



ROMANCE
WRITERS
of Australia

ANNUAL REPORT
2013/14

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Executive Summary

(Nikki Logan)

It's been another big year of activity within RWA and on Committee.

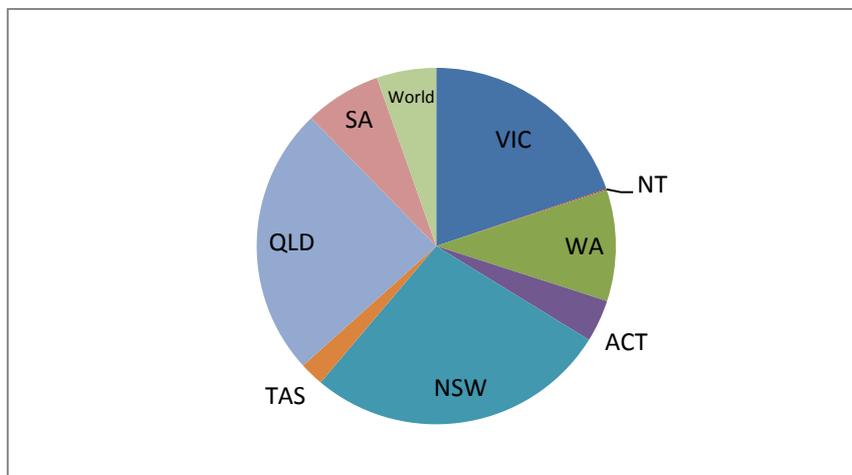
After several years of consultation, discussion and modelling, RWA was finally able to address the issue of how to better define our members to keep up with the rapidly changing marketplace. *Published* and *yet-to-be-Published* were no longer an effective reflection of the many different career stages or pathways to success available to us as professional writers, yet we struggled to find a model that was suitably equitable whilst also ensuring the sense of aspiration and achievement that members clearly value.

In the end, the way forward was conceived in a member suggestion, which was particularly pleasing, and, this year, we announced the new structure for members and services (effective after the 2014 AGM). Going forward, members will self-identify as either *Aspiring* (developing their craft), *Emerging* (close to being ready to release a book or within the first three years of having a book commercially available) or *Established* (those with books commercially available for three years or longer) and we will tailor RWA's services to those and open them up where practicable.

Membership (summary excerpt from report copied in full below)

RWA's membership grew steadily last year with 8% increase in the past twelve months and, for the first time, this growth flung us past the 950 mark so that we ended the year on an all-time high of 970 members with growth in all but one state/territory. Our largest growth last year was ACT, which eclipsed all other states with a whopping 19% increase on its previous numbers.

But, it's not all good news. Our statistics show that half of brand new members don't stay beyond a year (compared to 70% on average and a huge 90% for those who've been around for a decade) - so we have some work to do in showing new members how to really get value for their membership. Work began on this this a few years ago and will continue until we see more new members staying in the RWA family.



Membership June 30, 2014

Treasury (summary excerpt from report copied in full below)

This year RWA's financial situation was stable with strong membership and conference support. As budgeted, RWA's operational costs during 2013/14 financial year resulted in a net loss of \$7,084.53 which is on par with previous years and which is appropriate as a not-for-profit association. At the end of the period, RWA's net assets were \$340,974.97.

Once again this year RWA's main source of income was memberships, contests and some unexpected profit from the terrific support that members showed the 2013 Fremantle conference.

Collating, printing and posting *Hearts Talk* was again the biggest expense item for the financial year - \$25,773.48. In coming months we will be reviewing *Hearts Talk* production and looking to see if we can't find some new solutions to distributing everyone's favourite publication.

Volunteering

For many years, we have operated on the generosity of those members who are willing to contribute some time each year in any of the many voluntary roles within RWA. Right now, we have about 100 permanent volunteers (ie: excluding those who judge contests once or twice a year) and many of them have two or three voluntary roles to help keep RWA services ticking along for the remaining 90% of members. With no change in the trend in sight, we now face the tough decision to either reduce services or increase costs in order to part staff our organisation through a more traditional staffing model. We now publish the (voluntary) positions-vacant on the website including a description of tasks and how many hours a month it might require. Please give some thought to whether you can provide a few hours a month or a week to work on something and keep RWA the affordable, valuable organisation it is.

Regardless, in the coming year we will be examining the practicalities of a paid administrative position. With nearly 1000 members to service it is time we looked beyond volunteers to guarantee RWA's core business.

New Relationships

This year, we opened the door to a more formal relationship between RWA and RNA (the Romantic Novelist Association). I represented RWA at the RNA conference and took the opportunity to examine their structure, ideas and challenges and share some of ours. Although we come at a similar philosophy from very different directions, RNA is closer to RWA in size and focus, and we can learn much from each other.

New Technologies

Technology was our friend this year as we invested in and customised an online education medium called Moodle for delivery of the coming OWL series of workshops, and as we used the internet to allow our first off-shore committee member to participate fully in all of the Committee events and participate in the full-day March Strategy & Planning event from North America.

Portfolio Summaries (summary excerpts from reports copied in full below)

CONTESTS

Following some internal changes which saw the Ruby and Ella moved under the contest team umbrella, RWA also introduced a new contest, *The Ripping Start* which ran successfully.

The Ella contest was the first RWA contest to include digital judging and to accept e-book submission. For security reasons we restricted format to PDF only but next year we'll take the lessons-learned this year and look to expand the types of e-files we can offer. This year's learnings and the work done growing the digital judging pool mean we can now explore acceptance of digital entries in the Ruby next year which will be great news for digital-only authors.

Changes are afoot for the Emerald, too, removing the focus on story length and putting it instead on entrant's position in their writing career. The new Emerald also recognises that even authors who have had a work available commercially might want to explore new genres. The new Emerald Pro category will be available to them as a development tool.

Finally, 2012/13 was the last year that all RWA's contests were squeezed into the first part of the year. Going forward, contests will be more evenly spread across the calendar which will have benefits for coordinators, judges and entrants.

MEDIA

The media portfolio was covered by the President this year since so much of the contact from media it is directed there for comment. However, this change meant that RWA's media involvement this year simplified to responding to media requests for information or access to authors. Thanks to all those who put their hand up to help with media interest this year.

MARKETING

Festivals

In previous years, an RWA volunteer spent vast amounts of time trying to build networks with the writing and literary festivals and increase the presence of romance. Because that level of contribution (and expertise) is not sustainable, RWA has created, instead, a *Festival Fund* which can assist members (with a work commercially available) to appear at (non-RWA) writers' festivals and promote their work and the romance genre to the wider reading community. This funding program is expected to gain traction after 2014 since most festival line-ups were finalised in 2013.

Libraries

The loss of the volunteer in this area and the dominance of other areas in this portfolio has meant no new activity this year re: libraries, however the area has been reviewed and background work undertaken to overhaul it. This year RWA dedicated some of its

advertising resources to a targeted campaign via ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) to secure new reader-judges, to promote the RuBY finalists and advertise RWA. This package will be a mix of online newsletter and monthly magazine presence.

Sponsorship

Thanks to the changing face of romance publishing in Australia we began the year with multiple interest in the major sponsorship for the 2014 conference event. RWA changed its sponsorship strategy to move away from the 'first in best dressed' strategy of the past and ensure an equitable selection process, and to also increase the opportunities for creative exposure for sponsors. While the former strategy was successful, the 'build your own sponsorship' model was less successful and will need to be reviewed ahead of 2015.

It is pleasing to have Penguin Books Australia/Destiny on board as the platinum sponsor for 2014 as well as Harlequin Australia and Escape, Random House, PanMacMillan and ARRA. Thank you to all our sponsors for your ongoing (or new!) support.

ROMA

There were fifteen entries for the ROMA (RWA's award to celebrate professional and positive media coverage of romance) representing a wide-range of media from all over the country.

EVENTS

Conferences/workshops

Fremantle 2013 'Riding the Waves' Thanks to a fantastic, cohesive conference team, the 2013 Romance Writers of Australia Conference was a great success, far exceeding attendance estimates while offering a "must see" program.

