

**Subject:** July Newsletter

The temperatures continue to soar into the triple digits and that's just the releases coming out from our talented chapter! RWA Nationals are right around the corner and the year is half over! Check your goals!

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*Founded March 1983*

*July 2013*

*Chapter 33, Region 5*

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## **Letter from the President**

### **Halfway there!**

Hard to believe we've passed the halfway mark on 2013. I, for one, am glad to see the year progressing at a clip. I'm ready to hand the reins of NT to Clover and focus solely on the business of writing. It's been a difficult month or two as I try to make sense of the changes the national board has made and how it will affect our chapter. Other chapters are having the same issues and discussion at the national level will continue.

Meanwhile, our writing lives continue to prosper. I'm always excited to see great news, pop up on the loop! We are a prolific group and every success is another stepping stone on our collective road to publication.

In the last few months, I've been excited about learning. I've met some wonderful writers online through RWA's PAN loop, discovering a group of talented women anxious to share

their knowledge and in turn, learn something themselves. Romance writers are the best kind of friends, willing to support each other in the personal and business aspects of a writer's life.

One of those writers is C.J. Ellison. She's been spearheading a facebook campaign to promote romance writers and teaching us ways to enlarge our readership. (Shh-she's agreed to speak at our conference in March!)

And speaking of next year, we're in need of a few volunteers for the conference committee. If you're interested in participating, contact Lara or anyone on the board and we'll sign you up for a great experience!

-Michelle Welsh

***Congratulations to Kim Quinton for her first book sale!!***

***She sold Her Wish Before Christmas to Decadent Publishing!***

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June 15, 2013

## **BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, June 15, 2013 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President was present. In the absence of the Secretary, Marsha R. West recorded minutes. The meeting was called to order at 10:59 a.m. The minutes for the May meeting were approved as printed in the June newsletter.

### **OFFICER REPORTS:**

#### **President: Michelle Welsh reported:**

- Reminded members who are not attending the RWA annual conference to mail their voting proxies to Clover Autrey.

**President-Elect: Clover Autrey was absent.**

**Secretary: Nancy Connally was absent.**

**Treasurer: Angi Morgan reported:**

- The Treasurer's report will be filed for audit.

**Program Director: Lara Lacombe reported:**

- The July meeting will be July 13, one week earlier than usual due to the RWA annual conference.

- The Texas Two Step will be held the last weekend in March, 2014.

Cherry Adair will conduct one-on-one plot doctoring in small groups.

C.J. Ellison will conduct workshops with beginning Facebook users and experienced Facebook users.

Amy Atwell will focus on all other social media platforms.

Plans are for writers Linda Castillo and Sophie Jordan to also attend, as well as local authors focusing on a variety of topics.

**Membership Director: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- The chapter has 72 members and three visitors.

**Communications Director: In the absence of Heather Long, Michelle Welsh reported:**

- Encouraged members to submit articles for the newsletter.

**Website Director: No report.**

**COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:**

**PAN Liaison: D'Ann Burrow was absent.**

**PRO Liaison: Jeanne Guzman was absent.**

**Carolyn Contest: Michelle Welsh reported:**

- Jen FitzGerald will chair the Carolyn Contest committee.
- Asked members to look for readers to be judges.

**Hospitality: Sidney Bristol: no report.**

**Audio Librarian: D'Ann Burrow was absent.**

**Writing Incentives: Chrissy Szarek reported:**

- Most written pages: Suzie Sheehey. Most edited pages: Sidney Bristol.

**Unfinished Business: None**

**New Business: None**

Next Business Meeting: 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 13, 2013 at La Hacienda. The meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

Submitted electronically by Nancy Connally

Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Most Pages Written

- Sidney Bristol - 310
- Suzan Butler - 166
- Carolyn Williamson - 152
- Chrissy Szarek - 141
- Susie Sheehey - 85

## Most Pages Edited

- Susie Sheehey - 798
- Angi Morgan - 634
- Sidney Bristol - 537
- Suzan Butler - 439
- Susan Welch - 400

# Choosing the Right Writer's Conference

by Chrissy Szarek and Susie Sheehey

So you want to attend a writers' conference? First time? Even BETTER!

There are so many great ones out there. Before you make any decisions, make sure you do your research, talk to others that have gone; listen to what they might have to say.

