

Liberty States Fiction Writers

New York - New Jersey - Pennsylvania



February 2011

Volume 2, Number 1b

Let Freedom Ring!

www.lsfwriters.com

**Liberty States
Fiction Writers
PO Box 2914
Westfield, NJ 07090**

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***"Words, once they
are printed, have a
life of their own."***
Carol Burnett

★ Articles ★

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Conflict and Connection by
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Can Murder by Funny? by
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Increasing Backlinks to
Increase Website Traffic by

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[Liberty States Fiction Writers Newsletter](#)

(requires login to Members Only area of Liberty States Fiction Writers Website)

LINK TO PDF VERSION in Files Section:

[LSFW Announcements](#)

(requires login to Liberty Announcements Yahoogroups)

Please send information, news, and articles for the newsletter to the appropriate assistant editor (listed below) if one is specified and to Anne Walradt—newsletter@lsfwriters.com

Articles: Please contact Anne if you are interested in rounding up articles for the newsletter.

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Member Spotlight: Kiersten Krum—kksquad@gmail.com

Contests, Conferences, and Classes: Monica Liming—mjliming@comcast.net

Author Spotlight: Kathye Quick—KathyeQ@aol.com

Next Month's Meeting

**The next meeting of the Liberty States Fiction Writers is on
February 12 at the Edison Public Library on Plainfield Avenue.**

Using Blogging Platforms for Blogging and as Websites

Using Blogging Platforms for Blogging and as Websites

Authors and techies Rayna Vause and Caridad Pineiro will show you how to use Blogger and WordPress to establish a presence on the web.

This will be a hands-on workshop showing members how to create and update their blogs and websites and do basic functions on the Internet.

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Rayna Vause loves to learn new things. Along her educational journey she earned a B.A. in English creative writing, and A.A.S in computer information systems and got part way through a degree in computer graphics before switching gears and earning a B.S. in vascular technologies. Though her educational path may have been long and winding, the one constant is her love of reading and writing romance novels. She has published a paranormal romantic suspense novel and has more stories that are currently looking for homes. While she may not be working towards another degree, she's still feeding her need to learn by studying karate and honing her writing skills. With a little encouragement from a friend, she finally stepped onto the mat and has worked her way into a yellow belt. She's also a founding member of Liberty States Fiction Writers, a multi-genre fiction writer's organization. She currently serves as LSF Writers Vice President and Conference Chair. For more information, please visit www.raynavause.com.



Caridad Pineiro is a NY Times and USA Today bestselling author of paranormal romance and romantic suspense. Caridad has published over 25 novels and/or novellas. She is also a self-confessed geek who just loves to play around with all things technical. For more information on Caridad, please visit www.caridad.com.

Roundtable Sessions

Our **Roundtable Sessions** will be on **Technology Questions** and **Critiques**. For the Critique Roundtable Session, please bring 10 (ten) copies of 5 (five) Pages from the work you wish to discuss as well as any pitch you would like to try out. If you are a published author and would like to assist with the pitches and critique sessions, please contact Lois Winston, our Program Chair.

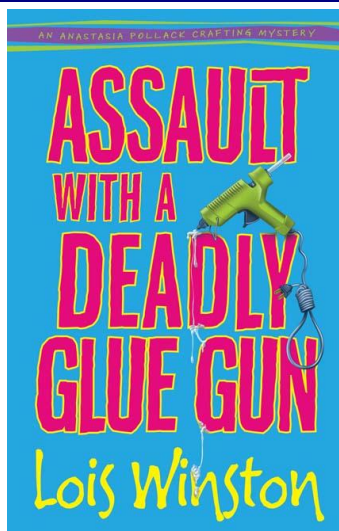
Networking and Snacks

During and after the Roundtable Sessions, members may network and either brown bag lunch or share snacks with fellow members.

Author Spotlight



Lois Winston straddles two worlds. She's an award-winning author of romantic suspense, humorous women's fiction, and mystery. She's also an award-winning designer of needlework and crafts projects for magazines, craft book publishers, and craft kit manufacturers. Like Anastasia, the protagonist in her ANASTASIA POLLACK CRAFTING MYSTERIES series, Lois worked for several years as a crafts editor. A graduate of the prestigious Tyler School of Art, she often draws on her art and design background for much of the source material in her fiction. She lives with her husband a stone's throw from Manhattan (assuming you can throw a stone across the Hudson River.)



ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY GLUE GUN

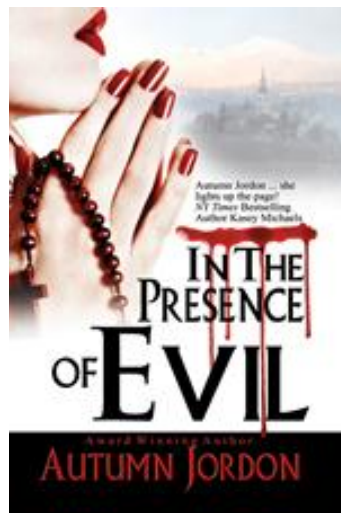
Lois will be signing ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY GLUE GUN: A normal day for magazine crafts editor Anastasia Pollack involves juggling two teenage sons, a communist mother-in-law, a mother descended from Russian royalty, a Shakespeare quoting parrot, an army of bill collectors, AND her dead husband's loan shark. As if that weren't enough, she's now the prime suspect in the murder of a coworker. Anastasia must use both her wits and her craft skills to clear her name and find the killer before he finds her.

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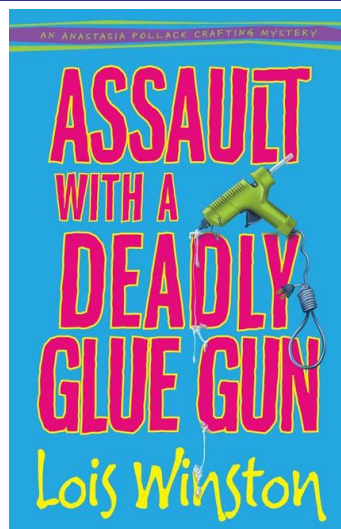
Member News



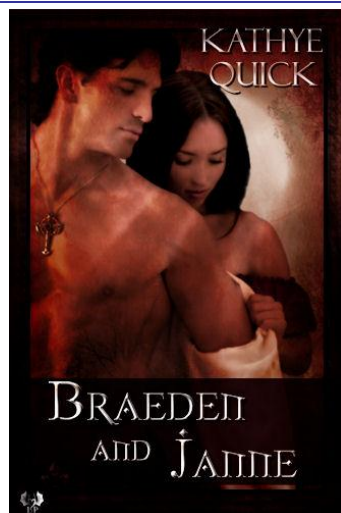
Anne Frazier Walradt will appear with Peter Delaney in *Love Letters* by A.R. Gurney, at 7 P.M., February 12, at the United Methodist Church on Broad Street in Red Bank, NJ. Admission is \$10 and includes an excellent dessert. Celebrate Valentine's Day weekend at this performance.