The event was conservatively budgeted originally but very quickly eclipsed the original targets and we ended with 320 delegates across the three days.

Pleasingly, the event attracted nearly one hundred WA delegates and a whopping 91 first-timers as well as 70 non-members thanks to the Friday partnership event with Curtin University.

To sell-out a West Coast event and bring one hundred Western Australian members in 'from the wilderness' is a truly amazing result and the team is incredibly proud that we were able to prove that a conference in Western Australia was not only possible – but also extremely successful.

A thankyou note from Hachette Australia perhaps sums the event up best.

Congratulations on a brilliant and unique RWA conference. It was relaxed and dynamic (if it's possible to be both those things at once). The atmosphere was buzzing, friendly and inclusive.

Claytons The annual Claytons Conference was once again a big hit with 120 delegates who gathered online to participate in some networking and learning while everyone else was in Perth at the face-to-face conference. Across the weekend, six fabulous speakers and a mix of social and challenge events really offered value for (no) money for those participating. The big room-fillers were sessions with Alexandra Sokoloff which attracted over 80 attendees, Valerie Parv (70+) and Sue Grimshaw (60+).

Roadshow In 2014, the RWA Roadshow returned to Adelaide for a partnership event with the SA Writers' Centre. Over two days, romance lovers came together at the Centre for a *Weekend Romance: A Fair to Remember*. The event included panels, workshops and guest speakers over two streams, including an introductory stream ('*So You Want To Write a Romance?*') and a more advanced/technical series of workshops on the Sunday.

This event was different to the average RWA Roadshow in that it was a partner event with SA Writers' Centre who took care of the administration (media, promotion, sponsorship & catering) while RWA coordinated the volunteers and speakers. Despite a glitch when the SAWC website was hacked just as regos opened, the event attracted a good crowd with a healthy discount for RWA members.

MEMBER SERVICES

The Members Services portfolio grew a little in 2013/14 with the addition of the joint Published Author Liaison and Digital-First Published Author Liaison (PAL/ePAL) coordinator role to the team. The main focus of the portfolio over the past 12 months has been to implement ways to take as many of our services online and self-service, to reduce reliance on volunteers and provide a more immediate 'do-it-yourself' service. This is still a work in progress, however, we have made excellent strides.

Notable changes in this portfolio included the withdrawal of the US partner from the AU/NZ Crit Partner Register due to lack of uptake at their end, and a significant jump in the level of interest in our Members Assistance Fund. We received a record number of applications for financial support, due in part to a higher profile/awareness and in part to leaner times within the writing community. Thanks to the generosity of anonymous members we had more than the usual amount to distribute - \$4000 in total.

You can donate to this fund anytime through the website or easily when you renew. We'll also be accepting donations to this fund at the AGM so if writing has been good to you this year (or even just okay) please consider supporting a fellow member who's doing it tough. The scheme is anonymous but invaluable.

WEB SERVICES

At the very start of 2013/14 we launched the new-look RWA website and we've had terrific feedback on it. With that big job out of the way, much of the web services project work this year has been behind-the-scenes, improving databases which will facilitate better collection and reporting of data, enable you all to update your own contacts and pseudonyms, opt out of the public register, and to ready us for the change to RWA's structure that comes into effect after the AGM.

We also worked on automating membership renewal notices so that they go out a month before they are due and then a few days before it expires. This eases much of the manual handling (for 1000 members) from the process and ensures that reminders go out in good time. But no RWA notice will be effective if your address has expired or you no longer look at that mail box.

Please ensure you update your details on the RWA homepage so that you continue to get important RWA notices.

SOCIAL MEDIA

This year marks the fifth year of RWA's social media presence. Our **blog** continues to be an excellent venue for celebration, promotion, education and information five years on and our **Twitter** presence has grown to 2000 followers. It's pleasing to see the kind of online community involvement happening on or around conference time and particularly exciting when the #RWAus hashtag trends.

As is so often the case with social media, RWA's public **Facebook** group has grown so large and contributory that we need to migrate its participants over to our official page so that our limited volunteers can better manage the content. This is a classic case of how social media can fragment and we hope that we'll hold onto those people with a real interest in RWA when we merge the two aspects.

There's no question that the variety of social media outlets have drawn some of the traffic away from our many **e-loops**, but they continue to provide a useful venue for member-only, writer-specific conversations. Our most active loops are *RomAus* (for the whole membership), *Historical*, *Paranormal*, and *Erotic*.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Five Day Intensive (5DI)

A change for the upcoming 5DI with a move from Queensland to Melbourne in order to increase the accessibility of the scheme. A great deal of work was done in the first part of the committee year identifying a venue suited to small events and external to Melbourne for the 2014 5DI, however all (non-university) venues came with logistical costs that exceeded the savings created by holding the event outside of the CBD and so the team re-focused on bringing the event back into the CBD and university setting. We also, necessarily, moved the event back to the end of the current year between conference and Christmas but when the venue was available for public use.

5DI was scheduled to commence in November but, in the end, there were not sufficient applicants to proceed with this intensive, specialist event and it was very recently postponed.

There was no 5DI in 2013 due to low volunteer numbers.

HEARTSTALK

Our fabulous Hearts Talk magazine continued to be a must-read this year under the leadership of Cath Evans in what turned out to be her final year at the helm. I wanted to thank Cath, publicly, for her terrific contribution to RWA but remind everyone that the HeartsTalk team is one of RWA's biggest with contributors from all over the country doing their bit to bring such a comprehensive publication each month.

We're trialling something new as of September issue by splitting the Editor role into two parts--a publications editor and a content editor--so that we can take advantage of the very specific skill sets of two talented volunteers, Daniel de Lorne and Carla Caruso. They will bring their own personal flavour to Hearts Talk and carry on the great work done by their predecessors.

Thank you, Farewell and Welcome back

There a changing of the guard at RWA committee with myself (President) and secretary/Vice President, Anita Joy, stepping down after four years and events coordinator, Alli Sinclair, stepping down after two. We also farewelled Melissa Smith and Helene Young mid-term but were fortunate to be able to replace them quickly last year with Daniel deLorne and Helen Lacey.

Thank you to a brilliant, hard-working and *fearless* committee who indulged me when I rambled, who were a terrific brains-trust on a range of issues and who were such a pleasure to work with.

We have a strong group re-standing in their committee positions again: Diane Curran, Daniel de Lorne, Leisl Leighton, Helen Katsinis, Kerrie Ptolemy, Helen Lacey, Alison Leake and Imelda Evans plus fresh energy and focus in the shape of new nominees Imogene Nix, Renee Hammond and Sarah Brabazon.

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.

“So long, and thanks for all the fish...”

If there was one thing I can say as my last official statement as President it's that this writing gig has not been easy for many this past couple of years as the marketplace has changed and reader habits have evolved, and while publishing opportunities have *increased*, overall, our readers' discretionary dollar is being stretched ever-further and our dreams are taking as much of a beating as our royalty cheques.

But our writing journeys are as dynamic as our books should be. We all get high on that first-meet moment with this new, exciting career and throw ourselves pen-first into an exhilarating new romance full of possibilities. But, like our characters, our professional journey is not without conflict, it has peaks and troughs and complications and, maybe for some, things can look black-moment bleak sometimes.

For those people, *Trust that you will find your feet*. You will remember what you loved so much about this business we call fiction. Never forget that you are a writer, you are a bard. A spinner of tales and a weaver of magic. You create the stories that feed other people's dreams.

Stay the course, people, spread those eggs into multiple baskets, hunt down new income streams, get cleverer about what you write and surf the swell of public habit. And most of all...when that dreaded black moment comes, handle yourself with dignity and professionalism throughout and you will get your career happy ever after. Isn't that what we're all about?

Perhaps Neil Gaiman said it best: "Trust dreams. Trust your heart, and trust your story."

Thank you for the opportunity to have led this fine organisation for two years. I look forward to easing back into obscurity now but I will miss the camaraderie and the energy and all the ideas.

