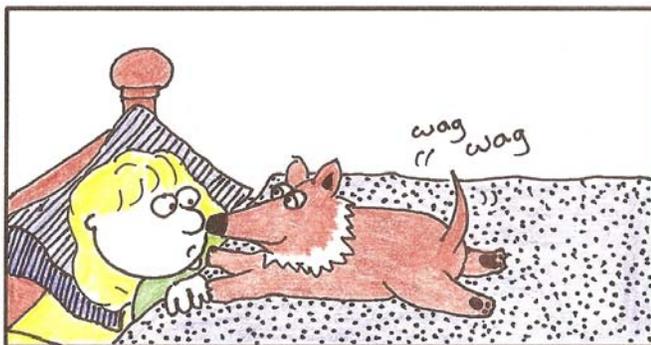
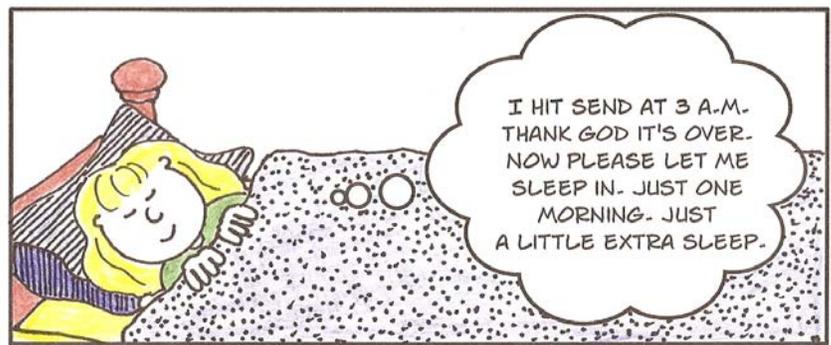
Fortunately, the IRS has issued some guidance on domain name registration. In IRS publication 535, in a discussion of "Internet-related expenses," the IRS states that a business owner can immediately deduct domain registration fees and "webmaster consulting costs." The IRS says these costs must be amortized only if they are part of business start-up costs.

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



THE AUTHOR

THE DAY
AFTER THE
DEADLINE



WWW.SUZANNESELFORS.COM

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



NOISE

“The Internet is just the world passing around notes in a classroom.”

— comedian Jon Stewart

Whenever I hear discussions about whether or not a working novelist really needs a strong online presence, as well as discussions about what “a strong online presence” specifically means, my own thoughts on the matter are always influenced by a crucial factor: I can’t stand noise—which is not the same thing as ‘sound.’

‘Noise’ is, for example, uninvited and banal chitchat with people whom I don’t know and don’t really want to know. ‘Noise’ is a debate with someone whose opinions don’t actually matter to me. When I’m subjected to a barrage of information that I don’t want, that’s noise.

Perhaps (as happened the other day) I happen to get cornered by a scant acquaintance who’s determined to explain the details to me—multiple times—of a subject in which I have expressed no interest whatsoever. Or perhaps I’m exposed to depressing, irritating, distracting, or really idiotic commentary as a result of sitting in an airport lounge to await my flight or sitting in a doctor’s office to await my appointment. (In both of those venues, most of the idiotic commentary comes from blaring televisions).

Since writing novels is a solitary and independent profession, I have more control than most people over the noise in my life. And that’s the way I like it. One way or another, I have structured my life to minimize noise as much as possible.

The Internet, however, is full of noise. Even without having a strong online presence (since, according to an article I read a few months ago, my Internet presence is “moderate-to-light”), I nonetheless find myself frequently distracted by Internet noise. I also, alas, sometimes become a part of Internet noise.

And when noise gets into my head, it completely drowns out the sound of whatever I’m supposed to be writing at that moment. Therefore, the very last thing I want in my life is more noise—whether I’m making it or merely distracted by it.

So it’s important for me to maintain the right balance for myself between the unpredictable benefits of an online presence and the disadvantages of noise. There is, after all, no denying that an increased Internet presence also increases noise. Often quite unintentionally!

You can innocently pass along an interesting news item on Twitter, for example, and consequently become the subject of widespread vilification. [Hi, there! You know who you are.]

And the benefits of an online presence are indeed unpredictable. Also highly variable.

Certainly there are writers whose online presence has made a huge impact on their careers. An obvious example is John Scalzi, who started a blog ten years ago, when blogs were not yet common. Scalzi invested a lot of effort in his blog, and it developed a large and loyal audience. He also wrote a science fiction novel which he posted on his blog. The book built an audience—enough to get the attention of Tor Books, a major sf/f publisher, which then offered him a contract for it. Scalzi went on to become a bestselling and award-winning science fiction writer.

