

Heart to Heart

ROMANCE WRITERS
OF NEW ZEALAND

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An Interview with Amy Andrews

Joanne Harris



Flights are being booked, hotels reserved and registration is officially open! Heart to Heart kicks off our conference preparations with an interview with Amy Andrews, one of our international guests. Amy will be speaking to us on a range of topics, from romantic comedy to nailing dialogue. Joanne Harris interviewed her on behalf of Heart to Heart.

1) You write across so many sub-genres. What is your favourite?

I have written a variety of sub-genres – sports, medical, small town - but they're all pretty much come square under the umbrella of contemporary romance and that is absolutely my favourite. I love reading and writing about the now, about contemporary women and men and modern relationships.

2) After over seventy books and 2 million (it's actually pretty much 3 million now) copies sold, how do you find fresh inspiration?

In a world that bombards us with stories wherever we look, I never really have any problems with inspiration. And I think writers are especially receptive to these stories. It's like our superpower!

3) You live by the ocean. Can we expect any hunky surfer dude heroes?

Hmmm, good question. Not in the foreseeable future, no. But never say never.

4) What future writing goals do you have?

My big lofty goals are to hit the NYT list and score a movie deal. My more realistic ones are to make a hundred books and get enough time in my schedule to tinker with a film script.

5) What couldn't you live without—dogs, chocolate or alcohol?

Booze! Although I am having a dry year and proving I can live without it so...

6) Is there one book you are particularly proud of?

Not one but probably a handful. I'm proud of different books for different reasons. For example, I'm proud of *No More Mr Nice Guy* because it's the book I hit the USA Today bestselling list with. I'm proud of *Numbered*, the book I wrote with my sister, Ros Baxter which won us a Ruby. I'm proud of *How to Mend A Broken Heart* because a lot of people hated it but it was wrenching and real about a couple dealing with terrible grief and I loved it. I'm proud of *Nothing But Trouble* which is out in April because it'll be my first book ever in Walmart! I could go on but will leave it at four.

7) Have you ever been to New Zealand/Christchurch and do you have a wish list while you are here?

I've been to NZ twice but not really explored any of it and never been to the South Island. Hubby and I will be taking a week after the conference to explore all your Southern delights! Prior to my dry year I would have head for the wine region but I'm quite keen to get to the southern-most point and hope the weather is perfect for some Aurora Borealis spotting.

8) I'm so looking forward to your workshop on writing with humour, Laughing them into Bed. Can you give us any sneak peak on being funny?

How about a sneak peak on how NOT to be funny? Humour should be situational not the liberal application of jokes. Be subtle. Don't overegg!



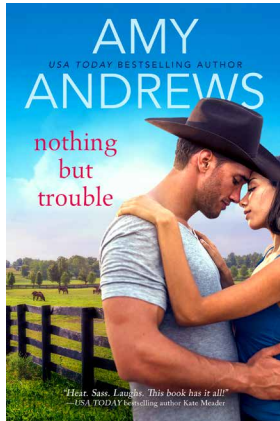


9) Plot or not? AM or PM writing habit?

I'm a planstar....some plot, some flying blind. I'm a day time writer generally but can write into the night if required. I tend to edit at night.

10) If they made Amy Andrews the movie, which actress would you choose to play you?

Oh dear....now that is a scary thought. Maybe the Bridget Jones version of Renee Zellweger? The loveable ditz with a heart of gold.



NOTHING BUT TROUBLE

For five years, Cecilia Morgan's entire existence has revolved around playing personal assistant to self-centered former NFL quarterback Wade Carter. But just when she finally gives her notice, his father's health fails, and Wade whisks her back to his hometown. CC will stay for his dad—for now—even if that means ignoring how sexy her boss is starting to look in his Wranglers.

To say CC's notice is a bomb-shell is an insult to bombs. Wade can't imagine his life without his "left tackle." She's the only person who can tell him "no" and strangely, it's his favorite quality. He'll do anything to keep her from leaving, even if it means playing dirty and dragging her back to Credence, Colorado, with him.

But now they're living under the same roof, getting involved in small-town politics, and bickering like an old married couple. Suddenly, five years of fighting is starting to feel a whole lot like foreplay. What's a quarterback to do when he realizes he might be falling for his "left tackle"? Throw a Hail Mary she'll never see coming, of course.

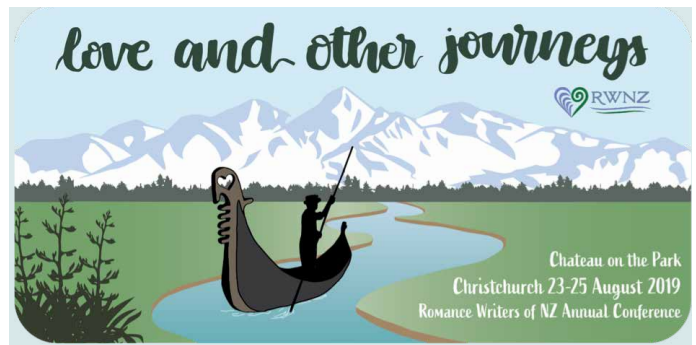
Buy Nothing But Trouble [here](#)



[Amy](#) is an award-winning, USA Today best-selling, Aussie author who has written seventy plus contemporary romances in both the traditional and digital markets. Her debut novel hit the shelves in 2005 and, in 2018, she became a double RITA finalist. Her books bring all the feels from sass, quirk and laughter to emotional grit and panty-melting heat. She loves good books and great booze although she'll take mediocre booze if there's nothing else. For many, many years she was a registered nurse which means she knows things. Anatomical things. And she's not afraid to use them!

Amy has a long association with RWAustralia. She's twice served on the national executive where she did everything from secretary to two time conference coordinator, to vice president and finally two years as president. In 2014, after many years of advising/mentoring emerging romance authors, she started a manuscript assessment service, Word Witchery, with fellow Harlequin author Anna Cleary. She now runs it solo, juggling manuscripts with her writing schedule.

At the beginning of 2018 she swapped her tree change for a sea change and now gets to stare at the mighty Pacific Ocean as she writes her happily ever afters.



Romancing the Flow: of Shipboard Romance and Endurance Adventure Sports

Zana Bell



My one and only shipboard romance truly was love at first sight. I was five years old, sailing to Africa and the minute I clapped eyes on the writing room that was it. I was smitten. There was something about the ecclesiastical silence of adults bent over their letters that used to suck me into the room where I'd kneel up on the green upholstered seats to finger-trace ghostly hieroglyphs embossed on the wide expanse of the blotter (yes, it was a wee while ago when people still wrote with pen and ink!).

Then one day an unknown adult kindly gave me a pencil. My world suddenly expanded – just like that.

How long I spent at the mahogany desk that day, I have no idea. All I know is that I covered page after page of the ship's letterheaded, ivory paper, gripped in my first orgy of writing. I can't remember what I wrote but I do remember power surging through me, driving my pencil to perform until, blunted down to its wooden sheath, it could go no further. I came out of my trance and, trembling with the exhilaration of inspiration, bore my pages off to our





cabin where my mother read them, laughed and said how clever I was.

When we arrived in Africa, I was astonished to find a letter waiting for me. I ripped open the envelope and out tumbled the pages from the ship. I stared at them. They were nothing more than scribbles with the odd badly formed alphabet letter. My mother was smiling, little realising that her fun surprise had just pitched me into my first experience of existential angst. All that work, all that inspiration, and all I'd produced was gibberish.

I didn't know it then but I was already doomed to spend a lifetime in quest for those snatched moments of exhilarated surrender to words and to suffer a lifetime of writer's despair at producing so much dross.

No wonder Hemingway smoked like a chimney and drank like a fish. Small wonder Coleridge took to opium while I am driven to timtams. Writing is hard. Writing can be soul-destroying. But as you yourself know, when it goes well nothing can match it. Time and self both vanish into that absolute immersion in another world where rich satisfaction is seeded deep within the creative act itself. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls this state of mindful, joyous oblivion 'flow' and sees it manifest in many aspects of life.

Alas when it comes to writing, these moments can be as rare and fleeting as any shipboard romance. We moan of writer's block, of being uninspired. At worst, we can relate to Gene Fowler's:

'Writing is easy: All you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead'

Yet experiments have shown that when pianists are 'in the zone', their facial muscles relax, their hearts slow and they perform better. Those are excellent arguments for why we should learn to harness flow.

Which brings me to the second part of the title. You see, athletes have a huge vested interest in understanding and managing flow and I've had the opportunity to observe them closely because my husband is an endurance athlete. Thus my other life is spent standing in mist-swaddled dawns in foreign paddocks, ankle-deep in mud, surrounded by strange beings, lithesome in lycra, with eyes ablaze with excitement and trepidation of the forthcoming hours of running up mountains, cycling down precipices and kayaking wild rivers.

