



**ROMANCE**  
**WRITERS**  
*of Australia*

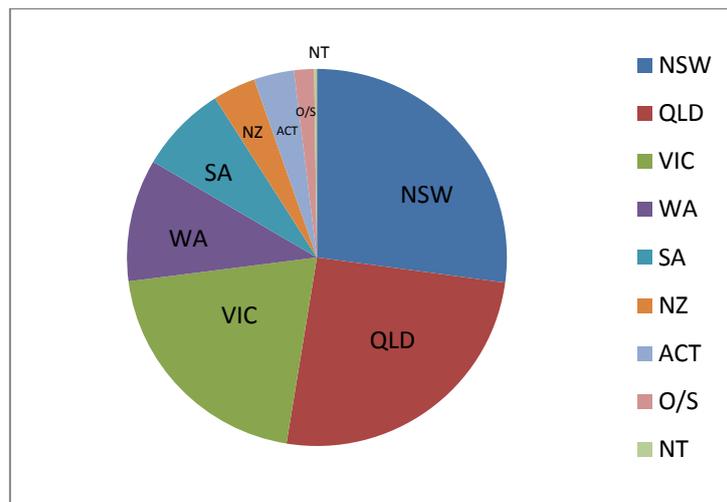
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
*2012/13*

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - President's Report

## (Nikki Logan)

RWA's 22nd year has been dynamic and loaded with necessary change. Public awareness of the existence and aims of our organisation is greater than ever and we've made a conscious effort to form or strengthen partnerships with the publishing/festival industries and other writing and reading organisations.

### Membership



Membership June 30, 2013

RWA's membership as at June 30, 2013 was 897 and we've spent the year fluctuating around the 900-member mark. Our numbers have been steadily growing over the past five years and new members are finding us through our website, blog and good fashioned old word-of-mouth. So, thank you to those members who have recommend RWA to their writer friends. Thank you to our hardworking Member Secretary, Diane Curran, for your constant attention to the needs of our members and trends in activity.

### Treasury

It is this very healthy return membership rate that puts RWA in such a strong financial position with memberships being the lion's share of our 2012/13 income. Our other main income came from the very successful 2012 Gold Coast conference, our contest season and interest from our invested funds. 2012/13 resulted in a budgeted net loss of \$8,399 courtesy of some one-off costs like audit, rebranding and legal fees, but after numerous years of high profit, RWA's net assets still remain at a very healthy \$166,500.

With that kind of bank balance, it's easy to imagine *'free conference for all!'* but a lot of people have worked very hard for a lot of years to get RWA into such a strong position and so responsible financial management remains a priority for our organisation. With this in mind, we've taken a look at where our major annual expenses lie (versus the

services they offer) and we'll be reviewing them to see if technology can't work harder for us so that we can continue the service without incurring such high costs to ensure we are using our funds to provide the best range of services for members.

Thanks to Bronwyn Jameson and Alison Leake who formed a dynamic Treasury duo this year as Bron prepares to hand over the reins to Alison. More on that later.

## Who are we?

As we approached 1000 members, we spent some time looking at who we are as an organisation and where we want to be in ten years. That conversation led to one of the early changes of the year, RWA's logo. Because the one thing we agreed on was that we wanted to look as contemporary as our organisation has become. As professional as we wanted to be treated. And with our average logo-life being a decade, the timing felt right for a change as we head into our third decade.

RWA's new logo comes into effect from conference weekend (August 16-18, 2013).



## The Year of Admin

### Consolidation Portfolio

The logo was a fun and creative highlight in what—for many of us on Committee—will go down in memory as 'the year of admin'. Not the sexiest or most exciting way to spend a Committee year so I want to extend a big, up front thank you to the members of RWA's managing Committee for enduring the reams of reports and paperwork and endless meetings and votes that was this year. Your focus and tolerance were integral to getting a number of tough jobs done this year and I do, most sincerely, thank you.

2012/13 was the second in a two-year 'consolidation' project intended to update RWA's key policies and strengthen RWA's internal structure so that incoming committees had better access to the policies and processes they were expected to administer. This year, the consolidation project saw policies and procedures created or formalised for correspondence, privacy, advertising, plagiarism and disciplinary aspects of our operations but the primary focus of the past twelve months has been the review and update of RWA's constitution.

I would like to acknowledge Anita Joy's work over two years in the consolidation portfolio and the constitution particularly. A big job very well and patiently done.

## **The year of Volunteers**

RWA was once again blessed at the support and generosity of its members who come out in droves to undertake voluntary tasks. It will be my absolute pleasure during the conference to draw a winner of a free conference from amongst RWAs 2012/13 volunteers. But as we do every year, I'm back to ask people to please put your hand up to contribute some of your spare time to RWA. Many hands make light work and will help make sure we don't have to start reducing services. The same amazing volunteers simply can't do it all.

We'll be advertising these voluntary vacancies in Hearts Talk each month and we have voluntary tasks to suit any time budget. I urge you to give a little back to the organisation that gives you so much. Thank you in anticipation. And thank you to Rachel Bailey who coordinated those volunteers during 2012/13.

## **The year of controversy**

I never imagined I'd see a year where the thorny issue of how to define publication status our membership would actually be the lesser of the year's sticky management issues. But the lengthy, complicated and frequent discussions that have taken place in the Committee room and the ones happening out on the RWA loops are, at least, getting us closer to a resolution. Finding a way of providing services for 900 writers at different stages and with different needs is a challenge but it's something we, as an organisation, are working towards together. With everyone's best interests at heart.

Unfortunately, this was not always the case this year. Plagiarism reared its ugly head again this year and resulted in the expulsion of a member who had multiple published works that were assessed by a panel and deemed to be substantively the work of others. A writer's organisation can be a potential smorgasbord for someone interested in harvesting story ideas, concepts and even entire worlds and characters from other writers, and we were concerned that our constitution didn't go far enough to protect our members. Immediately this issue was resolved, *we* resolved to tighten up our procedures and our protections related to plagiarism.

I include this in my President's report because we spent RWA resources—both in volunteer time and in the engagement of lawyers—on managing this case, and because it wasn't the first and won't be the last instance of plagiarists in our midst. Our new constitution makes it very clear how cases of alleged plagiarism will be proceeded—without bias, with confidentiality and with consequences for false or spurious accusation, too.

## **Portfolio Summaries**

### **Contests Portfolio**

It's been a dynamic year over in the Contests team with innovation and modification to RWA's suite of writing contests to ensure we are responding to the changing marketplace and publishing patterns.

Overall, contest numbers were lower this year due to a continuing drop in the number of entries for the category-length contests and this likely reflects the comparative ease of accessing publishers who have broader guidelines and publish all lengths. Entrants for the longer-form contests remained strong in 2012/13.

RWA elected to merge its two opening-chapter contests, the *High Five* and *STALL*, recognising that the skills required to write a compelling opening were more-the-same-than-not and transcended story length.

We introduced an 85% minimum score (for finalling, placing or winning) across all its contests to ensure that eligibility is consistent across contests and that the standard of any entry going to a judge remains high.

A big thank you to Lis Hoorweg who is standing down after five years as the Coordinator of the hardworking contests team. You've done a fabulous job Lis and we welcome Leisl Leighton who will step into the position.

### **Corporate Affairs Portfolio**

This is a vast portfolio covering media and the Roma, festivals, libraries, and sponsorship.

The Corporate Affairs team handled ad hoc media requests throughout the year, secured promotion for the RuBY, Fremantle conference and a prodigious amount of exposure for the Gold Coast conference. The 2013 ROMA media awards drew eleven submissions from media outlets--mostly newspaper but including magazine and radio--across most Australian states.

The team also focussed on growing the ways in which RWA promotes itself in the community through writers' festivals. As a starting point, RWA had trade display and presentation at the 2013 ARRA convention and at the inaugural GenreCon event and are scheduled to launch *Little Gems* and have presentation rights at the Brisbane Writers Festival next month. Additionally, we have evolved the concept of festival funding to include a new scheme to aid RWA members who are presenting and representing romance at Australian literary festivals. This will be implemented in coming months.

Libraries play an important role in connecting authors with readers, and deserved more of our time and focus than we could give it this year given our shortage of volunteers.

## **Sponsorship**

The changing face of romance publishing in Australia is clearly reflected in the increase in organisations seeking to support the RWA conference -- up 18% on 2011/12. Sponsorship is vital to delivering a great conference for its members, to build relationships between publishers, authors and booksellers and to continue to build the reputation of our conference as the premier event on the romance-writing industry calendar.

