



Write ON!

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE
WOMEN'S FICTION WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Fall 2016

HOW TO GET THOSE GOALS ON TRACK!

**YOUR 2017:
YOUR MOST PRODUCTIVE
YEAR EVER**

**7 EASY TIPS FOR MEETING
EDITORIAL GOALS**

2017 WFWA BOARD CANDIDATES

**WINNERS OF THE STAR
AND RISING STAR AWARDS!**





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President's Note



This is such a bittersweet moment.

As I pen my final letter as WFWA President, there is so much I want to say, including that this has been a record-breaking and monumental year for this organization, and yet, I have to be cautious not to fall into that familiar writer trap—I have to remember to show, not tell.

So here goes. Membership is up about 20% from last year. Registration and engagement in online workshops is up across the board. So much so that we've added to our programming schedule, including expanded Facebook Launch parties, a summer reading challenge, and post-conference access for those members who could not participate in certain programs in real time. We continue to explore new ways to accommodate our ever growing membership. The first Regional Conference in Philadelphia and expanded Annual Retreat in New Mexico were hopefully just the beginning of our steps toward more and diverse live programming. This international organization of 800+ members craves connection, and as a board, we are constantly obsessing about ways to provide it!

As we heard at the annual retreat this fall, our members are finding more and more ways to make successful careers out of writing, and are maximizing the opportunities provided by the new era of publishing. They are also generous in unprecedented degrees, sharing what they have learned—both successes and failures—with their fellow members in ways that make me extremely optimistic about the future of WFWA. In the works for 2017 are an innovative mentorship

program and a broad push to showcase all of the many and diverse voices of Women's Fiction. I am so excited not just to watch what is in store for this organization, but to join in the work required to take it to the next level.

Congratulations to all of us on an amazingly successful 2016, and cheers to an even more amazing 2017!

Like any great work in progress, there is lots more work to be done. I'm not going anywhere and I hope you aren't either.

XO

Amy

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Amy'.

Editors

FEATURES EDITOR

Erin Bartels writes copy for a living, but she writes novels for a life. She has worked in the publishing industry for fourteen years and has been a finalist in WFWA's Rising Star Contest and in the *Saturday Evening Post's* Great American Fiction Contest. You can find her in her home office in the middle of the Mitten State or at www.erinbartels.com.

LAYOUT EDITOR

Sierra Godfrey writes fiction with international settings and always a mention of football (soccer) or two. She is also a graphic designer with a soft spot for magazine layout, and a staff sports writer covering La Liga for online sports sites. She lives in the foggy wastelands of the San Francisco Bay Area with her family and can be found at www.sierragodfrey.com.

MANAGING AND COLUMNS EDITOR

Tasha Seegmiller is a mom to three kids and high school English teacher in Southern Utah. She writes contemporary women's fiction with a dash of magic. Her loves include Diet Coke, owls, chocolate and cinnamon bears. She is a founder of and contributor to *Thinking Through Our Fingers*, and can be found at tashaseegmiller.com.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Patricia Friedrich is an associate professor at Arizona State University. She is the author/editor of six nonfiction books including the upcoming *The Sociolinguistics of Digital Englishes* (Routledge 2016), and of several published short stories. She is currently working on revisions to her first novel-length manuscript, *Artful Women*.

Write On! is published quarterly by the WFWA.

womensfictionwriters.org

f facebook.com/WFWritersAssociation

twitter.com/WF_Writers

ABOUT THE WFWA

We began this organization in 2013 with the idea to create a safe, nurturing place for male and female writers of women's fiction. The publishing industry is morphing—with new opportunities and, as yet, unknown futures. The founders of the Women's Fiction Writers Association wanted somewhere to amass and disseminate information to and about our chosen genre.

Defining Women's Fiction has proven as subjective as the types of books we prefer. For that reason, our guiding statement is broad and comprehensive:

Stories that are driven by the main character's emotional journey.

Our stories may have romance. Or they may not. They could be contemporary. Or historical. But what binds us together is the focus on a main character's emotional journey.

Write on!



Join the closed WFWA Facebook group by sending an email to:

membership@womensfictionwriters.org

READER LETTERS

Like what you've read in *Write On!*? Send us a letter! We'd love to hear your feedback and reactions on the stories and features. Email them to writeon@womensfictionwriters.org. Submitted letters are considered for publication and may be edited for clarity or space.

2016 WFWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Member News

WE'RE EXCITED TO SHARE THESE NEW MEMBER RELEASES
COMING OUT THIS QUARTER



MEMBER BOOKS RELEASED THIS QUARTER:

GAINING VISIBILITY

PAMELA HEARON

NORTH OF THE KILLING HAND

JONI M. FISHER

OUT OF PRACTICE

PHOEBE FOX

THE EDUCATION OF DIXIE DUPREE

DONNA EVERHART

DUTY TO THE CROWN

AIMIE RUNYAN

FOUND

EMILY BRETT

LOVE LITERARY STYLE

KARIN GILLESPIE

SECRETS OF WORRY DOLLS

AMY IMPELLIZZERI

RUBBING STONES

NANCY BURKEY

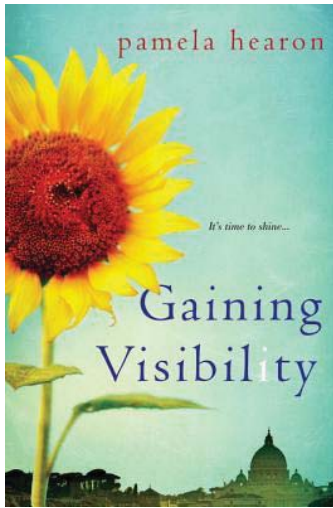
ALL THE BREAKING WAVES

KERRY LONSDALE

THE MARRIAGE LIE

KIMBERLY BELLE

If you have a Women's Fiction novel being published in the next quarter (July–September), and would like Write On! to feature it, please [fill out the submission form here](#).



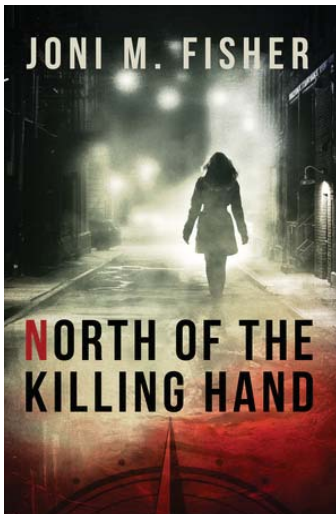
GAINING VISIBILITY

PAMELA HEARON
SEPTEMBER 27, 2016

Julia Berkwith's daughter has moved to Alaska, her beloved mother-in-law is in a nursing home, and her ex-husband is in Hawaii—with a younger woman. In her late forties, Julia is now used to being invisible. But even if she has to do it alone, she's determined to celebrate her victory over breast cancer by hiking Italy's Cinque Terre. And while she's there, she can scout out treasures for her interior design business back in Kentucky.

Invigorated by the beauty of the Italian countryside, Julia seems unstoppable, until she's injured by a rock—one that happens to belong to thirty-something stone mason Vitale DeLuca. Reluctantly, Julia accepts Vitale's insistent offer of lodging while she recovers. But in his home, amid his exquisite sculptures, Julia sees beyond his charm and looks to something special: a talent she must bring to the world's attention. And once she does, she plans to step aside to leave him in the spotlight. But Vitale has seen something in Julia too, something she is no longer able to recognize in herself. And he is determined to find a way to show it to her.

Poignant and uplifting, *Gaining Visibility* is an exhilarating story of one woman's realization that even the deepest scars have a beauty of their own—and that it's time to take her place in the sun once more.

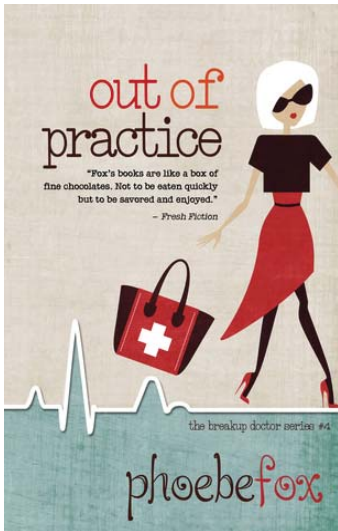


NORTH OF THE KILLING HAND

JONI M. FISHER
OCTOBER 16, 2016

Years after witnessing the murder of her parents, Nefi Jenkins pursues a career in law enforcement, but later must choose between the rule of law and the temptation of revenge.

The second book in the Compass Crimes Series, *North of the Killing Hand* is a prequel to *South of Justice*.



OUT OF PRACTICE

PHOEBE FOX

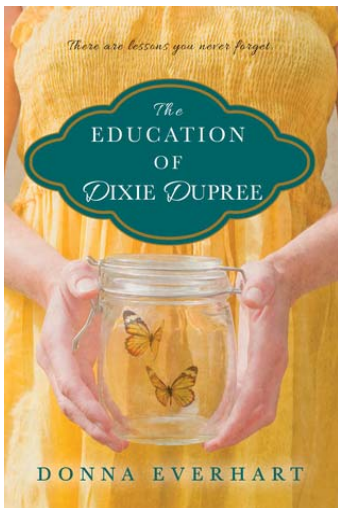
OCTOBER 18, 2016

When your relationship is on life support, the Breakup Doctor is on call.

There's no shortage of broken hearts in Breakup Doctor Brook Ogden's successful breakup counseling practice—if love is a battlefield, then Brook is the cavalry. Luckily her own love life is in full recovery: after a long, tortuous road, she and Ben Garrett are finally headed down the aisle.

But when a local TV personality—and former frenemy—invites Brook onto her show, she's blindsided live on the air when the interview turns into an act of long-delayed revenge meant to publicly humiliate her. Brook's an expert at getting back on your feet when life knocks you down, but as the blows keep piling on—with a betrayal she never saw coming and a family crisis that threatens to pull the foundation out from under her—her confidence starts slinking away. With her clients dropping her faster than a one-night stand, suddenly the Breakup Doctor's career is in critical care.

Brimming with both the sublime and ridiculous aspects of love—romantic and otherwise—*Out of Practice* is a funny and heartwarming tale about loss, grief, and failure that will resonate with all who have loved, lost...and dared to love again.



THE EDUCATION OF DIXIE DUPREE

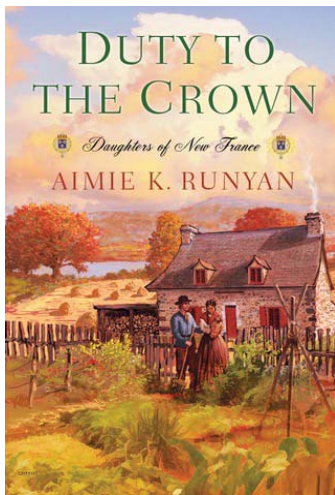
DONNA EVERHART

OCTOBER 25, 2016

In 1969, Dixie Dupree is eleven years old and already an expert liar. Sometimes the lies are for her mama Evie's sake—to explain away a bruise brought on by her quick-as-lightning temper. And sometimes the lies are to spite Evie, who longs to leave her unhappy marriage in Perry County, Alabama, and return to her beloved New Hampshire. But for Dixie and her brother, Alabama is home, a place of pine-scented breezes and hot, languid afternoons.

