
The Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine

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Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.

"Fiction Writing = Organizing + Creating + Marketing"

What's in This Issue

- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!
 - 2) Organizing: The Future of Publishing
 - 3) Creating: Your Story Question
 - 4) Marketing: Marketing Fiction Using Non-fiction
 - 5) What's New At AdvancedFictionWriting.com
 - 6) Randy Recommends . . .
 - 7) Steal This E-zine!
 - 8) Reprint Rights
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- 1) Welcome to the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine!

Those of you who have joined in the past month (nearly 600 of you signed up in June), welcome to my e-zine!

You should be on this list only if you signed up for it on my web site. If you no longer wish to hear from me, don't be shy -- there's a link at the bottom of this e-mail that will put you out of your misery.

If you need to change your e-mail address, there's a different link at the bottom to help you do that.

If you missed a back issue, remember that all previous

issues are archived on my web site at:
<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/ezine>

What's in this issue:

The successful novelist needs good organization, good craft, and good marketing. In this issue, we'll talk about each of these in turn.

* Are you ready for the future? The publishing industry is changing radically. Want to know my predictions for how the business will look five years from now -- and what you can do now to get ready for it? Read my bold, frightening, and quite possibly correct article, "The Future of Publishing." Warning: It's a very long article, and it may well scare you. Don't be afraid of the future. Be prepared.

* When I was doing postdoctoral research in physics years ago, I had a co-worker who told me that success in our line of work depended on asking the right question. That's true in physics; doubly true in fiction. Your novel needs to raise a question early in the book which will force your reader to race through the pages to learn the answer. Want to know how to do that like the pros? Read my column on craft for this month, "Your Story Question."

* Many novelists hate the term "platform." Why, they wonder, should they bother with building a marketing platform for themselves? This month, I'll interview a novelist, Mary DeMuth, who also writes non-fiction, and we'll talk about how and why she uses her non-fiction to help create a platform for her fiction. Get to know Mary in my interview, "Marketing Fiction Using Non-fiction."

Are you reading my blog? I've recently started an immensely popular "Ask A Question For My Blog" feature to my web site. Every day, I answer one question from my loyal blog readers. Are you missing out? Join the fun here:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/blog>

2) Organizing: The Future of Publishing

The world of publishing is currently going through massive turmoil. Some people believe that the rise of e-books is going to be the biggest single change in publishing since Gutenberg's invention of movable type.

I'm not a prophet nor a seer nor clairvoyant. But I do have my eyes open, and in this column, I give you my best predictions for the coming years. They may be

right. They may be wrong. Either way, one thing seems certain: Huge changes are coming.

I offer these predictions to suggest ways you might plan for your future. I'm using them to plan for mine.

Prediction #1: E-books Will Surpass P-books Soon

I define a "p-book" to be a book printed on paper. This term includes books created by traditional royalty-paying publishers (usually in large print runs of thousands or tens of thousands). This term also includes print-on-demand ("POD") books.

P-books are very wasteful and inefficient. To create a p-book, you must pay all of the following:

- * The person who typesets the edited manuscript
- * The person who cuts the trees to make the paper
- * The person who turns the trees into paper
- * The person who puts ink on the paper
- * The person who binds the paper into books
- * The person who puts the books in a box
- * The person who drives the box to the store
- * The person who unpacks the box in the store
- * The person who puts the book on a shelf
- * The person who rings up the sale at the counter
- * The person who puts the unsold copies back in a box
- * The person who drives the box back to the publisher
- * The person who unpacks and shreds the returns

To create either an e-book or a p-book, you must pay all of the following:

- * The person who writes the book
- * The person who edits the book
- * The person who makes the cover art for the book
- * The person who markets the book
- * The person who enters the book info into the store computers

E-books require one other player who must be paid once by each reader:

- * The person who makes the e-book reader

I've left out a number of minor players in the above cast of characters, but I think these are all the main parts. The marginal cost to create an e-book is lower than the marginal cost to create a p-book. You can automate the sales process for an e-book and deliver it anywhere in the world almost instantly at almost zero cost.

