

Amazon and the Curious Case of the Missing Titles

Imogene Nix



Editor's note: Imogene wrote and offered me this piece back in November, but Facebook—delightful as ever—hid her message from me and I only discovered it now. Once again, Imogene, apologies for not publishing this article in a more timely manner!

Once again, a ripple has fluttered through the book world and we, as authors, have to make decisions about the long-term ramifications of our e-distribution channels. Even though it feels like something is happening most every week, the latest happening has caused mass chaos and concern, with many authors experiencing a “white out” of some or most of their titles.

In the last couple of weeks, Amazon experienced a glitch that has many authors concerned about the visibility of their books. So, this last week, I asked two very important questions of authors. While many authors contacted Amazon and we did receive notification that the issue was being examined, the “white out” of many books across a range of geographic regions (and the fact the white out seemed to vary from Amazon site to Amazon site) meant many authors were *financiallynegativelyimpacted*. Some had booked promotional opportunities with specialist marketing sites such as Book Bub or Facebook/Amazon ads which were ineffective. Others with pre-orders were unable to make the requisite sales. It also appears this wasn't simply an Indie Only phenomenon with some traditional authors also feeling the pinch.

The first question was are you Wide? (This basically means are your books distributed on every platform?) or are you KDP only? KDP for readers is Kindle Direct Publishing (Amazon only) and authors have the ability to choose to only distribute to Kindle only through a range of channels.

The results that came in from my poll (which I ran through my facebook profile) were interesting. Over a 7-day period I received 63 responses.

I also asked a secondary question, just for those who are KDP only. Are you planning to continue with KDP only or has this caused you to decide to take your books Wide? This question received 16 responses.

So, let's deconstruct the information received.

It's very clear that more authors are moving to the Wide stance – for some because of the ongoing issues with Amazon and for others simply because they want to be accessible to as many readers as possible.

With 73% already “wide” and a further 27% only using Kindle (Amazon) for distribution and/or publication of their titles.

“I have some that are wide and some that are amazon only because some types of stories sell better wide and others are preferred by the amazon crowd.”

“My box set has completed its KU time frame, very soon it will be making its way over to the wide digital world. Still debating if to go through smashwords, as the original books or go via D2D for the first time. Oh, plus google play of course. Seems they had been out numbering all the free downloads over amazon in the last two months. Well up until yesterday, when my book made an appearance in a well distributed newsletter bringing my old trusty first book up to the top 10 in the US, Aus & UK. How short I lived the excitement, now as the book is slowly drifting on its way back out.

But yesterday morning, amazon had it as unavailable!”

Wide. But with my indie novellas, I've only sold one or two copies in the last couple of months on Apple and Kobo. The vast majority of my sales are with Amazon US and UK.

There were also some responses that weren't counted as I couldn't offer a third option of some & some.

I've got some books that are wide, and some that are Amazon only.

The outcome however of the latest glitch has caused some destabilization and concern among some authors who are currently KDP only. **Of those 16 who responded to the survey 31% have indicated they plan to either petition or wait out their unlimited enrolment and for those without those barriers, they will take their books wide.**



"Have been in the process of withdrawing from KU and moving wide for the last short while. The constant and current debacles only support my reasons to do so."

"I have been KU with the first book in my series but am just waiting for the expiry date in a couple of weeks so I can go wide again."

I also attempted to gain some feedback from readers, but was unable to gain a large enough sample.

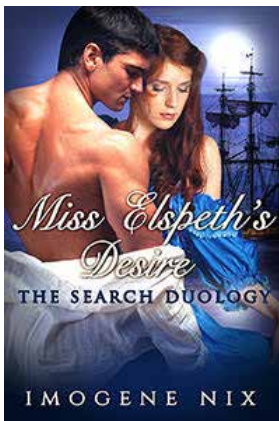
One interesting piece of feedback I did receive was:

"Authors are such drama queens against Amazon--you'd think they were selling the cure to cancer!"

So, all in all, while I can't claim this is an exhaustive view of publishing and the relationship with Amazon, it's certainly sobering for all of us.

Bear in mind too, that on November 22, Amazon announced a major backflip in its policy on selling to and shipping to Australia, so on the strength of this, it seems that there may be the opportunity to see other wholesale changes dependent on the stance of readers and authors combined. (Amazon to resume shipping to Australia after online GST change news.com.au 22 November 2018 [bit.ly/2Dzy9IM](https://www.2dzy9im.com))

However, given this is a third party site — and one who we have experience of changing direction without discussion with their main customers — we'll just have to sit back and wait for the drama to unfold.



MISS ELSPETH'S DESIRE

Elspeth Forster, the eldest spinster sister and part owner of Forster Shipping Line has never known passion.

On the youngest Forster sister's marriage, Elspeth and her middle sister Isabelle determine to use their ships for more than just business by taking the adventure of a lifetime. In India she might find a man who can teach her all the things that will keep her warm in her advancing age. But she never expected that an unscheduled stop would put her

within Aeddán Fitzsimmon's sights.

Returning from a top-secret mission, English spy, Aeddán Fitzsimmons, finds passage on the Zephyr, a vessel in the Forster fleet. From the moment he stepped aboard the statuesque red-head entices him like no other ever has. Now in India he has a new mission: keep the elegant Elspeth safe while wooing her into his bed.

Buy Miss Elspeth's Desire [here](#)



[Imogene](#) is published in a range of romance genres including Paranormal, Science Fiction and Contemporary. She is mainly published in the UK and USA. Imogene has successfully been contracted for twenty-five titles. She has also completed several others. In 2017 Imogene decided to self publish most of her further works - a plan which is in train.

Imogene is a member of a range of professional organisations world wide, and believes in the mantra of mentoring and paying it forward. She loves to drink coffee, wine and eat chocolate and is parenting two spoiled dogs and a ferocious cat along with her husband and two human daughters.