Dianne Gerber, writing as Autumn Jordan, has the cover for her new release **IN THE PRESENCE OF EVIL**. Release date is to be announced. For more information, please visit www.autumnjordan.com.

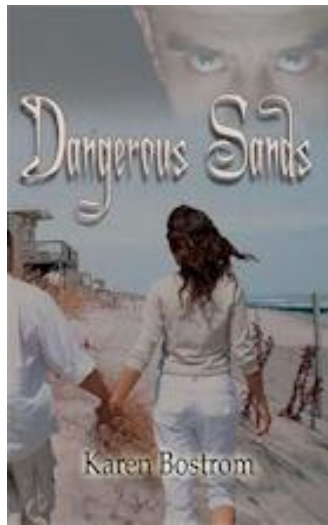


ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY GLUE GUN was reviewed in Sunday's Star Ledger as one of "Five mysteries to keep you spellbound." I'm right there with Colleen McCullough and Dean Koontz! The reviewer called it, "a delightful romp through the halls of who-done-it." **ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY GLUE GUN** was also chosen as a NJ Monthly Featured Read and received starred reviews in both Booklist and Publishers Weekly.



BRAEDEN AND JANNE by Kathye Quick is now available in e-reader formats from Lyrical Press. Lyrical Press. Download an e-version and let Kathye know and she will send you the Print version of book 1 in the series - Cynthia and Constantine.

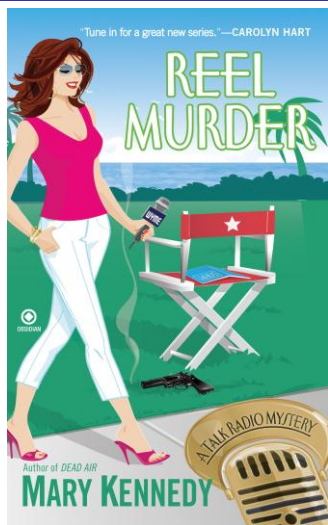
BRAEDEN AND JANNE - Duty and desire clash when a Knight of the Round Table and a Druidess join to save New Camelot from the sons of Mordred.



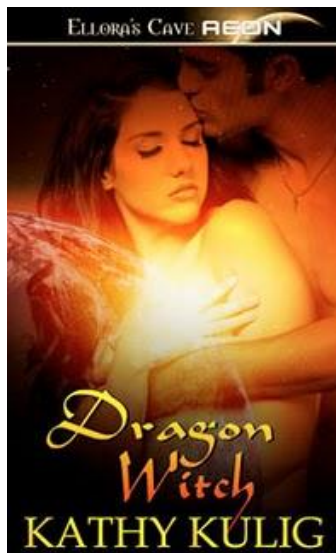
Karen Bostrom is pleased to announce that she accepted an offer from The Wild Rose Press for her latest work, "Red Leather Reunion," that she submitted to their Class of '85 High School Reunion Series.



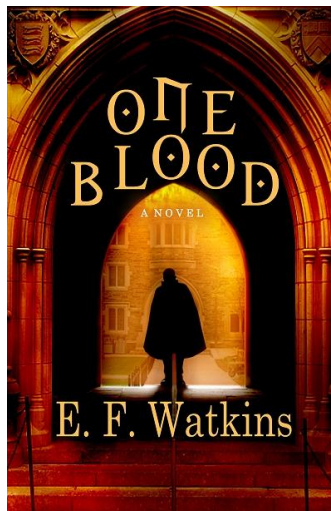
The January issue of *Romance Writers Report* included Rosemary DiBattista's essay (which started out as my Road Story for the LSFW newsletter) as its Last Word column. Rosemary also just launched a new website at <http://rosemarydibattista.com>.



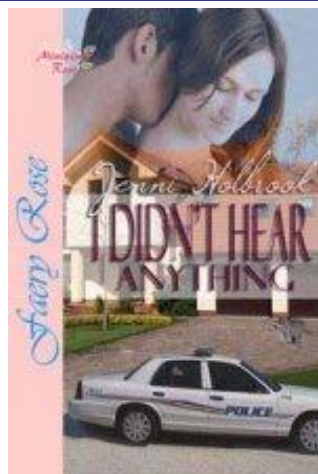
Mary Kennedy's REEL MURDER made REEL MURDER the Baker and Taylor mystery best seller list at # 15



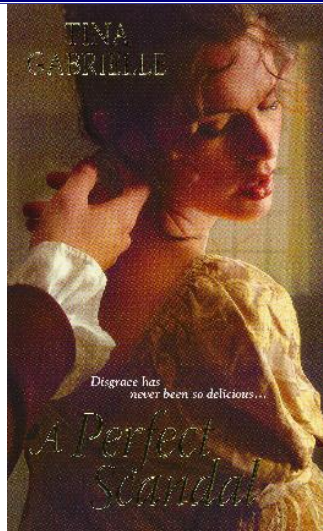
HEA Reviews gave DRAGON WITCH 5 Tea Cups and had this to say: Brayden is a nice guy who occasionally does bad things. Jaida is a talented, misunderstood woman who is willing to lie to save the people—or animals—she loves. Together they have great chemistry. Add to that a shape-shifting dragon who needs to change shape and mate twice a year and you have a really unique ménage story that entertains from start to finish.



Coffee Time Romance gave E.F. Watkins' ONE BLOOD 4 Cups and had this to say: One Blood is a spectacular read. There were unexpected twists and turns that kept this reader thoroughly engaged. I love how Ms. Watkins brings life into her refreshing characters...This story has all the essentials that make it an incredible read to this reader.



Jenni Holbrook was recently interviewed at Nights and Weekends.com. Check it out by [clicking here](#). Nights and Weekends also did a review of I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING



Tina Gabrielle was featured in the Philadelphia Inquirer. [Click here to read the story.](#)



Chris Redding is pleased to announce that she accepted an offer from Echelon Press, for A VIEW TO A KILT which will be released in e and print in 2011.



