

N I N K

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NINC WORLD

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

Authors Guild Directors Bring Advocacy Message to NINC World

Gather any group of seasoned authors together, in person or online, and the conversation eventually turns to contracts, reversion of rights on backlist, and the frustrating process of getting those rights back from publishers who are no longer exploiting them. So things go, and so it was on NINCLink recently—and the timing dovetailed with recently announced efforts by the Authors Guild to attempt to persuade publishers to adopt standard contract terms more favorable to authors.

Never one to pass up a good opportunity, 2015 NINC conference chair Kasey Michaels got to work. As a result, Mary Rasenberger, Executive Director of the Authors Guild and instrumental in the work of their Fair Contract Initiative, is joining us in Florida for NINC 2015. She will be speaking both to us and with us about our backlists, reversions, and contract clauses. She is bringing with her Ryan Fox, Editorial Director of the Authors Guild.

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The Authors Guild launched its Fair Contract Initiative in May 2015, at BookExpo America. Since then, they have issued a general preview of their campaign, as well as three segments addressing discreet contract terms that they maintain are unfair to authors and should be abandoned or amended to restore balance to the author-publisher relationship.

The first phase of the Fair Contract Initiative, already underway, is a series of articles focused on the unfairness of certain standard contract provisions. The Guild plans to release a *Continued on page 4* ▶

Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

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

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<http://www.ninc.com>

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Address changes may be made on the website.

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

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Introducing...

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

Membership Chair:

Tracy Higley
tracy@tracyhigley.com

Qualified Applicants:

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Saralee Rosenberg, Dix Hills NY
Sharon Srock, Newalla OK
Jenn Sterling, Petaluma CA

NINC has room to grow...

Recommend membership to your colleagues. Prospective members may apply online at <http://www.ninc.com>. Refer members at ninc.com. Go to Members Only, "Member Services," and click "Refer a New Member to NINC." Take NINC brochures to conferences.

New Members:

Christa Allan, New Orleans LA
Christy Barritt, Chesapeake VA
Laura Benedict, Carbondale IL
Shoshanna Evers, Post Falls ID
Mary Foster (Geri Foster), Bedford TX
Jennifer Jones (Jenny B. Jones), Bella Vista AR
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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.

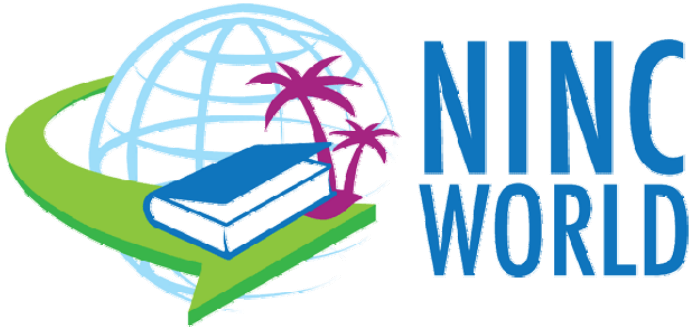
September Contributors

Bill Ferris is the former guitar player of several rock and roll bands you haven't heard of. He now writes mysteries, horror, fantasy, and science fiction. He blogs at www.famousauthorbillferris.com and *Writer Unboxed*. His article previously appeared on *Writer Unboxed* and is reprinted with the author's permission.

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.

Laura Resnick is the author of an urban fantasy series, an epic fantasy trilogy, and many short stories and articles.



Authors Guild Directors Bring Advocacy Message to NINC World

Continued from page 1 ▶ new article approximately every two weeks until all of their major issues have been addressed. During Phase 2, they plan to approach publishers individually to challenge them to revise their standard agreements to eliminate the inequities suffered by authors.

According to the most recent Authors Guild survey of its members, median writing-related income decreased 24 percent since 2009, with full-time authors' median income dropping 30 percent, from \$25,000 to \$17,500. Seasoned authors with 25 to 40 years in the writing business experienced a drop from \$28,750 to \$9,500.

The details:

▶ “The Authors Guild Fair Contract Initiative: A Preview”—the Guild takes the stand that half of net proceeds is the fair author share of e-book proceeds. That’s 50 percent of net. Also, contracts should have fixed and reasonable expiration dates and contain no non-compete clauses. Standard contracts shouldn’t permit publishers to reject contracted manuscripts “on a whim.” Advances should actually be advances, not split into multiple payments at signing, acceptance, publication, etc. The Guild also believes publishers should change their standard clauses that require authors to fully indemnify the publisher and, instead, should share the legal risk and cover authors under the publishers’ liability insurance. A few other points: reasonable option clauses, author approval on changes to the manuscript, prompt payments, and fair terms on “special sales.”

