

April / May 2022

Heart 2 Heart

Romance Writers of New Zealand

**TIPS ON :
CO-WRITING
+**

**WRITING TO THE
THANKSGIVING MARKET
+**

**WRITING AS A HYBRID AUTHOR
+**

**GAINING A PUBLISHING CONTRACT
+**

**RWNZ COMPETITIONS
+**

RWNZ CONFERENCE 2022

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NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mollie Smith

Hi y'all!

It's starting to get a wee bit nippy outside! I grew up in a swamp—New Orleans, to be precise. It rarely got below freezing, but when it did, I remember having to wrap the pipes with old rags and shirts to avoid the water freezing and bursting the pipes. Mum would ask us to leave the taps dripping as well. If it threatened to snow, the apocalypse was upon us, and the governor shut the schools down.

Even after twenty years of living in New Zealand where it routinely drops below zero at night during the winter, I still haven't acclimatised. So, I hibernate and dream of thirty-degree days and lots of sun. However, despite my intense hatred of being cold, there is nothing quite like being wrapped up in a blanket with a hot cuppa, sitting in a sunbeam, and either reading or writing. So, my message this time is to take some time for yourself and find your joy this winter, whatever that happens to be. Reading. Writing. Skiing. Cleaning the house. Getting ready for conference.

On that, **conference** is a couple of months away, and it's a perfect end-of-winter break for me. There's nearly five months between Matariki (end of June) and Labour Day (end of October)! While Melissa and her team had a slight setback with the rooms that are available to us, the conference committee and the James Cook Hotel are committed to making this work for us.

If you're keen to help Melissa and the conference committee in any way, please get in touch with her at melissa@foreverlovepublishing.com.



Our **RWNZ contests** are finished for the year. Congratulations to all of our finalists, and a huge round of applause from me to everyone who entered them. It takes a lot of courage to put your baby out into the world and ask for feedback. Feedback is one of the best reasons to enter a contest; it lets you know if you're on the right track and it validates that nagging feeling you might have that something isn't right in your story, but you're not quite sure what it is. Feedback from my most recent piece validated that my ending needed work, and I was given a couple of suggestions as to what to do next.

If you're keen to help judge the contests, get in touch with our contest coordinator, Shelagh, at contests@romancewriters.co.nz. You'll be helping authors out on their journey!

If you have any questions or concerns at all about RWNZ, feel free to send the Exec an email at info@romancewriters.co.nz. This is your romance writing community, and we're here to help!

Nga mihi nui

Mollie Smith
President

SCALING THE SOCIAL MEDIA LADDER



Corina Douglas

Well, winter is almost here, and it's hard to believe we're almost halfway through the year. It really hit home when my youngest asked me yesterday, "When are the elves coming back to get up to their pesky tricks?" I almost replied that we only just had Christmas when I suddenly realised, actually, no we're now in June! Where has the year gone? We are flying through it. I swear, this feels so much faster than usual. I'm really not sure why, except it feels like I'm playing catchup on what's been missing over the last two years, especially in my author career.

Since the release of the last ezine, I've been learning how to do many new things, the least of which is delving into social media—thanks to Anne Buttar and Kseniia Spodyneiko. You may have recalled about four months ago that these two lovely ladies each wrote an article on how to build your social media platforms on Tiktok and Instagram, respectively. Well, I delved into both of their courses, and by the time this goes to print, I'll be a month into Tiktok and a few weeks into IG reels. It's been a real ride so

far, and I've definitely thrown myself out of my comfort zone . . . Eeek!

You see, I've never given social media a proper go. Well, not the proper go it deserves. I think a lot of that has to do with really bad imposter syndrome. Even though I have ten published works under my belt, I still struggle to believe I'm an 'author' sometimes. When friends ask me what I do, I will still say "editor" before I say "author". Owning that book you wrote isn't easy.

I'm conscious that the word 'author' comes with many biases—both yours and the person you're talking to. Therefore, when I think of social media, I think of fronting up and owning the fact that I'm the author of those books. A dose of fear, anyone?

On delving into this world, I soon realised using social media still comes with options. You can choose to be on camera or off it by using some clever video manoeuvres. However, you'll still be 'fronting' the camera and the readers, and still wide open for comments and/or feedback.



So far, I've only had positive comments on TT and IG, but I am aware that this isn't always the case. There was a recent survey undertaken by [Book Angel](#) around author safety, addressing issues around privacy, harassment, bullying, and even stalking. Did you know the number is fairly high (and only increasing in this day and age)? Many authors have given up their careers because of these disturbing issues, and I can name two authors in the last two years who suffered from bullying due to the fictional stories they wrote. Putting ourselves out there on social media only adds to that anxiety level and fear. It also has the power to make us stop what we're doing and pull back from even trying to succeed; but I've come to realise life is too short, and we can't let these people win. Thus, I'm sucking up my courage, and I'm delving right in, learning strategies as I go along.

I've learned two valuable lessons on this social media journey. The first is that we can't manage how people will interpret our social media posts (just like we can't manage how they will interpret our books), and it's up to us to decide if we own those opinions or not. Secondly, if we're going to succeed on any social media platform, then the key is to enjoy it.

Writing is a blessing as well as a need. It gives us endorphins and a creative outlet. We don't choose to do it because we want to; often, it's because we need to. However, with social media, it's a choice. And clearly, if we're not enjoying it and posting consistently, we're going to fail because the algorithm won't push our posts as much as we want it to.

I was worried I would be a one-stop wonder on Tiktok, but in actuality, I'm enjoying myself immensely. I'm also happy to say that you don't need to dance or sing, and I'm not the oldest person on there making a fool out of myself! I sure hope this feeling continues for however long is needed—either until I become the next Sarah J. Maas, or the need for authors to front up on social media is suddenly obsolete (wishful thinking, I know, given that traditional authors are now all over social media too!).

So, with all that said, I want to end on this note—a note I can't take the credit for; rather, that goes to Anne Buttar. What Anne said to me was this: **There is no getting 'there' on this journey—we are already there, so enjoy the ride!**

This message has really stayed with me these last few weeks, and I remind myself of this fact every time I sit in front of my computer. So, take the time right now to tell yourself that you are "there". Celebrate how far you've come, and enjoy the moment!

Until next edition,

Corina x

CO-WRITING: POLISHING THE PROOF



Ashley Lindsay



Sarah Anderson

By now, you might have followed along with our previous articles that covered the basics of co-writing and how to start writing your first draft. You might have navigated some treacherous waters with your co-writer and discovered that co-writing is fun, despite all the challenges. Or, maybe you haven't dipped your toes in that wild sea quite yet and still have some doubts. After all, anyone can create a first draft, but there's a lot more hard work to do if you want to create a sellable book.

