

Subject:

July 2014 Newsletter

Countdown to Nationals.

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Letter from the President

I found the old notebook I used from the very first day I walked into an NT meeting until I ran out of pages. Early 2009. Seriously? I've been a member that long? Sure doesn't seem like it. Flipping through these pages brought back tons of memories. From Wendy Watson discussing black moments and Pete the forensics guy lifting our fingerprints to Judi McCoy transfixing us with the force of her personality. I have pages of notes on Shelley Bradley giving us the rundown on what to look for in contracts and another load of notes with Ron Campbell's guidance into taxes.

And who can't remember Sally Felt's "Screw the fear, find the fun!" philosophy?

I've taken notes from hypnotists, dream analyzers, librarians, bookstore CRMs, a

Magician/Medical Examiner, Search and Rescue Dog Trainer, social media gurus, and Editor and Agents galore all from our little room at the side of La Hacienda restaurant.

I also have little notes for myself stuck in there like “Give Michelle Welch, Jeannie Guzman, and Nancy Connally their PRO pins” and “New members this month: Gloria, Jamie, Karen, Sasha, Ruby, and Juliet”. I have names written down of people who walked into our group fresh without a first novel under their belts who are now on bestseller lists.

The funniest quote I found is from Angi Platt (back before she became Angi Morgan) dated Sept. 17, 2009.

“You do have to be present to be there.”

Um? I have no memory what she was talking about but I obviously found it hilarious enough to write down. I can see us all having a good chuckle over that slip of words as well as Angi’s sheepish grin.

Man, we’ve had a good time together, haven’t we? I had no idea that first meeting just how much North Texas would enrich my life or how much I would look forward to coming each month. Or how jazzed up with creative energy I’d be each month with new ideas and techniques I didn’t know before.

I know I’ve said this before so I hope it doesn’t sound trite, but I really do love you guys. Can’t think of one person from NT I haven’t enjoyed getting to know. You’re an extremely talented and giving bunch of people. Anyway, before the violins really start sobbing in the background, let me just end with this: Thanks for being part of NT. Thanks for always being present so you can be there.

Clover Autrey
NTRWA President

Upcoming July Meeting:

Melanie Jade Rummel

Creating Characters with Psychic and Mediumship Abilities

Develop a greater understanding of characters with psychic and mediumship abilities with the help of professional Psychic Medium, Melanie Jade Rummel. Through unusual and entertaining personal stories, Melanie will help you understand how these abilities are developed, how they can be used, and how they affect daily life. Best of all, Melanie will answer your questions to help make your psychic characters come to life.

Getting to Know Our Members:

Question: What's your writing process? Minimum number of words/pages a day?

Writing sprints?etc.

C.A. Szarek: I work alot, so I write whenever I can. Writing daily keeps me consistent, and keeps my drive to write, to finish the book where it needs to be. During the week, I only get about 2 and a half hours to write, from about 6pm to about 8pm. If I write 1000 words, or 1000, it's words I didn't have before. But lately, my average for that time frame is 1500 words or more.

As far as process, I am a panster. I just sit and write. And hopefully, characters cooperate and words flow!

I love writing sprints. They keep me competitive and productive. I have a few friends I do them with. We go into a chatroom and do twenty mins, then come back and chat for a min or two, share something we just wrote and then do it all over again. It's fun and keeps the tempo up!

Understanding Algorithms

As first appeared on Facebook

By Cindy Dees

One of the hardest parts of being in the publishing industry is keeping up with the technologies. Words like propagation, impressions, metrics, or click-throughs were never part of the writer's working vocabulary until very recently. Now we're all having to be amateur marketers and computer geeks.

An area many authors are not aware of is understanding the algorithms big social media sites and retailing sites use. How do they decide who gets advertisements about your book, or even who sees your posts? It's technical, it's dry, and it's hard to digest. But it's also vitally important to you as a writer.

With millions of writers attempting to sell books, everyone is desperately trying to find ways to rise up above the seething masses and achieve...wait for it...another new writer word...discoverability. Which is to say, how will you be found by potential readers?

