



Coffs Harbour, NSW

Setting.....	p4
Marion Lennox / Trish Morey Cont...	p6
Writer's Life: Writing with Babies.....	p8
Clayton's Conf	p9
Our RWA: The Emerald Award	p10
Brisbane Conference Report	p11
Member Spotlight	p12
Member News & Releases	p13
Focus on: Sagas, UK Style.....	p14
Events	p16
Contest News	p17
All About Twitter	p18
Market Watch.....	p19

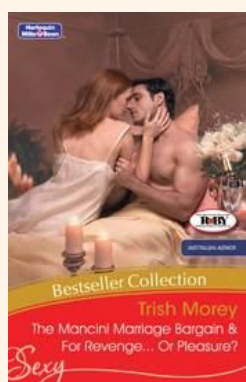
R♥BY Winners



Marion Lennox & Trish Morey

Bronwyn Jameson chats with two of RWA's best-loved Harlequin authors, Marion Lennox and Trish Morey, winners of 2009 Romantic Book of the Year (R♥BY) Awards in the Short Sweet and Short Sexy categories respectively.

Marion Lennox has been writing romance since she was knee high to a grasshopper, which anyone who's met Marion will realize was quite some time ago. She's just sold her eightieth romance, but continues with the belief that she has the best job in the universe. Marion's been nominated for the R♥BY every year since its inception and is now a two-time winner. She's won the prestigious US RITA award twice as well. Her books are fun, lighthearted celebrations of the human spirit and the power of romance to conquer all, and her latest US release more than proves that after 2 weeks as #1 Series Bestseller on the Borders/Waldenbooks list.



Trish Morey always fancied herself as a writer, so why she became a Chartered Accountant is anyone's guess. In 1992 she spied an article saying Mills&Boon was actively seeking new authors and with two young children at home, this was her Eureka moment—becoming an author for HM&B was her destiny! It only took 11 years to convince Harlequin to come to the party. Trish writes for the Sexy/Presents series, is a four times Borders/Waldenbooks #1 Bestseller and also had the immense honour of winning the R♥BY Award twice, in 2006 with *The Italian Boss's Secret Child* and now in 2009, with *The Italian Boss's Mistress of Revenge*.

Congratulations on winning 2009 R♥BY Awards, the second for you both. I sensed from your acceptance speeches that the second time IS as good as the first...

Marion: It's unbelievable. I try and read each new author in the lines I write for, and

(Continued on page 6)



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All deadlines, entry forms and sample score sheets 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 yahoo 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.

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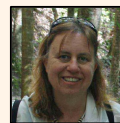
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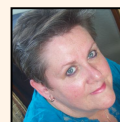
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Ghosts of Presidents Past...

Anyone who saw last month's column probably got a chuckle out of the pic snapped by our erstwhile HT editor of myself and Kelly Hunter with Anne Gracie hovering gypsy-style in the background. It's a cute photo and we were laughing like crazy while it was being taken.

But, it's also a hell of a lot to live up to.

Our wonderful organisation had thrived, come back from the brink and flourished under the guidance of women such as these.

Err....anyone for a cup of pressure?

Luckily I have the perfect anti-dote for new-presidentitis. A crack team of wonderful women—dedicated volunteers—committed to, and passionate about, RWA.

W12 (writers twelve aka your national executive) have hit the ground running with an enthusiasm that beggars belief.

Already a series of think tanks made up of executive and non-exec members (targeted for their expertise in specific areas) of RWA have been mulling over issues involving sponsorship, media, scholarships, building relationships with libraries and ways in which we can "give-back" to the membership.

Our long range plans for the coming year involve tackling things such as the constitution (which is in dire need of an overhaul) and a comprehensive membership survey.

All these things are bubbling away madly in this caul-

dron of enthusiasm that has embraced us all. So watch this space!

Unfortunately, Robyn Grady has had to step aside as minutes secretary and we welcome Lisa Barry (one of our fabulous Brissy conference team) in her place. I'd like to thank Robyn for her time on the committee. She will be missed.

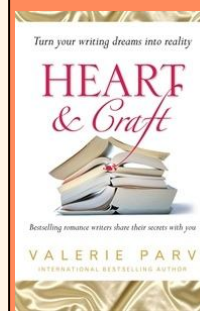
Before I finish I'd like to especially thank my immediate predecessor, Kelly Hunter – not just for her leadership qualities, her grace under pressure and her quiet insightfulness (or her damn good books for that matter) but for setting such a high benchmark. The growth of our volunteer culture, in particular, under Kelly's guidance, has been a wonderful legacy. I only hope that I can continue to carry the blazing torch she has passed on and that together with the executive—and you, the members—we can make RWA all it can be.

Until next month, may the Muse be with you.

AA



Volunteer of the Month!



Roseanne Smiles: National Conference Team. Roseanne wins a copy of *Heart & Craft* edited by Valerie Parv. Congratulations Roseanne and **Thank You.**



RWA's New Judge Coordinator

I recently took on the position of RWA Judge Coordinator and am in the process of updating the list of volunteer judges. This is a new role in RWA and I'll be the main point of contact for all judges in each of the contests.

The Romance Writers of Australia has some wonderful competitions with great feedback and prizes, but we rely on the kindness of judges.

The competition season is now in full swing so if you feel you'd like to be involved as a judge, could you please contact me with your details at:

judge-coordinator@romanceaustralia.com

Please include your name, email address, postal address and phone number, likes and dislikes in reading (what do you prefer to read, and more importantly, what you dislike. If you can be specific about the various lines, even better).

Judging can be a very rewarding experience.

Thanks in advance.

Serena Tatti, Judge Coordinator

judge-coordinator@romanceaustralia.com

STELLAR SETTINGS: Bringing your story to life

Is the setting just window dressing?

By Nicola Marsh

The crux of any good story is character and emotion. You can set your story in Vegas or Paris or the wilds of Africa but unless your readers care about your characters, and those characters are strongly motivated and believable, setting is irrelevant.

But if used correctly, as an adjunct to your powerfully written story, the setting can bring your book alive.

Is the setting evocative?

How many of you have read a book set in Paris and can visualise the Eiffel Tower, the Place de la Concorde, Montmartre? A Roman book, with the Colosseum, the Spanish Steps? Venice with its charming waterways and gondolas?

Mention a city in the world and anyone will have an instant mental image of what that place looks like. Why stop there? If you can layer in sounds, smells and the 'feel' of a place, you'll really bring your story alive.

That's what I hoped to evoke with my current release, *A Trip With The Tycoon* (Harlequin Sweet). Set predominantly in India, I didn't settle for one city. I wanted to bring this magical, mystical country alive, so I deliberately took my readers on a journey. A train journey in particular, on the luxurious Palace on Wheels travelling through Rajasthan, visiting exotic destinations like Jaipur (the Pink City), Udaipur (with its famous Lake Palace) and Agra (home of the Taj Mahal). Throw in an extended stay in Goa, and readers are guaranteed a satisfying armchair travel.

I also layered the story with sights, sounds, aromas and foods, a good way to enhance the setting.

Here are two examples:

"Prawns today, Missie?"

Smiling, she stopped at one of the many food vendors scattered along the roadside leading to Colva Beach. She'd been starving when she'd arrived here her first day and the tantalising aromas of seafood sizzling in garlic and tumeric had led her straight here.

"Two please."

She held up two fingers for reinforcement, knowing the wizened old man would give her four, just like he had the previous times she'd stopped here. Not that she was complaining but the waistbands of her skirts sure were.

His wide, toothless grin warmed her heart as she handed over the rupees and juggled the hot prawns, waving the skewer around and blowing on them before biting into the delicious, crispy flesh, savouring the freshness of the seafood drenched in spicy masala.

She devoured the first prawn in two bites, saliva pooling in her mouth at the anticipatory bite of the next as she strolled past another vendor selling a fiery fish vindaloo that smelled as good as the prawns.

Using the taste and smell of food particular to this region enhances this scene. Packs more punch than: "Hungry, Tamara stopped at a roadside vendor, bought her usual favourite prawns and continued on her way."

Here's another example:

"I thought Goa was settled by the Portugese?"

Tamara nodded, browsing the market stall's brightly coloured powders for the Holi festival tomorrow. "It was. That's why you see so many Portugese inspired buildings and a lot of the population are Catholic. Apparently thousands of people make the pilgrimage to see St. Francis Xavier's body at the basilica here every five years."

Ethan trailed his fingers through a mound of sunshine yellow powder and earned a frown from the vendor for his trouble.

"If it's predominantly Catholic, what's with this Holi festival? Isn't that Hindu?"

"Uh-huh. But like most of India, there are so many different religions and castes living side by side that everyone's pretty tolerant of the different festivals." She pointed to several piles of powder, smiling at the vendor who began shovelling mini mountains of the stuff into clear plastic bags. "I think it's fabulous everyone gets involved. It's such a joyous occasion that you can't help but get swept up in the fun. At least, that's what mum told me."

He nodded, pointing to the bags being thrust into her hands. "So tell me about it. All I know is everyone goes berserk and throws colour on everyone else."

Upon hearing this, the vendor frowned again and shook his head, while she handed him rupees and laughed. "Come on, I'll enlighten you over a cup of masala chai."

"Sounds good."

He held out his hand for her carry-all and she gratefully gave it to him. Choosing every colour of the rainbow for Holi mightn't be such a great idea if she had to lug all those kilos back to the hut.

