

Creating Kick-Butt Heroines: Part Two

Brynn Kelly



The best part about writing romantic suspense is creating no-holds-barred heroines. Fascinating and flawed, these larger-than-life women come with plenty of challenges, for the hero and villain—and for the author. Here is part two of my top-ten tips for writing kickass

heroines.

Give her agency and an agenda.

A common mistake in a romantic suspense is to have the villain call all the shots and the hero and heroine simply react to them. Another is for the hero to constantly sweep in and rescue the heroine. Sure, the villain's dastardly actions will probably kick off the plot and he or she might keep picking at the wound until our heroes are forced to respond. In this scenario the villain forces our heroes into ever tighter corners as the story progresses, seeking to block any attempt to fix the problem. In this scenario, it is the choices (and mistakes) our heroes make as they fight their way out, that forms the plot. It's when they start taking the initiative that readers will start cheering for them (and fearing for them). Your villain must have a strong goal and motivation but the heroine and hero's goal(s) should drive the action.

Give her a hero worthy of her.

Such a powerful and flawed heroine deserves an equally strong and real hero, who challenges, complements and respects her. It is through their diverse values and personalities that emotional and mental friction is created. No white knight heroes allowed. Force them together, keep them together, isolate them. Usually, they'll share a story goal—e.g., to save his kidnapped son. Add to this by giving them: different (even opposing) motivations, different strengths and weaknesses, hidden agendas

and secrets, and opposing ideas on how to reach the goal. Contrast their dialogue—maybe she's brusque and potty mouthed and he's cultured and verbose. Empower both the heroine and hero to take turns sweeping in and saving the day, using their unique strengths.

Make things ever more difficult.

Give her an ambitious goal at the outset and make it ever more impossible. Figure out the worst that could happen and the worst time it could happen, and make it so. Don't be afraid to take away her tools and resources and comforts, make her challenges ever more difficult, trap her physically and morally, prey on her fears and weaknesses. You could throw her into an uncomfortable setting, disable her strengths, injure her, make her fail, isolate her, make her growing love for the hero complicate things, make her doubt her allies, herself and the hero ... Force her to make limited, agonising choices—should she save the wounded hero, or pursue the villain to prevent him taking out the next victim? Meanwhile, the villain becomes progressively stronger and more desperate. Once you've got her into all this trouble, make her step up and earn her way out. No easy outs—no white knights, no *Deus ex machina*, no lucky coincidences. Force her to give this quest everything she has. The way she responds will be the making of her.

Beware of the TSTL heroine.

Even if you're not familiar with the term ("too stupid to live") you've met this heroine. She's the woman home alone at night during a power cut who hears a noise in the basement and goes downstairs to check it out, though she knows a serial killer is stalking her. Readers hate this. The key to combating this urge for self-destruction (usually done for no reason other than to advance the plot) is motivation. Leave her with no choice. Force her into the basement because the phone is dead, she's in the middle of nowhere, her child is trapped down there and the house is on fire and about to explode.

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The basement scenario is the most oft-cited TSTL example but it's surprising how insidious this stupidity urge is, and it's trickier to avoid than you might think because you want your flawed heroine to make mistakes and get in trouble. Just don't make it a TSTL mistake. Sure, she might take unwise risks and step out of her comfort zone, but they must be well motivated.

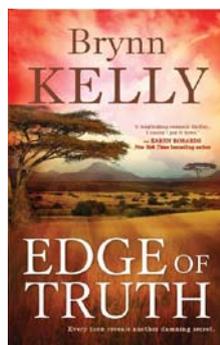
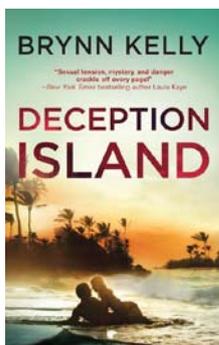
Give her a transformational journey.

It can be tricky to balance the need to establish reader empathy from the outset with the need to give your heroine flaws and defects so her character can transform through the course of the novel. You don't want her to be annoying or unlikeable or for the reader to shout, "Just get over yourself already." But you do want to force her to grow and change to earn her suspense goal and her HEA. Empathy and motivation are your secret weapons here. Develop empathy so the reader will cheer for her in spite of her big flaw. And make sure her flaw and wound are understandable, deeply rooted in her back story and not easily overcome.

This is where the romance plot can help prod things along. Use it to push along the internal journey. In this process the heroine and hero hold a mirror up to each other, they see through the other's façade and through love and conflict, help reshape each other. The heroine's character growth should be something we see in her actions and reactions to problems. Contrast the way she struggles with romantic and suspense challenges at the outset with the way she overcomes them at the end. Consider putting her in the same situation she failed at in the beginning so you can create a parallel.

Check out July's *Heart to Heart* for Part One of this series, covering strengths and flaws, GMC, stakes and empathy.

Keen for more romantic suspense tips? HQN author Brynn Kelly is presenting a workshop called Keeping Them in Suspense at the RWNZ conference in August, with her editor, Allison Carroll, and award-winning suspense and historical writer Frances Housden.



ACC Demystified **Tania Roberts**

ACC levies are one of those necessary evils that you cannot avoid. Either you pre-empt it by applying for ACC Cover Plus Extra or you wait until ACC invoices you, based on the information forwarded to them by Inland Revenue.

Applying for ACC Cover Plus Extra can be done through the Accident Compensation Corporation website at www.acc.co.nz. You can download the application form and complete it manually or apply online. The website has a calculator that allows you to enter various levels of compensation and find out what the resulting levies will be. Some people will want to limit the level of compensation requested in order to lower the levies charged. However, I always suggest to clients that they look at their household budget and determine how much would they need to survive, should they be injured and unable to work for a long period of time. You may consider the risk of an accident while you are writing to be minimal but the compensation will be applicable for any accident—work or non-work.

When using the calculator, you need to enter your Business Classification Code. You can find this out at businessdescription.co.nz by entering Arts and Recreation Services as the Industry, Creative and Performing Arts as the sector and Creative Arts, Musicians, Writers & Performers as the category. Then you will find Author R900267, Writer R900267 and Playwright R 900243 are some of the options. Whichever you select will determine the rate at which ACC levies are charged.

You can only apply for ACC Cover Plus Extra if you are considered full time—that is, you are working more than 30 hours per week on average. The minimum earnings on which you can be charged levies is \$30,680. The maximum earnings on which you can be levied is \$120,070. The minimum and maximum levels are adjusted annually.

ACC Cover Plus Extra is like taking out insurance. Following an accident, you will be paid the agreed amount of compensation without having to prove loss of earnings. The invoice will be issued for the period 1 April to the following 31 March. If you are applying part way through the year, then the levy shown by the calculator will be apportioned. ACC does offer payment plans—at a cost—if you are unable to pay the levy in one amount.

