

How to Use Facebook to Sell Books

Jayne Castel



For years I have subscribed to the idea that Social Media is far better for engagement rather than selling books – and I still believe that. If you set up a Facebook author page, Instagram and Twitter account with the only purpose of promoting your work, and then proceed to post predominantly about your novels, you're not likely to see many sales as a result. In fact, you're more likely to feel as if you're sending out your posts to a void, with no likes, shares, or comments – and certainly no new readers!

However, I do think that your Facebook author page can be a powerful tool, once you have an engaged group of loyal readers following you there. Here are some tips I have employed, which have made my Facebook author page a vital part of my author marketing.

- You'll hear advice that you don't need a Facebook author page until you actually have a few books out – but it's never too early to start connecting with potential readers. Initially, just focus on engagement, so you build up a group of loyal followers who enjoy your posts and interact with you.
- You don't need legions of followers. I only have under 300 followers on my author Facebook page, and yet my posts get a lot of engagement. Focus on quality rather than quantity.

- Check whether Facebook is actually your audience. I write Historical Romance and that's where my readers hang out. But if you write in a different romance sub-genre, your readers might be elsewhere, like Instagram.
- Before you start posting, think about your BRAND. I.e.: What message about yourself are you trying to put out there. Take your cue from the type of books you write (or will be writing). For example, if your books are sexy, sassy, and snarky – make your posts like that. If you write something light and fluffy with cats in it ... start posting cute cat photos! ;-) I write Historical Romance with distinctive Scottish settings, and many of my stories are based on real historical figures and events – as such a great number my posts are scenic and/or inspirational pics of Scotland as well as links to articles on Dark Ages, Anglo-Saxon, and Medieval British History.
- I try to use the 80/20 rule – sharing 80% fun content that appeals to my target audience but doesn't promote my books, and 20% posts relating to sneak peeks, cover reveals, free or discount promotions, new release or preorder alerts to do with my books.
- Posts that aren't related to your books generally get a better engagement – especially if they ask questions and are directly aligned with what your target audience likes. E.g. recently I shared a post of ancient Scottish standing stones, with the question 'what's the oldest place you've visited' – and got a lot of engagement.
- Make sure that your posts have great images – try to include images with every post (use public domain pictures if you don't own the rights and don't post anything that you don't have the rights to ... i.e. images from Pinterest).
- Create pretty graphics (Canva is good for this) to go with your bookish posts – create a template and try to go for the same 'look' so that you start to build a 'brand' in the minds of those following your page.
- Consider the either posting video updates onto your Facebook author page, or doing regular Facebook Live videos – as this can help build engagement. For the last year and a half, I have been doing a weekly Facebook Live broadcast on my page. What do I talk about? I discuss current or upcoming projects, read snippets of a new release, run paperback giveaways, answer reader questions, and give my thoughts on various aspects of the writing process. Of course, going on camera isn't for everyone. It helps in the beginning to write a few notes to get you started (in case you get nervous and blank). It also helps to have a theme for each video. I'm naturally shy, but find that I love chatting away on camera. Try it and see if it suits you.



- Once you build engagement on your page you can create a closed Facebook reader group too – but be aware this can be quite a bit of work to maintain.

HOW TO CONVERT ALL THIS ENGAGEMENT INTO SALES

If you do most of the above over a period of around six months, you're ready to take your Facebook author page to the next level – using it as an effective marketing tool to generate sales.

This is how I do it:

- Involve your followers in the book creation, editing, and launch process. Keep them consistently updated so you build anticipation. That way, when you put up the preorder or launch posts, they're eager to click on the Amazon link without any prompting from you.
- Use 'boosted' posts to promote selected posts, which will give them a wider reach and bring new people to your page. Once you've built up a following, boosted posts can actually sell some books for you!
- Using Facebook Ads and boosted posts is a huge subject so I won't go into it in detail here. These days, I've been focusing on using boosted posts rather than Facebook Ads. The general advice is that these aren't as effective as ads, but I have found the opposite of late. Recently, I listened to a podcast with author Lindsay Buroker, who also successfully uses boosted posts to help promote her books on her author Facebook page. If it works for her!
- I wouldn't bother with boosted posts if you haven't released a book yet. However, using it for targeted posts once you've got something ready to release can work really well
- I tend to use Facebook boosted posts for a few reasons. The first is that they're easy, the second is that unlike the ads, they help generate engagement on your page, and the third is that they're cheaper, and the fourth is that they're actually quite effective at selling – hence I only boost posts where I'm actually promoting a book, or providing something 'high value' that I want to share.
- Spend some time building an 'audience' for your boosted posts – really think about who your audience is and narrow the focus whenever possible.
- Build a strategy around your advertising – don't just randomly boost posts without a plan behind it. E.g. I only boost preorder, free promo, sneak peeks of upcoming release, or new release alert posts.

