

# LARA CONFIDENTIAL

The Newsletter of the Los Angeles Romance Authors Chapter of RWA®

*Presidential Prattle* 1  
*Editor's Talk...* 3  
*Hot Off the Keyboard* 4  
*Say Hello to LARA Member...Ellenie Kilpatrick* 7  
*June Workshop Notes: "Conquering Writer's Block and More"* 8  
*July Meeting Notes: D'Anne Avner on "Itching to Pitch"* 9  
*August Meeting Notes: Publisher Spotlights* 10  
*Notes from National* 13  
*Cruising with Crusie* 15  
*Pseudonyms: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* 17  
*Workshop? Sign Me Up!* 20  
*Whisper in My Ear* 21

IN THIS ISSUE

"Promoting Excellence in Romantic Fiction Through Education and Community Service"

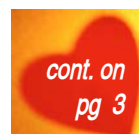
## PRESIDENTIAL PRATTLE "WHOSE HOUSE IS IT?"

An organization is a little like a house, with similar needs to run smoothly. Finances, furnishings, people, activity, and attention. RWA as an organization (and LARA as one of its chapters) has all the hallmarks of a house. But somewhere along the way some misconceptions came up as to how the House is to be used, what RWA's purpose is for its members.



National Conference in Dallas this last July boasted a very lively Annual General Membership meeting. Many complaints and opinions were aired about the changes and wording in the bylaws. What struck me most was how people ascribed things to RWA that were never part of the organization's role, or purpose for existing.

RWA exists as a non-profit educational organization that is an advocate for aspiring and published writers of romance fiction. It neither approves of—nor disapproves of—how members get published, and it does not set any one path for the unpublished to follow to publication. That's why the board changed "RWA Recognized" to "RWA Eligible" for publishers meeting certain criteria. It merely means the publisher doesn't have to pay for space at Nationals so they can talk to you, the paying membership, about what books you've been writing. It has always been defined that way, but somehow the word "recognition" made it into an RWA Seal of Approval, which was not the intent.



*For inquiries regarding article submissions, or to request reprint permission, please contact:*

Brenda Scott Royce  
Editor, *LARA Confidential*  
P.O. Box 1184  
Covina, CA 91722

The editor can also be reached by e-mail at the following address:  
[LARAConfidential@yahoo.com](mailto:LARAConfidential@yahoo.com)

If you wish to receive the *LARA Confidential* in hard copy instead of accessing it online, please send your name and mailing address to:  
[LARAConfidential@yahoo.com](mailto:LARAConfidential@yahoo.com)

Next meeting:

**Sunday, October 14th (second Sunday)**

Agent Carolyn Grayson will be speaking about the do's and don'ts of working with agents. Also, the Board elections and annual LARA Bookfair immediately follow the presentation.



**President: Sandra Kleinschmitt**

**Executive Vice President:  
Gina Roland**

**Vice President in Charge of Programming:  
Irena Raza-Petrovich**

**Vice President In Charge of Membership:  
Sandra Robinson**

**Vice President of Ways and Means:  
Melissa Jarvis-Prieto**

**Vice President in Charge of Public  
Relations: Christine London**

**Treasurer: Maria Seager**

**Newsletter Editor: Brenda Scott Royce**

**Secretary: Alex Kent**

**PAN Liaison: Linda O. Johnston**

**PRO Liaison: Jodi Gottlieb**

**Past President: Robena Grant**

**Website and Listserv Diva:  
Sandra Kleinschmitt**

**Los Angeles Romance Authors  
c/o Sandra Robinson  
P.O. Box 261572  
Encino, CA 91316**

**Assistant Editor: Tai Shan Jackson**



*LARA Confidential* is published bimonthly by Los Angeles Romance Authors, Chapter 25 of RWA®.

*LARA Confidential* welcomes input from all LARA members for requests, original or reprinted articles, ideas, suggestions, and comments. All contributors retain copyright to their original works. This is *your* newsletter, and it should meet your needs.

Please send comments, suggestions, and article ideas to the Newsletter Editor at [LARAConfidential@yahoo.com](mailto:LARAConfidential@yahoo.com).



*All views and opinions expressed in the LARA Confidential do not necessarily reflect the acceptance or endorsement of those views and opinions by the LARA membership, the LARA Board, or RWA® at large, and it is further assumed that authors have obtained all requisite copyright and/or reprint permissions.*

(continued from page 1)

Another strange notion is that RWA is a guild or union, wielding clout to make things better for the writer—a Big Sister with a Big Stick. RWA has done a lot to better the life of romance writers just by offering support and networking. But the organization cannot and does not set pay rates or other standards, nor can the organization provide benefits as a union or guild would. There is no tier system for who gets more work pay. To be eligible for the Published Author Network, there is only a requirement of being paid for (not *paying for*) a book to be printed and distributed. It's something all writers' groups use as a measure of publication—how much have you earned as an author.

So, whose house is it anyway? The RWA members whose dues, time, votes, and suggestions help keep it running. RWA—and likewise, LARA—can only go in the direction the members want it to, via member input. Just as each member decides the direction of

their career by mapping it on their own, we decide where RWA goes.

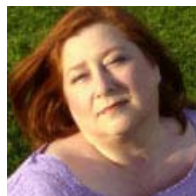
But if we're on our own to make our career, why do we need RWA? Industry resources and education. Alerts about which company is doing what. To make the solitary journey not so solitary with networking.

Michael Hague—a much sought after Hollywood script doctor who gave a presentation at National Conference this year—said it best, “This is the most supportive, friendly writers’ group it has been my pleasure to work with.”

It's your house. Make yourself at home.

Don't stop writing,

*Sandra*



*Sandra Kleinschmitt is president of Los Angeles Romance Authors.*



Looking for a critique group? LARA's got one! Get the scoop from LARA member Rae Shapiro, at [raeshapiro@aol.com](mailto:raeshapiro@aol.com).

## Editor's Talk...

### Coffee, Coffee, Coffee

I was recently asked for three pieces of advice for aspiring authors. Here's what I came up with:

1. Get a rich spouse.
2. Hire a housekeeper.
3. Find a good coffee shop.

Okay, so I'm joking about #1 and only half-serious about #2, but #3 is crucial. A rich husband would have been nice, but true love is better than financial independence, right? And while I'd like to think I'd have more time to write if someone else was doing the laundry, I'd probably just spend more time pre-cleaning the house so the housekeeper wouldn't think we were slob.

But finding a good coffeehouse (actually several) was vital to writing my novel. I didn't even like coffee when I started writing *Monkey Love*, but I needed a place to write away from the many distractions of home. Now I have a debilitating caffeine addiction and my yearly coffee expenditures could probably employ a full-time housekeeper. Or two.

What works for you?



*Brenda Scott Royce is editor of L A R A Confidential, Director of Publications for the Los Angeles Zoo, and author of two novels, Monkey Love and Monkey Star.*



## Hot Off the Keyboard

(Last minute news from the grapevine)



### GOOD NEWS

Join us in congratulating the following LARA members who received good news!

After receiving rejections from agents Jenny Bent and Jessica Regel, **Trish Cerrone** w/a **Trish Albright** signed with agent Meredith Bernstein and accepted a two-book deal from Dorchester for her novel, *The Captain's Ring*, a 2007 Golden Heart finalist. The novel, a historical romantic adventure, has been renamed *Siren's Song* and will be out in July 2008.

**Evie Byrne** made her first sale to Samhain, a historical novella called *Dante's Inferno*, and it will be released in June 2008.

**Christine London** signed a contract for her single title contemporary novel, *Soul in His Eyes*, to Phaze, which may be released on January 28, 2008. Her first release, *Sunninghill Snow*, also through Phaze (and available at Fictionwise) is available now!

**Eden Bradley** sold yet another

two-book deal to Bantam. (These are novels five and six!) These two full-length erotic novels were contracted sight-unseen. No titles or release dates yet, but these will likely be 2009 releases. Bantam also negotiated the translation of her first three books, *The Dark Garden*, *The Darker Side of Pleasure*, and *Exotica: Seven Days of Kama Sutra*, *Nine Days of Arabian Nights*, into German. Also, her novella, *Sanctuary*, will appear in the Berkley Heat EXCLUSIVE anthology with authors Jaci Burton and Lisa Renee Jones, out on September 4, 2007.

