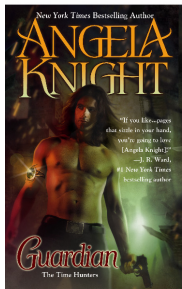


# HEART TO HEART



## ANGELA KNIGHT

*Interviewed by Kylie Short*



Angela's love for paranormal romance is evident in her cross-genre novels, combining futuristic, fantasy and romantic fiction with incredible success. Over the last decade she's been a multi-nominee and winner of the PEARL Award & RIO Award for many of her books.

Besides writing romance, her publishing career includes a stint as a comic book writer and ten years as a newspaper reporter. In 1996, she achieved her dream of romance publication in the *Secrets 2* anthology with Red Sage. She's

also sold books to Changeling Press and Loose Id.

After publishing several more novellas in *Secrets* she was discovered by Berkley editor, Cindy Hwang, for whom she now writes two highly popular series – the *Ageverse* and *Time Hunters* series. She attributes her success to the wonderful editors she's had over the years, all of whom encouraged her to believe in herself and her talent for romance writing.

Angela continues to rock the paranormal romance world with her success. With her work hitting the bestseller lists, she stands alongside other highly successful paranormal authors such as J.R.Ward, Sherriyn Kenyon, Lora Leigh, Nalini Singh and Christine Feehan.

Angela takes time out from her hectic schedule to share her thoughts into the world of paranormal romance.

**#I'm always fascinated by the books/authors/life experiences that influenced writers. What inspired you to become a writer? Do you have a particular author you like to read or were influenced by? What are you reading now?**

Nora Roberts is a big influence on me. Others include Lois McMaster Bujold, Laurell K. Hamilton, Linda Howard, Jennifer Blake, JR Ward, Tanya Huff, Jim Butcher, and many, many others. I'm a voracious reader, particularly of urban fantasy novels.

**#What draws you to write paranormal romances?**

I love letting my imagination run, thinking about the implications of things. How would being a vampire affect the way one makes love? What if King Arthur were a vampire? How did he get to be a vampire? Playing with those kinds of ideas is great fun. **Contd page 4**

### In this issue...

1. Angela Knight  
by **Kylie Short**
2. RWNZ contacts  
Editors' Desk
3. **President Pat**
6. Retreat, No Surrender  
by **Abby Gaines**
8. Jessica Faust  
by **Soraya Nicholas**
9. Ebony McKenna  
by **Kylie Short**
11. NZ Recruitment  
by **Sue Knight**
13. Auckland Chapter  
Meetings
14. Member successes  
and Releases
15. World Building  
by **Kylie Short**
18. International News &  
Contests
19. RWNZ regional news
20. The Naked Writer

## ROMANCE WRITERS OF NEW ZEALAND, INC.

**President:** Pat Snellgrove  
email: [rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz)

**Vice president:** Gracie Stanners  
email: [gstanners@xtra.co.nz](mailto:gstanners@xtra.co.nz)

**Secretary:** Karen Browning  
email: [kmbrowning@gmail.com](mailto:kmbrowning@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Bronwyn Evans  
email: [bronwene@xtra.co.nz](mailto:bronwene@xtra.co.nz)

**Membership:** Rachel Collins  
email: [rachel\\_collins@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz)

**Publicity:** Sue Knight  
email: [sueknight@ihug.co.nz](mailto:sueknight@ihug.co.nz)

**Immediate past president:**  
Joanne Graves  
email: [joanne.graves@gmail.com](mailto:joanne.graves@gmail.com)

**H2H editors:**  
Soraya Nicholas  
[sorayanicholas@yahoo.com](mailto:sorayanicholas@yahoo.com)  
Suzanne Perazzini  
[suzanne.perazzini@orcon.net.nz](mailto:suzanne.perazzini@orcon.net.nz)

**Website content coordinator:**  
Kamy Chetty  
email: [kamychetty@yahoo.com](mailto:kamychetty@yahoo.com)

**Principal contest coordinator:**  
Ellie Huse  
email: [elliehuse@yahoo.com](mailto:elliehuse@yahoo.com)

**Founder:** Jean Drew  
(RWNZ was founded in Sept 1990)

**Contact details:** Romance Writers of New Zealand, Inc., P O Box 10264, Dominion Road, Auckland

**Heart to Heart (H2H)** is the official publication of Romance Writers of New Zealand (RWNZ) and is published eleven times a year.

No part may be reproduced or used for profit by RWNZ or others without prior permission from the editor. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of RWNZ, its executive, or its editor. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, no responsibility will be taken by RWNZ or the editor for inaccurate information.

To subscribe to the RWNZ online loop, which is dedicated to the support of its writers by and for members, send a blank email to [NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) or contact [giovanna@xtra.co.nz](mailto:giovanna@xtra.co.nz) for information about the loop.

To join RWNZ's critique partner register, run jointly with RW Australia, email the coordinator Rachel Robinson on [rachelrobinson@dodo.com.au](mailto:rachelrobinson@dodo.com.au)

## EDITORS' DESK

This month we have a newsletter packed with information! Paranormal author Angela Knight talks to H2H about her ongoing success, we have a fantastic three page article on World Building, and there are the usual inclusions on markets, contests and what's happening around the country. Debut author Ebony McKenna has also been kind enough to stop for a chat, as has super agent Jessica Faust.

Congratulations to all our clever ladies who have entered the Clendon, and now that's out of the way, we had all better start polishing first chapters for the Great Beginnings contest. On the topic of contests, if you live in the Auckland region and would like to help out, Barbara and Peter Clendon still require assistance for the Clendon Award.

Hope you are all busy writing . . . enjoy!

Soraya & Suzanne

PS We would like to say a special thanks to Kylie Short for her contributions to this issue. Kylie has, in very exciting news, just signed with Jenny Rappaport of the Rappaport Literary Agency in New Jersey, USA.

### RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2009

Entry forms for RWNZ contests will no longer be available as an insert in the newsletter. Entry forms can be accessed on the RWNZ website, from the relevant coordinator or from Ellie Huse: [elliehuse@yahoo.com](mailto:elliehuse@yahoo.com)

#### **GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST 2009** - Closing Date: 24 April 2009

Final Judge: Kimberley Young, Senior Editor, Mills & Boon, London

Enter: Up to first 25 pages plus 2-page synopsis. Up to 2 entries by same author will be accepted.

Eligibility: Published and non-published writers. (Entrants must be current financial members of RWNZ.)

Entry Fee: \$NZ20 (NZ entrants); \$A20 (Australian entrants). Coordinator: Sue MacKay - [ismackay@ts.co.nz](mailto:ismackay@ts.co.nz)

#### **STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST 2009** - Closing Date: 25 September 2009

# PRESIDENT PAT



Welcome to the April issue of H2H.

## **A Romantic Retreat – RWNZ Annual Conference 21-23 August 2009**

As an insert in this month's newsletter you will find a poster advertising the conference. Feel free to talk to your local librarian/information centre/bookshop etc and ask them if they could put it up on their notice board. If you need more copies please email Sue Knight at [sueknight@ihug.co.nz](mailto:sueknight@ihug.co.nz).

The registration form for conference will be in the May issue of H2H and also up on our website [www.romancewriters.co.nz](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz).

Now is the time – while the air fares are so cheap – to start thinking about booking your flights to Auckland for conference. Get in early and you will be able to obtain cheap flights that will leave you heaps of money to spend on books when you get there. You should also ring the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre – 09 526 3003 – and book your accommodation. Say that you are with the Romance Writers Conference and they will give you our discounted price of \$140 + GST per room.

Start thinking about what you are going to wear for both the cocktail party – Leather and Lace – and the awards dinner – A Touch of Fantasy. If last year was any indication there will be some fantastic costumes appearing on the night. Let your imagination go and think outside the square.

If you require a room-mate for conference put an email on the NZRomance loop asking for anyone who would like to share to get in touch. One way of saving costs is to share, and also gives you a chance to meet someone new, or connect with old friends.

Prepare yourself for conference by going out and finding books – if you haven't read any yet - by our speakers, Mary Jo Putney, Nalini Singh and Fiona Brand. Then make a list of questions that you would like to ask these wonderful authors during the weekend.

## **Clendon**

This year there were 38 entries in the Clendon. These are now being processed and will soon be on there way to the judges. Good luck everyone and congratulations on "Finishing the Damn Book". Our thanks must also go to Maree Anderson who coordinated the competition – thank you for all your hard work.

