

**Subject:**

March 2014 Newsletter

Conference season is upon us. Don't miss what's coming up next...

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## **Letter from the President**

I love writer conferences.

I've only been to two big ones. Fantasy & Scifi WorldCon and our own RWA Nationals last year. At World Con I was beside myself in the presence of the greats like L. E. Modesitt (trapped him in an elevator), Charlaine Harris, Elizabeth Moon, and Charles DeLint (found them in the elevator too. I'm telling you the elevators is the place to hang out.) And poor Marjorie Liu. I fangirled all over that sweet kid before she had a chance to check in. That's what she gets for being in line behind me and telling the clerk her name out loud. I love her! Embarrassingly enough I'm sure I'd fawn all over her again even eight years later. Unless she remembers me and runs for it. She looks fast.

I was an ant walking among gods. But wow, was it fun.

I've also attended several of our local smaller conferences and love them just as much. Probably because I know more people there, or because it's smaller and not as intimidating, I'm more myself. One of the highlights for me personally, is going out to dinner at the end of the day with a large group of writers, old friends and new friends. It's so much fun.

This year we're lucky enough to have two RWA conferences close by. Our Two-Step this month and Nationals in San Antonio in July! I hope I hope I hope that all of you are able to take advantage of at least one of these conferences this year. Better if you can go to both!!! There is nothing like the energy of being around creative people. And if you happen to see Margorie Liu...do a little fangirl flip out on my behalf please.



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## ***Upcoming February Meeting Speaker:***

### *The Art of the Story Board with Patricia Burroughs*

Screenwriters and filmmakers have used storyboards for decades, but most novelists have come to the game lately. Join Patricia as she demonstrates various plotting techniques [including Blake Snyder's *Save the Cat* and Chris Vogler's *Writer's Journey*] using storyboards, index cards, post-its, and more. This is plotting as you've probably never seen it, and you will walk away with new techniques for your arsenal.

And here's some bio information:

Patricia Burroughs—Pooks—began her writing career in romance with five published

novels. She received nominations and recognition from "RT" and "Affaire de Coeur," and was a finalist for Romance Writers of America's Rita before succumbing to the dark side—screenwriting. She's the only writer in the history of the Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting [Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences] to be a Finalist with two different scripts, and won with an adaptation of her first romance novel. Uncredited but paying work followed, and she was happy with her Hollywood dreams...

Until one day she woke up with a new story rooting itself into her heart, a story that couldn't be told in a script but needed many more pages to spread out, flex its muscles and take wing. Her fantasy trilogy begins with *This Crumbling Pageant*, April 2014 in print and digital.

And yes. She really does answer to Pooks.

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## **Texas Two Step Conference**

**March 28th, 29th, 30th**

*Ad Space in Programs is Available!*

Ad space is now available for purchase in our conference program. NT does not provide graphic services. You are responsible for designing your ad.

Program size is 8.5 x 11.

Prices:

- 1/4 page ~ \$25
- 1/2 page ~ \$50 (vertical or horizontal)

- full page ~ \$100

PLEASE NOTE: The above prices are for black and white ads only. If you want color, you will have to pay the printer's price. For more info, contact [programs@ntrwa.org](mailto:programs@ntrwa.org). Deadline to be included is **March 14th**.

### *Rates*

NT, DARA, and Yellow Rose members regular rate: \$155

All others regular rate: \$185

~ available January 24 through March 15, 2014

NT members and All others last minute rate: \$215

~ available March 16 through March 28, 2014

Location: [Sheraton Fort Worth Hotel and Spa](#) at 1701 Commerce Street, Fort Worth, 76102.

### *Speakers:*

**C.J. Ellisson** - Facebook Intensive

**Amy Atwell** - What's Your Social Media Game Plan?

**Linda Castillo** - Fundamentals and Essentials of Writing the Suspense Novel & Dealing With Negativity

**Sophie Jordan** - New Adult: It's not your Momma's YA.... & Historical Romance for the Modern Reader

**Jodi Thomas** - World Building in Womens Fiction



## Most Pages Written

- Sidney Bristol 266
- Allie Broadfield 85
- Susannah Chapin 78
- Jerrie Alexander 65
- Dakota Byrd 65

## Most Pages Edited

- Sidney Bristol 727
- Carolyn Williamson 506
- Tish Sanders 500
- Marsha West 450
- Lavendar Daye 392



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## Choosing the *Right* Writers' Conference

By C.A. Szarek and Susan Sheehey

So you want to attend a writers' conference? First time? Even BETTER!