My Facebook author page has become the place where my readers get to connect with me online. Many prefer of them it to email, and it also gives them the opportunity to chat with other readers too so they feel part of something. Once you have a community of avid readers who keep dropping in to 'say hi', letting them know when you've got a new book available isn't about pushing your work on them, but about doing them a favour. They've been waiting for that post! All you have to do is lay the groundwork.



BLURB

A widowed clan-chief, a knife-wielding nun, and a once in a lifetime love. A sweeping, epic tale of second chances and forbidden love in Medieval Scotland—from the author of the Amazon best-selling Brides of Skye series.

Gavin MacNichol once broke Annella Fraser's heart.

After he ended their affair to wed her elder sister, Ella fled her home and took the veil. Eighteen years later, she's shocked to find herself face-to-face with the man she's never forgotten, or forgiven.

Recently widowed, Gavin has lived with regret all these years. He wed for duty, not for love. But when he escorts Sister Ella of Kilbride home to visit her ailing mother, he realizes that the passion he once felt for Ella still burns—hotter than ever.

Yet Ella is forbidden. She's sworn her life to the Cluniac order, and is determined to resist the emotional response Gavin's nearness provokes in her.

It's only when Ella falls foul of the tyrant who controls the fate of her beloved abbey that Gavin and Ella's lives become entwined once more.

But, this time, their fate is one that neither can run from.

UNFORGOTTEN is Book #1 in The Sisters of Kilbride series set in 14th Century Isle of Skye, Scotland. Readers who enjoy Diana Gabaldon, Cecelia Mecca, and Donna Fletcher will love this heart-felt Scottish Medieval Historical Romance.

Buy *Unforgotten* [here](#)



Award-winning author [Jayne Castel](#) writes Epic Historical and Fantasy Romance. Her vibrant characters, richly researched historical settings and action-packed adventure romance transport readers to forgotten times and imaginary worlds.

Reading Blind

Bonnie Mosen



Imagine not being able to read your favourite RWNZ member's newest book or having to wait months or years for the next installment in a romantic suspense series to be available in a format you can access.

For blind and low vision readers, or those who can't read print material for other reasons, reading isn't as simple as walking into a bookstore or clicking buy on Kindle. It's estimated that only five to seven percent of printed material is accessible to the print impaired. What this means for authors is a significant audience is missing out on their work.

So, how do the blind and low vision read, and how can authors ensure their work can be enjoyed by everyone?

Today's technology has made reading easier than ever before. Most of us have Kindles or other e-reading devices or their equivalent on our smart phones. Screen reading software—such as Voice Over on Apple products enable readers who can't see the screen to listen to the text.

Books produced in e-pub format—the standard for digital publishing, are easily accessed this way by the print impaired. Low vision readers use screen magnifiers to enlarge or change the contrast of text for easier reading.

A Braille reader has only to connect a refreshable Braille display to their device for a more hands-on reading experience. The use of audio books is on the rise and many authors are choosing this platform along with e-publishing.

But there is still a huge gap in accessible reading materials.

Seventy percent of the blind and low vision population are unemployed. Kindles, smart phones, and Audible subscriptions can be expensive, and there aren't many government or private subsidies to purchase these luxury items.

The Talking Book programme for the blind has been around since the 1930s. Professional narrators record books and magazines for free distribution to eligible patrons. These recordings can only be played on special devices not readily available to the commercial market.

Due to copyright issues, refusal by publishers to provide the books, or sighted librarians deeming content too risqué for blind readers, the selection of books has always been somewhat limited.

The Marrakesh Treaty, recently signed by NZ, provides an international legal framework for copyright exceptions that allows for the reproduction, distribution and cross-border exchange of copyright works in accessible formats – such as braille, audio and large print books – between countries signing the treaty, meaning any book can be made accessible for the print impaired.

Geraldine Lewis, Library Manager for Blind Low Vision NZ, says this will allow eligible Kiwis to have access to thousands of books they didn't have access to before.

"We produce over 100 books per year with a distribution of about 4,000 patrons, but the wait for copyright permission often took years." Ms Lewis says romance is the most popular genre among members, and they would love to hear from NZ authors wishing to have their books added to the library.



Bonnie Mosen is a Georgia Peach, who has had the privilege of living all over the South and East Coast of the United States.

While living in Boston, she fell in love with a Kiwi and was whisked off to Wellington with three humongous suitcases, two laptops, and her Seeing eye dog.

By day, Bonnie works for Blind Low Vision NZ as a vision rehabilitation counsellor, and by night—and possibly during tea breaks, conjures up hunky heroes and strong heroines she hopes to one day see in print.

In her spare time, she enjoys reading, writing, and discovering new coffee shops.

She is a member of the Wellington-Kapiti chapter of RWNZ.

For more information on accessibility visit www.blindlowvision.org.nz

Creating Compelling Characters

Iola Goulton



At my first-ever writing conference (not an RWNZ conference!), I attended a session on characterisation. The presenter handed out a long list of questions to help us get to know our characters: favourite colour, favourite food, name of their childhood pet. I suspected most of the information was irrelevant. Now I'm sure.

