



# Connections

The official newsletter of the Connecticut Romance Writers Association

Connecticut Chapter, Romance Writers of America, Chapter 1, Region 1

## President's Letter *Getting It Out the Door*

April 2009

***A ship in port is safe, but that's not what ships are built for. — Grace Murray Hopper***

Our conference is next month, New England's was last month, National is just around the corner, and submitting is on people's minds. Sending out your manuscript is a huge step in your career, and it's exciting... wonderful... terrifying... awful. If you're like me, the second someone asks to see your stuff, you'll immediately see huge flaws in your story. You'll ask yourself if it's really ready to go out into the wide world. Your stomach might hurt. Your hands may feel sweaty.

The submission process can be grueling emotionally, so here are a few things to remember. The first is quite basic. Your book can't be published if you don't submit. According to my beloved agent, 80% of people she invites to submit...don't. That's right. They turn down the chance to have an established agent read their stuff. Don't let this be you. To paraphrase Ms. Hopper above, a book on your hard drive is safe, but that's not what books are meant for. They're meant to be read. Send it out.

Secondly, don't let little mistakes shoot you in the foot. Have someone proofread your work. My own critique partner once sent out a query in which the editor's name was misspelled. Guess what? She got a very cold rejection. *If you can't be bothered to spell my name correctly, I wonder what kind of* blah, blah, ouch, blah. Our May workshop (the Saturday after the conference) will focus on just this subject...what to say in your query letter, the basics of synopsis writing, common mistakes that make editors and agents grind their teeth.

Rule of thumb #3...it may take a while to hear back, even though someone asked for it. Chances are, the requesting agent or editor is not going to read your submission the second it lands on her desk. It may take her weeks...quite possibly longer...to get to it. If three months pass and you don't hear from her, drop her an e-mail asking for an estimate of when she thinks she might get to it. On the flip side, there are those (some even in our own little group!) who've heard back in a matter of hours. Yes. Hours.

And lastly, start something new. It's easy to obsess over that one book, to think, *Dang it, now that I've sent it out, I'm going to totally rewrite the middle.* Well, you could do that...but here's the thing. You thought it was good enough to pitch or query. Give the agent or editor a chance to give you some feedback. In the meantime, start something else. If you want to be a writer, you're going to be writing lots of books. Better get on that!

And remember...you belong to a group whose sole purpose is to help you on this journey. You won't be alone.

~Kristan

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## NEXT MEETING

**April 11**

Emily Bryan: *WHAT A NOVEL IDEA! (Story Structure)*

MONTHLY MEETINGS of the CTRWA are held at The Four Points Sheraton in Meriden. Non-members are welcome to observe a meeting before joining. Meetings begin at 10:30 a.m. with a speaker or workshop at 11:00. PYOW lunch follows. See our website ([www.ctrwa.org](http://www.ctrwa.org)) for more information and directions.

# COMMUNITY

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

*Do you have any superstitious writing behaviors? Things you MUST do before you can write?*

**Lori Avocato:** I've listened to the same flute music tape (yes, I've been in the business so long that it was pre-CD!). James Galloway's flute music plays softly in the background. Then I sit at my writing computer--one that is not hooked up to the Internet. **Lois Pegg:** Just as my grandmother had an old Irish superstition about having all clothing and sheets etc. washed, dried and ironed before a new year came in (usually New Year Eve's Day wash was hung all over because this was before we had dryers), I need to have my house clean before I can write, so it goes without saying that I am not getting much writing done. I'm trying to loosen up a little, the bathroom floor does not have to be clean enough to eat off (yuk) but clean enough for guests and I can close the bedroom door if the bed isn't made. I will try and combine both this weekend and hope the clean gremlins allow me to write. **Marie Roy:** One of the things I try to make sure is that I have a bag of Hershey's chocolates here at my computer. The last bag that I just emptied was full of Hershey's Nuggets Truffles - Special Dark Chocolate of course...I always try to eat healthy! ;)

**Kristan Higgins:** I like to have a clean office before I start every book. I can't work in clutter. I also like to look at a picture of Daniel Craig before I get to work. Of course, I also like to do this before I start cooking, fold laundry, brush my teeth... **Bob Bonitz:** I need a cup of tea... or a glass of wine... or a beer!