Patt Mihailoff is pleased to announce that she accepted an offer from NEW CONCEPTS PUBLISHING for her Historical Western A LESSON IN LOVE (working title).

We've tried to streamline the process of members adding events to the Liberty Calendar of Events

<http://www.libertystatesfictionwriters.com/calendar/>

Just click on an event to expand it for additional details. To do this streamlining, we've created a public Google Calendar!

If you have an upcoming event that you wish to publicize, please cut and paste this link into your browser:

http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=contact%40lsfwriters.com&ctz=America/New_York

You will be taken to the Google Calendar program where you can enter your information. Click on the small "Google Calendar" icon in the bottom

right corner of the calendar. The user name and password are as follows:

User Name: contact@lsfwriters.com

Password: Isfwmember

Please edit only your own events. Please list only those events in which you are personally participating. All members, whether SPA or not, may enter their writing-related events in the Liberty States Fiction Writers' Calendar of Events.

In case you forget this information, you may find the links and passwords in the Members Only section as well.

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Member Releases

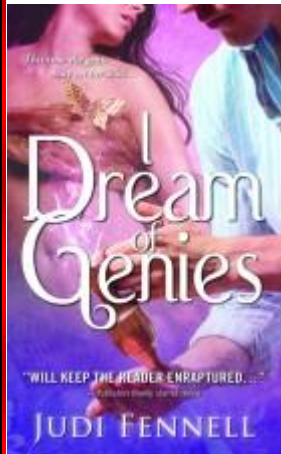
January 2011

	<p>Assault With a Deadly Glue Gun Lois Winston ISBN # 0738723479 January 2011, Midnight Ink</p> <p>A normal day for magazine crafts editor Anastasia Pollack involves juggling two teenage sons, a communist mother-in-law, a mother descended from Russian royalty, a Shakespeare quoting parrot, an army of bill collectors, AND her dead husband's loan shark. As if that weren't enough, she's now the prime suspect in the murder of a coworker. Anastasia must use both her wits and her craft skills to clear her name and find the killer before he finds her.</p>
	<p>AZTEC GOLD Caridad Pineiro ISBN 9781426891045 January 2011, Carina Press</p> <p>Six months ago, Cynthia Guerrero's lover and fellow archaeologist Rafael Santiago trekked into the Mexican jungle in search of one of the fabled Cities of Gold—and never emerged. Guilty over their parting, Cynthia won't rest until she knows what happened. When the discovery of a conquistador's journal corroborates Rafe's intended path, Cynthia is determined to finally leave the safety of the museum to rescue him, despite the conquistador's dire warnings, and her own traumatic past. Arriving at a remote village deep in the jungle, Cynthia is both elated and angered to find Rafe alive. But he is far from well, having watched his team be decimated by a bloodthirsty demon-goddess. When</p>

Rafe reveals he has been gifted with supernatural powers—powers he plans to use to kill the beast and save his brother, still held captive in the temple—Cynthia must face her own inner demons to fight alongside the man she loves.

[I Dream of Genies](#)

Judi Fennell
ISBN#: 9781402241895
January 2011, Sourcebooks, Inc.



He needs to change his luck and fast! Matt Ewing would gladly hunt down a fortune in lucky pennies if he thought it would help save his business. But for all his hoping, Matt's clueless when his long awaited lucky charm falls in his lap in the form of a beguiling genie. He just can't believe that this beautiful woman could be the answer to his prayers... She's been bottled up for far too long! Spending 2,000 years in a bottle would make any woman go a little stir crazy. So when Matt releases Eden from her luxurious captivity, she's thrilled to repay him by giving him the magical boost he needs... But for all her good intentions, Eden's magical prowess is a little rusty and her magical mistakes become more than embarrassing. And though Eden knows falling in love will end her magic and immortality, she can't help but be drawn to the one man who wants her just for herself...



[INCENDIARY](#)

Chris Redding
ISBN 9781-897562-78-9
January 2011, Lachesis Publishing

A firefighter and an EMT must stop a serial arsonist before they go up in flames. Framed for the arsons, a firefighter is willing to do anything to prove his innocence, including enlist his old lover who he didn't leave on good terms. Will they find the arsonist before their past threatens to burn them?

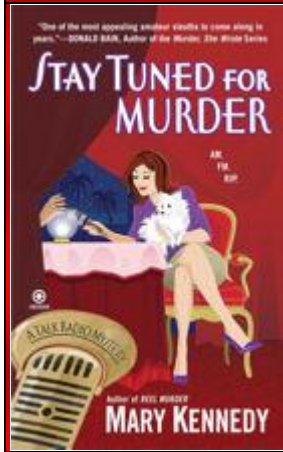


[MOONLIGHT TEMPTATION](#)

Stephanie Julian
ISBN # 9781419932885
January 2011, Ellora's Cave

Evie Simmons has major issues. She's got magical powers she can't control, she's living in a house that isn't hers, and her best friend is a seventeen-year-old werewolf. It'd be hilarious if it weren't just so damn depressing. Add in the sexy shifter she can't keep out of her mind and his hot-as-hell friend and it's a recipe for disaster. Dr. Dane Dimitriou knows Evie has had a hard time adjusting to her new life as part of the

Etruscan magical community—almost as difficult as his denial of his feelings for her have been. And he's got the perfect cure—his best friend, Ryan Maguire. Easygoing Ryan is the complete opposite of stick-up-his-ass Dane. He can act as a buffer. Dane can get close, but not too close. Yeah, good luck with that. Together, these sexy men may be just what the doctor ordered for Evie. And the doctor himself may discover the cure for what ails him has been right in front of him all along.



STAY TUNED FOR MURDER

Mary Kennedy
ISBN 978-0-451-23235-9
January 2011, Penguin

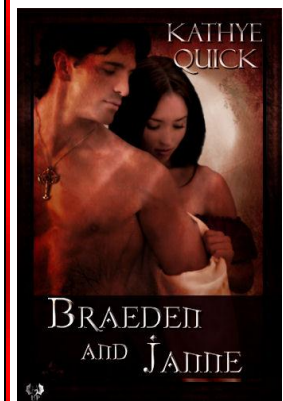
Psychologist Maggie Walsh matches wits with a phony psychic who blows into town and starts holding séances. Does Madame Chantel really have the power to talk to the dead? And can Maggie solve a double murder? Stay tuned.



