

## Girls On Top: Writing The Erotic Romance Heroine

### Serenity Woods



**I've written many different types of heroine: brave, feisty, gentle, kind, sassy, cheeky, thoughtful, serious. Her character is guided by her name, her situation, and the type of story I'm writing.**

Generally, a young, sassy name will lead to a young, sassy heroine. A more traditional name might

lead to a quieter, more responsible heroine. Equally, for me, a Liz is going to have a different personality than an Elizabeth. In one story, I had a heroine called Veronica who worked as a strait-laced PA in a law firm, but the hero called her Coco, which helped to deepen the intimacy between them. Of course it's fun to turn this theory on its head—in my latest novel I have a Winifred who's called Fred, and she's certainly not staid!

A heroine's place in her family might also influence her personality. A younger daughter might be more spoiled than an oldest daughter, who might be more responsible and thoughtful. If I'm writing a trilogy about three sisters, I already have three different heroines, their personalities guided by their position in the family. Again, it's good to turn this around too, so it might be fun to make the eldest really ditzy and unreliable, while the youngest always saves the day.

The heroine's personality can be guided by the type of story (or 'trope') that I'm writing. In a friends-to-lovers story, the heroine is likely to be a 'girl-next-door' type, who's known the hero for a long time. They have to have a friendly, intimate relationship that borders on flirting, because we're going to enter the story at the point that the flirting tips over into something more serious. In an office romance, the heroine might be more ambitious and feisty. These aren't hard and fast rules, but don't be surprised if you choose a trope and discover your heroine

appears before you, fully-formed!

But I'm here to talk about erotic romance, so I suppose we should look more closely at the sexy stuff! A reader once commented that she was tired of stories where the heroine is unfulfilled in bed up until the moment she meets the hero, and then wham! Orgasms proliferate, as if only one man is able to press her buttons in the right order. I understand the complaint, and since then I have tried to vary the heroine's experience, but for me, a hero has to fulfil something in the heroine that other men can't—not just in bed, but in all ways. He has to be the perfect match—there must be something between them she's not felt with other men. That's what brings the magic, and echoing this special 'something' into the bedroom is a natural extension of that.

It doesn't mean that your heroine has to be a virgin, although I have written a couple of virgin heroines (and one virgin hero! That was fun, and it was challenging to come up with a reason why a guy wouldn't have had sex for twenty-eight years...) It's fun to write about the physical and emotional implications of a hero being the heroine's first. But that doesn't have to be the case. Neither does our gal have to have her first ever orgasm with a hero (although that's fun to explore too).

But your hero must bring an emotional connection with our girl that makes lovemaking even more special, because ultimately, the act of sex is a matter of inserting Tab A into Slot B (or C, or even D, if you're writing very erotic romance!) It's just moving parts, and if you're only writing clenches and erections and moans, it can leave the reader cold.

Erotic romance is about the heroine's emotional and mental connection with the hero, explored through the act of lovemaking. He doesn't just know how to press the right buttons. She feels something for him that she hasn't

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felt for another man, and that's what makes the romance special. She's probably had sex before, and she might even have loved her previous partners, but with the hero, something's different. It's the magic ingredient. The special spice. Without it, the relationship is bland. With it, it has a zing that lifts it above the ordinary.

This connection is key not just when writing the erotic romance heroine, but when writing any heroine. Whether your girl is sassy, shy, outgoing, sensible, or ditzy, it's the connection with the hero that's the most important thing—it's just that in erotic romance, that connection is expressed in the bedroom. Our heroines can have weaknesses, but they can't be weak, nor can they be TSTL—Too Stupid to Live. Even if you're writing historical romance, when women generally accepted they were subjugated by men, you have to remember that you are writing for the modern reader.

Even if you have a powerful alpha hero, your heroine cannot be simpering, and faint just because he deigns to glance at her.

The heroine should be the hero's equal in every way possible. But even in *Fifty Shades*, where Ana is supposed to be a submissive, she fights Christian every step of the way. Your heroine must have an inner strength (why do you think her surname is Steele?) and she must stand up to her hero at all times. It's just that, in the end, she cannot fight that undefinable attraction between them.

Your heroine can be stubborn, argumentative, impulsive, and hot-tempered. But she must also be brave, hard-working, compassionate, and loving. Don't tell me this, though—show her refusing to back down from an argument with the hero, then rushing to help him look after his sick dog. In an erotic romance, she can be a virgin or have had many partners, but she has to be unequivocally drawn to the hero. She gives in to the attraction between them not because he's so powerful that she has no say in the matter, but because he arouses in her a desire that she cannot ignore.

*... but for me, a hero  
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USA Today bestselling author Serenity Woods is a sexy romance writer. Or, rather, a writer of sexy romance. You can find out more about Serenity by visiting <http://www.serenitywoods.com/>

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*Heart to Heart* will be published in the first week of each month except January. The deadline for every issue is the 20th of the month prior (e.g. 20th August for September issue). Please have all articles, news, reports, and advertising to Gracie at [heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz) on or before the deadline.

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*“There are no secrets to success. It is a result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”*

~ Colin Powell



# Writing The Women's Fiction Heroine

Catherine Robertson



**Women's Fiction is a broad category, if you'll pardon the pun. At one end of its spectrum it has Chick Lit and at the other novels such as *The Natural Way of Things* by Charlotte Wood, "a savagely, unapologetically feminist book" that won the Stella prize, awarded to Australian women authors.**

Books in Women's Fiction can vary dramatically in tone and style. The unifying factor is that the authors are women, the main characters predominantly women, and the intended readers mostly women, too.

When I'm in a bad mood, I find the term demeaning, as if women need a 'special' kind of fiction because they can't handle the stuff meant for men. On sunny-side-up days, I think it's excellent that women are writing mainly for women, and about issues that are important to women. (Romance has always had this going for it, of course.)

I review contemporary fiction for the NZ Listener, and most of it is women's fiction. In fact, I have fourteen new books on my shelf for consideration right now, and only one is by a bloke. Men don't tend to write about the struggles around families, making a living or relationships. They write thrillers and sci-fi, and non-fiction books about *Glorious South Island Steam Power* (pub 2017). There are exceptions—Nick Hornby, Tony Parsons, David Nicholls—but they are a dude-author minority.

In reading Women's Fiction, I have to admit I've formed a preference for certain types of heroines. I've become acutely aware that many main female characters can be summed up as 'bad', 'sad' or 'mad'. A 'bad' heroine would be Amy in *Gone Girl*, a manipulative psychopath. 'Sad' is alcoholic, amnesiac Rachel in *The Girl on the Train*, and 'mad' could be Lisbeth Salander, in the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* series. While Lisbeth has powerful intellectual and physical abilities, she is still painted as both crazy and permanently furious—a double dose of 'mad'.

