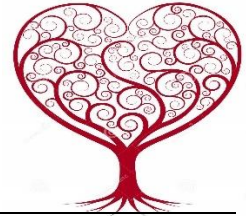


# KEYNOTES



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*The newsletter of the Romance Writers of America / New York City Chapter #6*    *APRIL 2017*

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**NEXT CHAPTER MEETING & CRITIQUE SESSION: SATURDAY, APRIL 1  
TRS, 40 EXCHANGE PLACE, 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR, 12-4PM**

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## **TOPIC: CONFERENCES AND HOW TO BE A PROFESSIONAL AUTHOR**

Two conference planners-- **Tere Michaels** from the RT Booklovers Convention and **Rayna Vause** from the Liberty States Fiction Writers Create Something Magical Conference-- will give the inside scoop on big vs. small cons, what to expect, what to do, and how to get the most out of your conference experience, among other topics. If you're going to RT, RWA, or any small cons this year, you don't want to miss this meeting. Bring your questions, as this will be a Q&A.

### **BIOS:**



**Tere Michaels** writes happily ever afters in the big city – with heaps of snark, angst and humor. Her focus is on characters and all the ridiculous ways they trip through life and love. She has written fifteen books including her popular Faith, Love & Devotion series and the superhero saga, *THE VIGILANTE*. She is a member of RWA and Liberty States Fiction Writers. Visit her at [www.teremichaels.com](http://www.teremichaels.com) and <https://twitter.com/TereMichaels>.



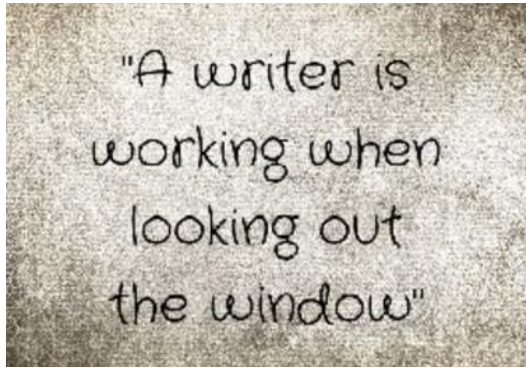
**Rayna Vause** is a lifetime learner who wants to live on a Disney cruise ship travelling the world and thinks purple should be considered a natural hair color. She loves to craft tales full of mystery, magic, and adventure and is a proud geek who injects a little bit of her geeky, tech-obsessed soul into every story. Rayna has collected degrees in English, Computer Information Systems, Radiologic Science, and more are on the way. She's planned readers and writers conference for the last ten years and has spent years serving on the boards of her various writers' organizations. Rayna is a member of RWA, RRW, and a founding member of Liberty States Fiction Writers. When she isn't writing, she's likely indulging her love of video games, working through her massive TBR pile, or plotting her next novel. She lives in southern NJ, just a bit outside of Philadelphia and shares a home with her cat, the Princess Muffin.



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### **CRITIQUE SESSION!**

**We will end our monthly meeting with a critique session. Bring 2-3 pages.**




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**THANK YOU!**

To Our Contributing Writers

Maria Cox, Alexis Daria, Cathy Greenfeder,  
Kate McMurray, Lisa Siefert, Lisa Ann Verge,  
JN Welsh

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**2017 CHAPTER CALENDAR**


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Jan 7	Feb 4	Mar 4	Apr 1	May 13	Jun 3
Jul 8	Aug 5	Sep 9	Oct 7	Nov 4	Dec 2

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**KEYNOTES DEADLINE**


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Send articles to [keynoteseditor@gmail.com](mailto:keynoteseditor@gmail.com)  
by the 15th of the month. All articles  
must be typed and up to 500 words.

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**MAY THEME**


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**WONDER WOMEN**

*Tell us all about Your HEROINE and her Super Power. PLUS, we want articles on writing, book reviews, writing resources, tips, et al. Send them to us by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Month.*

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**RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**


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President: Kate McMurray  
Vice President/Events: Stacey Agdern  
Vice President/Contest: LaQuette  
Secretary: TBD  
Treasurer: Maria Cox  
Past President: Ursula Renée

**LIAISONS & COMMITTEES**

Keynotes Editor: Ursula Renée  
PRO Liaisons: Alexis Daria  
PAN Liaison: Mageela Troche  
Blog/Social Media: Maria Ferrer  
Craft Loop: Isabo Kelly  
Critique Group: Ursula Renée  
Publicity: Maria Cox, Jean Joachim,  
Michael Molloy  
Website: Ursula Renée

**ATTENTION:** The Board welcomes all comments/suggestions/etc. Please send emails to [info@rwanyc.com](mailto:info@rwanyc.com).

**MEETING INFO:** 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.

**RWA/NYC**, PO Box 3722,  
Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163  
[www.rwanyc.com](http://www.rwanyc.com)  
[info@rwanyc.com](mailto:info@rwanyc.com)  
[rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com](http://rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com)

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**CHAPTER MINUTES: MARCH**

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We began the meeting at 12:19 PM. LaQuette led the meeting in Kate's stead. She asked if anyone had read the February minutes. Jean said she had, and Michael seconded.

**Treasurer's Report:** Maria Cox announced that the chapter has 91 members and \$5,658.48 in the bank. She also had member renewal forms with her. LaQuette announced that the roster had been rectified.

**Golden Apples:** Nominations will begin this month. If someone has won in the last five years, they are not eligible to win again. However, they don't have to be a chapter member to be nominated. Voting will begin in April. Winners will be announced at the May brunch. We hope to secure a venue by July, and send invites in August. The event will be in September. Stacey is going to set up a separate email account to keep everything related to the GAA in one place, and then hand it over to the next VP. With nominations, think of people you want to see at the awards ceremony.