I've since read articles or books encouraging writers to use things like personality assessments and love languages to develop characters. Those methods may provide some insight, but I've yet to find a single resource that offers the One Ring of characterisation. As such, it's probably not surprising that characterisation is one of the main issues I see in the manuscripts I assess and edit. Damon Suede agrees:

Want to know why characterisation is so critical for fiction? What makes it so difficult and why so few writing guides dig into its challenges? Characters are not faces, but forces ... Stories don't depict human personalities, but human action, people wanting things and working past obstacles to achieve and/or acquire them.

In that final sentence, Suede reveals two of the cornerstones of great fiction:

1. People wanting things.
2. Working past obstacles.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER WANT?

All the writing experts agree with Suede: your character should want something. Debra Dixon (GMC: Goals, Motivation, Conflict) refers to this as the goal. Brandilyn Collins (Getting into Character) calls it the Desire. Nancy Kress (Character, Emotion & Viewpoint) says:

It is an absolute rule (and fiction has very few of them) that someone must want something, or you don't have a story ... it is your job as a writer to make sure we always know what those character's goals are.

But it's not enough for the character to want something (or more than one thing). The reader needs to know why they want that thing.

WHY DOES YOUR CHARACTER WANT THIS?

Knowing why a character wants something helps us relate to the character as a person. Debra Dixon refers to this as the motivation. If we can't see the motivation (or, worse, if the motivation feels like something the author has created to push the story forward, not something that comes out of the character's inner being), then it's hard to care about the character. And if we don't care, we stop reading.

In Story Genius, Lisa Cron says:

Understanding the motivation behind what someone does is what give it meaning.

Character actions have to have a believable motivation. Show the reason, and the reader will go along for the ride. Otherwise, the reader will be wondering why the character didn't do the obvious (a problem I often see when I read). Debra Dixon says:

When someone tells you that your story isn't believable, it isn't because you sent the characters to a space planet ... it's because your GMC wasn't appropriate to your characters. What the reader is telling you is, "I didn't believe these people would find themselves in this situation or make these decisions."

Brandilyn Collins encourages authors to find their character's motivation in their deep inner values:

Inner values are the core truths of the character. They define the person's worldview. They drive his or her desires or actions.

Worldview can also be called values, theme, or backstory. Lisa Cron (Wired for Story) encourages writers to explore the character's backstory:

The best place to start working on a story is by pinpointing the moment long before, when she first fell prey to the inner issue that's been skewing her worldview ever since.

This inner issue is usually referred to as the emotional wound, or the lie the character believes (or lies. In real life, most of us experience more than one emotional wound).

WHAT IS THE EMOTIONAL WOUND?

Ackerman and Puglisi (The Emotional Wound Thesaurus) define emotional wounds as the negative experiences in our pasts that cause deep psychological pain. They say:

If we want our characters to come across as authentic and believable to readers, we need to understand their backstories ... understanding the pain they've experienced is necessary to creating fully formed and compelling characters.

If we want our characters come to life, then they have to reflect that pain. Damon Suede calls this the void:

Every believable character has a personal void that affects all their actions and choices, which drives their steps and haunts their happiness. What does your character a-void?

The emotional wound or void results in the character believing a lie. Michael Hauge (Writing Screenplays that Sell) says major part of your main character's internal arc is recognising this lie as a lie and changing their behaviour accordingly.

Hauge describes this as the character moving from living in their (false) identity to living in their (true) essence. As such, the emotional wound or lie is what stops your character taking external action to achieve their external and internal goals.





WHAT'S STOPPING YOUR CHARACTER ACHIEVE THEIR GOAL?

There has to be a reason the character can't immediately achieve their goal. If they could, we'd have a short story or a vignette, not a novel. That means our characters have to face conflict. This is where a lot of authors trip up—they don't want to make their beloved characters suffer. But it's necessary. As Debra Dixon says:

If conflict makes you uncomfortable or if you have difficulty wrecking the lives of your characters, you need to consider another line of work.

The conflict has to be significant to the character, and more than a simple misunderstanding. Here's Debra Dixon again:

Misunderstanding is never to be confused with conflict. If your characters in rocky relationships can sit down and resolve some misunderstanding, then you don't have conflict.

So how do you build deeper conflict? Nancy Kress suggests:

You build more plausible, complex characters if they want not just one thing but two that are in conflict ... People often want more than one thing because they hold more than one value. What makes life—and fiction—interesting is when those values collide.

So an external conflict could be the main character and the love interest having what appear to be mutually exclusive goals. An internal conflict would be the main character having two mutually exclusive goals.

WILL YOUR MAIN CHARACTER CHANGE?

