



The official newsletter  
of Novelists, Inc.,  
a professional organization  
of writers of popular fiction

 **novelists,  
inc.**

---

**VOLUME 31 : NUMBER 4**  
**APRIL 2020**

---

# *Nink* April 2020

## Contents

- ◆ President's Voice ~ Tawdra Kandle
- ◆ NINC 2020: The Future Is Now
- ◆ Translating Your Book into German ~ Nina Gettler
- ◆ How and Why All Authors Should Grow Their Publishing Team ~ Kate Tilton
- ◆ Keeping Your Writing Fresh ~ Trish Milburn
- ◆ Serving Your Reader Through Editing ~ Lindsay Randall
- ◆ Resources for Preparedness & Some Links For Staying Sane In This Time ~ Michele Dunaway
- ◆ Writing Through Hard Times: Part One ~ Denise Agnew
- ◆ The Mad Scribbler: Books in the Time of Corona ~ Laura Resnick
- ◆ NINC Membership Benefits
- ◆ About NINC

## President's Voice

*By Tawdra Kandle*



Last month, I wrote about March coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb. Oh, if I had only known how lion-like last month was going to be! As I write this, most of us are in the midst of social distancing, quarantining and/or sheltering in place as the world faces the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The author community has reacted admirably. I've been part of more than one group effort to offer free or discounted books to help keep readers busy during the hours at home. I've seen authors join together to help other writers who are struggling to pay bills because of day jobs lost thanks to the virus. Everyone is working together to help keep others afloat, amused and alive. I'm proud of our publishing world.

I'm proud of NINC too. Last month, our fabulous sponsorship chair Rochelle Paige recalled that in 2018, NINC had purchased some N95 masks because of worry over the red tide issues at St. Pete Beach. The board agreed to donate these masks to a local Florida hospital struggling with shortages of protective gear. It's a little thing, but we hope it helps.

As writers, we're used to a certain amount of self-isolation. Our jobs are by nature fairly solitary. We understand what it's like when you have to remember to change your PJ's at the end of the day—because pajamas are what you wear 24/7. We know the challenges of dealing with kids, pets, spouses and others who don't understand that being at home doesn't always mean being off work. We have a unique opportunity to reach out to our friends who are adjusting to a new normal, offering them support, encouragement and ideas for coping.

We can also be an inspiration to other creatives who are struggling amidst the tension and anxiety of our world now. I saw a post the other day that announced the writer was no longer calling herself quarantined; she'd chosen to look at her new role as artist-in-residence of her house. I love it! Perspective is a wonderful thing.

Even in the middle of all the turmoil, life (and NINC) goes on. On the conference front, we've been in touch with all of our speakers as we narrow down topics, and I'm so excited about each and every one. We're offering a well-rounded and innovative slate this year. I can't wait for September.

For those of you who have inquired about our plans for the conference in the face of Covid-19-related shutdowns—yes, we are well aware of potential problems. We have been in touch with the venue, and together we’re monitoring the situation. It is far too early to make any decisions, but please rest assured that we are mindful of protecting our members and our organization. We’ll keep everyone up to date as it is appropriate.

But let’s hope that by the fall, the corona virus pandemic is a distant memory.

In the meantime, remember that just as we are all here for each other during these uncertain days, NINC is always available to its members, too. The discussion on our NINC Link loop is lively and varied, and our Facebook group is also active. Reach out if you need advice or information or encouragement.

May your April be filled with sunny days, lots of amazing words written, and above all, health. Be well and stay sane.

—Tawdra Kandle

---

*Tawdra Kandle is a USA Today best-selling romance author with over 80 books released. Her titles include new adult and adult contemporary romance; under the pen name Tamara Kendall, she writes paranormal romance, and under the pen name Tessa Kent, she writes erotic romance.*

## **About NINC**

NINC remains committed to serving all of our members, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs if any, ability, nationality or age. It is NINC's desire and goal to make sure that every author member feels welcomed and accepted and heard.

## **About Nink**

*Nink's* goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members; [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

## **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](#).

## **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/>



September 23 – 27, 2020



- **Conference information:** <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>
- **Conference Registration:** <https://ninc.com/conferences/registration/>
- **Conference e-loop:** <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2020/>

# Translating Your Book into German

From an author's/translator's perspective

*By Nina Gettler*



When I first started thinking about getting my books translated, I decided to stick to German. First of all, it's the biggest foreign-language market where historical romance is very popular. Secondly, it's a language I am completely fluent in, and I have spent many, many years as a German-to-English translator and as an editor of translations both from and into German.

The first thing I did was wade through the NINC email list archives and do a search for different variations translation/translator/German, and I then did the same on at least a dozen Facebook groups that I am on. (To search a Facebook group, go to the list/menu to the left of where the posts actually appear, and plug in your keyword(s) in the box that says "Search this group.") That got me several pages of notes and a list of half a dozen English-into-German translators.

I decided to keep the names on file for the time being and to start with contacting translators through one of the online platforms, where I would have a large number of translators to choose from. As it turned out, I ultimately ended up contracting with a translator from that original search.

There are a number of different platforms online where you can find translators. Two of the most common platforms are [Babelcube](#) and [Fiverr](#). However, here's why I did not even consider them.

First, Babelcube. Their setup is convenient with no up-front costs, but this site gives the author very little control. The author gets to review the first 10 pages of the translation, and if the author accepts it, they are stuck with the final version. This means that the translator can deliver 10 very good pages and then translate the rest using Google Translate, [deepl.com](#), or some other machine translation engine. Judging from some horror stories I found, this appears to be a scenario that does indeed happen.

Next, Fiverr. I may be doing this site an injustice, but translators advertising their services on a platform with a reputation for low prices did not do well on my reliability meter. I was a

freelance translator and editor for more than 30 years. My experience taught me that if you deliver quality work, you will generally have a stable of regular clients, meaning you don't have to market your services on a low-budget platform. Granted, if you specialize in the translation of books, clients might not come back because they haven't written another book. But in this market, I think it's safe to say that if an author goes to the trouble of having their book translated into German, they've written more than one.

I have edited too many terrible translations, where the client used an inexpensive translator and hoped that a good editor could fix it (at a reasonable price). In my experience, if you have a sow's ear, the best you can hope for is a more attractive sow's ear. Even the best editor can't turn it into a silk purse.

The platform I tried out was [Upwork](#). It seemed to have a reputation that was not so focused on low prices, and the translator bios appeared more professional.

Within a few days, I had applications from almost 30 translators. I deleted about a third immediately, either because they had obviously not read that I was looking for a translator with at least some experience in translating romance novels or because their English was extremely faulty. Then I sent out the test translation, which I kept at about 350 words (the text length I was willing to translate back in the day if the job looked interesting).

