

Hearts Talk



The official journal of Romance Writers of Australia

Edition #326 | August 2020

2020 RuBY finalists announced

by Linda Joyce, Contest Manager



Congratulations RuBY finalists

Congratulations to The Romantic Book of the Year Award, or RuBY, finalists of 2020. This is Romance Writers' of Australia's principal award. Australian readers and writers judge this contest which is open each year to any Australian or New Zealand author who has published a romance or romantic elements book.

Please join us on Saturday, 22 August at 7pm AEST for a star studded Virtual Awards Ceremony where this year you can swap from the perfume free event in your couture gown or dinner suit, to an indulgent night wearing as much of your favourite fragrance as you wish and comfy pyjamas. Be with us to celebrate all the achievements of the 2020 contest year as our well deserving winners

are announced and toast their success. Full details on how to access this will be emailed to RWA members and announced on social media – so start planning your pyjama parties, tiaras optional.

CONTEMPORARY

- Nothing But Trouble* - Amy Andrews
- Can't Stop That Feeling* - Janet Elizabeth Henderson
- The Desert Midwife* - Fiona McArthur
- Capturing Love* - Ann Penny
- Stowaway* - Stella Quinn
- The Legacies of Brigadier Station* - Sarah Williams

HISTORICAL

- The Slum Angel* - AnneMarie Brear
- Marry In Scandal* - Anne Gracie
- The Clothiers Daughter* - Bronwyn Parry

NOVELLA

- Unwrapping Her Heart* - Marianne Bayliss
- A Christmas Arrangement* - Monique McDonell
- Whistler Wonderland* - Gerogia Tingley

ROMANTIC ELEMENTS

- Just One Wish* - Rachael Johns
- House of Wishes* - Jenn McLeod
- The Silk Merchant Of Sychar* - Cindy Williams

ROMANTIC SUSPENSE

- Defiant (Now Outrun the Night)*- Leah Ashton
- Shelter* - Claire Boston
- Nothing To Lose* - Claire Boston

HIDE AND SEEK

- Hide And Seek* - Emma Lea

SPECULATIVE FICTION

- Heart of Eon* - Anna Hackett
- Envy* - Lana Pecherczyk
- Sloth* - Lana Pecherczyk ♥

RWA President's column

by Joanne Tracey, president@romanceaustralia.com

August is usually a big month in the RWA calendar with the conference to look forward to. This year it's all different but there is just as much to be excited about.

In addition to the fantastic content the conference team is bringing you, we'll also have our virtual awards ceremony. Sure, we might be in pyjamas and ugg boots rather than glammed up in our glad rags (or is that just me?) but we'll still be able to celebrate the achievements of our members. Even though there's no after party following the awards ceremony this year, if you want to (socially distanced) pump up the volume and dance the night away in the comfort of your own home, well, why not?

This month we're pleased to be launching the Romance Writers of Australia Academy – a rebranding

and restructuring of our OWL (Online Writing Lab) program. After painstakingly perusing your feedback Kenny and her team have come up with an accessible suite of courses which will take your professional development to new levels. I hope after reading Kenny's article in this issue (page 12) that you're as excited about this as we are.

Also in this issue are details of changes that we're making to the judging of RWA contests. Contests are an important part of professional development and a great way for authors to obtain valuable and objective feedback, so it's important to us that we are regularly reviewing this area. You'll find all the details in the Contest Manager's column (page 24).

Speaking of which, this will be Linda's last column as Contest



Manager as she's handing the reins across to Kristine Charles for the 2021 contest season. I'd like to say on behalf of us all a heartfelt thank you to Linda for all you've contributed to this important role.

On a personal note, I've been procrastinating up a storm over the last few months. Given though that my current WIP has a lot of scones in it I'm calling it research.

Stay safe, stay well, and happy writing.

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Author instagram: [@thehungryauthor](https://www.instagram.com/thehungryauthor)

Facebook: [facebook.com/joannetraceywriter/](https://www.facebook.com/joannetraceywriter/)

My blog: andanyways.com

Author website: joannetracey.com ♥

From your editors

Sara Hartland

Content Editor

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Well I'm hell jel now because Tanya and her buddies are winning at Conference already! (See right) Oh to be a plotter not a pantsner. Seriously, thanks to the amazing content in this issue, we will all nail Conference this year. My pic this month is from last year's Twisted Fairytale cocktail party, as evil Maleficent turned peace-loving flower child. And because we love dressing up at *HT*, we're giving away a book bundle to our pick of best conference outfit. Donna explains how to enter below. Happy reading, and see you at Love in Isolation

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Tanya Nellestein

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OMG it's August – my favourite month of the year, because it's RWA Conference Month! It's been widely acknowledged it's a total bummer we can't get together in the flesh...but what a treat to have the luxury of attending ALL of the workshops and presentations. As my extrovert ways will be tamed by COVID, I'll probably learn a whole lot more too! Fingers-crossed NSW doesn't return to lockdown because I aim to be hanging with my tribe in a house by the ocean for the duration of the conference. Stay tuned for all the social media posts #RWAus20 #RWAusHeartsTalk. I'm so excited for the new RWA Academy as well. Read all about it on page 12.

Tanya Nellestein,

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Twitter: @TanyaNellestein



Follow RWA.

Click an icon now.

Donna Munro

Design Editor

editor@romanceaustralia.com



It's less than two weeks until #RWAus20 Virtual Conference and I'm feeling exhausted but excited. All the hard work of our Conference Team will finally pay off. Replanning a physical event to a virtual one has been a steep learning curve with a small timeframe. There's been new technology, webinar platforms, websites, Grenadine (loading tickets, rego pages and other info) and apps. Then there's designs, promo, merchandise, scheduling, rebooking speakers, organising pitches, business appointments, sponsors, zoom meetings, phone calls and about a gazillion emails. Yep, it's hard work but worth every second of it. *Phew!*

I can't wait for Wednesday 12 August to begin. I've planned ahead. My laptop and phone are on charge, Grenadine app downloaded and schedule picked, notebook and plenty of pens, snacks ready, family dinners precooked, drinks in the fridge, 'don't disturb' sign on my office door, and an outfit organised (**dress up on any of the days, take a pic and post on Instagram with #RWAusHeartsTalk**). Theme: Virtual or Wild West. Have fun everyone. I'm sending you a virtual wave and hugs!

Donna Munro, *Hearts Talk* Design Editor

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Conference 2020

Awards presentation night

by Tanya Keen, Event Manager, events@romanceaustralia.com



As you already know, everything conference related is certainly different this year.

Covid-19, social distance rules and lockdown has seen every one of us having to learn new tech skills and adapt to a bran nue world!! The conference is no exception. The team has had to do plenty of thinking outside the box to ensure we can still produce events that maintain our commitment to provide professional development opportunities, as well as recognise and reward all of our contest winners and award recipients.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers who have stepped up to help bring you the conference in a format that is so very different from previous years and that many may not be familiar with. The events team has undergone an enormous learning curve and taken on massive workload to make the conference as comprehensive and educational as possible.

The Fremantle conference team deserve a particular mention for their commitment to stay with the conference despite having to

rethink the entire process. Please be understanding of the efforts of Claire Boston (convenor), Daniel De Lorne, Lana Pecherzyk, Shona Husk and Michelle Diener (pitching coordinator) to bring you over 35 hours of content over five days via live and pre-recorded webinars. If you get a chance to thank them personally, please do so.

Also giving their all are Donna Munro (registrar), Laura Harris (sponsorship), Ebony McKenna (digital bookstore) and the awards team including myself, Kristine Charles, Jo Tracey and Tracey Rosen.

Sadly, the awards presentation dinner is no longer on the menu (see what I did there?), and the traditional HQ after party is relegated to a late night fuzzy fond memory for now; but we still have an awesome smorgasbord of contest winners and award presentations for your viewing pleasure.

The date for this unique awards presentation is Saturday 22 August screened on the RWA YouTube channel from 7pm AEST

There will be the usual award presentations:

♥ Ripping Start;

- ♥ Selling Synopsis;
- ♥ First Kiss;
- ♥ Emerald;
- ♥ Sapphire;
- ♥ RuBY category awards;
- ♥ VPA, ROMA and Lynne Wilding awards.
- As part of the festivities there will be a shout out to the members who are eligible for their first sale ribbons.
- In keeping with tradition, the Gold Coast conference team will end the night with a special showcase screening of the attending presenters and special plans for next year's conference on the spectacular Gold Coast.
- Your MC for the night will be our fabulous RWA president Joanne Tracey.

So push back the sofa, roll up the rugs; put your high heels and red dress on. Gather your fellow writer friends, your family and significant others 'cause we are putting on a show stopper of an awards presentation night, coming live (well, pre recorded), from the RWA YouTube channel and beamed directly into a living room near you.



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How to navigate the tech during

#RWAus20

by Donna Munro, Conference Registrar, conference_registrar@romanceaustralia.com

Our illustrious un-tech-savvy HT editors pointed out; some people struggle with the tech side of things. You may not know an app from a webinar, or how to load a conference schedule any better than finding the thingamajig on a keyboard, but I'm here to help. I've been the Conference Registrar for two years, and seen my way around Grenadine, it's app and all the problem solving that goes with helping attendees navigate a conference. And, being this year is a virtual one – it's a whole new concept. Most of you have registered. Yay you! If not, get to it. Don't miss this fabulous literary event. Those who have used Grenadine will know it's picky on how you login. Remember the email you used, or whether you chose a Facebook or Google login and you should be fine. If not, you can send me an email at admin@romanceaustralia.com and I'll remind you how you logged in last.

Yet to login and register?

Here is how you do it

From the event website click 'Log in' menu item on the right upper

corner of the page. You will see a list of login providers. Click on one and follow the steps. You will be asked to enter or confirm your first and last name to allow Grenadine to find you if you already exist in the organiser database.

A login form titled 'Log in' with the instruction 'Please log in to continue on this Website'. It features two large buttons for 'Facebook' and 'Google' login. Below these is an 'Email' input field containing 'you@company.com' and a 'Continue' button. At the bottom, there are links for 'Help' and 'Privacy policy'.

In case you do not want to use a login provider, you can still create a login using an email address and password. Write them down. But, don't stress though. There's another easy way if you forget, just click (this is only on the web, not app) the handy little button 'Send me a magic link'. You'll be emailed a link to either use the magic link or reset your password (yes, this time write it down, so you don't forget).

A 'Welcome' screen for the user 'donna@warmwittywords.com.au'. It features a red button labeled 'Send me a magic link', an 'or' separator, a password input field with the placeholder 'Password', a 'Forgot your password?' link, and a blue 'Continue' button.

Once you are logged in you can click on 'My Account' and make any changes necessary, like adding a profile picture, choosing if you want to have a public profile, see your schedule, among other things. (see diagram page 6)

How do I add to my schedule?

Easy as a love heart. See the little blank hearts to the right? Click on the Webinars you want to attend and the heart turns red. It is added to your schedule. Simple! See the top right light-blue button? You can click on it to download your schedule to your calendar. A neat feature. (see diagram page 6)

Updating information when you have already purchased tickets

Login in. Go to My account > My Contact Information. You can load



Welcome Donna Munro (Registered)

You are logged in using donna@warmwittywords.com.au.

- My Profile
- My Contact Information
- My Orders
- My Tickets
- My Schedule
- My Availability
- Change my password

My Profile

[View my profile](#)

Share information about yourself with other attendees by filling in and publishing your profile.