**Kaitlin O'Riley** sold the first two novels of a series to Kensington Publishing. The as yet untitled (and unwritten!) historical romance novels will be March 2009 and 2010 releases. These will be her third and fourth novels. Her first novel, *Secrets of a Duchess*, will be translated into both Spanish and Russian. Her second book, *One Sinful Night*, will be released in March 2008.

**Jax Cassidy** has signed with Parker Publishing as a staple author and her debut book with them is *The Lotus Blossom Chronicles: Siren's Seduction*, an anthology with Simone Harlow will be released in

March 2008. She will be helping them launch their Lotus Blossom line focusing outside of the African-American line. Her second book, *Fortune's Fool*, as Cassidy Kent, will be released December 2007. Jax also reports that her single title novel *Art of Sensuality* has sold to Parker Publishing. It is set to be released December 2008!



**Leigh Court** reports that Red Sage Publishing bought her second novella, a sexy Victorian romance called *The Bet*, for the Secrets July 2009 anthology.

### YEAH, BUT DID I WIN? (CONTEST NEWS)

**Evie Byrne's** novella, *Burn for You*, took first place in the paranormal category of Passionate Ink's Stroke of Midnight contest.

The *LARA Confidential* earned second place in the RWA National Chapter Newsletter contest! Congratulations to last year's editor, **Tai Shan Jackson**, and all the members who contributed articles.



(continued from page 4)

## MILESTONES

**Melissa Jarvis-Prieto** submitted and got a request from Rose Hilliard at St. Martin's for her new book, *She Must Be Possessed*.

**L y n n e Marshall** has submitted the full manuscript, as requested, for *One for the Road* to Medallion Press and to Kate Duffy at Kensington. TOR has a partial for the same manuscript. She also sent her fifth medical romance to her editor at Harlequin Mills and Boon.

**Genella deGrey** submitted her manuscript *Remember Me* to Laura Bradford of the Bradford Agency, Alexandria Kendall of Red Sage, and Margo Lipschultz of Harlequin. These are all connections she made at Nationals. She has received a rejection from BookEnds on a manuscript she sent them in December. She received a very nice rejection from Kevan Lyon at the Dijkstra Agency for her paranormal. Unfortunately, she also received a rejection from Margo Lipschultz of Harlequin.

**D'Anne Avner** had a request for a partial of her story *Race of Her Life* from Nephele Tempest of the Knight Agency, which turned into



a request for a full. She also got a request for a full from Hachette books for the same story, and the editor requested permission to hand it to her friend and agent Caran Johnson. She got a rejection from Berkley. She has also submitted a full manuscript to Kate Duffy at Kensington. D'Anne has just started her eighth book!

**Caro Kinkead** submitted a partial of her contemporary manuscript *Sweeter Than Wine* to Patience Smith of Harlequin American after she pitched to her at conference.

**Ethel Ann Pemberton** got a nice rejection from Sha-Shana Crichton of Crichton & Associates, Inc. Literary Agency for *Twice Betrayed*.

## MORE GOOD NEWS

**Cara King's** novel, *My Lady Gamester*, will be translated into German.

**Jax Cassidy's** novella *Miranda Writes* in the *Fortune's Fool* Anthology (written as Cassidy Kent) will be available in print through Phaze Publishing December 2007.

**T.J. Bennett** has a release date for her second book, formerly *Alonsa's Choice*,



## Monthly meetings

*Meetings of the Los Angeles Romance Authors are held at the Barnes and Noble in Encino, usually on the third Sunday of the month. Guests are welcome to attend one meeting for free. Coffee and chat begin at 10 a.m. General meeting starts at 10:30 a.m. For more information, www.*

[www.losangelesromanceauthors.com](http://www.losangelesromanceauthors.com)

Address:

*Barnes & Noble Booksellers  
16461 Ventura Blvd.  
Encino, CA 91436  
(818) 380-1636*

*Cross-street: Hayvenhurst*



(continued from page 5)

now entitled *The Promise*. It will be a May 2009 release.

**Kate Willoughby's** interview will appear in Ellora's Cave *Lady Jaided* magazine and her first Ellora's Cave book *All In* was released today.

Among the LARA authors signing books at the West Hollywood Book Fair on September 30th were: **Christine London, Jax Cassidy, Niki Chanel, Eden Bradley, Brenda Scott Royce,** and **Linda O. Johnston.**



At the West Hollywood signing LARA authors Christine, Jax, Niki, and Eden are joined by Phaze author Stephanie Vaughan (2nd from left), Ellora's Cave author Lillian Feisty (3rd from left), and Phaze author Will Belegon.

**Leigh Court** will be part of the upcoming Cheers for Writers "Books and Blogging: For Fun and Profit" author panel along with New York Times bestselling author Vicki Lewis Thompson and erotic romance author Helen Kay Dimon, on November 18, 2007 at the Barnes & Noble in Burbank from 2-5 pm.

**Lynne Marshall** reports that Mills and Boon has retitled *Allergic to Love* to *Pregnant Nurse, New-Found Family*, to be released next

August 2008 in the UK.

**Brenda Scott Royce** had a signing for *Monkey Star* at Vroman's in Pasadena in August and had a nice article about her with picture in the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*.

**Carol Ericson** was thrilled to find out that the first chapter of her *Intrigue, The Stranger and I*, will appear in Harlequin's Direct to Consumer program's brochure, which is sent out to tons of readers. As her editor stated, "It's an honor to be selected from all books being published that month in *Intrigue*."



Compiled by  
L A R A  
m e m b e r  
K a i t l i n  
O ' R i l e y ,  
author of  
*Secrets of a  
Duchess*, a  
2007 Zebra  
historical  
release. Her next book will be  
released in the spring of 2008.



## 2008 BOARD ELECTION SLATE

### President:

Sandra Kleinschmitt, Eden Bradley

### Executive Vice President:

Gina Roland, Jax Crane

### Secretary:

Cara King, Kim Winklhofer

### Treasurer:

Dana Belfry

### V.P. of Programming:

Irena Rafa-Petrovich

### V.P. of Membership:

Caro Kincade

### V.P. of Ways and Means:

Lynne Marshall

### V.P. of Public Relations:

*Vacant!*

### Newsletter editor (co-editors):

Christine Ashworth and  
Tai Shan Jackson

### PAN Liaison:

Mollie Molay

### PRO Liaison:

Jodi Gottlieb

## Say Hello to LARA Member...Ellenie Kilpatrick



*How (and when) did you get into writing?*

I was writing as soon as I could hold a crayon. I officially start counting in high school. My friends became the lead characters in several action-adventure stories. The first time they asked for a second adventure I knew it was what I wanted to do.

*What do you write?*

I write romantic comedy/adventure that probably is classified as chick-lit. My current manuscript has some paranormal elements in it so I'm doing a lot of research and I'm not quite sure where that one will end up!

*Describe your writing routine.*

I generally write in the evening. I like to write the first draft by hand. The act of physically writing the story connects me to it in a more intimate way. If I type straight into the computer I'm tempted to start cutting and pasting paragraphs around. Next I'll start surfing the web... Writing on paper keeps me focused.

I also have a whiteboard at home that reminds me of the London Un-

derground Tube maps. Characters, suspects, evidence, victims, potential plot points, and scenes are all connected with colored lines and arrows. Then I write questions like, "What happens next?" "How did he know?" "Why should I care?" "Where would they go?" The map gives me a general story guide. I want to discover how it fits together and writing it out shows me the way.

*Who are your favorite authors (romance or otherwise) and why?*

I have so many! I really enjoy Nora Roberts and Jennifer Crusie. I'll read any romance author that can make me laugh out loud. The top two non-romance authors that have multiple novels sitting on my bookshelf are Terry Pratchett for his fantasy/satire Discworld series and Elizabeth Peters for her Amelia Peabody series. These writers can take me into the worlds they've created and I totally lose track of time.

