

How to Launch a Successful Book Kickstarter

Steff Green



Last year, I ran a successful Kickstarter campaign.

My kids book, *Only Freaks Turn Things Into Bones* – about a little grim reaper who gets bullied – is now out in the world. My lovely friend and incredible illustrator Bree Roldan has done an amazing job on the cover and spreads. I learned so much from this book's success. I think the concept really spoke to people – especially now, in this age of #metoo and 13 Reasons Why – and Bree's wonderful illustrations make this crazy idea of mine actually WORK.

For all the other creatives out there, I thought I'd take the time to outline some of the things I think worked really well on our project, and what we learned that we can apply to future projects:

1. You gotta get the word out

Kickstarter is a great platform to manage your campaign. You may even find a few new fans from the platform. But unless your campaign goes viral or you get featured by Kickstarter (which is not something you can buy/guarantee), the majority of your backers will come from your network or your own marketing networks.

You can probably count on your parents and a few awesome friends to back your project. If you have a project that Bree and I had wonderful support from our networks of friends and acquaintances I think because we focused a lot on the gift aspect of the books.

In order to reach your goal, you need to find backers outside your current circle of influence. You do this by figuring out who will back your project (not who will read your book – those two things are sometimes different) and how to reach them.

For *Only Freaks Turn Things Into Bones*, I identified three key audiences:

- *Goths and alternative people who'd like the little Death aspect.*
- *People in the book / arts community who like to support creative projects.*
- *Parents and people who need to give kids gifts.*

I reached out to the alternative community through Facebook groups and blogs. For the arts community, I asked to write blog posts on book blogs and community pages. For parents, we looked at parenting magazines and groups. I had pre-existing contacts in some places because of all my previous projects, and I took advantage of them as much as possible.

We also hired an amazing publicist, Elizabeth Heritage, to help us get the word out about the book. She was able to help us reach big media outlets like Stuff.co.nz and Radio NZ. We incorporated her fee into our book budget.

A note about media: The further a platform is from Kickstarter, the harder it is to get backers. For example, my Radio NZ interview only resulted in 3 pledges coming directly from the Radio NZ website. We believe this is because getting people who are listening to go to their computer and type in an address is harder than getting people who are already online to click on a link.

However, the value of this media can't be measured in the dollar value of backers. They help build your profile so that more people know who you are, and they can present you with other opportunities.

2. Be involved in the Kickstarter community

I've been supporting Kickstarter campaigns for years before we launched *Only Freaks Turn Things Into Bones*. A lot of the projects I've backed have been in the children's book category or other weird books. One of the best things I did in the middle of the campaign – when things were lagging a bit – was contact all the creators of the book projects I'd backed, told them how much I loved



their work, and showed them my project. Four of them graciously shared my project with their backers, and this resulted in \$890 for our book.

During my campaign, I also received a lot of similar requests from other writers to share their book with my audience. None of these people had backed my project, and for some of them, the quality just wasn't there. I think if you're going to do this, you need to at the very least already be a fan/backer of the person you're asking for a favour. I would happily share projects from fans who have work that my audience would love, but I'm less inclined to share the work of random strangers. I'm sure other creators feel the same way.

3. Engage your backers

This part seems kind of obvious, but you won't believe how often people forget to simply ask their backers to help spread the word.

Your backers already support you. They're already excited about the project and engaged in the creative process. Every time you post an update, remind backers to share the project.

Our backers also got the Kickstarter page in front of people, such as passing it around their office and posting it on parenting FB groups. Backers would message me in excitement – "I just got my boss to back the book!" "Two people said they backed you today!" They are the best cheerleaders you could ask for.

On the last week of our project, I noticed another Kickstarter I was backing reminded their backers that they could change their pledge level if they wanted to. I decided to try this with our backers. I let them know that they could change their pledge if they decided they wanted an extra book or a t-shirt or one of the other cool rewards. Overnight, eight backers upped their pledges to higher reward tiers, resulting in nearly \$300 of extra funding.

At the end of your campaign, think of something really awesome you can give your backers to say "thanks for supporting my crazy idea." We made a PDF colouring page of characters from the book, so people can print it out and colour it in. I've heard from a few backers the colouring pages are pinned up in offices and on fridges. How cool is that?



4. Make a video

I really, REALLY didn't want to do a video. I get nervous because of how my eyes look on camera, and I don't really like my voice. However, every article about successful Kickstarters said "By Odin's beard, make a video!" so we did.

People clicked on our video 547 times, and 37.4% of those clicks resulted in a full watch of the video. Many backers commented on the video. I fully believe the video played a vital role in getting us to our goal.

5. Have something to talk about

Even though we had some pages already complete at the beginning of the project to promote on the Kickstarter page (and you should absolutely do this because backers need to see the quality/style) we wanted to have surprises to reveal throughout the campaign. We knew this would help keep their interest and give them something they could share with their friends and family.

Bree worked hard to produce four new pieces of artwork (plus our thank you gift) throughout the campaign. We also shared our media mentions and other news with our backers, and when we hit important campaign milestones.

Those are five things I believe contributed to our success, although I believe a HUGE part of it was down to Bree's amazing illustrations. She really brought Little Death to life!

Here are five things I learned that I'll be factoring in next time we do a campaign:

1. Utilize Facebook

Facebook was the top referrer for our campaign, sending us \$2891 of our total funding. This was a combination of two ads I ran (\$18 cost), me sharing on my personal and writing profiles, and friends sharing the post with their friends.

Literally, every time I shared the link on Facebook, someone new went along and pledged. I thought I'd annoy the hell out of everyone I love, but instead they commented and shared and helped push the message even further.



Next time, I'd set aside a bigger budget for Facebook ads and experiment with that as a channel.

2. Set a lower goal

Although we reached our goal (yay!) and we should have covered our costs for production and shipping (cross fingers!) we didn't get close enough to hit our first stretch goal. I think to hit at least one of the stretch goals might have helped drive interest in the project and maybe enable us to raise more overall.

I think if I did it again, I would knock \$1-2k off the goal so we'd hit it sooner and push toward the stretch goals.

3. Make more digital rewards

Even with only three physical rewards to make (the book, the t-shirt, the art prints), we still have a huge headache ahead of us when it comes to production and shipping. I live in New Zealand, Bree lives in London and our backers are spread far and wide across the world. We chose mostly digital rewards for our stretch goals so everyone could enjoy them, which I do think was a good idea, but for a future project, I might look at including more digital bonus content reward tiers to cut down on the shipping nightmares.

4. Have pre-orders ready as soon as the campaign ends

I've had messages from people who want a copy of the book but didn't hear about the Kickstarter in time. We're working on a way to manage book pre-orders, but it's taking a bit longer than I'd hoped because reasons. In future, I'd have this on lock so we could point people on the Kickstarter page directly to a pre-order page.

5. Look for international press

Because of the high shipping costs of getting our book out to overseas backers, I focused our marketing efforts on New Zealand. However, I was surprised by just how many overseas backers we had. Well over half the backers for physical rewards have chosen overseas shipping (I'll have a more exact idea once I've sent out the surveys). I did not expect this, but I guess it makes sense. I back Kickstarter projects all the time even if the shipping is CRAZY because the idea is too cool.

In a future campaign, I'd look at approaching more international publications and blogs for PR.

There you have it! If you're thinking of running a book-related Kickstarter campaign (or any crowdfunding campaign), I hope you find this advice useful and experience all the joy of seeing your project become reality!

