

Scrivener: A Word-Processing Program Designed for Writers

Judy L Mohr



Many writers spend endless hours writing their precious manuscripts using MS Word or some other equivalent word-processing program. In the initial writing phase, they encounter very little problems. Then editing begins. So too does the grumbling.

The file size increases dramatically and previous versions of certain chapters are lost. To move a chapter, the cut-and-paste hell takes over. Versions are sent out for review, resulting in hundreds of copies of the manuscript. (Exactly which one was the one I was working on?)

Here's the situation: I have NEVER liked MS Word. It stems back to my Master's thesis where MS Word frequently moved my images off the screen, so I would spend forever hunting for them. Then, it would gobble up whole chapters and all my editing would be lost. And when it came to printing... The Master Document feature failed completely and I had to change all the cross-references and auto-numbering manually, including page numbers. I was not a happy chappy.

Granted, I was working in MS Word 95. Things have significantly improved since then, but MS Word still doesn't like my documents.

When I did my PhD, I used LaTeX: a freeware software package that was designed for scientists and academics. The system had very little memory overhead and I never lost my images again. Moving chapters around was a simple matter of moving a single line of code.

When I finally started writing my high fantasy series, LaTeX was my choice. Then, I started looking seriously at agents and publishers. The horrible truth was that all

manuscripts needed to be submitted in DOC format. DOH! LaTeX outputs to PDF no sweat, ePub/MOBI with gentle persuasion (and a wooden mallet), RTF is covered, but DOC? Aaahh! Nope. It ain't happening.

After extensive research, and trialing various programs, I discovered Scrivener. It promised to provide the flexibility needed for editing, low memory overheads, and varied outputs, including DOC, PDF, RTF, ePub and MOBI. OMG, the transition from LaTeX was beyond easy and Scrivener upheld its promises.

I started using Scrivener in 2014. Since then, I've published a book (formatted using Scrivener), and have written countless other manuscripts. Today, ALL of my personal writing is done in Scrivener. I export my files to DOC for submission and to share with critique partners. Occasionally, a critique partner or beta reader wants to read the file on their Kindle. No problem—export to MOBI, and off the file goes.

From the conception through to the final revision, I do everything in Scrivener. No more hunting down random stray files on my computer with that random tidbit of information that I needed for a given scene. All research notes are added directly into my Scrivener project, so it's one click and one my screen. This includes any images, PDF documents, links to websites, and anything else that I might need.

I can take a snapshot of my chapters before I start editing, giving the ability to compare changes between versions. I can track my daily word count, and more importantly the word count of my manuscript. Chapter numbering is handled for me, and if I move chapters around, things are automatically updated.

And for those who hate writing synopses... There is a built-in feature where you can summarise each chapter and export those summary notes into a single synopsis file, editing your synopsis from there. (Bet you MS Word can't do that.)

Changing the formatting of my manuscript is literally a few clicks of the mouse and off it goes, meanwhile, my master document is left in the format that I like to work in. And with all the recent changes to Scrivener, new features are ready for me to play with that I'm still discovering.

I can share my projects between multiple devices. Scrivener is available for Mac, Windows, and iOS. Sorry, but no Android version... yet. The full license of Scrivener is less than \$50 USD, which entitles you to updates and full technical support. And this is a lifetime license. (When was the last time MS Word was that cheap?)



Every year, Literature and Latte, the developers of Scrivener, sponsor NaNoWriMo. If you are registered for the NaNoWriMo, CampNaNo or the young writers program, then you will get a discount, normally 20%. Winners are normally given a 50%-discount code.

The trial version of the software is the full package, with all features enabled. You get 30 non-consecutive days to trial the software.

Okay... This really is coming across as an ad for Scrivener, but after the experiences I've had with other programs...

It's no secret: I'm a huge fan of Scrivener. I'll be the first to admit that the workflow with a Scrivener project is different to that employed in MS Word, but if you were prepared to put in the time and effort to learn to use the program, I honestly believe that you would come to love it at much as I do.



Kiwi Judy L. Mohr is a writer of thrillers, fantasy, science fiction, and non-fiction. She is also a freelance editor with [Black Wolf Editorial Services](#), 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, [ConvoScience](#). You can follow her crazy adventures on her [blog](#) (judylmohr.com) or on [Twitter](#) (@JudyLMohr).

Buy *Hidden Traps* on Amazon [here](#).

What's The Skinny on Vellum?

Maria King



I was attending my second regional meeting when fellow RWNZ author, Rachel Stedman, mentioned Vellum Software. At the time, I had written and self-published one book without a clue about anything. I'd spent hours formatting the print version in Word with the aid of a CreateSpace template,

adding styles, watching You Tube tutorials on how to format a clickable TOC, and moving horizontal spaces a fraction of a point so everything looked like a store bought novel. By the end, I was ready to throw my keyboard out the window, and I hadn't even started on my Kindle file.

MOVE OVER WORD

The moment I clicked onto the Vellum website, I knew I was on to a winner. Here was a software that would format e-books in a matter of minutes. Better still, you could, and still can, download Vellum and play around with it to your hearts content without spending a cent. The only problem was, it is only for Mac and, it was yet to have a print version available.

Having one book under my belt, with a small few creeping off the Kindle shelves, I took my credit card to the local computer shop, purchased a small MacBook Air and started to format my next e-book in Vellum—and I was hooked. Back in the day, they had three price points including a one-book deal. Unfortunately, the price has been streamlined to \$US199.99 for the e-book package, and \$US249.99 for the print and e-book combo. Both packages allow you to generate unlimited book files with no additional fees. So while the investment may be on the steep side, in my opinion, the benefits are worth every American dollar.

THE PROS.

Formatting. As well as formatting print, Vellum generates files for iBooks, Nook, Google Play, Kindle, a generic EPUB, and Kobo at the click of a button. You work with one file, meaning updating your manuscript is a one-step process. Additionally you don't have to worry about page numbers, headers, line spacing, or drop caps, as the software takes care of everything. Best of all, the completed file is ready in a few seconds, and can be uploaded to your retailers website within minutes.

Ease of Use. Documents are easily imported from Word. A live TOC generates automatically and you can split chapters with one click, move chapters with the drag of a mouse, or add a 'parts' feature easily. The screen preview shows TOC on the left sidebar, your up and coming best seller in the centre, and various device views on the right side of the screen. Changing from Kindle Paperwhite and Fire, Kobo Glo, Android Tablet, iPhone, and iPad, takes just one click, and if you need to add a few words or even an entire scene, previews upload automatically as you paste or type.

Print. There are four print trim sizes available including: 5 x 8, 5.5 x 8.5, and 6 x 9.

Fancy Bits. The * feature is your one stop shop for subheads, images, alignment blocks, block quotations and more, as well as web links and store links. These features make 'text speak' and letters within the manuscript easy to format.

The Book Styles feature lets you choose a variety of chapters, first paragraph, ornamental break styles, and font and line spacing points. A new feature allows you to upload your own image into the ornamental break, and images can be uploaded in both black and white and colour.

The speech function is easy on the ear. It reads chapter by chapter, or any highlighted text. Mr. Speaker can be a tad monotonous, but he rarely misses a word and can be dismissed by the click of a mouse when you've had enough of his drone. (Edit>Speech>Start Speaking).



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Support through Vellum's Facebook page is my first point of contact. They usually reply within a day or two. There is also an active Facebook support page called Vellum Users, which is helpful for small problems. If you want to make a suggestion, team Vellum are open to ideas. They recently added a half title page in an update, which has been well received.

Front and Back Matter. There are a variety of additional pages including: Copyright, Dedication, Also By, as well as About the Author and Acknowledgements, which are moveable to suit your preference.

THE CONS

Available on Mac only. The makers of Vellum, Brad and Brad, don't have plans to release a PC version at this stage.

The price. At \$US199.99 for the e-book only version, and \$US249.99 for print and e-book, the cost is up there, but all updates are free, so if you are an indie or hybrid author with many more books to write, the investment is worth considering.

'I love Vellum so much, I often write straight into it, especially when I'm traveling.'

IN SUMMARY

Vellum has everything you need to create a professional looking product within minutes. In fact, I love Vellum so much, I often write straight into it, especially when I'm traveling.

