

KEYNOTES



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

**NEXT CHAPTER MEETING & CRITIQUE SESSION: SATURDAY, JULY 8
TRS, 40 EXCHANGE PLACE, 3RD FLOOR, 12-4PM**



TOPIC: WORKING WITH AN AGENT

SPEAKER: LATOYA C. SMITH

Everything you wanted to know about why to get an agent and how to find the best one. This workshop will cover how to prepare to query, what to look for in a good agent, what your agent can do for you, and what to do if things go wrong. This will be a workshop for writers at all stages of their careers.♥

BIO: Latoya C. Smith started her editorial career as an administrative assistant to *New York Times* bestselling author, Teri Woods at Teri Woods Publishing, while pursuing her Bachelor's Degree at Temple University. She graduated Cum Laude from Temple in August of 2005. She then attained a full-time position at Kensington Publishing in March of 2006. In October 2006, Latoya joined Grand Central Publishing, an imprint at Hachette Book Group. For the span of her eight years there, Latoya acquired a variety of titles from Hardcover fiction and non-fiction, to digital romance and erotica. She was featured in *Publishers Weekly* and *USA Today*, as well as on various author, book conference, and book blogger websites. She is the winner of the 2012 RWA/NYC Golden Apple for Editor of the Year. In early 2014, she appeared on CSpan2 where she contributed to a panel

discussing the state of book publishing. From August 2014 to February 2016, Latoya was Executive Editor at Samhain Publishing where she acquired short and long form romance and erotic fiction. Now, Latoya provides editorial and consultation services through her company, LCS Literary Services. She is also an agent with the L. Perkins Agency.

2017 RWA/NYC
Kathryn Hayes
When Sparks Fly
When the Sparks are undeniable & the Chemistry is explosive
Contest submissions open July 1st - September 1st
www.rwanyc.com/guidelines.html

See page 6.



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THANK YOU!

To Our Contributing Writers
 Kay Blake, Maria Cox, Alexis Daria,
 Maria Ferrer, Linda London, Kate McMurray,
 Mimi Pizarro-Logsdon, Joan Ramirez,
 Ursula Renée, Mageela Troche, Jenn Welsh

2017 CHAPTER CALENDAR

Jul 8 Aug 5 Sep 9 Oct 7 Nov 4 Dec 2

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.

AUGUST THEME

FEELING HOT HOT HOT!

What do you consider “Hot?”

How do you get in the mood to write Hot?

*Share a Hot excerpt from your book with us--
 200 words! Don’t forget to include a bio.*

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

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.

RWA/NYC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: OCCUPATION VS. AVOCATION
IS WRITING YOUR HOBBY OR YOUR JOB?
BY KATE MCMURRAY**



Because art requires so much of our souls, it falls into the middle of a Venn diagram showing business and pleasure. Many of us write because we love it or it calls to us. Many of us also loathe the monetary aspects of it; we'd rather write our books than try to sell them. But if we want careers doing the thing we love; the business of writing plays a big role.

So what are your goals? Do you write solely for pleasure, or do you set goals with the aim of making a career of it? Do you write full time, or when you have time, or just when the whim strikes? There are absolutely no wrong answers here; creative pursuits are deeply personal.

I've known hobby writers who write stories every now and then or participate in NaNoWriMo every year but have never taken the next steps to publish their books. They love writing, but aren't in any hurry to publish or even share their writing with anyone. I've also known writers at the other end of the spectrum, who are entrepreneurs who run their writing career like a business, with strict deadlines, quality standards, and detailed business plans. These extremes and everything in between are legitimate ways to handle your writing—only you can decide what your goals are—but one thing I've seen a lot lately are writers who want careers but still treat their writing like a hobby.

I've seen this manifest itself in two ways. Either authors are in such a rush to get their product to market they cut corners, or authors value the creative expression more than the packaging of the final project.

Here's what I mean by that. I've seen a rash of social media posts from self-published authors recently that are some variation on, "I want to put books out but I don't have the means to hire people to help me, so I'm just going to do what I can and hope for the best." These are authors who don't hire editors, who do their own covers (badly), who just type out a story and upload it. I've also seen writers who complain when reviewers ding them for bad editing, saying grammar shouldn't matter, that the *story* is more important.

And, look, I get it. Author services are expensive. You could spend a few thousand dollars to produce a book if you hire top-quality editors, cover designers, and book formatters. There are many authors who can't afford that. But I feel that authors aren't taking their potential customers seriously if they skimp on the quality of the final product for the sake of putting out a book. They're short-changing themselves, too, because bad covers and books riddled with mistakes turn off readers, so rather than cultivating a group of fans on which to build a career, they're putting out books that may sell a few copies but probably won't inspire repeat customers.

So why not work to save the money to hire quality people? Or why not try submitting that novel to a traditional publisher, who will take on the expense of packaging the book well?



Because, yes, a novel is a creative expression, but if you want a writing career, it's also a product. You wouldn't buy a piece of furniture missing some screws or a cake that is only half-frosted or clothing with seams that were incomplete. So why would you buy a book that is still unpolished? Why would you expect readers to buy that book?

