

Romance Writers of America
Board Meeting Agenda
December 13, 2020
Virtual Meeting

Sunday, December 13, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: President-Elect LaQuette called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. CT on Sunday, December 13, 2020.

ROLL CALL/CERTIFICATION OF QUORUM: President-Elect LaQuette directed Secretary Chilove to call the roll. Fifteen board members were present: Officers LaQuette, Laura Alford, and C. Chilove. Directors-at-Large, Elf Ahearn, Clair Brett, Antonia Cyn, Kelly Garcia, Seressia Glass, Leslie Hachtel, Siera London, Amy Quinton, Elizabeth Schechter, Jessa Slade, Nikki Sloane, and Beth Yarnall. Advisors, JoMarie DeGioia, Nancy Weeks, and Catherine Stuart. RWA Staff members Executive Director Leslie Scantlebury, Megan Sloan, Jessie Edwards, Erin Fry, Jackie Padilla, Donna Mathoslah, and Ashley Wucher. President Avery Flynn was excused. With a majority of the Board members needed to establish a quorum, there were 15 voting board members present and the Chair declared a quorum.

PRESIDENT-ELECT'S REPORT - LaQuette

At the beginning of this term, we established our goals and created a plan to help us accomplish them. Since then, we've spent the last few months putting those plans into action. The result has been several exciting new member benefits. First, we launched our monthly Deep Dive webinars with leading authors and experts in craft and marketing. We've also launched the inaugural Vivian Awards. Through the use of Author Coalition funds, we eliminated the fee for the first book entry for both members and non-members of RWA.

Next, to provide moral support for our members taking part in NaNoRiMo, we conducted Meetups. Board members hosted them, and they ranged from write-ins to impromptu topical tips to improve the writing process and craft. We've also announced RAMP (Romance Author Mentor Program) and P2P (Push to Publish), two exciting programs to help members reach their publishing goals. Each of the programs will launch in the first quarter of 2021.

Last, we're creating a Job Board and a New Release Listing. The first will be a directory of vendors who provide some services necessary to romance authorship such as editing, proofreaders, and graphic artists. The New Release listing will be a link where members can upload their new releases. Each month, we will note those new releases on our website.

We've accomplished a good deal in this first quarter, and our intention is to continue that momentum into the upcoming quarter by focusing on the following:

- Alternate Revenue: Anthology
- Outreach: Members, publishers, and publishing professionals
- DEIA Module Review & Implementation

Thank you,
LaQuette, RWA President-Elect

SECRETARY'S REPORT – C. Chilove

Motion to Allow Nonmember Entrants to Enter Vivian During First Week

Flynn moves to change the following language for The Vivian Contest.

- *The Vivian Contest will be open to members and non-members, ~~with members having the initial registration priority. Members will be able to enter one title in the week before entry to non-members opens.~~*
- *Any lapse in membership during the course of the contest by the author(s) which is defined as ~~from the time of entry to the winners' ceremony will result in the author(s) being required to renew within 10 (ten) days of notification or the entry will be disqualified.~~*
- *Each entrant may submit up to two entries. ~~Members~~ Entrants will be able to enter one title for the first two weeks the contest is open. ~~Non-members will be able to enter one title for the second week the contest is open.~~ Members and non-members will be able to enter and a second title from the third week the contest is open until the maximum number of entries is reached or the contest closes, whichever comes first.*

The motion was adopted in an Action without Meeting on October 21 with 15 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

Motion to populate the Leadership Development Committee

Flynn moves to approve the following members of the LDC.

Alison Ann Luff

Jacki Renee Miller

Sarah Robinson

Nikki Brock Wright

The motion was adopted in an Action without Meeting on October 28 with 15 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

Motion to Approve Funds for Silent Auction Page

Slade moves to approve \$200 to launch a 32Auctions silent auction page. The \$200 auction listing covers up to 200 auction items, RWA branding, no third party ads, and promotional placement for donors and sponsors. The auction is intended to raise funds via member and industry donations of goods and services of interest to romance writers, such as editing services, cover designs, ad creation, critiques from editors and agents, autographed books, etc. Funds raised will be split equally between the Perseverance Fund, the Scholarship Fund, and the general fund.

The motion was adopted in an Action without Meeting on November 2 with 15 votes in the affirmative, 1 against, and 0 abstentions.

Motion to Approve October 2020 Board Meeting Minutes

Flynn moves that the October 17, 2020, RWA Board of Directors meeting minutes be approved as distributed.

The motion was adopted in an Action without Meeting on November 2 with 15 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

Motion to Approve Committee Members

Flynn moves to approve the committee members listed below:

Conference Workshop Committee

Linda Bond

CJ Martin

Alexis Roark

Nikki Wright

PAN Advisory Committee

Assistant Chair: Elizabeth Essex

Members:

Sabrina Sol

Corrina Lawson

Barbara Denise Keaton

The motion was adopted in an Action without Meeting on November 2 with 15 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

TREASURER’S REPORT – L. Alford

CASH POSITION

Oct	Sept	Difference
\$658,693	\$712,957	(\$54,264)

Total General and Associate members is 5,413, a decrease of 3.87% from September to October.

New	Reinstated	Lapsed	Renewed
52	28	282	314

NET INCOME (LOSS)

Monthly Net income for October is (\$36,873).

Fiscal Year-to-Date Net Income is (\$8,382).

BUDGET VS ACTUAL COMPARISON

- Conference Workshop recordings brought in \$600 more than budgeted.
- Advertising publications brought in over \$600 more than budgeted.
- Received \$359 in Perseverance donations & awarded \$495.

MEMBERSHIP

- Office Expenses and Supplies were about \$425 less than budgeted.
- Legal expenses were less than the budgeted \$12,000, but have not yet been paid because we have 60 days. September invoice is \$3,025.60 and October's invoice is \$616.
- Budgeted housing stipend of \$4,000 was not spent in September or October because internship was delayed.
- Payroll expenses and payroll taxes were less than budgeted because the new employee did not start until November, and we did not hire a second employee as budgeted.