One of the MOST important ways for you to be seen is to figure out how to work the various algorithms to your advantage. I can't promise to turn this into a series of articles, but as I run across interesting and useful information in my own study of the algorithms, I'll be sure to share it with you.

An algorithm I'm making a concerted effort to work with is on this very site. And here's how I'm going about doing it:

As all of you are no doubt aware, Facebook now does not share all of your posts with all of your friends and followers (unless you pay to boost your post!). So, for example, if I write an article here about a writing topic, only about a quarter of all my writing colleagues on this page will actually receive it on their FB feed.

This puts the onus on each of you to stop by here periodically to see if I've posted anything new. Most of you have already figured out that I tend to post around once a week. Which means, you may stop by here every couple of weeks. Realistically, you'll catch some of my

posts some of the time.

Not ideal.

So how can I fix this, and how can you fix it for your friends, followers, and rabid fans?

I now copy every article I write here on FB to my website. Then, on my website I have installed a very nifty widget. (oooh, another one of those modern geek words) If you go to my website just once and click on the little, red "read more" link to ANY article there, you will jump to that post and see a prominent spot where you can sign up to receive a very short email notification any time I make a new post to my website.

This means you'll know any time I post a new article and won't have to remember to come back here or go to my website to check and see if I've posted a new article. I'll tell you when it's time to come here or hop over to my website to catch new content.

Stuff like this may seem trivial to you. But it is SUCH a competitive marketplace for writers these days that every little thing you do to make it easier for your friends/fans/readers to find you matters. A lot.

Oh, and here's another thing that pesky Facebook algorithm means. It's valuable to train your friends and followers to like every post of yours that they're willing to. The more likes an individual post gets, the more people it gets shared with.

Take note of my last three posts, here. I wrote an article on getting your electronic house in order before you break out into author stardom. A REALLY important topic where I shared some good advice. 16 people liked the original post and 651 people saw it. My duplicate post fed over from my website has 5 likes and 194 people saw it. My most recent post (hilarious if I do say so myself) has been liked by 176 people and 2826 people have seen it.

Algorithms matter. Like it or not, you have to drill down and wrap your brain around them.

I guess this is the part where I get down on one knee and beg you to like this post, then, isn't it? And while you're at it, consider hopping over to www.cindydees.com, click on any article in the white column in the middle of the page, and subscribe to get notifications

whenever I make a new post! — feeling loved.

It's good to lurk on multiple writer's loops where authors compare notes and experiences. Recently, a lot of us have been talking about our dramatically shrinking FB reach. As far as we can tell, our favorite social media host is messing with its "post reach" algorithms again.

What seems to be happening--and this is by no means scientific or confirmed, but merely the observation of multiple authors--is that when a post goes out, if many or most of the first 5-10 people who read it interact with it by liking it or sharing it, then the post is labeled "hot" and gets a much wider distribution.

Conversely, if few people or no people interact with the post immediately, it's buried, and very few people see it.

Also, posts with key words like "New Job" or "New Baby" get wide distribution immediately.

When a post gets a lot of comments with the word "Congratulations" in them, the post gets wider distribution.

FB admits to having up to 100,000 parameters that determine how widely posts are distributed. Hence, I think it makes great sense to copy your articles and news and post them on other social media platforms that are readily accessible to your readers, friends, and fans.

In my case, I post the big stuff to Goodreads, my Amazon Author Page, and most importantly, my website. I talked in my last post about setting up a widget folks can opt in to that notifies them anytime I make a post there. IT gives a short sneak preview of the post (just a few sentences) so people can decide if they want to click over and read the whole thing. Very handy, and my fans, friends, and readers never miss a post.

Unlike here, where your odds of seeing my posts are currently sitting at a whopping 1.5%. Just sayin.

CINDY DEES is the author of more than 45 romance novels and a multiple RITA award winner, among other awards.

Getting to Know Our Members:

Question: What's your writing process? Minimum number of words/pages a day?
Writing sprints?etc.

Lara Lacombe: My writing process tends to be fairly regular--I try to write every day. If I'm on a deadline, I have a minimum daily word count to make so that I stay on track. If I don't have a deadline, I'll write as much as I can.