RWA wishes to thank our 2013 sponsors for their enthusiastic and generous support: *Harlequin Australia, Penguin Books Australia, Booktopia, Baci, Perth Convention Bureau*, and supporters *Random House, HelzKat Designs, Tronox, ARRA, Rachael Johns* and *Carolyn Wren*.

## **Published Author Services Portfolio**

2012/13 saw a new element within the PAS portfolio - the *Ella* award for published novellas. *Ella* was created to recognise and respond to increasing opportunities within the industry for romance writers publishing in novella length. Based on RWA's existing judging pool the inaugural *Ella* was a paper-only contest but we feel confident that the behind-the-scenes work in strengthening and diversifying the judging pool will mean we can offer the *Ella* as fully electronic next year.

Pleasingly, RuBY entries were 16% up on previous years and we saw significant increase in publisher variety in the short categories. The coordinator also began work on strengthening and diversifying the composition of the judging pool to help ensure they remain relevant and in-step with the market.

RWA delivered a program of online professional development workshops to published author members this year and has introduced a new committee-level portfolio to reflect the importance of this across membership.

## **Events Portfolio**

### **Conference/s**

The **2012 Gold Coast** conference was an enormous success and re-defined the concept of member service. The Gold Coast team worked intensively and hard to bring such a distinguished line-up of guests to Australia and even though they tried not to, they still managed to make a profit, so popular was their event.

On behalf of RWA I wanted to thank each and every one of you for making the journey west in order to attend *Riding the Waves*. Team Freo have worked their butts off to find creative ways of keeping costs down without diminishing the event to help mitigate the additional airfares that some members incurred and I'm so pleased to say that registrations eclipsed our original (conservative) estimations and then even passed our revised-upwards figures. RWA has truly shown its support for a national conference circuit. Pleasingly, bringing the event to Fremantle generated a 40% jump in new WA memberships.

RWA formed its first academic partnerships with Curtin University and the University of Queensland this year, in delivering yesterday's *Elizabeth Jolley Conference* and in the formation of an intern program which will see UQ students assigned to the Sydney conference team to help deliver their event.

Speaking of Sydney... the 2014 conference team have been hard at work selecting a fantastic venue at a great price, an extraordinary speaking line-up and some great innovations. RWA's new two-year-out planning for this event continues to be super beneficial in terms of securing talented guests and the most suitable venues. All will be revealed at the close of *Riding the Waves*.

Big thanks to the **Claytons conference** team for pulling together a terrific parallel digital event happening the same weekend as conference and to June's **50K in 30 Days** - a great success again this year. Sadly, low volunteer numbers meant we couldn't run **5DI** this year but we hope it will return next year as exciting and educative as ever. And the **RWA Roadshow** will also be back in 2014 offering education and fellowship in the more remote regions of Australia.

The big event news--quite a while in the making--the RWA 'Owl' series. OWL stands for Online Workshop List and we've been busily preparing a structure and delivery format for a range of online writing workshops for RWA members next year. We know how popular online workshops are with RWA members and so we hope that OWLs will become as commonplace and supported as other RWA member benefits.

### **Member Services Portfolio**

A whole portfolio exists to oversee our services to members and not all of those services get as much airtime as events or group activity. Most of them tick away quietly in the background achieving terrific outcomes for our members. Like the **New Members Liaison Scheme**, the **Crit Partner Scheme**, the **face-to-face Groups** coordination, the **Individual Writers Support** scheme which provides one-on-one mentorship for advanced writers, and the **Group Grants** program which provides funding for RWA groups to run workshops, retreats and talk to further their careers. This year, we awarded three grants to RWA groups seeking to further their craft.

The **Member's Assistance Fund** helps members with compelling circumstances to attend RWA events that they, otherwise, would not have been able to access. Two *Riding the Waves* delegates are here thanks to receipt of a MAF grant and thanks to the wonderful support of other RWA members who contribute to the fund. We would love to introduce you to each other but the fund is anonymous and so the best I can do is say to those who contributed to the fund, thank you on behalf of two dedicated and talented members who are now that much closer to achieving their writing goals.

### WebServices Portfolio

Key improvements during 2012/13 included the upgrading of our membership database to include additional fields to facilitate better collection of data and increased reporting capacity.

This year also saw the creation of a great new-look website designed around the new logo. The new site presents a fresh, clean, professional look to the public and allow for improved navigation and ease of use.

### Social Media Services Portfolio

Despite all of our other activity and media success, social media continues to be RWAs primary 'exposure' tool.

The RWA blog has continued to provide a valued and valuable place to share RWA news and events and promote our members. Along with our website, it is the centre of our online presence and the hub for all our public announcements. Over the life of the RWA blog, it has published more than 1000 posts and had almost 200,000 total views.

Since our e-groups were first set up, we have seen the rise of Facebook, Twitter, blogs, our Forum and many other ways for writers in general and RWA members in particular to communicate with their 'tribe'. Consequently, our email-based groups have become less active than they used to be but our most active groups have all grown in membership this year.

The official RWA **Facebook page** and the open **Facebook group** both grew strongly this year. Twitter is our highest-subscribed service and while our posts there are mainly promotional it really comes into its own at conference time and awards nights. Activity has been low on **Google+**, mainly due to a shortage of volunteer time but our presence on **Goodreads** grows every month.

## Farewell and Welcome back

I'd like to extend a teary farewell to and thank you to departing committee members Jen St George, Claire Baxter, and Bronwyn Jameson who leave us after years of amazing service.

Huge thanks to the 2012/13 committee members who are standing for committee again. Diane Curran, Helene Young, Imelda Evans, Alison Leake, Anita Joy and Alli Sinclair. Thank you for the year ahead; your gift is the excitement of finding messages from me in your inbox every morning.

There simply is not time to adequately thank everyone who contributed to RWA's massive output this year and so please forgive this blanket thank you to everyone who gave of themselves this year. We wouldn't be the organisation we are without the spirit of giving that resides in so many of you.

And so I declare this coming year the **Year of Giving**.

- Giving back through volunteering.
- Giving yourself the gift of you-time;
- giving your work the best chance in the industry you love by working hard and learning as much as you can about being a quality and professional writer;
- giving each other a fair go and recognising differences in individual journeys;

And most importantly, giving yourself a break. Celebrate your successes but forgive your mistakes, don't obsess on other people's sales figures or book numbers or social media exploits. Don't convince yourself that everyone is a better writer, or marketer or earner than you. Paths to success are as varied as DNA and your only job--your only focus--is in travelling your own.

So here's to a fantastic year of giving ahead and continued success to everyone, no matter what form yours takes.

Nikki Logan  
*RWA President 2012/13*

# **RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Consolidation Project**

## Anita Joy

The 2011/12 and 2012/13 Consolidation Project has continued to strengthen RWA's internal structures. Existing policies have been reviewed and new policies identified and developed with the result RWA now has a wide array of policy documents covering topics such as correspondence, plagiarism, privacy and advertising.

However, the primary focus of the past twelve months has been the review of RWA's constitution. The need to review and update the existing constitution was twofold. Significantly, the legislation the existing constitution was developed under was repealed, meaning RWA no longer met our legislative obligations. In addition, many points in the existing constitution had grown outdated or become too prescriptive.

The review commenced in 2011/12 we finalised it this year, bringing our constitution into line with current legislation and ensuring RWA will have a current, high level guiding document.

Nothing in RWA can be achieved without volunteers and I'd like to particularly thank Alison Brideson and Sarah Newton for their contributions in redrafting the constitution, and the RWA committee for their assistance and support throughout the process.

I'd also like to thank Mills Oakley Lawyers for the fabulous work they did not only in going over the constitution with a fine tooth comb, but in learning very quickly the ins and outs of the writing industry.

# RWA Annual Report 2012-2013 - Contests

## Lis Hoorweg

The Contest team has had a busy year with quite a few contest condition updates to discuss and implement.

The main changes this year were the marked drop in entries for both the *High Five*, traditionally a strong contest, and the category section of *The Emerald*. Because of this, total contest numbers were down but the *Valerie Parv Award (VPA)*, the *Little Gems* and the single title contests held steady with average numbers.

High Five (36), STALI (71), Selling Synopsis (33), Emerald Category (13), Emerald Single Title (51), Little Gems (69), First Kiss (31) and VPA (89)

Total entries = 393

The *Little Gems Cover Contest* attracted 9 entries.