The only obstacle here is the cost of those pesky e-book readers. That cost is dropping rapidly. Furthermore, many phones and other mobile devices now include e-book reading as a standard feature, and numerous software products allow you to read e-books on your computer.

Apple's new iPad marked a turning point, because Apple promised to pay publishers a hefty 70% of the retail price of each e-book. Shortly after the iPad's announcement, Amazon began changing their payment model to be in line with Apple's. This makes e-books very profitable for publishers -- and potentially for their authors.

I believe that e-books will surpass p-books in market share within five years.

If you want some specific reasons why, I suggest you read the blog of Joe Konrath:
<http://JAKonrath.blogspot.com>

Read a few of Joe's recent blogs and see if you're not astounded at how well e-books can do in the hands of a competent marketer.

Prediction #2: E-books Will Become The "Minor Leagues"

A beginning writer faces a very long learning curve. It typically takes a writer several years to develop the skills and the contacts needed to sell a first novel to a major publisher. It's not uncommon to hear of a writer who took "ten years of hard work to become an overnight success."

During that 3 or 5 or 10 or 20 years when a writer is learning the craft of fiction, she earns nothing (or a pittance if she can find a magazine to buy her short stories). Typically, a writer writes several complete novels before she sells her first to a publisher.

That will change in the coming years. The reason is because we writers are an impatient lot, and we all believe that our work is unalloyed gold and that those philistine agents and publishers just can't recognize genius when it smacks them in the face.

I believed this before I got published. I believe it still about a couple of my manuscripts that crashed and burned before publication. You probably believe it too. In many cases, we're right.

In coming years, writers will simply short-circuit the traditional route by e-publishing their first book. It will probably sell a copy to Mom and to Aunt Mabel and to a few friends.

If the writer gets any encouragement at all from this first attempt, she'll e-publish another, and another, and another. As she improves, her books will sell to a wider and wider audience, eventually going far beyond her circle of family and friends.

When I outline this scenario to my writer friends,

they're all horrified at the prospect of a market "flooded with awful e-books."

My response to that is simple: The market is smart. Readers will ignore the "flood of awful e-books." They'll gobble up the e-books that are good and will recommend them to their friends. Those friends will do likewise. The cream will rise to the top. The dregs will not. It's that simple.

For those who live in terror of the coming "flood of awful e-books," I'll simply point out that the market is already flooded with hundreds of thousands of self-published e-books (and p-books). Did you notice? Were you flooded out of your house? Are you drowning in a sea of awful books?

No, no, and no.

The market chooses the quality books because the market is composed of people who know what they like and who talk about it. Word-of-mouth will sift the quality from the quantity, just as it always has. Only a very few people ever see any given "awful book." Most readers only come across a few "awful books." Lots of people see the really good books. The market efficiently finds them.

E-books will be the minor leagues of publishing (to use a baseball metaphor). This means that new authors will try out their talents and rise to their own level. Agents and publishers will no longer have to play the role of gatekeepers who try to guess what the market will buy. The market will decide what it wants to buy.

I know there are some authors who think it will be a horrible prostitution of our art that the market should actually get to decide what sells. Tragically, the market has been deciding what sells for hundreds of years. In the future, it will do so better and quicker because the gatekeepers will vanish.

Prediction #3: Beginning Authors Will E-publish First

Beginning writers will e-publish their work long before they p-publish it. They will do so because all the other beginning writers are doing so. Nobody wants to get left behind. Everybody wants to be discovered. Everybody believes they are writing a heartbreaking work of staggering genius.

Some writers are.

Yes, really. Some writers are exceptionally good. Those writers will get discovered far quicker than they would have in years past. They'll earn money at their writing. They'll blog about their successes, making it clear that their road to success led through e-books.