ONLY FREAKS TURN THINGS INTO BONES

It's Little Grim's first day at his new school.

He's excited about making new friends, but the other kids don't like his talent for turning anything he touches into bones. They call him "freak" and "weirdo" and refuse to play with him.

Little Grim runs away to hide but ends up learning something very important about being different.

Written and illustrated by two artists who were victims of bullying themselves, Only Freaks Turn Things Into Bones uses darkly gothic humour to address the very real issue of being different.



Buy *Only Freaks Turn Things Into Bones* [here](#)



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

““Honestly...
this is why I write.

*I write to get the happy ending
I sometimes feel is eluding me.*

I write for my sanity.”

—Debora Dennis

Get Off the Churn Train! Writing Books That Stick

Rosalind James



Note: what follows is NOT an assertion that good books can't be written fast. It's about finding YOUR personal sweet spot where you do your best, most memorable work.

I've read a lot of posts recently about the increase in "churn" with ebooks, particularly on Amazon. Conventional wisdom says that in order to have success selling on Amazon, particularly in KU, you have to be releasing new books every month.

I think that's wrong. Here's why.

The authors I hear that from most are also the most vocal about the need to "write to market," by which they seem to mean, not what I believe Chris Fox was originally outlining, but more like "write to trend"—to identify what the market wants now and supply that, in a format (presentation) that makes it instantly identifiable.

The problem with that? You are inviting churn. You're inviting obsolescence. You're putting yourself on the writing treadmill, and on the promotion treadmill, too.

Why? Your books look the same as everybody else's. You're going after a trend-loyal, a niche-loyal reader, NOT an author-loyal reader.

Does that work? Yes and no. Yes, there's sure as heck a big audience who are picking up books right now featuring Navy SEALs. Books with a man's nekkid torso and a short title written in bright blue script. Books featuring a bad-boy Mafia hitman with a jaggedy sort of title. Short books priced at 99 cents and in KU. (Or to mention some of the trends in other genres: books with a spaceship on the cover. Urban fantasy showing a skinny girl with long hair and leather pants. Not that those books can't be great. I'm talking about jumping on the train because that's

the hot thing.) Some of those authors are making great money putting out a book every month within that trend. They pivot fast, too. When the trend changes, they'll write the new trend and present that well.

But their books don't stick. What's my least sticky series? Not Quite a Billionaire, even though, she says modestly, it's really kinda awesome. It is the only series I wrote to any kind of trend (super-alpha multimillionaire boss, blonde virgin employee). I did that for Reasons (it was the book Faith was writing in Just in Time—to go along with a photo shoot featuring those two characters), and the books, especially the first one, sold very well—but they don't stick. People read FIERCE, thought "That was fun" (well, unless they thought "I hate Hope," which also happened), and went on to the next billionaire/virgin book.

Those books respond to promotion (Facebook ads, etc.) better than my other books do, because the audience is so defined, and the books hit that spot—but they don't stick.

The key to getting off the Churn Train? Books that stick.

That Churn Train can take you straight to the bank. Yes, it can. But it's not the only way to get there. The other way is to go after YOUR reader, to write YOUR brand of books instead of today's brand, and to present those books so they're clearly identifiable as (a) yours, and (b) a certain type of read.

NOTE: What I discuss below is not the only way. It's one way. It's something to try if you long to step off the writing/promoting treadmill. If you have a strong voice and some writing chops. And, perhaps, if you have some spirit of adventure and you want to make your own, more personal mark.

*Know your brand.
Author brand underlies all else.
Who are YOU as an author?
What are YOUR strengths?*

This way has worked for me. My first book has sold almost 150,000 copies in ebook, German edition, and audio. It came out almost five years ago, and it still sells well. (Even though, yes, it's my first fiction, and yes, that shows.) My top-selling book right now is over four years old, and it's currently ranked in the 700's on Amazon. It is the LAST thing from trendy. The absolute last. But it's sticky. Because it's a cool idea, it's presented intriguingly, and it's written hookily.

So here's my best advice.

Know your brand. Author brand underlies all else. Who are YOU as an author? What are YOUR strengths? What is a "Madison Kimberly" book? (I made up "Madison Kimberly." If that's your name, I don't mean you.) If you don't know the answer—spend some time thinking about it. Ask your readers. And, yes—read your reviews, however painful that is. Find out what isn't working. Fix it.





Knowing your brand and writing to it doesn't mean every book has to have the same sort of hero and heroine, the same tone, or be in the same genre. I write in three or four subgenres, even within series, and my books are quite different in tone. SILVER-TONGUED DEVIL, for example, Book 1 in the Portland Devils series, is funny and snappy and I guess you'd say—bold. Whereas Book 2, NO KIND OF HERO, has a bittersweet tone and a very reserved hero and heroine. That kind of difference among books is part of my brand. (Scary, because readers who love one book can feel very meh about the next, but part of what I like to do as a writer and what my reader enjoys.)

Your brand also isn't "bad boys" or "billionaires" or whatever specific thing you're writing right now. Dig deeper. Do you spring surprises on the reader, make them gasp in shock? Do you deal in realism in characters and situations, anchored in details, or are we strictly in fantasyland and archetypes? (Either thing can work.) Are you edgy, putting your reader on the verge of discomfort, or—not? For me, consent's a Thing. A great, big Thing. So I'll never put a reader in that uncomfortably-aroused-but-disturbed spot. It's a place I don't go. Other authors go to the bank on that spot. (And yes, it's fiction. Personal choice for author and reader.)

Know your genre. Know your reader. What is your reader reading for? I don't mean "hot guys" or "kissing scenes," I mean what emotions? From the beginning, I wanted to write "Calgon, take me away" books—a concept that resonated so deeply that, decades later, the Dixie Chicks had a hit with it.

The concept embodied in this song is the one that was embedded in my mind while I wrote JUST THIS ONCE. I knew it was a hooky idea. Calgon and the Dixie Chicks had already proven it. I wanted to write that concept for my reader, a reader like me—a smart woman with a demanding life—kids, job, and all the rest of it—who wanted to escape into a book. To feel good, not bad, except during the weepy moments. Who wanted to get stirred up at times and reminded that she was more than just a mom, but without any squicky feelings.

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It's usually

*(a) cover, and, more importantly,
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When I see writers talking about not selling well and not understanding why? It's usually (a) cover, and, more importantly, (b) not understanding what their reader's looking for. There's a world of difference between a good romance concept and an unappealing one. I see

questions a lot on forums like, "Can you write a romance hero who isn't strong and hot?" Well, sure, if you don't want to sell books. He doesn't have to be good-looking, and he definitely doesn't have to be perfect. But he sure does have to be strong and hot. Know your reader.

Show your brand. Your author name needs to be more visible than that "hot niche" branding. Every series does NOT have to look the same—check out my Escape to New Zealand covers vs. my Paradise, Idaho, Kincaids, and Portland Devils covers. All those are quite different, because the series are quite different in tone and content. But my author name is similar on all the covers, and the "look" of each series signals its tone.

Overall, I'm going for a clean look (I don't mean not sexy, I mean design-wise), and a look that would attract a reader who reads multiple genres (romance and others) or multiple types of romance. That's my reader. I'm also trying to tell her that the books are about more than the romance—that there are other layers to the books. Because that's my reader too.

Which brings us to . . .

Writing sticky. AKA "writing re-readable books."

