

*Feb / March 2021*

# *Heart 2 Heart*

*Romance Writers of New Zealand*



**TIPS ON :**

**WRITING BLURBS**

**+**

**JOINING MULTI AUTHOR BOX SETS**

**+**

**PLANNING FOR TAX SEASON**

**+**

**RWNZ 2021 CONFERENCE UPDATE**





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## NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Susan Sims**Hi everyone,*

It's amazing seeing the autumn leaves already and I hope you all had a good Easter break!

Thanks to everyone who completed the conference-related survey, there's good news to come as a result of an overwhelming desire to hold a small conference this year. See Steff's Conference update in this issue for details.

After several conversations with the lovely Director and team at the Dunedin Writers & Readers Festival, it's wonderful to see romance writing and our writers included in the lineup for May. We're there in the Gala Showcase opening event, and six other events over the 6–9th May. You can find all details here: <https://www.dunedinwritersfestival.co.nz>

As many of you know, Dunedin is a UNESCO City of Literature, and also has a Writers' Walk which is adding a plaque dedicated to Essie Summers during the festival this year.

It's really rewarding to see our genre represented in this year's festival, and after the schedule and inclusion was confirmed, the organisers approached the RWNZ Executive with a sponsorship request. We decided this fit well with the aims of RWNZ in our constitution and have sponsored this festival as part of RWNZ's work to promote our writers and writing.

It's impossible to miss the way that COVID-19 continues to rage around the world, so please keep scanning the COVID-19 code from your apps! We all still need to follow the guidelines from the [New Zealand Government](#) for Kiwis, or the [Australian Government](#) for our Australian members. This is really important. It is also normal to feel stressed or anxious in these situations. For Kiwis to get support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, call or text the free 'Need to talk?' service on 1737. This is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and a place where you can talk things through with a trained counsellor.

*Keep safe, keep well, and keep writing!**Love, Susan*

## TAX RETURNS

**Corina Douglas**

My editorials are usually flavoured with whatever has been going on over the last few months, and this one is a little hard to write, because just as I was overcoming writer's burnout, a few weeks later, I ended up losing my father. It was sudden and it was a shock and as a result, my writing fell to the wayside. However, if you read my last editorial, you'll know that I haven't given up the fight because what got me through is holding onto my 'why'. And boy, did I need it this previous month given I also had pressure to complete my tax return for the 2019-2020 financial year.

I'm going to apologise profusely before I get into it, because let's face it, this subject is not exciting. It's far better to watch paint dry than hear me go on about tax obligations. However, it's something that's necessary if we are going to be treating our writing like a business. I'll be the first to admit I don't make an income over the threshold from my authoring business to qualify for a tax return, but given I make an earning from other sources, I do. *Sigh*.

So, let's talk tax returns.

I'm usually an organized person. I'm a planner—literally. I made a business writing resource consent applications for clients who wanted to build or subdivide. It was a cutthroat industry filled with tight timeframes—both clients and Councils, not to mention the Resource Management Act's imposed timeframes, too.

However, that didn't help my tax issues, which had come to a head. Given COVID-19 had hit our shores and we had moved twice over the last two years amongst other family dramas, our 2019-2020 tax return was super delayed and our accountant reminded us in February that we needed to get it in over the coming month. Her email went something like, *"Your tax return needs to be in by the end of the month or else you'll be applicable for a fine as it's now the deadline for the following financial year."*

Oh. Well, yes, about that.

For me, this was my first big tax return in the authoring business, because before then, it was just a hobby. But from 2018, I wanted it to be a 'business'. However, it's not one of those things you can go to the bank for a loan

# PAY YOUR TAX NOW

Here!

for. Rather, it's seen as a 'passion' or a 'passing fancy' by the bank, therefore, if you need start-up cash for a new computer or software that will aid your indie publishing dreams, you'll be starting on your own.

What most of us end up doing is 'falling into the job'. Usually, we don't have a bank account allocated to our writing/editing/whatever business straight away. Instead, we steal, beg, and borrow money from whatever account has the funds available (or is that just me and our family finances?), and we just get by through the year on a repetitive laundry cycle just like that.

What that meant for me is that when I was compiling my tax return documents for my authoring business, I didn't just have one bank account that I needed to refer to... but four. I have a PayPal account (for online payments and invoicing for editing and authoring business); I have two Wise accounts, one for editing and one for receiving Amazon payments; I have a New Zealand business account to receive editing and author money; and finally, I have our family credit card, which I used to beg, borrow, and steal money from for big ticket items like international courses and/or a new iMac. So, as you can imagine, my tax return for my authoring business for the 2019–2020 year was a decent size novel by the time I added all these bank account statements, the list of expenses (which were a mile high), and ... only one page of income. *Eeek!*

But I collated all that information and recorded it into spreadsheets on MS Excel. Everything was then conciliated (painfully and slowly between all those bank accounts) and it was finally done. Locked and loaded.

Even though this tax return was incredibly hard and I hated doing it with a passion, this exercise gave me a chance to really know if I am making a profit or a loss—and how much that profit or loss is. Because if you are treating your writing like a business and keeping up-to-date, accurate records on your income, expenses, and bank accounts, compiling your tax return documents yourself will empower you to make successful business decisions and answer questions like: Do I really need that new laptop? Do I really need that course? After all, you may already have ten on backlog to watch (yes, this is me).

On that note, did you know that the 2021–2020 tax year just finished? If you haven't started yet, now's a good time to get those documents in order. And if you need help working out where to start on what to include, check out the list of tips below.

Me? I might just take a wee breather for a few months and submit mine in July...

Until next edition,

*Corina x*

**Turn the Page for Corina's Top Tax Tips >>>**

## THINGS TO CONSIDER TO MAKE YOUR TAX RETURN RUN A LOT SMOOTHER:

- **Maintain a spreadsheet of all your expenses.**

This includes courses, computers, writing manuals, how to guides, a style guide (no matter if you are a writer or an editor), covers, promotions and marketing fees, apps and writing software such as Scrivener, Bookfunnel, Bookbrush etc., fees associated with a backup drive, and on and on.

- **Maintain a spreadsheet of all your income.**

This will include local paperback sales, Amazon payments, speaking gigs and presentations, and wide payments from Apple, Kobo, etc.

- **Keep records of all your bank statements.**

These illustrate the honesty of your transactions. I usually number the expenses and write the corresponding number next to the expense noted on my bank statements so that my accountant understands what's what. It should also illustrate your income and be labelled clearly if you've given yourself 'personal drawings'.

- **If you get paid in US dollars or another currency, make sure that you use the same online exchange rate for all your payments/income.**

NB: There are various websites that can tell you what the cost of the dollar was on that day.

- **Make sure you have the right BIC code allocated for your tax bracket.**

I use 'AUTHOR - R900210) as it fits the best with both my editing and authoring business. Unfortunately, it's also the highest tax bracket to have. There are up to four different options and it pays to double check that you are on the right one, because if worse comes to worse, you may have to pay tax back if your chosen bracket doesn't honestly

represent your overall business. Consult your accountant on this one.

- **Consider whether you need a GST number.**

This is a requirement when you form a company and if your income is over the threshold. Refer to your accountant and IRD for more information.

- **On that note, consider whether you need to form a company to keep things tidy.** For me, I created a company called Burning Legacies Publishing (BLP). BLP is my editing company and also my publishing house. One of my trading names is also 'Corina Douglas' to incorporate my author business. This made my business tidy and succinct under the same umbrella. Talk to a business specialist or your accountant to find out which option is the best fit for you.

- **Consider whether you want to publish under Amazon, your own publishing house or another entity.**

If you're forming your own publishing house, do you want to protect it with a company name and a company logo? Can you kill two birds with one stone like I did and end up using it for a related business?

