

KEYNOTES

The newsletter of the Romance Writers of America / New York City Chapter #6 APRIL 2018

NEXT MEETING: SATURDAY, APRIL 7

LOCATION: TRS, 40 EXCHANGE PLACE, 3RD FLOOR, 12 – 3 PM

**TOPIC: WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE (THE AUTHOR LIFE EDITION)
7 TIPS FOR ROCKING YOUR CAREER**

SPEAKER: MAYA RODALE



Bestselling author **Maya Rodale** will be sharing seven tips for a successful career in romance publishing. These tips will be peppered with insight on craft and marketing techniques that have worked for Maya throughout her career. There will also be an "Ask Me Anything" portion of Maya's workshop in which members are encouraged to ask their most pressing questions about writing, marketing, the publishing industry and everything in between!

Maya Rodale began reading romance novels in college at her mother's insistence. She is now the bestselling and award winning author of numerous smart and sassy romance novels. A champion of the genre and its readers, she is also the author of the non-fiction book, **DANGEROUS BOOKS FOR GIRLS: THE BAD REPUTATION OF ROMANCE NOVELS, EXPLAINED**, and a frequent contributor to *NPR Books*, *The Huffington Post*, *Bustle* and more. Maya lives in New York City with her darling dog and a rogue of her own. Visit her at www.mayarodale.com. ♥

SAVE THE DATE: MAY 5, CHAPTER BRUNCH



Our brunch speaker will be Joanna Shupe.
More details on brunch coming soon. ♥





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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

LaQuette, Stacey Agdern, Maria Cox,
Alexis Daria, Maria Ferrer, Barbara James,
Kate McMurray, Jennifer Welsh

MEETING INFORMATION

RWA/NYC meets the first Saturday of each month. Meetings are held at TRS, 40 Exchange Place, NYC. 12 noon. Membership is at the discretion of the Board. Annual dues are \$40. Make all checks payable to RWA/NYC. There will be a \$20 fee on returned checks.

ATTENTION: The Board welcomes all comments/suggestions/etc. Please send emails to info@rwanyc.com.



MAY THEME

PRINCESS DIARIES

Why are Royal Romances so romantic?

PLUS! We welcome articles on all topics, book reviews, conference notes, etc., etc.

DEADLINE: 15th of the month

2018 CHAPTER CALENDAR

Jan 6	Feb 3	Mar 3	Apr 7	May 5	Jun 2
Jul 7	Aug 4	Sep 8	Oct 6	Nov 3	Dec 1

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KEYNOTES DEADLINE

Send articles to keynoteseditor@gmail.com by the **15th of the month**. All articles must be typed and up to 500 words. Send pictures as attachments; not in article

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: LAUGHTER IS THE NEW SEXY
BY LAQUETTE



When writing about love things can get...heavy. If you write erotic romance, well then you can add hot to that mix. Romance is supposed to be passionate and intense, making readers flip pages with wild abandon just to see what happens next. So, if intense passion is good, then pouring a never-ending amount of drama and angst to add to the intensity should make your story even better, right? Well, not always. There really can be such a thing as too much of a good thing.

High-conflict and passion are useful tools in a romance novel. They hook and keep your reader's attention. However, if there's never a lull in all the excitement, your story can lack the emotional currency necessary to help your readers fall in love with your characters and keep them from believing in the love your protagonists have for one another.

As someone who writes a good bit of erotic romantic suspense, things can get emotionally and physically heavy quickly in my books. But with all the passion and attitude my characters are throwing back and forth, it can quickly become overkill if I'm not careful. Whenever I find that my characters are doing too much on the page, I think about adding a healthy dose of levity (or in my case flippancy since my characters seem to do sarcasm so well) to the scene to help some of the intensity dissipate.

Now, I know you're probably wondering why I would want to slow things down with laughter when the heat is turning up on the page. Slowing things down when things get really intense is a way of delaying gratification. Pulling back when your characters are obviously ready to rip each other's clothes off can leave your reader breathless, aching for the satisfaction the next passionate high is going to bring.

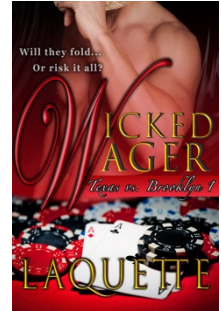
It may seem counterintuitive, but those few moments of laughter will help elevate the tension between your characters if placed appropriately in the story. Not to mention, infusing humor into your writing, especially during moments of passion and angst takes skill. Being able to pull it off successfully is an opportunity for you to flex your writer's muscle and show your reader a few of your tricks.

