

Heart to Heart

ROMANCE WRITERS
OF NEW ZEALAND

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Interview with Dan Wood of Draft2Digital

Gillian St. Kevern



We are incredibly lucky to welcome Dan Wood to our RWNZ conference for a second time! Dan is the Director of Author Relations at Draft2Digital, a position which gives him a unique perspective and insight into publishing and marketing trends throughout the publishing industry. In addition to speaking about Digital and Audio trends at the conference, Dan kindly agreed to be interviewed for Heart to Heart. Thank you, Dan!

1. Briefly, what services does Draft2Digital offer authors?

Draft2Digital's core service to authors comes down to converting their manuscript and distributing it online, worldwide, with full support the whole way. Authors can upload their Word or RTF file, and we'll quickly and automatically convert it to epub and mobi for use with ebook retailers, and a print-ready PDF for use with print on demand (POD) services.

We also offer free ebook and print layout templates to give an author's book a professional look and feel. And our Automated End Matter keeps the author's also-by pages, bios, copyright and more updated across all their titles, and siloed by pen name or even by publisher.

Over the past three years, we've built and rolled out some services meant to help with discoverability for the authors and their books. Our Author Pages and Reading Lists are all built around our Universal Book Links—a single link that takes readers to everywhere a book is sold online.

Our most prominent service to authors, though, revolves around distribution. We can distribute an author's work to nearly every country on the planet, and every major ebook retailer, including Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, and more. We also have a healthy and growing library distribution through Overdrive and bibliotheca, and our partnership with audiobook distributor Findaway Voices makes it easier than ever for authors get their work into audio.

We can distribute an author's work to nearly every country on the planet, and every major ebook retailer, including Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, and more.

The short version of this: Draft2Digital offers tools and services that empower authors to get their books to more readers worldwide.

2. How would you recommend an author at the start of their publishing career best use Draft2Digital? Does that differ from the advice you'd offer an author in the more advanced stages of their career?

I recommend authors at the beginning of their career take advantage of as many of our free services as possible to really get a feel for what they want to invest in later. For instance, our free conversion tool includes a number of beautiful templates and works for digital and print book formats. If later on you want more control over how your books are formatted, you can try great paid tools like Vellum. I think many beginning authors will find they can save some money using our tool though and still have a beautiful book.

For veteran authors I highly recommend checking out our Automated End Matter if you aren't already using it. As your catalog grows it can be very time consuming to





follow best practices like including retailer specific links to all your other books and updating your backlist each time you add a new book. Let us handle all that automatically for you.

3. *What in your opinion most sets Draft2Digital apart from similar services?*

I think there are three primary things that set Draft2Digital apart from our competition. The first is that we have the best customer service in the industry. It has been our focus and it has paid off with tremendous amounts of word of mouth growth. This industry moves quick, so you need to be able to get answers quickly. We provide that with top notch email and phone support.

The second major difference is that we have had professional authors on our team from the beginning. They've provided feedback internally on how we prioritize projects, usability and we get to do a lot of our testing with their books. Believe me, this saves all of you a lot of headaches!

The last difference is that we are a private company. We've seen a lot of venture-funded companies come and go trying to compete with us with fancy marketing and pricing tricks. Ultimately it doesn't work because they are responsible to their shareholders to produce a big profit at some point. Draft2Digital is building our platform and relationships for a long-term future. We have a proven business model and we continue to invest in building tools that make our authors' lives easier.

4. *You've been active in the publishing industry for many years! What is the biggest change you've seen in that time?*

I would argue the most significant change in publishing is how digital platforms have fundamentally changed the access to worldwide markets of readers. Before the rise of digital books, it was only the blockbuster books that made it across the oceans and into different languages. Now, no matter where you are writing from, you have access to most of the biggest markets in the world the day you release your book. How amazing is that? As a reader I can find new stories from people around the world, I can buy a book in my native language no matter where I might be traveling, and I can buy the book at a fair price.

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writing from, you have access to
most of the biggest markets in
the world the day you
release your book.
How amazing is that?*

5. *Conversely, what hasn't changed?*

The one thing that never changes is the need to write a great story that makes readers feel. As an indie author, there will be a lot of things that will fill your time. Any investment you make in perfecting your craft is worth it. That might be a book or a course. It might be a workshop at a conference. It should involve taking time to read other writers and be inspired by them.

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6. *Tell us about Books2Read. Why was this tool developed and how can it help authors connect with readers?*

Books2Read is our solution to help authors sell more books at their reader's preferred retailer. We noticed several years ago that authors would often only share the Amazon buy link on their social media and websites. Sometimes this was just to save time and sometimes because they weren't sure how to find the link for their book. Now we have made that easy with our Books2Read Universal Book Links, Author Pages and Reading Lists. All an author needs to do is bring us a link to their book at any retailer and we will search for the links at retailers worldwide.

Authors can then share these links on social media with Universal Book Links, share an Author Page of all their works or a Reading List of curated books (their own books or recommendations of other authors). When the reader clicks on one of these links the first time, they'll be given a list of retailers where the book can be found so they can choose their favorite retailer. After that, they will be taken to their retailer directly every time they click on a Books2Read link.

Best of all, all these Books2Read features are free to authors. You don't even have to use Draft2Digital for any of your distribution.

7. *I'm very excited about Draft2Digital's partnership with Findaway Voices. What do they offer authors?*

We were very excited when we first met the Findaway Voices team because we were getting lots of questions from authors about audio. Findaway works with authors worldwide on both audio book production and distribution. If you have never made an audiobook before, they are the people to talk to. They help curate down a list of narrators to people who have worked in your genre before and can do all the accents your project might require. If you already have an audiobook produced and just want to find a distributor to make it available for sale in thousands of stores and libraries worldwide, they can help you there too.





8. It sounds like you've been very busy attending a lot of conferences already this year. What have you learned that surprised you?

I've been most surprised and excited by how many indie authors are talking about backlist. Over the past five years I've seen so much focus on writing the next book quickly because of how the algorithms at the digital retailers reward new content with extra visibility. That is great, but I don't think the pace at which authors are writing new books right now is ultimately sustainable. There is a lot of money in your backlist. Don't ignore it. Experiment with new marketing ideas.

9. What question do you get asked the most by authors?

We get questions about marketing a lot. Everyone wants a step-by-step recipe to follow but the truth is marketing is hard, it is going to be a little different for everyone and it is always changing. I know that sounds scary. The best advice I have for authors in this regard is the more you know about your fans the better. No matter what the current marketing trend is, the more you can target your type of readers the better. Attending conferences and connecting to your peers is also going to be tremendously valuable. Like I said, marketing works a little different for everyone, but odds are what works for other people in your genre might work well for you.

10. What are you most looking forward to at your second RWNZ conference?

This is a tough question! I can easily say the only thing I'm not looking forward to is the flight there and back. Last year was so amazing. I can't wait to reconnect with the people I met last year and meet some new folks as well.

11. What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?

I absolutely love getting to travel worldwide and spend time with authors. I learn so much from these conferences and I get to see the positive impact Draft2Digital is having on the publishing community.

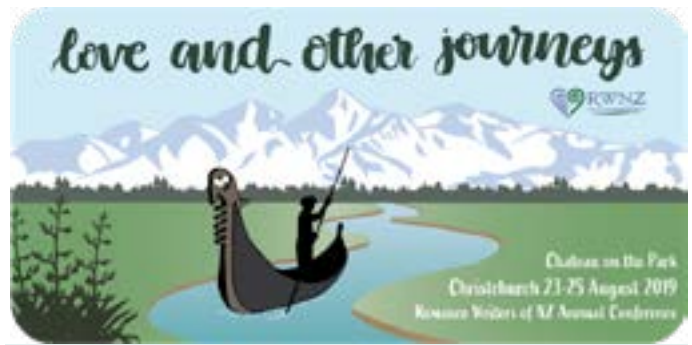
12. What are you currently reading?

For pleasure I generally read Fantasy and Science Fiction. Right now, I'm listening to All Tomorrow's Parties by William Gibson and reading Viridian Gate Online: Doomforge by J.A. Hunter (an author friend I met last year). In Nonfiction I've been reading Wired for Story by Lisa Cron.

Thank you for your time, Dan, and we look forward to getting to know you better at conference!



Dan Wood is the Director of Author Relations at [Draft2Digital](https://draft2digital.com). Prior to this he spent many years as a technology advisor in the energy industry and served two years as an AmeriCorps Vista volunteer. Draft2Digital gives over 56,000 authors simple tools to format and publish their ebooks to digital stores worldwide. Authors keep their rights and keep writing. Draft2Digital helps with the rest.