"Do the colours mean anything?"

She nodded, instantly transported back to the first time she'd heard about Holi, sitting on her mum's knee. She'd just learned to make her first chapatti that same day, and had had so much fun rolling the balls of dough into flat breads, standing on a stool next to the stove as her mum fried them.

She'd been five at the time and her dad had come home after work, scoffed three with jam and pronounced them better than her mum's.



Nicola Marsh

Stellar Settings: Bringing your story to life

continued...

It'd been a magical day, one of those days where her mum was reminiscing about India, eager to tell stories and she'd lapped it up. Yet another thing she missed.

"Green's for vitality, red is purity, blue is calmness and yellow is piety."

He squinted through the bag. "So what happens when you mix the lot together?"

"You'll find out."

Weaving a local festival, using description of the event, the colours, etc...in dialogue brings this scene alive, and avoids a chunky exposition of information I needed to get across.

Here's an example closer to home, from *Three Times A Bridesmaid* (Harlequin Romance May 2010)

Stepping into the lofty open plan room serving as lounge, dining and entertaining area, her mouth fell open as she took in the black sheer drapes framing the floor to ceiling windows and the giant chandelier hanging from an ornate ceiling, the leopard print furniture, the black marble floors and the eclectic mix of candelabras, African animal figurines and coloured glass bottles.

A few dimmed down lights reflected off the ebony marble floors, shimmering like an oil slick beneath her feet while Melbourne's city skyline glittered through the sheer black chiffon like jewels scattered against an ermine cape.

The overall effect was surreal, sophisticated and decadent. A bit like the man himself, the man she'd first glimpsed in that photo accompanying the article online: suave, confident, a guy on top of his game, a guy ready to take on the world and win.

Bryce's apartment was very James Bond while her home in a quiet South Yarra street channelled Little House on the Prairie, from its green and cream checkered sofas to its soft honey oak polished boards, its antique fireplace to the lemon walls.

The two places were worlds apart.

Standing in his apartment reinforced what she'd always thought, always known: they were two very different people.

She'd been kidding herself.

Seeing the apartment through the heroine Eve's eyes, having her mentally compare it to her own, gives us a good contrast between trendy inner city Melbourne and her suburban home.

Is first-hand research essential?

I set the bulk of my novels in Melbourne, which makes for easy first-hand research. No prizes for guessing why I've set books in Acland Street (St. Kilda), Lygon St. (Carlton) and the Docklands...food research a must for authenticity!

So did I travel to India? Unfortunately not, but I lived vicariously through relatives who had just returned from the Palace on Wheels trip. Their finer details and photos enabled me to layer in a richness I might've had lacking using the Internet alone.

If you've chosen a setting you've never visited, it pays to

put in a little extra groundwork.

Contact people who live in the area to gather details and give your setting authenticity. People who live in an area can give you specifics, such as weather in a certain month, names of local newspapers, local slang.

Ask friends/family for referrals to local people from that country/city. Talking to people from an area can help bring it alive. My grandmother was partially raised in Goa and hearing her food stories helped me layer that richness in my story.

Read reference books written by people living in the area. Look for sensory details, local language to describe events and places.

The Internet is every author's friend when it comes to research. But a word of warning: sites can be inaccurate, so choose wisely. Blogs from locals living in an area can be particularly useful. Web cams are also useful for seeing what an area looks like: weather, traffic, cars people drive, etc...

Tourist information bureaus are a wealth of local knowledge, and are particularly good for adding local flavour (eg. things to do, yearly festivities, etc...)

"World building of a place, imagined or otherwise, can suck a reader into a book and make them crave the sequel."

Is it okay to use your imagination?

Writers invent settings all the time. World building of a place, imagined or otherwise, can suck a reader into a book and make them crave the sequel.

If you've chosen a real setting, using your imagination to layer in details of smell, taste, feel, can only enhance the picture

you're painting for your reader.

In the example above from *A Trip With The Tycoon*, Tamara buys spicy prawns from a street vendor. Goa is famous for its seafood and while I haven't been there, I imagined street vendors selling a variety of spicy seafood dishes.

Is accuracy important?

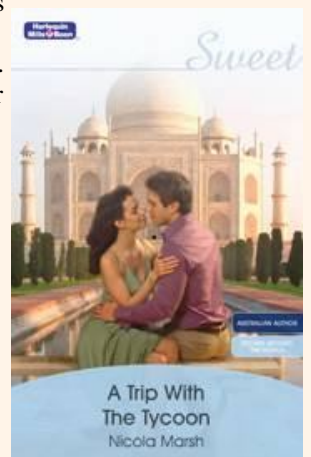
If your setting is front and centre (eg. historicals), how you portray a setting is crucial. Nothing yanks a reader out of a story more than an incongruous detail that doesn't fit a specific time period. So check historical timelines, fashions, foods, whether a building existed or an event happened, topography of the land, etc...to ensure authenticity.

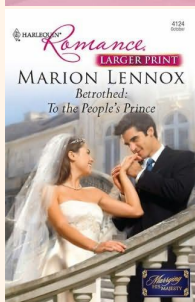
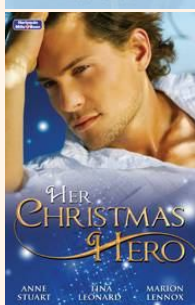
I love choosing settings for my books. The perfect setting adds a richness to the story, the perfect backdrop a canvas for your strongly motivated characters to strut their stuff.

Check facts. Be inventive. Most of all, have fun creating your vibrant setting.

Happy writing!

Nicola's current release, A Trip With The Tycoon, received 4 1/2 stars from Romantic Times. "Sterling characters, an exotic setting and crackling sexual tension make for a great read. The realistically paced romance is also refreshing." And if you're after another Indian fix, the prequel, One Indian Summer, is available now as a free online read at www.charlequin.com.





Marion Lennox & Trish Morey

(Continued from page 1)

what that gives me is a huge sense of wonder that I'm still being published at all! We have fabulous young authors with wonderful fresh voices, so many of them from Downunder. I love what I do. I love that my work's out there alongside writers I loved when I was an emerging writer, and also alongside the currently emerging writers whose work leaves me feeling the art of romance is growing stronger all the time.

Trish: Second time is better than the first, if that's possible, simply because of the odds. There's just no way it can happen twice! So yes, it's kind of amazing. Especially given the competition—we truly have the most awesome writers Downunder and I really have to pay homage to my fellow finalists this year, Carol Marinelli, Miranda Lee and Paula Roe, who write awesome books. It had to have been a close thing and I am incredibly blessed to have scraped through.

Your bio's both mention writing from an early age. Do you remember your first storytelling venture?

Marion: Back in the olden days our teacher used to write pairs of sentences on the board and we had to join them without using 'and'. It was maybe the most interminable lesson in the known universe. He wrote really, really slowly which gave me time to turn them into stories—with not an 'and' in sight. And... sorry.... **But...** he didn't appreciate them one bit.

Trish: I'm thinking it was a fib, or maybe just a wee embellishment of the truth <g>. I was in grade one or two and our teacher had asked us to write about what we'd done in the holidays and my holidays had been dreadfully dull. We'd done nothing, as usual. Nothing at all. So I made something up.

We'd painted the roof. And I illustrated the story. Loads of little stick people all up on the roof, painting our tin roof red. It was fabulous!

My teacher read my story, and said, "I'll have to come and have a look. I only live just around the corner." She literally did, merely a dozen houses away, and I died a slow death knowing that if she hadn't already, then she would find me out.

Little did I know then that you could get paid for inventing stories...

(Love your inventiveness, Trish, even if surprised (and disappointed) there was no rooftop romance.)

So, despite this demonstrated ability to tell a very fine story, you both pursued another career path entirely...

Marion: Trish and I come from very similar backgrounds—I was a stats lecturer, she was an accountant. Therefore we're dry, dusty number crunchers, right? So the way to get where we are is crunch those numbers, work out the probability of getting a book published—and then do what we did, ignore probability completely, don't even think about superannuation, and dive right in. However I do think my background makes my plotting easier—I'm logical and methodical and I can't bear plot holes.

Trish: Marion's right, dry'n'dusty'r'us! Actually, the wonderful thing about an accounting background is it's just so creative, it's the perfect breeding ground for writing fiction. ☺ Plus, in accounting, everything has to reconcile and balance in the end, much like needing to get your hero and heroine to overcome their conflicts to get to their HEA. It might sound weird, but like Marion said, I'm sure that number crunching background helps.

And your first romance? (Trish, did yours feature an Italian boss?)

Trish: LOL. Gosh no, my first submission was called "Headlong into Love" because my heroine was doing her first jump and her parachute landed over the hero's sports car, the same guy who turns out to be her new boss come Monday. I wish I had thought about making him an Italian boss. Maybe I might have sold earlier. Although, given my fabulous premise, maybe not...

Marion: Mine was a medical when the current med line was Doctor Nurse Romances. Only I didn't even know there were different lines, so I wrote a lovely long romance about a female doctor being sent to a logging camp in the wilds of Tasmania. It hit my editor's desk just as she was thinking you know what, there are more medical romances than just Doctor Nurse. 20,000 slashed words later and the rest is history. I was incredibly lucky.

I'm sure there's a lesson in there, about editors always finding a place for a brilliant talent and voice. Do you think that's still the case or have the guidelines tightened even more? What is your best advice for members wanting to write for Harlequin?