**Kathryn Hayes "When Sparks Fly" Contest:** LaQuette's waiting to hear back from Kate confirming the proposal, but her idea is that this contest will be for published manuscripts only. Full manuscripts will be submitted, with a minimum of five per category. (A second contest will be held later on in the year for unpublished manuscripts.) If there are not enough entries in each category, the author will have the opportunity to choose a second category or receive a refund. We need judges for this--members or published authors. Will also reach out to other local chapters. For the final round, we will hopefully get agents or editors. The final-round will include maybe the top two or top three in each category, so the agents and editors will not have too many manuscripts to read. Categories might be contemporary, erotic, historical, romantic suspense, and paranormal/sci-fi fantasy. Maybe a deadline of June 30. We want to advertise the contest in RWR magazine. The first round of judging should finish by the end of August, and the final round done by November, so as not to interfere with when agents and editors start to take vacations for the holidays. We would announce the winners by the December brunch. We can discuss and vote on this in the loop.

**Committee Reports**

**Blog:** Maria Ferrer and Ursula are not at the meeting, but blogging seems to be going well. Ursula sent a message asking that keynotes articles be sent to her by March 15. It is okay if the submissions are not on-topic, send anyway. We need articles for the keynotes. There is uncertainty on the topic — it is either conferences or inspiring women. Either way, send articles.

**PRO:** Alexis gives info on the benefits of signing up for PRO status on the RWA website.

**PAN:** LaQuette explains PAN Guidelines, which have changed in the past year. Group discussion of the benefits to joining PRO and PAN.

**Publicity Committee**

--Romance Festival: Maria Cox reports that Erika Obey has taken over Morris Jumel responsibilities. The festival will no longer be held in June, but in August.

--Brooklyn Book Festival: Michael reports that we are all set for the Brooklyn Book Festival on September 17th. It is an 8-hour event. Michael will send information to the chapter on booth times. Each timeslot at the booth will cost \$40 each. This is because the overall event price went up.

--Jean suggests compiling a document with promotional information and contact info for radio, media, etc. If anyone is interested in helping compile information for this document, reach out to Jean off list. Maria Cox has the old, outdated spreadsheet.

**Website:** Ursula says the website is in good shape. If you want to update your information or the link to your website, contact Ursula. The problem people were having with updating their membership on the website and making their payment through PayPal seems to have been fixed. If you have not yet paid, please do so soon, so as not to incur a late payment fee.

**Mailbox key:** Maria Cox has one. Kate has the other.

Google Drive: There has been talk about using a central file system like Google Drive or Dropbox.

Round Robin begins. Speaker Kait Scalisi, sex educator, spoke. Meeting adjourned. ♥



### **ABOUT PAN (PUBLISHED AUTHOR NETWORK)**

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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.♥

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### **About PRO**

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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.♥

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: THE LITTLE THINGS MATTER**  
**BY KATE MCMURRAY**

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I picked up a book recently that was a delightful surprise. It was a nonfiction book, but the author had a Shakespearean gift for word play, and I enjoyed the prose almost more than the content. It was a nice reminder that *writing itself* is an art form, can be something truly beautiful.

There's a tremendous amount of pressure on authors these days to produce more books. Some of that pressure is external—readers demanding the next book in a series, publishers wanting to keep authors on tight schedules, etc.—but some of it is internal. We put pressure on ourselves to produce, perhaps out of fear we'll fade into obscurity if we don't put new books out constantly, of needing to put out new books on a regular schedule in order to earn a certain income. Or, we see our colleagues put out book after book and feel like we have to write more in order to be competitive.

We can't do much about the external pressure, but we can be a little introspective about the internal pressure.

Here's what I mean: I've read probably a dozen novels so far this year. They've been a nearly 50/50 split of traditional and indie pub. And most of the books have been... fine. Not terrible, but not great either. And, because sometimes it's hard to turn off the editorial part of my brain, I thought a lot about what kept these books from being great.

Here's a theory: authors, particularly indie authors, rushing books to market is actually doing these books a disservice because getting the book out matters more than the story.

This manifests itself in a few ways. Some are obvious. An author who cuts corners on editorial will have a book full of typos. An author who skips over research will put out a book full of factual errors. Some are less obvious. An author who rushes through the writing process might put out a book without obvious flaws but that is nevertheless kind of dull or not engaging or ultimately forgettable.

And all of those things can kill a writing career, because a subpar book might persuade readers not to pick up the author's next book.

What can be done about this?

I argued in my column last month that I thought gatekeepers would make a comeback. One way to get through the gates is to write a better book. And the best way to do that is to slow down and remember what's important.

Story is important.

I teach a class on revision in which I recommend that, before authors revise, they take a few minutes to write a paragraph about the core of their story. That story core is something that I think gets lost



among published authors when we talk about writing. We're preoccupied with marketing strategies, with sales, with the size of our royalty checks. We think about social media, conferences, deadlines.

However, a really great book will sell itself.

"But I wrote a good book! How do I let readers know about it?" No, slow down. Marketing is important, but *story* is king. *Story* sells your book.

A book about nice people falling in love might be a perfectly nice beach read. I don't know about you, but I don't want to write perfectly nice books. I want to write books that evoke what Sarah Wendell calls "good book noise," that delighted sigh the reader lets out when she reads something that hits her in the right place. I want to write books readers talk about, pass around between each other, encourage others to read. I want to write books that people are still talking about five years from now. I want to write amazing books.

And, you know, I'd rather sell 10,000 copies of a great book than 1,000 copies each of 10 okay books.

The thing about rushing a book to market is that we overlook the little things, but the little things matter. Words matter. The best books have compelling stories *and* beautiful writing.

So push aside as much internal pressure as you can. What can you do to make your next book your best yet? Does that mean writing slower? Taking more time to revise? Rethinking the core of the story? Does that mean hiring a better editor or spending a little extra money on an eye-catching cover? Does it mean trying a different publication strategy (indie vs. traditional)? Does that mean stopping the rush to publication and taking the time to get it right?

At the end of the day, I want us all to write better books. Better books makes the genre better as a whole. A rising tide lifts all boats, and we are those boats. Not to mention, more good books in the world give me more good books to read.

