

Promo Through Paper.li

BY GILLIAN DOYLE

A year ago, “discoverability” was the buzz word ringing in my head after the NINC 2014 conference. Traditional or indie, authors at every level of publishing need a high “discoverability quotient” (DQ). Building a respectable DQ can take 18 months to two years. Social media is the go-to for maximum exposure, but also a time-drain with too many choices and not enough evidence of the effectiveness of any of them. Several times during this year’s NINC workshops, members wanted to know how to juggle PR/Social Media. The common answer: “Do what you can without sacrificing writing time.” Easier said than done!

Another time-drain is keeping up with the latest news in the publishing industry. When I returned to my writing career after a long hiatus from traditional publishing, my decision to become an indie author meant weeks ... okay, *months* of learning about self-publishing, including platform and promotion. I had already subscribed to a few writing e-newspapers, skimming headlines every morning over coffee, clicking on articles that caught my eye and saving the best in a download file (before I discovered Pocket, www.getpocket.com). When I reached four or five e-news subscriptions—all Paper.li productions—I realized I could save time if I created my own, selecting my favorite bloggers such as Joel Friedlander, Jane Friedman, Orna Ross, and Penny Sansevieri. I added my favorite authors via their Twitter handles, pulling in their tweets about writing and publishing. Everything I wanted to read was finally in one place!

So ... what is Paper.li? The website description is “a content curation service [that] enables people to publish newspapers based on topics they like and treat their readers to fresh news, daily.”

What are the benefits of “content curation” through Paper.li?

- ▶ Build your community
- ▶ Build traffic
- ▶ Show your personality
- ▶ Establish your authority
- ▶ Share your thoughts in a different way
- ▶ Complement the creative process
- ▶ Serve your audience
- ▶ For more about the benefits of content curation, see “Introduction to Content Curation” by Cendrine Marrouat, <http://bit.ly/1M1miZ>

How does a Paper.li e-newspaper benefit authors?

- ▶ *Build Your Community* for your readers

Continued on page 4 ▶

INSIDE this ISSUE

President’s Voice: Summing Up 3

NINC World: Conference Recaps

Metadata: Management and Maxims 7

The Hot Sheet: News You Can Use 9

Explaining & Exploiting the German Market .. 10

Focusing on Kindle Direct Publishing 12

Next-Level Promotions: Supercharge

Your Book Sales 13

Diversion Books 15

Not Your Usual Writing Advice: You Are an Inspiration 16

The Mad Scribbler: These Times We Live In 18

Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

Founders

Rebecca Brandewyne
Janice Young Brooks
Jasmine Cresswell

Maggie Osborne
Marianne Shock

Advisory Council

Janice Young Brooks	Barbara Keiler	Kasey Michaels
Maggie Osborne	Pat Rice	Kay Hooper
Linda Barlow	Jean Brashear	Donna Fletcher
Georgia Bockoven	Vicki Lewis Thompson	Lou Aronica
Victoria Thompson	Brenda Hiatt Barber	Laura Parker Castoro
Steven Womack	Pat McLaughlin	Meredith Efken

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

2015 Board of Directors

President:

Julie Leto
Julie@julieleto.com

President-Elect:

Diana Peterfreund
diana@dianapeterfreund.com

Secretary:

Sylvie Kurtz
kurtzsy@aol.com

Treasurer:

Pamela Johnson
authorpameladaltongmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Laura Phillips
Laura@LauraPhillips.net

Advisory Council Rep:

Lou Aronica
laronica@fictionstudio.com

2015 Committees

2015 Conference

Chair: Kasey Michaels
Committee: Camy Tang,
Karen Tintori Katz, Pam
McCutcheon, Margaret
Daley, Jennifer Stevenson,
Pat Roy

Anthology

Editor: Lou Aronica

Authors Coalition Rep

Pat Roy & Leslie Thompson

Blog Coordinator

Patricia Rosemoor

Elections

Chair: Sylvie Kurtz

Member Retention

Chair: Barbara Bretton

Membership

Chair: Tracy Higley

Nink Online Index

Denise Lynn

Nominating

Chair: Brenda Hiatt

Denise Agnew, Ruth Glick,
Sally Hawkes, Kathryn Shay,
David Wind

Technology

Chair: Camy Tang

Volunteer Jobs List

Coordinator:
Dianne Despain

Complete committee member listings are available on the website:

<http://www.ninc.com>

Central Coordinator:

Novelists, Inc.
c/o Terese Ramin
P.O. Box 54
Hartland MI 48353

admin@ninc.com

Website:

<http://www.ninc.com>

Address changes may be made on the website.

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

Copyright ©2015 by Novelists, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission.

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:

Donna Alward, Fall River NS, Canada
Sn Atkins (S.M. McEachern), Stittsville ON, Canada
Tamra Baumann, Albuquerque NM
Matthew Buchman (M. L. Buchman), Lincoln City OR
Melanie Dobson, Sherwood OR
Meggan Dyer (Meghan March), Midland MI
Laura Freeman (Elle Saint James, Lara Santiago),
Melbourne FL
Phoebe Kitanidis, Seattle WA
Jana Oliver, Norcross GA
Angi Platt (Angi Morgan), Farmers Branch TX
Heather Sunseri, Versailles KY

New Members:

Brian Anderson, Fairhope AL
Julie Barnard (Jules Barnard), Capitola CA
Colleen Coble, Wabash IN
Laurie Eakes, Houston TX
Michelle Fox, Parma MI
D.K. Holmberg, New Ulm MN
Amy Jones (AE Jones), Oberlin OH
Alethea Kontis, Mims FL
Kim Law, Lebanon TN
Mary Litton (Maryann Jordan), Fredericksburg VA
Evan Marshall, Roseland NJ
Becky McGraw, Milton FL
Jennifer Merritt (Evelyn Adams), Moneta VA
Jennifer Probst, Wallkill NY
Lauren Sauvageau (Lauren Stewart), Carmichael CA
Sarah Strohmeier, Middlesex VT
Lauralyn Thompson (Z.A. Maxfield), Placentia CA
Amy Woods, Austin TX

NINC has room to grow...

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

Summing Up



It's hard to believe that 2015 is coming to a close and my time as president is nearly at an end. It has been a crazy, intense, revelatory year for me, and I am thankful I had this opportunity to serve the writer's organization I love best.

Of all the things we accomplished this year—completing the website update, introducing new membership benefits like an updated NINC “binder” (now called the NINC Guide) and the Pro Services Directory, establishing conference sponsorships to temper costs to members and reliance on ACA and general funds, and reorganizing procedures so that we could be more responsive to member's needs and requests—the thing I'm most proud of is how artfully and easily the board worked together.

Serving on the NINC Board isn't always easy, but it is so much more fun when people find a way to work with each other to reach common goals. Every member of this year's board worked hard and for this, I am grateful.

NINC will always depend on our volunteers. We have taken steps toward lightening the volunteer loads with paid consultants and independent contractors, but NINC will always need NINC members to succeed. Many of you put in time for NINC this year—as committee chairs, committee members, or Just One Thing (JOT) volunteers—and for that, I'm thankful, too.

The 2016 Board of Directors, committee chairs, and volunteers will, no doubt, continue the legacy of service and responsibility that has come to be NINC's hallmark. I'm honored to have been asked to serve and I see great things ahead for NINC. I hope you do, too.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie".

