

DARA Newsletter



January 2021

January Meeting – 2021 Book Marketing: Online All-The-Time or What? with Denny Bryce

With in-person author events such as conferences, in-store launch parties, and book club gatherings on hold, how can authors do the best job possible in advertising, marketing, publicizing and engaging readers?

What's the difference these days in publicizing and promoting for the indie book authors vs. traditionally published authors? Or has this line blurred? Let's discuss how a 2021 marketing plan looks in light of the pandemic.

Let's share ideas and have a frank discussion about what it takes to get the most out of social media platforms and author marketing partnerships during COVID-19!

And remember: The POWER IS IN THE PLAN!

About Denny...

Denny S. Bryce writes historical fiction, and her debut novel, *WILD WOMEN AND THE BLUES* from Kensington Books will be on sale on March 30, 2021. (*Editor's Aside -- This novel is one of Bustle's Most Anticipated Debut Novels of 2021, and one of Oprah Magazine's Most Anticipated Historical Fictions of 2021! Congrats, Denny!*)

A marketing and public relations professional, Denny spent more than 20 years running her event marketing firm. For nearly 10 of those years, she also

wrote and read Buffy/Spike fan fiction. A devoted fan of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Firefly*,



and *Angel* (the TV series), she is also a classic film buff and loves genre TV. Current favorites include *Bridgerton*, *A Discovery of Witches*; *This is Us*, *The Flash*, and *Seal Team*—and of course,

Outlander Starz!

Denny has taught workshops on marketing for authors and spoken on romance and historical fiction panels at the Strand Book Store and BookCon in New York City, the Baltimore Book Festival, and the Gaithersburg Book Festival, to name a few. A member of the Historical Novel Society (HSN), the Women's Fiction Writers Association (WFWA) and Novelists, Inc. (NINC), Denny

Join Us Online

DARA January 2021 Meeting
Jan 23, 2021, 10 a.m. Central

Direct Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87258596104?pwd=NTl-wdTJ3cEd6OFBOOFNpdDlx-TFFFQT09>

Or go to zoom.com and input:

- Meeting ID: 872 5859 6104
- Passcode: 314682

also completed the 2019 TIN HOUSE WINTER WORKSHOP (a prestigious literary workshop) in Portland, Oregon, and is a 2020 PITCH WARS adult mentor.

She is represented by Nalini Akolekar at Spencerhill Associates and recently relocated from northern Virginia to Georgia.

Also Inside —

- President's Corner
- New Releases
- We Need Your Input & Ideas
- Dress the Stage to Be Real
- Guilt is the Frenemy



RWA Mentor Program Deadline is Jan 19

Welcome 2021!
Wow! I think 2021 just told 2020 to hold its beer! It was been a wild year already. But as an eternal optimist, I think good things are coming our way.

When I envision 2021, I am excited about the direction RWA is going. We still have challenges, but we have good people working diligently to bring us where we need to be.

RWA national has launched the Romance Author Mentorship Program. They are now accepting applications for mentees. For more information, or to apply, go to: rwa.org/Online/News/2021/RAMP_Mentee_Applications_Open.aspx

RWA national is also developing curriculum for the Push to Publish program. The goal of this program is



Mary Karlik
2021 DARA President

to help every unpublished author to get published. More information to come.

And DARA has an exciting future too!

We had our first official Board meeting on January 10. (The minutes are available on the DARA forum.)

I am really excited about this year. Even with the pandemic still raging, we have a

lot of cool stuff planned. But no spoilers, Zoom with us on Saturday January 23, at 10 am, and hear all about it.

Here is the Zoom link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87258596104?pwd=NTlwdTJ3cEd6OFBOOFNpdDIxTFFFQT09>

Or you can go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.com) and input the following:

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We are a non-profit, voluntary association of writers dedicated to raising and maintaining quality in the romance genre and its sub genres. DARA works to accomplish this through advocating high professional standards and through the dissemination of information on writing and the publishing industry.

Upcoming Meetings

February 27

**Empowering Your Writing:
Using Conscious Language
for Inclusiveness and Respect
with Crystal Shelly,
Sensitivity Reader and Editor
at Rabbit with a Red Pen**

March 27

**Speaker Priscilla Oliveras
Topic TBD**

We currently meet online via Zoom in order to provide our members with outstanding programs to help them pursue their personal publishing happily-ever-afters. All members will receive an email invitation with the Zoom link. Please make sure Mary Karlik has your email address.

Invite your writing friends to DARA meetings. Guests are always welcome! You may attend two meetings as a guest (free), and then we ask you join DARA to continue attending.