Though Dixie is learning that the family she once believed was happy has deep fractures, even her vivid imagination couldn't concoct the events about to unfold. Dixie records everything in her diary—her parents' fights, her father's drinking and his unexplained departure, and the arrival of Uncle Ray. Only when Dixie desperately needs help and is met with disbelief does she realize how much damage her past lies have done. But she has courage and a spirit that may yet prevail, forcing secrets into the open and allowing her to forgive and become whole again.

Narrated by her young heroine in a voice as sure and resonant as *The Secret Life of Bees*' Lily or *Bastard Out of Carolina*'s Bone, Donna Everhart's remarkable debut is a story about mothers and daughters, the guilt and pain that pass between generations, and the truths that are impossible to hide, especially from ourselves.



DUTY TO THE CROWN

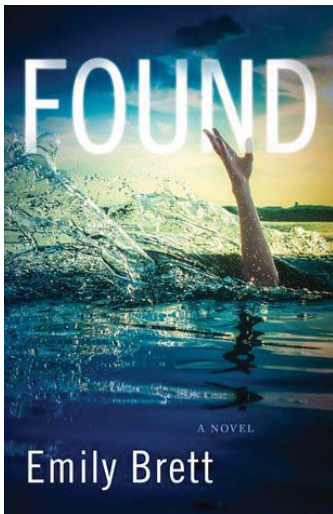
AIMIE RUNYAN

OCTOBER 25, 2016

Set amid the promise and challenge of the first Canadian colonies, Aimie K. Runyan's vividly rendered novel provides a fascinating portrait of the women who would become the founding mothers of New France.

In 1667, an invisible wall separates settlers in New France from their Huron neighbors. Yet whether in the fledgling city of Quebec or within one of the native tribes, every woman's fate depends on the man she chooses—or is obligated—to marry.

Although Claudine Deschamps and Gabrielle Giroux both live within the settlement, their prospects are very different. French-born Claudine has followed her older sister across the Atlantic hoping to attract a wealthy husband through her beauty and connections. Gabrielle, orphan daughter of the town drunkard, is forced into a loveless union by a cruel law that requires her to marry by her sixteenth birthday. And Manon Lefebvre, born in the Huron village and later adopted by settlers, has faced the prejudices of both societies and is convinced she can no longer be accepted in either. Drawn into unexpected friendship through their loves, losses, and dreams of home and family, all three women will have to call on their bravery and resilience to succeed in this new world...



FOUND

EMILY BRETT

OCTOBER 18, 2016

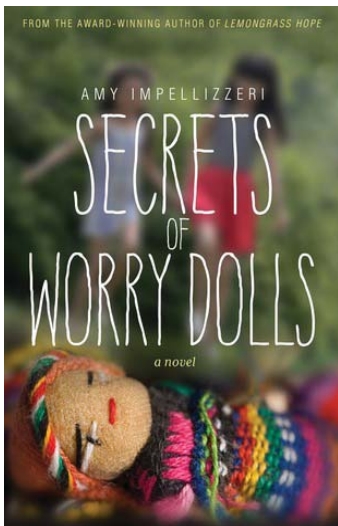
Twenty-seven-year-old ICU nurse Natalie Ulster has a desire to see the world, in case she dies young like her mother, and a need to heal, which is compensation for her own damaged heart. Armed with an independence and self-reliance that stems from her father's emotional abandonment and wanting to separate herself from a deranged nurse whose husband just died under suspicious circumstances on Natalie's watch, Natalie grabs life by the globe and accepts successive assignments in Belize, Australia, and Arizona. When Natalie meets Dr. Joel Lansfield, a physician who is also familiar with grief, she finds that Joel sees her for the strong woman she is and loves her for all she has yet to figure out. But she's not sure she's ready to make room in her heart for love. Desperate to maintain her emotional distance with Joel, she continues to travel. In each country, however, she finds herself confronted with near-death accidents, from a poisoned drink to a severe food allergy to being thrown overboard in the Great Barrier Reef. Too many coincidences force her to ask herself a frightening question: Is someone trying to kill her?



LOVE LITERARY STYLE

KARIN GILLESPIE
NOVEMBER 8, 2016

Low brow meets high brow in a literary love story. Can an emotionally stunted literary novelist and a vivacious romance writer find their happily-ever-after? Even when she becomes more successful than he? *Love Literary Style* spoofs romantic comedy tropes, winks at literary pretensions, and pokes fun at book publishing. Like *Legally Blonde* only in the literary world. Inspired by the author's *New York Times* article "Masters in Chick Lit." A sparkling romantic comedy for fans of *The Rosie Project*.



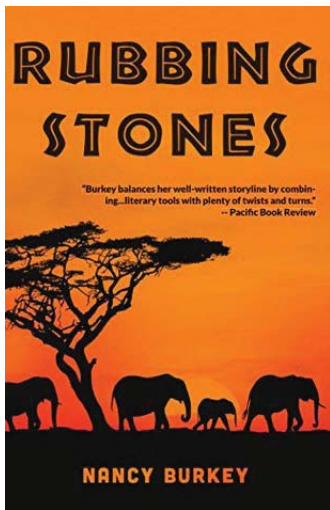
SECRETS OF WORRY DOLLS

AMY IMPELLIZZERI
DECEMBER 1, 2016

According to Mayan tradition, if you whisper your troubles to the Worry Dolls, they will do the worrying instead of you—therefore, it follows that Worry Dolls are the keepers of a great many secrets . . .

On the eve of the end of the world—according to the Mayan calendar—Mari Guarez Roselli's secrets are being unraveled by her daughter, Lu.

Lu's worry dolls are at capacity as she tries to outrun the ghosts from her past—including loved ones stolen on 9/11—by traveling through her mother's homeland of Guatemala, to discover the painful reasons behind her own dysfunctional childhood, and why she must trust in the magic of the legend.



RUBBING STONES

NANCY BURKEY
DECEMBER 1, 2016

Dr. Jane O'Neil, an American psychiatry professor, books her family on a rafting trip down the Zambezi River, seeking redirection and reconnection with her troubled son.

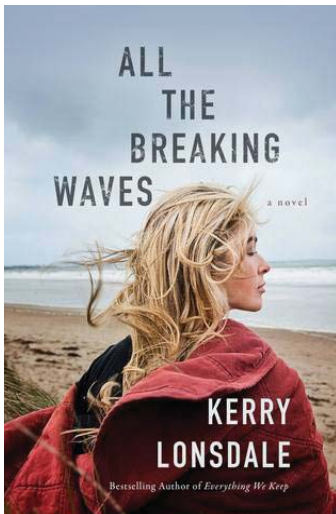
Katura Masaku, a smart but impulsive teenager in Botswana, sneaks across the border to Victoria Falls, naively confident she can rescue her wrongfully arrested older brother.

Her optimism is crushed by a corrupt police department that's willing to punish the innocent. And Jane's river trip ends violently with a hijacking that turns into an extended hostage situation. Zimbabwe's political chaos, not to mention the jungle itself, puts both Jane and Katura in danger.

Will they succumb to their desperation, or find the courage to make it home?

Rubbing Stones is an emotionally charged debut novel about two families from opposite corners of the world, thrown together in a place where political and personal currents are more dangerous than the Zambezi that threatens to drown them.

How far will they go to save the ones they love?



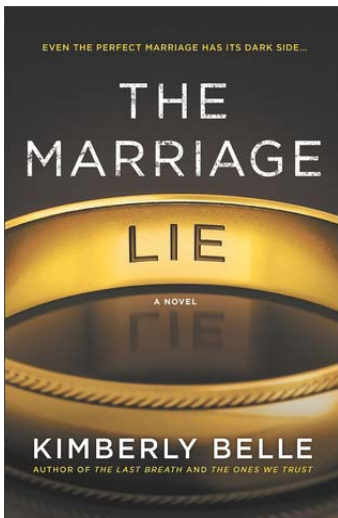
ALL THE BREAKING WAVES

KERRY LONSDALE
DECEMBER 6, 2016

After a harrowing accident tore her family apart, Molly Brennan fled from the man she loved and the tragic mistake she made.

Twelve years later, Molly has created a new life for herself and her eight-year-old daughter, Cassie. The art history professor crafts jewelry as unique and weathered as the surf-tumbled sea glass she collects, while raising her daughter in a safe and loving environment—something Molly never had. But when Cassie is plagued by horrific visions and debilitating nightmares, Molly is forced to return to the one place she swore she'd never move back to—home to Pacific Grove.

A riveting exploration of love, secrets, and motherhood, *All the Breaking Waves* is the poignant story of a woman who discovers she must confront her past, let go of her guilt, and summon everything in her power to save her daughter.



THE MARRIAGE LIE

KIMBERLY BELLE

DECEMBER 27, 2016

Iris and Will's marriage is as close to perfect as it can be: a large house in a nice Atlanta neighborhood, rewarding careers, and the excitement of trying for their first baby. But on the morning Will leaves for a business trip to Orlando, Iris's happy world comes to an abrupt halt. Another plane headed for Seattle has crashed into a field, killing everyone on board, and according to the airline, Will was one of the passengers on this plane.

Grief-stricken and confused, Iris is convinced it all must be a huge misunderstanding. But as time passes and there is still no sign of Will, she reluctantly accepts that he is gone. Still, Iris needs answers. Why did Will lie about where he was going? What is in Seattle? And what else has he lied about? As Iris sets off on a desperate quest to find out what her husband was keeping from her, the answers she receives will shock her to her very core.



How to Make 2017 Your Most Productive Writing Year *Ever*

by JAMIE RAINTREE

As we look ahead, at the dawn of a new year, you're probably sick to death of the idea of setting resolutions. You're probably even irritated to see this article here. What more could I possibly say that you haven't heard a thousand times, and that's done nothing to help you get thinner, break bad habits, start new ones, or reach your dreams—writing or otherwise?

The truth is, I don't set resolutions and I haven't for years, despite the fact that New Year's Day is my favorite holiday. I love the possibilities of a fresh start so much that I even love Mondays (which you have probably gathered if you're a member of the WFWA Facebook Group). But resolutions? Not so much. Because resolutions are more of a hope than an objective. That's the inherent problem with New Year's Resolutions: hopes aren't actionable.


So at the beginning of each year, here's what I set: goals. And not just *what* I want to happen, but *how* I'm going to make it happen and when. This is where typical resolutions fail and why most people end up setting the same resolutions year after year, without ever making progress. Reaching your goals doesn't happen on accident and without careful planning. If you want this year to be different—if you want to make it your

most productive year ever—I'm going to share some tips with you that have helped me improve my productivity exponentially every year.