That hard work is called editing.

If you've ever gotten further than the first draft of a novel, you know your work is only half complete. Or maybe not even half, depending on your writing style and how many rounds of revisions you typically tend to do. Whatever your usual process, it will look a bit different when you have a co-writer involved.

There are a number of ways to edit your work—every writer works differently. And that's no different for co-writers. For example, as we mentioned in our last article, sometimes one author takes on the editor

role and follows in the footsteps of the drafter, buffering and smoothing while the drafter lays down the initial foundation. For some co-writers, this is the go-to method—I've heard of very successful writers who work this way.

Our process is different, therefore, we can only speak from our own experience for this article. We take a fifty-fifty approach to all elements of our work, including the editing. We believe that for a partnership to work, both parties need to be equally satisfied with the final product. And the final product must flow smoothly and consistently from one chapter to the next, so the reader never realises it was co-written in the first place. So, how do we do it?

The Warm-Up:

We begin by reading the book from start to finish. This is where we gain a sense of the strengths and flaws of each chapter and give each other some general critique. This initial discussion allows us to understand what might need to be changed and helps to eliminate any surprises. Once both writers read the entire draft in full, we jointly decide



on any significant plot points that need to be reworked (and there are usually many). We also take notes along the way, which help guide the first round of edits.

The Relay Race:

We then begin the arduous task of reworking the initial draft. To start, one member of the co-writing team takes the lead, sifting and sorting through the pages of notes and comments created in the first read-through. We give each other as much time to edit as necessary—there's no use rushing this phase. We want our draft as polished as possible, so both of us are happy with the outcome.

The editing method is different for every writer, and we are no exception, as each of us follows our own process. One author may prefer to edit chapter by chapter while the other may decide to focus on one element, such as setting, description, or character. This allows them to take a more systematic approach. Any method is acceptable—do whatever works for you!

After one of us does this first edit, we pass it on to the other and let them dig their claws into the work-in-progress. This continues

back and forth until we feel the novel is ready to go out to our beta-readers.

Working as a Team:

No matter how in sync you are with your co-writer, there will always be some bumps along the way. Do you remember that metaphor you liked on page 107? Your co-writer might have deleted it. What about that swoon-worthy passage of dialogue between two characters in chapter six? Your co-writer may have re-written it. Or maybe there is a passage of description that your co-writer is fond of, but you don't think is up to scratch. Disagreements happen. And that's OK.

In situations like this, it's important to remember the shared vision you and your co-writer had back in the beginning. This might mean some hard negotiating until you arrive at a solution you are both happy with. Stubbornly refusing to consider your co-writer's opinion will only make the situation worse and, in the end, will compromise the quality of your book.

Think about why your co-writer is bringing up these changes. It won't be for no reason—they want the best possible product as well.

Listen to their ideas and explanations, but if their solution still doesn't sit well with you, suggest an alternative. Maybe combining ideas or changing it altogether is the answer. After all, two minds are better than one.

Pleasing the Crowd:

There comes a point when you both believe your novel is at its best—in other words, there's nowhere left to go. You have primed and preened the story until you can do no more. This is where an outside opinion comes in handy.

Enter the beta readers.

This is the fun (and sometimes scary) phase where people outside your co-writing bubble get to read your work for the first time.

In our process, one of us takes responsibility for organising the betas and gathering all their feedback, as it's easier for the reader to deal directly with one person. Once the feedback is collated, we review the comments and identify the major areas that need work. After a discussion session on how we can make any suggested changes, one of us takes the lead and works on the manuscript until they are happy with it. Then, the other has their turn to edit the manuscript. This goes on repeatedly until we feel the novel is ready for publication.

Conclusions:

Co-writing can be a challenging process at times. Not only do you have to write a novel, which is a feat in itself, but you also have to relinquish control and share the creative process with another writer. Despite these hurdles, we believe co-writing is a rewarding experience. With the right amount of planning and communication, you can minimise any difficulties that may arise. For us, co-writing is a fun and enjoyable way of writing that has really helped our development as writers and enabled us to polish our writing skills.

We hope the tips from this series of articles have helped you learn about co-writing and maybe even convinced you to give it a try.

Happy writing, everyone!

Ashley and Sarah



Bio:

Ashley and Sarah grew up together in the small city of Tauranga, New Zealand, and in high-school they began co-authoring the first draft of the Black Skies series. Soon, their lives took some major plot twists—Sarah moved halfway across the world and is now an operating room nurse in Canada, and Ashley completed a PhD in Chemistry, applying her research to innovation and sustainability. But despite the distance, and after a hiatus of several years, they returned to the Black Skies series with fresh eyes and new determination. Their passion for writing and co-authoring has remained strong, and along with the Black Skies series, they have a number of other writing-related pursuits in progress.

One of their recent co-authored books can be found here:

<http://www.lindersoncreations.com/books/>

WRITING AS A HYBRID AUTHOR



Anne Buttar

When I started my journey as an author ten years ago, self-publishing was just beginning, and there wasn't any such thing as a hybrid author. But that was then...and this is 2022!

I've been self-publishing since taking my rights back from my publisher in 2016; but, as of last year, my agent found me a home with a small publishing house in the USA. My first book with them comes out in August of this year, and I'm contracted for three more over the next two years.

I've had a few people ask me why I'm continuing to self-publish if I have an agent and this contract now. Well, my answer is simple...I like having some creative control, but I also like being held to guidelines. I'm one of those types of people who is always educating themselves around the publishing industry. To me, being self-published aids furthering this goal, and it keeps my finger on the pulse of the industry. The fact I'm hybrid now compliments my growth. The hybrid blend has been beneficial in the way I work—it's added to my creativity. It's gotten me into a space where, when the momentum is flowing, I want to keep the ball rolling.

From my experience so far, straddling the hybrid line is both fun and chaotic at the same time. Some days when I sit down to write for my contracted work, it takes a hot minute for me to get my head into the game. There are different characters, plotlines, towns, POVs...it can make one anxious if you're not careful. Have I hyper-ventilated into a brown paper bag because I mixed up names? Oh, you bet I have!

I have to pay close attention to my POVs too. I write my self-published sweet romcoms in first person POV, whereas the books I'm writing under contract (cozy mystery, sweet contemporary romance, and romantic suspense) are written in third person POV. This means I have to pay even closer attention to what I write and how I'm writing it.

I've read articles with a discourse around being either self-pubbed or traditionally published. Personally, to each their own. We all have our reasons for our strategy and our author careers; you have to do what is best for you and how you work. Both sides are beneficial to our learning process and each come with learning curves.



