

N I N K

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The Business Rusch: Binge Reading

BY KRISTINE KATHRYN RUSCH

On a day when most of the publishing blogosphere is dealing with Random House's horrible Hydra publishing line, I figured I'd talk about something else. If you haven't heard about Hydra and what it wants to do to writers who know nothing about business, check out John Scalzi's blog. (www.whatever.scalzi.com) In fact, check out John Scalzi's blog to see why so many writers choose to remain in traditional publishing without becoming hybrid writers at all. Also note (apropos of my February 28 blog) that John now has an escape route in the back of his mind, should traditional book publishing turn on him the way it has turned on so many of us.

And let me add that many of you expressed surprise at my interchangeable widgets comment recently. Here's what I said: Traditional publishers know that when one writer goes away, another will step into her place. You're a rotating group of widgets that might make the publisher some money. If you don't make the publisher money, then they'll find someone who will.

Now, thanks to Hydra, you can see that attitude in action.

But, let's move on to my own pleasant surprise of last week. It came in the comment section of my blog. Marie Force mentioned that her self-published book, *Waiting For Love*, hit the *New York Times* bestseller list at number 6 for e-books and number 11 overall, the *USA Today* bestseller list at number 15 and the *Wall Street Journal* bestseller list at number 6 for e-books.

I've been turning that news over and over in my mind since last week. Marie Force isn't the first self-published writer (even though I prefer the term indie, which I will now use) to hit the *New York Times* list, and she certainly won't be the last. But it's refreshing to see it in action. (Congrats again, Marie!)

Journalist that I used to be, though, I wasn't going to blog about this until I made certain I saw the actual lists. And Marie linked to all three in her post. As I scanned through the *Times* list for Marie's name, I noticed something else. Let me explain how.

The list is formatted this way:

6. *Waiting For Love*, by Marie Force (Marie Force)

If you look at the number one book on the list, you see this:

1. Alex Cross, *Run*, by James Patterson (Little, Brown & Company)

In other words, the publisher comes after the author's name, something

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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.

Binge Reading

Continued from page 1 ▶

we're all used to. But I'm not used—even now—to seeing the author's name as the publisher. As I was scanning this list—the e-book bestseller's list for the week of March 10, 2013—I noticed that same phenomenon six times in the top 25. In other words, self-published authors comprise 24 percent of the *New York Times* e-book list for the week of March 10.

Wowza. Nifty. Cool.

So much for that added value traditional publishers bring. Guess what, y'all? Even hitting a bestseller list is no longer reserved for traditionally published writers only. Back when just one or two writers were making the lists, I wasn't so sure it would happen, but now—I'm thrilled and amazed, and the traditional writer in me is surprised.

The business woman isn't.

Now that the distribution model for books has expanded so that it's easy for writers to get their books in front of readers, of course readers drive sales. Readers don't care if Marie Force was published by Marie Force or by Little, Brown & Company, so long as the readers can get the books.

Getting on the bestseller list, then, has to do with word of mouth and demand, not on availability on bookstore shelves.

Remember, bestseller lists are based on velocity as well as number of copies sold. In other words, if you sell 5,000 books in the first week of publication and only 1,000 more books in the next 51 weeks, you might hit a bestseller list. But if you sell 1,000 books for 52 weeks out of the year, you won't hit a bestseller list—even though you've sold 46,000 more copies of your book than the so-called bestseller did. If you don't believe me, look at this article in *The Wall Street Journal*, exposing a marketing firm that buys its clients onto the WSJ bestseller list. (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323864304578316143623600544.html> / <http://tinyurl.com/bkbxd4x>)

If you understand business and you understand velocity versus total sales, you can manipulate some lists. But you can't manipulate three of them in the same week. That's because the lists that Marie hit (and several other of those authors as well) use different algorithms to compute their bestseller lists. The *USA Today* list is the most impressive to me because it computes actual sales of total books, comparing the sales of business books to the sales of romance novels to the sales of e-books to the sales of trade paper. To hit that list is hard (and, quite frankly, more of an achievement, in my humble opinion, than hitting the *Times* list).

How did these indie authors hit the lists? I don't know. I'm sure some of them would tell you they promoted to death or they blogged a lot. And I know those things had no real impact at all. Writers never believe that they got on a bestseller list because they wrote a good book.

Here's what I do know: each of the six indie authors on the *New York Times* list has published more than one book. The author with the fewest titles, Shanora Williams, published three titles since the end of November.

The other authors (and the two on the extended *New York Times* list) published at least four books last year. Some are indie-only authors, and others, like Marie, are hybrid writers, with books from traditional publishers as well as indie publishing their own titles. Some are newer writers who have just signed a traditional book deal (and I hope to hell their contracts are good).

What this shows is what those of us who have been in the business a long time already know: write a lot of books and readers will find you. In fact, if you're a good storyteller, then readers will anxiously wait for your next book.

In the Amazon reviews for one of these *Times* bestsellers lurk a lot of complaints about copy editing or the lack thereof. Those reviews are mixed in with demands from readers for the next book in the series. As I said with the early Amanda Hocking books, copy editing matters, but if you're a good storyteller, then many readers will forgive the misuse of commas to get to your story. (Many won't, however, which is why I insist that you indie writers pay for a copy editor of some kind. Increase your sales even more with proper punctuation!) ▶

Traditional publishers have long limited their authors to one or two books per year. Stephen King even made that a plot point in *Bag of Bones*. Even he, who made a profit for the publisher on every book he wrote, was restricted to two books per year for his publisher in those dark days.

The romance genre broke that mold—and got dismissed for it. Harlequin liked authors who could write six or more books per year for its category romances (generally, those books run 50-60,000 words, about half to a third the length of a standard novel). Nora Roberts continued that practice after she left the categories, and early on, she took on a pen name for her J.D. Robb series, since her publisher and agent were afraid that slight departure from her romance novels would tank her sales. It didn't. It just brought in new readers.

It was news when historical romance writer Mary Balogh published four books in the same season. Three were paperback originals, and the fourth was a hardcover. The experiment, according to the traditional publisher, was to see if the readers would spend even more for the last book in a four-book series or if they would wait until the mass market paperback got released.

Some readers waited, of course. But most bought all four books in the same season, without a lot of qualms.

If you ask a traditional publisher when a writer will overwhelm readers with content, you will get a different answer than you will if you ask readers.

Traditional publishers sometimes released three books in three months, usually to promote a new writer (or a new-to-the-publisher writer) with a series of books. Often that publisher had invested a lot of money in the writer or was going to build that writer into a bestseller.

Sometimes the experiment flopped; most often it worked, and it is being used more and more now.

The problem that traditional publishers have is this: it costs a lot of money to publish a book. The publisher must put all the money out up front for everything from content to editorial to production to distribution. Books go from being a proposal from a writer to being a paper edition in stores, at thousands of copies, all before the publisher sees a dime (this, of course, doesn't count Random's grabby e-publishing lines). The average cost for a mass market original is about \$250,000 (with a \$5,000 advance to the author factored in), so if the publisher is going to publish three books by that author in one year, that author had better justify the publisher's \$750,000 investment.

