

Heart to Heart

ROMANCE WRITERS
OF NEW ZEALAND

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Making History: An Interview with Sophie Jordan

Lizzi Tremayne



Sophie Jordan is our Friday speaker for the upcoming RWNZ 2019 Conference. Sophie writes YA, contemporary romance and historical romance and will be sharing her experiences from an epic writing career. Who better to interview her than RWNZ's own Lizzi Tremayne? Over to you, Lizzi!

Thank you for offering to answer our questions, Sophie! I have a bunch of historical questions for you!

1. How long have you been writing?

This should be a simple answer, right? Hmm. Well, I always wrote stories through junior high and high school.

I stopped during college and didn't write that much then ... or the years following college when I was working full-time. Then, in 2004, I started writing again with the serious intent for publication. I'd just had my first child and felt very motivated to become a published author. Three years later, my first novel was published in 2007.

2. Have you always been interested in history and did you always write historicals?

I do love history (it's one of my degrees) and yes, I have always written historical romances, but I'm not limited to that genre as an author. I'm simply a writer. I write everything. Just like I read everything ... wherever my interest takes me, I go. The only common thread in my books is that there will be a romance in everything I write.

I've published in several subgenres: historical romance, paranormal romance, new adult, contemporary romance and young adult fiction. In young adult fiction, I've written paranormals, fantasy, dystopian and contemporary. In 2021, my first historical young adult novel will be published.

3. Did the onset of your writing career have an inciting incident?

I can only think back and point at the birth of my daughter. I had decided to take some time off work to stay home with her. This wasn't the permanent plan. My husband and I were accustomed to being a two-income household, so living off one income was a challenge. We'd decided that I would be stay home with my daughter for a few years, but then I started to remember about that old dream of being a writer. I started to wonder: what if. What if I could write a book? What if I could get it published? What if I could publish more than one book? I could live my dream career and do it from home.

4. What is your favourite part (or parts) of the writing process?

The dreaming. All the dreaming and plotting that goes into creating a book.

5. Which format do you prefer to "read" books in?

I read both in print and ereader.

6. Do you have a favourite period of history and is that the same period you prefer to write?

When writing historicals, I mostly concentrate my writing in the early Victorian era (circa 1850s). My young adult fantasy series (Reign of Shadows) has a medieval feel to it—that's how I exercised my love of medieval history. I channeled all that into a two book series.

7. Do you search for people to write about from history, or do you fall over new heroes and heroines during your research for other books or when you're travelling?





I don't need research/travel to come up with characters. My head is full of them. It's the curse and blessing of being a writer. We have ideas all the time and they come from everywhere. Yes, sometimes research and travel can lead to inspiration, but I can be taking a shower or driving or watching Netflix and poof! A character or story idea enters my head fully formed.

8: *Do you tend to write your historicals in the English of the country where the story is set (for the UK stories), or do you always/usually use American English?*

Even though my historicals are British-set, I do use American English.

9: *Do you have a writing routine?*

I write to deadline ... and that's three to four books a year, so I simply set a word count goal in order to meet that deadline and try to get the words done when I can. Sometimes I write in my home office ... or on the couch or in bed while my husband is watching reruns of Big Bang Theory next to me. Or in planes. Or in the car waiting for one of my kids to get out of soccer or baseball practice. My writing routine is flexible because my life is busy and can be unpredictable.

10: *Does most of your writing inspiration occur in one place or during one sort of activity, or is it just anywhere? (i.e. mine tend to hit me while I'm out walking or while mucking out horse stables).*

Ideas hit me everywhere—especcially when I'm driving. I live in Texas, so it takes time in a car to get anywhere. That gives me a lot of time to daydream and plot.

11: *Are your average characters (sorry, I'm sure none of your characters are "average") reflections of people you know well, or more a mix of fantasy and real life?*

You said it perfectly—my characters are a mix of what inspires me in real life and what I imagine. I've modeled characters after myself and my own experiences. I've also used my family and friends as inspiration. And then the rest is fantasy. As with most writers, I've got plenty of imagination.

12: *With respect to gender, race, political beliefs, etc, do you attempt to convey history as you believe it to have occurred back in the day, or in a politically correct manner? Some don't agree with one or the other. What do you think? What has informed your decision to do this, and has feedback to this altered the way you write?*

I don't think it's possible to write a historical free of anachronisms. I didn't live in Victorian England. I can never fully know that reality. I try to use the conventions and facts of history as authentically as possible, but that said ... it is my goal to write stories for the modern woman with heroines that I like, with heroines that I would want to be ... with heroines who can be admired even amid their struggles and mistakes. My heroines might be women of the 1850s, but it's important to me that a reader can see herself in them. As for my personal beliefs, tolerance and acceptance of all people are very important to me and I do my best to convey that message in my stories.

13: *What is your top advice for writers new to the historical genre?*

Read the genre, of course! Immerse yourself in the genre—both old school historicals and new.

I also think that if you want to be a writer, you should read all the things. All the books being buzzed about in every genre. Inform yourself, widen your scope. It can only make you a better writer.

Thank you so much!

Xx

Lizzi Tremayne



THIS SCOT OF MINE (THE ROGUE FILES)

A daring deception...

Desperate to escape her vile fiancé, Lady Clara devises a bold lie—that she's pregnant with another man's child. With her reputation in tatters, Clara flees to Scotland to live out her days in disgrace, resigned to her fate as a spinster...until she claps eyes on the powerful and wickedly handsome Laird Hunt MacLarin.

She's the answer to his curse...

Laird of an ancient clan, Hunt needs an heir, but he comes from a long line of men cursed to die before the birth of their firstborn. When the Duke of Autenberry approaches him with a proposition—marry my ruined sister—it seems the perfect solution. Even better, the defiant lass stirs him to his very soul.

No escaping the truth...

Except marriage cannot set them free. No matter how much Hunt desires her. No matter how much Clara burns for him. Soon she is falling for her husband, but is love enough to end the curse? Or is the tragic history of the MacLarin Clan doomed to repeat itself?

Buy *This Scot of Mine* [here](#)



[Sophie Jordan](#) grew up in the Texas hill country where she wove fantasies of dragons, warriors, and princesses. A former high school English teacher, she's an international, New York Times, Publishers Weekly and USA Today bestselling author with over thirty books to her credit and one film option in the works. She now lives in Houston with her family. When she's not writing, she spends her time overloading on caffeine (lattes preferred), talking plotlines with anyone who will listen (including her kids), and cramming her DVR with true-crime and reality-TV shows.



An interview with Nic Caws

Gillian St. Kevern



Nic Caws is our Global Harlequin Editor and we are delighted to welcome her to conference. I enjoyed talking to Nic about her career to date and hope you enjoy her insights as an editor.

1. I'm so intrigued by your origin story because I also have a BA In English Literature, but wound up on the opposite side of the publishing table! How do you think your BA in Literature shaped your career and your editing work?

I love how English Literature degrees can lead in many different directions! I've always been driven by my love of reading - anything and everything I can get my hands on. So after graduation it simply made sense for me to try for a career which enabled me to put my love of reading to good use! Aside from that, I think my BA helped me to hone my attention to detail, which certainly can come in handy, and to analyse what contributes to good storytelling, and engaging characters.

2. You've worked with authors over an amazing variety of lines. Did you start out in one line and then branch out as you gained experience, or does Harlequin prefer their editors to have experience working across lines?

Right from the beginning, I've worked on books across the UK acquired lines, and gained experience across the board. I've always loved this variety - one day I'll be reading a gripping Medical drama, the next I'll be plunged into a world surrounded by Vikings!

3. Many authors talk about their first book/manuscript as their 'baby' and are quite protective of it. Did you have similar feelings towards the first manuscript you worked on as editor? Have your feelings towards the manuscripts you work on changed over your career?

It's hard to pin down exactly the first book I edited, as we're often working on a few at the same time, but I definitely got a similar feeling about the first book I got a dedication for. I was so touched! However I'm always quite protective of my author's manuscripts - working behind the scenes, I'm aware of how hard the author has worked and I want everyone to love the story just as much as I do. That hasn't changed over time!

4. At conference, you're accepting pitches for all the Harlequin lines. However you have particular knowledge of Modern/Presents, Romance, Medical, Historical and Dare. While it is easy to understand what sets Medical and Historical apart from the other lines, where do you divide Modern/Presents, Romance and Dare?

What a great question! Ok, so whilst all three series are contemporary lines there are clear boundaries in tone and character.

Modern/Presents is all about the extreme glamour and intense passion as the heroine and reader are swept up in the jet-set world of billionaires and royals! These are sexy stories, which explore the power dynamics of bringing an alpha hero to his knees...with love!

Harlequin Romance focuses more on the emotional rollercoaster of two strong, relatable characters falling in love - any sexual scenes will be focused on the emotional bond between the couple. These stories are set in gorgeous, vibrant and romantic international settings, with a touch of wealth to make you feel like you're escaping on holiday!

Harlequin DARE is sexually explicit romance - the heat is dialed up to eleven! This series is all about bold, empowered women and the incredibly sexy men they choose to share their beds.

