



April 1, 2017

Volume XXIX, Issue 3

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers

Members welcomed best-selling romance author Eloisa James and lead editor Debby Gilbert of SoulMate Publishing to German Village for the March meeting. The event was open to the public and everyone had opportunities to win gifts in the COFW basket raffle. Eloisa spoke on the ten things she wished she'd known about publishing. Debby gave tips on how to create a dazzling submission to editors.

Contents

- 1. Special Guest Recap by Saralee Etter: Eloisa James. "Ten Things about Publishing."**
- 2. Minutes and Treasury Summary for March 18, 2017.**
- 3. Attendance, Works in Progress and Welcome New Members.**
- 4. Q&A Spotlight: New Member Shari Heinrich.**
- 5. Member New Releases: Karen Harper, Robin Gianna, Janie Mason, Marcia James.**
- 6. COFW Meeting Guest Presentation Schedule: Lisa Cooke (April 15); Lorie Langdon (May 13); Lori Foster (June 17); Laurie Schnebly (July 17); RWA Conference Recap (August 19); Lita Lawson and Kat Sheridan (September 16); Holiday Party (December).**
- 7. All-day Workshop with Larry Brooks. October 21. Columbus Courtyard Marriott.**
- 8. Announcements on the Craft and Business of Writing.**
- 9. Special Guest Recap by Saralee Etter: Debby Gilbert. "Creating a Submission that Dazzles."**
- 10. 2017 COFW Leadership and Contacts.**

Central Ohio Fiction Writers (COFW) <http://cofwevents.org> is a non-profit professional association for romance writers and a local chapter of the Romance Writers of America (RWA) organization that offers monthly meetings. Since 1987, COFW has promoted excellence in fiction writing, encouraging writers to grow and gain knowledge in their craft. Members provide a networking system to share knowledge and support the goal of becoming published.

Eloisa James: Ten Things I Wished I'd Known about Publishing

Saralee Etter

In March, the Central Ohio Fiction Writers had the great good luck to host bestselling romance author Eloisa James. For romance readers, Eloisa James is the best selling and beloved author of 26 historical romance books, mostly set in the Georgian and Regency periods. She is also a professor of Shakespeare at Fordham University in New York City. To learn more about her, visit her website at www.eloisajames.com.

Romance novels are a \$348 million business worldwide, and their sales far outstrip all other types of books. Romance supports the overall publishing industry. Almost all romance novels are written by women, edited and published by women, purchased and read by women, making romance publishing one of the biggest women-run industries in the world.

That being the case, it has been surprising and disheartening to learn that the *New York Times* decided to drop genre books (including romance) in both mass-market paperback and ebook formats from the prestigious *NYT* Bestseller List. Now, *USA Today* is planning to follow suit.



Eloisa James with COFW members Karen Harper and Robin Gianna.

Eloisa urged all of us to write an email to Alison Maxwell at amaxwell@usatoday.com to protest the newspaper's plan to drop romance novels from its *USA Today* Bestseller List. Don't forget to make your voice heard!

Women face many challenges when they venture out into the marketplace, and Eloisa offered the following tips for surviving and thriving in publishing:

Be Machiavellian.

Machiavelli was the Renaissance political advisor who wrote *The Prince*, which is a practical (more like unprincipled) strategic manual for the use of power in politics. One example of Machiavelli's tactics was to advise the Prince to hire a ruthless strong man to kill all the Prince's enemies. Once the enemies were dispatched, the Prince was to cut off the strong man's head in the central plaza and announce that he'd saved the people from the strong man.

This strategy, Eloisa said, was a lesson in how to do what you want and still satisfy your audience. Don't write the book of your heart – write the book that provides a reader with the

most “pleasure moments.” How do you know what the reader’s pleasure moments will be? You are your own book’s “ideal reader,” so notice when you’re really enjoying what you have written and why you are enjoying it.

Reader pleasure moments are those ferocious, emotional moments that we don’t want to skip, the passages we re-read in our favorite books, and the ones we gloat over when we’ve written them. Some examples of pleasure moments include:

When you unwrap some delicious aspect of the world of the story; and
When you realize just how powerful the heroine is.

One of Eloisa’s pleasures is when the heroine is being totally humiliated. If you’re fascinated by such a moment, write about it! You know what the framework of a romance novel should be. Within it, plan for seven or eight reader pleasure moments. Things that you wouldn’t skip, your readers won’t skip them either.

Figure out what attracts you to these pleasure moments, bring them to vivid life in your own stories.

Use your deepest emotions. Explore your past. Remember what the most intense moments of your life felt like, and mine those feelings and experiences.

Stories have to feel like life and death are at stake. So look back to your childhood when you were most impressionable. Take your fears and volumize them to make the experience real and vivid to the reader.

Pay attention to the back cover copy of your book.

You’re not done when you’ve written the book. You must then think about how your reader will make the buying decision.

Readers make their buying decisions by looking first at the cover, then at the back cover copy, then at the first page. In the back cover copy, a savvy author will make use of themes or tropes such as the wallflower, heiress, or pirate.

One of the most delicious elements of the romance genre is the alpha male. Some romances do fine with a beta hero, but if you want high sales, you need an alpha. These are heroes who are emotionally unavailable, incredibly competent, and who finally fall in love with the heroine.

It’s important to have a scene early in your book where the hero is shown being an alpha. He can’t just look alpha, with rippling muscles and a square jaw – he has to take charge of a situation in the most competent and effective way.