Public profile Show my schedule

Photo



[Upload image](#)

Name

Prefix

Show Filters



Wednesday August 12, 2020

Time Zone: AWST/Perth

7:50 AM

Opening

Online Virtual Venue - Wednesday Webinar Room

7:50 AM - 7:55 AM | 5 minutes

Break [Welcome](#)

8:00 AM

PART ONE: Writing a Best Seller ONE-DAY WORKSHOP - Liz Pelletier

Online Virtual Venue - Wednesday Webinar Room

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM | 2 hours

Workshop [Wednesday Workshop](#) [Live](#)

10:15 AM

PART TWO: Editing a Best Seller ONE-DAY WORKSHOP - Liz Pelletier

Online Virtual Venue - Wednesday Webinar Room

10:15 AM - 12:15 PM | 2 hours

Workshop [Wednesday Workshop](#) [Live](#)

1:05 PM

PART THREE: Marketing a Best Seller ONE-DAY WORKSHOP - Liz Pelletier

Online Virtual Venue - Wednesday Webinar Room

1:05 PM - 3:05 PM | 2 hours

Workshop [Wednesday Workshop](#) [Live Q&A](#)

Wed Aug 12

7:50 AM

8:00 AM

10:15 AM

1:05 PM

3:05 PM

4:10 PM

5:15 PM

Thu Aug 13

8:00 AM

9:05 AM

10:20 AM

12:50 PM

2:25 PM

4:10 PM

5:10 PM

Fri Aug 14

[Add to My Schedule as Favorite](#)

a profile picture and bio if you want to go public.

Where are my tickets?

See the top screenshot. The tickets are listed once you click My Tickets tab at the left.

You will receive an email with the ticket pdf after purchase, but you may want to find or print again from this tab.

In the mobile app, click on 'Me' picture and follow the login steps. Click on My Tickets.

Speaking of the mobile app, you'll need to download it (highly recommended) if you haven't already done so.

Downloading mobile app

The app can be downloaded from Google Play or on the App Store.

Downloadable link <https://vvy4n.app.goo.gl/5r2l>. Once loaded, you'll find a compacted version of the web page. Enter our event code: RWA2020.

Socialising in isolation



Grenadine Eve...

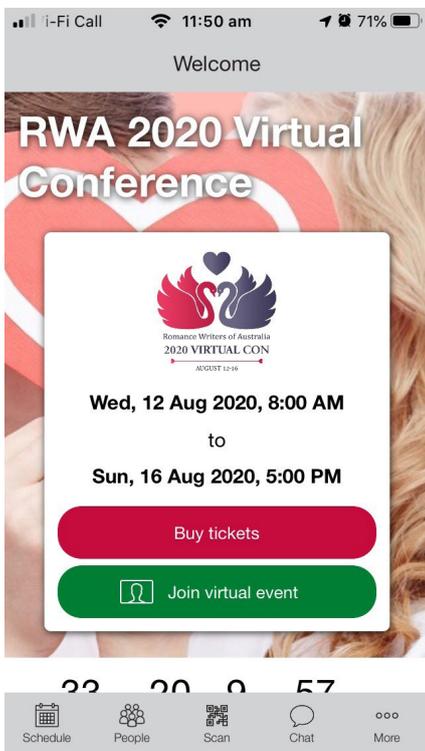
Business

[OPEN](#)

The Grenadine app allows you to socialise during the conference. We might be in isolation, but we will not be isolated. Click the Attendees tab to discover people (only those with a public profile can be seen). You can favourite

them (ticking the heart). Try chatting by clicking the chat symbol on the bottom bar. Link with your writing buddies while the conference is in full swing. Take photos of your office, where

you're viewing the conference, what you're wearing (be it PJs, fancy dress or cocktail attire), what you're drinking (promise we will not judge you), your conference merchandise, books and anything conference related. Don't forget



to use our hashtag #RWAus20 and #RWAusHeartsTalk. Let's go viral!

How to view the webinars

Webinars (live and pre-recorded) are run through Webinar Ninja. See Daniel De Lorne's article on page 8.

No one can see you during the webinars (unless of course you're zooming with your critique group) so feel free to go for a loo break, sip that bourbon and coke, dance around the room when you're having a fan-girl moment and eat the gourmet meal your perfect partner ordered in for you (we can dream, we're romance writers).

For those who have endured extra isolation (we're sending you hugs Victorians) ensure you manage your mental health. We hope the conference will be a cure and salve by bringing you inspiration, connection and motivation for your writing.

Further info can be found at:
<https://events.grenadine.co/event-help-center/>

You can also email me at
conference_registrar@romanceaustralia.com or
admin@romanceaustralia.com



Six tech tips

1. Remember your login password
2. Upload the mobile app
3. Load your schedule
4. Socialise and use the hashtags
5. Charge your laptop, phone, notebook and ready your viewing area for the whole five days
6. Refresh or sync your app regularly



ROMA UPDATE

by Tracey Rosen, ROMA coordinator



By the time Hearts Talk goes to press, our panel will be busy assessing an impressive number of entries in the annual ROMA – the Romance Media Award – for 2020. This year we have received twenty entries. Thank you to everyone for their nominations.

The ROMA is Romance Writers of Australia's annual award recognising outstanding reporting of romance writing in the Australian media.

It is open to Australian print and electronic media for coverage focusing on some aspect of romance novels, romance writing,

or romance publishing. Australian print, television, radio and digital media are eligible.

There were a wide variety of authors, publications, and themes on the topic of romance writing. We will be showcasing these wonderful entries at our virtual awards night as well as announcing the ROMA winner for 2020.

Some of the things our judges look at are the quality of the writing and the research put into the work, how innovative is the angle, whether coverage was without bias and a respectful representation of the romance genre and writers, if it

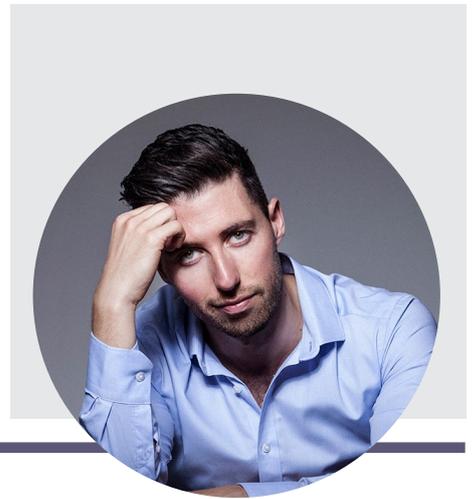
objectively addressed negative bias (if applicable) and how far reaching the piece is, including if it breaks new ground for coverage. And of course, the all important X-factor.

With all of these considerations, the finalists and winner will have demonstrated quality content of the kind that RWA wishes to encourage to help promote the romance genre to existing and future readers across Australia.

Our virtual awards night will be held on Saturday 22 August 2020 on RWA's YouTube channel. Don't forget to tune in. ♥

10 top tips for a kick-ass virtual conference

by Daniel de Lorne, Event Manager, events@romanceaustralia.com



RWA's annual conference is looking a little different this year – thank you, Miss Rona – as it moves from its usual three days of workshops to five, all on a virtual platform.

Every conference comes with opportunities for networking and learning, and the virtual conference is no different. Running from 12 to 16 August, with over 41 hours of content available, here are our top ten tips for getting the most of the conference.

1. Register on WebinarNinja early

The 2020 conference will be run on WebinarNinja, an online program that is run through your browser (Chrome or Firefox preferred). You need to create an account to watch the conference live or on replay so go create one now (and I mean RIGHT NOW) so you don't run into any problems on the day. Head to webinarninja.com to register.

2. Test out the webinar software beforehand

Once you've registered at WebinarNinja, take a look at the helpful articles they provide which can give you an idea of what to expect (or better yet find a free webinar and attend it before conference). Check out <https://help.webinarninja.com/en/collections/1905103-attending-webinars> for helpful tips.

3. Add the conference to your calendar

There's nothing worse than missing out. NOTHING. So go ahead and add the sessions you want to see to your calendar. You can either do this manually using the conference program on RWA's website or through WebinarNinja.

4. Limit your distractions

We're all used to so-called multitasking, juggling multiple screens at once. Hands up who watches TV while playing on their phone (and their laptop)? I know I do! And afterwards I can't remember any of what I saw. Do yourself a favour and cut out as many distractions as you can so you can make the most of this learning opportunity.

5. If you stay ready, you don't have to get ready

Prepare your space the day/night before the conference, which means having your desktop/laptop ready to go and charged, any pens and papers at hand and computer programs for note taking set-up. You might also want to listen to the conference through headphones to help limit distractions so make sure they're handy and charged.

6. Make it social

One of the greatest parts of the face to face conference is the social networking you get to do, but just because you're not with 300 of your besties, doesn't mean you can't have a similar experience. Jump onto social media or a Zoom/Skype chat with your tribe to discuss what you learned during the day and how you intend to put it into practice. This will help ensure your best chance of implementing it. (And the conference hashtag is #RWAus20.)

7. Pre-plan meals, snacks and tea/coffee breaks

The virtual conference schedule is *tight* so you want to have everything ready to go so you don't miss the start of a session. If you can, you might even want to relocate the kettle into your home office or wherever you're going to watch the sessions so it's within

easy reach. Have a selection of snacks available and pre-make your lunch (if you can) so you're not wasting time wondering what to have.

8. Don't feel guilty

If you've registered for the conference but can't attend a session you really wanted to see, don't be hard on yourself. The replay is there as a backup. Equally, if there's a session you're not interested in attending, don't feel like you have to go. This is your time and it's precious so make the most of it.

9. Enjoy the conference in your own time

We understand that life can get in the way and you might not be able to spend five days in front of your computer screen. That's why you can watch a replay of many of the sessions up to three months after the conference. Once the replays are available, you will receive a replay link to access it. (Closed captioning will be available on all replays, however, may not be uploaded within the first week.) For the best success, schedule when you're going to watch the replays NOW.

10. Have fun!

We're all a bit sad that this year's conference couldn't take place in Fremantle (especially the conference team), however, that doesn't mean the virtual conference can't be an enjoyable and valuable experience. We're looking forward to welcoming you to this jam-packed program and hope you have an awesome five days.

Tickets for RWA's virtual conference are available to purchase through Grenadine. Visit <https://rwaaustraliavcon.com.au> for all the details. ♥

Anthologies launch

Launching the 2020 Sweet Treats and Spicy Bites Anthologies

Amid the chaos of reorganising the Romance Writers of Australia's annual conference, two tasty morsels have not been forgotten! Our Sweet Treats and Spicy Bites anthologies will both be launched online this year, meaning a much wider audience can celebrate the success of Australia's up-and-coming romance authors.

For those unfamiliar with our anthologies, the RWA holds two short story writing competitions each year – Sweet Treats (for sweet and sensual romance stories) and Spicy Bites (for sexy and erotic

romance stories) – with the top-scoring entries in each competition appearing in its two annual anthologies of the same names.

Between the two anthologies, all heat levels are covered, as are a variety of romance sub-genres. No matter your reading preference, there'll be a story (or several!) that's sure to appeal to you!

Two launches will be held, one for each anthology, both with a run-time of approximately thirty minutes. This will allow you to attend a single launch if you prefer one heat level over the other, but if you're a fan of romance no matter the heat level, you can, of course, attend both.