## **Competitions**

### **Great Beginnings**

Don't forget to get your entries in for the Great Beginnings Competition. Closing date for this is April 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Valerie Parv**

Closing date for this is April 3<sup>rd</sup> – you don't have to be a member of RWAust to enter, so get those entries flying across the Tasman.

Well that's all from me for this month.

Pat Snellgrove  
President, RWNZ

## **Full Day Writer's Workshop**

**Where? - Christchurch**

**When? – Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May**

**See Regional News page for details**

**#Mentioning paranormal romance to the un-enlightened can sometimes elicit lamentable cracks about the genre eg. "Eww, that's sex with aliens/shapeshifters (inset appropriate label here)." Have you experienced these sorts of comments in the past and how have you dealt with them?**

Yeah, I do get that sometimes. Mostly it's just distaste for the fact that I write about sex at all. I just smile and shrug. There's not much else you can really do.

**#You started out being published by Red Sage, a small press publisher. How has this helped you in your career as an author? Would you recommend this pathway for writers trying to break into the world of publishing?**

Oh, it was a huge help. My Berkley editor, Cindy Hwang, read my *Secrets* novellas and decided she wanted to see if I'd write for Berkley. So she actually approached ME. This does NOT happen. Yet it has worked out very well for both of us.

I think it's good for new authors to write for small presses and e-presses. Writing is a difficult craft, and it takes time and effort to learn. Working with editors at small presses lets you learn skills that New York editors are not going to take the time to teach you.

**#Jane's Warlord was the first novel of yours that I read. *Captive Dreams* (with Diane Whiteside) was the second. Baran, Mykhayl and Jarred are all alpha males. Yet Jane, Corrine and Celeste are heroines more than a match for each of them, capable and resourceful women in their own right. What are your thoughts on why alpha heroes and strong heroines have such a fascinating appeal to readers?**

I think if you're going to write Alpha Males, you HAVE to write kickass heroines. Otherwise, you get the eighties effect -- hapless, dishrag heroines who get run over by these butch males.

You can't get a good romantic conflict going with a pair like that, because the heroine is too far out of her weight class. But an assertive, strong heroine can get up in the Alpha's face and give him a good fight. It makes for better drama, and readers will enjoy it more.

**#In the *Mageverse* series you combined the mythos of Merlin and King Arthur and made your heroes vampiric knights. In addition, you have them interacting with shapeshifters, sorceresses, and magic in a contemporary world and alternate universes. What inspired you to give the vampire tale a new twist?**

I love vampires and always have. But they've been DONE. You have to find some way to make them different and special. For me, adding in the Arthurian legends let me turn everything sideways and have a great deal of fun.

**#You've recently released *The Time Hunters* series, with *Warrior* debuting in July 2008. *Guardian* comes out in May 2009. How hard was it to begin planning or building a new series after writing (and continue to) the highly-successful *Mageverse* series? What does the future hold for *The Time Hunters* series?**

There will be a third book that will wrap up the series. For me, the *Time Hunters* series was a great way to play in the Jane's Warlord universe without having to set the series completely in the future. I was afraid a futuristic series wouldn't work with readers. So by pairing these superhuman characters with heroes and heroines in the present, I got to play without going too far.

**#What do you think it is about your books that give them such appeal? Is it the cross-genre mix? The memorable characters? Your incredible world building?**

Thank you for the compliment! I have no idea why people enjoy my books. I only know why I enjoy my books. I love playing with handsome Alpha heroes with a superhuman twist, and heroines who can go toe to toe with them. I love writing great sex scenes and great fight scenes, and roller coaster plots. I think my enjoyment of those elements communicates itself to the reader. If I'm having a good time, the reader has a good time. That's the key to success as a writer.

**#I'm always interested to learn about an author's writing habits. Can you tell us a little bit about your routine/research?**

I just spent a week following around a



forensic chemist who is also a member of the bomb squad as well as an arson investigator. So I got to wear part of a bomb suit and take pictures of their bomb robot, and watch them detonate an explosive chemical sample they found.

I also tested various samples to find out if they were cocaine or crack. I'm now going to incorporate those elements in my new Mageverse book, which features King Arthur's mortal son, who is a forensic chemist. I spent a lot of time brainstorming with the chemist friend on ways to kill him! It was a lot of fun.

I think anytime you can research by actually talking to somebody who does that job, your work is so much stronger. I now know how cocaine smells, and what a mortar feels like. And my chemist friend (Lt. Ashley Harris) also helped me come up with a great bomb to use in the opening scene. He seemed to be thrilled at having a hero modeled on him, and I had a fantastic time.

#### **#What keeps you motivated when the writing gets hard?**

Money. LOL! I'm under contract, so I've got to deliver one way or another. So that keeps me writing every day.

#### **#The paranormal genre still seems to be quite popular in the marketplace. Are there any particular themes that tend to resonate or remain popular in this genre? Do you feel that it still has a strong future or are publishers beginning to cut back?**

I think readers are still fascinated by paranormal elements, because they want to fantasize about superhuman heroes. Look at all the superheroes we're seeing in the movies -- Iron Man, Batman, etc. The need for fantasy is particularly strong when times get grim.

#### **#Is life as a published writer how you imagined it would be or have there been some surprises? Are there things you'd do differently given the chance to go back and do it again?**

I would have had more confidence in myself and finished and submitted more books earlier than I did. When I was younger, I just didn't believe I was any good. The positive response I got on the Secrets books on Amazon gave me the courage to go for it.

I was very insecure -- just like most writers. Taking a chance on myself was worth it, though, because now I'm making great money and hitting the best-seller list. I think young writers need to go for it -- just take a chance on your work. Educate yourself on the market and write the best book you possibly can, and you will eventually succeed.

#### **#Do you have any advice for someone setting out in this business who wants a long-term career as an author? Any experiences that you'd like to share in your journey to publication?**

Like I said, FINISH YOUR BOOK AND SUBMIT IT. However, you should check out publishers you submit to, to make sure they have good reputations, and you should be careful about the contracts you sign, because you can get screwed by fly-by-night pubs.

Luckily, if you join online writer's groups, you can usually ask around and find out a lot about these publishers. I personally like Changeling Press and Loose Id as e-publishers as a venue for new writers. I know the publishers of both companies, and I'm comfortable recommending them. They're not going to screw you. And of course, Red Sage is a great company.

#### **#Is there anything else you'd like to add or share with us about your writing?**

My new book, GUARDIAN, is coming out in May. I did a book video for it myself, with my own artwork. The first edit of it used my voice and some music I had bought from Renderosity. My editor told me the marketing guy hated my Southern accent and the music sounded like a porn vid, so I hired a professional narrator through Circle of Seven, and redid the music. Here's the redone video:

<http://www.angelasknights.com/video.html>

I hope you like it!

You can also check out my website at [www.angelasknights.com](http://www.angelasknights.com)

Thank you so much for interviewing me!

**Angela, thanks for answering my questions and sharing your experiences with us!**

**NEW MEMBER**

Rayna Singh - Auckland

# RETREAT, NO SURRENDER

*by Abby Gaines*

Writing is primarily a solitary pursuit, but there are times when we need the stimulation and inspiration that only other writers can offer. One option is to attend a writing conference, such as RWNZ's conference coming up in August. Another option, and I firmly believe this should be an "and" rather than "or", is to organize your own retreat for you and your best writing buddies.

My best buds are Karina Bliss, Sandra Hyatt, and Tessa Radley. In fact, Karina and I met Sandra and Tessa on a sort of retreat—a weekend class at the Kara School of Writing, with the just the four of us attending. Since that Kara "retreat" we've managed to carve out time in varying chunks to be together—another Kara weekend, numerous four-hour lunch/brainstorming sessions at someone's house (think of them as micro-retreats), and a couple of days midweek at a lake cottage near Taupo. I truly believe that without these get-togethers, I'd struggle with my writing on so many fronts (or should I say, I'd struggle even more!). When the gals and I get together, we talk craft and industry, we share lessons learned from workshops, we review synopses, and we brainstorm.

That's what we do...but the options for an effective retreat are much wider than that. Recently, I talked to several authors about how they like to get together with their buddies. Read on...

J.L. Wilson organizes a writing retreat for five friends twice a year at a local casino. The buffet is inexpensive, and the rooms are nice but not pricy. The group hires a suite, which makes it easy to hold the meeting part of the retreat.

The retreat starts Friday evening at the buffet, then gets right down into business. "Everyone gets two one-hour blocks of time to discuss whatever they want: brainstorming plots, query letters, industry discussions, etc. That one hour is THEIRS to do with as they will," J.L. says.