As mentioned before, if you don't apply for ACC Cover Plus Extra you will still be invoiced for ACC levies. When your IR3 income tax return is processed by IRD, the amount of your self-employed earnings is forwarded to ACC who use it to generate an invoice. It is important that your Business Classification Code is entered on the

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front page of your IR3. ACC's default industry is Manufacturing—which will have a lot higher levy rate than writing. (Yes, *this happened to me, and it was extremely stressful. Double check.* ~ Editor)

If paying levies through this system, you can distinguish between full time and part time. If you spend less than 30 hours per week on average working at your writing, then you are considered part time. If your self-employed earnings are less than the full-time minimum of \$30,680 then you are levied on the actual earnings and not the minimum. If you are part time and make a loss from your writing activities, then you will not be subject to any levy.

While the levies charged under this scheme may be cheaper, you will need to prove loss of earnings should an injury occur. If there is no loss of earnings, then there is no compensation.

If you receive a schedular payment for freelance journalism/writing, then this amount is considered self-employed earnings and will be subject to ACC levies.

If you are trading through a company structure, the company will be invoiced for ACC levies on your shareholder-employee salary (if you haven't applied for ACC Cover Plus Extra). If you are using a trust for your writing activities, then any distribution of trust income is considered passive and not subject to ACC levies.

ACC levies are tax deductible and any ACC compensation received for loss of earnings following an injury will be taxable.

Tania Roberts is RWNZ's Treasurer and also an accountant. However, the above is intended as a general discussion only and you should seek advice from your tax adviser as to how the various rules, which are subject to change, apply to your specific circumstances.

“The beautiful part about writing is that you don't have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon.”

~ Robert Cormier



“The only writer to whom you should compare yourself is the writer you were yesterday.”

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Is KU Right For You?

Grace Burrowes



Kindle Unlimited (KU) is a subscription service available to Amazon customers that allows them to read an unlimited quantity of material from the KU library for a fee of \$13.99 (AUD)/\$9.99 (US) a month. That catalogue includes (according to Amazon), more than a mil-

lion titles, thousands of audiobooks, and many popular magazines. Amazon launched KU in July 2014. Since then, the program has undergone several significant revisions, but the basic structure remains the same.

For readers on a limited budget—and who isn't on a limited budget?—the primary advantage is obvious: Tons of great material, for one low, low price. For authors, the primary selling point of the program (at least initially) was that it's a way to reach a huge audience of new readers.

Or is it?

Before we get into that thorny question, a few more details about how the program works.

On the reader end, the sign up is easy. All it takes is a valid form of payment on file with Amazon, one-click ordering enabled, and away you go. The subscription can be cancelled at any time, but will automatically renew, month after month, unless terminated. If your designated form of payment should stop working, Amazon can try any other form of payment you have on file with them.

For the author, KU is a little more complicated. KU content is supposed to be exclusive to Amazon. Your books can be for sale through Kindle Direct Publishing throughout the Amazon ecosystem, but ONLY in the Amazon ecosystem. You commit to leave your title up on KU for ninety days, and you must affirmatively opt out or your title gets re-enlisted.

Initially, authors were paid per borrow. Every time a KU reader downloaded a book, the author was compensated. Many authors saw significant revenue as a result, but—predictably—other authors began publishing books that barely qualified as novelettes. The compensation for these skimpy reads was the same “per borrow” as for a

500-page epic or 2500-page bundle.

Amazon responded in June 2015 by shifting the unit of compensation to Kindle Edition Normalized Pages (a way to equalize formatting variables). Many authors saw a drop in compensation as a result of this “KU 2.0,” but the “novelette” end-run became unprofitable.

Now, the amount an author is paid is calculated as that author's percentage of the KDP Select Global Fund, based on the author's proportionate share of all pages read. If the fund is \$1 million (Amazon unilaterally decides what the fund will be each month), and a million total pages were read that month, an author whose books comprised 10,000 of those pages read would be paid \$10,000.

In real terms, this has lately equated to less than half a cent (US) per page. In other words, if you publish a 200-page book on KU, and it's read once, you'll likely be compensated less than a dollar. Assuming that book was priced at \$3.99 and instead sold to the reader, your compensation would be (in most Amazon markets), $\$3.99 \times .70$ percent royalties = \$2.79.

Why leave \$1.79 per read on the table?

In part, because those KU readers might never have bought your book. [One survey](#) estimated that 23 percent of KU borrowers never purchase a book from Amazon. That's precisely why they have a KU membership—they either don't read much at all, or they don't want to/cannot pay much for what they read.

So KU can get a book into the hands of readers who would never otherwise read it. The other KU readers DO buy books, at least occasionally. That means putting the first book in a series, or a series prequel into KU can expose that series to voracious, budget-conscious readers who will then go buy the other eight books in the series.

In theory. If any part of the indie publishing experience fits the “your mileage may vary” adage, it's Kindle Unlimited. For every author who swears that limiting readership to one platform (Amazon) nearly killed her brand, there's another author claiming that her series didn't take off until she put book one into KU.

For every generalisation about the KU market-place,

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there's an author defying it. However, if your brand does well internationally, then KU might not be a good fit. Amazon.com customers outside the US can't access Amazon.com KU, and [not all territories](#) have their own versions, either. If your also-boughts are all from major publishers, then again, KU might not be the best fit, because the major houses do not participate in KU (some smaller houses do). Readers devoted to the traditional bestsellers might not bother with KU, because their preferred titles won't be in the KU lending library.

KU is thus a mixed bag. On the one hand, you can find readers there you won't reach otherwise. On the other, the compensation per read is much less than for readers who buy your books, and you sacrifice wide distribution to participate in KU. For some, that sacrifice pays off handsomely. For others, a tour through KU goes squarely in the regrets column.

Your mileage may vary, and at any point, Amazon can change the terms (again).

Other times, the book is simply very low quality.

The click-farm title is published to KU, and in some obscure location, click-farmers go to work, paging through the book on thousands of screens at a time. The number of pages read skyrockets, the book's rank in the Kindle store shoots up just as fast, and a fake book (to use David Gaughran's term) hits the Amazon bestseller list. You can read [his excellent post](#) on this topic for more detail.

Twice in July, the top ranked title in the whole Amazon.com store was a click-farm book. Amazon is well aware of the problem, and has been aware of this aspect of KU for at least fifteen months. As of this writing, no plan has been announced to deal with the issue.

Why does it matter?

For several reasons. First, every legitimate author using KU will make less money because of the click-farm books. The click-farm authors, with their enormous KENP counts, are being handsomely compensated out of the fixed monthly KDP Select Global Fund, leaving a lot less to go around for legitimate authors, but requiring no more payout from Amazon.

