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of writers of popular fiction



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President's Voice

By Wayne Stinnett



Summer is my favorite time of year. Yeah, it's hotter than blazes, but the days are long and long days are for outdoor activities (ask me about my new boat). It also means I'm halfway through my term as president (be sure to check out the election slate in this issue of *Nink*). July means I'm also getting ready for the NINC conference. We're going to have a heck of a time this year. Alyssa Day and the programming committee are to be highly commended for the work on this year's conference. The lineup of speakers is nearly locked down, and the program is about ready to go to print.

We have surpassed the number of rooms we had blocked for the conference, but Tradewinds will continue to honor the discounted prices for NINC members, as long as rooms last. We're getting close to the last day of registration and the hotel is filling fast, so if you've been sitting on the fence, now's the time to jump down and join us at the beach.

I live in South Carolina, and I received a phone call from my senator, Tim Scott, this week. I'd written to both my senators and my representative concerning the CASE Act. Senator Scott said that the bill was currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee, where my other senator, Lindsey Graham, is a member. I'm happy to say that all three of my representatives are behind the CASE Act.

Have you contacted your representatives? You can go to www.whoismyrepresentative.com and enter your zip code to get links to your representatives' websites. It takes about three minutes to voice your support of the CASE Act, which I talked about in detail in previous columns.

Piracy is a big problem; nobody is immune from it and it's getting bigger all the time. The CASE Act alone won't solve piracy. However, it will provide creatives with a far less expensive and more efficient tool than what we have today.

Wayne Stinnett, President
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NINC Member Benefits

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), and the members-only [Facebook group](#) if you haven't already. The Pro Services Directory, member [discount page](#), and [sample letters](#) are also great resources.

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#). You can also [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

Accessing the NINC Website

Not sure how to log in to the NINC website? Visit the login page here: <https://ninc.com/membership-overview/login-to-ninc/>

Wayne Stinnett writes your typical murder and mayhem in paradise. His characters and plots come from real people and situations he's encountered, fictionalized to protect the guilty.

September 25 - September 29, 2019



The conference planning is well underway and far ahead of where we'd hoped to be. The final schedule will be available to members by **July 15**; we're just finalizing a few final sponsor slots and industry guest panels.

The conference team is looking forward to seeing you at the beach!

Registration deadline: August 1, 2019

Registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/2019-member-registration/>
2019 Conference Assistant/Industry Guest registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/ninc-2019-conference-non-member/>

Conference FAQs: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/ninc-conference-faq/>

Conference e-list: <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2019>

How Authors Can Use Newsletters To Generate Sales And Cultivate Readers

What popular writers do to keep subscribers engaged

By Rachel Kramer Bussel



Starting a newsletter sounds easy enough, but what should you write about to keep subscribers engaged, especially once you've been publishing for many years? How can you sustain interest in your work between releases? Four popular authors share strategies and philosophies about sending author newsletters.

Make readers feel special

Young adult author [Sandhya Menon](#) started her newsletter a year before her first traditionally published novel, *When Dimple Met Rishi*, was released. Previously she'd self-published under another name, and in indie publishing, "Newsletter is king."

Menon, who spends half an hour crafting each newsletter and sends five or six per year, said that giving readers exclusive content is "absolutely essential. It creates a sense of anticipation for readers, and it also gives them more of a reason to sign up in the first place." She's done subscriber contests for annotated ARCs, and even let three giveaway winners name secondary characters in a book.

How to pique—and keep—subscribers' interest

Novelist [Randy Susan Meyers](#) (*The Widow of Wall Street, Waisted*) sends her newsletter monthly, and spends four to five hours on each one. She made a "very conscious decision" to cover a broad range of topics beyond her books and writing, based on what she would want to read. "I barely glance at newsletters from other authors that only shout about themselves. I totally understand the need to market oneself, but if you want to appeal to readers you must be appealing," Meyers said. She strives for posting 10 things that aren't about her work for every item about herself.

She has four questions she asks herself to guide newsletter content: “What am I passionate about? What is enjoyable for me at the time I’m doing the newsletter? What books are exciting me? What are my passions?” Based on those, she includes everything from recipes to gardening information to skincare finds, which always get the most clicks, followed by links to essays she’s written or her blog. As Meyers put it, “How can I expect to write newsletters that readers will enjoy if I’m not enjoying my topic?”

Novelist [Georgia Clark](#) (*The Regulars*, *The Bucket List*) sends her newsletter at the end of each month, catching her 1,500 subscribers up on what she’s been doing. The content that resonates the most, she said, often offers an inside look at the life of a working writer. “They love writing tips, how-tos, anything that’s an insight into the writing process or making a living as a creative.” That includes big wins, like selling a book, because “people are attracted to success,” as well as low points. Clark said that one of the newsletters that generated the most response was when she shared a list of professional failures, with many emailing to thank her for showing the less glamorous side of her job.

What might seem mundane to you, especially after you’ve already published several books, is of deep interest to readers and aspiring authors. Clark said she can always find something to talk about based on where she is in the creative process, whether that’s going to a writing residency or revisions. “You’re making content out of what stage you’re at,” Clark explained. This could include “ideation, outline, first draft, second draft. There’s different phases and there’s a lot that goes on behind the scenes; you can drill down into any part of it. I could write about characterization or fixing plot holes.”

This is a strategy Menon has also used to promote her May 2019 release, *There’s Something About Sweetie*. “I’ve been sending out videos of me talking about the book, my process crafting it, why I wrote it, and other behind-the-scenes things I felt readers would be excited to know about,” she said.

Form a connection with readers

Clark noted the value of authenticity when communicating with readers. “I read a lot of authors’ content where it does feel it’s just plugging their work and once the pub window has closed, it’s not forming a connection with someone. The more you let people into your personal life and what you’re interested in or what you’re reading about or what you’re thinking about, or the struggles you’re having, people really do respond well.”

Let your newsletter evolve

Novelist [Lauren Willig](#), whose 19th novel, *The Summer Country*, came out in June, started her newsletter in the fall of 2006, about a year after the release of her first novel. She currently has 5,000 subscribers, and sends newsletters about twice a year, coinciding with book launches or other major events.

While her earliest newsletters featured interactive giveaways, to save time and labor, Willig has streamlined her content to a more straightforward style, offering news about new releases, events, and giveaways. Contrary to the authors quoted above, to-the-point news works for

Willig. “I work on the assumption that most readers won't open the newsletter, or, if they do, they'll skim it rapidly for highlights,” said Willig. “It's really meant as the equivalent of the old bookstore browse, when you'd bump up against a book by a familiar author and think, “Oh, wait, I didn't know so and so had a book out.” Willig also uses her newsletter to direct readers to her website and Facebook page, where she interacts with them more regularly.

Newsletters and book sales

While sales can be hard to quantify, some authors report seeing sales spikes as a result of their newsletters. “I definitely see a pre-order boost from my newsletter subscribers when I tell them about my pre-order campaign. I also typically have one or two things in my pre-order campaign that are just for newsletter subscribers,” said Menon.

Promoting your newsletter

Yes, in addition to promoting your books, you can also promote your newsletter, which Meyers does by having a sign-up sheet at events, with a giveaway for added enticement.