Her group comprises writers at different stages—published and unpublished—and in different genres, including cozy mysteries and dark paranormal. "I've found that the mix of genres adds a great energy to the brainstorming sessions."

The group continues to meet throughout Saturday, taking breaks for gambling and food. Everyone brings a food item for Saturday lunch (sandwiches and chips) and the group uses the buffet on Saturday night. The retreat wraps up on Sunday.

"It's a huge amount of fun and relatively cheap, about \$150 a person," J.L. says. "I make up little pins just like at RWA National with the date and the 'theme' of the 'conference.'"

Bonnie Spidle says one thing she and her writer buddies like to do at their quarterly retreats is read the first five pages of published books, not necessarily romances, and study their openers, hooks, and plot/character development.

"We pick books randomly but we all read each pick," she says. "It's amazing what works and what doesn't. And we discuss the whys of what works and what doesn't. We do this bit of craft study to improve our own work, not judge in an unappreciative way. We don't always agree about what makes us want to read more. That's the idea, to learn what makes a diverse group want to see what happens next. Some first pages draw a reader in quietly, softly...others are fast, full of hooks and action or dread and suspense."

Dissecting a tiny section of a book for a specific "thing" helps, she says. "I need to apply myself to endings...I'll suggest that for our next one!"

Bonnie's retreat group are all multi-published authors and the name of the game is to study and learn. They lug along favorite craft books and pore over them, trying to define problems they're encountering. Bonnie was actually at the retreat when I got in touch with her about this article. And the focus of the current retreat? "We're after the elusive "high concept" definition to see if it applies to our newest ideas," she says.

Megan Hatfield's local chapter had a retreat this summer. Everyone brought magazines (glue sticks, poster boards and scissors were provided) and made collages for their current books, or for motivational purposes," all while gossiping and nattering on, of course," Meagan says.

Ann Macela's critique group starts off every meeting with one member giving a short presentation on a craft topic of her choosing. It's a concentrated look at a single aspect of writing, and it can range

all over the place, from beginnings to ending to overused words. "One of the best was when [we looked at] how one word or one detail can make the scene come alive for the reader."

Linda Gerber's writing group's retreat will be held at a beach house in Florida this year (hooray for retired parents leaving their house open!). Her group, Creative Support, has officially been together for seven years though some members have known each other longer. "We're online friends scattered across the country from New York to California, so sadly we don't see each other regularly, though we do talk online every day," Linda says. "We are in various stages of our writing journey, some agented, some published and some on the cusp of both."

The group's retreats are usually a long weekend someplace secluded or at least removed from the everyday. Each of the five members prepares a mini workshop to present to the group. The workshops are on craft, "typically something that we feel like we have just mastered, or something we need to work on. It's as much for the benefit of the presenter as the presentees," Linda says.

The weekend schedule includes a set time to go over each writers' WIP, to brainstorm, hash out characterization or plot, etc. "Since we crit each other's work regularly, we already know a lot about the WIPs anyway and this gives us a chance to dig deeper," Linda says.

They talk craft over dinner and take long walks on the beach and read snippets of their WIP, as well as scheduling solitary time to WRITE.

Natalie Damschroder claims her local chapter, Central Pennsylvania Romance Writers, has the best retreat ever. The annual All About Me writers retreat is held in May at the Rhodes Grove Camp and Conference Center for four days, Thursday through Sunday, or whatever portion people can attend. The conference center provides three meals a day and hotel room-style accommodations on a large property that has hiking trails and benches, swings and tables outdoors. Indoors are conference rooms, a comfortable lobby, a kitchenette, and private rooms where attendees spread out and write all weekend.

"We call it All About Me because we have NO responsibilities," Natalie says. "The very best thing about it is that we don't have to cook or clean up or take care of anyone else. There's no TV or phones (though there is a good cell phone signal for those who need to be accessible for families), and the first couple of years there wasn't even Internet access. (I'm glad there's free wireless now because two years ago, day one of the retreat, I got the email from my agent that she wanted to call me, which she did the next day, and offered me representation, and how much better can it be to get that call surrounded by your writing friends?)."

The chapter experimented early on with organized programs, but found they didn't work well. "Occasionally someone will offer a short workshop on mind-mapping or something, and small groups will get together for critiquing and brainstorming, but we end up doing a lot of that at meals."

The retreat is very informal—some people almost never come out of their rooms, others socialize a little more, but everyone gets tons done, sometimes a month's worth in four days. "We set personal goals for how many pages we want to write or whatever, and we are free to pursue those goals with no distractions and no guilt," Natalie says. "For some people, it's the only writing they get done all year."

It's not all work and no play, however. Participants receive welcome packs containing a variety of writing supplies and other essentials. There are also goody bags allocated through a prize draw, with attendees qualifying for draw entries by meeting their writing milestones.

There are excursions—a Friday night drinks outing—for those who like to get out and about, and Saturday night is game night. Over the years, they've played Romance Jeopardy (trivia about the industry), Romance Wheel of Fortune (more like hangman, with members' book titles), Romance Family Feud (with questions and categories based on the industry) and Romance Deal or No Deal. "We have lame-o prizes and everyone gets a prize, but the point is to have us all in a room, loving each other and having a blast, celebrating ourselves and our passion for writing," Natalie says. "Well, really, that's the point of the whole retreat, I guess!"

Just writing about all these retreats has made me want to go an round up my dearest writing buddies and run away with them. We could all do with scheduling this kind of activity on a regular basis.

Abby writes romance for both Harlequin Superromance and Harlequin NASCAR. Visit her on-line at [www.abbygaines.com](http://www.abbygaines.com)

# JESSICA FAUST (*BookEnds LLC*)

## *Agent Interview by Soraya Nicholas*

**Tell us about you and your agency. How did you start out as an agent, and what types of fiction does BookEnds represent?**

I started my publishing career as an editor at Berkley Publishing and later moved to Alpha Books (at that time a division of Wiley) to work on series like *The Complete Idiot's Guide* and *The Unofficial Guides*. In 1999, Jacky Sach and I, more or less on a whim, decided to start BookEnds as a book packaging company. At the time, Jacky and I envisioned creating our own book projects and hiring writers, designers and other support people to make them come together. The books would then be sold to publishers. While we had some great successes and enjoyed what we were doing, it wasn't long before we felt that we were really missing out on some of the books we wanted to be doing, including fiction. So in early 2001 we changed our business model from packager to literary agent and haven't looked back since. BookEnds now has three full-time agents, Jacky, me and Kim Lionetti and we represent a terrific group of authors. Our specialties are commercial fiction and nonfiction especially in the areas of romance, mystery, suspense/thriller, and women's fiction. We are also looking for self-help nonfiction in business, parenting, spirituality, health, true crime, pop science and pop culture.

**Are you actively looking for new authors?**

Absolutely

**What types of romance stories do you like to read? What would you most like to see cross your desk this year?**

I like pretty much everything. In my quiet time I read romantic suspense, historical romances, paranormal, contemporary... Ultimately, I read all across the board depending on what kind of mood I'm in. I'm always looking for really fantastic historical and paranormal romances, but would also love to find a contemporary that balances that line between contemporary and women's fiction.

**Is there anything you are seeing too much of?**

No specific sub-genre, but I do see a lot of books that just don't stand out. There's nothing special about them and there's nothing that makes me sit up and say, "wow" and I'm really looking for that wow book.

**Your blog (<http://bookendslitagency.blogspot.com>) is a great resource for aspiring writers, particularly on what not to do when querying an agent! What are the major mistakes writers make when querying you? How can a writer make their query stand out to you?**

The most important thing to know about querying is that it has to sound like you. Agents always preach that query letters need to be professional and they do, but this is a creative business and in a creative business professional doesn't mean squelching your voice. The biggest mistake authors make is writing a letter that sounds dry and boring. That certainly is not the type of book I want to read.

**Is the current economic climate making it more difficult to sell new novelists?**

Yes. I think everyone is being more cautious. Sales have dropped drastically and with no real end in sight it's hard for publishers to predict what the future is going to look like. For that reason many are sticking with what they know—the names that have been successful thus far. That certainly doesn't mean they aren't buying new and debut authors it just means that now, more than ever, those books need to really have that wow factor for everyone.

**What is the process once you take on a new client? Do you work with a writer to edit their manuscript before trying to place their book? Do you send out material to only one publisher at a time?**

Each and every situation is different. Typically though, the first step is to edit the book and make it as strong as we can possibly make it before getting it into the hands of editors. If there are any concerns I have about the book, an editor's concerns will be tenfold (and probably make the difference in whether or not the book will sell). I want to make sure we clean all of those things up. As far as submissions go, again, each project is different. Typically though I do submit to more than one publisher at a time and continue to submit until either I feel I've completely run out of options or we've sold the book.

