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Letter from the Board

By [Jade Buchanan](#), president

Hello everyone, I hope you are all enjoying the fall weather. There's something about this time of year that makes me want to burrow under the covers with a good book, and a mug of hot chocolate, and just lose myself in words. It's also a great time to sit down at the computer and type out a few pages, especially since it's a bit chilly up where I live!

Your Board of Directors has been very busy since our last newsletter, and we have some wonderful news to share with you. With the help of a slate of volunteers we have managed to create a Contest Committee, a Membership Committee and a Workshop Committee. We already have three workshops planned for 2010 – Medical 101 for writers, Homosexuality in the Classical Age and Plotting Romantic Suspense. In addition to those, we also have a few ideas that are percolating at the moment. As soon as we have anything concrete we'll share it with the group.

RWA National has recently come forward with a few changes, direct from the IRS, that will impact our website. In order to comply with the IRS non-profit requirements, all the chapters have been asked to remove information from our websites that is seen as an advertisement or promotion for individual members. We don't expect these changes will impact us too much, but as soon as we get clear directions from RWA we will contact everyone and let them know what will change.

We will also be contacting members soon to find nominees to run for the 2010 RRW Board of Directors, and I'm hopeful we'll have passionate candidates step forward who are willing to put a little time and effort into helping shape the future of the Rainbow Romance Writers. Please give some thought as to whether you would be interested in running.

Of course, it will take time to roll out everything we would like to do, so we appreciate your patience, as well as your suggestions for improvement. We are incredibly thankful to all the volunteers who have stepped forward to help us make this chapter a success!

Until next time, happy writing!

Jade



Dialogue, It's Not Just Talk

By Janet K. Brown

The following article ran in the Sept. 2009 issue of Love Letters, the newsletter of Red River Romance Writers in Wichita Falls, TX. Permission granted to sister chapters to forward or reprint with proper credit.

Here is my diagnosis for making dialogue dynamic:

D Different Goals

The best dialogue comes when two characters desire different goals from the conversation. This provides tension, and dialogue should always have tension.

I Interview your characters

Find out how they would answer certain questions even if the questions aren't posed in your manuscript. This deepens your knowledge of a character's reaction.

A Action

Fiction and non-fiction are similar to stage plays. Dialogue is more than words. We need gestures, body language, even moments of silence to set the stage, put the reader into the story.

L Listen to your characters talk

Each one should have their own way of talking, so that we recognize the speech without putting their name to the line of talk. Educated/use slang? Pet names? Recurrent phrases?

O Out loud reading

Prose and poetry have meter in common. When you read your work out loud, does it have rhythm, cadence, and energy? Is it missing a word or is it three words too long? You can only tell by reading it out loud. Be sure if you change it, to read it out loud again.

U Use of dialogue

Dialogue only has three uses:

1. Move the story along.
2. Intensify characterization
3. Both

If none of those uses apply, then take out the dialogue.

E Eliminate words

Dialogue should be concise. Eliminating words that we've slaved over and think are beautiful is hard, but sometimes necessary. We can strengthen by elimination.

One part of speech to eliminate almost totally is adverbs like almost totally.

Beats or tags? Which is best?

Beats - gestures/body language

Tags - he said

Rainbow Romance

Writers is online chapter #217 of [Romance Writers of America](http://www.rainbowromancewriters.com)®, founded in 2009. Our goals are:

- to promote excellence in gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender romances
- to help members become published in LGBT romances
- to be an advocate within the industry for our genre
- to be a resource to our members and others on writing and the publishing industry

We are career-focused writers, and what we love to write are passionate, sensual, sweet, and sometimes erotic glimpses of love between LGBT characters.

We can be found online at www.rainbowromancewriters.com

Pot of Gold is published quarterly by volunteers and welcomes articles and ideas from chapter members. Articles are the opinion of the author and not necessarily those of RRW. Articles may be reprinted with obtained permission to reprint content.

If you'd like to join RRW, visit us on the web:

<http://www.rainbowromancewriters.com/join-us/>

Annual chapter membership is \$25, half year is \$12.50, starting November 1. You must be a member in good standing of RWA as well.



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Sometimes using neither is best.

Summary advice to helping your dialogue:

1. Read every day from your favorite writers- both in your chosen genre and in other genres.
2. Periodically read or reread a writing craft book or take an online course.

For help with writing books, check my group blog.

<http://www.bookstowriteby.blogspot.com>

3. Write something every day even if you delete it and start again the next day.

Janet K. Brown loves and lives dialogue in short stories, romances and women's fiction in Wichita Falls, TX.



Publisher Interview - Trace Edward Zaber of Amber Quill Press

By [Lynn Lorenz](#)

This time I've chosen Trace Edward Zaber, co-owner of Amber Quill Press. You can find the site at www.amberquillpress.com and from there go to either their Amber Heat line, heterosexual romance, or Amber Allure, their GLBT romance line.

Trace is an amazingly accomplished person, sort of a renaissance man of the arts. He sings, plays keyboards, writes, creates websites, does cover art and edits. Whew! I'm exhausted just thinking of all the stuff he does.

So, I took a deep breath, got comfy, and asked Trace a few questions our readers might just want to know about Amber Quill Press and at the end of the interview, about Trace.

Trace, what made you decide to turn "publisher?" Was it one incident, or had the notion of "hey, I write, but I'd really like to publish" been playing in your brain?

