

LARA Confidential

The newsletter of the Los Angeles Romance Authors Chapter of RWA.

May, 2013

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LARA Presents

Contests: *The Good, The Bad, The Ugly*
With Veronica Blade, Suzanne Lazear, Kathy Bennett,
and Robena Grant
May 19, 2013



Join four LARA members and authors as they discuss their experiences with contests. This is a panel discussion, come prepared with your questions. To learn more about this month's guest speakers, check out our Speaker Spotlight on **Page 20**.

Everyone welcome to the spring fling party to celebrate Robena Grant's book launch. At Bridges Academy 12noon-1.30pm. A limited number of print books, *Unlock the Truth*, will be available at \$10 for anyone interested in obtaining an autographed copy. Book excerpt will be read by author/narrator Dee J. Adams. Please RSVP by May 17th, to Lynne Marshall @jmarshock@aol.com

From the Editor's Desk

Greetings!

In this issue I've collected some articles from our many sister chapters from all points in the writing process. From selling your first book to writing a one sheet to organizing to marketing, I hope there is a little something for everyone.

JUNE NEWSLETTER: CALL FOR ARTICLES

We're looking for any articles about romance writing – from just starting out to words of wisdom from our PAN and PRO members. This is a fabulous opportunity to have your work in print. Many of our articles are picked up and reprinted in RWA chapter newsletters around the country (and globe!) Please send all articles or stories to me at LARACConfidential@LARARWA.com by June 1st.

(**Please note: word count should be either approximately 600 words or 1,200 words).

Keep writing,

- Ariel Lawrence, *LARA Confidential* - Content Editor 2013

Words to Write by...

“You have to write the book that wants to be written. And if the book will be too difficult for grown-ups, then you write it for children.” — *Madeleine L'Engle*

“A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.” — *Maya Angelou*

“Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality. It's a way of understanding it.” — *Lloyd Alexander*

“After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.” — *Phillip Pullman*



Presidential Prattle

Times are Changing

Christine Ashworth, LARA President 2013

Ch ch ch changes!

Change is in the air. If you've been paying attention, you've noticed how changeable the weather in So Cal has been this year. Frost on the ground in January, hot days in February and back to frost. March and April fluctuated between chilly and hot, and May has brought us ninety degree temperatures, wildfires, and a chilly rain - all on the first weekend.

The publishing industry, too, is undergoing change, as it always seems to do, only much more rapidly now. Self-publishing continues its rise, with many mid-list authors flocking to it with both their backlists and their new works. New authors are self-publishing at an astonishing rate. Some excellent work is being put out, and some not-so-excellent work. Publishing houses close, new ones open up. Editors come and go. It seems like to get where you want to go, you have to work faster, pay more, for any sort of return. How to cope?

I suggest you let go of the anxiety of the marketplace and the multitude of changes that surround us, and concentrate on the one thing you can control at this point - your writing. Make it as strong as you can, complete the projects you're currently juggling, and then take a step back and look around. Once you are sure of your product, then you can take stock of the state of publishing and think about your options.

The next thing to do is to keep the conversation open with your writer friends. Reach out. Those of us who have been writing for a very long time just need to keep at it, study the new paradigm, and discuss it with our friends. Keep our minds open. Be ready with that polished manuscript (or two, or twelve) for the next opportunity, whether we decide to self-publish, or accept that agent offer. The way forward is two-fold...one, there is no one "correct" way for everyone; and two, it really continues to be a brave new world out there in publishing. And the changes will keep on coming for the next decade. Or two.

So hang in there. Keep your friends close, your writing chops honed, and your heart and mind open. You can't anticipate which way the publishing industry will change, any more than you can anticipate the weather changing. All you can do is adjust your attitude to the changing times.



Upcoming

LARA Events:

Next Meeting: June 9

Julie Hurwitz, PITCH WORKSHOP

SAVE the DATE! LARA Workshop

DATE: Saturday, October 5, 2013

TIME: 9am-12:15pm (Registration opens at 8:30, program to start at 9am)

COST: \$30 LARA members for early registration, \$35 for late registration, \$40 non-members. (The online registration date will be announced.)

WHERE: Bridges Academy Auditorium

WORKSHOP PRESENTER: Laurie Schnebly Campbell, <http://www.booklaurie.com>

PROGRAM: Plot Is All About Character

Three one hour presentations:

- Finding Your Hero's Fatal Flaw
- Psychology for Creating Characters
- The Personality Ladder

SPEW: Don't forget that SPEW (Stop Procrastinating Everybody Write) starts the Monday after our regular monthly meeting. To join, contact Kady Winter (kadywinter@gmail.com) so she can invite you to join the "LARA-SPEWcrew" Yahoo list serve group, or request to join from Yahoo Groups.

Author Critique Opportunity Drawing: For just one dollar, you can buy a chance to get your manuscript read by one of LARA's fabulous published authors! You can buy your raffle tickets at the beginning of each General Meeting.

Upcoming RWA Contests

*Open to published authors **Open to published and unpublished authors

****Minuet of Love Romance Novella Contest**

Sponsor: Music City Romance Writers Fee: \$15.00 Deadline: June 1, 2013

Eligibility: Open to both unpublished and published authors, but novella entered must be unpublished.

Entry: Romance novellas (15-40K) with HEA or HFN ending. All electronic. First 10 pages, 250 word query/synopsis OPTIONAL (unjudged) in .doc format; all heat levels accepted.

Judges: Published/trained unpublished authors.

Categories and Final Judges: Contemporary – Rhonda Helms, Carina Press; Historical – Kerri-Leigh Grady, Entangled Publishing; Paranormal – Holly Atkinson, Samhain Publishing.

Top Prize: \$25 in each category, certificate, and announcement in RWR.

FMI, visit www.mcrw.com or email contest coordinators at novella@mcrw.com.

****The Catherine**

Sponsor: Toronto Romance Writers

Fee: \$25 TRW members, \$30 non-TRW members Deadline: June 1, 2013

Eligibility: Open to all unpublished writers, and published members of RWA who are not eligible to join RWA-PAN. Entry must be uncontracted, unpublished at time of entry.

Entry: First pages plus a synopsis, maximum 7500 words.

