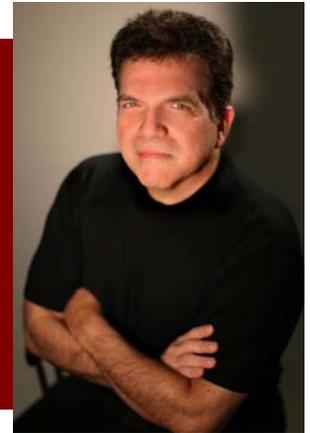


N I N C

June 2015
Vol. 26, No. 6

Building a Better Publisher: Brick #1 — Editorial

Lou Aronica's
*Eye on
Industry*



As we're all aware, there's been a considerable amount of discussion within NINC about the relative virtues of indie publishing and traditional publishing. While the decision over which route to follow is obviously a matter of personal preference (or no particular preference, as illustrated by our many members who choose both), I think that only in rare instances is either the ideal scenario for an author. So, if one could blink one's eyes and wish a better publisher into being, what would that publisher look like, and how would it function? I've been giving this a great deal of thought lately, and I've decided to write it up in a series of pieces, each of which will concentrate on a particular department or function within this next-generation house. The point of this exercise is not to leave us frustrated with what we can't have, but rather to imagine something achievable. Therefore, I'm not going to present the optimal scenario for everyone involved (if such a thing were even possible), but rather what I believe is the optimal *achievable* scenario.

One of the core business axioms is that the sales department is always the most important department in

any commercial enterprise. There's of course a great deal of logic to this. Sales, after all, are what make the enterprise commercial. I think in many ways we as an organization subscribe to this line of thinking; most of our conversation is about the business of and, more specifically, the selling of books. However, I've never believed that, and it's not just because I came up through the editorial side of the industry (in fact, my very first real job in the business was in marketing, so my personal origin story begins with sales). It's because I believe that any business built around the selling of millions of products, each of which is distinct from the others in some

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Novelists, Inc.

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

2015 Board of Directors

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Julie@julieleto.com

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authorpameladalton@gmail.com

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diana@dianapeterfreund.com

Newsletter Editor:

Laura Phillips
Laura@LauraPhillips.net

Secretary:

Sylvie Kurtz
kurtzsy@aol.com

Advisory Council Rep:

Lou Aronica
laronica@fictionstudio.com

Board Admin: Terese daly Ramin, thewritingwench@gmail.com

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Complete committee member listings are available on the website:

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Central Coordinator:

Tonya Wilkerson, Varney and Assoc.
Novelists, Inc.
c/o Terese Ramin
P.O. Box 54
Hartland MI 48353
Fax: 785-537-1877
Ninc@varney.com

Address changes may be made on the website.

Members without Internet access may send changes to the Central Coordinator.

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Website:

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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:

Tracy Higley
tracy@tracyhigley.com

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*

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Information

June Contributors

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. He served as editor of the NINC anthology, *I Never Thought I'd See You Again*. You can reach Lou at laronica@fictionstudio.com.

JoAnn Grote is the award-winning author of 40 books, including inspirational romances, middle-grade historical novels, and children's nonfiction. Contact her at jaghi@rconnect.com.

D. P. Lyle is the Macavity Award-winning and Edgar, Agatha, Scribe, and USA Today Best Book Award-nominated author of many nonfiction books as well as numerous fiction works, including the *Samantha Cody* and the *Dub Walker* thriller series, and the *Royal Pains* media tie-in novels. He has worked with many novelists and writers of popular television shows. Dr. Lyle is a practicing cardiologist in Orange County CA. See his website at www.dplylemd.com or his blog at <http://writersforensicsblog.wordpress.com>. Q&As are republished with the author's permission.

Fantasy writer **Laura Resnick** can be found staring off into space with a fork halfway to her mouth on many occasions.

Susan Spann writes the *Shinobi Mysteries*, featuring ninja detective Hiro Hattori and his Portuguese Jesuit sidekick, Father Mateo. Her debut novel, *Claws of the Cat* (Minotaur Books, 2013), was a finalist for the Silver Falchion Award for Best First Novel and a *Library Journal Mystery Debut of the Month*. The second *Shinobi Mystery*, *Blade of the Samauri*, released on July 15, 2014. Susan is also a transactional attorney whose practice focuses on publishing law and business. When not writing or practicing law, she raises seahorses and rare corals in her marine aquarium. You can find her online at her website, <http://www.SusanSpann.com>, and on Twitter (@SusanSpann).

Tom Watson writes about outdoor topics and the writing process for regional and national magazines and is the author of four books, including *How To Think Like A Survivor*. He can be contacted through his websites, tomwatsonwrites.com and wvetameradventures.com. "Pondering Star" first appeared in his newspaper column, *Prairie Notebook*, published in the Appleton Press. It is reprinted with the author's permission.

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](http://www.ninc.com). Go to Members Only, "Member Services" and click "Refer a New Member to NINC." Take NINC brochures to conferences.

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.

Generosity



Julie Leto

Recently, I was trying to remember when I first joined NINC. I know it was slightly before I hired my agent because I was at a NINC conference when we first met in person. I wanted to join immediately after selling my second book, but I had a baby around the same time, and things like joining a new writer's organization were pushed to the background. (That baby, by the way, is now 17 and about to end her junior year in high school. Yikes!)

Conservatively speaking, I'd say I joined in 2002-03. I was immediately struck by the differences between NINC and any other writers' organization I'd been a part of. Whether on the loop or in person, people were friendly and refreshingly honest. When they looked at my name tag at the conference, it wasn't so they could gauge if I was "important enough" to speak with. If I was at NINC, I was a member. If I was a member, I was important enough. To say hello to. To share a table with. To reach out to.

I happen to know that over all these years, this NINC attitude has not changed.

Over the past couple of weeks, I've had the opportunity to see NINC at its finest. First was during renewals. I sent a personal note to everyone who had not renewed their membership. The vast majority took the time to write back and either confess that they'd simply forgotten, had tried to renew when the website was not cooperating, or their lives had moved away from publishing. But to a one, every message was filled with love for NINC, support for our future goals, and either extreme regret that they were not renewing or "I can't let NINC membership go!" messages.