The Contest team feels the steady drop in category entries over the last few years reflects the rapidly changing nature of the market. HM&B is no longer the only house taking that style of manuscript with many of the big publishers establishing digital lines which take all lengths and with more open guidelines. The rush of newly published RWA members has resulted in a big drop in eligible entrants for unpublished contests. Wonderful to see. Many of these writers have honed their craft through RWA's contest system.

### Revised Contests/Conditions

We raised the VPA cap to 90 after last year's 80 filled in record time and this proved right with everyone who wanted gaining entry.

We standardised all contests by widening the 85% minimum score for any contest entry to progress to the next round, gain a finals place or win. This ensures the standard of any RWA contest entry going to a final judge remains high.

This year, we reviewed the purpose of the High Five and STALI contests (both 'first chapter' type contests for the unpublished) and implemented a single contest for great beginnings regardless of story length, *The Ripping Start*. This contest is open to novella-length and upwards.

### Judging & ScoreSheets

We were pleased with the judge response to our request, this year, for solid reasons to back up their marks. Contest managers sent several scoresheets back for more detailed comments.

We will continue to tweak the questions and forms to improve the contest experience for our members.

## **A move toward e-entry**

This year the Emerald went electronic-only for the first round and proved very successful. We are considering going all-electronic but this is dependent, as always, on reader judge numbers willing to read full manuscripts onscreen.

## **Contest thanks**

Thank you to everyone who judged for us this year. Without you, contests couldn't function.

A big thank you to the 2013 contest team: Managers — Kasey Rowe, Sandra Harris, Erica Hayes who took on the Selling Synopsis as well as the VPA, Leisl Leighton, and Debbie Cox who once again stepped up to fill a vacancy. I (Lis Hoorweg) managed the Emerald Single Title and the Little Gems.

Thank you also to Judge Coordinator Margaret Midwood and Judge Training coordinator Beverley Eikli. Thank you to Serena Tatti for helpful advice and to Anita Mack, our committee liaison.

After five years this is my final year as Contest Coordinator. Thank you to Leisl Leighton who is taking over for 2014.

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Corporate Services

## Jennifer St George

### MEDIA

#### Key achievements:

- **Staffing:** Therese Raft took over management of the media relations portfolio from Jennifer St George at the end of 2012
- **Valentine's Day:** A media release was written and distributed to promote romance writers on Valentine's Day
- **Ruby:** A winner's media release was distributed after the announcement at the 2012 Awards Dinner. RWA organised a half-page ad to publicise the Ruby winners and finalists in New Idea magazine. Two book reviews were also negotiated with New Idea.
- **2012 Conference:** Generated good media during the conference including interest from The Australian, QMagazine (The Courier Mail), The Sunday Mail, Australian Country Style, Australian Senior Magazine, Gold Coast Bulletin and more. Distributed a press release via MediaNet and followed-up with lots of media calls and put a number of journalists directly in touch with keynote speakers.
- **2013 Conference:** A media release was distributed to promote attendance at the 22<sup>nd</sup> conference, generating coverage in The West Australian, Scoop.com.au and the Fremantle Cockburn Gazette. Currently preparing a plan to encourage stories closer to the date of the conference for pre and post coverage.
- **Ad-hoc media requests:** The media team handled media requests from outlets including Writers Victoria, The Advertiser, the Sue Myc Show on 897FM (Perth), ABC radio Canberra, Catalyst, Newcastle Herald and more.

Report prepared by:



Jennifer St George/Therese Raft  
Corporate Services  
Romance Writers of Australia  
e:[corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com)

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Corporate Services

## Jennifer St George

### SPONSORSHIP

#### Key achievements:

- ***Harlequin High Five:*** Harlequin again sponsored the High Five competition.
- ***Sponsors Thank you:*** The changing face of romance publishing in Australia is clearly reflected in the increase in organisations seeking to support the RWA conference -- up 18% on 2011/12. Sponsorship is vital to delivering a great conference for its members, to build relationships between publishers, authors and booksellers and to continue to build the reputation of the conference as the premier event on the romance-writing industry calendar.
- RWA wishes to thank our 2013 sponsors for their enthusiastic and generous support:

***Platinum*** *Harlequin Australia*

***Silver*** *Penguin Books Australia*

***Silver*** *Booktopia*

***Bronze*** *Baci*

***Bronze*** *The Perth Convention Bureau*

***Supporter*** *Random House*

***Supporter*** *HelzKat Designs*

***Supporter*** *Tronox*

***Supporter*** *ARRA*

***Supporter*** *Rachael Johns*

***Supporter*** *Carolyn Wren*

Report prepared by:



Nikki Logan/Jennifer St George

Corporate Services

Romance Writers of Australia

e:[corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com)

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Corporate Services

## Jennifer St George

### FESTIVALS

The 2013 Committee introduced an increased focus on promoting romance writing at Australian Writers' Festivals.

#### Key achievements:

- ***Festival sponsorship budget:*** The Committee allocated \$5000 to support RWA participation in Writing Festivals.
- ***ARRA 2013:*** RWA sponsored the book-signing event at the 2013 ARRA convention in Brisbane. Along with a number of key benefits, RWA held an information session to promote RWA membership.
- ***Brisbane Writers Festival (4-8 September 2013):*** RWA pitched the idea of a public launch of Little Gems to be part of the Ampers&nd program at the Brisbane Writers Festival. The proposal was accepted. RWA will also hold presentation rights at the Brisbane Festival.
- ***GenreCon:*** RWA organised a contra promotional arrangement with GenreCon. Along with other benefits, President Nikki Logan presented on RWA information session at the conference in Sydney.
- ***Other Festivals:*** The Festival team has developed a process for further promoting of romance writing/authors at Writing Festivals, which will be implemented over the next few months.

Report prepared by:



Jennifer St George  
Corporate Services  
Romance Writers of Australia  
e:[corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:corporateservices@romanceaustralia.com)

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Corporate Services

## Jennifer St George

### ROMA AWARD

It was great to see another year in which strong stories about romance writing appeared in our media.

There have been eleven submissions this year for the ROMA award, the largest majority being newspaper stories. Almost every state was represented with stories appearing in *The West Australian*, *The Melbourne Age*, *The Gold Coast Bulletin*, *The Weekend Australian*, *Australian Senior News*, *The Western Advocate*, *The Newcastle Herald*, and *The Adelaide Advertiser*. Two magazine stories from the *Young Witness* and *The Women's Weekly* were entered as well as a radio interview on MQ – 2SER.

Report prepared by:



Barbara Hannay  
ROMA co-ordinator 2011-2012  
Romance Writers of Australia

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Corporate Services

## Jennifer St George

### LIBRARIES

RWA recognises that libraries play an important role in connecting authors with readers and as such are invaluable and we are continuing our efforts to connect. Unfortunately, the portfolio has suffered this year from lack of available time and really needs a small group of energised volunteers who, preferably, have some knowledge of the sector to keep the focus going.

Doreen Sullivan stepped down in her position as library liaison at the beginning to the year and I'd like to thank her most sincerely for her amazing work during her time in the role establishing our first wholesale contact with libraries, through the development and implementation of a two monthly newsletter and being the RWA contact person for any librarian queries. Special thanks to Carol Challis as well who assisted Doreen with formatting and production of the newsletters.

Thanks to Kristin Meagher who has done some content legwork on the library page for the website. This needs some time spent on it to get it up and running and becoming something of value to those people who work in the library system wishing to know more about the association and romance writing/writers in particular.

The goals for the coming year are –

- Appoint a new library liaison
- Form a small library sub-committee or focus group to work solely and specifically on achieving RWA targets for libraries
- Establish the library page on the website

Report prepared by:



Alison Ahearn  
RWA Library Liaison  
Romance Writers of Australia

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Published Author Services

## Claire Baxter

Published Author Services (PAS) exists to provide a network of communication and support, to connect authors with media and other external parties, to share publishing information, and to offer opportunities for promotion, education and recognition.

New to the PAS portfolio this year is the *Ella* award for published novellas. Opportunities have opened up for romance writers to publish novellas in all sub-genres, and many RWA members have embraced these opportunities. Moving with the times and in recognition of the popularity of these compact works, RWA has launched this romantic novella of the year award which is reader-judged with the winner to be announced at RWA's national conference in August. To be eligible, an entry must be a romance and have a word count of between 10,000 and 40,000 words.

### **Published Author Liaison (PAL)**

Robyn Grady has been in the role of PAL since August 2011 and has done an excellent job of providing a link between RWA's published author members and the RWA Committee, subcommittees, volunteer teams, and external parties.

Activities completed this year include:

First sale ribbons: The newly published were announced and first sale ribbons handed out at the Gold Coast 2012 Conference by both the PAL and ePAL. There were an unprecedented number of recipients; for the most part, digital-first.