MAKING THIS YEAR YOUR MOST PRODUCTIVE YEAR EVER

It's actually pretty perfect that the New Year falls after the holiday busy-ness. If you're like me, from Halloween to Christmas writing ends up taking a backseat to shopping, cooking, spending time with the family, and enjoying the holiday cheer. It's a time for "refilling the well," which creates exactly the kind of renewed, excited energy you want to bring to your plans for the following year.

Not long after the final gift is unwrapped, my mind starts to wander to what did and didn't work this year, the goals I reached, the ones I didn't and why, and whether or not I want to bring those goals into the new year. And then, while The Husband is still home from work to watch The Girls, I sneak away with a cup of coffee, a notebook, my planner, and assortment of colored pens (because pretty colors make planning a lot more fun—trust me). I make it decadent, this date with myself, because that's how I want my goals to feel—not like an obligation, but like the ultimate present I'm giving to myself.



**I'M MAKING MY OWN
DREAMS COME TRUE.
WHAT BETTER GIFT IS
THERE THAN THAT?**



I'm making my own dreams come true. What better gift is there than that?

So design your own date—whatever makes you feel treated and excited—and with your choice of notebook and/or planner, map out the year ahead, including the following things:

SET 1 TO 3 MAJOR GOALS FOR THE YEAR.

It's important to keep your goals focused. If you're anything like me, you probably have a dozen things you'd like to accomplish in 2017, in your writing career and in your personal life. We've all heard the phrase, "Jack of all trades, master of none," and in your publishing career, this is the last thing you want to be. In order to sell your book, or continue selling your books, you must be a master. The competition is too stiff for anything less. Therefore, by keeping your goals focused, you can ensure that you have enough time to master each one of them.

I think I'm safe in assuming that writing a book is on your goals list so we'll count that as the first one. If you're one of those people who can write more than one book in a year, and you know you can do this without jeopardizing quality or your sanity, then land on a number that makes sense for you.

In addition to writing, you may want to expand your web presence or promote your forth-

coming book. Maybe you want to write a collection of short stories or teach. Maybe you want to build up your editing or coaching business. Or maybe your focus is solely on writing a book, and that's great too.

Lastly, I'd highly recommend setting a personal goal—one that will support you in accomplishing all your other goals. Eating healthier to lose weight and have more energy supports your writing. Exercising also gives you more energy and supports your writing. Reading more, meditating, going on more adventures, spending more quality time with your family . . . all of these things fill up your well so you can be a better writer.

No matter what you decide, knowing what you're capable of and honoring that is the best choice you can make.

Understand why you want to reach these goals and how they will contribute to your big picture ambitions.

Here's another big reason people fizzle out on their New Year's resolutions: they don't have a strong understanding of their why. It's easy to give up when you're writing for writing's sake or exercising for exercise's sake. If these goals don't connect to the big picture vision you have for your life, they will mean nothing to you, and it's the meaning behind your goals that motivate you, not the goals themselves. For each goal, write down why you want to accomplish it, what it means to you, and how hitting it by the end of the year will move you forward in building the life you most desire. When you're driven by a deeper purpose, you'll be amazed at the mountains you can move.

MAKE A LIST OF ACTIONABLE STEPS FOR EACH GOAL.

What do you need to do in order to reach your goal? Don't leave it up to chance! Don't wait until September and wonder why you haven't gotten any closer to finishing your book, or losing the weight, or getting more editing clients. It won't happen on accident. For each of your big goals, create a list of at least ten (but twenty or thirty or forty is great too) steps you, yourself,

are able to take action on. Obviously, if your goal is to get traditionally published next year, you can't control whether an agent offers representation or not, or whether you get a contract or not. But you absolutely have control over researching agents that represent your genre, learning how to write an effective query, getting your query critiqued, sending out a certain amount of letters per week, etc.

If finishing your book is your goal, break it down by how many weeks, words, or pages you need to write, how many critique partners you want to connect with, how many drafts you think you will need to polish it, which craft books you want to read. Be as precise and thorough as possible so you are 100% clear on how you are going to make your goals happen (or at least 90% . . . all right, 80% will do). There will be some things you aren't sure of yet, and that's fine. You can absolutely adjust and refine as you go.

PLOT THE ACTIONABLE STEPS OUT ON A YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE CALENDAR.

As writers, our projects are typically long and extensive, so plotting your calendar out by day, or even week, probably isn't feasible. I like to have a year-at-a-glance calendar handy so I can plot out my action steps by month. This also provides a lot more flexibility as things inevitably shift throughout the year. Mine shifts so frequently, in fact, that it's the only thing in my planner that I write in pencil! Be sure to take into account other important (a.k.a., time-sucking) events throughout the year, such as travel plans, holidays, and the normal ebb and flow of productivity that changes with the seasons.

The objective of this exercise isn't to have it all planned out perfectly and to stick to it like it's written in stone—it's to show you that you do have time to accomplish all your goals for the year, and to give you a quick reference that will help you get back on track if you get diverted along the way.

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY.

In Gretchen Rubin's book about habits, *Better Than Before*, she asserts that people fall into four tendencies when it comes to accountability:

they best uphold other people's expectations for them, or they best uphold the expectations they have for themselves; both, or neither. Understanding which tendency resonates with your own habit style is hugely beneficial in ensuring you create the best possible environment for pursuing your goals.

A planner works well for those who uphold their own expectations, while joining online challenges may work better for those who are better at upholding the expectations of others. Maybe you need both. Check out [Gretchen Rubin's quiz on her website](#) to find out which tendency you fall into and/or take a critical look at the previous circumstances surrounding times where you've reached your goals versus times when you haven't. Duplicate what works and brainstorm ideas to replace what doesn't.

As a general rule of thumb, though, staying connected to your writing community is always helpful, and luckily, you already have one you can tap into for support at any time. Don't be afraid to ask—there are no doubt dozens of other WFWA members who are in the same boat and could also use a word of encouragement or a kick in the pants. That's what we're here for!

REFER TO YOUR GOAL LIST FREQUENTLY.

Now that you've got your plan in order, here's my biggest piece of advice: don't stuff it into a drawer and never look at it again. I admit it, I'm guilty of this too. Unfortunately, though, the best-laid plans mean nothing if we forget about them completely, which is often what happens without regular reminders.

A beneficial tactic I've adopted from the podcast *Being Boss*, is the "CEO Date." We all spend so much time doing the daily tasks of being a writer and building our platform, but how often do we step back and take a look at our big picture goals for our careers to make sure we're staying the course? Probably not often enough. Because of my CEO Dates, I now have 30-60 minutes scheduled in each week when I do just that. I look over my goals for the month to make sure I'm on track to complete them on time, I

write out my plans for the following week, and I touch base with my heart to make sure I'm still excited about what I'm doing, making adjustments if necessary. You can always make adjustments.

If weekly is too often, once a month is sufficient, or even once a quarter. Schedule these dates with yourself now so you don't forget. If you struggle with keeping a calendar, set a reminder on your phone. It may feel like an inconvenience when you already have so many other tasks on your plate, but regularly reconnecting with your vision can often eliminate mental tasks as you get more comfortable prioritizing your writing career.

Leaving behind the "resolutions mindset" and setting tangible goals is a skill like any other that you'll get better at with time and practice. As you learn how quickly you can accomplish tasks and what your natural flow of productivity is, your planning will get tighter and more accurate. It will also get more confident as you prove to yourself what you're capable by setting goals reaching them, over and over again.

But it starts here, today.

So make a commitment to yourself now to sit down and plan the year ahead, and you'll be well on your way to having your most productive year ever. •



Jamie Raintree is an author and a writing business teacher. She is also a mother of two girls, a wife, a businesswoman, a nature-lover, and a wannabe yogi. Her debut novel, *Perfectly Undone*, will be released on October 3, 2017, by Graydon House. Subscribe to her newsletter for more writing tips, workshops, and book news. To find out more, visit her website at www.jamieraintree.com.



A Writing Goal You May Not Have Considered: Getting Yourself to the *2017 Retreat*

by ERIN BARTELS

All of us have writing goals (and if we don't yet, we're going to for 2017 after reading all of these inspiring goal-oriented articles, right?). But beyond the writing and the editing and the querying, have you considered making "spending IRL time with other writers" one of your goals?

During the past two Septembers, I have been so personally blessed by my time at the Annual WFWA Writers Retreat in Albuquerque that one of my most important goals is to not miss the next one. And the one after that. And the one after that.

But travel is expensive. I have a mortgage and I have to heat and cool my house and pay for martial arts lessons for my son. I have coffee and wine needs that I must fill!

And travel takes time. I have a full time job. I have a husband and a son and a canary (his name is Alistair Beckett) to take care of. I have laundry and dishes that need doing.

Yeah, we all do.

Like you, I have responsibilities and, let's be honest, not a lot of extra cash just lying around that I can spend on retreat registration, flights, shuttles, tips, hotel rooms, food, and lemon drop martinis and manhattans at Garduños (sorry, I tried to love margaritas in order to fit in in the Southwest, but I'm a vodka and whiskey girl).

But I also have my goal: *be at that retreat*.

Why? Because it's one of few things I do for me and me alone. Because my heart needs it. Because I want to get closer to the friends I've made through this phenomenal organization. Because it feeds my soul.

As Jamie Raintree says in her article this quarter, every goal needs to be broken down into doable steps. So if getting to the annual retreat or a regional conference is one of your goals for 2017, here are some clear, doable steps you can take to make it happen.

- 1. BLOCK OFF THE TIME IN YOUR CALENDAR AND ASK YOUR BOSS FOR THOSE DAYS OFF.**

The 2017 Retreat will be September 20–24. Make it real to yourself and others by putting it on your calendar. Use pen. Do it now. Don't wait. Have you done it yet? No? Go DO IT and then come back and read the rest of this article.

2. SAVE YOUR MONEY.

Get a jar. Label it Writing Retreat. Cut a hole in the lid big enough for bills to fit through. Start filling it. With what? Everything you can get your grubby paws on. Loose change. The money you would have spent on something you know you don't need (specialty coffees, cute-but-unnecessary shoes, name brand whatever).

This Christmas or Hanukkah, ask your loved ones to contribute to your trip. You don't need another sweater! You need this trip! Birthday, Mother's Day, Clergy Appreciation Month—ask for money. Some people will be super annoyed about this. Some people will not comply with your wishes and they'll get you something extra ugly to punish you. But some people *will* give you money and they will be *thrilled* that it's that easy to make you happy!

3. MAKE MORE MONEY.

How? Freelance writing or editing is a great way to make some extra spending cash if you have the time and the expertise. Or maybe you have a hobby you can monetize. Knitting, crocheting, painting, handyman jobs, small engine repair—do you do something others wish they could do? Start selling yourself—I mean your goods and services . . . start selling your goods and services. It will take some time away from the writing you've vowed to do, but I know that some of you are doing it anyway because I see your pictures on Facebook.

Other ways? Garage sales, bake sales, mowing lawns or delivering papers. Are you retired? Take on a part time job just to fund your travel!