I'm pretty sure no other president ever had so much fun writing emails. (I could be wrong ... I didn't ask the other presidents about this.) And of the 134 people I contacted, over 42 percent renewed. I'd call that a successful renewal campaign!

Some of those renewing members took advantage of the Linda Kay West Memorial fund. This is where I again was able to see NINC at its best. In my message to the membership that announced the increase in NINC dues for 2016, I asked members to donate to the fund if they were in a position to do so. Not at all surprisingly, the response was amazing. If members need help at renewal time next year, we will be able to provide. And I also want to thank the many members who wrote to me in support of the dues increase. Not a single member complained about it. Not one. (Not to me, anyway!) I can guarantee you that never happens in other organizations.

Generosity isn't just financial, of course. People are generous with their time, in their volunteer efforts for NINC, and with their knowledge, such as in the posts to the email loop where questions can range from how to remove the annoying code from the end of emails (I'm still floating some conspiracy theories on that one!) to tax and incorporation issues and the marketability of serialized novels.

It is not a coincidence that I'm writing about generosity as the Nominating Committee is about to beat the bushes to find people to serve on next year's board. It takes a generous heart to serve, but it comes back to you twentyfold. Yes, being on the board is work—I won't lie. But there is payback that is worth its weight in gold. Seeing your fellow writers at their best? It's priceless.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Building a Better Publisher:

Brick #1 — Editorial

Eye on Industry

Continued from page 1 ▶ meaningful way, must focus first on the quality of the product before it focuses on the selling of those products. (In case you're wondering, I'm using the term "product" here in the generic sense. I do not think of what we do as writers as creating product.)

Therefore, I'm going to start with editorial. In many ways, I think this is the thing indie authors lose out on the most when they go off on their own. Yes, you can buy much of this à la carte, and many of you might feel that you don't need the parts that you can't buy, but I think the "better" editorial department I'm proposing here offers something of irreplaceable value.

First and foremost, this department needs to be headed by someone concerned overwhelmingly with the quality of the books the company publishes. One can define quality in lots of different ways, but let's define it here as a balance between literary and commercial value in every book. In other words, if the company is publishing a stream-of-consciousness novel written from the perspective of an unreliable and delusional narrator, that narrator needs to have enough humanity to make her relatable to a sizeable swath of the reading public. Conversely, if the company is publishing a shamelessly fannish biography of the latest celebrity of the moment, that biography should get its facts straight and attempt to put the celebrity's stardom in some kind of context. This head of the department needs to emphasize the quest for quality to his staff regularly and must model it by championing books that exemplify the range of this quality.

The department head also needs to hire the right editors. To me, the best editors practice excellence in both taste and author interaction.

Taste is obviously subjective. And since we're talking about a commercial enterprise, commerce is going to influence taste. As it should. Some books have very little chance to sell, regardless of how well they are written. While I suppose there is some metric one could develop that would define the quality of an editor's "taste" by the percentages of her hits and misses, I'm a firm believer that history only tells us so much. What sold yesterday might not sell tomorrow, and what failed to sell yesterday might be a breakout hit next year. I think we should therefore judge the taste of an editor by one simple standard: how well he sticks to acquiring only books that he would purchase personally. The logic of this is simple: unless you've hired an editor with reading interests on the extreme fringes, that editor is likely to represent a substantial chunk of the reading public. If the editor loves a manuscript so much that she could honestly envision purchasing that book, then the sales and marketing people should have a decent shot at finding the audience.

Where acquisitions often fall apart are when the editor is not a part of the audience for the book he's acquired and therefore can only guess at what would satisfy the audience. I learned this the hard way. My biggest failures in my publishing career came when I tried to guess the marketplace rather than acquire in alignment with my segment of the marketplace. The most terrifying of these was with a diet book. Anyone who knows me knows that I am the last person on the planet capable of judging a diet book. Someone really should have stopped me. The CEO learned his lesson on that one, but I'd already learned mine. ▶

**The best
editors practice
excellence in
both taste
and author
interaction.**

Author interaction should be all about taking the lead from the author. Some writers either desire or need steady contact with an editor to stay on track or to stay engaged through the publishing process. Others want to be left alone during the writing stage, seek minimal interaction during the editorial stage, and just want a marketing plan and finished copies. Obviously, there are lots of other scenarios.

In my opinion, a good editor doesn't try to impose his or her working style on the author but works the way the author works best. Also, it should go without saying that an editor should always remember that the book is the author's book, not the editor's. Nothing gets my back up faster as an author than an editorial comment that begins, "I would do it this way."

An editor should be the author's most qualified set of eyes.

An editor should be the author's most qualified set of eyes. This extends not only to the editorial process, but also to discussions about future books. An editor should have enough of an understanding of the marketplace (and, as already established, be a part of that marketplace) to be able to say that an author's new idea is the right next step or a critical misstep, and even suggest the author utilize strengths in a new project the author might not have been aware she had.

This "better" editorial department would also manage copyeditors and proofreaders who were not only fluent in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, but also sensitive to a writer's individual style. In my experience, it takes time to compile a good team of copyeditors and proofreaders, and serious consideration to match a particular author to the right ones.

Finally, this department should have superior communication skills. From expressing the overall editorial vision of the company to communicating the editorial work needed in a manuscript to delivering sales expectations and the author's marketing responsibilities, clarity, compassion, and enthusiasm are paramount.

Does this scenario exist anywhere in publishing now? Not that I'm aware, though it very possibly does in some smaller houses or specialty houses. Is all of this available to indie authors? Yes, but you'd have to work awfully hard to pull it together. One of the great advantages to paying people to work for you is that you can tell them exactly what you want from them. One of the great disadvantages is that they often give you what you say you want rather than what you need. Is all of this possible? Absolutely.