*What do you do in your non-writing life?*

I work in corporate education and development to pay the bills. When I'm not relaxing at home, I like creating mixed-media art and cooking for family and friends. I also love to travel. I try to take at least one trip a year to a new destination. I go to Greece every other summer to visit family.

*What one thing about yourself would people be surprised to know?*

I'm a mirror-image identical twin. Seeing adult twins is surprising to some people. We work in the same department, and it feels like I'm back in high school with the stares and general confusion. One of my clients thought I liked to change my clothes twice a day until she saw us together.

It can be odd.

*What type of books do you read?*

Right now I'm reading *Death by Black Hole and Other Cosmic Quandaries* by Neil deGrasse Tyson. I read books on history, archeology, astronomy, mythology, and any other subject that interests me. I also love mystery, romance, fantasy, and adventure novels.

*What is something you know a lot about?*

Byzantine history and mythic story structure—I still have a lot to learn.

*What is something you wish you knew more about?*

Just about everything! If I have to pick one for you, I would say Egyptology. I would love to study ancient Egyptian culture, including the people, language, literature, history, religion, art, economics and architecture. I'm intrigued by ancient Mediterranean cultures.

*I love the name of your website, herdingwords.com. How did you come up with it?*

I was putting magnetic poetry pieces on the fridge and thought, 'Here I go again, herding words.' When I write I'm gathering words together in order to set the mood, subtly shape a reader's reaction, or reveal what my characters are thinking and feeling. When I wanted to create a website that phrase came back to me and voilà! herdingwords was born.

*Is there anything else you'd like to share?*

I'm looking forward to sharing the writing life with the other LARA members. You can find my little corner of the web at (you guessed it) [www.herdingwords.com](http://www.herdingwords.com). Thank you, this has been fun!

## June Workshop Notes: “Conquering Writer’s Block and More”

© 2007, Brenda Scott  
Royce

“My job as a writer is not to tell my characters what to do,” says multi-published romance author Karen Kay. “My job is to create them and let them be. And then they tell me the story.”

In May, Kay led LARA members through three workshops at a day-long event at Burbank’s Holiday Inn Media Center. The first session was aimed at techniques to overcome writer’s block, a problem that plagues so many writers, seasoned and novice alike. Next she guided writers through exercises designed to creating believable characters. Finally, she discussed tried and true ways to get published.

Kay’s tips for dealing with writer’s block stem from her long-time study of Scientology. The principles aren’t religious but practical in nature, Kay says. They can be applied by anyone.

She began by describing three barriers to study, which can be stumbling blocks to writing. The first is the misunderstood word or phrase. If you’re using words you don’t fully understand, this lack of clarity can cause writer’s block.

The second barrier, lack of mass, refers to problems that can arise when you write without physical reference materials. “If you’re writing about tractors, and you don’t have a tractor and you’ve never seen one, that could be confusing and limiting,” Kay explains. She surrounds herself with photographs, books, films, and other

research materials when she writes. Kay, who is known for her accurate depiction of Native American cultures, also does a lot of firsthand research, visiting tribes and interviewing members. All this contributes to the “mass” that you need to write in flow.

The third barrier, called the “skipped gradient,” refers to a missed step. Just as a missed step in an assembly line can result in a finished product that doesn’t work, skipping a step in the writing process can halt your progress. If you find yourself blocked, Kay recommends backtracking to the point where everything was



*V.P. in Charge of Programming,  
Irena Rafa-Petrovich with speaker  
Karen Kay*

flowing smoothly. Find the tail end of that section, and examine it closely. You may have skipped a gradient.

In her own writing, Kay has found that sometimes her characters want to do something she doesn’t want them to do (or they *want* to do something she doesn’t think they should). When she forces the characters to follow her predetermined plan, they become obstinate and the story stagnates.

She says the best solution in such

cases is to backtrack to the point where she and her characters first parted company and rewrite, allowing the characters to have their way. “Then the book practically writes itself, and my characters are thankful.” Kay admits that her characters sometimes startle her. “In almost every story, they do something that I did not intend. It’s not my job to tell them what to do. It’s my job to figure out a way to explain it to my readers, so they aren’t startled too!”

After guiding attendees through brainstorming exercises in creating multi-faceted characters, Kay discussed the current state of the publishing industry. With media conglomerates buying up smaller publishers there are fewer houses to pitch to. This makes getting published more challenging, but not impossible. Kay also lamented the fact that floor space devoted to books in retail outlets like Target and Wal-Mart is shrinking, and almost impossible to break into unless you’re a bestselling author.

Despite these limitations, publication is possible. Among Kay’s suggestions: Go through your Rolodex and memory banks and figure out if you have any contacts in the industry. “There’s nothing wrong with asking for help,” she says. “It can be a shortcut to getting your foot in the door.” Contests and conferences can also be avenues to publication success. Most importantly, she advises writers to submit their work, as frequently as possible.

In the end, Kay said, there are three requirements to getting published: thick skin, discipline, and postage.

*Karen Kay’s newest release is Red Hawk’s Woman, a Berkley Sensation Historical Romance. Visit her online at [www.novels-by-karenkay.com](http://www.novels-by-karenkay.com).*

## July Meeting Notes: D'Anne Avner on "Itching to Pitch"

© 2007, Brenda Scott  
Royce

One of the most important things a writer needs to learn is how to pitch a book and sell it with enthusiastic pride. At the July meeting of Los Angeles Romance Authors, D'Anne Avner gave attendees the tools they need to do just that. By the end of the rousing, information-packed session, she had many in the audience "Itching to Pitch."

Avner boasts an impressive success rate—in 11 pitches, she has had requests for 10 full manuscripts and 7 partials. The key to success in pitching is not the quality of your writing, but your ability to sell yourself. "You can have the most innovative story ever written," she explains, "but if you can't look the person across from you in the eye and pitch your story with confidence, your chances of getting a request will drop."

Nerves are part of the game, according to Avner, but you must accept your nervousness and push through it in order to succeed. "Take a deep breath and accept it and power forward." Keep in mind that editors and agents are there because they *want* to like you and your book. They want you to "wow" them. (And they are just people, after all; they put their pants on one leg at a time like the rest of us!)

Avner's pitching tips include several common-sense suggestions: turn off your cell phone; dress professionally; walk in with confidence (head high, shoulders back); smile; give a firm handshake; and speak up. If

you're a shrinking violet in everyday life, become someone else—someone with a take-charge attitude and killer confidence—for just 10 minutes.

Practice your pitch in a mirror. Begin by stating your writing credentials, including professional affiliations and contest wins, if applicable. Keep this preamble brief—you want to get quickly to the pitch.

Avner strongly advocates the use of index cards during the pitch. "I've always used them, and I always will."



*D'Anne Avner gets positively precise about pitching professionally.*

With only six to eight minutes for a typical pitch, authors need to stay on track and be concise. Agents and editors would rather see you refer to your index cards than to watch you stumble through without a guideline. Don't read directly from the cards, however. Use them as a guide to keep you focused.

Avner uses a five-card system, which she called an expanded version of author Deb Dixon's four-card system:

•**Card 1: Basics and Theme.** The nuts and bolts of your book: title, target line (e.g. Harlequin Intrigue, Desire, etc.), genre, setting, ap-

proximate word count, and theme. The theme is one core issue at the heart of your story (e.g. "finding the courage to risk"). Try to keep this card to one sentence, but include enough information to hook an agent or editor.

•**Card 2: Heroine.** Choose an adjective and noun to describe your heroine (e.g. unhappy teen, cunning lawyer). State her goal, motivation, and external conflict.

•**Card 3: Hero.** Repeat the process for the hero card, describing your hero and stating his goal, motivation, and external conflict.

•**Card 4: Internal Conflict.** Describe the obstacles keeping the hero and heroine apart.

•**Card 5: Turning Point and Resolution.** Reveal how the hero and heroine overcome those obstacles. How do they compromise?

Don't let the cards give you a false sense of security, Avner warns. Be prepared to answer questions. Such interruptions shouldn't throw you off your game. Most importantly, know your book, love your book, and don't apologize for your book. Your enthusiasm and confidence will be contagious.