See why traditional publishers slow writers down?

But indie writers, handling their own publishing schedule, don't need to slow down. They can publish something when it's done, with minimal financial outlay. If you figure that when the indie writer spends money on a cover and copy edits—and doesn't count her time—she can publish her book for the cost of a expensive four-person dinner in Manhattan, the kind that editors put on their expense accounts.

With that kind of outlay, publishing 12 books per year, provided the writer can write that many, is doable. Publishing four to six is definitely possible. If the writer has an existing backlist, then publishing even more can happen.

Velocity happens to indie and traditionally published writers alike when they're publishing the next book in a well-loved series. About half of those indie books on the *Times* list are in a series, so clearly the readers were waiting for the next book.

Most online bookstores have some kind of algorithm that notifies a customer when a favorite author has published a new book. Even if the indie authors can't do preorders yet, the algorithm more than makes up for it. The fans will buy the book day one if they want it.

How many books will a reader read by the same author? That question used to bother me, since I have such a huge inventory. At what point am I overwhelming my readers?

That, it turned out, was a traditional publishing question. If you think of limited shelf space and the importance of velocity in traditional publishing—there's only so much room for new books and those books better sell—then it matters how many books you push by a certain writer. At minimum, that writer had better sell \$800,000 worth of books per season to justify the capital outlay.

All of those factors make "overwhelming the reader" an issue because—unbeknownst to the reader—those books have to sell within a short time frame to make the publisher's money back.

Now, books stay on the virtual shelves as long as the contracts and/or the writer wants them to. Writers are happy with selling (by traditional publishing standards) small numbers of books per week, because those sales add up over time. Traditional publishers still need to make their investment back, so they still need a lot of sales very fast to make supporting an author worthwhile.

In other words, if you ask a traditional publisher when a writer will overwhelm readers with content, you will get a different answer than you will if you ask readers.

Because if you ask readers the question, they'll pause, frown, and think. Then they'll ask you which writers you're referring to. The reason they ask that is simple: every reader has favorite writers whose work they would buy every week if they could. And every reader has writers they like whose work they won't buy weekly because the reader has other things to do with his time. So the reader will discriminate between favorite authors and authors he merely likes.

You do this. I know you do. Every reader does.

In fact, every consumer does this with various forms of entertainment. The thing that calmed my fears about too much content was looking at the Rolling Stones song title availability in MP3. Two thousand songs. Two thousand. And while you might not like the Stones, a lot of people do. Not everyone is going to buy all two thousand songs, but a great number of people will be disappointed if their favorite isn't listed.

Yeah, yeah, I'm not the Rolling Stones (I'm not that old or that male, for that matter) nor am I Nora Roberts. But I have to trust my fan base to pick and choose among the things I publish to find what they want.

I know that some folks prefer my *Fey* fantasy series to my *Retrieval Artist* series, and others won't ever read anything but the Smokey Dalton mysteries. That's okay by me. I like having all of those books out there, and I like having as much of my work available as possible.

Slowly, the content providers are learning that consumers don't all act in the same way. Right now, television producers are discussing this in public in two ways.

First, they're reacting to the Netflix series, *House of Cards*. Netflix released the entire season at once, and a lot of viewers binge-watched. They spent the entire weekend watching all 13 episodes back to back. (I assume these consumers took naps and ate meals, but that might be a big assumption.) Others spent the month of February watching, and others, like me, are waiting until we have time.

I binge watch series. I prefer *Downton Abbey* all at once. I tried to watch Season 3 "live" and gave up. I ordered the DVD the moment it became available. I watch some shows every week. I really don't care if I see *NCIS* in bulk, but it's a comforting hour on a tired night.

Netflix, which has a lot of data on the way that consumers watch, knows that consumers watch slowly and binge-watch, which is why Netflix put the entire season out at once. Other content providers will follow suit. But not everyone. A panel with cable executives at the Hollywood Radio and Television Society's February luncheon had most of the panelists giving a cranky response to the question of whether or not they'd release their premiere programming in single-season dumps.

HBO's programming president called Netflix's move "showy," and dismissed it out of hand. Other cable executives still wanted "water-cooler" TV. They don't care about controlling the conversation as much as they care about controlling the purse strings. It costs a lot of money to produce an entire season of something, and to spend all of that money all at once.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

At the same time, the industry is slowly coming to grips with the fact that consumers have choices now. (As opposed to those three networks with rigid programming back in the day.) The *Los Angeles Times* has published article after article about the way that Nielsen measures television viewing in this country. For the five of you who don't know, Nielsen is the company that measures television ratings. Ratings show everything from whether a program should be canceled to how much advertising should cost on that program depending on how many eyeballs actually view the ad.

And that's the question. First, Nielsen only rated eyeballs that watched live. Then live +24 hours after air. Now it is—I think—live +7 days later, unless I missed something (which is entirely possible).

Recently, Nielsen also sought to change the definition of a "television home" since it noted that many people, particularly younger people, no longer watch TV programming on an actual television. Here's what the *LA Times* said, "Besides people cutting the cord to their pay-TV provider, many younger consumers ▶

simply never sign up in the first place, choosing instead to get content through newer platforms such as Hulu or Netflix. The traditional networks are putting more of their content online as well. If that material has advertisements in it, having a proper measurement becomes crucial.”

The change has already occurred, but Nielsen won’t have a way to properly measure all of it (if it can even be properly measured) until 2014.

Now, apply all of this to books.

Readers have long binge-read their favorite authors. My first memory of binge reading stems from my 12th summer. I read all of Agatha Christie’s books in the local library and figured out how she determined whodunit. I felt very smart. I also read all of Edgar Rice Burroughs’s *Tarzan* books, but discovered that I couldn’t quite suspend my disbelief for *Princess of Mars*. (I think I wanted more princess, less Mars.) The following summer, all of Victoria Holt and all of Andre Norton. And somewhere—my 16th summer, maybe?—all of Alexander Dumas and all of Ian Fleming.

Binge reading is such a common phenomenon that the execs who are talking about the changing TV scene comparing the consumer’s behavior with episode availability to the consumer’s behavior with books in a series. In other words, we all do it.

The problem that traditional publishers have is the same one that television executives have—upfront financial outlay. It’s expensive to produce a lot of stuff at once. Which is why Random House is developing nasty things like the well-named Hydra imprint, why they’re holding onto as many rights as they can, and why they’re contracting for the length of the copyright.

It’s also why good writers who produce and self-publish a lot of content are hitting the bestseller lists with later titles. Readers want the next book in their favorite series. They’ll try a stand-alone book by the same author. They’ll go for the first book in a new series.