I've had plenty of time to witness flow in action while quaffing takeaway coffee and scoffing energy bars. Competitors arrive in transition smothered in mud (sometimes blood) and, in trancelike concentration, rip off some gear, haul on new gear, slather sunscreen, grab a morsel, swig electrolytes and shoot off again. Hours later, battered warriors come bounding, hobbling or crawling over the finishline. Yet no matter how drained they are, within minutes they are blazing with the exhilaration of achievement.

Envious of this blazing joy, I began investigating flow for it seems to me that writing a novel is comparable to completing the Coast to Coast. Of course the challenges and goals are vastly different but both demand determination and dedication. We are all

looking for a way to achieve what sometimes seems the unachievable and here's a quote that struck me in a trail running magazine:

Once you blend joy into habit, then discipline morphs from difficult to desirable.

Isn't that what we'd all love – a way to transform our writing from difficult to desirable? I've all too often agreed with Dorothy Parker when she said, "I hate writing. I love having written." Process versus product. All too often I have excellent reasons for not writing. "Too busy today," I tell myself. "But tomorrow I'll write double."

My investigations have taken me into positive psychology and sports psychology, creativity and discipline, athlete training schedules and buddhist philosophy. It's been a fascinating and fun ride where I've learnt startling facts such as it takes people *20 minutes* to fully settle back into their work after the interruption of a phone call. I admit I've never seen an athlete stop mid-race to send a tweet or check Facebook.

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Facebook."*

So if you are interested in channelling your inner adventure athlete to make your writing process more autotelic (intrinsically pleasurable) through the eight stages of flow, then I hope my workshop at the conference will be useful. It will be a sharing of training schedules and writing processes to discover what it takes to romance the flow and turn a shipboard affair into a lifelong, fruitful passion.



Zana Bell has had six novels published internationally across a range of genres. Her short stories have been published in anthologies, in literary journals and broadcast on National Radio. Her articles – both academic and of general interest – have also been published both nationally and internationally.

Her work has attracted a number of awards and grants including the National Koru Award for Long Fiction (2015) and a Vice Chancellors Scholarship (AUT). She has a PhD in Creative Writing and tutors on the New Zealand Diploma in Creative Writing.

An Interview with Kobo's Tara Cremin

Gillian St. Kevern



Members of the Christchurch RWNZ chapter were fortunate enough to sit down with Tara Cremin, Author Experience Manager for Kobo Writing Life for coffee, cake and a frank discussion about publishing. Afterwards, Tara was kind enough to agree to an interview for Heart to Heart! Thank you very much for your time, Tara!

1. Briefly, what is Kobo Writing Life?

Founded in 2012, Kobo Writing Life (KWL) is a global DIY publishing platform that empowers authors to take their publishing career into their own hands. If you're a great writer with an entrepreneurial streak, then KWL is the place for you.

With Kobo Writing Life, you own your rights, set your prices and distribute your books in any country you choose. We don't ask for exclusivity so you are free to publish wherever else you please. Our payment structure is 70% for books priced \$2.99 NZD and higher (no price cap), and 45% for books under \$2.99. You can price your books free anytime and set pre-orders ahead of time, with no date limitations. Publishing your book is a simple four-step process, then you can track global sales live in the dashboard and get paid in the currency of your choice.

2. What does 'Author Experience Manager' entail?

As Author Experience Manager, my focus is on how authors interact with the KWL platform. I'm looking to see what features are really working for us, how we can optimize them and what new initiatives we should explore - for example, the introduction direct audiobook uploading. This is something that we're currently working on and I'm really excited to show everyone once it's launched!

Part of optimizing Kobo Writing Life involves gathering direct feedback from authors. If you've ever filled out a survey for us, thank you! This really does help us align our areas of focus. I also have the pleasure of gathering feedback directly at different conferences and events, (or when I happen to be on vacation in New Zealand).

Our headquarters is based in Toronto and if you're ever visiting or attending a North American conference, let us know!

3. What do you think Rakuten Kobo does best?

Rakuten Kobo's mission is to make reading lives better. We're a company that's filled with passionate readers that genuinely love books. What we're best at, is taking that passion and using it to create the greatest reading experience possible. We're doing this by making the world's best apps and eReaders, like the latest release - the Kobo Forma. Whether you're reading a book or listening to one, we want to make it the most enjoyable experience we can.

4. What publishing market trends are you noticing at Rakuten Kobo?

The rise of audio! Book lovers are always looking for new ways to get lost in a story and we're seeing a big spike in reader interest in audiobooks. There's never been a better time to explore your audiobook options.

For eBooks, we're seeing huge success with box sets. Kobo readers are really big fans of box sets and we often have promotions specifically for them. If you have a series of books, you may want to consider creating a box set. And remember, Kobo Writing Life doesn't have an upper price limit so you're earning 70% on each sale!

5. What marketing tools/enhancements are you offering in 2019?

I mentioned promotions for box sets, these opportunities can be found in the promotions tab directly in your Kobo Writing Life account. If you don't see this tab in your account, email the ever helpful team at writinglife@kobo.com. They'll enable it for you.

This tab allows users to apply directly for promotional opportunities. We offer new promotions regularly so we recommend keeping an eye on this tab and seeing if your books are suited to any opportunities. We also have geo specific sales, including sales for New Zealand and Australia. Using this feature is a great way to get your books in the eyes of our merchandising team!

If you're looking for marketing tips and advice, you should join the Kobo Writing Life community! We have an award winning blog and weekly Podcast (The Kobo Writing Life Podcast) that's chocked full of advice about everything self-publishing and includes interviews with authors and industry experts. You can also find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest.

6. Tell us about Rakuten Kobo and audiobooks!

We're so excited about audiobooks! Since Rakuten Kobo launched audiobooks, we've seen the interest from readers grow and grow. Audiobooks are available through the free Kobo app and as a self-confessed audiophile, I can testify that the app is really great and offers seamless playback, including car-play!

Given this interest, we want to be able to help independent authors get their audiobooks in front of this eager audience. We're currently developing direct audiobook uploading for Kobo Writing Life. This would allow KWL users to create an audiobook as easily as they can create an eBook. You always retain the rights and we won't



ask for exclusivity. You'll also control your distribution and price, including price promotions! Publishing your audiobooks through Kobo Writing Life will make them available in the Kobo store and also in Walmart's online store in the US. This is just one of the ways that Kobo's strategic retail partnerships are a valuable resource for independent authors.

We're really busy at the moment making audiobook uploading the best experience it can be and can't wait for you all to see it once it's finished. We expect it to launch in the first quarter of 2019.

7. What does Kobo's relationship with Overdrive mean for authors?

OverDrive is the leading digital reading platform for libraries and schools worldwide. OverDrive and Kobo represent the digital reading arms of Rakuten, a Japanese global eCommerce company.

As a Kobo Writing Life author, you can easily opt your books in for distribution to OverDrive in the *Rights and Distribution* section of your book. You'll receive 50% of each library sale, which is higher than all other leading self-publishing platforms. As Kobo is a sister company to OverDrive, we also have marketing opportunities available for Kobo Writing Life authors. If you're interested in learning more about how libraries help sell titles and why you should befriend your local librarian, I'd recommend this article from the KWL Blog.

8. You mentioned that Kobo's New Zealand distribution partner is Paper Plus. Does that mean books published via Kobo's Writing Life platform are automatically available through Paper Plus? How does this work?

Yes! Paper Plus one of Kobo's many retail partners, that includes Walmart in the US, WHSmith in the UK, Angus & Robertson in Australia and many, many more. If you choose to distribute in a territory where Kobo has a retail partner, your book will be automatically added. No action is needed on your side!

For example, if you wanted to include your books in Paper Plus, all you need to do is ensure you have New Zealand selected. If your books have World Wide rights, then New Zealand will already be included. You can review and adjust these settings at any time in the Rights and Distribution section of your book.

9. You mentioned that Kobo Writing Life offers referrals to services that provide editors and covers from the writing life dashboard. Can you tell us more about these?

When you're starting your independent publishing journey, it can be very daunting. You've written your book but you may not know where to begin with editing or how to find the perfect cover image that best represents your book. We're trying to make this step easier for Kobo Writing Life authors by recommending trusted service providers.

You'll see this option in the *Author Services* section of your KWL dashboard. By clicking on any of these recommendations, you'll receive an email with more information and also some discounts that are only available to KWL authors.

10. How can authors use Kobo's Promotions to increase their outreach?

Using the promotions tool that's available in the KWL dashboard is a great way to give your books some exposure. In addition to this, we also have a price promotion tool. This allows you to set sale prices for your book!

You'll see this option become available when you go to the *Set the Price* section of a published book. You can adjust the price in all currencies, or choose specific areas to discount. For example, you can set a sale prize in NZD while maintaining the full price in other currencies. You choose between setting a permanent price promotion or a temporary one that has a start and end date.

This tool can be used to set your book to free and these numbers are included in your reporting dashboard. We don't have any time limitations for price promotions so you can set as far ahead as you like. We'll send you an email reminder when your promotion is starting and another when it's ending.