5. Of all the different lines you've worked on, do you have one that you're particularly fond of?

I love them all, but I do have a soft spot for Medical Romances. I think it comes from watching a lot of medical dramas like Holby City and House when I was a teenager!

6. What do you consider the highlight of your career so far?

Probably making the trip to Orlando in 2017 to the RWA conference. It was amazing to be surrounded by so many fellow romance enthusiasts, and to finally meet some of the colleagues and authors I work with over the other side of the Atlantic. I'm similarly ultra-excited about coming to New Zealand - so who knows, I might have a new highlight coming up...!

7. Some writers have a mental image of editors as red-pen wielding vultures intent of sucking the zest out of their precious manuscript. How do you view your role as editor?

Haha, wow! I prefer to see it more like a cheerleader. Someone who believes in an author's work, and will give them that energy and encouragement to make their book the best it can possibly be.



◀◀
8. What are the primary failings that prevent a manuscript from making it onto your 'must have' pile?

Lack of originality – and by that I don't necessarily mean that the plot has to be something I've never seen before. I need to feel like the voice and the characters brings something fresh and unique to the romance!

Lack of conflict – it's hard to maintain romantic tension (and the readers' attention) without believable emotional conflict. Learning how to create internal conflict, to execute it sensitively, sustain it throughout the novel, and show how it changes isn't easy, but is it so important to creating a satisfying romance.

9. What are you hoping to see from the writers who pitch to you at conference? What is your dream pitch?

My dream pitch is full of enthusiasm and creative flair, from a writer who has thought carefully about their character's backstories and emotional conflicts. It's always great to see if someone has done their research for the series they are targeting too!

10. Is this your first time to visit New Zealand? What are you looking forward to in Christchurch?

It is! I've always wanted to visit so I'm very excited. I'll actually be taking some time before and after the conference to travel the South Island of New Zealand. I've heard so much about how beautiful it is. I'm really looking forward to coming to Christchurch – and I'm going to make a little stop on the Banks Peninsula, with my fingers crossed to see some wildlife.

11. What publishing developments are you looking forward to enjoying in 2019?

I'm really loving the bit of a resurgence in the 'rom-com' trend, as I love to laugh and to discover new stories that make me feel good!

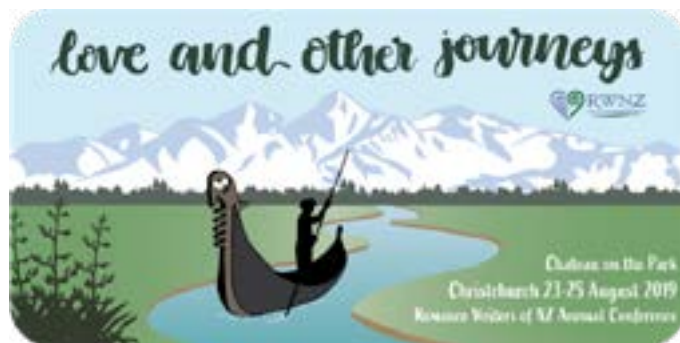
I'm also looking forward to more inclusivity in publishing across all genres, including romance – the industry isn't there yet, but things are changing. I strongly feel literature should reflect and celebrate the diversity of the world we live in.

PITCH WISH LIST:

Nic is looking for manuscripts suitable for Harlequin's Modern/Presents, Romance, Medical, Historical and Dare lines.



Nic Caws is an Editor for Harlequin Series, working in the London office. She came to Harlequin in 2013, after completing her B.A. in English Literature, and promptly fell headlong into a love affair with category romance. Nic has been lucky enough to work closely with authors across the Modern, Historical, Medical, Romance and Dare lines, but is on hand to answer any questions about all Harlequin Series. She's looking to acquire unique, gripping voices, with fresh twists and perspectives on popular themes. When she doesn't have her nose buried in a book, she can be found seeking her next theatre fix, listening to podcasts, or enthusiastically baking!



Talking About Cover Design: An Interview with Charmaine Ross



Hi Charmaine! We're glad to have you on the Love and Other Journey's Romance Writers of New Zealand 2019 conference.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Hi there. I'm so glad to have this opportunity to speak about Book Cover Design and to be able to meet everyone there this year. A very short history: In a nutshell, I'm a wife, mother of two teens, caretaker of two cats, a writer, marketer and designer. I've been in the marketing and design business for 25+ years (and I cringe because it makes me sound so old!). Let me tell you, what you see on the outside is not what happens in my mind, that's for sure. I decided to put all of my loves together (not including the husband or the kids) into book cover design and what makes them sell books.

What is the most difficult thing you find about designing book covers?

There is so much choice! There are so many things that can be put into a cover, but I have to decide what will make the cut or not. I think about things like genre, typography, images, colour, and any author branding. There are a lot of considerations to be made before I'm happy with the final design.

The genre dictates what to or not to include and the challenge is working within the parameters to create something fresh and different that will attract a target reader.

What is the most unique thing someone has asked for?

I always like to include suggestions authors like to include that emulate their story. I did have one very detailed request in which the author cut and paste the paragraph in her book where she described what the character wore. I polished off my Photoshop skills and changed the colour of the characters clothing, added in shin and shoulder guards, gave him massive boots and added in a crumpled piece of metal (his talent was manipulating metal using his telekinesis). I put in a maze in the background and added rivets on the pinchers on the jaws of huge bugs that prowled the maze. I actually used photo stock of stag beetles and had to come up close and personal with those pincers in my screen. I don't think I'm ever going to get close to those insects again. I know them intimately now! The end result was colourful, dynamic, attractive and tailored to the young adult market. I was very pleased with the result, and most importantly the author was too.

What is your favourite thing about designing book covers?

I love choosing models. Now, don't get me wrong, sometimes spending hours prowling stock photo sites can get a little tedious, but I find if I work with the author, we can find something stunning, and appropriate for the market and the cover. I love styling the clothing, hair, makeup and look and feel to create something that might be a bit different than where I started off. I love seeing the transformation from start to finish.

What is your favourite genre for designing covers?

I have to say I like the Urban Fantasy / Paranormal Romance, because I can be so creative and unleash my Photoshop skills, however each genre has certain design aspects suited to each that I like. I get to look at bare chests for a living (sigh - it's a tough job and all that), I get to make pretty contemporary romance covers, I get to create colourful works of art for the young adult market. Each cover is different than the last so it's something fresh every day.

What do you have in stall for us in your workshop?

Squee! I'm so excited about this – I'm going to create a cover right in front of everyone's eyes! I'm going to load up my little laptop with Photoshop and while I'm talking about what makes a cover sell, I'll explain using a real life example and put it all together so you can see the nuts and bolts of design, what to do, look out for and to avoid.

That's not even the best bit – I'm going to give the cover away to one lucky person who attends my workshop. That means you could walk away with a brand new cover. Yay!

I also promise to make it fun, tell very bad dad jokes (even though I'm a Mum) and, besides the giveaway cover) I'll have a few other surprises up my sleeve. Hopefully, it'll be a very enjoyable workshop. Love to see you there.



COVER DESIGN SECRETS

Many authors write fantastic books. Books are easily skipped over in a competitive market. Successful authors know their book cover has to appeal.

Do you have a book cover that just isn't selling your book? Are you launching a book and want to give its best chance of success? Many authors spend hours writing their book, only to have it fail because the cover doesn't appeal to readers.

Successful authors know what part their book cover plays in the buying process, and how to leverage the cover to their book's best advantage.

This book teaches you to analyse the genre you write in, discover what readers are buying and why, and to how to nail the type of cover that will subconsciously appeal to a potential reader.

You only have micro-seconds to stand out from the crowd. Don't leave your book cover to chance. Deliver the kind of cover that will engage readers and give your book the best chance of success.

Buy *Cover Design Secrets* [here](#)



Charmaine designs book covers under her business name Charmaine Ross Book Cover Designs. She has a web site where you can see her designs. Join her closed Facebook group for hints, tips and fabulous eye candy. Oh, and she also has a book out – *Cover Design Secrets that Sell*.

“Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist.”

— Pablo Picasso

News from the President

Kendra Delugar



With conference and the AGM not far away, it's impossible to ignore that we really are heading towards the wind up of the RWNZ 2018/19 year. So with that in mind...

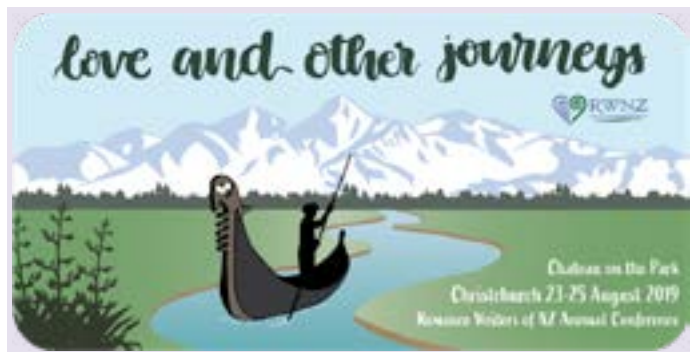
The call will be going out for Nominations, Remits and Special Resolutions on the 25th of June, and will be closing on the 13th of July.