<https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/the-authors-guild-fair-contract-initiative-a-preview/>

▶ “Half of Net Proceeds Is the Fair Royalty Rate for E-Books”—“We maintain that a 50-50 split in e-book profits is fair because the traditional author-publisher relationship is essentially a joint venture.”

<https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/half-of-net-proceeds-is-the-fair-royalty-rate-for-e-books/>

▶ “A Publishing Contract Should Not Be Forever”—Of particular concern are contracts for the life of the copyright and out-of-print clauses that make it impossible for authors to regain their rights. The Guild advocates for reversions based on a specific income level over a one-year period.

<https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/a-publishing-contract-should-not-be-forever/>

▶ “Authors, Keep Your Copyrights. You Earned Them”—This is a common problem for academic authors.

<https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/authors-keep-your-copyrights-you-earned-them/> ▲

President's VOICE

Remember to Update Your Profile

After last month's long letter, I thought I'd go short this time. I want to remind everyone about updating their profiles at the website. Here are the instructions:



Julie Leto

Sign in to the website (upper right hand corner).

On the main menu, select, "My Profile."

Upload your photo. (Either drag-and-drop or click on the photo space and you can upload from your computer.)

Update your personal and professional information by posting a bio, booklist, and link to your website.

Don't forget to check the two email addresses we have for you! One is the email address that other members can see in order to contact you. The other says LOOP, which is only visible to you and to website Admins.

Please go in and list your loop email address, even if it is the same one you use for general email. Hover your mouse over the "Contact Info" section of your profile. A menu bar will appear with a pencil icon. Click the pencil. A pop-up box will appear that says "Personal Information." Enter your email address in the field that says "Loop" and then click SAVE.

That's it!

On September 15, the board will pick someone with a complete profile to win a \$50 gift card! Who says NINC is all-business, all-the-time? Sometimes, we like to have fun!

Questions and requests for help should be directed to Terese Daly Ramin, our Central Coordinator, through her email: admin@ninc.com.

Until next month!



Business Briefs

Compiled by Sally Hawkes

NYRB KIDS

A New Children's Imprint

September 8 is the launch date for NYRB Kids, a new paperback imprint from The New York Review of Books' Children's Collection. The launch titles are very familiar backlist reprints—*The 13 Clocks* and *The Pushcart War*. Two or three titles are projected per quarter,

and editor Edwin Frank hopes to include original paperbacks in the future. The books in this imprint have a common element in strong narrative presentation.

PW Daily

How to Get the Perfect Author Photo ... What is an Author Photo?

BY BILL FERRIS

I talked briefly about author photos before on the *Writer Unboxed* blog, but now I'm sharing the primo tips that'll mean the difference between looking like a successful famous author or some poseur who ironed some elbow patches onto a thrift-store suit jacket.

Let's start with why we're going through this rigmarole. An author photo is a selling tool designed to let your fans know what you look like so they can properly throw themselves at you when they see you. To do that, you'll need to

Hire a Photographer

No, that blurry selfie you use for your Twitter avatar isn't going to cut it. It's time to go to a professional. That means someone with AT MINIMUM 500 followers on Instagram. This will not come cheap, but it'll be the best twenty-bucks-plus-a-case-of-Pabst you'll ever spend.

Any reputable photographer should be able to guarantee you'll get some action as a result of this photo. Ask them about this specifically.

Set the Mood

The best time to take a photo is during the "magic hour"—the time just before sunset, when the light is redder, softer, and more flattering. Basically, around happy hour. Knock back a couple brewskis during the shoot to turn yourself from a dour, desperate, struggling writer into a delightfully eccentric raconteur.

What to Bring

Create your own "author photo booth" and bring a variety of writerly props so you'll have options. Some suggestions to get you started:

coffee mug
typewriter
quill pen
assortment of pipes, with tobacco
jacket with elbow patches
no fewer than three hounds
Gibson Flying V guitar
fake Hemingway beard
working wood fireplace
suit and tie fashioned from pages of *Finnegans Wake*
Agatha Christie's Remington Home Portable typewriter, with certificate of authenticity.

Say Cheese!