Do you agree that this would be a better editorial operation? Are there things you'd like to add or things I've suggested here that don't matter to you at all? I'd be interested in your thoughts. ▲

Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes



New Indie Author Site

Books-A-Million has added an online publishing site to their resources, (<https://diy.bampublish.com/>). As the banner says on the web site—create, edit, and sell. Their tools provide cover and interior design, print to digital formatting, and working with Amazon, Barnes & Noble, iBooks, and Ingram for distribution. Print copies can be picked up at two locations—South Portland ME and Birmingham AL—which have Espresso Book Machines. Cost runs from \$59 to \$329 depending on the scope of the package.

PW Daily



**NINC
WORLD**

**TRADEWINDS
ST. PETE, FLORIDA
SEPT 30 - OCT 4, 2015**

**Novelists, Inc: The Only International
Writers Organization for
Multi-Published Fiction Authors**

Checked Out the Conference Website Lately?

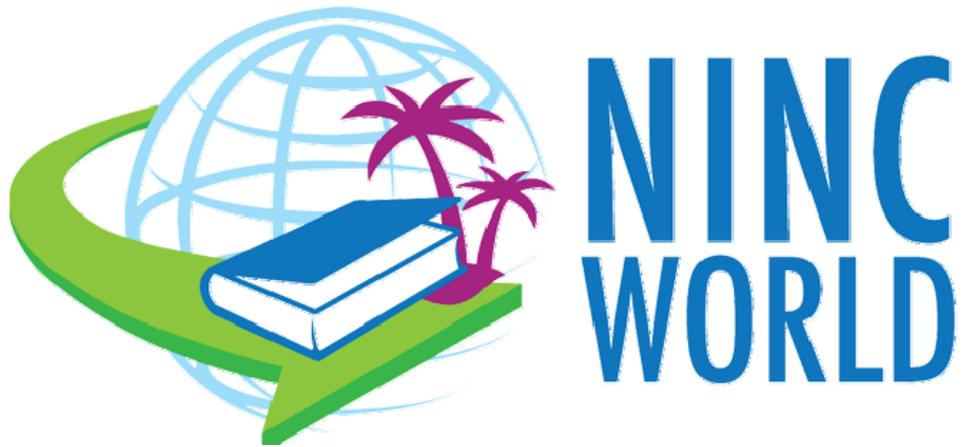
No, sorry, the program isn't listed yet. But the speakers are, at least most of them. We know that First Word Day is going to concentrate on the Global Marketplace and how we—writers and publishers—are going to get there. We know the Main Conference will be jam-packed and diverse, and that the Night Owls will be informal and frank.

Oh, and the food will once again be fabulous. Here are photos one of our members snapped of the prime rib carving station (do notice the waters of the Gulf behind the chef), and that great buffet line at last year's banquet, just in case you need a reminder.



Okay, shake it off... ▶



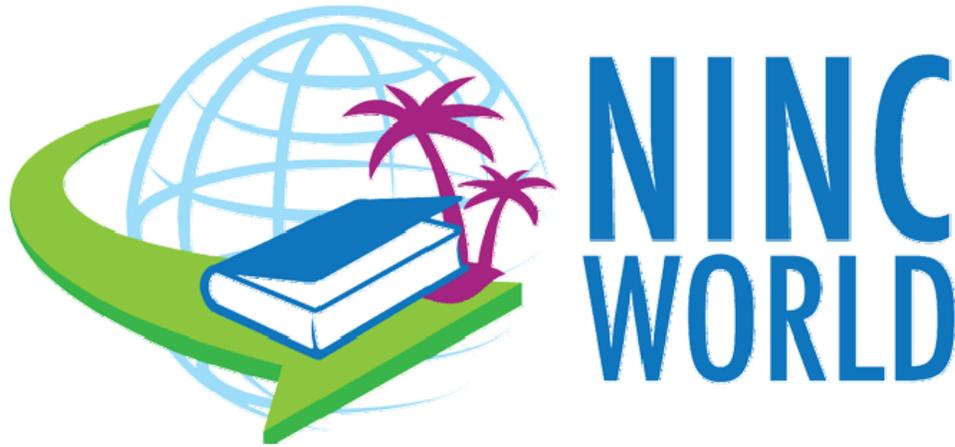


Back to business!

We are expanding the conference program this year to include advertisements. Full color program, saddle-stitched pages, all professionally designed. Not only will the program be available in Florida, but it will also be available for download at the website after the conference, so advertisements get a second life online. PLEASE NOTE: Advertising is limited to products and services of value to multi-published, career-oriented authors and does not include self-promotion of any kind.

Space is limited, open to members and allied industry, and we're already accepting ads. Check out the details on the conference site: https://ninc.com/conferences/support_ninc/program_ads

Also new this year is the opportunity for allied industry to support the conference with sponsorships. We do



something unique in NINC—we mix and mingle career authors with allied industry, and both sides benefit. We're delighted that we're now seeing tangible support by way of sponsorships. To date, ACX and KDP are sponsoring the Saturday night banquet and Draft2Digital, the First Word luncheon. KOBO Writing Life, in addition to sponsoring, is providing NINC with a spanking new Kobo e-reader, and some lucky member is going to take it home!

With every sponsor the conference budget expands, we bring more fantastic speakers to Florida and our programs extend the reach of the information we gain during the conference, as we help benefit all writers in our class. That's very important—we don't hide what goes on in Florida. An informed writer and an informed allied industry are what are going to keep all of us moving ahead!