Mad Mimi Newsletters: The following wording was included in the latest newsletter–

\*A copy of this newsletter is available on the RWAustAuthors Yahoo loop. [Provide the link]

\*Not for redistribution.

Promotion: The regular feature in the RWA Newsletter directing the newly published to contact PAL for information regarding services has been hugely successful.

RWA Website: A note was added to the bottom of the Library Services page.

“If you are interested in having an author speak or participate in some way at your library, please contact us. Please also be aware that fees may be involved for appearances and workshops to compensate for the author's time.”

RWAustAuthors published author Loop: Due to the high number of newly published authors, as well as established authors who have become aware of the loop and associated services via the RWA Newsletter or by other means, new-to-the-loop people are now asked introduce themselves.

PAL queries: PAL responds to queries from newly published authors on a regular basis. A list of services and relevant contacts is sent to each new author, the RWA Webmistress is copied in on the email so that the author can be given access to published author info on the website/forum, and a loop invitation is sent. If not provided, additional information i.e. state, genre, publisher, may be requested for PAL records.

### **Digital-first Published Author Liaison (ePAL)**

Rhian Cahill has continued in her role of ePAL, providing a link between RWA's digital-first published author members and the RWA Committee, subcommittees, volunteer teams, and external parties. Rhian has moderated the digital-first Yahoo group, a place for authors to freely discuss the specific issues associated with digital-first publishing, and has collaborated with Robyn on the PAL newsletter and in awarding first –sale ribbons at the 2012 conference.

The number of digital-first published authors continues to increase with the arrival of new e-publishers into the marketplace, and Rhian continues to respond to queries from members regarding the digital-first publishing landscape.

### **Professional Development for Authors (PDA)**

The PDA team of Helen Lacey, Kylie Griffin and Lillian Grant continued in the role until the end of the 2012 calendar year, planning and delivering a program of on-line workshops to provide professional development opportunities at no charge to published author members.

Workshop presenters during year included experts in diverse fields such as marketing and book trailer design, website design, on-line promotion, self-publishing and research topics. An editor panel was the most popular workshop of the year.

As we moved into 2013 and Helen's team stepped down, the program was placed on hold pending the search for a replacement coordinator. This search is on-going.

### **Romantic Book of the Year (Ruby)**

The Romantic Book of the Year Award, known as The Ruby, is our premier award for published authors, and the only one of its kind in Australia. Voted on by Australian readers, this contest is open each year to any Australian or New Zealand romance author who has published a long or short romance novel (40K+ words). This year our long-term coordinator Louise Reynolds stepped down from the role when she became a published author. Our newly-appointed coordinator Dorothy Bramich undertook this demanding role and completed it in very able fashion. We are grateful to Louise for making herself available as mentor to Dorothy during this first year.

There were 184 entries this year, up on previous years (158 in 2012, 150 in 2011, 145 in 2010), a pleasing trend, and there was significant increased publisher variety in the short categories.

Entries Received By Judging Category:

- Short Sweet: 64
- Short Sexy: 56

- Long Romance: 36
- Romantic Elements: 28
- Total: 184**

All finalists have been notified via email, except for one who has been contacted via her publisher. Publishers have been notified of their Ruby finalists, and most finalists will be attending the gala awards ceremony. RWA's media team is working on publicity for the finalists.

As usual there were problems with some judges in getting score sheets back, entailing additional work for the coordinator. In order to strengthen the judge pool and increase the diversity of reading preferences we will be advertising for judges with ARRA and putting out a judge call via RWA social media. We will also be looking for judges who are willing to read e-books with a view to accepting digital entries in the future, but it is not envisaged that this will be feasible in 2014.

### **Romantic Novella of the Year (Ella)**

With the introduction of the Ella, the romantic novella of the year award, to celebrate and recognise the achievement of authors who are published in shorter fiction, the PAS team gained a new member in Raewyn Bright who has excelled in taking the contest from concept to completion.

In its inaugural year, the Ella was modelled on the existing Ruby award. Due to a lack of judges able to accept electronic entries, the Ella was introduced as a paper only contest. Since the contest's launch, however, further judges have been sourced through the existing judge pool, via social media and through ARRA and RWA associations. A survey will be sent to existing judges to ascertain those able to judge e-books. The 2014 award is expected to be fully electronic.

Advertising for the award this year was limited to RWA members, but for the 2014 award advertising will be expanded and invitations sent directly to publishers.

The Ella was open for entries from Monday, 7th January to Monday, 4th February 2013. The entries received covered all sub-genres of romance with near equal entries in contemporary, historical, speculative fiction, and erotic romances. The finalists were announced on Wednesday, 19th June. Of the four finalists, three are contemporaries and one is an erotic romance.

The winner of the Ella will be announced at the national RWA conference in August, at which time the new Ella trophy and logo will be unveiled.



Claire Baxter  
 Published Author Services Coordinator  
 Romance Writers of Australia Inc.  
[vicepres@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:vicepres@romanceaustralia.com)

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Conference (GoldCoast)

Fiona Gregory



## Diamonds are Forever Conference Report

### Registrant Numbers

Romancipation – Published Author Day	72
Penguin Special Function	220
Friday Workshop – Alexandra Sokoloff	129
Core Conference	327
Awards Dinner	312

### Executive and RWA Volunteer Support

- Team Diamonds was extremely grateful for the extensive support from Nikki Logan (Events Portfolio), Kerry Ptolemy (Webmistress), Bronwyn Turner (Treasurer), Rachel Bailey (President) and Cath Evans (Hearts Talk Editor).

### Team Diamonds

- Fiona Gregory – Co-ordinator and Hotel Liaison
- Jenn McLeod – Registrar
- Helen Katsinis – Cocktail Party, Awards and Information
- Denise Rossetti – Workshops, Bookstore Liaison
- Zoe Younger – Pitching, Bookstore Liaison, Overseas Speakers
- Jen St George – Media and Sponsorships
- Alison Ahearn – Published Author Day
- Roseanne Smiles – Palazzo Tour and Covers Competition

Team Diamonds were helped by RWA members:

- Christine Wells – Choosing International Speakers
- Natalie Moress – General Duties
- Carolyn de Ridder – New Member Liaison
- Nicole Murphy – Author Chats
- Enisa Hasic – Heart Foundation Silent Auction

While this listing seems extensive, the size of the conference meant that many team members spent a significant amount of time during the six months prior to conference on the role (to the detriment of their writing). Some of these tasks are routine each year (organising the bag and other satchel contents, processing name tags) and could be outsourced to a part time conference worker. This would have the advantage of increasing efficiency (corporate knowledge), leaving the romance specific tasks (eg choosing speakers) to the conference volunteer team. We would also recommend RWA pursue multi-year deals with the supplier of satchel and contents to achieve a better deal on these items.

## Venue

- Hotel QT, Surfers Paradise.
- The newly refurbished QT was very well received by delegates. The recent refurbishment posed some challenges as there were changes to the rooms after the contract was signed, and closer to the event, the room names were changed without the hotel maps being updated, or adequate signage available during the conference.
- Staging Connections provided the AV and we were very happy with the services provided.
- The majority of critical feedback from delegates related to lack of hotel maps, special needs food, acoustics of the breakout spaces and lack of complimentary instant coffee in the accommodation rooms.

## Overseas Speakers and Guests

- Alexandra Sokoloff – Friday workshop. Also delivered a cut-down version of her workshop during the weekend. This impacted Friday numbers but ensured that more delegates overall could meet/see Alexandra.
- Eloisa James – Well received by all delegates. The Breakfast workshop (scheduled at 7am and available to all delegates) was very well received (“*the best workshop at the conference*”)
- Helen Breitwieser – Well received, with her Thursday workshop presentation by far the most popular at A-Day.
- Monique Patterson – Well received in pitching and speaking arrangements
- Joanne Grant and Birgit Davis-Todd – Well received and popular in pitching

## Core Conference Program – Workshops and Speakers

- The conference offered a total of eighteen workshops and six author panels during the breakout sessions.
- Feedback mixed - ranged from ‘not enough choice’ to ‘impossible to choose’.
- Some feedback about the schedule being too busy but majority of survey respondents did not want to extend the core conference to three days.
- Disappointing attendance to a bonus workshop originally scheduled for Thursday evening after a function was scheduled concurrently. People on the waiting list missed out. Recommend 1. Not scheduling any conference sessions against a social function and 2. Minimising the number of limited registration sessions

- Missed opportunity: inspirational closing speech. Delegate feedback was that this felt that the omission of this ended the conference with a whimper rather than a bang.