Second, the pervasiveness of the click-farm problem, combined with Amazon algorithms that give KU titles preferential ranking, means nearly every Amazon bestsellers list is affected by these titles. Your book—whether in KU or not—is less visible as a result of the click-farm titles being more favorably treated by the ranking method. The click-farm titles are displacing your visibility in the recommendation algorithms as well, so your visibility takes another hit.

Third, the quality of the click-farm material affects reader perception of both KU and Amazon's reading options. Often, the click-farm "author" will have no social media

presence (or one only recently concocted). The covers show a clear lack of production quality. The publishing schedules are unusual (six books in a month, with nothing before or after those six titles). These books accumulate highly negative reviews, which, again as a function of visibility algorithms, only push the click-farm title even higher in the rankings.

What's an author to do?

In this, as in so many other career decisions, a little experimentation will yield data specific to your books and your brand. KU has been a career-maker for some authors, a wrong turn for others. The only way to gauge whether KU can generate revenue, visibility, and readership for your books is to give it a try, and evaluate the results.



Grace Burrowes is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of the Lonely Lords series and the extensive Windham series, which includes the subseries The Duke's Obsession, The Duke's Daughters, and A Duke and His Duchess. Her debut, The Heir, was a Publishers Weekly Best Book of 2010, and its follow-up, The Soldier, was named a Publishers Weekly Best Spring Romance of 2011. A practicing family law attorney, Grace lives in rural Maryland.

From The Editor: Moving In - New House, New Job, New Day



There are times in our lives when everything seems as if it is on the move: moving to new places, moving into new roles or jobs. This month I have found myself doing both. I am moving in as the editor of *Heart to Heart*, and this week we

moved into a new house.

The new home will, after the cardboard is cleared, be a lovely place that I can't wait to welcome folk into. Somewhere behind a wall of boxes—all of which appear to contain books—I am pretty sure I still possess a husband and a rather annoyed cat!

What I had not envisaged inheriting this week, was a teenager. This young woman in need of post-operative supervision came to us the night we moved. In a matter of hours, we moved into the role of interim parents. This has been a challenge.

There has been late night ambulance rides, and time spent developing medical romance plots in emergency waiting rooms. There have also been the thought pro-

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cesses of a teenage girl to contend with. It's enough to make you dizzy!

Our teenager is fascinated by my writing. She has decided to assist, sharing her own set of romantic ideals to aid in my heroine's quest for love. These ideals are both charming and the tiniest bit scary. All of us have been challenged to move into new ways of thinking as we live together.

Only yesterday I caught the tail end of a conversation between my shaved-headed-biker-looking husband and our new charge. First came the deep sigh, followed by "Honey, I know he seems nice on-line, but believe me when I tell you no man just wants to lie in bed with you and just cuddle."

In the midst of all this movement, I fall back on that great stress reliever: the romance novel. As I reread my old favourites I am reminded of the quintessential hope so many of us look for in the pages of our favourite romance—to know that somewhere, somehow, someone lives happily ever after.

This quintessential hope, the love of the chase, is what led me to put pen to paper. Two hearts vie to let go of that which has been, in the hope of becoming something new. As I move into the new role of editor of *Heart to Heart* I am aware that I am surrounded by a whole cohort of talented story tellers who do just that. It is my hope that at our upcoming conference; and beyond, many of you will be encouraged to share your experience and talent with us all.

Whilst I am a firm believer in "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," Gracie and I have been talking about the occasional addition to the magazine.

One such possible challenge is along the lines of the 'flash fiction' phenomena. Flash fiction is where a person writes a whole story in just 300 words! Rather than ask you to write a whole story we have decided to challenge you to write the perfect scene. Some of the scene topics suggested have been:

'It's Ms to you!'
'Here I go again.'
'Where the wild things are.'
'If you knew who I really was ...'
'A kiss goodbye.'

Find out more about 'theme scenes' at the conference!

There is no doubt that this is a time of great movement within *Heart to Heart*. I want to thank Gracie for all her support, as well as you all in anticipation of your input!

Big waves from me to you from behind a wall of boxes—I know I have an Awards Dinner outfit somewhere here!

Megan

Woos & Hoos



Holly James' debut novel WORTH REMEMBERING was published in June. Buy link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B072JSTLL6/>



Kris Pearson has issued a box set of three series starters called ALL FOR LOVE. Buy link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07424T8B5/>



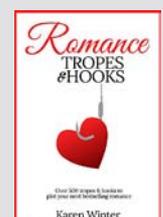
Kellie Watkinson w/a Kellie Hailes' second book THE BIG LITTLE FESTIVAL was released 19 June. Buy link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0714815RL/>

Bronwen Evans' A LOVE TO REMEMBER, book 7 in the Disgraced Lords historical romance series, releases 29 August. Buy link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LXH1IM9/>



Sandi Manning w/a Hayson Manning has a new release with Entangled Publishing. TEN DAYS WITH THE HIGHLANDER releases August 14 under their Lovestruck Imprint. Buy link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0746MWLJY/>

Karen White w/a Karen Winter released ROMANCE TROPES AND HOOKS in July and is available on Amazon. Buy link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B073TSLTF5/>



The Limits Of Kindle Unlimited

Megan Cameron asks Steff Green the hard questions

Megan Cameron



As a voracious romance reader, I've found Kindle Unlimited to be a real gift. I can go through five books a week no problem. As you can imagine this can get very expensive.

One of the benefits I find with Kindle Unlimited is that it has introduced me to a wider variety of authors. I literally find myself in a position where I try before I buy. As I tend to read my favourite books again and again, I now read the book first on KU and then purchase it for the long haul.

But that's as a reader, not as an author. Steff Green is one of our authors who initially listed her books with KU and then changed tack.

What drew you to Kindle Unlimited in the beginning, Steff?

In my genre (paranormal romance) most other successful authors are in KU, so enrolling was a bit of a no-brainer. I've been in KU right from the beginning, back when it paid a full read after the reader reached 10% of the story. I started off with novellas (My Crookshollow Foxes series) to take advantage of writing shorter and publishing faster, and I made a lot of money in the last six months of KU1.0, but I loved writing romance so much I wanted to write more involved stories. Serendipitously, I was publishing full-length novels when KU2.0 hit. When that came out, my income didn't fluctuate much (as it did for others who were writing a lot of shorter work), so I just stayed in KU because it was easier and I felt like I knew what I was doing.

What were the initial benefits of being a part of Kindle Unlimited?

For me, there were 3 major benefits:

1. Getting readers to "take a chance" on a new, unknown author was much easier with KU, because they felt as though my books were "free" even though they aren't.
2. With countdown deals and the free days, it was easy for me to promote my work, and also, every other PNR writer was in KU so we did a lot of box sets and co-promo to build an audience—if I wasn't in KU, I'd have

missed out on all that.

3. It was MUCH easier publishing to one platform than several, especially since I'd frequently change my back-matter or correct typos.

Did you have to sell all your books on Kindle Unlimited or did you have a choice over what books you sold?

