



March 01, 2018.

Volume XXX. Issue 02.

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers Newsletter

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Newsletter Editor, Sandra J. Kachurek

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.

March 01, 2018/Issue 02/Volume XXX/1

♥ Central Ohio Fiction Writers ♥
Proud Chapter of the Romance Writers of America®

2018 Leadership

President, Jenessa McRoy <jenessah1@gmail.com>
Secretary, Susan Heino <susan_gee_heino@yahoo.com>
Treasurer, Jeanne Estridge <jeanne.estrIDGE.author@gmail.com>

Program Chair, Aleta Dodson <aletawrites@hotmail.com>
Newsletter Editor, Sandra J. Kachurek <sandrajkachurek@gmail.com>
Membership Chair, Linda Rice <lindarice05@gmail.com>
Social Media Chair, Andrea McConnell <fyrefly93@gmail.com>
Incentives, Julia Blaine <julmassie@aol.com>

Meetings

First "Teen" Saturday of the Month.
Social: Noon to 12:30. Business: 12:30. Guest Presentation: 1:30.

Location

Norwich Township Building
5181 Northwest Parkway. Hilliard, OH 43026

Dues

Renewal before January 31: \$25.
After January 31: \$30.

Follow COFW

Twitter <https://twitter.com/COFWriters>
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Central Ohio Fiction Writers

P.O. Box 24254
Dayton, OH 45424

Coming to COFW, March 17

Sara Portman

Creating Female Characters for Historicals

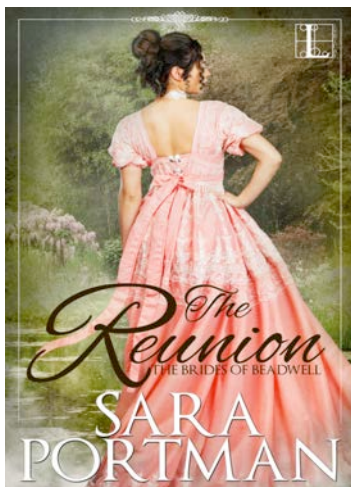
Sara Portman is an award-winning author of historical and contemporary romance. Her debut novel, *The Reunion*, was named 2015 winner in the Historical Category of the Romance Writers of America® Golden Heart® contest.

A daughter of the Midwest, Sara was born in Illinois, grew up in Michigan and currently lives in Ohio. In addition to her writing endeavors, Sara is a wife and mother in a large, blended family.

When not reading or dreaming up romantic fiction, Sara works in corporate finance by day and holds a B.B.A. in Accounting. As part of her academic experience, Sara spent a semester in London, UK through a study abroad program at Richmond College in London. Her anglophile tendencies continue today.



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



2015 Winner in the Historical Category of Romance Writers of America® Golden Heart® contest.

COFW Member, Maddie James

April 14

Just One More: The Series Addiction

Writing a series can be addicting—for the author and the reader. Having a series in your front/back list can boost sales, provide marketing opportunities, and keep readers coming back for the next book.

But what does it take to pull off a successful series? This workshop will share some strategies, tools, and behind the scenes logistics that work for Maddie James, and might work for you.

Maddie James is the author of the Amazon #1 Western Romance novel, *Broken*, and dozens of books that have hit numerous Amazon Top 10 - 100 lists, such as Hot New Releases and Top 5 Kindle World New Releases.

Maddie also has been listed as a Top 100 Contemporary Romance author at Amazon and a Rising Star of Western Romance at iBooks. She is the recipient of the Calico Trails Cameo Award and the Romance Book Scene's Best Novella Award.

She has over 43 titles spanning romance to traditional contemporary to western to suspense and into paranormal. Maddie pens stories that frequently cross a variety of romantic sub-genres. Sweet or spicy, suspense or comedy, western or time-travel, her heroes and heroines always chase one thing—the happily-ever-after—whether they realize it or not!

In 2017, Maddie split off some of her sweeter titles to a new pen name, Sophie Jacobs, who writes contemporary romance and women's fiction.



<http://www.maddiejames.net/>

Looking Ahead to COFW for 2018

June 16

Danielle Barclay

Publicity and Marketing Tips

Danielle Barclay, Owner and Marketing and Publicity Director of Barclay Publicity



Danielle is the owner of Barclay Publicity, a boutique public relations agency specializing in author publicity and book promotion. She started her career in publishing close to 20 years ago, honing her sales skills as an advertising account executive and working as a freelance marketing consultant.

Before founding Barclay Publicity, she held the position of publicity director at Entangled Publishing, helping launch and brand six of the company's twelve imprints. She also provided publicity support for the RT Booklovers Convention in 2010 and 2011.

As an industry recognized award winning social media expert, she has created and implemented over 700 publicity campaigns. She conducts presentations for writers groups and has a passion for mentoring aspiring and debut authors.

