

# Heart to Heart

ROMANCE WRITERS  
OF NEW ZEALAND

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August 2019



## An Interview with Jo MacKay

Cherie Mitchell



**We are very fortunate to have Jo MacKay joining us once again. Jo will be representing the Australian Harlequin/Mills and Boon office. This is Jo's third consecutive RWNZ conference. Those of us who pitched to her in Rotorua and Auckland already know that she is very easy to talk to and willing to share her experience and enthusiasm for good stories. For those of our members who have not yet met Jo, Cherie Mitchell has interviewed her. Enjoy getting to know Jo and what she is looking for in a manuscript.**

*You've worked in journalism and publishing for many years - have you ever been tempted to write a book of your own? If yes, have you published or did you write it for your own enjoyment?*

I have ghost-written several (published) books and I have also written an (unpublished) novel, which I have filed in a folder somewhere in the hopes that if I ignore it long enough it will go away. I am very critical of my own fiction writing. That said, it is probably just as bad as I think it is.

*Determining which books will do well commercially as opposed to books that will have popular appeal (but a lower readership) must be difficult - do you have some tried and true guidelines that you use?*

I don't really see this as an either/or situation. Great books share the same characteristics whether genre, commercial/literary crossover or straight literary. Strong voice, compelling characters, beautifully crafted language, strong structure.

Of course, certain genre trends do work to sell books because they make books easily recognisable and so easier to market and sell. But books with original and authentic voices (the kind that make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up) will always find a place on my list.

*We all know that familiar tropes are guaranteed to sell. Can you name any unusual plot lines that have had surprising success, or for commercial reasons do the big publishers avoid risking anything too new or outrageous?*

I think publishers take risks all the time, it's just that they aren't always visible. Every debut author we publish, around thirteen last year, is a risk on one level because we don't know how they will perform. The point of genre fiction, including romance, is that it brings a level of enjoyment to the reader because it is accessible, recognisable and known... That doesn't marry that well with the concept of 'new and outrageous'. That said, I think we see new voices and interesting twists and innovation on genre coming through all the time.

I love, for example, that Penelope Janu's new novel (Up on Horseshoe Hill December 2019) has a first kiss that results in anaphylactic shock in the hero. The kiss that kills. Genre has fun with its ideas, form and tropes, which is one of the reasons we love it.

*Asking you for your favorite book when you enjoy such a range of genres is difficult so I'll narrow it down - can you name some authors or books in the psychological thriller category that you love?*

I loved Sarah Bailey's Dark Lake, Dervla McTiernan's The Ruin, Jane Harper's The Dry and Sarah Barrie's Devil's Lair as great Australian thriller/crime reads. I love anything by Adrian McGinty (not recently The Chain, but I honestly loved his Northern Irish novels more) and loved Karin Slaughter's last three books. I am also a big fan of Michael Robotham's work.





*Digital books have changed the face of publishing - can you see the demand for e-books continuing? What about audio books?*

Ebook demand has plateaued in recent years. Audio is on the increase and is a huge growth area for publishers.

*Can you name your favourite part of the publishing process - finding a manuscript, working with the author to edit the book, working on marketing and launch, or something else?*

Definitely working with an author to develop a book, but the excitement of finding a fabulous manuscript is a great feeling too.

*Everyone has stories of the one that got away. Have you ever declined a manuscript (for any number of reasons) only to see it rise to great heights with another publisher?*

Not really. I might have lost it at auction, not offered enough for it and been outbid (a crushing sensation) but you can usually tell when a manuscript is excellent and likely to succeed.

*What do you think (besides their specialisation in Romance) makes Harlequin different to other publishers? What is Harlequin's super power, what do they offer writers that they won't find elsewhere?*

We are fierce advocates for our authors, we are a team - from editorial assistant to publisher - driven by passion for what we do and we have an amazingly strong relationship with retailers that works in our (and our authors') favour.

We offer a personal, boutique and local publishing experience to authors as well as all the advantages of a multinational publishing company in HarperCollins.

Our superpower is that we don't forget how lucky we are to work with the ANZ authors we have. I am very grateful to have what I think is the best job in the world.



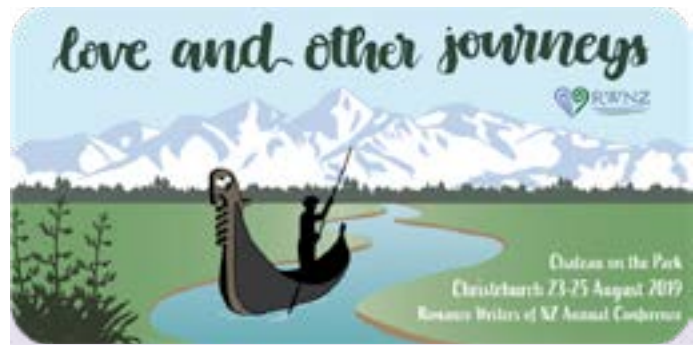
*Jo Mackay heads the local fiction lists for Mira and HQ at Harlequin Books (a division of HarperCollins Publishers). A passionate advocate for her authors, Jo firmly believes good writing can change lives. She loves strong characters, historical novels, mysteries, family sagas, pacey woman-centred fiction, psychological thrillers, romance set in close-knit communities and any story she can't put down after the first page.*

*Jo has worked in publishing for more than 20 years. Originally from the UK, she began her career as a journalist in London before training as a book editor. Since then she has worked in Australia for several trade publishing houses in senior editorial roles, including six years as a Commissioning Editor at ABC Books and three years as an Associate Publisher at HarperCollins Publisher. She has worked at Harlequin Books since 2014.*

#### **PITCH WISH LIST:**

Jo is looking for mysteries, family sagas, contemporary women-centred fiction, psychological thrillers, historical, and any story she can't put down after the first page for our print imprints, Mira and HQ. Also taking pitches for Escape, our digital-first imprint.

Find out more about pitching [here](#)



## **An Interview with Monique Patterson of St Martin's Press**

Becky Watts



**In this interview, we conclude our introduction of our 2019 conference guests with Monique Patterson. A lot of our members have told me how excited they are to have Monique joining us, so without further ado, over to Monique—interviewed by Christchurch chapter member, Becky Watts!**

*Welcome, Monique - we're so looking forward to having you with us!*

*We understand that you're a keen traveler - do you have a favourite place in the world so far?*

I love every place I have visited, which is pretty amazing. However, I do have to say that I have a particular soft spot for Florence, Italy. The atmosphere of the city was so warm and welcoming. The history, the architecture and the art was breath taking. The food and wine were...a delight to the senses. Then being able to lose myself in the Uffizi and see Michelangelo's David in person put that particular trip over the top.

*Is there anything you're particularly excited to see here in New Zealand?*

I honestly can't wait to experience everything my trip to New Zealand has to offer. I'll have the chance to tour around after the conference and I can't wait to see what I will discover. Usually when I go to country I have never been to before, I'm going in clean. I'm excited about the whole trip and it's afterwards that certain experiences stand out. This will be a wonderful new adventure for me.