Categories/Final Judges: Contemporary Series – Wanda Ottewell, Harlequin; Contemporary Single Title – Leonore Waldrip, HQN; Historical – Katherine Pelz, Berkley; Romantic Suspense – Leis Pederson, Berkley; Paranormal, Fantasy, Futuristic – Esi Sogah, Kensington; Strong Romantic Elements – Kathleen Gilligan, St. Martin's; Young Adult – Karen Chaplin, HarperCollins Children's. Top Prize: Winners of the Final Round are entered into the Gold Ticket Round, judged by Kristin Nelson of Nelson Literary Agency.

FMI, <http://www.torontoromancewriters.com/contest.html>.

***The Aspen Gold 2013**

Sponsor: Heart of Denver Romance Writers Fee: \$20 for HODRW members, \$25 for all other RWA members, and \$30 for all non-RWA members Deadline: June 3, 2013

Eligibility: Romance Genre Book/Novella with a 2012 publication date.

Entry: 3 print copies or electronic version of book. Finalists will be asked for 2 additional copies for the final round judges.

Categories: All subcategories of romance fiction accepted.

Judges: First round, romance readers; Final round, librarians.

Prize: The first place winner in each category will receive the Aspen Gold Plaque. All other finalists will receive certificates. Results will be publicized on website, loops and in the RWR.

FMI, Visit <http://www.hodrw.com/contests/> for complete rules, entry instructions, payment options, and sample of score sheet. For further questions email AG@hodrw.com.

***2013 Golden Leaf Contest**

Sponsor: New Jersey Romance Writers

Fee: \$25–30.00

Deadline: June 17, 2013

Entry: Four new autographed books with a first copyright date or first North American printing date between July 2012 and June 2013. Open to RWA Region 1 and NJRW members published in novel-length romance.

Judges: Booksellers, librarians, readers groups, romance readers

FMI, visit <http://www.njromancewriters.org/> or email contest coordinators at GoldenLeaf@njromancewriters.org.

Cont.

More RWA Contests...

****The 21st Annual Lone Star Writing Competition**

Sponsor: Northwest Houston RWA Fee: \$20 for members of NWHRWA, \$25 for non-members

Deadline: Midnight June 8, 2013 Entry: First 25 pages. Electronic entries, only.

Eligibility: Open to both unpublished and published authors. Unpublished may enter any category.

Published may enter any category in which they're not published, or in which they've not been contracted for five years. Open to RWA and non-RWA members.

Judges and Scoring: Two published and one non-published in the first round. Lowest score is dropped.

Final round is by a panel of three professionals in the romance industry, which may include any of the following, agent/editor/epublisher. Visit our website to view our all-star lineup of final judges.

Categories and Final Judges: **Contemporary Series:** Agent – TBA; Editor – Wanda Ottewell, Harlequin;

Epublisher – Leanne Morgena, The Wild Rose Press **Erotic Romance:** Editor – Nicole Fisher, Harper-Collins; Editor – Violet Hughes, Ellora's Cave; Epublisher – Char Chaffin, Soul Mate Publishing

Fantasy, Futuristic & Paranormal: Agent – Pam van Hyckama Vlieg, Foreword Literary, Inc.; Editor – Junessa Vioria, Random House; Epublisher – Debby Gilbert, Soul Mate Publishing

Historical/Regency: Agent – Jessica Alvarez, BookEnds, LLC; Editor – Katherine Pelz, Berkley Publishing Group (Penguin Group); Epublisher – Susan Yates, The Wild Rose Press

Inspirational Romance: Agent – Kimberly Shumate, Living Word Literary Agency; Editor – TBA;

Epublisher – Nicola Martinez, Pelican Book Group **Romantic Suspense:** Editor – Whitney Mae, Ellora's Cave; Editor – Rachel Burkot, Harlequin; Epublisher – Lori Graham, The Wild Rose Press

Single Title: Agent – Jill Marsal, Marsal Lyon Literary Agency; Epublisher – Chris Keeslar, Boroughs Publishing Group; Epublisher – Jennifer Lawler, Crimson Romance

Young Adult: Agent – Laura Bradford, Bradford Literary Agency; Editor – Aubrey Poole, SourceBooks; Epublisher – Kat O'Shea, Leap Books.

Top Prize: Winners will be announced during the October 5th Lone Star Conference in Houston, TX.

First place winners in each category will receive the Lone Star Brooch. Achievement certificates will be awarded to all finalists. But as always, the real prize is the opportunity for your work to be viewed by our prestigious editor and agent judges

FMI, contact the contest coordinator, Jaye Garland at jayegarland@gmail.com. For entry form and rules, please visit www.nwhrwa.com.

****Put Your Heart in a Book**

Sponsor: New Jersey Romance Writers Fee: \$25 members - \$35 non-members

Entry period: June 1, 2013 – June 30, 2013 Electronic deadline: 11:59 p.m, June 30, 2013

Eligibility: unpublished or not published in last five years. Entry: synopsis and first chapter/prologue (30 pages max). Categories: Contemporary Series, Single Title Contemporary, Historical, Paranormal, Romantic Suspense, Young Adult.

Judges: published authors. Final Round Judges: One each in each category: Agent, editor, multipublished

author. Confirmed final round judges include authors Margaret Mallory, Eloisa James, Connie Brockway, Diana Cosby, Keri Mikulski and Katherine Garbera; editors Latoya Smith from Grand Central Publishing,

Leah Hultenschmidt from Sourcebooks, Patience Bloom from Harlequin, Lauren Ruth from Entangled Publishing, Tessa Woodward from Avon, and Melissa Johnson from Carina Press; agents Michelle

Grajkowski, Pamela Harty, Eric Ruben, Jordy Albert, Pattie Steele-Perkins, and Kevan Lyon. Top Prize:

1st Place: \$50.00 + plaque; 2nd Place: \$35.00 + certificate; 3rd Place: \$25.00 + certificate.

FMI, www.njromancewriters.org or e-mail PYHIAB@njromancewriters.org.

Cont.

Revisions & Writing

Revisions and the Writer Lynne Marshall

As a writer or an aspiring author, at one time or another, it is inevitable you **WILL** be asked to revise your book. The author letter, also known as the revision letter from your publisher can be as simple as a few tweaks to the story, or a six page, single-spaced breakdown of each and every aspect of your story that needs reworking. A revision letter can knock the wind out of the author, and nothing less than determination is required to successfully interpret and implement a particularly troublesome revision letter. A writer must have faith in their ability to figure out what the editor is asking, agree or disagree with it, fix what can be fixed, and discuss differences-in-vision for the story with a level head and a clear plan.

