

Hearts Talk

The official journal of Romance Writers of Australia



Helen Katsinis introduces our Conference
Keynote Speaker,

Eloisa James

A New York Times bestseller many times over, Eloisa James writes historical romance for Harper Collins. People Magazine raved of Eloisa's writing that "romance writing does not get much better than this." Eloisa is also a Shakespeare professor at Fordham University in New York City. In addition to publishing academic work she has written a memoir, Paris in Love, about her family's experience of living in France for a year.

Eloisa James will be our Keynote Speaker at the Diamonds Are Forever conference on the Gold Coast in 2012.

Hi Eloisa. Welcome to Hearts Talk.

Not only are you an author, but you are also a Shakespeare professor (and let's not forget wife and mother). How do you juggle all your hats? And what is it like leading a 'double life'?

I get a lot of sleep! In fact, sometimes I think that is the only secret I have to share: I nap. As for how I get things done... I figured out quite a while ago, that it's OK not to be perfect. When I publish something, it's the very best that I could write at that moment. I think giving up perfectionism is the key to getting a lot done—and that goes for parenting, household work, and writing.



People always think that there are two me's—but the truth is that I spend my days in front of a classroom analysing the way Shakespeare put together words, sentences, a plot. When I sit down to write, I'm not so far away from the same sort of analysis.

Continued on Page 4



Romance Writers of Australia Inc

Romance Writers of Australia Inc
PO Box 1236, Neutral Bay NSW 2089
phone: 0429 233 764
www.romanceaustralia.com

Romance Writers of Australia Inc ABN 30 075 409 728 is registered in NSW as an Incorporated Association the liability of whose members is limited.

RWA COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

Rachel Bailey president@romanceaustralia.com

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Jennifer St George corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com

JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Claire Baxter vicepres@romanceaustralia.com

MEMBER SECRETARY

Diane Curran membersecretary@romanceaustralia.com

TREASURER

Bronwyn Turner treas@romanceaustralia.com

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Anita Joy, Lis Hoorweg, Nikki Logan, Sandie Hudson, Kerrie Ptolemy, Helene Young.

OTHER CONTACTS

PUBLISHED AUTHOR LIAISON

Robyn Grady PAL@romanceaustralia.com

e-PUBLISHED AUTHOR LIAISON

Rhian Cahill e-PAL@romanceaustralia.com

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Rachel Bailey volunteers@romanceaustralia.com

R♥BY COORDINATOR

Louise Reynolds rby@romanceaustralia.com

2012 CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

Fiona Gregory conference@romanceaustralia.com

WEB MISTRESS

Kerrie Ptolemy webmistress@romanceaustralia.com

WEBSITE PASSWORDS: To gain access to our members only section, email passwords@romanceaustralia.com

CONTESTS COORDINATOR

Lis Hoorweg contests@romanceaustralia.com

All deadlines, entry forms and sample scoresheets are at www.romanceaustralia.com in the members only section (you will need a password), or in the Files section of the RWA Contest Alert group.

For contest entry forms via mail, send request with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: RWA Contests, 20 Waller Crescent, Campbell ACT 2612.

To join Contest Alert, RWA's email alert for contest entrants, go to au.groups.yahoo.com/group/RWAContestAlert/ click on the "join this group" in the right hand corner and follow the instructions.

JUDGE COORDINATOR

Margaret Midwood judge-coordinator@romanceaustralia.com

ROMAUS e-List Moderator

Jenn J McLeod elistmod@romanceaustralia.com

To join ROMAUS, our online email group, go to <http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/romanceaustralia> click on the "join this group" button and follow the instructions.

FACE-TO-FACE GROUPS exist throughout Australia, and for queries on how to join an existing group or start one yourself:

GroupLiaison@gmail.com

CRITIQUE PARTNER SCHEME

Bec Sampson applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com

INDIVIDUAL WRITERS SUPPORT SCHEME

Sharon Archer iws@romanceaustralia.com

For unpublished members. Priority given to those challenged by distance or unable to access creative support by other means. Register for a one-off critique of either 1 or 3 chapters by a published author/advanced unpublished writer.

RWA SOCIAL MEDIA

BLOG

<http://romanceaustralia.wordpress.com/>

TWITTER

www.twitter.com/RWAus

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=53338877477

MY SPACE

www.myspace.com/rwaustalia

Please note that RWA is run by volunteers. Currently, the best way to make an enquiry is via email, but if you call the phone number please leave a message and someone will contact you as soon as possible.

HEARTS TALK TEAM

EDITOR

Catherine Evans hteditor@romanceaustralia.com

MEMBER NEWS & RELEASES

Bronwyn Stuart htgoodnews@romanceaustralia.com

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Fiona Lowe askauntyfi@romanceaustralia.com

TEAM MEMBERS

Rachael Blair	Fiona Lowe
Suzanne Brandyn	Sarah Mayberry
Frances Burke	Jodie Morphet
Rhian Cahill	Nicole Pfeiffer
Carol Challis	Christina Phillips
Pam Collings	Ingrid Rickersey
Beverley Eikli	Bec Sampson
Catherine Evans	Bronwyn Stuart
Phillipa Fioretti	Doreen Sullivan
Lis Hoorweg	Serena Tatti
Vonnie Hughes	Mel Teshco
Bronwyn Jameson	Rhyll Vallis
Clare Karacsonyi	Janette Whitehead
Helen Katsinis	Michelle Wood
Sami Lee	Malvina Yock
Marion Lennox	

Hearts Talk Cover Photo: inspired by Anita Joy

HEARTS TALK RIGHTS INFORMATION

Hearts Talk is the official publication of RWA Inc. and no part may be reproduced or used without prior written permission from the Editor.

Reproduction rights may be arranged between agreed parties only on the condition that appropriate credit is given to RWA, Hearts Talk and the author of the article.

All material appearing in Hearts Talk may be reproduced by RWA in any form for any purpose. Copyright remains with the author.

The views expressed in Hearts Talk do not necessarily reflect the official policy of RWA. All care is taken to verify details included in these pages but no responsibility is taken for any inaccuracies or actions arising from the information. If notified of errors a correction will be published in a subsequent issue.

© Copyright 2012 Romance Writers of Australia Inc.

Welcome to February!

Despite being the shortest month of the year, for members with children going back to school, or an empty house after family and friends staying over the holidays, February is a month of getting back into the rhythm of writing. Becoming serious about 2012 writing goals. Whatever your writing time will be used for in February, good luck!

RWA Committee Changes

This month, we say goodbye to AJ Macpherson from the RWA committee. AJ joined the committee in 2008 and has served as the Registrar, Hearts Talk Editor and Vice President, and has always been willing to become involved in sub-committees and on projects. We'll miss her attention to detail and ability to cut through to the heart of an issue. AJ, we wish you all the best.

Helene Young has stepped into the vacancy, and we couldn't be more thrilled. With her publishing career with Australian publishers, she brings a fresh perspective to committee discussions and her logical thinking processes have already been invaluable. She's taken on the Member Services portfolio, where she's currently finding her feet. Thank you, Helene, and welcome.

As AJ was the senior vice-president, we've also had a minor internal reshuffle. Jennifer St George, who was junior vice-president, has stepped up to senior VP and Claire Baxter has stepped into the junior VP role. Thank you, Jen and Claire.

Contests

Have you entered a contest this season? Keen to

enter another one? We have two coming up, the First Kiss, closing on 17 February and the Valerie Parv Award, closing 4 May (or until filled; see page 17). They're a great way to get some objective feedback on your writing and maybe even land your work on an editor's desk!



Members' Assistance Fund

Want to attend an RWA event, such as the Gold Coast conference, but money is too tight? Have you considered applying for a Members' Assistance Fund (MAF) grant? Now in its third year, the MAF pool of money comes from both RWA and donations from members. If you'd like to apply or to donate, details are on the website—you can even do it via Paypal. More info on page 5.

Group Grants

Are you part of an RWA writing group? If so, you can apply for an RWA grant for your group. You can use it to pay a workshop speaker, to assist in funding a retreat, to buy craft books for your group to use like a library, or anything else creative your group can think up. See page 5 for more details.

May February bring you many words and much happiness,

Rachel

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Congratulations! February's winner is contest judge...

Laney Cairo

Laney has won a SuperRomance double of *Her Surprise Hero* by Abby Gaines and *The Father for Her Son* by Cindi Myers.



In this issue...

Author Interviews cont. _____	4	A Writer's Life _____	14
RWA Notices _____	5	Your Questions Answered _____	15
The Write Craft _____	6	Interview with an Editor _____	16
Vale Leonie Knight _____	8	Contests _____	17
How Do I...? _____	9	Market Watch _____	18
Conference Information _____	10	Member News _____	19
Events _____	12	Online Events _____	19
Member Spotlight _____	13	New Releases _____	20

You have a very interesting call story. Can you briefly tell us what that was?