## MEMBER NEWS

**Pat Grasso:** "Enticing The Prince" is a finalist for the New England Chapter Bean Pot Award AND for the Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence. (Congratulations!) You can join her at her book signing at Barnes and Noble in Smithfield, Rhode Island on May 1st from 6:30 to 9PM.

**Lori Avocato** sold a short story to Highland Press. It is a medical/military romance called "Temporary Duty" and will be included in the Every Beat of My Heart anthology. **Shirley G. Webb** has a number of upcoming events: April 23, 2009 – she is giving an Author School Session at Glastonbury High School sponsored by the Park and Rec Department of Glastonbury. May 16, 2009 - she is giving a Craft of Writing Presentation for CAPA in Avon: 'How to Market Your Book'. May 20, 2009 - she is giving two Workshop Presentations for the Student

Teacher Conference. The workshop is called: 'The Muse = The Mouse = The Magic'.

**Joy Smith** reports the 2nd edition of her non-fiction book on sailing is due out in April 09--and is available now for preorder.



## Online Auction for Diabetes Research

**When:** May 1 - May 31st

**Where:** [brendanovak.com](http://brendanovak.com)

Each year, Brenda Novak runs an amazing online auction for diabetes research at her Web site ([brendanovak.com](http://brendanovak.com)). There, you can find amazing opportunities for published and unpublished authors (among a lot of other things). More than fifty agents and just as many editors participate by offering evaluations (some with an amazing 24-hours response!), meet-and-greets and even line edits. All the major houses are represented. They also have NYTimes Bestselling Authors offering critiques and mentoring sessions. They have writing classes and how-to books and complete edits by professional editors. And for published authors we have publicity packages and networking opportunities galore. All wonderful ways for an unpublished author searching for a way to break in! Even better, the proceeds go to fight diabetes, helping those who are trying to cope with this terrible disease, which is the 5th deadliest killer.

## CALENDAR: Save the Dates!

**April 11:** Emily Bryan: *WHAT A NOVEL IDEA!* (*Story Structure*)

**May 2:** *Connecticut Fiction Fest*

**May 9:** *Putting Your Baby On the Bus: Preparing Your Manuscript for Submission*

**June 13:** Karlee Etter: *The Best or Worst Dressed Heroine, an Authentic Historical Wardrobe*

# COMMUNITY

## Member Interview: Karlee Etter

### Tell us a little about yourself.

I have lived in CT most of my life and raised two children. When I'm not writing, I work full-time at a local middle school.

As a child I hated reading on my own, although I could listen for hours if someone read to me. I was bored by history and loved acting. As I grew older my dislike for reading remained, until I returned to school as an adult to earn a bachelor's degree. At that point, reading became a passion and thanks to three awesome professors of Trinity College, I learned to value history.

### Tell us a little about the book you're working on.

The book I am writing was inspired by my Mystic Seaport Museum role playing character, and the fact that few people know that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century women went to sea with their captain-husbands on voyages that lasted anywhere from three to six years.

### How did your job inspire this novel?

I suppose it was my enthusiasm for American history and love of acting that took me down the path toward my role playing job at Mystic. As a role player, I have the opportunity to step back in time and take visitors with me; to give them the chance to meet a living-breathing woman of another time and place. I entice and educate visitors of all ages in an exciting and innovative manner in ways I never thought possible until I witnessed it first-hand as *Mrs. Wheldon*.

### How have you researched your characters?

The main character in my book is an extension of my Mystic persona. The other characters in my novel are a combination of real people and imagination.