*** (Note: what follows is NOT a claim that good books can't be written fast. It's my personal experience and my personal path.)***

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n order for the book to
have some richness...*

Many bestselling romance authors, as noted above, write eight or ten or fourteen books a year, where I can write only four or five. But when I've tried to push my pace, I've found that despite the fact that writing is pretty much all I do, my books stubbornly refuse to get thought up faster. My one experience where I started writing without really knowing my characters, without getting fully into their heads, was JUST GOOD FRIENDS. I was so afraid I wouldn't be able to write a second book, I jumped into it too fast. I finished it and was happy, but I sent it to my beta readers, and they said, "Ehhhh..." I was so upset! I'd only had one good book in me after all. Then I slept





on it and realized what the problem was. Kate's character wasn't developed enough, because I hadn't thought enough about what it would FEEL like to have been in her situation, to have been stalked and terrorized. Once I did, I rewrote the book, and you could see what she felt, where she was in her life, which informed her reactions and her decisions. I sent it out again, and guess what? It was a whole lot better.

Same thing with writing. It takes me 4-6 weeks to write a 100k (350-page) book once I start, and while that sounds fast to non-writers, for many romance writers it would be a snail's pace. But I find that I need a certain amount of time to write, edit, polish the prose—and most of all, time to think and let the book “rest,” to come back the next day and edit some more, to have the characters' reactions, on and off the page, unspool in my head, in order for the book to have some richness, for the other things to occur to me that make the book more, that make it better.

I'm not saying that all those who write faster aren't writing rich books with great character development. I'm saying that for me, there's a pace where that happens, and a pace where it doesn't. Find YOUR pace, and resist the urge to write 8K words a day if those won't be your best words. (If they are? Yay, you—go for it!) People say that the writing doesn't matter anymore. It does. That doesn't mean perfect mechanics. It means that the writing resonates at your readers' fundamental frequency.

How about other genres? Urban fantasy? Annie Bellet writes books that stick. She writes a book a YEAR right now—and they stick. Yet—skinny girl with blowing hair, check. Black leather pants, check. Glow colored light, check. BUT . . . her books are different. They stick.

Paranormal romance? Kristen Painter. Cozy mystery? Jana De Leon. Billionaire and virgin that veered from the norm? Brenna Aubrey. More examples of authors in “currently hot” genres who stick.

Character counts. Write at the pace where you can produce a multi-layered book, a book that can be read as a simple romance or mystery or whatever, but also on another level. For me, that other level tends to be personal growth toward courage and self-expression, and also family dynamics. It's writing characters who feel real. I strive to get better at that with every book, because those things are my brand, and it's by improving those that I connect better with MY reader.

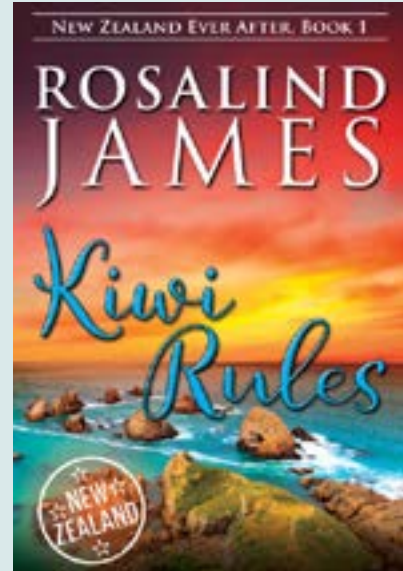
Write hooky. I'm gonna invoke myself here—my post on “How to Be Hooky,” which is my very best “craft” advice.

Your re-readable book. It's got that—the depth and “reality” of the characters, that they're people you remember after you finish the book. LaVyrle Spencer? I can still remember her characters literally 30 years after reading the book. THAT is voice. THAT is richness. Eva Ibbotson. Susan Elizabeth Phillips. Jennifer Crusie. And, of course, Jane Austen.

Then it's the flow, the ease of it, and the writing quality, too. It's some indefinable spark that makes that book come alive, where you're escaping into that world and just—immersed. Whether it's a thriller, a mystery, a historical

novel, a romance, a literary novel, you're THERE. As a writer, during that 4-6 weeks when I'm writing, I'm totally wrapped up in my book. I'm with the characters, believing that they're real, living in their heads and hearts. My goal, my dream, would be that I could transmit some of that “life” to my readers as well; that they could believe, for just a little while, that they were there, too. That's the sharing and connection that makes it all worthwhile for me.

And best of all? It's what keeps me off the Churn Train.



KIWI RULES

Afghanistan hadn't quite killed me. Karen Sinclair just might.

You don't find many too-pretty rich boys in the New Zealand Defense Force. Turns out there's a reason for that. Fortunately, you can find your true self in the oddest places. Of course, you can lose yourself in those places, too—at least some pieces of you.

Since I was back home with a new leg, some facial alterations, and time on my hands, I might as well help out my sister. Showing a potential buyer around some of New Zealand's quirkiest ecotourism sites, having a few adrenaline-fueled adventures? Fine. It wasn't like I'd never been camping, unlike the walking tornado that was Miss Karen Sinclair. Unfortunately, Karen had never heard of the phrase, “Let me get that,” let alone, “We don't have time.” She'd definitely never heard, “There's no more room in the car.”

And then there was the sexual frustration.

Buy *Kiwi Rules* [here](#)



I met my husband Rick at UC Berkeley when I was 21, so I really do believe in True Love and Happily Ever After—which helps a lot in writing about them! We renewed our vows a few years ago with the help of our two grown sons. Our home base when we're not having our own adventures is in Berkeley, California, where the summers are foggy and the food shopping is the greatest.

My husband's job as an engineer, and mine as a marketing consultant, have given us the opportunity to live in many different wonderful places in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand. During the latest stint, 15 months living and working in Auckland, I fell in love with New Zealand: the beauty and diversity of the landscape (not to mention the seascapes), the Maori culture and its integration into the country's life, and, perhaps more than anything, the people: modest, good-humored, unfailingly polite and hospitable, and so very funny. I wanted to share what I loved so much about the country with everyone I knew—and didn't know!

Four-Stage Reaction Diagnostics

Emma Bryson



Last month in Heart to Heart I introduced the concept of four-stage reactions and talked about the importance of the ‘visceral’ reaction stage in building reader empathy. But did you know that thinking of your work through the framework of the four-stage reaction is a great, simple way to treat problems in your work, too?

First up, let’s do a little revision and look at that four-stage reaction example again. Remember: we have our **emotion/visceral reaction**, then our **thought** and **decision**, followed by our **action**. This is one of the most procedural ways to explain the action and reaction cycle that cumulatively creates a scene.

FOUR-STAGE REACTION EXAMPLE:

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!”

Last month I also talked a little about how the stages we include and/or omit in a reaction cycle can influence pacing in action scenes and emotion in high-conflict romance. This month we’ll take this further still – to look at some common critique phrases and show how to treat these issues through the four-stage reaction framework and ‘surgical edits’ (adding/removing sentences or parts of sentences instead of rewriting whole paragraphs or scenes).

If your work is **lacking in deep point** of view or “I just didn’t connect with the characters.”

Chances are you need to add in more visceral reactions so your readers can ‘see’ your character’s emotions play out on the page. Make sure these inserted visceral reactions come directly after the action stimulus, as mixing up the order (thought/decision/emotion) creates distance and can make character’s reactions feel ingenuine. Take a look at the Mickey example when the visceral comes after the thought and decision:

“I’m sorry, Mickey... but Goofy... he’s—he’s dead!” Minnie sobbed.