As a public relations professional, Danielle strives to get her clients in the right place to connect with readers so they can tell their story to as many people as possible. Aside from her marketing responsibilities, she also acts as copywriter, media buyer, and graphic designer for the company.

She has worked with numerous *New York Times* bestselling authors including Shannon McKenna, Sarah Castille, Sharon Hamilton, Tracy Wolff, Noelle Adams, Katee Robert, Gina Maxwell, Jennifer Probst, Laura Kaye, Jennifer L. Armentrout, and Tawny Weber.

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

September 15

J. Leigh Bailey

Mastering the Meet-Cute in Romance Fiction

The very first encounter between the romantic leads of your story sets the tone for the rest of the book. This encounter either pulls the reader deeper into the story or makes them decide the book isn't for them.

The meet-cute—the quirky, funny, sexy, and/or memorable way two people meet for the first time—has been used for decades in film, television, and novels as a way to get the audience immediately sucked into the romantic storyline.

This presentation will use examples from popular movies, television shows, and books to identify the main characteristics of an effective meet-cute, to recognize the basic formulas and tropes of the meet-cute, and to explore ways to create fresh versions of this classic plot device.

J. Leigh Bailey is an office drone by day and the author of Young Adult and New Adult LGBT Romance by night. She can usually be found with her nose in a book or pressed up against her computer monitor. A book-a-day reading habit sometimes gets in the way of ... well, everything ... but some habits aren't worth breaking. She's been reading romance novels since she was ten years old. The last twenty years or so have not changed her voracious appetite for stories of romance, relationships and achieving that vitally important Happy Ever After. She's a firm believer that everyone, no matter their gender, age, sexual orientation or paranormal affiliation deserves a happy ending.



<http://jleighbailey.net/>



More To Come for COFW in 2018

November 17: Write-In

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COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly

If you find you can't get your protagonist out of a hole you've written her into, or you're not sure whether the antagonist is antag-ing enough, or you merely need a boost with a story idea that has yet to see words on a page, consider stopping by the COFW Fiction Plotters group.

They meet the first Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Panera Bread in Taylor Square in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, 43068.

To ensure members are meeting and to stay in touch in between, they use this email:

cofwplot@yahoo.com

If you have questions:

Andrea McConnell: fyrefly93@gmail.com

Saralee Etter: saralee_etter@yahoo.com

Financial Aid Available for COFW Activities and Dues

1. COFW maintains a fund to be used by qualified applicants for the payment COFW Chapter Workshops, Conferences, other events or COFW membership dues.
2. Funding is obtained from member donations and is kept separate from RWA chapter funds.
3. To qualify for an award from the fund, an applicant must be a member of COFW for one full calendar year prior to applying. The applicant will submit the required form stating their need for assistance to the Chapter President. The letter shall contain a statement of the applicant's financial need as well as a description of the applicant's serious pursuit of a writing career.
4. An individual needing financial assistance may be awarded up to \$75.00 from the fund once every three calendar years.
5. Funds are to be distributed by the Board on a first-come, first-served basis; "first" being defined as the first applicant to submit a letter to the Board following the guidelines.
6. Funds shall be disbursed only to the extent there are available funds and qualified applicants. There shall be no limit to the number of applicants who receive funds in any year.
- 7. Requests will be reviewed by the Board President and Treasurer and are confidential.**

Minutes, Treasury Report, Attendance for February 17, 2018

Norwich Township Building, Hilliard

The meeting was called to order by President Jenessa McRoy, at 12:35 pm. A total of 20 members were present with two visitors.

Secretary Susan Gee Heino sent the Works in Progress sheet around and encouraged everyone to sign legibly to help us all get to know each other and see what we are working on.

Going around the room, everyone was invited to introduce herself and tell a bit about what she is writing.

Saralee Etter agreed to do the recap of today's speaker.

Financial Audit

Donna MacMeans announced that she met with members of the Board (past and current) this morning to conduct an audit on our books. Everything checked out and she was happy to say that things look good.

Recap of January COFW Board Meeting

Jenessa briefly shared highlights from the most recent Board meeting:

The 2018 Board has voted that we will host no major events this year—no retreat or conference—as we focus on building community within the group, attracting new members, and developing a larger pool of volunteers. This will be a year for brainstorming and rebuilding, not spending a lot of money.

Also, since no one has volunteered to serve as contest chair for 2018, we will not be able to offer our Ignite the Flame Contest. As participation has been struggling, a committee will be formed to evaluate our contest and decide what changes need to be made to make our contest more viable. The committee will announce these proposed changes by Fall of 2018, and we will look forward to hosting a more vibrant and money-making contest in 2019.

COFW has been experiencing many problems with our Yahoo! Group. The platform appears to be failing and it is clear that we will need to find some other, more reliable way to continue our communications and data storage. The Board is looking into other options and recognizes that whatever change will be made, there will be a learning curve. The Board's intent is to provide training and introduce changes in a manageable way.