So my advice this month is to take a step back and really think about what is more important: your story or your need to get it up for sale? The latter might be good for your short term career, but the latter is what will make your career sustainable. Because great books win over readers and earn us fans for life.♥

*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 has served as President of Rainbow Romance Writers, the LGBT romance chapter of Romance Writers of America; and as Vice President of RWA/NYC. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Visit her at [www.katemcmurray.com](http://www.katemcmurray.com).*



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**FROM THE PRO LIAISON: ALEXIS DARIA**

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**WHY LIVE-TWEET?**

It's no secret that I love Twitter, and I've developed something of a reputation for live-tweeting. I live-tweet everything from TV shows (mainly *Dancing with the Stars* and *RuPaul's Drag Race*) to sports events (hello, Olympics) to museum trips. But writing conferences and reader events are some of my favorite things to live-tweet. Here's why.

**Live-tweeting is note-taking.**

I'm a compulsive note-taker. Since I'm not an auditory learner, I process and retain information by writing it down. I've always taken notes at workshops and panels, but live-tweeting became a way to take notes quickly, in nugget-sized soundbites, and share it on the spot. That leads into the next benefit.

**Live-tweeting is an easy way to share information.**

Once I've written everything down, it does me no good languishing in a notebook or a hard drive. Since I take notes anyway, I like to share that information and make it available to people who couldn't attend the event. But I'm terrible at blogging or publishing the info later. Live-tweeting allows me to post the info instantly, and lets people to follow along live via a dedicated hashtag. You can even create a Storify that retains all of the tweets under one link. If you can't attend an event and manage to find a few people doing a comprehensive live-tweet, it's almost as good as being there. Now, on to the practical reasons.

**Live-tweeting expands your reach.**

Live-tweeting is work, especially if you're doing it from a phone. You have to type quickly and accurately, be concise, and still follow along with what's happening live. If you're live-tweeting an event, chances are other people present will figure it out and retweet you to help boost your range. You're providing the content, they're providing the signal boost. Live-tweeting is a service that allows people to follow along at home and feel like they're at the party. Their interest, in turn, expands your reach further, and leads into the final point.

**Live-tweeting helps build engagement.**

Sometimes on Twitter, you feel like you're speaking into the void. You tweet something, and no one responds. Are you there? Are you invisible? What are you even supposed to be tweeting about, anyway? Attending writing conferences and reader events gives you something to tweet about that's on brand and interesting to your followers--in other words, it gives you *content*. Instead of debating whether you need to write yet another blog post about your writing process (probably not) or post more photos of your cat (probably yes), attending events shows you're an active member of the romance reading and writing community and gives you content to share with your followers. Better yet, it gives you content your followers can engage with. They can comment and ask questions, sparking conversations and growing relationships. Social media is still social, and engagement is more important than follower count. You'll see the phrases "content is king" and "engagement is everything" tossed around. Live-tweeting on-brand events gives you both.

Live-tweeting can be a fun and easy way to generate content and engagement. The next time you attend a writing-related event, note the event's hashtag and the speakers' Twitter usernames. Quote & tag them in the tweets when appropriate, and don't be afraid to tweet your takeaways and what you learned. Your followers can mute the hashtag if they don't want to follow along. And if you ever want to search for your own event tweets, simply type your @-username and event's #-hashtag in the search bar on Twitter, thread the tweets, or create a Storify.♥

*Alexis Daria is a contemporary and paranormal romance writer. On Sunday evenings, she co-hosts #RWchat, a weekly Twitter chat for romance writers. Alexis also serves as PRO Liaison for the New York City chapter of RWA, and Municipal Liaison for the NYC region of National Novel Writing Month. You can find her on Twitter at @alexisdaria, and follow her blog [creativestaycation.com](http://creativestaycation.com).*

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## MEMBER NEWS

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**Alexis Daria** got DOUBLE lucky!! She is a 2017 Golden Heart Finalist and she signed with Sarah Younger at the Nancy Yost Literary Agency.

**Alyssa Cole** is a 2017 RITA Finalist for her book, LET US DREAM.

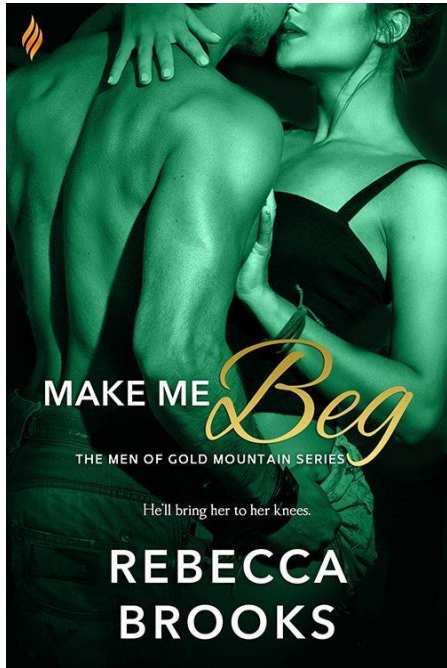
**LaQuette, Kate, Alexis, Jenn, Cathy and Xyla** were part of a group of RWA/NYC members who attended the Liberty States Conference. Check out articles by Cathy Greenfeder and JN Welsh within.

