



ROMANCE
WRITERS
of Australia

Romance Writers of Australia (Inc)
Annual Report 2015/16



Contents

2015/16 Committee	4
Organisational Structure	4
Executive Summary – President’s Report	5
Highlights 2015/16	7
Memberships	8
Contests	10
Sponsorship	11
Media	12
Libraries	12
Festivals	12
ROMA	12
Events	13
Melbourne Conference – Get Fresh in ‘15	14
Adelaide Conference – Ain’t Love Grand 2016 ..	15
Brisbane Conference – 2017	16
Future Conferences	17
Member Services & Volunteers	18
Web Services	19
Social Media	20
Hearts Talk	21
Professional Development	22
Other Ventures	23
Focus for 2016-2017	24
Volunteers	25



Our vision is a world where Australian romance writers are well supported, highly respected and professionally successful.

Our mission is to support, promote and educate Australian romance writers.

Romance Writers of Australia: the heart of Australian romance

Romance Writers of Australia (Inc.) supports and develops writers of the world's most popular genre. RWA provides programs that target all stages of a writer's career – before, during and after publication – and promotes excellence in romantic fiction. RWA's strong community of members ensures writers can grow their careers in a nurturing and professional environment. So come join a professional, supportive writers' organisation where everyone loves romance as much as you do.

Objectives

- Promoting excellence in romantic fiction
- Helping writers become published and maintain strong careers
- Providing continuing support and development

Values

- Excellent Service: providing the best experience for members and associates
- Respect and Community: valuing and supporting each other and the genres we write
- Innovation and Creativity: fostering and implementing ideas to improve our services, programs and experiences for members
- Learning and Knowledge: building knowledge of writing craft, business practices and industry to better serve members
- Integrity and Ethical Practice: strong corporate governance, transparency, effective communication and honesty

Strategies

- Provide dynamic and responsive services that benefit romance writers in all stages of their careers.
- Ensure the highest standard of customer service while balancing the workloads of our volunteer workforce.
- Deliver valuable knowledge and networking through events, services and products.
- Promote the romance genre to media and the public.
- Develop a financially sustainable business model for ensuring the organisation's long term viability and growth.

Measures

- Our membership grows (3% annually with a 70% retention rate).
- Our organisation is financially stable and profitable.
- Our members consider their membership good value for money and integral to their career success.

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2015/16 Committee

Executive

President – Leisl Leighton

Vice-president – Daniel de Lorne

Treasurer – Alison Leake

Secretary – Vicki Vuat

Ordinary Members

Sarah Brabazon – Events

Susan Downham – Professional Development

Imelda Evans – Social Media

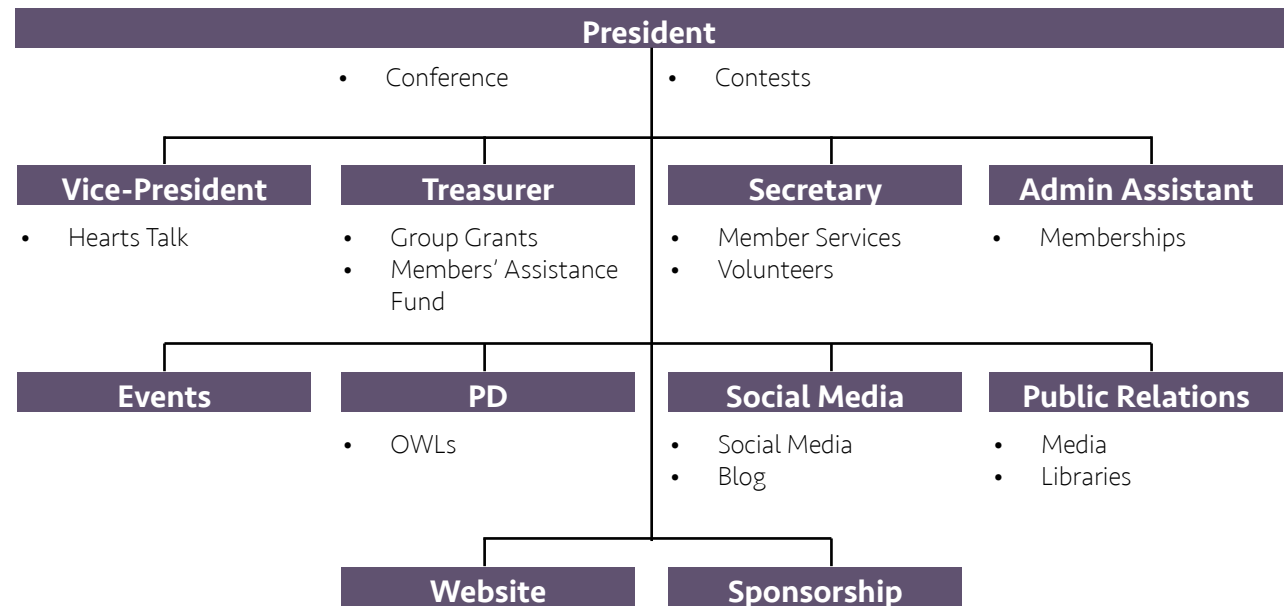
Imogene Nix – Public Relations/Media

Lana Pecherczyk – Website

Victoria Purman – Sponsorship

Organisational Structure

This is the make-up of the committee with their various responsibilities for 2015/16.





Executive Summary – President's Report

This year, like last year, has been a year of transition, but it has also been a year of making plans to ensure RWA grows.

The big change for the year was bringing on our first employee and *Hearts Talk* going digital. I am pleased to report that our new Administrative Assistant, Shannon Curtis, is a godsend. She has a passion and understanding for RWA that has helped her, alongside myself and the committee, create a role that is proving to be essential to the smooth running of our organisation and that our plans are becoming a reality. More about that later.

Hearts Talk went digital in November. It is pleasing to have figures to show us how many people are reading. We will continue to monitor this and ask how we can improve our monthly journal to better serve our membership. Digital gives us greater freedom to try new things and make changes we previously haven't been able to do.

We have continued to be concerned about the burden on our volunteers and have worked this year to ensure changes are made to address this issue. The Administrative Assistant has been essential in implementing changes in two of our most time-consuming and stressful volunteer environments – conferences and contests. She has been essential in sourcing and helping to create the registration system that was used this year and building relationships with businesses who can help us in the future. She has also been looking into new database systems that could help monitor our membership and membership payments more efficiently. They could also be used to help run contests and the registration process for conference. This will help cut time spent by our volunteers on data entry that is quite time consuming.

It has also been a year for improving communication. I have spent a lot of time this year building better relationships with partners, sponsors and volunteers. Daniel de Lorne (VP) and I held face-to-face meetings with representatives of the major sponsors from the last

few years to ensure we address shortcomings on both sides and increase understanding of what the important issues are to them and us. These meetings were beneficial for both sides and changes were implemented in the structuring of our sponsorship approach and some conference management as well.

To aid the future direction of RWA, the committee established a strategic direction document that outlines our vision and mission, as well as our values, strategies and measures. These are included on the previous page of this report and we hope to make further use of them in guiding our decisions through the next year.

Another issue concerning our members this year was the report on intellectual property from the Productivity Commission. This is of course a serious issue and myself and the committee felt it appropriate for RWA to wade in on discussions and to submit a response to the commission, arguing specifically against the areas of changes to copyright longevity and parallel import restrictions.

As president, I researched these issues, reading many of the arguments on both sides, as well as talking to a copyright expert and a business associate with expertise in imports and government policies. Together, they helped me form an educated position on the issues at hand. I wrote to the membership detailing the areas of concern and encouraged the membership to submit their own arguments to the commission. I wrote a submission on behalf of RWA on these issues and submitted it to the commission. A number of our members who are knowledgeable and vocal about the report's issues have since been invited to speak to panels on the commission's findings. We hope that our concerns will be taken seriously and the recommendations in the report changed so as not to affect the livelihood of our members.

It has been a busy year, but a fulfilling one.