Let's discuss what Revising is from a practical standpoint with a medical slant. Think of revisions as major surgery on a patient (your manuscript) with a good prognosis. You must be bold and daring with your approach to cutting and changing scenes, and yet precise when capturing the important emotional nuances and theme of the story. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO TAKE A HACKSAW AND DRAW BLOOD TO FIX YOUR BOOK.**

EXAMPLES OF REVISION REQUESTS: Revisions mean to delete the prologue and the seduction scene because the editor doesn't feel they make the hero sympathetic enough. Revisions mean to change up a sequence of events and/or move a scene around or delete it if it causes a lag in story tension or pace. Revisions mean to change a pivotal scene and have the heroine walk away instead of the hero (even though that's how you always imagined that scene from the day you hatched the story) to give the book more emotional oomph.

ESPECIALLY FOR ROMANCE AUTHORS: Revisions mean to go through the entire manuscript and add emotion, tension, and passion! Revisions mean to somehow find a way to add a pregnancy, a baby, or a marriage of convenience to your story if the buying editor thinks you should.

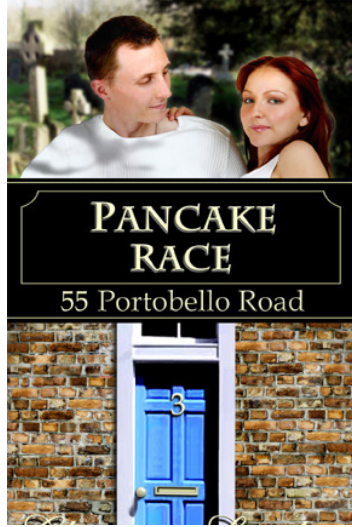
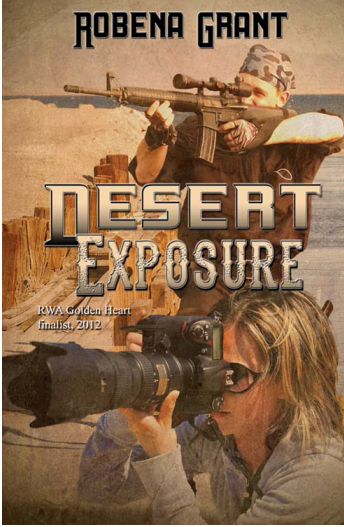
Above all, revisions mean to be **FLEXIBLE** and do whatever it takes to make your story a combination of your vision and what your agent or editor is looking for.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND: Editors are paid professionals who know how to make our books better. We may think of ourselves as "Artistes," but a quick reality check in today's market tells us we are writers for hire. Stop and think very carefully about what is being asked of you as the author, does it help or hinder your story? Will the changes increase conflict and put more tension on the page?

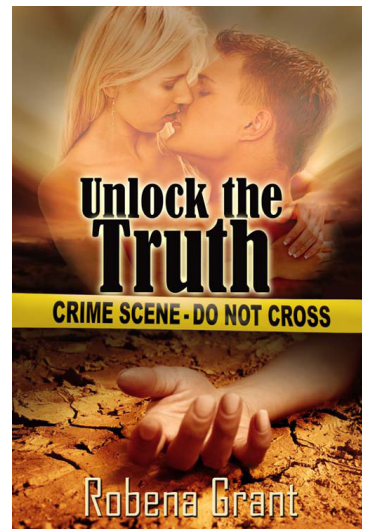
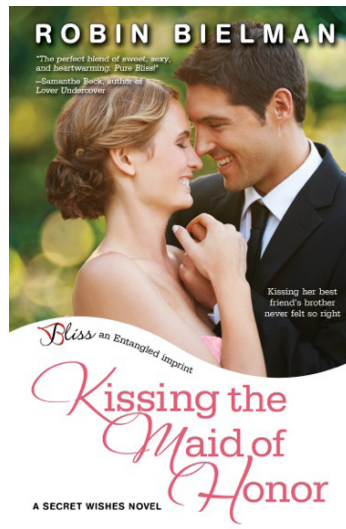
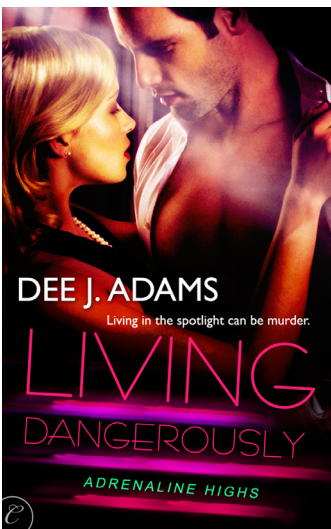
Let's face it, the revision portion of your manuscript request can make or break the publishing deal. Our attitude plus skill at delivering what the editor or agent requests are the key. Handle revisions with care.

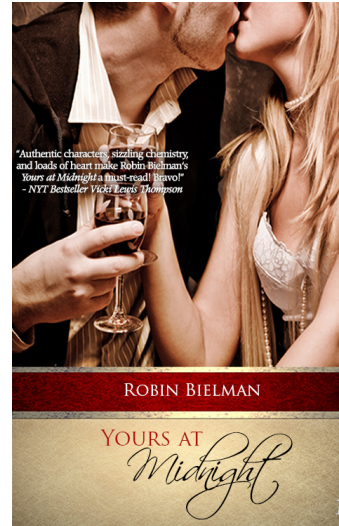
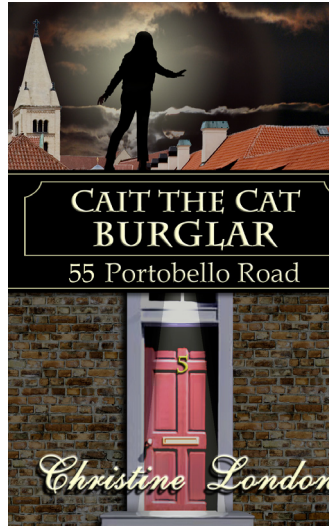
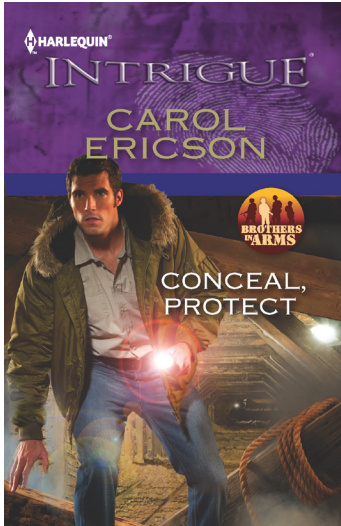
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Think outside the box on your current work in progress or that manuscript you've just submitted to an agent or editor. Imagine and choose an outrageous editor or agent request for your plot (a surprise pregnancy, a secret child, a marriage of convenience, a change in profession for either of your characters, deleting a secondary character – you catch my drift). How would you add it to the story if an editor said they loved the book, but asked you to make the change in order to publish it?