After the pitch, listen carefully to everything the agent or editor requests. Find out when you can expect to hear back from them, and when you should follow up. When your time is up, say a sincere thank you, give another firm handshake, and walk away with confidence. Don't linger at the door. You've done what you came to do; now it's someone else's turn.

Lastly, be sure to follow up. After all, the only person who can sell your book is you!

Visit D'Anne's website at [www.danneavner.com](http://www.danneavner.com).

## August Meeting Notes: Publisher Spotlights

At the August meeting of Los Angeles Romance Authors, members who attended publisher spotlights at the RWA National Conference recapped what they had learned. So what are publishers looking for today? The oft-repeated phrase was “a good story, well-written.” And while most editors are feeling the bite of a market flooded with vampire stories, most concede that they’ll still consider a unique vampire tale.

Following are a few highlights from each of the spotlights reported on. For more detailed information, check out the conference tapes, available for checkout from our tape library.

### St. Martin's Press

([www.stmartins.com](http://www.stmartins.com))

St. Martin's Press (SMP) publishes a wide range of romantic fiction including urban fantasy and paranormal romance. According to acquiring editors Jennifer Enderlin, Rose Hilliard, and Monique Patterson, too many books begin with a bang but don't follow up on that promise. SMP authors have a strong voice and distinct personality. Enderlin likes contemporary romance, romantic comedy, and basically “anything really good.” Hilliard is looking for new writers with a unique voice and high concept ideas. Patterson acquires African-American fiction and romance, literary fiction, and select commercial fiction.

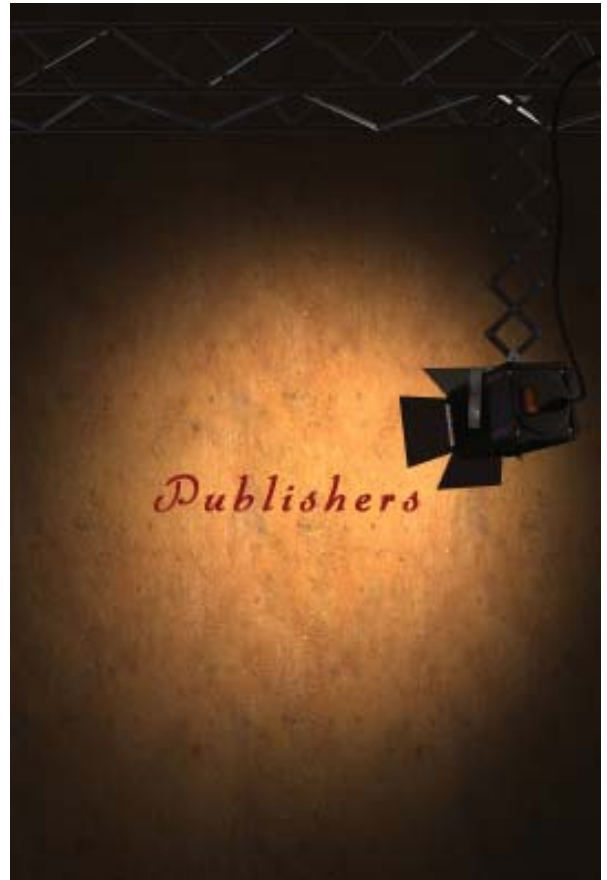
SMP is more interested in building an author rather than acquiring a single book. It helps to have your first book finished and one (or more) novels in progress when you submit. They are open to series, trilogies, and single-author anthologies (stories related in theme or characters). SMP does not accept unagented submissions; however, they will look at unagented *queries*.

### NAL

([www.nalauthors.com](http://www.nalauthors.com))

NAL publishes a wide variety of romantic fiction in mass market and trade paperback. They do not “blanket reject” any genre; any well-written story with a strong voice will be considered. Before fielding audience questions, editors Claire Zion, Ellen Edwards, Kara Cesare, Laura Cifelli, and Anne Bohner queried the audience about a variety of topics, from Amazon reviews to the effect of book trailers on buying habits.

NAL has seven imprints (Eclipse, Signal, Onyx, Accent, Heat, Obsidian Mysteries, and NAL Trade Paperbacks). The best way to find out which line to target is to look at their recent releases for each. They prefer agented submissions, but will consider unsolicited materials (send a cover letter, synopsis, and first three chapters). Overall, they are looking for strong voices and good love stories.



### Bantam Dell

([www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell](http://www.randomhouse.com/bantamdell))

Bantam Dell is always on the lookout for great new authors. They are an all-purpose, all-format publisher, releasing everything from bestsellers to literary fiction to genre fiction. A new imprint, “A Bantam Discovery” will launch in 2008. They are currently looking for straight contemporary romance and romantic suspense because they have seen no new authors in either genre in the last year. Paranormal is still a strong category, but if you write about vampires, you'd better have a new twist. Bantam will read unsolicited works, but it will take a couple of months.



(continued from page 10)

Their final advice: Write what you love and write the best book you can. Don't worry about branding or franchising. Follow your heart, find your voice, and believe in it. If you are not passionate about your own work, they won't be either.

### Pocket Books

([www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com))

Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, publishes women's fiction, historical, contemporary, and romantic suspense in mass market paperback. They are always looking for new talent and new, exciting books. Of the editors present only senior Abby Zeiler stated she is currently acquiring new titles. She is looking for a variety of commercial fiction. Pocket does not accept unsolicited submissions. If you're unagented, the best way to reach a Pocket editor is through conference pitches and contests.

Paranormal is still selling for Pocket, and historicals are hot. On the flip side, vampire stories and chick lit require a fresh take to be considered. The Pocket editors want a sexy read with strong sexual tension and humor. The final word, again—write well.

### Samhain Publishing

([www.samhainpublishing.com](http://www.samhainpublishing.com))

Executive editor Angela James and publisher Crissy Brashear told Dallas conference attendees that paranormals are doing particularly well for them. While they are well-

known for their erotic romance titles, Samhain isn't strictly a romance publisher. They do almost every category except of poetry. They also do several anthologies each year.

Samhain primarily publishes electronic books. Titles over 50,000 words are available as print-on-demand. They have also entered into exciting partnerships with Ingram (a leading book distributor) and Kensington Books. In the latter deal, Kensington will select one title per month and release it under their new Samhain imprint.

Expect a response time of 8 to 12 weeks. Maximum word count is 120,000, and royalties are 40% of cover price.

### Kensington

([www.kensingtonbooks.com](http://www.kensingtonbooks.com))

Panelists John Scomaglio, Kate Duffy, and Audrey LeFere discussed Kensington and imprints Zebra (mass market historical and contemporary romance), Brava (trade paper erotic romance), Aphrodisia (trade paperback erotica/erotic romance), and Pinnacle (mystery/thriller/true crime). The overwhelming theme was "there are no guidelines;" they are looking for what they can't get anywhere else. (The only exception is that they are *not* looking for straight science fiction or fantasy.)

LeFere said she's looking for historicals in the Philippa Gregory mode—big, sweeping stories with a strong dose of romance but more historical detail than most historicals. Scomaglio is seeking urban fantasy. The panel said that Western romance is welcomed. They'd love to see some

good cowboy heroes. Kensington accepts unagented submissions.

### Red Sage

([www.redsagepub.com](http://www.redsagepub.com),  
[www.eRedSage.com](http://www.eRedSage.com))

In addition to four print anthologies per year, Red Sage has recently launched an e-book line for which they are currently seeking submissions. For their e-line, Red Sage will not accept multiple submissions or any works previously published in e-book format, but will consider previously published print books for e-books if the author has all rights. They are primarily looking for works from 5,000 to 25,000 words. The e-books will take greater risk with sexual content than their print titles, but they stress the stories are not just about the sex. They like "ultra alpha males."

Red Sage expects 90% of their e-books will be written by first-time authors, so there is a lot of opportunity!