Many other writers will follow and soon the majority of unpublished writers will be publishing their work first as e-books.

The result of this is that agents and editors will buy fewer and fewer unpublished novelists. Instead, they'll simply watch the e-market to see what sells. Then they'll acquire the p-book rights for those e-books that are proven successful.

This is the smart thing for them to do. Publishers have long joked that "The way to be profitable in this business is to only publish the bestsellers." In the past, nobody had any idea how to predict the bestsellers. In the coming e-future, it will be obvious. Successful e-books will make successful p-books.

I believe publishers will eventually refuse to take chances on any unpublished writers. Those writers will therefore be forced to publish themselves first as e-books, whether they want to or not. This transition will take time, but I expect that within five years, the overwhelming majority of all first novels will be published first as e-books.

Prediction #4: Mid-list Authors May Do Better

Mid-list authors have had a rough go during the last few years. Publishers have been chafed by shrinking profit margins. They've been willing to pay big bucks to the sure-thing bestselling authors. They've been willing to pay peanuts to new novelists in the hope of finding gold and raking in huge bucks. But they've been less willing to keep paying the mid-listers to write book after book that just earns out its advance (or doesn't quite earn out but does still make a small profit).

In the coming e-future, mid-list authors will try their hand at e-books and discover that their fans love them in e-format just as much as in p-format. Mid-listers will decide that self-publishing an e-book for 70% of the pie is better than working with a traditional publisher for 7% of the pie.

This is rational behavior. Those mid-list authors who can market themselves at least 10% as effectively as their publishers would market them will decide to do so. They'll e-publish their own work and market it themselves, no longer subject to the whims of their publishers.

Some mid-listers will flourish in this e-culture. They'll connect to their fan base and grow it. And the publishers will notice. The publishers are both smart and rational. They'll see which mid-list novels do best

as e-books and will bankroll them as p-books.

Some mid-listers will refuse this route. I believe they'll do less well as time goes on. They'll find their publishers increasingly fearful of publishing their work and increasingly stingy with advances.

In this world, publishers will finally achieve their goal -- they'll only publish the winners.

This may take longer than five years to sort out, since mid-list authors appear at first glance to have the most to lose. It will take them some time to see that they can do well in an e-future. I believe they'll see it eventually, and the sooner they see it, the better they'll do.

Prediction #5: Bestselling Authors Will Profit Most

Bestselling authors always profit most. The reason is because the market rewards best what it likes best. In the coming e-future, the market will operate more efficiently. That means it'll reward the best performers more quickly and more richly.

It's hard for me to predict how one aspect of this will play out. It may be that traditional publishers will retain their top-performing authors in e-book format. Or it may be that bestselling authors will e-publish on their own first and rake in all the e-profits, and only then sell the rights to the p-books. Right now, I can't foresee which way it'll go.

I'm confident that p-books will live on and flourish. A strong segment of the market wants p-books. If publishers publish a p-book only after the novel has already proven itself in the e-market, then they'll benefit from better information and will not lose their shirts on wildly expensive gambles. Even if they publish a novel in e-format and p-format simultaneously, they'll benefit from the improved efficiencies in the e-market.

Prediction #6: Publishers Will No Longer Accept Returns

Currently, publishers allow bookstores to return unsold books for full credit. This practice began in the Great Depression, and it's been a curse on the industry ever since. Bookstores can order more copies than they expect to sell, because there's no risk. Anything they don't sell just goes back to the publisher.

What this has meant for the publisher is that returns on a book can kill them. It might make great PR to tell everyone they printed a million, but it's not so pretty if half a million come back as returns.

Returns are wasteful. E-books can't be returned. In the coming e-future, I suspect that publishers will decide that p-books can't be returned either.

This prediction is not a certainty. I don't think it's quite as likely as most of my other predictions here. But it seems rational to end the practice of accepting returns. I suspect that as soon as one of the major publishers makes this move, the others will follow.