Suggestion was made about using Facebook as our platform, but concerns were raised about privacy and "ownership." Also, not all of our members are on Facebook. We know that RWA has a platform and encourages chapters to make use of it, but there are glitches in the current platform and the entire RWA site/platform is being upgraded currently. The new and improved

RWA platform should roll out this fall and will be considered, as well as Google Drive and other options.

An updated definition of "First Sale" is needed in order to best celebrate our members' accomplishments; we need to revisit this incentive and "come into the now."

As COFW moves toward creating deeper community, the Board wants to hear from our members. What do we want from COFW? Can we enhance our community by partnering with NEORWA for larger events? Board will be looking into this.

What are New Members looking for in COFW?

Jenessa mentioned that as she has heard from new or prospective members, one topic seems to keep coming up and, therefore, should be addressed. Several people have told her they have a need for critique groups or mentor program and would like COFW to provide this.

Currently there is a plotting group that meets, but we'd like to see this sort of thing extended to serve more of our members. Perhaps one chair could head up critique groups as well as a mentor program. The matter will need further discussion, but we'd like to get volunteers involved in the brainstorming/planning as soon as possible.

Volunteers needed!

To get these new programs going, volunteers are needed. We need someone to serve as chair for critique groups and one for mentorship. We can see the value of creating small satellite groups who can build community within the larger COFW group, but we can't do this without volunteers. We all need to chip in because the work is too much for the current volunteer pool.

Meeting ideas needed

Most of 2018 is already scheduled, but we still need a few more program ideas. The Board relies on membership to tell us what you want! One suggestion was made that more could be done to increase attendance and involvement in our August meeting. That is the month we offer a recap of the annual Romance Writers of America Conference, held in July.

Several of our members attend and we always look forward to hearing from them. This year, the suggestion was made that those who can't attend might post their interest in a certain speaker or topic. If someone at the conference this year happens to also be interested in the same thing, they can take notes and share them.

Incentives

Julia Blaine was able to reward several people from our incentives basket this month, including:

*Julia has a beautiful cover for her upcoming release with Soul Mate Publishing and loves it!

*Eva Siedler finished her current WIP and entered it in the Golden Heart ®.

*Sheri Heinrich entered the NYC Midnight Short Story Challenge and the Writers Workout writing challenge.

*Rachael Dye submitted to Harlequin and her ms was redirected to their Medical Romance line. She also has been seeing great results from her weekly writers group in Piqua, focusing on critique and discussion.

*Jeanne Estridge got a new cover for her upcoming release. She sent Book 2 off to her developmental editor, and she sent Book 1 off to the copy editor.

*Aleta Dodson won the Readers' Choice for Contemporary in the JABBIC cover contest. She also submitted to Harlequin.

*Stacy McKittrick's next book in her *Ghostly Encounters* series releases on Feb. 27th.

*Andrea McConnell received an incentive for entering the Golden Heart ®.

*Becky Barker has a reissue coming out this week with a new title.

*Sandra Kachurek received a rejection, but she's happy to be submitting!

*Janice Beckett signed a five book deal with Soul Mate Publishing! Her first book will be out in April but is available for pre-order now.

Newsletter

Sandra Kachurek was applauded for her work with our Newsletter, and she asked for article ideas for upcoming issues. She had high praise for recent articles from Saralee Etter as well as others, and encouraged everyone to send in new release info with author bio and cover. She would love to hear from authors about why we are involved in COFW.

She can pull articles from the RWA platform but prefers fresh articles from the COFW membership. Articles can cover a wide range of topics of interest to the group, but we can't include links for selling or advertising.

Treasurer's Report

Jeanne Estridge submitted her report: Checking: \$8737.90; PayPal: \$954.52; Financial Assistance: \$1564.52. We have positive balances and she was happy that the audit went so well.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:35 pm to make ready for a Social Media presentation by Andrea McConnell.