For those of you who want more information, Joanna Penn, from The Creative Penn, is a Vellum fan and has a tutorial on how to use the product on her YouTube channel.

Check out the [Vellum website](#).



Writing as Frances Cowie, Maria King first hit the keyboard four years ago at the age of fifty-seven. She has self-published three novels; one contemporary romance, and two woman's fiction set in the 20th century. She released her latest book, *Field of the White Snow*, in August 2018 using Vellum software for both the e-book and print versions. Maria lives in Wanaka, and when she's not embarrassing her adult children by writing romance, works part-time in her family's commercial property business. You can find her at www.francescowie.com

Buy *Field of the White Snow* on Amazon [here](#).

Blending Fact with Fiction

Soraya Lane



One of the toughest things about being a historical author is navigating the slippery path of blending fact with fiction. Many people ask me about my research, expecting that to be the most challenging part of my writing, but the truth is we now have more information available to us as authors than we've ever had. In addition to

fantastic resource books, we have Google, and for little bite-sized facts in particular, it means we literally have an information overload available to us without even getting out of our chair! So research is never my problem, working out how much of it to include in my story is the big issue.

My next historical novel, *THE SPITFIRE GIRLS*, involved an incredibly exciting time in history. I was writing about fictional characters, based on real women, who had flown almost every plane owned by the military at a time when women were expected to be keeping house and raising children. So I dived headfirst into the story, brimming with historical facts and wanting to weave as much of that into my novel as possible. And I did that brilliantly. *Or so I thought.*

Then my editor read it. Then my other editor. They liked it, but it was "too heavy on the historical information". They wanted me to pare back the history and delve deeper into my characters, because as interesting as it was, I wasn't writing non-fiction. So I did that. I rewrote the story and sent it back. Surely it was incredible this time!

It wasn't. This ended up being a novel that I had to rewrite almost entirely at least three times. Because as interesting as the historical facts were, my editors had to remind me that I was writing commercial fiction, and my readers expected something from me. Yes, they expected to read fascinating snippets of historical information, but most importantly they were on this journey with me because I write big character driven novels about women and their experiences. They want to know more about how my characters are feeling, how their individual backstory affected their experiences, how they grew as characters and so forth. They want me to go deep on the emotion more than anything else. And what had I done? Well, I thought I'd written a book my readers would like, but I'd become lost in the historical detail. I'd done my research, I knew everything I could know about this period in time, but I'd written from the outside in. Instead of starting with my characters, which is something





I ALWAYS do, I'd started with history and then added my characters in to make it work. I'm proud to say that with my editor's expert assistance, I eventually rewrote the book to create a story that my readers will hopefully love.

For my next novel, I'm going back to basics. To write character driven, commercial fiction, I need to start with my characters and make the history work for them. One thing I've always struggled with is deviating from history, because someone always catches me out, but my editors seem less concerned with that than I do. They keep reminding me that I write fiction, and it's okay to fudge things sometimes! Of course I always note that at the back of the book that it's a work of fiction, but there will always be the odd review that painstakingly tells me of some little detail that I got wrong or didn't expand on clearly enough.

So no matter whether I'm writing contemporary romance or historical women's fiction, my characters need to come first. What makes my stories powerful is the depth of human emotion, exploring my characters and understanding how their own individual back story makes their experience of history different than anyone else's at that time, and making sure they aren't the same character at the start of the book as they are at the end. My readers expect my characters to change and develop as the story progresses, and they want to see a journey through the eyes of my character. It's a tough balance that's for sure, and without great editors I'd be lost! So I encourage you, if you're thinking of writing historical women's fiction or romance, to make sure you stay focused on your characters and their journey, without letting the history take over.

My current release, HEARTS OF RESISTANCE, is my all-time favourite story that I've ever written, because it explores the story of three flawed yet strong women, and the incredible period of history in which they find themselves. And when the writing is tough or edits are getting me down, I remind myself how many times I had to rewrite part of that novel to get the balance between fiction and history just right!



Soraya M. Lane is the Amazon Charts and Kindle #1 bestselling author of *Wives of War* and *Hearts of Resistance*. You can find her at www.sorayalane.com and on Facebook at [SorayaLaneAuthor](https://www.facebook.com/SorayaLaneAuthor), or head to [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8) and check out her informative #AuthorCoach sessions!



Buy *Hearts of Resistance* on Amazon AU [here](#).
Buy *Hearts of Resistance* on Amazon.com [here](#).

Beginnings

Keri Arthur



The following is a special treat for anyone who wasn't at conference or who missed Keri's session on Getting the Beginning Right. Keri has graciously allowed us to reproduce her notes in Heart to Heart. Thank you, Keri!

BEGINNINGS

Most workshops tend to concentrate on plots, characters, and world building, and as important as those three things are, there's one more vital element—the beginning of your story.

As harsh as it may seem, very few editors and agents read more than the first couple of paragraphs of your book. If you haven't created enough interest in either the characters or the storyline in that time, then it doesn't matter how brilliant your plot, your characters, or your world building is, that manuscript is rejected. Editors and agents have so many submissions these days they simply haven't got the time or patience to deal with stories that have slow or uninteresting starts, even if the rest of book is otherwise brilliant.

Noah Lukeman, a US literary agent, backs this up in the opening section of his book, *The First Five Pages*.

He says: Agents and editors often ignore synopsis and plot outlines; instead, we skip right to the actual manuscript. If the writing is good, then we'll go back and consider the synopsis. If not, then the manuscript is discarded.

How many of you pick up a book and read the first few lines? How many of you put it right back if the story doesn't immediately catch you?

That's what you're facing when you're either sending your work out or self-publishing it. You need to grab a reader's interest right away. If you can do that, and if you can build on that interest in the following paragraphs, then you're well down the road of getting a request or a sale.

Jacob M. Appel in his writer's digest article--10 Ways to Start Your Story Better--says this about beginnings:

Think of every opening line you write as a pebble tossed down a mountainside: The stone may jolt back and forth within a limited path, building up force, but the trajectory of its initial release largely determines its subsequent route. Never forget that the entire course of a story or novel, like an avalanche, is largely defined within its first seconds. To craft a compelling story, you must first launch it in the right direction.

So, how do we go about this?





The first line is, of course, one of the hardest things to get right. It's commonly advised to drop your reader right into the middle of the action and sweep on from there, filling in the backstory as you go. But it doesn't have to be I-must-save-the-world type action. It may be something as simple as the character facing a major change in their life, or a decision that will affect the people in his or her life. Whatever you open with, show that it's important—vitaly important—to the entire plot to come.

Here's a couple of samples of opening line hooks:

Dick Francis/Bonecrack: They both wore thin rubber masks.

Cursed/ Keri Arthur: I raised my face to the storm-clad sky and let the rain wash the sweat and blood from my skin.

Those lines immediately have you questioning what is going on, and therefore drag you on to the next sentence.

Of course, opening hooks are not without their problems and they can feel like a gimmick if the hook is not carried through into the following narrative. If you're going to use an opening hook, then the following couple of paragraphs not only must relate back to that hook, but set the scene and introduce your protagonist.

Using the two samples above, here's the next couple of paragraphs:

Bonecrack:

They both wore thin rubber masks.

Identical.

I looked at the two identical faceless faces in tingling disbelief. I was not the sort of person to whom rubber-masked individuals up to no good paid calls at twenty to midnight. I was a thirty-four year old sober-minded businessman quietly bringing up to date the account books at my father's stables in Newmarket.

Cursed:

I raised my face to the storm-clad sky and let the rain wash the sweat and blood from my skin.

Some of that blood was mine.

Most of it was not.

I drew in a deep breath and savored the scent of pain, anger, and confusion that rode the air. This day—this moment—had been a long time coming, and I intended to enjoy every second of it.

If only because seconds was probably all I had left.

My gaze returned to my opponent. He was broad and thick set, a man-mountain whose long black hair was tied back in an ornate ponytail—a practice common amongst those of the high court. His almond shaped eyes were dark gold and his skin brown.

He was my brother. My twin.

And heir to the ancient Kingdom of Cannamore.

As you can see, both lead on nicely from the opening hook while setting the scene and introduce the main character.