Soraya M. Lane interviews bestselling Harlequin Presents author Natalie Anderson



Fifteen years ago, I attended my first ever romance writers chapter meeting. I was so nervous I sat in my car outside, terrified to go in, until someone spotted me and I felt silly for hiding! To cut a long story short, that night I met a great bunch of women, all at very different stages of their writing careers, and Natalie Anderson was one of them. Natalie and I were both relatively young writers at the time, both working hard to get published. But Natalie had two preschoolers and was also 4 months pregnant with twins!

In the end, Natalie's journey to publication was much shorter than mine, and as many of you might know, Natalie completed revisions on what would become her first published book, whilst in hospital after giving birth to her babies. We stayed in contact throughout our early careers, and we became not only firm friends but also great cheerleaders of one another's careers.

Natalie and I are still in touch almost daily and our friendship is so important to me. We are always there for one another, on good days and bad, throughout every



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career milestone and low point, and I will forever be grateful to RWNZ for introducing us!

At the upcoming conference, Natalie and I will be conducting our first ever workshop together, and we thought it would be fun to interview one another so you can find out who we are and what we write. So here goes!

Natalie, I've just told everyone that you completed your revisions after giving birth to your twins, but can you tell us more about how you got to that point, and how you eventually sold that first book?

Like lots of people I'd always wanted to 'write a book' but had never really given myself the chance to... I didn't really know how to start to be honest. Then I discovered the Nanowrimo book, "No Plot No Problem" in my local library. The fact that it was really a 'get off your butt and just write' book, and not a 'how to write a proper novel' book was absolutely what I needed. It took the 'terrifying' out of the process and gave me the chance to shut up that inner critic and just write... for the sheer crazy joy of it... In other words, don't take yourself too seriously!!! And also, don't ever think you can write a perfect first draft! Get the draft down... dirty and all over the place and fix it up much later once you've finished...

Anyway, that was the perfect motivator to make me sit down and finally have a go at 'writing that novel'...

I'd always loved reading romance and wanted to write something uplifting and fun—a Mills & Boon was it. I started and simply fell in love with it... writing three draft stories in just a few months. I picked my favourite, polished up the partial and posted it to London, somewhat amazed to get a request for the full manuscript a few months later. I sent that in but then things took a back seat for a while as I was heavily pregnant with twins.

Then it all happened at once--the twins were born a few weeks premature and that same night I received an email asking for revisions... in a crazy fog of time, I did the revisions while sitting next to the incubator in NICU. At the end of that time, I brought two babies home together with a two book contract with the London office. It was insane and I feel so, so lucky.

What is a typical 'day in your life'? Although I know that you don't really have a 'typical' day, given that you're also juggling 4 kids! Maybe give us your ideal day when everything goes to plan...

I'm up early supervising breakfast and lunch making and while two now bike to school, I still have one more year of dropping the other two to school... so it's the school run and then home again. Its super boring but I try to get at least one laundry load and a dishwasher load on before leaving... lol, with six in the household there's a lot of laundry! But by 9am its all quiet and I should be able to get cracking. I try to get the words done before midday because I definitely hit an 'afternoon slump', so that's the time to read, revise or just rest and brainstorm with a pen and paper.

When the children were very young I wrote four books a year... looking back now I really have no idea how I did it. But I think in some ways with preschoolers there's actually more 'thinking' time... because they nap and (hopefully) go to bed a little earlier. With teenagers now

there's a large 'mental load'... helping them process the dramas of the day... and they ask really tough questions all the time!!! I thought I'd be so prolific once they all went to school, but in fact I've lost some of that 'quiet thinking time' I had in the evenings now they're older and able to stay awake longer than I can... lol... so some of those school hours are needed for me to take a walk and just 'mull'... letting the stories percolate for a while in the back of the brain is really important I think otherwise I write myself into a corner too quickly! I think we definitely need that time to read and refill the well. That's become more and more important to me the longer I've been writing professionally.

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What is the greatest challenge in your writing life? I'm guessing you're going to say completing the damn manuscript, but I could be wrong!

Finishing is always tricky! And just balancing everything—full on family, other demands on your time and mental energy... it always comes down to time and balance. Consistency in writing creatively is absolutely the key so you need to get into a routine (Of course I say this, but honestly I still struggle with it even with more than a decade of this being my full-time job).

Ideally you need to get something written every, single, day. It can also be hard... often we're procrastinators, right? Maybe turn off the TV for a while

Is there anything you wish you could have told your younger self at the start of your writing journey?

Just to relax and enjoy the ride a little more... so often we're striving to bag the next mountain... maybe pause and look at the view every so often!

You've written almost exclusively for Harlequin Mills & Boon (edited out of the London office) during your career. Can you tell us what Mills & Boon are like to write for, and what advice you'd give to pre-published authors wanting to write for them? How did you know what category to target when you started out?

Mills & Boon are wonderful to write for. I'm so grateful to the editors I've had, they've always been so supportive. They're very clear in their directions for revisions and so forth, so it has just been the most positive experience for me. I feel very grateful to them. And honestly, getting all the translations in the post is just amazing...

My advice to writers would be to read widely—in all the M&B series to discover your favourite. But also go beyond M&B to see what else going on out there in the current market.

At the time I decided to have a go, they'd just put out a call for city-set stories featuring a 'girl-about-town'. I convinced myself that that's what I'd been when on my OE in London only a few years ago... so I just went for it. Because there does come a time when you have to just dive in with the blinkers on and focus only on your story... get it down, get it done. Then revise. Honestly I revise



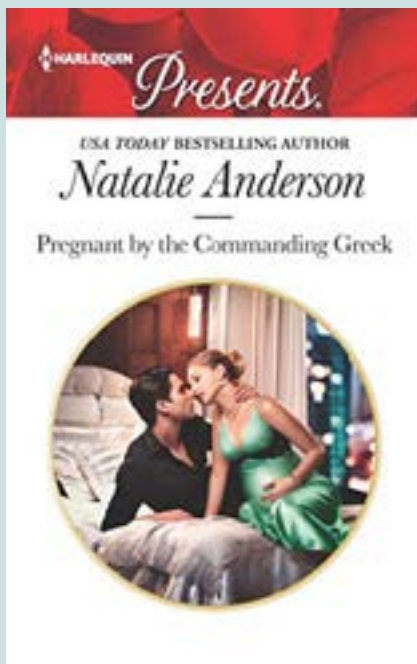
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a lot—sometimes there are huge changes from my first draft to my final product. I am a dirty-draft writer, I need to get it all down because that's what helps me find the depth. Then I can prune, shape, highlight... and finally find that diamond...

And finally, do you see yourself writing romance novels in 5, 10, or even 20 years time? Or will you be writing something different?

Oh my heart is absolutely in romance—I love it. I love writing it, it's uplifting and joyous and, for all the glamour in a M&B Modern, it's real...

I think there will always be romance in my writing

Natalie's latest romance, "Pregnant by the Commanding Greek" is available from April.



PREGNANT BY THE COMMANDING GREEK

Their blissful encounter was a secret...

Until her pregnancy shock!

Powerful Greek Leon Kariakis is not accustomed to being challenged—least of all by an impulsive woman who's mistaken his identity. Yet warmhearted Ettie Roberts is a breath of fresh air, and Leon can't resist indulging in a night of tantalizing pleasure! But Ettie's pregnancy bombshell demands action. Leon's heir will not be born out of wedlock, so Ettie must say "I do"...

Buy Pregnant by the Commanding Greek [here](#)



USA TODAY bestselling author [Natalie Anderson](#) writes emotional contemporary romance full of sparkling banter, sizzling heat and uplifting endings—perfect for readers who love to escape with empowered heroines and arrogant alphas who are too sexy for their own good. With over three million books sold, her stories are translated into more than a dozen languages. She's published with Harlequin Mills & Boon, Entangled Publishing, Penguin NZ and independently. She lives with her husband and four children in Christchurch, New Zealand.

News from the President

Kendra Delugar



The 2018/19 RWNZ year is almost at an end. My daughter is about to head off to the UK on her big OE (no need to panic – okay, panicking a fair bit). And winter has hit with full scrape-ice-off-your-windscreen force.