None of those books technically counts as women's fiction, but you get the idea—it's uncommon for female characters to be fundamentally okay; there has to be something wrong with them. A woman can't be in charge

without with being 'bad', can't be fierce without being 'mad', and can't be either of those if they're 'sad'; they have to be a victim. I don't think this does anyone any favours.

I have written two 'sad' heroines who were dealing with the trauma of grief. But they were not victims at the mercy of the actions and will of other characters. They were making their own decisions about how to live their lives. Not always good decisions, to be fair, but definitely their own.

And this is what I prefer in a heroine—one who has agency, who has influence over what's happening to her in the story.

These women don't have to be fiercely strong-willed. I've written those types of characters, too, and received flak for them, which raises the whole other issue of whether female characters should be 'likeable'. Personally, I do like women, in fiction and real life, who know their own minds and speak them. I enjoy women with no filters and no shame. In Marian Keyes' last book, *The Mystery of Mercy Close*, she gave the funniest Walsh sister, Helen, depression, as if the character couldn't be allowed to be her previously unfiltered, bold self. Keyes dulled Helen's brilliant edge by making her 'sad'—and, Marian, I'm not sure I can forgive you.

But I also enjoy reading about gentle women who are a little unsure. Finding inner strength and the confidence to stand up to others is a great character development, and one many women struggle with in real life. I just don't want these tentative heroines to be victims, passively at the mercy of others—unless the story is about them learning not to be.

*And this is what I prefer in a heroine—one who has agency, who has influence over what's happening to her in the story.*

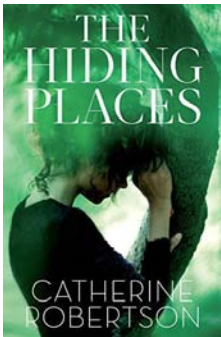
I could launch into a crabby feminist rant about the fact we are surrounded by shitty stereotypes and unrealistic expectations—writ large via the media and in smaller everyday

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ways. We can't wave a wand and instantly eradicate those problems (and yes, I have more than once borrowed a book of spells from the library). But we can look carefully at the female characters we create—in every genre—and ask whether they do women justice. Are they real or are they Kim Kardashian? Are they neither super-perfect nor super-flawed? Do they have agency? Would they make women readers feel worse about themselves, or would they reassure, amuse and even inspire?

I think it's a step too far to say writers have a moral obligation to set examples with their writing—terrible, no-good, very-bad characters can make terrific reading. But if we're writing predominantly for women, then why not write the kind of characters that would make us feel better if we read them? Heroines that readers want to cheer on. Who make them say out loud, "You go girl!"



Catherine Robertson is a number one New Zealand best-selling author. She lives beside the sea in Wellington, New Zealand, with her husband, the one son still at home, two rescue dogs and a Burmese cat. You can find out more about Catherine at <http://www.catherinerobertson.net/>

*"Dialogue is not just quotation. It is grimaces, pauses, adjustments of blouse buttons, doodles on a napkin, and crossings of legs."*

*~Jerome Stern, Making Shapely Fiction, 1991*

“ ”

## From The Editor



One of the many things that we as writers do, is sit. It's expected of us. We even have a little slogan: Keep-Your-Butt-In-Your-Chair. Which sounds very cool and nifty ... until one day you notice the calendar on your screen says 2017 not 2014 as it did last time

you looked up, and when you try to get to your feet, you can't. That's when you discover you're no longer a sylph-like size 8. You're a size 32 wedged into a size 12 office chair—and if you don't figure out pretty-damn-quick how to shoehorn your backside out from between the arms of the seat you're going to lose what remains of your circulatory system.

It's not pretty, people. And most of you know that—having lost more than one-hundred kilos already—I'm not saying anything here that I haven't experienced in real life ... and have no intention (please God) of ever experiencing again.

I'd already made a commitment to either lose a few pounds or maintain my current numbers during the writing of my next novel—because I remember someone saying four kilos is the average weight-gain a writer experiences through the life-cycle of one book. I'd already knocked sugar out of my diet (several times ... does the chocolate cake at lunch today count?), and gluten (see previous question), and added a thirty-minute exercise program to my morning routine and kept it going for the best part of a year.

But I was still sitting. All. Freaking. Day. Health-wise, I felt like I was going down-hill—and let me tell you, when you're on the shady side of fifty it's a whale of a lot easier to go down-hill than up.

So, just before Easter, I bit the bullet and bought a standing desk.

I'd already tried the concept using a stack of teetering cardboard boxes together with a Harry-Potter-like *Wingardium Leviosa* incantation, and thought it might work if I could learn to type standing up. Interestingly, the typing part is now a lot easier when I'm standing than it is when I'm sitting down. No idea why. But let me tell you that having the ability to raise and lower the desk so I have the choice of how I work at the click of a button is just brilliant.

Yes, it was expensive and I had to make some sacrifices to do it. (In fact, if I'd ever had a first-born—and if she was still a virgin—she'd probably be really upset with me right now.) But I'm sleeping better. My bathroom scale is once more showing a downward trend. My neck no

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no longer aches after a day's writing. I'm a lot less grouchy—okay, okay, I'm a bit—oh, all *right* ... last Tuesday I didn't snap or snarl for an entire two minutes and twenty-one seconds after I'd done three eighteen-hour days in a row. My husband, bless him, says he thinks it's worth every cent! :-)

If any of this resonates—and I know that a few of you are struggling to find that work/health balance—you could do worse than look at <http://www.varidesk.com/>.\*\*\* I got the VARIDESK ProPlus 48 inch because with my editing and other stuff I work across two—sometimes three—monitors at a time. But there are plenty of choices and a wide price range.

And there you have it. There's nothing wrong with Butt-in-Chair. But if your Butt-In-Chair is in danger of becoming a Bacon-Buttie, there are alternatives. This is just one of them.

Do you have a special way of dealing with writing-related health-issues? I'd love to know. Email me at:

[heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.com](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.com)

*Gracie*

\*\*\*No, I'm *not* receiving a commission on referrals! I did, however, do some research on what was available because my husband's work was investigating the issue as part of Health and Safety.

*“A successful writer is one who can take the bullshit internet trolls and one-star reviewers throw at her, turn it into compost and, out of it, cultivate a garden of dreams.”*

*~ Gracie O'Neil*



*“Be fearless in pursuit of what sets your soul on fire.”*

*~ Unknown*

## Woos & Hoos

Vonnie Hughes' **DANGEROUS HOMECOMING** Regency Historical, previously released as **COMING HOME** by Robt Hale Ltd, now in paperback and e-book.