Yes, and sponsors help to keep conference fees low, so that all that good stuff coming out of Florida remains affordable for working career authors. Or, as Hannibal Smith always said in the old *A-Team* series: "I love it when a plan comes together." Here's the link to the Sponsoring Opportunities page:

https://ninc.com/conferences/support_ninc/sponsorship/

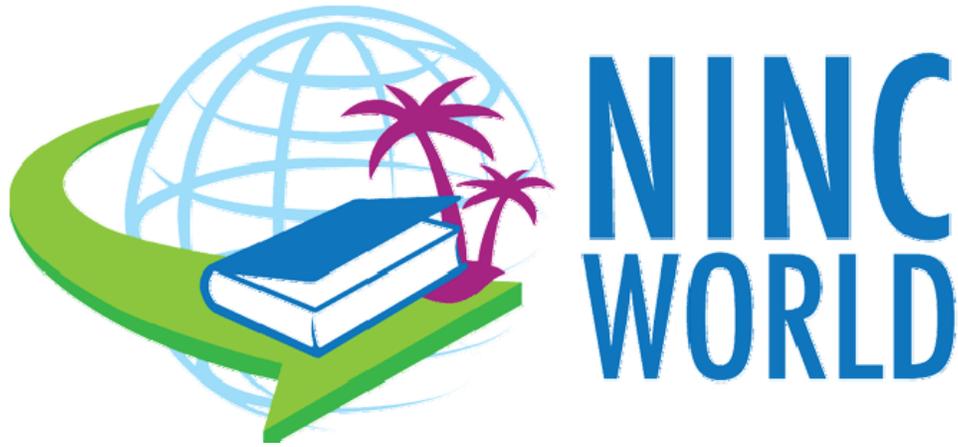
We've set aside space for an Author Support Gallery—that's a fancy name for Vendor Fair. We're hoping allied industry will take advantage of the space and attendees will be able to see, touch, and discuss many innovations meant to help the author. Go to https://ninc.com/conferences/support_ninc/sponsorship/ for details.

And there's more. Don't faint, but we actually have the Spouse/Companion meals (with menus) selection up online early this year.

A quick refresher: Registered members, author assistants, registered industry, and specially invited speakers, do NOT have to pay for their NINC-offered meals. They're included. However, if you want to buy meals for a non-registered companion—one, two, all three, even the reception, you can do that, and at our cost (okay, so we round up to the nearest dollar). If you're already trying to figure out how to tell your spouse/companion that you're going off for salmon with caviar, peel-your-own shrimp, fresh water lobster tails, Mahi-Mahi, prime rib, and so much more on Saturday night—while they schlepp off to Pizza Hut Express—you might want to check out that page. https://ninc.com/conferences/companion_meals

Oh, and if you simply want to see the menus, they are also on that page.

We have filled the TradeWinds, but the resort has opened up more rooms for us at their sister hotel (located 150 flip-flop steps down the beach on the same property). Check out hotel information on the ▶



website and see how fantastic the Guy Harvey Outpost is after its multi-million-dollar renovation.
https://ninc.com/conferences/hotel_information/

Is there a cap to registrations? Yes, there is. Did we hit our cap last year and have to begin a waiting list? Yes, we did. Is there a deadline for registrations? Yes there is—August 28, 2015.

So here's one more link, this one to Member Registration:
https://ninc.com/conferences/member_registration/

See you in Florida! Because remember, St. Pete Beach in October is a deductible vacation wrapped around the most productive conference your career has ever had!

Or as one of our sponsors told us recently:

[NINC] was one of our best experiences last year and we expect it to be again this year. It's a real pleasure to have an audience of authors who are seasoned professionals and serious about the work of writing and publishing. Not that we don't get that elsewhere to some extent, but that's the whole point of NINC and it shows.

— Joshua Unruh, Director of Marketing, Draft2Digital



P.S.

***There's still time—sign up!
Bring the family, extend your stay.
NINC's never all work and no play!***

Not registered yet? Go to www.ninc.com/conferences

See you in St. Pete!
Kasey Michaels, 2015 Conference Chair

The Pondering Star

BY TOM WATSON

There's a place I go to every few nights to clear my mind of the day's clutter.

That nocturnal journey begins from the cradle-like comfort of a swinging hammock chair suspended from a huge branch of the ash tree growing alongside my deck. Bundled against the prevailing seasonal temperatures of that particular evening, and out beyond the smoke swirling from the glowing tip of my cigar, I launch my thoughts up into the prairie heavens.

While my physical body relaxes in the soothing sway of that seat, my consciousness ascends upward, on an uncharted course, through a circular gap in the network of branches right above my head and up into a star-studded night sky.

Perfectly framed and centered within that gap is Polaris—the North Star. It's my Pondering Star. A fixed point of light I focus on—and beyond—to clear my brain of all the mental flotsam that's drifted in since my last pondering session. At the same time, it's how I open up my thoughts for any notions that decide to filter back on through.

As a freelance writer, it's my way of enticing those ideas-on-wing to roost in my brain. Mostly though, it enables me to generate fresh thoughts by not thinking; to discard the remnants of any dead-end fragments that have been leading me down the road toward a place called "Writer's Block." It's a way to let my subconscious mind offer me creative suggestions—a mental Phoenix that rises up from the ashes of burned-out ideas for articles or story angles that are no longer generating any creative fires.

I know what some of you are thinking: What if it's cloudy?

Doesn't matter, I know my Pondering Star is up there in that same spot in the sky.

And then there's the added pleasure of listening to the silence—the whispers amid the stillness; the spirit of the night! With no thoughts rattling around my brain, that sound is indescribably soothing—therapeutic.

Yet conversely, often-times rising from within that silence, there's another equally rewarding aspect. Contemplating my Pondering Star lets me tune in to the sounds of the nearby prairie: the distant high-pitched howl of a coyote, the harmonics of a train's whistle as it passes along the edge of town, or on rare occasions during the warmer seasons, the hoots of a horned owl that frequents a neighbor's tree.

We all need our own Pondering Star place, somewhere we can take our mind to relax; to reflect. It doesn't really matter where; what does matter is that we allow ourselves to make that trip as often as we feel we need to. Out here on the prairie, we may not always find the time, but we most certainly can always find the place! ▲

Business Briefs

Independent Bookstore Day (U.S.) and Canadian Authors for Indies (Canada)

May 2 was a really good day with most indie bookstores reporting sales that were equal to Christmas revenues. Celebrations ranged from small efforts in some locations to the Mayor of Chicago issuing a proclamation. The results from this year may help this become an annual day to help boost mid-year sales.