Strategic Partnerships

One of the major areas our Administrative Assistant was tasked with was to facilitate the creation of strategic partnerships with a hotel group and a travel agency group to help with the cost, both financially and to our volunteers, of organising our conferences each year. This was done to create a deal with a hotel group for at least the next four years. It helps keep costs down and removes the need for conference teams to spend time choosing a location and negotiating contracts. Conference teams now can immediately get onto planning the theme, inviting guests and organising the program. Similarly the idea behind making a deal with a travel agency group is to create a more professional approach in dealing with our guests and organising and paying for their flights and transfers. This benefits members, too, by having an agent to go to who knows their needs and gets them the best deals.

The end results, thanks in large part to Shannon's efforts, are partnerships with Accor Hotel Group and Flight Centre Blues Point, NSW. We have achieved significant savings and value-adds.

The Accor deal is set for Brisbane 2017, Sydney 2018 and Melbourne 2019, with us still looking at possibilities for a Perth conference in 2020. Accor was by far the most attentive bidder and not only negotiated well on rates, but has given us membership in their Accor points program and a 10% discount for any of our members who book an Accor hotel outside of our conference (their rates have already been lowered more than 10% for these events). If our members use the link on our website for their bookings, RWA will also benefit by gaining points through their booking. The points we earn through these conferences and member bookings will be used against the cost of future conferences. They will be helpful in keeping down the overall cost to our members and increase our ability to continue to get the best of the industry to attend our events and organise a fulfilling conference experience for all involved.



The Flight Centre deal allows us to book and pay for guest and RWA relevant committee flights through our RWA account without the need for fiddly repayments and the relief of not having to deal with changing and confusing currency rates. We also earn points through any of these bookings. If our members use the link on our website to get to the Flight Centre website, or phone and quote that they are an RWA member, Flight Centre staff will not only endeavour to get the best possible price for them, but RWA will earn Flight Centre points that can be used toward helping to pay for future guests' travel and RWA-related flights.

The RWA committee are thrilled with these deals and the ongoing future benefits they give to our members and the organisation. We hope that members are equally excited and will use the links provided to ensure RWA (and they) benefit as much as possible from these deals.

Merchandising and Marketing

We are also doing deals with a merchandising group to help bring down merchandising costs, especially for conference, and to help more properly promote RWA and its ongoing mandate. It was decided to ensure that only the RWA logo is branded on conference satchels, pens and lanyards. Each conference team can brand the conference logo onto the badges and mugs/cups. This decision allows us to order better quality items in larger job lots at a lower per item cost with the intention of using the same good quality item year after year.

Volunteering

RWA continues to thrive due to the dedication and support of member volunteers. With the membership continuing to skirt the 1000-mark, and the organisation building on the opportunities, the appointment of the Administrative Assistant has been essential in developing better policies, procedures and documents and in understanding our legal obligations to our members and theirs to us.

Our volunteer numbers remain constant around 150, with many of these being judges in the contests portfolio. We

are aware that, despite the changes brought on by having an Administrative Assistant, there are still areas that need better overall management in regards to volunteer time and stress.

The Administrative Assistant is going through processes and procedures to find ways of decreasing the amount of time given to particular roles, and we hope to see over the next year some extensive positive change in this area to decrease the burden on our volunteers so time spent on our association is not taking away from writing and family time. We are also still hoping to find a way to source funds to bring on another employee in the near future, one who will oversee events and help organise the conferences year after year and maintain strategic partnerships and create new ones.

Memberships

Membership retention rates have been around 70%. We are looking at ways to address this and have begun to conduct surveys within the membership to find areas where we can improve. We have developed an exit survey for members who leave the organisation and these will be sent in the next committee year.

Due to the rising costs of running an organisation this size, we increased membership fees this year for the first time in at least five years. The committee voted on a regular review process to be done once a year at the March/April S&P in regards to fees vs costs and for there to be a minimum rise of CPI in the future.

Treasurer

RWA's operational costs during the 2015/16 financial year resulted in a net loss of \$37,647.39. Contributing to this loss are several factors including the approximate \$10,000 loss made by the 2015 conference, the 'one-off' doubling up of *Hearts Talk* costs, plus the wages and associated costs of employing an administrative assistant, and deposits made to secure venues for future conferences. This last relates to a partnership deal with Accor Hotels which will see RWA benefit from much reduced venue costs. It is hoped this, along with

other efficiencies being put in place, will enable future conferences to report profits rather than losses. When budgeting to employ an administrative assistant, it was always intended that funds used to produce a hard copy *Hearts Talk* would instead be put to better use paying the wage of an administrative assistant. With our newsletter now produced digitally, *Hearts Talk* related expenses next year should be all but non-existent.

Assets currently sit at \$150,486.94.

Income and Expenses:

Main sources of revenue were membership subscriptions, contests, OWLS and interest earned on bank accounts and term deposit.

Main sources of expenses were wages and superannuation, *Hearts Talk*, honorariums and committee costs.

A large portion of committee costs were related to meetings in Sydney by our President and Administrative Assistant in order to ensure better communication with sponsors and to secure a very advantageous deal with Sydney Sofitel for a future conference and a partnership deal with Fight Centre, which will see reduced costs and ease of management with regards to the travel arrangements of our overseas conference guests in the future.

Thank you, Goodbye and Welcome...

I would like to thank the RWA management committee this year, for volunteering and helping to add to the future of RWA. To those who are staying on – Lana Pecherczyk, Victoria Purman and Imelda Evans – we are all grateful to you for your past year of service and for the year to come. I look very much forward to continuing on with you and the work we will continue to do on RWA's behalf.

To those who are going – Daniel de Lorne, Alison Leake, Vicki Vuat, Susan Downham, Sarah Brabazon and Imogene Nix – thank you for your time over this last year or two and the efforts you have made in furthering your portfolios and serving the volunteers under your purview and the members as a whole. I wish you all the best for the future.



I would like to make special mention of Daniel de Lorne and Alison Leake. Alison is stepping down after having served on committee for four-and-a-half years and Daniel is stepping down after serving on committee for the last three years. They have both been an essential part of the committee and executive, and for me, personally, have given me support, a shoulder to cry on, a reasoned opinion that sent me back on the right track and someone to share my burdens with. Alison – you have been a stable influence in the background, working away quietly and supporting me always in my decision. Daniel, you have been the best VP a president could have hoped for, always supportive, ready to make me smile when I wanted to cry, supportive, generous and empathetic. You also always make me sound better than I would without you – you write me better than I do! You will both be missed, by me in particular, and I wish you all the best with your future endeavors.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Shannon Curtis, our wonderful Administrative Assistant, for her exceptional work this year. She has gone above and beyond expectations and if the members of RWA knew the extent to which that is true, I think she would be overwhelmed with their thank yous. All I have to offer her though is mine. Shannon, thank you a million times over for the support you give me, and the exceptional lady of action that you are.

I would also like to welcome the new committee members into the fold: Elise K Ackers, Laura Greaves, Claire Boston, DB Tait, Shelley Findlater, Bronwyn Stuart and Shelagh Merlin. Thank you so much for putting up your hands and taking on the role of management – it is a wonderful experience and well worth the time and effort. Welcome.

'I had a dream...'

Those words that Martin Luther King uttered so long ago echo down the ages to everyone who wants to express themselves, to change perceptions about things that matter to them, no matter how big or small, to be who they are truly meant to be and be accepted for it. Everyone should always be encouraged to dream, for without them, life would be monotone.

I think this need to nourish dreams is where RWA came from in the first place. Our members dream of writing, of being published, of expressing themselves, of being taken seriously in our chosen genre. We also dream of making the romance genre as important and meaningful to others as it is to us. The committee are there to service these dreams in the best way we perceive as possible. We give our time and energy to make this association we love better for ourselves, the membership, and those who will pick up our dreams and move with them into the future.