<https://www.amazon.com/Dangerous-Homecoming-Vonnie-Hughes/dp/1520921373/>

Jude Knight's: anthology in which she had two titles, **HOLLY** and **HOPEFUL HEARTS**, is up in the reader voting round for the RONE awards (having already passed round one with a 4.5 star review in In'DScribe Magazine.

Jude is also publishing her historical romance, **A RAGING MADNESS** on 9 May.

Bronwyn Evans has just signed a contract for a Scottish novella for a Christmas five author anthology that she was invited to be a part of with St Martin's Press.

# Casket Or Coffin?

## Falling Down The Rabbit Hole Of Research

Lizzi Tremayne



**Not to be getting morbid on you this early in the piece, but really, details are important. Getting the detail right makes a difference to the discerning reader.**

Whether it's fiction or non-fiction, a writer may have to leave the main stream and travel down smaller and smaller rivulets until the detail becomes clear—and correct, to the best of their understanding.

I've known this for quite some time, but was reminded the other day when writing a scene for one of my 1863 historical fictions. In the interest of avoiding word repetition—by using varied words to say the same thing—I used the word coffin in one line, and casket in the next ... and then, as I often do, began to wonder whether substituting one for the other was appropriate, for now, and as well as 1863.

As my best friend, a techie, tells me whenever I ask him a question, "Google is your friend."

So I went online, once again.

As any writer of historical works will tell you, do your research before you begin. I do, I do. But 'when in the course of human events, it become necessary' to figure out the plausibility of, for example, substituting 'casket' for 'coffin', one must hit the proverbial books again.

In this case, it turned out that mere word substitution was definitely not okay.

The name selected for the burial container of your historical heroine's uncle implies vastly different things, with respect to the period in which he lived, his cultural affiliations, and his social status as well.

The number of sides? Coffins have six or eight, while caskets, in North America, at least, have four, and are designed to look like a bed—apparently, to ease the mourning process—sheltering those left behind by making the deceased seem less dead than they are. (Really? No amount of makeup could have made my grandfather look alive, to my eight-year-old eyes.)

Are they shaped like the deceased, as in the anthropoid shape of a coffin, wide at the shoulders and narrow

towards the feet, or rectangular like a casket? How many layers? And the composition of those layers? While common in England a few centuries ago, a tri-layered coffin—with the middle layer of lead—would have been difficult to manufacture for burial of one's loved husband while crossing the Sierras in a covered wagon. There certainly wasn't the space to carry a spare.

So you see why it takes a writer so long to finish even a simple paragraph?

Likewise, some readers are pretty particular about their hobby. Take, for instance, horsey people. Don't get me wrong, I've been riding since I was seven, and luckily, made a career out of my love for horses. I'm not a snob in general, but when I pick up a book that has a horse in it, and its characters do something a horse person would consider just plain stupid, I tend to drop the book.

For example, no true horse person does something like whip their reins around a hitching rail. The horse would rip its mouth to shreds if it panics and pulls back. Nor would they wrap the reins or lead rope around their hand. It's a great way to lose fingers. Nor would they drive a pair or team from the wrong side of a carriage, because the reins are buckled together at different lengths, specifically for the side on which the driver traditionally sits. If I read anything like these examples I don't want to read any more.

Some may call it snobbery, but it's really more that the author has just lost credibility in the reader's eyes. If they couldn't bother to research enough to get that simple detail right, what else could be a lie in the story? So, research, research, research—and then run it past a person who practices that hobby. An author won't always get it right, but they earn points with me for doing their best.

Detail, detail, and more detail.

During The Great Flood of Sacramento, having your fictional steamboat pilot tying his boat up to the dock would have local history buffs jumping up and down in hysterics, because the pier was beneath three stories of water.

The piles for said docks were just not that long. There was an awful lot of water filling up Sacramento, not to mention the whole Central Valley of California. In fact,

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there was so much water that Leland Stanford had to go to his inauguration in downtown Sacramento in a rowboat. I can suppose his wife would not have been amused. Imagine the difficulty that would have posed for management of her crinoline, and keeping her ankles covered.

HOWEVER, and this is a big one ... one cannot research and research and then put it all into the story.

No, you say? Whatever can you mean? I've discovered all this information, and I want to tell the world, now that I'm an 'expert' on the topic! It won't fly. It just won't.

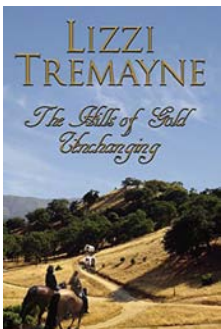
If a reader wanted a history book, they would seek out a history book. If one is writing historical fiction, the historical detail must be used with delicacy. Subtlety. It is far too easy to launch into historical exposition, and bury the story in pet research. I know. I did it. And I must constantly prevent myself from doing it again.

Other authors ask why I released a 3rd edition of *A Long Trail Rolling*. "Move forward," they said. "It's your first novel, get on with the next book!"

I couldn't. This may have been my first book, but it was also the launching pad for my first series. The suboptimal reviews I've received (from the first edition) have complained of historical exposition, or history book-type rants about what I loved from my research. As Stephen King says, "Kill your darlings". To those of you who offered these comments, thank you—it's helped my writing evolve.

Writing historicals can be an exercise in trying to get out of the research and into putting words down on the page—for me, anyway—but maybe I'm just easily distracted. It's also my excuse to keep delving deeper into the period in which I'm engaged. I love it, but it's a bit of an addiction, this research. I can't seem to get enough, and it will probably remain a compulsion, best kept under control.

Maybe we can start a new club. RA—Researchers Anonymous.



*When Lizzi's not writing, she's swinging a rapier or shooting a bow in medieval garb, riding, driving a carriage or playing on her hobby farm, singing, or working as an equine veterinarian or science teacher. You can find out more about her work (and play!) at <http://www.lizzitremayne.com/>*

## The Welcome Mat

We're rolling out the red carpet this month for another lovely group of new and returning members. Welcome, ladies. It's great to have you as part of RWNZ!

Shirley-Anne Ayers - Katikati

Annette Featherstone - Auckland

Emily Gee - Nelson

Kerry McLeod - Auckland

Ann Neville - Hamilton

Helen Pickering - Wellington

Lyssa Randolph - Christchurch

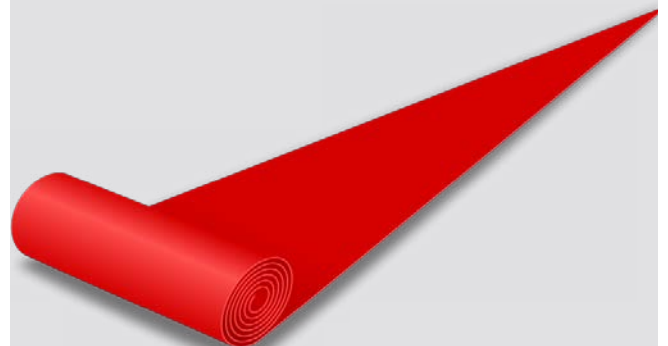
Ann Russell - Auckland

Olivia Spooner - Auckland

Don't forget to read the INFORMATION FOR NEW MEMBERS page on our website:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/information-new-members/>

You'll need to login as a member first before you can access the page, but you'll find information there about how to join up with our Members Only Facebook page and the NZRomance Yahoo loop—along with a whole lot of other fun stuff.