You can find the submission guidelines for BookEnds at: <http://www.bookends-inc.com/submit.html>

**Thank you so much Jessica for stopping by to talk to us!**



# EBONY MCKENNA

*Interviewed by Kylie Short*

**Boldly Going ...  
where we all want to go!**

**Have you ever had a conversation with friends about what life would be like once you receive THE CALL? Have you wondered what happens next? What lies beyond that magical moment?**

**I thought it was time to ask some of our newly published about their experiences and see if they can shed some light on what to expect and how they've begun to build their careers now that they're published.**



## **A little bit about myself...**

I'm 37 and live in Melbourne with my husband and young son. I've been writing novels for 12 years or so and before that I was a newspaper journalist.

I wrote science fiction and comedy, and even had a go at writing a short film. I found myself getting absorbed in the characters, wanting to know what made them tick, wanting the hero and heroine to get together and have a happily ever after. It took me a while to realise I was writing romance! I joined the MRWG (Melbourne Romance Writers' Guild) and found my 'home'.

Over the years I wrote six manuscripts (not counting the ones I didn't finish) that earned plenty of rejections from agents and publishers.

**How authors are "discovered" is as diverse as the brands of chocolate we consume. Please tell us your CALL story.**

I got two – an agent, then a publisher. The first was early 2008 - an email from my agent Suzy Jenvey at PFD (UK) saying she'd like to take me on. PFD were the top of my list, so that was a fabulous day! I walked around with a stupid grin on my face. I told non-writer friends but they didn't really understand how huge it was or how hard it was to get an agent.

The next 'call' was several months later,

when Suzy Jenvey told me Egmont - the biggest publisher of children's books in the UK - wanted to run with my YA book, Ondine and Shambles.

I was excited but apprehensive – the offer was on the table but I hadn't signed anything, so I lived in this emotional limbo with one foot on the accelerator and one on the brake.

It took months to get those contract papers. The day the contract arrived at my post box was the final hurdle. It was a large package, so I had to collect it from the counter. I could see it in the pile of packages, but the postal officer wouldn't hand it over! I could see the literary agent's logo on the front with my name on it, but the postmaster said, 'nah, that's not you'. I nearly leapt over the counter and ripped it from his bony hands!

**I just have to ask the-chicken-or-the-egg question. What happened first – agent or an editor? How did you go about finding one/both?**

I really needed an agent because none of the publishers I wanted to approach accepted unsolicited scripts. Timing is everything - I made contact with Suzy Jenvey soon after she joined PFD. A month after sending the full, Suzy emailed me back and said she loved Ondine and Shambles. It was the classic case of having the right book at the right time.

If you are approaching a publisher who accepts unsolicited mss, then you might not need an agent. But later, as you build a career, an agent will come in handy, guiding your career and taking care of contracts. (After all, I'm a writer, not a lawyer).

Check out agents' websites and follow their submission guidelines to the letter! Read plenty of blogs and advice from agents about how to submit and how not to annoy them.

I also have a theory that new agents are keen to build a list. Agents who have busy lists might pass on something - even if they love it - because they already have something similar.

Or they are too well known and are swamped with 200 queries a week, which means even a good query can become a victim of slush.

**What's the name of your book scheduled for release and can you tell us something about it?**

My book is called *Ondine: The Summer of Shambles* and it will be out Jan 2010 with Egmont. It's about a young girl in the fictional European country of Brugel. Her pet ferret, Shambles, starts talking with a Scottish brogue and mayhem ensues. Shambles is a real man living in reduced circumstances. He develops a knack for espionage and Ondine develops a huge crush on him, especially when the light of the full moon shows his true human form. I have also written a second novel called *Ondine: The Autumn Palace*. We haven't set a release date yet.

Before I landed the agent, Cheryl Wright, an editor who is also a member of the MRWG approached me to contribute to a romantic anthology. Cheryl had read some early chapters of *Ondine* and *Shambles* and thought my style would suit the theme. She provided the set up: Scotland, 1678 - a gypsy has an enchanted faerie guaranteed to find your true love. The catch? It costs 100 gold coins. I felt honoured to be invited to contribute. It's been such fun working with the other writers on the project. We're doing another anthology at the moment.

The anthology that's out now is called *The Enchanted Faerie* and it's available from The Wild Rose Press. You can check it out at <http://thewildrosepress.com/>

**What's the most exciting thing about writing for you? The most boring?**

The most exciting thing about writing is the 'aha' moment, when I solve a problem or come up with something I feel is amazing. This is soon followed by a horrible panic where I think 'that can't be mine, it's too good'. Then I'll do a web search and see if anything comes up.

The boring part is ... um ... nothing boring yet. I am living the dream. I don't even mind when people ask me 'where do you get your ideas from?'. I tell them I have a brain that comes up with lots of ideas. Sometimes people try and give me ideas and I have to divert them really quickly into 'that's your idea, you should write that.' Ultimately, it's not the ideas that

matter anyway. Every idea has been done. It's what you do with the ideas that count.

**At the chat sessions during conferences we hear favourite authors telling us that things really change once you publish. What differences, good or OMG (oh my goodness), have you experienced since getting THE CALL?**

I have more discipline. I get up early and sit at the computer and make some progress just about every day. The urge to go back to bed is so strong. I desperately need a cup of tea to warm my brain and get started.

I have a theory ... coffee and tea are responsible for all literature. How many books were written before tea and coffee? I can't even name three. How many books were written after tea and coffee? Millions. I rest my case.

Now that I have a deal, I love telling people I'm a writer. Before the deal, it felt like a hobby that I should keep to myself. Like the model train set in the garage. Now I feel my work is validated. This is my career. And hey, they money's nice too!

**Is there any other advice, "lightbulb" moments or comments you'd like to share about getting/being published?**

Things finally happened for me when I embraced my inner child. I'd read some good advice about writing the book you want to read. You know what? It's true. I pour my heart out on the page and make myself grin, worry, laugh and cry. I stopped trying to write the novels I thought publishers would want. The crazy story about a ferret was the book I wrote for me. I

figured it would never see the light of day. How ironic, that's the one that finally worked for me!

For more information about Ebony, you can click on: <http://ejmckenna.com>



blog: <http://ejmckennablog.blogspot.com/>

**Thanks for your time, Ebony!**

# RWNZ Recruitment Part Two

*By Sue Knight with Bronwen Evans, Grace Stanners, Jean drew, Joanne Graves, Karen Browning, Pat Snellgrove, Rachel Collins*

## How do we help potential new members find us?

There must be heaps of writers out there who would love to join us. . . if only they knew we existed. It's time to get the word out! Time to let writers know that this is a great place to belong.

The Exec team has brainstormed an amazing variety of ways to advertise our organisation. Success depends on us giving just a little time and energy.

There is something everyone can do - from those brave enough to face the TV cameras, to those happier to mail a Poster to a local writing group or library.

Soooo. . . this article is about what needs to be done and how you can volunteer for the bits that interest you. NO PRESSURE! JUST OPTIONS.

**If you pin the enclosed Poster up somewhere in your community, then you have done your bit. Thanks!**

There is a possibility that some members with known skills may be shoulder-tapped. . LIGHTLY, of course! Feel free to say, "NO. That's outside my comfort zone." Or, "NO. My WIP won't let me!" That's OK - we'll send you another Poster. ☺

## Publicity Wish List

### Articles



Write **one article every two months to every major newspaper in NZ** – that's just 6 a year. Nothing specific, just anything relevant that's happening in RWNZ in order to bring up our profile.

**Six volunteers needed to write one article a year – to join that team please email Sue.**



Write **articles about our Competitions** to attract new writers. **Interested volunteers please email Joanne.**

### Books Published by Members



Get a schedule from our authors' publishers. What are our authors' launch dates? Where are their books stocked? Put a poster "Romance Writers of New Zealand is thrilled to announce New Zealand author Jane Doe's newest book." in as many places as will allow it.

**A volunteer is needed to collect, collate and distribute this information. Please contact Sue.**



**Reviews books by RWNZ authors' books** and send them off to different newspapers. Include review, book cover, personal photo of author. Volunteers to read and review.