Scalzi still maintains his popular blog and still invests a lot of effort in it. In fact, he won the 2009 Hugo Award in nonfiction for *Your Hate Mail Will Be Graded*, a small press book derived directly from his blog; Tor Books subsequently

acquired the paperback rights and released its edition in January 2010. So it seems likely that Scalzi's blog audience, recently cited as 40,000 viewers per day, and his book audience will continue to grow virally (you should pardon the expression).

But what's remarkable about Scalzi's example, of course, is that it's remarkable. Many factors—including hard work and talent, certainly—were involved in making the blog so successful, as well as in making his published books so successful after his writing was discovered on his blog by a major house. And not all these factors can be duplicated. For example, I can't go back ten years in time to when blogs were still uncommon and start one; and these days, the blogosphere is so crowded that it's very hard for a new blog to stand out.

Meanwhile, the factors of Scalzi's blog that can be duplicated won't necessarily produce identical results. I could post a new, uncontracted novel on my blog, for example; but rather than gaining an audience that way, the novel could just as easily be ignored and remain obscure. And rather than offering me a contract for it after I post it on my blog, publishers could just as easily say, "If Resnick wants to give it away, fine. We don't really like paying her, anyhow."

I could invest myself in posting multiple times per day on my blog, with thoughtful essays, entertaining pictures, and interesting links, the way Scalzi does... and there's still every chance that no one but three old friends would follow my blog, and that my editors would rail at me for writing a dozen thoughtful blog pieces every week instead of spending that time working on my next book.

Every time I study the example of a novelist who's achieved tangible career benefits as a direct result of having a strong online presence, those are always the three general points I keep rediscovering: (1) the example is remarkable rather than typical; (2) some factors in the example can't be duplicated (at least not by me); and (3) the factors that can be duplicated aren't guaranteed to produce a similarly successful result.

Which brings me right back to noise. In the absence of a guaranteed bonanza for increasing my online presence, what's genuinely best for me, though your mileage may vary, is making sure that I don't have too much noise in my life—because noise drowns out the sound of the book I'm supposed to be writing.

I maintain a website that I keep updated and on which I provide 'unique content' (which is supposedly one of the key things that visitors like to find on a writer's website: stuff they can't find elsewhere). I have a Facebook page, where my activity level is moderate-to-light. I do a little guest blogging and some online interviews.

That's about it.

The one way in which I'd like to increase my online exposure is to establish a quarterly newsletter, which is something I keep meaning to do. Other than that, I don't really want to do more; I am easily distracted (also easily irritated), so it's important for me to keep the noise level in my life under control.

I also believe that what many editors, publishers, agents, or busybodies mean, when they urge a writer to develop 'a strong online presence,' is actually: "Turn your online presence into enviable commercial success." And while there are indeed examples of writers who have done that, there's no reliable formula for it. Therefore, in my opinion, a writer's online activity should just be the level at which she is individually comfortable. And 'moderate-to-light' seems to be what suits me.

Laura Resnick's 'unique content' can be found under various menu tabs at: <http://www.lauraresnick.com>. John Scalzi's "Whatever" blog is at: <http://whatever.scalzi.com>.

Business Briefs

HarperStudio Closed for Business

As expected, the no-return imprint has shut down, following the departure of founder, Bob Miller, to Workman Publishing. The imprint's last books will be published in the summer of 2010. Other titles planned for the line will be released under different HarperCollins lines. HarperStudio experimented with lower advances with a higher royalty percent and non-returnable stock.

Ninc Bulletin Board

COMPILED BY JACKIE KRAMER

Got any news or information
for the Bulletin Board?

Send it to Jackie at
jackiekramer7@netscape.com

If you'd like to run for the Nominating Committee, or serve as an officer of Ninc in 2010, please contact Nominating Chair Kasey Michaels at kcmi@aol.com. Nominations close June 1 and are reported to the current Board for approval.

Hi, all! Here's a great incentive to nudge friends and people you meet at conferences along the way to sign up for Ninc, and all of the benefits that come with membership. The plan: Help Ninc grow and save on membership dues and more!

Get two writers to join Ninc and get your membership dues free in 2011. Get nine writers to join Ninc before June 30th and your 2010 conference fee is free! No, you don't have to get eleven in all; the two counts toward the nine. But, to make certain you get the credit, tell your friends to add your name to the line on the membership application that reads, "Where did you learn about Ninc?" Spread the word about Ninc and reap the rewards!

The ways to do this are endless. At your local chapter conferences, on your blogs or web pages, on your writer loops. Use your imagination. We all already know the benefits of membership. We just want our members to spread the word, and reap the benefits of doing so.

Good luck and happy recruiting.