Some heroes can be alphas even though they are able to express some appropriate positive emotion. For instance, a doctor will be protective of those in his care and want to help those in need. But most alphas don’t understand their emotions at all, and require the heroine to discover

them.

In historical romance, the hero can be politically incorrect and push the boundaries of what we consider acceptable behavior. Readers often enjoy exploring the non-politically correct environment without actually having to experience it.

Another element that provides pleasure to a reader is wit. However, accomplishing wittiness is tricky and often requires revision. There are many different styles of humor.

Revision is necessary when your story goes awry. Whether you've forced the characters to act in an inauthentic way in order to conform to your plot, or the hero is acting too nice, or you've focused on some minor characters to the detriment of the couple's story, you will have to make cuts. Eloisa says that she can lose about 100 pages of a manuscript in the revision process.

Writers make mistakes over and over – and we can be blind to our own errors, which is why it helps to take note of reviews that offer constructive criticism.



Eloisa James and COFW Member and RWA Treasurer Donna MacMeans.

In Eloisa's book *The Ugly Duchess*, the hero and heroine are married and then separated for seven years—because a wife had to be abandoned for seven years before the marriage could be legally dissolved. But would a young and virile man be celibate for that long, considering that he never planned to go back to his wife? Eloisa gave her hero a few mistresses during his seven-year absence, only to find that readers were shocked at what they considered to be adultery. Those disapproving reviews helped her to see the story from a different perspective.

You are a businesswoman.

Many writers want to just write, but you have to be a writer and a businesswoman. You are the CEO of your company, and your agent is your employee. Even though it's tempting for a new writer to feel grateful that an agent has taken them on as a client,

you can't leave all the business details to an agent because it is your career. Make sure you know to whom your manuscripts have been submitted and what the results are. Reinvest your profits in your business. Stay on top of foreign sales. There are romance readers around the world, and they are eager readers of romances written by Americans.

Your agent's job is to get the most money she can on your behalf. But the editor's job is to spend as little as possible to acquire and produce your book. So what can you expect the publisher to do for you? Be the squeaky wheel and make sure they're doing as promised, and that other professionals you're working with, like the PR agent, know what you want them to do.

Find ways to get your name out there. Connect with other professionals. Be a blogger, if that suits you. Make sure you have a newsletter. Offer free content to newsletter subscribers. Connect with your readers on social media – try littsy.com. Do a survey to find out what your readers like.

Be a management consultant for your own business.

Through kindness and nagging, make sure your people are working to the best of their abilities. Whether they're independent contractors you've hired, employees of your publisher who are assigned to work with you, or your own virtual assistants, make them feel appreciated and valued when they do a good job, or correct them when they need it.

Promotion.

Answer your reader letters. Cultivate your readers, and keep in touch with them. If you have a newsletter, it doesn't have to be long. Just give them "Five Fabulous Things" in each newsletter, with pictures or fun facts.

Make your newsletters fun, because people want to escape and play. Make newsletters regular, because you can't just send out a newsletter when you've got a book to peddle.

Spend Money on your business.

A well-organized website is necessary so people can learn more about you and find out what's coming next. It's worth spending money on. It's one of the first ways that people can become acquainted with you and your books.

Advertising that drives readers to your website or to sign up for your newsletter is the beginning of the "sales funnel" – that is, the series of interactions that take a person from learning about an author, to being curious about their work, to buying a book, to being a lifelong fan.

Publishing is humiliating.

When you fail—and everybody fails—you have to claw your way back up. Work out your own grief process. Figure out what you need to do to heal from some injury, whether it's a rejection or a book that doesn't sell or a terrible review. After you've done it, let it go.

Your friends are not always your friends.

Be careful who you trust, because some people who you may think are friendly are not. It doesn't make sense to bash other people because you never know who will be in a position to help or hurt you later on.

But your best friends are worth their weight in gold.

When you find a good friend, value them! Promote them when you can. All boats rise together. When we help one another we can all succeed. Celebrate your friends' successes because there is room for all of us to achieve our writing dreams.

After her presentation, Eloisa held a book signing for her latest release, *Seven Minutes in*

Heaven.

About Saralee Etter: After years of writing newspaper articles, public relations releases and legal briefs, Saralee Etter published three sweet Regency romances and a sexy contemporary fantasy. Now she is working on a Victorian murder mystery series with sleuth Lucy Turner, featuring Gilbert & Sullivan. Her first book in this series, *A Short Sharp Shock*, will be coming soon. You can find Saralee at <http://www.saraleeetter.com> and at her blog, A Fine Mystery Indeed, www.saraleeetter.com/blog.