Be aware that Upwork does not allow asking for free translation samples. You have to pay for them. I got the sample translation back from about half of the translators I had sent it to. Some were terrible, some were decent, some were promising. None of them knocked my socks off.

Concurrently with my Upwork venture, I also contacted two of the translators from my original search of various Facebook groups and sent them the test translation. I ended up choosing a translator from that first search, a translator located in Austria.

Don't forget that you will also need an editor and a proofreader. Some translators have their own editing and proofreading team. This will certainly be more convenient and probably less expensive than finding your own editor and proofreader but again, going this route gives you less control.

For the sample translation, I chose two scenes that had both emotion and some heat. Anything even mildly sexy is difficult to translate into German without sounding vulgar, and emotion can easily slide into kitsch.

If you are reissuing a book that was previously translated into German, keep in mind that when you get the rights back to your book, this does not give you the rights to any existing translations. You either have to pay the foreign language publisher or the translator for the rights or have it re-translated.

Publishing something for the German market has a few additional kinks. According to German law, a translator who is located in Germany retains the copyright to the translation and has something that translates as "moral rights," which basically means that you cannot change the translation without the translator's approval. (Note: I don't know if Babelcube has something in place that gets around this.)

Additionally, the translator has the copyright for the translation. The translator also has the right to have their name not only on the title page but also on the cover, to have their biography

appear on the back cover of the paperback edition, and to have their name mentioned in any advertising. The translator also has the right to royalties. In fact, there is no legal way a translator who is located in Germany can forgo royalties.

These were some of the reasons why I chose a translator located in Austria instead of Germany. She also did not have a problem with signing a contract that specified that this was a work-for-hire. Austria also does not have a law stipulating royalties. The translator does retain the rights to the translation, but our contract is worded that she grants me the exclusive license to exploit the translation for my lifetime plus 50 years.

If you hire a translator who is not located in Germany, make sure that he/she is a native German speaker who regularly spends time in Germany. Language use changes, meaning that even native speakers who are out of the country for a few years may not be up on the latest German idioms and/or slang, if that's relevant for your book. I specify native speakers because while some people are in fact fully bilingual—or even trilingual—I've seen plenty of translators who overestimate their capability in their non-dominant language.

The contract I made with my translator is short and straightforward, as it is a shortened version of the sample contract I found on [PEN America](#). You should probably use a more comprehensive contract or consult an attorney, especially if your translator is located in Germany. But since I had met the translator personally, I was comfortable with the simplified contract. I'll be glad to share my contract if anyone is interested, but I would not endorse using it if you are working with a translator you found online and haven't worked with before. (Interested persons can contact me through my website at: [ninabeaumont.com](#).)

Following are several websites where translators post their bios and areas of specialization:

- [www.literaturuebersetzer.de](#) German organization of literary translators, website in German only
- [www.atanet.org](#) (American Translators Association)
- [www.proz.com](#)

These are some agencies that offer translation services. I found positive feedback about them online, but as I am not familiar with them personally, this is not an endorsement:

- <https://literarytranslations.us/>
- <http://www.libelliagency.com/agency/>
- <https://indie-translations.com/about/>

At this point, the translation of book one has been completed. I did the editing myself, and I'm quite pleased with the final result. The translation process of this book took about three months. The translator sent me the translation three chapters at a time, and I sent back my pretty extensive edits, occasionally with several suggestions for a sentence or paragraph. I received a reasonably clean copy from her, with comments where I had offered alternatives. Then I went through the final, clean copy and did some polishing. I paid her an hourly fee for the clean-up of this final version because that really went above and beyond.



Prices I have seen quoted for German translation range from US\$ 0.045 to US\$ 0.115 per source word (the word count of your book in English). However, I have seen prices as high as US\$ 0.17 per source word mentioned on Facebook groups.

I have recently seen a spate of posts by authors saying that they have their books translated by a machine translation engine and then edited by a translator, so this appears to be a procedure that is not uncommon. Going that route will certainly save you money, but it is full of pitfalls. Even if you have an experienced translator/editor, your end product will not have the quality of a manual translation by a good human translator.

---

*Nina Gettler, who writes historical romance as [Nina Beaumont](#), is in the process of indie publishing revised versions of her books previously published by Harlequin (the first five books are available under the series name Fearless Women Historical Romance Series).*

# Authors Can't Do It All Alone... Luckily They Don't Have To

## How and why all authors should grow their publishing team

*By Kate Tilton*



When publishing a book, an author has a whole team of people to help them take that manuscript from first draft to finished product. Both traditional and indie authors will have a variety of professionals—agents, editors, formatters, cover designers, and early readers—to help the author along the way.

These days, however, everything else that goes into being a career author ends up on the author's plate, including managing the website, social media, book events and travel, career planning and strategy, business admin and accounting, and so much more.

Whether an author publishes with a traditional house or goes indie, or does a little of both, much of the job of an author is left up to the author alone. But it doesn't have to be this way. Authors can and should grow their publishing team, as a well-rounded team will help an author with the business side as well as the craft side. Doing this can save authors valuable time and help authors earn more in the long run.

### **Why hire help?**

Just because authors **can** do a task does not mean it is cost effective. This is not as cut and dry as other industries, as authors do not make an income based on hourly services but by selling their products (books). The more quality books an author produces, the greater their income can become. Hiring others to take on things that keep them from writing can mean a bigger income at the end of the year.

Teams also offer support and encouragement. Publishing, no matter what route an author takes, can be tough. Unlike family and friends, having business professionals on the team offers a different kind of support. They know what it is like to be a part of this industry and can relate better to an author's struggle.

These professionals may also be better than the author—at least when it comes to certain things. Having insider knowledge makes publishing professionals better suited to offer guidance and problem-solve for an author’s particular needs. A consultant may be better at planning a launch strategy. An assistant may be able to make better looking newsletters or promotional graphics. A social media manager may understand policy changes better.

### **Avoid common pitfalls when hiring help.**

The common pitfalls when hiring help boil down to one big pit with many ways to fall into it. But in essence, it’s about *hiring the wrong person*.

Pay attention to the **five pitfalls** below to help avoid this.

#### **Pitfall 1**

The author hires a consultant when they need an assistant (or a publicist when they need a consultant, or an assistant when they need a consultant, and so on).

To avoid this trap, when an author decides to hire help, first they should figure out what things they need help with.

- If feeling overwhelmed by all the publishing advice out there and not knowing what to do, a publishing consultant may be the right fit.
- If an author has admin and basic marketing tasks (i.e. managing a launch team, newsletters, social media), an assistant or social media manager may be who they need.
- If an author wants to get on TV, radio, and/or other traditional media, they likely need a publicist.

Before beginning any search, authors should write down where they are struggling so they can identify the right type of service provider needed. Make a list of specific action items or goals, For instance, one could be to release a monthly newsletter and build a street team. Seeing the list in full will help avoid wasting time contacting the wrong type of professional and makes the entire process easier.