Regardless of the specificity of our dream or the reasons behind it, we all need to have dreams and the courage to follow them and the fight inside ourselves to see them through. In this ever changing world of publishing, I feel this is truer than ever before. Oprah Winfrey said, 'The biggest adventure you can take in life is to live your dreams.' I would like to round this out by adding Walt Disney's famous words, 'All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them.'

With this in mind, I wish you the adventure of living your dreams and to have endless depths of courage so that you can pursue them. I promise that under my guidance, the RWA committee will endeavour to help you in this task.

I wish you all good health, happy families, plentiful story ideas, a full well to colour your dreams and bring life to them, and that the Muse will always be with you.

Leisl Leighton
RWA President 2015/16

Highlights 2015/16

- Employed RWA's first employee, part-time Administrative Assistant Shannon Stein.
- *Hearts Talk* went completely digital with a new design launched in January 2016.
- Ratified a Strategic Direction for the organisation.
- Established deals with Accor Hotel Group and Flight Centre to help reduce workload and keep costs as low as possible, particularly for conferences, over the next four years.
- The Valerie Parv Award received a 40% spike in entries from 2015. Numbers also increased for Ripping Start, which continues to be popular with its shorter entries.
- President Leisl Leighton spoke to a number of journalists and researchers throughout the year about RWA and on the romance genre, in particular Jan Zwar of Macquarie University.
- Ten entries were considered by the ROMA selection panel, representing six print, one broadcast media and three digital/online media.
- The Melbourne conference – *Get Fresh in '15* – welcomed over 400 delegates across three days.
- Michael Hauge locked in to attend our 25th anniversary conference in Adelaide in August 2016, along with a host of other special guests.
- The Members' Assistance Fund awarded \$4,722.50 and Group Grants awarded \$2,813.80.
- Commenced website redevelopment incorporating a new design and membership database functions.
- Launched a Pinterest account, adding to our suite of social media channels.
- Our second year of OWLS saw 266 participants attend nine workshops.

Memberships

Membership as at 30 June 2016: 947.

This has dropped since last year (5%), but this is a constantly fluctuating number month-to-month. A contributing factor could be the increase of membership dues.

Total Membership: 947 (as at 30 June 2016)

Ordinary Members: 932

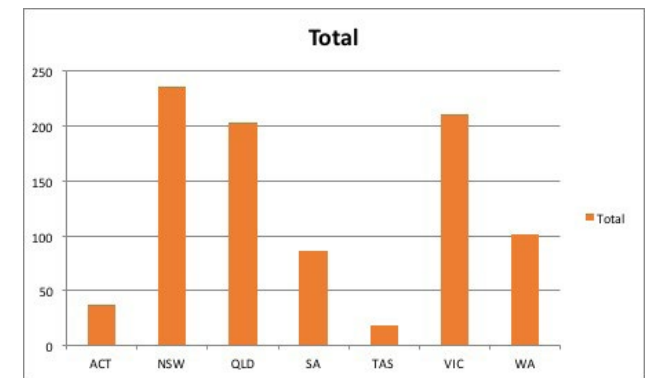
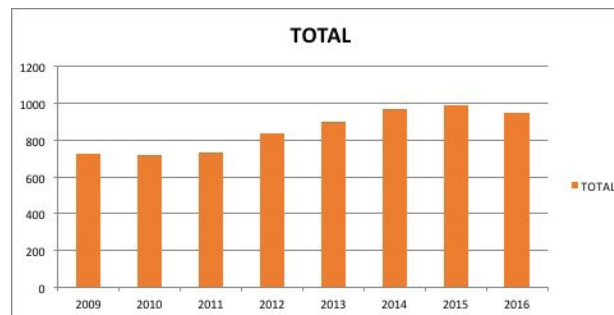
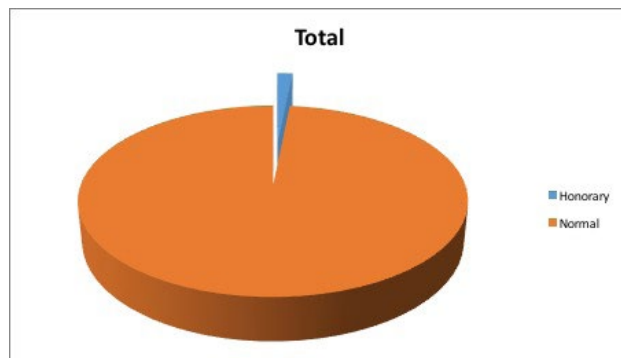
Honorary Members: 15

Historical Membership

2016	947
2015	992
2014	970
2013	897
2012	838
2011	732
2010	718
2009	723

Membership by State

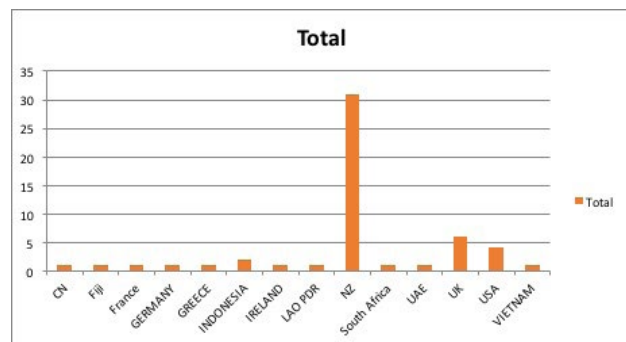
State	Number of Members
ACT	37
NSW	236
QLD	203
SA	87
TAS	19
VIC	211
WA	101
Total	894





Membership by Country (excluding Australia)

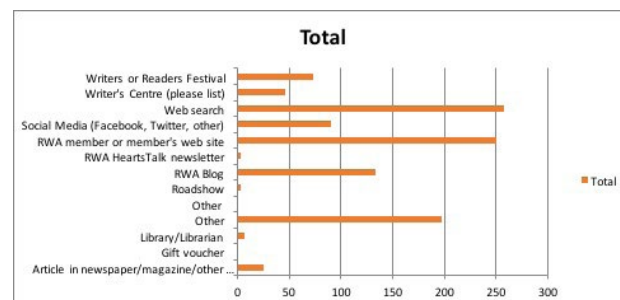
Country	Number of Members
Canada	1
Fiji	1
France	1
Germany	1
Greece	1
Indonesia	2
Ireland	1
Lao PD	1
New Zealand	31
South Africa	1
United Arab Emirates	1
United Kingdom	6
United States of America	4
Vietnam	1
Total	53



How Members Found RWA

This report pulls data from all memberships listed in our database, and includes lapsed members.

Channel	Number of Members
Article	25
Gift voucher	1
Library/librarian	7
Other	198
Roadshow	3
RWA blog	134
RWA Hearts Talk	3
RWA member/member site	251
Social media	91
Web search	258
Writer's centre	36
Writers/readers festival	73
Total	1090



Memberships Database Upgrade

This area is a very manual, data-entry focused area, and requires some investment into RWA's IT infrastructure to improve (see Website section for further details).

With a membership fluctuating at the 1000 mark, the manual tasks take up considerable time, with repetitive key strokes in the thousands, and there are many products available that can streamline this process.

With a more automated system, the memberships will be processed faster, if not instantly, giving faster access for members to resources. There is also the added benefit of limiting or removing human error from the backend process, as well as a more reliable capture of data and financial reporting, limiting the 'loss' of payment recording.



Portfolio Reports

Contests

Coordinator: Erica Hayes

It's been another successful year for contests, in which we achieved the long-awaited codification of contest procedures, as well as streamlining and checking of entry fee payments, and liaison with the administrative assistant. The contests team continues to function well, allowing the introduction of several new contest managers without any disruption. Many thanks to all our managers, judge coordinators, judges and web volunteers, as well as Kerrie Ptolemy who spent more than a few unpaid hours tweaking our Ruby entry system.

The **Valerie Parv Award** continues to attract large entry numbers, with a 40% spike from 2015.

Numbers also increased for **Ripping Start**, which continues to be popular with its shorter entries.

Emerald entries have been declining for a number of years, and the reasons for this need to be analysed.