PW Daily

Addressing Small-Balance Royalty Checks in Contracts

BY SUSAN SPANN

From the question files: “My contract says that the publisher doesn’t have to send me a royalty check or a sales statement unless the “balance owed” to me is over \$25. Is this normal?”

Short answer: yes and no.

Many publishing contracts have clauses stating that the publisher doesn’t need to send the author an accounting statement or a payment unless the royalties meet a stated threshold. These are actually two different issues, and authors need to treat them differently.

Here’s what the language this question refers to might look like in a contract: If the balance owed to Author at the end of any accounting period is less than Fifty Dollars (\$50), no payment or royalty statement will be sent to Author and the amount due will be carried forward until the total balance owed to Author equals or exceeds Fifty Dollars (\$50). Publisher will send Author royalty statements any time a payment is due and payable to Author, but no statements are due unless a royalty payment is also due.

Here’s what it means: If, at the end of any accounting period, the publisher owes the author less than \$50 in royalties, the publisher doesn’t have to make a payment or send a sales statement to the author. (The length of an accounting period varies—it’s usually six months for larger publishers, quarterly for mid-sized and some smaller publishers, and may be monthly with digital-only publishers and self-publishing platforms.)

The two issues arising from this language are:

1. The publisher only needs to send a sales statement when a royalty payment is also due. (A problem.)
2. The publisher only needs to send royalty payments when the amount due to the author exceeds the stated threshold (here, \$50.00). (A business decision.)

Let’s look at each in turn.

AUTHORS SHOULD GET STATEMENTS AFTER EVERY ACCOUNTING PERIOD

The publisher should send you a sales/accounting statement at the end of every accounting period, whether or not a royalty payment is due. If the contract doesn’t require this, you can (and should) ask the publisher to insert language requiring a statement at the end of every royalty period, whether or not a royalty payment is also due.

ROYALTY PAYMENTS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REASONABLE MINIMUMS

Normally, the royalty payment threshold exists to ensure that the publisher isn’t paying its accounting department more to process author payments than the amount of the payment. Consider: if an accounting employee makes \$50/hour and spends an hour processing checks to authors which total less than \$50, in the aggregate, the publisher just lost money by sending the checks. Not a good business model.

Many publishers pay royalties at the end of accounting periods regardless of the amount the author is due. However, many publishers (including smaller houses) often do impose some minimum royalty amount to trigger cutting a check. Both are legitimate practices, and whether an author is willing to accept a royalty threshold is a business decision.

If your contract contains a minimum royalty amount required to trigger a payment, make sure the amount is low and reasonable. A reasonable amount to trigger royalty payment varies, but \$20–\$100 is fairly standard. Anything over \$100 could lead to significant delays in the author receiving payments.

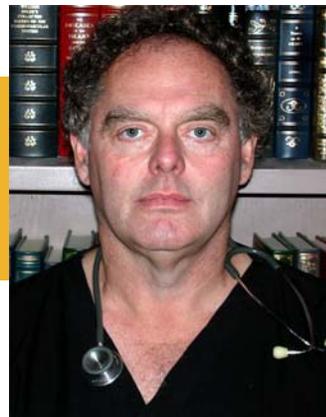
Also, make sure that you get sales statements at the end of every accounting period, whether or not royalty payments have a minimum threshold.

Have questions about this or other publishing legal issues? Feel free to tweet me, @SusanSpann.

And, to please the Bar, here's a lovely disclaimer: This post is for informational purposes only, and does not create an attorney-client relationship between the author and any person. If you have legal issues or claims, consult an attorney promptly. ▲

Forensic Files

By D. P. Lyle, MD



What Obstetrical Problems Might My Pregnant Puritan Wife Encounter That Could Result in Her Death?

Q: In the novel I'm working on, one of the characters is a Puritan whose wife dies during childbirth. I've been unable to find any information concerning medical practices in 17th Century New England, and I'm hoping you might be able to assist. What were the specifics of obstetric practices at that time? Were midwives used? Were husbands present for delivery as often as they are today?

A: Great questions.

In the 1600s there were no hospitals, and doctors knew very little. How little? It wasn't until 1628 that Sir William Harvey (1578-1657) published "De Motu Cordis," his famous treatise outlining his discovery that the blood actually circulated through the body. Prior to this, physicians lived under the erroneous assumptions espoused by Aristotle, Galen (approximately AD 130-201), and Andres Vesalius (1514-1564). The Germ Theory of infectious diseases wasn't even a flicker in the minds of scientists. It wasn't until 1870 that Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch developed this concept. Vaccination as a means of preventing disease was over a century away: smallpox (Edward Jenner, 1796), anthrax and rabies (Pasteur, 1881 and 1882, respectively), tetanus and diphtheria (Emil von Behring, 1890), and polio (Jonas Salk, 1952). Antibiotics such as penicillin (Alexander Fleming, 1928) did not exist and surgical anesthesia (Crawford Long, 1842) wasn't around.

Needless to say, childbirth in the 17th Century was a risky proposition. Mothers often died, as did the infant, most commonly from bleeding and infection since methods to control bleeding were crude, and treatment of infections was non-existent. The problems of breech or other abnormal births led to death more often than not. ▶

At that time, few doctors existed, especially in America, and the population was predominately rural. Most people lived on farms or in small communities, and the large majority of these areas did not have a doctor for miles around, if at all.

Though trained midwives were common in Europe, there were few, if any, in America during Puritan times. Thus, deliveries were often performed by a member of the community, perhaps one of the older women who became a de facto midwife. She likely traveled by horseback or on foot from farm to farm in order to attend the births.

Deliveries took place in the home, usually in the bedroom. If the home was a single room cabin, family and friends waited outside until the ordeal was over. Hot water, freshly washed cloths, bare hands, and a healthy dose of fear and anxiety were the only available tools. An understanding of post-partum infections (called Puerperal Sepsis) wouldn't be delineated until Ignaz Semmelweis developed sterile delivery techniques in 1847. If severe bleeding or infection occurred, prayer and comfort were the only salves. And if the infant entered the birth canal in an abnormal fashion, such as a breech (butt first) or footling (foot first) presentation, death of the mother and the infant was likely. Obstetric anesthesia and analgesia consisted of a piece of wood or leather the mother could bite down on. Perhaps in some communities alcohol or tincture of opium would be available. Interestingly, both alcohol and opiates tend to diminish uterine contractions with the net effect of prolonging the mother's ordeal.