- *Nominations for the Executive: We cannot run an organisation like the RWNZ without volunteers who are willing to take on these roles. So if you're thinking you'd like to give back by being on the Exec but want more information on what the roles contain, feel free to get in touch with our current Executive members to have a chat. It truly is the ultimate way to shape and support your organisation.*
- *Remits vs Special Resolutions: For those of you who haven't put one in before, if your 'remit' will change the Constitution/Rules of the RWNZ, it then needs to be submitted as a Special Resolution – it's that simple.*

Next, the Executive would like to thank our members for the overwhelming support – on Facebook and in person – regarding our decision to buy Patricia Kay's craft courses. These courses are FREE for our members to do, so you can work through them on your own, with a CP partner, in a group, or at your regional meetings. They can be found under the resources section of the website. The last of the courses will be being uploaded over the next few weeks, but Novel Writing 1 is a great place to start. (Note: All course lessons and bonus material are copyrighted to Patricia Kay. These lessons are not to be shared outside of RWNZ membership to ensure we meet the terms of our contract with Pat.)

And last but not least, Early Bird rates have closed for the 2019 RWNZ 'Love and Other Journeys' Conference registration, but that doesn't mean you can't still register! The conference team have been working hard and have an incredible line up of speakers and events. The conference runs from the 23rd to the 25th of August, and I can't wait! You can register [here](#)

Happy writing,
Kendra Delugar



Pitch, Please: No Need for Nerves

Anna Klein



I once described pitching to my non-writer friends as bringing together the most terrifying aspects of job interviews and giving a performance. You're coming forward, trying to present your creative work in the best light, and being judged by an industry professional who, it feels, holds the key to riches and acclaim.

The good news is that while pitching can feel like that, the reality of what it is, and what it feels like after a few goes, is markedly different.

I pitched at my very first conference. I arrived more than ten minutes early for pitch, fearful of being late. The room was empty, all the agents and editors were taking a morning tea break. I hovered around the room, so nervous my legs were physically shaking. A lady with a New York accent walked up to me and asked if I was pitching and if it was my first time (the knees, or look of pure terror, must have given me away). When I said I was, she replied "You can practice on me!" and took me by the elbow and whisked me into the room. I made a semi-incoherent comment about there being some kind of schedule, which she waved away. "Don't be nervous! Just tell me about your book!" she said, giving me an encouraging nod and her rapt attention.





Bless that wonderful New York editor for humanising the pitching process immediately - I stumbled from there straight to my actual scheduled pitch, which was suddenly a whole lot less daunting and within fifteen minutes I was back outside with two business cards in hand, and a whole lot more confidence. My knees stopped interfering with the local seismic equipment. Nothing came of that submission other than a kind rejection letter, but it was incredibly valuable regardless: the agent's kindness made me realise that they're human too, and they probably don't enjoy causing fear and distress! They're in the publishing industry because they love books, and they're at the conference because they want to meet new people (i.e. you!) and hear about their books. They're looking for books to fall in love with, not to terrorise the local author population.

OUTCOMES

Conquering the nerves helps making pitching fun. It's nice when you're pitching your idea and you can see them visibly react with enjoyment! Some of the most fun pitches I've had were for with agents or editors I had pitched to, or met, before. They remembered me and it felt more like catching up with someone I know (while telling them all about my amazing new work!) than an intimidating pitch. Even if what I had on the table wasn't right for them at that moment, they want to work with people they like - so if you are friendly, professional and engaging, if you 'click', that's a little bit more added to your network. You're a person (that they like) now, not just a name on an email and a word document, and that matters.

I've had bad pitches too. Sometimes, they're clearly not interested, or are distracted because it's the last thing on Sunday, or they're just too tired (see above: only human after all) It's never been anything personal. Conferences are long, and your wonderful novel might just not be what floats their boat. Chalk it up to an experience, and keep your chin up.

Take the pressure off yourself: none of these pitches are your 'make or break' moment. Your writing career depends on more than a single ten minute slot. Every pitch is a chance to learn something, even the once that don't go so well or don't result in a request for a full or partial manuscript. You can get valuable feedback on how your concept suits markets. I didn't want to hear about how my historical concept was not what the major American market wanted to read right now, but it was important to hear. Like job interviews, you're also checking them out, to see if they're someone who matches what you want to write and how you want to publish. One agent I was pitching wanted me to add a lot more heat to my sweet romance, and I knew they weren't the right fit for me and my work at that stage: they wanted spice, and I was all sugar. And every single pitch is meeting a person in the industry, a chance to build a rapport, to be more than a name, and to extend your professional network.

PREPARATION

They say luck is when preparation meets opportunity. The pitch is an opportunity, so you can definitely make some of your own luck by making like a Boy Scout and being prepared. Start by writing out all the important points about the manuscript your pitching: your high concept/hook, your genre, your heat level, your word count, your tropes. Practice distilling the essential elements of your romantic leads and your plots into a paragraph. It's hard to do, so don't expect yourself to do it on the fly when your adrenaline is running: write it well before the pitch. You don't want your spiel to take more than about two or three minutes: you want to leave time to have a conversation with the editor, to give them an opportunity to ask questions, and for you to ask them questions too, if you have any.

Once you have your basics down, you'll want to do some in depth homework. You change your CV and cover letter for every different job you apply for, the same goes for the pitch. You want to make sure each pitch is tailored to the editor or agent you are pitching to. The agent likes a sense of magic in their love stories? Emphasise the part where your manuscript is based on an old Russian fairy tale. The editor likes very edgy settings? Highlight how your Russian fairy tale inspired romance is set in a Mad Max: Fury Road-esque apocalyptic desert. Don't make your manuscript sound like something it isn't - this is about bringing the most desirable traits for your audience forward.

Then, practice it. Say it to a rubber duck. Say it to yourself in the mirror. Say it to a friend. Say it to another writer. Practice it all until you're sure you've nailed down the pithy encapsulation of your book, until your first reaction when asked "What's your book about?" isn't a blank mind followed by a thoughtful noise and a long pause. Since I don't particularly trust my adrenaline to not give me complete amnesia, I use cue cards during the pitch. Maybe it's not the most professional, but I think it shows that I know how to find tools to addresses my weakness (and not one person has told me they like the sound of my book but the cue cards are a deal breaker!)

There's a fantastic lineup of people to pitch to at this year's RWNZ conference, so if you have a work in progress or a manuscript, or an idea you're pretty sure you're going to write, take a deep breath and book your pitches. Like first drafts, they don't need to be perfect, they just need to be done. Good luck, and remember to enjoy yourself!



Anna Klein is an emerging author of sweet contemporary romances. Her first novel, The Modern Woman's Guide to Finding a Knight, won the 2018 Koru Award for Best First Book.

See Anna's book info over page...





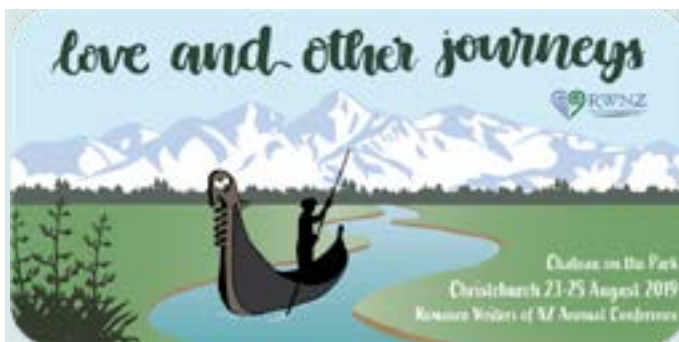
THE MODERN WOMAN'S GUIDE TO FINDING A KNIGHT

Connie leads a double life. During the week, she is an up-and-coming designer and dressmaker, creating sleek, elegant gowns for the wealthy elite. But come the weekend, Connie becomes Lady Constance, a member of the House Felicitous at the local Renaissance Faire, creating beautiful historical garments for herself and her friends and teaching dancing to fair attendees. Fearing loss of business should her stylish clientèle discover her extracurricular activities, Connie keeps her professional life and her faire life carefully separate. However, everything changes when she's saved from certain death by Sir Justin: a rising star in the joust and an actual knight in shining armour.

Behind his mask as Sir Justin, Dominic is confident and charismatic, but out of his armour, his courage fails him, and to his own horror he finds himself accidentally pretending to be his own best friend. Suddenly, he is in Connie's life as two different men: the elusive Sir Justin who courts her over the internet and from behind a suit of armour and Justin's 'best friend' Dominic who hangs out at her apartment and helps her move. The lie only grows bigger and Sir Justin finds himself faced with the most frightening challenge he can imagine: extricating himself from his lie and winning Connie's heart as his true self.

But there's something rotten afoot at the Faire, something that threatens its future, the community that has grown there, and even Sir Justin's life. Will Lady Constance find the courage to step up and risk everything to defend her friends, save the Faire, and rescue her knight?

Buy *The Modern Woman's Guide to Finding a Knight* [here](#)



Conference Needs You!

Sue Mackay

There many little jobs that make RWNZ Conferences so wonderful and I'd like to hear from you saying you'll take on one of them.