Lynne Marshall is a multi-published author for Harlequin, Mills & Boon, and The Wild Rose Press. Watch for her next Medical Romance – NYC Angels: Making the Surgeon Smile (book #7 in the series) June 2013, and The Medic's Homecoming, Harlequin Special Edition, July 2013. www.lynnemarshall.com

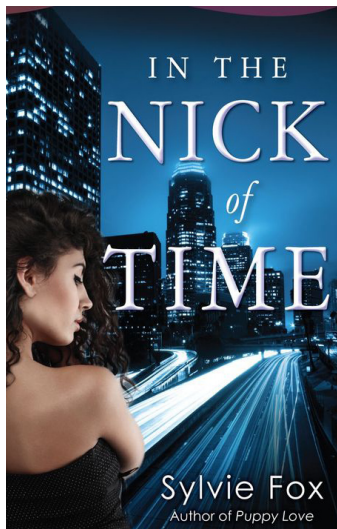
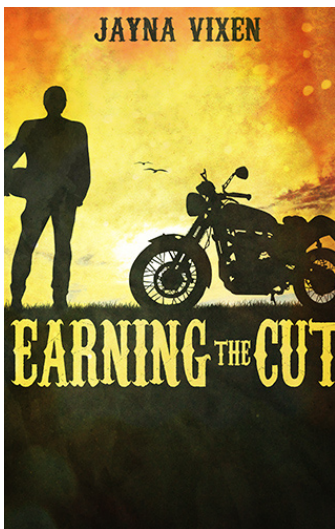


NEW RELEASES





By LARA Members



The following article first appeared in the April 2013 issue of Penn & Passion, the monthly newsletter of the Central Pennsylvania Romance writers chapter of RWA. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.

So You Want To Organize Your Writing...

Isabelle Arden

It's happened. You have a novella you wrote three years ago that would be perfect for the contest. Only it's vanished into the ether of your office or computer, and despite your best efforts, it isn't going to be found. At least not until the contest deadline has passed!

For creative people disorganization is often portrayed as a must-have hallmark of genius. The problem with clutter is it not only gets out of hand but also prevents us from being professionals – a must-have hallmark of the successful author. Organization begins with understanding where you do the bulk of your writing work, and then builds from there. We all need some type of physical organization, but computer organization is also become a crucial key for the successful author.

Computer Organization:

Computers are very efficient in organizing drafts, research notes, and other materials - if you are consistent. Start off with your electronic device(s). It's easy if you have only one primary computer. If you work from multiple computers, pick one stable place for storage: an external hard drive or cloud based storage, such as Google Drive or Dropbox. But don't use multiple storage options, you will lose track of your material!

After selecting your primary storage place, folders and names are key. In a broad 'documents' folder, you should keep a central folder for each type of work you do (novels, short stories, articles, etc.) and if you work in multiple genres, I recommend folders for each genre and certainly a separate folder for series. Each novel, story or article should also have its own folder. My 'nesting' folders work like this: 'Documents' – 'Writing' - 'Novels' – 'Egypt'

It's possible to stop there. You'll quickly find the project you're looking for by following your folders. However, I'm the kind of writer who has twenty-two different opening scenes, each one an individual file. When I add in pictures, character notes, outlines, synopses, multiple drafts and other files, that one folder is a mess.

This is where names - and more folders - come in handy. Inside the novel folder, 'Egypt,' I keep a folder called 'Working Draft.' The only document in that folder is the current draft of my novel. Then I create other folders: 'Egypt Characters,' 'Egypt Opening Scenes,' 'Egypt pictures,' and so forth.

The final step to quickly find what you're looking for is to use specific names. It's easy to simply save a picture by the name it downloads with. However, an obscure name is not going to help you find what you're looking for. Typing a specific name in your computer's search feature will allow all related folders and files to spring to your fingertips, so choose names carefully.

A writer friend of mine saves every draft file with a date at the start of the name: '13_2_8_Chimera_1stDraft.' This allows him to find the most recent copy of the file, or a copy from an earlier date. When you go to search for a lost file, you might not remember what you called it, but you will remember that you started the story in February or March or June, and a date in the name can help you track it down. I also use numbers to differentiate between files. Remember my opening scenes? I name them by permutation - 'Egypt Opening Scene 19.' Ideally, the type of file it is (picture, scene, research) should always be included in the name.

Physical Organization:

At one point or another in our processes, we're going to have paper. Index cards, a page from a steno notepad, napkins and notebooks can all serve. Unfortunately, there is no magic search button that will cause a much needed index card to suddenly leap in the air. For that reason, physical organization is crucial.

1. The Banker's Box: for people who use all kinds of paper, notebooks, etc.

To me, the banker box is something every writer should use, regardless of writing style. It's important to store physical copies of our stories, along with our notes and edited drafts. All types of stores sell banker boxes cheaply, usually in packs of three. They're easy to set up and stack. I label mine with the title of the draft, one novel per box. The banker box for your novel becomes the place where you store notebooks, paper, index cards and printed scenes or drafts. Anything you write for your project should go into this box so you can easily find it when it comes time to type in notes, reference character sketches or transcribe a handwritten scene. At the end of the project, the banker's box doubles as storage for all those materials. For me, gathering all the materials and filling the banker's box is a ritual way of closing the project. When I slide the box into its place on the shelf, I feel a sense of closure.

2. The Binder: for people who use largely 8x12 paper

There are two ways of using binders. The first is to use one binder for all of the book's materials (research, notes, character and setting sketches, scenes, etc.). Oftentimes, it's a binder you might use over for multiple projects. The second is to use multiple binders, one for research and notes, another for the draft. Binders can be stored on a large bookshelf, available to peruse at a later date, or you can 'box' them. Binders for short stories or articles could be kept until the binder is full. You can also keep a binder that is strictly story and article ideas.