Alpha Reading

Anne Barwell



I've spent most of the last year struggling to get my writing output back to the levels it was during 2017. A determined push during November for NaNoWriMo helped a lot, as did writing. Editing/tweaking later, which included leaving a lot of [insert name etc here] in my manuscript, instead of stopping and researching, and then continuing to write, was also helpful.

But how to maintain that push? Real life kept rearing its ugly head, and making demands on my time.

I love my betas but they'd had changes in their lives during 2017 as well. Instead of regularly touching base, talking plotting, and receiving feedback, I was now at the point where I'd send a chapter off into what was quickly feeling like a black void, with no idea when it might return.

The answer to my dilemma? Alpha reading. At this point I'd like to thank my friend Gillian St. Kevern for not only suggesting it, but also giving her permission to share about our alpha reading journey over the past few weeks.

When she suggested trying alpha reading, I hadn't heard of the term. For those of you, like me, who hadn't, it's the first person who sees your writing after you've written it. The idea is that you send whomever you're alpha reading with whatever you've written for the day, and they do the same. What you send is the raw, very much first draft, so ignore the typos, and the bits in brackets as those will be sorted out later.

You read the new bit within 24 hours and send it back one or two positive comments. I knew I wouldn't have any problem finding something positive in Gillian's writing, as I've yet to read something of hers I didn't enjoy. An added bonus is that because your alpha reader is familiar with what you're writing, if you want to run plot ideas past them, and have those sorts of discussions they know what you're talking about and can give constructive feedback at that level too.

We decided we'd do a test drive and see how we got on. She'd alpha read in the past, but her alpha reader wasn't able to do it anymore. Like me, the dropping off of regular feedback had made a difference to her writing output so this had the potential to be very beneficial to both of us. We'd already read a lot of each other's work,



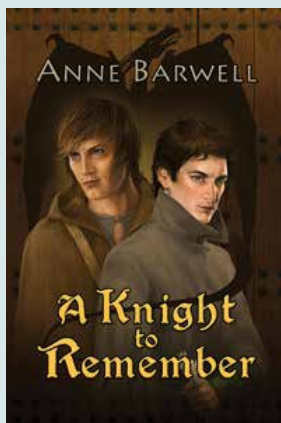
◀◀
plus had known each other since before we were both published writers. I think this does need to be done with someone you trust, and know is on a similar wavelength. I've been stung before with beta readers who did more damage than good.

We sent each other our current WIPs so far on Christmas Eve so we'd be up to date on what was happening with our stories etc. Both of us were at the point in our manuscripts that we were only a few chapters in, so it was the perfect time to start our test drive. The results were almost immediate. While I'd struggled to write 500 words most days, and found it difficult to find the discipline to sit and write, I'm now—not even a month later—averaging 1K a day, and can't wait to get up in the morning to write. My characters are clambering in my head, my story is moving ahead, and I'm back on target and more.

Ditto for Gillian. I'm loving her new book, and having the opportunity to read it bit by bit, even if I'm on tenderhooks waiting to find out what happens next, and poking at my inbox each day to see if there is another email from her in my inbox.

I ran this post past her as she was a big part of it, and she had this to add:

Alpha reading also addresses one of the biggest hazards of the writing life—loneliness. Since writing is often done on our own somewhere quiet and removed from distractions, it's really easy to start feeling isolated and down. Alpha-reading combats that because in addition to getting regular e-mails from you, it reminds me that the end goal is human connections—readers reading this book, and interacting with my words in their way.



A KNIGHT TO REMEMBER

The last of your line will be in the embrace of a dragon.

Aric, Crown Prince of Astria, has been brought up to believe that all dragons are evil. But when he speaks with one, he finds himself questioning those beliefs. The dragon tells him to find a sword in Sherwin Forest to save not only his kingdom but also his sister, Georgia, who must otherwise wed the prince of a neighboring kingdom.

At the start of his quest, Aric dons a disguise and meets Denys, an archer and herbalist who lives alone at the edge of the forest. Denys agrees to guide Aric into the forest, but then Georgia appears, revealing Aric's true identity.

However Aric learns he is not the only one keeping secrets. Denys has a few of his own that could change both of their lives forever.

Buy *A Knight to Remember* [here](#)



[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.

Write What Resonates: Choosing a Genre for the Longterm

Gillian St. Kevern



At the end of June last year, I signed up for a self-publishing course. It wasn't the first such course I've taken, and it probably won't be the last. Although I've been writing more than a few years now, there is always more to learn. In this case, I got one piece of advice that struck me

in particular. A lot of advice given to self-publishing authors these days is write with a view to rapid release. Write quickly with a view to publishing in rapid succession, trusting the Amazon algorithms to boost your book. Easier said than done! How to write quickly without burning yourself out? According to one of the presenters, the answer is to write what resonates—what comes easily and naturally and what you do best.

This advice could not have come at a better time for me. I'd started out writing LGBTQ paranormal romances, but the more I wrote, the more the romance aspect dwindled in favour of twisty plots and elements of mystery. Since my go-to choice for reading is vintage mysteries I decided that the obvious solution was to change genres to vintage mysteries. While I had no problems coming up with the characters or the mystery, the actual writing was hard work! My daily word count dropped and I struggled with lack of motivation and self doubt. I persisted, thinking that surely this would clear up with book two. It didn't. For some reason, although I love the genre to bits, writing a historical mystery was hard work.