So in the immortal words of another of my writing heroes - 'So long...and thanks for all the fish.'

Nikki Logan
RWA President 2012/13

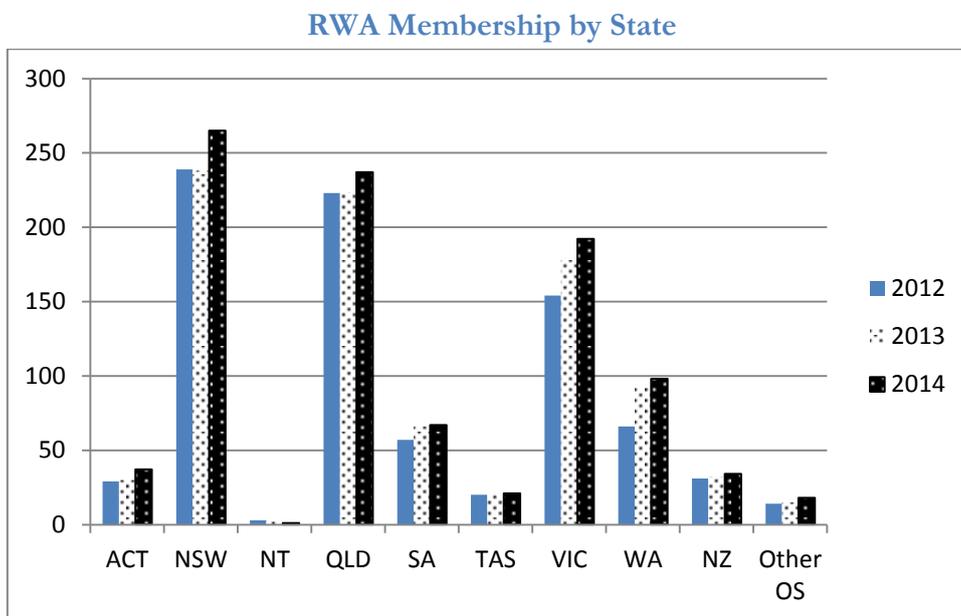
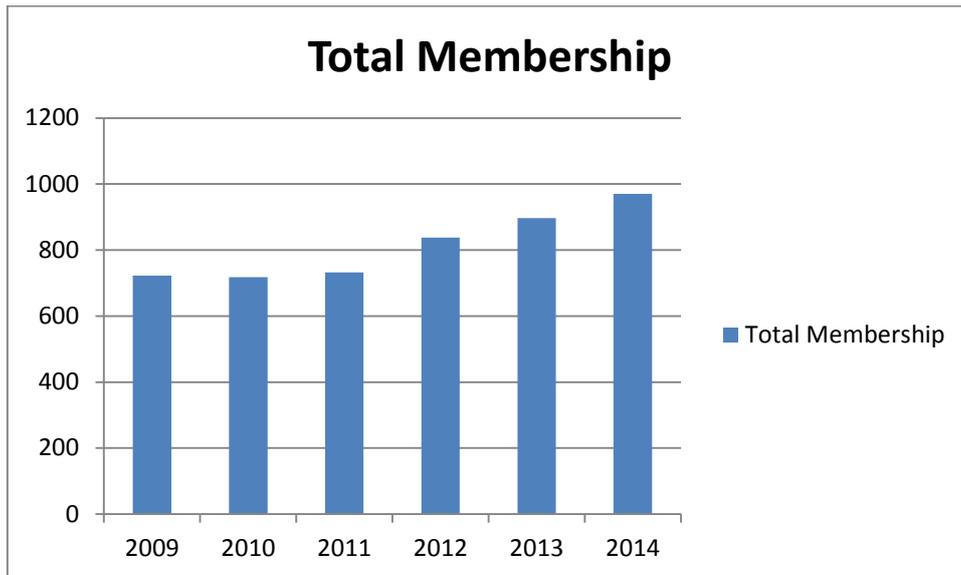
Portfolio Reports (Individual)

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Membership

Diane Curran

The membership of RWA continues to steadily increase, with a 8% growth in the last twelve months. This year we have seen substantial growth in membership in NSW, VIC and QLD. All states except NT have grown in membership numbers. New members are finding us through word of mouth, web search and the RWA blog.

Membership: Ordinary Members: 956 Honorary Members: 14 - Total Membership: 970



RWA Membership by State			
	2012	2013	2014
ACT	29	30	37
NSW	239	238	265
NT	3	2	1
QLD	223	223	237
SA	57	66	67
TAS	20	20	21
VIC	154	179	192
WA	66	92	98
NZ	31	32	34
Other OS	14	15	18
Totals	836	897	970

Enhancements in the Member Secretary portfolio

Over the last twelve months, we have moved to automated renewal emails sent to members at the beginning of the month prior to their membership falling due. We have also moved to automated reminders which are sent out on the 20th of the month to members who are yet to renew their membership.

By sending up to two notices, we are aiming to catch as many members as possible to ensure that their membership does not expire and they avoid paying an admin fee. However, it is important that members keep their email address up to date in the database and check their emails.

Our wonderful webmistress, Kerrie Ptolemy, has modified our membership database so that members can now add their websites and blogs, record their membership status under the new RWA classifications, opt out of the public register, along with being able to update their contact details or pseudonym at any time.

I also now track our renewal rates of members. It seems that many of our new members try us out for a year and then drift away. In 2013, our renewal rate of new members was 54%. This compares to a renewal rate of 89% for those members who joined in 2003 or earlier (our membership numbers were issued in 2003), and an overall renewal rate of 70% in membership.

Report prepared by

Diane Curran
Member Secretary

RWA Annual Report 2013-2014 - Treasurer

Alison Leake

As budgeted, RWA's operational costs during the 2013/14 financial year resulted in a net loss of \$7084.53. Assets currently sit at \$340,974.97.

Income:

Main sources of income were Membership subscriptions \$72,519.71, Fremantle Conference profit of \$4,200 & our contests \$13,162.12.

Interest earned on our working accounts and Term Deposits totalled \$5,281.44, down on previous years despite the healthy state of our finances, due to the current low interest rates being offered by financial institutions.

Expenses:

As always, the cost of collating, printing & posting out *Hearts Talk* is RWA's biggest single expense for the financial year totalling \$25,773.48. Expenses for the second volume of *Best of Hearts Talk* were \$6173. Expenses for the operations of the RWA Committee (including twice-yearly Strategy & Planning meetings and other networking costs) dropped to \$11,145. Advertising and Media expenses totalled \$6210, the main portion of this being the 2013 Ruby feature/advertisement in *New Idea*.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Bronwyn Turner, for her well-managed hand over to me upon her resignation from the committee last year and I now look forward to my second term as Treasurer for RWA.

Report prepared by

Alison Leake
RWA Treasurer

Copies of RWA's financial statements for 2013/2014 are available at the AGM or for download from the website afterward.

RWA Annual Report 2013-2014 - Contests

Leisl Leighton

It has been an exciting and sometimes turbulent year in contests this year.

We started the year off with a brand new competition, the Ripping Start, welcomed the Ruby and Ella into the contests fold, had many new managers taking over competitions, have included novellas in our competitions for the first time and have brought on a new Reader Judge Coordinator.

There has been, like last year, fewer entries in all competitions bar the Ella, Ruby and Emerald (Short), due mainly to the increase in members being published and therefore being ineligible for most contests. We have tried to address this issue and looked at ways to make more of our competitions accessible and useful to all of our members.

This year has been one of standardising – trying to bring the Entry forms and Score sheets, the Formatting Guidelines and the general running of the comps into line with each other to give a more professional look to our contests.

We also updated the language in the T&C's to encompass new definitions for members, to encompass the new terminology to distinguish different lengths of novels (Long and Short rather than ST and Category), to include novellas into some of our comps and to make contests more accessible for all members. We will continue to refine the language used in the T&C's to try to make them user-friendly but also encompass as many variables as possible so that confusion won't arise.