Readers want their writers to be able to write as fast as the readers read. Since very few writers can write an entire novel overnight and most readers can read one overnight, that wish will never come true. Writers will always write slower than readers can read.

But it’s good news for those of us who are prolific. We will have an audience that will grow with us, because our books remain available over time. And readers rarely discover a favorite author with the first book that author ever published. Readers hear about that author through word-of-mouth and pick up the latest title or the title with the best cover or the title that seems closer to something the reader already knows she likes.

For the mystery workshop I’m teaching in June, I’m introducing the students to authors they’ve never heard of. In the case of at least two writers, I start with a mid-series book. So if my students end up liking that book, they’ll have to go back to the author’s previous work.

It’s how we read. And finally, publishing reflects the way that readers read thanks to the digital era.

Just like television is starting to reflect how people actually watch, as opposed to the mandate from corporate on high. Water-cooler television? There will always be that. Just like there will be the Book of the Year (depending on genre). But there will also be consumers who come really late to that Book of the Year or that water-cooler TV show. I’m thinking *Supernatural* might be my summer binge show. Yeah, I know. I haven’t seen it yet. But the scenes at the front of the show look interesting. I’ve been watching them after I watch the episode of *Arrow* that I’ve stored on my DVR. *Arrow* is as close to appointment television as I get. I watch it a day or two later.

And I buy the Book of the Year when I hear about it, but I might read it three years later. If I do and like it, I’ll have three years of new books by that author to catch up on. If it’s an indie author, I’ll have a lot of reading.

And I like that. Very much.

Kristine Kathryn Rusch is an award-winning mystery, romance, science fiction, and fantasy writer. She has written many novels under various names, including Kristine Grayson for romance, and Kris Nelscott for mystery. Her novels have made the bestseller lists all over the world and have been published in 14 countries and 13 different languages. She is the former editor of prestigious The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. Before that, she and Dean Wesley Smith, started and ran Pulphouse Publishing, a science fiction and mystery press in Eugene. This article was first published March 7, 2013 on the author’s blog at www.kriswrites.com and is reprinted with permission.



The First Day With First Word: Putting The Writer First

BY SANDRA KITT, CONFERENCE PUBLICITY COORDINATOR

Several years ago NINC came up with the idea to start out the annual conference with a one-day program, a pre-conference event if you will. It was not only a way of adding value to the entire conference event, but specifically allowed for focusing on a topic that that could be covered in depth.

For a fee the one-day program was also opened to the public and other industry professionals who wished to attend. One year it was a full day of forensics. In other years we've brainstormed, tried to forecast the future, and last year under the formal program title of *First Word* we worked to form partnerships with the industry and service providers who will help us take our careers to the next level or at least keep us on track.

For the 2013 conference in Myrtle Beach, *The Author's World* will begin with *First Word: Putting the Writer First*.

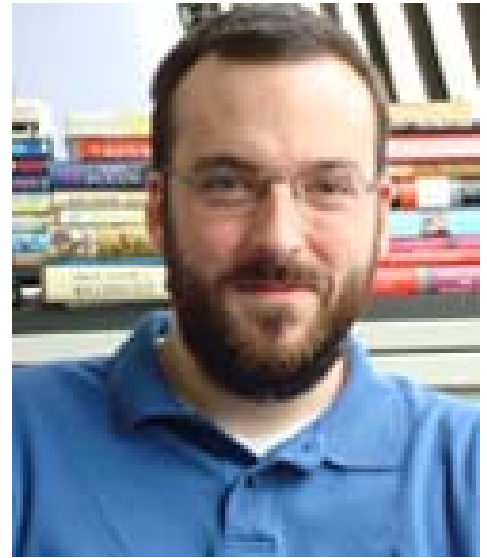
In a real sense we're talking about going back to first base...why we do what we do. Even after we've twisted ourselves and souls into pretzels in an attempt to wrestle the business side of being a writer into submission, all that effort doesn't mean much if there's no story for the effort. So, just how do we put the writer first? Go back to thinking about the stories, to the characters that talk to us in our heads about what they want and don't want, and try to figure out how to put it all together into a compelling read. We're not forgetting about promotion, marketing, and building an audience. We're simply setting priorities...the horse before the cart.

We've been fortunate to have already booked two great speakers for First Word. For a little something different this year, First Word will begin with a high level writer's workshop presented by Lisa Cron. She ▶

is the author of “Wired For Story,” an examination using the discoveries being made by neuroscience of how and why readers are drawn to stories and what matters most to them. Lisa’s background and knowledge should provide workshop participants with an inside track to the reader’s brain.



Lisa Cron, author of *Wired for Story*

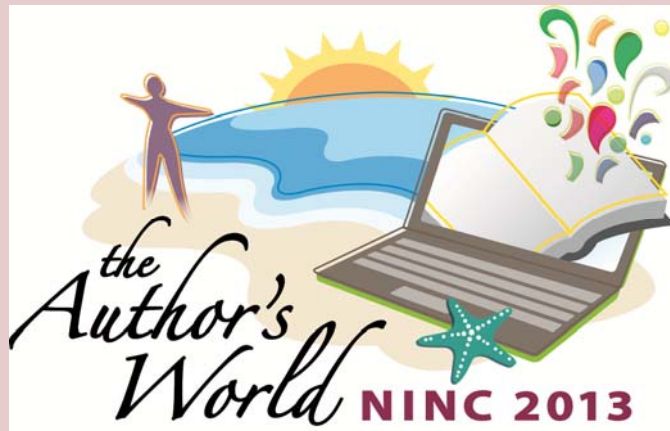


Jim McCarthy, agent

In the afternoon, we’ll have the traditional First Word panels discussing just how we can handle the business aspects of publishing, while protecting the creative flame and possibly pushing the genre and storytelling boundaries that traditional publishing established for a print-only world. For that we’re delighted to announce we’ve already confirmed Jim McCarthy of Dystel & Goderich Literary Management.

While wary writers wonder if there is any real value to having an agent these days, Jim McCarthy will remind us that there are agents who live for finding an unforgettable story, a new and innovative voice. He’s on our side! “I’ll read anything an author can make interesting.” He’s also looking for women’s literary stories, underrepresented voices(!), and anything unusual and unexpected.

There’s more to look forward to, and in future updates we’ll profile additional speakers. ▲



NINC 2013 Conference
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
October 24-27

Members’ Early Registration \$350

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

Harlequin Ends 2012 in a Somber Note

Operating earnings went down 11.6 percent in 2012, with the slow growth of digital sales taking the blame with a 7.2 percent loss in the third quarter. Another culprit cited was foreign currency translations. North American print sales also began to move downward in the second quarter and continued. TorStar targeted economics in the European market and higher author royalties on digital sales. The company is optimistic for the coming year with digital numbers counterbalancing print figures in North America.