When the shutter starts to ... I don't know, shut, I suppose ... put on your best face. The key is to smize. I learned this from watching *America's Next Top Model*. Smizing means to smile with your eyes. If your mouth is grinning but your eyes look like a dead, soulless void through which you watch your life passing you

by, people can tell, so make sure to look at happy things like people high-fiving each other. Your eyes can do lots of facial expressions, including:

Frize is a mashup of frown and eyes. It's an easy expression to pull off if you concentrate on how much this photo shoot is costing you.

Winze is wincing with your eyes. Achieve this expression by stabbing yourself in the leg with a pushpin.

Blize means to blink with your eyes. Just wink both eyes at once.

Sneepers is sneezing with your peepers—basically, shutting your eyes reflexively so they don't pop out of your skull.

Brizebrows is brooding with your eyebrows, I guess.

Grimince Pies combines grimace with "mince pies," cockney rhyming slang for eyes. Get this look by listening to Dick Van Dyke's accent in *Mary Poppins*.

Final Touch-up

Ah. That awkward moment when you see the proofs and it's apparent that as your fame has grown, so too has your waistline. I recommend calisthenics. Simply open your photo in PhotoShop and streeetch it vertically. Now you're thinner and taller!

You're ready to take an amazing author photo. Now your biggest problem is how you'll have time to write your next book with all those hotties fawning all over you. ▲

Business Briefs

Slight dip in Books-A-Million Sales

Books-A-Million reported sales revenue was \$107.9 million in its second quarter, which ended August 1. That figure represents a .4 percent dip compared with the same period in 2014. Worse, the company reported a net loss of \$5.8 million, up from second quarter 2014's loss of \$3 million. Also announced by the company was a decision by its board to allow the Anderson family to purchase company shares not already owned by the family.

Publishers Weekly



Twitters Away

A new web application (<http://tweet.authorbee.com/>) is available from AuthorBee, a content management platform. What does it do? Users can collect, organize, and save content from Twitter. New content can be added and there's an easy search/find function.

PW Daily

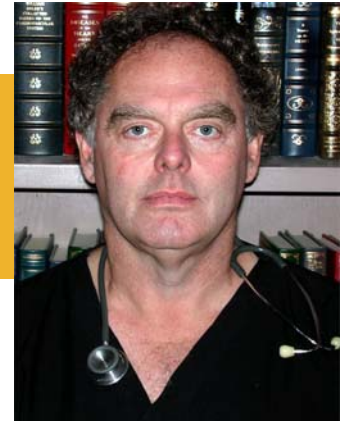
SMP Swerve Coming From St. Martin's Press

What is Swerve's focus? Romance fiction in digital format. Anne Marie Tallberg, v-p and associate publisher of St. Martin's Paperbacks and St. Martin's Griffin v-p, will be at the helm. Current title selection is from St. Martin's Press overseen by Monique Patterson, executive editor and editorial director of romance. The launch date is January 2016. Payment is either an advance/royalty plan or the author can choose a higher royalty with no advance. Royalties will be sent quarterly and will be based on net receipts.

PW Daily

Forensic Files

By D. P. Lyle, MD



Does Rubbing Alcohol Make a Good Poison?

Q: I am considering using isopropanol as a poison. My victim is a heavy drinker and isopropanol will be added to his drink by the killer. He will appear to have died from his heavy drinking and the isopropanol will mimic diabetes in his system. The autopsy will show some edema, swelling, and hemorrhaging in the chest cavity. I need to know more about the diabetes part. What else could show up in an autopsy? Am I on the right track? How quickly will he die? I know there will be acetone formed. How long does this take? How much isopropanol (assume 70 percent solution) must be ingested to produce the desired effect?

A: Isopropanol is isopropyl or rubbing alcohol, so it is readily available. It can enter the body by ingestion, inhalation of the vapors, and through the skin. Many years ago, alcohol rubs were used to lower fever, particularly in children. It readily evaporated and did indeed lower body temperature, but it also was absorbed through the skin and occasionally led to coma.

Like ethanol (ethyl alcohol), which is the alcohol in alcoholic beverages, isopropanol is an intoxicant and a central nervous system depressant. Its effects appear rapidly after ingestion, usually within 10 to 30 minutes, depending upon the amount consumed and whether food or other beverages are taken also. The person will appear very drunk with drowsiness, poor balance, staggering gait, slurred speech, and poor coordination. Nausea, vomiting (sometimes bloody), abdominal pain, sweating, stupor, coma, and death from respiratory depression may follow. Hemorrhage into the bronchial tubes (breathing tubes or airways) and the chest cavity may occur.