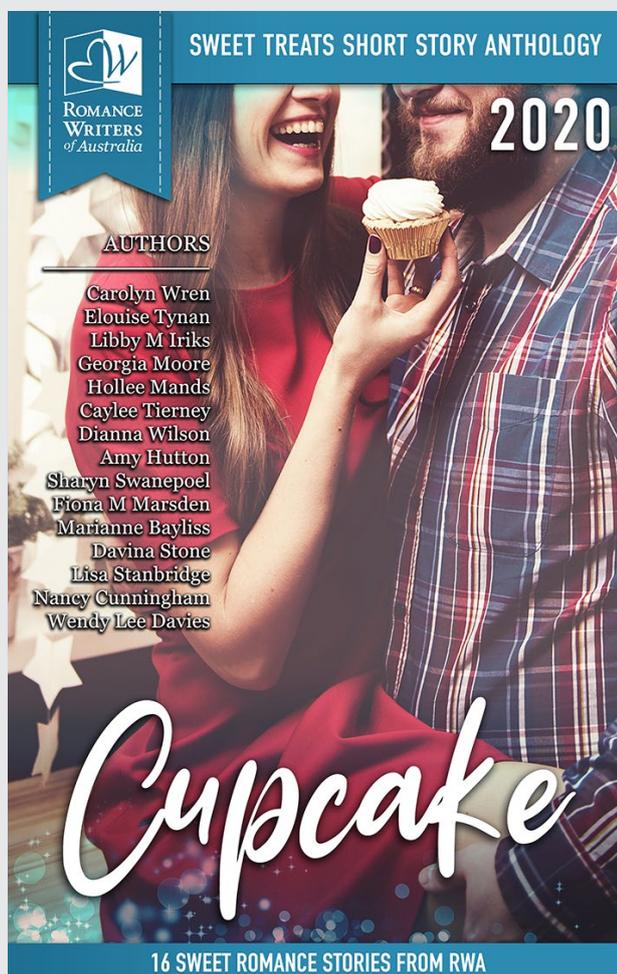
The launches will be held via webinar and will be FREE for anyone to attend. We are currently working on the webinar registration process and hope to confirm this by 31 July – registration links will be sent to all mailing list subscribers and will be published to our Facebook page.

For now, pencil one or both of the following dates in your diary and stay tuned for more information.

Sweet Treats launch: Thursday 20 August, 8-8.30pm EST (6-6.30pm WST)

Spicy Bites launch: Friday 21 August, 8-8.30pm EST (6-6.30pm WST)

We look forward to seeing you there! ♥



Lynn Wilding Award Nominees 2020



Kaz Delaney has announced the nominees for the Lynne Wilding Meritorious Service Award for 2020.

"There was a great response from the membership and we're very grateful. It's always so important to recognise those who work quietly behind the scenes to keep us viable and growing – and now in these unsettled times, perhaps even more so," said Kaz.

"So, to these wonderful, wonderful ladies – and all who give so generously of their time and skills – thank you. Each of you is appreciated and absolutely invaluable."

Nominees for 2020 are, in alphabetical order:

- ♥ **Claire Boston**
- ♥ **Kristine Charles**
- ♥ **Laura Harris**
- ♥ **Sara Hartland**
- ♥ **Jillian Jones**
- ♥ **Helen Katsinis***
- ♥ **Tanya Kean**
- ♥ **Dannielle Line***
- ♥ **Ebony McKenna**
- ♥ **Lana Percherczyk**
- ♥ **Kenny Raine (Kenny Snabel)**
- ♥ **Bree Vreendenburgh***

"Huge congratulations and let the cheers begin!"

"Please note that while each of these ladies is worthy, three members were ineligible – however I felt it important for them to be recognised and celebrated as nominees, regardless of their ineligibility. Danielle Line (former recipient), Helen Katsinis (former recipient) and Bree Vreendenburgh (Immediate past standing President) have all graciously – and happily – accepted the situation. Thank you lovely ones for what you continue to do."



Meet the VCon Team



Claire Boston
Convenor

Conference convenor **Claire Boston** writes both romance and fantasy, her stories full of love, adventure and escape. In 2014 she was nominated for an Australian Romance Readers Award for Favourite New Romance Author and her series include *The Blackbridge Series* and *The Emperor's Conspiracy*.

www.claireboston.com



Michelle Diener
Pitch Coordinator

Michelle Diener writes award-winning science fiction romance, fantasy and historical novels. Her Class 5 science fiction romance series has over 1600 five star ratings on Goodreads and Amazon combined. She has been a member of RWA from 2009 and has served on the RWA committee for a year. This has been her second stint on a conference committee team. You can find her at www.michellediener.com.



Shona Husk
VCon Committee

Romance author **Shona Husk** lives in Western Australia at the edge of the Indian Ocean. Blessed with a lively imagination she spent most of her childhood making up stories. As an adult she discovered romance novels and hasn't looked back. With over forty published stories, ranging from sensual to scorching, she writes contemporary, paranormal, fantasy and sci-fi romance. You can find her at www.shonahusk.com



Lana Pecherczyk

Lana Pecherczyk is a romance writer from Perth Australia. She's a fan of 'pro-caffeinating' and writes in the paranormal and fantasy categories. Basically if it's got supernatural powers, sexy heroes, thrilling action and a kick-ass heroine, you know she'll write it because she loves reading it. Visit her worlds at www.lanapecherczyk.com



Daniel de Lorne
VCon Committee

Daniel de Lorne writes paranormal, urban fantasy and contemporary gay romance. His first novel, the romantic horror *Beckoning Blood*, was in 2014. He has been a member of RWA since 2010, serving on committee for three years and *Hearts Talk* for four. He lives in Perth, Western Australia, where he also works as a professional writer and researcher. www.danieldelorne.com



Tanya Kean
Event Manager

Tanya enjoys shining the spotlight on the 'forgotten' women of history; ordinary women doing extraordinary things, with unconventional heroines who are the feminists of their time. Tanya is a restless spirit and is constantly planning her next travel destination. If she wasn't a writer, she would spend her days traveling the world as a tour guide. Although her stories hope to empower women, she is a romantic at heart, so there is always a happily ever after. Learn more at www.tanyakean.com



Donna Munro
Registrar

Donna writes contemporary romance with exotic settings, wildlife and wild guys. Her goal with her latest manuscript is to secure a trad deal. She keeps busy being the RWA Administrative Assistant, *HT Design* Editor as well as Conference Registrar - you could say she's an allrounder. Visit Donna at her blog/website www.warmwittywords.com.au



Kristine Charles
Awards Night

Kristine Charles loves telling sexy tales, exploring relationships between complex women and the strong men who love them, then working out just how much pain to inflict before giving her characters their HEA (or, at least, their HFN). She writes, and reads, to escape into other worlds where coffee (and red wine) is abundant, designer shoes and handbags are cheap, chocolate has no calories and men always put the toilet seat down. Visit her at www.wordsbykristinecharles.com



Ebony McKenna
Bookstore

Ebony McKenna is the author of eight young adult novels and many author-help writing guides. She is the 2018 RuBy award-winning author of *The Girl and The Ghost: A Sweet Paranormal Romance*. As Ebony Jean, she writes 'flirty, little-bit-dirty' contemporary romances; and as Ebony Oaten, pens sparkling Regency romance. Intrigued? Her ferret-loving website is www.ebonymckenna.com



Laura Simpson
Sponsor Coordinator

Laura Simpson writes contemporary romance with plenty of sass and steam. Her first four novels are set in Bright, at the base of Victoria's Alpine Mountains where she lives, works and wrangles her kids. Working in homelessness for more than a decade, writing romance has been a creative outlet that combines her love of love, with real life issues and small town communities. Visit Laura at www.lsimpsonauthor.com/



Romance Writers of Australia
2020 VIRTUAL CON

AUGUST 12 - 16

Farewell OWLs and hello RWA Academy!

by *Kenny Raine, RWA Professional Development*



Woot Woot!

We're excited to announce RWA's popular Online Writing Labs (OWLs) are being rebranded and restructured to cater to a wider audience and meet changing demand.

The **Romance Writers of Australia Academy** will consist of three levels of online professional development.

Online Self-paced Courses are courses where participants work through learning materials at their own pace. Participants will be

able to access learning materials immediately for a one year period. Prices start from \$19.

Online Short Courses (previously known as OWLs) are four-week online courses delivered in a group environment with feedback from the presenter on up to 500 words or on an equivalent small project. Group participation and feedback will also be encouraged, although it is not mandatory. Price: \$55 members (\$65 non-members)

Focused One-on-One Courses involve interaction between one participant and an expert in a specific field or area of writing. Learning materials will be provided and there will be opportunities for



**ROMANCE
WRITERS
of Australia
ACADEMY**



discussion. Personalised feedback will be given on a minimum of 1,000 words or equivalent in another medium. Duration is varied depending on the program. Prices start from \$165.

Calls for RWA Academy proposals for 2021 will be opened in September so keep an eye out for details in September's *Hearts Talk* if you're interested in proposing a course.



Life in the Indie Lane

by Clare Connelly

This column is a team effort between Indie authors Anna Hackett, Clare Connelly, Claire Boston and Michelle Diener.



Selling your backlist

After the new release buzz dies down, it can be frustrating to see book sales slow. I'm all for flattening the curve but not *that* curve. However, a backlist is a really valuable commodity, and a great way to maximise your indie income. It just takes a little work and time to make the most out of your older books.

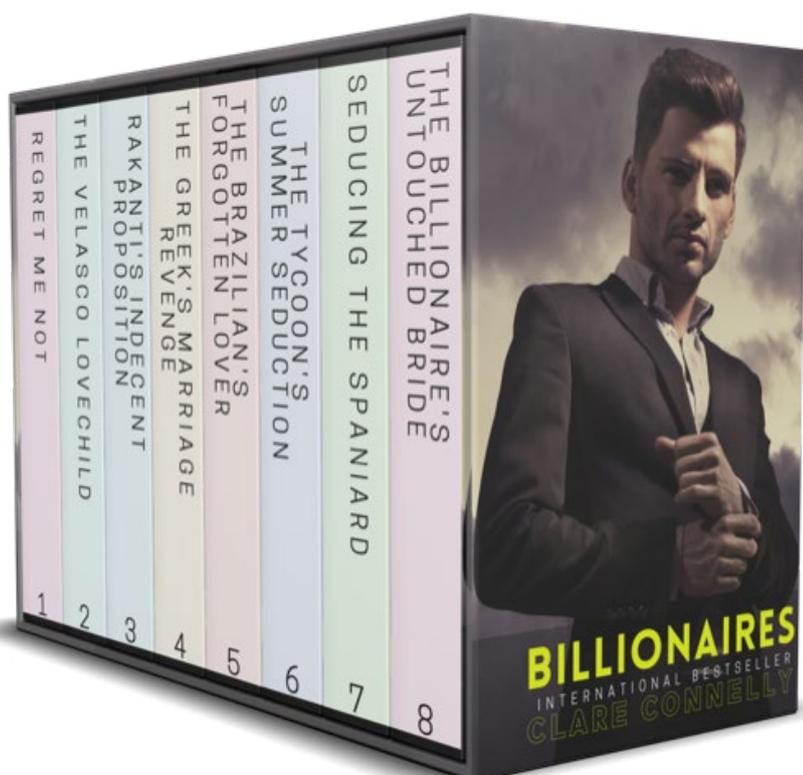
Let's start with the holy grail: Bookbub. It goes without saying that if you can get a deal over there, you're likely to see a boost in sales! Other bargain newsletter

websites (bargainbooksy, freebooksy etc) can also be a good way to promote your older books. Before your promotion runs, there are a few things you can do to make sure it gets the best results.

Update your cover. This is something you should do every few years, making sure your covers continue to sit well within the marketplace. Depending on how many books you have, this can be an expensive exercise, so don't feel you need to have a revolving door of covers. At the same time, a freshen up can help make your book stand out, so be realistic about how appealing your current covers are likely to be to your prospective readers. Lots of cover artists will offer a package deal if you're looking to recover a heap of books.

Update your blurb and keywords.

You can change the content or update the blurb with pertinent information, such as reviews – even better to include a 'star' graphic. Make use of formatting tools, such as displaying sections of the text in bold or italics, to attract more attention and make sure your tagline is powerful and attractive.



Look at ways to repackage your older books.