We have brought on a new Reader Judge Coordinator who is sorting through the reader judge databases from the different comps and actively sourcing new reader judges able to judge digitally. She is in charge of the Ruby, Ella and Emerald competition judge pools.

We clearly articulated what RWA means by 'commercially available' so members will know what competitions they can and can't enter.

Finally, we are going to be spreading out our competitions which, with the addition of the Ruby and Ella, seem to clump very much around a certain time of the year. This has become an issue because we are experiencing more difficulty getting judges to sign up for some contests due to competition exhaustion. The proposed new timetable is as follows:

September - Ripping Start
October - Selling Synopsis
November - Emerald
(early) January - Little Gems
(late) January - Ruby
February - First Kiss
March - Ella
April - VPA

- The **Ripping Start** Contest ran for the first time quite successfully. After feedback gained from entrants and judges, we are looking at the score sheet questions and revising to make it a great comp to hone those first important pages on.
- **Ruby** - Our previous manager stepped down due to ill health and a new manager took up the reins. During this period, we looked at how the Ruby (and Ella) had been run in the past and changed some of the procedures to utilise services already set up in the contests portfolio and help the managers run it more smoothly. We are also looking at going partially digital for 2015 rather than ask those with digital-only published novels to continue printing out copies and send them in. We are also going to split Ruby into two sections next year with two different managers because it's grown too big for one manager to organise.
- **Ella** - We had digital entries for the first time this year, trialling a PDF file format. It went quite successfully for a trial, but we are looking at other options for next year to help with downloading and emailing issues we came across this year.
- **Emerald** – We are making plans to condense it from two comps (long and short) to one and adding an *Emerald Pro* where Established authors can get feedback on WIP's in a genre other than the one they usually write in.

Report prepared by:

Leisl Leighton
Contests

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Marketing (Sponsorship)

Helen Katsinis

Sponsorship was moved to the Marketing Portfolio in November 2013 when Media was transferred to the President. There has been continual help from the previous sponsorship coordinator and the portfolio was in good shape at time of transfer.

For the first time, the sponsorship prospectus for RWA's conference had a *tender bid* system for the platinum position. This was to make it easier for sponsors to propose sponsorship packages that had the most meaning for them and for RWA to manage selection between bids (rather than operating on a first-in-best-dressed system). In hindsight, the tender bid system seems to have confused potential sponsors who prefer to know exactly what they get for each sponsorship level. This needs to be factored in when creating the prospectus for the 2015 Melbourne conference.

That change notwithstanding, 2014 will see a new platinum sponsor at RWA's conference—Penguin Books Australia/Destiny—as well as ongoing support from Harlequin/Escape, Random House, Pan Mac and ARRA.

A massive thank you to all our valued sponsors for the 2014 conference.

Platinum: Destiny Romance

Gold: Harlequin Australia

Bronze: Random House Australia

After-Party Sponsor: Escape Publishing

Conference Supporter: Pan MacMillan

Conference Supporter: Australian Romance Readers Association (ARRA)

Donations for the High Tea

Instead of having a sponsorship package for this, it was decided it would be a donation-based system, where supporters would be acknowledged on the day and recognised by their logo appearing on screen.

Supporters to date - Decadent Publishing (sticky notes and pens), Harlequin Australia (bags and USBs), HelzKat Designs (magnets).

Report prepared by:

Helen Katsinis

Sponsorships

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Marketing (Festivals)

Helen Katsinis

Festival fund for published authors

This fund was established in 2014 to assist RWA members with a book commercially available to attend (non-RWA) Australian Writers' Festivals. Its objective is to raise the profile of the authors and romance to the wider reading community.

Most major writing festivals for this year had their program line-up confirmed early in 2014 so the Festival Fund program may not gain traction until the later part of this year.

Festival Fund information will be reworded to reflect new classification post conference and will be available to members in the *Established* category, while members in the *Emerging* category (with a book commercially available) will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Festivals List

A List of 2014 Festivals has been placed on the RWA website. These opportunities have also been and will continue to be posted on Facebook.

Brisbane Writers' Festival

RWA co-presented blogger and author Sarah Wendell at the 2013 Brisbane Writers' Festival and launched Little Gems there. It was wonderful to see support for the most popular commercial genre at this notable event. No romance panels have been scheduled at the upcoming Sydney Writers' Festival.

Upcoming and past romance panels/appearances

After four years of negotiating, member Jennifer St George has a romance panel at the Byron Bay Writers Festival. It will feature Amy Andrews, Jennifer St George and comedienne Mandy Nolan.

Another panel is in development thanks to member Belinda Williams at the Sydney Book Expo.

Report prepared by:

Helen Katsinis & Jennifer St George
Marketing

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Marketing (ROMA)

Barbara Hannay

There have been thirteen entries so far for the ROMA for the 2013/14 period covering a wide range of media from all over the country.

The entries are:

1. 9th September 2013 – entered by Anna Campbell – Radio National interview at the Brisbane Writers' Festival
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/weekendarts/antony-funnell---romance-fiction/4915208>
2. 10th September 2013 – entered by Debbie Phillips – follow up article to the above interview on the ABC
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/weekendarts/romantic-fiction/4946572>
3. 1st October 2013 – entered by Jennifer St George – article in The West Australian about Rachael Johns 'Romance Feels US Embrace'.
<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/entertainment/a/19177927/rural-romance-feels-us-embrace/>
4. 1st October 2013 – entered by Nikki Logan – in the West Australian 'Pages Spread the Love' about how Aussie publishers are getting behind romance. (scanned copy)
5. 23rd January 2014 – entered by Cathleen Ross – article in the Mosman Daily – 'Love and Zombies'. (scanned copy)
6. 1st February 2014 – entered by Linda Brumley – Ballarat Courier 'A Never-ending Love Story' <http://www.thecourier.com.au/story/2060276/a-never-ending-love-story/?cs=62>
7. 3rd February 2014 – entered by Linda Tate – West Wyalong Advocate Valerie Parv, Australia Day Ambassador (attachment)
8. 5th February 2014 – entered by Linda Tate – The Witness -
<http://www.youngwitness.com.au/story/2043751/parv-off-to-bland-shire-for-aus-day-duties/?cs=1540>
9. 7th March 2014 – Marion Lennox 100 books interview – entered by Marion Lennox
<http://blogs.abc.net.au/victoria/2014/03/will-richard-feature-in-a-future-mills-boon-romance.html>
10. [Addicted to Love](#) by Toni Jordan (Cover story for *The Big Issue*, ed 438, August 2013) entered by Kat Mayo at Bookthingo
<http://www.thebigissue.org.au/blog/2013/08/19/cover-story--addicted-to-love/>
11. Dear columnists, romance fiction is not your bitch (*The Drum*, ABC online, April 2014) entered by Kat Mayo at Bookthingo
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-17/mayo-dear-columnists-romance-fiction-is-not-your-bitch/5396672>

12. Interview on 2SER with Gabby Maait, May 2014: – entered by Kat Mayo at Bookthingo <http://www.2ser.com/accessibility/item/8765-saturday-may-10th-storytellers> (from 23:08)
13. Gabby Mait's [Open letter to the Sydney Writers' Festival](#) (April 2014). entered by Kat Mayo at Bookthingo

Report prepared by:

Barbara Hannay
ROMA Coordinator 2013/14
29 May 2013

**Note: two further entries were received for the ROMA after this report was submitted bringing the total to 15. Entry dates have been altered for future years so that the season closes prior to reporting requirements.*

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Marketing (Libraries)

Helen Katsinis

The loss of the Library Coordinator last year has meant that there hasn't been a lot of operational action in Libraries for 2013/14. However, a focus has been placed on reviewing and refining the procedures of this area.

Review

A review of the library procedures and resources has been undertaken and continues to be developed as the year has progressed. Information has been gathered from the former Library Coordinator, from associations, websites, newsletters and been considered.

Libraries in Australia

Libraries are run differently in each state. Each has its own library network system and some are more centralised than others. Relationships are to be developed with each state to discuss the best way to disseminate information to public librarians.