I know it may sound weird, laughter and romance, or laughter and sex don't seem to be synonymous on the surface. However, if you dig deeper, the similarities between the two can be closely linked. Think about it. Laughter is fun, exciting, and seductive. It can be light and sweet, or explicit and raunchy. Without difficulty, it wouldn't be much of a leap to suggest those descriptors can also be used to describe sex.



In my opinion, it's obvious that just like love and attraction, laughter belongs in a romance novel too. The only thing you have to do is figure out where you want to put it (full disclosure, I really didn't mean that to sound as provocative as it probably did. But you get the point). Keep it sexy! 💋

LaQuette-President of RWA/NYC, is the 2016 Golden Apple Award Author of the year winner. She writes bold & sexy tales for diverse characters who are confident in their right to appear on the page. Represented by Latoya C. Smith of the L. Perkins Agency. Visit her at www.LaQuette.com and LaQuette@LaQuette.com



GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS BY VICE PRESIDENT ALEXIS DARIA

Hi everyone! It's super easy to submit your nominations, and this is important for our chapter because we invite the winners to the Golden Apple Awards ceremony in September, which is a GREAT way for chapter members to get face time with industry professionals.

How to submit nominations:

- 1) Submit your nominations via this Google form: <https://goo.gl/forms/KUiXAc9a1uWAwFI12>
- 2) There are six categories: Lifetime Achievement, Author of the Year, Agent of the Year, Editor of the Year, Publisher of the Year, and Bookstore of the Year.
- 3) Please submit nominations by ****March 31, 2018.**** Voting will occur in April.
- 4) Any category that does not receive more than two nominations will be dropped, so please submit!
- 5) NOTE: Nominated parties cannot have won in the last five years (2013-2017). You can view past GAA winners at these links: 1996-2016
<http://www.rwanyc.com/past-gaa-winners.html>
2017 <http://www.rwanyc.com/golden-apple-awards.html>
- 6) If you have any questions that were not answered by the points above, please email vicepresident@rwanyc.com ♥



dreamstime.com



EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE: NOVEMBER 3

Mark your calendar for Saturday, November 3rd.
RWA/NYC is having a mini-conference.

Keynote speakers: Piper Huguley and Farrah Rochon.

Details will follow shortly. Think about volunteering. ♥



**CHAPTER MINUTES: MARCH
BY SECRETARY JENNIFER WELSH**



Attendance: 14 members

VP of Programs Alexis Daria called the meeting to order the meeting to order at 12:18pm

Past President Kate McMurray motioned and Treasurer Maria Cox seconded.

Treasurer's report: We currently have \$4,421.98 in the bank.

Secretary Report: We currently have 91 members

Golden Apples – VP of Programs – Alexis is preparing to email the nominees (please send nominees that you love). They don't have to be local and not have won in the last 5 years.

Kathryn Hayes Contest – VP of Communications– Harper has organized a strategic rollout and has already received some forms for both judging and entering contest. Submitted to RWR will published our advertisement from now to end of July. We are also posting in the PAN forum and events loop. Members are highly encouraged to tweet and get the word out. Judges can be librarians, authors, aspiring authors, agents, and editors.

Website – The website is being updating. More information coming soon!

Newsletter – Alexis took a quick survey on how members are accessing/use Keynotes (via website, loop or email) We need someone to take on a yahoo group email about the meeting every month. Andrea Obacz volunteered to help work on social media. Keynotes theme for April: Incorporating Humor (any articles), the 15th. Send articles to keynoteseditor@gmail.com.

Mini Con – We are still looking for locations. Eloisa James and Kristen Dwyer have been confirmed in addition to previously mentioned authors.

Brooklyn Book Festival - Michael and Maria have organized payment. We are all set for now. More information about tables and volunteer need to come down the line!

April Speaker - Maya Rodale - What I Know for Sure (the author life edition) - 7 Tips for Rocking Your Career.

May Brunch - Joanna Shupe is confirmed. More details coming soon!

Other Announcements/Discussions

- RWA Conference is open
- Long Island Luncheon is open –
- Strand Event on Feb27th - Let the Women 'sprain Romance
- Diversity report the Ripped Bodice has been released

Round Robins begin. Meeting adjourned at 12:39pm♥

FREE PUBLICITY!



Have a new book out? Entered and won a contest? Have an interesting topic, research, tips you want to share? An event, book, conference you'd like to review?