3. Folders: for those with filing cabinets

Folders and filing cabinets are the standard organizational method for writers. Yet, they can very easily become impossible to deal with unless you are careful about how you organize. Start by separating your drawers by purpose: drafts, notes, and materials for writing belong in one drawer, while accounting belongs in another. Labeling physical folders is not as intensive as computer files. The project name, indicating whether contents are notes or draft, is usually enough. Use a label maker if you can, because the label stays clear, easy to read and can be 'labeled over' if you decide to reuse the folder. Alphabetizing folders allow you to quickly find the folder, but organizing folders 'chronologically' may work just as well. Older projects go to the back of the drawer, and the more recent projects to the front.

Final Thoughts:

Organization is like your writing style: you have to find what works. Try one of the previous methods and see whether it feels natural. If it does, stick with it: consistency is as much a component of successful organization as compatibility.

Any method can help you become organized, but the key is whether the method is compatible to you and your work habits. Try a method, give it a little time, but don't latch onto it unless it really is helping you stay organized. An incompatible method causes more disorganization, and problems.

Isabelle Arden is a writer of paranormal romance and dark historical fantasy with strong romantic elements, and is currently working on her first novel. She lives in central Pennsylvania with her golden retriever, who has delusions of grandeur.

This article first appeared in the May 2013 issue of Tide Lines, newsletter of the Vancouver Island Chapter of RWA. Permission granted to other RWA chapters to use with proper credit given to author and chapter.

Create Interest with Pinterest

Lisa McManus Lange

Are you a fan of Pinterest? It's that addictive online pin board where you can search for pictures, recipes, home improvement ideas, wedding ideas—the works—and collect “pins,” or pictures/links you want to save. It's still foreign and new to many, but once you understand what it's all about, it can not only be used as a business-driving tool, but also as a tool for your writing.

The basics of it: a pin is an image—a picture, recipe, quote, etc.—you would like to save. And where do you save it? To your “board,” like a pin board you would pin (or tack) an image to.

Think of all the times you have leafed through a magazine cutting out recipes, intriguing travel or home decor photos, or pictures of favourite clothes. Remember when you used to tack them on your pin board as a teenager, or now, perhaps, paste them in a scrapbook for personal inspiration? Or have you ever created collages, either for personal life inspiration or for your writing? Nothing beats the tactile fun of glue and scissors, but sometimes it's easier and more productive (as far as finding images goes, never mind for storage purposes) to collage online. Collaging, world-building—whatever you want to call it—it sure helps to have a visual image to inspire a story, and nothing beats having it right at your fingertips.

Pinterest is the online equivalent of collaging—it's easy, fun, and oh-so-addictive!

If you're new to Pinterest and only want to browse around the site, simply go to: www.pinterest.com <http://www.pinterest.com>, sign-up via your Facebook, Twitter or email address, and start searching for goodies under the categories tab at the top of the page. Before I knew what it was all about, I first signed up for it using my email address and I never had boards or anything fancy—I only joined to search for recipes and home decorating ideas.

Now, as I have found my way around and understand what it's all about, I'm having fun with it. I'm still not a pro at it, but I'm learning as I go.

One thing to note—Pinterest is connected to Facebook and Twitter. If you wanted to follow someone's board, you would need to be friends with or follow them on one of these two social media outlets. Or if you happen to know someone's user name—mine is [lisamclange](http://www.pinterest.com/lisamclange)—then you would enter it in the web browser after the site name, such as: www.pinterest.com/lisamclange <<http://www.pinterest.com/lisamclange>>.

I know this sounds very confusing, but once you navigate the user-friendly site, Pinterest can be fun, interactive, brand-building, and...addictive. **It's more than just saving pins—it's also about sharing and interacting with people you know. And what's more, it can drive traffic to your website.**

Folks searching for stuff can re-pin from your boards to their own—but remember, they aren't stealing from you in a copyright sense—these were pins you already re-pinned to your own boards from someone else—kind of like sharing. Many pins are linked to websites, leading you deeper into the Internet. Say you saw a neat recipe which linked you to a website. Instead of saving websites to your favourites, all your recipes and their related websites are saved in one place—a board—on Pinterest.

Confused? Don't be. It's easy. Even computer-skill-lacking writer-girl like me figured it out.

And I didn't cry once.

But moving on...

For those already in the pinning world, have you thought about how you can use your created boards to help your writing? In the past I pinned inspirational photos for fun, but I took it one step further by taking the lead from Jane Porter and her boards.

She has a board for each published novel featuring inspirational photos used when writing that novel. As well, she has current works-in-progress and, for example, she has a “new adult” board for her current work-in-progress (note the new “new adult” genre). You can link to <http://pinterest.com/thejaneporter/>.

Like Jane Porter, I have my own Pinterest profile where you will see a blurb about me, my blog's address and my boards.

Among my boards of recipes, craft and travel pictures, I made a board featuring the covers of the books where my work has appeared, aptly called, “Books Including My Works.” And if I couldn't find the covers, I simply uploaded a picture from my computer and created a pin.

Along with craft ideas, travel inspiration and recipe boards, which are all good to show potential readers a personal side of you without being too revealing, I created a board for a completed novel, as well as a work-in-progress. **Not only does doing this help me get a better visual of my character(s) and their worlds, but I glean inspiration and motivation to keep pushing my story forward.** Even photos of movie stars have helped me visualize certain characters in my novel.

But be careful, getting lost in the world of Pinterest can suck up writing time! Pinning is not writing!

In a nutshell, get inspired by collaging online, and in the spirit of PR, build a profile and create boards on Pinterest. I don't claim to be an expert on Pinterest—I'm learning as I go along. And even though I know I still have a lot to learn about the many features of it, I know what I have created has helped my writing immensely by making boards for world building in my novels.

So don't be afraid, just dive in, and get “pinning.”

*Lisa McManus Lange is addicted to Pinterest in Victoria, BC, Canada. Her latest work can be found in the anthology *Not Your Mother's Book...On Travel* (Publishing Syndicate, March 2013). Visit her at www.lisamcmanuslange.blogspot.com <http://www.lisamcmanuslange.blogspot.com> or write her at lisamc2010@yahoo.ca <<mailto:lisamc2010@yahoo.ca>>.*



The following article appeared in the February 2013 issue of the DARA News, the newsletter of the Dallas Area Romance Authors. This article may be reprinted with proper credit to the author and chapter.

Are You Tapped Dry? Vicki Batman

I am a writer and like most writers I know, occasionally my work isn't going anywhere, especially when my husband had cancer six years ago. My whole world screeched to a heart-stopping halt. I felt like my brain had left the station and could just about manage to function. And, yeah, that writing went nowhere. I had to devise a plan to keep me in the game. So I went at it from several directions.