Every once in a while, I can devote the whole day to writing. Sometimes, I'll have friends over and we'll write for 20 minutes, take a quick 2-3 minute break, and then dive back in. It sounds distracting, but you'd be surprised how much work you can get done in targeted bursts like that.

I reward myself by recording my word count on a calendar. If I've done really well, I'll put a sticker up for that day. My inner 5 year-old really likes to get stickers, so it's a cheap motivator for me!

The following article appeared in the June Heart of the West, Newsletter of the Utah Chapter, RWA.

E-Z Packing Tips: Part 1

By Jude Brown

Stressing over packing for a summer vacation or the 34th Annual Romance Writers of America Conference in San Antonio in July? Breathe easy. This former six-countries, 250-days-a-year road warrior is a packing maestro.

Whether preparing for a long weekend at the cabin, yachting the Mediterranean for fourteen days, or jetting the globe for a month, Packing Tips: Part 1 and Part 2 will save your sanity and SPACE!

With bag charges some airlines may be passing on to you and weight restrictions, efficiency matters.

E-Z Strategy: Only pack necessities. Don't pack anything your destination provides: such as a hairdryer, shampoo, lotion, etc.

When packing, act as though you're stocking a picnic basket for a relaxing day at the park. Same principles apply: STRATEGIZE your needs. And UTILIZE every nook and cranny.

Don't ignore the crevices created by the roller handle at the bottom of your suitcase. It's usable space. Fill it with spare tissue packs, protein bars, panty liners/pads, tampons, another paperback, spare business cards, etc. Notice I didn't say jammies-I've learned from experience to pack my jammies and a pair of clean undies in the lid's inside pocket. Travel hiccups happen. When you arrive at your hotel room in the wee hours of crazy, you can pull your pjs from the lid and drop into bed.

Tip: Ladies, pack a generous supply of panty liners. A panty liner is an easy way to refresh, particularly when travelling all day or rushing about at conferences, conventions, or on tour. They are simple to tuck into your handbag and well worth the extra fresh-start throughout the day.

Tip: If you're traveling out of the country (especially to multiple destinations), pack a Xeroxed copy of your passport and your itinerary inside your luggage. I put the paperwork in an envelope and place it on top of my clothing. If my luggage is misplaced, I have a chance it will catch up to me instead of sitting on my doorstep for weeks.

Tip: When using luggage tags or windowed identification slots, insert your information inward to protect your privacy. Write YOUR LAST NAME ONLY on the outward side. I also mark each piece of my luggage with a distinctive identifier that I can spot easily.

Tip: Keep in mind. You want your heavier items packed at the bottom when-in-roller-

mode. Otherwise, your luggage will be top heavy and tip when "at rest." For example, I pack my toiletries bag and shoes at the wheels end (this is what I'm referring to as the bottom).

Tip: I always pack a nylon collapsible backpack or zippered tote. Inevitably, I seek out the nearest food marts to load up on fruit and bottled water. Hotel prices can kill a budget or per diem.

E-Z Strategy: Only pack what (and the amount) you need.

Best packing secret, E.V.E.R? Pack-Mate® zipper seal compression bags. I found these at a Samsonite outlet, years ago. If possible, only buy the MEDIUM size (the large is massive and the small is teeny). An online search revealed TravelSmith also carries a variety of compression bags, as well. I can't live without these. They save space and time-and organize me, too. CAUTION: condensed packing still carries weight. Don't be lulled into packing more stuff!

Best packing trick, E.V.E.R? Pack one complete outfit per compression bag (Ladies, with the exception of bras). Neatly fold: slacks, undies, hosiery/socks, blouse/shirt, scarf/tie, etc. Slide them into the bag, smoothing the clothing to the edges then compress the air out. Tip: unroll your socks to alleviate bulk. Ladies, when it comes to packing bras, I wrap them in a sturdy plastic bag and tuck them in the corner at the top or lighter end of the luggage. Protect your pretties. I pulled a soggy suitcase off the carousel, once. My pretties were soaked and muddy, thus the plastic bag.

E-Z Strategy: Pack 'n Stack.