**Kate McMurray, Hope Tarr and Mingmei Yip** read at the Lady Jane's Salon March meeting.

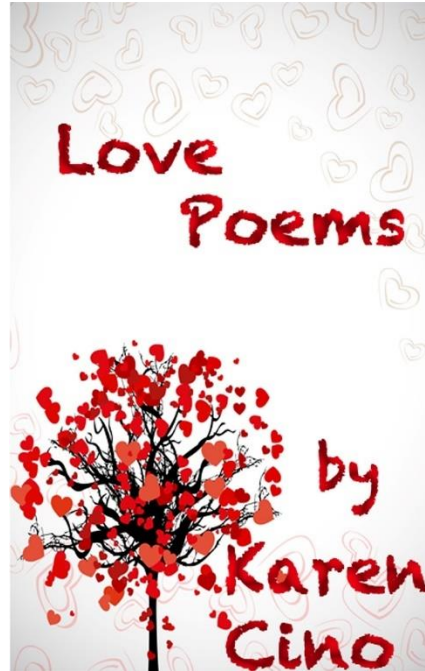




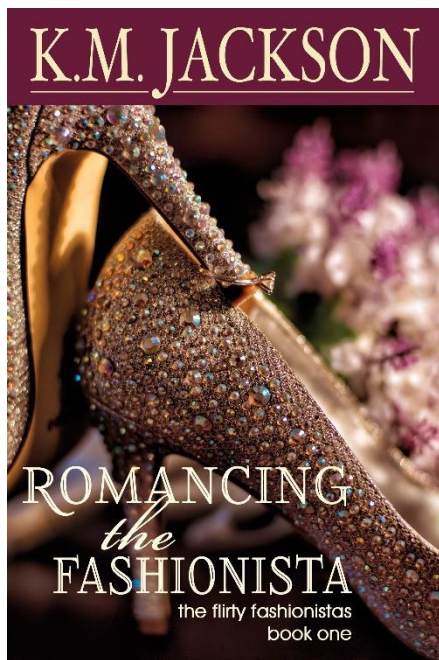
MEMBERS ON THE SHELF



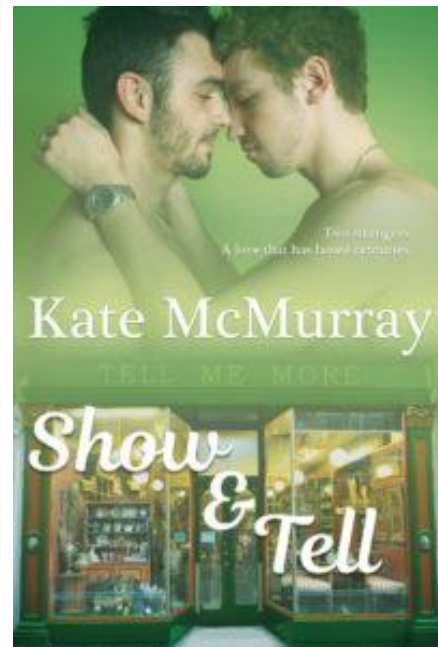
**MAKE ME BEG**  
The Men of Gold Mountain Series  
by Rebecca Brooks



**LOVE POEMS**  
by Karen Cino



**ROMANCING THE FASHIONISTA**  
by K.M. Jackson



**SHOW & TELL**  
by Kate McMurray

**MONTHLY THEME: MARKETING TIPS**

*This month our members are sharing their marketing tips.*

**WELCOME TO MY WRITING DEN!©****#HASH THIS****BY MARIA COX**

A hashtag is simply a phrase, spelled out without spaces and with a pound sign (#) in front of it, i.e. #writing #writerslife. Hashtags tie national and worldwide conversations into a single stream.

One of the best things about hashtags is that it allows people interested in similar topics to share related information in real time. Hashtags are often used to unite like-minded individuals...

**Group Activities.**

As in college classes, clubs, or events. Examples: #RWA2017 (RWA yearly conference).

**Pop Culture Themes.**

There are hundreds of trending topics on Twitter. Example: #DWTS (Dancing with the Stars).

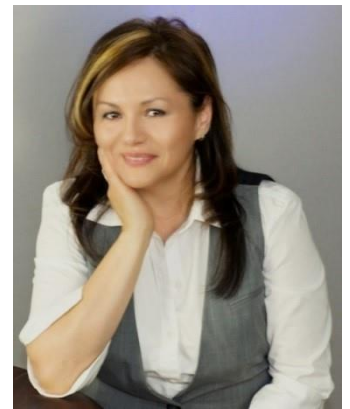
**World Events.**

When it comes to certain events (civic or political) and how information is disseminated, hashtags have given activists direct access to supporters, the media, and the broader public. Example: #Brexit ("British exit" - referring to the UK's decision to leave the European Union).

**Why Hashtags are great**

When used properly, hashtags can give people useful context. They are also a great way for individuals and brands to increase visibility and engagement.

The key to hashtags is to use them sparingly and only when they add value. Use them too much, and they can be confusing, frustrating, annoying even.



Personally, I believe the Twitter hashtag #rwchat\* which is moderated by RWA/NYC's very own Golden Heart nominee – Alexis Daria – is an awesome community for romance writers. The #rwchat gang meets Sunday evenings, 7:00-8:00pm ET. Join the conversation today!

If you want to learn more about social media, visit <http://www.socialmediatoday.com>♥

\*Not affiliated with Romance Writers of America.

*Maria Cox is a PRO member of Romance Writers of America; she has also served 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](http://www.mariacox.net) and/or follow her on Twitter.*

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### **BOOK MARKETING TIP: DEFY CONVENTIONAL WISDOM BY KATE MCMURRAY**

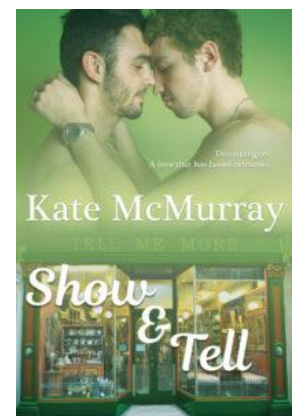
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I'll tell you a secret: you don't have to do social media.

*Gasp.*

No, really.

Here's the thing: Social media can be a great book marketing tool. It's a fantastic way to connect with readers. It's an easy way to get out the word about your next book. It helps authors network with each other and other industry professionals. It can play a role in building your platform. If you're good at social media, it can be an important tool in your marketing toolbox.



Because it can be so great, it's become conventional wisdom that all authors have to have all the accounts: Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, etc., etc.

But you don't need them. Any of them. I'm serious.

I'm going to take it a step further and say that bad social media is worse for you than having no social media at all.

“Bad” is too vague a term, I think. I don't mean authors who are angry or hostile, but merely social media that isn't doing anything for you. The thing with social media is that it can be a great tool, but everybody has a Twitter or Facebook, so you have to do more than just have an account to reach readers, and it can be an uphill climb at times. So if your social media isn't doing anything for you—if it isn't *social*—it's taking time away from better uses of your time (like writing).