Of course, not all stories suit the 'grab them by the throat' first line hook theory. There are plenty of successful novels that break this rule and instead set the scene. Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* opens with a comment about the weather. Kelly Hunter's *Untamable Rogue* starts with inner dialogue about how the heroine quite likes looking at near naked men, and proceeds along this line for the next two paragraphs, setting the scene and the story before the following hook appears—*Right now, as Madeline's eyes adjusted to the dim interior of the shabby little dojo in the heart of Singapore's Chinatown, she had the definite pleasure of happening upon not one shirtless warrior, but two.*

I also break this rule in *Hunter Hunted* with a bit of scene setting while I'm introducing the main characters: *The woman sitting opposite me was plump, with merry blue eyes and purple-tinted gray hair. She was one of the café's regular customers, and came in at least three times a week. If Belle—the café's co-owner and my best friend—wasn't helping her to communicate with the daughter she'd lost five years ago, I was using my psychometry skills to find whatever item she'd misplaced that particular week.*

It's not a hook by any stretch of the imagination, and it means the following paragraphs have to shoulder the task of dragging the reader deeper into the novel.

But if you are taking this approach, be aware there's a fine line to walk between setting the scene and boring your readers, and it's usually best to use a mix of scene setting and introducing the characters at the point of change. The one thing you don't want to do is have a paragraph or more of beautiful description without the reader knowing who or what is seeing it.

'The power of a story lies in looking forward, not back.'

Donald Maass had this to say about story beginnings:

What is the moment when a protagonist realizes that things are changing, and that they can never change back? They may not provide an opening line but it does indicate where the true story begins.

The plot, you see, is one thing. It can provide a hook. But a plot gimmick is not what hooks our hearts. We are drawn in emotionally by a character who is in flux. A world can be in flux too, which explains how the omniscient narrator in the first Harry Potter novel is able to capture us.

Catchy openings can also be a false promise. In manuscripts, I often begin to notice the sag of the middle on page three.

So what are the other possible problems?

One of the major ones is simply too much backstory. When I was editing the first draft of *Full Moon Rising*, I actually ended up cutting the first chapter and a half. It was written for me more than the reader—it was all the stuff I needed to know about the world and the character, but it wasn't stuff that the reader necessarily needed to know. Not at the beginning of the story, anyway.



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The power of a story lies in looking forward, not back. As an example, in *City of Light*, the backstory involves a war that has torn the world apart and left the protagonist the soul survivor of her kind. But the story starts one hundred years later, at a point of change for *her*. Her backstory and that of the war, is woven in through the rest of the narrative.

It's also best not to start with too many characters. As the old saying goes, too many cooks spoil the broth and all that. You want your reader to connect with your hero first and foremost; as writers, we have to show *why* that character is worth spending time with, and *that* means you actually have to spend story time with that character. If you're continually hopping from head to head, you're diluting the reader's connection and possibly their interest.

The final problem is momentum. It's the force that leads your readers onto the next line, the next paragraph, and the next page. Your opening pages should not be answering too many questions about your characters, their quests, or their pasts. The opening page is all about *asking* questions. Your task, as the writer, is to invite the reader into your world via that first line, and then intrigue them enough to make them want to read on. You can't do that without a strong sense of anticipation—a feeling that there's a whole more going on than appears on the page. So don't blurt out everything—reveal the story, the plot, and a character's traits in teasing bits and pieces.

Of course, there are always exceptions to every rule, and there are plenty of books out there that break the 'hook' one. But in a fast paced world where we authors are competing against movies, TV, smart phones, video games, etc. etc., it's certainly better to be safe rather than sorry—to hook rather than risk them putting the book down and wandering off to do something else.

One other thing to remember before I make you all work—the perfect first line doesn't always happen with the first draft. Sometimes you have to write the whole story before it comes to you. Sometimes you might write something you think is perfect only to discard it for something better during the edits.

Like everything else in writing, it doesn't matter how you get there, just as long as you do.



[Keri Arthur](#), author of the New York Times bestselling Riley Jenson Guardian series, has now written more than forty-one novels. She's received several nominations in the Best Contemporary Paranormal category of the Romantic Times Reviewers Choice Awards and has won RT's Career Achievement Award for urban fantasy. She's also something of a wannabe photographer, so when she's not at her computer madly writing, she can be found taking photos of scenery or animals (with varying degrees of success)

Buy *Hunter Hunted* on Amazon [here](#).

GMC—The Trust Dilemma

Susan Pace/Alison Lane

As happens often when authors gather, I fell into a discussion on GMC last week – for those who haven't heard this term, it stands for Goal, Motivation, and Conflict, which collectively form the basis of all successful storytelling. The discussion was timely since I'm again wrestling with the conflict in my own story.

My characters' internal conflicts usually involve trust issues. This tendency is so ubiquitous that you can define the theme of my entire body of work as trust. I've always believed that a successful relationship between any two people – parent/child, siblings, friends, lovers, spouses – has to be based on trust. Distrust makes one or both parties secretive, jealous, and aloof as each hides his/her real self behind thick walls, fearing to reveal vulnerability and open their cores to pain.

Which is why resolving a conflict based on a lack of trust is so tricky. How does one prove that he/she is trustworthy? How does a lifelong rake convince a heroine that he will remain a monogamous, supportive spouse who harbors no remorse over the loss of his former activities? Our culture is full of sayings like *leopards don't change their spots*. How does the character who disappeared without a word, leaving his/her betrothed standing alone at the altar, prove that he/she won't do it again? After all, there was no hint of impending doom the first time around. How can the unrestrained gamester convince anyone he has changed? Or the drunkard, addict, abuser, or any other character with a serious flaw?

Yet authors are expected to create characters with just such flaws, then help those characters resolve their problems over the course of the book. The other characters must ultimately accept that these changes are real and permanent, letting them lock the former bad behavior into the past, never to be remembered again. The author's problem is finding a way to make this believable to readers because, frankly, few of us would accept such changes as more than an act if we faced them in real life. How many times does the abuser apologize, cry, and swear it will never happen again? How many times does the shopaholic vow to adhere to a budget? Most people who live in the modern world are cynical about the ability of people to actually follow through on such resolutions. Anyone intimate with the ones who try remains constantly alert for any sign of backsliding. In other words, trust doesn't return easily. Promises mean nothing unless trust already exists.

I've done the impossible before, of course. To get 28 titles in print, I've had to. I even had one book in which I deliberately set out to see how bad I could make the hero and still redeem him. *Devall's Angel*



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was lauded in many quarters, winning several awards. But I admit that I cheated just a bit. Once the heroine dug through the thick screen of social ostracism and lurid rumor, Devall's goals were laudable and his motivation heroic, so she only had to divert his execution onto more acceptable paths.

My current dilemma is not so easy, though the hero's public image is nowhere near as bad as Devall's was. But the current hero broke trust with the heroine by disappearing without a trace, leaving her in an untenable position. She has come about in the intervening decade, rebuilding her life and developing new goals and motivations. His sudden reappearance is thus a problem on many levels. His presence resurrects feelings she no longer wants. His disappearance might be understandable in lieu of new information, but the callous way he handled that old situation remains unacceptable. So why should she trust him? It isn't only herself that she must worry about this time around. She has two young children who depend on her to protect and support them. How can she expose them to potential harm by allowing the hero back into her heart? It is easier to take chances when the only potential victim is oneself, but a heroine mother must always put her children's interests first.

Which brings me back to MY dilemma – how can he prove that he is trustworthy? What test must he pass before she can tear down the wall surrounding her heart? So far, all my ideas are clichéd or trite, which I refuse to consider. Eventually she will tell me how to resolve this dilemma. I just wish she'd get on with it...



Hi. I'm Allison Lane, an award-winning author who has enjoyed a lifelong affair with books. I was born in Minnesota, earned degrees in mathematics and computer science from the University of Illinois, then embarked on careers designing computer software and teaching classical piano before settling on writing Regency romances. Among my many awards is the Romantic Times Career Achievement Award and finaling for RWA's RITA award. I have a fabulous dog named Midas, who pinch-hits for me whenever I have to supply publicity photos - he looks so much cuter than I do. Besides writing, my favorite activity is traveling, which I indulge in as often as possible. I've lived all over the country, but currently reside in California with my husband.