Keynotes is a FREE Promotion Opportunity. We welcome all subjects.

Send in your articles, news, book covers, reviews, etc., to keynoteseditor@gmail.com. Articles will also be published on the Chapter Blog for DOUBLE the promotion!

Deadline: the 15th of every month.

Take advantage of us!♥

Almost all good writing begins

with terrible first efforts.

You need to start somewhere.

Anne Lamott



MONTHLY THEME

FOOL FOR LOVE

**BEWARE FLYING TOMATOES:
ADDING HUMOR TO YOUR WRITING
BY STACEY AGDERN**

So you want to add humor to your writing? It's a very tricky, dangerous and interesting world. Humor can be anything from a quagmire of disaster to a purveyor of sidesplitting laughter or even some slightly sarcastic comment that would give your reader reason to smile. The field is wide, the potential for failure is huge. But sometimes? It's worth the risk of getting a tomato thrown at your face 😊

The most difficult thing about humor is that you cannot make it seem forced. If a reader feels like they're supposed to laugh, you've lost them. My one and only experience with the works of a well-known fantasy writer ended partway through the first book I read of his because it felt as if each page was written with the intent to make a reader laugh. Even though any writer who writes funny intends to make a reader laugh, any writer who telegraphs that intent to a reader will guarantee they've lost that reader.

Once we've gotten past the thing you're not supposed to do when writing humor, we get to the way you're supposed to write it.

Clearly, not all humor is the same; there are more styles of comedy and humor that you can shake a stick at. So the first thing you need to decide is what kind of humor are you writing. What are you going for? Slapstick? Something more subtle? Puns and wordplay? Are you spoofing something? It doesn't matter which style you choose, but once you do decide, pay attention to who you think does it best. Writers? Comics? Songwriters? Television writers? Screenwriters? Playwrights? Once you've decided who, pay attention to how they do it. Tear it apart. Then use what you've learned as a guide in your writing.

When I do end up writing funny, I find that the humor comes in the internal monologues of my characters. More specifically, their reactions and descriptions to things they're having difficulty understanding. Here's an unedited excerpt of this:

He looked up and her world stopped. Far away he was hot. Up close the charcoal grey eyes pierced through her, the hint of stubble accented those cheekbones, and the jeans he wore showed off a nice ass. She tried not to stare, and clearly failed miserably.

“You saved my life,” he said.

She raised an eyebrow. *It was a pen, not mission critical.* “It’s a pen,” she said, trying to remain somewhere between polite and flabbergasted. “Really. It’s no big deal.”

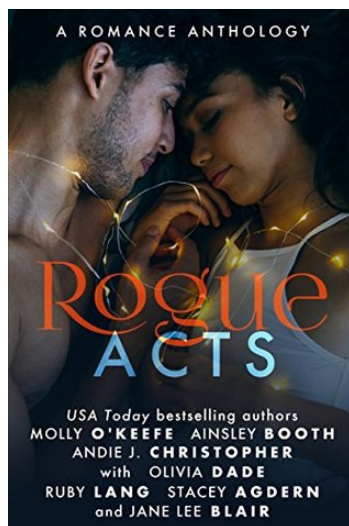
“No,” he replied, those eyes burning through her. “I’m serious. It’s ...” He took the pen from her outstretched hand, his fingers brushing her palm, and smiled.

Of course his smile had to be killer. Just her luck that he was also unaffected by the press of skin on skin. How was that possible? Also? How could he be so devoted to a ...pen? It wasn’t even a good pen; a random piece of whatever that he probably picked up at a dollar store. Definitely not worthy of the kind of devotion she’d seen people show to fountain pens or things they bought at prices that were way beyond her comprehension.
(CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE, Unedited, SA)

The italicized sections got laughs in a reading I did recently. When I thought about why, I discovered that, in fact, they all were the wry observations of the heroine as she processed the hero’s ...odd devotion to a pen.

In the end, every writer needs to figure out what their own style of humor is. How do you translate your own sense of humor to the page. And how do you do it in a way that feels natural? Whatever you do, have fun, enjoy, and be careful of the tomatoes. ♥

Stacey Agdern is an award-winning former bookseller who has reviewed romance novels in multiple formats and given talks about various aspects of the romance genre. She is also a romance writer. She’s a proud member of both LIRW and RWA NYC. She lives in New York, not far from her favorite hockey team’s practice facility. You can find her on twitter at @nystacey.