When writing my first novel, I had joined or organized several writer critique groups, and during the meetings, I heard numerous first-hand stories from other authors about how agents and large publishers operated (mostly NY companies). I found it very discouraging that many had a narrow scope when it came to the genres they found "acceptable," regardless what readers wanted. For instance, crossing genres was considered (and still is considered) a "no-no," and writers had a difficult time finding agents or publishers who would even look at manuscripts that didn't fit the "norm." Personally, I love stories that don't fit the standard mold—for example, if given something like a "Dark Fantasy / Vampire / Futuristic / Suspense / Thriller / Time Travel / Etc." book to read, I'll be more than satisfied. In an example like this, however, the typical NY agent or publisher wouldn't have a clue what to do with it and wouldn't even want to give the author a chance. As I said, discouraging.

Meanwhile, I faced my own frustration, being an author of Historical Fiction. Most agents fed me the same line—"Historical Fiction, especially Civil War Fiction, has absolutely no market, and we



want nothing to do with it." Now, keep in mind, this was at the very moment when the Civil War novel *Cold Mountain* was the #1 best seller in the US. So this response from agents made no sense to me and got me to thinking that many NY "gurus" truly didn't have a clue what they were talking about. Soon thereafter, I learned about electronic publishing, how e-publishers were more amenable regarding books the NY bigwigs rejected based on genre, or the cross-genre books I mentioned earlier. After my novel found a home with one of them, I did more research into the e-publishing industry, which seemed more author-friendly overall.

Eventually I got hired as an editor for the same company that published my book and learned even more about the business. After a short time, however, I realized not all was "kosher" when it came to my particular employer, and many of my co-workers felt the same way. We all learned from the company's owner what "not to do" when it came to running a company, and keeping the authors happy. Unfortunately, when we approached her in mid 2002 and voiced our concerns, she basically told us, "If you ingrates think you can do better, then to hell with you, I dare you to try." So this is exactly what we did. In July 2002, we formed Amber Quill Press, LLC, and we opened in October of the same year.

Wow! So once you had the idea, how did you make it happen?

It took only several meetings of the key participants before things came together. Keep in mind, we had all worked at the other e-publishing house, we knew each other extremely well, and as I mentioned, we also knew what "not to do" when forming the LLC. This familiarity with each other allowed us to organize quickly, with each partner taking on key duties, setting our goals, etc. Frankly, I believe it was fate that brought together such a diversified team. As it happened, each owner had experience in at least one key area such as accounting, customer service, and marketing, and all of us had been editors. I was a cover artist and webmaster as well as editorial director for the other publisher, so when we formed AQP, some of us kept our same duties and titles. Moreover, since the authors at the other publisher were also frustrated and dissatisfied, it wasn't difficult to gather a roster of talent to join us, so we began with a slew of titles from extremely prolific writers. We had several generous individuals who financed our start-up, and each of the owners forfeited their salaries until we had the company firmly running in the black. Thankfully, since we have never been people to rush forward too quickly and put ourselves in financial despair, this didn't take too long to achieve.

Tell me, where'd the name Amber Quill Press come from?

We had toyed with several names, but none of them seemed quite right. Then one of our group members suggested Amber Quill Press, LLC. If I remember correctly, what eventually sold us on the name was the fact that it not only sounded right to us, but it also started with an "A," which obviously would put us at or near the top of alphabetical lists of publishers.

Amber Quill publishes both print and e-book. Why both? Why not just e-book? Isn't that where most of the profit comes from?

Again, this goes back to what we learned from working at the other e-publisher. Many authors had been promised print versions of their books, but the owner never came through. We didn't want that to happen to our authors, so we vowed to put every full-length manuscript into print and release them simultaneously along with their e-book counterparts (albeit with a 1-2 week delay based on the schedule of our printer).



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But why print? We realized that electronic publishing was only a small but growing market, and that most readers preferred print (many still do, I'm sure, even after all these years). Therefore, we knew that for our books to reach as many potential customers as possible, we needed every format available. We have also never believed in what I call the "quota nonsense," where an author must prove his/her sales potential and sell so many copies of an e-book before a print version is considered. Frankly, in our experience, the "success" of one format has absolutely nothing to do with the sales potential of the other format. Indeed, some of our titles that have sold almost zero in electronic format have gone on to sell hundreds or thousands of paperbacks (if we had waited for those authors to meet an "e-book sales quota," we would still be waiting and have lost out on all those paperback sales). And on the flip side of the coin, some of our most popular e-books have gone on to sell very few copies in paperback. Again, just because a book may sell a certain number of units in electronic format doesn't accurately reflect how many copies the same book will sell in paperback.

Regardless, at AQP, not only do we release all of our novel-length titles in paperback, but we also encourage our authors--when it comes to their short stories or novellas--to plan ahead for paperback collections. Once an author has enough stories where the combined word count is high enough, they are free to send me a request for a paperback collection, and I'll happily work it into the release schedule. These days, we release approximately 3-6 new paperback collections each month in addition to the usual novel-length paperbacks.

Again, in order to reach as many potential customers as possible, we simply treat paperback as another format.

You mentioned your partners. Do each of you handle a different part of the business?

Yes, there are five company owners/LLC members, and based on our past experience, each of us has a different area of expertise. One owner is our Marketing Director as well as being a Managing Editor; another owner is our Customer Service Director, Contract Administrator, Author Liaison, and Book Review Coordinator as well as being a Managing Editor, while another owner is our Financial Manager/Accountant along with being a Managing Editor. Another owner is our Production and Pre-Press Director and formats both the e-books and paperback files. And my duties are Editorial Director, Creative Director, Acquisitions Director, and Webmaster, and although I still do the occasional edit, that's becoming rare. Of course, each owner pitches in wherever they can when necessary, but generally that's how the company duties are broken down.