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

It doesn’t quite ‘feel’ right, huh? And the action part of the visceral feels delayed, which in turn slows the pacing and, over the course of a whole scene like this, would make the scene drag. That’s why placing your visceral/emotional reactions as hard up against the action stimulus as you can is important: it reduces drag, increases pacing and makes the emotion feel more immediate and thus more genuine.

If your work **lacks action** or “I was lost and wondering what was actually happening.”

Likely you need to cut some of the thought/decision processes and stick to visceral and action. This is a very common mistake – either the deep POV isn’t there, or there’s too much of it all at once. (Or you see pages and pages of thoughts and then action scenes with very little deep POV – a ‘feast and famine’ manuscript.)

If your character is thinking about or processing some deep, potentially long-winded emotions, the best surgical edit you can do here is add in a scene-associated action to break up the internal thought. This might be as simple as adding in a character taking a sip of a drink, swiveling around on a chair, or hearing a bird chattering at a window – anything that helps reground the reader back into the physical place where the character is. A pure visceral here won’t work, as a heart can pump or leap in any old setting, so your reader will still be visually lost. Really think about what thinking/decisions are necessary and are propelling the plot, and what might be a bit gratuitous – often character can be demonstrated better through action/interaction than it can be through revealing the character’s deepest, darkest thoughts explicitly, anyway.

Often character can be demonstrated better through action/interaction than it can be through revealing the character’s deepest, darkest thoughts...

If your work **lacks engagement** or “I just couldn’t get into the story”.

Have a go at changing up your reactions within a scene to stop them from feeling repetitive/methodical – try a visceral and an action, then a visceral-thought-action combo, then just a couple of actions before adding a full four-stage visceral-thought-decision-action. Of all four, the ‘decision’ reaction is probably the least important – and can sound repetitive when the action closely matches the decision. Similarly, the ‘thought’ stage can feel repetitive, too, especially when it mirrors or explains the visceral in some way. Under-confident writers will often explain the visceral with a thought because they’re not confident that the visceral is enough to show the reader the emotion – even in my own writing, I’m guilty of this all too often!

EXAMPLE:

I flared my nostrils. That’s it! I’m angry and I’ve had enough! I’m going to have to tell this Bozo what’s what. “You know what’s what, Bozo?”

IN CONCLUSION

I hope this helps! Or at least gives you a clearer idea about what four-stage reactions are and how useful they are as a framework to assess and treat problems in a manuscript.

*...have a go at writing a scene
using four-stage reactions,
and/or grab a book and see
if you can deconstruct a scene...*

To really consolidate your learning, have a go at writing a scene using four-stage reactions, and/or grab a book and see if you can deconstruct a scene using the four-stage reaction framework. Do you notice visceral reactions or visceral phrases in books more often now? Have a go! Identifying and engaging critically with bestselling texts may well take your own writing to the next level.



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. You may have seen her rocking the RWNZ tradeshow :)

2019 Romance Writers of New Zealand Awards Dinner Speech

Soraya M. Lane



When I offered to be the MC for tonight, I had that familiar feeling in my stomach, the kind where butterflies are beating furiously. You see, as my wonderful daily writing companion (and friend) Yvonne Lindsay keeps telling me, I have imposter syndrome. Sometimes it’s easy to keep it at bay, and other times it can feel overwhelming. You see, in this case, I started to think of all the wonderful speakers I’ve heard at our awards dinners over the years, which leads to the little butterfly explosion of doubt.

To explain, imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a “fraud”. A recent study I read from the UK confirmed that two thirds of women interviewed had suffered from imposter syndrome at work in the past 12 months.

As women, we seem much more likely to suffer from imposter syndrome than men, and it’s something feminists have been calling a women’s problem for years. It’s often attributed to why women don’t believe in their success or have higher expectations of what their success should look like. You see, men achieve success, and they largely own it. If they have a bestselling novel or reach a certain level of success, they most often accept the fact. A woman has a bestseller, and what is she likely to say? I’ll tell you. In her mind she is thinking it was probably a fluke. I’ll never be able to write something great again. My editor will figure out I’m a fraud and I won’t get another publishing contract. Apparently Jodie Foster even had this feeling when she won an Oscar, believing she’d be figured out as a fraud and have to hand it back!





Now I know not all women are like this, but there are many of us who are! We find it hard to accept our success, and we find it even harder to OWN it. We are the least likely gender to sing it from the rooftops that we've been successful, perhaps due to the dreaded tall poppy syndrome. Even if someone points out how successful we are, we're far more likely to downplay it than smile and acknowledge it.

Last year, at a writing festival I attended, there was a very successful male author there. He was very good at owning his success. In fact, at drinks on the opening night, a chance for authors to meet and chat, someone was friendly and beckoned him over. "Hey," this friendly author said. And then to make conversation: 'What do you write?' You know what this guy said? This guy who knew literally NOONE at this festival and was being introduced for the first time to another bunch of authors? He didn't say his name, he didn't say what genre he wrote. He said, wait for it: Only the most successful book of 2018.

I'm not saying all men have egos this big, and for the record I, like most women here, write romance, and I LOVE men, but I also can't imagine a woman ever saying this! Incidentally, I did discover during my research that men do suffer from imposter syndrome, they just have a different way of showing it.

But times are changing for women. And this is a great thing. Do I think women should declare that they're the most successful author of the year or the highest earning author in their genre? No. But we do need to start owning our success and being proud to be successful women achieving great things in our chosen careers.

Do I think women should declare that they're the most successful author of the year or the highest earning author in their genre? No. But we do need to start owning our success and being proud to be successful women achieving great things in our chosen careers.

In this room tonight, we have New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal and Amazon Charts bestselling authors. We have an editorial director from one of the big 5 publishing houses in New York and an executive editor, too. We also have the vice president of a highly successful literary agency. And do you know what they all have in common? They're women. They are women with hugely successful careers, and I want you to join me in applauding them and every other women here in the audience tonight!!

When I said times are changing, I meant it. Recently, we have seen the #MeToo and the #TimesUp movements, which has been hugely powerful and indeed life changing for many women around the world. It has given a voice to women who have suffered sexual abuse, particularly in the workplace, and certainly in the entertainment industry. We have also seen the hugely powerful #OwnVoices movement, which has given a voice to so many women of colour, not to mention the LGBTQ community. This is powerful because it means that more women's voices than ever are being heard.

If we haven't been able to own our success in the past, surely now is the time to start believing in ourselves, in our voices, and the stories we want to tell. The #OwnVoices hashtag has spawned a huge change in publishing, with many editors and agents using the hashtag on social media, seeking out those voices and going on to publish those stories.

In a recent conversation I had with a film producer based in L.A., he said to me that at almost every meeting he was having, women were centre and forefront. He said that all the film studios and production companies were eager to tell women's stories – they wanted to cast women, they wanted to use female directors on those projects, and they genuinely wanted to embrace the aftermath of the #MeToo movement. Interestingly, he said that if he was able to produce my female driven novel into a movie, he only wanted a female director working on it.

I got off the phone with him excited by what felt like a huge industry change – for me, hearing the change firsthand like that was an exciting experience, and one I'll never forget.

While many critics might say that men still dominate the NYT bestseller list, there is evidence to suggest that publishing is becoming a women's game. In 2017, only one male writer made the top 10 bestselling author list in the UK, with Margaret Atwood declared the bestselling literary novelist of the year. In 2018 in a list of the highest earning authors worldwide, four women made the top 10. EL James, Nora Roberts and Danielle Steel all featured, with JK Rowling taking out the #2 spot. And guess what? Three of those top earning authors all write romance, which is certainly something to celebrate in this room!