LIVE. LOVE. LAUGH.... WRITE.**BY MARIA FERRER**



I firmly believe that if your writing makes you laugh, then others will laugh too. Writers can't really force the laughs, because it shows. One has to visualize the actions, the consequences, the reactions and get all that down on paper. Always remembering to make sure the joke fits the character(s). You don't want them to look stupid and you don't want to be cruel.

I'm not an expert, but here are some tricks I like to use when writing funny:

Characters – don't be afraid to make fun of your heroes. You want to throw them in awkward situations for the laughs and to move the plot along.

- 1) Names can be funny. For example, if the whole family is made up of women named Rose after the matriarch. Or have a family of siblings named after states or cities – Tennessee, Paris.
- 2) Quirky characteristics can help you write funny too. The big body builder with the teacup Chihuahua. The nerdy professor with a bright bow tie. The nervous thief who eats her hair.

Situations – get your characters out of their comfort zone and let them have it. A pie in the face is always good for a laugh.

- 1) Location, location, location. Any place can be funny; it all depends on how you are using it. A Bed and Breakfast in New Hampshire with each room a different time period or a different BDSM room. Think Dominatrix lost in Main Street, USA. Think New Yorker lost in Arkansas.
- 2) Forget being politically correct. This is fiction. All bets are off. Everyone and everything is fair game.

You want readers laughing with your characters, not at them. Well, at least, not always laughing at them. You have to make your prose funny, but remember that you are telling a story and it has to move on and come to a funny and a happy ever after.

Some of my favorite funny writers include Rachel Gibson, Katie MacAlister, Susan Elizabeth Phillips and Janet Evanovich. Who are your favorites? Read them again and pay attention how they make you laugh. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Happy Writing! ♥

Maria Ferrer doesn't think she writes funny so she is often found rereading her favorite funny authors and watching her favorite comedy shows. Her favorite motto: Live, Love, Laugh... Write.

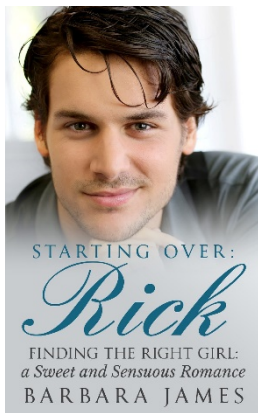
**ONE YEAR IN MY #WRITERSLIFE JOURNEY IN #AMWRITINGROMANCE
BY BARBARA JAMES**



I just reviewed the first notes that I jotted down when I began writing my first novel, *STARTING OVER: RICK*. My first entries began in late March of 2017, just about year ago. I wasn't even on Facebook or Twitter. Now, I'm part of different writers' groups on Facebook, I tweet on a regular basis, and various writers' tweeting groups draw me in as a means of keeping me inspired and thinking about my progress.

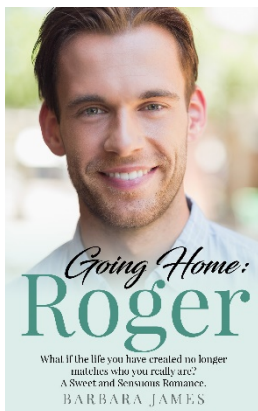
So how has this year been? It has been an amazing one, of incredible learning. When I first began, I had merely been a reader for many years, but I had experience as a writer, and with traditional publishing, just not in this genre. Plus, I had been blogging for a while. Those blog entries were like expository essays, however, not novels!

Writing romance novels had been on my mind since sometime in 2016. I was doing freelance writing, some marketing work, but the projects in my field were drying up, and I wanted something else to do. I was inspired by a few authors that interested me, and it seemed a number of my favorites were starting to go the independent route. I started researching and learning. I joined RWA and sent in my paperwork for our NYC chapter.



But I couldn't attend the meetings in May and June, as I had some conflicts. I only attended my first meeting in July, and by that time, I had taken a class through RWA for those interested in indie publishing. I was writing away and had found a developmental editor through Reedsy, a site for finding freelance writing professionals. RWA members were getting discounts. In retrospect, it seems to me that editors can be like graduate school advisors. They beat you up and make you become better writers. A saying I once heard encapsulates the sentiment, "It's business, nothing personal!" This message was reinforced

at our chapter meeting last month, when we heard from editors Madeleine Colavita of Forever Romance and Elle Keck of Avon, each of whom talked about the editorial process from the publisher's end.