*Your career had what many would consider a dream start with a job as a romance editor right out of college. What were the steps that led you there?*

I was an English major in college with a minor in History and a Concentration in Creative Writing. Every time someone asked me what I wanted to do with my degree they figured I would say teaching or law. Teaching wasn't in the cards for me, but I did seriously consider a career in criminal law. In my senior year, I landed an internship at the New York City Criminal Court and it was completely fascinating. However, in the end, I decided that this was not the career path for me, either. It was in that moment that I returned to considering books and publishing. I'll be honest. I didn't know much about real ins and outs of publishing at the time. But I was obsessed with books. I always had been. With that in mind, I sent my resume out to five different publishers and I got a call the next day from Avon Books (pre-HarperCollins acquisition). When I walked into Carrie Feron's office and saw some of the biggest names in romance gracing her shelves, I was in raptures. I had read almost all of them.

I was thrilled when I was offered the job as editorial assistant. It was an amazing experience that I credit with launching my career.

*Have you been given memorable career advice, positive or negative?*

The most memorable advice I was given was when I was told 1) "To be an editor, you need to love the job."

Being an editor requires a lot of out-of-the-office hours. That is when you actually get your reading and editing done. So if you're not in love with that, it's going to be hard for you. However, I think that also means that the people who are editors many years later do love what they do. I dare say that we are a bit obsessed with the art and science of publishing books. We certainly think about it enough for it to count as an obsession! I think, sometimes, I can exasperate family and friends. LOL.

2) "No one is going to stop you from working yourself to death."

This is absolutely true no matter what industry you are in. So set your own boundaries. Take vacation. Power down. You are responsible for your own well-being in every way.

*What career advice would you give to aspiring authors? And what about someone looking to emulate your success in the editing arena?*

For authors: Educate yourself about the industry, and most especially about the area in which you write. Make professional connections. You don't need everyone to be your friend, you just need the right people who are going to lift you up as you lift them up. And stay true to your voice.

For aspiring editors: Figure out what you think you would love to edit. The field is wide and you don't have to do what you think everyone else is doing. You need to figure out what deeply interests you and pursue that. Be open to learning about the business and that includes learning from your failures—and there will be plenty of those. That's just the way it works. However, there is also ample opportunity for success—if you stay open and are curious

about what makes books work—how and why they speak to readers. Stay hungry for knowledge. That will be your best asset.

*During your time in the publishing industry, there's been many changes. What are some of the most important ones for you both professionally and personally?*

There will always be change. I think the most important thing is to know what is going on in your industry. How the changes are playing out and what you need to do to adjust. But one thing that doesn't change is that people want amazing stories. We always have to remember that.

*Do you think that we're doing what needs to be done for diversity to take hold in a genuine way?*

I think that we are beginning to have some of the important conversations that need to be had. Talking is crucial and it has to be followed by action. There is a lot of work to be done.

*What do you look for when signing a new author?*

I'm looking to fall in love with that author's voice and story.

*What's your favourite romance trope?*

Well! I don't think I have just one. I love marriage of convenience, secret babies, second chance love, the girl next door and The Ugly Duckling—just to name a few.

*Many of us find that writing ruins us as readers! Do you find it difficult to enjoy reading outside of work?*

No. It's my obsession! However, it's hard not to edit a book, or a movie or a tv episode when I feel something has too easily gone awry. Lol.

*Do you have a favourite genre to read recreationally? Is there something that you're loving right now?*

It all depends on my mood, but I do tend to love a juicy, commercial read. I also deeply love mythology and folklore. Right now I am reading The Odyssey, translated by Emily Wilson and loving it. Next I'm planning to finish Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali.

*Thank you so much for sharing with us, we all look forward to learning more about you at conference!*



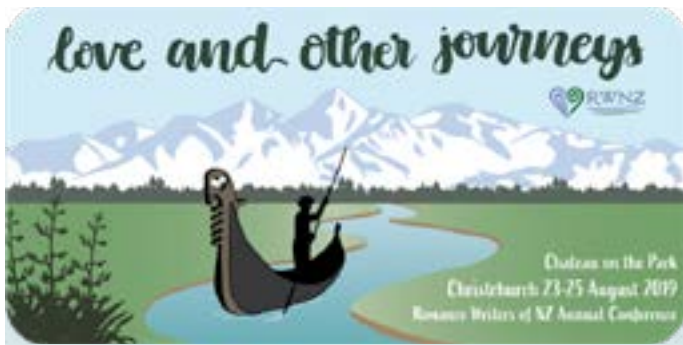
*Monique Patterson is an Editorial Director and Executive Editor at St. Martin's Press. She has published countless New York Times bestselling and award-winning authors. Some of her authors include #1 New York Times bestseller, Lora Leigh (Dagger's Edge), award-winning author, L. Penelope (Song of Blood and Stone), #1 New York Times bestsellers PC and Kristin Cast (Moon Chosen, Sun Warrior & The Dysasters), co-founder of Black Lives Matter, Patrisse Khan-Cullors and award-winning author asha bandele (When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir), New York Times bestselling husband and wife writing duo, Ashley and JaQuavis (The Cartel series) and award-winning author, Sarah Bird (Daughter of a Daughter of a Queen).*

#### **PITCH WISH LIST:**

Historical romance  
Contemporary romance  
Historical women's fiction  
Cowboy romance (American)

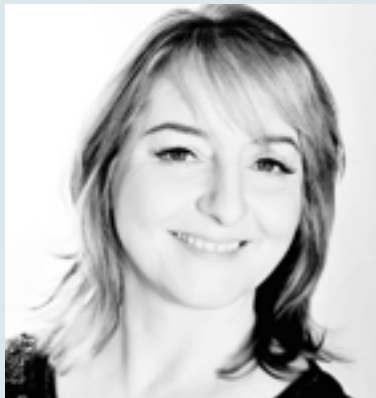
*Find out more about pitching [here](#)*





## Pitching Tips

J C Harroway



RWNZ Conference 2019 has a fantastic line up of editors waiting for your pitch, together with our agent from Spencerhill Associates.

A pitch is a great opportunity for you to sell yourself and your writing and bypassing the slush pile. The idea of pitching can feel intimidating, but here are a few simple tips for success:-

### BEFORE CONFERENCE

- Finish your book: Show you can finish a novel and be prepared for when an agent or editor asks you to send the complete manuscript.
- Do your research: Find out what the agent and publishers attending conference are looking for so you don't waste your time and theirs.
- Make an appointment: Schedule time with as many appropriate agents and editors as you can. You can book when you purchase your conference ticket or contact the Pitch Coordinator: [conference2019@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:conference2019@romancewriters.co.nz)
- Prepare and practice: Write down your pitch and read it aloud.

### WHAT YOUR PITCH SHOULD INCLUDE

- Think of your pitch as a back copy blurb.
- A compelling hook/logline/the essence of your story.
- Focus on the conflict between your characters.
- Comparisons to similar stories.

