

Summer 2022.

Latest news from Author - Ned Stephenson



Hello from the Hunter Valley. This is my first author newsletter and each time I'll be sticking to a format similar to what you see now. Of course, if you would like to know anything more about my books, or my writing, let me know. And if you'd like to see a topic added to my blog on the [website](#), or covered in this newsletter, shoot me an email and I'll try to accommodate.

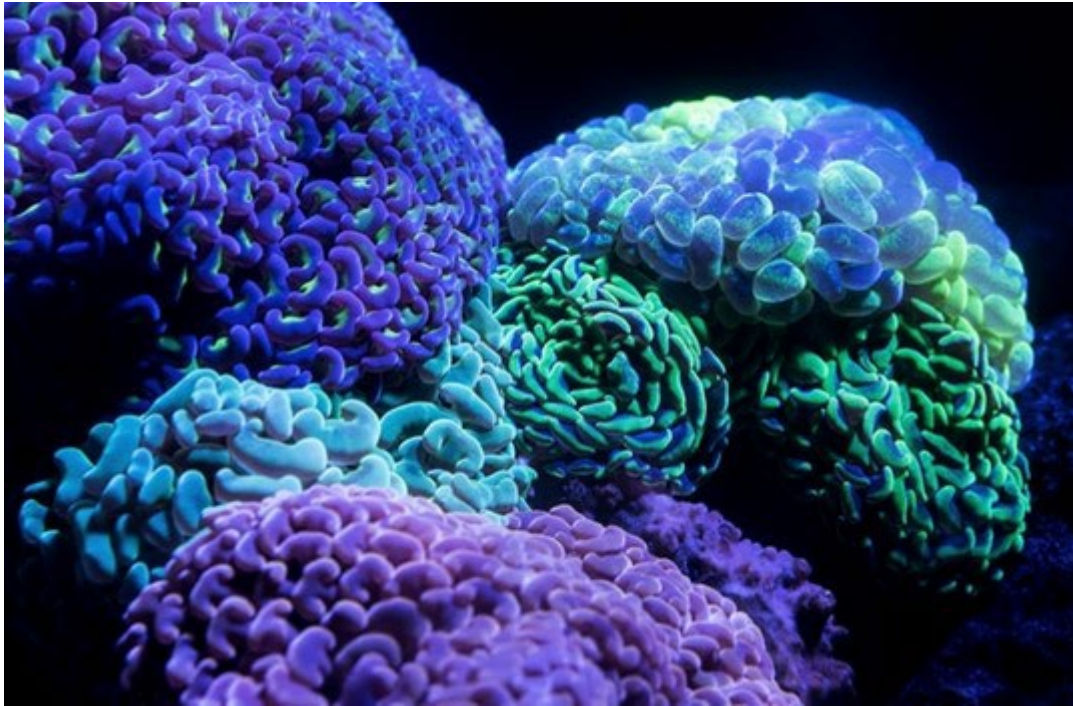
My Books Arrived!



The other day I received hardcopies of both Enhancement and Gold. Getting to hold them in my hands was a major buzz to say the least. Especially with Gold, which has been in the making for many years. Now that I've picked up some steam and ironed out the wrinkles in self-publishing, I hope to release a book a year, maybe two (I should be

careful what I promise). As you can see in the photo, I've a handful sitting here. If you would like a signed copy of either, please [email](#) me. I haven't a private purchase link on the website yet, but I'm sure we can sort something out via EFT.

More about the book - Enhancement



I've been asked where I got the idea for Enhancement. One of my [blogs](#) touches on what drove me to write the book, but I thought it might be good to share with you a little more about it.

What is the book about?

Enhancement is a science fiction book about changing human bodies so they can partially photosynthesize like plants. It's told as a chronological series of short stories covering a period of seventy-five years; from the first discovery in a university lab, through to a time when hundreds of millions of people have been modified. To keep the stories fresh, they're set in locations around the world.

Why did I write it?

There's a symbiotic relationship that occurs in corals that I first heard about while studying biology at uni. I used to do a lot of snorkelling and spearfishing at the time and loved anything about the ocean. For those unfamiliar, corals are two creatures living together. There is the polyp part, which you usually don't see during the day, they come out at night to feed on plankton in the water and look a bit like anemones. And then there's the plant-like part which lives *inside* the tissues of the polyps. That's what gives corals their stunning colours. Put really simplistically, corals are animals with plants

living inside their skin.

Other creatures can do this. There's a salamander in eastern North America and a cool marine creature called a nudibranch, who also pull off this neat trick. No doubt there are more I'm not aware of.

Anyway, that's the science, and now the question I asked myself: why haven't we tried to change our bodies to draw at least some of our body's energy needs straight from the sun? We already enhance ourselves in many ways, from face lifts, to hearing implants to replacing joints with metal. And more recently we've put more thought into getting the microbiology right, such as taking probiotics to aid digestion. Our bodies are already a soup of different creatures, everywhere from on our skin to inside our guts. Why not put another life *into* our skin as well? Imagine a living tattoo.

So, I took this idea and created scenarios. Ranging from the benefits of people eating less - because sunlight is replacing their need for food; through to what governments might think about this - mandating everyone gets the enhancement so medical costs drop. Bit like forcing vaccinations (sound familiar?). That's what Enhancement is all about.

What motivated me to write it

That's easy. I'm passionate about science and I'm attracted to the natural world. I like to know how things work, what works well, and what could be done better. I think we can all agree that enhancing our bodies will only continue. Making us able to get some of our energy needs direct from sunlight, and so eat less animals and plants, sounded like a fun theme and one that I could have some fun with.

Key messages from the book

We should be trying to do this. Simple as that. With an increasing world population we need to make ourselves, our bodies, more capable of looking after themselves. But, like most innovations' humankind undertakes, there are always unforeseen consequences. If you want to find out what they may be; you'll have to read Enhancement.

What am I reading



Stephen King is often quoted as saying "If you want to be a good writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot." My current reading list includes two fiction and one non-fiction: Terry Pratchett *Thud!*, Jo Nesbo *Blood on Snow*, and Peter Godfrey-Smith *Metazoa*. To say they are very different is an understatement of the highest order. We all know variety is the spice of life, right?

What's on the Horizon



My next collection of short stories, called *Tapestries*, is currently with the editor. Editing is a slow process and involves many stages, and more than likely I've a bit of re-writing ahead of me before it's ready for publication. This means a release around mid-year. There's no preorder available yet, but I'll be working with the guys at [Ocean Reeve Publishing](#) to have a link on the website maybe next month. In my March newsletter I'll talk more about *Tapestries* and what it's about. In parallel to the editing we're working on the book cover. People do judge books by their covers and in this case I'm collaborating with the talented scratchboard artist [Linda Lunnon](#). Stay tuned to see the result. More again next month. Until then, stay safe. And if you've enjoyed any of my books so far, tell your friends 😊