OFFICE REPORT – L. Scantlebury

Staff

Leslie Scantlebury, Executive Director
 Jessie Edwards, Communications and Member Advocacy Manager
 Erin Fry, Senior Project Manager
 Donna Mathoslah, Member Services Administrator
 Jackie Padilla, Accountant
 Megan Sloan, Deputy Executive Director
 Ashley Wucher, Chapter Relations Manager

Membership

Member Type	09/24/20	12/2/20	Change
Affiliate	62	51	-11
Associate	1477	1368	-109
Charter	30	30	0
Charter/Honorary	2	2	0
General	4400	4088	-310
General/Honorary	21	20	-0
Honorary	55	56	1
	6047	5615	-432

The Vivian

Based on the number of judges (~520), the contest ended with a final entry cap of 850 entries. Live judge training will begin on December 10. Four sessions were initially scheduled, but more will be added to the calendar to accommodate the number of judges and variety of time zones and schedules. This training will cover the contest rules, scoring rubrics, and how to access packets/submit scores.

Entrants are required to upload their books by January 4, 2021.

RAMP Update

As of December 1, 23 mentors have signed up for RAMP. Mentor applications close December 9, and mentors will be announced and wish lists posted on December 16. As this is the first year

of the program, our ideal number of mentors was around 25. Mentee submissions open on January 5.

PAN ADVISOR/PAN ADVISORY/PAN STEERING REPORT – N. Weeks

Coming on board as the PAN advisor, it was suggested that I work with the Communities of Practice to redefine a new PAN. The question on everyone's mind is what is RWA going to go about the PAN loop. It is essential that the PAN loop is a safe and inclusive place for all RWA members.

Proposed New PAN 2021

- General PAN and Provisional PAN – Propose we revamp eligibility into one PAN membership in order to insure an inclusive environment.
- Until a structure is in place for PAN members to be able to voice their concerns, I would like to reach out to all RWA chapter PAN liaisons to gain a little deeper understanding how PAN members would like RWA to move forward with the forum. Does the PAN community want a PAN forum on the RWA website? If not, how would they like to be represented? Once there is a clearer picture, I would like to poll the general population of PAN members and get their response.
- The PAN committee, PAN Advisor, Communities of Practice and Staff Liaison should meet [zoom meeting] to identify areas of concern and brainstorm ideas to provide our PAN members a voice as soon as possible.
- Propose hosting monthly “Ask Me Anything” session open to all PRO members, inviting PAN members to the discussion in order to create a friendly, inclusive environment between PRO and PAN.
- Revise Terms and Benefits - All material on PAN must be updated: Removal of terms like Golden Heart and RITA finalists. Easy fix.
- Meet with the PAN committee to discuss 2021 Conference

Nancy C. Weeks
PAN Advisor

PRO ADVISOR/PRO STEERING REPORT – C. Stuart

The PRO Advisor has continued to work to build community amongst the PRO membership. Throughout the month of November, there has been an RWA-PRO specific writing community for NaNoWriMo. In January, there will be a forum thread to discuss editing NaNoWriMo-created manuscripts.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Stuart
RWA PRO Advisor

PRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT – C. STUART

The PRO Advisory Committee had its initial meeting on 11/21, to discuss priorities for the committee. The first priorities for the Committee will be as follows:

- Increase awareness among the RWA membership of the PRO Community and the process for acquiring that membership.
- Increase the sense of community in the PRO forum.
 - Suggestions included monthly AMAs, Zoom social meetings, and quarterly PRO-only workshops.
- Plan the PRO retreat, while being cautious to Covid-related limitations.

The Committee will meet next on 12/19 to discuss the first of these priorities and plan a Push to Join PRO campaign.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Stuart
RWA PRO Advisor

CHAPTER ADVISOR'S REPORT – J. DeGioia

The Chapter Relations Task Force has been approved and populated. The task force is in the process of creating a survey of Chapter Leaders to better gauge their needs. We should have a proposal for the Board to consider very soon.

A proposal for the Chapter Leader Mentor Program was submitted to the Board for discussion and approval by the Chapter Relations Task Force. This would be something added to the Chapter Leadership Training Portal on the RWA website, and would be a demonstrative value of affiliation for chapter leaders.

Ashley Wucher, RWA Chapter Relations Manager, and I have discussed highlighting chapter descriptions and geographical location and/or special interest on the RWA website. Chapter leaders will be contacted to provide these blurbs to promote their chapters.

Ashley has been in the process of communicating with Chapter Leaders. She will provide leaders with a list of RWA members without chapter affiliation in their geographical area and/or special interest of local and online chapters for the purpose of outreach. Leaders will be invited to request this information that relates to their chapters if they so desire.

Respectfully submitted,
JoMarie DeGioia
RWA Chapter Advisor

CHAPTER RELATIONS TASK FORCE REPORT – J. DeGioia

Charge: This task force will be charged with identifying, researching and recommending how RWA can strengthen its relationship with chapters, better benefit its chapters and help its chapters to reach their goals.

The task force has been discussing our top priorities for this term, with an eye toward demonstrating the value of RWA membership and affiliation to chapter leaders and increasing revenue through membership retention and renewals on the chapter and national level.

The task force met via Zoom on 11/11/2020, with several members in attendance along with RWA Chapter Relations Manager Ashley Wucher and RWA Executive Director Leslie Scantlebury.

Prior to the meeting, I met with Ashley regarding our goals and implementations. She indicated that we were on track with what she was hearing from chapter leaders, and conveyed this to the Task Force when we convened.

Here is a recap of what the Task Force discussed in our meeting, and an update of work done on these items where applicable.