### ON THE DAY

- Look your best: Think of your writing career as a job and present yourself professionally. A publisher is buying you as well as your work.
- Be punctual: think of it as a job interview.
- Know what you want: Because you've done your research, you know why they are looking for your manuscript, and where it fits in the kind of books they publish.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Remember: Agents and Editors are people too. A smile, courtesy and a professional attitude go a long way.
- Make a note of what they ask you to send and swap business cards, if you have one.

Remember pitching a fantastic opportunity to put your manuscript in front of publishing professionals looking to acquire new authors/new stories, so be brave, be yourself and good luck!



### FORBIDDEN TO TOUCH

*One contract for work... Another contract for play.*

*Confident, controlled, and thigh-clenchingly hot, Reid Faulkner was the object of my naughtiest teenaged desires. Now I have a contract to redesign his family's flagship hotel. Only I want more. Like a second contract - one that allows Reid to fulfil my filthiest fantasies. But lust at first touch quickly turns into something much more...might Reid protect his heart at all costs - even if it means breaking mine?*



Award winning author, J.C. Harroway, writes sexy contemporaries for Mills and Boon Dare, including the kindle bestseller, *A Week to be Wild*.

Find out more here <https://jcharroway.com/>



## 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](mailto: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

## News from the President

Kendra Delugar

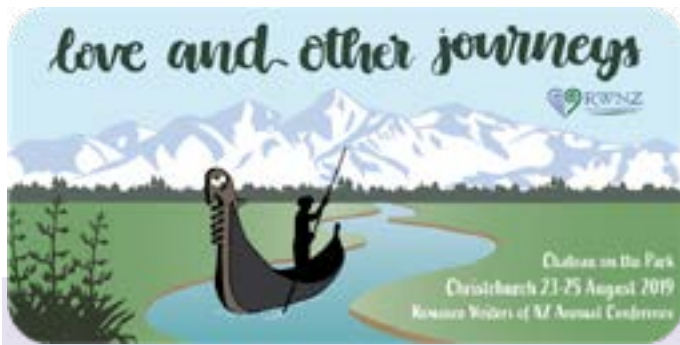


This is officially my last President's Report for the year. It's almost time for someone else to pick up the mantle. Someone with fresh new ideas. Someone who's got boundless energy (and after three years of volunteering mine is starting to wane). I can't wait to see what a new President and a new Executive brings to our wonderful organisation. It's exciting!

On a less than exciting note, I think I can safely say it's been a rough month for those who I hold dear—and their worries become my worries. I'm feeling a bit buffeted by life right now, but it has also had me looking at the bigger picture. The important lessons. Enjoy every day. Take note of the small things. Tell the ones you love how much you care. Do something you love (and yes, that's where writing comes in). Don't sweat the small stuff or you won't have the reserves for when the big stuff hits. And take the time to do something just for you.

Speaking of which, I am very much looking forward to seeing those of you who are going to the Christchurch Conference. That's my something just for me. So, see you all there and...

Happy writing,  
Kendra Delugar



## RWNZ Conference 2019 Update

Kia ora whanau,

**By the time you read this, we will be so close to conference that bags will be half packed and pitches, cold reads and costumes in the later stages of development (or not, for those who love the adrenalin rush of living in the last possible moment). Perhaps you are racing to a submission deadline before you leave home, or scrambling to polish that cold read, or trying to get the day job out of the way, and of course wrangling the family. All so that when you set foot over the threshold of the Chateau on the Park, you can step away from reality for three days and fully immerse yourself in a world of writing.**

That is my plan anyway. I am staying at the hotel, even though I only live 3km away from the venue. The family must pretend I am far, far away for a few days. I am not going to be available to run children anywhere, or cook meals, or do any chores. While I am openly claiming convener privileges ("I need to be on site to be available and keep things running smoothly"), really, I just want to leave 'normal' for a few days and dive deep into all things writing - to take time out for myself and my writing journey.

Our theme this year is all about journeys. For me, conference is a welcome waypoint, a pause in momentum (though this year feels more like stasis), to check the map, reflect on the progress thus far, and re-assess my forward direction. My first RWNZ conference blew my mind... in a good way! It was also absolutely exhausting – and I am saying that as an extrovert. Despite knowing this, my second RWNZ conference was the same. I absorbed everything, everywhere, slept little, volunteered, learned much, and came home inspired and exhausted in equal measures. For my third year, I am convening the conference.

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Delivering you a kick-arse conference has also been a journey. Eighteen months ago, when there was no sign of an alternative, I suggested Christchurch to the exec, pitching the first South Island conference, and got a green light. All systems go....and I was a team of one. One who is not yet published, doesn't whale read romance, and doesn't know the "big" names in romance. Nora who? Plus, at the time I had been in Christchurch less than a year. Meh. Shrug. We all have to start somewhere.

What I do bring is plenty of enthusiasm, a penchant for solving complex problems and buckets of confidence. Plus, leadership and organisation is my superpower. Thankfully, I wasn't a team of one for long - less than a week, to be exact. The Christchurch chapter were ecstatic, and local's Jo, Em and Louise (Gillian) all stepped up. Iona (from Blenheim) sent me an email and offered to be our speaker liaison. She had no idea who I was or what we were planning, but she put up her hand anyway. I had a blank piece of paper and no pre-conceived ideas, and suddenly I had a team to start brainstorming. Blind faith, grit and determination, and a committed team can make anything happen.

We have been snowballing ever since. When Janet stepped away from organising 2020, we nabbed her for 2019 before she knew what had happened. Sue offered to coordinate our volunteers even though she couldn't even come to conference. And the closer we got to August 2019, the more people put their hands up – from all over NZ. I sincerely thank you all for your ideas, assistance and contributions, especially those tasks during conference yet to come.

We have discovered that the hardest part of delivering a conference is not finding people, it is choosing. The committee and friends have spent many, many joyful hours playing what-if, and "oooooh we could [insert grand idea here]". My hardest (ongoing) life lesson, and arch nemesis is: I can do anything, but I can't do everything. We know of course, that conference can't be everything to everyone, every year – but that doesn't stop us trying!

Why do we come together at conference? To be inspired. To learn – the craft, the business and everything in between - and of course to grow as writers. To meet others, both those in the same stage we are, and those we aspire to be like. My first fan-girl moment was at a RWNZ conference, and many life-long friendships start from a serendipitous meeting with a stranger.

For my entire life, a dusty, faded 1960s version of an inspirational poster hung in the entrance at my grandmother's house, held up by a piece of twine. The words said,

*"There are no strangers here, only  
friends we haven't met"*





The image wasn't faded when my mother and her four siblings holidayed in the same house as children. She assures me that it once was sky blue, and that the string has been replaced many times. But with the death of my grandma this year, the image came down – and we discovered that this simple message has touched many people. Everyone wanted to know who got the tatty old wall hanging. My grandparents lived this motto as their truth, and everyone was welcome under their roof. With my Grandma living to 95, and the youngest of eight, there were always visitors to 'Aunty Alva's'. Over the decades, everyone became our whanau.