Prediction #7: Agents Will Stop Reading Slush

In the old days of publishing, publishers received enormous numbers of manuscripts from hopeful writers. The manuscripts went into a large stack (called the "slush pile") and publishers hired staff to sift through the slush looking for gold.

Few publishers these days will even open a manuscript from a writer they don't know. Instead, they rely on agents to submit manuscripts. Effectively, publishers have off-loaded their slush piles to the agents.

Agents were already overworked, and this has put a massive strain on them. Their real job is to represent their clients. Now they also have to sift through mountains of slush, written by people whom they don't represent and most of whom they will never represent.

In the coming e-future, agents will stop reading the slush pile because they'll have a much more effective method of finding new talent. They'll ask to see sales numbers on e-books by prospective clients. If a writer can't show a good enough track record for sales of e-books, then the agent won't even consider representing the writer.

In effect, the agents will off-load the slush pile to the market. The market won't mind, because the market is extremely efficient. The market will ignore writing it doesn't like and reward writing it does like.

Please note that I didn't say "the market will ignore bad writing and reward good writing." I do believe there is such a thing as good writing and bad writing. The problem is that there isn't any consensus on which is which. I like one kind of writing. My wife likes another. My best friend likes a third.

"Good" and "bad" are multi-dimensional concepts when applied to writing. That makes it very difficult to choose what to publish. It really is true that one man's meat is another man's poison.

However, sales numbers are one-dimensional. There is a world of difference between selling 10 copies and selling 10,000.

The market efficiently translates its likes and dislikes into hard sales numbers. In the future, I believe that agents (and of course publishers) will do their initial sifting simply by looking at those numbers. Then, from the novels that have a good track record in e-sales, they'll select the ones they like.

If this prediction is correct (and I can't prove that it is, but it seems reasonable), the life of agents will get a bit easier in the future.

However, I believe that fewer books will be p-published in the future, and that probably means that fewer agents will be needed. So I foresee a winnowing of agents. Those who are currently successful will be more successful or will have to work less hard. Those who are currently marginal may well go out of business.

Prediction #8: Publishers Will Become More Profitable

I believe publishers will be more profitable, but they'll publish fewer titles.

They'll be more profitable because they'll publish only those authors that have a strong track record in the e-market (or an exceptional track record in sales of past p-books). It's got to be more profitable when you only publish the winners. It's got to be more profitable when you have more information about potential sales before you publish a book.

Publishers will publish fewer titles because not all books are winners. Some books just don't do well in the market. In the past, publishers had to guess the winners. In the future, publishers will read the winners off the e-book charts. They'll ignore the losers on those same charts. That has to mean fewer titles.

This does not mean the public will have less choice. The public will have much, much, much more choice in the e-market. It will have less choice in the p-market, but those choices will have higher average quality. That's a net win for the public.

While I think it very likely that publishers will have higher profit margins in the future, it's an open question whether they'll earn more in gross revenues. I make no prediction on that. Naively, it seems that they would gross less. However, they might conceivably gross more, depending on complex factors that I can't foresee.

Prediction #9: Some Will Do Better; Some Will Do Worse

I believe that talented authors will do somewhat better in the e-future. I believe effective agents will do better and so will most publishers.

I foresee a burgeoning market for freelance editors (who can help writers polish their work before taking it to e-market). Likewise for freelance graphic artists (who can create great covers for e-books).

I foresee a larger, better array of choices for the reading public.

However, not everybody will do better. Some people will do worse. Let's make a list of them. We already discussed these people before, but let's list them here again:

- * The person who typesets the edited manuscript
- * The person who cuts the trees to make the paper
- * The person who turns the trees into paper
- * The person who puts ink on the paper
- * The person who binds the paper into books
- * The person who puts the books in a box
- * The person who drives the box to the store
- * The person who unpacks the box in the store
- * The person who puts the book on a shelf
- * The person who rings up the sale at the counter
- * The person who puts the unsold copies back in a box
- * The person who drives the box back to the publisher
- * The person who unpacks and shreds the returns

None of these people contribute actual value to the story. They only contribute value to the medium -- the handling of paper and ink. As the demand for paper and ink shrinks, so will the demand for these folks. That may be cruel and Darwinian, but it seems to me inevitable.