Well, I really started writing romance so that I could pay off my student loans. My husband (being a frugal Italian) was convinced that we couldn't have a second child because I had outstanding student loans, which isn't uncommon in the United States. I had to pay them off! So I wrote a romance. An agent took it on, and put it up for auction (much to my chagrin—I'd never heard of such a thing, and thought that maybe the editors would be annoyed). When my agent called and said that someone had bid on it, I could hardly believe it. Then the next day another publishing house bid a bit more—but they wanted two books! Then the first house bid again—and now they wanted three books! In the end, the advance was just slightly over my student loans...but I had to write three books. It was the beginning of a career for me. By the end of three books, I was hooked. And in a very nice turn of events, my daughter Anna was born between the publication of book one (*Potent Pleasures*) and book two (*Midnight Pleasures*).

I think many romance writers grew up loving fairy tales. Is that what influenced you to write your own fairy tale series?

My father, the poet Robert Bly, was always fascinated by fairy tales, and finally wrote the book *Iron John*, a rewriting of that tale, so in a sense it's a family business. I wouldn't say that my inspiration comes as much from *Iron John* itself, as from the fact that while Dad was working out the ideas behind the book he talked compulsively about fairy stories. He loved to challenge my siblings and me to "explain" such stories in cultural terms—to rewrite them in a way that made them socially relevant. Those were very important years for me. Not only was I reading fairy tales (and loving them), but I was being asked to think consciously about why I loved them.

You explore the themes of other relationships, such as friendship and sisters, in your work. Do you think it is just as important as the romance aspect?

Yes, I do. Women's lives do not shape themselves only around the men in their lives; in fact, I think in reality many women find their friends and sisters are equally if not more important than their husbands. I like creating women whom I would want to be my friends. I'm not submissive myself, and I don't admire it much as a trait. So I create heroines who are strong in themselves (though they may have tough times, of course), and who have close relationships with other women—because that's what I see all around me. Women have a great gift for friendship, and I've always wanted to depict that.

What made you decide to take a year off and move to Paris with your family?

(Eloisa has the book *Paris In Love: A Memoir* coming out in April 2012, about her experience in Paris.)

Well, first off, I had a brush with breast cancer. The illness gave me the motivation to do something I'd always dreamed of: live in Paris with my family for a year. Luckily my husband and I are both professors, and we were able to take sabbaticals from our respective universities.

When we moved to France, I was quite sure of one thing: I wanted to remember every day. My son Luca was already fifteen, and I had the chilling fear that once he grew up and left the house, I would forget all those funny teenage moments, the way I had forgotten most of the adorable things he did as a baby.

So I started keeping a brief journal, of sorts, on my Facebook page. It started out quite simply, but I found that I truly enjoyed the challenge of catching an evocative moment in a brief burst of prose. I posted once or twice a day. The book grew from those updates, although *Paris in Love* includes longer essays and many details that were not put onto Facebook. The book turned into a funny look at our year: life in Paris with Anna, Luca, my husband, my mother-in-law's plump dog...and all those Parisians. The website is up, if anyone would like to see an excerpt: www.parisinlovebook.com.

What is the reality of being a published author (for those of us still pre-published)?

It's hard work that requires thickening of skin and weathering of rejection. I think that's the hardest thing to understand. Heck, I don't understand it myself. I keep thinking, "But surely it's supposed to be easier after publishing twenty books?" Well, it isn't getting any easier. Reviewers are perhaps even tougher on a multi-published author than on a debut. Publishers have a lot more money riding on a lead novel, which gives them more fear about its bottom line, and leads to more pressure for the author. Frankly, I look back at the days when I was low on the publishing totem pole with distinct nostalgia. At the same time, I do absolutely love the great parts of being published: all the wonderful readers I've met, the way they sustain me with their kindness in email and on Facebook, the incredible satisfaction of hearing that one of my books helped someone going through a tough time. As Dickens said: it's the best of times and the worst of times.



What is your writing process, and how long does it take you to write a book?

I think/dream for a long time before I start writing. I have to conjure up the characters to the point at which they are talking in my head. I try to shape every novel around my characters, rather than around events: I find that my writing is far more powerful if it grows organically from the personalities involved. That said, I tend to write twenty pages in one day and drop ten. Or I'll write the first 175 pages of a book and then start over with a new heroine. I wish I had a 'better' way of writing, but I seem to have to put mistakes down on the page before I realise they're mistakes. Unfortunately, this means it can take a year to write a book (or, if the stars are aligned, as little as five months).

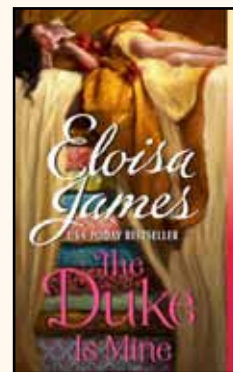


That drives me (and my publisher) crazy!

Thank you, Eloisa. We look forward to seeing you in Australia.

Eloisa's latest release is *The Duke Is Mine*. It's Eloisa's version of The Princess & the Pea (part of her fairy tale series).

You will find more information (including excerpts) about all of Eloisa's books on her website: <http://eloisajames.com>.



RWA Notices

Members' Assistance Fund 2012

In 2010 RWA established a Members' Assistance Fund, aiming to assist members who would otherwise be unable to participate in our professional development opportunities. In its first two years the fund has assisted seven writers from five states and territories, partially funding their attendance at conference and the 5DI residential workshop. In 2012 we hope to assist several more members in attaining their writing goals.

All members, published and unpublished, are eligible to apply for assistance to attend the conference or our roadshow in Tasmania. The only stipulation: you are not in a position to fund attendance at the event without assistance.

Perhaps unemployment, illness, or other circumstances have taken a toll on your finances. Perhaps your dream editor or agent is attending this year's conference. Perhaps your remote location makes the expense of attending the conference formidable every year. Perhaps the smaller roadshow is more your speed than a full-on conference. Whatever your circumstances, consider carefully

which event—and which year—is best for your career because, if successful, you will not be eligible to apply again for four years.

Applications are now open and **close 16 March, 2012**. The application form and instructions are available in the members section of our website. You will need to log in to access the page: <http://www.romanceaustralia.com/members/maf.asp>

Any queries can be directed to the MAF manager at: MAF@romanceaustralia.com

Help A Fellow Writer

We invite contributions to the Members' Assistance Fund, now and at any time during the year. All donations, small or more significant, will be used in assisting members who would otherwise be unable to attend the conference and other professional development opportunities.

You can donate via PayPal at <http://www.romanceaustralia.com/members/maf.asp> (log-in required) or by sending your cheque to MAF Contributions, c/- RWA Treasurer, PO Box 1236, Neutral Bay NSW 2089. Alternatively, you may prefer to add a contribution to your annual membership subscription when that falls due.



Group Grants

Applications for Group Grants are now open.

Would you like a free, intimate craft workshop by a published author?

How about a subsidised writing retreat for you and your writing mates?

The Group Grants Scheme is a fund that any RWA Affiliated or RWA Associated Group can apply to in support of the wonderful work they do in advancing the careers of their RWA members.

Don't delay, get your group together and apply now. **Applications close 29 February 2012.**

For more information, and to access the application form, go to the Group Grants page in the Members Section of the RWA website.

Or contact Janette Whitehead at groupgrants@romanceaustralia.com.

A Glimpse into the Writing Process of Alex Miller

*We know how romance writers write but do we write differently to other writers? Perhaps not, says award winning Australian author, Alex Miller, who crafts beautiful characters in interesting relationships and in his latest book, *Autumn Laing*, tackles the romance between an artist and his muse. Alex talks to Hearts Talk about his writing process and his admiration for romance writers.*

Alex Miller is the author of ten novels and winner of numerous awards. He has twice won the Miles Franklin Literary Award; the first occasion in 1993 for *The Ancestor Game* (his third novel), and again in 2003 for *Journey to the Stone Country* (his sixth novel). *Conditions of Faith*, his fifth novel, won the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction in the 2001 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. He was also an overall winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, for *The Ancestor Game*, in 1993. Miller's eighth novel, *Landscape of Farewell*, was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award in 2008. He was awarded the Manning Clark Cultural Award for an outstanding contribution to the quality of Australian cultural life in 2008. More recently, *Lovesong* (his ninth novel) was shortlisted for the 2010 Miles Franklin Award and Prime Minister's Literary Award, and winner of the 2010 Age Book of the Year and 2011 Christina Stead Prize for Fiction in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, as well as winning the overall People's Choice award.

What is your writing process? Are you driven by plot, theme or characters?

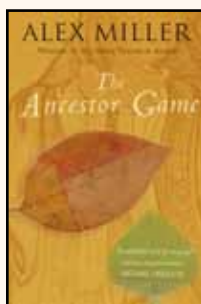
I usually think of a story that has interested me for some time and then set out to write it by starting writing where it feels right to me. I can't think of an example which didn't involve someone I have known and cared for who was at the centre of the story. So I already have a clear idea about the character, who they are and what they are like and the situation or story they were involved in that has my interest.