The husband likely was not present during the delivery. That is a more modern invention. The 1600s were very puritanical. Even a physician was often not allowed to undress a female patient for his examination. If he needed to listen to the patient's heart or lungs, he placed his ear against the patient's chest. With a female patient, this was rarely allowed. Thus, Rene Laennec invented the stethoscope (1816) to circumvent this problem.

All in all, childbirth was a dangerous, bloody, and noisy affair. It was also immensely rewarding, since the very survival of the community depended upon it. ▲

Learn more from D.P. Lyle, MD at these online locations:

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http://www.dplylemd.com/DPLyleMD/CRIME_%26_SCIENCE_RADIO.html

Business Briefs



Harlequin Good for HarperCollins

Without the Harlequin purchase, HarperCollins third quarter reports would have read down five percent from the same time last year. Instead, the report reads up 14 percent. \$75 million of the \$402 million in sales came from Harlequin. *Divergent* and *American Sniper* sales were helpful, but Harlequin revenue is expected to boost the next quarter as well.

PW Daily



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

Not Your Usual Writing Advice

By JoAnn Grote

Happiness, Focus, and Social Connections

“We are meant to midwife dreams for one another. We cannot labor in place of one another, but we can support the labor that each must undertake to birth his or her art and foster it to maturity.”
— Julia Cameron, *The Artist’s Way*

Do you have a Track Your Happiness app on your smart phone? The app was created by Matt Killingsworth for his doctoral research at Harvard to track what makes people happy. Users are pinged several times a day with questions such as, “How happy are you now? What are you doing now?”

One of the app questions is, “Is your mind wandering or in the moment?” Killingsworth found that people are generally happier when focused; yet 47 percent of the time, no matter what one is doing, the mind wanders, according to “Putting the Science of Happiness into Practice,” in the April 23, 2015 edition of *Positive Psychology News*. “Virtually all mind wandering is about the future and may be related to an innate tendency to scan ahead in order to anticipate threats,” according to Killingsworth.

I wondered what “threats” might translate to for a writer and realized my idea of a threat regarding my writing boiled down to: will someone else like what I write? I believe it’s extremely important to write what I like, and have done so for the most part in all my books. Yet there have been questions that resulted in compromises to stay within agreed upon or perceived expectations. Would the editor be upset if I deviated further than usual from a proposal? Would she be upset if I slid in a subplot that wasn’t common in the inspirational line for which the book was scheduled? If it passed muster with the editor, would the readers like it? It’s obvious that if the editor and/or readers are not pleased, that can affect not only sales of that book, but of future books—and whether or not the editor will contract for more books. Money. The ability to continue writing for publication, doing what one loves. In the end, that’s where the threat lies.

If it’s true that we are happier when focused, and a decrease in perceived threats increases focus and therefore happiness, do hybrid or indie authors feel they are happier than when they were solely traditionally published? I asked three NINC members who were traditionally published before indie publishing about their experiences. (Please note that I am traditionally published, though I have plans to go hybrid. I do not favor one form of publishing over another.)

Do you feel you are happier when writing for indie publication rather than for traditional publication?

Pat Rice: I don’t think there is a direct correlation between happiness/writing/publisher. I was happy receiving nice fat advances and working with great editors, but unhappy about NYC limitations. I am happy now writing what I like and working with indie editors, but unhappy about the lack of advances in indie publication. We all make trade-offs to achieve a balance that suits our needs at the time. I have reached a point in my life where it makes sense to write what I like and accept that the money will come later. I couldn’t have done that earlier.

Jana DeLeon: Absolutely. Indie publishing allows me to write exactly what I want and not what a ▶

publisher thinks will sell. A publisher would never have bought into my *Miss Fortune* series, and those are the stories I wanted to write.

Jennifer Stevenson: Yes, because I learned repeatedly that writing a book I sold on proposal makes me crazy.

Do you find it easier to focus on your manuscripts when writing for indie publication?

Pat: Nope. I set my own deadlines, and I know I can goof off as much as I like. And the need to concentrate on promo is more important in indie publication (see that “no advance” caveat above), which is extremely distracting from writing.

Jana: Yes. The only two opinions I care about when writing indie works are mine and my readers. I don’t have to be concerned with what an editor, salesmen, and marketing department will think.

Jennifer: Not necessarily. Like a traditionally published or hybrid author, I have many projects going on at once, so if my brain quits on a specific project—I get stuck, or I finish a big, emotionally draining scene, or I can’t think about social media one more *minute*, or I’m sick of looking for just the right cover model photo—there’s always another project on the front burner.

Do you find the mind clutter—questioning your choices while writing your stories—less constant and/or less creatively and energetically debilitating?

Pat: This is more an aspect of personality, I suspect. I want to write the best book possible no matter who I’m writing for. Second-guessing what I want to write and how I should write it is part of the process. I seek solutions to relieve the clutter—brainstorming, critiques, outlines—but this has been ongoing throughout my career. I am ultimately responsible for my choices, not my publisher.

Jana: Writing is a lot easier now than it was before, due to many things. First, with indie publishing, I finally made enough money to write full time, which makes a huge difference in my ability to focus on the story. And because I write the stories I want to write, the way I want to write them, I am free to let the story take me in any direction I choose to go, even if it goes against genre norms.

Jennifer: I don’t question my choices that much. I find the things that interfere with my concentration are: physical discomfort, exhaustion, and stress from outside factors (and looming deadlines set by publishers count!).