However, you should think about the level of interest of your subscribers, not just the number of subscribers you're gaining. Menon, who has a very high open rate of around 70 percent, advised that rather than simply doing giveaways of in-demand items like Kindles, focus on courting readers organically. “I'd like to keep that engagement high, and the trade-off is that my rate of growth will be slower,” Menon said.

Be real—or don't

Several authors noted that their newsletter is simply one part of a larger strategy of connecting with readers, which may happen on Instagram or other social media or on their websites. One key takeaway is that if you're going to do a newsletter, make it worth the reader's while. “If you don't like doing it, it comes across,” observed Clark. So if you're only pumping out a newsletter because you think you “have to,” think again. It can be an excellent tool, but it's not an obligatory one.

Rachel Kramer Bussel is the editor of over 60 anthologies, including the Cleis Press Best Women's Erotica of the Year series and teaches erotica writing workshops around the world and online. She writes about book publishing for Forbes online, and has been published in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Marie Claire and other publications. Follow her [@raquelita](#) on Twitter.

Mixing Traditional Publishing and Self-Publishing

Hybrid authors share their thoughts

By Lindsay Randall



Editor's note: For the purposes of this article, hybrid is defined as having published front list in both trad & indie during 2018-2019.

Is it double the trouble or worth the effort to publish front list titles both traditionally and indie?

Several of NINC's hybrid authors shared their thoughts, words of wisdom and warning, and how each times releases to widen her reach.

Why publish trad and indie simultaneously?

For author [Katie MacAlister](#), concurrently publishing indie and trad offers the opportunity to push beyond boundaries of style and storytelling while reaping the benefits of publisher support and a conduit to a larger readership.

"It's the best of both worlds, allowing me freedom to write whatever twangs my strings, yet remain in the traditionally published world," she said.

MacAlister's most recent trad title is [Day of the Dragon](#), the second book in the paranormal Dragon Hunter series (March 2019, Hachette Group). Her latest self-pub book is the contemporary romance [Ever Fallen in Love](#), released November 2018.

While the genres may differ, MacAlister noted that she sees an uptick in her self-pubbed sales whenever a new trad book is released.

"My publishers have connections and abilities that I either lack or don't want to spend time doing. They put books up on NetGalley, arrange for reviews in trade journals, organize blog features, run ads and contests, coordinate PR campaigns online, and so on. They usually have a longer reach with subsidiary sales and contacts within foreign publishing companies," she said. "It's also nice to be able to write a book and hand it over for editing, production, and cover work without having to arrange for all that myself."

Indie publishing also netted her a new publisher. She released [Fireborn](#) in 2018, the first book in a new series she wanted to write regardless if a publisher wanted it. She'd no sooner

posted news of the release than Kensington made an offer. It was a bid MacAlister liked. Kensington will re-release *Fireborn* in June and two other books in the series.

"I'd highly recommend being hybrid to any author," said [Bronwen Evans](#), who writes and publishes historical romance through indie and trad channels. "This market is ever-changing—in fact, it's more like revolving and spinning. I think it's good to ensure you have a foot in each camp."

Attracted to the Earl is her most recent trad release (May 2019, Random House), while her latest indie offering is *To Tempt a Highland Duke*, released in April as part of the *Dukes By the Dozen* multi-author boxed set.

Evans said she loves the freedom found in self-publishing and appreciates the marketing available through her traditional publisher.

Words of wisdom and warning

Both MacAlister and Evans said they must deal with non-compete clauses.

"My agent works hard to eliminate any non-compete clauses in my contracts, narrowing the language so that I can write outside of a series whenever the whim strikes me," MacAlister said. "I do try to remain cognizant of how many books are coming out and when. Since I'm not a rapid release sort of writer, I like to make sure I have a new book dropping every few months, and I will shift my self-pubbed books to make that happen."

As for Evans, the non-compete clause nearly made her walk away from traditional publishing.

"In the past two years, non-compete clauses began to pop into my contracts and the non-compete period got longer and longer," she said. "I have a good agent, and we tweak most of the clause now and work around it with my release schedule."

[Lyn Cote](#), who has been hybrid since 2010 and traditionally published for 12+ years before that, said "being a hybrid is a juggling act" of positioning indie titles around the release of trad titles.

She, too, worked through an agent to deal with the non-compete clauses, remaining with Harlequin's Love Inspired Historical line until its end in 2018 (her last title was *Suddenly a Frontier Father*, part of the Wilderness Brides series). She stayed because most of her readers purchased their books in Walmart "and Harlequin could get me into almost every Walmart in the U.S. and Canada."

She noted that sales for both increased whenever an indie book released around the time a traditionally published book came out. (She writes contemporary romance, romantic suspense, and historical novels. *The Heart Hopes* is her latest indie title.)

Today Cote said the biggest reality in all retailing is that more people are shopping online.

"When an author looks at a traditional contract, he/she must ask these questions: 'Where will my publisher sell these books?' and 'What will they do to actively make my books visible?'" she said.

Cozy mystery author [Lynn Cahoon](#), who indie writes in romance as [Lynn Collins](#), said "keeping your foot in both worlds gives you an edge over other authors."

"I now have a better understanding of the entire process for publishing a book, which gives me the ability to ask for things I know the publisher can do and not look stupid asking for things they can't do," Cahoon said. "As authors, sometimes we don't know enough about the entire book publishing cycle."

Cahoon's most recent trad title is *Mother's Day Mayhem* (April 2019, Kensington), part of the Tourist Trap Mystery series. Her most recent self-published title is *Country Hearts*, book five of the Castle View romance series.

"You have to plan your time and energy well," Cahoon said. "Make sure you're taking as much time writing and editing your self-published books that you do with your trad. And think about marketing. You can't just put a book up on Amazon (especially under a new name) and expect it to sell."

For [Lea Wait](#), the model of pubbing both indie and traditionally offers her a larger income (to date, her trad books out-earn her self-published titles), while allowing her the freedom to write what she wants in whatever genre she chooses.

She traditionally publishes mysteries (her latest is *Thread on Arrival: A Mainly Needlepoint Mystery* [April 2019, Kensington]) and indie publishes historical and young adult fiction (*Justice & Mercy: A Post-Civil War Mystery* in February).

Wait markets all of her books together, regardless of genre. When speaking or signing, she has both types of books available, plus blogs about both, and features them on postcards she shares with fans.

Timing releases/widening the reach

Each author said they time self-pubbed titles around their traditionally published titles and take care not to dilute the market.

"My traditional books come out about every nine to 12 months," Wait said. "I try to have indie books come between them."

For Cahoon, she tries to avoid releasing her self-pubbed romance in the months she has a mystery releasing on the traditional side.

"My trad contracts all say I can't give a book to another publisher before I complete this contract, except anything written under Lynn Collins," she added. "In a perfect world, I'd love to have one release a month—trad or indie."

Evans plans her release schedule each January. She also watches cover design on the trad side so that it doesn't clash with the indie side, and she makes use of her self-published work as giveaways and free reads for newsletter signups, marketing all of her releases to all readers.

MacAlister said she staggers books to release three or four times a year, and adds a link to all works in the end matter of every indie book. "Being very, very organized is a must," she said.

Wait summed it up like this: "Take a lot of deep breaths and don't overcommit yourself in either direction. Make sure you meet contracted deadlines. Have fun with the whole idea!"

Lindsay Randall serves as assistant editor of Nink, and while she has indie published front list and backlist, she hopes to once again work with a traditional publisher.