4. FIND A PATRON.

Do you have a doting great aunt who tells you she can't wait to read your first book? Ask her to invest in your writing career by helping you get to a writing retreat. Do you work in a writing-

related industry like publishing, journalism, or even education? Ask your boss to sponsor a portion of your trip as "continuing education." If you ask, you might get a no, but you can't get a yes unless you ask. I work at a book publisher. In 2015, I took a leap of faith and asked my boss if my company would help pay for the retreat and for two years straight they have covered my airfare. A benefactor like that can take a sizeable chunk out of the cost of a conference or retreat.

Where there is a will there is a way (don't strike me down, Margie Lawson!). If you want to join me (and Lisa Cron!) at the 2017 Retreat (and we both really, *really* want you to) the time to start planning and saving for it is now.

Now be honest with me . . . you still haven't asked for that time off, have you?

Seriously, writer, do it *now*. Then go find your jar. •



Erin Bartels is the author of *This Elegant Ruin: and other stories*. Her debut novel is on submission—which means she's trying really hard to stay inspired enough to work on her current WIP to avoid checking her inbox for news. She blogs at www.erinbartels.com and would love to connect with you on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ErinBartelsAuthor.

Writing Goals

by BARBARA CLAYPOLE WHITE

When my lovely agent called to offer representation, one of the first questions she asked was, “What’s your long-term career goal?” I didn’t have an answer because snagging the agent of my dreams had been the limit of my focus for years. Yes, I hoped she would ultimately sell the manuscript—she did—and it would be a runaway success—it wasn’t—but those big picture goals weren’t even on my horizon during our first conversation.

Writers are dreamers, and I’m sure most of us have planned our Oscar acceptance speeches, but what really matters is our meat-and-potatoes attitude toward writing. In other words, always striving to craft a better book. I think of my writing goals as everything that exists in my limited field of vision while driving through a doozy of a thunderstorm. I know there are sign posts out there saying *international bestseller this way*, or *exit here for movie deals*, but I’m concentrating on the windshield wipers, staying on the road, not running out of gas, and definitely not adding to my state’s roadkill tally. And hey, if good things happen while I’m white-knuckling that steering wheel, terrific.

My new novel, *Echoes of Family*, launched right before all the big guns. As soon as I realized that fact, I wanted to crawl into a hole and



stay there until I was at least three months out. I felt sure there was nothing waiting in the mist except total humiliation. After giving myself a good talking to—and pushing my poor husband to the edge of sanity—I decided to do something I rarely do: enjoy book launch. I’ve celebrated every five-star review, I’ve done the undignified author dance over every minor achievement, and I’ve had a blast with my author events. Ignoring everyone else’s success has allowed me to narrow my attention to what’s directly in front of me—celebrating the creation of a manic-depres-

sive heroine who pushed me beyond my writing comfort zone.

Thinking small is key for me; it's a question of survival. As many of you know, my son battles obsessive-compulsive disorder. His OCD—one mean little bastard—tries to prevent him from enjoying the moment. It keeps him glancing around corners for the next big disaster. There's a word for it: awfulizing or catastrophizing. The more I actively chase the big picture, the more I start awfulizing. And really, there's enough of that going on in our house.

You need career goals, of course you do, but keep them reasonable. For example, I'm meant to be on the book-a-year track, but my natural rhythm is for one novel every fifteen months, and I'm sticking with that. Why set myself up for a fall? I would rather slow down and produce a heroine who makes me ridiculously proud.

If you are chasing big picture goals, keep them flexible and adaptable. When I started out, one of my writing dreams was to be an Indie Next Pick, and after my second novel was chosen by the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance as an Okra pick, I dared to hope I was on the right path. Then Harlequin canceled my contract with MIRA, and my agent donned her superwoman cape to get me an offer from Lake Union. This means I'm now classified as an Amazon author (bye-bye Indie Next List). However, moving to Lake Union proved to be the best step I could have taken for my career: *The Perfect Son* was a Kindle First Pick and helped me attain an astonishing career milestone as a 2015 Goodreads Choice Awards Nominee for Best Fiction along with Harper Lee. Crazy, right? It was a glorious surprise, a terrific ego boost, and not something I will hope for again. It's not even on my radar.

Nope, I'm sticking with my simple philosophy: take nothing for granted in this crazy messed-up business and enjoy every success. Because making a 'best of' list doesn't compare to those moments when you touch a reader's heart and he or she can't wait to tell you, even if it means firing off an email at 2:00 a.m. That's my career goal—to create characters and stories with

the power to make a difference in some small corner of the Universe. Which means there's nothing in the beam of my headlights beyond writing the best book I can write.

Write on, chaps! xox •



A Brit living in North Carolina, Barbara Claypole White writes hopeful family drama with a healthy dose of mental illness. Her debut novel, *The Unfinished Garden*, won the 2013 Golden Quill Contest for Best First Book, and *The In-Between Hour* was chosen by SIBA (the Southern Independent Booksellers) as a Winter 2014 Okra Pick. Her third novel, *The Perfect Son*, was a semifinalist in the Goodreads Choice Awards Best Fiction 2015. Her fourth novel, currently untitled, has a publication date of October 2106.

For more information, or to connect with Barbara, please visit barbaraclaypolewhite.com.



Imagine My Surprise: Why Returning to the Same Hotel for WFWA Retreat is a Blessing and a Curse

by ZAN MARIE STEADMAN

Returning to Hotel Albuquerque for this year's WFWA Retreat was a delight—like going to the very best of high school reunions. Not only would my buddies, who I knew so well from our Facebook Community, be there, but the hotel was an old friend too. I knew where all the restrooms were.

But to walk out to the Sunport Shuttle bus and have the same “character” as our driver was too much. If you want to know why, check out “An Occupational Hazard” in the Fall 2015 Write On! I know I dropped my teeth in shock.

It got even stranger when the “character” remembered me. Last year, he relegated me to the back of the bus because I talked too much. This year, he assigned me the seat right by him so I could relish his irreverent and rabidly incorrect political banter.

But imagine my surprise when the “character” said that he'd been trying to pick me up for years. I had to demur, telling him there was something about the man who was waiting for me at home. I'd have to take a pass—again.

So remember, you never know when a “character” will enter your life. Just be sure to have pen and paper handy. And, don't jerk back

when the “character” gives you a hug and a kiss on the cheek. •



Zan Marie Steadham is a co-program coordinator for Women's Fiction Writers Association's Annual Write-A-Thin and a 2009 Georgia Author of the Year nominee for An Easter Walk. She's still shaking her head at the Universe for presenting her with characters when she least expects them—especially when all she wants is a smooth ride to the airport, so she can go home to her husband, John, and Max and Casey, their toy poodles.



2017 WFWA Board Candidates

The following candidates are presented:

PRESIDENT

- Chris Adler

VICE PRESIDENT PROGRAMS

- Kathy Sechrist

VICE PRESIDENT FINANCE

- Laura Drake

VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

- Martha Sessums
- Anitra Wilson

SECRETARY

- Tasha Seegmiller

BOARD DESCRIPTIONS

PRESIDENT

The President will oversee the Board of Directors and collaborate on programming and communications from the organization, and on budget issues with the Treasurer. The President is responsible for planning and conducting quarterly Board meetings, monitoring all info@ and president@ emails, staying on top of “customer service” issues, strategizing new means of member recruitment, including industry representatives, and conducting monthly audits of expired members.

As President, I have also researched and explored branding issues as they arise as well as cost-effective advertising options. I regularly interface with our web provider, and help Board members and volunteers trouble-shoot technology issues as needed. I also conduct regular communication with members via social media/email blasts, and research new ways to answer member needs as we grow and evolve as an organization. I oversaw the planning of the first Regional Conference in Philadelphia.

Finally, the President is the ambassador of WFWA, helping to enhance an understanding about the breadth of the Women’s Fiction genre for readers, and striving to make WFWA a go-to organization in the industry for established, emerging and aspiring Women’s Fiction authors.

VP, PROGRAMS

The VP Programs oversees all aspects of workshop programming for WFWA. This includes Write-A-Thin, Donald Maass' master class, craft and editing workshops in spring and summer, the annual online pitch session and the discussion event in fall. VP Programs sets the schedule for the coming year's workshops in September; oversees a team of volunteer program coordinators; interacts directly with presenters; handles registration for, formats and moderates the workshops and uses follow up feedback to assist in planning new programming and improving existing workshops. As a Board member, the VP Programs assists the President as needed and consults with the Board on technology or other issues as they impact programming for the organization.

VP, FINANCE/TREASURER

The Treasurer/VP, Finance handles all accounting and financial transactions including managing bank and PayPal accounts, issuing payments, reviewing PayPal and merchant account transactions, updating the annual budget, and entering data into Quickbooks Online. The position also includes monthly bank reconciliations, quarterly financial statement generation and review, and annual tax return filing. Finally, this position makes suggestions/recommendations to the WFWA Board based on financial status and budget projections.

VP, COMMUNICATIONS

The VP Communications is responsible for the overall communications strategy and messaging of WFWA including the development, review and execution of the Communications Plan; maintaining consistency in all internal and external communications; coordinating all communication vehicles including the quarterly magazine and newsletters; assisting the social media and web site teams with message and program opportunities; promoting appropriate successes of WFWA members, including Star Awards and Rising Star awards; assisting in managing any other messaging opportuni-

ties for WFWA. The VP of Communications will work closely with the President in all messaging and promotion opportunities, as well as fulfill any other obligation designated by the Board.

SECRETARY

According to the bylaws, the secretary position is mainly for keeping track of minutes from board meetings as well as voting on issues that need to have board approval. Following in the footsteps of secretaries before me, I took on the responsibility to also help spread the word about WFWA through trying to be consistently involved in online conversations and through starting Instagram and Pinterest accounts to broaden the audience interested in WFWA for whatever reason. Where the day to day expectations of my position aren't highly demanding, it seemed like a way to increase my involvement (which is why I volunteered in the first place) as well as provide a little more support for the organization I really love.

CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

PRESIDENT

Christine Adler

Chris Adler has lived many lives in the past few decades. A former IT Help Desk Design Specialist, she spent years in customer service and IT support. But after her first child was born, she started a blog and never looked back. She's the cur-



rent VP of Programs WFWA and a member of the Historical Novel Society. She's also a former Editor-in-Chief of the literary magazine Inkwell Journal, and of the regional NY parenting magazines Westchester Parent and Rockland Parent.

Chris's articles, essays, poems and book reviews have appeared in various print and online publications throughout the Northeastern United States and Canada and she has a Master's degree in Writing from Manhattanville College. She's currently shopping for an agent for her first historical fiction and is at work on her second. She lives in the suburbs of NYC with her husband and two teen sons in a home that is, for the first time in ten years, pet-free. For now.

What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?