Besides the partners, how many people does it take to run AQP?

Along with the five company owners, there are several senior staff members (one is a Managing Editor and Marketing Consultant, and another is a Marketing & Promotions Coordinator), one individual who works for our Production Director in preparing files, and we also have another individual who helps as a Technical Consultant when the need arises.

Tell us about Amber Quill Press -- the type of stories you publish, what you're looking for in an author, and about the "invitation only" concept. What's the overall mission statement?

At Amber Quill Press, we have three separate sections to our website (or three imprints):



-- Amber Quill Press (our parent site, which publishes Romance novels in all sub-genres, along with Horror, Science Fiction, Suspense/Thriller, Historical, Mainstream, and even some Young Adult fiction, among others)

-- Amber Heat (which publishes novels, novellas, and short stories that fall into the Erotica or Erotic Romance category, including all various sub-genres)

-- Amber Allure (which publishes novels, novellas, and short stories that fall into all GLBT Fiction categories, including all various sub-genres)

Regarding the "Invitation Only" process. Earlier, I mentioned how AQP started in a unique fashion (or more unique than how most e-pubs begin), with my partners and I leaving one publisher to form AQP, and in the process, bringing a group of authors with us. Thus, without us even planning it that way, we started the "invite only" model.

I could never wrap my head around the notion that any author already "established" at an e-publisher would have to go through the same old "waiting for acceptance" game for each new manuscript they submitted. I mean, come on...if that author has proven his/herself time and time again by submitting quality material and working well with editors, why did they have to spend weeks or perhaps months waiting around for an acceptance letter? We already knew the authors we brought along with us when forming the company, and we trusted them to deliver excellent fiction (or I wouldn't have invited them to come along with us in the first place), so I figured, why put them through that "waiting for acceptance" nonsense? Therefore, I didn't. And what happened is that I suddenly found myself with a ton of free time on my hands. I didn't have to spend most of each week wading through an endless stream of submissions or sending out an endless stream of rejection letters like I did at the other publisher. Instead, I could concentrate on the roster of trusted authors we had contracted, who were quite prolific and supplied us with more than enough material.

Nowadays, when I feel we can use some new material to fill out our schedule, I'll search the web for additional authors. This is usually based on the types of books our customers demand at any given time, and also based on recommendations I may receive from our staff members who've read books by "outside" authors and felt their writing style would fit in well at AQP. So instead of reading through submissions each week, I can periodically visit author websites, read some excerpts at my leisure, and if something strikes me as being engaging, and the author has a firm grasp on the craft of writing, I'll likely send an invitation to them. And with our "invite only" model in place, the submissions I receive from invited authors are able to be given top priority when they arrive and I'm generally able to send out either rejections or acceptance letters within days, if not hours.

The e-book market is a growing piece of the romance book industry. What kind of growth have you seen in your business over the last three years? What genres have seen the most growth in fanbase? Which ones have dropped? What do you see as the new trends?

Currently, the breakdown of sales for the company goes something like this...Amber Quill (non-erotica) sales make up less than 5% of our business today. Amber Heat ("straight" erotica or erotic romance), which used to comprise more than half of the business several years ago, has now dropped to only about 20%, and for the most part, that number continues to decline. Amber Allure (Gay Fiction and Erotica) now comprises approximately 75-80% of our business.

The surprising factor in all of this is that several years ago, almost en masse, our customers (mainly heterosexual women) decided, as if overnight, to shun "straight" erotica/erotic romance in favor of Gay Fiction & Erotica (more specifically, M/M Gay fiction as opposed to F/F fiction). The



change happened so suddenly, not gaining momentum over a year or two, but over the course of only several months. Even stories featuring ménage relationships (be they M/F/M or M/M/F with bisexual content) lost popularity in the past six months...extremely fast. Of course, demographically, after we began the Allure imprint, our customer base expanded to include the gay community, yet heterosexual females remain our chief customer base. But regardless of the numbers, we will continue to produce books in all imprints, while focusing extra attention to different areas, depending on what the majority of our customers request as well as what our authors want to submit to me.

What are some of the things you think should be taken into account when an author considers a publishing house for e-books? What are the warning signs a publisher might be in trouble?

A writer needs to do heavy research on the companies with whom he/she would like to publish. In this day and age with Google just a click away, and endless websites and blogs devoted to the industry, there's no excuse for an author to not know inside details about any particular e-publisher. Authors must always remember, this is a business and legal documents are at stake. They need to ask questions, and lots of them, instead of just crossing their fingers and signing on the dotted line. Fellow authors are usually very willing to lend advice, and it's certainly acceptable for an author to ask other writers how various e-publishers work or treat their authors. And, like in any medical situation, it is always wise to get multiple opinions.