New 2016 Officers

President – Diana Peterfreund
President-Elect – Erica Ridley
Treasurer – Mindy Neff
Newsletter Editor – Heidi Joy Thretheway
Secretary - Pauline Baird Jones
Advisory Council Representative –
Victoria Thompson

Nominating Committee

JoAnn Grote
Lori Handeland
Debra Holland
Charlotte Hubbard
Julie Ortolon

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.

Promo through Paper.li

Continued from page 1 ▶ and/or writers who share your interests.

- ▶ *Build Traffic*—Paper.li supports sources from Twitter, Facebook, Google+, YouTube, RSS, as well as other web content.
- ▶ *Show your personality* through personalization of your e-newsletter with a title, author profile, and the Editor's Note.
- ▶ *Establish your authority*—as publisher/editor, you decide the content.
- ▶ *Share your thoughts in a different way*—include your own blog to the headlines.
- ▶ *Complement the creative process*—add your own photos and/or videos.
- ▶ *Serve your audience*—supply book release news for readers and/or industry news for authors.

How much time is required to produce a Paper.li e-newspaper?

With the help of the video tutorials, a basic (free) Paper.li e-newspaper can be set up in 30 minutes or less. The Pro version will take a little longer if you want more personalization. Again, there are video tutorials to help. The e-newspaper can be set to automatically pull content from the internet and publish on a schedule, or you can choose manual curation and publication. Manual curation isn't complicated. While surfing the web, use the bookmarklet to drop an interesting article or blog into the current edition.

Most of the authors with the basic plan set up their e-newsletter for auto-curation and publication so they don't have to think about it again. Others spend a few minutes every day skimming the content for their own edification, choosing "keepers" as they go along, bumping favorite articles/blogs to the top headlines.

Decide on your preferred frequency: daily, weekly, monthly, or custom (ex: 3/week). Consistency and quality are more important than frequency.

What is the difference between a Basic and Pro plan?

Basic (Free) offers:

- ▶ Automatic updates
- ▶ 25 content sources
- ▶ Email alerts per edition
- ▶ Basic branding
- ▶ Autopost to Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn
- ▶ Bookmarklet
- ▶ Newspaper widgets (to be placed on your website)

Pro (\$9/month) offers everything in Basic PLUS:

- ▶ Email newsletters
- ▶ Custom domain
- ▶ Full branding and customization
- ▶ Content Draft (Review and publish online when you're ready.)
- ▶ Your own advertising (Feature Your Book Covers!)
- ▶ Team collaboration
- ▶ Private papers
- ▶ Google analytics
- ▶ Paper RSS feed
- ▶ Publish your paper on your site or blog
- ▶ Auto-Promote Redirect
- ▶ Autopost to FB and LI Pages
- ▶ Dedicated email support

If you are interested in creating your own e-newspaper, here are a few tips:

1. Starting out with baby steps is okay! Sign up for the Basic format on a weekly or monthly schedule to alleviate the pressure to learn everything. (The Paper.li blog and video tutorials are excellent resources.) You can upgrade to the Pro version whenever you want.

2. Create your own unique e-newspaper. A few possibilities:

- ▶ **A genre-focused newspaper.** Ex: Rae Davies/Lori Devoti offers two Paper.li newspapers: *Comic & Cozy Mysteries* and *Vampire Reads*.
- ▶ **A book series tie-in.** Ex: The author of the Hawaiian Lei Crime Series has *TobyNeal HawaiiScoop*.
- ▶ **A specific group of writers' tweets and blog posts.** Ex: *The Pixie Chicks Daily*
- ▶ **Industry news.** Use Twitter Lists. Ex: @[YourTwitterName] /NINCI5Speakers
- ▶ **Writing Organizations.** Feature only members' tweets and blogs.
- ▶ **Author Newsletter.** In the Pro version, turn off all curation and create the entire e-newspaper as a newsletter for subscribers.

3. **Always include** your website address and social media links in the profile or the Editor's Note.

4. **The Pro version** allows customization to match the author's website. The paper can also be embedded in the website, bringing more visitors. Ex: [screenshot] <http://gilliandoyle.com/the-gillian-doyle-daily/>



5. Categories:

- ▶ Keep the default of all categories OR choose only the ones you want to feature.
- ▶ The Pro version allows renaming default categories. Ex: In *The Gillian Doyle Daily*, “Arts & Entertainment” is renamed “Books, Movies, & More” featuring book releases.
- ▶ Headlines include your personal selections using the bookmarklet.
- ▶ Photos are actually from the articles/blogs so they may be repetitious and take up space.
- ▶ Video clips can be interesting, such as book trailers. But many can be amateur vlogs that require extra time to review.
- ▶ “Hashtag” categories. You can set your Paper.li to pull specific hashtags (Ex: #amwriting) or trending hashtags.
- ▶ Example of default categories and hashtags – ▶ ▶ ▶



WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE SAYING about *Paper.li*:

Amy Atwell of AuthorEMS (Entrepreneur.Management.Solutions)—*The Book Review Round-Up*

I started Paper.li because I wanted to establish some rapport and ongoing connection with book reviewers. When I thought about designing a weekly newsletter for subscribers, I thought content that included book reviews, new releases, and author interviews would be of interest to the book reviewers and their readers (and authors, too!).

The Book Review Round-Up follows over 400 Twitter accounts by people who are book bloggers or reviewers. Because there was so much content, I started sending the *Round-Up* daily. It's about the only thing the AuthorEMS Twitter account tweets because it auto compiles and sends all on its own. I receive retweets and thank you's daily from these Twitter posts—usually from the book reviewers, so I know there are some who pay attention to it.

I've been using Paper.li since 2011. I only utilize a free version of the account, but I think they offer paid versions. I think it can be a very useful tool for creating some slick content, but you do have to spend some time figuring out just what to feed into it. Be very selective or targeted in the Twitter accounts that are used to build it.

Rae Davies/Lori Devoti—*Vampire Reads* and *Comic & Cozy Mysteries*

Paper.li keeps you looking somewhat active on Twitter even when you aren't. I do have links to my freebies, etc. Also, people appreciate having their articles picked up by your paper and will retweet it and send you thank you messages. I don't know that it is helping my writing career, but it isn't hurting it and it takes zero effort after the initial set-up.

Caridad Pineiro—*Bad Boys of Romance News*, *Good Girls Read Romance* and *Crazy Paranormal Writer*

I've been using Paper.li for at least two or three years. I'm not on Twitter all day and wanted a way to round up interesting stories and share them. It was great to find a service that did that and that I could also automate to send out tweets with those stories. I know that it gives me regular content and that it generates shares by other authors mentioned in the tweets. Anything that helps get your name out there and is also simple to use is a win-win in my book.

Stacy Juba—*Book News Daily* and *Mystery & Suspense Novel Digest*

I started using Paper.li about four years ago. I have a few newsletters—for general book news, mystery book news, and reality TV, flags/patriotism, and hockey, as those topics are in some of my books. I started them as a way to connect on Twitter with readers and authors who were interested in those topics. I also have one about diabetes awareness as that is a personal interest of mine. It gets a lot of retweets and helps to spread the latest news in diabetes advances and treatment, so I am proud of that one.

As far as book marketing, *Book News Daily* and *Mystery & Suspense Novel Digest* have helped me to network with lots of writers. The flag one gets the word out about the flag book and connects me with people interested in patriotism and flag etiquette. The hockey and reality TV one seem to have the least effect on sales. But once the paper is set up, it just creates papers on its own, and most people think I designed the paper myself, so I found it worthwhile as a form of book marketing.