If I was only allowed to choose one goal for your conference experience, in fact for your entire RWNZ experience, then this would be it - there are no strangers here, only friends we haven't met.

Who will you take on your journey? Whose journey will you share?

To the 2019 conference committee, I send out an excessively large and heartfelt thank you. My friends, I would journey with you again in a heartbeat. Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again,...and may there always be caramel crème eggs on your journey.

**Ngā mihi**

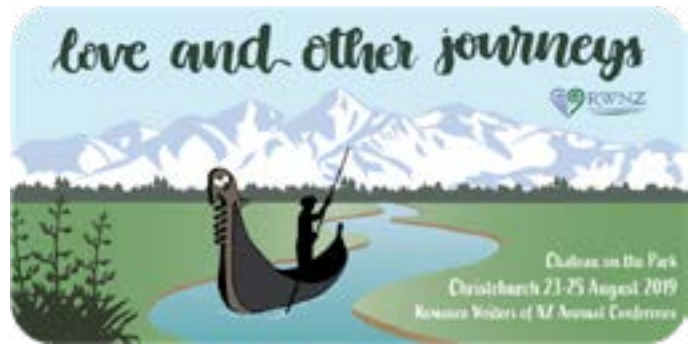
**Mel Climo**

**2019 Conference Convener**

**On behalf of the fabulous committee**

*"It is amateurs who have one big bright beautiful idea that they can never abandon. Professionals know that they have to produce theory after theory before they are likely to hit the jackpot."*

**—Francis Crick**



## Message from the First Time Attendees

### Coordinator

Kristina O'Grady



I am lucky enough to be the First Time Attendees Coordinator for this year's conference. We have an extraordinary number of first-time attendants this year, making it super exciting.

I met some of my best writing friends at my first conference and I'm eager to pay it forward. At my first conference we didn't have our own get together before the festivities started. If I remember correctly, which is always up for debate, we had stickers on our name tags that indicated that we were conference virgins. It was up to us to find each other and introduce ourselves. I don't know about you, but I always have to give myself a pep talk before I walk up to someone I don't know. I imagine this will surprise all of you who already know me. Did you know that you all terrified me the first time we met?

Luckily for frightened people like me, RWNZ has, for the last few years, organised get togethers and activities for our first-time attendees so they can get to know each other before getting overwhelmed by all the veterans of RWNZ conferences.

This year I have set up a Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/446518679529830/>. If you are a first time conference goer and haven't received your invite yet, please click on the link to join our group. As we get closer to the conference weekend, we'll be sharing tips and tricks for surviving your very first conference. This group will be your safe place to ask questions and get to know each other before the big weekend.

We will also be getting together before the Friday night Cocktail Party for our very own pre-party!

I can't wait to see you all soon,  
Kristina O'Grady

# The Cost of Good Publicity

Sarah Williams



**I knew getting the Logie nominated star of McLeods Daughters, Myles Pollard, to narrate my audiobooks would be good for business and it certainly helped last month!**

My publicity goal was to get the audiobook featured on Channel Nine. After all they hold the McLeods Daughters rights and own Stan, but beyond sending generic emails - which would probably go straight to a junior producer, or a spam folder, I was unsure how to tell the right people about it. So, after much consideration, I decided to employ a professional publicist.

Kerry doesn't come cheap, but I took the leap and signed her. Within a week we were getting requests for radio and print interviews. Then Channel Nine replied, could we appear live in the Sydney studio?

Um, yes!

I talked to Myles' agent and arranged to meet him in Sydney for two days of publicity events. Not only did Today Extra (Nine) want us on but The Daily Edition (Channel 7) wanted us too. The Morning Show were interested, but couldn't fit us in either of those days.

Being the introvert that I am, I was totally freaking out about live TV. Pre-recorded or audio only – no problem, but there is something about live TV. Remember that scene in Bridget Jones' Diaries where she comes sliding down the fire house pole and the camera films her bottom? I blame that scene for my fear of live video.

In the end the producers asked if they could just talk to Myles. They only get five minutes after all and they also wanted to talk about the rumoured McLeods Daughters remake and his other movies (Wolverine and Jasper Jones among others). Myles did a great job of answering those questions, but also making sure he talked about me and the audiobook and why he loved performing it.

Like reviews, having a third person (especially a celebrity) talk about your book is gold! It's word of mouth marketing on a whole other level. His Today Extra interview went

viral on social media as soon as it was aired. The Today Show replayed it several times over the week. At last count that one interview was viewed over 950,000 times and those viewers weren't just Australians but Americans and fans from other countries too.

Yes my audiobook sales picked up but so did my ebook and print sales all around the world. This publicity didn't come cheap but I am so glad I did it as it has flowed into speaking gigs and workshops and a book tour with Myles in September which has almost sold out already!

I'm so glad I chose Myles to narrate the books, it has truly been the best business decision I've made so far.

To check out the tour dates and our media appearances go to [www.sarahwilliamsauthor.com](http://www.sarahwilliamsauthor.com)



## THE BROTHERS OF BRIGADIER 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 Brigadier 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.*



# The Power of Visceral Reactions

Emma Bryson



Have you ever felt your finger twitch when a character in your favourite book bunches their fists? Or had that stomach-sinking feeling when a protagonist dives headfirst into their dark night of the soul? Or, perhaps you're like me – and you find yourself scrunching your nose, grimacing, smiling, or otherwise pulling faces alongside your favourite characters, even when you're in public? Chances are a well-placed visceral reaction is to blame!

Adding in more visceral reactions to your work is a must. Visceral reactions deepen point of view and give your reader a physical link to a character's emotional state. They're not always possible to squish into your manuscript at every turn – and it's best to have an arsenal of visceral reactions to keep from smearing those gut-dropping or heart-pumping reactions all over the place – but, generally speaking, visceral reactions are gold because they insight empathy. They give your reader a bodily link through which to 'feel' a character's emotional state.

So, what is a visceral reaction, exactly?

A visceral reaction is a physical response to a nonphysical experience; or more specifically, a bodily response to feeling an emotion. Maybe it's a shiver or a rush of adrenaline or a change in breathing or heart rate. It's the first part of a four-stage reaction to a stimulus, which I'll explore an example of below.

Four-stage reactions include a visceral reaction with three extra steps. The premise is that whenever we encounter an emotional stimulus of any kind, we first feel it, then reflect on it, then decide, and then act. Each of these stages of reaction are important to explore in your work, but try to keep them in order, and it's also a good idea to pick and choose depending on what suits the pacing of your scene. (For example, if you're writing a high-impact action scene, you wouldn't want to spend precious words slowing down the pacing by detailing all four reactions after every action! But in times of shifting emotions or

conflict, each stage might add more complexity to the scene and heighten the tension.)

Here's a simple an example of how a four-stage reaction might look:

*Minnie hesitated a moment—Mickey could hear her voice catch over the phone.*

*"Minnie, what is it?"*

*"I'm sorry, Mickey... but Goofy... he's—he's dead!"*  
Minnie sobbed.