Shawn Achor wrote in *The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology that Fuel Success and Performance at Work* (Crown Business, 2010), that “positive emotions ... provide a quick and powerful antidote to stress and anxiety, which in turn improves our focus and our ability to function at our best level.” Hmm. So does focus make us happier, as Killingsworth believes, or does happiness increase our focus, as Achor believes? A chicken-or-the-egg question, perhaps; but it appears obvious from research that there is a relationship.

Killingsworth’s research also shows that people are happier when they do things with others. Emiliana Simon-Thomas, an expert with UC Berkeley’s Greater Good Science Center, believes that very happy people spend little time alone, and that social relationships are the strongest predictor of happiness, according to the *Positive Psychology News* article. This is not necessarily good news for writers, who perform most of their work alone. Of course, we have online connections; they help, right? Maybe. According to Killingsworth, “Interaction with others through technology such as e-mail and Facebook, unlike face-to-face interactions ... shows no appreciable increase in happiness, and indeed, scores at about the same level as when one is not interacting with others.”

I haven’t found that the case. I’ve worked on novella collections with other authors where the plots and characters interconnected; working together by email and other technological sources was energizing, fun, and stimulated creativity. The NINC loop also is helpful, even when I lurk, in making me feel connected to other writers and knowing there is a group of supportive authors who will offer advice if needed.

I wondered whether NINC members who operate in life boats or collectives feel the social connections improve their happiness and focus. Pat Rice and Jennifer Stevenson are members of the collective Book View

Café, which is composed of 54 authors. Jana DeLeon is a member of a life boat.

As an indie author who operates within a collective or life boat, do you feel the connections increase your happiness—even if contact is by email, telephone, and other non face-to-face interactions?

Pat: I have always relied on my contacts with other authors—actively pursued contacts with other authors—to increase my happiness. No one understands authors as well as other authors. Since I'm an introvert, letter-writing, email, and social media are ideal for making connections. Prior to social media, I'd write actual letters—remember snail mail? So yes, my connections working with other authors make a lonely day of writing much more ... normal—if you can call anything we do normal. I would probably not have pursued indie publication if I didn't have that life support in place.

Jana: I love my private author groups and the author friends I've made. I'm in contact with them on a daily basis, and it definitely adds value to my life and to my work.

Jennifer: Book View Café is a big part of my writing career. My critique partners are members, as are my copyeditors and e-book formatters. I brainstorm covers, cover copy, and titles with my collective. I blog there and sell books there. We run joint creative projects. I also do quite a bit of creative (editing) and non-creative volunteering for the collective. My interactions with the other members are very real contributors to my happiness, productivity, and sometimes, of course, my stress levels, depending on the work load.

Do you feel the collective or life boat removes or reduces anxieties related to your writing career which translates to better focus and less mind clutter when working on your manuscripts?

Pat: When we're dealing with promotion, it increases mind clutter and cuts into my writing time—which increases anxieties, not to mention making me crazier. When we're working creatively, I may actually be more focused since I'm working with the part of my brain necessary for the manuscript.

Jana: I feel that the exchange of information helps alleviate worry of the unknown because so much information is available. Also, the ability to talk with people who know exactly what you're dealing with is always comforting.

Jennifer: In general I'd say my collective reduces my anxieties, since the brain trust of 30 to 50 authors means there is always *somebody* who knows the answer to an anxious author's question. However, nothing translates to better focus and less mind clutter than putting the butt in the chair and the hands on the keyboard.

If so, do you believe that is due to the social connections within the collective or life boat, or the sharing of professional information and services; or both?

Pat: I think, no, I *know*, if I were isolated, I'd spend all my time writing and agonizing over my failure to promote my books. Having professional and social relationships relieves that agony and helplessness. So there is no direct correlation to manuscript craziness. That's just built-in and part of being me.

Jana: Definitely both.

Jennifer: Both.

You can find out more about the Track Your Happiness app here: <https://www.trackyourhappiness.org/>.

Business Briefs

Changes at Simon & Schuster Children's

Christian Trimmer is now Executive Editor

Kristen Ostby is now Senior Editor

Catherine Laudone is now Assistant Editor

Publishers Lunch

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



Fan Fiction: Part Two

“It seems likely that you and I both have friends or relatives who participate in fanfic.”
— Laura Resnick, prescient columnist, “Fan Fiction: Part One,” *Nink* August 2014

I recently realized I’ve let 10 months lapse without writing Part Two of my fanfic exploration—mostly because it’s such a big subject that the rapid growth of my research pile intimidates me. I also realized that something I had not researched yet was actual fan fiction itself—you know, the stuff that fans *write*. This seemed a pretty obvious oversight, and so I decided to correct it.

It’s estimated that there are over one million fan fiction sites on the internet now (not fan writers—sites), so finding one isn’t hard work. I followed the trail laid by my other fanfic research to ArchiveOfOurOwn.org, “a fan-created, fan-run, non-profit, non-commercial archive.” The site hosts fan fiction based on novels, TV shows, movies, games, theater, cartoons, and other sources of inspiration—such as celebrities.

(That last category, by the way, falls under a popular form of fanfic known as Real Person Fiction (RPF). According to an article in *Time*, where I first read about this phenomenon, chosen subjects are not limited to celebrities and frequently include controversial public figures, such as the Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokar Tsarnaev or NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden.)

Archive of Our Own is managed by the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), which you can find at <http://transformativeworks.org/>. According to the U.S. Supreme Court (*Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music*) a “transformative work” is one that “adds something new, with a further purpose or different character, altering the [source] with new expression, meaning, or message.” Fanlore.org, which is OTW’s online wiki, defines the phrase more coherently as “creative works about characters or settings created by fans of the original work, rather than by the original creators.” OTW’s goal is “a future in which all fannish works are recognized as legal and transformative and are accepted as a legitimate creative activity,” and they seek to protect fannish works from “commercial exploitation and legal challenge.” OTW’s projects include legal advocacy, an academic journal (*Transformative Works and Cultures*), and various multimedia projects, as well as Fanlore.org and Archive of Our Own.

