

HEART TO HEART



SHERILYN KENYON Interviewed by Kylie Griffin



Hi, Sherrilyn, it's great you could be a part of this issue of RWNZ Heart to Heart!

Thanks so much for inviting me. I really appreciate it.

What significant milestones have marked your journey to publication?

The fact I think I've racked up more rejections than twenty authors put together and that I survived the single worst rejection of any writer I know or have heard of. "No one at this publishing house will ever be interested in developing this author. Do not submit her work to us again."

Honestly though, every book is a milestone and I cherish each one.

What has been the most surprising aspect of your publication journey?

That it was so hard and that I kept going. I always say there are two things you never want to ask me about. Childbirth and pregnancy because it'll scare you off both.

What's a typical working day like for you?

A case study in Murphy's Law. I don't really have a typical day because of the above :) I get up between 6-7 am. Help hubby get the boys off to school. I answer emails and usually hit the gym between 8-10 (yes, I do workout for this body LOL- can you imagine what I'd look like if I didn't?). Then I take business calls, answer emails and write. But the majority of my writing time is done after 8 PM when the house is quiet. I usually work until 2-3 am and then get up and start over. Sometimes I stay up for a couple of days in a row.

What is it about your books that makes them so popular?

I have no idea :) But fans tell me that they like the fact that they laugh and cry in every book. That the characters seem real to them and that even when a character is bad, they understand and feel for them.

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EDITORS' DESK

Once again we are proud to bring you some fabulous interviews and interesting articles! And now that conference is so close, the information and interviews about speakers and attendees is even more exciting.

This issue we do have an announcement to make though . . . we have decided that our reign as editors of Heart to Heart is coming to an end. By December this year, we will have been editing the newsletter for 2.5 years, so it's time to step down and let another team take over. While Heart to Heart has in the past been edited by one person, the job is probably best to be shared between two, ideally with one party being design focused and the other collating and sourcing content.

If you are at all interested in being an editor of Heart to Heart, please feel free to contact either of us to discuss. The new team would take over in 2011, with the first newsletter being due at the end of January.

Until next time.
Soraya & Suzanne

RWNZ & RWAustralia Critique Partner Scheme

To join RWNZ's critique partner register, run jointly with RWAustralia, go to <http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/members/critique-partner-register.php>. Fill out the online application form and send to applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com. Alternatively, email applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com and ask for an application form.

PRESIDENT ABBY



Have you registered for conference yet? August 20-22, the date of *An Affair to Remember*, RWNZ's 20th anniversary conference, is coming up soon, and registrations are looking strong, even before the last-minute rush to get in ahead of the earlybird deadline. If you want to get your choice of workshops and of editor and agent pitches, the sooner you register the better!

I'm pleased to announce that our *Crime Scene Investigation* workshop presenter has been confirmed...though possibly the name of the workshop is a bit misleading! Nick McLeay has many years experience as a police officer, most recently in drug enforcement and in inter-agency relations (an area where writers can often find interesting plot angles), as well as robbery and child abuse. Nick will be focusing mainly on the inter-agency aspect and on the drug "industry", but will be able to answer questions based on his wide experience.

Remember, the conference offers three full days of talks and workshops – the Friday workshop with Hollywood script consulting and "hero's journey" guru Christopher Vogler, plus the main event on Saturday and Sunday with our full complement of speakers. For those who appreciate an early start, you can join one of our super-early critiquing sessions with an agent or editor, on Friday and Saturday.

If you're one of our new members, or if you've somehow missed the announcements to date, here's a quick recap of our speaker list:

- Stephanie Laurens, New York Times bestselling historical romance author
- Christopher Vogler, "hero's journey" expert and Hollywood script consultant
- Dianne Moggy, Vice President, Overseas Editorial Strategy & development for Harlequin Books
- Alex Logan, Editor Grand Central Publishing
- Laura Bradford, Bradford Literary Agency
- Nalini Singh, New York Times-bestselling author of paranormal romance
- Nic Harrison, swords expert
- Vanessa Johnson NZ #1 bestselling author
- Natalie Anderson, USA Today-bestselling Mills & Boon author

And others!

Remember, this year the Friday night cocktail party is included in the weekend conference registration fee. The party includes an hour of free drinks, plus substantial canapés. Yum!

We will soon be emailing all members with more details about conference parking and a reminder of the great deal we have on accommodation at Rydges hotel.

You received your conference registration form in last month's Heart to Heart – if you've lost it, it's available online at www.romancewriters.org.nz

RWNZ Annual General Meeting

RWNZ's AGM will be held during the conference, at 5pm on Saturday August 21, and is open to all members. When this newsletter went to press the deadline for remits and executive nominations hadn't yet passed, so you can expect to see more about those next month.

Abby Gaines
President, RWNZ

Your world building ñ the mythology and complexity of your characters ñ in the Dark-Hunter series are as detailed, and can be compared to, epic fantasies. Was the DARK-HUNTER COMPANION a way of keeping the world building details straight for you and us? How do you keep track of the details in all your series?

I keep everything in my head. I don't ever look at the Companion. Alethea put that together for the fans, based on information I had on the site to help the fans keep it all straight. I have no idea how I keep it straight, but somehow I do.

2008 was the Year of ACHERON. His story was one of the most highly anticipated and significant in the Dark-Hunter series. The writing of the book, the build up and promotion of it and finally its release ñ did you feel any pressure while writing the book, and how did you cope with it while staying true to his story, yourself and living up to reader expectations?

Not at all. I write for the sheer enjoyment of it. For the character exploration. While I definitely care what readers think, I don't sweat that until after I'm finished with a project and am waiting on it to come out. I'm always fine during the writing. It's after it's done that I sweat.

Zarek & Acheron's stories make me cry every time I read them. They're such scarred, incredibly complex heroes who struggle to come to terms with their difficult pasts. The same can be said of some of the perceived "villains" in this series. How hard or easy is it to develop heroines who equal your heroes? Has the matching ever been a challenge?

Not really with the one notable exception of Kyrian. The first draft I tried to hook him up with Tabitha. That was a disaster. It was while working it over that I realized I had him with the wrong sister.

I read in an interview that you tend to relate more to the heroes in your books. Why is that?

Probably because I've been surrounded by men my entire life. I was raised in the middle of eight boys and have three sons. Most of my friends growing up were male and I worked in male dominated fields such as computer training and programming. While I'm definitely female, those experiences have given me a lot of insight into the male mind and how they think. I adore men and love to write about them.

You started off writing paranormal in the early 90s before the genre was hugely popular and switched to writing historical romance under the name Kinley McGregor. What draws you to this genre and can you tell us what's next for Kinley?

I actually started off writing horror for publication. My first pubbed story in 1978 was a horror short story and I focused on those for many years before publishing science fiction and then fantasy and romance. It's all basically marketing labels anyway. As I've said repeatedly, the Dark-Hunters were first pubbed as horror, then fantasy, then science fiction, then romance and now they're classified fiction even though it's the same series and style I've always written. Everything I've written from the beginning has been cross-genre stories. I've never liked to colour inside any lines or to be confined.