If I had gone immediately into pursuing the traditional publishing route, I'm not sure I would have had the intense one-on-one experience I had with the expert editor who helped me polish Rick's book before it came out in August of 2017. When I participated in a Goodreads writing group in the fall, I could see my own growth as I writer. The guest speakers who presented at our chapter meetings taught me as well. I made note of these lessons once I began working on the second book, *GOING HOME: ROGER*.

So what's next? I originally envisioned doing four books in a series. I am currently working on the third one. Having read for the RITA awards in

January into February, I was inspired to learn about other genres that I hadn't read as much. Perhaps I might want to branch out. In addition, I find myself wondering whether I might want to go back to traditional publishing. I'm open to exploring, learning and thinking further about new possibilities. ♥

Barbara James is an avid romance reader and a former academic writer. Writing romance novels has been a wonderful creative journey. Feel free to follow her on twitter: @BarbaraJames75 or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/authorbarbarajames>.

WELCOME TO MY WRITING DEN!

WHY WE WRITE

BY MARIA COX

International Women's Day was celebrated a few days ago and while doing research online I found excellent articles about women and writing. I also found a set of TED Talks podcasts from two well-known women writers, Isabel Allende and Amy Tan.

HAPPY
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY



It was Ms. Tan's account of childhood experiences and Isabel Allende's Tales of Passion that got me thinking about how our experiences shape us and how they bleed into our own unique creative realm. As such, each story we weave has the potential to invoke a wide range of emotions in our readers.

As one would imagine writers from all walks of life have very different reasons for writing. Below is a common thread among modern day writers:

Leave a legacy: If you write a book *well* and publish it, you may actually leave something behind that can last forever.

Incite: Writers write what the world is like as *they* see it. Writers ask the difficult questions. And, this boundless curiosity is the foundation that opens the doors to discussing difficult topics.

To stay sane: To write the endings we wish to see in the world. To make peace with the things we cannot control. ♥

Maria Cox is the 2nd Place winner of the 2017 MANA (MarketingNewAuthors.com) Blog Short Story Series Contest. Maria is also a PRO member of Romance Writers of America and the Treasurer of RWA/NYC. Maria served two terms as President of the Phoenix Writers Club. Maria has been writing stories since she was a young girl. She picked up her first romance novel when she was just eleven years old and has loved the genre ever since. Maria writes sensual romance, stories that showcase strong, sassy, and sexy characters. When not writing fiction, Maria works as a technical writer. She lives in Queens, New York. Please visit her site www.mariacox.net and/or follow her on Twitter.

YOU NEED AN EDITOR. YES, YOU. YES, YOU TOO.**BY KATE MCMURRAY**



The editorial process seems to be one of those things that seems elusive to newbie writers and some seasoned authors as well. I'm a professional editor who has worked for a number of big publishers, so I thought I could share my expertise from both sides of the red pen, as it were, to help break down what the editorial process is and should be to help you put out the best books you can. This is the first in a series of columns to explain what editors do, how the editorial process works, and how to find a great editor to work with. But first, WHY you need an editor!

I had a leg up on my classmates when I took a copyediting class at NYU in 2004, not just because I'd been working for a big publisher for over 2 years at that point, but also because my mother, who worked in publishing for decades, used to mark up all my high school papers in red pencil, using copyeditor's marks. In olden times, before so much of publishing went digital, copyeditors and proofreaders marked paper manuscript in colored pencil using their own code of squiggles and symbols. I still edit by hand this way sometimes.

I tell you this to illustrate that I have been schooled in the ways of editorial work, literally. I've spent my entire adult life working in publishing. I subscribe to the Chicago Manual online. I can tell you all about how to use commas and when to use which dash and how to conjugate verbs in the subjunctive tense. What I'm saying is, I probably have more grammatical prowess than your average writer.

And I need an editor.

These discussions periodically break out on author discussion loops I participate in. "Do I really need an editor?" Yes. Hard yes. Absolutely every writer needs to be edited, and edited well.

Here's the main reason: when you as the writer review your own manuscript, you are more likely to see what you know should be there and not what's actually there. You can read and reread your manuscript a dozen times and still not catch that you described your hero's shirt as blew instead of blue. And even if your novel is brilliant, you still need an outside perspective to see it with fresh eyes and offer feedback, no matter how seasoned you are.

My eighteenth novel is about to be published. I still need an editor.

I'm going to discuss the editorial process and what different kinds of editors do in a future column, but for now, I thought I'd focus on when you should hire an editor.

Which is to say, yes, you need an editor. You may not need to hire one, though. It depends on what your goals are.

If you plan to submit to an agent or traditional publishers...