There are so many great ones out there. Before you make any decisions make sure you do your research, talk to others that have gone and listen to what they might have to say.

Most conferences have their agenda listed with plenty of time to review it beforehand. Read over it carefully so you can plan your conference experience.

**What do you want to accomplish?** This is important to decide because if you're there just to socialize, you're not maximizing the resources writers' conferences offer. Of course, there's nothing wrong with meeting other authors, but it probably wouldn't be beneficial if this is your main attendance goal.

Authors attend conferences for many reasons, but here are a few main benefits that draw people.

**\*Pitching:** This is a fantastic opportunity that is rather unique to writers' conferences. Personal, face-to-

face contact with editors and agents who *want* to give you a shot. Believe it or not, they attend conferences for some of the same reasons authors do, but the positive thing here is these particular editors and agents make time because they are actively seeking quality work. No waiting on that pesky email.

Sometimes these are what we would consider *big deal* editors from the coveted New York Houses that you don't get into without an agent. This is a major benefit of a conference. On the same token, agents are not always easy to gain. Speaking to one face to face, whether from a big agency or not, is a great opportunity. You can make an impression so they remember you, even if your current project isn't for them.

This alone can be a great reason to attend a conference. But make sure you research well. Some conferences charge extra for this perk, and some don't.

If you're a conference virgin, even the thought could have you shaking in your boots, but don't. Editors and agents are people, too. They enjoy talking to you. Just think of it like this: You can practice your pitch all you want, but if it's not natural, it can lose appeal even if your words are awesome. So speak to an editor or agent as if you're telling your best friend about your book. No one knows the book better than you do.

Don't let nerves make you miss out on this conference-unique opportunity.

**\*Workshops:** Most conferences have a variety of sessions that cover everything from craft to marketing. What the conferences offer can also be a deciding factor in which conference you choose. No matter what stage you're at in your career, whether you're pre-published or have several books out there, you never stop learning as an author. The more you write, the better you get.

So, look at the agenda (most, if not all, will have it available beforehand) and see which would benefit you. Workshops can be a great reason to attend a conference.

**\*Book Signings:** A perk of many a conference is a book signing that's open to the public. Hopefully this won't be your *only* reason for attending a conference, but it can be a nice experience as well. You can get your name and your book(s) out to other authors as well as the general public.

If you are going to take part in a signing at a conference, ask questions. Will they have a sponsor? Will you have to be your own cashier for the books you sell? Will sales benefit a charity? (This is very common at conference book signings) and research what turnout they usually have, if the conference is annual so you can plan the number of books and swag you need to bring.

**\*Networking:** Another awesome reason for attending a conference! Read the brochure/agenda to see what headliners will be at the conference of your choice. Then, make it a point to speak to these people. Yes, you really can talk to *famous* authors! Just like editors and agents, they're people, too! You never

know what kind of friends you could make—for life.

Let your inner social butterfly can come out and shine! It pays to talk to people. Writing, like any other industry, can depend on *who* you know. So make some contacts! Get business cards and keep them handy.

Other authors, editors, agents, you never know who can be around the corner, at a meal, even hanging out in the lobby at the conference. Make use of free time by being observant. Read name badges. Don't be afraid to ask other authors what they write. And remember, when someone asks what *you* write—they really *do* want to know.

You could end up with a fantastic critique partner or some awesome new reads.

Other factors to consider in choosing which writer's conferences to attend are:

**\*Genre Specific:** Make sure you pick a conference that includes the genre in which you write. If your stories are mainly thriller or science fiction, then attending a romance based conference won't be as helpful. There are plenty of conferences that are more specific to a particular genre that gears many of their workshops and key speakers to that genre. Pay close attention to those. But of course don't completely disregard the broader conferences like the Writer's Digest Conference (<http://www.writersdigestconference.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=61986&>), where many big editors and agents always attend looking for new talent to add to their lineup.

**\*Budget:** How much can you spend in a given year on these conferences? Between registration fees, airfare, hotels, food, books, contests, and other miscellaneous items, the endeavor can get expensive. The best conferences are those that do not charge extra for pitch sessions, specific workshops or even parking. Make sure you choose one that has all of those included (unless you don't plan to pitch your manuscript). Another tip is to choose conferences that are geographically close, saving you the cost of airfare and/or hotel. Or if you have several friends all attending, split the costs by sharing a hotel room and make a road trip out of it. Most conferences also offer an 'early-bird' rate, so book early if you can. Some conferences also give out 'scholarships' to help ease the cost to a few individuals who present a financial or business need.