Attendance and Works in Progress

01. Susan Gee Heino: finishing a requested submission for Harlequin Medical Romance line.

02. Julia Blaine: slowly working on a Regency set in Spain/Portugal during Napoleonic wars.

03. Rachel Dye: finishing a paranormal romance.

04. Saralee Etter: working on a Regency Romance based on an Irish legend and a Victorian mystery. Starting a new blog!

05. Shari Heinrich: working on D3, YA Queen of Wands, five-week team competition with seven other writers.

06. Sandy Kachurek: writing short stories.
07. Donna MacMeans: writing another Victorian Romance.
08. Janice Beckett: publishing first contemporary romance and working on writing Book 2 in Horse's Heal Hearts series.
09. Becky Barker: working on the release of *Undercover Love*, which is going live on most bookstores this week.
10. Sandy Rice: working on a historical romantic suspense, *Man of Shadows*.
11. Linda Rice: getting back to writing.
12. Lauren Connolly: editing her rough draft of *You Only Need One*.
13. Tanja Fazzari: editing mode.
14. Andrea McConnell: mid-edit on *The British Captain*.
15. Aleta Dodson: *Kentucky Bluegrass Wedding* won Readers' Choice for contemporary cover award in the Houston RWA JABBIC contest; *A Valentine Reunion* novella released Feb. 13 in *Love Me Hard* multiple author box set; Entered Harlequin Romance open submission contest.
16. Jeanne Estridge: starting work on *The Demon Wore Stilettos*.
17. Kim Jacobs (w/a Maddie James, Sophie Jacobs): rebranding, rewriting *Harbor Falls* Series
18. Guest Dawn Paul: Book 3 in kids' series, *The Tales of Christian Tompta: Gnomeling Journeys to Joddeburg*.
19. Gina Smith [Rochelle Bradley]: editing Book 2 in her small town series, *Plumb Twisted*.
20. Stacy McKittrick: working on *In Love With a Vampire*.
21. Marcia James: launching a new website and a mailer like newsletter and finishing *Southern Exposure*.
22. Jenessa McRoy: *My Lady Spy*, a historical.
23. Guest Alice Vossbrinck: hasn't started anything yet but has lots of ideas.



Secretary Susan Gee Heino's first love is lighthearted Regency romance, but she also writes contemporary. Under her pen name, Serena Gilley, she writes *The Forbidden Realm* fantasy romance series. In 2008 she won the RWA Golden Heart® Award for Best Regency Historical.

From Someone Who'd Love Advice about Final Drafts and Publishing New Member, Lauren Connolly

Writing as herself from Finlay, Lauren Connolly moved to Ohio a little over a year ago. She was googling local writing conferences and groups when she stumbled onto Central Ohio Fiction Writers. Her first romance novel is almost complete, and she's looking for advice and guidance, while also getting inspiration from hearing others talk about writing.



Q: What are your favorite genres to write in?

A: I'm currently working on a contemporary romance with medical elements (not about doctors though). I'm also interested in urban fantasy romance.

Q: What is your writing regimen?

A: I do well with goals, such as daily word count requirements. I often surpass them (Go, me!), but I need that expectation, so I sit down and start writing. Scrivener and Google Docs are my preferred writing tools. Evernote for recording all the random ideas that pop into my head.

I tend to write on my couch recliner next to my grumpy cocker spaniel, but I like to write at libraries and coffee shops because I feel like strangers are judging me if they see me on social media. The public scrutiny keeps me from goofing off.

Of course, I tend to get my best ideas when I'm at work and shouldn't be writing

Q: What or who inspires you to write?

A: Random things I see and hear in my daily life. My current work has a hero with renal failure who falls in love with his organ donor. This idea all started with John Oliver's "Last Week Tonight" episode about dialysis. If I find I'm stuck, the way I tend to shake loose some inspiration is by reading articles and books about writing. Those get me excited to start working on my own pieces.

Q: Describe at least one goal you hope to achieve this year or sooner.

A: This year my goal is to polish the rough draft I recently finished and start sending it out to agents. This is the first time I'll be doing this, so I'd love advice from my fellow COFW members!

Q: Who's your favorite author?

A: Nope. Can't choose. I can give you favorites ... Penny Reid, Patricia Briggs, Kristen Callihan, Elle Kennedy ... so many more!

Q: What are your favorite books?

A: This is a constant fluctuation. I'll just say the last book I squealed out loud while reading (I don't squeal lightly.) was *Beard Science* by Penny Reid.

Q: What are you reading now?

A: I'm re-reading *Firelight* by Kristen Callihan because I love it, and the podcast "Heaving Bosoms" is about to discuss it. But I also just picked up a bunch of Tessa Dare from the library. I've also been eyeing *Us* by Sarina Bowen and Elle Kennedy, which sits crisp and unopened on my shelf. Love the feel of a new book!

Q: What other information about yourself are you willing to share?

A: I'm a University Librarian using my steady salary to support my fluffy puppy Giles. When I have the time and money, I like to travel (just went to NOLA for Mardi Gras!). I cook vegetarian meals, sing loud enough for my apartment neighbors to hear me, knit when the weather is cold, fill up Pinterest with tattoo ideas, and swim whenever I have access to a body of water.

Q: What else would you like the members of COFW to know about you?

A: I'm very quiet at first, mainly because I'm an observer, but if I'm surrounded by friendly people, I open up quickly. Also, I am embarrassingly bad at remembering names. (I've worked in the office next to the same guy for over a year and I still don't know his last name off the top of my head.)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lauren.connolly.75>

Instagram: [@readingred623](#)

Twitter: [@laurenaliciaCon](#)

☆☆☆ *Stellar News* ☆☆☆

What have you done recently to get one step closer to achieving a contract, perfecting your business, connecting with your readers? Let's celebrate your efforts.