I go wherever my muse takes me whether it's the Middle Ages, Arthurian fantasy, science fiction, suspense, mystery, whatever. I don't believe in limiting myself or my muse. As for Kinley, the next one out is Darkness Within which is Arthurian Fantasy. It should be out January 2011.

The LEAGUE series isn't new, you released them as e-books back in the 90's. Where did the idea for this series originate and how is it the stories are being re-released?

Not ebooks, all but Born of Fire was a novel first and Born of Fire was the first ebook published by a New York pubbed author. One book was released by Dorchester and the other by Kensington. This was the original series I started writing when I was seven years old. Yes, you read that correctly. I was seven. Nykyrian and Syn (then called Rachol) were my imaginary playmates when I was a kid. Since I was raised on Star Trek and Star Wars in addition to horror, it was my other love. While I pubbed the horror stories, I diligently worked on the novels over the years. I don't remember exactly when or how I came up with the universe and characters- it was too long ago. It just seems like they were always there. Probably had something to do with the fact that my older brother was obsessed by ninjas and I saw them as ninjas in space.

I completed the first draft of what would become Born of Night when I was twelve and my best friend still has a copy of it. The next draft was finished when I was twenty-one and that was the one I'd intended to submit to New York. Tragedy struck and it would be another three years before it would make the rounds.

The series sold in 1992 (in my early twenties at the time, I was the youngest writer then published by both Kensington and Dorchester) and the books came out 1994-1996. The books won numerous awards and landed on a couple of bestseller lists, then my career and personal life plummeted. It would be over four years before I'd sell again and some of that time was spent homeless with my children. It was horrible. Even after the career finally took off again, I never got the books out of my heart or the desire to return to them. Last year, St. Martins allowed me to completely rewrite the books from scratch and rerelease them. They instantly became #1 New York Times bestselling novels, driving my number of NYT bestsellers to over 50. It's also the first time a futuristic has hit #1 since 1992. Thank you fans!

Your non-fiction book EVERY DAY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES is a fantastically concise and great introduction for a writer for that time-period. How did this book come about?

While I was still in college, my editor at Writer's Digest asked me if I'd like to write it. Many of the sources were from the bibliography I was using for my dissertation. However, I would caveat any researcher that the information in that book is now twenty years old and extremely dated. There have been many, many more and better resources put out since then.

You have an eclectic variety of interests ñ restoration and rebuilding of classic cars, boxing, computers and web design, marksmanship ñ are these a result of research for your books?

Not at all. Gets into the fact that my father was a drill sergeant and I was raised with all boys. I was actually the sparring partner for two Golden Glove boxers and am the only one whoever knocked one of them out. Since they were my playmates, I did things like play quarterback and learn to flush out radiators and rebuild trannies. As for shooting, my father had me on a range as soon as I was old enough to hold a gun. He was an avid collector and passed that gene on to my brother and I.

You're website is complex and fascinating in its potential as a promo tool is huge. Is a website a must for an author? What works to connect you with your readers? What advice can you give those thinking about promotion?

Do only what makes you comfortable and don't fake it. Like dating. Readers can tell when you're being fake and they don't like it. Sites help, but plenty of authors have made careers without them. I think it's just up to the writer. Stay in your comfort zone and don't do anything that seems unnatural or strained to you. I like people, all people, so it's easy for me to go out and embrace them. I like web design so it's easy for me to expand my site and play around with it. But that's definitely not for everyone.

Promotion is an ongoing venture and there's not one thing that will make or break your career. The only thing that is universal is to respect and like your readers. Never take them for granted. What do readers tell you that they enjoy the most about your books?

That's as varied as my readership. Some love the humour, others the emotions, the action, the depth of world building, the realness of the characters... it just really depends.

Is there something you've always wanted to write but haven't had the chance to yet?

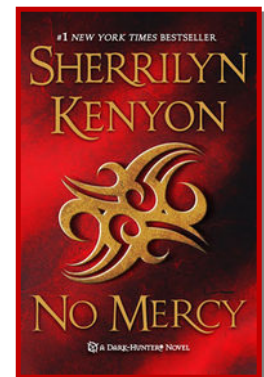
Not really. I've pretty much pubbed in all genres.

And lastly, what can we look forward to reading next from you? The Dark-Hunters Volume 2 manga, Silent Truth and the paperback editions of Bad Moon Rising and Whispered Lies are out now.

Infinity which tells how Nick met the Dark-Hunters and was sucked into their world hits the stands May 25th. July 6th is the release of In Other Worlds which combines a League story (Adronís), a Were-Hunter (Dragonswan) and an unrelated short story that tells my personal view on what happens to characters when writers don't write about them.

August 3rd bring No Mercy which is the story of Dev Peltier and a Dark-Huntress. Sept 14th is the hardback gift edition of Night Embrace Sept 28th is the Dark-Hunters Volume 3 of the manga. And the year finishes out with Blood Trinity up Oct 26th. It's a new urban fantasy series Dianna and I are writing together. Excerpts, covers and information on all of the above as well as the 2011 books can be found on my site:

<http://sherrilykenyon.com>



MJ SCOTT

Interviewed by Tessa Radley



No news is as good as hearing about THE CALL!

Tessa Radley catches up with 2003 Clendon Winner MJ Scott to hear more about her recent first sale...and what MJ has planned next.

Q: MJ Scott, we all ADORE call stories. You're not going anywhere until you tell us ALL about yours. In detail. We want the agony and the ecstasy!

MJ Scott: Ah, the call story :). Well, you asked for it. 2009 wasn't exactly the highpoint of my writing life. The economy wasn't great, publishers weren't buying many debut authors and we had a couple of close calls with one of my books that dragged on forever. To be honest, it messed with my head a bit and the writing was very slow and torturous and I couldn't really settle into any of my wips. But sometime around September I gave myself a talking to and decided that I had to stop worrying about publishing and concentrate back on the writing as that was all I could control. After giving myself

a deadline by promising my agent (Miriam Kriss) I'd have something new to her before the end of the year, I sat down and finished *Shadow Kin* early December. Luckily Miriam loved it. She wanted a few minor revisions and I had feedback from my crit partners, so I spent an exciting Christmas and New Year period with butt in chair revising. Then Miriam sent it out on January 21. We had some fairly immediate encouraging feedback that week and then some even more encouraging feedback the following week (at which point my fingernails started to fear for their lives).

I tried not to get too excited because I didn't want to get back on the will it/won't it rollercoaster. However it seems the publishing gods finally decided to let me switch to a faster track because early the following week we got an offer from a house that had always been on my dream list. Miriam went to work talking to the other editors who had the book and I stopped sleeping and started avoiding people so I wouldn't have to explain the stupid grin on my face (I wasn't allowed to tell anyone at this point) and the waiting began.

We got a second offer late on Friday in the US (Saturday morning for me) from another house that was on my dream list so then we knew there would be an auction! The US then had a long weekend which felt like the longest four days of my life where I had to walk around pinching myself a lot and swinging between being ecstatic and very very nervous. I was allowed to tell my crit partners at that point which was a relief to have people to share the craziness with.