Browsing the Archive’s (huge) fanfic menu, I picked a TV series that I had recently binge-watched on Netflix, which meant it was still fresh in my mind (things tend to rot quickly there), and over the next few weeks, I read dozens of fanfic stories based on the show. And just as researching fanfic as a subject has caused my views about it to evolve, reading fanfic itself has also altered my views—that is, it was a good experience. (I’d have quit much sooner if it wasn’t.)

What little I had seen of fanfic in the past was usually an isolated extract that made a very poor impression, either because it was so badly written (and had been extracted by someone *intending* to demonstrate

the poor quality of fanfic) or because it was based on original material that I wasn't familiar with, so it fell flat for me. (Fanfic typically assumes the reader knows the source material very well, so it's often a bizarre or bewildering read if you don't.)

However, what I saw in this sub-archive of several hundred fanfic stories based on this TV show was a wide variety of quality, covering everything on the spectrum from awful to excellent. More of it was readable than bad, and some of it (maybe 10 percent) evinced what I would describe as professional-level writing skills and storytelling ability. I enjoyed some of those stories more than I enjoyed much of the published fiction I've sampled in the past year. Those fanfic writers might be talented hobbyists, or they might be aspiring writers working on their craft in hopes of turning pro—a goal at which I'd say they've got a very reasonable shot. I wondered in some cases if they were already pros, doing this writing for fun under an anonymous internet handle.

In fact, the latter is not at all unlikely. While engaged in my exploration of fanfic, I learned by chance that a writer I know, the author of numerous published novels, had been writing fanfic in recent months (on a different site). The sheer fun of it revived the author's enthusiasm and creative drive, which had been flat and sluggish for a while, and subsequently led to significantly improved pace and refreshed enthusiasm in the writer's professional work. Nor is my friend unusual. According to an article on *Vulture.com*, bestselling author Lev Grossman has written fan fiction based on *Harry Potter*. Lauren Billings, who's half of the popular pseudonym Christina Lauren, writes *Hunger Games* fanfic. S.E. Hinton has written fanfic based on the TV show *Supernatural*, and has also (rather amusingly) written anonymous fanfic based on her own bestselling YA novel, *The Outsiders*.

While many of the fanfic stories I perused were quite short (under 2000 words), a significant number were longer—and some I saw were as long as novels, anywhere from 50,000 to 110,000 words; and they were finished works, with endings that wrapped up the story. Some writers of shorter works had posted as many as 20 or 30 stories. Frankly, I have met many people over the years (including people who belong to national writing organizations and attend writing conferences) who claim to be pursuing a professional writing career ... who haven't written nearly as much material as some of these fans have.

The fan writers on Archive of Our Own ask for feedback and thank people for leaving it, and their fellow fans make friendly comments, cite the aspects of the story they like best, and congratulate writers who've completed multi-chapter projects—most of which are posted chapter-by-chapter as they're being written, with fans returning regularly to the site to read the next installment.

What came across vividly to me, in reading these stories based on someone else's intellectual property (in this case, a TV show owned by a huge media company that probably doesn't care about fanfic) and viewing the comments left by fellow fans, was a love of the source material so enthusiastic that these people felt compelled to explore it more deeply and to share those explorations with each other. This put a different spin on fanfic for me that my previous minimal-but-unpleasant exposure to its participants, wherein I'd typically seen "fans" angrily characterize their "favorite" novelists as hypocrites and selfish narcissists for wanting to protect their intellectual property (by requesting that it not be used in fanfic). It's easy to see fanfic as threatening or negative when its advocates are vitriolic and disrespectful; but love, enthusiasm, and active engagement seem like things one should just let fans get on with nourishing in each other.

Which is among the reasons my views about fan fiction have changed substantially. Fanfic is based on books much less often than on other media, and it's typically inspired by *much* more successful novels than my own, so my work has never been the subject of fan fiction, and it may never be. That said, whereas my attitude used to be that, if asked, I would say, "No, absolutely not, don't base fan fiction on my work," now I'd say, "Sure, as long as you do it under a Creative Commons license and respect those terms, you have my blessing."

A subject so complex that it makes my little blonde brain hurt, Creative Commons licensing is a method of managing the various elements of your copyright that allows you to waive some of your rights or share some aspects of your copyright while restricting or reserving other rights. It's a means of specifying how your work may be used (fan fiction being an obvious example) other than the two all-or-nothing ▶

copyright situations familiar to most of us, i.e. “all rights reserved” and “public domain.” (For more information, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/>)

A number of writers have established fanfic policies under the Creative Commons umbrella, including Jim Butcher, author of the *Dresden Files*, a *New York Times*-bestselling urban fantasy series. In 2010, Butcher announced on his website that he was switching from his previous “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy toward fan fiction and would hereafter embrace fanfic as derivative, non-commercial fiction as long as fans observed the licensing rules set forth on his website. The terms of the license include provisions such as: fans agree they will never take money for anything they write that’s based on Butcher’s work, and they agree to post a disclaimer (provided in Butcher’s guidelines) on every fanfic story that they write which acknowledges Butcher’s copyright and waives rights to sue him if he ever writes anything similar. This strikes me as a reasonable and legally sound way to encourage love, enthusiasm, and active engagement with one’s original work.

Finally, Butcher proposes “ponies and ice cream for everyone!” And who can find fault with that?

In the final segment on fan fiction, fantasy writer Laura Resnick will look at some projects that combine fan fiction with the publishing world.

Business Briefs

What a difference a year makes?

Nielsen reports juvenile print fiction was down 46 percent the first week of May compared with that week last year. A downturn was expected. Why? There were no big hits this spring for this market. Last year the *Divergent* trilogy books were on the Top 10 lists, as well as the *Frozen*-related books. Juvenile fiction for the year to date was down three percent. Nielson reported adult print fiction sales for the year to date as up one percent.

PW Daily

Ruth Rendell dies at age 85

Author of more than 60 thrillers and mysteries, Ruth Rendell died in early May after a suffering a stroke earlier this year. One of her best known characters was Inspector Wexford. She also wrote under the name Barbara Vine. Her last book, *Dark Corners*, will be out in October 2015.

Publishers Lunch

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