Then I got an opportunity to work with an editor who has a lot of experience in YA. This seemed like the perfect opportunity to dust off my YA novel idea, and get cracking on that. Great in theory, but again, the book that I'd planned to write in a month took over four months to finish. Writing YA did not come easily to me, and I put it aside to work on a high fantasy novella, another project I'd been sitting on for years, waiting for the right moment. Again, it was a slog. What on earth had happened to me? I'd gone from writing a book a month not every month in 2017, but regularly enough that I could count on it. In contrast, I only finished four drafts in 2018.

It was while finishing the YA novel that I took the course. At



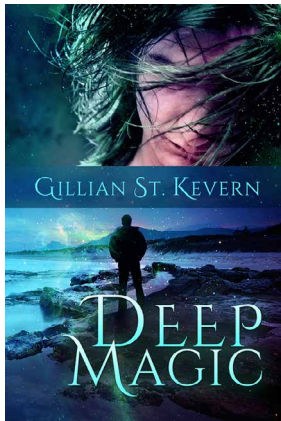


once the problems I'd been having fell into place. Maybe the problems I was having with my writing stemmed from the fact that none of these genres came naturally to me. So how to find the genre that resonated?

I looked at what common elements all of the stories I've written to date include. Then I put that aside, and made a list of the stories that really influenced me growing up, the ones that still resonate today. While there was a big mix still, including more comics and manga than I'd expected, low fantasy emerged as a clear winner. Low fantasy is what became urban fantasy now. I asked my friends for urban fantasy recs and started reading and while I didn't find anyone writing the stories I want to write, I definitely felt that I'd found a genre that I could call home.

What is interesting is that when I went and looked for reviews for my previously published books, the reviewers who most highly rated them were describing them as urban fantasy! Once again, I am the last to notice the glaringly obvious.

In October, I started writing my first urban fantasy. It took me longer than I'd hoped—I finished it December Eighth. I'm now two-thirds of the way through the second and plotting the third. It is a bit of a struggle still—for the first time, I've writing a story set in Christchurch, where people can call me out if I get the details wrong! It's a new kind of scary, but for all that it feels good. The characters have already made themselves at home and started rebelling, and it feels great. I'm still nervous, but I'm excited to see where this journey leads.



DEEP MAGIC

Where does magic end and love begin? Oliver Evans spent his youth spinning one tall tale after another until it got him over his head in trouble. Now he has returned to his grandmother's cottage in Aberdaron, determined to put his past behind him and settle down. But the misty Llŷn Peninsula hides dangerous secrets and Olly is torn between the Longing, a powerful force driving him away from the only home he has ever known, and the growing conviction that the prince of his childhood make-believe

is real and in need of Olly's help.

There is more truth in Olly's stories than he realises. If he is to have any chance of righting past wrongs and rescuing his prince, Olly must navigate the truth in his old stories and discover the magic right in front of him. But Olly has a powerful enemy on the Llŷn, an ancient king who would like to end Olly's story-telling permanently.

Buy *Deep Magic* [here](#)



Gillian St. Kevern is the author of the Deep Magic series, the Thorns and Fangs series, the For the Love of Christmas series, and standalone novels, The Biggest Scoop and The Wing Commander's Curse. Gillian currently lives in her native New Zealand, but spent eleven years in Japan and has visited over twenty different countries.

As a chronic traveller, Gillian is more interested in journeys than endings, with characters that grow and change to achieve their happy ending. She's not afraid to let her characters make mistakes or take the story in an unexpected direction. Her stories cross genres, time-periods and continents, taking readers along for an unforgettable ride.

Diversifying Your Writing Income Streams

Steff Green



When I worked my day job, I'd get paid once monthly from a single source. The money was the same every month unless I got a pay rise (yay!) and arrived on the same day. If the company wanted to get rid of me, they would have to give me notice/pay out redundancy/go through a termination process. I'd have time to adjust, pivot, find new work.

Now that I'm a self-employed writer, things are different. I can't rely on a single source of income anymore, because as a self-employed person I don't have the same employment rights. If Amazon decides they don't want to publish me anymore, I could be in trouble. I also don't have the right to an audience. If readers aren't into my latest book, they won't buy it, and that impacts my ability to pay my mortgage.

The idea that your livelihood could be pulled from under you in an instant is pretty scary. For a creative person who relies on their ideas to pay the bills, the fear can hold you back from taking risks and accepting opportunities. Most writers attempt to insulate themselves against this fear with diversification – building additional income streams so if one runs dry, you've got a safety net.

The fact that I have diverse income streams is the reason I was able to quit my job and write full time. Some streams pay more than others, but they all work together to make sure that if something bad happened I'd still be bringing in money to pay the bills. I've been pursuing diversification for years, sometimes not to my benefit. Here are some things I've learned along the way.

For beginners, diversification is the enemy of progress.

I believe that if you're building a sustainable writing career, then diversifying your income is absolutely essential. No exceptions.



But.



If you've just starting out on your writing journey, then you're probably working on your craft in between a day job, a busy family life, and other commitments. You have very little time. You need to spend that time wisely, and the wisest use of that time is focusing on growing your core skills.

At this stage, no one knows who you are. You need an audience in order to build enough stable income, and the best way to gain an audience is to give them as much of the same kind of content – the content they love – as you can over a period of time.

During this stage, diversification is your enemy. You don't have the time or energy to do lots of things well. If you want to build momentum, you need to knuckle down and focus on the core of your writing. Do one thing well. One genre. One pen name. One series. Become known for that. You can diversify later.

I've made this mistake SO MANY TIMES, which is part of the reason I've been taking my writing seriously since 2009 but it wasn't until 2018 that I've been able to do what I really wanted to do all along – write books. I got distracted. I thought what I had to do was try lots of different things and wait for one of them to take off and then I'd have more time to write and grow as a novelist. If I'd directed all my energy toward focusing on that one goal, I'd have got there a lot sooner.