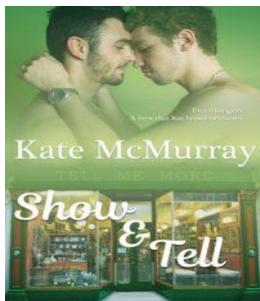
Here's why it's important. Shifts in the market have made it harder to be competitive as a self-published author. The days when an author could upload a book, sell it for 99¢, and sell thousands of copies are largely over. This is not to say that self-publishing success cannot be achieved, but more that the authors who will do well are those who treat their writing careers seriously, and not as a hobby. They treat writing as a business, putting out polished projects that are well written, well edited, and have eye-catching covers.

Which means investing in your product, just as you would with any business. If you want to make furniture, you invest in the materials to make good-quality furniture. Why wouldn't you do the same for a book? Put in the time to make the book as good as you can make it, which means studying craft and improving the quality of your writing, taking your time to write a good draft and revise it, working with critique partners to get feedback and improve, and then hiring an editor to put the final polish on it. All of these steps take time and work. If you don't have the design skills, hire a cover designer. Pay for software to format your book, or hire a formatter. These are expenses, yes, and may end up being significant expenses if you hire quality people and pay them what they're worth, but think of it as an investment to make your book a quality product.

The authors making six-figures self-publishing have a whole team of people they work with and put out books on a regular schedule. It's an incredible amount of work—a successful writing career is a hell of a lot of work, full stop—but the payoff is worth it.

Or, if you really don't have the means, the model of traditional publishing is that the publisher takes on the cost of making a quality product. Publishing isn't either/or these days, so you could also consider going the traditional publishing route, building up a platform and a fan base, and then begin self-publishing as well for the higher royalty rates and more creative control, if that's what you want. Studies indicate the most successful authors (from a financial standpoint) are hybrid authors who do a mix of self and traditional publishing.

But at the end of the day, you should decide for yourself what you want. If you want to write stories, put them out into the world, and would be delighted by a few sales, that's great. But if you want a career, you have to invest in 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.

WELCOME! NEW MEMBER

RUTH VINCENT

**CHAPTER MINUTES: JUNE 3
BY SECRETARY JENNIFER WELSH**



Attendance: 12 members

President Kate McMurray called the General Meeting to order at 12:15pm

The meeting began with lively open discussion on the pros and cons of the Feminism in Romance event with Eloisa James and Julia Quinn at Strand Bookstore. Many RWA/NYC members attended.

President's Report: Kate confirmed membership total: We currently have 76 members. Kate introduced new/returning attendees to the meeting as well as our guest speaker.

Kate also announced next meetings speaker: Agent LaToya Smith who will speak at our July 9th meeting. She will discuss, preparing your manuscript and documents for submission.

Treasurer's Report: Maria Cox is returning on June 10th and will give us her update at the next meeting.

Golden Apples: Stacy will be announcing the winners via email soon.

Kathryn Hayes "When Sparks Fly" Contest: LaQuette reported that we are ready to advertise and receive submissions for judging. For those who would like to participate in judging, reach out to Laquette@novelsbylaquette.com.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Newsletter and Websites: Write for keynotes!!! Keynotes theme was emailed to the group. There was some discussion on possibly getting themes more in advance – perhaps for the rest of the year.

Publicity: RWA/NYC night Lady Jane's Monday, July 10th (second week in July due to the holiday). Four member have been chosen to read so come out and support:

- Harper Miller
- Michael Molloy
- Erica Obey
- Anna DePalo
- Ursula Renee (backup)

Round Robin begins. Speakers Fran Cassano on Library Distribution for Authors.

Chapter meeting adjourned at 12:48pm♥

CHAPTER CONTEST
BY COORDINATOR LAQUETTE



2017
RWA/NYC

Kathryn
Hayes

When Sparks
Fly

RWA/NYC is looking for
published stories where the
spark is undeniable, and the
chemistry is explosive.
Check out
[www.rwanyc.com/
guidelines.html](http://www.rwanyc.com/guidelines.html)
for contest entry details.
Submissions open
July 1st -September 1st

Eligibility

Published submissions only, with an original publication date of January 1st—December 31st, 2016 (manuscript must have been published via traditional publishing, self-publishing, or small press, and must be available on platforms such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc.)

Timeline

- Submissions open: July 1st - Sept 1, 2017
- Finalists Announced: November 10th, 2017
- Winners Announced: December 2nd, 2017 Format
- Electronic submissions only
- PDF and/or mobi

Fee: \$25 RWA member \$35 Non-RWA member

Contact: Contest Coordinator: LaQuette, email: rwanyccontest@gmail.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.♥

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!♥



CHAPTER NEWS

P&PM. The RWA/NYC Board has updated the chapter's Policy & Procedure Manual to include a harassment policy. If you'd like to familiarize with this policy, the updated manual can be found on the Yahoo loop, in the files section."

Database. We're compiling a database of members' social media accounts so that chapter members can follow each other. The database is in the Yahoo group, and can be found at this link:

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/RWA-NYC/database/4/edit>

Press the +Add Row button to add your info, and follow your chapter mates!