For instance, I was careful to choose a logo that was symbolic of not only people writing books and leaving legacies, but also a name which suited the genre I write in (I write stories based on Celtic mythology and folklore). My logo is of a phoenix in flight, which incorporates the 'burning' and also because a phoenix symbolically stands for eternity or in other words, legacies. And as luck would have it (or subconscious ruminating), a phoenix also features in my stories!





NB: Coming up with a company name and a logo takes time. You want to get it right the first time, so don't rush into it if you're thinking of going down this path. And if you want a cost-effective solution, I used <https://looka.com/>.

- ***And finally, claim a percentage of the expenses related to your place of work.*** For most of us, our place of work will be in our homes, or specifically, our allocated 'office' space. Did you know that you are eligible to recoup a portion of the costs associated with running your office—such as electricity, internet, and insurance costs?

Therefore, collate all the bills for your 'place of work' and submit them with your tax return. You will also need to work out the allocated area of your 'office space' in terms of the overall house area.

For example, say your office space is 10m<sup>2</sup>. Subtract that from the total floor space of the whole house (say it's 100m<sup>2</sup> for some easy maths). Times the answer by 100 and you have the percentage of

your office in the house. This handy percentage number is the portion of the household bills that can be allocated to your authoring/writing business.

For instance, if the percentage of your office space is 10% of the overall floor area of your house, then this means 10% of every bill (electricity, internet, insurance, etc.) is allocated to your authoring/writing business and you can recoup those costs during the tax process (don't ask me what goes on there as my expertise is basic with tax).

Best to consult your accountant for more information). Therefore, make sure you keep a copy of all your utility bills and insurance documents and submit them with your tax return.

### EDITING TO WRITE TIGHT



**Lola Goulton**

*Today, we're going to work on what might be the most difficult part of the process: tightening our writing so it flows. Yes, there are words in our manuscript that need to be cut to make our sentences stronger and make our writing shine.*

That last sentence is the perfect example. There's nothing wrong with it—the spelling, grammar, and punctuation are all correct. But it could be improved with a little judicious trimming:

*Cutting unnecessary words strengthens our writing.*

That cut twenty-two words to six. So, where can we cut and trim and revise to strengthen our writing?

#### **Remove Excess Description**

Readers don't need an in-depth description of every character we meet, nor do we need detailed scene descriptions. Where you do

choose to go into detail, make sure it's in keeping with the mood of the scene e.g., describe the forest as the main character and love interest sit down for their romantic picnic. Or when men waving guns run out of the trees, it's time for the characters to start running, not time to notice what shoes or brand of cologne the intruders wear.

#### **Remove Filter Words**

Writing instructors often advise authors to use as many of the senses as possible in a scene (i.e., sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, intuition). Many authors add these senses in, but they use filter words.

Filter words filter the character's reactions, placing an artificial barrier between the reader and your characters. This is telling, and is contrary to the modern preference for deep perspective point of view.

Common filter words include:

- Feel (felt, feeling)
- See (saw, look, looked, glanced, gazed, noticed)
- Hear (heard, listened)
- Think (thought, wondered, pondered, realised, knew, remembered)



For example:

*I looked out the window and saw it was raining.*

Becomes: *It was raining outside.*

## Remove Weak Qualifiers

Instead of saying really well, find a single strong adjective that gets the point across. Weak or meaningless qualifiers include most -ly adverbs, as well as:

- Just
- Quite
- Rather
- Really
- Somewhat
- That
- Therefore
- Very
- Well

As Mark Twain is reputed to have said:

*"Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very'; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be."*

The exception to this might be dialogue, where the use of words like 'very' and 'really' are indicative of the way that character speaks.

## Remove Telling and Showing

Some writers tell the reader something (e.g., an emotion), then give an action or a line of interior monologue that shows the same emotion. The fix is easy: delete the tell and allow the reader to see the action or emotion for themselves. For example:

*She entered without knocking and was greeted warmly by Matt, who enveloped her in a giant hug.*

Becomes:

*She entered without knocking, and Matt enveloped her in a giant hug.*

The hug shows us Matt is glad to see her, which means we don't need the tell.

## Remove Weasel Words

Weasel words are words we don't need, words which drag down our manuscript and

make it more wordy than it needs to be. Most of us have a unique set of weasel words.

Common weasel words include:

### • -ly Adverbs

An adverb is describing a verb, attempting (and failing) to make the verb stronger. Instead of using an adverb, replace the weak verb with a stronger version. For example, "walked purposefully" can become "strode".

### • It

It is either unnecessary or confusing. If you can cut it without changing the meaning of the sentence, do so. Otherwise replace 'it' with the noun it is referring to.

### • That

If you can cut that without changing the meaning of the sentence, do so. I find I can cut at least half.

### • And then

Use 'and' or 'then', not both. "Then" is usually the better option. "And then" often indicates episodic writing, where we should be aiming for writing with more cause and effect.

### • Starting Sentences with "So" or "But" or "And"

There is nothing wrong with starting the occasional sentence with a coordinate conjunction, but don't let it become repetitive. Perhaps one character has the habit of starting dialogue with "so". Fine ... but make sure the only "So" sentences are in that character's dialogue, and that no other character has the same habit but with a different word.

### • Ending Sentences with "too" or "also" or "as well"

Again, this usage gets repetitive and isn't strong writing. It's far better to end the sentence (and paragraph, and scene) on the strongest word possible, ideally a word with some kind of emotional power.

In particular, don't combine starting and ending sentences with weak words. It makes writing look weak even when it isn't.

## Write Original Actions and Body Language

Many characters do nothing but nod or shrug or smile or sigh. Rayne Hall says in *The Word Loss Diet*:

*"If your novel contains four smiles, each of them creates strong emotions in the reader. If it has a thousand smiles, the effect wears off."*

It's good to use actions to show us how a character is feeling. It's not good to use the same action over and over and over. Brainstorm original ways of showing emotion. Invest in a copy of *The Emotion Thesaurus* by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi. Take a Margie Lawson course.

Write fresh.

## Watch Unnecessary Repetition

The deliberate repetition of words, phrases or ideas can be used to great literary effect. However, most of us have words, phrases or stylistic habits we tend to repeat unconsciously.

There are several kinds of repetition:

- **Repetition of a single word**

This could be using the same word twice in quick succession, or repeatedly using an unusual word or one that doesn't fit in the style of the novel.

For example, I recently read a manuscript where the author used some variation of magic five times in the first chapter—magic, magical, magically. Used once, magic is an interesting word. Used five times in one chapter, it feels out of place in a novel that's not about magic.

- **Repetition at the beginning of sentences or paragraphs**

For example, starting too many sentences with *-ing* words, with he or she, or with the character's name. Note that you can start several continuous sentences with the same word: it's a common rhetorical device, but make sure you're using that repetition deliberately, to add power, not because you haven't noticed that six out of eight sentences start with "she".

- **Repetition of an image or idea**

Many authors give two different images to describe a scene or an object. This is the most difficult to spot, but the most important to notice and delete. In *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*, Browne and King say:

*"Repetition is likely to weaken rather than intensify the power of [an] effect. When you try to accomplish the same effect twice, the weaker attempt is likely to undermine the power of the stronger one."*



## About Lola Goulton

Lola 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, Lola is usually reading or writing her next book review.

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Visit [www.christianediting.co.nz](https://www.christianediting.co.nz) to sign up for my free email course, *Learn to Revise Your Novel in Two Weeks*.



## PREPARING FOR A WRITING RETREAT



**Moira Kay**

*Twice a year, a contingent from the Wellington-Kapiti Chapter embark on a long weekend of pure writing indulgence.*

Forgetting the world outside, we eat, sleep, and breathe writing—and inevitably, we make progress towards our author goals. Every goal is different, ranging from relaxation to major word output, and supporting each other. We have a ball as we make the magic happen.

*But how do we prepare for a retreat?*

Firstly, we form an idea of what it is that we want to achieve. Then we purposely, or inadvertently, plan for it in the days leading up to the retreat, setting ourselves up to (hopefully) succeed.