### **Cocktail Party**

- Ongoing difficulty communicating to delegates the necessity to pay for cocktail party tickets if not registered for Sat/Sun. The CP is an inclusion in registration every year.
- Amazing conversion of foyer space into 'pop-up' cocktail venue reassured sponsor and created a magnificent vibe.
- Catering focus on vegetarian and gluten-free options. Delegate feedback was that the food was different and plentiful.
- A Cash Bar more economical than a beverage package and is recommended for all functions.
- Photographer added value to the event but caused some logistical issues.

### **Awards Dinner**

- Attention to detail in scheduling and theming the Awards Dinner was well received by both the attendees and the hotel, with the Awards Ceremony finishing on time.
- Delegate expectations of "value for money" was not met, although the quality of the food was considered exceptional. Some delegates felt the contribution of the alcohol package inflated the Awards Dinner price unnecessarily.
- Using name cards for special meals was well received, although the execution of matching the meal cards with the attendees during the seating process was difficult.

### **Budget**

- The conference finished with a surplus, due to careful budgeting and some exceptional good luck. Budgeted funds for accommodation of overseas speakers was significantly reduced by the free rooms provided by hotel based on very large number of delegates staying in the venue.
- Silver-lining to our challenge finding a second international speaker willing to travel on short notice--savings in airfares and accommodation.
- The healthy financial position four weeks out meant that we had sufficient funds to pay for urgent items and niceties when we needed to.

### **Registration**

- Online registration was preferred by the majority of delegates.
- 'Extras' (outside core conference registration) confused some delegates and it is recommended to minimise potential for confusion by minimising the options.
- There was some concern about the practice of monitoring nametags to ensure only registered delegates accessed workshops and catering, notably from those removed for breaching.
- Recommend future 'Early Bird' registrations are required to 'register and pay' prior to close of Early Bird period to avoid exploitation.

## **Information**

- This portfolio has expanded substantially with our expansion into social media
- While we provided a large amount of information, it was clear at the conference that the delegates either didn't read the information provided or the important information was lost due to the large volume provided.
- We recommend putting the important information from the conference booklet into one document and providing this to delegates before the conference, with their confirmation.
- We also recommend updating the website with the program prior to conference.

## **Sponsorships**

- Sponsorships were well taken up this year, and competitive, which reflects the current economic climate.
- The growing necessity for confidentiality over corporate events created some operational challenges

## **Media**

- The increased focus on romance from mainstream media has resulted in increased uptake from Media outlets and during conference this resulted in a very busy time for our media liaison, who was also presenting. We recommend that suitable authors for interviews (both television and radio) are organised well in advance of conference and that a media team is available to support this role.

## **Extras**

- Closer to conference, the organising team spent a disproportional amount of time on 'optional extras' (things that could have been removed without affecting the conference experience)
- Volunteers are not always aware that the success or failure of the non-core activity lies with them and so their ability to commit time and focus should be weighed up when deciding whether or not to offer the activity.

## **Fundraising**

- Silent auction – well received by delegates with generous donations although the upstairs location was not ideal from the delegates point of view.
- Raffles – well received, unfortunately understaffed.

## **Bookstore**

- Print bookstore – RWA should review the necessity for the conference bookstore. Liaising with authors, stock challenges and inventory decisions resulted in a large amount of extra work for the team.

- E-bookstore – A gesture by the conference team to incorporate an e-bookstore into the conference was complicated by tight restrictions placed on the facility by RWA which did not match the desires of the authors wanting the facility to promote their books. This was not able to be resolved in a satisfactory timeframe and the offer was withdrawn.

### **Covers Contest**

- The challenges of presenting this non-essential activity electronically diverted Team Diamond members away from their conference duties.
- We would recommend that the contest is not aligned with the conference, but organised, run and announced elsewhere with conditions of entry on a par with other RWA contests.

### **Palazzo Versace Tour**

- This tour was very successful and the pre-payment ensured that delegates attended after registering. We would recommend pre-payment for all tours going forward.

### **e-List Dinner**

- This event was initially cancelled by RWA until resurrected by popular demand, but it was not well attended in the end. The scheduling of a free social event including food immediately prior resulted in poor numbers which exposed RWA to the unacceptable risk of having to pay for the missing participants.
- Pre-payment option should be considered to prevent this embarrassing (and potentially expensive) situation from occurring again.

### **In conclusion:**

The Diamonds are Forever conference was successful for delegates and sponsors and, while there were challenges in delivering the conference from the team's point of view, the delegate's experience was overall positive.

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Events

Alli Sinclair

## Conferences:

### INTERN:

We now officially have an intern starting on 22 July and finishing in November. Her name is Stephanie McLeay (Masters Publishing) and she is looking forward to assisting the Sydney conference team. I will oversee Stephanie's appointment Stephanie will work with the Sydney conference on the day-to-day running of the projects she undertakes. As part of the agreement of having Stephanie as an intern, she is required to work eight hours a week with us and at this stage, it looks like we will have more than enough work to keep her busy!

### FREMANTLE 2013 (by Leah Ashton)

The 2013 Romance Writers of Australia conference in Fremantle is rapidly approaching, and thanks to a great conference team and good planning, it promises to be a fantastic event. A concern of the team was that the WA venue would result in a drop in registrations compared to east coast conferences. Consequently, the team had a strong focus on both offering a "must see" event (through our high profile international guests - Julia Quinn, Sarah Wendell, Kim Hudson, Nina Bruhns, Abby Zidle and Laura Bradford) and also bringing innovative ideas to the conference. Some decisions - such as merging published sessions into the main conference as an additional stream and transforming the awards evening into a more affordable gala - were aimed at reducing costs for interstate delegates - but others, such as removing the requirement to register for breakout workshops, were to streamline and simplify the event. Partnering with Curtin University to deliver the *Elizabeth Jolley Conference* is also a new initiative designed to draw more delegates to our conference and provide an event of increased interest for published members on the Friday.

The combination of these initiatives has resulted in registration numbers far higher than our conservative forecasts. As of 30th June, we have a total of 283 people registered across all of our conference events:

- 275 registered for the core Saturday/Sunday conference
- 95 for Kim Hudson's Friday workshop
- 225 for the Awards Gala Evening
- 57 for the Elizabeth Jolley Conference

We are confident that we will reach 300 delegates by the time of the conference - a truly amazing result, and comparable to recent RWA conferences. Team Freo are incredibly

proud that we have been able to prove that a conference outside of the east coast can work - and be very successful.

While the conference team fully expected that organising the conference would at times be stressful - and it is certainly time consuming - another focus of the team was to, where possible, mitigate what we felt were unreasonable pressures on the team.

We were aware of difficult areas from previous conferences (particularly around areas like Registrar) and recognised that this escalating workload arose, in part, from conference team members going above-and-beyond for delegates. Far more than was reasonable in some cases. We also knew that the team working cohesively was essential. With this in mind, the 2013 team:

- Used a single conference email address for the vast majority of conference communications (ensuring cohesive, consistent communications - and for the coordinators to be across all questions coming through)
- Delivered an extensive, easy to use web site with a simple to remember web address, so that delegates can easily find answers to their questions
- Agreed early on that we will be "tough" - while we would very clearly communicate deadlines and rules to delegates, we would not make exceptions to rules that would then spiral into complications and potential unfairness.
- Reviewed and redesigned the online conference registration system. This was a big job, and while the restrictions of the existing RWA web site meant that it is still not perfect, it was a significant improvement. We have received positive feedback from a number of delegates and more importantly, the number of questions and complaints to our registrar has been pleasingly low.
- Reviewed and redesigned the pitch registration form - again, this has resulted in few emails from delegates.
- We have taken advantage of Fiona Gregory and Helen Katsinis' very generous time. The 2012 coordinators have helped us hugely in learning from their experiences. We have tried very hard to avoid "reinventing the wheel".

Importantly, we have put special effort into avoiding the conference 'given' that if you organise a conference you miss most of it. By bringing in a large conference team willing to share responsibility in addition to a large team of external volunteers to assist over the weekend, as well as establishing a roster of our own time, we're confident that we will each get to see a good chunk of the conference that we've worked so hard to deliver.

### **SYDNEY 2014**

The Sydney team have been hard at work and have selected a spectacular venue. They look forward to announcing our speakers and theme at the close of the Perth conference. They have secured some amazing international presenters and speakers and 2014 is shaping up to be a spectacular line-up, along with some exciting additions throughout the conference.