I took several online classes. And this is kinda funny because I didn't participate. I read everything, but I couldn't write anything. Several teachers contacted me off-line and I told them my circumstances. I did puzzle books, specifically Word Search: No Vowels. Many of us start our days with crosswords, suduko or take time to play Farmville. I did Word Search with my boys when they were younger and in some of the books were puzzles with no vowels. I liked that particular challenge and found I could buy just those books. Now, I carry one with me all the time—the car, trips, TV. I find it exposes me to new words. I did crafts. I am a huge needlepoint person. I don't always do fancy stitches, just the regular one. Seeing the colors weave in the canvas makes me see color in my head. I critiqued. If I couldn't help myself, I could help others. I put the word out and several people took advantage of me. And like my help helped them, they helped me.

I attended local meetings which always had interesting discussion. I joined a couple of on-line chapters. By posting in Yahoo Groups, I made new friends and hey, it is writing. And I probably did the most important one of all: I READ! Lots of magazines, books, online articles. You name it. When Handsome had his treatments, I packed a backpack with the puzzle book, needlepoint, and books. He had to sit for a couple of hours each week and I did, too. Finally, I set a deadline. His treatment was over in October. He had to get well so we could go to the company conference, then there was Thanksgiving and Christmas. That was crazy! So I told gave myself permission to enjoy those times and not stress out. I set a deadline of January 2 to sit down at the computer, open my book and get to work. My plan worked! I actually was better prepared to write the book that had stalled. It sang!

I posed this question to other writers about what they do when they're stalled and here's what some of them said:

Pamela Stone - YouTube—What can I say? I'm extremely visual. This can start with a video of a particular song or person that interests me. By clicking through the videos that one brings up, I go to another, and another. Amazing that I often come up with ideas that weren't even on the radar when I started.

Diana Cosby - To refuel my muse, I read *Born in Ice*, by Nora Roberts. That story speaks to me, reiterates the importance of character along with a well written story, and touches my heart. In addition, I force myself to write as you can always edit poorly written copy.

Nikki Duncan - I clean house or weed the flower beds. For whatever reason the physical cleaning seems to also clean out my brain and stuff starts flowing again. Or it could be that with all the chores done I'm no longer thinking on some level about those things needing to be done. Oh, and my desk has to be clean even if I'm not sitting at it. I can't write when there's messiness around me. What can I say, I'm a little OCD.

Gay Kiser - When this happens to me, I either take a walk to somewhere I haven't been before, or take a drive to a location that isn't familiar to me and "people watch." I've noticed in my own writing that when my writing doesn't come easily, I'm struggling with the characters and need to get rejuvenated by watching the way people react to one another.

Sylvia McDaniel - I read one of my favorite authors and do something fun. Soon I can't wait to get back to the computer. Perhaps, if you are Tapped Dry, you might consider trying one of these tips. Because we all know, to write, something must be on the page.

Like some of her characters, award-winning author, Vicki Batman has worked a variety of jobs. Her latest book is LITTLE BIRDIE WHO...AND OTHER STORIES. She is a member of RWA and in 2004, she joined DARA. DARA awarded her the Robin Teer Memorial Service Award in 2010.

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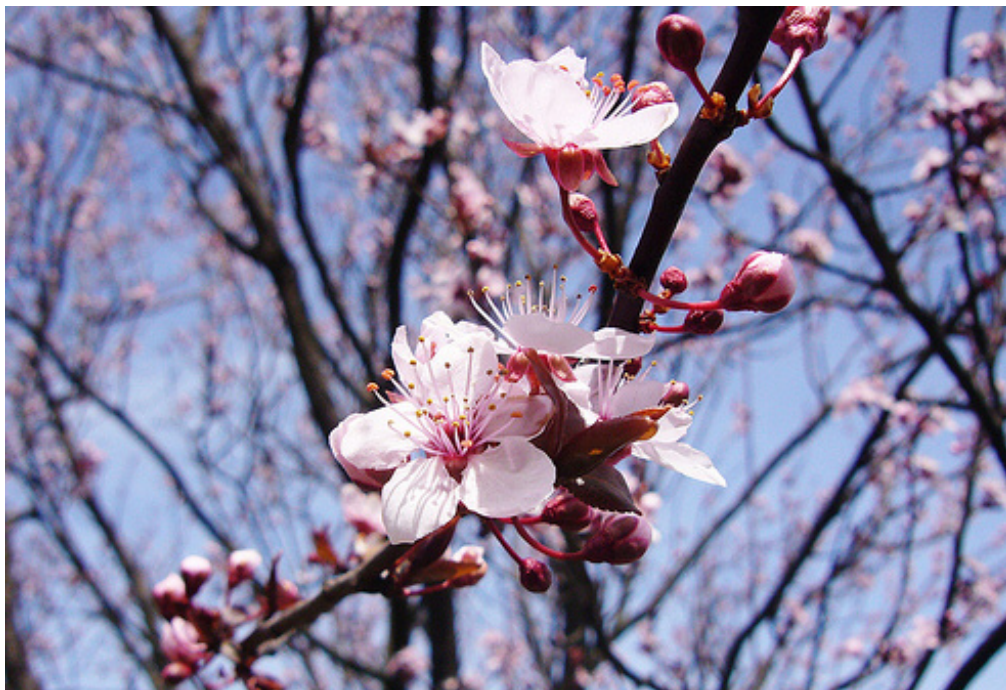
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LARA will be posting "Say Hello To" articles about the various members on the main blog and in the newsletter. It is a simple and fun way to let the Chapter's Readership get to know you, your blog and your writing style better. Simply click here to fill out the form:
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WORKSHOP OR SPEAKER PROPOSAL

LARA is rebuilding the Workshop Page on the website to help our writers market their Speaking and Workshop events. To have your workshop added, simply click here to fill out the quick form:
<http://www.lararwa.com/submit-a-workshop-or-speaker-proposal-for-laras-website/>



This article first appeared in the April 2013 issue of Tide Lines, newsletter of the Vancouver Island Chapter of RWA, and may be used by other chapters with proper credit given to author and chapter.

Create a Winning One-Sheet

Shelley Adina

There you are, in your 10-minute session with the editor or agent of your dreams. You've been over your pitch with your critique partner, you've written enough character sketches to populate a small town, and you've memorized your market research. The editor smiles and says, "Tell me about your book" and ... every single word drains out of your mind, leaving a complete blank where a scintillating pitch used to be.