Selling Synopsis, **First Kiss** and **Little Gems** continue to be steady.

We had another strong entrant and voter response to our online **Cover Contest**.

The **Ripping Start** had long delays because our manager suffered illness. The work was taken up by other managers as soon as the problem was identified. Unfortunately there's not a lot we can do to safeguard against this kind of issue, however, we are looking at creating a system that will help deal with a problem like this more easily if it arises again.

The rating for the **Little Gems** contest was increased from PG to M to accommodate more members. The resulting anthology will be produced in digital format for the first time, to complement the print edition, the initial run of which is to be sponsored by Fuji Xerox. In 2017, we'll be starting a second contest (and anthology) rated MA through R. It will be called **Spicy Bites**. This will mean all contests will now be open to all heat levels.

We experimented with a shorter (2-week) entry period, but anything shorter than three weeks seems to generate insufficient entries, so we'll be continuing with three weeks.

The **Emerald Pro** received only 6 entries (down from 11 in its initial year) and the judges' scores were low, resulting in the award of only one prize. For 2017 we'll be looking at adopting a final judge and prizes as per the regular **Emerald** to make the contest more attractive to prospective entrants and better serve members' needs.

This year we incorporated the **Ella** into the **Ruby**, a single five-section contest for both digital and print books. We hoped this year to increase judge participation and responsiveness, and reduce the need to buy extra copies for reallocation when judges don't return them, which is currently happening at significant cost to RWA. Measures we adopted included a calendar of reminders, plus reducing the number of judges per book from five to four, leaving us with a spare copy of print entries. We were less than successful, with more than 70 entries still needing reallocation.

Our lack of leverage over reader judges is an ongoing issue that causes nearly all the delays we experience in finalising the contest. We hope the inclusion of RWA members (writers) as judges in 2017 will help to remedy this. The intention is that Ruby entrants be enlisted to judge in categories other than those they've entered, as per the RITA.

Recent **Ruby** entry numbers show steady declines in the Short Sexy and Short Sweet sections, with a corresponding rise in longer sections. We expect in 2017 to be able to amalgamate the Short sections. We're also assessing the idea of introducing a final round and/or overall winner for the Ruby in future years.

Sponsorship

Coordinator: Victoria Purman

The past 12 months have been spent working intensely on securing sponsors for the 2016 Adelaide conference.

RWA will need to consider how it will attract sponsorship in the future due to a number of factors. Reasons for this include increasing uncertainties in the publishing industry, from mergers, closures and changes in the market, to changes at a political level that will affect how attractive we are as a sponsorship option for publishers.

While they do see the value in having a presence in front of writers – and importantly, readers – they too are being squeezed.

The sponsorship designations changed slightly this year. Previously, agreements were delineated as Gold, Silver and Bronze sponsors. For 2016, we are using Major Partner, Partner and Supporter, to reflect the terminology used in writing festivals across the country.

We are delighted to welcome Harlequin Australia as our Major Partner for Conference 2016 and we thank them for their long-term and on-going support of romance writing in Australia.

Our Partners for 2016 Conference include Penguin Random House, Hachette, Dymocks Adelaide, Flinders University, Jolley's Boathouse, Australian Romance Readers Association and Fuji Xerox Tasmania.

Our Supporters for Conference 2016 include Haigh's Chocolates, the SA Writers' Centre, authors Tess LeSue, Susanne Hampton and Victoria Purman.

We thank all our sponsors for their support.

Major Partner



Partners



Supporters





Media

Coordinator: Imogene Nix

In 2015/16 the media team worked on producing highly effective media releases, acting for and on behalf of RWA within media circles to promote RWA as the Peak body for Australian Romance Writers. They advocated and worked to create opportunities for authors. This team has set new benchmarks for the promotion of Australian authors.

Libraries

There were a number of changes to the volunteer overseeing our relationship with the libraries this year and as a result, not much was progressed from what was set up by Helen Katsinis. We will be looking at furthering this relationship next year under new leadership of the PR portfolio.

Festivals

A few members took advantage of our Festivals Fund. The committee have been looking at new options to try to expand on this positive stream for our members. One of the suggestions made at the March '16 S&P was to make use of our existing equipment for festivals; the RWA 'booth' that we send to ARRA and other events, but expanded. We envision a pop-up booth so that our established members have an easy way to sell their books and merchandise at trade shows, rural shows, expos and other face-to-face events. The booth will be branded so that it represents RWA, and material will be provided so that the established member promotes RWA as well as selling their own material. This will be developed further in the 2016/17 year.

ROMA

Coordinator: Nikki Logan

Nominations from members for the ROMA award was down 45% in 2015/16 but a thorough search online indicated that this was more attributable to a lack of coverage throughout the year than to a necessary lack of member nominations. Additionally, this year there was a finer focus on the nominated entries with fewer 'general' (and potentially uncompetitive) pieces on individuals or appearances.

Ten entries were considered by the ROMA selection panel, representing six print, one broadcast media and three digital/online media. There was a noticeable growth in 'new media' representing coverage outside of the traditional print/broadcast environments with journals, blogs and niche publications which – while traditionally struggling to rank highly in terms of reach (as it relates to readership/numbers) – did manage to leverage a new aspect of weight, being exposure in avenues traditionally not open to romance themes.

Pleasingly, the partnership between RWA and the (Melbourne) Wheeler Centre in delivering the 2015 RWA conference resulted in a number of romance-related pieces in avenues rarely given to romance discussion.

More broadly, the absence of coverage in the wider media could indicate both the end of the *50 Shades* flow-on effect and also perhaps an area of future focus for RWA in triggering reportage by more active media communication.



Events

Coordinator: Sarah Brabazon

Despite the success of the last few years' conferences, what was highlighted by the teams was the amount of stress and pressure put on the teams and the conference convenors in particular, to get our extraordinary events up and running smoothly. Members have come to expect excellence in program, speakers, workshop presenters, venue and pitch opportunities at the very least. This expectation puts a level of stress on the conference teams to at least match, if not beat, what came the year before. Any other organisation would hire a professional to oversee this kind of event, however, currently, our conferences are run entirely by volunteers, many of whom have to virtually give up writing for at least part of the time they are fulfilling the expectations of their role.

This being unacceptable, we explored ways of dealing with this issue, including hiring an events manager/coordinator in some capacity. However, our explorations highlighted the fact that our conferences would need to earn a steady profit every year before we could afford to hire someone in this capacity in even a part-time level. We are working toward a solution to this issue as we believe that the only way forward would be to employ a professional event planner to oversee and back up our volunteer teams, taking care of all the administrative and non-creative aspects of event production.

While we are working toward this, the president and administrative assistant have put in place some deals that will help to cut down on some of the stress and time consuming aspects of conference management. We have explored other areas that could be looked at to help raise revenue to support a part time events management position and also what could be done to help teams under the current organisational structure to help them until we've found a way through this dilemma.

Roadshow 2016

The Roadshow did not go ahead this year, due to difficulty in finding a convener. Bendigo was considered a suitable destination, however, we were not able to progress for 2016.

Claytons Conference

The Claytons Conference has undergone significant changes over the last half dozen years from the little taste of conference it originally began as for those who could not attend conference, to becoming its own online experience. However, with the amount of extra work this created for volunteers and the limited number of members who got to benefit from this work and expense, the committee had to question its importance to the overall membership and what it was trying to accomplish.

In the days before social media, the Claytons Conference had a definite purpose and meaning to those who couldn't attend the conference to help them experience a little of what those at the conference enjoyed. Announcements were made about contest wins, photos were shared and the odd presenter did a question and answer. Now many of these things are shared on social media via Facebook and Twitter and the need to have an entirely different platform taking up volunteer time and effort is no longer necessary. The committee also felt uncomfortable giving the fuller conference experience the Claytons had become away for free (or close enough to free – last year, attendees were charged \$10 which didn't come near to covering overall costs) to members when those who attend the face-to-face conference have to pay for their experience. This, added to the fact that so few members got to benefit from the Claytons (last year, only 50 could attend given technological limitations) and we were doing the marketing and business no-no of running two events at the same time that were in competition to each other, made the committee unanimously decide

the Claytons no longer served a purpose for the RWA membership.