Links to author e-newspapers:

The Gillian Doyle Daily (Gillian Doyle @GillianDoyle) <http://gilliandoyle.com/the-gillian-doyle-daily/>

Book Review Roundup (Amy Atwell @AuthorEMS) <http://paper.li/AuthorEMS/1332675787>

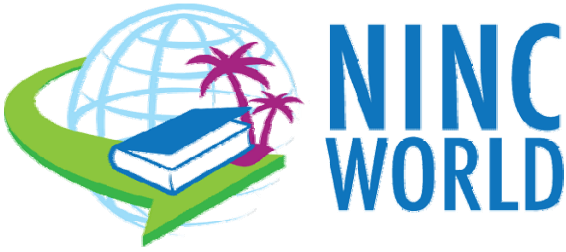
Vampire Reads (Rae Davies/Lori Devoti @LoriDevoti) <https://paper.li/LoriDevoti/1315506319>

Comic & Cozy Mysteries (Rae Davies/Lori Devoti @LoriDevoti) <https://paper.li/LoriDevoti/1393622859>

Bad Boys of Romance News (Caridad Pineiro @CaridadPineiro) <http://paper.li/CaridadPineiro/1394027420>

Book News Daily (Stacy Juba @StacyJuba) <http://paper.li/stacyjuba/1310222413>

Gillian Doyle published under various pseudonyms for St. Martin's Press, Berkley/Jove Books and Harlequin Enterprises. She created Sweetbriar Creek Publishing Company to reissue her early work as well as her co-authored True Crime novels. She is a member of Novelists, Inc., Author's Guild, Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, Romance Writers of America, and Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi).



METADATA: Management and Maxims

REPORTED BY ANN CHRISTOPHER

Presenter Lori Bennett is Nelson Literary Agency's full-time digital liaison, a position she's held since 2011.

- ▶ Author types the agency serves?
 1. Full service clients (existing clients, maybe with reverted rights). Lori prepares technical digital assets, including e-pub files. The agency also has an interior layout person;
 2. Distribution venue clients (e.g. Courtney Milan). These are indie authors who are very savvy on their own and use the agency as a conduit to getting their materials into Overdrive, etc.; and
 3. Guest authors—people who want supported self-publishing; the agency helps them reach difficult markets (e.g. Google; Overdrive).
- ▶ The agency distributes over 300 titles to many distribution and library partners, such as:
 - ▷ Overdrive
 - ▷ 3M Cloud Library
 - ▷ Biblioboard (subscription library service)
 - ▷ EBSCO (small pilot program for now)
 - ▷ Direct to library sales
- ▶ The agency has expanded their offerings to print-on-demand at CreateSpace and Ingram/Lightning Source (where they offer both paperback and hardcover editions).
- ▶ What's metadata? Data about data. More is better because it makes it easier for potential readers to find the books. Metadata can silently work in the background to help strengthen the author's brand, drive discoverability and increase sales.
- ▶ Myths about metadata?
 1. Metadata is static. No! Metadata should be tuned periodically to show new releases, new series, or brand information.
 2. Metadata is too technical and hard to learn. No! Anyone with knowledge and discipline can learn to produce better metadata.
 3. Metadata doesn't matter in sales. No!
 - ▷ See Kristin Nelson's comments (now slightly outdated; for example, mentioning other authors by name in your metadata is discouraged and/or forbidden at some retail venues) about the difference metadata can make in sales:
<http://nelsonagency.com/2013/01/where-kristin-discusses-the-importance-of-metadata/>
 - ▷ Additionally, Carolyn Reidy (president and CEO of Simon & Schuster) has discussed how tweaking the bio information in Nic Pizzolatto's *Galveston* to connect it with his later work, *True Detective*, resulted in 37X more sales in 2014. Scribner simply added "From the creator, writer, director, and executive producer of the HBO crime series *True Detective*" to the book's description.
- ▶ Metadata fields to leverage?
 1. Book description: In retail venues that don't have separate fields for author bio, series, or reviews, make sure to include it here. Be bold! Don't rely on references to other authors and books to sell your own. This practice is forbidden by some retailers anyway. For an example of an effective book description, see Sherry Thomas's AMZ page of *The One In My Heart* :

Bestselling historical romance author Sherry Thomas branches out with her first contemporary romance about a chance meeting a lifetime in the making and an all-consuming affair without a single predictable moment.

When Evangeline Canterbury meets the gorgeous, intriguing doctor next door, all she wants from him is a bit of distraction to help her get over a few rough days.



Her one-night stand, however, has other plans: He needs an accomplished and presentable girlfriend to bring before his parents—and for six months of her time, he is willing and prepared to spend an obscene amount of money.

Nothing but trouble can come of such an arrangement. But can Eva stop herself? Or will she fall headlong in love with a man who will leave her when their contract expires with a smile, a check, and hardly a backward glance?

“I am magnificently and irreparably ruined by her books”—Kristan Higgins, *New York Times*-bestselling author

2. Series info—make sure it’s synchronized across all platforms because series sell! This is low-hanging fruit, so make sure to take advantage.
 3. Author bio—keep it current! Include it on retailers’ sites wherever possible. Include on third-party sites like Goodreads. Add to book description field if necessary.
 4. Search categories/BISAC—all e-retailers are including some permutation of this on their sites, so make sure you use them and choose the most specific categories that apply. General categories are throwaways that don’t help you. See, for example, all the specific categories available for romance novels. Use at least three categories. Five categories are better. Synchronize them across series. If you’re hybrid, ask your publisher to synchronize your traditional titles with what you’re using on the indie side. See BISAC codes here: <https://www.bisg.org/complete-bisac-subject-headings-2014-edition>
 5. Search string/Keywords/Tags—use in the appropriate e-retailer fields whenever possible. If not possible, use judiciously inside the book description. You can also use to supplement a poor selection of BISAC codes for your genre (like young adult).
 6. ISBNs—use them—even when not required by a specific retailer—if you want to take your self-publishing to the next level. It’s more professional. They’re available for purchase via Bowker’s: <https://www.myidentifiers.com>
 7. Reviews—use them where possible (librarians cite them as a leading factor for purchasing indies) and embed into the book’s description where necessary.
- Mastering “stealth” metadata? Authors can control the following:
1. Author site
 2. Social media sites
 3. E-retailer author profiles (e.g. AMZ Author Central)
 4. Other sites (e.g. Goodreads; Smashwords)
 5. E-book asset files:
 - a. Embed metadata (ask your formatter) and create targeted e-book files by venue (i.e. one for AMZ, one for iBooks, etc.)
 - b. Edit the Properties area of a PDF file to include metadata
- Other ways to improve your metadata profile?
- ▷ BookBub campaigns
 - ▷ Blog postings as a guest author
 - ▷ NetGalley
 - ▷ Author/writing groups
- Note: managing metadata is time consuming. Start slowly and educate yourself and others.
- Adopt the following policy: Doing nothing in this area is not an option!
- Note: These are just tips and not guarantees of success.

Contact information:

NLA Digital: <http://nladigitalbooks.com> / Nelson Literary Agency: <http://nladigitalbooks.com>

Authors who meet certain criteria may apply for consideration as guest authors into our program by completing our questionnaire: <http://nladigitalbooks.com/be-a-guest-author>.