11. Is there anything you'd like us to know about Kobo Writing Life not already covered?

We have a mountain of resources available in our [Help Centre](#) but if you have any questions, please reach out us at writinglife@kobo.com. We'd love to hear from you!



TARA CREMIN - AUTHOR EXPERIENCE MANAGER, KOBO WRITING LIFE

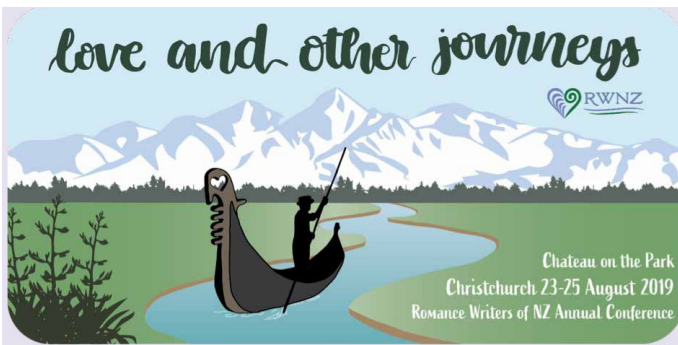
Tara is responsible for the overall author experience on Kobo Writing Life, from optimizing current features to looking for new avenues of growth. Her aim is to make KWL the greatest and most user-friendly self-publishing platform available.

Tara has an MA in American Literature and Film from University College Cork, Ireland and has worked for KWL since inception. She loves talking to authors and using direct feedback to make improvements that benefit the whole user base.

She likes to read lots of genres but particularly likes reading non-fiction, to get the story behind the story. As well as being a book nerd, Tara's a big music nerd. She could recommend a good soundtrack to your latest read.



Christchurch RWNZ members enjoying a sunny meeting with Tara



Creating Tension with Jackie Ashenden

Gillian St. Kevern



As the 2019 RWNZ Conference approaches, it's time to start getting to know our amazing presenters! Jackie Ashenden has been kind enough to kick things off with an interview on tension, the subject of her conference workshop. Auckland chapter members are already well aware that Jackie is a tension expert. In the following interview, she shares some of her insight into tension and writing generally.

1) Why is tension so important in romance?

It's actually important in any genre, not just romance, because tension is what keeps the reader turning the pages.

2) What are the key ingredients to creating edge-of-your-seat tension?

Conflict, character and plot are all vital to creating tension.

3) Does creating tension come naturally to you or is it a skill you had to learn?

It's always been natural to me as a writer, because angsty, high stakes books with lots of tension were what I gravitated to as a reader. However, what I did have to learn was the nuts and bolts of creating tension itself, what were the components I used etc. Knowing what goes into creating tension is important because then you can recreate it in every book you write.

4) How does tension differ by sub-genre?

Tension exists in every genre, between a) the character and their environment, b) the character and their relationship to other characters, and c) the character and themselves. However, you might get the tension more from one source than another depending on your sub-genre.

For example, in a historical you might find that the tension comes more from a) the structures of society and its rules. Or in a paranormal, where the tension can come from rules of the world the characters exist in. Or in a suspense, where there is an external threat (the character's environment) that puts the characters under pressure.

Examples of b) happen more in contemporary romance, where there tends to be more emphasis on the relationships between characters than the environment they exist in.

Examples of c) can happen in erotic romance, where there is tension between the character and their own desires.

5) Can you name some authors that you consider do a really good job of creating tension?

A few in romance off the top of my head are Sherry Thomas, Megan Crane, Kerrigan Byrne, Nalini Singh and Maya Blake. For other genres, Jane Harper does fantastic tension in thrillers – both between characters and each other and characters and their environment. Pierce Brown's Red Rising series in SciFi is an excellent example of tension between a character and the world he lives in.

Basically any book you simply can't put down is a book full of really well done tension. And it's that tension that keeps you reading because you have to know what happens next.

6) What are your goals for 2019?

Write more books!

7) What are you hoping to get out of the 2019 conference?

Catch up with some cool people and hang out in Christchurch!

8) What keeps you writing on days where everything feels impossible?

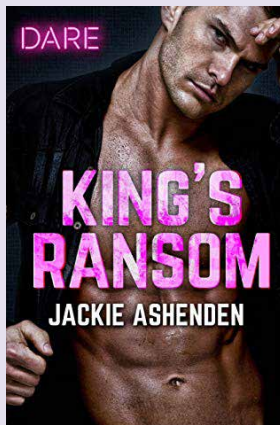
Writing is my escape from reality so I tend to write even more when everything feels impossible. Unless I'm really tired, in which case I'll veg in front of the TV.

9) What are you currently reading? Alternatively, what is the last book you read?

I'm judging RITA books so I can't tell you what I'm reading now, but the book I last read that I really enjoyed was A Discovery of Witches by Deborah Harkness. Really good!

10) What advice would you give to someone just starting their writing journey?

If you want to make writing your career, make sure you actually love writing. Because when sales dry up and your genre tanks (and it will, because it does for everyone), it's that love of writing that will get you through.



KINGS RANSOM

Decades of being the eldest son of the biggest crime lord in Sydney doesn't leave a man without scars, and mine run deep. Now I'll do almost anything to destroy Sydney's criminal underworld—even kidnap my enemy's delectable daughter. Imogen White is pristine. Perfect. And if her father won't leave Sydney for good, then I'll take the one thing he prizes above all—and make her mine!

Only Imogen isn't quite the innocent I thought. She wants to be freed from her gilded prison, and

damn if she isn't looking for a little carnal education in return. She's primal incarnate. Just like me.

But I'm no knight in shining armour. I live cold and hard. I want nothing. I need nothing. The ends always justify the means... and no one—not even a sweet little spitfire like Imogen—will thaw the ice around my cold heart. No one.

Buy *King's Ransom* [here](#)

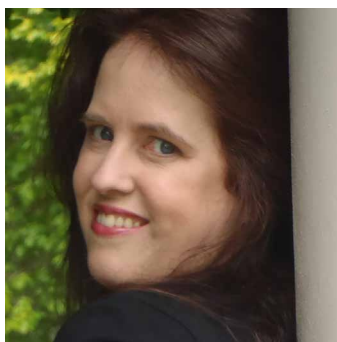


Jackie writes dark, emotional contemporary romance with alpha heroes who've just got the world to their liking only to have it blown wide apart by their kick-ass heroines.

She lives in Auckland, New Zealand with her husband, the imitable Dr Jax, two kids, one cat and one dog. When she's not torturing alpha males and their gutsy heroines, she can be found drinking chocolate martinis, reading anything she can lay her hands on, wasting time on social media, or being forced to go mountain biking with her husband.

The Stages of Editing

Judy L Mohr



It always surprises me when someone suggests that I must love punctuation and grammar just because I happen to be a freelance editor. When I explain exactly what editing is and what I specialise in, their jaws drop.

"You mean you have to actually think about that? Doesn't the publishing house do that for you?"

Let's ignore the assumption that getting a publication contract might be easy, because anyone who has ever headed down the road of traditional publication knows that it's bloody hard! But as I head deeper and deeper down the road of my personal writing and editing journey, I've come to realise that many writers just starting on their own journeys are in for a few surprises.

Before I get too involved in discussing the various stages of editing, I need to apologise to all those who are experienced writers of RWNZ. This article is targeted at those who are just learning their craft. The only way they can learn is if those of us more experienced pass on our knowledge. So, that's what I'm doing.

Time to head down the rabbit hole of editing.

CONCEPT THROUGH TO DEVELOPMENTAL EDITING

The full editing process is quite involved, pictographically shown in Figure 1.

We all start with a concept that eventually gets turned into that first draft. From there, the revisions begin as we enter into the developmental editing phase. We examine plot, character, narrative structure and much more. Most of us will send parts of our manuscripts out to critique partners for feedback. Occasionally, we might employ a developmental editor. We revise our manuscripts again, and around the cycle it goes.

In reality, *developmental editing* is likely the most complicated phase of editing. And ironically, most writers will developmentally edit their manuscripts to some level instinctively. Yet, developmental editing also seems to be the one area that is often rushed.

I'm always saying it: writing the first draft is actually the easy part; turning that manuscript into something worth reading is where the true talent of the writer lies.

Developmental editing goes by so many different names, with buzz words going in and out of fashion. The latest words seem to include book doctoring, structural editing and extreme editing.

The reason that this early stage of editing is so vital is because readers are more willing to forgive the odd typo or grammatical error if the story is gripping and captures the imagination. If your story fails to deliver, for whatever reason, if the narrative throws the reader out of the story at the wrong point, then your reader will focus on that typo and every other error they can find.

Everything you hear about using first-person or third-person, show vs tell, and all the other little nuances of creating gripping narratives is all captured by developmental editing. For many writers, developmental editing is the bane of our existence.