In addition, I also think that brick-and-mortar bookstores will become smaller (as measured in square footage). It's hard to say for sure if they'll also become fewer in number, but it's a good bet that they will. That's been the trend for several years, and I suspect it'll continue. It's possible that they'll become a bit more profitable, since they'll be stocking only p-books that are marketplace winners. But they may face increasing pressure from the online merchants for p-books, which can stock a much larger choice. I make no prediction on their profitability.

Those are my predictions for the future. I can't prove that any of them will come true. But I'm making my own plans based on this vision.

It's not the gloomy-doomy future that many writers see ahead of us. However, it's a future that will require serious adjustments from just about everybody in the publishing industry.

In five years, we'll know whether I'm right or wrong.

3) Creating: Your Story Question

Will Luke Skywalker save the galaxy? Will Scarlett steal Ashley from Melanie? Will Bruce Willis rescue his estranged wife before the terrorists blast her to bits?

Each of these is a "Story Question" -- the question that drives a reader to read a novel or watch a movie.

A novel without a Story Question is a car without an engine. It may look fantastic on the outside. It may have great styling. But it's got no oomph, and without oomph, it's not going anywhere.

Understand that the answer to the Story Question is usually not in much doubt. Most people who watch STAR WARS are pretty sure Luke is going to set things right, one way or another. Most readers of GONE WITH THE WIND can tell that Ashley is the wrong guy for Scarlett. Most viewers of DIE HARD know going in that Bruce Willis is a match for any number of terrorists.

There are two things that are critically important in setting up your Story Question:

- * The reader should care about the answer
- * The reader should be in doubt about how it'll be resolved

How do you make your reader care about the answer to the Story Question? You usually do that by making the reader care about the characters.

Luke and his compatriots, Princess Leia and Han Solo and Obi-wan Kenobi are likable enough characters, and they're on the side of right against the evil Galactic Empire. That's really enough.

Scarlett is a bit less likable. She's spoiled and self-centered. What makes her interesting is that she's so intent on getting Ashley. She desperately wants him, and a powerful desire always makes a character more compelling.

Bruce Willis is also not completely likable. He's a rough, tough New York cop. What captivates viewers in DIE HARD is that Bruce clearly has a soft spot for his wife, who really doesn't deserve it. She's pretty much written him off. Yet Bruce doesn't hesitate to take on a dozen machine-gun-toting terrorists -- barefoot and armed only with a pistol -- to save a woman who doesn't love him. That's downright heroic.

How do you keep your reader in doubt? By showing your lead character constantly facing enormous obstacles. The road to nirvana should never run straight.

Luke and company face a ton of challenges -- escaping Luke's home planet, being captured by the Death Star, facing Darth Vader in single combat, being chased by Tie fighters, and finally being tracked by the Death Star to the rebel base. Each time, our heroes escape by a hair. They pay a price when they lose their leader. But they plug on, twisting and turning toward their goal. That's captivating.

Scarlett is no less challenged. Ashley turns her down and then that dreadful Rhettt Butler mocks her. She marries a man she doesn't love and then is widowed. She lives in the same house with her rival Melanie who's married to the man she loves. She returns to her home and finds it nearly destroyed. Whether you like Scarlett or hate her, she faces a lot of trauma and survives it. Scarlett's life is a train wreck that you can't NOT watch.