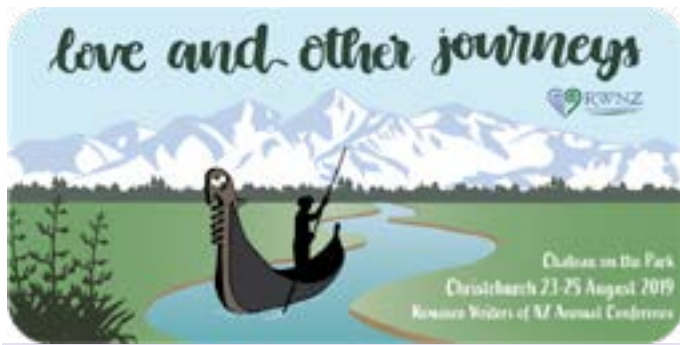
Of course, there is another way to look at this. The 2019/20 RWNZ year is about to begin. My daughter is about to have some of the greatest years of her life (still a hefty dose of motherly concern going on there). And lastly, as I write this, yesterday was the shortest day of the year so summer is getting closer with every passing day.

So, taking the glass is half full approach, by the time you get this the call for Nominations, Remits and Special Resolutions will have gone out. We're looking forward to seeing receiving those forms back, especially nominations for the Executive. We can't run an organisation like RWNZ without members putting themselves forward for these essential roles.

If you are thinking you'd like to give back by being on the Exec but want more information on what the roles contain than is currently on the website, feel free to get in touch with our current Executive members to have a chat!

Other than that, all of the Patricia Kay courses are now up on the resources section of the website, so make the most of them. All of our contests for the 2018/19 year have now closed and very shortly finalists should be announced for the last two – the Koru and the Chapter Short Story. Good luck to those who entered. And lastly, but by no means least, the 'Love and Other Journeys' Conference which runs from the 23rd to 25th of August has been filling up nicely with the Saturday/Sunday Weekend Conference now sold out! I look forward to catching up with you there.

Happy writing,
Kendra Delugar



Now Natalie asks Soraya how the hell she does it all...



So as Soraya has said, we met at a RWNZ Christchurch meeting a number of years ago. She was only twenty(!!!), a beautiful bright young thing who'd written a massive great historical romance (I feel like there were pirates—were there pirates in there Soraya???)...

So it was Soraya's first ever RWNZ meeting and she'd already completed her first novel. I'm not going to lie, there were some long-term members there yet to conquer that feat because as every one of us knows, finishing a book can be damn hard! But Soraya's focus, talent and grit were evident from day one and they're what's gotten her to where she is today—a one-woman powerhouse scooped up by Amazon's Lake Union Publishing to become one of their bestselling authors... so what's her journey been like, what's to come in the future and most importantly, what can we learn from her?

How do you write so prolifically, across romance genres and manage all these millions of deadlines (that would have me reaching for a brown paper bag to help me breathe!?). How do you structure your days to get it all done?

Okay so can we just go back to intro please? I think I'll employ you as my PR manager! You make me sound way better than I actually am! And yes, you're right, my first novel was a very long, waffling pirate story, and it will never see the light of day

I'm not going to lie, the past eight years have been a never-ending cycle of deadline after deadline. I sold my first book when I was pregnant with my first child, and I

barely had a day off after the birth (I think I handed a book in a few days before he arrived 3 weeks early!) and I kept up my full time job as a freelance writer as well as writing multiple books a year. The birth of our second child saw me give up my day job, but to justify that I had to write a lot of books! My pace has slowed slightly now as I'm mainly focusing on one genre, but I still have to write at least 2k words a day to stay on track. I'm very disciplined usually, but it's a never-ending battle to try to be a full-time mum, full-time author and also try to fit some exercise in there. And sometimes I actually do need a brown paper bag!

Because this is my full-time job, I take my work very seriously and I work every day. When it feels hard, I remind myself that the alternative is being a lawyer, and that's usually a good kick up the butt!

You studied for a Masters in Creative Writing (Can't remember exact qualification name), I remember thinking you were crazy at the time—working full time, writing the rest of the time, AND studying for a post-grad degree...? So, was it 'worth it'? Do you think it has made a difference to your confidence as a creative writer, to your career?

Oh yeah, in between all the above, I did complete my Masters too! It was a Master of Fine Arts (Creative Writing). Honestly, in hindsight I don't think it was worth the money I paid, in terms of making me a better writer or not. I truly believe the only thing that makes you a better writer is writing more. With each manuscript you find your voice, and I encourage all new writers to simply keep writing. Don't get me wrong, going to conferences and listening to published authors is hugely important, but it's just not as important as the writing itself.

In a twist of fate, the Masters degree was the best thing I ever did though, despite what I've said above. I challenged myself to write an historical fiction novel, and it was so damn hard that I would have given up if I hadn't paid over \$5k to do the degree! And then someone called Natalie wouldn't let up, telling me repeatedly to self publish it, and it went on to sell roughly 20k copies as a self published novel, before being picked up by Amazon Publishing. It was re-titled Voyage of the Heart, and it kick-started my career and launched me into the single title market. Thanks for that push, Natalie! I should also point out that my agent didn't think she could sell it, so if I hadn't self published the book, it would have just sat on my computer forever...

You signed with an agent right around the time you sold your first book to Mills & Boon. How has she helped develop your career? What advice would you give authors who are considering finding an agent?

Yes, I met my agent, Laura Bradford, at an RWNZ conference, and I signed with her within a few weeks of meeting her. I also sold that same week! She has been an amazing advocate for me, and while I didn't need her necessarily for my fairly boilerplate Mills & Boon contracts, I sure did need her when I sold my other novels to other publishers. She has sold my books to Harlequin, St. Martins Press, Penguin and Lake Union, and I really wouldn't want to be in this industry without an agent. I think the best thing is to find the right fit – don't sign with an agent just because you're excited about the idea of having one. Look at what authors an agent is



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representing, make sure they're the right fit for you, and ask lots of questions before signing!

As well as writing your traditionally published romances, you self-published relatively early on in the self-publishing 'wave'. In what way has that move impacted your career? Is your agent involved in your self-publishing—if so, how does that work?

Yes, I did dip my toes into the self-pub water with about 6 books I think. It was a great experience for me, and my agent took her 15% in exchange for editing, proof reading and formatting the books for me. If I hadn't self published my first historical novel, Amazon Publishing would never have even known it existed, and I wouldn't have the career I have today.

You've broadened your writing from sweet category romance, to spicier longer cowboy romance, to contemporary women's fiction and historical women's fiction, with some middle grade along the way... Is it hard to market yourself to different audiences? What advice would you give to writers wanting to broaden their scope?

To be honest, I've done what every agent would tell you not to do, and that's not focusing on one genre! But I write a lot and I love writing different genres, and somehow it's ended up working for me. I find it keeps my writing fresh, or at least it feels that way. I started out writing Sweet romance for Mills & Boon, because it suited my voice and I loved those types of stories. But my agent had an opportunity to sell my books to St. Martins Press, to an editor wanting hot cowboy books, and I took the opportunity. I still write for them today. I think my writing has evolved, and because I started writing so young, and I sold my first book at 27 years of age, I have grown up and developed what I like reading and what I want to write over the years. The only thing I wished I'd done is use a completely different name for my historical fiction, which I did when I wrote middle grade.

Is there anything you wish you could have told your extremely young self at the start of your writing journey?

The only thing I'd tell my younger self is that one day it will happen! I think of my pre-published years as my apprenticeship, and I think that I was ready to sell when I sold my first book, but I wasn't before then. In saying that, I was so close to giving up when I finally sold, so my biggest advice would be to just keep going.

Promotion, websites, ads, newsletters, social Media and all those other things... what are your thoughts on managing it all?

I am hopeless at newsletters (haven't sent one yet!) and I only do the social media that I enjoy. I love connecting with readers, and for me that's mainly on Facebook. I do what I can, when I can, but I find it a constant juggle.

And finally, what's next? Have you found your permanent 'home' in historical women's fiction, or will we be reading those along with something different again from you in the years to come?

I think, in terms of adult fiction, that my focus will remain historical women's fiction (which will always be heavy on the romance!). I have definitely found my home with that genre and with Lake Union as my publisher. Although in saying that, I'm busy brainstorming contemporary women's fiction ideas right now – similar to my historical stories but with contemporary settings – and I'm a third of the way through a new middle grade story! Watch this space!

Soraya's latest novel, *The Spitfire Girls*, is out now!



THE SPITFIRE GIRLS

Three skilled aviators determined to help win the war. Three brave women who know their place is not at home.