THE PROPER CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF FRIENDSHIP

Lisa Verge Higgins
ISBN # 978-0-446-56351-2
January 2011, Grand Central Publishing

When three women each receive a letter from a dying friend, old loyalties drive them to fulfill her last wishes. But those last wishes turn out to be world-rocking tasks that threaten to upend their ordinary lives. With a career at risk, a marriage in jeopardy, and a heart in terrible danger of breaking, these three women discover an essential truth: The only thing that can save them is friendship.



BRAEDEN AND JANNE

Kathye Quick
ISBN978-1-61650-222-5
January 2011, Lyrical Press

Duty and desire clash to save a new Camelot from the sons of Mordred.

After his brother is made king by a dying Arthur, Braeden hopes to help Constantine rebuild Camelot and carry on Arthur's vision for the kingdom. Together with the new queen, and her companion Janne, a new era begins. Although the ways of Merlin and Morganna are banned from court, Janne holds to the goddess. She finds the mind overrules the heart when she and

Braeden are betrothed. Refusing to marry him,. she fears their union will bring the fall of the kingdom. With the sons of Mordred, Melehan and Melou plotting the ultimate revenge...brother versus brother...there is no peace to be had in Camelot. When Janne is exposed as a Druidess, she and Braeden must find a way to expose the plot to take down Camelot while maintaining the ideals the majestic realm was built upon.

If you have an upcoming release, please send your title, cover, release date and short blurb to Caridad Piñeiro @ cpsromance@att.net so that we can include the release in the newsletter and on the website.

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★This Month's Articles★

Conflict and Connection by Jenna Kernan

Part 2: Connection: Made for Each Other

I actually wrote this article first and only afterward realized that this was really a two part deal. This article focuses on how to build connections between protagonists, while the conflict (discussed in Part I: Conflict, Anyone but Him) keeps the hero and heroine at odds until the last possible second. The seesaw between connection and conflict, throughout the story, will cause your protagonists to be deeply conflicted thinking one thing and feeling quite another and will maintain the tension that keeps readers flipping pages.

Ever wonder what makes two characters appear to be perfect for each other? As you read, you can see these two have what it takes to fulfill each other, even if they can't see it themselves. How did the author do that?

I wonder and I'm not sure I have it all worked out. But I have already worked out what you don't want to do. You don't want a book in which the characters love each other only because they are extremely good looking and because they are in the same book together. And you don't want two characters that do not have enough about them to like or love to make the reader even care what happens to them. And you don't want characters who bicker instead of tackling real conflict.

Whenever I sit down with my germ of an idea, I want to build two fabulous characters that are perfect for each other because each sees in the other their true selves, even if it is hidden or when they, themselves, don't know it exists. It is like Renee Zelweger's character, Dorothy Boyd, says to her sister in the movie *Jerry McGuire*, "I love him! I love him for the man he wants to be. And I love him for the man he almost is." Dorothy sees the potential missed by the rest of the world. That is why she is THE ONE for him. They alone can peek

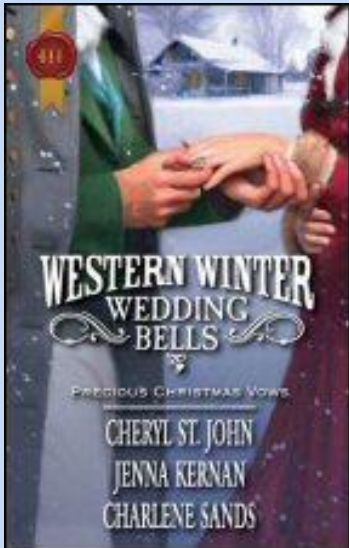
Conflict and Connection by Jenna Kernan Part 2: Connection: Made for Each Other



Award-winning author, Jenna Kernan has over a dozen novels published including Western historical and paranormal romance. She has received two RITA® nominations, and in 2010 she won the Book Buyers Best Award for her debut

paranormal, Dream Stalker from Silhouette Nocturne. The second book in the Nocturne series, The Trackers, is due out in the spring of 2011 as is Jenna's next Western romance, Partnering Lily.

Jenna grew up in the Catskills and is every bit as adventurous as her heroines. Her hobbies include recreational gold prospecting, scuba diving and gem hunting. Her adventures have taken her above the Arctic Circle in Alaska in search of gold nuggets and most recently to Maine for tourmaline. She lives in the Hudson Valley of New York State with her husband. Visit her online home, www.jennakernan.com, for release dates, articles on craft, and news.



behind the mask and see the inner beauty beneath.

To achieve this, the author will give each character an outward persona and a secret, guarded inner self. It is on this inner level that the protagonists connect because only their perfect opposite can see past who they appear to be and glimpse who they really are, or who they *could* be. To the rest of the world, they appear to be one thing—an outer personality designed to protect themselves from the vulnerability of letting others see their true self. This outer self is constructed on a belief system that grew out of their horrible past experience. It is the ability of their opposite to see the true self that makes them “the one” and not her violet eyes or his six-foot-three inch chiseled frame.

In addition, something about their perfect opposite makes them drop their persona and communicate at the inner level of true self for some brief periods of time after which they do a little freak-out, because it is so scary to let someone really see them and in this freak-out, reengage their force fields and return to their guarded self. This upsets their opposite who finds the guarded self to be a jerk and the clash begins again. This undulation between secret self and guarded self makes the characters vacillate between moments of true connection followed by moments when they collide. The outer persona is just armor, a protective shell that gives the appearance of strength and independence.

This necessitates that the author create an excellent backstory for each character that includes a really valid, understandable reason why your hero needs to hide who he or she really is. This is often called the wound. For example, if the heroine has a disfigurement, as my heroine Lucie West does in *His Dakota Captive*, she might have decided that she can be thought of only as useful, but never beautiful. He might feel that his part in the accidental death of his brother is such an unforgivable act that he does not deserve happiness. She’s not going around saying, “I’m ugly,” but if you were to tell her she was beautiful, she would believe you were mocking her or just think you were crazy, because it challenges her belief of who she is. This belief grows out of the wound (disfigurement in this case). And he won’t say to the heroine, “No, sorry I can’t marry you because I did something so bad that I must be punished. I can’t allow myself to be happy when my brother is dead because of me.” He might say, “I’m not the marrying kind,” or “I’m no good for you.” It is the wound which causes the mistaken belief and the mistaken belief that causes the character to construct a mask which will keep anyone from seeing the wound that never healed.