PW Daily

SmartEdit Goes Pro

BY LYNN VIEHL

Last summer I discovered a freeware editing program called SmartEdit, www.smart-edit.com, which analyzes any text you feed to it and provides lists of and stats on adverbs, clichés, repeated words, and other problematic content with the text. The program was so useful that ever since I've been recommending it to other writers.

In December, SmartEdit went pro, and while it is still available for a ten-day free trial, a license to use the program beyond that now costs \$69.95. The real question for me was, is the pro version worth the investment? I decided to buy a license, put the program through its paces and find out.

First, the differences between the two programs

The freeware version of SmartEdit checks:

Repeated Phrases List, Repeated Words List, Adverb Usage List, Monitored Words List, Cliché List

The pro Version of SmartEdit checks:

Repeated Phrases List, Repeated Words List, Adverb Usage List, Monitored Words List, Cliché List, Dialog Tag Counter, Separate Dialog & Prose Checks, Misused Word List, Foreign Phrase Usage List, Profanity Usage List, Suspect Punctuation List, Proper Nouns List, Acronyms List, Sentence Start List, Sentence Length Graph, Smart & Straight Quote Checker, Dash and Hyphen Checker, Word, Character & Page Count

One thing I have to note here is that I did fry the computer on which I had downloaded the old freeware version so I can't pull up the old program to double-check if there was anything else it did; I'm going by the notes I put together for last summer's post on it.

The first thing I noticed as I started up the pro version is that while the basic layout is still the same the program looks much more polished and professional and (obviously) has more options to offer. SmartEdit's scans can be fine-tuned to suit your needs, and also may serve more than one purpose. In addition to searching out problem areas, you can use the program to edit anything from a scene to an entire manuscript in one shot, discover what, as well as where, your weed words, echoes and other writing weaknesses are, and even create a style sheet for your story.

As before when I test drove the freeware version, I decided to feed SmartEdit Pro the manuscript for *Taken by Night*, which was my 50K NaNoWriMo novel and a story that hasn't been edited by anyone but me with the daily edits I did while writing it. I didn't refine any of the scan parameters on the first pass in order to get back the most comprehensive report, and the first report was 210 pages long (which I reduced to 51 pages after eliminating info like all the words and phrases I had repeated only twice, which are reported as a single column.)

As with the freeware version I learned a lot from the scan. The top five phrases I repeated most often were *one of the* (33 times), *out of the* (32 times), *the rest of* (29 times), *in front of* (17 times), and *in the park* (16 times.) These are all phrases I would hunt down and weed out as much as possible, along with my individual weed words (i.e., 87 eyes, 41 doors, 39 nods, and 31 voices.) ▶

The rest of the report provided lots of new and interesting data for me, too. For example, the scan identified 14 different words I used that were either profanity or potentially offensive (all intentional and fine with me, but good to know in the event I want to put together a PG version of the ms to use as a school seminar teaching tool.) My adverb usage report was nine pages long, and while I don't follow that Absolutely No Adverbs Whatsoever rule that seems a bit excessive, I need to take a hard look at my adverb usage during the final edit of the ms and see if I can trim that down. I also started 304 sentences with *She*, 264 with *The*, and 253 with *I*; it surprised me that those were my top three sentence starters. I put a space in front of a dash 24 different times (typing style preference of mine, and one that most of my editors tolerate) and made one punctuation error by putting a space before a comma (which I do need to fix). If you'd like to see a copy of the full scan report, I've uploaded it in .pdf format here:

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BzylBQC3SyqocDVJeklINN09MamM/edit?pli=1>

SmartEdit is ideal for me to use as part of my full manuscript edit; I'll be working it into my process by running a scan as soon as I finish the first complete draft. I also intend to use it to work on eliminating some of my weed word bad habits as well as simplifying the creation of my own style sheets and foreign language glossaries.

The one major issue I have with SmartEdit is that it's only available for Windows; for now you Mac and Linux users are out of luck (the developer notes that a Mac version may be possible in the future). I have Windows, so it doesn't affect me, but I know plenty of writers who are devoted to their Macs. Since this program is geared specifically toward us, I think it should be available to all writers, not just the Windows users.

The freeware version of SmartEdit was a useful editing tool; the pro version is even better, and I think every serious writer should take it for a test drive. You simply can't compile this much information on your own without a great deal of tedious searching and list-making. Even with close attention you will probably miss half of the data SmartEdit can compile for you with a single click. What the program doesn't replace is your internal editor; it's still up to you to analyze the scan results, make the appropriate story decisions, and apply that to your manuscript. The nice thing about this program is that it's a good teaching resource for new writers who want to learn what to look for as well as what to think about when they are writing in order to get their manuscripts up to professional level.

Bottom line, is it worth the purchase price? I say yes, absolutely.

This article first appeared January 15, 2012 on the blog Paperback Writer. Reprinted with permission from the author.

Business Briefs

Cravebox Promotions www.cravebox.com

Cravebox has worked with St. Martin's Press, Harlequin, Random House, and Hachette. Founder Kitty Kolding says two more publishers are in process of signing, and four others are in development. St. Martin's Press sponsored the first book campaign in October 2012, signing up for 1,000 boxes. Cravebox reported the campaign reached 1.3 million and an overall 41 million impressions (mining social media). That campaign featured Kaya McLaren's *How I Came to Sparkle Again* with strawberry licorice, a nut mix, and a charm bracelet. The 200,000 Cravebox members receive info of current boxes offering that are also advertised online. Consumers enter a drawing for the boxes. Cravebox looks at a contestant's demographics. This leads to looking at group interest in that gift box. Winners receive the box free and are later contacted to enlist their help in advertising the product. Social media sites—Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest—are part of the process.

Publishers Weekly

The New Divide

Lou Aronica's
*Eye on
Industry*



I came very close to being born a dinosaur. This isn't a reference to the guy with the nickname "Velociraptor" who tried to woo my mother when she was single. That's a story for another day. What I'm talking about is the way I entered the publishing field. I was an English major. I wanted to pursue a career in the book world. Because the jobs market was awful, I cast a very wide net. I could have wound up at a textbook publisher. I could have wound up at a travel books publisher. I *did* wind up at Bantam Books, where I stayed for fourteen years. But the next most likely scenario would have been getting a job at a trade hardcover house. Had that happened, there's the real chance that I would have been a "hardcover person" rather than a "paperback person," and there's an equally real chance that I would have grown up in the business with antiquated notions that caused me to be marginalized when paperback publishers redefined the industry in the late eighties.

Back then, there was a notable divide in the way hardcover publishers and paperback publishers saw the world, even when they were both focusing on fiction. Hardcover publishers tended to be book-centric, concentrating on the individual title in front of them, while paperback publishers tended to be author-centric, concentrating on the author's overall career since backlist was such a vital profit center for paperback houses. Hardcover publishers courted reviewers and independent bookstores and shied from packaging tricks. Paperback publishers courted wholesalers and chain bookstores and considered no packaging trick beneath them. Hardcover publishers platformed books and sold paperback rights. Paperback publishers distributed in mass.