I'm 100% indie, so I always had a choice.

When did things begin to go sour, and how?

In September 2016, my KU income dropped significantly, from about US\$1800 a month to nearly nothing. I kept thinking it would get better, but I released two books between September and December, and it didn't improve. I wasn't the only author experiencing this, and a lot of authors were doing tests and trying to come up with reasons for what had gone wrong. It looks like my books got caught in the PageFlip issue, as well as some kind of Amazon algorithm update, and those two things just nosedived my KU earnings.

At the same time, I was also in a box set that got hit with an "in breach of KU" notice that had never been levied at any other KU box set I'd been in before—we weren't allowed to have a KU book published on our own account AND in a box set, even if the set was also exclusive to KU. From now on, all box sets had to have content exclusive to that set. This happened right in the middle of launch week, and it tanked any hopes the set had of doing well. I pulled my book from the box set a week after launch, and haven't done one since.

Combining those two problems with the constant "what will the rate be THIS month?" stress, I decided it was time to try my hand wide. I'd always been heavily weighted toward sales for a PNR author (40% KU / 60% sales). I figured now was a great time to try wide, as my KU income didn't seem about to recover. I had very little to lose: if I earned nothing in the first six months, it would be no different to what I was doing now. It took me all of January to pull my books and make them wide, and I haven't looked back.

What advice do you have for those considering selling on Kindle Unlimited?

View it as you would any other marketing tool. Measure

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its success, run tests, survey your readers, track your ROI (Return On Investment). I think everyone should give it a go at least once if possible—the 90 day commitment isn't too arduous—but be prepared to leave and start over again wide if it's not working out.

KU is perfect for some authors, horrible for others, mediocre for a lot of us in-between. Only you know what's right for your books and your readers.

Are you doing better financially having withdrawn your books?

Not yet, but I think in the long run, I will be. I'm not doing any worse than I was when I left KU. I've had one book absolutely tank at launch and two do just okay. I'm doing a lot of experiments to figure out the best way to launch and promote wide—most of them have failed so far. For me, \$0.99 for launch or sales is a dead-zone, but I had to discover this the hard way. But some, like permafrost, have had decent results and are giving me hope. My next launch is coming up on August 10 and I'm hoping it will be much better!

Literally the first week I was fully wide, I got my first Bookbub (yay!) and that month (Feb) was one of my best sales months ever. If only we could all get a Bookbub every month!

Is Kindle Unlimited good for the newly-published author?

It could be. It's just one tool that helps readers decide to take a chance on you. It may be a powerful part of your author marketing, or it might be a flop. But you won't know until you try.

What is the impact of having withdrawn your books from Kindle Unlimited? Positive or Negative?

My income has flat-lined, so that's a bit depressing. It would be nice to say, "I left KU and I instantly made \$20k and quit my job and solved world peace and grew a chocolate tree in my backyard." Sadly, that's not what's happened, but I'm confident in time things will pick up (maybe not the chocolate tree, but one can dream). Wide is the long game.

I didn't anticipate how much the change would impact my stress levels. I'm so much happier. Despite currently earning less than my heyday in KU, I feel more secure. I enjoy checking six different platforms every morning.

My audience on Kobo has grown dramatically (that's my second bestselling platform after Amazon), and it's so cool to see there really are readers on other platforms. I'm pricing higher and still making sales. I see other authors railing against the falling KNPC rate each month and/or trying to deal with PageFlip issues or Amazon's other crazy random emails that doom your whole account, and I just breathe a sigh of relief that I don't have to deal with that any more. I'm writing more than ever,

and it's awesome.

I'd consider using KU again if I thought it would be effective (and in fact, my next launch will be in KU for 90 days, as an experiment), but I definitely won't go back to being all-in.



You can find out more about Steff at <http://steffanieholmes.com>. She also writes dark fantasy as S C Green. Those books are still in KU until the end of July.

The Welcome Mat

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

Sophie Brown—Stratford

Wendy Cook—Hamilton

Robert Evans—Invercargill

Stephanie Nixon—Christchurch

D.E. Ryan Sheridan—Auckland

Lorraine Tims—Te Awamutu

You should already have your username and password for the RWNZ site. If not, give Gracie a shout at membership@romancewriters.co.nz and she'll sort you out.

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

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

Of course, you'll need to login before you can access the members' area, 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.



Going Exclusive With Kindle Unlimited

Samantha Charlton



First of all, I'd like to say that this is only my experience with KU. Other authors may have a completely different perspective!

I chose to go exclusive with KU mainly because around 60-70% of my monthly sales come from lending library and page reads. I write Historical Romance (set in

the early Medieval period), and it appears the majority of my readers are: a) based in the US, and b) Prime members. I also have a number of self-published books out there already (8 novels and 1 novella), so this is another reason why KU works well for me.

At the moment, it makes sense financially to remain exclusive with KU. Having said that, the first novel in my first series is now a permafree (which I had to take out of KU to do). I was initially nervous that removing it would cause problems with Prime readers, but it has still boosted sales and helped funnel readers into the rest of the series, as well as increased sign ups to my mailing list.

I think KU has really helped me build a readership. It's a good way to get started, especially if your readers are based in the US, UK and Australia. There will come a stage when I will go wide with my books, but for now it's bringing in a steady income. Once my backlist grows even longer, I will probably experiment with other platforms as I'll have more books to play with. The free promotions and Kindle Countdown deals available on KU are also another benefit, although you need to be savvy and strategic to get the most out of them (i.e. use them as part of a launch, or to promote the first book in a series).

How do readers find me? I think making yourself discoverable is tricky, whether you're in KU or not! Making the first book in my first series a permafree—and therefore taking it out of KU—has helped me enormously with discoverability. If you don't do that, then making use of their free promotions and Kindle Countdown deals is another way to boost visibility. My attitude is that being exclusive in KU is just a tool. You shouldn't rely on any platform to help you get discovered—that comes down to you. No matter which option you choose, it's better to focus on building your mailing list, building a relationship with your readers, promotions (such as Amazon Ads), and a permafree of your first book.

Like everyone else, I'm paid on the basis of pages read

read converted to a percentage of the common monthly money pool. The question is always how do you know you're getting paid correctly? And the short answer is—you don't. However, I use Book Report to get a general idea of what my earnings are (it updates just after the 15th of every month—rounding up or down, depending on what the KDP Select Fund is for that month). It's not an exact science but it seems to be fairly accurate. Book Report (www.bookreport.com) is a free app that links to your KDP account and provides a much easier to read and follow report on your KDP sales. You don't have to be KU exclusive to use it either.



Samantha is our Otago Convener and writes Historical, Contemporary, and Epic Fantasy Romance as Jayne Castel. You can find out more about her at www.jaynecastel.com

Daphne Clair De Jong First Kiss Award 2017



I am delighted to be able to share with everyone the results of the inaugural Daphne Clair De Jong First Kiss Award.