### Harlequin

([www.charlequin.com](http://www.charlequin.com))

Harlequin is looking for both new and seasoned authors. They have three offices (Toronto, London, and New York) and publish in 100 countries in 26 languages. They are looking for relevant stories, well told, with good story structure and great characters, emotionally engaging, and above all, entertaining. Several lines are open to paranormal stories, most notably Luna, Nocturne, and Mira.



(continued from page 11)

Speaking of paranormal, once again the feeling is that vampire stories are dead. Genies and demons may be the next trend.

Following is a brief listing of their imprints and editors.

*Silhouette Desire* (Melissa Jaglinski): guilty pleasure, escapist soap opera-styled stories with intense, larger-than-life conflicts. Heroes are powerful, successful, and comfortable in their wealth. Heroine can be working class (i.e. Cinderella experience).

*American Romance* (Kathleen Scheibling): Feel-good, “comfort” romance with strong sense of setting and a focus on family and community.

*Romance* (Kimberley Young): Traditional (not old-fashioned) romance. These stories evoke the feeling of falling in love. The conflict between the hero and heroine are very important.

*Silhouette Romantic Suspense* (Mary Theresa Hussey): Moody, sensual love stories with a hint of suspense. Emphasis on romance rather than suspense.

*SuperRomance* (Laura Chin): Looking for new writers. The writer for SuperRomance gives an emotional read with lots of conflict. Give the reader what they don't know they want!

*Nocturne* (Leslie Tuttle): These titles are dramatic to the point of being over-the-top! They are dark,

sexy, action-packed contemporary paranormal stories with complex worlds and very strong heroes. New writers are actively being sought for this line.

*Presents* (Tessa Shapcott): New set of stories aimed at younger readers. Heroines are urban in outlook and lifestyle. Heroes are young, passionate alpha males; charismatic and uncompromising on what he holds



dear. The tone is smoldering and sensual, with a hint of humor.

*Harlequin Presents* (Tessa Shapcott): These titles offer the reader a rollercoaster of intense feeling, with glamour, fantasy, and exotic locales. The line is always recruiting new authors.

*Everlasting Love* (Paula Ekyloff): Romance novels for grown ups. These optimistic, love-affirming stories cover a greater span of time and explore what happens after happily ever after.

*Harlequin Intrigue*: Breathtaking, fast-paced romantic suspense. The romance in these stories is integral to

the suspense story. The level of sensuality is determined by the plot.

*Medical Romance*: Actively looking for new writers. Strong, emotional, heartrending stories with a medical setting. Don't blind reader with professional jargon.

*Next* (Anne Leslie Tuttle): Dedicated to women over 40. Stories feature “seasoned” heroines, still reaching for their dreams. Optimistic, complex reads.

*Blaze* (Brenda Chin): Harlequin's sexiest series has turned up the heat. Provocative stories with plenty of sexual tension.

*Special Edition*: Romance featuring contemporary woman searching for love.

*Harlequin Historical* (Tessa Shapcott and Linda Fildew): Richly textured, intense stories, covering a variety of periods, voice, and level of sexuality.

*Luna*: dark urban fantasy or high fantasy, with a focus on the heroine. The romance is secondary to the heroine's arc.

*Mira*: Some paranormal, including a paranormal “chick lit.”



Thanks to LARA members Leigh Court, Robena Grant, Dawn Halliday, Caro Kinkead, Sandra Kleinschmitt, Lynne Marshall, and Mia Powers for reporting on individual spotlights.

## Notes from National

Twenty-four LARA members were among the roughly 1,900 attendees at the RWA National Conference in Dallas, July 11 to 14, at the Hyatt Regency. For the second year in a row, Trish Cerrone attended as a Golden Heart nominee. She had one of the loudest cheering sections in the banquet hall, yet sadly she didn't take home the award in her category. Lynne Marshall was a presenter, appearing on a panel discussion titled, "Exposing the Truth About Writing Short Contemporary Romance."

Lynne was also one of the 450 romance authors participating in the Literacy signing, including LARA members Eden Bradley, Dayle Dermatis, Leigh Court, and others. The signing raised more than \$56,000 for literacy charities.

Following are just a few memories shared by our Dallas delegates:



2006 & 2007 Golden Heart nominee, Trish Cerrone, Melissa Jarvis-Prieto, Eden Bradley

Trish Cerrone's most memorable moment was hearing the following words from Dorchester editor Leah Hultenschmidt's lips: "...and my manager editor has read it, and you have an offer from Dorchester. Do you have an agent, or do you want to talk numbers now?"

**Lynne Marshall:** There were many memorable moments for me in Dallas this year. It was my first time as a workshop speaker, and I got to wear that cool pink speaker ribbon. It was also my first time as a participant in the Literacy Book Signing. What a thrill! (And thanks to so many LARA members and other friends, I actually sold a good number of books.) But by far, the most exciting moment was when Trish came up to me and Roben during lunch on Friday and asked if she could speak to us privately. The bombshell she laid on us about Dorchester offering her a contract for her Golden Heart entry still gives me chills when I think about it. This RWA National Conference will definitely go down as a great one in my memory book.

**TJ Bennett:** This was my first RWA conference as a PAN (provisional) member, and the difference was like chalk to cheese. I

learned so much more about the business of writing than I ever could have as a PRO, although those experiences were invaluable as well. I met booksellers, industry experts, and other authors, all willing to generously share their time and experience. My head was reeling by the time I left, and I'm still sorting through everything. However, the most memorable experience I had was meeting Nora Roberts in the

bathroom, and I have to say that sort of defined everything for me!

**Caro Kinkead:** What to say about National? Well, the workshops are a lot like going to an all-you-can-eat buffet;

there's an urge to over-indulge and try everything. Words of advice: If you are pitching or are doing *any* activity at conference for which you feel you have to be dressed nicely, do yourself a favor and pack an extra outfit. Doesn't have to be five or six, but have a fallback. I've always packed lightly and laughed at those women who bring several suitcases. It was only by happenstance that I decided this time to toss in some extra clothes. Guess who had a slight accident during lunch Friday? Fortunately, this happened with



Lynne Marshall and 2005 Golden Heart nominee, TJ Bennett





*The beautiful "LARA gang"*

enough time to change before I went to do my editor pitch.

**Robena Grant:** Most humorous moment: hearing the delightful Patricia Gaffney introduce Nora Roberts. Pat expounded on the numerous publications of the amazing Nora Roberts, and then said something along the lines of, "But we in the business refer to her as Nora E. Roberts." Nora cracked up.

**Kate Willoughby:** One of the most rewarding experiences this year was making the rounds at the Literacy Signing. I had so many friends signing books; It was such a thrill to support them.

**Brenda Scott Royce:** An interminably slow shuttle ride from the airport left me with no time to snack before the Literacy signing, and a massive migraine that didn't leave me until the next morning. But aside from that,

my first conference was exhilarating, inspirational, and a bit overwhelming. I had some great conversations with LARA members throughout the trip—and found it odd that I had to travel all the way to Dallas to get to know some



*Brenda Scott Royce  
at the Literacy signing*

of my fellow Californians better!

**Janie Emaus:** This was my first National experience, and it was wonderful. But actually my most memorable moment—or rather moments, like a half hour of them—didn't have anything to do with the conference, but involved walking down 46 flights of stairs at the Adams Mark when the fire emergency came on. I was with my friend Heidi. After the conference, I got an agent and Heidi finaled in the Orange Rose, so we decided that we had paid our dues in that hot, sticky, smelly, stairwell.

**Tai Shan Jackson:** One thing that comes quickly to mind was that it was wonderful to see Lynne Marshall up on the Harlequin Mills & Boon podium. Not that I had *anything* to do with it, but I still felt like a proud mama!



## Cruising with Crusie

© 2007, Robena Grant

I spent three days cruising with best-selling author Jennifer Crusie—the author of *Fast Women*, *Tell Me Lies*, and *Bet Me*, to name just a few of her single title novels. Well, okay, it wasn't really a cruise. It was the Romance Writers of Australia national conference,

held at a gorgeous hotel set on the edge of the Sydney Harbour at Darling Point. The weather was fabulous, the sun sparkled off

the water like it was lit by ten million perfectly cut diamonds, the sunsets were magnificent, the attendees in full party mode, the food amazing, and the workshops, well, those were beyond even my expectations.