#### **Pitfall 2**

The author hires a person who doesn’t have the skills they need.

There are different types of professionals, but in each profession there are also different skill sets.

For example, there are a wide variety of tasks assistants can do. However, some assistants do not work on marketing strategy. If marketing is something the author needs, they may do better by looking for a consultant who can help with creating the strategy and then hire an assistant to execute the strategy.

Another example—if an author wants someone to manage their Instagram account, the author should look for someone who can post photos that will attract readers of their genre.

With the list in hand from pitfall number one, authors should take a few minutes to research the skills of each potential team member and look for those who match their needs.

Most service providers will list their skills on their website. Authors can use these lists to compare the offerings of each service provider. Doing this will help an author avoid hiring someone who can't provide the services needed, saving everyone time, money, and the headache.

### **Pitfall 3**

An author hires someone without enough or the right kind of experience.

If a potential team member lists the skills the author is looking for on their site, the next step is for an author to see if the team member has the experience needed.

If the author needs someone who can do a task without much direction, they will want someone with more experience.

Authors should also consider the experience in terms of what type of books and authors the professional works with.

For example, an indie author may want someone who works with indies. In another example, if an author is looking for a publicist, the author will want someone with media connections relevant to the author's genre. A publicist who works primarily with business books is probably not a good fit for a romance author. It seems like a no-brainer, but is a common pitfall.

Authors can avoid experience issues by asking other authors for recommendations, and then ask the potential team member about both current and past work experience, and any book acknowledgments. It is also a good idea to check references if possible.

### **Pitfall 4**

The author hires a "bad apple."

There are many wonderful professionals in publishing. There are also some bad apples. Authors should do due diligence to avoid hiring someone who is not a professional.

Authors can check the professional's website and social media to look for red flags such as lots of errors or poor formatting. There are also resources like [Writer Beware](#) and [the Alliance of Independent Authors' service ratings](#). Not every professional is reviewed, but this step can help authors avoid bad apples.

### **Pitfall 5**

After hiring, the author and professional do not get along/cannot communicate well.

Working with a professional is a partnership. For a successful team, communication is crucial. Authors should also want to build a team of professionals they enjoy working with.

This can be difficult to figure out before starting to work with someone, but there are steps an author can take:

- Is there a written contract? If so, what does it spell out for each side? Make sure you are comfortable with the terms.
- Before hiring, check out the provider's social media, website, and newsletter to look for any similar interests and if the provider seems like someone worth working with. Is the provider professional?

- If wanting to start small, consider doing a smaller project or consultation before hiring long-term. Some professionals offer free consultations, others have paid one-time consultations (often this depends on their demand and experience). This could be a good litmus test.
- Make communication expectations known. Discuss how communication will happen (email, phone calls, Skype, text, messenger) and when (what days are work days). Discuss how a professional can get in touch in case of something urgent and vice versa.

### **How to find help to hire?**

Once an author knows the kind of help they are looking for, they can begin their search by: Asking their author friends for recommendations.

- Picking up a copy of *The Self-Publisher's Ultimate Resource Guide* by Joel Friedlander and Betty Kelly Sargent, which is a directory of publishing professionals.
- Using online resources like [Author E.M.S.](#) (a list of different professionals), [Reedsy](#) (an online marketplace connecting authors with professionals), [Kate Tilton's author assistant resource page](#) (for more information about assistants).
- Getting connected with a free mentor through [MicroMentor](#).
- Getting free small business coaching through the SBA. Check out the [Small Business Administration](#) for more.

Please note, hiring a team is a process and can take time. Professionals, depending on experience, will have different price points and hourly/weekly rates, retainers, and billing. Be sure to discuss each before hiring.

---

*Kate Tilton has been helping authors since 2010. Founder of [Kate Tilton's Author Services, LLC](#), Tilton helps authors of all stripes navigate the publishing world and connect with readers. She is a contributor to *The Self-Publisher's Ultimate Resource Guide* and appeared in *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, *Novelists Inc's Nink*, *Kobo Writing Life* and *The Book Designer*. Tilton presented at *Book Expo America*, *Penned Con*, *Novelists, Inc.*, among other venues.*



# Keeping Your Writing Fresh

*By Trish Milburn*



When we first become writers, everything we write is new—new stories, new characters, new plots. We don't run a big risk of rehashing any of those things because we've never written a book before. The possibilities for creation are seemingly endless. But the more books we publish and the more we begin to live our lives marked by book deadlines, the more we may need to pay attention to keeping all aspects of our storytelling fresh so as to avoid repeating ourselves and becoming stale. Because stale and repetitive work is a sure way to kill that once shiny and new writing career.

## **Fresh from the start**

A good idea is to go into one's writing career making the conscious effort with every decision to ensure your work is not only distinctive among all of your books over the span of your career, but also different enough from other writers' work that it stands out in a crowded marketplace.

"To some extent I've always been aware of needing to differentiate story elements because I've read some authors where the characters are interchangeable from book to book other than name, hair color and occupation," said [Nicole Evelina](#), author of the *Guinevere's Tale* trilogy. "I never wanted to be like that because it is one of the fastest ways for an author to lose me as a reader; I want to read something new, not what I've already read."

[Jennifer Ashley](#), author of 110 novels and novellas, made a rule for herself from the beginning to never repeat anything.

"Not a love scene, not a conflict, not a character," she said. "It's not easy, but I try. It keeps me digging deeper into my imagination and always on the lookout for new ways to tell a love story or find new plots for a mystery."

From the outset, [Josie Brown](#) knew her *Housewife Assassin's Handbook* mystery series would necessarily have to have some constants from book to book since the main character was the same. Thus, she focused on making sure that aspects that could differ from one title to the

next did so. These included the aging of her main character, assassin Donna Stone Craig, as well as her children and all the changes that come with that, Donna's romantic relationship with her mission partner, and the missions themselves.

"Each mission is timely, perhaps already in the news, and reflects the current state of terrorism," Brown said. "No mission is the same. My research on terrorism has given me tons of fodder. Attacks can happen anywhere and at any time. In my books, they've happened during political campaigns, in cornfields, on electrical grids, via AI technology, at weddings and funerals, and during Christmas."

### **The importance of keeping things interesting**

You've probably heard something to this effect in a workshop at some point—if you as the writer are bored with a story, then your reader will be too. Turning that aphorism toward something more positive, if you're excited about what you're writing, that excitement will likely shine through to the reader.