Do you plot your story before you start or do the characters take control of the story?

I plotted my first novel, *The Tivington Nott*, and also my second *Watching The Climbers On The Mountain*. The story of my third novel, *The*



Ancestor Game was so complex I never actually plotted it but was always looking for the right way of telling it. It took me five years to unravel the puzzle of it. Characters who were based on the simple need to have them, such as the mother of Lang Tzu the main character, I invented. I felt she would be strong and determined and possessive of her son and the old ways of China and unlikely to simply give in to being dominated by her husband. So it was very interesting finding out how she used cunning and strategy to get her own way. The Chinese loved her when they read the book in translation, so I think I more or less got her right. At least for them. And she interested me. I enjoyed being with her and so her part in the novel grew larger than I'd expected.



What method(s) do you use to understand your characters?

I can't honestly think of a methodology for understanding and quite often I honestly don't understand them very well but feel it's more important to simply watch them behaving and give lots of detail about how they move and behave and gradually a picture of them becomes clearer. I think understanding is often overrated and it is more important for a novelist to exercise accurate observations about people. I may be puzzled by the behaviour of a character but nevertheless feel it's real and authentic.

You write women beautifully, so much so that many have commented on their confusion when they find you are male. How do you do this? Do you study women, question the women you know, or is it innate?

I write all my characters with a combination of empathy and imagination and don't try too hard to untangle their motivations as I think human motivation is often deeply ambiguous and anyway it changes as the effects of decisions taken for one motive begin to unfold and affect subsequent situations that

will require further decisions, where the underlying motive will need to be modified. So I find I'm often just following the action as it unfolds and doing my best to describe it with clarity without necessarily understanding it or where it is going. It's always an act of faith with me that the novel will find its own way if I trust it to unfold.

Romance writers are always trying to write authentic male characters, do you have any tips for us?

I greatly admire what romance writers do and I think plots are probably as important to their style of story telling as they are to the crime writer, where the end of the book must provide answers and clarity and resolution. This isn't necessarily the case with my kind of writing, where the story can often end with uncertainty as to the outcome. I find men really no different to write than women. We are all just people, after all. I think we should be confident about our sense of what it is like for the other sex and not fall into the trap of believing the stereotypes, such as men are unable to express their emotions and women are able to express theirs. In real life the opposite of this is often true. I think it's probably helpful to let the character decide a bit what they are like - to follow them in what they do and find out about them this way, rather than decide about them to start with. We don't know most people very well and must guess what their private lives are really like. Guessing is half the fun so long as we don't feel we have to know everything.

I read an interview where you said you'd spent 18 months working on *Autumn Laing* before you realised it needed to be told from Autumn's reflections. How did you get to this point? Do you write rough first drafts? Or was this the research

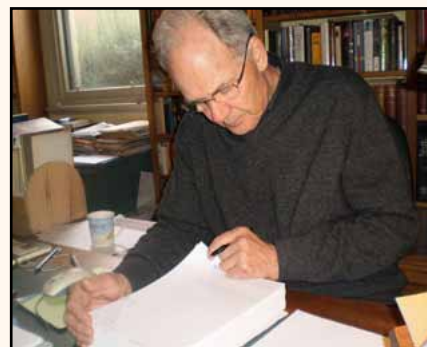
that led you to know how the story needed to be told?

The last part of your question hits the nail on the head; it was my research and also leaving the book alone for a month that allowed me to see what I had to do. I don't write rough drafts but try to get each section up to its most fully realised stage before moving on. This often means that by going in deeply to begin with I often find out things I would not have suspected if I'd dashed off a first draft. My writing often inches forward very slowly before I reach a point where suddenly understanding cuts in and then it goes much more quickly.

**I greatly admire
what romance
writers do ...
where the end of
the book must
provide answers
and clarity and
resolution.**

I think your books show a few common themes of social commentary, relationships and reflections upon life. Are these things you're particularly conscious of and want to speak about?

I honestly write about what I most love and what interests me in life.



Your books are all poignant and emotionally complex. How do you achieve this?

I think I am probably reflecting my own interests, my sense of the poignancy and beauty of life in the face of our mortality. I love it more than anything when a character like Autumn Laing takes the reins and decides what's what, and decides it with humour and a kind of vivid energy. Unfortunately I can't force this sort of character into being but must hope like a patient fisherman for the big ones to come along while dealing with the average size ones - tossing a few back too.

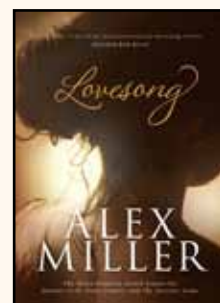
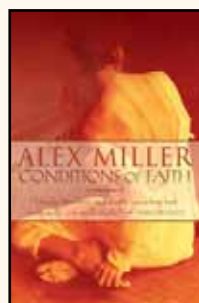
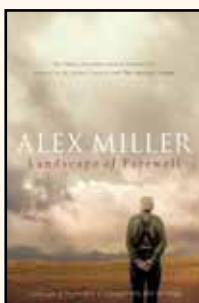
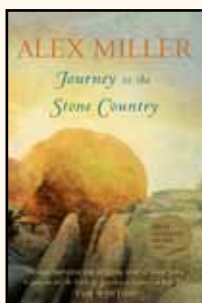
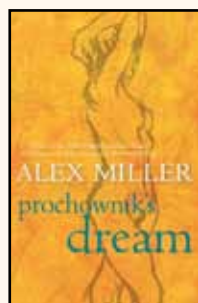
I hope this has been of some interest.
All the best,
Alex

Alex Miller's latest release is Autumn Laing.

A brilliantly alive, insistently energetic story of love, loyalty and creativity, introducing a character in Autumn Laing who is one of Miller's most unforgettable creations.



Visit www.alexmiller.com.au



Leonie Knight was a member of the Fine Print critique group in WA and a Harlequin Mills & Boon medical author. She died 21 December 2011 aged 58. I met Leonie five years ago. Anna Jacobs was putting together a new critique group and she had invited me to join. On the 20 January 2007 we met for the first time, a real collection of women ranging in age from 27 to 80 and with different backgrounds. One of Leonie's very first emails said she wasn't great with computers but she was trying hard to learn. And she did.

When the critique group suggested she needed to learn to touch type, Leonie went out and got a programme to teach herself. That was the kind of woman Leonie was, always willing to learn, always embracing anything that would help her on the way to publication.

Leonie was always the quietest one in the group. She was happy to sit back and listen to everyone talk. She would offer comments and suggestions and as we got comfortable with each other as a group, her critiques became more confident and insightful. She was our go-to-person if we had medical issues in our stories we had to sort out. Just last meeting she apologetically picked up that what was said to be a migraine actually sounded more like a tension headache. She was always so considerate with her critiquing, careful to phrase things so they were constructive.

When Mills & Boon requested revisions to a manuscript she'd submitted, her email subject line was simply, 'Good News'. Then on 8 October 2010 we got an email entitled 'Eureka!'. I knew before opening the email something huge had happened and I was right. She'd got THE Call. We celebrated with her as if we'd got the call because in one way we had. We were part of a team, supporting each other, encouraging each other and giving the tough love when required. We were all so thrilled for her.

Leonie's call to publication was only a matter of time. She could use so few words and paint a scene which you could see, hear and smell. Her characters were warm, her settings were different and there was emotion in her stories that could make you cry.

In August this year, Leonie and I went to the RWA conference in Melbourne. We flew over together, both of us conference newbies and unsure what the weekend would bring. Leonie had been invited to a Mills and Boon



Fine Print critique group celebrate Leonie's call. L to R: Teena Raffa-Mulligan, Susy Rogers, Leonie Knight, Anna Jacobs, Lorraine Mauvais, and Claire Boston.

author get together on that first night, where she got to meet her editor. The next day when we met up she spoke about how lovely everyone was. That night at the cocktail party, with Leonie dressed up in her 1920s Gatsby outfit, all the medical authors came up to her to chat. She'd been welcomed into the fold and she was overwhelmed by their kindness. Leonie was unassuming and modest; seemingly surprised that anyone would remember who she was, when in actual fact, once you knew Leonie, you could never forget her.

On the Saturday morning when she was presented with her First Sale ribbon, she was as giddy as a school girl. Her smile shone brightly as she climbed the steps of the stage to accept her ribbon and she wore it with pride.

Later in the weekend she'd been to the conference bookstall which was selling Mills and Boon books. In a quiet voice she admitted to me with a slightly guilty air that she'd rearranged the books so hers were most visible. I laughed because only someone like Leonie would feel guilty about such a sensible move! A few hours later she returned to say all her books had been sold. She seemed surprised and excited all at the same time.