*A recovering lawyer, **Ann Christopher** is an award-winning contemporary romance author. Her series include *Journey’s End* (small-town contemporary romance), *The Davies Legacy* (Harlequin contemporary romance), and *Warner Family Secrets & Lies* (Harlequin contemporary romance). Ann has also written five novellas, one young adult novel, *Monstrum*, first in her *Bella Monstrum* horror trilogy, and a tragically bad starter novel that will forever remain under her bed, where it belongs.*

THE HOTSHEET—News You Can Use

REPORTED BY JENNIFER STEVENSON

Porter Anderson (PA) and Jane Friedman (JF) had a casual conversation with the audience about how they see the publishing industry now. They publish *The Hot Sheet*, a new biweekly publishing industry newsletter for authors. “No drama, no hype.”

The highlights:

- ▶ Ben Thompson’s Stratechery blog (<https://stratechery.com>) is an intersection of tech and media.
- ▶ Recent news stories PA and JF are tired of?
 - ▷ The *New York Times* article about the decline of digital was silly.
 - ▷ PA: The Author Solutions lawsuit made everyone anxious. These days, everyone knows not to use vanity publishing.
 - ▷ PA: The last five years have signaled the end of amateurism in the industry. It’s been as if the car industry was flooded with people who thought they could build a car and had the ability to put the car out there—we’d all be killed. It’s been a difficult transition.
- ▶ What seems to change every five minutes?
 - ▷ Terms of service
 - JF: She sometimes waits to write about new companies to make sure they’ll be around for a while.
 - PA: The first place these new companies go is conferences. They’re like toadstools, popping up all over the place.
 - ▷ JF: Some of these new companies don’t know how they’ll make money. It’s like they want to figure it out later.
 - ▷ PA: You can see all these companies walking into walls. There’s lots of experimentation in the industry right now. Where’s the fire? Slow down. In two to three years, the industry will stabilize. If you’d built a beautiful boat and Hurricane Joaquin was coming, would you put the boat out there in the water? Authors should build a platform first or wait two to three years to publish their books if this isn’t the main source of their income because it’s so hard to make money right now. Sales have slowed down.
 - ▷ Audience member: Porter, can you clarify? What about those who need to make money? The room is full of multi-published mystery and romance authors—are you speaking to them as well?
 - ▷ PA: The market is confused and sluggish right now. There are variations for people who are somewhat established, but he would wait if possible.
 - ▷ JF: She encounters lots of authors just starting out and looking at traditional v. self-publishing options. They lean toward going the indie route. She thinks they should consider maybe stockpiling 2-3 books and then bringing them out.
 - ▷ Audience member: Having books out now helps with algorithms.
- ▶ Their favorite trends to observe?
 - ▷ JF: Publishers trying to sell things other than books, like experiences with authors.
 - ▷ Audience member: What’s the publisher’s motivation in those cases? To show how they add value?
 - ▷ JF: Yes. Publishers will say things like, “Our theme this year is focusing on the author.” But there’s no evidence they’re focusing on the author! This seems like lip service.
 - ▷ PA: Publishers can do so much for you if the partnership is correct. The Author’s Guild and The Society of Authors in London are working in this area. The dam will have to break and publishers will have to start to deal with these issues. Joanna Penn—he worries about the message she and others send. Will they lead the talent away from the possibility of a viable relationship with publishers? Joe Konrath thinks Porter’s crazy for raising this concern.
 - ▷ Mary Rasenberger (Author’s Guild): They’re learning like everyone else. They want authors to make a living and want to hear about issues on both the traditional and indie sides.

▶ ▶ ▶

- ▷ PA: Lots of authors got put off the Author's Guild under different management. Under Scott Turow's regime, there was hostility toward Amazon. But the new Author's Guild leadership understands that and wants a balanced perspective.
- ▶ Statistic they love to mention?
 - ▷ JF: Graphs showing how sales have shifted (regardless of format) to online rather than bookstores. This trend has more impact on everyone than whether authors are traditional or indie; it impacts everyone's behavior.
 - ▷ PA: At Digital Book World in January, the president of Nielsen cited a statistic that most YA is being read by adults. PA was surprised that so many people are reading down.
 - ▷ Audience member: Porter, can you clarify "reading down?"
 - ▷ PA: I mean reading down in rated age. YA books have simpler dilemmas and are cleaner with complexities. There was a bad reaction on Twitter to the suggestion that only kids should read YA.
- ▶ New publishers on the scene?
 - ▷ Fahrenheit Press (produces two titles per month).
 - ▷ Canelo just signed Eric Idle from Monty Python. Terms of the deal? 50-50 royalty split. Digital-only. Why no POD? It's distracting to their business and they want to hone in on digital.
 - ▷ PA likes:
 - Unbound in London. They like a celebrity crowd that must be agented.
 - Atria—they have lots of interesting and innovative efforts.
 - Snowbooks in UK.
 - ▷ Coburn Communications in Canada uses crowd funding.
 - ▷ Pentium Press (in Madrid)—crowd-funds and shares royalties with the backers. This creates a built-in street team.
- ▶ In Germany—bookstores decided they wanted to sell e-books. So they've demanded soft-watermarking instead of DRM to appeal to readers and compete with Amazon.

For more information about *The Hot Sheet*, go to hotsheetpub.com or @HotSheetPub. It's \$59/year with a one-month free trial.

Jennifer Stevenson writes sexy, funny romantic fantasy, paranormal romance, and contemporary romance. She is a founding member of Book View Café.

EXPLAINING & EXPLOITING the German Book Market

REPORTED BY LAURA RESNICK

Guest speaker Matthias Matting, who gave us an overview of the large and active German market in the First Word sessions, is the author of *How To Publish In Germany* (available as an ebook), and he runs a large English-language website of the same name (<http://www.how-to-publish-in-germany.com/>).

Many German readers can read English, but they prefer to read in their own language for relaxation. Matting says you cannot really expect to be successful there with an English language book; the best way to enter the German market is with a German translation.

He stresses that the translator should be a native German speaker, preferably from Germany, since the language is a bit different in Austria and Switzerland.

One way to find a translator is to get recommendations from colleagues in the same genre whose works have already been translated. Or you might investigate the Kindle bestseller lists for your genre in Germany,

looking for translated books; if a translated novel is selling well, that translator probably did a good job. (The word for translator is *Übersetzer*.) You also might be able to contact the U.S. (or United Kingdom) authors of such books to ask about their experiences with their translators.

Alternately, there are viable translation services such as Proz.com and TranslatorsCafe.com, but Matting only recommends those for nonfiction and cautions that they aren't great for fiction. Babelcube.com may be a possibility if you don't want to pay up front for a translation. He suggests that novelists look at <http://www.literaturuebersetzer.de/>, the (German language) website of the association of German translators.

In terms of translation cost, expect to pay \$0.05-\$0.10 per source word.

Be sure to ask plenty of questions and get things settled before the work begins. For example, clarify whether payment will be based on the number of words or characters and whether this will be based on the source language or the target language. How will the payout be structured? (It is typical to pay an advance for a big project like a novel.) How long will it take, what's the deadline, and what is the contingency if the deadline is missed? What happens if you're unhappy with the translation? Is proofreading part of the service? (It's best if someone other than the translator does the proofreading, but hiring someone will add to your costs.) Does the service include writing the cover copy and blurbs for the book? What about metadata? What rights, if any, will the translator acquire? And so on.