Eventually, the paperback publishers became hard/soft publishers, and the business shifted in their direction. Plenty of hardcover publishers resisted this, but they were dinosaurs and the asteroid was entering the atmosphere. The most evolved of the hardcover publishers became effective hard/soft publishers themselves, and the entire model for the industry changed. Most of you probably don't remember a time when you shared 50% of your paperback royalties with your hardcover publisher.

This came to mind recently because I was having lunch with an editor friend. She grew up on the hardcover side and had evolved into a great hard/soft publisher. Of course, minutes after we sat down we started talking about e-books. All lunch conversations between two people in the book industry must turn to e-books within the first ten minutes as per the dictates of the Association of American Publishers. We talked about the ubiquity of sub-\$2.99 titles in the market and the effect this was having on consumer expectations, at which point, she said, "Well, that's not the sort of thing we should be doing, is it?"

For a moment, I felt myself transported back to the mid-eighties when I would meet up with a hardcover friend and he/she would dismiss genre paperback publishing. I quickly started to give this further thought, though. Was it the sort of thing we should be doing, her at her Big Six house and me as either a writer or as an indie publisher? Were there appreciable differences between this type of publishing and the type of publishing we knew how to do? If we didn't do it, was there an asteroid whistling in our direction (yes, I realize this metaphor doesn't hold up, but give me some leeway here)?

Or was there a new divide that we needed to acknowledge and avoid getting caught between? ▶

Years ago, I wrote about the similarities between what was happening with e-books now and what happened with mass market paperbacks in the forties. This is a much-covered topic now, so there's no reason to go over it again here. Back in the forties, there was a huge divide between hardcovers and paperbacks. Hardcover were *real books* and paperbacks were *for the masses*. What's important to keep in mind is that, matters of snobbery aside, this system worked very well for nearly four decades. Hardcover publishers had their business, paperback publishers had theirs, they played nicely together for the most part, and the industry thrived. It only stopped working when bookstore chains and mass merchants started handling books in a new way, a way that completely favored the paperback (and ultimately hard/soft) model.

If there's a new divide now, built along lines of price, it's important for writers to align themselves properly. We're still learning about the e-book consumer, but what we seem to be discovering is that how readers regard their e-books relates closely to what they pay for them. There are some strong indications that people who buy books priced at \$2.99 or less tend to have very short memories about these books and even shorter memories about the authors. There's also some good evidence to suggest that readers who pay \$7.99 or more for an e-book tend to be more loyal to the authors and quicker to pick up backlist. This is all anecdotal at this point. However, there's some logic to it. Readers buying at the low price point need to sift through lots of books that might not be professionally written or edited, while that's much less likely to be true at the higher price point. (Before you start screaming, I'm well aware that there's a great deal of very good fiction available for less than \$2.99. However, there's also a great deal of stuff that's barely readable because it's so easy to publish now, and it isn't always easy for the consumer to tell the difference before buying.)

Many writers have found very loyal audiences at \$2.99 or less. I can't think of a single case, though, of an author who did so without publishing with great frequency (four, five, six, ten books a year). If that doesn't describe you, then going the other way might be the best course. Otherwise, there's a good chance that you'll never gain traction. I've seen several instances of writers who had success with a book at \$2.99 and then came back to the market a year later to discover that they were essentially starting over. It appears that bookseller algorithms are prioritizing price now as well, so the divide is likely to become more extreme.

I suppose my editor friend was right, then. She publishes serious fiction and nonfiction. I publish a novel every eighteen months or so. For us, low pricing isn't the answer. For others, it's ideal. In the forties, hardcover original was the right path for some, while paperback original was better for others. It's just important that you know which side of the divide you should be standing on.

Lou Aronica is a New York Times bestselling author of fiction and nonfiction, former President of Novelists Inc., former Publisher of Avon Books, and current Publisher of The Story Plant and Fiction Studio Books. You can reach Lou at laronica@fictionstudio.com.

Business Briefs

Winter Institute 8 Increasing Romance, Sci-fi, & Mystery Sales Panel

Panelists Jason Kennedy of Boswell Book Company, Milwaukee, Wis., Cheri LeBlond of Mysteryscape, Overland Park, KS, and Kit Little of Towne Book Center, Collegeville, PA, emphasized the importance of booksellers having a healthy genre inventory. While they talked about displays drawing attention to genre titles they also endorsed the need for staff that are passionate about specific genres. Other sources cited were working with sub-genres to get beyond the obvious and knowledgeable customers.

Shelf Aware



WRITING is TAXING

By Diane Kelly

Look Out for Thieves

Identity theft has become an enormous problem. Many of us have been victims. Identity thieves obtain data from all sorts of places—employer records, credit cards used at restaurants, stolen mail, etc. Even tax preparers have come under fire for improperly using client data. Identity thieves have also posed as representatives of the IRS in “phishing” expeditions online. A common phishing scheme involves the con artist informing the recipient of an e-mail purporting to be from the IRS that the recipient is either under investigation by the IRS or due a refund. The links contained within the e-mail take the recipient to a page that very closely resembles the IRS website. There, the recipient is asked to input personal data, including their name, social security number, bank account information, and credit card information.

Not only are thieves using stolen personal data to access bank accounts or open lines of credit, but they are also increasingly using stolen names and social security numbers to file falsified returns with the IRS in order to obtain fraudulent refunds. When a fraudulent return is filed, the real taxpayer will face months of back and forth with the IRS to resolve the matter. Not only is dealing with the matter a headache, the fraudulent return might also result in an extensive delay of any refund due. Such delays can be a big problem for a taxpayer who has been counting on the refund to pay expenses.

We’re advised to safeguard our personal information, especially our social security numbers, yet it seems that every time a writer turns around he or she is being asked for a tax ID number. A writer has to provide his or her tax ID to publishers and agents, as well as to outlets that sell self-published books. If an author has paid \$10 or more in royalties to another author or \$600 or more for personal services to an assistant, cover artist, freelance editor, accountant, or attorney, the author has to issue a 1099 to the recipient of the funds (unless the recipient is a corporation). The 1099 form requires the author to note his or her tax ID number. It can be risky to provide your social security number to parties who may or may not safeguard your information. Also, the more times you provide your social security number, the higher the chance that some unscrupulous person could access the information.

How can you protect yourself?

Be aware that the IRS never sends unsolicited e-mails and will never request credit card information and PIN numbers via e-mail.

Leave your social security card in a safe place. Do not carry it with you in your purse or wallet.

Check your credit report at least once a year for fraudulent accounts.

To avoid having to give out your personal social security number, obtain an “employer identification number” or “EIN” for your writing business. An EIN is available to any business, including a sole proprietor. Despite its name, you are not required to have employees in order to obtain an EIN. An EIN is simply a tax identification number for your business that is distinct from your social security number.