Book marketing should be about playing to your strengths. In *Your A Game*, Damon Suede and Heidi Cullinan argue that it should be a game. It should be *fun*. Any marketing technique you're using because you think you have to, or that feels like a slog, is ineffective, because readers will pick up on your antipathy.

If you're social and gregarious, in-person marketing—conferences, signings, other events—might be a better approach. I know a self-published author who is kind of her own empire, and though she's on Facebook, she hardly posts there, and that's really the limit of her social media. Instead, she's a constant presence at book fairs and signings, as well as a couple of big conferences a year, and she's so funny and charming that her readers adore her. She's happy with her sales; she doesn't need to be on Twitter or whatever else.

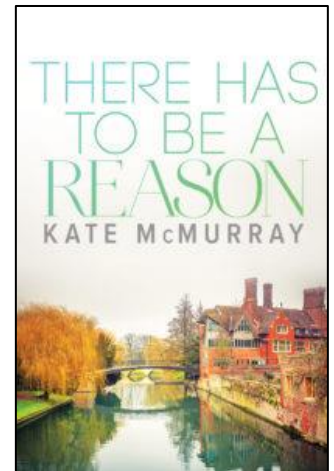
If you're a better long-form writer, consider putting your promo energy into your blog or writing articles for other blogs. Dozens of romance blogs will take guest posts from authors at any time—it never hurts to ask, and many are happy to have new content—and RWA's magazine *RWR* will take pitches and articles (and even pays its writers). Writing content for others is a good way to get in front of new eyes.

You can also appeal to your interests that are romance-adjacent. Write recaps of your favorite TV show to connect with fans of that show; chances are, something about that show is reflected in your own work, and the show's fans might find something to like. You can also review and recommend books. Be discriminating with your tastes, but don't bash other authors. Instead, promote books you think are worthy of promotion, and connect with romance fans that way. You can review on your own website, on a romance blog—which I did for a while—or on sites like Goodreads and Litsy. An author I know is a tireless advocate of gay romance. Although she herself is prolific, she rarely promotes her own books. Instead, she constantly recommends the books of other authors, and her taste is so well regarded, she's built up a steady following. Her readers love her for her generosity.

These are all things you can do that aren't social media that will still help you connect with readers. There are probably a dozen other things that I'm not thinking of, or things you've tried that you've gotten good feedback from. My point is that you *don't* have to do what everyone else does, and in fact, doing what everyone else does is a good way to get lost in the shuffle. Try new things, shakes things up, and use your own strengths and interests to appeal to readers.

If you still want to give social media a shot, I do have advice. First, keep in mind that it is *social* media. This means you should be interacting with other people: join discussions and chats, comment on your colleagues' posts, reach out to book bloggers and reviewers. If you're just putting out posts but not interacting with anyone, your social media is wasting your time

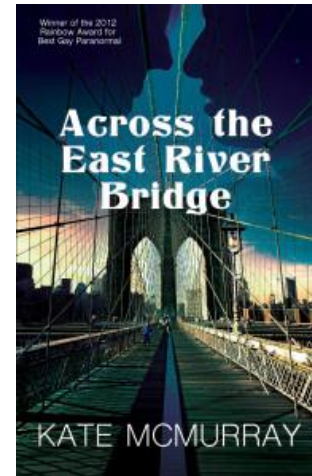
Social media marketers recommend a 30/60/10 ratio. That's 30% content you created ("owned" content), 60% curated content from others, and 10% "calls to action." Owned content means anything you create that is *not pure promo*: photos, blog posts, commentary on pop culture, etc. Curated content is anything created by others *related to your brand*. This includes articles written by others, shares of your colleagues' content, etc. Shared/curated content can help flesh out your social media





platform, since there's only so much you can come up with on your own. A call to action is anything that is pure promo: my book is out today, my book is on sale, I got a new review, etc.

A good way to get yourself unfollowed is to be all promo all the time. (It's tedious, readers don't like it.) Do post about your new book when it's available! But supplement that with other kinds of content as well. Also, don't *just* retweet/share others—that means you're not showing yourself at all or giving readers a compelling reason to follow you back. It's a tricky balance to get right, but here's something that is definitely true: It is better to organically grow your following with people who opt to follow you, because these are people who find you interesting and are more likely to buy your books. (Mass following others or buying followers is a good way to get a lot of people who just follow you back to collect followers but aren't actually interested in your books, or worse will mean a lot of your followers are bots, not real humans with wallets.)



You don't have to be everywhere. Pick one platform if that's what you have time for. Choose the thing you have fun with. I love Twitter, but I'm not on Instagram because half the time I don't even remember that my phone can also take photos. Some authors love Facebook. You don't have to divide your attention if there's one thing you can master, because readers will find you there.

Post about things you're passionate about that also relate to your books. If you write historical romance, post about historical fashion, or interesting historical facts, or your favorite Jane Austen novel, or where you fall in the Rochester vs. Darcy debate. (Team Rochester!) If you write sports romance, talk about your favorite team or live tweet a game. If a lot of your books are set in the same place, share information about that place. If you've got a character with an interesting career—fashion designer, astronaut, smoke jumper, what have you—share articles about that career. Pique your readers' interests by being natural and genuine online. People who share your interests will check out your books.

There's a lot more I could say about social media—hashtags get more eyes on your posts, but more than two or three means fewer people see them, at least on Twitter; use analytics to focus your attention; Facebook algorithms are a nebulous thing—but it boils down to this: a lot of authors use social media a time-sucking way that nevertheless does little to forward their career. If that's time you could be spending on anything else—a more effective promotional platform or even just writing your next book—do that thing. If everything I have said about social media makes it seem daunting, that's okay. You can delete your accounts right now. No, really.