☆ **Marcia James** has revamped her 12-year-old website, created a new blog and modernized her reader newsletter. Everything launches March 1. See the new makeover using the same URL: www.MarciaJames.net. Her blog "Go Pets!" is also on her site. She's changed her readers' newsletter from a simple one on Yahoo Groups to a more professional-looking newsletter on Mailerlite.

☆ **Aleta Dodson** w/a Lita Lawson's cover for her *Kentucky Bluegrass Wedding* won the 2017 Readers' Choice Winner Contemporary category in the JABBIC, *Judge a Book By Its Cover* contest, for published authors sponsored by the Houston Bay Area RWA Chapter. Aleta's cover artist was Kellie Dennis—Book Cover by Design.

♥ Andrea McConnell: Social Media – How To Get Started ♥

Recap by Saralee Etter

Andrea McConnell, who writes historical romance as Lena Welston and who is COFW's Social Media Coordinator, began her presentation in February saying social media can seem like a big, complicated and even somewhat scary aspect of modern life. However, it also can be a useful tool for both traditionally published and self-published authors.

She pointed out that social media is the fastest way to stay connected and share information. Authors who hope to build a fruitful career can benefit from understanding how social media works.

Andrea displayed the top social media channels, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. Each channel is slightly different. She gave a quick summary of the more prominent channels and what they do best:

Facebook – It is the biggest channel with two billion users around the world. Originally used to connect friends and family, it is now part of global commerce.

Instagram- This channel is mostly focused on sharing photos that people take with their mobile phones.

Twitter – Originally designed for sharing brief personal updates and pithy remarks, it's now used for a wider variety of information, including breaking news. Hashtags help users quickly identify subjects of interest.

LinkedIn – A variation of Facebook, this media format is used for professional career building and job hunting.

Pinterest – Popular with moms for crafts, recipes and home-making DIY, Pinterest can be used to gather details for your book, character pictures, settings, etc.

YouTube – How-to videos are popular here as it allows people to speak directly to the camera.

Snapchat – In its beginning it was used to take pictures and messages that would disappear within a few minutes. Special features could be added to the photo, like frames or cat ears. That made it cool.

Spotify – You can make your own playlists of songs or collections of music that suit a theme using this app.



*Andrea McConnell begins her presentation on social media.
(Photo by Shari Heinrich)*

Most social media channels are designed to be used on a mobile phone, not a desktop, explained Andrea. It's particularly difficult to get Instagram on your laptop. You generally need a program that will provide an interface.

For efficiency, Grum and Hootsuite are two platforms that allow you to post on multiple social media channels at the same time.

What about websites, email loops and newsletters?

Andrea said an author's website is still very necessary. It's your online store front, your permanent place of business on the web, and the hub from which you can share information about yourself and your work.

An email loop – like the COFW Yahoo loop – is a dying form of communication. Emails aren't usually how people communicate over the Internet because now it is more like chatting or sharing posts on social media.

Social media channels are like parties. You go there to talk or share information in the moment. Email is more like sending a letter, which a person gets and then responds to at their leisure.

A newsletter list is still super-important. When a person gives you their email address, they are giving you permission to contact them. Your newsletter is your reminder to them that you exist.

Furthermore, Andrea added, you "own" your email list. You don't own Facebook or any other channel, so if they decide to close up shop, you will lose all the friends or followers you made on that social media channel.



Rachel Dye (right) shows Saralee Etter how to use Instagram following Andrea's presentation.

Andrea explained, "The goal is to create a loop between your social media, your blog and your website." The idea is that you share a post from your blog to social media to attract people to your website where they will find out about you (and hopefully sign up for your newsletter). Then when they go back to social media, they may read a new post, which will send them back to your website, etc.

Facebook – a closer look

Andrea gave a little background, saying Facebook started in 2004 as a way to connect with friends, family and college classmates. Eventually, it became heavily commercial and people were seeing too many advertisements. Now the commercials are being cut back. Authors who have been using Facebook to reach

readers will need to re-think how they use that channel.

On Facebook, personal “timelines” are for individuals. “Pages” are for businesses. “Groups” are pages that can be joined by people who share a common interest. Groups can be open (anyone can join), closed (the group’s name is visible to all, but you must ask to join and a site moderator has to approve you), or secret (an existing member must invite you, and the group is hidden from outsiders).

“Events” are pages where posts, comments and discussions happen live during a designated time period. “Facebook Live” is a feature that allows a person to appear on a Facebook video stream and answer questions posted in the comment section.

Instagram – a closer look

Started in 2010, this photo-based app is used by 800 million people worldwide. It was acquired by Facebook in 2012. It is designed to be used on a mobile phone, where a person uploads a photo to the app and then makes a comment. Other users can follow and comment on your pictures.