Once the translator starts work, you need to start thinking about the subsequent parts of the process, such as packaging, pricing, and promotion.

The visual taste of Germans isn't markedly different, but avoid too much violence or weapons on your book cover, as these go over badly in Germany, though sexy covers are fine. And if the book was successful in the U.S., be sure to say so on cover! You might consider working with a German designer. You can look for one at: www.selpublishing-markt.de (another German language site). The cost will usually be €80-€250.

The parameters for formatting an ebook are similar to the U.S. Most indie ebooks are priced €2.99-€3.99; but, obviously, look at pricing in your own genre when making your decisions. Prices are often lower (€0.99) for a short book or for the first book in a series. Value Added Tax (VAT) of 19 percent is included in that price and will be taken off the top when calculating your share of the revenue. Transfer costs will also be deducted.

In Germany, you can deliver to Amazon via an aggregator! Which means you can deliver *free* books to Amazon. BoD (Books On Demand) and BookRix are examples of German aggregators. BoD (whose website offers an English language version: <https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=https://www.bod.de/&prev=search>) also does print books which, unlike CreateSpace editions, German booksellers are willing to order. Tolino is another e-book distributor in Germany, delivering to various competitors of Amazon. (Draft2Digital uploads to Tolino.)

Matting cautions Americans to be aware of German pricing laws. The important thing to know is that price competition among vendors is prohibited, so your book must be priced the same in all markets where it's available. You can't run a sale at Amazon and *not* run the same sale at every other vendor that has the book.

Germany also has something called "title protection," which prohibits you from using a German title that is already in use. This prohibition remains in effect until that book has been unavailable in the retail market for at least five years. To check whether your book's German title is in use already, look it up at: Buchhandel.de, Amazon.de, and DNB.de (the German National Library).

Marketing strategies for a German ebook are similar to those we use in the U.S. You can discount the book (within the parameters of German pricing laws) or make it free. There are multiple advertising companies in Germany (similar to BookBub here) that can help you promote your e-book; Matting presented a list of about 15, all offering various ad prices and tools.)

Social media is effective in Germany (blog, Facebook, Twitter, and particularly a newsletter), but you really need German content to promote your German-language book.

Reviews also help promote your book. Some German sites for this include: Lovelybooks.de (similar to our GoodReads); Rezi-Suche.de (a free database where you can offer your book to review bloggers); and Bloggdeinbuch.de (a commercial service, costing about €200, that will send your book to their review bloggers).



Matting also recommended that you look for German readers on Amazon who often review in your genre and offer them a free copy of your book. Similarly, search for German bloggers who review your genre. (In *sf/f*, there are some German fanzines, for example.) He also mentioned connecting with social reading communities (*leserunden*), but this takes time and requires some German language skills.

FOCUS ON KINDLE *Direct Publishing* (KDP)

REPORTED BY LAURA RESNICK

Guest speaker Dan Slater oversees Independent Publishing for Amazon, which is seeing sales growth in both North America and the international market. He described the sales increase as “steady” in print and “exponential” in digital. “Readers are voracious,” and Amazon is intent on providing them with a constant flow of high-quality new reading material from authors.

Amazon has lately redesigned the look of its Author Pages to bring the author’s photo and books prominently across the front fold. They have also added a **Follow** button. Any reader who clicks that button will be alerted any time you have a new book in the Amazon catalog (i.e. uploaded to the store). Slater urges authors to alert readers to this function, for obvious reasons.

They’ve also created a new dedicated “landing page” for series books, making it easier for your readers to view a whole series, purchase the books needed to complete their series collection, and order the next book in a favorite series. The author creates the series page by using new metadata fields; look for these on your Author’s Page or within your KDP account.

Since last conference, Amazon has also introduced Write On, an online “story lab” for writers (https://writeon.amazon.com/?ref=ign_f tn_wr). You can post your content there bit by bit while you’re writing it, develop an audience, and get feedback. It’s a reading-and-writing community where all content is posted for free, readers engage with authors, and all content posted belongs exclusively to the author. Although anyone can use the site and its tools, Slater presented it as an appealing sandbox for new writers trying to get started or seeking reaction to their work, and he says it’s proving to be a successful way for authors to reach readers *while* they’re working on a project.

Kindle Scout (<https://kindlescout.amazon.com/>) is another new option for authors at Amazon. Once you have completed a full length book, you can enter it in this program, where Amazon customers read the material and then cast votes for their favorite works. Books that rise to the top of this process get a Kindle Press contract, which includes an advance and royalties. The program is a launching pad for new books and is open only to unpublished works (defined as a book with no prior earnings). Previously published authors are eligible to participate.

Amazon’s Giveaway tool (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/giveaway/home>) was also briefly discussed. It’s a way to use Amazon’s products and services to run promotions with prizes or gifts. Digital books are not included, but print books are eligible.

There are also some new author tools, such as the Kindle Textbook Creator, Kindle Kids Book Creator, and a comic books creator. These tools help the author produce books that have more a complex layout and formatting than a novel has, and the work can be previewed across all devices. To find these tools, visit the KDP home page (<https://kdp.amazon.com/>) and follow the relevant links. Amazon will continue developing digital enhancements for independent authors to incorporate into their e-books.

Probably the most-discussed new Amazon program of the past year is its subscription library, Kindle Unlimited (KU). Customers of this international program (which has recently expanded to India) can read an unlimited number of books, which they do not purchase, though they can choose only from books enrolled in the KU library (which is something an author chooses, not a default function of uploading to Amazon, and it involves committing to exclusivity with Amazon). Authors are paid on the basis of how much of the book is read. Amazon has paid out over \$100 million so far to writers in the KU program.

According to Slater, KU is a “successful engine for growth,” wherein readers are discovering new books, and it’s creating a new revenue stream for authors in national and global sales. KU engages new readers with titles they may not otherwise have purchased. He suggests that enrollment in KU can create or revive interest in a quality work (one with excellent reader reviews and ratings) that has experienced very low sales for the past year. Subscriptions can also be another stage in a book’s lifecycle. For example: hardcover, then paperback, then subscription—keeping a book’s momentum going over time.

Amazon doesn’t frame KU as the right program for all your e-books. Slater recommends you consider the right type of books in your inventory to enroll there, and he suggests treating KU primarily as a discovery mechanism. For example, KU may be a good choice for books in deep backlist, or for the first book of an existing series—where being available via subscription would have a similar effect to being “free,” but the book would generate income when read.

Each “borrow” of a KU title counts toward the author’s sales rank for that book. Increasing sales rank drives a book’s visibility in automated merchandising. So this is another way that KU can boost a book’s lifecycle.

The exclusivity requirement for enrolling a book in KU only lasts for three months; at the end of that period, you can re-enroll or opt out. Slater says that 95 percent of authors have been choosing to stay in KU and earnings have doubled for authors who’ve remained in KU since its launch.

Kindle Unlimited also attracts new customers; in April 2015, 32 percent of KU customers were new to the Kindle “ecosystem.” KU customers also *buying* plenty of books, as well as spending significant time reading.

Finally, Slater made some general recommendations to authors, including: ensure your book is published across all formats (print, digital, and audio); experiment and refine your use of marketing tools, social media, and pricing strategies; focus on quality; and embrace entrepreneurialism.