ALIA - Australian Library and Information Association

ALIA publications reach librarians around Australia. Incite is the monthly magazine and ALIA Weekly is the weekly online newsletter. The 2014 committee has authorised \$3500 in advertising via ALIA's publications (2 ads in Incite and 8 ads in ALIA Weekly) to promote RWA, our reader-judged competitions, and our authors. This will also test their readership and see if they are a viable promotional source for the future.

Report prepared by:

Helen Katsinis
Libraries Coordinator 2013/14

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Professional Development

Helen Lacey

Five Day Intensive - 5DI

A great deal of work was done in the first part of the committee year identifying a venue suited to small events and external to Melbourne for the 2014 5DI, however all (non-university) venues came with logistical costs that exceeded the savings created by holding the event outside of the CBD and so the team re-focussed on bringing the event back into the CBD and university setting.

A final date and venue for 5DI 2014 were finalised on the 24th of March.

- Date: Saturday Nov 22nd to Friday 28th November
- Venue: University College Melbourne

Expression of interest letters were sent out to prospective mentors from the 27th of March. We have both a mentor and back-up mentor for a category romance pod. We have two authors interested in mentoring a single title pod. Many authors, while expressing an interest for future 5DIs were unable to commit to 5DI 2014. Like 5DI 2011, we may not find a back-up mentor for a single title pod.

Expression of interest letters were sent out to reader-judges on 31st March. We currently have 10 reader judges with expertise in a variety of genres.

The information about 5DI appeared in May's HeartTalk. However, it didn't appear on RWA's website until the 27th of May so the entry date was adjusted until midnight 29th June to give potential applicants a chance to polish their manuscripts. We've had several enquiries and one actual entry so far.

When all the applications are in they'll be recorded and the entries will be sent to reader-judges by the 2nd of July. Reader-judges are requested to return their scores no later than the 31st of July. Successful candidates will be selected and contacted by the 4th of August.

We have one volunteer for the "Logistics" team who will take care of all of the on-the-ground details. This is Lauren James who does have experience in event managements. She's even taking a week's leave to attend 5DI in the same capacity as Nicky Strickland did last time (timekeeper, troubleshooter, go-to-person etc). It would be great, though, if another volunteer could be found to assist her.

Report prepared by:

Michelle Douglas
5DI Admissions

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Conference (Fremantle)

Leah Ashton

Summary

Thanks to a fantastic, cohesive conference team, the 2013 Romance Writers of Australia Conference was a great success, far exceeding attendance estimates while offering an innovative, “must see” program.

Of primary concern to the team and RWA committee was that the first-time, west-coast venue could result in a drop in registrations compared to previous conferences. To minimise the risk to RWA, Exec Committee requested that the event be budgeted and negotiated with the hotel based on greatly reduced numbers (180).

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, Able Zidle and Laura Bradford) and also bringing innovative ideas to the conference to help attract members. Some of our innovations - such as adding a fifth (published) stream to the main Sat/Sun conference rather than have a separately charged and run day for published authors, and transforming the awards evening to a shorter, dessert only function - were aimed at minimising costs for interstate delegates. Others, such as removing the requirement to register for breakout workshops, were to streamline and simplify the event and create a relaxed tone.

Teaming with Curtin University to deliver the *Elizabeth Jolley Academic Conference* was also a new initiative designed to draw more and varied delegates to an RWA event.

The combination of these initiatives resulted in registration numbers far higher than originally forecast, with 320 delegates attending across the three days.

Pleasingly for RWA (who were eager to ensure that members all over the country could access an RWA conference equitably) the event attracted nearly one hundred WA delegates and 91 first-timers (from across the country). Statistics show we also had a whopping 70 non-members attend thanks in large part to our partner event with Curtin Uni. Because conferences are fully budgeted on member rates, these additional delegates at full rate helped to bring the event in on budget and with some profit.

To sell-out a West Coast event and bring one hundred Western Australian members in ‘from the wilderness’ is a truly amazing result and the team is incredibly proud that we were able to prove that a conference in Western Australia is not only possible – but also extremely successful.

Conference Team Portfolio Reports

Web site – Leah Ashton

- The romanceaustralia.com/freo/ address made promoting the website much easier.

- The minimal queries we received is a good indicator that the custom website was easy to use and comprehensive.
- The workshop program was published online rather than distributed in hard copy via *Hearts Talk*. This represented a cost saving, and appeared to be well received. It also provided us with more time to finalise the program (given HT deadlines).
- Similarly, online registration only (no paper) appeared to work very well.
- Improvements & streamlining to all online forms (registration, pitch, confirmation emails) had a huge impact on reducing the number of queries we received.

Communications – Leah Ashton

- I feel the combination of web site, Mad Mimi emails and Hearts Talk worked extremely well. My sense was that our delegates felt well informed, and we certainly received nowhere near the volume of enquiries we expected!
- The decision to not rely on a sole communication medium also worked well, with information released consistently and (close to) simultaneously
- We printed hard copy promotional “rack cards” (together with Curtin Uni, one side each) that were distributed at the Perth Writer’s Festival and various author talks locally.
- We also used the RWA Facebook page and Twitter.
- The program was printed in A5, full colour, booklet format and without workshop notes. This represented a good cost saving and was well received.

Budget – Nikki Logan

When a west-coast conference was conceived, RWA agreed to underwrite the event to offset any increased costs caused by (possible) lower attendance. The event was budgeted (and negotiated with the hotel) based on a conservative 180 delegates. Subsequent to that, the 2012 conference achieved a profit of around \$10K this was passed on to the Fremantle team to value-add their event (mostly the awards gala). In the end, fabulous support from eastern states members and, particularly, Western Australians was high enough to greatly exceeded the projections (320 overall, 285 for Sat/Sun) and the event created approx. \$150K in income leaving a balance profit of around \$4K in accumulated funds once all bills were paid. Thanks to profit from 2012, RWA’s agreed underwriting was not required which was very pleasing and validating for the Fremantle team.

Sponsorship – Nikki Logan

2013 conference sponsorship reached an all-time high of \$14,500 cash contribution plus the associated ‘in kind’ contribution of dozens of free books for delegates (total value around \$24,000). As always, the support of the publishing and related industries was extremely appreciated and added to the excitement of the event. The increased number of sponsors (10) created logistical challenges for the team so two additional volunteers were sourced to work on ‘delivery’ of the sponsor entitlements to ensure nothing was missed. For the most part this was a very successful model and sponsors were happy with the delivery of their entitlements. A big thanks to Sarah Brabazon and Jenny Schwartz for their efforts working closely with the sponsors.

Accessibility – Nikki Logan

For the first time, RWA's conference was conducted in accordance with the accessibility checklist which helped to ensure the event was accessible for those with a range of disabilities. The hotel venue was chosen for its accessibility and also for the size of the main ballroom which meant that those with size or mobility issues found the core rooms easy to negotiate. The accessible toilet and men's-room was at the entrance to the conference floor and two sets of toilets within the conference floor were converted into ladies-rooms to suit the majority female audience. General menu selection was made with the utmost consideration for the most common dietary needs and the hotel took it upon themselves to produce alternative meals for those with very specific dietary needs (lesson for next time, though, those unexpected meals were not well displayed or communicated to the delegates who needed them.) All rooms were furnished with amplification and large screen projection to aid those with hearing and vision impairments. Accessible accommodation was available on request.

Additionally, the Fremantle team took extra measures to ensure the event was financially accessible to those flying in from east by seeking extra sponsorship, and by keeping registration costs down by minimising expenditure in other areas, creating a profit-generating partner event to help offset cost, changing the dinner to a dessert-and-champagne function and negotiating hard with the hotel to cost-minimise.

Merchandise – Claire Boston

Merchandise was sourced early in the planning schedule which worked well as when things began to get busy all we needed to do was provide numbers. Both the bag (Enviro bag) and the mug (Keep Cup) were different from usual but seemed to have a good response from delegates. In 2013 the committee decided not to have a pen as the hotel was providing pens and put the extra money towards a different type of mug. In the end, RWA provided pens with their new logo/branding on it for each delegate.