- Ashley will communicate with chapter leaders about RWA providing them with RWA members in their geographical areas without chapter memberships for leaders' outreach. She'll post to the Chapter Leadership Resources forum about this as well.
- Ashley informed the Task Force that she is working on creating a map for chapter locations to assist RWA members in finding, and hopefully, joining a chapter.
- Ashley will review the Chapter Leadership Resources forum for Frequently Asked Questions, and an FAQ list will be added to the Chapter Leadership Training Portal.
- JoMarie will draft a notice to Chapter Leaders inviting them to provide a description, highlights and geographic location if applicable for their chapter to assist with outreach. A sample "chapter blurb" or "elevator pitch" will be included in this notice, keeping to around 25-30 words. Chapter blurbs will be added to the RWA site's chapter list.
- Leslie Scantlebury informed the Task Force that there are currently 90 RWA chapters and approximately 5500 members. Roughly half of these RWA members do not belong to any chapter.
- The Task Force will polish the Chapter Leader Mentor Program proposal to reflect changes we discussed and will discuss on the forum. *This was submitted to the Board for discussion and approval.
- The Task Force will rework the Needs Assessment proposal to reflect the changes we discussed in the meeting. Changes such as inviting all Chapter Leaders to participate via an email with a proposed "Help us help you!" subject line, utilizing Survey Monkey for initial feedback, encouraging chapter boards to work together on their responses but allowing all board members to answer individually if they wish. Once this proposal is ready for RWA Board approval, JoMarie will post it to the RWA Board forum.

- The Task Force discussed putting a “suggestion box” on the Chapter Leadership Training Portal, and Leslie Scantlebury responded that this may be doable.
- The Task Force discussed a possible meeting for Chapter Leaders to mingle and share ideas. This meeting would be separate from the quarterly Chapter Town Halls currently scheduled for this term.

Respectfully submitted,
JoMarie DeGioia
RWA Chapter Advisor

ACADEMIC GRANT COMMITTEE’S REPORT – A. Quinton

Charge: The Academic Grant committee shall review grant and fellowship applications and make recommendations to the Board.

The committee members discussed the proposals and make the following recommendations:

Julie E. Moody-Freeman's proposal: *‘Lift as We Climb’: Black Romance Writers, Social Justice, and Institution Building*

Rationale: Julie has a long track record in the field, and her podcast is a project that has launched, which shows a trajectory. The projects are well advanced and have an indication of impact and significance to the field. A public-facing project is essential to the Academic Grant committee's goal of fostering public knowledge of romance studies.

Hannah E. Scupham's proposal: *Sensual Politics: Modern Romance Novel Reading and Reimagination of the Victorian Past*

Rationale: Hannah is a junior scholar who is working on her dissertation. The research has promise, and the committee believes her finished study will benefit the field.

If possible, we would like to increase the 2021 funding to \$5,203.40. The breakdown of funding request is as follows:

- Hannah Scupham: \$1203.40 for travel expenses
- Julie Moody-Freeman: \$4000.00 for her project

The committee discussed the opportunity to propose an academic-themed panel at the 2021 RWA Conference. We will work on this after the start of the new year.

Finally, the committee agreed that the Academic Grant winners and their projects should be announced at the RWA awards ceremony.

Natalie Tindall, Chair

MOTION TO APPROVE ACADEMIC GRANT RECIPIENT (1 OF 2)

Quinton moved that Julie Moody-Freeman's project *'Lift as We Climb': Black Romance Writers, Social Justice, and Institution Building* (as submitted to the Academic Grant Committee) be funded from the Academic Grant budget. Amount not to exceed \$4,000.

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote with 15 ayes, 0 nays, and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE ACADEMIC GRANT RECIPIENT (2 OF 2)

Quinton moved that Hannah Scupham's project *Sensual Politics: Modern Romance Novel Reading and Reimagination of the Victorian Past* (as submitted to the Academic Grant Committee) be funded from the Academic Grant budget. Amount not to exceed \$1,203.40.

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote with 15 ayes, 0 nays, and 1 abstention.

AWARDS CEREMONY COMMITTEE REPORT – A. Cyn

Charge: The Awards Ceremony Committee shall oversee the Awards Ceremony, including working with the emcee to write the script and provide input on the ceremony theme. The Awards Ceremony Committee shall select Award Presenters who are RWA general members while adhering to RWA's foundational commitment to being diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible.

Report:

Our committee has been brainstorming ideas for the first Vivian Ceremony. To that end we have narrowed our choices down to three main ideas as follows:

- 1) One Genre, Many Stories : Love is Love is LOVE
 - a. Themes of joy, celebration, togetherness
- 2) Writing Our Next Chapter : Stronger Together
 - a. Themes of companionship, care, determination, and a little magic
- 3) Romancing the Future: Rebirth
 - a. Themes of rising from the ashes of The Rita
 - b. Better, stronger, smarter.

Thank you,

Awards ceremony committee:

Jenn LeBlanc, chair

Jacquelin Thomas, co chair

Alexis Morgan Roark

Cheryl Kennedy

Susannah Erwin

Alison Luff

Traci Douglass

Action Items: We request the board choose one of the three themes, or approve all and allow us to choose.

The board liked the “Romancing the Future” theme and asked the committee to flesh out the theme and have it presented at the next board meeting.

LIBRARIAN AND BOOKSELLER OUTREACH AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT – C.
Brett

Charge: The Librarian and Bookseller Outreach Committee will work with RWA staff to establish dialogue with librarians and booksellers in order to form stronger alliances for the betterment of RWA members and the romance genre. In addition, the committee will work with staff to create virtual and in-person events, such as Meet the Author panels, involving librarians and booksellers that will promote members and the romance genre as well as make recommendations about events, programs or action RWA could take to make it easier for booksellers, librarians and RWA members to connect.

Report:

The committee has met a few times and is currently reaching out to librarians and booksellers. The committee has several ideas on the tables (meet and greets, panels, programming, physical media).