Marion: After being accepted for the medical line, and with Helen Bianchin as my heroine ☺ I spent years trying to write what we now know as a Presents type romance. (Back in the olden days, there was no differentiating between Sweet and Sexy.) They all bounced, with comments like too much humour, too many minor characters, too much plot. So I tried to get rid of the things I love and got nowhere. It was only on reading Lauryn Chandler's Rita winning *Oh Baby*—Harlequin 1994—that I thought dammit there is a market for the books I



want to write, and I let my voice have its way without trying to fit into what I perceived 'they' wanted. *McAlister's Baby* was picked up straight away and I haven't looked back.

Voice is the only thing that differentiates me—and you—from the thousands of submissions that cross an editor's desk. Believe in your voice and actively nurture it.

Trish: What Marion said. ☺

Earlier you both referred to the depth of the talent pool in our part of the world... Do you have a theory on why so many Downunder authors write such wonderful books?

Marion: We have a powerful assembly of Downunder authors who've made it internationally with very different writing styles, but whatever style we write, we know where to find respect, encouragement and mentoring. The voluntary nature of RWA never ceases to take my breath away—the generosity of spirit that sees us getting stronger and stronger as an international romance voice.

There is also a tiny thought that most Aussie blokes wouldn't be caught dead serenading their lady from under a balcony—and we need to get our romance somewhere.

Trish: Too true! If I can add one more thing, I think our international success is a bit like the way Aussie food has developed, if that makes sense. We have the climate in which to grow the best produce and we have the pick of the best from cuisines around the world at our fingertips, whether it be Mexican, Chinese, Thai, Greek, Italian, good old English pub fare or whatever. We really have a global palate.

It's the same with our reading/movie/telly fare. We have the pick of the best in the world and I really believe that helps writers Downunder to achieve that sought after "global voice". And by global voice, I mean a voice that will work with readers all around the world. Harlequin publishes in more than thirty languages worldwide and they really want to find authors whose voices can transcend borders and work in any language.

I know you've not been resting on your laurels but working hard to keep your fans happy with more fabulous stories. Tell us about your current/upcoming releases...

Marion: I did bite off a wee bit more than I could chew last year. Firstly I decided to write my three part *Marrying His Majesty* series. Then I was asked to be part of the Karedes Royal series for Presents—and wow, how could I say no? I slid in a medical—I love my medical readers—and then... well, my Christmas Anthology with Anne Stuart and Tina Leonard was

another I couldn't say no to. Brides, bodies, missing diamonds, killers on the run, a wounded cop disguised as Santa Claus, a shoot up in a wedding chapel in Dallas (Oooh, that was me and I loved it!!!) We managed to tie the three books together into a fabulous messy, wonderful Christmas triple romance—*Her Christmas Hero*—and we still grin every time we think about it.

It was all great fun but it means I have six books released in four months this year—and afterwards I needed a wee lie down. ☺

Trish: While Marion's having a wee rest, I'll mention the October Bestsellers Collection featuring two of my earlier stories, *Stolen by the Sheikh* and *For Revenge...Or Pleasure?*, one of my favourites. (Marion's got an October Bestseller Collection out too, featuring her R♥BY winning title, *His Island Bride* plus another, but she couldn't fit it in.)

Then in March 2010, watch out for *His Mistress for a Million*, in which a lowly Aussie backpacker slash cleaner in a dodgy London hotel, gets whisked off to Santorini to play mistress to a gorgeous Greek tycoon. For a million dollars? Who wouldn't say yes?

Marion Lennox, Current & Upcoming Releases

A Special Kind Of Family, HM&B Medical, Sept. Bestseller Collection: *His Island Bride* (2009 R♥BY winner), *In Dr Darling's Care*, Sweet, Oct. *Her Christmas Hero*: HMB Special Release Anthology, Oct.

Claimed: Secret Royal Son, Sweet, Oct. *Betrothed: To The People's Prince*, Sweet, Nov. *Crowned: The Palace Nanny*, Sweet, Dec.

Trish Morey, Current & Upcoming Releases

The Italian Boss's Mistress Of Revenge (2009 R♥BY winner), The Best Love Stories of 2009 Anthology, Sept. *The Ruthless Greek's Virgin Princess*, Sexy, Sept. Bestseller Collection: *The Mancini Marriage Bargain*, *For Revenge...Or Pleasure?*, Sexy, Oct. *Stolen By The Sheikh*, HM&B The Sheikh Collection Bk 2, Nov.

His Mistress For A Million, Sexy, March 2010.

All available from www.millsandboon.com.au



RWA moves forward into Social Networking

In a bid to help promote both our association and our members, the web team have joined a number of social networks. From Twitter to Facebook, Goodreads to Shelfari, we are working hard to publicize our members' recent releases, debut novels and soon to be released novels. You can find us on the following networks:

Bebo: <http://www.bebo.com/rwaaustralia>

Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/nyzp57>

Goodreads: <http://www.goodreads.com/rwaaustralia>

MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/rwaaustralia>

Shelfari: <http://www.shelfari.com/rwaaustralia>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/RWAus>

If you haven't been to visit our blog <http://romanceaustralia.wordpress.com/> drop by and read our Author Spotlights, Craft Articles, Blog Bites and member's news and updates.

Happy Net Surfing
Sandie & the social media team

Birthing Books After Babies:

Nicola Marsh

Nic, you sold your first novel while pregnant with your first baby. Do you even vaguely remember how life was then?

I do remember, but it's a bit surreal... What did I do with all that time? Mind you, I was working full time as a physiotherapist and writing at weekends and nights, so it isn't all that different to now. Except the tiredness factor, which has escalated tenfold!

First book on shelves, getting that baby out—is it a fair comparison?

Considering they were only months apart, a fair comparison indeed! Though strolling into the shops and seeing my book on the shelf for the first time was a tad less painful than the other birthing process. ☺

How soon did you get back to writing after birth? Did your head feel the same? How could you drum up romance, keep it alive, when your life revolved around this new little person?

Hmm... At the risk of sounding absolutely mad, I wrote 2 books in the first 2 months after I gave birth. Maybe I was high on hormones, maybe it was all the free time I had to actually write (newborns nap a lot and I was used to writing in snatches), but those words poured out. As for drumming up romance... I think staring at a gorgeous little bub all day, cuddling him, caring for him, made me feel like I could do anything in the world. The writing just seemed to flow.

The fatigue factor affects mums, and not just mums of babies. It's hard to feel romantic while you're taking care of a household, raising a family and oh, that's right, writing as a job to pay bills and not just fluffing around with a hobby as some

friends and family think! That said, I think it's important to keep romance alive - in between propping open your eyes with matchsticks.

Personally, Hubby and I may not see much of each other these days, but we always have a quick quip or a light

touch to keep us smiling. He thinks it's okay now, as long as I become the next Nora Roberts and can keep him in the style to which he wishes to be accustomed later (his quote, not mine!)



Since you've sold, you've had 2 babies, published 21 books and ended up as a cover girl in India. Can you tell us how that happened? Is it hard to reconcile the glamorous public persona with what's happening behind the scenes?

You don't think I look glamorous all the time? In full make-up, fab clothes, immaculately coiffed hair, sitting at my computer every night belting out words? ☺

When I do library talks or attend conferences, I often wonder what people would think if they saw my 'working outfit' of PJs, old comfy pink fluffy robe and fuzzy flippers (oops, my secret's out!)

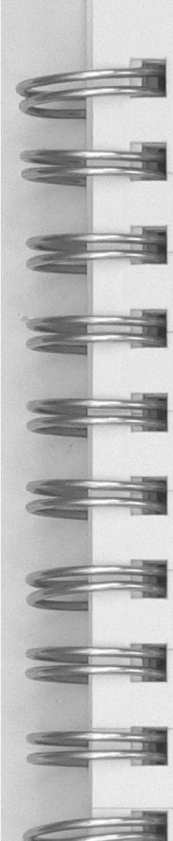
I really enjoy the laid-back, comfortable working from home aspect of writing, yet adore slipping into my 'author face' (as hubby calls it) when I'm out for work. I think it's part of the fun.

As for being an Indian cover girl, it was all rather coincidental. Harlequin Mills and Boon was launching in India and I was approached for several newspaper interviews. An editor of an Anglo-Indian magazine (my background) saw me and asked for an interview. I agreed, not knowing I'd be on the cover of the magazine, which was distributed to countries like the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Singapore and UAE!

And then baby number two... Rumour has it you've had little sleep with both bubs but you've kept on writing. How much harder is it when you have baby plus toddler?

Ah...the rumours would be true! Both my gorgeous boys had eczema so they scratched themselves silly at night. Sleep was limited, but compared to what some mums have to deal with, I count myself lucky. Besides, I can always catch up on those years of sleep later, right? ☺





Life is certainly more hectic writing with a toddler and a baby, but in a routine with one child, the rest fitted in. I was already a night writer with first bub, so nothing changed.

All you writers out there saying 'I'll write my novel when I have time... words of advice, Nic?'

Honestly? You'll never have the time unless you make it, which involves sacrifices.

Whether sacrificing sleep by getting up an hour before the family or working late after they're in bed, sacrificing your favourite TV shows, sacrificing regular coffee catch-ups with the girls, you need to find that time somewhere. I do all these things and at times it's a pain, but then I look at each completed book and I'm beyond satisfied.

The kids are now 5 & 2. Is life getting easier?