Bruce hits a lot of challenges too. Rather than running and hiding, he confronts the terrorists, picking them off one by one, taking their weapons, mocking the survivors while he calls in the cops. Uncowed, the bad guys strike back harder than Bruce expected and convince the police that his SOS was a false alarm. Now Bruce is on the run, racing barefoot through rooms full of shattered glass. When the police finally come to the rescue, they misread the situation and make a battle plan that will get Bruce and the hostages killed. Bruce struggles on relentlessly, intent on getting back his wife at any cost. You know he's going to win, but you can't imagine how.

That's the secret of a great story. Create a compelling Story Question. Give the reader someone to root for and a reason to root for him. Make it look like he can't possibly win. Then answer the Story Question in an unexpected way.

Is it really that simple? Yes, it's really that simple. But being simple is not the same as being easy.

4) Marketing: Marketing Fiction Using Non-fiction

I met Mary DeMuth several years ago at a Christian writing conference and we've been friends ever since. Mary seems to know everybody and she's the kind of

person who connects other people. I've lost count of how many people I've met because Mary invited a group of people at a writing conference to go out somewhere to eat together. Mary is also exceptionally open about her life. That is critical for her writing, as you'll see shortly, but suffice to say that her memoir, *THIN PLACES*, is one of the most moving memoirs I've read. Ever.

Mary writes both fiction and non-fiction, and they tie together remarkably well. In this month's column, I'll interview Mary about how to market fiction when it's related to a non-fiction topic.

Marketing is about finding your "tribe" and opening the channels of communication so you can talk to your tribe and so it can talk to you, to other tribe members, and to the world. Mary is one writer who's doing that pretty effectively.

Here's a short blurb describing Mary:

Mary DeMuth is a speaker and the author of nine books (both fiction and nonfiction). She loves to help folks turn their trials to triumph. She lives in TX with her three children, two pets, and one husband. Find out more at <http://www.marydemuth.com> or learn about her writing mentoring program at <http://www.thewritingspa.com>.

Now here's the interview:

RI: Your first novel got a very flattering review from *Publisher's Weekly*. Explain your title for us. What prompted you to name your book *WATCHING THE TREE LIMBS*?

MD: The protagonist in the book, Mara, is stalked and abused by a bully neighborhood boy named General. She "escapes" the abuse by watching the tree limbs above her. The limbs are a metaphor for the most horrific tragedy and, later, a beautiful redemption.

RI: Your latest fiction is a three-book series set in Defiance, Texas. In book 1, *DAISY CHAIN*, a 14-year-old boy must deal with a massive load of guilt after his best friend Daisy disappears from town the night he failed to walk her safely home. Tell us more about this book and your reasons for writing it.

MD: I wrote this series because I'd experienced some uniquely painful relationships within the community of faith, where folks said one thing, then acted the opposite. It made me very mad, so I vented my frustration through this fictional town Defiance, Texas. In *Daisy Chain*, we meet Jed, the 14-year-old, whose father is a pastor. In the pulpit he's pristine, but behind closed doors, he's a rage-aholic. Jed not

only has to come to grips with the loss of his best friend Daisy (she's missing), but also his perception of what it means to be a true man. In the series, the most unlikely, overlooked people become heroic, while the people whose position makes them appear heroic act terribly.

RI: Those are dark themes you're writing about, Mary. If you don't mind my asking, why is a nice Christian girl like you writing about the abuse of young boys and the rape of young girls?

MD: Great question, Randy. As you said in your intro, I'm actually quite a positive, joyful girl. How did I get to that place? By going back to my past and healing from pain back then. In my opinion, folks don't heal from unreality or secrets that fester deep inside. They heal in light of the truth. Ted Dekker, a successful, bestselling novelist said this at a writers conference I attended: "The beauty of redemption shines brighter on a dark canvas." What he meant by that was that our stories must show the darkness in reality to be able to best highlight a character's positive change. In other words, show the story world for what it is, evil and all, so that the beauty comes across as more breathtaking. I write about dark subjects in order to show triumph over them. That being said, I don't write happy, tied up endings in my fiction. The reality of a broken world still comes through. It's the resilience of the characters that endears the readers to the story.