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT – B. Yarnall

Charge: The Policy Advisory Committee shall monitor public policy and legislation as well as public events that have the potential to impact RWA members, the romance writing industry, and writers, in general. The committee shall make recommendations to the Board regarding actions the Board may undertake regarding policy and legislation.

Committee

Veronica Forand, Chairperson

Jamie Beck, Co-Chairperson

Beth Yarnell, RWA Board Liaison

Erin Fry, RWA Staff Liaison

Alana Albertson

Nina Bocci


Donna Comeaux

Romy Sommer

• **ACX Returns: Request for RWA Intervention**

For the past two years, Audible members in the United States are encouraged to exchange titles if they don't love them. In addition, Audible sends emails encouraging readers to exchange titles and uses this verbiage in advertisements:

Your membership



Audible Premium Plus

You have 12 Credits
[View your credit summary](#)

Your next bill date is: 11-13-2020

Thanks for being a listener since: 08-06-2013

Membership gives you access to:

- 1 credit a month to pick any title from our entire premium selection to keep
- Exchange titles if you don't love them
- Exclusive deals and discounts
- Stream or download the Audible Plus Catalog, including audiobooks, podcasts, and Audible Originals

The result is that Audible listeners use Audible as a library, listening to entire audiobooks and then "exchanging" them for a new listen, instead of using their precious credits.

Audible is NOT like KU. You get monthly credits and then can use each one until they expire. You don't get like 10 audio books on constant rotation. You use each credit for one listen and then that is your one credit of the month.

Audible is currently encouraging users to "exchange" books they've downloaded for new books without having to use up credits, and readers are taking advantage of this option even if they've fully read and enjoyed the audio book (as opposed to exchanging only when they start and decide they do not like a particular audio book). They keep the credit, Audible keeps the income, and the author gets a return and loses income.

To be clear, this is not the case of listeners returning books that have low quality audio or they didn't like the book, but listeners returning books they loved and bragging about how they use the "library" of audio books. The result is that those exchanges work like returns on the author's balance sheet. For authors (mostly indie authors who produce their books on ACX), this has resulted in a TON of monthly returns and significant economic loss.

We would like Audible to stop actively encouraging their users to return books on their website, in advertisements, and in emails, and instead have a normal return policy for books with poor audio control or other reasons they don't meet the listeners' standards.

RWA should ask them to keep it like the way they have for returning ebooks. A reader can return an ebook no questions asked, but Amazon doesn't advertise and put on the top of the amazon page "PLEASE RETURN AND GET A NEW BOOK" as they are doing with Audible.

Someone shouldn't be able to listen to an entire audible book, return it, and then keep the credit. Audible keeps the income on the credit and the author is cut out of the profits. An audio should absolutely be returned if there is poor sound quality or if the audio actors aren't any good or if the listener hates the book or buys the wrong one. But encouraging exchanges from books that are listened to in their entirety is not okay.

If Audible refuse to change the policy, perhaps they would accept parameters around the exchange notifications. Perhaps a safeguard (Eg., if the listener completed less than 10%, author

gets nothing, if they completed less than 50%, author gets 50% of the royalty, if they completed the full book, author retains all royalties despite exchange)? Or a limit to the listener's ability to exchange (Eg., if listener has completed more than 30% of the book, it is ineligible for exchange)?

From the Alliance for Independent Authors: ACX-Audible Controversy

We reported last week on the current problem of ACX-Audible [audiobook returns](#) (See this [terrific explanatory post from Susan May](#) if you haven't kept up with what's going on) Like most authors' organizations around the world, ALLi has objected to this development in strong terms.

We and many authors have received an **email from ACX**, the Amazon platform which indie authors use to publish audiobooks, which in summary says:

While this customer benefit is for active members in good standing and suspicious activity is rare, we take your concerns very seriously and are actively reviewing the policy with this feedback under consideration.

To show our appreciation for continued support of ACX, for the month of December 2020 we will pay an additional 5% royalty on all sales of ACX audiobooks through Audible, Amazon, and iTunes.

We know we've still got work to do – and are committed to doing so – and we want to reiterate our thanks for sticking with us through this challenging time.

ALLi has downgraded ACX's rating from "Partner" to "Pending" until this review of policy comes back with a satisfactory answer.

Such actions by service providers are one reason why ALLi recommends that authors publish widely, using a variety of outlets to distribute books (including our own websites, the only platform over which we have full control). Otherwise, we leave ourselves very vulnerable, particularly as subscription payment models come to dominate the publishing industry.

**On 11/18/2020: They have further downgraded ACX to "poor." See attached for update.

<https://selfpublishingadvice.org/self-publishing-news-audible-acx-have-questions-to-answer-over-returns/>

- **SFWA Supports Writer Alan Dean Foster in Fight for Royalties Against Disney: Request for RWA review and possible intervention.**

The Walt Disney Company (DIS) is under fire after a writer claimed that its sister companies owe him royalties for the novelizations of "Alien" and "Star Wars."

In a letter to the entertainment company, Alan Dean Foster said when Disney purchased Lucasfilm it also acquired the rights to his book “Splinter of the Mind’s Eye,” which was a novelization of “Star Wars.” Disney purchased Lucasfilm in 2012.

Foster went on to say that Disney when purchased 20th Century Fox, the deal included the rights to his novelizations of “Alien,” “Aliens,” and “Aliens 3.” Again, Foster alleged that royalties were never paid on these books. Disney acquired 20th Century Fox in 2019, now calling it 20th Century Studios.

“All these books are all still very much in print. They still earn money. For you,” Foster wrote. “When one company buys another, they acquire its liabilities as well as its assets. You’re certainly reaping the benefits of the assets. I’d very much like my minuscule (though it’s not small to me) share.”

To try to move the negotiations with Disney forward, Foster, 74, enlisted the help of Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA), which uses a Grievance Committee to help writers receive unpaid royalties. The organization also held a press conference on Foster’s behalf.