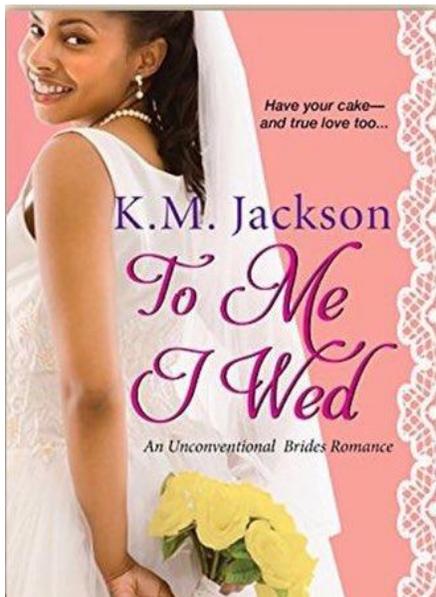
Survey. The RWA/NYC Board is surveying the membership. If you have not yet completed the survey, please go to <https://goo.gl/forms/gmoMyZPrA7x5vqTe2> and fill it out.♥

MEMBER NEWS

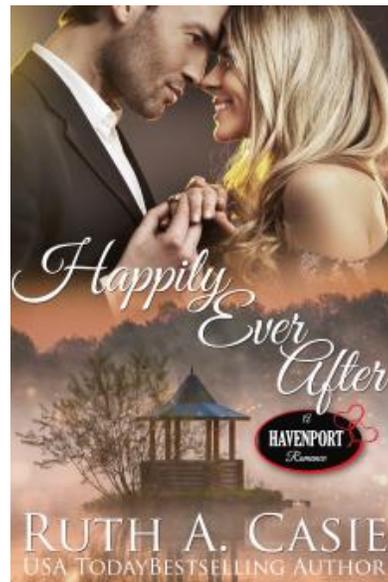
USA Today posted an exclusive excerpt of **Ruth A. Casie's** HAPPILY EVER AFTER: Here's the link: <http://happyeverafter.usatoday.com/2017/06/07/happily-ever-after-excerpt-ruth-casie/>

Anna DePalò, Harper Miller, Michael Molloy and **Erica Obey** will read at the July 10 Lady Jane's Salon. (**Ursula Renée** is on backup.) All members are encouraged to attend and support.♥

MEMBERS ON THE SHELF

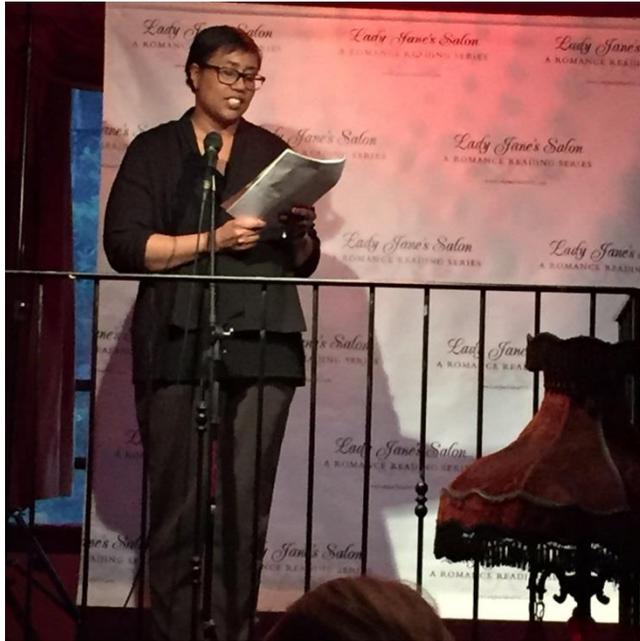


TO ME I WED
An Unconventional Brides Romance
by K.M. Jackson



HAPPILY EVER AFTER
A Havenport Romance
by Ruth A. Casie

PHOTO ALBUM: LADY JANE'S SALON, JUNE 5



K.M. Jackson read from her new book, *TO ME I WED*, at Lady Jane's Salon on June 5th. Several members of RWA/NYC were on hand to cheer her on, including Kate McMurray, Alexis Daria, Falguni Kothari, Jenn Welsh, and Rebecca Brooks.♥



A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

ALEXIS DARIA

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

Soft lighting. Skylights. Ceiling fans. Adjustable office chairs. Standing desk attachments. Over two dozen cubicles with large, blessedly empty desks, and a power strip handily positioned beneath each. A multitude of spare desk lamps, electric fans, space heaters, and white noise machines. And a central seating area with a comfy sofa, two arm chairs, and a coffee table covered in a random assortment of books.

And silence. Sweet, uninterrupted, silence.

Paragraph is a 24-hour membership-based writing space on 14th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues. It boasts a large quiet room for writers, and offers other amenities like locker rentals, a cafe seating area, and all the fixings for coffee and tea, including non-dairy options. It's at the top of a three-story walk-up, but it's worth every step.

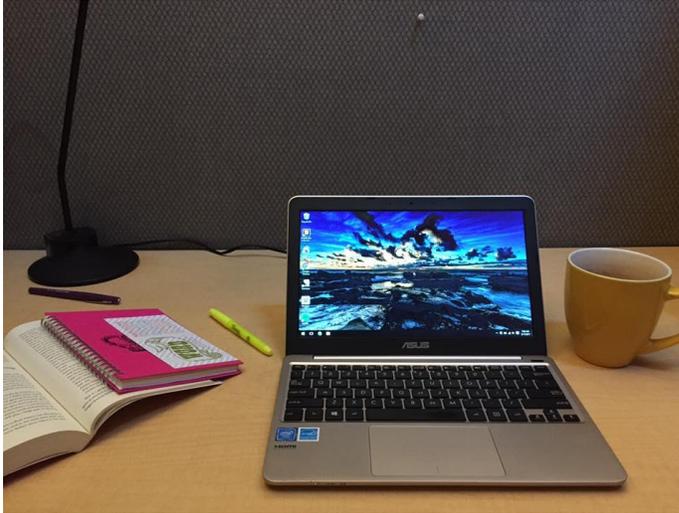


I've visited Paragraph a few times in the past. The owner has invited the New York City NaNoWriMo region to use the space for one day every November for the past few years. I live in the neighborhood, and I always said I'd get a membership when I got a book deal. That time finally came.