While coming to this conclusion, the committee did acknowledge the fact that there might still be a need for an online conference experience, but one that was held at a different time of the year to our face-to-face conference and could be used by the entire membership, not be limited to a select group of members as Claytons has been the last few years.

The Events portfolio manager has spent the past year exploring options, researching online conference software and database services and developing a plan to be implemented over the next year by the new Events volunteers. We hope to have something to offer the membership in regards to this during the next year.

Other Events

We are now in the process of composing a 'Writers Retreat' program, and will provide more information in the coming year.

We will have a presence at Book Expo Australia, and are looking to build on RWA's profile at similar events.

Annual Conference

Melbourne Conference – *Get Fresh in '15*

Kate O'Donnell & Kathryn Ledson

Venue

The Park Hyatt was a spectacular venue for the 2015 conference. It was centrally located on the edge of the Melbourne CBD and handy to public transport. Accommodation at the Park Hyatt was first rate, with the conference rate rooms sold out. Budget accommodation was available at a discount to delegates from the Mercure on Spring Street.

Core Conference

With keynote addresses from Anita Heiss, Mary-Jo Putney, Graeme Simsion and Patricia McLinn, presentations by international invited guests, superstar local authors, our partners – MWF and WV – and panels of heavy-hitting authors, the core conference was a showcase of inspiration and learning for delegates far beyond the ticket price. *Get Fresh in '15* organisers made huge strides in bringing mainstream writing organisations to conference – particularly the liaison with Melbourne Writers Festival and Writers Victoria, Anita Heiss and Graeme Simsion. Their coverage of self-publishing ensured that all aspects of the industry as it stands today were represented.

Social Events

The *Get Fresh in '15* committee continued the tradition of hosting a fancy-dress cocktail party on the Friday night. This was a short mixer event with finger food and drinks to allow delegates to socialise in a relaxed atmosphere. The theme for 2015 was Fun, Flirty and Famous. The awards dinner on Saturday night was a gala event with the theme Singin' in the Rain, a 1940s style nightclub to provide the backdrop to RWA's premier event of the year. The awards dinner was followed by a successful after party sponsored by Escape.

Pitch Program

The pitches were taken by a host of local and international editors and agents including two international editors and two local from Harlequin, four local editors from Penguin Random House (and Destiny Publishing), two international editors from Tule Publishing Group, one international editor from Sourcebooks Casablanca, one international agent, Courtney Miller-Callihan from Sanford J. Greenberger Associates, and local representatives from Momentum Books, Pantera Press, Hachette, as well as three local agents.

Charity

The charity chosen for 2015 was the Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF), which provides books and literacy resources for indigenous kids and families in remote communities of Australia. The key objective of ILF is to make a positive difference in the lives of young Australian Indigenous children so that they are enabled to make the most of their educational opportunities in schools. They do this by providing books and support Australian Indigenous parents so that they and their young children and babies can enjoy literacy experiences together, encouraging links between the book trade, schools and libraries to ensure the supply of books in remote Indigenous communities, assisting with the writing and publishing of books in the child's first language as well as English, ensuring engagement and familiarity with the range and types of books that children will experience in schools.

Photographer Duncan Carling-Rogers operated a photo booth at conference with proceeds going to the charity.

Friday Workshops

Get Fresh in '15 redefined Friday, bringing together intensive workshops for all categories of writers. Legendary writing coach Margie Lawson taught a whole-day workshop

for Emerging and Established stream. There was also a half-day workshop for Aspiring/Emerging writers on character development with Angela Ackerman. In addition, a business stream with a full day of workshops from a variety of industry professionals and a self-publishing stream was also offered. Close to 300 writers enrolled in these workshops – a record for Friday workshops.

Bookstore

Dymocks operated the bookstore in 2015. They created a book-nook reading space for their display and hosted author hot spots where delegates could meet high-profile authors.

Self-Pub Hub

The Scarlett Rugers Book Design Company and *Get Fresh in '15* brought self-publishing right into conference for the first time. The Scarlett Rugers Self-Pub Hub offered conference delegates the opportunity to have an expert walk them through the self-publishing process with a view to self-publishing a manuscript (short story, novella, novel) live during the conference. Fewer people than hoped took up this opportunity, even though the initial interest was strong. However, by the end of the conference there were six new works published online by established and emerging romance authors. That's a showcase of new romantic works of fiction published and available for download to celebrate the end of the *Get Fresh in '15* conference.





Adelaide Conference – *Ain't Love Grand* 2016

Linda Brown and Amy Matthews

For the first time, RWA selected Adelaide to host our 25th Anniversary conference.

Core Conference

On writing, 389 delegates are registered for conference this year with six streams featuring international speakers including Heather Graham, May McGoldrick, Michael Hauge, Catherine LaRoche, Joanne Grant, Sarah Younger, Esi Sogah; and national speakers and panels including Fiona McIntosh, Anne Gracie, Rachel Johns, and more.

Friday Workshop

255 delegates are currently booked to attend the Friday workshop lead by Michael Hauge, Hollywood script developer, mentor, and story mastery expert.

Academic Program

This year we partnered with Flinders University and the Flinders Institute for Research into the Humanities, the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance, and the Centre of Excellence for the History of the Emotions, to deliver an academic program, featuring special guests including Professor Catherine Roach from New College at the University of Alabama, and Professor Stephanie Trigg from the University of Melbourne. The Journal of Popular Romance Studies was the primary journal for the event, and we look forward to seeing the papers published in the near future.

Events:

Harlequin Australia hosted our Love is a Cabaret cocktail party, where we awarded the First Sale ribbons and welcomed delegates and special guests to our 25th anniversary conference. 317 people are booked to attend the 25th anniversary black tie Gala Dinner, where we celebrated our history in grand style. And then danced the night away at the Escape after party.

Venue

The beautiful Stamford Grand at Glenelg was selected as conference venue. The Stamford is currently only one of two hotels in Adelaide large enough to accommodate a conference of this size and was fully booked months ahead of time. RWA supplemented accommodation with RWA blocks in the neighbouring Oaks Pier and Liberty Towers. The Stamford Grand, Glenelg has kindly donated one of the major raffle prizes for our charity, ILF.

Bookstore

Dymocks Adelaide, a longtime supporter of Australian romance, were our conference bookseller this year, as well as selling books for the authors at the ARRA book signing.

Pitching

Over 150 members registered to pitch this year, with almost 100 registering within the first hour of opening. We had 12 editors and agents taking pitches this year, including international guests Joanne Grant, Esi Sogah and Sarah Younger and, of course, our valued Australian publishers, editors and agents.

Charity

RWA is proud to support ILF in our fundraising again this year. James Kellow is on the board of ILF and Anita Heiss is an ambassador, and both introduced the charity at the cocktail party. The key objective of ILF is to make a positive difference in the lives of Australian Indigenous children, by fostering literacy and providing books in English and in first languages.

Sponsorship

RWA's Sponsorship Coordinator, Victoria Purman, is also a member of the Adelaide Conference team and has redeveloped, grown and established sponsor partnerships both for this conference and into the future.

We are delighted to welcome Harlequin Australia as our Major Partner for Conference 2016 and we thank them for their long-term and on-going support of romance writing in Australia.

Our Partners for 2016 Conference include Penguin Random House, Hachette, Dymocks Adelaide, Flinders University, Jolley's Boathouse, Australian Romance Readers Association and Fuji Xerox Tasmania.

Our Supporters for Conference 2016 include Haigh's Chocolates, the SA Writers' Centre, authors Tess LeSue, Susanne Hampton, Suzie Hindmarsh-Knights, Trish Morey and Victoria Purman.

We thank all our sponsors for their support.