Congratulations to:

1st—Emma Bryson with *Pizza, Punk Rock and her Perfect Princess*

2nd—Bronwen Evans with *Tempt ME, Tease ME, Love ME*

3rd—Becky Watts with *The Bad Boy Next Door*

Please join me in congratulating our prize winners!

I'd like to thank the New Zealand Society of Authors Northland Branch for sponsoring the competition this year. We really appreciate it!

I'd also like to thank the judges for their time and effort, and Jude as Contest Coordinator.

Yours,

Gillian St Kevern

A Holiday Romance

Nelson Romance Writers present: A Romance Short Story Competition 2017



Open to: Published, Self-published & Non-published writers plus Senior Students within New Zealand

Launch: Thursday 1 June 2017

Deadline: Friday 1 September 2017

The winner in each category will get a basket of romantic goodies.

The Supreme overall winner will get one year's membership of Romance Writers New Zealand (RWNZ) plus a certificate.

Judge: Angela Bissell - A NZ Romance Writer published by Harlequin Mills & Boon.

Posters and flyers printed by Copy Press, Nelson



Prizes generously sponsored by

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Elsie Editing Services
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Jeanine Taylor
Jean Gorman
Harley's Pharmacy
The Warehouse
McCashin's Kitchen & Bar
Pomeroy's*

For more information and entry form: Email: Annika Ohlson-Smith on nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz or phone Annika on 03 548 5561

The Reason Of Voice

Daphne Clair de Jong



A writer's voice is a refined version of the writer's speaking voice. Our writing mirrors our everyday speech, leaving out hesitations and correcting garbled sentences, in communicating to our readers.

ers.

Some writers use more complex words and sentences than I, in both speech and writing. While I like to use the simplest word that will do the job sometimes a more exact or longer word is needed.

Searching for a word that would describe a hero's striking blue eyes, I resorted to a thesaurus and found "smalt", meaning *crushed blue glass*.

Who knew there was a special word for that! It was exactly what I wanted. It even sounds smoky. I fell in love on sight, but never used it again. While perfect in its setting, gems like that should not be overused.

Another once-used word was "effulgence." Those who know the Wairoa River as it slides its wide, opaque, and muddy way through Dargaville will know *effulgence* is the only word to describe the moonlight on it at midnight.

When you find a different word, do check it in a good dictionary. It's tempting to use a new word because you just found it and it's calling you to show it in the light of day. Don't be seduced because the word seems glamorous—or worse, erudite. Showing off isn't the object of your search.

Does the word say what you want it to say? And does it fit the sentence? A longer or unusual word may be needed for the cadence of the sentence, or to break a pattern of similar sentences.

The other problem that may send a writer hunting for a different word is that one word has been used too often. Some writers have a signature word or phrase that appears in everything they write. Others find that in each work a different word sneakily inserts itself at every opportunity. Editors don't always pick them up.

There is the danger of changing a repeated word, only to find that the replacement also has a doppelganger one paragraph further on. Altering or even cutting a sentence or sentences may eliminate some repetition. A solution can usually be found with a little ingenuity. Do you really need all of those sentences, all of those words? Is there another way to say it?

Repeating an ordinary word may be safer than using an outlandish one that will stand out, waving and shouting, "Look at me!" and stop the reader in her tracks.

I've sometimes wasted time hunting for a different word before realising—Duh!—the sentence doesn't need this or any other word in that space.

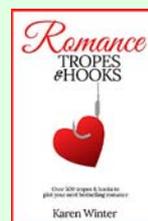


In some cases, the Delete key is our best friend.

Daphne Clair de Jong has almost eighty books and many short stories and poems, published worldwide. She has finalled for Rita and Ruby awards, and won other awards for fiction and non-fiction. She also edits and coaches other writers. Questions or comments: [daphne@](mailto:daphne@daphneclair.com)

daphneclair.com

The Bookshelf



Romance Hooks & Tropes

Karen Winter

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B073TSLTF5/>

Romance Tropes & Hooks will give you the inspiration to start crafting stories your readers will love with its extensive collection of over 500 tropes and hooks. Each has a description, and some include examples and variations.



Mastering Amazon Ads

Brian D Meeks

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B072SNXYMY/>

Whether you're an Indie author self-publishing for the first time or an experienced author working on your book marketing skills, this book will help you build an advertising and marketing plan that will find readers and end up selling lots of books.

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Tips For Getting A BookBub Promotion

Faye Robertson



One of the most lucrative ways of advertising is the infamous BookBub promotion.

In case you live on Venus and haven't heard of BookBub (<https://www.bookbub.com/home/>) as a reader you can sign up for a variety of categories such as contemporary romance or thrillers, and

BookBub will email you with details of one free book and/or one low-priced deal in those categories every day.

As an author, the advantages are obvious. Check out the categories (<https://www.bookbub.com/partners/pricing>) and you'll see that, for example, contemporary romance has a reach of 2,360,000+ readers. Now, we all know it doesn't mean that every one of those people will download your book or even open that day's email, but BookBub does give a guideline as to how many downloads you can expect for each category and price range of your promotion—in this case, for a free contemporary romance, you can expect around 39,000 downloads.

Mind you, it's not cheap—a free contemporary romance promotion is going to cost you a cool US\$372—that's just over NZ\$500, for one ad! That can be well out of a beginner's price range. Another disadvantage is that BookBub say they only accept 20% of all the applications they receive. When you factor in that some of the applications will be from traditional publishers or indie-publishers who've had previous promotions with them, the chances of getting accepted as a newbie seem almost impossible.

But do not despair! It is possible to get accepted, and I am living proof of this. My first promotion was accepted in November 2015. That was after FIFTEEN rejections. Since then, I've had a dozen promotions. Every time one finishes, I apply for a new one. I've applied 38 times since that first promotion, and been accepted for 12. So for every acceptance, I still get three or four rejections.

But I'm here to give you a few tips on how to get one. These are by no means a guarantee of acceptance, but you might find one that proves to be the magical ingredient you need.

Tip 1: Rotate your offerings

This is a lot easier the more books you have published. I have many different series, and I routinely offer the first in each series to BookBub, either as a 99 cent, or a free.

Offering 99 cents first does give you two shots at the target, because if they turn you down, you can immediately apply for a free promotion. To be honest, though, if given the choice, for a single book I would always choose a free promotion over a 99 cent one.

For a start, it's cheaper (\$372 for a free as opposed to \$744 for a 99 cent promotion in the contemporary romance category). And I always find I have a better tail (meaning a sell-through of the rest in the series) from a free promotion than from a 99 cent one. But anyway, offer your first-in-series in rotation, if you have more than one series, and don't be afraid to offer other books in a series too, especially if they are standalones, because readers will go back to read the others in a series.