Life is very structured, what with school runs and volunteering at school and doing the rest of the stuff mums do. With an active 2

year old, I spend my day running around after him. I love my life, I wouldn't have it any other way. My writing schedule hasn't changed much

since I had the first baby as, when I'm with my kids, I devote my time to them. So it's writing early morning, during naps and late at night when they're asleep. I'm assuming it'll get easier when the youngest is at school and I can work 'regular' hours. And get more sleep! And watch more TV! Yay!

Nicola Marsh currently writes for Harlequin Mills and Boon Romance & Modern Heat/Presents series, has published 21 books and sold over 1.5 million copies worldwide. She's a Neilson Bookscan & Waldenbooks bestseller, has finalised in several awards including the prestigious HOLT Medallion, Booksellers' Best, Golden Quill, Laurel Wreath, More than Magic and won several CataRomance Reviewers' Choice Awards. She blogs daily and loves to hear from readers. For more information about her books, visit www.nicolamarsh.com



Clayton's Conference

Clayton's Fun in our PJs

By Sandie Hudson

While RWA members attended the national conference in Brisbane (14th to 16th August), many of us at home enjoyed the 2009 Clayton's Conference—the online alternative. With an unprecedented number of members signed up for a weekend of fun and educational writing challenges, author chats and workshops, it was a great success with a fabulous line-up of presenters: Anne Whitfield, Diane Curran, Fran Tann, Heather Brown, Joanna Challis, Rhian Cahill, Valerie Parv, and Zana Bell. Each gave freely of their time and industry knowledge to share their perspective of the romance writing industry.

Clayton's Conference participants networked over the weekend, making new friends as well as tackling a range of interesting writing challenges, with prizes awarded to those who participated in the challenges. This year, each Clayton's Conference participant also received a goodie bag.

While as a writer I deal with words

all day long, I cannot think of any that adequately show (*not tell*) my appreciation to those who so generously donated to the giveaway and prize pool. Our sincere thanks to the RWA members who donated novels, bookmarks, magnets, postcards and bag fillers.

2009 was the year of the Inaugural Clayton's Conference Awards night. Thank you to Nikki and Kiki in Brisbane who Twittered each announcement so those of us at home could share in the celebration, while having our own fun and excitement announcing the winners from seven challenge categories.

For those who haven't visited the new RWA blog <http://romanceaustralia.wordpress.com> here are the winners (placegetters are also listed on the blog):

It's Hot in Here (Best First Kiss):

1st Heather Brown

Fractured Fairy Tale:

1st Jenn McLeod

Do It Already (Sexual Tension):

1st Dana Scully

The Synopsis Award:

1st Julie-Ann Carter

Most Ludicrous Romance Plot:

1st Neely Lyon

Best Cover: 1st (below) Sue Thompson

Best PJ Shot: 1st Dana Scully

As coordinator of the 2009 Clayton's Conference, I'd like to thank my partners in crime—Diane Curran and Rhian Cahill—for their help and support over the weekend. To the Clayton's members—a big thank you for joining in the chats and challenges.

To the RWA members who donated time and/or prizes—you have shown what big and beautiful hearts you all have. Until next year—yes I will be back.





The Emerald Award

A Jewel in RWA's Contest Calendar Crown

If that publishing contract is proving rather elusive you've only got a few weeks to brush up your manuscript in readiness for the Emerald Contest 2010 which will potentially give six unpublished writers the opportunity to have their full manuscript read by either a top editor or agent.

As one of the premier contests for unpublished writers in the RWA calendar, the Emerald Award is unique in that it is the only one to emulate the submission process. Writers are advised not to enter unless they have a complete manuscript because even though only the first three chapters are submitted for round one judging, should their entry proceed to round two then the full manuscript would have to be sent in within a few days.

Kylie Short, who writes as Kylie Griffin, has entered the Emerald every year since it began. She says, 'I can't express how much I value the Emerald and it being a full manuscript competition. Putting a whole book out there for feedback is a whole different ball game to submitting three chapters and a synopsis. And designing the Emerald so that it mirrors the submission process really does prepare you for "the real thing".'

Over the years she's been entering the Emerald (and the Emma Darcy before that), she's seen a huge change in the quality and quantity of feedback made on score sheets to the point where now the majority of judges make constructive criticism on things like punctuation and grammar, plot elements, character development, craft and style feedback etc. Says Kylie, 'I really, really appreciated those who gave a balance of comments—specifics on what worked well and what needed improving.' This year Kylie, in a remarkable feat, had her three entries all reach the finals and ultimately win second, third and fourth places.

For entrant Monique Wood, having reader judges works well. 'The feedback I received was extremely useful. The readers were able to appreciate the entry for the story/characters, and weren't overly focused on craft/structure/technical elements. It's like having a non-writing friend or family member read your manuscript, but the bonus is the reader is anonymous, so they can't be biased!'

The inaugural Emerald Award kicked off in 2005 to replace the Emma Darcy Award. When Emma Darcy launched the Emma Darcy Award early in the 1990's she had a threefold aim, to: emulate the entry process; get novice writers to finish their book; and get feedback from the target audience—readers rather than fellow writers. In pre-internet days, it also provided Australian and New Zealand writers, disadvantaged by being half a world away, with a valuable foot in the door with publishers.

The Emerald still retains many of the characteristics of the Emma Darcy: the full manuscript is required for round two, judges are still readers rather than writers but now the Emerald is split into two sections, category and single title to cater for the diverse range of work being produced

by RWA's growing membership. Each section has its own manager—Bev Lewis for the category section and Debbie Cox for the single title section.

What does it mean to win this contest? CC Coburn, winner of the inaugural Emerald Contest in the single title category, was headhunted by Dr. Glen Thomas to join his Masters in Writing program at Queensland University of Technology. This led to CC applying and being awarded a Career Development Grant of \$5000 from Arts Queensland to attend the Romance Writers of America national conference in 2008. It was there CC received "the call" in person from Harlequin Senior Executive Editor, Paula Eykelhof and Kathleen Schreiberling, Editor of Harlequin American Romance.

Winner of the 2006 category section was Rachel Robinson who went onto repeat her victory in 2007 and now writes for Silhouette Desire as Rachel Bailey. 'Both Emerald wins were instrumental in my writing career,' she says. Among the benefits, they garnered her direct feedback from editors and made for a stronger query letter to her now agent. 'Obviously, I'm a fan of the Emerald!'

For 2007 single title winner, Melanie Scott, winning the award gave her valuable confirmation she was doing something right. Says Melanie, 'The book that won the Emerald was my first try at a single title length story and also a change from the contemporaries I'd been writing to urban fantasy, so I wasn't at all sure of what I was doing.'

Frances Maslen, winner of the 2008 category section believes entering competitions is well worth the effort. She says, 'Judges often put so much effort into their feedback and it's a great way to get a fresh perspective on something you, as the writer, can no longer see with fresh eyes. Even if the comments don't lead to changes in the manuscript, I had comments that reduced me to tears because they were so kind, and what better feeling can there be than reading that someone you don't even know really, really loved your story?'

Carolyn Comito, winner of the 2008 single title section, agrees that the feedback she received was invaluable. 'It was wonderful to know that real readers of the genre connected with my story and one even contacted me privately via the contest coordinator to say how much she enjoyed my entry. Winning the Emerald was definitely a highlight in my writing career,' she says.

The Emerald Award opens 16 Oct & closes 27 Nov 2009.

For entry forms: www.romanceaustralia.com

Emerald Winners:

2009 Single Title: AJ Macpherson **Category:** Helen Lacey

2008 Single Title: Carolyn Comito **Category:** Frances Maslen

2007 Single Title: Melanie Scott **Category:** Rachel Robinson/Bailey

2006 Single Title: CC Coburn **Category:** Rachel Robinson/Bailey

Hot August Nights Report



What an absolutely fantastic time was had by all in Brisbane last month! RWA's 18th annual conference lived up to its name proving to be hot, hot, hot—and that wasn't just the gorgeous warm winter weather!!

This year we had unprecedented demand and had to close registrations much earlier than it was ever anticipated.

130 delegates attended the Friday workshop. 242 attended the conference proper. 252 frocked up for the spectacular Harlequin Arabian Nights Cocktail Party and an amazing 218 attended our gala event, the annual Awards Dinner. There was a total of 114 pitches and over 70 newbies.

Our international guests—Mary Jo Putney, Mary-Theresa Hussey and Melissa Jeglinski—delighted one and all with personal insights, unflagging enthusiasm and the odd request or two. It was also wonderful to see Clare Forster, our Aussie agent and Annette Barlow from Allen & Unwin give so unstintingly of their time.

I think it's fair to say that moving away from the plenary style of previous conferences and offering a more workshop intensive programme was very successful as was the round table set-ups which seemed to promote interaction and friendliness as well as providing everyone with a place to sit as they ate. The Sebel and Citigate location was superb—smack bang in the middle of the city and their staff were simply marvelous.

The Awards Dinner rates a very special mention. This

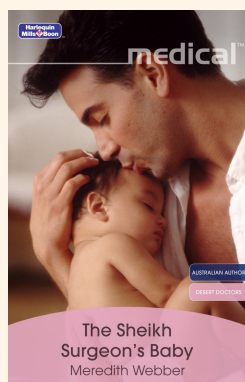


year we went multi-media and the results were spectacular. Thanks to Robyn Grady for being our hostess with the mostest and to Tina Clarke whose wonderful PowerPoint presentation added a touch of sparkle and a whiff of Hollywood to our night of nights.