What We Heard: A Day with Eloisa James and Debby Gilbert

"I had a good time...and finally got to see German Village after all these years. Loved the speakers and seeing all the visitors." ~Sandy Wickersham McWhorter

"I received a full manuscript request! Great day! Thanks for the nudge, Donna." ~Andrea McConnell w/a Lena Welston

"The baskets all looked great and the prizes wonderful." ~Donna MacMeans

"Sheri Adkins truly deserves a really big round of applause!" ~Robin Gianna

"Absorbed awesome writing mojo." ~Amalie Berlin w/a Darcy Gafeira

"Eloisa's talk about the industry--enlightening. And who knew it is ALWAYS Ladies' Room with an apostrophe." ~Margaret Crowley

"I am never more inspired than when I spend the day with all of you." ~Jenessa McRoy w/a Jenessa Ryan

"What a joy it was to find a room full of welcoming and supportive writers." ~Marisa Dillon w/a Marisa Del Preori

"Eloisa was down to earth and gracious. My mother had a good time." ~Aleta Dodson w/a Lita Lawson

"Eloisa James was surprised to learn we offer a speaker every month! There's more to come...so bring friends!" ~Sheri Adkins

"The most valuable piece of advice from Eloisa was to focus on 'reader pleasure moments' -- the parts of the story that are so delicious and intense that you can't wait to write them. Since we are all our own ideal readers, we know what they are!" ~Saralee Etter

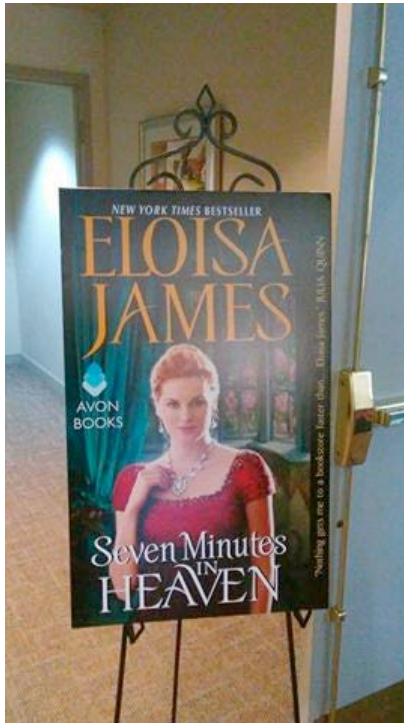


Aleta Dodson's mother and Eloisa James.

Minutes for March 18, 2017 at German Village Society Haus, Columbus

At 9 a.m., President Jenessa McRoy welcomed everyone and thanked Sheri Adkins, Robin Gianna and Karen Harper for setting up this mini-conference. She also thanked Debby Gilbert of SoulMate Publishing and author Eloisa James for presenting today's program.

Sheri Adkins moved, Julia Blaine seconded, to accept the minutes from February. Minutes were approved.



The financial audit of COFW's books was overdue. Three people were needed to review the books. Please contact a Board member to volunteer.

The current balance in the Treasurer's account was \$13,736.92.

Program Chair Sheri Adkins gave an overview of upcoming programs, including the Writers' Retreat in Hocking Hills on April 21-23; guest speakers Lorie Langdon for the May meeting and Laurie Schnebly for July; an RWA Nationals recap for August; and an October workshop with Larry Brooks.

Linda Rice gave an update on the workshop with Larry Brooks in October at the Marriott Courtyard Columbus West. Registration and payment will be via the COFW website not RWA. Cost will be \$55 for members and \$75 for non-members with a limit of 72 attendees.

Sheri Adkins updated the April writers' retreat at Hocking Hills. The final registration deadline was on Monday, March 20, and more sign-ups were needed to make it happen.

Julia Blaine gave out incentives.

A reminder about May's guest speaker, Lorie Langdon, was announced. A multi-published YA author, Lorie Langdon was offering a weeklong writer's conference in Ireland to include mentoring, training and interactive workshops. One will be offered in July and a second in August. Two spots were open for July and six for August. The cost was around \$1,800 plus airfare and some meals.

Saralee Etter volunteered to recap both of today's sessions with Debby Gilbert and Eloisa James.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Works in Progress and Attendance for March

1. Ire Anne Chambers: New cozy mystery.
2. Andrea McConnell/Lena Welston: Final edit of *The British Captain*.
3. Karin Shah: *Chimera Chronicles 5*.
4. Amalie Berlin/Darcy Gafeira: Revising medical #11.
5. Janice Beckett: Contemporary romance.
6. Donna MacMeans: Working on historical.
7. Sandy Rice: *Man of Shadows*.
8. Stacy McKittrick: *Ghostly Protector*.
9. Linda Rice: Working on WIP.
10. Margaret Crowley: *Cherish*.
11. Sheri Adkins: Coordinating events.
12. Saralee Etter: Have a cover for *A Short Sharp Shock*. Yay!
13. Jeanne Estridge: Working on contemporary, *Girl's Best Friend*.
14. Jenessa McRoy: *My Lady Spy*.



Welcome, Newest Members: Eva Gangloff and Sandra Rice

COFW Meeting Location (unless otherwise stated)

Location: Norwich Twp Safety & Services Building. 5181 Northwest Parkway. Hilliard, OH 43026

Networking: Noon

Business Meeting: 12:30 p.m.

Guest Presentation: 1:30 p.m.

Spotlighting New Member in Q&A: Shari Heinrich

Shari writes from her Westerville home, a place her Cape Cod friends call "Shari's Bed and Breakfast" for its rural setting and guest room. She's a writer who sticks to her writing goals even when she's challenged by her kitties, Xanth, who likes to kick her keyboard off her lap, and Pern, who favors sitting on one or both chair arms. Shania Hunter may become her pen name for romance.

Q: How did you hear about COFW?

A: I met Karin Shah through her bicycling husband, Nikhil. I didn't check into COFW until two years later when COFW handed out cards at the Upper Arlington Library's "The Write Stuff."

Q: Why join COFW?