There is one final question: is your character a different person by the end of the story? As with plotting and pantsing, some experts say yes and others say no. Nancy Kress classifies characters as changers or stayers, and points out that their goal or motivation might change even if they don't.

Character change often depends on genre. Sometimes the characters take second place to the action (e.g. thrillers or series novels), while genres such as romance, literary fiction and women's fiction place more emphasis on character change. There is no right or wrong answer. The important thing is to ensure your characters actions and reactions are consistent with their emotional wounds and GMC.

If you're looking for some good books on plot and conflict, check out my Amazon shop at www.amazon.com/shop/iolagoulton. And visit www.christianediting.co.nz to sign up for my free email course, Learn to Revise Your Novel in Two Weeks.



Iola Goulton is a New Zealand book reviewer, freelance editor, and writer. She holds a degree in marketing, has a background in human resource consulting, and works as a freelance editor specialising in Christian fiction. When she's not working, Iola is usually reading or writing her next book review.

From the Editor: Fear

Gillian St. Kevern



A lot has happened since my last editorial. We have said goodbye to one decade, welcomed a new one. In personal news, I've celebrated a birthday and moved into what I hope will be a permanent address bringing some much needed stability into my life. And the furor surrounding a decision made by the Romance Writers of America executive has brought attention to the inequalities of not just romance, but publishing as a whole. I've seen a lot of discussion around the RWA situation. One of the things that most upset me about the situation was seeing writers saying they now felt afraid to write diverse characters.

What got me most about this was the assumption that being afraid of something was a good reason to not do it. As a person, I have grown most and learned most when doing things that terrified me. Fear is an integral part of not just life, but writing life in particular. I'm not alone in this point of view. In *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert's amazing exploration of her inner writing life, she describes how she came to terms with the fear that accompanies the start of each new writing project. To summarise, she imagines she is setting out on a long car trip with creativity in the passenger seat. She tells her fear 'you're welcome to come along for the journey, Fear. But you're not allowed to hold the map. You're not allowed to give directions. There will be no backseat driving on this trip. You will be welcome to contribute later, in the editing phase, but for now I need you to sit back and shut up.' Fear for Gilbert is an inevitable part of the writing process. Instead of ignoring it or trying to get rid of it, she recognises it's part in her writing life.





There are no guarantees of success in writing. If you want to be assured of income, success, or attention, you need to look elsewhere. That is not to say there are no guarantees. We can be confident that there will always be at least one typo that we missed no matter how many rounds of proofreading and editing we do. Everyone will have a different interpretation of our stories. Inspiration will strike at the most inconvenient of moments and vanish when we are best prepared for it.

Nowhere on this list is the fact that if someone writes X number of books or writes X number of words a day, after X number of years they will be earning X amount and will have X amount of fans. Writing is not a numbers game. There are definitely things we can do to improve our chances of success, but stories are so individual and measured against a set of criteria that is entirely subjective and can change at any given moment. If you are in this profession, you need to make uncertainty your friend.

Of course there are no certainties elsewhere either. Reliable employers go bankrupt. Markets change. New inventions make traditional ways of doing business obsolete. Even guaranteed success like a movie directed by an director with a track record of success and based on a much beloved and long running musical with a cast of A-list actors and a budget of millions can completely bomb. So when sitting yourself down to your laptop or notebook and feeling that quiet chill, it may help to know even Hollywood directors and writers are in the same boat as us. There are no guarantees. Every book is a gamble.

Instead of trying to eliminate fear, my suggestion is to learn your fear and make it work for you. You can, like Elizabeth Gilbert, invite it to become part of your editing process and give it a job there. I found that I need to listen to fear during the writing process. Little niggles, like the fact that I'm not sure how much the price of herrings were in London in the late Victorian period, I can safely dismiss until the editing phase when I can use my fear that my work will be read by someone who knows more than I do about Victorian fishmongers will fuel me to research. The worries that aren't so easily settled, those are the ones I need to examine.

I had a story I worked on that was incredibly tough going. Sitting down to write it was hard work. I loved the characters. I had a really strong plot with a clear direction. But every time I sat down to work on it, I struggled to reach my word goal. I missed deadline after deadline. I had to push the editor hired for the project back. I felt awful. This project was rapidly becoming a source of anxiety rather than enjoyment.

That should have been a really big clue, but it took me a while to realise this was different from my usual writing nerves and dig into why. At the heart of my anxiety about this project was my growing doubts that I, a pakeha woman in her late 30s who lived in Christchurch, could write a story set in Auckland, with a mainly Pasifika cast and get it right. Growing up, my family spent a couple of years living in the Solomon Islands, an experience that gave me an insight into island life. That said, my experiences of living in Honiara are not the same experiences as a

Pasifika kid growing up in Auckland. Although I'd done my research and thought hard about the characters and story, I realised that I needed sensitivity readers before I could move on to the final draft of this particular project. Once I knew that, the block came unstuck. I was able to finish a first draft, knowing that this was not the final draft, and that there would be no final draft until I'd got plenty of feedback. This project is currently on hold until I can get that feedback, a tough decision given how hard I worked on that first draft, but the right decision.