Find the promo that works for you and your schedule. Make it fun! Make it a game! Don't let it drag you down! But don't do the thing that everyone else is doing just because everyone else is doing it.♥

*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 has served as President of Rainbow Romance Writers, the LGBT romance chapter of Romance Writers of America; and as Vice President of RWA/NYC. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. Visit her at [www.katemcmurray.com](http://www.katemcmurray.com).*

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**CONFERENCE SHOWDOWN: RT VS. RWA**
**BY LISA SIEFERT**


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I love conferences. There's really nothing about them that I don't like. I especially love the planning stage and mapping out all of the conferences happening for the year. In fact, I love it so much that I even created a calendar of over 100 events happening in 2017 that you can download at <http://bit.ly/rrcalendar2017>



In addition to choosing among all of the events in this calendar, as a romance writer, your biggest choice every year is probably whether to attend the Romantic Times Convention or the Romance Writers of America Annual Conference. Let's go through the pros and cons of each.

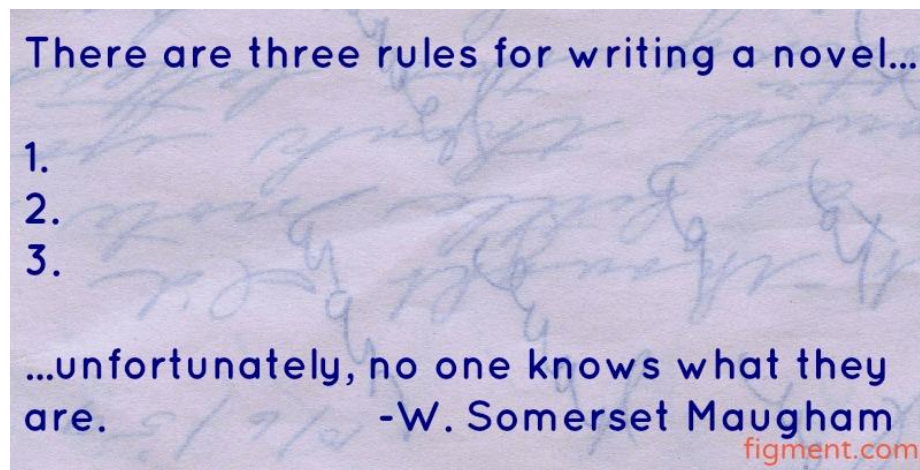
- **Craft** If you're looking for more instruction and lecture style information on the actual craft of writing, RWA tends to be more selective in who is allowed to present craft workshops and reviews materials beforehand. RT does better on pre-conference workshops for this. In fact, RWA does not offer any pre-conference workshops. Sometimes the individual online chapters will host half or all day workshops but typically these are just panels and/or a single speaker on one topic.
  - Winner: RWA workshops for the actual conference but RT wins for the pre-conference sessions.
- **Free Books** Both conferences offer a boatload of free books at the Publisher spotlights and Meet the Author signing events as well as random free books just lying around the hotel. But my suitcase is always way overfilled after RT.
  - Winner: RT has more book giveaway sessions and parties presented by publishers.
- **The Goody Room** if you've never heard of a Goody Room, then you're in for a treat. Every conference attendees receives a ticket for one visit to the Goody Room during the conference. Typically, the best books are given away in the Goody Room and in years past the giveaways would be spread out during the conference so what you see on day one in the Goody Room is not the same as what you see on day two and day three. But lately, it seems that all books are provided one day one and if you're late, you miss out so it pays to get to the Goody Room on day one of the conference. If you wait until the last day, no tickets are required and anyone can take anything but by that time, it's usually just lots of promo material and swag.
  - Winner: RWA's Goody Room is much more organized but repeats the same book and giveaways over and over but RT's Goody Room is larger.
- **Book Promotion if you're an author** RWA's charity book signing the night before the conference starts is a huge event and a great opportunity to promote your book to a larger audience of mostly fellow writers. RT's Great Book Hall signing on the last day is just as large

but has more of an external crowd of readers. If you're an indie, RT is better than RWA. I was able to get an indie signing table for RWA but only because I was a speaker for the conference and able to register early. It was a smaller event and most of my friends who registered during regular open registration did not receive a table for the indie book signing. However, they may open more tables for future events but because it was an event by itself, it did not draw as large of a crowd as the regular book signings. RT combines indies with traditional authors which is better for promoting your book.

- Winner: RT for overall attendees and a wider scope of reader reach.
- **Cost** They're about the same in terms of registration, travel, hotel + food. Neither conference provides much in terms of free food or hotel discounts so it's a wash.
  - Winner: Tie

I've personally been to both of these conferences multiple times and overall RWA has more of a formal, corporate feel to it while RT is a party. ♥

*Lisa Siefert [Pen Name: Lisa London] is a contemporary + erotica romance writer who also writes marketing books for romance writers. You can download a FREE copy of How to Launch a Virtual Book at <https://www.instafreebie.com/free/ebJ07>*





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**REVIEW: LEARNING MORE THROUGH CONFERENCING AT  
CREATE SOMETHING MAGICAL CONFERENCE  
BY CATHERINE GREENFEDER**

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Although I have had my share of conferences through the years, I was thrilled to be at this year's Liberty State Fiction Writers "Create Something Magical Conference" held in Iselin, New Jersey. LSFW does a fine job of providing workshops for writers and readers, as well as having highly motivational guest speakers. This year's keynote speakers, Jennifer L. Armentrout and Virginia Kantra, each a multi-published and award winning novelist, truly inspired me with their energy, humor, and life stories. The workshops for writers focused on both craft and business. Here are two which I attended and found very helpful.

**Writing Fast and Being Prolific from Jennifer L. Armentrout and Laura Kaye**

This workshop presented by award winning and multi-published authors Jennifer L. Armentrout and Laura Kaye focused on productivity. According to the speakers, the ideal for keeping interested readers would be to have a new release every three months, and if writing a series, to keep books close together. For becoming prolific as they had become, you need to write fast.