It is the job of each character’s perfect opposite to get the character to recognize that their belief is flawed. This cognition causes them to consider developing a new belief system that allows them to accept who they really are and become self-actualized, happy, and fulfilled. Only then are they capable of finding happiness with the other.

The process of discovering the mistaken belief is difficult and includes lots of failed tries with some progress. Think about it. How often do you overturn your belief system? I’m betting it’s not as often as you change your motor oil. In other words, you don’t or you won’t without a fight or without really compelling evidence that you were wrong. Same deal with Mr. and Mrs. Right.

Example time!

Finding Nemo

The main character here is Marlin, a not-so-funny clown fish who has lost his wife and all but one of their offspring to a barracuda attack. His wound is his inability to protect those he loves. Upon regaining consciousness, he finds only one egg left with a swimming embryo inside and makes his promise. He will be certain that nothing ever happens to his son. His mistaken belief that arises from this accident is that, to protect his boy, he must prevent him from any and all dangers and this includes keeping him from school, friends, and a normal fishy-life. As a result, his outer self becomes an overbearing, overprotective parent who drives his son crazy and makes the other fish parents raise what amounts to a fishy-eyebrow. He's a kill-joy which is ironic for a clown fish. The reason the folks a Disney opened with Marlin and his wife is so that you can see that he was not always a kill-joy and then see why he has become one. After Nemo is captured by divers, Marlin's journeys with Dori, a blue fish with short-term memory loss, helps him recognize the error of his ways. When he confesses that he promised his son that he'd make sure nothing ever happened to him, she is confused and says, "That's a funny thing to promise. If nothing ever happens to him, then nothing will ever happen to him." Another character, a 150-year-old surfer-dude sea turtle considers how to judge when your offspring are ready to be on their own, says, "Well, you never really know, but when they know, you know. You know?" Later, while they cling to the tongue of a whale, she relays the prophetic message from the whale that "It's time to let go." Through his journey, Marlin discovers that it is his over-protectiveness that drove his son to take the silly chance that caused his capture and that, by trying to protect Nemo, he has actually put him in danger. This "ah-ha" moment leads to the change in his beliefs. By the story's conclusion, Marlin has relinquished his outer self and rediscovered the fun-loving, playful clownfish he used to be before his wife's death. He is a confident father, making Nemo a self-assured fish.

Lethal Weapon

Marty Riggs is the crazy, suicidal cop partner that no one wants. His wound is the paralyzing grief caused by the death of his beloved wife of eleven years, killed in an auto accident. He really does not know if he wants to live or die. Riggs's mistaken belief is that the only way to end his crushing pain is by dying. This leads him to his crazy, suicidal outer public self. He takes unnecessary risks, flirts with death by jumping off buildings and taking on snipers single handedly. He seems to be a man with a death wish, but when he puts his service revolver in his mouth, he fails to pull the trigger because his inner self wants to live and be happy again. His partner, Lt. Murtaugh (Danny Glover) first believes Riggs has a death wish, but glimpses hope in Riggs's reaction and interaction with his family. Murtaugh now has a reason to hope and tries to connect by gradually inviting Riggs into his home. In these moments, the men connect and Murtaugh sees that Riggs could become what he was, the funny, fun-loving man he was before his wife's death. Lt. Murtaugh's willingness to include Riggs in the life of his boisterous, loving family helps Riggs connect with people and life again. In the final scene Riggs gives Murtaugh the hollow-pointed bullet with which he had planned to end his life, signaling his return to life, and Murtaugh invites him in for Christmas dinner.

Pirates of the Caribbean, Search for the Black Pearl

Elizabeth Swan is the proper daughter of the governor. Her wound was being onboard a ship that was attacked by pirates and, instead of being frightened, she was exhilarated and has developed a fascination with pirates. At her core, she is an adventuress, which is extremely inappropriate for a young lady of her social position. She must hide who she is, which she does symbolically by hiding the piece of Aztec treasure which she stole (like any good pirate) from a survivor of the attacked vessel. She later wears it about her neck, secreting it (and her true self) beneath her outer self, represented by the elaborate new dress and corset her father presents to her to wear to the promotion ceremony of her young man. Her mistaken belief is that she must act like a proper lady to be accepted. Outwardly and publicly she is the dutiful daughter to the governor and perfect match for her young man, Commodore James Norrington. From the outside she looks like the luckiest girl in Port Royal. But her inner self is at war with the outer. She finds the corset (representing her mask) constraining and ridiculous. She knows she should marry Norrington but is secretly taken by Will Turner, her social inferior, a blacksmith she helped rescue from a pirate ship. Her inner self is adventurous, brave, cunning, lawless, and, in other words—she's a pirate. From the moment of her fall from the parapets, and her symbolic death, she begins to become her true self. It is no coincidence that the one who removes her shackles (corset) is a pirate. Jack Sparrow liberates her, and sets her on the journey toward becoming who she is meant to be.

Conclusion:

Movies and books provide excellent examples of well-crafted characters who are made for each other. But it doesn't happen by accident. Their opposite must be able to glimpse who the other character is at their core or who they could be if they were willing to face their wound and topple their belief system. In order for that to happen, their mistaken belief must cause them trouble by keeping them from having the object of their desire. They must be forced into situations that are uncomfortable and that make them question if their belief system is correct. Once they recognize that they might be mistaken about this particular belief, they must make the decision to change. Change is hard, and most people first try the easy way out. Some attempts to change will blow up in their face, especially if they are trying to do so by holding fast to their outer self while trying to get what the inner self needs. Some efforts will be successful. But as the author, you need to show them making these attempts at moving toward their inner self and show the results of these endeavors. Eventually each character must face a choice: change their beliefs or lose their love interest.

Living as the inner self is glorious and terrifying all at once. Scared heroes often retreat to the familiar ground of the outer mask. That is why a scene that involves showing his or her true self, physically or by sharing some deep emotional truth, is often followed by a pulling back, a retreat of sorts, and a clash.

All of this means that you need to think about who your characters appear to be, who they really are, and what is keeping them from being happy. Then you need to think of a partner who will give them a reason to face their fears and come out a better person for it.