### **ROADSHOW**

We plan to hold a road show in 2014 and will start preparations early next year.

## 5DI

Disappointingly, the 5 Day Intensive (5DI) event had to be put on hold in 2013 due to inability to source volunteers. This event will be reviewed while we search for volunteers to run it in Victoria in 2014.

## **ONLINE EVENTS**

### **CLAYTONS** – (by Dana Scully)

The Claytons team (Fiona Gregory, Annie Lynch, Roseanne Smiles, Cassandra Pennington, Marilyn Forsyth, Imogene Nix, Nikki Cousins, and myself) has been hard at work since February. Our team came up with the theme of BE THE BOOK. We want our delegates to live, breathe, and eat the book they want to write and we're providing them the opportunity to do just that!

We've lined up some amazing presenters:

- Alexandra Sokoloff—3 Act 8 Scene Story Structure
- Valerie Parv—The Revision Maze
- Mel Tescho—Sensual Tension Regardless of Genre
- Zana Bell—The Grommet's Path to Publication
- Sue Grimshaw—The Quick Pitch

I believe the high quality of our presenters has led to the phenomenal registrations that we've received so far—over 80 delegates are registered with more still coming in!

Our donations team has not only worked hard at attracting book/ebook donations, but also at finding non-book random prizes and writing challenge rewards. This year we have gift vouchers, magazine subscriptions, how-to books, and even an ereader to give-away during the conference!

Our tech team has put together a scrolling donor book cover page on a designated forum thread as a thank you to donors. Our presenters too have their own forum thread, detailing their background and topic.

The marketing team has instigated weekly Tweets, regular blog posts, and Facebook discussions to promote The Claytons, to RWA members and to the world in general, (RWA's online conference is truly unique and we want the world to be aware of it!)

Our pre- and post-event material team has put together some inspirational and informative packs that will be emailed to delegates at various times.

All this could not have been possible without the help of non-Claytons committee members such as:

**Kerrie Ptolemy & Diane Curran**—their help with technical issues has made registrations and use-ability an ease (and allayed a lot of my personal technical fears!)

**Nikki Logan & Alli Sinclair**—neither blinked when I came up with some seemingly absurd idea, instead they offered suggestions that turned ideas into reality

**Jenny Schwartz**—opened my eyes to forums, past The Claytons, and ‘what to do if...’

**Helen Katsinis**—‘Legend,’ as she’s otherwise known, put together our logo for FREE for us this year and she’s helped a number of times with technical questions

**Donors**—without our amazingly generous authors and non-published members, this year’s The Claytons would be a bit less exciting

As always, thank you for the opportunity to organize RWA’s 2013 The Claytons BE THE BOOK Online Conference. It’s been a privilege and an honour.

### **50K/30 DAYS** (by Sarah Brabazon)

We had 58 active writers. Three formally withdrew, but there were 25 members who registered but never returned my communications. One amazing quiet achiever whom I believed to be a ‘no-show’, actually finished her 50ks on the 25<sup>th</sup> outside of the formal support of 50/30 but using it as a motivator.

I have long believed that the forum is underutilised by the membership, and that holding an event like 50ks in there would show participants how using the forum can benefit them. I’ve had loads of positive comments about the way the whole tribe have supported each other.

I ran this event a little differently than in the past, in that I’ve not had guest posts to motivate everyone (primarily because almost every single one of the writers I personally know, and felt comfortable asking for a 50ks endorsement, signed up for the event). Instead, I’ve encouraged the participants to motivate each other, by asking them to report in daily in their own personal wordcount topic and by posting everyone’s progress towards their target in the forum.

I have had many comments from participants (whether they are meeting their targets or not) that the event has taught them the manifold benefits of writing every day, that they have a better understanding of their story as a result of the event and that the camaraderie and support has enabled them to write more than they have ever written before. If a writer learns nothing else than to *write* in June, then this is a good result.

In my first few *NaNoWriMos*, I kept stats on how many participants ‘won.’ Generally, the figure was no more than 15%. In this event, we had 86 initial registrants, 67% of them participated in the forum. The other 33% reconsidered participating or completed their wordcounts without participating actively in the forum. Of the participants, more than 7% (and 3%—or one writer—who did not participate in the forum) finished in the last week of June, and I expect 43% to finish by midnight on the 30<sup>th</sup>. This represents 29% of the initial registrants. Nearly double the international average. This may be higher, on the day, as several participants revised their targets down in the last week to something more achievable (but still challenging, according to their progress-to-date). Full data is available on each participant who self-reported their wordcounts in the forum, some 59 writers.

I provided my own excel wordcount tracking spreadsheet to the forum participants as a motivational tool, and many have used this throughout the month (copy attached). I was able to use the spreadsheet to publish everybody's progress in a % towards target form (see attached image).

Many of us have indicated that we like the daily contact, and will continue in the 500 club with our own personal targets after June is over.

As far as our efforts on the forum, the four all-time top posters on the forum are participants in 50ks in 30 days. Of the all-time top twenty posters in the entire forum, thirteen are participants in 50ks, and two of those members only joined the forum on May 31, 2013. When we look at recent results, the picture is more obvious. Of today's (26/6/13) top 20 posters, all of them are 50ks members. We have nearly 100 topics and over 2,000 replies (out of just over 6000 posts in total on the forum). I think this has been a vibrant exercise, and a great way to socialise at a distance for our members.

We used a #50ks30days conversation in Twitter to gather members to the sprint room, and several finishers claimed they wouldn't have done it without the camaraderie of daily (and nightly) sprints.

### **ONLINE WORKSHOP LIST (OWL)**

With the help of the OWL team, we plan to have a list of presenters by the end of August and get them trained on the presentation system we are using so they feel comfortable. We will also offer a tutorial to participants and hopefully by October, we can offer our first OWL session and as long as we can find enough presenters, hold OWL sessions on a monthly basis.

# **RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Members Assistance Fund**

## **Bronwyn Turner**

In 2012/13 the RWA Members' Assistance Fund is assisting two members in attending the 2013 "Riding the Waves" Conference in Fremantle. Both members had compelling reasons for attending but without assistance neither would have been able to afford the necessary travel, accommodation and registration expenses. Total distribution will be in the vicinity of \$2,945, \$2,445 from accumulated funds and \$500 from member contributions.

Thank you to the members who contributed, helping these two dedicated and talented members toward achieving their writing goals.

Bronwyn Turner, MAF Coordinator 2013

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Members Services

Helene Young

The Members Services Portfolio continues to provide support, advice, mentoring and grants to our members. In an organization that continues to grow at a healthy rate this is presenting a few challenges.

The biggest challenge this year has been the ongoing search for volunteers. Most of the people managing the various schemes want to step back from their current role, but replacements are yet to be found. I don't see any easy solution to this other than the proposed restructure to the New Members Liaison Scheme, which may free up some extra resources.

**The Crit Partnership Scheme** continues to provide a good service for our members matching writer from Australia, NZ and also America with like-minded people. We're hoping to encourage more people to update their details once they have made a successful match to cut down on some of the work load for our coordinators. My thanks to Rebecca Sampson and Joanne Levy for their ongoing hard work and their following report.

Crit Partnership Scheme : We are working well for our more advanced members with GIAM, a sister CP register run by RWAmerica.

The total of 142 members is up a little from last year but also represents a turnover of new members coming in to replace a number who've dropped out through finding a partner or no longer being interested (30 new members and 22 cancellations).

Matching:

Beg/Int

- Now made 105 successful CP matches since the program started :)
- This year we've had – 39 requests for trials, 21 CP trials (5 are still ongoing) and 5 matches!

Advanced

- Now made 51 successful CP matches since the program started :) (but none this year)
- This year we've had – 8 requests for trials and 5 CP trials (5 are still ongoing)!

There have been ongoing issues with members not responding to emails and/or having changed email addresses without letting us know which can result in extra chasing up being required. Although applications have fallen away a little the last two months there have been quite a few enquiries from people seeking more information on the scheme and taking application forms.

We've both had a lot of positive feedback on the scheme, personally and on Facebook (the RWA page). It's great to see people finding partners and moving forward on their writing journey.

**The Individual Writers Support** scheme has continued to provide one on one mentorship for writers who require additional feedback. My thanks to Shannon Stein for continuing in this role despite other work pressures.

**Group Grants** under Janette Whitehead's guidance has handed out funds to enable RWA writing groups to run workshops, retreats and talks to help further their careers. The grants are allocated twice a year and all details for submission can be found on the website. Three grants were allocated in the last twelve months. All reported that the grants provided them with good opportunities to further their writing.