Invited Guests – Claire Boston

We had 8 international VIPs: 4 editors, 1 agent and 4 authors. Each guest participated in a selection of panels, gave plenary speech, ran workshops and took pitches.

21 editors/agents were invited to take pitches and 9 accepted. One of our local publishers (Twelfth Planet Press) expressed interest in attending further RWA conferences.

Program – Rachael Johns

30 workshop sessions were offered to conference delegates – nine of these sessions were run by international VIP guests; two of our VIPS were part of workshops with other presenters; one workshop was given by an international author; one workshop was given by a non-RWA member and the rest were presented by members. For the first time, delegates were not required to nominate which sessions they would attend when they registered for conference and workshop notes were available to download online. Overall this worked well.

Pitching – Michelle Diener

The new form worked well, and the feedback was that it was simple to use and not confusing at all. For next year, I would suggest that the opening and end dates for the pitch registration be even more clear, and on multiple pages of the site.

Registrar – Jodie Morphett

Total Figures:

Conference Total	320
First Conference	91
RWA Members	252
Core Conference Delegates	285
ARRA Attendees	80
Elizabeth Jolley Conference	75
Kim Hudson Workshop	97
Gala Awards Evening	266 (incl 26 Guests)

Early Bird Payments

243 bookings were made prior to early-bird closing and 26 people took advantage of the split-payment option. Fremantle offered a (sponsored) early bird incentive prize valued at \$1000 and it was won by Jodie Rolleston (Kim Hudson workshop, two nights accomm with breakfast, dinner, airport transfers) - hard to gauge if this was a factor in the strong early bird bookings but it was a great incentive.

Cocktail Party – Helen Katsinis

Having the dedicated volunteer team for set up was amazing. They set up with little fuss and in great time. Feedback from sponsors and delegates was positive. Decorations were popular, Cap'n Jack was a hit.

Awards Gala – Carolyn Wren and Helen Katsinis

266 people attended the Awards Gala. Rather than a sit down dinner, the event was a champagne and chocolate evening. This was to make the event more affordable for delegates. The room was beautifully lit and decorated, and it certainly had all the glitz of any previous RWA awards night, despite the lack of a meal.

In hindsight, the format of the AG was so streamlined that we could have accommodated a couple of breaks to spread the night out more. Sponsors were happy that their after party event went on for longer, though. Feedback after the event tells us that delegates were not aware they could eat the desserts during the actual awards. This would need to be announced if this format was used again.

After-party: received really well. Music was popular. I believe this after-party idea should be continued. A DJ situation would be able to handle requests.

Volunteers – Neely Lyon

A team of approximately 40 volunteers made up of both delegates and friends/family of the committee were rostered across the weekend. It is strongly recommended that non-delegate volunteers do core tasks, such as staffing the pitch desk. Many delegates are happy to help, but they are best utilised during conference breaks as most do not want to miss any sessions

(understandably). The job of communicating/coordinating the volunteers was much bigger than expected, and it is best this is done centrally.

We offered a free plenary session/workshop to our non-delegate volunteers as a thankyou but only a handful took up the offer.

Bookshop – Jennie Jones

Having a dedicated bookshop liaison worked extremely well to minimise confusion and streamline communication. Both the conference bookshop (Co-op) and our booksigning partner, ARRA, were very happy with how books were sold. The bookstore offered to help address the issue relating to indie and electronic book sales by providing a display wall for promotion of e-books (poorly utilised) and (incredibly generously) by selling indie books with no margin for themselves.

Running the RWA Conference Bookshop was very successful from Co-op's point of view. The book sales covered all of their expenses (staffing the event and the time put into organising the books). They also got a real thrill from selling books to such enthusiastic buyers. Best-selling titles were reference and craft books (*Emotion Thesaurus*, *Virgin's Promise*, *Beyond Heaving Bosoms*, *Passionate Ink*)

Fundraising – Tracey Turner

Total raised \$2993 which is lower than past conference standards but came close to matching the funding that our charity receives from Govt in a year so they were very happy to have it. A large number of raffle prizes were donated by writing groups, authors and RWA members. There also was a range of prizes including books, electronic devices and writers swag plus two generous vouchers from the coop bookshop. Volunteers were invaluable in selling and folding tickets plus wrapping and presenting the prizes. Tickets were popular with most buying multiples of 3 and a number of generous people giving donations.

Elizabeth Jolley Conference – Leah Ashton

Seventy-seven people attended the Elizabeth Jolley Conference on Friday (64 paying, remainder VIPs, keynote speaker etc). Three concurrent streams were run in breakout rooms (each with its own theme), and 29 papers were presented. Promotion of this event within RWA was extremely successful, with approximately 70% of attendees being RWA members. While it would have been nice to have a stronger attendance from the academic community, the overall feedback for the event was positive, and there appears to be enthusiasm for a similar partner event in the future. Including EJC in our online registration system worked seamlessly and was minimal additional work.

Report prepared by:

Leah Ashton
2013 Conference Coordinator

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Events

Alli Sinclair

SYDNEY 2014 (by Shannon Curtis)

Venue

The Novotel Olympic Park

Accommodation

This is offered at the Novotel with the accommodation also being offered at nearby hotels (Ibis, Ibis Budget and the Pullman)

Professional Development Day

This is held on the Thursday prior to the core conference and covers a range of presentations and workshops, such as Media Boot Camp, Media Arts Lawyers, Accountants, and writers discussing different aspects of the industry.

Literacy High Tea

This is held on the Thursday afternoon prior to the core conference and is a networking event for librarians, booksellers, authors and readers with the view of raising money for the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation.

James Scott Bell Friday Craft Workshop

This one day workshop had phenomenal attendance with 170 delegates booking (at time of printing). James is best known for his books for writers, such *Plot & Structure*, and has written highly popular craft books for Writer's Digest Books, including: *Revision & Self-Publication*, *The Art of War for Writers* and *Conflict & Suspense*.

Core Conference

At the time of writing the core conference was 100% booked (320 out of 320 available places). Due to the unprecedented response, we have opened up an extra 20 spaces, to a total of 340 delegates. The weekend offers attendees the chance to attend workshops and panels by international presenters such as James Scott Bell, Keynote Cherry Adair, Guest Speakers Marie Force, Kate Byrne (Headline Publishing Group), Lucienne Diver (The Knight Agency), Julian Hewitt (Media Arts Lawyer) and Jim Azevedo (Smashwords). Also in attendance were editors and agents from Destiny Romance, Penguin, Harlequin (Australia and International), Escape Publishing, Random House, Pan Macmillan, Momentum, Harper Collins, HarperImpulse, Hachette, Decadent Publishing, Adsette Publishing Services, and Cameron's Management.

After Party

This is an event that follows on from the Awards Dinner, with Escape Publishing as its sponsor. This is a social dance event open to all attendees to the dinner, and was offered at no extra cost to the delegates.

Pitch Programme

With an outstanding array of visiting editors and agents, a comprehensive pitch opportunity to attendees of the Core Conference was offered. Participating publishers include Penguin/Destiny Romance, Harlequin (Australia and International), Escape Publishing, Headline Eternal, Random Romance, Pan Macmillan, Momentum Books, Harper Collins, HarperImpulse, Hachette and

Decadent Publishing. Participating agencies were both international and domestic, including The Knight Agency, Adsette Publishing Services and Cameron's Management.

Bookstore

At the time of printing, the bookstore provision was still being sourced. Due to feedback received from both booksellers and some members, we have considered alternative, innovative methods of bringing the bookstore element to the conference, and are currently in discussions with interested parties. There is some resistance as a result of the cost outlaid by the bookseller, and we are addressing these challenges in order to create a feasible model to offer book sales.

MELBOURNE 2015

At the time of printing the Melbourne team, led by Kathryn Ledson and Kate Belle, were busy selecting the venue and presenters. It is gearing up to be an unforgettable conference with venue and speaker details to be announced at the end of the Sydney 2014 conference.