We learn a lot about marketing when we're self-published, and this carries over to a traditionally published life in most cases. Most publishers want their authors involved in some part of the marketing aspect. Honestly, to me, this is where self-published authors can sparkle and shine—because we've been wearing all those hats for years, sorting our own social media posts, promos, writing newsletters, and prepping ad copy! Also, depending on your goals and your contract, you may need to run your self-published books and outlines past your traditional publishing house due to a non-compete clause. It's a case of being safe, not sorry.

If you're thinking of going hybrid or making it a career path, I'd also suggest that you tighten up your juggling skills. I consider myself to be a very organized person, but when you're pushing yourself with your own self-publishing deadlines, you have to remember you have contracts and editors to answer to still, and you don't want to let them down.

Financially, for some writers, this can also be a win-win. Signing a contract can, in most cases, give you a sense of security where some folks who are in the indie game find the road can be a bit bumpier. Being able to straddle the line of both models gives an author the chance to cash a check (and pay some bills) while letting their freak flag fly with their writing. Another plus is the diversification: it's no secret having multiple

income streams can help in our quest to make money, so if you have the option and are able to diversify your writing, why not give it a shot?

Rights are another conversation you'll need to have if you go with a contract. Being self-published, we own our rights and have a grip on them. When you sign with any kind of publisher, make sure you look at your contract and always know and understand what your rights are.

After reading this, you may still be firmly either on Team Self-Pub or Team Traditional—depending on what works best for you as an author, what fits your goals, or where it is you want your writing career to be in one—five—or even ten years down the road. But maybe, just maybe, being a Hybrid author may be better suited for you. It all comes back to your goals and what you can handle....and only you can answer that.

Bio:

Anne Buttar writes sweet romcom, chick lit, and sweet contemporary romance as Anne Kemp and cozy mystery as AF Kemp. She's also the creative head of Wonderland Firm, an award-winning PR and social media marketing agency located on the Kapiti Coast. An American expat who has made New Zealand her home, Anne has over 25+ years of experience in the marketing and entertainment industry and loves sharing her knowledge around PR and social media marketing with fellow authors.

WRITING TO THE THANKSGIVING MARKET



Leeana Morgan

Hi everyone!

Following on from Serenity's wonderful article about writing to the valentine market in the Dec/Jan edition of Heart 2 Heart, I'd like to share some thoughts about the Thanksgiving Day market.

First of all, why include Thanksgiving Day in a novel?

It's all about EMOTION. The best way to connect with your readers (and keep them coming back for more novels) is to create books that draw them into the story and make them feel as though they're there, participating in everything that's happening. Special holidays, like Thanksgiving Day, give you a ready-made occasion that can be used to create an emotional connection between the story and your readers.

I write for an American audience, so it makes sense to celebrate one of the biggest American holidays in my novels. My stories are focused on family, friends, and creating a sense of community—another tick for

Thanksgiving Day, especially when yummy food and gorgeous decorations are involved.

Thanksgiving Day is also familiar to my readers. The emotional connection to this holiday is already there, buried deep in their subconscious. When I write a holiday novel or scene, I want to focus on things that will make my readers remember previous Thanksgiving Days they've shared with their families, or ones they would have liked to have shared. I want them to be part of the food preparation, decorating the house, and coping with any last-minute disasters.

A Thanksgiving Day scene (or book) doesn't have to be full of love and feel-good vibes. It could be a time for reflection, of remembering better times. Maybe someone in the family or friend group has died, been recently divorced, had a financial setback, or a health issue that's making life difficult for them. Use the holiday celebration as a way to show just how different your character's life is from all the happiness around them—or from other Thanksgiving Days they've shared with friends and family.



What if your books aren't set in America and you want a Thanksgiving Day scene? Well, do you have an American main or secondary character? Maybe they want to recreate what's familiar to them? Or maybe, someone in the family/friend group wants to start a new tradition, complete with a few recipes that may or may not turn out successfully?

BUT, there's more to writing a Thanksgiving Day novel than writing the book. If you want readers to find the book, you need a cover that screams Thanksgiving Day (if that's the main focus). Research other top-selling Thanksgiving Day (or holiday) books in your genre to see what's selling, then tie the common elements into your branding. Look at the color palettes that have been used, font, images, and layout. For example, mine is above:

Look at the titles and subtitles the top-selling books have used. Do they include the word 'Thanksgiving'? And what common keywords have the authors used in the blurbs to make the retail bots push your book at potential readers? Make sure you include these in your own blurb.

Next, when were the books published? Did they hit the market a few months before the holiday celebration, a few days before, or on the day? Do you want to set up a pre-order for the book so it releases close to or on the day of the holiday?

Think about the price of your book leading up to the actual launch. Do you want to drop the price to free or heavily discount it to promote your book on advertising sites? Do you want to keep it at the full price and push it to potential readers on Facebook or Amazon ads? Do you want to promote it on TikTok and other social media platforms?



Look for promotion sites that include a variety of authors writing with a particular theme in their books. BookSweeps and LitRing are good examples of these.

Consider what the holiday represents and how you can use this to provide a marketing opportunity. In the example of Thanksgiving Day, two of the key elements for me are food and friendship. You could run a giveaway with a difference on your social media platform(s). Ask your readers what their favorite Thanksgiving Day memory is, along with the name of a not-for-profit organization that provides meals to people. You could then draw the name of one organization out of a hat and make a donation to them (on behalf of your readers) so other people can enjoy Thanksgiving Day. Tell your followers what you've done, and thank them for their suggestions.

In conclusion, there are as many ways to include Thanksgiving Day in a novel and in your marketing strategy as there are stars in the sky, so be creative and think connection, emotion, and lots of food!

Have a wonderful day,

Leeanna

Bio:

USA Today bestselling author, Leeanna Morgan, writes small-town romances set in Montana. She is writing her 40th novel and busy planning next year's releases. To learn more about Leeanna and her books, you can find her here:

<https://www.leeannamorgan.com/>

THREE THINGS THAT HELPED ME GAIN A PUBLISHING CONTRACT



Jennifer Raines

In September 2021, I opened my email to find Inkspell Publishing was offering me a contract for my contemporary romance *Taylor's Law*. I was equal parts thrilled and stunned. Over the next few days I'd find myself smiling at nothing or checking the contract to see if it was real. You see, *Taylor's Law* placed third in the Australian 2018 Emerald competition; but, after being rejected by a number of major publishing companies, I'd tucked it away.