Leonie took to promoting her book with gusto. If someone asked her to blog she blogged, she had a website created and searched the web for reference of her book. She sent us an email one day to say she'd discovered a French translation of *Suddenly Single Sophie* and was amazed. All this from a woman who said only a few years earlier she was no good with computers.

Leonie was a wonderful woman. She was kind, generous, modest and

unassuming. She was an integral part of our critique group, bringing her special way of looking at things to her critiques to make our work stronger. There is going to be a gaping hole at the next meeting which will never be able to be filled. She will be missed.

"Leonie was so modest that there is so much about her we will never know. She was successful in her two careers, with family, in love, and in life. A giver, not a taker, she was generous in every sense of the word. It is so unfair she should be taken from the people who loved her." Susy Rogers

"I knew from the first reading of her manuscript that Leonie had what it took to get published, she created such warmly 'human' characters and could tell a story engagingly. I already knew from our first meeting that I liked her as a person, and my liking only got stronger. I still see her sitting on my sofa, glowing with happiness at her success, giving generously of her time for critiquing our stories . . . and facing cancer with incredible bravery. I wish so much that she was still with us." Anna Jacobs

"Leonie's chair at our future meetings may remain empty but for me there will always be a sense of her quiet, gentle presence sharing the afternoon with us. I will miss her lovely smile, her generous nature and her carefully considered feedback to my work. It was a privilege to know her and the parting came too soon." Teena Raffa-Mulligan

"Kind, gentle, sensitive, supportive, intelligent, gifted. Leonie was all that and more, a brilliant writer who made the world a better place." Lorraine Mauvais

Use the RWA Forum

by Kerrie Ptolemy

Have you signed up for the RWA Forums yet?
www.romanceaustraliaforum.com

Maybe you visited and felt overwhelmed, or maybe you weren't sure where to start and how to use it?

Here are some tips and tricks to make your forum experience run more smoothly.

I'm a newbie to forums. How do I post and reply?

The forum is split up into different sections (e.g. Promo and Social, Conference), each with its own rooms. Each room focuses on a different topic. For example Good News Week is where you can share your good news with the world.

To start a new topic, just go to the room that best matches, and click the [Start New Topic](#) button. And don't be afraid to post in the wrong room—just choose where you think it best matches.

To reply to a conversation, click on the conversation name to read it, then press [Add Reply](#) to type in your reply (or use the [Fast Reply](#) section at the bottom of the page).

I get lost in the forums—how do I easily navigate between the topics?

At all stages in the forum, it will show you where you are at the top of the screen. For example Romance Writers of Australia Forum -> The Writing Room -> Good News Week. You can click on any of those to take you back to that level. For example, clicking on the "[Forum](#)" part will take you back to the main page of the forum, clicking on [The Writing Room](#) will take you back to the Writing Room topics.

I've visited the forums, but I don't have a lot of time. How do I just see what's new without going into each of the rooms?

Once you've signed into the forum, you'll see the main forum screen with all of the rooms (or topics) listed down the page.



On the main forum screen, rooms that have new content are shown as dark blue, whereas those you have read are greyed out.

To save visiting every room, simply click on the [View New Content](#) link on the right-hand side, just below the top banner.

That will show you a list of all conversations that have

new content since you last logged in.



Just to the left of the topic name, there is a little button that looks like a page with an arrow on it—click on that to go straight to the last unread post in the conversation. No more scrolling through trying to remember where you were up to!

If you move your mouse over the right-hand side of the topic name (at the end of the column), an icon pops up saying [View Topic Preview](#). Click on that to show a preview of the post to see if you're interested in reading the entire thread.



But I forget to check the forums. I prefer to be emailed when there's something new.

Did you know? You can be emailed automatically when people add to a conversation you have replied to.

Once you're signed in to the forum, go up to your name (top right hand corner) and click on the down arrow. Select [My Settings](#).

On the left-hand side, go down to [Notification Options](#). In there, tick "[Watch every topic I reply to](#)".

You can also choose other times you want to be notified. For example when someone starts a personal conversation with you.

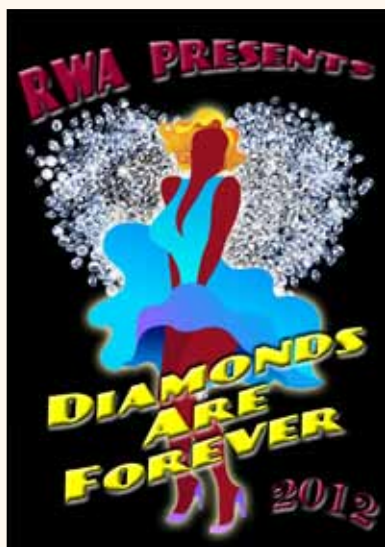
If you want to watch a conversation that you haven't replied to, go to the forum, and click on "[Watch Forum](#)" (to be notified about the entire forum), or go to the [Thread](#) and click on "[Watch Thread](#)".

So why not try the forums today? Join the 500 club where we aim for writing 500 words each day. Declare your writing goals for 2012 (it's not too late to make some!). Chat about the books you're reading. Ask any burning questions.

Just go through the simple registration process or login to get started:

<http://www.romanceaustraliaforum.com/>

Good luck!



Want to keep up-to-date with conference information?

Website:

http://www.romanceaustralia.com/conference_goldcoast.html

Blog:

<http://romanceaustralia.wordpress.com/conferences-roadshows/rwa-conference-2012/>

Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/#!/RWAusConf2012>
We also have an official hashtag! #RWAus12

Facebook Event Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/events/219227684810134/>

Forum:

<http://www.romanceaustraliaforum.com/GoldCoast2012>

Contact

Fiona Gregory—Conference Co-ordinator
conference@romanceaustralia.com

As with most positions in RWA, the conference team are all volunteers with busy lives and responsibilities outside the organisation. We ask you to bear this in mind with any communications.

Conference Newbies

We understand your first conference can be quite daunting. But there is no need to worry, there will be a newbie liaison, just for you. More details to come in upcoming issues.

Venue bookings

There will be a specific booking process for conference attendees at QT (the hotel). More details to come in the March issue.

Look out next month for information on Registration, Workshops, and more!

Special Guest

Romance Writers of Australia is proud to announce another special guest to Diamonds Are Forever,

Monique Patterson
Executive Editor, St. Martin's Press

Monique Patterson began her publishing career at Avon Books in 1998, which then became a part of HarperCollins. She is currently Executive Editor at St. Martin's Press where she acquires women's fiction, which includes contemporary, historical, paranormal and erotic romance, paranormal fiction, African American fiction and a selective amount of commercial non-fiction, which includes pop culture and celebrity bios for all parts of the list and for all formats. Some of her current authors are Sherrilyn Kenyon, Lora Leigh, MaryJanice Davidson, Suzanne Enoch, Christina Brooke, Julianne Maclean, Celeste Bradley, Susan Donovan, Alexandra Hawkins, Christine Warren, MaryJanice Davidson, Francis Ray and others.

One of her favourite pastimes. . . is reading. What a surprise.

Monique will be taking pitches. Thank you, Monique!



More special guests will be announced next month.



Taking the family to the conference?

Here are some of the things visitors can do at the Gold Coast.

Australia's Gold Coast enjoys an ideal year round climate and an amazing variety of natural landscapes, including 70 kilometres of famous beaches and 100,000 hectares of world heritage-listed rainforest. The region has been attracting visitors since first settlement.

Today, natural wonders are complemented by the largest selection of family theme parks, golfing greens, shopping centres and restaurants.

Family favourites such as Dreamworld, Sea World, Wet 'n' Wild and WhiteWater World are sure to please. Warner Bros. Movie World and the Australian Outback Spectacular provide their own unique feel. While Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary creates a never ending interactive experience with nature's many creatures.

A city jam-packed with adrenaline rides, jet boating on the broadwater, whale watching and themed attractions, including Dracula's Haunted House and Infinity's multidimensional maze located in the city centre, offer yet another opportunity to create some exciting holiday memories.

Internationally regarded golfing experiences are also in easy reach of the weekend hacker or the serious swinger with more than 40 championship and resort golf courses located throughout the region.

It's easy to see why a Gold Coast holiday is the popular choice, especially from up on high at the Q1 observation deck, Qdeck with SkyPoint, atop the World's Tallest Residential Tower or a morning ride in a hot air balloon followed by a Champagne Breakfast at O'Reilly's Vineyard.

(Above taken from: <http://www.visitgoldcoast.com/attractions/>)

The Gold Coast's Show is on 31 August, 1 and 2 September, if you want to extend your trip to take in the Show. Brisbane's EKKA Show is on 9—18 August.

August is the middle of the whale watching season on the Gold Coast. For more information; <http://www.gold-coast-australia-travel-tips.com/whale-watching-season.html>

Tangalooma is on Moreton Island, just off the Gold Coast. You could see dugongs, rare Indo-Pacific humpback river dolphins, flying fish, stingrays, starfish, turtles and lots more. For more information; <http://www.gold-coast-australia-travel-tips.com/tangalooma-day-trip.html>

Average temperatures on the Gold Coast in August are 10°C—21°C, with water temperature of 19°C.