Some of the suggestions offered include the following:

- Carve out time each day for writing
- Avoid Internet distraction; if possible, set a timer while using the Internet
- Don't read what you just wrote. Write a fast first draft and then go back to revise.
- Try doing sprints where you write and take breaks in between writing. You can set a timer for both writing and break time. It was suggested that for some writers, this enhances one's creativity.
- Give yourself permission to write out of order instead of sequentially. If you know a scene and can't wait to get to writing it, go for it.
- Set reasonable and achievable word goals.
- Keep a balance in your life so that you don't wear yourself out. That means making time for your health, your family, and friends.

**Plot Your Work presented by C. J. Ellison**

This workshop presented by multi-published novelist C.J. Ellison addresses the struggle of balancing one's writing work with the rest of one's life. It addressed how to organize on multiple novel projects, setting and completing tasks to reach your writing goals, and maintaining focus on a daily basis.



C.J. Ellison provided worksheets and guided participants through using them to plan their writing projects around their life events. She suggested setting realistic goals and sticking to them. Ask yourself how many words or pages per day can you write as well as when can you write them.

She suggested using dictating software, such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, or the voice recorder of your mobile phone to tell your story more quickly.

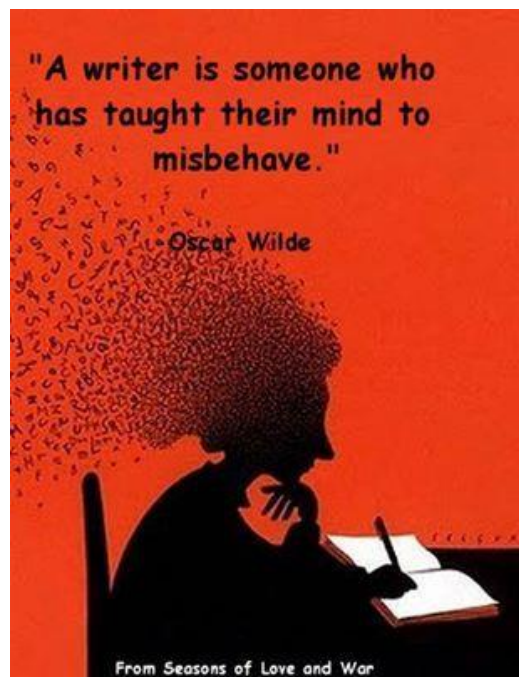
She also suggested limiting time with social media and including it on your daily planner. A good rule is the 80 – 20 rule whereby you spend 80% of time with social media on sharing something about yourself or your genre and 20% to promote your books.

***Plot Your Work, The Writer's Project Planner*** is a book which C.J. Ellison made available for sale to attendees for use in structuring their writing time and planning projects.



It contained a weekly, monthly, yearly, and project planning section. There is room for mind mapping and bullet journaling. It also included helpful tips on finding balance, such as getting exercise, posting to social media sites, using newsletters, listening to music to increase word count, and help with marketing.♥

*Catherine Greenfeder, a charter member of RWA/NYC, is the author of two young adult novels, A DANCE OUT OF TIME and A KISS OUT OF TIME, and a western historical novel, WILDFLOWERS. She hopes to use what she learned in the workshops to plot work time and write more quickly as she finishes work on her current book projects.*



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**REVIEW: LIBERTY STATES FICTION WRITERS:  
CREATE SOMETHING MAGICAL CONFERENCE 2017  
BY JN WELSH**

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On March 18 and 19th, Liberty States Fiction Writers (LSFW) hosted their annual conference. This year's theme was entitled Create Something Magical and what a great conference experience. I was a first-timer to this event and I am glad I attended. Not only was conference held locally for most attendees in Iselin, New Jersey but was also jam-packed with great workshops from the moment the event officially opened at 9:00am on Saturday.

Agents and editors were available for scheduled appointments and they heard from an array of attending fiction authors. Though there were some agent/editor cancellations, alternative manuscript submission options were available and handled well by the LSFw Committee.

Workshops on craft included How to Craft a Slam-Dunk Hook with Mary Altman and Laura Costello, Intimacy with Tere Michaels and Damon Suede and The Killing Game with Melinda Leigh and Dee Davis. Additional workshops and panels by our own RWA/NYC chapter members Kate McMurray (Big Picture Revising), LaQuette (Tools of the Trade) and Harper Mills (In Loving Color: Diversity in Romance) were packed with attendees ready for information.

#1 New York Times and International Bestselling author, Jennifer L. Armentrout, delivered inspirational words for authors citing multiple rejections, challenging times and embracing the option to indie publish even with established works.

The Sunday breakfast speech by Virginia Kantra was humorous, empowering and emotional carrying with it a theme of "you are good enough" and navigating the ebbs and flows of your writing career especially when others may not identify or understand your chosen career path.

All in all, this was an organized, fun and well thought out conference, housing many educational and networking opportunities offered by the big conferences but on micro scale. Congratulations and a very special thanks to the 2017 Conference Committee and LSFw Board who did a great job. With the familiar faces of RWA/NYC chapter members at the conference, New York was definitely represented and appreciated. If you are thinking about attending the LSFw Conference, plug this event into your calendar for 2018. ♥





**LIBERTY STATES CONFERENCE PHOTO ALBUM**

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*RWA/NYC Members who attended included JN Welsh, Cathy Greenfeder, Laquette, Alexis Daria, Xyla Turner, Kate McMurray, Karen Cino, Chloe Blaque, Carolyn Gibbs and Dee Davis.*



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**A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN**  
**BY LISA ANN VERGE**

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*This is a new monthly feature. Members are invited to share their writing room with us.*

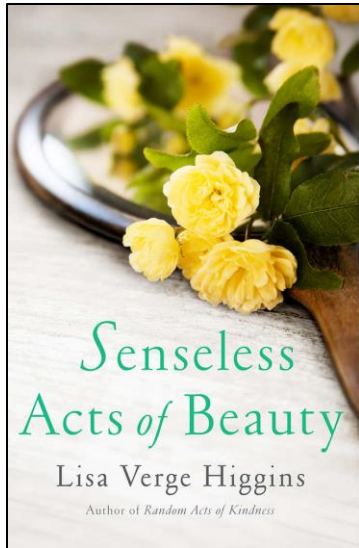


This is the room that clinched our decision to buy the house. My husband and I had been looking for a home for two years, to no avail. We recognized this house as a standard two-story center hall colonial, so finding three bedrooms on the second floor wasn't a surprise. It was the fourth door that knocked me for a loop.