NEXT-LEVEL PROMOTIONS: Supercharge your Book Sales by Getting the Stores to Sell for You

REPORTED BY: ROCHELLE PAIGE

Speakers: Dan Wood, Director of Author Relations and Joshua Unruh, Marketing Director—Draft2Digital
Draft2Digital distributes over 63,000 books from 17,000 authors, including 64 *New York Times* bestsellers in 2014 and 48 already in 2015. They distribute books to iBooks, Nook, Tolino, Kobo, Oyster, ScribD, Inktera, and CreateSpace. In 2015, they’ve sold books in 195 countries. Their largest market share belongs to the United States (71 percent), Australia (10 percent), Great Britain (8 percent), and Canada (8 percent). Their presentation focused on “The Trifecta” of knowing the stores, getting the packaging right, and building your platform. Here are the highlights.

Know the stores:

- ▶ Amazon
 - ▷ Largest e-book retailer
 - ▷ Algorithms rule
 - ▷ Strategic growth to international marketplaces
 - ▷ Synergy between KDP, Createspace, and AudibleDo print books because then the price appears next to the e-book and the customer sees it
- ▶ iBooks
 - ▷ Second largest e-book retailer and growing—last year 20 percent of their customers bought an iBook. This year, 45 percent have bought.



- ▷ 1 billion devices with iBooks installed
- ▷ Agnostic about how authors get books to them when it comes to merchandising
- ▶ **Nook**
 - ▷ Still a major player in the US and UK
 - ▷ Merchandising is powerful on their platform. Free Fridays on the blog drive sales to the book highlighted, plus a book the author recommends.
- ▶ **Kobo**
 - ▷ 190 countries
 - ▷ Innovative marketing strategies, like their e-read local promotion with indie bookstores
- ▶ **Google Play**
 - ▷ Potential to be a major player, but has been inconsistent with e-books
 - ▷ Currently closed to new accounts due to piracy issues
- ▶ **Subscription Services**
 - ▷ Can be a powerful discovery tool
 - ▷ Reader demand remains, but recent announcements by Oyster and ScribD demonstrate the difficulty of finding a profitable business model.
- ▶ **Tolino & Inktera**
 - ▷ International e-book adoption rate is growing

Get the packaging right:

- ▶ **Covers**
 - ▷ Must be at the traditionally published level of quality and genre appropriate.
 - ▷ Incorporate personal branding: similar cover art or photos and author name typography treatment.
 - ▷ If you have books which you think could sell better and are considering updating the covers ... Do it!
 - ▷ If you really want an Apple promo, consider using a less steamy cover.
- ▶ **Product description**
 - ▷ Real talk: this is not the place to get cute.
 - ▷ Fulfill your promise to the reader.
 - ▷ Weaponized plot: boil down your relatively innocuous substance until it's dangerous.
 - ▷ Distill plot into the 100 best words.
 - ▷ Keywords: work them into your description as long as you don't have to work hard at it.
- ▶ **Reviews**—Reviewing isn't natural to many people. Ask for reviews!
- ▶ **Categories**
 - ▷ Check how your book is categorized at each retailer because it's different everywhere.
 - ▷ Stay up to date on categories since new ones are offered which might match the specific niche for your book (ie: Apple recently added new adult and young adult).
- ▶ **Pricing**
 - ▷ Free funnel books can be effective but should be switched up over time.
 - ▷ Set your prices for each currency individually because you can go up in some markets like Australia and Canada.
 - ▷ Have some higher priced books in your catalog so you can offer steeper discounts for promotional opportunities.
- ▶ **Bundles & Series**
 - ▷ Many retailers feature bundles.
 - ▷ In 2015, series with a first book free generated three times the revenue as those without.
 - ▷ Metadata is critical on series to ensure they display properly.
- ▶ **Preorders**
 - ▷ Powerful merchandising tool.
 - ▷ Double ranking bump at iBooks.
- ▶ **Back matter**
 - ▷ Make it easy for the reader to sign up for your newsletter and buy other books using hyperlinks.

Build your platform:

- ▶ Highlight your personal credentials, bestseller lists, and awards.
- ▶ Make connections with fans on social media.
 - ▷ Utilize the 90/10 rule so you aren't always promoting books. Ninety percent sharing and 10 percent promoting.
 - ▷ You don't have to be on all the social media platforms. Focus on the ones you enjoy most.
- ▶ Podcasts are becoming more popular.
- ▶ Build your newsletter list. If you aren't doing one yet, do it now. If you are, then do it better.

Wood and Unruh also shared information about new features on Draft2Digital. They've made it easier for authors to update their backmatter links. They are also launching a service where readers can sign up to get new release information through D2D on Books2Read.

***Rochelle Paige** writes romance in a variety of sub-genres: contemporary, new adult, paranormal and romantic suspense. Although she holds a BA in Economics, her career was mainly spent as a marketing professional. She lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, with her two sons.*

DIVERSION Books

REPORTED BY ROCHELLE PAIGE

Speaker: Mary Cummings, Director of Content Acquisition and Business Development at EverAfter and Vice President of Diversion Books.

Diversion and EverAfter Romance recently launched a new program for self-published and hybrid romance authors that allows indie authors to publish their print editions through them while retaining their e-book rights. New York publisher Diversion Books aims to utilize their existing infrastructure to provide the market access and tools of a traditional house in a new way. Features of the new program include returnability and discounting, distribution, and a dedicated sales team for select titles. The program seeks to allow indie authors the benefits of higher quality products, greater market access, and a team of real-life publishing people behind them.

Books will utilize print on demand through Ingram Spark. Authors would not be responsible for paying a set-up fee, as they would if they went direct to Ingram. Another benefit is that they would have access to lower print prices through Diversion's contracted rates. Books would be offered at industry standard wholesale discounts and would offer returnability, although print copies would be burned and not returned to the author. Discounts and returnability are vital for authors looking to sell into bookstores, options which are not available through CreateSpace. Some books would be selected by Diversion's sales team to be proactively marketed to bookstores. These would be a limited number of select, front list titles only. In both cases, print books would be available for bookstores to purchase through a wide variety of distribution channels, including ipage which is a business-to-business ordering site.

Contracts for the new program vary in terms and length. They are licensing print rights only. No royalty rate information was provided since contracts are handled on a case-by-case basis. In all instances, authors would be able to buy copies at cost.

They have doubled down on romance, expanding the reach their 400 titles have already given them by launching the EverAfter e-bookstore app. The app was launched in November 2014 and is dedicated to romance titles. It gives them lots of data which is then used to inform their marketing decisions. The new print program is kicking off with more than one hundred titles from twelve romance authors, most of whom are *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestsellers. They are looking to leverage their existing infrastructure and knowledge to expand.



Photo by Sabrina Ingram

Not Your Usual Writing Advice

By JoAnn Grote

You Are an Inspiration

“The local painters were my idols ... These artists, too, were grown-ups, but they were grown-ups who could still see! Their eye was still in love! Like mine!”
— **Frederick Franck, sculptor, painter, author—and a dental surgeon**

In August, an 11-year-old girl named Alyssa showed up at my front door. Her family has lived two houses from me for three years, but we’d never met. I spend too much time at the computer to be curious about my neighbors. Alyssa wanted to meet me because she rescued an abandoned rabbit and she’d heard I had also rescued an abandoned rabbit. A couple days after we met, Alyssa discovered six-week-old kittens under another neighbor’s porch. We became foster parents for the five darlings—and Alyssa became a daily visitor, to my delight.