More on the Indie/Trad Mix

By Lindsay Randall



While some NINC members are publishing front list independently and traditionally, a number of others are creating various blends of the indie/trad mix, plus carving out niches in new-to-them areas of fiction and non-fiction.

Shifting with the times

For Barbara Keiler, a changing publishing landscape is nothing new.

Writing as [Judith Arnold](#), she has more than 100 titles to her name, decades of experience working with traditional publishers, and 10 years of self-publishing under her belt. She knows the challenges of each approach intimately.

“If you're a hybrid author, you have to contend with the worst of both worlds,” Keiler said. “You have to publish the indie books yourself, getting them edited, packaged, distributed, and marketed. The traditionally published books have to inch their way through the bureaucratic maze of a publishing house. You have to satisfy an editor, and you lose a large degree of control over the book. With indie books, you're your own midwife, delivering the baby and tying off the umbilical cord yourself. With trad books, you're knocked out and given a Caesarian, whether or not you want one.”

These days, Keiler independently publishes contemporary romance and mystery and is now working with a traditional publisher to release front list non-genre fiction.

She was prepared to publish her newest book independently, but believed a traditional publisher could launch and market it more effectively.

“I have faith the publisher can do a better job with these books than I could, but I can still take care of my own genre-fiction books independently.”

[Sandra Marton](#) enjoyed a 28-year career writing for Harlequin Presents, ending the relationship over a contract dispute.

These days, she self-publishes contemporary romances that hold some of the same qualities as her trad books, though they have more heat, stronger language, and higher body counts. Meanwhile, Harlequin continues to reissue her work.

“Though I was initially irritated that Harlequin insisted on keeping and republishing so many of the books I wrote for them, both in print for foreign markets and as ebooks for the U.S., I finally got past that and began to see that there are definite advantages,” Marton said. “The new editions keep my name out there. It’s free and welcome publicity for me. I get the benefit of Harlequin advertising and distribution, both of which far exceed anything I could do on my own. And there’s the income stream from those books, especially now that self-publishing money is lessening.”

Creating buzz/reaching readers

[Mary Jo Putney](#) has been traditionally published in historical romance since 1987 and began indie publishing her backlist in 2011.

She said that while she is “too undisciplined to write new work without a contract and a deadline,” creating trad front list and indie backlist do support each other. In fact, indie publishing her backlist accounts for about half her income these days, given the fact profits are down in traditional publishing.

“I think the fact that I do a new book every year is a valuable part of promoting my backlist,” Putney said. “The majority of my books are historical romance so what I do now isn’t too different from what I wrote in the past.”

[Chéré Coen](#) works with a traditional publisher for her nonfiction work and indie publishes the Viola Valentine paranormal mystery series under the name [Cherie Claire](#) (previously she traditionally published in romance). She has found that promoting her traditionally published books often gives credence to the self-published titles.

“Unfortunately, many people think self-published may mean a book is less than stellar writing,” she said. “I think people don’t immediately write me off if they see I’m also traditionally published.”

Since her fiction is paranormal and some of her nonfiction work centers around the lore of ghost stories in the state of Louisiana, Coen is able to mix in both in some of her marketing and in discussions with readers.

“The trick is juggling both and keeping things separate, when applicable,” Coen said. “I have to concentrate on self-promotion for my self-published books and do the same for traditionally published books but with the help of the publisher’s marketing staff.”

For Keiler, cross-promotional marketing is the key, a lot of which she does in her newsletters.

“Just as I cross-promote my romances and mysteries, I’ll cross-promote my indie and trad books,” she said. “Although they’re different, my author voice is the same in all my genres, and I’d like to think there will be a fair amount of cross-over readership.”

Putney readily admits she dislikes promo but says she has learned the basics due to necessity. She focuses on only one social media channel (Facebook) and utilizes BookBub ads for indie titles.

“The big challenge is that while I hope my trad publisher will do a reasonable job of promoting my front list, the indie books require promotional efforts on my part,” she said.

Focusing on indie only

[Kristen Painter](#), who once traditionally published urban fantasy, switched to paranormal romance and full-time indie writing in 2016. She hasn't looked back since.

Painter credits trad pubbing for teaching her the importance of having a good editor, though noted that traditional publishers often keep an author too busy to simultaneously indie publish.

"Trad authors who dip their toes into indie usually fail because they aren't focused on new indie releases," she said.

Painter also said trad authors should pay careful attention to first right of refusal and any non-compete clauses that might prevent them from indie writing in the same genre or length.

"The hybrids that I've seen succeed are those who start indie and then take a trad contract, although most pretty quickly figure out the grass isn't greener," Painter said.

Giving our best

Whether indie or self-publishing, marketing a lot or a little, Putney perhaps summed it up best with the following advice: "Choose what you're comfortable with and protect your creativity. Burning out is a real danger. In the long run, I think quality, always doing one's best work, serves our careers best."

[Lindsay Randall](#) serves as assistant editor of Nink, and while she has indie published front list and backlist, she hopes to once again work with a traditional publisher.

An Insider Look At Traditional Publishing

Interview with Alicia Condon, editorial director at Kensington Publishing

By Charlotte Hubbard



Alicia Condon

This continues the feature for Nink in which NINC members interview agents, editors, and marketing professionals so that authors can get an in-depth look at how to network with traditional publishing. All questions came from those culled from questions asked on the traditional publishing loop, some verbatim. If you have a house/editor/marketing professional you'd like to see interviewed or if you'd like to volunteer to do an interview, please email: ninkeditor@gmail.com.

My editor, Alicia Condon, has been editing romance for the last 30-plus years and is currently an editorial director at Kensington, where she acquires romance of every kind. She has had the pleasure of working with *New York Times* bestselling authors Jayne Ann Krentz, Kat Martin, Diana Palmer, Sylvia Day and Mary Jo Putney. She especially enjoys pushing the boundaries of the genre and discovering and working with brand-new writers.

Below follows my interview with Condon, whose answers represent only her and Kensington Publishing, not any other industry professionals.

What can an author do to advance their career? What mistakes might authors not even know they're making?

The most important thing is to meet your deadlines. Most authors used to meet them, but now—possibly because they're more engaged in social media and promotion—only about 50% of authors meet their deadlines. A missed deadline is a disaster for a publisher, especially if a book's cover and promotion plan has been developed and distributors have already ordered the title. Being "seriously late" with manuscripts also earns you a bad reputation with a publisher, and it can be a career killer.

How can authors best be part of their publisher's team?

It's crucial to be a clear communicator—to be direct with your editor and keep him/her up with all you're doing. If your manuscript will be late, let your editor know sooner rather than later. Let your publicist know about your marketing plan so you can coordinate your promotional efforts with theirs. Most importantly, remain positive! You don't have to be a Pollyanna, but over the long haul, glitches occur and it's best if you can approach the problem as a team. All the editors at a house know which authors take a positive approach and which ones become drama queens, and they dread having to speak with authors who are habitually negative. Authors are like children in a family: editors love them all, but they approach each author differently and it's important for authors not to compare the treatment they receive to what they hear other authors are receiving.

What does Kensington do for new-to-them or midlist authors—those who aren't best sellers?

At Kensington, every author has a publicist, and every author has a marketing plan devised for his/her books. Here's a marketing and publicity plan for a typical midlist romance. Obviously, not every step applies to every book, so plans for individual titles vary.