**Volunteers needed to read review books. Interested? Please contact Sue.**



**Website Promos: send latest books/covers to Kamy** for updating the website and H2H. **Authors please give your publishing info to Kamy as soon as possible.**

## Conference Publicity – the Jewel in our Crown



### Pre-Conference.

- **Advertising** for conferences should include Polytechs, NZSA.
- Push the fact that everyone who comes is able to pitch their work to an agent/editor – a huge plus given how difficult it is to get an opportunity like this overseas with their pitching hierarchies.  
**Ideas for this? Please contact Sue who will link you with the Conference Committee.**
- **Conference Posters** will be sent to Libraries, Borders, Whitcoulls, schools, polytechs etc. Lists of large number mail outs will need to be drawn up to avoid double-ups.  
**Please contact Sue for Posters**

- Find out how expensive it is to have a banner linked to the RWNZ website from **TradeMe** starting about a month before conference. **If you know about TradeMe contact Sue.**
- Begin now to **raise main speaker's profile** in the media and in the local libraries. This year Mary Jo Putney. Conference Team to work on this. **Please contact Sue if you are interested in working with the Conference Team.**
- **Magazine Articles** in NZ Woman's Weekly, Australian Woman's Day (both Oz and NZ editions). **Ideas for this? Please contact Sue who will link you with the Conference Committee.**



#### **During Conference**

- Ensure during conference that we get our guest speakers / local authors on the news, Good morning, April in the afternoon, Close Up, Campbell Live. Radio: Kerrie's Café, Mike Hosking. **Volunteers willing to be our public face please contact Sue who will link you with the Conference Committee.**

#### **Websites**

- Get the website cross linked from other people's sites.
- How many of us have websites? We need to make sure we're all linked through to RWNZ. It raises the Google rating.



**Everyone with a Website – please don't forget to mention and include a link to RWNZ**

#### **Paid Advertisements**

- Ideas needed for best places for paid advertisements.
- Suggestions: Listener Noticeboard page, Sunday Magazine SST, Next Magazine, Women's Weekly.
- It is thought a little spending in the right places would be a good investment.
- **A booth at your local Women's Expo.** See website for [www.expos.co.nz](http://www.expos.co.nz) for annual national calendar.



**Any suggestions for best placement? Please let Sue know.**

#### **Posters – two types**



**Conference Advertisement – copy included this month.**



**Recruitment – 2 choices** – a general version and a YA version - for young writers and those young-at-heart who are writing YA! **Copies to be included in May H2H. All also available via email for you to print off.** Larger numbers may be ordered and posted to you. **Please order from Sue.** [NB: Posters are compiled in Word – so no high-tech layout tricks – but easily available to all.]

#### **How do we attract interested writers to join us?**



A pre-joining pack ?

- Free copy of H2H ?
- Two free attendances at regional workshops ?



The cost to belong – just over \$4 a month - what a bargain! Emphasise what great value this is.



**What would have cinched joining for you?**

*Phew. . . that's the ideas so far. What do you think?  
What have we missed? What are you fired up to do?  
Let us know. Get on the Loop. Email the Exec.  
Whip up the blurb / poster / article you think we need.*



# AUCKLAND CHAPTER MEETINGS for 2009

All out-of-town members welcome. Meetings are held at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion, corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads at 12.30 pm, first Saturday of the month.

## **The Many Faces of Suspense**

**May 2** — Multi published suspense author Norah Hansen Hill will take this workshop about the many different genres of suspense, from horror to romance, most of which Norah is published in. Norah recently signed her 41<sup>st</sup> contract.

## **All you ever wanted to know about writing romance** (*Midwinter Meeting*)

**June 6** — Our panel will include Clendon winner Abby Gaines, published by Harlequin Superromance and the Nascar series. Bookstore owner and sponsor of the Clendon Award, Barbara Clendon will be there to share her knowledge of romance and all its sub-genres, And finally much loved Mills & Boon Presents author, Susan Napier makes up this expert panel. As it will be mid-winter, hot chocolate and marshmallows will be served.

## **Marketing Yourself and Your Work**

**July 4** — from websites to whatever, Kevin Findlater will give us the low-down show on marketing and what better day for the topic than the 4th of July, America's Independence Day. The US is surely the home base of marketing for both people and products.

## **Perfecting your Pitch**

**August 1** — three weeks before Romance Writers of New Zealand's conference at Waipuna Lodge we will have an interactive workshop on perfecting your pitch to the editors and/or the agents who will be at the conference. Members will have time to work on their pitch then complete a trial run by pitching to Clendon winner, Frances Housden and RWNZ founder Jean Drew to take the edge off their nerves.

# CONFERENCE 2009

This year's conference is shaping up beautifully – so we want to share some of the highlights with you while the great air-fare deals are available. (Hint – book now, book now!)

Although the 'official' conference starts with the cocktail party on Friday evening, this is always preceded by a day of slightly more serious workshops. If you can attend for the whole three days, here's what you can look forward to:

Multi-published author Fiona Brand kicks off the conference at 9 am Friday with 'Story – from Idea to Saleable Book'. (And she certainly has the saleable books to prove her point.)

The Friday late morning and early afternoon slots are your first chance to enjoy our American guest-author Mary Jo Putney. Mary Jo's first session is titled 'Warrior Poet/Triune Goddess', and her after-lunch slot is on Storytelling.

Nalini Singh – again onto the New York Times and USA Today best-seller lists with 'Angel's Blood' - rounds out the day's workshops with World Building.

After that it's cocktail party time in leather and lace....

Saturday and Sunday will be a mixture of whole-conference workshops from Mary Jo, our American agent Melissa Jeglinski, and other speakers whose times are still being finalised. Alternating with these are breakout workshops – a choice of three on Saturday morning, three more on Saturday afternoon, and yet another three on Sunday morning – in every case by published authors. Details in the next Heart to Heart, and soon on the loop as well.

Saturday night is Awards Dinner time of course. The dress theme is 'A Touch of Fantasy' – and you can interpret that any way you like! Find out who won the Clendon Award, applaud all of our contest place-getters, and enjoy a great meal and a fine after-dinner speaker.

As always, you have the chance to try and sell a finished novel during the conference, so book your pitch-slot early with Melissa Jeglinski of The Knight Agency.

We've once-again negotiated excellent savings for you at the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, and it's looking as though the over-all cost of conference will be very close to last year. Give a thought to this though – the current exchange rate between the American dollar and the New Zealand dollar has made it almost half again as expensive to fly our American speakers over this year. Oh darn!

See you there?

Kris Pearson.

# MEMBER SUCCESSES

Compiled by Tyree Bidgood

## Official Releases

Yvonne Lindsay's Mini Series Rogue Diamonds has had its first book released - **Convenient Marriage, Inconvenient Husband** in March. The second book **Secret Baby, Public Affair** will be released April and the third in May - **Pretend Mistress, Bona-Fide Boss**.

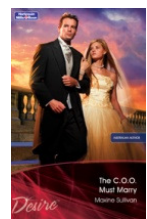
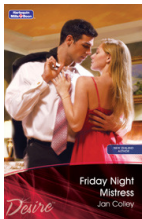
Maxine Sullivan's latest Silhouette Desire, **The C.O.O. Must Marry**, reached #3 on the Waldenbooks Bestseller List in February in the States.

Nalini Singh's **Angels' Blood**, the first book in her new Guild Hunter series hit #19 on the New York Times Bestseller list, and #117 on the USA Today Bestseller list!

Christina Phillips' **Touch of the Demon** (Wild Rose Press)

Jan Colley's **Friday Night Mistress**

Natalie Anderson's **Pleased in the Playboy's Penthouse**



## Sold

Sandra Hyatt has sold her second manuscript, tentatively titled **The Billionaire's Baby Bargain**, to HM&B Desire

Clare Scott has had a short story accepted for Barbara Else's children's anthology (Random House tbp Oct 2009)

## Competitions

Allison Withers placed first in the Historical Section of the *RWA Emily Award* with **Border Laird's Bride**.

Clare Scott has been shortlisted in the *Joy Cowley Award* for unpublished picture books.

Joanne Graves & Soraya Nicholas won the opportunity to pitch a manuscript to SSE editor Susan Litman on *eharlequin* in a pitching contest. Both had full manuscripts requested as a result.

North Texas Romance Writers of America "Great Expectations" contest has three RWNZ member finalists: Maree Anderson (YA), Nicola Beynon (Romantic Suspense), and Abby Gaines (Single Title).