In this instance my fear highlighted a very valid concern about my work. My experience living in Honiara alone is not enough to give me an accurate gauge of whether I'm telling a story respectfully. I want to see more Pacific characters in fiction. But it is crucial that those characters are real. Perpetuating stereotypes is just as harmful as erasure.

There have been times in my writing life where I have not listened to my fear and I have regretted it. The first story I ever published as Gillian St. Kevern is one such case. I had misgivings about my choice of setting but thought 'hey, my editors and beta-readers for this project are American. They will tell me if I get this wrong.' Relying on other people to be my conscience was a mistake. It was my first story, so I will forgive myself for being naïve and trusting other people's perspective above my own. I did not realise that no one cares about a story more than the author. I should have trusted my fear.

My editors and beta-readers did not see anything wrong with my work. It was published and immediately the subject of some pretty harsh criticism. At the time, this seemed like the end of the world. I felt like I had no right to tell my stories, that I had caused harm with my work—the exact opposite of what I want to do as a writer. I felt physically sick. For three days, I was convinced that I would never write again.

At the end of those three days, I went back to the criticism. I'm not sure what pulled me back, but I had the urge to write, and I knew I couldn't write until I had moved past the criticism I'd received. It was much nicer than I'd originally thought it was. There were valid points for me to consider. I did my best to educate myself, to learn from the experience, and I moved on. I wish I could say that since then I have never made any mistakes, but I still mess up. Every time I do though, I make sure that I learn and take responsibility for what I've done.

The writing journey is one of constant growth. We should not be writing the same stories that we were writing ten years ago. If we are, something is seriously wrong. The world is constantly changing and evolving, and we must too. Audience tastes change, our skills develop, we gain new interests and we learn, gaining the strength and skill to tackle stories and subjects that we could not have done when we were just starting our writing journey. I take inspiration from a quote from Maya Angelou: 'Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.' This is good advice for writers—especially when writing characters from walks of life very different to your own.

We need to listen to our fear. Learn to take cues from it. Afraid to tackle a certain subject because we feel we don't





know enough? Do more research. Afraid that stating a certain opinion will provoke backlash? Find the opposing point of view and listen to it until you understand it—and where it comes from—thoroughly. Worried a portrayal is stereotypical or an appropriation of someone's story? Find readers from that community. Sensitivity readers are not a silver bullet against criticism. They can get it wrong, just like editors can get it wrong. But if you can find a good sensitivity reader who is able to give you a breadth of experiences that can only improve your work. I recommend looking for an experienced sensitivity reader rather than asking a gay friend or Muslim neighbour. Friends will spare our feelings. They may also not read in our genre or be able to give us access to a wide range of lived experiences outside their own. Get a professional.

The other fear we have to consider is other people's fears. Again, as writers we're used to this. Sitting down and devoting part of our day to a dream that may or may not ever come true is something that many of our friends and family members find scary because they don't understand it. They may want to talk us out of it to protect us. For some, the very fact that we're doing something different, something that doesn't involve them, is scary and frightening. This fear can be disguised as well-meaning advice. It can be criticism or belittling behaviour. Whatever form it takes, as writers we have learned to persist without being swayed by other people's fears. In the same way, I wouldn't suggest leaving other people's fears stop you from writing. However, if you're going to write about a minority group's experiences, then I would suggest getting familiar with their fears.

Periodically, debates occur in the gay romance community about the right of women to write M/M romance and whether our presence is helping or harming the genre as a whole. I am firmly of the belief that my stories deserve to be written and that I am allowed to write them. However every single time this debate comes around, I make sure that I read all the voices opposing my place in this particular writing community. The recurring themes I see are the fear that women writers are taking visibility away from gay authors, overly sexualising/eroticizing gay men or perpetuating harmful negative stereotypes which then fuel hate crimes against the gay community—consequences that women writers will not themselves experience.

These all really valid fears to have. It can be difficult reading these viewpoints. Every time I do, I ask myself: are my stories telling a narrative that is true? Are my characters real people and not stereotypes or overly eroticised? Is this a story that somebody else could tell better? Is there anyone else writing stories like mine?

So far, every time I've taken myself through this checklist, I found that I can say with all honesty that there is nobody writing stories like mine, and my writing does not perpetuate harmful stereotypes or take advantage of the gay community. If the day comes when I can not be confident of this, I will need to take hard look at myself and my writing and decide whether I can continue. Until that day, it's my job to write the best stories I can, make them as honest and true as I can, and listen to and respect the lived experiences of those whose lives are different from my own.