In 2021, I entered the first chapter in a US competition. Melissa Keir, the owner and editor of Inkspell Publishing was the final judge, and the rest, as they say, is history. The following is what I learned from this process:

Identifying competitions with acquiring editors as judges—aka being open to feedback

It took me a while to twig to this, but once I had, it was critical to the competitions I entered. I sought final judges from publishing companies I hoped would publish my books. But the idea of a professional editor or agent—or any professional editor or agent—assessing my work was so appealing that I

submitted to numerous competitions where smaller, independent publishing companies and agencies provided final judges, as getting my work directly to a judge seemed faster than being added to a busy editor's reading pile!

Obviously, I didn't always final. However, what I did find was a wealth of constructive feedback from romance readers, hints for online courses, suggestions for particular expert teachers I should look out for, and books I should read to improve conflict, scene endings, and deep point of view. The feedback—yes, even the feedback which initially crushed me—provided insights into my writing, which have only helped me improve. I always reread the negative feedback, often after a break of a few days or weeks when my initial outrage or despair has settled, because in 99 percent of cases a valid or interesting point has been made. Therefore, if you don't reread tough critiques, you miss the gems.

Take another look at old manuscripts—aka persistence



If, like me, you've been scribbling for years, by which I mean putting your heart and soul into your writing, then you've probably got a bottom drawer full of discarded manuscripts that you haven't given a thought to for years. Whether it was the premise, the characters, or the setting, there was something that drove you to write the original book. The book wasn't a success, yes, but that doesn't mean the concept isn't a winner. By using the new skills you've developed, rewriting, reworking, rearranging—even ditching whole sections of an old manuscript and using the bare bones of the structure—will produce a different book. A book worthy of publication. That's what happened to me.

Be prepared to go out of your comfort zone—aka calculated risk-taking

Smaller companies are just as keen to take on new writers as bigger publishing companies. Be bold. You may have no social media presence. Still, a company that requires its authors to have a profile may love your book and give you time between contract signing and publication to develop your profile. You won't know if you don't ask. Accept that you can no longer just write. Even the biggest

publishing companies expect their authors to be active in self-promotion. Decide how much of yourself you're prepared to share, know what your boundaries are, and create a brand that reflects who you are. Look at the websites of other authors, their social media presence, and the style of their covers, so you can begin to develop a sense of what suits you. Best of luck!

Bio:

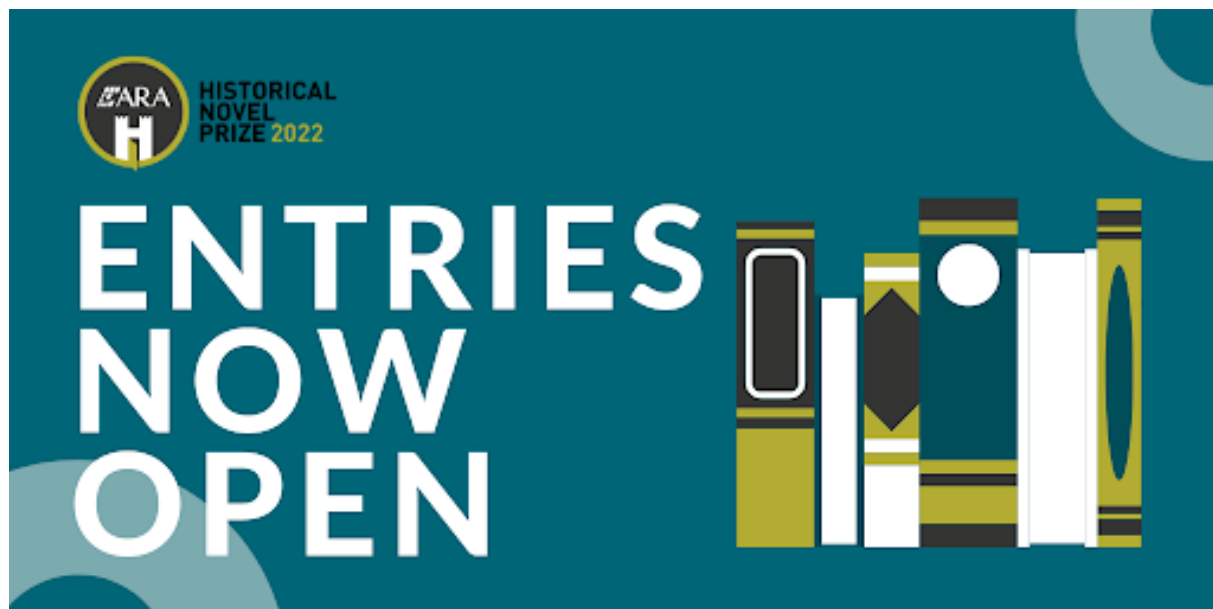
Taylor's Law will be published in July 2022 by Inkspell Publishing. Grace Under Fire is the sequel to Taylor's Law. It was the 2019 winner of the NZ Pacific Hearts competition and will be published in March 2023 by Inkspell Publishing.

To find out more about Jennifer, visit <https://www.facebook.com/jenniferrainesauthor>

or

<https://jenniferrainesauthor.com>

ENTRIES FOR THE 2022 ARA HISTORICAL NOVEL PRIZE NOW OPEN



Historical Novel Society Australasia (HNSA), in partnership with Australia's leading essential building and infrastructure services provider ARA Group, is excited to announce that entries for the 2022 ARA Historical Novel Prize are now open.

The ARA Historical Novel Prize is the richest genre-based literary award in Australasia, incorporating both an Adult category and a Children and Young Adult (CYA) category. The Prize is 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 Programme Director of the HNSA, 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 130 entries for the prize, all of

which demonstrated the power of the historical fiction genre to explore what lies hidden and unspoken in society today, illuminated by the sometimes shadowy, yet revealing, paths to our past."