### RWNZ Strictly Single Competition 2008

It's my great pleasure to announce the placings for the Strictly Single competition:

#### Editor's Placings:

1st Nikki Beynon

2nd Kylie Short

3rd Susy Rogers

#### Agent's Placings:

1st

2nd

3rd Susy Rogers

Nikki

Allison

Beynon

Withers

Both Editor and Agent were impressed with the standard of entries. A big thank you to all the NZ judges who took the time to read and rate the 21 entries for this competition. There were a number of entries very close to the five that made the final which goes to show the depth of talent out there in the RWNZ.

Please email submissions to this page to, Tyree at [rocker.t@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rocker.t@xtra.co.nz), by 13<sup>th</sup> of each month.

[www.romancewriters.co.nz](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz)

April 2009

# WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

## *A guide to World Building*

*by Kylie Short*

Two of the most memorable novels I read as a teenager were *Dragonflight* by Anne McCaffrey and *Clan of the Cave Bear* by Jean M. Auel. The wonder of McCaffrey's feudal-like society of Dragonriders and their Weyr's and the savage beauty of Auel's prehistoric setting sparked my imagination. The detail, the unique characters, intriguing cultures and vivid descriptions drew me into their worlds and convinced me I was flying a-dragonback with Lessa and F'lar or walking right alongside Ayla as their stories unfolded.

This is the sort of effect we all want as authors when a reader picks up one of our books and spends a few hours sharing our characters' adventures. We want the world to stick in their minds so well the memories will last long after they've put the book down. I've no doubt Ms. Auel and Ms. McCaffrey spent weeks, if not months or years, world building. And as they wrote other books in their respective series they revealed additional layers of detail and expanded our knowledge of the worlds their characters inhabited.

How did they do it? Is there a set formula or process writers' use when constructing their world? Answering these questions wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. Firstly, though, what is world building?

The best definition I could come up with was this... *World building is imagination with logic, a world unlike our own but with enough recognizable similarities that they resonate with the reader and then embrace the differences.*

It's also a term frequently associated with the science fiction, fantasy or paranormal genres. Type in the search words *world building* on the Internet and you'll be inundated with thousands of articles and references that assure you the term is synonymous with this genre. In fact, it's hard to find something that doesn't mention it.

Sure, it plays an integral role in sf/f/p but it's not confined to this genre alone. A contemporary still needs a setting, an historical needs to get its facts right, a suspense might be based loosely on a true story or an erotic romance might push the boundaries of what's socially acceptable.

How can you address these issues, in whatever genre, if you have limited or no knowledge of them? Whatever you write, world building is as important to your book as any other. So, is there a set process or magic formula to follow so we can get it right?

Do you want the good news or the bad news? Bad news is, there's no set process or magic formula to make world building easier. You have to figure out what works best for you. This article will only provide ideas on where to start. But don't despair, good news is that I polled some of our writers and published authors and asked them how they went about world building . . .

*"I spent 7 years researching my 1000 BC book. I searched libraries for rare books, the 'net, interviewed Jewish folk and historians."*

**-Melissa James - Harlequin romance**

*"My world building starts with the premise that my heroine is a powerful woman in her own sphere. Whether she happens to be a witch or a druid her existence is influenced by her matrilineal heritage and the goddess culture.*

*Since I'm fascinated by this, research is no hardship and I spend far too many hours reading up on ancient customs and beliefs, and then incorporate whatever happens to best fit my plot. Within this framework I can twist the world to accommodate spirits of ancestors, elemental power from the earth herself and the occasional demon. It's a lot of fun being the goddess-of-my-own-universe!!"*

**-Christina Phillips - The Wild Rose Press.**

*"I usually use places I know for my books, although occasionally I will change some aspect of them. I very rarely name streets only towns."*

**-Ann Patrick - Whiskey Creek Press**

*"You ... have to 'know' everything about the world you create: location, scenery, seasons, culture, traditions, history, clothing, food... all that and more. For example, I've drawn a map of the Settlement where my hero lives, detailing all the major dwellings and surrounding areas of importance. This helps me keep everything straight in my mind and also helps whatever I imagine to be accurately depicted on the page..."*

*I like to keep things simple. I tweaked my characters' names a bit to make them a bit more exotic but not too hard to relate to. Like B-l-a-i-y-n-e for Blaine, L-y-a-m for Liam, C-a-i-y-l for Kale. I referred to the jobs people did as 'Trades' and capitalised them all, e.g. Potter, Healer, Hunter, Tracker. Same with significant places: the Gathering Place, Healing Hall or Elders' Hall."*

**-Maree Anderson - Red Sage Publishing**

*"When creating the fictional peninsula and the township of Onemata in my February 08 release, TYCOON'S VALENTINE VENDETTA, and when I created the fictional luxury game resort in my August 08 release, CLAIMING HIS RUNAWAY BRIDE, both with Silhouette Desire, I drew very strongly on my own experiences and knowledge of the country in which I, and my characters, live. For what I was unfamiliar with it was an easy matter of researching such areas and places both online and via other people who'd experienced places like that (travel books are marvellous for this kind of information, I've found.) As far as process goes, once I've decided upon where I'm going to set my stories I will glean as much information about it by (a) searching the internet, (b) taking relevant books out from the library, (c) visiting those places if at all possible and taking a whole lot of photos and notes, and (d) speaking to people who have been to those places or experienced the kinds of things my characters are doing."*

**-Yvonne Lindsay - Silhouette Desire**

*"My stories are steeped in reality, but my heroines have special abilities that set them apart, such as clairvoyance or witchcraft. So rather than building a futuristic, fantasy or parallel universe, my challenge is to show the internal world of my characters--what is it like to see and talk to ghosts; interpreting visions; learning who can you trust in the spirit realm--that kind of thing. I'm not psychic, but I do know people who have the gift and I draw on their experiences. For research, I read a ton of esoteric books and memoirs by psychics, and I love to freak myself out by watching scary movies. This part of the process is where ideas for characters and plots percolate. By the time I'm ready to work on the book, I feel I'm writing from an authentic point of view."*

**-Vanessa Barneveld -YA paranormal, represented by Writers' House Literary Agency NY**

*"For me, world building is very much an organic process. I feel as if I step into the world and write what I see. One tip I can give is in terms of writing a series - consistency is key. It is the absolute bedrock of a realistic world. I've learned the value of keeping detailed notes on characters, events, the physical world itself. This helps so much in terms of maintaining continuity."*

**-Nalini Singh - Berkley Sensation**

*"Because I've done extensive research about the Regency over many years, I have a good general knowledge of the period so I usually know if a story will work within the constraints of my historical period. But each story has specific elements that require more specific knowledge. For example, in CLAIMING THE COURTESAN and TEMPT THE DEVIL, I had to know about the demimonde. In UNTOUCHED, I researched mental illness in the early 19th century. The Regency is such a popular setting for historical romance, I'm lucky when it comes to world-building. I can often use just a few salient details to establish the world. Many readers probably know as much or more about this period than I do! One thing I like to do to establish a feeling of time and place is throw in the occasional unusual bit of vocabulary or expression. I want my readers to recognize that they're reading about somewhere different from where they live now. Luckily the Regency abounds in really colourful, vigorous language so that part of my writing is often a joy."*

**-Anna Campbell - Avon/HarperCollins**

As I mentioned before there is no set formula to world building. The process is as varied as there are genres. Frustrated yet? Then, let's move on to how we begin world building when we have no idea where to start? I discovered plenty of comprehensive checklists of elements essential to world building and character development in articles and books as I researched this topic. Too many to cover in the space of this article. So I've combine a smattering of those with some our authors mentioned.

### **ELEMENTS OF WORLD BUILDING**

**Environment** – What is the world your characters inhabit? What life forms are there? Are there any physical features such as continents or landforms? Ecosystems? What are the locations of any cities & towns? Does weather or climate play a part in your story? Will these factors influence your characters culture, lifestyles, shelter, food production or types of clothing?

I like to draw maps of the places where my characters live, putting in details of topography, territories or borders, cities and place names and often thumb through information books or travel guides to get a visual image of the landscapes to accompany them.

**Culture** – What building blocks make up your characters life? Do they have government, religion, an economy, values, language or dialects, beliefs, social classes, education, family structures, law, the arts or leisure activities? How do these issues relate to marriage, sexual relationships or death?

All these things will influence your characters thoughts, behaviour and actions. The foundations of culture can come from your imagination or you can draw on aspects of past & present societies from our own world history. This is where research comes in. A lot of fun can be had hunting for information, whether you surf the 'net or visit the local library. Note taking is a definite must and don't forget to reference where you found your ideas as there's nothing worst than losing a great source of information when you want it again.