One of the things that shocked a lot of us about the responses to the RWA debacle was just how angry people were. To understand that anger, we need to understand the power of written characters. To look at the transgender community, trans-folk are much more likely to experience violence against them than cisgender individuals are. Yet there is a persistent narrative that trans people are deceptive and dangerous. This narrative has no basis in reality. However, the two most famous trans-people in popular culture are Buffalo Bill, a sadistic serial killer, and Dr Frankfurter, at best interpretation morally ambiguous, at worst sexual predator. When we consider just how deeply entrenched these two characters are in popular culture, we can begin to understand why the trans-community—and other minority groups—are touchy about how they're portrayed in fiction.

Another way of looking at it: imagine that you've just found out that a big Hollywood producer is making the story of your life. Amazing, right? You're going to be famous. The entire world will know about you. Days pass without the studio contacting you. Weeks pass. You realise that the story of your life is being made without any input from you. You find out other things. You are being played by Jared Leto who is enthusiastically telling every news channel that will interview him about how he excited he is to really dredge all the depths of your inner darkness. In the story of your own life, you're being portrayed by an absolute tool, you are the villain, and you have no say in any of this. People you don't know will judge you according to this movie, and nothing you can do will counter that. This is the best analogy I can think of for how it can feel to be a member of a minority with no control over how you are portrayed in the media or in fiction, but who will be judged on that portrayal. Sort of like how it feels any time Russel Crowe does something moronic and the media calls him a New Zealander.

If you think that analogy is a bit out there, there is a film being made which I will not name because I do not want to give it any more publicity. Basically, the story is a guy pretends to be a trans-man in order to get the lesbian he's fallen in love with to notice him. At the end of the story, the lesbian is completely okay with this deception and enters into a relationship with him. This movie is causing a lot of consternation in the queer community because it gives weight to two beliefs that actively endanger trans-folk and lesbians: that trans identities are not real and only adopted in order to get a particular end and that all lesbians need is sex with a penis to cure them. The first belief actively contributes to the violence committed against trans folk, the second to rape. I wish I could say that I was exaggerating or being alarmist here but this why it is so important to get the input of sensitivity readers, to educate ourselves, and to listen to our fear. Fear shouldn't stop us from doing things, but it should guide us how to do them better.

In March last year we saw the consequences of what can happen when white is seen as normal and difference an attack on white values. We can no longer say that as New Zealanders, we're not a part of this debate, or think that the stories we tell—and who we use to tell them—aren't important. Yes, taking risks and opening ourselves up to criticism is scary, but almost everything worth doing is.



2020 Conference Update: Announcing Rachael Herron at Conference 2020!

Let's get the sad news out of the way first. Due to personal circumstances, Jennifer Ashley has had to cancel her appearance at our 2020 conference. But not to worry, because we have another superstar in her place!



INTRODUCING RACHAEL HERRON!

Rachael Herron is the internationally bestselling author of more than two dozen books, including romance, women's fiction, thriller (under R.H. Herron), memoir, and nonfiction about writing. She received her MFA in writing from Mills College, Oakland, and she teaches writing extension workshops at both UC Berkeley and Stanford. She is a proud member of the NaNoWriMo Writers Board.

You might know Rachael from her AMAZING writer's podcast *How Do You Write* and her craft workshops all over the world. We're delighted to have her as our main Friday workshop speaker and I think I'm going to learn a lot from her.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPENS SOON

Conference registration opens Feb 25th. Keep an eye on the website as we'll be loading all the information about our speakers and workshops leading up to registration opening. You'll be able to see all the amazing workshops we've booked in for you. All the registration information will be available here.

Don't forget to log in to the website before you register to get the special member price.

CONFERENCE ROOM RATES AT WAIPUNA HOTEL

When booking your hotel rooms at the Waipuna, we have a special conference rate. It's a great saving, at \$172.50 per room per night for two queen beds, instead of the usual rate of \$219 per room per night.

To get the discount, book via EMAIL at res@waipunahotel.co.nz, or by PHONE at 0800 924 786 (from NZ only) or at +64 9 526 3000 (from overseas), quoting RWNZ2020 as the PROMO CODE.

If you want to take advantage of the discounted rate, you can't book online.

We're so excited to welcome you to 'Get out of my dreams. Get into my book.' Join us to learn from Rachael and our other amazing speakers, and find the tools, friends, and inspiration you need to make your writing dreams come true.

Steff & Linda

News from the President

Susan Sims



I hope everyone's year has started well, and your plans for the year are underway?

The RWNZ Secretary, Zoe Sojourner, has stepped down and we'd like to thank her for all her work on behalf of the organisation. The search for a new Secretary is underway.

Most of you will be aware that Romance Writers of America is undergoing enormous change at the moment with the entire board resigning and new elections scheduled in March with the intention of embracing the change required to build a new, inclusive and equitable organisation. We wish them all the very best with this important work. The Exec of RWNZ is mindful that we want to ensure our organisation is as diverse, inclusive and equitable too and we want to continue the generosity and inclusiveness that has been illustrated by so many of our members, and to ensure that remains a priority.