Brisbane Conference – 2017

The initial Brisbane convener stepped aside due to health and personal reasons. These reasons also resulted in a lack of communication with the existing committee, and handover to the new convener was also incomplete. A member of the team bravely put her hand up to lead the team, but due to lack of events experience among other things, it eventuated that this wasn't a good fit for anyone and a new team was put together under new leadership. The existing committee was disbanded in May 2016, as some members could not be contacted, and reinstated with five members volunteering, including Kendall Talbot (Conference Coordinator), Tina Marie Clarke, Tania Joyce, Melanie Page, and Madeline McCreanor who stayed on as treasurer.

The current BNE '17 committee are currently putting together a new team made up of Queensland members, have a wonderful theme and are going after some fabulous local and international talent to headline the event.

Venue

The Pullman Georges Square was specified for BNE '17 by the RWA Executive in a multi-year contract with Accor hotels, removing the need for the conference committee to select their own venue.

The committee intend to organise their sessions around the theme of 'taking charge of your career,' with an emphasis this year on self-publishing to cater to our growing membership who take this route. They will be making their announcements about name, theme and guest speakers at the Adelaide conference 2016.



Future Conferences

Venues

In November 2015, RWA drafted a tender process and invited eight national hotel chains with venues of a suitable size to submit their proposals. Over the course of several months, five hotel chains submitted proposals: Accor, Intercontinental, Hilton, and Sheraton, with Rydges, Stamford, Hyatt and QT withdrawing due to the size of the event.

Overall, we received seventeen site proposals:

QLD – 5

NSW – 7

CBR – 0

WA – 1

VIC – 4

Each proposal was reviewed, and the focal criteria were: cost and the value-add services, with the objective to award ONE hotel chain the conference sites for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The reasons for conducting this tender were:

- to reduce the time, stress and action required from an individual conference team to perform a task that is repeated year-on-year, thus reducing volunteer fatigue
- to obtain significant cost-savings with the negotiating power four large-scale conferences brings to this kind of agreement, in an effort to provide the best possible delegate experience at the most efficient cost
- to create an ongoing relationship with hotels and venues into the significant future.

The winner of the tender was Accor, who provided by far the most significant cost-saving and value-added opportunities to our events and members. These include:

- a reward system that allows us to accrue points at an event and use them in subsequent events to either pay or reduce the cost of elements of our events
- a significant price-reduction in the overall conference cost, year-on-year
- an RWA-member 10% discount off the best unrestricted rate of the day (subject to availability with Accor hotels)
- a commission for any accommodation booked through the RWA website
- key personnel at each venue site to work with, as well as a business centre contact for the general relationship.

Accor are now an RWA Strategic Partner, and are the preferred venue partner for any appropriate events RWA decides to hold in the future.

2017 – Pullman Georges Square, Brisbane Queensland

2018 – Sofitel-Wentworth, Sydney, NSW

2019 – Pullman Melbourne Albert Park, Vic

2020 – TBA

Planning

We have created a very basic draft for conference planning, and are continuing to work closely with the conference teams to create position descriptions, processes and procedures. At the moment, we have the conference coordinator, as well as several key conference portfolio manager descriptions documented.

We sought the legal expertise of Vicki Harvey, who generously gave of her time and expertise to draft speaker agreements for our speaker talent for conferences. These agreements are designed to protect and define both RWA's and the speakers' rights and responsibilities.

Merchandising

We contacted Promo Shop and Get Smart Promotional Products and 24-Hr Merchandise (Australian based companies), for quotes on 'bulk' merchandising – for the next four years' conferences. Get Smart Promotional Products have provided the best prices and customer service to date, and have been selected for ordering RWA conference merchandise for the products we'll be using year-on-year. These include pens, bags and nametag holders/lanyards. Ordering these in bulk (to cover min 2017, 2018 and 2019 conferences) provides the organisation with considerable savings. GS Promo also provides a storage solution, free-of-charge, for the volume of stock we purchase.

Member Services & Volunteers

Coordinator: Vicki Vuat

Member Services

The Member Services portfolio has had a good year overall. Not much change from the previous year in areas such as IWS, Critique-Partner Register and New Member liaison.

Groups

The **Groups Liaison** role has seen the highest turnover – with the third volunteer in that job this financial year. While the Lonely Hearts section of the website was under-utilised and the Google Hangouts didn't run, we will be attempting these services again with our new Groups Liaison.

The **Aspiring Author loop** is the most interactive e-place to meet and talk about writing. Yahoo tech issues resulted in a move to Google Groups. The monthly Author Q&A sessions and the bi-monthly BIAW are always well attended. This loop is now run by a team of three volunteers.

The **Emerging Author loop** has been the least active. After a short questionnaire, we gathered that the use of Yahoo for the loop wasn't working for the members in that group and that the majority would prefer a move to a closed Facebook group. A group has been formed and the Yahoo loop closed down in June. A new moderator has taken over and is posting questions and industry info there regularly. So far there has been more interaction there than previously found in the Yahoo loop.

The **Established Author loop** is also generally quiet except for hot topics from time to time. It is suspected that this is primarily because many of those in this group have deadlines and promo commitments and are members of smaller groups of writing friends who they receive support and information from and therefore generally have less time to devote to the RWA online forums on a daily basis. RWA has conducted a survey to discover what would be of greater benefit to our Established authors.

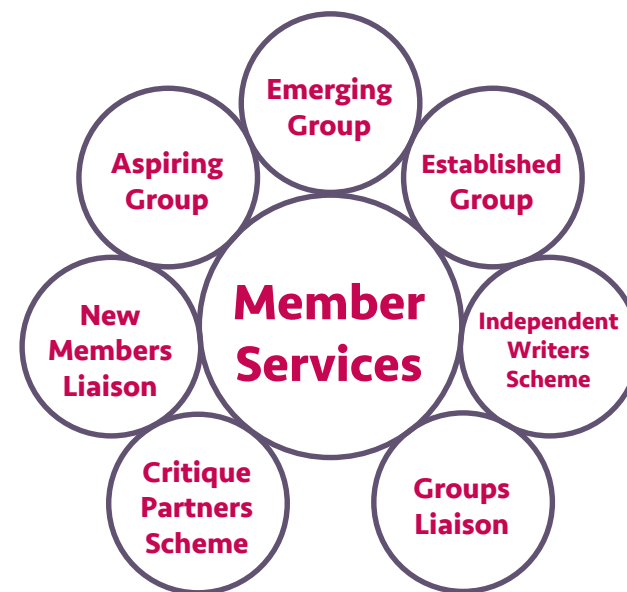
Volunteers Portfolio

This portfolio has undergone significant change this past year. Procedures have been put in place to register volunteers' skills/interests and so on. The portfolio managers are also monitoring the workloads of their volunteers to prevent burn-out.

A brief induction booklet has been created to help them better understand

- the running of a non-profit organisation like RWA
- what their rights and obligations are
- what their job entails specifically and when.

Most vacancies have been filled in good time.





Web Services

Coordinator: Lana Pecherczyk

With the intermittent help of the previous webmistress, the current website has been maintained including updating new releases, OWLs, new conference information, advertising and more. Moderating the 75 email accounts for the company has also been a weekly task.

Due to the growing membership base and the changing landscape of technology, we've agreed to redesign the website using Wordpress and a specific membership plugin. This has been worked on as part of the webmistress role, alongside regular duties. The aim for doing this is to make the background running of the website more accessible to every volunteer, not just those with a web development background. It will also allow the blog to come under the romanceaustralia.com domain and thus make it easier to convert new visitors to memberships.

E-commerce will also be more flexible on the new website and will be run through the membership system, allowing for products such as The Little Gems Anthology, gift vouchers and more to be sold directly through the site. The new membership plugin will also allow us to have greater flexibility with our reports, automation, and structural organisation of memberships. There will be a cross-over period after the conference where we will change over to the main site but continue to run OWLs on the old Moodle site.

In addition we will include:

- a new database tailored to the needs of the organisation, to help automate applications and renewals, and capture and report on data more efficiently
- a new contest management system that automates contest entries/registration to help take the load off the volunteer contest managers and to provide more efficient tracking of registrations and financials than the current, manual system provides
- a new OWL registration approach, along with a review of the current online learning system.