**\*Workshops:** Make sure you review the list of workshops presented, and who is presenting them. The best conferences are packed with exceptional workshops on a variety of topics, on improving craft, managing your business, and industry trends. Workshops that will be relevant to where you are in your career. You shouldn't have any 'free' blocks in your schedule. There should be so many interesting classes you just *have* to attend, how can you possibly choose between them. Research the presenters as well: are they experienced in what they're presenting? Have they given it the presentation before and have others found it helpful?

**\*Attendings Agents/Editors/Authors:** If you're pitching a novel or just want to meet the experts in the

industry, make sure the ones you're really interested in plan on attending. Conferences will always list the names of presenting authors, agents and editors on their websites in advance, especially those that will accept pitches. They often include the kinds of things the experts are actively looking for. So research the editors and agents attending and see if they cover your topic/genre. If you're spending this much money, make sure it's worth your while. [www.querytracker.net](http://www.querytracker.net)

### **Conference Etiquette**

Dress appropriately. No one is asking you to wear an uncomfortable suit or dress or three-inch heels for an entire day of workshops, presentations and pitch sessions. But be professional. Don't show up in ratty jeans, tank top and flip flops.

Don't stalk agents/editors in the bathroom or just before they present. They are clearly focused on other things and they won't give you their full attention. And it'll annoy the hell out of them, and that's not the kind of impression you want to leave.

Networking is a must, but monopolizing conversations with constant reminders of what you're story is about is a turnoff. Give others a chance to talk, and LISTEN.

### **What to Bring**

Business cards with your email address and contact info [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com)

Notepad or Notebook and a good pen

Synopsis/Query Letter <http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2010/08/how-to-write-query-letter.html>

A prepped 1-line 'elevator pitch' of your story. <http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2010/05/how-to-write-one-sentence-pitch.html>

A small messenger bag to carry the 'goodies' you'll get

Cash- for buying books, the cash bar, raffles, tips for housekeeping

Light Jacket/Sweater- you never know how powerful the air conditioner will be

Extra Luggage Bag- to cart home the extra books and stuff you'll get (if you're flying, and if you don't leave extra space in your original bag)

Snacks- if you're staying at the hotel overnight, do you really want to pay hotel prices for a bag of chips or granola bars?

### **What to Leave**

Laptop (leave it in the hotel room)

A copy of your full manuscript. If agents ask for it, they all prefer email. (Why would you want to cart around that extra weight, anyway?)

Shy or Wallflower Tendencies- this will kill your experience at conferences, and the whole point is to network and meet people who will help advance your career and/or skills

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C.A. Szarek:

*Multigenre, award winning and best selling author, C.A. is originally from Ohio, but got to Texas as soon as she could. She is married and has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She works with kids when she's not writing. She's always wanted to be a writer and is overjoyed to share her stories with the world.*

You can find her on Facebook and Twitter. Her website is [www.caszarek.com](http://www.caszarek.com).

*Susan Sheehey:*

*Susan writes contemporary romance, romantic suspense and women's fiction. After spending six years in the corporate world, her true passion wouldn't let go and she's been writing ever since. She lives and laughs in Texas with her husband and son.*

*Follow Susan's page at [www.SusanSheehey.com](http://www.SusanSheehey.com) or on Facebook and Twitter.*

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## What I Learned from Contests

*by Lavender Daye*

If you've ever entered a contest or judged contest entries, you know there are several moving parts that must be manipulated to make the contest worthwhile. It takes time and effort, often in the wee hours of the night, to make sure entries are judged, tallied, charted, and on and on until the end.

I've been a contestant, a judge, and a worker bee, and in each role, I learned something new to add to my writing tool chest. (Yes, this is a sly bid to encourage participation in contests, but give me a minute or two to explain.)

As a contestant, I learned how to present my story to the world by following the format requirements and putting my best foot forward. In return, I was gifted with comments about my writing that helped shine a light on the dos and don'ts of the genre, pointed out issues previously ignored by critique buddies, and helped me find my strengths. A win for me, no matter the rank I scored in the contest.

As a worker bee for my chapter's contest, I discovered that the computer I'd been using religiously was much more than a typewriter. (Yes, I'm that old. I learned to type in high school using an IBM Selectric. Computers in offices came along five years later.)

I asked for written instructions from the Contest Coordinator, since she wanted me to reformat each entry to make them fit contest guidelines. (Imagine my shock! Some strange writers actually fail to read all the directions and send entries willy nilly! Don't get me started on rules....)