THE EARL'S REVENGE -- When the Earl of Bridgeport catches up with Elaine Thompson, the insignificant chit who left him standing at the altar, he plots the perfect revenge. But she won't cooperate, initiating a battle of wits that threatens to destroy them both. Will she discover his deepest secret? Will he discover hers? Who will win this war of wills?

Buy *Hunter Hunted* on Amazon [here](#).

RWNZ 2018 Conference Report

Cherie Mitchell



As a first time attendee and a new member of RWNZ, I approached the conference weekend with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. As most writers do, I possess a fairly sizeable introvert streak and the thought of spending three

days with around 300 strangers was daunting to say the least.

I flew from Christchurch to Auckland on the Thursday in order to make the most of the weekend. I met with my agent Nadine Rubin Nathan on Thursday afternoon, which was awesome, as we had not had the chance to spend time together previously. My first taste of the treasures the conference might hold was The Prose Toolkit workshop with Grace Burrowes on Thursday evening. Wow. I left the Rimu Room feeling pumped and ready to roll!

Friday began bright and early with a full-day session with Damon Suede scheduled for all attendees. I must admit that I had never heard of Damon Suede and prior to his introduction I had planned on taking some time out during the day for writing in my room. No Chance. Damon is a vibrant, whirling powerhouse of energy; a walking, talking, word-juggling thesaurus; and the ultimate definition of fun on two legs. He also loves verbs! If his Friday workshops were the only part of the conference I was able to attend, it would have been all worth it.

I met with the other first timers for a get together at 6.30. This was an ideal time to meet other conference newbies, make our introductions, and find some more friendly faces in the large crowd. At this point, I must iterate that the whole weekend was crammed with friendly faces; my concerns over spending a weekend with strangers were completely unfounded.

'...not only did I receive valuable feedback on my own work, but also I was able to listen to other writers' novel beginnings.'

The day finished with the conference cocktail party, providing another opportunity to mix and mingle, and then I said my goodnights and slipped away.



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Saturday's schedule commenced at 7.30 with anonymous Cold Reads. These were a lot of fun – not only did I receive valuable feedback on my own work, but also I was able to listen to other writers' novel beginnings (see what I did there?). Following on from the Cold Reads, we enjoyed another session with Damon, a presentation on market tips and trends, and a choice of three breakout workshops. Over the lunch break, Dan Wood the Director of Operations from Draft2Digital presented. I am a huge fan of D2D and I have used their services for quite some time now.

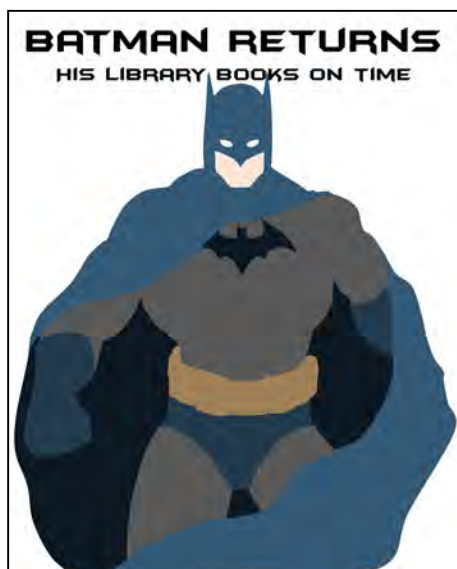
The afternoon sped by in a rush of presentations and workshops, of hastily grabbed cups of coffee, of chatting and coalescing, and a full-on information download. By the time the evening rolled around, I was exhausted. I had not ticked the box for the Anniversary Dinner but I have to quietly admit that I was pleased, as I was not at my sociable best after a disrupted sleep the night before. I ended the day with a room service dinner in my room whilst watching Angelina Jolie's *Maleficent* and preparing myself for another full day tomorrow.

On Sunday, I was up super early and anxious to write and utilize some of the knowledge I had gained. I banged out a chapter (as you do) then I hurried downstairs for Grace's workshop. A highlight of Sunday's program for me was the keynote address by Bella Andre. Every now and then, you hear someone speak who resonates with your own outlook and plans, and for me this was Bella. She is a prolific and productive author with a business brain and background, as I am, and everything she said made perfect sense to me. The motivational Nalini Singh followed with her address to galvanize and spark me further. Utterly inspired by everything I had heard over the weekend, I floated through the rest of the day before hurrying away to the airport.

In summary – am I glad I went to the conference? YES! Did I meet some fantastic people? YES! Did I learn more than I could have ever anticipated? YES! Will I attend the next conference? HELL YEAH!



To learn more about Cherie, read on to our Meet the Authors Section!



From the Editor:

Gillian St. Kevern



My three and half-month old nephew is helping me write this editorial. Apologies if it is a little damper than usual. It is nephew's second greatest joy to put things in his mouth.

His first greatest joy is rolling over, which he discovered on Monday. Since then, he will roll over on the slightest provocation. He has rolled over for Mummy, Daddy, his big sister, the dog, his Aunt (hello!), grandma, great grandma, the loud guy on the telly, a red bird... Basically, if you stop still for more than a few seconds, nephew will show off his rolling over skills.

Well, why shouldn't he? Part of the fun of being good at something is showing it off, right? And nephew is not only good at rolling over, but he enjoys it—and so, presumably does his audience. Right?

Well, nephew's audience is currently pretty enthusiastic about his rolling, but who knows how long this will last? If nephew wants to keep entertaining the family, he is going to have to learn some new tricks.

As writers, we probably have a pretty good repertoire of tricks. Tropes we nail with the accuracy of William Tell, techniques to add or subtract words from manuscripts as needed. With every manuscript we complete, we hone our skills... But how do we keep our tricks interesting?

At conference, Bella Andre spoke of the importance of knowing your core story, that is at the heart of the promise you make your reader—the promise that keeps them coming back to your work, book after book. At the same time, Damon Suede warned of the problem of satiety, that presented with the same pattern enough times, our brains stop recognizing beauty and downgrades it to delight, which, if repeated too often, becomes boredom. How do we stay true to our core story, while keeping it fresh every time?

I'm at the point of my writer journey where everything is new enough that I'm only just starting to see the patterns in my own work. I'm still struggling to uncover my core story to hone in on it. But I think the key here—as it will be down the road—is intentionality. Knowing myself and looking critically at my writing will hopefully enable me to tell difference between what is a crutch and what is a core element.

With the distance between us and conference, I'm sure that others have found their own take-aways. I've been enjoying the post-conference discussions in our Canterbury writers groups, and am once again impressed at how willing RWNZ members are to share their tricks and inspirations with each other.

Not my nephew, however. Not getting the reaction he felt he deserved, he started grizzling and has been returned to his mother.

Meet the Executive!

Starting in September, the previous executive has handed over the reigns to the new. We have a really good mix of new and experienced volunteers, bringing to the roles enthusiasm and expertise. What better way to get to know our new executive, than by asking them to introduce themselves?

I asked each member of the exec three questions:

1. What book or author has most influenced you?
2. What is the best writing advice you ever received?
3. Cherry ripe or Turkish Delight?

Vivienne Matthews: President



Hello, I'm Vivienne and I'm your new President. I'm sure lots of you are asking 'Vivienne? Who's that? Who is this person who's now our President?' which being I've not been around that long, is a very valid question. So here's a little about me. I first joined RWNZ after the 2011 conference. Went to a few chapter meetings but wasn't

really writing and so let my membership lapse. I went to the 2016 conference and joined up again at that point. In December 2016 I took on the convenor role for the Coast to Coast (C2C) chapter and am planning on continuing in that role alongside the Presidency. I didn't make the 2017 Conference but did make it this year and loved it! I'm still figuring out my own writing but seem to lean towards Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Paranormal. I've dabbled in contemporary but they often end up being on a spaceship or being shapeshifters so, yeah. I'm very much at the beginning of my writing journey and I love all that RWNZ has to offer its members both fledging wana be writers and authors of 20+ books. The friendships, the knowledge, the laughter, the willingness to share what people have learnt and being there for each other through the good and the bad. It's an awesome organisation and I'm proud and excited to be part of the team leading it.