“If you are doing this to Alan Dean Foster, one of the great science fiction writers of our time, then what are they doing to the younger writers who do not know that a contract is a contract?” Mary Robinette Kowal, president of SFWA, said in a letter to Disney in support of Foster.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/disney-must-pay-writer-alan-dean-foster-says-company-owes-him-big-3085496>

Publishing News Updates:

- Author’s Guild Calls on Publisher Albert Whitman and Co. to Pay Overdue Royalties

The Authors Guild made a statement on Monday in support of authors who are owed royalties by publisher Albert Whitman and Company, calling for “transparency and immediate rectification of past due royalties.” They write, “Over the last few years, the Authors Guild has contacted AW&C on numerous occasions to convey members’ concerns involving delayed royalty payments and the accuracy of accounting reports.”

- New Imprint at Hachette Focuses on Books For and By People of Color.

Michael Pietsch, CEO of Hachette Book Group, announced today the launch of Legacy Lit, the first imprint dedicated to books for and by people of color at Hachette Book Group. The new imprint will be led by newly named Vice President and Publisher Krishan Trotman. Trotman and her team will publish books that give voice to issues, authors, and communities that have been marginalized, underserved, and overlooked. Legacy Lit will publish narrative nonfiction, memoir, investigative, women’s interest, current events, social justice, cultural and

empowerment titles, along with select fiction offerings. The imprint will launch its first titles in January 2022.

<https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/news/hachette-book-group-announces-legacy-lit-an-exciting-new-imprint-celebrating-social-justice-and-bipoc-voices/>

- Bookshop Unites Independent Bookstores Online to Rival Amazon, allows authors to sell as Affiliates.

Bookshop.org, which launched in the US earlier this year, has accelerated UK plans and goes online this week in partnership with more than 130 shops. It is being described as a “revolutionary moment in the history of bookselling”: a socially conscious alternative to Amazon that allows readers to buy books online while supporting their local independent bookseller. And after a hugely successful launch in the US, it is open in the UK from today.

Bookshop was dreamed up by the writer and co-founder of Literary Hub, Andy Hunter. It allows independent bookshops to create their own virtual shopfront on the site, with the stores receiving the full profit margin – 30% of the cover price – from each sale. All customer service and shipping are handled by Bookshop and its distributor partners, with titles offered at a small discount and delivered within two to three days.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/nov/02/this-is-revolutionary-new-online-bookshop-unites-indies-to-rival-amazon>

Authors can sign up to become an affiliate and earn a 10% percentage of the sales through their own website store or through links to Bookshop books. It works in a similar way to the older Amazon Affiliate program.

<https://public-production.bookshop.org/documents/Bookshop%20Author%20Brochure.pdf>

Also covered on CNN:

<https://www.cnn.com/style/article/bookshop-the-indie-book-platform-trying-to-take-on-amazon/index.html>

- European Commission Accuses Amazon of Breaching EU antitrust Rules

Though months later than expected, the European Commission taken another step forward in their antitrust investigations of Amazon, expressing a “preliminary view that it has breached EU antitrust rules,” set out in a statement of objections. At the same time, the EC opened a second antitrust investigation against the etailer. Building on preliminary fact-finding from over a year ago, the EC charges “the abuse of a dominant market position.” They found that Amazon uses “very large quantities” of proprietary data about Marketplace sellers who use their platform in order to compete with them directly. Which is therefore not competition at all, since the game is rigged.

The new, second investigation will further build the case that Amazon gives preferential treatment to vendors that use their fulfillment services — in winning the product Buy Box and in accessing Prime customers. As Commissioner Margrethe Vestager says in a [statement](#), “We do not take issue with the success of Amazon or its size. Our concern is a very specific business conduct, which appears to distort genuine competition.” Amazon can now respond to the objections. The company said in a statement, “We disagree with the preliminary assertions of the European Commission and will continue to make every effort to ensure it has an accurate understanding of the facts.”

<https://lunch.publishersmarketplace.com/2020/11/european-commission-accuses-amazon-of-breaching-eu-antitrust-rules/>

- [Update on Simon & Schuster Sale](#)

Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp is making a play for Simon & Schuster, the venerable home to best-selling authors like Stephen King and Hillary Clinton that raised a ruckus this year after releasing a string of hit titles critical of [President Trump](#).

The powerhouse publisher was [put up for sale](#) by its owner, ViacomCBS, in March, and the company has since fielded more than half a dozen inquiries, according to three people familiar with the process who declined to be named because the matter remains confidential.

In addition to News Corp, which already owns HarperCollins, a leading bidder is Penguin Random House, according to the people. Penguin Random House, the largest book publisher in the United States, is owned by the German media giant Bertelsmann. The French firm Vivendi, a minority owner of Hachette through the publisher Lagardère, has also made a bid.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/business/media/rupert-murdoch-news-corp-simon-schuster.html>

*** Update 11/19/2020

1. News Corp CEO Says PRH Would Face Antitrust Fight Over Simon & Schuster

<https://lunch.publishersmarketplace.com/2020/11/news-corp-ceo-says-prh-would-face-antitrust-fight-over-simon-schuster/>

- [Houghton Mifflin Harcourt selling Trade Division](#)

While the industry waits to see who the new owner of Simon & Schuster will be, another large trade publisher has been put up for sale: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt said it is exploring the sale of its trade division. Though not one of the Big Five trade publishers, HMH Books & Media is in the next tier, with sales in 2019 of \$180 million.