A: I'm looking to grow my writing *tribe* and love the concept of programs following business meetings. After enjoying the November and January programs and meeting kind, inviting members, I anted up.

Q: What are your favorite genres to write in?

A: My characters tend to have run ins with magic, lending itself well to fantasy. I've devoured that genre since fifth grade. How many kids tackle *The Lord of the Rings* in sixth grade and *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever* (a leper turned hero when he steps into another world) in seventh grade?

Q: What or who inspires you to write?

A: My brain takes a mishmash of events until a character stomps her feet, insisting I understand. Mermaid Isabella's birth hails from sweat, sun and the Scioto River where I trained as an amateur bicycle racer. I'd play word games to distract myself from the pain. I'm attending my first half marathon in May.

Q: Where do you like to write?

A: In my backyard, leaning against the black walnut tree, looking up the knoll into the forest. The days the creek is babbling nicely are my favorite. I listen to music, such as Celtic if I'm writing about my mermaid Isabella from *River Daughter*, the novel I'm shopping around. While working on *Solve for X*, I tend toward Adele, Imagine Dragons, Gomez and Katy Perry.

Q: What is your writing regimen?

A: I set a simple, daily goal, usually 250 to 300 words, tracking it with a dozen online writer friends. Because I work full time, weekday's goal is writing through part of lunch and an hour or two in the evening. On Saturdays or Sundays, I carve out two to three hours at Panera Bread, away from the distractions of cats and chores. These getaway mornings are my most productive.



Typically, my monthly writing exceeds my goal, but it takes a big hit when I research agents.

Q: What one writing goal do you hope to achieve this year?

A: Finish *Solve for X*, super rough draft, by April 30.

Q: Who's your favorite author and favorite book?

A: My favorite author is Patricia Wede, especially her *Enchanted Forest Chronicles* about the unconventional Princess Cimorene who runs away from boring castle life to become a dragon's princess. My favorite book is *The Hobbit*, which I reread every few years.

Q: What are you reading now?

A: I'm beta reading a new adult novel for a friend in another writing group, and, simultaneously, I'm loving *Ash and Bramble*, a YA alternative fairy tale by Sarah Prineas. I don't ever want to cross her version of the fairy godmother.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add?

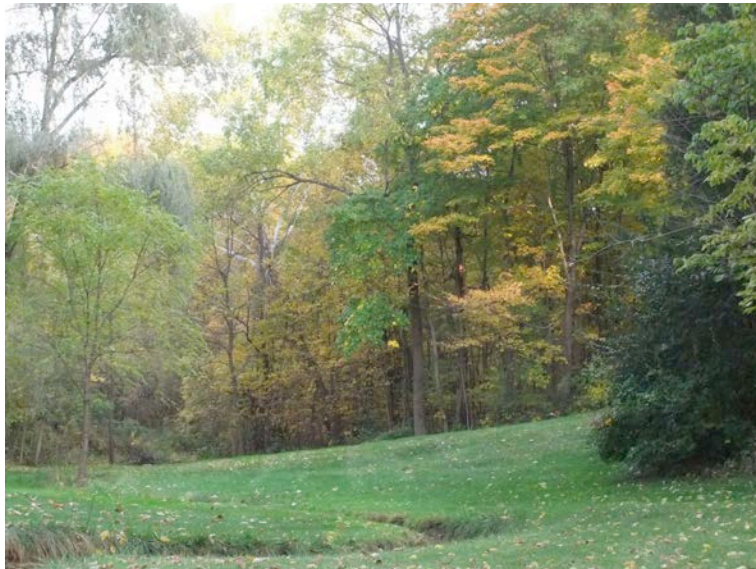
A: If I make a meeting during the summer, expect home-grown tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and peppers to appear on the back table.

COFW looks forward to everything Shari has to share.

www.ShariHeinrich.com

www.facebook.com/ShariHeinrichWrites/

Twitter: @SEHBicycle



Shari's backyard and place of inspiration.

The Latest from COFW Founding Member Karen Harper

Falling Darkness

Release Date: April 18.

Falling Darkness, the third book in Karen Harper's romantic suspense *South Shores* series, will be out from Mira books on April 18. Criminal attorney Nick Markwood and forensic psychologist Clair have been forced into marriage, but they're not fighting each other, just the billionaire who is out to kill them both. Hiding on Mackinac Island in the WITSEC program, they believe they are safe, but true love and suspense novels never run smoothly! The first two books in the series are *Chasing Shadows* and *Drowning Tides*. Karen is currently writing book number four.

Karen is a founding member of COFW, so she has been there from the start. She was first published in 1982. "Travel and family demands

get in the way of attending meetings sometimes, but it's great to still have some of the original friends over the years. Yet, new people and new ideas are also the bedrock of COFW."



Karen Harper Dec.'06



A *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author, Karen Harper is a former college English instructor (The Ohio State University) and high school literature and writing teacher. A lifelong Ohioan, Karen and her husband Don divide their time between the midwest and the southeast; both locations she has used in her books. Besides her American settings, Karen loves the British Isles, where her Scottish and English roots run deep, and where she has set many of her historical Tudor-era mysteries and her historical novels about real and dynamic British women.

<http://karenharperauthor.com/>

Baby Surprise for the Doctor Prince

Robin Gianna

Out Now.

Two months after her breathtaking night with Prince Enzo Affini, nurse Aubrey Henderson arrives in Venice to discover he's her new boss. Even more shocking? The news she's carrying his royal baby!