Research was completed over two years using numerous primary documents at Mystic's archived collection. The collection includes 19<sup>th</sup> century letters and journals written by wives who remained home and went to sea. Secondary sources consist of more than a dozen 19<sup>th</sup> century women's personal papers edited and published after the 1980's. Thorough research is the foundation of my realistic Mystic persona and contributes to an interesting, multi-layered, vivid heroine in my novel. I also went to Lahaina, Maui, in 2007 because during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that was the preferred port of call for whaling captains and their wives.

### Do you remember the moment when you decided to write this book?

It is precisely my research that motivated me to write a novel. However, the idea of writing a novel did not occur instantly, but was the culmination of several events over a period of years.

Dr. Desmangles of Trinity College was the first person to encourage me to write a book on the topic about the 19<sup>th</sup> century women who went to sea with their husbands. However, I didn't take him seriously because the whole idea terrified me. All the same, after a year of role playing I realized few people knew women did just that against the status quo.

That all changed, when one day while working, a woman stopped in to talk with *Mrs. Wheldon* and asked, "So when are you going to write your dissertation? You must share such fascinating history." She was a professor of women's studies and by asking that question, like mixing a healthy dose of nutrient-rich soil into a struggling plant, caused the seed to germinate. The seed of my novel sprouted in January 2007.

Originally I considered writing my book as non fiction but decided there was nothing new to offer since Joan Druett, a leading expert in 19<sup>th</sup> century women's history; covered the topic in previous publications. I chose to write fiction because one of the primary things missing from many of the women's journals is their emotion and the impact such a life had on those females who experienced an extraordinary life at sea.

### What are your writing goals for the next six months?

I hope to finish my first draft by May of this year. A reasonable goal, since I have just another 50-60 pages to complete.

### How long have you been a member of CTRWA and what is your favorite thing about it?

I have been a member since March 2008. It's been great to make new friends with common interests and to have the opportunity to network with other writers. Our meetings sustain my enthusiasm and give me confidence in my continuing efforts, even when that nasty little devil occasionally pops into my head and shouts, "You can't do this" or "Why are you doing this, what's the point?" or "You'll never get published." I'm very thankful for encouraging words from those who understand and keep that self-defeating little imp under control.

# CRAFT

## What is Plot? By Georgia Woods

As a senior editor for an e-publisher, I see a lot of manuscripts. Some of them I start reading and I'm caught up from the first few lines. Others I am unable to stay interested enough to finish the first chapter. And sometimes both authors started out with equally great ideas, good characters, interesting situations. What makes the difference?

What do you think plot is? The standard definition is that it's whatever happens in a story...but does that mean every scene is part of the plot? Plot is the significant events that build a given story. Notice I said 'significant' events... For example, if your character is washing her kitchen windows, that can be a scene, but it's not part of the plot necessarily. But if your character's house is about to be burglarized and the fingerprints which catch the suspect are left on those clean kitchen windows, then washing them could be part of the plot.

In the best books, every single scene moves the plot forward. If you have scenes that don't move the plot, it slows down the momentum. For example, our window washing scene from the prior paragraph would, if not making an important point, possibly end up fodder for the editor's knife. Some people will argue and say well, in print or longer single title works, you can have scenes that are descriptive, part of setting the scene or character or world building. But if you think about it, those things are part of the plot - you can't have a story without a world and characters, so they have a significant place in the plot. However, it is my belief that no matter what type of work it is, every scene should be of concern to you as a writer, and you should make sure each and every scene keeps the reader's attention while it gives information. If you bore the reader with too much information, even information you feel important, they might lose interest and even quit reading.