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For me personally, I feel as if 2019 might well have been the best year for women in publishing yet. While the official top 10 lists are important, as is the highly influential NYT list, there is evidence to suggest just how well women are doing in the ebook market in particular. On Amazon's top 100 kindle books list, women regularly dominate. In fact, today when I was writing this speech, there were 58 female authors in that top 100 list, and you guessed it, many of them were romance authors.

Actresses and producers with a strong voice in their industry, such as Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman, have had a huge impact on this change in women's voices being heard. As those stories are translated from print into television or film, it normalises women's stories being told. That same producer I told you about earlier, he told me no one wants women in secondary roles right now, they want them front and centre.

One of the reasons I love my job, aside from the writing itself, is that I feel so surrounded and supported by women. My author friends are women. My editors are women. My editorial directors are women. My agent is a woman. My copy editors and proof readers, as well as my author liaison teams and cover designers are ALL women. And they're strong, powerful women in what was once a very male dominated industry. As research for an upcoming project, I have been researching female journalists in the 1940s, in particular women who had to write under male pseudonyms just to get their work published. Many of those women lost their jobs the moment their gender was discovered – they were simply not allowed in those roles.

I write both romance and women's fiction, and although I understand that some authors take offense to their work being labelled as women's fiction as opposed to just fiction, I actually like it. Because I'm writing fiction as a woman, for women, and I love that.

*One of the reasons I love my job,
aside from the writing itself,
is that I feel so surrounded and
supported by women.*

It has honestly never been a better time to be a woman, and I want to encourage each and every one of you to own your success. Try to make that conscious effort to hold your high and accept praise instead of shuffling away from it; smile and affirm the fact that you're successful if someone mentions an accolade instead of shying away from it; and most importantly, don't make excuses for your success.

When I hit a particularly exciting sales milestone recently, it was the first time I sat back and smiled, truly believing in my success. Instead of being paralysed by fear and believing it was a mistake, I owned it. I accepted that I'd worked hard, and that I deserved it. It hasn't been an easy road getting to that point, but the more I see other women succeed, and own their success, the more able I feel to own mine.

When I attended my first RWNZ conference approx. 15 years ago, I was very aware that I was surrounded by some very successful writers and industry professionals. Women who were achieving great things in the literary industry. It's one of the amazing things about attending this conference and other romance conferences around the world, because they are inclusive places where women can truly shine. It is an honour to be here tonight, to still be surrounded by powerful, professional, successful women, and I love that we come together each year. So let's continue to support one another, to allow each other to rise up and enjoy our successes, if not sing it from the rooftops!



THE GIRLS OF PEARL HARBOR

From the bestselling author of Wives of War comes a harrowing tale of four brave young nurses whose lives change forever in the wake of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

When Grace, April, and Poppy join the US Army Nurse Corps, they see it as little more than an adventure, one made all the better by their first station: Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Joined at the hip, idealistic Grace, exuberant Poppy, and brave but haunted April frolic in the sun, attending parties, flirting with the handsome soldiers, and becoming fast friends with seasoned nurse Eva. Like the Hawaiian sun, their future seems warm and bright—until the infamous morning of December 7.

Within just a few horrifying hours, their sparkling hopes turn to black rubble and ash. Now embroiled in a war they never could have imagined, they must decide what truly matters to them and face grief as they never have before. Death may await them—but so do hope and purpose. In the midst of the carnage, can they find happiness and learn to fight not just for their country's honor but for themselves?

Buy *The Girls of Pearl Harbor* [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!

RWNZ 2019 Conference Report

Anna Klein



Love and Other Journeys was a journey I was eager and ready to take! I had my flights booked in January, I had my conference tickets booked the day of release, and thankfully my leave from the day job was approved too. I was free to hop on a plane and reconnect with my writing tribe. This Aucklander is always keen to get out of the city and see the rest of the country, so I was very excited about my first time in Christchurch (and my second time to the south island ever, I know, it's terrible, I'm sorry, I'll visit more, I promise) First impressions were: it's very flat. Where are all your volcanos? Second impression was that it was not nearly as cold as I had been told. The sun was out, the breeze fresh, there was an abundance of daffodils. Christchurch certainly rolled out its finery for the welcome!

The venue, Chateau on the Park, was my favourite yet. The medieval castle aesthetic appealed to me greatly, I wished I'd done what my friend Michelle had and packed a medieval outfit for the dinner. How great is it when you can give directions that include, "then you cross the moat"? Aside from the fanciful decor, the rooms were super comfortable, the staff were nothing short of lovely and accommodating, and the coffee and pastries were waiting for us first thing in the morning as we blearily stumbled towards cold reads and morning plenaries. When they made up my room, they tucked my PJs under my pillow. Too cute.

Friday morning, we were set to spend the day with Sophie Jordan and her Dukes (that's the name of my new band). She was an engaging and energising speaker. Last year, Damon Suede bombarded us with knowledge and energy so frantically I don't think anyone drew in a single breath all day, but Sophie's style was more relaxed. Her passion for the writing shone, as she took us through openings,

heroines and avoiding the dreaded DNF. You could practically hear the entire room rewriting their manuscript beginnings as she walked us through her tips. She was both generous and kind with her feedback as she invited us to share our writing exercises with her the room. The standout moment from her keynote was when she shared why she thought romance was important. "I don't like to get political," she told us, her tone serious. "But writing romance is political. Writing romance is a political act." It resonated with me at the time, and since. Because as we learned recently, a genre (largely) for women (largely) by women is still considered by the world at large at best a curiosity, at worst considered worthy of scorn.

That evening the cocktail party was opened with a beautifully coordinated mihi whakatau, wherein members from Christchurch welcomed those visiting from other places to the whenua, complete with waiata and a karakia mō te kai. The theme for the party was "A Night with a Billionaire" but disappointingly, it was revealed there were no actual billionaires to be had. What there was to be had was a drinks tab and an ice-breaker bingo sheet. A roomful of introverts suddenly had reason to talk to each other and proudly announce which boxes they could sign - I found myself proudly announcing to strangers that I was left handed and had won NaNoWriMo. One guest who hadn't seen any of Game of Thrones was mobbed. We all searched for the elusive prize, that one person who didn't have Facebook. Two hours flew past and this introvert managed to somehow spend the entire time talking to people instead of awkwardly sidling towards the door thinking of getting an early night, so a very good job by the cocktail party team to make it an engaging night!

The Saturday dawned with more coffees and pastries, and we all compared our cool conference swag. The reusable coffee cup was many people's favourite because who doesn't love sustainability and caffeination in one? My conference goody-bag pen is the most OTT pen of all time, rose gold and capped with a giant faux pearl. I adore it. The new style conference lanyard deserves a special shout out, made of paper AND room to write all your workshops and pitch times on the back. Did I mention the badges? The only downside was there weren't enough badges to keep up with everyone's wide writing habits. But as a conversation starter and a way to express yourself, they were great. The front desk was always staffed by friendly, enthusiastic volunteers, so there was always someone to chat with if you had a question or if you were just perusing the book swap table (loved this, same again next year?). The Sunday lunchtime trade show too was a brilliant addition - with a wealth of talent in our writing community, and it is always inspiring to see row upon row of beautiful books by the NZ romance writing community.