The process looks different for each one of us.

Some of us have full, or part-time work that needs our attention before we can escape. There's adulting and housekeeping to do. Some of us have animals, families, health

issues, and even animals and families with health issues.... So often the planning for a writing getaway begins by arranging all of the personal, non-writing demands into a tidy, self-sufficient bundle that we can then set aside and forget about for a few days.

Sometimes these bundles can unravel before we get a chance to leave them, and have to take priority for the weekend, but that's just the way life goes sometimes, and there will always be another opportunity to go on a retreat.

After the day-jobs have been done, and the required attention given to those in our care, it's then time to focus on the reason we're retreating—the *writing*. Not too surprisingly, (for those who have time to do it) the writing prep is *also* about tidying up loose ends, and setting things up to maintain themselves while our concentration is elsewhere. This could mean finishing a project, clearing the backlog of writing admin tasks, paying tribute to whatever deadline has had us hunched over our keyboards, and tidying up our desks so we don't return home to fall prey to some frazzled mindset that we've been trying to leave behind.

It seems that on retreat, we want to clarify our thoughts in peace. Some of us have music playing as we drive to our secluded destination. This helps us unwind, forget the responsibilities we've left behind, and shift into a creative mindset. Others carpool and slip into writing talk from the get go.

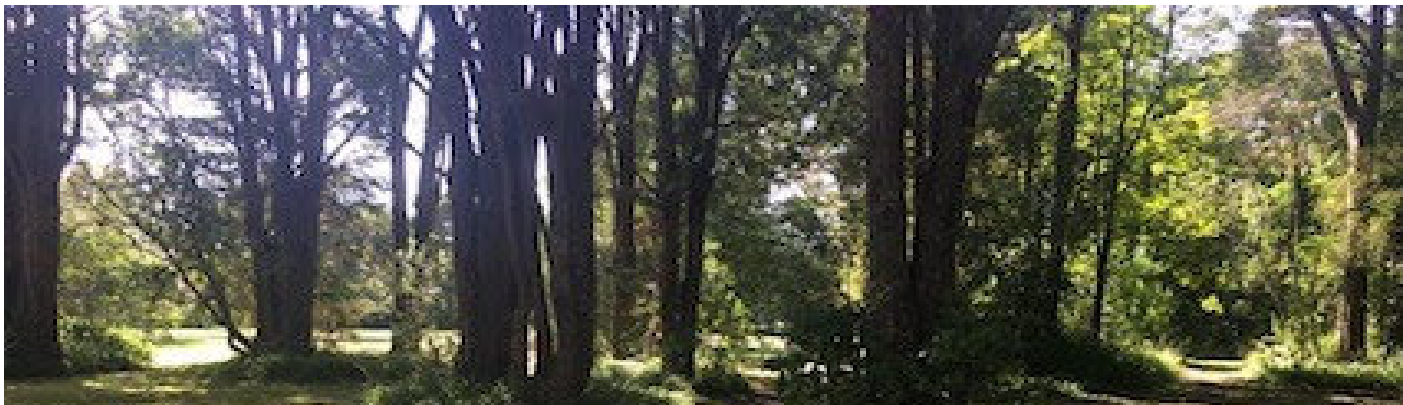
All of us load our cars with entirely too much food—all of it indulgent, and glorious, and completely capable of enticing even the most stubborn of us to stray from whatever diet we planned to adhere to. We arrive. We share. We support. And most importantly, we *write*.

Interestingly, most of us seem to align a writing escape with a 'fresh start'. A retreat is a great place to hit a reset button. We can be each other's cheerleaders, and electric

energy during brainstorm. Over our recent getaway, ALL of us achieved our goals.

It was not all smooth sailing, of course. Sometimes birthing a novel can be rather painful. While a fresh start seems nice in theory, several of us discovered that had we been part-way through a story, we would have spent less time gazing into space and got many more words written. On the bright side, space-gazing is indeed part of writing; and where better to do it, than at a peaceful, out-of-the-way farmhouse, surrounded by your tribe?

*The photos below were taken on our recent retreat:*



### **Bio:**

**Maira Kay** is a prolific author who can't decide which sub-genre of romance she likes best, so writes a bunch of 'em under different pen names.



## GROW YOUR READERSHIP WITH MULTI-AUTHOR BOXSETS



*Steff Green*

*I've had my name on the USA Today bestseller list five times now.*

*That BLOWS MY MIND.*

I cried when I saw my name there the first time. I called my husband at work and I was blubbing and he thought something was wrong, but it turns out I'm a big dorkus who sort of still doesn't really believe people want to read my books. He came home that night with chocolates and a new computer mouse, which is the height of romance. (It actually is. I hate spending money on things so I will use stuff until it literally crumbles to dust. I'd been complaining for months about my computer mouse not working because it had been carved in a cave by an ancient hominid. So he got me a new one).

My acquisition of a new computer mouse happened because of a multi-author boxset. If you're not sure what that is—it's where several authors get together to contribute a

story (novel, short, excerpt, novella, essay, or bonus scene) to a collection. The stories are packaged up together into a large ebook (sometimes a paperback, too, but we're talking self-publishing here, so ebooks are the main jam), and then sold at a discounted price to readers.

Readers love these anthologies/collections/boxsets because they can get a ton of books for a tiny price, and they might get some stories from their favourite authors but also discover some new gems, as well.

For authors, boxsets have many benefits. I'm going to talk about why you should make boxsets part of your author marketing whether you're fiction, non-fiction, or poetry; how to be strategic about your inclusion; and how to avoid the pitfalls and bad apples. (***This article is not going to cover running a boxset, since I've never actually been in charge of that.***)

### 01 - BENEFITS OF BEING IN A MULTI-AUTHOR BOXSET

When you launch a boxset onto the market, you shout it out to all your readers—through email, on your socials, even in the back of

other books. This is especially doubly true if the set contains exclusive material from you e.g., a new short story from their favourite world, or some tipsheets or a video they haven't seen.

If there are five or ten or twenty authors in a set, each contributing material, and each emailing their readers to tell them about this cool thing they've made... that's lots of other readers you're getting in front of who might not otherwise know you exist.

Some of those readers are just going to check out their fave author's content and that's it. But many of them will look at other books or content in the set they might enjoy. And because you've chosen a set filled with similar authors whose readers would love your stuff, you end up with new fans excited to devour your other books.

I know you like real numbers, so let's talk results. I did one set with a \$200 buy-in where I did an exclusive 20k preview of an as-yet-unpublished book. I sold 325 pre-orders of that book at \$3.99, and I believe I can attribute many of those to the boxset.

I did another set with a bonus scene from a popular series (5k words). I used a unique link to get readers to join my newsletter to get a free book. I gained 234 new readers. This set had a buy-in of \$10.

I participated in a charity boxset cookbook (recipes from characters in our books) that has raised over \$800 USD for charity. The buy-in was nominal or nothing, I can't actually remember.

This is the main reason authors participate in boxsets. There are other benefits, too—namely, getting to know a cool bunch of people, possibly hitting a bestseller list, creating some new content you can repurpose later, making some extra money (I did one boxset with a \$500 buy-in that made me \$4000 in profit just from the sales, but that was before the new 3000 page reads limit was in place). But the main one is that box sets are a great way to get your work in front of new readers.

When choosing to be part of a boxset or anthology, you gotta consider how you're going to get more readers to check out your

entry, and then how to get them to follow you. This is why we're going to get all clever and strategic about multi-author boxsets.

## **02 - FINDING AND CHOOSING BOX SET OPPORTUNITIES**

Okay, so you've decided you're keen to try a boxset. Now, how do you find a box-set, anthology, or bundle to be a part of? This is one of those things where it pays to be involved in the author community and to be talking with other authors. Organisers will post sign-up sheets and applications in author groups on Facebook, or in online forums. I've found most of my boxsets through those two avenues.