Although an EIN is linked to your writing business with the IRS, an identity thief will not get far if the thief tries to use the number for other purposes such as obtaining a credit card or tries to use it on tax forms when a social security number is required.

You can use this EIN on the 1099 forms you file. You will also list the EIN in box D at the top of your Schedule C when you file your tax return. ▶

It's easy to get an EIN. You can apply online, by phone, via fax, or by snail mail. Here's a link that will take you to an instruction page:

<http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/How-to-Apply-for-an-EIN>

How can you tell if you've been a victim of identity theft?

Besides the usual calls or letters from bill collectors or credit card companies, you might have been a victim of identity theft if you receive a notice from the IRS stating that you have unreported income from an employer for whom you've never worked. In this situation, someone has likely used your name and social security number to obtain employment. In addition, you have probably been a victim if you attempt to file your tax return electronically and it is rejected because a return has already been filed. In this case, someone who has your personal information has already filed a fraudulent return. Be careful, however. The letter purporting to be from the IRS could itself be fraudulent. To make sure the notice was indeed sent by the IRS, call the Service at 1-800-829-1040.

If you find your personal data has been stolen or misused, file Form 14039 – Identity Theft Affidavit right away. Be sure to include a photocopy of your passport, driver's license, social security card, or other valid government identification along with the Affidavit. If your wallet has been lost or stolen and you believe your personal data may be at risk, file the Affidavit and also call the Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.

Diane Kelly is a retired CPA/tax attorney and the author of the humorous Death and Taxes romantic mystery series from St. Martin's Press.

Business Briefs

Rumblings at Barnes & Noble

Len Riggio, Barnes & Noble's chairman, founder, and largest shareholder, filed his plan to purchase the company with the SEC in February. His offer includes the retail stores, the B&N website, and Sterling Publishing. He not interested in the Nook Media group that covers the digital devices, Nook bookstore, or college stores. Riggio would take the retail stores corporation private. His proposal is being evaluated by three independent directors.

In other B&N news, Nook last quarter sales were reported to be down 26 percent. The content was up 6.8 percent so the company examining the digital device. Lowering prices on devices is the first move, and the company claims it isn't stopping hardware production through 2014. However, more immediate efforts are targeted at the content portion, more apps, and opening 10 additional Nook e-bookstores as well as reexamining the educational market.

There is concern by those watching the consumer market that if Nook hardware leaves the market, Amazon will continue to advance unimpeded with negative results for the industry.

PW Daily

Apple Files Used E-book Patent

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office published Apple's application in early March for its own digital marketplace for reselling e-books, music, movies and software by transferring files instead of reproducing them. A quick peek at the patent application revealed Apple left the door open for publishers to set restrictions such as a minimum price and the time period before resale is permitted. A provision also is included in the patent allowing for the possibility of sharing resale proceeds with creators and publishers.

PCMag.com



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

Not Your Usual Writing Advice

By JoAnn Grote

Recapturing the Joy

Enthusiasm means “of the gods.” When you have an enthusiastic heart, all the heavens can flow through it.

— Sonia Choquette

Do you remember when you first decided you wanted to write a novel? Do you recall the joy of creating the story in your mind and transferring it to paper when you were still an aspiring author?

I spent months writing and rewriting the first three chapters of the proposal for what became my first published book. Combined with the historical research, I spent at least a year developing the proposal. Each day while at my full-time accounting position, I anticipated the joy of working on that proposal when I got home. Perhaps writing was the place I went to get away from my “real,” everyday life. Fiction can be a form of escapism for the writer as well as the reader.

When writing becomes our career, we soon learn we can’t play indefinitely with the plot or the best words to use. Deadlines (one hopes, as that implies contracts, sometimes self-imposed in today’s indie market) and bills require we write with regularity and perhaps be prolific.

Rejections, changes in lines, shifts in what’s “hot,” editors with revolving door syndrome, contracted deadlines so close we feel on a carnival ride we can’t get off—all can leech our joy in writing.

I follow a blog by an indie author who appears to be doing quite well with her career. She published her first novel in January 2011 and her third in December 2012. She now has an agent and is hoping to sell to a traditional publisher. She is one busy lady. She’s working hard to gain the dream—the dream we’ve all had—of spending her life writing fiction. One thing that comes through in her blog is her enthusiasm for writing—no matter how harried her life.

I recall a television interview years ago with Victoria Principal, one of the stars of the original *Dallas* television show. She was making a movie. The role required long hours in difficult outdoor conditions—twelve to eighteen-hour days in the desert if I recall correctly. The interviewer asked how Principal handled these demands. She replied that whenever things seemed difficult or her schedule over-full, she reminded herself of when she was still struggling to become a paid actress. Night after night she would tell God that if He let her have just one paying role, she’d never ask for anything more.

Before I was published in book-length fiction, I met another aspiring inspirational romance writer at a conference. Soon after, she sold her first book. It was released to glowing reviews. She signed with an agent, and soon a much larger publishing house was considering a proposal. While the proposal was under consideration, the agent turned down a second proposal and then a third, refusing to submit them to editors. My friend was understandably discouraged. Though I didn’t voice my feelings to her, I thought how happy I would be to sell just one book—a goal she’d already accomplished. (Yes, she did become multi-published.)

Remember when seeing just one of your books in print was one of your greatest dreams?

Recently, I met a middle-aged man with a family and a truck repair business. One’s first impression isn’t that this man is a story-teller. Yet he made up bedtime stories for his children during their growing-up years. In a prior job he was in regular contact by computer with fellow workers at a distant location. “Just for fun” he’d send them stories he wrote, thrillers, in serial form—off the cuff, no rewriting. If he allowed too much time between serials, his co-workers would badger him for another. He was thrilled ▶

to learn I'm a published author and wants to glean information from me. He knows nothing about the publishing world, but is eager to learn. He'd love to see his stories in print, and spend time writing more of them.

Remember when writing itself—the act of it, not the “having done”—was one of your greatest joys?

From what I've experienced, and from what I've heard from other career writers, we too often let the joy of writing slip away over the years of our careers. Career writers often advise newly published authors and aspiring writers to treat writing as “a job.” While this mindset has obvious advantages, too often the job becomes a chore.

I decided I wanted the joy back. I began looking for a path to that joy.

We all know the ego-boosters that put us on cloud nine: fan letters, signing writing contracts, nice advances and royalty checks, editors saying they love your latest manuscript, holding your first copy of your latest release. These are wonderful, but we can't conjure them up any time we choose. We can't count on them to bring us happiness as a writer for the everyday or the long-term.

If we want to retain or recover joy in our writing, we must learn how to develop it for ourselves. Here are some of the things that became part of my path.

Gratitude.

Following Victoria Principal's example, I remind myself how lucky I am to be a multi-published author, to have current contracts, and—in these days of indie publishing—that there are readers who already know my name and can be expected to seek out my books.