Now, I *could* write at home. I've done it in the past. I have time and lots of tables. But my boyfriend works from home part of the time, the TV is *always* on, and I seem incapable of keeping piles of receipts, mail, and fanart (don't ask) from cluttering my desks when I'm in the middle of writing a book. At home, it's hard to resist the allure of a nap. Or the TV. Or reading, or cleaning, or...even *laundry*. You get the idea.



When faced with a tight deadline, I figured it was time to make good on my promise to myself. Paragraph was featured in the *New York Times* earlier this year, and my boyfriend's mom was like, "Isn't that the place near you? You should sign up." I registered for a free trial day to test out the quiet room, because as many times as I'd been there in the past, I always sat in the kitchen area, since I was technically "working" in my capacity as NaNoWriMo Municipal Liaison.



At first, I tensed whenever someone walked by, waiting to be interrupted. But it never happened. *No one here was going to talk to me.* It was great!

Blessed, uninterrupted writing time. A clean, clear desk, devoid of clutter. I applied for a membership immediately.

I try to call myself out on excuses, like, “I can’t write at home.” I said that for a long time and spent a lot of money at cafes as a result. The truth is, I *can* write at home, but the amount of stress Paragraph saves me is worth every penny I’m paying for

membership. (I’m also saving money on food. I make use of their tea cabinet, and I keep yogurt and other small food items in the fridge.) The way I look at it, this is another investment in myself and my writing career, just like my RWA membership. I started out with a part-time membership, but since my deadline is looming, I recently upped it to full-time for the next month.

Think about what you need for your writing and your quality of life. If it’s feasible and within reach, go for it.♥

Alexis Daria’s debut contemporary romance, TAKE THE LEAD, is a 2017 Golden Heart® finalist and will be released in Fall 2017 from SMP Swerve. On Sunday evenings, Alexis co-hosts #RWchat, a weekly Twitter chat for romance writers. She also serves as PRO Liaison for the New York City chapter of RWA, and is represented by Sarah E. Younger from Nancy Yost Literary Agency. Alexis loves social media, and you can find her as @alexisdaria on Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest, @alexidaria1 on Facebook, and follow her blog, alexisdaria.com.

If a story is in you,
it has got to come out.

William Faulkner

HELLO AND WELCOME TO MY WRITING DEN!© BY MARIA COX

REVIEW: DESERT DREAMS CONFERENCE 2017



Conference Badge

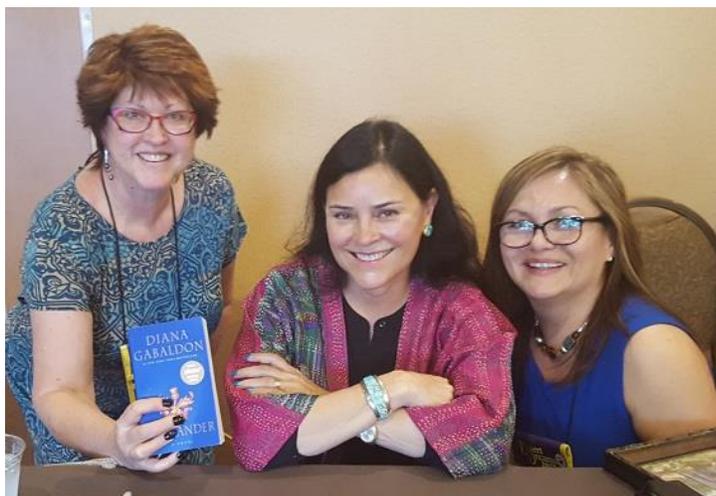
On June 1-4 the Phoenix chapter of RWA, Desert Rose, hosted their annual conference in beautiful Scottsdale, Arizona. This year's theme was Write Your Dreams into Reality. I was a first-timer to this event and I am glad I attended.

The event was jam-packed with useful workshops from the moment it officially kicked off at 10:00am on Thursday. Agents and editors were available for scheduled appointments. Though there were some cancellations, alternative options were offered to participating attendees.



Workshops on the craft of writing included How to Submit and Get Attention with Mary Altman, Platform, Product & Promotion with Bob Mayer and Secret To eBook Publishing Success with Jim Acevedo, Smashwords Marketing Director.

#1 New York Times and International Bestselling author, Diana Gabaldon was Keynote Speaker for Friday's event. Ms. Gabaldon spoke about her journey into the film industry via the wildly popular and critically acclaimed *Outlander* series. It was a phenomenal experience to hear Ms. Gabaldon speak.



Sandy Wright, award winning author of women's fiction, Diana Gabaldon & Maria Cox, RWA/NYC Treasurer

Saturday's evening festivities were enjoyable and informative. I had an opportunity to network with readers and writers some as far away as Colorado and Alaska.