This is probably the most important tool in my arsenal when it comes to getting my older books to continue to sell. I'm a huge fan of boxsets or anthologies. I group mine by genre, or series, and in any number of combinations. For example, I have a series of duos, called 'Pairs', which bring together two standalone romances with complementary themes. The covers

for these are quite different to my single title cover graphics, because I'm aiming to appeal to a different market – ie, to draw new readers to my books. I like to include a stand-alone novel from a series, in the hope it whets the appetite of a reader who will then go on to nose out the other titles in the series.

I generally make anthologies a more economical way to purchase my books as well (eg three for the price of two). A word to the wise, be careful with your KU enrolments once you step into the world of anthologies. Before taking a book wide, it's important to make sure that same book isn't featured in any of your anthologies available in KU or you'll fall foul of their exclusivity rules.

Highlight backlist titles to newsletter subscribers and social media followers. You can send out newsletters with interesting tidbits about your older novels – what inspired you to write it, what was happening in your life when you did write it, interesting reviews and feedback you've received since, and so on. Leslie North is an example of an author who does great backlist promo in her regular newsletters.

Make sure the backmatter in your older books is up to date! Keep a master list of your full booklist, updating it in one place each time you release a book (or load one for preorder), so that you can easily sub this file into the back of your older books, making sure whoever finds your older titles has a shiny arrow pointing them to all your books.

Look at competitive pricing strategies – run promos on the book across the platforms. Tether these promos into current events – for example, I like to discount or run as 'giveaways' my 'hometown heroes' set of All-American heroes around Independence Day or Veterans Day. Promote on social media – either to your organic followers or do some paid ad placements.

Write some additional content to 'hype' backlist titles. You could write an epilogue or an addition to the epilogue, or touch base with your characters five years after

their story ends, or right before the action's about to take place – any bonus content that can spark someone's interest. Promote it on social media channels and distribute to your newsletter subscribers.

Make sure your website has a comprehensive list of your books, ideally sorted by series or trope – an easy guide for new-to-you readers who want to glom all your titles! Images with clickable links so there are no roadblocks between the reader on your website being able to buy your book.

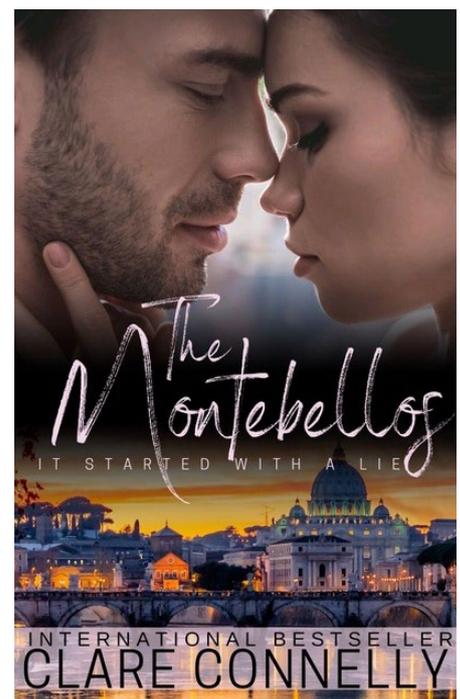
Diversify! I'm in the process of having various backlist titles translated into German, or transcribed into audio. This isn't cheap but it's another distinct pillar to my indie business. And while it requires a financial investment, the content is already created – my words are written, I've already done the hard yards! – so this is a great way to make that book keep working for me. I've opted to pay artists/translators for the work upfront, meaning their product is mine to do with what I will, but there are royalty split options to alleviate the financial burden. Upwork is a great place to find people to work with (consult their reviews and feedback and always get a sample of their work before committing).

Perma-Free. Look at making an earlier book (that you really love!) a perma-free title, and again, make sure your backmatter is updated to draw readers to your newer titles. It's a loss leader, in that you don't make royalties from the reading of that book (though if you're in KU there's some anecdotal evidence that readers will click through the links of a freebie or cheapie but then read that book via KU if they can, so freebies can still boost your KU revenue) but if it helps readers discover you for the first time and they continue to read your books then that's a total win. The ultimate is if this perma-free title is the first book in a series, so you get readthrough of your backlist series titles as well as making sure each book points the reader to front list novels.

Reviews are a great way to keep the algorithms working in your favour. You can contact reviewers and ask if they'd like a complimentary copy of a backlist title – or better yet, start a Facebook group for your superfans and regularly send out backlist books for them to read – and review.

Focus your efforts. Choose one book from your backlist that you'd like to promote and give it a month. Hit it with a combined approach of the above – newsletter mentions, bonus content, social media promotion, a campaign of new reviews, price incentive – and track your success so you know what's worked best for you.

So there you have it! Good luck with selling your backlist. I'd love to hear from you if you have some other ideas or experience with techniques that have worked well for you. Until next time, all the best from the Life in the Indie Lane authors. x



– Clare Connelly has written more than eighty full length category romance novels. From glamorous locations to powerful royals, self-made millionaires and the women who bring them to their knees, she lives to write romance that sets your soul on fire. Order *It Started with a Lie* on [Amazon](#)



Marketing, Money & Motivation

by MV Ellis



With a twenty-year career spanning advertising, marketing, social media, and life coaching, MV brings a unique skillset to the business of being an author.

Write in the fast lane.

Eight other strategies I employ to write a book a month.

In July's month's column I talked about how writing sprints help me write a book a month. That article elicited such a positive response that it got me thinking about the other tools in my writerly toolbox that have helped me crank through the words this year, and not only write, but also *publish* a book every month.

Plan

This should get a rise out of those who read the previous article, because I explicitly stated that I'm not a planner when it comes to my writing, in the sense that I don't (or more accurately, *can't*) plot. However, in order to be able to knock out the requisite words to hit my monthly targets, I need to plan in other areas of my work in order to ensure that I have the time and space to write, and so that the books actually make it to publication. This, I can do.

Free My Mind...

....and my To-Do list. I've found that if I have outstanding admin tasks hanging over my head when I'm writing, it makes concentrating more difficult, if not, impossible. Therefore, I try to sit down to write unencumbered by niggly tasks that may pull my focus, or distract me while I work (or try to).

Team MV

A lean writing and publishing schedule means a lean *everything* schedule, and this is only possible for me with a solid team in place – promo company, cover designer, editor, proofreader – on whom I can rely to make magic happen in accordance with my tight timings. I'll be honest, I've had to kiss a few frogs to get to this point, but that's understandable.



It's also advisable to have a plan B (and beyond) in place, in case the unexpected should happen, and the A team is unavailable for whatever reason. Earlier this year, my editor was unfortunate enough to contract COVID-19,

and sadly became quite ill as a result. I obviously expected and understood that this meant that my planned edit would not go ahead, and sent my best wishes. Her symptoms progressed to the point where she was hospitalized, so imagine my surprise when I received an email containing my MS, with the latest round of edits completed. She'd taken her laptop with her to the ER, and completed my edit while she waited for treatment. I would of course never expect anyone to do this, though I was incredibly grateful that she did. However, it reinforced the need to have a more robust solution for times like those. Off I go to kiss more frogs...

Take a break

Although my schedule is pretty jam-packed, I do try to ensure that I take some writing-free days every month, especially between books. I've found that at the end of an intense period of writing to complete a book, I can feel quite tired and drained. A few days between books therefore serves as a good palate cleanser, and allows me some time to recharge my batteries.

Unlock my creative brain

Similar to the point above, cranking out the words can sometimes make me feel as though the creative well has, or will run dry, so I find it both necessary and beneficial to feed my creativity in other ways.

As a visual thinker, for me, TV is a great way to relax and unwind, and consuming storytelling in a visual medium (and yes, as an occupational hazard, deconstructing the devices and techniques at play) helps to add fuel to my creative tank for when I need to get back to writing. An added bonus is that I get a quick TV binge in, and have some clue what people are talking about when they refer to TV shows on social media!

If it ain't broke...still try to fix it

I'm always looking for new ways to improve or streamline my writing process. I want to work smarter, not harder, which means I don't consider that process a case of 'set and forget'. It's a constantly evolving beast, and I'm prepared to change things up to get results. To that end, I will confess, that I'm somewhat promiscuous when it comes to writing software, and

have experimented with quite a number of programs in my time. At the moment I'm favouring a simple, no 'bells and whistles' program that writes in markup (i.e. no visible formatting until the document is exported). Somehow, without all the complexities of some other programs, when I sit down to write, the focus is...well... writing rather than fiddling with the functionality. One thing it does have, however, is an inbuilt sprint-timer, which, in my humble opinion, is worth its weight in gold.

When everyone else zigs, zag

I've taken the no frills approach one step further after researching whether font choice can affect creativity and productivity. There is some (admittedly anecdotal) suggestion that the simplicity of the much-ridiculed, humble Comic Sans could somehow help boost writing performance.

Never one to say never, I gave it a try, and though I can't specifically attribute an improvement in writing speeds, it certainly hasn't slowed me down. Not only that,

but I feel that writing in a font so alien to me helps with error checking when exporting to my regular font (Times New Roman). What can I say? The truth is, that for some (possibly completely illogical) reason, I just kind of like it, so I've stuck with it.

Tidy office, tidy mind

It's a cliché, but they exist for a reason. I recently shared a photo of my newly decorated office space, which is mostly white, pretty (at least to my tastes), and quite sparse by some standards. For me, it's the ideal space to write in, and though it's not always spotless, I try to keep it as close to tidy as possible, as I find that an absence of clutter in my physical surroundings helps fuel my creative brain.

MV Ellis doesn't just write romance, she lives it. She followed her heart halfway around the world to be with a man she sat next to on a wild 36-hour bus journey across sultry Brazil.

Visit MVELlis.com to learn more. ♥

CONTEST CALENDAR 2020

<i>Contest</i>	<i>Opens 1700 AEST</i>	<i>Closes 1700 AEST</i>
Ripping Start	Monday 7 September 2020	Monday 29 September 2020
The Sapphire Award	Monday 14 September 2020	Monday 5 October 2020
Publishing Basics	Monday 5 October 2020	Monday 26 October 2020
The Emerald Award	Monday 26 October 2020	Monday 16 November 2020
The RuBY Awards	Monday 14 December 2020	Monday 18 January 2021
Spicy Bites	Monday 4 January 2021	Monday 25 January 2021
Sweet Treats	Monday 4 January 2021	Monday 25th January 2021
First Kiss	Monday 8 February 2021	Monday 1 March 2021
The Valerie Parv Award	Monday 5 April 2021	Monday 26 April 2021

The Craft of Romance

by Elizabeth Rolls: books@elizabethrolls.com



'The past is a foreign country: They do things differently there.'

L.P. Hartley was referring to memory and how our minds alter our memories as time passes, but we do this with history too. We leave bits out here, either because of word count and those bits don't directly affect the plot or characters, or we take a little artistic licence there because if we don't our characters and their behaviour may be totally unsympathetic to our readers.

The simple truth is that we can't fit in absolutely everything we may know about our book's historical setting.



Sometimes our reference as to how our heroine got from Yorkshire to London in 1823 may be limited to ensuring that, unless she travelled on the Mail, she didn't do it in a day. Unless of course the hero is eloping with her, in which case it becomes part of the story. This is why Lisa Kleypas devotes time to St Vincent and Evie's elopement to Gretna Green in *The Devil in Winter* - including the foot warmers - and I largely skate over my heroine's journey from Yorkshire to London with her brother in *A Compromised Lady*.