Alyssa soon discovered I’m an author. I gave her a couple of the historical novel chapter books I wrote for children her age, which I autographed for her. After she read the books, her parents framed them and hung them on her bedroom wall. I am not making this up. She told her family, extended family, friends, teachers, school librarian, and the librarian at the public library that her new best friend is an author. Alyssa said that she never thought she’d meet an author. “You inspire me,” she told me.

Alyssa brought a friend over, a girl her age who has lived in Japan. I was fascinated and wanted to hear about her life. But she was fascinated with *me*—an everyday woman who was at the time standing in the back yard of a typical, simple, 100-year-old house in a small town on the Minnesota prairie. “Meeting an author is on my bucket list,” she told me. (Eleven-year-olds have bucket lists?)

A year ago this month a new neighbor moved into the house next door. We’ve exchanged polite chatter now and again when we both happened to be outside at the same time. A few weeks ago she said, “I hear you are an author.” She told me that she loves to read, so I gave her one of my books. The next day she stopped me again, this time with those words we all love to hear, “I couldn’t sleep last night; I couldn’t put your book down.” She added, “I love everything about your story: the romance, the prairie setting, the spirituality.” It turns out that she’s always wanted to write, but it seemed more a wish than a possibility. And what does she want to write; what are the stories she plays with in her head? Historical novels with a prairie setting, of course. We’ve agreed to get together to talk about her writing when Minnesota’s winter weather sets in and she isn’t working in her yard or improving her new-to-her house every minute she’s not at her job. This woman is in her 60s. “You inspire me,” she said.

Certain professions appear more obtainable than others to most people, and writing is one of those careers. The everyday aspects and challenges of the writing life have become so normal to me that I forget what a magic life it can appear to others.

I wondered if it is easier for children of writers and others with creative careers to believe in the possibility of a creative career for themselves. Like most NINC members who have been writing for a long time, I know a lot of authors personally and also “know” authors through networks like NINCLink. I made a list of writers I knew who grew up with parents who are writers and writers whose children I thought are published or unpublished writers, and began contacting them for their opinions. It was a very short list.

Former NINC president Laura Resnick's father is the author and multi-Hugo Award winner Mike Resnick. Laura told me, "I was raised by a professional writer and knew many writers growing up. So to me, writing was just the boring job that my boring dad and other regular people who hung out at our house all did, not an impossible dream. I never had any romanticism about "talent" or "luck," because I saw throughout my youth that hard work and persistence were what separated professional writers from people who just talked a lot about writing. When I started writing, I figured anything less than completing six novels and submitting them as often as I could wouldn't be a serious attempt to be a writer. I understood this because I had grown up seeing my dad sitting at his keyboard day after day, year after year, completing story after story, and submitting his manuscripts over and over until they sold."

I asked Laura why she became a writer, since she did not see writing as the alluring and magical career so many of us had growing up. She told me, "I specifically *did not* want to be a writer, precisely because I grew up seeing what kind of life it was. When I was about 24, I realized I was not cut out for my first career choice, acting. While trying to decide what to do with my life instead, I was teaching English in Sicily. I got a book a friend in the U.S. recommended to me, Kathryn Falk's *How to Write a Romance and Get It Published*. I had an overdraft at Barclay's Bank in London that I needed to pay off, and I had several possible plans for doing so. One of them, I decided while reading Falk's book, was to try selling a romance novel. Mostly because trying would cost me nothing but paper and postage, which I could just about afford. I also didn't have much to do when I was in my apartment, since this was pre-internet, and I also had no phone or TV. I read a lot, but was looking for something more active to fill my at-home hours. So I started writing. By the time I returned to the U.S. the following year, I was working on my fourth book—and I sold the first two (but not #3 or #4). By then, I was enjoying the writing and thought I'd do this for a while (in large part because I didn't have any other career plans), but I still didn't want it to be my long term career. I tried to quit when I was 30, and I tried again when I was in my early 40s—for all the usual reasons people quit: burned out by the business, tired of the solitude and the financial instability, tired of being jerked around by publishers and abused by agents, etc. But I wound up writing again every time and, after the last time (around 2006), I finally gave up pretending I'd quit and accepted that this is what I do."

As a child of a writer, Laura's lack of desire for a writing career isn't as uncommon as I expected. My stepdaughter is a wonderful story teller and writer, and she has more natural talent than I do. I have no doubt she could make it as a novelist if she chose to do so. She doesn't so choose, because she's seen the life of a writer up close and has no misconceptions as to what it entails.

I contacted a woman multi-published in the Christian non-fiction market. Her daughter co-authored a non-fiction book with her a few years ago. At the time, the daughter thought she'd like to write fiction for children. After the experience of writing the non-fiction book, she lost all interest in writing. The son of a friend and non-fiction writer shows talent for writing science fiction stories, but he's set aside the manuscript he was working on to concentrate on accounting. Another woman I contacted grew up near an aunt who has published over 100 novels. She's become a multi-published author herself, but only as a sideline while she worked toward her own dream career in law.

Perhaps most NINC members' children and other family members and friends won't become authors, but I hope our choice to take the perceived risk of following our dream to become storytellers will give some of them the faith to risk following their own dreams. Exposure to the daily work involved in living our own dreams can also benefit them by showing that dream careers, like any others, take focused and daily commitment.

Lots of NINC members encourage others to try for their dreams. We speak encouraging words to them. We give advice, critique manuscripts, and teach classes. But maybe just living our lives is the greatest inspiration we can offer; showing up every day to perform the unglamorous act of creation.

Remember my friend Alyssa? She stopped at my house on her way home from school a couple weeks ago, excitement bubbling over. She had an idea for a novel and wanted some advice on how to go about it. I gave her some suggestions on how to get started, answered specific questions on developing characters, plotting, how to decide on the book's length and the number of chapters, and so forth. I was quite impressed she had these questions at her age and at this early point in developing her idea. I didn't tell her the statistics we've all heard about how many people who say they are going to write a book never even start one, ▶

let alone finish one or get one published. I didn't tell her that writing can sometimes be hard. I admit I wondered if her enthusiasm would last long enough to put any words on paper or computer screen.

Alyssa no longer visits me daily. Last time she stopped by, she said, "My life is just so busy. I've got school, homework, church, the girls' church club, band, and when I have free time, I have to write my book." She's already written one chapter, is expanding on her plot, and is asking herself all those "what if" questions that make up so much of the excitement and frustration of creating stories. Obviously, I don't know at this point whether Alyssa will complete her story, or if she does complete it whether she will decide to continue the writing life. Just starting a book puts her a step ahead of most adults I know who have told me they want to write a book—someday. Alyssa's story is a paranormal that would give readers an interesting read interwoven with hope. I believe readers would love her story. I hope she does finish it. But if she doesn't, perhaps she'll put what she learns toward her dream to become a dancer or veterinarian. Alyssa inspires me.

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.

The Mad Scribbler

By Laura Resnick



These Times We Live In

*"But these times we live in are far-fetched times.
In our particular world, incredible things happen."
— Agatha Christie, *By the Pricking of My Thumbs**

Last year at an *sf/f* convention, I participated in a panel discussion on the business of writing. My two co-panelists were both editors, one at a Hugo-nominated fiction magazine and the other at a small publishing house, and they opened the panel by making a number of discouraging comments about self-publishing.