If you have never attended a conference I would highly encourage you to make the investment. I learned much from chatting with different authors and discovering what has and has not worked for

them. Consequently, Alice Gaines and I sat during a break had some wine and chatted about her novel *Kiss the Frog* novel, later I would witness Alice receive the 2017 Best First Book award. Awesome!

All in all, the Desert Dreams conference was fantastic. From the beautiful venue at the Embassy Suites, to the camaraderie, to all the networking, the experience was priceless. Hope you can make it to one writing conference this year ☺ Happy writing!

On a personal note, I'm ecstatic because not only did I win New York Times Bestselling author Erin Quinn's inspirational frame, but during Saturday night raffle giveaway, I won a one-on-one mentoring session with New York Times and USA Today and Amazon Bestselling author Cathy McDavid!♥

Maria Cox is a PRO member of Romance Writers of America and also the Treasurer of RWA/NYC. Maria 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 and/or follow her on Twitter.



Left: Melissa Singer from Tor



Center: Jim Acevedo,
Smashwords
Marketing Director



From left to right: Maria Cox; Kris Tualla, Desert Rose President; Navissa Kaiser, Phoenix Writers Club Treasurer; Camelia M. Skiba, women's fiction writer



Maria Cox & Erin Quinn



Maria Cox & Cathy McDavid.



MONTHLY THEME: AM WRITING

This month our members are sharing their feelings about how they write through the hard times.

THE CHALLENGE OF WRITING THROUGH HARD TIMES
BY MIMI PIZARRO-LOGSDON

I'd attempted several times to write the first line of this article. I hoped to make an eloquent or profound statement about the challenge of writing through hard times, specifically during my husband's current illness. Unfortunately, now, in this moment, the only line that constantly circles through my mind, like the ticker tape that runs underneath the news broadcast, is "It sucks!"



It hasn't always been that way. Writing has been a comforting friend. Written words are the catharsis that have helped me through many hard times.

When my older sister died of a heart attack at the young age of 50 in 2005, I wrote dozens of short stories about her and the fun adventures we had while growing up. They were my savior during my mourning. She was my half-sister, but I whole loved her. In fact, she gave me my first romance novel. While cleaning her bedroom, I found a manuscript she'd been working on. It was a regency romance novel. That day I learned something new about my sister. She was a romance writer.

Writing comforted me again in 2013 when I was diagnosed with Uterine Cancer. After surgery, I felt less of a woman and the whole experience made me depressed. I stopped reading. I wasn't interested in literary novels, romantic swooning damsels, or contemporary hot women who had hot sex with hot guys. Luckily, I found my savior in Paranormal Romance and fell madly in love with the genre. It became my great escape and I began to write paranormal stories of my own. During my recovery, I attended forums, courses and workshops that led to wonderful friendships with some aspiring and established writers. Those friends suggested I'd benefit from joining the RWA and the New York Chapter. I joined Spring of 2014, excited to learn more about the art of writing romance. It brought me back.

I've gained an abundance of knowledge, skills, and creative growth as the result of my membership. Outlines, character profiles and scenes filled my imagination, resulting in several manuscripts. It became my passion. My husband noticed that I enjoyed it so much, he encouraged me to work towards getting published. Leading to positive progress and opportunities. When times are good, writing comes easy for. It's fun. Happiness is a positive and productive motivator for me.

This brings me back to my opening statement. I know I'm not the only writer who has gone through hard times, has experienced loss, illness and/or an "almost" divorce. And, writing along with

sculpting, painting and exercising is considered therapeutic. Writers such as Albert Camus and Alexandre Dumas wrote to release their anxiety towards philosophy and politics. Emily Dickinson and Anne Sexton wrote to help them through depression. Writing is an emotional art form. The past few months I've dabbled, and tried to write, but couldn't. Instead, I shopped. It made me feel good for a day, but buyer's remorse kicked in the next morning. This week my husband will have double surgery, half of his throat, a cancerous tumor and half of his stomach will be removed. We've been through a lot in 16 years, but this time I'm not scared – I'm petrified. My fear is stronger than my desire and all I can write are excuses why I can't write. That's why, "It sucks!" Still, the words "In sickness and in health, till death do us part" come to mind often these days. I have to believe it's an omen that my writer's block may be on its way out and once again writing will be my savior. Now more than ever I need to find the words to stand up to the challenge.♥

Mimi Pizarro-Logsdon has been writing romance stories since her teens, and loves the Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Paranormal genres. She has worked in the media industry for over 25 years, and currently works at HBO, Inc. She lives in New York with her husband and pets. One of them, an eccentric cat named George she features in her current romance series, "Immortals In New York." Follow her on Twitter: @mimilogsdon; Facebook: mimipizarro.

THROUGH GOOD TIMES AND BAD

BY JOAN RAMIREZ

I am blessed to have a friend in Australia whom I've known for 25 years and sees me through good and bad times. She is a retired office manager who delights in hearing about my literary projects. Despite the distance, we keep in touch online and through correspondence. I am constantly running themes by her. She is my sounding board. She recently lost someone significant in her life so it was my turn to lift her spirits this month. I wish I could've crawled through the phone when we've been able to afford to speak to each other and sooth her anxieties as she's done for me. She has taught me how to be resilient like the tree that bends in the wind. Someday, I know I'll be in Australia with my dear friend front row center as I dedicate my published romance to her and give her a "hot off the press" autographed copy.♥

Joan Ramirez has published three nonfiction books as well as many online short mystery stories and is currently a freelance educator and journalist. The best is yet to come: Published romance and romantic suspense novels.