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/84836-at-houghton-mifflin-harcourt-the-consolidation-carousel-continues.html>

- Linking or embedding photos: the evolution of the Fair Use doctrine

When it comes to linking or embedding photograph files to share on the internet, the 9th Circuit established around 2007 a sort of "exemption" or loophole known as the "Server Test" that states linking/embedding is NOT a violation/infringement of copyright because the website isn't "hosting" the info, merely acting as a conduit/info hub for the info. However, in 2018, the 2nd Circuit court started chipping away at that loophole (so far pertaining primarily to photographs), establishing that embedding an image could be considered a violation of copyright owner's "right to display" the image. This is based on an interpretation of Section 101 of the Copyright Act, which defines "to display a work publicly" as "to transmit...a...display of the work...by means of *any device or process*" and that "devices and processes" are defined to mean those "now known or later developed." Thus, by coding a website to call up an image (via embedding/linking), it is using a "process" to display the work, thus potentially violating the copyright (absent other loopholes or exemptions like Fair Use).

Some defendants argue that social media terms and usages give them a sublicense to share/embed those images, but the courts are not taking that broad view unless the defendant can show that they actually received overt "sublicense" from said platform (Pinterest is the only one that automatically says users can re-pin without permission). BuzzFeed was sued for embedding copyrighted photos from Instagram posts, for example, and United Sports Publications is in court over another fair use fight on a photo posted by Caroline Wozniacki on Instagram. The law is not clear yet on this issue.

Related to Instagram:

<https://abovethelaw.com/2020/10/publication-fights-back-with-fair-use-in-caroline-wozniacki-copyright-case/>

Related to Twitter:

<https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2020/11/16/ip-in-the-twitter-sphere-edny-considers-whether-embedded-images-protected-by-fair-use-doctrine/?slreturn=20201024101809>

- U.S. Copyright Office Launches Digital Millennium Copyright Act Webpage

The U.S. Copyright Office today launched a new [webpage](#) dedicated to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). The new webpage consolidates information and resources about various aspects of the DMCA, including section 512's safe harbors and notice-and-takedown system, section 1201's anticircumvention provisions, and section 1202's copyright management information protections.

MOTION TO UPDATE AUTHORS COALITION OF AMERICA CONTACT

Yarnall moved that the following individuals be designated as a contact for the Authors Coalition of America effective immediately.

Jamie Beck, Policy Advisory Committee Assistant Chair

The motion was adopted by general consent.

RWA UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE REPORT– E. Ahearn

Charge: The RWA University Committee shall work with RWA staff to provide classes and other online educational resources to members and help to ensure that the RWA University reflects RWA’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and access—including but not limited to the speakers whose work is featured and the topics covered in the educational resources.

The committee met on 11/27/20

Each sub committees proposed a preliminary schedule and budget for the following year

- Author Survival Guides: Budget \$1200.00 per annum
 - Schedule 12 per year - 1 per month
- Forum classes: Budget \$1000
 - Four classes, two business and two craft
 - Feb (business: branding, Blue Saffire), May (craft: Gail Carriger), Sept and Oct (Part 1&2 TBD)
 - Branding, website building
- Podcasts - Sub committee member was unable to attend will have updated material for next meeting
 - Date TBD
- Two-Minute Tips (unpaid)
 - Spreadsheet has a list of names, Jessie will strike names of people no longer members of RWA
 - Two-minute tip from deep dive presenters to help promote the deep dive a week or two prior to scheduled date.
 - Two per month total of 24 per annum
- Webinars: Budget \$2750 per annum
 - 11 total, once/month except July

Reflecting on past years committee efforts the subcommittee feel they set realistic and obtainable goals. The current total, minus pod-cast costs the current budget is \$2950.00 This is in keeping with past number and no increases for paid content have been added.

Discussed adding several more members to help with tasks.

Discussed creating a committee mission in keeping with RWA and University Goals

Action Items:

* The committee would like to add the following members pending board approval:

Theresa Fin, Aly Menuti, Meloni Bignali, Preslaysa Williams, Kristin Ramsdell, Laurie Corsention & Ani Stubb

* The committee would like to defer the final budget vote until the next board meeting and when all subcommittees have made full reports.

* The RWA University committee would also like to create a mission statement reflecting the goals, intent and mission of both RWA and the University committee. We would like to know if this would need board approval or can we adopt one for ourselves. The general consensus is, a mission statement would offer something to work towards while keeping our goals in perspective.

Deborah Cracovia, Committee Chair, Rebeca Hunter, Committee Co-Chair Member(s) Ursula Renee Members all in attendance - members not in attendance Margaret Bates

Please note: Action Items will not be implemented unless a motion is presented and approved by the Board

AFFILIATE MEMBER BENEFITS AND RELATIONS TASK FORCE REPORT – S.

London

Charge: This task force will be charged with identifying, researching and recommending member benefits that will help our affiliate and non-writer associate members (book sellers, librarians, reviewers) and strengthening the relationship between RWA and its affiliate members to better promote romance as a genre. This task force chair should coordinate with the other benefits task force chairs to be efficient and productive in areas where there may be overlap. The task force shall utilize board feedback on this topic from the task force thread and other board information in creating a list of benefits.

The Affiliate Members Benefit Task Force has started our online discussion of possible benefits. We have our first Zoom meeting scheduled for Wednesday. In accordance with one benefit each month, I'm posting a few of our no-cost, low-cost suggestions below for your review. I've talked with librarians and a bookseller and the first item they both requested was RWA created high-quality marketing / promo material that they can print out and share with their patrons.

1. RWA-generated romance promotional material / graphics that librarians and booksellers can print and post. This can also be a RWA recruiting tool.
2. Create a webpage or printable pamphlet of what exactly a romance novel is. (I am still so surprised how little librarians and library catalogers understand about what elements make up romance fiction.) Along the same lines, include information about the subgenres, too.
3. Consider adding library and bookseller romance author events to weekly eNotes or our website.
4. Consider a librarians / booksellers spotlight in RWR magazine during April (National Library Week) and September (Banned Books Week)
5. Create a RWA.org submission page for romance booksellers and library-sponsored romance events to help both recruit author participants and / or to be shared across our social media.
6. Foster online support campaigns around library-bookseller annual events. A lot of bookstores and libraries create writing nooks and / or showcase their self-help writing books. We could start a #hashtag encouraging romance writers, librarians, and booksellers to share pictures.