At the height of World War II, the British Air Transport Auxiliary need help. A group of young women volunteer for action, but the perils of their new job don't end on the tarmac. Things are tough in the air, but on the ground their abilities as pilots are constantly questioned.

There is friction from the start between the new recruits. Spirited American Lizzie turns heads with her audacity, but few can deny her flying skills. She couldn't be more different from shy, petite Ruby, who is far from diminutive in the sky. It falls to pragmatic pilot May to bring the women together and create a formidable team capable of bringing the aircraft home.

As these very different women fight to prove themselves up to the task at hand, they are faced with challenges and tragedies at every turn. They must fight for equal pay and respect while handling aircraft that are dangerously ill-equipped; meanwhile, lives continue to be lost in the tumult of war.

Determined to assist the war effort doing what they love, can May, Lizzie and Ruby put aside their differences to overcome adversity, and will they find love in the skies?

Buy *The Spitfire Girls* [here](#)



Amazon Charts bestselling author [Soraya M. Lane](#) graduated with a law degree before realising that law wasn't the career for her and that her future was in writing! She is the author of historical women's fiction for Lake Union (Amazon Publishing) and contemporary romance for St. Martins Press, and her most recent novel, *Hearts of Resistance*, was an Amazon #1 best-seller. Soraya lives on a small farm in New Zealand with her family and an ever-growing collecting of four legged friends!



The Bookshelf

Do you have a writing resource you'd like to share with the RWNZ members?

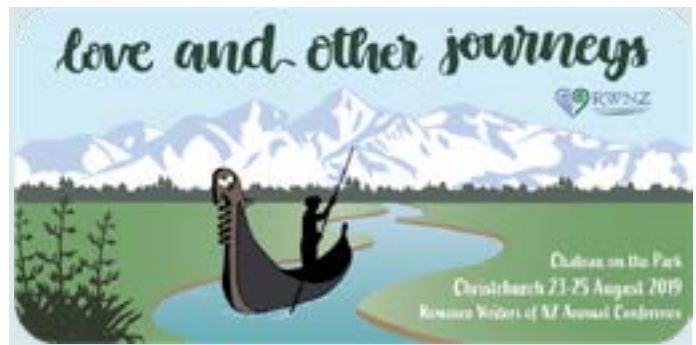
Or a review of a technical book (marketing/craft/writing life)?

Please send it to :

heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz



Thank you!



Conference Needs You!

Sue Mackay

There are 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*

'Oh, bother.'

—Winnie the Pooh.

Geysercon Report

Mollie Smith, Deryn Pittar,
Jill Batty, Trudi Jaye



Panel: 'Hot and Steamy in Rotorua' left to right: Darian Smith, J.C. Hart, Mary Brock Jones and Deryn Pittar

Over Queen's birthday weekend, my Facebook page suddenly exploded with author friends sharing the fun time they were having at Geysercon—New Zealand's 40th National Sci-Fi and Fantasy convention. I promptly came down with a bad case of conference envy. I've asked four RWNZ members who attended the convention to share their impressions of the event.

MOLLIE SMITH

The 40th annual National Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention was held in Rotorua on Queen's Birthday weekend and appropriately titled GeyserCon. With international and New-Zealand based speakers, GeyserCon offered a lot in terms of craft, specific genre-based talks (ever wanted to know how to create a fantasy map?), cover design, marketing, cosplay, a chance to talk with a psychic, and kaffeeklatsch (round-table coffee talks on a topic)- among many, many others.

While this is not my first con (most of my con experiences have been based around crowded-as Armageddon), I can say that bigger isn't always better. An intimate convention, GeyserCon gave attendees the chance to mix and mingle among themselves and the speakers without feeling like they're standing on top of each other or competing for someone's attention. I met several newbie writers and I was able to connect with several more experienced ones over a cuppa in the lobby corner during some downtime.

The range of talks left me feeling inspired- which is the aim after all, right? Psychic James Revell gave an evening chat about being a psychic and a session on palm readings to a small group of people, which was so

handy (no pun intended) since one of my characters goes to a psychic to get her palm read and her fortune told. Apparently, I'm a square palm with lots of travel in my future— though I think I'll need to publish and sell some books to pay for it all!

YA author Grace Bridges spoke about breaking down writing goals into 200-word chunks. Eight of those a day and you have 1600 words. Distractions? What distractions? Ain't nobody got time for that! For those of us who are time-poor due to jobs, parenthood, or busy retired life, sometimes, all you have is five minutes to write. Her message was to take those five minutes, and shut the world out.

The talk in mythology in SFF was a lot deeper than I was expecting, which made it satisfying to attend. The panel spoke about why we created myths, what they were used for, and why they endure for so long. For those authors who want to retell or incorporate myths into their writing, be aware that not all myths are the same across all peoples. Some Maori myths vary from iwi to iwi. Not all Native American myths are consistent across tribes. Even some Western myths vary, depending on the teller and tradition.

The final evening saw the presentation of the Sir Julius Vogel Awards. I wasn't able to attend, but having read some of the books, like Deryn Pittar's *Lutapolli*, and Kura Carpenter's *The Kingfisher's Debt*, it made me more aware of the amazing talent that we have here in New Zealand (I've got a few of Lee Murray's books to get through now as well).

Overall, being able to nerd out with other writers and fans, and attend talks by people who have been there, done that, and received beaucoup t-shirts was the biggest drawcard for me. I've always had a soft-spot for classic science-fiction and fantasy novels, and I don't think it's coincidence that my novels are grounded in the settings of science-fiction and fantasy. Having like-minded people congregate in one place, and everyone I spoke with has helped me realise I'm in good company, and also helped me refine what I've already learned.

DERYN PITTAR

Queen's Birthday for me was a weekend of firsts. Geysercon was my first 'Con – a gathering for writers and readers of Sci.fi., Fantasy and Horror. For two days and three evenings there were panel discussions, four overseas Guests of Honour who spoke individually; fireside reads, Board Games (serious stuff. One game finished at 1 a.m. I'm told). Cosplay (dressing up), a radio play selected, practised and presented on the last evening, discussions on publishing, steam punk, mythology, poetry and lots of audience participation with burning questions answered.

At the opening the winners were announced of the fiction contest (judged by Kaaron Wallen) held in the lead-up to Geysercon. The Sir Julius Vogel Awards for six categories of published works in 2018 were announced on the final evening.

Speakers and panels ran every hour from 9 a.m. to late evening with only hour breaks for lunch and dinner. You



◀◀
could wander in and out of the four rooms. If a discussion wasn't what you expected you could quietly move to another, which we did a couple of times. Some discussions I missed from being too weary to attend. There was also a large display of books for sale and the authors were often available for you to talk to and sign your purchases; all you had to do was catch them between events.

A gathering of like-minds - and as I'd been writing sci. fi. and fantasy for some years I found another tribe that weekend. I won the short fiction contest with 'Hendrik's Pet', which I will be posting shortly in my newsletter. While I was home sleeping on the final night my dragon won the Sir Julius Vogel Best Young Adult published in 2018. While I love him, I didn't know so many others did too.

I also had a request for a full Ms – so I will have to get further than the six chapters I've written. I think I peaked at Geysercon. It may take another 17 years to peak again, should I live that long, but I had a great time. The next Con is in Wellington, next year (WorldCon 2020). I will seriously consider going because I missed so much this year.

JILL BATTY

I am a relatively new Specfic girl and attended Geysercon firstly because it was so near Tauranga that I would be a fool not to, and secondly because I could share a room with Deryn and decrease costs!

I am a Specfic reader and was thrilled when I realized that I could write Specfic. All I had to do was do it! And at Geysercon I met a lot of people who all wrote Specfic and had the slightly skewed view of the universe that I think I have.

The topics were interesting and the guest speakers were fascinating. I spent a lot on books that were just sitting there calling to me. And I learnt a lot. There was a Steampunk man who explained exactly what Steampunk is, talks on writer's block, mythology in specific writing, marketing your book and it went on. There were three sessions per hour as well as casual groups who could meet and talk about things that fascinated them or else play games.

The event had attracted a high calibre of guests and the panels were an interesting mix of usually local authors.

It was brilliant. I would recommend attendance whether you are a Specfic author or not. So much about writing is true for every genre. The Worldcon next year in Wellington sounds as though it will be excellent.

There are not a lot of NZ Specfic members but they punched way above their weight.

TRUDI JAYE

This year's Geysercon was well-organised and well-attended, with the usual range of strangely dressed people writing about worlds only they can see. In other words, I loved it!