*Mickey's knees trembled and gave way, slamming him to the floor. Goofy? No... he'd just seen him yesterday, he looked as right as rain! This simply wasn't possible.*

*"Ha-ha! Oh, Minnie..."* Mickey said, *swallowing the lump in his throat.* *"You're such a terrible prankster! There's no way Goofy is dead!"*

## KEY:

Emotion/visceral

Thought

Decision

Action

## IN CONCLUSION

Visceral reactions are, in my opinion, the most important of the four-stage reaction. In high-action scenes, visceral/action mixed with just action-reaction-action will work without slowing down the pacing. But generally – especially in high-conflict romance – three or four stage reactions are necessary in emotional scenes to build empathetic, relatable characters who we'll want to throw our arms around.



## A FREE PRODUCTIVITY COURSE

Hey! Do you have problems with procrastination? Me, too! That's why I created 'Stop Procrast-Scrolling! And Start Making Progress on Your Novel in the Next 15 Mins'. It's a free, light-hearted course meant to kick-start your productivity in as little as 10-15 minutes. Come join me, I'd love to see you over there!

Enrol [here](#)



Emma Bryson is a freelance editor, creative, and writer based in Auckland. She spent five years working with Entangled Publishing, holds a Diploma in Publishing from Whitireia New Zealand, and has worked on books for Penguin Random House NZ, Steele Roberts Publishers, Victoria University Press, and Te Papa Press. Her first novella was published last year by Carina Press. Come say hi at the RWNZ conference trade show :)

# AMS: Can we Cooperate?

Kris Pearson



**I suppose this is a plea for help. I'd love it if more of our members would join in this discussion. The topic is Amazon ads – those little sponsored ads that run along the book pages. (Unless you have an ad blocker, in which case you can't see them. That fooled me for a while!)**

As it was a few months since I'd last tried them - and on that occasion I spent \$350.65 for no clicks or sales at all – I approached them with extreme caution and asked the advice of friends Tracey Alvarez and Serenity Woods before I laid out any more cash. Yes, I guess those ads contributed to sales generally, and to page reads on the book I had in Amazon KU at that time, but certainly no sales were directly attributed to the ads.

OK, early June I launched my first cozy mystery. Because it was different for me, I thought this was the ideal time to try AMS again. I made it exclusive to KU so people could read it free through Select for the page-reads.

Tracey, who currently has her Stewart Island series of books in KU said "I've just started running AMS ads again after watching the free webinar with Joanna Penn and Mark Dawson. Spent agggggggee collating similar books and authors etc."

So I did the same - spent a lot of time trawling through Amazon's top 100 cozies list, noting author names, themes, titles etc to use as keywords. Went to the book pages of many of them to see what else I could glean, and ended up with a respectable-looking list of around 500. (We're allowed up to a thousand keywords if you haven't tried this).

Tracey has a number of ads running. Here's what she says: "I've got ads for Hide Your Heart (99c in KU), the boxed set for each series, and In Too Deep (my old perma-free). Nothing is happening with the boxed sets, one of the Hide Your Heart ads is using money but not much of an uptick in sales/reads, and two of my In Too Deep ads 'seem' to be working - though one is GOBBLING money

so I've cut the daily spend back on that one as I still only seem to be getting around 50-130 free downloads a day (only 2 days in the past 8 days that I've been advertising have over 100 copies been downloaded) and not much to sing and dance about in follow-on sales."

Back to me: I asked the advice of friends on our local Wellington/Kapiti Facebook page, and it was suggested Dave Chesson's free course would be useful. Yes, it was. Good ways of finding keywords, for sure.

When I came to upload my first ad, the whole process seemed to have changed a lot since I did it six months earlier, but I filled in whatever they wanted, decided \$20 a day would be enough to try, and chose 20c per click. No results. No money being used. So much for thinking this was a launch strategy! In thirteen days they wanted only \$9.58 of my money instead of the \$250 I thought they might. Totally mystified, I cancelled the ad and tried another, so that was a total bust.

From the uploading process this time, which was entirely different, I have to assume there was some sort of technical glitch the first time around and it was probably a miracle I got an ad showing up anywhere at all. (Maybe I didn't.) The next ad brought two requests from Amazon. First of all a suggestion that \$33 per day would be a more suitable amount to spend given the keywords I'd chosen, and then \$60. No way was I going to commit \$60 a day without seeing any results. Some days later, with no clicks or sales showing, I cancelled the ad. Several days after that, six sales appeared on my ad dashboard. Forgive me, but what's the point of trying this stuff if you can't see the results for ten days or more?

*Several days after that, six sales appeared on my ad dashboard. Forgive me, but what's the point of trying this stuff if you can't see the results for ten days or more?*

Tracey told me: "On my boxed sets I set the daily amount at \$50 per day, and true to past experience, they have used almost nothing of that (like most of the ads spend so far in a week is under \$5 total!). I also set HYH and ITD at \$50 a day initially. Quite a few of the ads didn't do anything, but I was playing around with the text on all of them and one in particular (the ITD one) I changed the first line hook and impressions took off! I've just changed the \$ amount to \$25 per day on that one as it was sucking up all that money, and I don't think on average 50 downloads are worth \$50! But I'll continue to play around with them. I've no other paid advertising on any of the books right now, so I know the downloads/sales are coming from AMS."



◀◀  
Serenity very kindly shared the following: "Re Amazon Ads... yeah, they're tricky. I spend about 50% of my advertising budget on Facebook and 50% on AMS, which is split between about 2/3 US and 1/3 UK (I was lucky enough to get in Amazon Advantage which gives you access to the UK – I think they've stopped allowing authors in now, although Mark Dawson seems to think there are changes coming to AMS soon which will allow us all access to more countries.)

This is what I've read/found: you're likely to make a loss on book 1 (and take no notice of the ACOS as it doesn't factor in page reads. 70% of my royalties come from page reads.) It's all about readthrough, which is difficult if you only have one book. For example on my billionaire series I mostly advertise book 1, and have 6 ads running for that in the US, mostly to the same keywords (names of authors who also write billionaire romances, about 100-200 keywords), of between \$5 to \$30 per ad per day. I bid 75c/click and on half of them I adjust the bid to match their suggested bid. So my average Cost Per Click is between 0.54 and 0.74. I might make a loss on book 1, but when I look at sales and reads of books 1-3, I'm making a profit. I don't calculate anything more than that normally! As long as I'm making more than I'm spending, that's okay."

She raises a very good point. I was stupidly trying this with a single book – ie no other books to lead on to in KU. I was probably doomed from the start as far as sales from the ads were concerned. However, yes the page-reads were good. When I stopped the ads the page-reads virtually disappeared. When I put another ad up, the page-reads came back. The same thing happened with the book's ranking. Down like a stone and then up again like a swimmer gasping for air. However, my second cozy is now up for pre-order, so it'll be interesting to see what, if any, difference that makes. A further point: books don't have to be in Select to use AMS, but of course you'll get no page reads if they're not.