**The Groups Coordinator**, Barb Jeffcot-Geris, continues to struggle with placing new members in Face to Face groups, particularly in capital cities and more particularly in Sydney. We need to encourage existing groups to think about whether they can increase their size and include more new writers. Perhaps groups which are geographically scattered can look at forming sub-groups which would allow for more members. We also continue to explore on-line groups as a way of providing the famous RWA camaraderie without the need to travel from the lounge room. Thanks to Barb for continuing in this role despite having major responsibilities for the RWNZ conference.

**The New Members Liaison** has grown under Mervet McClintock's guidance, but we have to make some significant changes this year if we are to continue to effectively mentor new members with the reduce volunteer resources available to us. I thank her for her wonderful input along with that of the NML mentors. Mervet's report is as follows.

#### EOFY

01 July 2012 – 25 June 2013

210 Newbies

57 Asked for an NML

14 Are completed

12 Are currently awaiting an NML

#### COMMENTS

The NML Forum Is still not up and running and we are still yet to confirm a date. We have received one survey from a completed NML in this period with the following to say:

*RWA has opened my whole writing experience. I am only very new and it wasn't until I paired up with critique partners that I realised how much more I had to learn, and that there were those prepared to give up their time to help. Keep up the good work. I highly recommend RWA as often as I can. There are a lot of services I don't have time to use, but I know of their existence. Maybe one day when I have more time I can utilize them. Also, feedback from competitions is fantastic. Keep it up.*

So once again, my thanks to everyone involved in the NML portfolio. I hope we can continue to make a difference in the next 12 months.

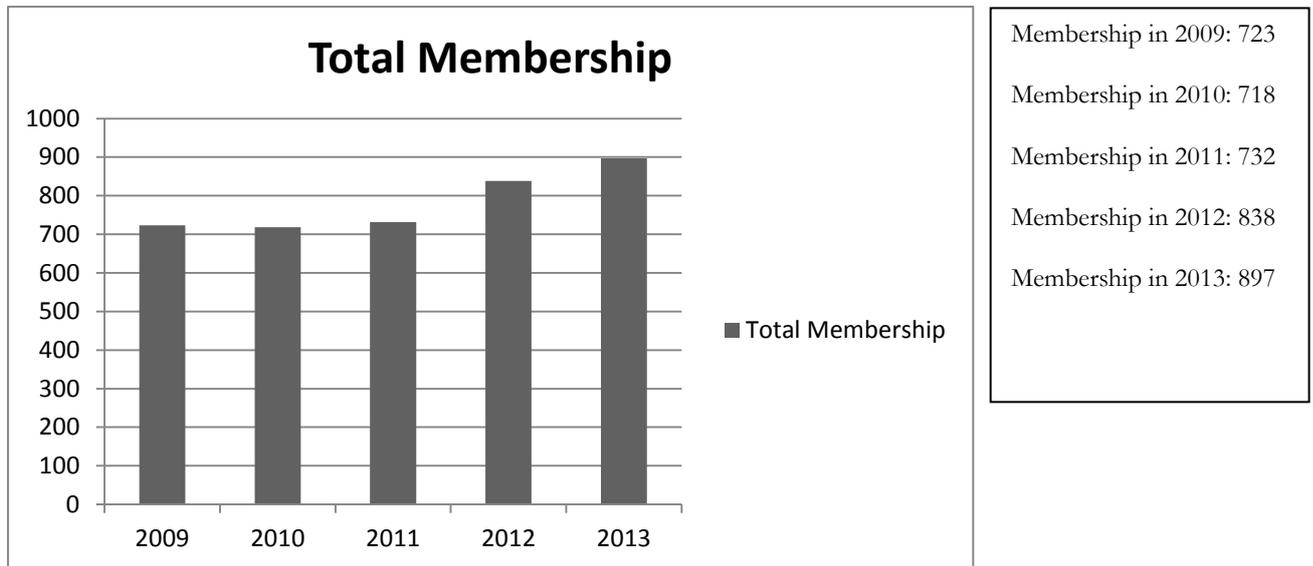
Helene Young

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Member Secretary

## Diane Curran

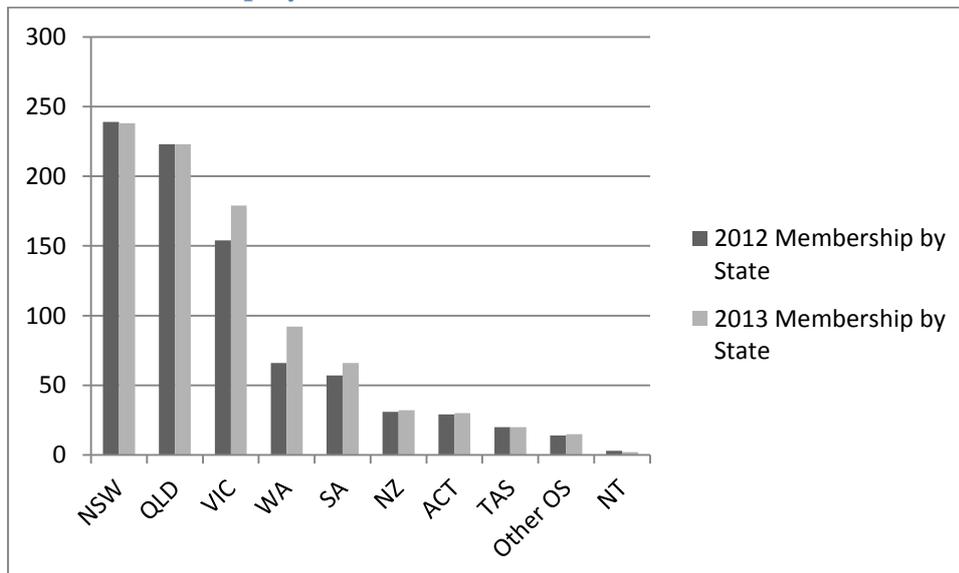
Membership as at 30 June 2013:

Ordinary Members: 884; Honorary Members: 13 - Total Membership: 897



The membership of RWA continues to steadily increase, with a 7% growth in the last twelve months. New members are finding us through word of mouth, web search and the RWA blog.

### RWA Membership by State



The marked growth in WA members (39%) can be attributed to the decision to hold our first ever conference in the west. Victoria also showed an increase in members of 16% and South Australia had a small increase in membership. All other states remained approximately the same,

attracting new members to balance out the members who chose not to renew. Our New Zealand membership and membership elsewhere overseas also remains steady from July 2012 to now.

This is the raw data – NB I'm missing the state for 2 members from last year's figures.

<b>RWA Membership by State</b>		
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
NSW	239	238
QLD	223	223
VIC	154	179
WA	66	92
SA	57	66
NZ	31	32
ACT	29	30
TAS	20	20
Other OS	14	15
NT	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>897</b>

New memberships via mail have almost disappeared with the majority of new members using the online form on our website. I also take this opportunity to remind members that they can update their contact details by logging into the member section of the website, in order not to miss out on any editions of Hearts Talk.

Diane Curran  
Member Secretary  
1 July 2013

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Web Services

## Kerrie Ptolemy

Much of the web services work this year has been behind the scenes.

Our membership database was improved by adding more fields to allow better collection of data, and extra reporting to use that data more effectively.

The online conference registration system and pitch registration was improved following suggestions from members and conference registrars. A content management system was again successfully used to allow conference team members to update the relevant conference information pages themselves. This allowed for timely dissemination of information.

The RWA forum and chat room has had a slow take-up rate, although events like 50Kin30days and Claytons gave it a boost. The New Member group are setting up a room to use for new members so that will hopefully increase general use. Both the forum and the chat room have had various updates to keep it up to date with the latest version.

A new site has been designed around the new logo and will be ready to go live at conference. The new site will present a fresh, clean look to the public and allow for improved navigation and ease of use. The site will include a new Content management system (CMS) to allow authorised people to update the pages relevant to their areas.



Kerrie Ptolemy  
RWA Webmistress  
Romance Writers of Australia Inc.  
[webmistress@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:webmistress@romanceaustralia.com)

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Social Media

Imelda Evans

## Overview

It's been a big year in the Social Media Services Portfolio. To begin, I must acknowledge Sandie Hudson, who stepped down from looking after RWA's Social Media Services after the last AGM. I would like to thank her for the great work she did in nurturing RWA's social media presence.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who make our social media services possible. We have had quite a few changes in the volunteer roster this year and to all those who have served and who have stepped up to serve RWA as volunteers, on behalf of your fellow members, I offer most grateful thanks.