**TO WRITE OR NOT TO WRITE?
MY BATTLE WITH CHRONIC PAIN & WRITING
BY KAY BLAKE**

You know the grating sound a drill makes when it crushes through the pavement. How we can heat every crack as the concrete crumble so that the construction worker can get dig into the earth and get to work? Now imagine actually feeling that same drill digging into your skin. The many pricks, shooting, dull and sharp pains all engulfing your body at the very same time. That's what it is like for an average day for me.



I have fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia is chronic widespread body pain. Most people like me also experience things such as moderate to severe fatigue, not being able to sleep/sleep disturbances, sensitivity to sound, light touch, and other cognitive difficulties such as remembering things short term. Fibro fog which I experience often is where I would go to do something and forget what I was about to do. It also consists of things such as talking to someone and all of a sudden losing train of thought and forgetting what was going to be said. Focusing and finishing tasks sometimes is extremely hard. I was diagnosed with it in 2014 a little more than a year after my youngest daughter was born. At first I thought it was the typical pains that some women go through after the body adjust to having a baby. Oh, was I mistaken.

I recently graduated college with my bachelor's in Psychology and during that time I published 3 novellas, as well as participated in 2 anthologies. I've been asked how I did it with fibro, and 3 children. My answer was simple. One day at a time. One of the things most writers will tell you is to try to write every day. There have been days when I was in so much pain that all I could do was curl up in bed and cry. I was in too much pain to even get out of bed. On really bad flares that feeling can last for weeks.

When I need to write something, I will do so on days where the pain is manageable. On those days, I try to get as much done as I can. I know sometimes when I overdo it I will pay for it the next day. However, as a person who loves telling stories and like to create characters the reward is a finished product even if the road there is a long and hard one.

If there are any other writers who have what I have I know it can be hard and most people don't understand what it is to write when your fingers hurt, but it can be done. Take it one day at a time, one word at a time, and you can still be a writer. Everyone's road to victory is always different, but the good thing is that there is a finish line, and that is what you hold on to.♥

Kay writes sassy, sexy and sweet contemporary and interracial romance. She is from arguably the greatest city in the world. (New York). She is a sarcastic sweetheart who prefers snuggling at home with a good book. She is a mom to three cubs. Kay indulges in strawberry cheesecake, horror movies, Harry Potter, The Walking Dead, wrestling and of course a happily ever after.

DEALING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS
BY MAGEELA TROCHE

Chronic illness afflicts approximately 133 million Americans that equals 45% of the population. These diseases include everything from heart disease, Type 2 diabetes to fibromyalgia and multiple sclerosis. Added to the hard times that life can slam us with life with chronic illness can knock you low. When dealing with chronic illness, one must adapt and change, which poses a difficulty because change isn't *your* choice. So how do you deal with life—your goals, difficulties, wants, and needs when you are coping with illness? These are five lessons I learned the hard way.



1. **You can't do everything.** This is a hard lesson to learn but *you cannot do everything* and that's okay. Modern life presses much upon us—career, husband, kids, family, pets, friends, writing, hobbies, social media and everything and anything else. But sometimes, you have to let others do whatever needs to be done.
2. **Listen to yourself.** This piece of advice means knowing the state of yourself physically, mentally and spiritually. If you are tired and cannot clean the house, then don't do it. If your back hurts, then care for it. If you don't want to attend that party, then say no.
3. **Know what is important.** One task you must do is figure out what is important to you and that means those parts of your life you love most in life. For me, it is my writing and my family (that includes my bird). Since I know that these two things are important to me and that means I spend my precious energy on these two aspects of my life before I do something else. Yes, I have lost friends and missed out on life. Yet, I find *my* fulfillment in other ways and that helps me deal with my illness.
4. **Just say no.** Sometimes, you have to say no and that is okay. You have to self-care so that you can do the stuff that is important to you. Besides, how many times have you forced yourself to attend a party when you rather be home reading a book.
5. **Prepare.** This is an important step. When I know that I am attending something like our chapter meeting, I always prepare whether it's clothing choices, taking medication, eating meals even money for a cab since riding the subway tends to cause panic attacks, which also includes various routes home—whether I am walking or having a family member pick me up. It takes energy but you have to decide what you are willing to pay in energy for.♥

*Mageela Troche writes in her cramped apartment in the Big Apple. Her debut novel *The Marriage Alliance* is set for an August re-release. She is the current RWA/NYC PAN Liaison. When she should be writing but isn't, she can be found on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and her website—www.MageelaTroche.com*

ESCAPE
BY URSULA RENÉE

She got a gun, killed your uncle and then shot herself.

For more than a week, I heard my mother's voice in my head as well as the scream I emitted when she told me the tragic news about my uncle. During this time, I had been dealing with various emotions. There was anger at the woman who took the life of an uncle whom I had fond memories of. I felt pain for my mother who was burying a brother almost a year after her mother passed. And, there was disbelief that the events unfolded while I was attending an RWA/NYC chapter meeting.

My son helped me get through those days by making sure I got out of bed and I ate. And, my co-workers offered reassuring hugs and ears. But, even with all their support, I still needed something to quiet the voices in my mind.