My thanks also go to the wonderful team of volunteers without whom the conference would not have happened—Meredith Webber, Louise Ousby, Lisa Barry and Denise Rossetti. Also thanks to Fiona Gregory, Roseanne Smiles and Wendy Nichols. And to all the others—from the husbands who helped with pitch timing to the team of "ants" who helped with the bag stuffing and gift wrapping. And to all our sponsors from the continued support of Harlequin right down to the many individuals who donated gifts.

And of course to the delegates who make a conference so memorable. Thanks for the company and for the many, many words of thanks and praise you gave the team over the weekend—it means a lot to know our hard work is appreciated.

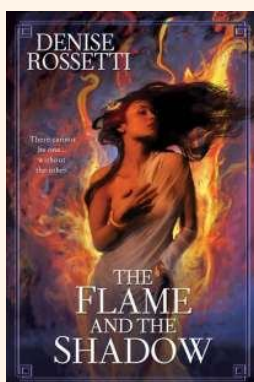
I look forward to seeing you all again at Coogee in 2010.



2008 Cover Contest

Winners as voted by the delegates at Hot August Nights.

Long Novel:
Denise Rossetti,
The Flame and the Shadow



Short Novel:
3-way tie
Meredith Webber,
The Sheikh Surgeon's Baby
Meredith Webber,
Desert Doctor, Secret Sheikh



Abby Gaines,
The Diaper Diaries



2009 ROMA Award

Romance in the Media

Winner:

(Print) **Lisa Chant & Michelle McLochlan** of The Weekender Sunshine Coast Publishing Pty. Ltd. (22/1/2009) "*True Romantic*"



Finalists:

(TV) **Evelyn Ek** (Segment Producer) **Kim Watkins, Steven Quartermain** (presenters) 9am with David and Kim, Channel 10 Friday 8th May 2009 "*Interview with Anne Gracie*"

(Print) **Margaret Burin**, Williamstown Advertiser, 21/1/09 "*Novel Way to Woo Readers.*"

(Print) **Fiona Purdon**, The Courier Mail, Brisbane 19/07/09 "*Fans Thirsty for Blood.*"

We'd like to introduce you to Helen Lacey, the winner of the 2009 Emerald (category section).

Helen Lacey

This month's Spotlight is on the lovely Helen Lacey who won the Emerald in the category section. Helen will long be remembered for her honest, shocked and funny acceptance speech at the conference. I donned my Larry King suspenders, slicked back my hair and got down to business.

Can you tell us a little about yourself and where you live?

I live on the glorious Fraser Coast in sunny Queensland. My husband and I had a sea change a couple of years ago and moved from Brisbane and now have our own business (I previously worked as a retail manager for 20 years). I run the administrative side of things so am now at home during the day.

How do you balance writing and working?

I really like to write at night between 9pm and about 1 am. I think because it's so quiet and there's just me, my story, the odd bellow of a cow or neigh of a horse and the sound of ocean coming through my office window.

Who are you targeting?

Silhouette Special Edition

Where do you get your story ideas from?

I get my ideas from everywhere—songs, movies, magazines, people in the street, people I know—just from life I guess. I'm always on the look out for ideas, always wondering about people's lives and why people react to things the way they do.

How long have you been a member of RWA?

Seventeen years.

Your writing plans for next year?

Just to keep writing and keep submitting.



How long did it take you to finish your Emerald award winning manuscript and where did the story idea come from?

My Emerald MS was about book number twenty—which sounds like a lot but I sent my first submission to M&B in 1987, so really that's less than one a year.

This MS took just three months to write—a first for me. I woke up at 2am with an idea and it just rushed out. I knew I wanted to have a single dad hero and horses in my story, because horses are such a big part of my life and I married a single dad—so I guess the idea came from what I know.

Your last meal would be?

Probably some type of pasta

Your favourite part of this year's conference?

I only got to the awards dinner this year—so I guess that was my favourite part.

If you could do one thing over what would it be?

I wouldn't have gotten that Flock Of Seagulls haircut in the 80's.

Words of wisdom from your mother growing up?

A true friend will always tell you when you have spinach in your teeth!

If you could invite a group of people—from any time period—to dinner, who would you invite?

Jane Austen, Louisa May Alcott, James Cameron, Neil Armstrong & Louise Cusack (Who'd slap me around the head if I had a party with Neil Armstrong and didn't invite her too!)

Growing up you wanted to...

Be a writer, ride my horse at the Olympics, be taller.

Do you belong to a critique group? Face to face or remote?

I belong to the most wonderful writing support group and we've been together for nearly eighteen years.

With the amazing Helen Bianchin, CC Coburn, Louise Cusack, Lesley Millar and Noela Cowell, I feel incredibly fortunate to have the support and friendship of this outstanding and talented group of women.

We still get together every 1–2 months and spend the day talking about our work, sharing ideas etc.

Any tips for members wanting to enter the Emerald next year?

Just to write the best book you can and trust in it enough to put it out there.

What now for your manuscript?

My MS is with an editor at the moment, so I'm just waiting for a response and getting on with the next story.

Favourite Authors?

Jane Austen, Ruth Wind, Virginia Andrews, Christine Rimmer, Du Maurier, Winston Graham.

Coming soon: watch out for our Spotlight on AJ Macpherson, the winner of the 2009 Emerald (Single Title).

Send your news and releases to: HTgoodnews@romanceaustralia.com by the 15th of the previous month. Please note that new releases will only be featured once, so authors may choose whether that's their Australian, overseas, digital or print release.

Member News

THE SALES:

Astrid Cooper had work accepted in Allen & Unwin anthology *In Search Of Angels*, with a Oct 2009 release.

Annie West sold her 11th title to HMB. *Scandal: His Majesty's Love Child* will be a 2010 release, as part of a continuity. Also writing for the continuity are RWA's **Trish Morey** & **Carol Marinelli**.

THE REVIEWS:

Kate Loveday's *An Independent Woman* has received a five star review from AussieAuthors.com.

THE LISTS:

Anne Gracie's *To Catch A Bride* hit the top 10 Barnes & Noble romance mass market bestsellers list.

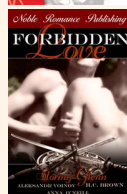
Borders Group Series Bestsellers during Aug/Sept:

- #1 **Marion Lennox** *The Prince's Captive Wife*
- #3 **Miranda Lee** *The Billionaire's Bride Of Vengeance*
- #5 **Melanie Milburne** *Bound By The Marcolini Diamonds*
- #6 **Paula Roe** *The Magnate's Baby Promise*
- #7 **Robyn Donald** *Innocent Mistress, Royal Wife*
- #9 **Nicola Marsh** *Two Weeks In The Magnate's Bed*
- #9 **Trish Morey** *The Ruthless Greek's Virgin Princess*

Member New Releases



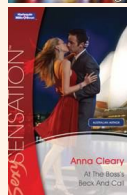
Ally Blake
GETTING RED-HOT WITH
THE ROGUE
HMB Sexy Sensation



Heather Brown
FORBIDDEN LOVE
(Historical M/M Anthology)
Noble Romance Publishing



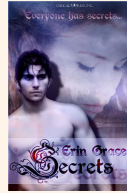
Rhian Cahill
SINGAPORE FLING
Noble Romance Publishing



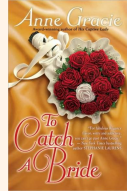
Anna Cleary
AT THE BOSS'S BECK AND
CALL
HMB Sexy Sensation



Robyn Donald
RICH, RUTHLESS AND
SECRETLY ROYAL
HMB Sexy



Erin Grace
SECRETS
Lyrical Press Inc



Anne Gracie
TO CATCH A BRIDE
Berkley Sensation



Robyn Grady
THE BILLIONAIRE'S FAKE
ENGAGEMENT
Silhouette Desire



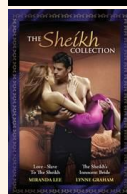
Anna Hackett
TAKEN BY THE SOUTH
WIND
Nocturne Bites



Barbara Hannay
EXPECTING MIRACLE
TWINs
HMB Sweet



Erica Hayes
SHADOWFAE
St Martin's Press



Miranda Lee
LOVE SLAVE TO THE
SHIEK
HMB Continuities



Marion Lennox
CLAIMED: SECRET ROYAL
SON
HMB Sweet



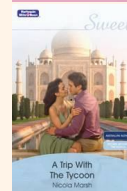
Marion Lennox
HIS ISLAND BRIDE/IN
DOCTOR DARLINGS CARE
HMB Bestseller Collection



Marion Lennox
CANDY CANES AND
CROSSFIRE
in HER CHRISTMAS HERO
HMB Anthology



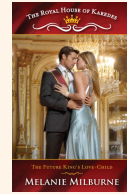
Carol Marinelli
SECRET SHEIK, SECRET
BABY
HMB Sweet



Nicola Marsh
A TRIP WITH THE
TYCOON
HMB Sweet



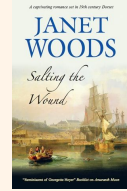
Fiona McArthur
PREGNANT WIFE,
FATHER NEEDED
HMB Medical



Melanie Milburne
THE FUTURE KING'S
LOVE CHILD
HMB Continuities



Trish Morey
THE MANCINI MARRIAGE
BARGAIN/FOR REVENGE
OR PLEASURE?
HMB Bestseller Collection



Janet Woods
SALTING THE WOUND
Severn House



Sagas: UK Style

By Anna Jacobs

WHAT IS A SAGA?