# What Is Structure?

Daphne Clair de Jong



**A story needs a beginning, a middle and an end. Or setup, complication, resolution. Writers can play with that structure using flashbacks, thoughts, dialogue, and exposition. But stories are told in scenes. Every scene advances the**

**plot, the central thread of the story.**

Part of writing well is knowing what to not write; like long paragraphs of description or exposition. Or introspection that doesn't lead to insight or action.

The story starts at a point of change. The background should be drawn in swiftly, introducing at least one main character, and promising that something significant is happening or soon will be.

Set the character(s) in the scene; evoke the mood with a few details—either intensifying or contrasting with the characters' current feelings—and keep the focus on their relationship, using dialogue and action.

Dialogue helps to define the character and must lead to change, external or internal. Preferably both. Action isn't necessarily wildly dramatic. A lifted brow, a blink, are actions.

Every scene needs to reference the main story. If the hero and heroine are not together, nor thinking about each other, what they do or say will inform or impact on the reader to further or deepen their understanding of the character and the relationship.

Even in longer crossover books the romance thread isn't a separate strand, but is integral to the whole story.

Exposition gives necessary details like where people are and when. Often a mere double-space gap is all that's needed to shift the location or viewpoint. Or start the next paragraph with "Later, back on the ranch" or similar.

Exposition disguised as dialogue is to be avoided if possible. Beware the "best friend" and the "fairy godmother". The protagonists need to resolve their own problem, being strong, independent characters and making ultimately sensible decisions.

In scenes, important things *happen*. Think dialogue, action, revelation. Each scene moves the storyline, changes the relationship, perhaps subtly, or drastically, and affects a character's (and/or the reader's), understanding of the story. A scene might do all of those and more. If it does none of them it doesn't belong. Aim for at least two.

That goes for love scenes as much as any other scene. Early in the story they complicate the plot, later they may trigger a revelation.

Flashbacks are usually best used when the reader is fully into the story and really wants to know what happened before. Mini-flashbacks of a sentence or two can be part of a present scene, in a character's mind or perhaps in a scrap of dialogue.

If the character indulges in introspection, it leads to revelation, and possibly decision. Otherwise it just stops the story.

Plot consists of *change*, forwarding or checking the characters' journey to the satisfying end. A series of misunderstandings is not a plot.

A plot needs some real, believable obstacle other than mistaken first impressions. Give characters real problems to resolve, and difficult choices to make. Then write the scenes that will overcome the insoluble problem—believably!



Daphne Clair has written over seventy-five romance novels for Harlequin lines. As Daphne de Jong she has published many short stories and a historical novel, both critically acclaimed in her homeland. She has won the prestigious Katherine Mansfield Short Story Award, has been a Rita finalist and has either finished or won in other contests in several writing fields. To learn more about Daphne visit <http://www.harlequin.com/author.html?authorid=920>





## More Exciting #Love — Writing Romance in the Digital Age News

First, we now have a second agent coming to Rotorua—ELAINE SPENCER from THE KNIGHT AGENCY <http://knightagency.net/> If you have already booked for conference and would like to pitch to Elaine please email me at [president@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:president@romancewriters.co.nz)

Second, we have a change to the workshop programme. Jennifer Kloester, author of *Georgette Heyer's Regency World*, will be taking a workshop slot on Sunday during session one. As a Regency writer I'm very excited. Find out more about Jennifer at <http://jenniferkloester.com/my-bio/> If you would now like to change your Sunday session one workshop option email me through this link [president@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:president@romancewriters.co.nz).

Third, we have confirmed that Lilia Kanna, Head of International and Series Publishing (which means she manages the Mills & Boon imprint as well as Mira and Teen titles published in Australia and New Zealand) will be the Harlequin editor from Australia to complement Allison Carroll, the global editor from Harlequin. We can't wait to meet Lilia and Allison and hear what they have to say.

If you haven't booked for conference yet, you have until **31 May** to take advantage of the early bird prices.

And don't forget, the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust offers a scholarship to the Romance Writers of NZ annual conference, and applications for that close **22 May**. You can apply for the scholarship here: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/events/sandra-hyde-romance-writers-memorial-scholarship/>

This is looking like a great conference for 2017, and I thank the conference team for all their work.

Still trying to decide? You can see the full programme here: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/events/full-programme/>

## Update

When the Executive made the hard decision pre-Christmas to shift Conference out of Wellington, we received support, but also quite a lot of flak. We were told the decision was "reckless" and a lot of fuss about nothing because no one could predict earthquakes.

The elevated risk of earthquake was part of our decision, but our main reason was that we felt the Amora could not guarantee it would be available as a venue, which put Conference and RWNZ member finances at risk.

On the 28th April there was an article in the DomPost. We present it, not to say 'told you so', but to reinforce that when it comes to protecting our—your—finances, and Conference, any Executive needs to do solid due diligence, and take risk management incredibly seriously. I was glad we did so at the time, and am even more grateful now.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/91978931/wellingtons-amora-hotel-closes-doors-for-facelift>

Looking forward to a fantastic Conference in Rotorua.

*"Successful women become successful by doing what they didn't want to do, when they didn't want to do it."*

~ Unknown

## From The President

Dear members,

I said that I would be open about what is happening in your organization, so this month I'm sharing my journey in ascertaining our tax liability situation.

It's amazing what you can do when you read the manual! I read the IRD Guide for (IR9gu) Clubs or Societies, of which RWNZ is one. This is what it says about our tax liability.

Who has to file a return?

All New Zealand clubs and societies must file a tax return each year unless they derive only exempt income.

If your organisation has a certificate of exemption from RWT (resident withholding tax) on interest and dividends, this doesn't mean your income is exempt income.

A club or society's taxable income is based on its net profit or loss from revenue sources only, including:

- interest, dividends, and rents
- taxable Māori authority distributions
- sponsorship and admission fees
- advertising revenue from club journals, magazines or other printed material

Any membership subscriptions or levies are not income for tax purposes. Certain transactions the club or society does with its members may be liable for income tax. This includes the purchase of trading stock and the supply of services. Deduct any costs incurred in earning income from taxable sources when you calculate the club or societies taxable income.