In its first year of existence, the WFWA Board of Directors worked tirelessly to build a community of women's fiction writers, and provide them with a supportive and educational environment in which to hone their craft and grow in their writing life. Last year's board built on that foundation and raised the visibility of the organization, drawing in agents, editors and other industry professionals to add an additional layer of benefit to members by expanding the association's reach. This year's board helped WFWA brand itself as the champion organization of women's fiction in publishing. Through it all, the most important benefit has been that members have the feeling of being part of a supportive and engaging community.

As a member since the beginning, I've felt that sense of community for the entire three years. The Board of Directors focuses on the professional growth and education of its members, while the members provide support on a peer level that is not found in any other organization of this kind. I want to continue to foster this strength of community on both the board and the member levels while we continue to expand our reach.

How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and professionally from the association?

I've been a member since the month WFWA launched, September of 2013. Personally I have found people who've helped me to grow in an industry where I was a relative newbie, and they

got me excited about it. I went from writing by myself in my basement office to mingling with other like-minded authors in Albuquerque and online. Suddenly I have a tribe of peeps who "get" the whole writing thing! I've also made some dear friends. Professionally, WFWA has been a way for me to tap into a hive mind I had no access to before. I've learned more about the craft, the industry and the process than at any other time in my writing life, and interacted with agents and editors I'd have been afraid to talk to just a few years ago.

Are there any new directions you'd like the organization to take? New ideas?

I have so many ideas! We are already moving toward a more robust website platform, one that will allow for things like video tutorials and podcasts, cleaner forums and smoother membership payment transactions. I'm also working on a mentorship program; we'd like to hold more regional conferences; we're looking into a partnership program with various companies that offer services for authors so our members can benefit from their knowledge and experience, and a potential charitable project in which WFWA members can participate. As for new directions, my goal is to continue to move the association in the direction the founding members envisioned: provide a thriving community for writers of women's fiction where they can expand their skills and resources and reach their writing goals, whatever they may be.

What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?

All the people I've worked with in the last two years, both as Director of Communications in 2015 and as the VP of Programs this year have been incredible. They've brought a level of professionalism and vision to their positions, as well as an open-mindedness and a bevy of incredible ideas, that make me feel anything is possible. To work with such passionate, eager writers excites me because I know together, we can achieve anything.

What is your leadership style? What would be your first item you'd like to address as president?

As a leader, I've tried to style myself after those whose leadership has helped me most in my life. I'll make sure the board members understand the direction in which we want to steer the association and why. I want them each to be clear and confident about what their role is in that journey, and to feel comfortable coming forward with ideas, questions or concerns. And I'll continue to keep communications open from top to bottom. This way, the members can make their voices heard, and the board will be able to work together as a whole to resolve problems and implement changes that benefit the organization on every level.

VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAMS

Kathy Sechrist

Kathy Sechrist is a retired Organizational Change Management/Communication Consultant, living on Whidbey Island, WA with her husband, Bob, and two cats, Harvey and Chaz. She has one short story published in the collection *Hello I'm Here: The Untold Stories of Everyday People*. Kathy serves as co-editor of *Inside WFWA*, President of Soroptimist International of Coupeville, Volunteer Coordinator for the Coupeville Festival Assn. and Ambassador of Hope for Shared Hope Int'l, educating communities on Child Sex Trafficking. When she's not volunteering, reading, or writing she can be found walking on her beloved beaches or island forests. Kathy, a Whidbey Island native, is currently working on her first novel.



What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you

do to support that?

Without question the value of WFWA is the dynamic writing community that becomes this organization's valuable draw to other writers. Members are involved and supportive of each other – each of us has the tremendous gift of our own cheerleading team! My goals for 2017 include supporting the continuation of this collaboration through current avenues as well as programs that encourage members to interact with one another.

Are there any new directions you'd like the organization to take? New ideas?

WFWA has been blessed with visionary leadership who have positioned our organization as a leading organization – a destination for writers to be. I want to continue that forward movement and solidify our position in the industry.

What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?

It is critical to continue to listen to our membership for what is of benefit to them. There will be challenge of identifying and providing programs that our members find great benefit from. I thrive on challenge, and look forward to this opportunity to listen to our members and to provide exciting, beneficial programs.

What would you like to put in place in the coming year that we haven't addressed yet?

A mentor program where published authors help guide less experienced writers in areas such as structure, publishing, marketing, etc. Members have expressed they want workshops in Characterization, Unpacking Conflict and Maintaining Tension, Plotting and Marketing which I would work to provide. I believe in the voice of our membership and look forward to pursuing leading workshop providers to deliver what our members want.

How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?

The best thing I did three years ago was sign up to join WFWA. During those three years I have met and learned from other members, many who have published books, many who are like me, yet to be published but working on it. The support, knowledge, friendship and comradery has been an ultimate force in maturing my writing. Membership to me feels like my extended family.

VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS

Martha Jessums

I spent the last year as VP of Communications for WFWA where I developed a Communications Plan for the organization and executed in several areas. Successes include beginning to build awareness of WFWA as a premier organization



representing women's fiction writers around the world, announcing the Star Award and Rising Star awards, and managing the editorial teams for Inside WFWA and Industry News, which required a content reboot. There is much more to do to build awareness for WFWA in the coming year.

I bring to this position a career in high technology public relations managing external and internal communications, messaging, positioning and marketing. This was done through management positions at leading companies and agencies in and serving Silicon Valley, such as Apple Computer, Covad Communications, Hill and Knowlton and Regis McKenna. I have developed and executed a wide range of communications plans from introducing new products

and executives, to trade show exhibits and press tours, to company turnarounds and a pre-negotiated bankruptcy.

Currently, I'm President of the Association for Continuing Education, an educational non-profit. I develop all communications including the web site and its move to a mobile platform, manage the blog and write many of the posts (including an April poetry contest for ACE's Learning Centers.) I tweet, Facebook and Instagram in a combination of my personal and professional accounts.

My press/promotional writing is kept sharp by volunteering for writing jobs from press releases for mobile software (my husband's business,) to brochure copy on senior healthcare (for a friend.) I write for France Today magazine as its San Francisco Ambassador, reporting on all things French in the Bay Area. My WIP is an upmarket novel featuring a woman art thief. I earned an MBA from Santa Clara University.

[Association for Continuing Education](#)

[France Today Ambassador – San Francisco](#)

What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?

I said this last year and I still believe it – building your community circle is the most important. And from community comes empowerment. Members benefit from participating in events and programs, getting to know other members/writers, sharing and encouraging each other's writing and celebrating our successes. It also means that each WFWA member is an ambassador for the organization, and we should find ways to encourage that empowerment attitude.

Are there any new directions you'd like the organization to take? New ideas?

WFWA is just beginning to gain traction by growing membership and earning a position in the industry, and there is much to do to continue this forward direction. The benefits, programs and support of WFWA should be promoted to grow membership internationally and encour-

agediversity of writers and stories. Member and industry contacts should be made easily accessible for members. WFWA should continue to be a supportive, empowering place for writers at all levels. Where the organization needs to move forward is to increase awareness of WFWA as the leading professional community for women's fiction writers. That means WFWA should be the first place resource that industry leaders, traditional and new media go to when needing messaging, understanding and perspective regarding women's fiction.

What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?

I have spent less than a year as VP Communications, and I don't feel my job is complete yet. I invested this time getting to know the organization, its leadership, members and the industry. Now I'm ready to move the organization to a higher level of awareness in the industry and will work hard to gain that leadership position. Plus, as I said before, I like the challenge, and love working with this group of interesting, successful, professional women.

How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?

I have been a member of WFWA for about 14 months, gaining contacts and friends that I hope to always know. I also gained a sense of where I fit in the industry as I work on my WIP. This inspiration and empowerment aids me on the path to finishing my book, getting it published, and then work even harder on its promotion. WFWA makes me work to be my best.

Anitra Wilson

Anitra Wilson has experience teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in electrical engineering and computer science, working on state-of-the-art research initiatives, and performing professional service responsibilities including



serving in leadership roles. She has received outstanding teaching awards at the departmental, college, and university levels, and other accolades. Her private sector experience includes technical work at innovative companies such as IBM, Motorola Solutions, and Texas Instruments. Some of her volunteer experience includes serving for two years on separate committees for publicity and newsletters, and over six years on a technology committee for a graduate chapter of her sorority in Baton Rouge, LA.

Anitra has a Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and a Ph.D. in electrical engineering. Her technical interests include smart grid technology, solid-state lighting, electric vehicles, wireless technologies, and efficient and sustainable technologies for water stewardship.

She is a Senior Member of IEEE, IEEE Power & Energy Society, and IEEE's Women in Engineering (WIE) organization, and a member of the Women's Fiction Writers Association, Tau Beta Pi (National Engineering Honor Association), IEEE-HKN (IEEE's Official Honor Society), and various technical communities within IEEE including the "Smart Grid Community, IEEE" and "Transportation Electrification Community, IEEE."

Anitra has Italian, Spanish, and American heritage. She enjoys being creative.

What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?

There are so many benefits of membership—our programs, resources, annual retreat and regional conference, contest opportunities, and the wonderful community of amazing members—the latter being the most important benefit of membership.

It's inspiring and exciting when a writer lands an agent, one or more book deals, has a book reviewed in a major publication, or other great news to share. I love it when writers are candid about their writing process, and share their wisdom and insights.

I'm one of many members who are so supportive, and make our association feel more like a family, and a very special international organization.

Are there any new directions you'd like the organization to take? New ideas?

Our association is thriving! I like the direction our organization has taken.

One idea is for WFWA to launch an international literary journal and publish short stories of women's fiction. Another idea is to enhance our weekly eblasts to include photographs, for example, when sharing member news. A third idea is to add an international section to our quarterly magazine and feature interviews with international agents, insights in foreign rights markets, and spotlight features on members who live or have traveled abroad who can share little known facts about the local culture, town, city, and/or surrounding areas, and historic landmarks.

What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?

I'm excited/intrigued about the opportunity to serve in a leadership role with oversight responsibility for our association's overall messaging (i.e., internal and external) and communications mediums such as the quarterly magazine and weekly eblasts, as well as fulfilling other duties for this position.

How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?

I have been a member of Women's Fiction Writers Association since January 29, 2014.

I treasure the friendships I've made with my writer friends in WFWA, and on Facebook and Twitter.

Most of what I have learned about writing fiction has been through my participation in various WFWA programs.

VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE

Laura Drake

Laura Drake is a city girl who never grew out of her tomboy ways, or a serious cowboy crush. She writes both Women's Fiction and Romance.



She sold her Sweet on a Cowboy series, romances set in the world of professional bull riding, to Grand Central. The Sweet Spot won the 2014 Romance Writers of America® RITA® award in the Best First Book category.

She also published a four book, small town series to Harlequin's Superromance line.

Laura's first women's fiction, Days Made of Glass, released January, 2016.

In 2014, Laura realized a lifelong dream of becoming a Texan and is currently working on her accent. She gave up the corporate CFO gig

to write full time. She's a wife, grandmother, and motorcycle chick in the remaining waking hours.

What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?