For me, good personal policy was to write what I love so I could grow as a writer. When I reached a stage of burnout, part of the reason was because I was writing what felt like similar books. I made them as different as possible within the confines of my Harlequin line, but it still felt as if there was only so far I could stretch—you get pigeonholed when writing category romance similar to how some actors get typecast into a certain kind of TV or film role. When I came to a point where I could write whatever I wanted, I went a completely different direction. I went from writing modern cowboy stories to writing about one of my passions, K-pop music and the people who make it. Because of the different locale, different characters, and different world in which I'm writing, the stories feel fresher and more exciting. Hopefully, that is translating to the readers' experience.

Brown said one of the principles she sticks to for her series as well as her stand-alone titles is that it has to be something she wants to write and of which she can be proud.

"The premise of each book must excite me," she said. "I have reams of research that I sift through before and after I sit down to write, which spurs my excitement to put words on (electronic) paper."

[John Scherber](#) said the plots for his Murder in Mexico series fall into two categories—artifacts and passions. The artifacts are things such as Mayan ceramics or fake paintings, and the passions are universal human emotions such as revenge or love. But though his stories are set in Mexico and revolve around crimes, he never writes about drug cartels.

"They are business crimes and essentially without much interest," he said. "They are pretty much all the same, like 'Don't intrude on my territory.' I am most interested in the way people rationalize what they do."

Some writers keep things fresh and interesting by varying the type of books they write, alternating between two or more genres or sub-genres. This helps to prevent burnout or getting in a writing rut.

"It helps that my series are very different—from paranormal romance (shifters) to historical mysteries to urban fantasy to Scottish historical romance," Ashley said. "One thing I do in each is keep a background thread running throughout—will the Shifters free themselves or will they

have to fight another Shifter-Fae war? Will Kat and Daniel in the Victorian mysteries overcome their pasts and become a couple? Something that makes the series more than simply solving a problem in each book.”

### **The challenge of series**

It’s one thing to maintain freshness from one stand-alone book to the next, but series can pose extra challenges, especially if it’s a long-running series. Series with a single protagonist, as is often the case with mysteries, need to show that the character changes over time as people do in real life. They will be changed by the things they experience, the people around them and the things they witness. Those books also will need to have good variety in plots. None of the mysteries can be too similar so readers don’t get confused, thinking they’ve already read a book when they haven’t. Even when you’re dealing with the same setting in terms of your fictional town and perhaps the main character’s home or place of business, a writer must endeavor to make the rest of the setting details as different as possible. For instance, instead of having murder victims be found in a bar in one book followed by in a restaurant in the next, perhaps have the second victim found someplace completely different and unusual such as an unoccupied cabin at a state park.

In romance series, it’s typical for the main characters to change from book to book with brief appearances of past main characters as secondary ones in subsequent books. It’s important, then, to make sure you don’t repeat not only small details like character names and physical characteristics but also their backstories, goals, motivations, conflicts, emotional wounds, personalities, etc.

“Particularly in romance, I look at each couple and see what is unique about them,” Ashley said. “Some heroes will be full of humor, others more serious; some comfortable with women, others shy; some have happy lives, others not so much. Heroines likewise have different personalities—some are bold and fearless, others quiet and contemplative. My characters are never perfect, and exploring their flaws, all different, helps to keep books fresh.”

If your series is more character-driven like [Susan Aylworth’s](#) Seasons of Destiny series, making sure all the characters are unique is the key to keeping the series fresh.

“I created a small town populated with interesting people who differ from one another,” she said. “The stories are different because the people are.”

“You are always going to have certain stock characters: the innocent, the villain, the love interest, etc., because they are archetypes in life,” Evelina said. “You can vary those based on the personality and background of the characters. For example, not every power-hungry woman is going to have the same motivation or backstory.”

### **To borrow a cliché, think outside the box**

Yes, I know, that phrase is as worn out as a 20-year-old pair of sneakers, but it fits because sometimes you have to think of different ways to brainstorm and come up with new paths to fresh ideas, cutting away the thicket of used-too-often with a literary machete.

Over the course of his series, what Scherber has noticed is the role the unconscious mind plays.

“Increasingly it makes suggestions, especially during the times of coming out of sleep,” he said. “It becomes a partner, and you can use the ideas to the degree that they make sense. But you must work all the time to engage that function, because otherwise it wanders off.”

Inspiration for fresh takes may also come from other types of creative works—paintings, photography, music lyrics or the feelings music evokes, crafts, reading genres of fiction you don’t write, watching documentaries, visiting museum exhibits and the like. You never know from where the germ of a new idea might originate. Be open to all of it, no matter what it is or from where it comes.

“I read a lot of nonfiction and news type articles,” said *USA Today* best-selling romance author [Katherine Garbera](#). “To be fair, it’s a lot harder to read the news in the current craziness, but I always find stories about interesting people that give me ideas.”

Garbera said that even when she uses familiar tropes in her stories, sometimes ones she’s even used before, she comes at it from a new angle. One of her favorite tropes, the boss/secretary romance, is not really politically correct now, so she might tweak the familiar angles so that they are actually co-workers, workers from different companies or a gender reversal of the one in power.

“The characters are always going to make the plot unique,” she said. “I find that the more books I write, the easier different ideas are. I think my creative self likes exploring something new.”

For me, one of the things helping to spark my creativity and generate fresh ideas is watching TV. I’ve often disagreed with those who say that TV watching is useless. I’ve been inspired by TV characters’ personality traits, their voices, how they interact with other characters, snippets of their backstories and so much more. All of these things simmer in my head until I need a particular tidbit for a story I’m working on. If I need a character to be closed-off emotionally, I can easily visualize all the TV characters I’ve seen exhibit that trait and determine my own take on that type of character. It’s like having a basic recipe and adding little bits of flavor to make the dish come alive for the palate.

For my [Idol in Love](#) K-pop series, I’ve gotten a lot of ideas from Twitter—either from fan interactions (both good and bad) or stories about various K-pop acts and the challenges they face to make it in the highly competitive industry. K-pop groups also appear on a lot of variety shows, which are big in Korea, and provide a lot of content on YouTube, V LIVE and online fan cafes for their fans. These provide a wealth of inspiration for plots and character motivations.

Even though it might seem a challenge to breathe new life into your writing, it’s a challenge worth undertaking. Peel away the top layers that encompass the often-suggested ways of sparking your creativity to find the hidden layers beneath that may very well reveal unusual but fruitful ways to keep your stories—as well as your interest in them—fresh. By doing so, you help maintain your excitement for writing and keep your readers coming back for more.

---

*Trish Milburn is the author of more than 50 novels and novellas, including her current Idol in Love series set in the world of K-pop.*

# Serving Your Reader Through Editing

By Lindsay Randall



For author and professor [Denny Wilkins](#), editing is this: defending your reader—from error, inaccuracies, a confusing story.

Any discussion of it being a mix of rules and artistry doesn't hold much interest for him.

"Editing is just work. It's thoughtful, meticulous, persistent work," Wilkins said. "Debate about the art and science of it all you want. You have to want to defend your reader, right down to its and it's."