Hearts Talk Photo Request

Do you have any photos of HEARTS or of people TALKing that would be suitable for the front page of Hearts Talk?

If you'd like to design a strip, or just send in your photo, we'd love to receive them. Your efforts will be acknowledged on the inside cover.

Please email any contributions to Catherine Evans at hteditor@romanceaustralia.com

Thanks!

IN PERSON EVENTS

(Costings Code: M=member, MC=Member concession. NM=Non-members, C=concession)

Tuesday, 14 February**Romance Writing Workshop ~ Cathleen Ross and Annie West**

Willoughby Room, Chatswood Library on Concourse
1:30pm—3:30pm

Cost: \$15 inc afternoon tea

Bookings: 02 9967 2917

or contact willpark@willoughby.nsw.gov.au

Thursday, 16 February**Face to Face with Anna Campbell**

Caloundra Library, 8 Omrah Avenue, Caloundra
11:00am—12:30pm

Free, refreshments, prizes

Bookings: 07 5499 5444

Saturday 18 February**The Romance Writing Maze: Finding Your Niche ~ Trish Morey**

When: 10.00am—1.00pm

Where: SA Writers' Centre

Cost: \$55 M, \$77 NM

FMI + Bookings: http://sawriters.org.au/component/eventbooking/?task=view_event&event_id=41

Saturday 18 February**Personal Branding Workshop ~ Paula Smith**

When: 1.00pm—4.00pm

Where: KSP Writers Centre, WA

Cost: \$25 M, \$40 NM

FMI + Bookings: <http://kspf.iinet.net.au/events.html#feb>
OR kspf@iinet.net.au OR 08 9294 1872

Saturday 18 February**Taking the Mystery out of History: Writing Historical Fiction ~ Diane Armstrong**

When: 10.00am—4.00pm

Where: NSW Writers' Centre

Cost: \$105 M, \$90 MC, \$150 NM

FMI + Bookings: http://www.nswwc.org.au/?page_id=3&ptag=february OR 02 9555 9757

Monday, 20 February**Face to Face with Anna Campbell**

Coolum Library, 6 Park Street, Coolum
10:00am—11:30am

Free, refreshments, prizes

Bookings: 07 5343 2000

Monday, 20 February**Face to Face with Anna Campbell**

Kawana Library, 30 Nanyima Street, Buddina
2:00pm—3:30pm

Free, refreshments, prizes

Bookings: 07 5458 6500

**Tuesday, 21 February****Face to Face with Anna Campbell**

Cooroy Library, 9 Maple Street

1:00pm—2:30pm

Free, refreshments, prizes

Bookings: 07 5454 9000

Wednesday, 22 February**Face to Face with Anna Campbell**

Noosa Library, 54 Eumundi Noosa Drive, Noosaville

10:00am—11:30am

Free, refreshments, prizes

Bookings: 07 5442 4411

Wednesday, 22 February**Face to Face with Anna Campbell**

Maroochydore Library, 44 Sixth Avenue, Cotton Tree

2:00pm—3:30pm

Free, refreshments, prizes

Bookings: 07 5475 8900

Thursday 23 February x 2 session times**Unleashed Passions in Print ~ Anna Campbell**

When:

Redcliffe Library, 23 February, 2.30pm

Caboolture Library, 23 February, 6.00pm

Where: Redcliffe & Caboolture Libraries, Qld

Cost: Free

FMI + Bookings. Bookings Essential: <http://www.moretonbay.qld.gov.au/discover.aspx?id=97934>

Saturday 25 February**Will You Read My Work? Beta Readers for Beginners ~ Jodi Cleghorn**

When: 10.30am—4.30pm

Where: Queensland Writers' Centre

Cost: \$110 M, \$99 MC, \$160 NM, \$144 C

FMI + Bookings: <http://www.qwc.asn.au/courses-and-events/courses/weekend-workshops/will-you-read-my-work-beta-readers-for-beginners/> OR 07 3842 9922 OR qldwriters@qwc.asn.au

Saturday 10 March**Where is the Love? How to put Romance into Your Writing ~ Dianne Blacklock**

When: 10.00am—4.00pm

Where: NSW Writers' Centre

Cost: \$105 M, \$90 MC, \$150 NM

FMI + Bookings: http://www.nswwc.org.au/?page_id=3&ptag=march OR 02 9555 9757

Saturday 24 March**Advanced Story Mastery: Create Stories That Sell~ Michael Hauge**

When: 9.00am—6.00pm

Where: Kaleide Theatre, RMIT, Melbourne

Cost: \$195 full, \$165 industry concession

FMI + Bookings: <http://www.epiphany.com.au>



Welcome Sue. Can you tell us where you live and a little about your area?

I live in the north-eastern foothills of Adelaide, surrounded by River Red Gums and winter creeks, with views to the city and sea. Koalas visit my street, and even my garden several times a year, providing thrills for my golden retriever, Max.

How long have you been a member of RWA, and who or what inspired you to join?

I've been a member for one year and I was inspired by the website, especially the contests. I thought entering would be a great way to gain feedback on my writing— anonymously.

What genre do you write and who are you targeting?

I'm writing fantasy/sci-fi romance and contemporary romance with Australian settings. My current goal is to send off a couple of query letters. I'm still deciding where to send them.

You recently attended your first conference. What was your highlight?

It was excellent, I could've stayed for another week of sessions. Highlights for me were Julia Hunter speaking about her career with the FBI; Ray Floro demonstrating how to stab a leg of pork with a pen; and especially Kristin Nelson – all her sessions were gold.

Could you tell us a little about your first rejection experience?

After dabbling with writing over the years I knuckled down and wrote two children's picture book manuscripts, which I sent to a publisher. Several months later, one rejection slip came back, but the other didn't, so I got very excited and thought, ooh, maybe that means it has progressed to the next level... anyway, the rejection letter came eventually and I never got around to resubmitting. So, that was about ten years ago and time just flew past, until I made the decision last year to get serious about writing. I announced to family and friends and the workplace that in 2011, Tuesdays are dedicated writing

Sue Price

days and I am not available. Life and laundry get in the way sometimes.

Who is your favourite author and why?

I have many favourite authors and am always discovering new ones. I tend to discover an author, print out their backlist, read everything, and then I have to wait for them to write their next book. I'm waiting for the next novels of quite a few authors, including Christine Feehan, J.R. Ward, Jeaniene Frost, Jessica Andersen, Sherilyn Kenyon, Robyn Carr, Lara Adrian and Suzanne Brockmann. I love to escape with the characters into the worlds they create.



Do you belong to a critique group?

No. I met some lovely South Australian writers at the conference who happen to live in my neighbourhood and have a critique group. I aim to attend the next SARA meeting and follow up on a discussion I had with a SARA member at the conference dinner.

What is your favourite meal?

I love the Chicken Bianco and sautéed vegetables at Café Va Bene.

What are you reading at present?

I'm reading several books, as usual. Judy Dench's autobiography, *And Furthermore*, Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson's *The Gathering Storm*, and some non-fiction books on male point-of-view on relationships.

What are your writing plans for the future?

To improve my writing, implement what I learn and get those manuscripts out there doing their thing.

Grammar with Anna

Today I was reading an American romance by a famous author. The book is avoiding the past continuous tense throughout as if it was incorrect, even when nothing else will do.

This is more or less the sentence that upset me most—but I've found many similar over the past few years. (N.B. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.)

'When Mabel went into the kitchen, Polly cut the beans at the table so Mabel stopped to talk to her.'

To me it's totally incorrect to say 'cut' because this is a continuous action that was going on before Mabel arrived in the kitchen, and it doesn't make sense if you don't say 'was cutting' i.e. past continuous tense.

I'm supposing it's some young editor who's been told that 'was' is the passive mood/tense—and it isn't, isn't, isn't!!! (Well, not necessarily and not even usually.)

They're mangling my language. Just let an editor try to do this to me!

Anna Jacobs

Refilling the Word Well, or Why Reading Should Always Be Guilt Free



One of the only things I don't like about being a writer is the almost constant nag of guilt at the back of my brain, that little voice telling me that instead of watching TV/shopping for shoes/cooking dinner/weeding the garden, I should be writing. It's always there, like a never-satisfied school teacher. Doesn't

matter if I hit word count for the day—if there are hours of my appointed work time left, The Nag tells me I should be writing. If I am at a loose end on the weekend, instead of vegging on the couch watching TV or going to the gym or shopping with my favourite man, I should be writing. If I get an invitation to lunch with writing friends, I should say no, because instead of plundering the delights of the hotel buffet, I should be writing...

You get the picture, I'm sure.