Education and networking (I know, that's two...I couldn't decide which was more important). Since we're mostly an online community at present, not much can happen without a robust website. The Board has determined that the platform we have is not adequate for our needs, so we'll need to research that, and I think the treasurer should have a large role in that. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to help.

Are there any new directions you'd like the organization to take? New ideas?

Since we're trying to keep the retreat a fairly small, intimate affair, it makes the need for regional events even more important. The treasurer should have a role in the budgeting for that.

What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?

I was a CFO for 25 years, and what I enjoyed most about it was using the information that number analysis can give to make good decisions, going forward. I'd welcome the opportunity to do that for WFWA again.

What experience have you had in the past, either in your career or volunteer time that will prepare you to take over the organization's fiscal reins?

As I mentioned above, I was a career CFO for twenty-five years, and was the founding VP of Finance for WFWA.

How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?

I think I was maybe the second member, when we started it. About the time we began WFWA, I moved to Texas, where I knew no one but my husband, and my MIL. The networking

and camaraderie has sustained me in a wasteland! ;)

SECRETARY

Tasha Seegmiller

Tasha Seegmiller is a mom to three kids and coordinator of the project-based learning center (EDGE) at Southern Utah University. She writes contemporary women's fiction with a hint of magic, and thrives on Diet Coke, chocolate and cinnamon bears. She is a co-founder and the managing editor for the Thinking Through Our Fingers blog, as well as the Women's Fiction Writers Association quarterly magazine (Write On!), where she also serves as a board member and a social media liaison. Tasha is represented by Annelise Robey of the Jane Rotrosen Agency.



What do you think is the most important benefit of membership, and what will you do to support that?

The most important benefit for me in this organization is community. There are all sorts of statements out there about the solitary nature of writing, and while the creation of story does embody this, plotting, revising, promoting, releasing, and everything in-between requires support and advice and encouragement. To the best of my ability, I give this to our members however I can because I have had the blessed opportunity to have been buoyed up by others.

Are there any new directions you'd like the organization to take? New ideas?

There is still a lot of education that we are WFWA members need to do in our broader communities regarding genre. I think the Rising Star and The Star Award for great writing are steps in the right directions, and love the idea of an advisory board. Having regional workshops are certain to help with this, but I also think members presenting at other conferences as well as meeting up casually as much as possible, and then sharing the greatness of connecting with other WF writers, will allow WFWA to continue reaching and providing a welcome place for writers and professionals who are looking to understand and belong.

What excites/intrigues you about the position you are running for?

I have loved getting an inside look at how this organization runs. Because I am not as heavily involved in the day to day affairs, serving as secretary also allows me to assist as a person who is mostly a member, and that allows for a different perspective in the voting. Furthermore, my limited responsibilities provide the perfect means for me to support the other board members as needed.

What experience have you had in the past, either in your career or volunteer time that will prepare you to take over the organization's secretarial and record-keeping duties?

While serving as WFWA secretary in 2016, I also transitioned jobs professionally. I work as a coordinator for a project-based learning center, overseeing the day to day functionality of a program required for graduation. At this university of 9000 students, I monitor the quality of advice provided by student mentors, track the grades of 320 students ever 8 weeks, provide feedback and guidance to faculty members and serve as a guide and support for the growth of the college as a whole. I am dedicated to solid record keeping as a means of learning from previous experiences while looking forward to ways of improvement.

How long have you been a member of WFWA and what have you gained personally and/or professionally from the association?

I joined the first day that WFWA launched in 2013. I have gained knowledge and insights into the publishing world through the newsletters full of knowledge. I have gained joy in watching people who I consider my friends celebrate their accomplishments from signing with an agent to getting a book deal to receiving great awards. I have gained awareness and confidence in my writing from the workshops provided, feedback from instructors and mentors who know the nuances of women's fiction, and from other members who donated their time to critique and comment on my work. It is because of WFWA that I was able to sign with a great agent this year and that I have the confidence moving forward toward my publication goals. •

Jennifer Johnson-Blalock

Liza Dawson Associates



Each month we focus on an agent who represents women’s fiction. This month, we’re thrilled to welcome Jennifer Johnson-Blalock of Liza Dawson Associates.



BIO

All about Jennifer

Jennifer Johnson-Blalock joined Liza Dawson Associates as an associate agent in 2015, having previously interned at LDA in 2013 before working as an agent’s assistant at Trident Media Group. Jennifer graduated with honors from The University of Texas at Austin with a BA in English and earned a JD from Harvard Law School. Before interning at LDA, she practiced entertainment law and taught high school English and debate. Follow her on Twitter @JJohnson-Blalock, and visit her website: www.jjohnsonblalock.com.



WANTS

What are you hoping lands in your inbox right now?

I’m really looking for diversity of all kinds—racial, sexuality, socioeconomic, etc. I’d also love to see more books about women making choices that are tough (what if you can’t have it all?) or outside the norm (not wanting marriage or children, for instance). And though I love books with a romantic core, I’m also hungry for women’s fiction focused on other relationships, with friends or family, or on other aspects of life, like career. I think a character with a happy marriage who’s struggling in another area of life could be very compelling.



LOOKS FOR

What do you look for in a debut?

It’s primarily about the writing. I’m looking for a propulsive plot, memorable characters, and a captivating voice, which is really easy, right? Beyond that, however, I like to see potential clients who have done their research and are savvy about the marketplace, have at least made a start on building a social media platform, have ideas for future books, and are open to more revisions on the current project.



STANDING OUT

What makes a women's fiction project stand out in today's marketplace?

Even with more upmarket works, I've been seeing a call for a strong hook. The more high concept your book is (the more that it has a unique idea as its backbone that can be described in a single sentence), the better your chances for publication.



TIPS

What's your best tip for writers seeking literary representation? (Tips on query writing, pitching, surviving rejection, etc.)

My overall tip is to keep writing and focus on the work. Publishing is slow and difficult, and the only aspect of it you can completely control is what you put on the page each day (or week or month, no judgment). Beyond that, with querying and pitching, do your research. There's a wealth of articles out there with tips for queries, pitches, contests, and more—I've done several interviews and guest blogs on these topics recently. Spend time combing the internet to learn best practices. And then follow agents on Twitter, read their interviews, and check out their Manuscript Wishlists to find the perfect fit. We read all our queries, but targeted ones make an impact.



FAVORITES

Who are your favorite authors, living or dead?

These lists are never exhaustive, but in women's fiction, I love J. Courtney Sullivan, Emily Giffin, and Marisa de los Santos. I also love upmarket fiction with a mystery or suspense bent, like Megan Abbot or Robin Wasserman's *Girls on Fire*. Further afield, I adore Sloane Crosley, Nina LaCour, Stephanie Perkins, Jennifer Egan, Jeffrey Eugenides, and Margaret Atwood. Classic favorites include Austen (of course), Sylvia Plath, Dorothy Parker, Virginia Woolf, and *The Sun Also Rises*—just the one Hemingway.



BOOKS

What book changed your life?

I honestly don't remember the first book I read; I don't have a childhood memory that doesn't involve a book in my hand. One that I keep returning to, though, is *Little Women*. It's a little saccharine, and the characters don't necessarily end up where I'd like them to, but there's something hopeful and comforting about it, the book version of a favorite old blanket.



TIDBIT

What do most people not know about you?

I took a personality test recently that confirmed something I've long suspected—I'm a bit of an anomaly; for this test in particular, my personality was split evenly amongst the four types. I'm adventurous, but reliable, direct, but empathetic. While this makes my personal life a mess at times, the good news for you is that it's ideal for agenting, a job that requires the broadest possible range of traits and skills.

Winners of the First Annual *Star Award* for Published Women's Fiction

Scott Wilbanks Wins for General and Kelli Estes Wins for Outstanding Debut

Albuquerque, New Mexico – September 23, 2016 – The Women's Fiction Writers Association (WFWA) announced the winners of the Star Award given to authors of published women's fiction. This is the first year Star Awards have been bestowed, and are the start of an annual tradition.

The Star Award General winner is Scott Wilbanks for *The Lemoncholy Life of Annie Aster*. Wilbanks is an American living in Auckland, New Zealand. His book was published in August 2015.

The Star Award Outstanding Debut winner is Kelli Estes for *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk*. Estes lives near Seattle, Washington, and her book was published in July 2015.

"We are proud to announce the winners of the first ever Star Awards for published women's fiction," said WFWA President Amy Impellizzeri. "In an industry that often celebrates success with raw data, sales reports, and rankings, it is important to take a step back occasionally and celebrate the amazing stories behind that data. Women's Fiction, as a genre, celebrates those stories that stay with you long after the last page is read. This year's Star Award winners are no exceptions."



The WFWA Star Award was open to all women's fiction authors. Librarians with a strong interest in women's fiction chose the winners from a group of finalists who were chosen by readers. The contest was limited to the first 50 entries that were received by February 15, 2016.

"This is the first year WFWA, a young organization itself, has given out Star Awards," said Laura Drake, Star Award Contest Chair. "The winning books were chosen as some of the finest in the genre, and the authors are gifted. We expect the Star Award will inspire all writers in this category, and will become an influential indicator of the best in women's fiction."

Wilbank's Star Award General book, *The Lemoncholy Life of Annie Aster*, is a commercial fiction novel with a fantasy premise. It's

a story of two pen pals who fight against the clock to solve the mystery behind the hiccup in time connecting their homes before one of them is convicted of a murder that is yet to happen, and yet somehow already did.

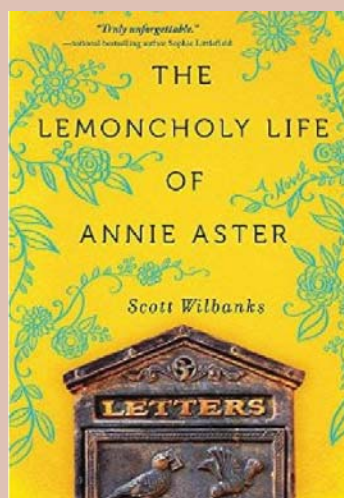
“Winning this award is empowering,” said Wilbanks, who has been a WFWA member since it started. “I joined for the community and to improve my craft. To win this award is overwhelming, and I’m proud this great organization has given me and my book this award.”

In Estes’ Star Award Outstanding Debut book, *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk*, the character explores her deceased aunt’s island estate and finds an elaborately stitched piece of fabric. As layer upon layer of the secrets it holds is peeled back, her life becomes interwoven with that of a young Chinese girl mysteriously driven from her home a century before. Through stories told in silk, a tragic truth is uncovered that will shake the character’s family to its core—and force her to make an impossible choice.