I didn't get to attend as many of the sessions as I would have liked—I had my husband and 7-year-old daughter in tow, cramping my con-style—but every single session I did go to was amazing.

My favourites were:

Multi-award winning horror author Kaaron Warren was fascinating as she talked about her childhood in the Hare Krishna religion, and how her parents view her desire to write (i.e. her mother with great caution for fear she writes something scandalous, and her father with great pride as a man who came to Australia with zero English skills). She was funny, self deprecating, and made me want to go out and buy her books—despite the fact I'm terrified of horror novels!

Alan Baxter was an upbeat kind of guest, tall and fit, and willing to get in a fight. At least, he was willing to talk about fighting, and given that he's a kung fu instructor as well as an author, he was the perfect person to lead a discussion on how to write fight scenes. I learned that it's kind of like sex scenes (he didn't actually say that, I'm just extrapolating here) in that you need to be aware of the surroundings, and use all the senses of the people involved to describe what's happening.

American author Laura Van Arendonk Baugh is an animal behavioral scientist by day, and writer and cos-player by...well, all the rest of the time. She and her sister Alena were dressed in the coolest costumes the whole time, and she had some funny stories about the many, many cons they've gone to, and the competitions they've entered. I interviewed her for the SPA Girls Podcast, and she gave some great insights into why we do the things we do as writers, and how to get over some of our worst habits.

Jean Gilbert was the most interesting talk for me. I almost didn't go, because I wasn't quite sure what it was going to be about. What I discovered is that Jean is face blind to such an extreme level, that not only can she not distinguish between people's faces, but she's likely to forget even talking to you if she can't find a way to remember you that doesn't involve your face. She talked about her husband having a sexy radio voice, and using that to remember him. She told a story about meeting a woman who she'd worked with for 10 years at the gym, and because this long-time friend had her hair tied back, and different clothes on, she totally blanked her. Didn't even know it was her.

What's even more interesting is that Jean is determined to be a writer. She has no concept of faces, doesn't understand what a nose or eyes or a mouth even look like, other than in a learned way, but she's writing a novel. I find that amazing, and inspirational, and cool. Go Jean!



LUTAPOLII – WHITE DRAGON OF THE SOUTH

Dragons can't swim and they can't catch seals -but Lutapolii can.

Lutapolii, a puny white dragon, escapes to the south to avoid being bullied and his mother's mocking words. He learns to dive, swim and catch seals but winter creeps up on him and he finds himself stranded. With luck on his side he manages to survive, and returns home in the spring, stronger, taller and very handsome – for a dragon.

After discovering he has been declared dead by the dragon queen, Lutapolii considers this absolves him of all loyalty and





decides to establish a flight of his own in the southern seas. All he needs is a handful of lady dragons.

Can he steal them from the queen's flight? He's matured over the winter and totally magnificent, so why not take the risk?

Love, jealous, revenge and loyalty – this story has them all. Suitable for all ages.

Buy *Lutapolii* [here](#)

MOLLIE SMITH

Mollie moved to Aotearoa ages ago from the US, fell in love with the country and her husband (not in that order), then bought a house with rural vistas which include cows, the occasional pukeko, a white-faced heron named Harry, and lots of hay fever. When she's not dreaming up or writing about characters who (a) look suspiciously like her favourite actors, (b) she'd like to take down in a fight, or (c) she'd like to take down to the pub for a drink, she puts up with the shenanigans of a dog and a day-job, though her husband and her two cats are indulged and spoiled rotten.

DERYN PITTAR

Deryn Pittar writes Sci-Fi., fantasy, cozy mystery, futuristic and contemporary romance and Y.A. She belongs to Spec.Fic.NZ, and the Romance Writers of N.Z. She reads and critiques for fellow authors and listens to their advice in return.

She has a series of five futuristic romantic novellas published as the 'Future Movers Series' and romantic novellas in several anthologies. Her dragon novel 'Lutapolii – White Dragon of the South' is a prize winning fantasy. She also writes short fiction and in 2016 won a Steam Punk fiction prize with her short story 'The Carbonite's Daughter', and won the short fiction contest at Geysercon in 2019 with 'Hendrik's Pet'.

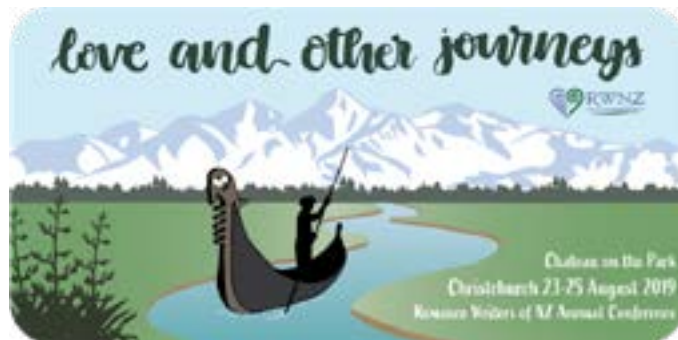
Deryn is a published poet with a fondness for haiku, a form of poetry requiring a few words to convey a captured moment.

TRUDI JAYE

Trudi Jaye has been employed in many professions, from waitress and checkout operator to citizenship officer and camp counsellor, but her passion has always been for writing. After a few years of overseas travel, she ended up working as a magazine journalist and editor, writing articles on such diverse topics as hardware, holidays, recipes and university-level research projects. Now she writes novels full time. (Yay!) When she's not writing or reading, she enjoys yoga, although she's not very bendy, and karate, although she doesn't like the idea of hitting anyone.

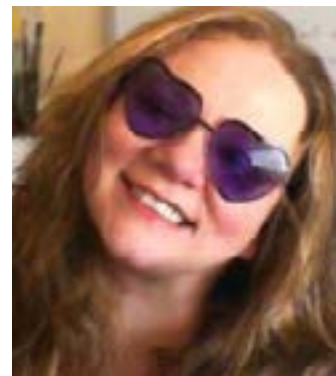
JILL BATTY

Jill has belonged to the Romance Writers for three years now after writing and self-publishing three children's picture books. As a new grandmother they seemed appropriate! She was, however, brought up on the Regency romances of Georgette Heyer and is still trying to finish her first book. There are a lot less words in a children's picture book! Her new interest is the Specific genre and why shouldn't those young women living in a fantasy kingdom have some love in their lives. She is looking forward to her first Romance Conference this year and hoping for lots of sage advice.



Cold Reads — What's the Point?

Kris Pearson and
Janet Elizabeth Henderson



So, you might have noticed that on the conference schedule, at the butt-crack of dawn, there's a thing called Cold Reads. And you might have thought, "There's no way in hell I'm getting up for that!" In which case, you'd be wrong. And here to tell you why are Kris Pearson and Janet Elizabeth Henderson.

Kris, Janet, tell us what you get out of this Cold Reads thing?

Kris: Cold Reads have always been my favourite part of conference and I've been trotting along to them for as long as they've existed. It was thrilling to know a real international agent or editor was listening to my words. Reactions varied from a request for a full novel at the high end, down to an agent who had better remain nameless and who chopped everyone off after a few sentences and departed very early for breakfast. She was the only sour note in many years.

Janet: I haven't been to as many conferences as Kris, but the ones I've attended I've always made sure to get to cold reads. It's one of the few times you get honest feedback from an industry professional.

Can you tell us about the format of these early morning sessions?





Janet: You submit a couple of pages of your book beforehand to the moderator, making sure that your name isn't on them. Then someone else reads out your story, and the agent or editor comments on it. It's all anonymous, so you don't have to claim your work. Which means no one knows if the terrible feedback is aimed at you! Joking, just joking. Usually the feedback is very constructive. It's the sort of thing the agent would think if the pages came across her desk for the first time. Which makes it invaluable insight into how industry professionals think and see your work.

Kris: I would add, that if you're bringing pages to conference for this, take serious note of the requirements. The fonts suggested are the easiest to read, and you don't want the reader squinting and stumbling over your work and making a hash of it. Make it easy for them. I once ended up with two pages with virtually no margins and probably ten point type. I stopped reading after the first page and said why. I'd done an awful job, but so had they.

Janet: Yes, that's true, Kris has been organising cold reads for years. The format is very important. You don't want bad feedback because someone stumbles over your prose!