So there you have it. The push and pull between the protagonists makes the magic. The push of conflict comes from two vital and worthy goals that are in opposition and the pull of two souls looking past their differences to glimpse the inner self.

Nail these two elements and you will create two characters who can overcome real, compelling, nearly insurmountable differences to connect despite all rational and reasonable arguments to the contrary. You will, in fact, be creating a satisfying read that will end up on someone's keeper shelf.

I hope you enjoyed this article. This and other articles on the craft of writing are available on my website on the RESOURCES page at www.jennakernan.com

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Anatomy of a Bestseller '11 by Eloisa James



Eloisa James writes historical romance for Harper Collins; People Magazine raved of Eloisa's writing that "romance writing does not get much better than this." A New York Times bestseller many times over, Eloisa is also a Shakespeare professor at Fordham University.

The question of what makes a bestseller is, of course, of perpetual interest to authors (not to mention the publishing industry at large). Here's a fairly random list of fairly recent bestsellers: *The Nanny Diaries*, *The DaVinci code*, *Freakanomics*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Twilight*, *He's Just Not That Into You...*

None of the publishers knew that they had a wild bestseller in their hands when they launched those books. Or maybe it's more fair to say that publishers often hope that they have just such a bestseller—but who can say which book will make it and which won't?

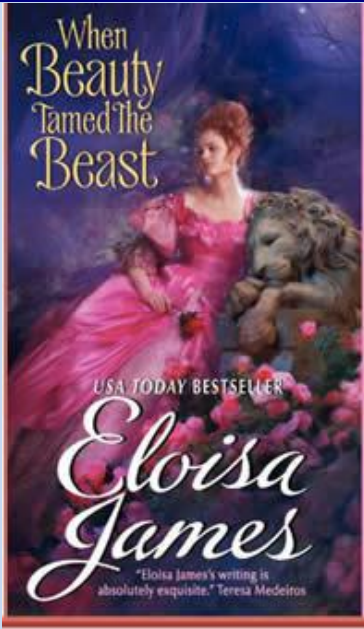
One thing we do know is that publishers often make the mistake of jumping on the same old bandwagon and shelling out big bucks to get the author to write the same thing over again. According to *Publishers Weekly*, Simon & Schuster paid a reported \$2 million for *Everyone Worth Knowing*, the follow-up to *The Devil Wears Prada*. Who's heard of it? Not me. Broadway coughed up around the same amount for the "sequel" to *He's Just Not That into You* called *It's Called a Break-up because It's Broken*. Apparently the *Break-up* clung to the bestseller list by its toenails.

Repetitive publishing is not a magic ticket to success. Maybe that magic ticket is timing? People have suggested that a book has to hit in the perfect moment and, obviously, to some extent that's true. But *Twilight* joined a load of vampire romances that were already published, so it's hard to determine what was perfect about that moment.

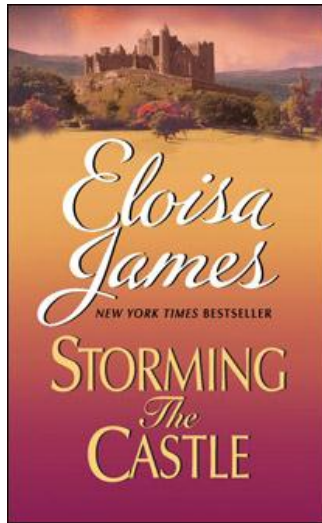
Yet *Twilight* also brought something to the genre of vampire novel: the author's particular viewpoint, her definitely idiosyncratic take on the world, as a Mormon housewife turned novelist. So perhaps it was her nostalgic viewpoint that created a perfect storm? It's rather chilling to think, then, that I could easily see her critique partners (had she been in a critique group) pushing her to change the old-fashioned values of the novel, not to mention the odd lack of electronics among the young set.

I would suggest that there's one important link between the bestsellers mentioned above: they weren't written by committee. I'm not saying that you should ditch your critique group. But I do think that we have to be very careful not to iron out the strange aspects of other people's novels—those may be the

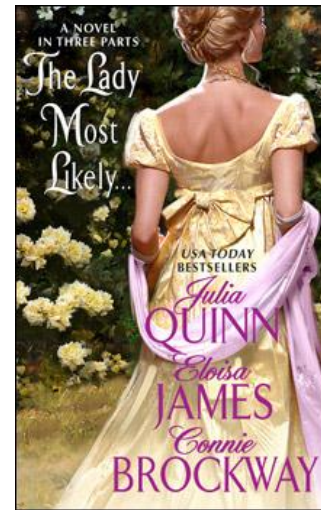
very points that catch the public's attention and turn a "regular" novel into a huge bestseller.



January 25, 2011



December 21, 2010



December 28, 2010

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Can Murder Be Funny? by Lois Winston



Lois Winston is an award-winning author and designer as well as an agent with the Ashley Grayson Literary Agency. Her latest book, *ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY GLUE GUN*, the first book in her *Anastasia Pollack Crafting Mysteries* series, was a January release from *Midnight Ink*. Visit Lois at www.loiswinston.com and Anastasia at her

People are very opinionated. It's the nature of the beast, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. I happen to prefer people with strong opinions, even though they may differ considerably from my own. One of my best friends is my polar opposite when it comes to politics. We simply agree to disagree on certain topics.

I came to the mystery genre via romance, where I'd previously published two books. Romance authors can be very opinionated about their genre. One ongoing argument is whether authors of chick lit and women's fiction should be considered published in romance. I've witnessed heated rhetoric from both sides that caused major rifts in a national writing organization.

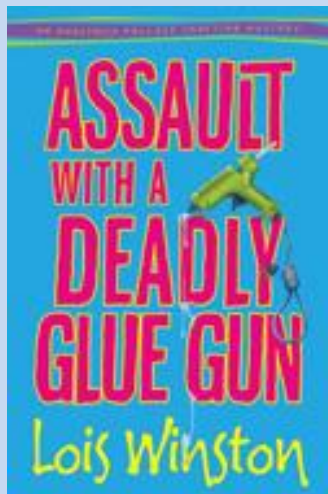
Now I'm writing mysteries, and once again I find myself plopped down into the middle of what apparently is an old argument. You see, I write humorous mysteries. Some people have very strong opinions against this particular sub-genre. They find nothing humorous about murder. Actually, neither do I. However, I do find that it usually helps to have a sense of humor to get through much of what life throws at you, and I try to convey that in the way my characters approach life. (I also prefer to read books that make me laugh, rather than have me constantly checking the locks on all my windows and doors!)