It is true that 15 to 20 percent of the ingested isopropanol is converted to acetone in the body. This produces an acidosis (excess acid in the body). In diabetics, lack of insulin may lead to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), which may initially appear like alcohol intoxication. The acidosis in the situation is due to build-up of ketones in the body. However, a physician should be able to quickly distinguish diabetes from alcohol ingestion. A simple blood sugar analysis, which can be done fairly quickly (immediately with a finger stick analysis), would show a low or normal sugar level in excess alcohol intake and a significantly elevated level in DKA.

Treatment of acute isopropanol intoxication is to lavage (pump) the stomach, give intravenous (IV) fluids with glucose (sugar), and support respiration and blood pressure with a ventilator and medications as needed.

As a poison, isopropanol works well. It is easily disguised as an alcoholic beverage and the victim would simply appear to be extremely drunk until he became very ill. Without medical treatment, coma and death

would follow. The amount needed and the time required for death to arrive, varies greatly from person to person and depends upon how quickly it was consumed and how quickly it was absorbed. An empty stomach would hasten the intoxication, while the concomitant intake of food would slow it. Give your victim four or five hefty drinks in 60 to 90 minutes and kiss him goodbye.

At autopsy, the medical examiner would easily find the isopropanol in the blood and would easily rule out the presence of diabetes as the cause of death. He could find bleeding into the lungs and the chest cavity. He might find corrosion and bleeding of the stomach as well. △

Forensic Files

What Human Tissues and Secretions Do Not Contain DNA?

Q: It seems that a criminal cannot walk near a crime scene without shedding DNA. I would like to know what kinds of personal trace evidence would NOT be testable for DNA. Sweat? Urine? Feces? Facial oils? Semen from someone who has had a vasectomy? Tears? Mucus? Pus? Would it matter that a person was a non-secretor? If the person had a bacterial infection or venereal disease would the infection contaminate the sample and make it unusable? Would a scab or a fingernail clipping contain DNA?

A: Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is the molecule that makes up our genes. It is present in any cell that possesses a nucleus. In humans, the notable exceptions are the red blood cells (RBCs). Developing RBCs within bone marrow do have nuclei, but they are lost during the maturation process so that by the time they are released from the marrow into the bloodstream, the nucleus is no longer present. Thus, they have no DNA. White blood cells (WBCs) do. When blood is tested for DNA it is the DNA of the WBCs that is tested.

Basically, for DNA to be found, the tissue or fluid tested must have cells or cellular material. The cells do not have to be intact, since fragmented cells still have intact strands or fragments of their DNA among the debris. The sample size must be sufficient to yield enough testable DNA, but very small samples, such as a single hair follicle or saliva from a postage stamp, may be enough. Also, the DNA cannot have been exposed to extreme conditions such as high heat, since this will denature (destroy) the DNA, making testing impossible.

In secretions such as tears, sweat, saliva, urine, and feces, cells from the tear ducts, urethra, salivary ducts, mouth, intestinal lining, and the skin may yield enough DNA for testing. It may not. For the purposes of fiction, you could have it either way. So, even if the secretion itself doesn't have DNA as a component, it "picks up" shed cells, and thus DNA, along its route from its source to its exit point. ►

The same is true for semen. Cells from the urethra and the non-sperm secretions (mostly from the prostate gland) as well as the sperm itself can supply a testable sample. After a vasectomy, the sperm count in the specimen should be very low or absent, but DNA from the other cells in the ejaculate would supply the needed DNA.

The secretory status would have little effect. Approximately 80 to 85 percent of individuals are secretors. This means that they secrete proteins of their ABO blood type in all bodily fluids, including seminal fluid. The ABO type can be used much as blood typing to eliminate a suspect in a rape. For example, if the victim is a secretor of type O and the suspect is a secretor of type A, but the vaginal material tested shows type B, the suspect is not the perp. On the other hand, if the vaginal material matched the ABO group of the suspect, he could not be eliminated, but neither could he be convicted. DNA testing would be employed to make a conclusive match or not. Thus, secretory matching is similar to blood typing. It can eliminate someone but cannot conclusively ID them. It is too crude a test. DNA typing is specific.

In the case of pus (purulent drainage), the bacterial DNA would cause little confusion, and the suspect's DNA could be separated out in most cases.

A scab is basically clotted blood with fibrin and other materials consumed during the clotting process and should yield usable DNA. Fingernails, like hair (nails are basically evolutionarily modified hair), are acellular (without cells) and have no DNA. △

Forensic Files

Can a Medical Examiner Determine If a Child Died From Exposure as Opposed to Being Locked in a Heated Vehicle?