Here's a sample of the things that need doing so that everyone has a wonderful time:

- Coercing others into coughing up dollars for raffles - or you can play nice because no one turns down the opportunity to buy tickets anyway,
- Introducing a well known author to a workshop,
- Time keeping at cold reads - you can't sleep in for this one,
- Stuffing bags with books and other goodies, (This is fun)
- Registering attendees - you get a chance to meet everyone here, (Even your favourite authors)
- Greeting people as they turn up for the cocktail party or dinner.

This is seriously the best way to get amongst the crowd, and have fun while you're doing it. We're all there to have fun, along with the learning, talking, sharing info, but enjoying yourself is right up there.

Don't put off telling me you're available. Email me, Sue Mackay, at ismackay@ts.co.nz to register your name. If there's something you really would not like to do then tell me. Not everyone's comfortable standing up and talking in front of a group so introducing a speaker would be out for those people. Just let me know.

Cheers,
Sue

A writer is someone who has taught his mind to misbehave.

—Oscar Wilde.

An Interview with actor Myles Pollard

Sarah Williams



After deciding 2019 would be the year I would create my first audiobook, I found out Myles Pollard, my favourite Ryan brother from Australia's most popular TV drama, would be attending a charity event in my rural town—for my kid's primary school. Sounds like the start of a novel, doesn't it?

After building up the nerve to talk to him, I blurted out something along the lines of "Will you narrate my book?"

He was very friendly and asked for my card and within a week he was signed up to do it. Two months later we have a finished audiobook version of The Brothers of Brigadier Station, we are planning a short book tour together where we will meet readers and fans and teach some workshops on making audiobooks. And we are trying to find time to record the second book in the series.

Since Myles and I are both happily married (to other people) this hasn't played out the way I'd plot it for a romance novel, but sometimes a creative collaboration and a great new friendship is an even better ending.

Sarah Williams: I'd love it if you could just tell us about yourself and your acting career so far.

Myles Pollard: My acting career stretches back about 20 years. I went through NIDA, so the National Institute of Dramatic Art. I graduated in 1998, and following that, I went on and got involved in a whole bunch of different TV shows, like Water Rats, like Wildside and All Saints and East West 101, and then finally two years out, I got offered the role of McLeod's Daughters. The infamous

McLeod's Daughters. That was five years' full-time work in South Australia. That was my first real big opportunity. I had no idea that the show would go on and become the most popular TV show in Australian history, the most successful TV show in Australian history in terms of how many countries it sold worldwide. I think when it was released in the first 12 months, it went out to 110 countries in the world.

I had no idea that 10 years later, I'd be still getting fan mail from all over the world, from America, from South America, from Europe, and this show just still has a massive fan base, and people have this insatiable ... yeah, demand for all content McLeod's. From McLeod's, I went on and started doing a few films. I produced and acted in a film called Drift with Sam Worthington a few years ago, films like Jasper Jones a couple of years ago, Looking For Grace, a science fiction thriller called The Gateway, and I suppose in more recent times, I'm starting to try my hand at directing, writing ... Got a couple of projects that I'm developing myself. Factual documentary TV series, which I'm hoping to sell, and a couple of feature films as well.

Sarah Williams: Tell us about landing the role on McLeod's Daughters. Were you a country boy growing up, or had you ridden horses before that experience?

Myles Pollard: The whole McLeod's experience in terms of living in the country, horses, motorbikes, that whole sensibility, wasn't new to me. I grew up in small country towns in the north west of Western Australia, so I understood the culture of living in small towns. I lived in a one-street town for a few years in the wheat belt. I lived in Onslow in the late Seventies, and Karratha and Port Hedland before they were I would say industrialized by the mining boom.

Getting the role on McLeod's was just one of those formative moments in your life. I was working in a veterinary wholesale factory warehouse, packing steroids for animals, pretty much working ... I'd just graduated from NIDA a year or so earlier, and then I got the call from my agent, and then off we went. And it was three weeks in Bowral doing horse camp, which was being paid good money to learn dressage, which was completely incredible. And then meeting all the cast on the train out to the Blue Mountains, out to Bowral. And then suddenly found myself in South Australia, and every day working sometimes 15, 17 hour days out in the country in Country Gawler and Strathalbyn and Mount Pleasant and all the hinterland around South Australia, which is beautiful wine country. It's Barossa, it's McLaren Vale.

For five years, getting paid to ride horses, ride motorbikes, kiss beautiful women, and just really get immersed in this whole paradigm, which was country living, which was a real honor actually, and a real privilege.

Sarah Williams: Yeah, absolutely. What do you miss most about the show, now that it's finished?

Myles Pollard: I think at the time, as a young actor, you don't realize just how much of an impression the show would have on so many people for so long. We knew it was a good show. I had nothing to compare it to, so



◀◀
there was no precedent for me. For me, it just felt like it was how the industry was. You come out of NIDA and you get involved in a really successful show that does really well internationally for a decade. Okay, this is pretty easy. That's not the case. I think I miss being around the people. I miss ... The relationships and the friendships are really strong.

Even to this day actually, I'm still talking quite regularly with Bridie. Bridie Carter and myself are actually putting a potential business together with some of the other cast. And Aaron Jeffery is a really good mate of mine, so I talk to him regularly. So we often cross paths; we've done a couple of functions in Country Australia, where we've come together and talked about our careers. I love that. I love sharing stories with the cast, with fans.

I miss just living in the bush. I lived in Gawler for about two years, and every spare moment was spent riding horses, going to rodeos, having the luxury of being ... having the Barossa Valley next door, all those sorts of things.

And also the obvious point is that working every day for five years, that luxury doesn't exist any more. They don't make TV like McLeod's any more. We were making between 25 and 35 episodes a year. The only other show that really does that is Home and Away, that generate so much content. TV shows aren't made to that model any more in Australia. They do five episodes, so it was such a luxury as an actor to work consistently like that. If I had known that back then, I probably would have appreciated it a lot more, because it's certainly not the norm.

*McLeod's was released in 2001,
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It came to air at that time.
And I reckon there was definitely
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family...*

Sarah Williams: Yeah, for sure. McLeod's Daughters is available to stream on Stan and Amazon Prime now, which is pretty cool. Are you surprised by how popular it still is?

Myles Pollard: Not really. McLeod's was released in 2001, just after September 11. I remember it clearly. It came to air at that time. And I reckon there was definitely a huge paradigm shift in viewing habits. People moved away from the violent, the more I suppose controversial formats, and they moved towards community, family and that whole sensibility: the unashamedly romantic and sentimental.

People were looking for something I suppose a little more enriching. It's a big, bad, ugly world out there that can be quite scary.

I think that's why it's had a resurgence too. I think people are becoming more tribal, moving back to community. They want to be enriched. They want to see the simpler sort of things in life. They want to celebrate the simple things in life, and McLeod's certainly catches that and celebrates that. I'm not surprised; I think we need more of that type of content, especially now.

Sarah Williams: This is your first audio book narration. What do you think?

Myles Pollard: I'm so excited by it. It's something I've been thinking about for a long time. I really enjoy reading, and I really enjoy reading aloud with my son, ever since he was a kid, it's something that I've had a passion for as a parent. And using all the skills that you've got over 20 years playing different characters, but trying to play the characters in a really simple and honest way, allowing the story to speak first ... I love the content, I love the themes.

I wouldn't say that I'm a huge romantic fiction reader. I don't read romantic fiction voraciously. Not publicly. But I can see its appeal. And it's fun; it's fun to perform, I think. The writing is really concise. It's well-crafted. It's so entertaining, and I suppose I can connect well with it too. The characters and the world just aren't foreign to me.

I hope to do more of it. I really enjoy it. If the opportunity arises, I'll grab it with two hands.

Sarah Williams: So you'd be interested in doing more audiobook?

Myles Pollard: Absolutely. People close to me have always said, "You should do animation. You should really get involved in doing more audio books and voiceovers and things like that." It's a different realm; it's something that I haven't really explored, but I'm so open to it. I really enjoy it, and the variety too. I can imagine doing something like a Brothers of Brigadier, which is a very clear genre. But there are other genres out there too: thrillers, horrors. Also there's non-fiction too; I'd be fascinated to do something in that realm. All of the above, please, more. I love it.





THE BROTHERS OF BRIGADER STATION

She came to the outback to marry the love of her life. She just didn't expect him to be her fiancé's younger brother.

When Meghan Flanagan, a vet-nurse from Townsville, moves to Brigadier Station in outback Queensland to marry the man of her dreams, she is shocked to discover that perhaps her fiancé isn't the man she wants waiting for her at the altar. The man she's destined to marry, just might be his younger brother.

Cautious of women after a disastrous past relationship, Darcy is happy living on his beloved cattle station, spending his spare time riding horses, going to rodeos and campdrafting. He didn't expect the perfect woman show up on his doorstep. Engaged to his brother.

With the wedding only hours away, Meghan must make the decision of a lifetime. But, her betrayal could tear the family apart. She knows all too well the pain of losing loved ones and being alone.

Now that she has the family she so desperately wants; will she risk losing it all?

Set in the drought stricken plains of Julia Creek, North Queensland and the coastal city of Townsville this is a rural romance that will leave you asking: Will she marry the right man, for the right reasons?

The Brothers of Brigadier Station is the first in the Brigadier Station series and can easily be read as a standalone. Each of Sarah's stories are linked so you can find out what happens to the other brothers and your favourite characters in future books.