Think of it this way...when you go to a party and become involved in the conversations and happenings there, if something occurs in front of you, say a fight or a romance or any significant event, do you, as an observer, need to know what shaving lotion the man is wearing? Do you need to know his parents' names? Do you need to know she bought three dresses before she could decide which one to wear? When we meet people in real life, we take them at face value, and we can come to care about them without knowing everything about them. You should give just enough to build a character sketch, but not their life's history, enough to hook the reader into caring about them or what happens to them, but you want to keep the action

moving and the reader interested. Action will keep the reader engaged more effectively than anything else. And action can be a dinner out, a fight scene, whatever, but things have to be happening, and the reader should be learning what's going on from those things that are happening, not things they are being told by narrative. And be careful - new writers sometimes use the dinner scene to have a dinner conversation and introduce information they want the reader to have which isn't necessary. The reader isn't interested in learning why a character acts the way they do by hearing them tell their life's story over dinner. They are interested in learning what makes a character tick by how they react when things happen to them. Action, action, action.

Also try to keep the idea in the back of your mind that a reader is always looking for a good place to stop, where they can be satisfied to go to bed or go make dinner or go do laundry or whatever, and you don't want to give them one. You want them to be so embroiled in the action of your story, so hooked into what is happening to your characters, that they don't dare stop. Now, you can use the dinner table to impart important information. In a book I just finished editing, there's a scene over a dinner table at Denny's, well actually over coffee...and it's terrific. But it's terrific because of the information imparted, not because of the setting. On one side of the table, you have two vampires, male and female lovers, and on the other side of the table are two vampire slayers, male and female. The vampires are trying to convince the vampire slayers to help them rescue someone instead of completing their slayer duties. The conversation, the way the two males glower at each other while the women try to keep the peace, meanwhile a truce is being set up and they almost come to blows several times as the conversation goes back and forth. It's a great scene for both illustrating out the characters are working out the power hierarchy and showing character traits, so it can be done. It is my opinion and preference as a reader that every scene teach me something about where the story is going and how it's going to get there, and if it doesn't do that, I skim and keep moving until the next scene where I start reading again. I know as authors you find yourselves skimming on occasion, and it's frustrating. Scenes shouldn't be random, they should all have reasons, something to show the reader that is important to the story, either to the internal conflict, or the external one, or to the story arc, the character arc, a logical reason for being in that place at that time. Don't add scenes that encourage your reader to skim.

So, what makes a scene or story worth caring about to

your reader? For the reader to care, there has to be something at stake, something of value to be gained or lost. And there should actually be at least two things at stake, an external one, like a bad guy to be defeated, and an internal one, like too much pride to be overcome. And the biggest attribute, I believe, you can use to make your story more interesting is to make sure the matter at stake is extremely important, and the battle to win it isn't fair. If you think about it, when you get something without having to fight for it, you don't value it as much. Think back over the lessons you've learned in life and when you've learned the most important lessons. When you do everything right, you don't learn a lot. We learn the most by fighting against very high odds and making lots of mistakes. That's what makes life and a good story interesting. When you make mistakes, you are putting yourself out there knowing you don't know it all and willing to take the chance because something you want is more important and you are willing to go after it even knowing you might fail. That is what makes a story.

Do you ever plot, then have your story take off in another direction? What do you do? Redirect or go with the flow? I think learning to be flexible when you are writing is part of having "living" characters - they learn something that changes their choices, or changes their minds, and you have to allow for that, I think, for the story and character to stay true to life. You can plot all

day long, but when you sit down and write the story, something can happen that makes your plot not work, you may find a flaw in the logic, or something the character does that doesn't seem "human", and you have to allow for that. I think if the plot/story is forced into its twists and turns, it feels forced. Things happen and if you try to remain too rigid, you lose the spontaneous emotion and reaction that elicits amazing, and true, things to the writing. For plotting, I'm a mix of pantster and plotter. I make what I call my outline, but it's basically a list of scenes I've planned to get my characters from here to there, but how the scenes hook together is up in the air and allowed to just happen. I do number them, and I'll do a. b. c. under them if I have specific points I want to make sure the scene includes. But I allow for my characters to be human, to make mistakes and have to go back and fix them, to inject their personalities and take the story in a bit of a different direction than I'd planned.

So plot your story, then feel free to allow your characters to grow, to learn, to be real, and let them drive the story, not the story drive them. In this way, your story will be real, will read as if it is true and real, and your characters and scenes will come to life in the minds of your readers.