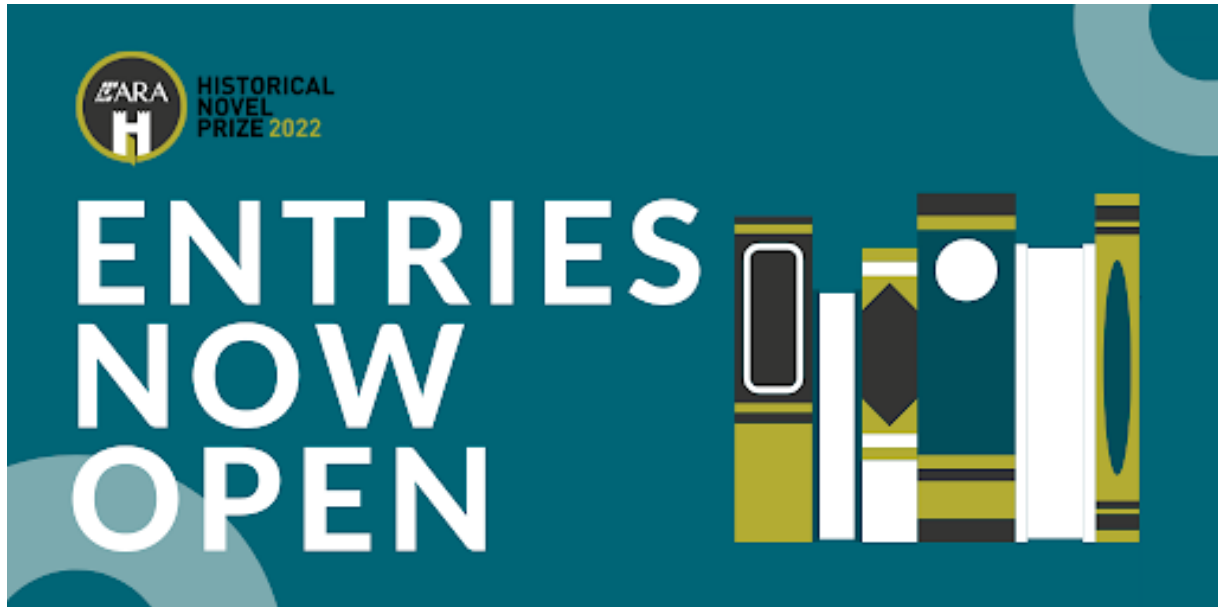
"Last year's winning novels demonstrated the irresistible prose, unforgettable characters, meticulous research, and epic storytelling for which historical fiction is known—as I'm sure this year's will do as well. The ARA Historical Novel Prize is a true celebration of the genre, and a real opportunity to foster the genre on a grander scale," said Storrs.

The judging panels consist of:

- Adult Novels: Angelo Loukakis (Chair), Madison Shakespeare and Meg Keneally
- CYA Novels: Paul McDonald (Chair), Deborah Abela and Rachael King

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

ENTRIES FOR THE 2022 ARA HISTORICAL NOVEL PRIZE NOW OPEN



the narrative must have taken place at least 50 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 includes 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. This year, entries for the Adult category must be submitted in digital edition only. Entries for the CYA category will be accepted in both print and digital format. Works must be published between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 to be eligible. The history explored can be from any era or society across the world.

Key dates:

- **Awards open:** 9am (AEST) 13 April 2022
- **Awards close:** 5pm (AEST) 15 June 2022
- **Longlist announced (nine books):** 14 September 2022
- **Shortlist announced (three books):** 28 September 2022
- **Winners announced:** 20 October 2022

For more information about the ARA Historical Novel Prize and to see last year's winners, please visit the [HNSA website](https://hnsa.org.au).

Media contact:

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0434 442 687 media@hnsa.org.au

THE 2022 RWNZ CONFERENCE IS NOW OPEN FOR REGISTRATION!



Yay! The conference committee is super excited to announce that conference registrations are now officially open! Go to <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/event/2022-rwnz-conference-registration/> to secure your spot. **The early bird special runs until July 4th**, but places will fill up quickly, and we don't want you to miss out, so the sooner you register the better!

To see what you have in store for this year, you can check out the full program here: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/2022-full-program/>

It's another line up of completely awesome NZ-based authors, and we look forward to celebrating and learning from so much local talent!

We're incredibly grateful to our sponsors—Draft to Digital and Kobo Life—who are helping us put on this event for you. Thanks to their generosity, we were able to prepare some special treats for you, including the “Romance the Night Away” cocktail party. This event is a wonderful chance to kick off and meet the people you'll be attending conference with. You can enjoy this fairytale-themed event with tasty canapés and drinks while you socialize with your friends and meet some new writers you can connect with. Keep an eye out for people wearing genre buttons on their lanyards, and find writers who write in the same genre/s you do!

The committee is also working hard to prepare the Awards Dinner, which is themed as “A Night at the Oscars” this year. Join your fellow RWNZ members in this fun event where you'll be able to celebrate romantic storytelling with a room full of talented writers. Not only can you enjoy a delicious three-course meal, but you'll also have the chance to network with passionate writers like yourself. There is plenty of time for socialising in between the various award presentations and speeches, along with entertaining quizzes and a photo booth. Whether you're a conference newbie or veteran, this is an event you don't want to miss!

Our line-up of keynote speakers and workshop presenters are going to be inspiring you throughout the weekend. With a variety of subjects covering everything from career to craft

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to marketing, you should find something throughout the weekend that you can take away and apply to your own writing journey. And please note, if you decide to sign up for the three-day conference, you are invited to an extra workshop on Thursday night. USA Today best-selling author, Steffanie Holmes, will be teaching us how to turn casual readers into ride or die superfans!

We have some other special treats in store, but we've got to save some stuff to surprise you with, right? So—will we be seeing you at the conference this year? I sure hope so!

If money is tight and the conference feels out of reach, then please consider applying for this here:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/events/sandra-hyde-romance-writers-memorial-scholarship/>.

This is a wonderful opportunity, and we encourage you to check it out. You have until June 18 to enter.

Will you be a RWNZ conference first-timer in 2022?

We have a facebook group set up as a place to get to know a few other first timers before the conference. Feel free to introduce yourself and ask any questions. We'll also look at getting the group together before the cocktail party so you can meet a few friendly faces before the evening's event begins. Come and join us here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/516211269583608>

In the meantime, keep an eye out for more news coming your way soon. We'll be looking for volunteers to help us throughout the weekend, plus donations for the raffle baskets.

If you want to let your writing buddies know about the event, don't forget to use the hashtag **#rwnz22** when posting about the conference! We can't wait to see you all there!

Ngā mihi,
Melissa Pearl Guyan
(Conference Convenor 2022)

**Disclaimer: The project is subject to change.*

RWNZ COMPETITION NEWS:



Great Beginnings Results for this year's Great Beginnings contest are as follows:

Editor's Choice 2021

- 1) Nancy M. Cunningham, *Girls of the USO*
- 2) Melanie Harding-Shaw, *City of Souls*
- 3) Amy Blythe, *What's Welsh for Wild*

Agent's Choice 2021

- 1) Melanie Harding-Shaw, *City of Souls*
- 2) Amy Blythe, *What's Welsh for Wild*
- 3) Nancy M. Cunningham, *Girls of the USO*

The Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss

Results for this year's contest are as follows:

1. Colette Rivera, *One Wicked Night*
2. Courtney Clark Michaels, *Protecting His Princess*
3. Susan Frame, *It's Okay To Change Your Tune*
4. Gabriella Margo, *Tulips From Mal*
5. Gabriella Margo, *All's Fair In Love And Tequila*



Pacific Hearts The Pacific Hearts contest is now in the final leg. There were ten entries for 2022, all of a very high standard. All entries were judged on their synopsis and first 10,000 words. The three with the highest scores will have their full manuscript judged by another independent judge, and the winner gets awarded a lovely trophy at the RWNZ conference. The finalists for this year : *Right Royal Homecoming* by Katrina Cameron, *The Dating Ban* by Jacinta Peachey, and *The Duke's Kitchen* by Wendy Reid.