- Content partnerships with appropriate outlets
- Instagram and other social media outreach and tours
- Blogger outreach and tours
- NetGalley promotion for early reader reviews
- Goodreads giveaways
- Podcast or online radio advertising
- Publicity outreach to women's interest outlets
- Publicity outreach outlets that tie in to the novel or author brand
- Publicity outreach to author's local market
- Targeted online native advertising
- Targeted eBlast and eNewsletter advertising
- Retailer promotions and backlist price drops

How important is an author's social media platform when Kensington is deciding whether to purchase that author's work?

Although lack of an effective online presence won't keep Kensington from acquiring a book, it only takes moments at an editorial meeting to look up an author's website and social media presence. If an author has already established a platform, website, etc., editors are inclined to consider that author more favorably.

Will Kensington consider authors who might need new branding because of low sales? When will the rebranding begin?

Yes, Kensington will rebrand an author, and this will begin after a book is acquired. Sometimes this means a new pseudonym, a new website, and a new bio which will address experience pertinent to their new book. Kensington now has young, very savvy publicists who

work with several authors and books, and they try new ideas and themes to promote a rebranded author's work.

About how many titles will a publisher give an author to develop sell-through growth these days? Do publishers really care about building career authors anymore?

This element of publishing has changed a lot over the years because accounts are different now. Distributors used to only expect a 50% sell-through, but now they look at a book's sales the first eight weeks it's out and expect a significantly higher sell-through. If sales are low, they cut the number they order of the author's next book—which means fewer books distributed, so fewer readers can discover this author, a downward cycle that happens more frequently now. Unfortunately, most authors don't have four to six books to develop their skills and their audience as they used to do. However, social media can make discoverability happen more quickly, and Kensington works hard with our authors to find success early.

What is your most surprising success?

Amish romances. When Kensington first began publishing Amish fiction (ironically, this was when *Fifty Shades of Grey* was so popular!), we were amazed that a year later, we were putting out one Amish romance per month—and last year we began publishing two every month. We think our mass-market format reaches a larger audience because it's less expensive than the trade paperbacks other publishers' Amish romances come out in. We also attribute this success to our authors having a real feel for the genre, and to our publicists' creativity at finding new ways to promote them.

What have you just bought, and what direction is that genre heading?

I recently bought a contemporary rom com from a two-author team, because I loved its young, fresh sense of humor. I think contemporary romance is headed this direction—with stories that portray what dating and falling in love are like *now*, breaking some of the taboos we had earlier.

What does an author need to know about switching genres?

An author should expect to take a step back in print order and advance amount until they're established in a new genre—and they might need to reinvent themselves with a new pseudonym, website, etc. As time goes by and tastes change, career longevity requires flexibility and being limber, and not all authors can do this. Some authors do one thing wonderfully well, and sometimes their creative impulses and mindset just don't fit a new market. We can't ask authors to do what they're not capable of. Authors need to know their own strengths.

How should a professional author handle ghosting (never getting a reply) from a potential editor who requested a manuscript?

Most often, when an editor doesn't reply to a requested manuscript in a reasonable amount of time, it's because working on the many projects she's already acquired must be her first priority. Authors should continue to send polite email queries (humor helps!)—and if all else

fails, name a date by which they will pull the project. This might spur an editor to read the project.

How can authors support their traditionally published books? What promo works?

Authors can develop social media networks in ways a publisher can't. Also, when a publicist offers an author an opportunity, such as a blog post or interview, authors should make time to say yes to these.

Where do you see the market headed? What trends might be coming?

I don't have a crystal ball, but I believe it's important for authors to remain culturally current and aware of the mood of the country to determine what might come next in publishing. Back in the last decade we took more risks and loved a sense of danger and floating with the forbidden—hence, erotica that pushed the limits took the market by storm. Now that times are more emotionally turbulent, I believe Amish romances are so popular because they take readers to a more peaceful place where rules are known and followed, and where people strive to live in harmony with one another. If authors remain aware of how people are *feeling*, in general, they will know where their audience wants to go in the fiction they read.

How has the #metoo movement affected romance or publishing in general?

We're all sensitive now, especially in romance, because some of the traditional tropes that were once acceptable now feel inappropriate. Anything that implies force or coercion, whether in the story or artwork or the title—even something such as *Swept Away*—no longer works.

What makes Kensington a great company to work with?

We have an amazing team of professionals whose total enthusiasm for books is delightful—everyone here gets excited about the books we publish. There's a lot of open communication between departments because we all see each other every day. We are family owned, so the family/team feeling at Kensington starts at the top, with the Zacharius family.

Why do you still love this job after all these years?

I started in publishing in 1981, and for me the thrill of discovering new authors and ideas never grows old. I love to brainstorm with my authors, and although I don't otherwise meddle in an author's story, I love to help with the direction a book's taking when I'm needed. I love to witness the creative process, and I especially love it when an author pulls off an idea I wasn't sure was going to work!



In 1983, [Charlotte Hubbard](#) sold her first story to True Story. She wrote around 70 of those confession stories, and she's sold more than 50 books to traditional or online publishers under various names. A longtime resident of Missouri, she's currently writing Amish romances set in imaginary Missouri towns for Kensington. She now lives in St. Paul, MN with her husband, Neal, and their Border collie, Vera.

All I Ever Need to Know About the Writing Life... I Learned From My Cat

By Michele Dunaway



Even as I'm trying to write this, I've got a cat in my lap. His head and front paws are on my stomach, and he's stretched all the way up and over my shoulder. Idgie is a Maine coon, and he adopted us. Actually, both of my former outdoor cats adopted us. We saw one who kept sitting on our porch, so we fed him. Doofy (short for Dr. Heinz Doofenshmirtz from the TV show *Phineas & Ferb*) lived a long happy life until one cold day (too cold for his igloo and heat pad) we pulled him inside. He never went out again or cared to—spending most of his life on my bed. But I digress.



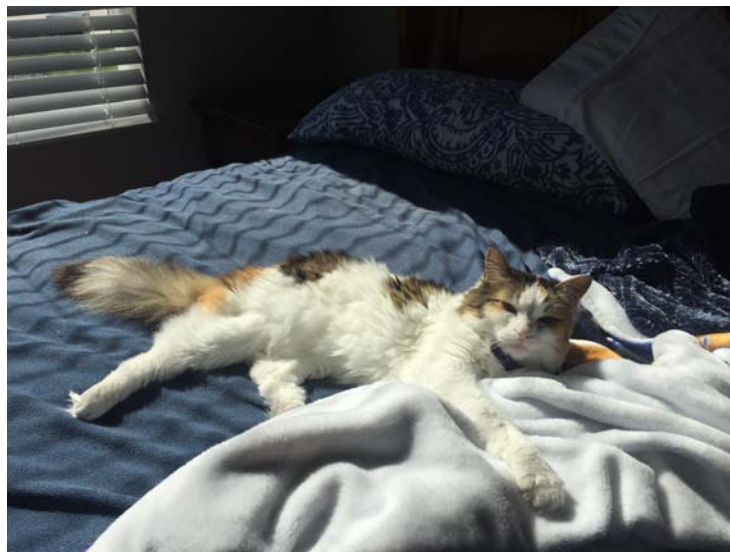
Idgie came along and he stole food from Doofy. Idgie was curious about humans, and my kids determined he'd be ours (my kids think all cats should be ours). So they played with him by tossing tennis balls. One day we opened the door and he trotted on in, and that was that. By the way, when we had him neutered, he howled so much at the vet they said, "We've never seen a cat in so much pain." When we got home, he clawed at the door. I let him out, much to the chagrin and panic of my younger daughters who cried, "He'll never come back!" Nope. They were wrong. He came back inside within the hour. He simply wanted to know he had some control over his life after we'd taken away his manhood.