Saturday and Sunday were, as always, filled with valuable workshops on every aspect of being an author, from writing and editing craft, to marketing and branding. International guests and our homegrown talent generously shared their knowledge, and most of us wished we could be in more than one workshop at a time. There were presentations from the visiting agencies and publishers, introducing us to their visions of romance and the upcoming trends they



were treated to a bonus workshop, a choice of hearing from Dan Woods of Draft2Digital, or having the traditional publishing journey demystified by Harlequin. Both afternoons there were happy raffle winners as amazing prizes generously donated by the RWNZ community found new homes.

Laura Kaye's keynote on the Saturday morning was an important and effective reminder that no success comes without struggle, even if those struggles are unseen. As she recounted her meteoric rise from brain injury to four published novels in her debut year and onwards, I sank lower and lower in my seat thinking of my own (much) less impressive debut year, and began to wonder if I was in the wrong place. "That's one version of the story," she said, and told us the other half, the unseen half, the half we don't put on Instagram but that creates a bond between us writers. We know there's no happily ever after (or for now) without conflict and struggle, and that is as regrettably true in reality as in fiction. Mel Storm's honest recounting of her her turbulent journey with life and fiction was a definite encouragement to anyone who is trying to tell stories while life is crashing and burning alongside it. Both Mel and Laura gave excellent workshops. Laura Kaye's "Writing at Every Length" was a wonderful mix of both craft tips and marketing tips: not just how to write in a shorter or longer form, but how mixing lengths could be effectively used in your career. One hour was not enough time with Mel and her immense knowledge on data, but I did learn that I have... a heck of a lot to learn!

While Laura Kaye's talks, and Sophie Jordan on beginnings, were my highlight from a professional learning perspective, my highlight from a social perspective was the awards dinner. I love celebrating the successes of the community, and the formal dinner brings a fantastic sense of ceremony to the occasion. The atmosphere was immediately festive with the fun props and decorations on the tables, with the assortment of costumes worn, and with the rainbow "love wins" sashes celebrating LGBTQIA+ romance. There was a live band, and there were dances to learn, and it turns out the song that gets the most romance writers away from their dessert and onto the dancefloor is "(I Would Walk) 500 Miles". It was Soraya Lane's powerful speech about owning our success as women that was the high point of the night for me. Her words were an invitation and an exhortation to feel proud of our achievements, our writing, and our genre. She imbued what we do with the gravitas that our craft deserves. It put me in mind of the quote from Maya Angelou: "Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women."

Soraya's speech echoing in my ears, I watched a hall full of romance writers celebrating each other's success, each other's journeys, each other's presence. Celebrating a moment in time when our journeys were brought together, where we - craftspeople most often found working alone - came together as a community. I reflected that my RWNZ journey had helped me find a craft I love, and a tribe that supports it. And I celebrated that.



AS SWEET AS HONEY

Chelsea Lambert is an unhappy receptionist, working for Honey, a glitzy dating website that she thinks is more than a bit sleazy. But she's got bills to pay, especially if she wants to avoid her manipulative aunt's clutches. She didn't plan on spilling her views on Honey to the handsome stranger who rescued her from being late for work - and she certainly didn't plan on him being the gold-plated sleazebag she was mocking - yet here she was, ready for the earth to swallow her up.

Neil O'Connell, a Californian businessman, thought New Zealand would be an idyllic escape. The perfect place to get some space, avoid his past and definitely to avoid complicated attachments. When he is the unwitting target of Chelsea's vitriolic diatribe, he unexpectedly finds himself having complicated feelings, the exact kind he needs to avoid.

When Chelsea's aunt puts pressure on her to find a rich husband for her cousin, Chelsea sees an opportunity. She proposes a deal to Neil: three dates with her glamorous cousin, who is the perfect match for him. And three dates with her. Three dates to show she can't be dazzled with dollars. Three dates to prove they don't belong together.

It's just three dates. What could go wrong?

Buy *As Sweet As Honey* [here](#)



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



RWNZ 2020 Conference

21-23 August 2020

Waipuna Conference
Centre, Auckland

Whether you like the sweet, the saucy, or the scandalous, the 2020 RWNZ Conference will offer you another chance to learn craft, develop business skills and network the hell out of a fantastic opportunity to connect with your peers. You're going to have fun too!

2020 is all about dreaming big – big stories and big careers. That's why our 2020 theme is "Get out of my dreams, get into my book." As a writer, you pour your dreams into your books and the words you write entertain, provoke and inspire readers to pursue their own dreams.

With our theme in mind, we've worked hard to find speakers who will offer something to all members of the organisation, no matter what kind of stories you craft. We've sourced well-established and up-and-coming voices across different genres and from both traditional and self-publishing. These speakers have all made their own dreams a reality and they're going to inspire you to do the same.

Announcing the key speakers for the 2020 RWNZ Conference!!

Jennifer Ashley



Jennifer Ashley is a New York Times bestselling author of more than 100 novels and novellas in romance, mystery, fantasy and historical fiction. She also writes as Allyson James and Ashley Gardner. Her books have been translated into more than a dozen languages and have earned starred reviews from Booklist and Publisher's Weekly.



Crystal Kaswell!



Crystal writes fun, sexy new adult romances with damaged heroes and the strong women who unlock their hearts. She is a USA Today and Wall Street Journal bestseller. Her Sinful Serenade and Dangerous Noise series follow the men in a rock band and the women they love. She adores writing bad boys, alpha males and tortured heroes (and sometimes men who are all three).

Crystal and Jennifer will both feature in the Friday workshops to bring you DEEP CRAFT sessions on plot, character, POV and tension.



Jaymin Eve!



Jaymin Eve is the Wall Street Journal and USA Today Bestselling author of paranormal, reverse harem and urban fantasy romance filled with epic love stories, great adventure and plenty of laughs. She lives in Australia with her husband, two beautiful daughters and a couple of crazy pets. To date, she has sold close to two million ebooks and still can't believe that she gets to create fantasy worlds as a job.

Jaymin will be offering some amazing breakout workshops paranormal writers will NOT want to miss.



And... you!

RWNZ conferences are so much more than great speakers and suggestive cocktails – it couldn't happen without YOU! You bring your energy, your expertise and your dreams to make each conference a success.

And if you don't know us yet - your 2020 Conference organisers are...



Steff Green, Programme Director and Co-Convenor. Steff is a USA Today bestseller and award-winning writer of paranormal romance, as well as the founder of a supportive online community for writers called Rage Against The Manuscript. She's been to lots of New Zealand and International Romance conferences so is an excellent resource for making magic happen!



Linda Shaw, Logistics Manager and Co-Convenor. Complete newby, unpublished and just completing her first manuscript in the Mature Contemporary Steamy genre. Linda has extensive experience in event management, professional speaking, marketing/ promotion and workshop delivery.

We're working hard behind the scenes to make all your author dreams come true. We have some REALLY exciting surprises to reveal over the next year, including an editor who will knock your socks off. Keep an eye on H2H every month for more conference announcements.

**REGISTRATIONS WILL OPEN EARLY NEXT YEAR.
CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU THERE!**

Formatter's note: For the first time we have a blank half page I have no idea what to do with... Seems to me this calls for a RWNZ2019 Cocktail Party Photo Montage! Enjoy! ♥

News from the President

Susan Sims



This is my very first President's Report and I'd like to thank Kendra, Vivienne and all the Exec team who have done such a great job over the past year.