But I digress.

'Format' was a terrifying word for me, but the directions were clear, concise, and easy to follow. AND I discovered ways to change the way I used my laptop, making my work easier and faster. Another win for me, and I didn't even enter the contest.

As a published author, I've judged contest pieces. To me, this is the most demanding and most needed job in a contest. It's also a huge part of RWA's reason to be.

Writers learning from writers creates a community of learners. When I help another writer, I invariably learn something about myself, my process, and/or my writing.

When I judge entries, I tend to use a lot of yellow highlight (thank goodness colors are free on computers!) I try hard to find good things to say about each piece. I don't hesitate to offer suggestions and remind the writer of rules we all must follow. No two writers follow the same learning curve, but I always hope my comments help the contestant down the road to publication.

Not long ago, I sent an entry back to a coordinator with a note, worried about how much I'd commented on the piece. Her reply was a surprise. Some judges score high because they don't want to make comments. Unfair to the contestants, but it happens.

It made me sad. We are a community of learners, a community that refreshes itself by helping each other succeed.

Now, go forth and support your local authors.

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*Lavender lives in Texas with her own private Prince Charming, two kids, two cats and a large brown rug, uh, dog. She spends her days writing sexy contemporary romance, sometimes adding a hint of suspense or tossing in a little dominance and submission.*

*A member of RWA, she took first place in the Great Expectations Contest in 2011 for Bound by Trust.*

When she's not writing or reading great romance novels, she can be found in the kitchen baking, usually with chocolate.

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## **A Note from the Newsletter Editor:**

Please note photos included in the newsletter are provided by the members. Any photos you'd like to include can be sent to [newsletter@ntrwa.org](mailto:newsletter@ntrwa.org). It is at the discretion of the newsletter editor as to which photos will be included in the newsletter. Thank you.

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## February 2014 Meeting Minutes:

### CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, February 15, 2014 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:33 a. m. The minutes for the January meeting were approved.

### OFFICER REPORTS:

#### **President: Clover Autrey reported:**

- Our chapter reimburses one member's fees for entering both the Golden Heart and the RITA. Guest Robin Nelson drew the winners:
  - Gen Wilson will be reimbursed for entering the Golden Heart.
  - Suzan Butler will be reimbursed for entering the RITA.
- Change to the Bylaws will be voted online for approval.
- PRO / PAN retreat will be after the conference in March.
- Board meeting 9 am before next general meeting on March 15, 2014.

#### **President-Elect: Angi Morgan was not present:**

#### **Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:**

- No report.

#### **Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- Report will be at March meeting.

#### **Program Director: Lara Lacombe was not present. Clover Autrey reported:**

- Cindy Dees is our speaker.

**Membership Director: Gina Nelson was not present. Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- 83 members to date.
- Guests at meeting: Robin Nelson and Jessica Davidson.
- Current members, please renew your membership.

**Communications Director: Kim Miller was not present:**

- Send information / articles for inclusion in the newsletter to [newsletter@NTRWA.org](mailto:newsletter@NTRWA.org).

**Website Director:**

**COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:**

**PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek was not present. Clover Autrey reported:**

- Presented pencils to:
  - Carolyn Williamson for Romancing the Gold.
  - Lavender Day for The Art of Submission.
  - Sidney Bristol for Hot Tango.

**PRO Liaison: Jeanne Guzman was not present:**

**Great Expectations: Angi Morgan was not present:**

**Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:**

- 128 entries to date.
- Young Adult category did not garner enough entries to qualify as a category. Entrants were notified and were given the option to enter in another category.
- \$2836.15 in entry fees - \$650 in expenses.

**Hospitality: Michelle Welsh reported:**

- No report.

**Audio Librarian: Debra Owens was not present:**

**Writing Incentives: Christine Crocker reported:**

- Distributed writing incentives.

**Texas Two-Step: Lara Lacombe and Suzan Butler were not present. Clover Autrey reported in Lara Lacombe's absence:**

- Blog site for the conference: [ntrwatwostep.blogspot.com](http://ntrwatwostep.blogspot.com)
- Room block at the Sheraton is available until February 26, 2014.
- Dates are March 28, 29, 30, 2014.

**Bylaws: Angi Morgan was not present:**

**Spotlights: Regina Richards reported:**

- Dakota Byrd is our spotlight for February.

**Unfinished Business:**

- No unfinished business to report.

**New Business:**

- No new business to report.
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Email questions, comments, or articles to [newsletter@ntrwa.org](mailto:newsletter@ntrwa.org).

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