Twitter – a closer look

Started in March 2006, Twitter lets you tell the world what you’re doing right this moment. You are limited to 280 characters (used to be only 140). Twitter has become a large source for breaking news.

There are more than 974 million Twitter accounts. Most are inactive, with only about 70 million active accounts in the last quarter of 2017. In keeping with the “bird” theme, messages are called tweets and a new, inactive, or anonymous user is represented by an egg.

Hashtags (example: #amwriting) allow users to easily follow certain categories of information.

Hootsuite – a closer look

Hootsuite is a social media management platform. Want to promote your book on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, all with a single click of a button? That’s what Hootsuite does. It also allows you to schedule posts so you can have them appear automatically on these channels at a particular time or date.

In conclusion, Andrea reminded us that social media is a valuable tool for authors. Readers are looking for engaging content, and social media helps you supply that content to your readers. Pictures are worth a thousand words when it comes to grabbing attention on social media.

You don’t have to be on every social media channel, said Andrea. Pick one and get comfortable with it. Then join another if you feel ready for it. Not all your readers will see all your social media content. Posting on a social media channel will not replace your email newsletter or your author website.

Andrea cautioned us to remember that when we're on social media, we're in public. "Be careful," she said, "about sharing your private life and opinions online! You want to put your best foot forward in cyber-space as well as real life."

Being on social media allows a person to network and socialize without leaving home. It's a big help for introverted authors and busy people.

Following her presentation, Andrea was available for questions and personal assistance as members helped members with the various types of social media.

Andrea McConnell is a lifelong reader and former scientist who started reading romance as an undergraduate. After grad school, she worked as a marketing coordinator for a health science publisher and, more recently, as a marketing consultant. She now works in the field of scientific sales and, somehow, manages to find time to show dogs as well.



Becky Barker (right) clarifies social media types and their uses to Julia Blaine.

Follow Andrea w/a Lena Welston:

Twitter: [@lenawelston](https://twitter.com/lenawelston)

www.facebook.com/lenawelston

The slides from Andrea's presentation are available to COFW members here:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1TPrSs_7GxpnXTOYHzw8avQgfJLhL7spPijjGwlnCuOU/edit#slide=id.p



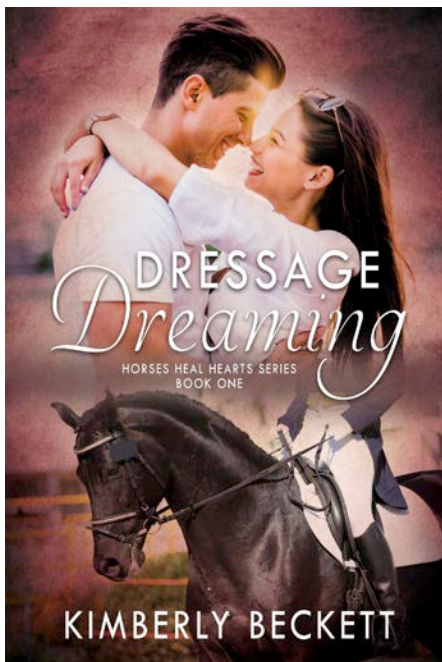
Recap writer, Saralee Etter is the author of three traditional Regency romances. Her next book, coming during summer 2018, will be part of the *Legend to Love* Regency romance series, with a protagonist based on the legendary Irish hero Cuchulain. She is still working on *A Short Sharp Shock*, the first book in a Victorian-set mystery series featuring sleuth Lucy Turner and her friends, William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan.

www.saraleeetter.com

A Fine Mystery Indeed at www.saraleeetter.com/blog1

☆ First Book Release by Kimberly Beckett ☆

Dressage Dreaming



Michael Stafford was on top of the world as a proud member of the British Olympic Dressage Team and Olympic gold medalist. Then he lost his mount, his fiancée left him for another man, and now his brother has been arrested for manslaughter. He believes his luck has turned when a talented stallion named Tempest comes available in Germany, just in time to compete in the next World Cup competition.

Jessica Warren, orphaned at 21 and legal guardian of her younger sister, is an up and coming American dressage prodigy, but she has lost her competition mount to injury. To compete in next year's World Cup, she flies to Germany to consider a horse named Tempest, where she discovers she will have to compete with the extremely handsome and talented Michael Stafford for the right to ride the spectacular stallion.

Who will win Tempest? Will Michael be able to trust another woman with his heart? Will Jessica allow herself to be loved, or will her personal demons keep them apart?