It's important to ask ourselves if we're including something just because we know about it and want to show everyone that we know it, or if the story and our readers really

need that snippet of information. For example, I often have pets in my stories, and my current heroine owns a cat called Fiddle. I've owned cats since I was a child, but only once have I had the unfortunate experience of living - albeit briefly - with an entire female. Smudge was a stray we adopted. We kept her for some weeks hoping her owners might turn up. No such luck. So we arranged to get her de-sexed - and then she came into heat. Hideous! Yowling non-stop, male cats spraying the house and garden. So knowing how ghastly that is, and also knowing that female cats could not be de-sexed until the twentieth century, I have made an executive decision that any cat owned by one of my characters is going to be a de-sexed male. Could male cats be de-sexed? Yes, they could. But after asking a vet how it might have been managed just in terms of keeping the cat still without the use of anaesthesia, I'm fairly unlikely to go into the details in a book. My vet friend was elderly himself and he'd heard from much older colleagues of the poor cat being stuffed headfirst into a boot. Suffice it to say that Fiddle is not spraying my heroine's apartment, and I am avoiding the entire issue of female cats in heat!

It's not too different with dogs - the issues of entire dogs, male or female is something to consider. Again, I tend to take the coward's way out and my characters often own male dogs so I don't have to consider the ins and outs of bitches in heat and every male dog in London sniffing around the heroine's residence.

Although come to think of it I could certainly make some pointed comparisons there!

It's very hard to avoid horses in any historical setting. Like a lot of little

girls of my generation, I spent a fair bit of time with my nose buried in a pony book. I also rode a lot as a child and teenager, so I have a reasonable working knowledge of horses. I know what annoys them, what will completely freak one out, and I know enough about looking after one for my characters not to raise too many eyebrows over the care and handling of their horses. But I've never driven a horse and that's very different to riding one. In fact, riding side-saddle is quite different to riding astride, and even side-saddles have changed enormously in two hundred years. They were even more different if you go further back.

We need to keep asking ourselves how things we take completely for granted might have worked in the context of our historical setting.



Elizabeth Rolls is a two-time winner of the HOLT Medallion, and RuBy and RITA finalist. Find out more facebook.com/elizabeth.

Tips From An Industry Insider

with **Laura Boon**



The production process: file formatting and metadata

Once you are ready to format your digital files, you are on the home straight of your production run*, closing in on publication day.

Once you have your final, typeset manuscript, you want to convert it to one or all of the three primary file types – PDF, ePub and Mobi. Many of the programs or platforms you can use for typesetting and printing will offer a conversion service. There are also free apps you can use. If you are nervous about doing it yourself, you can contract a freelancer through a website such as Fiverr. Many graphic designers have taken up file conversion as a natural extension of their skills, so it is also worth asking your cover designer if she does file conversions. Some publishers do file conversion in-house; others outsource it as they do cover design and editing.

PDF is one of the most accessible file formats available. It is often used by authors and publishers who sell direct from their websites and for ARCs. Unfortunately, it is also the easiest format to pirate. Anyone with access to the Adobe suite of products can easily convert a PDF to a Word doc. If you're going to send a PDF out into the world, I recommend you only send

it to trusted sources.

Mobi is a Kindle-specific file type. Amazon will convert other file formats to Mobi for uploading and reading. Authors used to have to create Mobi files to upload to Amazon, but now, in some circumstances, you can upload an ePub3 file and Amazon will convert it for you.



ePub3 is the current gold standard in electronic book file formats. It can be used across a wide variety of platforms, including Kobo, Google Play, Apple and others. It can be read on both Android and Apple devices.

There are other file formats, usually for specific platforms. However, you have a diminishing rate of return in sales for investing in these other formats and platforms. Amazon dominates the ebook market in no small part because their Kindle App is easy to use and available free on all platforms. As a sales platform,

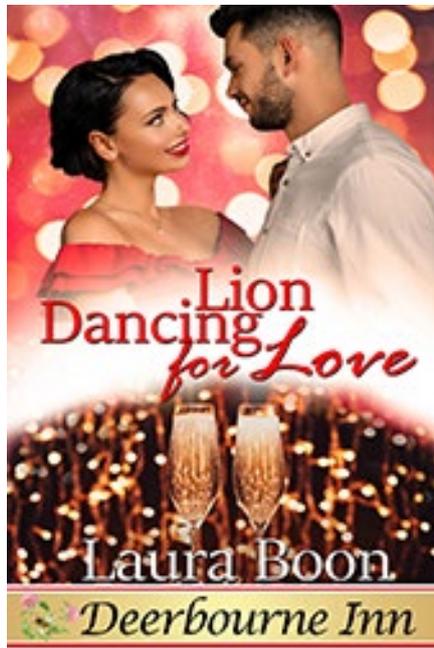
Apple is a distant second and Kobo a yet further distant third. Google, Nook/Barnes and other platforms all languish even further behind.

Once your files have been converted, be sure to do a read-through before you upload them. Check that all the links actually work especially if you have a Table of Contents. You are scanning for unexpected (and unwanted) changes in font and correct paragraph, page and chapter breaks. If you have used any decorative elements, such as a drop cap at the beginning of each chapter, make sure they are all in place and working properly.

Check that your front and end matter is in place. It's common practice now for a lot of pages that used to be front matter to appear at the end of an ebook, for example, dedications and acknowledgements, and even the title and half-title pages. This is so the reader can dive straight into the story. Ebooks also have different end matter to print books. You can include extracts from and blurbs about your other books and link to your website or a sales platform.

When you are happy everything is as perfect as it can be, you are ready to upload. This is generally an easy process once you have an account with the sales platforms you want your book to appear on, for example Amazon, Apple, Kobo, Google Play, etc. Certainly, the platforms will provide you with instructions.

One important piece of preparation you need to do before you upload is gather your metadata. Metadata is data about data, so basically data about your book. You'll need your blurb, author bio, any endorsements, reader and review quotes. You'll also need a list of key words that describe your book, the more the better. Think about genres, sub-genres, tropes, themes, character types, settings, and anything a reader might type in to try to find a book they like. For example, historical romance (genre); Regency (sub-genre); marriage of convenience, runaway bride (tropes); sisters, domestic violence, trust, childhood trauma (themes), Alpha male, single, Polynesian heroine (character information); Australia, Outback, small town, Victorian England (setting); and elements of diversity, culture,



etc – anything that is key to your story, including words and phrases such as happy ever after, sexy romance, sweet romance, ménage, etc. You also want to put together a list of similar authors, similar

in the sense that if readers like their books, they may like yours. Don't be afraid to aim high; target bestselling authors as well as those you think are a great fit. Each platform will have a form for you to fill in and populate with data. The more information you provide, the easier it will be for readers to discover your books.

* Covered in previous issues: Editing (April 2020), cover design (May 2020), typesetting and printing (June 2020)

For more insider tips, read Laura's monthly column on the RWA blog. Laura Boon worked as a bookseller, sales rep, marketer and publicist before discovering the RWA and finding the courage and technique to write her own books. She is the author of two contemporary romances, the most recent being the novella, *Lion Dancing for Love*. ♥

Talk one-on-one with the experts

Considering self-publishing or keen to do it better? Book your personal appointments with the leaders in self-publishing at the Love in Isolation conference.

Ask the experts at [Draft2Digital](#), [Reedsy](#) and [IngramSpark](#) anything you need to know to get started, or grow your author business.

Conference attendees can request to speak one-on-one with [Dan Woods](#) or [Kevin Tumlinson](#) from [Draft2Digital](#); [Ricardo Fayet](#) from [Reedsy](#) and [Melanie Coles](#) and [Thato Molefi](#) from [IngramSpark](#). It's a golden opportunity.

Learn more from Dan and Kevin about all the possibilities

for your books in digital, print and audio; or ask about the latest marketing tips. They know what works!

Ricardo from Reedsy helped to create the world's leading marketplace of publishing professionals – from editors to proofreaders, cover designers, book marketers and literary translators. He can definitely help you.

Melanie and Thato are keen to help authors learn about using IngramSpark for print on demand and global distribution of your book. Global distribution – sounds good doesn't it?

Find out more at <https://rwaustriavcon.com.au/business/> ♥

Wiradjuri woman wins Miles Franklin

Australia's most prestigious literary award, the Miles Franklin, has been awarded to Wiradjuri author Tara June Winch for *The Yield*, published by Penguin Random House Australia.

Ms Winch said she hoped to encourage the next generation of indigenous voices.

"There is a space here for you in the industry, and in the minds and hearts of a new era of readers."

"We need to hear voices from across the nation to truly immerse ourselves in the song of Australia," Ms Winch said.

The Yield weaves together three stories to reveal how Indigenous history carries forward pain and sorrow yet allows compassion, resilience, dignity, humour and humanity to flourish.

Ms Winch said her success signalled to publishers that "we can write our own stories, and that we don't want to be spoken for." ♥

Otherworldly Bites

by Kaydence Snow

What world are you living in

There are certain key elements we must consider as writers of romance stories.

The characters – who is the main character and his/her love interest/s?

The plot – what happens to these characters? When? And why?

The setting – where does the story take place?

The real world

Worldbuilding in any story is crucial for drawing the reader into the character's surroundings and making them feel like they're lost in the story. In historical romance, descriptions of clothing and outdated social rituals are used to illustrate what it was like to live during a particular time period. In contemporary romance, descriptions of provincial France can be used to help set the romantic, dreamy tone of the story. In a romantic thriller, the remote woods in the winter become like another sinister character, adding suspense and tension.

The unreal world

When writing paranormal (PNR) or fantasy romance, the setting is vitally important. It's not just a part of the book; it's woven into every aspect of the story, each detail crafted to create a rich, complex, intriguing world.

The actual setting is an obvious place to start when worldbuilding. Where is it? What does it look like? Is it an alien planet? Modern day New York, but with a secret paranormal underworld? Post-apocalyptic earth, overrun by mutants? How many species are

there? What are the political and social structures?

However, worldbuilding can also be a major factor in driving the plot in paranormal romance. Perhaps the lovers in the tale are from two separate species which are natural rivals. Perhaps they live on a planet where arranged marriage is the norm. The very world the characters must navigate can be used to create obstacles and tension, driving factors to move the plot forward.

Worldbuilding can be an intrinsic part of character development too. A shifter character could have some of the characteristics of the animal they shift into. The harsh and brutal post-apocalyptic world that the main character grew up in may have made her tough and untrusting – an obstacle that her love interest must overcome.

Know the rules before you break them

There are many ways to approach creating a fantastical world when writing PNR. It's incredibly rewarding and a whole lot of fun to let your imagination loose. If you're going to run wild and create a whole new universe with unique species and unrecognisable surroundings, have at it! Just be consistent and take abundant notes.

But if you're going to play around with existing lore and myth, a word of caution. Research is vital. Vampires, werewolves and fairies (to give a few of the more common examples) are popular, well-known paranormal creatures that have been the subject of countless romantic tales. There are certain elements and tropes in these worlds that are widely known and accepted. There is no reason why a new, fresh take can't be written, subverting these tropes and rules



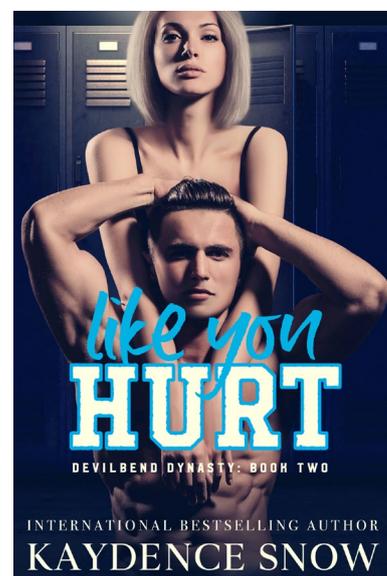
(hello! *Twilight!*). But in order to break the rules, it is vital to know them first. So, make sure you read plenty in the genre you plan to write in and be intentional and specific about how you plan to subvert accepted worldbuilding.