A writer should ask themselves several questions before submitting a manuscript to any company. Does the publisher have an attractive and comprehensive website, or is it riddled with spelling and grammar mistakes, have broken links, have mismatched graphics, etc.? If the latter, move on. Does the publisher have professional-looking book covers? If no, move on. Does the publisher have experience producing books in the same genre as the manuscript in question? If no, move on. Does the publisher use third-party vendors (Fictionwise, Amazon, ARe, etc.) to also sell its products? If no, move on. Does the publisher have a solid track record (in other words, have they been in business for a number of years with no public claims of financial troubles)? If no, move on. Have there been any rumors about the publisher breaching its contracts (including but not limited to paying royalties on time, grabbing rights they do not need, cancelling contracts for no good reason, promising paperbacks but not following through, etc.)? If multiple authors have made claims against the publisher breaching its contracts, move on...and fast. Additionally, if the owners or management of the company are known for verbally attacking disgruntled authors in public forums, are not above disclosing personal information about their authors in public forums to embarrass them, etc., avoid these publishers at all costs. In other words, if the owners or management of a company seem to not know the meaning of the words "professionalism" and "ethics," do not submit your precious manuscripts to them.

As I mentioned, an author should make it his/her business to ask questions and spend days, in not weeks, researching the company in question. When companies go out of business amid financial scandal, etc., I typically shake my head in wonder when I see comments such as, "Gee, how could this happen? They swore all those rumors about them were false..." Well, where there's smoke, there's usually fire, so if fellow authors are urging you to avoid Publisher X, then avoid Publisher X. It's as simple as that. And these days, with some publishers (including AQP) no longer considering "re-published" manuscripts, preliminary research is vital since you may not be able to find new homes for those previously published manuscripts should something happen. There are too many potential legal pitfalls involved for companies to take a chance on re-publishing manuscripts--especially when some "iffy" legal documents were signed with "shady" publishers--so a writer needs to play it safe and not just sign away their rights with the first publisher who offers them a contract (unless that publisher has truly proven itself and stood the test of time without scandal).



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Writers should also be cautious about any brand new company, especially a publisher that has yet to produce any books or pay out its first scheduled royalties. In these cases, research is tricky, and if the company does not at least offer information on company owners and chief operating officers so that a writer can do research and check references, then it's best to steer clear. Also, if a new company appears and instantly makes grand promises of mega-sales, of "changing the face of e publishing as we know it," etc., you can pretty much assume there will be major trouble ahead. No one has a crystal ball as far as I know, and any company owner who guarantees these things before publishing a single book has obviously not done their own industry research. It takes many years for a company to establish itself and remain solidly in the black, no matter how much staff experience or financial backing it has, and an author must take this into account before jumping on an "untested bandwagon."

Great advice, Trace. Thanks for being so open and thorough.

Now, I'm going to ask about Trace, the man. How many hours a week do you work? Do you limit yourself and have to just say, "Stop, I'm over my quota of hours?" Do you have a life outside of work?

I work anywhere from 60-80 hours per week, depending on the workload at any given time. And no, I have no quota of hours. If something needs to get done, it needs to get done. Period. Regarding a life outside of work? Oh yes, I remember those days. In other words, the answer is "no, not much."

Besides doing the editor gig, you're also an author. Tell us something about your own writing....

I'm an author of Civil War fiction and have one novel available through AQP called *Sins of the Father*. About a decade ago I had also released the first book in a planned seven-part series revolving around several families during the Civil War, but I decided not to re-publish the book through Amber Quill Press. AQP business comes first, and since there's little time available to devote to any personal writing projects, I knew I would never be able to finish the series, so decided to shelve the first book.

Thanks, Trace, for a very interesting and informative interview. We at Rainbow Romance Writers are thrilled you took the time to answer our questions.

Lynn has been pubbed for 2 years and writing for publication for 4 years. She's livin' the dream and having a blast doing it. Currently, she lives in Texas, and loves big hair, BBQ, and blue jeans. www.lynnlorenz.com





Help wearing the "Author Promotion Hat"

by Linda Joyce Clements

This article was first published in the HeRA Writers Journal in the September edition. Use by other RWA chapters is permissible with proper chapter and author credits.

Does the thought of wearing the "author promotion hat" make you groan? Lose sleep? Or make you explode into an explicative diatribe? A marketing firm may be the ticket to promoting a book and marketing yourself without needing an advanced business degree.

"Let's start with the basics," says Mary Schanuel, president of Synergy Group, a St. Louis marketing communications firm she founded in 1995. (www.synergy-pr.com) Mary is also a kindred spirit. She's working on an eco-thriller novel.

"Authors have to build a platform," she says. A platform is a starting point to get an author's message to the public: a website, email, facebook, and publications. Many businesses and authors are jumping on the Twitter bandwagon. These applications are easy enough for authors handle on their own. However, if an author wants to take promotions to the next step, a marketing/public relations firm can help.

Where to begin the search for the right type of help? Knowing industry terms arms an author with knowledge and can aid in smoother communications when interviewing firms.

- ❖ Advertising – paid public promotion for a book.
- ❖ Publicity – also called "earned advertising" -- articles are written, but no money is exchanged with the publication.

"Publicity is a public relations strategy. It's about selling a story to the public through the media. Using the media as a funnel to push information to the audience. But first you must convince the editor that their readers will be interested in your client and/or client's product," Mary says. Earned advertising is advantageous to an author. "The article placement in a publication is free, and an article has more credibility than a paid-for advertisement," Mary said.

How does one achieve earned advertising? This is where a marketing firm can help. When Mary works with a client, she has to understand their story and how to market it. She studies publications, magazines, journals, and E-zines, to learn about their readership and editorial guidelines, then works to develop a relationship with someone at that publication. She pitches that person an article idea. Pitching an article idea about a client is no different from an author pitching to an agent or editor. It starts with a query letter and a hook in the first sentence to interest the media contact. Next, the letter tells what the story is about and why it's good for the publication. (All of this is familiar to any author.) The difference is, if the story is accepted, Mary puts her client in touch with the staff person or freelancer assigned to write the article and they take it from there. The author gets publicity from the article.