Tip 2: Price the first in series high

I price most of my full-length romances at \$3.99. Most authors reduce the price of the first in their series either to free or a reduced price, say 99 cents or \$2.99 (called a loss leader) which is done with the hope of encouraging a reader to try you at little cost to them. BookBub do accept books with a regular price of 99 cents or \$2.99, but I believe that the higher the regular price of a book, the more they are likely to accept it for a promotion, because it means a greater saving for the reader. So if your first-in-series is usually permanently 99 cents or free, try raising the price to \$2.99 (or higher) for a short while, and then offer it to BookBub (for either a 99 cent or a free promotion.)

Tip 3: Try a smaller category

I write contemporary romance, but I read on a Facebook group that it was worth trying to apply in a smaller category with less competition. I applied for the chick-lit category and not only was I accepted, but they then moved it to the contemporary romance category! Would I have been accepted straight away for the contemporary category if I'd applied? No way of telling, but it's worth a shot.

Tip 4: Create box sets

Run out of individual books to offer? Try bundling books together in box sets and offering them for a 99 cent promotion (or even for free, if you have a lot of books.) This is one way to have a stab at the USA Today bestseller list—you'll have to sell upwards from 6-7,000 books in a week to hit the list, but I've done it and so have other indie authors, so it's definitely doable!

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You can either box together books 1-3 in a series, or you can do what I and other authors like the lovely Tracey Alvarez have done, and box together a few of your first-in-series starters and offer that box set for free or 99 cents. Check out my *Finding Love*, or Tracey's *Romance Down Under*.

Tip 5: Books too short?

Perhaps you have a book that would be perfect for a promotion but it's shorter than the stipulated minimum length of 150 pages? Add a "bonus" novella or short story to the back of the book! I did this with *His Christmas Present*, which fell short of the mark. I added *Remember Me*, another novella, as a bonus, which took the total to over 150 pages, and BookBub accepted it. Yay!

Tip 6: Change your cover/blurb

BookBub rejected *A Secret Between Friends* twice. I then changed the cover and tweaked the blurb, and the next time they accepted it! So make sure your covers are hot as, and the blurb is short and snappy.

Tip 7: What to put in your letter

At the bottom of the application, you are allowed to enter additional information. Here, make sure you put if you are a USA Today bestseller (or any other kind of bestseller.) Say if you have won relevant awards (writing ones, not swimming certificates.) And make it clear why readers will want to read your book—does it have a popular trope, say marriage-of-convenience or friends-to-lovers? Have you had a marvellous review from an important blogger? Don't be afraid to shove every little detail in there. With my first success, I asked them if they'd like to be my fairy godmother and make my Christmas a magical one. They did! Who knows if it helped?

Tip 8: Think about your marketing plans BEFORE you write!

After 15 rejections, I decided in August 2015 that I was going to write a series for Christmas. I was going to call it *Three Wise Men*, make sure they had terrifically Christmassy covers, emphasize the tropes (billionaires, single mums), and I decided I'd release the first in the trio at the beginning of November, the second two weeks later, and the third in mid-December.

I applied for a BookBub just after the second was released, once my readers had had a chance to post their reviews, and the third was on pre-order. It worked perfectly—BookBub loved the Christmassy nature of them, and I had an advert on 14 December, four days before book 3 was published. They sold really well, so much so that I tried it again in 2016 with my *Love Comes Later* series. It worked again—three Christmassy stories with a BookBub for the first book in December.

I did the same thing with my Four Seasons series. I began writing these in January, starting with *Seducing Summer*, then going on to *Tempting Autumn* (March), *Bewitching Winter* (May), and finally *Persuading Spring* which was released in July.

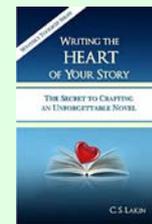
I applied for a BookBub for *Seducing Summer* in June, and got one for July, which is of course the height of summer in the northern hemisphere, so I was able to promote it to them as a sexy beach-read. Since then, I've also had one for Autumn (in non-USA countries, the only problem with not calling it Fall!), one for *Bewitching Winter* in January, and one for the box set too! Talk about milk it for what it's worth. LOL. But every time, I've discovered a batch of new readers.

Anyway, I hope that's helped someone! I'll be at conference, sitting on the self-published panel on Saturday, if anyone has any questions!



Faye writes as Serenity Woods. You can find out more about her—and her delicious romances—by visiting <http://www.serenitywoodsromance.com>

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Writing the Heart of Your Story

C. S. Lakin

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00L9CJQIU/>

Amazon Reviewer: C. S. Lakin shows you how to get the heart of your story, true, but these are practical processes necessary for creating believability throughout your book: creating characters real enough to fall in love with (or hate if that's your goal), places readers can see and feel, and plots that demand you turn the next page and start reading the next chapter. This writing craft book transcends genre: suspense, romance, horror, doesn't matter. Great tool for any writer's toolbox.

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“Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.”

~ Mark Twain

From The President

Announcing a New RWNZ Honorary Member for 2017

I must admit the lead-up to Conference is getting more and more exciting! It's been wonderful to see members step up to help organize the conference, and the team of people working so hard to make it happen is awesome.

In particular, I'd like to mention Kris Pearson. She has taken on many roles within RWNZ over the past fifteen-plus years, and is a positive, robust supporter of RWNZ.

So it's my great pleasure to announce that Kris is being awarded a Life Time Honorary Membership. The presentation will be made at the Rotorua Conference, just after the AGM.

Kris served on the Executive for over ten years—a number of these as Membership Secretary. She has organized our conference volunteers on many occasions. She's the Wellington/Kapiti Regional Convener. She's also a convener for the RWNZ members' loop. She has written numerous articles over the years for the Heart to Heart magazine. She enters many of our contests to support our organization, sometimes helps to judge, and is always ready with a warm and welcome smile at conference.

Together with her husband Philip, she created the new electronic RWNZ Liaisons Magazines of short stories. With the Pearsons, we get two for the price of one. When I called to tell her about the award, she said Philip had spent all afternoon printing and cutting the dinner and cocktail conference tickets.

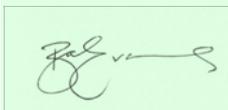
Kris lives in Wellington, writes contemporary romance, and was one of the first RWNZ members to take the brave step into successful self-publishing. She has had her books translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. Five are currently being translated for the Chinese market.

I hope you will join me in congratulating Kris.

Inspired to get more involved in our organization? I'd love to hear from you. Drop me an email or talk to me at Conference.

Happy Writing.

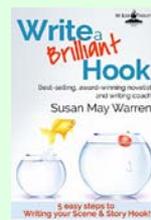
Bronwen Evans



President



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Write A Brilliant Hook

Susan May Warren

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01EWDIZV6/>

Best-selling, RITA and CHRISTY award-winning novelist, and nationally acclaimed writing instructor Susan May Warren has spent a decade teaching novelists how to write brilliant stories—starting with hooking their reader with the first line.