Many of the great writers had cats: Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, T.S. Eliot. You can read about them and others in Alison Nastasi's book *Writers and Their Cats*. So clearly I'm among the greats (jk). So back to what I've learned.

Sleep is a key priority

Cats sleep 12-15 hours a day. They are the kings of conserving their energy. If I'm lucky, I get six hours. During the school year, it's more likely to be five, for my sleep schedule works best when I get up around 8-10 a.m. and fall asleep around 2 a.m. But that's not going to work when I'm teaching. My cats have learned to sleep when I'm sleeping—although most of them do get up and do their nocturnal shenanigans once I'm down and out. But the key here is sleep.

Cats take care of themselves through sleep and we writers could do well to follow suit. The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) has published charts based on age that you can find [here](#). People ages 24-64 need about 7-9 hours while those over 65 need 7-8. In fact, the NSF writes, "Most importantly, make sleep a priority. You must schedule sleep like any other daily activity, so put it on your 'to-do list' and cross it off every night. But don't make it the thing you do only after everything else is done—stop doing other things so you get the sleep you need." So getting good, healthy sleep is important, and it's something I need to remember. One final piece of cat advice: naps are best in the warm sunshine.



Emergencies happen and you must learn to roll with them

There's nothing like being in a wonderful dream where you're hanging out with Keanu Reeves and you hear this "Ack." "Ack." "Ack." This sound is normally followed by me bolting upright, finding the cat about to hack a hairball and gack vomit all over the bed and give them a helpful shove onto the hardwood floors. However, there have been nights when the cat was much faster than I was, and thus, I was changing sheets and tossing in a laundry load at 3 a.m.

Cats also do dumb things like eat string or other things they shouldn't, or they don't drink enough water and so you have to drive to the vet with a crated cat howling the entire way—and no matter what radio station, they drown it out. The point is that life never seems to go perfectly. When in an emergency situation, our body reacts in three ways: flight, fight, or freeze. It's one reason why before a passenger plane takes off the flight crew goes over safety information, and it's another reason why schools and businesses have had to institute active shooter drills as supplements to other safety drills. Your body has to be trained how to react. Mine recognizes the sound of a cat vomiting and immediately knows how to react (get the cat to something easy to clean).

As writers, we get hit with emergencies all the time. Something happens that blows our deadlines, or we get a terrible review, or someone comes along and trashes us on Twitter. We immediately go into crisis mode. The key is not to panic when the adrenaline hits. You have to stay calm. You can find great strategies to train your body [here](#) or [here](#). That also brings us to the next lesson.

Worry about things you can control

When a severe thunderstorm is about to hit, I'm literally watching the weather. I also have a weather radio that is set to alert me. These things are necessary when you live in the Midwest, and this spring's tornadoes have driven that fact home. In fact, the other day, my friend and I moved all our cars to a parking garage knowing that we had hail coming in. However, my cats don't worry until they see me worry. Then they are in my lap, either crying or needing petting, or sitting around me trying to help. While I can't control the weather, I can control how I respond.

However, I have noticed that I can get obsessive and worry about things I can't control. I can't control whether an editor likes my book, or whether yet another agent will make me revise only to reject me yet again. I can obsess once I hit send, or let it go. I often think of the Tom Hanks movie *Bridge of Spies*, where Hanks's character asks the spy (played by Mark Rylance) several times if he's worried. The reply was always "Would it help?"

My cats have little control—I feed them. I scoop their boxes. I decide when it's treat time. They are dependent on me, and they don't seem worried about it. In "Song of Myself," Walt Whitman wrote, "I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd, I stand and look at them long and long. They do not sweat and whine about their condition, They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God, Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of

owning things, Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago, Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.”

Whitman isn't saying he literally wants to be an animal (and this article is not the place to get into the ethics of animals as food or how we worry about politics). The idea here is that Whitman is listing things humans do that bother him—for Whitman perceives none of these actions as necessarily helping create real change or showing individualism. As I apply the message of both Whitman and the movie, when I'm worried and stressed, I ask myself, “Would it help?” If what I'm doing or worrying about won't help, I'm simply wasting time and energy best directed elsewhere, like starting another manuscript or visiting with friends.

Slow down and eat the good stuff

Let me tell you, when you see a cat food commercial and the cat wakes upon hearing the sound of a can opening, and then said cat comes running—that's a real scenario in my house. In fact, since I've been stuck in this apartment with no plates (they are in storage—one of our moving screw ups), the cats eat off paper plates. The moment I pick up a paper plate for something, the cats are around me howling. Despite bowls filled with dry kibble, they are starving for the wet stuff. Also, the moment I move near the kitchen sink, three of them appear because they want to drink from the sink faucet—even though not even 10 feet away on the floor is a pretty (and expensive) water fountain. We also have bowls of standing water we refresh as well, but nope, that sink faucet is key. Bathroom? Kitchen? It's fresher from the source. So remember to feed yourself the good stuff. I'm a teacher, so we get 25 minutes for lunch. For me this means shove something into the microwave. Use the five minutes it cooks to get to the bathroom and office. Return about eight minutes later to food able to be eaten.

Okay, ha-ha, that's my dream scenario. Most times after I run around and get everything done during the break, I've got five minutes left to eat. Because teachers become the ultimate at shoveling food into our mouths in the fewest minutes possible, when I go out to eat, this learned pattern means that my plate is cleaned first. Everyone else is three bites into their meal and my plate is empty. It's too instinctual to stop. This is one reason why, when we pick restaurants, I try to pick the good ones that aren't going to simply try to “turn over the table.” This naturally forces me to slow down—when I don't feel there's a rush to get in and get out, I can regroup and take my time.

As a foodie, one favorite activity is to go places where the restaurant set-up is a multi-course meal, which means three-plus hours of great food and conversation. No one rushes you. Everything is designed for an evening of friends and good times. All I can say is that going to Gordon Ramsay's Petrus in London was worth every penny. We need to remember we are all busy. Oftentimes meals become things we eat in our car from one place to the next. My kids grew up on fast food—when I was young it was simply a rare treat. Today snacks are things we eat on the go—we grab individually wrapped portions and we're out the door. I remember when it was cool to see if you could chew gum and walk at the same time. Or remember asking someone if they could pat their head and rub their stomach and walk? We'd laugh because it was hard and funny.

Now we've mastered the art of walking and texting or scrolling. Or walking and eating. (I can carry a microwavable meal down the hall and eat it with a fork as I go back to my classroom, and I'm not alone.) Remember that scheduling of sleep? Schedule in some dedicated mealtime too, and eat the good stuff. Cook some bacon and eggs rather than simply grabbing a donut. Nourishing your body is important to your self-care as a writer—I know my brain works best when I'm well fed.

(And P.S.—don't be like a cat and try to push someone else away from their plate and take their food because you've finished first. We frown on that in our house.)