The auction and various agentish things took until the following Friday US time but finally Miriam called me early Saturday morning my time and we talked and then she called the winning editor and then I got the official "call" from Miriam to say it was a done deal. So in the end it took just under a month. Plus the eight odd years of writing and submitting prior to that :). The moment when I could actually type "the call" into an email to start spreading the news was pretty damn good!

Q: Tell us a bit about ACE. What kind of stories do they publish...your favorites? What are they looking for?

MJ Scott: Ace/Roc are Penguin's US Science Fiction and Fantasy arm. They publish a huge range of books. In fantasy they do everything from urban fantasy to epic fantasy. Some of my favorite Ace/Roc authors are Patricia Briggs, Anne Bishop, Ilona Andrews and Guy Gavriel Kay. I could

give you a much longer list as they publish many of my favourite urban fantasy and fantasy authors. I still have to pinch myself that they're going to be publishing me too!

Q: You won the Clendon Award back in 2003 and finalled in the Golden Heart in 2007...great contest credentials. Was it one of those books that sold?

MJ Scott: Sadly, no. My Clendon book was a short contemporary romance. My Golden Heart books were a single title urban fantasy and a short contemporary romance. And at that point I decided I needed to focus on one or the other to get published and picked urban fantasy. I'd still love to sell my GH urban fantasy one day (and I still love contemporary romance but not sure there are enough hours in the day to write both!)

Q: Any tips to contest junkies?

MJ Scott: Contests are a great way to get feedback and encouragement on what can be the very long road to selling. But my advice would be to use them strategically. When I was writing short contemporary, I always used to submit my books to whatever line they were aimed at, not wait for the contest results. Contest can take up a lot of emotional energy (much like submitting), so make sure you keep writing. You have to finish the book you enter and you have to then move onto the next book. I've always tried to approach my writing as if I was published and try to write the same amount I'd be writing once I sold. I haven't always managed it but I now have a pretty good idea of my process and how much I can produce under time pressure which I wouldn't have had if I'd kept polishing just one book or a few partials to enter in contests.

Think about why you're entering...because there's a final judge you want to target or a prize that makes it worthwhile (whether that's money or a good credit for querying such as the Clendon or Golden Heart). When I started to write urban fantasy I entered my first book, *The Wolf Within* into the Golden Heart, the Emerald and the STALI plus one other US competition that had an interesting editor as the final judge because I wanted to know if I was on the right track with a longer book. That book got me my agent, finalled in the GH and won the STALI and the Emerald and finalled in the other US comp, so I got the feedback I wanted. After that, I knew my agent could submit my books wherever I wanted and to the editors she knew would be interested in my stuff, so I pretty much stopped entering contests. Though it has been tempting from time to time to start again to get the buzz again.

Q: Do you think getting an agent helped you along the way? How did you go about finding an agent that was the right fit?

MJ Scott: My agent definitely helped me. For single title, I think it's vital to have an agent to get you access to the editors who are buying, giving advice and keeping the faith for you while you're trying to sell and you get discouraged. Miriam got my work in front of editors that I doubt I could have on my own. I'd been with her for nearly three years when I sold, so she'd been working for me for that long without being paid, so that's one sign of a good agent, someone who'll stick by you and isn't in it just for one book.

As for how I found her, well, I had tried unsuccessfully to get an agent for my category books but when I started writing my single title, I knew I'd need one so started working on a new short list based on who repped my favourite authors, the internet and word of mouth. I was lucky enough to meet Miriam when she came out to the Australian conference in 2006 and got to spend a bit of time with her because she's Keri Arthur's agent and Keri's one of my crit partners. So I knew we got along on a personal level. She specializes in UF and paranormal, so I also knew she was a good fit for what I was writing and that she was making good sales for her clients, so she was one of my top picks and luckily, she offered to represent me after I submitted to her.

Q: Past winners of the Clendon Award have told me that there's a feeling of "Everyone except me has sold? What am I doing wrong? When will it happen for me? Did you ever feel anything like that? Or did you always KNOW that you would sell?"

MJ Scott: I absolutely had those moments. I always believed I would get there in the end but it felt

like a long long long road at times. My Clendon winning book was my second manuscript...Shadow Kin is something like the tenth I completed (with a couple of other almost done or never submitted books in the wip pile as well). I was lucky enough to do well in competitions from an early stage but that success definitely made me think "why can't I sell when others who've won these do?" at times. My mantra (sometimes muttered through gritted teeth) is "everyone has their own path". You can't change how the publishing side of things works for you other than by keeping writing and learning so your books keep improving, so you just have to keep walking that path. I hope that everything I've learned about my writing process and the industry in the time it took me to sell means my post sale learning curve won't be as big as someone who sells their first or second book, but I'm not kidding myself that there won't be a learning curve. I figure I've just reached a point where my path has turned and now I'll have more interesting times ahead of me as I follow it into the world of the published author.

Q: When will your first book be out?

MJ Scott: Shadow Kin will be out sometime in the second half of 2011. I don't have the final date yet. Since Miriam was clever enough to get me a three book contract, I'm hoping book 2 and book three in the trilogy will follow shortly after.

Q: Do you have a website or blog where our members can find out more about you, your writing journey and your upcoming books?

MJ Scott: My website is www.mjscott.net and my blog is <http://melscott.blogspot.com> I've been blogging since January 2006, so you can definitely read about my writing journey!

M.J Scott lives in Melbourne, Australia and spends her days trying to wrestle recalcitrant plots into submission and finding time to tackle her growing to be read pile. When not writing or reading she's often found attempting something crafty with varying results.



Comic by www.inkygirl.com

NEWBIE AUTHOR

Heather Brown

interviewed by Kylie Griffin



Share a little bit about yourself and your writing.

I live with my husband on the Gold Coast in Australia. I enjoy writing varied genres: Mystery, Y.A. Fantasy, Paranormal Erotic Romance, Fantasy Erotic Romance, Historical, Urban Fantasy and Contemporary Romance including M/M romance.

I'm currently writing for Noble Romance Publishing in the U.S.A.

Our readers love a good story - please tell us how you received THE CALL.

I have completed heaps of manuscripts and only entered two competitions. One in the local paper, I came second and the other and last year, I won the RWAustralia Clayton's First Kiss.

I joined RWA a little over a year ago and the ten years I spent drifting in the wilderness was over. I joined the Critique Partners list and gained fantastic feedback. This scheme is an essential part of making your first sale.

I had no idea where I was going wrong, in fact I had never heard of 'show' and 'tell'. My CP partners soon whipped me into shape. I began to submit. I got the usual rejections but I was determined to be published. I think a rejection from the Wild Rose Press set me straight. They loved my story but I wrote in first person and it just wasn't good enough.

I began to write two stories in third person. Betrothed to the Enemy, a historical romance set in England just after the Battle of Hastings and a paranormal Purr-fect Seduction, the first book in the *Pride Brothers* series.

I researched the publishers. Noble Romance although a smaller (at the time) e-book publisher, had great internet presence. The covers were fantastic, the website easy to use with long excerpts. I submitted in a partial of Betrothed to the Enemy.