I wasn't surprised that most of their statements mischaracterized indie publishing by being incomplete, out of date, skewed, and/or inaccurate, since this isn't exactly uncommon among traditional editors and publishers (as well as literary agents). But I was surprised that they opened a discussion on "the business of publishing" by talking about self-publishing. After all, it obviously wasn't their area of expertise, and the brief topic-description in the program book certainly did not imply an indie-versus-trad framework for the panel. So I suggested that before my co-panelists proceeded any further down a path of telling people why they shouldn't self-publish, we ought to find out what our audience was interested in and what they had come to this session hoping to learn.

I asked for a show of hands in response to a series of questions and learned that everyone in the room was an aspiring writer (no one was published or self-published), all of them were interested in pursuing traditional publishing. None of them—*none*—were interested in self-publishing. And only one person was attending the panel to learn something about both avenues; but he was skeptical about self-publishing because "it

has such a stigma attached to it.” I told that *one* person to see me after the panel for a list of resources about the indie world, and I suggested that my fellow panelists cease discussing self-publishing, since our audience wasn’t interested in it.

Only a month later, I attended the 2014 NINC conference, at which I and several hundred other multi-published career novelists spent four days focused on the business of self-publishing.

And that same paradox still exists now, at the end of 2015, in my travels around the writing world, both online and in “meatspace.” (Yes, I have finally given in and used that hideous word.) I write *sfff* and in that genre it’s still common for writers—and readers—to make dismissive (and sometimes snide) comments about self-publishing and about indie writers. I was recently “corrected” when describing international best-seller Hugh Howey as a successful author—corrected because his U.S. career has been primarily indie (though not exclusively so), and that’s “not anyone’s definition of success.” I still see writers who’ve left traditional publishing to go indie full-time get spoken about with puzzled pity, or dismissed for making bizarre or unwise professional choices.

Yet when attending the NINC conference, as I did again this year, or when reading NINClick and half a dozen online groups I follow, I invariably feel like I’m missing the boat, the train, the plane, *and* the parade because my career is primarily in traditional publishing rather than in self-publishing.

My reasons for my career focus make sense for me, just as the reasons various writers go indie full-time make sense for them. That said, I do want to get much more active in self-publishing and become a true hybrid author, because I think that makes the *most* sense for me. However, I’m amazingly slow and inefficient (at, oh, almost everything), so I got nothing whatsoever done on that front after NINC 2014 and have only taken baby steps (a more viable approach for me) in that direction since this year’s NINC conference. But having thought through my goals in excruciating detail, my professional priorities in 2016 will still focus on my traditional career.

I think about this stuff all the time and revisit these decisions weekly. Not in a hand-wringing, tail-chasing way (well, not *always*), but because there’s so much to consider, so much information crossing my radar almost daily, and so many options and possibilities available to a writer now. So why *not* revisit decisions regularly to see if they’re still the ones you want to stick with?

We live in far-fetched times, indeed, when “Do I want a publisher?” is a legitimate question that every writer should ask herself, whether aspiring or experienced, whether struggling or a bestseller. For some writers, it’s a question worth asking every couple of years, or on a project-by-project basis; for others, it may be a question they’ve answered for the last time.

We live in incredible times when “I don’t have a publisher” isn’t just the statement of an aspiring writer seeking a contract, or the lament of a writer who’s been dumped, but has also become a declaration by successful novelists enjoying lucrative writing careers, expanded distribution, and growing readership in their own indie ventures—often after *choosing* to leave traditional publishing, rather than being dumped or squeezed out.

And we live in a golden age wherein writers exercise their business acumen with skill and pleasure, as the heads of their own publishing enterprises, rather than grimly heeding the long-established admonition to just write the books and leave all business decisions to publishing house employees.

I remember being thrilled at last year’s NINC conference when Dan Wood of Draft2Digital opened his presentation by saying if he’d learned one thing at this conference, it was that “authors want data.” And he proceeded to provide it—as he did again this year.

Yes, we do want data. Because we are sole proprietors of our own writing businesses, and many of us support families, pay the mortgage, cover crucial healthcare costs, send kids to school, and/or buy food with this income. I don’t dabble in writing to keep myself occupied in those empty hours between depositing inheritance checks. This is what I do for a *living*, it’s my *profession*, and it is a pleasure and a relief to see the book industry creeping toward recognition of that.

As it happens, it has taken brand new players entering the field for that evolutionary shift to occur; publishers, alas, still decline to treat writers as business partners. But NINC members are forging ahead, whether or not the traditional industry chooses to keep pace with these times we live in.



After this year's conference, publishing consultant and NINC guest Jane Friedman wrote on her blog: "This was my first time speaking at NINC, and it's by far the most professional and established group of authors I've ever spoken to It felt like that might be the case for other speakers as well; one often heard speakers say from the podium, 'But of course you all know this already,' as they self-consciously hurried to present more advanced information while the room collectively tapped its impatient foot."

At last year's conference, a prominent literary agent, acknowledging the rapid changes in the industry and its related business models, predicted on a discussion panel that within five years, we wouldn't have any agents appearing at our conference. While time may or may not confirm his prediction, I do note that with more than 50 industry guests listed in this year's conference program, only two were literary agents, and only one of them was on programming—and what she spoke about was *not* how to get an agent, how to get *her* as an agent, or what she's looking for in a client, but rather how authors can "develop a meaningful metadata strategy to help increase your titles' discoverability and your profits."

(Pardon me while I pause. I'm having flashbacks to sitting through panel after panel over the years where literary agents speaking to talented, accomplished, intelligent, professional NINC members said over and over, "Write the best book you can." It's such a relief to me that those times we lived in are over. In NINC, at least, if not elsewhere.)

The vast majority of this year's conference speakers and guests were from the 21st Century, the future that we're already living in. The discussions focused on worldwide distribution, cultivating new readers, opening new markets, accommodating readers' new ways of accessing fiction (mobile devices), exploiting subrights (audio and foreign), using professional services to streamline the indie publishing process, exploring new tools being developed by accounting, production, and distribution companies in the digital market, and so on.

These are the time we're living and working in ... and they seem a world apart from the times we're *also* living and working in, wherein publishers snail-mail bizarrely opaque fiscal reports to us only twice per year, pay us by check (my publisher refuses to switch to direct deposit), declare huge tracts of their contracts "nonnegotiable" and "industry standard" (**but there's no collusion here!**), and exclude us from decisions about packaging, production, marketing, distribution, and pricing.

I know my from travels online and otherwise that many people still see traditional publishing as the only legitimate or worthy sort ... but as we prepare to ring in 2016, I'm wondering how long it will take traditional publishing to enter the 21st Century.

*Fantasy novelist **Laura Resnick** wishes you joy of the season and a Happy New Year.*



REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

DATE: September 21 thru 25, 2016
PLACE: Tradewinds, St. Pete Beach, Florida

NINC 2016: Master Class—from business to craft to creativity to marketing and sales, we will present speakers to guide us to a higher level of knowledge and achievement.

Registration is open and filling up fast! If you're interested in attending, sign up now to secure your spot and your room at our amazing destination resort hotel. Member and assistant registrations are both open, with multiple ways to pay, including our three-part EZ pay.

Sign up now at ninc.com. And while you're there, renew your membership. Conference is just one of the benefits you won't want to miss in 2016.