Now is the time to think about entering this contest in 2023. Entries are accepted from 1–28th February. They must be unpublished, and please check the RWNZ website for more information. Each entry had five judges, and the scoresheets from each judge were emailed to the entrants, providing valuable feedback to contestants.

We are always short of judges. The Pacific Hearts judges must be readers not writers, so I am not asking for you to judge but maybe your mother, sister, friend, or neighbour is a reader and would love to participate? Please ensure they register their interest on the RWNZ website.

Jill Batty, Pacific Hearts Contest Convenor

RWNZ COMPETITION NEWS:



Koru Entries in this contest were sent out to reader judges in mid-April. Results will be announced at the conference.

Chapter Short Story Entries closed on April 30, and judging is under way.

Contest managers A huge thank you to this year's contest managers, without whom we wouldn't be able to run our contests. **Megan Mayfair** managed Great Beginnings in 2020 and stepped up again to manage the 2021 contest. Thanks also to **Jill Batty** and **Anna Klein**, who are running our two largest and most prestigious contests this year. Jill managed Pacific Hearts last year and stayed on to run this year's contest, while Anna has stepped up again to manage the Koru after taking a break from this contest. Words cannot express how much I appreciate you three.

Thank you also to **Alexa Rivers**, who has generously volunteered to manage the 2022 Daphne Clair de Jong First Kiss contest.

However, we still need one more contest manager!

We still need somebody to run the next Chapter Short Story contest. It doesn't open until 1st April 2023, so you have plenty of time to get up to speed with the contest guidelines and supporting information. I have run this contest for several years and, honestly, it is an absolute joy to run. The contestants and judges are lovely, as are the stories. I will be there to support you as you find your feet. I just need you to volunteer.

If you'd like to help out with contests or have any questions or comments, you can reach me on contests@romancewriters.co.nz.

Shelagh Merlin
Overall RWNZ Contest Manager



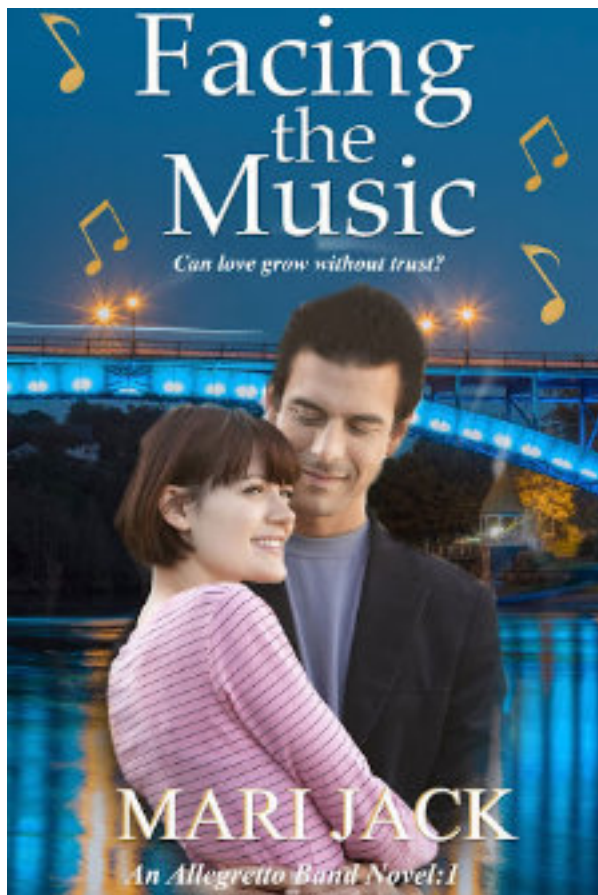
Corina Douglas

WINTER SOLSTICE

Corina Douglas recently released *Winter Solstice*, a standalone complement to her Daughter of Winter series on May 31st.

Two fated mates. A forbidden romance. And the threat of discovery. Romance and intrigue collide in this special Celtic fantasy romance.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09PFMNMKN>



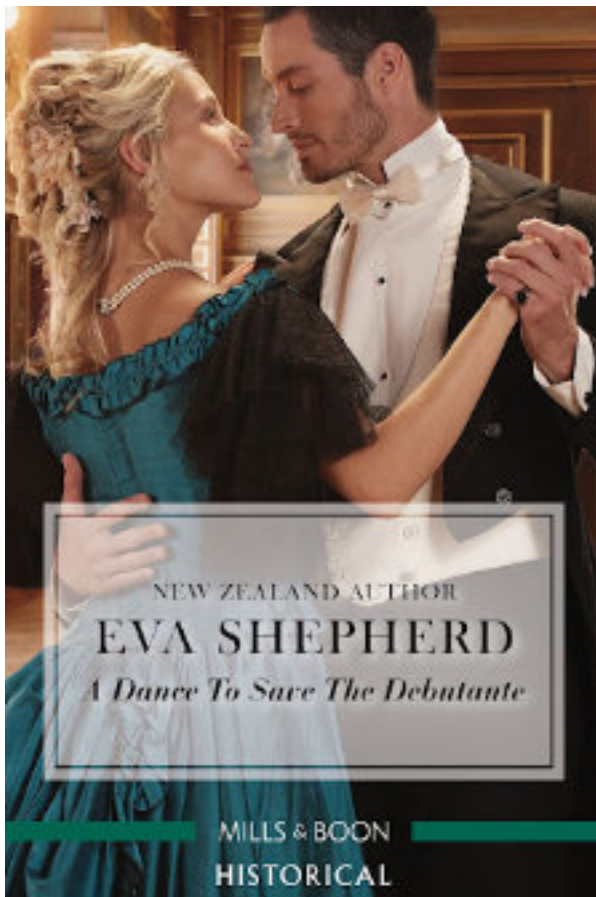
Mariana Jackson

FACING THE MUSIC

Mariana Jackson recently released *Facing the Music*, the first book in her Allegretto Band series.

Kylie Wake's dream is to teach the flute. Peter's past experiences have turned him off relationships. But when their pasts interfere, can the passion between them survive?