I remember when the realtor opened it. I felt like the Pevensie kids in *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*, reaching through the furs at the back of the wardrobe only to tumble into a new kingdom. The door led to a set of stairs to an attic that had been recently renovated. A sitting room. An office. A private bathroom. All bathed in light.

Now, some writers can be productive in chaos, or write in ten-minute intervals, or keep late-night or early-morning hours. I work best given long stretches of uninterrupted time so that I can sink, fully and joyfully, into my characters and their world. Here was a suite that could be closed off from the rest of the house. All I needed was a hot pot for tea and I'd never have to leave.



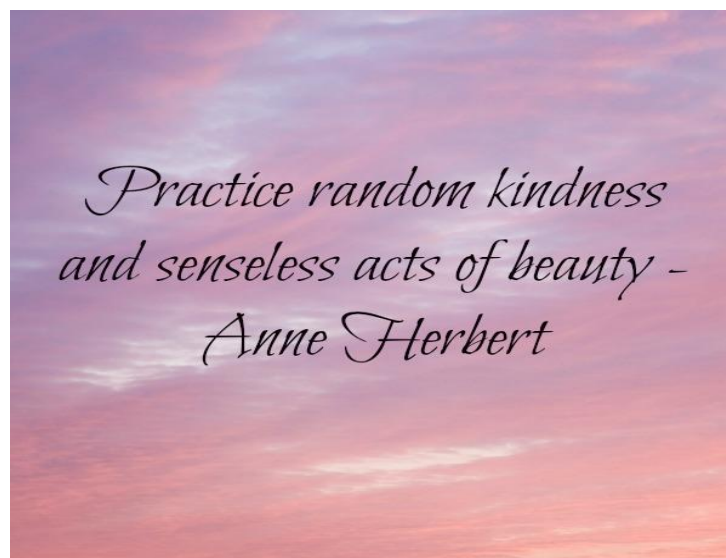


While these sugarplum dreams danced in my head, the realtor babbled on about using the area as a master suite, or a guest room, or a hang-out for teenagers. But I knew in an instant that this was my writing garret. We bought the house and within a few months we moved fifty-seven boxes of books up three flights of stairs into the bookshelves that lined the eaves.

In this room I've written most of my eighteen published novels. I wrote while the babies napped and while a neighborhood girl watched my kids after school. I was close by my children if any emergency arose, yet far enough removed that I could sink into my work. For a working mother, the situation couldn't be more perfect.

My kids are older now, and one of them is a writer herself. (My oldest, writing as C. A. Higgins: Check out her Sci-Fi trilogy LIGHTLESS, SUPERNOVA, and the final installment in the series, RADIATE coming out in May 2017! Mom brag over.) She's living in Brooklyn, where it's hard to dedicate space just to writing, but I'm hoping someday she'll have the same thrill of opening an unexpected door only to fall into a room of her own.♥

*Lisa Ann Verge is the critically acclaimed RITA-nominated author of eighteen novels that have been published worldwide and translated into as many languages. She writes sexy, adventurous romance about hot men and dangerous women and also writes life-affirming women's fiction under the name Lisa Verge Higgins. Lisa is a five-time finalist in Romantic Times' book awards, her novels have won the Golden Leaf and the Bean Pot, and twice she has cracked Barnes & Noble's General Fiction Forum's top twenty books of the year. She currently lives in New Jersey with her husband and their three daughters, who never fail to make life interesting.*



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**TOP 5 TOOLS YOU CAN'T DO CAMP NANO WITHOUT**
**BY LISA SIEFERT**


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I've failed at NaNo. A lot. I really thought sheer will-power and desire alone could get me through it. I'd pre-plot everything, amass a huge collection of craft advice books around me and make sure to charge my laptop every night. But somehow I'd miss a day or two there, and then three and then four... And then NaNo would come up again and I'd try the same thing but with a stronger determination but still the same thing happened again.

Finally, the third NaNo, I did it! And then the one after that and the one after that. I'd finally figured it out and I'm here to share how.

Here are my top must-have tools to keep you on track.

1. **A Pomodoro Timer** If you haven't tried this method out, you're missing out. It's basically 25 minutes of uninterrupted concentrated focus on a single task followed by 5 minutes of free time. It helps to remove distractions from your mind by allowing it to focus on only the task at hand. You can easily put out any other thoughts out of your mind know that you'll be able to thinking about, research or do something about them during your 5 minute break.
2. **Cathy Yardley's Rock Your Plot** This is the Bible of outlining a good genre fiction book from beginning to end. She has downloads to accompany her structure and it's super easy to follow,
3. **Reedsy** Forget Scrivener, forget its copycat Ulysses...instead try Reedsy as your editor. First, it's in the cloud so you're not device dependent and when you're done, you can easily package it up and post it on Amazon.
4. **Pinterest Board** You've heard of creating a board for your book of characters but what about your scenes, chapters and black moment? This of your book like a movie and plan a visual backdrop for every part to help keep you on track.
5. **The NaNo Planner** This is basically a replication of the wall calendar I followed each day. It tells you exactly how many words you need to hit each day to make the 50K total. It allows you to record your word count and also provides space each day for notes and a motivational quote to keep you going. You can buy it now at <http://bit.ly/nanoplanner>

A good combination of pre-plotting, scheduling and planning will help you to not only conquer Camp Nano but any given month you want to NaNo.♥

*Lisa Siefert [Pen Name: Lisa London] is a contemporary + erotica romance writer who also writes marketing books for romance writers. You can download a FREE copy of How to Launch a Virtual Book at <https://www.instafreebie.com/free/ebJ07>*