Kimberly Beckett wore out four rocking horses before she was 5 and later read every horse story in print. Her parents believed it was a phase, but as soon as she had her first attorney job nearly 30 years ago, Kimberly bought her first horse and hasn't been without at least one ever since. She's earned her United States Dressage Federation Bronze Medal. When she wasn't reading about horses, she was reading romance novels, and her favorites always involve an alpha male Hero riding a magnificent horse. Kimberly now combines both loves with her own version of equine-facilitated happily ever afters. She truly believes that Horses Heal Hearts.

Janice Beckett w/a Kimberly Beckett says she's a member of COFW because "I value the support and encouragement I get from the other members, and I am doing the best I can to learn from authors much more experienced than I am. I especially appreciate the fact that if it had not been for the COFW, I would not have met and pitched my first book to Debby Gilbert and would not now have a publishing contract with Soul Mate Publishing."



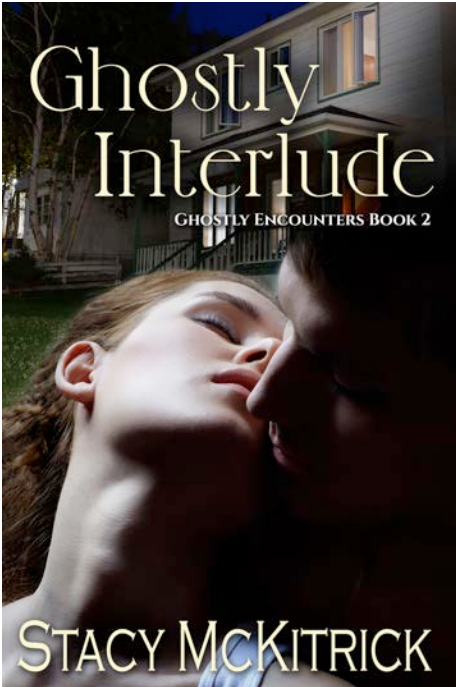
<https://www.facebook.com/Author-Kimberly-Beckett>

www.kimberlybeckett.com

February 27th Release for Stacy McKittrick's

Book 2 in her Ghostly Encounters Series

Ghostly Interlude



Maggie Russell—legal assistant by day, horror writer by night—gets the scare of her life when she wakes up in a strange café without any idea of how she got there. But if she tells anyone about her sleepwalking escapades, she could lose her grandmother's house, one she'd fought so hard to keep.

Dean Parker is a private investigator whose office is next door to Maggie's law firm. He's been eyeing the pretty brunette ever since she started working there but getting involved with anyone isn't in his game plan. When he finds out she's been having sleeping problems, he suspects her money-grubbing cousin is involved. Instead, he discovers something worse: one ghost is living with Maggie and another may be possessing her.

Dean is determined to help Maggie rid her home of the uninvited guests. He just never figured his attraction to her would be reciprocated. Keeping his distance is no longer an option, though. If he fails, Maggie could very well be possessed forever.

Stacy McKittrick fell in love with paranormal romance, decided to write her own, and found her passion in life. She used to work in accounting. Now she spends her time with vampires, ghosts and aliens. Born in California, she currently resides in Ohio with her husband. They have two grown children.

About being a member of COFW, Stacy says, "I love my local chapter because I get to see actual PEOPLE! Writer-people! Without COFW I'd feel lost. On-line chapters just aren't the same because it's too easy to be a lurker. I like the face-to-face interaction so much better."

www.stacymckittrick.com

www.stacysrantings.blogspot.com.



Releases March 1st

UNDERCOVER LOVE

By Becky Barker

Kyle Tremont, retired FBI agent, reluctantly agrees to one last job as a favor to his former boss. His mission is to extract an agent by the code name "Phantom" from a deep undercover assignment. And the plan runs smoothly until their identities are compromised. On the run with a sexy, yet mysteriously innocent operative, he finds her more intriguing by the minute. Which means the sooner he delivers her to safety and makes his way home to Texas, the better!



Phantom, aka Rianna Sullivan, had trained for years to bring down the man who destroyed her family, but nothing has prepared her for the impact of working with an FBI legend. The bond of trust they forge is fierce, the attraction between them even fiercer, but what they share has to be temporary. As they fight side by side for justice, she wonders what it would be like to keep him longer

Becky Barker is an award-winning, bestselling author of contemporary western romances and romantic suspense novels. Her work has been translated into more than a dozen foreign languages, has been published in hardcover library editions and is currently available in digital as well as audio formats. She

lives in central Ohio surrounded by a big, loving family. The author considers herself blessed to have a life filled with love and laughter.

Becky's involvement in COFW goes back to its very beginnings. "After my first book was published in 1987, I was asked to help organize a local RWA chapter in the central Ohio area. The COFW was born and has been meeting ever since. I've always been a proud member."

[MailChimp Contest/News](#)

<http://beckybarker.com/>

www.twitter.com/BeckyBarker

www.Facebook.com/BeckyBarker

The Perils of Being Published: The Rules of Romance

By Gerry Bartlett

The following article first appeared in the February 2018 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.