Most conferences have their agenda listed with plenty of time to review it beforehand. Read over it carefully so you can plan your conference experience.

**What do you want to accomplish?** This is important to decide, because if you're there just to socialize, you're not maximizing the resources writers' conferences offer. Of course, there's nothing wrong with meeting other authors, but it probably wouldn't be beneficial if this is your main attendance goal.

Authors attend conferences for many reasons, but here are a few main benefits that draw people.

**\*Pitching:** This is a fantastic opportunity that is rather unique to writers' conferences. Personal, face-to-face contact with editors and agents who *want* to give you a shot. Believe it or not, they attend conferences for some of the same reasons authors do, but the positive thing here is these particular editors and agents make time because they are actively seeking quality work. No waiting on that pesky email.

Sometimes these are what we would consider *big deal* editors from the coveted New York Houses that you don't get into without an agent. This is a major benefit of a conference. On the same token, agents are not always easy to gain. Speaking to one face to face, whether from a big agency or not is a great opportunity. You can make an impression so they remember you, even if your current project isn't for them.

This alone can be a great reason to attend a conference. But make sure you research well. Some conferences charge extra for this perk, and some don't.

If you're a conference virgin, even the thought could have you shaking in your boots, but don't. Editors and agents are people, too. They enjoy talking to you. Just think of it like this: You can practice your pitch all you want, but if it's not natural, it can lose appeal even if your words are awesome. So speak to an editor or agent as if you're telling your best friend about your book. No one knows the book better than you do.

Don't let nerves make you miss out on this conference-unique opportunity.

**\*Workshops:** Most conferences have a variety of sessions that cover everything from craft to marketing. What the conferences offer can also be a deciding factor in which conference you choose. No matter what stage you're at in your career, whether you're pre-published or have several books out there, you never stop learning as an author. The more you write, the better you get.

So, look at the agenda (most, if not all, will have it available beforehand) and see which would benefit you. Workshops can be a great reason to attend a conference.

**\*Book Signings:** A perk of many a conference is a book signing that's open to the public. Hopefully this won't be your *only* reason for attending a conference, but it can be a nice experience as well. You can get your name and your book(s) out to other authors as well as the general public.

If you are going to take part in a signing at a conference, ask questions. Will they have a sponsor? Will you have to be your own cashier for the books you sell? Will sales benefit a charity? (This is very common at conference book signings) and research what turnout they usually have, if the conference is annual so you can plan the number of books and swag you need to bring.

**\*Networking:** Another awesome reason for attending a conference! Read the brochure/agenda to see what headliners will be at the conference of your choice. Then, make it a point to speak to these people. Yes, you really can talk to *famous* authors! Just like editors and agents, they're people, too! You never know what kind of friends you could make—for life.

Let your inner social butterfly can come out and shine! It pays to talk to people. Writing, like any other industry can depend on *who* you know. So make some contacts! Get business cards and keep them handy.

Other authors, editors, agents, you never know who can be around the corner, at a meal, even hanging out in the lobby at the conference. Make use of free time by being observant. Read name badges. Don't be afraid to ask other authors what they write. And remember, when someone asks what *you* write—they really *do* want to know.

You could end up with a fantastic critique partner or some awesome new reads.

Other factors to consider in choosing which writer's conferences to attend are:

**\*Genre Specific:** Make sure you pick a conference that includes the genre in which you write. If your stories are mainly thriller or science fiction, then attending a romance based conference won't be as helpful. There are plenty of conferences that are more specific to a particular genre that gears many of their workshops and key speakers to that genre. Pay close attention to those. But of course don't completely disregard the broader conferences like the Writer's Digest Conference (<http://www.writersdigestconference.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=61986&>), where many big editors and agents always attend looking for new talent to add to their lineup.

**\*Budget:** How much can you spend in a given year on these conferences? Between registration fees, airfare, hotels, food, books, contests, and other miscellaneous items, the endeavor can get expensive. The best conferences are those that do not charge extra for pitch sessions, specific workshops or even parking. Make sure you choose one that has all of those included (unless you don't plan to pitch your manuscript). Another tip is to choose conferences that are geographically close, saving you the cost of airfare and/or hotel. Or if you have several friends all attending, split the costs by sharing a hotel room and make a road trip out of it. Most conferences also offer an 'early-bird' rate, so book early if you can. Some conferences also give out 'scholarships' to help ease the cost to a few individuals who present a financial or business need.