So when I began writing mysteries, I knew I wanted to write humorous amateur sleuth mysteries, not police procedurals or dark, gritty serial killer fare. I get enough of that reading my daily newspaper and watching the evening news.

However, I firmly believe that there's a place and a readership for all sub-genres of mystery. Taste is very subjective, and I respect whatever someone else's particular taste in mysteries is. If someone likes to read or write stories that scare the stuffing out of people, good for them.

Me? I like to make my readers laugh, even if they're reading about a murder investigation. That's why when I killed off the fashion editor in *ASSAULT WITH A*

blog.



DEADLY GLUE GUN, I did it with (duh!) a hot glue gun. After all, anyone can kill off a victim with a Glock or a Ginsu knife, but how many killers use a glue gun?

My mystery series is also populated with a cast of zany characters. I love taking polar opposites and throwing them together to create conflict. In the Anastasia Pollack Crafting Mysteries, my protagonist has a mother who believes she descends from Russian royalty and a mother-in-law who's a staunch communist. Not only are they both living under Anastasia's roof, they're forced to share a bedroom. Zany characters + conflict = humor. Even though it's in the confines of a murder mystery.

The problem with writing humor, though, is that you never know if your readership will "get it." For me, writing humor is the second hardest part of writing a mystery. The first part is creating a story where you keep your readers guessing as to the identity of the killer. As the author, I have to know who the killer is. So it's difficult for me to be objective. Did I leave too many clues? Not enough? The worst thing in the world is to have your readers figure out whodunit by the third or fourth chapter into the book.

Humor is very subjective, though. I've written scenes where I've laughed out loud as I've typed, then again each time I reread the scene. However, I never know if others will find those scenes funny. So I always hold my breath, fingers crossed, waiting to hear from first my agent, then my editor, then reviewers, and finally readers. Some will laugh; some won't. All I can hope for is that more laugh than don't.

So you can imagine how absolutely thrilled I was when I received starred reviews from both *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*, with *Publishers Weekly* stating, "Crafty cozies don't get any better than this hilarious confection..." and *Booklist* saying, "Winston has hit a home run with this hilarious, laugh-until-your-sides-hurt tale." By George, they got it!

Now I keep my fingers crossed, hoping others do, too.

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Increasing Backlinks to Increase Traffic to Your Website by Caridad Pineiro



Caridad Pineiro is a NY Times and USA Today

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) experts will tell you that one of the most important things you can do to increase website traffic and improve search engine listings is to increase the number of backlinks to your website.

What is a backlink? Backlinks are incoming links to a website. Backlinks are also one way that [Google determines PageRank](#) in order to assess the popularity of a website. (Did you know Page is actually the name of Larry Page, the inventor of the ranking algorithm?)

Wondering how your website ranks and how many backlinks there are to it? Click here for a [nice backlink checker](#) that also provides a ton of other info

So how can you boost backlinks?

1. Exchange links to your website with others. List them on your links page in exchange for them linking to you.

bestselling author of paranormal romance and romantic suspense. Caridad has published over 25 novels and/or novellas. She is also a self-confessed geek who just loves to play around with all things technical. For more information on Caridad, please visit www.caridad.com



2. Article submissions. Writing articles in your area of expertise or about topics of interest are a great way to create backlinks. [E-zine Articles](#) is a great way to do this.
3. Social sites (Facebook, Twitter and Myspace) and social bookmarking are also great ways to create backlinks and it doesn't have to be time-consuming. Applications like [Hootsuite](#) and sites like [Ping.fm](#) allow you to propagate multiple sites. Make sure to bookmark important pages on your site to Digg, Delicious and Stumbleupon, but also remember that "social" bookmarking is about being "social". Share fun and interesting links as well via these sites.
4. Video submission sites are another manner in which to generate backlinks to your site and your uploaded videos
5. Get listed at the various search directories like dmoz.org, Alexa, Google, Bing and Yahoo. This will assist in making sure that these search engines spider your site. This will help boost where you appear in their listings.
6. Guest blogs and comments on blogs also help create backlinks to your site. While every blog/website has a different method for leaving comments, try to use choose the method that allows you to leave your name and URL.

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★[This Month's New and Noteworthy](#)★

★Current Bestsellers★

Click on Name to Access List

Booksense Indie Bestsellers
NY Times Bestsellers
Publishers Weekly
USA Today Bestsellers
Washington Post Bestsellers

★Contact Us★

www.lsfwriters.com
contact@lsfwriters.com
Become a Friend on Facebook!
Become a Fan on Facebook!

Contests

Circalit Crime Fiction Competition – Deadline Wed, 2/09/2011

The top submissions will be read and considered for representation by literary agency, A.P. Watt. A.P. Watt, the world's longest established literary agency are looking to find the next bestselling crime writer, so if you think you have what it takes to be the next John Le Carré or Stieg Larsson, enter your novel for free now. The competition is hosted online at Circalit (www.circalit.com). If you wish to enter start by creating an account at Circalit and posting your novel online. The public will be able to read all the submissions and vote for their favorite novels. How much of your novel is visible to the public is entirely up to you, but you must make sure that the first 30 pages are visible in order to be eligible to enter. After posting up your work be sure to visit the competitions section (<http://www.circalit.com/projects/competitions/crime>) and enter your novel into the A.P. Watt competition.

One entry per person only.
<http://www.circalit.com>

Carteret Writers 20th Annual Contest – Deadline Tue, 3/08/2011

Children's, Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry

Fees: \$10 per non-entry for non-members, \$5 per entry for members

Prizes: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd awarded in each category.

1st: \$100

2nd: \$50

3rd: \$25

Winning entries will be included in our 2011 literary journal "Shoal"

Complete guidelines are on the web site.

Contact Information: Keith Laughinghouse Laughinghousekeith@yahoo.com or Douglas Hayes djhayes@hotmail.com

<http://carteretwriters.org>

2011 Sheila Contest from Valley Forge Romance Writers Deadline 02/12/2011

Participation is open to all RWA members, published and unpublished, who have not published a full-length novel (40K words or more) in the category entered at the time of the contest deadline and within the past five years. Previous winners may not re-enter their winning entry, even in edited format. They may, however, enter another work. Enter as many different manuscripts as you wish, but each entry must be entered and submitted separately. The same manuscript may not be entered in more than one category. Choose the best category for any single work. Any entries received after the deadline will be returned, and the entry fee forfeited.