As a child, I turned to writing as an escape. If I was unhappy with my parents, I could create a world with understanding relatives or, better yet, a universe in which parents did not exist. But, after my uncle's death, escaping was not that easy.

I was unable to look at my thrillers without thinking about the horrors that took place that Saturday morning and I had trouble believing in a happy-for-now after the tragic end to a forty-five-year marriage. Therefore, I pulled out the notes I had for a historical novel.

Instead of writing words on a page, I research the time period in which my novel would be set. This gave me something to do other than sit in the middle of the bed and replay that Saturday afternoon in my head or wonder what led to the tragedy.

Once I regained my focus and I lost myself in worlds in which I controlled the ending. The good guys received their rewards and the bad were punished.

I do not know how psychologists would feel about my method of coping. However, it helped me get from one day to the next. Eventually, the pain lessened, the voice faded and once again I was able to believe in Happy-for-Now.♥

Ursula Renée writes stories set in the early and mid-twentieth century with a diverse cast who must examine their own beliefs and challenge society's conventions to reach their happy-for-now. Her latest novel, BITTER BLUES, is the second book in her Big Band Series and it explores the challenges an interracial couple faces after saying, "I do," in the 1940s. When she is not writing, Ursula enjoys photography, drawing and stone carving. She is the mother to one son and two cats.



REVIEW: BOOKCON AND ME!
BY KAY BLAKE



As a birthday gift from one of my best friends I attended BookCon for the second time. I always like to attend these kinds of events as a reader because it lets me do one of my favorite things which is to interact with other people much like me. Bookworms!

I went on Saturday June 3rd. I had a jam packed day with many authors that I wanted to meet, get new ARCS, information or even listen to the panels that resonated with me.

While the site was a bit wonky, lines were long, and sometimes unorganized I still enjoyed myself. My main goals was to meet Nicola Yoon, Sarah Dessen and Jenny Han. Even with the time for Sarah and Jenny being at the same time, I was still able to meet the both of them and chat for a bit. I think my favorite was after I meet Nicola, I told her that I went to the premiere with my sister for “Everything, Everything”. I told her how much I enjoyed the movie and how closely it resembled the book. What really made my day was running into Nicola later on and mentioning to her that I was thinking of writing a Young Adult book. For me that was big as I normally write adult romance, but she smiled and told me I should go for it.



Kay and author Sarah Dessen

I know I’m an author, but let me tell you I fangirled so hard that I was close to tears. The book community are some of the most helpful, interesting and nicest people on the planet, and I was fortunate to be there surrounded by them, and access to many more books that made its way into my bookshelf. Will I go next year? Possibly. Maybe one day I could be one of the signing authors like our very own K.M. Jackson (who was awesome on the diversity panel) and Jennifer Green.

For now this gets shelved in as one of the best moments of 2017.♥

Kay Blake writes sassy, sexy and sweet contemporary and interracial romance. She is from arguably the greatest city in the world. (New York). She is a sarcastic sweetheart who prefers snuggling at home with a good book. She is a mom to three cubs. Kay indulges in strawberry cheesecake, horror movies, Harry Potter, The Walking Dead, wrestling and of course a happily ever after.

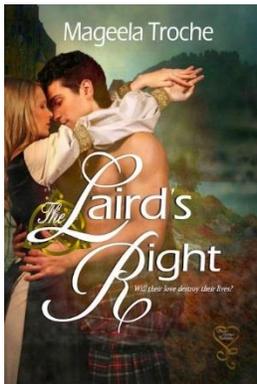
REVIEW: BOOKCON
BY MAGEELA TROCHE



This year, Javits Center hosted Book Con on the first weekend of June. Publishers and all literary-related companies took up residence in the convention center. The show spanned three floors, hosting various panels, signings, and provide all-around entertaining. The crowd milled about the large space, lugging tote bags emblazoned with publisher's logos and gathered around booths that spread out the open space. Confusion affected many of the attending book lovers but was no deterrent to enjoyment. A few attendees stated that the crowds were thin this year yet publications proclaimed that the crowd was larger than last year.

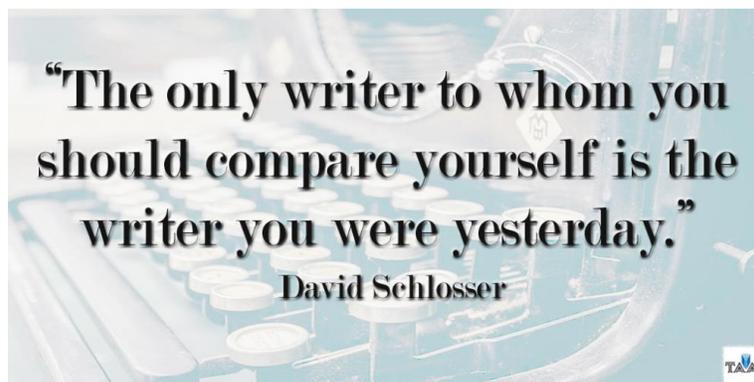
Whatever the numbers the books were all that matter to everyone. The autographing lines were long and could require a good chunk of your time waiting on them. The popular genre seemed to be YA. The books were what attendees wanted. YA's upcoming publications were advertised heavily. Is that still the hot genre and not as oversaturated as some have said? Certainly, the readers are present whether it was the young adult or the adult who is young at heart.