Also, if you spread your focus across different projects, you end up drip-feeding content to several disparate audiences. You'll grow slower than if you just focused on doing one thing really well and getting it out there and finding your fans.

"You need an audience in order to build enough stable income, and the best way to gain an audience is to give them as much of the same kind of content – the content they love – as you can over a period of time."

WHEN SHOULD YOU DIVERSIFY?

Once you have a big enough audience that the possibility of leaving your day job to do the thing is on the cards, but you're feeling scared. If you're like most writers, you don't go from nothing to superstardom – it's a long, slow build and there's a wobbly middle period where you're making decent money but not quite enough money and it feels very precarious.

This is the time to start thinking about complementary ways to grow your writing career. Look for ways you can transform projects to grow your current audience, offer them something new, or get them to buy more at different

price points. For example, creating audiobook versions of your books or bundling into a collection with bonus material (deleted scenes, extra epilogue, etc).

Can you build another income stream from your current portfolio of work? For example, I used my backlist of successful books to land a ghostwriting client – I'm writing a true-life love story for a couple at a professional rate.

Instead of starting from scratch with a completely new audience, can you pivot an idea to work within your current business? I've had this idea for a paranormal cozy mystery series for a while, but it would involve starting a whole new pen name and building it from scratch. Instead, I made the concept – with key changes – work under my current pen name. (This idea has become the Nevermore Bookshop Mysteries).

Don't diversify just for the sake of it, and try not to land yourself with a huge long-term project when there might be a quicker way. Don't lose sight of your end goal – especially if that goal is making enough money so you can quit your job and feel safe that you don't have all your income in one basket.

(This is where I say DON'T take on another pen name unless you're 100% sure you need it and can keep up with it. Dividing your focus at this stage isn't a great idea. Instead, maybe you could sell your current backlist in another format, or use it as a jumping-off point to secure some work teaching creative writing classes or ghostwriting.)

DIVERSIFICATION IDEAS

Writing for hire is great if you need the money, to even out irregular earnings, and to network and gain opportunities. With all writing for hire work, there's a ceiling on earnings – you do the work once, and you get paid once.

As much as possible, consider passive diversification – where you're not tied to a direct exchange of time for money.

Swag is great – create visuals and pull out key quotes from your books and place them on objects like coffee mugs, phone cases, throw pillows, and notebooks. You can create an online store through Society6.com, redbubble.com, or pixels.com where people can purchase your prints and work on objects.

Because these objects are print-on-demand, you don't have to do anything except load designs and accept the checks. It's a completely passive income stream you set up once and earn income on for the rest of your career. That income may only be a few cents a month to start with, but as your audience grows, so does the revenue. They also make great additions to author giveaways.

Think about additional formats – paperback, large print, audio. If you're in Kindle Unlimited, consider taking some or all of your backlist wide to build an audience in the other stores. My new releases go into KU, but taking my backlist wide last year was one of the key reasons I felt safe quitting my job in Feb. If Amazon shut down my account tomorrow or tanked a release (please don't do that!) I'd still have at least some income coming in.



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If you self-publish, consider sending a project off to publishers. If you're a traditionally-published author, consider self-publishing a series between books.

If you write a blog, use affiliate codes whenever you link to sites like Amazon to earn money every time readers click on your links.

You can also try these diversification ideas (most of these aren't passive):

- Crowdfunding – one-off projects through Kickstarter.com, ongoing through Patreon.com.
- Starting another pen name in a different genre.
- Participating in a multi-author pen name project.
- Creating interactive fiction, games, scripts, and other formats.
- Ghostwriting.
- Copywriting and freelance writing.
- Paid book reviewing.
- Teaching and speaking.
- Applying for grants and retreats.

Passive diversification is really the key to success as a creative. The more you can separate income earned from your time, the safer and better off you'll be.

WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Always bring decisions about diversification back to your goals. What do you want to be known for? What's your 'brand' as a writer? This means sometimes saying no to exciting opportunities and diversification ideas because they take you too far from what you want to be.

Don't get so distracted by diversifying and new projects and opportunities that you lose track of your core principles, values, and joy.

CREATING FOR NOW, SOON AND THE FUTURE

When considering your diversification, it's helpful to divide your projects into those that pay off now (launching a new book, freelance writing), soon (writing the next book, getting your books done in audio, etc) and in the future (career-building stuff, networking, building a writing course).

For more about this, read author Tim Leffel's article on The Creative Penn: <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2018/08/24/writing-for-now-soon-future/>

REASSESS AND PULL BACK

A mistake a lot of creative people make – and I've been here many, many times before – is going nuts on the diversification and spreading yourself too thin. That's why it's really important to step back from your writing projects and ask yourself, "Am I happy? Have I moved too far away from my core goal?"

I've done a lot of interesting things over the years. A webcomic! A sock business! Officiating weird weddings! Running a content agency! Writing for magazines! Running a business blog! I regret none of them, but I do regret the time they took away from my core focus as a writer – fiction. That's why over the years I've dropped those projects as

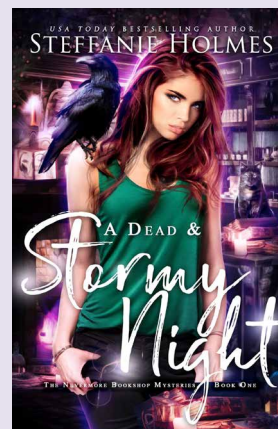
I've moved back toward what I really love.

It's okay to try things, and quit if they're not working. In 2016, I launched a Patreon to create an additional income stream so that I was less reliant on Amazon. I had an initial flurry of interest, and then it stagnated. It sucked my energy, but didn't return any benefits. I dropped it after a year and directed my energy elsewhere.