Never break your own rules

PNR and fantasy readers are voracious, love detail and have vivid imaginations. They are the ones who will love your stories so much that they write fanfiction set in the world you've created. They are dedicated, and you must be too. If you contradict your own worldbuilding, break the very rules that you made up, your readers will notice and they will probably point it out to you. Plot holes are wider and deeper in magical narratives. Keeping detailed notes and tracking developments will help you avoid them.

Resources

Worldbuilding can be tricky and at times painful. Weaving it into your writing takes time to learn and



perfect. Entire books have been written on the subject. If you'd like to improve your worldbuilding, the links on the next pages gives you a few places to start:

Worldbuilding links:

Worksheets created by Lana Pecherczyk:

<https://www.etsy.com/au/listing/650231104/world-building-worksheets-pdf-ultimate>

A couple of 'how-to' articles for a good starting point:

♥ <https://thewritelife.com/worldbuilding/>

♥ <https://blog.reedsy.com/worldbuilding-guide/>

♥ <https://www.soyouthinkyoucanwrite.com/worldbuilding-101-part-1/>

Kaydence Snow is the author of the international bestselling reverse harem series *The Evelyn Maynard Trilogy*. She lives on the Mornington Peninsula with her husband and a beagle with as much attitude as her. kaydencesnow.com ♥

Help RWA to be inclusive

RWAus is committed to becoming an inclusive organisation and recently put together a diversity sub-committee.

The initial task of the diversity sub-committee will be to review RWAus policies to ensure they are inclusive.

Other ongoing tasks will be to advise other sub-committees, such as events, how to continue to improve diversity and become more inclusive of a broader range of voices.

A good number of members responded to the initial call out.

The current sub-committee includes a range of members who identify as either people with a disability or LGBTIQ+ or both, but we would love to see more racially and ethnically diverse members add their voices to this sub-committee.

If you are interested in this volunteer task, we'd love to hear from you. Please email president@romanceaustralia.com ♥

News in brief



Critique Matchmakers

Speed dating for a Critique Partner

matchmakers@romanceaustralia.com

Looking for a critique partner?

Knowing where to start when finding your perfect CRITIQUE partner MATCH can sometimes be difficult. Romance Writers of Australia's CRITIQUE MATCHMAKERS provides a platform for our members to meet & greet other members interested in finding a critique partner.

How it works.

RWA hosts scheduled "date night" events where writers join in a series of five-minute virtual meetings with other participants. No "date night" nerves necessary – RWA provides participants the important questions to ask, and be prepared to answer. Afterwards, you get to pick which of those people you would like to trial as a Critique Partner – if they pick you too you've found a match.

The next date night will be: August 2020 (to be confirmed)

RWA facilitates the exchange of contact details and provides information on being the best Critique Partner you can be!

And if it doesn't work out (just like in any relationship) you can always try again next Critique Matchmakers event.

If you're interested in being involved in the next CRITIQUE MATCHMAKERS event, email matchmakers@romanceaustralia.com to register your interest.

Link to [Critique Matchmaker Code of Conduct pdf](#) Link to [Critiquing Made Easy pdf](#)

Hoot, Hoot!

Online Writing Labs



Course Dates: 7 Sept to 2 Oct 2020

Cost: RWA Member – \$55. Non-RWA Member – \$88.

Venue: Online – RWA Moodle Platform

Pen a Kick-arse Short Story in Nine Easy Steps* with Libby M Iriks : *Craft

How hard can it be to write a short story? It has to be easier than writing a novel because, well, they're short ... right?

Booking: trybooking.com/BHGWN

Just because there are less words in a short story, it doesn't mean it takes any less skill to engage and satisfy your reader.

Short stories do, however, take less time to write. So if you're struggling to learn the ins and outs of how to write a novel, try penning a short story first and take the time to practice your craft before attempting a longer work.

Learning how to write a submission-worthy short story means you'll develop the skills you need to create well-rounded character arcs and construct interesting and well-paced plots. You'll also learn how to make every word count – so much so that it'll become second nature to know when to show and when to tell. It goes without saying, then, that you'll keep your reader hooked and

turning pages until the very end.

Now that we've established how learning to write a short story will benefit you in the long term, set yourself up for success this competition season by joining Libby M Iriks for *Pen a Kick-arse Short Story in Nine Easy Steps*. RWA's short story competitions, *Sweet Treats* and *Spicy Bites* open in January, so this course will give you plenty of time to craft and polish the perfect short romantic tale. Put yourself ahead of the pack and enrol now!

If that's not enough to entice you, perhaps this will: all course participants will have the opportunity to submit their stories anonymously for peer and presenter feedback. Plus, they will go into the draw – with opportunities to earn extra entries throughout the course – to have their completed short story professionally edited by Libby.

Presenters bio

Libby M Iriks is the commissioning editor of romance for Vulpine Press and offers freelance editing services at Perfect Pear Editing and Proofreading. She writes small-town romance where the chemistry sizzles and love is forever.

The first short story she ever penned, *Breaking Free*, was a placegetter in RWA's Little Gems competition in 2016.

Another of her short stories, *His Luminous Gemstone*, caught the attention of a reviewer who had this to say: "This story has it all – a powerful plot, an interesting male lead, a strong sexy female, and fabulous settings. It's superbly written!"

All participants of *Pen a Kick-arse Short Story in Nine Easy Steps* will receive a free copy of *His Luminous Gemstone*.

Taking the Plunge – your book submission pack* with Janet Gover : *Craft

Booking: trybooking.com/BHGWI

You've written, rewritten, edited and edited again. Now your book is ready – but how do you get it out there into the world?

For those planning the traditional route to a publishing career, this course looks at how to catch the attention of an agent or editor in the best possible way. You will emerge from this course with a ready to go submission pack.

Everyone hates writing a synopsis, but a good synopsis is key. Multi-published and international award winning author Janet Gover will help you write an eye-catching synopsis.

Your submission letter is the start of your professional career as a writer. Janet will help you develop a 'business mind-set', to make that agent or editor want to work with you.

The course will look at how to deal with that rejection letter and what to do when you get a yes. After the

crying and celebrating, you need to know what comes next.

Along with hints and tips from someone with more than a decade of experience in the industry, you will also submit a synopsis and submission letter for review and feedback.

In the highly competitive publishing world, agents and editors are looking for a reason to say 'Yes' to your submission. This course will help you give your book the very best chance of success

Presenters bio

Janet Gover is the author of thirteen published novels. She has twice been a RuBY finalist, has won the Romantic Novel of the Year Award (UK) and several Romance Writers of America chapter awards.

She is the organiser of the RNA (UK) New Writers Scheme and a specialist in online training in her non-writing life.

She draws on her experience growing up in rural Queensland for her Australian romances. As Juliet Bell, she co-authors darker

relationship novels inspired by great English classics.

www.janetgover.com

Also connect with Sandy on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

Focus on the First Five with Samantha Bond : *Individual Mentoring*

Mentoring

On-Demand course available from 3 February – 27 November 2020

Cost: RWA Member – \$165. Non-RWA Member – \$264.

Venue: Via Email

Booking link: trybooking.com/BHRIH

Are you ready to submit your work to an agent or publisher? Want to ensure your work has the best chance to impress? Then you'd better make sure your first few pages "sing". We all know that publishing professionals receive thousands of submissions each year and they're often so busy that if your work fails to grab them in that first page or two, they won't persist past that. Sending your work out into the world is a harrowing experience, but if you get those first five pages right, it has a far better chance of success.

The object of this on-demand workshop is to get those first five pages in top shape. Samantha's years of mentoring at the TAFE and university level have shown her the best way to improve written work is to focus on the individual writer. Group activities are great, but individual feedback is for serious writers. You'll learn not only how to improve your first pages, but will learn lessons applicable to your whole manuscript.

Presenter's Bio

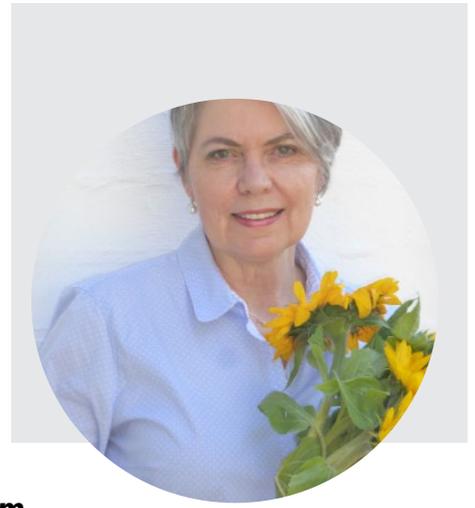
Samantha Bond is a reformed corporate lawyer, now writer and public servant. Her creative work has been published in numerous national literary journals, anthologies and magazines. She has an Advanced Diploma of Professional Writing, winning the award for Highest Overall Achievement for her graduating class of 2014 and now teaches and mentors in that course.



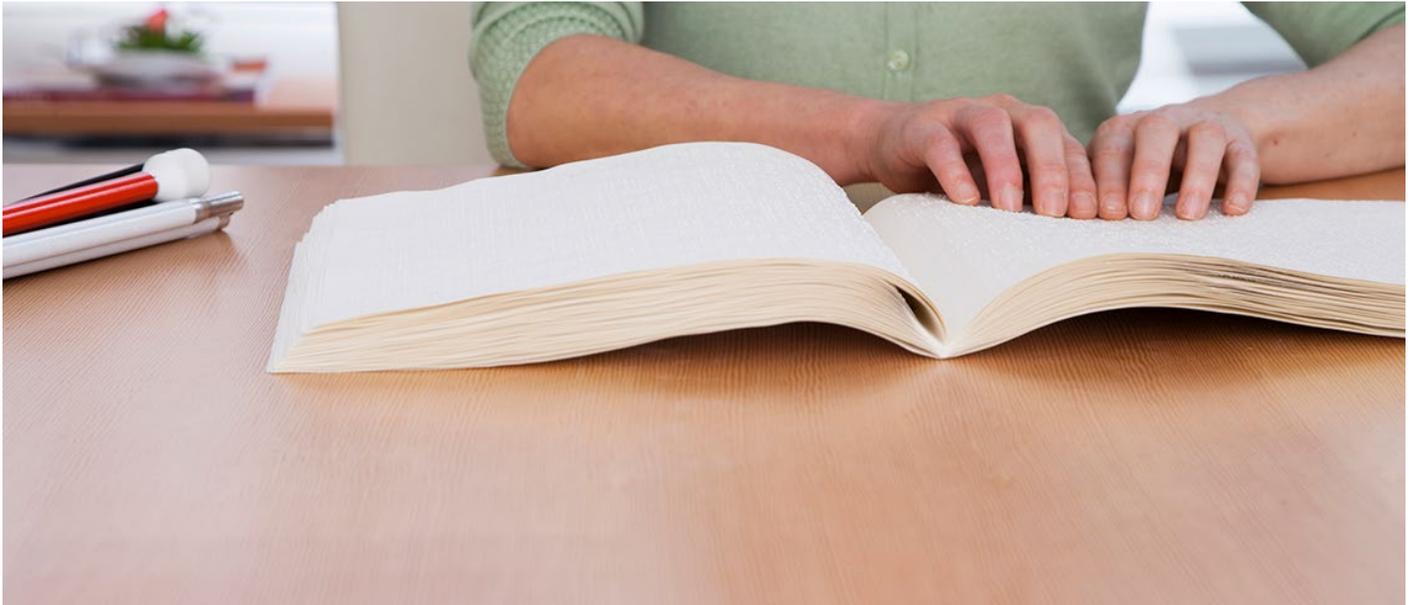
samanthastaceybond.com/

romanceaustralia.com/owl-schedule/

Contest News



by *Linda Joyce, Contests Manager: contests@romanceaustralia.com*



New season - new judging process

Contest season will be opening in just five short weeks. It comes around quickly but now is the time to start polishing your Ripping Start entries.