- a. November – Nanowrimo
- b. April 4-10, 2021 National Library Week
- c. April 12, 2021 Drop Everything And Read
- d. June 2021 GLBT Book Month
- e. September 2021 Library Card Sign-up Month
- f. September 27-October 3, 2021 Banned Books Week

I postponed our November meeting after receiving the email regarding the change in leadership and possible reorganization of task force priorities.

ALTERNATIVE REVENUE IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE REPORT – J. Slade

Charge: This task force will be charged with reviewing the Alternate Revenue Stream Report and working with staff to create revenue streams. Special attention should be paid to the revenue streams cited as priorities by the board in the task force discussion thread.

Report:

Following board approval for utilizing existing revenue sources, the ARI Task Force made suggestions for adding donation buttons and a more compelling donation landing page to the RWA website prior to the holiday charitable gifting season. Staff is currently in the process of making those changes.

Following board approval for a job board, staff is in the process of creating a database which will serve as a member resource as well as an income source.

Following board approval of a silent auction, the ARI Task Force is moving forward with organizing the auction for early spring. This first auction will serve as a template for future fundraising.

At the December meeting, the task force is also seeking approval to begin work on an anthology. The anthology will serve as a revenue source as well as a template for future efforts.

RWA Romance Fiction Anthology for Spring 2020 Proposal

Statement of Need:

Romance Writers of America is “The Voice of Romance Writers”. Publishing an anthology of romance fiction featuring a diverse selection of our best, breakout, and budding authors gives us a chance to showcase our genre and our organization.

Overview:

Based on a previous RWA anthology, task force discussion, and the experiences of interested parties, the proposal suggests a 2020 romance fiction anthology from RWA to release in the spring with stories, cover art, and promotions reflecting a theme appropriate to the season and the genre. It will feature 10-15 member authors, previously published and debut, from the diversity of our demographics. Two or three marquee names to entice readers will be rounded out with mid-list authors and previously unpublished writers representing a range of romance

sub-genres with short fiction (5,000 to 7,000 words) billed as a sampling of all romance has to offer.

Contributing authors will sign a contract granting RWA license for first publication rights for a limited time (tentatively six months) and acknowledging that all royalties will be collected in support of the organization. Contributing authors will be asked to promote the anthology, and RWA will also promote via the organization's public outlets and will encourage members to share as well.

For the duration of the contract, the anthology will be released digitally and print on demand. Because of the limited duration of the contract, no audio will be produced, and no other publications rights will be pursued. Pricing is TBD and may be offered at a lower preorder price to kick start sales.

Rationale:

RWA has published anthologies in the past resulting in some profit and increased visibility. However, little remains in institutional memory from those efforts. Creating first a procedural template then policy and a standing committee for semi-regular anthology publications, both fiction and non-fiction, is intended to:

1. establish a short term revenue source and a template for ongoing revenue
2. serve as a beacon to prospective members as well as romance readers
3. reinforce RWA's presence as a power in the publishing industry

Timeline:

- Approval (assumed) at December board meeting
- Reach out to potential organizer (upon board approval)
- Solicit marquee authors* (January**)
- Fill out contributing author lineup*
- Collect contracts
- Cover art
- Promo tease and preorders (beginning Valentines**)
- Completed stories returned (mid March**)
- Formatting
- Publication (April**)
- Ongoing promotion
- Rights reversion to contributing authors (after six months**)

* As always with consideration to representing a diverse cross section of our membership to demonstrate RWA's ongoing DEIA commitment.

** Dates tentative

Staff Workload:

Impact on staff should be minimal. The anthology coordinator will be the direct contact for contributing authors. Eventually, a standing anthology committee should handle the bulk of the workload. Adding the procedure to the P&PM should provide a template for future anthologies.

Staff will need to either provide access to RWA's retailer dashboards or handle the administrative duties of uploading. Promotion in the RWR, eNotes, and RWA's social media accounts will also be necessary for the duration of the publication, although frequency will be higher at launch and before takedown.

Board Involvement:

Board involvement should be limited although of course promotion of all organization programs is welcome. To avoid any appearance of impropriety, board members should not be considered for contributions under any pen names.

The Alternate Revenue Source Task Force has members experienced in anthology production and has a willing coordinator and potential contributors.

Costs and ROI:

While previous anthologies have budgeted thousands of dollars for design, promotion, and other services, this proposal is emphasizing DIY leanness to maximize return. Proposed costs are \$400 for cover art; all other needs such as formatting, promotional graphics, etc. will be handled following the best practices of the self-publishing revolution including Vellum, BookBrush, etc. (May pursue sponsorship opportunities from those companies.)

Though the previous RWA anthology has brought in approximately \$30,000 since 2015, tentative short term goal for this next endeavor is \$10,000. Upon codification of anthologies as a revenue source, ROI will become part of institutional memory and hopefully allow more accurate forecasting.

Notes:

While a non-fiction writing craft and business series is also being considered, that will take more time to collate and has a more limited audience. Since non-fiction revenue opportunities are currently being addressed via our conference audio and now the deep dives, we want to add to RWA's publication history with a showcase of what we do best: writing stories of Happily Ever Afters.

DEIA TASK FORCE REPORT – C. Chilove

Charge: This task force will be charged with reviewing the DEIA training modules being created for RWA, recommend an implementation process for members at renewal and otherwise, election to a leadership/committee position at the chapter or national level, forum violations, ethics violations, etc. Also, this task force will be charged with creating a process for access violations at the chapter and national level to be reported and addressed as well as ways that RWA can help chapters meet access challenges, such as help with transcription services.

Report:

1. The Task Force is asking all BOD's to complete and submit notes on the modules no later than Dec 31st. Originally, we had said Dec. 18th, But Dr. Pierre would not be able to review until 2nd week of January so deadline for Board was extended.