Make time for dedicated play

One thing about indoor cats, they can have issues. Sure, I have a brood that could care less about going outside because they've never been outside minus in a carrier going to the vet. However, indoor cats need and love toys—a catnip-filled banana is the favorite in my house. They also love to chase a laser dot. If you've ever watched an episode of Jackson Galaxy's [My Cat From Hell](#), you know that he's always telling the families that they must play with their cats, and this playing often helps with their behavior. Play is necessary for a healthy and fulfilled life.

When I teach excerpts from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, the kids begin with a section from "Economy" that reads: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Thoreau talked about how men go from the city to the country but the "play" they engaged in (hunting) did little to satisfy. [SparkNotes](#) said that Thoreau "believes that the monomaniacal pursuit of success and wealth has paradoxically cheapened the lives of those engaged in it, making them unable to appreciate the simpler pleasures enumerated in *Walden*." If you click through the link, it will further discuss the connotation of the word desperation. That aside, what's important is that "Our lives are frittered away by detail. Simplify. Simplify." For my cats, their favorite toys are shredding paper, clawing up the cat tower, and sitting in laundry baskets or boxes (Ask Laura Resnick about Airy and his box.)

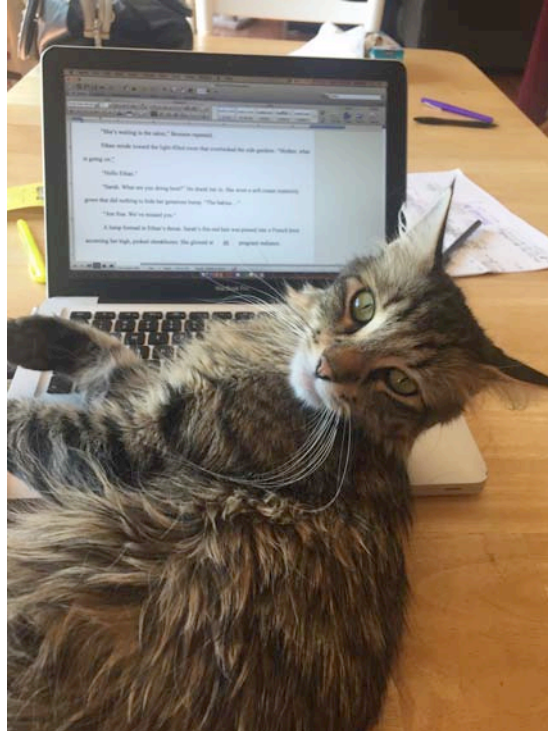


Thoreau felt people spent tons of time making money for things we may not need and that won't make us happy. As I interpret and apply his words to my life, it's about being content with your life and what you do in your spare time to nourish your soul. I don't need fancy trips to Europe—been there, done that—but I am determined to put a swimming pool in the backyard of my new house (once I figure out how to pay for it without breaking the bank).

You need to figure out what type of play is best for you. What makes you happy? What brings you joy. Think about it—gardening is work. Playing softball is work. But we enjoy that work. Translating to writing, what schedule do you need to be content? For instance, the internet became an uproar over Danielle Steele and her [writing schedule](#). Maybe that's not you, and frankly, that's okay. The bottom line is, you make the choice as to what you want to do and what makes you happy. Thoreau would agree with that: "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." (P.S.—for a cat, a castle in the air is a cat tower. We have at least four in our house.) This brings us to the final lesson.

Every cat is unique

While I fully admit there's a pecking order in my house, for the most part, we have family harmony. The bottom line is I'm the dominant cat. Each one of my cats has different personalities and appearances—even the twins, who still look like each other. There's Wiggy the frequent traveler who gets in her carrier and flew multiple round trips from St. Louis to Hartford and lived in my daughter's dorm room. There's Idgie, who still bites me when he's over stimulated. There's Princess who cries when she's on the wrong side of a shut door and who wants to be as high up as possible. We call Winnie "dumb Pooh" because she's constantly staring at the ceiling because one time she saw a bug and she's determined years later that bug must still be there. All Winnie wants is a head scratch and a comfy pillow to sleep on. I could go on. But the fact is, people are unique. Thoreau wrote, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."



You are unique as a writer. Your writing schedule is yours. Your voice is yours. Your stories are yours. They belong to you. In *Self-Reliance*, Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.” Later he continued, “A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.”

The lesson here—don't judge yourself by what others do. Sure, my cats love to be the first one in the fresh, newly poured litter and they wait in line. But you aren't a cat. If there's a lesson in that, it's that we all like clean things. So let me once more turn to Thoreau: “If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

Go forth. Live your dreams. Or in cat terms, “It's time for a nap.”



Michele Dunaway currently has an eight-cat household. It's been much higher. Back in March, she'd planned to move into a condo, but after living in an apartment after selling her house and having the condo deal fall through, she's changed her mind and moving into another house. More on that later.

Genre Switch Up

Save your creativity, Part 1

By Denise A. Agnew



As a creativity coach, I recognize that not everyone's creative journey is the same. However, many writers don't understand they can inject new life into their creativity by changing or adding genres. Writers do hesitate to change, even if the genre they are writing in now bores them to death, making burnout their painful new companion. Why do they push pause? Limiting beliefs may have a lot to do with it.

Some of those limiting beliefs include:

1. I'm not any good at writing in another genre.
2. I'm too afraid to write in another genre.
3. I think there is something wrong or bad about another genre.
4. The other genre I'm interested in doesn't make money.

While it may be true that an author doesn't find their skills are as strong in another genre, there is no way to be certain unless a writer tries. Being afraid of change is certainly something most humans have felt at one time or another. In order to grow, however, humans have found that change is essential. Also, if writers find they have strange ideas about the value/money-making potential of another genre, perhaps it is time to discover why these things are so.

I interviewed several Novelists, Inc. authors about their genre-switch journeys. What it shows is that while no two writing adventures are exactly alike, most of the authors I interviewed found the genre switch well worth it.

[Anna Jacobs](#) currently writes complex family/relationship stories, modern for one publisher and historical for another. "Can't call it 'women's fiction' nowadays because men read mine too," she said. "It's not romance either, though there are always romantic threads in them."

For Jacobs, stories had been humming in her mind since childhood, but it wasn't until Georgette Heyer died that her dabbling habit became a serious attempt to write regency romances for publication.

"I had two published and one won a \$10,000 prize," she said. "After that I found my present style and voice. I tried several genres during my learning phase, then had spare capacity on what my first publisher wanted per year. I loved fantasy and got that published under another name. I was shortlisted for Australian Fantasy Novel of the Year in the mid 1990s. I tried romantic suspense and modern romances and got them published, as well as writing short stories for magazines which led to two collections being published."

Did she hesitate to switch genres, and did it boost her creativity?

"I didn't hesitate to write anything that caught my fancy because I was avid to learn and improve my skills. If stories didn't get published, they still taught me a lot, so the effort was never wasted. I continued to write modern stories because they sell well for my second publisher. It's refreshing, stops me from getting jaded," she said.

Jacobs indicated that writing in another genre gave her different backgrounds to research and think about, as well as characters, plot, and content.

"I love historical research, did a university unit in that to get it right," she said. "I read three novels a week in my own and other genres. You need to feed your imagination and keep it active, as well as keeping an eye on what other writers in your area are doing."