Wilkins, who has spent the past 20 years teaching journalism and mass communication, said the "search for the right word is a moral imperative for a good writer."

But the evolution of language, especially recently, has narrowed the ability to create fine distinctions in meaning. Added to this is the fact that while the English language has by far the largest number of words, the working vocabulary of the average person is decreasing. Too, words can cause distance and division, perhaps more so now than ever before.

All the more reason for novelists to have fresh eyes on their work—both conceptually and line by line, Wilkins noted—to ensure serving today's reader.

[Benjamin Dreyer](#), author of the best-selling *Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style*, has devoted nearly three decades to "making skilled writing better."

He began his publishing career as a freelance proofreader and copy editor and today serves as vice president, executive managing editor and copy chief of Random House.

Dreyer defines copy editing as "the act of doing one's best to make an author's text into the best possible version of itself that it can be."

He does this by ensuring that sentences are grammatical, words are spelled correctly, and punctuation is error-free.

He also asks questions "carefully and respectfully" and makes suggestions on "more subjective, nuanial issues of style," which is, in other words, "a great big blanket term covering everything an author sets on a page."



In the past 20 years, Dreyer has noted a decrease in the use of punctuation from all kinds of writers, but the biggest change in written English, he said, “derives from the awareness on the part of writers that the default reader—and the default human being—are not male, are not white, are not heterosexual.

“This appreciation of a larger world is reflected, I’d say, in the near disappearance of the supposedly genderless use of the pronoun ‘he,’ and the rise of the singular and nonbinary ‘they,’ to any number of changes in perspective and assumption that writers bring to their work in all sorts of ways.”

*Dreyer’s English*, named one of the best books of 2019 by *O: The Oprah Magazine*, the [Strand Book Store](#), and *Shelf Awareness*, details the many tips and tricks Dreyer has gathered through the years, plus features his fun sense of humor and true delight in all things word related.

*Special to this edition of the newsletter are the following excerpts from the book.*

### ***From Chapter 7, The Realities of Fiction***

Putting aside the extensive mechanical work of attending to the rudiments of spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc., the styling of prose is very much about listening. An attentive copy editor should become attuned to and immersed in a writer’s voice to the point where the copy editor has so thoroughly absorbed the writer’s intentions that the process turns into a sort of conversation-on-the-page.

Nowhere is this conversation more crucial than in the copyediting of fiction, where artistry, however you want to define that slippery concept, can outrank and outweigh notions of what might conventionally be deemed “correct”; where voice—eccentric, particular, peculiar as it may be—is paramount; and where a copy editor, however well-intentioned, who can’t hear what a writer is doing, or at least attempting to do, is apt to wreak havoc. Unfortunately, havoc is occasionally wreaked: I cringingly recall an instance in which one of the finest copy editors I know—so attentive, so sensitive, so adept that editors clamor for her service—crashed and burned on a job in which for some mysterious, unhappy reason she didn’t understand what the writer was doing generally and, specifically and perhaps worst of all, didn’t get his jokes, which she proceeded to flatten as if with a steamroller. Happily, this sort of calamity is exceptionally rare, and it was easy enough, in this case, to put the writer’s nose back in joint by having his manuscript recopyedited, tip to toe, by another copy editor.

Though I can’t here demonstrate in any practical fashion the elusive art of empathic listening, I can certainly let you in on some of the methodology—scrutinizing everything, taking nothing for granted, asking lots of questions, taking lots of notes, and performing scores of little tricks—a copy editor employs in the act of copyediting a work of fiction. I can, as well, point out to you some of the glitches that, since I’ve repeatedly come face-to-face with them over the years, you may well find in your own work.

## ***The Real Reality of Fiction***

Fiction may be fictional, but a work of fiction won't work if it isn't logical and consistent.

- Characters must age in accordance with the calendar—that is, someone asserted to have been born in May 1960 must then be twenty-five in May 1985, forty in May 2000, etc.—and at the same pace as other characters: Two characters who meet at the ages of thirty-five and eighteen cannot, in a later scene, be fifty and merely twenty-six. Grandparents and great-grandparents, I've occasionally noted, are often said to have lived decades out of whack, in either direction, with what is reproductively possible.
- Keep track of passage of time, particularly in narratives whose plots play themselves out, crucially, in a matter of days or weeks. I've encountered many a Friday arriving two days after a Tuesday, and third-graders in math class on what, once one adds up the various "the next day"s, turns out to be a Sunday.
- Height; weight; eye and hair color; nose, ear, and chin size; right- or left-handedness; etc., mandate consistency.
- Stage management and choreography: Watch out for people going up to the attic only to shortly and directly step out onto the driveway; removing their shoes and socks twice over the course of five minutes; drinking from glasses they quite definitively set down, a few paragraphs earlier, in another room; and reading newspapers that suddenly transform into magazines.
- While we're here: I recall one manuscript in which fully half the characters had names beginning with the letter *M*. You may not be surprised to learn that the author's given name also began with an *M*. This is not a good thing.
- I don't know why or how writers end up laboriously and lengthily describing restaurant meals as if they—the writers, that is—have never experienced one, but: Pay better attention.
- I don't know why or how writers end up laboriously and lengthily counterfeiting newspaper articles as if they—the writers, that is—had never read one. At the least, remember to establish the whowhatwherewhywhen you were taught in high school, and terse it up a bit too.

Fun tip for counterfeiting newspaper articles with verisimilitude and panache: Yank out all the series commas.

## ***From pages 123-124: A Few Pointers on Unfinished Speech***

- If one of your characters is speaking and is cut off in midsentence by the speech or action of another character, haul out a dash:

*"I'm about to play Chopin's Prelude—" Grace slammed the piano lid onto Horace's fingers.*

- When a line of dialogue is interrupted by an action, note that the dashes are placed not within the dialogue but on either side of the interrupting action.

*"I can't possibly" —she set the jam pot down furiously— "eat such overtoasted toast."*

Writers will often do this:

*"I can't possibly —" she set the jam pot down furiously "—eat such overtoasted toast."*

and that floating, unmoored narration is, I'm sure you'll agree, spooky-looking.

- If one of your characters is speaking and drifts off dreamily in midsentence, indicate that not with a dash, but with an ellipsis.

*"It's been such a spring for daffodils," she crooned kittenishly. "I can't recall the last time..." she drifted off dreamily in midsentence.*

- When characters self-interrupt and immediately resume speaking with a pronounced change in thought, I suggest the em dash-space-capital letter combo pack, thus:

*"Our lesson for today is— No, we can't have class outside today, it's raining."*

- "Furthermore," he noted, "if your characters are in the habit of nattering on for numerous uninterrupted paragraphs of dialogue, do remember that each paragraph of dialogue concludes without a closing quotation mark, until you get to the last one.