*The format is very important.
You don't want bad feedback
because someone stumbles
over your prose!*

Kris: And remember, the aim is not to have the LONGEST read. It's to have the clearest, most vivid words and the most enticing situation. For heaven's sake read it out loud a few times, or get a friend to. See where the stumbles are - if any. Think about a different word or two. More space? Another para break? Make it easy for the reader to make you shine.

What should you submit for these cold reads? Your polished work? An idea you're toying with? What?

Kris: The Reads are all anonymous. Your name is never included. This means you can write the start of an interplanetary extravaganza with multi-sex vampires and duels with solid gold pistols that fire flower petals if you like. Or maybe not... It's a chance to try something different though, and if the agent or editor feels it might be the next big thing you'll be very pleased to admit it was yours after all.

*The Reads are all anonymous.
Your name is never included...
It's a chance to try
something different...*

Janet: I'd take a slightly different approach than Kris—although the vampire thing sounds interesting! I submit the first two pages of a book that's finished, polished and ready to go. I then use their feedback to judge the market and to tweak my work. Also, let's face it, everyone wants to know how they stack up in regards to the industry. So getting feedback on work that I think is ready gives me insight into the way the industry sees it too.

Any last words to get people out of bed and into the Cold Reads sessions?

Kris: It appeals to my curiosity. I've loved hearing what other people were writing, too. Inspiration and a sense of 'I'll never write as well as them' sometimes, and 'Goodness, I'm better than that' on others. Frustration and affirmation in the same session!

Janet: Where else will you hear honest, instant feedback from someone in the industry on your work? That kind of input is worth gold to a writer. And you never know what's going to happen during the session—it was during a cold read that I got my agent! After my piece was read, she said, "Who wrote that?" And, terrified, I put up my hand. Then she said, "I'll represent you, if you're interested talk to me later." I thought she was joking until I talked with her and found out she wasn't. And we've lived happily ever after ever since!



[Kris began writing](#) at her local radio station in Hawkes Bay. After living in Italy and London she 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, she followed this by surprising everyone and going into business with her husband as a curtain installer and working for some of the capital city's top designers. This freed up her brain to write fiction. In twenty years she hasn't fallen off her ladder once through drifting into romantic dreams, but she's certainly seen many beautiful homes and met wonderful people, and may just have stolen glimpses of them for the books. (She didn't say that, did she?) Kris has written sixteen contemporary romances and almost two cozy mysteries.



Buy Summer Secrets [here](#)



[Janet Elizabeth Henderson](#) has written nineteen novels, most of which are romantic comedies. Her latest, *Can't Buy Me Love*, is due out on August 4th. You can find out more about her work at janetelizabethhenderson.com

We publish, and then we're reviewed...or not

Grace Burrowes



My thinking about reviews is as follows: Every review helps the book to a) find the readers who will love it, or b) avoid the readers who won't love it. Even the negative reviewers, the ones who are "so over dukes," will help the book avoid other readers who

are also "so over dukes." So a constructive review, positive or negative, can help the book do well over time. But what about those very unconstructive negative reviews? The ones that attack the author personally, troll the book, and clearly aren't written for anything but spite?

My thinking regarding reviews generally has changed. Initially, I regarded reviews as none of my business. My job was to write the books, period. At least as far as Amazon and Goodreads are concerned, reviews are simply a traffic lure. They provide a semblance of user interaction, have no effect on rank, and skew toward the negative in most cases (we are more likely to review a product we don't like than one we do).

Then I got review-trolled for several books in a row. Somebody took it into her head to smack my books with one-star reviews within a few hours of the books going live (because reading a 400-page book and writing a review for it takes no time at all). The reviews were short, generic, and word-for-word the same as her one-star reviews for other authors. Her review pattern suggested she slammed everybody who had a release on the same days as the two authors whose books she liked.

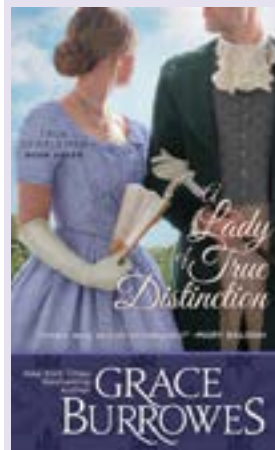
The problem with early, very negative reviews is one of anchoring. "Anchoring" refers to the subconscious impact of an observed data set on our decision-making processes. What does that mean? If I ask you to guess how old Gandhi was when he died and I offer you a choice between 132 years old, 98 years old, 87 years old, and 79 years old, you are MUCH more likely to choose one of the higher numbers than if your options are 53, 62, 71, and 79. (He was assassinated at age 79.) Even though you know nobody has lived to 132 years old, simply seeing that number among the options skews your guess upward.

So too with reviews. If a reader bounces onto your book page ready to leave a 5-star review, and sees only one-

and two-star reviews there, their five stars are likely to morph into a four or lower. Their gushing praise will become guardedly positive. We think we're making up our own minds, but in fact, we're highly suggestible and easily influenced. This is why Amazon loves to price the print book higher than the ebook. Subconsciously, the ebook will look like a bargain, even when the print book is priced well below the usual mass market price.

So I have a review team now. Nobody is under any obligation to leave a review, but if they do, I hope it's an honest review. I am bowing to market forces in this regard, because the trolled books ended up with significantly fewer reviews and lower sales compared to my similar, untrolled titles. I publish the print version of a book about a week ahead of the ebook version, so that on the official on-sale day, the book's review team efforts are already on display.

What's the take-away here? For me there are two. First, reviews do matter and should be part of an author's no-cost marketing toolkit. They can impact sales and impact other reviews. Second, my hands-off approach left me more vulnerable to trolling than more pro-active authors are, so I needed to change my strategy. Both good lessons, so now it's onward to writing more good books!



A LADY OF TRUE DISTINCTION

Grace has just released A Lady of True Distinction, an indie Regency Hawthorne Dorning either finds a way to turn his family's vast botanical resources into a successful commercial venture, or the estate the Dornings have called home for centuries could be broken up. He loves the land and he's never shied away from hard work, but he knows nothing about creating perfumes or fragrances.

Margaret Summerfield has put aside her passion for scent-making to tend to the serious business of raising her little nieces. She's no longer the girl who wandered the countryside by the hour, lost in the pleasures of nature, nor does she want to be. Hawthorne needs her help, but what does he have that could possibly tempt Margaret to entangle herself with his dreams?

Buy A Lady of True Distinction [here](#)



Grace Burrowes grew up in central Pennsylvania and is the sixth out of seven children. She discovered romance novels when in junior high (back when there was a such a thing), and has been reading them voraciously ever since. Grace has a bachelor's degree in Political Science, a Bachelor of Music in Music History, (both from The Pennsylvania State University); a Master's Degree in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University; and a Juris Doctor from The National Law Center at The George Washington University. Her debut novel, *The Heir* was chosen as a Publishers Weekly Top Five Romances for 2010, and is the first in an eight-sibling historical romance series published by Sourcebooks Casablanca.

Grace writes Georgian, Regency, Scottish Victorian and contemporary romances in both novella and novel lengths. She's a member of Romance Writers of America and enjoys giving workshops and speaking at writer's conferences. If you'd like Grace to speak or present at your conference, contact her [here](#). Giving back to the industry is a large part of the fun of being published!

From the Editor:



Gillian St. Kevern



Last year's July issue (only my second as Heart to Heart editor—my one year anniversary was last month, and I completely failed to make a big deal about it!), I over did things a bit. The theme was Wellness, a subject very close to my heart for a lot of reasons, one of which being that I was very sick for a long time. I e-mailed a bunch of authors who'd written on the subject of physical and mental health while writing, expecting maybe one or two would get back to me. Instead, they all did! As a result the issue was swamped with good healthy advice.

Before I even got as far as e-mailing the issue to our formatter, I was sick. That bug lasted two months, not as long as the flu/cold/TB that wasn't (see the July 2018 editorial for a full breakdown of my health), but still much longer than I wanted it to. It dragged on, a lingering hacking cough that made my relatives look up in surprise ("You still alive?" "You're sure the doctor said it's a cold?") and a head fog and mood dive that had me low for what felt like forever.

Needless to say, I learned my lesson! There is not one wellness related article in this month's Heart to Heart.

Unfortunately, it hasn't been the preventative I hoped. I am just now emerging from the cold that came on with last month's Heart to Heart. I sincerely hope that you have managed to avoid all the bugs that like to circulate at this time of the year.