In the UK, sagas are a clearly defined and very popular historical genre with its own shelving in bookshops. They're not usually generational stories but are more like the old Norse sagas. Protagonists, especially the heroines, battle against overwhelming odds—and win, thus providing an uplifting tale of personal triumph.

I would call sagas romantic fiction, not pure romances. Basic elements include:

- working class woman (or women) battling the odds
- very carefully researched historical background, especially of working class life
- regional focus
- central romance (often sub-plots also include romances)
- a complex story with several sub-plots, often leading to several books in a series
- happy ending

HISTORICAL DETAIL

Saga author Jean Fullerton says: 'The historical detail in a good saga is almost a character in its own right. Fans of the genre tell me time and time again how much they love reading about everyday things that they either remember as a child or that their mothers told them about. If I want to give my readers the maximum enjoyment out of my books, which I do, then I have to work hard to ensure that all my period detail is spot on.'

I agree with Jean. I have a wall of research books, folders full of notes and other research storage and retrieval systems. It's not enough to nip on the Internet to check a fact. You have to be sure of the historical background and tone behind that fact.

RWA Saga Authors:

Anna Jacobs
Anne Whitfield
Janet Woods

Authors are not giving history lessons, but slip in the history smoothly as part of the story background. It's how daily life

was lived that's important: cooking, clothes, pastimes, work.

Benita Brown says, 'sagas are linked to the past by the memories of generations of the readers' own families. Of course there is romance in them but also so much more: birth, love, ambition, success, tragedy, death, the whole of life!'

That's why they're so enjoyable to write!

HEROINES

The heroine usually starts off poor and vulnerable, though rags to riches stories are popular. Catherine Cookson's early books were ground-breaking, because until then the middle and upper classes had dominated fiction for a long time.

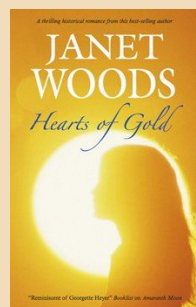
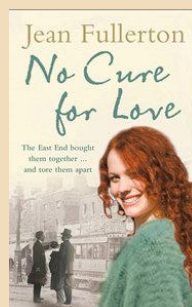
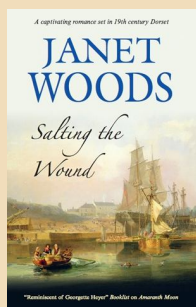
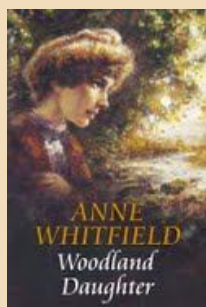
Janet Woods says, 'I often write my main female characters from a young age. For instance, in my current release *Hearts Of Gold* the heroine is fourteen when she's left destitute on an Australian goldfield. It's a hook that draws instant reader sympathy, and one that wouldn't fit easily into a pure romance.'

HEROES

There is more latitude with heroes than heroines, but many of them are working class too, very rarely upper class. Even if they're alpha males, it's not they who dominate the story, it's the heroine. But they can form wonderful partnerships with the heroines to beat the odds stacked against them. I love the freedom to create any sort of hero to suit a particular story.

COMPLEX PLOTS

Most sagas are complex, with several sub-plots. They're usually told "herringbone fashion" with plot threads, characters and POVs alternating. (NB this does not mean 'head hopping'!) As a reader, I sometimes wonder how it'll all come together, but it always does in the end. As a writer, I find it stimulating to keep so many plot threads alive and weave them together into an inevitable and



compelling conclusion.

Jean Fullerton says, 'They are multi-layered stories that affirm women of all ages as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters, and are absolutely packed with adventure, intrigue and painstakingly researched period detail.'

THE ROMANCE ELEMENT

There is always a romance at the heart of a saga. Indeed, my first visualizations of the plot are of the heroine's story and then the hero's, and how they get together. They might not be together at the start, but they move steadily towards deep involvement.

Sagas are not usually graphic sexually and I think most of my readers would recoil from that, but I've seen many wonderful love scenes that make you sigh with the pleasure and rightness of the pair-bonding.

In addition, sagas offer great emotional depth, what my editor calls 'heart'. If I don't bring tears to my own eyes several times when I'm writing a story (both happy and sad tears) then I don't consider it good enough.

HISTORICAL PERIODS

Most sagas these days are set in the twentieth century, with fewer in the nineteenth century. The genre has been dominated by World War II stories for a decade or so, with a fair sprinkling of WWI stories (which I prefer writing). But authors seem to be moving on now to the post-war period. I've written sagas set from 1760 (*Like No Other*) to 1926 (*Freedom's Land*) so far.

REGIONAL SETTINGS

Sagas tend to have strong regional UK settings. Indeed, authors usually specialize in a certain area. I started by writing books set in Lancashire because I grew up there. When I want to include dialect, I only have to remember how my grandma spoke. However, once I was established, I started setting sagas in Australia, where I now live, and these have sold well, too.

CLOG AND SHAWL SAGAS

Sagas set in the northern industrial areas of England (e.g. Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland) were originally the most popular of all and have become known as 'clog and shawl sagas' or 'trouble at the mill' tales. However, the genre has broadened its base considerably since then.

LENGTHS

Most sagas are at least 100,000 words long, but I think they're shorter on average than they used to be. My contracts now ask for stories 'of at least 100,000 words', where they used to ask for '120,000 words'.

MARKETS

The genre has been selling really well in the UK for decades. I notice that Harlequin UK has put out one or two sagas recently and Penguin Australia has just released one. The genre is not hitting the heights of popularity at the moment, but the main authors are still selling solidly. (My editor approves of this market summary, by the way.)

UK Editor Says:

Comment from an editor who handles several top UK saga authors

The most important thing in a saga is heart—readers look to sagas to be inspired by characters they can believe in, and care about, and weep for. The ability to do this is a gift and not everyone can do it, but it's the single most important thing I want to see. The other things I look for before I even consider taking on a book add up to: excellent writing; believable dialogue; controlled and vivid descriptions, a gripping plot.

Not that research and accuracy aren't absolutely essential. Readers aren't idiots—they know lots of history, either because they've visited museums and historic houses, or because they've read lots of books. If a novel is set relatively recently, a reader could well have been there and remember it well, or could have listened to someone of the right age describe how things were, in the world wars or the depression for instance. A reader who spots a mistake stops believing in the whole story, so there mustn't be any if at all possible. Good saga writers are good historians, and great saga writers write historical novels every bit as accurate and ambitious as writers who are labelled 'historical novelists'.

Sagas can be set anywhere. They usually have a British connection—but often, some of a novel's settings are colonial or European or American, or take some of the characters to wars (World Wars I and II especially, but I've also published books with Boer War and Crimean War scenes).

THE DISADVANTAGES

I see two main disadvantages to writing sagas. Firstly, it's not as easy to sell foreign language rights – presumably because sagas have such a regional 'English' flavour. It is, however, easy to sell large print and audio rights. Secondly, it's not easy to sell to the US because editors at the publishing houses there seem to think sagas won't sell. This attitude is surprising because LaVyrle Spencer's 'Morning Glory' is an archetypal saga in format, as well as being a brilliant story. It just isn't labelled a 'saga'.

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM THIS GENRE

Whether you want to write sagas or not, I think there's a lot to be learned from reading and studying them. There is a skill to writing complex plots, creating realistic historical backgrounds and plumbing great emotional depth.

Anna Jacobs grew up in the UK, in industrial Lancashire, and emigrated to Western Australia in 1973. Her 46th novel, *Freedom's Land* was published in July. You can visit her at: www.annajacobs.com





Send your events to: HTevents@romanceaustralia.com by the 15th of the month prior to your event.

In Person Events

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

@ Sunday 11 October

The Opportunities of Romance Fiction ~ Anne Gracie

When: 10.00am--4.00pm

Where: NSW Writers' Centre

Cost: \$85 MC, \$99 M, \$125 NM

FMI + Bookings:

www.nswwriterscentre.org.au/ OR
workshops@nswwriterscentre.org.au

@ Sundays 18, 25 Oct, 1, 8, 15 & 22 Nov

World Building using Real History ~ Gillian Polack

When: 1.00pm--4.00pm

Where: ACT Writers' Centre

Cost: \$270 M, \$216 MC, \$320 NM

FMI + Bookings:

[www.actwriters.org.au/
workshops09.html#World_building_](http://www.actwriters.org.au/workshops09.html#World_building_using_real_history)
[using_real_history](http://www.actwriters.org.au/workshops09.html#World_building_using_real_history)

OR (02) 6262 9191

@ Saturday 24 October

Polishing for Publication ~ Wendy James

When: 10.00am--4.00pm

Where: New England Writers' Centre

Cost: \$55 M, \$60 NM

FMI + Bookings:

[http://users.northnet.com.au/
~newc/](http://users.northnet.com.au/~newc/)

OR (02) 6772 7210 OR e-mail

newc@northnet.com.au

@ Thursday 29 October

Publishers and Agents Seminar, Part 2 ~

Alexandra Payne & Gaby Naher

When: 6.30pm

Where: Queensland Writers' Centre

Seminar Room

Cost: \$65 M, \$55 MC, \$110 NM

FMI + Bookings:

[www.qwc.asn.au/ProgramsEvents/
Events/Seminars.aspx#publishers2](http://www.qwc.asn.au/ProgramsEvents/Events/Seminars.aspx#publishers2)

OR (07) 3839 1243

@ Wednesday 4 November

Synopsis Blues; Walk Out That Door ~ Sophie Cunningham

When: 5.30pm--7.00pm

Where: Byron Bay Community Centre

Cost: \$20 M, \$25 NM

FMI + Bookings: www.nrwc.org.au/

OR e-mail susie@nrwc.org.au

OR phone (02) 6685 5115.