I attended a full day workshop run by Jenny called *The Basic Story Dynamic*. Then in days following, I caught two more workshops, *Sex and Violence: How to Write Action Without Losing Your Story* and *A Master Class on Motif, Metaphor, and Theme*, which is about unifying your book, finding the underlying meaning and pulling it all to-

gether. Jenny is a teacher at heart and shares anecdotes about her personal and professional life that really drive the craft points home. She's an amazingly generous person and says she gets back so much through sharing her knowledge.

So the incredible Jennifer Crusie and the wonderful Anne Stuart (who has published over 70 novels, including gothic, category, historical, and romantic suspense titles) swept Sydney by



*Sydney Darling Harbour*

storm. I heard they left Brisbane breathless and ended up in New Zealand for the RWNZ conference. Who knows what havoc they wreaked down there? I was exhausted and had to come back home.

Back to the Sydney conference: there wasn't a dull moment. Jenny's keynote speech touched on the Goddess in every female writer. She spoke of how easy it is to forget how special we are as writers. We've chosen to learn how to make stuff up. Others

have lives. We *create* lives. She said as women and writers we must decide who we are and find our own way, our writer's path, and after deciding who we are, it's our place to protect that identity.

Jenny discussed how she had hit a glitch in her career and spent several years not being able to complete anything. She then began collaborating with Bob Mayer on romantic adventure stories (*Don't Look Down* was released

in 2006; *Agnes and the Hitman* in 2007). In addition, she collaborated on *The Unfortunate Miss Fortunes*, with Anne Stuart and Eileen

Dreyer, released in June 2007. She is currently working on *Dogs and Goddesses* with Lani Diane Rich and Anne Stuart.

Jenny found her way back, bridging the gap between wanting to write and being unable to complete the work, through collaboration. She says the writer's life can be lonely, but collaborating is not. Through the shared writing experience, Jenny feels she has learned a lot about herself and the craft of writing. She says you never stop learning. She recently hit another glitch when she was



(continued from page 15)

let go by her agent and good friend. They came to a parting of the ways because the agent didn't want to continue with collaborations; they are harder to negotiate and apparently the sell-through is not as great. While they are still good friends, Jenny says this was a good thing and that change is good, change forces you to grow.

As I sat in the audience, I was amazed at the unpredictability of this business of writing and publishing. From the perspective of a newbie, it seems like the accomplished authors have it all. But the bottom line is: they don't. They struggle as hard to maintain their status, or harder, than those of us trying to move up the ranks or get that first book published. It also occurred to me that just like bookends,

*From the perspective of a newbie, it seems like the accomplished authors have it all. But the bottom line is: they don't.*

which Jenny advocates in writing (coming full circle with a beginning that mirrors an ending) she has come full circle in her own

career. She started out as a researcher for her dissertation, exploring the different ways men and women tell stories. She planned to read 100 romance novels and 100 men's adventure novels. She found the romance novels absorbing and never got to the men's books. Instead, she decided to write a romance, and the dissertation was never completed. Now she's going back to finish that Ph.D.

Yay, Doctor Crusie, you go girl, embrace the Goddess within and set this world ablaze!

You can download the complete Down Under workshop in PDF format on Jenny's website, [www.jennycrusie.com](http://www.jennycrusie.com). If you want to view the yearlong online writers workshop run by Jenny and Bob Mayer, go to [www.crusiemayer.com/workshop](http://www.crusiemayer.com/workshop).



*A luncheon for Jenny's Cherries: L to R, Erica, Mel, Jenny, Alison, Anne, Robyn and me (I'm the one who looks like she just got goosed.)*



*Robena Grant is the recent Past President of LARA. She is published twice with women's fiction and pursuing a career in writing romance (if she can ever figure out what love is.)*



This article first appeared in the May 2007 issue of *Romance in the Rockies*, the newsletter of the Colorado Romance Writers. It is used with permission.

## ***Pseudonyms: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly***

© 2007, Amanda Harte

To use a pseudonym or not. Like many decisions that affect your career as a writer, this is an important question. Back in the bad old days, writers didn't have a lot of choices. If you wrote romance, your publisher normally insisted that you take a pseudonym—typically one of their choosing. To make matters worse, the publisher often owned that pseudonym, which meant that if you built a readership with Publisher A and wanted to move to Publisher B, you'd have to start over with a new name. Fortunately, those bad old days are over. Mostly. Now the decision of whether to use a pseudonym is the author's. But, as the title suggests, there are things you ought to consider.

### **The Good**

Let's talk about the reasons why an author might choose to write under a pseudonym or even more than one.

*Privacy* – Have you heard that prisoners are avid readers of romance? It's true. It's also true that they like to correspond with

authors. I have to admit that it was more than a little disconcerting (okay, it was scary) to get a letter from a man convicted of murdering his wife, saying he wanted to meet me and tell me his story. In today's web-connected world, it's all too easy to find a person's home address and phone number. A pseudonym and PO box can prevent that. There is one caveat. You must also copy-right under the pseudonym.

*Day Job Conflict* – For some authors, there's no question about writing under their own names. Their bosses at the day job, which is probably the one that pays the mortgage, wouldn't approve, and their careers might suffer. A pseudonym is the only solution, short of finding a new job.

*Name Conflict* – What do you do if there's already an author with the same name or one that's very similar. Since you don't want to confuse readers, a pseudonym might be necessary. Trust me. If Amanda Hart (no 'e') or even Armand Harte wrote blood and gore novels, I'd change my name.



*Pronunciation* – Writers with names, particularly surnames, that are difficult to pronounce and/or spell often choose pseudonyms that are easier for their readers to pronounce. After all, you don't want the reader to stumble over your name when she tells everyone she meets how fabulous your book is. A variation on this reason is that you simply don't like your given name and welcome the opportunity to choose a new one.

*Genre Distinction* – Someone who writes in multiple genres might choose multiple pseudonyms to avoid confusing readers, using a different name for each genre. Jayne Ann Krentz and Nora Roberts have each taken this approach. If you write erotica and inspirational romance, one of those publishers is likely to insist on different names, since there's limited overlap of readership and, more importantly, the readers of one genre might be offended by the other. There are, of course, downsides to multiple names, which we'll discuss below.

*Shelf Location* – Occasionally a pseudonym is chosen to give the author a more favorable location on the bookstore's shelves. The old conventional wisdom used to be that names at the beginning and end of the alphabet were shelved where it was difficult for readers to reach them. This is less of a consideration now that significant book buying is done online; however, some authors still



(continued from page 17)

choose pseudonyms that will place their books close to a best selling author's. If I called myself Nellie Roberts, the reason would be obvious.

*Personal Preference* – Perhaps none of the reasons above apply to you, but you've always thought that when you published your first book, it would be under a pseudonym. That's as good a reason as any. Whatever the reason you choose for a pseudonym, the decision about whether to use one and which name it should be should be yours. Which leads us to the next part of our discussion.

### The Bad

Although there are valid reasons for pseudonyms, there are also disadvantages. Only you can decide whether those disadvantages outweigh the benefits. For the purpose of our examples, let's assume that Rebecca Realname has decided to write as Phyllis Pseudonym.

*Complexity* – Having more than one name makes life a bit more difficult. Besides Rebecca needing to remember to answer when someone calls 'Phyllis' at a booksigning, her contract negotiations may be more complex. A typical publishing contract states that the publisher has the right to use the author's name for publicity. Does Rebecca want that to happen? Depending on her reasons for choosing to use a pseudonym, she may not. In that case, she needs to convince the

publisher to modify the contract and to accept the right to use only her pseudonym.

Publicity can also be complicated by the use of a pseudonym. If Rebecca is well-known in her home town and attended a large university, she's likely to want to play the 'local author' and 'successful alumna' card when seeking publicity for her books. But no one in Big City, Colorado or at Fabulous U will recognize the name of Phyllis Pseudonym. If Rebecca wants this publicity, she'll have no choice but to use both names. Which, depending on her reason for choosing a pseudonym in the first place, may not be an acceptable choice.