Her advice to other writers?

"Make sure you like the genre you're adding and as usual, read widely in it, if only to find out what sort of plot line has been done to death. Find a fresh type of plot line! Continue to learn and experiment. But it'd not be as easy if you're a slow writer."

Like Anna, [Barbara Keiler](#) hasn't limited herself. She writes contemporary romance, women's fiction, and humorous mysteries.

"My first writing was lit-fic (never published) and plays (several produced)," she said. "I decided to try writing romance fiction because I wanted to earn money with my writing, and in 1982, when I was burned out on the theater, the romance genre was booming. I read a few romances, loved them, and tried my hand writing them. In less than a year, I'd sold my first romance. I stuck with romance for many years and published many books."

When asked what made her decide to venture into new genres, she said, "I wanted to write 'bigger' books in the hope that I could write fewer a year and still make decent money. I sold several women's fiction novels to Mira. After I got dumped by Harlequin and Mira, I figured I had nothing to lose (having already lost everything, career-wise) and decided to try writing other kinds of novels."

For Keiler, this meant selling three novels to a mid-size press: a women's fiction, a lit-fic, and the first mystery in her Lainie Lovett mystery series.

"It was so refreshing to break out of the romance rut, to go where I hadn't gone before in my writing," she said. "I wound up parting ways with this publisher, got the rights back to that mystery, and turned it into an indie-published series. In the meantime, I launched my indie-pubbed romance career with a series Harlequin had rejected. Boy, was I lucky they rejected it! It's made me much more money as an indie series than it would have at Harlequin."

While Keiler has no regrets that she switched genres, she did hesitate at first. “Why? Self-doubt. Fear that I couldn’t write anything but contemporary romance,” she said. “Mysteries require solid plotting, and plotting has always been my weakness. But you don’t know what you can do until you try it. I tried it—and discovered I could plot reasonably well.”

She absolutely feels it made a big difference in her creativity.

“I was feeling stale and limited writing romance after romance,” she said. “Now, after writing a mystery or a women’s-fiction novel, I’m excited about tackling another romance. And once I’m done writing another romance, I’m eager to get back to the mysteries. Variety stimulates my muse.”

Her advice to others considering a genre switch? “Just do it.”

[Brenda Hiatt](#) is also no stranger to exploring more than one genre. She started out writing historical romance for 20 years before attempting her first YA book.

“I traditionally published first with Harlequin Regency (when that was a line) and when that folded, went on to write for HarperCollins/Avon until I burned out. I took about a year off before starting my first YA, largely because of the burnout (too many tight deadlines back to back, plus an editor who didn’t ‘get’ me),” she said. “When I finally started writing again with the YA, I thought of it mainly as a fun project to get my writing going again.”

When asked if she regretted these changes, she said, “Not at all! In fact, my six YA books have sold more copies over the past two years (in English, anyway) than my 16 historical romances. I’ve also had a lot more fun writing them.”

Hiatt also agrees the change has kept her writing experience fresh.

“After writing my original four book YA series, I went back to historical romance to write a book I’d wanted to write back in my trad days but that my editor vetoed, even though fans were asking for it. After two more YAs I’ve now written a third book in an unfinished historical series. I think going back and forth has kept me fresh in both genres,” she said.

Her advice to writers is, “Don’t be afraid to try! Especially if you’re feeling a bit ‘stale’ in your current genre. At the very least, it might get your creative juices flowing again, and at best you might discover another profitable/enjoyable genre to write in.”

Stick around for part 2 of this series to hear what other authors are saying about their genre switch-up experience and to receive some tips from me on how to discover what new genres might spark your enthusiasm.

Denise A. Agnew is the award-winning author of over 69 novels and screenplays. Denise’s novels Love from The Ashes and Blackout were optioned for film/TV by Where’s Lucy? Productions, Bright Frontier Films and MDR Entertainment. Denise is a writer/producer (Where’s Lucy? Productions, Happy Catastrophe Productions, Bright Frontier Films), a paranormal investigator, Reiki Master, and Certified Creativity Coach. As a creativity coach, Denise assists anyone in the creative arts to maintain lifelong creativity. You can find her at www.deniseagnew.com and www.creativepencoaching.com.

The Mad Scribbler

Book Talk

By Laura Resnick



“Every book begins and ends with other people—the readers who suggest the book to us and encourage us to read it, the talented author who crafted each word, the fascinating individuals we meet inside the pages—and the readers we discuss and share the book with when we finish.”

—Donalyn Miller, *Reading in the Wild*

Summer is the time of year I treasured throughout my youth, because I could spend my time reading only the books I *wanted* to read, rather than wading through the dreary stuff my teachers assigned. Summer was also when I had the time to read triple the quantity of books I usually read, because now I wasn’t locked up in school all day and drowning in homework all evening. (As you may gather, I hated school.)

That was my youth, though. Time has marched on, and as my adult life is particularly busy in summer, I usually fall into bed exhausted every night. Even so, I still think of this as “reading season,” and summer sparks my book-loving nostalgia and motivates me to make time for titles I’ve been eager to read. Which naturally leads to discussing those books, too.

Shortly before sitting down to write this column, I sent this message to my mom: “I’m reading a book you might like. It’s *Clarissa’s England* by the late Clarissa Dickson Wright, one of the *Two Fat Ladies* [a delightful British cooking/travel show in the late 1990s]. The book is a casual travelogue where she writes about England—county by county—talking about her favorite places, interesting historical anecdotes about those areas, and recollections of her personal experiences. It’s charming, interesting, and very soothing.”

A few days ago, one of my closest friends wrote to me: “I’ve read so many good books this year... Having said that, I doubt that anything I read this year will jump ahead of the book [I recommended to you] about the Irish troubles.”

I'm currently reading that book, *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* by Patrick Radden Keefe. My friend read Radden's latest work because she had really liked *The Snakehead: An Epic Tale of the Chinatown Underworld and the American Dream*, which I had recommended to her. (I read it while researching an [urban fantasy novel](#) set in Chinatown.)

I have found any number of my favorite books and writers via the recommendations and exhortations of people in my personal community of family, friends, co-workers, professional friendships, and co-hobbyists. I assume you have, too, because so many articles, head buyers, marketing mavens, and experts on the book business have informed me over the years that word-of-mouth and personal recommendations are the primary way readers choose books and find new authors.

I have also observed for decades that, unsurprisingly, after someone reads a book, they usually want to find someone else who's read it so they can discuss it. Indeed, a key thing that keeps a book on the bestseller list is that many readers want to read the book that all their friends, family, or co-workers are talking about.

This communal reading habit—this desire to participate in the book discussion others are having—even motivates us to read books that we'd otherwise never choose or would at least be unlikely to pick up and open. For example, people talking intensely around me and to me about *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Bridges of Madison County*, *The Celestine Prophecy*, *The Poisonwood Bible*, *Gone Girl*, and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* are all examples of books I only opened because I couldn't get through a week without people talking to me about them. None of them were books I'd have plucked from the shelf on my own, thinking, "This looks like my cup of tea."