All submissions must be received electronically by 11:59 p.m. (eastern standard time), February 12, 2011. Entries received after the deadline will be returned and the entry fee will be forfeited.

NOTE: If less than 10 entries are received for a category, that category will be eliminated and the author given the choice of switching the entry to another category or having the entry and fees returned.

CATEGORIES AND FINAL ROUND JUDGES:

Single Title Romance:
Emilia Pisani, Simon and Schuster

Historical (short or long and Regencies):
Holly Blanck, St. Martin's Press

Fantasy/Futuristic/Paranormal:
Leah Hultenschmidt, SourceBooks

Women's Fiction with Romantic Elements/Chick Lit:
Alex Logan, Grand Central

Romantic Suspense:
Leis Pederson, Berkeley

For more information, please visit <http://www.vfrw.com>.

Please note that we do not endorse any of these contests and/or publications ask that you check the fine print regarding the contest rules, publication terms and also confirm the deadlines in question. Thank you.

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Online Courses

Master Class Writers' Retreat for Women - Deadline: 2011-02-25

Writers' Retreat for Women! Get inspiration. Get guidance. Get published! The retreat is a weekend long training program located in a beautiful facility in upstate New York. In a long weekend of writing instruction and one-on-one critique, participants gain fundamental knowledge of developing, marketing and pitching works of fiction/nonfiction.

DATES of EVENT: February 25-27, 2011

LOCATION of EVENT: Woodhull Retreat Center, Ancramdale, NY

WHO IS ELIGIBLE: Women writers of all ages who wish to get their voice out and who are interested in getting published. This retreat is for both fiction and nonfiction authors

ENTRY FEE: Tuition : \$495 (ASJA members to receive a \$50 discount.), plus Room & Board: \$100 per night.

<http://woodhull.tv/programs/master-class-writers/>

Creativity Workshop - March 18-21, 2011

From website: Teaching people ways to develop their creativity and use it in life, work, and creative expression. We do this through a unique series of exercises in creative writing, drawing, memoir and storytelling.

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

Please note that we do not endorse any of these online courses and ask that you check the fine print regarding the online course rules and also confirm the deadlines in question. Thank you.

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Conferences

PLRW 2011 Retreat at Sea

August 8, 2011 to August 13, 2011

Speaker: Deidre Knight of the Knight Agency

Did you promise yourself that you'd finish a book by the end of the year and you haven't come close? Or are you starting a new project and you need a kick in the pants to begin? The PLRW Writer's retreat is a great way to separate yourself from distractions, join like-minded writers, and get the jump start you need. In 2011, PLRW's retreat will be on a Carnival cruise ship scheduled to set sail to the northeast Canadian coast. The retreat is open to RWA and non-RWA members.

Date: August 8, 2011

Ship: Carnival Glory

Destination: New England/Canada

Duration: 5 days

Departure Port: New York

RETREAT FEE

- PLRW Member fee: \$20.00

- Nonmember fee: \$35.00

- Companion fee: \$20.00

Retreat fees are not refundable.

- Checks must be payable to:

Pocono Lehigh Valley Romance Writers

- Please send checks to:

PLRW

PO Box 4129

Bethlehem, PA 18018-0129

Retreat fees are due at the time of your cruise booking.

CRUISE FEE

Inside Cabin: \$596.33 per person, including taxes and port charges.

Ocean View Cabin: \$724.44 per person, including taxes & port charges.

Balcony Cabin: \$846.33 per person, including taxes and port charges. Please note: rates are based on double occupancy rooms. Carnival does not have single rates at this time and single occupants must pay the double occupancy rate. For more information, please visit <http://www.plrw.org/plrw-retreat-at-sea/>.

William Paterson University Spring Writer's Conference

Saturday, April 9, 2011

With keynote speaker Francine Prose, author of *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife*; *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them*; *The Lives of the Muses: Nine Women and the Artists They Inspired*. For more information about the conference, see

<http://euphrates.wpunj.edu/writersconference>

RT Booklovers Convention

April 6-10, 2011 in Los Angeles, CA

What sets the RT BOOKLOVERS CONVENTION apart from any other book industry convention? We mix business and networking with fellowship and fun.

- Begin each morning with a meet and greet mixer hosted by various authors and publishers.
- Then choose from a rich variety of over 125 informative workshops for readers, writers and booksellers.
- Join Authors, Publishers and Vendors in Club RT, the place to meet for socializing.

- Pick up goodies on Promotion Lane to remember your authors.
- Cap off the afternoon with a fun-filled stimulating networking party.
- At dark, it's time to get ready for our sumptuous evening events.

Attendees will receive lots of FREE books and promotional items from authors and publishers.

ON THE AGENDA:

- PUBLISHED AUTHORS and ASPIRING WRITERS can attend over 100 workshops to learn how to write and get published, how to network, how to promote and how to increase sales.
- READERS will enjoy a special five-day program with games, giveaways, prizes and lots of FREE BOOKS as well as attend bestselling author lectures in an intimate setting. Authors are at the ready to answer all your book-related questions.
- BOOKSELLERS will value a special three-day program that will take you into the future of bookselling with tips on how to increase sales and revenues and how to compete with the chains. You will also learn how to use the internet to supplement your income.
- BREAK AWAY from your designated track and check out any other workshop that appeals to you.

All of the workshops, dinners and events are included in the registration fee. For more information, please visit <http://www.rtconvention.com>

Romance Writers of America – June 28-July 1, 2011

31st Annual Conference, **Marriott Marquis** in Times Square, New York, New York
http://www.rwa.org/cs/conferences_and_events

NJ SCBWI – 2011 Annual Conference – June 3-5, 2011

Princeton Wyndham, Princeton, NJ

<http://www.newjerseyscbwi.com/events/110604%20conference.shtml>

Deadly Ink

August 5-7, 2011

HANK PHILLIPPI RYAN IS THE 2011 GUEST OF HONOR

Annual conference covering all types of mystery writing with book sales, key speakers, and professional authors.

<http://www.deadlyink.com/conference.html>

Please note that we do not endorse any of these conferences and ask that you check the fine print regarding the online course rules and also confirm the deadlines in question. Thank you.

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Liberty States Fiction Writers ★ PO Box 2914 ★ Westfield, NJ 07090