*Georgia Woods is a senior editor and Editor for Author Development at Loose Id. This article was first printed in the Jan/Feb issue of the Passionate Ink newsletter.*

## Heroscopes: The Aries Heroine

by Bonnie Staring

There's always time for a parade in her world.

Born between March 21 and April 19, the Aries heroine is the head cheerleader of the Zodiac. She's the activist in the group; if you need someone to be tied to a tree or camp out on the President's doorstep, she's your gal. Just don't be surprised if this woman loses interest after the third splinter, or when more volunteers show up to finish the job.

The Aries heroine is full of ideas. Whether they work or not doesn't really matter as long as she's having fun. It's not that she's not willing to work hard; it's just that there are some things better left for others to do, such as taking down the streamers and washing out the punch bowls. When everyone else is cleaning up, this fabulous woman is already onto the next big thing.

There's only one way to an Aries woman's heart: the hard way. Spark her interest and then run as fast as you can—she loves a challenge with a worthy hunk of a reward at the end. Great dates for her include getting to know more about her hero, perhaps through a lively debate or during a paintball tournament. Famous Aries heroines include Eudora Alice Wetly, Gloria Steinem, Diana Ross and Jane Mansfield.

*Bonnie Staring is a comedic triple threat (writer, performer, coupon user). Her articles regularly appear in a variety of magazines and she conducts workshops on creativity and discovering your inner superhero. See what else Bonnie's been up to at [www.bonniestaring.com](http://www.bonniestaring.com)*

*This article first appeared in the April 2009 issue of romANTICS, the newsletter of the Toronto Romance Writers, Susan Haire, editor.*

## MY FIVE BIGGEST WRITING MISTAKES

(SO FAR) By Christine Ashworth

Mistakes happen in every profession. An actor who goes in for a stage audition, without memorizing the monologue first, has made a mistake. (Yeah, did that one.) And then there's the professional ballet dancer auditioning for a new company, who leaves her pointe shoes back at the hotel. Big mistake. (Uh, yep. Did that one, too.) What about the temporary secretary, who purchases some artwork for her office and then expects the boss to pay for it? That mistake could cost your job. (Okay, okay. I admit it. My excuse is, I was very young and full of myself. And yeah, I did lose my job. But I still have the artwork.)

So it won't come as any surprise when I tell you that writers make mistakes, too. Here are a few that I've made in my six plus serious years of writing. Hopefully, by sharing my dirty laundry, you'll be able to avoid them (or maybe recognize them in yourself) and nip them in the bud.

### 1. The Beginner's Rewrite Mistake

Before I actually decided to give writing my all, I dabbled. "Dipped my toe in", so to speak, while earning a living, having kids, and buying a house. I came up with great characters, terrific plots, and then tried to put them together in a novel. Wrote a chapter or two, over several months, mind you – and then got stuck. Of course! The first two chapters were crap. I couldn't go on if those chapters weren't completely right. So I rewrote them, and rewrote them, until I made myself sick even thinking about those characters. I think I went ten years without finishing that novel. (In my defense, this was pre-RWA, pre-LARA, and pre-every writing book ever published.)

Getting it right: Do yourself a favor. Keep writing, and don't look back. Just plough your way through the book, even though you're not sure where your novel is going. Until it's done, you won't be able to see it clearly. And as Nora says, 'you can't rewrite a blank page'.

### 2. The Sexy New Idea Mistake

This is another face of the Rewrite Syndrome. I had finished a couple novels and felt pretty good about myself. So I started another one, an idea that kinda

came to me. Once I got halfway through it, though, the bloom wore off. The romance was over. I hated my characters, hated the plot, and couldn't care less if the hero and heroine got together for smoochies. So when a new story beckoned, it became impossibly exciting, forbidden even. The hero and heroine are dynamic, the plot so compelling. And sexy? Honey, it's all you can do to NOT put those two in bed together! And so I abandoned one story in order to tackle the Sexy New Idea.