Alternatively, post a query on the on-line loops – there's a wealth of information among our own members for all sorts of things or they can refer you to a site, article or book if they don't.

**Technology** – Is your society/culture industrial or pre-industrial? What forms of machinery, communication and



transport exist? Have they achieved space travel? Who uses the technology in your world? The military? An undercover cop? Everyday Joe and Jane? A specific race or culture? How does it impact on your characters lives? Do they have a phobia associated with technology?

**Clothing** – What does your character wear? Does their environment dictate the style? Will their culture or class influence their choice? Do male and female clothes differ? What fabrics make up their clothes? Does their employment require a certain image?

**Language or communication** – Do your characters speak another language or dialect? Will their conversation be interspersed with words from their native tongue? Do you need to make up your own language? Have you considered giving a character a speech affectation (eg. a stutter, a lisp, an accent)?

Depending on your genre your choice of vocabulary and the grammatical structure of the sentences your characters speak may vary (eg. think of Yoda from Star Wars). Language isn't just confined to verbal communication. Gestures, sign, sounds, and mannerisms are all facets of language.

In one of my stories I have a young character who's mute as a result of a childhood trauma. He communicates using sign and I indicate this through the use of gesture and italics. In the same book I have an alien who has a sibilant hiss in her speech. In another, the colour of my heroines eyes change with the moods she's experiencing.

**Sex** – Does culture affect your characters views on this subject? What practices are acceptable? Frowned upon? Are there any taboos or restrictions? Do your characters have relationships, love or is it just for the purpose of reproduction? What sexual preferences are the norm in your world? Will marriage be a pre-requisite to having sex? What slang words do your characters use associated with sex? (eg. Nalini Singh uses the term "skin privileges" in her Changeling series. It refers to who has the right to touch one another in their Packs. Here's how she explains it – "Because touch is such an intimate thing, it depends on each individual as to what level and to whom, they will accede the right to skin privileges." \*\*)

By no means are these the only categories you should consider when world building. They're just a starting point. Many of the sub-categories mentioned within the larger ones can be teased out as well. It all depends on each writer's needs.

Play the "What If..." game when you ask questions about the categories. Dig deep on the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* or *how* this affects or influences your world and characters. One of the benefits is that you'll discover conflicts, plot twists & sub-plots for your characters coming from the answers.

Now, once you've built this world, do you include every little detail? No. Not if you want to bore your readers to death. Details are good for the likes of writing for Encyclopedia Britannica or Lonely Planet. Details, in this instant, provide you with knowledge. The confidence of this knowledge will come through in the tone of your writing. You'll write the story from the inside out.

### **WORLD BUILDING Summary**

1. Research – make the time to flesh out your world. Readers come to your book wanting to believe and if you don't delve a little more deeply into what makes your world function, then you run the risk of the story not living up to its potential.
2. Structure and consistency – by all means interweave reality with imagination but whatever you create in your world must have a set of rules or be based on logic or reason. Gerrold, in his book *Worlds of Wonder*, quite rightly states, "The reader will suspend belief - he won't suspend common sense."\*\*\* Little or no structure will result in the reader becoming confused; that leads to boredom or frustration. And without consistency the reader will disbelieve and mistrust what they're reading. Don't give them a reason to put your book down.
3. Humanize elements of your world building – make them similar enough to something readers would be familiar with but then balance it with whatever is unique about it. Combine the old with the new.
4. Layer the experience – use the senses. Create the scene in your head. What did you see? Hear? Smell? Touch? Taste? Feel emotionally? Provide this and you'll bring your world alive, make it believable.
5. Have fun – take time to daydream. It's part of the creative process of world building. Collage your ideas, make maps, family trees, lists of your character likes/dislikes, create a play-list of songs that evoke the right mood conducive to the tone of your world.

What are you waiting for? You have the tools to start world building – it's time to go for it. Discover and enjoy the process that works for you, whatever it may be.

Once you get started, you never know what sort of wonderful world you might end up with!

**Biopic:** Kylie Short lives in the small village of Tambar Springs (pop.103), NSW, Australia with three fuzzy, feline friends. She's an aspiring author disguised as a primary school teacher who writes sf/f/paranormal romance. She's a multiple finalist in RWAustralia & RWNZ competitions and has placed in both the Emma Darcy Award and the Clendon Award. Receiving the Readers' Choice Award (twice) in the Clendon has been the highlight of her writing career so far.

\* "We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto" article by Maree Anderson from her website ([www.mareeanderson.com](http://www.mareeanderson.com))

\*\* Nalini Singh website – web-link called Behind the Scenes re: "skin privileges" ([www.nalinisingh.com/psy.html](http://www.nalinisingh.com/psy.html))

\*\*\* *Worlds of Wonder – How to write science fiction & fantasy* – David Gerrold (Titan Books 2001.)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

*Compiled by Soraya Nicholas, with a contribution from Cynthia Sterling*

### Harlequin Mills & Boon

Silhouette Nocturne Bites are looking for your manuscript! To enter send a 2 paragraph blurb of your manuscript, deadline April 6<sup>th</sup>. Log on to the web page below for details.

<http://community.eharlequin.com/forums/write-stuff/editor-pitch-silhouette-nocturne-bites>

### Seeking writers and ebook proof reader

The Love Company is looking for writers and an ebook proof reader for our online ebook library. We are a 'New' internet based company and plan to sell our ebooks world-wide. The ebooks are short (20 to 30 pages) and relating specifically to a particular love experience.

Contact Caroline McHenery 09 817 1345 or 027 527 1345 [www.thelovecompany.co.nz](http://www.thelovecompany.co.nz) or email

[caro@thelovecompany.co.nz](mailto:caro@thelovecompany.co.nz)

### Flash Fiction on-line

Publishes short stories of 500-1000 words (no porn or erotica).

Payment is \$50 for first electronic rights.

<http://www.flashfictiononline.com/submit.html>

### Alloy Entertainment

Alloy Entertainment the company behind the Gossip Girls and Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, is looking for new writers and new ideas for a program they've dubbed The Collaborative. They are looking to acquire up to 12 partial or completed manuscripts in the coming year.

<http://www.alloyentertainment.com>

## INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

*Submitted by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner, aka Lisa Whitefern*

### The Valerie Parv Award

**Deadline:** 3 April 2009 **Enter :** First 50 pages + 2 page synopsis

**Cost:** RWA Members AU\$22, Non Members AU\$38.50

**Prize:** 1 year mentorship with Valerie Parv <http://www.romanceaustralia.com>

### Dark Tales Short Story Competition

(Horror or Dark Speculative Fiction)

**Deadline :** 30th April 2009. **Eligibility :** Non-UK residents can enter the competition online.

**Entry fee** is £3 (UK) First Prize is £250 <http://www.darktales.co.uk/>

### Tampa Bay Area Romance Authors Contest

**Deadline :** May 1st, 2009. **Eligibility :** Open to unpublished writers and to any author who has not been published in the past three years and is not currently contracted for any novel-length work of fiction (40,000 + words) in any format

**Cost :** \$25.00 (U.S. funds) <http://www.tararwa.com/contest.php>

### Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards

**Deadline :** Postmark by May 1, 2009. **Cost :** \$100

**Prize** \$3000 <http://www.wordhustler.com/contests/tag/romance>

### Annual Writer's Digest Short Story Competition

**Deadline :** Postmark by May 15, 2009 (Late entry is June 1, 2009)

**Fee :** \$20 for the first manuscript, \$15 for each additional manuscript (US funds) submitted in the same online session.

<http://www.writersdigest.com/annual/>

### Writers of the Future (Science Fiction or Fantasy short stories/novelettes)

**Deadline :** Postmark by midnight June 31, 2009

**Fee :** Free and writer retains all rights <http://www.writersofthefuture.com/rules.htm>

[www.romancewriters.co.nz](http://www.romancewriters.co.nz)

April 2009

# RWNZ NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

## Regional convenor contacts

AUCKLAND – Frances Housden  
email: fhousten@xtra.co.nz

CHRISTCHURCH – Sue Knight  
email: sueknight@ihug.co.nz

HAWKE'S BAY – Ginny Suckling  
email: ginnysuckling@xtra.co.nz

NELSON – Cherie Skinner & Sally Astridge  
email: bruceastridge@aol.com or cheriesk@hotmail.com

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING COUNTRY – Liz Heywood  
email: liz.heywood@gmail.com  
phone: (09) 2351404

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse  
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com



Don't see your region listed here? If you're interested in helping to start a local RWNZ group in your area, please contact RWNZ president Pat Snellgrove via email [rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz) or our membership secretary Rachel Collins on [rachel\\_collins@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz)

## AUCKLAND

In March 18 members attended the excellent session on Sources of Inspiration from Helen Kirkman and Maree Anderson. And on April 4th: we have Sandra Hydes's workshop on Conflict - another not to be missed workshop. As usual the meeting will be held at 12.30 on the 4th of April in Three Kings Tennis Pavilion corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads. Bring a small plate for lunch. Out of Auckland members welcome.