Buy The Brothers of Brigader Station [here](#)



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

Lessons I've learned from writing Seasoned Romance novels

Gudrun Freichs



I grew up with a steady diet of Mills & Boons and, later on, advanced to supersize helpings of Georgette Heyer. To be a successful romance writer nowadays requires to follow some trends. If you rely on your books for income, you have to follow en vogue tropes.

I've had a successful twenty-five-year-career as a trauma therapist. That means I don't need to write for a living. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't mind hitting the bestseller lists. But not at any cost. I love writing about women my age. And I use the my-age-concept lightly with a margin of give and take twenty years on both sides of seventy.

Why that age? I love reading romance. If it's all lovey-dovey with a little he-loves-me-he-loves-me-not dilemma, I get bored. But if the book has a surprising plot-twist, I'm all in. As I am getting older, I found it harder and harder to relate to romance featuring spring chickens. I do find their escapades endearing and cute, but... *yawn.*

*As I am getting older, I found
it harder and harder to relate to
romance featuring spring chickens.
I do find their escapades
endearing and cute, but...*

When I look around my group of friends, who are all in their sixties and beyond, I see this amazing kaleidoscope





of stunning characters. They have lived through amazing times, after the WWII when money was in short supply and you couldn't buy stuff, through the sixties when free love and sex were the norms, through rebelling against the establishment in their student years, through demonstrations against wars, and they even put up with the horrendous hair-dos of the Eighties.

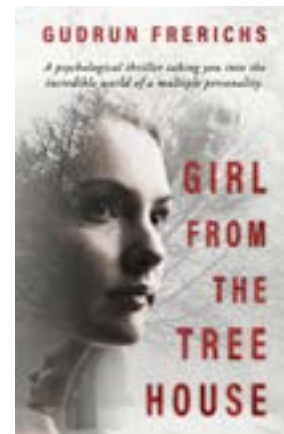
*These baby-boomer-women
offer rich personal stories
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accomplishments.*

These baby-boomer-women offer rich personal stories with amazing accomplishments. They've seen their children leave home and start their own families, have been through several marriages and menopause, were divorced or widowed, and finding that after all that, society has sidelined the 'grey generation'. BUT it's not over 'till the fat lady sings. We can give them recognition by writing about them. We can show they are still having adventures, climbing mountains, diving down to coral reefs, sailing, flying, and re-invent themselves again and again.

Our bodies may not be as lithe as they once were, there may be this or that wrong with it—and don't get me wrong, we love to talk about those things at great length. But you can find us also sitting on the stones of the Fontana Di Trevi in Rome, crossing the Plaza de Toros in Madrid, climbing the stairs of the Parthenon in Athens, or driving with a Jeep through an African Safari Park. We do exactly the same things younger people do, maybe a little slower, but certainly with equally great enthusiasm. It's never too late to fall in love and these women know and show that. Seasoned Gals have exciting stories to tell filled with love, adventure, and yes, sex.

*The romance market is a hard
market to break into, especially
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indie author who hasn't got
an established following.*

How successful am I with my Seasoned Romances? Not a lot. The romance market is a hard market to break into, especially when one is just starting as an indie author and hasn't got an established following. I also made huge mistakes in publishing books way before they were ready to see the world. I pulled my first two books to give them a good, thorough workout (Yes, seasoned writers can still learn new things). They are worth it because I believe baby-boomer stories deserve to show up on peoples shelves and Kindles.



GIRL FROM THE TREEHOUSE

It all unraveled at the funeral...

Horace Reid's death opened the door to our freedom. His widow, Elizabeth, exists only on paper. She disappeared thirty years ago. It's us, the Tribe, who live in her body now. But nobody knows that. Us are Elise, the reluctant host, Lilly the closer, Ama, the proverbial mother, Sky, our wise guide, Amadeus, the warrior, and Luke, the man around the house. There are others, but we make sure they stay hidden and away from harm.

After Horace's funeral, they tried to lock us in a mental hospital. Our sister-in-law had it all carefully planned. Thanks to quick thinking—yes, being a multiple has its advantages—we escaped to New Zealand's South Island. Tucked away in the West Coast wilderness we... well, the plan was to continue our healing. We didn't expect that monsters from our past still had us on their radar. When the police accuse us of murder we have to run again. Where to go, which way to turn? Our neighbor Scott appears helpful, but can we trust him? Can we trust ourselves? Can we trust anyone?

The GIRL FROM THE TREE HOUSE is the first of a series of psychological thrillers set in current day New Zealand. It describes how Elizabeth, a thirty-two-year-old woman with multiple personalities (Dissociative Identity Disorder, DID), fights for her sanity and freedom. Four core personalities tell the story from the inside out, giving a touching insight into the workings of the dissociated mind. There are no graphic descriptions of abuse.

Gudrun Frerichs is a retired psychotherapist and trauma specialist in the field of (sexual) abuse recovery. She successfully worked with many clients who had a DID diagnosis. Recovery from trauma and dissociation has been the focus of her Master's dissertation (2000) and Ph.D. thesis (2008) and is also the topic of her blog Multiple Voices. THE GIRL FROM THE TREE HOUSE is a spectacular departure from her romance series THE GOLDEN GIRLS.

Buy The Girl From the Treehouse [here](#)



[Gudrun](#) is a retired psychotherapist, full-time writer, and closet-gypsy. Born on a small fishing island close to Hamburg, Germany, she followed her husband with their three children to New Zealand, after detours over Switzerland and The Netherlands. It has been their home for the last 30 years.

Since her retirement she combined her passion for writing with her passion for challenging the invisibility of (older) women and those who fall through the gaps in our social and mental health systems. She does so by writing contemporary women's fiction with a dash of adventure, a sprinkling of romance, and second chances at finding love if that's where her heroines are headed.

Famous For Five Minutes

Kris Pearson



We certainly had fun trying to make the most of our opportunities when PR specialist Anne Buttar scored an interview with Seven Sharp for the Wellington Chapter.

Our meetings are almost always held in private homes, although there are so many of us now it can be a bit of a squeeze. This time we were due to meet in Holly James' Island Bay home. The deal was that three of us who'd agreed to solo interviews would get there half an hour early. Yes – that totally worked! It takes so long to set something like this up that we had a big audience before we even got started.

However, Gudrun Frerichs and I faced up to the exceedingly charming Arrun Soma and his cameraperson Candice, and they later interviewed Tracey Alvarez separately at home, so no worries. Everyone else was good about keeping quiet, and possibly grateful they weren't the ones in the hot-seat. This wasn't scripted in the least. We had no idea quite what we'd be asked, and despite our valiant attempts to mention RWNZ at every turn, we don't think they kept a single one in.

However, what definitely came across was the camaraderie and how much we enjoyed each other's company and how we found the meetings invaluable for



keeping up our writing enthusiasm. Our selection of books on the coffee table may have been shown for about half a second. And we'd like to think we looked a good deal more interesting than the strange soppy hand-holding shots and Acker Bilk music they insisted on threading through the final version.

If you missed the item and would like to see it, go [here](#)!



SUMMER SPARKS

Scarlet Bay – where passions run deep, and surely everyone deserves a summertime treat? A walk on the wild side for uptight Anna Wynn so she can try and forget her shameful secret. An unexpected roll in the hay for unsettled Jason Jones who really needs the tender touch of a worthwhile woman. They've no future together, of course. But...

Jason's dreams were ruthlessly crushed by his alcoholic father, but he's finally become the man he always hoped to be – the strong, focussed boss of his own construction company. Now, uptight interfering Anna Wynn is threatening to turn his life upside down.

Anna has arrived at the idyllic beach house to prepare for her wealthy family's Christmas vacation. Big tough Jason Jones is right in the way – even in the bed she intended claiming as her own. She vows not to let this infuriating tower of testosterone upset her careful plans, but his rippling body and huge tattoo are hard to ignore.

Soon her closed-off heart is under siege from a man determined to break through her reserve. Enemies become lovers, but when her secret is revealed and her life is in tatters, will he be willing to pick up the pieces?

SUMMER SPARKS is sexy, funny and heart-warming, and is intended for mature readers.

Buy Summer Sparks [here](#)



I love words, and I use them to make the world a happier place by creating people who are perfect for each other – although maybe they can't see that to start with! This is happening with my new cozy mysteries, too.

I began writing at my local radio station in New Zealand. After living in Italy and London I returned home and worked in TV, radio again, several advertising agencies, and then spent happy years as a retail ad manager. Totally hooked on fabrics, I followed this by surprising everyone and going into business with my husband as a curtain installer and working for some of the capital city's top designers. Good for my body, and it freed up my brain to write fiction. In twenty years I haven't fallen off my ladder once through drifting into romantic dreams, but I've certainly seen many beautiful homes and met wonderful people, and I may just have stolen glimpses of them for the books. (I didn't say that, did I?)

From the Editor: Keeping Momentum

Gillian St. Kevern



I've had the most frustrating week writing wise. I haven't had more than a couple of hours uninterrupted writing time. My volunteer commitments, house-sitting, a job interview and my niece and nephew have all come to together in a perfect storm of Gillian gets no writing done. I am forever having to reread what I've already written to remember where I am and I spend more time wondering what I'm doing than putting words down. Grrr.