Back to Serenity: "I'm all-in with KU. I was sick of giving away thousands of free books with only a small percentage of readers going on to buy. It was a valid business model for me for many years, and I also loved Apple and Google Play, but I'm loving being with only one retailer - it's a lot easier to organize prices and do updates, and much more lucrative for me. I rarely do free promotions now, and I don't think I have any at 99c at the moment either, as my \$2.99 starters are doing okay on FB and AMS.

I have over 60 books out there now, I think, plus box sets. I don't particularly like being exclusive, but I'm a lot happier! At the moment I'm only really advertising The Billionaire Kings 1, Bay of Islands Brides 1, and Between the Sheets 1 (and that only on FB as the cover is too racy for AMS)."

An interruption from Kris: "From personal experience I also know AMS won't accept racy covers – or rather their AI system has been programmed not to accept racy covers. This means that horizontal people – even fully dressed on a sunlit beach – aren't acceptable, and barely clad people standing up in a clinch in a darkened room seem to be fine." OK... Their rules, so we have to play accordingly.

Serenity continues: "I try to spend between 20 and 30% of my daily royalties on advertising (FB and AMS combined). Right now I'm in between releases so it's more like 30% as my royalties dip – after release when I'm earning more it's more like 20-25%. And I try not to go over NZ\$350 (US\$230) per day. I have no idea if I'm doing it right. Others seem to have lower CPC on AMS but my ads just don't deliver at anything less than around 75c a click. I can get a lower CPC on Facebook but they take more testing and longer to set up; once they're running, though, they seem really effective.

My first Bride is at 22c/click, and I'm spending \$20/day on FB targeted at the US, \$20 on FB targeted at the UK, and around \$10 on AMS UK and \$10 on AMS US. So that's around NZ\$60/day. Today I made US\$35 or NZ\$53 in sales on that book, so, a loss. But on the six-book series, I made US\$123 or NZ\$186, so that's over a 300% profit (I think!) Which ain't too bad."

Many thanks to both of you for being so frank with your information.

And I picked up a wonderful gem from Wellington author Eileen Mueller: "I have one advert that has a \$3000 budget a day, but only ever spends a few dollars. It sells really well at ACOS 10%. Some ads have ACOS of 275% but when I factor in KU reads and all my sales, they're still a low % of revenue." She went on to say "It means my advert is shown to way more people. Non fiction niche genre."

I don't think I'd be brave enough to bid \$3000 a day! Eileen recommends Bryan Cohen's course on AMS, so if you're interested, there's another good source of information.

Follow-up, July 26. Tracey has now stopped her ads for a while. Even over a number of books she didn't find they were performing well enough to justify what she was spending. And I cancelled all of mine as well (see graph). These are the final results for Murder in the Aisle, and some of the daily bids have been reduced from \$30 a day because they were galloping through money with no effect except page-reads and better rankings. \$456.81 US for six sales after more than a quarter of a million impressions. That's close to \$680 NZ. The normal sales and page-reads meant I was breaking even-ish, but last night I cancelled all that remained.

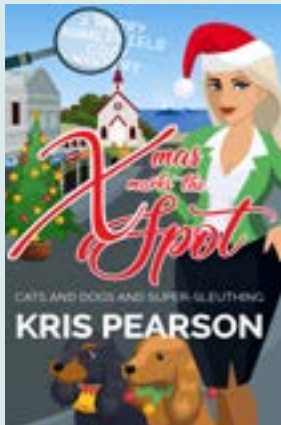






This morning (because I'm a horrible gambler and don't like being beaten) I started a new ad with possibly better copy, high bids for exactly three keywords, and a \$5 a day limit. This goes against everything I've read about them but shouldn't cost me much. We shall see!

If you have results/tricks/tips you'd like to share I'm sure we'd all love to hear them.



#### **XMAS MARKS THE SPOT**

*Hi - I'm Merry Summerfield, freelance editor and pet-sitter - and OMG! Who hid a quarter of a cow in the trunk of my brother's beloved Mercedes? And what's with that spooky big X marking the spot on the beach where a man lies dead? Can my quarter-cow and the corpse possibly be connected?*

*Detective Bruce Carver doesn't think the body is any of my business, but someone's up to no good amid the twinkling Christmas decorations in drowsy Drizzle Bay.*

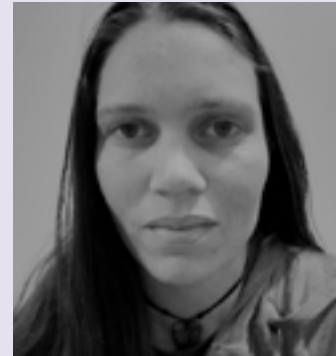
Buy *Xmas Marks the Spot* [here](#)



[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 two cozy mysteries.

## Settings Through the Character's Eyes

Carol Tate



**Every writer has their own version of how they create their stories. For me, they are like motion pictures my brain projects. Our goal as writers is to describe what we conjure and write it so another person can see a similar image.**

Writers know to describe a setting we involve the five senses – smell, sight, hear, feel, and taste. But sometimes, while trying to convert ideas into words, the character's POV can be overlooked.

Readers form different pictures with the information supplied regarding the setting of a story. Some writers create long setting descriptions featuring beautiful language but ultimately, unnecessary information. As a reader, I often skip these because they don't move the story forward or interact with the characters. Long descriptions don't make me grip the book and eagerly hang off every word to find out what happens next. I'm interested in the important stuff – the character's journey.

So how can writers weave in the setting without interrupting the story flow? The answer is through the characters actions, experiences, and POV. Each character has a unique perception and interaction within their world. By describing the setting through the character, the setting becomes directly relevant to the story while also fleshing out our characters.

If we consider ourselves, when we walk into a known room, it is done automatically, knowing what to expect – we don't consciously note and describe every detail. However, when entering an unknown area, noticing the surroundings becomes vital, what must be understood to navigate and achieve our goals safely.

I know a lady who becomes instantly alert at the sound or sight of a dog – she loves them and hurries to greet them. But consider a character who's never seen a dog or one who hates dogs, or is indifferent? Each character will react and describe the dog differently.

People also process the environment and the five senses



in certain orders. If someone enters a room with a strong smell, they will notice that before the texture of the couch cover. Smell is a powerful tool in an author's kit; a brief sentence carries a huge weight and should appear as a character enters an environment. My son's room usually smells like dirty socks, my daughter's room like paint and nail polish – two very different images for two very different rooms.

However, writers can't start every scene with a smell, or it becomes a predictable formula for describing the setting. So, mix it up; it's not always the first thing noticed. Sound also rates high in the order; I arrive home and hear a fight scene blasted across the speakers or the musical notes of a Disney movie and giggling girls. Before I've taken that first step inside, I know who's controlling the TV; therefore, sound would be noted before the smell of home baking, nail polish, or my son's discarded shoes.

What about background noise, when does someone notice those? Do I hear the cats purring while the kids argue over who's going to load the dishwasher? Or when the kids are quiet? Is someone likely to notice the ticking of a wall clock and the soft murmurs of conversations while waiting for an appointment or as they race through an office building?