There are some specific Facebook groups that post boxset opportunities for authors. If you find people who regularly organise boxsets (hint, they're usually the person with their story first in a set), follow them on Facebook and see if they post sign-ups. Alternatively, you can be brave and ask about future opportunities.

Some marketing companies/PR firms also run sets and anthologies. Going on their mailing lists will keep you informed when new opportunities come up.

I ended up in two boxsets recently simply from posting on my Facebook feed. "Hey, anyone organising a boxset? I'd like to join one." But it obviously helps to have lots of authors on your friend list.

When assessing boxset opportunities, you need to be careful that you're making strategic decisions that will help your career. Don't say yes to a set just because you're invited. Think about how many sets you are in, and when the set will go live. Don't overextend yourself. I only do one set at once.

What is the goal of the set? This is the **MOST IMPORTANT THING**. OMG. The set must have a goal. The most common goals are:

- The set will be priced to maximise revenue for participating authors. Usually, revenue-aiming sets will be enrolled in KU and will leverage the combined audiences of the participating authors. A set maximising revenue will probably be





priced between \$2.99 - \$9.99. For non-fiction authors, a set might be sold off Amazon. It would usually involve a bundle of books, courses, and bonuses sold at a steep discount with affiliates, but the price point might be more like \$19 - \$99.

- The set will be priced low or free to maximise the number of readers who will download the set, and therefore exposing the authors to a wider potential reader base. This is probably free or \$0.99 on Amazon, or as a freebie bundle promoted on individual writers' websites.
- The set will aim to reach a best-seller list (such as *USA Today*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*). In order to do this, there are specific parameters that must be followed, and I've outlined these below.
- The set will raise money for a charity the authors believe in. This will effectively work the same as a revenue-maximising set.
- The set will not have a clearly-defined goal. (I'd avoid sets without a clear goal, because all the decisions made about the set will reflect on a goal).

Who is running the set? Do you know this person? Do they have a good reputation in the industry/genre? Do they have a decent following? (Boxset organisers tend to place their books first in the collection as a reward, because this shit is a ton of work. Make sure you're happy with the quality of their work and their ability to pull in readers). If possible, look at other boxsets they've run in the past to see how they're presented. You might even ask previous participants if they were happy about it.

What genres/stories will be represented and who is already on-board? Sometimes sets are a wild jumble of stories (often these are put out by writing groups for geographic areas or to benefit charities). I'd avoid any multi-genre sets because remember, you're being strategic about this and you're doing it to increase your readership, so you need to be in front of YOUR readers.

Also, it doesn't hurt to check out any authors who are already signed on for the set. The organiser will usually ask their friends first, so see if those are names you'd like to be associated with.

Can you afford the buy-in? Most sets have a buy-in, which is an amount each author pays to contribute toward a cover artist and advertising. I've seen buy-ins as low as \$10 and as high as \$1000. List-aiming sets usually have the highest buy-in.

Does the buy-in match the goals of the set? If the set is asking for a low buy-in, but they're aiming to hit a list, you might conclude they're unlikely to hit that goal. If a set is aiming to be revenue-generating but the cover art is so cheap and terrible you know it won't sell many copies, you need to steer clear.

Is there a contract? Most box-set organisers will have a contract. This helps everyone deal with situations where people pull out or don't contribute (which always happens). Read the contract carefully and make sure you're happy with the terms. In particular:

- How long will your book be committed to the set? (Usually terms are 3 months or 6 months, but can be longer).
- What are the parameters around your contribution e.g., wordcount, topic, etc.
- What's the deadline for submitting content?
- How will royalties be divided?
- When is the buy-in due, how much is it, and how will it be spent? Will you see accounting of this?
- How will records be kept? Can you see how the set has sold?
- What happens if you need to pull out of the set?
- What promotion will you be required to do?
- What is your role and what jobs will the set organiser perform?
- What happens if the set organiser doesn't perform their tasks?

What will you have to write? This is the second biggest factor you'll need to consider when being strategic about boxset opportunities. Sets have different themes

and ask for different types of work. Most sets want exclusive content (but not all). You may have to include a whole new novel, or write bonus material to beef up your non-fiction entry. You may need to stick to a strict word-count (for example, I don't do sets where the word count is under 10k because I can't write short stories like that).

### **03 - BEING STRATEGIC ABOUT WHAT YOU WRITE FOR A BOXSET OR BUNDLE**

After you've signed on to a boxset, looked over the contract, and paid the fee, you'll next need to start working on your entry for the set.

First, a few things to consider.

Most authors will be running their boxsets on Amazon. You might also have the set on sale in other places (especially if you're trying to make a list), but Amazon will be where you make the majority of your sales.

Obviously, if your set is going to be in KU, it cannot contain work that is also wide. And vice versa—if your set is wide, it cannot contain work that is in KU. This is true even if the set is on pre-order. I was once in a set that was pulled down because the organiser listed books that would be available in a wide set that were still in KU during the pre-order. So don't do that.

Amazon does not allow boxsets in KU to contain books that are also published under your own account. You used to be able to do this, and it was common for authors to simply place book 1 in a series into a boxset. But you now cannot do this. If you want to put a book one of a series into a set in KU, you'll need to unpublish it from your own dashboard.

Boxsets in KU have a page-read cut-off. Boxsets are loooooong-ass books, and you used to get a metric fuck-ton of page reads from them that would make them extremely profitable. Now, Amazon has the page reads capped at 3000, so most organisers won't make their sets any longer than this.

Now that you know all this, what should you write about?

- First, what are the rules of the boxset? Most organisers will give guidelines,



including the genre, word count limits, and whether the material has to be exclusive to the set.

- Some sets have a theme. This might be a genre (paranormal romance or space opera), a certain type of story (sexy shorts set on Halloween), a type of character (badass female protagonists), an inspiration (poems inspired by climate change), or even a shared-world aspect (stories set in the Underworld).
- For non-fiction, the set might have a specific reader in mind (for example, "beginner authors" or "small business owners looking to grow" or "solo mums who need extra income"), so to be strategic, choose an idea that speaks to that reader and their pain points. If you can, ask those readers on social media or through an email survey what would be most useful to them.
- **THINK ABOUT YOUR FUNNEL. OMG.** This is the number one most important thing once you've nailed the set's primary reader. Where do you want those readers to go after they finish your story or content? Do you want them to sign up to your mailing list? Do you want them to read a particular series? Do you want them to purchase a certain product? Make sure your content for the set directs them and leads them and gets them excited about setting into your funnel. Soooooooo... how does that work? Say you write fantasy books. You have a strong six-book fantasy series—it's your breadwinning series. You want readers of the boxset to start book 1 of that series. You could create a prequel story with the same characters that leads directly into the action of book 1.
- What if you want to get readers excited about a new series you're launching soon? Why not write the first 20-30k words of a novel, cut it off at a cliffhanger, and then direct readers to pre-order book 1 to find out what happens next. I've seen authors doing this lately and it's GENIUS.
- If you have a character you want people to fall in love with, and your books are

standalones (for example, cosy mysteries), write a shorter adventure from that character that can stand alone. After the box set comes down, you can republish this story as a novella or save it for a bonus in a series boxset.

- Sometimes, boxsets want bonus scenes or epilogues from already published series. If you do this, choose your most successful series and make it super-enticing to encourage readers to dive in at book 1.
- For non-fiction authors, create a mini-course that leads readers through a process, then make your follow-up product or funnel the next stage of the process. You'll probably find you have a ton of content you can repurpose to create something exclusive.
- Cliffhanger it up! Nothing gets the sellthrough from a boxset like a good cliffhanger.
- Think about what you'll do with your contribution after the boxset comes down. Will it work as a novella? Will you extend it into a full-length book? Will you save it for a bonus in a series boxset, give it away in your newsletter, or stick it straight in another multi-author set?