Your DARA Leaders

President — Mary Karlik
President Elect — Anita Learned
Secretary: — Vicky Batman
Treasurer — Dren James
Programs — Randee Leigh
Membership — Priya Ardis
Newsletter — Randee Leigh
PAN Liaison — Elizabeth Essex
PRO Liaison — OPEN

Our mailing address:

Dallas Area Romance Authors
PO Box 832445
Richardson, TX 75083-2445

DARA Newsletter

Our Mission: *To inform the membership about chapter events, RWA news and classes, our member's good news, and other things important to our members.* The DARA News is published monthly January through November. DARA does not publish a newsletter in December.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS is the 10th of each month.

SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS to Randee Leigh at randee@randeeleigh.com.

DARA welcomes letters, comments, and articles on writing and publishing. The DARA News is seeking articles that cover self and traditional publishing, author interviews, genre and subgenre writing techniques, grammar, reports from conferences, marketing / promotions, social media, and any other writing advice and tips. You don't need to be a published author to submit an article.

SUBMISSION POLICY— In the interest of good journalism the editor reserves the right to refuse or edit any material that could offend our readers and the right to edit to meet space requirements. Accuracy of the articles, announcements, and informative statements are the sole responsibility of the submitting author and not this publications or its supporting Executive Board. DARA does not endorse any person, firm, partnership, or corporation mentioned in this newsletter. Readers are urged to determine for themselves the reliability, integrity, and financial responsibility of those with whom they deal. DARA makes no warranties or representation, either expressed or implied.

TO OUR SISTER CHAPTERS: We invite you to use any part of our publication with proper credit to the author and chapter.



Seeking to Upgrade DARA Communications, Website & Newsletter

Hi. I'm Randee Leigh, and I'm primarily serving as your programs coordinator. But until we get everything situated (and we find another volunteer), I'll be tackling the DARA website and newsletter, too.



But I need your help. I need to know what information you need and the best way to get it to you.

NEWSLETTER — After Saturday's meeting, I'll send out a survey that I hope everyone will take a few minutes to fill out. Let me know if you prefer a newsletter delivered in the body of your email or as a .pdf attachment (like this month). How much of the newsletter do you read? Would you be willing to write an article for it? Stuff like that.

It's also time for us to give our newsletter a catchy name. Why? One reason is because RWA chapters allow other chapters to republish articles written for them. (So if you're looking to get a publishing credit, writing an article for us is a good idea.) When others see our work, it would be good for them to get a flavor of our chapter from our newsletter name. So be thinking of a newsletter name that's better than "DARA Newsletter." There'll be a question on the survey for that, too.

Once I get all the results, I'll create a template that should be easy for anyone to work with, and hopefully someone will be willing to step up and take it over.

WEBSITE — If you've been to our website lately (either dallasarearomanceauthors.com or our portal through RWA), you've probably noticed the information is out of date. The board is working to switch to a new website host that gives us a public face that is professional and inviting, but is also easy to maintain on the back-end. Once done, we'll be looking for a webmaster, too.

If you have any suggestions, please contact me at randee@randeeleigh.com.



Author — Patience Griffin

Book — Kilt in Scotland: A Ewe Dunit Mystery

Release Date — January 19, 2021

Publisher — Tantor

Details — Novel in audiobook format.

Book #8 in the Kilts & Quilts® series



The Kilts & Quilts saga continues with more than stitching and a love match. This time it's mystery and murder...

In Scotland, the Gandiegow quilters are in an uproar when their favorite fictional quilters - the Buttermilk Guild - are killed off by a best-selling mystery author. Diana McKellen is called in by the publisher to fix this PR nightmare. It's said, there's no such thing as bad publicity, but Diana questions this long-standing notion when an editor is murdered at a book signing.

Detective Chief Inspector Rory Crannach has been called in to investigate. He has to interview all the suspects closely... including Diana McKellen. He finds it perplexing that he's drawn to her, especially since Diana wants nothing to do with him. She has vowed to never make the same mistake her mother made...falling for a man of the law.

Despite Diana's resolve, sparks fly between her and DCI Crannach. As the body count rises, they are both on the case to find the killer. But the path to the truth takes twists and turns, putting them both in mortal danger. To save the day, Rory and Diana must accept that love - in all its many shapes and forms - just might hold the answer.



Dress the Stage to Be Real

This is an original article for the DARA Newsletter, January 2021. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.

By Randee Leigh

If you're facing an issue in your story, what's a simple way to figure out how to fix it?