I'm not the only one talking about cutting back and refocusing. Joanna Penn of The Creative Penn recently wrote that she was cutting back on some of her diverse income streams in order to get back to the core of what excited her about being an artist. (Read Joanna's story here: <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2018/08/22/re-focus-your-writing-priorities/>)

As a writer, have you diversified? Did you do what I did and diversify too soon? What ways can you create additional income to help your writing career thrive?

A DEAD AND STORMY NIGHT



What do you get when you cross a cursed bookshop, three hot fictional men, and a punk rock heroine nursing a broken heart?

After being fired from her fashion internship in New York City, Mina Wilde decides it's time to reevaluate her life. She returns to the quaint English village where she grew up to take a job at the local bookshop, hoping that being surrounded by great literature will help her heal from a devastating blow.

But Mina soon discovers her life is stranger than fiction – a mysterious curse on the bookshop brings fictional characters to life in lust-worthy bodies. Mina finds herself babysitting Poe's raven, making hot dogs for Heathcliff, and getting IT help from James Moriarty, all while trying not to fall for the three broken men who should only exist within her imagination.

When Mina's ex-best friend shows up dead with a knife in her back, she's the chief suspect. She'll have to solve the murder if she wants to clear her name. Will her fictional boyfriends be able to keep her out of prison?

The Nevermore Bookshop Mysteries are what you get when all your book boyfriends come to life. Join a brooding antihero, a master criminal, a cheeky raven, and a heroine with a big heart (and an even bigger book collection) in this brand new steamy reverse harem paranormal mystery series by USA Today best-selling author Steffanie Holmes.

Buy *A Dead and Stormy Night* [here](#)



Under her pen name Steffanie Holmes, [Steff Green](#) is a USA Today bestselling author of the paranormal, gothic, dark, and fantastical. Steff received the 2017 Attitude Award for Artistic Achievement and is a finalist for a 2018 Women of Influence award. Her books are enjoyed by thousands of readers all over the world. When she's not hiking or front row at a heavy metal concert, you'll find Steff writing from her off-grid rural home, surrounded by her cantankerous drummer husband, horde of cats, and their medieval sword collection.

Author Spotlight

Alissa Callen



CAREER OVERVIEW

I live in country NSW and without Romance Writers of Australia I'd still be an isolated dabbler with only my dogs to run my story ideas past. At a Gold Coast RWA conference Beverly Cousins (Penguin Random House) offered to look at unsolicited manuscripts so I sent in my full length drought story. This book became the first of two published with the digital line of Random Romance, that then came out in print a year later. Around this time, I also subbed to Tule Publishing and wrote a six novella series for their Montana Born line.

Fast forward to now and I'm still writing the small town and rural stories that I love. I'm very excited that the fourth book in my town of windmills series has just been released with the Mira imprint of HarperCollins and the fifth Woodlea book will be on shelves February 2020. I also will be writing a Texas novella series for Tule that will be out the end of 2019.

A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR LIFE:

Thanks to having four teenagers and living on a small farm every day is different. On the 'perfect' writing day I will check my emails and social media after breakfast, then write until lunch. I'll write again until late-afternoon. On a 'typical' day it's more likely writing will only happen after lunch and I can sometimes sneak a little more in after dinner. Each New Year my resolution is always to set a more productive routine. Much like my latest book, such a plan is still a work-in-progress.

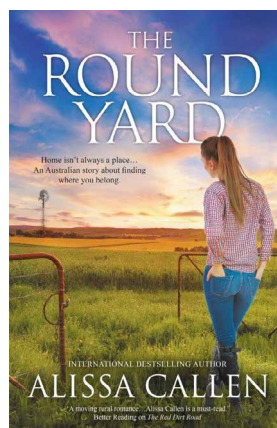
YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE AND HOW YOU OVERCOME IT:

I am very much the stereotypical introvert who is most comfortable typing away in my home office. I also am a perfectionist so having people read and review my books provided my first reality check. I know now that it is impossible to please everybody all of the time. My second reality check was the need for self-promotion. Whether it be on social media, or face-to-face, I still am not entirely comfortable spruiking my stories even though it is a business necessity.

THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER GOT:

The best advice I have ever been given was to take the time to enjoy the journey to publication. It is wonderful when 'the call' comes but then writing can change shape. Deadlines, expectations and the need to wear many hats, can sometimes take away from the joy of telling our stories.

"... take the time to enjoy the journey to publication. It is wonderful when 'the call' comes but then writing can change shape."



THE ROUND YARD

For only child Neve Fitzpatrick, family is everything. When she loses her mother, she heads to the bush to rent a farmhouse near her grandmother's family home. To keep herself busy, she offers to look after two little redheaded cowgirls and adopts a sassy pony and sweet donkey in need of a refuge.

Drover and horse trainer Tanner Callahan may have just found his mother, but he's resolved never to let anyone too close. Abandonment has cursed him all his life, and he won't let it happen again. Only two things unnerve him: children and small-town matchmaking. Then he meets occupational therapist Neve. Warm-hearted and unforgettable, she represents all that Tanner feels will forever remain out of reach. But when an old iron key unlocks family secrets from the Second World War, Neve needs help only Tanner can give. As the threads of the past unravel, and locusts threaten to suffocate the land, Neve and Tanner must make a choice. Will fear keep them running or is the home each yearns for already within their grasp?

Buy *The Round Yard* [here](#)



USA Today bestselling author [Alissa Callen](#) is a country girl happiest living far from the city fringe. She draws inspiration from the countryside around her and from the resilience of local bush communities. Once a teacher and a counsellor, she remains interested in the life journeys that people take. Her books are characteristically heart-warming, authentic and character driven. Alissa lives with her family on a small slice of rural Australia.