## WAIKATO/BAY OF PLENTY/KING COUNTRY

We had a fabulous start to the New Year with nine of us gathering at Angela's welcoming home. Top of our list was to acknowledge the awesome effort that Liz Heywood has contributed to our group as convenor. Liz made sure that every meeting we had was informative, supportive and a darn good giggle! She has now resigned from her role as convenor but has left us well set up to continue on. Thank you Liz, you are wonderful! Our first topic of the year was characterisation. Gracie Stanners ran a fantastic workshop for us, one that got us all thinking hard and no doubt a few racing back to their WIP's for some minor/major alteration! As always Gracie we are lucky to have you!

Our next meeting will be held at Leigh's place at 12 on March the 21st. Please bring a shared plate for lunch. Lastly, the new co-convenors for our area are Lyn Rasmussen and Sarah Hamilton. We look forward to a great year with you all!

## WELLINGTON

Our recent meeting saw us reading out 'back-cover blurbs'. We all found it surprisingly hard to describe our own books in riveting racy terms - and developed a new respect for the people who do this for a living.

We also shared a promising rejection letter and some Emerald feed-back sheets.

At least three of us made the Clendon deadline - four if we're still allowed to count Gracie-on-the-bus. Rachel has offered to hold a dialogue workshop, so we're polishing up our chat and bringing a page or two to share and critique at our next meeting - 1 pm, Saturday April 4th at Ellie's, 135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu. All welcome.

## NELSON

Nothing could match Annika's Valentine Special last month, but seven of us were able to congratulate Loren Teague on the imminent publication of her second book with Robert Hale, Ultimate Betrayal, and wish her well as she returns to Christchurch for radio- and chemotherapy. Sheree produced an excellent writing exercise, which had us scratching our heads over adolescent traits, and then the reactions of a couple stuck in a lift. To add spice to the pudding, one of the couple had to suffer from claustrophobia. It goes without saying that Anna's offering had us all sweating. For next month's meeting, which will be at Sally's house, we're all writing 100 word romances, and bringing with us memorable opening sentences. To join us, call either Sally Astridge, on 545 2244, or Cherie Skinner, on 548 6070

## CHRISTCHURCH

We have had two small but very enjoyable critique meetings since we last checked in and now we are planning our **Full Day Workshop**

**Date:** Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May **Time:** 9.15am – 4pm **Cost:** \$10 - includes lunch

**Workshop 1** - The Struggle for First Page Impact with editor, writer and RWNZ member Kathryn Taylor.

**Workshop 2** - "Telling It Like It Is" - a cosy chat with Jan Colley, multi-published Harlequin author.

**Workshop 3** - "Hooking an Agent" - practical advice from writer, Steve Malley.

**Workshop 4** - "Role Reversal" - getting into a character's bones" - some interactive fun with Gwen Reekie, psychodramatist, writer and RWNZ member.

Out-of-towners very welcome please contact Sue for location details and to book by 1<sup>st</sup> May - [sueknight@ihug.co.nz](mailto:sueknight@ihug.co.nz)

## HAWKES BAY

We haven't met face-to-face this year but have been in contact by email. As some people know via the RWNZ loop, Amanda's book, *Zombie Queen of Newbury High*, has been released, and there is a great interview by Sarah with Amanda on her blog page. Meanwhile, Sarah has signed with a new agent who is dealing with her latest young adult proposal. June Clarke, who was a founder member of the Hawke's Bay group and generous volunteer at the RWNZ conferences, has left to pursue other creative interests of acrylic painting and card making. We'll all miss her but hope she'll join us for our social meetings. I'm still in Australia working in the remote Aboriginal communities with my husband and will be away from New Zealand for the next few months. As Sarah and Amanda are also busy, we'll continue to keep in touch by email. If anyone wants to contact me regarding our group they can do so by sending me an email at [ginnysuckling@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ginnysuckling@xtra.co.nz)

# THE NAKED WRITER

*Baring all in the world of romance and writing*



What an exciting month it's been and it's only just a quarter of the way through the year. What with members finalling in contests, hitting bestseller lists and my own personal favourite, winning the opportunity to pitch my book on e-harlequin, RWNZers are on a roll. Of course, in the midst of all that, personally, there has been a dismal showing in a contest, and a rejection by an agent who described my writing voice as "interesting" – I have no idea if that is good or bad but I'm leaning towards bad cos I figure if she thought it was good, she'd have said so, and she was probably trying to think of something nice to say in case I was some violent nut job who held grudges – so it all balances out, really. Now on to the news ..... You know how we love the

whole name game business, and what name we'll write under when we sell? Ruth Wind aka Barbara Samuel now has another AKA - Barbara O'Neal - with her latest book *The Lost Recipe for Happiness* (released locally here in NZ – I spotted the book at Dymocks) On the excellent Writer Unboxed website ([www.writerunboxed.com](http://www.writerunboxed.com)) she explained the desire to have a new name: "There was a lot of discussion over whether to do this—the book has a strong thread of magic realism, but that wouldn't throw my core readers all that much. Magic realism has been a thread in my work from the earliest days as a category romance writer. *Lost Recipe* just takes that thread and moves it forward one (giant) step.....We also agreed that Barbara Samuel, as a brand name, was quite muddled. It was muddled from my end because it was a name from a marriage I'd outgrown, and muddled from a professional aspect because I was on the computers and databases as writing historical romances, paranormal novellas, and women's fiction. It is also a sad truth that the mainstream review world still views anyone with romance roots as highly suspicious. With *The Lost Recipe for Happiness*, the time seemed right to offer a new brand. To that end, I chose to take a new name, O'Neal, which is a family name I embrace with deep pride—my beloved grandmother's name, my mother's name, my uncle's name. This move gives me a lot more freedom. Barbara Samuel can play with urban fantasy and dragons or even historical romance. Ruth can handle straight romances. And we all live happily as one writer with many guises, leaving readers free to make their choice of brand, too.

In the world of business - Barnes and Nobel have bought Fictionwise, the massive e-book company ([www.fictionwise.com](http://www.fictionwise.com)) Naturally, not everyone is happy. "Fictionwise was the big independent in the industry, and also the company most willing to work with small publishers and non-DRM (Digital Rights Management)," Rob Preece of [BooksForABuck.com](http://BooksForABuck.com), a small e-publisher, said. "I'm sorry to see them go as an independent force, and not especially happy that BN made the purchase as they haven't traditionally been especially friendly to small publishing." Barnes & Noble plans to use Fictionwise as part of its digital strategy, which includes the launch of an e-Bookstore later this year. FYI, Barnes & Noble is the world's largest bookseller, a Fortune 500 company, operates 799 bookstores in 50 states, is America's top bookseller brand."

In Jan, stats came out as to what the biggest selling books were in America in 2008. (Not to be confused with the highest paid authors mentioned a month or so back.) Stephanie – sorry, *Stephenie* - Meyer had the biggest selling books in the USA in 2008 by a freakin' – whatever a million times a mile is. For romance readers, *Fearless Fourteen* by Janet Evanovich came in at 33, and Nora Roberts *The Hollow* at 41. Interesting too that the books on the Top Ten list following are either one of two - the fiction books are, loosely, "fantasy" (ie Stephenie Meyers, JK Rowling and Christopher Paolini) or they are "spiritual" ie New Age and Christian (Eckart Tolle, Elizabeth Gilbert and William Young.) The exception is Randy Pausch's "The Last Lecture", a non-fiction work based on a lecture the late professor gave. Here is the list as published 15 March 09 in bookseller.com: 1, *Breaking Dawn* Meyer, Stephenie; 2 *Twilight* Meyer, Stephenie; 3 *A New Earth* Tolle, Eckhart; 4 *The Last Lecture* Pausch, Randy; 5 *New Moon* Meyer, Stephenie Little; 6 *Eclipse* Meyer, Stephenie; 7 *The Shack* Young, William P; 8 *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* Rowling, J K; 9 *Brisngrr* Paolini, Christopher; 10 *Eat, Pray, Love* Gilbert, Elizabeth