(Ironically, developmental editing is where I thrive. It's what I've specialised in as an editor. To me, it's fun to tear apart a story, only to piece it together again—even if that story is one of my own.)

COPYEDITING TO PROOFREADING

After the developmental editing nightmare (which always seems to take longer than we initially anticipate), we move into the *copyediting* phase. Issues associated with language are examined in detail. We might send



our manuscripts out to *beta readers* during this time, or we might pay for a *copyeditor* to work their magic. The revision continues, and our stories become tighter and polished.

However, it's actually common for a beta reader to highlight some sort of developmental issue that escaped the initial editing passes. Those little foxes are good like that, and it might be back into the developmental editing phase we go. This is probably the main reason why developmental editing is the bane of our existence. It is also the reason why the arrow goes both ways on Figure 1 between the copyediting and developmental editing phase.

Once we have a manuscript that we're happy to not continually tinker with, our baby will head off into the proofreading phase, where it goes to a *typesetter* and to a *proofreader*. (Note: Even production of an eBook format is typesetting.)

After all of that, our book finds itself in the stores, either online or brick-and-mortar.

This short description is an oversimplification of the process, but there is a word count limit here, and I really don't want to bore everyone to death.

*"It doesn't matter which road
towards publication your
heading, traditional or self.
Both paths require all stages
of editing..."*

It doesn't matter which road towards publication your heading, traditional or self. Both paths require all stages of editing, but exactly who pays for the editors along this journey will depend on the path you're on. For the most part, developmental editing will always land directly on your shoulders. Copyediting and proofreading is a different story.

Whether you chose to hire a developmental editor or not is entirely up to you. Depending on who you shoulder tap to be your critique partners and beta readers, you might not need a developmental editor. But whatever you do, I beg you, for the sake of your stories, don't overlook any step within the editing process. If you do, your readers will notice.



Kiwi Judy L Mohr is a writer and freelance editor with [Black Wolf Editorial Services](#). While her initial training was in scientific writing, her real passion is for fiction, where the imagination can run wild. Her personal writing is filled with fantastical themes and heart-racing thriller moments. As such, she adores working with clients on their paranormal romance and romantic suspense stories.

She holds an editorial accreditation from OpenColleges Australia, in addition to her academic qualifications. In July 2018, Judy became a professional member of the Institute of Professional Editors, Inc (IPEd) in Australia.

How to Research Your Diverse Character

Steff Green



There's a lot of discussion in the writing community about who has 'permission' to write certain stories. Mainly, these are the stories that feature non-cis (cis = identifying as the sex you're born as), non-white, non-straight, non-'western', non-able-bodied characters. The #ownvoices movement aims to lift up the writers who are telling these stories from their lived experiences, which is fucking amazing and about bloody time.

However, the conversation can sometimes veer off into a battle of who has the rights to these characters. Is an able-bodied person allowed to write a disabled character? What about a white person writing a POC? Does the identity of the writer preclude them from certain narratives?

There's no easy answer here, which is why it's something that's discussed ad nauseum inside as part of any discussion about diverse literature. And it isn't just fiction that gets this treatment. Historian T K Roxborough wrote recently about this issue when writing histories. "We should welcome the telling of histories – in whatever form they take – because no one person can hold the 'right' way of telling a history: people are flawed. Although, the better tellings are those that have done lots of research and used a range of sources."

Speaking as a fiction writer with a disability, I have opinions! My opinion is this: we're all writing fiction. It's all flying saucers and happily-ever-afters and dinosaur capers and mysterious strangers. We all get to play in the same sandbox of our imagination, and I don't think one fiction writer or reader should be telling another what they can/can't write.

The key is to remember why you want to write diverse characters, and not to lose sight of that as your story takes over. There is a real and present problem that there isn't enough diverse fiction in the world. Many people can't see themselves reflected in the characters in books and films and TV. Many people don't see protagonists that look or think like them, and that can do lasting damage.

Part of that problem is that there are not enough non-white, non-male writers. Part of the problem is that



◀◀
writers aren't writing enough diverse characters. Part of the problem is that the gatekeepers (reviewers, award committee, publishers, booksellers) aren't lifting up the books with these important stories. Part of that comes from our own perceptions as readers – if we see a book with a black hero or heroine on the front, we think it's a certain kind of book (even if it's not) and bypass it for something that feels safer for us (usually with a white cover model). It's a complex issue with lots of facets, but the end result is the same – a bland landscape of same, same, same.

The truth is, we don't live in a world that's all-white, all-cis, all-straight, all-able-bodied. We live in a wonderful, diverse melting pot of different experiences where anyone and everyone can and does fall in love. But that's not reflected in our literature. That's why we need representation – so that our readers can see themselves in our stories – and that's why I applaud any writer who wants to be a part in changing that.

However, it can be tough to nail that representation in a way that feels authentic. We have a history steeped in colonialism and ableism and homophobia and all sorts of other isms and phobias that mean real people have endured a world of hurt. They don't want to open a book that's supposed to be for them, that's supposed to be their escape from all that bollocks, and see that same ugliness reflected back at them again.

When you write a story with a minority character that reinforces those beliefs – even if unintentionally – you can contribute to actual hurt and damage done to that group. (Speaking as a person with a disability, it would be nice if not every single disabled character died as a means to teach able-bodied characters a lesson).

What's the solution? Research.

Research helps all of us get the details right. Whether it's making sure your WWI soldiers aren't using weapons that weren't invented for another 15 years or creating an authentic experience of life in a wheelchair, you need research. Because you weren't a soldier in WWI, the same way you might not know what it's like to live in a wheelchair.

If you've got an idea for a book with a diverse protagonist who has a life outside of your lived experience, then you've gotta research. Here's a simple guide to help you do the best job you can.

GET ORGANISED

This is the first stage of any research project. You need to put together a research plan so you have time to fit in everything you need to do before your deadline. If you're a prolific writer, then you need to get this research done fast, but you also got to get it right, so this stage is super important.

You need to:

- Set out a timeline for your project, including deadlines – when you need to start writing the book, when you need to finish the draft, etc.
- Plan the stages of research (general, specific, interviews, sensitivity readers). Identify the key areas of research of what you know already about the novel (character, location, technical details).

- Book interview times with subject matter experts and those with lived experience (I like to do this at the beginning of a research period if possible, as the dates serve as deadlines to help me focus).

I like to talk to people with lived experience, and I prefer to speak to friends or friends-of-friends, so I usually start by throwing a note up on Facebook to ask people to hook me up with someone who can help. I've found so many amazing and helpful peeps that way. There are also networks of people who work as sensitivity readers, such as Writing In The Margins. Either way, it's nice to have someone on tap to ask really weird questions like, "how does one actually attach a prosthetic limb?" or "do blind people really do that face-touching thing?"

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

In the beginning, you probably don't know much about what you need to know, so you need to do some reading to figure out... what you want to know.

For me, exploratory research is happening all the time as I see and learn and read and watch new things. It also happens from the time I get an inkling of an idea for plot or character. It's the research you do when you decide you'll be writing a heroine with an amputation but you don't know what that means or what it looks like.

You need general background knowledge about your subject. For this stage, Wikipedia or other general knowledge websites or books are a good place to begin. Get a basic overview of your subject, then dive into tangents that interest you, find unique books (I love biographies and interesting history books) and also look for academic essays and papers. This is also a time when I like to throw up a question on Facebook. "Hey, I'm researching Slavic mythology and being bisexual. Does anyone have any books or documentaries they can recommend to me?" I get LOTS of cool responses.

NARROWING YOUR FOCUS

As you research, you'll begin to put your ideas together and your story and characters will start to emerge in your mind. It's around this time you'll start developing certain questions and lines of research you need to pursue. As well as looking in the same places for more specific research, you will need to:

- Create a list of specific questions. This list might include things like: how does a person with an above-the-knee amputation have sex? Or what slang words would a POC who grew up in New Orleans use? These are the questions it's particularly useful to talk to a friend or source about.
- Learn about stereotypes. There are common stereotypes about all minority groups that you need to be aware of if you're writing about them. Many stereotypes are harmful and offensive to the groups involved – and since you're not of that culture or group, you might not realise you've done something harmful. Remember, the whole point of having representation is so that everyone can see themselves in books, so if you resort to stereotypes for your diverse characters, you're not achieving the goal.
- On the other hand, stereotypes can also be great tools for a storyteller, enabling you to dig deeper into



the world of your character and subvert expectations. You need to be careful not to be too broad here and remember that stereotypes aren't only between 'western' and 'other'. For example, YA writer Malinda Yo writes about the problems researching stereotypes about Asian characters – 'Asia' is quite a large geographic area encompassing many diverse cultures. Stereotypes white America has about Chinese people are very different from stereotypes the Chinese have about Taiwanese people. There's great story fodder there.