Three weeks later, I received a request for the whole manuscript. The next day Jill Noble contacted me and said she loved the story and the world building BUT it was a 'sweet' romance and it needed to flow into the bedroom. She gave me the chance to re-write a few scenes. I did this in a few hours and resent. The same day I got my contract. That was in June 2009 since then I have had a further six books published with Noble Romance.

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 haven't pitched to an agent yet. In between other WIP, I'm writing a fantasy YA series. I'm taking my time and building a deep fantasy world. This story came to me over ten years ago. It's a project close to my heart and I want to make it very special. When this manuscript is completed, I will pitch an agent and one day, I'll see the book of my dreams in print.

Can you tell us about your debut/current book up for release?

My current release is A Savage Lust - Book Three in *Pride Brothers* series.

Prince Rio of Knight Watch's mission is to visit London, to retrieve the Lady's Book of Knowledge. He encounters Humans for the first time and his life freefalls into chaos. Torn between his love for a magnificent Fae male and an unusual Human female, he must complete his task or fall foul of Nox, King of the Faerie.

Link: <https://www.nobleromance.com/ItemDisplay.aspx?i=114>

My other Releases with Noble Romance Publishing:

Betrothed to the Enemy, Purr-fect Seduction, My Purr-fect Alphas, A Savage Lust, Hot Damn, A Long, Hot, Delicious Slide, Forbidden Love. A Taste of Nox is a Free Read.

Link to my Noble Romance author page:
<https://www.nobleromance.com/BrowseListing.aspx?author=40>

My Blog: www.hcbrownauthoreroticromance.blogspot.com

My web: www.heathercbrown.bravehost.com

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/pages/HCBrown-Author/292331631137?ref=ts>

Writers' tend to have strengths and weaknesses. Can you identify them? What's the most challenging thing about writing process for you and how do you strive to overcome it?

IMO successful authors have the ability to create ambience in their story. They can describe the scene so vividly the reader is there in the story with the characters. I think no matter how well you write, without ambience, the story will fall flat. For example, if you're describing a room, don't just list items. Break the list with an observation - make the reader see what you see.

Rather than: *A wooden chair sat by the hearth.* Make it interesting: (from *Pure Hot Sin* by H.C.Brown). *His gaze travelled to a stone fireplace, with two mahogany straight back chairs on either side. The seats, surrounded by a row of gold studs, matched the brocade of the bedspread. He admired how the elegant arms of the chairs, curved gently and complimented the spirals at the back. The legs bowed down to lion's head feet, beautifully carved in exquisite detail.*

Dialogue can be problem. It has to be 'real' and believable to the characters involved. Another weakness is the over use of back-story, which doesn't move the story along. How many times have you skipped through a novel because that particular scene was boring? Nine times out of ten its back-story.

My challenge in writing was to move out of my comfort zone. I had to push myself to write in different genres; especially writing M/M love scenes was a challenge.

My problem is waiting to find out if my current submission is accepted. At first, I found the worry stopped me from writing anything at all. I went through a slump until I found out the good or bad news. Not now, if it's a rejection I take what the acquiring editor says into account, fix it and re-submit.

I send in my submission and push myself back into work straight away; it's the only way to keep on track. The longer away from writing or worrying about something you have no control over, is a waste of time.

Is it fair to say getting published takes you on a steep learning curve in the next stage of your career as a writer? What's something you've learnt since getting THE CALL?

I agree it's true to say that my writing is not the same as it was a year ago. I've gained so much knowledge it's mind blowing. Writing is not a hobby anymore; every manuscript has to be better than the last one. The amount of time you spend on promotion is huge. However, the amount of time editing grows less with each manuscript.

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

Yes, don't be put off by rejections- rather learn by them. There are publishers out there with editors who will help you improve your craft. Trust in yourself and never give up. Dreams do come true.

Thanks, Heather, for sharing your thoughts with us!



THE LOW DOWN ON THE INSPIRATIONAL MARKET

by Joanne Graves

"The appetite for Christian fiction seems to have no end, and publishers are solidifying their positions in the full range of genres the category now embraces."

Publishers Weekly, June 2008

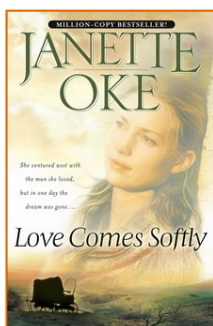
"Religious books show the highest growth in dollar sales across the industry and Christian romance leads the charge accounting for 11.4% of all romance paperback sales. A 33% increase from 2005 with the numbers continuing to grow."

Book Trends, 2007

From suspense to historical to romantic comedy, women's fiction and YA, the inspirational (i.e. Christian) romance market is huge. While it fails to have much of a presence here in God's Own, that's no reason for Kiwi writers not to have a crack at targeting what, according to the stats above, is one very fast growing market that shows no sign of slowing down.

Inspirational romance novels are written from a Christian world view and run the gamut of sub genres. Right now, as in the romance genre, it is historical that is hot. The inspirational market really opened up in fact with the novel, *Love Comes Softly* by Canadian writer, Janette Oke (pronounced Oak), set in 1800s America. Published by Bethany House in 1979, Oke's story about a young pregnant widow, stranded on the prairie, and a marriage of convenience, did for Christian fiction what Kathleen Woodiwiss did for historicals and the new sub-genre of "prairie romances" was born. While westerns remain the hottest market, another top market took off in 1997 with the publication of the Amish-set romance, *The Shunning*, written by a children's author, Beverly Lewis. Lewis, the "reigning queen" of Amish romance, while not Amish, was born in "plain" Country herself, and has penned many Amish set books. She even lived with an Old Order Amish community for research, has written an Amish cookbook with recipes on her website, and is a New York Times bestseller. Amish romance (dubbed "bonnet rippers") shows no sign of wavering and at 2008, *The Shunning* had sold over a million copies. What is the attraction of Amish and Prairie romances? Possibly that they revolve around a life many contemporary women find attractive - living in a close knit community, and life staying constant in a changing world.

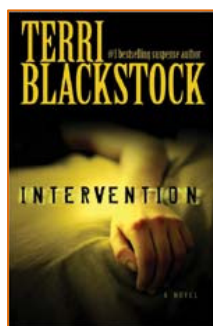
www.romancewriters.co.nz



skip over the Jesus bits in inspirational.

Publishers:

The best round up of who is doing what in Christian publishing is author Lyn Cote's page on www.lyncote.net. Under her "Christian Book Publishers" tag. Cote has been following the market for years and her 2010 update went up in May. Worth a browse to get a handle on how to submit and who is taking what. In the meantime, here's the low down on a few of them.



Harlequin - For over ten years now, Harlequin's Steeple Hill imprint has published Love Inspired (contemporary), Love Inspired Suspense, and Love Inspired Historical. Their mission statement is "wholesome Christian entertainment that will help women to better guide themselves, their families and other women in their communities toward purposeful, faith-driven lives." Steeple Hill has grown from three books a month when it was launched, to 12 books a month and the good news is that in 2011, it will increase to 14! Check e-harlequin for further guidelines. Editors stress, however, these are not conversion tools - the readers are generally already Christian.