*"Only then do you properly conclude the dialogue with a closing quotation mark.*

*"Like so."*

*Excerpted from [Dreyer's English](#) by Benjamin Dreyer. Copyright © 2019 by Benjamin Dreyer. Excerpted by permission of Random House, A Penguin Random House Company. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.*

---

*Lindsay Randall writes historical romance and most recently served as assistant editor of Nink.*

# Resources for Preparedness & Some Links For Staying Sane In This Time

*By Michele Dunaway*



A look at my Facebook page shows some real fears in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. While all this was going on, earthquakes rattled Utah, Nevada and California. Given the amount of information and misinformation out there, I wanted to provide a few links to resources you can use to prepare for these things, and links to help you stay sane in this trying time.

## **Be prepared/in the loop**

- First, here is the link to the CDC: <https://emergency.cdc.gov>
- Next, here is the link to the World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Here is the Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/symptoms-causes/syc-20479963>
- If you aren't sure if that email you received is a scam, you can check here: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/coronavirus-scams-what-ftc-doing>
- If you aren't sure what you are reading is true, before you repost or click through, Google it. I like to read both U.S. sources and from around the world. In fact, I saw people posting about the government giving out checks on someone's Facebook, but the story was from an Ireland newspaper and about the Irish government. Make sure you look at the source. A good chart showing news bias is found here: <https://www.adfontesmedia.com/interactive-media-bias-chart/?v=402f03a963ba>
- To prepare for any disaster, the U.S. Government has an official site filled with tons of information: <https://www.usa.gov/prepare-for-disasters>. Unemployment information is also here, although you will file for that from your state. As to your state, while your

federal taxes are now due to be filed July 15, unless your state has communicated otherwise, those are due April 15.

- Another government site focuses on exactly what should be in your emergency kit: <https://www.ready.gov/kit>

## Stay sane

Last but not least, what the world is going through will take a mental toll. I know it has on me. I found a few articles with some good advice for how to stay sane during this time. I can't guarantee all of them are great or perfect, but resources are out there if you just Google what you need.

1. "How To Stay Sane During Social Distancing" from Columbia U – <https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2020/03/19/coronavirus-social-distancing-covid-19/>
2. "Five Ways to View Coverage of the Corona Virus" from the American Psychological Association – <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/pandemics>
3. "Coronavirus: 5 ways to work from home with your kids (and stay sane)" <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/working-parents-school-closures-coronavirus/>
4. "A doctor's advice/Tips on Staying healthy" – [https://www.yakimaherald.com/special\\_projects/coronavirus/a-doctor-s-advice-tips-on-staying-healthy-and-sane/article\\_f06cb9d4-9427-5583-9840-08fcb8ebcf49.html](https://www.yakimaherald.com/special_projects/coronavirus/a-doctor-s-advice-tips-on-staying-healthy-and-sane/article_f06cb9d4-9427-5583-9840-08fcb8ebcf49.html)
5. "Corona Virus Sanity Guide" (with mediations) – <https://www.tenpercent.com/coronavirussanityguide>
6. A video on my local news—scroll down for the "comfort card" – <https://www.ksdk.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-mental-health-destress-coping-mechanisms/63-88db16c7-b0d7-46e1-b6a6-8ce9b98b0744>
7. A video made by a counselor for parents on how to explain the Corona Virus to kids – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=K8to-eUg9HU&app=desktop>

There are also many Facebook groups forming, and while we don't talk party politics on the Ninclink loop, if you need your fellow writers during this time for any mental health reason or business reason, please reach out. Many of us are probably going through what you are and it's hard enough to be by yourself and be socially distant. Self care is extremely important right now. As my aunt, who lives by herself and is high risk said when she called me, "I'm going so stir crazy I'm excited when the robo callers ring." So please remember you are not alone and reach out. Remain connected. We are in this together.

---

*Michele Dunaway is your Nink editor.*



# Writing Through Hard Times

## Part One

*By Denise A. Agnew*



In this two-part series, I'm going to focus on authors willing to share some personal experiences, as sometimes the best way to recharge your creativity is to know you're not the only one experiencing tough times.

For Judith Arnold (Barbara Keiler), the universe gave her a triple whammy close together.

"In Feb. 2017, my younger son was diagnosed with Stage-4 lymphoma. Barely three months later, my older son was diagnosed with a rare form of brain cancer, medulloblastoma. A few months after that, my elderly mother fell, broke her wrist, and went into a decline leading to her death in Feb. 2018," Arnold said.

Describing it as not the best year of her life, Arnold kept writing.

"Writing gave me a chance to escape from my reality," she said. "Or maybe it gave me the chance to escape back to my reality, since writing seemed much more normal to me than chauffeuring my younger son to his chemo appointments, shuttling my mother to doctors, ER's, and rehab facilities, and making regular flights across the country to help my older son and his wife while he was undergoing treatment. I write funny books, and I often wasn't in a particularly funny mood. But sometimes I was able to make myself laugh with my writing."

Arnold's advice on getting through this kind of ordeal was to manage deadlines and stress through a variety of approaches.

"If you can—e.g., if you're indie—don't set deadlines, pre-orders, or anything else that might stress you out," Arnold said. "Hand as much as you can over to a virtual assistant, if you have one. Tell your newsletter readers you're going through some family health crises which will throw your schedule off, and then don't worry about sending out regular newsletters. Try to do something every day that you find pleasurable and that will reduce your stress level. Follow the old airplane cliché about putting on your own oxygen mask before you help others. You need to take care of yourself. And remember to laugh."

Taking your time to work through a difficult time is also important, as Katie MacAlister advises.

"When my husband died unexpectedly in 2012, I was in the middle of writing the first book in a new series for NAL," McAlister said. "I knew I would need some time off to deal with the fact that my world had just changed, so I explained the situation to my editor. She asked me

how much time I'd need (since my book was due within a few months), and stupidly, I told her an extra month would be all I needed to get my life back on track.

"That was a huge mistake. Not only was I underestimating the amount of processing there was dealing with grief, I also didn't take into account the sheer amount of time needed to wrap up all the legalities. Once that month of what I thought of as coping was done, I loaded up my book file and stared at it for a good three days without my muse once even casting an eye at it. I assumed it was just the lack of time spent with the book that was causing issues, but it soon became apparent that not only is it hard to fire up your creativity when you are still grieving a lost spouse, but it's even harder when you write lighthearted, funny books."

McAlister got the book done, but said it's not one of my favorites.

"The humor feels flawed to me, and I'm sure if I looked at that book with a critical eye, I'd see a large number of things wrong with it, all stemming from forcing myself to write when my muse needed time to recharge," she said. "Now older and wiser, and having lost beloved pets (I grieved for an entire year when one of my dogs died), I see several things that I should have done when trying to write through adversity."