Guarded doctor Enzo has long protected his legacy--and his heart. He's determined not to trust his attraction to irresistible, spirited Aubrey. But as their baby grows, so, too, does their undeniable connection...and a longing for a happy-ever-after that neither can deny!

Robin completed a degree in journalism, worked in the advertising industry then became a stay-at-home mom. She had what she calls her "awakening." She decided she wanted to write the romance novels she'd loved since her teens.

Robin Gianna joined COFW in 2004 as a naive newbie when it came to writing fiction.

"Being a member has been hugely important to my growth as a writer and eventual publishing contract with Harlequin/Mills & Boon. From my very first meeting, members were friendly and inclusive, always generous with their knowledge and happy to share their experiences and expertise with me. Writing is mostly a solitary endeavor, and it's easy to get discouraged. Spending time with other authors has always been the boost I need to feel excited again. COFW and RWA gives me exactly that!"

When she's not writing, Robin's life is filled with a happily messy kitchen, a needy garden, a wonderful husband, three great kids, a drooling bulldog and one grouchy Siamese cat.



<http://www.robingianna.com/>

Trusting Love

Janie Mason

Release Date: Early April.

Trusting Love is the second book in Janie Mason's *New Beginnings* series of historical romances. Philadelphia socialite Elizabeth Hargrove may be impetuous, pampered and naive about the world, but she's desperate to escape her controlling parents and the marriage they're pushing her into. So when a plea for help arrives from a friend in Texas, Elizabeth and her best friend decide to run away.

When Buck Jackson saves a feisty woman from drowning, he loses more than his money in the process. If he doesn't get back to his ranch soon, he could lose his land. He has no choice but to accept the job of escorting the spoiled socialite and her friend to Texas.

It isn't hard for Buck to start falling for Elizabeth, even though a fine lady like her isn't for a rough man like him. When Buck is in danger of losing everything, Elizabeth is willing to do whatever it takes to help, even if it means sacrificing her independence. But for the cowboy and the socialite, their sacrifices may not be enough. Sometimes, it's a matter of trusting in love.



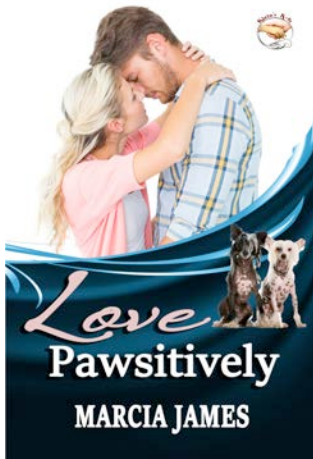
Janie Mason joined COFW in 2002 upon the advice of a *New York Times* best-selling author. "After writing my first romance novel, I had a fan-girl moment and e-mailed Suzanne Brockmann for some advice about my story. She kindly took the time to reply, advising



me to join my local chapter of Romance Writers of America. I visited my first COFW meeting and joined that day. Thanks to their meetings, workshops, conferences and fellow members sharing their knowledge with me, I signed my first publishing contract in 2008. I highly encourage anyone interested in pursuing a career in romance writing to join their local RWA chapter."

Janie was born, raised and still resides in Columbus with her amazingly supportive husband, David. They've recently become empty nesters, being super proud of their two college-aged children. Bonnie, the Heinz 57 dog, rounds out the family.

<https://janiemason.com/>



Box Set:
Love Pawsitively

Marcia James

Release Date: April.

Marcia James's new anthology includes three books of her *Klein's K-9s* series. The stories hail from Jenkins, North Carolina, home of the Klein's K-9s Service Dog training facility.

Racing Hearts: Stock car legend, Tom "Torque" Tyler, faces a bleak future following a traumatic head injury. Service dog trainer, Meg

Klein, arrives with a tiny but talented seizure-response dog, determined to drag her high school crush from his self-imposed solitude. Will the paparazzi ruin Meg's best laid plans?

8 Hounds a-Howling: Celebrity photographer "Jax" Jackson volunteers to shoot the Klein's K-9s' dog-themed "12 Day of Christmas" fundraising calendar. His hidden agenda: Convince past love and calendar coordinator Amy Walters to give him a second chance. But he never anticipates dodging dive-bombing birds, tackling runaway pigs and handling 78 dogs who'd rather play than pose.

Nothing but a Hound Dog: After a night of raucous partying, country music star Ryan "Rowdy" Gates is sentenced to community service at the Jenkins Animal Shelter. To his surprise, he bonds with the caring shelter workers and falls for an abandoned Basset Hound puppy. Shelter director Cindi Landon offers Ryan something he's never had--a home, a family and unconditional love.

Marcia James joined COFW in 1999 when "I moved to Columbus from Washington, D.C. Kind, helpful members, such as Becky Barker, Janet Ciccone and Karen Harper, were welcoming and willing to share their publication craft and business knowledge with me. I volunteered for conferences, contests and workshops, and served as president from 2000-2002. I learned so much and made close friendships that continue today. Whenever I meet an aspiring fiction writer, I always recommend she/he join COFW. Writing is a solitary profession but nothing can replace the support, education and motivation of a professional organization such as COFW."



Marcia had her wedding covered by *People* magazine and enjoys "researching" and plotting steamy love scenes with her husband and hero of many years. www.MarciaJames.net

COFW Meeting for April 15

Lisa Cooke*

The 12 Steps of Intimacy

Looking for a way to make the building romance between your hero and heroine more believable?