What a mistake. Because inevitably, that one, too, stalled when another Sexy New Idea beckoned. I wasted almost a year jumping from story to story, which did not endear me to my writing buddy. (I can still hear her say, "Will you finish something so I can read it?!")

Getting it right: Write the Sexy New Idea down in a journal for later, then force yourself to finish the current novel. After all, you can't sell it if it's not finished, right? May as well put your time in, and hone your craft.

### 3. The Know-It-All Mistake

This one was more personal, and more difficult for me to overcome. I'd been writing for...well... ever. Both my dad and my brother had published books, and lots of them. So what was the big deal? I knew what to do. I'd watched them, saw them cash the checks. They'd made a living doing it. It was in my blood, right? I had this writing thing down, man. I knew exactly what to do.

Uh, yeah. Not so much. Writing is one thing, and one thing only...writing. Actually doing the work, day after day after day. I didn't know it all: I had plenty to learn. A part of that was learning to play nice in critique groups –how to say circumspectly what it was I was trying to say, and still have them respect me in the morning. It took several embarrassing stumbles before it hit home - I truly didn't know everything. I still don't know everything. And the funny thing about that is, the older I get and the more I write, the more I realize I still need to learn.

Getting it right: This one is two-pronged. Keep writing. Push on through until you get to 'The End.' Also, keep your mind open and think twice before you speak, when giving or getting a critique. After all, there is still so much to learn, no matter how long you've been writing.

# CAREER

## 4. The Eager Pitcher Mistake

Okay, so there I was. I'd gone to RWA National a couple of times, pitched, failed, succeeded, and still wasn't published. (What's up with that?!) So, I went to a smaller conference in April a few years back, where I had an appointment with an editor that I REALLY wanted to publish with. But I had nothing – I mean nothing – written that would fit the house she worked for. So I came up with three ideas that sounded right. That would fit the line the editor worked for. I honed those pitches to perfection. In my meeting with the editor, I was bubbly, passionate about my three pitches – and stunned when she actually chose one that she wanted to see.

The only problem was, it hadn't been written. So after panicking the minute I got home, I started writing it. And it sucked. Not totally, not completely, but I didn't know the line well enough to write for it. By November (7 months later, ahem), I'd exhausted myself trying to write something that wasn't my style. I sent her a note, telling her a little white lie (something about a family illness), and that I was sorry but I wouldn't be sending her my manuscript. (Okay, that might have been going overboard – surely she didn't remember me or my pitch - but I felt guilty.)

Getting it right: Do yourself a favor. Don't sign up for a pitch appointment at any conference if you don't have the manuscript finished. Don't think you'll race to finish it in the month or two before the conference – Real Life has a way of slamming you when you least expect it. Trust me on this one. I've done it more times than I can count, and no one yet has bought the book.

## 5. There's Gotta Be A Shortcut Mistake

Because of my innate arrogance (see Mistake # 3), a few years into the writing, I figured I'd get a leg up if I read all the writing books, listened to all the tapes, talked to all the published writers and went to all the conferences I could in search of the elusive shortcut to becoming a bestselling author. Because, you know. "There's Gotta Be A Shortcut."

Getting it right: Yeah, about that. Eight novels on, I've come to realize that not only are there no shortcuts, but that I'm still in my apprenticeship as a writer. The only shortcut is to stop procrastinating, sit down at the computer, and write. Go to bed, get up, and do it

all over again. That's my current plan. One of these days, the book will be solid enough, amazing enough, to push me from apprentice to journeyman. But the only way I'll get there is to keep writing, no matter what.