### 04 - YOUR BOXSET CALL-TO-ACTION

We addressed this back in the previous point, but I'm going to bring it up again. What you're trying to do with a boxset is get new readers to pay attention to you. You do this by giving something great to read right away, then adding a call-to-action to inspire them to do something else.

For fiction authors, you want them to either pick up a book of yours, or join your mailing list. You might also ask them to follow you on social media but let's keep things simple. Send them (strategically) to the next book and/or give them some (strategic) cool free download for signing up to your mailing list.

For non-fiction authors, the same rules apply. You either want them to buy another one of your products, or to sign up to your mailing list so you can promote to them in the future.

If this were me, I'd consider creating a challenge funnel (where you give them a five-day challenge with new content/steps each day) related to the content in your boxset content that they can sign up to for free or for \$1 or \$7. The more people converting to your list, the better for you in the long-term.

*"When choosing to be part of a boxset or anthology, you gotta consider how you're going to get more readers to check out your entry, and then how to get them to follow you."*

## 05 - NETWORKING WITH YOUR FELLOW AUTHORS

While you're doing the whole boxset thing, participate in conversations and decision-making with your fellow authors. If there's a FB group or chat stream for the set, join up! If possible, follow all the participants on social media or sign up to their mailing lists and keep up-to-date with what's happening in their book lives.

Be an awesome participant and a kind person—like I know you are. Volunteer for jobs you know how to do, and help others make decisions. Share about the set as often as you can. Cheer on the other authors as they get their material together and see successes in their career. Think of ways you might like to leverage relationships built from the set in the future. Many authors meet in boxsets and go on to co-write together, create unique projects, be guests on each other's podcasts, etc.

## 06 - MARKETING A BOXSET

YAY! You're in a box set and you've got some cool new author buddies. Now, how do you get this puppy in front of as many readers as possible? You take advantage of the collective to do some awesome shit, of course.

Here are things I've done on previous sets that have worked well:

- Friend all your new author buddies on social media. Like and comment on their posts about the set when you see them. This helps the algorithms show the posts to more followers.
- Tell your newsletter list about the set. Multiple times. Tell them about the book/

story/content you're adding. Get them excited for this cool new thing!

- Create a reader group for the set on Facebook. Get readers in there and hit them with content all the time—excerpts, cool teaser graphics, games, giveaways, etc.
- Run a giveaway with swag from all the authors. Mega paperback giveaways work well. This will help readers discover the set. Ideally, get these entrants to sign up with their emails, and then hit them with promos for the set.
- Create a bonus book of extra scenes from authors in the set. Use this as a giveaway to promote the set or create a paperback to use as giveaway prizes.
- Promote the set in genre-specific book groups and pages.
- Send copies to your ARCs teams. Try to get as many reviews to hit as possible on day one.
- Non-fiction? Guest post on other blogs, go on other podcasts, and talk about the boxset or bundle. Promote a landing page where readers/listeners can grab the set.
- Ask other author friends to promote the set in their newsletter in exchange for promoting their book.
- Use affiliates to get other people to promote the bundle to their audiences for you.
- Offer cool bonuses to people who buy from your website (not for Amazon sets as this violates the sweepstakes rules).
- Talk about the set always and often.
- Book every newsletter promotional service you can find for release week.
- Get people who are good at it to do some FB or AMS ads for release week.

## 07 - HITTING A BESTSELLER LIST WITH A BOXSET

One of the most common goals for indie authors participating in multi-author boxsets

is "making a list run". This means, aiming to get the boxset a spot on one of the bestseller lists.

"Hitting a list" means you as an author can use "USA Today bestselling author" on your books if you want to. That's why most authors do it. It's also just really cool to see your name there. I've also known authors to get attention from agents and editors for hitting the list, but that's mainly if they hit with their own boxsets or single titles.

There are three lists worth their salt. The first is the USA Today, which ranks the top 150-bestselling books using data from the previous week from online and bricks-and-mortar retailers. The top 150 are published online every Tuesday. You will need to sell at least 5000 copies in the US to have a chance at this list.

Then there's the Wall Street Journal bestseller list. This is actually several lists comprising the top 10-20 books in different categories. Some are tougher to get on than others. You will need to sell 8-10,000 copies to have a chance at this list.

Finally, there is the mother-load. The big kahuna. The New York Times (NYT) bestseller list. Unlike the other two lists, the NYT list is curated—meaning even if you make the sales numbers to hit it, you might not end up on the list. Multi-author boxsets rarely make it on this list. (I've been on one that has.) You will usually need to aim for around 20,000 book sales in order to have a shot at being on this list, and it also helps to have media attention, etc.

Most indie authors aim for the *USA Today* list as it's the most attainable. Here's what your set needs to be doing if you're aiming to make a list run:

- Aim to make 5000 sales in the US (international sales don't count) on release week. There's no number to hit to "guarantee" your spot, because it depends what other books sell that week or how much. I've hit the USAT with around 4500 sales and missed out with over 8000 sales. But 5000 is a good number to aim for.
- USAT requires sales to be reported for more than one platform to count, so your boxset cannot be in KU. Most authors focus on getting sales on Barnes & Noble or Apple. It's best to aim for 500 sales on these platforms as sometimes they won't report sales of lower numbers (although, I have been in sets that have made the USAT with only 200ish sales on Apple, so there you go).
- Run your opening week's promotions from Monday to Sunday. This gives you the best chance of making the list. If you do a pre-order, release your book on the Tuesday, as sometimes pre-orders land the night before because of time-zone shenanigans.
- Have a long pre-order period where you try to get as many pre-order sales as possible. These sales all hit on release day, and will count toward your total for the week.
- If possible, try to hit in the US summertime as people read less over the summer so it's less competitive.
- Launch at \$0.99. Make it as easy as possible for more readers to buy. After your first week, you can increase the price or even put the book into KU.
- Slam a ton of money into marketing. List-making sets will usually book every possible promotion site in that first week, and do FB, AMS, and Bookbub ads, too.
- Don't do shady things, like offering to buy someone's book if they buy your set, or giving out prizes to people who supply a proof of purchase (that's actually illegal). Remember that the sales are useless to you if they're not from proper readers. If a reader isn't buying the set, it's not a good idea.

There's some debate in indie author circles if aiming for the lists in this way is "scamming" or "cheating." I'm going to share my thoughts on that real quick.

1. It's not great to go around calling other authors 'scammers' unless you have significant evidence that is so. That's a loaded



word and I think it should be reserved for ACTUAL people trying to do ACTUAL harm rather than authors legitimately selling a book to readers.

2. It's entirely possible authors doing this have eroded some of the value of the letters on their books. But this is not new. The lists have been "gamed" since they were started by publishers. The system is the system and if you work within the system, you're entitled to the rewards of the system. Asking if the system is broken (it is) is a completely different topic.

3. For me personally, I'll only participate in sets for list runs that focus on gaining the attention of READERS. I don't care about the number of books sold so much as who they're being sold to. I don't want to participate in "buy-swaps" with people who won't even read the set, or running any kind of promo that breaks FB or Amazon rules. It's up to you as the author to decide what you're comfortable with.

4. Some people refuse to use the letters they gain from boxsets and tell other authors not to use them either. I say, do what you believe is right. Personally, I use the USA Today letters because when you go to the *USA Today* website and look up my name, it comes up with all the times I've hit. If you go to the NYT website and search my name, it doesn't come up (only the name of the set organiser), and for that reason, I don't use that on my books, even though it was super cool.

## 08 - PITFALLS TO AVOID

Okay, so, we've talked a ton about the positives of boxsets. Now, what should you try to avoid.

I've had some amazing experiences in boxsets, and I've also been in sets mired in controversy. I'm so so so careful now because I don't want to risk my Amazon account on set organisers who don't follow the rules.