Psychologists have defined 12 stages of intimacy that, if incorporated into your manuscript, can pull your reader into the passion between your characters in a natural and believable way.

This workshop will explore these stages and give examples for ways to blend them into your story.

Lisa Cooke is a retired high school science teacher. She began writing at the age of 46 and sold her first novel to Dorchester's Leisure Historical line in June of 2008. Her first releases were humorous historical romances, but she has since branched out into a variety of genres from suspense to non-fiction.

<http://www.lisacookebooks.com/index.php>



April 15, 2017

Location: Norwich Twp Safety & Services Building.
5181 Northwest Parkway.
Hilliard, OH 43026

Networking: Noon

Business Meeting: 12:30 p.m.

Lisa's Presentation: 1:30 p.m.

*Lisa Cooke is replacing Lori Foster who's been rescheduled for June.

COFW Meeting for May 13



Lorie Langdon

How to Hook Your Reader

YA co-author of the Amazon #1 Best-selling *Doon* series, Lorie will speak about emotionally descriptive writing.

Lorie Langdon is one half of the author team that writes the best-selling *Doon* series, a YA re-imagining of *Brigadoon!* published by Blink/HarperCollins. She has longed to write her own novels since she was a wee girl reading every Judy Blume book she could get her hands on. So a few years ago, she left her thriving corporate career to satisfy the voices in her head. Now as a full-time author and stay-at-home mom, she spends her days tucked into her cozy office, Havanese puppy by her side, working to translate her effusive imagination into the written word.



Lorie's first solo novel, *Gilt Hollow*, a YA romantic thriller, was released in September 2016.

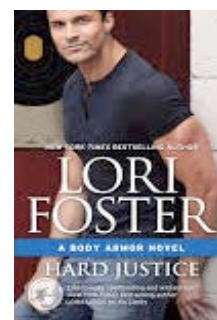


COFW Meeting for June 17, 2017

NYT Best-selling Author

Founder of RAGT

Lori Foster



Lori will share her personal experiences with the current industry and its changes along with her recent struggles with issues such as an insane schedule. Questions and Answers, too.

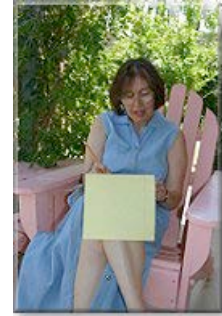
Since first publishing in January 1996, Lori Foster has become a *USA Today*, *Publisher's Weekly* and *New York Times* best-selling author of over 80 novellas and novels. Her newest release, *Hard Justice*, comes out in March 2017.

Coming July 15 to COFW

A Full Day with Laurie Schnebly

Morning Session:

Plotting vs Motivation: Any one of us could write a book in which characters set out for a three-hour tour and get shipwrecked on an uncharted desert isle. But if you nail down the characters' motivation, it doesn't matter whether the ship capsizes or lands safely three hours later. Your characters will create a plot from WHATEVER happens because you've got their motivation built in from the very beginning...and here's how to do it.



From Plot to Finish: Once a writer knows the elements that belong in her characters and her plot, she's all set...right? Well, not always. Making the move from a few basic answers to a manuscript which is ready to type involves a series of steps that people have called "incredible...a plotting system which truly RESPECTS that I'm a pantser" and "the easiest way I've ever seen of getting from Basic Idea to Finished Book."

Afternoon Session:

Building Conflict from the Head Down: They're perfect for each other, right? So why can't things ever seem to go as smoothly for these people as they deserve? Well, you know why--it's because nobody wants the happy ending to arrive five minutes into the book. Which means we need to stir up conflict for these characters, and no matter what kind of conflict is happening around them it'll be even more dramatic when you get the conflict happening inside each one.

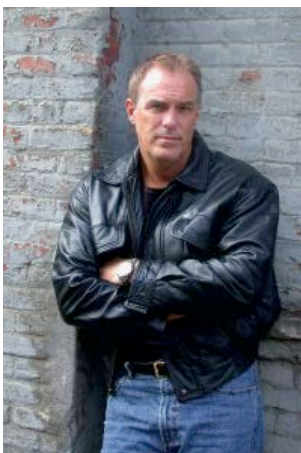
And more.

Giving workshops for students from London and Los Angeles to New Zealand and New York is just one of Laurie Schnebly's interests. During weekdays, she writes and produces videos, brochures and commercials for a Phoenix advertising agency. She'd written six books for Special Edition before she turned to non-fiction, using her research into the nine personality types to help writers create plausible, likable people with realistic flaws. <http://booklaurie.com/>

A Sneak Peek into Future COFW Meeting Presentations

September 16: Let's Talk about Self-publishing. Self-published, contemporary author and COFW member **Lita Lawson** will discuss how to hire an editor and format your work, along with other handy tips regarding publishing your own work. www.litalawson.net. Historical, self-published author **Kat Sheridan** will discuss how to write a back cover blurb for your book. www.facebook.com/Kat-Sheridan

December: Holiday Party for COFW members only.



Saturday, October 21, 2017

All-day Workshop. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Larry Brooks

Author of *Story Fix* and *Story Engineering*

Location: The Courtyard Marriott 2350 Westbest Drive, Columbus.

Fee: COFW Members: \$55. Non-members: \$75. (includes continental breakfast, lunch, raffle)

To Register and Pay: COFW Website: <http://www.cofwevents.org/workshop>.