"Book publicity is tough in today's economy," Mary advised. "The LA Times dropped the Sunday Book Review. The New York Times has reduced column space for book reviews. Places to get book reviews in print publications are declining. But at the same time, opportunities for online publicity are growing."

A publicist's services can enhance promotions through developing strategies to take book promotions to the next level. But, how to find someone? Here are points to consider:

1. What other authors do they represent?



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2. What are the results of their story placements?
3. What strategies are used to get an authors name out to the public?
4. How much do they charge?

"Networking with other authors and writers may lead to the best recommendations for a publicist. Ask about their results. It's not enough for a publicist to send out two hundred press releases, an author needs to know the results," Mary says. Did the two hundred press releases contribute to a higher turnout at an event, such as a book signing or a speaking engagement? Another consideration is whether the publicist maintains a database of contacts for book reviews, magazines and other consumer publications for author interviews.

And the cost? "Some agencies work on retainer," Mary says. "They decide the scope of the work and set a price. Others work on an hourly basis. The hourly cost can range anywhere from \$50 to \$300 an hour."

Mary also explains that a public relations is not about "the spin." Authors need to find publicists who believe in them and their book, rather than try to "spin" a story that may not be authentic." And in the end, isn't that what all authors want? An agent, editor and publicist who believe in what the author writes.

About Mary Schanuel: Mary has more than 25 years experience in communications. She uses ingenuity and creative thinking to find the most inventive and appropriate solutions, tailored to each client's goal, budget and time frame. Please see Synergy Group at: <http://www.synergy-pr.com>.

Linda Joyce is an award-winning professional writer. She is a member of Heartland Romance Authors and the editor of HeRA's Writers Journal. (www.linda-joyce.com)



GLBT Bookshelf: Find Out What You're Missing

by [Sloan Parker](#)

[GLBT Bookshelf](#) is an on-line community where the goal is to "encourage writers, reach and intrigue readers, foster sales, build careers -- not just in writing and publishing, but specifically in GLBT writing and publishing." In other words, it's a resource anyone writing GLBT romances may want to take advantage of.

So how does one go about getting involved with the GLBT Bookshelf, and how can authors, specifically, benefit from the site?

That's just what I wanted to know when I first saw the wiki mentioned in a blog post a few months back. With the help of GLBT Bookshelf creator Mel Keegan, the wiki's on-line documentation, and my own experience setting up pages, this article will provide you with all the details -- the who, what, where, how, and why -- of the GLBT Bookshelf.



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WHAT

So what is a wiki anyway?

Wikis are websites that harness the power of collaboration to develop content. It's the members who create the pages on the site. If you join the wiki, you can add, edit, and delete pages using an editor similar to a word processing application, just like blogging. Using your browser, you can add books, reviews, excerpts, buy links, and more -- you can become a part of the community.



WHERE

The GLBT Bookshelf is located at www.glbtfbookshelf.com. Admin for the site is headquartered in Adelaide South Australia, but as Mel Keegan has stated, "it's an absolutely global community."

WHO

Who is the site for? And who can become a member? The site was developed for writers, artists, editors, publishers, booksellers, reviewers, and readers of GLBT books. The welcome page states, "If you enjoy a great gay read, this is the place for you!"

WHY

Why was the site developed? Why should authors of GLBT romances consider using the wiki? And what are the benefits? I asked Mel Keegan those very questions. Here's what Mel had to say:

"As happens so often in life, necessity was the mother of invention! Which of us was not dismayed by the implications of the [AmazonFail](#) debacle? As GLBT writers, we're already marginalized as a group. More often than not, our public profile is almost completely dependent on the web, because we tend to be isolated even from each other. Many GLBT writers can't attend the literary events -- which might be due to simple geography, or more complex concerns to do one's public image or privacy -- so the internet has been a godsend. Creative people are flourishing everywhere, as they never have before ... but if the major engines (like Amazon and Google) are allowed to "filter" web content, the whole community can vanish to the point where we'll have difficulty even finding each other, and tomorrow's newcomers will have no clue who we are, where we are, and what we do.

The truth is, AmazonFail demonstrated GLBT writers to be shockingly vulnerable. I believe we're the most vulnerable niche within popular fiction, and GLBT Bookshelf is an attempt to remedy the situation by building a community which can exist, and prosper, not via the massive engines, but through social networking.

Our intention has been to develop a sturdy, durable community of writers, artists, editors, publishers, booksellers, reviewers and readers -- a community which will be immune to the whims of the big engines because we're self-supporting, well known because we're visible everywhere, and immediately accessible. The bottom line is that -- without resorting to an engine of any kind, be it Google, Amazon, whatever -- a reader can find any book s/he might have a hankering for; a new writer can connect with a dozen publishers; an established writer can connect with hundreds of potential new customers every day; booksellers can "meet" both writers and readers; publishers can "meet" artists ... and so on, right across the full breadth of the industry.

In short, we're an industry which depends on connectivity for our survival, and in recent years the major engines have become the pivot point for this connectivity. AmazonFail, added to the recent misgivings many of us have felt over Google's filtration of gay content, provided a kind of "miner's



canary." A warning flag went up. I was concerned enough about what could be happening in 2010 or 2012 to do something about it -- quickly.