September is also the month for The Sapphire Award, for published authors with an unpublished manuscript. This award is judged by reader judges before the final three go to a publisher for final judging. The first round is for the first 10,000 words; the second and final rounds are for the full manuscript.

This coming contest year we will trial two new approaches to the

judging process. This will apply to all contests except the Ruby. We are increasing the linear scale of marks available to judges from 1-5 to 1-10. With the move to software-based marking judges have been unable to use half marks. With this greater spread of marks to choose from, this can now be accommodated. Take a look at the scoresheet examples linked at each of the contests, on the contest page to see what has changed.

Our other initiative is to trial a discrepancy judge in cases where there is a greater than 20% difference below the next closest mark. This is going to put extra work onto our coordinators and the judge coordinator, and strain on our pool of judges but it is our response to the issue of discrepant

marking. I urge you to look at the criteria for judging and consider becoming a judge where you can. It would be great if we could make this work and increasing our pool of judges will help it become successful.

Thank you to everyone who helped me throughout the year. There were moments where I thought the Contest portfolio would not survive me, but we both pulled through and I have made fabulous new writing friends and learnt more than I thought possible especially about software I had never heard of before becoming the Contest Manager.

Welcome to Kristine Charles who is the Contest Manager for the 2021 season.



Legal Beagle

with Penelope Janu



Who makes the laws in Australia?

As a result of the pandemic, we've experienced significant upheaval in the past few months, including changes to State and Commonwealth laws that have an impact on travel, eating out and many other things. Much as (thankfully!) we don't necessarily have to incorporate this into what we write (though being a writer of contemporary fiction I'm rather envious of historical, fantasy and paranormal romance writers who might not have to make a call on it at all....), I thought this might be a good time to consider the workings of our federal system of laws in Australia.

Prior to *The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900*, the colonies were governed by laws of the colonial parliaments together with common law (case law made by the judges), and also UK parliamentary and common law. The pre-federation set novels written by authors such as Téa Cooper, Darry Fraser, Cheryl Adnams, Sonya Heaney and Alison Butler have, I'm sure, helped many of us to improve our understanding of the law making institutions and laws of this time.

After federation, Australia had a whole new set of laws to contend with. The UK parliament and courts had a less significant (but still continuing) role, the colonies became States, and the Commonwealth parliament, under

the *Commonwealth Constitution*, was given law-making authority through a grant of limited exclusive powers (over, for example, the armed forces) and concurrent powers (areas where both the States and the Commonwealth could make laws, but in the event of a conflict, the Commonwealth law would prevail).

And this is why the States and Commonwealth are forced to work together (in pandemics and at other times). The Commonwealth

States and
Commonwealth
are forced to
work together in
pandemics.

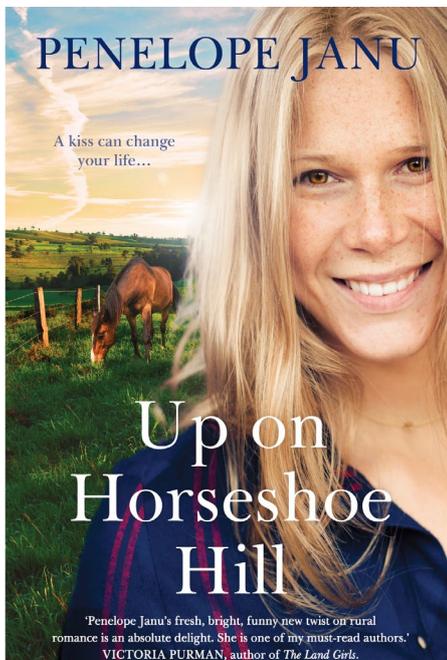
parliament only has defined law-making powers (most of which, the concurrent powers, are set out under section 51 (s51) of the *Commonwealth Constitution*: http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/coaca430/s51.html). Examples of these powers are currency, postal services, marriage and divorce, corporations law, customs, immigration, quarantine and external affairs.

The State parliaments have much more broadly based constitutional powers. NSW, for example, has the power (subject to the *Commonwealth Constitution*) to make laws for the *peace, welfare and good government* of *New South Wales*. This covers *everything* that isn't regulated by the Commonwealth.

An example of the State's broader law-making powers is in the area of environmental law. Yes, the Commonwealth does make laws on the environment, but there is no general law making power (the environment wasn't contemplated as a Commonwealth issue by the framers of the *Commonwealth Constitution*) – so the Commonwealth parliament has to base its power in areas listed in s51 that might be relevant to the environment. For example, if the Commonwealth government has entered into an international treaty for the protection of World Heritage Sites, this might allow it to regulate the activities of corporations which operate in logging, dam building and so on (a useful starting point in understanding the State/Commonwealth divide is the *Tasmanian Dams Case*. For an introduction see <http://envlaw.com.au/tasmanian-dam-case/>)

Laws in a pandemic

What is the relevance of all this to laws governing the pandemic? The Commonwealth government doesn't have the power to regulate



when working out our plots to establish who will be responsible for the laws in the relevant area (or would have been responsible if we are writing historical fiction). Also note that the federal system has an impact on territorial laws (the NT and ACT). The territories can be governed absolutely by the Commonwealth Parliament, but it generally steps back and lets the local territorial governments regulate day-to-day activities (unless they do something the Commonwealth government doesn't approve of – NT laws on euthanasia were struck down on this basis over twenty years ago).

Cases to read

A great place to start when you are looking for specific State and Commonwealth statutes or cases is the Australasian Legal Information Institute, or Austlii (<http://www.austlii.edu.au>). This database covers all Australian and New Zealand laws. The site also refers to useful 'libraries' that group laws together – anything from Health Law to Privacy Law. This site might be too technical for some purposes, but it's a great

this area across the board, so relies on the co-operation of the State governments, who make different regulations depending on the politics and circumstances of the State. And that's why we don't have uniformity on the laws and never will.

Now for the romance...

How does this relate to romance writing? Not specifically at all! But it does, I think, illustrate how as writers we have to be careful

way to check whether State law or Commonwealth law is relevant to your plot point. Best of all, the database is up to date and free!

Penelope Janu worked as a lawyer for many years, but now writes full time. Her latest release with Harlequin Mira is *Up On Horseshoe Hill*. If you have any questions or ideas for future columns, contact Penelope through penelopejanu.com. She would love to hear from you! ♥

Sell your book at conference

RWA Marketing manager Ebony McKenna is running the bookstore at our conference.

Any books by RWA members are welcome.

To get involved:

- ♥ email Author@ebonymckenna.com
- ♥ Put "Virtual RWA bookstore" in the subject heading.
- ♥ Give her one (1) bookstore link per title.

Ebony will be using Books2Read to create multiple store links to your preferred store, so please, just one link per title.

List the genre of each title –ie, historical, contemporary, YA, suspense, non-fiction craft etc. She'll be sorting books this way, to make it easy for potential purchasers to buy them. If you have a paperback edition, we can still link to that if it comes up as an option next to your kindle Au book.

It's entirely possible this might stay up all year round, because we know that it is growing, and Ebony is happy to keep it going.



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Volunteer News

Volunteer has an eye for detail

by Bree Vreedenburg: volunteers@romanceaustralia.com

RWA Volunteer of the Month for August is Patsy Poppenbeek.

Patsy has been a RWA volunteer for five years, and currently serves as one of the proofreading team for Hearts Talk.



She writes fantasy and contemporary romance and has been published in a number of anthologies, including three times in RWA's beloved *Little Gems*, recently rebranded as *Sweet Treats*. Her work appears in two other anthologies: *Melbourne Subjective*, which her writing group won a grant to publish, and the forthcoming *South of the Sun: Australian Fairy Tales for the 21st Century*, which a sub-committee of the Australian Fairy Tales Society successfully funded through Pozible.

Patsy is a Melbourne resident and admits being named Volunteer of

the Month came at the right time, to cheer her up as she struggled with the prospect, and then reality, of Victoria's return to lockdown.

She's found some solace in reading, but her choice may surprise you.

"I'm currently reading *On Pandemics: Deadly Diseases from Bubonic Plague to Coronavirus*, by David Waltner-Toews! It's weirdly comforting – we've got through things like this before," she said.

Helping out with proofreading *HT* may help create a sense of normality, when isolation is curtailing other activities. What does Patsy like most about volunteering?

"I enjoy checking up on picky little grammatical points. I know that's sick." She admits.

In some circles perhaps, but it makes Patsy a perfect match and much appreciated by the *HT* editorial team and our readers.

And what does she like most about RWA?

"That's hard. It's professionalism and dedication."

Thank you Patsy for demonstrating those very qualities and best wishes for the future from all of us.

You can be a winner

The RWA Volunteer Rewards Lottery winner for June was Bernardette Eden.

Bernadette has chosen an OWL as her reward.

All volunteers at RWA are automatically considered in the

VOLUNTEER REWARDS
What will you choose?

ROMANCE WRITERS of Australia

YOUR FIRST 500 WORDS
Critique by Cathleen Ross, published author and editor
Only 5 available

SCRIVENER
12 month subscription
MacOS or Windows

OWL
Online Writing Lab
VIEW LATEST OWLS

CRAFT BOOK BUNDLE 1
A Writers Guide to Character Expression - Paperbacks

CRAFT BOOK BUNDLE 2
All Things Romance... Paperbacks

ONLINE COURSE
WRITING KILLER BLURBS AND HOOKS
with Adam Craft

ONLINE COURSE
CONTENT MARKETING FOR FICTION
Joanna Penn

CRAFT BOOK BUNDLE 3
Sharpening your Craft Paperbacks

Volunteer Rewards Lottery, with the monthly winner able to select from a host of wonderful thank-you prizes such as short courses and packs of books on the craft of writing.

Bernadette is currently serving as the host of RWA's regular critique matchmaking event, a speed dating style experience for writers looking to partner with another writer to share critiques.

The online event is run four times a year in February, May, August and November. The next one is scheduled for 25 August at 7pm.

If you think you could benefit from finding a critique partner contact Madeline McCreanor at matchmakers@romanceaustralia.com to find out more.

If you would like to volunteer for a role at RWA, please email Bree Vreedenburg at volunteers@romanceaustralia.com ♥

NEWSLETTER KNOW-HOW



by **Bree Vredenburg**: part two of a five part series

Author newsletters - what do you write about?

Knowing that you'll be writing your newsletter for years, you suddenly realize that you are going to have to come up with content. Lots and lots of content.

It makes sense to have a good, long list of topics for your newsletter before you start, so you always have something to say.

But you also need to stay on brand.

You also need to be drawing your readers in, piquing their interest and setting their psychological markers to positive, so the next time your newsletter comes in, they can't wait to open it.

It sounds too hard.

But it's not! Let me show you how to work out what to write about.

Your brand

How strange would it be to get on Stephen King's newsletter list and discover that he writes about his granddaughter's ballet lessons? Or long, country walks? Or that he fills his newsletter with dreadful bits of poetry?

What do you expect to see in Stephen King's newsletter? Perhaps some research he's done on serial

killers. Perhaps stats on how many people in the USA are afraid of clowns. Perhaps a snippet from one of his latest books.

There's a theme to that. And it all plays into his brand, which is Stephen King, Horror Writer.

I love the TV series *Supernatural*. I love the lore, the epic storylines, and the love between the two brothers (although there are many times I wish to slap Dean upside the head for his stupidity.)