- Visit a reference library. If you have access to a university or society library complete with subject-matter librarians, you've hit research gold! You can speak to the librarian about the questions you've identified and he/she will direct you to where to look for answers. Don't expect the librarian to do the work for you.
- Conduct your interviews. Sit down either in person or via Skype with your awesome source and pick their brains about their life and experiences and any other questions you have. Remember that they don't speak for their entire culture or group and their experiences are personal to them.

START WRITING

Now you get to put your research together and put words on the page. It's a little scary, but also heaps of fun!

When writing, try not to let details hold you up. As you write you'll no doubt come up with many more research questions along the way. When I was writing *Wedding the Wolf*, I realised during one scene that I didn't actually know how a person put on/took off a prosthetic limb. When I'm in the flow of writing I leave a gap in the text and a note about what I need to know, so I can come back and add the details later.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK

When I write characters from cultures I'm not familiar with or with disabilities I don't possess myself, I usually ask someone within my network (possibly one of my original sources) to have a read over the story and make sure I haven't made any glaring mistakes. Usually, their feedback is positive – thanks to all the research I've done – but they will add one or two interesting details that add depth to the story.

Even if you conduct extensive research and write a compelling story, you may still end up with readers accusing you of getting things 'wrong.' Many people have a high personal stake in certain types of stories or certain characters because of their own lived experiences. They may take offense to your portrayal of a character even if you've worked hard to create something that doesn't conform to harmful stereotypes.

They have every right to do so, and you shouldn't get angry or try and stop them. Readers are complex people and every one of them will have their own reaction to a book. The best thing you can do is remember that they don't speak for everyone, focus on what you've achieved that you're proud of, and learn and listen so you can improve in the future.

I believe that even if experiences aren't universal, emotions

are. Guilt, pain, humiliation, rage, love, rejection, regret, devotion – these are universal to the human condition. By rooting a character in these universal emotions, you can create someone who appeals to a wide range of readers, even though the character's experiences are vastly different from their own.

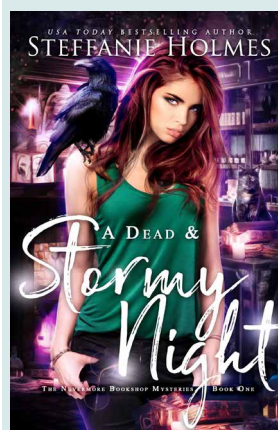
I also believe it's the duty of writers who believe in the importance of representation to lift up diverse voices and help marginalised writers to be heard. As well as creating your own cast of diverse characters, you should help your audience be aware of books by other writers who deserve to be heard. Doing these two things with earnestness and grace helps to create an inclusive book community where everyone has the chance to be the hero or heroine of their favourite story.

RESOURCES

[We Need Diverse Books](#) – an organisation dedicated to promoting diverse literature.

[Be Brave and Write Inclusively](#) – an amazing list of resources and further reading on writing diverse books.

A list of resources for all kinds of diverse characters on [Writing With Color](#) – I use this all the time.



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.

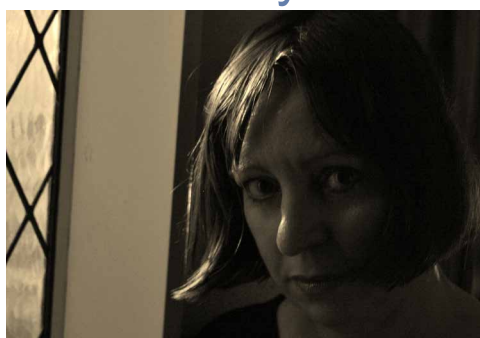
Buy *A Dead and Stormy Night* [here](#)



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.

Taking Your Writing to the Next Level—An Annual Plan for Your Writing

Jane Ashurst w/a Sophia Grey



There are many reasons for writing fiction, and some of us do it purely for the entertainment of friends and family. That's cool. But some of us want to take it to the next level, and sell copies to strangers. That's kinda scary the first time you do it, that leap into the unknown, but it's pretty cool, too.

And some of us want to push through to the next level after that. Using writing as our main source of income. Wouldn't that be the best job in the world?

It takes time, though. And planning.

Let me ask you a question. If you were thinking of starting a new business, let's say, opening a bookshop, you wouldn't just buy / lease the first shopfront you saw, and launch in, feet first, with nothing but a bunch of great ideas. Would you? It's a silly question, because you wouldn't. You'd draw up a business plan first, and figure out who you were going to sell to, what you wanted them to buy, what pricing you needed to charge, how many units you needed to shift to make the lease payments... and much more. Right?

So why not take the same approach with your writing plans?

I'm currently six years into a ten-year aspirational plan to quit the day job and write full time. I'll be honest, it's been a struggle so far. The writing process is relatively easy, if slow, but the marketing / self-promotion / sales activities have all fallen into the too-hard basket for most of that time. It was only last year, when I was half-way through my long-term plan, that I realised what I was doing wrong. I was playing. I wasn't treating it as a serious undertaking. If I want to be a full-time writer that can support my family, I need to be serious about the business side of things. It was a classic lightbulb moment. I work in project management and I plan things all freaking day at work, so I know I have the skills

and experience. I just need the confidence in myself, and the motivation to make it happen.

And the first link in the chain is the plan.

I developed a plan last year, and used it to figure out what my activities were going to be every month. It was ambitious, and not entirely achievable, so this year I've simplified it. Why don't you give it a try?

I used MS Excel, but any spreadsheet or document will work fine. It's the process of thinking that's important, and the ability to change it as things flex.

	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019
Publish						
Promo						
ARC release						
Revisions						
Edit						
Write						
	Jul 2019	Aug 2019	Sep 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019
Publish						
Promo						
ARC release						
Revisions						
Edit						
Write						

Keeping this first one simple, I'm allocating time in month-long chunks.

1. Start with the big dates, the delivery deadlines, or the agreed hand-in dates to your editor. For this exercise, let's assume you want to release 2 books this year, one in June and one in October. We'll focus on the June release first. Mark that on the planner, and then we work backwards from there.
2. The month before release is all about getting your pre-launch publicity lined up. Everything from website updates, and Facebook teasers, to newsletters to your loyal readers to whip them into a frenzy of excitement. Block out 1 month for pre-publicity.
3. Part of pre-launch is getting your ARC readers across it, giving them time to read it, of course, and write their reviews ready for posting on launch day. Block out 1 month for ARC reviews (this can be the same period as pre-publicity)
4. Let's assume the editor needs a full month, and then you'll need 2-4 weeks for revisions. Block out 1 month for editing and then another for revisions & polishing.
5. Now work out how long you need to write to those deadlines. If you can write a comfortable 2k per day on average, that means you can knock out 60k in 2 months. Block out 2 months just for writing. On this timetable, you should have started writing the June book in January.

	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019
Publish						The June Book
Promo					The June Book	
ARC release					The June Book	
Revisions				The June Book		
Edit			The June Book			
Write	The June Book	The June Book				
	Jul 2019	Aug 2019	Sep 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019
Publish						
Promo						
ARC release						
Revisions						
Edit						
Write						



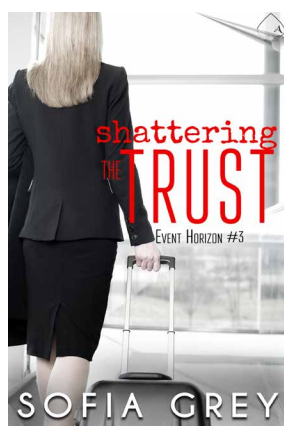
6. Now repeat the process for the October release. Do you have any overlaps? Are you trying to write in the same month as you're doing revisions? Is that realistic?

	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019
Publish						The June Book
Promo					The June Book	
ARC release					The June Book	
Revisions				The June Book		
Edit			The June Book			
Write	The June Book	The June Book			The October Book	The October Book

	Jul 2019	Aug 2019	Sep 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019
Publish				The October Book		
Promo			The October Book			
ARC release			The October Book			
Revisions		The October Book				
Edit	The October Book					
Write						

Because I have pre-booked editing slots, I use those as the starting points, and then plan the writing and promo dates around them, but the process is exactly the same. It's just a way of thinking about how long stuff takes, and planning for it.

There's a whole lot more that can be included under the banner of 'planning', but this is a starting point. There's an old saying in the project management world: Failure to plan means planning to fail. My 2019 plan is ambitious, but it's also achievable, and when I get to the end of the year, I'm going to be another step closer to the end goal. Why don't you give it a try?



SHATTERING THE TRUST

Trusting the wrong person can be deadly

Julien's business trip to New Zealand should be awesome. Throw in front row tickets to see her favourite band while she's there? Perfect.

That's before she learns she's in danger from a terrorist splinter cell. She has information on a new technology, and they want it, at any cost.

Falling for one of the band's bodyguards should make her feel safer. But the one man she needs

to trust hasn't been honest about who he's really working for.

If Julien can't separate the truth from the lies, her technology will get turned into a potent weapon, and the world will pay the price.