Trish Jensen

The Ninc blog (read: Blog Mistress) needs you. Rather she needs your agent, editor, publisher, publicist, web designer or anyone else who could be considered an industry guest. Take a few minutes to contribute to this valuable asset for Novelists, Inc. and find someone willing to blog (or do a Q&A) for us. If you succeed, contact Patricia at Patricia.Rosemoor@gmail.com

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Agency Model” Now Accommodated in Book Industry Standard for Product Information

a
BISG/EDItEUR/BIC “how to” guide also available to aid implementation

Thanks to timely action by the Book Industry Study Group (BISG) in the U.S. and EDItEUR, the international body which maintains ONIX product information standards, working in collaboration with representatives from the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and the UK Publishers Association (PA), rapid provisions have been made in ONIX for Books to allow for a standard means of communicating “agency model” sales terms for e-books.

The agency model is a newly defined commercial model for e-book sales which is distinctly different from the more traditional retail model. In the agency model, the publisher sells to the consumer via an “agent” – who may be an online retailer or another similar intermediary – who fulfills the sale on the publisher’s behalf and receives a commission from the publisher for doing so. Although the traditional model, in which the publisher sells the book to retailers at wholesale, has long been accommodated for in ONIX for Books, appropriate new code values had to be developed rapidly to meet requirements of the new agency model. These new code values are now included in the just-published ONIX [Code Lists Issue 11](#).

In response to the new provisions, Alicia Wise, Head of Digital Publishing at The Publishers Association, said, “The importance of metadata and digital standards is hard to over-emphasize. Quite literally they are fundamental to a thriving digital market. The book industry has talented experts in EDItEUR and BISG who have implemented ONIX 3.0 to convey a panoply of product information, and who are fleet of foot in ensuring this open standard evolves in conjunction with our business models. This work is vital to publishers and their retail partners around the world.”

To aid in the implementation of the new codes, BISG and EDItEUR have also co-published a distinctive “how to” guide, showing how best to use ONIX to specify different terms of supply in different territories. Entitled “*ONIX for Books: How to Specify Different Terms of Supply in Different Territories*”, the new guide provides four detailed worked examples, which are fully supported in both ONIX 2.1 and ONIX 3.0, and will be helpful for those needing to specify different terms in different supply territories even if they are not adopting the agency model for e-book sales.

Ed McCoyd, Executive Director for Digital, Environmental & Accessibility affairs at the Association of American Publishers, said, “The agency model emerged very quickly and is a significant development in the ever-advancing e-book industry. BISG and EDItEUR worked swiftly to update our industry’s metadata exchange standard to support the new model. International sales opportunities are also growing, and the ‘how to’ guide will be invaluable in helping publishers, distributors and retailers make more books available to readers worldwide.” More information on this topic can be found on the BISG website at <http://www.bisg.org/what-we-do-21-15-onix-for-books.php> and on the EDItEUR website at <http://www.editeur.org/107/Agency-terms-in-ONIX/>. ▶

About Book Industry Study Group, Inc.

The Book Industry Study Group, Inc. (BISG) is the U.S. book industry's leading trade association for policy, standards and research. The mission of BISG is to create a more informed, empowered and efficient book industry supply chain for both physical and digital products. Membership consists of publishers, manufacturers, suppliers, wholesalers, retailers, librarians and others engaged in the business of print and electronic media. For over 30 years, BISG has provided a forum for all industry professionals to come together and efficiently address issues and concerns to advance the book community. Learn more about BISG at <http://www.bisg.org>.

About EDItEUR

EDItEUR is the London-based international group which coordinates development of the standards infrastructure for electronic commerce in the book and serials sectors worldwide. EDItEUR provides its membership with research, standards and guidance in such diverse areas as: EDI and other e-commerce standards for book and serial transactions; bibliographic and product information; the standards infrastructure for digital publishing; rights management and trading; and identification. Established in 1991, EDItEUR is a truly global organization with over 80 members from 17 countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, South Africa, United States and most European countries. EDItEUR is best known for creating and maintaining the ONIX family of messages, but also develops and manages EDI standards, and also provides management services to the International ISBN Agency. Learn more about EDItEUR at <http://www.editeur.org>.

About The Publishers Association

The Publishers Association (PA) is the leading trade organization serving book, journal and electronic publishers in the UK, representing around 80% of the industry by turnover. The PA's core service is representation and lobbying, around copyright, rights and other matters relevant to members. Learn more about PA at <http://www.publishers.org.uk>.

About The Association of American Publishers

The Association of American Publishers (AAP) is the national trade association of the U.S. book publishing industry. AAP's more than 300 members include most of the major commercial publishers in the United States, as well as smaller and non-profit publishers, university presses, and scholarly societies. AAP members publish books in every field; educational materials for the elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and professional markets; scholarly journals; computer software; and electronic products and services. Learn more about AAP at <http://www.publishers.org>.