Of course, sometimes The Nag is right—sometimes I am ducking out on work that I need to do, often because I'm avoiding tackling a tough part of the WIP. But if I listened to The Nag all the time, I would never do anything except write. And that would not be pretty for my sanity or, I suspect, the quality of my work.

I have Stephen King to thank for my one get-out-of-gaol-free card from writing guilt. His book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* contains a whole section on the joys of reading. In it, Mr King argues passionately that writers must keep reading. He believes that reading other writers' words, disappearing into their worlds, is vital to feeding his own creativity. He calls it "refilling the word well" and ever since I read his book I have felt as though I had a permission slip from my parents (or someone of equal authority!) giving me license to read. In fact, I could even go so far as to say that reading has become a legitimate part of my work regime (bless you, Mr King!).

I don't know a writer who didn't start out as a passionate reader. For me, there is no greater joy than a book that I can't put down. For however many hours it takes for me to travel from the front to the back cover, I am somewhere else. Deep space, a fantasy realm, the gritty streets of New York, decadent pre-revolutionary Paris, Regency England... Places I can never go in real life, but that are open to me thanks to books. I escape and become someone else and it is wonderful.

But escapism isn't the only reason to grab a book. A

Washington University study a few years ago looked at what happens in our brains when we lose ourselves in a story. They discovered that "readers create vivid mental simulations of the sounds, sights, tastes and movements described in a textual narrative while simultaneously activating brain regions used to process similar experiences in real life." In other words, we relate our own experiences to what we are reading, providing a rich interface between the story on the page and our own lives and imaginations. Stimulating stuff, and it almost inevitably knocks an idea or two loose for my own work. Sometimes I discover themes in my chosen read that make me question my own themes. Other times I am left wondering "what if this had happened instead of that", or even "if I had written this story, I think I might have..." All good grist for the writer's brain.

There is also the craft element to reading. I learn so much from books that I love, and even more from books that don't work for me. In fact, some of my most profound writing lessons have come from reading other peoples' books and recognising some of my own (bad) habits. Narrowing down the things that I love about another writer's work is often much harder. Usually I'm so absorbed in the words, so swept away that I can't distance myself from my emotional reaction to the story enough to analyse the why and how of the writing. Over the years, I've discovered repeated readings are really the only way to go to get past the magic of the writing and into the nuts and bolts of it to try to understand how my favourite authors make me putty in their hands.

All of the reasons above are why I always have a towering pile of books on my bedside table and a queue on my e-reader and an order winging its way to me via an on-line bookstore. They're all pretty good reasons, and they definitely silence my inner nag, but I think the best reason to read is still the one that made me pick up a book in the first place and inspired me to dare to dream of becoming a writer one day myself—the sheer joy of a good story well told. It all begins and ends there, really, doesn't it?

Happy writing and reading!

Sarah



Dear Auntie Fi,

When a story is complicated, like for example the need to explain a fantasy world, what is the best way to manage exposition?

World-weary in Wedderburn



Dear WW,

I've asked honorary Auntie M.J. Scott, world builder of the Half-Light City and author of *Shadow Kin* (out now) and *Blood Kin* (June 2012) to answer your question. Take it away, M.J.!

WW, in any genre, exposition is tricky. Too much equals a bored reader, too little and they get confused. In fantasy or paranormal you have more to explain but you also have readers who like puzzling together new worlds. For me, the key rule with divulging information to the reader is always 'less is more'. You need to know more about your world than the reader does. They don't need all your brilliant world building. And what they do need, they need in small chunks. How? I like to think of the Four Cs.

1. **Context.** Deliver a piece of information in context and don't explain. For example, if your world has an equivalent of coffee or tea, it's enough to say your heroine poured herself a steaming cup of caff/klah/chah in the morning and let the reader work it out.
2. **Conversation.** Use cautiously. Consider whether the characters know this information already? (Avoid the dreaded "as you know, Bob," info-dump) If they don't, dialogue can be a good place to drip feed exposition. Which brings me to the next point...
3. **Curiosity.** A very useful device is the fish out of water/stranger character. Someone who is new to the culture/place/situation who legitimately needs to ask lots of questions and learn things as they move through the story.
4. **Cogitation.** Characters think. Use those thoughts. People have varying views about how much exposition you can put in internal monologue, some say stick to only what the character is consciously thinking but, for me, particularly in first person, you can do a little more (after all, we are always thinking more than one thing, we have memories and associations with places and objects and people that impact us). You can use some of that to flesh out your world. Just make sure the character is doing something while they think.

In the end, it's a balancing act. You'll probably write long chunks of exposition in first draft. That's fine. You need to know it. But when you revise, think about what the reader really needs to know. Cut down those chunks and deliver the information sprinkled through the manuscript...make that reader an active reader who's putting things together and they'll enjoy your story more!

Write On!

M.J. Scott xx

Dear Auntie Fi,

When writing in the third person is there a way to make sure point of view changes are logical, carry the story forward and don't become confusing to the reader?

Head-hopping in Hopetoun

Dear HH,

This question opens up the writing chestnut of single point of view vs

multiple points of view in a scene. Often, writers are divided and are staunch advocates of their preferred style. Advocates of single point of view (POV) per scene maintain that it gives their novel an emotional depth that head-hopping kills. Head hoppers never agree and are we to argue with Nora Roberts?

That said, readers and writers have their own preferences. No one should be telling you, 'You must do...' but I do recommend you settle on a style that gives you the best emotionally charged scene you can write that is full of conflict. When I first learned about scene-sequel I followed it to the letter and every scene was single POV and the next scene opened in the other character's head, reacting to the previous scene. Now I have settled on occasionally changing POV mid scene when it is demanded, but the change is only done once so the segue is clear.

Multiple head-hopping can be confusing to the reader and pull them out of the story. It can drain your scene of tension if it is done too often. Deriders of scene-sequel say that the sequel drains tension if it is a long narrative and that the sequel should be short, sharp and then bang, into the next scene.

So how do you change POV and make it clear? You name the character and give them a thought or an action so the reader is fully aware of the switch.

In the example below, the scene has been in the hero's POV. At the start of the scene his name was used and an action or thought attached to it, so the reader knew whose head the scene was in. After that, most of the time his name wasn't used and he has been referred to as 'he' and 'his'. This is the final paragraph in his POV and the first in the heroine's.

A fizz of anger shook him and for the first time in a long, long time, his inherent good manners deserted him. He didn't greet her and instead left her extended hand hovering between them.

Damn it. Lucy's plan of coming unobserved into the clinic after hours was unraveling faster than a skein of wool in the claws of a cat.

For more information, check out *Goal, Motivation and Conflict* by Debra Dixon and numerous online articles. Also, think about your favorite authors and read them with a highlighter to see what style they use.

Write On!

Auntie Fi x



Beverly Cousins, Random House Australia, talks about publishing women's fiction and general fiction in Australia.



What does the term 'trade publisher' mean?

'Trade publisher' would be a publisher who sells into the general book trade, the high street book

stores and DDS (discount and department stores), as opposed to educational publishers (obviously into the educational market) and custom publishers (for specific businesses and outlets). Specialist romance publishers could still be classed as trade publishers, I guess, because they sell their books to book stores. But specialist lists (such as Harlequin/Mills & Boon) tend, as I understand it, to sell their books in bulk at a much lower cover price, rather than as individual titles, and to a very defined audience, whereas trade publishers will obviously try to cover as wide a reading market as possible.

Specialist publishers look for specific features in a manuscript, features they know their sector of the market will expect. Trade publishers look for what?

Books that they believe will sell well and make a profit!

For me, as a commercial fiction publisher, I'm looking for strong, compelling plots as much as I am looking for good writing and strong characterisation. But I also want some originality too—something that will set the book apart from the crowd. A marketable plot or hook is important, as from the moment the script lands on my desk the job of selling begins—the book has to sell itself to me, if I like it I have to sell it to my colleagues, they have to sell it to their contacts (e.g. booksellers and reviewers), and the booksellers have to sell it to readers.

I also like to see that the author understands the market and what readers enjoy and want. Obviously anyone can write a novel—and if they are doing it as a hobby then the author can write about whatever pleases them. However not everyone can write a novel good enough to be published! And if they wish it to be published then the first thing they have

to do is understand they are entering a business and they need to be aware of market factors.

The US and Australian publishing industries are quite different and not just in terms of market size. In your opinion what other differences should Australian writers be aware of?

This is quite hard to answer. Obviously because of the size of the American market, the US publishers can publish many more titles. The Australian market is so small that we are not able to publish as many books per year and have to be very selective. The American market can be quite resistant to novels not set in the US, whereas in Australia we are far more used to reading 'international' books. But that's a sweeping generalisation—I'm not sure what else to add for this one!

In Australia, the individual publisher chooses manuscripts based on experience, instinct and a thorough knowledge of the marketplace, and is answerable to the company as a whole. It is not a personal, subjective decision only. Can you talk to this?