Rules? Are there rules I should know about? Actually, there aren't. Well, not many.

This is contest season. I volunteer to judge one of my chapter's contests. It's a way to pay back. And I enjoy it. Usually.

When a contest coordinator called me, frantic, because she'd received another judge's very harsh feedback, she had a question.

This judge was brutal because she kept writing on the unpublished contest entry that the writer "couldn't do that in romance" that the writer had "broken the rules."

Whoa.

Why hadn't I gotten the memo that there were hard and fast rules about what you could or couldn't do when writing contemporaries or even romantic suspense?

After all, I've only had, um, over 20 books published. But, wait, I do know that RWA demands a "satisfying ending." Well, heck, I demand that, too. If the hero and heroine don't have a promise of a happily ever after at the end of a book, I'm pissed. Other than that? I'll say it again, what rules?

Okay, so maybe there are a few guidelines that it doesn't hurt to follow. Here are some that I think can make your book better.

First, we all know that your characters need to be likeable. Now there are ways to get around that. Maybe your hero does a bad, almost unforgivable thing at first. He'd better save a kitten or puppy early on or we're never going to stick with him.

You have read *Save the Cat* [by Blake Sheldon] haven't you?

Then that same hero had better redeem himself to our heroine and fast. We also hate those too stupid to live characters. Don't send your heroine down into the cellar when there's a serial killer on the loose and she hears a noise. Not without a gun, backup and her own baby screaming down there. Know what I mean? Good.

Some books have graphic violence, others graphic sex. Fine unless they're going on at the same time. Then we're back to stupidity. Bad guys are shooting at you but he's got this gigantic boner and ...

One thing I won't forgive, and neither will your readers, is a boring book. (Okay, I admit it, that boner thing wasn't boring.) Endless pages of backstory, description and dialogue rehashing what we already know will induce comas. Yes, that's unconsciousness, not punctuation. Sluggish

pacing does the same.

I'd rather see mythical rules broken and broken with enthusiasm, than to see a same old same old story.

Entertain me. That's a rule I can live with. Yes! Rule one for me is that you must entertain your reader.

If you don't? You will be asked for a refund.

There's a reason editors say they are always looking for a fresh voice. Because they see too many polished manuscripts that stick to well-worn paths.

I'm not talking about punctuation and spelling. Nor formatting. If you can't send in a good, clean copy, or upload one if you're self-publishing, then shame on you. Hire someone if you have to, but dot those i's and fix those commas (yes, I'm talking punctuation this time).

Sparkling characters that come to life on the page, interesting plot twists and dialogue that flows seamlessly are what will make your book stand out. Whether it breaks a rule or two in the small mind of someone who thinks she knows what should or shouldn't be in a story won't matter. Success will be yours.

How do you learn to do this stuff?

Well, I read a lot. I spent years going to conferences where I listened to the masters sharing the secrets of the craft. The Internet is full of classes for newbies and not-so-newbies. If you can afford it, sign up for the 2018 National RWA Conference in Denver this summer. You will be overwhelmed with great information and inspiration. If you're extra lucky and extra dedicated, it might be your chance to hook an agent or editor.

Have you entered a contest so you can get feedback on your manuscript? Are you paying attention to what was said? If two judges agree on a point, it might be valid. If there's an outlier who makes you doubt what you know, think about it but it may be something to ignore.

Whatever you discover, don't let it make you quit writing if that is your dream.

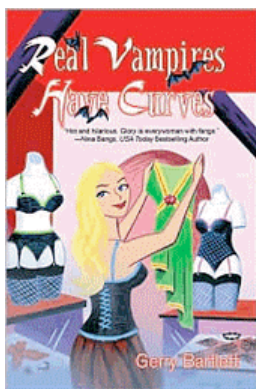
We have all faced rejection. I had years of "no" before I got the call in 1998. Yes, that long ago. And I didn't automatically sell books after that.

It has been a struggle to stay published. I hustle to keep traditionally published. I now indie publish my vampire books because of a stagnant market in paranormals these days. My advances and my income have dropped.

If I were smart, I'd be a greeter at Wal-Mart. I'd earn more. But I love to tell stories. And my friends won't sit still for them. So I put them into my computer instead. And challenge myself to create interesting characters, twisty plots and unique worlds. It's a compulsion that's better for me than some others I could name.

I've been lucky that I found an audience. But luck is just part of it. Most of it is perseverance and a stubborn refusal to take no for an answer.

Then again, I was never fond of rules. Lucky for me, I found a job where there aren't many.



Gerry Bartlett is the best-selling author of the *Real Vampires* series. She'll soon release *Real Vampires: When Glory Met Jerry*, the prequel to the series set in 1604 London. She's also the author of the *Texas Heat* contemporary series for Kensington and has a romantic suspense series for them starting with *Texas Lightning*, a November 2018 release.