## Blog

The RWA blog has continued to provide a valued and valuable place to share RWA news and events and promote our members. Along with our website, it is the centre of our online presence and the hub for all our public announcements.

Over the last year, our wonderful volunteers have published a total of 228 posts which averaged 113 views a day. (Some posts have many hundreds more than that, of course.) At the time of writing, over the life of the blog, we had published a total of more than 1000 posts and had almost 200,000 total views.

During this year, we have spotlighted our members in 24 Author Spotlights, 20 Blog Bites and 20 Day in the Writing Life posts. We've also had approximately 42 Conference Spotlights, 13 sets of New Releases, 12 Hearts Talk Wraps, an assortment of craft and general interest articles and twice weekly updates on member activities in the form of the Cruisin' and Events posts.

We have had several people step down from blog posts this year and I would like to thank them for all their work and the generous people who have taken up the roles vacated.

Suzanne Hamilton stepped down from a long stint of looking after the Day in the Writing Life posts. Thank you, Suzanne, it was a pleasure working with you. Stepping in to take over were Efthalia and Bernice, who will be sharing the job over the year to come.

Juanita Kees continues to be a stalwart supporter of our Blog, both as Blog Editor and by providing the Cruisin' and Events posts every week.

Juliet Madison stepped down from doing our Author Spotlights and the job has been taken over by Sarah Belle. Our Author Spotlights are perennially popular posts and I would like to thank them both for keeping them coming.

Kerri Williams has done a magnificent job of keeping up our Blog Bites posts, which have introduced us to so many of our members since the blog began. Kerri is looking to retire from this role soon, so we are looking for a new volunteer to take over from her.

Ainslie Patton is another new blog volunteer this year and has looked after our Hearts Talk Wrap articles and several general interest articles that didn't fit into any of our other categories.

And we couldn't complete a report on the blog without mentioning Eleni Konstantine. Eleni does all our new releases posts. She took over this role from Nicole Flockton, who in turn, took it on when Sandie Hudson retired from the blog.

Eleni is also responsible for all of the Conference Spotlights, which highlight our guests and members who are presenting at our Annual Conference. Conference Spotlights are our biggest single category of blog posts and extremely popular, so I cannot thank Eleni enough for her contribution.

We are always open to new ideas for posts and contributions from members, so if you would like to start an occasional 'Day in a Publisher's Life' column (say), or perhaps offer a craft post, please contact the blogmistress at [blogmistress@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:blogmistress@romanceaustralia.com). (We are also in the market for a new blogmistress, so if you think you would like to give it a try, please let me know. I am seriously considering changing the title to blog goddess, if that helps.)

## **E-groups**

The way we interact online is ever-changing in these technology-hungry times. Since our e-groups were initially set up, we have seen the rise of Facebook, Twitter, blogs, our Forum and many other ways for writers in general and RWA members in particular to communicate with their 'tribe'. Consequently, our email-based groups have become less active than they used to be.

Having said that, however, our most active groups have all grown in membership numbers since last year, showing that our members still see a benefit to being involved, even if the activity on the loops is more variable than it used to be.

At the time of writing, our most active groups included:

Our main e-group, Romaus, with 507 members

The Paranormal loop, with 122 members

The Historical group, now hosted on Google+, with 78 members

The Erotica loop, with 55 members.

A big thank you and farewell to Jenn J McLeod who stood down as Romaus moderator early in the year. This position is still vacant as at time of writing.

## Facebook

The official RWA Facebook page has been much more active this year, as we've been cross-promoting the blog posts there, as well as posting other items of interest. Our readership has grown accordingly. At the time of writing, the page is at 416 likes, up from 157 at the same time last year and has a worldwide readership. On any given day, posts on our page can reach readers in the USA, the UK, New Zealand, Canada, Indonesia, India and Argentina, among others. (I would like to note that, on one of the days I checked, two of our readers listed their language as 'Pirate'. It's nice to know that we have such broad appeal!)

Our open Facebook group has also grown. It now has 681 members, up from 503 last year, and is growing weekly.

Thanks go to Emmie Dark for looking after our Facebook activities for us. Emmie stepped down from her Facebook role during the year and I would like to thank Juanita Kees and Diane Curran for helping to manage our open Facebook group since her retirement.

## Other Social Media

On **Twitter**, we have 1397 followers. This has grown since last year – and it's worth noting that this number is considerably more than our number of members. During the year, our Twitter posts are mainly to promote blog posts (and assorted items of interest, as with our Facebook page), but our Twitter feed comes into its own as a way of spreading news from awards nights and the like. Thanks to Diane Curran for continuing to look after our Twitter profile, in addition to her other roles with RWA.

On **Google+**, we have 38 people in circles and 129 have us in circles. We have been quite quiet on Google+, mainly due to a shortage of volunteer time. We know we have a lot of members on Google+ and one of our projects for the year to come is to expand our presence and activity on Google+.

Our presence on **Goodreads** grows every month, as our new releases are added by our wonderful volunteer Louise Ousby.

We have withdrawn from **Shelfari** and **MySpace**, to concentrate our efforts where our members have a much greater presence.

Social Media Services is, by its nature, an ever-changing and developing portfolio. I would encourage members who are active in social media to get involved with the team. There are many jobs in the portfolio, of all sizes and I'm sure we could find you one that you would enjoy!

Regards

Imelda Evans (Coordinator)

## RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Treasurer

### Bronwyn Turner

RWA's operations during the 2012/2013 financial year resulted in a net loss of \$8,399, in keeping with our budget. After numerous years of high profit, the association's net assets remain at a very healthy \$166,500.

The major source of income was, as always, membership subscriptions of \$65,944. The Gold Coast conference realised a profit of \$12,246 while our suite of contests contributed \$2,869. Interest from our invested deposits totaled \$8,264, down on last year due to the fall in interest rates.

Noteworthy expenses included an increase in accountancy fees to pay for the audit required under the Associations Act. This was not required in 2013 and this will be reflected in a drop in professional fees in the next financial year. Promotions of \$9,748 included the RuBY feature in New Idea, sponsorship of the ARRC booksigning and part of the allocated budget toward rebranding RWA. Special projects this year included our first Best of Hearts Talk publication \$5,188 and the review of our constitution \$5,042, largely in legal fees.

Publication and postage of Hearts Talk cost \$22,670, chewing up a large slice of the membership subscription pie (34%.) The cost of committee meetings and networking rose sharply this year to \$14,588. These are two of several areas the committee is looking into in a review of expenditure, to ensure we are using our funds to provide the best range of services for all members.

At the conclusion of my fourth and final term as RWA Treasurer, I extend thanks to my fellow committee members and the RWA membership for entrusting me with this portfolio. It has been a privilege.

Bronwyn Turner  
RWA Treasurer 2012/2013  
[treas@romanceaustralia.com](mailto:treas@romanceaustralia.com)

*Copies of RWA's financial statements for 2012/2013 are available at the AGM or for download from the website afterward.*

# RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Hearts Talk

## Catherine Evans

The *Hearts Talk* Team has around 30 members who work together to deliver each issue. We have people who organise columns, conduct interviews, source information, create fill, proofread, write columns, liaise with the web and conference teams, act as sounding boards, ideas people, and general support. It is a fantastic team to work with and *Hearts Talk* couldn't be produced without them.

Some of the team have left this year, including: Sarah Mayberry, Joan Kilby, Doreen Sullivan, Ingrid Rickersey, Bronwyn Stuart, Mel Teshco and Sara Hantz. Thanks for the many contributions you made to *Hearts Talk*.

Over the year, we've interviewed authors and editors. We've had articles on: Pitching; Juggling life and writing; Self-publishing; Becoming Published; Novellas; Christmas stories; Supporting authors; Contest diva to contracted author; Making fiction a reality; Facts fiction and fudging; In the name of research; Conduct; Writing a book; Self-publishing e-books; Translations; Chapter hooks; Identity to essence; Building atmosphere; Characterisation; Beta heroes; Visceral reactions; The right place at the right time; Plagiarism; and Redefining "published".

Many thanks to all contributors.

We've had lots of conference news, keeping people up to date with who will be there, who's taking pitches and what they're interested in, as well as sessions and other information. Clayton's conference has been included. Thanks to Leah, Michelle, Annie and the teams.

Regular features each month include the President's column, A Writer's Life, Your Questions Answered. As well as contest news and results, events, markets and publishing news, good news and new releases.

The RWA community has been amazingly supportive of *Hearts Talk*. Thank you.

Catherine Evans  
Editor.