Sound plays into the tension of the scene – is a knock at the door going to startle, be expected or interrupt a tense moment – is it a loud pounding at eleven-thirty at night or a polite knock at ten-thirty in the morning. Use sound to create tension or disperse it. It can also be used to describe actions, a glass shattering, musical notes filling the air. We don't need much to build a scene.

When recording textures, does it relate to the character? When I see beautifully stained wood cabinetry, I run my hand across the smooth polished surface and think of my father, who is a cabinet maker. However, someone else might remember a family home or a place visited. With knitted items, I remember my grandmother, who taught me to knit. My oldest son will screw his face at anything woollen because he hates the feel; but give him a super soft fluffy item and he's taken to a place of comfort. How does the POV character relate items they touch to their memories and personalities?

Taste is easily related to the character, described when the character eats or drinks; this can be used to build both setting and character; custard to me is comforting, reminds me of my mum, while cream donuts of trips to my grandparent's place. What memories does the food inspire in the character – what role does it play in building a character's image and the setting? Is it home baking, store-bought or elegantly prepared food on a table set with precision? Has the character been raised with luxury or in a home where food was scarce, and how will this change their view?

With the scenery, rather than having a lovely long description that slows the pace, consider how the character views the scene, not just what their eyes see, but what thoughts are inspired by their view and how the character would describe it. Are they watching the sunset waiting for nightfall to escape in the dark? Or holding the love of their life in a peaceful moment. Is the sun rising before a soldier on a battlefield or a farmer milking the cows?

The character's state of mind plays a role in how they view their surroundings. Will they notice people around them, are they aware of their surroundings or caught up in their own actions? The emotional state of the character is going to dictate what and how they observe.

Don't however, simply match weather and mood, consider that placing a happy character in grey weather is going to have a different effect to a depressed character, and the same with placing both those personalities in a storm. Each character will view the scene differently and be impacted by it differently, so it needs to be described according to those different perspectives.

The setting is vital, and our words must count – they need to have a purpose in carrying the story forward. If you're trying to work out how to describe something, consider your character's POV and their thoughts, reactions, and interaction with the setting, make it unique to them. If we make the setting relevant, we can add a description in small doses much like backstory, building both setting and character.



### HEARTBEAT

*A murdered mother, an accused father, a broken woman, and a son seeking justice.*

*Jeff Jae is drawn home by heartbreak, prepared to defend his father at all costs.*

*Evelyn Miller suffers in silence, seeking comfort from the only couple who know her secret; now one is dead and the other is threatened - their only hope is the son who left them behind.*

*Can Jeff save them all, and will he forgive Evelyn for her silence?*

*Buy Heartbeat [here](#)*



*[Carol Tate](#) writes NZ Romantic Suspense from a home ruled by rescued cats. A mother, writer, and dreamer, she has a NZ Level Six Diploma in Applied Writing and a strong love of romance. Five years ago, she woke up with an idea that only grew; so, she started frantically writing with no idea of how to write a book. After drafting multiple full-length manuscripts, she enrolled at Northtec to learn the craft of writing. Now her first full-length novel *Take Down*, is undergoing professional editing and is the start of three planned trilogies in her Kiwi Falls Series. June 2019 saw the release of *Heartbeat*, a short prequel, written in the final part of her diploma.*

# From the Editor:

Gillian St. Kevern



**Thank you everyone who e-mailed me asking about how the new job is going! It's been challenging, that's for sure. It's completely different from anything I've done before. I was expecting to have to learn a lot. I was not expecting how that would make me feel.**

I left my last job after eight years with the company I was working for, eleven years as an Assistant Language Teacher total. At that point, I was considered 'sempai' to my newer colleagues—one of those hard to describe without a lot of context Japanese words. Basically, I was someone with a lot of experience, and people knew they could rely on me for advice. I took a lot of pride in being able to help those around me.

We're on week two of training as I write this, and the hardest thing hasn't been the new hours, squeezing my writing time in before work, or mastering the new technology (although all of those things have been tricky). It's been coping with being at square one. Like most people, I enjoy being good at things! Having to start from a place where everything is brand new is hard.

Fortunately, day one of training included a presentation on Cultivating a Growth Mindset. Basically, if you believe that you can learn or improve a skill, you have a growth mindset. If you believe talent is inherent and you're either good at something or you're not, you have a fixed mindset. Adopting a growth mindset is a powerful tool, not just for changing how you view yourself and the challenges that come your way, but for improving your skills.

*Reframe 'failing' and 'learning.'  
After all, when you make a  
mistake or don't meet a goal,  
you've learned something  
important that will help you  
later on.*

This resonated with me so much! As writers, we're always reading craft articles, attending workshops and conferences, and filling our to-be-read lists with books about writing. We sit down to our notebooks or computers with the will to write the best story we can. And we share our drafts with beta readers, editors, and readers, getting feedback and using that to identify and tackle our weak points. All of which are essential parts of cultivating a growth mindset.

As writers, I think we already have a lot of the growth mindset down. However, I'm going to share some of the points that came up in this session that were new to me.

Reframe 'failing' and 'learning.' After all, when you make a mistake or don't meet a goal, you've learned something important that will help you later on.

Prioritize growth over approval. When you seek praise or validation, you put other people's values ahead of your own, sacrificing opportunities for your own development. On a similar note, emphasis learning over speed.

Value the process not the end result. This sounds a lot like like something Joanna Penn says a lot. We're entitled to our labour, not the fruits of our labour—so we'd better make sure we enjoy our writing!

Celebrate growth with others (again, something RWNZ members are pretty good at).

Provide regular opportunities for reflection.

For every goal accomplished, make a new goal. Learning isn't a one time thing. It's a lifetime process. Likewise, I believe that no matter where we are on our writing journey, we have things to learn, weaknesses to address—and improvements to celebrate.

Training is still challenging, but even by flicking through the notes I took during week one, I can see that I've already learned a lot. I've noted down my small victories in my bullet journal, and the overwhelm is at bay. I haven't got this down yet—but I will.

*See you in Christchurch!*

*"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."*

— Jalaluddin Rumi



# Woos and Hoos



Ashlee Robinson's second book, *Falling for the Veteran*, was just released under the pen name Alexa Rivers. True Love is hiding in plain sight...

Buy *Falling for the Veteran* [here](#)



Vonnie Hughes has just published *The Second Son*, a Regency Romance. What happens when a man achieves his secret wish at the expense of a brother he despises?

Buy *The Second Son* [here](#)



Pia Buck has just released her latest book, *Love Me Maybe*, under her pen name, Melissa Crosby. *Love Me Maybe* is the second book in her sweet small town romance series, following *Love Me True*.

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



The release date for *Digging Deep* by Jay Hogan is rapidly approaching! The third in her series of New Zealand set mm romance, *Deep Digging* features a gay midwife and a senior detective. Release Date Aug 6th. Available for pre-order now.