Buy *Shattering the Trust* [here](#)



Romance author [Sofia Grey](#) spends her days managing projects in the corporate world and her nights hanging out with wolf shifters and alpha males. She devours pretty much anything in the fiction line, but she prefers her romances to be hot, and her heroes to have hidden depths. When writing, she enjoys peeling back the layers to expose her characters' flaws and always makes them work hard for their happy endings.

Music is interwoven so tightly into my writing that I can't untangle the two. Either I'm listening to a playlist on my iPod, have music seeping from my laptop speakers, or there's a song playing in my head – sometimes on auto-repeat.

News from the President

Kendra Delugar



I thought with a good month having passed since my last President's report that so would the heat, but it's almost 10pm and the temperature is still a balmy twenty degrees. It's enough to keep me outside with the crickets!

Things really start ramping up at this time of year for the RWNZ. As I write this report the 2019 RWNZ Christchurch Conference registration hasn't yet gone live – but it should have by the time this reaches you. The conference runs from the 23rd – 25th of August, and the Christchurch team have put together a fabulous programme for you. If you want more details go here: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/events/>. This is our first Southern conference, and I saw a piece in the newspaper that said 'There are two types of New Zealanders. Those who agree the South Island is the best, and those who are lying.' Being a Northerner I'm not sure I agree, but if you're thinking of attending it may be a great way to step into the debate.

On contest news, entries for the Pacific Hearts have closed. The Koru Published Book Contest is now open throughout the month of March. Thanks to a call out for extra judges we'll be able to accommodate 65 entries again this year. Entries will be limited to 25 Long Romances, 25 Short Romances, and 15 Novellas. As soon as those places fill up the contest will close so get in quick! And our last contest for the 2018/19 year, the Chapter Short Story Contest opens on the 1st of April – so start penning those stories now.

Today the romance world got a reminder of how much of our heart and soul we put into every word, character and story we write. At how much we give of ourselves in this endeavour. We love what we do (even on the bad days), we work incredibly hard it, and it's only fair that we expect our work (and those of our colleagues) to be treated with integrity. And while it's easy on a day like this to let the negativity creep in, it's also important to remember that, for the most part, we work in an industry full of the most amazing people. It's one I consider myself lucky to be part of and contribute to. I hope you do too.

Kendra

From the Editor:

Gillian St. Kevern



At Two Rivers cafe in Cheviot, (off State Highway One, on the right if you are driving to Christchurch from the North, say, for a conference), there is a news article pinned to the wall, talking about the power of saying ‘thank you.’ I’ve spent a lot of time in Cheviot lately, and a considerable percentage of that has been spent in the Two Rivers cafe. As such, I’m quite familiar with the article. While I’m not disagreeing that taking the time to say thank you is an important way to show people you value them and their contributions, build trust and community and self-worth, I think there’s something even more basic the article overlooks: listening.

If you have ever worked as an English teacher in Japan and been asked to explain the difference between listening and hearing, then you already know that hearing happens whether or not you want it to (excluding the baseball playing students, three year olds being asked to pick up toys, all teenagers, etc.). Listening is deliberate. But it wasn’t until a listening exercise popped up on my preferred meditation app that I realised I’m really bad at listening. And I’m sure I’m not the only one.

Intentional listening is when you just listen to whoever you’re talking to. You focus on what they’re saying. This is harder than it sounds. When someone says to me, for example, that Superman is boring because he’s so overpowered, it takes effort to remember that this is their opinion, and not a criticism of my tastes in superheroes. Instead of immediately pointing out that the entire point of Superman is that he wants to be human and isn’t, that every time he pulls off Clark Kent’s shirt, he is failing, you just listen. Your conversational partner continues to talk about why they think this, and the more they talk, the more you realise that they formed this opinion as a result of different and varied life experiences, which they’ve interpreted in new and valid ways—that this is not about you.

This is important, because brains tend to be wired to be ‘me me me.’ We interpret everything we hear through the lens of how it effects us which is why when someone

says something completely innocuous like ‘seriously, who wears underwear outside their clothes?’ it is heard and remembered as ‘Superman is dumb and you’re dumb for liking him.’ This is a bit of an exaggeration, but I’m sure we’ve all experienced a conversation where it felt like you were hitting your head against a wall.

I’m becoming more conscious of how I listen and working to improve, and as I do, I’m noticing that intentional listening—or the lack thereof—is showing up more and more in my writing.

What do I mean? When you’re building your romantic arc, even if the chemistry is there, the characters haven’t forged an emotional connection. By letting them fail to properly listen to each other, you can really showcase their flaws and demonstrate the hurdles their relationship has to overcome to achieve that satisfying HEA.

Does one character have a habit of catching the first half of a sentence and then start mentally rehearsing their response, missing the bulk of what is being said? Why? Are they insecure? Defensive? Dismissive? What happens when their conversation partner flips the script? Are they left speechless?

Then there’s the classic: offering advice when sympathy is needed. This is an alpha type response that can all too easily be misinterpreted as criticism. Conversely, learning to read someone’s emotional cues and correctly divining when to be sympathetic, when to be practical, is a fantastic way to indicate growing emotional connections.

Deliberate misunderstanding, hijacking a conversation and otherwise deflecting conversation could be a power-play in a billionaire romance or a mind-game in romantic suspense. Is this a ploy employed deliberately to cover up something—or is this an instinctive reaction to protect self? Do they get away this? Or does the other character call bullshit?

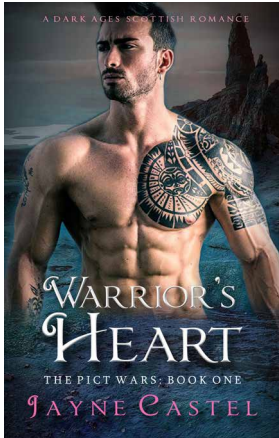
Letting characters interrupt, assume they know what someone is going to say or otherwise silence another character powerfully demonstrates how little they care. No matter what they might say, not listening shows they don’t respect or value the other character. That is one hell of an obstacle to overcome.

Conversely, one of the ways I show the deepening emotional connection between my characters is to have them actively listen to each other, ask questions and otherwise show that they want to understand. In writing these conversations, I’ve not only realised how rare and valuable really being listened to, but how much of a gift that is.

But if you suggest that the Kelly and Champagne run on the Superboy series is not the closest to perfection that comic books have ever achieved, then you’re wrong and I will have to fight you.

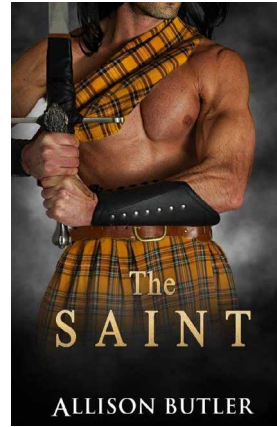
Sorry.

Woos and Hoos



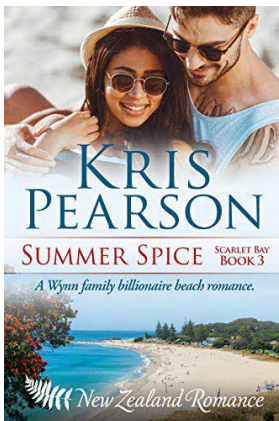
Samantha Burton (w/a: Jayne Castel) has a new Historical Romance novel out! **WARRIOR'S HEART** (Book #1: The Pict Wars) was released on 22nd January 2019. Set in Dark Ages Isle of Skye, this is a high-octane, passionate 'Enemies to Lovers' story.

Buy *Warrior's Heart* [here](#)



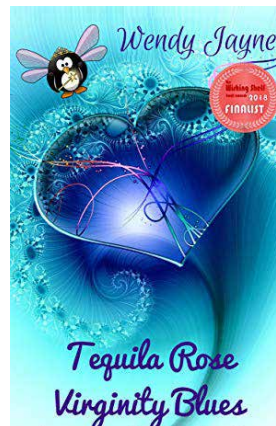
THE SAINT, book 3 in Alison Butler's Highland Brides series was released on January 20 2019!

Buy *The Saint* [here](#)



Congratulations Kris Pearson on the release of the third book in the Scarlet Bay series! **Summer Spice** follows an unlikely love affair between a billionaire and the girl from the Chinese take-away.

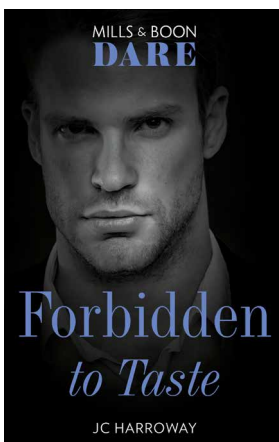
Buy *Summer Spice* [here](#)



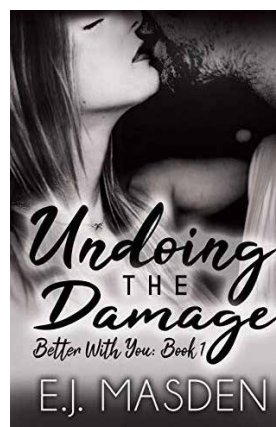
Wendy Scott's contemporary romance short story, *Tequila Rose Virginité Blues*, under her pen name, Wendy Jayne, is a finalist in the UK Wishing Shelf Book Awards 2018 Adult Fiction.