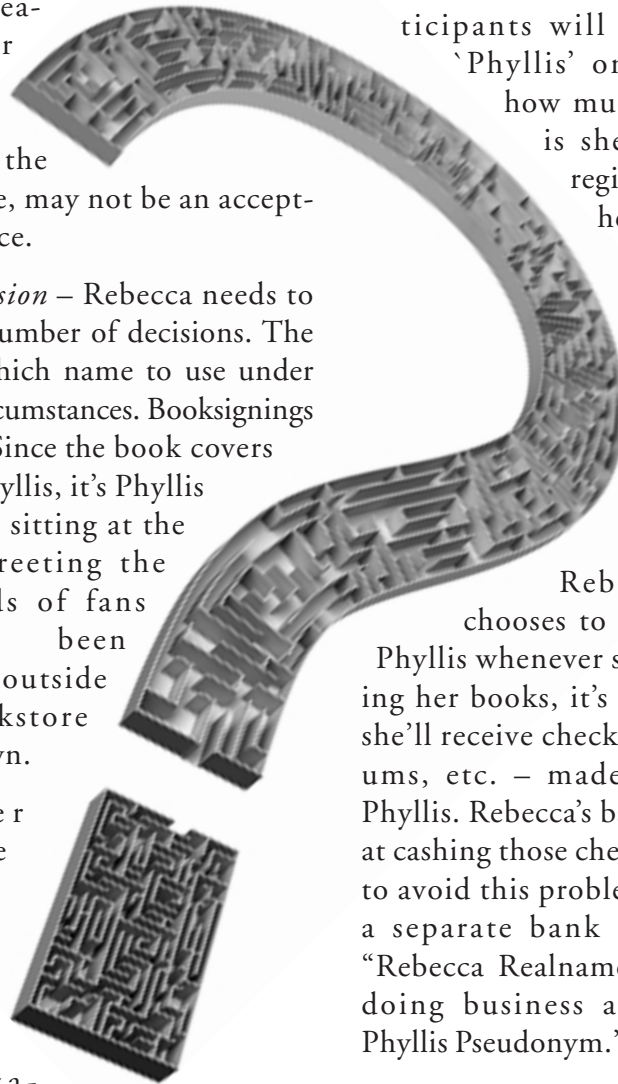
*Confusion* – Rebecca needs to make a number of decisions. The first is which name to use under which circumstances. Booksignings are easy. Since the book covers all say Phyllis, it's Phyllis who'll be sitting at the table, greeting the hundreds of fans who've been camped outside the bookstore since dawn.

Other areas are grayer. When she joins a writer's organiza-

tion like Colorado Romance Writers and when she attends conferences where the majority of the attendees will be writers, will she register as Rebecca or Phyllis? Although it's tempting to be known as "Rebecca Realname writing as Phyllis Pseudonym," that approach dilutes name recognition. As authors, we want people to remember our names so that they read and recommend our books. If that's our goal, I'd argue that we shouldn't create confusion by using both names. If our heroine delivers a workshop as Rebecca but the books she's hoping participants will buy all say 'Phyllis' on the cover, how much of a price is she paying for registering under her real name?

A related concern is money. While the publisher will make checks payable to

Rebecca, if she chooses to be known as Phyllis whenever she's promoting her books, it's possible that she'll receive checks – honorariums, etc. – made payable to Phyllis. Rebecca's bank may balk at cashing those checks. One way to avoid this problem is to open a separate bank account for "Rebecca Realname doing business as Phyllis Pseudonym."



(continued from page 18)

*The Cringe Factor* – Although it's less common now, some publishers do still choose pseudonyms for the author. What happens if you hate the name, particularly if the editor thinks it's wonderful? Rebecca Realname might not be thrilled if the publisher's 'special' pseudonym for her is 'Rebecca Sunnybrook.' If you don't plan to attend book signings or other events where people will be calling you by name, it may not be a big deal. But if the name is one that causes you to cringe or one that you're uncomfortable using, find the most diplomatic way of telling your editor that this one really won't work for you. It's always a good idea to have a suggestion of one that you'd accept. And, of course, if that name is close to the editor's choice, you have a better chance of getting her approval. In this example, Rebecca might propose 'Becca Brooks.'

*Splintered Readership* – This applies only when you're using multiple pseudonyms, and it may or may not be a problem. If you're writing for two totally different markets where you know that less than one percent of the readers would be interested in both types of books, you probably don't care that readers of your *Dummies Can* series don't know that you also write bestselling contemporary romance. But if you write historical romance, romantic suspense and pure mystery and expect that

at least some of your fan base will enjoy all three genres, the use of multiple names is a complicating factor. One way to mitigate this is to choose similar names and to ensure that each web page links to the others.

### The Ugly

As I've said before, the decision to use a pseudonym is a personal one. When it becomes ugly is when a third party 'outs' a writer who's chosen to be known only by her pseudonym. Sometimes this is inadvertent. When publishers send information to B&N and Amazon, they don't always check the wording in the contract and occasionally send both real names and pseudonyms. Sometimes it's deliberate, as when fan web sites list both names as a service to readers.

I mentioned it before, but it bears repeating. If you write under a pseudonym and want to ensure that your real name is not known, change the contract so that your publisher is authorized to use only your pseudonym, copyright your books under the pseudonym, open a bank account under the pseudonym, and never, ever tell anyone other than your publisher your real name. The onus is on you.

### Decision Time

How do you decide whether or not to use a pseudonym? I'd

suggest you answer the following questions.

1. Do I have a reason that makes sense to me for choosing a second name?
2. Will I be comfortable answering to that name, not just next month but for the foreseeable future?
3. Am I willing to accept the potential downsides of having two names?

If your answers are all affirmative, do it!



*Amanda Harte is the author of twenty-two novels, two and a half non-fiction books and enough technical articles to cure insomnia in a medium-sized city. Over the course of her career, she's written under four different names and has learned to answer to everything from 'Amanda' to 'hey, you.'*

This article first appeared in the September 2007 issue of *Romance of the Desert*, newsletter of the *Saguaro Romance Writers of America*. It is reprinted with permission.

## Workshop? Sign Me Up!

© 2007, Jill Knowles

We see them every month: listings for local, face-to-face workshops, and online workshops. My eyes used to drift over the listings, and unless I saw something that I was specifically interested in, I dismissed them and went on about my business.

All that changed when I joined the Special Events Committee for my local RWA Chapter. I was required (by good manners, if nothing else) to attend workshop sessions I wasn't expecting to get much from, either because it wasn't relevant to my genre of romance, or it conflicted with my writing style. An unrepentant "pantser," the thought of sitting through several hours on outlining a novel made me cringe.

So there I was, listening to a lecture on the beauties of the detailed outline, thinking to myself, "Nope, doesn't work for me. I feel as though I've already written the story, get bored, and go on to something else." Then, the instructors had us break up into small groups, assigned a fairytale, and told us to produce an outline.

It was fun—and surprisingly informative. One of the main issues

my group discussed was pacing. A light bulb switched on over my head, and I began frantically scribbling notes. Detailed outlines don't work for me, but being conscious of pacing as I "seat of my pants-ed" through a novel would let me cut out at least one step in my revision process, and give me a cleaner, more coherent initial rough draft. *Eureka!*

I've attended several workshops since then, ones I've salivated over for months until it was time to go, and ones I felt considerably less enthusiastic about. And know what? I've come away from every one of them a better writer.

### Some tips for getting the most out of a local workshop:

- Go. Even if you're not expecting to get anything useful. I guarantee you will learn something unexpected and valuable.
- Don't sit with friends. That way you won't be tempted to chit-chat instead of paying attention, and you'll meet fascinating new people.
- If the instructor breaks the class into small groups, don't sit with friends or critique partners. This will give you an opportunity to brainstorm with entirely new brains, not the familiar brains you've been using.
- Know which writing project you intend to use during the workshop, and review it before you attend. You may be amazed at the fresh ideas that spring up and leave you itching to sit down in front of your computer for a nice long writing session.