You may not need to hire an editor yourself. If you acquire an agent, many will give editorial feedback. The traditional publisher will do at minimum two editorial passes (usually a developmental edit and a copyedit—we'll get into those next in a future column) so your novel will be edited. If your aim is a traditional publishing contract, your book will be edited as part of the publication process and you won't need to hire one.

The exception is if you want to hire someone to help you get the book ready for submission; some editors offer manuscript consultations for less money than a full edit, in which they will give you some advice for big things to fix. You can pay them to do a more intensive edit, too, if you feel like you need it. You may not; finding a few beta readers, friends, or family members to read your story and give you feedback may be sufficient. Workshopping your book in a critique group or class could serve this purpose, also. Whether you pay for this kind of help is at your discretion.

If you plan to self-publish...

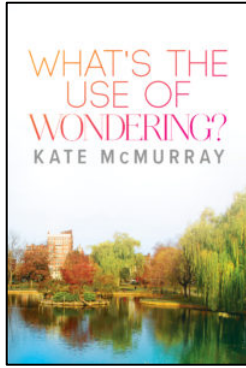
Then you 100% need an editor. Possibly more than one. Every book should be edited. Every book. You might find other consultants also—fact checkers, translators—depending on the content of your book. But, please, at minimum hire someone to give the book a final polish before you publish. I'll give you a couple of examples without naming the titles or authors to show you why.



As a reader, I'm willing to overlook the occasional typo. Mistakes happen. Publishing schedules are short these days. But a great number of errors are distracting and hard to overlook. I read a self-published novel last year that had several typos, spelling, grammatical, or other errors *per page*. What that told me is that the author decided not to hire an editor, because any decent copyeditor would have caught and corrected a lot of that. (Not to mention, the hero was a native Italian speaker. Italian is my second language, so I can tell you that just about all of the Italian in the book was wrong. The author probably just typed the phrases into Google translate and cut and paste.)

This level of error made what might have been a good story hard for me to read, because the mistakes kept pulling me out of the story. What you want is the sort of book that sucks in your reader and doesn't let them go until the last page. Some readers are willing to overlook mistakes, but a lot aren't, and with so many books available these days, you have to make your book really stellar both to stand out and to ensure your readers come back for the next book.

What's almost worse is hiring a bad editor. We'll get into this a little more next time. But I just read a book put out by a small press that had an editor listed on the copyright page, so clearly the book was



edited, but not by someone who knew what they were doing. The book was plagued by obvious grammatical errors—random verb tense changes within the same paragraph, incorrectly formatted dialogue, etc.—and it was a real shame, because I actually enjoyed the story. (It was my trope catnip, with a suspenseful plot and likable characters.) But I kept thinking that the book would have been amazing—and thus might have sold better via stronger word of mouth—if a better editor had gotten her hands on it.

I plan to get into how to find a good editor next month, but for now, hear my cry: you need an editor. Yes, even you. ♥

Kate McMurray is an award-winning author of gay romance and an unabashed romance fan. When she's not writing, she works as a nonfiction editor, dabbles in various crafts, and is maybe a tiny bit obsessed with baseball. She is Past President of RWA/NYC. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Visit her at www.katemcmurray.com.

ABOUT PAN (PUBLISHED AUTHOR NETWORK)



The purpose of the Published Authors Network (PAN) is to establish within the RWA framework a network of communication and support to effectively promote and protect the interests of published romance authors; to open channels of communication between those romance authors and other publishing industry professionals; and to encourage professionalism on all levels and in all relationships within the publishing industry.

To be eligible for General PAN Membership: RWA General or Honorary members in good standing should have earned at least \$1,000 on a single novel or novella that meets the definition of Romance Fiction.

To be eligible for Provisional PAN Membership: RWA General or Honorary members in good standing should have: (1) contracted for the publication of a novel or novella for an advance of at least \$1,000, but said work is not yet commercially available ("Option One"); or (2) published a novel or novella, but not yet earned \$1,000 ("Option Two"). Works offered through Predatory Publishing companies shall not qualify.♥

About PRO



The purpose of the PRO Community of Practice is to establish within RWA a network of communication and support to effectively promote and protect the interests of romance writers in the areas between manuscript completion and PAN eligibility.

To help members reach the next level, PRO focuses on the business side of writing rather than craft. This program is available to any active General or Honorary member who: (1) is not PAN-eligible and (2) has one complete original work of romance fiction of at least 20,000 words, or multiple complete original works of romance fiction which combine for a total of at least 20,000 words.♥