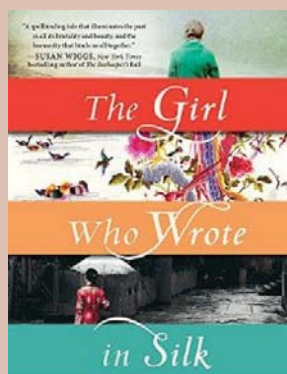
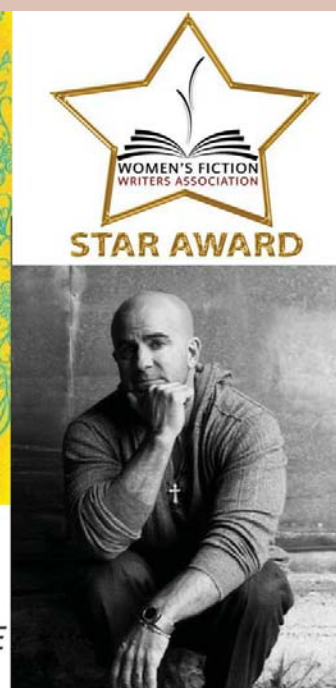
Women’s Fiction is described by WFWA as layered stories that are driven by the main character’s emotional journey. They can range from contemporary to historical, commercial to literary, with romance or without, as long as the story’s focus is on the emotional journey.

Winners will receive a Star Award trophy plus a prize package for book promotion and branding services equivalent to \$850.

Further details of the Star Award are at: http://womensfictionwriters.org/STAR_AWARD



2016 STAR AWARD
GENERAL WINNER
SCOTT WILBANKS
*THE LEMONCHOLY LIFE
OF ANNIE ASTER*



2016 STAR AWARD
DEBUT WINNER
KELLI ESTES
*THE GIRL WHO
WROTE IN SILK*



Winners of the *Rising Star Award* for Unpublished Women's Fiction

**Winners are Kathleen M. Basi, Laura Levin
and Gabrielle Luthy**

Albuquerque, New Mexico – September 24, 2016 – The Women's Fiction Writers Association (WFWA) today announced the winners of the third annual Rising Star award given to authors of unpublished women's fiction. This is an annual award, and agents active in acquiring women's fiction chose the winners.

The **first place Rising Star winner** is *The Substitute Princess* by Kathleen M. Basi. Basi lives in Columbia, Missouri. Her book is about a woman who takes on an actress gig as the substitute princess for the Prince of Monaco's fiancée to save her family's deeply in debt Christmas tree farm, and learns that fairy tale love can't replace love with family connections.

The **second place Rising Star winner** is *By Accident* by Laura Levin, who lives in Nyack, New Jersey. This book reveals life's choices that are made by a family regarding love, marriage, unintended pregnancies, guilt behind a friend's death, and the secrets that are kept as a marriage and lives are tested by a stranger's phone call.

The **third place Rising Star winner** is *Shelter Me* by Gabrielle Luthy. She lives in St. Kilda, Australia. The character in Luthy's book is an in-debt surrogate mother who returns to



the father of her child for financial help, but entry into the financial world of investors leads to an accusation of embezzlement which forces her to make decisions regarding family, love, and honor.

“The Rising Star contestants have proven once again the depth and breadth of the women's fiction genre, from contemporary to historical, mainstream to literary, realistic to paranormal, and everything in between,” said M.M. Finck, Rising Star Contest Chair.

Final round judges were Donald Maass and Katie Shea Boutillier from the Donald Maass Literary Agency; Jeff Kleinman from Folio

Literary Management; Elaine Spencer from the Knight Agency; and Carly Watters from P.S. Literary Agency. Three published women's fiction authors chose the five finalists for the final round judges from 75 entrants who provided the first 35 pages and a synopsis of their novel. The WFWA Rising Star contest was open to all women's fiction authors, regardless of WFWA membership. Registration was capped at the first 75 entries received by WFWA.

"The Rising Star Award has become synonymous with the best of emerging women's fiction, attracting the attention of industry editors and agents," said WFWA President Amy Impellizzeri. "We are so proud of the high caliber of writing that this contest continues to attract year after year."

"This is a tough business to break into," said Nancy Johnson, one of the Rising Star Finalists. "The contest was a great opportunity to give me growth as a writer, open doors to the industry, and provide recognition."

Women's Fiction is defined as stories about a main character's emotional journey. They can range from contemporary to historical, commercial to literary, with romance or without, as long as the story's focus is on the emotional journey.

All winners will receive a 15-minute call with one of the finalist agent judges, as well as a Rising Star Winner badge for his/her website.

Further details of the Rising Star award are at: http://womensfictionwriters.org/Rising_Star_Contest

January 23-27, 2017: Grabbing the Reader

No matter how much time we spend writing our books, we need to grab the reader right away with our first pages, whether it be an agent, editor or potential customer.

Do your first pages get the job done? In January, you can post your first two pages and get honest, helpful, anonymous feedback from other WFWA members on whether they've been 'grabbed'.

In return, you'll give the same to at least five other members who post. 500 word/first two pages limit. Examples and instructions will be posted for all participants.

Meeting Your *Editorial Goals*

by PATRICIA FRIEDRICH

On the path to realizing their publication dreams, writers are often faced with the task of polishing their manuscripts as an on-going, process-driven activity, one to be conducted with the help of peers as well as on one's own. Several of the steps below will likely be addressed while the manuscript is polished, so I am focusing on them in this column in hopes they help you meet your editorial goals.

Rewriting involves large scale changes, oftentimes to critical elements of the story and plot, switching outcomes, even reworking whole characters and storylines. Rewrites can be a result of **developmental editing**, the process by which an editor points out and explains shortcomings within broad categories, such as conflict, tension, and character development.

Revising as the name indicates is “seeing again.” It is the term often preferred to describe big changes, and it is often used in reference to academic, analytical, and journalistic papers. For example, many academic journals have a feedback category called “revise and resubmit,” which often means the work merited consideration but the editors or publisher are not committing to publication. Instead, they are offering to read again if big changes are made.



Editing focuses on correcting mistakes. If not further qualified (e.g., developmental editing), the process has its focus on paragraphs and sentences (removal included) to fix problems with flow, clarity, organization, large syntax problems, etc.

Proofreading often happens and is more beneficial after editing. It involves reading a product to make sure no surface-level mistakes remain. Spelling, wrong word, punctuation, extra spac-

ing, and formatting issues are usually addressed.

Copyediting is to prepare copy, which can be seen as a sub-category of proofreading. Nonetheless, it takes into consideration aspect of the process that might go beyond the manuscript itself, for example, the preferred house style of a publisher or consistency with other books in a series.

While it would be beyond the scope of this column to speak in detail about how to conduct each of these stages of work with a manuscript (some of them are performed by professionals who trained for many years to develop their skills), I would like to suggest a few self-administered strategies that can help. In addition, notice that the list above goes in the intuitive order in which these tasks are more effectively conducted, that is, from the deep structure to the surface level, so consider optimal order when deciding what editorial step to take next.

1. STRATEGIES

Read someone else's work and have them read yours

Of this list of strategies, this is probably the most common editorial strategy writers already use. One addition I would like to make to the process is that writers swapping work with their peers can enhance the practice by asking specific pre-reading questions. Because there are so many different possible aspects of writing to focus on, and because of the way our brains work, it is more effective to direct the peer to specific questions, challenges, and concerns. Is dialogue flowing naturally? Are paragraph breaks intuitive? Are there many surface-level mistakes? Is this character well developed? These are all worthy questions which will take the peer-review process in very different directions.

2. ROLEPLAY

If you have a group of reviewers, you can also roleplay your text. With this practice you can often pinpoint inconsistencies in scenes. This strategy involves more than reading the lines aloud in group. For example, roleplaying can show that a character is standing in one side of

the room only to be found doing something else incompatible with her previous movements right after, but that requires that participants actually play the movements of the scene. Roleplaying can help with transitions and other scene details: if a reader in this group does not understand a scene well enough to play a part, chances are other readers might find themselves in the same situation. On the other hand, roleplaying also provides an opportunity for writers to decide whether a scene follows the mechanics of the actions of a character too closely without advancing the plot.

3. READ OUT OF ORDER

Oftentimes, after having worked on a manuscript for a long time, a writer is looking at the words she believes are on the page rather than the ones that are actually there. That explains why repeated words and wrong spellings (resulting in words that actually exist) are hard to catch. One way to trick the brain is to read the sentences in a different order from their presentation, last sentence of the page to the first, for example. This way, the writer avoids reciting what they want to have written and go toward what they actually did write.

4. READ ALOUD

Similarly to the previous strategy, reading aloud causes the writer to read what is actually on the page, thus increasing her chances of spotting mistakes. An extra advantage is that reading aloud allows the writer to detect sound combinations, rhythms, and cadences that she might want to work on.

5. READ FOR DIFFERENT MISTAKES IN DIFFERENT INSTALLMENTS

Because of the layered nature of a text, focusing on one feature at a time helps the writer stay on task. Having trouble with parallel structure? Read for that. Concerned about unintended comma splices? Look for them. This requires several readings but is crucial in identifying specific patterns of problems.

6. PUT MANUSCRIPT AWAY FOR

SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE EDITING

Reading a manuscript after it has been put away for a while causes the writer to feel like it is someone else's text that they are reading, and this is exactly what an author needs to catch their own mistakes.

7. CHANGE FONT TYPE AND SIZE

For the same reason as all the strategies above, anything that changes the text so that it looks different from the text the writer has in their brain will cause the words on the page to be in the forefront. •



Patricia Friedrich is an associate professor at Arizona State University. She is the author/editor of six nonfiction books including the upcoming *The Sociolinguistics of Digital Englishes* (Routledge 2016), and of several published short stories. She is currently working on revisions to her first novel-length manuscript, *Artful Women*.

Write-A-Thin coming
February 2017

Save the Date for 2017
WFWA Facebook Launch
Parties

- February 7th
- May 16th
- August 15th
- November 14th



Twitter

Tips and Tricks for Authors

by MAGGIE GILES

As an author, you've heard a million times before about the importance of having a social media platform to market yourself. There is Facebook, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn and a hundred others out there for you to explore but there is that tiny little bird that always seems to baffle us. Twitter. What is it good for and how—as an author—can I utilize it to help me? That's what I hope to clear up for you!

First it's important to understand what exactly Twitter is. Basically put, Twitter is the go-to site for real-time updates from people and industries you're interested in. This makes it a valuable resource in today's media. It provides users with constant information about the people and things you are most curious about. And even better, you get to tailor Twitter to your needs by picking and choosing who you want to follow. It provides vast amounts of information at your fingertips!

Further it also provides an outlet for you to share with your followers. It becomes a valuable resource for promoting novels, sharing blog posts, or just updating fans on your process. It helps you as an author interact with those that are reading your book and makes you more approachable to the average reader.

Twitter is a great place to connect with like-minded people, from other writers looking to connect with similar genre based groups and authors or readers simply looking for the next great read. It provides authors with an opportunity to reach people who may have otherwise been difficult connect with and further allows fans and readers to retweet or share an author's post. Better yet, readers and fellow authors get a chance to help promote for you.

Once you have a grasp on what Twitter is and what it can do for you, you need an understanding of how to use it. As with all social media outlets, you get out what you put into it. This means that as a Twitter user, you need to interact with your fans and fellow authors in order to gain followers or retweets. The more you retweet and respond to others, the more likely they will do so in return to you.