But my readers, who are by and large historical romance readers, don't want to hear about the latest Japanese demon that Sam and Dean fought off. They don't want to hear about how if you buy just the right type of Chevrolet Impala you can get from one side of America to the other in hours. And if I wail about Kevin or Jo or Charlie dying, they won't feel any connection.

They want to hear about my brand - Bree Verity, History and Romance with a Little Magic. There will be history. There will be romance. And there will be magic, either the everyday romantic kind, or as part of the fantasy world I have created.

So, what is your brand?

To work it out, look at the books you write and the ones that are still floating in your head. How can you tie them all together in one sentence?

If you write across several genres, is there a common trope? Do you always write feisty kickass protagonists? Maybe nerds who use their nerdiness to their advantage? Are all your books set in the one place? At the one time? Find the commonalities between your books, and that is where your brand will lie.

If you can't find those commonalities, it's possible you have two brands. Or more. And that's beyond the scope of this article... but give me a hoiy if that's you and we can work through it. Once you have an idea of your brand, you can move on to what you should write about.

What should I write about?

The first thing you need to do is clear twenty minutes from your schedule.

Sit down with a blank piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Try, if you can, to do this exercise with pen and paper instead of straight on to the computer - using a pen or pencil changes your brain chemistry and there is some evidence the creative side of your brain is used more when you handwrite rather than type.

For twenty minutes, you are going to basically do a brain dump of all the things that make up 'you'. Start with tangible things,

family, household, pets, holidays, physical traits. Dig deeper into your thoughts and feelings – write down how you feel about social issues, what you think about yourself, what other people say about you. The things you did as a kid that you wish you were still doing, snippets of conversations, favourites and least favourites, anything that comes into your head. If you run out, look back over your list to restart – something will spark a thought. Ideas will cross your mind faster than you can write them

The more of
your brand you
put in, the more
enthusiastic
about your brand
you are...

down, don't panic about things getting away. Just keep on writing.

At the end of twenty minutes, you will have a word cloud of all the various things that make up you.

From there, you want to cross out the ones that will not match up to your brand. For example, when I did this exercise, I crossed out *Supernatural*, and stadium rock bands. Sob.

What you will have left is a list of topics you can talk about that will resonate with your readers. Congratulations. You have things to write about.

Your newsletter schedule

Your newsletter will take an hour or two to build each month – sometimes more and especially so if you don't know what you are going to write about.

It can help to have your topics pre-scheduled.

A newsletter schedule helps you also to speak to your readers about the right things at the right time. Are you having a launch next month? Tell your readers about it this month so they can plan to attend. Match up your content to Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas, your birthday, the birthdays of your hero writers, specific social and community events like Mental Health Week or World Autism Awareness Day.

Being aware of what's coming up makes it much easier to prepare content for your newsletter, and even to get ahead of the curve and write some of your articles in advance (if you are way more organised than I will ever be.)

Sales copy

Your newsletter isn't going to be the best place to try to sell your books. It is a promotional tool, not an advertising one. Your newsletter sells you, cements your brand into your readers' heads, and gives them positive feels about you, so when the time comes to sell them a book, they are primed to receive that sales pitch positively.

That doesn't mean you can't sell your books through your newsletter. The rule of thumb is two pieces of sales copy for eight pieces of writing that inform, entertain, or educate.

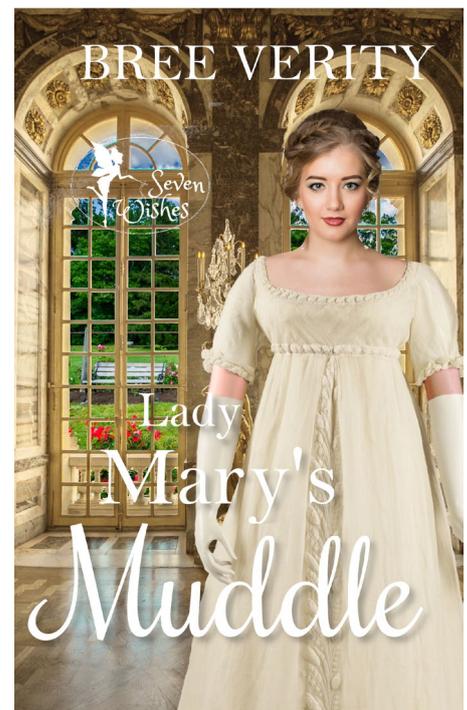
Conclusion

The more of your brand you put in, the more enthusiastic about your brand you are, the more you will

build those positive psychological markers, and the more often your readers will open and read your newsletter.

But to make it a joyful experience to build a newsletter, you can use topics that will resonate both with you and with your readers.

And then you can slip in the odd sales pitch because they won't mind a recommendation from a friend.



Now that you have your newsletter up and running, where do you get subscribers? And thousands of them? I'll talk more about that in next month's article.

Bree is a qualified business coach, virtual assistant, and author with a strong interest in the psychology behind the behaviour of organisations and consumers. She has indie published more than ten novels and built her first newsletter to 3000 subscribers in just a couple of months.

Her latest novel is *Lady Mary's Muddle*; the universal link is <https://books2read.com/ladymary> ♥

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manager. All contest staff are volunteers.

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on how to join an existing group or start one
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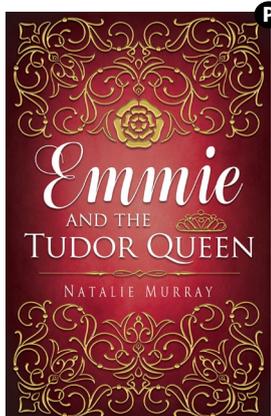
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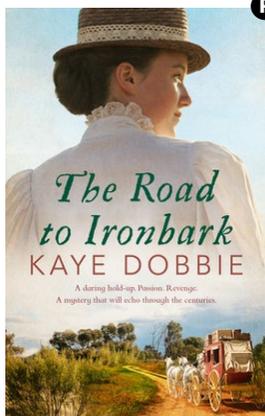
The deadline for *Hearts Talk* submissions is
the 8th of the month before publication.



Emmie and the Tudor Queen
Natalie Murray
Self Published



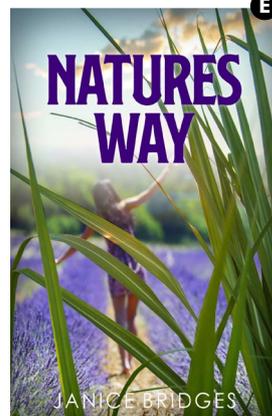
Going Home
Carole Brungar
Carole Brungar Publishing



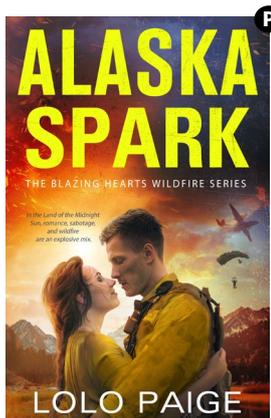
The Road to Ironbark
Kaye Dobbie
Mira Australia



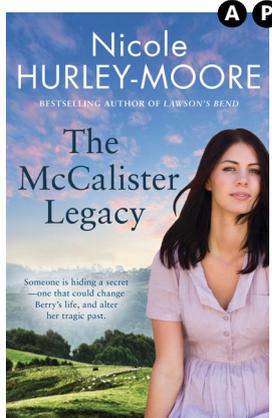
Guarding His Runaway Princess
Jayne Kingsley
Blueberry Lane Publishing



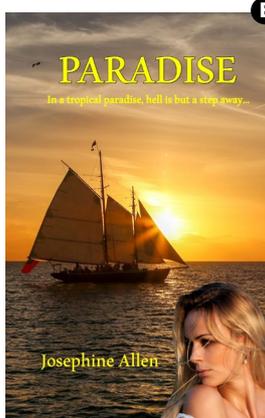
Natures Way
Janice Bridges
Daisychain Publishing



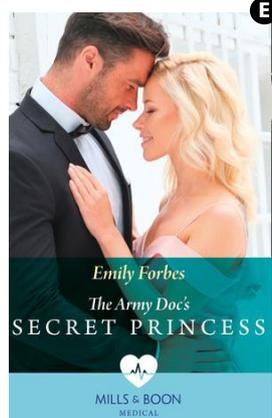
Alaska Spark
Lolo Paige
Self Published



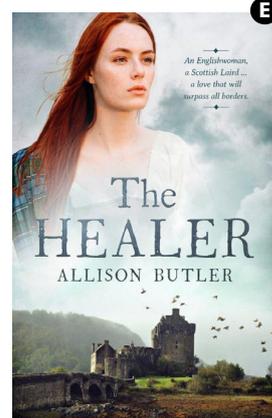
The McCalister Legacy
Nicole Hurley-Moore
Allen & Unwin



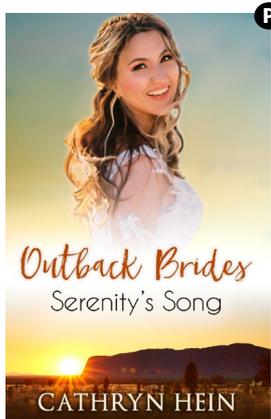
Paradise
Josephine Allen
Self Published



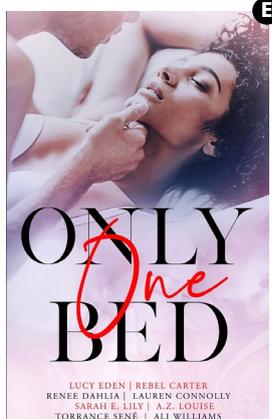
The Army Doc's Secret Princess
Emily Forbes
Mills & Boon



The Healer
Allison Butler
Harlequin MIRA



Serenity's Song
Cathryn Hein
Tule Publishing



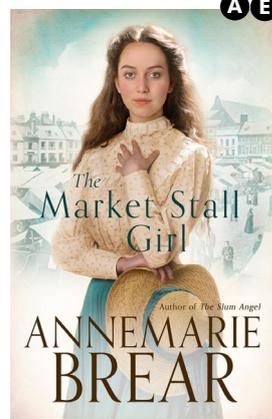
Only One Bed
Renee Dahlia
Violet Gaze Press



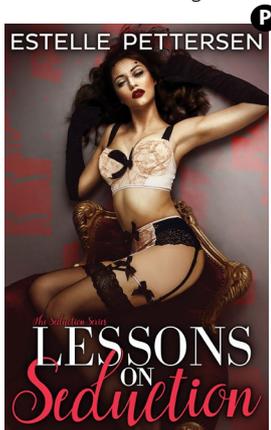
Last Known Contact
Phillippa Nefri Clark
Self Published



All the Dumb Things
Georgia Tingley
HarperCollins



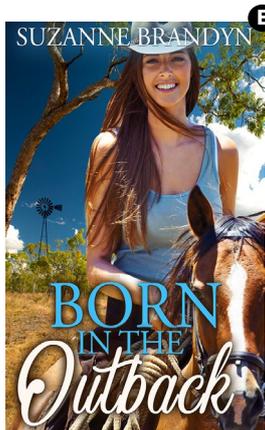
The Market Stall Girl
AnneMarie Brear
Self Published



Lessons on Seduction
Estelle Pettersen
Black Velvet Seductions



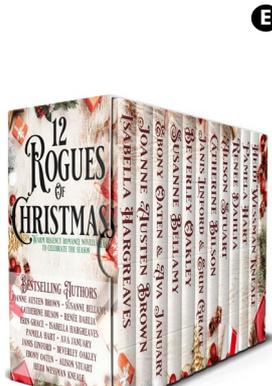
Protect
Claire Boston
Bantilly Publishing



Born in the Outback
Suzanne Brandyn
Sunburnt Enterprises



Romancing the Summer
Ebony Jean
Ebony McKenna



12 Rogues of Christmas
Ebony Jean
Ebony McKenna