**\*Workshops:** Make sure you review the list of workshops presented, and who is presenting them. The best conferences are packed with exceptional workshops on a variety of topics, on improving craft, managing your business, and industry trends. Workshops that will be relevant to where you are in your career. You shouldn't have any 'free' blocks in your schedule. There should be so many interesting classes you just *have* to attend, how can you possibly choose between them. Research the presenters as well: are they experienced in what they're presenting? Have they given it the presentation before and have others found it helpful?

**\*Attendings Agents/Editors/Authors:** If you're pitching a novel or just want to meet the experts in the industry, make sure the ones you're really interested in plan on attending. Conferences will always list the names of presenting authors, agents and editors on their websites in advance, especially those that will accept pitches. They often include the kinds of things the experts are actively looking for. So research the editors and agents attending and see if they cover your topic/genre. If you're spending this much money, make sure it's worth your while. [www.querytracker.net](http://www.querytracker.net)

### Conference Etiquette

- Dress appropriately. No one is asking you to wear an uncomfortable suit or dress or three-inch heels for an entire day of workshops, presentations and pitch sessions. But be professional. Don't show up in ratty jeans, tank top and flip flops.
- Don't stalk agents/editors in the bathroom or just before they present. They are clearly focused on other things and they won't give you their full attention. And it'll annoy the hell out of them, and that's not the kind of impression you want to leave.
- Networking is a must, but monopolizing conversations with constant reminders of what you're story is about is a turnoff. Give others a chance to talk, and LISTEN.

### What to Bring

- Business cards with your email address and contact info [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com)
- Notepad or Notebook and a good pen
- Synopsis/Query Letter <http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2010/08/how-to-write-query-letter.html>
- A prepped 1-line 'elevator pitch' of your story. <http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2010/05/how-to-write-one-sentence-pitch.html>
- A small messenger bag to carry the 'goodies' you'll get
- Cash- for buying books, the cash bar, raffles, tips for housekeeping
- Light Jacket/Sweater- you never know how powerful the air conditioner will be
- Extra Luggage Bag- to cart home the extra books and stuff you'll get (if you're flying, and if you don't leave extra space in your original bag)
- Snacks- if you're staying at the hotel overnight, do you really want to pay hotel prices for a bag of chips or granola bars?

### What to Leave

Laptop (leave it in the hotel room)

A copy of your full manuscript. If agents ask for it, they all prefer email. (Why would you want to cart around that extra weight, anyway?)

Shy or Wallflower Tendencies- this will kill your experience at conferences, and the whole point is to

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## **Print, eBook, Audio Book**

by Terry Spear

When I first started out with a small print publisher, that's what she did—print only. Then as eBooks took off (I had been with some eBook publishers only also—no print), she realized that eBooks sold a lot more.

So she added eBooks to the line. Then she started doing audiobooks also.

I received a sweet, disgruntled FB fan message to all authors, that if you have books in eBooks, great, but please, please make them available to print book readers also. She asked that I share that message with authors. And so, I am.

I've published print books for some of the more popular eBooks, and they're doing really well. But I don't do it on all titles because some sell much more slowly. It's true that some books will sell for all titles, even if it's just a few. And we make readers happy and that's most important.

I have high-speed Internet that is a misnomer. It's slow speed Internet but I'm paying for high speed. So it takes me forever to get a print version ready. And I have about 29 indie books, 12 of which are already in print.

They don't cost you anything if: you already have a cover for your eBook that you can use for your print book. If you're using stock photos, be sure you get either large or X-large, or the picture is too small for print. If you're buying a cover photo, be sure you're paying for a version that can be used for print also. If the cover artist says this is for eBook only, then you can't use it for print.

Most of the stock photo sites allow you to use the picture for covers without paying a higher fee. If you're selling clothes, mouse pads, etc, using that photo, you'll have to get special licensing.

Just read the copyright restrictions.

If you do print (and I use Create Space), you'll be asked if you want to use a free ISBN, or pay for one. And they give you options.