For me, there are two big red flags. The first is about the set organiser. I've been in a set where Amazon rule changes resulted in a lawsuit between the organiser and an author (I lost \$500 on this set). In another set I was in, an organiser took the buy-in money and

ghosted the authors. The set never happened and no-one got their money back. MAKE SURE YOU TRUST THE ORGANISER. Make sure they have a good reputation in the industry. If people warn you off them, it might be worthwhile to listen, even if the set looks amazing.

The second is sets that aren't focused on getting readers. These are usually list-aiming sets so focused on selling copies they don't care who buys the copies. These end up with buy-swaps with other authors or giveaways that don't conform to legal rules. Before you join a set, find out about the promotional activities planned and make sure you're happy with them. For me, I will pull out of any sets that don't focus on readers.

## READY TO KICK ASS WITH MULTI-AUTHOR BOXSETS?

Boxsets, bundles, and collaborations with other authors are the secret sauce that can help indie authors like us to grow our readership. I hope I've given you the info you need to make smart decisions about sets and have shown you how strategic thinking can yield wicked results.

## About Steff Green

*Writing as 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 was a finalist for a 2018 Women of Influence award. She lives on the rugged Kaipara coast with her husband, a menagerie of animals, and her medieval sword collection.*

*Steff is also the creator of [Rage Against the Manuscript](#), an online community for writers to learn about self-publishing, finding their readers, and building a badass author brand. Steff's passionate about helping authors from all walks of life find their voice and tell their story.*

## BLURBS

**Donna Capil**

*What do I know about the topic that someone hasn't already said, and by people who know way more than me?*

At last month's RWNZ Nelson chapter meeting, our focus was on blurbs. Each member brought along two blurbs related to a current WIP or future manuscript, and tested the waters to see what works.

Before I show an example of the blurb I wrote for my paranormal romance novel, let me share with you the journey I undertook to arrive at that stage.

I read in an article that some authors prescribe writing the blurb (or the synopsis) before starting a novel, which then acts like a map to guide the writer from start to finish. Other authors write the blurb after completing the entire story. Whichever technique works for you is a matter of choice.

***"If the cover design of your book is the hook, the cover blurb is the line to reel readers in."***  
~ Dale E Lehman.

I'm not ready to cast out a line to reel in readers yet, as I've still to finish the edits on my novel. With writing, nothing works better than practice, practice, practice; also true when perfecting your casting skills. Ask any angler. On a side note, I have caught a fish or two from the stern of a boat, although admittedly, I didn't bait my hook, but I did reel them in.

I have ideas for the cover of my book but, of course, the decision depends on whether I head down the traditionally published route or self-publish my manuscript. If I go traditional, as a new author, the publisher will probably decide the design of the book cover. For argument's sake, however, let's say I have a come-closer-look-at-me hot off the press book cover in which to bait my hook. Now, I'd have to reel in those avid readers with an intriguing blurb, and one I can use for my Amazon and other digital retailers, too.

Moving on, let's see how I spent my time researching options for the best reel; oops, I mean researching how to write a great blurb.

The internet has a variety of information on this topic. Authors are eager and willing to share their advice through articles, blogs, YouTube videos, podcasts, and forums. After hours sitting at the computer, my poor brain ached, and information tumbled around inside my head like wet laundry in a dryer. I needed to focus less on cramming stuff in and more on pulling information out.

I took notes when I found common threads of information.

## DO...

- Keep the blurb within 100—200 words
- Highlight your success in the writing world (Hmm ... not a bestselling or award-winning author yet, so skip this part)
- Introduce character(s) and the world
- Include a hook
- Create intrigue around the initial conflict
- Use vivid imagery and specifics
- Use present tense
- End on a question or a point of tension
- Challenge every word's place on the page.

## DON'T...

- Info dump
- Reveal too much of the story
- Copy anyone else's blurb (that goes without saying)
- Worry about the rules with your first draft
- Reveal every single character in the book
- Use too much world-building
- Mislead the reader (The novel might be a sweet romance, but the blurb is raunchy with sexual innuendos and vice versa. If so, brace for a bad review.)
- Freak out (Oh, all right... but don't take all day).

I confess, I added the last bullet point. But as an aspiring author, it needed to be said.

Another tip I've either read or heard about is to check out the back covers of your favourite authors. After going through the books on my shelves, I could only dream of creating such

cleverly written blurbs. Needing a break from my usual writing spot, I headed to my local library and pored over the books in other genres, noting what I liked or didn't like about the blurb. A good move. Aside from the research material—I also found new authors to add to my TBR list.

I stopped for a coffee to mull over my discoveries, so an hour, maybe more, had passed before I headed home to start work on drafting my blurb.



Yes, sometimes I mirror a fantastic likeness of the above image when I sit down to write. Procrastination much? Maybe. I fully own my indulgence in a spot of daydreaming. I read somewhere that every dream starts from a thought or a mental image. My dream is to entertain people with my stories and make enough money to keep writing without the need to hold down another job. So, to all those who meditate, power nap, daydream, exercise or whatever else you want to label the ritual you carry out before you start work—more power to you.

Armed with a stack of notes, and a pocketful of enthusiasm, writing this blurb would be a breeze. Wrong! Donna, Donna, Donna, so naïve. Many drafts later, words still eluded me, and those that appeared on my laptop screen refused to flow in a clear, concise, and compelling manner. I had exceeded the word





count by four times the maximum limit. I struggled to choose which intriguing parts to include and which to dump. A couple of drafts didn't include the inciting incident—the event that kicks off the story. And my endings made for brilliant yawn makers.

How can I reel in the readers if I have a substandard blurb? Feeling somewhat defeated, I left my work for a day, hoping my ideas would marinate in my subconscious mind overnight. Sometimes, if I'm having trouble solving a writing issue, I will go for a walk, garden, cook, listen to music, or talk with someone e.g., a writing buddy or my hubby or daughter. Using these methods gives me a fresh outlook and renews my passion and determination to see the project to the end. It certainly worked when I floundered over this article.

And now we come to my examples.

#### **#1 Attempt:**

The blurb below is the example I took along to a recent meeting.

*Maia craves acceptance for who and what she is—a human-Fae half-breed by day and a fearsome taniwha, water creature by night.*

*She lives life in the shadows, a monster the likes of nightmares. She wants more. A life. Love. A taste of normal. But Maia was cast away by her father; to hide his bastard child by the monster that marked her, and by the Purebreds who killed her best friend for breaking tribal laws.*

*Warrior angel, Zachariel, lost his wings when he protected his brother for breaking angel law. Now a bounty hunter for the Archaeans, merciless beings who slaughtered his kind, he must obey as his brothers' fates hang in the balance. After thousands of years, Zachariel is offered freedom, if he completes one final capture—but she must come by choice, which means he must trick her into love.*

Now that I've had time to reflect, below is a rewrite.

#### **#2 Attempt:**

*Deep in the shadows of the Fiordland National Park exists a tribe of almost immortals. Among them, guardians protect the secret world. Of these, none craves acceptance for who and what she is more than Maia. She lives life in the shadows, a monster the likes of nightmares. She wants*



*more. A life. Love. A taste of normal. But when a stranger enters their world, Maia must choose to keep things as is or risk her life reaching for a dream.*

*A former warrior angel, Zachariel lost his wings protecting his brother. Now a bounty hunter for the Archaeans, merciless beings who torment and abuse his kind, he is honor-bound to obey. More than one brother's fate is at stake. In exchange for his freedom, he needs to complete one last hunt. There's a catch—his target must come of her own free will. His plan to trap her is working well until she captures his heart.*

I think the second version has more appeal, or I hope so. With every piece of writing, I'll set it aside to revisit later.

Before I end my spiel, I want to share a snippet of a conversation I had with a bestselling author. Riddled with self-doubt, I asked if they could remember struggling with blurbs, synopses, and query letters. Their response was a hearty laugh followed by "We've all been in that position".