Timons Esaias, a satirist, poet and instructor at Seton Hill's Writing Popular Fiction MFA program, gives his students one possible answer — Field Recon.

The idea is so simple, I'm ashamed to admit I hadn't thought of it. When you have a problem in your story, go to five or ten books on your shelves like the one you're trying to write and find out how those authors dealt with the issue.

If you read my current WIP, you'd probably think I'm a flat-Earther. (I'm not.)

My hero and heroine live on an empty stage with no ensemble behind them (except the two heroes who will get their own books later in the series). To take the theater analogy further, I don't have much of a set, my characters are wearing burlap sacks instead of costumes, and there's very few props.

Okay, it's not quite as bad as I described it, but it's definitely a problem. So I did some field recon, starting with my favorite romance author, Kristen Ashley. What do her stories have that mine lacks? People, places, and things that seem real, even if they're not.

My sister and I have talked about visiting Denver (when we can travel again) to go to some of the real places her characters frequent — the Mexican restaurant with the amazing black bean salsa. The bar where Ally worked. I'm sure when I hit the corner of Bayaud and Broadway, I'll expect to see Fortnum's Book Store, even though that only lives in Ashley's imaginary world.

If I walked inside Fortnum's, I'd hear rock music on the speakers, and I'd smell coffee and used books.

Tex, a Vietnam veteran, would be behind the coffee counter, looking crazy, booming about "I don't make tea," yelling at customers, and swinging the portafilter around. However, the customers waiting in line would just put up with it because



he is a coffee savant. Tex will finish his day and go home to his house full of cats, and maybe sit out on the front porch with night vision goggles on his head and a shotgun on his lap, watching his street.

Duke, in his flannel shirt, Harley boots, and bandanna, would be checking someone out at the book counter. Everyone would cheer because they sold a book. Duke's been there since Indy's grandmother owned the place and he was a grad

student at CU. Jane would be wandering through the stacks, putting books away, seemingly unaware that people were around, dreaming about the romance stories she wants to write.

What's so impressive about this scene is that none of the people are main characters in any of the 38 books she has published that take place in and around Denver.

Yes, these folks appear in many of them, but they aren't mere plot devices. I was watching television one night, and a man's picture came on. I told my husband, "He looks like Darius." My husband, confused, answered, "Huh?" Then I realized Darius is a made-up, secondary character in Ashley's Rock Chick world. But he's a character that is real enough to me that I was able to recognize him in a picture.

My series takes place in a fictional city, but I learned I needed to do more than figure out where it is on a map and give it a name. I needed people. I needed shops and restaurants and bars. I needed a police captain and a fire chief and a florist (for when my hero needs to apologize).

I needed to dress my stage. My characters need a set to live in, other people to interact with, and props to play with.

I started with the people, the ensemble cast that will give the story depth. I went through a list in one of my developing character books that lists a bunch of different jobs. I put the ones I needed on three different colored sticky notes (blue for boys, pink for girls, and orange for the "bad" people, 'cause not everybody can be good). I stuck them all on the wall of my bedroom. They all have names, and I'm

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Guilt is the Frenemy

The following appeared in the October 1, 2020, issue of ShoreLines, the monthly newsletter of Chapter 160-Long Island Romance Writers. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.

By Violet Vahle

Something you don't hear about before you have a baby—or at least I didn't—is “mom guilt.” Even after I had my daughter and had heard the term, I scoffed. What would there be to feel guilty about? I knew there was no such thing as perfection. I would just do my best. It would be fine, I thought—which anyone who's ever read, or watched, or done anything ever, knows that as soon as someone says, “It'll be fine,” disaster strikes.

Suddenly there's...a scratch on her face!

Wildly unpredictable sleeping patterns.

Tummy problems.

Did I talk to her enough throughout the day? Was I talking too much?

Was I holding her too often?

Instead of sleeping, mom guilt kept me awake anxiously reading countless articles and books about every parenting concern conceivable, while simultaneously feeling guilty that I hadn't read it all before my baby was born. And on top of that, I'd feel guilty for being tired when she woke up.

When what I wanted most in the world was to be the best parent I could, not sleeping and worrying about my failures was doing more harm than good. This pattern was unsustainable and I had to put my foot down.

There's a great hook in a Prayers* song where Leafar Seyer repeats, “Love is the enemy,” over and over. I took to chanting it about guilt. Guilt is the enemy. Over and over again. And it helped. It reminded me that I needed to let negative thinking go, because not only was



the guilt not helping me, it was actively hurting me.