McAlister has three things in hindsight she thinks should have done.

"Pride at being an in-control person/grounded/well-balanced emotionally...yeah, that all goes out the window when it comes to grief," she said. "Everyone around me would have been happy to give me whatever time I wanted had I asked for it; it was only my own inexperience that put me in a position where I had to force creativity to flow when it wasn't ready."

After the loss of one her dogs, McAlister said she should have sought grief counseling.

"I see now with hindsight that I was very close to spiraling into depression," she said. "The loss of my dog happened almost simultaneously with the loss of a close friend's child, and those two tragedies were too much for my psyche."

One thing McAlister did that helped was to immerse herself in a hobby.

"I have always loved paper crafting, so I spent long months making detailed cards, and bound journals," she said. "Crafting felt good; it was a way to indulge in a creative outlet that wasn't writing, and I think that went a long way to refilling my creative well."

Writers can have hard times besides the death of a loved one. Divorce and natural disasters can also occur.

"In 2013, when I was on deadline, my husband of 25 years walked out," Lexi George said. "My books are humorous. Hard to be romantic and funny when you are in a black hole. I was a year late on my book, but I finally got off the couch and finished the darn thing."

However, in 2017, outside circumstances again reared their head, when George was writing book two of a fantasy, and the hits kept coming.

"I was forced into retirement due to political shenanigans at work. That was hard because I lost my work family, but I got back on the horse and continued writing," she said. "Nov. 2018 I am deep in the throes of a book due in January and I get a call from my dermatologist that the tiny black bump under my eye is a rare and deadly kind of skin cancer. Mohs procedure and lymph node biopsies followed (clean, thank God) and a PET scan, also clean, followed by 28 rounds of radiation on my face. Oh, and a thyroidectomy because I had a nodule and they couldn't determine what it was."

George describe it as a scary year that pushed her deadline back, and called herself “a poster child for What Not To Be as a writer.” However, her characters, friends and muse kept her going.

“Honestly, my biggest motivation was the story and the characters. They kept nagging at me. ‘Hel-looo! We’re still here and talking to you. Get off your stuff and write.’ I also had encouragement from my writers group, and that was a tremendous help. Bottom line: I am stubborn and my muse is a nagging bitch,” George said.

For Claudia Dain, a disaster impacted her life.

“My creativity challenge was that my house burned to the ground; the fire was started by workmen in our home. My three children, husband, and I ran out of the house with the clothes on our backs and nothing else. My computer with all my books on it, including the WIP, was melted into a chunk of metal slag,” she said.

Dain was not yet published but had an agent.

“I had four finished novels and was partway through number five. During the following 15 months, we went through a very expensive lawsuit against the workmen’s company, two of my young children struggled with deep depression, we had many legal and financial problems rebuilding our home, my agent dropped me, and my mother, my last living parent, died,” she said. “My husband took my melted computer to a special company that specializes in this sort of thing and they were able to retrieve all my files, intact. I sat in our rental house and said to myself, ‘Writers write.’ I finished my fifth novel during this time. I found another agent during this time as well.”

Even without a publishing deadline, Dain set for herself a six-month deadline on each novel she wrote.

“I had to keep to a publishing norm before I was published or how would I ever keep the pace after I was published? I kept repeating to myself, ‘Writers write.’ If I was an actual writer, published or not, I had to actually write. It was a simple yet profound mantra for me,” she said.

“I also found, which can be no surprise to any writer, that the act of writing, of walking into a different world and living there during the act of writing, was an escapist’s dream. I wanted to get out of my life for a few hours at a time. Writing was the gift I gave to myself,” she added. “My advice is merely a reminder. We all began to write because it gave us pleasure. When writing becomes our business, it’s easy to forget that. Remembering that writing is fun on a very elemental level for each of us is the key.”

Thank you to all these authors for giving us insight and advice on how they worked through tough times to create. Next month, several other authors contribute in Part Two.

---

*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](http://www.deniseagnew.com) and [www.creativepencoaching.com](http://www.creativepencoaching.com).*

# The Mad Scribbler

## Books in the Time of Corona

By Laura Resnick



*“Buying a book means making an investment in your own future, a kind of bet. It’s an expression of optimism about what your life will look like next week or next month, what person you will be five years from now.”*

—Dan Kois, journalist and editor

I have loved books, bookstores, and book shopping all of my life. One of my favorite childhood memories when I was growing up in Chicago is every year accompanying my father to the [Brandeis Book Sale](#); it was a magical annual fundraiser (discontinued in our era) where bibliophiles browsed through hundreds of thousands of old books on folding tables inside a series of enormous tents. It was like going on a treasure hunt where I discovered stories, authors, and decades-old editions that made my childhood richer.

For each birthday back then, my father would take me downtown to shop and have a fancy lunch. We always started the day at dusty old bookshops where I could stock up on great books for low prices, making my birthday money stretch as far as possible.

As an adult, I spent many hours at the famous Strand Bookstore and the old Fifth Avenue Barnes & Noble when I was living in New York. I haunted English-language bookshops when I lived in Italy and Israel. I’ve visited the legendary Shakespeare and Company, “arguably the most famous independent bookstore in the world,” every time I’ve been in Paris. Every time I drive through Detroit, I stop at John King Books, an enormous dusty old building stuffed with hundreds of thousands of books. And I regularly stop off at various independent booksellers in my own city.

Now, however, in a worldwide crisis where we’re repeatedly warned to get no closer to each other than six feet and to not touch surfaces that others have touched, going to a bookstore seems fraught with risk. Booksellers have handled and shelved those books, other shoppers

have touched the displays and the checkout counter, and customers or staff might sneeze violently on you. As for going to a library—these days that seems about as safe as picking a quarrel with the Russian mob. Other people have not only handled those books, library patrons have also touched every page when reading them. Some people even *lick their fingers* before turning the pages!

In any case, retail shops and libraries where I live have been closed for weeks, removing the temptation to risk contagion in search of a good book. Indeed, across many states, regions, and nations, most businesses, schools, clubs, institutions, and organizations are now closed. Events, gatherings, and milestones are canceled or postponed. Professional, educational, recreational, and social activities have been eliminated or severely curtailed.

As COVID-19 spreads, isolating us from each other and from our usual resources and routines, access to books is more crucial than ever for students, teachers, writers, researchers, and readers. Also for anyone who needs a break from the news (currently more devastating with each passing day), binge-watching TV (I am on Season 6 of the BBC's *Father Brown* mysteries), puzzling over what to do with forgotten ingredients discovered at the back of the pantry (I have no idea when or why I purchased buckwheat groats), or fulfilling a long-neglected vow to clean and organize the basement (let's call it a work in progress).