I'm not the only one, either. Three of us Christchurch people decided to be accountability buddies this year, and we've been e-mailing each other progress reports. More often than not, however, we're bemoaning the fact that life has interrupted again. I'm more conscious than ever of the fact that we really need to defend our writing time. I suck at that, particularly when it comes to pets or small children. Yet, despite my week being frustrating, I've somehow managed to add 10,000 words to my current project. Here's my strategy.

START SMALL

This week has been exhausting. Often when I sat down to write, my attention span was all over the place, and I seemed to end up on Facebook or Youtube more than I did my document. Knowing I had, at most, an hour or two to work, was just overwhelming (which makes no sense, but there you go). I'd lost my writing muscle.

Instead of setting my timing for 30 minutes, I started setting it for ten and doing 'warm-up' sprints. Somehow, the shorter time made it seem a lot more achievable. After a few of these, I was in the writing zone, and I didn't want to stop after my sprint finished. In many cases, I just kept going, and ended up with 2-3000 words.

ORGANISE EVERYTHING ELSE

A lot of writing advice says 'schedule your writing time.' This is a good thing to do, but you should also schedule the other stuff. Otherwise it's going to be doing its best to sneak into your writing time.

I also try and batch jobs together. For example, I often wait until I have a few Heart to Heart e-mails to reply to before I answer them, or a few conference registrations before I update my registration spreadsheet. Not only does this help me protect my writing time, but I think it makes me more efficient with my use of my Heart to Heart and conference registration time.

I also set a timer on these tasks too. Just having a time limit means that I'm conscious of how I use my time, and makes it easier to ignore Facebook's siren call.

SLEEP

I am such a soft touch when it comes to pets sleeping on my bed, but last night, I was so tired, I said enough, and the face-hugging cat and attention-seeking dog had to sleep outside. Despite their protests to the contrary, both are still alive, and I had an amazing night's sleep and feel fantastic.

Will I be strong-willed enough to do the same tonight? Who knows! Hopefully you have more resistance to cute than I do. Regardless, taking some steps to ensure you get the best sleep you can will only help.

PLAN

I've been experimenting with a freer, more organic form of plotting which works great when I have the time to immerse myself in the world and just write. When I am squeezing in my writing time around other commitments, however, that just doesn't work. I've gone back to plotting out more of what's coming, albeit, still keeping things pretty flexible.

DO SOMETHING EVERY DAY, NO MATTER HOW SMALL

Remember when I said above that I lost my writing muscle? I've noticed that if I write consistently every day, I don't struggle when I do sit down to write. It's much easier to get into the zone, and I seem to produce more words than I do coming back after a week off or a few days editing. Even on the days when I can't sit down and get an hour of work in, doing something, whether that is jotting down a few notes for the next scene, Googling Hungarian forms of address, or brainstorming keywords, keeps the project fresh in my mind and ensure that when I do get time to write, I will use that time much more efficiently.

Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to cut out stars for a four-year-old's birthday party...

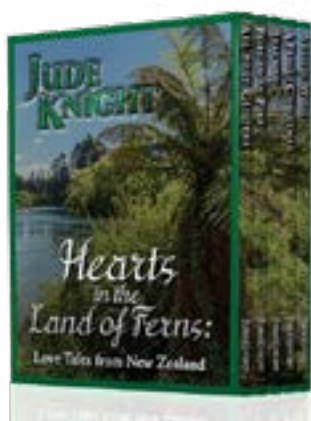


Woos and Hoos



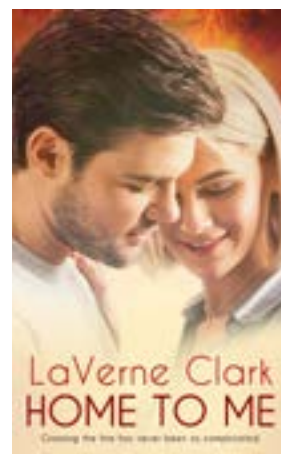
*The audio narration of the bestselling novel **The Brothers of Brigadier Station** by Sarah Williams is underway with McLeod's Daughters star Myles Pollard signed up to perform. Out in June 2019 it will be available through all audio book retailers and libraries. Myles is expected to perform all in the 5 book series.*

Buy *The Brothers of Brigadier Station* [here](#)



Happy release day to Jude Knight, on the release of a collection of novellas set in New Zealand. 'Hearts in the Land of Ferns: Love Tales from New Zealand' contains two historical and three contemporary romances, prepublished in previous multi-author collections but together here for the first time.

Buy *Hearts in the Land of Ferns* [here](#)



LaVerne Clark is excited to announce her new release - *Home to Me* - a contemporary romance published by The Wild Rose Press.

She thinks she's frigid - he's about to prove her wrong. What starts as a no-strings arrangement becomes an all-consuming passion neither of them is prepared for.

Buy *Home to Me* [here](#)



Congratulations to Erin Moira O'Hara! Her latest novel, *The Amethyst Code*, is the 4th Book in her Steele Ops romantic suspense series.

Buy *The Amethyst Code* [here](#)



Congratulations Pia Buck who has published her first ever novel, *Love Me True*, under the pen name, Melissa Crosby. *Love Me True* is a sweet contemporary romance and is the first book of the Willow Oaks Series.

Buy *Love Me True* [here](#)

Woos and Hoos

**CONGRATULATIONS TO JC HARROWAY WHO
HAS JUST SIGNED A NEW THREE BOOK DEAL
WITH HARLEQUIN MILLS AND BOON DARE,
ACQUIRING EDITOR SAREETA DOMINGO,
LONDON**



Jill Darragh (writing as Carole St Aubyns) just published the third in her New Zealand historical "Sweet Bitter" series. "Sweet Bitter Justice" follows a young woman criminal lawyer in 1899, Fielding, who encounters prejudice and support when her first client is accused of kidnapping. Her efforts in solving the case lead her to confront her own tragic past and to find the determination to accept love in her future.

Buy *Sweet Bitter Justice* [here](#)



Samantha Burton (w/a Jayne Castel) has a new book out on 16 May. *THE OUTLAW'S BRIDE* (Book 2: The Brides of Skye) is set in Medieval Scotland. A woman desperate to escape an arranged marriage. A prisoner with nothing to lose. The promise that will change their lives forever.

Buy *The Outlaw's Bride* [here](#)



Ashlee Robinson's *Summer with the CEO*, the first novel in her Little Sky Romance series which is set in NZ will be available on Amazon on 3 June. It's written under the pen name Alexa Rivers.

Buy *Summer with the CEO* [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-woo-hoos/> or directly to: heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz.

Author Spotlight

Nalini Singh



CAREER OVERVIEW

I submitted my first manuscript—to Mills & Boon in London—the summer after I finished high school. This was before I joined RWNZ or even knew about it. I rang up a supplier for M&B and asked them how to send my book to the publisher and they sent me a guidelines sheet! They were so nice to young me and I'll never forget that.

That submission was rejected, but I was already working on another book, and I was determined to be a writer, so I kept on submitting. Several years and many, many, many rejections later (including one that was waiting for me after I returned home jazzed from a RWNZ conference), I sold not to M&B, but to Silhouette Desire in New York.

My first book was published in 2003 and I was ecstatic. However, the editor who'd acquired me ended up leaving not many books into my Silhouette career and I began to feel like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. It was difficult for me to get contracts, and I was asked to do revision after revision on submissions (not the full books, but just the three chapter proposals).

It was incredibly heartbreaking to have to claw for every contract when I'd thought I had finally made it, had a writing career, and in the end, I decided to spend my energy on a story idea that had nothing to do with category romance. I had always written paranormal romance alongside contemporaries, and that day, I sat down and began to work on this paranormal story that I just had to tell—I wrote the first draft of SLAVE TO SENSATION in three weeks around a full-time job. I lived and breathed and dreamed this book and I loved the story that took shape as I typed

frantically.

While I was editing the next draft, I began to send query letters to agents. The stars aligned and I ended up signing with Nephele Tempest at The Knight Agency, who is still my agent to this day. From day one, we communicated so well—and having an open line of communication with my agent was and is critically important to me.

Nephele sent out STS to various publishers and, as more than one wanted it, it ended up going to auction. It wasn't a huge auction, but it was far more money than I'd ever before received for a book. More than that, it showed excitement for my work, which was such a boost to my writing soul.

And the stars aligned again—the editor who bought STS, Cindy Hwang, is still my editor. I love working with her. She **gets** me and my voice, and that makes all the difference in an editor-author relationship.

I did still want to continue to write contemporary categories, but again, my voice just didn't seem to work there. Eventually, I finished up my last Desire contract—I only wrote six Desires overall. Then I switched to writing single title paranormals full time and absolutely loved it (and still do!).

It wasn't until many years later, after indie-publishing became a possibility, that I decided to try contemporary stories again, though single title length, rather than category, as that is where I'm most comfortable, especially as I love creating big casts featuring family and friends.

I'm still developing as a writer and I think I'll always be doing so. My thriller debut comes out at the end of this year and I can't wait to see what this new chapter brings.