If you decide to do print, be sure to send a pdf/or whatever they allow at the US govt copyright site, first!!! Once you've paid for it and sent your file to them, and it's received, you are good to go. Don't put your book into print until you've done this. Otherwise, if you go to copyright it afterward, you'll have to send two copies of your print book to them. And that adds to your cost—buying the books and shipping them.

And yes, I've made all the mistakes on these already!!!! Too small pictures for print, publishing print books before copyright. Yes. :) So I don't want you to have to make my mistakes. They cost money!

You can use the Create Space formatted book to format your own. You can have a copy sent to you afterward to proof. And that doesn't cost very much for the book. Or you can do everything online at no cost.

And then it's available and your readers love you.

But also, audiobooks are a great way to expand your book sales. I've used both ACX and Voices. ACX is easier as far as once you've found your narrator, the book is narrated, you pay the narrator, and it's reviewed, then put up for sale, you're good to go. With Voices, I found a really good narrator, but we had the hassle of setting the files up in the format ACX could use. You have to pay the money into an escrow account up front. You can do 50/50 with ACX and no money down also. With Voices, you then have to upload the files yourself to ACX to make it available. What I liked about Voices is I had a ton of auditions to choose from.

What I've done with ACX is put in the search parameters for a particular book. Female, YA, no accent... then I click on the names and listen to their sample auditions. (For me with slow speed Internet, it takes forever to load a sample to listen to. For everyone else, easy.) Then, I send a message to the narrator saying: I loved your sample of Name of Book and would love to hear you audition for Name of My Book). You don't give a link. They can search for title, then audition for it. Most often, they are thrilled to be asked. :) I've had some awesome narrators I picked up that way. Don't just use anyone. Make sure you LOVE their voice for the project. I've had three auditions for The Shadow Elf—not requested, but not happy with any of them. One, the girl and boy sound way too old. Like adults. So I'll have to go on another search for narrators for that project. :)

I am doing my series books in one narrator's voice, once I find one I like.

You do have to redo your cover to make it 2400x2400 square, rather than rectangular like you would with print or eBooks. You can't squash them to make them fit this. Well, you can, but they won't look as good and they could be rejected by ACX. You want your best cover, so you'll want to make it square. And again, you'll need the larger picture for this. If you only have a small 1200x1600 to begin with, you won't be able to use it for audiobook.

The benefits of print is that when the book is available, it'll be a higher dollar price than your eBook title, and Amazon will automatically show what a savings you're making with an eBook. Psychologically, it makes an impact. The more versions you have of the book, the better because some only will read one or another. Some will get all versions!

So just a word to authors who are writing for epubshers who don't put your books in print (like some I was with) and for indie published authors, some of our fans still want print. And some are getting excited about our audiobooks too.

*Bestselling and award-winning author Terry Spear has written a couple of dozen paranormal romance novels and two medieval Highland historical romances. Her first werewolf romance, Heart of the Wolf, was named a 2008 Publishers Weekly's Best Book of the Year, and her subsequent titles have garnered high praise and hit the USA Today bestseller list. A retired officer of the U.S. Army Reserves, Terry lives in Crawford, Texas, where she is working on her next werewolf romance and continuing her new series about shapeshifting jaguars. For more information, please visit [www.terryspear.com](http://www.terryspear.com), or follow her on Twitter, @TerrySpear. She is also on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/terry.spear>.*

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## **"Rules" from an Animator Turned Romance**

# Writer

By Jacqui Nelson

## WHAT ARE THE RULES?

As a writer I keep hearing about rules. Write something people will want to read. Write what you love. Write every day. Write quick, edit slow. Rules are everywhere—in life, art, business and every occupation on the planet.

Before my creativity was consumed by writing, one of my day jobs was as an animator for TV shows and electronic games. I've always loved watching movies. Animated movies held particular interest because of their expressive format. For me, they were like a painting coming alive on the screen. I was captivated. I wanted to be involved in creating something that could induce that deep a reaction.

But, yes, there are rules in animation as well!

There are 12 basic principles of animation—according to Walt Disney Studios. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12\\_basic\\_principles\\_of\\_animation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12_basic_principles_of_animation)

There are 22 story basics—according to one Pixar artist. <http://www.pixartouchbook.com/blog/2011/5/15/pixar-story-rules-one-version.html>

There appear to be as many rules as there are words to describe them. We call them principles, basics, tips, suggestions, and (according to Captain Hector Barbossa) guidelines.