Writing can be lonely, so join a writers' group if you haven't done so already. Or ask for help from a writing community. Facebook, Goodreads, or any other social media platform hosting these types of forums have generous authors willing to take time out of their busy lives to offer help and/or advice.

Writing a blurb for your first book can be difficult, considering you have to compress a

50—100,000-word novel into 100—200 words, but the task is not impossible. As Jodi Picoult said "You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page."

So, write your first draft with wild abandon, let it rest while you do something else, then rewrite and keep repeating until you achieve your best blurb. Match it to your fantastic cover design, publish, and do a happy dance as you reel in your readers.

#### **Bio:**

*Donna Capil writes contemporary and paranormal romances. She started writing short stories, and her story, Lost Moments, won the 2017 RWNZ Chapter Short Story. With two unfinished manuscripts sitting in a drawer, she needed a push to complete at least one. Enrolling in the level 7 Diploma in Advanced Applied Writing in 2020 provided the impetus. She worked on her debut novel, Shadows of the Mist, the first book in the Sons of Morning Light series as her major project for the course. She lives in sunny Nelson with her husband and has a 'revolving door' for their adult children and grandchildren. When not writing, she loves reading, gardening, crossword puzzles, music and enjoys movie dates with her hero.*

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<https://www.facebook.com/DonnaCapilAuthor>

## FIRST KISS CONTEST UPDATE



I'm delighted to be able to share with you the finalists for the Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss contest. Please join me in congratulating our finalists whose work will go on to be read by our final judge:

***Because It's Us, by Jax Calder***

***Playing Offside, by Jax Calder***

***Cougar Temptation, by Molly Matheson***

In what I believe is a first for RWNZ, all three finalist entries are M/M romance. We had only seven entries this year, but all were of incredibly high quality. I'm honestly very impressed that with everything going on, our entrants still had the time and focus to polish and submit their entries.

I'm also very grateful to our judges who bore with me through some technical difficulties, and offered their time and insight to help our entrants improve their craft. I saw some absolutely wonderful feedback shared, and it reminded me what RWNZ is all about: supporting each other on our writing journeys.

I also want to thank Anne, our contest coordinator, Bronwen, our webmaster, and the members of the exec for helping me with my technical issues. I would have been lost without you.

Our finalists entries are now going to be judged by the final judge. Molly and Jax, good luck to you both!

*Yours, Gillian St. Kevern*



## ARA HISTORICAL NOVEL PRIZE



The ARA Historical Novel Prize is now the richest genre-based literary award in Australasia. The Historical Novel Society of Australasia (HNSA), in partnership with Australia's leading essential building and infrastructure services provider ARA Group, has today announced the exciting expansion of the ARA Historical Novel Prize. The Prize will now incorporate a category for outstanding Children and Young Adult (CYA) literature.

In just its second year of operation, the ARA Historical Novel Prize is now worth a total of \$100,000 in prize monies. The Prize will award \$50,000 to the Adult category winner, with an additional \$5,000 to be awarded to each of the remaining two shortlisted authors. In the CYA category, the winner will receive \$30,000, while the two short listers will receive \$5,000 each.

Chair and Program Director of the Historical Novel Society Australasia, Elisabeth Storrs, said the ARA Historical Novel Prize is an excellent opportunity for writers to showcase their work in the increasingly popular genre of historical fiction.

"Last year, we received nearly 200 entries for the inaugural prize. These novels provided not only entertainment and escapism, but

also enlightened readers on the richness of history. I am looking forward to exploring the bygone eras illuminated in the 2021 entries, particularly those submitted for our new CYA category."

"Designed to give historical novelists the opportunity to be recognised in a class of their own, the ARA Historical Novel Prize is a true celebration of historical fiction, and a real opportunity to foster it on a grander scale and encourage younger readers to embrace the genre," said Storrs.

ARA Group Founder, Executive Chair and Managing Director—and patron of the arts—Edward Federman, said he was determined to expand the prize funding to support more of Australasia's most talented authors during a time of immense uncertainty in the industry.

"In its second year, we're proud to not only continue, but amplify, the impact the ARA Historical Novel Prize will have on the literary community in Australia and New Zealand by rewarding a wider breadth of authors for their contributions to our society's extraordinary library of published works," he said.

"As COVID-19 continues to affect author's earnings, ARA Group is hopeful the launch of

the new CYA category and additional funding for the ARA Historical Novel Prize will not only make a considerable difference to the lives of the winning authors, but also ensure the telling of history lives on.”

The judging panels consist of:

- Adult Novels: Nicole Alexander (Chair), Carmel Bird, and Roanna Gonsalves
- CYA Novels: Paul McDonald (Chair), Thuy On, and Catherine Mayo

The definition of the genre set for the prize will ensure a breadth of talented writers is eligible to enter. Historical fiction will be defined as a novel in which the majority of the narrative must have taken place at least fifty years before publication.

A range of sub-genres are eligible, including historical mystery, historical romance, alternate history, historical fantasy, multi-time, time-slip, and parallel narrative novels.

The judging criteria include depth of research, widespread reader appeal, with excellence in writing as the deciding factor.

**The ARA Historical Novel Prize is open to all authors who are citizens or residents of Australia or New Zealand.** Authors, publishers, or agents may submit books in print or digital editions. Works must be published between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021 to be eligible. The history explored can be from any era or society across the world. The submission process will be administered by the HNSA’s partner, the New England Writers’ Centre.

### **Key dates:**

- Awards open: 9am (AEST) 14 April 2021
- Awards close: 5pm (AEST) 14 June 2021
- Longlist announced (nine books): 8 September 2021
- Shortlist announced (three books): 22 September 2021
- Winners announced: 22 October 2021

Winners will be announced at the [HNSA biennial conference](#) in October. For more information about the awards and to see last year’s winners, please visit the [HNSA website](#).

The HNSA supports and promotes the writing, reading and publication of historical fiction across Australia and New Zealand. It is the third arm of the International Historical Novel Society.

The ARA Historical Novel Prize has been made possible through the generous patronage of ARA Group. The ARA Group, and its Founder, Executive Chair and Managing Director, Edward Federman, are committed to supporting the arts and literature. They do this in a number of ways—as a Principal Partner of the Sydney Writers’ Festival, as a Principal Partner of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, as a Principal Partner of the Monkey Baa Theatre, and as a sponsor of the Historical Novel Society Australia’s biennial conferences—and now as the sponsor of this very significant literary prize.

### **Media contact:**

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## LOVE HAS FOUND A WAY: CONFERENCE 2021 IS ON!



*Friends,*

I'm so excited to announce the return of the **Romance Writers of New Zealand conference, scheduled for the 7-8th August, 2021.**

It's been a wild year for all of us, and I know how sad everyone was to miss catching up with other members in person. The conference team have been through the wringer, planning an entire event that had to be cancelled and completely re-imagined. But we've done it and we couldn't be happier!

We'd like to invite you to attend ***Love Finds A Way***, our 2021 conference celebrating our local kiwi talent and the resilience and tenacity we need to survive and thrive in these strange times. Here's everything you need to know so far:

### **Location:**

***Our conference will be held in Wellington, 7-8 August 2021. We will have a block of rooms available to book shortly once we're able to announce the hotel.*** The hotel is centrally-located on Terrace/Lambton Quay, with onsite parking and easy access to bus/airport routes. Cafes, shops, bars, and restaurants, as well as tourist attractions like Te Papa, the cable car, Parliament, and many art galleries are right outside your door.

### **Format:**

This will be a two-day conference of keynotes, workshops, panels, roundtables, and more.

### **Keynotes:**

A star-studded lineup of local talent, including Nalini Singh, Jay Hogan, and more to be announced.



**Pitches:**

Conference attendees will be able to pitch a selection of international editors and agents online during the weeks either side of the conference. These appointments are only available to delegates with a completed manuscript or proposal and are first in, first served.