The scope of works looks at the operations needed to be conducted, and is weighed against cost vs. need.



Social Media

Coordinator: Imelda Evans

RWA Blog

In the last year we have streamlined the blog to carry mainly material that is specific to the format of the blog. That is, posts that need the space, stability and searchability of a blog platform, rather than the ephemeral immediacy of platforms like Facebook or Twitter.

In the last year, we have posted RWA news, especially competition information and results, members' new releases (monthly) and a regular industry news and opinion column, written by our wonderful blog volunteer, Laura Boon. In the last couple of months of the financial year we have also introduced a monthly feature article on our established members, reprinted from our newsletter, *Hearts Talk*.

The aim was to provide more of what our readers found useful and less of what they didn't – and it seems to be working. In the last year, the RWA blog was visited by nearly 16,000 people. Two years ago, it was visited by just under 18,000 people. At first glance, that seems like a substantial drop – until you realise that we published approximately half as many posts in the year just gone as we did two years ago. Each post is getting much more attention – and therefore having more impact – than they were before. It's a sign that we are serving our readers better and it is a much better use of our precious volunteer resources.

Unsurprisingly, most of our visitors are from Australia, but we also have a significant number of visitors from the UK, USA and Canada and smaller numbers from countries as diverse as Brazil and India.

New Horizons

Last year we updated all our social media with our new logo and this year we expect to migrate our blog to our new and improved website. With that will come a new look and, we hope, one that is easier to navigate, search and use for members and members of the public alike.

Twitter, Facebook , Google+,

Our Facebook page has continued to grow. In the last year, we have averaged roughly two new 'likes' per day and that pattern seems likely to continue. Our Facebook page also enjoys a considerably better 'reach' and engagement than the average Facebook page. Most of our posts reach up to half of our subscribers. This is compared to the average reach of about 10–15% on Facebook pages.

Our members-only community group on Facebook is also flourishing and has even spun off some member-run, special-interest groups, such as our group for RWA members who are studying for, or have completed, PhDs.

We are also experimenting with using the community space on Facebook for events. This year, for the first time, we will be inviting the members who can't make it to conference, to attend a virtual 'party' in the group to celebrate the annual Awards Dinner in real time with the conference-goers. If it goes well, it will become an annual event.

Twitter and Google+ continue to be mainly news outlets for us, but they serve a useful communication purpose for those members whose social media activity is mainly on those platforms. The exception to the 'mainly news' function for Twitter is during our annual conference, when many of the attendees live-tweet from the conference to share insights from workshops, pictures from social events and awards results with the members and friends who couldn't make it. We create an official hashtag each year and on some occasions we have even trended on Twitter Australia!

Pinterest

Since our last AGM, we have established an RWA presence on Pinterest. Erica Hayes has been posting our members' new releases each month on boards divided by romantic sub-genre. In the year to come we hope to expand the use and connections of our Pinterest account. You can see it at au.pinterest.com/rwaus.

Hearts Talk

Editors: Carla Caruso & Daniel de Lorne

Hearts Talk continues to be a valued and much enjoyed benefit for our members. Carla Caruso and Daniel de Lorne continued on as editors, splitting the work between content and production.

The majority of members were switched to receiving *Hearts Talk* digitally from December 2015 as part of a way of funding the part-time administrative assistant. Members who wished to continue to receive a print copy could do so if they paid a \$25 annual fee. Unfortunately, this was not enough to cover costs of printing and postage. The decision was made to withdraw the print copy as an option, finishing with the June 2016 issue.

A new design for *Hearts Talk* was introduced in January 2016. We also introduced two new columns in the year, Bumps in the Road and Career Stalker, while maintaining regular features such as A Writer's Life, Write Craft and Marketing Questions Answered.

Hearts Talk email open rates for 2015/16

Month	Sent	Viewed	Engaged	% Engaged
July 15	380	261	170	45%
August 15	404	319	160	40%
September 15	433	306	190	44%
October 15	450	299	174	39%
November 15	471	313	179	38%
December 15	965	566	333	35%
January 16	957	611	346	36%
February 16	958	639	394	41%
March 16	966	702	458	47%
April 16	963	630	364	38%
May 16	962	624	353	37%
June 16	955	585	323	34%

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Professional Development

Coordinator: Susan Downham and Leisl Leighton

Due to many personal issues over the last year, Susan Downham, the portfolio holder, has been unable to progress the PD portfolio as much as she wished. With Leisl's help, Susan oversaw the OWLS team as much as she could.

Some work was done on looking at other avenues of professional development to offer the membership, with the intent to try to create things that will be of use and appealing to our Established members. This included options for writers' retreats which will be progressed under the new portfolio manager.

OWLS Report

Coordinator: Jillian Jones

Sharon Sherry did a wonderful job of establishing the OWLS and occupying both OWL Coordinator and Registrar positions throughout 2015. Her contribution has been much appreciated. Sharon stepped down in January 2016 handing the Registrar role to Pauline Johnston and the Coordinator position to Jillian Jones.

The workshops continue to prove popular with a record number of 62 participating in Rachel Bailey's Sexual Tension: The Undertow of Romance, in April 2016.

The Moodle platform was used for the majority of the courses. Facebook groups have also been utilised, while Nikki Logan's Author Branding – Why You Need it Before You Sell course was conducted via Google Groups.

OWLS 2015/16

Presenter	Scheduled	Members	Non-members	Total
Shona Husk: Tarot For Inspiration & Plotting	July 2015	21	0	21
Laura Greaves: Writing Magazine Feature Writing For Authors	September 2015	13	2	15
Ainslie Paton: The Dark Art Of The Blurp	October 2015	18	2	20
Helen Katsinis & Daniel de Lorne: The Wonderful World Of Blogging	November 2015	14	2	16
Carla Caruso: Writing Satisfying Novellas & Short Stories	December 2015	31	2	33
Nikki Logan: Author Branding – Why You Need it Before You Sell	February 2016	34	0	34
Alison Stuart: Scrivener For L Platers	March 2016	38	1	39
Rachel Bailey: Sexual Tension: The Undertow of Romance	April 2016	55	7	62
Sandy Vaile: Treat Back Story Like a Pungent Spice	June 2016	26	0	26
Total		250	16	266



Travel

We contacted Escape Travel and Flight Centre for discussions on travel partnerships, and Flight Centre were selected (Escape Travel is a subsidiary of Flight Centre). We have now set up a corporate account with Flight Centre that enables us to:

- book the travel for our international and national speakers – this means we can get the best value ticket available;
- accrue points for that travel booked, and can use those points to offset future travel costs;
- book travel for committee for strategy and planning meetings, and accrue those points to offset for future travel costs;
- provide a travel agent to all RWA members, who are available online, over-the-phone and face-to-face (Sydney). This means conference delegates can book their flights and transfers through Flight Centre, and obtain best possible rates, as well as the potential for 'group' bookings to further reduce costs to our delegates.
- provide a kickback scheme which would see 2% of all travel referred or booked by RWA credited to our travel ledger, to help with future travel costs.

RWA's Administrative Officer had the opportunity to attend some events on behalf of RWA, to network and discuss potential opportunities.

Mobile-ising Women in Business – connected primarily with Telstra and MYOB, as well as other women in business, and learned some potential strategic direction for RWA to discuss and explore.

Rob Edwards Presents, in conjunction with Rydges and World Corporate Travel, to showcase Rydges as a potential conference venue and WCT as an event management partner. Rydges currently doesn't have the capacity to host RWA as a conference event, but it was a good opportunity to establish a relationship. WCT

has significant IT infrastructure for event travel and management, and while RWA cannot afford their services at this time, they could be a potential alternative to in-house conference management.

