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## Top Secret Work Habits of the Successful Novelist

by [Randy Ross](#)

Recently, I've been working on my novel at the local library, where I don't have Web access to distract me. Last week, a successful novelist\* started coming in to work on what I'm assuming is his next book. So, I've had the good fortune to observe his routine, which I'd like to share.

**11:00 a.m.:** He arrives, starts his computer.

**11:02:** As the computer boots up, he scratches his forehead with the eraser of a yellow pencil. (I'm guessing it's a Ticonderoga #2.)

**11:04:** He stares deep into his screen. I imagine his synapses firing, forming succinct, pearly prose.

**11:07:** He presses two keys with his right hand. And again stares deep into his screen, synapses fire, prose knit and purl. The sight moves something deep inside me; I have to look away.

**11:15:** I glance back and the novelist has his head down on the desk. He's taking a nap. Synapses need their rest, too.

**12:00 p.m.:** His head is up and once again he peers deep into his screen. He scratches himself again with the pencil eraser. (It appears to be the same yellow pencil.) He pauses and checks his watch.

**12:01:** He leaves his seat, cell phone in hand. (He probably has to call his New York editor, or his New York agent, or possibly a reporter from *Vanity Fair*.)

**12:15:** I look out the library window—the novelist is sitting on the lawn, talking on his cell phone. Minutes later, he flips the phone shut and walks off into the distance. His computer is still open on his desk. (It appears to be a new wide-screen Dell with a tasteful

black case.) This is a public library—isn't he worried that someone will steal his computer? Oh, right, the man is a true artist; he is not attached to his possessions.

**1:30:** The novelist returns with a half empty bottle of Diet Coke. Food and drink are not allowed in this section of the library. But he writes fiction, genre-busting fiction. He lives to break rules. He drinks his soda in open defiance of the library establishment.

**1:32:** I look up and the novelist's head is down, his face to the side, his eyes closed. He must be recharging the synapses.

**2:00:** The novelist packs up his computer and pencil, and leaves. He is a model to us all—it doesn't matter how much you get done, the important thing is to get that ass in the seat.

\*This story was inspired by actual events and an actual novelist I observed. But identifying features have been changed and exaggerations added for entertainment value.

### About the Author

Randy Ross is a Boston-area writer and former executive editor for *PC World* magazine. His fiction has appeared in *The Drum*, *Black Heart Magazine*, and *Side B Magazine*. His non-fiction has appeared in *The Boston Herald*, the *Boston Phoenix*, and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

He is currently completing a novel with the working title, *The Loneliest Planet: A Handbook for the Chronically Single*, and plans to circulate the manuscript to agents this year.

He also invites readers to visit his humorous blog, [TheLoneliestPlanet.com](#), and his personal web site: [RandyRossMedia.com](#).