I also want to thank Mel and the 2019 Conference Committee who pulled together an excellent conference in Christchurch. My brain is full of ideas from the terrific speakers, and the clear need to make massive changes to my wip is almost as daunting as the president's role.

I'm really excited to come into the President's role, and hope I'm up to the task of helping the organisation. Like so many RWNZ members, I have a full-time day job, as a Director of Development for a not-for-profit, and my work background is management of programs, marketing, and conference and events, variously based in Sydney, New York and Dunedin.

Fortunately there's a wonderful team that's joining me for this journey. They bring a wide set of skills and, along with the 2020 conference committee, we'll all work hard to continue to keep RWNZ strong and vibrant.

As many of you know, we've had some significant challenges around an article that The Press and Stuff have published by an attendee at conference that had not declared her attendance as a member of the press. Unfortunately she did not disclose her intention to record, attribute or quote people she spoke to or listened in on. There is a response to the article posted on both our main and members only Facebook pages and we are in touch with Stuff over what we believe is a clear breach of ethics. We have put together a considered, measured and thorough response as the representatives of our very smart and professional members. We will let everyone know the upshot of this.



From the Editor:

Gillian St. Kevern



As I write this, it's been a week and a bit since conference. A lot has happened in that time! As a group, we're still digesting the Stuff article and deciding how best to respond. Like many of our members, I have strong feelings about this for a number of reasons, but not least because of the timing. Saturday the article came out. Sunday, the official exec handover took place. The article has overshadowed the latter, and so I'm hoping to correct that a bit with my editorial!

First off, I'd like to acknowledge our outgoing exec—Kendra, Kate, Emma, Bronwen and Vivienne, thank you so much for contributing your time, energy and passion to RWNZ! I'm sure that for all that we've seen you do, there were hours and hours of unseen work. This executive and others to follow will benefit from your hard work and organisation.

I can also say that we may not have had the most auspicious of starts, but I've got a lot of confidence in the new exec! We've only had the one meeting so far, but I'm really impressed with Susan's judgement and ability to keep us focused, and Josie's ability to represent us publicly. We're really lucky to have Tania remaining with us as treasurer and Zoe staying on the exec but changing roles to be our new secretary. New vice-president Mollie could not join us unfortunately, but judging by her emails she brings a lot of enthusiasm to her role. And then there's me!

I'm still coming to grips with the role of membership secretary. I spent a good portion of tonight wrestling with email logins and dropbox. I won, eventually, but it took me a while. I anticipate that it is going to take me at least a few months to feel fully confident in my new role. And that's okay. It will take us, as an executive, a couple of months to figure out our goals and get a sense of what we can do as a team, but we'll get there.



Gillian accepting their Jean Drew Volunteer of the Year Award

As I said at the cocktail party, I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to hold the volunteer positions I have, because I get to work with all of you. With the support and encouragement of our members, whether judges who sign up in response to desperate posts even though they're super busy, conference committee members who organise Heart to Heart pieces for me because they know I've got a lot on my plate, amazing Heart to Heart contributors especially those who send in pieces on a regular basis, I'm able to accomplish so much more than I ever could alone. I take a lot of satisfaction out of bringing you each new issue of Heart to Heart, or seeing a contest—and now a conference—through to a successful close. But I know that I couldn't do any of these things by myself. I encourage everyone, particularly those who don't think they have anything to offer, to volunteer and get involved with RWNZ anyway. You'll be surprised what you are capable of when you have this group behind you!

To the surprise of no one who was at the cocktail party, I'm getting a bit weepy typing this (spoilers: it turns out I am easily flustered and get very emotional when talking about our amazing volunteers!). So thank you, outgoing exec for everything you've done. Thank you incoming exec, for everything you're going to do. Thank you to the conference committee, for an incredible eighteen months, thank you Christchurch chapter and our conference volunteers for your support, and to everyone who was willing to embrace our vision and journey with us. Thank you to our contest coordinator, managers and judges. Thank you every one for making RWNZ the group of welcoming, supportive, focused and encouraging writers that it is. As a group, we are able to achieve great things. I'm really excited to see what we're going to do in the coming year. Let's take a cue from Linda and Steff, and dream big—both as individuals and an organisation.

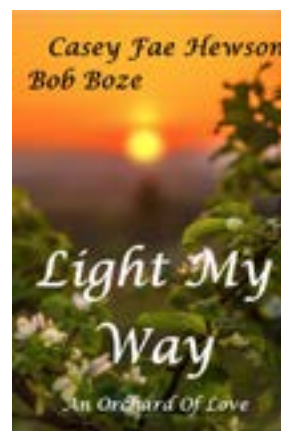
Thank you!

Your very weepy editor.

Woos and Hoos



Congratulations to all the brave souls who pitched or participated in Cold Reads at conference this year. It's not easy putting your work and yourself out there like that, and you can and should feel very proud of yourselves for taking risks for the sake of your work. Go you!



Robyn Bennet, writing as Casey Fae Hewson, and Bob Boze's co-authored book, *Light My Way* is now available on Amazon. Can Ciara recover from the devastating loss of her husband, Logan? Can Aidan, the firefighter who desperately tried to save her husband, open her heart and help her love again?

Buy *Light My Way* [here](#)



An upcoming release from a Christchurch chapter member! Can an impoverished orphan ever marry a duke? Eva Shepherd's book *Beguiling the Duke*, the first in a three book series, will be released by Harlequin Historical on October 19.

Buy *Beguiling the Duke* [here](#)



Kathryn Taylor, writing as Amy Talbot, has some exciting news. The Wild Rose Press are publishing her romantic trilogy 'The Accidental Billionaires.' The world-wide release date for *Reclaiming Paradise*, the first in the series, was August 28th. Congratulations, Kathryn!

Buy *Reclaiming Paradise* [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.

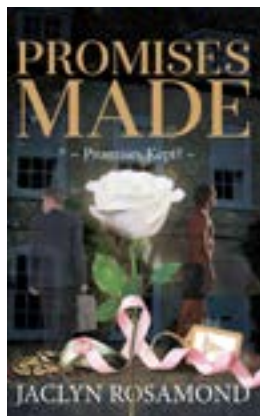
Woos and Hoos



Member Merrin Tait has a fun new release, *The Year of the Fox*! When Nancy Myers starts her New Life in the mountains of New Zealand with a wild leap of faith and a cordless drill in her back pocket, she discovers that:

- a) making stuff up as you go along tends to bite you in the arse
- b) men who look good in gumboots are Dangerous
- c) it's a good idea to keep an eye out for the neighbours when you bathe naked in your sheep trough

Buy *The Year of the Fox* [here](#)



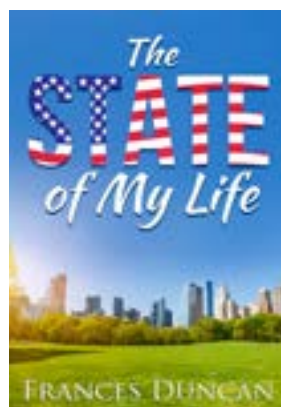
Jaclyn Rosamond is excited to announce the release of her first book - *Promises Made, Promises Kept* - a contemporary women's fiction novel published by Amazon. What would you do if your brand new husband suddenly wanted to rewrite the rules of your relationship and you're no longer included? Newly married, Rose has expectations that *Promises Made* mean *Promises Kept*, but Eddie has other ideas.