I also make a habit of reading some works in science fiction/fantasy that (it seems to me) everyone involved in sf/f is talking about, even if the material doesn't seem like my sort of thing, so that I can stay familiar with current works and developments in my genre. This custom sometimes goes awry, such as the time I developed a crushing migraine by trying to understand the long passages about physics (I *think* it was physics...) in Cixin Liu's Hugo Award-winning novel *The Three-Body Problem*. But my custom has also led to rewarding experiences like reading Kij Johnson's Nebula Award-winning short story, "[Ponies](#)," which still haunts me, and Ted Chiang's *The Lifecycle of Software Objects*, which is some of the most moving fiction I've read.

We usually read as a solo activity, and yet there is also a deep and satisfying aspect of reading that's a communal experience enhanced by sharing and discussion. Hence the popularity of book clubs and reading groups.

Reading is also an ice-breaker. I can't even count how many strangers over the years have approached me on planes, trains, and in public places to comment on whatever book I'm reading—maybe to say they've read it, or maybe to ask if I like it, because they're thinking of reading it. In younger days, when I was backpacking across Europe and overlanding across Africa, exchanging books with other travelers was a happy custom, as was discussing whatever book was so popular at the time that we'd all exchanged a copy of it at some point along our journey. And, when you peruse a book in a store, probably another shopper has said something to you like, "I loved that one! You should get it."

Although there is a great deal to celebrate about ebooks, one sad aspect is that e-reading eliminates these friendly encounters since other readers can't see what book is open on your phone or device.

In an [article](#) on the Scholastic Books website, author and reading teacher Donalyn Miller writes, "Readers enjoy talking about books almost as much as reading them. Reading communities provide a group of other readers who support us. As literacy expert Stephen Krashen reminds us, 'Children read more when they see other people reading.'"

Miller's work focuses on getting kids to love reading. Her first book, *The Book Whisperer*, is about helping kids enjoy reading. No matter what their reading level is when they enter her sixth-grade classroom, they typically end up reading 40 books in a year. However, Miller found that after they moved on to other grades and classrooms, some of them lost their motivation and weren't reading much anymore. This led Miller to study what characterized lifelong reading habits, and her teaching evolved to help her students develop those.

"If my students had internalized the behaviors of lifelong readers, they wouldn't need a teacher to orchestrate their reading lives," she wrote. "While students benefited from the optimal reading environment in my classroom, they lacked the skills to maintain independent reading habits. It is necessary to model, explicitly teach, and reflect on students' development of lifelong, avid—or, as I call them, 'wild'—reading behaviors to ensure that they remain motivated, engaged readers."

Miller's next book, *Reading in the Wild*, was the result of surveying more than 900 adults for whom reading regularly is a long-term lifestyle. The book discusses strategies for helping kids develop these habits at an early age, which can turn them into readers for the rest of their lives.

One of her teaching tips for developing such habits is: "Foster reading relationships by seating students with common reading interests at the same table. They can suggest titles to one another for additional reading and participate in book discussions."

Another of Miller's tips is to create a "graffiti wall" in the classroom where students can regularly scrawl memorable, favorite lines from books they're reading, which gets other kids interested in reading those books. (I like this idea so much, I'm wondering if it would work as a mural for a wall in my house.)

Miller is also co-founder of [The Nerdy Book Club](#), which includes a website and blog, a podcast, workshops, and events. The club is a place for kids, their parents, and teachers to share their love of reading with others. "Like us," the self-introduction says, "you probably always have a book along to read, a title to recommend, and time to talk about works held dear."

Sharing books, talking about books, and having a book handy at all times are all habits that create lifelong readers. These are all habits I treasure and I thank my family, friends, colleagues, and passing strangers for encouraging and engaging in them with me.

Enjoy your summer reading—and all the sharing and discussion that goes along with it!

Laura Resnick is the author of novels, short stories, and non-fiction.

Membership Benefits

Need industry intel, software, or legal help? We've got you covered.

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

As a NINC member, your benefits include industry discounts, newsletter and website articles, professional services directory, networking opportunities, and more.

We've compiled all of these—which you can also find on our website—into this list as a helpful reminder.

Networking

The email list for Novelists, Inc. Members: <https://groups.io/g/NINCLINK>

Join our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>

We offer a critique/brainstorming group: <https://groups.io/g/NINKcritique>

Follow NINC on Twitter: https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc

Conference 2019: Planning For Success

Conference information: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>

Conference Registration: <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/2019-member-registration/>

Conference e-loop: <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2019>

Newsletter

Propose an article: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/propose-an-article/>

Submit a letter to the editor: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/submit-letter-to-editor/>

Newsletter archives: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/news-archive/>

Best of Nink in paperback: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/best-of-nink/>

Website (you must be logged in to access these services)

Legal Fund: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/legal-fund/>

Pro Services Directory: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/pro-services-directory/>

Sample Letters: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/sample-letters/>

Articles & Links: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/>

Welcome Packet: http://ninc.com/system/assets/uploads/2017/01/2017_New_Member_Welcome_Packet-public.pdf

Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts. A complete listing of these can be found at <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/member-freebies-discounts/> along with other member discounts.

Volunteer

One of the greatest benefits of NINC is the opportunity to volunteer your talents to benefit other members—which pays incredible and unexpected dividends in networking and knowledge. Learn more about volunteer opportunities here: <https://ninc.com/members-only/open-positions/>

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- 2019 Conference Promoter
- Anything!



Founded in 1989

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.

Founders

- Rebecca Brandewyne
- Janice Young Brooks
- Jasmine Cresswell
- Maggie Osborne
- Marianne Shock

2019 Board of Directors

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

- President: Wayne Stinnett
- President-Elect: Alyssa Day
- Secretary: Sue Phillips
- Treasurer: Pam McCutcheon
- Newsletter Editor: Michele Dunaway
- Advisory Council Representative: Lou Aronica

Advisory Council

- Lou Aronica
- Brenda Hiatt Barber
- Linda Barlow
- Jean Brashear
- Janice Young Brooks
- Laura Parker Castoro
- Meredith Efken
- Donna Fletcher
- Kay Hooper
- Barbara Keiler
- Julie Leto

- Pat McLaughlin
- Kasey Michaels
- Julie Ortolon
- Diana Peterfreund
- Pat Rice
- Erica Ridley
- Marianne Shock
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

2019 Committees

- *Complete committee member listings are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.*
- 2019 Conference Committee:
 - Conference Director: Mel Jolly
 - Programming: Alyssa Day
 - Sponsorship: Rochelle Paige
 - Logistics: Karen Fox
 - Registration: Mindy Neff
- Authors Coalition Rep: Laura Phillips & Sue Phillips
- Social Media Committee:
 - Chair: Jenna Kernan
 - Rick Gualteieri
 - Lisa Hughey
- Membership Committee
 - Chair: Sarah Woodbury
 - Boyd Craven
- *Nink* Newsletter
 - Editor: Michele Dunaway
 - Assistant Editor: Susan Anderson
 - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
 - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee:
 - Emilie Richards
 - Barbara Dunlop
 - Tawdra Kandle
 - Karen King
 - Pat Van Wie
- Technology Committee
 - Nick Thacker
 - Elizabeth Ann West
 - Jamie McFarlane
 - Erica Ridley
- Discount Program Chair: Emilie Richards
- Volunteer Jobs (Just One Thing) Coordinator: Lois Lavrisa

Central Coordinator

Novelists, Inc. c/o Terese Ramin

P.O. Box 54, Hartland MI 48353

admin@ninc.com

Address changes may be made on the website.

***Nink* Newsletter**

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