In case you're not that fortunate, here are my tips for recovering from your winter bug of choice:

1. Take care of yourself.

Early nights, hot baths, lots of water, the hot drink of your choice (I've switched out tea for Barkers blackcurrant syrup), vitamins... I think we know how to take care of ourselves, but we don't always make it a priority. Now is a good time to correct that. Think of it as an investment in your health—after all, you are your most important writing asset!

2. Pace yourself.

I'm currently editing a story, and what would usually be a two-three day job, has taken four days—and I'm not even halfway. I've had to accept that I am just not up to my usual speed right now. I've also had to accept that I'm getting tired out faster and need more breaks.

Instead of stressing about how much I wasn't doing (although, I did do quite a bit of that too), I'm focusing instead on giving myself reasonable goals until I'm back up to speed.

3. Accept Limitations.

Building on the tip above! Before consulting the Oracle of Delphi, travellers were confronted with the text 'Know Thyself.' I don't know how or why I know this, but it's stuck with me. Often whatever guidance or answer you need can be found in your knowledge of your strengths, your weaknesses, your habits and your flaws.

For the past two years, I've been determined to keep to a busy writing schedule over winter, despite my health—and been miserable and sick. This year, I decided to give myself a week's extra wriggle room when making writing plans. I'm so glad I did! I'm still behind, but nowhere near as badly as I could have been if I'd tried to stick to a more ambitious schedule.

Though, on the subject of limitations, I'm starting a new job in July. I've yet to see how this will impact my schedule and if I'll be able to balance it, my writing, and editing Heart to Heart. If you're interesting in being editor, this is a really good time to get in touch and find out more about the role!

*"There simply must be a corpse in a detective novel,
and the deader the corpse the better."*

—S.S. Van Dine

#Bookstagram — what's it all about?

Sofia Grey



If you're anything like me, you love books. You probably have a hoard of them, and find it difficult to resist the siren call of new ones? Do you like talking about your favourite books? Sharing pictures of them?

Welcome to #Bookstagram.



Unless you've been living in a cave for the past couple of years, you know that Instagram is the current social media darling. Not as swamped with ads as Facebook, all the posts look beautiful, and it's picture-driven content. It's also hashtag-driven, and one of the hashtags is #Bookstagram. In simple terms, #Bookstagram is Instagram for book-lovers.

I set up an Instagram profile a few years ago, but never really found my place on there. I don't take many pictures with my phone, and I was sure the pics I did take would never be interesting to anyone else. And so I shifted away from Instagram and focused on Facebook. When I heard about #Bookstagram, I was curious, and so I checked it out. And LOVED it.

I started on Instagram with less than 20 followers. After posting twice daily for the first month, I've bumped my followers to 130. I've now dropped my schedule to only post once per day, but my followers are slowly increasing. In addition, I occasionally post teasers for my own books, but this is limited to once per week. I want to build up a set of followers with a stream of good posts, rather than bombarding the platform with my own works

HERE'S WHAT I LEARNED

Q. What do you need?

A. An Instagram account, and books. That's it.

People warned me it could be a huge time-suck, and that made me pause. I work full time, and write in the hours that are left, so the absolute last thing I needed was another diversion away from writing, but I decided to give it a try. And now, one month in, I have a system that works for me, with just a couple of hours of input each week.



LET'S LOOK AT THE PRO'S AND CON'S

Cons

- can't post direct from desktop (only from mobile devices)
- too difficult / time-consuming to stage pictures
- too much hassle to take pictures on my phone and then upload them to my PC to tidy them / pretty-fy them

Pros

- Fun!
- Opportunity to share books / pictures of books / chat about books / more books!
- Chance to build a group of followers, with the opportunity to gain new interest in my own works

Con - can't post direct from desktop (only from mobile devices)

To me, being constrained by having to post from my phone / tablet was a big no-no. I needed to find a way around that. I already had a Hootsuite account, and when I checked, that could post direct to Instagram. It took a bit of setting up, as it will only post to an Instagram Business account, and not a personal one, but that was an easy (and free) update.

Now I have Hootsuite (free version) that will post to Instagram for me, no mobile device needed.

Con - too difficult / time-consuming to stage pictures

Con - too much hassle to take pictures on my phone and then upload them to my PC to tidy them / pretty-fy them

I'm dealing with these together.





The #Bookstagram feed is filled with pictures of people reading in beautiful places, with flowers and other books strewn around them, soft lighting and perfect bedlinen.

They might look pretty, but it's not my style.

Instead of staging real books, the alternative is to create the #Bookstagram images using your normal graphics software. That option appealed to me.

I wanted to have my own style, and to create a branding that worked with my author brand, and that meant doing some research. I'm already active on Goodreads, and post on there about what books I read, reviews etc, so I decided that would be my focus. Books I've read, books I own, books I want to read etc.

HERE'S HOW I DO IT

- I looked at dozens of other profiles to get ideas about what styles work, and what would work for me. I also researched the most popular hashtags. I spent the best part of a weekend doing research and making decisions about my approach.
- I spent some time buying images to use as backgrounds, and then started the process of creating my posts.
- I've whittled the process down to a couple of hours per week, to update Goodreads, grab the book covers, convert them to Kindle covers, create the backgrounds, and schedule in Hootsuite, to post for the week ahead.
- Hashtags are SUPER important. An internet search will produce dozens of pages with suggested hashtags. Here's one example: <https://www.sintiaastarina.com/most-popular-bookstagram-hashtags/>



STEP-BY-STEP DETAILS

If you want the step-by-step details, here you are:

- Update Goodreads with (a) next book to read, (b) currently reading, or (c) a new review
- Grab the book cover, and use one of the many free apps to transform it into a Kindle PNG image (I use <https://diybookcovers.com/3Dmockups/>)
- Use a graphics application (I use PicMonkey) to add the Kindle version of the book cover onto one of my backgrounds, add a star rating and some text (e.g. 4 stars – loved this broken soldier romance! #dogtags)

- Because I'm scheduling in bulk, I create all the images before posting any. I also write my posts ahead of time, with all the relevant hashtags, and then just copy & paste into the post.

- Schedule the post in Hootsuite: date and time to post, which platforms (I use my FB author page and Instagram), the book image I've created, and the text, including hashtags

MY TIPS

- Take some time to research before you jump in. What look & feel? Branding? Goal? Hashtags?
- Decide if you're going to post from your mobile device, or go through the process of setting up an aggregator (e.g. Hootsuite)
- Look at other people's posts, and start following the ones you like
- Have fun



SHATTERING TRUST

If she trusts the wrong man, she could wind up dead

Juli'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 Juli 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 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.

Woos and Hoos



New Release coming Aug 6th from Jay Hogan. Digging Deep is an mm romance set in New Zealand. Available on Amazon for pre-order now.

Pre-order Digging Deep [here](#)



Jayne Castel released Book #3 in The Brides of Skye series on 20 June. THE ROGUE'S BRIDE is a Scottish Medieval Romance set on 14th Century Isle of Skye.

Some things cannot be forgotten—or forgiven. The widow trying to forge a new life for herself. The man she once spurned bent on revenge.

Buy The Rogue's Bride [here](#)



One contract for work... Another contract for play. Forbidden to Touch, book three in JC Harroway's Billionaire Bachelors Series for DARE releases July 22nd.

Buy Forbidden to Touch [here](#)



Jamie Sands (w/a Jaxon Knight) has released their debut romance novel Rival Princes, the first in the Fairyland theme park romances series. Fairyland Romances are sweet contemporary mm romances set in a fairy tale theme park where dreams can come true.

Buy Rival Princes [here](#)

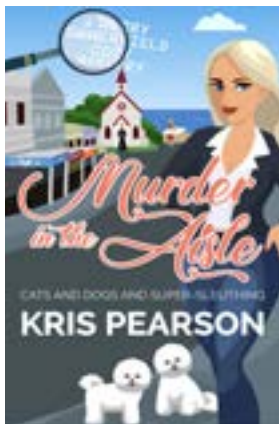
Heart to Heart is always keen to share new book releases from members, news of awards, contracts, basically anything that we can celebrate. Send us a 2-3 sentence summary of your good news and, if it's a new release, your book cover and buy link, by the twentieth of each month online at <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/member-woo-hoos/> or directly to: heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz.

Woos and Hoos



Gillian St. Kevern is far too excited about the release of her first ever lesbian romance! The Vampire's Relic is the fifth book in a series of standalone gothic paranormals featuring anything from ghosts to itinerant photographers.