Tax Return Workings	31-Mar-13	31-Mar-14	31-Mar-15	31-Mar-16
Membership Subscription Income	16,149	14,364	10,308	13,492
RWNZ Expenses related to subscription income	- 2,480	- 904	- 1,503	- 2,471
Accountancy Fee	168	216	263	479
Bank fees	200	66	-	-
Computer expenses	315	141	114	-
Courier freight	20	168	-	168
Executive Officer Expense	-	-	-	333
General	1,295	137	609	746
Newsletter Envelopes* finished mail newsletter in 2013	61	-	-	-
Newsletter photocopying	264	-	-	-
PO Box Rental	135	135	161	296
Website hosting	21	41	30	72
Website maintenance	-	-	326	379
<b>Net Profit/(Loss) From Membership Subscriptions</b>	<b>13,669</b>	<b>13,460</b>	<b>8,805</b>	<b>11,021</b>
<b>Net Profit/(Loss) Annual Accounts</b>	<b>7,730</b>	<b>17,545</b>	<b>13,053</b>	<b>(2,265)</b>
less non-taxable Net Subscription Income	- 13,669	- 13,460	- 8,805	- 11,021
<b>Total Net Profit/(Loss)</b>	<b>(5,939)</b>	<b>4,085</b>	<b>4,248</b>	<b>(13,286)</b>
Clubs and Societies tax credit	0	0	0	0
<b>Our taxable Net Profit/(Loss)</b>	<b>(5,939)</b>	<b>4,085</b>	<b>4,248</b>	<b>(13,286)</b>
Less loss b/f	0	(5,939)	(1,854)	0
<b>Total taxable Net Profit/(Loss)</b>	<b>(5,939)</b>	<b>(1,854)</b>	<b>2,394</b>	<b>(13,286)</b>
<b>Tax owing at 28%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>670.21</b>	<b>-</b>

Our membership subscriptions are not taxable. However, our Conference falls under supply of services as do our courses and contests. So I set about calculating our exposure back to 2012 (see chart in previous column, below left).

The IRD have accepted my calculations—which I got an accountant to check—and the amount was \$670.21. I think, after penalties and interest, our total tax bill was around \$800.

Tania has already done our accounts for this year and our tax return. We will distribute these to all members in May together with a report. Due to the loss in 2016 we have no tax liability for the year ended 31 March 2017.

If you have any questions about our tax status, please feel free to contact me.



Bronwen Evans  
RWNZ President



*“When you are describing,  
A shape, or sound, or tint;  
Don't state the matter plainly,  
But put it in a hint;  
And learn to look at all things,  
With a sort of mental squint.”*

~ Lewis Carroll



# Writing The Medical Heroine

Sue Mackay



**The medical heroine is no different to any other in that she has to be tough without being a prize cow, soft without being a wimp. She has to have empathy without going over the top and making the reader want to puke, and she can**

**be funny, serious, sexy, shy, whatever—as long as she is real.**

She will have issues from her past that are often confronted by her medical work. This is a great tool for bringing out backstory without dumping on the reader. A midwife whose baby died during birth will struggle to deal with the same thing happening to one of her patients and give the hero—and readers—great insight into the woman behind the nurse. An emergency specialist who couldn't save her lover from dying of cardiac arrest is never going to let another patient die of the same medical event if she can help it.

Often medical heroines hide behind their work persona, not admitting they've become this medical carer because of that deep need to help, care for, rescue, anyone and everyone. They can be abrupt with their colleagues in order to keep everyone at arms-length because they feel vulnerable having others know what they perceive to be weakness.

Most medical personnel have followed their career path because they want to help others by using their knowledge, their empathy, their need to fix people. Some do it only for the science and prefer to work with microscopes than patients, but we don't write about them in our romance stories—unless, yep, here's a story idea. Unless we can turn our pathologist heroine's life around by making her fall so deeply in love she doesn't recognise herself. She'd hate losing control, and scientists love control of facts, numbers, chemicals, etc.

Not picking on pathologists here. I've worked with too many for that!

Our heroine might believe her caring approach to patients is because she's a nurse, when in fact she became a nurse because caring for people is essential to her make up. She could be hiding behind that fact, not wanting people, especially the hero, to see her weaknesses,

her need for love and family. She might've become a doctor because she couldn't save someone close to her when she was a child and is now dedicated to saving everyone she possibly can. She might be a paramedic on the ambulance or Life Flight because someone in that position saved her father or sister or whoever. There are as many reasons as there are heroines, and as long as you have a genuine, gut tugging, heart felt reason your readers will root for her all the way.

The major difference with these heroines and others is the medical element, the day to day confrontations with injuries, illnesses, births, deaths; and the people they involve. Our heroine faces harrowing medical situations, often daily, but she is not only a nurse or doctor or whatever. She is also a woman with needs and wants, a heart and soul. While medical stories contain some intense situations these are primarily there to show the heroine and hero working together, and their reactions to the crises and to each other in that situation. These scenes lead into what might be going on in their relationship. They do not follow up with what's happening to the patient's life, other than medical stuff in the following chapters if absolutely necessary to the story.

Our heroine has to have a way of dumping that tension brought on by an incident with a patient and that's where we can make her have some fun—with the hero. He can deflate the tension, or change the direction on himself and their relationship. Or he can up the ante and have her in a right old pickle about life and love.

The reader needs to see who's behind the scrubs or uniform or suit even when the patients don't. Our girl's going to knock off work and go home to her toddler, or her cold, dark flat she can barely afford because she's supporting her mother in a retirement home. Or she's not going to knock off because there's nothing to go home for.

Our heroines are human and they make mistakes, but in these stories not medical errors. Never, ever. They have to be at the top of their game all the time. Their mistakes come outside of their careers. Instead their decisions about men, the hero in particular, relationships, commitment, even the length of their sexy red dress are acceptable—as long as the mistakes make sense and don't show our girl as a ditz. While even a ditz is entitled to romance she's less likely to be found in a medical setting. Now there's a challenge for someone.

*continued on page 12*

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Seriously? Write YOUR heroine, the one who speaks to you, who makes you want to sit at your computer for hours telling her story. If she's a nurse she will show that no matter what you try to tell her to do. If she's a paramedic she's going to be reacting to anyone's suffering even when not on the job. It's the whole person you're writing about, not just the doctor or midwife.

Sit down and write her.



*Sue Mackay writes emotional medical stories for the Mills & Boon Medical line, and has twenty-three titles out. She also loves kayaking and cycling, cooking up a storm and sharing her creations with friends over a bottle—or two—of wine.*

## The Bookshelf



**Become a Fearless Writer: How to Stop Procrastinating, Break Free of Self-Doubt, and Build a Profitable Career**  
Nina Harrington

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B071R9X1JG>

Five Star Amazon Review by Lorna Faith

[...]Nina Harrington a scientist turned bestselling romance author, shares how writers can find their true North and understand their why which will motivate them to persist in their writing dream. Nina, goes through the MAGIC system, which she personally tested on herself as she moved from procrastination and fear to being a writer who is super productive.