Buy *Digging Deep* [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](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz).

# 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!



Maya Linnell featured in episode 79 and talked about her debut Australian romance, *Wildflower Ridge*.

Kiwi author, Janet Elizabeth Henderson appeared on episode 80 and we giggled our way through Scotland and why chasing a traditional deal backfired for her.



My audiobook narrator and Logie nominated actor, Myles Pollard and I were interviewed on the Writes 4 Women podcast. It was full of audiobook insights I thought you might enjoy on episode 81.

Episode 82 featured Kaneana May a debut author who comes from a screenwriting background and learnt lots working on the set of *Home and Away*.



Check out all the episode at [www.sarahwilliamsauthor.com/write-with-love](http://www.sarahwilliamsauthor.com/write-with-love)

Join in on the fun, including regular competitions at [www.facebook.com/WritewithLovePodcast/](https://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](mailto:sarah@serenadepublishing.com) or become a sponsor on Patreon!



## 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 :***

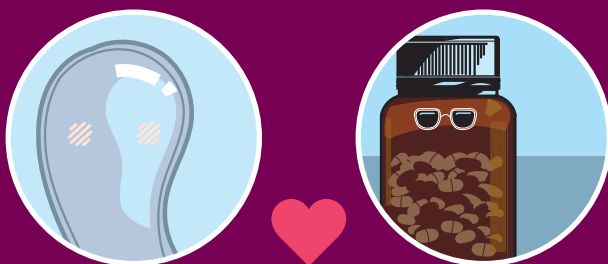
***[heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz)***



***Thank you!***

# 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](http://www.mitoq.com)

MitoQ

## The Welcome Mat

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



Frances Duncan

Gavin Flower

Peter Wilberfoss

Anna Scaife



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](mailto:president@romancewriters.co.nz)

**Zoe Sojourner:** [vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:vicepresident@romancewriters.co.nz)

**Tania Roberts:** [treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz)

**Kate O'Keeffe:** [secretary@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:secretary@romancewriters.co.nz)

**???:** [publicity@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:publicity@romancewriters.co.nz)

**Bronwen Evans:** [membership@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz)

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



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



# Regional Round-Up Reports

## AUCKLAND

Convenor: [Ruth Clough](#)

This month's meeting took place on Saturday 6 July at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion. We had twenty eight attendees at the meeting this month - it was lovely to see all of you.

Our speaker this month was Frances Housden, who presented on Great Beginnings and Hooking the Reader. Frances shared with a selection of great beginnings from books she has read - from crime to romance - and explained why these openings were strong and immediately hooked the reader. The common themes seemed to be death (mostly literal - but there is room for figurative as well) and desperation (yes - even in romance).

When I got home, I pulled a bunch of books of my shelf (some that I'd read and some that I hadn't) and read the first line/paragraph/page. The very first one opened with a birth (a slightly odd, something wrong with this baby kind of birth) in the prologue and death in Chapter One! And many others seemed to be about death, desperation, loss and change - guess we all have a good idea of how we need to hook the reader in our own books!

Thanks Frances for this fantastic talk!

## HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Debbie Williams](#)

Our July meeting was held at Bron's where members were working on scene setting/description. Patricia Kay's lesson on description (from the member resources!) was referenced, and members brought examples from books that they thought were effective. Selections provided from member's own works were read and feedback provided.

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 3rd of August at Kate's, where we will be discussing plotting.

## WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

Thirteen of us met on Saturday July 6th at Anna's lovely house in Paekakariki. We welcomed a new member - Frances.

On our agenda was:

- Intro / round table updates
- Gudrun's hilarious word game
- Twelve Steps to Publication (Jane)
- Focus on blurbs: three people were brave enough to share their draft blurbs, and we critiqued them as a group.
- Our usual Cold Reads session
- Quick update on our plans for a Retreat Weekend toward the end of the year (Gudrun)

Leann recommends Bookbrush as a graphics tool for ads: it builds ads and is not expensive, and is easy to use.

Also, Rosalind James has a great article on blurb writing on her website.

Next month we plan to look at:

- focus next months on Beta Readers, getting reviews, planning the launch

## NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

The mood of the group on a chilly July day in Nelson was positive with lots of excitement for the upcoming conference. After a round-the-table catch up, we went over a quick outline of the group's processes and rules for one of our newest members and clarified a few issues for others.

Our topic for the month was developing characters. We shared examples, tips, resources and our experiences of creating characters. It was a great chance to hear the different thoughts and feedback from members. What the lively talk highlighted for us was how important it is to use a character profile chart. We spent the rest of the meeting discussing topics for the next four months and decided we will do Nanowrimo as a group this year. Good conversation continued with the aid of a hot drink and delicious baking.

Our next meeting will be Saturday 10 August at 2pm at Nick Smith's Headquarters on Quarantine Road, and new members are always welcome. Next month's topic is: Building an Author Platform.

# Regional Round-Up Reports

## CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

This month the Christchurch chapter met at South Library. We discussed an anthology several chapter members are collaborating on, and the upcoming NZSA Heritage Week contest. We also discussed volunteer roles for the upcoming conference.

We then revisited the goals that we set at our February meeting. We wrote the most important thing we had achieved on a post-it note and stuck it on the "Wall of Awesome." We then came up with a new goal. Mel Climo wrote these goals down on the whiteboard, and challenged us to describe one action we would take to achieve that goal.

Seeing what we'd already achieved was very encouraging, as was sharing each other's success. What better way to battle the mid-year slump? At next month's meeting we'll be doing Cold Reads practice. Bring along 500 words from the first two pages of your book. Our next meeting is August 18th at Tūranga.

## OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

The Otago/Southland chapter met up on Saturday 6 July in the University of Otago's Link Building. This month's meeting didn't have a theme - instead the group caught up on each other's writing projects! The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 3 August.

## COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Bel Macfie](#)

This month C2C farewelled Netta and wished her well as she returns to England to live. So many C2Cers have been blessed to have known Netta for many years and will miss her immensely. We wish her all the very best. Thanks to Jill this month for hosting our awesome C2C group totalling 25 attendees, and thanks to Gaylene for organising the raffle basket which is C2Cs contribution to RWNZ.

In our July meeting Deryn led a group discussion and interactive activities about point of view. POV describes what is going on in a scene in front of you. Deryn gave examples of what is excellent writing in point of view vs the traps of head hopping too often. Deryn then moved on to talk about preparing manuscripts for publication

Top 10 tips to preparing manuscripts

- 1 Get it critiqued
- 2 Check out what is required – font and size
- 3 Review layout – margins, line spacing, page numbers
- 4 Decide about indents
- 5 Decide about headings
- 6 Keep a word count
- 7 Premise – deliver what they ask for
- 8 Check spelling - UK or US?
- 9 Be very familiar with the submission process (read, re-read and research it as needed)
- 10 File type – doc, docx,

In C2C we are so fortunate to have amazing authors with extensive experience who are so willing to share their craft and their wisdom.

## BLLENHEIM AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)