Thus, in the Time of Corona, the ebook is indisputably the ideal format for literature. I can browse, shop for, purchase, and download ebooks daily without risking contact with anyone outside my home. I can safely borrow ebooks and digital audiobooks from the library, which can lend to me without endangering the health of librarians. Indie writers and even traditional publishers can easily change ebook prices at online vendors, making them more affordable to millions of people who, in addition to being stuck at home indefinitely, are also experiencing income loss and financial hardship because of widespread shutdowns and layoffs.

In mid-March, prolific indie author J.A. Konrath announced, "Every day for 90 days I will make a new Kindle ebook free or 99 cents." (Visit his social media for daily updates on those titles.) [Tor.com](#) offered free downloads of John Scalzi's Hugo Award-winning novel *Redshirts* in March, and Tor is offering another title in April. Many individual authors in my Twitter feed (including NINC members) are offering free or low-cost ebooks during the crisis. On March 22, [Apple](#) "sent out a push notification offering a free Apple Book to users." Amazon's Kindle store has a [section](#) for free ebooks (with a subheader that says: *Thank you to the authors and educators supporting this offer*). And the usual email from BookBub arrives daily in my inbox to promote great ebook deals.

Library downloads are always free, of course. Recently, because of the virus crisis, MacMillan has reversed a controversial policy to restrict ebook sales to libraries. Additionally, the company's CEO John Sargent has announced, "We will be lowering some ebook prices on a short-term basis to help expand libraries' collections in these difficult times. Stay safe." And Draft2Digital announced a program (submissions filled up quickly and are now closed) to help libraries increase ebook access and reduce cost during the crisis.

Valancourt Books, an independent press specializing in horror and supernatural fiction is offering [free audiobook downloads](#) of 50 titles from their catalogue (no account signup required), and the books' authors will still reportedly receive royalties. Another small press,

Dartfrog, has a [Quarantine Page](#) where it's offering free ebooks, with permission of the authors: "We are not collecting data or trying to grow our mailing list through this program. We seek simply to offer great indie books to people whose lives have been upended by this global pandemic."

It seems very fitting that digital books, the great disruptor of the deeply flawed publishing world, have become such a saving grace during this globally disruptive pandemic.

Which is not to say that print books and traditional booksellers are just sitting on the sidelines.

For example, [Capitol Hill Books](#), an independent bookstore in Washington, D.C., has recently implemented creative shopping schemes for print books. In mid-March, they offered readers the opportunity to reserve one private hour of shopping in their store, restricted to groups of four-or-fewer people: "Employees will be waiting at the door with gloves and hand sanitizer." The appointment slots filled quickly. *CBS This Morning* did a [TV segment](#) shortly before the program was suspended on March 25 because of local restrictions as the current crisis deepened. Another program Capitol Hill Books implemented, and is still in operation as of this writing, is the [Mystery Box of Books](#): Customers email the staff with a price point (\$25, \$50, or \$100) and tell them what sort of books and authors they like; the staff curates a selection of books for them on that basis, invoices them via PayPal, and ships the surprise books. The bookstore's Twitter feed has photos posted by delighted customers who've received their mystery boxes.

The Bookstore at the End of the World (BAEW) is another crisis-inspired endeavor. (The name is presumably a tip of the hat to *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, a novel in the late Douglas Adams' beloved Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series.) This is a collective of recently laid-off New York booksellers who've started [their own storefront](#) at [Bookshop.org](#)—an online bookstore, often cited as an alternative to Amazon, that shares the proceeds of every sale with small, independent bookstores.

Each bookseller in BAEW personally recommends titles available for order: "For the next eight weeks, 30% of the purchase price will go to sustain the talented booksellers who have lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic. Every bookseller who contributes 10 or more recommendations to this endeavor will share equally in the money generated. And all of your purchases from this online storefront, not just our recommendations, will be shipped right to your door."

The *New York Times* [reports](#) that Parnassus Books in Nashville is offering curbside book delivery and is putting together video book recommendations for its website. And The Booksmith in San Francisco, now offering free local shipping, has seen a rise in online sales. "Fulfilling those orders has turned into a constant, full-time, all-day thing for now," the store's manager told the *New York Times*.

Interviewing independent booksellers in March for [Quartz](#), Ephrat Livni reported that some booksellers noticed "panic buying," readers acquiring large stacks of books before stores shut down, as well as purchasing "ambitious reads" or "big, fat books." So maybe now is the time to tackle Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (another of the longest novels ever written) or Nora Roberts' entire body of work.



Hard times lie ahead—for our society, our industry, and our communities. But as the pandemic surges, it’s reassuring that readers still love, value, and take comfort in books—as well as buying more than they’re likely to finish reading even in this period of social distancing.

As Livni writes in his *Quartz* article, which describes books as *essential* in a time of pandemic, “At a time when our thoughts are running wild, escaping into other experiences, or trying to understand what’s happening through the lens of historical accounts, is a kind of lifesaver.”

---

*Laura Resnick writes novels, short fiction, and nonfiction.*

# 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](https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc)

## Conference 2020:

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

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

Conference e-loop: <https://groups.io/g/BeachNINC2020/>

## 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/>

## 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](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
- 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

### **2020 Board of Directors**

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

- President: Tawdra Kandle
- President-Elect: Lisa Hughey
- Secretary: Hallee Bridgeman
- 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
- Wayne Stinnett
- Vicki Lewis Thompson
- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

## 2020 Committees

*Complete committee member listings are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.*

- 2020 Conference Committee:
  - Conference Coordinator: Mel Jolly
  - Programming Chair: Tawdra Kandle
  - Asst. Prog. Chair & Trade Show: Lisa Hughey
  - Sponsorship & Trade Show: Rochelle Paige
  - Traditional Publishing Liaison: Victoria Thompson
  - Annabel Chase
- Authors Coalition Rep: Laura Phillips & Sue Phillips
- Social Media Committee:
  - Chair: Jenna Kernan
  - Rick Gualteieri
  - Lisa Hughey
  - Christine Breen
- Membership Committee
  - Sarah Woodbury
  - Boyd Craven
- *Nink* Newsletter
  - Editor: Michele Dunaway
  - Assistant Editor: Nicole Evelina
  - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
  - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
- Nominating Committee:
  - Tanya Anne Crosby
  - Kathy Carmichael
  - Kristine Smith
  - Jenny Gardiner
  - Rick Gualtieri

- 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](mailto:admin@ninc.com)

*Address changes may be made on the website.*

### ***Nink* Newsletter**

*April 2020 edition – Vol. 31, No. 4*

*Nink's* goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members.

To request reprint rights or to **submit an article proposal**, please contact [the editor](#).

Publication: 12 issues annually. Available in PDF, mobi and epub formats. Public issues redact NINC members-only information.

To change subscription preferences, please contact [admin@ninc.com](mailto:admin@ninc.com).

---

*Copyright ©2020 by Novelists, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission.*