From the Editor:

Gillian St. Kevern



My 2019 got off to a busy start. Since roughly 2007, when we moved house, my parents have had a storage unit in Kaiapoi. Some of the boxes that were supposed to go to our new house went to the unit accidentally. We've moved two more times since then, and boxes and furniture got hopelessly jumbled. Finding anything in the unit is a real challenge. My mother decided that she wanted to use her summer holiday to finally tackle the chaos, and so the family rallied. After three days of hardwork, I've finally cleared my room of most of the boxes. I've got a floor again, and we discovered a desk that everyone had forgotten about, so I've got a new desk! Best of all, I've got most of my books!

There have been some marvellous treasures discovered. I have beautiful cloth bound copies of Cranford, The Hound of the Baskervilles, and The Woman in White, and discovered a book of Le Fanu's ghost stories I had no idea I even had! I also discovered a lot of old Harlequins and a Nalini Singh novel I bought on the recommendation of one of my classmates at Auckland University, who introduced me to Chapter Bookstore. I also discovered a copy of Writing Romantic Fiction by Daphne Clair and Robyn Donald. I find it really nice to discover that nine years before I joined RWNZ, its members were impacting my life!

Not everything I found was treasure. In addition to some really bizarre fashion choices (I was living in Japan, so I guess that explains some of them), I had boxes full of my study notes, dating all the way back to fifth form geography. Which I hated. Why would I hang on to something that I hated for twenty years? I've been pondering this the last couple of days. I've definitely inherited my grandmother's Depression era mindset of don't throw out anything because you might need it. I didn't see myself needing to know how cyclones form anytime soon, and if I do, I can Google it. Another factor is that I'd obviously put a lot of effort into these notes. I was a really good student, and at that part of my life, a lot of my identity came from the fact that I was a straight-A student.

My notes are currently sitting outside in a metal drum, waiting for my stepdad to decide we've got enough for a fire. That was a pretty easy decision—I'm no longer defined by my academic grades. There were other things that were much harder to say goodbye to. Books I bought but will never read. Clothes that I will not wear again. Stories I will never finish (in a box under my bed—no way I'm saying a permanent goodbye to gems like *The Vampire* and *the Accountant*). But the majority of the stuff I had in storage was junk. Why was it so hard to say goodbye to it?

I think I've been holding on to old beliefs and values, not realising that they no longer represent the person I am today. My old diaries in particular brought this home—sixteen year old Gillian in particular was a little snooty. But having limited space meant I had to think very carefully about what I kept. Which meant I wasn't just choosing items that had sentimental meaning, I had to choose items that had meaning for my life now/the writer I want to become. This meant I had to think hard about what my values are now and who I am as opposed to who I think I should be.

Fortunately, I'd been doing a lot of new year goal setting which helped with this! But it also made me think about change. I hate change and uncertainty. My instinct is always to keep things the same. Yet, as seen from my boxes and boxes of notes, holding on to the old just because it's familiar can end up suffocating you. I'm starting 2019 with a better understanding of who I am and who I want to be, and I'm hoping to find my balance between new and old.

Finding the right balance between new and old is my 2019 goal for Heart to Heart, too! This is the second month of one of our new features, the author spotlight. Ask the members will return from next month. We say goodbye to the Book Reviews section—a huge thanks to Paula and Anne for their regular contributions since the feature began! I'm still looking for reviews of technical books i.e. Craft or marketing, so please get in touch if you'd like to review one, or if you've got a feature or idea to contribute. Let's have a magnificent 2019!

*As I look back on my own stories
it would be absurd if I did not
wish they had been better.
But if they had been much
better they would not
have been published.*

— Raymond Chandler

Outgoing President's Report



Hello, welcome to 2019! Hope your new year has started well and you've managed to have a good rest amongst everything else going on.

RWNZ has another action packed year ahead with our first South Island Conference happening 23rd to 25th August in Christchurch. The Conference team have put together an amazing line up for us, both with overseas speakers as well as workshops from some home-grown talent. Keep an eye out on the updates going up on our website – www.romancewriters.co.nz – under Events. Announcements are also being made on Facebook and in the Heart to Heart.

Our contests are running all year. Check out what's opening when and plan what you're going to enter, or maybe which ones you'll judge and book that time out early. Contests are a great way to get feedback, or as a Judge to offer feedback and also to learn new things yourself. Check them out under the Contests tab on our website.

The other big news happening within RWNZ right now is a change in the President role. Unfortunately my year has taken a turn I wasn't expecting and as a result I'm unable to fulfil my commitments as President. I'm disappointed about needing to take this step as I've learnt a lot in my short time and was looking forward to the rest of the year, but as we all know, our own health and well-being comes first or we're no good to anyone. I know I leave you in good hands, not only with the great Executive we have and the new President, but also the masses of volunteers who make RWNZ the incredible organisation it is. A massive, massive thank you to you all for the time and energy you put in to RWNZ. Know that what you do is making a difference in writer's lives and you're much appreciated.

With RWNZ being full of amazing people, we already have someone who has offered to step into the role of President. So I'm really pleased to be able to introduce Kendra Delugar as RWNZ President. Many of you already know Kendra as she has been with RWNZ for 14 years and was on the Executive as our Membership Secretary. She also organised our fantastic 2018 conference and was on the Executive prior to that. A personal big thank you to Kendra for stepping up into the President role. I know you'll be great and the organisation is in good hands.

Just before I leave you with Kendra to introduce herself a bit more and also introduce the new Membership Secretary, I want to wish the new President Kendra, the Executive and all of our fantastic members a most fantastic year. I'll still be around RWNZ and I look forward to continue getting to know you all. All the best.

Cheers,

Vivienne Matthews

Incoming President's Report



I'm crawling out from under the oppressive summer heat to write my incoming President's post.

First of all I'd like to thank Vivienne Matthews for all her hard work. She'll be a hugely missed part of the Executive team.