Working With Ingram Spark

Judy L Mohr



Many self-published and indie-published writers are connected with Amazon's CreateSpace and KDP. They aren't bad options, but they aren't the only options either.

When I started down the road of setting up my own publishing house, I seriously looked into what CreateSpace and KDP had to offer. I quickly realised that CreateSpace and KDP had some major drawbacks for myself living all the way on the other side of the world.

Enter IngramSpark.

Before I delve into the specific reasons of why I chose to print my books, and distribute the printed and eBook versions through IngramSpark, I better explain what makes IngramSpark different to CreateSpace and KDP.

IngramSpark is solely a printer and distribution centre. If you choose to work with IngramSpark, you become the publisher—and that means everything that goes with it. There is the editing, the formatting, the typesetting, cover design, ISBN numbers, marketing, and every other aspect of the publishing venture. The only aspect that IngramSpark handles is the printing and distribution—that is it.

Files that are uploaded must follow strict formats, and I

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will gladly admit that massaging your manuscripts into those formats can do your head in, but they are industry standard. ALL printers and distributors of eBooks (except Amazon and Smashwords) require the same file formats.

Let's start with eBooks. Submission of eBook files needs to be in EPUB3 format. (Those using Scrivener to output EPUB files, be advised that Scrivener is still formatting using the EPUB2 protocols.) EPUB3 is the format required by iBooks, Nook, and Kobo. These eBook distributors might distribute in a custom format (iBooks certainly does), but they will reject any file you submit to them that doesn't follow the EPUB3 protocol.

For printed books, PDF files must be uploaded, with all fonts embedded. For those using MSWord, you will instantly curse Word, because saved PDF files do not embed in the file Times New Roman, Arial, Courier, or any other font that is common to all operating systems. You would think that this wouldn't be a problem, but it is. IngramSpark is a printer, with machines that do not need a traditional operating system to function. Hence, why ALL printing information needs to be included in the files. And creating said file requires software that is either expensive, such as Adobe, or not part of standard configurations, such as doPDF.

It will be these file restrictions that will be one of the biggest drawcards to publishing via CreateSpace and KDP. You can upload a DOC file and be done. However, file formats are not the only thing to consider.

Other authors that I have spoken to have all said that Amazon has been their largest source of sales. It's not surprising considering the reach they have. However, companies like iTunes are fast on their heels. As such, you want to get the electronic version of your book into iTunes, if possible.

Enter the first major problem I encountered.

You can upload your digital book to iTunes as an individual supplier, but only if you have a Mac. For those of us on Windows, you're out of luck. I could tap on the shoulders of friends with Mac machines, but ...

Online stores such as Barnes and Noble require that you live in the United States, UK, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, The Netherlands or Belgium. If you live in Canada: no joy. Australia: nope. New Zealand? You've got to be kidding.

Both IngramSpark and Smashwords provide avenues for all books in their network to be listed on iTunes and in Nook (the eBook branch of Barnes and Noble). However, Smashwords is digital only. Let's face it, there is nothing like the feel of a real book in your hands.

So back to CreateSpace we go, only to encounter the next distribution hurdle.

Printed books purchased from Amazon are expensive to ship to New Zealand. Therefore, a large number of book fans turn to Book Depository and Fishpond to purchase their books. So, how does one get their books listed on Book Depository and Fishpond?

With IngramSpark, printed books are automatically included on the catalogue for both stores. Instant bonus. But the aspect that tipped it over the top was the costs associated with bringing printed books into New Zealand for conferences.

For the RWNZ conference, I ordered a box of 32 books (the largest number that would fit in a single carton). This box cost me just over AUD\$250, and was shipped from Australia. If I had been with CreateSpace, the same number of books would have cost me approximately US\$270, and they would have been shipped from the US, taking longer to get here. In addition, with a purchase of US\$270, one sits on the threshold of being slammed with GST charges (nearly NZ\$120 because of the administration costs too). Umm... I don't know about anyone else, but I would rather pay AUD\$250 any day, than pay US\$270 and run the risk of an additional NZ\$120.

IngramSpark has printers located throughout the world, keeping the cost of postage down, regardless of where in the world books are being sent.

It was the cost of the printed books that was the main reason I chose to work with IngramSpark. And I get, in my hand, approximately the same royalty for printed books as I would have if I had gone with CreateSpace.

The distribution network associated with IngramSpark is ... Huge is not quite the right word for it, because it's much wider than I had imagined. My book, printed and electronic, is listed on all the common online bookstores (Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Kobo, iBooks, Book Depository, Fishpond, etc.), but my curiosity searches have found the book listed on a Japanese online bookstore, a French bookstore, as well as a number of independent bookstores. I have even found a little independent bookstore in the Middle of Nowhere, USA, that has elected to stock the book on their shelves. How far the book has gone has just blown me away. And ALL of the distribution to date has been handled through IngramSpark.

And there are other hidden advantages of going with IngramSpark.

You can list both the printed and electronic versions of your books for pre-orders. Yes, you can achieve this with KDP, but pre-orders with CreateSpace are nasty and confusing. With IngramSpark, you just set your publication dates properly and the rest is all happy and cheery.

In addition, because YOU become the publisher, you can set yourself up as the publisher properly, eventually

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taking on books from other writers, if you wanted to go that way.

But with every bright cloud, there is always the moisture that threatens to rain on the parade.

IngramSpark costs US\$49 to list both your print and electronic versions of your book. Revisions to a version that has gone live costs US\$25 per upload. This can be a costly venture if you don't do a proper editing and typesetting job in the first instance. Yes, revisions are sometimes unavoidable (such as the poor resolution or contrast on a graphic that didn't get picked up until it was printed), but if you are going to use IngramSpark, you need to think of the entire process as a publisher would. You never send something to the printer for mass printing until you are 99.9% confident that you are ready to go live.

I'm still trying to work out all the ins and outs of working with IngramSpark. I have yet to discover how to offer discounts on the various networks, without fiddling with the list price. Give me time, and I'll have that one answered too.

Is IngramSpark the better option over CreateSpace and KDP? Well, in terms of printed books, in my opinion, IngramSpark wins hands-down. The distribution network is amazing, and the cost of importing books into New Zealand is a massive bonus. For the electronic books... That remains to be seen.

Based on the costs set on IngramSpark, I'm looking at approximately US\$2 per unit on royalties. I have no idea if the prices were set too high, or too low. I have no idea how well the book will sell on any channel, or if I will sell more printed books than electronic books. With the official release set for August 1st, the answers to all these questions is still a mystery. In truth, because of the way IngramSpark reports its figures, I won't know any of this for three months after release at the earliest.