Gold Coast Business Exchange 2016 – this was a very good opportunity to explore the possibilities for convention-style conferencing, an option we may have to consider if our conference event keeps building in numbers. Overall, the Gold Coast is aiming to become the conference and event centre for Australia. With the 2018 Commonwealth Games, there is significant investment in infrastructure, including transport and new venue sites. After speaking with 20+ venues and event services providers, there are significant cost-savings to be had with potentially staging the Gold Coast as a 'home' for RWA conferences, in the future. This opportunity will need to be explored further.

Little Gems Distribution

This year we've taken a new approach to the Little Gems Anthology. We've taken the publication of this anthology to a new level, with making it available for purchase on a global scale.

The book will be available at Amazon in Kindle and print format, and we've set up an account with Ingram Spark, which offers a 70+ online partners for e-book distribution, and tens of thousands of retailers, libraries, etc for print distribution.

There is a small cost associated with getting the title into such a wide distribution network (\$75 per title), but we're hoping to offset this with access to more sales channels, and ultimately more readers.

POS System

One hurdle to sales for the Little Gems, Independent Bookstore, RWA Merchandising, last-minute conference registration and possible membership recruitment has been the restriction to cash-only sales at events. After careful consideration and assessment of various Point-of-Sale systems, including the PayPal Here device, the

Commonwealth Bank devices and Square Register, RWA have invested in Square Register.

This is an online, mobile POS-capable credit card reader that can hook into a mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet that allows for the payment of goods and services for credit card holders.

The Square Register offered a lower transaction fee, no subscription fees and no long-term lock-in contracts. The goal with this new POS system is to further increase sales opportunities at events by no longer being limited to cash sales only.

Pop-Up Stand

We have replaced our old, worn signage with new banners, and are looking for opportunities to promote both RWA and our members. With the new signage and POS system, we can sell Little Gems, memberships, event registrations and RWA merchandise, along with independent author works, at non-RWA events.

This is to deliver on two of our organisation's objectives: to promote excellence in romance fiction, and to help grow and develop our published authors. Our first non-RWA event will be Book Expo Oz, 8 and 9 October 2016, and we continue to look for appropriate opportunities.

Focus for 2016/17

In addition to our ongoing responsibilities for the portfolio we will be investigating and developing the following areas for the next 12 months:

- New revenue streams
- More events tailored to location and membership classification
- More resources and benefits for Established Authors
- More fundraising for RWA to assist with funding an events manager and further investment in the organisation's infrastructure.
- Writers' retreats
- New website
- Media and PR.



Volunteers

Thank you to all volunteers, contest managers, judges and more who helped RWA so much in 2015/16.

Contest Team Members

Erica Hayes, Annie Lynch, Gemma McBride, Raewyn Mc Gill, Pauline Johnston, Marnie St Clair, Lis Hoorweg, Tricia Sargent, Jo McAlister, Suzy Butcher, Claire Boston, Margaret Midwood, Beverley Eikli, Sue Downham, Leisl Leighton, Nikki Logan and Kerrie Ptolemy.

Contest Judges

Laney Cairo, Jane Ainslie, DB Tait, Sharon Arkell, Amanda Ashby, Leah Ashton, Nikki Logan, Jenny Brassel, Alison Brideson, Cassandra Samuels, Lis Chaplin, Kiss Carson, Catherine Evans, Rosemary Foy-Brown, Denise Frost, Cherrie Frost, Fiona Georgiou, Lis Hoorweg, Nicole Hurley-Moore, Laney Cairo, Jennifer Kloester, Sami Lee, Jennifer Lynne, Paola Matthews, Ebony McKenna, Trish Morey, Sandra O'Grady, Anne Oliver, Louise Reynolds, Ingrid Rickersey, Cherie Skinner, Jennifer St George, Sue Love, Janni Nell, Justine Woulfe, Malvina Yock, Janis Linford, Jenny Addicoat, Mim Andriano, Rita Azar, Vanessa Barneveld, Deb Bennetto, Claire Boston, Kylie Breakey, Karyn Brinkley, Sarma Burdeu, Rowena Candish, Suzanne Cass, Carol Challis, Lorena Chiappara, Marian Chivers, Mel Cimbaro, Debbie Cox, Larissa Deck, Robyn Enlund, Shelley Flindlater, Sharon Francesca, Theresa Fuller, Babette Fuller, Frana Graco, Bernice Greenham, Marnie Griffith, Judy Griffiths, Pat Haggerty, Rob Hap, Leonie Hardy, Cris Hickey, Linda Hills, Carol Hoggart, Alicia Hope, Sara Hood, Sandie Hudson, Pauline Johnston, Aislinn Kearns, Heather Kopp, Sandra Linklater, Tamara Martin, Shannon McEwan, Monique McDonell, Margaret Midwood, Marie Miller, Mary Moore, Margaret Penhalljones, Nicole Pfeiffer, Amanda Reynolds-Smith, Bernadette Rowley, Susannah Sabine, Cheryl Sallick, Bec Sampson, Caroline Savage, Holly Scribe, Rebecca Skrabl, Lesley Smith, Deborah Southwell, Kerry Stapleton, Kerrie Starbuck, Fran Tran, Tracy Travis, Vanda Vadas, Vicki Vuat, Helen West, Allison Wharley, Zoe Younger, Cassandra Dean, Noreen Allan, Dora Bramden, Janice

Bridges, Simone Cooper, Beverley Eikli, Lauren James, Jess Langhorne, Joanne Levy, Neely Lyon, Juliet Madison, Erin Moira O'Hara, Bridie Smith, Michelle Somers, Alison Stuart, Virginia Suckling, Kristine Thomas, Kew Walker, Leisl Leighton, Erica Hayes, Annie Lynch, Raewyn Bright, and Gemma McBride.

Events Team Members

Melbourne Conference

Sarma Bardeau, Kate Belle, Laura Boon, Sarah Brabazon, Duncan Carling-Rogers, Jacqui Carling-Rogers, Ashley Carr, Frana Graco, Lauren James, Delwyn Jenkins, Helen Katsinis, Jennifer Kloester, Kathryn Ledson, Leisl Leighton, Samantha McHenry, Patsy Poppenbeek, Sue Price, Tracey Sharpe, Michelle Somers and Paul Sleeth.

Adelaide Conference

Linda Brown, Amy T Matthews, Bronwyn Stuart, Victoria Purman, Carla Caruso, Dianne Osborne, Trish Morey, Maggie Mundy, Suzie Hindmarsh-Knight, Bec Sampson, Susan Panageris, Charmaine Osborne and Helen Katsinis.

Brisbane Conference

Kendall Talbot, Tina Marie Clarke, Tania Joyce, Melanie Page, J'aimee Brooker, Madeline McCreanor, Leisl Leighton and Shannon Curtis.

Hearts Talk Team Members

Rachel Bailey, Rhyll Biest, Frances Burke, Carla Caruso, Pam Collings, Daniel de Lorne, Anne Gracie, Laura Greaves, Erica Hayes, Sara Hood, Vonnie Hughes, Moraig Kisler, Jodie Morphet, Nicole Pfeiffer, Patsy Poppenbeek, Clare Tanner (Karacsonyi), Serena Tatti, Janette Whitehead and Malvina Yock.

Member Services Team Members

Nas Dean, Bec Sampson, Joanne Levy, Catherine Whelan, Danielle Line, Julie-anne Carter, Janet Bayliss, Rachael Blair, Janice Bridges, Chris Weston, Dee Scully, Renee Hammond, Anita Joy, Karina Coldrick.

Media Team Members

Danielle Belwater (Katie Milan), Laura Boon, Jacqui Carling-Rogers (Elizabeth Ellen Carter), Leisl Leighton, Nikki Logan, Imogene Nix, Nicola Pitt and Jennifer St George.

OWL Team Members

General: Susan Downham, Leisl Leighton, Shannon Stein, and for OWLS: Sharon Sherry, Jillian Jones, Pauline Johnson & Leanne Stockwell.

Social Media Volunteers

Laura Boon Russell, Erica Hayes, Imelda Evans, Daniel de Lorne, Louise Ousby