If you are not staying in one location for long (or you just like no-brainer convenience like I do), tuck an easily-seen 3X5 card or post-it inside the compression bag with the date on it (ie. WED, THUR or 11/20, 11/21, etc.) If I'm traveling with Forever Guy, I also note "J" or "FG" on the card along with the date. Pack the latest dates on the bottom. Instead of digging through your luggage whenever you need anything, it's at your fingertips. I'm not trying to make you insanely detailed-I'm alleviating travel stress. Honest!! Once you get the hang of this, you won't burn a single brain cell packing for trips (or unpacking during trips). It's easy-peasy.

Safe Travels, my friends!

Next month YOUR BEST SELF will publish E-Z PACKING TIPS: Part 2. We'll fine-tune efficiency even further when it comes to packing toiletries. We'll also address how to keep your shoes, evening wear (particularly sequins) and business attire wrinkle free and protected. Join us for even more tried and true secrets to safe, easy and efficient travel.

URWA member, Jude Bown is an award-winning contemporary romance author currently creating a single title series that takes place in a small, quirky Montana town. As a renowned International Speaker, Jude has presented over 1,200 seminars in America, Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland and Ireland. Visit Jude on Facebook, Twitter, Goodreads or at www.JudeBown.com. YOUR BEST SELF is adapted from a series of blogs. Any part of this series-and more-can be found in the blog section at www.JudeBown.com.

Getting to Know Our Members:

Question: What's your writing process? Minimum number of words/pages a day?

Writing sprints?etc.

Susan Sheehey: My writing process has to be flexible, due to my son's schedule and special needs. But normally, I try to write about 2-3hrs a day (not necessarily all in one sitting), with at least 1500 words/day (between new words and editing). Weekends are different: sometimes I can get several hours in with about 3-4K words. Other weekends I can't get anything done.

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. It is at the discretion of the newsletter editor as to which photos will be included in the newsletter. Thank you.

June 2014 Meeting Minutes:

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting for the North Texas Romance Writers of America (NTRWA) was held on Saturday, June 21, 2014 at the La Hacienda Restaurant in Colleyville, Texas. The President and Secretary were present. The meeting was called to order at 10:50 a.m. The minutes for the May meeting were approved.

OFFICER REPORTS:

President: Clover Autrey reported:

- Requesting volunteers for our contests, The Carolyn and Great Expectations.

President-Elect: Angi Morgan reported:

- No Report

Secretary: Lisa Fenley reported:

- Marsha West did not have corrections for the April minutes so the April minutes are approved as submitted at the May meeting.

Treasurer: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- The Treasurer's report was presented and filed for audit.

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

- Today's program is Jen Fitzgerald discussing editing and Angi Morgan discussing book signing kit essentials.

Membership Director: Gina Nelson was not present. Lisa Fenley reported.

- Guests at meeting:
 - Amanda McMurrey
 - Faith Stencel

Communications Director: Kim Miller was not present:

- Send information / articles for inclusion in the newsletter to newsletter@NTRWA.org by June 28.

Website Director:

COMMITTEE COORDINATOR REPORTS:

PAN Liaison: Chrissy Szarek was not present:

- No report.

PRO Liaison: Jeanne Guzman was not present:

- No report.

Great Expectations: Angi Morgan reported:

- Angi Morgan provided an overview of the Great Expectations Contest roles.

Carolyn Contest: Jen FitzGerald reported:

- Jen Fitzgerald submitted a report on the Carolyn Contest and reviewed contest roles.

Hospitality: Michelle Welsh reported:

- No report.

Audio Librarian: Debra Owens was not present:

Writing Incentives: Christine Crocker was not present. Clover Autrey reported:

- Distributed writing incentives.
 - Sidney Bristol – Duty Bound
 - Angi Morgan – Bodyguards in Heels

Texas Two-Step: Lara Lacombe was not present. Clover Autrey reported:

- Signing at the Southlake Barnes and Noble was held on June 14.

Bylaws: Angi Morgan reported:

- No Report

Spotlights: Regina Richards reported:

- Carol Rose Doss is our spotlight for June.

Unfinished Business:

- No unfinished business to report.

New Business:

-
-

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