**May you have the stamina to do the same!**

*Christine Ashworth has been a member of RWA and LARA since 2002. She's been writing for six years and has completed eight novels, with at least twenty novel partials that have fallen to the Sexy New Idea Syndrome. Her day job a victim of the souring economy, she's currently holding office hours at the Coffee Bean in Simi Valley from 8am to noon, most weekdays, with the help of her laptop, her iPod, and the gracious CB&T crew who keep her in coffee and bagels. If you're ever in the neighborhood, stop by and say hello.*

*This article first appeared in the March 2009 edition of LARA Confidential, the newsletter of the Los Angeles Romance Writers.*

## CTRWA 2008 Board Members

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# CAREER

## Seven Tips For A Successful Booksigning

By Romney Nesbitt

In today's competitive market writers need to think creatively to increase sales. Follow these seven tips to make your next book signing a success.

See your future. Peer into your crystal ball and visualize a successful book signing from start to finish. Imagine an article in the newspaper advertising your event. Like being in the spotlight? How about an interview on a local TV or radio morning show? Looking for sales? See a long line of buyers waiting for an autographed copy of your book. Focus on what you want!

Understand reality. People are busy. Your event is in competition with work schedules, TV, youth sports, errands, chores and weekend travel. For every twelve invitations sent expect to see one or two people at your signing. Generate interest by having a drawing for a free book. Sign books with another author and double the number of potential buyers.

Contact the bookstore owner or store manager early. Whether you're dealing with a chain bookstore or local bookshop, signings are scheduled weeks or even months out. Once the date is set, ask what you could do to make your event more successful. Draw attention to your book signing table with a poster-sized image of your book cover, brightly colored tablecloth and a bowl of candy or fresh-baked cookies.

Court the media. Send a copy of your book and a cover letter announcing your signing to local newspapers and television stations six to eight weeks in advance. Don't stop with a notice to the person in charge of new books. Look at the subplots in your romance to find a hook to the Style or Living sections, women's issues or health. If your main character is working her way through a nasty divorce, coping with her brother's schizophrenia, suddenly raising her sister's children or experiencing paranormal disturbances in her newly purchased home, point this out in your cover letter. Invite the editor to consider using your fictional character's problems as a lead-in to an article on the topic. You might uncover a whole new audience for your book. Don't underestimate your value to a local morning TV or radio show. It's easy to link your book to a national holiday or anniversary. Check out CHASE'S CALENDAR OF EVENTS in the reference section of the library to find thousands of quirky

national holidays listed by date and topic. Under the topic of "Romance" I found nineteen listings. Did you know "Find Your Soul Mate Day" is May 22, "Resurrect Romance Week" begins August 8 and "Pleasure Your Mate Month" happens every September?

Enthusiasm pays. Even if you're an introvert, push yourself to be more engaging and friendly at your book signing. People are interested in interesting people. Make eye contact and speak to bookstore browsers, "Hi, My name is...I've written a book. Could I tell you about it?" Be positive, not pushy. Don't chase customers through the racks.

Stimulate sales with bookmarks and postcards. Your postcard or bookmark should feature the book's title, book cover, your photo and contact information. Add a sidebar listing interesting facts about the contents of your non-fiction book or print the introductory paragraph of your novel on your postcard to entice new buyers.

Send a variety of invitations. E-mail invitations are easy but can be easily forgotten once your message rolls off-screen. A hand-addressed postcard with a personal note may seem old-fashioned but will still make a good impression. Add an invitation to your book signing to your phone's voice mail message. Include a bookmark with your bill payments. A potential buyer will open your envelope.

The same creativity you used to bring your characters to life can be used to lure buyers to your book signings and increase sales. Brainstorm your way to a novel event for your novel and enjoy your financial gains.

*Romney Nesbitt is a Creativity Coach and author of SECRETS FROM A CREATIVITY COACH, published by AWOC Books. In her coaching practice she helps writers and artists move past limiting thinking to achieve their goals ([www.romneynesbitt.com](http://www.romneynesbitt.com)). Nesbitt teaches a series of classes on creative thinking for Tulsa Community College and writes an advice column for artists in Art Focus Oklahoma Magazine. Nesbitt is a member of Romance Writers Ink in Tulsa, Oklahoma and is writing her first romance.*

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