Zondervan - One of the biggest Christian publishers They publish best sellers such as Karen Kingsbury and Terri Blackstock, and nonfiction such as Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life*. They are also big in YA and children's books.



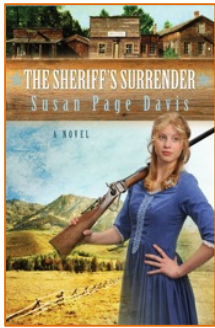
Bethany House - this mid west company first published Janette Oke, and now publishes top romance authors Tamera Alexander, Tracie Petterson, Janette Oke and Beverly Lewis.

Revel - a sister company of Bethany House. There is some overlap with Bethany House but Revel also do YA and Urban (ie African American - another growing sub genre). They published the nonfiction book *90 Minutes In Heaven* a few years back

which reached No. 2 on the NYT, thus increasing

June 2010

11



Revel's profile and giving them more clout with booksellers.

Imprints:

Most major publishers now have a Christian fiction imprint: Avon Morrow has Avon Inspired, and parent company Harper Collins owns Zondervan. Penguin has Putnam Praise. Random Double Day Dell began

Waterbrook Press, and later acquired Multnomah. Hachette (formerly Warner) has Centre Street and Faithworks. Simon and Shuster has Howard Books.

The Agents

Inspirational might be hot but not all agents are interested. Our 2010 conference guest agent, Laura Bradford said in a recent *Heart to Heart* that inspirational is one category she does *not* represent, while Melissa Jeglinski from last year's conference does look at Christian fiction. However, many agents have writers published in the genre – eg Deidre Knight, Karen Solem, and Natasha Kern.

Literary agent Mike Hyatt has a blog on www.michaelhyatt.com where he looks at the agents. Lyn Cote has a direct link to this on her site. One of the superstars of agents is Rick Christian of Colorado based agency, *Alive Communications* – Alive represents Karen Kingsbury. You can't even submit to them unless you're published or recommended by a client.

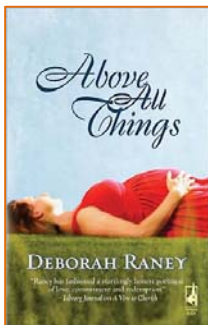
Inspirational Authors:

For a good look at newly released books, check out Robin Lee Hatcher's blog on new Christian fiction.

http://robinlee.typepad.com/new_in_christian_fiction/ She doesn't just choose romance, so it's a good guide to the diversity in this market. Hatcher also includes biographies of the authors with links to their websites. Several inspirational authors have crossed over from what is called the "secular" side ie non Christian. Hatcher used to write historicals for Dorchester, and Steeple Hill author Winnie Griggs used to write for Leisure.

Other authors of interest in the Christian market:

Jan Karon – While not romance, Jan Karon has written a series on the town of Mitford, a "gentle read" www.mitfordbooks.com which focuses upon the townspeople and their minister, Father Tim. Hugely successful.

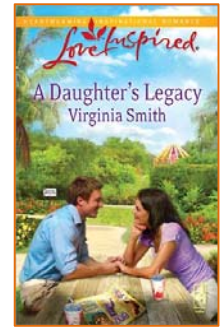


Francine Rivers – a member of the RWA Hall of Fame and a multi Rita winner. She writes compelling women's fiction. Her latest book, *Her Mother's Hope* is an epic saga

following a heroine growing up in Switzerland, to her life in California in the early part of the 20th century. A follow up will soon follow.

Misc stuff about Inspirational fiction:

- RWA have their own inspirational chapter; <http://www.faithhopelove-rwa.org/>
- The Christy Awards are the main awards for inspirational fiction, www.christyawards.com and cross all genres. This year's ceremony will take place in July.
- Inspirational fiction is not afraid to tackle tough subjects. Robin Lee Hatcher wrote about alcoholism in *Beyond the Shadows*, written from her experience of marriage to an alcoholic, and suspense author Terri Blackstock covered drug addiction in *Intervention*, (nominated for a Christy 2010) as the author herself grappled with her own daughter's addiction.
- In 2009, Steeple Hill bought 19 brand new authors and are still looking, especially for historicals. In 2011 historicals will go from two to four books a month.
- <http://www.acfw.com/> - the American Christian Fiction Writers Association was originally the American Christian Fiction Romance Writers. Randy Ingermanson, the man who devised the Snowflake method of plotting, is on the Board.



Finally

The best bet is to read, read, read, as this is definitely one market you'd be crazy to second guess. The degree of the faith element can vary, and you need to have a belief in Christianity yourself. Libraries often stock Christian fiction, especially historicals such as Oke and Lewis, plus there are the on line stores, Barbara's Books, and Christian stores that stock some fiction, eg Manna Christian Books. Harlequin do not release Steeple Hill here, so best to buy through Barbara or on line.

If you can afford it, swing over to America for a conference. The American Christian Fiction Writers conference offers huge names in Christian fiction, and all the main publishers are represented. Past speakers have included Angela Hunt, Debbie Macomber, Karen Solem, Margie Lawson, and such enticing topics as "Sin plus Virtue equals Bestseller!" (by agent Natasha Kern, Robin Lee Hatcher's agent). This year's conference is a four day event to be held in Indiana. Watch their website for more information.



ALLSTEAMED UP: THE RISE AND RISE OF STEAMPUNK FICTION

By Abby Gaines

There's a new fiction bandwagon in town, and publishers and authors are scrambling aboard. It's called Steampunk, and while it's not truly new, it's arguably the ride of the day and it's taking a few new twists and turns on its journey.

Ugh, enough with the labored metaphor!

Suffice to say, although I perennially fail to attach myself to any bandwagon, thus missing out on those six-figure advances and depriving my children of a private school education, the word "steampunk" is interesting enough to have caught even my attention in several recent publishing news items.

When I decided to do some research on the subject, much of the material showed up in my email inbox uninvited, making my task ridiculously easy. So here's Steampunk, from a newbie's perspective...

First up, what is Steampunk? And should it be spelled with a capital S? (Hey, some people worry about that stuff. I'm one of them).

Steampunk, says Wikipedia, is a sub-genre of science fiction and speculative fiction, frequently featuring elements of fantasy, that came into prominence in the 1980s and early 1990s (I did warn you it's not really new!). The term denotes works set in an era or world where steam power is still widely used — usually the 19th century, and often Victorian era England — but with prominent elements of either science fiction or fantasy, such as fictional technological inventions like those found in the works of H. G. Wells and Jules Verne, or real technological developments like the computer occurring at an earlier date. Other examples of steampunk contain alternate history-style presentations of "the path not taken" of such technology as dirigibles, analog computers, or digital mechanical computers...these frequently are presented in an idealized light, or with a presumption of functionality.

Thanks, Wikipedia. (By the way, do you lie awake at night worrying about our increasing dependence on Wikipedia's unnamed experts? Me, too).

For a women's fiction/romance perspective, I asked highly articulate author Theresa Meyers, who just sold a Steampunk trilogy to Kensington (more on that later), for her definition of the genre.