Authors are benefiting enormously from the wiki, because of the way it works. Nowhere else on the web is there a site whose slogan is "All GLBT, All indie, All the time." Every title on the Bookshelf is GLBT, so when a reader -- a potential customer! -- clicks on a Book Category, s/he isn't just clicking into the gay list. S/he might be clicking into a Paranormal Fiction list where 75 titles are indexed ... all GLBT. Or a Historical Fiction list where 100 titles are indexed, again, all GLBT. Due to the exclusivity of the wiki content, our indexes are actually useful -- you don't find yourself on a "Gay Category" which is a dumping ground for 2500 titles ranged all over the literary spectrum, in which it's virtually impossible to find what you want.

It's the usefulness to readers that makes the wiki so invaluable to writers. GLBT readers' groups are joining us, bringing with them hundreds of book reviews, tomes of recommendations. Readers can research a Category in depth, choose between 10 titles, read a couple of chapters here and there, see the covers and "meet the authors" with a few clicks, on the same site ... and then check out, without even leaving our pages.

Readers like it ... and what readers like is sustenance for working writers!"

HOW

So how does the wiki work? And how can authors add their own books and other content? Mel Keegan offered this:

"The Bookshelf is built on the www.editme.com wiki engine. Members register (free), download the user's manual (free), create and edit their own pages. They can make, update, and delete any page or set of pages, for which they are responsible. Members can contribute via advertising, and donate to help run the wiki -- or not, if they choose not to. If we actually build pages for a writer or group, we do ask for a ten dollar donation, in exchange for an hour or two of our time, which seems to be a fair price. Members can chat, post, write, read, sell books, buy and review them, show covers, contract cover artists, research publishers, self-publish, discuss the business of writing and anything else of interest. Booksellers, publishers and writers sell their titles directly off the wiki pages: affiliate links and "buy now" links belong to the writers, not to the wiki."

The following overview provides the basic steps for adding your own content:

Step 1: Register

- ❖ Complete the free registration available at www.glbtbookshelf.com.
- ❖ Within 24 hours, you'll receive an email with a link to your personal, ready-made "graffiti wall" (your author page).

Step 2: View your page

- ❖ Click on the link in the email to access your personal author page. This page includes instructions to help get you started using the wiki.

Step 3: Edit your page

- ❖ Log in to the site using the "log in" link at the top of any page. This will give you access to your toolbar (visible on every page you can edit).
- ❖ Browse to your personal author page via the link in your email or the master "Page Index" link (at the top of every page in the site).
- ❖ Click the "edit" link on your toolbar.



- ❖ Remove the default copy and add your own. This could be a bio, blurbs for your books, links to reviews, a link to your website, and/or any other related content.
- ❖ Once finished, save your page. Your changes will appear on the wiki and will also be listed in the Change Notification emails sent to members.

Step 4: Add new pages

- ❖ Click the "new" link on your toolbar.
- ❖ Provide a name for your new page (there should be no spaces in page names).
- ❖ Add content to the page. Content ideas include:
 - One page per book with blurbs, covers, excerpts, and buy links to wherever your books are sold.
 - Excerpts, sample chapters, and video trailers.
 - Links to articles and reviews of your books.
 - A couple rules of the site: All images and videos must be hosted on another site such as Flickr or YouTube. And all external links must open in a new window.
- ❖ Save your new page.
 - Once saved, all new pages are listed in the master "Page Index." You can always return to this list to edit any of your pages.
 - New pages may also be temporarily listed in the Bookshelf's main menu (the gray area at the left). These links are routinely removed by the site's administrators to keep the navigation clean and organized.

Step 5: Link your new pages to the rest of the wiki

- ❖ Once you have created new pages, you can add links to those pages on your personal author page. You can also add links on the Bookshelf's communal pages like *Titles A-K*, *Titles L-Z*, *Reviews A-Z*, *Book Launches*, and others so people can find your content in various ways.
- ❖ To create links:
 1. Browse to the page where you wish to place a link. Click the "edit" link on your toolbar.
 2. Type the text that you want to become a link.
 3. Highlight this text and click the "make link" icon.
 4. In the "Link List" select the page on the wiki you wish to link to.
 5. Click "insert" and then "save" to publish your changes.
 6. Be sure not to edit other members' links or content even if you have access to do so.
- ❖ An exception: You will not have access to add your link to the authors index page (*Authors & Others A-Z*). You will need to send an [email to the administrators](#) so they may add your link to this list.

Step 6: Return to the site at any time to edit your pages with new books, reviews, buy links, and more



And don't forget -- the site isn't just for published authors. If you're pre-published, you can create a page now and it will be listed on the "Booklovers" page. Then when you have a book to promote, contact the Bookshelf's administrators to request that your page be moved to the author index.

For more detailed instructions (especially if you are new to blogging and/or wikis), check out the full [user manual](#). And if you're limited on time, I suggest you try the [Quick Start page](#). You'll be well on your way to becoming a part of the GLBT Bookshelf.

I signed up, added my own content, and created a couple pages in no time at all. There are numerous help and tutorial pages, a users' forum, and even a way to get assistance if you wish to have someone else build it for you. I found the wiki's documentation helpful in answering questions that came up as I worked on my own pages. Links to these resources and more can be found in the sidebar of this article.

So What Does All This Cost? Is It Really Free? And How Much Time Is Involved?

Mel Keegan offered the following about the investment authors would need to make in order to take advantage of the site.