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0B1NX32KL>



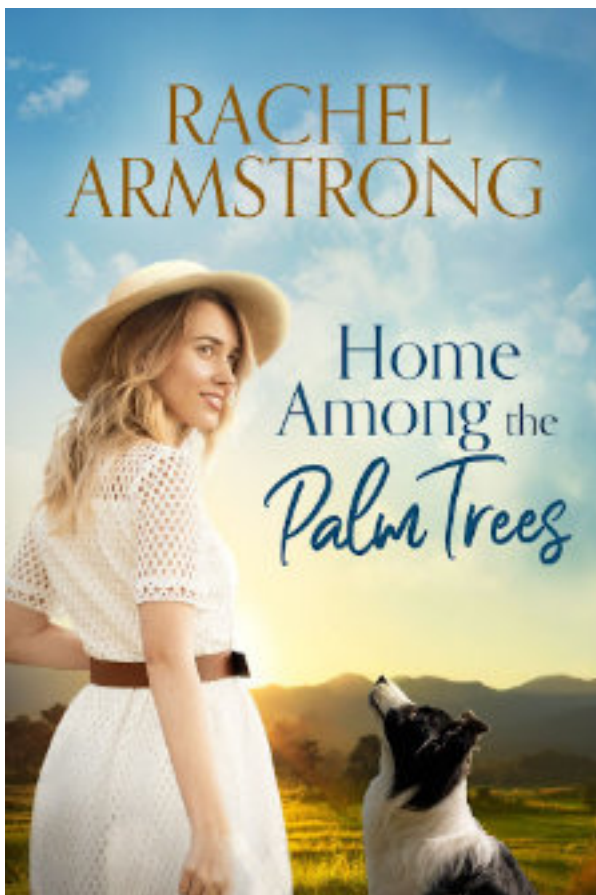
Eva Shepherd

A DANCE TO SAVE THE DEBUTANTE

Eva Shepherd recently released *A Dance to Save the Debutante*, a historical Mills & Boon romance.

It would be all too easy to give into the desire fizzing between them — but only if this rake is willing to save her reputation—by marrying her himself...

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09SRJFM1T>



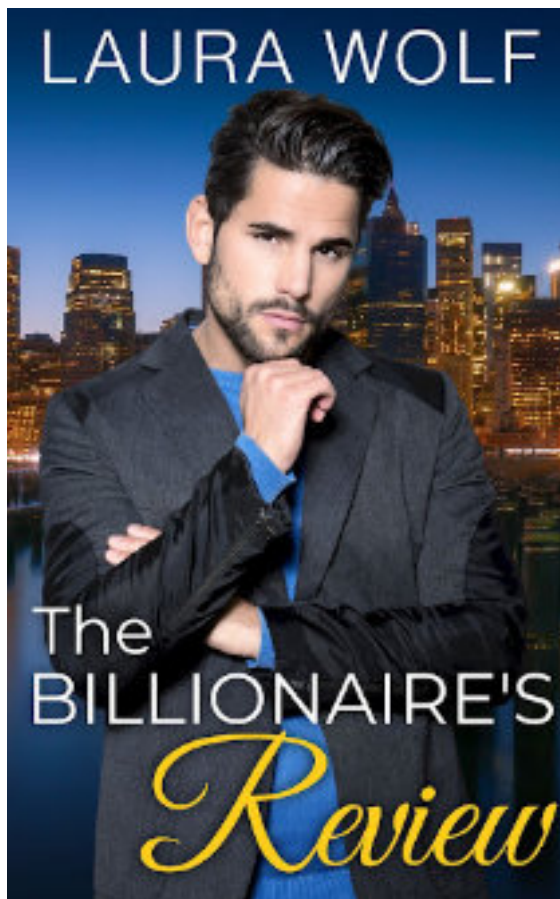
Rachel Armstrong

HOME AMONG THE PALM TREES

Rachel Armstrong recently released *Home Among the Palm Trees*, the first book in the Shadow Creek series.

Can the timid schoolteacher, the laid back guy-next-door, and two cheeky border collies overcome their painful pasts and form a home together?

<https://www.rachelarmstrongauthor.com.au/homeamongthepalmtrees.html>



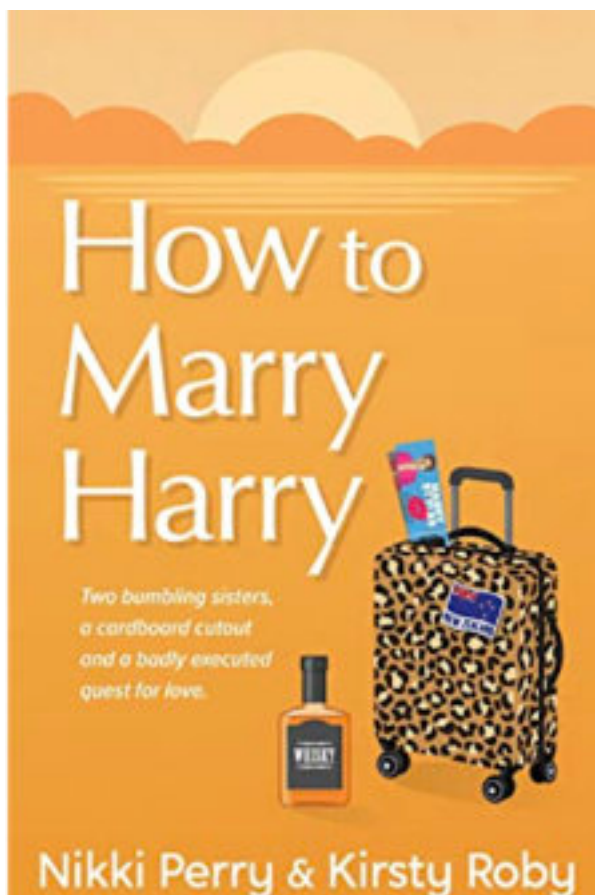
Laura Wolf

THE BILLIONAIRE'S REVIEW

Laura Wolf recently released *The Billionaire's Review*, the third book in The Crypto-Billionaire Brotherhood series.

Can you get a 'Happily Ever After' twice? Will Zeke be able to get a second happy ending? And will Bonnie hold the answers Zeke has to not only his daughter's wounds, but his own as well?

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09ZG3JQ47>



Nikki Perry and Kristy Roby

HOW TO MARRY HARRY

Nikki Perry and Kristy Roby self-published their first novel, *How to Marry Harry*, this year and even made it into the Woman's Day for a two-page spread! Their second novel, another rom com, launches October 1st.

Recently divorced, trivia collector Jo becomes overly fixated on finding her daughter Bayley the perfect man. And who could be better for the job than musician Harry Styles himself?

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09KFGMQSS>



Mary Brock Jones

EXILED

Mary Brock Jones recently released *Exiled*, the third book in her Arcadia series.

Sentenced to exile by his home world, he's hungry for revenge. Only he isn't innocent, and Alliance space is no safe haven. Can the cleverest of the den Coille's and the habitat worlds' best biome scientist stay alive long enough to save both their worlds?