Many authors save the situation with notes on 3x5 cards. But when you're stressed, even making sense of your own handwriting can be difficult. Enter a new tool: the one-sheet. These have been used for years in the Christian market and in the music and video game industries. Here's how they work.

The one-sheet is a snapshot of your book or series, your market research, and your bio, all on—you guessed it—one page. The editor has everything she needs to know to begin a productive conversation about your book, and helps her remember your manuscript when you mail it to her later. It also gives her some unwritten but clear information about you, the author: that you're market savvy, have done the legwork to answer her questions in advance, and have thought about marketing yourself as well as your novel—all skills that will serve you well in a writing career.

Not bad for an 8.5 x 11" piece of paper.

So let's look at the one-sheet, section by section, and see how it not only presents your book in its best light, but how it can organize your thinking as well.

Section 1: The Book

The most important section, and the one given visual importance on the page, contains the back-cover copy for your book. Two or three paragraphs tell the reader about your characters, the central conflict, the setting ... and end with a story question. Here's an example from the fourth book in my steampunk series, *BRILLIANT DEVICES*:

A lady of resources has the power to change the world—if she can stay alive long enough to do it.

Lady Claire Trevelyan had been looking forward to glittering balls, congenial society, and relief from pursuit during her stay with Lord and Lady Dunsuir in the Canadas. Well, perhaps not entirely. Being pursued by a handsome airship captain is quite diverting, especially when it appears Andrew Malvern is far too distracted by a certain blond mechanic for his own good.

But a shot fired in the night puts an end to such diversions, and instead plunges her and her orphaned band of children into a fight for their very survival. Between secret conversations at the highest levels of society and skullduggery in the diamond mines, Claire must discover who is behind these alarming attempts on her friends' lives—before her mother is compelled to make funeral arrangements yet again.

The back-cover blurb is designed to pique reader interest—and gives the editor a starting point for a productive conversation about your characters and plot development.

If you're pitching a series rather than a single book, you can lay out the one-sheet in landscape orientation and arrange three back-cover blurbs across the page. Then, in a paragraph that spans all three, you can give a series overview, describing the main plot and themes. This will save space so that you don't have to repeat it in the book descriptions, allowing you greater detail in the individual blurbs below.

Section 2: Your Bio and Contact Information

This section should be 100-150 words, giving your credentials for writing the book, your experience, contest wins, and education. Use your bio from your website if you have one, so that your “collateral,” or marketing materials, are all consistent. Include your website and email address so that if the editor wishes to contact you for more, she can do so easily.

Section 3: Market Research

If you have room, or you’re using a double-sided sheet, think about including your market research. I proposed a teen series featuring a group of antagonistic high-school girls, slowly drawn together as they created the dresses of their dreams. My market research included quotes from articles that had recently appeared in Publishers Weekly and Time about teens getting into crafting, and mentioned books by NYT bestsellers set in the knitting and scrapbooking communities. Show the editor that your book has a market, and she will have less work to do when she takes your proposal to the editorial meeting.

Section 4: Tag Lines and Quotes (optional)

Many authors include tag lines on their websites and signature lines to give readers a quick, witty way to remember them and their books. Lee McKenzie, for instance, writes “fifty shades of pink.” Debbie Macomber promises, “Wherever you are, Debbie takes you home.” You can create a tag line for your book or series, too, and place it in a display font in a strategic location on your one-sheet. “Steampunk with spirit” is my tag line for the Magnificent Devices series. It’s both a promise and a description.

Another option is to use a particularly telling quote from your manuscript—something that encapsulates the theme of your book. I used “A lady of resources makes her own luck,” one of the heroine’s lines. This line appealed to a reader so much that she created a poster of it along with my book covers, and sent it to me!

Other Elements:

Editors tend to be visual people—even if they’re not creating cover art and page layouts, they still give professional input in both those areas. So consider including images that convey the style and mood of your book, its setting, maybe even its characters. Use your own photography or buy images from stock photo sites, and make your one-sheet even more memorable.

So far, I’ve sold two trilogies on a one-sheet alone, so I can vouch for how well they work. Give your inner graphic designer some freedom and see what you can come up with. Then at your next editor appointment, see how well it works. You never know—one sheet of paper might start a chain of events that ends with a book contract!

RITA Award® winning author and Christy finalist Shelley Adina wrote her first novel when she was 13. It was rejected by the literary publisher to whom she sent it, but he did say she knew how to tell a story. Shelley is a world traveler who loves to imagine what might have been. Between books, Shelley loves playing the piano and Celtic harp, making period costumes, and spoiling her flock of rescued chickens.

Learn more about her books at www.shelleyadina.com and www.adinasenft.com.



Can a Grandmother...

The following article appeared in the May 2013 issue of Writer's Serenade, the newsletter of the Rose City Romance Writers. This article may be reprinted with proper credit to the author and chapter.

Can A Grandmother Write YA?

Maggie Faire

When I first conceived my YA Fantasy series almost four years ago, I had to look hard at whether I could pull it off. The good news was my roots were in SF and Fantasy-even if my short stories were published 30+ years ago. Though I've been writing and publishing adult romances for the past decade, I'd also begun reading scores of YA books in 2009 and found I loved the genre. I loved revisiting the complexities of deciding who you are and what you want to do with your life. In many ways, looking toward retirement after a long career in Academia, I was doing that again myself. The question that loomed in my mind was "Is there a YA Voice and, if so, can I capture it?" At that time, there were a lot of first person, snarky, mean girls kinds of novels and first person, snarky, fantasy kick-butt (read mean girls) kinds of novels. Hmmmm. I don't write snark and I don't write mean girls. Is this really the only YA voice?

I started building my fantasy world anyway. Maybe I could be the first successful non-snark, non-first person, non-mean girls grandmother to debut in YA? I knew I had the ultimate coming-of-age story-a girl who is born a human chameleon. If she looks at you, she completely turns into you. Male, female, young, old-it doesn't matter. She turns into you. It is frightening both for the protagonist and for those who see it happen. Hence she is raised in isolation. What better foundation for being totally confused about your identity and unaware of the world? Add in a save the world aspect and an entire forest peopled with fantasy characters and I loved it.

In 2010 I pitched it as Avatar meets Wicked Lovely at a Michael Hauge workshop given by the Rose City chapter. After reading my two-line high concept pitch, the best part of that day was he really liked the idea and encouraged me to move forward. That told me I was on the right track. Now all I had to do was write the darn thing.