"At its heart," Meyers says, "steampunk is Victorian-era science fiction or fantasy. Think Jules Verne with *50,000 Leagues Under the Sea* or H.G. Well's *Time Machine*. One of the primary expectations is that the story [should] take place in the Victorian period, but according to those involved in clubs and the steampunk community, it's the time period, not the locale, that matters. It can take place anywhere on the globe or even in a parallel dimension as long as you remain grounded in Victorian materials — that's the steam. The punk comes from taking those Victorian sensibilities and social norms and twisting them inside with unexpected roles for characters (like female airship captains) or unusual technological advancements (like death rays and mechanical horses)."

Writers not confident about setting their story in England might instead use the American Wild West,

which is proving popular as a steampunk setting, or create their own alternative steampunk world.

"In general, New York is just beginning to grasp the limitless range this burgeoning sub-genre has to offer, but the whole culture of steampunk and the people who love it are growing all the time," Meyers says. "Steampunk has very few defined limitations, which is part of the reason people enjoy creating their own experience with it at conventions and conferences, from artwork and costuming to music and literature. To get a feel for what steampunk is really like, go to a convention or conference and hang out with the people who are firmly grounded in this fascinating world. You'll never look at the Victorian era the same again."

RWNZ member Melanie Scott, whose recent debut sale was a steampunk trilogy, concurs with Meyers' description. "Steampunk is fantasy, or science fiction, set in worlds where the predominant power is still steam," says Scott, who adds Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to the list of steampunk originators.

"This level of technology — think Victorian England — is generally coupled with magic or made up gadgets or modern gadgets brought into that time and powered through steam or magic. These days, people probably expect more of the gadget type stuff when they think steampunk. My books fall at the less-gadgets, more just steam technology end of the scale."

Steampunk Plots

So what, exactly, happens in a steampunk book? As in other genres, stories vary widely. But to the casual observer, steampunk books do seem to have rather a lot going on plot-wise.

Theresa Meyers' three-book steampunk romance series features three paranormal hunting brothers, all named after their father's guns, in the weird wild west of 1880s America.

"The best way for me to describe the series is what would happen if you took the show *Supernatural* and mashed it up with the Will Smith movie *Wild Wild West*," Meyers says. "They've got steampunk technology and a nearly mad British inventor friend, and they're out there protecting humanity by fighting supernatural things, that turn out to be nothing like they expected."

Melanie Scott describes her books as "dark fantasy". The first book, *Shadow Kin*, is about an assassin sent to kill a human mage. Things go horribly wrong, which changes both the heroine's life and the City where she lives. "There's a good dose of romance and a touch of steampunk, but my books aren't full-fledged steampunk. Books two and three are set in the same world with different main characters though the overall external plot is continuing."

Publishers' Marketplace has reported several recent sales of YA steampunk. Suzanne Lazear's *Innocent Darkness* is described as "a steampunk fairytale, in which an adventure-seeking sixteen year old who has been incarcerated at an abusive reform school for her delinquent ways is rescued by a mysterious man

from the realm of Faerie who reveals she must die in sacrifice in order to save the entire Otherworld civilization.”

Mercedes Lackey and Rosemary Edghill's *The Sundowners Book I: West Of The Moon* is “a steampunk Western, in which three teens in 1867 Texas pool their skills to defeat a zombie army.

Lia Habel is another author combining steampunk and zombies. Publisher's Marketplace describes her *Dearly, Departed* as “a maximalist, post-apocalyptic, neo-Victorian steampunk zombie novel in which a girl, whose blood is impervious to the ‘Z-virus’, searches for her missing dad, is kidnapped by (good) zombies, falls improbably in love with a rather sweet zombie boy, and sets out to save the world from a zombie plague beyond imagining.” Sounds complicated, but the sale was a “significant deal”, so obviously it's a good kind of complicated.

Steven Harper's *The Doomsday Vault* is the first in a new series of steampunk novels in which two people join an underground police force in Victorian London. They fight zombies, mad scientists, and air pirates in an attempt to save the British Empire from a terrible plague, only to discover that the cure may be worse than the disease.

Another 1800s America-set novel is Devon Monk's *Dead Man's Moon*, which sounds like a battle between machines and magic, with some paranormal creatures thrown in. Philippa Ballantine's *Geist* is a “dark fantasy with steampunk overtones filled with soul-stealing ghosts, fatal rune magic and impossible situations.”

Selling Your Steampunk Novel

If you have a steampunk manuscript ready to submit, well done! Because editors are allegedly hanging out to read this stuff. What comes next is a mix of industry gossip and news from Publishers Marketplace that might help you figure out where to send your steampunk story.

If you're wanting to go the Harlequin route, one of my USA chapters invited Harlequin editor Adam Wilson to a meeting in March, and he specifically mentioned steampunk as something as he's looking for. Tara Gavin, another Harlequin editor, has also been known to request steampunk manuscripts.

Kensington editor Megan Records reportedly expressed interest in Steampunk at the Romantic Times convention in April. And Theresa Meyers' sale was to Peter Sennfleben at Kensington.

Melanie Scott sold to Ace/Roc, Penguin's fantasy imprint. Other recent sales reported in Publishers' Marketplace were to Anne Sowards at Ace/Roc, Chris Schluep at Ballantine, and Danielle Stockley at Berkley. In the young adult arena, Deborah Noyes Wayshak at Candlewick, Brian Farrey at Flux and Margaret Miller at Bloomsbury Children's have all made recent steampunk acquisitions.

Check out Eos, Orbit and Baen if you're looking for a specialist SF/fantasy house or imprint.

Some of the literary agents involved in recent deals are Laura Bradford at Bradford Literary Agency (yes, the Laura Bradford who's attending the RWNZ conference in August!), Lucienne Diver (The Knight Agency), Laurie McLean (Larsen/Pomada), Miriam Kriss

(Irene Goodman Agency), Renee Zuckerbrot (Renee Zuckerbrot Agency).

Go Native!

If you want to immerse yourself in the steampunk world, you might want to look the part. Steampunk accessories – timepieces, goggles, parasols, bustiers and steampunk jewelry – can be purchased on sites like www.etsy.com. Antique stores are a good source of the real thing, too.

And if you want to hang out with fellow steampunkers (did I just invent a new word?), you can hit one of the steampunk conventions. Steamcon II, www.steamcon.org, to be held in November 2010, is the largest steampunk conference on the west coast. Others include the Steampunk World's Fair in New Jersey in mid-May (<http://steampunkworldsfair.com/>), the Steampunk World Expo in Dearborn, Michigan, and for Canadian fans, the Victoria Steam Exposition in late May in Victoria, B.C. www.victoriasteamexpo.com

If you fancy yourself as a steampunk artist, Bookview Café Press is currently running a steampunk photo contest to celebrate the forthcoming release of *Shadow Conspiracy II*. The winning photo will be used on the cover of SC II which is scheduled for publication in December of this year. Check it out at <http://www.bookviewcafe.com/index.php/Shadow-Conspiracy-Extraordinary-Stempunk-Photo-Contest>

So, Is Steampunk For You?