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0B1V1LJS9>

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 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

Coast to Coast

Convenor: *Lyn Rasmussen + Lyndsay-Jean Campbell*

April:

Nine of us met at the Enchanted Cafe in Tirau for the first 'real' meeting since January. We enjoyed a catch-up round when we each said a little about what we've been up to writing-wise and anything else of note. Lyndsay gave a short talk about her life-changing experience of joining the Romance Writers in 2014 and how the group has inspired her. If you are not yet in the FB group and would like to be, please send your request to Lyn Rasmussen, and she'll invite you.

May:

We met at Melissa's house in Hamilton. While it was a small gathering, it was lovely to meet face-to-face in Melissa's lovely home, and those who made the effort were rewarded with lunch and the gift of one of Deborah Challinor's books (thanks very much, Deb), plus an interesting talk from Nicky Webber.

Nicky gave us the nuts and bolts about writing true stories. Similar skills and tropes used in writing romance and other genres apply, of course, with the main difference being that you can't just make stuff up. Stories grounded in reality usually require interviews and research. Writing creative non-fiction means finding real stories that form the skeleton from which your story can hang. Nicky says we are the creatives with the imaginative keys to bring the stories to life. Accurate details and well-researched events of the times help

create the story world. I'm sure her background as a journalist helps a lot.

A big thank you to the twelve members who took part in the flash fiction challenge, and congratulations to Denise Fitzpatrick, whose name was drawn from the hat. Denise has a \$30 book voucher to spend. We were pleased with the response to the challenge, which also gave an opportunity for those who, for various reasons, don't often make our meetings. The stories were so varied and lots of fun to read, so maybe we'll do it again some time.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 11 June and will be held at Jill Batty's house in Papamoa. Trudi Jaye, from the Spa Girls' team, will be giving us valuable information on how they go about marketing.

Wellington / Kapiti Coast

Convenor: *Kris Pearson*

April:

We Zoomed again today, and Kerry chaired up to fifteen of us. We've been busy—books and plots happening in all directions. Indeed, the 'progress' part of our meeting took so long that we had to break for coffee half way through.

Gudrun's house is now sold, so Wellington's loss will be Auckland's eventual gain. We discussed audiobook production. Bonnie is going to narrate the book she wrote about her guide dog, Eclipse. She can read Braille as fast as we can read print.

Wellington / Kapiti Coast

Both Eileen and Moira shared information about writing a series (or more than one series).

We also discussed Amazon's policy of allowing refunds on books they can see have been read in total. Authors need paying. We've all noticed an upswing in refunds since the current TikTok nonsense. Anne advised us not to 'stir the pot' on social media but to make our views known to Amazon directly.

May:

Freedom at last! We deserted Zoom for a face-to-face meeting in Paraparaumu, which meant some new people attended, and some existing ones felt they wouldn't risk it. Our roundup of each member's progress in the last month was impressive. Lisa's included the beautiful patchwork quilt she's made for the conference raffle. Gaia, who writes in Polish, was approached by a publisher, who has now republished and distributed some of her older books.

We had cold reads submitted by Peter, Moira, and Kris, which brought us an Arabian dinner party with a Polish accent, a conversation with a cat, and the start of a mountain man novel! Then, as we discussed launching new books, Moira spoke about how important metadata is—the keywords, categories, and keyword-rich blurb. She finds Publisher Rocket valuable—a one-time cost of US \$97. Leeanna advised us to contact Amazon to get our books put into extra categories. The June meeting will be in Johnsonville.

Nelson

Convenor: Annika Ohlson-Smith

April:

Although we are few in number, we are rich in talent. This was evident in the writing that followed this month's short talk about POV and the importance of each character being easily identified by the reader. In this exercise, we had to write as one of three characters, witnessing or taking part in a robbery or shoplifting. Next month, we expect to welcome Sarah, a new prospective member, and Lorna will lead us in the writing and insertion of back-story.

May:

Our numbers swelled from three to four at the May meeting. Following brief introductions all round, Lorna, as convenor, presented this month's topic: Dealing with Backstory. Her talk explored the purpose of incorporating past events into our writing and championed backstory's role in developing characters, creating expectations, establishing settings, and colouring cause and effect in a story. Also, she advocated that well-placed backstory helps readers build strong emotional ties with characters, thereby keeping them invested in the novel and turning pages. A discussion on the different options open to writers when wanting to weave backstory into their narrative without disruption to either pace or plot concluded Lorna's review of the topic.

With an emphasis on relevance, the group then assessed four authors' use of backstory in pages of text taken from random books. This exercise led to some interesting observations from around the table. Annika, who has chosen characterisation as her topic, will convene at our next meeting on 11 June.

Canterbury

Convenor: *Melissa Climo & Amy Blythe*

April meeting:

This month was all about editing and redrafting. The theme was 'Autumn for your book: time to weed, prune, and dig out the dead stumps'. Heather McQuillan, a Christchurch local and published author of many skills, led us through a zoom workshop, and we came away with long to-do lists!

May:

We explored what we love to write, once again via Zoom (but we're planning to go back to in-person meetings next month). We talked about including universal and personalised pleasures/fantasy in our books. These concepts have been hot topics in the writing world, and all over podcasts. We started our ID lists and inspired each other by sharing what we love to find in books.

Otago / Southland

Convenor: *Laura Hewson*

April:

Eight of us met up this month at Metalon to discuss short romances and short stories. Ironically, it was one of the longest meetings we've had, but very, very interesting. We also held a mid-month, online catch up for those who couldn't make the meeting and needed some writerly chat. Our next meeting will be on May 7th, where we will discuss what to think about when creating an author brand.

May:

Our May meeting was all about engagement, with a focus on newsletters. We discussed the idea of creating an author and reader/subscriber avatar, then we were very fortunate to have author, Jayne Castel, share some of her experiences from running her own newsletter, and how she's benefitted from recent changes that she's made. Our next meeting will be on June 11th, and the theme is diversity.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Alison Ahearn ~ overseas
Anisoara Nicol ~ Auckland
Anna True ~ overseas
Calanthe Colt ~ Christchurch
Cassandra Gaisford ~ Northland
Catherine Hart ~ Auckland
Catherine Strachan ~ Wellington
Deb Potter ~ Wellington

Felicia Kolonjari ~ Wellington
Herman Visagie ~ Auckland
Jan Wilson ~ Wellington
Julia Mahony ~ Wellington
Marianne Beer ~ Otago
Marjorie Cammer ~ overseas
Raasheda Diwan ~ Hawkes Bay
Stephanie Clews ~ Auckland

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/>

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