While my own writing is still getting to the starting block, I love curling up with books – normally via my kindle so I can have as many books as I like wherever I am! I read across genres, mostly romance but everything from Regency and Historical through to Contemporary to Sci-Fi and Paranormal and anything that takes my fancy on the day. I also enjoy non-hetero-sexual romances and love that these are gaining more traction and attention in the writing world. I don't have a particular author or book that I would say has influenced me at this point, but the books that stand out from my childhood are Famous Five by Enid Blyton and The Abby Books by Elsie J Oxenham. Very different to what I read now, but life has a way of changing our tastes. I think the best piece of writing advice for me at this stage, that was re-iterated again and again

at Conference, is 'Write the Damn Book!' And for me that's what I'm going to concentrating on now. I'll worry about the rest of the stuff once I've actually got a completed manuscript under my belt! The last question Gillian has given me to answer was 'Cherry Ripe or Turkish Delight' and I'm not gonna lie, those are the two chocolates I would happily give away! Moro's, Pixie Caramel's however, not a chance and I am yet to find the person I love enough to give my last Rollo too...

Well I hope that's given you more of a sense of who this person is who's now in the Presidents seat. I'm super-stoked Bronwen is sticking around as the Past-President and I know with her guidance and the superb team we have on the Executive, we're in for another brilliant year at Romance Writers New Zealand. If you want to get in touch, please do. I can be reached via our RWNZ emails – so president@romancewriters.co.nz or on Twitter at https://twitter.com/_vivienneamathe or Facebook on <https://www.facebook.com/vivienne.matthews.338?ref=bookmarks> though I don't tend to check my Facebook messenger too often so via email or Twitter are better. Looking forward to getting to know you all a bit more and seeing where this year takes us! Kia kaha.

Cheers,

Vivienne Matthews

Zoe Sojourner: Vice-President



Hi, I'm Zoe, a high school teaching, book loving, married mother of two boys. While I have written short stories and essays more successfully I am not quite as experienced with novels. I tend to get distracted by the next shiny new idea before I have finished the last one. So my mission is to actually finish my current project.

I read basically anything and everything but young adult fiction has always been a love of mine and that is what I am focusing on writing at the moment. I have been hugely inspired by the talent in this community so far. I am looking forward to learning from and getting to know everyone, as well as helping out however I can.

1. When I started reading novels as a child my favourite authors were all New Zealanders (like Sherryl Jordan and Ken Catran) which was what inspired me to start writing in the first place.
2. If you want to write well you need to read widely. (Or is that just an excuse! Haha.)
3. Turkish Delight.



Tania Roberts: Treasurer

I've been treasurer now since February 2017 so think I now have a handle on that job. As far as everything else about the executive and RWNZ

is concerned - I am learning, learning, learning. It is awesome to be involved with a friendly, supportive group of people who organise such inspirational conferences.

Being a newbie to writing, I'm still trying to find my own voice and after this year's conference I am changing focus slightly to start on a new story based in historical New Zealand. Nobody does historical New Zealand like Deborah Challinor. If I dream a little, I can see my books on the shelves at Whitcoulls beside hers. To make that dream a reality, I try to follow the advice that so many authors give – write, write, write.

And because most people I know don't like Turkish Delight or Cherry Ripe, I like them both so I can get more chocolate.

Kendra Delugar: Membership Secretary



Hi, I'm Kendra, your 2018/19 Membership Secretary. I've set myself a three year writing plan so I don't intend to have a tonne of time for outside interests - though I do want to get fit and I have a five month old golden lab puppy, Blue, who's meant to help me with that (once I can convince her to stop chewing everything in sight).

I read romance (historical and paranormal when I'm writing my first draft and contemporary when I'm editing or between writing books), plus sci-fi's, thrillers and suspenses. I write sexy contemporary romances set in the USA. And I've honestly not thought about what I'm looking forward to in this role on the Executive yet, I've only just recovered from Conference! I'll have a better answer for that in a month's time

1. What book or author has most influenced you?

Ready for the confessions of a self-professed science geek? Good, because this isn't going to be your Jane Austen or Nora Roberts sort of answer.



Katie O'Keefe: Secretary

Hi, I'm Kate O'Keeffe and I'm a mother, wife, and pet wrangler, heralding from Havelock North in gorgeous Hawke's Bay. As well as writing

romantic comedies and chick lit, I'm currently learning to grow my own fruit and veggies, and soak up the summer sun. Tough life for some, right?

I love to read chick lit and rom coms, but I also read biographies, contemporary romance, historical romance, and books on health and well-being (because I'm also a bit of a hippy at heart, refer: growing own fruit and veggies).

This is my second year as Secretary for the Exec, and I've enjoyed playing my small part in helping our fantastic organisation. This year's line-up looks like a great group, and I'm looking forward to working with the team to deliver more benefits to our members in 2018-19.

1. What book or author has most influenced you? I'm most influenced by Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. When I read it back in the late-90s I thought it had exactly the balance I liked in a book: the heroine's development, swoon-worthy love interest, comedy, and that all important HEA.

2. What is the best writing advice you ever received? Wow, that's a hard one as there is so much! I think it would be to think of every scene as driving the plot, thus cutting out any chaff that (often) creeps in.

3. Cherry ripe or Turkish Delight? Definitely Turkish Delight!

Website: www.kateokeeffe.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/kateokeeffeauthor

A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking because it blew my mind. But beyond that, at 17 (and a hater of all things to do with physics), it taught me that sometimes you just need to open your eyes wider, look at things a different way, learn from a new teacher, or just read a few more books because you can discover a love for something you once scorned. A life long love that, for me, has stretched from quarks to quasars to string theory - and a book did that. Words on a page. The transfer of ideas from one person to another. It's such a powerful thing - and one we all tap into.

2. What is the best writing advice you ever received?

There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are. W. Somerset Maugham

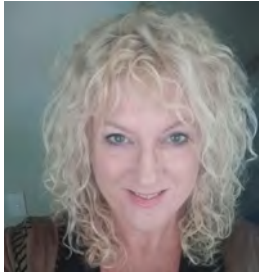
And I truly believe that. There is no one set of rules. For each of us the process is different, and we have to take time to learn what that process is and cut ourselves some slack if that means we can't write a first draft in three months.

3. Cherry ripe or Turkish Delight?

Seriously? I have to choose between them? This is my secret weapon at Christmas time, I adore them both and no one else does. So as the Favourites are shared around I eat all the other options and then invariably there's a stash of 'unwants' left over - the Cherry Ripes and Turkish Delights. And those are just for me! *grins* But as I have two Cherry Ripes sitting beside me right now (I kid you not), that's what I'll choose as my 'favourite' for today.

Meet the New Member Authors

This month, we're using 'Meet the Authors' to put the spotlight on some new member authors. While the authors below may not be new to writing, they're all first time conference attendees and recent additions to RWNZ. Welcome all!



Cherie Mitchell: On the completion of her tenure as General Manager of a multi-national in Australia, followed by an exciting sojourn in China teaching English, Cherie Mitchell returned to Christchurch three years ago determined never to work in an office again. She took on the role of a freelancer, juggling the ghostwriting of romance novels with creating US executive bios and resumes for a US startup (now ranked on the Inc 100 List of Fastest Growing US Companies) until November 2017. At this stage, she made the move to write under her own name following the publication of her first novel by The Little French. Since November, Cherie has self-published several novels, appeared on US TV in a writer spotlight interview, achieved Indie recognition for one of her books, built a mailing list of 4000, and signed with High Spot Literary Agency. Cherie is a highly productive writer (some would say a nutter) and is consistently rated as more productive than 99% of other Grammarly users.



Web page: <https://www.hotfromthepen.com>
Buy Cherie's books on Amazon [here](#).



Michelle Vernal is a Harper Collins author who loves a happy ending. She lives with her husband, their two boys and a needy three-legged black cat in Christchurch, New Zealand. She's partial to a glass of wine, loves a cheese scone and has recently taken up yoga—a sight to behold indeed.

She is a freelance writer for a Canterbury lifestyle magazine who is currently working on her seventh novel. Michelle's a firm believer in happy endings, and all of her stories are written with humour and warmth, and she hopes you enjoy reading them.