This step-by-step guide will be a resource that will help many struggling writers who feel stuck in their own fear, worries and ultimately procrastination.

I definitely recommend this book to all writers who want to get rid of what holds them back so they can achieve their writing dreams :)



**The One Hour Guide to Better Antagonists**  
Mary. L. Mercer

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MFCW5UZ>

From love interests in romances to “friendly” foes to evil villains, this book shows you how to successfully avoid moustache-twirling clichés and create multidimensional antagonists who are the bedrock of the stories they live and breathe in.



**Write Naked: A Bestseller's Secrets to Writing Romance & Navigating the Path to Success**  
Jennifer Probst

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01N16FESI>

Five Star Amazon Review by Carolyn T. Bateson

A book that tells it like it is and is the all the better for it. Honest to a fault, Ms. Probst opens herself up as well and nakedly discusses her career highs, her lows, and addresses the doubts and fears that plague authors no matter what stage of their careers. A great motivational book that tells it like it is. Definitely a must for any type of author.



**You Are Boring, But You Are Uniquely Boring: 25 Models for Writing Your Memoir**  
Louise Plummer and Ann Cannon

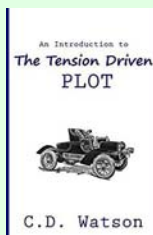
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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B06XQ7TPM1>

Editor says: Okay, I'll be honest. I bought this book initially because I loved the title. The major reason I don't blog is because I'm a boring person with not much exciting happening around me. And then I read it because, hey, not going to waste US\$3.48. And then I discovered that I loved the book itself, the refreshing way it's written, the ideas and memories it sparked in me, and the burgeoning realization that my unique brand of boring might just be the key to finding my ideal readers. I'm still working through it, laughing and saying "Yes!" as I go. Fabulous fun and humour.



**An Introduction to the Tension Driven Plot**  
C. D. Watson

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B071YC3VCB>

Editor says: A brief, no-nonsense guide to building tension and keeping readers hooked. I loved her SCARED acronym and—even though I've been writing a while now—I found her list of Tension Breakers (don't do them!) helpful. You can't go wrong for US\$1.15. Ideal if you're just starting out writing, whether you're a plotter or not.



**The Story Structure Secret: Actions and Goals**  
Marshall Dotson

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MRL10N3/>

Successful storytellers understand the importance of structure. Actions and Goals gives you beat by beat examples of this structural secret at work in over a dozen critically acclaimed novels and films. From The Hunger Games to The Empire Strikes Back, from Titanic to Iron Man, you will learn the simple, effective narrative structure at the heart of them all.

## The Koru Award Is Now Open

The Koru Award is now open for entries.

The Koru Award is a reader's choice award, and is intended to recognise excellence in published romance writing. It is open to all published authors, not only to members of the Romance Writers of New Zealand.

**Opening date:** 01 May 2017. Entries via website only

**Closing date:** Midnight New Zealand time, 31 May, 2017

**Entry Specifications:** All entries must have been published for the first time in the previous year. For example, if the Award is being judged in 2017, the entry must have:

- An original copyright date of 2016, or
- "First NZ or Australian Printing or e-Publishing" date of 2016 as evidenced by the copyright page.
- An electronic book that has been e-published or independently published will be accepted as an entry if it is submitted in perfect bound or spiral bound, galley-printed book form with an ISBN (no 3-ring binders)

**Entry Fee:**

\$40 for RWNZ Members (you must login before entering to receive this price)  
\$55 for Non-Members

**Number of Entries:** Two entries only with each book's copyright date of 2016

**Judging:** The contest is 100% reader judged. The judges are all romance readers who are NOT authors. Each book is read by three different readers and scored according to the scoresheet.

**Prizes:** The winner of the coveted 2017 Koru Award wins a lovely trophy, and the winner and finalists are presented with certificates at the annual conference awards dinner. Finalists and winner may request badges which may be placed on their website.

**Checklist:**

- 4 autographed (if possible) copies of printed book with copyright of 2016
- Please ensure your books are mailed before 31 May 2017

To enter, visit the website: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/shop/contests/koru-published-book/>

# Find Instalove With Instafreebie

Tracey Alvarez



**You may've heard the name 'Instafreebie' tossed around in writer circles and not known exactly what the fuss about. As a converted Instafreebie fan, I'll give you a brief guide.**

Instafreebie, or [www.instafreebie.com](http://www.instafreebie.com) is a website that takes the stress out of delivering free e-books to your readers. Whether you want to distribute ten copies of your latest release to bloggers, or make thirty copies of an ARC available to your review team, or build up your newsletter subscribers, or explode your list with an promotion, Instafreebie is a useful tool to have in your indie author toolbox.

## How it works—in a nutshell

You (the author) sign up to the site for free (more about the advantages of the paid upgrades later) and upload the cover and epub file of the book you wish to distribute.

You set up a giveaway with that book, specifying how many copies you want to give away, or stipulating a time limit.

You choose which formats your book will be available in (Instafreebie will turn your epub into a pdf and mobi if you wish) and you'll get a personalized link which you can distribute however you please. The reader who acquires this link will choose what format they want, add their name and e-mail address to the form, and Instafreebie will send them the file with easy to understand instructions.

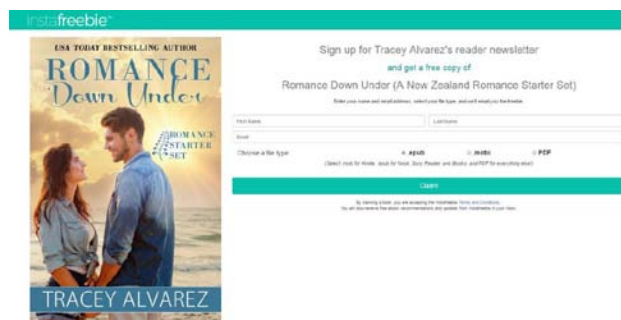
Want to try it for yourself? Grab a free copy of my starter series Romance Down Under: <https://www.instafreebie.com/free/ZGTem> Please note that this giveaway is set up so you'll be added to my newsletter list. If you don't want to be on it, you can unsubscribe at any time. Or you may want to check out my series of welcome e-mails which seem to work well with subscribers.

## Choosing what type of account is right for you

There are three types of accounts on Instafreebie.

1. The free version, which is great for ARC distribution, reader rewards and prizes, and for bloggers etc.
2. Then there is the most expensive upgrade (Pro plan) which is currently US\$50 per month.