**Registration:**

Registration will open shortly with early-bird pricing for members. We've capped the numbers at 100 delegates total, so it pays to register early.

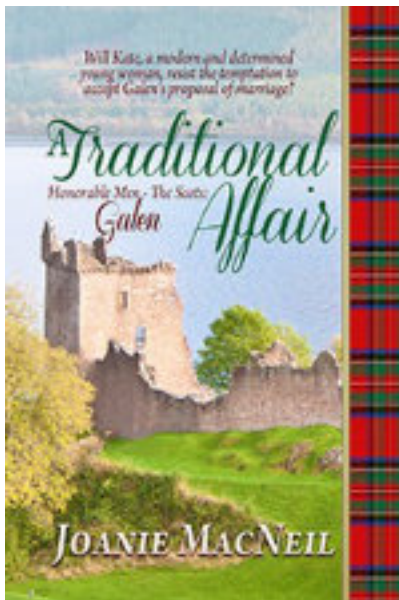
**COVID-19:**

Conference has been designed so that it's possible to operate under Level 2 restrictions. However, in the event of a lockdown it is likely that the event will be postponed.

Tickets will be refundable for COVID-related changes, and please note if you're flying from elsewhere in NZ that AirNZ offers flight changes at no-cost and credits on flights not taken.

That's all for now. I hope you're as excited as I am to meet up in Wellington, talk about all things romance, and have some much-deserved fun!

*Love, Steff and the conference team.*



## Joanie MacNeil

### A TRADITIONAL AFFAIR

Joanie MacNeil released a contemporary romance called **A Traditional Affair** (*Honorable Men—The Scots: Galen*) on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March.

*Will Kate, a modern and determined young woman, resist the temptation to accept Galen's proposal of marriage?*

<https://books2read.com/A-Traditional-Affair>



## Alexa Rivers

### SAFE IN HIS ARMS

Alexa Rivers released the third book in her *Haven Bay* series of small-town romances on 11<sup>th</sup> of February.

**Safe In His Arms** is a slow-burn small-town romance.

*If you like protective heroes, quietly strong heroines, and emotionally-charged stories, then you'll love the third book in Alexa Rivers' Haven Bay series.*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08T6W9SRG>



## Gillian Mayne

### A TRUEHEART FOR ALLIE

Gillian Mayne released **A Trueheart for Allie** in February, the third book in her *Lotus Season* series.

*This is a boy next door, sweet contemporary romance.*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08VL6W5KJ>



## Jordan Ford

### THE FIGHTER

Jordan Ford released **The Fighter**, a heart-racing, high-octane drama in a thrilling, YA romance stories.

*He'll do anything to save a young girl's life. She's a runaway who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Can a carjacking turn into a partnership that will redeem them both?*

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08N7V6HT2>



## Jordan Ford

### PAPER CRANES

In October last year, Jordan Ford's YA sweet romance novel, **Paper Cranes**, received a gold medal for the Readers' Favorite Awards in YA Romance.

**Paper Cranes** is a modern day, real-world fairytale with a twist. Inspired by the story of Rapunzel, this YA contemporary romance will tug on your heart strings.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07222M9MG>

## How to get your title featured:

**Heart 2 Heart** is always keen to share news from members:

- new book releases
- news of awards,
- contracts, and anything else that is worth celebrating.

To submit email the editor [heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz](mailto:heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz) or use the form on the RWNZ website.

**Supply: 2-3 sentences in the third person, a cover image (no other images will be accepted) and a CLEAN link direct to the retailer.**



## REGIONAL ROUND-UP REPORTS

## Hawkes Bay

**Convenor: Bronwen Evans**

March Meeting:

The Hawkes Bay group met at Ginny's where we celebrated Jackie Rutherford's wins and welcomed our newest member, Jacqui Peck. We had a long discussion about 'newsletters', and why, what, when, and voice, which is why the next meeting is on "How To Amp up Your Author Voice".

## Coast to Coast

**Convenors: Julie Gilligan + Jill Batty**

February meeting:

We had a small group of ten at Jill Batty's house where we had a presentation on how to write characters with illness and disability. Our presenter provided a lot of research and personal experiences with both. The insights into autism, attention deficit disorder, mental illness, and chronic illness were incredible and generated a lot of discussions.

March meeting:

The C2C meetup was held at Denise Fitzpatrick's house. The weather was stunning and we dined on a delicious shared lunch sitting on her deck under the umbrella; Bellissimo! There was a presentation on 'Publishing Wide' and it included an online demo of Google Play Partner Center and the simplicity of using the website to upload and sell your ebooks. C2C also conducted a member survey during March. The next meeting is in Hamilton on the 8th May, and is on how to work with beta readers.

## Wellington / Kapiti Coast

**Convenors: Holly James + Gudrun Frerichs**

February meeting:

Waitangi Day saw our meeting postponed to the second weekend of February, but it was worth it to see more of our group turn up to the Petone Community Centre! We welcomed new member, Lisa, and caught up on all of our summer happenings. To kick start the new year, we were led by author Holly James, who will be transitioning into the Convenor role for our group. It was great to see her in action!

As a group, we're keen to identify the direction our meetings should take this year, so we completed a survey of what we'd each find helpful over the coming months, and this should help us better support each other on our journeys. Those not able to attend could still complete the survey in our Facebook group so their voices were heard. We look forward to sharing the results and tailoring future meetings to our member's needs.

March meeting:

Ten writers met up on a rainy Saturday afternoon at Paraparaumu Library. Attending were Jane—the superhero who swooped in to champion the group when all four coordinators were unable to make it—Vanessa, Helen, Susan, Kris, Lisa, Frances, Jeanette, Bonnie (plus Eclipse!), and Jenny.

We had some last-minute agenda changes due to sickness and absences, but talked about the difference between writing Romance and Cozy (Kris Pearson), and Jane Ashurst shared her annual marketing plan and how it works. There was a reminder for our upcoming retreat at the end of March, and we talked a little about different types of paid advertising and our collective experiences.

## Nelson

### Convenors:

**Annika Ohlson-Smith + Lorna Croft**

February meeting:

Our first meeting for 2021 was on Saturday the 13th February. It was an almost full house, with one of two prospective members attending. It took some time to introduce us to Triona, getting to know her, and catching up on where we are with our writing.

We brainstormed the programme for the year, and we chose writing blurbs at our next meeting. Other subjects: pitching practise, reviewing a book, metaphors, editing, structure of story, show/tell, and website design. Donna volunteered to be the March convenor. We took five minutes to write a five-line story; some were dark, some sexy, some scary, and some funny. As usual, there was lots of chatter and laughter while having banana cake and little chocolate hearts with our cuppa.

## Canterbury

**Convenor: Emma Lowe**

February meeting:

The Christchurch chapter kicked off our 2021 meetings at South Library with a catch up on everything we've been doing. We welcomed a new member, shared successes from 2020 (yes, there were a few of those), and under Mel's guidance, had our usual goal-setting session.

The highlight of the meeting, however, happened before the meeting when we got to meet Carmen's husband, Ali. He had just left managed isolation and was reunited with his wife after a much longer separation than either of them imagined! An awesome Valentine's Day surprise.

## Otago / Southland

**Convenor: Samantha Burton**

March meeting:

The Otago/Southland chapter met at our usual venue (University of Otago Link) on Saturday 6 March at 2pm. This month, as well as our usual catch-up, we had an open 'Q&A' session, where anyone with a writing/publishing/marketing question had a chance to hear possible solutions!





## *WELCOME NEW MEMBERS*

Danielle Line ~ Overseas  
Troy Tang ~ Auckland  
Lisa Stanbridge ~ Overseas  
Kate Frey ~ Overseas  
Triona Pottinger ~ Nelson

Great to have you all with us!

Don't forget to read the information for new members page on our website. 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.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RWNZMembersOnly/>