



# As the Author Learns

Bits & bites about publishing & writing from

*J L Wilson*

Author of mysteries, time travel, romances, & other  
books that defy categorizing

## What's Happening?

Before I get into news, here's my yearly "opt out" info:

*I send my newsletter to people who requested it, either by giving me their email address or by signing up via Yahoo in my once active Yahoo group. All my newsletters are posted to my website if you ever want to go back and look at them.*

*If my personal email is hacked, I'll do what I can to prevent anyone getting your email address. My website is part of my blog on Google and as such it uses Google's privacy policies. If you don't want to hear from me, send me an email and I'll remove your name from my email list.*

On to what's happening...I'm in a big "clean out" mode and I spent most of January going through EVERYTHING – this includes physical files, electronic files, cabinets, drawers, and containers. When we moved three years ago, I downsized quite a bit but I did hang on to some things that really served no purpose. I kept them because, well, I always had them.

One of these kinds of things are my writing notebooks. For every book I would use a small notebook to jot down ideas, floor plans, pictures, and anything else related to the book. As I contemplated the two big plastic bins FULL of these notebooks, I realized that I don't have a comprehensive, easy-to-find list anywhere of the details in my books.

Why does it matter? Well, I don't want to repeat myself for one thing. Did I already use that name? What about that location or that profession or that pet name? How about the bad guy? Am I being inventive about the kind of crimes I'm portraying?

The other aspect to this is the fact that I'm no longer using these physical notebooks. I've switched to using an electronic filing system for all things related to my books. I've used that system for the last three manuscripts I wrote and I feel comfortable using it.

I decided to go back and re-read everything I've had published. As I do, I'm making notes about the characters, the plot, the location, the timeframe, its publishing history – all the things that should be in those physical notebooks. As I do this, I'm checking the notebooks to see if it all ties together. Is there a reason to retain that notebook? I will keep some because there are maps or pictures in them, but others I think I can toss.

I was surprised to find that (especially in my earlier books) what was published and what I had jotted in the notebook was different. I must have been using those physical journals for ideas and snips and thoughts, but when the actual book was written, it was different.

I'm almost done reviewing all the books. I just have two more published ones to go, then I'll do something similar for the manuscripts I have written but haven't submitted yet. And then I can pitch out those bins full of notebooks because everything is saved electronically in two spots: my electronic tablet and copied to an online note-taking system.

Yes, I am paranoid about losing work so I \*always\* duplicate my backups. Heck, I have backups of my backups. You can't be too careful...

## In Other News

As I work on my reviews, I'm starting to get ideas for a new book. It's been a month or two since I finished my last manuscript and I'm feeling itchy to get started again. I have a good idea for a plot for a Jack-and-the-Beanstalk story involving an old murder, a cold case detective, and a multi-national seed company. I'm starting to hear those voices in my head so that tells me it might be time to start writing.



I also took the leap and set up a new computer system; this was far easier than I thought it might be because I used a laptop as my base and was able to duplicate the old computer quite easily. My old desktop system was almost 8 years old and already had one disk crash to its credit. I figured it was past time for another one to happen in the near future.

So far, things are working fine. I'll keep the old computer around for a few months, just to make sure I have everything I need. Then I'll erase it and recycle it. One more downsizing thing done!

## What's Next?

I finished first-round edits for my Cinderella story, so that process is moving along. I may submit another book to my editor in the middle of the year, so I'll decide which to do.

I'm speaking at a local library in April and May about writing and publishing. I have a 3-hour seminar-style talk I give about crafting a book, then another one on the trials and tribulations of self-publishing. I need to dig out my notes and get that all updated. So much has changed since I taught it almost 13 years ago – there's a LOT to update.

My goal for this year is to send out queries to agents for my series and to consider covers for the series if I decide I can't get a 'regular' publisher for it. I also want to investigate audio recordings and see if that's financially feasible. Then there's the whole subject of how to make my books more discoverable. There are so many books out there and it's hard to be noticed. I doubt if there's a sure-fire way to make it happen, but I'll do some experiments.

It can't hurt to try, right? 😊