"As with all things in life, you'll only get out of it what you put into it. The wiki is absolutely free. No fees, no joining costs, no renewal fees -- nada. There's also no one breathing down your neck to make sure you get involved and give yourself a chance of vastly improving your book sales! Being a wiki, it's a "self-motivating" project where members own and operate their own pages. Some of our members' existing pages are spectacular; some members have mini-websites within the wiki, with scores of pages, marvellous artwork, sample readings, special offers -- the works. Other folks come in and put up a line of text on one page saying, "Visit my website at this address." The difference between the two is abyssal...

Writers who make a raft of pages -- a homepage, a booklist, a page for each book -- will be highly visible. They'll dominate wiki searches, and when visitors surf through the Book Categories, their names and book covers will pop up again and again. They're going to get clicks through to their pages; handsome covers, good samples, fine reviews and attractive prices will sell books. The less motivated writer -- the one whose page consists of little more than a link to his or her website -- will be invisible in the wiki searches and absent from the Book Categories. Being seen is the key to being read, and selling books. One probably won't be noticed without putting up at least a little good content.

The return for one's investment of time pivots on how long it takes to make wiki pages, and what kind of return one is looking for. There's a learning curve -- but if you can blog, the wiki engine will be so comfortably familiar, it'll be almost (not quite!) turnkey. If you know anything about Live Journal and Blogger, you can build wiki pages ... and it's very fast. We provide a free download PDF manual which explains all in 50pp or so, with pictures, and with this open in your lap and a basic grasp of blogging, each wiki page should take a few minutes. If you have a backlist of 10 books, you're looking at a couple of hours to have fully-functional, crisp, attractive pages up -- after which, you can tinker with them to your heart's content! The writer also needs to make sure each title is

GLBT Bookshelf Links

- [Quickstart: Up and Running in Twenty Minutes](#)
- [The Wiki User's Manual Tutorials page](#)
- [How do I Add Myself to the Index Pages?](#)
- [How To Wrangle The Reading Room](#)
- [User Forums](#)
- [HELP!! Can someone build it for me?](#)
- [Affordable Advertising on the GLBT Bookshelf](#)
- [Make a Donation to the GLBT Bookshelf](#)
- [Banners to Link to the GLBT Bookshelf](#)

GLBT Bookshelf Wiki Administrators

Admin-in-Chief: Mel Keegan
Administrator and Moderator: Sara Lansing
Administrator and Art Designer: Jade
Reviewer in Residence: Aricia Gavriel
Hardware Guru: Dave Downes



THE RAINBOW ROMANCE WRITER'S

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properly indexed, so that browsing readers can find them; this is also as easy as opening the index page, making a link, saving the page.

So, the investment of cash is nil so far, and it's an hour or two of your time. Now, what about the return for this? The object is to sell copies! With attractive pages, good content and the right indexing in the Book Categories, visiting readers can't help literally falling over new writers as well as firm favourites. We can't absolutely guarantee sales – who can? – but every writer knows that if you could meet 250 new potential readers every day, and “show them your best stuff,” and if your material is good enough, and tightly-targeted enough ... sales do happen.

The beauty of the wiki is that you only need to build your pages once. They're permanent fixtures, so a new reader could discover an old writer, from a page built a year before.

There is, of course, a way to “jump off the page” and hit visitors right between the eyes, get them to visit your own pages instead of someone else's! Advertising makes the world “go” and the wiki is no exception. We're just a little different, and I should explain.

GLBT Bookshelf charges nothing for membership, and you can upload as many pages as you need or want. The only thing we ask is that you stay on topic. Funding is raised via low-cost advertising, to pay for bandwidth, and also to buy the wiki's own advertising, which in turn drives more new customers to our pages. Our banners are appearing all over the internet now; we have press releases circulating widely. When a writer wants to “beat the competition” on the wiki, s/he buys an ad (starting at \$2.50 for a 30-day run). We collect these “peppercorn” contributions, and use the funds raised to place banner ads via an ad-server which is currently delivering tightly-targeted visitors for 5c per head. So, a \$5 ad campaign from an enthusiastic writer will send around 100 visitors to the wiki homepage. From there, in two clicks, any visitor can be viewing the writer's own ad, which would be running on the correct Book Category pages.

The bonus is that people generally surf around. Bing! might send them to the wiki following a search on Josh Lanyon; but while they're on our pages, they stumble over Kirby Crow, and John Simpson, and Alex Beecroft, by rummaging around the community pages. It's a lot of fun ... and it works.

We're still very new – only four months old. On average, we're already getting more than 1000 hits per day spread over the wiki as a whole, and our ambition is to triple this by Christmas. We have about 360 members now, with around 700 titles online, and with this growth curve, it'll be about 400 members and 800 titles around the time this article begins to circulate. We hope to make that 1,000 books and 500 members by Christmas, which would position us superbly in 2010 for our participating writers to do good business, as an ever-growing community of readers discovers us.”

I would like to thank Mel Keegan for taking the time to answer these questions. I'd also like to encourage everyone to check out the wiki. As Mel stated, “readers like it ... and what readers like is sustenance for working writers!” So find out what you're missing at www.glbtbookshelf.com.

Sloan Parker writes erotic gay romance and is currently working on promotion and getting published. Raised in the Midwest where neighbors were scarce and school friends were a long distance phone call away, her wild imagination helped her grow into an avid writer and reader. She enjoys creating complex characters, imperfect people who are growing as individuals, living as true to themselves as they can, and of course, falling in love. You can read more about Sloan at www.sloanparker.com.