Buy *Vampire's Relic* [here](#)



Kris Pearson has just released her first cozy mystery, *Murder in the Aisle*, featuring freelance editor Merry Summerfield, cats, dogs and super-sleuthing. It's another fantastic day in drowsy Drizzle Bay, until Merry and Vicar Paul find Isobel Crombie lying dead in a sea of flowers in the aisle of Saint Agatha's church. Who'd kill a harmless old girl like her?

Buy *Murder in the Aisle* [here](#)



Is she an author? A writing machine? Either way, Cherie Mitchell's got a new release: *Finding Prosperity*, the prequel to *The Prosperity Spartanburg Files*, a collaboration between Cherie and a well-known US thriller writer, David Berens, book one of which is set to debut on 1 July, is out now. Cherie describes this series as sure to be a favourite with fans of island thrillers, mysteries, sexual attraction purposefully kept on the down-low to prevent disruption to the job (think of those popular TV series with man and woman main characters who never quite manage to get their lips to meet), crazy but lovable characters, and goofy dialogue.

Buy *Finding Prosperity* [here](#)

*"A reporter's lot is not easy,
making exciting stories
out of plain, average,
ordinary people like
Robin and me."*

—Batman

Write With Love



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!



AM Hargrove featured in episode 75 and talked about her sometimes nice, mostly naughty romances.

Author of sexy, messy novels, Kate Stewart appeared on episode 76.



Kiwi author and famous for her reverse harem stories, Steff Green appeared on episode 77.

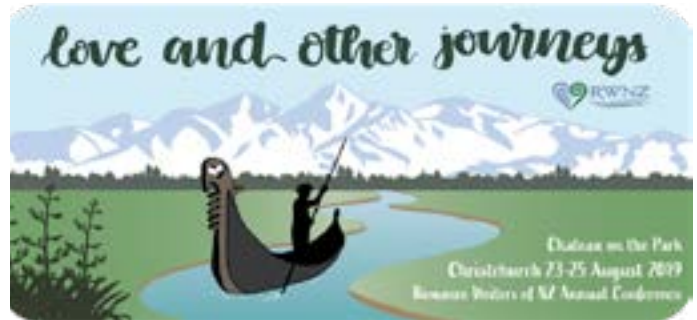
Episode 78 featured my very own audiobook narrator and Logie nominated actor Myles Pollard who shared some tales of his time on the set of McLeods Daughters.



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!



RWNZ Conference 2019 Update

RWNZ CONFERENCE 2019 HAS SOLD OUT!

For the Saturday & Sunday there are no more tickets available, as we have reached capacity. There are however, still some tickets left (as I write this), for the Friday workshop with Sophie Jordan, as well as for the cocktail party/welcome and conference dinner.

So, what are your conference committee up to?

We don't get to kick back and cruise our way to conference! We are into logistics mode now as it is all about scheduling - rooms, pitches, people, equipment. Choosing menus, choosing room decorations for the cocktail party and dinner – Jo and Em are having a wonderful time debating colours and visiting hire centres, designing table decorations.

We are chasing the finer details and drafting run sheets, tracking down logos, and starting to pull together a programme booklet. Boxes of books have started arriving at my house to go in the goodie bags, and we have already had some amazing and generous offers for raffle prizes.

I can't believe how fast the time is flying by – it will be August before we know it...

*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.

Order online at www.mitoq.com

MitoQ

The Welcome Mat

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



Kim Triegaardt
Linda Nevin
SunKee Hong
Jody Reynolds
Susan Charnley
Tina Clark
Jude Black
Cathy Sneyd
Nikki Johnson
Laura Hewson
Sarah Daymond



Great to have you all with us.

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

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



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

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

To submit a woo hoo, e-mail Gillian or use [this form](#) on the website.



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

Regional Round-Up Reports

AUCKLAND

Convenor: [Ruth Clough](#)

Our speaker this month was Pamela Gervai, who presented on dialogue and its uses and importance to the writing craft. Dialogue can be used to great effect to reveal character, action and even backstory. It creates that all important white space on a page that breaks up blocks of text and makes the words look less daunting to a reader (I love reading but even I find big solid unending blocks of text to be off putting). It was great to see members participating and sharing examples of good and bad dialogue they had encountered in their own reading and also how they approached dialogue in their writing. Our next meeting will be held on Saturday 6 July at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. Our speaker will be Frances Housden who will be speaking about Great Beginnings

HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Debbie Williams](#)

Our June meeting was held at Jackie's where members caught up on everyone's news before reading and providing feedback on each other's query letters—a productive and informative session!

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

Our next meeting will be held on the 6th of July at Bron's, where we will be working on scene setting/description.

WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

Our meeting was on a cold and stormy Saturday June 1st. Fourteen of us met at Holly's place in Island Bay.

This month on the agenda we had::

- Intro / round table updates
- Gudrun's Word game
- A fantastic step-by-step Bookbub Ads Primer with Tracey
- And several cold reads

We also talked about: K-lytics (Kindle analytics), and Voracious Reviews - \$20 per month to get legitimate book reviews.

Fred reminded us about the importance of backing up. In a couple of months, he'll do a presentation on the different options.

NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

June 8 2019: We had a productive meeting with plenty of laughter, excellent afternoon tea and animated conversation. Our topic for discussion was Authors Who Inspired Us and Why. From our group of six we covered a varied range of authors and genres, including, Yorkshire vet, James Herriot, popular author, Diana Gabaldon (Jamie Fraser, anyone?), ever-revered RITA winner Kristan Higgins, 1950s sci-fi author John Wyndham, fantasy writer, Terry Pratchett and many others, not forgetting our enduring passion for many romance authors, embracing historical to contemporary women's fiction. Red Sneaker author, William Bernhardt, received an honourable mention for his excellent books on writing skills.

Our authors of choice inspired us for many reasons, whether from the joy of plunging into another world and becoming lost to its charms, or challenging our imagination, or sparking our own writing adventure.

Our discussion led to a unanimous enjoyment of romance, whether paranormal, sexy, steamy, erotic, historical or other.

Our next meeting will cover Building a Character or Characters, and will include discussion on how to create a detailed history for believability re protagonist/antagonist

Newcomers are welcome to join us at Nick Smith's meeting rooms, corner of Quarantine Road and Main Road, Stoke, on Saturday 13 June at 2:00 p.m.

Regional Round-Up Reports

CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

The Canterbury chapter met on June 16th at South Library Beckenham for an impromptu panel discussion between some of our trad, self-pub and hybrid authors. The idea was for those of our members who are going to conference/ thinking of pitching/ or merely contemplating how they want to move their careers forward - this would be an opportunity to glean some speck of insight from our published member's experiences. How awesome is it that we have this available within our organisation?

We had a brief conference update, something that is seeing excitement ramp up as we draw nearer to August, and discussed the plans for an up-coming pot luck evening – date to be confirmed.

Every month we have a great turn out, and every month we seem to see new members, it's awesome. This month we welcomed Sally and Carmen, it was great to see you ladies.

Next month's meeting will be on July 21st at South Library, Beckenham. The same time of 14:00-16:00. We'll be taking the opportunity to practice pitching and also re-visit the goals we set ourselves back in February to redefine, or set new ones. It's set to be a busy meeting.

OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

The Otago/Southland chapter met up on Saturday 1 June in the University of Otago's Link Building. This month's meeting was dedicated to 'author branding'. We had an insightful discussion and also caught up with each other's writing projects. The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 6 July.

COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Bel Macfie](#)

It was lovely to come together at Gaylene's idyllic rural home, with its bucolic landscape and peaceful ambience. Thanks for having us Gaylene! Gaylene led a workshop and a rousing discussion on dealing with strong critique (aka bad reviews). Several well known authors had been asked how they cope with bad reviews so their pearls of wisdom were shared. The published members of the group also shared their personal experiences with getting reviews and how it had affected them.

We also discussed about how to get reviews. Using Booksprout (\$10US per month) or Hidden Gems who distribute free copies of books to ARC reviewers with the expectation that they write a review is one way. Other topics included debating whether to use a developmental editor, and the difference between a synopsis and a blurb.

Mollie, Deryn, Jill and Trudi attended Geysercon and spent some time giving us feedback about a range of speculative fiction talks they had attended. Congratulations to Deryn Pittar for winning the Sir Julius Vogel award for Lutapolii: White Dragon of the South and for also winning the short story competition at Geysercon. It's fantastic to see our members achieve something special.

I'll finish on a contribution from Mollie Smith "Being erotic is using a feather, and being kinky is using the whole damn chicken".

BLenheim AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)