ROADSHOW (by Helen Katsinis)

Last year, Adelaide was marked as the location of RWA's 2014 Roadshow. Around this time RWA met with the Director of the SA Writers Centre, and the possibility of a profit-share joint event was discussed. The SAWC agreed to undertake the admin side of the this event (media, promo, sponsorship and catering) and RWA committed to providing volunteer-power, speakers and liaison.

Roadshow was designed to offer a varied program that interested readers and writers at different stages of their careers.

The Event

Weekend Romance: A Fair to Remember was held at the SA Writers' Centre (Adelaide) on the 14-15th June 2014 as linked ticketed events (rather than a conference). It ran over two days including panels, workshops and guest speakers on the Saturday, and with two streams of workshop running on the Sunday. Stream A was an introductory-level all-day workshop, *So You Want To Write A Romance*, run by SA's own Trish Morey. Stream B was tailored for more advanced writers and consisted of four workshops - *Show, Don't Tell* with Elizabeth Rolls, *Point of View* with Amy T. Mathews, *The Author's Online Shuffle* with Helen Katsinis and *You, Your Writing and the Media* with Victoria Purman.

Special Guests Fiona McIntosh, Helene Young, Keri Arthur, Tricia Stringer, Trish Morey and Victoria Purman also spoke about their publication journey during the weekend.

Registration issues

The SAWC website was hacked just when registrations were due to open however, information could still be disseminated via their newsletter and delegates were asked to book via email or by phone.

Cost of event

- 1 day = \$130 SAWC and RWA members, \$170 non members
- 2 days = \$240 SAWC and RWA members, \$340 non members
- QUIZ NIGHT: \$20 per head

RWA - Speaker & Volunteer Liaison

Coordinator Helen Katsinis was responsible for gauging speaker interest and their level of participation; obtaining bios, pics, and blurbs; disseminating information to speakers and collecting and processing invoices. She also liaised with SAWC and coordinated the SAWC volunteer team. Rostering and coordinating these volunteers to meet the conditions set by SAWC (one day free for every four hours of volunteering) was time consumptive but ensured that the volunteers could maximise the opportunity.

Quiz Night

A Literary Quiz Night was organised for the SAWC to recoup their admin costs. Those attending the whole weekend had it included in their weekend registration but for others it was \$20 per head.

Call for donations

A call to members for donations went out in *Hearts Talk*, on loops and via newsletter. Donations were allocated either to the quiz night or as a door prize during Roadshow.

ONLINE EVENTS

CLAYTONS – (by Dana Scully)

Claytons saw 120 participants across the two days. Prior to the actual event we hosted two pre-chat trials to get delegates up and running with the tools and etiquette of the chat rooms. Kerrie Ptolemy kindly assisted with these events to help with any major issues. These were attended by about 50% of those registered. All presenters attended either the chat trials or private chat tutorials and were well prepared on the day.

Starting in August, emails were sent almost daily to delegates informing them of schedules, etiquette, prizes, writing challenges, home/prep-work, disaster plans, and more. These emails were all incorporated into our forum threads and our pre-event newsletter, as well. We also used social media this year, Twitter and Facebook, to keep delegates and RWA members at large informed and up-to-date.

The conference itself went off without a hitch thanks to the pre-planning and hard work of the committee members (Fiona Gregory, Imogene Nix, Cassandra Pennington/Samuels, Annie Newton/Lynch, Marilyn Forsyth, Roseanne Smiles, and Nikki Cousins) and our fantastic liaison, Alli Sinclair.

The technology had a few hiccoughs though. The chat rooms had a bit of lag and needed regular refreshing in order to keep up with the presentations. With the numbers

of delegates attending some sessions (see below), this was to be expected and was discussed/explained in a number of random emails, during chat trials, and also during the conference itself.

- **Alexandra Sokoloff**=80+/- attendees
- **Sue Grimshaw**=60+/- attendees
- **Zana Bell**=20+/- attendees
- **Mel Teshco**=40+/- attendees
- **Tracey O'Hara**=20+/- attendees
- **Valerie Parv**=70+/- attendees

Immediately following the conference, a voluntary and anonymous survey was mass emailed to delegates using Survey Monkey. We had roughly a 60% response rate, which is fairly high for a survey. The survey confirmed that delegates struggled with the chat room environment despite the pre-event chat trials and the detailed instructions. It also showed the impact of poor chat etiquette which caused disruptions in the flow of presentations for others. Lastly, there seemed to be some un-met expectation regarding the purpose of this (free) online event.

Lastly, following the event and in response to a forum discussion and a few questions during the conference, a mass email was sent discussing what RWA has to offer its members outside of The Claytons.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to coordinate this year's Claytons Conference. I learned a great deal about RWA, my writing, and coordinating, skills and experiences that I will be able to utilize in other facets of my life (as well as applying to my writing!).

Report prepared by:

Alli Sinclair
Events Coordinator 2013/14

RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Member Services

Daniel de Lorne

The Members Services portfolio grew a little in 2013/14 with the addition of the Published Author Liaison and ePublished Author Liaison coordinator role. The main focus of the portfolio over the past 12 months has been to investigate and implement ways to take as many of our services online and self-service, to reduce burden on volunteers and to provide a do-it-yourself service that can be quicker than waiting for responses from people. This is still a work in progress, however, we have made excellent strides.

The **Critique Partner** scheme continues to provide a good service for our members matching writer from Australia and NZ with like-minded people. The register is run by Rebecca Sampson, who maintains the files and database of the register, and Joanne Dannon, who provides assistance to the writers as well being a go-between for the writers on the scheme. My thanks to them both for their ongoing hard work and their following report:

The total of 161 members is up 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 having a need (31 new members and 17 cancellations).

Beginner/Intermediate

- We have 122 writers on the beginner/intermediate database.
- This year we had 29 requests for trials, 17 CP trials (6 are still ongoing) and 3 matches

Advanced

- We have 39 writers on the advanced database.
- This year we had 13 requests for trials and 8 CP trials (5 are still ongoing) and 2 matches

There have been ongoing delays and work associated with members not responding to emails and/or having changed email addresses without letting us know.

A big change this year was the US sister-scheme finished at the end of January as they no longer had enough activity to keep it viable. Most of their activity has been from our scheme.

Rebecca and Joanne have both had a lot of positive feedback on the scheme, personally and on the RWA Facebook 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 Nas Dean for her proactive work in this role.

Group Grants had a bumper year with seven applications received for the first round of funding (February 2014) with \$3000 awarded to five groups to run workshops, retreats and talks to help further their careers. Each round of funding is usually only \$1500, however, there were no funds awarded during the second round in June 2013 so money rolled over into February. A second round of funding opened in June 2014, with one grant being awarded after the end of the 2013/14 financial year. My thanks to Mary Warwick for taking over the running of the Group Grants program.

Group Liaison Clare Jude received 20 enquiries from members seeking groups during the year, with a peak around the post conference period. As in previous years, placing members into groups can prove challenging. Many groups are full and therefore closed to new members, and where an opening can be found, the addition of a new member doesn't always work with the existing group dynamics.

On a positive note, there have been two new groups set up, one in Central Victoria and one overseas. Going forward, our challenge is to find ways to help members find the group support they need. This will include encouraging existing groups to expand or spin off, and providing online forums for members to meet and potentially start their own groups.

The **New Members Liaison** service continues to be a useful but time-intensive program to manage. Carolyn Wren has been doing an excellent job with it to date, getting in contact with 207 new members, with most questions being about contest details and entry forms. We are in the process of making changes to the service's operation, which should come into effect early in the new financial year. This includes new welcome documentation to be sent immediately to new members and a follow-up email from the NML. This will reduce the amount of effort required by the NML, while still providing members with support. In addition, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been added to the website to assist members (and potential members) with their enquiries. New members are also encouraged to use the new members section of the RWA forum where advisors are on-hand to answer questions.

Published Author Liaison and ePublished Author Liaison coordinator positions were merged early in the financial year after previous coordinators Robyn Grady and Rhian Cahill stepped down from their respective roles. Shona Husk took over both positions and continues to moderate the loops. With the new member classifications coming into effect after the AGM, the PAL and ePAL loops may undergo some changes.