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*Tracey Alvarez's Instafreebie with newsletter sign-up.*

3. Then there is the one I'm using (Plus plan) which is currently \$20 per month.

I think the Plus plan is the one most authors would stick to unless they have multiple pen names. The biggest advantage of the Plus plan is integration with your Mailchimp newsletter list, or if you use another newsletter provider, the ability to export a XLS or CSV file.

You can start with a free account and then, if you're keen to try blowing up your newsletter list, you can take advantage of Instafreebie's 1 month free trial of the Plus Plan to try out an Instafreebie group promotion.

## Blowing up your newsletter list

In order to use Instafreebie to blow up your newsletter list, upgrade to a Plus plan or start your free trial. Also, to gain those subscribers, you'll need to have two books available, and at absolute minimum, one. For obvious reasons—you're going to attract readers to sign up to your newsletter in exchange for them receiving a FREE book. Better for you if you've got two books available, because after reading your free one, they'll hopefully go onto buy book two. If you have more than two books, you'll have more room to play, or strategize.

If you have a Mailchimp account, follow the steps on this page <http://support.instafreebie.com/article/173-multiple-mailchimp-lists> to integrate it with Instafreebie. My advice—if you've already got a subscriber list where people sign up via your website/front-and-backmatter in your e-books—is that you set up a new list on Mailchimp solely for your Instafreebie subscribers.

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### Trap for young players:

You won't be able to use a book that is currently enrolled in Amazon's Select program, as this goes against Amazon's terms and conditions.

### Group promotions:

There are many promotions where you can enter your free book and multiply the effect of gathering subscribers. The Instafreebie site itself has a forum section where authors are always organizing promotions that you can sign up to. Or, if you have a website and some technical skills, you can organize one yourself.

The basic requirement for most promotions is that you share the group promotion on social media and to your current subscriber base. Many organizers have teamed up with Instafreebie themselves who will include the promotion in their weekly newsletter—and that's when the magic happens.

For example, the last Instafreebie promotion I ran over Valentine's Day saw many of my participating authors increase their newsletter size by hundreds of subscribers—some even got over a thousand. I have started a Facebook group called Down Under Promos to share and organize promotions including Instafreebie ones. If you're an interested indie author in you can join here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/198947900554041/>

### Setting up a basic Instafreebie giveaway

Now you're signed up and ready to set up your first giveaway!

On your Instafreebie dashboard, click 'Add a book' and fill out the page. This includes uploading your cover and an epub file of your book. Instafreebie will e-mail you a pdf of your book so you can check it.

I strongly suggest you do. Don't do what I did once and assume it was fine, only to be contacted later by a reader who said all my formatting was screwed up

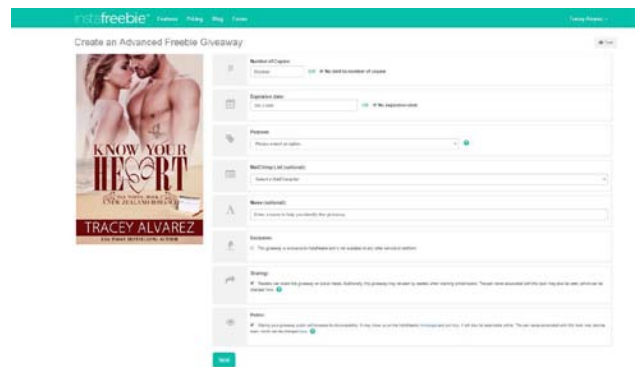
Then, on your book page (once it's done uploading) click the green 'new giveaway' button.

You can select a 'Quick Giveaway' to set up a giveaway for an ARC copy or blogger/reader prize etc.

For a newsletter promotion, you'll want to select 'Advanced Giveaway', but for this you will need an Instafreebie Plus account. As I mentioned earlier, they run a one-month free trial of this upgrade, so make sure you've got something like a group promotion lined up during this period to take advantage of it.

Next: You'll be taken to a screen with a whole bunch of stuff to fill out. Here's what you do on page 1:

- **Number of copies:** Tick 'No limit to number of copies' for a newsletter promotion.



### How To Set Up A Basic Instafreebie giveaway

- **Expiration date:** Up to you—you can tick 'No expiration date' or pick a date to have it end.
- **Purpose:** Dropdown choices, I usually pick fan/audience reward
- **Mailchimp List:** Once you've integrated Instafreebie with Mailchimp you can select which of your lists to use.
- **Name (optional):** If you have more than one Instafreebie giveaway running it's helpful to give them different names so you can see which is the more popular with readers.
- **Exclusive:** Tick if the book isn't available on any other retailer sites. Instafreebie defines 'exclusive' as: The book is only available on Instafreebie, and is not available through any other store fronts like Amazon, Barnes & Noble etc.
- **Sharing:** You want to tick this if you are running a newsletter drive, but not if you're using Instafreebie to distribute an ARC etc or a reader prize.
- **Public:** Again, if you want subscribers, tick public. For ARCs etc that you don't want everyone having access to your book, leave unchecked.

Next: Now's the important bit if you're trying to gain subscribers. Pick the option of 'Mailing List opt-in required.'

Next: Select 'Public'—ONLY choose password protected for an ARC etc giveaway.

Next: Select the file types you wish to give away (epub, pdf, mobi)—I would tick all of them.

From your dashboard you can click on the cover of your book and edit and change options in your giveaway at any time. The link to share with readers is also on this page. So is the number of copies that have been distributed.

### Now what?

As I said earlier, I've started a Facebook group called Down Under Promos to share and organize promotions including Instafreebie ones. If you're an interested indie author in you can join here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/198947900554041/>

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Instafreebie has completely changed the way I distribute ARCs and e-books. It's a super easy interface to use, both for authors and for readers who don't seem to have too much difficulty claiming their free books—unlike other issues I've struck with less techy-readers struggling to transfer an electronic file to their e-reader. Since the beginning of 2016 I've built a newsletter of over 7500 readers *purely with Instafreebie*, and the list is a more engaged list than the one I've built via my website/e-books.