An issue has come to light with MBIE's reworking of the Copyright Act. Their proposal is very worrying for those who register copyright in New Zealand, as they seem to be working off the assumption that our creative people are happy to give away our work. This is a major change to what was anticipated.

The paper is here: [MBIE paper on Copyright approach](#)

NZSA; Publishers Association of New Zealand and Copyright Licensing New Zealand sent an excellent joint response to this which we fully support. We hope MBIE will reconsider their approach.

The Expression of Interest form for conference for 2021 is now live on the website! Please fill this in if you are keen to convene the conference for RWNZ.

Happy writing everyone :)

Susan

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO CONVENE RWNZ 2021 CONFERENCE

RWNZ is looking for expressions of interest for running the 2021 conference. We need to start planning now as hotels and speakers book up well in advance.

The success of our last few conferences has been due to the work and dedication of our convenors. We're looking for an RWNZ member or team willing to take on the role of convenor for the 2021 conference. If you would love to take on this challenge, and have a vision for our 2021 conference, then you can let us know by completing the following form on the RWNZ website:

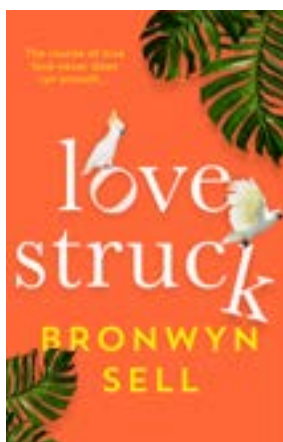


EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO CONVENE RWNZ 2021 CONFERENCE FORM:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/expression-of-interest-to-convene-rwnz-2021-conference/>

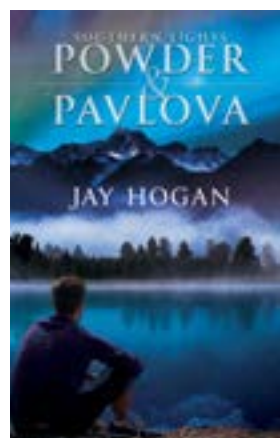


Woos and Hoos



Bronwyn Sell's new romantic comedy LOVESTRUCK releases on February 24, in trade paperback in Australia and New Zealand and ebook everywhere else from Harlequin's HQ imprint. It's her first release since winning the Best Novella RITA under her pen name, Brynn Kelly.

Buy Lovestruck [here](#)



Congratulations Jay Hogan on the New Release Jan 23 of

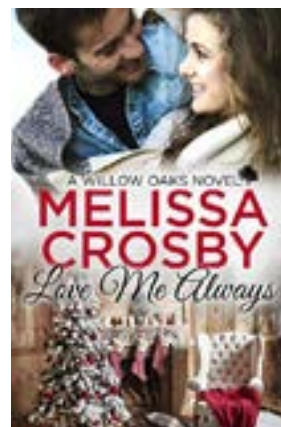
'Powder and Pavlova,' the first book in a mm romance series 'Southern Lights' with all stories set in Queenstown NZ.

Buy Powder and Pavlova [here](#)



Juanita Kees latest book, Promise Me Forever, releases February 14th. News correspondent, Jack Hughes, is sent to sleepy Bindarra Creek to escape the spotlight after a fake video goes viral. In a fight to save his reputation, the last thing Jack is looking for is love.

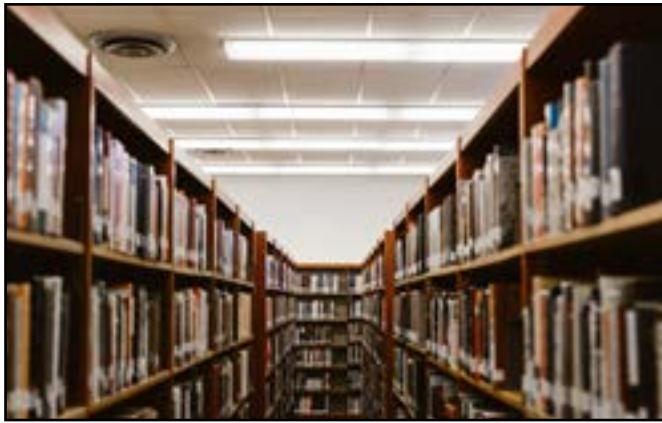
Buy Promise Me Forever [here](#)



Through her pen name, Melissa Crosby, Pia has just published Love Me Always, which tells the story of Mallory and Ethan as they learn about life, trust, and true love. Love Me Always is the fourth book in the Willow Oaks Sweet Romance series.

Buy Love Me Always [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.



The Bookshelf

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

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

Please send it to :

heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz

Thank you!