RI: Mary, you've experienced more hell in your forty-few years than most people would in a dozen lifetimes. But the strange thing is that nobody would ever guess that on first meeting you. You're one of the most joyful people I know. If you didn't tell people what your early life was like, they'd never guess. So . . . why do you tell them?

MD: I like that. Forty-few. That's going to be my answer at parties when folks ask my age.

I tell them because stories are powerful. I've healed and experienced change and freedom from hearing other people's stories. Anne Lamott wrote this in her excellent writing book *Bird by Bird*: "If you are no longer wracked or in bondage to a person or a way of life, tell your story. Risk freeing someone else." I tell my own crazy story to free others, so others won't feel alone.

RI: In your recent memoir, *THIN PLACES*, you tell all, and now it's clear how your own life ties in with your

fiction. It's also clear how you rose above your dark past to live a life of joy. I thought THIN PLACES was brilliant. Who do you see as your primary audience for THIN PLACES? Who is your ideal reader?

MD: I have to stop here and thank Randy for his help in figuring this out. He kindly pushed me further and further to think strategically about my tribe. (And my hat goes off to Seth Godin for his excellent book Tribes). Since Thin Places is a memoir that details the agony and beauty of recovering from sexual abuse, substance abuse in the home, neglect, and the death of a parent, I realize that it has a universal appeal. I often receive emails that say something along the lines of, "I didn't share your circumstances, but I could relate to the aftermath." As humans we all suffer tragedy, often at the hands of others, particularly in childhood. I offer hope to those who can't seem to let go of "back then." My ideal reader is a man or woman between the ages of 25-45 who likes memoirs like The Glass Castle. It's someone who enjoys reading authentic, gritty words, not for the sake of glorying in the gore of the past, but with an eye toward healing and hope and overcoming. These readers love to learn from a story well told.

RI: Marketing either fiction or non-fiction is all about finding your "tribe" -- the people who resonate with your message and who will be all too eager to tell others about your work. You just described your tribe above. What do you do to reach your tribe and empower them to tell others about your work? Do you do public speaking? Do you have an online presence where your tribe can get to know you?

MD: I'm currently undergoing a website and blog redesign with this reader in mind. I'm spending a lot of time focusing on Thin Places readers as I write my next memoir (about my father). Those readers, thankfully, also tend to jump over to my fiction because my fiction also deals in this kind of raw reality. As you intimated, Randy, my fiction and nonfiction ties together quite neatly.

I blog frequently, but the blog's been separate from my website <http://www.marydemuth.com>. I'm uniting them now, and exploring a way for my readers to interact with a possible forum on my site. I'm also developing a 6-session audio series about how people who are stuck in the past can find healing to live differently today. I have a presence at all the usual suspects, Twitter (@marydemuth), Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/mary.demuth>), LinkedIn, etc. And I'm currently brainstorming ways to build my fan page. (I recently reached my Facebook friend limit of 5000 people). My fan page is here: <http://www.facebook.com/?tid=1506140615247&sk=messages#!/pages/Mary-DeMuth/33200616570?ref=ts>

I'm exploring how to use Facebook ads to build my readership there.

Like Randy, I also have a monthly ezine called Inside Renewal for those who want to grow further. You can access it here if you're interested:

http://visitor.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001hAbSJWFaOM61zL_z5wjEXMX-ot0M8HQE

Randy is my hero/guru in this respect. Although I don't have as many readers as this ezine, every week I'm garnering more readership. I'm thankful for every single one. I often tell myself that selling books is simple: It's one reader at a time.

When I first started in the publishing biz about six years ago, my mentor, author Sandra Glahn, told me the best way to sell books is to speak. Although I consider myself social media and web savvy, Sandra's words have truly proved true. This year I'm exploring more ways to speak to groups large and small. I find that when people meet me and hear me tell my stories, they want to read more. Thankfully this isn't hard for me, as I love to communicate.