Q: In my story, a police officer is on the scene where the body of a three-year-old child was found among the rocks and weeds of a dried-up riverbed in Southern California. It is early summer. Can the crime scene investigation (CSI) techs or the medical examiner (ME) determine if the child died from being locked up in a heated car rather than from exposure to the elements where the body was found?

A: The simple answer is that this is not very likely; however, there might be a way. Much depends on the condition of the body. If it is severely decayed or has become skeletal, the medical examiner would have little to work with, and there would be no way to determine exactly where the death occurred. In either case, the death would be from that catchall term "exposure." What that means is that the victim died from lack of water or food, with water, of course, being the most important. Exposure deaths are almost always due to severe dehydration.

However, if the child is found within a day or two of death, the body would be more or less intact and

the ME might be able to estimate where the death had occurred, given the two choices you outlined. One difference would be insect activity. If the child died in a trunk as opposed to being exposed outdoors, there would be less insect activity for the amount of time since death than would be expected from an exposed corpse. If the ME determined that the child had been dead for two or three days yet there was essentially no insect activity, it would mean that she had been in a protected environment, such as an enclosed car or car trunk, for those two or three days and only exposed for maybe a few hours. On the other hand, if he found insect activity that matched his estimate of the time since death, this would favor her being in an exposed environment for those two to three days. It's not that flies can't get into car trunks, it's just that most are so well sealed their access would be very limited, if at all.

On a similar note, predatory animals would not be able to attack the body while it was in the car, but, if exposed, predator feeding on an exposed body is fairly common. Coyotes are everywhere. Predator activity would suggest a longer period of environmental exposure.

One circumstance that might be interesting for you would be if the child died in either the trunk or on the floorboard of the car. As she died from hyperthermia and dehydration, she would increasingly gasp for breath toward the end of her life and could inhale carpet fibers from the trunk lining or floor carpets. This would not happen if death occurred while exposed outside. This would of course require that the body be in fairly good condition. I think as long as you have the body found within a few days, the decay process would not have progressed far enough for the lungs to be destroyed, and therefore the medical examiner might see these fibers during his microscopic examination of lung tissue. Once he found these fibers, he would know that the victim had inhaled them and therefore was alive while in the car. So finding the fibers would at least allow the medical examiner to guess that she had been in the car near or shortly before her death.

Another interesting thing about this scenario is that the ME could then analyze these fibers physically, optically, and chemically to determine the manufacturer of the carpet. This in turn could lead to the car manufacturer and even the make and model year—or at least a narrow range of years since car manufacturers change their products quite frequently. This would greatly help your police officer develop suspects. ▲

Business Briefs

The Ed Greenwood Group (TEGG) and An Ambitious New Concept

TEGG had been formed by Ed Greenwood, creator of *Forgotten Realms*, with a focus on stories set in newly created worlds. The first book is *Your World is Doomed* by Greenwood himself, with cover art from Eric Belisle. It will be published on Halloween. In addition to books, TEGG will sell games, jewelry, costumes, and items related to the fantasy settings. TEGG already has 100 authors, 20 game designers, and 50 artisans interested in the project.

Partners at this point include ChiZine Publications, distribution through ACD Distribution for books and more, ebooks through Trajectory Inc., and enhanced ebooks through Trapdoor Technologies. *Amazing Stories* will publish the first three chapters of each title. The financial part will be a percentage of overall profits between authors, artists, distributors, and Greenwood. ChiZine will write storylines for a new fantasy setting and involve ChiZine authors. Greenwood is projecting a 10-year plan and publishing 50 books a year.

PW Daily



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

Not Your Usual Writing Advice

By JoAnn Grote

Dead-heading

“Eliminate something superfluous from your life. Break a habit. Do something that makes you feel insecure.”

— Piero Ferrucci

I’m not much of a gardener. I love the beauty, color, and cheer that flowers add to the landscape, but I prefer perennials that come up every year and need little help other than to be watered and, when it can be avoided no longer, weeded. In spite of my preference for planted perennials, there are only potted plants decorating the yard of my current home and all of them require deadheading.

Probably because I’m not a gardener, gardening analogies to life in general and the writing life in particular have always annoyed me, yet so often when I perform my few necessary garden chores, analogies come to mind. This week the analogy that leapt out is deadheading.

In case anyone reading this column is even less of a gardener than me, let me explain that deadheading is the practice of removing flowers that are dead or past their prime from plants in order to redirect the plant’s energy. Deadheading takes a lot of a gardener’s time, but for many plants it is considered necessary in order to increase the number and size of blossoms and the length of a plant’s blooming season.