So, as a Writer Who Once was an Animator, What is My Suggestion?

Many of my insights about writing have come from being an animator, but which one do I use the most? Visualize sections of your story until they play out like a movie in your head...then get up and act it out.

Yes, I'm suggesting you get out of your writing chair and act out your

story! Play the part of your character. What do they feel? What do they decide? What do they do? Then go back to your computer, or paper and pen, and fill the blank page with your discoveries.

Acting out an animation is something an animator does often. And, yes, this can be an embarrassing thing to do in a studio full of your co-workers! But we are willing to make sacrifices for our craft, right? Hopefully, wherever you write is a little more private—as is my current writing desk. If not, there is always the sanctuary of the bathroom. I'd often go to the ladies' room to act out an animation in private.

How About Some Examples?

If I'm sharing examples, I might as well link them to the most widely recognizable animation project I worked on—the Harry Potter, Goblet of Fire game.

Can't think of a walk for Harry, Hermione, or Ron (or your character)? Wanting a walk that matches your character's unique personality? A walk that sets your character apart from the others? Get up and act it out. Walk around. Is your stride confident or meek? Do you shuffle or strut or scurry or limp? Do you huff and puff as you go uphill, or do you almost tumble over as you hurry down?

Can't think of a hand gesture for Harry, Hermione, or Ron (or your character)? Get up and act it out. Are you having a conversation with someone? People talk with their hands. How do your hands move or interact with the rest of your body as you pretend you are facing the other character and as you (gasp) speak your dialogue aloud? Your family may wonder why they hear voices coming from the bathroom whenever you're in there. Tell them it's an extension of singing in the shower.

Can't think of a facial expression for Harry, Hermione, or Ron (or your character)? Get up and act it out. Well, actually you can do this one sitting down. We animators always had little mirrors on our desks for this purpose. Or, once again, head to the bathroom. Look in the mirror and pretend you are your character. Are they mad or sad or happy? Remember a time when you were mad or sad or happy. Analyze what your

face does.

Can't think of an idle for Harry, Hermione, or Ron (or your character)? Meaning what does a character do when they are doing nothing at all? This is the dreaded idle cycle in electronic games. And it's a biggie. Sometimes a character's stillness says more about them than their biggest, boldest moves. Once again, get up and act it out. Try to think small. Are you relaxed, tired or trying to hide something? Do you feel a twitch or tremor in a certain part of your body? Do you fidget or shift your weight? Are your eyes the only part of your body that moves?

Want to Take My Suggestion to the Next Level?

Why not try this for all of your characters—your hero, heroine, villain and secondary characters? You don't have to go overboard. One unique, descriptive action can speak volumes.

Quite often I've found I can act out my story while sitting in my chair. But I've also found that the physical act of getting up puts me the mood to use my whole body (inside and out) to figure out what's going on with my characters. It makes me dig deep.

Being a writer or an animator is a bit like playing God. We take nothing (a blank piece of paper or a blank computer screen) and create something that comes alive and elicits an emotional response. Or at least, that was my goal. It still is.

Jacqui Nelson writes historical romantic suspense set in the American West and Victorian London. Her first manuscript, *Between Heaven and Hell*, won the 2010 Golden Heart® for historical romance. In 2013, she was nominated for both the historical and romantic suspense categories with her second and third manuscripts, *Between Love and Lies* and *The Shadow Hour*. While continuing to seek representation for her Golden Heart nominated manuscripts, she is releasing the Western Historical Romance novella "Adella's Enemy" as part of the *Passion's Prize* anthology written with fellow 2010 Golden Heart finalists E.E. Burke and Jennifer Jakes. Jacqui lives on the west coast of Canada, where she is a member of the Vancouver Island and Greater Vancouver chapters of RWA.

Visit Jacqui at <http://www.JacquiNelson.com> <http://www.JacquiNelson.com>.

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#### 2013 Meeting Schedule

Join us July 13th for the

### **Brenda Talley**

The North Richland Hills librarian will be talking to us about maximizing research and the tools available to authors for research

#### Future Meetings:

August: Jodi Thomas, NYT bestseller

September: Mallory Braus, Carina Press, speaking on the editor-author relationship