Another form of gratitude I practice is for the people who have helped me, and continue to help me, along this path. When I sit down to write I ask a blessing on the editor who has contracted the piece. If the piece isn't contracted, I ask a blessing on editors who have contracted my writing in the past, and the readers who have expressed—in words or purchases or both—that they like my stories.

Writing by hand.

There does seem, for me, to be a benefit to writing by hand. For so many years I've told myself and others that I must write by computer to write fast enough to make a living. That's still so. However, writing even a short summary of what I plan to do in the next scene or chapter, or writing a short scene or the beginning of a new one, not only appears to allow the words and ideas to come more quickly and with less effort, but has, in some mysterious manner, increased my joy in writing. Until my recent attempt to rediscover joy, I didn't allow myself the “luxury” of writing scenes by hand. I've found this isn't the luxury I thought, but a lovely way to encourage story and tempt words onto the paper.

Location.

I've often heard that if one writes in the same location every day, the writer's subconscious learns to associate that location with writing. Sit down in front of the computer at the same desk in the same room in the same chair every day and your mind begins to think in terms of story as soon as you sit down. I may even have suggested this to other writers. I do think this is good advice.

However, if you're in an unhappy place with your writing, the subconscious might relate the usual writing spot with drudgery, lack of joy, a sense of impossibility, or even failure. Sitting there may make you feel you want to run away. A new location—even if only a comfortable chair on the other side of the room—may make you feel you've done just that: run away and escaped. Your imagination may reward you with an easy flow of ideas and more joy in putting them on paper.

Supplies.

Like any other career writer, I am capable of writing anywhere with any type of supplies and equipment. But since I'm allowing myself to write by hand, even if it's only a five-minute summary of a scene, I also allow myself to write in notebooks that appeal to me or on lavender-lined paper. I use only my favorite pens, which include a purple pen with purple ink, as well as a plain pen with black ink. Yes, I know it might appear unprofessional and even silly, but it adds a little more joy to my writing process, and that's what I'm after.

Along with my enjoyment of using pretty paper, I've started hand-writing notes to friends and relatives again. Not every day, but occasionally. It gives me a wonderful excuse to explore stationary when I'm out, and to write on beautiful paper. The notes feel more personal than the emails and texts which are my normal forms of communication, and it's nice to communicate without using the laptop I associate with work.

Maybe papers and pens don't contribute to your joy of writing at all. Perhaps a certain picture on the wall above your desk or sometimes writing on different forms of technology, such as an Ipad, makes you happy. Whatever tangible things contribute to happiness, add them to your writing practice if at all possible.

Daily action.

This one has perhaps been the hardest in recent months, as my life has been filled with transitions and helping my 88-year-old mother. Too many days without writing and my self-respect goes south. The more I kick myself for not writing daily, the harder it is to begin the practice again. Nothing depletes the joy of writing faster than not making the time to write. The answer is simple: write every day, even if it's only a sentence. I've discovered if I write that one sentence, I seldom stop until I've written a paragraph. And that's all it takes for the imagination to consider the next paragraph. Besides, "having written" feels so good!

Fellow NINC member Elaine Isaak told me, "When I had lost heart and momentum after losing my publisher and my agent in the same year, it took a while to find the joy again. I brainstormed *a list of things I love*, everything from astronomical devices to China to hiking to flying machines, about three pages worth. Then I picked some to write about. It was immediately fun, because I knew about these strange subjects, and the collisions between the things I love created some exciting ideas. I'm now working on a novel based on this crazy list!"

NINC member Tina Wainscott shared her experience. "I was writing for a well-known publisher with a slew of books out, but the frustration of dealing with an apathetic editor and an agent who would do nothing about it was sapping my creativity. I kept hearing about authors who weren't getting their contracts renewed, and successful authors' warnings not to try to write for a second house, lest I risk pissing off my current one. I told myself I was lucky to have what I did, but for the first time in my life, I couldn't get an idea to work. Then I realized why, and it was the scariest thing I'd ever faced: I was losing my joy of writing.

"I decided it was time to shake things up. First, *I let my muse run free*, and she picked a series, something completely new for me. I got a new agent. Thanks to a kick in the butt from Janet Evanovich that I desperately needed, I asked for a change of editor. That, predictably, ended with my next proposal being turned down. I was out of contract in a 'tough market' (isn't it always?) and I felt the happiest I'd been in years. I was free! I had my writing mojo back, along with an important lesson: if something threatens your joy of writing, change your circumstances! I went on to sell that series to Avon, with six books and three novellas, and am now embarking on two new series."

Most of the above examples aren't world-shaking, but they work. Change as extreme as Tina's takes courage, but if that's the way your muse is leading you, the results can be exciting and rewarding. What would it take to add a little joy to your writing? Choose one thing from whatever comes to mind, and begin to build your own path back to the joy of writing.

JoAnn Grote is the award-winning author of 38 books, including inspirational romances, middle-grade historical novels, and children's nonfiction. Contact her at jaghi@rconnect.com.

Business Briefs

The Reading Room Adds E-book Sales

The book-focused social network The Reading Room has partnered with distributor Baker & Taylor to sell e-books. It also has added an e-reading app powered by Bluefire. The site's store has been operating since January and offers nearly a half million titles.

Digital Book World

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



The Tale of the Tail Grows Longer

“Our culture and economy are increasingly shifting away from a focus on a relatively small number of hits (mainstream products and markets) at the head of the demand curve, and moving toward a huge number of niches in the tail.”

— **Chris Anderson**, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More*

Last month in this column, we looked at a few of the empowering options and opportunities that have emerged for writers thanks to various new technologies and distribution channels which have created the Long Tail effect in our industry: the book market is increasingly shifting (as per NINC 2007 keynote speaker Chris Anderson) “away from a small number of mainstream markets and products towards an enormous number of niche markets and products.” I briefly discussed the most obvious example of this phenomenon, the widespread success of self-published ebooks. We also looked at crowdfunding (see Elaine Isaak’s March 2012 *Nink* article about crowdfunding and [Kickstarter](http://www.kickstarter.com), www.kickstarter.com), and we explored several individual types of crowdfunding efforts employed by *sf/f* writers Catherynne M. Valente and the team of Tracy and Laura Hickman, who used social media effectively (rather than obnoxiously) and created various projects structured and funded on a subscription basis. Moving along now...

In another blog-launched crowdfunding effort, one which was a one-time endeavor rather than a subscription plan, Saladin Ahmed sought “patronage” for a work of fiction in June of 2012. Ahmed was a much-published short story writer in the *sf/f* genre, his work had attracted significant attention in some prestigious awards venues, and his first novel had been published by DAW Books (my publisher) a few months earlier. Ahmed posted “Iron Eyes and the Watered-Down World” on his blog in June, the only short story he’d written that had never been published—nor even submitted anywhere, due to being a niche story for which the author had seen no viable publishing markets

In his blog introduction to the story, Ahmed candidly detailed some of the pressing expenses for which he needed to generate income. He invited people to read the short story for free and, if they liked it, to consider acting as a patron of the art in question by using the PayPal link to send whatever monetary support they felt comfortable offering.