That was a really long answer, but I think it's important to share the various steps on my journey because, as you can see, it wasn't easy. It took years and years of hard work, knockbacks and rejections and tears. In the current climate, there's a push to achieve quick success, a feeling that if you aren't a bestseller out of the gate, it's all over. But success isn't any less valuable for having been achieved over a longer period.

And, not everyone's idea of success is the same. Mine has always been simple: to be able to write full time. Anything else is a bonus.

A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR LIFE

I'm quite flexible in terms of how I structure my day. Part of the joy of being my own boss is setting my own schedule. Yet at the same time, I am disciplined about doing my work, because I'm not someone who feeds off a last minute rush. I like breaking projects down into daily and weekly goals, so I'm in a good position when



Author Spotlight

a deadline nears. I hate the stress of trying to complete something by pulling all-nighters for example.

So at the top of my daily to-do list will be a writing goal, whether it's a certain number of words per day, or a certain number of pages edited. That's priority one.

However, I do need to check my emails in the morning. My agent is in LA, my main editor is in NYC, and that morning period is the time when we're all online. I could let it go and take care of it overnight, but that really slows things down and sometimes, emails need quick responses, or we need to have a quick back and forth.

At this point in my writing journey, taking care of emails in the morning doesn't put me off-track in terms of my writing. I have a routine of clearing work emails while having a post-breakfast cup of tea. As soon as the work stuff is clear, I update my social media—this might just be a Facebook post. I may check in on Twitter, but, release days and other exceptional circumstances aside, it's only for a small peek.

That done, I get to work. My aim is to be writing by 8.30/9.

I write till 12 or 12.30, break for exercise and lunch, then check my e-mails again after lunch to see if anything needs clearing/do a bit of social media. By around 2.30pm, I'm on my second round of writing, usually powering through to 6/6.30. (A note about my writing blocks – I do take regular breaks to stretch and/or get a cup of tea! Don't sit in place for hours! It's terrible for your body).

I turn off e-mail notifications during my writing periods, actually turn off the Internet totally, and don't go on social media. I'm not perfect and of course, there are days when I slip and fall down the internet wormhole, but in general, I've realized that I feel so much better if I don't fritter away time—and I achieve a ton within these concentrated chunks of time. I'm a big believer in deep work and what we can achieve if we're not distracted. (If you haven't read Cal Newport's book on the topic, I highly recommend it.)

I'm a night owl by nature, so I do return to my vampire ways at times, but overall, I try to structure my day so I have downtime where my brain can rejuvenate itself. As I move deeper into the second decade of my career, I've realized the importance of this, of taking time to breathe and relax.

This schedule can and does change depending on life and deadlines, but I'm always aware of my first point—to keep my writing levels stable overall, so I don't have to stress while heading to deadline.

The other thing I'll mention is that I've learned to schedule all the peripheral things too – if I have to complete an interview for example, or read a contract. All that takes time. Putting everything I need to do on a list means I'm also more realistic about my daily goals/schedule for the

day, and I have a real sense of satisfaction at the end of the day, instead of constantly feeling as if I'm playing catch up.

While I'm a full-time writer, this same type of thinking can be applied even if you have only a short amount of writing time available. I wrote while at high school, I wrote while at uni, and I wrote while working as a lawyer. I basically did the same thing in compressed format – if I had only thirty minutes, I closed the door or went to the library or even sat on a bus with headphones on and wrote for those thirty minutes. I produced multiple books this way.

WHAT YOU'RE MOST GRATEFUL FOR/ ALTERNATIVELY: THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER GOT.

After I joined RWNZ, and while I was still submitting projects, Fiona Brand told me not to have only one submission out there. Because if I focused all my hopes on one submission, I'd be crushed by a rejection. Whereas, if I had multiple submissions out there, I'd always have hope even if I got a rejection.

While that advice is specific to traditional publishing, it can be extrapolated to the indie landscape as well. For example, don't obsessively edit a single project. There's a point at which you have to let go and begin something new. Because the more projects you have out there, the more chances you have to reach readers.

My only caveat is—don't put up the first draft of the first book you ever write. Actually, don't put up the first draft of anything. Take the time to polish it, give it depth. It's not necessarily popular advice right now, but trust me, you want to start your career as you mean to go on. Put your best foot forward, so when a reader sees your name, they think *oh, this person tells a good story*, not, *oh, this person doesn't edit their work*. Respect your readers and they'll stick with you over the long haul.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE

You can't rely on external validation to motivate you in this career. If five star reviews are your motivation, then one star reviews will crush you. Find the motivation in yourself, nurture your passion and love for your work.

It's nice to have validation, of course. As I mentioned above, it was a boost to me to find people who loved my work. But prior to that—all those rejections, all those revisions requests, why did I go on? Because I love to write. In the end, it comes down to me and the page... and the story.





WOLF RAIN

A Psy-Changeling Trinity Novel
June 2019

The fate of millions of lives hangs in the balance in this new Psy-Changeling Trinity novel from New York Times bestselling author Nalini Singh...

Kidnapped as a young girl, her psychic powers harnessed by a madman, Memory lives a caged and isolated existence...until she comes face-to-face with a wolf. Labelled an empath by her bad-tempered rescuer, Memory knows that her 'gift' is nothing so bright. It is a terrible darkness that means she will always be hunted.

But Memory is free now and she intends to live. A certain growly wolf can just deal with it.

Alexei prefers to keep his packmates at bay, the bleak history of his family a constant reminder that mating, love, hope is not for him. But Memory, this defiant and fearless woman who stands toe-to-toe with him awakens the most primal part of his nature—and soon, he must make a choice: risk everything or lose Memory to a murderous darkness that wants to annihilate her from existence...

Buy Wolf Rain [here](#)



[Nalini Singh](#) is the New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, and international bestselling author of the Psy-Changeling, Guild Hunter, Rock Kiss, and Hard Play series.

Born in Fiji and raised in New Zealand, she was first published in 2003. Her books have sold over seven million copies worldwide and have been translated into more than twenty languages, including German, French, Japanese, and Turkish.

Her 2019 releases are: Wolf Rain (June), Archangel's War (September), and A Madness of Sunshine (December).

Her website is: <http://www.nalinisingh.com>

You can also find her on Twitter (@nalinisingh), Facebook (facebook.com/authornalinisingh), and Instagram (@authornalinisingh).

Social Media Reach Survey: Results

From the 2019 Conference committee – but mostly to Emma Lowe & Janet Elizabeth Henderson for doing hard parts!

Thank you to the 80 people who provided feedback for the survey of our members' social media reach a few months ago. The results are quite fascinating and fun to delve into – if you like playing with data

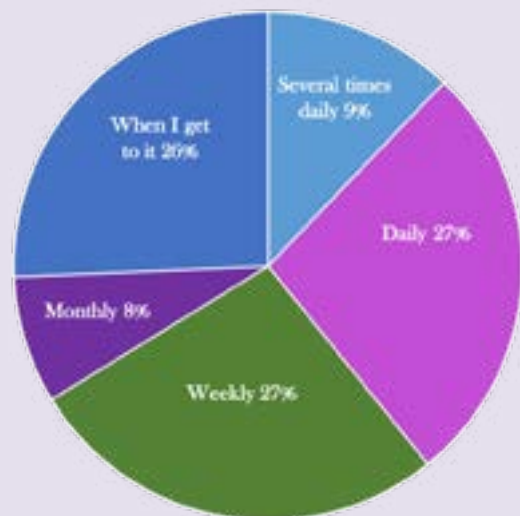
We wanted to summarise and share the results with you, to provide an overview of the findings, and to show you where your contribution went. So here are some fun and fascinating insights about RWNZ members' social media habits, including results in pictorial form for those who need more convincing that data can be fun...



FACEBOOK

- 10% of respondents don't use Facebook
- 59% of active respondents have less than 1000 followers
- Our four highest achievers have a collective following of 51,000

Frequency of posts of active Facebook user participants

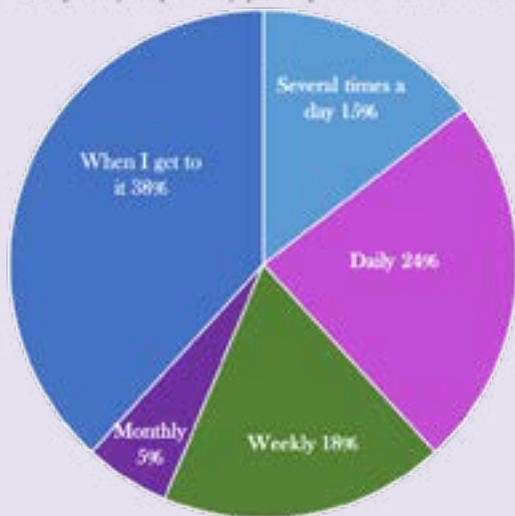




TWITTER

- 26% of respondents don't use Twitter
- 39% of active respondents have less than 1000 followers
- Our four highest achievers have a collective following of over 80,000