Workshop Topics:

- ☆ The Hidden Secrets of Story Structure.
- ☆ The Beautiful Collision of Concept and Premise.
- ☆ Dramatic Arc as the Key to Everything (Including Character).
- ☆ When Every Month is NanoWriMo.

Larry Brooks is a career writer from the corporate sector who had nourished a fiction-writing dream the entire time. He's published six novels and two best-selling books on writing, *Story Engineering* and *Story Physics* and the 2015 release *Story Fix*, all through Writer's Digest.

For Questions: Linda Rice: lindarice05@gmail.com

Announcements on the Craft and Business of Writing

♥ Fiction Plotting with COFW Members

- ~First Wednesdays, 10 a.m.
- ~Panera Bread, 2374 Taylor Square Drive, Reynoldsburg, 43068.
- ~Sharing and discussing plots. Giving constructive advice on improvements.
- ~Between meetings, attendees stay in touch and ask questions via cofwplot@yahoogroups.com

♥ Live Q & A on Facebook with Author Assistant, Melissa Jolly

- ~Every Wednesday, 2:30 p.m. Eastern
- ~Request to be her Friend on Facebook. Click on it when it pops up in your feed. Or go to her page and click on the "play" icon hovering over her picture.
- ~She takes questions for 30 minutes or until people stop asking.
- ~To ask your question, simply type.
- ~If you can't make it during that time, email her at [melissa\(at\)authorrx\(dot\)com](mailto:melissa(at)authorrx(dot)com) -- melissa@authorrx.com. She'll try to answer your question during one of her weekly chats.



Membership Chair Linda Rice wins Writing Craft books in Raffle.

Melissa has spoken at COFW meetings and regularly presents workshops at RWA Conferences. She's been an author's assistant for many years and would love to share what she knows.

<http://authorrx.com/>

♥ Want More of Laurie Schnebly? See Her on Sunday, July 16 in West Chester.

- ~Laurie Schebly Campbell will be giving a free class (or two) at the West Chester Library.
- ~Sunday July 16.
- ~1 p.m.
- ~Free.
- ~Confirm attendance: email Stacy McKitrick. semckitrick@aol.com
- ~This class is the day after the July COFW meeting with Laurie as special presenter. Different topics.

Debby Gilbert: Creating a Submission that Dazzles the Editor

Saralee Etter

Debby Gilbert, the founder and lead editor of Soulmate Publishing, talked to COFW members at our March meeting held at the German Village Meeting Haus.

After working as an English teacher for 16 years, Debby opened SoulMate Publishing in October 2011. Her successful publishing house began with just a few authors, and now has grown to feature 160 authors of romance stories of all varieties.

Having a great story is always the most important part of your submission. But if you want to impress an editor, it's important to show that you are professional and will be good to work with. The following tips will help anyone polish their manuscript:

What's in a Name?

Give your book a great title! So often, an author won't bother to come up with a title that will catch a potential reader's eye – even though that is the first step in wooing a reader into buying your novel. So what elements go in to a great title?

Alliteration: *The Great Gatsby*, *Pride and Prejudice* – the same initial letter;

Oxymoron: *True Lies*, *Honest Illusions* – opposites create interest;

Uniqueness: Make sure there aren't a dozen books by the same name already out there; and

Searchability: Make sure your book can't be confused with a product.

Hook 'em Dano.

Make sure you hook the reader's interest from the very first sentence of your story, and then continue to add hooks throughout the first few pages of the book (and also in the rest of the story, of course, but the beginning is crucial). Hooking means to:

Set the tone of the story, or raise a story question;

Start in the middle of the action; and

Continue to complicate the story so that the reader is compelled to read on.

Make a Great First Impression.

Be professional, and don't neglect these details!

In the subject line of your email submission, remember to label your manuscript with the full title, spelled and punctuated correctly. Also make sure to specify whether the submission is of the first three chapters or a full manuscript.

AND make sure you put your name and contact information in your document. Too many times, the author puts her name in the email, but not on the submission itself. If the document is downloaded, there's no way for the editor to know who submitted it! If you don't have a title

page, then put the title, your name and email on the pages themselves, maybe next to the page number or in a footer.

Formatting Tips.

These items show professionalism, but are details that may not be the basis for rejecting a manuscript. The important thing here is to show that you understand the conventions and best practices of the industry.

Courier New 12 is the best font to use, easier to read than Times New Roman.

The preferred style is one space between sentences, not two. This can be programmed into your document in Word options.

Italics are preferable and easier to read than underlines. Underlines are a throwback to when printers had to be told to typeset certain words differently – no longer needed.

Keep ellipses, hyphens, dashes, semicolons and colons to a minimum. Commas and periods are invisible to readers, but fancy punctuation is distracting and should be avoided if possible.

Scene breaks – make sure to designate scene breaks with three asterisks (***), or Amazon's upload system will assume you just made a mistake in spacing and will eliminate the spaces automatically.

Notes on Grammatical Errors in General.

Debby has found that in roughly 40% of cases where an aspiring author has great story but her manuscript is riddled with grammar mistakes, the author is also someone who doesn't understand that her work isn't done when she types "THE END." This makes these authors harder to work with because they don't respond promptly to requests for changes and aren't prepared for the follow-through that is needed to turn a manuscript into a sellable book. Therefore, Debby has made it a practice to simply reject a manuscript if grammar is an issue.