So many factors come into play when a publisher chooses a typescript. The decision is subjective in that it is that publisher's assessment of the script taking into account the three factors mentioned above: experience, instinct and knowledge of the market. For example, one publisher's instinct/experience/knowledge may lead them to see a typescript in a completely different way to another publisher. One publisher may have been burned in the past by a similar type of novel and not want to go there again, another might be full of enthusiasm for its potential. Sometimes experience can talk you out of acquiring a novel you like, while at other times instinct makes you take a chance on a book that perhaps your experience or knowledge of the marketplace would tell you to avoid! It's so hard to quantify. Also, one publisher might be looking out for a particular type of novel (e.g. crime novel) while another publisher might have a full list of crime novels and be looking for something else.

Because of the sheer volume of

submissions received, most books will be turned down on the decision of the publisher alone. If they like a book and think it has potential they will circulate it more widely for other colleagues' opinions, so sometimes those rejections are a joint or company decision.

Acquiring a book is NEVER the decision of the publisher alone however. There is a long process inhouse to get approval to make an offer. This will involve other departments assessing the script (using the three factors above), sales estimates, previous Bookscan numbers (if the author has been published before), potential marketing. And, of course, whether the advance needed to acquire the book works in the final financial costing! We obviously have to demonstrate that the book will be profitable to publish.

That said, publisher/editor passion goes an extremely long way in influencing the company's decision. It is the publisher's job to champion a book they want to have on their list, and they must sell it to their colleagues. If the publisher has such a passion for a book and strong belief that it should be published then the company (usually!) trusts their publisher's instinct!

"Trade publishers don't want to know which character ends up with the main character on the first page, whereas specialist publishers do."
This loose definition was offered at the plenary session of the 2011 RWA conference and caused much discussion. There seems to be an ongoing 'genre confusion' that exists for both readers and writers. What are your thoughts on this?

Again, I don't know if I'm the best person to answer this because I don't read a lot of specialist fiction to know what is and isn't expected of the writer. A big no-no for me would be predictability—I want the writer to confound my expectations, to keep me guessing, and give me a great ending that satisfies. This is the hard task for a genre writer in trade publishing because you would be expected to abide by the unwritten rules of the genre, while subverting and playing with them enough to keep the reader on their toes.

The Valerie Parv Award 2012 —a few changes

The Valerie Parv Award 2012 offers the winner a year of mentorship with bestselling Australian romance writer Valerie Parv, as well as a critique of your partial from Mary Theresa Hussey, Executive Editor at Harlequin Books. A fabulous prize for both category and single title writers!

Please enter the first 10,000 words (maximum) of your unpublished romance or romantic elements manuscript, plus a 1,000 word (maximum) synopsis. Note that the entry length is reduced this year. This is to make the judging process more streamlined, while still allowing a long enough partial to show story and character development.

Also new for this year: **the contest will be limited to the first 80 entries received.** This has become necessary in order to make sure that we have enough judges to cover the contest. Once 80 eligible entries have been received, the contest will close to further entries.

PLEASE enter as soon as possible on/after the opening date to ensure your entry can be included. Don't leave it until the last minute, or you will likely miss out.

There will be a progress bar on the VPA web page to show how quickly the contest is filling. If you do not receive a response to your entry email within 48 hours of sending, please re-email the manager, without attachments, to ensure your entry has been received.

Opening date:

23 April 2012—please, no entries before this date.

Closing date:

4 May 2012—again, we anticipate the contest will fill early, so make sure to enter promptly so you don't miss out.

Maximum of two entries per person. This has been reduced from three now that we are capping the contest.

Tips:

- Follow the formatting instructions carefully. Incorrectly formatted entries will be returned for correction before being admitted to the contest. Formatting guidelines are on the entry form, and you can download an example of correct formatting from the contest web page. **If in doubt, ask before submitting.**
- Download the sample scoresheet. This will give you an idea of what judges are looking for, and will help you revise your manuscript. Note in particular the questions for the synopsis, which have been changed for this year.
- The word limits are exact. Any words exceeding the limits will be trimmed, so make sure your entry is 10,000 words or fewer by computer count, plus 1,000 or fewer for the synopsis.

For more details, entry forms/conditions and formatting examples, go to:

<http://www.romanceaustralia.com/vpa.html>

First Kiss Contest

Just a few more weeks to get those kisses in! The contest closes on 17 February. Entry information on the website.

CONTEST DATES

February 17
First Kiss

May 4 (or until full)
Valerie Parv Award
(opens Apr 23)



HARLEQUIN

High Five Manager's Report—Deb Bennetto

There were 75 entries in this year's Harlequin High Five contest, with 10 entries within 10 marks of a top possible score of 225 and 24 entries in the top 10 per cent. There was a close battle for the 6th finalist spot with the place being decided by the entry with the highest X factor score.

This year's final judge was Charles Griemsmann, Associate Editor at Harlequin Mills & Boon. He requested to read more of the 1st and 2nd entries and remarked that the finalist entries were a fabulous crop of entries. "I really enjoyed these opening scenes—the quality of writing was solid across the board. The writers should be proud."

As contest manager, I was gratified that so many entrants got their entries in well before the deadline. This meant I had time to address any formatting errors and return them to the entrants to fix up to avoid incurring penalty marks. One of the most common formatting errors was entrants getting the file format wrong. A word.doc file is not the same as a word.docx. If you have one of the newer versions of Microsoft Word (2007 and upwards) take care when saving your entry.

A huge thank you goes to Margaret Midwood, our tireless Judge Coordinator who did a wonderful job of organising the list of judges. And of course many thanks to all of those who volunteered their time to help with the judging. This year we had 40 judges.

The general comments reported by the judges included:

- Too much back story (this was a recurrent theme also echoed by the finalist judge, Charles Griemsmann)
- Telling not showing
- Point of view changes
- Unclear motivation
- Problems with pacing
- Lack of emotional reactions
- Too much info dumping in the beginning.

Thank you to Harlequin for their continued sponsorship of this contest.

I'd like to wish our talented top two finalists the best of luck with their requested manuscripts. I hope all entrants enjoyed entering and found the feedback they received helpful.

Sources: Cynthia Sterling, Publishers Lunch, RWA members, publishers' websites, Publishers Weekly.

People:

Literary agent **Emmanuelle Morgen**, formerly of Judith Ehrlich Literary Management, joined Stonesong on 5 January, representing adult and children's fiction, including women's fiction and romance, historical fiction, and young adult fiction, and nonfiction in the areas of psychology, pop science, self-help, and memoir.

At Ballantine Bantam Dell **Libby McGuire** has been promoted from senior vice president to executive vice president. She will continue to oversee the hardcover and mass market publishing programs for the division, reporting to Gina Centrello.

Recently joining Amazon Publishing's romance imprint, Montlake, is **Lindsay Guzzardo**. Previously with Guideposts Books and NAL, she will now be working for Amazon as an associate acquisitions editor.

Carrie Thornton has joined HarperCollins as executive editor, It Books. Previously she was executive editor at Dutton.

Call for Submissions:

Entangled publishing seeks submissions for their Ever After line's 2012 collection featuring geeks (i.e. stories must feature a 'geek' as a primary character. Think computer programmers, starship engineers, scientists etc.). All heat levels acceptable, however erotic elements should not be the main focus of the story. Previously published material or material previously rejected by Entangled will not be considered. Submissions should be between 20,000 and 40,000 words and contain strong romantic elements.

Manuscripts chosen for the anthology will be released as e-books in 2012, with the possibility of a print compilation at a later date. To submit a manuscript for consideration, please send the full manuscript (RTF format) and a one-page query letter briefly describing the premise, heat level, and word count to everafter-submissions@entangledpublishing.com. Query letters should be addressed to Adrien-Luc Sanders. Please include "Geek Collection"

and your title in the subject line. Submissions are open until 15 April, 2012 and final decisions will be made by 1 May. More details at <http://www.entangledinromance.com/2011/12/03/call-for-submissions-geeks/>

Total E Bound, an erotic romance publisher, is seeking submissions for its upcoming anthologies and collections.

- **Switch — Bondage/BDSM Anthology**
- **Haunted by You (Halloween 2012)**
- **Oberon's Court (Christmas 2012)**
- **Emergency Servicing - Medical Anthology**
- **Immortal Love (Valentine's 2013)**

For more information see the website: <http://www.total-e-bound.com/submissionguidelines.asp>

Contest:

The Royal Ascot is a writing competition run by The Beau Monde, a specialty chapter of the Romance Writers of America. The chapter is a community of Regency writers, both published and unpublished, who specialise in the Regency genre. The 2012 Royal Ascot will open for Entries on 1 February, 2012, with last entries accepted on 6 April.

Enquiries should be directed to royalascotcontest@gmail.com.