Yes, I’ve come to believe deadheading is a necessity if a writer wants a healthy writing life.

These words of Henry David Thoreau’s are often quoted: “Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you’ve imagined.” Seldom do we see Thoreau’s following sentence included: “As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler; solitude will not be solitude, poverty will not be poverty, nor weakness weakness.” It appears Thoreau felt simplifying one’s life is part of pursuing one’s dreams and living the life one imagines, including the life of a happy, productive writer. I think deadheading is another term for simplifying.

How do we recognize deadheads in our writing lives? By paying attention, examining our assumptions and habits, and noticing what no longer serves us.

One area ripe for deadheading might be writing projects you feel guilty for not completing, but for which you’ve lost your vision. If you find yourself procrastinating about going back to the page, guilt may build up. After all, a writer writes, you might remind yourself while you stare at the empty screen and feel miserable, or watch innumerable reruns of a show you don’t even like and feel even more miserable. If there’s another project you’d rather be writing but are putting off until you complete the project you’re procrastinating on, the situation is even worse, a double whammy. If you no longer feel passion for a project, perhaps it’s time to let it go. Visualize setting the manuscript on a shelf in your actual or imagined office. What sensation does that cause? If you experience a sense of relief, it’s probably the right thing to do; if you become excited about the project again later, it will be there waiting for you. If you feel more anxious after the visualization exercise, maybe you should stick with the project and complete it now.

The suggestion that you deadhead a manuscript doesn’t mean I believe writers should always abandon a manuscript when a story no longer captivates the sensibilities the way it did when it was started. It seems with every manuscript there’s a place where a new story idea tempts us to follow its path and leave the work-in-progress behind. I do believe the process of creating one story spurs the creative energy, both for the

manuscript in progress and for other stories. I also believe that we needn't always be Spartan in our responsibility to the current manuscript. Taking time to draft a scene from a newly inspired story can reinsert enthusiasm for the current manuscript without abandoning it. The same way working on the current manuscript causes the imagination to create a new story idea with the resulting adrenaline rush, spending even a little time on that new idea can stimulate new insights for the current manuscript. Enthusiasm and joy are powerful food for creativity. When we use our enthusiasm as a guide, creativity increases and, in turn, feeds back into more enthusiasm—a lovely circle.

I have a short story that is deadhead material. I'm not committed to an editor to do the rewrite it needs before sending it out, nor is it written for a general submission request with a deadline, so there isn't an external reason to complete it. But I don't like to feel I'm a quitter. It feels lazy or irresponsible or both to set it aside. My logic says there isn't that much work left to get the story into publishable form, but I continue to procrastinate on it. My self-imposed guilt is stealing energy from the novel-in-progress. It's time to deadhead the short story, set it on the shelf, work on the novel, and see if the excitement for the short story returns later. Perhaps God or the Universe knows that a time on the shelf will result in new insights that will make it a vastly better story than if I insist I complete it now.

I believe most published writers are good at fitting an unusual amount of activity, including their writing, into the 24-hour days available to everyone. Writers know how to use spare minutes and how to prioritize. We've figured out what we can procrastinate on in order to spend more time writing, but like everyone else, we can fall into ruts and forget to look for new ways to use or grab time.

One of the things I tend to forget is that when I decide to take on a new writing project I must deadhead something else. If I am simply starting a new manuscript upon completion of another, this doesn't apply. If I decide to write something in addition to the usual novel I have going, then it's time to deadhead, because something already fills the time that project will take. Maybe it's filled with my night-out with family or friends, or one of the three television shows I allow myself each week, or just doing the dishes, but something fills that time. I have learned that if I decide what to give up in order to make space in my life before beginning a new project, the probability of that project succeeding skyrockets.

Years ago, I was happy to discover an online magazine for which Anne Lamott, author of the writing classic *Bird by Bird*, wrote a monthly column. I eagerly looked the magazine up and read the current Lamott column—which ended with the announcement that she was going to start writing another book, so the column I was reading would be her last. She needed to draw in her energy and refocus it for the book.

My immediate reaction was, "It's just a once-a-month column; how much time and focus can it take from the book?" Now that I'm into my sixth year of writing the Not Your Usual Writing Advice column, I understand why she deadheaded her column. I love writing this column, but I've discovered that, as with novels or short stories, the columns seldom flow complete from the keyboard in one short sitting. Sometimes an idea that seems full-blown from rambling around in my brain for months shows it is anything but complete when I start putting it on the page.