The **Members' Assistance Fund** received a record number of applications this financial year, due in part to a higher profile/awareness. The MAF helps members with compelling circumstances to attend RWA events that they, otherwise, would not have been able to access so that their writing and career objectives don't have to be sidelined.

There was one round of funding this year, which closed on 14 April. This year, a total of \$4,000 was available for distribution through the MAF, comprising \$3,000 from RWA funds and \$1,000 from member contributions. Applications were received from 10 members, a combination of established, emerging and aspiring writers, both long-term members and recently joined. All requested assistance to attend the Romance Rocks! Conference. The selection panel had a

particularly difficult task, but decided to distribute the \$4,000 between four members. My thanks to Bronwyn Turner for coordinating this program.

Report prepared by:

Daniel deLorne
Member Services Coordinator 2013/14

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Web Services

Kerrie Ptolemy

Following the successful launch of the new look website at the last conference, much of the web services work this year has been behind the scenes.

The membership database has been improved by adding yet more fields to allow better collection of data, including making it ready to work with the new membership structure.

Membership renewal notices and reminders have been automated and set up to run automatically on a schedule. This takes much of the manual handling from the renewal process.

The RWA forum and chat room worked well with events like 50Kin30days and Claytons. Work has also been done in installing and re-skinning Moodle ready for OWL workshops this year.

Work has continued on a new Content management system (CMS) to allow authorised people to update the pages relevant to their areas.

Report prepared by:

Kerrie Ptolemy

RWA Webmistress

webmistress@romanceaustralia.com

RWA Annual Report 2012/13 - Social Media

Imelda Evans

RWA Blog

This year marks some significant milestones for RWA's social media presence.

In the five years since Diane Curran established our blog, we have published nearly 1200 blog posts, which in turn have averaged over 3,500 views per month. The blog has provided a perfect venue to celebrate and promote our competitions, new releases, conferences, events, special guests, RWA news and most of all, our members.

As with all of our services, the blog relies on the generosity of many volunteers. This year has seen some big changes in our volunteer team.

After several years of publishing two (or more) Blog Bites columns every month, Kerri Williams retired from that role, with our most sincere thanks. For several months, we were without a Blog Bites co-ordinator, but have recently welcomed new member and volunteer Thea George to the team, so this short and sweet catch-up column will soon be back to promote our members.

We are very pleased too, to welcome Keziah Hill to the Day in the Writing Life column, which showcases our new and lesser-known members. We were without this column for nearly a year after Efthalia Pegios stepped down from the blog and we are thrilled to have it back.

Last, but certainly not least, among our new team members are Laura Boon, who has joined us to post the monthly round-up of members' new releases and Gabrielle Battistel, who is posting a regular column of tips and tricks for authors creating book promotion videos.

While all this baton-passing has gone on in the background, we have relied on our continuing team members, Sara Belle, Ainslie Paton, Juanita Kees and Eleni Konstantine to maintain our presence in the blogosphere.

In the absence of Blog Bites and Day in the Writing Life, Sara Belle has been flying the flag for our member promotion by posting nearly 50 Author Spotlights in the last year.

Ainslie has continued to provide the popular Hearts Talk Wrap column, as well as occasional news columns.

Juanita Kees is our blog editor and provides our Cruisin' and Events columns every week, keeping our readers up to date with RWA official and member news. She has been an invaluable constant through the changes of the last twelve months.

Eleni stepped down from our New Releases column during the year, but was back to manage the extremely popular cover contest and promote the South Australian Road Show. She has been and continues to be a great contributor to the RWA blog.

Twitter, Facebook and Google+

July also marks the fifth anniversary of RWA being on Twitter and the third birthday for our Facebook page.

Our presence in these venues continues to grow. At last count, we had nearly 2000 Twitter followers, 834 'likes' on our official Facebook page and nearly 1400 members on our public Facebook group.

Our Twitter account mostly provides promotion for our blog posts and official news, but it really comes into its own at conference time, when we tweet updates for the members at home, especially the competition results from the award dinner. On at least one occasion, the official RWA conference hashtag has been a trending topic on Twitter. While our official account didn't make that happen on its own, it's an important part of the very active romance community on Twitter and helps to keep RWA a part of that community.

Both our Facebook page and group have expanded massively over the last year, which helps us to promote our members and for members to keep in touch with each other while on Facebook. Unfortunately, the open group has now become so large that monitoring and managing posts has become a drain on volunteer time. Now that we have the option of hosting conversation on our official Facebook page, we intend to invite the group members to the official page and shut down the group. This is not done lightly, but as a considered measure to manage volunteer load while providing the best promotion and networking opportunities for members.

We maintain a presence on Google+, mainly through promoting our blog posts there, so RWA news can be easily shared by our members who are on Google+. In the coming year we hope to be able to expand our circles on Google+ to more accurately represent our membership.

Goodreads

Another quiet-achieving volunteer of long standing, Louise Ousby, has continued to add our members' books to the RWA Goodreads account each month this year. This year we will be encouraging members to 'friend' the RWA account, and promote it to the Goodreads community, to increase the coverage it provides to members' new releases.

Loops

Although other social media outlets have taken some of the traffic away from our e-loops, they continue to provide a useful venue for member-only, writer-specific conversations that are less appropriate on public forums. Our active e-loops include RomAus, for the whole membership, the Historical loop (hosted on Google+ and very popular with our historical-writing members), the Paranormal loop, which has spawned a group blog and the Erotic group, which was instrumental in creating the Hot Down Under short series, subsequently published by Momentum.

New Look

This year, all our social media outlets have been updated with our new logo and we will continue to evaluate our 'look' so as to present a consistent, professional RWA image to our members' fans and the general public.

Report prepared by:

Imelda Evans
Social Media Coordinator 2013/14

RWA Annual Report 2013/14 - Hearts Talk

Catherine Evans

The *Hearts Talk* Team has 35 members who work together to deliver each issue. 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: Phillipa Fioretti, Lis Hoorweg, and Helen Katsinis. Thanks for the many contributions you made to *Hearts Talk*. New on board are: Leisl Leighton, Cathy Lindsay, Bec McMaster and Patsy Poppenbeek.

Along with the new RWA logo came a new layout for Hearts Talk, which has been used since September 2013. The new layout is in keeping with the logo, using the same fonts and incorporating the logo into the design.

The March 2014 saw the 250th edition of *Hearts Talk* and two previous editors spoke of the evolution of the newsletter.

Over the year we've interviewed authors and had articles on endings, active and passive voice, backstory, outlining, Tai Chi and writing, chapter summaries, characters, writing fast, Facebook parties, pacing, being a conscious writer, the writing x factor, external conflict, new experiences, competitive streaks, motivation, using RWA, motifs, subplots, keeping the faith, the alpha male, blogging tips, controlling your research, the McGuffin, keeping romance real, blurbs, finding your niche. Many thanks to all contributors.

Regular features each month include committee corner, A Writer's Life, Scrivener Tips, The Writing Journey with..., as well as contest news and results, events, markets and publishing news, good news and new releases. Thanks to all who produce columns every month without fail.

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

Team Members

Rachel Bailey, Rhyll Biest, Rachael Blair, Suzanne Brandyn, Frances Burke, Rhian Cahill, Carol Challis, Pam Collings, Beverley Eikli, Catherine Evans, Anne Gracie, Vonnie Hughes, Bronwyn Jameson, Clare Karacsonyi, Helen Katsinis, Joan Kilby, Sami Lee, Leisl Leighton, Marion Lennox, Cathy Lindsay, Sarah Mayberry, Bec McMaster, Jodie Morphett, Ainslie Paton, Nicole Pfeiffer, Christina Phillips, Patsy Poppenbeek, Ingrid Rickersey, Bec Sampson, Bronwyn Stuart, Serena Tatti, Mel Teshco, Janette Whitehead, Kate Wigseller, Michelle Wood, Malvina Yock

Report prepared by:

Catherine Evans
HT Editor