I would say my weakness is enabling and empowering readers to tell others about my work. I'm not great at that yet, but am looking into giving my readers tools to do just that. All in good time.

One last piece of advice: A lot of authors don't realize how much work marketing is. It's better that you explore it now (whether you write nonfiction or fiction) and count the cost ahead of time. Also consider your fit. You may not be the life of the party, or you may shudder to think of being on the radio. That's okay. Find something that works for you and do it to the best of your ability. Marketing should be a joy because it springs from your own unique gifts and passions. It's simply part of the job. If you dread it going in, you'll be miserable as an author. Instead, embrace it and revel in the opportunities that come your way to promote. Promote with a peaceful, joyful, settled heart.

RI: Thanks for your insights, Mary. I'm looking forward to seeing the results of your recent work on pulling together your marketing efforts into one coherent whole.

My new book, WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES, has been selling well since it began shipping last November and is one of the most popular fiction writing books on Amazon. You can find out all about WRITING FICTION FOR DUMMIES here:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/info/wffd>

If you've already bought the book and like it, I'd be delighted if you wrote an Amazon review. Thanks to those of you who already have! I appreciate you!

I've also been gratified at the response to my latest software product, "Snowflake Pro," which makes it fast, easy, and fun to work through the steps of my well-known Snowflake method for designing a novel. You can find out more about Snowflake Pro at:

<http://www.SnowflakeProSoftware.com>

I teach at roughly 4 to 6 writing conferences per year, depending on my schedule. My schedule for this year is now mostly filled in.

In early August, I'll be doing a small group mentoring workshop at the Oregon Christian Writers Conference. This group is now closed.

Immediately after that, I'll be attending the Willamette Writers Conference in Portland, Oregon. I won't be teaching; I'll just be hanging out and learning. Hope to see some of you there!

In October, I'll be teaching an all-day series of lectures for an RWA group (RWA = Romance Writers of America) in Houston.

Also in October, I'll be teaching an all-day series of lectures for the Denver Romance Writers.

If you'd like me to teach at your conference, email me to find out how outrageously expensive I am.

If you'd just like to hear me teach, I have a number of recordings and e-books that are outrageously cheap.

Details here:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com/info>

6) Randy Recommends . . .

I don't take paid ads for this e-zine. I do, however, recommend people I like.

I'm a huge fan of Margie Lawson's courses, both the

ones she teaches in person and the ones she sells on her web site at

<http://www.MargieLawson.com>

Margie is a psychologist who applies what she knows about human psychology to writing fiction. I believe her material is brilliant. Check her out on her web site!

I've also become a fan of Thomas Umstatted's terrific uncommon-sense thoughts on internet marketing. You can read Thomas's blog at:

<http://www.AuthorTechTips.com>

Thomas is especially skilled at helping authors create an inexpensive but powerful web site using WordPress blogs. I am a huge fan of this approach, since it gives the most bang for the buck in an author site. Find out more about this at:

<http://www.UmstattedMedia.com>

7) Steal This E-zine!

This E-zine is free, and I personally guarantee it's worth at least 67059 times the price. I invite you to "steal" it, but only if you do it nicely . . .

Distasteful legal babble: This E-zine is copyright Randall Ingermanson, 2010.

Extremely tasteful postscript: I encourage you to email this E-zine to any writer friends of yours who might benefit from it. I only ask that you email the whole thing, not bits and pieces. Otherwise, you'll be getting desperate calls at midnight from your friends asking where they can get their own free subscription.

At the moment, there is one place to subscribe:

<http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>

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Award-winning novelist Randy Ingermanson, "the

Snowflake Guy," publishes the Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, with more than 21,000 readers, every month. If you want to learn the craft and marketing of fiction, AND make your writing more valuable to editors, AND have FUN doing it, visit <http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com>.

Download your free Special Report on Tiger Marketing and get a free 5-Day Course in How To Publish a Novel.

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