In a subsequent blog update, Ahmed announced that within 24 hours of that post going live, he had received all the funds he needed for the expenses he’d blogged about, adding, “THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH FOR YOUR MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT, and for all the kind words about my writing.”

Speaking of PayPal links... Prolific fiction writer Kristine Kathryn Rusch (www.kriswrites.com) and her husband Dean Wesley Smith (www.deanwesleymith.com) both regularly write blog posts for their online readerships about the craft and business of writing. In particular, they each compose nonfiction books online about these subjects on their blogs, posting chapter by chapter over a period of time until the book is finished (ex. *Think Like A Publisher* by Smith and *Freelancer’s Survival Guide* by Rusch), and then they self-publish and sell the completed books. Each of their blogs always contains a PayPal link, accompanied by a short message explaining why it’s there: Writing is their profession, and they hope you’ll leave a tip on the way out if you’ve gotten something valuable out of today’s blog.

This ability to collect payment directly and easily via one's website opens a wide range of possibilities for the writer beyond crowdfunding and patronage, especially when combined with a broad selection of affordable, user-friendly new technologies.

For example, like many writers, I've taught writing workshops over the years, either for an honorarium or fee, or as a conference guest getting expenses comped in exchange for my appearance. These experiences are generally scheduled and structured to serve the goals of the organizers and the needs of their venue, and such appearances aren't usually profitable for the presenter. (Indeed, many of us have discovered upon tallying our expenses against our speaking fee that we *lost* money by teaching a workshop, even without taking our time expenditure into account.)

But, I've realized while trawling the Web lately in search of Long Tail inspiration that a whole new horizon of opportunities is appearing before us to do this kind of work in ways structured to suit the *writer's* needs, preferences, and individual niches, as well as to put the *writer* completely in charge of the economic aspects of the venture—and to make the writer the primary economic beneficiary of sharing her expertise with others. Because these days, the tools to create and mass-distribute professional-quality audio/visual presentations in exchange for payment are affordable and accessible to most of us. (Indeed, sometimes all you need is a teenage son and his personal tech devices.)

Bestselling fantasy spouses Tracy and Laura Hickman (see last month's column), for example, run Scribe's Forge (www.scribesforge.com/lyceum/100), where the duo offer online writing workshops and seminars. A selection of pricing plans allows customers to shape their own programs by picking and choosing which services they want to subscribe to; the choices include recorded videos, live webinars, downloadable workbooks, and online group forums, as well as in-person workshops.

In a similar but simpler example, romantic comedy authors Lani Diane Rich and Jennifer Crusie co-host the online Writewell Academy (www.writewellacademy.com). The offerings consist entirely of "downloadable lectures on the craft of story to use at your own pace. Lecture package includes slideshow with voiceover, audio track, and support materials." The first lecture is free, and the rest cost \$10 apiece. There are more than 20 courses, and they're listed and described in their recommended chronological order on the website, starting with basic classes (ex. Course 103: Introduction To Conflict) through advanced work (ex. Course 312: Time and Pacing).

Kristine Kathryn Rusch and Dean Wesley Smith, who've run popular in-person writing workshops for years, have also added online workshops and lectures to their quiver. They charge flat fees for each video lecture series and for each six-week workshop. The lecture and workshop topics cover a range of writing craft, publishing business, and (for self-publishing) production skills. The workshops include weekly writing assignments, and the instructors review the written assignments and work with the students via the internet.

Rusch and Smith have also combined crowdfunding with new publishing technologies to create *Fiction River*, a bi-monthly fiction anthology series scheduled to launch this month. Each installment in the series will be a themed short story anthology with a different editor, and it will be released in three formats: ebook, paperback, and signed limited-edition hardcover.

Setting \$6,000 as their initial crowdfunding goal, the couple ended up with \$14,056 in funding on Kickstarter. (<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/403649867/fiction-river-an-original-fiction-anthology-series>) I've been commissioned to write a short story for one of the early *Fiction River* anthologies by its editor, John Helfers.

But returning to the subject of how you can use Long Tail opportunities for your *own* writing, the written word needn't be the only format of your stories that generates income. How about the spoken word? Due to the traditional production and distribution costs of audio books (a professional sound studio and team; producing and packaging the audio book as a set of cassettes or CDs; distribution through brick-and-mortar outlets), my audio rights have never been exploited—and that's true for many midlisters. My market niche was never big enough to support such high costs for my product.

But things are changing.

Not long ago, I read a November 2011 interview on Salon.com with sf/f mega-seller Neil Gaiman, who was teaming up with Audible.com to launch a line of audiobooks under the banner *Neil Gaiman Presents* (http://www.salon.com/2011/11/23/neil_gaimans_audiobook_record_label/). ▶

The goal of the project was to create high-quality audiobooks of titles that had never been presented in this format. Gaiman chose the books and oversaw quality-control of the audio edition. (In one example of what *not* to do—and how careless publishers often get it wrong—Gaiman recalled the experience of a best-selling author he knew: “He’d written a book that was narrated by a 20-something black male and the audiobook was read by a 50-something white female. He had no say in this and after listening to it for five minutes he stopped, feeling physically sick.”)

(http://www.salon.com/2011/11/23/neil_gaimans_audiobook_record_label/)

The Gaiman project is associated with Audible’s Audiobook Creation Exchange ([ACX](http://www.ACX.com), on the internet at www.ACX.com). ACX was created to bring new titles to the public by hosting a service through which authors can connect with professional narrators and production people. From the website: “At ACX, those unused audio rights will be matched with narrators, engineers, recording studios, and other producers capable of producing a finished audiobook, as well as with audiobook publishers.” As the rights holder, you have control over the process and can pick and choose from a menu of services and royalty structures.

A good example of how upscale an ACX audiobook production can be is the fantasy novel *Swordspoint* by Ellen Kushner, narrated by the author (and produced in the *Neil Gaiman Presents* project).

(http://www.audible.com/pd/ref=sr_l_l?asin=B006FJJDBW&qid=1359221734&sr=1-1)

If you listen to the free sample audiofile, you’ll notice the recording includes sound effects and additional cast. It’s the sort of treatment you (and/or an ACX producer) could arrange for your own work, depending on your budget. (Don’t have the cash? Then see above: crowdfunding!)

Laura Resnick invites you to send her information about writers creating and employing various Long Tail strategies, so that she can write about those examples, too: LaResnick@sff.net.

Business Briefs

Pittis leaves HarperCollins

HarperCollins announced that SVP, Publishing Transformation Carolyn Pittis had left the company, effective March 29. She was with the company more than twenty years and served in roles ranging from editorial management and author services to business development and sales to consumer forecasting. Pittis will work as a private change management consultant.

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