Web page: <https://www.michellevernal-books.com>

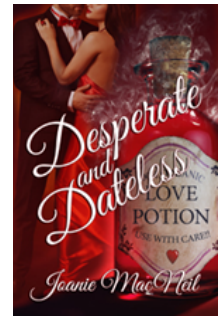


Joanie MacNeil: I am an Australian author of sweet and sexy feel-good contemporary romance. I love to travel and have visited parts of the world I never dreamed I'd see. From the UK to US; Italy, Croatia,

Spain and Portugal; Tunisia, where I took a camel ride into the Sahara desert; Morocco, Paris; the Baltic Capitals, Shetland Islands, Faroe Islands; Noumea, and late last year, Iceland and Wales. More recently I attended the fabulous Romance Writers of New Zealand Auckland conference. An inspiring and motivational weekend.

Home, family and friends are important to me. I have blended these elements into some of my stories.

Web page: www.joaniemacneil.com



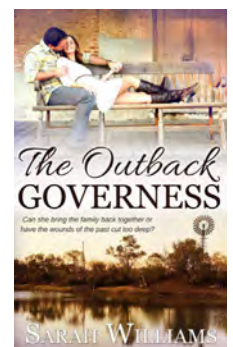
Sarah Williams spent her childhood chasing sheep, riding horses and picking Kiwi fruit on the family orchard in rural New Zealand. After a decade travelling, Sarah moved to Queensland to raise a family and follow her passion for writing. She currently resides in Maleny on the

Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

When she's not absorbed in her fictional writing world, Sarah is the director of boutique small press Serenade Publishing and host of Write with Love, a weekly writers podcast/vlog.

Sarah is regularly checking social media when she really should be cleaning, or writing.

Web page: www.sarahwilliamsauthor.com
www.facebook.com/sarahwilliamswriter
www.twitter.com/SarahW_Writer



Write With Love

Sarah Williams



G'day, I'm Sarah Williams Romance Author and host of Write with Love, a weekly podcast for writers and readers of love stories. Haven't heard of it? Well then here are four good reasons to tune in!

Rural romance author Helene Young joined me on Episode 32 and we chatted about her journey as a pilot with Qantas to getting her big break with Penguin Random House. Her latest novel, *Return to Roseglen* is a moving and insightful family drama about three generations coming to terms with the family matriarch facing her final days.



Episode 33 saw me chatting to one of New Zealand's bestselling authors. Nalini Singh hooked new readers on her vast selection of paranormal and contemporary romances, while fans got a sneak peak on what to expect from Nalini at the RWNZ conference.

Speaking of RWNZ conference, American guest, Grace Burrowes chatted to me on Episode 34 ahead of her trip *Down Under*. Grace has published over 74 novels and is still going strong with Historical her favourite genre.



Then for something different I chatted to Andi Arnt on Episode 35. Don't know Andi? If you listen to Audio books you have probably come across her name. She is a voice narrator for authors such as Lauren Blakely, Melissa Foster and Kylie Scott. This was a really

interesting look behind the scenes of the audiobook industry and the tremendous amount of work it takes.

I have a steller line up planned for September, including Bella Andrea – live from RWNZ conference!

Check out all the episodes [here](#).

Join in on the fun, including regular competitions at <https://www.facebook.com/WritewithLovePodcast/>

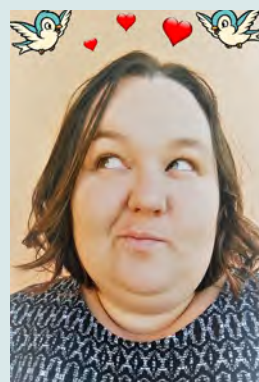
If you are an author who would like a shout out, email me sarah@serenadepublishing.com and become a sponsor on Patreon!

In general...there's no point in writing hopeless novels. We all know we're going to die; what's important is the kind of men and women we are in the face of this.

-Anne Lamott

New Formatter Alert!

Hi! I'm Emma, the new Heart to Heart formatter. I'm looking forward to getting stuck in to the H2H newsletter and refreshing my skills. I learned how to format books back in 2015, so stick with me – I might be a little rusty!



I write a mix of young adult and erotic contemporary, and I do a little editing, too. My first novella *Turned On: Take Me Private* was published this year by Carina Press, and I'm currently working on a follow up. Exciting times!

1. What book or author has most influenced you?

Hmm, I'm going to have to go with David Hill's *See Ya, Simon*. That was the book that taught me real-life writer people could make you feel things. Sad, horrible, horrendous things...

2. What is the best writing advice you ever received?

Read. Persist. Keep learning. I was recently impressed by Judy Blume's honesty about her feelings on writing in her Masterclass (she says, now that she owns a bookstore, she gets up in the morning relieved that she doesn't have to write!) I found that refreshing after the screeds of 'writing is as essential to a true writer as breathing' advice that seemed to be plastered everywhere when I first started out—that advice lead me into crazy-long guilt spirals that would take me away from creating for months at a time. Thank goodness for successful writers who are honest about creative struggle.

3. Cherry Ripe or Turkish Delight?

Is this even a question? How could anyone ever compare the sugary deliciousness of Turkish Delight to the far inferior Cherry Ripe? *shakes head and walks away* Apologies to our Australian friends! I'll send you my Cherry Ripes any time!



bonus picture of my Turkish Delight-loving cat to fill in space!

LOVE AND OTHER JOURNEYS



RWNZ Conference 2019

You are invited:

Christchurch, 23-25 August 2019

For those who missed the announcement at the conference in Auckland, put the above dates into your diary.

If you are like me, you are still buzzing and recovering, in about equal measure, from the brilliance of the 2018 conference. Working through the long to do list, inspired by the speakers and workshops. But there is no time to rest for your 2019 conference committee - our job is well underway.

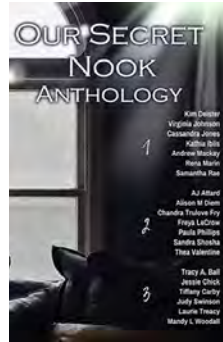
We will be welcoming Sophie Jordan, Laura Kaye and Amy Andrews to Christchurch, and will be announcing other guests over the next few months, and of course calling for workshop proposals from our members.

Our theme is "Love and other journeys".

Come join us! Make Christchurch 2019 a part of your writing journey.

*Mel
2019 Conference Convener
On behalf of the fabulous committee*

Woos and Hoos



Paula Phillips has just had two short stories released in two separate romance anthologies! Check out her work in Shades of BWWM and Our Secret Nook! Congratulations, Paula!

Buy Shades of BWWM on Amazon [here](#).

Buy Our Secret Nook on Amazon [here](#).



Michelle Vernal's novel Sweet Home Summer published by Harper Impulse UK and sold into NZ bookstores by Harper Collins NZ, has been available instores since 30 July 18. This is Michelle's first book in the shops, which is a wonderful achievement!

Blurb: What's a Matchmaker? I'm thinking a really, really old Irish version of Tinder...

Isla Brookes was terrified of leading a little life in the small New Zealand town where she was born and where her gran and mum were also born and bred. To escape their fate, she breaks it off with her teenage sweetheart and runs away to London. She's spent the last ten years climbing the interior design career ladder and meeting the wrong kind of man until one day she wakes up and wonders what it's all been for. Leaving her latest unsuitable man and job for dust Isla winds up sitting on a beanbag in therapy at a Californian retreat, where she realises it's time to go home.

They breed em tough on New Zealand's West Coast. A fact Isla's grandmother, Bridget prides herself on. Her heart was broken once, and she won't let it happen again, but now ever since her husband passed away, someone's been sending her Valentine's Day cards.

When the dance hall, the scene for this heartbreak, falls into decline, Bridget decides the link to her first love must be restored even if the events of long ago can't be put right. She's never heard of dating apps, so in a nod to her Irish ancestry, she decides to hold a fundraising Matchmaker Festival.

Then Rohan Sullivan blows into town on a strange wind offering his services as a bona fide matchmaker; suddenly it's time for both women to remedy the mistakes of their past.

Buy Sweet Home Summer on Amazon [here](#).