It is also important to make sure the information you are sharing is relevant and interesting to your followers. Don't constantly be spamming your followers with buy links for your novels as they won't appreciate the continual sales pitch and it will likely result in an unfollow. As a Twitter user and author, it's important to find that easy medium of promoting your work but also engaging and sharing interesting infor-

mation.

The more often you post and share, the more likely you are to gain a dedicated following.

It is important to make use of Twitter hashtags. These tags are what you can use to search and follow other writers, agents, editors and readers across Twitter. Here are a few great hashtags to monitor.

#mswl – This stands for manuscript wishlist. Many agents will use this hashtag to tweet out what sort of novels they are looking to acquire. If you are an aspiring author this is a great way to find an agent looking for something you're writing.

#amwriting – This tag is used by authors to share about their writing experience or any writing articles they share. It's a great tag to follow in order to read about other author experiences or to find great articles with writing advice.

#writetip or **#pubtip** – These hashtags provide authors with writing and publishing tips. Agents, editors and even other writers will use these tags to share their experiences with other authors. If you are looking for any quick tips or tricks when it comes to writing or the publishing industry this tag is a valuable one to follow.

#writerslife – this tag can be a fun tag to follow. It allows authors a place to vent and share their funny experiences in the writing industry. It helps authors know they are not alone in their experiences.

#womensfiction – a tag to find popular women's fiction novels or authors active on Twitter.

When creating a post for Twitter make sure you save room in the 140 characters to include hashtags. Hashtags are not only a great way to find people but they are also the buzzwords that others will use to find you.

And most importantly, experiment! Twitter, like all social media, is a constantly changing platform hoping to engage users and improve their overall experience. When using Twitter be sure to have fun and use it how you feel it best

suits your needs.

Good luck and happy Tweeting!

EXTRA READING:

[How to Use Hashtags: How Many, Best Ones, and Where to Use Them](#)

[100 Twitter Hashtags Every Writer Should Know](#)

[Twitter Marketing 101: For Writers](#)

[10 Secret #Twitter Tips, Tricks and Hacks \(That You Probably Don't Know\)](#)



Maggie Giles is a Canadian author who enjoys creating new connections and experiencing new opportunities. Her writing interests span across a variety of genres, most recently focusing on a women's fiction thriller novel series. If she's not writing, Maggie is usually bogged down with some other creative project. She has a love for knitting and sewing as well as cooking up a storm. If she has to go outside, you'll find her at the barn cuddling the horses (and probably riding them too.). If she had the money, she'd spend the rest of her life travelling the world and staying in hostels. She also has an unnatural obsession with Shawn Spencer.

Winning at *Instagram*

by TASHA SEEGMILLER

As social media platforms come and go, it can be difficult to know which ones are worth learning and which one “other people” should use.

Instagram has over 500 million users. It’s staying.

With that in mind (along with dozens of conversations at the WFWA Retreat), here are a few tips and tricks on using this social media platform.

TIP ONE: THE PICTURE IS KEY

Where Twitter is mostly written (only 140 characters) and Facebook can be a conglomeration of anything and everything, the simplistic design of Instagram is appealing to many people. The picture needs to showcase process, idea, appreciation, or what-have-you with clarity and conciseness, especially because when scrolling through, viewers get to see just three lines of description. They can click on more, but the picture has to make them want to.

TIP TWO: BE CLEAR AND CONCISE

Remember that Instagram isn’t the place for long-winded tangents or deep, detailed thoughts. You need to share what you are interested in sharing, why you are sharing it, and allow your personality to show through—with as few words

and as much personality as possible.

TIP THREE: HASHTAGS MATTER

Maggie points out some great reasons to use hashtags in her article about Twitter, and the same could be said for Instagram. These are how you are discovered, and how you can discover others with similar interests. The really nice thing about Instagram is when you hit the hashtag (formerly known as the pound sign) and start typing, Instagram will show you how many others use that same hashtag. You want



a combination of tags that have heavy use and others that really hone in on who you are trying to reach. Increasing breadth of audience and reaching new people is most easily done through hashtags.

WARNING

There can be a temptation to overload hashtags, thinking more is better. This is a time when quality vs. quantity comes in to play. Where Twitter restricts what you can post because of character limitations, Instagram has no such limitations. There is a healthy balance between reach and annoyance. Spending a little time on this platform will make it apparent fairly quickly.

TIP FOUR: FIND THE BALANCE

One of the tricky things about Instagram is that users who are there want to see a little bit of everything. Some selfies and kid posts mixed in with writerly things allows you to be more personable, more relatable, more followable. And consistent posting is essential, especially since Facebook bought the platform. However, more than once a day is rarely the good choice. Only once a week doesn't tend to be frequent enough. You want to let people see you, celebrate with you, commiserate with you. And it's a great place to do the same for others.

TIP FIVE: HAVE SUCCESS WITHOUT A SMARTPHONE

Every social media site has some sort of disadvantage. For Instagram, it is that it was designed with smartphones in mind. Even tablets don't tend to have the connectivity that the app wants. However, you can make it work from your computer by following the tips in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKbod3SQE88&feature=share>

A FINAL WORD ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN GENERAL

One of the really cool things about Instagram is the way you can connect it to other social me-

dia sites. There are times when I post something on Instagram that I will also share to Facebook (cue grandkid pictures), but I don't share *everything* across the platforms. If everything you post in Instagram is also on Facebook and Twitter and Tumblr and . . . there is no reason for me to follow you anywhere else. Diving into Instagram is a good decision, but it needs to be a place for something intentional, something different from what you share elsewhere. Some cross sharing is okay, expected even, but if you inundate every platform with everything, you will end up losing connections. Be intentional on social media, have conversations, and thoroughly enjoy the connections you can make with other people. •



Tasha Seegmiller is a mom to three kids and high school English teacher in Southern Utah. She writes contemporary women's fiction with a dash of magic. Her loves include Diet Coke, owls, chocolate, and cinnamon bears. She is a founder of and contributor to Thinking Through Our Fingers, and can be found at tashaseegmiller.com.



Libraries and Book Clubs: A perfect place to seek out (and educate) *Women's Fiction Readers*

by ZAN MARIE STEADMAN

As writers we are constantly in search of avid readers. The two best places to find them are libraries and book clubs. So, why not combine them and seek out book clubs sponsored by libraries? I did. Though, I'll admit that I had a perfect ace in the hole—my sister. She belongs to two library-sponsored book clubs—one a mystery-focused group and the other interested in literary and upmarket books.

As I developed my story, I shared my genre with my sister. She, in turn, talked up Women's Fiction with her second book club. Some were skeptical that the genre was needed or feared that it was a denigration of women authors. The interest in expanding their knowledge of the books available led them to invite me to share my favorite genre. They'd hosted local writers before, usually with books for sale in tow. Since I'm not published yet, I led a discussion on Women's Fiction. I must have done something right; those who were at the meeting were still sharing my information and the list of Women's Fiction titles I'd left with them two months later. (By the way, ninety-nine percent of the titles I

included were by members of WFWA.)

Here's some of what I shared.

WHY HAVE A GENRE AT ALL?

- If writers want to get a good story in front of your eyes, they have to find an agent.
- Once they find an agent, they need the genre specifics to find editors and publishers.
- Without a genre classification, a writer can't narrow down the hunt.
- Even if writers choose to self-publish, they must have the genre clear so they can find readers who would be interested in their books.
- The term Women's Fiction isn't denigration. In fact, publishers are actively seeking Women's Fiction. According to some of the agents I've pitched, Women's Fiction is one of the fastest growing genres with a wide-open market.

HOW I FOUND THE GENRE

(Including this was a suggestion from my sister. You might find it useful to include.)

- I found my current main story during a dream and began writing. When I looked into finding an agent, I hit a wall. Agents had specific genres that they represent.
- My story is about a retired teacher and an abused foster child and isn't Mystery, Romance, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Historical, Suspense, or Horror. I knew I didn't write Literary.
- That left me with Mainstream. How could I sort through the thousands of agents? Then I came across Amy Nathan's blog—[Women Fiction Writers](#)—and found my home.
- When people ask me what I write, I say, "Women's Fiction. Let me tell you about my story."

WHAT IS WOMEN'S FICTION?

- First of all, remember, that books that could be classed as Women's Fiction have existed for a long time, like the classic *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. More contemporary writers include Ann Tyler, Gail Godwin, Anita Shreve, and Anna Quinlan.
- The Women's Fiction Writers Association's definition is "...layered stories that are driven by the main character's emotional journey."
- The Romance Writers of America's definition is "a commercial novel about a woman on the brink of life change and personal growth. Her journey details emotional reflection and action that transforms her and her relationships with others, and includes a hopeful/upbeat ending with regard to her romantic relationship."
- This is one place that WFWA diverged with RWA. Many Women's Fiction books have no romantic elements at all.
- RWA ceased sponsoring their Women's

Fiction with Romantic Elements chapter as part of their association in 2013. This was the reason that writers who felt disenfranchised created the WFWA. "*We began this organization in 2013 with the idea to create a safe, nurturing place for male and female writers of women's fiction. The publishing industry is morphing—with new opportunities and, as yet, unknown futures. Some of us came from the Romance Writers of America, where a shift of focus left many of us out in the rain. The founders of the Women's Fiction Writers Association wanted somewhere to amass and disseminate information to and about our chosen genre.*" The current membership is now over eight hundred.

- My personal working definition of Women's Fiction is a story that pulls back the character's outer layer to find the vulnerable core that makes them tick. In fact, much of what people do is because of the view of their inner core and how it doesn't stack up to others who are only showing their outer layers. WF works when the core vulnerability creates the tension of the story.

TROPES FOR ROMANCE VS. WOMEN'S FICTION

- Romance Tropes (a short list):
 - Heroine and Hero meet in the first few pages.
 - Obstacles must abound to keep them apart, making both doubt the outcome.
 - End with Happily Ever After—ends when courtship comes to end. What comes next is out of the Romance parameters.
- Women's Fiction has but one—the emotional journey of the protagonist(s) with both internal and external conflicts

POVS USUALLY FOUND IN WOMEN'S FICTION

- First and close third person POVs are used.
- Women's Fiction can have multiple close third person POVs.
- Male POVs are included as needed.

SUBGENRES: BECAUSE WF IS SUCH A LARGE, GENERAL GROUP, IT HAS MANY SUBGENRES.

- The first distinction is on this continuum:
 - Literary with the emphasis on character and the beauty and innovation of the language over plot.
 - Upmarket still emphasizes character, but plot grows to equal importance.
 - Commercial in which plot is more important.
- All of them are marketed for book clubs, usually with readers' discussion guides in the back.
- Then there are the elements of other genres—Romance elements are very common, but you can find elements of Mystery, SciFi, Fantasy, and Suspense.

Check with your local library and see if you can find a receptive book club to share information about Women's Fiction. You just might find a few readers for the future when your own books are published. •



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