It took some time, and more than repeating that chant, but I've finally gotten the mom guilt under control—mostly.

Recently, however, I've begun to pay more attention to other areas in my life in which guilt no longer serves me. The number one area? My writing. More specifically, my current work in progress. First, there's the guilt for not writing. Then there's the guilt when I AM writing because I should be doing something else...like what? Editing my last project? Dishes? Laundry? Who knows?! While I'm doing dishes, or laundry, or anything else at all, I feel guilty for not writing. It never ends. Gah!

Breathe.

Look, we know that sometimes feeling guilty is important. Guilt teaches us lessons like maybe don't yell at the customer service representative on the phone because you'll ruin her day and it's not her fault the cable is out. My daughter should feel a sense of guilt if she bops her friend on the nose, and if she doesn't, I'm not doing my job right.

Guilt is not the enemy. There is good reason not to banish it forever. No, it's more like the frenemy.

Despite the good it can do—keeping us on track to meet a deadline, reminding us to call our loved ones once in a while—it can sometimes feed us a false narrative. That we aren't good enough. That we're lazy. That we don't deserve the good things we've worked for. That there isn't a point in even trying. If we listen to these things, we end up depressed, unmotivated, and feeling even more guilty. Then the cycle continues.

Like your least favorite frenemy, guilt has nothing but unsolicited advice to give all day long. Occasionally, a frenemy may actually offer something helpful, but the rest of the time, they are scoffing, side-eyeing, and generally wearing you down. They may even be downright gaslighting you—because that's what frenemies do! And if you don't tune them out, you'll get sucked into their noxious orbit.

I hadn't touched my WIP in a full month. There were so many negative

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Guilt...

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emotions surrounding that fact that I just couldn't get back to it even when I did find an hour during the day. The guilty part of my brain told me things like, what's the point? You'll need an hour just to find your rhythm again and then you'll have to stop and then you won't touch it for another month.

I had my reasons for being away from it, though—reasons my guilt-bestowing frenemy would ignore completely. No sleep. Baby. Pandemic. Husband working from home. No sleep! Did I say no sleep?

It's so easy for a frenemy to gloss over these things because a frenemy isn't looking at the whole picture and a frenemy doesn't care about your well-being. They're all about appearances. And just like a frenemy, when your sense of guilt is running wild, you're not looking at the whole picture either. Your guilt is laser-focused on your failings while missing all of the other relevant details completely.

Maybe like me, you've had a run-in with the frenemy that is guilt. Or perhaps this frenemy may come along to pester you sometime in the future.

The first step to getting out of that frenemy's toxic reach? Go easy on yourself.

I know this sounds overly simple. And truthfully, it is. That's why this is a first step and not the only step. But it's a big step. It's advice I would offer to any of my friends who may be going through this same thing, and I think you would wholeheartedly give this same advice to your own friends as well.

So, if we would all tell our friends to go easy on themselves, and mean it, why not tell ourselves the same thing?

You may not have achieved everything you wanted to yesterday, but there's no reason to dwell on that today. Dwelling on your past performance, I mean really harping on it, will not improve your future performance.

If you find that you didn't live up to your potential yesterday, be assured, there was a valid reason. Even if that reason was that your heart craved Netflix instead of plot development. You tried your best yesterday. Leave the guilt behind. Today is a new day. Don't let that frenemy take over your thoughts with endless negativity—you don't have the time for it. You can acknowledge its existence, but then wish it a good day and move on.

**In case anyone is interested, Prayers is a self-described "Cholo goth" band/duo. The song "Love is the Enemy" came out in 2015 and is quite catchy.*

Violet Vahle is the content editor for ShoreLines. She writes paranormal romance and is currently working on her first book for publication.



Empty Stage...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

discovering as I get to know them, how they fit into this community I'm building.

My family thinks my wall is funny, but they get what I'm doing, and they're supportive. For Christmas, my daughter literally made all my characters three-dimensional.

She worked on my present for days (after having to "find enough" of them at Kroger). On Christmas morning, I opened four cases of mini Pringles cans (50 finished "people"), each painted, with googly eyes, and labeled with who they are. All my police officers are wearing blue uniforms, and my firefighters are in red.

I can play with them, have them interact, put them in their stores along main street.

My daughter gave me Pringles dolls for Christmas, and I can't wait to put them on stage!

Randee Leigh edits the DARA Newsletter. She has a Writing Popular Fiction MFA from Seton Hill and writes romantic suspense that is yet to be published.

Coming Next Month...