Cheryl Phipps is taking part in a very special anthology! As Cheryl explains:

I'm proud to be part of a charity anthology to help keep immigrant families together.

There are more than 150 contributors (Authors, Editors, and Promoters worldwide) helping with the release of this anthology.

All covers, graphics and advertising have been donated and 100% of the proceeds will go to Innovation Law Lab and KIND (Kids In Need of Defence).

The promotional price is \$3.99. Full price will be \$5.99 on release week (August 21st). There are plenty of NYT and USA Today bestselling authors, as well as newer authors who simply want to do something to fix this tragedy by helping the children affected.

The anthology will feature many different genres so there will be something for everyone.

Thank you so much for your support.

Cheryl Phipps

Buy Somewhere Out There on Amazon [here](#).



Michele de Winton is back with the second book in her new Hot Tide series: Making Over Maya. A beautiful cover and an intriguing blurb—Cinderella with a wolfish twist. Great work, Michele!

Buy Making Over Maya on Amazon [here](#)



Samantha Burton (w/a Jayne Castel) published her Epic Fantasy Romance, THE LOST SWALLOW on 14 August. This release is Book #2 in the Light and Darkness series.

Buy The Lost Swallow on Amazon [here](#).

The Bookshelf

Book Review: Alpha Mail by Brenda Rothert

Reviewed by Paula Phillips



Sienna Mills knows her alpha males.

They brood.

They growl.

They love the word 'mine.'

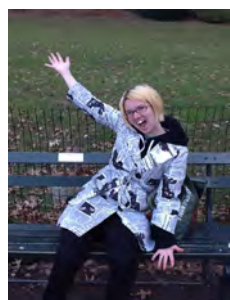
After spending her early twenties in and out of relationships with alphas, Sienna used her knowledge to found Alpha Mail, a booming business that allows women to sign up for emails, letters, and texts from their own brooding, red-blooded man.

Her star is on the rise and Sienna is attracting the interest of investors when a mysterious man starts messaging her about the true nature of an alpha. She's got it all wrong, he says, and he's willing to show her how a real man makes women respond.

The more Sienna hears from him, the more aggravated she becomes. Who does this anonymous, supposed alpha think he is, anyway?

And yet...she can't deny his messages are becoming the best part of her days. Commitment-phobic Sienna finds herself wanting more from her sensei of seduction. But is she willing to trust her heart to an alpha again?

Buy Alpha Mail on Amazon [here](#)



REVIEW

When I saw this book, I knew immediately that I wanted to read it and I was certain that I would love it. What I didn't know was just how much I would love it. This book was amazing as it draws the reader in. We all know someone who is an Alpha Mail, and like the main character Sienna, we have probably

had a date with an Alpha and hated it as they turned out to be jerks. I know I had a bad date with an alpha and OMFG worst date ever as he was rude, no manners and then when I told him we weren't going to work, he asked

for my sister's number though if I think about it, they were more suited, but still. Over a night with her best friend Sienna came up with a business idea called Alpha Mail. Where females can sign up and get the sexting/talking part of the alphas without all the other hassle and even better no relationship needed. Sienna's life is taken up mainly with her business and looking after Carmen and Jack who is dying. After an article shows up about her business, Sienna receives an email from RoughRider16 telling her she needs schooling in "real alphas." What begins is then an IM/Email romance, but what happens when she discovers who the person behind RoughRider16 is? Will it change her developing feelings? Alpha Mail ticks all the boxes for a great book from romantic comedy, IM/Emails, Friendships and then the emotional parts and though Jack was a minor part, he stole the show with his cuteness and child mannerism/ sayings. I just wanted in parts to cuddle up with Jack and be like we are here for you mate and take care of him. Alpha Mail is a romance read that should be added to your 2018 reading lists.



Paula Phillips lives in Tauranga. She works by day as a Children and Teens Programme Specialist at the local library and by night she is The Phantom Paragrapher – a book review blog. She has also had two short stories published and a third being released at the end of August.

Website: <http://thephantomparagrapher.blogspot.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pparagrapher7/>

Twitter: www.twitter.com/beau_angelnz

Instagram: www.instagram.com/nzgeekchic

Book Review: Badlands by Morgan Brice

Reviewed by Anne Barwell



Medium and clairvoyant Simon Kincaide owns a Myrtle Beach boardwalk shop where he runs ghost tours, holds séances, and offers private psychic readings, making a fresh start after his abilities cost him his lover and his job as a folklore professor. Jaded cop Vic D'Amato saw something supernatural he couldn't explain during a shootout several years ago in Pittsburgh and relocated to Myrtle

Beach to leave the past behind, still skeptical about the paranormal. But when the search for a serial killer hits a



◀◀
dead end, Vic battles his skepticism to ask Simon for help. As the body count rises, Simon's involvement makes him a target, and a suspect. But Simon can't say no, even if it costs him his life and heart.

Buy Badlands on Amazon [here](#).

REVIEW



This is the first of a new series, and the first I've read by Morgan Brice—AKA Gail Z Martin—and I'm totally hooked. I have so much love for this story, and these characters. It hit all of the things I love in a story: interesting

characters with angsty pasts, urban fantasy, psi powers, and magic. And then I discovered some of the side characters who 'cameo' in this story, have series of their own. I LOVE books and series that stand on their own, yet are part of a larger interconnected universe. My wish list on Book Depository suddenly grew exponentially as I need to catch up on this author's backlist—and buy a hardcopy of this one, as I like hardcopies of my favourites. I read a lot of books, and enjoy most of what I read, but occasionally one comes along that I totally obsess over, and feel the need to tell everyone about. This is one of those books.

I loved Simon and Vic, both as individuals and a couple. Simon describes himself as a 'gay clairvoyant medium history nerd with a passion for ghost stories' and I liked him as soon as he appeared on the page. It's obvious that Simon cares about those around him, and I liked the way he tries to help those with abilities, as those who are part of his 'skeleton crew' help each other. I thought it was realistic that he feels like an outsider, not just because of his abilities but because he is a gay man, and I felt for him and why he lost as his job as a tenured professor.

I liked that although the attraction between Vic and Simon is there as soon as they meet, Vic struggled to believe in Simon's abilities. Especially given Vic's own experiences, the time it took for him to come to terms with everything about Simon felt very realistic.

The world building was fabulous and the locations very easy to visualise. I really enjoyed the sense of community amongst the people of Myrtle Beach, both amongst those who are part of the loosely aligned group of people initiated into the Shadow Group, and their friends. The side characters were interesting in their own right and I hope to see more of them in future books—and am aiming to catch up with others by reading their series. It's obvious that author has researched the different kinds of magic used in the story, and I appreciated the realism that was the result of that research.

I found this story very addictive, and I got hooked as soon as I started reading. I blame it for several late nights as I had to find out what happened next. The plot unfolds at a good pace, but not too quickly, and I found myself trying to join the dots along with the characters. I was on the edge of my seat during a lot of the book, especially during the

final showdown with the bad guy. The author does a great job in racking up the tension, and in the finish I had to keep reading as I was very worried about the survival of one of the main characters!

I'd recommend *Badlands* to readers who enjoy urban fantasy and paranormal romance with interesting characters, fabulous world building, a story that keeps you turning pages, and is part of an interconnected universe. 5 out of 5 stars.



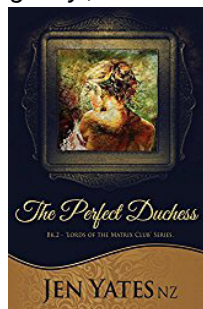
Anne Barwell lives in Wellington, New Zealand. She shares her home with two cats who are convinced that the house is run to suit them; this is an ongoing "discussion," and to date it appears as though the cats may be winning. She works in a library, is an avid reader and watcher of a wide range of genres, and is constantly on the look out for more hours in her day. Anne likes to write in series and even so called one shots seem to breed more plot bunnies. Her writing is like her reading - across a range of genres, although her favourites are fantasy, SF, and historical. Anne also plays piano and violin, so often music plays a part in her stories and/or her characters are musicians.

Website: <http://annebarwell.wordpress.com/>

Book Review: The Perfect Duchess by Jen Yates

Reviewed by Gaylene Atkins

This series is Regency Romantica, and is on the 'very sexy' end of the heat scale. If you're looking for 'sweet regency', this is not it!