The panels ranged from various interests and provided great entertainment, and centered on books topic, writing, or understanding of a genre such as *Diversifying Love* panel moderated by Sarah MacLean, which included our very own K.M. Jackson. RWA had a presence and proudly held up the romance genre flag that seemed to be scant in comparison to its hold on the market.



If you plan to purchase a ticket next years, here are some tips. Wear comfortable shoes, bring cash as well as credit cards, don't carry much, you will be leaving with goodies.♥

Mageela Troche writes in her cramped apartment in the Big Apple. Her debut novel THE MARRIAGE ALLIANCE is set for an August re-release. She is the RWA/NYC PAN Liaison. When she should be writing but isn't, she can be found on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and her website—www.MageelaTroche.com

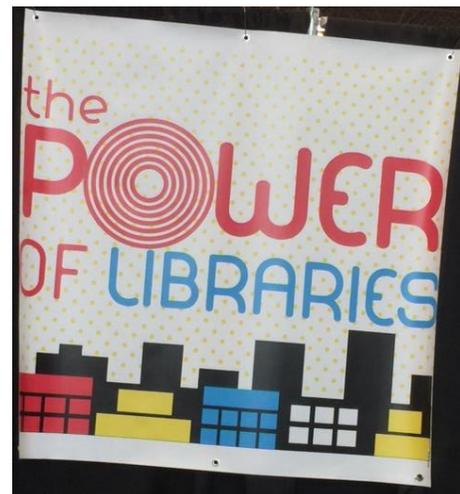


REVIEW: BOOK EXPO PHOTO ALBUM
BY MARIA FERRER

Book Expo America moved back to New York this year, which was great for my commute. Unfortunately, I found the show... empty. Don't get me wrong, there were plenty of publishers, university presses and vendors all over the place, but there were noticeable absences like RWA. It seems a lot of publishers and vendors elected to participate in BookCon instead of BEA, which makes sense since BookCon was geared more for readers, while BEA is more for commercial buyers. But BEA had plenty of fun people to meet and plenty of goodies—free books, tote bags, pins, candy, socks, etc. Here was my day in pictures.♥



Maria Ferrer writes contemporary romances and erotica under the pseudonym Del Carmen. She tries to attend BEA each year and, now that it's back in New York, that goal looks very attainable.



TOP 5 REASONS DIY URBAN RETREATS ROCK BY LISA LONDON

If you're like me, the traditional writing retreats held in the woods, the middle of nowhere or remote locations cut off from society might not appeal to you. Don't get me wrong. I completely understand the need for solitude, quiet and a change of scenery. But here are the top 5 reasons you might want to consider staying right here:

- 1) **The Food Is Better.** Eating mass-made buffet meals usually leaves a little to be desired. Plus, at any traditional retreat that provides meals, you will be limited to eating only during scheduled meal times. Here in the city, you can walk out the door 24/7 and grab anything you want or even better, have it delivered.
- 2) **You Can Have An Amazing Workout Every Day.** Exercise helps to spark ideas, conjure creativity and improve your mood. Traditional retreats are typically set up for an entire week or weekend of nearly complete immobilization or the world's most boring yoga class. If you're lucky enough to have a retreat at a venue with on-site fitness options, most likely they contain outdated equipment stored in a windowless basement. Here in the city, you can still keep going to your local gym and attend your favorite classes.
- 3) **It's Cheap.** The last time I went on a week-long retreat, I was \$3,800 poorer at the end. The accommodations, the travel, the meals and other items I needed to purchase were double my rent. What kind of marketing could you invest in instead with kind of money?
- 4) **It's Easy.** Not only will you avoid the pain of packing, you'll also avoid the suffering of getting to your destination only to discover you really wished you had brought your favorite craft book, currently sitting at home on your bookshelf.
- 5) **It Saves You Time.** Aside from stocking up on some of your favorite snacks and beverages, you'll avoid the long lines at the airport, travel and transit times, having to pack/unpack/repack, getting settled in, learning a new location, etc.
- 6) **BONUS: Extra Mental Space.** Your brain is like a muscle and each decision taxes and fatigues it. When you're already in your own element, you decrease the number of decisions your brain has to make because it's already in its native environment, running on autopilot. This leaves you a full tank of fuel to work with for your novel.



But Lisa, I have a family!

Alright, I admit I'm single with no kids but I do have a social butterfly boyfriend I live with who loves to party and entertain. For my DIY at-home writing retreats, we set up some house rules:

1. **Designate Set Times for Socializing.** This was extra tough to stick to because we both work from home but it did get better with each at-home retreat.
2. **Share Your Schedule & Plan For The Week.** I created a pretty strict timeline on when I would wake up, eat breakfast, go to the gym, shower, write, take breaks, etc. This helped to allow him to know when I needed quiet time and not have to interrupt me and eliminated the need to ask me where I was going or what I was doing.
3. **Hello, Airbnb.** And if all fails, checking into an Airbnb for a few days might be totally worth it. Another idea is cat or dog-sitting for a friend while they're out of town. The pets would love the company and you'd get paid to spend quality writing time there.

What are you waiting for? Go out and schedule your own DIY Urban Writing Retreat this weekend!♥

Lisa London is a romance writer who lives in San Diego but is back in NY for the summer on her own DIY Urban Writing Retreat on the UWS.