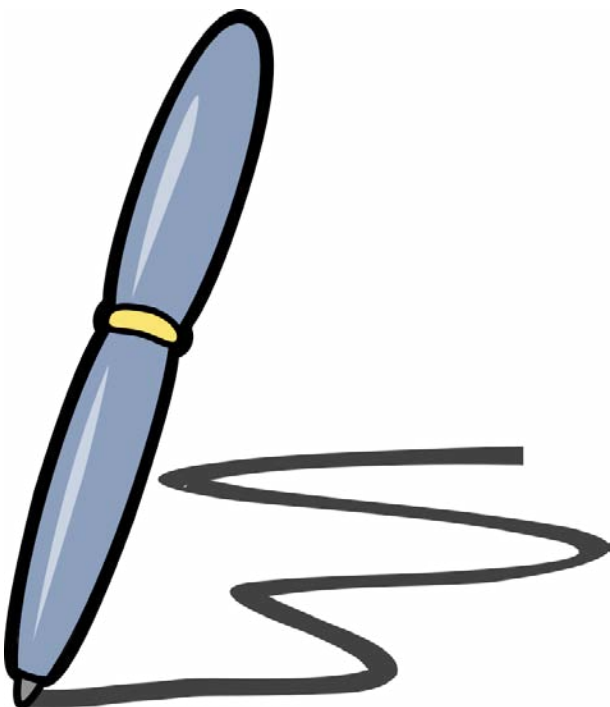
So, give Instafreebie a try. You may find you're insta-hooked.

*Fuelled by copious amounts of coffee, USA TODAY bestselling author Tracey Alvarez writes steamy but heart-warming contemporary romances set in New Zealand. Her two series, DUE SOUTH and FAR NORTH, both focus on small coastal towns, close communities, and family. You can find out more about Tracey at: <http://www.traceyalvarez.com/>*

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*“As children, some of us liked magic and fantasy, more than reality. So, we became writers.”*

*~ Dr. SunWolf*



## Changes To The Executive - New Publicity Officer



A **HUGE** thank you to Rachel Collins our publicity officer, who has had to step down from the committee. What with her high-powered job and post-graduate studies, it has not left her with the time she wants to dedicate to the publicity officer role.

I want to acknowledge the great job she has done for the executive such as working on the website functional spec, working with the website developers, organising our policies and position descriptions, and her invaluable guidance, sound reasoning, and discussions behind a lot of the executive's decisions. She will be sadly missed by the current executive, but we wish her the best of luck with her post-graduate studies.

The good news is that we have already found her replacement—Wilma McKay from Dunedin. Wilma put her hand up at nomination time for the publicity role too, and has kindly agreed to step in to fill Rachel's Jimmy Choos.

Wilma was a journalist for thirty years, most recently working for Fairfax national dailies and stuff under her pen name Wilma McCorkindale until she married David McKay in 2014. One of the highlights of her career was an interview with inspiring author, the late Bryce Courtenay. She joined RWNZ just over a year ago.

As well as millions of news stories, Wilma has published three books, two non fiction and a children's story. She's currently working on her first romance novel manuscript.

“It's quite a mission switching from non fiction to fiction writing but it's starting to fall into place now,” she says. “I've had exceptional support from RWNZ members and, with writing classes here in Dunedin, that's inspired me to sit down and write daily.” The Publicity role will be a chance to give back, she says. Since being made redundant in 2015 Wilma has run a BnB from their farm at the windswept Cape Saunders on Otago Peninsula. She also helps David run the farm as well as monitoring and caring for wildlife in a colony on their private beach.

You can reach Wilma with any helpful ideas regarding publicity by email at [publicity@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:publicity@romancewriters.co.nz)



# Regional Round-Up Reports

## Auckland

Convenor: Pamela Gervai ([pamelagervai.com](mailto:pamelagervai.com))

Twenty-eight people attended the April meeting. Frances Housden gave us an insightful talk on Suspense, Mystery, and Thrillers and how to differentiate between the genres. It was also Frances' wedding anniversary, so she surprised us with a luscious cake. Thank you, Frances.

We had four new potential members this time, and two visitors to enliven the group. Delightful to meet you all.

Our next speaker for our May 6th meeting will be intriguing. Special guest Jacinda is going to talk about the topic of Side-Saddles—their history from the past into modern day. She is going to bring side-saddles with the associated paraphernalia for us to look at.

As usual the meeting venue is the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12.30 until 3.00. Please bring a gold coin donation, change for the raffles, and a plate to share.

## Coast to Coast

Convenor: Vivienne Matthews  
([vivienнематthewswriter@gmail.com](mailto:vivienнематthewswriter@gmail.com))

Many thanks to Iola Goulton who presented two awesome workshops on 'Building Your Author Platform' and 'Using Social Media as an Author'. Both were informative and full of useful tips and tricks that both budding and experienced authors are able to utilize. Also, huge thanks to Shirley Wine for opening up her new, gorgeous home in Waihi.

Our next meeting will be at Hamurana / Rotorua at Mollie's place on the 13th May for a workshop on Plotting.

## Hawkes Bay

Convenor: Kendra Delugar  
([kendraonthemove@hotmail.com](mailto:kendraonthemove@hotmail.com))

Our April meeting took place at Kate's, where we were thrilled to welcome Andrene Low to our group. After an extended catch-up to introduce ourselves, we talked about what we'd been up to and then spoke a bit about marketing, and the market in general.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome. The May meeting will be held at Kendra's, where we'll be bringing along the first two pages of our current work in progress.

## Wellington/Kapiti Coast

Convenor: Kris Pearson ([kris.p@paradise.net.nz](mailto:kris.p@paradise.net.nz))

Our April meeting once again took place at Anna's lovely beachfront home at Paekakariki.

Ten of us enjoyed the sight and sound of the sea while we heard about Gudrun's imminent book launch, and Diana and Leeann's new books. Kris outlined how she is producing sweeter versions of some of her books for possible publication in China. Tracey spoke about sharpening up our blurbs, and how making the first book in a series free works well for her so the following books sell at full price. Jane gave us a short talk on becoming more disciplined and treating our writing like a business. She also passed around some helpful handouts.

Our next meeting will be at 1pm on Saturday May 6th at 118 The Parade, Paekakariki. Our June meeting will be somewhere else because Anna will be away.

## Nelson

Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith  
([nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz))

Saturday 8 April was another busy meeting for us, with a lot of discussion and decisions to make regarding our upcoming short story competition 'A Holiday Romance'. The poster picture was chosen and several alternatives for the final judge were discussed. Annika appealed for help with approaching sponsors for the prize baskets. She also reminded everyone about the RWNZ Chapter Short Story Competition.

Then we practiced, by judging ourselves using critique forms from another competition on one story. This turned out to be particularly good exercise for our new members, but also a good brush-up for us 'oldies'. Some had excellent suggestions for changes to certain parts of the form as well.

Over our cuppa and banana muffins we talked and laughed as usual. Next meeting is put forward to Saturday 6 May, at 2pm. By then we need to know who our judge will be.

Otago - Contact: Samantha Charlton ([samanthacharlton@hotmail.com](mailto:samanthacharlton@hotmail.com))

Christchurch - Contact: Jane Madison-Jones ([mad-diejane@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mad-diejane@xtra.co.nz))

Blenheim - Contact: Iona Jones ([ionajones@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ionajones@xtra.co.nz))