As a third son Dominic Beresford should not have been the next Duke of Wolverton, but like it or not, he's inherited the titles and the estates, and the pressing obligations to find a wife and provide a ducal heir. His first choice of Duchess recently married his best friend so now he seeks marriage with the next most suitable candidate, long-time family friend, Lady Sherida Dearing. He has also been commissioned to locate a missing heiress as a favour to his erstwhile commander, a woman with a birthmark one cannot ask to see in polite circles.

Lady Sherida Dearing would make the perfect Duchess. She is exquisitely fair, icily regal and with an unfashionable tendency to wear high-necked gowns, she's been dubbed the 'Heavenly Iceberg'. Only Sheri's maid knows the depth of her sinful imperfections and although Sheri has loved Dom since her first ball, can she marry him and keep her heart intact—and her secrets?

What the Duke of Wolverton hasn't envisioned is exposing his own secret life as the Master of Virgins at the Matrix



◀◀
Club. Or that beneath the icy façade of his wife he will discover that one who will cause him to forsake all others; that one who is indelibly marked for the Duke of Wolverton—that one he's been searching for.

Buy The Perfect Duchess [here](#)



REVIEW



Five Star Review from me.

The Perfect Duchess is another 'WOW' for Jen Yates from me! I ABSOLUTELY loved it. When Dominic Beresford (aka Wolf or the Duke of Wolverton OR The Master of Virgins for the

famous Lords of the Matrix Club series) finally 'sees' his perfect match, the icy perfection that is Lady Sherida Dearing, he only sees a woman of potential; as his Duchess, as the mother of his heirs, as a woman capable of running his households. But Lady Sheri is so much more than that. Under the icy veneer beats the heart of woman who believes in love; a woman with talents and secrets... and all is 'revealed' by the final 'sigh worthy' HEA ending.



I've been a member of RWNZ since 1996; it's one of the best organisations I've ever had the pleasure of being associated with and I promote RWNZ and its members whenever I get the chance. Recently a friend suggested H2H could be a possible avenue for some of my book reviews?

I've always loved reading, as well as working with various writing styles and genres. With the advent of Social Media and blogging; I'm adapting quite well and am now sharing some of my book reviews on my WordPress blog.

As we all know 'a review' is one person's opinion; 'if' while reading that review, something resonates and you end up buying and enjoying the book (and leaving another review) then that's a huge bonus for the author; and all authors love favourable reviews because it generates a wider readership, as well as income! Which, let's be honest, we all desire. Greatly!

These days I'm only reviewing books that touch that invisible part of me; be it as simple as giving me full belly laughs, or choking me up with some strong emotions; fear for the characters, anger at their situations, relief at their triumphs over their adversity, 'love at last' and what happens if I shed some tears? Well... of course those make a review guaranteed in my book!

For my own writing endeavours, I'm mostly writing non-fiction—at present. My life's changed dramatically, especially in the last couple of years; OH of over 40+ years and I moved to another town just over a year ago. We absolutely love our new lifestyle in Te Kuiti; no such thing as retirement in our house – I've dubbed it 'reinvention' instead. We're still in the adjustment phase; with the odd pang of grief thrown in (letting go of our old farming lifestyle and mind-set and all that it meant is easier said than done some days, especially for my darling OH). But he's started 'a small digger & man for hire' business which is going amazingly well. And I've been upskilling by learning a 'hands-on' therapy 'Mind, Body & Bowen', and now in the final stages of completing the registration process. In between studies & clients, I'm reading, writing, stepping up my SM skills, attending C2C chapter meetings, or getting together with other writers/friends for the odd retreat weekend. And I'm so very, very grateful, for each and every day of my life so far!

Website: <https://gayleneatkins.wordpress.com/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/adafarms>



NOW OPEN!

Great Beginnings

The purpose of THE GREAT BEGINNINGS contest is to inspire, motivate, and reward authors of romance fiction.

Eligibility: Participation is open to all unpublished and published authors of novel length romance fiction who are paid up members of RWNZ.

OPENS 1ST SEPTEMBER 2018

CLOSES 30TH SEPTEMBER 2018

SUBMIT

Entrants submit the first three chapters (up to 5000 words) of a completed but unpublished manuscript, plus synopsis up to 1000 words.

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The Welcome Mat

Another red carpet roll-out this month for new members:



Helen Trigg – Auckland

Kristine Thomas – Overseas

Paula Phillips – Central North

Kara Isaac – Wellington

Janice Bridges – Overseas



Great to have you all with us.

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 the [RWNZ Members-Only Facebook page](#).

Contacts

Vivienne Matthews: president@romancewriters.co.nz

Zoe Sojourner: vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz

Tania Roberts: treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz

Kate O'Keeffe: secretary@romancewriters.co.nz

???: publicity@romancewriters.co.nz

Kendra Delugar: membership@romancewriters.co.nz

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 October for November issue). Please have all articles, news, reports, and advertising to Gillian at heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz on or before the deadline.

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Heart to Heart Contact: Gillian St. Kevern (Editor) heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz



To join the RWNZ Members-Only Facebook page, click [here](#).

Regional Round-Up Reports

AUCKLAND

Convenor: [Ruth Clough](#)

This month's meeting took place on Saturday 4 August at the Three Kings Tennis Pavillion. We had a small turnout for this meeting - just 15 people - no doubt because Conference is right around the corner. The meeting was an informal discussion about Conference, the state of affairs in the American romance publishing scene (thanks for your report on this Jackie) and other general writing talk. Although it was a small group the conversation was varied and interesting and everyone engaged with and enjoyed the topics discussed.

Our next meeting will be held on Saturday 1 September at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. Please bring a donation for Chapter, change for the raffles and a plate to share.

Next month we have a presentation by Nalini Singh and Toni Kenyon.

HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Kendra Delugar](#)

WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

A warm-hearted meeting on a soggy day. Twelve of us met at Sandra's lovely home and celebrated Holly's finalist placing in the Koru with a bottle of fizz. Then it was our usual news-around-the circle, and we heard about Helen and Angelique's upcoming book launch, and lots of other progress.

We discussed cold reads at conference, and assured the first-timers it would all be anonymous. Then we did some cold reading of our own; a dozen reads with fairly spirited critiques.

This was followed by an outlining exercise from Jane. She split us into teams, gave us a hero and heroine, and we drew major and minor events from a bag. Somehow we had to fit them together, and fifteen minutes later we had a number of completed (but possibly unlikely) plots.

Our next meeting will be 1pm, Saturday September 1st. Watch for your email re venue etc.

NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

The final instalment of Lorna's Show vs Tell workshop went down a treat for August's meeting, leaving us all feeling clearer about making our writing sing. Thank you, Lorna, for your expertise, direction, and patience – especially when it came to exercise-time!

The rest of the meeting was spent making plans to increase our membership and enticing new writers to join us. Discussions were also focused on next year's conference in Christchurch, which many of us are hoping to make. Since seeing the wonderful photos on social media of this year's conference, that excitement is growing!

Next month, we have the pleasure of hosting Harlequin Mills and Boon Medical author, Sue MacKay. Sue will be talking about her writing journey and what it takes to write for a living. We can't wait to see her!

Next meeting is Saturday 8 September, 2pm at Nick Smith's Head Office on Quarantine Road. Gold coin donation. All welcome!

CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Lyssa Randolph](#)

OTAGO

Convenor: [Maria King](#)

The Otago/Southland chapter skipped the August meeting. Our next meeting is at Rhubarb Cafe, Dunedin on September the 8th.

COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Vivienne Matthews](#)

While some of our Chapter hit the Conference, others gathered in the small township of Tirau for lunch and a catch up. It seems the presence of our five amazing authors was too much for the technology and they were left scrabbling around for cash when the eftpos went down — turns out there are still small townships with no ATMs!! Once that was sorted and some sustenance was purchased, the girls were able to sit back and enjoy the gorgeous sunny day in the courtyard chatting about their writing projects, how they met their one/s, animals, adventures in motor-homes and other backstory fill ins. A really pleasant afternoon spent with friends.

BLenheim AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)