- a. This is to ensure that all updates are complete before rolling out to 1st round participants for review and feedback
 - b. If you have completed this and sent over, thank you.
2. Currently reviewing ways to encourage completion.
 - a. Engaging chapter leaders
 - b. TF members have recommended restricting access to member privileges
 - c. Meeting planned w/ Jeff this week to determine what is allowed
3. Launch is April/May
4. Next TF meeting is Jan. 13th where we will be presented with:
 - a. Pricing for LMS
 - b. Terms and Conditions

POLICY MANUAL REVIEW TASK FORCE REPORT – A. Quinton

Charge: Complete a review of the Policy & Procedure Manual to identify places where it is out of date, needs corrections, or needs additional information and to recommend changes (including new language or language that should be deleted) that the board must approve.

Report:

The task force was originally tasked with making their recommendations by March, however that date is not going to be met. The task force work is currently paused awaiting word to see if the task force can move forward by the board.

PUBLISHED MEMBER BENEFITS TASK FORCE REPORT – N. Sloane

Charge: This task force will be charged with identifying, researching and recommending member benefits that will help our published members. This task force chair should coordinate with the other benefits task force chairs to be efficient and productive in areas where there may be overlap. The task force shall utilize board feedback on this topic from the task force thread and other board information in creating a list of benefits.

Report:

The task force is still working on its proposal for the New Releases Listing and is working with staff as well.

UNPUBLISHED MEMBER BENEFITS TASK FORCE REPORT – E. Schechter

Charge: This task force will be charged with identifying, researching and recommending member benefits that will help our unpublished members. This task force chair should coordinate with the other benefits task force chairs to be efficient and productive in areas where there may be overlap. The task force shall utilize board feedback on this topic from the task force thread and other board information in creating a list of benefits.

Push To Publish Timeline: A plan for creating and starting the Push to Publish program should be presented to the board for approval at its December 2020 meeting.

Benefits Implementation Timeline: The task force should present at least one and no more than three benefits options that are ready for implementation to the board at the end of every month beginning with October 31, 2020 through the end of this board term.

Accomplishments:

- Polled our unpublished membership and chapter leadership on what benefits they felt were needed
- recruited a task force. Task force was finalized on October 7th.
- Met with other committee leaders for which there is overlap and planned out we can work together (specifically, RWAU and PRO Advisory)
- Went through the website and listed benefits that members want that we already have, but that are difficult to find.
- Submitted a proposal for a Foundations Dashboard, to collate basic information for our unpublished members. (10/26/2020)
- Developed an outline for Push to Publish, and drafted a preliminary proposal.
- Submitted a proposal for Push to Publish. (11/9/2020)
- Revised and resubmitted Push to Publish Proposal (11/12/2020)
- Began developing proposals for future deliverables.
 - Monthly minis
 - Rationale: Smaller, easily implementable ideas that offer immediate benefits and that can be offered on a monthly rotation.
 - To be presented late November.
 - Critique Forum
 - rationale: One of the most requested benefits from the crowdsourced list.
 - To be presented in early to mid-December.
- Met once (on Saturday, October 24th)
- Set date for our next meeting (November 21st)

Going Forward:

- The Task force has been requested to assist with the Push to Publish program, both in the recruitment of Guides, and in the day-to-day operations.
- The Task Force will meet in January to set goals for 2021, and to schedule deliverable.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Entered Executive Session at 11:58 p.m. CT.

Executive Director Leslie Scantlebury, RWA Staff members Megan Sloan, Jessie Edwards, Erin Fry, Jackie Padilla, Donna Mathoslah, Ashley Wucher, and Advisors JoMarie DeGioia, Catherine Stuart, and Nancy Weeks were allowed to remain in the session.

Exited Executive Session at 4:21 p.m. CT.

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION TO SET THE ELECTION SCHEDULE

LaQuette moved that the following deadlines be adopted for the 2021 board election:

Election Deadlines

June 28. Deadline to declare for office

July 2. Deadline to submit required paperwork

July 13. Publication date for candidates' bios and answers to questions on www.rwa.org.

August 2. Email to members to access ballot

August 16. Ballot closes

August 17. Election results announced

September 1. Candidates take office

The motion was adopted by general consent.

MOTION TO APPROVE FUNDS FOR A SPRING 2021 RWA ANTHOLOGY

Slade moved to approve \$750 for expenses for a Spring 2021 RWA Anthology.

The limited-time anthology of short romance fiction will feature a diverse range of RWA members and romance sub-genres, fulfilling RWA's tagline as "The Voice of Romance Writers" and showcasing our members, our organization, and our genre. (Refer to the proposal for specs.) Profits will go to supporting the organization in its mission to advance the interests of romance writers.

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote with 14 ayes, 0 nays, and 2 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE RWAU COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ahearn moved to approve the RWA Committee members listed below:

- Theresa Finn
- Aly Mennuti
- Meloni Vignali
- Lori Corsentino
- Kristin Ramsdell

The motion was adopted by general consent.

MOTION TO RELEASE RESERVE FUNDS

Alford moved to release the following board designated funds.

Conferences and contests: \$44,183
Legal matters: \$33,497
PAN Public Awareness: \$12,823
Other Funds: \$16,229

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote with 14 ayes, 0 nays, and 2 abstentions.

MOTION TO SET CONFERENCE FEES

LaQuette moved to set the following RWA2021 conference registration fees:

	Member	Nonmember
January 12-25	\$ 299.00	\$ 349.00
January 26-February 22	\$ 349.00	\$ 399.00
Feb 23-March 22	\$ 399.00	\$ 449.00
March 23 - April 19	\$ 449.00	\$ 499.00
April 20 - June 21	\$ 499.00	\$ 549.00
June 22 - Conference	\$ 549.00	\$ 599.00

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote with 13 ayes, 1 nays, and 2 abstentions.

ADJOURN: President-Elect LaQuette adjourned the meeting at 4:44 p.m. CT.