@ Saturdays, 7, 14, 21, 28 Nov

Even More Awesome Foursome: a Deeper Look at the Building Blocks of Creative Writing ~ Valerie Parv

When: 1.00pm--4.00pm

Where: ACT Writers' Centre

Cost: \$200 M, \$184 MC, \$250 NM

FMI + Bookings:

[www.actwriters.org.au/
workshops09.html#Even_more_awesome_foursome:_a_deeper](http://www.actwriters.org.au/workshops09.html#Even_more_awesome_foursome:_a_deeper_look_at_the_building_blocks_of_creative_writing)

OR (02) 6262 9191

@ Love, Romance and Getting it Right

Isolde Martyn and the Turramurra Women's Fiction Group

When: 10.00am--4.00pm

Where: New South Wales Writers' Centre

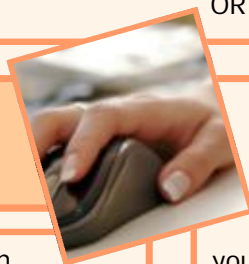
Cost: \$99 M, \$85 MC, \$125 NM

FMI + Bookings:

www.nswwriterscentre.org.au/

OR (02) 9555 9757

Online Events

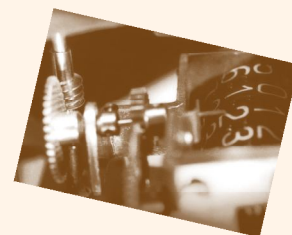


Julie Rowe, a 2006 Golden Heart double finalist, moderates the Announce Online Writing Classes list. The Announce Online Writing Classes list notifies subscribers of around 25 to 35 workshops available each month. Most tutorials are sponsored by Romance Writers of America chapters, but on occasion other reputable teachers are handpicked too.

Interested?

Subscribe by sending an e-mail to Announceonlinewritingclasses-subscribe@yahoo.com

Want to be in an RWA BIAW?



BIAW is a "Book in a Week" which means you set yourself a challenge for the number of words you want to write during that week and report your word count at the end of each day. Many members find it acutely motivating to have the support of meeting a challenge with others, and knowing you need to report your totals at the end of the day.

So why not have a go?

Upcoming BIAWs

5-11 October

2-8 November

30 Nov--6 December

Weekly Challenges 2000 word goal for the day every Monday except BIAW weeks.

Email pam@collings.id.au for more information or with your goal.

Contests!

RWA 2010 Contest dates

Selling Synopsis –
CLOSES October 9th - SO HURRY!!

Emerald -
opens Oct 16; CLOSES Nov 27, 2009

Little Gems (Topaz) -
opens Dec 18; CLOSES Jan 29, 2010
Little Gems Cover contest -
opens Dec 18; CLOSES Jan 29, 2010

First Kiss -
opens Jan 1;
CLOSES Feb
12, 2010

Valerie Parv
Award – opens
Feb 15; Closes
March 26, 2010

RBV will close
early Feb (date
to be advised)

The STALI and High Five contests have
already closed (25 Sept).

Closing Dates 2010 Contest Closing Dates

2009
9 Oct - Selling Synopsis
27 Nov – Emerald

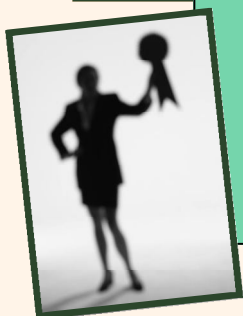
2010
29 Jan – Little Gems (Topaz)
29 Jan – Little Gems cover
12 Feb – First Kiss
26 Mar – Valerie Parv Award

Valerie Parv Award **Change to Entry Conditions**

The Valerie Parv Award is open to RWA members and non-members. This year there were almost 100 entries. To help with keeping the number of entries to a manageable level, it has been decided that each entrant shall be allowed to enter only 1 manuscript.

Stephie Smith has a great website listing all the American contests. Have a look at - www.stephiesmith.com/contests.html OR

Donna Caubareaux also has a blog where you can join a yahoo group contest alert. <http://contestdivas.blogspot.com/>



Other Writing Contests

If writing contests are your thing – there are enough to keep you busy for the entire year!

Some members, like Kylie Griffin, belong to Romance Writers of Australia, New Zealand and America. Kylie says, “For me, cross membership into RWNZ was for access to their writing competitions. RWA & RWNZ have very similar contests - for category & single title, partials & a synopsis as well as full manuscript. It gave me double the feedback and it gave me twice the chance to get in front of an editor or agent if I finalised.”



The RWNZ contests are similar to the RWAus ones and you need to be a member of RWNZ to enter.

Strictly Single (similar to the STALI and closing on 25th September 2009!)

HMB Great Beginnings (similar to the HMB High Five)

Clendon Award (similar to the Emerald Award)

Chapter Short Story (similar to the Little Gems)

Dates for the new contest year are not yet available, but keep an eye on the website if you're interested – Romance Writers NZ:

www.romancewriters.co.nz/

Romance Writers of America



ROMANCE WRITERS
OF AMERICA

RWAmerica have a pile of contests, some open to members only and others open to all. The two national contests are the RITA (for published romance fiction novels) and the Golden Heart (for unpublished fiction romance manuscripts).

For more information, go to www.rwanational.org/

Outside the Romance Industry a list of contests can be found on the websites of each State Writers' Centres –

NSW Writers' Centre www.nswwriterscentre.org.au

Qld Writers' Centre www.qwc.asn.au

WA Writers' Centre www.writerswritingwa.org

Vic Writers' Centre www.vwc.org.au

SA Writers' Centre www.sawriters.on.net

NT Writers' Centre www.ntwriters.com.au

Tas Writers' Centre www.tasmanianwriters.org

ACT Writers' Centre www.actwriters.org.au

There's also the FAW, who hold contests - Fellowship of Australian Writers

www.writers.asn.au



There's Something A-Tweet on the Web

By Kiki Lon



Personal websites, blogging, chat rooms. You've mastered the internet and are savvy on your promo. "Yes, but are you on Twitter?" someone asks and you're back to square one.

Is Twitter just another Facebook? Is it text messaging the web? And most importantly, do you need it?

The answer to the last one is simple. No, you don't need Twitter any more than you need a blog or Facebook account website. You can do just fine without them, and many do. But just as many people find tweeting, sending little messages via the Twitter client out into the world, fun and a great networking tool.

How can you get involved? I'm glad you asked.



What is Twitter?

Twitter (www.twitter.com) is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages known as tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to the author's subscribers.

If that sounds a lot like a cross-over between a text message and a Facebook update to you, you're on the right track. If the idea of broadcasting your life 140 characters at a time doesn't appeal to you, or you could care less about your friends' status updates, Twitter probably isn't the right tool for you.

If you love the idea of little bits of instant connection, however, here are a few tips to get the most out of your Twitter life.



How to become one of the Tweeples

First things first, get an account. You can't tweet without an account to do it on. Second, I'd recommend that you get a desktop client. There are several great options out there for both Mac and PC. TweetDeck for PC and Twitterific for the Mac are both highly recommended. They make sorting your Twitter friends into categories easier and help you keep track of who mentions you, too.

Once you're set up with your own Twitter username and have maybe customised your page with a photo, a link to your website and a short blurb, it's time to get following.

A great place to start is www.twitter.com/rwaus, RWA's official Twitter account. If you click on the 'Followers' link, you can find many of our authors who are already tweeting. By clicking on the 'follow' button next to their names, you can follow them, too.



Next Steps

Once you've sent and read your first few tweets, you might see a few things that will still confuse you.

When you send a message with @username at the beginning, it's understood that your message is intended for that specific user, but all your followers can still see the tweet.

To send a friend a private tweet, use the Direct command: d username message.

Messages can be forwarded as well. This is known as Re-Tweeting, RT for short. Usually, the original sender of the message will be included, i.e. RT @username.

tags are used to topic tag a message. These range from the silly to serious and help people search for specific news items across Twitter. Try searching for #rwaus09 to see all the tweets sent in regards to RWA's conference in Brisbane this year.



Advanced Twitter

Once you've set yourself up on Twitter and are comfortable with the basics, you are ready to use Twitter to promote yourself and your work, catch up with friends and network to your heart's content.

Get in touch with the RWA webteam at our Twitter account (Just tweet your question or comment @rwaus) and let us know about your Twitter experience. Tweet you there!

Kiki Lon is RWA's webmistress and the Manager of Online Services. She also writes books. You can visit her at: <http://kikifu.wordpress.com/> and she blogs at: <http://weloveya.wordpress.com/>

Information on markets is sourced from websites and other publications and reported in good faith. RWA Inc. does not investigate the information hereafter and cannot be held responsible for its accuracy and recommends readers verify names and addresses before submitting.