Second, I'd like to thank Bronwen Evans for stepping into the Membership Secretary role I've just vacated. And third, but far from last, a warm welcome to Emma Bryson who has taken on the previously empty role of Publicity Officer. We're thrilled to have you with us.

Just so everyone's up to date on what's going on, the Pacific Hearts Contest is open for entries throughout the month of February. And on March 1st the Koru Award opens (and entries will probably be limited by the number of judges we're able to get, like last year. We're already working on getting our judging roster together). So if you're thinking of entering either of these contests, start preparing now.

And since this is the first magazine of the year, it's the perfect time to talk about writing goals for 2019. I'm a very slow writer as all of those close to me know – so my ambitious (or foolhardy) goal this year is to write two books, a novel and a novella. What's yours? Entering a contest? Finishing your first book? Attending your first conference (start saving now!)? Getting an agent? Knocking out five books? Write it down and at the end of the year see how close you got.

I'll leave it there for now as this magazine is on a deadline (and it's finally cool enough to enjoy being outside). I look forward to catching up with you all again next month.

Kendra Delugar

Woos and Hoos



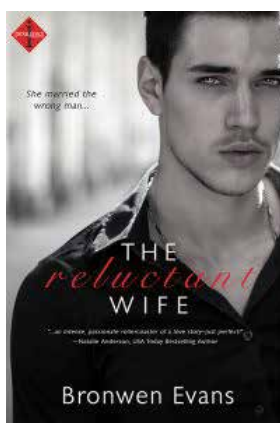
Amazing news from our member Ann B Harrison. Valentine Kisses, the second book in the Moore Sisters of Montana series has been optioned for a movie. Congratulations, Ann! That is incredibly exciting news.

Buy Valentine Kisses [here](#)



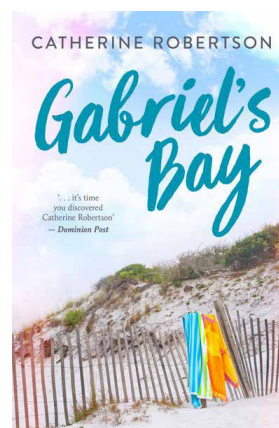
Jena Petrie has published her first novel, a contemporary romance featuring an olympic rower whose love for the sport is fading, and a reporter with enough passion for both of them. Gold Medal Hero is book 1 in the Hero series.

Buy Gold Medal Hero [here](#)



Congratulations to Bronwen Evans, whose first contemporary novel, The Reluctant Wife, written in 2012, just reached number one in the romance category on the USA iBooks store, number one in romance on KOBO USA, number one in romance Barnes and Noble USA and number four in romance Amazon USA. What a great way to start 2019!

Buy The Reluctant Wife [here](#)



Wonderful news for RWNZ member Catherine Robertson. Her latest release this January, What You Wish For (Gabriel's Bay #2) has once again made it to #1 on the NZ Kiwi Author Best Seller list.

Buy Gabriel's Bay [here](#)

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!



New Zealand's own, Lizzy Tremayne talks Horses and History in episode 48

Monica McInerney appeared on Episode 49 all the way from Dublin! She shared her story with all it's highs and lows.



We made it to episode 50! Phillipa Nefri Clark's novel The Stationmaster's Cottage is one of the seven stories in our Multi-author boxset Outback Hearts.



Suzanne Gilchrist is also in Outback Hearts and on episode 51 she talks about her many collaborations with other authors.



The big names keep coming in January including another incredible Kiwi author, Soraya Lane.

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 for only \$25, email me sarah@serenadepublishing.com and become a sponsor on Patreon!

Sarah Williams

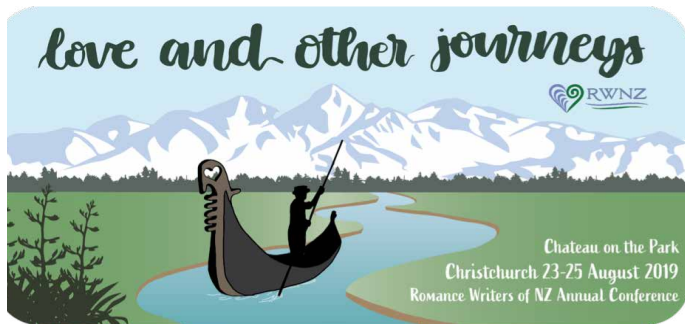


Do you have a writing resource you'd like to share with the RWNZ members? Or a review of a technical book (marketing/craft/writing life)? Please send it to:

heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz

Thank you!





RWNZ Conference 2019 Update

Welcome to 2019! One small change to a number and we can't refer to the Christchurch conference as being 'next year' any more. Luckily, your conference committee is on track and about to get stuck back into all things conference...after quite a few weeks distracted by the Christmas, summer, end-of-school, holiday etc season. As I write this [late, and reminded very politely as such by our Heart to Heart Editor] I am in a holiday house in Nelson, looking out across the Tasman Bay to Abel Tasman National Park and scheming how far I could reasonably make the kids walk in a day trip out there...

For you, February means we are racing towards the reality of opening up 2019 registration in the next few weeks. For us, this means untangling the puzzle that is a conference programme. Who knew there were so many different ways to arrange fifteen workshops and a dozen or so plenary sessions, to schedule our RWNZ and international speakers, and to squeeze all this amazingness (yes I am sure that is a real word) into only three days?

It's all good fun though, and here are some of the best bits:

WELCOMING OUR RWNZ WORKSHOP SPEAKERS

Thank you to all those who put forward your ideas and were willing to share your expertise and enthusiasm. For the 2019 RWNZ conference please welcome the following RWNZ workshop presenters:

- Charmaine Ross reveals book cover design secrets;
- Michelle Somers explores characterisation through narration;
- Natalie Anderson and Soraya Lane relate how to stay published once you get published;
- Brynn Kelly shares media training tricks for interviews and pitches;
- Jackie Ashendon teaches us about tension
- Lola Goulton conveys top tips to improve your manuscript; and
- Zana Bell helps us find flow in writing.