Like any publishing trend, it's best to jump on board only if the concept resonates deeply with you. Theresa Meyers says of her new sale, “These characters have been spinning around in the back of my brain for decades.”

Melanie Scott advises, “Firstly I think it helps if you are someone who is interested in technology and history, and wants to have some fun with both of those mixed up with science and fantasy. Like any fantasy or paranormal book, world-building is really important. There have to be reasons why your world is the way it is. I also think you still have to write a great story with great characters. Throwing lots of gadgets into a book won't make it a great book if the characters and story don't hold reader's attention.”

Having done my research, I'm going with my initial assumption that, like most bandwagons, steampunk isn't for me. But it might be for you. Don't be put off just because you've never thought of it before. If your heart goes pitter-pat at the thought of combining gadgets and history and fantasy and romance, then maybe you're about to have the best-ever steampunk idea.

In which case, go write that story. Now! You might never have a better opportunity to make that sale.

BOX

Steampunk TBR

Want to read steampunk? Check out these titles recommended by fans of the genre:

Clockwork Heart, by Dru Pagliassotti

Soulless, by Gail Carriger

Changeless, by Gail Carriger

Leviathan, by Scott Westerfeld

Perdido Street Station, by China Mieville

Anno Dracula, by Kim Newman

Doctrine of Labyrinth series, by Sarah Monette (“steampunkish elements”)

WELLINGTON SEMINAR IN PICTURES

The Wellington/Kapiti Chapter of RWNZ is on a roll! As a result of our local all-day seminar we can now give a warm welcome to new members, Leeann, Janet, Carol, Jane, Rozellia, Juliet, Sheila, and Sue who are sprinkled between Otaki and Wellington City. Many thanks to the speakers - Yvonne, Zana, Pat and Victoria - who gave us a fantastic day. And to Karina Bliss and Vonnie Hughes for donating their books for the raffle basket (won by Meryl.) And finally a huge thank you to my helpers Kris, Ellie, Diana, Mig, Leeann, (who set up the Paraparaumu library display and kept it for weeks!) Carol (for the Whitcoulls display and book-signing) and Joan. Without the help of all of you it couldn't have happened.

Giovanna Lee



Library Stand



Zana, Pat, Yvonne, Victoria



Pot luck Dinner



Seminar

JOB AVAILABLE

- Needed:** Two Editors for the RWNZ *Heart to Heart* newsletter.
- Job starts:** January 2011 for preparation of the February newsletter
- Job description:** Editor one – the sourcing and collation of the material
Editor two – the design and layout of the newsletter
- Hours of Work:** Four to five hours each per month - variable
- Remuneration:** The eternal gratitude of all members of RWNZ

Mills  Boon™



HARLEQUIN

NEW MEMBERS

Suzanne Jarrett, NSW
Bryan Harrison, Christchurch
Rosalina McCarthy, Nelson
Angelique Jurd, Manukau
Sandra Markle, Amberley
Caroline Bagshaw, Hamilton



 HARLEQUIN



How many screenwriters does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer: Ten

- 1st draft. Hero changes light bulb.
- 2nd draft. Villain changes light bulb.
- 3rd draft. Hero stops villain from changing light bulb. Villain falls to death.
- 4th draft. Lose the light bulb.
- 5th draft. Light bulb back in. Fluorescent instead of tungsten.
- 6th draft. Villain breaks bulb, uses it to kill hero's mentor.
- 7th draft. Fluorescent not working. Back to tungsten.
- 8th draft. Hero forces villain to eat light bulb.
- 9th draft. Hero laments loss of light bulb. Doesn't change it.
- 10th draft. Hero changes light bulb.

Q. How many mystery writers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A. Two. One to screw it almost all the way in, and the other to give it a surprising twist at the end.

<http://sites.google.com/site/writersjokes/jokesaboutwriters>

THE KARA SCHOOL OF WRITING

The Kara School of Writing is thrilled to be offering weekend romance writing courses again! Please contact Lesley at editline@xtra.co.nz for further details.

The Kara School of Writing has been instrumental in the success of many published authors. A dozen past students are now writing for Harlequin, and other world-wide and New Zealand publishers.

OFFICIAL RELEASES & MEMBER SUCCESSES

Official June Releases

My Reckless Surrender by **Anna Campbell** (Avon Harper Collins Australia)

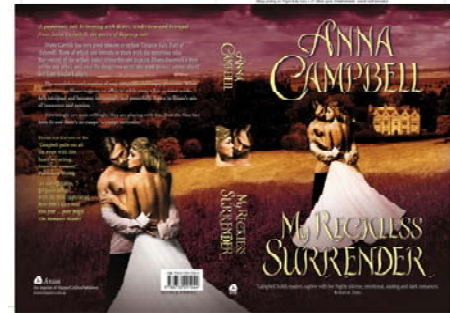
He's the One by **Jane Beckenham** (Samhain)

Forbidden: The Sheik's Virgin by **Trish Morey**

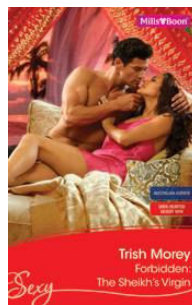
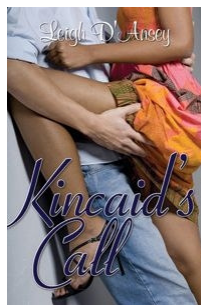
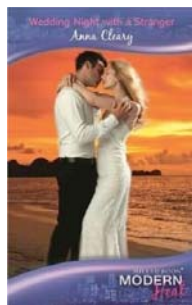
Wedding Night with a Stranger by **Anna Cleary**

Bargaining for Baby by **Robyn Grady**

Kincaid's call by **Leigh D'Ansey**



I want to know what love is by **Eve Summers** will be released on 27 May 2010 by Red Rose Publishers.



Member Successes - Competitions and Accolades

Competitions

Romantic Times Reviewers Choice Awards:

Abby Gaines won the best Harlequin Superromance for **HER SO CALLED FIANCE**.

Nalini Singh won best Urban Fantasy Protagonist for **ANGEL'S BLOOD**.

Abby Gaines also finalised in the **Lories Best Proposal Contest** with **YES GIRL**, and finalised in the **Reader's Crown Contest** for **HER SO CALLED FIANCE** and **THE GROOM CAME BACK**.

Emerald Awards:

Finalists in the Single Title section include **Michelle de Rooy** and **Allison Withers**.

Sandii Manning won the Washington Romance Writers **Marlene Award**, placing first in the series contemporary section (judged by Patience Smith of Harlequin).

Kylie Griffin has finalised in the Valley Forge **Sheila Contest** with three manuscripts.

Catherine Robertson has been chosen as one of the 5 finalists in the NZ Society of Authors **Pindar Awards**.