This story is set in Hokitika, West Coast, NZ. Wendy says "My thanks to the wonderful Nelson Romance Writers Group, who adopted me several years ago, and encouraged me to experiment with the romance genre."

Buy *Tequilla Rose Virginité Blues* [here](#)



Forbidden to Taste, the second book in JC Harroway's Billionaire Bachelors series, will release on April 18th 2019. The Christchurch chapter, having seen snippets of this book, is very excited for this release!



Emma Masson-Oakden released her first book, **Undoing the Damage** (Better With You: Book 1), under the name E.J. Masden on Valentine's Day. Well done, Emma!

Buy *Undoing the Damage* [here](#)

Heart to Heart is always keen to share new book releases from members, news of awards, contracts, basically anything that we can celebrate. Send us a 2-3 sentence summary of your good news and, if it's a new release, your book cover and buy link, by the twentieth of each month online at <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/member-woos-hoos/> or directly to:

heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz

The Bookshelf

Book Review: Take Off Your Pants by Libbie Hawker

Reviewed by Kura
Carpenter



When it comes to writing books, are you a "plotter" or a "pantser"? Is one method really better than the other?

In this instructional ebook, author Libbie Hawker explains the benefits and technique of planning a story before you begin to write. She'll show you how to develop a foolproof character arc and plot, how to pace any book for a can't-put-down reading experience, and how to ensure that your stories are complete and satisfying without wasting time or words.

Hawker's outlining technique works no matter what genre you write, and no matter the age of your audience. If you want to improve your writing speed, increase your backlog, and ensure a quality book before you even write the first word, this is the how-to book for you.

Take off your pants! It's time to start outlining.

Buy *Take Off Your Pants* [here](#)



REVIEW

I'm a classic Pantser. And I enjoy it – for me, not knowing what's going to happen is the fun part. Admittedly being a Pantser has one major downside – it means I'm extremely unproductive.

When the muse isn't there, I just don't write. And as someone trying to make writing a viable career, being unproductive is a huge problem – one might say it's my character flaw.

Trouble is, being aware of my flaw hasn't helped. Sure, I've read How-To-Outline type books. So many, many books... And I can outline if forced to. My problem is, once I know what's going to happen, I lose complete interest in a story – so it still remains unwritten. Ergo Writero

Unproductivo. Sigh.

While bemoaning this problem to fellow writers at the Otago chapter meeting of the RWNZ, Samantha Burton suggested Libbie Hawker's book *Take off Your Pants* – which is a system aimed at Pantser's teaching how to create flexible outlines through understanding character in relation to the Story Core.

The most notable difference between Hawker and standard writing books is Hawker puts little emphasis on Plot. And it's this factor which makes the book so useful to the way Pantser's writing-brains work.

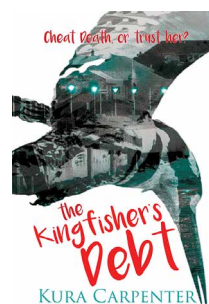
Hawker gives specific steps to building a novel idea. It starts with Story Core, something we're all familiar with: A Character who wants something > Obstacles > Struggle > Resolution.

No big deal. Where Hawker's method shines is that her outlining systems revolves around 3 aspects of story: Character Arc, Theme, and Pacing.

These three factors become the main building blocks to enable a Pantser such as myself to develop a fully formed story which is "Pantsed" in one go, rather my usual way of chasing a great idea, stall, go back, rewrite, more threads...etc which is both slow and frustrating and lends itself to projects stalling.

Hawker's ability to clearly explain her concept while giving practical information is an absolute delight. It's the best How-To-Write book I've ever come across. (Thank You, Sam!)

I feel any Pantser armed with both *Take off Your Pants* and *GMC: Goal, Motivation and Conflict* by Debra Dixon is well on their way to over-coming the lack-of-productiveness of Pantsing while still having the fun of exploring a story.



[Kura Carpenter](#) lives just outside of Dunedin with her husband and their greyhound. Her debut urban fantasy novel *The Kingfisher's Debt*, a fast-paced and witty crime drama packed full of snark and hints of dark magic, came out in late 2018.

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!

Write With Love



December replay of the podcast.

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!



Charlotte Nash talks about changing from rural romance to commercial fiction

New York Time Bestselling author Rachel Van Dyken appeared on Episode 60 all the way from Idaho! Prolific author and instagrammer Rachel was an amazing guest.

Sarah Mayberry's day job is writing for the Australian show Neighbours and we discuss how writing for television helps her as an author.



Michelle Dalton author of Epona, discusses her muse and how, in her



own way, she is helping to draw attention to the harsh realities faced for those in her home country of South Africa.

The big names keep coming including Harlequin author, Kandy Shepard.



Check out all the episode at www.sarahwilliamsauthor.com/write-with-love

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

If you are an author who would like a shout out for only \$25, email me sarah@serenadepublishing.com or become a sponsor on Patreon!

Sarah Williams

Publicity Officer Introduction

Emma Bryson



Well hello there!

I hope you've all had a merry and productive start to March. With Autumn weather looming, there's really no better time to grab a mug of something warm and curl your fingers around a keyboard (or a good book – for 'research purposes', of course...)

With recent life craziness behind me I thought it was about time I introduced myself as your new Publicity Officer.

So... I'm Emma – an Auckland member of RWNZ. I have a background in educational administration, music teaching, and publishing. I graduated from Whitireia NZ with a Diploma in Publishing in 2015 – since then, you may have seen event reviews or articles I've written for Booksellers NZ (I was even on Radio New Zealand once talking about YouTube books). Or perhaps you may have caught me on social media advertising my developmental editing specials.

The RWNZ publicity role is a big one, and I could really use your help! If you have any thoughts or opinions on RWNZ publicity, or perhaps any bright ideas or media contacts hiding up your sleeves please feel free to reach out.

I'd love to hear from you!

You can email me at publicity@romancewriters.co.nz, or if you'd prefer, you can catch me on Facebook.

Wishing you all the best for a productive month!

Emma

Maleny Writing Retreat



Join 1 Bestselling Author Sarah Williams in Maleny, Sunshine Coast, Queensland. 31st May – 3rd June 2019

Take time out of your regular routine this autumn and join me on a boutique writing retreat you won't forget in Maleny, on Queensland's beautiful Sunshine Coast Hinterland. You'll spend 3 nights at a stunning country house located just 1.5 hours from Brisbane, alongside me and a small group of like-minded writers. Spaces for this retreat are strictly limited to only 6 people!

Born in New Zealand, Sarah Williams knew she wanted to be an author ever since picking up her first romance novel at fourteen years old. After starting up her own boutique small press, Serenade Publishing, Sarah has gone on to publish a novel every six months, including her bestselling series "Brigadier Station". In 2017 Sarah was nominated for Best Debut Author by the ARRA (Australian Romance Readers Association) and AusRom Today.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS RETREAT:

You can expect to create in a beautiful environment, alongside an intimate group of like-minded writers in an atmosphere that allows for socialisation as well as connection. I believe that a retreat should allow for rest, relaxation, and fun, as well as support that extends far beyond the retreat stay once friendships are made.

During our time together, we'll be creating the space to brainstorm new ideas, participate in discussion, give and receive feedback (if you choose to) and most importantly, write. This is a time for you to detach from the pressures and distractions of everyday life, so you can become comfortable with your voice and with your craft.

It doesn't matter if you aren't calling yourself a writer (yet!) or if all you have right now is an idea. This retreat is open to all kinds of writers, no matter where you're at on your writing journey. I'll be there to support and coach you. We'll regroup each evening for dinner. I'll champion you and your work. We'll have fun. And hopefully, by the time you go home you'll have made some lifelong friends too.

WRITING SUPPORT

It's all about you! The aim of this retreat is to provide you with a highly individualised experience, tailored to your specific needs as a writer. Workshops and activities are completely optional. You may participate in as much or as little of the program as you like. You can also expect informal discussions around aspects of writing craft, and these topics will be determined once I have an idea of what members of the group need.

PERSONALISED FEEDBACK ON YOUR WORK

Each retreat attendee will have the chance to submit up to 20 manuscript pages for written and oral feedback. Your pages will be critiqued by me before the beginning of the retreat. I will then set aside some time during our time away where I will be available for one:ones to discuss your work in a personalised feedback session.

SUCCESSFUL SELF-PUBLISHING WORKSHOP

This in-depth workshop will teach you how to take your precious manuscript from polished to published!