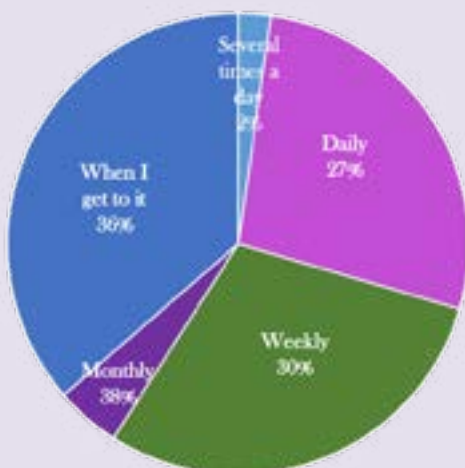
Frequency of posts by participants who use Tweet



INSTAGRAM

- 44% of respondents don't use Instagram

Frequency of posts by respondents on Instagram



NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

- 37% of respondents don't have a newsletter
- 32% of active respondents have less than 1000 followers
- Our four highest achievers have a collective following of over 80,000

Newsletter frequency



OTHER FEEDBACK

Here are some tidbits you might find interesting:

- 44% of respondents use Bookbub
- 14% of respondents have no social media presence
- Other online forums include blogs, Pinterest, Tumblr, LinkedIn, YouTube, PaperLi, LitNet and The Prose
- Our members are also members of RWA, RWAus, NZ Society of Authors and the South Island Writers Association
- 95% of respondents would be willing to pass on any offer a sponsor might make for RWNZ to their group/readers, etc. if it was appropriate for their target audience

Thanks again for your participation in this survey. This information helps RWNZ to compile data on our reach as a group through social media, etc. In turn, this data is being used when approaching sponsors for their support of RWNZ, including our conference.

Write With Love



RWNZ Conference 2019 Update

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!



Koru winner Tea Cooper featured in episode 71 and talked about her historical fiction including her latest novel *The Woman in the Green Dress*.

Author of rom-coms with a time travelling twist, Kirsty McManus appeared on episode 72.



Editor and author of small-town romance, Lauren K. McKellar appeared on episode 73.

Episode 74 went back to regency days with Sasha Cottman.



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 to be featured or have a promotion to share, email me sarah@serenadepublishing.com or become a sponsor on Patreon!

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei

Aim for the highest cloud so that if you miss it, you will hit a lofty mountain

We have been completely blown away by your support for the RWNZ conference. We aimed high, wanting to make Christchurch 2019 a memorable event, and of course to entice you all down here to the South Island. We are so pleased you accepted our invitation!

Thank you to all those who registered early, as this helps us so much to plan ahead, and allows us to add extras to the events.

IN THE NUMBERS

We are over a hundred registrations already and numbers are still climbing. From the outset, all of the workshops have been tracking well with a fairly balanced spread of attendee numbers. The cocktail party (including official welcome to conference) numbers are looking great and the conference dinner sold out before the end of the early-bird period – so we are having to re-consider our plans. What a wonderful problem to have.

The Tradeshow has eight businesses ready to share their skills with you, and we are considering other ideas to add onto this event, including adding a member's book sale table, if we can source a couple of volunteers to take on this task.

EXTRA WORKSHOP

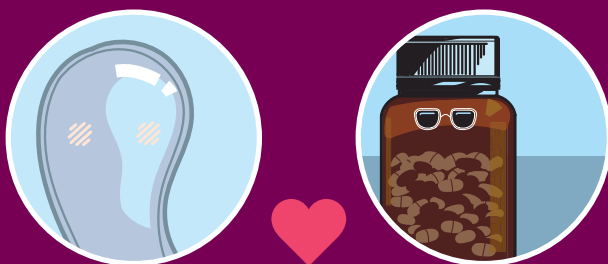
You will have seen there is an extra workshop in the programme from Nicola Caws, Harlequin UK. I missed that a Harlequin workshop is part of our sponsorship deal with them, so you benefit from my mistake. Though, I am asking you to make yet another hard choice between which amazing session to attend – a journey with Harlequin on a look behind the scenes at their editorial processes, or with Draft to Digital on e-book and audio market trends. If you registered before mid-May (when this workshop was added), please respond to the email from Gillian (our registrar) asking which workshop you would prefer.

Get your glad rags out, polish up those pitches – its only a couple more months 'til conference!

Mel Climo
2019 Conference Convener
On behalf of the fabulous committee

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.

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The Welcome Mat

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



Juanita Kees
Grant Bayley
Esther Ducai
Serena Clarke
Lynne Russell
Patricia Kay
Rebecca Ross
Sally Carroll
Erin McKechnie
Marianne Castle
Trish Devine
Hayley Leibowitz



Great to have you all with us.

Don't forget to read the information for new members page on our website: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/information-new-members/>

Of course, you'll need to login before you can access the members' area, but you'll find information there about how to join the [RWNZ Members-Only Facebook page](#).



Contacts

Kendra Delugar: president@romancewriters.co.nz

Zoe Sojourner: vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz

Tania Roberts: treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz

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

???: publicity@romancewriters.co.nz

Bronwen Evans: membership@romancewriters.co.nz

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

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

To 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](#)

Our speaker this month was Tessa Radley, who presented on losing your writing mojo. The presentation covered a diverse range of topics including brain chemistry and the flight-fight response, using your frontal lobe, deep thinking & work, and how distractions (such as social media), lack of self-care and unexpected changes/challenges to our schedules can all result in losing our desire and ability to write. Thanks Tessa for this interesting, informative and interactive session. Our next meeting will be held on Saturday 1 June at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. Pamela Gervai will be speaking about the Craft of Dialogue.

HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Debbie Williams](#)

Our May meeting was held at the Waipawa Library where we chatted about what we'd been up to before discussing the blurbs some of our members had prepared.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome.

Due to the Queen's Birthday long weekend, our next meeting will be held on the 8th of June at Jackie's, where we will be working on query letters.

WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

15 of us met on Saturday May 4th at the Paraparaumu Library. We welcomed new member Pia.

Nyria, Moira, Bonnie, Ellie, Jeanette, Holly James, Anne Barwell, Gudrun, Kris, Emma, Helen, Leanne, Pia, Jane, Jenny Russell.

On the agenda was:

- Warm up round-robin game using Gudrun's scenario-prompting kit. We laughed so much that I was crying, and will definitely use that kit again :)
- Catchup / round-table news and intros.
- We also talked about our recent experience with the Seven Sharp TV feature.
- Jane shared some handouts on Bookstagram - what is it and what can it do for us?
- Jane led a discussion about planning the publishing process, to help us to target the areas of focus for the coming meetings. We agreed we walk to look in more detail at:
keywords, marketing, covers, blurbs, getting reviews
- And we had our usual cold reads session

Regional Round-Up Reports

NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

Our latest meeting was an enjoyable and informative one discussing marketing options and social media for today's writer. Amongst the wailing and gnashing of teeth at all the things that encompasses, we came to the consensus that marketing ourselves is a necessary evil in this business, and the sooner plans are made toward it the better. We also had the pleasure of viewing our newest member, Jaclyn's book cover – and what a beauty it is!

Next month, we will be discussing favourite authors and authors that have inspired us to write ourselves and why. It will be held on Saturday 8 June at 2:00 p.m. the usual venue of Nick Smith's meeting rooms on Quarantine Road and Main Road Stoke. Newbies welcome and encouraged to check us out.

CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

There was a great turn out of more than twenty members for the Canterbury Chapters monthly meeting last Sunday.

We welcomed local author Soraya Lane, who generously hosted an informative session on pitching - very timely with several of our members planning to pitch at conference.

The session brought with it some brilliant hints and tips both on preparation and on the actual pitch itself, and surprisingly saw more than a few people rather looking forward to the opportunity now!

Thank you so much, Soraya!

We also congratulated one of our members, Wendy and her daughter Leonie, on finaling in the Pacific Hearts contest. It's been a great year for our local chapter.

We're currently planning another attempt at a movie night to watch the RWAs Love Between the Covers with a pot luck theme - the date will be confirmed on the Facebook page.

Next month's meeting is on June 16th at South Library, Beckenham, 2-3pm where we'll have a panel of three local authors, Cherie Mitchell, Michelle Vernal and J.C. Harroway discussing the pros and cons of trad v self-publishing.

OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

The Otago/Southland chapter met up on Saturday 4 May. Carol Tate led the discussion this month around 'settings'. We talked about how to integrate setting descriptions into our books without providing an info-dump, engaging the senses, and how to filter description through the POV of the main characters. Our next meeting will be on Saturday 1 June.

COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Bel Macfie](#)

What a great workshop we had in May! Even the most experienced writers in the group were able to learn a few new things. Our very own Catherine Hudson (Pacific Hearts finalist) facilitated a brilliant workshop speaking about how her writing had improved since she had completed a Margie Lawson immersion class - two of them in fact! Cat discussed different rhetorical devices, how to amplify emotions, pacing and cadence, writing body language, and managing backstory. We did an exercise about cliches focusing on how to twist them, make them fresh or take them further to give them power. A range of useful lecture packets are available for US\$22 from www.margielawson.com covering editing, Margie's own EDITS system, rhetorical devices, body language, dialogue cues, visceral rules, and empowering characters emotions. Having just finished three of these, I concur with Cat that Margie's unique lens in which she views writing and the systems she uses are practical and thought-provoking.

BLenheim AREA Contact: [Iona Jones](#)