This month's focus is conference Spotlights (with Harlequin next month). Thanks to Cath Evans, Helen Katsinis & Meredith Webber for their marvellous notes.

**ALLEN & UNWIN—Annette Barlow
by Cath Evans www.allenandunwin.com**

Annette gave an overview: A&U, the largest independent book publisher in Australia, with 250 books published/year. **Arena** is the popular fiction and non-fiction arm. A&U also distribute for Bloomsbury and other overseas publishers.

All manuscripts, regardless of genre, go through the same submission process. A&U seek manuscripts that will sell well (not necessarily the most creative). Once a manuscript is found, then the acquiring editor has to "sell it" in-house by giving comparisons in the same genre, the target audience, expected sales, etc. A&U needs the whole company on board with a book, which makes 70-90 people to increase word-of-mouth sales. About 95% of the "spark" books picked and sold in-house end up on the shelves.

Relationships in the publishing industry are important. You need your editor/publisher to have integrity and shared vision. Most authors need an agent.

A&U are looking for: Popular fiction, strong characters, romance infused into other genres (eg. literary romance, historical time slip, romantic travel or memoir, crime, historical crime, chick-lit crime, cosy crime, outback romance, chick-lit, hen-lit, erotic romance), a good hook for booksellers (e.g. Fleur Macdonald writes outback romance and lives in outback WA), stories with heart (want to invite the characters for dinner, be their friends, don't ever want to finish with them), believable plot, don't dabble around the edges of issues—get to the heart. Acquiring through Friday Pitch with Louise Thurtell, although this may soon end due to bulk of submissions.

In economic downturn, riskier projects are more difficult to sell. Looking for the "new" Nora Roberts, Rachel Treasure, Janet Evanovich, Stephenie Meyer. If they love it but have something similar, may be a case of waiting or may suggest you submit widely. Erotica—boundaries depend on stories themselves. Major concern is how will be sold/bought in a bookshop.

In Aust, very difficult to introduce new author with big numbers of books (in Aust, usually a big print run is 8–10 000 books).

SUBMISSION TIPS

- ➔ Important to follow guidelines on website. And check them again—they do change.
- ➔ No unsolicited manuscripts due to sheer volume they have. This may change as submissions lessen.

- ➔ Don't ring, don't talk – WRITE!
- ➔ Let it sit a few months before sending.
- ➔ Revision, revision, revision. Have it the best you can before you send it in.
- ➔ Read widely.
- ➔ Don't pretty it up—just plain font, one-sided, B&W, bound with rubber band.
- ➔ Don't send originals or photos, they won't be returned.
- ➔ Don't send marketing plans or launch details—just manuscript. Once you've sold, then worry about marketing.
- ➔ Put energy into your writing.
- ➔ Check shops for similar types of books.
- ➔ Don't ever give up.
- ➔ Stick with groups (eg RWA, crit grp).
- ➔ Enter contests.
- ➔ Try to get published in newspapers and magazines.
- ➔ Cover letter, synopsis, include where your book might fit in market, what it's like (make that real, not what you'd like it to be like!), if you had a book group read it anonymously and you collated those results, that can be added. Contest results can be included.
- ➔ Rejection is not personal. Sometimes A&U miss a gem because of volumes of manuscripts.
- ➔ Use courses, contests, mentors, self-help, etc. that are available.
- ➔ Multiple submissions okay if they know. Tell them if you get an offer asap.

A couple of authors resist editing. Editing is suggestion not a demand. Editors **don't** expect you to make all changes and expect some resistance because authors have to love their story. Editors know most authors hate structural review. Any mandatory editorial changes are sorted out before contract is negotiated.

**CURTIS BROWN—Clare Forster
by Meredith Webber**

CB Aust is 20% owned by CB UK but doesn't mean they use only CB to seek deals for authors overseas. Have 3½ agents: Clare (Melb), 2 agents in Sydney, and the 2IC in Syd handling some authors (making her the ½!). Doesn't mean Syd agents only handle Syd authors—have freedom to take on anyone, anywhere, if convinced can find a publisher for book.

Agents work closely with publishers and author to package new book to best advantage. Publishers take the biggest risk as they put up the money to produce the book without knowing if it'll sell, but conversely, a runaway bestseller means publisher has money to risk to buy a book from an unknown author. Because agent and publisher are together building a base for author, they like the author to produce one book a year, to keep name out, and build reader base and sales figures. At the same time they're building reader expect-

tations of their work, so the name of the author is linked to a certain type of book.

She talked of proposed changes to copyright laws in Aust and the impact on earnings for both Aust authors & publishers, and the problems overseas companies dumping cheap books in Aust will cause.

She's excited by Aust outback stories, romantic suspense, thrillers & mysteries.

**The Knight Agency—Melissa Jeglinski
by Helen Katsinis**

- ➔ Have 6 acquiring agents
- ➔ Represent a vast range of genres
- ➔ Agency agreement has 90 day no-signing
- ➔ Commission is 15% national, 20% overseas as they use co-agents
- ➔ Melissa looks after general submissions: submissions@knightagency.net
- ➔ You can follow their blog and some agents have an individual blog
- ➔ Everything is electronic—no paper sub
- ➔ Some publishers only want North American English rights, but agency will look for markets elsewhere.
- ➔ With YA, too many Twilight-based books sent in. Be nice to see themes with extra twist, eg historical YA.
- ➔ With promotion, as much as client wants to. Would rather have them working on next book.
- ➔ Website important, book more so.
- ➔ Continue writing when waiting to hear back from agents and publishers.
- ➔ Remember sometimes it comes down to "the right book at the right time".

Query letter

- Questions don't always grab. Eg what would you do if...?
- Two or three lines about the book.
- Descriptions of characters.
- Short, to the point and professional.
- Story needs to have an ending. Don't leave it hanging.
- Compare voice with other works, or combination of works.
- Relevant personal information—organisations belong to, contest finals.
- Receives 50–75 queries per day.

Relationship between author & agent:

- Business/friendship relationship.
- Agent works for you but be kind.
- Be reasonable with agent.
- Ask for updates: where your books are going, who they're with, when will agent hear back, what plan is for you the author, and be reasonable about times to work on things.

Melissa Jeglinski currently has 15 clients and wants to double by next year.



Free Downloads!

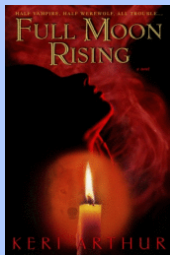
I do like my free stuff ☺



Mills & Boon UK have are celebrating their first year of releasing eBooks and are giving 10 eBooks away at:

www.everyonesreading.com

Keri Arthur's **Full Moon Rising**



(the 1st in the Riley Jensen Guardian series, set in Melbourne about a rare half-vampire, half-werewolf hybrid) is available for free

download at

www.suvudu.com/freelibrary

Reminder: Harlequin are celebrating their 60th Anniversary this year and are giving away free eBooks at

www.harlequincelebrates.com



Tolkien Trust and Harper UK have settled Lord of the Rings film suit. So here comes *The Hobbit*! Woohoo! Source: scifitv

Break time!



Classic Typo...

Smart Bitches, Trashy Books noted this typo in the monthly

Mills & Boon newsletter (or is it a new direction of M&B books?) The title is meant to be *The Virgin Secretary's Impossible Boss*. Whoops!

Highly recommended this month



MODERN

Just £3.19

[More Info](#)



The Virgin Secretary's Impossible Bride

International Billionaires mini-series (book 8 of 8)

By Carole Mortimer

Linus Harrison's masculine aura is a little too much for his sensible, bespectacled PA Andrea. He makes her heart beat quite erratically! And the last thing Andi expects is to have to spend a weekend along with her wild, irrepressible boss...

Literary Agent Nathan Bransford's Book Publishing Glossary

www.tinyurl.com/mkucct

Open Book Alliance

More oppose
Google's
Book

Settlement and join the *Open Book Alliance* including: Amazon, Microsoft, Yahoo, SFWA, and the New York Library Association.

BRONWYN PARRY interviewed by Graeme Blundell in *The Australian*.

tinyurl.com/n7rw3r

Go Bronwyn!



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE
STUDY OF POPULAR ROMANCE

The international conference for the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance was held in August in Brisbane. Some news footage:

ABC News: <http://tinyurl.com/qbx4nt>

Brisbane Times: <http://tinyurl.com/qxae05>

The Book vs The Kindle: 10 part Youtube videos

A bit of tongue-in-cheek humour from a bookstore in San Francisco.

youtube.com/user/GreenAppleBooks

"Woody women spice up book sales"

A Market-place podcast and transcript: how women and romantic fiction are helping the book market in this economic downturn.

tinyurl.com/n6r6av



Harlequin Sales Stats in Australia

"Harlequin is the number one romance fiction publisher in the world, selling over 130 million books a year, with a worldwide readership of 50 million women. In Australia, more than one in every five paperbacks sold is published by Harlequin."

source: B&T marketing/advertising/PR

New York Times breaks embargoes

The NYT has broken 2 embargoes in the last week, releasing by reviews before set dates Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol* and Ted Kennedy's memoir. In the case of the latter, Hachette has hired a private investigator to discover the leak.

Source: Galleycat

Book publishing in new TV series...

"CBS has landed a highly sought multicamera comedy script by "Will & Grace" alumna Gail Lerner. The project, tentatively titled "Open Books," has received a pilot commitment from the network. It revolves around book editor June and her circle of friends." Source: Reuters