Buy *Promises Made* [here](#)



MARRIED FOR THE MORTGAGE, Maree O'Brien's first attempt at self publishing, is now available on Amazon and is entered into the StorytellerUK2019 competition. This contemporary romance with a side of humor centres on a couple who meet on a disastrous Tinder date and find that they have only one thing in common, the desire to get onto the property ladder. This first step can be easily taken if they are prepared to say two words 'I do', but they soon find the next steps aren't so easy.

Buy *Married for the Mortgage* [here](#)



On the 1st of October, Frances Duncan is publishing *The State of My Life*. Susan hopes to escape memories of her dead husband by flying around the world to visit Sophie in New York. Her oldest friend should be able to help her deal with Henry's death, except ten years leaves their once tight friendship strained.

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.

Congratulations to the 2019 Pacific Hearts winners and finalists:

1st Grace Under Fire by Jennifer Raines
2nd Little Blue Box by Frances Dall'Alba
3rd Finding Solace by Catherine J Hudson
4th The Film Star and the Fashionista by Sonya Leowen
(Wendy & Leonie Wethey)



Congratulations to the winners and finalists of our Koru awards:

LONG ROMANCE:

1st Emily Larkin - Primrose and the Dreadful Duke
2nd Zoe Chant - Stealing the Snow Leopard's Heart
2nd Zoe Piper - The Sweetest Song
4th Jude Knight - The Realm of Silence
5th Soraya Lane - Cowboy Stole My Heart



SHORT ROMANCE:

1st Fiona McArthur - Holly's Heart
1st Janet Elizabeth Henderson - Can't Tie Me Down
3rd JC Harroway - Her Dirty Little Secret
4th Jude Knight - House of Thorns



NOVELLA:

1st Alissa Callen - The Purple Hills
2nd Jayne Castel - Winter's Promise
2nd Joanne Dannon - A Christmas Kiss in London



BEST FIRST (DEBUT) BOOK:

1st Jena Petrie – Gold Medal Hero
Finalist WA Cooper - Decree Absolute



BEST OVERALL

Emily Larkin - Primrose and the Dreadful Duke

2020 Romance Writers of Australia Conference Workshop Submissions

Workshop submissions for Romance Writers of Australia's 2020 conference in Fremantle, Western Australia, are open now! The conference will be held from 14–16 August at the Esplanade Hotel Fremantle by Rydges. It promises to be a wild and wonderful event with Lisa Cron, author of *Story Genius* and *Wired for Story*, and New York Times bestselling author Heather Graham already confirmed.

The conference team is looking for local and international talent to present sessions on beginner and advanced writing craft, business, research and industry. This will also be an inclusive and diverse conference, and we encourage submissions that cover a broad range of topics including gender, sexuality, age, and subgenre.

To add your submission, please visit <https://forms.gle/193QRpbxYdC8Qf5n6> and submit your proposal before 30 September 2019. Successful presenters will be notified by 31 October 2019 and must confirm their participation by 30 November 2019. The program will be announced February 2020.

For more information visit www.romanceaustralia.com.

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!



Marie Force might have missed out on a RITA this year, but she's still happy to share her story and why she's a force to be reckoned with.

Beloved Kiwi author, Nalini Singh is always generous with her time and inspiration and she dishes in out in loads in this chat.



Last year at RWNZ conference I got to chat with Bella Andre and I still regard this as one of my all time favourite chats.

And way back when I first started this podcast I talked to Leeanna Morgan. Another Kiwi doing big things from a small country.



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!



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 :

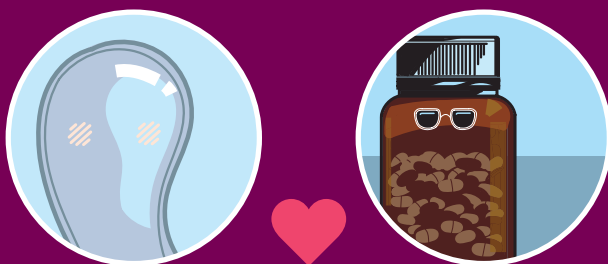
heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz



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The Welcome Mat

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



Joanne Boog, Auckland
Gayle Ash, Overseas
Skye Bothma, Wellington
Andrea Koedijk, Wellington
Alison Brideson, Overseas
Nicky Webber, Central North
Lenore Nash, Wellington
Kathryn Stewart, Central North
Jillian Hathway, Auckland
Denise Quinn, Auckland
Tamsin Kingston, Auckland
Bronwyn Turner, Overseas



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](#)

This month's meeting took place on Saturday 3 August at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion. We had twenty nine attendees at the meeting this month - it was lovely to see all of you.

We were lucky to have the fabulous SPA Girls as our speakers for this month. Cheryl, Wendy and Shar presented a lively workshop on all things Self-Publishing 101. Topics covered included researching your genre, investing in a professional quality book cover, wide vs exclusive publishing, the importance of marketing, newsletters and websites and advertising basics. This is by no means an exhaustive list but the presentation was very informative and gave an excellent base for understanding how to have success when self-publishing your books.

A huge thank you to the SPA Girls - Cheryl, Wendy and Shar - for presenting your workshop to the Auckland Chapter.

Our next meeting will be held on Saturday 7 September at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. Speaker details - TBA.

HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Debbie Williams](#)

WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Jane Ashurst](#)

13 of us met at Tracey & Fred's gorgeously refurbished house in Wellington, on Saturday 10 August. It was another stormy day outside (OMG the hailstorm!!!), but we were cosy indoors. We welcomed brand new member Linda Nevin.

This month on the agenda:

Monthly round robin catch up

Gudrun's Word Game (I haven't laughed so hard in ages!)

Save and Protect: Back up options with Fred Alvarez

Cold reads

KU or wide? Tracey reported back on 3-months of KU

Conference Q&A for first timers

NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

We had five members present for our 2pm August meeting at Nick Smith's rooms on Quarantine Road Nelson.

There was a big round of yahoos for Jaclyn Rosamond as she presented her fresh off the press first book. It looks fabulous. Congratulations and well done Jaclyn.

It was a great meeting with valuable input from everyone. We discussed author platforms, author websites, some promotional materials, particularly the value of bookmarks to hand out to your book buyers, getting your book into libraries and looking at different ways to get your book printed if you are self-publishing.

For our next meeting in September we will be debriefing about our experiences at the August conference.

New members always welcome!

Regional Round-Up Reports

CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

The Christchurch chapter met on Sunday 18th August at the capacious meeting room in Turanga, our central library.

We held a two hour Cold Reads session in preparation for Conference.

Amy opened with helpful and sensitive guidelines based on her experience of giving writer

feedback to others, enabling us to give the most effective responses in our discussion.

A valuable reading and feedback episode then ensued as we packed in plenty of reviewing into the time.

Good preparation was made for final amendments to our story openings, and a deeper appreciation of both varied and

effective hooks and beginnings.

OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Bel Macfie](#)

Coast to Coast August Meeting

We held our August meeting at Mollie Smith's (RWNZ incoming vice-president) house and we hadn't laughed so much in ages!!

In a world where information is available on line, and data mining is rife I wonder what information governments have about writers? Can you imagine it? If anyone has watched the Netflix movie/doco 'the great hack' they reckon that in the USA they have 5000 points of information about each citizen. Perhaps writers should come with a warning label, or a disclaimer such as "I am a writer please ignore my google searches". What info would the government have about you and your preferences?

Our workshop topic was Overcoming writers block

"You can't think yourself out of a writing block; you have to write yourself out of a thinking block." - John Rogers

BLenheim AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)