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

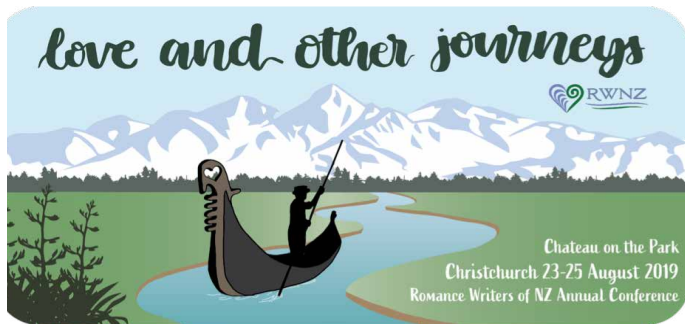
- 3 nights accommodation in a private room
- All meals except dinner out on Saturday night
- Feedback on your writing and one on one time with Sarah
- Much more!!

Cost per person: \$969

Payment plans are available. Retreat prices are in Australian dollars.

For more information and to reserve your spot, go to: <https://www.sarahwilliamsauthor.com/maleny-writers-retreat/>

*Be yourself; everyone else is
already taken.
– Oscar Wilde.*



RWNZ Conference 2019 Update

Kia Ora koutou

Let's start with the most important thing first: Hopefully by the time this Heart2Heart goes out to you in March we will have opened registration for the 2019 RWNZ conference and (i) you already know about it and (ii) you have already registered! It is wonderful to hear people are booking flights and accommodation already.

Information updates are rapidly going up on the website, so you can look at the pitch requests and explore workshop offerings.

While we are keeping with many of the tried and tested items and formats of past RWNZ conferences, this year we are also going to trial a mini-tradeshow. There is such a wealth of knowledge and experience amongst the RWNZ membership, and we would love to play a part in helping to connect people. We plan to offer RWNZ members who provide services for writers a chance to promote their business to conference attendees – voila! A mini-tradeshow over a longer-than-usual lunch break. So, if you are an editor, proof-reader, website designer, PR expert, run a PA business, design book covers, or have any other service that writers need, we would love for you to put in an expression of interest.

To end, our latest woo hoo: the addition to the international guest line-up of Dan Wood from Draft2Digital. He is coming back for a second year....and hopefully this time he can take some time to explore a bit of New Zealand too.

*Ngā mihi
Mel Climo*

*2019 Conference Convener
On behalf of the fabulous committee*



Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss Report

After a slow start, the Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss ended with twenty-four wonderful entries and the stunning number of thirty-five judges. Reading the entries, I was awed by the range of scenes our entrants offered and going by the judges' comments I know they were too.

My heartfelt and sincere thanks go to all the wonderful judges who offered their time to read and provide valuable feedback for our writers. These competitions provide a wonderful opportunity for our community to grow. Both entrants and judges gain valuable lessons on the craft of writing and it wouldn't be possible without the willingness of members from across the board to step up and volunteer. A mere thank you doesn't seem enough, they all deserve a round of applause. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

All the writers who entered the competition also deserve a big shout out for stepping up and putting their hard work forward, I know how daunting that step can be, and I hope the judges' comments help on your journey. Congratulations again to our finalists, I wish you all the best in the finals, I know it's going to be a tough decision. Thank you for showcasing just how talented our members are.

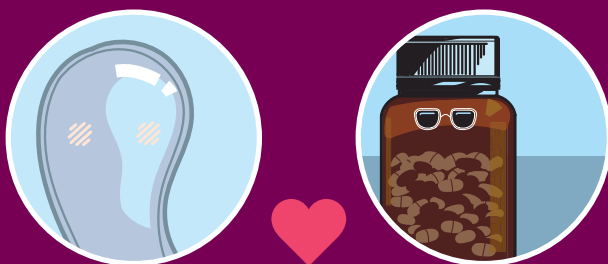
THE FINALISTS FOR THE FIRST KISS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER FOR 2018 ARE:

Bronwen Evans
Charlotte Brentwood
EL Lowe
Grace Lawler
Melissa Climo
Susie Frame

*Carol Tate
First Kiss Contest Manager*

It's a Match!

Mitochondria and MitoQ have liked each other.



MitoQ is a scientific breakthrough. It's the first supplement capable of entering your mitochondria and supporting their health in a meaningful way.

When your mitochondria are healthier they produce more energy, meaning you can be at your best for longer.

Order online at www.mitoq.com

MitoQ

The Welcome Mat

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



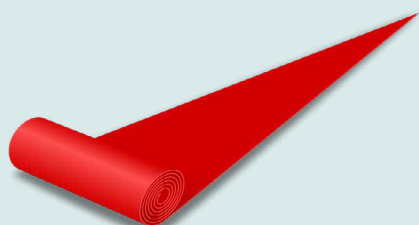
Kura Carpenter
Jenny Russell
Vanessa McGrath
Catherine Taylor
Abby Rogan
Mandy Spearing
Annalise Silan
Cara Neil
Tatiana Faumui
Loralee Wall
Josie Berliner



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 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](#)

This month's meeting took place on Saturday 1 February at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion. We had a fabulous turnout - with thirty two members attending the meeting this month. It was lovely to see you all.

Our speaker this month was Penny Costello and she gave a comprehensive presentation on the different aspects of forensics, the different departments involved in solving crimes and what they do and how forensics is used to solve crimes. She even walked us through a crime scene investigation from a forensics viewpoint - step by meticulous step.

Despite the sweltering heat, everyone was fascinated by the topic and the event ran overtime! Fantastic to see such engagement with speakers & topics. I'd like to thank Penny for her talk and also Lucille for organising for Penny to speak at the Chapter meeting.

HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Debbie Williams](#)

Our February meeting was held at Bron's, where we welcomed a new member - Ruth - to our Hawke's Bay group. We chatted about what we'd been up to and then worked through a Conflict Box exercise using examples from our current manuscripts or upcoming projects. It always amazes me how sometimes all you need is the clarity of an outside opinion to make you see the obvious. We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome. Our next meeting on March the 2nd will be held at Andrene's where we'll be working on first chapters.

WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

14 of us met in Sandra's gorgeous Wellington home - thank you to Sandra for hosting again.

We welcomed Kara to her first meeting. She's been a member of RWNZ for some time, but this was her first opportunity to meet the chapter members.

After a quick catch-up and introductions, we went around the table and gave our updates. Next we discussed a possible promotional activity for the chapter (a secret for the moment, in case it doesn't happen!).

Jane presented a year planner template and suggestions for how to plan writing for the year ahead, and then we discussed different approaches to writing.

We had our usual cold reads session, with a mix of some opening pages, and also some dark moments.

Finally we discussed ideas for the next meeting, and how we want to focus of marketing. Tracey agreed to talk us through her experiences of using BookBub.

NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

After catching up from the long holiday period, this month's meeting was focused on how we each deal with getting back into our writing if we've had a bit of time away. This seems to be a common struggle for a lot of writers, especially coming back from the Christmas break, so we decided to share our secrets with each

other and brainstormed some thoughts. There were some really great suggestions and hints, and some lively discussions were had. Look for an article on our findings in an upcoming H2H.

Next month, we will be working on pitching to agents/editors in preparation for the conference we will all be attending. Two of our members have done this before, so we're looking forward to picking their brains! Some of us will also be working up the courage to actually follow through with said pitches!

Next meeting will be Saturday 9th March, 2:00 p.m. at Nick Smith's meeting rooms the corners of Quarantine Road and Main Road, Stoke.

CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

The Christchurch chapter's first meeting of the year kicked off with a round of introductions followed by a relaxed chat about goals—or so we thought! While we were distracted, Mel Climo started writing things on the board. Before we knew what had happened, we all set a solid goal, identified a potential obstacle and came up with a strategy for dealing with said obstacle. And then, Mel took a photo of it, so now it's too late—we're accountable.

Our next meeting takes place at South Library in the Sydenham Room on March 10th.

OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

Seven of us met up on Saturday 2 February at Rhubarb Cafe in Dunedin. It was great to catch up and talk story structure! We welcome to new member, Liz, and returning member, Kura, and had an enlightening chat about structuring a romance novel. Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 2 March.

COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Bel Macfie](#)

Coast2Coast members have been extremely productive this month following last months workshop on goal setting. At the February meeting we were privileged to have a presentation by Matthew Mole on Public Speaking and Presentations for authors. It was held in a serenely beautiful part of rural New Zealand.

Matt's presentation focused on using the skills we already have to structure a presentation that builds suspense and provides dramatic relief. He introduced us to the concept of "selling without selling" and encouraged us to think about hooks, buildups and punchlines.

Key messages included: first things first; tell them a story, know what your point of difference is, you are way more interesting than you think you are, and just because it is common and familiar to you this doesn't mean it is to the audience.

As a new convenor I find myself constantly inspired by the wealth of knowledge, kindness and support that exists within this amazing group. Cant wait for what's coming up...

BLenheim AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)