Publishing Trends:

Rick Joyce, Chief Marketing Officer from Perseus Books has outlined what he sees as the growing trends in book publishing for 2012. He states digital discovery will only grow in importance in the future due to the waning of traditional marketing avenues and the explosion of digital adoption due to widespread ownership of smartphones and other electronic devices. The means by which an author seeks to be noticed (and therefore purchased) will rely increasingly on digital technology. He cites effective use of social media, recommendation sites (such as Goodreads) and search engine optimisation as crucial to the marketing success of authors in the future. You can read the full article at <http://www.publishingtrends.com/2012/01/trendspotting-2012-rick-joyce/>.

Amazon's market share continues

to grow worldwide. According to The Gadget Website, over a million e-readers were sold in the UK over the holidays, 92 per cent of which were the Amazon Kindle (which equates to 1 in 40 UK residents). Tablets also did incredibly well this year with around 640,000 having been gifted and 72 per cent of those iPad 2s. Interestingly, 60 per cent of those iPad 2s were gifted to women with men only getting 40 per cent.

According to Publishers Weekly, **e-books** and other forms of digital content are transforming all aspects of the book publishing industry. It is generally believed that in five years e-book sales will account for about half of trade revenues. Nine publishing executives were asked to outline strategies for how they will deal with the shift. CEO of Harlequin, Donna Hayes, made this comment: "digital and traditional publishing are not separate businesses. Sure, we'll continue to examine our strategies as the market for e-books grows, but the popularity of the e-book does not alter the essential fact that for Harlequin, our primary objective is to connect our talented authors and their outstanding editorial to receptive readers, whatever the format." The full article can be found at: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/50017-looking-for-the-50-solution.html>

Other News:

Romance author **Penny Jordan** has died aged 65. The bestselling romance author, who also wrote under the names Annie Groves, Melinda Wright and Lydia Hitchcock, sold over 70 million copies worldwide. Her first novel was published in 1979 under the pen name Caroline Courtney. Last year Penny was presented with a lifetime achievement award from the Romantic Novelists' Association. Penny passed away on 31 December, 2011 after a battle with cancer.

Fred Kerner, editor emeritus of Harlequin Books, died on 24 December. He was 90. Kerner was named editorial director of Harlequin's North American operations in 1975; he took early retirement in 1983 after undergoing heart surgery.

THE SALES

Alison Stuart (Brideson) sold her novel *Gather The Bones* to Lyrical Press.

Bronwyn Stuart has sold her novel *Scandal's Mistress* to Carina Press.

Danielle Lisle has sold her series *Rogues of Deception* to Total-E-Bound Publishing.

Jennifer Lynne has sold her novel *Educating Ethan* to Breathless Press.

THE WINS

Elise Ackers has placed third in the Single Title category for the Florida Romance Writers 2011 Golden Palm contest.



Two of **Leisl Leighton's** manuscripts have been selected as one of six finalists in the Unique Genres category of the Linda Howard Award of Excellence competition, sponsored by the Southern Magic RWA chapter.

The ARRA (Australian Romance Readers Association) Finalists

Congratulations to Sharon Archer, Lucinda Brant, Christina Brooke, Rhian Cahill, Anna Campbell, CC Coburn, Lexxie Couper, Shannon Curtis, Jess Dee, Beverly Eikli, Jaye Ford, Barbara Hannay, Erica Hayes, Lisa Heidke, Cathryn Hein, Kelly Hunter, Shona Husk, Rachael Johns, Karly Lane, Stephanie Laurens, Nikki Logan, Fiona Lowe, Paula Roe, Cathleen Ross, Denise Rossetti, Jenny Schwartz, MJ Scott, Kandy Shepherd, Nalini Singh, Angela Verdenius, Annie West and Helene Young.

Online Events

Can this manuscript be saved?

with Susan Meier

5 March to 1 April 2012

Rejected? Can't get an agent? Can't sell, even though your critique partners LOVE your work? Susan Meier reviews the seven most common rejection catch phrases and explains why you and even your critique partners can't spot them, then shows how determining whether your book's trouble is a story, scene or word problem is the first step on the road to recovery.

Attendees will learn how to "skim-read" their manuscripts quickly, marking specific problems with post-its. Susan also demonstrates how to use a storyboard, a 'list of twenty' and a one-paragraph blurb to create a plan of attack for fixing your book's trouble.

Susan can't revise or rewrite your manuscript for you, but with her tricks you'll not only see how to revise the book of your heart; you'll also see how published authors are able to write four, five and even six books a year without breaking a sweat!

Presenter bio:

Susan Meier is the author of 47 books for Harlequin and Silhouette and one of Guideposts' Grace Chapel Inn series books, *The Kindness of Strangers*. Her books have been finalists for Reviewers' Choice Awards, National Readers' Choice Awards and cataromance.com Reviewers' Choice Awards and nominated for Romantic Times awards. Her book, *Her Baby's First Christmas* won the traditional category in the 2009 More Than Magic contest. *The Magic Of A Family Christmas* is a finalist in the Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence.

Her Pregnancy Surprise, her first release for the Harlequin Romance line, made both Walden's Bestseller List for Series Romance and Bookscan. *The Baby Project*, *Second Chance Baby*, *A Baby On The Ranch*, and *Kisses On Her Christmas List* are her 2011 releases.

Susan loves to teach as much as she loves to write and is a popular speaker at RWA chapter conferences. *Can This Manuscript Be Saved?* and *Journey Steps*, *No Frills Guide to Plotting!* are her most requested workshops. Her article "How to Write a Category Romance" appeared in *2003 Writer's Digest Novel and Short Story Markets*. Susan also gives online workshops for various groups and her articles regularly appear in RWA chapter newsletters.

The registration details are:

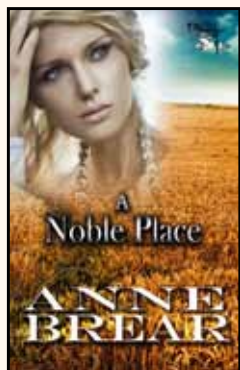
The course fee is NZ\$10 for RWNZ members and NZ\$25 for non-members.

Registration is now open on the RWNZ website at the following link:

<http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/workshops-2/>



NEW RELEASES FEBRUARY 2012



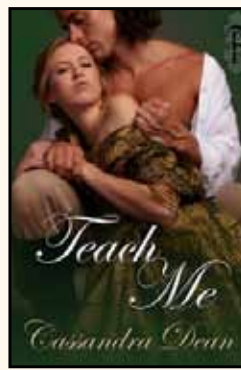
A Noble Place
Anne Brear
MuseltUp Publishing



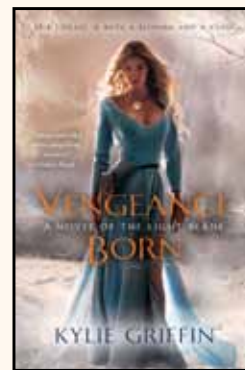
The Viking's Forbidden Pleasure
Jennie Brumley
Ravenous Romance



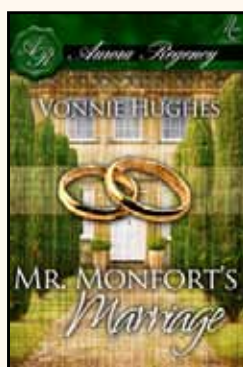
The Boss She Can't Resist
Lucy Clark
HMB Medical



Teach Me
Cassandra Dean
Decadent Publishing



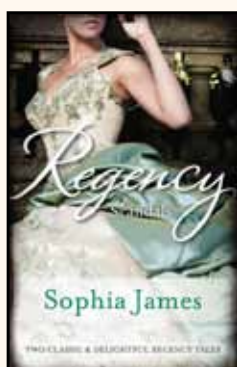
Vengeance Born
Kylie Griffin
Berkley Sensation



Mr Montfort's Marriage
Vonnies Hughes
Musa Publishing



The Tycoon Who Healed Her Heart
Melissa James
HMB Sweet



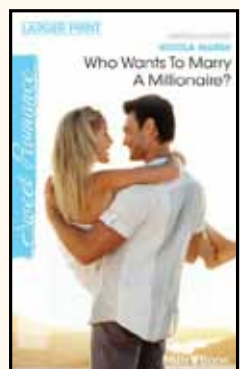
High Seas To High Society + Masquerading Mistress
Sophia James
HMB Regency



Platinum Passion
Jennifer Lynne
Amazon



Bought by the Millionaire Prince
Carol Marinelli
HMB Special Format



Who Wants To Marry A Millionaire
Nicola Marsh
HMB Sweet



Daredevil and Dr Kate
Leah Martyn
HMB Medical



Secrets of Castillo Del Arco
Trish Morey
HMB Sexy



Starline
Imogene Nix
Secret Cravings Publishing



New Doc In Town + Orphan Under The Christmas Tree
Meredith Webber
HMB Medical

Romance Writers of Australia is proud to employ the Endeavour Foundation to produce Hearts Talk and many other official RWA publications.

www.endeavour.com.au

ENDEAVOUR
FOUNDATION
Opportunities for people with a disability