AND ANOTHER INTERNATIONAL EDITOR

We will also be welcoming May Chen from Avon to our 2019 conference.

Keep an eye on the RWNZ members Facebook page and website as we will be updating online content with more information on speaker bios and workshop information as we get closer to opening registration. Though let's be honest, having more information doesn't make it any easier to choose workshops...

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



Great Beginnings Report

The Great Beginnings contest closed with a remarkable thirty-eight entries – and I mean remarkable in every sense of the word. The quality of the writing was of a very high standard, and I know from the comments of our judges that they all enjoyed their tasks tremendously.

Because of the sheer amount of entries, and with each entry needing to be read by five different judges for fairness, the need was great this year for willing judges. And the Great turned up. Fifty-one of you! Thank you all for putting your hands up to help out your organisation. The words are said often, but in this instance, they couldn't be truer – without your help, this contest would not have got off the ground. Thank you once more for your help in making this contest run smoothly.

All the very best of luck to our deserving Finalists in the last round of judging. And thank you for representing our organisation with your incredible talent.

UPDATED GB FINALISTS 2018

(in random order)

Stephanie Ruth x2

Caenys Kerr

Wendy and Leonie Wethey w/a Sonya Leowen

Sue Kingham

*LaVerne Clark
Great Beginnings Contest Manager 2018*

It's a Match!

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MitoQ

The Welcome Mat

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



Katherine Whittaker

Ruth Zapasnik

Maree O'Brien

Fiona Maddison

Fleur Connor

Katherine Hayton

Joanna Tracey

Angela Stein

Ingrid Renneberg



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](#).



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Heart to Heart will be published in the first week of each month except January. The deadline for every issue is the 20th of the month prior (e.g. 20th 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 submit a woo hoo, e-mail Gillian or use [this form](#) on the website.



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

Regional Round-Up Reports

AUCKLAND

Convenor: [Ruth Clough](#)

The first Chapter member for Auckland is 1 Feb from 12:30 - 3:00 p.m. at Three Kings Tennis Pavilion.

HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Kendra Delugar](#)

Our Christmas meeting was held at the lovely Boardwalk Beach Bar and Bistro, where we all ate too much, had a lot of fun, and set up our writing and business goals for 2019. We also looked at how we did meeting our goals from last year - some of us (not me) nailed it, the rest of us could only smile/grimace and order another wine.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome. Our next meeting, February the 2nd, will be held at Bron's - where we'll be tackling Goal, Motivation, and Conflict.

WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

16 of us met for the last Wellington Chapter Meeting of the year, in the meeting room at Paraparaumu Library (Jane, Peter, Charlotte, Ellie, Diana, Bonnie, Gudrun, Leanne, Moira, Anne Barwell, Kris, Helen Pickering, Angelique, Susan, Anne Kemp and Helen McNaught).

We looked back at our plans for 2018, and what we'd achieved, and then made our individual writing goals for 2019, to be reviewed at the Christmas meeting next year.

Kris talked about boxed sets of romances, we did our usual cold reads, caught up on everyone's news, and bounced some ideas for future chapter meetings and workshops, including:

- Marketing and ads - what works and what doesn't
- Useful web tools & apps
- Newsletters
- How to find readers / ARC readers / beta readers

We also stuffed ourselves with a selection of yummy food :)
Next meeting - 2 Feb 2019

NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

The last meeting of the year saw our group enjoying a lovely meal at Styx, a local waterfront café. The food was great, but the company and conversation were even better! Any time a group of writers get together, hilarity ensues, especially if they are romance writers.

After our delicious meal, we were visited by the one and only Santina who delivered us presents and received more than a curious look or two from the other customers.

Next meeting will be at 2:00 p.m., Saturday 9 February at Nick Smith's meeting rooms, corner of Quarantine and Waimea Roads. As the start of the new year can be sluggish for our brains to kick back into life, we'll be sharing books or prompts we find useful to get us back into the swing of things. All welcome to come and check us out!

CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

In December, the Christchurch Chapter had a fun end of year social meetup at Madam Kwong's restaurant. We enjoyed plenty of chat over a delicious meal. Thanks to everyone in our group for their contributions and leading of sessions over the year. Also, S thanks to our conference committee group for their brilliant organisation and work towards 2019 conference.

Our first Christchurch chapter meeting of 2019 will be Sunday 10th February. We meet monthly on a Sunday afternoon at Christchurch libraries. Our new convenor for the group is Emma Lowe, please contact her for the set dates of meetings this year.

OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

The Otago/Southland chapter met up on Saturday 8 December at Rhubarb cafe in Dunedin. There were eight of us present, and we enjoyed hearing about everyone's writing/publishing plans for 2019. We then spent the second half of the meeting discussing what makes 'strong dialogue'. Our next chapter meeting is scheduled for Sat 2 February 2019.

COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Vivienne Matthews](#)

With the year just beginning it's always a fitting time to set some goals for the upcoming year. However, rather than go through a goal setting workshop – again - we thought it would be good to hear different strategies that have worked for others. It was awesome to hear what works for different people and led to some great discussions around people's ideas and how they work for them. Many of us walked away with new ideas of what we could try, or incorporate, into our goal achieving skills. 2018 was a big year for some of our C2C with people publishing both first books and not first books. 2019 is going to be another big year for our group with more books coming out, websites going up and goals being met! Bring it on!

BLenheim AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)



Nelson RWNZ members celebrating at Styx