Don't Drink and Query

By: Nisha Sharma

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I admit it. I've tipped the proverbial bottle and queried agents before. What can I say? With all the resources out there and with the convenience of e-mail queries, life is too sweet not to drink and query. But as a recovering alcoholic querier and an editor that reads her share of drunken query letters, I urge you not to fall down this dark path of destruction. It may ruin your chances of publication.

So the question is what do I mean by drinking and querying? I mean, don't lose your inhibitions and send a query letter out until you have a spit-shined letter. If you lose your patience and query too soon just because it's so easy to use a form query letter, chances are that you're not doing your manuscript justice. Keep in mind that you only have one shot with an agent/ editor/ publishing house. Do you really want to diminish your chances of receiving a request just because you didn't feel like fixing sloppy writing? To help stop writers from suffering from this drunken query problem, I'd like to share a check list that I used before sending out my queries:

1. Did you do the research? Make sure the agent or editor you are querying is still with the same agency/publishing house. Your query letter should have the appropriate name and address with the appropriate spelling. If you are sending your query via e-mail, check to make sure you are e-mailing the right person.
2. Does the agent or editor you are interested in represent the genre you write? Are they currently accepting queries in that genre? If you're emailing the wrong person at an agency or house, someone who doesn't accept works in your genre, chances are they will delete your query letter.
3. What information did you open with? Start with your genre and your word count. Some people disagree, but the majority of agents that speak at RWA conferences or blog about queries always want to know the genre and word count up front. Your opening line can be something as simple as "(Book title) is a 100,000 word romantic suspense in the style of (comparison)." Or it can be "(Book title) is a 50,000 word regency historical geared towards the (particular line)."
4. Did you hook 'em? The opening line of your book summary should catch an agent or editors attention. Most of them stop reading after the first or second line if it isn't eye-catching. For example, in my query letter for my young adult novel 'My So-Called Bollywood Life,' my opening line captured the tone of the story and urged readers to keep going:

"Winnie Singh hates drama.but as a member of a culture that can make day time soaps look like normal every-day life, she has no choice but to live in a bad rendition of a Bollywood movie."
5. After the first line, do you have the hero/heroine Goal, Motivation & Conflict? Keep your query story summaries short. For romance, I suggest one short paragraph for the hero's GMC and one short paragraph for the heroine's GMC. The character with the stronger GMC should go first. To break it down even further, write a short sentence about what the hero wants, what's stopping them, and how to resolve the issue. The same goes for the heroine.



6. What do you conclude your book summary with? Think of the back cover summary of a novel. Don't they always leave you with something that makes you want to read the book? Instead of just ending the book summary with a bland 'they lived happily ever after,' try adding a cliff hanger. As an example, for my YA 'My So-Called Bollywood Life,' I ended my book summary with the following line:

"In an uncharted life adventure through dates, mistakes, and two weeks in India, Winnie finds out that being your own person doesn't necessarily mean you have to step away from your culture. sometimes it means you have to embrace it."

7. High concept? I like to add a high concept line, but a lot of writer's don't bother with it because there is a possibility that the agent or editor you are querying may not like your high concept line. I use a high concept line because it helps agents and editors understand the tone and voice of my story. The next time they see the movie or comparison element I used, chances are, if my query is strong, they'll remember the high concept line. For 'My So-Called Bollywood Life,' my high concept line was: a cross between 'Bend it like Beckham' and 'My Big, Fat, Greek Wedding.'
8. What'cha do? Don't forget the author bio paragraph! Keep it short and only use bio information that is pertinent to your story. We don't want to know about the details in your current research project as a marine biologist if your story is a historical western. Mention contests and memberships at this point. If you don't have any other pertinent information other than memberships, then that's all you need to write.
9. Is it done? Always write a one-liner that says something like "a full manuscript and synopsis are available upon request." If you are snail-mailing mailing your query, include a short sentence about an SASE attachment. Leave off with 'Regards,' or something equally professional.
10. For the love of Bob, Puh-leeeeeze use spell/grammar check! I am the worst speller in the world. I have grammar edits in every document I ever produce. I'm sure there is a mistake in this article. Sometimes mistakes happen and you can't catch them in time, but do your best and take a fine tooth comb to fix your query much as possible. You want your letter to be as flawless as you can make it.

If you use a checklist like this, you won't be sending drunken queries out. The chances of your query receiving a rejection letter go down by a fair percentage just because you are putting your best foot forward.

So the next time you decide to drink, make sure you're away from computer or hide your laptop so you don't query!

Award winning author Nisha Sharma graduated from Muhlenberg in 2006 with a B.A. in English. She currently attends law school in New York. Her novella 'Bewitched Cowboy' written under her pseudonym 'Tess Quinn' will tentatively be released in early 2010. She is represented with Andrea Brown Literary Agency for her young adult fiction. Please visit Nisha at www.nisha-sharma.com or www.tessquinn.com.

*Kathy Kulig, Editor Bouquet of Romance, PLRW, Easton, PA
www.kathykulig.com*





THE RAINBOW ROMANCE WRITER'S

Pot of Gold

A Note from the Editor

There are great things in store for Rainbow Romance Writers and we'd like this newsletter to be a big part of that. In order to do that, we could use some help.

Do you have a GLBT-centric article that you'd like to share? Do you know of someone of interest whom we could interview? If so, please contact me or anyone on the RRW board or newsletter staff and let us know. We'd like to keep everyone informed.

Also, if you'd like to be on the newsletter staff yourself, please contact me.

[Jet Mykles](#) – Newsletter editor and Webmaster

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