Captive of Sin by **Anna Campbell** has finalised in the historical category of the Wisconsin **RWA Write Touch Readers Awards**.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEST NEWS

Compiled by Lisa Elkind-Gardiner

Indiana Romance Writers of America Golden Opportunity Contest

Enter: first 35 pp, including synopsis (10 pp max). **Deadline:** All entries must be received by **June 27, 2010**. Accepts only electronic entries. **Fee:** \$25 US **Eligibility:**

<http://www.indianarwa.com/contest/>

Rainbow Romance Writers of America Rainbow Award of Excellence

Enter: Any *published* work of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender romance, either electronic or print with an ISBN number, published in 2009. **Deadline:** **June 30, 2010**, **Fee:** \$15 US **entry fee**

Eligibility: Open to anyone with a GLBT Book or novella, electronic entry published in 2009

<http://www.rainbowromancewriters.com/>

The Sean O'Faolain Short Story Competition

Enter: Original, unpublished short stories in the English language of 3,000 words or less. The story can be on any subject, in any style, by a writer of any nationality, living anywhere in the world. Literary short stories are probably more suitable for this contest. **Eligibility:** Anyone writing in English. **Deadline:** Closing date is **31st July 2010**. All non-email entries must be postmarked before or on that date **Fee:** \$20 US €1,500 (approx US \$2000) and **publication in the literary journal *Southword***. <http://www.munsterlit.ie/SOF%20Page.html>

INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Compiled by PDR Lindsay-Salmon, aka Patrika Salmon

Blue Leaf Publishing

<http://www.blueleafpub.com>

Print and electronic formats, seeking completed novels, 30,000-85,000 words, romance: science fiction/futuristic, romance: paranormal/werewolf. Strong female characters highly desired.

Anthology: Vagabondage Press

[www.http://www.vagabondagepress.com](http://www.vagabondagepress.com)

Short Literary Erotica Fiction; 2,000 - 6,000 words, for Anthology Series: 'Lyrotica' Seeking literary, defined as: 'smut with its opera gloves on, elegant and provocative, but never tawdry.

Liquid Silver Books

<http://www.liquidsilverbooks.com>

E-books, Deadline: June 15th, 2010, Anthology, 'Geeks Need Love Too'. Must have a HEA or HFN hot and sexy romance.

Check out New Holland Press

<http://www.newholland.com.au>

Gibbes Street imprint. Seeks romance. Word is that there is a NZ connection.

Solstice Publishing

www.Solsticepublishing.com

E-books, seeking most sub- genres of Romance, read the submission guidelines and FAQs carefully.

RWENZ NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

Regional convenor contacts

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

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

HAWKE'S BAY – Ginny Suckling
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NELSON – Annika Ohlson-Smith
email: allan-annika@xtra.co.nz

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING
COUNTRY – Sarah Saunders
email:
rainbowpt@vodafone.co.nz

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com

OTAGO - Viv Adams, email:
whitecliffodge@xtra.co.nz



AUCKLAND

We had a very good turn out last month for Louise Williams' workshop on Sci-Fi/Fantasy, which was excellent and very informative. This month we will enjoy the benefits of Karina Bliss' wisdom from her workshop on Adding Power to your Scenes. And for this she will be handing out a to-do list on editing and revising a scene. This month's meeting takes place on June 5th, I know this is Queen's Birthday weekend, but believe me if you're not leaving town this is a not to be missed.

As usual the venue is the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion corner of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads at 12.30p.m. on June 5th. Please bring a small plate for a shared lunch and a gold coin for the collection. The raffles prizes will be up to our usual standard - great! As the is a holiday weekend any out of town visitors will be most welcome.

WELLINGTON

Ellie's sitting room was bursting at the seams with our huge May meeting – many of the new members from our recent local workshop attended, which was great.

We toasted Catherine's success as a finalist in The Pindar Award, heard a little from every attendee about what and how they write, and planned where we might meet if our meetings grew to this size regularly.

Saturday June 5th we'll be looking at pitching, and Bron has agreed to show us how she plots on a spreadsheet. We'll email the whole group before then as to venue.

CHRISTCHURCH

The Christchurch mini-conference is fast approaching – Sunday 30th May, and all are looking forward to it.

Christchurch will now have two co-ordinators, with Sue Knight continuing on along with Cally Edgar (cedgar@xtra.co.nz)

NELSON

We had a good meeting on Saturday 8/5. Since last meeting we have got yet another prospective member, who we hope to meet next time. We started with a cuppa & cake, as Annika had made a cake that needed to be eaten while still warm. It was with great pleasure we found that everyone had done their homework and written a story of 500 words, using the words from a 'Code Cracker' Annika had provided. Amazing how different our stories turned out, everything from great suspense to hot and lusty, and the way we had used the provided words in our stories.

The rest of the meeting was brainstorming how to launch a Romance Short Story Competition this winter and we felt very pleased with the result, so watch this space...

Last but not least we had a wonderful surprise when Sheree waved her left hand as good-bye and flashed an engagement ring before our eyes. Wasn't that an awesomely Romantic ending of our meeting?

WEB SURFING

Compiled by Nalini Singh

- Mills & Boon partners with the National Trust to set romances in historic homes: <http://tinyurl.com/29ungpd>
- If you've ever had errant section breaks in your work, this article at The Blood-Red Pencil teaches you how to remove them: <http://tinyurl.com/26uq2kq>
- From mediabistro - Google is to start selling ebooks: <http://tinyurl.com/2bdgnmp>
- Also from mediabistro - Amazon is to divide the Kindle Bestseller list into Free and Paid: <http://tinyurl.com/27ulfw5>
- A breakdown of all the different departments within a publishing house over at Pimp My Novel: <http://tinyurl.com/26qgry2>
- A couple of links about pitching:
 - Agent Nathan Bransford talks about "The One Sentence, One Paragraph, and Two Paragraph Pitch": <http://tinyurl.com/2agzokm>
 - Agent Rachelle Gardner talks about the "Secrets of a Great Pitch": <http://tinyurl.com/38clk2e> (link via Louise W.)
- The Guardian discusses cover differences between countries: <http://tinyurl.com/3yebmo5> (link via Read, React, Review).
- The New York Times has an article about "E-Reader Applications for Today, and Beyond": <http://tinyurl.com/2cqxm99>

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BITS AND PIECES

Compiled by Soraya Nicholas

ROMANCE AUTHORS IN PERSPECTIVE
Nicholas Sparks, bestselling author of novels such as *The Notebook* and *Dear John*, didn't sell his first book until he was 30 years old, and now has a rumoured net worth of US\$30million. However this pales in comparison to Danielle Steel's new worth, which is estimated to be in the vicinity of US\$600 million! Nora Roberts is another literary superstar, valued by *Forbes* magazine to earn an estimated US\$60 million dollars annually.

Outside of the romance genre, James Patterson is valued at a cool US\$50 million, John Grisham at US\$90 million, JK Rowling a staggering US\$1 billion, and Stephenie Meyer a relatively new literary superstar contender, at US\$125 million.

New York literary agent Kristin Nelson posted her primary reason for not requesting work from an author on her blog . . . starting the story in the wrong place. She notes that many "decent" writers simply start their story at the incorrect place. Kristin states backstory and too much detail as the primary problems. "I know this is happening when I read and think, not bad writing here, but this author needs some judicious editing as I'm getting bogged down in details but the story isn't actually moving forward with momentum and tension." Read more at <http://pubrants.blogspot.com>