### Some tips for getting the most out of an online workshop:

- Don't just sign up for the "sure thing." Take a chance on a new instructor or a new technique. You'll be glad you did.
- Set aside time every day to participate. Depending on the size of the class and the demands of the lessons, there may be several hours of reading and writing required each week—or even each day.
- Do the assignments and turn them in on time.
- Read your classmates' posts and respond appropriately. Don't let yourself be sucked in to an off-topic discussion about parakeets, or even worse, a flame-war.

Romance Writers of America and each of its local and online chapters place a strong emphasis on learning the craft of writing. Workshops, both local and online, are available nearly every week of every month during the year, and for a fraction of the cost of most professional continuing education.

Don't miss out on an opportunity to become the best writer you can be. The next time the announcement catches your eye, say "Workshop? Sign me up!"

*Jill Knowles is an active member of Tucson's Saguaro Romance Writers. She has sold three books to Loose-Id, and hopes to sell many, many more. Her first book, Kissing Chaos, is available for download from [www.loose-id.com](http://www.loose-id.com).*

## Whisper in My Ear

© 2007, Kate Fink

Dialogue: Is it your nightmare or your dream preoccupation?

Me? When I'm in the zone, my characters are always chatting it up in my head. (Oh, who am I kidding? They're yakkety-yakking when I'm at the gas pump.) I have a hard time inserting setting or action descriptives before they start to jibe-volley again. My early drafts are a puzzle of dialogue vents without staging instructions. I freeze over perfect word selection to get these people to do *anything*, and then I give up, afraid to stem the flow of copious dialogue.

I know my scene stars just need a nudge. But it's a distant third on my drafting totem pole: dialogue, then internal musings, and...oh, yeah...saucy Cassandra should *do* something...hmmm. She'll never get that toe-curling kiss she craves unless she gives that man a non-verbal sign of interest. And what about Rick? He'll never see how her eyes dance when she smiles at him and feel his pulse ramp up as he crowds her personal space if he's left standing outside a solid pine door!

Transitioning from dialogue to descriptive text may not be a problem for you. Bless you. Or perhaps you've got the action nailed but your character needs to Just Say It. But alas, the words come out as drivel.

I'm convinced every writer's muse is uniquely slow in one or two areas. Sure there are Superstars. You can pick their prolific authors out on the

best-sellers lists; they're the ones with multiple entries on the same sheet. The rest of us could use some tangible help.

My muse, Betty, was a third-round draft pick from the Vanderbilt Novel Extraordinaires, Old-School (Greek division). Sadly, she proved to be a bit of a prima donna and got traded three times before getting bumped down to the Minors, which is where I picked her up. A little long in the tooth, but a solid plotter and a twists-and-turns goldmine, Betty has acquired a solid work ethic, but she is a bit vain. Refusing to wear glasses

or upgrade to contacts (which really would help), she often bumps into things as we work, making writing sizzling romance near impossible, what with all the *crash, bang*, and, "*Well, that's gonna leave a mark.*" So I am left typing hot dialogue with one eye closed or, on the really bad days, switching off to romantic comedy.

Can this writing team be helped? Why, yes, with a little help from the LARA Tape Library. Even Betty can benefit from an RWA workshop—and maybe duct tape. Perhaps you and your muse need to check out some of the following tapes as well:

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Title</u>
29	Aid for the Character-Challenged Writer
36	Ten Twists to Unravel Your Plot Knots
39	Completing the Connection, on Beyond Conflict
47	Another Day in Paradise
50	Going Deep with POV
63	Dialogue: Getting the Voices in Your Head on Paper
84	How the Thorny Rose Could Sink Your Ship...the Use & Development of Imagery in Romance
85	Layering Complexity, Texture & Theme Using Subplots, Secondary Characters & Villains
117	Getting Into Bed with Your Characters
119	Location...Location...Location!

(Conference tapes can be reserved by logging on to the Members Only Section of the LARA website. Click on "Conference Library" and follow the instructions on how to access the list of titles. Email Kate with your selections—up to five tapes—to reserve in advance of the next chapter meeting.



Kate is the tape librarian for the Los Angeles Romance Authors and writes contemporary romance.

Support Our Organization.  
Come to Our  
**Barnes & Noble**  
**BOOKFAIR**

Join Us  
for the  
Annual **LARA** Romance Author  
Book Signing Event

Sunday October 14, Noon to 2 pm

Barnes & Noble Encino  
16461 Ventura Blvd

Meet your favorites including:  
Eden Bradley, Leigh Court, Sarah Dale, Cheryl Holt,  
Carolyn Hughey, Linda O. Johnston, Cassidy Kent,  
Harley Jane Kozak, Kaitlin O'Riley,  
Brenda Scott Royce, and Kate Willoughby

Help support the  
Los Angeles chapter of  
Romance Writers of America!

# Barnes & Noble Bookfair Voucher Supporting

## LARA

**Sunday October 14, 2007**  
**Noon**  
**Barnes & Noble Encino**  
**16461 Ventura Blvd**

Simply present this voucher at  
the cash register at the time of purchase.

A percentage of the net sale  
will be donated to your organization.\*

### OFFICE USE ONLY

Register #: ..... Transaction #: .....

Amount of sale before tax less purchase  
of Gift Cards, Membership Cards,  
and Café consumables.

\$ .....

\* THE FOLLOWING TRANSACTIONS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN BOOKFAIR TOTALS: THE  
PURCHASE OF GIFT CARDS, MEMBERSHIP CARDS, AND CAFÉ CONSUMABLES.  
NON-PROFIT AND BUSINESS ACCOUNT DISCOUNTS MAY NOT BE APPLIED TO  
BOOKFAIR PURCHASES.



# Barnes & Noble Bookfair Voucher Supporting

## LARA

**Sunday October 14, 2007**  
**Noon**  
**Barnes & Noble Encino**  
**16461 Ventura Blvd**

Simply present this voucher at  
the cash register at the time of purchase.

A percentage of the net sale  
will be donated to your organization.\*

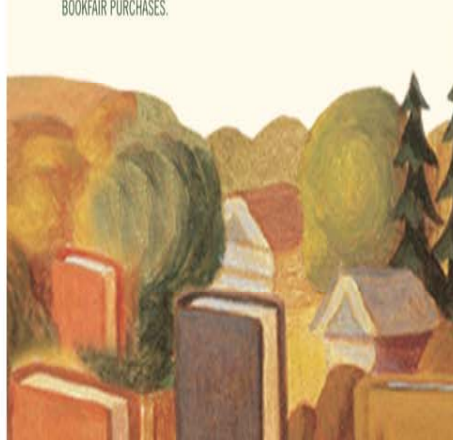
### OFFICE USE ONLY

Register #: ..... Transaction #: .....

Amount of sale before tax less purchase  
of Gift Cards, Membership Cards,  
and Café consumables.

\$ .....

\* THE FOLLOWING TRANSACTIONS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN BOOKFAIR TOTALS: THE  
PURCHASE OF GIFT CARDS, MEMBERSHIP CARDS, AND CAFÉ CONSUMABLES.  
NON-PROFIT AND BUSINESS ACCOUNT DISCOUNTS MAY NOT BE APPLIED TO  
BOOKFAIR PURCHASES.



# Barnes & Noble Bookfair Voucher Supporting

## LARA

**Sunday October 14, 2007**  
**Noon**  
**Barnes & Noble Encino**  
**16461 Ventura Blvd**

Simply present this voucher at  
the cash register at the time of purchase.

A percentage of the net sale  
will be donated to your organization.\*

### OFFICE USE ONLY

Register #: ..... Transaction #: .....

Amount of sale before tax less purchase  
of Gift Cards, Membership Cards,  
and Café consumables.

\$ .....

\* THE FOLLOWING TRANSACTIONS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN BOOKFAIR TOTALS: THE  
PURCHASE OF GIFT CARDS, MEMBERSHIP CARDS, AND CAFÉ CONSUMABLES.  
NON-PROFIT AND BUSINESS ACCOUNT DISCOUNTS MAY NOT BE APPLIED TO  
BOOKFAIR PURCHASES.