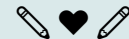


The Welcome Mat

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



Joanne Evelynna - Overseas
Enni Tuomisalo - Central North
Louise Guy - Overseas
Jane Redman - Auckland
Christie Williams - Nelson
Bronwyn Hall - Overseas
Carron Stevenson - Christchurch
Leanne Taylor-Innes Auckland
Emily Foster - Christchurch
Penelope Janu - Overseas
Jennie Brumley - Overseas
Lauren King - Wellington
John McCormick - Central North
Deb Howell - Otago



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

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Tania Roberts: treasurer@romancewriters.co.nz

: secretary@romancewriters.co.nz

Josie Berliner: publicity@romancewriters.co.nz

Gillian St Kevern: membership@romancewriters.co.nz

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 we celebrated the festive season with our annual Christmas Party. The party was hosted by Kellie Watkinson who lives on the idyllic Herald Island in West Auckland. Despite some ups and downs with the weather, everyone had a great time and there was plenty of food and drink to enjoy, lots of great company and conversation and of course presents and raffles!

A big thank you to Kellie for being our hostess this year - it's always great to see people standing up and volunteering in the Chapter! I hope that everyone who attended had a fabulous time and that it marked a great end to the 2019 RWNZ Auckland Chapter year.

HAWKES BAY

Convenor: [Bronwen Evans](#)

Our December/Christmas meeting was a wonderful lunch out with much fun had by all.

We opened our 2019 goal envelopes set at last years December lunch, and celebrated our wins.

Mini santas were liberally handed out for all the "Woohoos" from throughout the year.

The next meeting is February 8th at Bron's, and subsequent meetings will be held on the second Saturday of the month at 1pm.

COAST TO COAST

Convenor: [Bel Macfie](#)

December:

What a lively and wonderfully interactive end of year celebration workshop we had.

It was lovely to meet new attendees Jane and Penelope. Penelope signed up with RWNZ at the end of the workshop so we must have made a great impression!! Jane has been a member all year so we were happy to finally meet her.

The themes for the workshop were being grateful and having a positive mindset. We listened as one by one we talked about our achievements, highlights and goals and each shared a piece of advice that worked well for us.

Advice included

- Its easier to fix a bad page than to fix a blank page
- For tweeting or Instagram consider writing it into a word document and cut and pasting it (so links etc all look correct)
- Add your website and books to your email signature. Increases exposure and profiling.
- Consider writing to a different length. The trend is for prequels/'free-quels' to entice readers to buy a series
- Explore Hidden Gems. One authors books have been recovered/renamed and sent out for ARC reviews. Have to apply months in advance. Used for new releases.
- If looking to do traditional publishing enter competitions. Publishers will contact you, especially those competitions profiled at conferences.
- Good references. Patricia Hampl – The Art of the Wasted Day and Libbie Hawker Take Off Your Pants is the best 'how-to' book
- The Holy Trinity is cover/title/blurb. If you aren't selling well you will likely need to change one of these. Get others to help you write/read your blurbs. Put more emphasis on these. Get your books in a series looking like a series. Look at the covers carefully.

January:

A small and perfectly formed group met in Tirau in January for an informal post-Christmas catch up.

The great thing is that informality brings out spontaneous and valuable discussions such as a conversation about photographs. One of our members who used to be a photographer offered to host this years retreat and take any photos requested.

The group also did a mini workshop on scheduling courtesy of Jen Yates amongst the usual sharing of information on all sorts of topics writerly.

Thanks to Gaylene for her oversight of this meeting.

Regional Round-Up Reports

WELLINGTON/KAPITI COAST

Convenor: [Gudrun Frerichs](#)

Fifteen of us met on December 7 at the Paraparaumu Library meeting room, for our final meeting of the year. In addition to lots of yummy food, we discussed:

- Around the table catch-up
- What we each planned for 2019, and our plans for 2020
- We talked about marketing:

Leeanne shared a list of recommended advertising sites, and Eileen shared her tips for Amazon ads

Leanne has 3 permafrost books and she advertises these every month with Freebooksy, on different weekends. She now advertises 5 days per week and her sales have increased very well.

Janet recommended the newsletter builder promos from Charmaine Ross. In her experience, the additional readers have not unsubscribed.

Our first meeting of 2020 will be on the first Saturday in February. Location tbc. Jane is stepping down as Convenor, but Gudrun Frerichs is going to take her place, with assistance from Moira and Lynne.

NELSON

Convenor: [LaVerne Clark](#)

CHRISTCHURCH

Convenor: [Emma Lowe](#)

The Christchurch chapter met at Madam Kwong's for our annual shared Christmas dinner. A big crowd turned out, too many to fit around one table—or to eat all the food we ordered. We had a fun night, catching up with each other, and ending 2019 feeling very well fed.



Wellington Chapter

OTAGO

Convenor: [Samantha Burton](#)

A group of us met up on Saturday 1 February and shared our writing/publishing goals for 2020! We also caught up after taking a two-month break from our last meet up. Our next meeting will take place on Saturday 7 March.

BLenheim AREA

Contact: [Iona Jones](#)