Moreover, reviewers are brutal about grammatical mistakes, so the fewer there are to begin with, the better for everyone.

Overall Tips When Submitting.

Make sure you submit a clean copy (accept all Changes and turn off Track Changes).

When working with an editor, make sure you label your files correctly so that you can keep track of which version of your manuscript you're working on.

Use proper punctuation.

Label all email correspondence correctly, which means that you must update the subject line. If you're past the QUERY stage, change the subject line to reflect that or your emails won't get

handled properly.

In your manuscript, set each scene. Make sure your reader knows where and when your story is happening. Places where you can include scene setting are: the beginning of the book, after each scene break, and during dialogue.

That Pesky Comma.

In general, the rules are trending toward fewer commas. But the comma is still necessary in some places.

The Oxford Comma:

Sometimes called the serial comma, the Oxford comma is used when the sentence includes a list of items. Some grammarians are in favor of omitting the final comma before the word “and,” but there are good reasons for including that last comma.

With Oxford Comma:

We are true to the red, white, and blue.

No Oxford Comma:

By train, plane and sedan chair, Peter Ustinov retraces a journey made by Mark Twain a century ago. The highlights of his global tour include encounters with Nelson Mandela, an 800-year-old demigod and a dildo collector.

This book is dedicated to my parents, Ayn Rand and God.

Otherwise, commas should go:

Between independent clauses and after introductory elements.

Before and after parenthetical elements (try not to use dashes). If you can take a clause out and the sentence still makes sense, then it’s a parenthetical element.

To separate coordinate adjectives. If you can insert the word “and” between two adjectives describing the same noun, then they’re coordinating.

A cool, clear day. (If you added “and” the sentence still works, so keep the comma.)

A pink knit sweater. (Adding “and” would be awkward, so no comma.)

To set off quoted elements.

“Today is going to be hot and humid,” he said with a smile. (dialogue tag)

“Today is going to be hot and humid.” He smiled. (action tag)

To set off phrases that express contrast.

He is good, not bad.

For typographical reasons, dates and addresses.

APB: Look out for roaming body parts.

Don't let your character's body parts develop minds of their own! Although in the past, these phrases may have been used in published books, nowadays a scene can appear awkward and distracting when eyes roam around the room or fingers itch to do something.

Avoid:

His eyes bounced around the room. (Use: He gazed around the room.)

My leg itched to slide against his.

Her fingers longed to slap his face.

When to Use Italics.

Although it is more difficult to read italics than regular letters, sometimes they are necessary. Use italics for:

Titles of books, TV shows, magazines, newspapers, ships;

Foreign words;

Internal thoughts (but make sure they are brief thoughts);

Sounds (*wham*, *bam*...); and

Telepathic communications (also use sparingly).

More pesky grammar things.

Be careful when choosing among these variations. A global search might help you find all the times when you've used these words, so you can judge if you've chosen the right one.

Its/It's; They're/Their/There; You're/Your; Who's/Whose.

Homophones.

Words that sound like other words, but have different meanings.

Altar/alter; Whack/wack; Poured/pored; Complements/compliments;

Waver/waiver; Reigning/reining; Peek/Pique/Peak; Vise/vice (This one pops up frequently in romance novels: The correct usage is "his vise-like grip.").

Synonyms.

Don't rely on the same general word. When you are revising your story, look for stronger, more specific alternatives to these words:

Walked; Looked; Small/Large; It was/he was/she was; Just/that/really (Take these out; usually unnecessary).

21st Century words.

Spell and/or capitalize these correctly!

iPhone (Just don't start a sentence with this word);

YouTube (both Y and T capitalized);

Internet (capitalized);
ringtone;
caller ID;
touchscreen; and
site (not “sight”).

Other mistakes to look out for.

If you can substitute a person’s name for their title, then the title is capitalized; otherwise, don’t capitalize the title.

“Aww, Mom!” and “My mom is coming to pick me up.”

Plural possessives – Ladies’ Room, Men’s Room.

When a noun ends in an “s,” Debby prefers to add ’s: Douglas’s home.

Also watch out for American vs. UK spelling.

Gray (US)/Grey (UK) and Toward (US)/Towards (UK)

For more information, check the following resources:

The Elements of Style by Strunk & White;

The Chicago Manual of Style;

The AP Manual; and

On Writing by Stephen King

As a final note, it might be helpful to read your work aloud. Some versions of Microsoft Word will let your computer read your work to you. Dragon Naturally Speaking and Dragon Dictate also may include a read-aloud function.

When you get finished with all these details, you will have a manuscript that will be polished until it dazzles! Good luck with your submissions.

About Saralee Etter: After years of writing newspaper articles, public relations releases and legal briefs, Saralee Etter published three sweet Regency romances and a sexy contemporary fantasy. Now she is working on a Victorian murder mystery series with sleuth Lucy Turner, featuring Gilbert & Sullivan. Her first book in this series, *A Short Sharp Shock*, will be coming soon. You can find Saralee at <http://www.saraleeetter.com> and at her blog, A Fine Mystery Indeed, www.saraleeetter.com/blog.

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Central Ohio Fiction Writers

P.O. Box 24254

Dayton, OH 45424

<https://twitter.com/COFWriters>

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Meeting Days:

The first "teen" Saturday of the month.



COFW President Jenessa McRoy with her raffle win.