

MINI-SERIES MANIA

by Stephanie Bond

A craze has swept the romance industry—mini-series mania. Whether referred to as "continuities," "sequels," or "spin-offs," romance customers love reading about characters that are connected in some way. Mini-series come in all forms, possibly centering around one family (siblings), a locale (small town), a group (sorority), or even an event (the millennium). Some contain characters who know each other and feature characters from other books in the series, others are standalone books. Regardless, mini-series books are consistently the best sellers. Here's how you can help your customers find connected stories:

- Some publishers have special promotions for mini-series, ask your sales rep to give you advance notice—let them know you are especially interested in connected books.
- Be aware that one promotional tool, such as a shelf-talker, might work for more than one title.
- Look for a "flash," a little insignia on the book cover that identifies it as part of a series. Each mini-series within category romance will have its own distinctive flash, and its own "name." These flashes are meant to better target the customer, to provide a glimpse of the story's tone and/or story line.
- Subscribe to a novel database that allows you to search by mini-series.
- Read romance review magazines to stay abreast of hot mini-series trends.
- Be aware that "trilogies" can sometimes expand to four or more books if the mini-series becomes popular!
- Also be aware that the mini-series might be released in successive months within the same publishing line (for instance, January, February, and March within Harlequin Intrigue), or spread over several months within the same line (January, July, and December within Harlequin Temptation), or spread over more than one publishing line (Silhouette Intimate Moment, Silhouette Special Edition, Silhouette Desire).
- And, finally, know that some mini-series are written by the same author, while other series are "shared."

Whew! Mini-series mania can be confusing, but publishers know that voracious readers will follow the mini-series, which can be a great tool to attract readers to a less popular line or to a new line, or to introduce a new author. Which, in turn, helps you sell more books! ~**SBond**

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Article first appeared in *Romance Sells*, a publication of Romance Writers of America.