It is possible that the best solution is actually using a combination of KDP and IngramSpark, giving you more control over the situation on Amazon for your eBook. However, remember that if you do use IngramSpark, you CAN NOT use KDP Select. It goes against their exclusivity clause.

I have been asked whether I will sell my books through my website. At this stage, the answer is no. If one elects to sell books through their personal (or business) website, then one also needs to consider the costs associated with that particular venture. I'm talking about the cost of an SSL certificate and the appropriate credit card handler. I'm also talking about the cost of postage and distribution. Yes, IngramSpark makes that somewhat affordable, the distribution side anyway, but is there sufficient financial gain in heading down that path? I'm getting US\$2 per unit through the sales using IngramSpark. I don't honestly think I could do much better if I did it on

my own.

Publishing a book is a business. Hence, whatever decision you make in the end NEEDS to be taken with this viewpoint. It's all about numbers and profit margins.

Kiwi Judy L Mohr is a writer of fantasy and science fiction. She is also a freelance editor with Black Wolf Editorial Services (<http://blackwolfeditorial.com>), working on projects from writers around the world. When she isn't writing, editing or doing something for writing within the local community, she is hosting her own radio show about science on KLRNRadio. You can find out more about Judy's various projects on her personal website (<http://judylmohr.com>) or follow her on twitter (<https://twitter.com/JudyLMohr>).



Hidden Traps: A Writer's Guide to Protecting Your Online Platform is officially released on August 1st, 2017. There are many different elements that go into forming an online platform but there are also many Hidden Traps. To make matters worse, solid advice on how to survive the muddy waters is scarce. In *Hidden Traps*, you'll learn about some of the hidden aspects of building an online writer's platform, and how to avoid them. At the end of the day, it's about protecting yourself and your reputation.

"It's not hard to write when your hand is led by your heart."

~ Sissy Gavilaki



"Writing, to me, is simply thinking through my fingers."

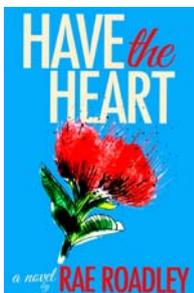
~ Isaac Asimov

Get To Know Our Authors



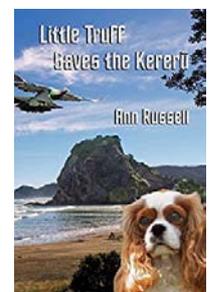
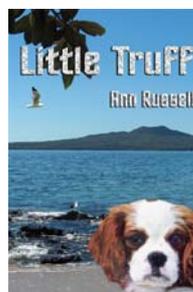
A member of the Otago chapter, Lucy Parker writes contemporary romance. She's currently working on the third novel in her West End theatre series for Carina Press. You can learn more about Lucy at www.lucyparkerfiction.com

USA Today Bestselling Author Serenity Woods lives in the sub-tropical Northland of New Zealand with her wonderful husband and her gorgeous teenage son. You can check out her books at <http://www.serenitywoodsromance.com>



Rae Roadley is a journalist, writing tutor, columnist, and author. She wrote about her city-to-remote-back-country move in Love at the End of the Road (Penguin) and loves big love stories set in small communities. You can find out more at www.raeroadley.co.nz

Author Ann Russell writes books about animal issues and conservation for readers from 8 years to 108. These family books are animal adventure stories, loved for their quirky plots and characters, action and humour. Meticulously researched, her books always have a message and a happy ending.



To be featured on this free page, please email **EITHER** one cover **OR** three, **PLUS** bio, **PLUS** buy links to: heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz by the 20th of the month deadline.

Regional Round-Up Reports

Auckland

Convenor: Pamela Gervai
(pamelagervai.com)

Nineteen attended our meeting 1 July. Toni Kenyon was our speaker. Her talk as an Indie writer on book launching was incredibly informative—and amusing too. Toni is a prolific writer and that in itself has led to her on-going success.

At our next meeting on 5 August our speaker is Emma Bryson. Emma is a graduate of Whitireia New Zealand's publishing course, and has interned for Penguin Random House NZ, Steele Roberts Aotearoa, and Victoria University Press. She spends her time proofreading and intern-wrangling for Entangled Publishing, editing manuscripts with the assistance of her *very *opinionated cat, or (quietly) attending bookish events.

Emma is going to tell us how to catch an editor's attention, what happens to your work when you push 'send', and finding someone to champion your book in both traditional and digital-first publishing environments.

Coast to Coast

Convenor: Vivienne Matthews
(vivienmatthewswriter@gmail.com)

Another laughter-filled meeting in the Central Region, combined with loads of puzzled looks and learning as our own Matthew Tremayne took us through a beginner's look at Scrivener. Such an awesome program with so many options for how you can use it. It was great to see and hear how different people use it and other tools. It's the program that keeps giving.

With RWNZ Conference in August we won't have a regional meeting. We'll meet again in September in Tauranga to hear about conference and do some cold reads. May all those going to conference have a fabulous time and learn lots for their craft.

Hawkes Bay

Convenor: Kendra Delugar
(kendraonthemove@hotmail.com)

Our July meeting took place at Bron's. After our normal catch-up we spoke about contracts (specifically, non-compete clauses) and how to make the most out of beta readers. Then we spoke about character development, how we each go about it, including tips on what we each do when our characters just don't want to play the game.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome. In our August meeting at Ginny's we'll be practicing our pitches for conference.

Wellington/Kapiti Coast

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

Ten of us (including new member Kit) had a great meeting today at Sandra's gorgeous house in Wellington. Thank you to Sandra for hosting.

We talked about the Conference pitch process, how to find an editor—and what kinds of editors we might need, Beta readers vs ARC readers—and how to acquire one. Then we had a brainstorming exercise for Gudrun's WiP. We congratulated Tracey on her awesome promo piece in STUFF this week, and Gudrun for pressing GO on her second book.

Next month we're practicing the cold read exercise in readiness for conference. Please bring the first two pages of your manuscripts to be read out anonymously. Watch your inbox for the email confirming the venue for our next meeting, 1pm, Saturday August 5th. Please bring items for the conference raffle.

Nelson

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

Our July meeting was held at Annika's place with mini-workshops on the agenda. The majority of the members had fled the country that particular day, which just goes to show that we practice the art of procrastination to perfection. Left were four brave souls, who attacked the writing tasks with their pen-swords. The writing was quite intense, and we earned the cuppa and ginger and cinnamon cake with lemon icing that had filled our senses with sweet spicy scents while we worked. We didn't do all the suggested tasks—deciding to save the rest for another time, to be fair to those who weren't there, haha. Our next meeting will be on Saturday 12 August, 2pm, at the usual venue. All are welcome.

Christchurch

Convenor: Jane Madison-Jones
(maddiejane@xtra.co.nz)

A group of members, including several new members, met for a mid-winter warmer at Strawberry Fare for drinks and desert. Several of us are attending conference in Rotorua so the excitement is building.

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

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