When I finished the first book, I knew it was a series. I began pitching it to agents at conferences. Though almost everyone liked the idea and asked for the first three chapters, the first question they asked me was: "Why do you think you can write YA at your age?" I have to admit I stumbled on that. It had never occurred to me there was a perceived age limit for writing YA. One agent tried to be kind when I stumbled, but it didn't quite work. She offered: "Perhaps you're a kid at heart?" Well, no, not really. But I do believe the experience of deciding who you are, what you want, and forging your independence is a universal experience that is shared at many stages of life. Of course, I didn't say that then. It's taken me several years of pitching agents and editors to come up with that response.

So, why should grandmothers consider writing YA? Honestly, I think we are the MOST qualified. We have years of life experience through lots of ups and downs and have often repeated in some fashion that identity seeking experience. As women we seek identity in our teen years, after college (or whenever we choose a career), after marriage, during motherhood, after the children leave the nest, and again when we contemplate and enter retirement. Women, especially, seem to be in a constant search for identity that is separate from all the other people in their lives.

... write YA?

Add to that, as grandmothers we can't get pregnant, hopefully don't live with teenagers who might drive us to writing a mean girls novel, and most important we are at the most knowledgeable time of life to be able to rewrite being a teenager. I don't think anyone looks back at being a teenager and says "Wow! That was the best, most confident and amazing time of my life" If you do, please DO NOT contact me! I prefer to believe that everyone else was devastated by their teen years.

What better way to rewrite that experience than to become the teen you wished you had been: confident, kick-butt, learns from mistakes and gets better, has pithy come backs to boys who drive her crazy, always brave, and of course can absolutely save the world!. And of course, my protagonist is beautiful. After all she's a chameleon, she can look anyway she pleases.

Still not convinced age is no determiner for writing your first YA novel? Here are just a few of the popular YA writers who are over 50 (whether they are grandmother's or not), successful, and still writing.

Tamora Pierce -59; Susan Cooper-77; Cornelia Funke-54; Cynthia Voight-71; Julia Alvarez-63; Rachel Caine-50; Suzanne Collins-50; Lois Duncan-78; Ursula Le Guin-83; Lois Lowry-76; Jane Yolen-73

And the men too!

Terry Pratchett-64; Michael Grant-58; Orson Scott Card-61; James Patterson-66; Jerry Spinelli-72

Soon I hope we can add Maggie Faire, age 59, to the list of popular YA writers. When I see writers like Ursula LeGuin, Lois Lowry, Susan Cooper and Jane Yolen still at it, I have great hopes for a full and wonderful YA career.

If you love reading YA and have been thinking of writing it, but wonder if you are too old. I say "Pshaw! Give it a try." You are never too old to live your dream. You are never too old to rewrite that teen experience and make it everything you wanted it to be and more. More than that, who better than someone with maturity to capture not only the coming-of-age experience, but add some depth to what it means in the longer view.

Have fun and happy writing!

Maggie Faire is the YA pseudonym for RWA member Maggie Lynch. Maggie also writes adult romances and currently has four books available under the name Maggie Jaimeson. Her goal is to pursue both an adult and YA career well into her 80's and longer if possible. The first two books in her YA Fantasy series will be released May 30, 2013 through Windtree Press. The series contains a total of seven books, the rest to be released over the next two years. You can contact Maggie under either of her author personas at her websites: <http://maggiefaire.com> and <http://maggiejaimeson.com> The websites also contain links to all her social media sites.

SPEAKER SPOTLIGHT

Speaker Spotlight - Victoria Blade, Kathy Bennett, Robena Grant, and Suzanne Lazear Answer Some Questions...

Victoria Blade:

1. Who is your favorite fictional character, and why?

Damon Salvatore. For anyone who watches The Vampire Diaries, my choice needs no explanation. For the rest of you, I just love myself a bad boy who'll do anything to protect the woman he loves and who tries to be better for her.

2. What is your favorite dessert?

My homemade ice-blended mochas at only 175 calories. Yeah, baby!

3. What is next for you?

Right now, I'm working on Wolves at the Door, the sequel to My Wolf's Bane. It will be released near the end of summer.

Kathy Bennett:

1. Who is your favorite fictional character, and why?

My favorite fictional character is Sergeant Joe Friday from Dragnet. Sergeant Friday always got the bad guy and then gave him or her a no-nonsense and succinct lecture to boot!

2. What is your favorite dessert?

My favorite dessert is: Hot Fudge Cake from Bob's Big Boy.

3. What is next for you?

What's next for me: I'm working on my third Maddie Divine suspense novel, A Deadly Beauty, which takes Maddie and her partner, Jade Donovan, inside the glitzy pageant world.

Robena Grant:

1. Who is your favorite fictional character and why?

From a novel, it would have to be Minerva Dobbs in Bet Me, by Jennifer Crusie. Min gets to eat donuts and not feel guilty about it.

2. What is your favorite dessert?

Key Lime Pie, no, Pavlova, no, Flourless Chocolate Cake.

3. What's next for you?

The rewrite of a romantic suspense set in Australia, plus I'm writing a contemporary romance.

From Suzanne Lazear:

1. Who is your favorite fictional character and why?

Oh, goodness, there are too many to chose from!!

2. What is your favorite dessert?

Cupcakes, of course.

3. What's next for you?

Book 2 of the Aether Chronicles series--Charmed Vengeance releases 8/8/13.

LARA Meetings

2013

June 9 - Julie Hurwitz;
PITCH WORKSHOP

July 14 - Debbie Decker, Beverly Diehl and Chellesie B. Dancer;
CONFERENCE PREP 101: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

August 18
THE WRITERS TEAM: How to establish the perfect team to support your career

September 15 - Maria Seager;
CONTRACTS 101: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

October 20 - Rick Ochoki;
NANO WRIMO PREP

November 17 - Louisa Bacio;
SYNOPSIS 101: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

December 15
FIRST SALES MEETING

Upcoming RWA University Classes

RWA University will offer two forum classes per month. One class will be offered at no cost to members. The other class will be offered at a cost to those members wishing to participate. Registration spaces are limited for the classes that have fees. These classes will be large enough to encourage participant interaction, but small enough so that participants have more opportunity to interact with the instructor. Learn more at <http://my.rwa.org/rwau>, or e-mail: RWAUniversity@rwa.org with questions.

Writer's Toolkit:

Tools for Writers on PC and Mac. June 3 - 7.
Instructor: Gwen Hernandez. Cost: \$0.

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