Most novelists begin their careers with the responsibility for all aspects of it, not just the creative area, but it's our ability to create stories that is the vital element without which the rest is unnecessary and even superfluous. We often think it costs too much to pay others to do something we can do ourselves, but the time, energy, and focus it takes to do those other things is taken directly from our creation of stories. If there is anything that you can hand over to someone else, deadhead it. If you feel you can't afford to pay someone else to do it, try the barter system. Determine what you would like to deadhead and then make a list of ways you might make that happen. Don't quit until you have listed at least 10 possibilities. Maybe you have a family member or friend who is willing to help with repetitive responsibilities, but the time to teach them seems too precious. Remember that once they learn, you have freed up more time for yourself than the training will take away. Areas to consider include bookkeeping, keeping up with social media, and most aspects of self-publishing. If in the past you couldn't hand off the non-story telling aspects of your writing life to others, take a minute to reconsider. Have the facts of your situation changed so this is now an option?

Remember that deadheading plants increases the size and number of blooms and lengthens the plant's blooming season. Deadheading in a writer's life can increase the quality of our stories and the number of stories the writer tells in a lifetime. Deadheading—it's a gardener's friend, and a writer's friend, too. ▲

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



Change

“The real complaint that Authors United, the Authors Guild, the American Booksellers Association, and the Association of Authors’ Representatives have is that Amazon is changing their world.”

— David Vandagriff, attorney and blogger at *The Passive Voice*

Last September, while the infamous Amazon-Hachette Standoff of 2014 was dragging on for so long that we were about to start measuring it in geological time, bestselling novelist Douglas Preston announced that Authors United (AU) was working on a letter to the US Department of Justice (DOJ) in which it would urge the government to investigate Amazon.com for antitrust violations.

Remember Authors United? They were a group of about 1,000 writers, many of them well-known names or bestsellers, who got a fair bit of media coverage for joining forces (or at least signing a letter) under the leadership of Douglas Preston to advocate in favor of Hachette, publishers, writers, literature, and culture during Hachette’s interminable negotiations with Amazon.

Along with approximately 8,000 other writers and readers, I signed a different letter being circulated at the time by bestselling author and indie icon Hugh Howey; it was a pro-Amazon argument which pointed out the distortions, omissions, and misstatements in the AU letter.

By way of disclosure, I had declined to participate in writing the latter letter (what alluring alliteration!), and I also declined to sign it until the Late Cretaceous Era of the dispute. My position for months was that when two big corporations argue over which of them gets more of the revenue for a book, they are each on their own side and neither of them is on *my* side. I changed my position and signed the Howey letter when Amazon advocated paying writers a larger e-book royalty, recommending a 30/35/35 percentage split among Amazon/publisher/author. (As you may recall, Hachette did not warmly embrace the suggestion of paying writers a higher royalty rate.) If Hachette had set a goal in those negotiations of securing sufficient revenue to increase author royalty percentages beyond “the industry standard” (**but there’s no collusion here!**) of 25 percent of net for e-books, then I would have favored them.

Anyhow, this July, *a mere 10 months* after the initial announcement, AU finished the promised letter to the DOJ and made it public.

It was 24 pages long, including 45 footnotes. Needless to say, the first time I tried to read it, I fainted.

After some training and mental conditioning to prepare myself better, I did eventually get through the whole thing, but only because I was tied to a chair and sustained by generous quantities of artisanal chocolate. (The things I do for *Nink*.)

Despite the long wait for this letter, there’s not really anything in it that wasn’t already said and discussed last year, and the addition of citations and footnotes doesn’t disguise the same flaws that also existed in AU spokesperson Douglas Preston’s much-quoted arguments back then.

Amazon still isn’t a monopoly, but AU still claims that it is, ignoring that fact that it has multiple cor-

porate competitors, including Google Play, Apple iBooks, BN.com, and Kobo. The letter accuses Amazon of possible antitrust violations because of damage to its competitors and/or suppliers; but as various attorneys (and also court decisions in the Apple price-fixing lawsuit) have repeatedly stated, U.S. antitrust law focuses on protecting consumers, not competitors. AU complains that Amazon has damaged the market by driving down book prices while simultaneously accusing the company (completely unsupported by any evidence whatsoever) of intentions to damage the market by driving up book prices. AU argues that lower e-book prices “harm” readers, but has still never credibly explained *how*. AU accuses Amazon of impeding the free flow of ideas in our society, despite the self-evident fact that many retailers besides Amazon sell books and e-books, mass media exists without interference from Amazon, and stats indicate that the number of titles being published annually has increased more than tenfold since the start of the century (see *TechDirt*’s “The Sky Is Rising”). AU claims that Amazon is detrimental to the traditional brick-and-mortar bookstore model, but *Fortune* points out in a critique of the AU letter (“Why Amazon Monopoly Accusations Deserve A Closer Look”) that there are more such bookstores operating in the U.S. now than there were six years ago.

I could go on (and on and on), but I’m in danger of fainting again.

Overall, I agree with the conclusion of Brady Dale in the *Observer*, who opined that “the health of the world of letters may not really be the driving motivation behind the Authors United letter. It might instead be fear of a future in which a small clutch of authors will not be able to enjoy the primacy they had in the bookstore world.”

I’ve never had primacy, so I do not identify with those authors or their perspective. I also believe that AU’s complaints and accusations completely ignore the *actual* problem—and I do agree there is an actual problem with Amazon’s market dominance. Yes, I share the concern that Amazon, which *Fortune* estimates controls 1/3 of the printed book market and 2/3 of the e-book market, is too powerful and has too big a market share. I agree completely that this is legitimately worrying for writers and also for publishers.

But the *actual* problem is that Amazon’s competitors *still* aren’t competing effectively enough to challenge or put real pressure on Amazon’s market dominance. For this reason, I am *extremely annoyed* at them. Indeed, if AU would turn its wrath on Google, Kobo, and BN for doing such a lame job of competing for a bigger share of the e-book market, I’d become their biggest fan, rather than someone who has to be tied to a chair and sustained with chocolate in order to wade through their rhetoric.

Even publishing consultant and industry pundit Mike Shatzkin, with whom I almost never agree on anything, sees the same thing I see. In reaction to the AU letter, he wrote on his blog:

“Although those fighting Amazon can and will point to what they consider to be situations where Amazon takes unfair advantage of its marketplace position, there are two aspects of what has transpired over the past 20 years that the critics who plead for government intervention will almost certainly ignore.

“Most of Amazon’s success is due to their own stellar performance: innovating, investing, executing, and having a vision of what could happen as they grew.”

His second point is that Amazon’s success has expanded the book market, grown publishers’ sales, and increased publishers’ profits. Yet AU keeps trying to frame this as a *bad* thing.

As it happens, my vision of the future has one thing in common with the future that Authors United apparently wants, which is that Amazon will no longer dominate the market. But in my future, that’s *not* because AU has convinced the government to intervene in the book industry. Instead, in the future I envision, there are a total of 3—or 4! Or 6!—major online vendors who are all as innovative, aggressive, and successful as Amazon, all of them in fierce competition with each other, as well as a thriving market of online “boutique” or “indie” booksellers focusing on various niche markets and offering services that court specific audiences and target special interests. *That’s* the bookselling world I want to experience as a writer (and ▶

The Mad Scribbler

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also as a reader); not the future AU seeks, in which Amazon is reined in by the government for being too innovative and successful, in an effort to protect traditional publishers from the inevitable need to innovate, adapt, and *change*.

The Mad Scribbler

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Author, editor, and publisher Kristine Kathryn Rusch also thinks that Authors United is focusing on the wrong things, but for more immediate and pragmatic reasons. Reacting on her blog (on July 15) to the AU letter, she wrote, “I wish that they would then use their collective multimillion dollar clout to fight the *real* war,” which Rusch defines as *transparency*. She goes on to discuss the inadequate, opaque, and arcane way that publishers “report” sales and earnings to writers and how bizarre it is that in the second decade of the 21st Century, our fiscal business with our publishing partners is not only still so murky, it’s also still treated as wholly unreasonable for us to ask for more information, clearer and more accurate records, and quarterly or monthly reports and payments.

As Rusch points out, five major traditional publishers have already been heavily fined by the DOJ for (to put it euphemistically) problematic business practices, and “organizations which have already proven that they’ll break the law to have a business advantage will break the law in other places as well.”

But I think Rusch’s frustration with AU’s focus is addressed by the Dale/Observer quote above. Douglas Preston and Authors United pursue flimsy or false accusations against Amazon rather than transparency in publishers’ dealings with writers because they’re anxious to preserve (or resuscitate) a business model that has been extremely beneficial to them. Whereas the new and rapidly changing market offers more choices and opportunities to the much larger number of writers—including me and Rusch—who have not experienced similar benefits in the traditional publishing model, and we’re frustrated with the slowness (or lack) of change and progress in publishers’ dealings with us. ▲

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